

9 patients' eyes removed, 9 others lose vision after cataract surgery

GORAKHPUR (TSIT) Nine patients had to get an eye removed, and nine others lost vision in one of the eyes after they developed an infection following cataract surgeries at a private hospital here, prompting authorities to seal the facility and order an inquiry.

Congress top leadership holds review with CM Revanth & Ministers

NEW DELHI (TSIT): The All India Congress Committee (AICC) leadership held a high-level review meeting with Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy and other State Cabinet Ministers here on Thursday.

The meeting, chaired by AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge in the presence of Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and AICC General Secretary KC Venugopal, comes close to the heels of the Congress party's emphatic victory in the Telangana Municipal Polls-



2026. According to latest data, the Congress secured 93 out of 113 Municipal Chairperson posts, consolidating its position in the State.

Following the deliberations, Mr. Kharge took to X to affirm the party's commitment to the

people of Telangana. "Our resolve for social welfare, economic empowerment, and justice for all remains firm and is reflected in our guarantees. We will continue striving to realise the aspirations of every citizen and build a truly inclusive Telangana," he posted.

RAJANTH MEETS ASEAN NAVY CHIEFS ON MILAN 2026 SIDELINES



VISAKHAPATNAM (TSIT): Raksha Mantri Rajnath Singh held a high-level interaction with Navy Chiefs and Naval delegations from nine ASEAN member states here today, on the sidelines of the ongoing MILAN 2026 naval exercise.

and-rescue operations. Describing ASEAN as a central pillar of India's Indo-Pacific strategy, Mr. Singh stated that shared security is the foundation of regional prosperity.

Reiterating sentiments from the India-ASEAN informal meeting in late 2025, the ASEAN delegates lauded India's role as a first responder in the region.

TELANGANA RESTAURANTS AMONG TOP EVADERS IN RS 70,000 CRORE TAX SCAM



HYDERABAD: An investigation into Hyderabad's biryani chains revealed that there is a greater tax evasion scam worth at least Rs 70,000 crore in the restaurant industry, with Karnataka recording the highest evasion and Telangana not far behind.

The Income Tax Department reportedly used data analysis and artificial intelligence (AI) tools to inspect 60 terabytes of data on the pan-India billing

software used by over 1 lakh restaurants. The investigators found that although customers paid, the bills were being systematically deleted or altered.

These places reportedly suppressed sales turnover worth approximately Rs 70,000 crore since the 2019-20 financial year.

The evasion was discovered when an income tax investigation team searched a biryani restaurant chain in Hyderabad. The officials acted under Section 133A of the Income Tax Act and conducted survey operations to compare the restaurant's computer records with actual sales.

Andhra to sign agreements to strengthen AI infrastructure at New Delhi summit

AMARAVATI (TSIT): The Andhra Pradesh government will sign agreements with various institutions and companies to strengthen Artificial Intelligence (AI) infrastructure and skill development in the state at the ongoing India AI Impact Summit 2026 in New Delhi.

Another agreement will be signed with the United Nations International Computing Centre (UNICC) for the establishment of a Quantum and AI Centre of Excellence. The state will also sign an MoU with NIELIT, the



skill development and capacity building arm of the Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY), for setting up a Quantum AI University in

Andhra Pradesh. IIT Madras will collaborate with the Andhra Pradesh government to establish an Artificial Intelligence Tutor initiative, while NVIDIA will partner in setting up AI Living Labs in the state.

The Chief Minister will participate in meetings with industry leaders during the event. As per the schedule, the Chief Minister will leave for Jaipur on Thursday evening to attend the wedding of Kuppam Area Development Authority Project Director Vikas Marmat.

Reliance Group to invest Rs 10 lakh crore in AI, create new high-skill work opportunities: Mukesh Ambani

NEW DELHI, Feb 19 (GNS): Billionaire Mukesh Ambani announced on Thursday that Jio and Reliance Industries will together invest as much as Rs 10 lakh crore in artificial intelligence over the next seven years. "This is not a speculative investment. It is not for chasing valuation. This is patient, disciplined, nation-building capital — designed to create durable economic value and strategic resilience for decades to come," the Reliance Industries Chairman remarked in his address at the AI India Impact Summit here.



network, will make intelligence responsive, low-latency and affordable — close to where Indians live, learn and work. "From kirana stores to clinics, from classrooms to farms — intelligence will live at the edge. Our resolve is clear: make intelligence as ubiquitous as connectivity. When compute becomes infrastructure, innovation will become inevitable," Ambani observed.

sans speak to AI in their own words, and students learn in their own mother tongue — this is not convenience. This is inclusion", he remarked. Jio would ensure responsibility, security, data residency and trust as core guarantees, he also said. He further stated that the Reliance Group would prove that AI does not take away jobs. Rather, it will create new high-skill work opportunities.

SC stays Madras High Court order restraining Tamil Nadu Waqf Board from exercising functions



NEW DELHI (GNS): The Supreme Court on Thursday stayed a Madras High Court order which restrained the Tamil Nadu Waqf Board from exercising any functions while observing that its constitution was prima facie not in accordance with the provisions of law.



sub-section (1) of Section 14, excluding ex-officio members, shall be non-Muslim. Section 14 of the Act deals with composition of board. Before the high court, the counsel appearing for the state contended that constitution of the board is almost complete as majority of members have already been nominated or appointed and as far as other members are concerned, steps are being taken to complete the same.

India not just a part of AI revolution, but leading it: PM Modi

NEW DELHI (GNS): Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said artificial intelligence must be democratised and become a tool for inclusion and empowerment, particularly for the Global South. Addressing the India AI Impact Summit, Modi said the expo is taking place in India, which represents one sixth of humanity, a country with the world's largest young population and a hub of the largest tech talent pool.



The prime minister said India not only builds technology but also adopts it at an unprecedented pace. "Some people have doubts about new technology. But the way the younger generation is embracing AI is unprecedented. There has also been tremendous enthusiasm here regarding the AI Summit exhibition," he said.

centuries. These turning points set the direction of civilisation and transform the pace of development. Artificial intelligence is one such transformation in history," he said. The world leaders attending the summit at the Bharat Mandapam include French President Emmanuel Macron, Brazil President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Sri Lanka President Anura Kumara Dissanayaka, Bhutan Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay, Mauritius Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Croatia Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic, Serbia President Aleksandar Vucic, Seychelles Vice President Sebastien Pillay, Estonia President Alar Karis, and Finland Prime Minister Petteri Orpo.

Row erupts as Mamata accuses PM Modi of misaddressing Sri Ramakrishna on birth anniversary

Kolkata, Feb 19: West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress (TMC) supreme Mamata Banerjee on Thursday took a sharp dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accusing him of cultural insensitivity over his reference to Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa on the saint's birth anniversary.

ly displays his cultural insensitivity to great figures of Bengal. Today is the janmatithi of Yugavata Sri Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. While trying to hail the great saint on this occasion, our PM added an unprecedented and improper prefix to the great saint's name, 'Swami', she wrote. Earlier in the day, Modi had paid tribute to Ramakrishna Paramahansa on his birth anniversary, using the prefix "Swami" before the saint's name in his message.



including party spokesperson Kunal Ghosh, who said that in Bengal's tradition, Ramakrishna Paramahansa is commonly addressed as "Thakur" or "Sri Ramakrishna," and not as "Swami."

The controversy comes amid heightened political tensions in West Bengal ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections, with the TMC and the Bharatiya Janata Party once again trading barbs. The ruling party in the state has repeatedly accused the BJP of being "anti-Bengal," a charge that resurfaced in the wake of the latest exchange.

# AMODEI, ALTMAN REFUSE TO HOLD HANDS FOR GROUP PIC AT AI IMPACT SUMMIT



**New Delhi (TSIT) :** OpenAI's Sam Altman and Anthropic's Dario Amodei didn't hold hands for a group photograph with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the India AI Impact Summit on Thursday and raised their fists instead, the awkward moment between the

once colleagues and now rival CEOs captured on camera and quickly going viral. The tech giants, including Google CEO Sundar Pichai, had gathered on stage after Modi's address at the summit. Pichai and Altman were standing on either side of Modi, who held

their hands aloft and asked others to join in. However, Altman and Amodei, standing next to each other, conspicuously did not do so and raised their fists, breaking the chain. The two tech leaders looked distinctly uncomfortable as well. Altman, 40, has been

CEO of the American AI research organisation OpenAI since 2019. Amodei, three years older, is the co-founder and CEO of Anthropic, the American company behind the large language model series Claude. They worked together in OpenAI before

Amodei branched out. Amodei, his sister Daniela Amodei, and other senior OpenAI researchers left the company in 2020 due to disagreements with Altman and the board over the company's direction. The Amodei siblings subsequently founded Anthropic.

## MLA Veerlapalli Shankar Directs Strengthening of Veterinary Services in Shadnagar



**RANGAREDDY (TSIT) Shadnagar** MLA and Chairman of the Government Public Sector Undertakings Committee, Veerlapalli Shankar, held a comprehensive review meeting with veterinary doctors of the Shadnagar Assembly constituency at his camp office, calling for enhanced and farmer-centric veterinary services. During the meeting, the MLA stressed that veterinary officials must remain easily accessible to farmers and ensure prompt medical assistance for livestock. He instructed the District Veterinary Officer, Srinivas Rao, to immediately cancel deputations of staff who were allotted to Shadnagar but currently serving in other areas. He underlined that such arrangements were affecting service delivery in the constituency and must be corrected without delay. Pointing to the staff shortage, Veerlapalli Shankar noted that 22 Veterinary Assistant posts are lying vacant and assured that he would raise the matter with State Minister Vakitri Srihari to expedite their recruitment. He further assured that necessary repairs to veterinary hospital buildings would be taken up in phases to improve infrastructure and ensure better services for the farming community.

## KAVITHA SLAMS CONGRESS OVER RTC MERGER DELAY



**Hyderabad: BRS MLC K. Kavitha** on Thursday accused the Congress government of betraying RTC workers by failing to implement the merger of the Telangana State Road Transport Corporation with the State government. Addressing a press meet at the Telangana Jagruthi office, she questioned the delay despite the merger bill being passed and demanded specific budget allocation in the upcoming session. She alleged that employees are working long hours, nearly 1,000 workers were removed for

minor reasons, and retirement benefits remain pending. Kavitha sought immediate reinstatement of dismissed staff, compensation for affected workers, and a white paper on funds allocated for the Mahalakshmi free bus scheme. She also opposed alleged moves toward privatization and outsourcing of RTC services. Extending support to the "Chalo Secretariat" protest on February 24, she warned of intensified agitation if demands are not addressed.

## SHIVAJI MAHARAJ STATUE UNVEILED AT SHAMSHIGUDA



**Hyderabad:** The 396th birth anniversary of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was celebrated at Mahankali Nagar, Shamsiguda, where his statue was unveiled in a grand Eatala Rajender, Member of Parliament from Malkajgiri, attended as Chief Guest and described Shivaji Maharaj as a symbol of dharma, courage and self-respect. He said Shivaji's vision of Swarajya and governance continues to inspire generations and urged youth to embrace discipline and patriotism. Former Telangana State BC Commission Chairman Dr. Vakulabharanam Krishna Mohan Rao highlighted Shivaji's administrative brilliance, commitment to Rajadharma and inclusive governance. The programme was organised by Shivaji Yuva Sena, with several leaders and community members participating in the celebrations.



TOWN POLICE, ALONG WITH TRAFFIC SI ARUN KUMAR AND SI SABIR, CONDUCTED DRINK AND DRIVE TESTS AS PART OF ROUTINE CHECKS AT THE LOCAL MOTHER TERESA STATUE AT THE FOREST OFFICE CENTER IN MAHABUBABAD TOWN, KEEPING PUBLIC SAFETY IN MIND.

## PROTEST IF BJP FAILS ON PROMISES: KOMATIREDDY

**Karimnagar, February 19:** Suda Chairman Komatireddy Narendar Reddy said people should stage protests if the BJP fails to implement its promises. Addressing a press conference, he alleged that the BJP was indulging in "divert and drama politics" and accused Union Minister Bandi Sanjay Kumar of failing to deliver development for Karimnagar despite the



BJP holding MP, MLC and Mayor posts. Narendar Reddy claimed the BJP had a secret understand-

ing with the BRS to target the Congress and criticised attempts to lure corporators. He demanded that the Centre fulfil all assurances given to the people. Stating that the State government has been implementing welfare and development schemes sincerely, he urged the BJP to prove its commitment or face public opposition. Several Congress leaders were present at the meeting.

## WARANGAL COMMISSIONERATE CONTINUES TO BE ACTIVE IN POLICE SPORTS

**WARANGAL, February 19,** TSIT : Police athletes of Warangal Commissionerate continued their efforts on the third day on Thursday in the State Police Games and Sports Meet, which was started by Saibarabadi Commissionerate. In these games till now the athletes of Warangal Police Commissionerate have won a total of 42 medals, including 9 gold medals, 15 silver medals and 18 bronze medals. Among the medals won so far, mainly in archery sports, the police sports persons performed brilliantly



and SI Anil Kumar won the gold medal in the Indian Olympic category on Thursday, while another athlete Chalpathy won the bronze medal. In the same archery event, team section Warangal Commissionerate players SI Anil Kumar, SI Mahender constables

Rahul and Chalpathy won the gold medal. In another event, Constable Surrender Savarna won the gold medal in hammer throw, while female constable Bhuvaneshwari won the Rajita medal in weight jumping. Constable Kalyani silver, Head Constable Sujatha, Latha and Constable Sarvesh won bronze medals in power lifting sport. Similarly, in some other sports, the players of Warangal Police Commissionerate secured medals by reaching the finals in various sports. Warangal Police Commissioner Sanpreet Singh and Team Manager Nagaiah congratulated the police athletes who won medals on this occasion.

## IAS AND IPS FOUNDATION LAUNCHED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF VIGYAN GROUP OF SCHOOLS



**Yadadri Bhongir TSIT:** IAS and IPS program will be organized under the auspices of Vignyan Group of Schools in Bhuvanagiri town of Yadadri Bhongir district on Saturday, 21st of this month at Sai Convention Hall, said Chairman Dr. Pagidala Jalandhar Reddy. The chief guests for this program were Bhuvanagiri Member of Parliament Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy, Bhuvanagiri MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy, District Collector Hanumantha Rao, Additional DGP Mahesh Bhagwat, Municipal Chairman Tangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar, District SP Akshansh Yadav, Additional Collector Bhaskara Rao, District Library Chairman Ajev Chisti, DEO Satyanarayana, Swarnagiri Trust Chairman Rama Rao, keynote speaker Suddala Ashok Teja, Vice Chairman Pothamsetty Manjula Venkatesh, students, parents, and a large number of participants. They requested for a successful event.

## ON THE OCCASION OF CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI MAHARAJ'S BIRTHDAY,

**Nizamabad TSIT :** grand celebration was organized by Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj Yuva Sena at Hanuman Junction in Vinayaka Nagar, Nizamabad. Prasad distribution program was also held. Speaking on the occasion, Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj Yuva Sena President Kautanya Mutyam Goud said that Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's services to our Hindu community are memorable and inspiring. Chief guest of this event was 4th Town SI Sandeep and his team. He was honored by Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj Yuva Sena. Ratnakar Goud, Madhusudan Reddy and Darshan Suresh were also special guests of the event. Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj Yuva



Sena team members Mutyala Suresh, Bangari Navin, Rekoti Shivakumar (Bittu), Mettu Gangadhar, Chandu Rathod, Neeraj, Sai Kumar, Navin Kumar, Nitin Patel, Kranti Kumar, Kotha Bharat Patel, Akshit Gaud, Nagarjuna, Uday, Mutyam, Chhotu and others participated.

## BANDI SANJAY EXTENDS HELP TO DISTRESSED KARIMNAGAR FAMILY

**Karimnagar, February 19:** Union Minister and Karimnagar MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar extended support to a distressed family from Karimnagar, who lost their money and belongings during a pilgrimage to Kanchipuram. The family, including women



and children, reportedly lost their luggage to unidentified thieves while sleeping at a temple after darshan. Upon receiving information, the Minister immediately alerted his office staff

and arranged assistance. Food and temporary accommodation were provided, train tickets were booked, and travel expenses were borne to ensure their safe return to Karimnagar. The family expressed gratitude to the Minister for his swift response and timely help.

## COLLECTOR REVIEWS HEALTH, WOMEN & CHILD WELFARE DEPARTMENTS



**Mahabubabad:** District Collector held an extensive review meeting with officials of the Medical & Health and Women & Child Welfare departments at the Collectorate conference hall. The Collector directed officials to reduce maternal and child mortality, prevent female foeticide and conduct regular inspections of private hospitals. Stressing strict implementation of the PCPNDT Act, 1994, he called for coordinated field-level action by medical officers, CDPOs, Anganwadi and ASHA workers, with police support where necessary. He instructed that awareness programmes be intensified to highlight that gender determination is a crime and emphasised collective responsibility to protect the girl child. Regular quarterly reviews and monthly inspections of private hospitals were ordered, with strict action against violators. The Collector also directed proper implementation of welfare schemes and quality nutrition and education in Anganwadi centres. Additional Collector Lenin Vatsal Toppo, DMHO Dr. Ravi Rathod and other officials attended the meeting.

## ENSURE BASIC FACILITIES IN ANGANWADI CENTRES: COLLECTOR PRAVEENYA

**Sangareddy, February 19:** District Collector P. Praveenya has directed officials to provide basic infrastructure in Anganwadi centres across the district. During a review meeting with Panchayat Raj Engineering, Rural Development and Electricity department officials, she stressed better coordination to expedite works in schools and Anganwadi centres. She called for effective utilisation of government funds and sought details of completed and ongoing projects. The Collector ordered speedy construction and repair of toilets in schools, ensuring quality standards. She also directed that completed Anganwadi buildings with electricity and basic facilities be handed over without delay. Further, she instructed officials to complete SHG federation buildings, compound walls in schools and Anganwadi centres in EGS villages, and ensure timely payment of EGS wages.

## FROM BIOASIA DEBUT TO BUILDING MEANINGFUL AI: QUADRIC IT'S JOURNEY INTO 2026



**Hyderabad (TSIT)** Quadric IT's journey at BioAsia began in 2025 with the debut of Renote AI, a reusable, intelligent note-taking platform designed to turn fragmented handwritten and digital notes into structured, usable knowledge for research, pharma, and enterprise teams. The idea was simple but powerful: reduce manual effort, improve documentation quality, and help teams retain and reuse knowledge more effectively. Renote AI marked Quadric IT's entry into applied AI—focused not on experimentation, but on solving real problems on the ground. In 2026, Quadric IT returns to BioAsia with a broader and more meaningful vision: building AI solutions that create real-world impact for people, professionals, and enterprises. One of the most inspiring additions to Quadric IT's portfolio is the Smart AI Cane, an assistive mobility device designed to help visually impaired individuals move more safely and confidently. The idea originated from a high school student who wanted to build an advanced yet affordable smart cane for the blind. Recognizing the potential of this vision, Quadric IT's engineering team transformed it into a working AI-powered solution. The Smart AI Cane uses sensors and computer vision to detect obstacles and provides audio and vibration alerts to guide users in real time. The goal is simple: make mobility safer, improve independence, and ensure that advanced technology remains accessible and affordable for those who need it most. From a single product debut in 2025 to a growing portfolio in 2026, Quadric IT's story is one of steady evolution—from showcasing innovation to building practical, scalable, and meaningful AI solutions...

Protection of Citizen's Fundamental Rights is the duty of officials: T Shyam Bhat



Udupi, Feb 19: The fundamental rights granted to citizens are human rights, and it is the duty of government officials to protect them. In case of any violation, the public can file complaints before the Commission, said the president of the Karnataka State Human Rights Commission, T Shyam Bhat.

Officials act as custodians of human rights and must ensure that the rights of common citizens are not violated. When grievances related to human rights violations are brought before departmental authorities, they must respond with courtesy and patience, carefully listen to complaints, and resolve them in accordance with the rules.

Commission Member S K Vantigodi said that every individual is naturally endowed with human rights from birth. Every person in society has the right to live with dignity, and they also have the right to question and challenge violations of these rights.

Deputy Commissioner Swaroopa T K stated that Udupi district has geographical differences compared to other districts. Certain modifications and relaxations may be necessary to effectively implement some government schemes, programs, and regulations.

PURAVANKARA LAUNCHES PURVA SILVERSKY, A PREMIUM RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN ELECTRONIC CITY, BENGALURU



Bengaluru : Puravankara Limited (NSE: PURVA | BSE: 532891), one of India's most trusted and admired real estate developers, announces the launch of Purva Silversky, a premium residential development in Hebbagodi, Electronic City, off Hosur Road, Bengaluru.

Spread across approximately 6.99 acres, the project comprises 356 exclusive residences across three iconic 32-storey towers. The project Purva Silversky offers nearly 88% open-to-sky spaces. It is positioned as a low-density development with just four residences per floor, offering enhanced privacy, openness, and elevated living.

SHIVAKUMAR APPEALS TO STATE ELECTION COMMISSION TO RECTIFY LAPSES IN VOTERS LISTS

Bengaluru : Deputy Chief Minister and KPCC President DK Shivakumar has written a letter to the State Election Commission to rectify the lapses in voter list and map the households to voting booths in Greater Bengaluru Authority area.

BENGALURU'S DEEVIA SOFTWARE WINS TOSHIBA GRIDDB IOT HACKATHON.



Bengaluru : Toshiba Digital Solutions Corporation, in collaboration with Toshiba Software India Private Limited, successfully concluded the GridDB Cloud IoT Hackathon, an innovation initiative aimed at enabling students, developers, and startup companies to build real-time IoT applications using Toshiba's GridDB® Cloud Database Service for Big Data and IoT.

The hackathon received strong participation from October 29 to December 14 2025, with over 250 applications from across India, addressing use cases including Healthcare, Finance, IoT, and Knowledge Management, demonstrating the versatility of GridDB® database service.

Commenting on the initiative, Mr. Hiroshi Tsukino, Director and Vice President of Toshiba Digital Solutions Corporation said, "Toshiba is committed to making a better world through the power of data by utilizing various kinds of data generated by businesses related to social infrastructure and turning them into platforms.

SWAN APPOINTS BWSSB CHAIRMAN DR. RAM PRASATH MANOHAR TO GLOBAL SENIOR UTILITY ADVISORY GROUP; SOLE REPRESENTATIVE FROM INDIA

LONDON / BENGALURU : The Smart Water Networks Forum (SWAN), the leading global voice for the smart water sector, has announced the formation of its 5th Senior Utility Advisory Group (UAG). In a proud moment for India's water sector, Dr. Ram Prasath Manohar, Chairman of the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB), has been selected to join this elite global committee.

Minister K.J. George Directs Immediate Action on Infrastructure Issues in K.G. Halli

BENGALURU, February 19: Reaffirming that people are the true custodians of democracy, Energy Minister and Sarvagannagar MLA K.J. George on Thursday undertook an extensive field visit across Kadugondanahalli (K.G. Halli), directly engaging with residents and instructing officials to address civic grievances without delay.



through five blocks of Pillanna Garden, hearing residents' concerns regarding the renovation of Slum Development Board houses and the availability of clean drinking water. Locals also highlighted persistent

water supply issues in Vinoba Nagar and Bharat Mata Layout. Summoning BWSSB officials to the spot, the Minister issued stern instructions: "Do not make excuses. Tell me the exact date by which clean drinking water connections will be provided. Otherwise, strict action will be taken."

90 lakh grant from the MLA's Recurrent Development Fund for the project. He also visited the Anganwadi centre at Bharat Matha Layout, which is CSR-funded by Embassy Golf Links Business Park, and assured all necessary support for its smooth functioning.

Land Acquisition Holds the Key to Fast-Tracking Railway Growth in Karnataka

Karnataka stands at a crucial juncture in its railway infrastructure expansion, with several transformative projects underway across the State. While substantial financial allocations and project approvals have paved the way for enhanced rail connectivity, the pace of execution now largely hinges on the timely acquisition of land.

hectares, the Shimoga-Harihar New Line (79 km) requires 488 hectares, the Whitefield-Kolar New Line (53 km) requires 337 hectares, and the Hassan-Belur New Line (32 km) requires 206 hectares — all of which remain fully pending.

and delivering enhanced rail connectivity to the people of the State. The pending land acquisition thus represents not just an administrative hurdle but a developmental challenge. Every delay in securing land pushes back project timelines, escalates costs and postpones the socio-economic benefits that these projects promise to deliver.

With nearly two-thirds of the required land already acquired, Karnataka has demonstrated substantial progress. The focus must now shift toward resolving pending cases through proactive coordination, stakeholder engagement and streamlined processes.

MLC Dinesh Gooligowda Submits Key Budget Proposals to CM Siddaramaiah

BENGALURU: With the presentation of the 2026-27 State Budget approaching, MLC Dinesh Gooligowda has submitted a comprehensive set of proposals to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar for incorporation into the upcoming financial plan.



Water Management and Agriculture Recognizing Karnataka's status as an agrarian State, the MLC has called for the constitution of a new Water Commission to systematically manage irrigation, reservoirs, lift irrigation schemes, and rainwater harvesting.

Initiatives In line with emerging employment trends, Gooligowda has proposed the introduction of Job & Skill Upgraded AI Diploma Courses under the Higher Education Department in every district to equip youth with Artificial Intelligence skills.

# EDITORIAL

## TIM COOK SEEMS DETERMINED TO KEEP BRUISING APPLE

For America's brands, the second Trump administration has been a field of rakes lying in wait to give them black eyes. But unlike most rakes, these have big red flags telling you where they are. Which makes it even more surprising and disappointing that the purveyor of one of America's shiniest and strongest brands keeps stepping on them. Apple Inc. is one of this country's flagship businesses. For the past 19 years, it has been the world's most admired company, according to surveys of executives, directors and analysts by Fortune Magazine and the consulting firm Korn Ferry.

For 13 years running, the iPhone maker has been the world's most valuable brand as measured by the consulting firm Interbrand. It's routinely considered one of the world's best employers. For most of those 19 years as the Gallant to so many corporate Goofuses, Apple has been led by Chief Executive Officer Tim Cook, who took over from founder Steve Jobs in 2011. Succeeding such a legend would seem to be a poisoned chalice, but Cook's low-key leadership was apparently just what the company needed to carry on in the style to which it had grown accustomed under the hard-charging Jobs, if not better.

Cook, who raised money for Hillary Clinton during the 2016 election, navigated Trump 1.0 with aplomb and even a touch of bravery. At a Bloomberg Global Business forum in 2017, he criticized the administration's immigration policies, saying: "This is unacceptable. This is not who we are as a country." The worst President Donald Trump could ever do in return was call him "Tim Apple."

Trump 2.0 has been a much different story. Where once he managed to stay on Trump's good side without embarrassing himself, this time Cook has bent fully to the political winds. It hasn't been a good look. He donated \$1 million of his own money to Trump's inaugural committee and attended the inauguration with a bevy of other tech CEOs. In August, he presented the award-hungry Trump with a bespoke glass-and-gold plaque and glazed the president as "one of the great and most esteemed business leaders and geniuses and innovators anywhere in the world."

Most infamously, Cook attended a private White House screening of Melania - a \$40 million favor from a less-beloved brand, Amazon.com Inc., to Trump and the first lady - just hours after federal agents shot and killed Alex Pretti in Minneapolis. It took days of furious criticism for Cook to finally release a milquetoast statement calling for "deescalation." More stealthily, Apple last year killed incentives for Cook and other executives to consider the environmental impact of their decisions, Bloomberg News reported. In doing so, Apple joined a recent trend of companies backing away from climate commitments, encouraged by a US government whose official policy is that climate change is a myth.

Such commitments aren't just important for woke virtue signaling. An increasingly chaotic climate makes it harder to do business, especially for a company with global reach and supply chains such as Apple.

Nor have Cook's MAGA flirtations been nearly enough to remove Apple from the American Conservative Values ETF's list of 37 overly woke companies in which it refuses to invest. The ETF's managers say they want to "exclude companies perceived to be most hostile to conservative values without sacrificing performance." The ETF consistently lagged the S&P 500 for most of last year. Apple's stock price has shown no obvious reaction to Cook's political stumbles, rising consistently during the Melania debacle. "

# Beyond Robodog: The Hollowness of Indian Higher Education



(Academic quality is dying in the race for certification)

—Dr. Priyanka Saurabh

The recent controversy surrounding the display of Robodog at Galgotias University has generated widespread discussion on social media and in the mainstream media. On the surface, this issue appears to be about appropriateness, priorities, or campus culture, but in reality, it is merely a symptom of a deeper, structural crisis that has been brewing in India's higher education system for years. The problem isn't Robodog. The problem is what our universities have gradually become. The past two decades have seen unprecedented expansion in higher education in India. The number of private universities, self-financed colleges, and degree institutions has grown rapidly. This expansion has often been presented as a result of "increased access to education" and a "demographic dividend." However, when this expansion occurred without corresponding regulation, academic rigor, and accountability, quality has come at a cost. The result has been that quantity has increased, but quality has steadily declined. Today, most—though not all—private universities and degree colleges in the country have become less centers of learning

and more centers of degree distribution. Education is becoming a transaction rather than an intellectual process—degrees in exchange for money. Attendance, academic participation, laboratory work, and intellectual discipline are no longer mandatory but are subject to negotiation. What was once non-negotiable in higher education has now become flexible, weak, and distorted. This decline is particularly worrisome in subjects where rigor is essential. Weakening theoretical studies is one thing, but the hollowing out of science education is far more serious. Today, students are receiving bachelor's and master's degrees in science without attending regular classes or receiving practical laboratory training. Experimental work—once the backbone of scientific training—has become a mere formality. Degrees are awarded, but competence is not ensured. The consequences of this hollowness become apparent when students apply for jobs. A master's degree in chemistry can't explain basic scientific concepts. A commerce graduate can't explain the basic concepts of debit and credit. A student with a management degree appears weak in problem-solving and critical thinking. These aren't isolated examples, but rather common trends observed repeatedly by industry. Naturally, this leads to frustra-

tion among students and parents. When employment fails despite years of study and substantial financial investment, questions arise. Parents are right to ask why their children remain unemployed despite their education. This discontent often targets the government, which is accused of failing to create jobs. While job creation is a policy challenge, this discourse ignores an uncomfortable truth—that a significant number of graduates are actually unemployable. This raises the fundamental question. If students lack the necessary knowledge and skills, how did they obtain the degrees that qualify them? Who gave such institutions permission to issue certificates without ensuring academic quality? The answer lies in the regulatory framework for higher education. Higher education in India is overseen by a number of ministries, departments, and regulatory bodies whose stated purpose is to safeguard standards, ensure quality, and maintain academic integrity. Accreditation systems, inspections, evaluations, and academic audits were created for this purpose. However, in practice, these processes often remain formalities rather than genuine evaluations. Inspections are often pre-planned. Documents are embellished to fulfill formalities. Buildings and infrastruc-

ture are prioritized over teaching quality. Compliance is placed above learning outcomes. The actual academic experience of students, the quality of teaching, the rigor of examinations, and the culture of inquiry—these are rarely seriously and consistently monitored. As a result, institutions learn to "manage" regulators rather than improve education. This regulatory laxity has led to a vicious cycle—institutions operate with minimal academic accountability, regulators maintain the appearance of oversight, and degrees continue to be issued. The price of this system is borne not by institutions nor by regulators—but by students, employers, and society. Ironically, while industry complains about a shortage of qualified human resources, the country grapples with a serious crisis of educated unemployment. This is not a contradiction, but a natural consequence of a system that prioritizes certification over competence. Companies are forced to spend heavily on retraining new employees, while young professionals struggle with a lack of confidence and career stagnation. The biggest victims of this system are honest and talented students who, often due to a lack of options or misleading branding, end up in mediocre institutions. They work hard and want to learn, but ultimately, they are burdened more by the institution's name on their marksheet than by their own abilities. Their individual merit is overshadowed by the lack of institutional credibility. This is not only unfair, but a waste of talent on a national scale. It must be acknowledged that India still has some high-quality institutions that compete internationally. But they are the exception, not the rule. It's worth noting that school education up to grade 12 remains relatively structured and controlled. As students enter higher education, oversight loosens and expectations become blurred. If this trend is not arrested in time, the long-term consequences will be dire. The social and economic value of degrees will decline. Public trust in higher education will weaken. The distinction between merit and mediocrity will become ever more blurred. Phrases like "university on every street" will become not satire but a description of reality—where universities will be everywhere, but education will not.

## Delhi Scorpio Tragedy: Why These Four States Top The Hit-And-Run List

Two years ago, there was the Pune Porsche case - which still remains in court, by the way. Now, Delhi has been jolted by another fatal road incident: a 23-year-old was killed after being struck by an allegedly speeding Scorpio. Preliminary reports indicate that the vehicle was driven by a minor who did not apply the brakes at the point of impact and attempted to flee the scene, which places this harrowing episode within a troubling pattern of attempted hit-and-run cases. While public outrage, particularly in metropolitan centres like Delhi, tends to frame such cases as sudden moral breakdowns from reckless teenage drivers making a panicked escape, national road safety data tells a more structural story. Persistent enforcement gaps, low conviction rates, rapid motorisation, and uneven state capacity have together eroded credible deterrence. The pattern suggests not isolated deviance, but a systemic failure of governance. India's Road Toll in Numbers National data suggest that hit-and-run fatalities are not episodic spikes but part of a sustained upward trajectory. According to the National Crime Records Bureau and the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, hit-and-run deaths increased from 18,702 in 2013 to 31,209 in 2023, a rise of nearly 67% over a decade. Their share in total road fatalities has expanded from roughly 13-14% to nearly 18%, indicating that fleeing the scene is accounting for a growing proportion of fatal crashes. The post-pandemic rebound sharpened this pattern. Between 2021 and 2022 alone, hit-and-run deaths rose by about 18%, outpacing the increase in overall road fatalities. Delhi's recent cases have amplified public anger, but the capital is not statistically exceptional. The trend is national. The data points less to isolated moral collapse and more to a widening gap between rapid motorisation and credible enforcement. UP Tops The List The national aggregate masks sharp regional concentration. Data from NCRB and the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways show that Uttar Pradesh recorded roughly 16,300 hit-and-run cases in 2022, accounting for a disproportionately large share of the national toll.



It was followed by Madhya Pradesh, with around 9,000 cases, Maharashtra with more than 3,600, and Rajasthan with 2,850. Together, these four states contributed close to two-thirds of all hit-and-run fatalities that year. Yet, absolute burden does not equal density. When normalised by population, smaller states and Union Territories reveal different risk patterns. Even a few hundred cases in Delhi, with a population exceeding 20 million and with one of the highest vehicle densities in the country, translate into elevated per-lakh exposure. Crucially, high motorisation does not automatically imply higher hit-and-run density. Tamil Nadu, despite leading in overall crash volumes, performs differently from Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh on fatality intensity. Similarly, Kerala and Chandigarh combine high vehicle ownership with comparatively lower fatality ratios. The divergence underscores a central inference: exposure is driven by traffic volume, but density of death is driven by other things. Two-Wheeler Riders Are The Most Vulnerable Data from the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways also show that in 2022, two-wheeler riders accounted for roughly 44.5% of all road deaths, while pedestrians constituted nearly 19.5%, together forming the largest victim categories. This aligns with findings from the World Health Organization (WHO) that in low and middle-income countries

(LMICs), over half of fatalities involve vulnerable road users. Temporal clustering is equally stark. About 20.8% of accidents occurred between 9 pm and midnight, the single highest time band nationally. Darkness reduces detection probability, impaired driving increases impact severity. Geographically, nearly 68% of road fatalities occur in rural areas, where surveillance, lighting and emergency response infrastructure remain limited. The convergence is structural: vulnerable victims, high-speed corridors, low-visibility hours, weak monitoring. Hit-and-run, in statistical terms, is patterned exposure meeting limited enforcement, not episodic deviance. But Why Do Drivers Flee? The data suggests that the problem is not merely reckless driving, but weak consequence management. According to the NCRB, nearly 47,800 hit-and-run cases were registered in 2022. Yet, the legal funnel thins dramatically thereafter. Conviction rates in negligent driving cases hover below 50%, while over 90% of cases remain pending at different stages of trial. In deterrence economics, certainty outweighs severity. India has increased statutory penalties through the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019 and more recently under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023. But if enforcement probability is low and adjudication is slow, harsher punishment does not automatically translate into better behaviour.

## Trump Might Not Actually Have A 'Real' Plan For Iran

The United States under President Donald Trump has taken the decision to go into talks with Iran regarding the country's contested nuclear programme'. This sentence might as well remind one of 2013, when under the American presidency of Barack Obama, pressure was being exerted against Tehran to come to the negotiating table. Back then, as Iran agreed to do so, it led to the signing of the Iran nuclear deal in 2015 (officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or the 'JCPOA'). After that, Trump had been one of the deal's most vocal critics, finally terminating US participation in 2018. The US, as of writing this, is building a massive military arsenal in the Middle East. Rumour mills are abuzz as to what kind of action Trump may be mulling, considering that a second round of talks hosted by Oman in Geneva, Switzerland, was, as per reports, not entirely a failure. Even so, two American aircraft carriers are being stationed in the Mediterranean and Arabian waters alike, while open-source information on social media is lit up with a column of US Air Force mid-air refuellers heading to Europe, potentially aimed at supporting a military campaign in the Middle East. The deepening anxieties are not without merit. In 2025, a similar military movement was used as a cover by the US and Israel to launch strikes against Iranian nuclear and air defence sites using stealth B-2 bombers carrying weapons only in the American arse-



nal, which could target facilities deep underground. Since then, much has happened with the Iran file, including months of protests called upon by Reza Pahlavi, son of the former Shah of Iran. That unrest saw thousands of protesters take to the streets, leading to an internet ban, a communications blackout, and the state dispersing such gatherings with force. 1. Trump Has Already Shown His Cards Any impending second strike against Iran by the US will have to lay out a different set of political and military aims compared to June last year. One of these is expected to be a final take-down of Iran's expansive missile stocks. The earlier strikes against Iranian nuclear facilities, which are built deep underground, have already utilised primary weapon systems that the US has for such roles. In the months following the attacks, it has been more evident that while they caused much damage across

Iranian facilities, the bombings did not provide the death blow to the programme as the US was expecting. The three main sites, namely, Natanz, Fordow, and Isfahan, suffered significant damage, but the underground depth of the sites largely spared them from long-term damage. Iran's nuclear designs seem to have been built around redundancy and contingency of lopsided air power being used against it. True, Israeli air strikes in the past decommissioned nuclear facilities in Iraq (1981) and Syria (2007), but Iran is a much more complex affair, as the past few months have shown. 2. Are There Alternatives Within Iran? There is no doubt that US and Israeli firepower over the past year has shaken the Iranian establishment as well as the 86-year-old Ayatollah Khamenei to the core. Prior to this, Israeli air strikes and intelligence operations deep inside Iranian cities had also removed

some of the country's top political, military, and intelligence leadership. However, some resilience of structure and loyalty of personnel has kept the state from any impending collapse, at least till now. A new round of military strikes, which will almost exclusively rely on air power, will come with unclear aims. Trump's impending wish for regime change, whether holistic or engineered, seems to be wishful thinking. Any push to install a new regime through military power cannot be successful without sustained on-ground operations. And this too will only work if there were robust anti-regime forces and personalities within Iran readily available to take charge or offer alternatives. The recent US actions in Venezuela, a precise and impressive military operation leading to Nicolás Maduro's second-in-command taking over the country - in cahoots with the US - is now commonly cited as a model.

# Ahead of Modi's visit, India and Israel sign another MoU deepening defence ties

Tel Aviv: Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel later this month, an MoU was signed between India and Israel to deepen defence ties and strengthen ongoing joint activities, including future seminars and cooperative initiatives. The International Defence Cooperation Directorate (SIBAT) within Israel's Ministry of Defense (IMOD) have facilitated meetings between leading Indian and Israel defence industries leading to the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). SIBAT in cooperation with the Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers (SIDM) and India's Ministry of Defence led a seminar and B2B meetings this week between leading Indian and Israeli defence companies, the IMOD said. "The seminar was led by SIBAT Director, Brig. Gen. (Res.) Yair Kulas, and brought together small, medium and large Israeli and Indian defence companies for substantive engagements, with the goal of deepening familiarity with India's defense industrial ecosystem and its updated Defense



Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2026 - India's national defense procurement policy," a statement from the IMOD said. "The event featured representatives from 30 Indian and 26 Israeli defence companies," it said. The Indian delegation was led by Ramesh K, Director General of SIDM, and included J P Singh, Ambassador of India to Israel, and Gp Capt. Vijay Patil, Defence Attaché of

India to Israel. < "Both sides expressed their commitment to advancing the bilateral dialogue and emphasised the importance of continued cooperation between two defence industries that have stood shoulder to shoulder in times of crisis," the statement said. The IMOD said that the strategic seminar advances the strategic vision of Israel Ministry of Defence Director General Maj Gen (Res.) Amir

Baram to broaden Israel's defence exports and deepen strategic partnerships with key countries. The event follows the Joint Working Group (JWG) meeting held in November last year when the two sides inked a landmark agreement to enhance defence, industrial and technological cooperation, enabling sharing of advanced technology to promote co-development and co-production. Modi

would arrive on February 25 on a two-day visit to Israel. He is likely to touch upon all issues of bilateral and regional interest during his meetings. "Both sides expressed their commitment to advancing the bilateral dialogue and emphasised the importance of continued cooperation between two defence industries that have stood shoulder to shoulder in times of crisis," the statement said.

# Cognizant Expands Strategic Partnership with Google Cloud to Operationalize Agentic AI at Enterprise Scale

BENGALURU, INDIA, Feb. 2026 - Cognizant (NASDAQ: CTSI) announced a new phase in its strategic partnership with Google Cloud, advancing from platform integration to enterprise-scale execution to help organizations operationalize agentic AI in real-world environments. Building on the recently announced collaboration to adopt Gemini Enterprise, Cognizant is combining enterprise-wide internal deployment, commercial execution and scaled delivery investments to turn the potential of agentic AI into measurable business outcomes. As part of this next phase in the partnership, Cognizant has invested in, and is deploying, Google Workspace alongside Gemini Enterprise internally, with the goal of enhancing productivity, employee experience and delivery velocity across the enterprise. Building on this internal execution, Cognizant will also go to market with a new productivity offering that brings together Gemini Enterprise and Google Workspace to help clients move from manual, fragmented tasks to streamlined, AI-driven workflows, including use cases such as collaborative content creation and supplier communications.

"This partnership reinforces Cognizant's position as an AI builder, a new kind of services partner focused on creating purpose-built, enterprise-grade solutions that drive real business outcomes," said Annadurai Elango, President, Core Technologies and Insights, Cognizant. "Cognizant brings together the optimal combination of people and technology, including proprietary IP and deep services expertise, to build industry-specific platforms, embed context into systems, and co-create agentic solutions tailored to each client's business." To support scalable and repeatable delivery, Cognizant - a multi-year Google Cloud Data Partner of the Year award winner - is establishing a dedicated Gemini Enterprise Center of Excellence and investing in the delivery capabilities required to deploy agentic AI consistently at enterprise scale. Cognizant will operationalize this delivery model through its Agent Development Lifecycle (ADLC), integrating AI directly into the development workflow, from design and blueprinting through implementation, validation and production rollout. "Our partnership with Cognizant brings together advanced AI

technology and deep industry expertise to help enterprises operationalize agentic AI" said Kevin Ichapurani, President, Global Ecosystem and Channels at Google Cloud. "Together, we are enabling organizations to deploy enterprise-ready AI solutions that deliver real business impact." With tools such as Cognizant Ignition, enabled by Gemini, Cognizant helps accelerate discovery, prototyping, and optimize our clients data foundations. Leveraging Cognizant Agent Foundry, Cognizant will help clients realize rapid value through no-code capabilities and pre-configured solutions for high-impact use cases such as AI-powered contact centers and intelligent order management. With its global cadre of Gemini-trained specialists, Cognizant will continue to scale delivery across agentic coding initiatives and Google Distributed Cloud programs. These capabilities will be showcased through Cognizant's existing Google Experience Zones and Gen AI Studios. Together, Cognizant and Google Cloud are demonstrating a practical model for how enterprises can adopt agentic AI at scale, moving beyond platform selection to execution-ready operating models.

# TCI AND FLYING WHALES ANNOUNCE A STRATEGIC COLLABORATION TO STRENGTHEN INTEGRATED LOGISTICS SOLUTIONS IN INDIA

Delhi February 2026: On the occasion of the official summit between the President of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, FLYING WHALES SERVICES (FWS) and Transport Corporation of India Limited (TCI) are pleased to announce strategic collaboration to strengthen integrated logistics solutions in India. The MOU was signed in the presence of Mr. Vineet Agarwal, Managing Director, and Mr. Rajkiran Kanagala, Chief Business Officer, Transport Corporation of India and Mr. Sébastien Bougon, President of FLYING WHALES and President of FLYING WHALES SERVICES, FLYING WHALES' operation subsidiary. Transport Corporation of India Limited ("TCI"), India's leading integrated logistics and supply chain solutions provider and a publicly listed company on the National Stock Exchange (NSE) and Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE), today announced that it is working together with



FLYING WHALES and FLYING WHALES SERVICES its operation subsidiary, a French group that is developing the LCA60T aeronautical program, a rigid cargo airship with a large payload capacity of 60 tons. The LCA60T has the unique ability to load and deliver its cargo in stationary flight. It will decarbonize transportation of goods, including heavy or bulky loads, and explore new and develop existing logistics, infrastructure and supply chain solutions in India, with a specific focus on enabling high-value and mission-critical programs.

Commenting on the collaboration, Mr. Vineet Agarwal, Managing Director, TCI said: "TCI has consistently partnered with leading global and domestic organizations to provide state-of-the-art logistics solutions for our customers. Flying whales innovative technology will provide low carbon, efficient solutions to remotest locations thus accelerating PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan for Multi-modal connectivity." "Marking our first strategic partnership in India, this collaboration with TCI is a pivotal step in FLYING

WHALES' international expansion. By combining our LCA60T technology, the world's only solution for heavy-lift transport without ground infrastructure with TCI's unparalleled logistical expertise, we are providing a tangible answer to India's connectivity and ecological transition challenges. Together, we are making the impossible possible: delivering 60 tons of strategic equipment to the country's most remote areas with a minimal environmental footprint", explaining Sébastien BOUGON, President of FLYING WHALES.

# SMFG India Credit Champions "Sarvottam Seva" Through Pashu Vikas Day; Impacts Over 1.55 Lakh Rural Lives

Hyderabad, February 19, 2026: SMFG India Credit, one of India's leading NBFCs, successfully concluded the 8th edition of Pashu Vikas Day (PVD), its flagship livestock welfare and rural livelihood initiative, on February 14, 2026. Anchored around the theme 'Sarvottam Seva: Pashu, Parivar aur Pragati', the initiative reinforced the organisation's commitment to holistic rural development by strengthening livestock health, family wellbeing, and sustainable progress. Launched in 2014, Pashu Vikas Day addresses the critical healthcare needs of cattle owners by providing access to free veterinary services and expert guidance. Over the years, the initiative has evolved into one of the largest one-day cattle welfare programmes in the country. SMFG India Credit positively impacted over 1.55 lakh lives, including the treatment of approximately 1.4 lakh cattle and healthcare support for over 14,000 people, benefitting more than 30,000 households. The initiative was conducted in 16 states, across 510 SMFG Gramshakti branches, underscoring the company's deep reach into rural India. In



Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, Pashu Vikas Day was held across 47 locations and provided essential health care services to over 8,350 cattle, benefitting more than 2,300 households. Each camp offered services like free cattle check-ups by local veterinary doctors, distribution of free medicine and vaccinations for cattle, and advice on increasing the yield for milch animals. Commenting on the successful conclusion of the initiative, Mr. Ravi Narayanan, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer, SMFG India Credit, said, "Sarvottam Seva" is about delivering service at its

highest standard—where empathy meets impact and intention translates into lasting change. In rural India, the health of livestock, the security of families, and economic progress are deeply interconnected. Pashu Vikas Day embodies our commitment to nurturing this ecosystem by caring for cattle, strengthening livelihoods, and supporting community well-being. Through this initiative, we aim to create sustainable outcomes that empower farming households and drive inclusive growth from the grassroots level." Over the years, the initiative has earned multiple national and global

recognitions, underscoring its scale and impact. PVD was featured in the Limca Book of Records in 2015, Best of India Records in 2018, World Book of Records in 2019 and the World Records Union in 2024 for hosting the largest single-day cattle care camps nationwide. Building on this legacy, SMFG India Credit achieved a significant global milestone in 2025, when Pashu Vikas Day set a Guinness World Record for the 'Largest Cattle Welfare Lesson, conducted simultaneously across multiple locations in India—further reinforcing the company's long-standing dedication to rural welfare.

# 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."

# MobiKwik turns PAT profitable in Q3 FY26; Delivers strong upswing of INR 593 Mn YoY

Hyderabad, February 2026: One MobiKwik Systems Ltd. (MobiKwik) (NSE: MOBIKWIK / BSE: 544305), India's largest digital wallet[2], today announced its earnings results (standalone and consolidated) for the quarter ended December 31, 2025. The Company reported a profitable quarter, underpinned by strong execution across its Payments and Financial Services businesses. This marks a significant inflection point as MobiKwik transitions to profitability while continuing to scale its platform & strengthens its role in enabling digital financial access across Bharat. The company delivered a strong operating quarter in Q3FY26 through sharp cost control & healthy margin expansion. Operational discipline led to a INR 576 Mn EBITDA swing on YoY basis, delivering PAT profitability. Headline Results for the Quarter Ended December 31, 2025 Consolidated Financials Total income remained steady at INR 2,972 Mn, reflecting a balanced growth profile Contribution profit increased 76% YoY (34% QoQ) to INR 1,288 Mn, underscoring continued focus on cost efficiency Fixed



Costs as a % of Total Income reduced to 38% in Q3FY26 from 42% Q3FY25 EBITDA for Q3 FY26 stood at INR 150 Mn, marking a profitable quarter with a sequential improvement of INR 576 Mn YoY (INR 214 Mn QoQ) Payments The Company's core payments business continued to deliver strong growth with improving unit economics and high operating leverage. Consistently ranked as the #1 PPI Wallet in India Ranked amongst Top 5 Fastest Growing UPI Apps[1] in India's UPI Ecosystem, achieving 3.2x YoY growth in UPI transactions

Payments GMV hit an all-time high of 481 billion, growing at 63% YoY (11% QoQ), marking a record high for the 12th quarter in a row. User base grew to 186.6 Mn and merchant base expanded to 4.79 Mn Best-in-class Net payments processing margin of 17 bps, reflecting improved monetisation beyond UPI Consequently, gross margin for the payments business reached an all-time high of 37%, reflecting a 125% YoY expansion (36% QoQ) #7th largest Customer Operating Unit [3] in the BBPS ecosystem Financial Services Financial Services Business makes a turn-

around, delivering High-Quality Revenue on the back of enhanced credit quality and collection efficiency. ZIP EMI GMV grew 126% YoY (12% QoQ), reflecting renewed momentum in the lending business ZIP EMI GMV reached an all-time high of INR 9,000 Mn, surpassing previous peak levels and marking a full recovery from the interim slowdown Financial services Gross Profit at INR 372 Mn, up by 405% YoY (45% QoQ) Net FS Margin Quadrupled YoY from 1.05% in Q3FY25 to 4.13% in Q3FY26, owing to improvement in credit quality The improvement across these metrics reflects a complete recovery in the Lending business. With profitability firmly re-established, the Company is well positioned to accelerate growth across its digital financial services portfolio in a calibrated and sustainable manner. Commenting on the Company's performance, Upasana Taku, Executive Director, Co-founder and CFO, MobiKwik, said: "We are pleased to report a profitable quarter, reflecting disciplined execution and sustained cost optimization across our businesses.

# SUDAN ATROCITIES ARE 'HALLMARKS OF GENOCIDE', UN SAYS

A UN fact-finding mission has determined that evidence of atrocities carried out during the siege and takeover of the Sudanese city of el-Fasher points to genocide. The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) captured el-Fasher, located in the western region of Darfur, at the end of October after an 18-month blockade. It was one of the most brutal chapters in Sudan's nearly three-year civil war and triggered widespread international outrage. This is the closest the UN has come to declaring that genocide is being carried out by RSF fighters in Darfur during the current conflict. The RSF has not commented on the report but has denied previous such accusations. "The body of evidence we collected — including the prolonged siege, starvation and denial of humanitarian assistance, followed by mass killings, rape, torture and enforced disappearance, systematic humiliation and per-

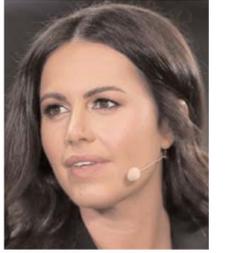
petrators' own declarations - leaves only one reasonable inference," said fact-finding mission expert Mona Rishmawi. "The RSF acted with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, the Zaghawa and Fur communities in El-Fasher. These are the hallmarks of genocide." The report concludes that at least three underlying acts of genocide were committed, including killing members of a protected ethnic group; causing serious bodily and mental harm; and deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about the group's physical destruction in whole or in part. Calling the findings "truly horrific", UK Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper said she would take the report's conclusions to the UN Security Council on Thursday. In a statement she said there must be international criminal investigations to ensure accountability for perpetrators and justice for victims, and an end to



the arms flow feeding the conflict. Sudan's civil war erupted in April 2023 out of a power struggle between the regular army and the RSF over how and whether the paramilitaries would integrate into the security forces. It evolved into a country-wide conflict fuelled by longstanding local grievances and ethnic divisions. In the Darfur region, Arab militias that form the backbone of the RSF have targeted non-Arabs they see as enemies, using savage tactics also employed some 20 years ago. At that time, they massacred hundreds of thousands of Darfuris from indigenous African ethnic groups,

employed by the country's then authoritarian leader Omar al-Bashir to put down local rebellions. The report says the city was deliberately starved and destroyed during the long siege, which systematically weakened the "targeted population" and left them defenceless against the extreme violence that followed. "Thousands of persons, particularly the Zaghawa, were killed, raped or disappeared during three days of absolute horror," it says, as RSF troops failed to distinguish between Zaghawa civilians and the armed groups defending the city. Investigators described RSF conduct in el-Fasher as an aggravation of earlier patterns but on a far more lethal scale, noting that this demonstrates the failure to prevent the atrocities despite clear warning signs. They say without prevention and accountability, the risk of "more genocidal acts remains serious and ongoing". The mandate issued by the Human Rights Council in Geneva called on the investigative team to "identify, where possible" suspected perpetrators in a bid to ensure they are "held accountable". The report names RSF Leader Lt Gen Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (widely known as Hemetti) and spokesperson Lt Col Al-Fatih Al-Qurashi, citing the way they publicly claimed and celebrated the operation. It notes that General Hemetti acknowledged some "violations" had occurred during the takeover of the city but that while he described el-Fasher as a "catastrophe", he justified the assault as necessary. The RSF leader also issued instructions for his fighters not to harm civilians or kill prisoners, and he promised investigations. But investigators say the RSF did not respond to the mission's request to clarify the steps it had taken, or any other questions.

## Australian presenter apologises for drinking before slurred Olympics report



An Australian sports presenter has apologised after a clip of her slurring her way through a live cross from the Winter Olympics in Italy went viral, with even Australia's prime minister weighing in. Channel Nine reporter Danika Mason said she had "misjudged the situation" by drinking ahead of her appearance on live television, also blaming the altitude, the cold and her failure to eat dinner. "I want to take full responsibility, it's not the standard I set myself," she said during another appearance a day later, adding that she was "embarrassed". Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said he was "pro-Danika" and that there was "nothing to see here" suggesting she had been affected by jet lag. Mason stumbled over her words and talked about iguanas and the price of coffee as she reported on the day's sports events. "Literally like the price of coffee over here is actually fine, it's more the price of coffee in the US that we're gonna have to get used to. I'm not sure about

the iguanas, where are we going with that one?" she said during her cross to the breakfast television show 'Today on Wednesday, apparently in response to comments from the studio hosts. With glazed eyes she then stumbled through the rest of her sports report, mixing up her words as well as the UK and the US, while studio host Karl Stefanovic could be heard laughing in the background. "Look the cold weather is a thing, right," Stefanovic said unprompted afterwards. "You can't actually move your lips." Social media clips of her report prompted mixed reactions from Australians.

## Do not give away Diego Garcia, Trump tells UK in fresh attack on Chagos deal



Donald Trump has thrown the UK's Chagos deal into doubt as he launched a stinging criticism of the plan that would see the UK hand over the Chagos Islands to Mauritius and lease back a joint UK-US military base. The US president urged Sir Keir Starmer not to "give away Diego Garcia" - the largest island on the archipelago and home to the base. Trump said "this land should not be taken away from the UK" and if it did it would be "a blight on our Great Ally", in a post on social media. This comes despite Washington on Tuesday giving its official backing to London's plan to cede sovereignty of the British Indian Ocean Territory to Mauritius. In response to Trump, the UK Foreign Office said the Chagos Islands deal was "crucial to the security of the UK and our key allies, and to keeping the British people safe". "The agreement we have reached is the only way to guarantee the long-term future of this vital military base," it said in a statement. Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer has previously insisted the deal is necessary to protect the continued operation of the base, amid previous attempts from

Mauritius to dispute the legality of British sovereignty over the islands. Diego Garcia is the largest island in the archipelago, and is used as a joint military base by the UK and US armed forces. Under the deal - which was announced last May - the UK will lease back Diego Garcia for a period of 99 years at an average cost of £101m a year. Trump's latest comments come ahead of talks between the US and Mauritius planned for next week. The US president's position on the issue has seen rapid U-turns in recent months - from describing the planned transfer as an "act of great stupidity" to saying the deal was the "best" the prime minister could make. UK ministers have previously said that the deal could not go ahead unless it had the support of the US. The bill, aimed at enshrining the agreement into UK law, has been delayed and there is no date set for the next stage. UK Minister Alex Davies-Jones said the bill would return to the House of Lords "as soon as parliamentary time allows". Posting on the Truth Social platform on Wednesday, Trump wrote: "I have been telling Prime Minister Keir Starmer, of the United Kingdom.

## OVER 1,000 KENYANS ENLISTED TO FIGHT IN RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR, REPORT SAYS



A total of 1,000 Kenyans have been recruited to fight for Russia, according to a Kenyan intelligence report that details a network of rogue officials allegedly colluding with human trafficking syndicates. The report, submitted to parliament on Wednesday by Kenya's National Intelligence Service (NIS), said 89 Kenyans were on the front lines of the Russia-Ukraine war as of

February this year. At least one Kenyan has died, while several others have returned home injured or traumatised, it added. The Kenyan government, which previously estimated that about 200 of its nationals had been recruited to fight for Russia, wants Moscow to bar the conscription of Kenyan soldiers. Presenting the report to MPs, parliament majority leader Kimani Ichung'wah, revealed what he termed a "deeply disturbing" network of rogue state officials allegedly colluding with human trafficking syndicates to recruit and transport Kenyans to fight in the Russia-Ukraine war. The spy agency detailed how recruitment agencies have allegedly been colluding with rogue Kenyan airport staff, immigration officers,

## White House presses Iran to make deal, while ramping up military presence

The White House has warned Iran would be "very wise" to make a deal with the US, amid reports that President Donald Trump is weighing fresh military action against the Islamic Republic. Press secretary Karoline Leavitt told a news briefing that Trump was still hoping for a diplomatic resolution over Tehran's nuclear programme. Her comments come as the US moves a second battleship into the region, and a day after progress was reported at US-Iran talks in Switzerland. US media reported on Wednesday that Trump had discussed attack options with advisers, and that a US strike could take place as early as Saturday. Last summer the US military launched strikes on three Iranian nuclear



facilities. Trump had not yet made a final decision about whether to attack and ongoing conversations were described as fluid, sources have told the BBC's US partner CBS News. Leavitt told reporters on Wednesday there were "many reasons and arguments that one could make for a strike against Iran". She referred to US strikes in June, adding:

"Iran would be very wise to make a deal with President Trump and with his administration. "Although no breakthrough seemed to have emerged from Tuesday's indirect talks in Geneva, both sides indicated that there had been steps in the right direction. Iran said an understanding had been reached with the US on the main "guiding principles"

that will frame efforts to resolve the dispute around Tehran's nuclear programme. Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi added that work still needed to be done. The US said "progress was made" and Badr Albusaidi, the foreign minister of Oman, which is mediating the talks, said the negotiations "concluded with good progress" on common aims and technical issues. Asked about the Geneva negotiations, the White House press secretary said that Washington and Tehran were still "far apart" on some key issues. "I think you heard from the administration and the state department yesterday that there was a little bit of progress made, but we're still very far apart on some issues," Leavitt said.

## Hamas is reasserting control in Gaza despite its heavy losses fighting Israel

When a US-imposed ceasefire halted the Gaza War last October, Hamas's war for survival against Israel switched into a battle for control at home. The war had left the group's disciplined military units shattered into guerrilla forces, and most of its leaders killed; Gaza's buildings and infrastructure were largely destroyed, its population displaced, and its economic life in ruins. More than 72,000 Gazans were killed by Israeli attacks during the conflict, the Hamas-run health ministry says. Four months on, Gazans say Hamas is again extending its control over security, tax revenue, and government services, raising



questions about its long-term strategy, and whether it is prepared to give up its weapons and authority, as now required under the second stage of Donald Trump's peace plan. "Hamas regained control of more than 90% of the areas where it is present," said Mohammed Diab, an activist in Gaza. "Its police and security agencies have returned, and are now present in the streets, controlling crime and pursuing those it labels as collaborators and people with opinions. Citizens must go to the

Hamas authorities for identity cards or health procedures, and it is also reasserting control over the judiciary and courts." At markets across Gaza, stallholders describe regular police patrols - and a renewed iron grip on official fees and taxes. "The markets are quiet, but the municipality keeps pursuing us for rent," one stallholder said. All those we spoke to there about Hamas control in Gaza asked that we hide their identity. "Every single day they come to us aggressively, with the same demands and the same determination, saying if we don't pay they'll throw us and our goods into the street.

## EIGHT SKIERS FOUND DEAD AFTER CALIFORNIA AVALANCHE



Rescue teams combed through the backcountry of California's Lake Tahoe region say they have found the bodies of eight skiers who went missing in an avalanche on Tuesday. The search for a final missing skier continues but that person is presumed dead, Nevada County Sheriff Shannan Moon said at a news conference on Wednesday. Officials said one of the deceased was the spouse of someone on one of the search-and-rescue teams, making continued rescue efforts "challenging emotionally". Fifteen skiers were reported missing on Tuesday after a "football-field" sized avalanche came barreling down in the Castle Peak area around 11:30 local time (19:30 GMT). Six have been rescued. "I want to offer my condolences to the family in this very trying time," Placer County Sheriff Wayne Woo said on Wednesday. The bodies of the eight dead skiers were still trapped in the snow and could not yet be recovered due to "pretty horrific" conditions, officials said. Since the avalanche, another 3ft (90cm) of snow has fallen on the area, Tahoe National Forest supervisor Chris Feutrier said. "The

hazard remains high," he said. Once the bodies are recovered, they will be transported to the Placer County morgue. Families of the deceased have been notified. Authorities have not yet released any of their names. Officials say the victims are seven women and two men. Sugar Bowl Academy, a ski school in Placer County, California, said multiple members of its community had died in the avalanche. "Emergency responders are still working to recover all of the victims and are not at this time sharing the personal details of the victims and the survivors out of respect for the families affected," the academy said. "We are an incredibly close and connected community," executive director Stephen McMahon said. "This tragedy has affected each and every one of us. The depth of support for the families whose lives have been changed forever reminds us of how special this community is." Sheriff Woo said the rescue operation was a joint effort involving two teams and roughly 50 crew members who had to traverse "extreme weather conditions" using specialised equipment.

# SOUTH KOREA'S EX-PRESIDENT JAILED FOR LIFE OVER MARTIAL LAW ATTEMPT

South Korea's ex-president Yoon Suk Yeol has been jailed for life for masterminding an insurrection by trying to impose military rule. Yoon attempted to subvert the constitution by deploying military troops to seal off the National Assembly and ordering the arrest of politicians on 3 December 2024, a Seoul court ruled. His actions fundamentally damaged South Korea's democracy and deserves a harsh punishment, presiding judge Ji Gwi-yeon told the court. Prosecutors had sought the death penalty. Though it was short-lived, Yoon's martial law order left the nation more polarised than ever, and those deep divisions were on full display as the sentencing took place. Huge crowds of Yoon's supporters gathered outside the court hours before the hearing, holding banners reading "Yoon, again". Many of them broke down in tears following the verdict. Also present were anti-Yoon protesters, rallying for him to be sentenced to death. Yoon himself showed no emotion as he learned of his fate. His lawyers alleged that the verdict was not backed by evidence and accused the judge of following a "pre-written script". If either side launches an appeal, the case will go up to the Supreme Court, which means it could be months before the verdict is finalised. Yoon shocked his nation on 3 December 2024



by declaring martial law on live television. He claimed it was to protect the country from "anti-state" forces that sympathised with North Korea, but it soon became clear he was driven by domestic troubles: the opposition which held a parliamentary majority left him a

lame duck president, while his wife Kim Keon Hee was at the centre of various corruption allegations. He rolled back the order within hours, after lawmakers fought their way into the National Assembly to overturn it. What followed were months of political chaos, Yoon's impeachment, and a string of indictments against him and other top officials. Former prime minister Han Duck-soo was handed a 23-year jail term last month for his part in the insurrection, while ex-defence minister Kim Yong-hyun, who advised Yoon to impose martial law, was jailed for 30 years on Thursday. Former interior minister Lee Sang-min, former intelligence commander Roh Sang-won, and ex-police chief Cho Ji-ho were among the other officials jailed for what judges have described as "an insurrection from the top". Security was tight outside the court on Thursday, with dozens of police buses forming a cordon to restrict pub-

lic access. Some 1,000 officers were deployed for security operations, local media reported. Inside the court, judge Ji called Yoon the "insurrectionist leader", although the judging panel found insufficient evidence to rule that he'd planned the martial law order a year before his announcement. Yoon defended his actions throughout his trial, arguing that as president he had had the authority to declare martial law, sounding the alarm over opposition parties' obstruction of government. He maintained that the order was necessary "to protect the freedom and sovereignty of the people and to preserve the nation and its constitution".

## IPL-LINKED TEAMS 'NOT CONSIDERING PAKISTAN PLAYERS'

Pakistan cricketers are not being considered for next month's Hundred auction, sources have told BBC Sport. Players from Pakistan have not featured in the Indian Premier League (IPL) since 2009 because of diplomatic tensions between the two countries. Four of The Hundred's eight franchises - Manchester Super Giants, MI London, Southern Brave and Sunrisers Leeds - are now at least part-owned by companies that control IPL teams. In messages seen by the BBC, a senior official from the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) indicated to an agent that interest in his Pakistan players would be limited to sides not linked to the IPL. Another agent described the situation as "an unwritten rule" across T20 leagues with Indian investment. ECB chief executive Richard Gould said last year he expected "players from all nations to be selected for all teams" in The



Hundred and warned "clear anti-discrimination policies" were in place. None of the four teams or ownership groups in question responded to requests for comment. An ECB spokesperson said: "The Hundred welcomes men's and women's players from all over the world and we would expect the eight teams to reflect that. "Almost 1,000 cricketers from 18

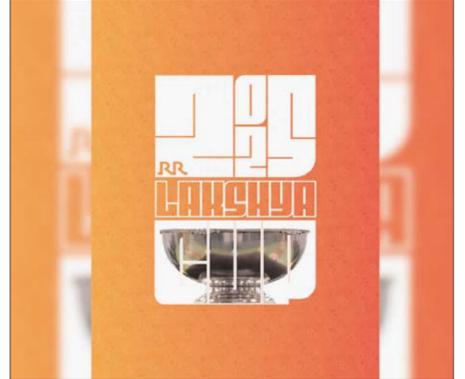
nations have registered for The Hundred auction, with representation on the longlist of over 50 players respectively from Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, Pakistan and West Indies." Two Pakistan internationals - Mohammad Amir and Imad Wasim - appeared in last year's tournament, which was the final edition before new investors took control.

Others - including Shaheen Afridi, Shadab Khan and Harris Rauf - featured in earlier seasons of the men's competition. No Pakistan players have appeared in the women's Hundred. Pakistan's men are ranked sixth in the ICC T20 world rankings, external with the women's team eighth. The men's side are scheduled to play a Test series in the West

Indies during this year's Hundred, though white-ball specialists would still be available. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has previously withdrawn no-objection certificates (NOCs) - required for players to take part in overseas tournaments - at short notice. However, sources point to the participation of seven leading players in Australia's recent Big Bash League as evidence the PCB has shown flexibility over player availability. A growing trend in franchise cricket No Pakistan players have featured in South Africa's SA20, which launched in 2023. All six of its teams are owned by IPL franchise groups - including the four now involved in The Hundred. In the UAE's ILT20, franchises controlled by the owners of MI London and Southern Brave have not signed a Pakistan player across four seasons, but have recruited cricketers from 15 other nationalities.

## 16TH LAKSHYA CUP 2025 TO FEATURE INDIA'S TOP-RANKED AIR RIFLE SHOOTERS IN NAVI MUMBAI

India's top 20-ranked 10m Air Rifle shooters will compete at the 16th RR Lakshya Cup 2025, powered by RR Global, at the Lakshya Shooting Club, Karnala Sports Academy, Panvel, Navi Mumbai. The Invitation only tournament scheduled for 21st and 22nd February will bring together leading junior and senior athletes in a professionally run competition aligned with international standards, with equal podium opportunities for men and women, and prize money and equipment awards for top finishers. The top-contenders like Kiran Jadhav (reigning National Champion and World Championship medalist), Sonam Maskar (ISSF World Cup medalist), Parth Mane (reigning National Games Champion and Junior World Champion), Rajshree Sancheti (international shooter and former National Champion), and Ojasvi Thakur (Asian Championships Youth gold



medalist) will compete, where the Senior Champion will receive ₹1.5 lakhs and the rotating Silver Trophy, currently held by Kiran Jadhav of the Navy. The Junior Champion will receive ₹75,000, with additional cash prizes for other podium finishers. Athletes will also be eligible to win shooting equipment and accessories from equipment partner Capapie Sports and accessories partner Tiro

Sports. Founded in 2006, Lakshya Shooting Club introduced the Lakshya Cup in 2009 as an intra-club event. The tournament was conceptualised by Olympian, Arjuna Awardee and Dronacharya Awardee Suma Shirur, Founder and High-Performance Director of Lakshya Shooting Club. Since 2016, it has developed into one of India's most respected invitation-only rifle competitions.

## Italy defeat puts GB's men into curling semi-finals

Team GB's men's curlers are now just two victories away from a remarkable Winter Olympic gold after sneaking into Thursday's semi-finals in Cortina. Bruce Mouat's world champions were on the brink of a shock early exit in Italy after losing their penultimate round-robin match to Canada. However, a comprehensive victory over the United States on Wednesday - coupled with favourable results elsewhere - revived their hopes. And Italy's defeat by Switzerland on Thursday morning ensured the British rink would advance to a last-four meeting with the unbeaten Swiss at 18:35 GMT. Should the Scottish



quartet win that repeat of last April's world final, they will play in Saturday's gold-medal contest (18:05) and would be guaranteed to at least match the silver they won in Beijing four years

ago. Lose, and they will go for bronze on Friday (18:05) against whoever loses the other semi between Canada and Norway, who edged GB into fourth in the standings on the head-to-head

record. The women's rink must win a third game in a row - against the Italians on Thursday (13:35) - and hope Switzerland beat the US if they are to make Friday's semi-finals.

## "Everyone Turned Against Me, Had To Resign": Pakistan Great's Big Revelation On Suggestion To Drop Babar Azam

Mohammad Yousuf has publicly criticised Babar Azam amid the latter's ongoing struggles in the T20 World Cup, asserting that the former Pakistan captain lacks the requisite skill set to excel in the shortest format of the game. Babar has managed to score only 66 runs across three matches, prompting renewed scrutiny of his place in the playing XI. Yousuf further disclosed that he resigned from his role as a selector because he had proposed dropping Babar from the squad - a recommendation that was rejected, as the entire team management opposed his stance. "I've been saying this for 2-3 years that Babar's technique has gone for a toss. I've been hearing



that he is out-of-form, but he is not. A player can only be out-of-form for two to three series and he has not scored runs for the past two-three years. The moment I suggested resting Babar, everyone suddenly turned against me. I had to

resign because of this. He was eventually dropped a couple of series later," Yousuf said on 'How Does It Work?' podcast. Yousuf also offered a blunt assessment, arguing that mindset alone cannot be considered the issue, as mental strength holds little value without the requisite skill set. "The churan of mindset is being sold very wrongly. Until you don't have the skill, the mind can't do anything. If you don't have the skill, what will the mind do?" he added. When asked to compare Babar with players from his own era, Yousuf asserted that Pakistan greats such as Inzamam-ul-Haq, Saeed Anwar, Younis Khan, and Zaheer Abbas operated on an entirely different level. "Inzy Bhai and Saeed Bhai's level can't be matched. They can't be matched. They were very big players. Zaheer Abbas... These four players were of different categories and levels. Babar is nothing in front of them."

## NORRIS ADMITS NEW F1 CARS 'NOT PUREST FORM OF RACING'



Lando Norris has admitted he described the new Formula 1 cars as "a lot of fun" last week to "see what the reaction was of everyone". The world champion also suggested Max Verstappen, who had said the cars were "just not F1", could "go and find something else to do" if he did not like them. On Thursday, at the second pre-season test, Norris said: "I just didn't want to come out into the media and complain to everyone on the first weekend back. I just wanted to say that and see what the reaction was of everyone. It's been quite an amusing week, and it certainly made a lot of people comment and say a lot of things." The McLaren driver also admitted that the cars were "certainly not the purest form of racing", and that he shared Verstappen's views in many ways. "I agree with Max on a lot of comments," the McLaren driver said. "Probably most of the comments I agree with, but it's not that I don't have fun out there. So there's two sides." "I do agree with basically every

other driver, because I think every other driver has made their comments pretty clear. I just didn't want to come out into the media and complain to everyone on the first weekend back. I want to still enjoy my time and just say what I feel. "I had fun last week. I've still been having fun out there now. And I think we know as a championship with FIA and with Formula 1, we're trying to improve the car that we have now, because it's certainly not the purest form of racing, and that's what Formula 1 should be. "A lot of the driving is focused on just trying to get the battery to work properly and less focused on how can you as a driver get everything out of the car." Verstappen's criticisms centred on the amount of energy management that is required with the new cars. The combination of the power provided by the electrical part of the engine being increased threefold, to about half of the total output, and the batteries being more or less the same size, has led to drivers doing tasks they have described as counter-intuitive.



'For Dad, who didn't get to see this' - Shiffrin wins gold

## The 20-year-old newspaper column that gave a hint to Man City's new tactics

Last week, Pep Guardiola replied to a journalist's question by saying: "Do you want to be my assistant coach? You are brilliant, you are top." The journalist asking that question was me. The reason for my question was to try to gain insight into Manchester City's increasing use of narrow and fluid attackers. In City's stellar side of 2017-18, Leroy Sane and Raheem Sterling would finish games with white paint on their boots after being stationed high and wide. Almost a decade on, Guardiola's system looks very different. To understand why requires a deep dive. "In my question I referenced an article Guardiola wrote for Spanish newspaper El Pais in 2006, in which he analysed Spain's 3-1 win against Tunisia. An important aspect of that column



was his analysis of how to break down low blocks, which has been a key theme this season. "When you decide to play on the counter-attack, you have plenty of space. When you decide to attack [with the ball], you have less. [But] when you play on the counter-attack, the ball belongs to the opponent," he wrote. At the start of this season, City leant into the counter-attacking strengths of individuals

such as Erling Haaland and Tijjani Reijnders. By November, they had scored more goals from fast breaks than in the previous two league campaigns combined. In response to increasingly physical and centrally compact defences in the Premier League, City were scoring by bypassing teams' low-blocks altogether. And although City still look to use their fast attackers, the Spaniard has

applied the brakes in recent weeks, with his words from 20 years ago hinting as to why. Playing more directly can lead to more turnovers, especially centrally. In those circumstances, the attacking side can become stretched with the forwards far from the midfielders and defenders. If a side's shape off the ball is not compact and a team loses the ball often, the logic behind Guardiola wanting to minimise the risk around playing directly is obvious. "After [their opening goal], Tunisia wanted the game to be 14-a-side. They wanted a game with little space," he continued in his column. Given how many Premier League teams now look to defend City in a way that mirrors how Tunisia played on that day, the rest of his words become even more insightful.

## HOW SZOBOSZLAI BECAME LIVERPOOL'S KEY MAN



On his forearm, Dominik Szoboszlai has a tattoo in Hungarian which reads "Talent is a divine blessing, but without incredible will and humility, it is worth nothing". Dig a little deeper and you find the quote is attributed to Steven Gerrard. When midfielder Szoboszlai arrived at Liverpool from RB Leipzig in 2023 for £60m, there was a reason why he took the number eight shirt that had become synonymous with Gerrard at Anfield. Earlier that summer, Alexis Mac Allister turned down the chance to take the number, but Szoboszlai craved that main-character energy. The 25-year-old has been Liverpool's main character this season, scoring his 10th goal of the season last weekend, to go with seven assists. When it was put to him that he was having a "Steven Gerrard season", he politely disagreed and insisted he was writing his own story. Only forward Hugo Ekitike has more goal involvements

and captain Virgil van Dijk has played more minutes than Szoboszlai for Liverpool this season - and close friend Mohamed Salah described him as "one of the best players in the world right now". The Hungarian international may insist on being his own man, but when it comes to taking responsibility as others struggle, and having his own goal of the season competition at the club, there are certainly similarities to the iconic and inspirational Gerrard. Szoboszlai hasn't always played in his preferred number 10 position this season, but is scoring more frequently - his stunning free-kicks against Arsenal and Manchester City came in games he started at right-back. The step-up in both consistency and output has been clear. In a tumultuous Liverpool campaign that has involved speculation about the future of Salah and defenders Ibrahima Konate and Andy Robertson.

## Father, Fear, and Rising Suspense – Emotional Crime Thriller ‘D/O Prasad Rao Kanabadaledhu’ Unveils a Powerful, Tense Trailer Ahead of 27th February Premiere on ZEE5

The makers of D/O Prasad Rao Kanabadaledhu have unveiled a powerful and tension-filled trailer, offering a compelling glimpse into the emotional crime thriller set to stream exclusively on ZEE5 from 27th February. Directed by Krishna Poluru and produced by K.V. Sri Ram under the banner of South India Screens, the Telugu Original series blends heartfelt emotion with layered investigative intrigue. The trailer opens on an intimate and deeply personal note, capturing the warmth of a father-daughter relationship before shifting abruptly into anxiety and uncertainty. Portrayed by Rajiv Kanakala, Prasad Rao is introduced as a devoted father whose world is shaken when his daughter Swathi suddenly goes missing. The emotional contrast between affection and absence establishes the tone immediately – this is not merely a mystery, but a story rooted in love and loss. Vasanthika plays Swathi, whose presence resonates throughout the narrative even in disappearance. The trailer carefully establishes her aspirations and the tenderness she shares with her father, making her absence feel profoundly unsettling. As the search intensifies, the narrative transitions into a gripping investigative track. Uday Bhanu, portraying



Investigation Officer Rebecca Joseph, brings authority and emotional sharpness to the case. A striking moment in the trailer suggests that while clues may seem visible, something essential is being overlooked – hinting at unexpected twists and layered revelations. The preview raises compelling questions: Was Swathi's disappearance linked to her hostel life? Did something occur at her workplace? Is someone

close to her involved? Each frame builds intrigue while carefully withholding answers. The ensemble cast further deepens the narrative fabric. Gayatri Bhargavi and Hima Bindu contribute to the evolving emotional and investigative layers surrounding the central conflict, while Sri Ram Venkat appears in a significant role that adds dimension to the unfolding web of relationships. The screenplay by Krishna

Poluru is structured to escalate suspense gradually while remaining grounded in emotional authenticity. Dialogues by Maidala Shrutu lend credibility and texture to character interactions, ensuring the drama feels lived-in rather than exaggerated. The background score composed by Sri Ram Madduru heightens tension with measured precision, amplifying both suspense and sentiment without overwhelming the narrative.

Technically, the series is shaped with clarity and rhythm. Editing by Chandrashekar G.V. maintains narrative momentum, allowing key emotional beats to resonate while sustaining intrigue. Cinematography by Ram K Mahesh captures a visual landscape defined by unease and emotional fragility, reinforcing the psychological undercurrents that drive the story. With its emotionally resonant core and suspense-driven structure, D/O Prasad Rao Kanabadaledhu positions itself as more than a conventional crime thriller. It explores the unbreakable bond between a parent and child, the anguish of uncertainty, and the resilience that emerges when hope refuses to fade. By combining psychological depth with investigative tension, the series promises an experience that is both emotionally stirring and narratively compelling. As a platform committed to elevating regional storytelling, ZEE5 continues to expand the scale and ambition of Telugu Originals. With D/O Prasad Rao Kanabadaledhu, it reinforces its vision of presenting stories that are emotionally powerful, technically refined, and resonant with contemporary audiences. D/O Prasad Rao Kanabadaledhu premieres exclusively on ZEE5 on 27th February.

## We Are Confident ‘Hey Balwanth’ Will Be a Sure Shot Hit” – Distributor & Producer Vamsi Nandipati at Release Press Meet



“Hey Balwanth’ Will Be a Memorable Film in Telugu Cinema” – Senior Actor Naresh After delivering blockbuster films like Little Hearts, Raju Weds Rambai, and Isha, the successful duo Bunny Vasu and Vamsi Nandipati are now coming together once again with a full-length out-and-out entertainer titled Hey Balwanth. The film is being presented under the banners of Nandipati Entertainments and Bunny Vas Works. The movie stars Suhas, Shivani Nagaram, senior actor Naresh, and anchor Sravanti in prominent roles. The film is directed by Gopi Achhar and produced by B. Narendra Reddy under the Trishul Visionary Studios banner. Hey Balwanth is slated for release on February 20. Ahead of its release, the film unit organized a grand release press meet. Vamsi Nandipati Speaks Speaking at the event, Vamsi Nandipati said:

“We have spoken about Hey Balwanth on many platforms so far. The film is releasing in over 650 screens, which reflects our confidence. As the release approaches, we have already started paid premieres in several locations from Thursday evening, and we’ve planned them across all areas. You don’t need to follow a one-month diet or hit the gym for a month. Just give us three hours, and we’ll give you a month’s worth of happiness and energy. We have a strong story, powerful emotions, and wholesome entertainment. This is a film that must be experienced in theatres. Come, laugh wholeheartedly, and enjoy the ride. We are confident that we will score a definite hit.” Senior Actor Naresh Shares His Excitement Senior actor Naresh added: “From ‘Hey Bhagwan’ to ‘Hey Balwanth,’ it has grown even stronger. The film is releasing in over 300 the-

atres overseas, and many shows are already successful. There’s tremendous positive buzz both in India and abroad. Anil Sunkara garu, after witnessing the overseas response, has already called it a blockbuster. Another director called to say he laughed non-stop for two and a half hours. Even the media has started congratulating us in advance. This year looks very promising for Tollywood. Hey Balwanth comes with freshness and family entertainment. Suhas is entering the next phase of his career. The climax will particularly impress everyone. This film will become a memorable one in Telugu cinema. Everyone has delivered outstanding performances. In Gopi, the industry has found a talented director. If Vamsi Nandipati is involved, the film is bound to be a hit. Premieres have already begun from the evening of February 19, and we are all celebrating with great enthusiasm.”

## THE LOVE SONG “OOSULADE..” FROM THE MOVIE “SON OF”, STARRING SAI SIMHADRI, HAS RECEIVED A SUPERB RESPONSE

Produced under the Sai Simhadri Cinema banner, “Son Of” features Sai Simhadri as both the hero and producer. The film is directed by Battula Satish. The movie is scheduled to release on February 27. As part of the promotions, the love song titled “Oosulaade..” was released on Wednesday. The song beautifully portrays the love between the hero and heroine and is captivating listeners. Meera Raj plays the female lead in this film, while senior actor Vinod Kumar appears in a key role. The music for the film is composed by Rishi M. The song “Oosulaade..” is written by Bhaskarabhatla and sung by Aditya and Sameera Bharadwaj. This cute love song is melodious

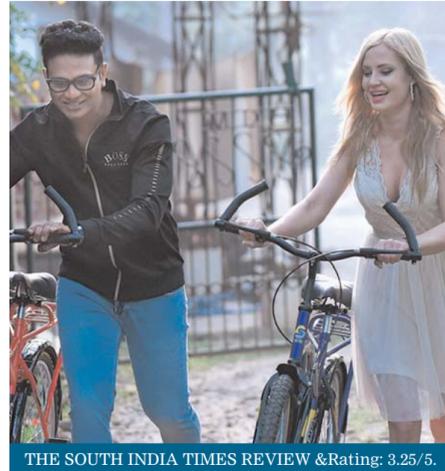


and pleasant to listen to. Earlier, the teaser and the movie’s title song received a superb response from the audience. Following that trend, the newly released “Oosulaade..” song is also getting an amazing

response. The makers stated that the film has been crafted to highlight the emotional bonding between a father and son and expressed confidence that it will definitely impress the audience.

## REVIEW: A BEAUTIFUL BREAKUP - STRONG YET GROUNDED

A Beautiful Breakup proves that strong performances can sustain a film without the need for large ensemble casts. Making a two-character film for 90 minutes is an ambitious decision. It requires courage and immense trust in the actors. Thaksh and Matylda justify that trust. Their natural acting makes the emotional journey feel believable. Thaksh brings a composed yet intense performance that stands out. There is star quality in his calm confidence – a new face with significant potential. Matylda complements him well, ensuring the emotional balance never feels one-sided. The film’s technical aspects are handled with care. The colour grading enhances mood, and the production



THE SOUTH INDIA TIMES REVIEW & Rating: 3.25/5.

values, including poster designs and presentation, reflect professional quality. Ilaiyaraaja’s symphony-based score elevates the

film considerably. His music adds scale, richness, and emotional resonance, turning intimate scenes into cinematic moments.

## Lets create MIRACLE! Says Heartthrob Hebba Patel



Hebba to join the sets Of Prabhas Nimmala’s MIRACLE The upcoming out-and-out action entertainer “Miracle”, directed by Prabhas Nimmala, is progressing at a brisk pace. The film is being produced under the Saida Family Entertainment banner by Ramesh Eggidi, Srikanth Mogadasu, and Chander Goud. After successfully completing two schedules, the team is gearing up for the third schedule, which will commence on February 24 in and around Hyderabad. Actress Hebba Patel is joining the project and will participate in this schedule. The film features Randheer Bheesu as the lead hero, while senior actors Sriram and Suresh are playing crucial roles. Naidu Pendra is being introduced as the antago-

nist. Senior film journalist Dheeraj Appaji will be seen in the role of a forensic officer. The supporting cast includes Janardhan, Yogi Katre, Vijay Surya, Intiaz, Saibaba, Dil Ramesh, Jhansi, Suryanarayana, Sridhar, Srikanth, Shiva, Amani, Haimavathi, Navya (Ammu), Sameer Datta, Anushree, Bezawada Mastan, R. Kumar and others in important roles. Speaking about the film, the producers said that director Prabhas Nimmala, who earlier showcased his talent with “Satya Gang” and “Fighter Shiva,” is confident that “Miracle” will live up to its title. They stated that Hebba Patel’s glamour, the strong performances of senior actors, and the high-voltage action sequences will be the major highlights of the movie.



## Akshay Kumar calls out racism against North-east Indians

Mumbai: On Wheel of Fortune India, Akshay Kumar did what very few celebrities consistently choose to do, he turned a mainstream entertainment platform into a space for

social reckoning, further acknowledging the racism that takes place against North East Indians. It all began when a contestant shared her lived experience of racial abuse faced by people from the Northeast, to which Akshay leaned into and completely acknowledged it, further making his stand known. Rather than positioning himself as a distant ally, he made the issue personal. The actor further called his makeup artist Kim, who is from Manipur, onto the stage. He stated, “There is a boy with me, who does my makeup and takes care of me. He is here, Kim.” Further when Kim narrated his experience of being mocked, stereotyped, reduced to slurs like

“Chinese,” “Chinky,” “Momo”, Akshay seemed disturbed and shocked. Akshay didn’t dilute the moment with politeness or denial, and said that “Today, after listening to Kim, I am convinced that these things happen.” He further said, “I want to tell all the people of India, there is discrimination with the people of North-East. They are all Indians. They are as much Indians as I am, you are and the people sitting here.” He went further, reminding viewers that the same people who are mocked for their features are often the first to stand at the borders. “There is so much contribution for this country. The Naga Regiment... Kargil war, Bangladesh war. They have given their blood.

They are Indians.” For the uninitiated, Akshay Kumar is currently seen hosting the quiz reality show Wheel of Fortune. It all began when a contestant shared her lived experience of racial abuse faced by people from the Northeast. Akshay explained that he brought up the topic on the national television to highlight the discrimination faced by North-East people. “They are all Indians. Ye utne hi Indian hain jitney ki mai hun, aap hain aur yaha pe jitney bhi baithne wale log gain,” Akshay voiced his support. He also reminded viewers of the significant contributions of North-East Indians, including their role in the Kargil War, the Naga Regiment, and the Head

Hunters. Akshay further claimed, “They have given their blood. They are Indians.” Fans are cheering as the actor openly voices his support for North-East Indians. Akshay Kumar hosted Wheel Of Fortune is a quiz show that was originally meant to be a limited series, including 40 episodes. Seeing how great of a response Wheel of Fortune is getting, makers have extended the show with an addition of 25 more episodes in it. Wheel of Fortune premiered on January 27, 2026. The new episodes of the show releases every Monday to Friday at 9 pm IST on Sony Entertainment Television. The show can also be streamed on Sony LIV OTT platform.