



02-02-2026  
Total pilgrims: 69,262  
Tonsures: 22,28  
Hundi Kanuklu: 3.77 CR  
Waiting Compartments: 11

Approx. Darsan Time for Sarvadarshanam  
(with out SSD Tokens): 8-10 H



## NATION | NEWS

Priyanka Gandhi accuses govt of 'letting down' Indian farmers in US trade deal

## WORLD | NEWS

Iran's president says it is ready to negotiate with the US

## SPORTS | NEWS

ICC Contemplates 'Suspending' Pakistan As T20 World Cup 'India Boycott' Row Deepens

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EC teaming up with  
BJP to delete PDA  
voters through  
Form-7: Akhilesh

New Delhi (TSIT) Lucknow: Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Tuesday, February 3, accused the Election Commission of India of teaming up with the BJP in Uttar Pradesh to delete the names of PDA voters from the electoral roll through Form-7. According to the Election Commission, Form-7 is filed out to get the name of a voter deleted from the existing electoral roll. Addressing a press conference here, Yadav said, "Voting is the biggest right in a democracy, and there should not be any fraud with it. But the ECI has teamed up with the BJP and made a plan to delete the names of the PDA voters from the electoral roll through Form-7 in Uttar Pradesh.

AIMIM general  
secretary Ahmed  
Pasha Quadri  
passes away



Hyderabad (TSIT): All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) general secretary, Syed Ahmed Pasha Quadri, passed away at Owaishi Hospital on Tuesday, February 3. He was 72 years old. The former MLA was admitted to Owaishi Hospital at Kanchanbagh on November 30, last year, after he complained of uneasiness. He had been suffering from renal problems for the last two years and was taking the necessary treatment. Quadri has been associated with the AIMIM party for several decades and served as MLA from 2004 to 2023.

New Delhi (TSIT): President Donald Trump's announcement on social media last night that he would sharply reduce tariffs on Indian imports set off a rally in India's financial markets on Tuesday, offering a burst of optimism to exporters and policymakers even as the contours of the agreement remained largely undefined.

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal called the deal concluded between the two countries as "one of the best deals" that no other country has been able to get in recent years. "PM Modi clinched the deal with the US on the basis of his friendship with President Trump," Goyal said at a press conference here.

Without revealing the details of the deal, which he said, will be announced through a joint

## 'Unruly': 8 MPs suspended as Opposition, govt clash over US, EU trade deals

Seven Congress MPs and one (CPI(M)) member were suspended for the remainder of the Budget Session.

NEW DELHI (TSIT): Eight MPs were suspended from the Lok Sabha on Tuesday, February 3, for "unruly behaviour" amid escalating confrontations between the government and the Opposition over multiple issues, including Rahul Gandhi being denied permission to cite excerpts from former army chief MM Naravane's unpublished memoir on the 2020 India-China conflict and sharp criticism of the Centre over newly announced India-US and EU trade deals.

Seven Congress MPs and one Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) member were suspended for the remainder of the Budget Session, which ends on April 2, after they tore papers and threw them at the Chair during repeated disruptions in the House. The Opposition has also been protesting President Donald Trump's announcement of an India-US trade deal and the alleged demolition drive at the Manikarnika Ghat in Varanasi.

When the House met at 3 pm



after multiple adjournments on Tuesday, Dilip Saikia, who was in the Chair, named the eight members. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju then moved a resolution seeking their suspension for the rest of the session, which was passed by a voice vote before proceedings were adjourned for the day amid uproar.

The suspended MPs are Gurjeet Singh Auja, Hibi Eden, C Kiran Kumar Reddy, Amarinder Singh Raja Warring, Manickam Tagore, Prashant Padole and Dean Kuriakose of the Congress and S Ventakesan of the CPI(M). Moving

the resolution, Rijiju said the members had acted in utter disregard of the House and the authority of the Chair, alleging that they tore papers, tried to climb on to the table of the Secretary General and hurled documents at the presiding officer. Outside Parliament, Congress members led by Rahul Gandhi staged a protest against the suspensions, while other Opposition MPs said the suspended legislators would continue to demonstrate in the precincts.

### US-India trade deal under spotlight

The Congress, meanwhile, stepped up its attack on the government over trade negotiations with the United States and the European Union, demanding that Parliament be taken into confidence on the details of the agreements. Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had "completely surrendered" to appease President

Donald Trump at the cost of India's farmers, and said that from the information released by the US leader, "India stands diminished by this unfortunate sequence of events." He urged the government to table the texts of both the EU and US trade deals in Parliament for debate, particularly after the US Secretary of Agriculture claimed that India had liberalised agricultural imports.

## Rahul on India-US trade deal: PM buckled under pressure, farmers' hard work 'sold out'



NEW DELHI (TSIT): Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has buckled under US pressure to finalise a trade deal and has "sold out" the hard work of Indian farmers through the agreement.

Addressing reporters in the Parliament House complex after he was not allowed to speak in the Lok Sabha as he insisted on quoting from an article that cited former Army chief MM Naravane's unpublished "memoir", Gandhi said it is for the first time in history that the Leader of Opposition has not been allowed to speak on the president's address.

"We need to understand why a trade deal stuck for about four months was suddenly finalised

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"We need to understand why a trade deal stuck for about four months was suddenly finalised last evening," Gandhi said adding that "there was huge pressure on Prime Minister Modi"

last evening." Gandhi said adding that "there was huge pressure on Prime Minister Modi". Asked what kind of pressure he was referring to, Gandhi alleged there is a case against industrialist Gautam Adani in the US and a lot more is to come in the Epstein files. He alleged that Prime Minister Modi "has been compromised" and that Indian farmers must understand their hard work "as well as their blood and sweat" has been "sold out" through the India-US trade deal.

## Andhra Dy CM Kalyan orders action against liquor sale at inflated prices



Amaravati, Feb 3 : Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan on Tuesday directed the Excise officials to maintain continuous surveillance on liquor shops and take action against those selling booze at inflated prices.

The Deputy Chief Minister received complaints that liquor is being sold at prices higher than the Maximum Retail Price (MRP) across the State. He asked liquor shops not to bring a bad name to the government by selling liquor at higher prices.

According to a statement from the Deputy Chief Minister, complaints are coming in from Kakinada district and other parts of the State. After examining the complaints, he stated that selling liquor at inflated prices is against the rules. It also brings a bad name to the government. The Jana Sena leader said shopkeepers must strictly adhere to the regulations regarding liquor sales.

Pawan Kalyan's Jana Sena is a partner in Telugu Desam Party (TDP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government. Opposition YSR Congress Party has been tar-

sizes of India-Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) brands and foreign liquor by Rs.10 per bottle, while withdrawing additional retail excise tax imposed on bars. It was announced that the increase of Rs.10 per bottle will not be applicable to cheaper liquor (180 ml bottle costing Rs.99), beer, wine and ready-to-drink (RTD) varieties.

The Cabinet also decided to increase the retailer margin by approximately 1 per cent of the MRP on IMFL and FL, includ-

*The Deputy Chief Minister received complaints that liquor is being sold at prices higher than the Maximum Retail Price (MRP) across the State. He asked liquor shops not to bring a bad name to the government by selling liquor at higher prices.*

ing the coalition government over illegal liquor sales. Its leaders alleged that the government is allowing rampant violations. According to YSRCP leaders, the shopkeepers are selling liquor at inflated prices. The State Cabinet last month decided to increase the maximum retail price of all

ing 180 ml IMFL bottles, beer, wine and RTDs. The price hike is expected to generate approximately Rs.1,391 crore in additional annual revenue for the State. At the same time, the withdrawal of additional retail excise tax will reduce the financial burden on bars by about Rs.340 crore per year.

## India to restrict Russian oil buy, import only where supplies are irreplaceable: Sources



New Delhi (TSIT) India will restrict crude oil purchases from Russia as part of an agreement reached with the US in exchange for lower trade tariffs, sources said, adding that imports will continue for now by refiners such as Nayara Energy, which have no other alternative source.

US President Donald Trump announced overnight that the United States will cut the reciprocal tariff on imports of Indian goods to 18 per cent from 25 per cent under a broader bilateral understanding.

According to him, this came after India agreed to stop buying Russian oil, reduce its tariff and non-tariff barriers against the US, and commit to purchasing an additional USD 500 billion worth of US energy, technology, agricultural products, coal and other goods over time.

The commitment to halt Russian oil purchases removes the additional 25 per cent punitive tariff earlier imposed, effectively lowering the applied US tariff on Indian exports to 18 per cent from 50 per cent, providing substantial relief to Indian exporters. Indian refiners, which became the world's second big-

gest buyer of Russian oil after it became available at a discount post Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, will continue to honour the purchase commitments made prior to the announcement but will not place new orders thereafter, three sources with knowledge of the matter said.

While refiners like Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL), Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd (MRPL) and HPCL-Mittal Energy Ltd (HME) had stopped buying oil from Russia soon after the US last year slapped sanctions on Moscow's key exporters, others like Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) will wind down their purchases, they said.

India-US trade deal nearing finalisation: Piyush Goyal



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## Trump tariff cut sparks market rally, cheers industry but ignites political storm in India

New Delhi (TSIT): President Donald Trump's announcement on social media last night that he would sharply reduce tariffs on Indian imports set off a rally in India's financial markets on Tuesday, offering a burst of optimism to exporters and policymakers even as the contours of the agreement remained largely undefined.

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal called the deal concluded between the two countries as "one of the best deals" that no other country has been able to get in recent years. "PM Modi clinched the deal with the US on the basis of his friendship with President Trump," Goyal said at a press conference here.

Without revealing the details of the deal, which he said, will be announced through a joint

statement soon, he said that the "deal will make every Indian proud".

The opposition led by Leader of the opposition Rahul Gandhi however lashed out at the deal and attacked it, terming it a "sell out" of the interests of Indian farmers and stalled Lok Sabha from functioning by creating a repeated din over the trade deal and a statement by Gandhi on India-China border issue.

India and the United States last night announced a trade deal which will see the US cut tariffs for Indian merchandise exports to 18 per cent from 50 per cent, in exchange for New Delhi ending purchases of Russian oil and easing restrictions on American goods.

"India-U.S. trade deal will further expand and deepen



trade between two of the largest economies of the world. It will create more opportunities for our labour-intensive and manufacturing sectors," said Revenue secretary Arvind Srivastava, adding that the deal will also "give impetus to

mutually beneficial collaboration in high and advanced technology."

Another Indian government official said the agreement includes commitments by India to increase purchases of American petroleum, defense

equipment and aircraft, and to partially open its closely protected agriculture sector.

The official added that New Delhi had also lowered tariffs on imported automobiles, a step aimed at addressing one of Washington's most immediate demands. Industry welcomed the move with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) President Rajiv Memani stating, "The expected reduction of US-India tariffs to 18 per cent marks a significant step forward in the strategic economic partnership between India and the US." In his social media post, Trump had said India would significantly expand its purchases of American goods, citing energy, coal, technology and agricultural products among the beneficiaries,

though he did not specify a timeline for the increase in trade to USD 500 billion, which he claimed would be the end result of the deal.

"The agreement can be expected to provide relief to Indian industries hit hardest by U.S. trade measures, including gems and jewellery, leather, plastics, ceramics and auto components, according to the official. It could also support non-technology foreign investment, a segment of the economy that has struggled amid global trade uncertainty," said Biswajit Dhar, former WTO chair at the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade.

In terms of competitive advantages, the pact could help India regain its position of exporter of choice to the US

market which it lost in recent months after the huge 50 per cent tariff was slapped on its exports. If elevated US tariffs are becoming a structural feature of the global trading system, what matters is not absolute levels but comparative positioning, analysts explained.

At 18 per cent, US tariffs on India are slightly lower than that many ASEAN competitors, most of which face tariffs around 19 per cent, while Vietnam reportedly stands near 20 per cent. Neeraj home, textiles out of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka face 20 per cent US tariff. Analysts said that the deal improves India's competitiveness vis-à-vis its rivals. India's bilateral merchandise trade with US in the January to November 2025 period stood at over USD 132 billion.

## Ministers Congratulate CM Revanth Reddy on Completing Harvard Executive Leadership Programme

Hyderabad: Several Telangana ministers and senior Congress leaders met Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy and congratulated him on successfully completing the "Leadership in the 21st Century" Executive Leadership Programme at the Harvard Kennedy School, one of the world's premier public policy institutions.

The leaders visited the Chief Minister's residence and conveyed their best wishes, stating that the advanced leadership programme would further strengthen governance, policy innovation, and development planning in Telangana. Those who extended congratulations included Ministers N. Uttam



Kumar Reddy, D. Sridhar Babu, Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, Jupally Krishna Rao, Ponam Prabhakar, Tummala Nageswara Rao, Danasari Anasuya, Konda Surekha, Mohammed Azharuddin, Vivek Venkataswamy, and Vakiti Srihari.

Telangana PCC President Mahesh Kumar Goud, AICC state in-charge Meenakshi Natarajan, CM Advisor Vem Narender Reddy, and Government Advisor Sudarshan Reddy were also among those who personally greeted the

Chief Minister. They expressed confidence that the global exposure and leadership insights gained through the Harvard programme would contribute to more effective and forward-looking governance in the State.

## Third edition of tri-services future warfare course to be held in Delhi from Feb 2-25

NEW DELHI: The third edition of the tri-services future warfare course featuring an enhanced curriculum which covers specialised subjects and domain-specific warfare developments in military operations will be held here from February 2-25, officials said on Monday. Additionally, this course features experts on subjects like critical and rare earth elements, supply chain vulnerabilities and regional and global geopolitics impinging on operations in the future, expanding the number of subjects that will need to be studied and analysed by the defence forces in order to plan and conduct operations in the future, they said.

The course is being hosted under the aegis of Headquarters Integrated De-

fence Staff (HQ IDS) in partnership with the Centre for Joint Warfare Studies (CENJOWS).

Building on the success of the inaugural course held in September 2024, this expanded three-week programme aims to realise the vision of Chief of the Defence Staff Gen Anil Chauhan to prepare officers for the complex challenges of modern warfare, they said.

The course, to be held at the Manekshaw Centre at Delhi Cantonment, focuses on developing an erudite understanding on how war fighting is being impacted by technology, necessitating a rethink at our thinking, concepts, doctrines, strategies and techniques, and Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs), the defence ministry said. "It also ca-

ters for deeper exploration of critical topics, practical demonstrations of emerging technologies and visits to institutions of critical importance to the capabilities of the defence forces," the ministry said in a statement. It said this edition features an enhanced curriculum covering specialised subjects and domain-specific warfare developments in military operations.

The course comprises participants from the three services, as well as representatives from the defence industry including start-ups, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs) and the private industry. Among the services' participants, senior officers with ranks varying from majors to major

generals (and their equivalents) will be part of it, with the junior officers bringing their technical flair and expertise and the senior officers their operational experience and strategic knowledge, it said. The future warfare course will align operational priorities of the armed forces with the capabilities of the indigenous defence industry and enable a free-flowing discussion on the various facets of modern and futuristic war-fighting, the ministry said. A diverse range of experts including veterans, serving officers, former ambassadors, industry experts and academic professionals will ensure that a holistic analysis of India's security challenges is debated in a threadbare and professional manner, officials said.

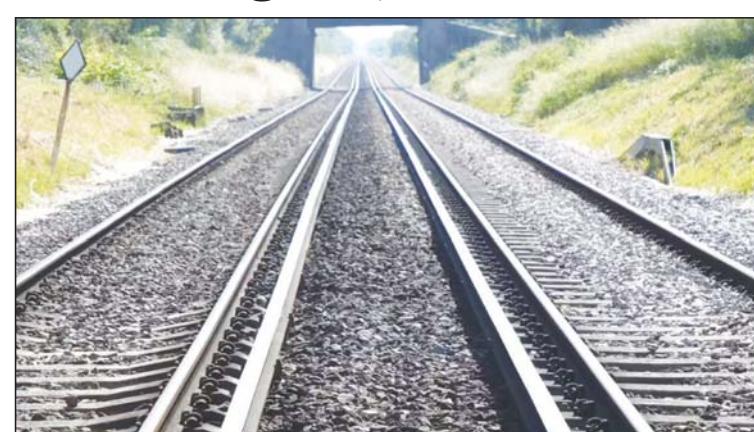
## Centre planning underground rail tracks along 40-km corridor connecting NE, rest of India: Vaishnav

GUWAHATI: Union minister Ashwini Vaishnav on Monday said plans are afoot to lay underground railway tracks along a 40-km strategic corridor in West Bengal, connecting the northeast with the rest of India.

The strategic corridor, called the 'Chicken's Neck' for its shape, is a strip of land located in northern West Bengal's Siliguri area, having a width of over 20 km. The strip is sandwiched between Nepal and Bangladesh, with Bhutan and China a few hundred kilometres away.

Addressing reporters through video conference on the Union Budget allocation for the railway ministry, Vaishnav said, "There is special planning for the 40-km strategic corridor connecting the northeast with the rest of the country."

"Planning is underway to lay un-



derground railway tracks, and

also make the existing tracks four-line," he said.

Sharing details, Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) General Manager Chetan Kumar Shrivastava and Chief Administrative Officer (Construction), Hitendra Goyal, said the underground lines will be

between Tin Mile Haat and Raniganj railway stations in West Bengal.

"This underground stretch is important from a security point of view," Shrivastava said.

One of the lines will go towards Bagdogra in West Bengal, which

is vital for the air defence mechanism of the country.

Shrivastava said the tracks will be laid around 20-24 metres underground over a plain area.

Goyal added that along with the underground tracks, the existing double line on the stretch will be converted into a four-line one.

"When these plans are implemented, it will essentially mean that the strategic corridor will have six lines of railway track – four overground and two underground," one of the officials said.

Assam had last year called for prioritising exploring alternative road routes effectively bypassing the 'Chicken's Neck', after the head of Bangladesh's interim government Muhammad Yunus

made a controversial statement in China, saying India's northeastern states are 'landlocked' and have no way to reach the ocean except through his country.

## Assam CM Himanta inaugurates 67 schools, lays foundation of 61 more

GUWAHATI: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday inaugurated 67 school buildings and laid the foundation for 61 more

with a total investment of Rs 760 crore, aiming to create world-class learning environments across the state.

Speaking at the central function at Sonapuri near here, Sarma said the day was "historic and transformative" for the state's education sector.

Earlier, educational institutions in the state were constructed through donations and contributions from individuals, and to meet classroom requirements, small rooms were often built using funds from MLAs' or MPs' Local Area Development schemes, he said.

He said the state government has undertaken the construction of new buildings for 1,318 schools across the state and renovated old buildings of 58 schools instead of demolishing them.

Sarma added that of the 67 schools inaugurated, new buildings have been con-

structed at a cost of around Rs 483 crore, of which 18 schools were built under the PM-DeviNE scheme. These school buildings include up to 20 classrooms, rooms for the principal and teachers, laboratories, libraries, smart classrooms, and other essential infrastructure.

Additionally, 21 school buildings were constructed under the North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme, while 28 were built using funds from the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund, he said.

The foundation stones laid for 61 school buildings will involve an expenditure of Rs 277.55 crore, with each school being constructed at a cost of

Rs 4.55 crore under the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund.

## Mamata walks out of meeting with CEC on SIR, says she was humiliated

NEW DELHI: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday walked out of a meeting with Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar over the SIR issue, accusing him of being "arrogant" and alleging that the poll panel had "humiliated" their delegation.

Wearing black shawls as a mark of "protest", the TMC supremo, accompanied by party national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee and MP Kalyan Banerjee, and 12 members of "SIR affected families" from West Bengal, met Chief Election Commissioner Kumar and fellow ECs here, her party said.

Banerjee, who has been demanding a halt to the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in her poll-bound state, later said they "boycotted" the meeting in protest, while Election Commission (EC) officials claimed she left in a huff without listening to the response of the EC top brass

on the issues raised by her. The CEC told the TMC leaders that the "rule of law will prevail" and anybody taking the law into their own hands will be dealt with strictly in accordance with the provisions of law and powers vested in the Commission, the EC officials said.

Talking to the media after coming out of the Election Commission's headquarters here, the West Bengal CM launched a fresh tirade against the poll panel, accusing it of working as the BJP's "dalal" (middleman). "So many people have died, who is responsible? The EC is responsible. They are working at the behest of the BJP," Banerjee alleged.

"They behaved very badly with us, I said I am sorry we came here for justice; we did not get that, and you are lying. He is a great liar..." she said.

"We said we will fight it on the ground. You have the power of the BJP, we have the power of the people. We boycotted the meeting

## Over 7.5 lakh manuscripts digitised under Gyan Bharatam; 45 centres onboarded: Govt to LS

NEW DELHI: Over 7.5 lakh manuscripts have been digitised under the Gyan Bharatam initiative, with 1.29 lakh out of these available on its dedicated portal, the government informed Lok Sabha on Monday.

Gyan Bharatam, announced during Union Budget 2025-26, is a flagship initiative of the Ministry of Culture, aimed at unearthling, safeguarding and preserving India's vast manuscript heritage.

"Aligned with the national vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, the initiative seeks to harmonise cultural preservation with human capital development, ensuring that India's ancient wisdom continues to inspire generations to come. To support the initiative, the Standing Finance Committee has sanctioned Rs 491.66 crore for the period 2025-2031," Union Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhar said in a written response to a query.

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor and Nationalist Congress Party - Sharadchandra Pawar leader Amar Shar-

adrao Kale asked the minister the list of all institutions that have signed or are scheduled to sign Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) under the Gyan Bharatam mission, along with their categorisation as 'cluster centres' or 'independent centres'. The number of partner institutions assigned to each cluster centre in the country was also sought.

Shekhar said 45 centres -- 28 cluster centres and 17 independent centres in various states and UTs -- have been onboarded so far to act as the "nodal coordinating authority" for Gyan Bharatam implementation within the states and UTs concerned, he said.

A detailed manual on preservation and conservation has been framed and shared with conservation experts for feedback. A "survey app" has been developed and also shared with stakeholders for feedback, the Union minister said.

Shekhar, in his written response, also said, "More than 7.5 lakh manuscripts have

been digitised under Gyan Bharatam, out of which, 1.29 lakh manuscripts are available on Gyan Bharatam portal."

The culture minister also shared a state-wise list of the 45 centres onboarded so far in the two categories.

The 28 cluster centres include Nava Nalanda Mahavihara, Nalanda and Patna Musuem, Patna in Bihar;

University Library Jamia Hamdard and Central Sanskrit University in Delhi;

Shruti Ratnakara, Ahmedabad and Oriental Institute, The Maharaja Sayajirao Uni-

versity of Baroda, Vadodara in Gujarat; and The Asiatic Society, Kolkata in West Bengal.

The 17 independent centres include Sanatan Jeevan Trust, Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh; Nagari Pracharini Sabha, Varanasi and Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh; Bharat Itihas Sanshodhak Mandal, Sadashiv Peth, Pune in Maharashtra; and Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Jodhpur in Rajasthan.

Technical partners have been onboarded for basic level metadata creation, its integration on National Digital Repository (NDR) and to facilitate integration of manuscripts and its metadata for global accessibility via NDR, he said. Additionally, partners have been roped in for the deployment of scanners and equipment to be deployed across designated centres for digitisation of manuscripts and for building a fully functional, AI-integrated digital platform and a mobile application, according to the minister.



The Ministry of Culture last September hosted a three-day international conference -- 'Gyan Bharatam' -- on India's manuscript heritage.

On its day two, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had launched the 'Gyan Bharatam' portal, a dedicated digital repository platform that seeks to accelerate digitisation and preservation of ancient Indian manuscripts and enhance the dissemination of traditional knowledge embedded in them.

Shekhar, in his written response, also said, "More than 7.5 lakh manuscripts have

Three minors detained for moral policing of interfaith students in Karnataka's Chikkaballapur

Chikkaballapur, Feb 3 : Three minors were detained in Karnataka's Chikkaballapur district on Tuesday in connection with a moral policing incident. According to the police, the incident occurred when a man and woman from different faiths were walking together on a public road in Chikkaballapur city.

The man and woman hailed from Sidlaghatta town and are friends. While they were walking together, a group of minors intercepted them, recorded a video, and allegedly harassed them. The minors reportedly showed the video to the pair and attempted to intimidate them. Despite the young man and woman explaining that they were friends and belonged to the same place, the group continued to harass them, engaging in acts of moral policing. The video of the incident later surfaced on social media and went viral, triggering strong public anger and condemnation.

Following the backlash, the Chikkaballapur City Police acted swiftly and took the minors involved into custody. Locals have urged the Police

Department to take strict legal action to curb such incidents in the future and prevent harassment in the name of moral policing. On November 7, 2025, two people were arrested on the charge of abusing a group of students from different religions for being together and allegedly assaulting a student on November 6, 2025.

According to police, the alleged abuse and attack occurred at Periyakada when a group of 10 undergraduate students were on their way to the house of their ailing classmate. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah recently said the state has effectively curbed "unconstitutional and unethical moral policing" that once disrupted Karnataka's dignity and progress, crediting the Police Department for restoring discipline and public trust. "Illegal and unconstitutional moral policing that had tarnished the state's reputation has now been brought under control. The credit for this achievement goes entirely to the Police Department," Siddaramaiah said while addressing the Police Commemoration Day event in Bengaluru.

"Women should be provided with greater opportunities to actively engage in social life. Programmes such as these play a crucial role in empowering women and must be organised more frequently," he said, underlining the importance of inclusive and women-centric social initiatives.

Former minister B Ramanath Rai, president of Atmashakti Multi-purpose Cooperative Society Chittaranjan Bolar, entrepreneurs Shailendra and Abbas Ali, Bood, president Baby Kunder, and prominent personalities Pius L Rodrigues, Dr Shashikala R Somayaji, Sangeetha Sharma, Dr Samshad Kunjath Baile, and social worker Prabha Narayana Suvarna, in recognition of their dedicated service to society. Various competitions for women and children were also organised as part of the celebration, adding vibrancy and enthusiasm to the event.

Manch Shaurya, Prakash Kervase, Krishna Suvarna, Balakrishna Anchan and Rajesh Poojary were present on the dais.

Founder of the Vatsalyamai Women Development and Research Institute, Shailaja Rajesh, welcomed the gathering and presented the introductory address. The programme was compered by Yatheesh Poojary.

'Girijaratna State Award Presented'

On the same occasion, the Vatsalyamai Women Development and Research Institute conferred the prestigious Girijaratna State Award on anaesthesiologist Dr Shashikala R Somayaji, social worker Sujitha V Bangera, teacher Sangeetha Sharma, social worker Dr Samshad Kunjath Baile, and social worker Prabha Narayana Suvarna, in recognition of their dedicated service to society.

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## KSDL Clocks New Production Peak in January

4,894 TONNES OF SOAP PRODUCED

Bengaluru:

State-owned Karnataka Soaps and Detergents Limited (KSDL) has set an all-time production record by manufacturing a total of 4,894.777 metric tonnes of products in January this year, said Minister for Large and Medium Industries M.B. Patil on Tuesday.

In a press release, the Minister stated that January production comprised 3,798 tonnes in the soap segment, 941 tonnes in the detergents segment, and 15 tonnes in the cosmetics segment.

He recalled that KSDL had earlier achieved record production levels of 3,113 tonnes in September 2020, 2,744 tonnes in November 2021, 3,650 tonnes in September 2022, 4,144 tonnes in November 2023, 4,486 tonnes in March 2025, and



4,735 tonnes in December 2025. The Minister said extensive measures have been taken to expand markets and strengthen branding in North India and overseas. In addition, a system of continuous, quality-driven production operating across three shifts has been put in place. The state-owned enterprise currently offers over 45 products, with more to be introduced in the coming days. The company's turnover is targeted to be scaled up to Rs.5,000 crore by 2030, Patil said. Prashanth, MD, KSDL, stated that the new record production has been achieved using the existing facilities, without recruiting additional staff or procuring any new equipment, and thanked the employees for their efforts in accomplishing this milestone.

## Digital with Purpose" Summit 2026: Serious Deliberations on Employment Generation for Youth



Bengaluru : The "Digital with Purpose" Summit 2026 was held in the city with a strong focus on leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) to generate employment opportunities across sectors, including IT, and to strengthen governance systems. The high-level summit took place at Taj West End, Bengaluru, and brought together prominent global leaders and industry experts. Among the distinguished participants were Maria João Rodrigues, President of the Committee for the Reshaping of Europe and senior European Union leader; Neeti Sharma, CEO of TeamLease Digital; Luis Neves, CEO of GeSI; and John Quinn, CEO of Grounding Academia Group, along with several other dignitaries. The speakers engaged in meaningful discussions on various dimensions of emerging technologies and their transformative impact.

Speaking on the occasion, Jose Jacob K, President of the Future ICT Forum, said that discussions were also held with Dr. Stephan Keller, Mayor of Düsseldorf, Germany, regarding sustainable development initiatives. While Germany has set a carbon emission reduction target for 2045, the city of Düsseldorf aims to achieve the goal ten years earlier, by 2035. He stated that collaborative efforts are underway to achieve sustainable city goals. This marks the first round of discussions with Maria João Rodrigues. Following the recent

Free Trade Agreement signed last week, deliberations were held on how to reshape partnerships and identify long-term strategic partners. A significant number of delegates from European nations participated in the summit. The key objective is to equip youth with AI-driven technological skills and facilitate employment opportunities. It was emphasized that this partnership should grow stronger over the next decade. Addressing concerns about AI posing challenges to the IT sector, speakers noted that the development of innovative products can create new job opportunities alongside economic growth. "This is a time of transformation, and we must be prepared. The time has come for India to take leadership in Artificial Intelligence. India has one of the largest pools of AI professionals in the world," it was stated.

## "Digital with Purpose" Summit 2026: Serious consultation on job creation for the youth



Bengaluru : The "Digital with Purpose" Summit was held in the city to strengthen job creation and governance in various sectors including IT using artificial intelligence technology.

In this important meeting held at the city's Taj Westend Hotel, Maria João Rodrigues, Chairman of the Committee for Reshaping the European Union and Head of the European Union, Team Lease Digital CEO Niti Sharma, GeSI CEO Luis Neves, Grounding Academia Group CEO John Cunne and other dignitaries held important consultations on various aspects of technology.

Future ICT Forum President Jose Jacob K said that he had a discussion with the Mayor of Düsseldorf, Germany, Dr. Stephan Keller today on sustainable development. The carbon emission target has been set for 2045, but the city of Düsseldorf has an ambition to reach the target ten years ahead of 2035.

works in coordination with B-SMILE, strictly adhering to the approved comprehensive development plan. Submit List of Pedestrian Skywalks: Officials from the City Corporation and Traffic Police were instructed to jointly inspect the Outer Ring Road and submit a list of required pedestrian skywalks, along with design details and estimated funding requirements.

### FOOTPATH DEVELOPMENT NEAR KODIBISANAHALLI:

Near Kodibisanahalli Metro Station (close to Marathahalli Police Station), as the stormwater drain is narrow, officials were instructed to widen the area suitably and construct footpaths to facilitate smooth vehicular movement.

### EXPEDITE HOODI FLYOVER WORK:

A flyover is proposed near Hoodi Circle, for which land acquisition is required. Officials were instructed to expedite land acquisition and commence flyover construction at the earliest.

### WIDEN ITPL MAIN ROAD:

Properties for which relinquishment deeds have been issued along the ITPL Main Road should be taken over by the City Corporation. Thereafter, the road should be widened to ensure smooth traffic flow, officials were instructed. During the inspection, City Corporation Commissioners Ramesh K.N. and Ramesh D.S., BMRC Managing Director Ravishankar, Additional Development Commissioner Lokhande Snehal Sudhakar, DCP Gopal M. Byakod, Sahil Bagla, Engineer in Chief Dr. B.S. Prahalad, Chief Engineers Basavaraj Kabade, Ravi, Lokesh, and officials from the Police, BMRC, and other departments were present.

### CONSTRUCT LEVEL ROADS NEAR METRO STATIONS:

The Chief Commissioner observed that roads beneath Metro stations along the Outer Ring Road are uneven, and that due to pile cap works, road width is gradually reducing, which could lead to increased congestion. He instructed officials to inspect all Metro stations along the Outer Ring Road and immediately rectify issues wherever found.

### DEVELOP FOOTPATHS:

At the Iblr Metro Station (towards Silk Board Junction), it was observed that along a 2 km stretch of footpath, maintenance is lacking in some places and incomplete in others. Officials were instructed to develop and complete the footpaths.

### WORK IN COORDINATION:

As Metro-related footpath and other works are already underway in certain sections, officials were instructed to execute

paths. As Metro-related footpath and median works are already in progress, BMRC and B-SMILE officials were instructed to coordinate closely and finalize the DPR, ensuring that ongoing works are not duplicated.

### FINALIZE THE DETAILED PROJECT REPORT (DPR):

A plan is being prepared to ease traffic congestion and ensure smooth vehicular movement through the development of the Outer Ring Road, service roads, and foot

## Excise Department Involved in Bribery, Transfer Racket; Minister Thimmapur Should Resign: Opposition Leader R. Ashoka

Bengaluru : Opposition Leader R. Ashoka demanded resignation of excise Minister r.b.thimmapur as there are bribes are taken to grant license and transfers have come to light in excise department. There are audio recordings have been released, and complaints have been filed with the Lokayukta.

Speaking in the Legislative Assembly, he said that in the state government, the Excise Department is the No. 1 department in corruption. Irregularities are taking place in forms such as bribes for licenses and fixed amounts for transfers. Congress leaders who are opposing the VBG Ramji scheme are talking about Mahatma Gandhi's ideals. However, the Congress party is not following Gandhi's ideals. In a WhatsApp message from government officials, it has been officially instructed that since the CM and DCM are participating in a housing department program in Hubballi, more people will come, so liquor shops should stock sufficient quantities of liquor and sell it. This is a program that ruins homes. CM Siddaramaiah talks about lessons in sensitivity. Telling people to drink liquor is their idea of sensitivity, he said. The minister is silent because monthly fees come from officials in the scandal happening in the Excise Department. The president of the liquor sellers' association, Guruswamy, has issued a press statement saying he will complain to Rahul Gandhi about the irregularities. "In the department, targets are given every year to collect money, from licenses to all stages, one has to grease palms, it has been detected that the Excise DC takes bribes when issuing licenses. Bribes have to be given from senior officials to juniors. A complaint has been given to the Chief Minister about this," Guruswamy has said. Permission has been given to two thousand liquor shops, bribes of 50 lakh rupees for one and 1 crore rupees for another have been taken, if bribes are not given by the 10th of every month, shop owners are harassed. Guruswamy is from CM Siddaramaiah's Varuna constituency itself. Even though Guruswamy has complained, Siddaramaiah has not

helped. He has said that Siddaramaiah is no longer a strong CM, he added.

**Bribery Collection**

An audio related to the Excise Department scandal has come out. In it, allegations have been made against Excise Minister R.B. Thimmapur and his son. Yet, the minister says it's not him. Until June 2025, there are 3,267 hotel restaurants under CL-7, 4,342 MRP under CL-2, 3,667 bars under CL-9, 1,088 under CL-11C, 316 clubs under CL-4, and 86 star hotels under CL-6. In total, there are 14,229 institutions supplying liquor. However, there are not this many primary health centers in the state. Bribes of 15-20 thousand rupees are collected from each shop every month. That means, on average, 21 crore rupees per month and 252 crore rupees per year.

**Audio Release**

A conversation took place between Joint Commissioner of Excise Nagarajappa and a lawyer named Ramesh, in which there is talk of demanding 18 lakh rupees. The audio says that bribes will be paid to Minister R.B. Thimmapur and his son Vinay. It is said that to reduce it by 50%, one has to speak directly to the minister. Later, Ramesh has officially complained to the Chief Minister. The complaint mentions that the officer said 15 lakh rupees for urban areas and 10 lakh rupees for rural areas, he said. Money is fixed for transfers in the Excise Department. For Deputy Commissioners, 2.5 to 3.5 crore rupees, for Superintendents 25-30 lakh rupees, for Deputy Superintendents 30-40 lakh rupees, for Excise Inspectors 40-50 lakh rupees, for constables 5-8 lakh rupees have to be paid. Among these, the constables themselves run four to five bars, he said. Later, Manju has complained about this. However, officer Nagarajappa has denied it, saying the voice was artificially created, so drop the case. At that time, the department did not investigate. Even with all this evidence, no investigation was done against the scandal. The audio should have been sent to forensics to detect its authenticity. Here, the officer has been protected. In another audio, it is said that since he is a JDS supporter, more bribes have to be paid.

**Indian Bank Mangalore Branch**

**APPENDIX- IV-A [See provision to rule 8 (6)] Sale notice for sale of immovable properties**

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 6 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the physical/constructive/ symbolic (whichever is applicable) possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Indian Bank, Mangalore branch, Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" on 18.02.2026, for recovery of Rs. 1,63,61,988/- (Rupees One crore Thirty Eighty Six lakh Sixty one thousand nine hundred and eighty eight only) (as on 03/02/2026) and the said amount carries further interest at the agreed rate from 04.02.2026 till date of repayment) due to the Indian Bank, Mangalore branch, Secured Creditor, from (1)Mr/s Inchan Bar and Restaurant Proprietor Mr Balakrishna Gambira- 2/18/102-1,2,5 & Sanjeva complex Kulshetra Padavu village Dakshina Kannada Karnataka, (2) Mr Balakrishna Gambira S/o Late Padmanabha Gambira, R/o 5-20 Thevur Finajipet Bantwal Dakshina Kannada (3) Mrs. Usha Gambira (guarantor) W/o Mr. Balakrishna Gambira, R/o 5-20 Thevur Finajipet Bantwal Dakshina Kannada 574143.

The specific details of the property intended to be brought to sale through e-auction mode are enumerated below:

**Detailed Description of the Property**

All that piece and parcel of land property situated at Pudu village of Bantwal Taluk and within the registration Sub-district of Bantwal Dakshina Kannada having S.Y.no 17-1P a total area of 30 cents belonging to Mr. Balakrishna Gambira with boundaries-East: S.Y.no 1, West: S.Y.no 17 & Parangipet Abettu Road, North: S.Y.no 1, South: S.Y.no 17-1.

**Encumbrances on property Known to the bank NIL**

**Reserve Price** Rs. 28.80 Lakh

**EMD Amount** Rs. 2.88 Lakh

**Bid Incremental amount** Rs.50000/-

**Date and time of e-auction** 18.02.2026, 11AM to 4 PM.

**Property ID No** IDIB0000015R

Bidders are advised to visit the website (<https://www.ebkray.in>) of our e-auction service provider PSB Alliance Pvt. Ltd. to participate in online bid. For Technical Assistance Please call 6591220220. For Registration status and for EMD status please email to support.ebkray@psballiance.com. For property details and photograph of the property and auction terms and conditions please visit: <https://www.ebkray.in> and for clarifications related to this portal, please contact PSB Alliance Pvt. Ltd. Contact No. 8291220220. Bidders are advised to use Property ID Number mentioned above while searching for the property in the website with https://www.ebkray.in

**SDI-Authorised Officer, Indian Bank**

Date : 03/02/2026  
Place : MANGALORE

**DCB BANK Limited**  
650/12, BEE 3rd Avenue, Dr. Raj Kumar Road, Rajajinagar, Bangalore-560 060

**POSSESSION NOTICE**

The undersigned being the authorized officer of the DCB Bank Ltd., under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice dated 23/10/2025 on the addressee No-1, to 3, as well as publication was done in News Paper on 21/11/2025, calling upon all the addressees to repay the outstanding amount mentioned in the notice as detailed below in tabular form with further interest thereon from within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The borrower, Co-Borrowers are failed to repay the amount. The notice is hereby given to the borrower, Co-Borrowers and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under sub-section (4) of section 13 of Act read with rule 8 of the Security Interest Rules 2002 on 31/10/2026.

The borrower and Co-Borrowers are in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property (Description of the immovable Property) and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the DCB Bank Ltd., for respective amount as mentioned here below.

That, as per the provisions of Sec. 13 (8) of the SARFEASI Act, the right of redemption shall be extinguished on the date fixed for sale by adopting any methods as prescribed in the said act.

**1. Demand Notice Dated** 23-10-2025  
**Borrower & Legal Heirs of Deceased Co-Borrower** No-2  
Mr. Rudragoud S/o Late: Devendragoud, Ward No.17, Near Vishwanath Temple, Nidigol, Tq. Sindhanor, Dt.Raichur, Karnataka Pin Code: 584128, Phone. No. 9901438886/ 9008942228

**2. Legal Heirs of Deceased Co-Borrower No-2**  
Mr. Ravi @ Ravigouda S/o Late: Devendragoud, Ward No.17, Near Vishwanath Temple, Nidigol, Tq. Sindhanor, Dt.Raichur, Karnataka Pin Code: 584128, Phone. No. 9901438886/ 9008942228

**3. Legal Heirs of Deceased Co-Borrower No-2**  
Mr. Hanamgouda S/o Late: Devendragoud, Ward No.17, Near Vishwanath Temple, Nidigol, Tq. Sindhanor, Dt.Raichur, Karnataka Pin Code: 584128, Phone. No. 9901438886/ 9008942228

**4. Legal Heirs of Deceased Co-Borrower No-2**  
Mrs. Shrimanna W/o Late: Devendragoud Javoor, Ward No.17, Near Vishwanath Temple, Nidigol, Tq. Sindhanor, Dt.Raichur, Karnataka Pin Code: 584128, Phone. No. 9901438886/ 9008942228

**5. Legal Heirs of Deceased Co-Borrower No-2**  
Mr. Hanamgouda W/o Late: Devendragoud Javoor, Ward No.17, Near Vishwanath Temple, Nidigol, Tq. Sindhanor, Dt.Raichur, Karnataka Pin Code: 584128, Same standing in the name of Mr. Devendragouda S/o Hanamgouda, BOUNDARIES: East: 6 Feet Road, West: 3 Feet Road, North: 6 Feet Road, South: 20 Feet Road

## EDITORIAL

### IS 'INVISBLE KERALA' PAYING THE PRICE FOR BEING 'UNALIGNED'?

The Union Budget 2026-27 has landed with a thud in Kerala - not because of what it contains, but because of what it omits. For a state that contributes richly to India's skilled workforce, tourism brand, and foreign exchange reserves, the silence is deafening. No AIIMS. No high-speed rail. No last-mile connectivity to Vizhinjam port. No special packages, despite this being an election year. The Finance Minister's speech might as well have skipped us entirely. As the Member of Parliament for Kerala's capital, I watched our State Budget unfold with hope - hope that the Centre would match our aspirations with support. Instead, we've been handed a reality check. The State Budget was built on a fantasy of central funds that the Union Budget has now explicitly failed to deliver. The result? A fiscal mirage evaporating in the heat of political indifference.

#### No Vote, No Voice?

The tragedy is not just economic - it's political. The Centre sees no electoral gain in Kerala, so it offers no economic gain. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government has made a cold calculation: why invest in a state that doesn't vote for us? Meanwhile, the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government in Kerala screams "victim" but fails to present bankable projects or negotiate effectively with New Delhi. It proposes paper trains and acronyms - RRTS instead of SilverLine - but lacks the fiscal discipline or strategic clarity to make them real. Caught in this federal standoff is the common Malayali. We pay the price for a Centre indifferent to our pain and a State in denial of its own profligacy. We welcome headlines about coconut and cashew promotion schemes, but without concrete procurement prices or export support, they remain shell promises.

#### Many Ironies

We hear of national corridors and maritime ambitions, but Vizhinjam - India's gateway to global trade, our only port that can host the world's largest container ships - is treated as a local afterthought, with no Central support for the road and rail connectivity that is hampering its potential as a world-class transhipment port. Similarly, while 20 new National Waterways are to be operationalised, it remains unclear how many - if any - will benefit Kerala. Ship repair ecosystems are promised in Patna and Varanasi, but not in a state with 44 rivers and a rich inland waterway network! Our coastal communities face the deadly peril of sea erosion that has already leached so much of our territory into the sea, but there is no money for the sea-walls and groynes so essential for coastal protection. The Centre says it's the state's problem, and the State says it has no money, so we continue losing seafront to the marauding ocean. (If we lost an inch of territory to a foreign army, we would spare no expense to mobilise our forces and express outrage, but 64 square kilometres of Bharat Mata's soil have been lost from my constituency alone to the sea, and the government couldn't care less.) The lives and livelihoods of our fisherfolk, mostly living below the poverty line, are apparently of no concern to our budget-makers either. Even in sectors where Kerala leads, the neglect is striking. Our state accounts for nearly 72% of India's rubber production, yet close to 100,000 hectares of plantations remain untapped due to ageing trees, out-migration of owners, and a shortage of tappers. The Budget offers no targeted support to address these constraints.

# Budget 2026: No More 'Instant Gratification'



The ninth consecutive and record-setting Union Budget of Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman was the first without the backdrop of usual macroeconomic concerns - either about anaemic growth or high inflation - that have dogged most FMs. In fact, given that economic growth is projected at a very impressive 7.4% in 2025-26 and retail inflation plumbing an unprecedented low of 1.33% in December, the Indian economy is experiencing the so-called 'Goldilocks' moment - neither too hot, nor too cold, perfect. The Finance Minister exploited this rare opportunity to share a national blueprint to strengthen the foundations of the Indian economy, which commits the government to pursue domestic reforms and accelerate the ongoing decentralisation - a strategy that cements India as the landing stage for the next phase of growth. No surprises then that the downside of shunning instant gratification - an expectation sharpened by the social-media era's demand for headline-ready Budget sops - and placing the wager on long-term growth drew a negative reaction from the markets. The truth is that enhancing the Indian economy to realise the audacious ambition of becoming a developed economy in the next 21 years entails unglamorous work: fixing the plumbing of the economy and cities, restoring the credibility of regulators, deepening financial and consumer markets, improving the quality of education, ensuring the predictability of taxes, seamless logistics, instilling the discipline of governance, and last but not the least, dealing with the political opposition. The outcome of this rather boring heavy-lifting, if pursued, will be a stronger Indian economy - the best defence against frequent geopolitical disruptions, something that is rapidly becoming the norm rather than the exception. Rebalancing the Fisc Reclaiming fiscal control - manifesting in reduced government debt - is what allowed Sitharaman the space to focus on renewing the economic foundations of the country. In fact, this admirable fiscal management is now part of her legacy as Finance Minister. In 2020-21, in the

aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, which led to the Indian economy contracting by 24.4% in the first quarter of the year, the fiscal deficit had climbed to a staggering 9.2% of gross domestic product. Thanks to a combination of prudent spending - focusing on capital expenditure, which has an inherent multiplier effect on growth, and targeted social welfare spending by triangulating the beneficiary based on their Jandhan-Aadhaar-Mobile, because of which the exchequer saved a cumulative sum of Rs 3 lakh crore - Sitharaman was able to commit the country to a glide path. Not only did she halve the fiscal deficit to 4.4% in a span of five years, but she has also committed to lowering it further to 4.3% next year. Prudent fiscal management has a very positive fallout for the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in managing inflation - its primary objective. Fiscal slippage means more government borrowing, which, if not managed, crowds out the private sector and raises the cost of borrowing in the economy. And the outcome is there for all of us to see. The only question is whether retail inflation, too, like economic growth, has discovered a new trend rate. The Wager Every government

gets one defining economic wager. In the case of previous regimes, it was already decided by inclement macroeconomic circumstances. The difference with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is that they have, through some hard work, earned the right to make their own choice: Viksit Bharat by 2047. Therefore, this year's Budget is best not read merely as an annual fiscal statement. Instead, it is an important waypoint in the next stage of growth of the Indian economy. Essentially, it seeks to answer the most vexing question that has dogged policy makers forever: how does a nation of such immense aspiration and potential finally master the art of conversion? Especially, since India, in the past, has always flattered to disappoint. Not on one occasion, but several. India has never suffered from a shortage of ambition or talent. What it has struggled with, across decades, is the statecraft that can turn promise into productivity, growth into jobs, redistribution into dignity, and policy intent into institutional delivery. The Finance Minister said as much in her speech - that the NDA intends to check all these boxes and transform aspiration into achievement and potential into performance, while ensuring that the dividends of growth benefited everyone. Framing the Finance Minister's speech in this way signals a subtle shift in the role of the state. This government is no longer positioning itself merely as a dispenser of welfare or a passive facilitator of markets. It is reclaiming the harder role of performance enabler - building platforms, absorbing risks where and when markets cannot, and nudging the economy up the value chain. Exactly what was prescribed in the Economic Survey, released last week; it argued that the state needs to evolve into the role of an entrepreneur. The clearest expression of this new intent is the big boost to industrial policy. This Budget proposes scaling up manufacturing across strategic sectors, anchored by multi-year interventions. For instance, Biopharma SHAKTI, backed by ₹10,000 crore, proposes to make India a global hub for biologics and biosimilars, moving beyond low-cost generics into high-value health manufacturing. Semiconductors follow a similar logic, with ISM 2.0 expanding the ambition from assembly into equipment, materials and full-stack Indian IP.

## Taxation Without Representation? The Southern States' Federal Anxiety

#### R. Suryamurthy

The Sixteenth Finance Commission has not redrawn India's fiscal map, but it has confirmed, with unusual clarity, the structural bargain that underpins it: states that controlled population growth, expanded formal economic activity and generated a disproportionate share of national revenues will continue to finance the Union, while redistribution remains anchored to demographic scale rather than economic contribution - just as political representation itself is poised to tilt further in the same direction. Read alongside what the southern states collectively submitted to the Commission, the award is less a neutral technocratic exercise than a quiet affirmation of where power, money and voice are now expected to reside. Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh approached the 16th Finance Commission with memoranda that were strikingly convergent in diagnosis, even if framed in different idioms. All argued that India's fiscal federal architecture has failed to adjust to demographic transition; that population control has become a long-term fiscal penalty rather than a dividend; that indirect tax contribution, tax effort and compliance are systematically undervalued; and that the expanding use of cesses and surcharges has hollowed out the promise of the 41 per cent devolution headline. None asked for the dismantling of redistribution. All asked for recognition that redistribution cannot become a permanent extraction mechanism from a shrinking set of contributor states. The Commission listened. It made limited adjustments. It did not alter the underlying logic. The macro arithmetic explains why the southern grievance refuses to dissipate. The five southern states together account for around 30 per cent of India's GDP while housing just over 18 per cent of its population. Their share in direct taxes, GST collections, exports, formal employment and services output is consistently higher than their demographic

weight. By contrast, the large northern and central states - Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Jharkhand - account for over 40 per cent of the population but less than 30 per cent of GDP, and remain heavily dependent on fiscal transfers to finance even routine expenditure. This divergence is not new; what is new is that it is now demographically locked in. Fertility rates in the South fell below replacement decades ago, while population growth in much of the Hindi heartland remained elevated well into the 2010s. Southern memoranda repeatedly warned the Commission that continuing to privilege population metrics under these conditions would institutionalise a permanent fiscal asymmetry - rewarding demographic lag while penalising demographic discipline. Yet population remains central. Under the 16th Finance Commission's horizontal devolution formula, population (2011) and demographic performance together carry 27.5 per cent weight, while income distance retains a dominant 45 per cent. Against this, the long-demanded recognition of contribution arrives in the form of a 10 per cent weight for "contribution to GDP" - a concession that looks significant on paper but functions more as an adjustment at the margin than a rebalancing of priorities. The distributional outcomes reflect this imbalance. Karnataka emerges as the largest gainer, with its share rising from 3.65 per cent to 4.13 per cent, translating into an additional ₹7,387 crore over five years. Kerala's share increases from 1.93 per cent to 2.38 per cent, yielding about ₹6,975 crore. Tamil Nadu's gains are modest; Telangana and Andhra Pradesh see limited improvement. Politically, these increases are showcased as evidence that contributor states have been "heard". Economically, they barely scratch the surface. Even after the revision, Karnataka - responsible for close to 9 per cent of national GDP and a far higher share of direct taxes - receives just over 4 per cent of the divisible pool. Tamil Nadu and Kerala continue to

## The Real Reason Mamata Has Taken The SIR Fight To Delhi



West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee landed in Delhi on Sunday in full battle-gear, bringing her fight against the Centre over the SIR (Special Intensive Revision) of electoral rolls in the state, to the frontline. She was expected to meet Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar today, demanding that SIR be halted before the assembly polls in Bengal, as the process has created widespread harassment of electors. This comes after she has written seven letters to the ECI on specific issues of SIR that go against "the democratic and constitutional norms" of the People's Representation Act or the rights of the electorate. But even before she lands in the capital, a whole army of family members of 126 BLOs (Block Level Officers) employed by the Election Commission for the grassroots surveys, who died by suicide or collapsed due to stress, unable to take the mounting pressures of their jobs, have arrived here. The Chief Minister will lead the contingent, with her able lieutenant, Diamond Harbour MP and party's national general secretary, Abhishek Banerjee, holding street protests in the heart of the Capital, taking up the cause of the "victims" of the SIR exercise. The timing also lends itself to full public attention as the country's entire political class is here attending the Budget Session of Parliament. Mamata believes in taking every political battle to the streets, showcasing the power of the people and

highlighting her mass leader appeal. Street fighting has been her greatest strength, and she revels in its flourish. That is exactly how she plans to take the fight forward against the poll body's SIR move - turning it to the Trinamool Congress's advantage by gaining popular support as she prepares to contest for a fourth term as Chief Minister. If the image of a Chief Minister campaigning on a wheelchair with one foot in a plaster, throwing a football - Bengal's favourite game - at the crowds, saying "khela hobey" (the game is on), was the most successful Trinamool campaign during the 2021 assembly polls, the latest challenge at the hustings has already seen the viral footage of the Chief Minister barging in and retrieving a "green file" purportedly containing her party's poll plans, all in the midst of an unannounced ED raid at the I-PAC office in Kolkata. An angry "Didi", as she is popularly referred to, addressed the media as she explained her impromptu reaction and descended on the streets the next day in a protest march, galvanising her party leaders and cadres to the hilt, barely two months before the elections are declared. While the central agency and the Chief Minister fight it out in the courts on whether either of their actions (the raid and the counter-raid) can be constitutionally justified, the latter, according to sources, could be present in the Supreme Court when the matter comes up on Tuesday, February 3. That again is how Mamata likes to play the game - commanding her contingent from the frontline. Mamata, a 24X7 politician, has already led protest rallies in every district - especially in north Bengal, where the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has its main strength in the state - to highlight the plight of the people under the SIR exercise, taking up the cause of booth level officers and attacking the BJP for trying to "disenfranchise voters", while opposition leaders in the state are dependent only

on central agencies to take on the ruling Trinamool in Bengal. The relentless counter-moves to the threats from the SIR process have kept her entire party cadres on the ground for the last three months, whereas opposition party leaders in the state are hardly visible on the ground. Having come up from students' politics and years of experience as a leader in opposition against the Left Front regime, fighting for her cause comes naturally to Mamata. She had to battle her seniors in the Congress, take the risk of breaking away and getting wiped out, and then create her own party. Instead of losing, she gained strength from her street fights to finally oust the Left Front and become Chief Minister for three consecutive terms. Through all of it, "going for the offensive" has remained her game, says Trinamool's Rajya Sabha MP Dola Sen, who joined the party during the Singur-Nandigram movements. The slogan "khela hobey" in Bangla is uttered by the challenger, in the spirit of "offence is the best defence". That is what Mamata, the street fighter, is doing with the Narendra Modi government at the Centre. With Modi being the face of the BJP-led opposition in Bengal, Mamata has also ensured that her battle for Bengal is played out in Delhi. She has pitched herself as the opposition leader against none other than Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who heads the central government in Delhi. Hence, the battleground must spill over to the national capital now.

## Union Budget 2026–27 lays the groundwork for sustained growth with fiscal discipline: CareEdge Ratings

Mumbai, 3rd February, 2026: According to CareEdge Ratings, the Union Budget 2026–27 reflects a steady policy hand at a time when India's economy is transitioning from recovery-led growth to a phase of consolidation and medium-term planning. The emphasis on capital expenditure, alongside a continued commitment to fiscal consolidation, reinforces macroeconomic stability and supports India's evolving credit profile. Meenal Pandya, MD & Group CEO, CareEdge said, "The Union Budget for 2026–27 comes at a time when India's economy is undergoing a period of consolidation and planning. What stands out this year is not just the scale of announcements but the steady hand guiding them. The Budget continues many of the reforms already in progress, focusing on stability, productivity, and competitiveness. These qualities are crucial as growth needs to sustain itself in a changing global environment." CareEdge Ratings believes that the Union Budget 2026–27 provides a stable and predictable policy environment. The combination of sustained public investment, gradual fiscal consolidation, and sector-specific support measures strengthens the resilience of the economy and supports medium-term credit



stability. According to Sachin Gupta, Chief Rating Officer, CareEdge Ratings, "Overall, the Budget reinforces a stable credit environment across sectors. The focus on long-term capacity creation, rather than short-term stimulus, augurs well for India's sovereign and corporate credit outlook over the medium term." Update on the Recently Announced India-US Trade Deal The recently announced India-US trade deal is a positive development for India's exports, particularly for sectors such as gems and jewellery, textiles, and marine products. A key highlight is that India has managed to secure a lower tariff rate compared to competitors including China, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Malaysia, Cambodia, and Thailand. Based on our estimates, this tariff reduction could add ~20 bps to GDP growth in FY27. Additionally, easing trade uncertainties are likely to support a revival in foreign investment inflows, providing greater

stability to the rupee. This could allow the RBI to scale back its forex interventions, which had intensified over the past few months amid heightened volatility. Furthermore, with a stable rupee the RBI could better support the borrowing plans of government and domestic liquidity conditions through higher quantum of open market operations. A Budget Anchored in Stability and Continuity CareEdge Ratings notes that the overarching message of the Budget is one of predictability. Rather than introducing sharp policy shifts, the government has chosen to build on reforms already underway, with a focus on productivity, competitiveness and long-term capacity creation. This approach is particularly relevant in the current global environment, where growth uncertainties persist and capital flows remain sensitive to macro stability. Commitment to Fiscal Discipline Despite weaker tax and subdued disinvest-

ment receipts in FY26, the government was able to achieve the fiscal deficit target of 4.4% of GDP due to lower spending and higher RBI dividend transfers. Centre's budgeted fiscal deficit for FY27 at 4.3% is reasonable. At the same time, the Centre's debt-to-GDP ratio is expected to decline to 55.6% in FY27 from 56.1% in FY26, reinforcing confidence in India's fiscal trajectory. As per CareEdge assessment, even with the assumption of a conservative nominal GDP growth of ~10% in the coming years, the Centre should be able to reduce its debt to GDP ratio to ~50% by 2031. According to Rajani Sinha, Chief Economist, CareEdge Ratings, "The pace of fiscal consolidation may appear gradual, but it is deliberate. This balance between supporting growth and preserving fiscal credibility is important for sustaining investor confidence and managing medium-term debt dynamics." FY27 Tax Growth to Moderate Amid GST Cuts;

## Classic Legends inaugurates National Training Centre to advance technical capability and service excellence



Indore, February 2026: Classic Legends marks an important milestone in its journey of strengthening technical capability and service excellence with the inauguration of the Advanced National Training Centre at its Pithampur plant in Indore. The new facility underlines the company's continued commitment to building future-ready talent and investing in world-class training infrastructure. Strategically developed to deliver advanced, hands-on and skill-oriented technical training, the National Training Centre will focus on real-world diagnostics, precision repair practices, and structured skill development.

It is designed to support technicians and service professionals across dealerships. The facility will play a critical role in standardising service quality and enhancing aftersales excellence. Anupam Thareja, Co-founder, Classic Legends, said, "As our brands continue to grow, strengthening our service capability ecosystem becomes extremely important. The Advanced National Training Centre is a strategic investment in people, skills and infrastructure, aimed at building future-ready technicians and standardising service excellence across our network. This centre will play an



important role in ensuring every JAWA, YEZDI and BSA rider enjoys a consistent and high-quality ownership experience." The Advanced National Training Centre brings together state-of-the-art infrastructure and structured capability building to elevate technical excellence across Classic Legends and its dealer network. Equipped with a modern showroom, smart classrooms, dedicated engine, electrical and advanced troubleshooting labs, along with the latest diagnostic equipment and special service tools, the facility supports comprehensive learning from Level 1 to Level 3. Designed

to enable advanced diagnostics, root cause analysis and hands-on skill development, the centre will play a pivotal role in enhancing technical competency, standardising service and repair practices, nurturing highly skilled technicians and service professionals, and strengthening the rollout of advanced Level 3 training programmes. With this, Classic Legends strengthens its service capability ecosystem, ensuring that its growing rider base continues to receive consistent, high-quality and reliable aftersales support, to deliver a superior ownership experience across its portfolio of motorcycles.

## I am writing to submit an opinion article titled The Real Test of Thalapathy for your consideration

### Highlights

- As mentioned during our telephonic conversation, you had kindly asked me to share the article with you for review, and I am sending it here accordingly.
- The piece examines Vijay's transition from cinema to politics, placing it within Tamil Nadu's long history of cinema and power, and explores whether contemporary stardom can evolve into credible political leadership. It draws on cultural history, voter psychology, and recent developments around TVK.

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The piece examines Vijay's transition from cinema to politics, placing it within Tamil Nadu's long history of cinema and power, and explores whether contemporary stardom can evolve into credible political leadership. It draws on cultural history, voter psychology, and recent developments around TVK. By way of introduction, I am a Kochi-based filmmaker, Journalist and published writer whose work focuses on cinema, society, culture, and politics, with particular attention to how popular culture intersects with public life. A few of my books have been published in multiple languages. My work

engages with contemporary social questions through a critical and reflective lens. I am also a regular online reader of The South India Times and value its space for thoughtful public discourse. I would be glad to continue contributing in the future as well and to write for The South India Times on a range of sub-

jects related to cinema, culture, society and politics. I believe the article will resonate with your readership, given its strong engagement with Tamil society, cinema, and public conversation. I have attached the article below for your review. I would be honoured if you consider it for publication.

## COMEDK UGET/Uni-GAUGE 2026 Entrance Examination Scheduled for 09 May 2026

Hyderabad, February 03

2026: The COMEDK UGET/Uni-GAUGE 2026 entrance examination will be conducted on Saturday, 09 May 2026. This unified national-level test serves as a gateway to undergraduate engineering admissions across 150+ engineering colleges in Karnataka and 30+ reputed private, self-funded and deemed universities across India.

The examination is intended for candidates seeking admission to B.E./B. Tech programs offered by institutions affiliated with the Karnataka Unaided Private Engineering Colleges Association (KUPECA) and Uni-GAUGE member universities. The computer-based test will be conducted in 200+ cities across India, spanning 400+ test centres. Over 1,40,000 students are expected to appear for the examination. Candidates from across the country are eligible to apply.

**Application Details**  
Application Window: 03 February 2026 to 16 March 2026  
Official Websites: [www.comedk.org](http://www.comedk.org) | [www.unigauge.com](http://www.unigauge.com)  
The entire application and examination process will be conducted online. Detailed instructions regarding eligibility, application procedures, and examination guidelines are available on the official websites.

COMEDK KARES  
Innovation Hubs

reflects our commitment to fairness, transparency, and equal opportunity. Over 150 top-tier colleges admit students through this platform, and we take pride in connecting young talent with quality education," said Dr. Kumar, Executive Secretary, COMEDK.

The hubs offer programs in emerging and future-ready domains, including:

Innovation & Entrepreneurial Thinking

Prototyping & Product Development

Internet of Things (IoT) –

Smart Connected Systems

Data Science & Applied

Machine Learning

Robotics & Intelligent

Systems

Applied AI & Agentic

Systems

Karnataka is the first state

to introduce structured,

skill-based training in private

engineering colleges

through this pioneering ini-

tiative by COMEDK.

"Through Uni-GAUGE, we are committed to upholding the highest standards of fairness and objectivity while fostering the holistic development of India's future workforce. We are proud to contribute to this important cause," added Mr. P. Muralidhar, CEO, ERA Foundation.

**Important Advisory**

[www.comedk.org](http://www.comedk.org) and [www.unigauge.com](http://www.unigauge.com) are the only official websites for COMEDK and Uni-GAUGE.

Students and parents are advised to rely solely on these websites for authentic information and applications.

## X OFFICES RAIDED IN FRANCE AS UK OPENS FRESH INVESTIGATION INTO GROK

The French offices of Elon Musk's X have been raided by the Paris prosecutor's cyber-crime unit, as part of an investigation into suspected offences including unlawful data extraction and complicity in the possession of child pornography. The prosecutor's office also said both Musk and former X chief executive Linda Yaccarino had been summoned to appear at hearings in April. In a separate development, the UK's Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) announced a probe into Musk's AI tool, Grok, over its "potential to produce harmful sexualised image and video content." X is yet to respond to either investigation. The BBC has approached it for comment. It has previously characterised the French investigation as an attack on free speech. The investigation began in January 2025 when French prosecutors started looking into content recommended by X's algorithm, before being widened in July that year to include Musk's controversial AI chatbot, Grok. In a post at the time, X said the action was "politically-motivated" and denied allegations it had manipulated its algorithm. Following



today's raid, French prosecutors say they are now investigating whether X has broken the law across multiple areas. Among potential crimes it said it would investigate were complicity in possession or organised distribution of images of children of a pornographic nature, infringement of people's image rights with sexual deepfakes and fraudulent data extraction by an organised group. New UK investigation Meanwhile, UK authorities have given an update on their investigations into sexual deepfakes created by Grok and shared on X. The images often made using real images of women without their consent - prompted a barrage of criticism in

Pizza, Veg Manchurian and Veg Biryani were also amongst the top 10 favourite snacks in the city.

Dinner was the most popular time in the city to order food. Affordable options struck a strong chord. On 99 Store orders, Chicken Biryani emerged as the top favourite with nearly 159 plates being ordered per day. Chicken Nuggets, Chicken Fried Rice and Mutton Biryani were also amongst the top 5 favourites. Elaborating on the trends, Sidharth Bhakoo, Chief Business Officer, Swiggy Food Marketplace said, "In 2025 food continued to be an important part of our daily life and celebrations as India indulged in its favourite dishes. In Warangal, we witnessed a fine balance of the love for classics and the comfort of national favourites. Food is an emotion, and we remain committed to deliver exceptional food experiences in every corner of the city, one meal, one celebration at a time."

Warangal, February 03

2026: Warangal's culinary identity is both a daily ritual and a reminder of classic favourites. Check out the Warangal Edition of How India Swiggy'd, a snapshot of the city's evolving food habits and a delicious recap of the year gone by. The City's Favourites Chicken Biryani emerged as the city's most ordered dish with over 4.46 lakh orders in 2025, an average of more than 1222 plates ordered per day! Veg Dosa, Idli and Veg Biryani were amongst the top 5 ordered dishes in the city. A customer placed a single order worth Rs. 13,778, which included a total of 37 plates of local classics such as Zafrani Mutton Biryani, Zafrani Chicken Biryani, Schewzwan Fried Rice, Chicken 65, Chicken Tikka Masala and more - highest in the city! Late night binging is also becoming popular with orders growing 118% YoY. Cravings for Biryani's and Burgers

continued into late city stayed classic. With nights (12 am - 2 am). Chicken Biryani led the more than 200 plates ordered every morning, followed. Chicken Shawarma followed. Chicken Fried Rice, Chicken Burger and Chicken Pizza were amongst the other favourites. Dark Chocolate Ice Cream was the most ordered dessert, followed by Chocolate Cake and Chocolate Waffle. Mornings in the

city stayed classic. With

more than 200 plates ordered every morning,

Chicken Biryani was the most ordered

breakfast dish. Veg Dosa, Vada, Onion Dosa and Bonda were also amongst the other favourites.

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NO DEFECT FOUND IN SWITCH  
OF JET GROUNDED BY AIR  
INDIA - REGULATOR

# Clintons agree to testify on Epstein as vote looms to hold them in contempt of Congress

Former US President Bill Clinton and his wife Hillary Clinton, the former Secretary of State, have agreed to testify in the congressional investigation into late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. It comes days before a vote on whether to hold the couple in criminal contempt for refusing to appear before the House Oversight Committee after a months-long standoff. Bill Clinton was acquitted with Epstein, who died in prison in 2019, but has denied knowledge of his sex offending and says he cut off contact two decades ago. It's unclear when the depositions will take place, but it will be the first time a former US president has testified to a congressional panel since Gerald Ford did so in 1983. The Clintons had long resisted a demand to appear before the committee, saying they had already given sworn statements representing the "limited information" they had on Epstein. They had dismissed the legal summonses issued by the committee as "nothing more than a ploy to attempt to embarrass political rivals, as President Trump has directed". The House Oversight Committee, led by Republicans, then approved the measure to hold the Clintons in contempt late last month, with the support of several Democrats. On Saturday, lawyers for the couple made an offer for them to provide limited testimony that would have centred on a four-hour interview by Bill Clinton. But House Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer expressed concerns that the former president would stonewall questions and run down the clock. On Monday evening, Bill Clinton's deputy chief of staff Angel Ureña posted on X confirming the couple would appear before the



panel. "They negotiated in good faith," Ureña wrote in a tweet directed at the House Oversight Committee. "You did not. 'They told you under oath what they know, but you don't care. But the former President and former Secretary of State will be there. They look forward to setting a precedent that applies to everyone.' Afterwards, it was announced that lawmakers' consideration of the contempt resolutions against the Clintons would be postponed. House Rules Committee Chairwoman Virginia Foxx said the Oversight Committee needed more time to clarify with the Clintons what they are actually agreeing to". For his part, Comer said: "I will clarify the terms they are agreeing to and then discuss next steps with my committee members." Neither Clinton has been accused of wrongdoing by

survivors of Epstein's abuse, and they have denied knowledge of his sex offending. Hillary Clinton, former US senator and secretary of state, and the Democratic presidential nominee in 2016, has said she never met or spoke to Epstein. Epstein's private jet logs show that Clinton took four international flights in 2002 and 2003. Shortly after Epstein was arrested on sex trafficking charges in July 2019, Clinton's spokesperson said the former president took trips on the plane including "stops in connection with the work of the Clinton Foundation". The former president also appears at the late financier's estate in photos that were among a batch of records released by the justice department to comply with a law passed by Congress mandating the disclosure of all investigative material relating to the late convicted paedophile.

One picture shows the former president swimming in a pool, and another shows him lying on his back with his hands behind his head in what appears to be a hot tub. Ureña, Clinton's spokesman, said at the time the photos were released in December that they were decades old and Clinton had stopped associating with Epstein before his crimes came to light.

Last month, the Clintons wrote a letter to James Comer, the House Oversight Committee chairman, criticising his handling of the Epstein investigation. "The decisions you have made, and the priorities you have set as chairman regarding the Epstein investigation, have prevented progress in discovering the facts about the government's role," the letter said. They added: "There is no plausible explanation for what you are doing other than partisan politics."

India's aviation regulator said it found no defect in the fuel control switch of a Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner jet grounded by Air India based on a pilot's report. The issue was reported on Sunday after the plane, which took off from London, landed in Indian's Bengaluru city. The regulator said that while starting the engine during take-off, the crew noticed that twice the fuel control switch - which regulates the flow of fuel into the plane's engines - did not "remain positively latched in the run position when light vertical pressure was applied". It remained stable the third time and the crew closely monitored the aircraft during the flight, which "was completed without incident". Air India had said in a statement on Monday that it informed India's aviation regulator about the issue and that it was getting the pilot's concerns checked on a "priority basis". A Boeing spokesperson had told the BBC in response to a question that the company was supporting Air India's "review of this matter". The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said on Tuesday that when the switches were operated according to Boeing's recommended procedure, they were found to be "satisfactory", staying at run instead of moving to cut-off (which can stop fuel supply to the engines).

## TRUMP SEEKS \$1BN IN DAMAGES FROM HARVARD



US President Donald Trump announced he will be seeking \$1bn (£730m) in damages from Harvard University in his administration's ongoing feud with the institution. The news comes after the New York Times reported that the Trump administration had to backtrack from its demand for a \$200m payment in negotiations with the university. Trump cited the story in a Truth Social post late on Monday, blaming Harvard for "feeding a lot of nonsense" to the New York Times. Trump officials have accused Harvard of not doing enough to tackle antisemitism during pro-Palestinian protests. Harvard has rejected the accusation. Harvard has been a central target in the White House's campaign to stamp out what it calls "woke" and "radical left" ideologies on American campuses. In April last year, Trump revoked around \$2bn in research grants to Harvard and froze federal funding. The university

sued the Trump administration over the move, saying no government "should dictate what private universities can teach, whom they can admit and hire, and which areas of study and inquiry they can pursue". A US federal court later overturned the billions in funding cuts, ruling the government had violated university's free speech rights. The White House vowed to immediately challenge the "egregious decision", saying Harvard remains "ineligible for grants in the future". Before Monday's announcement, the government had been in discussions with Harvard over a potential deal to unfreeze federal funding. "We are now seeking One Billion Dollars in damages, and want nothing further to do, into the future, with Harvard University," Trump wrote on Monday. He accused Harvard of "serious and heinous illegalities", but did not clarify how he believed it had broken the law.

## CHINA BANS HIDDEN CAR DOOR HANDLES OVER SAFETY CONCERN



China has banned hidden door handles on electric vehicles (EVs), making it the first country to stop the use of the controversial designs that were made popular by multi-billionaire Elon Musk's Tesla. It comes as EVs are facing scrutiny from safety watchdogs around the world after a number of deadly incidents, including two fatal crashes in

China involving Xiaomi EVs in which power failures were suspected to have prevented doors from being opened. Under the new regulations, cars will only be allowed to be sold if they have a mechanical release both on the inside and outside of their doors, according to state media. The new rules are due to take effect on 1 January 2027. The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology rules require the outside of every passenger door except the boot, to have a recessed space measuring no smaller than 6cm (2 in) by 2cm by 2.5cm to allow access to the handle. Inside the car there must be signs measuring at least 1cm by 0.7cm to show how to open the door.

## After months of acrimony, Colombia's Petro is about to meet Trump



Colombian President Gustavo Petro is heading to Washington for a high-stakes trip to meet US President Donald Trump, the first in-person meeting between the two after months of escalating tensions and angry rhetoric. Venezuela, drug trafficking, oil, security and US strikes on alleged drug vessels will be high on the agenda when they meet at the White House on Tuesday. While the two men were cordial in a phone call after the 3 January US military operation to seize Venezuela's President Nicolás Maduro, Petro has since said he believes that there is a "real

threat" of military action against Colombia. Trump, for his part, has previously said that a military operation in Colombia "sounds good". Tuesday's meeting follows months of the two leaders trading barbs - with Petro repeatedly criticising the repeat US strikes on the repeat US strikes on the alleged drugs boats in the

Caribbean and Pacific, as well as the White House's immigration policies. In an interview with the BBC last month, Petro went as far as to compare US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents to "Nazi brigades" and accused the US of treating other countries as part of its "empire".

## RUSSIAN HITS UKRAINE ENERGY SITES IN 'MOST POWERFUL BLOW' SO FAR THIS YEAR



Russia has used a record number of ballistic missiles to target Ukraine's energy sector, President Volodymyr Zelensky has said. The combined missile and drone strikes hit power plants and infrastructure in Kyiv and multiple locations causing "the most powerful blow" so far this year, according to private energy company DTEK. The strikes were launched as temperatures dropped to -20C (-4F) and left more than 1,000 tower blocks in the capital without heating once again and damaged a power plant in the eastern city of Kharkiv beyond repair. Zelensky said Russia was "choosing terror and escalation" rather than

diplomacy to end this war and called for "maximum pressure" on Moscow from Ukraine's allies. The attack comes after a so-called "energy truce" agreed by Donald Trump with Vladimir Putin expired at the weekend. Ukraine's president suggested that Russia had simply used the time to stock up on missiles and prepare for the next attack. It also came on the day Nato Secretary-General Mark Rutte was in Kyiv to meet President Zelensky and to address the national parliament. Donald Trump's initiative was meant to give diplomacy a chance. Negotiators from Russia and Ukraine are due to meet in Abu Dhabi for

another round of talks coordinated by the US later this week. It is clear that Russia has other ideas. And in fact, there is always a gap between Russia's massive strikes which makes Ukrainians doubt there was ever any real pause at all. We heard the first explosions in Kyiv soon after midnight and the air raid lasted more than seven hours. There were several subsequent blasts. Residents spent the night sheltering in metro stations, with some pitching tents on the platforms to protect them from the freezing cold. President Zelensky has said more than 70 ballis-

tic and cruise missiles were fired - significantly more than usual - together with 450 drones which are used to overwhelm Ukraine's air defences. Ukraine's Air Force said it had intercepted only 38 of the missiles, which means many reached their target. Officials here have complained repeatedly of a shortage of missiles to protect the skies. Ukraine relies on US-made Patriot missiles, in particular. "Timely delivery of missiles for air defense systems and the protection of normal life are our priority," Zelensky wrote on X this morning. "Without pressure on Russia, there will be no end to this war." Volodymyr Zelensky has accused

Moscow of using the coldest days of winter to "terrorise people". DTEK has confirmed that two of its own power plants were hit again overnight, including in Odesa, in what it says was the ninth massive attack on the sector since October. State-run facilities were hit in Kyiv, Dnipro and elsewhere, adding to serious damage caused by a series of previous targeted attacks. DTEK says some of the plants targeted were providing heating only, not electricity, which means they were exclusively for civilian use. The Geneva Convention makes clear that targeting civilian infrastructure is a potential war crime.

## Iran's president says it is ready to negotiate with the US



Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi has said Iran will pursue negotiations with the US after requests from "friendly governments in the region" respond to a US proposal for talks. In a statement on X, Raisi said he had told Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abbas Araghchi to pursue talks "provided that a suitable environment exists - one free from threats and unreasonable expectations". The Iranian president's words come after the country's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned any attack on Iran would spark a regional conflict. US President Donald Trump has threatened to intervene in Iran over its nuclear ambitions and deadly crackdown on protesters, building up forces nearby. "These negotiations shall be conducted within the framework of our national interests", Raisi added. The talks will be held in Istanbul on Friday, according to US media reports. Raisi's announcement follows an interview with Araghchi in which he told CNN he was "confident that we can achieve a deal". Speaking to a press pool in the White



Denmark's Julius Johansen and UAE Team lead the peloton during the 6th AlUla Tour 2026, Stage 3, a 142.1km stage from Winter Park – AlUla to Bir Jaydah Mountain Wirkah. Photo by Dario Belingheri

## 'Mohsin Naqvi Not Bothered About Pakistan Cricket': Report Makes Stunning 'U-Turn' Claim

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) could reportedly make a U-turn on its T20 World Cup stance. With only days remaining before the start of the T20 World Cup 2026, Pakistan's decision to boycott the match against arch-rival India on February 15 has led to a fresh controversy. The decision was announced on Sunday on the instructions of the Pakistani government, following a meeting between PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif last week. However, Pakistan hasn't yet officially specified the reasons for skipping the game against India to the ICC. According to a report by PTI, PCB chief Naqvi, who is also the Interior Minister of Pakistan, might just make a



U-turn once the general elections are held in Bangladesh on February 12 and a democratic government takes charge instead of the present one headed by Muhammad Yunus. Pakistan will have two days to reconsider its stance as the elections in Bangladesh will take place on February 12, while the match

against India is scheduled for February 15. "Naqvi, more than a cricket administrator is a politician, who is not one bit bothered about the welfare of the national team. He is trying to score a brownie point with this and could well flip once elections are held on February 12. "There would still be two days before the

India game and things could just change. Else he knows that Pakistan could be ostracised," PTI quoted a source, tracking Pakistan cricket, as saying. In response to Pakistan's announcement, the ICC issued a strong statement on Sunday, urging the PCB to seek a mutually acceptable resolution and warning that selective participation undermines the principles of global competition. "While the ICC awaits official communication from the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), this position of selective participation is difficult to reconcile with the fundamental premise of a global sporting event where all qualified teams are expected to compete on equal terms per the event schedule.

## INFANTINO 'INFANTILE' FOR WANTING TO LIFT RUSSIA BAN



Ukraine's sports minister has called Fifa president Gianni Infantino "irresponsible" and "infantile" for saying that world football's governing body will look at lifting a ban on Russia. Russian national teams and clubs were suspended from all competitions by Fifa and Uefa in February 2022 after the country's invasion of Ukraine. With the war still going on, Infantino has said "this ban has not achieved anything" and "has just created more frustration and hatred". He added: "Having girls and boys from Russia being able to play football games in other parts of Europe would help." In response, Ukraine sports minister Matvii Bidnyi said in a social media post, external "Gianni Infantino's words sound irresponsible - not to say infantile. They detach football from the reality in which children are being killed. Let me remind you that since the start of Russia's full-scale aggression, more than 650 Ukrainian athletes and coaches have been killed by Russians. Among them were more than one hundred footballers." Infantino was awarded the Russian

Order of Friendship medal by president Vladimir Putin after Russia hosted the 2018 World Cup. However, since Russia's ban, they have been unable to compete at the 2022 World Cup and Uefa's Euro 2024 and the country will not be part of the 2026 World Cup. Russia has not completely stopped playing international football as they have played matches against non-Western nations without the permission of Fifa or Uefa. "War is a crime, not politics," added Bidnyi. "It is Russia that politicises sport and uses it to justify aggression. I share the position of the Ukrainian Association of Football, which also warns against Russia's return to international competitions. "As long as Russians continue killing Ukrainians and politicising sport, their flag and national symbols have no place among people who respect values such as justice, integrity and fair play."

Last year, Ukraine criticised the International Paralympic Committee's (IPC) decision to lift a ban on athletes from Russia and its close ally Belarus. In

## Ex-Pakistan Star Gives Bizarre 'Asia Cup' Argument In T20 World Cup 'Boycott' Row



Former Pakistan cricket team wicket-keeper batter Kamran Akmal urged the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) not to back down from their stance of boycotting the T20 World Cup 2026 game against India. Pakistan announced that they will take part in the competition but will not play in the group stage match against India in Colombo on February 15. The International Cricket Council (ICC) revealed that they have not received any official communication from the PCB on the subject but warned Pakistan against going forward with their decision. Boycotting the match against India can lead to financial sanctions for Pakistan and possible conflicts with other cricket

boards. Akmal said that although ICC has asked PCB to reconsider its stance, Pakistan should not change their stance. Akmal argued that India were allowed to not travel to Pakistan for either Asia Cup or Champions Trophy

## Ishan Kishan Makes Stunning Revelation On Jasprit Bumrah: "He Might Get Upset"



India wicketkeeper-batter Ishan Kishan has named the players he finds toughest to face in the nets. He noted that while Yuzvendra Chahal is the most difficult among spinners, pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah always poses significant challenges. In a recent interaction, Kishan shared that the veteran pacer doesn't go easy on batters, even when conditions are challenging. He also recalled instances where Bumrah would bowl a series of bouncers if a batter middled his deliveries during practice sessions.

"Among spinners, I find Yuzi bhai [Yuzvendra Chahal] tough to play; I think he's figured me out. In

pace, I mean, no one is better than [Jasprit] Bumrah bhai. Let me tell you a story. Bura

maan jayenge (He might get upset) that I say this everywhere. When we practice, we often get different wickets. Some will be grassy, others will be dry. But whenever it's grassy, usually the bowlers go easy on batters, but Bumrah doesn't believe in it. If a batter middles the ball, you know he'll bowl a barrage of bouncers later," Ishan said while speaking

on the 2 Sloggers podcast. Meanwhile, Kishan has been in stunning form since his return to the India side during the recently concluded T20I series against New Zealand. In four matches, he scored 215 runs at an average of 53.75, including a hundred in the fifth and final T20I in Thiruvananthapuram. Former Australian crick-

eter Michael Klinger suggested that Kishan has made a strong case for himself to be included in India's playing XI for the upcoming T20 World Cup. "Ishan Kishan has come back in fantastic form and is certainly putting a case forward to start in the XI at the World Cup," he said, adding that India's depth has turned selection into a challenge rather than a concern. India T20 World Cup Squad: Suryakumar Yadav (c), Abhishek Sharma, Tilak Varma, Sanju Samson, Shivam Dube, Ishan Kishan, Hardik Pandya, Arshdeep Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Harshit Rana, Varun Chakaravarthy, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Rinku Singh.

## THE TALENTED PLAY-MAKER NO-ONE SEEMS TO WANT



When Harvey Elliott joined Aston Villa on loan from Liverpool in August, he did so as a Premier League champion and as the player of the tournament in last summer's European Under-21 Championship. He had contributed at key moments in Liverpool's title win but was expected to see more game time at Villa and push for inclusion in England's squad for the World Cup. Five months on, the reality has proved very, very different - and Elliott has become a talented player that neither his parent club or his loan club appear to want. The 22-year-old is still at Villa Park following the closure of the transfer window but his long-term future is the opposite of assured. He is now three appearances away from his loan move - and Elliott is still at Villa Park following the closure of the transfer window but his long-term future is the opposite of assured. 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## Mass Maharaja Ravi Teja Praises “Sumathi Sathakam” Teaser & Trailer – Worldwide Release on February 6 via Mythri Movie Makers

Produced under the Vision Movie Makers banner by Sai Sudhakar Kommalapati and directed by M.M. Naidu, Sumathi Sathakam is a wholesome family entertainer gearing up for a worldwide theatrical release on February 6. The film stars Amardeep Chowdary and Saylimchaudhri in the lead roles. Renowned production house Mythri Movie Makers is releasing the film across the Telugu states. The first look, teaser, songs, and promotional content of Sumathi Sathakam have already received an encouraging response from audiences. Amardeep Chowdary's energetic dance moves in the songs have been widely appreciated, while Subhash Anand's music has added strong emotional and entertainment value to the film. As part of promotions, the film team conducted an extensive tour across the Rayalaseema region, receiving an overwhelming response. The trailer launch event held at a college in Tirupati turned out to be a



grand success, with students enthusiastically responding to the film's hook steps and

youthful content. Popular actor and Mass Maharaja Ravi Teja, who is well

known as Amardeep Chowdary's inspiration, watched the teaser, trailer,

and other promotional content and shared his appreciation. He said, "I have watched the teaser, trailer, and content of Amardeep's film Sumathi Sathakam. I really liked it. I wish the film great success and hope Amardeep has a bright future ahead." During college promotions, the film's catchy hook steps strongly connected with students, and the teaser and trailer received a positive response from youth across Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The title Sumathi Sathakam has also created strong recall among audiences. Adding to its highlights, Sumathi Sathakam received a U/A certificate with zero cuts, which is considered rare. The Censor Board members appreciated the film, stating that it is a feel-good entertainer watched after a long time. The film will be released in the Telugu states by Mythri Movie Makers, while overseas distribution in North America will be handled by Vibrant Cinemas, with releases in Dallas by Ravi Kollipara and Jai Pakala.

## Adivi Sesh Launches Concept Poster of CAT in Hyderabad



### Highlights

- Popular actor Adivi Sesh unveiled the concept poster of the upcoming film CAT at Annapurna Studios, Hyderabad. The film is presented by Y. Gangadhar IPS under the VRGR Movies banner and produced by Rajani Gongati.
- The film is presented by Y. Gangadhar IPS under the VRGR Movies banner and produced by Rajani Gongati.

and thriller genres, CAT

stars G.V. Naidu, V.J. Balu, Lavanya, and Kalyani Rani in the lead roles.

Maruthi Raja. The story, screenplay, and dialogues are written by V. CH Shekhar Muddu, while the film is directed by G.V. Naidu (Gongati Veeranjaneyulu).

With its intriguing concept and dedicated team, CAT is expected to offer an engaging cinematic experience.

## Vinay Ratnam Calls Sri Chidambaram Garu a Journey of Self-Love



Sri Chidambaram Garu A sensitive emotional journey about loving yourself first: Director Vinay Ratnam" Sri Chidambaram is produced by Chinta Vineesh Reddy and Chinta Gopala Krishna Reddy under the Sri Chakras Entertainment banner, presented by Mrs. Chinta Varalakshmi, with Chinta Rajasekhar Reddy as co-producer. Vamsi Thummala and Sandhya Vasishta play the lead pair. Through this film, Vinay Ratnam is being introduced as a director. The movie will be released on February 6. On this occasion, director Vinay Ratnam spoke with the media on Tuesday. Here are the highlights.

Why did you want to tell the story of "Sri Chidambaram Garu"? This presentation focuses more on people who feel inferior complex and insecurities and are unable to lead their lives confidently. They compare themselves with others and feel bad about not having what others have. I felt this is

the right time to tell such a story. So I wanted to present it with sensitive emotions.

What theme are you dealing with through this story?

Standing in front of a mirror, we should first believe that we are good enough. To love another person, you must first love yourself. That is the core message of this story.

What is your background? How did you get this movie opportunity?

I made 25 short films. I am from Rajahmundry. I made a short film for film festivals, presented by Niharika Konidela.

## AKSHAY KUMAR'S 'BHOOT BANGLA' COPIED A SHOT FROM MY FILM: 'CREATIVE STAR' SUMAN BABU

"Erra Cheera" Grand Release on February 6 - Movie Team Announces Bumper Offers for B & C Center Audiences

The upcoming film Erra Cheera - The Beginning is a unique cinematic blend of motherly sentiment, horror, and action. Jointly produced by Sri Padmayala Entertainments and Sri Suman Venkatadri Productions, presented by Baby Damari, the film is set for a grand theatrical release on February 6.

The film features Baby Sai Tejaswini (granddaughter of veteran actor Rajendra Prasad) in a pivotal role. Creative Star Suman Babu has not only directed the film but also played a key character. Speaking to the media ahead of the release, he shared several sensational details about the project.

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM CREATIVE STAR SUMAN BABU'S MEDIA INTERACTION:**

### The Copy Claim

In a statement that has sparked discussion, Creative Star Suman Babu claimed that a specific shot of a child drinking milk in the trailer of Akshay Kumar's upcoming Bollywood film Bhoot Bangla was directly copied from the Erra Cheera trailer.



### A Real-Life Inspiration

The director revealed that the story is based on a real incident that occurred near his friend's house in the Chintal area. While 20% of the film is a true story, the rest has been fictionalized for the screen.

**No Compromise on VFX:** Although the shoot was wrapped in 37 days, the release was delayed to ensure high-quality CG. "We aimed for Hanu-Man level quality. We worked with three different studios until the graphics were per-

fect," said Suman Babu.

### Ensemble Cast:

The movie features 23 prominent actors, including Sriram, Kamal Kamaraju, Ajay, Karunya Chowdhury, Ayyappa P. Sharma, Raghu Babu, and others.

**Saree Giveaway:** In a unique promotional move for B & C centers, the team will hold a Lucky Draw during every show, gifting sarees to 10 winners per show.

**36 Kisses Concept:** Addressing the buzz around a particular song, the director clarified that the 36 Kisses concept was included solely because the story demanded it to appeal to the youth.

### Future Slate

Creative Star Suman Babu is already planning for the future. He announced a sequel titled Ambika

(Erra Cheera-2) based on a tribal incident in Araku, and a romantic comedy called Ramuda Krishnuda. He plans to release a new film every six months.

## Dhurandhar sequel titled 'Dhurandhar: The Revenge', makers drop new poster

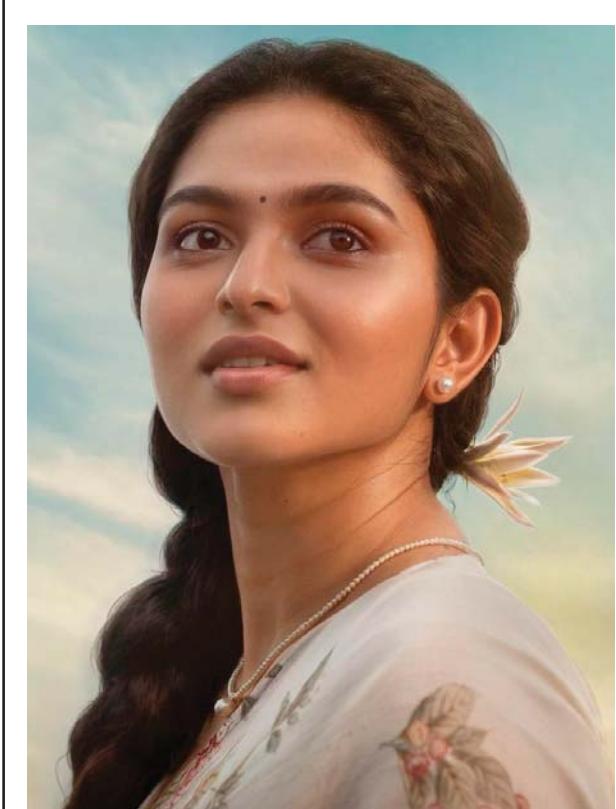
**M**umbai: The makers of 'Dhurandhar' have announced the title of the film's sequel as 'Dhurandhar: The Revenge'. Along with the title reveal, a striking new poster offering a glimpse into the next chapter of the high-octane blockbuster franchise. Ranveer took to Instagram, where he shared the poster drenched in deep, ominous red tones, instantly setting a dark and intense mood. At the centre stands the star, soaked in rain, staring straight ahead with a fierce, unflinching expression. Behind him, carved into a blood-red wall, looms the title "THE REVENGE", dominating the background like a warning. The date 19.03.26 is prominently displayed at

the top, signalling the film's release. The poster strongly hints at a darker, more ferocious chapter ahead. Captioning the poster, Ranveer wrote: "Ab Bigadne Ka Waqt Aa Gaya Hai. Dhurandhar: The Revenge Teaser Out Today at 12:12 PM Releasing In Cinemas Worldwide on 19th March 2026 in Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada & Malayalam." Dhurandhar also stars R. Madhavan, Akshaye Khanna, Sanjay Dutt, and Arjun Rampal. Serving as the first installment of a two-part film series, it centres on a high-stakes covert counter-terrorism operation. The film follows an undercover Indian intelligence agent who infiltrates Karachi's

criminal syndicates and political power structures in Pakistan in an effort to dismantle a terror network targeting India. The film's storyline draws loose inspiration from multiple real-life geopolitical events and conflicts in South Asia, including the 1999 IC-814 hijacking, the 2001 Indian Parliament attack, the 2008 Mumbai attacks, and developments linked to Pakistan's Operation Lyari. Director Aditya Dhar and Ranveer on Monday had sparked excitement by teasing that the teaser of Dhurandhar 2 will drop on February 3. They took to Instagram to share the update, simply writing, "Tomorrow 12:12." "Dhurandhar 2" resumes with Hamza Ali Mazhari,



## Kayadu Lohar Returns to Malayalam; New Poster of 'Pallichattambi' Released



A new poster of *Pallichattambi*, directed by Dijo Jose Antony with Tovino Thomas in the lead, has been released. The latest release is a single-character poster featuring the film's heroine, Kayadu Lohar. The poster also reveals the film's release date. Posters have been unveiled in five languages, including Malayalam. *Pallichattambi* is set for a worldwide theatrical release on April 9.

Kayadu Lohar's announcement video as the female lead in *Pallichattambi* had earlier drawn significant attention. Kayadu became a favorite among South Indian cinema audiences following her role as the heroine in the Tamil superhit film *Dragon*.

In *Pallichattambi*, Tovino Thomas will be seen in a look never seen before. The film is produced by Noufal and Brijesh under the banner of Worldwide Films, along with Chanukya, Chaitanya, and Charan under the banner of C Cube Bros Entertainments. The film is being released in five languages, including Malayalam. The screenplay has been written by S. Suresh Babu. Apart from Kayadu Lohar in the female lead, *Pallichattambi* also features an ensemble cast including Vijay Raghavan, Sudheer Karamana, Baburaj, Vinod Keeda mangala, Prashanth Alex, and several other prominent actors. The film is set in the 1950s-60s period. The cinematography of the film is handled by Tijo Tomy, while the music is composed by Mollywood's music sensation Jakes Bejoy. Megha Shyam and Thanseer serve as co-producers. Costumes are designed by Manjusha Radhakrishnan, and makeup is by Rasheed Ahmed. The line producer is Alex E. Kurian, finance controller Anil Amballur, and production controller Rajesh Menon. Renith Raj and Kiran Raphael are the chief associate directors. Sound design is by Sync Cinema, and the art direction is by Rajesh Menon. Casting is handled by Binoy Nambala. Digital marketing is managed by Akhil Vishnu V.S. with PR by Akshay Prakash. Stills photography is by Rishabh Unnikrishnan, and the poster design is by Yellowtooths.