

OM NAMO VENKATESAYA



28-01-2026
Total pilgrims: 72,637
Tonsures: 24,739
Hundi kanukalu: 4,51CR
Waiting Compartments: 15

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

TO BOOK YOUR ADS CALL

99484 80279, 73307 78889



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'Symbol of women's power': Leaders across party lines hail FM Sitharaman for 9th consecutive budget



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WHAT COULD HAPPEN IF THE US STRIKES IRAN?

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Why Are India Struggling In Tests? Rahul Dravid Gives Blunt Reply: "Not Easy"



IN BRIFS

PM Modi meets Deve Gowda, praises his insights on key issues



Bengaluru (TSIT): In an important development, former Prime Minister and Janata Dal (Secular) national president H.D. Deve Gowda met Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday and held a discussion. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, taking it to social media X, stated, "Had an excellent meeting with Shri H.D. Deve Gowda Ji. His insights on key issues are noteworthy. Equally admirable is his passion for India's development." The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has also made a post in the Kannada language in this regard. The development has become a topic of discussion in the state's political corridors. The development has also assumed significance with Deve Gowda and his son, Union Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy, organising a massive rally in their native Hassan and giving a call for the people of the state to overthrow the Congress-led government in the next Assembly election.

235 lakh demat accounts added in FY26 till December

New Delhi (TSIT): India's capital markets are witnessing a strong surge in retail investor participation, with 235 lakh new demat accounts added during FY26 up to December 2025, according to the Economic Survey 2025-26 tabled in Parliament on Thursday. The milestone reflects growing financial awareness and confidence among households, even as global trade uncertainties and geopolitical tensions continue to impact markets worldwide. The Economic Survey noted that despite volatile foreign investment flows, India's equity markets showed measured yet resilient performance during April to December 2025. The Nifty rose by around 11.1 per cent, while the Sensex gained nearly 10.1 per cent in the same period, supported by strong domestic investor participation, improving corporate earnings and supportive policy measures such as tax relief, easing inflation and accommodative monetary policy. A major highlight of the year was the crossing of 12 crore unique demat investors in September 2025, with nearly one-fourth of them being women.

SC stays UGC regulation pertaining to definition of caste discrimination



A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Jyomalya Bagchi issued notices to the Centre and the UGC on the pleas challenging the regulation.

NEW DELHI (TSIT): The Supreme Court on Thursday stayed a recent University Grants Commission (UGC) regulation after various pleas were filed contending that the Commission adopted a non-inclusionary definition of caste-based discrimination and excluded certain categories from institutional protection.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Jyomalya Bagchi issued notices to the Centre and the UGC on the pleas challenging the regulation. The new regulations mandating all higher education institutions to form "equity committees" to look into discrimination complaints and promote equity were notified on January 13.

The University Grants Commission (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026, mandated that these committees must include members of the Other Backward Classes (OBC), the

Scheduled Castes (SC), the Scheduled Tribes (ST), persons with disabilities, and women.

The new regulations replaces the UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations, 2012, which was largely advisory in nature.

The pleas assailed the regulation on the grounds that caste-based discrimination is defined strictly as discrimination against members of the SCs, STs and OBCs.

It said that by limiting the scope of "caste-based discrimination" only to SC, ST and OBC categories, the UGC has effectively denied institutional protection and grievance redressal to individuals belonging to the "general" or non-reserved categories who may also face harassment or bias based on their caste identity.

Protests were held at various places against the regulations, with student groups and organisations demanding its immediate rollback.

FM Nirmala tables Economic Survey 2026 in Parliament



New Delhi (TSIT): Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday tabled the Economic Survey 2026 in Parliament, which will set the official tone on how the economy of the country is performing on a strong note despite global uncertainties and US tariffs. The Economic Survey will reveal India's projected GDP growth estimates for the current fiscal (FY26) as well as the upcoming financial year (FY27).

The key pre-budget document summarises the annual economic development of India and charts out short and medium-term prospects of the economy. Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran will later explain the key findings of policy reforms as stated in the Economic Survey 2026, including key topics like rupee depreciation, geopolitical volatility and more.

Meanwhile, Sitharaman is the first woman to present Union Budget for the ninth consecutive time, making history in the Parliamentary history of the country, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said.

Clean air key to true development, says Bhatti

Hyderabad (TSIT) Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu said that true development is possible only with clean air and highlighted Telangana's scientific, target-driven approach to improve air quality across the State. He was speaking at a conference on Air Quality Index (AQI) and Air Quality Management, organised by the State Planning Department at the Marri Channa Reddy Human Resource Development Institute (MCRHRD).

Under Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy's leadership, the government is committed to ensuring a clean and healthy environment for the people, he said. Emphasising that development without environmental protection leads to long-term harm, Bhatti Vikramarka described air quality as a key public health, productivity, and economic indicator, citing studies that rank air pollution as the second leading cause of death globally.

The Deputy CM announced that Telangana has established 40 new air quality monitoring stations, doubling the network for accurate, real-time data. Air Quality Dashboards accessible to the public will be launched soon. He added that the State Clean Air Action Plan 2025 is being implemented to tackle pollution from vehicles, construction, industries, road dust, and open burning. Initiatives include promoting electric vehicles, expanding



THE DEPUTY CM ANNOUNCED THAT TELANGANA HAS ESTABLISHED 40 NEW AIR QUALITY MONITORING STATIONS, DOUBLING THE NETWORK FOR ACCURATE, REAL-TIME DATA. AIR QUALITY DASHBOARDS ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC WILL BE LAUNCHED SOON.

public transport, developing charging infrastructure, and introducing vehicle scrapping facilities. On industrial pollution, continuous emission monitoring systems have been linked to Pollution Control Board servers, while cleaner fuels and stricter enforcement

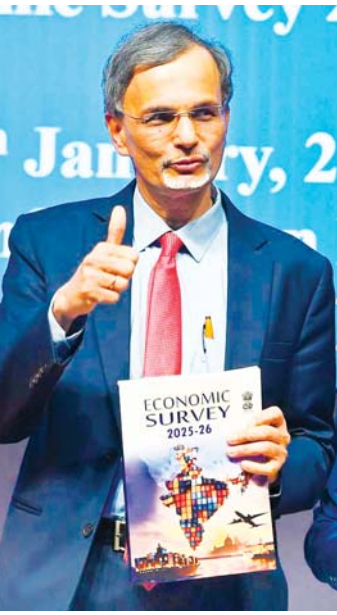
are encouraged. Under the Renewable Energy Policy-2025, Telangana aims to achieve 20,000 MW of renewable energy capacity by 2030.

The Deputy CM also raised concerns over industries operating in residential areas, including Jeedimetla, and announced plans for industrial restructuring, zoning reforms, and better land-use planning. Special response teams will be piloted in two GHMC zones to handle pollution complaints efficiently, with plans to expand statewide. Urging public participation, Bhatti Vikramarka called on citizens, industries, and civil society to adopt eco-friendly practices, emphasising that protecting the environment is a moral duty for future generations.

India to grow 6.8-7.2 % in FY27, 'Swadeshi' growth to be emphasised

New Delhi (TSIT): The Economic Survey, tabled in Parliament on Thursday, projected India's GDP growth at 6.8-7.2% for 2026-27, following an estimated 7.4% growth in the current fiscal year. The survey, prepared under Chief Economic Advisor V. Anantha Nageswaran, noted that policy reforms over recent years have strengthened India's medium-term growth potential to around 7%, with domestic demand emerging as the main driver of expansion.

The report described India as an "oasis of macro stability" in a turbulent global economy. While the outlook is broadly positive, it cautioned that slower global growth, trade wars, and tariff disruptions could weigh on exports and investor sentiment. The survey stressed that initiatives like Make in India serve



dual purposes—protecting domestic production during global shocks while building capabilities—but must not compromise efficiency or integration with global supply chains. Highlighting trade as a key growth enabler, the survey pointed to recent free trade agreements, including the India-EU FTA, as well as deals with the UK, New Zealand, and Oman, which are expected to deepen market access for Indian manufacturers.

The report noted that foreign portfolio investors sold USD 18 billion of Indian shares in 2025, though foreign direct investment surged, mostly via Singapore and Mauritius. Despite a 5.7% fall of the rupee against the dollar over six months, the survey said the currency's weakness reflects capital flow shortages rather than domestic economic weakness.

CM Stalin announces 20% subsidy for textile machinery

COIMBATORE (TSIT): The Chief Minister MK Stalin on Thursday announced a 20 per cent capital subsidy on the purchase of advanced weaving and knitting machinery for textile units.

The Chief Minister, in his address through a video message at the International Textile Summit- 360 in Coimbatore, said the textile firms purchasing state-of-the-art weaving and knitting machinery would be eligible for a 20 per cent capital subsidy with an annual budget allocation of Rs 30 crore under the newly integrated textile policy 2025-26.

"While ensuring inclusive growth and social justice under the Dravidian model of



governance, the State has retained its position as the country's largest exporter of ready-made garments for five consecutive years, accounting for 33 per cent of India's total textile trade, providing direct employment to 31 lakh workers, of whom 60.12 per cent are women," he said, highlighting the State's robust infrastructure and investor friendly ecosystem.

KCR summoned for questioning in phone-tapping case

Hyderabad, Jan 29 : In a significant development in the phone tapping case in Telangana, the Special Investigation Team (SIT) has summoned Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) President and former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao. The SIT has issued notice to K. Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR),



directing him to make himself available for questioning at 3 p.m. on Friday (January 30). The SIT officials served the notice at KCR's resident at Nandinagar in Banjara Hills on Thursday.

Considering KCR's age, Investigation Officer P. Venkatagiri has communicated to that he may voluntarily appear before him at the Jubilee Hills Police Station or alternatively may specify any other place within Hyderabad city convenient for examination. The notice, issued under Section 160 of the Criminal Procedure Code, mentioned that during the course of investigation, it has been revealed that he is acquainted with facts and circumstances relevant to the case and hence his examination is necessary.

Sammakka-Sarakka Jatara Is a Tribal Maha Kumbh Union Minister Jual Oram

Hyderabad (TSIT): Union Minister for Tribal Affairs Jual Oram on Thursday described the Sammakka-Sarakka Jatara as the largest tribal festival in the country and a "Tribal Maha Kumbh."

Union Minister Jual Oram, along with Union Minister for Coal and Mines G. Kishan Reddy, visited the Medaram temple and offered special prayers to Sammakka-Sarakka, fulfilling their vows. Union Ministers were accorded a traditional welcome at the temple entrance by State Ministers Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, Danasaari Anasuya (Seethakka), and Adluri Laxman Kumar, amid tribal drum beats. Special rituals were performed, and offerings were made to the goddesses.

Addressing the media, Jual



Oram said he was happy to return to the sacred Jatara after nearly two decades, on the directions of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He stated that the Union Government is extending full financial support for the development of the region and has arranged special trains for the convenience of devotees.

Highlighting tribal welfare initiatives, the Union Minister said the Centre has allocated 1 lakh crore under the Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan, Rs.24,000 crore under the PM Jan-

Man Yojana, and sanctioned 23 Ekalavya Model Residential Schools for Telangana. Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy said the Sammakka-Sarakka Jatara attracts lakhs of devotees from across the country. He thanked the Telangana Government and officials for smooth arrangements and said the Centre and State are jointly undertaking development works, including Rs.80 crore for regional tourism, 140 crore for Ramappa Temple development, and 3.70 crore for this year's Jatara arrangements.

Ajit Pawar cremated with full state honours; Amit Shah, Nabin attend funeral

Baramati (TSIT) The last rites of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, killed in a plane crash, were held with full state honours on Thursday at Baramati in Pune district.

Union ministers Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari, former Union minister Sharad Pawar and BJP president Nitin Nabin attended the 66-year-old Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief's funeral at the Vidya Pratishthan ground at Baramati, around 100 km from Pune. Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnis and Deputy CM Eknath Shinde were also present, along with Ajit Pawar's wife Sunetra, who is a Rajya Sabha member, and



sons Parth and Jay. Ajit Pawar's cousin Supriya Sule, Lok Sabha member from Baramati, and NCP working president and former Union minister Praful Patel were also present. Parth and Jay lit their

father's funeral pyre. On Thursday morning, the mortal remains of Ajit Pawar were taken from the Punyashlok Ahilyadevi Hospital in Baramati, where they were kept overnight, to his village.

'Symbol of women's power': Leaders across party lines hail FM Sitharaman for 9th consecutive budget



New Delhi, Jan 29 : As Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for becoming the first woman holder of the post to present the Union Budget for the ninth consecutive time, leaders, cutting across party lines, on Thursday backed him and said the milestone reflects the growing power and participation of women in India's public life. Speaking to IANS outside Parliament, AAP Rajya Sabha member Ashok Kumar Mittal said that women reaching top positions and contributing meaningfully to the nation is a strong reflection of women's empowerment. "When women in India rise to positions of responsibility and serve the country, it highlights the strength of women. This is something that deserves appreciation. We must encourage and enable more women to move forward. The Women's Reservation Bill has already been passed,

under which one-third of the seats will be reserved for women, which is a major step," he said. However, some Congress leaders underlined that while the achievement is noteworthy, the focus must remain on the substance of the Budget. Congress MP Deepender Singh Hooda said: "It is a good thing that she is presenting the Budget for the ninth time, but we hope that this Budget is prepared keeping the public in mind. The country is facing several challenges today. The value of the Indian rupee has weakened, unemployment remains a concern, and people are struggling with inflation. The economy is under pressure from multiple directions. In such a situation, it is important that this Budget provides real relief to the common people." Congress MP Vivek Tankha also acknowledged Sitharaman's role, recalling a previous interaction with her.

Hasina slams Bangladesh polls from India, warns of instability after Awami League barred

Dhaka, Jan 29: Bangladesh's ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has criticised the country's upcoming election, warning that the February 12 polls could trigger prolonged instability after her party, the Awami League, was barred from contesting. Speaking from exile in India, Hasina told The Associated Press in an email last week that Bangladesh urgently needs "inclusive, free and fair elections," and claimed the interim government led by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus has deliberately disenfranchised millions of Awami

League supporters by excluding the party from the vote. "Each time political participation is denied to a significant portion of the population, it deepens resentment, delegitimizes institutions and creates the conditions for future instability," Hasina said, adding that "a government born of exclusion cannot unite a divided nation." Bangladesh, where more than 127 million people are eligible to vote, is heading into what is being seen as the most consequential election in decades — the first since Hasina fled to India on August 5, 2024, following weeks of unrest and a mass



uprising that ended her 15-year rule. Yunus assumed charge three days later and has pledged to ensure a free and fair election. However, concerns have been raised by critics and rights groups over the inclusivity of the process, security arrangements, and uncertainty sur-

rounding a proposed constitutional referendum on sweeping political reforms. Yunus' office said security forces will ensure an orderly election and prevent coercion or violence. The administration has also invited international observers and human rights organisations to monitor the polls. The Election Commission has stated that around 500 foreign observers, including representatives from the European Union and the Commonwealth, are expected to be present. Since Hasina's removal, Bangladesh has faced mounting political and security challenges, with allegations of

rights violations and growing fears over the rising influence of Islamist groups. Minority organisations have raised concerns over attacks, particularly against Hindus, while media freedom has also come under the spotlight, with journalists facing criminal cases and reports of attacks on major newspaper offices. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), led by Tarique Rahman, has emerged as a key contender in the election. Rahman, son of former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, returned to Bangladesh in December after more than 17 years in exile and has promised stability for the nation of 170 million people. His main

challenge is expected from a coalition of 11 groups led by the Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami. Hasina, who was sentenced to death in absentia over her government's crackdown on the 2024 student uprising, dismissed the trial as a "kangaroo court," while international rights groups have expressed concern over the fairness of proceedings. Calling for an end to the cycle of bans and boycotts in Bangladesh politics, Hasina said the country needs a "legitimate government" that rules "with the genuine consent of the people," which she described as the only way for the nation to heal and move forward.

Kerala: Frontline workers get Rs 1,000 hike; major welfare, infrastructure initiatives unveiled

Thiruvananthapuram, Jan 29: The Kerala Budget 2026-27, presented by Finance Minister K. N. Balagopal on Thursday, has brought a major relief for ASHAs, anganwadi workers, pre-primary teachers, and literacy instructors with a monthly honorarium hike of Rs 1,000, as the state gears up for Assembly elections in the coming months. In addition, anganwadi helpers will receive an extra Rs 500 per month, and noon-meal cooks will get a Rs 25 hike in daily wages. The Finance Minister also assured that Dearness Allowance and Dearness Relief (DA/DR)



for government employees and pensioners would be expedited. From April 2026, the honorarium for elected representatives of local bodies will be enhanced, and a welfare fund board with a corpus of Rs 250 crore will be set up for their benefit. For the first time in India, Kerala will also present an elderly budget document alongside the main budget.

Punjab police and BSF foil cross-border smuggling, seize heroin and firearms

Chandigarh, Jan 29: In a significant security operation, Punjab Police's Counter Intelligence (CI) Faridkot, in coordination with the Border Security Force (BSF), successfully intercepted a cross-border smuggling attempt along the Fazilka district border, recovering 2.1 kg of heroin and 21 high-powered pistols with ammunition, officials said on Thursday. According to DGP Gaurav Yadav, the seized weapons include 11 Glock pistols with 22 magazines, one Beretta with one magazine, five Zigana pistols with 10 magazines, three Norinco pistols with five magazines, one Ghaffar



Security (MP-5 type) pistol with a magazine, and 310 rounds of 9mm ammunition. Preliminary investigations suggest that Pakistan-based smugglers crossed the zero line, attempting to exploit dense fog and nighttime conditions to transport arms and narcotics into India. Alert BSF troops

fired warning rounds to stop the breach, and a joint search operation led to the recovery of the consignment. Assistant Inspector General Gursewak Singh Brar said the operation was carried out following reliable intelligence inputs, with a special ambush planned in Teja

Ruhela village, Fazilka. The swift response by the BSF and police teams prevented the consignment from entering Indian territory. Authorities confirmed that further investigations are ongoing to identify local accomplices and dismantle the entire smuggling network. An FIR has been filed under Sections 21-C and 29 of the NDPS Act and Section 25 of the Arms Act in Fazilka. DGP Yadav emphasized that the Punjab Police remain vigilant and are committed to zero tolerance against cross-border crimes, ensuring the security of the state.

TG ICET -2026 to be held on May 13 and 14

Nalgonda, Jan 29 (TSIT): The Telangana Integrated Common Entrance Test-2026 (TG ICET-2026) will be conducted on May 13 and 14 in two sessions each on two days through Computer Based Test (CBT) by the Mahatma Gandhi University (MGU), Nalgonda for admission into first year M.B.A. and M.C.A. courses for the academic year 2026-27. Chairman of the TG ICET-2026 and Vice Chancellor of Mahatma Gandhi University Prof Khaja Althaf Hussain and TG ICET-2026 Convener and MGU Registrar Prof Aluvala Ravi on Thursday disclosed the details of the TG ICET-2026 as approved by the Telangana State Council of Higher Education (TSCHE). Speaking on the occasion, Vice Chancellor Prof Khaja Althaf Hussain and Convenor Prof Aluvala Ravi said that the Notification of TG ICET -2026 would be released on February 6 and the candidates who wish to apply for TG ICET-2026 may submit their applications through online mode only from February 12 till March 16.

LIC Inaugurates All India Public Sector Table Tennis Tournament 2025-26 in Lucknow



Lucknow: Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) inaugurated the All India Public Sector Table Tennis Tournament 2025-26 at the K.D. Singh Babu Stadium here on Tuesday. The tournament was formally opened by Shri Salil Vishwanath, Executive Director (HRD & Training), LIC of India. The inaugural ceremony was attended by Shri Sanjay Kumar

Singh, Senior Divisional Manager, Lucknow Division; Ms. S. Gayathri, Secretary (HRD & Training), Central Office, Mumbai; and Shri Ajay Kumar Mishra, Regional Manager (HRD), North Central Zone, Kanpur. An annual event of the All India Public Sector Sports Control Board, the tournament is being hosted by LIC of India this year. Around 120 players

from 13 Public Sector Organizations, including LIC, are participating in the competition. Addressing the players, Shri Salil Vishwanath highlighted the role of sports in fostering discipline, focus, and resilience, and urged participants to compete with enthusiasm and uphold the spirit of fair play. The tournament will conclude on January 31, 2026.

Kolkata man loses Rs 3.35 crore in stock scam, cyber police arrest key accused

Kolkata, Jan 29: The Kolkata Police have arrested a man from West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district in connection with a massive cyber fraud that allegedly duped a city resident of Rs 3.35 crore by promising lucrative stock market returns.



The accused, Hasan Molla, was taken into custody following an investigation by the Cyber Crime branch, police officials confirmed on Thursday. According to investigators, the victim, Ashish Kumar Ghora (56), a resident of Entally in central Kolkata, was allegedly drawn into a WhatsApp group that projected itself as a legitimate investment advisory platform. The

group promised exceptionally high returns within a short span, persuading Ghora to transfer large sums of money to multiple bank accounts as directed by its administrators. Police sources said the WhatsApp group contained several members and regularly shared stock market tips, creating an illusion of credibility and active trading. Trusting the assurances, the victim

reportedly transferred around Rs 3.35 crore over time. Trouble began when Ghora attempted to withdraw his funds and found himself unable to do so. Realising he had been cheated, he approached the Cyber Crime branch of the Kolkata Police and lodged a formal complaint. During the probe, investigators discovered that the accused allegedly used forged identities and fake logos of regulatory bodies such as the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) and the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) to make the scheme appear authentic. Fake documents were also allegedly circulated to win the victim's confidence.

GITAM Hosts Two-Day National Symposium on Literature and Socio-Political Movements

Hyderabad, January 29, 2026 : The Department of English & Other Languages, GITAM School of Humanities and Social Sciences (GSHS), Hyderabad, inaugurated a two-day national symposium titled "The Liminal Space: Literary Cultures and Socio-Political Movements in India" on Wednesday. The event brought together eminent scholars and academicians for in-depth discussions on literature, ideology, culture, and social change in the Indian context. The opening session, "Literature, Ideology, and Social Resistance in Colonial and Early Modern India," featured lectures by Dr. Amandeep



Kaur, Dr. Jagvir Singh, and Dr. Jondhale Rahul Hiranman. Keynote addresses by Prof. Alladi Uma and Prof. M. Sridhar (Retd.), University of Hyderabad) focused on caste, modernity, and reinterpretations of early

Telugu literature. Subsequent sessions examined themes of gender, sexuality, morality, devotion, and modernity, with presentations by scholars from universities across India. The symposium will conclude with

discussions on liminal identities and transitional texts, highlighting evolving literary modernity. The event offers a vibrant platform for interdisciplinary academic dialogue on India's socio-cultural transformations.

Systemic Reforms, Skill Upgradation Vital for Railways' Future: SCR GM

Secunderabad: South Central Railway (SCR) celebrated its 70th Railway Week on Wednesday at Rail Kalarang, New Bhoiguda, Secunderabad, with Shri Sanjay Kumar Srivastava, General Manager, SCR, calling for systemic reforms and continuous skill upgradation to meet future challenges. Addressing officers and staff, the General Manager said that the real strength of the Railways lies in its workforce and emphasized time-bound reforms across customer service, maintenance, and production, driven by accountability and effective execution. He stressed the need to encourage new ideas and ensure their proper evaluation and implementation. Highlighting the impor-



tance of technology, he urged employees to continuously upgrade their skills by leveraging digital learning platforms, with special focus on safety and modernization. During the celebrations, the GM presented the Overall Best Performance Efficiency Shield jointly to

Hyderabad and Guntakal Divisions. A total of 35 Zonal Level Performance Efficiency Shields were awarded to various divisions, workshops, and departments, while 86 officers and staff received the prestigious Vishisht Rail Seva Puraskar awards for

meritorious service. The event was attended by Shri Satya Prakash, Additional General Manager, along with senior officers, divisional railway managers, and staff. Cultural programmes by railway employees added colour to the celebrations.

EDITORIAL

DEALS WITH EU AND UK
GIVE TIPPLERS AND TRADE
REASONS TO BE HIGH

Alcoholic beverages may not figure among the top ten exports from the 27-nation European Union (EU) to India, but the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) signed on Tuesday, January 27, read along with the India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) okayed on July 24, 2025, has raised the spirits of the liquor trade and tipplers in India by several pegs. The most obvious benefit, according to industry insiders, is the growing access the market will now have to a greater variety of alcobev brands, from whisky, vodka and beer to wines, cognacs and liqueurs, at lower prices. This positivity stems from the significant reduction of tariffs on spirits (from up to 150% down to 40%), wines (150% to 20% on the premium range; medium range, 30%), and beer (110% to 50%).

The India-UK CETA, meanwhile, promises an immediate reduction of the tariff on India's much-loved Scotch whiskies from the present 150% to 75% next year and further down to 40% in another ten years. India is the No. 1 consumer of Scotch whiskies in the world, having toppled France from that position in 2023. Scotch today accounts for just 3% of India's exploding whisky market, but the Scotch Whisky Association, which has for long being lobbying for tariff reductions, sees India, in the post-CETA world, importing an additional £1 billion worth of Scotch over the next five years. "If that materialises, it won't just shift market dynamics, it could reshape the global Scotch landscape," says Cask Trade, the official mouthpiece of the Masters of Whisky Appreciation, a group of top-end collectors of cask whiskies. "A bottle of Johnnie Walker, once sold in India at around £60, could now be found for £40 as a result of the new tariff reductions." Cask Trade notes optimistically. "Though still expensive compared to locally produced spirits, that reduction will put imported Scotch within reach of tens of millions more consumers." It is how the world now views the Indian Scotch whisky market. Significantly, India's Scotch whisky imports, as Cask Trade points out, includes a substantial percentage of the 'bulk blend' category, which is mixed with local spirits and bottled under blended labels such as 100 Pipers and Royal Stag. It will be cheaper, as a result, to produce premium domestic whiskies, but will the large alcohol companies pass the benefit on to the consumer? That remains to be seen.

Forays by Indian companies into the international Scotch and Irish whisky markets also stand to benefit from the new business environment. It will be interesting to see how the ADS Group's entry into the Irish whiskey market with its brand The Irish Smith, produced in Ireland's Great Northern Distillery by industry veterans John Teeling and Brian Mongan, pans out after the European Parliament adopts the FTA (almost certainly in 2027). Likewise, Radico Khaitan, which has just announced that it will set up a Scotch whisky subsidiary in Scotland, will stand to benefit from the new tariff regime – it gains access into the European market and at the same time can take advantage of lowered tariffs if and when it decides to export its Scotch whisky from Scotland to India.

India's love for premium international alcohol brands, in tune with the rising aspirations of the country's upwardly (and outwardly) mobile class, is not limited to Scotch. Russian vodka exports to India, for instance, are reported to have experienced a 4x surge in 2025. The domestic industry does see it as a threat, but imported premium wines and spirits at present account for a small (albeit fast-growing) segment of the alcobev business in the country. Increases in imports, moreover, are not expected to happen overnight and are most likely to be absorbed by a growing market.

An India Miscalculation, And Ego: Inside
Bangladesh's Costly World Cup Exit

Like everything else, the landscape of global cricket has also changed over the decades. And like in most things of modern life, change has (amongst other things) ushered in heavy doses of chaos, anxiety and bad blood. Gone are the days when a cricket rivalry meant only an on-field battle of skills and nerves between two very talented groups of players. When people would gather in living rooms, in clubs, at roadside tea stalls, in college grounds, etc, to talk about which batter is in red hot form, or which bowler has the skills to torment an opposition batting line-up, or which captain has more tricks up her or his sleeve. Now, the 'rivalry' that is mainly talked about and makes headlines, often well before a tournament commences, is the off-field clashes between countries, cricket boards and officials. Sure, the purists still exist, but they are outnumbered. Trying to keep sports separate from politics is now a futile exercise. In the upcoming ICC men's T20 World Cup, cricketers of a talented team which had officially qualified have been robbed of a chance to play and entertain fans on the biggest stage of them all. Along with that, the almost 18 crore people of that country, where cricket has become an intrinsic part of national identity, will now not get to see their heroes in action. Bangladesh were drawn with England, the West Indies, Nepal and Italy, in Group C of the upcoming World Cup, which will be played in India and Sri Lanka. The Bangla Tigers are the third-highest ranked team in that group and in the extremely fickle T20 format, they could have potentially made it to the Super Eight stage, with one good day's worth of cricket. Beyond that, who knows what could have happened. Now, all that is just a hypothesis, which is a crying shame. India and Sri Lanka were announced as co-hosts in November 2021 as part of the ICC's 2024-2031 cycle of men's tournaments. There were credible reports of the Hindu community in Bangladesh being targeted from August 2024. So, timing-wise, the biggest questions that need to be asked are... If the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and the Bangladesh government thought that there was a genuine security threat to their players in India, why weren't these concerns raised earlier? Why did their interim government direct the BCB to ask the ICC for a venue change for



their matches scheduled to be played in India exactly a day after the Kolkata Knight Riders released Bangladesh fast bowler Mustafizur Rahman from their IPL 2026 squad (Mustafizur was released on January 3, 2026 and the BCB asked for a venue change on January 4)? Did the BCB confer with the BCCI about this directly? Why did the interim Bangladesh government ban all IPL broadcast and promotions indefinitely - what possible connection does this have with player security in India? Though the reason given for this was "in public interest", this was widely seen as a tit-for-tat retaliation to Mustafizur, the only Bangladeshi player in IPL 2026, being told he can't play in the IPL this season. At this end, could the entire Mustafizur episode have been handled better? Absolutely. Everyone knew just how volatile the situation was in Bangladesh ever since the first anti-establishment protests began against Sheikh Hasina's government in July 2024, which quickly spiralled from peaceful demands to violent clashes. The safest thing to do, to avoid public backlash of any kind in India against Bangladeshi players, would have been not to include Mustafizur in the player auction. Instead, he was included, the Kolkata Knight Riders spent as much as Rs 9.20 crore to buy him, and then the franchise was asked to release him. Bangladesh clearly viewed this as being extremely humiliating. It also made things worse in terms of the diplomatic

standoff. So, could this entire fiasco be avoided? It would have been unfair to Mustafizur himself, of course, but it would have been infinitely better to explain things to him at that stage instead of telling him, after he had secured a team and good money, that he couldn't play. However, what the Bangladesh regime also needed to understand was that they cannot turn this into an ego battle, for the health of their cricket. There was just too much at stake. Despite being given assurances by the ICC of heavy security for their players and staff, while in India, and an ICC internal security assessment that showed no specific threat to their team, Bangladesh risked a bit too much by sticking to their stance of threatening to pull out of the World Cup. And ironically, at the end of the day, their attempt to salvage lost pride has backfired spectacularly and only meant more humiliation, with the ICC promptly replacing them with Scotland in the tournament. Those in Bangladesh who are taking these decisions need to understand the reality of the times we live in. The ripple effects, financial and otherwise, are going to be enormous. According to reports, there is the participation fee of \$3 million or approximately 36.33 crore Bangladeshi Taka that they will not receive, along with any prize money that the team and the players would have potentially earned. The big blow will be the cut of ICC's central

revenue. Bangladesh receives a 4.46% cut of ICC's annual revenue pie, which translates to about \$27-30 million, going by recent projections. That's almost 60% of BCB's annual income that they have jeopardised. Also, by deciding to stick to their guns and not play the World Cup unless their last-minute demands for change of venue for their matches are met, Bangladesh will also be hit with a \$2 million fine by the ICC. Under the ICC Member Participation Agreement, any member nation that withdraws from a tournament without any justified cause will be hit with this fine. Add to that the almost 300 crore BDT loss for the host broadcaster in the country, other losses in advertisement revenue and Bangladeshi players potentially losing endorsement deals with Indian companies. After all, in the modern game, visibility is the sponsors' holy grail. Time heals almost everything, and perhaps the BCB will somehow tide over the financial repercussions. But what they have also severely risked is India's future bilateral cricket association with their neighbours, or, in other words, millions more in cricketing and broadcast revenue. Regardless of which direction strictly diplomatic relations between the two countries are headed, cricketing relations going forward could well be strained. India are scheduled to tour Bangladesh later this year (the white-ball tour was postponed from August 2025 to September 2026).

Beyond Ajit Pawar: What Happens To
Sharad Pawar's 'Succession' Plan Now?

It's too early to write the obituary of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), but the sudden death of Ajit Pawar in a plane crash is undoubtedly a near fatal blow for both factions of the party as well as the family that has controlled the politics of western Maharashtra's sugar belt and its wealthy cooperatives for more than four decades. The timing could not be worse. Ajit Pawar's demise comes at a critical phase in the NCP's evolution after the 2023 split, which tore the party into two and divided one of Maharashtra's foremost political dynasties, pitting nephew against uncle to upturn party patriarch Sharad Pawar's carefully laid succession plan. Firstly, the two factions (one led by Ajit Pawar and the other by Sharad Pawar) are still reeling from the shock of a virtual wipeout in their bastions of Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad in the recent corporation elections. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) captured both, and the sweep of its victories poses an existential challenge for the two NCPs, as well as the Pawar family possibly. What About The Unification? Secondly, plans for reunification are now up in the air. It was Ajit Pawar who had reached out to his uncle for a merger before the corporation elections following differences with the BJP over seat-sharing. They had agreed on a step-by-step approach. The first step was to forge an alliance for the corporation polls. The next was to contest the upcoming zilla parishad elections on the same symbol. Uncle and



nephew had agreed to use the clock symbol, which the Election Commission had taken away from Sharad Pawar and handed to Ajit Pawar's party. After that, reunification was a mere formality, expected to be completed after the local polls were done. Now, it's anybody's guess whether or not the process will be completed. Much depends on which way Ajit Pawar's 41 MLAs move in the coming weeks. Without his towering presence, they are pretty much orphaned. Given the manner in which Maharashtra parties have splintered since 2022, there is a strong possibility that they will either scatter in different directions or be welcomed wholesale by the BJP. Not that the BJP needs those numbers. Despite the death of one of its two Deputy Chief Ministers, there is no threat to the stability of the Devendra Fadnavis-led Nationalist Democratic Alliance (NDA) state government. The BJP has 131 MLAs of its own. It also has the support of the seven MLAs it had helped

win the last year's assembly election. This brings the BJP's tally to 138, just seven short of the halfway mark of 145. Eknath Shinde's faction of the Shiv Sena adds another 57 MLAs to the NDA's strength in the assembly. While on the face of it, this would seem to make the Shinde Sena indispensable for the government's survival, the party's poor showing in the recent corporation polls has made it vulnerable, leaving it with little room for manoeuvre within the alliance. A Dilemma For BJP There are opportunities as well as challenges for the BJP in Ajit Pawar's unexpected demise. His NCP proved useful as a balancing force against Shinde's Sena. In fact, it was Ajit Pawar's unconditional support that cleared the way for Fadnavis to become the Chief Minister despite Shinde's tantrums and pressure tactics. Every time Shinde tried to rock the boat subsequently, Ajit Pawar came in handy to make him toe the line. In a sense, Fadnavis and the BJP have

lost a valuable ally. Yet, Ajit Pawar's death can also be seen as fortuitous for the BJP's long-term ambition to be the single dominant force in Maharashtra and form a government on its own strength in the next assembly election. Ajit Pawar was groomed by Sharad Pawar from the early 1990s as his heir apparent. He not only familiarised himself with every nook and corner of the state, its demographics, caste composition and its geography, but also learnt from his uncle his canny political skills and the art of managing Maharashtra's complex dynamics. Although Sharad Pawar inducted his daughter Supriya Sule into politics, there was an unstated arrangement within the family that she would be the NCP's face at the Centre where her consummate skills as a parliamentarian and her talent for making friends across the political divide (which she seems to have inherited from her father) would prove useful for the party.

"Crack Team, Internal Unity": Inside
BJP's Bengal Election War Room

As the political adagio of West Bengal builds towards the upcoming assembly elections in March-April 2026, one cannot help but observe the intricate dance of ambition, identity, and power at play. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a party with an eye firmly trained on national significance, finds itself poised at a critical juncture, seeking to wrest Bengal from the entrenched grasp of the Trinamool Congress (TMC) led by Mamata Banerjee. The BJP's historical absence from the corridors of power in Kolkata is set against a backdrop of an electoral landscape in flux, where 2021's results revealed that the party is still nearly 10 percentage points adrift from the TMC. However, the BJP's impressive growth trajectory in Bengal from 4 seats in the 2016 assembly polls to 77 seats, out of 294, in the 2021 polls, tells a story of an extraordinary surge, beyond its traditional base of the Hindi heartland. Amit Shah's impending visit to focus on Internal Unity: The Imperative for Cohesion The internal dynamics of the BJP will also shape the electoral narrative. Amit Shah's forthcoming visit (on 30th and 31st January) - aimed at fostering unity and quelling factionalism-illustrates a critical recognition of the need for cohesion. In a political arena as turbulent as West Bengal, the fragility of internal alliances could be the Achilles' heel of any electoral endeavour. The previously sidelined former state president Dilip Ghosh and the assertive Leader of the Opposition in the state assembly, Suwendu Adhikari, emerge as key figures in the



push for collective leadership - a necessity that the party must articulate, lest it be exploited by the TMC, which has historically thrived on the politics of fragmentation. In a personal meeting with Amit Shah, Dilip Ghosh, at the end of December 2025, pointed out that "West Bengal is ready for change, but the BJP party is not ready yet." While mollifying Dilip Ghosh and roping him into active campaign mode, Shah had emphasised internal unity and the imperative for cohesion. Amit Shah is planning to hold a State Core Committee meeting in Kolkata, visit Anandpore Math in Barrackpore and a programme in the northern district of Siliguri.

● **The BJP's Ideological Evolution** In the vast and variegated tableau of Indian politics, the BJP stands as a striking testament to the enduring power of ideological lineage. At its core, the BJP is intertwined with the legacy of Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, a founder of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh in 1951, whose vision of a unit-

ed India finds itself reborn in the party's current narrative. Alongside Mukherjee's contributions, the spirit of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya's Anand Math, with its evocative hymn 'Vande Mataram,' resonates profoundly-echoing aspirations of nationalism, unity, and identity that continue to serve as the party's ideological compass.

● **The Demographic Landscape** West Bengal presents a particularly intricate tableau, marked by its demographic stratifications. Muslims constitute around 32 per cent of the electorate in 2026 (27 per cent according to the 2011 Census), largely anchored to the TMC, while Hindus represent approximately 68 per cent, with about 50 per cent of them reportedly leaning towards the BJP.

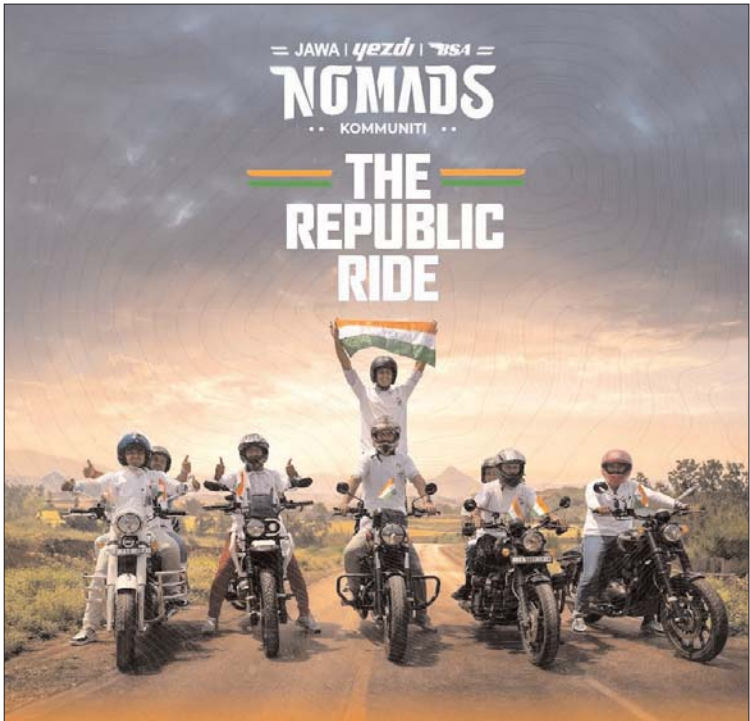
"The BJP's ambition to capture at least 60 to 65 per cent of the Hindu vote, necessitating a strategic swing of at least 5 plus per cent, underscores the party's awareness that political dominance is as much about arithmetic as it is about

the narratives that resonate with diverse community identities," says Dr Swapan Dasgupta, a member of the newly constituted Manifesto Committee. In this light, the BJP's approach is not merely a matter of winning votes; it involves cultivating a profound understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics that etch the contours of political allegiance. The party's efforts to engage different Hindu sects (the Matuas, the Rajbongshis among the Schedule Caste population, drawing on historical grievances and aspirations as well as the Bhadrolok upper castes) point toward a realisation that winning hearts must precede winning seats. Therefore, serious attempts to implement the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and ensure that the Matuas get the right to vote under the SIR scheme. The CAA provides a legal pathway to Indian citizenship for the Matua community-a Hindu Dalit sect (Namasudras) - who migrated from Bangladesh due to religious persecution.



Classic Legends unites Jawa, Yezdi and BSA riders under ‘Nomads’, the unified riding collective, this Republic Day

Pune, January 29, 2026: Riders of Jawa, Yezdi and BSA rode out across India on 26 January 2026, with the shared belief that motorcycling, like the Republic itself, thrives on unity drawn from diversity. Classic Legends, the makers of the modern performance classics, celebrated with them by going live with its community page, titled ‘Nomads: Ride as One, Ride the Legacy’, on its official website. The new page is designed to take riders closer to their local riding community (Jawa-Yezdi-BSA rider clubs) by making discovery and connecting just a click away. The Republic Day rides, Nomads for Unity in Diversity, stretched across regions and cultures, from Jammu to Tamil Nadu, Gujarat to Manipur, reflecting India’s vast geography united by a single passion for performance classics from Jawa, Yezdi and BSA. The love for these motorcycles brought together more than 2,000 riders, representing over 20 independent riding communities and more than 150 dealership-led riding groups, spanning different age groups, professions, and riding styles. In a rolling expression of continuity, seasoned riders rode alongside first-time tourers, and legacy machines flanked modern-day performance classics from brands Jawa, Yezdi and BSA. The independent communities and dealership-led riding groups will now be further



unified by Classic Legends’ riding collective called ‘Nomads’, consolidating all the brands’ riding groups on the brands’ common website. Spanning riding communities across Jawa, Yezdi, and BSA, Nomads is designed to be their shared identity that cuts across the brands, regions, and choice of ride. Built by riders, and not by campaigns, Nomads epitomises the inclusiveness, independence, and

joy of riding with one’s tribe. It made Republic Day a fitting celebration to launch the Nomads website nationally. The page will make finding the riding club closest to the rider easy and facilitate riding out with their tribe more often. Anupam Thareja, co-founder, Classic Legends, said, “At the heart of motorcycling lies the urge to seek out your own brand of freedom. Our performance classics are designed

for that quest. But there is a deeper longing that defines motorcycling across generations, especially in these alienating times of digital overload – the urge to belong. While some days are about riding for yourself, Republic Day is about riding together. The annual rides of Jawa, Yezdi and BSA on this day unites different riders to ride out as a close-knit tribe. This year, we are celebrating them by doing more than sharing their stories. We are going live with our community page, Nomads, which lets each of our riders, old and new, find a riding community near them. The name for our riding collective recognises the urge to test boundaries and yet, belong together for a shared purpose, which could simply be the love of motorcycling.” In addition to the Nomads page launch, rider stories from across the country were shared in real-time on the Jawa Yezdi and BSA Motorcycle social media handles throughout the day, saluting the spirit of riding with fellow Nomads. The Republic Day rides are an annual tradition for Nomads, the Jawa, Yezdi and BSA riding communities. This year marks a larger, more unified Nomads presence, deeper collaboration with independent communities, and the launch of the Nomads platform, built to sustain that momentum well beyond community rides throughout the year.

Gopal Snacks launches new national campaign for gathiya: “Chhoti Bhookh Ka Bada Solution”

Gopal Snacks, one of India’s leading companies in the organized traditional snacks sector, has launched a new national campaign for its flagship product, Gathiya, under the tagline “Chhoti Bhookh Ka Bada Solution.” The campaign marks the first-ever large-scale promotion of gathiya, highlighting its place as one of India’s most loved snacks. Gopal Snacks is the world’s largest manufacturer of gathiya. The new campaign positions Gopal gathiya as more than just an “anytime” snack, positioning it as an “every-lifestyle” snack, a part of everyday life across diverse consumer groups and situations. The campaign features three films depicting relatable scenarios among youth, working professionals, and home-makers. Each film captures different moods and moments but is united by a common musical thread of the same lyrical song reimagined with unique arrangements and tempos for each setting. The approach reflects Gopal Snacks’ aim to make the brand’s communication simple, inclusive, and emotionally resonant. Speaking about the campaign, Raj Hadvani, CEO of Gopal Snacks, said, “This cam-



campaign is a landmark moment for us. We began as a gathiya manufacturer, and it has been an integral part of our success story. We felt it was time to give gathiya the spotlight it truly deserves. We wanted to create something that feels relatable, universal, and deeply rooted in everyday moments of joy and connection. The ‘Chhoti Bhookh Ka Bada Solution’ campaign perfectly shows gathiya is a simple product that genuinely connects across all generations and fits into every lifestyle.” The campaign was launched during the recent 70th Filmfare Awards, where Gopal Snacks served as the official Snacks Partner, providing a high-visibility platform for the launch. Gopal Snacks is now rolling out an extensive, high-frequency media plan covering nation-

al and regional television, print, outdoor, radio, cinema, and digital platforms. The films are designed for both linear and digital formats, with shorter edits aimed at engaging audiences with shorter attention spans across multiple touchpoints. Early response to the campaign from consumers and trade partners has been strongly positive, with particular appreciation for its emotional connect and relatability. The campaign repositions gathiya from a regional favourite to a product with pan-India appeal. The campaign sets a new benchmark for Gopal Snacks’ future marketing efforts. Gathiya remains its flagship product even as it continues to expand its presence and strengthen its portfolio of over 85 products and 320 SKUs.

Shri. Hardeep Singh Puri launches Jio-bp’s Engine-Cleaning ACTIVE Technology Petrol with Up To 100 km Extra Drive per annum at No Extra Cost

Goa, India, January 29, 2026: Hon’ble Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Shri Hardeep Singh Puri today launched the path-breaking ACTIVE technology petrol at Jio-bp (the operating brand of Reliance BP Mobility Limited (RBML), a joint venture of Reliance Industries and bp) at India Energy Week 2026 in Goa. Petrol at Jio-bp with ACTIVE technology is designed to clean critical engine parts, deliver strong clean-up capability, restoring and protecting engine performance, and helping motorists go up to 100 km* further every year compared to regular petrol. And all this comes at no extra cost.

Benefits for Consumers: Petrol with ACTIVE technology at Jio-bp is built around what everyday drivers care about most: smoother rides and more km from every filled-up tank, all at no extra cost, as well as protecting and maintaining a clean

engine.

Key differentiators

- Cleans existing deposits stuck on critical engine parts, helping engines perform better and run smoother
- Delivers strong clean-up performance and - when used regularly, helping engines stay cleaner and more reliable for longer
- Can translate into up to 100 km* extra driving distance per year for typical Indian two- and four-wheeler users, at no extra cost
- Aligning with India’s evolving dynamic fuel standards
- Reduces maintenance Built on over 100 years of bp’s global fuel research leadership, high performance petrol with ACTIVE technology at Jio-bp has undergone extensive development and validation using both industry standard tests and customized methods aligned to India’s engine landscape. To prove its clean up effectiveness in real

world conditions, Jio-bp ran a motorcycle for more than 4,000 km at the Coimbatore test track, an impressive demonstration brought to life for audiences at India Energy Week. The removal of deposits helps reverse their adverse impact on vehicle performance, reliability and smooth operation, enabling tangible benefits to be associated with the use of petrol with ACTIVE technology at Jio-bp. Based on the average annual mileage of Indian two-wheelers and four-wheelers, this improvement can translate into gains of up to 100 km* per annum. Talking about this revolutionary product, Jio-bp Chairman, Sarthak Behuria, said: “Indian motorists value simple, real-world benefits—engines that run smoother, are more reliable, have reduced maintenance and deliver more kilometers for the same fuel spend. With Jio-bp ACTIVE Technology, we offer petrol that actively

cleans the engine as you drive, helping reverse the effects of harmful deposits. Our aim is to democratize advanced fuel technology by making high-performance engine clean-up a standard offering, ensuring customers across India benefit from it every day.” Adding to this, Jio-bp CEO, Akshay Wadhwa, said: “Today at India Energy Week 2026 in Goa, we have two motorcycles displayed side by side—one that has run on ACTIVE technology petrol and the other on regular petrol. Using advanced borescope imaging, the clean-up capability of ACTIVE technology petrol is explicitly visible. Backed by five years of tireless work in fuel chemistry, this petrol not only enhances fuel economy but also reduces maintenance. The motorcycle with ACTIVE technology petrol was run for 4,000 km at the Coimbatore testing track and the improvements translate into gains of up to 100 km* per annum.

ASI Telangana partners with Medtronic in India to train postgraduate students and young surgeons in advanced open and laparoscopic surgical techniques

Hyderabad, 29th January 2026: Medtronic, a global leader in medical technology has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in India with the Telangana State Chapter of the Association of Surgeons of India (ASI) to train residents, post-graduates, and early career surgeons in open and laparoscopic procedures using new-age technologies via collaborative skill-building training programs. The collaboration aims to strengthen surgical capabilities by providing focused training in minimally invasive surgery, combining Medtronic’s technological expertise with ASI Telangana’s academic and clinical leadership. It will follow a blended learning format with interactive academic sessions and hands-on endo-trainer workshops to help participants gain practical exposure to laparoscopic techniques. The programme will be led by experienced surgical faculty from ASI



and participating medical institutions, ensuring high-quality, structured learning tailored to the needs of early career surgeons. Commenting on the collaboration, Abhishek Bhargava, Senior Director, Medical Surgical, Medtronic India said, “Advancing surgical education is integral to improving patient outcomes. Our collaboration with ASI Telangana is a focused effort to build strong laparoscopic capabilities among the next generation through struc-

tured, hands-on training. By enabling access to the right skills and technologies early in their careers, the initiative supports surgical practices and contributes to a more resilient healthcare system. This partnership also reflects our commitment to meaningful public-private collaboration and reinforces Medtronic’s mission to alleviate pain, restore health, and extend life.” Dr. B. Ramesh, Honorary Secretary, ASI Telangana Chapter said, “We are excited to collaborate with

Medtronic in India to further strengthen our training efforts and extend our reach to more postgraduate students and young surgeons. This program helps bridge the gap between theoretical learning and real-world application by offering a structured environment to practice laparoscopic techniques and build essential hand-eye coordination. By combining our academic and clinical guidance with Medtronic’s expertise in surgical care and technology, this collaboration adds meaningful value and better prepares participants for independent surgical practice.” This collaboration underscores a shared commitment to supporting the next generation of surgeons and strengthening surgical education in Telangana. Through continued joint efforts, Medtronic India and ASI Telangana aim to contribute positively to the state’s evolving healthcare landscape.

PI Industries Unveils New Logo, Reflecting its Evolution into a Global Life Sciences Company

January 29th, 2026: PI Industries Ltd (PI) unveiled its new corporate logo, marking a significant milestone in its journey from a strong agri-sciences foundation to a globally integrated life sciences organisation. The Company’s name remains unchanged, with the PI brand name continuing to anchor the corporate identity. Rooted in PI’s scientific DNA and future-ready ambition, the refreshed identity reflects the Company’s expanding role across agri-sciences, biologicals, pharmaceuticals, and complex chemistry-driven solutions. The signature blue represents innovation, reliability, and trust built over decades of global partnerships, while the vibrant yellow symbolises energy, optimism, and the power of science



to create positive change. Structural elements inspired by the DNA helix and interconnected systems represent PI’s cross-domain scientific capabilities, while the Devanagari-inspired typography reflects pride in PI’s Indian roots and its global outlook. With an 80-year legacy of science-led execution, PI combines deep chemistry expertise, advanced technologies, and human ingenuity to deliver precision, quali-

ty, and speed at scale. Today, the Company partners with leading global innovators across regulated markets, delivering specialised molecules, platforms, and solutions that meet the highest standards of quality, safety, and sustainability. Commenting on the new identity, Mr. Mayank Singhal, Vice Chairman & Managing Director, said: “PI today operates at the intersection of chemistry, biology, and technology. Our new identity reflects the scale, sophistication, and global relevance of the organisation we have become - future-ready, science-led, and purpose-driven - while remaining anchored to the values and scientific discipline that have defined us for eight decades.”

Coca-Cola India Enables Hydration Access and Retail Empowerment at Asia's Largest Tribal Festival

29 January 2026: As communities and visitors come together for Medaram Jatara 2026 - Asia’s largest tribal congregation, Coca-Cola India, along with its bottling partner - Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Pvt. Ltd., is strengthening its commitment to local ecosystems through large-scale hydration access, retailer enablement, and community-led interventions. Anchored in its ‘Locally Yours’ initiative, the company is working closely with neighborhood retailers, vendors, and workers to support local livelihoods and create economic opportunities while delivering refreshment at scale. Across Medaram and nearby towns, local outlets and vendors have been supported with cooling infrastructure and on-ground assistance, helping them set up quickly and serve pilgrims efficiently. Mobile hydration carts, temporary stalls at high-footfall locations, and shaded rest areas have been set up to offer moments of relief to



visitors navigating long walks and queues. Vinay Nair, Chief Commercial Officer, Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Pvt. Ltd. said, “Our bottling operations are built to serve moments that matter, and few gatherings match the scale and cultural significance of Medaram Jatara. Working alongside thousands of local retailers, we’re ensuring that whether someone stops at a roadside

stall or picks up a chilled bottle from their neighborhood store, refreshment is within reach. This is what our supply chain and partnerships are designed to deliver.” Karan Achpal, Vice President - Franchise Operations, Developing Markets, Coca-Cola India and Southwest Asia said, “Medaram Jatara is both a cultural landmark and a significant economic driver for the region. The support

from the Telangana government has enabled us to mobilize our retail ecosystem to serve millions efficiently. Through our bottling partners and strong local relationships, we’re ensuring seamless beverage availability while creating economic opportunities. This model is driving local employment, strengthening retail businesses, and contributing to socio-economic growth that extends well beyond the festi-

val.” Alongside hydration and retail support, Anandana – The Coca-Cola India Foundation is also working with local authorities on #MaidaanSaaf, a community-led initiative that integrates waste collection with on-ground infrastructure. The effort supports sanitation workers and volunteers while encouraging responsible disposal and recycling. Furthermore, the initiative enables the deployment of public utility infrastructure made from recycled plastic waste, including changing rooms for visitors and benches for public seating, designed to support safety and convenience while demonstrating the practical reuse of post-consumer plastic in large public settings. Through these initiatives, Coca-Cola India continues to deepen its connection with local communities, supporting livelihoods, enhancing comfort for pilgrims, and contributing meaningfully to one of the region’s most cherished cultural gatherings.

They Said "I Am Meeting A Girl During Match Time": Yuvraj Singh Lifts Lid On Old Controversy

Former India all-rounder Yuvraj Singh dealt with several linkup rumours during his playing days. As one of the most flamboyant cricketers of his generation, Yuvraj's dating life was always a hot topic of discussion. As one of the most flamboyant cricketers of his generation, Yuvraj Singh's dating life was always a hot topic of discussion. Speaking on tennis great Sania Mirza's YouTube talk show, 'Serving it Up with Sania', Yuvraj recalled an incident where the media unnecessarily fueled a rumour. The 44-year-old revealed that he had casually hugged his manager, but it was portrayed as if he was meeting a girl mid-match. "I had an agent, somebody whom I had just started working with. I had given her a hug. Just when you meet someone, you give them a hug, and

they kind of turned it around that I'm meeting a girl during match time," Yuvraj said. While he admitted that linkup rumours are common for cricketers and celebrities, Yuvraj slammed the media for fueling controversies simply to boost readership. "It's part of the life we live. If the media doesn't make controversial or negative comments, they feel people are not going to read. I feel there's much more negativity out there than positivity. I feel there should be more positive stories," he added. Yuvraj made his international debut in 2000 and called it quits from the sport in 2019. He represented India in 398 matches across formats and had over 11,000 runs to show for it. Over the course of his one-and-a-half-decade career, he has accumulated a number of records

under his name. The 38-year-old was also phenomenal in India's World Cup triumph in 2011 as he became the first all-rounder to score over 300 runs and scalp 15 wickets in a single World Cup. The feat included four Man of the Match awards and Man of the Tournament for 362 runs and 15 wickets. In 2019, Yuvraj had announced his retirement from all forms of cricket. With a career spanning over 304 ODIs, 58 T20Is, and 40 Tests, Yuvraj cemented his place as a player who could win matches for his side either through his electric fielding, fierce batting, or smart bowling. As one of the most flamboyant cricketers of his generation, Yuvraj Singh's dating life was always a hot topic of discussion.



ICELAND CRICKET'S HILARIOUS OFFER TO REPLACE PAKISTAN IN T20 WORLD CUP GOES VIRAL

Iceland Cricket took a fresh dig at the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) amid speculation over a possible boycott of the T20 World Cup, which starts on February 7. Pakistan is expected to confirm its stance on either Friday or Monday, following PCB chief Mohsin Naqvi's meeting with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Last week, the International Cricket Council (ICC) removed Bangladesh from the tournament and replaced them with Scotland. The decision was made after Bangladesh reiterated its stance of not touring India for the T20 World Cup, citing security issues. Reacting to the uncertainty surrounding the PCB's position, Iceland Cricket joked on Wednesday that they are ready to replace Pakistan if the 2009 champions decide to pull out of the event. "We really need Pakistan to decide soon upon their participation



in the T20 WC. We are ready to take off as soon as they pull out on 2nd Feb, but the flight schedule is a logistical nightmare to get us to Colombo in good time for 7th Feb. Our opening bat is an insomniac!" Iceland Cricket wrote in a post on X. To drive the point home, the account also shared a screenshot of travel plans from Keflavik to Colombo, leaning into the logistical absurdity of a last-minute call-up. PCB chairman Naqvi, after a meeting with Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, had con-

veyed that all options were on the table the decision will be taken by either Friday or next Monday. Pakistan has been protesting ICC's decision to replace Bangladesh with Scotland after the Bangladesh Cricket Board and interim government insisted they will not play T20 World Cup matches in India over security concerns. Pakistan, meanwhile, announced their squad for the 20-team tournament which is, with one exception, the same which will face off against Australia.

SRM Institute Of Science And Technology Races To National Victory With Team Camber Racing At Formula Bharat 2026

SRM Institute of Science and Technology celebrated a landmark victory as its student team, Team Camber Racing, races to the National Championship at Formula Bharat 2026. At the competition, Team Camber Racing delivered a dominant performance, taking first place across all major dynamic and static categories, including Endurance, Skidpad, Autocross, Acceleration, Engineering Design, Fuel Economy, and Sustainability & Best Practices. The team also received the Best Driver Award of the event, showcasing complete technical excellence and teamwork. The students were mentored jointly by the Dean of Faculty of Engineering and Technology, Dr Leenus Martin and Dr. K.



Kamalakkannan, Head, Department of Automobile Engineering, SRMIST. The winning team was led by Himanshu Kumar, Captain and final-year student from the Department of Electronics and Communication Engineering. Supporting him were Vice Captain Aryan Sampath Nair

(Mechatronics Engineering), Technical Director Shashank Reddy (Automobile Engineering), Project Manager Rohit Ramesh (Automobile Engineering), and Chief Race Driver TM Sakthiprasad (Automobile Engineering). Their combined effort reflects the multidisciplinary approach at SRMIST, inte-

grating mechanical, electrical, electronics, and computing expertise. Commenting on the achievement, Dr. C. Muthamizhchelvan, Vice Chancellor, SRMIST, said, "Seeing our students push boundaries, innovate on the track, and achieve this national win is truly inspiring. Team Camber Racing embodies the energy, creativity, and dedication that SRMIST encourages in every student and this victory shows what can happen when passion meets hands-on learning." The Faculty Advisor of Team Camber Racing Dr. Jerome Stanley added, "This outcome reflects the students' consistency, technical discipline, and ability to tackle complex engineering challenges as a team.

Babar Azam Trolled Brutally After Another Flop Show Ahead Of T20 World Cup

Pakistan cricket team star batter Babar Azam was trolled brutally after he failed to score big during the first T20I match against Australia on Thursday. Babar looked uncomfortable against the Australian bowlers and could manage to score just 24 off 20 balls before he was dismissed by Adam Zampa. During the 14th over of the match, Babar went for a reverse sweep against a googly from Zampa and ended up missing the ball completely. It crashed into his stumps and a smart review from Travis Head ended Babar's nervy stay at the crease. Babar was already under the scanner following disappointing performances in the Big Bash League (BBL) and his



inclusion in the T20 World Cup 2026 squad was criticised heavily by some experts and a section of the Pakistan cricket team supporters. Fans on social media were not happy with Babar's performance and the star batter was trolled heavily for yet another flop show. Babar did take three catches during Australia's

run chase as Pakistan registered a significant 22-run victory to take a 1-0 lead in the three-match series. Babar endured a rough time in this edition of the Big Bash League scoring just 202 runs in 11 matches with just two half-centuries. His strike-rate was a poor 103 and averaged a mere 22. Babar's appearance in the

league also sparked a controversy when his partner Steve Smith refused a single to him while the former was batting on 47 from 58 balls. Smith later completed a hundred at a strike-rate of 238. Babar's and former T20 opening partner, Muhammad Rizwan also had a forgettable Big Bash scoring just 188 in 10 innings at a strike rate of 102 and in one match was recalled from batting by Melbourne Renegades because of his slow pace. Pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi, who returned home midway because of an injury, too had a mediocre BBL season. All three Pakistan cricketers were appearing in the Big Bash for the first time.

"Career Had Become A Burden": Yuvraj Singh Makes Shocking Revelation



Yuvraj Singh is a legendary India all-rounder. He has won two World Cups with the national cricket team. He played a key role in India's World Cup-winning campaigns in 2007 and 2011. While Yuvraj's world record of six sixes in one over and his 12-ball fifty against England lit up T20 World Cup 2007, his all-round show took centre stage during the Cricket World Cup 2011. Yuvraj scored 362 runs and picked 15 wickets, and was adjudged the Player of the Tournament. Even the best in the business have to deal with tough times, and so was the case with this great India all-rounder. Around a year after the Cricket World Cup, a seasoned campaigner Yuvraj stayed in and out of the national team till he last played for India in 2017, and called time on his career two years later. During this phase, Yuvraj also battled cancer that

took a big toll on his game. The former India all-rounder also revealed that he even lost motivation to play for the national team at one point. Yuvraj opened up on his struggles on Sania Mirza's YouTube show, 'Serving it Up with Sania'. "I got to that space where my career had become a burden. So, I was not enjoying my game. It's a very thin line. I had a feeling that 'why am I playing cricket when I'm not enjoying it?' I was not feeling respected. And I feel 'Why do I need to do this when I don't have it?' Yuvraj said. "When the game has given me so much, I've given my best. So why am I lingering on to something that I'm not enjoying? Why do I need to play? To prove what? I can't do more than this, mentally or physically. It was hurting me, so I decided to stop. The day I decided to stop, I was myself again," he added.

Australian Open Prize Money: Winners To Get Bumper Reward After Big Change

The 2026 Australian Open prize money has increased by 16% from last year, with the organizers of the season's first Grand Slam announcing their largest prize pool ever earlier this month. The total for 2026 is set at 111.5 million Australian dollars (\$75 million), as compared to 96.5 million Australian dollars (\$68.3 million) from last year. Meanwhile, the women's and men's singles champions will bag 4.15 million Australian dollars (\$2.8 million), a 19% jump from the previous edition. Speaking on the record hike in the prize pool, tournament director Craig Tiley said it reflected Tennis Australia's commitment to supporting tennis



careers at every level, from rising stars to Grand Slam champions. "From boosting qualifying prize money by 55 percent since 2023 to enhancing player benefits, we're ensuring professional tennis is sustainable for all competitors," he said. "By supporting players at all levels, we're building

deeper talent pools and more compelling storylines for fans." It was also announced earlier this month that players beaten in the opening round would bag 150,000 Australian dollars (\$100,750), while even those knocked out in the first round of qualifying will

walk away with 40,500 Australian dollars (\$27,200). The lineup for this year's men's and women's singles is confirmed. World No. 1 Carlos Alcaraz will take on third seed Alexander Zverev in the first semi-final, while second seed Jannik Sinner will square off against record 10-time winner Novak Djokovic. In the women's singles, top seed Aryna Sabalenka is set to face off with 12th seed Elina Svitolina. In the other clash, sixth seed Jessica Pegula eyes a place in the final against fifth seed Elena Rybakina. Sinner, the two-time defending champion, is aiming for a hat-trick this year in Melbourne.

Why Are India Struggling In Tests? Rahul Dravid Gives Blunt Reply: "Not Easy"

The Indian cricket team's performances in Test cricket have experienced a drastic slip in quality, with home defeats against New Zealand and South Africa in the past year. While the side has dominated the T20I format without a single series loss under head coach Gautam Gambhir, their Test form has led to criticism from fans and experts alike. Former India head coach Rahul Dravid opened up about the challenges that modern batters face in Test cricket, explaining how switching between formats hampers their preparation. "One of the things I understood as a coach, especially for the guys that play all three formats, is that they



keep moving from one format to the other," Dravid said at the launch of the book The Rise of the Hitman: The Rohit Sharma Story in Bengaluru. "There were times when we would get to a Test match three to four days before the game. When we started practicing for the Test match and looked back

at the last time some of these guys had actually hit a red ball, it might have been four or five months ago." "That's become a real challenge-how do you find the time to develop those difficult skills? To play on turning tracks or seaming wickets for hours in a Test match is not easy. It requires skill. In my genera-

tion, when there were only two formats and no franchise cricket, there were many times where I would have a whole month of practicing for a Test series, playing with the red ball to develop my skills," Dravid added. Dravid also noted that similar issues were pointed out by current skipper Shubman Gill, hinting that this lack of preparation could be behind the star batter's recent struggles. "Now, one of the things that has become tougher in red-ball cricket is that many of our guys who play all three formats or play the sheer amount of cricket they are playing-sometimes don't have the time to practice red-ball cricket as much."

PALACE WANT £50M STRAND LARSEN AS FOREST CHASE MATETA



Crystal Palace have agreed a deal in principle worth in the region of £50m to sign Wolves striker Jorgen Strand Larsen, as Nottingham Forest prepare an improved offer for Jean-Philippe Mateta. Sources have told BBC Sport that Palace's interest in the 25-year-old striker has intensified in the past 24 hours and a formal bid is now set to be submitted. Palace broke their club record with a £35m move for Wales forward Brennan Johnson earlier this month but Strand Larsen's arrival would surpass that deal. Wolves are open to selling the Norway international this month provided they get a fee close to the £55m they rejected from Newcastle for the striker during the summer transfer window. Leeds have already seen an offer of £40m rejected by Wolves, and as things stand the Elland Road club are reluctant to go much higher. Mateta wants to leave Palace and has informed the club's hierarchy of his wishes, with Forest set to return after failing with an initial £35m offer. Juventus and AC Milan are among the clubs to have shown a concrete interest in the France international. Mateta is under-

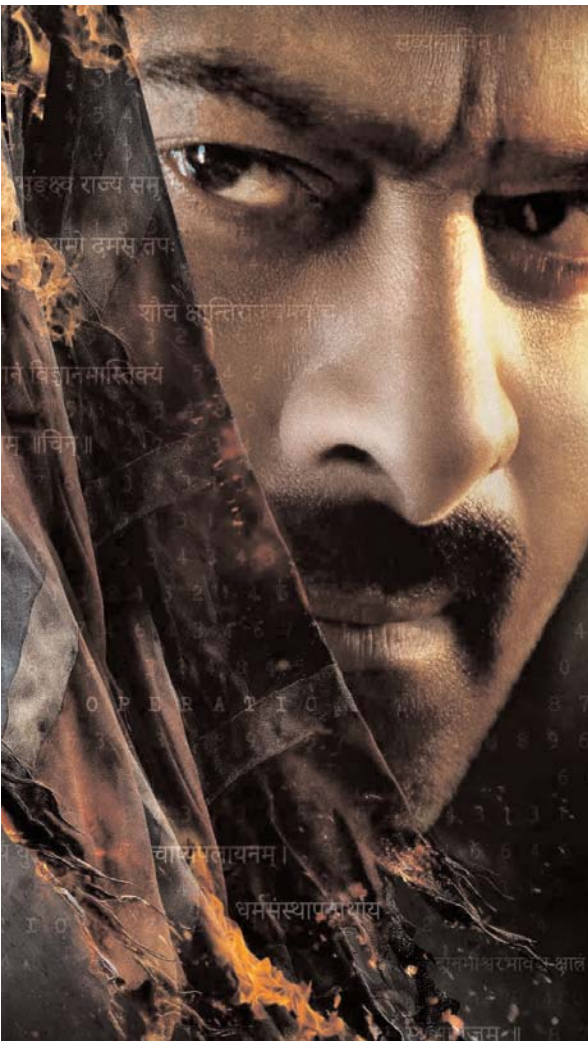
stood to want to play Champions League football, but a move to Forest is understood to be a financially lucrative option for the 28-year-old and sources are indicating that Forest intend to accelerate their interest. The two clubs face each other in the Premier League on Sunday and no agreement is expected before then. Meanwhile, Forest have bid £20m for Brighton midfielder Yasin Ayari, though the offer is expected to be rejected. Palace are also close to the loan signing of Aston Villa forward Evann Guessand. The Eagles, who looked at signing the 24-year-old last summer, are set to take Guessand until the end of the season in a deal that will give them an option to buy. Guessand has scored twice in 26 Villa appearances - both in the Europa League - having struggled to establish himself in his favoured central striker position. The £18.25m arrival of Tammy Abraham from Besiktas this week also leaves him as likely third choice behind Abraham and Ollie Watkins. And although the Ivory Coast international has been happy to fight for his place at Villa Park, he is expected to leave.

Rebel Star Prabhas, Creative Director Hanu Raghavapudi, Mythri Movie Makers' most awaited Pan India project 'Fauji' to be grandly released for Dussehra

Rebel Star Prabhas and creative filmmaker Hanu Raghavapudi are directing the most awaited pan-India project 'Fauji'. Produced by the successful pan-India banner Mythri Movie Makers, T-Series is presented by Gulshan Kumar and Bhushan Kumar. The first look has already been released and has received a tremendous response. 'Fauji' is set to have a grand release during the Dussehra festival. The shooting schedule will continue without any break

until the completion of the shoot. This film is shaping up to be very grand. 'Fauji' is going to be a visual wonder. Director Hanu Raghavapudi, known for his emotion and grandeur, is going to show Prabhas in a powerful avatar that has never been seen before. Imanvi is playing the female lead opposite Prabhas. Anupam Kher, Mithun Chakraborty, Jayaprada, and Bhanu Chander will be seen in key roles. This film is being produced by Naveen

Erneni and Y. Ravi Shankar under the banner of Mythri Movie Makers with world-class production values. The film has a top technical team working on it. Cinematography is handled by Sudeep Chatterjee (ISC), while music is composed by Vishal Chandrasekhar. Anil Vilas Jadhav is the production designer and Kotagiri Venkateswara Rao is the editor. The film will be released in Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam and Bengali languages.



DHURANDHAR BECOMES FIRST SINGLE-LANGUAGE FILM TO HIT RS 1,000 CRORE MARK



Hyderabad: Aditya Dhar's period spy thriller, Dhurandhar, starring Ranveer Singh and Sara Arjun, has become a historic success at the Indian box office. After completing eight full weeks in theatres, the film crossed the Rs. 1000 crore gross mark in India, making it the first Bollywood movie to achieve this milestone. Despite facing strong competition from Sunny Deol's Border 2, which had a massive Rs. 193 crore extended opening weekend, Dhurandhar continued its impressive run. The film faced a small dip in collections on day 50, earning around Rs. 55 lakh, but bounced back quickly. By day 53, it had crossed Rs. 1000 crore gross in India, making it only the fourth Indian film to do so.

A UNIQUE ACHIEVEMENT
What makes Dhurandhar's success even more remarkable is that it is the only single-language Indian film to cross Rs. 1000 crore. The previous films in this list were released in multiple languages, making

Dhurandhar's achievement stand out. With a strong and engaging narrative, the film proved that a single-language film can achieve massive success.

■ OTHER MOVIES THAT CROSSED RS. 1000 CRORE IN INDIA
Baahubali 2: The Conclusion : Rs. 1417 crore
KGF: Chapter 2 : Rs. 1001 crore
Pushpa 2: The Rule : Rs. 1471.10 crore
The makers of Dhurandhar are already preparing for the sequel, Dhurandhar 2, which is set to release on March 19, 2026. The film will feature Arjun Rampal reprising his role as Major Iqbal, the antagonist. The digital premiere of Dhurandhar will be on Netflix India on January 30, 2026, further increasing its reach before the sequel's release.

■ ABOUT DHURANDHAR AND DHURANDHAR PART 2
Based on true events, Ranveer Singh takes on four of Pakistan's deadliest terrorists. Speculation over the characters' identities has created buzz on social

media, but the makers haven't confirmed them yet. Ranveer Singh's character, thought to be inspired by Major Mohit Sharma, is a work of fiction, as confirmed by the Censor Board. Dhurandhar also dives deep into the socio-political dynamics of different ethnic groups in Pakistan. Dhurandhar marks the comeback of Uri: The Surgical Strike director Aditya Dhar, who scripted a new language of robust nationalism with his debut feature. It has emerged as the highest-grossing film in the Hindi language so far. Dhurandhar stars Ranveer Singh in the lead role and features an ensemble cast including Akshaye Khanna, Arjun Rampal, Sanjay Dutt, R. Madhavan, Sara Arjun and Rakesh Bedi. New details about the title of the second part, teaser certification and duration are out. The second part will release just three months later, on March 19, 2026. The first installment had a runtime of 3 hours and 34 minutes, but fans will have to wait a little longer to know the duration of the upcoming sequel.

Jennifer Winget, Karan Wahi's wedding on cards: Industry buzz



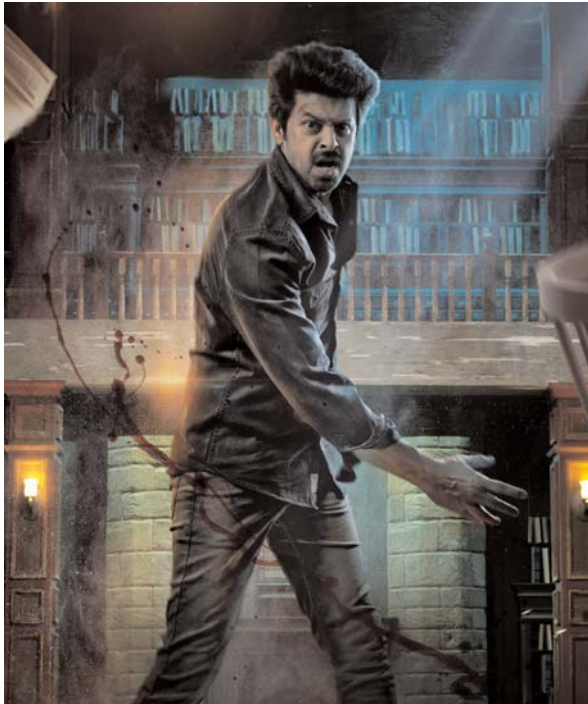
Mumbai: We already told you that 2026 could witness some of the biggest celebrity weddings, and the latest names making headlines with their rumoured wedding buzz are popular TV stars Jennifer Winget and Karan Wahi. Yes, you read that right! Tellyville is abuzz with reports suggesting that Jennifer and Karan might be ready to take their relationship to the next level and walk down the aisle soon.

According to several media reports, love has once again knocked on Jennifer Winget's door. After her divorce from actor Karan Singh Grover, Jennifer had been living a single life for many years. However, it is now being said that the actress has found love again in her long-

time friend and co-star Karan Wahi. Jennifer and Karan Wahi share a strong friendship that dates back many years. The two first worked together in the popular show Dil Mil Gaye (2007), where Jennifer played Dr Riddhima Gupta while Karan Wahi was seen as Dr Siddhant Modi. Nearly 14 years later, they reunited on screen in 2024 in Sony LIV's web series Raisinghani vs Raisinghani, where their chemistry received a lot of appreciation from viewers. With wedding rumours now doing the rounds, fans are excited to see their favourite on-screen pair possibly turn into a real-life couple. However, neither Jennifer nor Karan has officially confirmed their relationship or wedding plans yet, and no wedding date has been announced so far. If the reports turn out to be true, this would be Karan Wahi's first marriage, while Jennifer Winget would be tying the knot for the second time. Jennifer was earlier married to actor Karan Singh Grover, but the couple separated within two years. The divorce was reportedly a difficult phase for the actress, though she later moved on with her life.

Sriram's 'The Maze' First Look & Title Glimpse Unveiled

Actor Sriram, widely known to Telugu audiences for his superhit films Aadavari Maatalaku Arthale Verule and Okariki Okaru, is all set to captivate viewers once again with his upcoming Telugu film 'The Maze'. The makers have officially unveiled the film's first look and title glimpse on Thursday. Directed by Dr. Ravikiran Gadale, The Maze is a psychological thriller that explores the complex inner world of a man suffering from a mental disorder. The film delves deep into themes of memory, perception, identity, and blurs the line between reality and illusion, posing the thought-provoking question — "What is real?" Speaking about the film, director Dr. Ravikiran Gadale shared that the protagonist's real life and psychological state intertwine so deeply that he appears to be living in a dream-like world. The mysterious presence at the heart of the story remains an enigma till the end — whether it is a reflection of his subconscious, fear, guilt, past trauma, or an actual per-



son connected to his life forms the emotional and narrative core of the film. Starring Priyanka Sharma and Hrishika Srinivasan as the female leads, The Maze also features Ajay, Ravi Varma, and Ajay Ghosh in key roles. The film is jointly produced by Uday K. Reddy Palvai and K. Sridhar Reddy (KSR) under the banner Uday Reddy Creations, with

KSR presenting. With striking visuals by DOP Y.S. Krishna, music composed by Shravan Bharadwaj, and editing by Satya Giduturi and M.R. Varma, The Maze promises to be a gripping, emotionally intense, and thought-provoking cinematic experience for audiences who appreciate fresh and unconventional storytelling.

A MELODIOUS, ROMANTIC TRACK PAYANAME FROM SEETHA PAYANAM, DIRECTED BY ACTION KING ARJUN, IS OUT NOW



Multi-talented actor-director Action King Arjun is directing Seetha Payanam, under the banner of Shree Raam Films International. The film marks the onscreen debut of his daughter Aishwarya Arjun as the female lead. Niranjana, Sathyaraj, Prakash Raj, and Kovai Sarala play key roles, while Arjun himself appears in a special role. His nephew, Action Prince Dhruva Sarja, also makes a special cameo. The film is slated for release on February 14th. As part of the promotions, the content and songs released so far have garnered a strong response. Continuing the momentum, the team has now unveiled the song Payaname. Penned by Kasarla Shyam, the track features catchy music composed

by Anup Rubens. The melodious, romantic number is sung by Anup Rubens and Satya Prakash. Adding to the surprise factor, Arjun and Anup Rubens make appearances in the song. The lyrical video also beautifully showcases the chemistry of the lead pair. The team has completed both filming and post-production. With the film gearing up for a February 14 release, the makers have planned unique promotional strategies. Seetha Payanam will release on a grand scale in Telugu, Kannada, Tamil, Malayalam, and Hindi. G. Balamurugan handles cinematography, while Sai Madhav Burra provides the dialogues. Kick Ass Kali has choreographed the high-octane stunt sequences.

Shruti Haasan Joins Dulquer Salmaan's Aakasamlo Oka Tara in Powerful New Role

Introducing Shruti Haasan from the world of Dulquer Salmaan's Aakasamlo Oka Tara; Presented By Geetha Arts & Swapna Cinema, Produced By Sandeep Gunnam, Ramya Gunnam, Pan-India theatrical release in summer 2026 The versatile star Dulquer Salmaan, who is currently riding high on consecutive blockbusters and Pan-India stardom, is now gearing up with another promising drama, Aakasamlo Oka Tara. The film is directed by Pavan Sadineni, known for his inventive storytelling and distinct visual style.

Presented by the prestigious Geetha Arts and Swapna Cinema, the project is produced by Sandeep Gunnam and Ramya Gunnam. Newcomer Satvika Veeravalli plays the female lead opposite Dulquer. The previously released promos have already heightened anticipation for this engaging drama. Meanwhile, the makers have sprung a pleasant surprise. Shruti Haasan, who has become highly selective of late, has come on board for a crucial role. Extending birthday wishes, the makers have

unveiled her first look. She sports an intense, unvarnished look, with glasses framing a steady, downward gaze that reflects quiet intensity. The cigarette at her lips and the drifting smoke add a gritty layer to her character, hinting at emotional depth and unspoken stories. Shruti Haasan's character is going to play a decisive role in the film's narrative arc, with her entry steering the story into a new phase. Her mere appearance positions her as a force who brings sharp dimension and weight to the drama.

The film promises strong technical quality, with GV Prakash Kumar scoring the music, Sujith Sarang handling cinematography and Shwetha Sabu Cyril overseeing production design. Currently in its final phase of production, Aakasamlo Oka Tara is slated for a Pan-India release in Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, and Malayalam in summer 2026.

