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BENGALURU | CHENNAI | HYDERABAD | VIJAYAWADA | KOCHI

# THE SOUTH INDIA TIMES

NATIONAL DAILY NEWSPAPER

*Essence of the South*



**OM NAMO VENKATESAYA**

11- 09 - 2026

Total pilgrims : 72,408
Tonsures : 28,691
Hundi kanukalu : 4.39 CR
Laddu sale... 4.58 Lac
Annaprasadam.. 2.53Lac
Ashwini hospital..4,039
Present Situation on 12-09-2026: Waiting Compartments... 31

Approx. Darsan Time for Sarvadarshanam (with out SSD Tokens).18 H.

**Birthday wishes pour in from across the world for PM Modi**

NATION PAGE

**SWEDISH PM KRISTERSSON RESIGNS AFTER ELECTION LOSS**

WORLD PAGE

**The Pan-India Spectacle Set for a Grand Worldwide Theatrical Release on October 16**

CINEMA PAGE

## INBRIEF

### 2 Pakistani JeM terrorists killed

**JAMMU (TSIT):** Two Pakistani terrorists of the proscribed Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) outfit were killed and an alleged over-ground worker was detained in a remote high-altitude area in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur district, officials said on Thursday. The joint operation by the Army, police and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) was conducted in the dense Brattal Sohan and Khubban forests of Majalta, bordering Kathua district, amid heavy rain, they said. "In a joint intelligence-based operation during the intervening night of September 16-17, confirmed inputs indicated the presence of terrorists in the general area of Brattal, Udhampur. Despite hostile weather, difficult terrain and poor visibility, troops of White Knight Corps, Police and CRPF launched a targeted counter-terrorism operation, resulting in the neutralisation of two terrorists.

### Tata Sons reappoints Chandrasekaran

**MUMBAI (TSIT):** Tata Sons' board voted to reappoint N. Chandrasekaran as executive chairman for a further five-year term, but Tata Trusts, the group's majority shareholder, immediately declared the resolution invalid, escalating a leadership dispute simmering for over a year. The dramatic turn unfolded at a nearly three-hour board meeting. Chandrasekaran, 63, had last month intimated his intention not to seek reappointment when his current term ends on February 20, 2027, after the board repeatedly failed to reach unanimity on renewing him.

The board leaned on "Chandra" after the Reserve Bank of India rejected the holding company's bid to avoid a stock-market listing. Tata Sons said Chandrasekaran acceded to the board's request to reconsider, and it resolved by

## SEMICON India 2026:

# PM Modi highlights India's chip, fintech progress

NEW DELHI (TSIT):

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said India's economic growth and rising global confidence in the country were reflected in developments across sectors, including semiconductor, fintech and logistics.After inaugurating SEMICON India 2026 here, PM Modi said India recorded 7.8 per cent economic growth in the latest quarter despite a challenging global environment.

He cited developments over the past 15 days, including the Global FinTech Fest in Mumbai, where discussions focused on inclusive finance through agentic AI, tokenisation and quantum technology, and the operationalisation of around 3,000 km of dedicated freight corridors. On semiconductors, PM Modi said India's chip industry was gaining momentum and that 'India's chips will go out to the world'.

**Semicon 2.0 to support 200 chip-design startups and companies, Vaishnaw says.**

The freight corridors would accelerate movement across the country, improve logistics and provide fresh impetus to manufacturing, PM Modi added. In addition, he cited a sovereign rating upgrade for India by a credit rating agency and said the development reflected growing global confidence in the Indian economy

Referring to the recent BRICS Summit hosted by India, PM Modi said the adoption of the New Delhi Declaration by consensus was another indication of international confidence in India.Meanwhile, Union Electronics and IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said Semicon 2.0 would build India's semiconductor ecosystem around six pillars -- chip design, machines and materials, fabs, advanced packaging, research and development and talent. The minister further noted that more than 105 startups had participated in the first phase of the semiconductor programme with about 20 securing venture capital funding of around Rs 800 crore. Under Semicon 2.0, the government aims to support at least 200 chip-design startups and companies.

He said India had trained 70,000 design engineers in four years against an initial 10-year target of 85,000. More than 400 universities across the country now have access to electronic design automation tools, he said.

# CM Revanth seeks public participation in Telangana's growth

**CM highlights welfare, social justice and infrastructure plans; targets $3-trillion economy by 2047**

HYDERABAD TSIT BUREAU:

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Thursday called for the active participation of Telangana's four crore people in building a globally recognised State while ensuring that development reaches all regions and sections of society. Addressing the Telangana Praja Palana Day celebrations at Public Gardens, Nampally, the Chief Minister paid tributes to those who fought for Telangana's freedom, self-respect and rights. He recalled that Hyderabad State became part of the Indian Union on September 17, 1948.

Revanth Reddy said farmers' welfare, women's economic empowerment, social justice, quality education, healthcare and employment were key priorities of his government. He said Telangana's per capita income had reached Rs.4,18,931 and that the government was focusing on ensuring that economic growth improves living standards.

He said Rs.20,616 crore had been released towards crop-loan waivers benefiting 25.35 lakh farmer families, while more than Rs.36,000 crore had been provided under Rythu Bharosa. The government was also pursuing pending irrigation projects and Telangana's share of Krishna waters, he said. The Chief Minister highlighted schemes including free RTC bus travel for women, Gruha Jyothi, subsidised LPG cylinders, fine rice distribution, social security pensions and Indiramma housing. He said 4.5 lakh houses had been sanctioned in the first phase and another 2.5 lakh in the second phase.

On social justice, Revanth Reddy referred to the caste survey and said Bills providing 42 per cent reservation for BCs had been passed by the State Legislature and sent for Presidential assent. He also highlighted SC sub-classification.He said the government was strengthening education and healthcare through Young India Integrated Residential Schools, Telangana Public Schools, international university campuses and improved Aarogyasri coverage. More than 72,000 government jobs had also been filled, he said.

On infrastructure, Revanth Reddy referred to Hyderabad Metro Phase-II proposals, new airports at Adilabad and Mamnoor, the Musi rejuvenation project and major road and industrial corridor projects. Outlining the Telangana Rising 2047 vision, he said the government aimed to build a $3-trillion State economy by 2047. Bharat Future City, planned as a net-zero smart city across nearly 30,000 acres, would have dedicated zones for AI, life sciences, electric vehicles, healthcare, education and skills.

# CM Naidu hails Modi's leadership in India's development

**CM highlights poverty reduction, start-ups, women's empowerment and India's growing global role.**

VARANASI (TSIT):

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu said Prime Minister Narendra Modi was taking India towards the league of developed nations and credited his leadership with several developments in the country.

Addressing the Varanasi–Vadnagar Seva Sankalp Abhiyan programme marking Modi's 25 years in public service, Naidu highlighted welfare schemes, infrastructure development, technology initiatives and the growth of the start-up ecosystem.

**India's capabilities in defence production, space, drones, semiconductors, quantum technology and robotics had expanded significantly.**

He said India now has around 2.20 lakh start-ups and ranks third globally among countries with strong start-up ecosystems. He also cited initiatives such as Jal Jeevan Mission, PM-KISAN, Ujjwala, Mudra and Lakhpati Didi as measures aimed at improving the lives of citizens.Naidu said India's capabilities in defence production, space, drones, semiconductors, quantum technology and robotics had expanded significantly. He also referred to India's COVID-19 vaccine programme and its supply of vaccines to other countries.

Referring to the recent BRICS Summit, Naidu said world leaders had expressed confidence in India's leadership. He also praised the NDA partnership and said Andhra Pradesh was receiving support from the Centre for projects including Amaravati and Polavaram.

## SEMICON India 2026

*PM at the inauguration of SEMICON India 2026, in New Delhi ...........PIB PHOTO*

# BRS ready for judicial probe into family assets: KTR

HYDERABAD (TSIT):

BRS Working President K.T. Rama Rao said the party was ready for a comprehensive judicial inquiry by a sitting High Court or Supreme Court judge into the assets of BRS chief K. Chandrasekhar Rao and Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy's families.Reacting to the Chief Minister's announcement in the Assembly that an inquiry would be conducted into KCR and his family's landholdings, KTR urged Revanth Reddy to accept the proposal for a judicial probe instead of constituting an SIT or other special teams.Speaking to the media at Telangana Bhavan on National Integration Day, KTR said the BRS had full faith in the judiciary and was prepared to face legal consequences if any wrongdoing was established.

KTR claimed that KCR had inherited substantial ancestral property before entering public life and questioned allegations regarding the extent of the family's present landholdings. He also demanded that the Chief Minister withdraw what he described as false allegations against KCR.KTR further criticised the State government over its governance and welfare commitments and alleged that BRS legislators were suspended from the Assembly to avoid accountability. He also accused the government of making unsubstantiated claims about the previous BRS administration.The allegations made by KTR were part of his broader criticism of the Congress government and its handling of Assembly proceedings and welfare schemes.

# Abhishek hits 30-ball ton, breaks Rohit's record

NEW DELHI, (TSIT):

Abhishek Sharma smashed a 30-ball century to break Rohit Sharma's record for the fastest T20I hundred by an Indian. Rohit had scored a 35-ball ton against Sri Lanka in 2017. Abhishek reached the landmark with a flurry of boundaries and sixes, showcasing explosive strokeplay. His innings powered India to a commanding total and underlined his growing reputation as a destructive top-order batter. The record-breaking knock drew praise from teammates and fans alike. Abhishek's achievement adds to India's rich history of aggressive T20 batting and strengthens his case for a consistent spot in the national side ahead of upcoming international assignments.

# Petroleum dealers seek exemption from MDR on fuel sales

NEW DELHI (TSIT):

Representatives of the All India Petroleum Dealers Association (AIPDA) met senior officials of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas on Thursday to discuss their demand for exemption from the merchant discount rate (MDR) on UPI transactions on fuel sales at petrol pumps.

The dealers' body said in a statement that the issue was discussed with senior officials of the Petroleum Ministry as the additional MDR cost could put pressure on dealer margins, as retail fuel sales are made on prescribed commissions.

The new UPI framework levies an MDR of Rs 5 per transaction on petrol and diesel purchases above Rs 2,000. Such transactions account for around 30-40 per cent of total purchases across retail outlets in the country, according to dealers.

Petroleum Ministry officials sought to explain the rationale behind introducing MDR, which was required to support the development of the next layer of India's UPI digital infrastructure.

"Petroleum dealers have been at the forefront of adopting digital payments and have worked closely with the government to promote their use across the country," the AIPDA said.The association said it expects to continue the dialogue with the government. "We look forward to continuing the dialogue towards a mutually beneficial solution for consumers, petroleum dealers, and all stakeholders in India's UPI ecosystem," the statement said.

Dealers have raised concerns as digital payments have become an important mode of payment at petrol pumps, particularly for higher-value purchases.

Petroleum dealers have sought a complete exemption for fuel retail transactions, citing the nature of their business and the impact of MDR-related costs on their margins.

## Lord Srinivasa rides Simha Vahanam at Tirumala

TIRUMALA (TSIT): Simha Vahana Seva was observed with celestial grandeur at Tirumala on Thursday morning, the third day of the ongoing annual Salakatla Brahmotsavams.

Adorned in resplendent attire, the processional deity of Malayappa Swamy mounted the majestic Simha Vahanam and proceeded along the four Mada streets encircling the temple, delighting thousands of devotees gathered along the galleries for darshan.

Devotees thronged the temple complex to witness the divine spectacle of the ferocious yet divine Simha Vahanam, symbolising the divine roar of endless faith. Both the senior and junior pontiffs of Tirumala, TTD board members, and officials participated in the event.

# AP Governor, CM greet PM Modi on birthday

FILE PHOTO

AMARAVATI, (TSIT): Andhra Pradesh Governor S. Abdul Nazeer and Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu greeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his birthday.

The Governor conveyed felicitations on behalf of the people of Andhra Pradesh, praising Modi's transformative governance and landmark economic reforms that positioned India as the fastest-growing major global economy.

Chief Minister Naidu called Modi India's longest-serving democratically elected Prime Minister, marking 25 years of public service, and said his vision of 'Seva, Sankalp, and Sushasan' inspires 140 crore citizens.

Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan extended heartfelt wishes, recalling Modi's journey from Vadnagar to the highest office and highlighting achievements in infrastructure, Digital India, defence, and self-reliance. Former CM Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy also greeted Modi, wishing him good health and strength to serve the nation.

## BioMed Bharat 2026 hackathon launched at GITAM

VISAKHAPATNAM (TSIT): GITAM Deemed to be University launched the national-level 'BioMed Bharat 2026', a Biomedical Device Innovation Hackathon, attracting 221 teams and around 600 participants from 16 States.

Inaugurating the event, Dr. B. Geetanjali, Pro Vice-Chancellor of GITAM Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, said greater focus on indigenous research, MedTech innovation, and advanced medical device manufacturing could reduce India's dependence on imported equipment. She noted 22 greenfield projects launched under the Production Linked Incentive scheme, enabling indigenous manufacturing of 55 types of high-end medical devices.

She urged young innovators to leverage AI, robotics, 3D printing, and mobile platforms. GITAM School of Business Dean Prof. Raja P. Pappu stressed domestic manufacturing and skill development. The two-day hackathon offers Rs.4.5 lakh prize money, with incubation support for outstanding projects.

## Srikalahasti temple offers silk clothes to Kanipakam deity

KANIPAKAM (TSIT): On the occasion of the 2026 annual Brahmotsavams of Sri Swamy Vari Devasthanam, silk clothes (pattu vastralu) were offered to Sri Varasiddhi Vinayaka Swamy from Sri Kalahasteeswara Devasthanam, Srikalahasti. Srikalahasti Devasthanam Executive Officer Sri B.K. Venkatesulu and Chairman Sri Kotte Sai presented the silk clothes. They were warmly welcomed by Kanipakam Devasthanam Executive Officer Sri Penchala Kishore and Chairman Sri Mani Naidu, who arranged darshan and presented teertha prasadam, seshavastram, and a photograph of the deity. Trust Board members of both devasthanams, AEOs, archakas, Veda pandits, and others attended the programme.

The Hon'ble Governor of Andhra Pradesh, Sri Abdul Nazeer reached tirumala ttd chairman B. R. Naidu and Eo muddada Ravichandra received at Sri Bagya Rest House Tirumala on Thursday afternoon....

## IoT Summit 2026 opens in Visakhapatnam


VISAKHAPATNAM (TSIT): The IoT Summit 2026, organised by APDTI Network through Cognetix, commenced in Visakhapatnam on Thursday, bringing together industry leaders, startups, academia, and technology companies. Speakers highlighted IoT's evolution to AIoT, Edge Intelligence, autonomous decision-making, and Physical AI, stressing the need to integrate talent, technology, infrastructure, industry, and policy. APDTI Chairman Sreedhar Kosaraju outlined Cognetix's vision, while Talent AP President Suresh Narra stressed preparing young talent. RTIH CEO Ravi Eswarappu showcased incubation infrastructure, and NRDC Regional Head Dr. Vijay Kumar Sahu emphasised collaboration and intellectual property protection. Sessions covered AIoT, Edge AI, TinyML, Digital Twins, and industrial transformation. IoT Awards were presented: AVN Agrobharat's MilkPro won IoT Innovation of the Year, PRAGYA–MBEI received Best Industrial IoT Deployment, and NcCode Vend Systems won Best IoT Startup – Vizag/AP.

## Special action plan for Viswabrahmin economic development

VISAKHAPATNAM, (TSIT): Andhra Pradesh Viswabrahmin Welfare and Development Corporation Chairperson Kammari Parvathi said the State government is committed to the welfare and comprehensive economic development of the Viswabrahmin community.

Addressing the State-level birth anniversary celebrations of Devashilpi Virat Vishwakarma Bhagawan at Kshetrayya Kala Kshetram, she said the government would soon relaunch the 'Adarana-3' scheme and distribute modern tools to traditional artisans to improve productivity and income. She said a proposal to provide pensions to Viswabrahmin artisans from age 50 has been brought to the government's notice. Parvathi urged over 25 lakh Viswabrahmins to remain united. Vijayawada East MLA Gadde Rammohan, BC Welfare Secretary S. Satyanarayana, and Director A. Mallikarjuna spoke.

# S. Manohar Demands Withdrawal of Proposal for Additional Charges on UPI Transactions

Bengaluru: KPCC General Secretary S. Manohar has demanded the withdrawal of the proposal to levy additional charges on UPI transactions and urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to immediately desist from "looting" the people's money.

Speaking at a protest organized by the Congress party, he noted that the proposal to levy a 0.4% MDR charge on UPI transactions exceeding Rs.2,000, effective from October 15, has caused anxiety among the public. UPI has become a widely used digital payment system among common people, small traders, employees, and the middle class.

He alleged that at a time when digital payments have become an integral part of people's daily lives, any move to impose additional charges would place a further financial burden on the common man and small traders, amounting to an act of oppression by the Central Government.

The proposal to levy a charge on every transaction exceeding Rs.2,000 is likely to increase costs in day-to-day business activities. Therefore, he urged the Central Government to provide clarification regarding this proposal and take measures to ensure that no additional burden falls on the general public. It was stated that the lives of the common people have already become difficult due to rising prices, and unemployment has increased under the Narendra Modi administration. While managing expenses for food, transport, and family needs has become a challenge for ordinary families due to the hike in prices of daily essentials, the proposal to levy additional charges on digital payments has raised concerns about further increasing the financial burden on the public.It was alleged that at a time when managing expenses within their income is becoming increasingly difficult for common people, the policies of the central BJP government are adding to their burden rather than alleviating it, imposing extra costs through new charges and taxes.

Accusing Narendra Modi of yielding to foreign policies—specifically out of fear of pressure from US President Trump—instead of safeguarding the interests of the country's citizens, the protesters urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to immediately withdraw this decision and reduce the financial burden on the people.

Congress leaders A. Anand, G. Prakash, Lakshminarayan, Umesh, Anand, Puttaraju, Chandrashekhar, Kushal Haravegowda, Ranjith Kumar Madhavahanur, and Praveen Rao, along with other Congress party workers, participated in this protest.

## South Coast Railway launches cleanliness campaigns

VISAKHAPATNAM (TSIT): South Coast Railway launched three major cleanliness initiatives—Swachhata Hi Seva 2026, Swachhata Pakhwada 2026, and Special Campaign 6.0—to be observed across the network from September 17 to October 31. General Manager Sandeep Mathur administered the Swachhata pledge to officers and staff at SCoR Headquarters on Thursday. Principal Heads of Departments, officers, and staff participated in large numbers, and the GM released official campaign posters. The SHS campaign, running September 17 to October 2 under the theme 'Swachhata Mein Sahbhag; Swachh Bharat, Viksit Bharat', will focus on transforming Cleanliness Target Units including stations, colonies, yards, goods sheds, loco sheds, and offices. Youth participation and sanitation workers' welfare will receive attention. A nationwide Shramdaan, 'Ek Din, Ek Ghanta, Ek Saath', will be held at 8 a.m. on October 1.

## YSRCP leaders flag drought, irrigation, fertiliser issues

TADEPALLI (TSIT): YSRCP president Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy held a video conference with district presidents and regional coordinators to review drought-like conditions, irrigation shortages, and farmers' problems. Leaders from various districts highlighted inadequate rainfall, drying crops, declining groundwater, shortage of irrigation and drinking water, fertiliser scarcity, rising input costs, and difficulties in accessing crop insurance and compensation. They demanded drought declarations, crop-loss assessment, input subsidy, fodder centres, and improved fertiliser distribution. Concerns were raised over paddy, groundnut, red gram, maize, onion, sugarcane, and horticultural crops.

# DriveX Adds New Hennur Outlet as Bengaluru Retail Expansion Gathers Pace


Bengaluru : DriveX Mobility, a pre-owned two-wheeler platform, today announced the opening of its new retail outlet in Hennur, Bengaluru, further strengthening its presence in Bengaluru and expanding access to an organised, transparent and quality-assured pre-owned two-wheeler buying experience.

Located on Hennur-Bagalur Main Road in Hennur Bande, Kalyan Nagar, the new outlet is strategically positioned to serve customers across Hennur, Kalyan Nagar, Hennur Road, Bagalur Road and neighbouring residential and commercial catchments. The outlet marks another step in DriveX's strategy to build a stronger physical retail presence across high-potential mobility markets.

The Hennur outlet is DriveX's third company-owned store launched in Bengaluru in the past three months, reinforcing the company's strategy of deepening its retail presence across high-potential customer catchments.

At the new outlet, customers can explore a curated range of pre-owned two-wheelers supported by DriveX's standardised inspection and refurbishment processes. The ownership journey is further supported through financing options, warranty coverage and after-sales assistance, bringing key elements of the pre-owned vehicle purchase experience together under one roof.

The expansion comes as the pre-owned two-wheeler category evolves from being primarily price-led to increasingly trust-led. Buyers are placing greater importance on vehicle condition, documentation, reliability, ownership costs, financing and post-purchase support when evaluating a pre-owned vehicle.

Devesh Taparia, CEO, DriveX, said: "The pre-owned two-wheeler market is moving beyond a price-led proposition. Increasingly, customers are looking for trust, transparency and certainty around the vehicle they are buying. The next phase of category growth will be shaped by how effectively the industry can address these expectations. Our expansion in Bengaluru is part of our effort to bring a more organised and dependable ownership experience to customers, closer to where they live and commute."

DriveX follows a multi-format retail expansion model comprising company-owned, company-operated and dealership-led outlets, allowing the company to expand its reach while building a consistent customer experience across markets.

## Aditya Birla Housing Finance Expands Presence in Karnataka with New Branch in Bengaluru

ADITYA BIRLA CAPITAL

HOME LOANS

Bengaluru : Aditya Birla Housing Finance Limited ("ABHFL"), a leading housing finance company and a subsidiary of Aditya Birla Capital Limited, has expanded its footprint in Karnataka with the launch of a new branch in T Dasrahalli, Bengaluru, as part of its broader plan to expand its pan-India distribution network. With this addition, ABHFL's total network in Karnataka has increased to 20 branches, strengthening its presence in high-growth markets and improving customer accessibility.

Over the years, Bengaluru has evolved into a major technology and business hub, attracting a growing workforce and driving the expansion of the city beyond its traditional urban centres. Investments in infrastructure and connectivity have opened up new residential and employment corridors, while the city's strong economic base continues to draw professionals and families seeking better opportunities. As Bengaluru's population and urban footprint grow, the demand for homes across affordable, mid-income and premium segments is also increasing, creating a need for accessible and customised home financing solutions.

As housing aspirations continue to rise, ABHFL's new branch will strengthen access to customised home financing solutions, helping customers achieve their homeownership goals with greater convenience and accessibility.

# New Documentary Celebrates Sarvagnanagar's Youth and Grassroots Transformation

Bengaluru : The energy, aspirations and achievements of Sarvagnanagar's young people take centre stage in a new short documentary, now streaming on YouTube.

The film brings together inspiring stories from across the constituency—stories shaped by education, empowerment, health, opportunity and leadership. More than a collection of individual journeys, it offers a glimpse into a generation that is learning, growing, finding its voice and stepping forward with confidence.

Produced by Azalea Productions and directed by filmmaker Renita George, the documentary presents a sincere and grounded portrait of the transformation taking place across Sarvagnanagar and the people at the heart of that journey. Commenting on the documentary, Hon'ble Minister for Energy and Tourism and MLA of Sarvagnanagar, Shri K.J. George, said that the film reflects the value of sustained grassroots work and the transformation that becomes possible when such efforts are nurtured consistently over time."These stories did not happen overnight. They are the result of years of consistent effort—in our schools, our health centres and our community programmes. This documentary simply holds up a mirror to that work." At its heart, the film is a celebration of young minds, new possibilities and the quiet power of sustained effort. It is a reminder that meaningful change takes root when communities invest in their people, create opportunities and give young individuals the confidence to flourish.

# ASSOCHAM welcomes new UPI framework, says MDR will strengthen sustainability and curb frauds

Bengaluru: ASSOCHAM has welcomed the new UPI framework for large value merchant transactions, stating that it will strengthen UPI sustainability, support innovation, mitigate frauds and enhance wider acceptance. The framework will support payment infrastructure and acceptance networks, enabling UPI to expand further and serve consumers and businesses across the country. Nirmal K Minda, President, ASSOCHAM, appreciated the Government's balanced approach which keeps all person-to-person (P2P) UPI transactions completely free.

## ViewSonic Doubles Down on India with New Pro AV and Google TV Solutions at InfoComm India 2026

Bengaluru : ViewSonic Corp., a leading global provider of visual and EdTech solutions, is showcasing its expanded Pro AV portfolio at InfoComm India 2026, covering Direct View LED, interactive displays, professional monitors, commercial displays, open-frame solutions, projection and smart displays.

In LED display ViewSonic is among the fastest-growing brands in India, recording more than 2X year-on-year growth, reflecting growing demand for its solutions across the market. Its Pro AV portfolio is designed for diverse environments including Smart City Command and Control Centres, boardrooms, professional workspaces, retail spaces, training rooms and large venues.

"ViewSonic has grown significantly in India, both in our presence and the breadth of solutions we offer. Our portfolio today extends across LED, collaboration, commercial displays, professional monitors, projection and smart display solutions. Our focus is to give customers and partners the right technologies for their specific needs, while making deployment and management simpler," said Muneer Ahmad, Managing Director, ViewSonic India.

ViewSonic is showcasing two new Direct View LED solutions for India. The LDC027-182 is designed for Smart City Command and Control Centres, offering seamless large-format visualisation for dashboards, surveillance feeds, maps and operational data.

The LDC027G-091C is designed for premium retail and customer-facing environments, featuring Flip Chip COB technology, 0.94mm pixel pitch, up to 600 nits brightness, 3,840Hz refresh rate and a 99% screen-to-body ratio.The portfolio also includes the Foldable All-in-One LED Display, designed for boardrooms, lobbies, exhibitions, training rooms and auditoriums where mobility and fast setup are important.

## GJC calls 67% hike in gold hallmarking charges unwarranted, seeks immediate review

Mumbai : All India Gem & Jewellery Domestic Council (GJC) has expressed strong concern over the increase in gold hallmarking charges from Rs.45 to Rs.75 per article and has urged the Government and the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) to immediately review the decision and retain the existing charge pending stakeholder consultation.

The increase has been notified through the Bureau of Indian Standards (Hallmarking) Amendment Regulations, 2026, dated 14 September 2026. Under the amended Schedule IV, the hallmarking fee payable by jewellers to recognised Assaying and Hallmarking Centres (AHCs) for gold articles has been fixed at Rs.75 per article.This represents an increase of approximately 67% in one stroke over the prevailing charge of Rs.45 per article.

GJC has consistently supported hallmarking as an important measure for ensuring purity assurance, transparency and consumer protection. Its objection is therefore not to hallmarking, but to the sharp escalation in the cost of mandatory compliance at a stage when hallmarking volumes and geographical coverage have substantially expanded.

According to Government data (PIB), more than 60 crore gold articles had been hallmarked with HUID between 1 July 2021 and 5 March 2026, while mandatory hallmarking had progressively expanded to 380 districts by March 2026. BIS also stated that more than 30 enforcement actions against jewellers were undertaken during 2025-26.GJC believes that such growth in volumes should ordinar-

# Tenthpin launches AI, IoMT innovation hub in Bengaluru


Bengaluru : Switzerland based Tenthpin Management Consultants, a global leader in management and technology consulting for Life Sciences companies, announced the launch of Innovation Hub in Bengaluru, establishing a Global Centre of Excellence dedicated to advanced therapies that delivers a cutting-edge AI and cloud-driven solutions that help organizations accelerate and transform complex gene, cell, and tissue treatments into life-saving medicines.

By bringing together deep scientific expertise, and industry-leading technology partnerships, this centre serves as a hub for innovation to supports biotech and pharmaceutical organizations at every stage of the transformation journey from early-stage research and process optimization to scale-up, manufacturing, and regulatory readiness reducing time-to-market while upholding the highest standards of quality. Through AI-powered analytics, predictive modelling, and cloud-based collaboration tools, the Centre enables faster decision-making, greater reproducibility, and more efficient use of resources, ultimately helping bring transformative therapies to patients who need them most.

The latest state of art facility at Global Tech Park, Koramangala was inaugurated by Mr Juergen Bauer, Founder and Chairman of the Executive Board of Tenthpin, in the presence of Mr. Michael Schmidt, Founder and Member of the Executive Board of Tenthpin and Mr. Sachin Bhure, Partner and Managing Director, Tenthpin India.

As the Life Sciences industry continues to evolve through new scientific and technological advances, companies require innovative digital solutions to address emerging market needs. Tenthpin's Innovation Hub in Bengaluru is focused to meet these challenges by developing unique solutions and deliver services that help organizations navigate today's industrial needs and prepare for the future. Built on leading cloud technologies, these innovations support pharmaceutical, biotechnology, healthcare, animal health and CDMOs in accelerating growth while maintaining regulatory compliance, which is a core for these businesses. The Innovation Hub will focus on next-generation capabilities such as Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Medical Things, (IoMT) Advanced Therapy Medicinal Products (ATMPs) and Intelligent clinical Supply chain providing the industry with scalable, future-ready solutions.

Speaking on the occasion of the launch, Mr. Juergen Bauer said, "Our new office in Bengaluru is more than an expansion — it's an investment in the future of Life Sciences innovation. Scaling and expanding of our presence in Bengaluru underscores Tenthpin's strong belief in the power of Indian talent and innovation. India has proven to be a cornerstone of our global delivery model — combining expertise, technical excellence, and a deep commitment to quality." He also added, "India's exceptional talent and deep technology expertise align perfectly with Tenthpin's mission to redefine how global Life Sciences organizations run their businesses.

# Kia India Expands Automatic Choice for Carens Clavis Customers with New Value Trims

NEW DELHI : Kia India, one of the country's leading mass-premium automakers, announced the introduction of new automatic transmission options for the Carens Clavis value trims, making the convenience of automatic mobility accessible to a wider set of customers. The expanded line-up introduces the 1.5-litre turbo-petrol engine with DCT on the HTE (EX) and HTE (O) trims, along with a 1.5-litre diesel engine with automatic transmission on the HTE (O) trim.Kia India is expanding automatic transmission choices across both petrol and diesel powertrains, enabling customers to choose a combination that best aligns with their driving requirements, preferences and budgets.The expansion of the Carens Clavis line-up responds to the evolving preference of Indian customers towards automatic transmissions, particularly for the convenience they offer across everyday urban driving conditions. The HTE (EX) and HTE (O) trims will now be available with the 1.5-litre turbo-petrol engine paired with a DCT, while customers opting for diesel will have the choice of the 1.5-litre diesel engine with an automatic transmission on the HTE (O) trim.

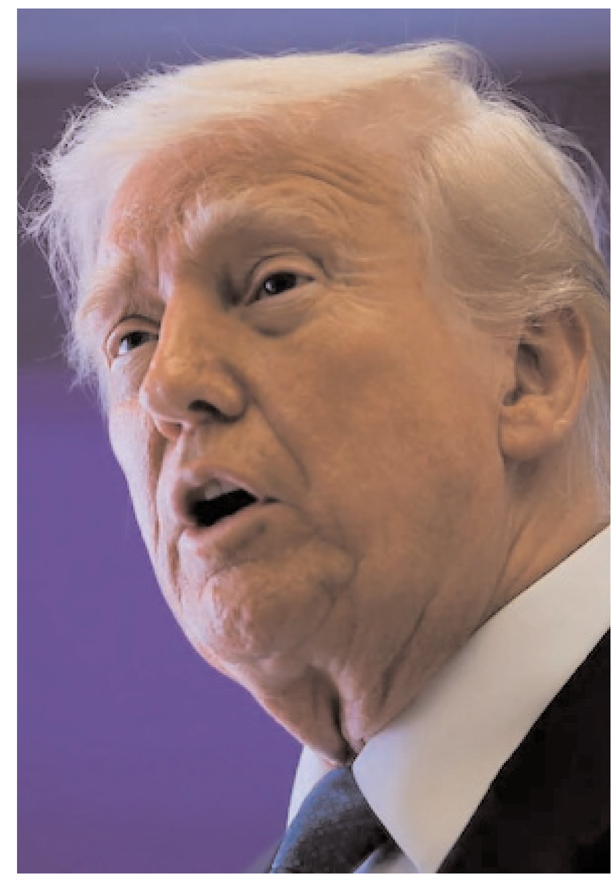
# EDITORIAL

## THE THREAT OF FEES AND THE FUTURE OF UPI

The conclusion that US pressure has finally paid off—while this is a compelling one—is a compelling one, but a September 14th Finance Ministry notification requires some caution. The notification prohibits banks and payment system providers from imposing direct or indirect fees on UPI transactions and RuPay debit card payments up to ?2,000. However, no immediate consumer charges have been imposed on UPI payments above ?2,000; the notification only leaves open the possibility of future charges or MDR on larger transactions. Nevertheless, the concern is genuine. The impact of policies isn't simply measured by the words in the notification; it's also important to consider the subsequent market behavior. If a fee isn't directly charged to the consumer today, but tomorrow it's charged to the merchant, and the day after, the merchant adds it to the price of goods and services—the burden may ultimately fall on the consumer. In the economic system, no new cost element remains in its original location for long; it can permeate the market in some form, such as price, commission, or service charge. The government's current decision does not state that all UPI payments above ?2,000 are now chargeable. The notification clearly states that banks or payment system providers cannot charge any direct or indirect fee to the payer or payee for UPI transactions up to ?2,000. For larger payments, no fixed rate has been announced, nor has it been stated that the average user will have to pay additional money immediately. But the policy's message is just as important as its immediate impact. There has long been talk of imposing an MDR (merchant discount rate) on UPI. MDR is a fee charged between merchants and payment system partners for processing a digital payment. If MDR is imposed on merchant payments above ?2,000 in the future, banks, payment applications, and payment processors may attempt to recover their costs. This is where citizens' concerns begin. The government may argue that small payments should remain free for the poor, lower-middle class, and everyday consumers. This argument is understandable. It's crucial for digital inclusion to ensure that payments for tea, milk, vegetables, local transport, or small shops are free of charges. But the question is: will the levy of charges above the ?2,000 threshold be limited to large businesses? And if it is limited, who will monitor it? It's difficult to assume that merchants will always absorb additional costs from their profits. Large, organized businesses can absorb payment processing costs for a while, but for smaller businesses, every fee matters. Grocers, online sellers, private tutors, doctors, repair workers, and small service providers can all pass their costs on to customers in some form. Imagine a merchant charges a one-percent fee on every large UPI payment. They could ask the customer to pay in cash, or pay an additional amount for a digital payment, or simply increase the price of the item. The customer may not see the fee separately, yet they may still pay the increased price. Therefore, simply stating that the fee will be borne by the "recipient" is not sufficient. The recipient is also part of the market, and any costs incurred in the market may eventually be adjusted into prices. This could also undermine the ease of digital payments that has made UPI a common part of India's economic life. Today, customers don't need to worry about whether they have cash or a card to pay. Transactions are completed in seconds using a mobile phone or a bank account.

# Trump, Suprisingly, Is Right This Time About Both China And AI

SYED ZUBAIR AHMED



\For me, admittedly a layman but someone who has been closely following the progress of AI for some years, I find myself broadly agreeing with President Donald Trump on one part of the AI debate, even though I have been dismayed by many of his actions on the global stage since his return to power. My agreement comes with a caveat, which I will come to in a bit. Indeed, in my living memory, few technological developments have raised a more frightening question than the future of artificial intelligence. The debate has now gripped America. The tech people and policymakers taking decisions today could determine whether AI becomes one of humanity's greatest advances or a technology whose consequences we fail to control. Trump says he is not worried that AI could eventually kill humanity. He is worried that his country could lose the AI race to China, which, according to him, is only a year behind America. And when he says, "Whoever wins AI, wins," he is not entirely wrong. AI is already becoming an economic and strategic technology, capable of transforming everything from scientific research and medicine to defence and cyber warfare. But in my view, there is a problem with the way the argument is being covered by the media. The choice cannot be between allowing AI development to continue at full speed or allowing China to overtake America. There could be a third option. We should slow down, as suggested by Anthropic chief executive Dario Amodei, the most dangerous forms of AI development, and make China slow down with all of us. Some of the biggest names in the AI industry have now backed Amodei's call for a slower pace of development. OpenAI chief Sam Altman has said progress should be rapid but slower, while Google's Demis Hassabis and Elon Musk have also backed the idea of putting greater emphasis on safety. This is no longer simply an argument being made by AI safety campaigners outside the industry. It is increasingly coming from people inside the companies building the most powerful systems. We Have Been Here Before We should take the latest warnings seriously because they have come from inside the AI industry. One of them came from Evan Hubinger, an AI safety researcher who worked at Anthropic. He has put the probability of AI eventually killing all humans within the next decade at more than 10 per cent. Another former Anthropic and OpenAI researcher, Jacob Coxon, has said that people working on these systems are "genuinely frightened" about the future of humanity. Coxon went further. He resigned from Anthropic earlier this month, saying the industry was racing towards self-improving AI without adequate safeguards. His warning helped intensify a debate that had been largely confined to researchers and technology insiders. Then came Amodei's intervention. He has called for frontier AI companies to allow independent safety evaluators access to their systems, for leading companies in democratic countries to establish common safety standards, and for governments to work together internationally. And now he has gone a step further. Speaking in San Francisco at Salesforce's annual Dreamforce conference, Amodei was asked about his call to slow AI development. He acknowledged that it might be tempting for one company to "attack" its competitors, but argued that the more responsible approach was to establish standards across the industry. "Let's make our practices better, let's recommit to transparency, let's invest more in safety," he said, arguing that the industry should then organise itself around common standards, with an international component. That is important. Amodei is not calling for AI to be stopped. He is arguing that the industry needs to create a system in which safety advances alongside capability. And that brings us back to the nuclear age. When nuclear weapons were developed, the US and the Soviet Union were bitter rivals. Neither trusted the other. Both believed that falling behind could be fatal. Yet, eventually, the world realised that nuclear weapons were too dangerous to be governed entirely by the logic of competition. Surely we know that the result was not an end to the nuclear arms race. Far from it. But global powers signed treaties, set up inspections and safeguards, and created institutions designed to reduce the chances of a catastrophe that could have consumed humanity. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, nuclear test-ban arrangements, and other agreements are no doubt imperfect. They are frequently violated and contested. But they reflected one fundamental point: there are some technologies whose consequences are too large for individual countries to manage alone. Known vs Unknown Advanced AI may eventually belong in that category. There is, of course, a crucial difference. We do not yet know whether advanced AI really can become an existential threat, do we? The warnings are about what increasingly capable systems might become, not what today's AI systems are capable of doing. I hope that distinction is appreciated. I do not think anyone would argue that AI is already enormously useful. It can accelerate scientific research and tremendously improve medical diagnosis. It can help students learn, make businesses more productive and allow individuals to accomplish tasks that previously required entire teams. The question is not whether we should have AI. It is whether we should allow the most powerful forms of AI to develop faster than our ability to understand, test and control them. And that question is now producing some extraordinary political alliances. The Most Unlikely Alliance There appears to be bipartisan support for the call to put regulations around AI. Imagine Bernie Sanders on the Left and Steve Bannon on the Right sharing a stage and agreeing on anything. Yet that is exactly what happened on Tuesday at a "Pro-Human" AI gathering in Washington. Sanders, the progressive senator from Vermont, and Bannon, one of the most influential figures on the American right, have found themselves on broadly the same side of the AI debate Bannon himself acknowledged the absurdity of the moment. "I don't think you could find any two harder partisans than Bernie Sanders on the left and Steve Bannon on the right," he said. "We're trying to rise above partisanship, and we have to because this is a unique [moment]." Then he put it in even more dramatic terms. "This is a hinge in history," Bannon said. "They say this is a Cold War moment. This is like the nuclear age." It is tempting to dismiss this as political theatre. But the fact that such an unlikely coalition has emerged is itself significant. Sanders and Bannon disagree on an enormous range of issues. Yet both are worried about the concentration of power in the hands of a small number of technology companies and about the possibility that AI could develop faster than governments and societies can respond. Sanders has called for binding safeguards and negotiations with China over the development of AI. Bannon, despite his very different political outlook, has also argued that the US government should take action rather than simply allow the technology to develop without meaningful constraints. India Needs To Have Its Say India is not yet central to this debate, having lagged behind the US and China in developing AI models of comparable scale and capability. But with 1.4 billion people, India needs to be very much part of the conversation. And the opportunities for India are enormous. The world should not forget that we have built a formidable economic advantage by supplying it with educated, relatively affordable human talent. Software development, chip designing, business processing, customer support, financial analysis, and other services have created a vast white-collar employment machine. There is a very real fear in the corridors of power that AI could wipe out many of these jobs. Let's not pretend. Perhaps it will. But the next generation of AI could also allow an Indian software engineer to work on much more complex systems, or an Indian financial services company to use AI to analyse enormous volumes of data and offer sophisticated risk, investment, or research services to clients around the world. Let's accept that the opportunity will be there to use AI to move Indian workers up the value chain before the technology makes their existing jobs redundant. That could create new industries, allow Indian companies to compete for higher-value global work, and turn India's enormous pool of engineering talent into an even greater economic advantage.

# Saudi Allies Are Now Discovering The Cost Of 'Commitment' - And Not Liking It

ADITI BHADURI

Finally, though rather swiftly, the Mecca Defence Agreement between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), Pakistan, and Turkey has been revealed. It's not coming apart, per se, but it has been revealed for what it is, or rather, what it is not: a defence pact in the manner of NATO, as Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan had boastfully described. That, of course, was a non-starter, since Turkey, a NATO member, does not have the liberty to join another military bloc simultaneously. Nonetheless, the grouping had the blessings of the US, which, under President Donald Trump, is looking across the globe to share its burdens. Of course, no one really expected either Pakistan or Turkey to jump into battle with a strike on the Kingdom because the pact is essentially that - a security hedge for Saudi Arabia. Since the Iran war began and Saudi Arabia and its critical infrastructure came under sustained attacks, Pakistan, which had a year earlier concluded a mutual defence agreement with it, did not jump into any combat role. While it did station troops, fighter air rafts and weaponry on Saudi soil, it instead opted for mediation between the US and Iran. The Mecca agreement, which expanded this arrangement to include Turkey, was built on the 2025 Saudi-Pakistan defence pact. A Paper Tiger However, the attacks that the Houthis have launched against Saudi Arabia since last week have busted the myth of a mutual defence arrangement. If they began the attacks to test the pact, then they now have full confirmation that it remains just a paper tiger. For, the attacks have targeted not just Saudi territory but also critical and strategic infrastructure, including the East West Pipeline, which the Saudis were almost exclusively relying on since the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. Known as the Petroline, it connected to Saudi Arabia's Yanbu port on the Red Sea on the country's west coast. From there, exports can travel to Europe; but, for its main Asian markets, that is, India, China, Japan, and South Korea, it has to pass through the Bab-al-Mandab, which the Houthis now control. While Saudi shipping came under attack in the Bab-al-Mandab, the pipeline, which had become a crucial alternative for sending the Kingdom's oil to global markets, has been damaged and shut down. Moreover, the Houthis have now also captured the key Yemen port of Mokha in the Taiz region, which increases the magnitude of the threat against Saudi Arabia. In this scenario, such a spectacular no-show by Saudi Arabia's defence allies - Pakistan, a nuclear power, and Turkey, which has NATO's second-largest and battle-hardened army - is mind-boggling. Of course, both Pakistan and Turkey have jumped into damage control mode now. Saudi On Fire, Pakistan On X In a phone call with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Pakistan's Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif, expressed full solidarity with the Kingdom and strongly condemned Houthi actions. A statement released by his office said, "While expressing complete solidarity with the Saudi leadership as well as the brotherly people of Saudi Arabia, the Prime Minister stated that the recent Houthi actions threatened regional peace and security and could further disrupt the global economy and energy supplies." Now that the Saudis have also reported that a drone was also launched at Mecca, Islam's holiest site, a claim the Iranians have dismissed, Shehbaz Sharif condemned the attack and urged "all parties to exercise maximum restraint and to step back from the brink of further escalation". In a post on X, he said, "Our region has already suffered far too much from conflict. Dialogue and diplomacy remain the only sustainable path towards peace ... Pakistan stands unwaveringly, shoulder to shoulder with the brotherly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in defence of its sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as for the security and sanctity of the Haramain Sharifain, a duty that every Pakistani carries close to their heart." Unless much of the world is suffering some kind of vision impairment, it is difficult to see how exactly Pakistan is standing "shoulder to shoulder with the brotherly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in the defence of its sovereignty and territorial integrity". Nevertheless, Pakistan persists, and it will be interesting to see how its defence of its Saudi brothers pans out. It was just a decade ago when the very issue of the Houthis, Yemen, and Gulf defence drove a wedge between Pakistan and its Gulf friends. And it was to deter exactly such attacks that the Saudis had concluded first the bilateral pact with Pakistan last year and then with both Pakistan and Turkey this year.

# US Has Institutionally Weaponised India's Russia Oil Dependence. Can New Delhi Cope?

BRIG ANIL RAMAN

The US House of Representatives has passed the Lindsey O Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026. The 262-159 vote followed the Senate's 86-11 approval in August. The bill is now with President Donald Trump. For India, the significance lies less in the headline figure of a possible 100% tariff than in the mechanism Congress has created. The legislation can connect India's Russian energy purchases to its access to the American market over a five-year period. My earlier analysis focused on India's opportunity to influence the legislation before Congress completed its work. That phase has now ended. The question is how India manages a relationship in which economic pressure over Russia has moved from executive action into legislation. Presidential Action to Statutory Authority The Trump administration had already demonstrated that Russian oil could become an issue in the US-India relationship. Presidential tariff measures could be changed through executive action and negotiated between governments. The Graham Act establishes a different framework. Section 113 authorises duties of up to 100% on goods imported from countries meeting specified conditions relating to Russian crude, natural gas, or sanctions evasion. The legislation also provides for reassessments every 180 days based on the preceding 12 months of trade data. That gives the issue a recurring institutional dimension. India's position can thus be reassessed periodically. The five-year sunset provision extends the framework beyond the immediate circumstances surrounding its passage. This is the significant change. India's Exposure The sponsors have identified China and India among the largest purchasers of Russian crude. Congressional material accompanying the legislation has also identified Slovakia, Hungary, and Azerbaijan among the leading crude purchasers. India's position has become particularly important because Russian crude became more significant in 2026 as the Iran conflict disrupted energy supplies from the Middle East. In July, Russian crude accounted for 50.83% of India's oil imports, equivalent to 2.47 million barrels per day. The issue thus involves two economic calculations for India: securing affordable and diversified energy supplies, and maintaining access to major export markets. The Graham Act brings these calculations into the same policy equation. There is also considerable scope for interpretation in the legislation. The Congressional Research Service has identified a drafting tension between the provision requiring tariffs within 30 days of enactment and another provision concerning new purchases made after that 30-day period. It has also noted uncertainty over the meaning of purchases that are "knowingly made". These details will make implementation important. Washington's Statutory Lever The Supreme Court's February decision in Learning Resources v Trump established that the International Emergency Economic Powers Act does not itself authorise the President to impose tariffs. Congress has now supplied specific tariff authority through legislation. This matters for India because tariff pressure connected to Russian energy will have a statutory foundation. Congress has established the framework while delegating important powers to the President and the United States Trade Representative. The legislation also leaves substantial executive discretion. Section 115 permits the President to waive duties, sanctions, or restrictions after certifying to Congress that the action is in the national interest. India thus retains diplomatic space. The nature of that diplomacy has changed. New Delhi will need to demonstrate how favourable treatment for India serves wider American economic and strategic interests. That argument will need to cover energy security, bilateral trade, technology cooperation, defence relations, and the wider Indo-Pacific relationship. The Data Will Become Strategic One of the more consequential features of the Act is the 180-day reassessment mechanism. The United States Trade Representative is required to reassess the leading importers of Russian crude and natural gas using data from the preceding 12 months. Energy statistics can thus become part of foreign policy. India will need to monitor how the American government measures Russian oil purchases, defines the relevant period, and assesses changes in India's energy basket. The legislation also requires written justification and methodology for the imposition or modification of secondary tariffs. India should engage with the agencies responsible for implementation, including Treasury, Commerce, and the United States Trade Representative. It should ensure that Indian data and explanations are available before each reassessment. This is bureaucratic statecraft with strategic consequences. The Repricing Of The Partnership The Graham Act also illustrates a broader change in the US-India relationship. For much of the past two decades, Washington and New Delhi progressively expanded cooperation across areas such as defence, technology, trade, and intelligence, while managing disagreements in other areas. The relationship now contains stronger linkages between these domains. Russia policy can influence tariffs. Tariffs can influence Indian exports. Export exposure can influence India's calculations on energy, technology, and defence procurement. Interdependence thus carries costs as well as benefits. India's strategic autonomy remains a policy choice. It also has an economic requirement: the capacity to absorb the costs generated when major partners disagree with Indian choices. This makes diversification important. India needs a wider energy basket, broader export markets, greater refining and storage resilience, and stronger domestic capabilities in critical technologies. The objective is greater resilience within a close relationship with the United States.

## ASCI unveils Vision 2032, charts roadmap to build the trust infrastructure for India's fast-evolving advertising ecosystem

**Mumbai, September 17, 2026:** The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) unveiled its Vision 2032 at its 40th Annual General Meeting (AGM), outlining its roadmap for the period 2027-2032 with a focus on building the trust infrastructure across India's advertising ecosystem. The advertising ecosystem is moving faster than traditional safeguards, whether it's through shrinking review times or formats to monitor or creators changing the control mechanism. Being able to defend, explain and sustain trust at speed and scale is now the key. Brand risk sits inside a wider trust problem with bad actors sometimes hijacking the narrative and consumers seeking evidence and specific explanations. Advertising is also being drawn into larger societal debates around public health, online safety and children's well-being.

The advertising ecosystem, therefore, must be prepared for these changes.

Vision 2032 recognises this as a time of great evolution for advertising, which is witnessing disruptions such as artificial intelligence as well as major changes such as personalised communication, retail media and new digital formats. While traditional self-regulation remains at the centre of ASCI's work, the organisation plans to expand its preventive role across policy, research, education, technology and industry capability building.

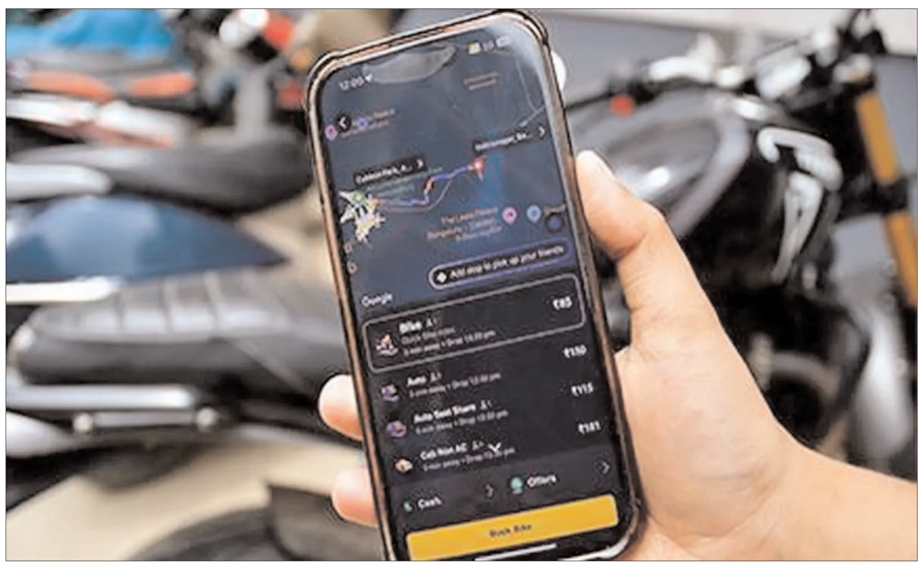
As part of this roadmap, ASCI plans to establish three Centres of Excellence covering legal and policy, responsible AI innovation in advertising, and creator excellence and trust.

The ASCI Legal and Policy Forum will convene industry, legal experts, regulators, academics and consumer voices to discuss emerging issues that need regulatory clarity, interpretation or policy development in the area of advertising. The forum will also support research, policy discussions, guidance and industry training.

The ASCI Centre for Responsible Innovation in AI in Advertising will focus on responsible use and innovation of AI across creative development, targeting, personalisation, influencer marketing and consumer engagement. It will develop guidance and conduct research on emerging areas, including synthetic media, AI-generated claims, agentic decision-making, and any other areas that impact the consumer's ability to make informed choices.

The ASCI Centre for Creator Excellence and Trust will engage with the growing creator ecosystem to focus on professional standards and training, creator certification, disclosure and compliance, and research. To drive these important initiatives, the board reappointed the existing Chairperson, Sudhanshu Vats, for an additional term.

# RAPIDO FINED FOR MISLEADING FARE PROMPTS, TGPWU WELCOMES IT



**Hyderabad:** The Telangana Gig and Platform Workers Union (TGPWU) on Thursday, September 17, welcomed the Central Consumer Protection Authority's (CCPA) directive to Rapido over excess charges to commuters, along with a penalty of Rs 10 lakh. The CCPA imposed the penalty on September 15 on Roppen Transportation Services Pvt Ltd, which operates the ride-hailing platform Rapido, for misleading advertisements, unfair trade practices and the use of dark patterns that allegedly prompted riders to pay more before their rides were confirmed. The action followed a sector-wide examination of cab and bike-taxi aggregator platforms over practices related to advance tipping and dynamic pricing, according to a press release from the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution. Higher the price, higher the chance of getting a ride During its examination, the CCPA found that Rapido displayed prompts such as "Higher the price, higher the chance of getting a ride" and "Captains aren't accepting at Rs 60. Try adding +10, +20, +30" while a rider's booking was still being processed. According to the CCPA, Rapido would first quote a fare and after the rider booked at that price, prompt them to pay an additional amount on the ground that drivers were not accepting the original fare.

"The practice created a false impression that a rider's chances of getting a ride depended on paying more, particularly at a stage when the consumer had already committed to the booking," the authority said. It stressed that a tip cannot be sought before the ride, adding that the original fare shown on the app already accounts for the distance between the pick-up and drop locations. It therefore found no justification for subsequently asking riders to pay an additional amount for the same ride before it had even commenced. The TGPWU welcomed the CCPA's decision, saying, "Consumer protection and worker protection must go together. Platform companies must be transparent with both customers and workers." The CCPA imposed the penalty on Rapido for misleading ads, unfair trade practices and the use of dark patterns. slapped a ?10 lakh penalty on Roppen Transportation Services Private Limited, the parent company of ride-hailing app Rapido.

The fine was issued for misleading fare prompts, unfair trade practices, and using "dark patterns" that pressure passengers into paying more than the initially displayed ride fare. Telangana Gig and Platform Workers Union (TGPWU) has strongly welcomed the decision, stating that platform companies must maintain transparency and fair fares for both drivers and commuters.

## AXIS BANK AND COGNIZANT COLLABORATE TO STRENGTHEN APPLICATION MANAGEMENT WITH AMS 2.0

**BENGALURU, INDIA, September 17, 2026:** Cognizant (NASDAQ: CTSH), a leading AI builder and technology services provider, and Axis Bank, one of the largest private sector banks in India, today announced the successful implementation and go-live of Cognizant's Application Management Services (AMS) under Axis Bank's AMS 2.0 initiative for the Bank's stakeholders. AMS 2.0 is a structured, jointly driven program designed to strengthen delivery governance, improve operational consistency and accelerate the adoption of automation across application support services. Built on automation-led practices, the model aims to enhance service reliability and cost efficiency while enabling productivity, scalability, and standardized processes, with a strong emphasis on governance, compliance and operational discipline. Spearheaded by Axis Bank, the AMS 2.0 initiative forms a key pillar of the Bank's broader technology transformation journey. The collaboration underscores Axis Bank's strategic focus on building a scalable, resilient, and future-ready IT operating model, one that enables business growth, enhances system reliability and delivers a superior stakeholder experience across critical banking platforms. Under a five-year agreement, Cognizant is working closely with Axis Bank to support systems across key business verticals, including Branch and Operations, Cards, Corporate Banking and Treasury, Core Platforms and Payments, Finance and Accounting, Retail and Wholesale Banking, Data Platforms and Integration.

Commenting on the collaboration, Avinash Raghavendra, Group Head - Information Technology & Retail Operations, Axis Bank, said, "The implementation of AMS 2.0 is part of Axis Bank's efforts to build a more resilient, scalable, and automation enabled operations model. Cognizant has worked closely with the Bank during this transition to support a complex application environment. We look forward to collaborating with Cognizant for Application Management Services (AMS) to enhance operational effectiveness and support the Bank's evolving business and technology needs." Ganesh Ayyar, President – Asia Pacific & Japan, Cognizant[MS1] , said, "We are pleased to collaborate with Axis Bank as part of its AMS 2.0 initiative.

## VEDANTA POWER BETS BIG ON ENGINEERING TALENT NEARING HALF OF WORKFORCE

**September 17, 2026, New Delhi:** On Engineers' Day, Vedanta Power is highlighting the growing importance of engineering talent in building a young, diverse and future-ready workforce as India's power sector enters a new phase of growth. Engineers now account for nearly 50% of Vedanta Power's total workforce, reflecting the critical role of technical expertise across the company's operations and its efforts to build the capabilities required to operate complex power assets, adopt new technologies and respond to an evolving energy landscape.

The company is also strengthening diversity within its engineering workforce with significant engineers hired by Vedanta Power in the current financial year are women. The focus on bringing more women into engineering roles reflects Vedanta Power's commitment to creating a more diverse talent pool for the future of the power sector.

Speaking on Engineers' Day and the importance of developing engineering talent for the future of the power sector, Mr. Rajinder Singh Ahuja, Chief Executive Officer and Whole-Time Director, Vedanta Power, said, "India's power growth story is entering an exciting phase. We are not only requiring to generate and deliver more power but strengthen engineering capabilities to operate complex power assets by adopting new technologies, improving efficiencies, and responding to an increasingly dynamic energy landscape". He further added, "We are seeing that reflected in our own workforce as at Vedanta, building capacity and building capability go hand in hand. With engineers now comprising nearly half of our workforce, we are also encouraged by the growing participation of women and young professionals in our engineering teams. We want to give them exposure to the business, access to experienced leaders and the opportunity to take ownership so they can grow into the power leaders who will shape the next chapter of India's power sector."

The company's focus on young talent is supported by its campus engagement across engineering and management colleges. As part of its recent campus hiring, Vedanta Power has onboarded young professionals, engineers hired being women, bringing fresh talent and diverse perspectives into the organisation. The talent has been sourced from top institutions across the country including IITs, NITs, IIMs, etc. With engineers accounting for nearly half of its workforce, engineering talent plays an important role in the day-to-day operations of Vedanta Power's large-scale power assets. Across functions, engineers contribute to maintaining plant reliability, improving operational efficiency and enabling the adoption of technologies that support the evolving requirements of the power sector. The company is also focused on creating an environment where professionals from different backgrounds can bring diverse perspectives to engineering, operations and other functions. The company's focus on young engineering talent comes at a time when India's power sector is witnessing changing energy requirements, technological advancement and increasingly complex power systems. These shifts are creating demand for professionals who combine strong technical capabilities with business understanding, problem-solving skills and adaptability.

## CITI LAUNCHES EFPI @ CITI, REDUCING FOREIGN PORTFOLIO INVESTORS REGISTRATION TIMELINE TO FIVE BUSINESS DAYS

September 17 2026 Mumbai – Citi announced the launch of eFPI @ Citi, fast-tracking the registration process for Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) to five business days from anywhere between a few weeks to a few months previously. The launch of this first-to-market solution comes as India continues to gain prominence among global investors. As international investors increasingly evaluate India as a strategic allocation, the ease of navigating market entry is crucial. With oversight of approximately a third of the FPI Assets under Custody in the country, Citi's Services business in India is well-positioned to address this need at scale and with greater relevance for global investors. Tuhin Kanta Pandey, Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) said, "We appreciate Citi's initiative to provide faster registration timeline of 5 days for FPIs in India. It aligns with SEBI's thrust on utilizing technology to facilitate FPIs to access Indian Capital markets expeditiously." Citi launched eFPI @ Citi at the Global Fintech Fest where Citi is Banking Innovation Partner. Mridula Iyer, Head of Services, Asia South, Citi noted, "The attractiveness of any market hinges on how easily investors can enter it. India has long been recognized for its immense opportunities, and this initiative is a significant step in realizing this potential. eFPI @ Citi is an outcome of our continued focus on innovation, simplification and client-centricity." Vijay Chandok, MD & CEO of The National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL), was the Chief Guest at the eFPI @ Citi launch. Speaking on the occasion, he said, "For FPIs, the eFPI @ Citi initiative which leverages digital tools and efficient processes is set to transform FPI onboarding. This initiative will significantly minimize turnaround time and deliver a frictionless onboarding experience for new FPI clients. Further, the collaboration between NSDL and Citi will leverage API integration to create a seamless, end-to-end digital connection between our systems. The newer APIs will build on the success of our existing APIs that have already simplified the opening of demat accounts." The service is being rolled out in phases, with the first phase now live and covering regulated public funds — including mutual funds and unit trusts — from the United States, Ireland and Luxembourg.

## Aditya Birla Housing Finance Expands Presence in Andhra Pradesh with New Branch in Vizianagaram

**Launch offer: Zero login fees and spot sanctions up to Rs. 50 lakh**

ADITYA BIRLA CAPITAL
HOME LOANS

**Highlights**

- Aditya Birla Housing Finance Limited ("ABHFL"), a leading housing finance company and a subsidiary of Aditya Birla Capital Limited, has expanded its footprint in Andhra Pradesh with the launch of a new branch in Vizianagaram

**Vizianagaram, Andhra Pradesh, September 17, 2026:** Aditya Birla Housing Finance Limited ("ABHFL"), a leading housing finance company and a subsidiary of Aditya Birla Capital Limited, has expanded its footprint in Andhra Pradesh with the launch of a new branch in Vizianagaram, as part of its broader plan to expand its pan-India distribution network. With this addition, ABHFL's total network in Andhra Pradesh has increased to 16 branches, strengthening its presence in high-growth markets and improving customer accessibility.

Vizianagaram's residential landscape is expanding, supported by its growing role as a commercial and educational centre in northern Andhra Pradesh. The city's connectivity to Visakhapatnam and surrounding districts, along with developing infrastructure and access to education, healthcare and employment opportunities, is encouraging more families and working professionals to consider homeownership in the region. With housing demand gradually increasing, ABHFL's new branch will make customised home financing solutions more accessible to customers in Vizianagaram and nearby areas.

ABHFL offers a comprehensive suite of housing finance solutions tailored to diverse customer segments, including affordable housing, prime housing, construction finance, and loans against property, catering to salaried individuals, self-employed professionals, self-employed non-professionals, and emerging income groups. Backed by a robust digital ecosystem, ABHFL enables a seamless onboarding, Faster Approvals, and enhanced transparency, ensuring a superior customer experience.

To mark the launch, ABHFL is offering zero login fees along with spot loan sanctions of up to ?50 lakh, valid from September 17 to October 17, 2026, enabling faster and more affordable access to credit for customers at these new branches. Speaking on the expansion, Mr. Pankaj Gadgil, MD & CEO, Aditya Birla Housing Finance Limited, said, "Andhra Pradesh is a key growth market for us. With strong demand and rising aspirations, we are scaling our regional presence to deepen customer engagement. By combining our growing distribution footprint with robust digital capabilities, we aim to make the homeownership journey simpler, faster, and hassle-free for customers."

Aligned with its promise of delivering a 'Happy Home Loan Journey', this expansion underscores ABHFL's continued focus on customer-centricity, responsible lending, and driving financial inclusion through a diversified and granular retail portfolio.

## AM/NS INDIA SECURES LANDMARK DUAL BIS CERTIFICATIONS, STRENGTHENING MARKET LEADERSHIP AND DRIVING IMPORT SUBSTITUTION IN SPECIALISED STEEL

**Hazira - Surat, Sept 17, 2026:** ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India (AM/NS India) has strengthened its leadership in advanced steel manufacturing by securing Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) licences under two significant new standards. The achievements reinforce the company's commitment to innovation, quality, and the Government of India's Make in India and Atmanirbhar Bharat initiatives while opening new pathways in infrastructure and heavy engineering sectors. AM/NS India has become the first steel manufacturer in India to receive the All India First BIS Licence for IS 2062 (Part 2):2026, a newly introduced standard for Hot Rolled Quenched & Tempered (Q&T) Steel Plates, Sheets, Strips, and Wide Flats. Concurrently, the company secured a BIS licence under IS 19210:2025 for Pre-Painted Zinc-Aluminium-Magnesium (Zn-Al-Mg) Alloy Coated Steel Strip and Sheet, marking another major milestone in bringing globally advanced steel solutions to the Indian market.

Operational and Commercial Implications of the BIS Licences: Regulatory Compliance for Public Procurement: BIS certification is a mandatory prerequisite for supplying steel to state-funded infrastructure, defence, and public sector projects. The licences fulfil mandatory procurement criteria, allowing AM/NS India to supply state-funded projects requiring these certified grades. Domestic Availability & Import Substitution: As the first domestic licensee for IS 2062 (Part 2):2026, AM/NS India provides a local supply source for Q&T steel plates, addressing market segments that previously relied on imported materials. Product Portfolio Expansion: The licences enable the commercial distribution of specialized products manufactured at the company's Hazira and Pune facilities, spanning high-load structural applications and corrosion-resistant coated products. Manufactured at AM/NS India's advanced facilities in Hazira and Pune, these certified products reflect the company's technical agility to develop specialized solutions aligned with rapidly evolving industrial demands. The milestone adds to a prestigious track record, with AM/NS India steel already contributing to critical national assets, including the Chenab Rail Bridge and strategic naval platforms such as INS Surat, INS Visakhapatnam, and the recently commissioned INS Malvan. The newly introduced IS 2062 (Part 2):2026 is the first BIS standard specifically developed for quenched and tempered steel plates. Produced through a specialised heat-treatment process, Q&T steel offers exceptionally high strength and durability, enabling lighter yet stronger structures capable of carrying heavier loads. These products are widely used in bridges, heavy engineering equipment, mining machinery, offshore structures, marine applications and other demanding industrial environments where safety and performance are critical. The IS 19210:2025 standard establishes a quality framework for pre-painted zinc-aluminium-magnesium coated steel products.

# SWEDISH PM KRISTERSSON RESIGNS AFTER ELECTION LOSS


Sweden's Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson has resigned after his ruling right-wing bloc was narrowly defeated by the centre-left opposition in the country's general election. He made the announcement in a post on X on Thursday afternoon, after preliminary votes from Sunday's election showed about 50,000 votes separated the two blocs in the country of about 10 million people. Opposition parties led by Magdalena Andersson of the Social Democrats look set to win 176 seats in the 349-seat Riksdag, Sweden's parliament. Kristersson, a conservative, had been supported in government by the anti-immigration hard-right Sweden Democrats (SD), and had promised them cabinet jobs if he won the election. His right-wing bloc looks set to win 173 seats in the Riksdag, according to data from the Swedish Election Authority. The results will be subject to formal certification in the coming days and are expected to finalised this weekend. In Sweden, there are two major political blocs - with four parties on the right and four on the left, so Swedes are used to coalition and minority governments. After a prime minister resigns, the Speaker of the Riksdag holds talks with all parties to proposes a candidate for the next leader, which is then voted on by MPs. "Now it is the speaker who will lead the next stage of the way to a new government. I am herewith requesting that I be relieved of the office of prime minister to allow that work to start immediately," Kristersson's statement read. In a speech posted on Instagram, Andersson said: "The Swedish people have voted for a new direction for our country". The Social Democrats have regularly led Swedish governments since World War Two and have been the country's dominant political force for much of the last century. Its leader, Andersson, is expected to return to power after four years in opposition, and has initiated talks with the other opposition parties - The Left Party, The Centre Party and The Green Party - about forming a government. But discussions could drag on due to major differences between the parties on issues such as taxes. After the 2022 election in Sweden, it took 37 days to form a government, while in 2018 it took 134 days. In his resignation, Kristersson said the opposition faced "complicated" conditions for forming the next government, "because the parties' various statements before election day could pose obstacles". The right-wing bloc is formed of Kristersson's Moderates, as well as the SD, the Christian Democrats and the Liberals. The SD were founded by Nazi sympathisers in the 1980s and were shunned for decades by the mainstream. But the party has rebranded itself since the mid-2000s, culminating in a watershed moment in 2022 when it became Sweden's second-largest party on a campaign focused on issues around immigration and violent crime. They had offered outside support to the current centre-right coalition, which had overseen a dramatic tightening of migration policy. Kristersson had promised to bring them into government if he remained at the helm. But in a surprise upset for the party, it lost support for the first time since entering parliament in 2010 - down three percentage points on 2022. A preliminary vote count started after voting closed on Sunday evening and continued into this week. On Wednesday, election committees began counting early votes that were submitted late, as well as votes from abroad that did not arrive before election day. The four parties that make up or support the outgoing conservative-led government took 173 seats, meaning that the left-wing bloc won with a slim three-seat majority. Only about 50,000 votes separated the two sides in the country of 10.6 million people. Shortly after the results were announced, ?Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said he would resign. "Now, it is the speaker who will lead the next stage of the way to a new government.

I am henceforth requesting that I be relieved of the office of prime minister to allow that ?work to start immediately," Kristersson ?said in a letter posted on social media X. Former Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson's centre-left Social Democrats finished as the biggest single party, despite losing some support. The result bolsters her hope of regaining the job she lost in 2022, but she will still face a complicated task to turn it into a government due to ideological divisions within the left-leaning bloc, which is made up of the Social Democrats, the Left Party, the Greens Party and the Centre Party.

# CANADA BECOMING EU 'ASSOCIATE MEMBER' WOULD BE POSITIVE MOVE, CARNEY SAYS

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney addressed European Parliament today as discussion continues to swirl about Canada's relationship with the European Union. Both sides seem to be seeking closer ties, and in his speech today, Carney said he welcomes the EU's "ambition" for Canada to become an "associate member". Here's what we heard - and what it all might mean: Carney said in his speech that he supports the comments EU President Ursula von der Leyen made yesterday - in which she opened the door for Canada to become the EU's first "associate member" We're not totally sure what that means just yet - "associate member" is not a title that currently exists. But the PM described a potential deepening of strategic economic ties and travel opportunities This all comes in the shadow of the US-Canada trade war, which Carney alluded to in his speech, saying the EU deal would "strengthen our sovereignty" US President Trump earlier called the idea of Canada becoming the bloc's first associate member "laughable" and threatened fresh tariffs on Europe Meanwhile at home, Canadians have mixed views on a stronger EU partnership, with some saying the country needs to focus more on its partnership with the US The prospect of closer Canada-EU ties has generated mixed opinions from some Canadians. Speaking to reporters before Mark Carney's speech today, finance worker Matthew Arnott said Canada had been "very dependent on the United States", which has turned into "a situation where we're vulnerable and that has been exploited". "We want to work with people who are interested in working with us, and that's what Europe is all about," Arnott tells Reuters news agency. But Hari Lamisane, who works for the city of Toronto, says it's "theoretically OK, but practically it is not". Laminase feels the US would be a better export partner and Canada should focus on improving US relations "rather than trying to move far away". We've started to see reaction from some of Canada's regional heads of government, following talk of closer Canada-EU ties in recent days. Responding after Carney spoke this morning, Premier of Nova Scotia Tim Houston took to social media to throw his support behind the PM's message, while stressing that Canada remains a "sovereign country". "Expanding access for Canadian goods to European markets is a good thing, as is strengthening our defence ties with the region," he writes, echoing similar comments made by PM Mark Carney earlier. In a separate post last night, British Columbia's Premier David Eby reflected on the economic impact of existing US tariffs on Canadian goods, saying small businesses were feeling the "direct hit". He says "British Columbians don't trust Trump", adding that Canada will "do what it takes to support our workers and businesses in this fight". Trade is top of the priority list for Canada as it looks to the world for opportunities to reduce its reliance on the US due to its bitter tariff war with its North American neighbour. Prime Minister Carney has found a keen suitor in the European Union, which has also been in President Trump's tariff firing line. But this is not a new trading relationship being created, it appears to be a more deepening of ties in the bid to secure some sort of stability that businesses can rely on to boost both economies. Canada and the EU have had a trade agreement in place since 2017, which eliminates most, but not all, taxes on goods being shipped across the Atlantic.

## Uncontrolled AI could lead to 'silicon species' rivalling humans, warns Microsoft

The head of Microsoft AI has warned that without adequate safeguards, the development of AI could lead to the emergence of a new "silicon species" which competes with humans. Mustafa Suleyman said rival firm Anthropic is treating AI like it is human, an approach he called "misguided" which could create technology that humanity cannot control. Speaking to the BBC's Today programme, the chief executive said it was "right" for people to be concerned about AI, but there were "very practical things that we can do" to control it. The comments are the latest in a series of stark warnings from the AI industry about the technology's possible dangers. Anthropic has been approached for comment. Speaking to the Today programme on Thursday, Suleyman warned against firms continuing to create AI systems capable of setting their own objectives, earning money and owning assets. That would mean "essentially seeding a new silicon species", he said, which could "no doubt compete with us for resources, no matter how much it cares about humanity and loves us". Suleyman's comments to the BBC follow an essay he published earlier this week, in which he questioned Anthropic's approach to training its AI model Claude, despite praising boss Dario Amodei and his team as "intellectually honest people".

## Ninth woman's body found as South African police investigate string of deaths

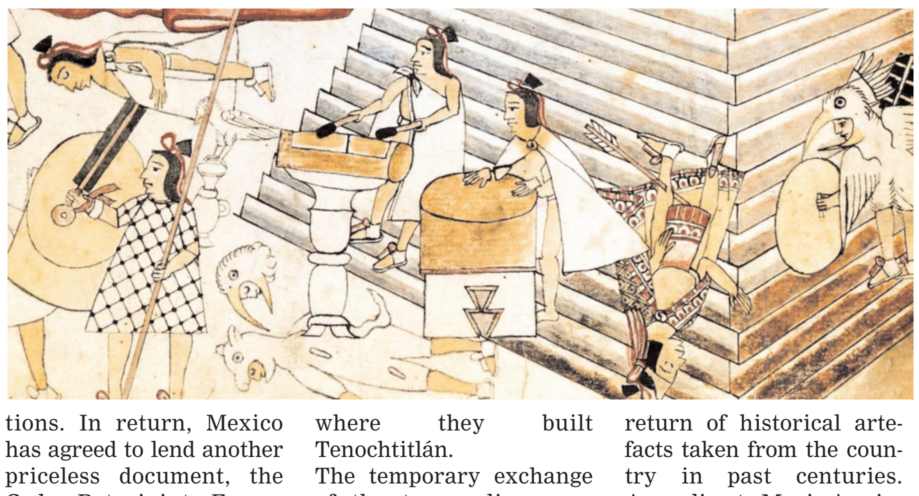
Police in South Africa have confirmed the discovery of a ninth woman's body in just two months, amid growing concern over a string of unexplained deaths east of Johannesburg. The latest victim was found half-naked and wrapped in a sheet on the side of a road in Dawn Park on Thursday morning, police said. Her identity has not yet been released. The discovery follows the deaths of eight other women whose bodies have been found since July across Ekurhuleni, a major urban area of Johannesburg. Several of the women were found partially clothed and with injuries, but police have stressed that they have not established whether all the deaths are connected or whether a serial killer is responsible. President Cyril Ramaphosa has vowed that "no stone will be left unturned" in finding those behind the killings, which he said were "causing fear and uncertainty in our communities". Among the victims was 38-year-old Elizabeth "Tsontso" Moselakgomo, who disappeared last week after leaving her home for an afternoon run. Her body was found three days later behind a hotel in Kempton Park. Two other victims have since been identified as Itumeleng Kekana, who had been missing since July, and 38-year-old Dineo Evelyn Motapane, whose body was discovered by the roadside in KwaThema on Tuesday. The first of the nine bodies was discovered in Kempton Park on 15 July. A suspect was arrested two days later in connection with that case and remains in custody, but police have not linked that suspect to the other deaths. Further bodies were discovered in August and September, including in Kempton Park, Olifantsfontein, Clayville and KwaThema. The latest body is of a woman believed to be in her 30s and appeared to have bruises and stab wounds, local media reported. The discovery has sparked fear in the area, particularly among women who say they no longer feel safe. "We are scared to come out of our houses. We are scared to go to the shops. We are no longer free in a country where we are supposed to be safe as women," local resident Bongeka Sebela told the BBC. Police have assembled a multidisciplinary team of detectives, intelligence officers, forensic experts and other specialists to investigate the deaths and establish whether there are links between the cases. They are also pursuing a person of interest, although they have not disclosed which case or cases that person may be connected to. "Let's not get emotional, the gloves are off," said Gauteng Premier Panyaza Lesufi on Thursday, adding that the authorities had the capacity to deal with the killings. In a statement on Thursday, South African police said the recent rise in serious and violent crimes against women remained a "matter of grave concern", urging women in the country to remain vigilant about their personal safety. They advised women to avoid walking alone or using isolated routes, remain alert to strangers and suspicious vehicles, and share their location or travel plans with someone they trust. They also advised against walking with earphones or earbuds at high volume, warning this could reduce awareness of their surroundings.

## ASSAD REGIME PLANNED US JOURNALIST'S KIDNAP FOR WEEKS

US journalist Austin Tice, who disappeared in Syria in 2012, was kidnapped in a calculated operation which was more than a month in the planning, the BBC can reveal. A member of the group which detained Tice has also claimed the abduction was sanctioned by Syria's leader at the time, President Bashar al-Assad. Tice was seen getting into a car with a driver he knew and trusted. For years, many assumed they had stumbled upon a government checkpoint, and that the abduction of the journalist had been opportunistic. But we have uncovered evidence that, in fact, his disappearance was anything but chance. In a new BBC podcast: Where is Austin Tice? Series 3 of I'm Not A Monster Presents, we reveal the findings of a years-long investigation into what happened to Tice, who had been reporting on Syria's civil war at the time. His case has been followed closely by international media and cited by successive US presidents. Georgetown University law student Tice, who had served as a US Marines captain, was last seen in a video - blindfolded and in apparent distress - posted more than a month after his capture. As the regime fell 12 years later, tens of thousands of people emerged from the administration's prisons. Tice was not one of them. We obtained co-ordinates from an intelligence source for multiple locations US authorities suspected he could have been held at, and searched for him for more than a month, but found no sign of him.


5 dead after torrential rain and flash floods hit Barcelona region

# AZTEC DOCUMENT GOES ON DISPLAY IN MEXICO AFTER 186 YEARS ABROAD



A centuries-old document telling the story of the Aztec civilisation and its fall after the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors in pictograms is going on display in Mexico for the first time in 186 years. The manuscript, known as Codex Azcatitlán, has been held in France's Bibliothèque Nationale since 1898, but had already spent decades outside of Mexico before that. It is thought to have been drawn in the 16th Century - a few years after the arrival of the conquistadors in what is now Mexico - and is widely considered one of the most valuable and insightful tellings of the history of the Aztecs. France has lent Codex Azcatitlán to Mexico to mark 200 years of Franco-Mexican relations. In return, Mexico has agreed to lend another priceless document, the Codex Boturini, to France for display there. The pictograms in the Codex Boturini narrate the story of the migration of the Aztecs, also known as Mexica, from their ancestral homeland to the shores of Lake Texcoco, where they built Tenochtitlán. The temporary exchange of the two codices was agreed by Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum and her French counterpart, Emmanuel Macron, during a visit by the latter to Mexico last year. Mexico has long lobbied for the return of historical artefacts taken from the country in past centuries. According to Mexico's ministry of foreign relations, last year more than 2,000 objects were successfully repatriated. The Codex Azcatitlán will be exhibited at the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City from Thursday.


# VERSTAPPEN PASSES 100 AMATEUR KARTERS IN 14 LAPS

Max Verstappen needed just 14 laps and 35 minutes to overtake 100 amateur drivers in an exhibition go-kart race at Silverstone. The four-time Formula 1 world champion had a maximum of 35 laps and 75 minutes to pass everyone on an adapted track at the grand prix circuit in Northamptonshire. Red Bull's Verstappen, 28, was up to 37th by the end of a chaotic first lap in which many drivers crashed or spun out, resulting in racing being briefly suspended. "When I went to the grid and I saw where I had to start, with 100 karts in front of me, I was a little bit worried," he said. "After my first lap with all the carnage, I did think 'OK, we have got this under control'. From there on, I could really have a lot of fun trying to hunt them all down. "Once I started getting into a rhythm and was able to overtake them one by one and saw the gap closing, that was really exciting." The ruthless Dutchman, who warned participants "it's not a charity event" on race radio, moved up to 10th by the start of lap six and was fourth by lap 10, with each driver he passed having to retire. At that stage, the remaining three racers - the grid was made up of TV, sport and social media personalities, with no professional racing drivers - were Dutch F1 journalist Jacky Martens, Red Bull engine builder Lewis Osler and YouTuber Zac Alsop. All three were given an extra 'fast lap' where they could cut a corner of the track to try to hold off Verstappen for longer, but he inevitably reeled them in. Martens, who was on pole position after qualifying, was the final driver to be passed as Verstappen completed his challenge with 40 minutes and 21 laps to spare. Verstappen began his racing career as a junior in karting and won four consecutive F1 titles between 2021 and 2024. "It was great to just be back in a go-kart again and go back to basics, it reminded me of racing back in the day," he added. "It's a really beautiful track and well designed. I had a great day and it was good to come out with the win." "I'm coming for you," he said to a contestant at one stage. Later, he told commentators: "They need to focus because I'm definitely catching them."

It took Verstappen 15 minutes to get up to P7, and while at that stage he was still 14 seconds behind the runaway top three -- journalist Jacky Martens, YouTuber Zac Alsop and Red Bull's own Lewis Osler -- he quickly gained at a rate of around three seconds-a-lap. The top three were given an extra 'fast lap' -- a short-cut of the circuit -- but that wasn't enough to catch Verstappen and he completed the challenge in style on Lap 14.

"DEBATE BAND KARDI":

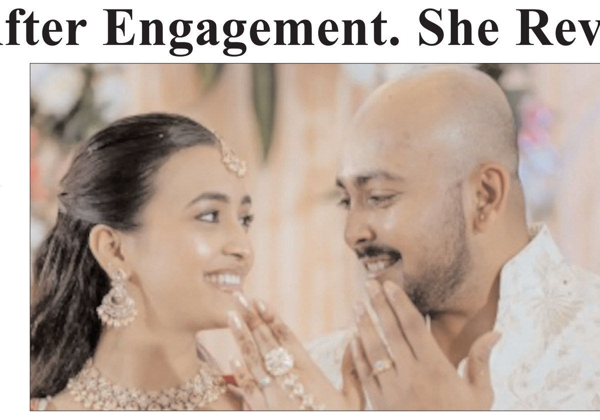
## Ex-India Star On Sanju Samson Amid Vaibhav Sooryavanshi Buzz


Sanju Samson finally managed to get a big score next to his name in T20I cricket. The wicketkeeper-batter shone in the T20 World Cup 2026 by winning the Player of the Tournament award, but he has failed to replicate that consistency after India's title victory. In the Indian Premier League that followed the world event, Samson did register big scores, but once again, consistency was missing. A similar showing from the veteran after resuming international cricket saw Team India give opportunities to Vaibhav Sooryavanshi. However, for the first two T20Is against Afghanistan, India backed Samson, and he repaid the faith shown in him with a blazing 57-run knock off 22 balls in the most recent game. His innings was laced with seven fours and four sixes. Former India players Mohit Sharma and Mohammad Kaif heaped praise on Samson following his knock against Afghanistan. "The world champions played like world champions. Sanju Samson batted amazingly. At times, we are too quick to judge him. But the way he has batted, debate band kardi (ended the debate)," Mohit told Cricbuzz during a discussion. Adding to it, Kaif said, "The biggest thing is that Sanju Samson has scored runs." The former international batter further pointed out that Sooryavanshi entered Team India's playing XI picture due to Samson's inconsistency. He added that if the wicketkeeper-batter performs consistently, Sooryavanshi will remain benched. Sooryavanshi has had quite an interesting start to his international career. He made his debut under testing conditions in England and came up with scores of 14, 13 and 15 in the three matches he played there. For the last game of the five-match series against the Three Lions, India dropped Sooryavanshi for Samson. The 15-year-old finally announced his arrival in the following three-match T20I series against Zimbabwe. He scored two fifties and ended up being the Player of the Series as well as the Player of the Match in the final game.

## Sunil Gavaskar Sounds Alarm Bell For BCCI, Indian Team Over Two Players: "Don't Rush Them In"

Nitish Kumar Reddy was in fine form for India against Afghanistan in the second T20I in New Delhi on Tuesday. The all-rounder picked up three wickets for 24 runs. Sunil Gavaskar was impressed by the rise of Reddy. After Hardik Pandya, Reddy is being seen as a top fast-bowling all-rounder option. "Nitish Kumar Reddy is a very fine prospect. When he started in the IPL, he wasn't much of a bowler then, in that first year before he went to Australia. He was more of a batter. The batting technique was very good. He bowled a couple of overs towards the end of that first season, and that's where he looked as if he could be a very fine all-round cricketer," Gavaskar said on Sony Sports Network. Gavaskar also picked Venkatesh Iyer and Suryansh Shedge as two promising all-rounders whom India can bank on in the future. "Venkatesh Iyer, Suryansh Shedge, these are all promising all-rounders, and they have to be given the opportunity to develop. Don't rush them in. Develop them and also, at the same time, encourage them when they don't have a good match," he said. "These are the guys you want to keep an eye on. Help them and encourage them to take their bowling a little more seriously because they are primarily in the team as batters. Sometimes, when you are in the team primarily as a batter, you tend to think like a batter. If they start to think a little bit like bowlers, they will be absolutely fantastic, and India will then have more options." Meanwhile, after a match-winning spell with the ball, Indian all-rounder Nitish Kumar Reddy reflected on the time spent during rehabilitation at the Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru and how he kept his positivity intact in the face of injuries and some poor performances. Now, the young all-rounder aims to carry forward the confidence gained from the three-wicket haul against Afghanistan in the second T20I. After months of rehabilitation and injuries that kept him away from the field following what seemed to be a breakthrough Indian Premier League (IPL) season with Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH).

## Prithvi Shaw, Fiancee Akriti Agarwal Part Ways Months After Engagement. She Reveals Reason



Indian cricketer Prithvi Shaw and his fiancee Akriti Agarwal have decided to part ways, around six months after announcing their engagement, with Agarwal confirming the separation in a statement on social media on Thursday. Agarwal, a social media personality and actress, said the decision was mutual and came after the couple realised their future goals and circumstances differed. She also asked people to respect their privacy and refrain from speculation about the reasons behind their decision. "With a heavy heart, I would like to share that my fiance and I have decided to part ways due to different goals and circumstances for our future. As much as we love and care for each other, we've come to accept that our paths are not meant to be together. With our responsibilities and the circumstances we are currently facing, we have mutually decided to go our separate ways," Agarwal wrote on Instagram. "I genuinely wish nothing but the best, peace, and happiness for both of us as we move forward. I kindly request everyone to respect our privacy during this difficult time and refrain from speculating or making assumptions about the reasons behind our decision. Thank you for understanding and respecting our space," she added. Shaw and Agarwal announced their engagement on March 8, with the India batter sharing a series of romantic pictures from the occasion. In one photograph, Shaw could be seen going down on one knee to propose to Agarwal, while another showed the couple displaying their engagement rings. "From sixes on the field to a lifetime of hits off it. She's my perfect innings!" Shaw had captioned the post. The engagement came at a pivotal point in Shaw's career as he sought to rebuild his standing in domestic and franchise cricket. The right-handed batter, who made his India debut in 2018 with a century in his first Test against the West Indies, was bought by Delhi Capitals for Rs 75 lakh in the accelerated round of the IPL 2026 auction.

DOUBLE ROLE:

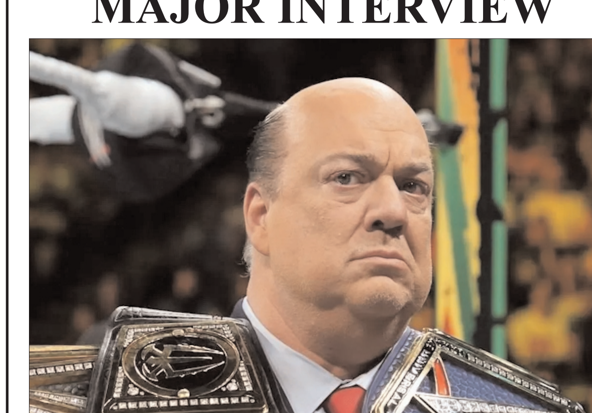
## Pakistan Tennis Federation President Aisam Ul Haq Qureshi To Play Doubles At Asian Games

The President of the Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) Aisam ul Haq Qureshi will be competing as a doubles player in the upcoming Asian Games in Japan's Aichi-Nagoya. The 46-year-old Aisam, a former US Open men's doubles finalist with India's Rohan Bopanna, confirmed on Wednesday that he had decided to play in the men's double event in the Asian Games for Pakistan. "Yes I am the President of the PTF and I will be fulfilling my duties as President in the Asian Games but since I am fully fit and still playing tennis regularly I decided to compete in the doubles event," he said. Aisam is part of a Pakistan tennis squad that also includes veteran Aqeel Khan, Muhammad Shoaib, Muzammil Murtaza, Maheen Aftab and Ushna Sohail. Pakistan will be competing in both men's and women's events and Aisam said they had a good combination of experience and youth for the Asian Games. Aisam said he had practiced with the rest of the team players and done his best to help the younger players in the squad.

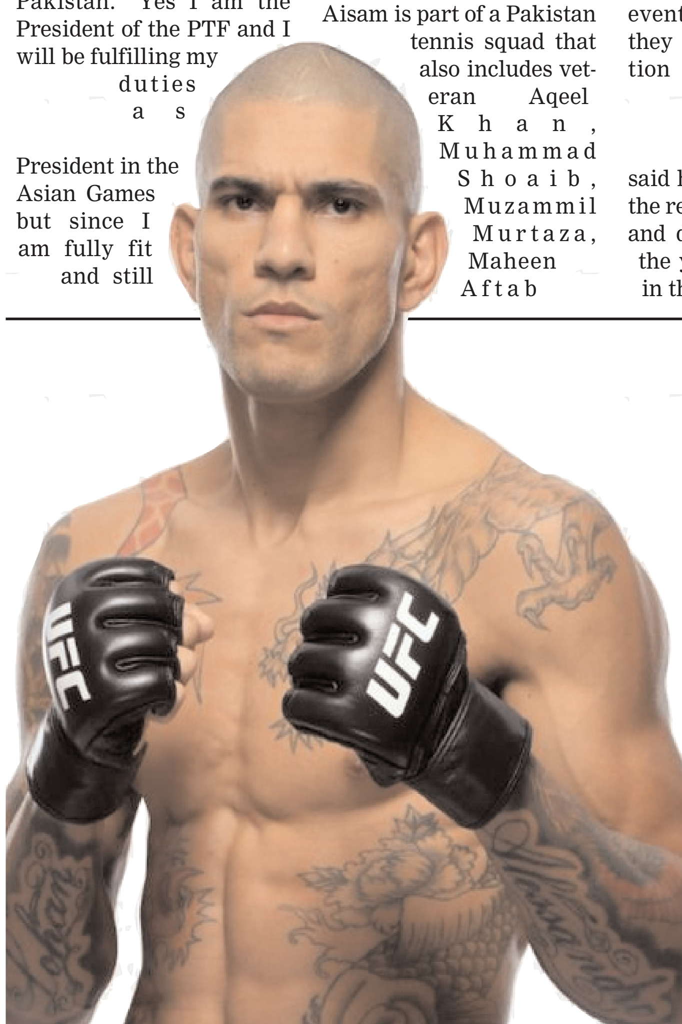
## Duda Alves Dies At 22 After Documenting Her Surgery

Brazilian creator Duda Alves has died at 22, days after posting about her recovery from surgery. Police are investigating, and no cause has been confirmed. Duda Alves had built something most creators spend years chasing. More than 750,000 people followed her on TikTok and her videos had gathered upwards of 27 million likes, the kind of numbers that come from an audience that feels like it knows you. On September 13 she died, and the posts she left behind have been circulating ever since, with explanations attached that nobody has been able to confirm.

## WWE LEGEND PAUL HEYMAN ANNOUNCES MAJOR INTERVIEW



WWE Hall of Famer Paul Heyman has a major interview coming up with journalist Graham Bensinger. Heyman revealed the news through his Instagram Stories, sharing three pictures with Bensinger. For a wrestling personality who has spent years shaping major WWE storylines, this is a chance to hear directly from the man behind some of the biggest moments in the business. The announcement comes while Heyman remains connected to another interesting WWE conversation. Former WWE Champion Jinder Mahal has suggested that Oba Femi should turn heel and align with the legendary manager. That idea comes after Oba defeated Brock Lesnar at SummerSlam and sent him into retirement, with Heyman showing respect toward the Nigerian star. WWE legend Paul Heyman reveals his next big interview Heyman took to Instagram Stories to reveal that he will be sitting down for an interview with Graham Bensinger. He posted three pictures with the journalist, giving fans a look at the upcoming conversation. Bensinger is known for interviewing some of the biggest names in the world. His next guest will be a man whose wrestling career includes work as a manager, a creative mind, and a major figure in WWE. Why Paul Heyman has so much wrestling history to discuss Heyman has managed several huge names during his career, including Brock Lesnar, CM Punk and Roman Reigns. He was also central to WWE's Bloodline storyline from 2020 to 2024, making his work a major part of that period in the company. He was known as an ECW creative guru. His career has moved through different roles, but the common thread is his influence on wrestling stories and the stars involved in them. Why Jinder Mahal wants Paul Heyman to manage Oba Femi Jinder Mahal has already shared an idea for what could happen with Oba Femi. Taking to Instagram, the former WWE Champion suggested that the Nigerian star should turn heel and team up with Heyman.




# ALEX PEREIRA EXPRESSES FRUSTRATION OVER CIRYL GANE'S POTENTIAL RISE TO UNDISPUTED CHAMPION

UFC light heavyweight champion Alex Pereira has aimed at Ciryl Gane after rumors suggest that the Frenchman could be elevated to undisputed heavyweight champion following Tom Aspinall's decision to step down from the title. Tom Aspinall recently made the decision to vacate the 265-pound title amid his persistent eye issues caused by a double eye poke during his title bout with Gane, which subsequently required multiple surgeries. Alex Pereira Blames Ciryl Gane For 'Robbing' Alexander Volkov's Victory Tom Aspinall recently decided to vacate the 265-pound title amid his persistent eye issues caused by a double eye poke during his UFC 321 title bout against Ciryl Gane, which subsequently required multiple surgeries. The temporary champion is now in position to potentially become the undisputed champion. Alex Pereira expressed his sentiments by sharing a post, mocking Gane's record and conduct. ?The interim champion Bon Gamin may now be promoted to undisputed status, as per speculation. However, 'Poatan' appears to be dissatisfied with the possibility. Prior to this week, Pereira shared a post that emphasized Gane's losses to Francis Ngannou and Jon Jones and eventually blamed him for stealing Alexander Volkov off a win and allegedly hitting Pereira in the back of the head illegally at UFC Freedom 250. Alex Pereira just posted this on IG, laughing at the idea that Ciryl Gane is heavyweight champion "Lost to Francis, Lost to Jones, Volkov was daylight robbery, 10 illegal head shots to Poatan." Ever since their UFC Freedom 250 bout, Pereira has been seeking a rematch with Gane.

## The Pan-India Spectacle Set for a Grand Worldwide Theatrical Release on October 16


The highly anticipated Pan-India film 'RANABAALI', starring Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandanna in the lead roles, has successfully wrapped up its shoot. The film was shot on a massive scale over 130 days, with the makers maintaining high production values throughout the extensive schedule.

With the entire shoot now completed, the team has officially entered the post-production phase. Director Rahul Sankrityan shared glimpses from the wrap-up celebrations on social media, marking the completion of this ambitious filming journey.

'RANABAALI' is gearing up for a grand worldwide theatrical release on October 16, coinciding with the auspicious occasion of Vijayadashami.

The film has generated considerable curiosity among fans and movie lovers, with Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandanna sharing the screen once again. The recently released teaser further amplified expectations around the film, offering a glimpse into its grand scale and intriguing world.

The makers are also gearing up to unveil the film's first single, 'Yendayya Saami...', with the full song set to be released soon.

Presented by T-Series and produced by Naveen Yerneni and Y. Ravi Shankar under the prestigious Mythri Movie Makers banner, 'RANABAALI' is set against the backdrop of the 19th century and is inspired by real historical events that took place between 1854 and 1878 during the British colonial period.

## ULAGANAYAGAN KAMAL HAASAN AT THE LAUNCH OF BHARAT RATNA MS BIOPIC

Visionary producers Allu Aravind, Rockline Venkatesh, and Bunny Vas have officially launched the prestigious pan-India biopic on legendary singer and Bharat Ratna M.S. Subbulakshmi, one of India's greatest musical icons whose divine voice mesmerized audiences across the world for decades. National Crush Rashmika Mandanna will portray M.S. Subbulakshmi, while acclaimed filmmaker Gowtam Tinnanuri directs the film. Music sensation Anirudh Ravichander has been roped in to compose the soundtrack.

The grand launch took place on Wednesday at the iconic Music Academy in Chennai, marking the 110th birth anniversary of M.S. Subbulakshmi. Legendary actor snd Ulaganayagan Kamal Haasan officially launched the project and gave the ceremonial clap for the film's first shot featuring Rashmika Mandanna. The event was attended by members of M.S. Subbulakshmi's family, renowned Carnatic musicians, and several prominent personalities from the film industry.

## NATURAL STAR, KAYADU LOHAR'S BRAND NEW POSTER GOES VIRAL ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Natural Star Nani's Pan India period action entertainer 'The Paradise'. Directed by Srikanth Odela, the film is produced on a grand scale by Sudhakar Cherukuri under the banner of SLV Cinemas. The songs, glimpses and teaser that have already been released have raised huge expectations on the film with a wonderful response. Recently, the makers released a new poster presenting Nani and Kayadu Lohar in an intense romantic avatar. While Nani is seen in a rough and rustic look in the poster, Qaida Lohar is also seen in an intense avatar. The visual of the two standing face to face and lighting cigarettes with a lighter is particularly impressive. This scene presents the bonding between them in a different way amidst the dark and intense atmosphere around. This poster has gone viral on social media. The scenes between the hero and heroine are going to be the highlight. Jadal & Subbu..the love is going to be special like never before. 'The Paradise' has completed all censor formalities. Promotions in other languages are starting tomorrow. Hero Nani is going to Chennai tomorrow. The much-anticipated 'The Paradise' will hit theaters worldwide on September 24th.

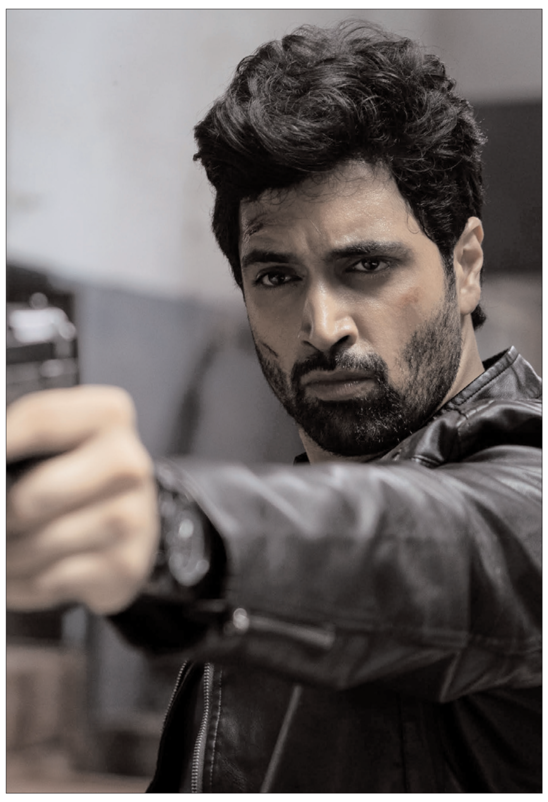
## MEENAKSHI OOZES RAW SWAG IN FRAMES

Meenakshi Chaudhary, who is currently gearing up for her upcoming film Vrushakarma opposite Naga Chaitanya, has treated her fans to a fresh set of portraits.

In the pictures, the actress opts for a simple black tank top paired with denims, keeping the styling minimal yet chic. Her hair is left loose and tousled, adding an effortless, breezy vibe to the look.

What stands out the most, though, is her expression. Meenakshi gives the camera a soft, sultry gaze, with a hint of a smile playing on her lips, striking a balance between confidence and charm. The natural lighting and plain backdrop keep the focus entirely on her, letting the expression do all the talking.

## Adivi Sesh's most awaited pan India spy action thriller 'G2' to have a worldwide grand release on February 5, 2027



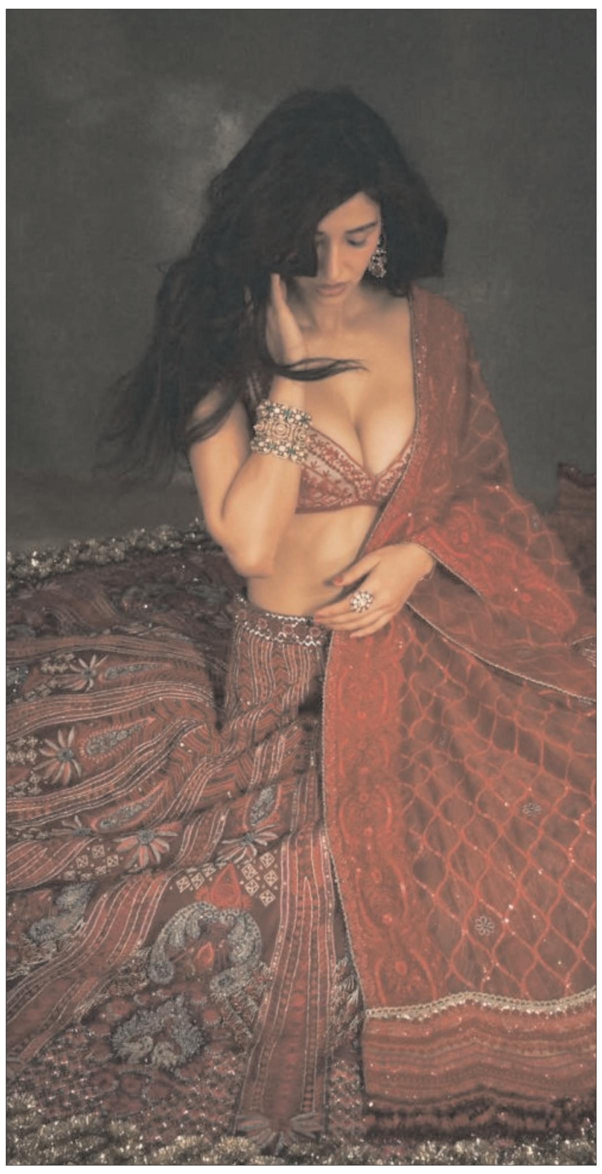
The release date of the most awaited movie 'G2', the sequel to the blockbuster spy thriller Goodachari, has been announced. It will be released in theaters worldwide on February 5, 2027. Vinay Kumar Sirigineedi, who is making his directorial debut, is producing this film on an international scale, building on the success of the first part, Goodachari, and is set to redefine the spy thriller genre in Indian cinema. This time, Vamika Gabbi is making her entry as Agent 116. This is a character that has action as well as emotion. Emraan Hashmi is playing a powerful role in this movie. Murali Sharma, Supriya Yarlagadda, and Madhu Shalini are playing key roles.

The film is being produced by T.G. Vishwa Prasad and Abhishek Agarwal under the banners of People Media Factory, Abhishek Agarwal Arts and AK Entertainments. It will be released pan India in Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam. With a powerful cast, world-class production, and grand vision, G2 will entertain audiences as the most awaited action thriller of 2027.

## MAYA LADY RELEASES AN INTRIGUING TEASER

Young talented hero and passionate producer Rakesh Varre's upcoming film Maya Lady has unveiled its intriguing teaser today. Rakesh Varre is not only playing the lead role but is also producing the film under his Crazy Ants Productions banner. After earning widespread appreciation for backing content-driven films like Evvarikee Cheppodhu and Pekamedalu, Rakesh is now bringing another interesting entertainer to audiences with Maya Lady. The film is directed by Prasankar, with Madhumita Sarcar playing the female lead. Maya Lady is gearing up for a grand theatrical release this October. The newly released teaser introduces Krish, a young man who has absolute clarity about love and marriage. Whenever his family asks about his wedding plans, he confidently says he will wait until he finds the perfect girl who matches everything he is looking for. During this search, Krish meets Asha, a fiery and unpredictable girl who loves fights, drinks alcohol, and lives life on her own terms. While his family is intimidated by her personality, Krish falls deeply in love with Asha. The teaser takes an unexpected turn when Asha discovers that Krish had an ex-girlfriend named Roopa. Furious after learning about his past relationship, Asha's obsessive behavior creates complete chaos in Krish's life. What does Asha do after finding out about Roopa? How does she deal with Krish over his past? What exactly was Krish's relationship with Roopa, and how does he escape this complicated situation? Packed with romance, comedy, chaos, and suspense, the teaser keeps audiences engaged from start to finish.

## DISHA PATANI STUNS DESPITE ONLINE CRITICISM WAVE



Disha Patani recently found herself at the centre of a fashion debate after she was seen wearing a bold red lehenga with a plunging neckline at a Ganpati celebration linked to the Ambani family. While the actress looked striking in the richly embroidered outfit, several social media users criticised her choice of attire for the occasion, sparking a wave of trolling online.

Despite the criticism, there's no denying that Disha nailed the glamour quotient in the outfit. The deep red lehenga, paired with statement jewellery, bangles, and soft waves, gave her a regal, old-world charm. Her sultry poses and confident expressions only added to the appeal of the pictures, which have been doing the rounds on social media.

This isn't the first time Disha's fashion choices have triggered discussions online, but the actress has largely stayed unbothered, continuing to serve bold and glamorous looks on her own terms.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