

**CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE YOUTH OF TAMIL NADU**

Nearly 9 lakh youth trained under PM Kaushal Vikas Yojana, 480+ Skill Development Centres in PMKVY 4.0 making youth job-ready

61+ lakh MSMEs registered on the Udyam Portal, 14,000+ DPIIT-recognised startups boosting entrepreneurship across the state

DEVELOPED TAMIL NADU FOR DEVELOPED INDIA  
MODI GOVERNMENT'S RESOLVE

**IN BRIFS**  
INDIA ISSUES ADVISORY FOR NATIONALS IN ISRAEL AMID SECURITY SITUATION

Tel Aviv (TSIT) The Embassy of India in Israel has issued an advisory urging all Indian nationals in the country to exercise "utmost caution" and remain "vigilant at all times" in view of the prevailing security situation following Israeli and US strikes on Iran on Saturday. The embassy emphasised that Indian citizens should strictly follow the safety guidelines and instructions issued by Israeli authorities and the Home Front Command. Citizens are advised to stay close to designated shelters and familiarise themselves with the nearest protected spaces in their area of residence or work. Non-essential travel within Israel should be avoided until further notice, and individuals are encouraged to monitor local news, official announcements, and emergency alerts regularly. In case of emergencies, Indian nationals can contact the Embassy of India in Tel Aviv via the 24x7 helpline at 972-54-7520711 or email cons1.telaviv@mea.gov.in.

**CM Revanth Distributes Compensation to Families of Madina Bus Accident Victims**



**Hyderabad TSIT BUREAU:** Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy on Saturday distributed compensation cheques to the families of victims who lost their lives in the tragic bus accident near Madina, Saudi Arabia, on November 17, 2025. A total of 44 Hyderabad residents were killed in the devastating accident, in which they were reportedly burnt alive. The State government provided

Rs.5 lakh each to the families of the deceased. Additionally, Rs.3 lakh compensation was given to one injured victim. Speaking on the occasion at the Secretariat, the Chief Minister said that immediately after learning about the accident, he spoke to the Union government to coordinate relief efforts and deputed Minority Welfare Minister Mohammed Azharuddin to

Madina to assist the affected families. He stated that the decision to provide Rs.5 lakh ex-gratia to each bereaved family was taken in a Cabinet meeting. "Generally, governments do not extend compensation for incidents occurring outside the country. However, considering the distress of the families, we decided to extend support," he said. The Chief Minister recalled that the government

had similarly supported families affected by the Nampally fire accident, emphasizing that instilling confidence among citizens that the government stands by them is crucial. "That is why we invited the families to the Secretariat and handed over the cheques personally. This is your government. Do not worry. We will stand by you in your sorrow and happiness," he assured. Referring to the ongoing holy month for the Muslim community, the Chief Minister called for unity and harmony. He also mentioned that since 2009, he has been sending one pilgrim from each mandal in Kodangal to Haj every year. The programme was attended by Minister Mohammed Azharuddin, Government Advisor Shabbir Ali, CM's Advisor Vem Narender Reddy, CMO OSD Vemula Srinivasulu, Nampally MLA Mohammed Majid Hussain, Haj Committee Chairman Khusro Pasha, TGMREIS Vice Chairman Faheem Qureshi, and Minority Finance Corporation Chairman Obedullah Kotwal.

**US, Israel strike Iran, Iran retaliates, attacks US bases in many countries**



**Tehran/New Delhi (TSIT):** Shattering the fragile peace in the Persian Gulf, the United States and Israel launched massive missile strikes on several Iranian cities, including capital Tehran, early Saturday morning and Iran, in retaliation, attacked American bases in many Gulf countries, including

confrontation, raising fears of a broader Middle Eastern war. While the number of casualties in the attacks was not known, Israel's Israeli broadcaster N12 said the commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Mohammad Pakpour, was killed in the strikes. Among the most powerful men in Iran, Pakpour was the IRGC commander for

**Russia denounces US, Israeli attacks on Iran, warns of grave repercussions**

**NEW DELHI:** Russia on Saturday strongly denounced the US and Israeli military strikes against Iran and warned against "grave repercussions of these ill-conceived" actions for the global non-proliferation regime, whose cornerstone NPT is being "openly disregarded." The Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement that Washington and Tel Aviv had once again embarked on a perilous course that is swiftly pushing the region toward a humanitarian, economic, and potentially even radiological disaster.

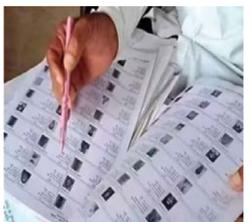
260 days. However, there has been no official confirmation from Tehran regarding Pakpour's death. Iranian News Agency (IRNA) reported from Bandar Abbas that 57 girl students were killed and 60 were wounded in an Israeli strike at a girls' school in Minab, Hormozgan Province.

**DELHI-TEL AVIV FLIGHT DIVERTED TO MUMBAI FOLLOWING ISRAEL AIRSPACE CLOSURE: AIR INDIA**

**NEW DELHI:** Air India on Saturday diverted its Delhi-Tel Aviv flight to Mumbai due to the closure of Israeli airspace. Israel and the US have launched attacks on Iran, following which some airspaces are closed for flight operations. "AI139 operating from Delhi to Tel Aviv on 28 February is air returning to India due to the closure of airspace in Israel and in the interest of the safety of passengers and crew," the airline said in a statement. An airline official said the flight has been diverted to Mumbai. "We will continue to assess the safety and security environment for our flight operations and adjust operations proactively as needed," Air India said.

**ELECTION COMMISSION BEGINS PUBLISHING FINAL VOTER LIST AFTER SIR IN WEST BENGAL**

**Kolkata (TSIT)** The Election Commission of India has begun publishing the final voter list in West Bengal following the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. While the final list has not yet been uploaded on the Commission's website at the time of filing this report, the publication process has started at the district level, with lists already reaching district administrations. The rolls are expected to be available online shortly. Sources said that in South Kolkata, 3,207 names have been removed from the draft electoral rolls at this stage. The office of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), West Bengal, is scheduled to hold a press conference around 4 pm on Saturday to provide further details. Sources from the CEO's office said that the final voter list has already reached district headquarters and will



be displayed shortly. The list has already reached the District Magistrate's office in Paschim Bardhaman. In Bankura, it has been displayed at the Bangabidyalaya polling booth. In Cooch Behar, the voter list has been posted at the Sub-Divisional Officers' office and at the Block Development Officer (BDO) offices of Blocks 1 and 2. The list has also reached Hooghly district. District magistrates' offices will provide copies of the voter list to recognised political parties.

**Andhra: 20 killed in explosion at firecracker unit**

**Amaravati (TSIT):** At least 20 people were killed and 15 others injured in a massive explosion in a firecracker manufacturing unit near Samarlakota in Kakinada district of Andhra Pradesh on Saturday. The incident occurred around 2 p.m. at Suryashri Fireworks, near the Godavari canal in Vetlapalem, in Samarlakota mandal, police said. Labour minister Vamsetti Subhash confirmed that 20 people died. He termed the incident unfortunate. Such was the impact of the explosion that the bodies of workers were thrown into the adjoining agricultural fields. Panic gripped people in the surrounding villages as huge flames engulfed the crackers unit, triggering dense smoke. According to local people, explosions were heard up to 5 kilometres away. The explosion shattered the windows of houses in



nearby villages. The slab at a school in a nearby village developed cracks. Firefighting personnel with two fire engines and other equipment rushed to the scene and were trying to douse the fire with the help of police and other departments. Fifteen were shifted to hospitals in ambulances. Most of the victims are reported to be women. District Collector, Superintendent of Police, and other senior officials rushed to the spot and were supervising rescue and relief operations. All the workers at the unit were trapped in the fire.

**Rahul, Kharge launch Congress campaign for 2027 Punjab Assembly polls in Barnala**



**Chandigarh (TSIT)** Senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and party National President Mallikarjun Kharge arrived in Barnala to address a massive public gathering, marking the official launch of the Congress campaign for the 2027 Punjab Assembly elections. Termed the "Kisan-Mazdoor Rally" or "MNREGA Bachao Sangram," the event is strategically focused on the Malwa region, a traditional stronghold of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), where Congress recently won the Barnala by-election. The rally aims to consolidate support among farmers and laborers across the 69 seats of the Malwa belt. During the rally, the

Congress leadership is expected to launch a scathing attack on the Central Government over its handling of the MGNREGA scheme and the potential impact of the India-US trade deal on the agricultural sector. Senior party leader Pawan Kumar Bansal criticized the union Government for restructuring MGNREGA, alleging that the changes would mislead the public and place an undue financial burden on state governments while hurting the interests of laborers. The party has even featured posters depicting Rahul Gandhi as an MGNREGA worker to foster a direct connection with the rural populace.



Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandanna, had paid a visit to Prime Minister Narendra Modi ahead of their wedding on February 26, to invite him to their special day....

**Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams approves Rs 5,456.26 Cr budget for 2026-27**

**Tirumala (TSIT)** The Trust Board of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), which manages the world-famous Lord Venkateswara Swamy temple in Tirumala hills of Andhra Pradesh, has approved an annual budget of Rs 5,456.26 crore for the financial year 2026-27, giving priority to education, security and pilgrim amenities, said TTD Board Chairman B.R. Naidu here on Saturday. Speaking to reporters along Executive Officer Muddada Ravichandra and board members after the trust board meeting at Annamayya Bhavan here, Naidu said that as per the revised estimates for 2025-26, the TTD accrued a revenue of Rs 5,394.52 crore. According to the budgetary figures approved by the board, the TTD is expecting to get the bulk of its revenue from Hundi (cash chest) offerings of devotees - to the extent of Rs 1,880 crore against revised estimate of Rs 1,738 crore during 2025-26. While interest on TTD bank



deposits is expected to be around Rs 1,205 crore compared to Rs 1,250 crore in the revised estimate for 2025-26 fiscal and revenue from the sale of "prasadam" is expected to touch Rs 650 crore against revised estimates of Rs 640 crore in the current financial year, it said. Naidu said an amount of Rs 175 crore is expected from the auction of human hair obtained from tonsuring of devotees' heads up from Rs Rs 170 crore in 2025-26. He further said that the sale of special entrance darshan and Break darshan darshanam tickets would fetch around Rs 310 crore, slightly higher than Rs 305 crore in 2025-26 while from Arjitha sevas are expected to fetch Rs 135 crore in 2026-27, unchanged from the current year's revised estimates.

www.thesouthindiatimes.com

Four Personnel Felicitated at Cyberabad Police Retirement Ceremony



Hyderabad: Four police personnel were felicitated on their retirement at a ceremony held at the Cyberabad Police Commissionerate auditorium on Saturday.

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Uma Peri Invited as Assistant Commissioner to Provisional World Parliament Panel

Hyderabad: Uma Peri has been invited to join the EERA Standing Commission of the Provisional World Parliament (PWP) as an Assistant Commissioner on a voluntary basis, marking an international recognition of her contributions.



Telangana State Outsourcing Employees JAC Committee Stages Protest at Indira Park

Hyderabad: The Telangana State Outsourcing Employees JAC Committee held a state-level protest at Indira Park demanding job security, regularization, and implementation of statutory benefits for outsourcing staff working in various government departments.



Raising slogans seeking justice and security, the leaders highlighted issues such as wage delays, lack of EPF and ESI implementation, absence of a clear job security policy, non-implementation of equal pay for equal work, and no wage revision since 2021.

salary payments through the Government Treasury, assured job protection, annual increments, paid maternity leave, and Rs.10 lakh compensation for families of employees who die in service.

Naini Rajender Reddy Meets CM Revanth Reddy, Discusses Warangal Medical Development

Hyderabad: Warangal West MLA Naini Rajender Reddy met Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy to discuss strengthening the medical sector in Warangal.



The MLA informed the Chief Minister about financial assistance announced by NRI doctor Dr. Sujith Reddy Punnam for the development of Kakatiya Medical College and MGM Hospital.

The Chief Minister appreciated Dr. Sujith Reddy's contribution to his native region and assured full government support for enhancing healthcare standards in Warangal.

College Principal Dr. Sandhya Rani and other officials were present.

Komatireddy Venkat Reddy: Construction Is Not Just a Contract, It Is State Building

Hyderabad: Telangana Roads, Buildings and Cinematography Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy said the construction sector plays a crucial role in shaping the State's future, calling it "state building" rather than mere contract work.



He was speaking at the National Managing Committee and General Council Meeting (2025-26) of the Builders Association of India held near

Shamshabad. Referring to Vision 2047 under Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, the Minister said projects worth nearly Rs.1 lakh

crore are under way, including the Regional Ring Road, highway expansions, flyovers, and Railway Over Bridges. He stressed the need for quality, timely completion, and strong coordination between the government and builders to accelerate Telangana's growth.

Kakatiya Institute of Technology and Science, Warangal Hosts Seminar on 'Science & Technology for Sustainable Future'



Warangal, February 28 (TSIT): The Departments of Physical Sciences, in association with C-2RE and IIC 6.0, organized a seminar on "Science and Technology for Sustainable Future" on the eve of National Science

Day-2026 at KITS Warangal. The seminar was inaugurated by Dr. Venugopal Akula, Scientist-G and Professor at CSIR-Indian Institute of Chemical Technology, Hyderabad. He emphasized that while

resources are limited, creativity is unlimited, and highlighted the role of green energy, green hydrogen, bioethanol, nanomaterials, and AI-driven catalyst selection in sustainable development.

Over 250 students, faculty members, and NSS representatives participated in the programme.

Telangana Launches Statewide HPV Vaccination Drive; 4 Lakh Girls to Receive Free Single Dose in 90 Days



Hyderabad: In a significant public health initiative to prevent cervical cancer, Telangana Health Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha on Saturday launched the statewide Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination programme at King Koti District Hospital.

The State-level launch was held in the presence of Rajya Sabha Member Anil Kumar Yadav and senior health officials. 4 Lakh Girls to Be Vaccinated Under a special 90-day campaign, the State government aims to administer a free single-dose HPV vaccine to nearly four lakh girls aged 14 to 15 years across Telangana.

HYD: BRAOU CELEBRATES NATIONAL SCIENCE DAY

Hyderabad, Feb 28: Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University (BRAOU) celebrated National Science Day on Saturday with a special lecture titled "India's Agri-Revolution: Shortage to Surplus with Science" at its campus.

The event was organized by the Faculty of Sciences to commemorate the discovery of the Raman Effect by C. V. Raman on February 28, 1928. Addressing the gathering, University Vice-Chancellor Prof. Ghanta Chakrapani, who attended the programme as Chief Guest, described B. R. Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian Constitution, as a great social scientist who worked for the development of all sections of society.

He said that while scientists across disciplines have significantly contributed to the country's growth, nations can progress only when they believe in science and adapt to economic and technological changes. He stressed the need for India's future to be free from superstitions and unscientific practices and urged young researchers to focus on modern technology and socially relevant research.

Agricultural-based vocational programmes will be launched from the coming academic year, he added. Delivering the keynote lecture, Himanshu Pathak, Director General of International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics, highlighted how science transformed India from a food-deficit nation to a food-surplus country. He noted that at the time of Independence, widespread hunger prevailed due to insufficient agricultural production. Despite stagnant land resources and a growing population, India now exports agricultural produce globally — a transformation made possible through scientific advancements.

Nadendla Manohar Reviews Transparent Paddy Procurement & Digital Reforms with Rice Millers

The State Government is committed to implementing the paddy procurement process in a more transparent, efficient, and farmer-friendly manner while ensuring the supply of high-quality rice to students in government schools and welfare hostels, stated Nadendla Manohar, Minister for Civil Supplies, Food & Consumer Affairs, Government of Andhra Pradesh. A high-level video conference meeting was held on Saturday morning at the Collectorate Video Conference Hall in Tirupati under the auspices of the Rice Millers' Association. The meeting focused on paddy procurement, implementation of the Mid-Day Meal scheme, and the newly introduced fully computerized and paperless systems. The meeting was attended by Civil Supplies Commissioner Sorab Gaur, Managing Director of the Andhra Pradesh State Civil Supplies Corporation M. Dilli Rao, District Collector Dr. S. Venkateswar, Joint Collectors of Tirupati (R. Govindarao), Chittoor (M. Venkateswarlu), and Nellore (A. Rajendran) districts, along with senior officials.



(MSP) value without delay or deduction. The Minister explained that paddy procured from farmers is processed to meet strict quality standards and then supplied as rice to the Mid-Day Meal scheme in government schools, welfare hostels, tribal ashram schools, and other special educational institutions across the state. He highlighted that quality rice is now being packed in 25 kg bags for supply to schools, underscoring the Government's unwavering commitment to children's health, nutrition, and quality standards. "Every grain we procure today becomes tomorrow's food for the next generation of children. Therefore, everyone involved must discharge their responsibilities with the highest sense of duty and integrity in matters of quality," the Minister said. Referring to rice millers as important partners, the Minister stated that the Government views them as key stakeholders. All aspects—including milling capaci-

ty, quantity of paddy received, processing details, and delivery status—are now integrated into a comprehensive digital platform. Each miller has been provided with a dedicated login facility. The Minister urged every miller to regularly verify that the information pertaining to their mill is accurate and up-to-date. In case of any discrepancies or errors, they should immediately contact the concerned District Manager (Civil Supplies) for rectification. He further informed that the Corporation has implemented a fully computerized accounting system. From this season onwards, all processes—including submission of claims, payment details, verifications, and bill submissions—are being handled in a completely paperless environment. These changes, he said, will enhance transparency and ensure timely compliance. While acknowledging that initial technical issues or coordination challenges may arise during the transition, the Minister assured

that officials would respond promptly and resolve them. The Minister reiterated the absolute necessity of strictly adhering to quality parameters—such as moisture content and cleaning standards—during procurement. No compromise will be tolerated, he stressed, to prevent injustice to farmers on one hand and financial loss to the Government on the other. Through these statewide reforms, the Minister expressed confidence that coordination among farmers, rice millers, and the Government will improve significantly, strengthening trust in the system. Greater emphasis is being placed on data collection and analysis to enable evidence-based decision-making. Representatives of the Rice Millers' Association shared their suggestions and feedback during the meeting. The Minister assured that the Government would positively consider all valid inputs and take necessary action. He expressed gratitude to the Rice Millers' Association members and all concerned officials for their cooperation in making the meeting successful. The Minister reiterated the Government's firm commitment to farmer welfare, student nutrition, and transparent governance. Following the meeting, rice millers thanked the Minister for securing the Central Government's approval to deliver Custom Milled Rice (CMR) without mandatory Fortified Rice (FRK) blending. The programme was also attended by District Civil Supplies Officer Seshachalam Raju, Deputy Manager (Civil Supplies) Balakrishna, members of the Rice Millers' Association, and other officials.

DR. D. RAJASEKHAR'S INVALUABLE SERVICES AS HEAD OF CARDIOLOGY AT SVIMS LAUDED - DIRECTOR-CUM-VICE-CHANCELLOR DR. R.V. KUMAR

Grand Felicitation Ceremony Held on Superannuation of Dr. D. Rajasekhar

Dr. D. Rajasekhar, Head of the Cardiology Department at Sri Venkateswara Institute of Medical Sciences (SVIMS), rendered priceless and invaluable services to patients suffering from heart diseases over a dedicated career spanning 32 years, stated Dr. R.V. Kumar, Director-cum-Vice-Chancellor of SVIMS.

A solemn felicitation ceremony was held in his honour on Saturday at Sri Padmavathi Auditorium to mark his superannuation. During the event, SVIMS faculty members and senior officials warmly felicitated Dr. Rajasekhar and his wife Smt. Lakshmi with shawls and bouquets. Professional Journey - Key Milestones Born on 10 February 1963 Completed MBBS from the prestigious JIPMER, Puducherry in 1986 Obtained MD from PGIMER, Chandigarh in 1989 Earned DM in Cardiology from Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST), Thiruvananthapuram in 1993 Joined SVIMS in January 1994 as Assistant Professor in the Department of Cardiology Served as Associate Professor from April 1997 to April 2001



Appointed Head of the Department of Cardiology on 13 March 1998 - a position he held until superannuation Served as Registrar, SVIMS from August 2007 to April 2008 Served as Dean, SVIMS from September 2010 to January 2014 Chaired the Disciplinary & Grievance Committee from June 2020 to February 2026 Awards and Recognitions K.V. Naidu Memorial Award - September 2000 Fellow of the American College of Cardiology (FACC) - awarded at the ACC Annual Session, Atlanta, Georgia, USA on 15 March 2010 Fellow of the Society for Coronary Angiography and Interventions (FSCAI), USA - June 2015 Dr. Subhashini Yaturu Gold Medal for Best Original Research Publication by SVIMS - 2014 Best Teacher Award of Andhra Pradesh State - presented by the Hon'ble Chief Minister on 5 September 2015 Dr. Neelam Sanjiva Reddy State Award - 19 May 2023 Lifetime Achievement Award - Kurnool Heart Federation - 29 September

2024 Life Time Achievement Award - Cardiological Society of India, Telangana Chapter - February 2026 Notable Achievements During His Tenure Under Dr. Rajasekhar's leadership, the Cardiology Department at SVIMS successfully performed 10,000 coronary angioplasties. By February 2026, the department achieved the remarkable milestone of 25,000 cardiac interventions - a feat accomplished by no other government hospital in Andhra Pradesh. He also served as President of the Indian College of Cardiology in 2022. The felicitation programme was attended by Dr. Alok Sachan (Dean), Dr. Aparna Bitla (Registrar), Dr. Usha Kalawat (Principal, Sri Padmavathi Medical College for Women), Dr. Shilpa Kadiyala (Controller of Examinations), Dr. Ram (MS), Dr. Srinath Reddy (Director, Sri Padmavathi Children's Heart Centre), Prof. Dr. Vanaja (Cardiology), various Heads of Departments, office bearers of employees' associations, staff members, faculty and students of the Cardiology Department, and other dignitaries.

## Don't dent CBI & ED's credibility, Stalin tells Centre



CHENNAI: CHENNAI: Chief Minister MK Stalin on Friday suggested the Centre to "have some shame" after the court discharged Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) convener Arvind Kejriwal and other accused from the Delhi excise policy case.

CM Stalin accused the Centre of "mortgaging the integrity" of investigating agencies like the CBI and ED to carry out "political witch-hunting" against opposition leaders.

In an 'X' post, Stalin said that the Union government "must not mortgage the integrity of investigat-

ing agencies for short-term political" gains. He also congratulated Arvind Kejriwal and former Delhi Deputy CM Manish Sisodia towards standing firm on their stance and letting the truth speak for itself.

"The Union BJP government must not mortgage the integrity of investigating agencies for short-term politics. Have some shame. Well done, my respected friend Arvind Kejriwal, and Manish Sisodia, for standing firm through it all and letting the truth speak for itself," the 'X' post said.

The Rouse Avenue Court on Friday discharged Former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia in the Delhi Excise Policy case. The court observed that the alleged central conspiratorial role could not be substantiated.

The court noted that the allegations "failed judicial scrutiny" and found "no criminal intent" on the part of Manish Sisodia. It further stated that the conspiracy theory "cannot survive against one constitutional authority."

## Tamil Nadu has 1.18 cr young voters: ECI

CHENNAI: Tamil Nadu has around 1.18 crore young voters, and 3,060 assistant electoral registration officers were deployed to enroll the youth, ECI has said. The Election Commission said this in a report it shared with the media, following a comprehensive review of preparedness on February 26 and 27 for the upcoming Tamil Nadu Assembly elections. The commission announced a series of measures across all 234 assembly constituencies comprising 188 general, 44 scheduled caste, and two scheduled tribe seats.

Data from the final electoral roll published on February 23 reveals a significant surge in youth numbers. There are 12,51,742 registered first-time voters (aged 18-19) and 1,05,31,653 electors in the 20-29 age bracket.

To integrate these 1.18 crore young citizens, the ECI had deployed 3,060 dedicated assistant electoral registration officers to conduct targeted campaigns, particularly in colleges, ECI said in the report.

This focus is central to maintaining a pure elec-



toral roll, described by the commission as the bedrock of democracy.

Following a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral roll that began in October 2025, the total electorate was verified at 5,67,07,380. The roll features 2,89,60,838 female electors, outnumbering 2,77,38,925 male electors, alongside 7,617 third-gender and 67,056 service electors. To facilitate the electorate, 75,032 polling stations have been planned (44,065 rural and 30,967 urban). Each station will serve an average of 756 voters, with a strict cap of 1,200 to prevent overcrowding. For the first time, the ECI has mandated 100 per cent webcasting across all locations. Inclusivity measures have been set for 4,63,398 persons with disabilities (PwD) and

3,99,668 senior citizens aged 85-plus, including optional home voting and accessible polling sites. The roll also includes 2,530 centenarians. Specialised booths include 258 women-managed, 47 PwD-managed, and 265 model polling stations. Technological engagement will be driven by the ECINET platform, offering e-voter cards, candidate details, and violation reporting in 23 languages, including Tamil.

New transparency measures include releasing statistical reports within 72 hours of results, mandatory Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) counting in case of data mismatches, and a provision for candidates to request verification of burnt memory in 5 per cent of EVMs.

## Tamil Nadu election date likely to be announced in a week or two?

CHENNAI: The date for the 2026 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections is likely to be announced within a week or two, according to a report in Daily Thanthi. A seven-member team led by Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar concluded a three-day visit to Tamil Nadu and Puducherry to review poll preparedness ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam, West Bengal, and Puducherry.

Election officials held consultations with representatives of recognised political parties, senior administrative officers, and police officials. Review meetings were conducted in Chennai on February 27 to assess security arrangements, logistics, and overall

readiness. The delegation later departed for New Delhi from Chennai airport. Will Tamil Nadu see a single-phase poll?

Tamil Nadu traditionally witnesses single-phase polling due to relatively low levels of election-related violence. Multi-phase elections are generally conducted in northern states owing to security concerns.

For the five states going to polls, the Election Commission has appointed: 714 IAS officers as General Observers

233 IPS officers as Police Observers

497 Expenditure Observers

Though elections across the five states are expected to be held in multiple phases, Tamil Nadu is likely to go to polls in the final phase.

## Met office issues intense Heat Wave alert for TN till May

Chennai, Feb 28 (UNI)

The Met office on Saturday evening issued an intense Heat Wave alert for Tamil Nadu from March to May 2026. It said Northern Tamil Nadu is likely to experience an above-normal number of heatwave days during the March-May 2026 season with the day temperature, which at present hovered around 32-33 deg C, expected to go up once the heatwave started intensifying.

The increased heatwave risk may affect public health, water supply, power demand, and essential services, particularly impacting the elderly, children, outdoor workers, and those with pre-existing medical conditions.

High temperatures can lead to heat-related illnesses and added stress on infrastructure, it said.

The IMD will issue weekly and extended-range forecasts, Early Warnings, and Impact-Based Forecasts (IBF) to

indicate severity and areas affected. The public is advised to stay hydrated, avoid peak heat hours, and take special care of vulnerable individuals during this season. Since the Northeast monsoon prolonged, spilled over to January this year, and the State witnessed cyclones and few weather systems systematically, the weather conditions

remained chilly till the third week of February—a rare phenomena. Considering this, it was predicted that the heat wave would be more intense this season and the people are advised to brace up a scorching summer.

The peak heat wave conditions (dog days), also called as "Kathiri Veyyil", during which the mercury level will go up by several notches and could touch the 43 to 45 Deg C in North Interior districts, would commence in the first week of May and would continue till that month end.

## 'Made in Bharat' brand growth will lift every citizen: Sadhguru

Coimbatore, Feb 28 (UNI) The idea that a strong national brand lifts individual and business prospects took centre stage as Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev emphasised the global rise of 'Made in Bharat' as a symbol of quality and credibility.

Speaking at the Brand INSIGHT leadership program at the Isha Yoga Centre, Sadhguru said that nation-building today extends beyond infrastructure and economy to global perception and identity. He said ensuring that 'Made in Bharat' represents excellence will naturally strengthen the global standing of Indian businesses, professionals and citizens.

"You must make sure 'Made in Bharat' means it's the best. When the nation's brand is built, every



citizen's brand becomes stronger, not only businesses," he said, underlining how global trust in a country's products, services and people is closely linked to national

reputation. He pointed to the gradual shift in the global perception, noting that the Indian passport is now often viewed with greater international-

ly compared to a decade ago. "People are looking at an Indian passport a little more respectfully than they used to ten years ago. That is brand building. India is building its brand consciously," he added. Framing branding as a tool of global influence, he said countries that invest in their image create better opportunities for their citizens. According to Sadhguru, once the brand of Bharat reaches a higher global threshold, Indian companies and professionals will find it easier to access international markets and partnerships.

Drawing a parallel with the global spread of yoga, Sadhguru said that despite its proven impact on human wellbeing, yoga remained underrepresented globally for

years due to poor branding strategies. He noted that awareness about yoga's benefits should have been far more widespread given its effectiveness.

The global perception of yoga is now improving as awareness campaigns and cultural outreach efforts expand. The 3-day Brand INSIGHT programme, launched in 2023 under the guidance of Isha Foundation, is designed for brand managers, marketing professionals and business leaders. The 6th edition of the program (February 27 - March 1, 2026) features industry experts including Anisha Motwani, Ameen Haque, Krishnan Subramanian, Rahul Jauhari, Sonal Dabral and Narayan Devanathan.

## Silent threats to kidneys: Experts warn on lesser-known risk factors



Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 28: Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) often progresses quietly, affecting nearly 10% of the global population before symptoms appear. While diabetes and high blood pressure remain the leading causes, nephrology experts warn that several lesser-known factors are silently damaging kidneys.

Dr Mohammed S. Khan, Associate Consultant at K I M S H E A L T H , Thiruvananthapuram, said, "The global kidney disease crisis forces us to look beyond the usual suspects onto emerging threats caused by environment,

lifestyle, and genetics."

Dr Gireesh M. S., HOD and Consultant at Ramaiah Memorial Hospital, added that nearly one in four adults may have some degree of kidney impairment, underscoring the need for early detection.

Key emerging risks include:

- Obesity: Excess weight forces kidneys to overwork, leading to scarring and reduced filtration. Lifestyle changes such as weight control and balanced diets can protect kidney health.

- Smoking: Nicotine and toxins in cigarettes reduce blood flow to kidneys and accelerate damage. Quitting

can slow CKD progression.

- CKDu (Chronic Kidney Disease of Unknown Etiology): Affecting young farmers and laborers in regions like Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala, Goa, Odisha, Maharashtra, and Chhattisgarh, CKDu may be linked to heat stress, dehydration, agrochemicals, and heavy metals. Regular screening in hotspots is vital.

- Frequent painkiller use: Over-the-counter NSAIDs can quietly harm kidneys when used repeatedly. Traditional or indigenous medications with undisclosed ingredients may pose similar risks.

- Supplements: Unregulated high-protein or fat-burning supplements can stress kidneys, particularly in individuals with undiagnosed kidney issues.
- Recurrent UTIs and kidney stones: These can lead to permanent kidney scarring if untreated.

- Genetics and autoimmune conditions: Family history and conditions like lupus contribute to 20-25% of CKD cases.

Dr Khan emphasized early detection, while Dr Gireesh stressed, "Regular check-ups and screenings are key. Many kidney problems remain hidden until significant damage occurs, so proactive health monitoring is crucial."

Both experts urge awareness of these silent threats to kidney health, especially for individuals with obesity, family history, frequent painkiller use, or occupational exposures.

## GSK CALLS FOR STRONGER ADULT IMMUNISATION FOCUS AMID RISING SHINGLES BURDEN

New Delhi, Feb 28:

Pharmaceutical major GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) has urged greater awareness around adult immunisation in India, highlighting that shingles prevention remains largely absent from health discussions among adults living with chronic illnesses. Citing findings from a global survey commissioned by the company, GSK said shingles — caused by the reactivation of the varicella-zoster virus responsible for chickenpox — can lead to severe, "day-disrupting" pain and significantly affect quality of life, particularly among older adults and those with weakened immune systems.

Shalini Menon, Executive Vice-President (Medical Affairs), GSK India, noted that while life expectancy in India is increasing, many people are living longer with chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, kidney disease and chronic lung disorders. These illnesses gradually weaken immune function, making ageing adults more vulnerable to infections like shingles.

"India is living longer but not necessarily healthier," she said, adding that awareness about the link between chronic diseases and declining immune health remains limited among older adults.

According to the survey findings:

Nearly 43% of Indian respondents who had experienced shingles reported severe, day-disrupting pain. More than one in three said the illness prevented them from working or attending social engagements. Patients



with chronic kidney disease and cardiovascular disease reported the greatest disruption. Those with diabetes and cardiovascular disease described the highest emotional toll. GSK launched its

shingles vaccine in India in early 2023 for adults aged 50 years and above. The two-dose vaccine is currently available in the private market at approximately Rs 11,000 per dose. While India

remains at an early stage in adult vaccination adoption, the company has expanded approvals in other countries. In China, the vaccine is approved for adults aged 18 years and above. In the United States, regulators have cleared a pre-filled syringe version to improve convenience and administration efficiency. Responding to queries, Menon said the pre-filled syringe system is under consideration for India, though it is too early to confirm launch plans. She added that GSK is currently gathering real-world data on the vaccine's performance in India before exploring broader integration into public health channels.

**Bajaj Finance Limited**  
Registered Office: C/o Bajaj Auto Limited Complex, Mumbai - Pune Road, Akurdi, Pune - 411035, Branch Office: Bajaj Finance Ltd, No. 21C/1, 1st Floor, MKM Complex, Western Side SN High Road, Tirunelveli-627001, Branch Office: Bajaj Finance Ltd, Sener Rivera Building No.70 First and Second Floor, Spurtank road, Chetpet, Chennai- 600031

**POSSESSION NOTICE (FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTY)**

(As per Appendix IV read with rule 8(1) of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002)

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Bajaj Finance Limited (BFL), under the provisions of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Sec.13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued demand notice under Section 13(2) of the Act by registered post ("Notice") calling upon the Borrowers/Co-borrowers mentioned hereunder to repay the amount mentioned in the notice U/s.13(2) of the said Act within a period of 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The Borrowers/Mortgagors/Guarantors named below having failed to repay the said amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers/Mortgagors/Guarantors and public in general that the undersigned has taken Possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on me under Sec.13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

The Borrowers in particular and public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the said property and any dealing with this property will be subject to the charge of the Bajaj Finance Limited. For the amount mentioned herein below along with interest thereon at contracted rate.

The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Loan Account No./Name of the Borrower(s) Mortgagor(s) Guarantor(s)	Description of the Secured Immovable Property	Demand Notice Date & Amt.
4468LP0330964 KAVITHA STORE (BORROWER) AT - 5/1, MAIN ROAD, NORTH VAGAIKULAM, UKIRANKOTTAI, TIRUNELVELI, TAMILNADU - 627202.	ALL THAT PIECE AND PARCEL OF THE MORTGAGE PROPERTY BEARING NATHAM S.NO. 509/27 (OLD NATHAM 351/1 HEC 0.00.94 WESTERN POSITION IN WHICH MEASURING EAST WEST 14 FEET SOUTH NORTH 39 FEET ADMEASURING 546 SQ.FT. AND THE HOUSE BEARING DOUR NO.4/178A AND ITS ELECTRIC SERVICE CONNECTION SITUATED AT TENKASI REGISTRATION DISTRICT ALANGULAM SUB REGISTRAR JURISDICTION VAGAIKULAM VILLAGE NORTH VAGAIKULAM, BOUNDED BY - NORTH - EAST WEST STREET, EAST - PRABHU HOUSE, SOUTH - VELSAMY NADAR LAND, WEST - M. EMARAJAN LAND,	18/11/2025 & Rs. 20,66,179.99/- (Rupees Twenty Lakh Sixty-One Thousand One Hundred and Seventy-Nine and Ninety-Nine Paise Only) as on 17/11/2025
YUVARAJ E (CO-BORROWER) & JEBASEELI Y (CO-BORROWER) BOTH AT - 4/178, AMMAN SANNATHI KEELA STREET, NORTH VAGAI KULAM, VAGAIKULAM, UKIRANKOTTAI, TIRUNELVELI-627202.	ALL THAT PIECE AND PARCEL OF THE PROPERTY BEARING FLAT NO. S1 ON THE SECOND FLOOR OF AN AREA OF 881 SQ.FT. (INCLUDING COMMON AREA) TOGETHER WITH 487.5 SQ.FT. OF UNDEVELOPED SHARE OF LAND IN THE TOTAL EXTENT MEASURING 1894 SQ.FT. COMPRISED IN S.NO. 114/2A OF POONAMALLEE VILLAGE BEARING PLOT NO. 455RINIVASA NAGAR POONAMALLEE, POONAMALLEE TALUK THIRUVALLUR DISTRICT. BOUNDARIES - NORTH - KURINGHILL LAND, SOUTH - MR. JAVANTHIBABU (S2) LAND, EAST - 16 FEET ROAD (EXTENT OF 25 FEET), WEST - DHARMAARAJA KOIL BACK SIDE	11/02/2025 & Rs. 39,61,461/- (Rupees Thirty-Nine Lakh Sixty-One Thousand Four Hundred and Sixty-One Only) as on 11/02/2025
4035HL22362084 & 4035HL22361861 JOHNGNANA SUNDAR B (BORROWER) AT - NO 34 S1 INSPECTOR JAYARAJ STREET INDIRA NAGAR POONAMALLEE CHENNAI TAMILNADU 600056		11/02/2025

Date - 01.03.2026, Place - CHENNAI  
Authorized Officer, For M/s BAJAJ FINANCE LIMITED

# EDITORIAL

## From Stand-In Chief Minister To Cadre: The 'OPS' Act In DMK's Politics

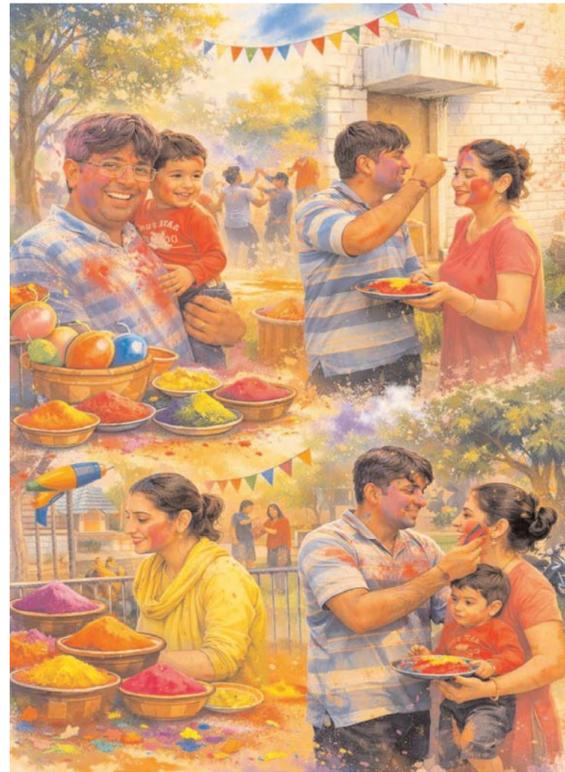
Back in 2001, when the late J Jayalalithaa was forced to step down as Chief Minister, she had announced her party MLA from Periyakulam as her successor at a press conference at the AIADMK headquarters in Chennai. In those pre-Google days, journalists at the press conference scrambled to find out who he was. "OPS", as O Panneerselvam would later be known, had done little to attract the limelight. He was a first-time MLA and also the revenue minister, but few outside the party even knew him. Since then, he was the perennial "stand-in" - filling the Chief Minister's chair in 2001 and again in 2014, when Jayalalithaa faced legal convictions. He wasn't chosen for his mass appeal, talent, or political acumen, but for his proximity to Jayalalithaa's long-time aide, VK Sasikala. Propped up as a "rubber stamp" loyalist, OPS was deemed safe by the Sasikala clan, whom Jayalalithaa famously kept at arm's length when it came to actual power. She found the Sasikala family, including her nephew TTV Dhinakaran, far too ambitious to be made a fill-in for her. The Shift from OPS to EPS While OPS, hailing from the OBC Thevar community, was an asset to the AIADMK, the Sasikala clan and OPS' standing within the party began to erode even before Jayalalithaa died in December 2016, according to longtime observers. Observers note that after her return to office in 2016, Jayalalithaa grew disillusioned with the Sasikala faction's governance. She began leaning on Edappadi K Palaniswami (EPS), a leader from the OBC Gounder community in Western Tamil Nadu, who was viewed as transparent in financial dealings and a steadfast party loyalist since MGR's time in the 1970s. EPS was first elected to the state assembly in 1989, unlike OPS, who emerged only in 2001. However, publicly, OPS was the only leader in the party whom Jayalalithaa herself had appointed Chief Minister. Hence, soon after Jayalalithaa's demise, OPS briefly claimed the chief minister mantle, rebelled against Sasikala, but, when the dust settled, the party's financial and organisational machinery consolidated behind EPS. But OPS did have a faction, and EPS had to accommodate him as deputy chief minister. The EPS-OPS combine lost in 2021, and when OPS tried to outwit EPS and take over the party, EPS dealt a decisive blow, expelling OPS from the party in 2022 and asserting undisputed control. This is why EPS, in 2026, put his foot down against the re-entry of OPS into the NDA fold. He did not want the alliance to have two former chief ministers and hence create the optics of a challenge to himself, according to AIADMK leaders. But what does all this mean for DMK? One of the big messages from the NDA in these polls, when the Prime Minister held his rally at Madurantakam a few weeks ago, was that they had built an alliance. Getting TTV Dhinakaran and his AMMK (bitter rival to EPS), Anbumani Ramadoss and his PMK on the stage with Edappadi Palaniswami and the Prime Minister was meant to portray unity and a big alliance. The NDA tried hard for Premalatha Vijayakanth's DMKD to come on board and would have liked O Panneerselvam as well. But, in a blow to the NDA, the DMKD decided to tango with the DMK. OPS was out in the cold and vulnerable with little choice but to align with the DMK. Perhaps the only way that he could remain relevant or get his son and former MP to win a seat. Was TVK an option for OPS? Maybe, but with another rival from the AIADMK, KA Sengottayan, cementing himself there, there was no place for OPS. OPS' move towards the DMK camp is less about "game-changing" electoral math and more about optics. It is just one seat - Bodinayakanur - that the DMK will give to OPS. He already has a presence there and is a formidable force with the DMK behind him. For that one seat, the DMK gets the optics of securing a former chief minister - handpicked by Jayalalithaa herself - sending a perception that the erstwhile AIADMK fragments have splintered away. Further, in the Thevar stronghold of Theni, OPS provides a small but incremental boost.

# FADING COLORS, FRAYING RELATIONSHIPS



(When Holi was not just a festival, it was a feeling of belongingness)

Holi was once not just a celebration of colors, but of relationships. As soon as Falgun arrived, songs would echo through neighborhoods, children would play with colors in groups, and adults would embrace generously. Today, that same Holi has been reduced to formal messages and limited boundaries. Technology and changing social conditions have increased convenience, but a sense of belonging has been left behind. Traditions, folk songs, and collective joy are gradually becoming part of memories. Holi has been a festival in Indian society that wasn't limited to colors alone. It was an opportunity to bridge the distance between people, wash away years of bitterness, and infuse new freshness into relationships. With the arrival of the month of Phalgun, a unique spirit permeated the atmosphere. The scent of gulal (coloured powder) wafting through the air, the laughter of children in the streets, and the melody of folk songs emanating from every home transformed life into a celebration. But today's Holi looks quite different from the Holi of the past. Over time, society has changed, technology has advanced, and conveniences have arrived—but somewhere amidst these changes, the warmth of relationships has cooled. The colors are still there, but they no longer reach hearts. There was a time when Holi wasn't just a one-day celebration. Preparations began as early as Vasant Panchami. Phaag would resonate in temples, the beats of dhap and chang would resonate in the chaupals, and groups of singers would emerge from villages and



neighborhoods. This togetherness was the soul of Holi. Children used to gather in groups in neighborhoods to collect Holi donations. Even if someone refused, they wouldn't mind—they would move on, smiling and making others laugh. Applying color wasn't a crime, but a way to show affection. Even if someone scolded them, it was simply forgotten, considering it part of the fun of Holi. Today, those same children are confined to mobile screens, and neighborhoods have become devoid of communication. The most beautiful aspect of Holi was that social distinctions blurred on that day. Rich and poor, young and old, friends and foes—all seemed painted in the same hue. Even enemies embraced. "Don't mind, it's Holi!" wasn't just a sentence, but a social consensus that this day should be lived with open hearts.

Today, that phrase has become a joke. People are more concerned with protecting their boundaries than with colors. The fear of something untoward happening or a dispute arising has taken away the spontaneity of Holi. Earlier, delicacies were prepared in every home. The aroma of gujyas, dahi-vadas, malpuas, and thandai would permeate the entire neighborhood. Neighbors' daughters-in-law and daughters were also considered members of their own family. Guests were welcomed with open arms. Today, celebrations are confined to the four walls of the home. A formal "Holi Mubarak" or "Happy Holi" has replaced the warmth of relationships. Growing insecurity and distrust in society have also changed family behavior. In the past, girls would stay late at night with friends

and relatives during Holi. Amid laughter, fun, and music, time would slip by without anyone realizing it. Today, those same things become a source of worry. Relationships are shrouded in suspicion. Traditions are also slowly disappearing. Once upon a time, natural dyes were made at home from Tesu and Palash flowers. Women would mix the colors while singing folk songs, and children would wait eagerly. Little girls would make Valudiyas from cow dung and adorn them with garlands. These were not just rituals, but symbols of collective labor and creativity. Today, commercially purchased chemical dyes have replaced those traditions. Convenience has increased, but emotional connection has diminished. Folk songs are now limited to a few cultural events. The tunes of Phaag and Rasiya, which once echoed throughout the month of Phalgun, are now rare. The peace that followed Holi was once comforting. The pause that followed the splashes of water and the sounds of laughter brought fulfillment, not fatigue. Today, the celebrations end within a few hours, and society returns to its own closed worlds. In recent years, social tensions and divisions have further limited celebrations like Holi. Many families avoid leaving their homes on this day, even though the original purpose of festivals is to unite people and lift them away from fear and negativity. Holi isn't just a festival of colors; it's a festival of forgiveness, a festival of reconciliation. It reminds us that being human means not just living for ourselves, but also laughing and connecting with others. Today, we need to revisit Holi in its original meaning. Away from the noise and formalities, devote time to relationships. Let children play in the neighborhoods, give adults opportunities to meet each other, and don't let traditions become mere memories. Festivals give us hope. They break loneliness and provide a brief respite from the tedium of life. If we reduce them to mere rituals, society will become even more desolate. The colors of Holi will only deepen when there is a sense of belonging in our hearts. Otherwise, the colors will be washed off our hands, but the dust on relationships will only grow thicker.

## What's Driving Pakistan-Afghanistan War? Islamabad's Never-Ending Cycle Of Insecurity

Long-simmering tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan have now spilled into open confrontation along the contested Durand Line. What was once a theatre of proxy maneuvering is, at least momentarily, being shaped by direct state-to-state hostility. On February 21, Pakistan launched airstrikes on alleged militant sanctuaries in Nangarhar, Paktika and Khost, claiming to target Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and ISIS-K elements. Kabul responded on February 26 with ground offensives against Pakistani positions across six provinces. Islamabad escalated further with "Operation Ghazab Lil Haq", striking targets in Kabul and Kandahar, as Defence Minister Khawaja Asif declared that Pakistan's "cup of patience has overflowed". Casualty figures remain contested and unverifiable - Islamabad claims 274 Taliban fighters have been killed and 12 soldiers lost, while Kabul asserts 55 Pakistani soldiers are dead and 13 of its own fighters have been killed. Yet, beyond the numbers lies a more consequential reality: a structurally unstable frontier has entered a new and potentially dangerous phase. Durand And Its Discontent The crisis cannot be reduced to episodic violence. Its roots lie in the unresolved question of the Durand Line - the 2,600-kilometre boundary drawn in 1893, never formally recognised by successive Afghan governments. The line bisects Pashtun tribal lands, embedding a historical grievance into the geogra-



phy of the modern state system. After the Taliban's return to power in 2021, Pakistan initially anticipated strategic dividends. It expected Kabul to curb the TTP, whose ideological affinities with the Afghan Taliban are well documented. Instead, TTP attacks intensified, with over 2,400 Pakistani security personnel reportedly killed in 2025 alone - the highest toll in a decade. Islamabad's frustration stems not merely from security losses but from the perception that its longstanding leverage over the Taliban has eroded. Recent attacks in Islamabad, Bajaur and Bannu - attributed by Pakistan to Afghan-based militants - served as immediate triggers. Ceasefire efforts mediated by regional actors in October 2025 collapsed amid persistent skirmishes. The Taliban's reluctance to confront the TTP reflects both shared Pashtun solidarities and a pragmatic fear of internal fragmentation, including defections to ISIS-K. Layered atop these tensions is a geopolitical

recalibration. Islamabad has accused Kabul of drifting into an "India colony", a charge that was further sharpened following Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi's visit to New Delhi last year and a joint statement condemning regional terrorism. For Pakistan, this diplomatic thaw between Kabul and New Delhi represents not merely optics but a potential strategic encirclement. The recent escalation thus appears as much a coercive signal as a counterterrorism operation. Nobody Wins This War The immediate fallout is economic and humanitarian. Afghanistan remains heavily dependent on Pakistani ports for transit trade, while Pakistan derives revenue and strategic depth from its western corridor. Border closures risk paralysing economic activity in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Flagship connectivity projects - from the TAPI gas pipeline to broader Eurasian transport initiatives - face renewed uncer-

tainty. China's investments in Pakistan, particularly under CPEC, could confront heightened security vulnerabilities if militancy spills over. The humanitarian dimension is equally stark. Civilian casualties, displacement and potential refugee flows compound Afghanistan's already dire socio-economic crisis. Prolonged instability could embolden Baloch separatists, invigorate ISIS-K, and fragment militant ecosystems further. For external stakeholders - China, Iran, Russia and Turkey - the escalation threatens to upset a precarious regional equilibrium. Yet, a full-scale conventional war remains unlikely. Afghanistan lacks airpower and conventional depth; Pakistan, for its part, cannot afford a protracted two-front contingency. The logic of escalation is, therefore, bounded by structural constraints, even if tactical brinkmanship persists. Where India Stands For India, the crisis is both opportunity and risk.

## WHAT IS ALPINE DIVORCE, A DARK DATING TREND OF ABANDONING PARTNERS MID-ADVENTURE



Much like the internet, the world of dating also has a dark web comprising red flags and dark trends. Until now, we believed that abuse, torture, and gaslighting were the obvious red flags, but what about actions like abandoning a partner? Alpine divorce refers to abandoning your partner mid-adventure, like a hike or in the wilderness. Guess what? This dating trend is gender-specific. Men leaving their wives, girlfriends, or partners on a hike has become quite common. Instead of telling the person to their face that they want to end the relationship, they take extreme steps to put the life of their partner in danger just so they can avoid an uncomfortable conversation and move on with their lives. How Alpine Divorces Work

Say you have planned a hike on a treacherous path, thinking that it will be an adventure that you and your partner will remember forever. However, your boyfriend or husband adds a dark twist to the itinerary. They leave you in the middle of the hike, especially when you might be in danger or come across deadly conditions, like freezing temperatures or treacherous paths. The term is derived from isolated alpine regions, known for their dangerous terrain and harsh weather conditions. But the concept can be traced back to a 1893 story - An Alpine Divorce by Robert Barr. It is a tale of a man plotting to kill his wife on a Swiss Alps trip. The fictional story not only inspired the modern dating term, but people have also

shared real-life experiences on the internet. Social Media Users Share Alpine Divorce Instances A user on X wrote, "The whole 'Alpine Divorce' thing is terrifying, but not surprising. The scariest thing in the woods isn't a wild animal, but a man. That's why I always go off into the backcountry alone. The elements are predictable, people are not." A second wrote, "Just saw a TikTok of a girl whose boyfriend abandoned her during a hike in the woods. The comments were all about how this is a thing multiple men do. It's so common it's called Alpine Divorce, and there are support groups for it....All I can say is wtf is wrong with men??? Why would you ever consider abandoning someone that way? I'm mortified." A

third shared, "I just relearned about this weird phenomenon people call 'alpine divorce' where men intentionally take their girlfriends, wives, or partners on hikes into remote areas to break up with them, start arguments, ask for divorces... and then... they abandon them there." A fourth shared, "Terrifying post on Threads. A woman talked about the phenomenon of 'Alpine divorce' and the replies are full of women with traumatic experiences of being abandoned." A fifth wrote, "This TikTok came up on my FYP, and it has 4.4 million views. Apparently, men abandoning their partners on a hike or in the wilderness is so common that it has a name: alpine divorce. Comments are filled with stories."

# A 'delicate' balance for Canada and a 'win-win' for Modi as Carney visits India

Prime Minister Mark Carney is in India for a pivotal trip aimed at repairing ties with the world's largest democracy, as both countries seek to reduce their trade reliance on the US. Carney began his visit in Mumbai, where he is meeting with business leaders. He will then travel to New Delhi for talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The trip marks a remarkable turnaround in relations, which had collapsed when Canada accused India of carrying out an extrajudicial killing of a Canadian Sikh separatist on Canadian soil - an allegation India strongly denied. Both sides now appear ready to move forward. Here's what has changed, and what each country hopes to gain as Carney's trip gets underway. Squeezed by US tariffs, Canada repairs ties with former foes by Nadine Yousif For Carney, this trip is strictly business, aligned with his broader goal of diversifying Canada's trade partners to reduce economic dependence on the US. A big focus will be making progress on a comprehensive free trade agreement with India, which has been discussed on-and-off for the last 15 years. The latest derailment in trade talks occurred after former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau



made a bombshell public accusation against India in 2023, alleging it was involved in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Sikh separatist, who was gunned down in British Columbia. Four men were later charged in his death, and their case is still before the courts. India has repeatedly denied any involvement. Now faced with US tariffs, and under Carney's more "pragmatic" approach to foreign policy, Ottawa is repairing ties with Delhi. Still, the allegations remain a point of contention for some members of Canada's Sikh community, who say they continue to be targeted by

India through transnational repression, and have criticised Carney for prioritising economic interests over their safety. It is a situation that will require "delicate handling", Vina Nadjibulla, vice-president of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, told the BBC. Asked repeatedly about these concerns, Canadian officials told reporters ahead of Carney's trip that the two countries are engaged in "robust" discussions on national security and foreign interference. They added that Canada does not believe the Indian government is currently linked to any violent crimes or threats

on Canadian soil, and that they "probably would not be taking this trip" if that were the case. Not everyone is convinced. Sukh Dhaliwal, an MP from Carney's Liberal party, told Canadian media that the claim of India no longer being a threat is "disconnected from the reality". Canada has made several diplomatic overtures to India since Carney took office last year, beginning with inviting Modi to the G7 summit in Kananaskis, Alberta last summer. That was followed by a series of meetings between Foreign Minister Anita Anand and her Indian counterpart, S Jaishankar, as

well as a visit to Ottawa last month by India's national security advisor, Ajit Doval. Carney's itinerary in India offers some insight into his priorities. He will stop only in Mumbai, India's financial hub, to meet with business leaders, and New Delhi, where he will sit down with Prime Minister Modi on Monday. Unlike Trudeau, Carney will not be visiting cultural sites like the Taj Mahal. Nor will he travel to Punjab, the home state of many of India's Sikhs, which was a stop for both Trudeau and another former prime minister, Stephen Harper. Those stops were often seen as nods to Canada's large Indo-Canadian and Sikh communities. Their omission signals that, this time, Canada's focus is squarely on trade. On the agenda will be discussions around energy, technology, artificial intelligence and defence, Carney's office has said, as well as attracting top talent to Canada. Carney and Modi are also likely to discuss tariff policies enacted by President Donald Trump, which have had an impact on both their economies. Heading into the trip, Canada remains the only G7 country that has not reached a preferential trade agreement with India.

# TRUMP ORDERS GOVERNMENT TO STOP USING ANTHROPIC IN BATTLE OVER AI USE

US President Donald Trump has said he would direct every federal agency to immediately stop using technology from AI developer Anthropic. "We don't need it, we don't want it, and will not do business with them again!" Trump wrote in a Truth Social post on Friday. Anthropic is mired in a row with the White House after refusing demands that it agree to give the US military unfettered access to its AI tools. The refusal led US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth to say he's deemed Anthropic a "supply chain risk". The label would make Anthropic the first US company to ever publicly receive such treatment. The company said that it "will challenge any supply chain risk designation in court". Trump's directive came after days of back and forth, in public and private, between the company's CEO Dario Amodei and Hegseth. The company had grown concerned in recent months about the government potentially using its AI tools, like Claude, in what it described as "mass surveillance" and "fully autonomous weapons". Hegseth and the Pentagon have insisted that Anthropic agree to "any lawful use" of its tools and



change our position on mass domestic surveillance or fully autonomous weapons", the company added. The Department of War is a secondary name Trump has given to the defence department. Anthropic's tools will be phased out of all government work over the next six months, Trump said. As for Anthropic's other customers, the company said the only impact will be on companies that also contract with the military. Those companies may have to stop using Anthropic for work being done on behalf of the department. Prior to Trump's pronouncement, Anthropic had said that, if the US Department of Defense chose to stop using the company's tools, the company would "work to enable a smooth transition to another provider".

# INDIA'S FOREX RESERVES DROP USD 2.119 BN TO USD 723.608 BN

Mumbai: India's forex reserves dropped by USD 2.119 billion to USD 723.608 billion during the week ended February 20, the RBI said on Friday, February 27. In the previous reporting week, the overall reserves had jumped by USD 8.663 billion to a new all-time high of USD 725.727 billion. For the week ended February 20, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by USD 1.039 billion to USD 572.564 billion, the data released by the central bank showed. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effects of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units, such as the euro, pound, and yen, held in the foreign exchange reserves. Value of the gold reserves dropped by USD 977 million to USD 127.489 billion during the week, the RBI said. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were down by USD 84 million to USD 18.84 billion, the apex bank said. India's reserve posi-



tion with the IMF was also down by USD 18 million to USD 4.716 billion in the reporting week, according to the apex bank's data. India's forex reserves jumped USD 5.543 billion to USD 692.576 billion during the week ended November 14 due to a steep increase in the value of gold reserves, the RBI said on Friday. The overall reserves had dropped by USD 2.699 billion to USD

687.034 billion in the previous reporting week. For the week ended November 14, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased by USD 152 million to USD 562.29 billion, the data released on Friday showed. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the

foreign exchange reserves. Value of the gold reserves jumped by USD 5.327 billion to USD 106.857 billion during the week, the RBI said. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) grew by USD 56 million to USD 18.65 billion, the apex bank said. India's reserve position with the IMF increased by USD 8 million to USD 4.779 billion in the reporting week, the apex bank data showed. PTI AA BAL BAL

# KISNA Hosts Mega CSR Drive Across South India at 19 Locations in a Single Day

Karimnagar, 28th February, 2026: KISNA Diamond & Gold Jewellery, the flagship diamond and gold jewellery brand from the Hari Krishna Group, successfully organised a Mega CSR Drive across South India, conducting multiple social initiatives simultaneously across 19 KISNA exclusive brand outlets. The drive was graced by the presence of esteemed dignitaries Mr.Santosh Sharma Business Head South, Mr.Priyesh Gamot National Head CSR, Mr.Sai Varun & Mr.Sai Krishna Franchise Partners, Mr.Santhosh Deconda Arra Manager, community leaders, and social representatives, NCC Cadets further strengthening the impact of the initiative. The initiative comprised Blood Donation Drives and Food Distribution activities, held between 11 AM and 5 PM, witnessing active participation from local communities and volunteers across cities such as Hyderabad, Chennai, Bengaluru, Madurai, Vijayawada and



more, reinforcing KISNA's commitment to social responsibility. Mr. Parag Dholakia, Founder & Managing Director, Hari Krishna Group, stated: "Giving back to society has always been integral to KISNA's philosophy. With our vision of 'Har Ghar KISNA', we are committed not only to expanding our reach but also to creating positive social impact. This Mega CSR Drive reflects our continued efforts towards healthcare, environmental

sustainability and community wellbeing." Mr. Parag Shah, CEO, KISNA Diamond & Gold Jewellery, added "At KISNA, we believe true growth lies in creating meaningful impact within the communities we serve. Through this Mega CSR Drive, we aim to contribute towards health, environmental sustainability and social wellbeing. The enthusiastic participation and commitment shown by our teams and local communities truly reflect our shared vision of

giving back to society." Mr.Sai Varun Gaurishetty & Mr.Sai Krishna Narla, Exclusive Brand Outlet, Partner, said: "It is truly inspiring to be part of a brand that prioritises community impact alongside business success. The Mega CSR Drive provided us with an opportunity to connect closely with our local communities and contribute meaningfully beyond retail, reinforcing KISNA's commitment towards social responsibility."

# WARREN BUFFETT'S SUCCESSOR PUBLISHES HIS FIRST LETTER TO BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY SHAREHOLDERS

Omaha (US): Warren Buffett's successor released his first letter to Berkshire Hathaway shareholders on Saturday, February 28, as the company took a USD 4.5 billion write-down on the value of its Kraft Heinz and Occidental Petroleum stakes. Greg Abel took over as CEO in January, so this is his chance to set the tone for his leadership. Investors are watching closely for any changes he might make, but Abel and Buffett have said there won't be significant changes in the way Berkshire operates. The letter opens with a tribute to Buffett and a promise to maintain Berkshire culture and continue operating the same way that has worked so well for six decades. And Buffett remains chairman and the largest shareholder, so he's still helping guide the Omaha, Nebraska-based conglomerate he built. But Abel is now writing the annual letters that were



always known as one of the most-read business reports out there because so many investors admired and followed Buffett because of his remarkable track record, homespun wit, and advice. Abel will also be the only one answering questions at the shareholder meeting in May while Buffett watches from the floor with the rest of the board. The only initial changes so far are some administrative moves Abel made as he took over, and a filing in January suggesting Berkshire is considering selling off some or all of its 325 million Kraft Heinz shares. But Buffett may

have supported that move because he had made comments about how Berkshire overpaid when it helped Heinz merge with Kraft, and he had been critical of the packaged food giant's plan to split into two companies. Many investors have tried to copy the moves Buffett made in Berkshire's massive portfolio of stocks. But Berkshire is powered by the dozens of companies it owns, including major insurers like Geico, the BNSF railroad, a number of major utilities and an assortment of manufacturing and retail firms.

# TRUST Mutual Fund Launches TRUSTMF Mid Cap Fund with an aim to Capture India's Emerging Growth Leaders

Mumbai 2026: TRUST Mutual Fund has announced the launch of the TRUST Mid Cap Fund, an open-ended equity scheme predominantly investing in mid-cap companies. The fund seeks to generate long-term capital appreciation by investing in equity and equity-related instruments of businesses ranked 101st to 250th in terms of full market capitalization, as defined by SEBI. The scheme will be benchmarked against the Nifty Midcap 150 TRI. The New Fund Offer (NFO) will open for subscription from 27th February 2026 and close on 13th March 2026. Mid-cap companies represent a distinctive stage in the corporate lifecycle - enterprises that have generally moved beyond early uncertainty and are positioned for scalable expansion. Mid-caps in India have a market capitalisation of Rs.34.8K to 104.5K Crore\*(Source:AMFI, Data as of Dec 2025). Many segment leaders are only available in the mid-cap uni-

verse across digital platforms, manufacturing, financial services, infrastructure, retail and niche consumption categories, several category-defining businesses currently reside in this space, offering investors exposure to companies before they transition into large-cap status. India's mid-cap segment continues to be one of the powerful engines of long-term wealth creation. In the last 5 years alone, 37 mid-caps have delivered greater than 3x returns, displaying the incredible opportunity for investors to generate high medium to long term returns. Source: Internal analysis, ACE equity Data base: AMFI's market cap Classification as on 31st December 2025. Indices considered for representation purpose- Nifty 100 TRI (for Large Cap), Nifty Midcap 150 TRI (for Mid Cap). Index performance does not guarantee scheme performance. Past performance may or may not be sustained in future

and is not a guarantee of any future return. Multi-baggers are internally defined as - stocks that have provided a return of at least 100%. (Source: Capitaline, Kotak Institutional Equities). Mid cap segment has also demonstrated relatively stronger earnings momentum in recent quarters, supported by healthy Profit After Tax (PAT) growth. Mid-cap valuations have moderated from peak levels and are now closer to long-term averages, while earnings growth expectations remain constructive. Nifty Mid-cap 150 TRI has outperformed both the Large-cap Nifty 100 TRI and Small-cap 250 TRI indices over a 15-year period. This demonstrates the strong long-term fundamentals of mid-caps. Data as on 31st Dec 2025. Source: ICRA MFI Explorer; Internal Research. Indices considered for representation purpose. Nifty 100 TRI (Large cap), Nifty Midcap 150 TRI (Mid-caps) & Nifty

smallcap250 TRI (Small cap). Past performance may or may not be sustained in future and is not a guarantee of any future return. Index performance does not guarantee scheme performance. The mid-cap universe is supported by broader structural drivers shaping India's growth trajectory. Stable inflation trends, a controlled current account deficit, sustained capital expenditure, and favourable demographics together provide a supportive macroeconomic backdrop. Mid-sized businesses, with diversified sector representation spanning financial services, consumer discretionary, industrials, healthcare and digital-led enterprises, are well positioned to benefit from rising domestic consumption, manufacturing expansion, financialization of savings, digitization, and export competitiveness. Commenting on the launch Sandeep Bagla, Chief Executive Officer, TRUST MF, said: "Growth invest-

ing\* is central to our philosophy. In the mid-cap universe, outcomes can vary significantly, making research depth and valuation discipline especially important. Our investment process combines fundamental analysis, relative valuation and Terminal Value Investing\* to identify businesses that can create sustainable long-term value." (The concepts of 'Terminal Value Investing' and 'GARV' explained herein describe the current investment approach / philosophy of TRUST AMC. The same is subject to change depending on market conditions and investment opportunities.) Data as on 31st Dec 2025. Source: ICRA MFI Explorer; Internal Research. Indices considered for representation purpose. Nifty 100 TRI (Large cap), Nifty Midcap 150 TRI (Mid cap) & Nifty smallcap250 TRI (Small cap). Past performance may or may not be sustained in future and is not a guarantee of any future return.

# Iran leadership sites targeted by US and Israel as Tehran retaliates with strikes across region

Keir Starmer says that British planes "are in the sky today" in the Middle East "as part of co-ordinated regional defensive operations to protect our people, our interests and our values". We're seeing a televised statement by the prime minister and we'll bring you more from him shortly. The Israeli military says it has "completed a broad strike" on the Iranian regime. "One of the strikes was directed toward an advanced SA-65 aerial defense system located in the Kermanshah area in western Iran," the IDF says in a statement. The statement adds: "These strikes were conducted in order to establish and enhance the Israeli Air Force's freedom of operation over Iranian aerial territory, in order to degrade the IRGC's capabilities and to thwart threats toward the home front of the State of Israel." Congressional leaders are beginning to issue statements after the US and



Israel launched joint strikes on Iran overnight in the US. The US Senate's Majority Leader, John Thune, says Iran's nuclear programme and missile inventory have posed a threat to the US over the years. "Despite the dogged efforts of the president and his administration, the Iranian regime has refused the diplomatic off-ramps that would peacefully resolve these national security concerns" Thune says in a statement. "I look forward to administration officials briefing all senators about these military operations." President Trump warned in his speech about the potential for US casualties, well aware that American public opinion has a low tolerance for any military operation that will bring their boys home in body-bags. Some 30,000 to 40,000 American

troops are normally deployed at 13 US military bases throughout the region, around a quarter of them here in Qatar at Al-Udeid, the headquarters for US Central Command. The massive American military deployment to the Gulf included extra air defense units, but nothing like Israel's comprehensive Iron Dome. It looks as if the US got as many assets out of the

direct line of fire as possible: in recent days there have been reports that hundreds of troops were moved out of Al-Udeid [military base]. We've also seen satellite images showing empty airfields at the base, as well as the departure of ships from the US Fifth Fleet base in Bahrain. The US and Israel have launched joint strikes across Iran prompting retaliatory strikes from Tehran. Numerous explosions have been heard in cities across Iran including in the capital, where the office of the supreme leader and the presidential office were reportedly targeted. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) has said its strikes in Tehran targeted locations where senior political and security figures were gathered. "The hour of your freedom is at hand," US President Donald Trump told the people of Iran as footage from Tehran showed huge plumes of black smoke rising above a busy residen-

tial area Trump said "major combat operations" have started and "the lives of courageous American heroes may be lost" Further explosions, sirens and columns of smoke have been reported across the Gulf as Iran promised a "crushing response" to the US-Israeli attacks Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain and Jordan all say they are intercepting missiles fired from Iran at US military bases on their territory Iran's state-run Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) reported 53 people have been killed after a strike on a girls' school while the UAE says a civilian was killed by falling debris after a strike "involving Iranian ballistic missiles" Sirens also continue to ring across Israel as defensive systems try to intercept barrages of missiles from Iran The scale of the damage across the region and the scale of casualties still remains unclear.

Pakistan's defence minister has said the country is in "open war" with Afghanistan, after Islamabad launched airstrikes on Kabul as part of a wave of attacks across the country. "Our patience has now run out," said Khawaja Muhammad Asif following the attacks. The strikes came after the Afghan Taliban announced a major offensive against Pakistani military posts near the border on Thursday night. The latest attacks follow months of clashes between the two neighbouring nations, despite agreeing to a fragile ceasefire in October. Last year's negotiations failed to reach a broader agreement for a complete end to hostilities, with both sides blaming each other for not engaging seriously with talks. The Taliban said a "retaliatory operation" had been launched at around 20:00 local time (15:30 GMT) on Thursday. It said it had captured 19 Pakistani military posts and two bases, adding that 55 Pakistani soldiers had been killed. The BBC has not been able to verify these claims. Pakistan quickly retaliated, saying the Taliban had "miscalculated and opened unprovoked fire on multiple locations" across the border in its north-western province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

## Pakistan defence minister says country in 'open war' with Afghanistan after strikes



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## DOJ charges 30 more people in Minnesota anti-ICE church protest



The US Department of Justice announced Friday that 30 more people are being charged for their roles in an anti-ICE protest staged last month at a church in Minnesota. Attorney General Pam Bondi wrote on social media that 25 of the 30 defendants named in a newly unsealed indictment had been arrested by federal agents, with "more to come". The protest is the same one that led to the arrest of former CNN anchor Don Lemon, who along with nine others was charged after entering the Cities Church in St Paul with protesters who claimed a pastor was an immigration-enforcement official. Lemon and the others initially arrested have pleaded not guilty to civil rights violations. "YOU CAN NOT ATTACK A HOUSE OF WORSHIP. If you do so, you cannot hide from us — we will find you, arrest you, and prosecute you," Bondi wrote on social media Friday. "This Department of Justice STANDS for Christians and all Americans of faith." All 39 people arrested are charged with conspiracy against religious freedom at a place of worship and injuring, intimi-

dating and interfering with the exercise of the right of religious freedom at a place of worship. "A group of approximately 40 agitators, including all of the defendants named in this Indictment, entered the Church in a coordinated takeover-style attack and engaged in acts of oppression, intimidation, threats, interference, and physical obstruction alleged herein," the indictment says. In the 18 January incident, protesters interrupted a service in the church by chanting "ICE out" and "Justice for Renee Good", the mother of three who was fatally shot by a US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officer last month in Minneapolis. Footage showed a chaotic scene unfolding inside the church, which belongs to the Southern Baptist Convention, as protesters and members of the congregation shout at each other. Lemon was live-streaming the incident when it happened, and he has defended his decision to enter the church, saying he was simply carrying out his duty as an independent journalist covering a protest.

## BIRMINGHAM FLIGHT TO DOHA DIVERTED AMID AIR STRIKES

A flight from Birmingham to Qatar has been diverted amid ongoing US and Israeli air strikes on Iran. The delayed Qatar Airways flight was due to take off at 08:14 GMT and head to Doha, but flew as far as France before turning back to Birmingham where it landed at about 11:20, a flight tracking platform has shown. The airline has confirmed it has suspended all flights to the Qatar capital due to the closure of Qatari airspace on Saturday. The BBC have contacted Birmingham Airport for comment. Qatar Airways said it is working with the relevant authorities to support impacted passengers and plans to resume operations when the airspace reopens. A spokesperson

added: "The safety of our passengers and crew is always our highest priority and we apologise for any inconvenience caused." Emirates, which flies to Dubai from the Solihull-based airport, has also suspended flights to and from the United Arab Emirates city. More than 200 passengers on British Airways' 20:00 flight to Doha on Friday found themselves back at Heathrow, after it was ordered to turn around about a third of the way through the journey. Explosions have been heard across multiple Iranian cities including the capital, Tehran, on Saturday, after negotiations to limit Iran's nuclear programme ended without an agreement this week.

## At least 20 killed after military plane carrying banknotes crashes in Bolivia

At least 20 people have been killed and others injured after a Bolivian air force cargo plane crashed in the western city of El Alto, the country's authorities say. The incident happened at 18:15 local time (22:15 GMT) on Friday as the plane was arriving at El Alto's airport from the city of Santa Cruz, aviation officials said. It reportedly skidded off the runway and hit nearby vehicles. The defence ministry later confirmed its C-130 Hercules was involved and that it had been transporting banknotes to the Central Bank of Bolivia. There were eight people aboard the plane, the air force commander said. Police fired tear gas to disperse crowds allegedly trying to take the



scattered banknotes. Firefighters had given an earlier death toll of at least 15. Video footage showed the plane on the ground and badly damaged vehicles. In other videos, people could be seen running away from the tear gas and police officers, some holding shields, forming a line. Some in the crowds are seen throwing rocks.

"While news crews were covering the accident, individuals attempting to steal the transported money attacked the press with unusual violence," the National Association of Journalists of Bolivia said in a statement. It said a mobile TV unit was "directly targeted", while other journalists "were attacked with stones, suffering seri-

ous injuries while carrying out their work". The government-run Bolivian News Agency reported that at least a dozen people were arrested for stealing banknotes. "I want to make it clear to those who are trying to take money from the plane involved in this tragedy that this money has no legal value since it has not been issued by the Central Bank and does not have a serial number, and that attempting to use this money is a crime," the Minister of Defence, Marcelo Salinas, said. "We also ask all those who are engaging in acts of vandalism in this area to refrain from doing so and to respect the mourning and grief we are experiencing at this difficult time."

## TRAM DERAILS IN MILAN, LEAVING TWO DEAD AND DOZENS INJURED

At least two people have been killed and up to 40 others are reported to have been injured, after a tram derailed in the northern Italian city of Milan. The crowded tram was travelling on the line 9 route along Milan's Viale Vittorio Veneto at about 16:00 local time (15:00 GMT) when it left the track and crashed into a building. One of the people who died, a 60-year-old man, is thought to have been a pedestrian hit by the tram, while the other fatality and most of the injured were passengers. Numerous ambulances went to the scene as reports emerged of people trapped in the



wreckage. Passengers described hearing a noise underneath the tram, after which it veered off its track, gathered speed and went into the side of a building. "I thought it was an earthquake. I was sitting down and I fell on the floor, along with the other passengers," one man told

Ansa news agency. "It was terrible." As it left the track, the tram apparently first hit a traffic light before smashing the window of a restaurant. A delivery rider waiting at the traffic light and a young man on a pavement narrowly escaped injury, La

Repubblica website reported. "I got on at the first stop, [Piazza della] Repubblica," one female passenger told Corriere della Sera. "I was standing next to the driver, and they all crashed into me." "I just heard an enormous bang," said 27-year-old Anna, who was in an office nearby, quoted by AFP. "I saw a bit of the tram had gone into a shop." Civil protection teams set up a tent at the scene to help the injured. It is not clear what caused the derailment, although media reports suggested the tram had taken a sharp corner too quickly, as it turned out of Viale Vittorio Veneto.

## Aid groups in Gaza and West Bank thrown lifeline as Israel court pauses ban threat



Israel's High Court has temporarily halted a ban on international aid groups from working in the occupied Palestinian territories, unless they meet strict new rules. The injunction came ahead of an Israeli deadline for 37 well-known organisations to stop work, something the groups warn will remove a lifeline for vulnerable people and cause "irreparable harm". Four months into a fragile ceasefire in war-torn Gaza, most of the more than two million population relies on aid — for food, medical care and water. In the West Bank, humanitarian organisations have been helping Palestinians who have been forced off their land by rapid Israeli settlement expansion and settler violence. In December, Israel told organisations — including Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF, Doctors Without Borders), Oxfam, Save the Children, ActionAid and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) — that their registrations had expired. They were given 60 days to renew them — by complying with new rules — or cease operations by 1 March. This week, a group of 17 NGOs jointly petitioned the High Court to suspend the new measures,

arguing that Israel has obligations as an occupying power under international humanitarian law. Responding on Friday, Judge Dafna Barak-Erez said there was "a real legal dispute" which would require more time to work through. The right-wing government of Israel's Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has taken a tough stance against international and Palestinian NGOs as well as UN agencies, some of which have operated in the region for decades, citing security reasons. It has also passed legislation banning the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, Unrwa, from operating in Israel, impacting its work in the West Bank and Gaza. Israel has claimed that Unrwa — and other organisations, including MSF — have been infiltrated by members of Palestinian armed groups or have ties to them. The humanitarian groups strongly deny that. Israel's Ministry for Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism says its "clear transparency requirements" mean all NGOs and humanitarian organisations must now give full details of their staff, funding sources and operational structures.

## BILL CLINTON ASKED ABOUT HOT TUB PHOTO AND TESTIFIES HE KNEW 'NOTHING' OF EPSTEIN CRIMES

Former President Bill Clinton told a congressional panel he "saw nothing," and "did nothing wrong" in relation to the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. The all-day hearing behind closed doors in New York featured the former president being asked about his inclusion in newly released files related to the financier, including in a photo with an unidentified person in a hot tub. His testimony came one day after his wife, ex-US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, told the committee she also "had no idea" of Epstein's crimes. Appearing in the files is not an indication of wrongdoing, and neither Clinton has been accused of misconduct by Epstein survivors who have come forward so far. Clinton

said that he would have cut off ties to Epstein and never would have flown on his plane if he "had any inkling of what he was doing". "I would have turned him in myself," he said in his opening statement released to the public ahead of his testimony. After his testimony in New York, he posted a video that largely repeated his opening statement, saying he did not know of Epstein's crimes "no matter how many photos they show of me". "When the video of my testimony today is released, I hope it will motivate everyone to go in front of Congress to say what they know," Clinton said. "I hope it will motivate the justice department to finally release all the files and to ensure that this



never happens again. The survivors deserve that." Both he and his wife had resisted subpoenas from the panel, dismissing them as politically motivated, before agreeing to testify before the House Oversight Committee as potential contempt-of-Congress proceedings loomed against them. When questioned about the photo-

graph showing the former president lounging in a hot tub with the person who appeared to be a woman — whose face is blacked out to protect her identity — Bill Clinton told lawmakers that he did not know her. When asked if he had sex with the woman, he said he did not, a source told the BBC. Unlike his wife, Clinton did not

come out and speak to reporters after his deposition wrapped up. James Comer, the Republican chairman of the House Oversight Committee, called the hours-long interview "a very productive deposition." "President Clinton answered every question, or attempted to answer every question," he said, adding that video of his testimony and a full transcript would be released in the coming days. He also called the Clintons' depositions "historic" and said they are the two highest-ranking officials to ever be deposed by Congress. President Gerald Ford voluntarily appeared before a congressional committee in 1974 to explain his pardon of former President Richard Nixon. "This is a

serious investigation," Comer said. "We will continue to try and get the truth to the American people and justice to the victims." Among the topics that arose during Bill Clinton's testimony was President Donald Trump's relationship with Epstein. House Democrats said his testimony brought up "additional information" about Trump that warranted renewed calls to bring the current president in for questioning. Robert Garcia, the top Democrat on the House Oversight Committee, said Clinton brought up "additional information about some discussions with President Trump". Garcia, like other Democrats, repeated his demand for Trump to testify before the committee.



## India Can Face Pakistan For Second Time In T20 World Cup 2026

The last two days of the T20 World Cup 2026 Super 8 stage are upon us, and the full list of semi-finalists is still undecided. From Group 1, South Africa, and from Group 2, England have already advanced. But the race for the second semi-finalist from each group remains open. India and West Indies are in contention from Group 1, while Pakistan and New Zealand are in contention from Group 2. Current T20 World Cup 2026 Super 8 - Group 1 Points Table (Q) South Africa - 4 points, 2 matches, NRR +2.890 West Indies - 2 points, 2 matches, NRR +1.791 India - 2 points, 2 matches, NRR -0.100 (E) Zimbabwe - 0 points, 2 matches, NRR -4.475 Remaining Fixtures in Super 8 Group 1 March 1: South Africa vs Zimbabwe (3 PM) March 1: India vs West Indies (7 PM) India can enter the semi-finals by beating West Indies in their final match. Current



T20 World Cup 2026 Super 8 - Group 2 Points Table (Q) England - 6 points, 3 matches, NRR +1.096 New Zealand - 3 points, 3 matches, NRR +1.390 Pakistan - 1 point, 2 matches, NRR -0.461 (E) Sri Lanka - 0 points, 2 matches, NRR -2.800 Pakistan can enter the semi-finals by beating Sri Lanka by a big margin

on Saturday. To leapfrog New Zealand, Pakistan not only need to win but must do so convincingly. According to the ICC: "To overtake New Zealand on Net Run Rate, they'll need to beat Dasun Shanaka's side by more than 65 runs, or chase down a target inside 13 overs, though the figures won't be exactly

known until after the first innings of the match." How can India vs Pakistan take place? The top-placed team of Super 8 Group 1 will face the second-ranked team of Group 2 in the semi-finals - and vice versa. Scenario 1 (Most likely): India vs Pakistan can take place if both teams qualify for the semi-finals and then win

their respective semi-final matches to meet in the final. Scenario 2 (Highly improbable but mathematically possible): If Zimbabwe beat South Africa on Sunday by a very big margin, South Africa's high Net Run Rate will fall, and they will remain stuck at four points. If India then beat West Indies by a humongous margin, they will finish tied on points (4) and potentially surpass South Africa's NRR to finish on top. Pakistan at best can finish second in its group, hence in such a scenario India vs Pakistan T20 World Cup 2026 semi-final is also possible. However, the chances of this scenario playing out are extremely slim. "If India and Pakistan meet in the semi-finals, that match will be staged in Colombo, while Mumbai will host Semi-Final 2 involving India if they face any team other than Pakistan," the ICC had said in a release earlier.

## Usyk to defend title against kickboxer in Egypt

Oleksandr Usyk will return to the ring in May when he defends his WBC heavyweight title against former kickboxing champion Rico Verhoeven at the Pyramids of Giza in Egypt. Two-time undisputed heavyweight champion Usyk, who holds the WBA, WBC and IBF belts, has not fought since stopping Daniel Dubois at Wembley Stadium in July.



In a bout organisers have dubbed the 'Glory in Giza', 36-year-old Dutch heavyweight Verhoeven will be boxing for the first time since 2014 when he faces Usyk on 23 May. "I truly respect people who reach the very top in their sport," said Usyk, who is unbeaten across his 24 professional bouts. "Rico is one of them - a powerful athlete and a great champion. "Being a champion isn't just about belts. It's about years of hard work, discipline and belief. I respect his journey - he's truly the King of Kickboxing. But this is boxing - a different game, with

its own rules and its own kings. "A big night is coming." "Undisputed versus undisputed" Verhoeven had 76 fights and 66 wins in his kickboxing career before announcing his departure from the sport in November. "I spent 12 years as the undisputed heavyweight kickboxing champion and accomplished everything I set out to accomplish. But staying at the top for that long didn't take away the hunger, it strengthened it," said Verhoeven. "I wasn't looking for comfort, so I started looking for the highest challenge available in another

world. "Usyk is undisputed in boxing. That's the kind of challenge that motivates me. Undisputed versus undisputed. The best facing the best." "A mammoth mismatch" - analysis ByKal Sajad BBC Sport Journalist This is a world heavyweight title fight in the shadow of one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World - a backdrop so spectacular it almost distracts from how extraordinary, and frankly bizarre, the contest itself is. Details of the fight's location are light, other than that it will be "under the shadow of ancient giants".

## Georgia Voll Slams Ton As Australia Outclass India To Clinch ODI Series Win

Australia chased down a target of 252 in just 36.1 overs in the second ODI to clinch ODI series victory over India with a game to spare. Georgia Voll smashed 101 off 82 balls and Phoebe Litchfield slammed 80 off 62 to power Australia to victory. Earlier, India had managed to post 251/9 in 50 overs, with captain Harmanpreet Kaur (54 off 70) and Pratika Rawal (52 off 81) scoring half-centuries. Kashvee Gautam also shone, slamming 25 with the bat and taking two wickets with the ball. The win ensures victory for Australia captain Alyssa Healy in her final ODI series. Well then, Australia Women have turned the tables around and have



taken a narrow 6-4 lead in this multi-format series. The third and final WODI now becomes very crucial, especially for India Women. The Aussies can ensure that they don't lose the series with a win in the next game, whereas India have to win if they want to win the overall series. The

3rd WODI will be played right here in Hobart once again, at the Bellerive Oval on Sunday, the 1st of March. The game will begin at 9.20 am IST (3.50 am GMT), but you can tune in to our build up much sooner. Until then, take care and goodbye! The Australian skipper - Alyssa Healy

expresses her excitement over her team's clinical run-chase, praising the group's outstanding effort in restricting the opposition to a sub-par 250 on a favorable batting wicket. She highlights the importance of consistency in their performance and commends young stars Phoebe Litchfield and Georgia Voll for their match-winning partnership, noting that their success represents the promising future of Australian cricket. As the team maintains its focus on executing the fundamentals and sticking to their proven brand of cricket, Healy says that her side are confident and prepared for the upcoming match on Sunday.

## Ahmed plays down hope of semi-final place - can he fit in England XI?

England all-rounder Rehan Ahmed played down his hopes of selection for the T20 World Cup semi-finals despite his crucial role in Friday's win over New Zealand. Making his World Cup debut, Ahmed, 21, took a wicket with his first ball and then scored a crucial 19 not out to secure victory in England's chase in partnership with Will Jacks. As a spinner, he was brought into the XI for the turning conditions in Colombo but England's semi-final is likely to be on a truer surface in Mumbai on Thursday. "I'm not too bothered about my place in the team," said Ahmed, who became England's youngest men's Test cricketer in 2022. "Baz [coach Brendon McCullum]



and Brooky [captain Harry Brook] will definitely put out the best team they think is going to win, as they did [against New Zealand]. "It's not a personal thing for me - it's a World Cup, it's my first World Cup to be in. "I'll just keep enjoying the ride, if I get the nod I'll play and if not then I'll

give water to the boys." Against New Zealand, Ahmed ignited a chase that was struggling in the final overs by hitting his second ball for six. He also struck Mitchell Santner for four with a fine reverse sweep and clubbed the left-arm spinner over long-off for another six. It meant

England were able to win with three balls to spare and progress through the Super 8s phase unbeaten. The performance has also led to some calls for Ahmed to keep his place on Thursday - a match likely to be against co-hosts India or West Indies - but fitting the youngster into England's team would be difficult. The returns of pace bowlers and spinners have been far more balanced at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium, compared with Colombo where spin has dominated. Without seamer Jamie Overton returning, England could be exposed with Jofra Archer and Sam Curran as their only pace options.

## GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER MAKES WINNING RETURN FROM INJURY



Shai Gilgeous-Alexander marked his return from injury with 36 points as the Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Denver Nuggets 127-121 in overtime. The NBA's reigning Most Valuable Player had been out of action since sustaining an abdominal strain on 3 February and missed nine games. He played 34 minutes on his return, but remained on the bench in overtime as Alex Caruso guided the Thunder to their sixth win from their past eight games. "Felt good," said Gilgeous-Alexander. "I'm just thankful to be back." The 27-year-old was in the action from the start, opening his account with a layup before being called for an early techni-

cal foul for throwing the ball at Denver's Nikola Jokic, who made contact with him after play had stopped. Thunder forward Luguentz Dort was later ejected for a flagrant foul after he tripped Jokic, sparking a shoving match after which Jokic and Oklahoma City's Jaylin Williams receive technical fouls. Caruso drove to the basket in the final seconds of regulation, but his shot bounced off the rim at the buzzer to send the game to extra time. However, the Thunder scored the first five points in overtime and hung on for the win to maintain their two-game lead over the San Antonio Spurs at the top of the Western Conference.



F1 to revise engine rule at centre of row

## The moment I told my mum I wanted to stop football - and how life changed

The Football Interview is a new series in which the biggest names in sport and entertainment join host Kelly Somers for bold and in-depth conversations about the nation's favourite sport. We'll explore mindset and motivation, and talk about defining moments, career highs and personal reflections. The Football Interview brings you the person behind the player. Interviews will drop on weekends across BBC iPlayer, YouTube, BBC Sounds and the BBC Sport website. This week's interview will be broadcast on BBC One from 23:50 BST on Saturday, 28 February. Leah Williamson has won almost everything there is to win in women's football. Twice a European champion as England captain, she has also lifted every trophy available to her during a 20-year career with Arsenal - includ-



ing the Champions League and inaugural Women's Champions Cup. Now she wants the World Cup. In a wide-ranging interview, Williamson tells Kelly Somers she considered turning her back on football as a teenager before a conversation with her mum convinced her to stick with it. She also talks about her love of fashion and how music helps her switch off from the pressures of the day job. Kelly Somers: Leah, nice to see you - thank you for your

local team, but my mum says it was painful. Kelly: Because you weren't very good?! Leah: Yeah. She's like: "You go and support your kids, but at the same time, it wasn't thrilling to watch. It's not like I was holding out that you were going to be a footballer." Kelly: When you were little, though, it probably wasn't something that she would have envisaged for her daughter anyway, was it? Leah: No, definitely not. Especially because she couldn't have played football - she had to pretend to be a boy, so she's thinking, 'all right, we'll just see how far this goes.' I used to toe-punt it. I couldn't kick the ball properly until I was 10 or something. Kelly: That gives every parent of young children hope, listening to that! Leah: Yeah, there's no stress. Kelly: What was the name of your first team? What can you remember of it? Leah: Scots Youth FC.

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## Wider VAR scope and more countdowns for World Cup



Corners and second yellow cards will be added to the scope of the video assistant referee (VAR) for this summer's World Cup. Measures to address loss of tempo in matches and cut down on time-wasting will also be introduced, including new countdowns on goal-kicks, throw-ins and substitutions. The International Football Association Board (Ifab) approved the proposals at its annual general meeting at Hensol Castle in Wales on Saturday. The changes will come into force from June 1 and apply for the 2026-27 season. Ifab also agreed to further trials about potential changes to offside, and to consult about measures to combat players covering their mouth when confronting opponents during matches. It comes after Benfica's Gianluca Prestianni was accused of racially abusing Real Madrid's Vinicius Jr while covering his mouth with his shirt. The Argentine, who denies the allegation, was provisionally suspended by Uefa - European football's governing body. Ifab will also stage trials with a view to finding ways to stop 'tactical timeouts' prompted by goalkeepers having on-

field treatment. And former Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger's proposal for changing the offside law will finally be trialled in the Canadian Premier League when its new season begins in April. More VAR - but leagues can opt out World governing body Fifa has strongly supported expanding the remit of VAR when it can quickly fix decisions that are clearly wrong. However, many leagues had said measures that could increase delays would not be acceptable. That was particularly the case for corners. Fifa was adamant it wanted to review corners at the World Cup and argued strongly for it. Because leagues opposed it, it is something they can opt in to. The Premier League is not expected to do so. Uefa is also believed to be against it, but Italy's Serie A is likely to adopt it. There was more support for the idea VAR should look at incorrectly awarded second yellow cards. In a notable incident earlier this month, Juventus defender Pierre Kalulu was sent off for a second booking after Inter Milan's Alessandro Bastoni went to ground under minimal contact.



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by

# Shri Narendra Modi Prime Minister



1<sup>st</sup> March, 2026



15.00 hrs



AAI Premises, Perungudi, Madurai

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