

OM NAMO  
VENKATESAYA



09-02-2026  
Total pilgrims: 74,130  
Tonsures: 24,631  
Hundi kanukalu: 4.03 CR  
Waiting Compartments: 21

Approx. Darsan Time for Sarvadarshanam  
(with out SSD Tokens) : 12 hrs

TO BOOK  
YOUR ADS  
CALL

99484 80279, 73307 78889



### Stage set for polling in 123 urban local bodies in Telangana

Hyderabad, Feb 10 : More than 52 lakh voters are eligible to cast their votes in 116 municipalities and seven corporations in Telangana on Wednesday, officials said on Tuesday.



### MACRON URGES EUROPE TO START ACTING LIKE WORLD POWER

WORLD | NEWS

### Gautam Gambhir Names One India Player Who Has "Made His Life A Lot Easier"



SPORTS | NEWS

### INBRIFS

#### At least 12 killed in bus accident in central Nepal



Kathmandu : At least 12 people were killed after a passenger bus plunged into the Tamakoshi River from the road in the Machanetar area of Ramechhap district in central Nepal, police said on Tuesday. Deputy Superintendent of Police Bhola Kumar Bhatta, chief of Ramechhap District Police Office told IANS that 12 people lost their lives in the accident, which occurred at around 11 am. "Eight people were injured, and seven of them have been sent to Kathmandu for further treatment due to serious injuries," he said. According to Bhatta, the bus driver lost control and the vehicle plunged about 100 metres down from the road into the river. The bus, which had departed from Kathmandu for Pokali in Okhaldhunga, fell into the Tamakoshi River while en route to its destination. The District Administration Office, Ramechhap, said that six bodies were recovered from the accident site, while six others died during treatment. Police said it is not immediately clear how many passengers were on board, but Bhatta said authorities believe about two dozen people were travelling in the ill-fated bus.

#### Five members of a family found dead in Mathura

Mathura, Feb 10 : Five members of a family were found dead in a village under the Mahavan police station area of Uttar Pradesh's Mathura district, police officials said on Tuesday. Police suspect that this could be a case of mass suicide. The deceased include a man, his wife, and their three children. The incident came to light after villagers grew suspicious when the family did not come out of their room for a long time in the morning. Neighbours peeped inside through a window and were shocked to see the family lying motionless, following which the police were informed. On reaching the spot, police found glasses of milk lying near the bodies, raising suspicion that a poisonous substance may have been mixed with the milk. A forensic team was called to the scene, and evidence was collected. Mahavan Circle Officer Shweta Verma said that a video has been recovered from the house.

## Core urban civic needs top priority, says Uttam

Hyderabad (TSIT):Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy on Monday said that addressing the core community needs of Urban Local Bodies would remain a top priority for the State Government, underlining the growing importance of effective urban governance amid rapid urbanisation in Telangana.

The Minister concluded his week-long intensive campaign for the February 11 municipal elections after touring several urban local bodies in Suryapet district and the Nizamabad Parliamentary constituency. Addressing rallies, public meetings and party interactions in



Nizamabad Urban, Armoor, Korutla, Metpally, Suryapet town, Kodad, Tirumalgi, Nereducharla and Huzurnagar, Uttam Kumar Reddy pointed out that more than one-third of

Telangana's population now resides in urban areas. He said the State's urban population stands at around 1.36 crore out of 3.50 crore, and is expected to grow further in the coming years.

### ECI revises WB SIR schedule following SC order

New Delhi (TSIT): The Election Commission of India on Tuesday revised the schedule of the ongoing Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in West Bengal, following directions issued by the Supreme Court. In a communication sent to the Chief Electoral Officer of West Bengal, the Commission said it was forwarding the Supreme Court's order dated February 9, 2026, passed in WPC) No. 1089/2025 and connected matters, and directed that it be followed "for strict compliance." "In compliance of the Hon'ble Supreme Court's direction, the Commission has decided to revise the programme of ongoing Special Intensive Revision in the State of West Bengal," the ECI said in its letter issued from Nirvachan Sadan, New Delhi.

## India, Fiji discuss bilateral ties

### Possibilities for cooperation in digital infrastructure



New Delhi (TSIT): Union Minister of State for External Affairs Pabitra Margherita held a meeting with Fiji's Minister for Finance, Commerce and Business Development Esrom Immanuel in New Delhi on Tuesday, discussing bilateral ties, shared priorities, and possibilities for cooperation in digital infrastructure.

"Pleased to meet Hon. Esrom Immanuel, Minister for Finance, Commerce and Business Development of Fiji, this morning. Held productive discussions covering the entire gamut of India-Fiji bilateral relations and shared priorities, with particular focus on development partnership, capacity building, and possibilities for cooperation in digital infrastructure, including ongoing collaboration and the way ahead," Margherita posted on X. On February 2, India's High Commissioner to Fiji Suneet Mehta held a meeting with Fiji

Parliament Speaker Filimone Jitoko and discussed strengthening bilateral cooperation.

Following their talks, India's High Commission in Fiji in a post on X stated, "High Commissioner Suneet Mehta was honoured to call on the Speaker of the Fiji Parliament, Filimone Jitoko. Productive discussions were held reaffirming strong parliamentary ties and avenues to further advance bilateral cooperation." On January 27, Suneet Mehta chaired the second meeting of the Project Steering Committee to review the Quick Impact Project (QIP)- 'Tubalevu Ground Water Supply Project', being supported by India. In a post on X, the Indian Commission in Fiji wrote, "Representatives from the Fiji Government, Fiji Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, Fiji Ministry of Finance, and Ministry of Public Works attended the meeting.

Hyderabad TSIT BUREAU: Director General of Police B. Shivadhar Reddy on Tuesday announced that comprehensive and foolproof security arrangements have been made for the municipal elections scheduled to be held on Wednesday across the State. Addressing a press conference, he urged voters to exercise their franchise freely and without fear.

Polling will be conducted in 7 Municipal Corporations and 116 Municipalities, with security coverage at 8,203 polling stations. Of these, 1,302 have



been identified as highly sensitive and 1,926 as sensitive, and additional police forces have been deployed at these locations.

The DGP said 100 percent webcasting has been arranged at all polling stations to ensure

transparency. In highly sensitive areas, surveillance is being extended even outside polling booths through special monitoring cameras.

To maintain law and order, about 3,000 additional personnel have been deployed, including staff from TGSP, Forest, Excise, CID, and Legal Metrology departments. With the campaign period ending at 5 pm on Monday, the silent period is now in force, and police visibility and patrolling have been intensified.

Since the election code came into effect on January 27, police

have conducted extensive checks and seized materials worth 3.09 crore, including 1.29 crore in cash, liquor worth 1.21 crore, drugs worth 15.7 lakh, and gold and silver ornaments worth 28.69 lakh.

To curb illegal transport of cash and goods, police have set up 20 interstate check posts and 55 inter-district check posts. Special drives are underway along the borders with Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh. A total of 181 flying squads and 167 static surveillance teams are on duty.

### Govt asks social media platforms to remove AI deepfake content in 3 hours

New Delhi (TSIT) : Taking cognisance of the spread of AI-based deepfakes online, the IT Ministry on Tuesday issued revised guidelines for social media intermediaries like Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, directing them to clearly label all AI-generated content and ensure that such synthetic material carries embedded identifiers.

The government has set a three-hour deadline for social media platforms to take down AI-generated or deepfake content once it is flagged by the government or ordered by a court. The official notification also barred digital platforms from allowing the removal or suppression of AI labels or associated metadata once they have been applied.

The social media companies will be required to deploy automated tools to detect and prevent the circulation of illegal, sexually exploitative or decep-



tive AI-generated content, according to the MeitY order."

An intermediary shall periodically inform its users, at least once every three months, in a simple and effective manner through its rules and regulations, privacy policy, user agreement, or any other appropriate means," about the consequences of violating rules related to AI misuse. Where an intermediary becomes aware of any violation in relation to the creation, generation, modification, alteration, hosting, displaying, uploading, publishing, transmitting, storing, updating, sharing or otherwise disseminating of information as synthetically generated information.

### Kavitha slams ruling party for ignoring public issues in poll campaign

Hyderabad (TSIT): Telangana Jagruthi President Kalvakuntla Kavitha on Tuesday criticised the conduct of the ongoing municipal election campaign, alleging that ruling party failed to address public issues and instead focused on diversion and personal attacks. Speaking to the media at the Telangana Jagruthi office, Kavitha said the campaign ended without any serious discussion on civic problems such as drinking water, public transport, sanitation, education, healthcare, and pensions. She alleged that basic amenities were neglected, pointing to irregular water supply, poor public transport, garbage accumulation, and lack of doctors in basti hospitals. Kavitha accused Congress, BRS and BJP of making electoral adjustments and claimed municipal elections had turned into a platform for "cursing people" rather than solving public problems.



## CM Naidu meets HM Amit Shah, FM Sitharaman on state issues

Amaravati (TSIT): Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi and sought the Centre's support on funding and approvals. The Chief Minister discussed key state-related issues, including ongoing and proposed projects, and sought the Centre's support on funding and approvals, according to a brief official release here.

The Chief Minister posted on social media that he discussed key matters related to Andhra Pradesh's development and progress. Chandrababu Naidu also met Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman at the Parliament. During the meeting, the Chief Minister raised matters related to Andhra Pradesh's development pri-



orities, central assistance, and financial support for state projects. Naidu, whose Telugu Desam Party (TDP) is a key partner in the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre, also had a separate meeting with Union Steel Minister HD Kumaraswamy and expressed gratitude to the Central Government for its support in putting the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (RINL) back on the path of profitability.

The Chief Minister informed the



Union Minister that the turnaround of Vizag Steel Plant was made possible due to the financial assistance extended by the Centre, strong support from the Andhra Pradesh government, and the determination and hard work of the plant's workers and employees. Chandrababu Naidu stated that RINL has not only returned to profits but is also operating at full capacity, marking a significant milestone for the iconic public sector steel plant.

### Political battles are often fought in courts during election season: SC on Himanta pleas



New Delhi (TSIT) The Supreme Court on Tuesday remarked that political battles are often fought in courts, particularly during election periods, while considering the mention of petitions alleging hate speech by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. The observation was

made by a Bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) Justice Surya Kant, Justice Joymalya Bagchi, and Justice NV Anjaria, when two petitions were mentioned seeking action over alleged hate speech and related material attributed to the Assam Chief Minister. Advocate Nizam Pasha, appearing for one of the petitioners, submitted that the plea concerned alleged hate speech by a political functionary and referred to a video purportedly showing the Chief Minister making remarks targeting minorities. Responding to the submission, Justice Surya Kant observed, "The problem is when elections come, it is often fought here in the Supreme Court only.

## Om Birla to stay away from Lok Sabha till no-confidence motion is decided

New Delhi, Feb 10 : Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has decided not to attend proceedings of the House until the no-confidence motion is decided, sources close to him said on Tuesday. While the Rules of Procedure do not mandate such a step, Birla has taken the decision voluntarily, sources said, adding that he will not enter the House irrespective of any attempt by the government or the Opposition to persuade him otherwise.

According to sources, the motion to remove the Speaker is likely to be taken up on March 9, the first day of the second part of the Budget Session. As per parliamentary procedure, at least 50 members would be required to rise in support of the notice for the motion to be admitted, following which the Chair may allow a discussion. Sources indicated that the



no-confidence motion against Birla is expected to be discussed at the start of the second phase of the Budget Session.

On Tuesday, a total of 118 MPs from Opposition parties submitted

a notice seeking the removal of the Speaker, accusing him of partisan conduct in the functioning of the House. The notice was submitted on behalf of the Opposition by a Congress MP, alleging that Birla

repeatedly denied Opposition leaders, including Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi, the opportunity to speak during the debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address. The notice also cited the suspension of eight Opposition MPs.

In the notice, the Opposition alleged that the Speaker conducted proceedings in a "blatantly partisan manner" and failed to protect the democratic rights of Opposition members.

However, the motion is unlikely to succeed numerically. For a resolution seeking the Speaker's removal to be carried, the Opposition would require the support of more than half of the total strength of the Lok Sabha, which is 543. The Bharatiya Janata Party, the single largest party, has 240 MPs, while its National

Democratic Alliance (NDA) partners - including the Telugu Desam Party (16 MPs) and the Janata Dal (United) (12 MPs) - give the ruling coalition a comfortable majority, with additional support from other regional parties.

In contrast, the Congress leads the Opposition with 99 MPs, followed by the Samajwadi Party (37) and the DMK (22), leaving the Opposition well short of the numbers required to remove the Speaker. Trinamool Congress has not signed the motion but suggested different ways to lodge a protest. Party MP Abhishek Banerjee, speaking to media persons in Delhi on Tuesday, said that the party is in favour of first giving a protest letter to the Speaker and then wait for his reply. Only after that, a no-confidence motion should be moved, he said.

# National interest is guiding factor: Foreign Secretary Misri on India's oil procurement

**NEW DELHI:** India will maintain multiple sources for crude oil purchases and diversify them to ensure stability in the supply chain with national interests remaining the "guiding factor" for the procurement, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said on Monday amid a swirling controversy over Washington's claim that New Delhi has agreed to stop importing Russian oil. Misri said the key drivers of the procurement policy are adequate availability, fair pricing, and reliability of supply, remarks seen as an indication that New Delhi is unlikely to snap its energy ties with Moscow. "National interests will be the guiding factor for us in our choices for energy procurement," he said. The foreign secretary said India's "foremost priority"

is to safeguard the interests of Indian consumers and to really ensure that they receive adequate energy at the right price and through reliable and secure supplies. "Our import policy insofar as energy is concerned is therefore driven entirely by these objectives," he said at a press conference while replying to a question on whether India will stop buying Russian crude oil. "We are neither dependent on any single source for this, nor do we intend to be. And it is natural for the mix of sources to vary from time to time, depending on objective market conditions," he said. "Our approach is to maintain multiple sources of supply and diversify them as appropriate to ensure stability. Therefore, I would

say that the more diversified we are in this area, the more secure we are," he said. US President Donald Trump, while announcing a trade deal with New Delhi last week, claimed India has agreed to not procure crude oil from Russia. In an executive order, Trump rolled back an additional 25 per cent tariffs on India that he imposed in August last for India's procurement of crude oil from Russia. In the order, the US said it would monitor whether India resumed Russian oil purchases directly or indirectly and that would determine whether a 25 per cent tariff would again be re-imposed. "The global economy has faced significant uncertainties which have had a major impact on the stability of



global energy markets. India certainly -- and I would imagine a lot of countries around the world, if not every country -- have a shared and common interest in ensuring stable energy prices and secure supplies," Misri said. "In fact I would underline

that India is not just one of the largest consumers of energy, but it also plays an important role as a stabilising factor in global energy markets. "And that's one reason why we import energy from multiple sources. The key drivers of our energy policy

are adequate availability, fair pricing, and reliability of supply," he said. Misri said that is the reason India imports crude oil from dozens of countries. "Insofar as actual sourcing of energy is concerned -- again, all of you follow this closely, so you know that the actual sourcing is done by oil companies. And they make decisions based on market conditions," he said. Misri said the oil companies assess availability of crude oil at any given point in time, assess risks and costs in this process and take their decisions. "And obviously, all of these companies also have their own internal accountability-related processes to look at and certain fiduciary responsibilities in the market," he said. "So, at any given time,

there is a rather complex matrix of issues that these companies have to take into account, which -- not to disregard it -- also includes very, very important financial and logistical aspects," he said. "I expect that what you will continue to see in this sector, in this area, is business choices being made based on these considerations that I have outlined. "So, what I can firmly and confidently say is that whether it is the government or indeed our business, at the end of the day, national interests will be the guiding factor for us in our choices," Misri said. Elaborating on India's approach on energy procurement, Misri said the country is a net importer in the oil and gas sector and as a developing economy, it has to be conscious about its re-

source availability. "Naturally, when you are dependent to the extent of 80-85 per cent on an imported resource, you have to have concerns about the possibility of inflation driven by energy costs," he said. "So, it's not surprising therefore that our foremost priority is to safeguard the interests of Indian consumers," he added. The relations between New Delhi and Washington saw a major downturn after Trump imposed 50 per cent tariffs on Indian goods, including a 25 per cent levies for New Delhi's procurement of Russian oil. Following the conversation between Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, both sides recently announced reduction of US tariffs on Indian goods to 18 per cent from 50 per cent.

## ISRO identifies site for Chandrayaan-4 lander

**BENGALURU:** The Chandrayaan-4 Mission is at least two years away, but the ISRO has identified a location in the South Polar region of Moon to land its lander. The union government has approved the Chandrayaan-4 mission, designed as a lunar sample-return mission and it will be India's most complex lunar endeavour yet. "We are targeting 2028 for Chandrayaan-4," ISRO chairman V Narayanan had earlier said. According to ISRO officials, they had zeroed in on four sites of the Mons Mouton (MM) and found one of them suitable for landing on the lunar surface. Mons Mouton is a region on the Moon. Officials said they had identified locations -- MM-1, MM-3, MM-4 and MM-5. Of them, MM-4 was chosen for the landing. "The four sites in Mons Mouton area were fully charac-



terised with respect to terrain characteristics using high resolution Orbiter High Resolution Camera (OHRC) multi view image datasets," they said. It was found that one kilometre by one kilometre area around MM-4 contains "the less hazard

percentage, mean slope of 5 degrees, mean height of 5334 metres and most number of hazard free grids of size 24 metres into 24 metres. Hence, MM-4 could be considered as the potential site of Chandrayaan-4 mission," officials said.

## Opposition to move resolution to remove LS Speaker Birla from office

**NEW DELHI:** The Opposition on Monday decided to move a resolution to remove Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla from office for disallowing Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi from speaking in the House on the Motion of Thanks to the President's address. Sources said the resolution is being moved under Article 94-C of the Constitution. The notice is being given for moving a resolution against the Speaker for his removal, for disallowing the LoP from speaking in the House on the motion of thanks, for not initiating action against BJP MP Nishikand Dubey, for making unsubstantiated charges against women MPs of the Congress and suspension of eight opposition MPs, the sources said. They said a resolution in this regard would soon be moved in the Lok Sabha and signatures of MPs are being procured. The resolution is likely to have signatures of 100 MPs in the Lok Sabha and getting the signatures



of various Opposition MPs is under process. The resolution is likely to be submitted today itself, top sources in the opposition said. Sources said the decision to move the resolution was taken at a meeting of Opposition leaders held in the chamber of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge this morning. The TMC also attended the meeting besides other parties,

including the left, DMK, SP, RJD, Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (SP) and RSP. This will be the fourth such notice against the sitting Speaker of Lok Sabha. The first such resolution was moved against M V Malavankar, which was defeated. Later, a resolution was moved against then Speaker Hukum Singh, which could not be taken up due to lack

of numbers in the House. Later another similar resolution, the third one, was moved against then Speaker Balram Jakhar, which was also defeated. Separately, women Congress MPs have written to Speaker Om Birla over the "unsubstantiated allegations" made by him against Congress women MPs. In a letter signed by several women MPs, including Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, they have objected to the "baseless allegations against women members of Parliament and the denial of Opposition's Parliamentary rights". Their letter to the Speaker comes days after Birla stated in the House that he had "concrete information" that many Congress members might move towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi's seat and carry out "some unexpected act" as a result of which he had requested him not to come to the House to reply to the discussion on the Motion of Thanks on the President's address.

## PM did not come to LS fearing Naravane book issue not because of threat from MPs: Rahul

**NEW DELHI:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not come to the Lok Sabha to reply to the discussion on the motion of thanks to the President's address as he was scared of the issue of former army chief MM Naravane's book. Gandhi also dared those claiming that there was a threat to the prime minister from members last Thursday to "file an FIR" against the person threatening Modi. He said the government is scared of having a discussion on the Budget because of the issue of the US deal, the way it was done, and its impact on farmers. "We are very disturbed about this idea that has been floated that members were going to threaten the PM. There is no question of that. The



fact is very clear the prime minister was scared to come to the House not because of the members but because of what I was saying and he is still scared because he cannot face the truth," the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said. There was no question of the Congress members attacking the prime minister, he said. "He (Modi) should have the courage to come. I also men-

tioned that 'look, if somebody has said that he is going to attack the PM. Please do an FIR, arrest that person'. Why you are not doing that!" Gandhi said. "The agreement is that we will be allowed to say these points and then the discussion should happen," he said. Gandhi said the opposition is quite keen that the discussion happens. "But let us see what the gov-

ernment says. My personal view is that the government is scared to have a debate. The PM did not come to the House. He was scared of what we say, he was scared of being handed Naravane's book as a first step," Gandhi said. "My guess is government is worried about having a debate on the Budget because the issue of the US deal, the way it was done, its impact on our farmers, is going to be discussed and the government does not want to do that," he said. Gandhi said the matter started a few days ago when the issue of the Naravane book came to the fore. "The government did not want me to talk about it so they stalled the House. They did not let me speak. That happened 3-4 times. First,

they said I cannot quote a book, then I said I am not quoting a book, I am quoting a magazine. Then they said you cannot quote a magazine. Then I said I will speak about it. They did not want me to speak about it," he said. Gandhi alleged that Defence Minister Rajnath Singh made a false claim that the book was unpublished. "The book has been published and we have got a copy of it," the Congress leader said. "So, that is one big issue of not allowing the LoP and entire opposition in the President's address. One of their members quoted books and spoke vile stuff and nothing was said. We don't like the fact that they can say whatever they want whenever they want and the opposition cannot," he said.

## Meta-WhatsApp privacy policy case: SC defers hearing to Feb 23

**NEW DELHI:** The Supreme Court on Monday deferred to February 23 pleas of Meta Platforms Inc and WhatsApp against a Competition Commission of India (CCI) order imposing a penalty of Rs 213.14 crore over privacy policy. A bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and N V Anjaria was told that senior advocate Kapil Sibal was unwell and hence the hearing should be adjourned. The bench said it would take up the pleas for passing an interim order on February 23. It permitted a litigant represented by senior advocate Arvind Datar to be made a party to the case. On February 3, the bench made strong observations against Meta Platforms Inc

and WhatsApp, saying they could not "play with the right to privacy of citizens in the name of data sharing" and alleged that they were creating a monopoly in the market and committing theft of private information of customers. Decrying WhatsApp's privacy policy, the bench referred to "silent customers" who were unorganised, digitally dependent and unaware of the implications of data-sharing policies, and asserted, "We will not allow the rights of any citizen of this country to be damaged." WhatsApp is owned by Meta Platforms Inc. The top court was hearing the appeals of the two tech giants against a CCI order that imposed a penalty of Rs 213.14 crore on them over the privacy policy.

On November 4, 2025, the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) set aside a section of a CCI order that had banned WhatsApp from sharing data with Meta Platforms Inc for advertising purposes for five years, but retained the Rs 213-crore penalty. Later, the NCLAT clarified that its order in the WhatsApp matter on privacy and consent safeguards also applies to user data collection and sharing for non-WhatsApp purposes, including non-advertising and advertising. The top court said that it would pass an interim order on February 9 and ordered that the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology also be made a party to the appeals of the two companies.

## Multiple rail infra projects approved to ease congestion, improve safety: Railway Ministry

**NEW DELHI:** A comprehensive set of rail infrastructure projects has been approved aimed at eliminating congestion, enhancing line capacity, improving safety systems and enabling faster, more reliable passenger and freight movement across the country, the Railway Ministry said on Monday. A press statement from the ministry said these approvals spanned Southern, Northern and South Eastern Railways covering line doubling, third and fourth lines, bypass corridors and advanced electronic interlocking systems. "Barbenda-Damrughutu doubling and Damrughutu-Bokaro Steel City 3rd & 4th Lines in Jharkhand are major capacity expansion projects under South Eastern Railway and a cornerstone of India's Energy, Mineral and Cement Corridor," the statement said. It added, "Currently, the line operates at 108% utilisation, with train detention ranging between 90-150 minutes, handling 78 (38 passenger and

40 freight) trains daily and supporting a freight throughput of 35.22 MTPA (Million Tonnes Per Annum)."

Highlighting the approval to electronic interlocking (EI) at 34 stations at the cost of Rs 421.41 crore across Northern Railway routes where Kavach is being rolled out, the ministry said that it will enhance safety and operational efficiency. "This includes 21 stations in the Delhi Division at a cost of Rs 292.24 crore and 13 stations in the Ambala Division costing Rs 129.17 crore," the ministry said. According to the ministry, the approval of the Rajpura bypass line (13.46 km) under the Northern Railway costing Rs 411.96 crore will significantly enhance capacity and operational efficiency on the Ambala-Jalandhar section, one of the busiest corridors on the Northern Railway. The press note outlined two doubling projects -- Alappuzha-Ambalapuzha doubling (12.66 km) at the cost of Rs

324.16 crore in Kerala and Irugur-Podanur doubling (10.77 km) costing Rs 277.42 crore in Tamil Nadu -- saying it will significantly improve line capacity and freight operations. Emphasising the benefits of another bypass project, Palakkad Town-Parli Bypass Line (1.80 km) worth Rs 163.57 crore, the ministry said it will provide immediate operational and passenger benefits by eliminating engine reversal at Palakkad Junction in Kerala for multiple train services. "It will reduce average detention of passenger trains by 40-44 minutes and cut freight detention by up to 120 minutes per train, while also supporting additional passenger services planned from Palakkad Junction," the statement said. "By streamlining train movements, the bypass will significantly improve punctuality on routes connecting Shoranur, Thiruvananthapuram and Pollachi, while easing congestion at one of Southern Railway's busiest junctions," it added.

## New EPFO app to allow members to withdraw EPF money through UPI

**NEW DELHI:** Subscribers of retirement fund body EPFO will be able to withdraw their employees' provident fund (EPF) directly into their bank accounts through UPI payment gateway using its newly designed mobile application to be launched in April this year, a top source said. The labour ministry is working on a project where a certain proportion of the EPF will be frozen, and a large chunk will be available for withdrawal through their bank account using Unified Payment Interface (UPI), the source told PTI. The source further informed that the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation will roll out a new mobile phone application through which the member would be able to withdraw their EPF money using UPI

gateway as well as avail other services like pass-book balance. Currently, the member uses either the Universal Account Number (UAN) portal or the UMANG app to access their EPF accounts and avail of their services. The source said that these services will remain available on both platforms, while the new dedicated app will further improve the accessibility and delivery of services for EPFO subscribers. He explained that subscribers will be able to view the eligible EPF balance available for transfer to their seeded bank accounts in the mobile application. They will be allowed to use their linked UPI PIN to complete the transaction, ensuring a secure transfer of funds to their bank accounts.



The source stated that the EPFO is presently conducting trials using 100 dummy accounts to improve the efficacy of the service and remove any technical glitches that the service may have. The labour ministry is likely to roll out the new app with a big fanfare in April this year. Presently, the members of EPFO have to apply for withdrawal claims to access their EPF money, which is time-consuming.

Under the auto-settlement mode, the withdrawal claims are settled electronically without manual intervention within three days of filing the application form. The limit of this auto-settlement mode has already been raised to Rs 5 lakh from the existing Rs 1 lakh. This facilitates a large number of EPFO members to access their EPF money within three days for illness, education, marriage, and housing purposes.

EPFO, which has about 8 crore members, first introduced online auto-settlement of advance claims during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide quick assistance to those facing financial crunch. However, all members have to file claims to access their own EPF. The new system is being developed to avoid this time-consuming process and reduce the burden on the EPFO, as over 5 crore claims, mostly for EPF withdrawals, are settled every year. The source said that the EPFO cannot allow its members to withdraw money directly from the EPF accounts because the body does not have any banking licences. However, the source said the government wants to improve EPFO services to be on par with banks.



EDITORIAL

Can India Really Replace 87 Million Tonnes Of Russian Oil?

The stroke of midnight has historically been an important moment for landmark happenings in India, from gaining independence in 1947 to the recent agreement on the India-US trade deal. This comes amidst a constant state of tariff influx on India. In August 2025, Trump signed executive actions adding an extra 25% tariff on Indian imports as a punitive response to India's continued purchases of Russian oil. This was imposed on top of an existing 25% duty, bringing total US tariffs on many Indian goods to around 50%.

India has been constantly attributed by the US as having one of the highest tariffs in the world, with the country being termed the "Tariff King". This discontentment largely stems from the fact that India enjoys a trade surplus with the US. In FY25, India had a trade surplus of USD 40.82 billion with America. This is just one face of this quagmire, another being India's purchase of crude oil from Russia amidst the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Though the final details are yet to be out, one of the things believed to be part of the agreement is India's purchase of a higher quantity of crude oil from the US.

**The Math of Substitution**

Let's dive deeper into the idea of India substituting Russian oil with that from the US and Venezuela. The idea looks promising theoretically, but the trade figures and overall trade scenario point to something absolutely different. This analysis is strictly based on international trade aspects, without taking into consideration political factors or the enhancement of crude oil capacity in the exporting countries.

According to data from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, India imported about 87.54 million tonnes of crude oil from Russia in the year 2024-25, registering a growth of about 72.1% from the year 2022-2023. On the other hand, India's imports of crude oil from the US were just 10.55 million tonnes in 2024-25, which in fact was a decline of about 30.4% from 15.16 million tonnes in the year 2022-2023.

In the case of Venezuela, India imported 2.98 million tonnes of crude oil in the year 2024-25. The growth in the case of Venezuela on a year-on-year basis from 2023-2024 to 2024-2025 was 74%, with zero imports in the years 2021-2022 and 2022-2023.

It's also important to note that the US exports the largest quantity of oil to Mexico (according to data from World Integrated Trade Solution), exporting about 26.50 million tonnes in the year 2024-2025, with a downward growth trajectory of about 27% from 2022-2023.

On a combined basis, India imported about 13.53 million tonnes of crude oil from the US and Venezuela in the year 2024-2025. Even this falls short by 74.01 million tonnes when compared to imports from Russia for the year 2024-2025. This pattern repeats itself for the years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024. Though oversimplistic, this analysis reveals that, keeping production capacity and political factors constant, the US and Venezuela would not be able to substitute Russia for crude oil imports. Let's consider another ambitious scenario wherein the US diverts all its crude oil exports from Mexico to India. Even in that case, the combined capacity would only reach 40.03 million tonnes as per the 2024-25 data, again falling short by about 47 million tonnes when compared to crude oil imports from Russia.India has registered a year-on-year growth rate of about 37% in crude oil imports from the US for the years 2023-2024 to 2024-2025. At a 32% annual growth rate, it would take approximately 4.5 to five years for American crude oil imports to reach the current level of Russia's imports.

Venezuela's imports have grown at a 72% year-on-year rate. At a 72% annual growth rate, Venezuela alone would take approximately 6.2 to 6.5 years to reach the current level of India's crude oil imports from Russia. The weighted average growth rate of US and Venezuela crude oil imports is approximately 40.8% per year for the year 2024-2025. At a 40.8% annual growth rate, it would take approximately 5.5 years to reach Russia's 87.54 million tonnes. In any case, such sustained growth seems highly improbable in the current volatile environment with conflicts raging across several parts of the world.

What China's 'Secret' Nuclear Test Means (If It Really Did Happen)



The disclosure by US officials recently of an alleged Chinese nuclear test conducted in 2020 has added a new layer of uncertainty to an already fragile global nuclear order. According to Washington, Beijing carried out a “yield-producing” nuclear explosive test at the Lop Nur site in Xinjiang on June 22, 2020, just days after the Galwan Valley clash with India. If accurate, the episode would represent a significant departure from China's long-standing adherence to the global testing moratorium and raises uncomfortable questions about the credibility of existing arms control arrangements. The charge that China employed decoupling techniques to conceal the test underlines a broader concern in US strategic thinking: that opacity and selective norm compliance are becoming defining features of China's nuclear behaviour. Although China signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 1996, it has never ratified it, and the alleged test - involving relatively low yields designed to evade detection - suggests a willingness to exploit the grey zones of international verification regimes. Whether or not the claim is ultimately substantiated, its political impact is already evident. The Timing Is Something The timing of the disclosure is telling. It coincides with the expiration of the US-Russia New

START treaty in February 2026, leaving the global nuclear order without binding limits on the world's two largest arsenals for the first time in decades. By foregrounding the 2020 test allegation, Washington has sought to strengthen its long-standing argument that bilateral arms control frameworks are increasingly inadequate in a multi-polar nuclear environment. China's rapid arsenal expansion, coupled with its refusal to join arms control negotiations on the grounds of numerical disparity, has reinforced US concerns that strategic stability can no longer be managed through Cold War-era constructs. For Beijing, these accusations fit a familiar narrative. China has dismissed them as politically motivated attempts to exaggerate a “China threat” and justify greater pressure for trilateral arms control talks. Yet, China's own actions - ranging from the construction of new ICBM silo fields to advances in hypersonic delivery systems - have fuelled doubts about its stated commitment to minimum deterrence. The perception that China is moving towards a more robust and flexible nuclear posture, aimed at ensuring survivability against multiple adversaries, has further eroded confidence in the sustainability of existing arms control norms. The Problem For India The implications

extend well beyond a US-China strategic competition. For India, the alleged 2020 test carries particular resonance. Its timing - immediately following the Galwan crisis - feeds into concerns in New Delhi about China's use of military signalling across multiple domains during periods of heightened tensions. India's nuclear doctrine of no-first-use and credible minimum deterrence has long been calibrated against a relatively restrained Chinese posture. China's accelerating nuclear modernisation, however, threatens to widen the asymmetry between the two sides, complicating India's deterrence calculations. New Delhi's response has been measured but deliberate. Since 2020, India has focused on enhancing survivability and credibility rather than numerical expansion - advancing canisterised missile systems, strengthening sea-based deterrence, and exploring MIRV capabilities. While official policy continues to reaffirm NFU, debates within India's strategic community increasingly reflect unease about its adequacy in the face of a more capable and potentially less predictable Chinese nuclear force. The US allegations, by highlighting China's opacity, indirectly reinforce India's case for continued modernisation within a restrained doctrinal framework. More broadly, the episode illustrates how

ambiguity in one state's nuclear behaviour can reverberate across regions. It weakens confidence in arms control, accelerates competitive modernisation, and heightens the risk of miscalculation - particularly in Asia, where unresolved territorial disputes intersect with evolving nuclear capabilities. In the absence of renewed transparency and more inclusive frameworks, the global nuclear order is likely to become more fragmented, less predictable, and far harder to stabilise. The Old Nuclear Order Is Dying The dysfunctionality of global nuclear arms control is evident because the political and strategic conditions that once sustained it have eroded. The Cold War system rested on a relatively stable bipolar balance, shared rules, and an acceptance of mutual vulnerability between the superpowers. Today's nuclear landscape is far more fragmented, marked by the rise of China, regional nuclear rivalries, and disruptive technologies such as hypersonic weapons, missile defence, and cyber capabilities. Intensifying great-power competition has hollowed out trust, led to treaty erosion, and weakened verification regimes. As nuclear weapons regain salience as instruments of power, arms control has become a victim of strategic rivalry rather than a constraint upon it.

Lamborghini Crash To Dying In Pits, Many Ways To Cheapen Life In India

Moody's latest report has given yet another reason to the Indian government and bureaucracy to celebrate. The forecast pegs India's real GDP growth at 6.9% for FY2027, the fastest in G20 countries. Let's tell this to the men recently claimed by infrastructural and empathy hellholes in the National Capital Region - or those left injured as a power-drunk (and actually drunk) Lamborghini driver ploughed into pedestrians and vehicles in an upscale locality in Kanpur. Let's share these shining statistics with their families. Perhaps that would bring them solace after their loved ones succumbed to a reality that no "real GDP" has been able to alter. Also note the recent deaths of two men in the NCR region, one who died after falling into an open construction pit in Noida, and another who lay dead in a pit for hours in Delhi after he plunged into a 14-foot-deep pit dug for water works. These are not freak accidents. They are symptomatic of a deeper governance crisis marked by bureaucratic indifference, substandard public works, and a pervasive culture of zero accountability. In the case of the Lamborghini crash, the driver, Shivam Mishra - a tobacco baron's son - tried to flee right after the crash and was shielded by his team of bouncers. The FIR initially registered by the police failed to even name him, but was later updated after public backlash. As of now, he remains in a Delhi hospital and hasn't been arrested. Anyone who has lived in India long enough could guess the fate of such cases.



tection from preventable harm is central to substantive citizenship. When citizens die because open pits remain unbaricaded for years, drains are left uncovered, or public agencies evade responsibility, the promise of citizenship is reduced to a constitutional abstraction. All three cases mentioned above starkly illustrate this deficit. The two victims fell into unmarked excavations or drains that lacked warning signage, barricades, or lighting. These are basic safety measures mandated under municipal and public works guidelines. Media investigations revealed that these hazards were not recent developments but had existed for extended periods despite complaints from local residents. In the Lamborghini crash, blame is still being assigned. Across the three incidents, responsibility has been diffused across agencies, each outdoing the other in deflecting blame. This fragmentation of responsibility is a defining feature of systemic apathy: when accountability is so dispersed that it effectively disappears.

**■ NO ISOLATED INCIDENTS**

Such incidents must be understood within a broader pattern of political and bureaucratic failure. Data from the National Crime Records Bureau consistently show that India records among the highest numbers of accidental deaths globally, with urban centres like Delhi accounting for a disproportionately high share of fatalities linked to

road accidents, construction hazards, and unsafe public spaces. We play with death on an everyday basis amidst chronic neglect in urban governance. It takes no genius to realise that Indian bureaucratic systems prioritise procedural compliance over outcome-based accountability. Files move, tenders are floated, guidelines are issued, palms are greased, and people continue to die. Max Weber's ideal bureaucracy was meant to ensure predictability, impartiality, and efficiency. In practice, the Indian bureaucracy often exhibits what sociologists term ritualism: adherence to rules divorced from purpose. Safety audits become paperwork exercises; inspections are conducted without enforcement; disciplinary action, when it occurs, is symbolic rather than transformative. Officials may be suspended after a death, but systemic reforms rarely follow. This reinforces a culture in which loss or damage to life is treated as an unfortunate but acceptable externality of development. Hence, the weakest link is scapegoated, should there be outrage. When citizens must rely on outrage after tragedy, rather than institutional safeguards, to elicit state response, democratic legitimacy erodes. Governance becomes reactive rather than preventive. Reforms become spectacle-driven rather than care-oriented. The consequences for citizenship are profound. Niraja Gopal Jayal has argued that Indian citizenship is increasingly fractured.

Nature, money and health: A BALANCED VIEW



PRIYANKA SAURABH

In today's world, our perceptions of health have rapidly changed. Modern lifestyles, technology, expensive medical facilities, and rising incomes have created the belief that money is the key to better health. People living in big cities believe that if they have access to good hospitals, renowned doctors, private insurance, and modern equipment, illness will be insurmountable. But when we see prominent figures from across the country and the world—with access to wealth, resources, and the best medical facilities—suffer from serious illnesses, this belief begins to waver. It's natural to question why, despite so much care, caution, and resources, people haven't been able to escape cancer, heart disease, and other complex illnesses. Is modern lifestyle truly making us healthier, or are we unknowingly weakening our bodies' natural strength? This question isn't limited to the rich and famous, but concerns everyone who lives a fast-paced, artificial, and stressful life. The human body is a gift of nature and the result of millions of years of evolution. Our bodies have evolved in harmony with natural foods, pure air, clean water, sunlight, and physical exertion. When we stray from this natural balance—eating highly processed foods, spending hours in closed rooms, and spending our lives in front of mobile phones and screens—the body's balance begins to deteriorate. Diseases don't

come suddenly; they are the result of years of bad habits, stress, and imbalance. Today's food is a prime example of this. Packaged, long-lasting, and laden with flavor-enhancing chemicals have taken over our plates. Fruit juices, frozen vegetables, and processed milk have become part of our daily diets. While convenient, they're not always healthy. Nature provides us with food in its complete form—a balanced diet of fiber, vitamins, and nutrients. When we alter that form, its effectiveness also changes. In the name of cleanliness and safety, we've made the environment around us highly artificial. There's a race to disinfect everything. Life seems incomplete without soap, sanitizer, and chemical cleaners. Undoubtedly, cleanliness is essential, but excess is always harmful. Scientists also agree that exposure to natural bacteria, even in limited quantities, strengthens our immune system. A body that is protected from every small challenge can become vulnerable when faced with a major one. Rural and urban life are often compared in this context. Elderly people living in villages eat simpler food, engage in more physical labor, and live a slower pace. Mental stress is also relatively low. This is why they can tolerate minor illnesses without medication. Meanwhile, urban residents lead comfortable lives, but even a simple fever can confine them to bed. This difference is not only about medical facilities, but also about lifestyle and mental state. However, it would be wrong to assume that connecting with nature is the cure for every illness. Many diseases are genetic, many are caused by infections, and many come naturally with age. Modern medical science has made unprecedented progress in these areas. Vaccines, antibiotics, surgery, and modern diagnostic techniques have saved millions of lives. It would also be a dangerous thought to dismiss science simply in the name of

"natural." The real problem arises when we go to one extreme. Either we become completely dependent on machines, medicines, and conveniences, or we reject science and seek solutions to every problem solely through home remedies. Both approaches are incomplete. Health is a balance—where both nature and science have their respective roles. Mental health is another important aspect of this balance, one that is often overlooked. Today's human being may be physically surrounded by comforts, but mentally they are insecure, anxious, and stressed. Competition, fear of failure, social pressure, and worries about the future keep our minds constantly occupied. This mental stress gradually affects the body and leads to serious illnesses. Money cannot completely eliminate this stress. It's also important to understand that the illnesses of wealthy people are more visible to us because they are in public life. Ordinary people also suffer from the same illnesses, but they are not discussed. This doesn't mean that wealth automatically brings illness, but rather that wealth cannot provide complete protection against illness. Today, we need to understand health not just from a medical perspective, but from a lifestyle perspective. A simple and balanced diet, regular physical activity, adequate sleep, time with nature, and mental peace—these are no less effective than any medicine. Furthermore, it is equally important to consult a doctor in a timely manner and take advantage of modern medicine when needed. Ultimately, we must accept that neither money can make us immortal, nor can a natural lifestyle alone protect us from all diseases. The real solution lies in balance. Only when we combine science with an understanding of nature is a healthy and meaningful life possible. Perhaps this is the path we can take to live not only longer, but also better lives.



# MESSE FRANKFURT TRADE FAIRS INDIA JOINS FORCES WITH BUSINESSLIVE TRADE FAIRS TO EXPAND MEDIA EXPO

**Hyderabad February 2026:** Under this collaboration between Messe Frankfurt Trade Fairs India and BusinessLive Trade Fairs, Sign India Expo will evolve into Media Expo Kochi and Media Expo Hyderabad while Sign India Expo Chennai transitions under the existing Media Expo Chennai banner. This move significantly expands the overall Media Expo footprint, increasing its presence from three cities to a total of five cities: Chennai, Hyderabad, Kochi, Mumbai and New Delhi. Media Expo, which has delivered 56 successful editions across Mumbai, New Delhi and Chennai, will now become the primary exhibition platform in the three southern markets of Kochi, Hyderabad and Chennai, transitioning from the long-established Sign India Expo. This move will ensure focused regional engagement while offering the industry consistent and unified platforms across these South Indian markets. The collaboration will be implemented beginning with Media Expo Chennai, scheduled for later this year at Chennai Trade



Centre, Chennai, Tamil Nadu. Sign India Expo is backed by a legacy of 70+ editions across India with a particularly deep presence in the Southern markets like Bengaluru, Chennai, Kochi and Hyderabad. This collaboration brings together two of the most recognised exhibition brands from the industry to create a unified and impactful industry trade fair platform. This partnership will leverage the region's strong business potential and create a broader and wider exhibition platform. The

combination of their expertise, the organisers aim to expand exhibitor participation and enhance the overall product showcase across the product segments like: printing, signage, digital signage, advertising solutions for out-of-home (OOH) and digital out-of-home (DOOH), retail displays and branding solutions, large-format and industrial printing, fabrication equipment and materials, POP-POS, LED screens, printing equipment, sign substrates, inks, advanced 3D and laser printing solutions and much

more. By leveraging BusinessLive Trade Fairs established presence in South Indian markets, this alliance enables Media Expo to strengthen its positioning as a central platform for the printing, signage, branding and advertising solutions segment. For the industry, this partnership will deliver increased opportunities by strengthening participation and market reach through the platform, bringing together exhibitors, visitors, associations and professionals from across the printing, signage, branding and OOH-DOOH

ecosystem. By consolidating participation and aligning market engagement, this pivotal step will strongly drive buyer-seller connections across South India's key commercial hubs. Commenting on the collaboration, Mr Raj Manek, Executive Director & Board Member, Messe Frankfurt Asia Holdings Ltd, said: "South India continues to be one of the most dynamic and opportunity driven regions for the printing and signage industry. This collaboration with BusinessLive Trade Fairs allows us to expand Media Expo's footprint while offering the industry a stronger, more centralised platform that supports long-term growth and meaningful engagement." Likewise, Mr Siva Prasad Palnati, Director, BusinessLive Trade Fairs, added: "Sign India Expo has built a strong and trusted presence across South India over the years. Partnering with Messe Frankfurt Trade Fairs enables us to elevate that legacy by combining regional strength with global exhibition expertise, creating region-specific platforms with Media Expo brand that will serve the industry and its evolving needs better."

# Wegovy maker sues rival over 'knock-off' weight-loss drugs

The maker of Ozempic and Wegovy is suing a rival firm for selling what it says are "unsafe, knock-off" versions of its weight-loss drugs in the US. Danish company Novo Nordisk asked US courts on Monday to ban Hims & Hers' range of weight-loss pills and injections, which it says are not approved by US authorities and infringe on its patent. The legal drama began on Friday after Hims & Hers launched a new weight-loss pill, leading to an initial threat from Novo Nordisk. Over the weekend, Hims & Hers said it would stop selling the pill. On Monday, its share price slumped as it called Novo Nordisk's decision to press ahead with the lawsuit a "blatant attack". Hims & Hers shares closed down 16% on Monday, while Novo Nordisk's share price nudged up early on Tuesday. Weight-loss drugs like Novo Nordisk's Ozempic and Wegovy and Eli Lilly's Zepbound and Mounjaro have soared in popularity over the last few years. Patent expiry has also led to rise of low-cost copycat weight-loss drugs, with warnings about the safety of some of them. Novo Nordisk said on Monday its action against Hims & Hers aims to "protect public health and defend the scientific innovations that deliver better health outcomes to Americans". Hims



& Hers said in response it has "a long history of providing safe access to personalized healthcare to millions of Americans", and accused Novo Nordisk of "weaponizing the US judicial system to limit consumer choice". 'Fighting back' Kerry Fulford, a pharmaceutical analyst at Berenberg, told the BBC that this was the "first move Novo Nordisk is making to clamp down on compounding". Compounding is a legal process in which US drug makers are allowed to sell medication that is not approved by authorities but offers alternatives for patients with specific needs. Hims & Hers weight-loss drugs are compounded, whereas Novo Nordisk's are not. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said on Friday it was taking steps to restrict the compounding of weight-loss drugs to "safeguard consumers from drugs for which the FDA cannot

verify quality, safety, or efficacy". Novo Nordisk referenced the FDA's concerns in its lawsuit announcement on Monday, saying Hims & Hers' compounded drugs "may contain dangerous impurities or incorrect amounts of active ingredients, which can result in life-threatening immune responses". "This is Novo's way of fighting back," said Fulford. The Danish firm has had a rocky few months. It announced thousands of job cuts in September and last week warned investors about a slump in profits due to expiring patents. Novo Nordisk has also come under fire from the FDA. The agency sent Novo Nordisk a letter on Thursday saying a TV advert for its Wegovy pill "misleadingly implies benefits beyond physical weight loss such as emotional relief, reduced psychological burden, hope, or direction for patients' lives".

# Ujjivan Small Finance Bank Launches EZY to Offer Smarter and Secure Digital Banking for Retail Customers

**Vishakhapatnam, January 2026:** Ujjivan Small Finance Bank, today announced the launch of Ujjivan EZY, its upgraded Mobile Banking and Internet Banking platform, marking a significant step in strengthening the Bank's digital-first strategy. Designed for its retail customer base, Ujjivan's EZY offers a unified, secure and intuitive banking experience across mobile and web channels, and is available in nine languages – English, Hindi, Kannada, Gujarati, Marathi, Bangali, Odia, Punjabi and Tamil. The platform brings together over 200 banking features, including more than 90 new capabilities, aimed at simplifying everyday banking while enabling deeper engagement across savings, payments, lending and investments. Built on a next-generation microservices architecture, EZY enhances speed, scalability and system resilience, allowing the Bank to introduce new features faster and respond more effectively to evolving customer needs. EZY integrates core banking services such as



account management, fund transfers, fixed and recurring deposits, bill payments, debit card management, GST payments and investment services including Demat and NPS on a single platform. In addition to these existing services, the upgraded platform has introduced loan services, smart statements, new digital capabilities and personalised interfaces based on customers' product relationships, further enhancing convenience and customer experience, ensuring a comprehensive end-to-end banking experience. The platform has been designed with a strong focus on accessibility and inclusion, catering to customers across geographies,

age groups and varying levels of digital literacy. Security has been further strengthened through the integration of AppProtect, an advanced security SDK that provides enhanced protection against fraud, device-level threats and emerging cyber risks. Commenting on the launch, Mr. Deepak Agarwal, Head - Strategy and Transformation, Ujjivan Small Finance Bank, said, "The launch of EZY marks our shift from standalone digital channels to a unified digital ecosystem. The platform enables faster innovation, deeper customer engagement and sustainable business growth, while continuing to stay aligned with our focus on

trust, simplicity, security and financial inclusion." Digital channels continue to play a central role in the Bank's operations, with digital payments accounting for over 95 per cent of Ujjivan Small Finance Bank's total outward transactions, reflecting strong customer adoption and trust in its digital ecosystem. About Ujjivan Small Finance Bank Limited Ujjivan Small Finance Bank Limited is a scheduled commercial bank authorised to carry on the business of small finance bank in India. Bank serves ~99 lakh customers through 766 branches, 613 ATMs/ACRs, spread across 334 districts and 26 states and union territories in India. Gross loan book stands at ₹ 34,588 crore with a deposit base of ₹ 39,211 crore as of September 30, 2025. The Bank has been assigned a credit rating of AA- (Stable)/A1+ from CARE/CRISIL respectively towards its long-term bank facilities, fixed deposits and CD program depicting sustenance of Banks Performance.

# ACPL Exports enters the domestic D2C silver jewellery market with the launch of TrueSilver

**New Delhi, 10th February 2026:** ACPL Exports, India's leading silver manufacturing and export house, has announced the launch of TrueSilver, its first direct-to-consumer (D2C) jewellery brand, marking a strategic expansion into the domestic and digital retail space. Built on ACPL's decades of global manufacturing expertise, TrueSilver brings the company's craftsmanship and quality standards directly to the Indian consumer through a modern, design-led, and digitally native brand. The brand is aimed at addressing the growing domestic demand for everyday wear silver jewellery category. Targeted at millennials and Gen Z, the brand focuses on contemporary design, accessible pricing, and certified purity standards. ACPL continues to expand its B2C export presence across key markets, including the US, Europe, the UK, the Middle East, and Australia, with the US accounting for nearly 50% of its export revenue. TrueSilver launches with close to 900 products for women, men, and children. Over 80% of the collection is designed for



women, featuring bracelets, earrings, rings, necklaces, and anklets. Reflecting evolving trends, the range is offered in gold and rose gold finishes alongside silver. TrueSilver's distinctive strength lies in its extensive personalised jewellery collection for both men and women. All jewellery is

BIS hallmarked. "TrueSilver marks a strategic next phase in our growth, enabling us to take our manufacturing and quality expertise directly to the Indian consumer," said Sidharth Gupta, Director, ACPL Exports. "We are targeting ₹100 crore in annual revenue for TrueSilver in the

near term and aim to scale the business to ₹250 crore over the next two to three years, supported by an expansion to 100 retail stores. Our focus is on building a trusted, scalable silver jewellery brand backed by strong design, consistent quality, and sustainable practices." The launch of TrueSilver is a key pillar of ACPL Exports' broader strategy to diversify revenue streams and strengthen its domestic presence. The company expects its branded consumer portfolio to contribute 30-40% of overall revenue over time. Sustainability and responsible manufacturing remain central to ACPL's operations, supported by zero-waste facilities, ethical labour practices, and global quality benchmarks. TrueSilver will be available through its D2C platform as well as leading marketplaces, including Amazon India and Myntra. Backed by ACPL's export-grade manufacturing expertise and global quality benchmarks, the brand will offer contemporary design, consistent quality, positioning TrueSilver as a new-age silver brand built for everyday wear.

# HDFC Life and Muthoot FinCorp Ltd. Collaborate to Secure Customers Financially

**Mumbai February, 2026:** HDFC Life, one of India's leading life insurance companies, announced a strategic partnership with Muthoot FinCorp Ltd., the flagship company of Muthoot Pappachan Group (Muthoot Blue), headquartered at Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. The partnership will enable Muthoot FinCorp Ltd.'s customers access HDFC Life's comprehensive suite of Group and Individual life insurance solutions including range of protection and long-term savings products to meet their long-term financial goals. These will be offered through Muthoot FinCorp Ltd.'s extensive network of 3750+ branches pan-India as well as through its digital platform. Speaking on this partnership, Vibha Padalkar – Managing Director & CEO, HDFC Life said: "Our partnership with Muthoot FinCorp Ltd. marks an important step towards achieving the



industry's goal of 'Insurance for All by 2047'. We are committed to offering Muthoot FinCorp Ltd.'s valuable customers, both existing and new, effective life insurance solutions that will enable them to achieve their long-term financial goals. Furthermore, our seamless process integration will ensure teams across Muthoot FinCorp Ltd.'s touchpoints are digitally empowered to make the experience for themselves and their customers a delightful one. Through this partnership, we look

forward to expanding the reach of life insurance and driving financial inclusion in the country." Mr Shaji Varghese, CEO, Muthoot FinCorp Ltd. said, "We are delighted to join hands with HDFC Life. Muthoot FinCorp Ltd. and HDFC Life are both built on deep customer trust. This partnership is about combining our reach of 3,750+ branches, digital platforms, our relationship depth with millions of customers, and HDFC Life's product and risk expertise to create meaningful protection for Indian families."

# INSTAGRAM AND YOUTUBE OWNERS BUILT 'ADDICTION MACHINES', TRIAL HEARS

The world's largest social media companies have been accused of creating "addiction machines" as a landmark trial began in California examining the mental health effects of Instagram and YouTube. In his opening argument before Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Carolyn B. Kuhl and a jury, Mark Lanier argued that his client, plaintiff "K.G.M.," suffered from mental health issues as a result of her social media addiction. "These companies built machines designed to addict the brains of children, and they did it on purpose," Lanier said. Lawyers for Meta and YouTube told the jury that K.G.M.'s addiction stemmed from other issues in her life, not their negligence. K.G.M. will be referred to by her initials, or as Kaley G.M., because the alleged harms took place when she was a minor. Lanier also charged that Meta and YouTube failed to warn of the dangers to young users posed by the design of



their platforms. Lanier underscored his opening remarks by speaking with a display of children's blocks in front of him: the words "Addicting," "Brains" and "Children" appeared next to the letters A, B, and C. "This case is about two of the richest corporations in history who have engineered addiction in children's brains," Lanier said. "I'm going to show you the addiction machine that they built, the

internal documents that people normally don't get to see, and emails from [Meta CEO] Mark Zuckerberg and YouTube executives." In a selected portion of a 2015 email Lanier showed the court, Zuckerberg demanded that "time spent increases by 12%" on Meta platforms in order to meet internal business goals. As for YouTube, Lanier said the platform, owned by Google, intentionally targeted young

users because it could "charge advertisers more", as compared to its YouTube Kids platform. Lanier then accused YouTube of trying to take advantage of busy parents looking for a "digital babysitting service." "When it was Meta's turn to make an opening statement, attorney Paul Schmidt pointed the jury to the question of whether Instagram was a substantial factor in K.G.M.'s mental health strug-

gles. He portrayed K.G.M as someone dealing with family turmoil, including neglect, physical and verbal abuse, and bullying by her parents. Schmidt told the jury he admired K.G.M because she "worked hard to overcome" her struggles. He referenced records that described domestic violence in K.G.M.'s family history and seeing therapists starting when she was three years old. On a projector, Schmidt showed certain statements K.G.M made about her home life, including that her mother had screamed at her, called her stupid, and had made her want to kill herself. "I recognise those are tough quotes," Schmidt told the jury. "In a case that's about psychological distress, that is what you have to consider." The proceedings on Monday marked the first day in what is poised to be a six-week trial with significant implications for similar lawsuits around the country likely to go to trial this year.

# US lawmakers accuse justice department of 'inappropriately' redacting Epstein files

US lawmakers say files related to convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein were improperly redacted ahead of their release by the Department of Justice (DOJ). Members of Congress on Monday were allowed to begin a review of the unredacted versions of the approximately three million pages of files released under the Epstein Files Transparency Act (EFTA) since December. "The core issue is that they're not complying with... my law, because these were scrubbed back in March by Donald Trump's FBI," Democratic Representative Ro Khanna told MS NOW. At least one document has been unredacted since the lawmakers' complaint, with Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche saying on X: "The DOJ is committed to transparency." The files' redactions came under scrutiny last week after lawyers for Epstein's victims said the latest tranche of files included email addresses and nude pho-

tos in which the names and faces of potential victims could be identified. Survivors issued a statement calling the disclosure "outrageous" and said they should not be "named, scrutinized and retraumatized". The DOJ said it had taken down all the flagged files and that mistakes were due to "technical or human error". After viewing the unredacted documents, Massie and Khanna, who co-sponsored the law which compelled the release of the Epstein files last year, told reporters they had a list of about 20 people in which every name was redacted except for Epstein's and his convicted sex trafficker associate Ghislaine Maxwell. Six of the names could even belong to men who are "likely incriminated by their inclusion in these files", Massie said outside the DOJ on Monday night, before posting a screenshot of the redacted file online and demanding an explanation. These names were "inappropriately" redacted, Khanna



said on MS NOW. In response to their concerns, Blanche said his department "just unredacted all non-victim names from this document. The DOJ is committed to transparency." He linked to what appears to be a new version of the file - which he said contains the names of Epstein victims, whose identities the EFTA law orders the government to conceal - with only two names now blacked out. Blanche also responded to two other files highlighted by Massie, saying those files do not obfuscate any

substantive information. But Khanna said those measures taken after the documents' release are still not in compliance with the EFTA law, which passed nearly unanimously in Congress and was signed by President Trump in November. "Trump's FBI scrubbed these files in March," Khanna said on social media. "The documents (the Department of Justice [received]) had the redactions that the FBI made back then. "They need to unscrub the FBI files so we know who the rich

and powerful men are who raped underage girls." Massie said the incorrect redactions show the justice department "need to do a little more homework" in their handling of the files. "What we found out is those 302 forms were redacted before they got to the DOJ," in contradiction of the law's order for the FBI - which is part of the DOJ - to un-redact information before sending it to Blanche and Attorney General Pam Bondi's office. Among the redactions flagged by Massie on Monday night was a document appearing the show an email exchange between Epstein and an unknown person discussing a "torture video" and travel between China and the United States. Massie claimed that "a Sultan seems to have sent this" and demanded the hidden identity be revealed. Blanche quoted Massie's post on X, saying the blacked-out text is an email address. "The law requires redactions for personally identifiable informa-

tion, including if in an email address. And you know that the Sultan's name is available unredacted in the files," he said. "Stop grandstanding," he added. Massie also complained that the name of a "well known retired CEO" was missing from the publicly available version of an FBI document listing potential Epstein co-conspirators. Within hours, Blanche said that name - which already appears elsewhere in the files - had also been uncovered. "DOJ is hiding nothing," he wrote. Chappell Roan leaves talent agency led by Casey Wasserman after Epstein fallout

## Kenya to confront Russia over 'unacceptable' use of its nationals in combat



Kenya says it will talk to Russia over growing reports that its citizens are being recruited to fight in the war in Ukraine. Speaking to the BBC, Foreign Minister Musalia Mudavadi called the practice "unacceptable and clandestine", and said Nairobi had shut down illegal recruiters and would urge Moscow to sign a deal banning the conscription of Kenyan soldiers. The Kenyan government estimates that around 200 of its nationals have been recruited to fight for Russia. The exact number remains unclear, as Nairobi maintains that none of them travelled through official chan-

nels. "Kenya and Russia have had long relations since independence, literally. So this, in my view, becomes a very unfortunate episode of otherwise very positive and cordial relations between our two countries," he added. Mudavadi has told the BBC that Kenya's engagement with Russia will focus on curbing illegal recruitment practices, including discussions on visa policy and bilateral labour agreements excluding military conscription. He said the Kenyan authorities had closed more than 600 recruitment agencies suspected of duping Kenyans with promises of jobs overseas.

## Chappell Roan leaves talent agency led by Casey Wasserman after Epstein fallout



Singer Chappell Roan says she has left the talent agency led by Casey Wasserman, whose name appears in the Epstein files. Announcing her split with the agency, Roan said she has a "duty to protect her team" and her decision reflected her belief that "meaningful change in our industry requires accountability". Wasserman has been criticised after his flirtatious emails to Ghislaine Maxwell, sent in 2003, were revealed among the millions of files published in relation to convicted paedophile Jeffrey Epstein. Roan made no mention of Epstein, nor the Epstein files, in her statement on Instagram announcing her departure. "As of today, I am no longer represented by Wasserman, the talent agency led by Casey Wasserman," she said. Roan added: "No artist, agent or employee should ever be expected to defend or overlook actions that conflict so deeply with our own moral values." The BBC has reached out to Wasserman for comment. Wasserman is also the chairman of the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games, and has faced calls to step down from the position following the release of the emails. He has said he "deeply regrets" the mes-

sages exchanged with Maxwell, who is currently serving a 20-year prison sentence for recruiting and trafficking teenage girls to be sexually abused by Epstein. He said in a statement that his correspondence with Maxwell "took place over two decades ago, long before her horrific crimes came to light". Who is in the Epstein files? Wasserman also emphasised that he had "never had a personal or business relationship with Jeffrey Epstein". "As is well documented, I went on a humanitarian trip as part of a delegation with the Clinton Foundation in 2002 on the Epstein plane," he said. "I am terribly sorry for having any association with either of them." Wasserman has not been accused of wrongdoing by any of Epstein's victims, and the appearance of his name in the files does not imply criminal activity of any kind. Roan's announcement comes after two other bands represented by Wasserman released statements indicating they wanted to distance themselves from his agency. Wednesday, a self-described indie rock band, said they were "aghast" to see Wasserman feature in the Epstein files and did not want to continue to be associated with him.

## CATHERINE O'HARA'S CAUSE OF DEATH CONFIRMED AS BLOOD CLOT



Award-winning actress Catherine O'Hara died of a pulmonary embolism, her death certificate in the US has revealed. O'Hara died on 30 January in a Los Angeles hospital, at the age of 71. In addition to the blood clot in her lungs, the death certificate listed rectal cancer as the long-term cause of death. It was indicated that she had been receiving treatment for the cancer since March 2025. Tributes have poured in for

the Canadian actress, who most recently appeared in the Emmy-winning comedy The Studio and The Last of Us. O'Hara remembered Actor and The Studio creator Seth Rogen said he was devastated by O'Hara's death, describing the actress as "hysterical, kind, intuitive, generous". "We're all lucky we got to live in a world with her in it," he said. Actor Pedro Pascal, who worked with O'Hara on The Last of Us, wrote on Instagram: "Oh, genius to be near you. Eternally grateful. There is less light in my world, this lucky world that had you, will keep you, always." The actress starred in six seasons of comedy series Schitt's Creek, for which she won an Emmy for best comedy actress.

## MACRON URGES EUROPE TO START ACTING LIKE WORLD POWER

French President Emmanuel Macron has urged Europe to assert itself on the world stage, saying it is time to start acting like a "power". In the face of growing threats from China, Russia and now the US, he told a group of European newspapers that the continent faced a "wake-up call". "Are we ready to become a power? This is the question in the field of economy and finance, in defence and security, and in our democratic systems. "In another era we might have said it is the moment to 'assume our majority'," he said ahead of an EU summit in Brussels later this week. Macron repeated his call for EU-wide mutualised loans in order to raise hundreds of billions of euros needed for



industrial investment. "The time has come to launch a shared debt capacity to fund our future expense - eurobonds for the future. We need big European programmes to finance the best projects," he said. Similar calls in the past have met scepticism from Germany and other countries, who feel France wants to use Europe to bear a financial burden which it

alone - because of its failure to reform - is unable to take up. Macron admitted that France "has never had a balanced model, unlike certain economies of the north, which are built more on a sense of responsibility. "And we have never had reforms like the ones initiated in the 2010s in Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece, which are paying dividends today." But he

said there was growing demand in the world's financial markets for mutualised European debt, which currently the EU was not equipped to supply. "The world markets are increasingly afraid of the American greenback [dollar]. They want alternatives... "For investors everywhere a democratic state of law is a huge attraction. And when I look at the world as it is, we have the authoritarian regime that is China, and on the other side we have the US distancing itself further and further from a state of law." According to Macron, the 27-member EU needs 1.2tn (£1tn; \$1.4tn) a year to invest in the vital sectors of security and defence, clean energy, and artificial intelligence.

## BUDDHIST MONKS' 108-DAY WALK FOR PEACE SET TO END IN WASHINGTON DC

A band of Buddhist monks who have spent four months walking - sometimes barefoot or through the snow - on a 2,000-mile march from Texas to Washington DC is expected to complete their journey on Tuesday. The group's arduous so-called Walk of Peace has gone viral, capturing the attention of millions of Americans at a time of heightened political division in the US. Along the way, the troupe has shared a message of mindfulness, with its leader, the Venerable Bhikkhu Pannakara, saying: "My hope is, when this walk ends, the people we met will continue practicing



mindfulness and find peace." Their journey began on 26 October 2025 at the Huong Dao Vipassana Bhavana Center in Fort Worth. After arriving in Washington, the monks will visit the Washington National Cathedral and the Lincoln Memorial. The group also reportedly plans

to appeal to lawmakers to declare Buddha's birthday-called Vesak - a national holiday - but their expedition has gained traction beyond this policy request. "Their long journey and gentle witness invite us all to deepen our commitment to compassion," said Washington Episcopal

Bishop Mariann Budde, who will help host the monks at an interfaith reception, according to the Associated Press. The 19 travelling monks are from Theravada Buddhist monasteries around the globe. The final day of their single-file trek across the country began on Tuesday morning in Arlington, Virginia, roughly five miles (9.1km) outside the US capitol. A livestream on the group's Facebook account shows them walking past piles of snow, as the first days of above-freezing temperatures return after weeks of record cold across much of the eastern United States.

## Marc Anthony says the way Beckham feud has played out is 'hardly the truth'



Singer Marc Anthony has described the Beckham family rift as "extremely unfortunate", but added that the way it has played out is "hardly the truth". The 57-year-old performed at Brooklyn and Nicola Peltz Beckham's wedding reception in 2022, and is a close friend of the wider family. But Brooklyn recently said the way the couple's first dance was handled at the wedding left him feeling "uncomfortable and humiliated", after Anthony reportedly called for him to dance with his mother instead of his wife. Beckham added that his mother then danced "very inappropriately" on him. Sir David and Lady Beckham have not commented since Brooklyn published his statement. Speaking to the Hollywood Reporter, Anthony said: "I have nothing to say about what's happening with the family. They're a wonderful, wonderful family. "I've known them since before the kids were born. I'm godfather to Cruz. I'm really close to the family. But I have nothing to say about what happened there." He added: "It's extremely unfortunate how it's playing out - but [how it's playing out] is hardly the truth." Brooklyn

Beckham published a six-page Instagram statement on 19 January, confirming a rift between him and his wife with the wider Beckham family. He accused his parents of trying to "ruin my relationship" with Peltz, adding that he had no wish to reconcile with his family. The 26-year-old also said his mother had "hijacked" his first dance with Peltz, which had been "planned weeks in advance to a romantic love song". "In front of our 500 wedding guests," he continued, "Marc Anthony called me to the stage, where in the schedule was planned to be my romantic dance with my wife but instead my mum was waiting to dance with me instead." "She danced very inappropriately on me in front of everyone. I've never felt more uncomfortable or humiliated in my entire life." Wedding DJ Fat Tony previously told ITV's This Morning that "the whole situation was really awkward for everyone in the room". After speculation about the nature of Lady Beckham's dancing, Fat Tony clarified: "There was no slut-dropping, there was no black cat PVC cat-suits, there was no Spice Girl action."

# Trump threatens to block opening of US-Canada bridge

President Donald Trump has threatened to block the opening of a bridge connecting the US and Canada until Washington is "fully compensated for everything" it has given to its northern neighbour. The Gordie Howe International Bridge, connecting the Canadian province of Ontario to the US state of Michigan, would not open until Ottawa "treats the United States with the Fairness and Respect that we deserve", Trump wrote on social media. According to the project's website, the bridge is being funded by the Canadian government but will be publicly owned by both Canada and Michigan. Michigan Senator Elissa Slotkin, a Democrat, said closing the "incredibly important infrastructure project" would be "awful for



our state's economy". The move could have "serious repercussions" she said in a post on X: "Higher costs for Michigan businesses, less secure supply chains, and ultimately, fewer jobs." It is not clear how Trump could block its opening but he said negotiations would begin immediately, without elabo-

rating. The bridge, which spans the Detroit River and is named after late Canadian hockey legend Gordie Howe, who played for the Detroit Red Wings, is expected to open to traffic pending formal tests and approvals in the early part of this year. Construction began in 2018, but the proj-

ect has been a point of contention between the countries for more than a decade. It is estimated to have cost \$6.4bn CAD (£3.4bn), according to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). In the statement on his Truth Social platform, Trump said that the US should own "at least one

half of this asset". He also suggested that Canada owned both the Canadian and US sides of the bridge. The organisation developing the bridge, the Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority, is a Canadian federal Crown corporation, an organisation that is wholly owned by the government but operates at arm's length. Trump wrote: "The Canadian Government expects me, as President of the United States, to PERMIT them to just 'take advantage of America'!" "I will not allow this bridge to open until the United States is fully compensated for everything we have given them," he added. He also blamed former President Barack Obama for allowing construction to begin without the use of any US steel. But Mayor Drew Dilkens of Windsor,

Ontario, on the Canadian side of the bridge, told the CBC that this accusation is wrong. "It's just insane," he said. "I really can't believe what I'm reading." The Moroun family - the American owners of the neighbouring Ambassador Bridge that also connects Detroit to Canada - appealed to Trump during his first term to stop construction of the new bridge, arguing that it infringed on their exclusive ability to collect tolls. In response, Trump and then-Prime Minister Justin Trudeau issued a joint statement saying the bridge was a "vital economic link" between the countries. Michigan's Democratic Governor Gretchen Whitmer pushed back on Trump's threat to close the bridge, saying it was good for jobs in her state.

# 96 Per Cent Of Experts Back This Team To Win T20 World Cup 2026

Defending champions India began their campaign in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 with a resounding victory against the USA at a packed Wankhede Stadium. Tipped as outright favourites to win the competition, India have nearly every expert from JioStar, official broadcasters of the marquee tournament, expecting the hosts to reach at least the final of the tournament. As many as 96 per cent of JioStar experts have backed India to go all the way and repeat defeat history, including the likes of ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2007 winners, Irfan Pathan and Piyush Chawla, former India Test captain and JioStar expert Anil Kumble and ex-cricketers R Vinay Kumar, Saba Karim and Yuzvendra Chahal, among others. Each of the 46 JioStar experts had India as one of



the two finalists, a trend the Men in Blue have followed in the last three men's ICC events, including the Cricket World Cup 2023, T20 World Cup 2024, and the Champions Trophy 2025, going on to win the last two under former India captain Rohit

Sharma. More than one-third of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup experts predicted a repeat of the India-Australia final at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad, while 30 per cent could foresee a repeat of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 final

between India and South Africa. As far as the semi-final predictions were concerned from those who are part of JioStar's presentation, India dominated those as well, including the ones from Sunil Gavaskar, Australia's ICC Men's T20 World Cup-win-

ning captain Aaron Finch, and renowned broadcaster Alan Wilkins, who also backed Afghanistan to make it to the last four. Apart from India, South Africa, Australia, England and New Zealand were popular choices to finish in the top four, with the occasional pick for Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Explaining his semi-final picks, former New Zealand bowler and commentator Danny Morrison said, "Co-host India in their own backyard, this blue juggernaut is hard to stop. I'm going to go with New Zealand because they just played in India, got some top firepower, plenty of players to pick and choose from- all powerhouses. Then England, and fourth South Africa, because of a lot of these players have played in the Indian Premier League and have got experience in those conditions."

## Wedding Bells For Arjun Tendulkar And Saaniya Chandhok: Sachin Personally Invites PM Narendra Modi



Sachin Tendulkar, along with his family, called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday to invite him to the upcoming wedding of his son, Arjun Tendulkar, and fiancée Saaniya Chandhok. The cricket great posted photos of the meeting. Arjun, Sachin's daughter Sara, and his wife Anjali were also present. "We were honoured to invite Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri

@narendramodi ji to Arjun and Saaniya's wedding. Thank you, Modi ji, for your blessings and thoughtful advice for the young couple," Sachin wrote in a post on Instagram. The wedding festivities are scheduled to kick off on March 3, with the main ceremony expected to be held on March 5, 2026. Arjun and Saaniya got engaged in August 2025. Arjun, who was recently traded from the

Mumbai Indians to the Lucknow Super Giants in the Indian Premier League (IPL), is a regular in the Indian domestic cricket circuit. Saaniya is a successful entrepreneur and comes from a prominent background. She is the granddaughter of well-known Mumbai businessman Ravi Ghai and has reportedly been a close part of the Tendulkar inner circle for quite some time.

### T20 WORLD CUP:

## Gautam Gambhir Names One India Player Who Has "Made His Life A Lot Easier"

India registered a winning start to their ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 campaign with a 29-run victory over the USA in Mumbai, riding on Captain Suryakumar Yadav's unbeaten 84. Speaking on JioStar's 'Follow the Blues', India Head Coach Gautam Gambhir hailed Suryakumar as a leader and emphasised how the team atmosphere has been critical to India's performance in the T20 format. Gambhir, speaking on JioStar's 'Follow the Blues', heaped praise on Suryakumar Yadav for leading the T20I side from the front both on and off the field: "Surya has made my life a lot easier in



this format, and I think he's a phenomenal leader of men-not because of the kind of batter he is or the shots he plays. All of that you can keep aside, but because of what he does on the cricket field. The way he relates to players, the way he talks to

them, the time he spends with them, and how relaxed he is on the field. As a coach, that allows you to think about other things because you know he's going to keep the atmosphere calm, which is what any coach can dream of. For me, Surya the

player can be kept aside, but Surya the leader has ticked every box. He's a phenomenal leader. It's a great thing to have someone like him leading the country, because his heart is in the right place and he takes the right decisions, especially under pressure." On the importance of having a light team atmosphere off the field, Gambhir added: "For me, they are a great bunch of young boys. They want to have fun, they want to play for each other. The atmosphere in the dressing room is relaxed, and that's extremely important, because once you walk onto the field, it's serious business.

## From Aluminium Bats To Failed Tests: When 'Bat Tampering' Grabbed Headlines

Controversy erupted during the ongoing T20 World Cup 2026 as Sri Lanka star Bhanuka Rajapaksa made a stunning 'bat tampering' allegation against the Indian cricket team. Rajapaksa said that the bats used by the India cricketers had an extra layer of rubber that allegedly helps them in generating extra power. According to ICC rules, bats must be made of wood and nothing else but Rajapaksa hinted towards Indian batters gaining an unfair advantage. Amid the ongoing row, here's a look at some instances where cricket bats grabbed headlines for all the wrong reasons - The Monster Bat Controversy (1971) English cricketer Thomas White used a bat which was as wide as the wick-



et itself while playing for Chertsey versus Hambledon at Laleham Burway in 1771. The bat caused a massive controversy at that time and even resulted in a change in the 1774 version of the Laws of Cricket where it was specified that the maximum width of a cricket bat

cannot exceed four and one quarter inches. Dennis Lillie's Aluminium Bat (1979) Legendary Australia fast bowler Dennis Lillie used a metal aluminium bat during an Ashes Test match in 1979. However, the bat was not to the liking of England captain

Mike Brearley who lodged an official complaint that it was damaging the balls. Australia captain Greg Chappell asked Lillie to change bats and the ICC decided to subsequently ban non-wooden bats. Ricky Ponting's Graphite-Coated Bat (2006) Controversy erupted over Australia great Ricky Ponting when the MCC decided to look into the legality of the 'Kahuna' Kookaburra bat. The bat had a graphite coating and the MCC argued that it helped the batter in producing extra power. ICC went on to ban the bat and other similar models. Andre Russell's Black Bat (2016) West Indies all-rounder Andre Russell used a black bat with a pink handle while playing for Sydney Thunder in the 2016-17 Big Bash League.

## Great attitude but goals have dried up - what's happened to Woltemade?



Nick Woltemade had his cap pulled over his eyes as he left the Stadium of Light. But there was no way the towering Newcastle United forward - all 6ft 6in of him - was going to slip out of the stadium unnoticed. Not after his own goal settled the Wear-Tyne derby a couple of months ago. Woltemade's team-mates were booed by the Sunderland supporters gathered outside as they climbed on to the team bus - but Woltemade was applauded, cheered and even serenaded with chants of "Hero! Hero! Hero!" after inadvertently heading Newcastle's bitter rivals to a 1-0 victory back in December. Some players might have taken a bit of time to come back from a blow like that. But Woltemade responded in immediate and emphatic fashion, scoring a first-half double against Chelsea in his next Newcastle start less than a week later. It was a sign of his mental strength, and Woltemade has had to draw on those reserves of resilience lately after failing to find the back of the net for Eddie Howe's side since December. "He started so

well," the Newcastle head coach said. "Everyone expected him to continue. As much as we wanted that for him, that's very difficult to do." So why have the goals dried up for the Germany forward? It is a question few could have imagined asking not so long ago. Not after Woltemade scored six goals from his first six efforts on target for the club, including bullet headers against Arsenal and Wolves, an audacious flick against Union Saint-Gilloise and a stunning backheel at Brighton. Such an instant impact even took Woltemade by surprise following his £68m move from Stuttgart in the final days of the summer window. But it got to the stage where the German went into every game firmly believing he would find the back of the net. Even those closest to Woltemade were taken aback by the devastating manner in which he dispatched a penalty against Nottingham Forest in a 2-0 victory back in October. However, it was never going to be sustainable for Woltemade to keep scoring at such a clinical rate.

## 'It kind of spiralled' - four ejected after mass brawl

Four players were ejected after a mass brawl as the Detroit Pistons beat the Charlotte Hornets 110-104 in a bad-tempered NBA fixture. Detroit's Jalen Duren was fouled by Charlotte's Moussa Diabate during the third quarter, with the pair then confronting one another and appearing to butt heads. Diabate had to be held back as he tried to hit Duren, before several other players got involved in the incident. Detroit forward Isaiah Stewart confronted Charlotte's Miles Bridges and put him in a headlock before appearing to strike him multiple times. The brawl lasted about 30 seconds, ending with a brief



police presence on the floor. Diabate, Duren, Stewart and Bridges were ejected - and Hornets coach Charles Lee was kicked out in the fourth quarter after he had to be restrained while

angrily shouting at the officials having disagreed with a decision. "Emotions were flaring. At the end of the day, we would love to keep it basketball, but things happen. Everybody was

just playing hard," Duren said after the match. "This isn't the first time that people have tried to be like extra aggressive with us and talk to us, whatever the case may be. "At the end of the day, emotions got high with everybody being competitive. Things happen." Bridges later apologised to fans, writing on Instagram: "Sorry Hornets nation! Sorry Hornets Organization! Always going to protect my team-mates forever." Lead official John Goble said in a post-game report the players were ejected because they "engaged in fighting activity during the dead ball".

## MOUAT & DODDS DENIED BRONZE AS GB MEDAL WAIT CONTINUES

Jen Dodds and Bruce Mouat suffered Winter Olympic heartbreak in the mixed doubles curling for the second time in four years after losing out on bronze to hosts Italy. The British duo had been peerless in the round-robin format, losing just once and topping the standings, but that fine form has evaporated in the play-offs. A surprise defeat by Sweden in Monday's semi-finals was followed by this 5-3 loss in a febrile Cortina Curling Stadium high in the Dolomites, which leaves Team GB still searching for their first medal of the Games. As the celebrations of the boisterous home fans rolled down the wooden bleachers in this quirky arena - where Italy's Stefania Constantini learned the game as a child - the Scottish pair suffered their latest Olympic disappointment. "So close, but so far," Dodds told BBC



Sport. "It hurts the same as four years ago but I don't want to ugly-cry so I'm going to stop there." This time was supposed to be different. The memories of losing both play-off matches in Beijing four years ago were supposed to fuel their bid for a medal. They were supposed to have ribbon around their necks and metal upon their chests. But instead, they will be left with more regrets as they head into the men's and women's events on

Wednesday and Thursday respectively. "It's rough. We played so much better than four years ago so to leave with the same result is going to hurt for a bit," an equally-emotional Mouat added. In a game of fine margins, Mouat and Dodds were repeatedly an inch or two away from where they needed to be. They started with the hammer - theoretically advantageous in allowing a team to control a match - and had a shot in the first end to take three points. However,

Dodds' effort was fractionally more and the Italians stole one. It would be a recurring theme as Constantini and Amos Mosaner dictated the contest. The British pair levelled, before the hosts edged back ahead in a cagey third end and pinched another in the third. Again, it was a near-miss from Dodds. That had Italy 3-1 ahead at the interval and GB chasing. One in the fifth was less than they wanted but a big mistake by Mosaner in the sixth opened the door. Was this going to be the moment the momentum shifted? It wasn't. Constantini - a picture of tranquility throughout - played a perfect shot to ensure the Italians edged two clear again with two to play. GB needed a big score, and deployed their powerplay, but again could only take one and were left needing a steal to even force an extra end. They couldn't.

## The messy Quad God and kitchen blender set to be an Olympic superstar



After sending the Milan-Cortina crowd into a frenzy with his back flip in the figure skating team event, all eyes will be on US skater Ilia Malinin as he strives for individual Winter Olympic gold. He made mistakes in the team event but was still the only participant to record more than 200 points, securing USA team gold by a single point ahead of Japan on Sunday. That sums up the 21-year-old, the biggest star of his sport, who is set for global fame at Milan-Cortina 2026. "It's his Olympics to lose," Olympic figure skating gold medallist Robin Cousins told BBC Sport. "After watching him over the last five years - he has grown. The talent was always there; he is otherworldly in that respect. "Is it messy? Yes, but I watched him live and I got it. Now he has grown into that slightly quirky style - it isn't polished, and I don't want it to be. "Anyone lucky enough to be in Milan, it will be one of those 'I was there' moments." Malinin has not been beaten in compe-

tion for almost two and a half years. Competing in his first Olympics, he arrives with the nickname 'Quad God' having become the only skater to successfully land the quadruple axel. The move requires a skater to launch themselves into a jump, spin four and a half times in the air, and cleanly land backwards. Malinin did not pull out this move in the team event, although it was registered in his planned program. He landed triple axels instead - costing him points but still executed so perfectly that it provided a net benefit. If that wasn't enough, he also landed the first legal backflip at an Olympic Games since US champion Terry Kubicka in 1976 - after which it was banned for safety reasons. Thanks in part to skaters like France's Surya Bonaly - who performed the move illegally but successfully at Nagano 1998 - the backflip is now legal again; and Malinin became the first to land it at the Games on only one foot. So Malinin is already making history and winning golds.

## The new film titled “Nawab Cafe” is set to release on February 20

Shiva Kandukuri, Rajeev Kanakala, and Teju Ashwini play the lead roles in “Nawab Cafe”, produced under the Harshika Productions banner by Radha V Papudippu. The film is directed by Pramod Harsha and is scheduled to release on February 20. In this context, the team organized a grand press meet to interact with the media. Hero Shiva Kandukuri said, “We began our journey with the title ‘Chai Wala’. We worked very hard to bring ‘Chai Wala’ to the audience. While respecting the censor rules and guidelines, we decided to change our title to ‘Nawab Cafe’. When Pramod first narrated this story to me, he had already considered the title ‘Nawab Cafe’. Even in my phone, Pramod’s name is saved under that title. Now, destiny has made it happen that we could officially go with ‘Nawab Cafe’. This title truly reflects the story and the soul of our film. Even though we had to change the title and faced some censor issues, our producer Venkat never stepped back or compromised. The whole team decided to pro-



mote the film under the new title ‘Nawab Cafe’. We made this movie with utmost honesty and genuineness. I’m confident it will connect with everyone. After watching the film, people will definitely call their fathers to share their feelings. We are coming to the audience on February 20 with the new title, ‘Nawab Cafe’. I thank the media and the audience for supporting us so far.” Producer Venkat said, “No one officially told us to change the title. I went to Mumbai and spoke to the

censor team.

They said the title ‘Chai Vala’ cannot be used. After that, we considered many options, but we finally decided to fix ‘Nawab Cafe’ as our working title. I hope the audience supports our title ‘Nawab Cafe’ as well. I also hope the media continues to support us like this.” Director Pramod Harsha said, “We changed the title from ‘Chai Wala’ for certain reasons. Following the guidelines and rules of the censor board, we chose a new title. The story is based

on incidents I have seen and experienced. I request the media to take our title ‘Nawab Cafe’ to the audience.” Heroine Teju Ashwini said, “Regardless of the title, if the content is good and the film is enjoyable, the audience will support it. This is my first film, and I hope everyone embraces ‘Nawab Cafe’. It feels as if God is testing us to bring out a good product. Our film is coming on February 20, and I hope the media and audience will continue to support us.”

## “NUVVE UNDIPO ILA”, “NUVVELE” SONGS LAUNCHED GRANDLY IN THE PRESENCE OF TOLLYWOOD CELEBRITIES

The song launch event of “Nuvve Undipo Ila” and “Nuvvele” was held in a grand manner in Hyderabad, attended by several prominent Tollywood personalities. Presented by Adonai Pictures Creations, the two songs are directed by renowned choreographer Satya Master, featuring Ankita Jadhav and Rohith Bhoga as the lead pair. The songs are produced by K.K. Reddy, with music composed by Jayanth Aryan and lyrics penned by Rambabu Gosala. The songs are beautifully rendered by singers Lipsika and Aditi Bhavaraju. Well-known directors Sai Rajesh, Shailesh Kolanu, choreographer Johnny Master, and actress Ashu Reddy attended the event as special guests. Satya Master Choreographer & Director said “I met producer K.K. Reddy during a US event. By then, the Hindi versions of these songs were already ready. When they shared the idea of making Telugu versions, we immediately started working on it. With a very small crew, we completed both songs in a short time. The producer was



extremely passionate about the project. Jayanth’s music, Rambabu’s lyrics, and the soulful singing by Lipsika and Aditi will definitely impress everyone.” Producer K.K. Reddy said “My heartfelt thanks to everyone who attended the launch. Director Satya Master picturized the songs beautifully with a strong love feel, and his choreography is a major highlight. Lipsika and Aditi sang wonderfully—one feels like calling them nightingales. Jayanth composed very engaging tunes. I believe

these songs will be loved and repeatedly listened to by audiences.” Heroine Ankita Jadhav said: “I come from Bollywood and have worked in music albums there. This is my fifth music album. We shot these songs in New York and Chicago under challenging weather conditions. Working under Satya Master’s direction was a great experience. I hope Telugu audiences will support and love these songs.” Music Director Jayanth Aryan said “These songs were originally made in

Hindi. While bringing them into Telugu, we were curious about how music lovers here would receive them. Seeing so many respected guests at the launch has given us great confidence that Telugu audiences will definitely enjoy these songs.” Actress Ashu Reddy said: “Both ‘Nuvve Undipo Ila’ and ‘Nuvvele’ are beautiful songs. Satya Master has presented them very well. I wish Ankita Jadhav great opportunities in Telugu after this project.” Lyricist Rambabu Gosala said “These are wonderful songs.

## “Shiva–Mithra’s journey in Couple Friendly will be engaging and interesting,”: hero Santosh Soban at the pre-release press meet



Santosh Soban is playing the lead in the film Couple Friendly, with Manasa Varanasi as the female lead. The film is being grandly produced in Telugu and Tamil by UV Concepts and presented by the reputed production house UV Creations. Ajay Kumar Raju P. is the co-producer. The film is directed by Ashwin Chandrasekhar. Made as a musical romantic love story, Couple Friendly is set to release in Telugu and Tamil on February 14, on the occasion of

Valentine’s Day. Passionate producer and distributor Dheeraj Mogilineni is releasing the film in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The pre-release press meet of the film was held today in Hyderabad. Producer and distributor Dheeraj Mogilineni said, “The censor board asked us to change the title Couple Friendly. However, the film was made with this title, and all promotions were also done with the same name. With only a few days left for release, we felt it was not right to change

the title now, so we decided to continue with it. As a result, the film received an A certificate. In Tamil, the same title received a UA certificate from the censor board. There are some rumours that the film contains adult content, and I want to clarify that. Couple Friendly is a pure love story. You can even call it a family entertainer. The hero and heroine come from good family backgrounds, and their family members play important roles in the film.

## I Consider It a Blessing to Act in the Song "Shivoham" – Tanikella Bharani

On the auspicious occasion of Maha Shivaratri, the launch event of the devotional song “Shivoham”, dedicated to Lord Shiva, was held grandly on Monday at the Hyderabad Film Chamber.

The song is presented by Radhakrishna and produced by Pottapu Keshava Reddy. It is directed by Damu Reddy, with music composed by Yashokrishna. The song was rendered by renowned Malayalam singer Madhu Balakrishnan. Shivoham will be available on Keertana TV in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, and Hindi.

The event was graced by His Holiness Sri Sri Sri Madabhina Voddanda Vidyashankara Bharati Mahaswamiji, Peethadhipathi of Sri Jagadguru Shankaracharya Pushpagiri Mahasanthanam, along with prominent actor Tanikella Bharani, renowned lyricist Suddala Ashok Teja, and actor Gautam Raju.

**MUSIC DIRECTOR YASHOKRISHNA SAID:** “I am very happy that Shivoham is being released on the occasion of Maha



Shivaratri. I feel fortunate to have composed the music for this song. I thank our director and producer for giving me this opportunity.” Director Damu Reddy said: “We are presenting the song Shivoham to all of you. It has been produced in Hindi as well as all major South Indian languages. Producer Keshava Reddy garu and actor Tanikella Bharani garu have extended great support. Our song will help devotees celebrate Maha Shivaratri with greater spiritual devotion.”

**PRODUCER POTTAPU KESHAVA REDDY SAID:** “It is a great honor to launch our song Shivoham in the presence of His Holiness Sri Vidyashankara Bharati Mahaswamiji. We are delighted that Tanikella Bharani garu and Suddala Ashok Teja garu attended as chief guests. We have produced Shivoham not only with devotion but also with a meaningful message for devotees.”

**ACTOR TANIKELLA BHARANI SAID:** “Twenty-five years ago, I wrote a book titled Atagadhara Shiva. Since then, I have been invited as a guest to programs related to Lord Shiva across the two Telugu states. I consider it a blessing to get the opportunity to act in the song Shivoham. I performed in it with complete devotion to Lord Shiva. The song was shot at the Isha Foundation premises. I personally spoke to Isha Shailaja and obtained

permission for the shoot. Director Damu Reddy has beautifully crafted the song. Yashokrishna composed it wonderfully. Suddala Ashok Teja wrote an extraordinary song using simple words. Madhu Balakrishnan sang it in a way that brings national recognition. I hope Shivoham delights all devotees.”

**LYRICIST SUDDALA ASHOK TEJA SAID:** “Tanikella Bharani was the one who gave me my first opportunity as a lyricist. Without his encouragement, I would not have entered the industry. It is a pleasure to launch Shivoham in his presence and in the presence of Sri Shankarabharati Swamiji. I never imagined this song would be unveiled before so many distinguished personalities. Lord Brahma appears in one way, Lord Vishnu in another, but Lord Shiva’s appearance feels unique to me. In Shiva’s capital, Kailasa, everyone is equal. It is a place of true equality. There may be a snake and a mouse there, but they coexist peacefully. Such a harmonious society does not exist in the kingdom of any other deity.

## “FUNKY WILL APPEAL TO AUDIENCES ACROSS ALL SECTIONS,” SAYS DIRECTOR K.V. ANUDEEP

After redefining comedy with Jathi Ratnalu, director K.V. Anudeep is now returning to theatres with Funky to deliver another round of laughter. Starring “Mass Ka Das” Vishwak Sen as the lead, the film features Kayaadu Lohar as the heroine. The film is presented by Sriakra Studios and produced by Suryadevara Naga Vamsi and Sai Soujanya under Sitara Entertainments and Fortune Four Cinemas. Music is composed by Bheems Ceciroleo. Releasing a day ahead of Valentine’s Day on February 13, Funky has already generated strong expectations. The teaser, trailer, and songs have been widely appreciated and have doubled the buzz around the film. As the film prepares to hit theatres, promising a memorable entertainment experience, director K.V. Anudeep interacted with

the media and shared several interesting insights about the movie.

**WHAT WAS THE IDEA BEHIND THE TITLE ‘FUNKY’?** The title Funky is catchy and suits the sensibilities of today’s generation. It also perfectly fits the hero’s character.

**HOW WILL VISHWAK SEN’S CHARACTER BE?** Vishwak Sen plays a film director in this movie. While writing the character, I felt only Vishwak could do justice to it. His comedy timing in Ee Nagarani Emaindi is excellent.

**WHAT IS THE GENRE AND STORY OF FUNKY? IS IT DIFFERENT FROM JATHI RATNALU?** Compared to Jathi Ratnalu, Funky is completely different. It

is an out-and-out romantic comedy and a family entertainer. The film humorously portrays certain situations from directors’ lives in a way that common audiences can relate to. Along with the love story, there are strong emotional family moments as well. There are scenes that connect with real-life experiences. The film will appeal to all sections of the audience.

**WILL THERE BE LOGIC IN FUNKY?** Definitely. Just because my films have a lot of comedy, people may assume there is no logic, but there is logic in all my films.

**SOME FILMMAKERS TRIED JATHI RATNALU-STYLE HUMOR AND FAILED. WHAT’S YOUR TAKE?** The world we create and the characters we write should feel

close to real life. Comedy should come across as natural. Only then will it connect with the audience. Even though Funky has a film industry backdrop, we have designed it to feel relatable to common viewers.

**DID YOU ACT IN THIS FILM? DO YOU PLAN TO BECOME A FULL-TIME ACTOR?** I appear in a guest role in Funky. I am more interested in being a director than an actor. I have no plans to become a full-time actor. I still have many stories to tell and want to continue directing films.

**THE COMEDY PUNCHES IN THE TRAILER LANDED REALLY WELL. WILL YOU ONLY MAKE COMEDY FILMS?** I want to make different kinds of films. Trailers are designed to be

highly entertaining to grab attention. In Funky, along with comedy, there is a beautiful love story and emotional family moments. Everything has come together well. There are also a few surprises in the film.

**WHO APPEARS IN GUEST ROLES IN THIS FILM?** Directors Harish Shankar and Kalyan Shankar, along with producers Dil Raju and Naga Vamsi, appear in guest roles. However, these roles are integrated into the story, and we have tried to generate humor through natural conversations with them.

**DID THE RESULT OF YOUR PREVIOUS FILM ‘PRINCE’ AFFECT YOU?** Success and failure are part of filmmaking. Every film is made with the intention of delivering something good. For Prince, we

didn’t have enough time to properly develop the script. For Funky, we took adequate time and prepared a strong script.

**WHOM DID YOU NARRATE FUNKY’S STORY TO FIRST?** I first narrated it to producer Naga Vamsi. He liked it and immediately agreed to make the film.

**DID TRIVIKRAM WATCH THE FILM?** Yes, he watched it during post-production. He liked the film and gave some valuable suggestions.

**ABOUT PRODUCER CHINABABU (S. RADHA KRISHNA)?** I worked very closely with him on this film. I used to discuss everything with him, and he gave many inputs and sugges-

