

OM NAMO VENKATESAYA



02-02-2026
Total pilgrims: 69,262
Tonsures: 22,728
Hundi kanukalu: 377 CR
Waiting Compartments: 11

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

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NATION | NEWS

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

WORLD | NEWS

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



SPORTS | NEWS

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



IN BRIFS

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

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

‘Unruly’: 8 MPs suspended as Opposition, govt clash over US, EU trade deals

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

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multiple issues, including Rahul Gandhi being denied permission to cite excerpts from former army chief MM Naravane's unpublished memoir on the 2020 India-China conflict and sharp criticism of the Centre over newly announced India-US and EU trade deals.

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

When the House met at 3 pm



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

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

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

US-India trade deal under spotlight

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

India-US trade deal nearing finalisation: Piyush Goyal



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

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

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

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

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

The opposition led by Leader of the opposition Rahul Gandhi however lashed out at the deal and attacked it, terming it a "sell out" of the interests of Indian farmers and stalled Lok Sabha from functioning by creating a repeated din over the trade deal and a statement by Gandhi on India-China border issue. India and the United States last night announced a trade deal which will see the US cut tariffs for Indian merchandise exports to 18 per cent from 50 per cent, in exchange for New Delhi ending purchases of Russian oil and easing restrictions on American goods.

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



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

mutually beneficial collaboration in high and advanced technology."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ministers Congratulate CM Revanth Reddy on Completing Harvard Executive Leadership Programme

Hyderabad: Several Telangana ministers and senior Congress leaders met Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy and congratulated him on successfully completing the “Leadership in the 21st Century” Executive Leadership Programme at the Harvard Kennedy School, one of the world’s premier public policy institutions. The leaders visited the Chief Minister’s residence and conveyed their best wishes, stating that the advanced leadership programme would further strengthen governance, policy innovation, and development planning in Telangana. Those who extended congratulations included Ministers N. Uttam



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

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

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



The Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) successfully demonstrated the Solid Fuel Ducted Ramjet (SFDR) technology on 3 February 2026 from the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur, off the coast of Odisha.

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

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

fence Staff (HQ IDS) in partnership with the Centre for Joint Warfare Studies (CENJOWS). Building on the success of the inaugural course held in September 2024, this expanded three-week programme aims to realise the vision of Chief of the Defence Staff Gen Anil Chauhan to prepare officers for the complex challenges of modern warfare, they said. The course, to be held at the Manekshaw Centre at Delhi Cantonment, focuses on developing an erudite understanding on how war fighting is being impacted by technology, necessitating a relook at our thinking, concepts, doctrines, strategies and techniques, and Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs), the defence ministry said. “It also ca-

ters for deeper exploration of critical topics, practical demonstrations of emerging technologies and visits to institutions of critical importance to the capabilities of the defence forces,” the ministry said in a statement. It said this edition features an enhanced curriculum covering specialised subjects and domain-specific warfare developments in military operations. The course comprises participants from the three services, as well as representatives from the defence industry including start-ups, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs) and the private industry. Among the services’ participants, senior officers with ranks varying from majors to major

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

Supreme Court refuses to entertain PIL questioning procedures to record caste of citizens in 2027 census

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Monday refused to entertain a PIL questioning the procedure to be adopted to record, classify and verify the caste data of citizens in the 2027 general census. The top court, however, asked the Centre and the office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India to consider the suggestions made by PIL petitioner Akash Goel, an academician, on the issue. Goel, represented by senior advocate Mukta Gupta, said a transparent questionnaire, to be used for recording, classifying and verifying the caste details of the citizens, has to be placed in public domain. The senior advocate alleged that the Directorate of Census Operations has not disclosed the criteria for recording the caste identity



of citizens “notwithstanding the acknowledgement that caste enumeration has extended beyond the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled tribes this time”. The bench told the PIL petitioner there is “no pre-determined data” to identify the

caste data. “The census exercise is regulated under the Census Act, 1958 and the 1990 Rules framed thereunder which empowers the respondent authorities to determine the particular and manners of census operations,” the

bench noted. “We have no reason to doubt that respondent authority with aid and assistance of domain experts must have evolved a robust mechanism in order to rule out any mistake as apprehended by the petitioner and several like-minded persons. We find the petitioner has raised some relevant issues through representation to the Registrar General of Census operations ...as well,” the CJI said. The bench said authorities may consider the suggestions raised in the legal notice and the petition and disposed of the PIL. The 2027 Census, officially the 16th national census, will be the first to include comprehensive caste enumeration since 1931 and the country’s first fully digital census.

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

GUWAHATI: Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Monday said plans are afoot to lay underground railway tracks along a 40-km strategic corridor in West Bengal, connecting the northeast with the rest of India. The strategic corridor, called the ‘Chicken’s Neck’ for its shape, is a strip of land located in northern West Bengal’s Siliguri area, having a width of over 20 km. The strip is sandwiched between Nepal and Bangladesh, with Bhutan and China a few hundred kilometres away. Addressing reporters through video conference on the Union Budget allocation for the railway ministry, Vaishnaw said, “There is special planning for the 40-km strategic corridor connecting the northeast with the rest of the country.” “Planning is underway to lay underground railway tracks, and



also make the existing tracks four-line,” he said. Sharing details, Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) General Manager Chetan Kumar Shrivastava and Chief Administrative Officer (Construction), Hitendra Goyal, said the underground lines will be

between Tin Mile Haat and Rangapani railway stations in West Bengal. “This underground stretch is important from a security point of view,” Shrivastava said. One of the lines will go towards Bagdogra in West Bengal, which

is vital for the air defence mechanism of the country. Shrivastava said the tracks will be laid around 20-24 metres underground over a plain area. Goyal added that along with the underground tracks, the existing double line on the stretch will be converted into a four-line one. “When these plans are implemented, it will essentially mean that the strategic corridor will have six lines of railway track – four overground and two underground,” one of the officials said. Assam had last year called for prioritising exploring alternative road routes effectively bypassing the ‘Chicken’s Neck’, after the head of Bangladesh’s interim government Muhammad Yunus made a controversial statement in China, saying India’s northeastern states are ‘landlocked’ and have no way to reach the ocean except through his country.

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

GUWAHATI: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday inaugurated 67 school buildings and laid the foundation for 61 more with a total investment of Rs 760 crore, aiming to create world-class learning environments across the state. Speaking at the central function at Sonapur near here, Sarma said the day was “historic and transformative” for the state’s education sector. Earlier, educational institutions in the state were constructed through donations and contributions from individuals, and to meet classroom requirements, small rooms were often built using funds from MLAs’ or MPs’ Local Area Development schemes, he said. “Such unplanned constructions diminished the aesthet-

ic appeal of school campuses and even after more than seven decades of India’s independence, there was a pressing need to bring about a comprehensive transformation in educational institutions of the state”, Sarma said. The CM said after assuming office in 2021, his government had adopted a well-planned approach to reconstruct schools across the state in a modern and aesthetically appealing manner. He said the state government has undertaken the construction of new buildings for 1,318 schools across the state and renovated old buildings of 58 schools instead of demolishing them. Sarma added that of the 67 schools inaugurated, new buildings have been con-

structed at a cost of around Rs 483 crore, of which 18 schools were built under the PM-DevINE scheme. These school buildings include up to 20 classrooms, rooms for the principal and teachers, laboratories, libraries, smart classrooms, and other essential infrastructure. Additionally, 21 school buildings were constructed under the North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme, while 28 were built using funds from the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund, he said. The foundation stones laid for 61 school buildings will involve an expenditure of Rs 277.55 crore, with each school being constructed at a cost of Rs 4.55 crore under the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund.

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

NEW DELHI: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday walked out of a meeting with Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar over the SIR issue, accusing him of being “arrogant” and alleging that the poll panel had “humiliated” their delegation. Wearing black shawls as a mark of “protest”, the TMC supremo, accompanied by party national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee and MP Kalyan Banerjee, and 12 members of “SIR affected families” from West Bengal, met Chief Election Commissioner Kumar and fellow ECs here, her party said. Banerjee, who has been demanding a halt to the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in her poll-bound state, later said they “boycotted” the meeting in protest, while Election Commission (EC) officials claimed she left in a huff without listening to the response of the EC top brass

on the issues raised by her. The CEC told the TMC leaders that the “rule of law will prevail” and anybody taking the law into their own hands will be dealt with strictly in accordance with the provisions of law and powers vested in the Commission, the EC officials said. Talking to the media after coming out of the Election Commission’s headquarters here, the West Bengal CM launched a fresh tirade against the poll panel, accusing it of working as the BJP’s “dala” (middleman). “So many people have died, who is responsible? The EC is responsible. They are working at the behest of the BJP,” Banerjee alleged. “They behaved very badly with us, I said I am sorry we came here for justice; we did not get that, and you are lying. He is a great liar...,” she said. “We said we will fight it on the ground. You have the power of the BJP, we have the power of the people. We boycotted the meeting

and came out. They have insulted us, humiliated us... I have not seen this type of Election Commission; they are very arrogant ... He talks with an attitude like he is Zamindar and we are servants,” she alleged. However, EC officials said that the TMC leaders were given a patient hearing. 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 S S Sandhu and Vivek Joshi. “When the CEC started to respond, the TMC leaders interjected on multiple occasions. She was agitated and left the meeting in a huff,” an official said. The CEC explained that the “rule of law will prevail” and anybody taking the law into their own hands will be dealt with strictly in accordance with the provisions of law and powers vested in the Commission, they said.

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

NEW DELHI: Over 7.5 lakh manuscripts have been digitised under the Gyan Bharatam initiative, with 1.29 lakh out of these available on its dedicated portal, the government informed Lok Sabha on Monday. Gyan Bharatam, announced during Union Budget 2025-26, is a flagship initiative of the Ministry of Culture, aimed at unearthing, safeguarding and preserving India’s vast manuscript heritage. “Aligned with the national vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, the initiative seeks to harmonise cultural preservation with human capital development, ensuring that India’s ancient wisdom continues to inspire generations to come. To support the initiative, the Standing Finance Committee has sanctioned Rs 491.66 crore for the period 2025-2031,” Union Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said in a written response to a query. Congress MP Shashi Tharoor and Nationalist Congress Party - Sharadchandra Pawar leader Amar Shar-

adrao Kale asked the minister the list of all institutions that have signed or are scheduled to sign Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) under the Gyan Bharatam mission, along with their categorisation as ‘cluster centres’ or ‘independent centres’. The number of partner institutions assigned to each cluster centre in the country was also sought. Shekhawat said 45 centres -- 28 cluster centres and 17 independent centres in various states and UTs -- “have been onboarded so far to carry out the activities outlined under Gyan Bhatamam initiative”. Also, 20 states and UTs have been onboarded so far to act as the “nodal coordinating authority” for Gyan Bharatam implementation within the states and UTs concerned, he said. A detailed manual on preservation and conservation has been framed and shared with conservation experts for feedback. A “survey app” has been developed and also shared with stakeholders for feedback, the Union minister said.



The Ministry of Culture last September hosted a three-day international conference -- ‘Gyan Bharatam’ -- on India’s manuscript heritage. On its day two, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had launched the ‘Gyan Bharatam’ portal, a dedicated digital repository platform that seeks to accelerate digitisation and preservation of ancient Indian manuscripts and enhance the dissemination of traditional knowledge embedded in them. Shekhawat, in his written response, also said, “More than 7.5 lakh manuscripts have

been digitised under Gyan Bharatam, out of which, 1.29 lakh manuscripts are available on Gyan Bharatam portal.” The culture minister also shared a state-wise list of the 45 centres onboarded so far in the two categories. The 28 cluster centres include Nava Nalanda Mahavihar, Nalanda and Patna Musuem, Patna in Bihar; University Library Jamia Hamdard and Central Sanskrit University in Delhi; Shruta Ratnakara, Ahmedabad and Oriental Institute, The Maharaja Sayajirao Uni-

versity of Baroda, Vadodara in Gujarat; and The Asiatic Society, Kolkata in West Bengal. The 17 independent centres include Sanatan Jeevan Trust, Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh; Nagari Pracharini Sabha, Varanasi and Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh; Bharat Itihas Sanshodhak Mandal, Sadashiv Peth, Pune in Maharashtra; and Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Jodhpur in Rajasthan. Technical partners have been onboarded for basic level metadata creation, its integration on National Digital Repository (NDR) and to facilitate integration of manuscripts and its metadata for global accessibility via NDR, he said. Additionally, partners have been roped in for the deployment of scanners and equipment to be deployed across designated centres for digitisation of manuscripts and for building a fully functional, AI-integrated digital platform and a mobile application, according to the minister.

EDITORIAL

IS 'INVISIBLE 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 transshipment 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.

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

receive well under 1 per cent for every 1 per cent they contribute to the Union exchequer. Estimates place the return ratio at 70.50-70.70 for the larger southern states, compared to 22-23 for several northern and central states. These are not rhetorical constructs; they emerge directly from juxtaposing state-wise tax contribution estimates with Finance Commission devolution tables. Southern memoranda were explicit about this asymmetry. Tamil Nadu argued that redistribution had ceased to be transitional and had instead hardened into a permanent cross-subsidy, with little evidence of convergence in productivity or governance outcomes. Kerala highlighted demographic ageing as a fiscal stress that the formula refuses to recognise, even as health and pension costs rise inexorably. Karnataka and Telangana emphasised tax effort and compliance, pointing out that states generating buoyant revenues through formalisation are effectively financing both redistribution and the Centre's own fiscal expansion. On this last point, the memoranda were particularly blunt. All southern states flagged the explosion of cesses and surcharges, now accounting for close to 20 per cent of gross tax revenues, as the single largest erosion of fiscal federalism. Because these levies sit outside the divisible pool, the effective share of states has declined sharply even as the nominal devolution percentage remains fixed at 41 per cent. In effect, contributor states pay into a tax system from which a growing share is never shared back, while expenditure responsibilities continue to be pushed downward. The 16th Finance Commission acknowledges this trend. It does not correct it. The expenditure side compounds the tension. Southern states spend more—both per capita and as a share of GSDP—on health, education, urban infrastructure and social protection, reflecting higher expectations, older populations and denser urbanisation. They also tend to perform better on fiscal discipline metrics, with lower debt stress relative to output and greater transparency.

Edit

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 plumping 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 plumbings 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 disappointment. 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 perform-

ance, 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.

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 grass-roots 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 bargaining in and retrieving a "green file" purportedly containing her party's poll plans, all in the midst of an unannounced ED raid at the I-PAC office in Kolkata. An angry "Didi", as she is popularly referred to, addressed the media as she explained her impromptu

reaction and descended on the streets the next day in a protest march, galvanising her party leaders and cadres to the hilt, barely two months before the elections are declared. While the central agency and the Chief Minister fight it out in the courts on whether either of their actions (the raid and the counter-raid) can be constitutionally justified, the latter, according to sources, could be present in the Supreme Court when the matter comes up on Tuesday, February 3. That again is how Mamata likes to play the game - commanding her contingent from the frontline. Mamata, a 24X7 politician, has already led protest rallies in every district - especially in north Bengal, where the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has its main strength in the state - to highlight the plight of the people under the SIR exercise, taking up the cause of booth level officers and attacking the BJP for trying to "disenfranchise voters", while opposition leaders in the state are dependent only

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

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

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



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

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

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

Dividends & Miscellaneous Receipts Budgeted Higher Gross tax revenue is budgeted to increase by 8% in FY27, compared to 7.4% in FY26. With a projected nominal GDP growth of 10% in FY27, gross tax buoyancy stands at 0.8. Overall, the budgeted tax growth appears reasonable. Direct taxes are budgeted to grow by 11.4% in FY27, significantly outpacing the 1.9% growth in indirect taxes. The impact of GST rationalisation is expected to spill over into the next fiscal year as well, resulting in a 2.6% contraction in GST revenues. The Centre has budgeted dividend receipts of Rs 3.2 trillion from the RBI and PSBs in FY27 (vs Rs 3 trillion in FY26), implying elevated dividends from the RBI. Miscellaneous capital receipts (divestment and asset monetisation) are budgeted significantly higher at Rs 800 billion in FY27, compared to Rs 338 billion in FY26. Achieving the disinvestment target remains critical given the Centre has underachieved its disinvestment targets in the past. Public Investment Continues to Anchor Growth A defining feature of the Union Budget 2026-27 is the continued reliance on public capital expenditure as the primary growth driver. Capital expenditure has been budgeted at Rs 12.2 lakh crore, reflecting an 11.5% year-on-year increase.

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

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



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

January from victims, online safety campaigners and politicians. The company eventually intervened to prevent the practice, after Ofcom and others launched investigations. In an update on Tuesday, Ofcom said it was continuing to investigate the platform and was treating it as "a matter of urgency". But it added it was currently unable to investigate the creation of illegal images by Grok in this case because it did not have sufficient powers relating to chatbots. However, shortly afterwards the ICO said it was launching its own probe, in conjunction with Ofcom, into the processing of personal data in relation to the Grok.

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



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

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



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

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

From 4.46 lakh Chicken Biryanis to Idlis for breakfast...here's how Warangal Swiggy'd in 2025

Warangal, February 03 2026: Warangal's culinary identity is both a daily ritual and a reminder of classic favourites. Check out the Warangal Edition of How India Swiggy'd, a snapshot of the city's evolving food habits and a delicious recap of the year gone by. The City's Favourites Chicken Biryani emerged as the city's most ordered dish with over 4.46 lakh orders in 2025, an average of more than 1222 plates ordered per day! Veg Dosa, Idli and Veg Biryani were amongst the top 5 ordered dishes in the city. A customer placed a single order worth Rs. 13,778, which included a total of 37 plates of local classics such as Zafrani Mutton Biryani, Zafrani Chicken Biryani, Schezwan Fried Rice, Chicken 65, Chicken Tikka Masala and more- highest in the city! Late night binging is also becoming popular with orders growing 118% YoY. Cravings for Biryani and Burgers



continued into late nights (12 am - 2 am). Chicken Biryani led the way and Chicken Shawarma followed. Chicken Fried Rice, Chicken Burger and Chicken Pizza were amongst the other favourites. Dark Chocolate Ice Cream was the most ordered dessert, followed by Chocolate Cake and Chocolate Waffle. Mornings in the

city stayed classic. With more than 200 plates ordered every morning, Idli was the most ordered breakfast dish. Veg Dosa, Vada, Onion Dosa and Bonda were also amongst the favourites to set the tone for the day. Snack-time (3 pm - 7 pm) cravings saw Chicken Biryani topping the carts, followed by Chicken Burger, Chicken Shawarma and Chicken

Pizza. Veg Manchurian and Veg Biryani were also amongst the top 10 favourite snacks in the city. Dinner was the most popular time in the city to order food. Affordable options struck a strong chord. On 99 Store orders, Chicken Biryani emerged as the top favourite with nearly 159 plates being ordered per day. Chicken Nuggets, Chicken Fried Rice and Mutton Biryani were also amongst the top 5 favourites. Elaborating on the trends, Sidharth Bhakoo, Chief Business Officer, Swiggy Food Marketplace said, "In 2025 food continued to be an important part of our daily life and celebrations as India indulged in its favourite dishes. In Warangal, we witnessed a fine balance of the love for classics and the comfort of national favourites. Food is an emotion, and we remain committed to deliver exceptional food experiences in every corner of the city, one meal, one celebration at a time."

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

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

Highlights

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

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

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

Hyderabad, February 03 2026: The COMEDK UGET/Uni-GAUGE 2026 entrance examination will be conducted on Saturday, 09 May 2026. This unified national-level test serves as a gateway to undergraduate engineering admissions across 150+ engineering colleges in Karnataka and 30+ reputed private, self-funded and deemed universities across India. The examination is intended for candidates seeking admission to B.E./B. Tech programs offered by institutions affiliated with the Karnataka Unaided Private Engineering Colleges Association (KUPECA) and Uni-GAUGE member universities. The computer-based test will be conducted in 200+ cities across India, spanning 400+ test centres. Over 1,40,000 students are expected to appear for the examination. Candidates from across the country are eligible to apply.



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

In 2022, COMEDK launched the COMEDK KARES Innovation Hubs to bridge the gap between academic learning and industry requirements by offering hands-on, skill-based training. Currently, 9 Innovation Hubs operate across Karnataka — three in Bengaluru and others located in Mysuru, Kalaburagi, Mangaluru, Belagavi, Tumakuru, and Hubballi. Each hub spans over 5,000 sq. ft. and is equipped with state-of-the-art facilities such as rapid prototyping

tools, laser cutting machines, 3D printers, AR/VR technology, robotics labs, and more.
The hubs offer programs in emerging and future-ready domains, including:
Innovation & Entrepreneurial Thinking
Prototyping & Product Development
Internet of Things (IoT) – Smart Connected Systems
Data Science & Applied Machine Learning
Robotics & Intelligent Systems
Applied AI & Agentic Systems
Karnataka is the first state to introduce structured, skill-based training in private engineering colleges through this pioneering initiative by COMEDK.
Leadership Speak
"At COMEDK, we firmly believe that a student's merit and aptitude should be the sole guiding factors for their educational journey. COMEDK UGET

reflects our commitment to fairness, transparency, and equal opportunity. Over 150 top-tier colleges admit students through this platform, and we take pride in connecting young talent with quality education," said Dr. Kumar, Executive Secretary, COMEDK.
"Through Uni-GAUGE, we are committed to upholding the highest standards of fairness and objectivity while fostering the holistic development of India's future workforce. We are proud to contribute to this important cause," added Mr. P. Muralidhar, CEO, ERA Foundation.
Important Advisory
www.comedk.org and www.unigauged.com are the only official websites for COMEDK and Uni-GAUGE. Students and parents are advised to rely solely on these websites for authentic information and applications.

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

Former US President Bill Clinton and his wife Hillary Clinton, the former Secretary of State, have agreed to testify in the congressional investigation into late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. It comes days before a vote on whether to hold the couple in criminal contempt for refusing to appear before the House Oversight Committee after a months-long standoff. Bill Clinton was acquainted with Epstein, who died in prison in 2019, but has denied knowledge of his sex offending and says he cut off contact two decades ago. It's unclear when the depositions will take place, but it will be the first time a former US president has testified to a congressional panel since Gerald Ford did so in 1983. The Clintons had long resisted a demand to appear before the committee, saying they had already given sworn statements representing the "limited infor-

mation" they had on Epstein. They had dismissed the legal summonses issued by the committee as "nothing more than a ploy to attempt to embarrass political rivals, as President Trump has directed". The House Oversight Committee, led by Republicans, then approved the measure to hold the Clintons in contempt late last month, with the support of several Democrats. On Saturday, lawyers for the couple made an offer for them to provide limited testimony that would have centred on a four-hour interview by Bill Clinton. But House Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer expressed concerns that the former president would stonewall questions and run down the clock. On Monday evening, Bill Clinton's deputy chief of staff Angel Urena posted on X confirming the couple would appear before the



panel. "They negotiated in good faith," Urena wrote in a tweet directed at the House Oversight Committee. "You did not. They told you under oath what they know, but you don't care. But the former President and former Secretary of State will be there. They look forward to setting a precedent that applies to everyone." Afterwards, it was announced that lawmakers' consideration of the con-

tempt resolutions against the Clintons would be postponed. House Rules Committee Chairwoman Virginia Foxx said the Oversight Committee needed more time "to clarify with the Clintons what they are actually agreeing to". For his part, Comer said: "I will clarify the terms they are agreeing to and then discuss next steps with my committee members." Neither Clinton has been accused of wrongdoing by

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

One picture shows the former president swimming in a pool, and another shows him lying on his back with his hands behind his head in what appears to be a hot tub. Urena, Clinton's spokesman, said at the time the photos were released in December that they were decades old and Clinton had stopped associating with Epstein before his crimes came to light. Last month, the Clintons wrote a letter to James Comer, the House Oversight Committee chairman, criticising his handling of the Epstein investigation. "The decisions you have made, and the priorities you have set as chairman regarding the Epstein investigation, have prevented progress in discovering the facts about the government's role," the letter said. They added: "There is no plausible explanation for what you are doing other than partisan politics."

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



India's aviation regulator said it found no defect in the fuel control switch of a Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner jet grounded by Air India based on a pilot's report. The issue was reported on Sunday after the plane, which took off from London, landed in Indian's Bengaluru city. The regulator said that while starting the engine during take-off, the crew noticed that twice the fuel control switch - which regulates the flow of fuel into the plane's engines - did not "remain positively latched in the run position when light vertical pressure was applied". It remained stable the third time and the crew closely monitored the aircraft during the flight, which "was

completed without incident". Air India had said in a statement on Monday that it informed India's aviation regulator about the issue and that it was getting the pilot's concerns checked on a "priority basis". A Boeing spokesperson had told the BBC in response to a question that the company was supporting Air India's "review of this matter". The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said on Tuesday that when the switches were operated according to Boeing's recommended procedure, they were found to be "satisfactory", staying at run instead of moving to cut-off (which can stop fuel supply to the engines).

TRUMP SEEKS \$1BN IN DAMAGES FROM HARVARD



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

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

CHINA BANS HIDDEN CAR DOOR HANDLES OVER SAFETY CONCERNS



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

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

Rape trial begins for son of Norway's crown princess in tense moment for royal family

A year and a half after Marius Borg Høiby was arrested over a violent episode at a woman's flat's in Oslo, the son of Norway's crown princess has gone on trial, in the biggest case to come to court here for years. Wearing a brown sweater and glasses, Høiby pleaded not guilty to four charges of rape, as the public prosecutor detailed the 38 charges against him. His lawyer said he was a young man who deserved a fair trial and the press treatment of him had been anything but normal. The seven-week trial opened at Oslo district court against a backdrop of almost daily revelations surrounding him and his mother, Crown Princess Mette-Marit. The



crown princess is facing increasing criticism after it emerged she was cited in hundreds of emails showing extensive contacts with late US sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. She has admitted showing "poor judgement", but the fallout has already begun, with one organisation dropping her as patron for its annual prize. Her son

appeared in court on Tuesday in an ordinary sweater, white T-shirt and green trousers, his blond hair cut short. He later removed the sweater and sat in court in a simple T-shirt. On the eve of the trial it emerged he had been detained for a fourth time, in circumstances not unlike his initial arrest, on suspicion of assault,

making threats with a knife and violating a restraining order. As police have placed him on remand for four weeks, he began the trial in custody. His defence team intends to appeal against the decision. Heavy court restrictions have been imposed on the trial, with a ban on any photos of the defendant inside or outside court. The judge broke into English at one point to emphasise the rules to international media. As the charges were read out, he pleaded not guilty to the four accusations of rape, speaking very quietly. He partially admitted charges relating to a woman in Frogner in western Oslo in August 2024, admitting bodily harm but denying abuse.

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

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



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

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

On the US side, Trump has accused Petro's government of not doing enough to stop the flow of cocaine heading north, and has vowed to expand strikes to land targets across the region. But the acrimony seemed to dissipate following a "cordial" phone call between the two leaders, which a Colombian official later described as an 180-degree turn "from both sides". According to diplomatic sources, one man - Rand Paul, US Senator for Kentucky - was instrumental in setting up the conversation. "I believe in diplomacy and I thought our relations were going in the wrong way," the senator told.

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



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

House, Trump said on Monday "if we can work something out" that would be "great", but warned that "bad things would happen" if not. The US carried out targeted strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities last year in what it called Operation Midnight Hammer. The strikes followed a large-scale operation by Israel to target Iran's nuclear facilities and nuclear scientists. Trump added that there was a "tremendous force" headed to Iran, including the "biggest and the best" ships. The build up of US military and navy includes air craft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln, which has an air wing of around 70 aircraft. It follows a crackdown by Iranian security forces that protesters told the BBC was unlike anything they had witnessed before. Iranian authorities previously said that 3,117 people were killed during the protests, but activist and monitoring groups say the toll is significantly higher. US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA) says it has confirmed the deaths of 6,430 protesters, 152 children and 214 people associated with the government.

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

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

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



another round of talks coordinated by the US last week. It is clear that Russia has other ideas. And in fact, there is always a gap between Russia's massive strikes which makes Ukrainians doubt there was ever any real pause at all. We heard the first explosions in Kyiv soon after

midnight and the air raid lasted more than seven hours. There were several subsequent blasts. Residents spent the night sheltering in metro stations, with some pitching tents on the platforms to protect them from the freezing cold. President Zelensky has said more than 70 ballis-

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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

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

India wicketkeeper-batter Ishan Kishan has named the players he finds toughest to face in the nets. He noted that while Yuzvendra Chahal is the most difficult among spinners, pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah always poses significant challenges. In a recent interaction, Kishan shared that the veteran pacer doesn't go easy on batters, even when conditions are challenging. He also recalled instances where Bumrah would bowl a series of bouncers if a batter muddled his deliveries during practice sessions. "Among spinners, I find Yuzi bhai [Yuzvendra Chahal] tough to play; I think he's figured me out. In pace, I mean, no one is better than [Jasprit] Bumrah bhai. Let me tell you a story. Bura



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

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

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

INFANTINO 'INFANTILE' FOR WANTING TO LIFT RUSSIA BAN



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

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

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

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



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

despite Pakistan travelling to India for the 2023 ODI World Cup. "PCB should not back down! The ICC has told the Pakistan Cricket Board to reconsider its stance of boycotting the India game. Was ICC sleeping when the Asia Cup hap-

pened in the hybrid model? Was ICC sleeping when India said it would not play the Champions Trophy in Pakistan and only play on a neutral venue?" Akmal said on the 'Game Plan' show. "How many times has Pakistan played in India, despite the heightened tensions between the two countries. I have gone myself. The ICC should have thought of these things three years back," he added. However, the argument does not hold ground as India played the matches when they were moved to a neutral venue. On the other hand, Pakistan have decided to boycott their match against India despite the venue being Colombo in Sri Lanka.

'UNCAGE THE GORILLA' - SCHOEMAN KNOWS WHAT SCOTS MUST IMPROVE

Pierre Schoeman paints pictures, not in the literal sense but with his words, imagery and unique takes on what it's like being a prop. This is a world few understand, he says. Previously, he's compared looseheads and tightheads to Vikings and gladiators, he's spoken about how they co-exist on a different level to their fellow players, like "migrating bison". Now, in the week running up to the Six Nations, he's talking in animalistic terms again. "Unlock the gorilla in the cage, it has to come out," he says. Scotland's first game is against Italy in Rome. All going well, it'll be his 21st straight Six Nations match, 19 starts and two off the



bench. What is it about his fellow props he admires so much? "It's probably that primal thing," he says. "We know we're underrated for our intellectual capabilities. "We don't always dress well, but when we do, you know, we grab the attention. And, also, we go to the dark place. We love to go to

the dark place. "There's not many people on this planet that want to pick up a rugby ball and run into a brick wall - shoulders, heads, knees and do it again and again. "But that's how we put bread on our tables. Not always bread, sometimes steak as well, especially if it's a win." He's asked to

take us into that first scrum in Rome and comes up with this: "It's basically like a car. Put the ignition on, put it into drive, put your safety belt on and brace for a massive collision." Fear not, citizens of Edinburgh, he's a very responsible road user, but you get his drift. "Stay on task," he adds. "Doesn't matter if there's a pothole and you swing out for a leaf or there's a puddle of rain coming up and you can't see for that moment. Brace and be ready. Do your job and the whole thing will work." Now we get into the meat of this thing - Scotland's inability to contend in a Six Nations and the factors that hold them back. Everybody can see them.

VOWLES 'NOT CONCERNED AT ALL' AT MISSING TEST



Williams team principal James Vowles says he is "not concerned at all" about missing the first pre-season test last week. Delays in the production of their new car made Williams the only team not to make it to the test at Spain's Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya. Vowles acknowledged that missing the test was "a deficit" because Williams had not been able to gain experience of the complexities of energy management in the new engines being introduced this year. Rivals have said that on-track running is invaluable in learning how to manage the new power-units. These have three times more power in the electrical part of the hybrid engines this year and are energy starved as a result. But Vowles said he was "confident we're in a good place" because "a lot of that can be replicated with a driver simulator once you have an accurate model into where you are in reality". Vowles was talking as Williams launched their new livery with pictures of

what the team described as "essentially a simplified version of the 2026 car, not the FW48 (itself)". He said that the six days of running over the remaining two pre-season tests in Bahrain later this month should give Williams time to gather the data they need, and that being a Mercedes engine customer also came with benefits. "That is an advantage we have to acknowledge, as opposed to perhaps Aston (Martin) with just Honda and one team as a result of it," Vowles said. "There is learning, however, in driving style, adapting to the new energy systems. That's a lot of what

you can see right now being talked about. "But a lot of that is mimicked. It's part of the reason why we built a state-of-the-art driver and loop simulator. It does allow you at least to fall back on some simulation systems." Vowles joined Williams three years ago charged with returning the team to the front of Formula 1, and made progress with a fifth-place finish in the constructors' championship last year. This is the third time in seven years, however, in which delays in the car-build process have affected Williams' early-season plans. Vowles said: "I've seen elements in '23.

Mass Maharaja Ravi Teja Praises “Sumathi Sathakam” Teaser & Trailer – Worldwide Release on February 6 via Mythri Movie Makers

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



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

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

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

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

Adivi Sesh Launches Concept Poster of CAT in Hyderabad



Highlights

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

Hyderabad: Popular actor Adivi Sesh unveiled the concept poster of the upcoming film CAT at Annapurna Studios, Hyderabad. The film is presented by Y. Gangadhar IPS under the VRGR Movies banner and produced by Rajani Gongati. Directed by debutant G.V. Naidu, CAT has completed its first copy and is preparing for release soon. On the occasion, Adivi Sesh conveyed his best wishes to the entire cast and crew and expressed his confidence that CAT would achieve grand success. Belonging to the drama

and thriller genres, CAT stars G.V. Naidu, V.J. Balu, Lavanya, and Kalyani Rani in the lead roles. The film boasts a strong technical team with cinematography by Pankaj Thottada, editing by D. Venkata Prabhu, and music composed by

Maruthi Raja. The story, screenplay, and dialogues are written by V. CH Shekhar Muddu, while the film is directed by G.V. Naidu (Gongati Veeranjaneyulu). With its intriguing concept and dedicated team, CAT is expected to offer an engaging cinematic experience.

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

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



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

What theme are you dealing with through this story?

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

Why did you want to tell the story of “Sri Chidambaram Garu”?

This presentation focuses more on people who feel inferior complex and insecurities and are unable to lead their lives confidently. They compare themselves with others and feel bad about not having what others have. I felt this is

What is your background?

How did you get this movie opportunity? I made 25 short films. I am from Rajahmundry. I made a short film for film festivals presented by Niharika Konidela.

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

“Erra Cheera” Grand Release on February 6 – Movie Team Announces Bumper Offers for B & C Center Audiences The upcoming film Erra Cheera – The Beginning is a unique cinematic blend of motherly sentiment, horror, and action. Jointly produced by Sri Padmayala Entertainments and Sri Suman Venkatadri Productions, presented by Baby Damari, the film is set for a grand theatrical release on February 6

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

HIGHLIGHTS FROM CREATIVE STAR SUMAN BABU’S MEDIA INTERACTION:

The Copy Claim

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



A Real-Life Inspiration

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

No Compromise on VFX:

Although the shoot was wrapped in 37 days, the release was delayed to ensure high-quality CG. “We aimed for Hanu-Man level quality. We worked with three different studios until the graphics were per-

fect,” said Suman Babu.

Ensemble Cast:

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

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

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

Future Slate

Creative Star Suman Babu is already planning for the future. He announced a sequel titled Ambika (Erra Cheera-2) based on a tribal incident in

Araku, and a romantic comedy called R a m u d a Krishnuda.

He plans to release a new film every six months.

Kayadu Lohar Returns to Malayalam; New Poster of ‘Pallichattambi’ Released



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

Kayadu Lohar's announcement video as the female lead in Pallichattambi had earlier drawn significant attention. Kayadu became a favorite among South Indian cinema audiences following her role as the heroine in the Tamil super-hit film Dragon. In Pallichattambi, Tovino Thomas will be seen in a look never seen before. The film is produced by Noufal and Brijesh under the banner of Worldwide Films, along with Chanukya, Chaitanya, and Charan under the banner of C Qube Bros Entertainments. The film is being released in five languages, including Malayalam. The screenplay has been written by S. Suresh Babu.

Apart from Kayadu Lohar in the female lead, Pallichattambi also features an ensemble cast including Vijay Raghavan, Sudheer Karamana, Baburaj, Vinod K e d a m a n g a l a m, Prashanth Alex, and several other prominent actors. The film is set in the 1950s-60s period. The cinematography of the film is handled by Tijo Tomy, while the music is composed by Mollywood's music sensation Jakes Bejoy. Megha Shyam and Thanseer serve as co-producers. Costumes are designed by Manjusha Radhakrishnan, and make-up is by Rasheed Ahmed. The line producer is Alex E. Kurien, finance controller Anil Amballur, and production controller Rajesh Menon. Renith Raj and Kiran Raphael are the chief associate directors. Sound design is by Sync Cinema, and the art direction is by Rajesh Menon. Casting is handled by Binoy Nambala. Digital marketing is managed by Akhil Vishnu V.S, with PR by Akshay Prakash. Stills photography is by Rishlal Unnikrishnan, and the poster design is by Yellowtooths.

Dhurandhar sequel titled ‘Dhurandhar: The Revenge’, makers drop new poster

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

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

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

an Indian undercover agent who has successfully infiltrated Pakistan's underworld. After taking down Rehman Dakaith, Hamza ascends the ranks of power, only to face his most formidable adversary yet Major Iqbal, the ISI mastermind known as Bade Sahab. Dhurandhar: The Revenge is a high-octane spy-action thriller written, directed, and produced by Aditya Dhar, and produced by Jyoti Deshpande and Lokesh Dhar. Presented by Jio Studios, this B62 Studios production is gearing up for a cinematic storm from March 19, 2026. Ranveer took to Instagram, where he shared the poster drenched in deep, ominous red tones, instantly setting a dark and intense mood.

