



BUZZ POINTS

Daggubati Purandeshwari Inaugurates Sri Chaitanya Zonal Sports Meet

Nannayya University Receives Only ₹12 Crore in Education Budget, Sparking

Grand Celebration of Parvati-Parameshwara Kalyanam at Dhone Temple



TTD Releases Tirumala Srivari May 2026 Darshan and Seva Quota Schedule



Bill Gates Applauds AP's RTGS Services



Amaravati, Feb 16 | TPN Bureau

Bill Gates on Monday praised the Andhra Pradesh government's Real Time Governance Society (RTGS) for its extensive use of technology in delivering public services, health initiatives, and agricultural support, calling the model a significant example of digital governance in action.

The chairman of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation visited the RTGS centre at the Andhra Pradesh Secretariat in Amaravati, where Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu made a detailed presentation on the system's functioning. During the hour-long visit, the Chief Minister explained how RTGS integrates a data lake,

AWARE 2.0 platform, WhatsApp governance tools, the Sanjeevani health project, and capital city development monitoring.

Gates showed keen interest in the mechanism used to assess citizen satisfaction with government services and enquired about safeguards for land records. The Chief Minister said the state is using blockchain technology and QR codes to prevent tampering, which Gates appreciated as a forward-looking step.

The philanthropist also reviewed the Sanjeevani health initiative being implemented in Kuppam with support from the foundation. When informed that the state is building comprehensive digital health records using artificial intelligence, Gates commended the

effort and stressed the importance of making diagnostic services affordable for the poor. He also discussed the development of Amaravati, with the Chief Minister describing plans to build the capital as a green and blue city.

In a separate interaction with ministers and officials, Naidu said Gates' visit would accelerate the state's push toward advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and quantum computing.

Recalling their first meeting in 1997, he noted that his engagement with Gates played a role in bringing Microsoft to Hyderabad, which helped drive rapid growth in the IT sector.

Gates praised Naidu's vision, remarking that the Chief Minister is "ahead in thinking among global leaders."

He said India is at the forefront of the digital revolution and highlighted the importance of technology in improving healthcare delivery, education, agriculture, and disaster management.

He particularly lauded Andhra Pradesh's use of digital tools in farming, noting that such large-scale adoption is uncommon even in developed countries.

Describing Naidu as a long-time associate, Gates said the Chief Minister had implemented digital governance practices long before they became global priorities. The visit is expected to deepen collaboration between the state government and the foundation in health and technology-driven development initiatives.

Bill Gates Says Only Singapore's Prime Minister Was Close to Chandrababu

Amaravati, Feb 16, 2026 | TPN Bureau

During his visit to Amaravati, Bill Gates praised Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu for his visionary thinking, saying that only the former Prime Minister of Singapore shared a mindset close to Naidu's in his early years. Gates made the remarks while interacting with the Chief Minister, Deputy CM, ministers, and senior officials, highlighting Naidu's long-standing strategic approach to governance and development. Gates recalled that he first recognized Naidu's forward-looking vision decades ago, when the Chief Minister emphasized the importance of building a strong technology ecosystem in the state. He noted that at that time, very few global leaders shared such innovative ideas for integrating technology with governance and public ser-

vice delivery.

During the meeting, Naidu presented the state's "Swarna Andhra 2047" vision, outlining ambitious targets including economic expansion, higher per capita income, increased female workforce participation, improved literacy, and enhanced public services. He emphasized that Andhra Pradesh is focusing on innovation in health, agriculture, education, disaster management, and digital governance to empower citizens and drive sustainable development. A key discussion point was the Sanjeevani health programme in Kuppam, which uses technology and AI to maintain health records and provide affordable diagnostic services to citizens. Gates appreciated the program and also lauded the state's use of artificial intelligence in agriculture and disaster management, noting that Andhra Pradesh has ef-

fectively adopted technology in areas where even developed countries have lagged. Gates described Naidu as a "good old friend," recalling their first meeting decades ago, when Naidu persuaded him to set up a technology presence in India. He remarked on the enduring relationship and expressed optimism about future collaborations between the Gates Foundation and the state government in areas such as health, digital services, and innovation.

The visit highlighted Andhra Pradesh's growing engagement with global partners and reinforced the state's commitment to technology-led governance, positioning it as a model for sustainable development and innovation. Gates' remarks underlined Naidu's unique approach to leadership and strategic thinking, placing him among the world's forward-thinking leaders.

President Murmu to Review Major Naval Exercises Off Visakhapatnam

Visakhapatnam, Feb 16, 2026 | TPN Bureau

President of India Droupadi Murmu will arrive in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday to preside over and review one of the largest naval exercises ever conducted off the Indian coastline. The visit forms part of the International Fleet Review (IFR)-2026, hosted by the Indian Navy under the Eastern Naval Command, and includes warships and delegations from several friendly nations.

During her two-day visit, President Murmu, in her role as the Supreme Commander of India's Armed Forces, will officially inaugurate the event and observe the ceremonial assembly of naval forces. The visit will include a presidential banquet, followed by the fleet review, where she will inspect over 70

warships, submarines, and aircraft from both India and partner navies.

This year's review is particularly significant as it coincides with the MILAN-2026 multilateral naval exercise and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium Conclave of Chiefs, making it one of the largest maritime events hosted by India at a single location.

The fleet features vessels from more than 19 countries, showcasing international maritime cooperation. India's indigenous aircraft carrier, INS Vikrant, will be a key attraction, highlighting the nation's growing naval capabilities and technological advancements.

Several dignitaries will accompany the President, including the Governor of Andhra Pradesh and Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, who will participate in the



fleet review and related ceremonial functions.

The IFR aims to strengthen maritime collaboration and reinforce India's role in regional security and defence diplomacy. Alongside the naval exercises, military delegations and officers from various countries will participate in cultural and professional exchange programs, furthering international cooperation.

The review reflects India's growing maritime leadership and its ability to host large-

scale global defence engagements, positioning Visakhapatnam as a premier hub for international naval diplomacy. The successful execution of such events is expected to enhance strategic partnerships and demonstrate India's operational capabilities on the global stage. President Murmu's visit and the large-scale fleet review symbolize both the strength of the Indian Navy and India's commitment to fostering strong defence ties with nations across the world.

Telangana Minister Thummala Meets AP CM Chandrababu to Discuss Border & Shared Issues

Amaravati, Feb 16, 2026 | TPN Bureau

Telangana's Agriculture Minister Thummala Nageswara Rao met with Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu in Amaravati on Monday to discuss a range of long-standing issues between the two neighbouring states, with special focus on border concerns and cooperative development efforts. The meeting took place at the Chief Minister's residence and was attended by senior officials from both states, reflecting the importance of crossborder coordination on matters that affect communities living in adjoining districts. The discussions were cordial and focused on addressing pending concerns related to border projects and governance challenges. One of the cen-

tral topics raised by Minister Thummala was the need to resolve the status of five villages that were merged into Andhra Pradesh following the bifurcation of the old unified state but are geographically and culturally closer to Telangana. He requested that Andhra Pradesh consider a cooperative approach toward adjusting the administrative boundaries so that the villages could rejoin Telangana. In addition to the border issues, Thummala raised infrastructure priorities that have implications for both states, including improvements to rail lines such as the SattupalliKovvuru route and other rail links that would benefit the movement of people and goods across the two regions.



He also appealed for coordinated efforts on road networks in border areas, which would improve trade and mobility for local residents. Water resources and irrigation concerns were also a part of the conversation, with Thummala asking for cooperation on projects that could benefit farmers and address shared agricultural needs. The ministers discussed collaborative solutions for the Penuballi and Amaravati rail line pro-

jects, which have broader implications for regional growth and economic activities that span both Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Both leaders agreed on the importance of highlevel communication to resolve the issues through constructive dialogue and agreed to continue discussions at subsequent meetings. Minister Thummala emphasized that cooperative development, rather than unilateral action, would yield benefits for people on both sides of the border and strengthen ties between the two Telugu states. Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu responded positively, acknowledging the need to work together on shared concerns and to foster harmony between the neighbouring states through mutual respect and policy coordination.

Nara Lokesh Launches Aviation Firm in Delhi

Amaravati, Feb 16, 2026 | TPN Bureau

Andhra Pradesh Minister for Human Resources Development and Information Technology Nara Lokesh on Monday evening unveiled a new aviation services company in the national capital, signalling a bold step into India's rapidly growing aviation sector. The firm, named Charlie Foxtrot Aviation Services, was inaugurated at a ceremony in Delhi, marking the beginning of what Lokesh described as a major push to

strengthen aviation skill development in the country.

In a statement during the launch, Lokesh said the idea of establishing an aviation services company first came to him during a visit to Atlanta in the United States, where he observed advanced aviation training practices. Determined to bring similar capabilities to India, he initiated the project upon returning home, eventually formalising the company's operations in New Delhi.

The primary objective of

Charlie Foxtrot Aviation Services, according to Lokesh, is to bridge the gap between demand and supply of highly skilled professionals in the aviation industry. With Indian civil aviation continuing its rapid expansion, there is an increasing need for well-trained pilots, technicians, and support personnel. The new venture aims to provide worldclass training and skill development opportunities, helping to prepare the next generation of aviation experts. Following the formal

launch, Lokesh engaged directly with young pilot cadets in an interactive session held against the backdrop of Delhi airport. He shared insights on career opportunities in aviation and encouraged the trainees to pursue excellence, emphasising that their expertise will be crucial in shaping the future of India's aviation ecosystem. The minister described the experience of interacting with cadets as inspiring and reaffirmed his belief that such initiatives will inject fresh energy into

the sector. Lokesh expressed optimism that Charlie Foxtrot Aviation Services will not only nurture skilled professionals but also contribute to the broader growth of India's aviation sector, which is one of the fastestgrowing markets globally. By focusing on human resource development and specialised training, the new company is expected to enhance India's competitiveness and support the industry's longterm needs. The launch of Charlie Foxtrot Aviation Services reflects



Andhra Pradesh's expanding role beyond traditional governance priorities, moving into strategic sectors that intersect education, skill development, and national infrastructure growth. As the aviation industry continues to grow, initiatives like this are seen as vital contributors to building a strong talent

pipeline and supporting India's ambitions in aerospace and aeronautical excellence. Overall, the initiative was welcomed as a forwardlooking move that could stimulate further investments in aviation training and expand opportunities for young professionals aspiring to soar high in this dynamic field.

# Andhra Pradesh Tourism: From Spiritual Hubs to a Thriving Startup

Amaravati, Feb 16, 2026 | TPN Bureau

In just a few years, Andhra Pradesh has transformed from a state known primarily for its spiritual and pilgrimage sites into one of India's fastest-growing tourism destinations, earning recognition as a "successful startup" in the tourism sector. With central government support and strong leadership from Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, and Tourism Minister Kandula Durgesh, the state's tourism ecosystem has undergone a remarkable transformation. Senior

officials like Ajay Jain and Amrapali Katal have also played a key role in shaping this success story.

From Blank Canvas to Masterpiece

Andhra Pradesh has applied the essential principles of a successful startup—speed, innovation, and scalable growth—to its tourism sector. Beyond popular destinations like Tirupati and Visakhapatnam, previously lesser-known sites such as Gandikota valleys, Lambasingi snowfields, and Hope Island beaches have been developed with detailed master plans. More than 25 thematic circuits now



showcase the state as a new global tourism hotspot.

3P Model: Policy, Partnership, Process. The state govern-

ment's 3P framework—Policy, Partnership, Process—has been the

backbone of Andhra Pradesh's tourism success. The Tourism Policy 2024-29 elevated the sector to "industry status," offering GST reimbursements, real-time project tracking, investor facilitation cells, simplified procedures, and transparent land allocations. Tour operators have been positioned not just as service providers but as "storytellers" of Andhra Pradesh tourism.

The streamlined processes, single-window approvals, and fast-track project clearances have resulted in 117 projects worth 20,088 crore being signed over the last 18 months, creating em-

ployment for 1.22 lakh people. Notably, nearly one-third of India's classified hotel rooms (4,597) are now located in Andhra Pradesh, reflecting the sector's rapid expansion.

Cultural Heritage and Employment

Tourism development has also focused on cultural preservation and local livelihoods. Over 100 experience centers across the state provide employment to 20,000 artisans and weavers. Visitors now enjoy immersive experiences of tribal culture, handicrafts, and traditional arts, connecting the local community directly with tourism.

With digital platforms like Andhra Pradesh Travel Partner Registration, luxury cruises, tent cities, homestays, and eco-retreats, the state has positioned itself as India's "Experience Capital." The collaboration between government agencies and tour operators ensures sustained growth and solidifies Andhra Pradesh's standing on the global tourism map.

The state government continues to emphasize innovation, sustainability, and community participation as it moves toward its ambitious vision of becoming a world-class tourism hub.

## APOSS Releases Andhra Pradesh Open Intermediate Exam Schedule for 2026

Tirupati, Feb 16, 2026 | TPN Bureau

The Andhra Pradesh Open School Society (APOSS) has officially released the timetable for the Intermediate (Class 12) public examinations for 2026, enabling students to plan their studies and manage their preparations in advance. The exams are scheduled to begin on March 2, 2026, and will conclude on March 13, 2026. These examinations provide a platform for students outside the regular schooling system to complete their senior secondary education, offering flexibility while maintaining academic rigor. According to the schedule, all exams will be held in the morning session from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM, with clear instructions for students to report to their respective examination centres well before the start time. The timetable covers both compulsory and elective subjects offered under the APOSS curriculum, ensuring that candidates can organise their preparation in a structured manner. Following the theory exams, practical examina-



tions are scheduled to take place in April 2026. These practical assessments are integral to the overall evaluation of students' performance and are designed to test hands-on knowledge and application of concepts. Students are advised to prepare thoroughly for both theory and practical components to secure a successful outcome.

In addition to Intermediate examinations, APOSS will conduct SSC (Class 10) board exams from March 16 to March 28, 2026, ensur-

ing that students appearing for both levels can manage their schedules without conflicts. This staggered scheduling allows students to focus on one set of exams at a time, reducing stress and enhancing performance.

Once examinations are completed, APOSS is expected to announce the results in April 2026. Students who are unable to clear certain subjects or wish to improve their scores will have the opportunity to appear for supplementary exams in May 2026. This

ensures that all learners have multiple opportunities to achieve their academic goals.

The AP Open Intermediate examinations play a vital role in providing education access to non-traditional students, including working professionals, private candidates, and those who could not complete their schooling in the regular system. By releasing the timetable well in advance, APOSS gives students sufficient time to strategize and prepare effectively.

## Bill Gates Impressed by Tech at Andhra Pradesh Banana Farm

Amaravati, Feb 16, 2026 | TPN Bureau

Worldrenowned philanthropist and Microsoft cofounder Bill Gates visited an agricultural field in Undavalli on Monday as part of his ongoing visit to Andhra Pradesh, where he observed modern farming practices and expressed admiration for the way technology is being integrated into agriculture. Accompanied by Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, Gates toured a banana plantation that exemplifies the state's efforts to blend traditional farming with cutting-edge innovations. The welcome was marked by a traditional greeting, after which Gates was given a detailed tour of the farm and its technological operations.

Officials demonstrated the use of drones for spraying pesticides and monitoring crop health, a technique that boosts efficiency and reduces manual labour. Gates watched the demonstrations with keen interest, appreciating how such technologies are helping farmers man-



age their fields more effectively.

Chief Minister Naidu highlighted that Andhra Pradesh is combining its deep agricultural roots with modern tools such as artificial intelligence (AI) to offer precise guidance to farmers. He explained that data on soil patterns, crop types, and prevailing market prices are being analysed through AI systems to provide customised advisories that help farmers make informed decisions.

"This combination of tradition and technology is something we shared with Mr. Gates today," the Chief Minister said, expressing pride in farmers who are embracing innova-

The interaction underscored Andhra Pradesh's push to adopt advanced farming technologies such as drones and AI tools, which are increasingly becoming part of mainstream agricultural practices in the state. Gates' positive response highlighted the potential of these innovations to transform farming, improve farmer incomes, and serve as a model for other regions looking to integrate technology with agriculture.

Overall, his visit to the banana plantation strengthened the narrative of Andhra Pradesh as a state where technology meets tradition, driving growth, sustainability, and farmer empowerment.

## Tirumala Temple to Close on March 3 Due to Lunar Eclipse

Tirupati, Feb 16, 2026 | TPN Bureau

The renowned Tirumala Venkateswara Temple will remain closed to devotees on Tuesday, March 3, 2026, in observance of the lunar eclipse (Chandra Grahan), temple authorities announced on Monday. The closure is in accordance with traditional religious practices followed during all lunar eclipses, when special rituals are performed and temple darshan is temporarily suspended.

According to a release issued by the Tirumala Temple Devasthanams (TTD), the shrine will be shut for regular worshippers for a specified period on March 3 to allow priests to conduct prescribed rituals during the eclipse. The administration has called upon devotees planning to visit Tirumala to reorganize their travel plans accordingly, as the temple's darshan operations and seva bookings will remain suspended during the eclipse period.

The lunar eclipse is expected to be visible in parts of southern India on March 3. As per temple tradition, all idols and sacred rituals undergo special cleansing



(known as Achamana, Abhishekam, and other rites) before and after the eclipse to maintain spiritual purity. Once the eclipse phases are complete, the shrine will reopen for darshan and regular worship after the post-eclipse purification ceremonies are concluded.

TTD officials have clarified that the temple will resume normal worship activities and seva tickets will be honoured as per the revised schedule. Devotees holding advance bookings are advised to

check updates through official channels before coming to Tirumala.

The temporary closure of the Tirumala temple during eclipses is a longstanding tradition rooted in belief and ritual observance. Devotees are encouraged to follow the guidance of temple authorities, who regularly announce such closures ahead of time to avoid inconvenience. With its large footfall of pilgrims throughout the year, Tirumala is one of India's most visited religious destinations, attracting mil-

lions who come to seek the blessings of Lord Venkateswara. The TTD said it has made necessary arrangements to manage crowds and ensure convenience for pilgrims arriving before and after the eclipse period.

The temple's closure for the Chandra Grahan on March 3 is expected to be meticulously observed, with rituals scheduled to maintain religious decorum and spiritual sanctity, after which the gates will be reopened for believers and tourists alike.

## Kolusu Parthasarathy's Sharp Comments on Chandrababu and Jagan

Amaravati, Feb 16, 2026 | TPN Bureau

Andhra Pradesh Housing and Information & Public Relations Minister Kolusu Parthasarathy on Monday made pointed political remarks comparing the leadership styles of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu and former Chief Minister and YSRCP leader Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, triggering reactions across the state's political landscape.

Taking to social media, Parthasarathy posted two contrasting photographs to highlight what he described as the stark difference in the trajectory of the two leaders since the recent change of government. One of the images showed CM Chandrababu Naidu with global technology luminary Bill Gates during a high-profile meeting in Amaravati, while the other depicted Jagan Mohan Reddy leaving his home with several YSRCP leaders waiting outside.

With a dose of political satire, the minister wrote that "those who are with Chandrababu meet great personalities like Bill Gates, while those who trust Jagan are left standing outside the gates." The



post was interpreted as a criticism of Jagan's postoffice visibility compared to Naidu's engagements with global figures and dignitaries.

Parthasarathy's remarks came against the backdrop of a recent high-profile visit to Amaravati by Bill Gates, during which the Microsoft cofounder and philanthropist praised Andhra Pradesh's use of technology in governance and development. The minister underlined this as evidence of the current government's growing stature on the national and international stage, attributing it to Naidu's

leadership.

The comments also implicitly underscored political narratives about contrasting leadership styles — with Parthasarathy suggesting that Naidu's tenure attracts global attention and partnerships, whereas Jagan's tenure was represented as lacking similar visibility or influence.

Political observers noted that such comparisons often surface in the runup to future elections, as parties seek to frame the discourse around governance credentials and public perception. Supporters of the ruling coalition welcomed the minister's post, view-

ing it as a reflection of confidence in the government's performance, while opposition circles criticized it as unnecessary political banter.

Parthasarathy's remarks reflect the increasingly competitive nature of Andhra Pradesh politics, where leaders not only defend their records but also actively seek to shape narratives about leadership effectiveness, public engagement, and international recognition. The social media post has since drawn wide attention and commentary from political analysts and party workers alike.

## Vasamsetti Subash Provides Financial Assistance to Two Women in Distress

K. Gangavaram, Feb 16, 2026 | TPN Bureau

In a compassionate move, Andhra Pradesh Labour Minister Vasamsetti Subash extended financial assistance to two women from K. Gangavaram mandal in the Ramachandrapuram constituency, who were facing severe hardships following the loss of their spouses. A total of Rs. 30,000 was provided to support them during this difficult time.

One of the beneficiaries, Anjali Devi from Dangeru village, lost her husband recently and was struggling to manage her family's daily needs. Upon learning about her situation, Minister Subash promptly intervened and handed over Rs. 20,000 to her as immediate financial relief.

Similarly, Padma Rajapu, a resident of Rajavari area, Kotha Kota village, became a widow



after her husband passed away due to prolonged illness. To support her, the minister arranged Rs. 10,000 in financial aid, delivered through senior coalition party leader Vasamsetti Satya.

Both women expressed heartfelt gratitude to Minister Subash for stepping in at a time of urgent need. They praised his timely support, which has helped alleviate some of the financial burden caused by the untimely loss of

their spouses. Local community members and party leaders also lauded the minister for his humanitarian approach and swift action in responding to the problems of the people.

Speaking on the occasion, local leaders highlighted that Minister Subash's initiatives reflect his commitment to the welfare of the underprivileged and vulnerable sections of society. They emphasized that his personal involvement and prompt

assistance serve as an exemplary model of public service and compassion.

This gesture is part of the minister's ongoing efforts to provide support to families and individuals in distress, ensuring that those facing sudden hardships are not left without aid. Through direct engagement with the community, Minister Subash continues to strengthen the bond between elected representatives and the people they serve,

demonstrating a practical approach to governance with empathy at its core.

The initiative has been widely appreciated by residents of the mandal, with many noting that such timely assistance provides not only financial relief but also moral support during trying times. Minister Subash's actions underline the importance of compassionate governance in addressing the needs of citizens in distress.

## Nara Lokesh's "Yuvagalam" Initiative Distributes Bicycles to School Students

Sreepotti Sriramulu Nellore, Feb 16, 2026 | TPN Bureau

To mark the third anniversary of the "Yuvagalam" padayatra, initiated by Nara Lokesh when he was in the opposition, the TDP leadership in Nellore district has taken special steps to benefit school students across the region. As part of this initiative, bicycles are being distributed to students in government schools, aiming to improve access to education and commemorate the milestone of the youth-focused campaign.

Over the past few years, the "Yuvagalam" padayatra has become a symbol of youth empowerment and educational outreach in the district. To continue this legacy, local TDP MLAs have been actively organizing bicycle distributions in phases across various constituencies. The initiative is particularly focused on helping students travel easily to and from schools, ensuring that transportation challenges do not hinder

their learning.

According to officials, Nellore City MLA and Minister Narayana has prepared 6,500 bicycles, while Sarvepalli MLA Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy has arranged 3,132 bicycles for students in their constituencies. The bicycles are being equipped with carriers and baskets, taking into account the practical needs of the children, and will be distributed primarily to girls to encourage their participation in education.

The program has already begun in some constituencies, with many students receiving bicycles in recent weeks. The phased distribution ensures that all eligible students across government schools in Nellore district benefit from the initiative, reinforcing the TDP's commitment to education, youth empowerment, and social welfare.

Launched in January 2023, the "Yuvagalam" padayatra has consistently focused on addressing issues affecting youth, promoting



education, and providing practical solutions to improve students' daily lives. The bicycle distribution program serves as a continuation of these efforts, reflecting the party's approach to combine symbolic commemorations with tangible support for students.

Local leaders and party officials emphasized that such initiatives not only support students but also foster a sense of community

and encouragement for education. By enabling easier access to schools, the project aims to increase attendance, reduce dropout rates, and empower young girls and boys to pursue learning without transportation barriers.

The "Yuvagalam" bicycle distribution program has been widely welcomed by parents, teachers, and students alike, highlighting Nara Lokesh's continued focus on youth wel-



fare and educational development in Nellore district.

## Court Reserves Verdict on Ambati Rambabu's Bail and Custody Petitions



Amaravati, Feb 16, 2026 | TPN Bureau

The Guntur Principal Senior Civil Judge Court on Monday reserved its verdict on the bail and police custody petitions filed by senior YSR Congress Party leader and former minister Ambati Rambabu in connection with a case linked to alleged irregularities in the Sankranti lucky draw scheme.

Rambabu, who is currently in judicial custody, had approached the court seeking bail, arguing that the offences involved in the case carry a maximum punishment of less than seven years and therefore do not warrant extended detention. His legal team, led by senior advocate Ponnaveedu Sudhakar Reddy, told the court that custodial interrogation was unnecessary and that bail should be granted promptly, especially since the charges do not fall under the most serious categories of criminal

offences.

On the other hand, the prosecution, representing the police, contended that Rambabu's custodial interrogation was essential for completing a thorough investigation into allegations that accused him of collecting money from pensioners under the guise of a festive lottery scheme during the Sankranti celebrations. Police counsel argued that the inquiry required additional questioning and evidence collection, and therefore sought custody before bail could be considered.

After hearing arguments from both sides at length, the judge chose to reserve the decision on both the bail plea and the request for police custody for further consideration, and is expected to pronounce the order on February 18. The outcome has generated considerable political and legal interest, as it could determine whether

Rambabu is released on bail or continues to remain in custody while the case proceeds.

Rambabu's detention and related court proceedings have been part of a larger political controversy in Andhra Pradesh, with rival parties trading charges and countercharges over the handling of cases involving prominent leaders. The Sankranti lucky draw case stems from allegations that, during celebrations in 2023, money was collected from pensioners in exchange for lottery tickets—claims that Rambabu has denied.

The reserved verdict will be closely watched by supporters and opponents alike, as it could influence the political and legal landscape in the state ahead of upcoming developments. Rambabu remains in judicial custody until the court delivers its decision on his petitions.

## Andhra Pradesh Budget Allocates Major Funds for MSME Sector: Minister Kondapalli



Amaravati, Feb 16, 2026 | TPN Bureau

The Andhra Pradesh government has made significant budgetary allocations for the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector, aiming to strengthen the industrial ecosystem and promote entrepreneurship across the state, informed Industry and MSME Minister Kondapalli Srinivas on Monday.

Speaking to the media, Minister Srinivas highlighted that the budget supports the government's vision of "one family, one industrial entrepreneur", designed to ensure timely payments to MSME suppliers and contractors through the issuance of Trades Mandates, which will help improve cash flow and operational efficiency for small enterprises.

The minister further explained that the state government is moving forward with a three-pronged strategic approach aligned with the central government's initiatives. This strategy focuses on:

1. Strengthening

of MSMEs. In a move aimed at easing financial access, the government has introduced a Credit Guarantee Scheme for small and micro industries, under which entrepreneurs can receive up to 95% loan guarantee, thereby reducing risk for financial institutions and improving credit availability for budding businesses. More over, Minister Srinivas noted that Rs. 10 crore has been set aside on an experimental basis to pilot innovative schemes for the MSME sector. Measures are also in place to ensure timely payments to MSME suppliers and contractors through the issuance of Trades Mandates, which will help improve cash flow and operational efficiency for small enterprises.

2. Providing financial assistance and credit guarantees to reduce barriers to entry. 3. Developing infrastructure and technological support to promote sustainable and scalable industrial growth. Minister Kondapalli Srinivas underlined that the government's initiatives aim to bolster the industrial ecosystem, create employment opportunities, and empower local entrepreneurs, particularly in semi-urban and rural areas. By providing structured support and financial safeguards, the state seeks to enable more families to participate in industrial activities, contributing to economic growth and regional development. With these targeted allocations and strategic measures, Andhra Pradesh aims to transform its MSME sector into a vibrant engine of growth, fostering innovation, employment, and entrepreneurship across the state.

## Internal Feud Erupts in TDP at Undi Constituency, West Godavari

Undi (West Godavari District), Feb 16, 2026 | TPN Bureau

A sharp internal conflict has surfaced within the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in the Undi Assembly constituency of West Godavari district, as party workers and leaders openly expressed dissent against their own MLA, signaling a deepening factional divide ahead of future political battles.

Tensions came to the fore during a gathering in Vellivarru village, where a group of TDP activists raised protest flags and voiced strong opposition to sitting MLA K. Raghurama Krishna Raju, accusing him of failing to meet local expectations and representing the party's interests inadequately in recent times. The factional display was led by senior leaders and supporters who organized the event to publicly express their

displeasure with the local leadership dynamics.

The protest coincided with a visit by TDP State General Secretary Potturi Venkateswara Raju, who addressed the media and party cadres in the area. Sources say the internal dispute stems in part from disagreements over candidacy decisions, seat allocations and representation within the constituency. Some party workers feel the distribution of opportunities and leadership roles has been uneven, leading to growing frustration among grassroots supporters.

Political observers note that such internal rifts can have an impact on party unity and electoral performance, especially in constituencies like Undi, where local leaders and community influencers play a significant role



in mobilising voters. With the next elections in view, any visible divide within a party can shift public perception and create openings for rival political formations to capitalise on local dissatisfaction.

The Undi constituency has witnessed fluctuating political dynamics over recent years, with competition among key parties and individual leaders shaping voter sentiment. The current unrest within the TDP comes at a time when

political allegiance at grassroots levels is seen as crucial for broader party success in West Godavari's competitive political landscape.

While the leadership has not yet issued a formal statement addressing the protests, party insiders suggest internal discussions are underway to resolve differences and reenergise the organisational structure at the constituency level. The aim, according to some leaders, is to ensure that lo-

cal representatives and party workers are aligned in their goals and strategies ahead of upcoming polls.

As the situation unfolds, the TDP in Undi will be closely watched by political analysts, given the constituency's importance in West Godavari politics. The resolution of this internal conflict may play a role in shaping the party's fortunes in the region, as leaders work to maintain cohesion and present a united front to voters.

# Vijayawada Commissioner Urges Citizens to Treat City as Home

Vijayawada, Feb 16, 2025 | TPN Bureau  
 Vijayawada Municipal Commissioner Dhyana-chandra on Monday urged residents to treat the city as their own home, emphasizing the importance of cleanliness, greenery, and public health. Addressing municipal officials and staff during an extensive inspection tour, he reiterated that maintaining the city in a clean and well-organized manner directly impacts the health and well-being of its citizens. The morning inspection covered several key areas of Vijayawada, including Mahatma Gandhi Road, One

Town, Prakasam Barrage, Bhavani Ghat, Krishnaveni Ghat, Eluru Road, and Patamata. Commissioner Dhyana-chandra personally observed the municipal sanitation efforts and reviewed the measures being taken to ensure proper upkeep of streets, drains, and public spaces. He stressed that waste should be cleared from drains on a daily basis, streets must be swept regularly, and public spaces should be maintained to avoid pollution and health hazards. In addition to sanitation, the Commissioner highlighted the importance of greenery in urban



He instructed officials to water plants along road dividers and sidewalks daily and to ensure that trees and shrubs are properly maintained. "Just as we take care of our homes every day, we must treat

Vijayawada as our home and work together to keep it clean and green," he said. This approach is intended to instill a sense of civic responsibility among municipal staff and residents alike. The inspection team included Chief Medical Health Officer Dr. K. Arjuna Rao, Chief City Planner Sanjay Ratnakumar, Deputy City Planner Chandrabose, and other municipal staff. The Commissioner discussed strategies to improve coordination among departments, focusing on timely waste removal, maintaining road dividers and parks, and enhancing the overall aes-

thetic of the city. Commissioner Dhyana-chandra also highlighted the role of citizens in maintaining urban hygiene. He encouraged community participation in keeping neighborhoods clean, disposing of waste responsibly, and supporting city beautification initiatives. He emphasized that the collective effort of municipal staff and citizens is essential to achieve a cleaner, safer, and more visually appealing Vijayawada. Through consistent sanitation drives, greenery maintenance, and active citizen engagement, the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation aims to set

an example in urban governance. Commissioner Dhyana-chandra's directives reflect a broader vision of sustainable urban development, where the city's health, cleanliness, and aesthetics are prioritized, creating a safe, vibrant, and liveable environment for all residents. By adopting the motto "Our City - Our Home", Vijayawada is working toward becoming a model city where civic responsibility, technological support, and community participation combine to ensure long-term cleanliness, sustainability, and citizen well-being.

## Maha Shivaratri Celebrations at Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Temple

Vijayawada, Feb 16, 2026 | TPN Bureau  
 As part of the grand Maha Shivaratri festivities, Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Temple will host a series of sacred rituals and traditional ceremonies tomorrow, Tuesday, February 17, 2026. Devotees and media personnel are invited to witness and participate in these spiritually significant events. The day's rituals will commence at 8:00 AM with Mantapa Puja, including the chanting of foundational mantras (Moola Mantra Havanam), Aarti, Mantra Pushpam, and distribution of Teertha Prasadam to devotees. These rituals are performed as per Vedic scriptures and form the spiritual core of the Maha Shivaratri celebrations. At 9:00 AM, the main highlight of the festival, the "Purnahuti" ceremony, will be con-



ducted with grandeur at the old Yaga Shala. This auspicious ritual is considered the most significant segment of the festival and is expected to draw large numbers of devotees seeking divine blessings. Following the Purnahuti, devotees can participate in Vasanthotsavam celebrations and the Avabhrithotsavam (Chakrasnana) at Durga Ghat by the Krishna River. The festival will conclude with the Dhawajaroohanam, marking the ceremonial lowering of the flag, signifying the successful completion of all rituals and festivities. Temple authorities have urged media representatives and devotees to attend in large numbers and take part in the special poojas and ceremonies. Participation is considered an opportunity to receive the divine blessings of the presiding deity. The temple administration emphasizes that all rituals will be conducted strictly according to Vedic traditions,

ensuring a spiritually enriching experience for the devotees. Special arrangements have been made to accommodate the expected crowds, and safety protocols will be observed during the ceremonies. Devotees are encouraged to be present early to witness the grandeur of the Purnahuti and other rituals and to seek the blessings of Lord Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy during the Maha Shivaratri celebrations, which remain a hallmark of faith, devotion, and community participation in Vijayawada. This Maha Shivaratri festival at Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Temple continues the rich tradition of spiritual and cultural observances that attract devotees from across the region, reinforcing the temple's significance as a major center of worship.

## Visakhapatnam Prepares 100 Boats for Foreign Guests During International Celebrations

Visakhapatnam, Feb 16, 2026 | TPN Bureau  
 Visakhapatnam is abuzz with activity as it prepares to host prestigious international events including the International Naval Review, International City Parade, and Milan festival. With dignitaries and guests arriving from across the world, the city administration has undertaken extensive arrangements to ensure their visit is seamless, enjoyable, and memorable. Among these measures, 100 boats have been arranged specifically for foreign visitors, highlighting the city's commitment to hospitality and safety. The boats, organized in collaboration with local fishermen and private operators, will allow foreign guests to navigate the city's waterways and coastal areas with ease. Visitors arriving aboard naval ships from different countries will be welcomed formally and guided through select locations in the city via these boats, providing them with a unique perspective of Visakhapatnam's scenic waterfronts. The initiative is designed to en-



hance their experience during the celebrations while also showcasing the city's maritime heritage. Officials stated that the boating arrangements are part of a broader strategy to combine cultural exhibition with logistical convenience. The visitors will not only witness the grandeur of the naval review and parades but also enjoy safe and organized tours along the port and other coastal landmarks. This ensures that guests can participate in multiple events without logistical difficulties, maintaining a smooth flow throughout the celebrations. The 100-boat deployment also supports local employment, as fishermen and boat operators

are engaged as partners for these arrangements. Their involvement guarantees skilled navigation and familiar knowledge of the waters, ensuring both safety and hospitality for foreign dignitaries. Moreover, it reflects the city's effort to integrate local communities into large-scale international events, creating economic and cultural benefits simultaneously. Authorities are confident that the well-planned arrangements will leave a positive impression on international participants and visitors. The floating tours will offer a first-hand experience of Visakhapatnam's harbor infrastructure, urban coastline, and natural beauty, while also demonstrating the city's ability to

manage high-profile events efficiently. With the launch of these preparations, Visakhapatnam is poised to solidify its reputation as a dynamic and visitor-friendly city capable of hosting international dignitaries and large-scale events. The 100 boats stand as a symbol of the city's meticulous planning, hospitality, and dedication to providing a safe and culturally enriching experience for all foreign guests during the upcoming celebrations. This effort is expected to enhance both the visibility and global profile of Visakhapatnam, positioning it as a leading destination for maritime, cultural, and international events in India.

## Visakhapatnam to Host New Railway Zone; Operations Begin April 1



Visakhapatnam, Feb 16, 2026 | TPN Bureau  
 A major development in India's railway network is set to take place on April 1, 2026, with the launch of a new railway zone headquartered in Visakhapatnam. The South Coast Railway Zone, also referred to as the Visakhapatnam Railway Zone, will officially commence operations on that date, marking a significant restructuring of the Indian Railways' administrative divisions and fulfilling a long-standing demand from residents and regional leaders. Under the new arrangement, the Vijayawada, Guntur, and

Guntakal divisions, previously part of the South Central Railway Zone, will come under the newly formed South Coast Zone. This realignment is expected to improve administrative efficiency, provide more focused attention to passenger and freight services in Andhra Pradesh and surrounding regions, and strengthen management of key railway routes. Railway officials have been actively preparing for the transition, including divisional realignments, staff redistribution, financial planning, and operational strategies to ensure a smooth launch on April 1. Several adjustments to

routes and divisions have been finalized to streamline management and enhance service delivery under the new zone. The creation of the Visakhapatnam Railway Zone is expected to significantly benefit trade and logistics in the region by improving connectivity to major ports such as Visakhapatnam Port and Krishnapatnam Port. The restructuring is also anticipated to facilitate the introduction of additional passenger trains and routes, providing better services for local commuters as well as long-distance travelers. The new zone is likely to boost local employ-

ment opportunities, with increased recruitment and staffing to support zonal operations. With administrative control centered in Visakhapatnam, the region is set to gain strategic priority in railway planning and execution, potentially accelerating infrastructure projects and enhancing overall regional connectivity. As preparations continue, the launch of the Visakhapatnam Railway Zone on April 1, 2026, is expected to mark a transformative step in southern India's railway development, positively impacting commerce, transport efficiency, and regional growth.

## Indrakeeladri Comes Alive with Shiva-Shakti Dance Performances

Vijayawada, Feb 16, 2026 | TPN Bureau  
 In celebration of Maha Shivaratri, the sacred hill of Indrakeeladri, home to Sri Malleshwara Swamy, was transformed into a vibrant spiritual arena, attracting devotees in large numbers. Specially organized Kuchipudi dance performances added a spectacular cultural dimension to the festivities, captivating all present and enhancing the devotional atmosphere. The temple complex resonated with chants of Shiva's name, while decorative lights, floral arrangements, and ceremonial rituals created a serene yet exhilarating ambiance. Devotees were immersed in spiritual bliss as the hill glowed under the illumination of lamps and the sacred archana rituals. Amidst this setting, the Kuchipudi dance presentations became the highlight of the celebration, bringing the stories of divine grace and power to life. Performances by Tenali Group The first set of performances was presented by disciples of Guru R. Vasantha Durga from Tenali. Their showcase began with "Ganesh Stuti", setting



a devotional tone. Following this: Shiva Panchakshari Stotra: Through expressive gestures and rhythmic footwork, dancers enacted the Ashtottara Nama Stotra of Lord Shiva, mesmerizing the audience with intricate storytelling. Mahishasura Mardini Stotra: This performance captured the fierce and protective form of Goddess Durga, reflecting her divine power and evoking devotion among the spectators. Performances by Tadepalli Group Another set of performances was delivered by disciples of Guru Swarnalata from Tadepalli, in classical

Kuchipudi style: Shankara Srigiri: Celebrating the majesty of Lord Malleshwara Swamy, this piece left the devotees spellbound. Koluvaitava Deva: Through rhythmic footwork and synchronized movements, the dancers conveyed the sanctity and significance of the hill and temple. Shiva Tandava: Representing Shiva's cosmic dance of joy and creation, this energetic performance concluded the program with vigor and flair. The fusion of artistry and devotion was evident as the dancers' grace and devotees' chanting blended, creating an atmosphere

reminiscent of Mount Kailash on Indrakeeladri. At the conclusion, temple authorities felicitated the artists with shawls and distributed prasadam to all, ensuring that the divine experience was both visually and spiritually fulfilling. The event not only showcased the cultural richness of Kuchipudi but also strengthened the spiritual connection of devotees with the divine couple, Shiva and Shakti. The celebration left an indelible mark on everyone present, turning Indrakeeladri into a living canvas of devotion, dance, and divine energy.

# Surge in TDP Support in Ramachandrapuram Constituency

K. Gangavaram, Feb 16, 2026 | TPN Bureau  
Political dynamics in Kota village, located in the K. Gangavaram mandal of Ramachandrapuram constituency in Konaseema district, have shifted significantly, with rising support for the Telugu Desam Party (TDP). On Monday, 50 local YSRCP workers officially joined the TDP in a ceremony attended by State Labour Minister Vasamsetti Satyam, senior coalition leaders Vasamsetti Satyam, and AMC Chairman Akkala Rishwanth Rai. The new entrants

were warmly welcomed into the party, with Minister Subash and Vasamsetti Satyam presenting TDP scarves and expressing appreciation for their support. Speaking at the event, Minister Subash emphasized that ongoing development and welfare initiatives in the state could only be realized through the coalition government and pledged to continue governance in line with public trust. He further assured that special attention would be given to village development and highlighted the state's implementation

of unprecedented accident insurance schemes for party workers. Senior party leader Vasamsetti Satyam noted that under Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's leadership, the TDP's popularity is steadily increasing in the region. He encouraged all new members to actively contribute to the party's growth and development initiatives. Minister Subash reiterated his commitment to strengthening the party in the Ramachandrapuram constituency and to ensuring that local

development projects receive priority. The event was attended by several local and mandal-level TDP leaders, including Mandal TDP President Medishetti Ravikumar, Malakala Vishweshwara Rao, Village Committee Presidents Malakala Ramachandra Rao and Kate Subramanyam, Mandal SC Cell President Talapala Ananda Rao, and Constituency Farmers' Association Presidents Balusu Shivaprasad, Dangeti Nageswara Rao, and Juttuku Shyam Prasad. As part of the pro-

gram, Minister Subash and Vasamsetti Satyam paid floral tributes to the statue of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian Constitution, marking the beginning of the ceremony. Party leaders present at the event noted that these new inductions further strengthen the TDP's presence and influence in Kota village, signaling a significant shift in local political alignment. The event underscores the TDP's ongoing efforts to consolidate its support base in the region ahead of fu-



ture political contests, reflecting the party's emphasis on development-oriented governance and community engagement.

## Daggubati Purandeshwari Inaugurates Sri Chaitanya Zonal Sports Meet

East Godavari, 14 February 2026 | TPN Bureau

An unauthorized multi-storey construction in Pidimgoyya Panchayat, Rajahmundry Rural Mandal, has sparked controversy after the Panchayat Secretary issued a formal notice to the concerned builder. The notice claims that P.J. Constructions, while permitted by the Rajahmundry Urban Development Authority (RUDA) to build up to four floors, had reportedly added an additional floor without approval. Authorities have ordered an immediate halt to construction and demanded submission of valid legal permissions, warning that the extra floors must be demolished if compliance is not met.

The incident has raised questions about oversight, especially since under the secretariat system, every construction—from small huts to permanent buildings—falls under the monitoring of the Panchayat Secretary and local planning authorities. Despite RUDA granting approval for only four floors, con-



struction beyond the sanctioned limit continued unchecked, prompting concerns over administrative negligence. Residents note that the notice was issued only after the transfer of the previous Panchayat Secretary, suggesting that earlier inaction may have allowed violations to persist. The issue also highlights the low response rate to government regularization schemes, such as the Building Penalization Scheme (BPS) and Lay-

out Regularization Scheme (LRS). While these programs invite applications to regularize unauthorized constructions, officials admit that only about 30-40% of eligible property owners take advantage of them. Experts suggest that while the government encourages regularization, the simultaneous failure to control unauthorized construction reflects gaps in enforcement. Concerns have also been raised over loss of po-

tential revenue, including Transferable Development Rights (TDR) funds, which the government could have earned from properly sanctioned construction. Critics argue that RUDA and Panchayat negligence not only harms the public exchequer but also undermines fairness for those adhering to the law. Local residents are now demanding a joint inquiry by RUDA and the Panchayat and strict disciplinary action against officials

responsible for lapses. They stress that transparent and consistent enforcement is essential, emphasizing that law and regulations must apply equally to all. Observers say that proactive monitoring, rather than reactive notices after officer transfers, is critical to prevent violations and maintain public trust. They insist that encouraging legal construction and preventing unauthorized buildings is the benchmark of effective local governance.

## Nannaya University Receives Only 12 Crore in Education Budget, Sparking Concerns

East Godavari, Feb 16, 2026 | TPN Bureau

The recently announced state budget has sparked concern among educators and students in East Godavari district, as allocations for local universities appear disproportionately low. While the state government has allocated around 34,875 crore to the education sector, Nannaya University, named after the revered Telugu poet Adikavi Nannaya, has been granted only 12.5 crore—far less than the 385 crore allotted to Andhra University in Visakhapatnam and 60 crore for Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University (JNTU) in Kakinada. The Telugu University in the same district received just 5 crore. The limited funds have raised questions about whether the historical and cultural significance of Nannaya University is being adequately recognized. Students, faculty, and education experts argue that such low allocations are insufficient for infrastructure development, the introduction of new courses, and support for research initiatives. Many feel



this undermines the district's reputation as an "education hub". Local opposition leaders have criticized the government, pointing out that despite East Godavari being represented by prominent political figures—including Tourism Minister Purandeshwari as MP, MLC Somu Veerajulu, senior TDP leaders, and multiple MLAs—the universities in the district have not received commensurate attention or funding. Education experts emphasized that the Nannaya University allocation falls short of maintaining its stature and fostering academic growth. They argue that proper funding is essential not only to honor the legacy of Adikavi Nannaya but also to strengthen the district's educational future. Residents and stu-

dents are now urging the government to reconsider the allocations, hoping for increased support in the revised budget. They stress that fair funding for Nannaya University is crucial for preserving the district's academic reputation and ensuring opportunities for local students. The situation has ignited widespread debate on balancing historical significance with practical needs in budgetary planning, highlighting the necessity for equitable resource distribution among universities across the state. Many believe that giving Nannaya University its due respect through appropriate funding will empower the district's education system and secure its future as a center of learning.

## Grand Celebration of Parvati-Parameshwara Kalyanam at Dhone Temple

Dhone, Feb 16, 2026 | TPN Bureau

The Parvati-Parameshwara Kalyanam at the Kotha Bugga Ramalingeshwara Swamy Temple in Dhone was celebrated with exceptional grandeur early Monday morning as part of the Maha Shivaratri festival. Devotees gathered in large numbers, many of whom had participated in the traditional overnight vigil on Sunday, witnessing the divine wedding ceremony of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati, a central highlight of the annual festivities. The rituals were performed by the temple priests with meticulous care, following ancient Vedic traditions. The priests chanted sacred mantras and conducted elaborate ceremonies, ensuring that every aspect of the kalyanam adhered to scriptural guidelines. Devotees actively participated in the rituals, offering prayers, flowers, and sacred items, expressing their devotion and seeking the blessings of the deities. Following the wedding ceremony, the idols of Swamy and Amma were beautifully adorned and placed in a palanquin for a ceremonial procession through the temple streets. The



streets were decorated with lights and flowers, creating a vibrant and festive atmosphere. Devotees lined the streets, cheering and participating in the procession, creating a moving display of faith and community spirit. The procession allowed devotees to have darshan of the deities and receive blessings, reinforcing the spiritual significance of the occasion. The temple management made elaborate arrangements for the smooth conduct of the event, ensuring crowd management, seating, and safety of all participants. Volunteers and staff worked tirelessly to maintain decorum, guide devotees,

and facilitate the rituals seamlessly. Special arrangements were also made for elderly devotees and families with children, ensuring that the festival was inclusive for all members of the community. The celebrations highlighted not only the spiritual importance of Maha Shivaratri but also the cultural heritage of Dhone, bringing together devotees from nearby towns and villages. Young devotees were seen actively participating in rituals, indicating that the traditions are being passed on to the next generation, preserving the rich legacy of the temple. The grand kalyanam and subsequent proces-

sion concluded with offerings, prayers, and aarti, seeking peace, prosperity, and well-being for all devotees. The festival reinforced the sense of unity and devotion among the local community, making it one of the most memorable religious celebrations of the year. This year's celebration of Parvati-Parameshwara Kalyanam at Dhone Temple will be remembered not only for its grandeur and elaborate rituals but also for the deep devotion and enthusiastic participation of devotees, reflecting the spiritual vitality of the region and the enduring appeal of sacred traditions.

## TTD Releases Tirumala Srivari May 2026 Darshan and Seva Quota Schedule



Tirupati, Feb 16, 2026 | TPN Bureau  
The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has announced the online release schedule for darshan, seva, and accommodation quotas for May 2026, allowing devotees to plan their pilgrimage to Tirumala Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple well in advance. The electronic dip for Arjitha Seva tickets including Suprabhatam, Thomala, Archana, and Ashtadala Pada Padmaradhana will open on February 18 at 10:00 AM and continue until February 20 morning. Devotees selected through the dip must complete payment by noon on

February 22 to confirm their bookings. On February 21 at 10:00 AM, tickets for special services such as Kalyanotsavam, Unjal Seva, Arjitha Brahmotsavam, and Sahasra Deepalankara Seva will be released online. Later that day at 3:00 PM, virtual seva slots and darshan quotas will be available. February 23 will see multiple releases: Anga Pradakshina tokens at 10:00 AM, Srivani Trust darshan tickets at 11:00 AM, and special free darshan tokens for senior citizens and differently-abled devotees at 3:00 PM. The highly anticipated Rs. 300 Special Entry Darshan tickets will be released on Feb-

ruary 24 at 10:00 AM, followed by the accommodation quota for Tirumala and Tirupati rooms at 3:00 PM. TTD has advised devotees to use only the official website for booking and avoid unofficial intermediaries. With summer holidays approaching, early planning is encouraged to secure preferred darshan and seva slots. The phased release ensures transparent, fair, and orderly booking, providing devotees a chance to visit the temple during busy summer months while managing the large influx of pilgrims. This schedule also allows devotees to participate

in key rituals and spiritual experiences, reinforcing Tirumala's significance as a major pilgrimage center. By organizing these releases in a structured manner, TTD aims to make darshan and seva accessible to all, including senior citizens, differently-abled individuals, and first-time pilgrims, ensuring a smooth, hassle-free experience during the festive month of May. The May 2026 quota release reaffirms TTD's commitment to enhancing convenience, transparency, and devotion for all pilgrims visiting Tirumala Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple.

# BioAsia 2026 Conference: Telangana Will Be Global Bio Powerhouse



BioAsia 2026 is not just a conference for Telangana. It is a clear sign of how the state is steadily growing into a major global centre for life sciences. On February 17, 2026, Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy and IT & Industries Minister D. Sridhar Babu will inaugurate Bio-



Asia 2026 in HITEX, Hyderabad. Nearly 3,000 delegates from about 50 countries are expected to attend. This global participation itself shows the importance of the event. Over the past two years, Telangana has made remarkable progress in biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, medical technology, and healthcare innovation. Around 190 companies have signed agreements with the government, bringing investments worth nearly ₹73,360 crore. These projects are expected to create more than one lakh jobs. Such large investments clearly show that global companies trust the state's policies, stability, and long-term vision.

One of Telangana's biggest strengths is its well-planned ecosystem. Research centres, Global Capability Centres, and manufacturing units are working together in a connected system. Initiatives like Genome Valley and Green Pharma City have helped create a full chain from research to production. Fast approvals and industry-friendly policies have encouraged multinational companies like Eli Lilly, Sanofi, Amgen, Johnson & Johnson, and Medtronic to expand their presence in the state. Investments are now moving into advanced fields like cell and gene therapy, biologics, artificial intelligence in healthcare, and vaccine production. The conference will be held at the Hy-

derabad International Convention Centre and will focus on the theme "TechBio Unleashed: AI, Automation & the Biology Revolution." The discussions will explore how technology and biology are coming together to shape the future of medicine. Union Ministers Piyush Goyal and Ashwini Vaishnaw are also expected to participate, showing the event's national importance. Global experts like Stefan Miltenyi will share their views on next-generation treatments and innovation. A special session on "Telangana Rising: Vision 2047" will present the state's long-term goal of placing Hyderabad among the top five life sciences hubs in the world. The fast growth of research parks and Global Capability Centres shows that this ambition is not unrealistic. BioAsia 2026 is therefore both a celebration of progress and a statement of intent. Telangana has created a strong base with stable policies, good infrastructure, and investor-friendly governance. If this momentum continues, the state is well on its way to becoming India's leading life sciences destination and a respected global player in the sector.



Sagar Vanaparthy, Policy Analyst.

# BNP's Landslide Victory Masks a More Complex Political Shift in Bangladesh



Bangladesh's February 2026 general election has delivered a resounding victory for the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), which secured a commanding two-thirds majority in parliament by winning 212 of the 299 contested seats. On the surface, the outcome appears decisive and potentially stabilizing after years of political tension. However, beneath the headline result lies a far more intricate political landscape. The resurgence of Jamaat-e-Islami, the continued influence of Muhammad Yunus, and the conspicuous absence of the Awami League together signal that Bangladesh's political story is far from settled.

The BNP's return to power was widely anticipated, especially given the absence of its long-time rival, the Awami League. With the party of Sheikh Hasina sidelined due to legal and political constraints, the BNP emerged as the principal national alternative. For many voters, this election was less about enthusiastic endorsement and more about choosing the only viable mainstream option available.

Yet the nature of the victory deserves scrutiny. Voter turnout was lower than expected, suggesting that a segment of the electorate may have felt disengaged or unrepresented. In traditional Awami League strongholds, the BNP faced little organized resistance. The lack of meaningful competition in several constituencies created an electoral environment that, while procedurally smooth, lacked the vibrancy of a fully contested democratic exercise.

Perhaps the most consequential development of this election was not the BNP's majority but the remarkable performance of Jamaat-e-Islami. Historically a marginal force in parliamentary politics, Jamaat dramatically expanded its footprint, winning dozens of seats and emerging as a powerful parliamentary bloc. This marks the party's strongest showing in decades and repositions it as a central player rather than a peripheral actor.

Jamaat's gains were particularly notable in northern and western border regions. In several constituencies, it either outperformed expectations or ran extremely close to the BNP. This geographic spread suggests that its appeal is no longer confined to isolated pockets of ideological support. Instead, the party appears to have broadened its base, including among younger voters and in university towns where its student wing has become increasingly active.

The party has also shown a strategic ability to adapt its messaging. By highlighting younger faces and promoting a more contemporary image, Jamaat has softened its public profile without necessarily altering its ideological foundations. This recalibration has allowed it to connect with a generation that may not be as tied to the historical narratives that once limited the party's appeal.

Equally important is Jamaat's role in supporting the constitutional referendum held alongside the general election. The referendum introduced significant structural changes to Bangladesh's governance framework, including decentralization of executive authority and enhancements to parliamentary oversight. By endorsing these reforms, Jamaat positioned itself not merely as an electoral beneficiary but as an active participant in shaping the country's institutional future.

The absence of the Awami League from this election remains one of its defining features. As the party associated with Bangladesh's independence movement and decades of governance, its exclusion left a substantial ideological and political vacuum. Supporters of secular nationalism and the party's traditional voter base found themselves without a direct vehicle for representation.

This absence had tangible consequences. Lower turnout in certain areas and reduced political debate point to an electorate that

did not experience a full spectrum of choice. Democracy thrives on competition between differing visions, and this election, while orderly, lacked the balance that typically animates national contests.

For the Awami League to regain relevance, it will need to rebuild organizational structures, restore public trust, and redefine its political strategy. The challenge is formidable, particularly after years of polarization and the legal battles that have sidelined its leadership. However, its long historical roots suggest that it cannot be counted out permanently.

Hovering over this entire transition is the figure of Muhammad Yunus. The Nobel laureate and former caretaker leader played a pivotal role in overseeing the political transition and shaping the constitutional reforms put before voters. His influence extended beyond administrative stewardship; he was central in drafting and promoting the structural changes that will guide governance in the coming years.

The referendum itself generated debate. Combining constitutional reform with a general election is unusual and raised concerns about whether voters fully understood the breadth of the proposed changes. Some provisions adjust the balance of power between executive and legislative branches, while others introduce broader institutional modifications. Supporters argue these reforms will prevent excessive centralization and strengthen democratic accountability. Critics contend that the process lacked sufficient public deliberation.

Yunus's imprint is also visible in economic policy shifts initiated during the caretaker period. Negotiations over trade partnerships and import diversification signaled a willingness to recalibrate Bangladesh's economic alignments. While such moves may reflect strategic diversification, they have also sparked debate over the proper scope of authority for a transitional administration.

For neighboring India, the new political landscape presents both opportunity and uncertainty. Historically, relations between Dhaka and New Delhi have fluctuated depending on which party held power in Bangladesh. The BNP's earlier tenures were marked at times by diplomatic friction, particularly around border management and regional security concerns. However, economic interdependence between the two countries has grown substantially in recent years.

Trade volumes have expanded, Indian businesses maintain significant investments in Bangladesh, and cooperation in infrastructure and energy remains robust. The new government will likely seek to preserve economic stability, even if political rhetoric occasionally reflects domestic sensitivities. At the same time, Bangladesh has diversified its international partnerships, engaging more actively with China, Pakistan, and other regional actors. This multipolar outreach adds another layer of complexity to foreign policy calculations.

Ultimately, the BNP's victory represents both an end and a beginning. It closes a turbulent chapter dominated by political confrontation and transitional governance. Yet it also opens a new phase in which multiple forces will compete to shape Bangladesh's direction.

Jamaat-e-Islami's resurgence ensures that ideological debates once thought settled are returning to the forefront. The Awami League's absence raises questions about inclusivity and the health of competitive politics. Muhammad Yunus's reforms have altered the institutional framework in ways that will only reveal their full impact over time.

Bangladesh stands at a crossroads. The promise of stability under a strong parliamentary majority is real, but so too are the underlying tensions that could surface if political dialogue narrows or governance becomes exclusionary. The coming years will test whether the country can translate electoral dominance into inclusive growth, institutional balance, and regional harmony.

The election result may appear decisive, but Bangladesh's political evolution remains very much in motion.

# Inside the Crisis That Nearly Toppled UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer — And How a High-Stakes "Rescue Operation" Bought Him Time

Britain's political landscape has entered turbulent territory. Once regarded as a stable democratic power with a rich history of commanding statesmen and women, the United Kingdom now finds itself grappling with a leadership crisis that has rattled Westminster. At the centre of this storm is Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who, despite securing a historic electoral majority less than two years ago, now leads amid deep scepticism — both from the public and from within his own party.

Starmer's leadership has been steadily eroded over months of conservative attacks, policy U-turns, and a growing perception of drift. Polling has been dismal; approval ratings have plunged to levels once unthinkable for a sitting British prime minister. Many pundits argue that, if a general election were held today, the Labour Party — the party Starmer leads — would struggle to hold onto power.

What Starmer has managed to do, however, is survive — for now. And it's this survival, experts say, that tells the real story: not of a strong or confident leader, but of a political figure whose authority depends on carefully orchestrated crisis management rather than organic support from his ranks.

## The Trigger: The Mandelson Fallout

The catalyst for the present turmoil was the decision to appoint Lord Peter Mandelson as the United Kingdom's ambassador to the United States — a pick that quickly became one of Starmer's costliest errors. Soon after the appointment, explosive revelations emerged linking Mandelson to controversial figures, triggering a wave of public and political backlash.

The unveiling of email correspondence detailing the depth of Mandelson's association with a convicted sex offender sparked shockwaves in political circles. It wasn't merely embarrassment for Downing Street — it became a full-blown crisis, prompting intense questioning of the prime minister's decision-making and judgment.

Even senior figures within Labour began suggesting that Starmer's leadership was untenable. Some openly demanded that he step aside, while others hinted that his continued premiership was damaging not only to Labour's credibility but to Britain's standing on the global stage.



Crisis Control: Scripted Posts and Coordinated Support

Faced with mounting calls for his resignation, Starmer's team initiated what political insiders have dubbed a "rescue operation" — a coordinated effort aimed at stalling internal rebellion and stabilising public perception.

The centerpiece of this strategy was an emergency messaging campaign inside Downing Street. Senior ministers were moved to issue statements endorsing Starmer, sometimes with suggested language or talking points provided directly by aides. One high-profile deputy released a carefully worded message on social media platforms urging colleagues and the public to recognise Starmer's electoral mandate and rally behind him.

Behind the scenes, late-night phone calls were placed to wavering MPs to secure conditional endorsements. These calls weren't framed as simple showings of loyalty — they came with pointed questions for ministers: Who would realistically replace the prime minister? Was another leadership contest likely to improve Labour's electoral chances? Given the party's current political exhaustion, many found themselves without an obvious alternative.

Those interventions succeeded in buying Starmer time, but they did not fundamentally resolve the underlying tensions in the party. Instead, they revealed that support for him

was often transactional and contingent — and in some cases dependent on reassurance that his continued leadership posed fewer risks than forcing a leadership change.

## Inside the Party: No Obvious Successor

One reason the rebellion within Labour has yet to coalesce into a full-blown coup is the lack of a clear successor. Several names have been floated — including some of Starmer's senior colleagues — but each has drawbacks. Some are viewed as too polarising; others lack broad support across all wings of the party.

Among those mentioned is the current Home Secretary — a figure viewed by some as steady and institutional, with a reputation for competence outside factional battles. Her rise would mark a historic moment and reflect the increasingly diverse face of British politics. Yet questions remain about whether she could unite a fractious parliamentary party or navigate the tightrope of Labour's internal ideological divides.

This leadership uncertainty mirrors a wider malaise in British politics: the absence of a clear narrative or direction that resonates strongly with voters. Many in Labour fear that a leadership change now could plunge the party into prolonged internal conflict, weakening its position ahead of crucial elections.

## The Perception Problem

Compounding Starmer's woes is a perception problem that has plagued his government for months. Critics argue that his leadership style is overly cautious, reactive rather than proactive, and lacking in boldness. Policy U-turns and mixed messaging have fuelled narratives that Downing Street is out of touch — not just with the electorate, but with its own parliamentary cohort.

These communication missteps have contributed to broader frustration. Some Labour MPs privately complain that the leadership has failed to articulate a compelling vision for the country. Instead, the government has appeared defensive, constantly attempting to manage crises rather than champion new initiatives that could re-energise public support.

This internal discontent is reflected in political commentary across British media, with many commentators noting that the party's direction has become unclear. What once appeared to be a period of stability under Starmer's leadership now looks

precarious — patched together by crisis management rather than conviction.

## Beyond Westminster: Broader Implications

Starmer's struggles aren't unfolding in isolation. The United Kingdom is navigating an increasingly uncertain global environment — from economic pressures to security challenges and shifting alliances. A prime minister perceived as weak or under siege internally risks projecting an image of instability on the world stage. Allies and adversaries alike may take note, complicating diplomatic efforts and strategic planning.

For Britain's national interests, continuity and credibility matter — whether in trade negotiations, defence cooperation, or international alliances. A prolonged leadership crisis could hinder Downing Street's ability to effectively engage with other governments and business partners, potentially weakening Britain's influence at a critical time.

## What Comes Next?

For now, Starmer remains in office. The immediate threat of an internal revolt has been defused, at least temporarily, and his team continues to steer the government through the next set of political challenges. But whether this respite holds — or simply postpones the inevitable — remains a matter of debate in Westminster. The upcoming local elections and by-elections will be important barometers of public sentiment. Poor performances could reignite leadership anxieties and embolden critics calling for change. Conversely, stronger showings could stabilise Starmer's position and give him the political space to redirect Labour's strategy.

What is clear is that Britain's current political climate is far from stable. The era of confident governance that many hoped would follow Labour's return to power has yet to materialise. Instead, a series of crises have revealed deep fissures within both the party and the broader UK political system.

Survival, in this context, has become an achievement in itself — but one that may only delay a reckoning yet to come. Starmer's premiership has been bought time by strategic crisis management and coordinated support. Whether that time can be turned into renewed leadership authority is the question that now defines British politics.

## Bhupen Borah Withdraws Resignation, Reinstated as Assam Congress Chief

In a dramatic turnaround, Bhupen Borah has withdrawn his resignation as the president of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC), just one day after submitting it. The sudden reversal ends a brief and turbulent episode within the party's state leadership and highlights ongoing internal challenges ahead of crucial elections.

Borah, a senior Congress leader from Assam, had submitted his resignation citing unspecified reasons, which sparked surprise and concern among party members and workers across the state. His decision came at a sensitive political juncture, with the Congress striving to consolidate its organisational strength and electoral strategy against rival parties.

Soon after Borah's resignation became public, reactions poured in from various quarters of the state unit. Many party workers, leaders, and regional legislators expressed surprise and urged him to reconsider, underlining his importance to the party's organisational structure and campaign planning. The swift pushback played a role in Borah's decision to retract his resignation.

In a statement addressing the matter, Borah said that after receiving overwhelming support and encouragement from senior party colleagues and grassroots workers, he had decided to remain in his post. He emphasised his continued commitment to strengthening the party in Assam and working tirelessly ahead of upcoming electoral



battles.

The brief resignation episode has drawn attention to internal dynamics within the Assam Congress, with some observers suggesting that factional pressures and strategic disagreements may have contributed to the initial decision. However, Borah's quick reversal and public reaffirmation of his leadership have been interpreted by many within the party as a sign of unity and resilience.

Senior Congress leaders from New Delhi and regional leadership reportedly intervened to ensure stability within the state unit, urging

dialogue and cohesion rather than abrupt leadership changes. Their involvement in smoothing over the situation reflects the party's desire for organisational steadiness as it gears up for future political contests.

Political analysts note that leadership stability is crucial for the Congress in a politically competitive state like Assam, where electoral outcomes can hinge on strong organisational presence and clear messaging. Borah's reinstatement is seen as potentially bolstering the party's ability to focus on outreach, alliances, and strategy rather than internal uncertainties.

For now, Borah appears focused on his responsibilities, stressing the need for unity and collective effort. The episode, although brief, underscores the intense pressures political leaders often face within party structures and the importance of broad support from workers and colleagues in sustaining leadership roles.

With his position now secured, Borah is expected to lead key party initiatives in Assam in the run-up to critical elections, with renewed emphasis on strengthening grassroots engagement and boosting the Congress's prospects in the region.

## Actor Trisha Slams Tamil Nadu BJP Chief Over Comment on Vijay, Calls It 'Distasteful'



Tamil film star Trisha has strongly criticised Tamil Nadu BJP president Vijay Nainar Nagendran for a remark he made about actor Vijay, calling the comment "distasteful" and unbecoming of a political leader.

The controversy erupted after Nagendran, addressing a political gathering, appeared to mock actor Vijay's recent absence from a major event. His comment was widely seen as unnecessary and disrespectful toward the popular actor, who has a massive fan following in the state and is often perceived as influential in Tamil Nadu's cultural and social landscape. Nagendran's remarks quickly drew backlash on social media.

Taking to X (formerly Twitter), Trisha expressed her strong disapproval, saying the BJP chief's comment was out of line and reflected poorly on political discourse. She emphasised that criticism of artists based on their personal or professional decisions should not be part of political rhetoric. Trisha added that such re-

marks contribute to toxicity in public life and divert attention from substantive issues that matter to citizens.

Several fans and supporters of Trisha and Vijay echoed her sentiment online, criticising political leaders for targeting celebrities rather than focusing on key governance concerns. Many users pointed out that both Trisha and Vijay have long careers in the Tamil film industry and have steered clear of political controversies, making the BJP chief's comments all the more surprising.

Trisha's response highlighted her belief that public figures, including politicians, should respect personal boundaries and avoid unnecessary commentary about individuals' choices. She urged leaders to keep political debates focused on policies, development, and public welfare instead of making statements that polarise audiences or undermine civil discourse.

The exchange has sparked broader discussion in Tamil Nadu about the role of celeb-

rities in public life and how political leaders engage with cultural icons. Some commentators suggested that the incident reflects a growing trend of political polarisation, where every public comment is examined through a partisan lens, sometimes leading to PR battles rather than policy dialogue.

While the BJP has not issued a formal clarification in response to Trisha's criticism, the controversy has generated significant attention, with the actor's supporters backing her stance on social media. It remains to be seen whether Nagendran will respond further or retract his original remark in light of the backlash.

For now, the incident underscores the evolving dynamic between politics and the film industry in Tamil Nadu — a state where cinema and public life have long been closely intertwined. The reaction from audiences highlights sensitivities around how entertainers are discussed in the political arena.

## Supreme Court Issues Caution on Pre-Marital Physical Relationships

India's Supreme Court has drawn attention for expressing strong views on pre-marital physical relationships while hearing a bail plea in a legal case where a man stands accused of rape on the basis of a false promise of marriage. The bench, presided over by Justices B V Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan, made observations that highlighted the need for caution and circumspection in physical relationships before marriage, especially when serious allegations are involved.

During the hearing, the court questioned why a woman would travel abroad before marriage to meet a man with whom she was said to have established a physical relationship, after he had allegedly assured her that he would marry her. The accused was said to have given this promise despite already being married and later marrying another woman. The prosecution's case included claims that intimate videos were recorded without the



woman's consent and used to threaten her.

In its remarks, the Supreme Court suggested that before marriage, a boy and a girl are essentially "strangers" to each other and that engaging in a physical relationship under such circumstances calls for careful judgment. One of the judges noted that they might sound "old-fashioned," but emphasised that individu-

als should be very cautious and not necessarily trust assurances before marriage. The court questioned why the woman would travel abroad if her priority was to secure a marriage first.

The bench also indicated that such cases might be more suitable for mediation rather than lengthy trials, suggesting that consensual relationships outside marriage fall

into a different category compared to coercive or exploitative conduct. The matter has been adjourned for further hearing, including consideration of mediation options.

These comments have sparked wider discussion given that the court was addressing legal issues surrounding consent, promises of marriage, and alleged deception, rather than issuing a general rule about pre-marital sex. Still, the remarks underscore the judiciary's engagement with evolving social norms around relationships and personal decisions, especially when they intersect with criminal law and issues of consent.

While the Supreme Court's observations are oral and made in the context of a specific legal case, they reflect the complex interplay between personal relationships and legal implications under Indian law, particularly when allegations of fraud or coercion are involved.

## Mani Shankar Aiyar, Unfiltered: Congress Veteran Targets Pawan Khera

Senior Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar has once again stirred controversy with sharp remarks aimed at party spokesperson Pawan Khera, deepening internal tensions within the Grand Old Party. Aiyar, known for his outspoken and often provocative comments, responded angrily after the party's leadership distanced itself from his praise of Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

Aiyar insisted that he remains a member of the Congress, despite recent statements from party officials suggesting otherwise. He rejected claims that he has had no connection with the party in recent years, asserting that if Khera moves to expel him, he would leave happily — and joked that he would "kick his backside" after doing so. This colourful remark underlined his frustration with how the party has responded to his comments.

The spat began when Aiyar, speaking at an event, praised the Kerala government led by Vijayan and expressed confidence that it would return to power, remarks that were quickly dissociated from the Congress by its media and



publicity department. Khera clarified that Aiyar's statements were personal and did not reflect the party's official stance. In response, Aiyar attacked Khera's credibility, calling him a "puppet" who merely repeats what others tell him and implying that he is not an effective representative for the party.

Aiyar's criticism is not limited to Khera. He has also taken aim at other senior Congress figures, suggesting that internal divisions and personal ambitions could harm the

party's prospects, particularly in the upcoming Kerala Assembly elections. His remarks reflect deep frustration with what he perceives as weak leadership and lack of strategic direction within the party.

The controversy has sparked reactions from within the Congress, with some leaders distancing themselves from Aiyar's views while others attempt to downplay the discord. The episode comes at a politically sensitive time, with the party navigating

multiple state elections and striving for unity against rival political forces.

Aiyar's comments have drawn both attention and criticism, illustrating ongoing challenges within the party regarding cohesion, messaging, and leadership. Whether this latest controversy will have lasting political repercussions remains to be seen, but it has certainly highlighted divisions and sparked debate about the direction of the Congress ahead of key electoral contests.

## Actor Rajpal Yadav Granted Bail in ₹9 Crore Cheque Bounce Case



Bollywood actor Rajpal Yadav has been granted bail in a high-profile cheque bounce case involving allegations of dishonoured payments worth ₹9 crore. A court in Delhi allowed the actor to walk free on bail after considering his application, as the legal process continues in the matter.

The case stems from complaints that Yadav issued cheques as part of financial dealings, which were subsequently returned unpaid. These incidents triggered legal action under provisions of the Negotiable Instruments Act, which deals with penal consequences for issuing cheques that fail to clear due to insufficient funds or other irregularities.

During the bail hearing, Yadav's legal team argued that the matter was fundamentally civil in nature and that there was no intent to defraud. They contended that the return of cheques related to business disputes and that the actor had always been willing to settle any genuine dues. Empha-

sising his cooperative approach and strong ties to the community, the defence presented factors in favour of bail.

The court noted these submissions and granted bail, imposing conditions that Yadav must comply with as part of his release. Such conditions typically include appearing for future court hearings as required and not tampering with evidence or influencing witnesses. The judge also emphasised that the accused must respect the judicial process and remain available for the continuation of trial proceedings.

Legal experts point out that while bail does not mean exoneration, it allows an accused individual to remain out of custody while the case progresses through the courts. The prosecution will have the opportunity to present evidence and arguments, and both sides will continue to engage in the legal process.

For Yadav, the bail decision brings a measure of relief amid intense media scrutiny and public interest

in the case. The actor has featured in numerous popular films and is known for his comic roles in mainstream Bollywood cinema. His supporters welcomed the court's decision, saying that the legal system must afford every individual the right to a fair hearing while balancing accountability.

The matter is expected to proceed to trial, where the details of the cheque transactions, financial obligations, and any disputes between the parties will be examined. Bail ensures that Yadav can prepare his defence and participate in proceedings without being confined to custody, enabling his legal team to engage fully in addressing the charges.

As the case unfolds further in court, attention will remain on how the trial develops and what implications it may have for legal and professional reputations. For now, Yadav's bail status allows him to continue his work outside of detention while adhering to judicial conditions.



## Trump's 'Board of Peace' Secures \$5 Billion Pledge for Gaza Reconstruction

Former US President Donald Trump has announced that member nations of the newly formed "Board of Peace" have pledged more than \$5 billion to support humanitarian relief and reconstruction efforts in Gaza. The funding commitments are expected to be formally outlined at the group's first official meeting in Washington, where participating countries will also discuss contributing personnel to a proposed international stabilisation force.

Trump, who chairs the initiative, described the effort as a major step toward rebuilding Gaza after prolonged conflict and promoting broader global peace efforts. According to him, the pledges include both financial aid and manpower

support aimed at restoring infrastructure, ensuring security, and stabilising the region in the aftermath of war.

One of the most significant developments linked to the plan is Indonesia's reported willingness to deploy up to 8,000 troops to participate in the proposed peace-keeping and humanitarian mission. If finalised, this would represent one of the largest personnel commitments to the initiative so far. The troops are expected to assist with maintaining order, protecting reconstruction projects, and supporting humanitarian distribution once deployed.

The Board of Peace was first unveiled at an international forum in Davos and is envisioned as a multilateral body bringing

together more than 20 nations. Its primary objective is to oversee Gaza's transition from conflict toward reconstruction under an internationally coordinated framework. The announcement follows a cease-fire agreement that brought an end to two years of intense hostilities in the region.

Despite the \$5 billion pledge, the financial needs for rebuilding Gaza are estimated to run into tens of billions of dollars. Large sections of housing, healthcare facilities, utilities, and public infrastructure were damaged or destroyed during the conflict, underscoring the scale of the reconstruction challenge ahead.

Supporters of the initiative see it as a proactive step toward stabilisation and long-

term recovery. However, questions remain regarding the structure of the Board of Peace, its mandate, and the level of backing it will receive from major global powers. Some observers have also raised concerns about how the international force would operate on the ground and coordinate with local authorities.

The upcoming Washington meeting is expected to provide greater clarity on participating nations, funding allocation, and operational details. As discussions unfold, global attention will remain focused on whether the pledged support can translate into meaningful progress in rebuilding Gaza and maintaining lasting stability in the region.

## Bangladesh's New Government Set for Swearing-In Ceremony, Regional Leaders to Attend

Bangladesh is set to witness a significant political transition as the newly elected government prepares to take office at a formal swearing-in ceremony in Dhaka. The event, scheduled to be held at the South Plaza of the National Parliament Building, will mark the beginning of a new administration following the recent national elections that delivered a decisive mandate.

The ceremony is expected to draw around 1,200 guests, including political leaders, diplomats, senior military officials, and foreign dignitaries. The presence of several high-profile international representatives underscores the regional and global interest in Bangladesh's political developments and its future direction under the new leadership.

Among the prominent foreign attendees expected at the ceremony are Bhutan's Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay, India's Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Pakistan's Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal, Nepal's Foreign Minister Bala Nanda



Sharma, Maldives Foreign Minister Abdulla Khaleel, Sri Lanka's Health Minister Nalinda Jayatissa, and the United Kingdom's Indo-Pacific minister Seema Malhotra. Their participation highlights the importance of Bangladesh's ties with neighboring South Asian nations as well as key global partners.

India's representation at the ceremony has drawn particular attention, given the longstanding diplomatic, econom-

ic, and cultural ties between the two countries. While Prime Minister Narendra Modi was invited, he is unable to attend due to prior commitments. However, the participation of the Lok Sabha Speaker signals continued engagement and cooperation between New Delhi and Dhaka.

The swearing-in proceedings are expected to take place in two phases. Newly elected members of parliament will first take their oath, followed

by the oath-taking of the Prime Minister and the new cabinet later in the day. Security arrangements have been strengthened in the capital to ensure the smooth conduct of the event.

The new government's assumption of office comes at a time when Bangladesh faces a range of economic and governance challenges, including inflationary pressures, employment generation, and maintaining export growth. Observers believe the administration's early policy signals and cabinet composition will be closely watched by both domestic stakeholders and international partners.

The presence of regional leaders at the ceremony reflects Bangladesh's strategic importance in South Asia and its role in regional connectivity, trade, and cooperation. As the new government takes charge, expectations are high for political stability and constructive engagement with global partners in the years ahead.

## US Democrats Tell Europe Trump's "Temporary Hell" Could End in Three Years

Top Democratic leaders from the United States have warned European partners that the current era of strained transatlantic relations under Donald Trump could be short-lived. They conveyed this message during meetings in Munich, where discussions focused on security cooperation, global challenges, and the evolving international order.

The Democrats described the Trump years as a period of disruption for alliances and longstanding partnerships, particularly with NATO members. While acknowledging the difficulties experienced under the previous administration, they reassured European officials that this phase was likely temporary and could be reversed in the next three years through political change in the United States.

During the talks, Democratic representatives emphasised the importance of a strong and stable transatlantic alliance grounded in shared values, democratic principles, and mutual security commitments. They argued that European concerns about US foreign policy volatility stemmed



largely from unpredictable decisions and rhetoric during Trump's presidency.

The US Democrats highlighted their party's deep support for collective defence and cooperation, underscoring that a return to more traditional foreign policy norms would strengthen Europe's confidence in Washington. They also stressed the need for strategic alignment on issues such as Russia's aggression, trade policy, global health, climate change, and emerging technological competition with China.

European leaders welcomed the engagement and expressed relief at the message that the "temporary hell," as it was described by the American visitors, could be ending. Many diplomats noted that a clear shift toward stability in US leadership would help reassure allies and markets alike, particularly at a time of heightened geopolitical tensions.

The discussions underscored mutual concerns about security in Eastern Europe, energy resilience, and transnational threats. Both sides

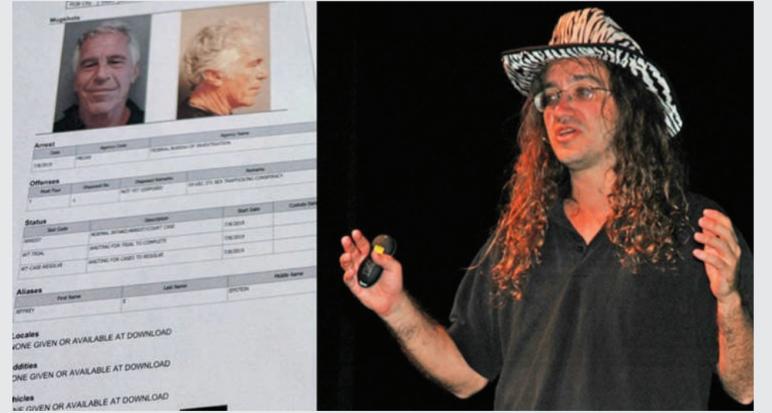
agreed on the need for continued collaboration within NATO and with other regional partners to deter aggression and promote peace.

Democratic officials also emphasised that domestic political processes in the United States, including elections and legislative priorities, play a critical role in shaping foreign policy. They conveyed to their European hosts that efforts to restore predictability and trust in the alliance would be integral to their agenda.

In response, European representatives reiterated their commitment to collective defence and expressed hope for robust cooperation in the years ahead. They highlighted areas where they were ready to work closely with the United States to address global challenges, including cybersecurity threats and economic competitiveness.

Overall, the meetings in Munich focused on reassuring European allies of a future US commitment to shared goals, signalling that current tensions could ease with changes in political leadership and a renewed emphasis on partnership.

## Jeffrey Epstein Helped Fund AI Researcher Ben Goertzel, Aiding HK\$8.9 Million in Grants



A prominent artificial intelligence researcher received financial support linked to the late financier Jeffrey Epstein, according to reporting that has raised fresh scrutiny over Epstein's influence in scientific and academic circles. Epstein's backing was tied to support for Ben Goertzel, a well-known AI scientist, and helped him secure substantial research funding in Hong Kong.

Epstein, whose reputation was marred by convictions related to sex offenses and extensive allegations of sexual exploitation, also invested in a range of academic and scientific endeavours before his death. New information reveals that some of his contributions extended into emerging technology sectors like artificial intelligence, where researchers like Goertzel have been prominent voices.

Goertzel, a co-founder of an AI research organisation and an advocate for advanced artificial general intelligence, received donor support influenced by Epstein's connections. These ties are understood to have played a role in Goertzel obtaining roughly HK\$8.9 million in grant funding from

several Hong Kong institutions. The grants were intended to support ongoing AI research projects and collaborations aimed at pushing the boundaries of machine learning and cognitive computing.

The revelations have prompted questions about the ethics of accepting funds that may indirectly originate from controversial figures, even when the research aims are legitimate. AI research, which spans everything from theoretical work to real-world applications, often relies on a mix of public and private financing. But connections to Epstein have triggered intense debate in scientific and policy communities about transparency and accountability in research backing.

Goertzel's supporters argue that funding sources do not necessarily influence the integrity of the scientific work and that research in AI deserves robust backing regardless of unrelated controversies. They point to the importance of continued investment in AI, given its potential impact on industries such as healthcare, robotics and data analytics.

Critics, however, contend that associations with Epstein, even indirectly, risk tarnishing both the research and the institutions involved. They argue that scientific endeavours should maintain strict ethical standards around donations and sponsorships, particularly when linked to individuals with criminal or discredited histories.

The situation has also reignited discussions in broader academic and technological circles about how research institutions evaluate and disclose the origins of funding. Some experts advocate for clearer guidelines and stronger ethical vetting processes for donations, especially for high-profile or high-impact research areas like artificial intelligence.

While there is no indication that the substance of the research itself was compromised, the funding link highlights ongoing tensions between scientific advancement and the imperative of ethical oversight in securing and accepting research support. The debate underscores the need for transparency as AI continues to develop and attract significant global investments.

## North Korea Opens New Housing District for Families of Ukraine War Dead

North Korea has inaugurated a new residential district intended to house families of soldiers who died fighting in support of Russia's war in Ukraine. The development, presented as a gesture of respect and care for bereaved families, reflects Pyongyang's continued alignment with Moscow and its efforts to reinforce internal loyalty through symbolic state projects.

The housing complex was unveiled in Pyongyang, where authorities held ceremonies to mark its completion. The project includes apartment blocks and community facilities intended to improve living standards for families of fallen fighters. State media coverage described the move as an important expression of gratitude toward those who made the ultimate sacrifice in what North Korea views as a shared struggle alongside Russia.

North Korea's involvement in the Ukraine conflict has never been publicly confirmed in detail, but evidence from Western governments suggests that Pyongyang has provided military assistance to Russia, including munitions and other equipment. In recent months, reports have indicated that some North Korean soldiers may have been deployed to fight in Ukraine, though such claims are difficult to independently verify due to the secretive nature of the regime.

The housing project underscores the political significance North Korean leaders attach to the country's relationship with Russia. It also serves domestic purposes by reinforcing narratives of loyalty, sacrifice, and international solidarity



under the leadership of Kim Jong Un. Providing improved housing for families of the war dead allows the state to visually demonstrate its commitment to supporting citizens who have suffered personal loss in connection with national priorities.

Observers note that the new housing district is likely intended to bolster morale and unity within North Korean society, particularly at a time when the country faces ongoing economic challenges and international isolation due to extensive sanctions. State propaganda often emphasises hardship and sacrifice as collective responsibilities, and gestures like the housing development are portrayed as evidence of the government's benevolence and resolve.

International reactions to North Korea's actions have varied. Western officials critical of Pyongyang's ties with Moscow have pointed out that honoring families of those con-

nected to the Ukraine conflict could signal deeper levels of military cooperation between the two nations. Meanwhile, analysts caution that propagandistic displays in Pyongyang often serve internal political objectives rather than reflect substantive policy shifts.

Despite the grand presentation of the housing district, details remain limited about how many families will benefit and the criteria for residency. Questions also persist about whether North Korea's support for Russia will translate into more direct involvement in the Ukraine war moving forward.

The unveiling of the new housing area reinforces the complex geopolitical entanglements surrounding the Ukraine conflict and highlights how allied states like North Korea use symbolic state projects to project strength and solidarity both domestically and internationally.

## Markets Rebound Strongly: Sensex Jumps 650 Points, Nifty Crosses 25,600



Indian equity markets staged a strong comeback on Monday, snapping a two-day losing streak as benchmark indices rallied sharply amid renewed buying interest. The BSE Sensex surged nearly 650 points to close above the 83,200 mark, while the NSE Nifty50 climbed over 200 points to settle above 25,600. Both indices recovered from early weakness and ended the session near their day's highs, reflecting improved investor sentiment.

Trading began on a cautious note, with the Nifty slipping below 25,400 in early deals due to continued profit-booking and mixed global cues. However, as the session progressed, buying momentum gathered pace across several heavyweight sectors. Strong gains in power, financials, infrastructure, and energy stocks helped lift the benchmarks decisively into

positive territory.

Sectorally, power, PSU banks, private banks, realty, infrastructure, capital goods, and energy stocks posted gains ranging between 1 and 2 percent. The rally in financial stocks played a key role in supporting the broader market recovery. However, not all segments participated equally. Media and automobile stocks remained under pressure, slipping modestly during the session and limiting the overall breadth of the rally.

The broader markets showed a mixed trend. The midcap index registered moderate gains, while the smallcap index ended largely flat. Despite the rebound in frontline stocks, market breadth indicated underlying caution, with a significant number of stocks touching fresh 52-week lows. This suggests that while investor confidence improved in large-cap counters, se-

lective weakness continues in certain pockets of the market.

Among individual stocks, shares in major power and banking companies led the gains, supported by renewed institutional interest. On the flip side, select auto and technology stocks witnessed selling pressure.

The recovery reflects value buying at lower levels after the recent correction. Investors appear to be selectively accumulating quality stocks amid expectations of stable domestic fundamentals. However, analysts caution that sustained buying support and favorable global cues will be necessary to confirm a stronger upward trend.

For now, the market's ability to hold above key support levels will be closely watched, as traders assess whether this rebound marks the beginning of a fresh rally or remains a short-term bounce.

## Gold Prices Dip Below \$5,000 as Traders Book Profits After Recent Rally



Global gold prices retreated on Monday, slipping back under the key \$5,000-per-ounce mark following a period of strong gains, as traders took profits amid thinner market conditions. The pullback came after bullion had climbed sharply in the previous session, driven by optimism around softer inflation data from the United States that had boosted expectations of future interest rate cuts.

The recent climb in gold had been significant, touching multi-year highs earlier this year, buoyed by speculative buying and safe-haven de-

mand. However, with prices reaching elevated levels and traders looking to lock in gains, profit-taking activity intensified and resulted in a notable decline in early Asian trading. With many markets in China closed for the Lunar New Year holiday, liquidity remains relatively low, which can exacerbate moves in either direction.

The retreat saw spot gold ease modestly, reversing part of the strong gains from the previous session. This downward momentum was accompanied by declines in other precious metals, includ-

ing silver, which also saw selling pressure amid weaker global cues. Analysts describe the current market phase as one of consolidation, where prices are finding a balance after recent volatility rather than trending decisively up or down.

While the short-term drop may raise concerns for some traders, broader market expectations for gold remain positive over the long term. Many major banks and financial institutions continue to forecast higher gold prices based on enduring structural drivers. These include geopolitical tensions that can elevate

safe-haven demand, questions about central bank independence, and a broad global shift away from traditional assets such as major currencies and sovereign bonds. Some forecasts suggest gold could retest and exceed previous peaks later in the year, amid supportive macroeconomic conditions.

Despite this optimistic outlook, price action in the near term is being influenced by technical factors and profit-booking at high levels. Markets often see sharp rallies followed by retracements as speculative interest ebbs and traders take advantage of

higher price points to secure returns. As such, consolidation below the \$5,000 threshold may represent a natural correction within a larger trend rather than a definitive reversal.

Investors now await fresh catalysts that could provide direction to bullion markets, including upcoming economic data releases from the United States and central bank policy signals. Until then, gold prices are likely to remain volatile, influenced by the interplay of profit-booking, liquidity conditions, and broader macroeconomic sentiment.

## IT Stocks Rebound as Market Views Diverge on AI Impact



Indian IT stocks showed signs of recovery on Monday after a period of intense selling driven by fears of artificial intelligence-led disruption. The Nifty IT index, which had been under pressure for several sessions, reversed course to close higher, ending a three-day losing streak. Mid-cap IT names rallied with stronger gains, helping lift the broader sector sentiment.

Early in the session, heavyweights like Infosys and Tech Mahindra had dragged the index lower, reflecting the lingering nervousness among investors about how advances in artificial intelligence could affect traditional software-services business models. However, as trading progressed, buying interest emerged, particularly in stocks that had seen significant sell-offs in recent weeks.

Analysts point out that the recent volatility in IT stocks has been triggered largely by sentiment rather than shifts in underlying business fundamentals. Some investors worried that new AI tools could automate core functions tra-

ditionally performed by Indian IT firms, potentially reducing demand for outsourced services. This concern intensified after the introduction of a legal AI tool that heightened fears of competition from machine-driven solutions.

Market perspectives on the outlook for IT firms remain sharply divided. At one end, some strategists are urging caution, noting that valuations in the sector appear elevated relative to earnings growth prospects. They believe that IT companies that successfully adapt to emerging technologies at competitive costs may fare better, but there could still be downside risk if market pessimism persists. This cautious view highlights the importance of selective stock picking and careful attention to individual growth trajectories.

On the other hand, a contrasting and more optimistic view is gaining traction among some brokers. They argue that the panic over AI's potential to disrupt IT services is overdone. According to this view, the cost of traditional coding has been falling for

years, and emerging tools—whether low-code platforms or AI-powered systems—should be seen as opportunities to enhance productivity rather than threats to existing business models. These analysts believe that Indian IT firms can adapt and evolve their service offerings to integrate new technologies and continue winning business globally.

This optimism is reflected in the market's rebound on Monday, as investors stepped in to buy stocks that had been oversold amid fear-driven selling. While some large-cap IT names may still face pressure in the near term, improving demand trends and upcoming corporate guidance could help drive a rerating of valuations in the sector.

Investor focus now remains on how IT companies articulate their AI strategy and growth prospects in the coming weeks. A clear demonstration of adaptation to technological change and robust deal pipelines could help solidify the recent recovery and build confidence in the sector's long-term outlook.

## PNGS Reva Diamond Jewellery IPO GMP Climbs Ahead of Rs 380 Crore Issue Launch



The upcoming initial public offering (IPO) of PNGS Reva Diamond Jewellery is generating noticeable buzz in the primary markets as its grey market premium (GMP) has risen ahead of the official subscription window next week. The increase in GMP signals that market participants are expecting healthy list-

ing gains when the shares begin trading on the exchanges.

The company is set to launch its IPO on February 24, with the offer closing on February 26. Bidding for anchor investors is scheduled a day earlier, on February 23. The issue size is Rs 380 crore, and it is composed entirely of a fresh issue of equity

shares, with no offer-for-sale component. Investors will be able to apply for shares in lots of 32, with a price band fixed between roughly Rs 367 and Rs 386 per share.

In the grey market, where unlisted shares are traded unofficially before the official listing, PNGS Reva Diamond Jewellery's shares have been com-

manding a rising premium. At one point, indicators from broker platforms showed the GMP at levels suggesting a possible listing gain of around 9 percent. This reflects growing confidence among some investors about the attractiveness of the issue and the potential for a positive debut once shares get listed.

The proceeds from the IPO will be used mainly to support the company's expansion plans, including opening 15 new stores over the next few years, along with meeting marketing and promotional expenses and other general corporate purposes. PNGS Reva Diamond Jewellery was formed after its promoter, P N Gadgil & Sons, transferred its diamond jewellery business into a separate entity focused on the retail segment.

As of the latest financial year ending March 31, 2025, the company operated more than 30 stores

across multiple states, including Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka. In the year, revenues grew significantly, reflecting strong demand trends in its core markets, while profits also recorded healthy year-on-year growth.

Despite the early grey market optimism, analysts and investors are watching closely to see how subscription traction unfolds once the IPO opens. Broader market conditions and investor sentiment toward consumer-oriented retail IPOs will play a key role in determining overall demand.

With its debut expected in early March, the PNGS Reva Diamond Jewellery IPO is one of the noteworthy public issues hitting the market in this primary market season, especially given its positioning in the jewellery retail space and the growth prospects of the Indian gems and jewellery sector.

## Sundaram AMC Launches USD-Denominated India Midcap Fund at GIFT City

Sundaram Asset Management Company has launched a new US dollar-denominated fund aimed at providing overseas investors with access to India's midcap equity segment. The scheme, titled Sundaram India Midcap - GIFT, has been introduced through the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) at GIFT City in Gujarat. The fund opened for subscription on February 16, 2026, with a minimum investment requirement of USD 5,000 for both direct and regular plans. Units are priced at USD 10 during the initial offer period.

The newly launched product is structured as an offshore feeder fund that will primarily invest in the domestic Sundaram Mid Cap Fund, a well-established SEBI-registered mutual fund with a long operating track record. Through this structure, global investors can gain exposure to a diver-

sified portfolio of Indian midcap companies across sectors such as financial services, industrials, healthcare, and consumer-linked businesses.

By offering the fund in US dollars and operating through GIFT City's IFSC framework, Sundaram AMC aims to simplify investment access for international participants. The structure is designed to reduce currency conversion hurdles and administrative complexities that foreign investors often encounter when investing directly in Indian rupee-denominated schemes. Additionally, GIFT City provides a globally aligned regulatory environment and certain tax efficiencies, making it an increasingly attractive platform for offshore investment vehicles.

The move highlights a broader trend among Indian asset management companies to tap global capital through GIFT



City. As India's economic growth and corporate earnings trajectory continue to draw international attention, fund houses are leveraging the IFSC ecosystem to launch innovative products tailored for overseas investors, including non-resident Indians and institutional players.

Midcap stocks, in particular, are viewed as of-

fering strong long-term growth potential, driven by expanding domestic consumption, manufacturing growth, and structural reforms. However, they also carry relatively higher volatility compared to large-cap stocks. The new feeder fund seeks to balance this growth potential with professional portfolio management and diversification.

With the launch of the Sundaram India Midcap - GIFT fund, Sundaram AMC aims to strengthen its global footprint while offering international investors a streamlined route to participate in India's midcap growth story. Market observers will closely monitor subscription levels and investor response as the fund begins attracting global allocations.

## Indian Expat in Dubai Says Rising Rents Consume Most of Your Salary — Here's What Life Is Really Like



An Indian professional who moved to Dubai two years ago has shared a candid, sometimes sobering account of what it's really like to live and work in the glittering Gulf city — and why many newcomers find themselves struggling with high costs, especially when it comes to housing.

Dubai is often presented on social media as a land of opportunity and prosperity — a place with impressive skyscrapers, tax-free salaries, and a vibrant expatriate lifestyle. But for this expat, those glossy images only tell part of the story. After spending two years in the emirate, he says newcomers need to be prepared for a reality that differs significantly from what they see online.

In a video he posted on social platforms, the expat explained that when he arrived, his expectations were shaped largely by online content showcasing Dubai's attractions. He looked forward to career opportunities, exposure to an international work environment and a lifestyle that, on paper, seemed hard to beat. While he acknowledges that some of those perks are real, they come with trade-offs that aren't often discussed openly.

For him, one of the biggest challenges has been the cost of living, particularly rent. Apartment prices in Dubai are high relative to many Indian cities, and even with a decent salary, a large portion of take-home pay can be absorbed by housing costs. In prime areas and popular expat neighbourhoods, monthly rent can quickly consume a significant share

of income, leaving little left for savings or discretionary spending.

He also highlighted how smaller, unexpected expenses can add up. From fines and service fees to daily living costs, putting together a budget that feels comfortable requires careful planning — and sometimes compromises in lifestyle or location.

Beyond financial pressures, the expat touched on the emotional toll of life abroad. Watching others spend freely or enjoy luxuries while he was focused on budgeting and saving could feel discouraging. Long workdays and the hustle of everyday life sometimes left him wondering whether progress was being made, even though he recognised he was gaining valuable experiences.

Yet it's not all bleak. The expat was clear that he wouldn't describe his experience as negative — merely more nuanced than many outsiders assume. He spoke warmly about the safety of the city, the opportunity to meet people from a variety of cultures, and the occasional treat — whether it's a nice meal or a day out — that reminds him why the move made sense in the first place.

He summed up his message as a reminder that growth often comes at a cost, and while Dubai offers opportunities many aspire to, newcomers should be prepared for both the thrills and the stresses of life there. For those considering a move, his candid reflections offer a valuable perspective: dream big, but plan realistically.

## Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Welcomes Its First Woman Ticket Examiner in 145-Year History



The iconic Darjeeling Himalayan Railway — affectionately known as the Toy Train — has marked a historic milestone with the appointment of its first woman Traveling Ticket Examiner (TTE) in its nearly 145-year existence. This achievement is being celebrated not only as a breakthrough for gender inclusion in a traditionally male-dominated field but also as a fresh chapter in the rich legacy of one of India's most beloved heritage railways.

The newly appointed TTE, Sarita Yolmo, brings decades of experience to her role and recently stepped into the prestigious assignment that places her aboard the scenic mountain railway connecting New Jalpaiguri with the hill town of Darjeeling. Her journey to this historic position spans more than 30 years in Indian Railways, where she has served in diverse roles, including public announcements, ticket checks, and rail customer services, before taking on this landmark operational duty.

The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway is a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of the oldest mountain railways in the world. Its narrow-gauge tracks wind through winding Himalayan terrain, climbing from plains to hills over a breathtaking landscape that draws visitors from across the country and abroad. For generations, the Toy Train has stood as a symbol of engineering ingenuity and cultural heritage — and now, with Sarita's appointment, it reflects evolving social change within the rail sector itself.

Taking on tour duty has long been a coveted role in this heritage line, involving direct interaction with passengers and the responsibility of en-

suring smooth operations throughout some of the route's most challenging stretches. For Sarita, the appointment wasn't just another posting — it was a moment of personal pride and professional validation. Colleagues and passengers alike have acknowledged her achievement as both inspiring and overdue.

Her rise to this position highlights a broader shift within Indian Railways, which in recent years has seen increased participation of women in front-line and operational roles that were once considered unconventional for female employees. Rail authorities have described her appointment as a reflection of changing attitudes and growing opportunities for women across different work profiles in the railways.

Sarita's story is resonating beyond the railway community, as it echoes larger conversations about gender equality and representation in professions historically dominated by men. Her success is being celebrated as a step forward for inclusivity and an example that traditional roles — no matter how longstanding — can evolve.

For locals and visitors riding the Toy Train, seeing a woman TTE uniforms the spirit of change with the nostalgia of heritage. Her role adds a contemporary chapter to the storied history of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, showing that institutions rooted in tradition can also be platforms for progress.

As she continues her duties on this legendary route, Sarita's journey stands as an inspiring reminder: barriers can be broken, histories can be rewritten, and longstanding legacies can grow more inclusive with time.

## Techie Draws the Line: Refuses to Dance or Strut for Client, Sparks Online Debate

In a story that has set social media buzzing, a tech professional made headlines not for work achievements but for politely refusing two highly unusual requests from a corporate client — and ended up igniting a broader conversation about personal boundaries in professional spaces.

The episode began when a software engineer — let's call him Rohan — was contracted by an overseas client for a long-term project. The work, focused on app development, was progressing smoothly until one day when things took an unexpected turn during a virtual meeting.

According to Rohan, the client suddenly shifted gears during a video call and asked him to perform a solo dance and later a fashion walk on camera — all supposedly to “impress stakeholders and show creative energy.” Taken aback, Rohan was firm but polite in his response: he declined both requests, saying that dancing and modeling were neither part of his job description nor appropriate in a professional setting.

What followed was a mix of reactions — some supportive, others critical — once Rohan shared the experience on social media. Hundreds chimed in with opinions. Many applauded him for upholding professional boundaries, emphasizing that no client should demand personal performances from



someone just because they are on a screen. Others argued that being accommodating can sometimes help build rapport and land future opportunities, especially in cultures where going the “extra mile” is valued in business.

A large group of commentators stressed the importance of respectful workplace conduct. They pointed out that while creative industries might involve out-of-the-box tasks, software development typically does not include impromptu dance routines or runway walks. Asking unrelated personal performances, they argued, could cross into uncomfortable territory, especially when power dynamics

are at play between freelancer and client.

Many women and men in the tech and corporate community shared anecdotes of being asked awkward favors — like posing in photos, appearing on camera without professional context, or making personal appearances during meetings — and stressed that it's important for professionals to feel empowered to say “no” when something feels inappropriate.

Others took a lighter view, suggesting that if someone genuinely enjoys performing or wants to show off hidden talents, there's nothing inherently wrong with spontaneous fun — just that it should

always be offered, never demanded. They pointed out that cultural norms vary, and what may seem odd in one context could be normal in another, as long as mutual respect is maintained.

Amid the debate, Rohan's core message gained traction: professionals should have the space to define what is acceptable in their own work environment without being pressured into situations that make them uncomfortable. Setting boundaries, he said, does not mean being rigid or difficult — it means recognizing one's own values and maintaining dignity in professional interactions. The incident has

sparked wider reflection about where lines should be drawn in today's increasingly virtual and informal work culture. With remote work blurring personal and professional spaces, many workers are reconsidering what kinds of requests are reasonable — and which should be politely but firmly turned down.

In the end, Rohan's story may not be about viral fame or dramatic confrontation. Instead, it's about a simple yet powerful reminder: even in a world that encourages creativity, there's nothing wrong with saying “no” when a request oversteps the boundaries of professionalism.

## Traveller Turns Flight Tickets Into Wall of Memories, Internet Applauds His Unique Post-Trip Ritual



In an age where travel memories are usually stored on smartphones or cloud albums, one young traveller has captured the internet's attention with a refreshingly simple and heartfelt tradition. Instead of discarding his boarding passes after each journey, he turns them into a growing wall display — creating a visual timeline of his adventures that doubles as room

décor. The ritual belongs to 25-year-old Deeraj Ds, who recently shared a video of his post-trip habit on social media. In the clip, he is seen carefully placing his latest flight ticket onto a section of his bedroom wall already filled with boarding passes from previous trips. Over time, what began as a small collection has transformed into a colourful collage of

memories representing destinations he has explored both within India and abroad.

For Deeraj, adding a boarding pass to the wall has become a “mandatory ritual” after every journey. Rather than letting these small paper slips gather dust in drawers or wallets, he preserves them in plain sight — each one symbolising a story, a city, or a special moment in

time. The simplicity of the idea struck a chord with viewers, and the video quickly gained widespread attention online.

Social media users flooded the comments with praise, calling the idea creative, nostalgic, and deeply personal. Many admitted they had never thought of preserving flight tickets in this way, while others shared their own traditions for remembering their travels. Some people collect fridge magnets from every destination. Others keep metro cards, museum passes, or even currency notes as souvenirs.

A few commenters pointed out a practical challenge: boarding passes are often printed with ink that fades over time. Months later, some tickets may appear nearly blank. However, many users felt that even faded slips hold sentimental value — much like old photographs or handwritten notes that grow softer with age but remain meaningful.

The post also sparked a wave of nostalgia. Some

users reminisced about older airline ticket designs and how travel once felt more tangible in a pre-digital era. In a time when many boarding passes are issued electronically, the act of holding onto a physical ticket carries a certain charm.

Others chimed in with their own quirky keepsake ideas. One traveller revealed they turn boarding passes into bookmarks for books purchased at airports, blending travel and reading into one lasting memory. Another joked about saving train ticket screenshots instead, adding a humorous touch to the conversation.

Ultimately, what resonated most about Deeraj's ritual was its authenticity. It doesn't require expensive scrapbooks or elaborate framing — just a wall and a willingness to celebrate small moments. In a world increasingly dominated by digital experiences, his simple tradition serves as a reminder that sometimes the smallest souvenirs can carry the biggest memories.

## Canadian Travellers Call Sleepless Indian Train Ride an Unforgettable Experience

Two Canadian tourists who set off on what they thought would be a restful train journey across India ended up with a lively and deeply memorable experience that they say they “wouldn't change for the world.”

What was supposed to be a peaceful seven-hour ride turned into a spontaneous celebration of community spirit and new friendships. The couple, including traveller Kim Greenwood, had booked sleeper class tickets hoping for much-needed rest between destinations. They were travelling early in the morning on an Indian passenger train and, expecting sleep in “sleeper class,” were surprised to learn that this coach often functions more like a shared space than a quiet cabin meant just for them. Rather than being a secluded, restful compartment, their space

soon became filled with curious local children and fellow passengers.

Almost immediately after boarding, the Canadians found children gathering around their berths. Instead of retreating or becoming annoyed, they embraced the unexpected company. What was meant to be a restful break quickly turned into a lively hub of interaction. The children were fascinated by the foreign visitors, and the group began playing games and talking, much to the delight of everyone in the coach.

Greenwood later shared her thoughts online, describing how impressed she was by the warm, collective energy of the journey. She spoke about the way families and individuals from diverse backgrounds came together in their small section of the train, sharing food, smiles

and stories as the journey unfolded. Some passengers even brought snacks and treats — some items bought from vendors boarding the train at stops, others prepared by families travelling in the same coach. The Canadians were touched by these gestures of hospitality and generosity.

Despite the bustle and the fact that neither of them got a minute of sleep during the entire seven-hour journey, Greenwood summed up the adventure with enthusiasm. She said she would not trade the experience for a quiet or solitary trip. For her, the sleepless hours were transformed into something far richer: a shared human experience and a genuine immersion into one of the most characteristic aspects of travel in India — connecting with people on the move.



Their story struck a chord with many who saw the travel post online. Social media users praised the couple's open-minded approach, saying that being flexible and friendly in unfamiliar situations often leads to the most memorable travel moments. Many agreed that train journeys in India offer far more than a way to reach

the next city; they provide a unique glimpse into daily life, an opportunity to connect across cultures, and a theatre of spontaneous human interaction.

Travel, as the Canadians discovered, sometimes has little to do with reaching a destination — and everything to do with embracing the moments between.

## What's Up Naresh Unveils Valentine's Day Glimpse

The makers of What's Up Naresh have released the second glimpse of their upcoming romantic entertainer as a special Valentine's Day treat, offering audiences a deeper look into the film's emotional core. Positioned as a youthful feel-good romcom, the film stars Kavya Kalyanram, who rose to fame with Balagam, alongside Anvesh Michael of Kotha Poradu.

Produced by Bhagya Laxmi Chinta under the CVV Cinema banner and directed by CV Vishal, the film had already created buzz with its first glimpse, which introduced the protagonist, his family dynamics, and the beginnings of a relationship. The newly unveiled second glimpse shifts tone, presenting a more intimate and thoughtful interaction between the lead pair.

The teaser showcases the duo connecting through a dating app and meeting for coffee, where their conversation evolves from playful banter to a candid discussion about past relationships and social realities. The inclusion of themes like caste and modern relationship expectations adds a grounded layer to the narrative, hinting that the film aims to balance entertainment with relatable emotions. As the glimpse progresses, viewers are treated to moments charting the gradual evolution of their bond, promising a warm and charming love story.

Both Kavya Kalyanram and Anvesh Michael ap-



pear perfectly suited to their characters, displaying an easy chemistry that anchors the film's romantic tone. Despite the director opting for a relatively lengthy glimpse, the emotional flow remains engaging, never losing its breezy appeal.

Music composer Smaran Sai enhances the teaser with a soothing and vibrant score, amplifying the romantic mood. The track featured toward the end, "Ayomayanga Saaguthunna..." stands out for its classical undertones and energetic finish, further raising expectations for the soundtrack.

Technically, the film boasts cinematography

by Vedaraman Sankaran and editing by Viplav Nyshadam, with the visuals capturing the soft, contemporary vibe of the story. The ensemble cast includes K Sai Santosh, Ushashree Murali, Santhosh Nandivada, Priyanka Raviru, and others, adding depth to the narrative world.

With its pleasant tone, relatable themes, and promising performances, the second glimpse suggests that What's Up Naresh is shaping up to be a refreshing addition to the romantic comedy space. The team is expected to unveil more promotional material in the coming weeks as anticipation builds for the film's release.

## Seetha Payanam Wins Hearts, Says Arjun Sarja at Thank You Meet



The team of Seetha Payanam celebrated the film's positive reception with a warm Thank You Meet on Sunday, following its theatrical release on February 14. Produced and directed by Action King Arjun Sarja under the banner of Shri Ram Films International, the emotional family drama has been drawing appreciation from audiences and critics alike for its heartfelt storytelling and performances.

Addressing the gathering, Arjun Sarja expressed gratitude for the overwhelming response, saying the film was made "with complete honesty" and a deep sense of purpose. He revealed that the story was inspired by a real-life accident he witnessed years ago, which led him to reflect on gratitude and life's unpredictability. "Everyone who watches the film feels it mirrors their own journey. Life itself is a journey filled with lessons,"

he said, adding that the encouraging feedback has been deeply satisfying.

The film marks the screen debut of his daughter Aishwarya Arjun alongside newcomer Niranjan, who comes from a film family connected to actor Upendra. Arjun shared that he was delighted by the praise Aishwarya has received, calling it a proud moment as a father and filmmaker. He also commended Niranjan for delivering a sincere performance that adds emotional depth to the narrative.

The director highlighted the contributions of senior actors Prakash Raj, Sathyaraj, and Kovai Sarala, noting that their presence elevated the film. He also mentioned a powerful cameo by Dhruva Sarja as one of the highlights appreciated by fans.

Speaking at the event, Aishwarya Arjun thanked audiences for

embracing the film and said the love it has received makes the project even more special. Niranjan echoed the sentiment, calling the film a perfect family entertainer rooted in values and emotions, while expressing gratitude to Telugu audiences for supporting newcomers.

Music composer Anup Rubens said films like Seetha Payanam require courage and conviction, praising Arjun's vision to create meaningful cinema. Dialogue writer Sai Madhav Burra noted that every character and scene carries depth, adding that viewers are leaving theatres with a sense of fulfillment.

With strong word-of-mouth and emotional resonance, the team remains optimistic that Seetha Payanam will continue its successful run, connecting with families and reinforcing the timeless message of gratitude and positivity.

## Pocket Novel Title Revealed for Vijay Sethupathi's New Film

The much-anticipated new project starring Vijay Sethupathi has officially been titled Pocket Novel, creating fresh excitement among fans and industry circles. The film brings together the versatile actor with acclaimed filmmaker Thiagarajan Kumararaja, marking their reunion after the cult success of Super Deluxe.

The announcement of the title has sparked curiosity about the film's narrative style, as Kumararaja is known for his unconventional storytelling and genre-blending approach. With Pocket Novel, the director is expected to once again present a unique cinematic experience that combines strong characters with an engaging narrative structure.

Joining Vijay Sethupathi in the film is Malavika Mohanan, who plays the female lead. The cast also includes Raj B Shetty, making his Tamil film debut, along with seasoned performer Kishore in a key role. The ensemble lineup has already raised expectations, as each actor is known for delivering powerful performances.

Music for the film is being composed by legendary maestro Ilayaraja, whose involvement has added further prestige to the project. Industry insiders believe his score will play a major role in shaping the film's

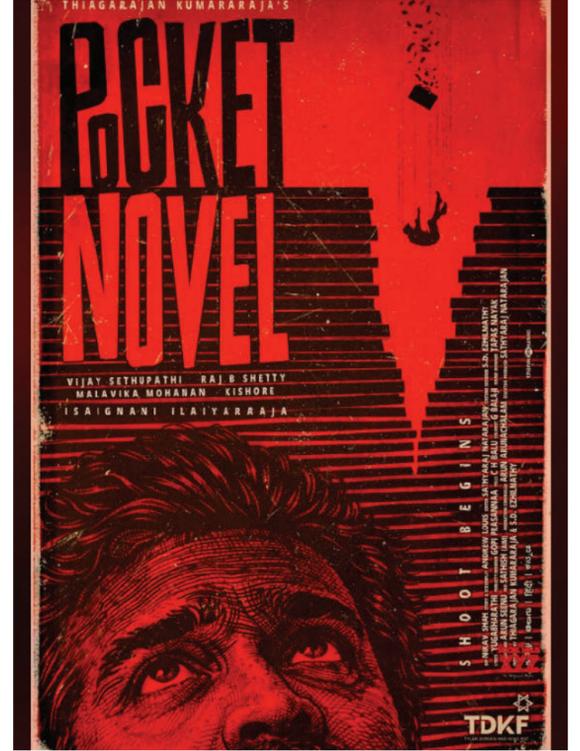
mood and emotional depth, especially given the director's penchant for atmospheric storytelling.

While the makers are keeping the storyline tightly under wraps, the title Pocket Novel hints at a narrative that could unfold like a compact yet layered story, possibly exploring multiple perspectives or interconnected events. Given the creative synergy between Vijay Sethupathi and Thiagarajan Kumararaja, expectations are high for a film that balances artistic sensibilities with mainstream appeal.

Production on the film has already commenced, and the team is reportedly progressing at a steady pace. With its intriguing title, strong technical crew, and talented cast, the project is being seen as one of the most promising upcoming ventures in Tamil cinema.

Fans of Vijay Sethupathi are particularly excited to see him collaborate again with Kumararaja, as their previous partnership delivered memorable performances and critical acclaim. As anticipation builds, the makers are expected to unveil more details, including first-look visuals and teaser content, in the coming months.

With its combination of star power, creative storytelling, and musical brilliance, Pocket Nov-



el is shaping up to be a film that could capture both critical attention and audience interest upon release.

## Hey Balwanth Promises Full-On Entertainment, Says Shivani Nagaram



The upcoming entertainer Hey Balwanth is gearing up for its theatrical release on February 20, and the film's leading

lady Shivani Nagaram says audiences can expect a complete package of fun, emotions, and laughter. Headlined by

Suhas alongside Shivani, the film also features senior actor Naresh and anchor Sravanti in key roles.

Backed by producer Bunny Vas and Vamsi Nandipati, the film is produced by B. Narendra Reddy under the Trishul Visionary Studios banner and directed by Gopi Acharya. The project was earlier titled Hey Bhagavan before being renamed Hey Balwanth.

Speaking to the media, Shivani described the film as a light-hearted contrast to her earlier intense roles. She revealed that her character blends innocence with comedy and said the story will keep viewers entertained throughout, while also delivering an emotional father-and-son thread that connects with audiences. "The entire movie will fully entertain, and the climax emotions will touch everyone," she said.

Shivani, who reunites with Suhas after their previous collaboration, expressed confidence in their on-screen chemistry, calling him a supportive co-actor and a strong performer. She added that the comedic elements, particularly the characters played by Naresh and comedian Venela Kishore, will be a major highlight, promising plenty of laughs. According to her, the interval sequence is de-

signed as a surprise moment that will leave audiences delighted.

On choosing the film, Shivani said she prioritizes stories and roles that resonate with her, regardless of scale or star power. She noted that while her first film lacked comedy and her second leaned heavily into humor, Hey Balwanth strikes a balance she found appealing from the moment she heard the script.

Apart from acting, Shivani shared that she has a background in music and classical dance, revealing she is a singer-turned-actor and open to singing opportunities in future projects. Reflecting on her journey, she credited her family's support and said she aims to build a career by choosing quality scripts rather than focusing on quantity.

With colorful visuals, lively performances, and a blend of comedy and emotion, Hey Balwanth is positioned as a wholesome entertainer. As anticipation builds ahead of its release, Shivani expressed hope that the film will continue her successful run and resonate strongly with audiences in theatres.

## Shivoham Wraps Shoot, Moves to Post-Production

The upcoming film Shivoham, spearheaded by filmmaker Vijay Yarramsetti, has officially completed its shooting schedule, marking a major milestone for the production team. Backed by the JC Film Factory, the project is now progressing into post-production, with the makers gearing up for promotional activities ahead of its theatrical release.

Adding to the film's buzz, the team recently unveiled a striking villain look poster to coincide with the festive spirit of Maha Shivaratri, giving audiences a glimpse into the film's intense tone. The movie is planned for a bilingual release in Telugu and Hindi, aiming to reach a wider audience base.

The film features veteran producer-actor Tummalapalli Rama Satyanarayana in a piv-

otal role, alongside a diverse ensemble cast that includes E. V. Prasad, Shirisha, Srilatha, Rani, G. V. V. Siddu, B. Shivashankar, Munesh, Swathi, Muralidhar, Pullayya, Manisha, and Viswanadh Reddy. With a mix of experienced performers and fresh faces, the team promises a narrative packed with drama and strong character arcs.

Apart from directing, Vijay Yarramsetti has taken on multiple responsibilities for Shivoham, handling the story, screenplay, and production, reflecting his personal creative vision for the film. The cinematography is helmed by Satish Pilli, whose visual treatment is expected to enhance the film's thematic depth and visual appeal.

Industry observers note that the completion

of shooting on schedule indicates a smooth production phase, which often translates into a more polished final product. With post-production work now underway, including editing, sound design, and music, the makers are focusing on fine-tuning the film's technical aspects.

While plot details remain under wraps, the title Shivoham and the recently released poster hint at a story with spiritual undertones blended with dramatic elements. The team is expected to announce the official release date and teaser in the coming weeks.

With momentum building and curiosity growing, Shivoham is positioning itself as a notable addition to the upcoming slate of Telugu cinema releases, as audiences await further updates from the makers.



## Omarzai's All-Round Brilliance Guides Afghanistan to First Win, Confirms South Africa's Super 8 Spot

Afghanistan secured their first victory of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 with a thrilling five-wicket win over the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in a Group D encounter in New Delhi. The star of the match was Azmatullah Omarzai, whose outstanding all-round performance played a decisive role in the result and also ensured South Africa's qualification for the Super Eights stage.

After winning the toss and opting to bowl, Afghanistan produced a disciplined effort with the ball. Omarzai led the charge with an exceptional spell, claiming four wickets for just 15 runs. His tight lines and ability to strike at crucial moments restricted the UAE to 160 for 9 in their allotted 20 overs. Despite a fighting 68 from Sohaib Khan and a steady 40 from Alishan Sharafu, the UAE struggled to accelerate against Afghanistan's controlled bowling attack.

In response, Afghanistan's chase began cautiously. Early wickets put them under pressure, leaving the side at 41 for 2 during the Powerplay. Opener Ibrahim Zadran then steadied the innings with a composed 53 off 41 deliveries, anchoring the chase



and keeping the required rate within reach.

As the match entered the final phase, Afghanistan still needed quick runs to seal the contest. Omarzai once again rose to the occasion, delivering a powerful unbeaten knock of 40 off just 21 balls. His aggressive strokeplay in the death overs shifted momentum

firmly in Afghanistan's favour. The team eventually reached 162 for 5 in 19.2 overs, completing the chase with four balls to spare.

The win not only boosted Afghanistan's campaign but also confirmed South Africa's progression to the Super Eights, as the result impacted the group standings. Afghanistan

remain in contention for a place in the next stage, though their qualification may depend on other results.

For the UAE, the defeat was disappointing after a competitive batting performance. Their inability to defend a respectable total ultimately proved costly, particularly against Omarzai's late assault.

Omarzai's match-winning display highlighted his growing importance to Afghanistan's T20 setup. His impact with both bat and ball underscored the value of genuine all-rounders in the shortest format and gave Afghanistan renewed confidence as the tournament moves into its decisive phase.

## Mohammad Yousuf Blasts PCB Politics, Calls Pakistan Cricket's Current Phase 'Darkest Period'



Former Pakistan batting legend Mohammad Yousuf has issued a blistering critique of the country's cricket leadership following Pakistan's heavy 61-run loss to India in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, describing the current state of Pakistan cricket as the "darkest period" in its history.

Yousuf took to social media to express his deep frustration, saying that cricket in Pakistan will not return to its former glory unless political influence and personal agendas are removed from the sport. He stressed that without ending such interference, the national team and cricketing ecosystem will continue to struggle and underperform.

In his message, Yousuf argued that the sport has been held back by decisions driven more by politics than cricketing merit, and that this has contributed to inconsistent performances by the national side, including the recent defeat to India which has left Pakistan's progression in the tournament hanging by a thread.

He specifically took aim at the cricket board's leadership, indirectly criticizing the PCB chairman and interior minister for what he sees as politically influenced decision-making. Yousuf insisted that incompetent individuals, both in administrative roles

and within the team setup, should be removed if Pakistan cricket is to be revived and made competitive again.

The comments reflect broader frustration among former players and fans, who feel that off-field issues have overshadowed cricketing priorities and hindered the development of the national team. Yousuf's remarks have sparked widespread discussion about the need for structural reforms, greater accountability and a focus on merit-based selection and management.

The backlash against current leadership comes at a crucial time for Pakistan's squad, which must now regroup and perform under pressure in its remaining matches to have any chance of advancing to the Super Eights stage of the T20 World Cup.

Yousuf's call for change underscores the intensity of feeling surrounding Pakistan cricket at the moment, with many supporters and pundits echoing his demand that political agendas be set aside in favour of a more professional, cricket-first approach. Whether this public criticism leads to any tangible changes in leadership or strategy remains to be seen, but it has clearly highlighted deep concerns about the direction of the sport in the country.

## After Heavy Defeat to India, Pakistan Stars Face Backlash and Possible Dropping



Pakistan's crushing 61-run loss to arch-rivals India in their ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 clash in Colombo has sparked a furious reaction at home, putting senior players Babar Azam and Shaheen Shah Afridi under intense scrutiny.

The defeat left Pakistan reeling and facing an uphill task to stay alive in the tournament, as they now must beat Namibia in

their final group match to keep hopes of reaching the Super 8 round alive. But it is not just the sporting implications that have dominated headlines back home — strong criticism and calls for drastic action against senior team members have emerged from former cricketers, commentators and fans.

The primary focus of the backlash has been on Babar Azam and Shaheen

Afridi, both of whom failed to make significant contributions in the crucial match against India. Babar, expected to anchor Pakistan's chase, was dismissed cheaply early in the innings, while Afridi, a key bowling spearhead, struggled to make an impact with the ball. Their lacklustre performances have fuelled demands for a shake-up in the batting and bowling order.

Several former Pakistan players and pundits have openly suggested that Babar and Shaheen should be dropped from the remaining T20 World Cup matches if Pakistan are to revive their campaign. There have also been calls to give more opportunities to younger cricketers, with the argument that fresh faces could inject energy and produce results in pressure situations.

The criticism has extended beyond the players to the team management, with some observers questioning selection decisions and overall strategy. In social media discussions and commentary, many fans and analysts have thrown their weight behind the idea of reordering the team's leadership and batting lineup to strengthen performance going forward.

The intense pressure reflects not only Pakistan's disappointing display in the loss but also the broader expectations of fans and former stars alike, who feel the senior players must deliver in marquee matches against major rivals like India. Whether these calls for changes will translate into actual team decisions remains to be seen, but the debate highlights the high stakes and passions surrounding Pakistan's cricketing fortunes in the T20 World Cup.

Pakistan now face a critical match against Namibia, and decisions regarding team composition — particularly the roles of Babar and Shaheen — could prove pivotal for their survival in the tournament.

## Steve Smith Replaces Josh Hazlewood in Australia's T20 World Cup Squad



Australia have made a key change to their ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 squad, bringing veteran batter Steve Smith into the lineup as a replacement for fast bowler Josh Hazlewood. The move comes just ahead of Australia's crucial matches in the tournament, with selectors electing to strengthen the batting lineup at the expense of one of their experienced pacers.

Hazlewood, a seasoned campaigner known for his accuracy and control in limited-overs cricket, has been withdrawn from the squad due to a minor injury concern. While not expected to be sidelined long-term, the team management opted to bring in Smith to provide additional depth and stability in the middle order — particularly as Australia face challenging batting conditions and strong bowling attacks from rival teams.

Steve Smith is one of Australia's most accomplished international batters, renowned for his consistency and adaptability across formats. Although his primary strengths have traditionally been in Test and One-Day cricket, Smith has also proved his worth in T20 competitions around the world with his ability to anchor innings and pace chases. His inclusion is expected to add experience and temperament to Australia's batting unit, especially in high-pressure moments.

The decision reflects a tactical shift by Australian selectors, prioritising batting reinforcement in light of the team's current balance and matchups. Australia's batting lineup already features explosive hitters at the top, but middle-over stability has been an area where the side has sought more solidity — a role Smith is well suited to provide.

With Smith now on board, Australia will look to recalibrate their strategies and batting order to maximise his impact. His presence could prove especially valuable if early wickets fall or if the team needs a composed hand to rebuild innings under pressure.

For Hazlewood, the focus now shifts to recovery and fitness ahead of potential return opportunities later in the tournament or in future fixtures. Given his experience and significance to Australia's bowling attack, team management will monitor his progress closely.

Overall, the inclusion of Steve Smith adds further firepower and leadership to Australia's World Cup campaign, which remains firmly in focus as they seek to defend their title and make a deep run in the competition. Fans and analysts will be watching closely to see how Smith's adaptation to the T20 format impacts Australia's performance in the coming matches.

## 'Deeply Disappointed' Dressing Room: Mike Hesson Opens Up After Pakistan's Heavy Loss to India

Pakistan head coach Mike Hesson has revealed that the team's dressing room was filled with disappointment following their comprehensive 61-run defeat to India in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 clash in Colombo. Describing the mood as subdued and hurting, Hesson admitted that the loss in such a high-profile encounter was difficult for the players to digest.

Speaking after the match, Hesson said the squad understood the magnitude of the India-Pakistan rivalry and what it means to supporters back home. He acknowledged that India outperformed Pakistan in key phases of the game and deserved the victory. The coach conceded that the team failed to execute their plans effectively, particularly under pressure.

Pakistan had entered the contest with confidence after a string of recent T20 wins, but India's dominant batting display quickly shifted the momentum. Despite believing that bowling first was the right decision based on pitch conditions, Hesson admitted that his side struggled to contain India's aggressive approach. Once the target was set, Pakistan's batting unit was unable to mount a serious challenge during the chase.

Hesson emphasised that such defeats are painful but urged his players to regroup quickly. He stressed that tournaments like the T20 World Cup demand mental resilience and the ability to bounce back from setbacks. According to him, dwelling too long on the loss would not help the team's chances moving forward.

The coach also pointed out that improvements are needed in both execution and composure during high-pressure situations. He acknowledged that expectations from senior players are always high in marquee matches, and delivering in such contests is crucial.

With the defeat denting Pakistan's qualification hopes, their upcoming match against Namibia has become a must-win encounter. Hesson made it clear that the focus now shifts to preparing thoroughly for that game and ensuring that the team responds positively.

While the setback against India has intensified scrutiny and criticism, Hesson's comments suggest that the team management remains determined to fight on. The coming match will test not just Pakistan's tactical



readiness but also their ability to recover mentally after what the

coach described as a deeply disappointing night for the squad.