



01-02-2026  
Total pilgrims: 74,192  
Tonsures: 22,313  
Hundi Kanukulu: 4,57 CR  
Waiting Compartments: 05

Approx. Darsan Time for Sarvadarshanam (without SSD Tokens): 8-10 H



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## IN BRIEFS



Air India grounds Dreamliner over fuel switch issue

New Delhi (TSIT) An Air India pilot on Monday flagged a possible defect with the fuel control switch of a Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner, and the matter has been reported to aviation watchdog DGCA. The aircraft operated the flight AI132 from London to Bengaluru, and it landed at Bengaluru on Monday morning, according to sources. In a statement, the airline said it is aware that one of its pilots has reported a possible defect on the fuel control switch of a Boeing 787-8 aircraft. After receiving this initial information, we have grounded the said aircraft and are involving the OEM to get the pilot's concerns checked on a priority basis. The matter has been communicated to the aviation regulator, DGCA. Air India had checked the fuel control switches on all Boeing 787 aircraft in its fleet after a directive from the DGCA, and had found no issues," the statement said.

**Silver slides for 3rd straight day to Rs 2.6 lakh/kg; gold drops to Rs 1.52 lakh/10g**



New Delhi (TSIT): Silver prices extended its steep fall for the third straight day, tumbling Rs 52,000 to Rs 2.60 lakh per kg in the national capital on Monday, while gold fell to Rs 1.52 lakh per 10 grams amid weak global trends and a firm US dollar. According to the All India Saraf Association, the white metal nosedived Rs 52,000, or nearly 17 per cent, to Rs 2.60 lakh per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes). On Saturday, the metal tanked 19 per cent, or Rs 72,500, to Rs 3.12 lakh per kilogram. In the last three sessions, silver prices have fallen by Rs 14,500, or nearly 36 per cent from Rs 40,450 per kg - its all-time high - recorded on January 29. Gold price of 99.9 per cent purity also bore the brunt of the sell-off, crashing by Rs 12,800, or 7.73 per cent, to Rs 1.52,700 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) on Monday. It had settled at Rs 1.65,500 per 10 grams in the previous session.

## NATION | NEWS

Rahul, Congress must apologise for surrendering territory to China: Kiren Rijiju

## SLAMS BRS &amp; BJP



**Hyderabad (TSIT):** Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy attended the Ravi Narayan Reddy National Award presentation ceremony and paid rich tributes to legendary peasant leader Ravi Narayan Reddy, describing him as an enduring symbol of sacrifice, social justice and democratic values.

Recalling his contributions, the Chief Minister said Ravi Narayan Reddy played a crucial role in the armed peasant struggle against feudal forces and worked relentlessly for the abolition of bonded labour. Despite being born into a landlord family, he donated nearly 500 acres of land for the poor and inspired generations of grassroots activists. He noted that Ravi Narayan Reddy was elected to Parliament with a record majority and later voluntarily stepped away

from public office to uphold ethical politics. Revanth Reddy said conferring the national award on former Supreme Court judge Justice B. Sudarshan Reddy was most appropriate, praising his integrity and commitment to the Constitution.

Launching a political attack, the Chief Minister criticised BRS leaders for claiming historical legacies without comparable sacrifice, asserting that true leadership is defined by struggle and service. He also accused the BJP of attempting to weaken constitutional and voting rights, urging democratic forces to raise public awareness. The Chief Minister said the State government would ensure lasting and fitting recognition for Ravi Narayan Reddy's legacy in Telangana.

As he spoke, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh intervened, objecting to the reference and demanding that only authenticated material be allowed on the floor of the House. Gandhi replied

## WORLD | NEWS

Beijing Criticises Dalai Lama Grammy Win As 'Manipulation'



## SPORTS | NEWS

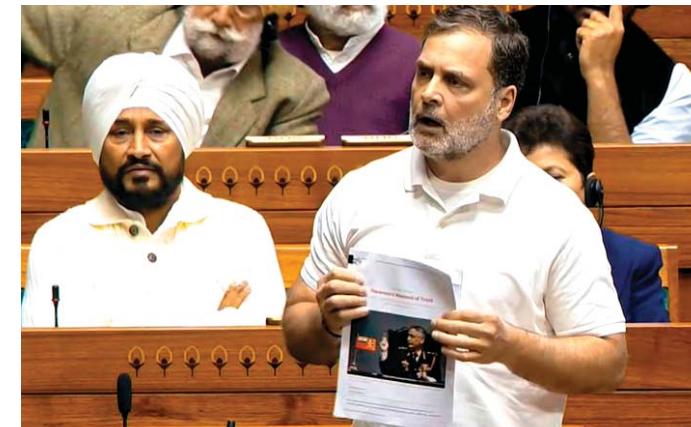
ICC Contemplates 'Suspending' Pakistan As T20 World Cup 'India Boycott' Row Deepens



## CM Revanth pays tribute to Ravi Narayan Reddy,

## Uproar in Lok Sabha after Rahul seeks to quote from ex-Army chief Naravane's 'memoir'

Rajnath Singh & Amit Shah object on the grounds that book has not yet been published



**New Delhi (TSIT):** The Lok Sabha was thrown into a political confrontation on Monday after Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi attempted to raise questions on India's handling of China during the discussion on the President's Address, prompting strong objections from the government and repeated interventions by the Speaker.

What began as a response to BJP attacks on the Congress's patriotism quickly escalated into a broader clash over national security, Parliamentary rules, and the limits placed on the opposition's right to speak on sensitive foreign policy issues.

At the centre of the row was Gandhi's reference to reports linked to former Army chief General M M Naravane's memoir, which he said pointed to serious concerns about Chinese military presence and decision-making at the highest levels of government. Gandhi began by responding to BJP MP Tejasvi Surya's earlier remarks questioning the Congress's patriotism. He said the issue of nationalism could not be reduced to slogans and pointed to what he described as serious concerns over national security, referring to four Chinese tanks entering Indian territory in Doklam.

As he spoke, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh intervened, objecting to the reference and demanding that only authenticated material be allowed on the floor of the House. Gandhi replied

that his remarks were based on Naravane's memoir. Singh countered that the book had not yet been published and therefore could not be treated as an authentic source. Home Minister Amit Shah supported the objection, stating that unpublished books and magazine reports could not be cited in Parliament and that "anything" could be written in such publications.

Speaker Om Birla stepped in, ruling that House rules do not permit the reading or quoting of any book or article that does not directly relate to the proceedings of Parliament. Singh further argued that "unofficial conversations" or unverified material should not be mentioned in the House. The controversy centres on General Naravane's memoir, 'Four Stars of Destiny', which has drawn attention for its reported disclosures on sensitive issues, including the 2020 India-

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday claimed that he was not being allowed to quote from former army chief MM Naravane's unpublished book in the Lok Sabha because it indicts Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh for "letting down" the Army during the 2020 conflict with China.

China border standoff and the Agnipath recruitment scheme. The book is currently under review by the Ministry of Defence, with reports suggesting it reveals internal differences within the Armed Forces and policy-making circles, raising wider questions about disclosure norms for retired military

officers. As the interruptions continued, Samajwadi Party MP and former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav came out in support of Gandhi, saying the China issue was sensitive and that the Leader of Opposition should be allowed to speak.

Union Minister Kiran Rijiju opposed this, insisting that a ruling had already been given by the Chair and must be accepted and followed. Shah again intervened, reminding the House that the discussion was on President Droupadi Murmu's address, not on unpublished books or speculative reports.

Gandhi pushed back, arguing that the President's Address covered India's overall situation, including foreign relations with China and the US, exports, and national security. Holding up papers related to Naravane's account, he said the material spoke directly about the prevailing situation. The Speaker warned Gandhi not to quote or describe the article. Gandhi responded by asking Birla to clearly state what he was permitted to say. When told to speak on the issue without references, Gandhi asked why he could not speak on India-China relations if he was not quoting any book or magazine. He questioned whether Parliament was barred from discussing international relations altogether. Gandhi further said that the Prime Minister, Defence Minister and Home Minister had allowed questions to be raised about his party's character and nationalism.

## SC issues notices to Centre, 12 states on PIL by Christian body against anti-conversion laws

The National Council of Churches in India (NCCI), represented by senior advocate Meenakshi Arora, also sought a stay on the operation of these state laws.



**NEW DELHI (TSIT):** The Supreme Court on Monday sought responses from the Centre and 12 states, including Rajasthan and Arunachal Pradesh, on a fresh PIL filed by the National Council of Churches in India challenging the validity of their respective anti-conversion laws.

The National Council of Churches in India (NCCI), represented by senior advocate Meenakshi Arora, also sought a stay on the operation of these state laws. A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi took note of the submissions of the NCCI and sought responses from the Centre and 12 state

said that similar petitions are pending which challenge the state laws. "Our reply is ready and will be filed shortly," the law officer said.

Arora said that Odisha and Rajasthan have also come out with their separate laws, and they were not under challenge in earlier petitions. "There are amendments also in other Acts which are not challenged. Let me serve all the standing counsels," she said. "Issue notice. Let a copy of each be served on Advocate Generals (of states) also. Let a counter affidavit (of the Centre and 12 states) be filed within four weeks. Let respondents file a common counter affidavit.

**Hyderabad (TSIT):** Telangana JAGRUTHI President K. Kavitha said on Monday that if the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the alleged phone-tapping case during the previous BRS regime, summons her, she would appear before the team and cooperate. Kavitha, daughter of former Chief Minister and Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) President K. Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR) reiterated that she suspects her and her husband's phones were tapped too.

"If the SIT issues notice, I will appear before it and cooperate in the investigation," she said while replying to a query at a press conference. The former MLC said that she expects KCR to clarify



what transpired during the examination by the SIT.

KCR was examined by the SIT for nearly five hours on Sunday at his residence in Hyderabad in connection with the case relating to the alleged tapping of phones of several individuals during the BRS' rule. On BRS Working

President K.T. Rama Rao reacting strongly to SIT summoning his father KCR, Kavitha remarked that no one is above the law. "When you are in public life, there will be many issues and one has to face the consequences," she said.

Stating that all should cooperate in the transparent investigation, Kavitha said it would be better to close the matter at the earliest. Kavitha, who quit BRS after being suspended from the party and also sent her resignation as a Member of the Legislative Council in September last year, said the BRS should introspect why a situation has come now where KCR was summoned.

## Over 50 dead in Poland as severe winter cold grips the country



Warsaw (TSIT): More than 50 people have died in Poland since the start of winter due to extremely low temperatures, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration Wieslaw Szczepanski told reporters on Monday.

"The wave of severe frost is reaching its peak. We have sad news of new victims. Currently, we have information about 54 deaths and 36 cases of hypothermia," Szczepanski said, emphasizing that people living in abandoned buildings are particularly at risk.

"Once again, we urge everyone living in abandoned buildings to move to places with higher temperatures," he added, warning that the coming night will be the coldest in Poland since the beginning of

## India among top drivers of global economic growth, FM Sitharaman highlights IMF data



**New Delhi (TSIT):** Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday highlighted India's growing role in the global economy, citing International Monetary Fund (IMF) data shared on social media by billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk. According to the chart, India and China together account for 43 per cent of worldwide GDP growth, with China contributing 26 per cent and India 17 per cent, surpassing the United States in driving global expansion.

Speaking to university students in Parliament after presenting the Union Budget 2026-27, FM Sitharaman noted that many young people may have seen Musk's post, which expressed surprise at the shift in India's growing economic clout.

"The data clearly reflects India's rising strength and influence in the global economy," Sitharaman said, adding that even India's Opposition should acknowledge the country's growing economic clout.

While she recognised that China's contribution remains higher, the finance minister emphasised that India is steadily closing the gap and is on a long-term growth trajectory. "India should take pride in playing such a significant role in global GDP growth alongside its neighbour," she said.

FM Sitharaman further stressed that Indians should have confidence in the nation's economy, noting that India is now central to global economic expansion and that its growth story is being noticed and discussed worldwide. Elon Musk had originally shared the chart, created by World of Statistics, remarking that the global balance of power is changing, drawing widespread attention to the IMF data.

## Mamata walks out of EC meeting



**New Delhi (TSIT):** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday left the meeting with the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar here on the SIR matter in a huff without listening to the response of the Election Commission (EC) top brass on the issues raised by her, EC officials said.

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

Their reaction came as Banerjee lashed out at the EC after emerging from the meeting, accusing the poll panel of acting as a "dalal" (middleman) of BJP. Wearing black shawls

as a mark of "protest", Banerjee along with some "SIR-affected" families and party leaders met CEC Kumar and fellow ECs here, her party said. First TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee spoke, followed by Mamata Banerjee, the officials said, adding that the points raised by them were duly noted down by CEC Kumar and Election Commissioners SS Sandhu and Vivek Joshi. When the CEC started to respond, the TMC leaders interjected on multiple occasions.

## Two killed in clash during Ravidas Shobhayatra in Haridwar village

Roorkee, Feb 2: Tension prevailed in the Bhagwanpur area of Roorkee in Uttarakhand's Haridwar district after a violent clash between two rival groups during a religious procession claimed two lives and left three others seriously injured on Sunday. The incident took place in Binarsi village during a bhandara organised as part of the Ravidas Shobhayatra. Following the violence, police deployed heavy security from multiple police stations, including Jhabrera, Roorkee and Kaliyar, to prevent further escalation. According to police sources, the clash erupted around 5 pm due to a long-standing rivalry and a dispute linked to "social prestige". What began as a verbal altercation soon escalated into a violent confrontation, during which firearms were allegedly used. Anand (28), a resident of Binarsi village, died on the spot after being shot in the chest. Later in the night, the body of Mangeram, belonging to the rival faction, was recovered from a nearby field. Preliminary findings indicate that he was beaten to death. The killings triggered protests by the victims' families and local residents, who blocked the road by placing Anand's body on it and refused to allow post-mortem examinations until the accused were arrested. Senior police officials intervened and managed to pacify the crowd, following which the bodies were sent for autopsy late in the evening.

## Clash erupts in Chhattisgarh village, six cops injured

Gariaband, Feb 2: Violence erupted between two communities in Dudhkaia village of Chhattisgarh's Gariaband district on Sunday evening after three men, recently released on bail, allegedly attacked locals, police said. Six police personnel were injured in stone-pelting while trying to control the clashes, the authorities added. The accused, including a man identified as Arif, had been arrested a year ago for vandalising a temple idol. After being released, they allegedly harassed witnesses and intimidated villagers. On Sunday morning, they reportedly attacked four to six youths with rods, triggering the communal tension. Angry villagers gheraoed the accused's homes, setting them on fire, while a few vehicles were also torched. Gariaband SP Vedrat Sirmour said additional forces were deployed, all three accused were re-arrested, and three cases registered. The situation is now under control.

## Uttarakhand to launch online portal for LUCC scam victims

Dehradun, Feb 2: In a major relief for over 1.5 lakh investors affected by the Loni Urban Multi-State Credit & Thrift Co-operative Society (LUCC) scam, the Uttarakhand government has decided to launch a dedicated integrated online portal to enable victims to submit their complaints. The decision follows a formal request made by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on January 14. Acting on this, Secretary Dilip Jawalkar directed the State Cooperation Department to immediately initiate the development of the portal. The LUCC management is accused of cheating investors of nearly Rs 800 crore by luring them with attractive returns on fixed and recurring deposits. The society operated through 35 branches across Uttarakhand and deployed hundreds of agents to mobilise small savings, primarily from rural and semi-urban areas. The scam surfaced in June 2024 after all LUCC offices abruptly shut down. The first FIR was registered at the Kotdwara police station based on a complaint by Tripti Negi, following which multiple complaints poured in. So far, 18 FIRs have been registered across six districts, including Dehradun and Haridwar, and more than 12 officials and agents have been arrested. Initially, the probe was handled by the state CID. However, a Public Interest Litigation filed by Ashutosh Negi, later merged with another petition by Vishal Chhetri, prompted the Uttarakhand High Court to intervene.

## 'Gayaki, Gat, Ghazal' Musical Evening Enthrals Hyderabad Audience at Taramati Baradari



Hyderabad: Chowrangee, a Hyderabad-based cultural platform celebrating India's artistic heritage, curated a captivating musical soirée titled "Gayaki, Gat, Ghazal" at the historic Taramati Baradari, offering music lovers a rich and immersive classical-contemporary experience.

The evening featured a distinguished lineup of acclaimed musicians including sitar maestro Purnabaya Chatterjee and noted vocalist Gayatri Asokan, along with Ishaa Ghosh, Shikhar Naad Qureshi, Absha Ahmad, and Steve Thomas Kottoor. Together, they presented a seamless blend of classical, contemporary, and ghazal traditions. A major highlight of the programme was a spellbinding jugalbandi

between sitar and vocals, which drew prolonged applause and created a deeply meditative atmosphere. The repertoire included evocative pieces such as Waterbird, Lullaby, Garaj Garaj, Barsan Lagi, and Pace of Mind, along with popular ghazals like Ishq Ishq Hai, Harsoo Dikhayi Dete Hain, and

Baat Karmi Mujhe Mushkil.

Organisers said the concert reflected Chowrangee's core philosophy of artistic dialogue and cross-cultural harmony, bringing together diverse musical styles and sensibilities on a single stage. Chowrangee President Dr Santanu Paul said the evening evolved into a free-flowing musical conversation where classical depth and global influences blended

naturally, leaving audiences with a memorable and transcendent cultural experience. Chowrangee, an initiative of the Bengal and Beyond Foundation, continues to curate high-quality programmes across music, theatre, dance, and visual arts, aimed at fostering inclusive cultural exchange in the city.

In his petition, Adhikari alleged that BJP leaders' public programmes were frequently disrupted by violence and resistance, despite prior intimation being given to the police.

Kolkata, Feb 2: A division bench of the Calcutta High Court on Monday directed the West Bengal Police and Kolkata Police to provide complete and uncompromised security for public political programmes organised by elected representatives of opposition parties. The order came in response to a petition filed by Leader of Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly, Suvendu Adhikari, who had approached the High

Court in October last year seeking judicial intervention to ensure long-term protection for public events held by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) legislators and parliamentarians, including Union ministers of state. The petition cited repeated instances of hostility and obstruction allegedly faced from ruling Trinamool Congress activists. After hearing the matter, the bench comprising

chief justice Sujoy Paul and justice Partha Sarathi Sen instructed both the state police and the city police to ensure absolute security for opposition leaders during their public political engagements. The court further directed that its order be strictly complied with until February 18, the next date of hearing in the case.

In his petition, Adhikari

# Jaishankar heads to US for critical minerals talks, to meet senior American officials

New Delhi, Feb 2: External affairs minister S. Jaishankar is set to begin a three-day official visit to the United States starting Monday, during which he will participate in the Critical Minerals Ministerial convened by US secretary of state Marco Rubio, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) announced. According to the MEA, the ministerial meeting will focus on strengthening supply chain resilience, advancing clean energy transitions, and enhancing strategic cooperation in the critical minerals sector—an area of growing importance for both countries.

During his visit from February 2 to 4, EAM Jaishankar is also scheduled to hold a series of meetings with senior members of the US administration to discuss key bilateral and regional issues.

The visit follows a series of high-level engagements between Indian and US officials. Last week, Jaishankar met US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor in New Delhi, where the two discussed various aspects of the India-US partnership. Welcoming the ambassador, Jaishankar expressed confidence in Gor's role in further strengthening bilateral ties.



## Highlight Points:

- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar will undertake a three-day official visit to the United States from February 2 to 4, participating in the Critical Minerals Ministerial to strengthen supply chain resilience, clean energy cooperation, and strategic ties.
- The visit underscores growing India-US engagement, with Jaishankar set to hold high-level meetings on bilateral and regional issues, following recent interactions with US officials on trade, Indo-Pacific security, critical minerals, and global developments.

"Pleased to meet US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor today in New Delhi. Our conversation covered the many dimensions of our partnership. Welcomed him and expressed confidence that he would contribute to the strengthening of India-US relations," Jaishankar posted on X.

On January 25, the External Affairs Minister also met a US Congressional delegation that included Mike Rogers, Adam Smith, and Jimmy Patronis, along with Ambassador Gor. Discussions during the meeting focused on enhancing bilateral cooperation, developments in the Indo-Pacific region, and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Reflecting on

the engagement, Jaishankar noted on X that interactions with the US Congress have long been a vital component of the bilateral relationship.

Earlier, on January 13, US secretary of state Marco Rubio held a telephone conversation with Jaishankar, during which the two reviewed major areas of cooperation such as civil nuclear energy, trade negotiations, and regional security in the Indo-Pacific. Ambassador Gor later described the conversation as positive, noting that the leaders discussed next steps in bilateral trade talks, cooperation on critical minerals, and the possibility of a meeting in the coming month.



New Delhi : Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Monday sought an apology from the Congress and Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi for his controversial "Chinese tanks in Doklam" remark and also for the sin of surrendering Indian territory to China in the past.

Addressing reporters after an adjournment in Lok Sabha over Rahul Gandhi's remarks, Rijiju said compromising our territory will never be allowed; in fact, the Congress must apologise for the sins it committed by surrendering Indian territory to China before 1959 and in 1962.

"Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India would not surrender even an inch of its land," he said, calling Rahul Gandhi's claims a bid to create a false narrative and project India as a weak nation.

Criticising Gandhi's unsubstantiated claims, Rijiju said the Congress must apologise. "They can't reclaim the land that the Congress government surrendered to China 50-60 years ago. If they cannot undo the past, at least they can apologise," said Rijiju.

The Minister also disapproved of Gandhi's reluctance to follow the instructions of the Chair and wasting nearly 30 minutes of the House.

"We wanted to hear each other on Motion of Thanks to the President's Address and proceed to the next agenda, but just because Rahul Gandhi is born in a particular family, he considers himself above the House and its rules," he said. Rijiju also assailed Congress MPs clapping over the Lop's repeated refusal to follow instructions from Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and prevent the House from functioning as per rules.

"I want Rahul Gandhi to introspect, apply his mind and advise his party MPs to function democratically and follow the rules of the House," he said. The Minister said that if Indian territory has been surrendered to China, it has been done under the Congress rule in the past. He has been done under the Congress rule in the past. He

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## Rajkot man held for repeatedly raping daughter, second FIR likely

Rajkot (TSIT): Rajkot Rural Police on Saturday arrested a man for allegedly raping his daughter repeatedly over the past several years. The survivor is now an adult. Police officials said another FIR is likely to be registered against the accused on Sunday for a similar offence against his teenage niece.

According to police, the accused works as an electronics repair technician and was affected by polio at the age of seven months. He lived in a joint family with his wife, who is suffering from advanced-stage breast cancer, his daughter, and the wife and daughter of his younger brother, who

works in another town. Rajkot Rural Superintendent of Police Vijay Singh Gurjar said the case came to light after the accused filed a missing person complaint for his daughter at the jurisdictional police station on January 3. Initial efforts to trace the woman were unsuccessful.

The accused later approached senior police officials, following which the Local Crime Branch (LCB) was assigned the case. The woman was traced on January 28 at an apartment in Rajkot city. During questioning, she told police that she had left home voluntarily and did not wish to return.

Further investigation revealed that the woman had allegedly been subjected to continuous sexual assault by her father over several years. She also alleged that the accused had sexually assaulted her minor cousin.

Police said the woman had earlier informed her cousin's parents, but her claims were not believed. SP Gurjar said joint questioning was conducted to verify the allegations, following which the accused was booked under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sahita (BNS) and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

According to an inquiry report submitted by Superintendent of Police, Devaswom Vigilance, Sunil Kumar, shooting for a feature film took place over multiple days at Pampa and nearby areas. The report further states that on the auspicious day

## Fresh controversy at Sabarimala over film shooting



Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 2: A fresh controversy has erupted at the Sabarimala temple, already under scrutiny in connection with the gold heist case, with a Devaswom Vigilance investigation finding that a film shoot was conducted in violation of restrictions at the holy shrine and its surroundings.

According to an inquiry report submitted by Superintendent of Police, Devaswom Vigilance, Sunil Kumar, shooting for a feature film took place over multiple days at Pampa and nearby areas. The report further states that on the auspicious day

The director had earlier

## Calcutta High Court orders police to ensure full security for opposition political events



In his petition, Adhikari alleged that BJP leaders' public programmes were frequently disrupted by violence and resistance, despite prior intimation being given to the police.

Kolkata, Feb 2: A division bench of the Calcutta High Court on Monday directed the West Bengal Police and Kolkata Police to provide complete and uncompromised security for public events held by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) legislators and parliamentarians, including Union ministers of state. The petition cited repeated instances of hostility and obstruction allegedly faced from ruling Trinamool Congress activists. After hearing the matter, the bench comprising

alleged that BJP leaders' public programmes were frequently disrupted by violence and resistance, despite prior intimation being given to the police. He argued that such incidents pointed to a systemic failure of the police and the state administration in maintaining law and order.

According to Adhikari, such disruptions have become increasingly common since the conclusion of the 2021 Assembly elections in West Bengal. He also highlighted that his own convoy had been attacked multiple times since 2021, allegedly by Trinamool Congress supporters, leading the Union Home Ministry to enhance his security cover. The petition also referred to attacks on the convoys of BJP Lok Sabha MP Khagen Murmu and Sankar Ghosh, the chief whip of the BJP's legislative party in the West Bengal Assembly, last year. Both leaders sustained serious injuries in those incidents and had to be hospitalised.

## Karnataka govt changes timing of Urdu schools during Ramzan

BENGALURU: (Feb 2) The Karnataka government has decided to change the school working hours for Urdu-medium primary, upper primary and high schools across the state during the month of Ramzan in the academic year 2025-26.



State Home Minister G Parameshwara on Monday said calling the government's move as appeasement of minorities was not right.

The decision applies to all government, aided and unaided Urdu-medium schools and follows a review of existing orders and a representation submitted by the Karnataka State Primary School Education Association (R), Bengaluru, a government circular said. In its January 30 circular, which became public on Monday, the government noted, "Earlier, through a Standing Order issued on October 31, 2002, Urdu-medium lower primary, higher primary and high schools in the state were permitted to conduct classes

only from 8 am to 12.45 pm, and the said Standing Order has been directed to be examined as per rules and necessary action taken." The government referred to its March 8, 2023, order under which an Activity Action Plan for the academic year 2023-24 was implemented for schools following the state syllabus.

As per that circular, an advisory timetable had fixed regular school working hours from 10 am to 4.20 pm for daily academic activities. However, taking into account the observance of Ramzan and the long-standing special provisions for Urdu-medium institutions, the government examined the matter afresh following a representation dated January 17, 2026, submitted by the association's president.

## HMSI Posts 29% YoY Growth with 5.74 Lakh Sales in January

Bengaluru : Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India (HMSI) reported total sales of 5,74,411 units in January 2026. This includes 5,19,579 units in domestic sales and 54,832 units in exports.

HMSI registered a 29% year-on-year (YoY) growth compared to January 2025. This performance reflects strong demand across domestic and international markets for HMSI's product portfolio. For the Year-to-Date (YTD) period of FY26 (April 2025–January 2026), HMSI recorded total sales of 52,53,205 units, comprising 47,23,979 units sold domestically and 5,29,226 units exported. HMSI's Key Highlights of January 2026: Road safety: Aligned with its vision of "Safety for Everyone," HMSI organised nationwide road safety campaigns across various locations including Ahmednagar, Alibag, Ballabgarh, Bhubaneswar, Dausa, Guwahati, Gwalior, Hosapete, Kakinada, Kasaragod, Kurukshetra, Raipur and

Surat. These campaigns encouraged responsible riding and community awareness to create safer roads for all.

HMSI also held a Road Safety Convention in Malappuram, Kerala, engaging principals and teachers with the aim of nurturing safe road habits among children from an early age. Additionally, HMSI carried out a series of awareness campaign nationwide and launched Jaipur Ideal Road Safety Project to mark National Road Safety Month.

Network expansion: Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India also expanded its presence with new authorized dealerships in Erode, Bilaspur, Moradabad and Udhampur. The dealerships are supported by a specially trained sales and service team, ensuring personalized guidance and support, reflecting its commitment to customer-centric mobility solutions. As HMSI moves forward, its focus remains clear towards delivering mobility

that empowers customers, prioritizes safety, and contributes to a sustainable future.

Building a Safer Tomorrow:

aHMSI, mobility is more than a means of transport, it is a way to empower people, connect communities, and enrich lives. Every product we create is a step towards making mobility safer, cleaner, and more accessible, so that millions of Indians can chase their dreams with confidence. This is in line with our "Safety for Everyone" vision which embraces not only riders, but also pedestrians, communities, and the larger road ecosystem. With advanced technologies such as ABS, CBS, and rider-assist features, we are committed to making every ride a safer ride. With people at the heart of everything we do, Honda stands not just as a brand but as a partner in India's growth story. Our commitment to the future is reflected in our efforts toward a safer and greener tomorrow.

## Modi Govt Burdened Every Indian with Rs. 3-4 Lakh Debt: Manohar



Bengaluru: KPCC General Secretary S. Manohar on

Monday alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 11-year tenure has resulted in mounting a massive public debt of Rs.196.78 lakh crore, effectively burdening every Indian with a debt of Rs.3 to Rs.4 lakh.

He cited the pending Rs.11,495 crore special grant, including allocations for peripheral ring roads and lake development, and demanded a transparent reconciliation statement from the Centre. Manohar also flagged delays in the Bengaluru Suburban Rail Project, noting that only Rs.500 crore of the Centre's Rs.15,767 crore share had

been released till May 31, 2024.

Further, he pointed out sharp cuts in Central funding for Namma Metro and alleged neglect of the Bhadra Upper Irrigation Project in North Karnataka. Accusing the Centre of deliberately stalling Karnataka's development, Manohar urged immediate release of all pending grants and said the Congress would intensify its agitation to protect the state's interests. Several Congress leaders and party workers participated in the protest.

## Opposition slams CM Siddaramaiah over Governor's speech claims

Bengaluru (TSIT) Bengaluru Opposition Leader R Ashok criticized that, Through the Governor's speech, the Congress government has only made him speak lies. CM Siddaramaiah has become a mouse instead of a tiger.



Speaking in the thanksgiving resolution on the Governor's speech, he said, the VBG Ram Ji Act has been signed by the President and implemented. Congress leaders are questioning why Mahatma Gandhi's name was removed. Congress cannot tolerate the name of Ram. That's why the name of Ramanagara district was changed. Ramalinga Reddy was the in-charge minister of Ramanagara district. Now there is no district there at all. Mahatma Gandhi had said 'Raghupati Raghav Rajaram'. The Congress government has passed 18 resolutions against the Centre. They are picking fights everywhere like this, he said. Former Prime Ministers Jawaharlal Nehru 17 times, Indira Gandhi 29 times, Rajiv Gandhi 10 times, including that, the Congress party has amended the Constitution 72 times. Former Atal Bihari Vajpayee 14 times and Prime Minister Narendra Modi 8 times have made amendments. The Congress, which has amended the most times, is accusing the BJP. "If the Constitution is to be permanent, we must keep changing it," Jawaharlal Nehru had said. Baba Saheb Ambedkar had expressed frustration about the Constitution and said he would burn it, he said.

**How Many Schemes Have Names?** How many schemes has Congress named after Mahatma Gandhi? But more names from Indira Gandhi's family have been given. Rajiv Gandhi Rural Electrification Scheme, Rajiv Gandhi Drinking Water Mission, Rajiv Gandhi National Creche, Indira Awas, Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal, Nehru Rozgar, Indira Gandhi Canal Project, Rajiv Gandhi Social Security, Indira Gandhi Path Yojana, Rajiv Gandhi Nagarhola Sanctuary, Indira Gandhi Children's Hospital, Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital, like this, 454 schemes and institutions have been named after their family members, he said.

**80 Percent Government** Contractors have held press conferences three times and made corruption allegations. Even when BJP government was there, it was accused of 40 percent. Interference by middlemen, double commission compared to previous government, 80 percent commission, such allegations have been made. Their allegations have reached up to Rahul Gandhi. Tenders are given to Andhra people, higher commission for old bills, 37,370 crore rupees are pending, yet the government has not taken action, there is no other way but strike, the contractors' association has said. The association has written letters to the Urban Development Minister and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. Even after all these allegations, if the government has not taken action against contractors, it means the government has done wrong, he said.

**Highest Debt** CM Siddaramaiah has made the highest debt of 7.64 lakh crore rupees. From Bengaluru onwards, among all Chief Ministers till now, Siddaramaiah has made the highest debt. Said to give 5,000 crore rupees for Gopalakshmi scheme but not given yet. Finance department has not given money yet, what is Minister Lakshmi Hebbalakar doing. DCM K. Shivakumar had said 657 crore rupees of Annabhaga has not reached people. Without giving MLA area development, MLAs are struggling, without giving honorarium to Anganwadi helpers, they are struggling, without giving flood relief, farmers are struggling. But ministers are fighting to make money. This is a government of no's. Due to termite attack in government treasury, no money can be given. Thousands of posts are vacant in government, 10 thousand candidates are protesting in Dharwad, he said.

**Insult to Artist**

Artist B. Jayashree applied three times to donate 5 guntas land, but Revenue Department has not responded. Finally when she went to survey office and asked, they say our superior's work is more important than yours. Officer speaks arrogantly, Jayashree has said in frustration. They are making her run around to get bribe for the land being donated. If government has respect, that officer should have been suspended immediately. Though government advertised house to door, they called the artist to

office. CM Siddaramaiah should take action against such corrupt officer, he demanded.

### Garbage in Bengaluru

After dividing Bengaluru into 5 parts, officials cannot pay bills to contractors. Due to this, garbage and road potholes have increased. DCM D.K. Shivakumar said we will fill potholes in 15 days, make Brand Bengaluru. Give us Kempegowda's or S.M. Krishna's Bengaluru, that's enough. DCM D.K. Shivakumar has disappeared. Like the song 'Kaanadanthe Maayavaadu Namma Shiva', he has gone missing. If fight for power doesn't stop, officials won't work. CM Siddaramaiah said we are like milk and sugar. But this is milk poison. D.K. Shivakumar is going to Delhi repeatedly to become Chief Minister. Due to power politics, no control over officials, he said.

### Law and Order

It is written in Governor's speech from Home Department that our police system is model. Recently a triple star SP was caught by Lokayukta while taking bribe, his screaming video has gone viral. Through him, police parade ground has become center of bribe. In Jayanagar bank money loot, one police was involved. Police department has failed in detecting drugs mafia, he said. Compared to 2023, in 2024, 739 rape cases have come, 23% increase. POCO cases have increased by 5%. 100% dowry deaths. Karnataka is No.1 in cyber crimes, 5,473 crore rupees cheated. 1,131 murder cases happened. Drug factories are being detected. In 2024, 5,200 drug cases happened, drugs worth 31.87 crore rupees seized. In 2024 3,961, in 2025 4,177 people arrested under drugs smuggling. Among them 300-400 police also. Still they say garden of peace, he said. In 33 months, 9 government officials have committed suicide. More than 15 unnatural deaths of officials. Justice not given to Valmiki Corporation officer Chandrashekaran, PSI Parashuram etc. One librarian committed suicide after taking loan without salary. Congress leader Rajiv Gowda abused woman commissioner with bad words and threatened to set fire. Just for banner of smoking cigarette picture. JDS MLA Karemna Nayak has been threatened, he said.

### Kogilu Cross Encroachment

When Kerala CM criticized bulldozer government for clearing encroachment in Kogilu Cross, CM Siddaramaiah hit back and announced will give houses tomorrow. Pakistan spokesperson said Muslims in Karnataka are troubled. Someone from here has messaged them. Girl near Cantonment was writing exam and when returned, her house was cleared. Government has not helped these Kannadigas. One Kerala MLA came here, abused government left and right and went. For questioning against Bangla residents, activist Puneeth Kerehalli was arrested. But no case against that MLA. Newspapers reported Bangla migrants everywhere in state. For 3 thousand rupees, they get ID card. In Chikmagalur, Kodagu etc. they are there. In Kogilu Cross also they are there. Initially said 34 are locals, later found they are also migrants. Why is government in such hurry to give houses to Bangladeshi? If done for votes, it will lead to disaster in future, he said. In Govindarao committee report, despite crores of grants, no development. Nanjundappa report said 114 talukas backward. Even after Siddaramaiah presented 16 budgets, number of such talukas is 177. Till now BJP ruled eight and half years. Congress ruled longer but no development, he said.

### Novo Run Celebrates 100 Weeks of Promoting Workplace Wellness at Embassy Manyata Business Park

## One Man with Courage Can Build a Majority: DCM Shivakumar



Bengaluru : Saying that politics was the art of the possible, Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar today said that one man with courage could achieve the impossible.

Politics is the art of the possible. Everything is possible here. I believe that one man with courage makes a majority. With conviction and determination, one can have 140 people and even more. Let's see what happens in 2028," the DCM said replying to Leader of the Opposition R Ashok during Motion of Thanks to Governor's address in the Assembly.

During the discussion, R Ashok said that everyone was confused as the comments of DCM D.K. Shivakumar have a hundred meanings to them.

Replies to R Ashok, the DCM said, "I have come up as a student leader and I have my own values. I entered politics at an early age as the party gave me ticket. Highs and lows are

common in politics. I have seen and survived many highs and lows in politics including time in jail. I will complete six years as KPCC President next month."

All 149 MLAs including Siddaramaiah are my strength. Siddaramaiah is with me 100%, there is no question about it. We are working together and we will continue to do so in

the future. We have given our word to the people of Karnataka and we are working towards fulfilling them. I have stood by him in his tough times and will continue to do so. He will stand by me during my tough times.

Let there not be any doubt about it," he said. When Ashok intervened and asked what his tweet meant, the DCM said, "It is

left to you how you understand the tweet."

Asked in what context he spoke about patience, the DCM said, "I am not answerable to everyone. In both our parties, the party decides more than the strength of the support. Many CMs and Cabinets were changed in your party (BJP), hence I won't bother responding to your question."



Bengaluru : NovoHealth@EmbassyManyata, the flagship 5K running initiative by Novo Nordisk Education Foundation & Embassy REIT marked its 100th week of fostering active lifestyles and holistic well-being among corporate employees in Bengaluru. At the ceremony last Friday, Mr. Vikrant Shrotriya - Managing Trustee, Novo Nordisk Education Foundation and Mr. Amit Shetty - CEO, Embassy REIT were joined by senior leaders from leading multinational companies and few of the occupiers of Embassy Manyata including Rolls Royce, Rohde & Schwartz India Pvt. Ltd. and Nokia Bengaluru, for an evening of fitness, engagement and discussions on sustainability.

Vikrant Shrotriya - Managing Trustee, Novo Nordisk Education Foundation said "100 weeks of Novo Run is more than a milestone. A cumulative 85,500 steps towards better health! As we work towards bending the obesity curve in India with weight loss solutions, we understand the importance of healthy diet & regular exercise in this journey. Habit for

formation for lifestyle changes has been a challenge for most of us. We believe that our workplace is a natural catalyst for change and this initiative is an active resolution towards prioritising healthy eating & exercising for all corporate employees. This journey alongside Embassy REIT reinforces our vision of driving sustainable health outcomes and building communities that thrive on well-being."

Amit Shetty - CEO, Embassy REIT said, "It has been a wonderful partnership with Novo Nordisk India, and we are proud to see the Novo Run complete 100 weeks and evolve into a truly community-led movement. At Embassy REIT, we are committed to building wellness-oriented communities within our ecosystems that foster vibrant and engaged workplaces. I commend the runners and teams who have championed this initiative and look forward to strengthening this partnership as we continue to promote sustainability, wellness, and healthy living within the Embassy Ecosystem. "Launched on World Obesity Day in March 2024, NovoHealth@EmbassyManyata has grown into a vibrant workplace wellness platform, encouraging physical activity and holistic health for over 100,000 employees at Embassy Manyata Business Park. Dedicated employees from organisations such as Carelon, Nokia, HCL, IBM, Cognizant, Kyndryl, Fidelity, Mavenir, WSP, and Target have played a pivotal role in making Novo Run a benchmark for workplace wellness initiatives.

India faces a growing health crisis with 101 million people living with diabetes and 254 million generalised obesity. Urbanisation is accelerating the prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes, obesity, and cardiovascular conditions. Given the significant time individuals spend at work, workplaces play a pivotal role in promoting healthier habits.

Globally, workplace and community-based interventions have proven effective in improving health outcomes. To drive this change, NovoHealth@EmbassyManyata was launched as a partnership between Novo Nordisk Education Foundation and Embassy REIT to empower employees and the surrounding community to adopt an active lifestyle and enhance overall well-being.

As the initiative enters its next phase, it will continue to integrate sustainability and employee engagement into its core activities, reinforcing the message that health and environmental responsibility go hand in hand.

## EDITORIAL

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

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

#### No Vote, No Voice?

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

#### Many Ironies

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

# Budget 2026: No More 'Instant Gratification'



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

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

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

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

#### R. Suryamurthy

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

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

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



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

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

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

'DUBAI, READY FOR A SURPRISE':

## Anushka Sharma and Virat Kohli's winter journey is showcased in new campaign film



February 2026: The Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing (Visit Dubai), part of the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism (DET), has unveiled the latest film in the 'Dubai, Ready for A Surprise' series featuring India's power couple, Anushka Sharma and Virat Kohli. With a focus on winter in Dubai, the film is rooted in the core idea of how the city continues to surprise both first-time and repeat visitors, always offering something new, and this time it's Anushka's turn to surprise Virat. As part of their ongoing destination partnership with Dubai, this

new chapter builds on the success of the previous film and follows the couple through a day of thoughtful surprises planned by Anushka, highlighting the depth, variety, and convenience that make Dubai an effortless choice for Indian travellers. Launched during Dubai's vibrant winter season, the film beautifully captures Dubai's stunning cityscapes and expansive outdoors, from serene desert escapes to sun-soaked beachfront moments, showcasing how Dubai enables travellers to enjoy both nature and the city, two distinct holidays within one stay, just moments apart. The film

ends with a gentle hint from Anushka about how spectacular the view might be when summer arrives, reinforcing Dubai as a city for every season.

The story begins with a tranquil desert escape at the Presidential Villa at Al Maha, a Luxury Collection Desert Resort & Spa, located within the Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve, where the couple immerse themselves in the beauty of the desert dunes, cooking under open skies and watching the graceful gazelles roam freely. The film spotlights the lesser-explored side of Dubai, with luxurious desert resort stays,

nature drives, and immersive wilderness experiences that many travellers are yet to discover. After enjoying some playful moments by the beach, the couple then heads to One&Only One Za'abeel, where Virat tries on his latest shopping finds and shares his dance moves with Anushka at the two-storey Skyline Loft suite. The film highlights how effortlessly Dubai blends luxury, fashion, cuisine and entertainment, and offers these within easy reach, making it one of the world's most convenient urban playgrounds. Wandering through the soulful lanes of Al Seef,

Virat and Anushka soak in its heritage, traditions, and the timeless charm that lies at the heart of Old Dubai, underscoring the city's cultural depth, where authentic experiences sit harmoniously alongside modern attractions. Their fun exchange at the aromatic spice stalls leads to a nostalgic moment when Anushka surprises Virat with chole bhature, evoking the cherished flavours from Delhi. The moment also reflects Dubai's unique ability to make Indian travellers feel instantly at home, whether through familiar cuisine or interactions with locals. The film concludes with a quiet sunset moment by the elevated infinity pool at Tapasake at One&Only One Za'abeel, where Virat surprises Anushka with a cold coffee. The closing line reinforces the campaign's essence that Dubai is a city for every season, always ready to reveal something new. The film, which is a part of the ongoing collaboration with Anushka Sharma and Virat Kohli, reinforces Dubai's ability to surprise both first-time and returning travellers by offering a fresh take and a unique twist to every experience.



## Gold rebounds to Rs 1.48 lakh/10g after early slump



New Delhi: Gold prices recovered to Rs 1.48 lakh per 10 grams in futures trade on Monday, February 2, after an early sharp fall that triggered the lower circuit level, while silver extended losses to witness heavy selling for the third consecutive day. On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold futures for April delivery opened on a weak note and plunged Rs 10,688, or 7.2 per cent, to hit a low of Rs 1,37,065 per 10 grams during early trade. Later, the metal rebounded strongly, erasing all of its losses to trade higher by Rs 259, or 0.18 per cent, to Rs 1,48,012 per 10 grams in a business turnover of 8,501 lots. In addition, silver futures remained under pressure, opening lower and declining Rs 39,847, or 15 per cent, to hit an intraday low of Rs 2,25,805 per kilogram, also its lower circuit limit on the exchange. The white metal later pared some of its losses to trade at Rs 2,50,242 per kilogram, down 5.8 per cent, or Rs 15,410, in 6,892 lots. In the international market, Comex gold futures for April delivery went up by USD 5.21, or 0.11 per cent, to USD 4,750.31 per ounce, while silver for the March contract rose by USD 3.33, or 4.24 per cent, to USD 81.86 per ounce. Gold prices recovered to Rs 1.48 lakh per 10 grams in futures trade on Monday after an early sharp fall that triggered the lower circuit level, while silver extended losses to witness heavy selling for the third consecutive day. On the Multi Commodity Exchange

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## GOVT RAISES LIMIT FOR BRINGING DUTY-FREE IMPORTED GOODS TO RS 75,000



New Delhi: The government on Sunday, February 1, raised the limit for passengers bringing duty-free imported goods into India from Rs 50,000 to Rs 75,000. Under the Baggage Rules, 2026, notified on Sunday, a resident or a tourist of Indian origin arriving in India other than by land, shall be allowed clearance free of duty articles, up to the value of Rs 25,000. This limit was Rs 15,000 in the Baggage Rule, 2016. In case of a resident or tourist of Indian origin residing abroad for more than one

year, upon return to India, they shall be allowed duty-free clearance of jewellery up to a weight of 40 grams, if brought by a female passenger. The limit will be 20 grams if brought by anyone other than a female passenger in bona fide baggage. Jewellery, for this Rule, means articles of adornment ordinarily worn by a person, made of gold, silver, platinum, or other such precious metals, whether studded or not.

## MONTRA ELECTRIC DELIVERS INDIA'S 1ST 'PM E-DRIVE' CERTIFIED ELECTRIC TRUCK

Hyderabad 2026: Montra Electric (e-M&HCV business vertical), part of the Murugappa Group, has achieved a significant milestone in India's clean mobility journey by becoming the first heavy-duty electric truck manufacturer in the country to receive certification under the Government of India's PM E-DRIVE Scheme. Marking this achievement, the company has also delivered the country's first PM E-DRIVE-certified electric heavy truck, Rhino 5538 EV 6x4 Tractor trailer, to UltraTech Cement Limited, India's largest cement and ready-mix concrete company, reinforcing its commitment in advancing growth of electric vehicles. The milestone was commemorated in the presence of Shri Arun Murugappan, Chairman-Montra Electric (TI Clean Mobility), Lalit Gupta MD-Montra Electric (TI Clean mobility), Shri Sathya Raj, Chief Procurement Officer, UltraTech Cement Limited, underscoring the significance of this achievement for India's



clean mobility ecosystem. This move is expected to expedite the adoption of electric heavy-duty trucks across India's logistics, mining, infrastructure, and manufacturing sectors by significantly improving the business case for electrification. By enabling large fleet operators and industrial customers to transition away from conventional fuels without compromising on performance, uptime, or economics, the certification marks a decisive step towards cleaner, more efficient, and future-ready freight movement. The first PM E-DRIVE-certified Rhino 5538 EV was flagged off and handed

over to UltraTech by Shri Arun Murugappan. The INR 10,900 crore PM E-DRIVE scheme has an outlay of Rs 500 crore dedicated for e-trucks, translating into a direct customer benefit of up to 29.6 lakh per vehicle for the Rhino 5538 EV. The incentive improves long-term fleet economics by lowering operating costs, reducing fuel price volatility exposure, and supporting compliance with evolving sustainability and emission norms. Commenting on the occasion, Shri H.D. Kumaraswamy, Hon'ble Union Minister for Heavy Industries, said, 'The PM E-DRIVE scheme is a testament



to the growing prowess of Indian innovation in the heavy-duty electric vehicle segment. Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, we are committed to decarbonizing our logistics and making India a global hub for EV manufacturing. Electric trucks are pivotal to our Net Zero goals, and by fostering a self-reliant ecosystem through such certifications, we are driving the spirit of Atmanirbhar Viksit Bharat. We are very happy to see our Prime Minister's vision coming to life with the 1st PM E-DRIVE certified heavy-duty electric truck from Montra Electric getting delivered today.' Commenting on the milestone, Arun Murugappan, Chairman, Montra Electric (TI Clean Mobility Private Limited), said, 'Decarbonising freight is one of the most critical challenges in India's energy transition. We are grateful to the Government of India and our Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi for introducing forward-looking and progressive policy frameworks such as the PM E-DRIVE Scheme, which represent a welcome and transformative step in accelerating this shift, particularly in heavy commercial vehicles where emissions intensity is high.'

## BUDGET FY27 DEMONSTRATES COMMITMENT TO MACRO STABILITY: FITCH

New Delhi: India's budget demonstrates the ongoing commitment to maintaining macro stability through a gradual path of government debt reduction balanced against a still-robust capex program to enhance growth prospects, Fitch Ratings said on Monday, February 2. While the budget did not flag specific large-scale reform announcements, Fitch said it expects more reforms to be forthcoming, particularly on the deregulation agenda. Strong GDP growth is driving positive momentum in several of India's sovereign credit metrics and if sustained, could improve the credit profile over time, even as lingering fiscal challenges remain, it said. Building on recent reform momentum should help accelerate private investment and give greater upside and resilience to India's potential growth, Fitch added. It said fiscal consolidation is set to be very modest with fiscal deficit target at 4.3 per cent of GDP in FY27, just a touch below 4.4 per cent in FY26. "The slowing pace of consolidation is in line with our view that further progress on deficit reduction is becoming more difficult without

compromising more on GDP growth," Fitch said. The government opted to keep capex spending relatively stable at 3.1 per cent of FY27 GDP rather than pursue a greater degree of consolidation. This likely reflects an effort to offset lagging private investment. "India's budget demonstrates the ongoing commitment to maintaining macro stability through a gradual path of government debt reduction balanced against a still-robust capex program to enhance growth prospects," Fitch Ratings Director and Primary Sovereign Analyst Jeremy Zook said in a note. Fitch forecasts FY27 growth at 6.4 per cent. The continued emphasis on capex spend-

## Rupee rises 42 paise to close at 91.51 against US dollar



Mumbai: The rupee gained 42 paise to close at 91.51 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, February 2, a day after the Union Budget 2026-27 was presented, largely as crude oil prices retreated from their elevated levels. Forex traders said the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) seemed to be defending the 92 per dollar level with a lot of resolve. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 91.95 against the US dollar, then gained some ground to touch an intraday high of 91.45 and a low of 91.95 against the greenback. At the end of the trading session on Monday, the rupee was quoted at 91.51 (provisional) against the greenback, registering a gain of 42 paise from its previous close. On Friday, the rupee hit a record low of 92.02 before ending 6 paise higher at 91.93 against the US dollar. For the rupee, the Budget offered reassurance, not relief, and the government's high

borrowing plan is likely to weigh on investor sentiments going ahead. The government is likely to borrow Rs 17.2 lakh crore in the next financial year to fund its fiscal deficit projected at 4.3 per cent of the GDP. "Overall, it looks like a prudent budget, focusing on continuity. Given the geopolitical uncertainties and challenges, it seems like the government has chosen to go a bit slow on fiscal consolidation," IFA Global said in a research note. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges

outperformers. A combination of cooling commodity prices, enhanced fiscal control, large forex reserves and suspected corporate dollar selling has provided a tailwind for the local currency," Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities, said. In the near term, the USD-INR spot is likely to consolidate within a tight range, finding support at 91.10 and facing resistance near 91.85, Parmar added. On the domestic equity market front, Sensex jumped 943.52 points to settle at 81,666.46, while the Nifty surged 262.95 points to 25,088.40. On Sunday, equity markets reacted negatively to the FY27 Budget as it proposed higher securities transaction tax on derivatives and changes to buy-back taxation, raising concerns over increased costs for investors. Foreign Institutional Investors offloaded equities worth Rs 588.34 crore on Sunday, according to exchange data.

# ISRAEL REOPENS GAZA'S KEY RAFAH BORDER CROSSING WITH EGYPT

Palestinians have started to enter the Rafah border crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt after it reopened for the movement of people. The crossing has largely been closed since May 2024, when the Gazan side was captured by Israeli forces. The reopening was supposed to happen during the first phase of US President Donald Trump's ceasefire plan between Israel and Hamas, which began in October. But Israel blocked it until the return of the body of the last Israeli hostage in Gaza, which happened last week. It will come as a relief to many Palestinians who see it as a lifeline to the world, although there is frustration that only small numbers of people and no goods will be allowed through. Around 20,000 sick and wounded Palestinians are waiting to leave Gaza for treatment, according to local hospitals and the



World Health Organization (WHO). Israeli reports say only 50 patients - accompanied by one or two relatives - will be allowed to exit each day, and that 50 people who left Gaza during the war will be allowed to return. The crossing will be run by supervisors from the European Union and local Palestinian staff, while Israel will carry out remote

security checks. On Monday morning, an Israeli security official said the Rafah crossing had "now opened to the movement of residents, for both entry and exit" following the arrival of teams from the European Union Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM). Al Qahera News TV, which is close to Egyptian intelligence, meanwhile said the crossing had "received the first batch of Palestinians returning from Egypt to the Gaza Strip". It added that the move came "as part of Egyptian efforts to facilitate movement through the crossing". A Palestinian mother, Sabrine al-Da'ma, told the BBC she was hoping to travel abroad with her 16-year-old daughter, Rawa,

who suffers from kidney disease. She plans to donate Rawa one of her kidneys. "She used to be treated through monitoring, ultrasound imaging and tests to check the condition of her kidneys. Since the war started, because of food shortages, hunger, and the food she was forced to eat, she began dialysis," Da'ma said. "We hope they will speed up our referral so that we can travel quickly, because she is getting exhausted. I am also 45 years old, and they may tell me that as I get older, I won't be able to donate anymore. That's why we're rushing." On Sunday, Israeli authorities said a trial opening of the crossing was carried out and completed. One Palestinian official familiar with the arrangements for the trial told the BBC that around 30 Palestinian staff members had arrived at the Egyptian side of the crossing, ahead of the initial operational phase. The WHO will oversee the transfer of patients from territory under Hamas control, transporting them by bus to the crossing over the so-called "Yellow Line" and into territory controlled by the Israeli military, the BBC understands. Trump's 20-point Gaza peace plan says the reopening of the Rafah crossing in both directions will be subject to the same mechanism implemented under a previous ceasefire deal in January last year. Before being seized by Israel in 2024, the crossing was the main exit point for Palestinians allowed to leave during the war and a key entry point for humanitarian aid. Now, aid that enters from Egypt is routed via Israel's Kerem Shalom crossing point. In December, the Israeli government said the Rafah crossing would open to allow Palestinians to leave Gaza.

## Candidate tough on crime wins Costa Rica presidential election



The candidate for the governing conservative Sovereign People's Party, Laura Fernández, has won the presidential election in Costa Rica. With more than 88% of the votes counted, Fernández had over 48% of the votes, far ahead of the second-placed centrist candidate, Álvaro Ramos, who conceded defeat. Fernández ran on a promise to deepen the tough-on-crime approach of the outgoing President Rodrigo Chaves, who had handpicked her as his successor. Voters had said they were concerned about a surge in drug-related violence in the Central American country. The size of her vote share - which exceeded the 40% needed to win outright in the first round - means that there is no need for a run-off. Fernández will be sworn in on 8 May. In her victory speech, the 39-year-old said she would plough ahead with the policies introduced by Chaves, whose chief of staff she was. Under Costa Rica's

## BEIJING CRITICISES DALAI LAMA GRAMMY WIN AS 'MANIPULATION'



China has reacted angrily to an unlikely winner at the Grammys - the Dalai Lama - saying it opposes art awards being used for "anti-China political manipulation". The Buddhist spiritual leader was recognised in the audiobook category for *Meditations: The Reflections of His Holiness the Dalai Lama*. The Dalai Lama said he accepted the award with "gratitude and humility". The 90-year-old

has lived in exile from his Tibetan homeland since 1959 and is condemned as a rebel and separatist by Beijing. China's foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian told a news conference: "We firmly oppose relevant parties using art awards as a tool for anti-China political manipulation, and this position is consistent and clear." The spiritual leader, who lives in Dharamshala in India, left China in fear of his life after Chinese troops crushed an uprising. He has campaigned for more autonomy for Tibet, but Beijing considers it an integral part of China. In a message on social media the Dalai Lama, who is also a Nobel peace laureate, said: "I receive this recognition with gratitude and humility."

## 'Enemy' insults and questioning Putin: Steve Rosenberg on tightrope of reporting from Russia



bureau, as the Kremlin continues to wage war on Ukraine, tightens the screws at home and builds a relationship with President Trump. The squirrel barb doesn't bother me. Squirrels are cute. And they have a thick skin - something a foreign correspondent needs here. But "enemy of Russia"? That hurts. I have spent

more than thirty years living and working in Moscow. As a young man I fell in love with the language, literature and music of Russia. At university in Leeds, I ran a choir that performed Russian folk classics. For one concert I wrote a song in Russian about a snowman who put on so many clothes that he melted.

## EIGHTY KIDNAPPED NIGERIANS RETURN HOME AFTER ESCAPE



Dozens of worshippers kidnapped by gunmen in Nigeria's northern Kaduna state have returned home weeks after their abduction, police have confirmed. They were among 177 people seized last month from three churches in the remote village of Kurmin Wali. The 80 people escaped on the day they were taken but hid in neighbouring villages for a fortnight "due to fear of being captured again", state police spokesman Mansur Hassan told the BBC. The authorities say efforts are ongoing to secure the release of the remaining 86 people still being held. The attack was part of a wave of kidnappings

for ransom affecting many parts of Nigeria, but no group has said it was behind the abductions. The raid was initially denied by police, who only confirmed the kidnappings on 21 January after local residents had reported to the BBC that 177 worshippers were abducted, with 11

gradually becoming the norm in Nigeria." In November, more than 300 students and teachers were taken from a Catholic school in Niger state, which neighbours Kaduna, before being released in two groups. Nigeria faces multiple, overlapping security challenges beyond kidnappings, including an Islamist insurgency in the north-east, separatist violence in the south-east, and frequent clashes between herders and farmers in central regions over land and water. Security experts say efforts to tackle these crises are hampered by corruption, poor intelligence sharing, and underfunded local police forces.

## Trump threatens to sue Trevor Noah over Epstein joke at Grammys



US President Donald Trump has threatened to sue comedian Trevor Noah after he joked about Trump and Jeffrey Epstein at the Grammy Awards. Hosting the event, Noah said: "Song of the Year - that is a Grammy that every artist wants almost as much as Trump wants Greenland, which makes sense because Epstein's island is gone, he needs a new one to hang out with Bill Clinton." Trump is known to have been an associate of Epstein for years, but says he had no knowledge of his crimes and that they fell out in about 2004. There are no suggestions he ever visited Epstein's private island and he has not been accused of any crime by Epstein's victims. The US justice department has said allegations about him are unfounded and false. In 2020, a spokesperson for Clinton said the former president had "never been" to Epstein's island, Little St James. Clinton has not been accused of any wrongdoing. Trump responded to Noah's joke by saying he would be "sending my lawyers to sue". Posting on Truth Social, Trump wrote: "Noah said, INCORRECT

## NORWAY'S PM AGREES CROWN PRINCESS HAD 'POOR JUDGEMENT' OVER EPSTEIN LINKS



Jagland had exercised "poor judgement", after it emerged that he had planned a family holiday on Epstein's private island, though he then cancelled it. Jagland was expected to make a statement on the issue on Monday. The latest cache of Epstein files suggests that the correspon-

dence between Princess Mette-Marit and Epstein began in autumn 2011. The warm nature of the messages has appalled commentators in Norway. An email from the HRH Crown Princess account on 23 October 2011 implies she had by then become aware of his initial jail term in

Australian woman dies after becoming snagged in ski lift in Japan





# RUSSELL 'WANTS TO GO HEAD-TO-HEAD' WITH VERSTAPPEN

Mercedes driver George Russell says his hope for the 2026 Formula 1 season is to find himself in a title fight with Red Bull's Max Verstappen. Russell said he would "love for it to turn out that way" as he and Mercedes officially launched their new car on Monday. The 27-year-old Briton added that he did not feel any more pressure as a result of his status as pre-season favourite. "I do want to go head-to-head with Max and obviously Lando [Norris, McLaren's world champion] had a great season last year but, no, it didn't add any more pressure," he said. Russell has won five F1 races for Mercedes since joining the team in 2022 but, up until now, has not had a car consistently fast enough to challenge for a drivers' championship. F1 has made the biggest regulation change in its history over the winter, with the



cars, engines, tyres and fuel all new heading into 2026. Russell said that although the first test in Barcelona had gone well for Mercedes, he had been impressed by other teams, especially Red Bull, who are producing their first in-house engine in partnership with Ford for this season. "Probably the fans and

people were expecting potentially Mercedes versus McLaren because there was a lot of anticipation that Mercedes would clearly have the best power unit," Russell said. "But it seems like the other power-unit manufacturers have done a good job and we know that Red Bull have always had an amazing

car. Even through the years of dominance of Mercedes, it was their engine that was letting them down not their car and we obviously know how good Max is. So I think he's very much going to be in the fight this year and that is great." Russell and team boss Toto Wolff were downplaying expectations

of Mercedes, saying it was impossible to know at this stage which team was the most competitive. "It's still very early days but, quoting Toto, it doesn't look like it's a turd, which is a bonus," Russell said. "In the early days like this, you know when it could be a really bad car and you can sort of highlight those negatives early on. "We don't believe it is, but is it a car that can produce a world championship? It's still way too early to say." Wolff added: "We don't have really a performance picture yet because we haven't seen Max driving the car fast and we haven't seen McLaren and Ferrari doing what they can do. So I would carefully refrain from saying that was great for us. We simply don't know." Russell, who said he felt ready to fight for a title, was generally positive about the new generation of cars.

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

The T20 World Cup 2026 has become a battleground between the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and the International Cricket Council (ICC), with the global body now preparing for a meeting that could change the map of world cricket forever. Outside, the clock is ticking: 48 hours remain before the governing body is expected to drop a verdict that might leave the PCB in total isolation. Sources have told NDTV that the Jay Shah-led ICC is contemplating imposing severe sanctions on Pakistan after the nation announced a boycott of the T20 World Cup match against India on 15 February, in solidarity with Bangladesh, who were replaced by Scotland in the



biennial event. The tension, which had been simmering since the removal of Bangladesh, reached a boiling point on Sunday. In a move that stunned the cricketing world, the Pakistani government cleared its team to travel to Sri Lanka but made a "selective participation" announcement. The

Pakistani government's official X (formerly Twitter) account clarified that its team has received the go-ahead for participation in the T20 World Cup, but it has been barred from taking the field against India on 15 February. The PCB, led by Mohsin Naqvi, framed this as a stand of solidarity with

Bangladesh, whose request to move matches out of India was rejected by the ICC. To Pakistan, it was a matter of principle; to the rest of the world, it felt like a wrecking ball swung at the heart of the tournament's commercial and sporting integrity. Historically, India has faced immense pressure to boycott fixtures against Pakistan due to geopolitical tensions. Despite this, the Indian team fulfilled its 2025 Asia Cup fixture in Pakistan, with the BCCI prioritising the stability of associate members and the global game. However, when required to reciprocate this commitment, Pakistan chose political posturing over sporting integrity.

## "Regrettable": Shahid Afridi's Blunt Take On Pakistan's Refusal To Play Against India In T20 World Cup 2026

Former Pakistan captain and cricketing legend Shahid Afridi shared quite an intriguing statement after his government confirmed a boycott of the Indian team at the upcoming T20 World Cup 2026. Pakistan and India are scheduled to square off in Colombo on 15 February, but Salman Ali Agha's men have been asked not to take the field by their government as a mark of protest against the International Cricket Council (ICC). The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has been flirting with the idea of giving the India match a miss ever since the ICC booted Bangladesh out of the tournament. Afridi, who has time and again advocated for sports and politics to be

kept separate, expressed 'regret' over Pakistan's decision to not play against India in the T20 World Cup. However, he also stood behind his government's decision while asking the ICC to resolve the matter through impartial actions. "I've always believed cricket can open doors when politics closes them. Regrettably, Pakistan

won't play India at the #T20WorldCup, but I stand behind my government's decision. "This is the moment for @ICC to lead and prove through decisions, not statements, that it is impartial, independent, and fair to every member," Afridi's post on X (formerly Twitter) read. Afridi himself was at the centre of a

## PGA TOUR SUCCESS VINDICATES REJECT-ING LIV - ROSE



Three PGA Tour victories and two near misses in the majors have left Justin Rose feeling vindicated by his decision to reject offers from the Saudi Arabia-backed LIV Golf series. The Englishman claimed his 13th PGA Tour title on Sunday after a dominant week at Torrey Pines in California, winning with a tournament record score. In 2022, some of the sport's biggest names chose to defect to the breakaway LIV Golf with lucrative contracts being offered by the controversial new competition. Rose, however, chose not to move and since then the 45-year-old has climbed to third in the world rankings. He has won three times on the American circuit, finished runner-up at the 2024 Open Championship and was beaten in a play-off at last year's Masters by Rory McIlroy. "I feel like my career goals have only been attainable by staying on the European Tour and the PGA Tour because access to them is not possible the other way," said Rose. "I've been sniffing and knocking on the door for a couple of majors

## Australia Skipper Shuts Down Pakistan Reporter Over T20 World Cup India Boycott Question



As Pakistan confirmed its stance of barring the national team from taking the field against India in the T20 World Cup 2026 match on February 15, a reporter looked to pounce on the opportunity by asking Australia skipper Mitchell Marsh his views on the matter. The Australian team, at present, is in Pakistan for a 3-match T20I series. After the conclusion of the series, Marsh had to face some unexpected questions in the press conference. The Pakistani reporter asked Marsh two questions: Pakistan's boycott of the India match and Bangladesh's removal from the T20 World Cup. But was shut down on both occasions. The reporter's attempt to draw a reaction from Marsh fell flat on both occasions as

the Australian skipper maintained a clear stance of focusing on only what he and his team have to do in the upcoming T20 World Cup. Here's how the conversation went: Reporter: Just came to know about the Pakistan-India match on the 15th February. You know, Pakistan is going to boycott the Pakistan-India match. So, your point of view,

if you want to add some words about this. Mitchell Marsh: Yeah, I don't really have a comment on that at this point in time. You know, we're going to the World Cup to just focus on what we're doing, and we'll let that stuff take care of itself. Reporter: Also, ICC full member Bangladesh is not going to participate in this World Cup

due to security concerns. As a player, how do you feel that an ICC full member is not going to participate in this World Cup? Mitchell Marsh: Yeah, I think the same goes for my previous answer, that we're going to the World Cup to try and win it, and we're solely focused on that. As the Australian team, we trust the people who are in place to keep us safe, and that's all I'll say. Yeah. The tour of Pakistan didn't end on the most promising note for Australia, with the visitors suffering defeats in all three matches, hence incurring a 0-3 sweep at the hands of Salman Ali Agha and Co. But, Australia do have some injured and absent stars returning as they kick off their T20 World Cup 2026 campaign on February 11.

## Will Seahawks stop Patriots' record bid? Lowdown on Super Bowl 2026

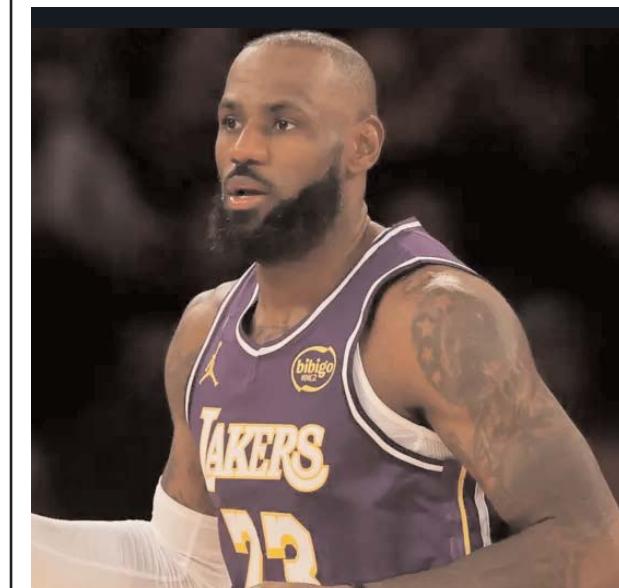


The NFL's 2025 season has provided the most wide-open race for the Super Bowl in years. Now just the New England Patriots and the Seattle Seahawks remain and they will meet on Sunday to decide the NFL champions. It is a title New England have held six times but this is their first Super Bowl since 2019 and the departure of legendary quarterback Tom Brady and coach Bill Belichick. A revitalised Patriots team have come from nowhere to reach Super Bowl 60 in California and secure a record-extending 12th appearance in the NFL showpiece. The Seahawks have reached their fourth Super Bowl, and their first

since 2015, when the Patriots denied them back-to-back championships. Now a Briton could become the first overseas coach to win arguably the biggest game in world sport having helped turn Seattle back into title contenders. There will also be a historic half-time show from a Latin

superstar amid concerns over how US immigration agents handle an event which for each of the past three years has been the most-watched broadcast in American television history. How the Patriots can make NFL history Brady and head coach Belichick led New England to nine

## JAMES A SURPRISE SELECTION FOR NBA ALL-STAR GAME



LeBron James has been selected for a record-extending 22nd consecutive NBA All-Star game by being named among the reserves from the Western Conference. The 41-year-old Los Angeles Lakers star was not selected as a starter in January but was among the seven reserves chosen from each of the Eastern and Western Conferences by NBA coaches. James, who missed his side's first 14 matches of the 2025-26 campaign because of sciatica, has played 31 times this season and is averaging 21.9 points per game. "It wasn't a goal of mine to come into the season, miss the first 14 games and say, 'OK, I can be an All-Star,'" James told reporters after playing in the Lakers' 112-100 defeat against the New York Knicks. "I just wanted to get back to playing the game at a high level I knew I was capable of once

## MARY KOM BREAKS SILENCE ON CONTROVERSIAL "DIDN'T EARN A SINGLE RUPEE" DIG AT EX-HUSBAND



Indian boxing icon Mary Kom, who has been in the news over her personal life, has officially addressed the social media firestorm surrounding the comments she made against her ex-husband K Onler Kom at a talk show. The decorated athlete, known for her composure inside and outside the ring, sought to clear the air regarding the controversial comments she made at the show, saying the outburst was a result of long-suppressed emotions over fallout with her husband and personal issues. She further said that the comments were in no way directed towards the male community overall. The controversy erupted following an emotional segment on Aap Ki Adalat where Kom discussed her personal life, leading to a viral "Ek Rupiya Bhi Nahi Kamaya" (not a single rupee was earned) remark that many felt targeted her former partner's career and

baad bhi maine public ya media mein koi statement nahi diya. Mein hamesha dignity aur restraint ke saath khud ko conduct kar rahi hoon." A significant portion of the backlash came from sports fans who felt her comments belittled the struggles of aspiring footballers. Mary Kom was quick to dismiss any notion that she holds a bias against the sport, citing legends like Sunil Chhetri as examples of the determination she admires. "Mere is remark ko social media par galat direction mei leke chale gaye, jo kaafi unfortunate hain.

## I HOPE BARABAR PREMISTHA GIVES CHANDRA HASS A STRONG BREAKTHROUGH: AADI SAIKUMAR AT THE PRE-RELEASE EVENT

Barabar Premistha, starring Attitude Star Chandra Hass in the lead, is directed by Sampath Rudra. Presented by Kakarla Satyanarayana, the film is produced by Geda Chandu, Gayatri Chinny, and AVR under the banners of CC Creations and AVR Movie Wonders. Miss India finalist Meghna Mukherjee plays the female lead, while Arjun Mahi (of Ishqam fame) essays the antagonist's role. The film is all set for a grand theatrical release on February 6th. Ahead of the release, the makers hold a pre-release event on Sunday (February 1). The event was graced by chief guests Jayanth C Paranjee, JD Chakravarthy, and Aadi Saikumar, along with the film's cast and crew. Chandra Hass said: "I am a big fan of Jayanth sir's films like Teen Maar and Shankar Dada. Aadi Anna has made an incredible comeback—he is truly an inspiration to me. JD Chakravarthy sir looks the same even today. I'm deeply grateful that so many people came here for me. I can never repay the debt of my father Prabhakar, who gave birth to



me and raised me. Meghna will become a big heroine in Telugu cinema. Dhruvan is extremely talented and has delivered fantastic songs for this film. My thanks to Chinny garu, Chandra garu, and Venky garu for producing this movie without any compromises. Special thanks to cinematographer Shekhar Anna, who played a key role in bringing this project to me. This film will not bore the audience even for a second. With countless and unimaginable twists, it will keep viewers glued from start to finish. Director Sampath has made this film beautifully and presented me really well. I hope audiences watch and support Barabar Premistha

on February 6." Aadi Saikumar stated: "I worked with Prabhakar Anna on Next Nuvve. Even back then, he spoke highly of Chandra Hass and said he would become a good hero—and I believed it. I've seen how hard Chandra Hass works with complete honesty. I sincerely wish him a big hit. I hope Barabar Premistha becomes a major turning point in Chandra Hass' career. I urge audiences to watch the film in theatres on February 6 and support the team." Prabhakar acknowledged: "Aadi is my first hero. When Shambhala became a hit, I was happier than even Sai Kumar garu. I'm delighted that Aadi attended this event. DOP Shekhar brought this story to me, and the entire team worked extremely hard on this film. I hope their efforts are rewarded on February 6. Dhruvan has given excellent music.

good singer. Meghna too has great energy and attitude. Sampath has directed the film wonderfully, and I really liked all the songs composed by Dhruvan. I strongly believe this film will be a big hit. I request everyone to watch Barabar Premistha on February 6 and support the team." Director Sampath Rudra said: "I've always admired Aadi garu's love stories, and I'm happy he came to support us today. Producer Venky is my classmate—without him, this film wouldn't exist. Chandra and Chinny joined the project later. Chinny and I worked together as assistant directors on Rechipo. Dhruvan has delivered outstanding music. No commercial film like this has come with a Telangana backdrop before.

Chandra Hass never lets negativity affect him—he always moves forward positively. Meghna is extremely passionate about cinema. I request audiences to watch and encourage this film." JD Chakravarthy stated: "Whatever Chandra Hass does naturally attracts people. I will definitely watch this film for Prabhakar. Starting his life as a constable and rising to become a television star, Prabhakar's journey is truly inspiring. Meghna looks impressive, and Dhruvan's music is excellent. My best wishes to the entire team. Don't miss Barabar Premistha in theatres on February 6." Director Sampath Rudra said: "I've always admired Aadi garu's love stories, and I'm happy he came to support us today. Producer Venky is my classmate—without him, this film wouldn't exist. Chandra and Chinny joined the project later.

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Couple Friendly, starring Santosh Shobhan in the lead role, features Manasa Varanasi as the female lead. Presented by the reputed production house UV Creations and produced under the banner UV Concepts, the film is being made on a grand scale in Telugu and Tamil. Ajay Kumar Raju P. serves as the co-producer, while Ashwin Chandrasekhar has directed the film. Touted as a musical romantic love story, Couple Friendly is set for a Valentine's Day release on February 14 in both Telugu and Tamil. Passionate producer and

## Couple Friendly will be a memorable film in my career Santosh Shobhan at the Trailer Launch Event



distributor Dheeraj Mogilineni is releasing the film across Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The film's trailer was launched today at a grand event held in Hyderabad. Manasa Varanasi said, "I played the character of Mithra in Couple Friendly, and I'm very happy to have received such a beautiful role. I connected deeply with Mithra on a personal level. Just like me, she believes in taking action without hesitation when something needs to be done. She doesn't overthink or doubt herself. This film is like a roller-coaster ride a

fresh, youthful love story set against the Chennai backdrop. We shot guerrilla-style across many locations in Chennai, which added great authenticity. Santosh Shobhan is a wonderful actor. I closely observed his dedication and his constant desire to perform better in every scene, and I learned a lot from him. Aditya has composed beautiful music. Two songs have already been released and turned into chartbusters, and my favourite songs are yet to come. I'm also very happy that Dheeraj garu is distributing our film.

The film 'Winter', jointly produced by Crescent Cinemas and TSR Makers, launched grandly with traditional pooja



### Highlights

■ 'Winter' features Ram, Aaditya Suraj Singh, Kusuma Chandhaka, Shashikala, and Srijita Ghosh in lead roles. The film is being produced by Riyaz Ahmed and T. Srinivas Rao. Suresh Lankalapalli, who received critical acclaim for Racharikam, is handling the story, screenplay, and direction for this project.

'Winter' features Ram, Aaditya Suraj Singh, Kusuma Chandhaka, Shashikala, and Srijita Ghosh in lead roles. The film is being produced by Riyaz Ahmed and T. Srinivas Rao. Suresh Lankalapalli, who received critical acclaim for Racharikam, is handling the story, screenplay, and direction for this project. With this film, Rizwan Ali will be introduced to the screen as the antagonist. Notably,

## HRIM HERO PAWAN'S GRANDFATHER HAS GREAT TALENT - HERO NANDU AT PAWAN'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS



Pawan Tata and Chaminda Varma star in the film 'Hreem'. Sujatha Mallala presented it under the banner of Shivam Media and Shivam Mallala produced it. Rajesh Ravi is the director of this film. On Monday, Sri Nandu, the hero of 'Dandora' and 'Psych Siddhartha', participated in the birthday celebrations held at the film office on the occasion of the film's hero Pawan Tata's birthday. On this occasion, Nandu said: "I have just seen the posters and

glimpses of the film 'Hreem'. This is the content that excited me the most when I saw it. Soon, all of you will also see this content. I have a special connection with the producer of this film. Our journey has been going on for many years. If I ever have any doubts about anything, I share it with Shivam Mallala's brother without thinking. He is a well-wisher to many people in the industry. My gratitude to hero Pawan's grandfather and heroine Dr. Chaminda

Varma, who are planning their careers in a big way with this film. This is a great opportunity for Rajesh, who is going to become a director after working in MaTV. All the best to everyone," he said. Hero Pawan said, "This birthday is very special for me. I got a good opportunity through the film 'Hreem'. Thanks to everyone who believed in me and gave me the opportunity. I am very happy that my family members, my aunt Renukamma, Gopi and Rekha, are all participating in this celebration. I hope that all of you will also praise me after watching the content," he said. Heroine Chaminda Varma said, "My first film co-star Pawan acted very well. Happy birthday to him. Thank you Nandu garu for participating in this celebration and wishing our team." Producer Shivamallala said, "Thank you to Nandu for participating in our hero Pawan's birthday celebrations as soon as I asked and giving energy to all our team.

**"One by Four (One/4) is being embraced by audiences across all sections; absence of heroines during promotions caused loss to our film" – Movie Team at Success meet**

T ejas Gunjal Films and Rohit Gunjal Films banners have produced the action crime drama "One by Four (One/4)", starring Venkatesh Peddapalem, Aparna Mallick, and Heena Soni in lead roles. The film is directed by Bahubali Palani K, who earlier worked as an associate director for the blockbuster Baahubali. The movie is jointly produced by Ranjana Rajesh Gunjal and Rohit Ramdas Gunjal. Recently released, "One by Four (One/4)" has emerged as a successful film, receiving appreciation from audiences across all categories and running successfully in all centers. On this occasion, the success meet was held at the Hyderabad Film Chamber, where the team shared their thoughts. Director Bahubali Palani K



said: "Audiences have made One by Four (One/4) a blockbuster. Collections are good in every theatre. Once again, viewers proved that if the content is strong, even a small film can achieve big success. Hero Venkatesh impressed everyone with his fight and performance. He has already done action films in Kannada, and he has a

bright future in Telugu cinema as well. Our producers Ranjana and Rohit came from Mumbai with great passion for cinema and entered Tollywood. I hope they produce many more films. However, it is unfortunate that some actors who initially come seeking opportunities do not show up during promotions. They should at least pro-

motivate the film with gratitude." Producer Ranjana Rajesh Gunjal said: "Our film One by Four (One/4), which carries a strong message along with entertainment, is being well received by audiences. The success is purely due to its solid content. The character 'Pavitra' is getting special appreciation, and hero Venkatesh's performance is

being widely praised. The film shows the struggles a woman faces due to blackmail, making it a thought-provoking experience. We are deeply hurt that we did not receive promotional support from the heroines. Despite providing all facilities, they did not show gratitude towards the film. Their absence during promotions caused losses to the movie. It feels better to encourage and cast Telugu girls as heroines rather than depending on North Indian heroines." Producer Rohit Ramdas Gunjal said: "Out of love for Telugu cinema, we came from Mumbai to Tollywood. Achieving success with our very first attempt is very encouraging. The message we wanted to convey through this film reached the audience, and collections are strong. Viewers

never reject a good film. Unfortunately, the actors themselves did not cooperate during promotions; otherwise, the film would have reached even more people." Hero Venkatesh Peddapalem said: "All of us worked extremely hard for One by Four (One/4). We also faced release issues due to competition from bigger films, but our producers bravely overcame all hurdles and released the movie. The film is receiving good talk from all the theatres. Many are saying this is a must-watch film for women. Even now, when we want to continue promotions, the heroines are not attending press meets. Actors who skip promotions should think about the situation of producers who invest so much passion and money into making a film."

**Mumbai: Choreographer and director Farah Khan revealed how actress Malaika Arora came on board 'Chaiyya Chaiyya'**



At the end, she admitted that Malaika ended up giving a mind-blowing performance in the 'Chaiyya Chaiyya' track. The pop-folk song was a part of the Bollywood film "Dil Se...". The song has reportedly been adapted from the lyrics of "Tere Ishq Nachaya", written by Bulleh Shah. Oscar-winning composer A.R. Rahman has provided the score, with lyrics penned by Gulzar. The track has been crooned by Sukhwinder Singh and Sapna Awasthi. The iconic number has been performed on top of a moving train by Malaika and the protagonist Shah Rukh Khan. Choreographed by Farah, the mesmerizing number continues to be one of the most memorable tracks, remembered for its energetic steps and deep lyrics. It still remains an inspiration for several dance enthusiasts across the country. "Dil Se..." further featured Manisha Koirala and Preity Zinta (debut movie) in significant roles.