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WEEKLY —
Current
Affairs



NATIONAL NEWS

NHAI to Revise FASTag Annual Pass Fee from 1st April 2026

- **Fee Increase to ₹3,075:** Starting April 1, 2026, the cost of the FASTag Annual Pass will increase from ₹3,000 to ₹3,075. This ₹75 hike is in line with the National Highways Fee Rules, 2008, which allow for annual inflation-linked adjustments.
- **Eligibility and Validity:** The pass remains exclusive to non-commercial vehicles (cars, jeeps, and vans). It is valid for one year or 200 toll crossings, whichever occurs first, and can be used at approximately 1,150 fee plazas across India's National Highways and Expressways.
- **Seamless Activation:** Users can purchase or renew the pass via the Rajmarg Yatra app or the official NHAI website. Once paid, the pass typically activates on the existing FASTag linked to the vehicle within two hours, eliminating the need for frequent balance top-ups for regular commuters.

IISc Professor Becomes 2nd Indian Woman to Scale Highest Volcanic Peak

- **Historic Feat:** On March 6, 2026, Professor Arpita Patra became the second Indian woman and the first Bengali woman to scale Nevado Ojos del Salado. Standing at 6,893 meters on the Chile-Argentina border, it is the highest volcanic peak in the world.
- **Volcanic Seven Summits Journey:** This climb marks her fifth successful summit in her quest to scale the highest volcano on each of the seven continents. She has previously conquered Mt. Kilimanjaro (Africa), Mt. Elbrus (Europe), Mt. Giluwe (Oceania), and Pico de Orizaba (North America).
- **Academic-Adventure Balance:** A full-time professor in the Department of Computer Science and Automation, Patra accomplished this technical climb—which includes a grueling 50-meter rock-climbing section near the summit—while balancing rigorous academic research in cryptography.

Kusunpur to Become Odisha's First Smart Village

- **Location and Scale:** Kusunpur is located in the Rajnagar block of the Kendrapara district, a coastal region highly vulnerable to Bay of Bengal cyclones. The village consists of approximately 130 families with a total population of around 700 people.
- **CSIR Mission Mode Project:** The initiative is led by the CSIR-Central Building Research Institute (CBRI), Roorkee, in collaboration with 13 other specialized CSIR laboratories (such as IMMT Bhubaneswar and CEERI).
- **"Lab to Land" Technology Transfer:** The project is a collaborative effort involving 14 CSIR laboratories across India. A key focus is the "Lab to Land" approach, where scientific teams (such as those from CSIR-IHBT, Palampur) have already begun distributing high-quality seeds and nutritionally enriched products to villagers.

Maharashtra Legislative Assembly passed 'Freedom of Religion Bill, 2026'

- **Stringent Penalties:** The Bill prescribes a jail term of up to 7 years and a fine of ₹1 lakh for unlawful conversions carried out through coercion, fraud, inducement, or marriage. For offences involving minors, women, or persons from SC/ST communities, the fine increases to ₹5 lakh. Repeat offenders can face up to 10 years in prison.
- **Mandatory Advance Notice:** Individuals intending to convert, as well as the person organizing the conversion ceremony, must provide a 60-day prior notice to the District Magistrate. Failure to do so, or failing to submit a post-conversion declaration within 21 days, can render the conversion null and void.
- **Legal Status of Children:** In cases of marriage involving unlawful conversion, the Bill stipulates that any child born of such a union will be deemed to belong to the original religion of the mother prior to the conversion.

Ministry of Culture Launches Gyan Bharatam National Manuscript Survey

- **Largest-ever Mapping Drive:** The survey is a three-month intensive exercise aimed at identifying and documenting an estimated one crore (10 million) manuscripts across India. It is a "district-level" upward operation, targeting manuscripts held not just in museums and libraries, but also in private collections, temples, and monasteries.
- **Technology-Driven Framework:** The mission utilizes the Gyan Bharatam mobile app for real-time data uploading and geo-tagging of manuscript locations. This data will form the backbone of a National Digital Repository (NDR), which uses AI-integrated tools for standardized digitization, metadata creation, and long-term secure storage (using LTO-9 tapes and cloud backups).
- **Institutional Network & Funding:** To ensure professional execution, the government has onboarded a network of 45 specialized centers (28 Cluster Centers and 17 Independent Centers) across 28 States/UTs.

Government of Andhra Pradesh launched the 'Divyang Shakti Yojana'

- **Comprehensive Coverage & Eligibility:** The scheme applies to individuals with more than 40% disability across 21 different categories (including physical, mental, neurological, and rare blood disorders). It is expected to benefit approximately 12.76 lakh people, including 11.16 lakh PwDs and their attendants.
- **Operational Details & Attendant Benefits:** Beneficiaries can travel free of charge in five categories of APSRTC buses: City Ordinary, Metro Express, Palle Velugu, Ultra Palle Velugu, and Express buses. Notably, the scheme also provides a 50% fare concession for one attendant or helper accompanying the person with a disability, ensuring ease of mobility.

- **Strategic Vision & Funding:** Launched by Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu in Amaravati, the scheme is billed as an "Ugadi Gift" focused on "last-mile dignity." It follows the success of the Stree Shakti (free travel for women) initiative.

GSI declares Kalinjar fort hill as National Geo-Heritage site

- **Geological Significance (Vindhyan Supergroup):** The Kalinjar hill is composed of massive Bundelkhand Gneiss and sedimentary rocks belonging to the Vindhyan Supergroup, dating back nearly 1.6 billion to 2.5 billion years. The GSI cited its unique "geomorphological features"—including natural caves and weathering patterns—as a rare record of the Earth's early crustal evolution.
- **Intersection of Heritage and Science:** While famous for its 10th-century Chandela-era fort and the Neelkanth Temple, the site is now recognized for its "Scientific Value." This status ensures that the natural rock formations and the hill's geological integrity are protected under the Geo-heritage Sites and Geo-relics (Preservation and Maintenance) Act, preventing any mining or construction that could damage the ancient strata.
- **Boost to Geo-Tourism:** With this declaration, Kalinjar joins an elite list of approximately 35 National Geo-Heritage sites in India (such as the Lonar Lake in Maharashtra and the Fossil Parks in Himachal).

Union Cabinet of India approved Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna

- **Development of 100 Plug-and-Play Parks:** The scheme allocates ₹33,660 crore to develop 100 world-class industrial parks over the next six years (FY 2026–27 to 2031–32). These "plug-and-play" ecosystems provide pre-approved land and ready infrastructure—including internal roads, underground utilities, and factory sheds—enabling businesses to move from "intent to production" almost immediately.
- **Financial Support & Scale:** The Centre will provide a grant of up to ₹1 crore per acre for core infrastructure and up to 25% of the project cost for external connectivity (roads/rail). The parks will typically range from 100 to 1,000 acres, though a lower threshold of 25 acres has been set for hilly and North-Eastern states to ensure inclusive regional growth.
- **Challenge-Based Selection & Sustainability:** To ensure high quality, projects will be selected via a "Challenge Mode" based on state reforms and investment readiness.

Government Enacts Online Gaming Act 2025 To Prohibit Money Games

- **Comprehensive Prohibition on Money Games:** The Act imposes a total ban on all forms of online money games, whether they are based on chance, skill, or a combination of both. This effectively dismantles the multi-billion dollar "real-money gaming" (RMG) sector in India.

- **Establishment of the Online Gaming Authority of India:** A new national-level regulatory body has been created with quasi-judicial powers (akin to a civil court). This Authority is responsible for classifying games, maintaining a transparent registry.
- **Extraterritorial Jurisdiction:** The Act is designed with a "global reach" clause. It applies not only to companies registered in India but also to offshore gaming platforms operating from outside the country if they are accessible to Indian users.

Tamil Nadu Becomes Top Textile Exporter for FY25

- **Significant National Share:** The state now accounts for 21.84% of India's total textile exports, which were valued at \$36,610 million (\$36.61 billion) globally for the same period. This dominant share underscores the state's role as the primary engine of India's textile trade.
- **The "Textile Valley" Ecosystem:** This growth is driven by the state's integrated supply chain clusters, particularly the "Textile Valley" consisting of Coimbatore, Tiruppur, Erode, and Karur. Tiruppur alone contributes nearly 50% of India's cotton knitwear exports, benefiting from a high concentration of spinning mills, garment units, and dyeing facilities in close proximity.
- **Policy and Market Drivers:** The state government attributed this success to the "Dravidian Model" of governance, specifically targeting the MSME sector through the New Integrated Textile Policy.

Uttar Pradesh Signs Reform-Linked MoU Under Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0

- **Structure of JJM 2.0:** This next phase of the mission (approved by the Union Cabinet on March 10, 2026) extends the program until December 2028 with a massive total outlay of ₹8.69 lakh crore. The focus has shifted from "infrastructure creation" (Phase 1) to "assured service delivery" and long-term sustainability.
- **11 Key Structural Reforms:** The MoU outlines 11 specific reform areas that UP must implement to unlock funding. These include creating a Service Utility Framework for rural water supply, adopting Digital Data Governance, and establishing a "Research, Innovation, and Knowledge Ecosystem" to handle local water challenges.
- **The "Jal Arpan" Process:** A critical condition of the MoU is the formal transition of water systems to local communities. Completed piped water schemes must be handed over to Gram Panchayats or Village Water and Sanitation Committees (VWSCs) through a standardized "Jal Arpan" process, ensuring that the people who use the water also manage its maintenance.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Jose Antonio Kast Rist Took Oath as President of Chile

- **Sharpest Rightward Shift Since 1990:** Kast's assumption of office represents Chile's most pronounced shift to the right since the return to democracy following the Pinochet era. He succeeds Gabriel Boric, a left-wing leader who left office with low approval ratings, signaling a public rejection of the previous administration's progressive agenda.
- **Landslide Electoral Mandate:** Kast secured the presidency after a resounding victory in the December 2025 runoff against Communist Party candidate Jeannette Jara. He won with roughly 58% of the vote, achieving one of the highest vote shares in Chile's modern history by campaigning on a platform of "security, order, and freedom."
- **"Emergency Government" Focus:** In his first speech from the La Moneda Palace, Kast declared an "emergency government" aimed at tackling public safety and irregular migration.

U.S. & South Korea Kick Off Massive Joint Military Exercise 'Freedom Shield'

- **Massive Scale and Duration:** The 11-day exercise (running until March 19) involves roughly 18,000 South Korean troops alongside thousands of U.S. personnel. Despite current U.S. military focus on escalating conflicts in the Middle East, the scale of this drill remains a "massive" display of coordination aimed at deterring North Korean aggression.
- **"All-Domain" Operational Focus:** Unlike traditional drills, Freedom Shield 26 focuses on a multi-domain environment, integrating land, sea, air, space, and cyber elements. Key events include combined airborne operations with the 11th Airborne Division (deploying from Alaska) and the first-ever integration of advanced ROK-U.S. bridging equipment during dynamic river-crossing exercises.
- **Heightened Regional Tensions:** The drills have sparked a strong reaction from Pyongyang. On March 14, North Korea launched a suspected ballistic missile toward the Sea of Japan as a direct protest.

22 Year Old Surya Midha Breaks Mark Zuckerberg Record

- **Youngest Self-Made Billionaire:** At 22, Surya Midha broke the record previously held by Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg (who became a billionaire at 23). With an estimated net worth of \$2.2 billion, he is the youngest member of a trio of founders—including Brendan Foody and Adarsh Hiremath—to debut on the Forbes 2026 list.
- **AI-Driven Success (Mercor):** Midha is the co-founder and board chairman of Mercor, a San Francisco-based AI hiring platform. Founded in 2023, the startup reached a \$10 billion valuation in late 2025. The platform uses AI to automate recruitment, including conducting interviews via AI avatars and matching candidates with specialized roles in major tech labs like OpenAI.
- **Thiel Fellowship & Background:** Midha and his co-founders are recipients of the Thiel Fellowship, which provides \$100,000 to young entrepreneurs who drop out of college to build businesses.

58-Foot Bronze Statue of Potti Sriramulu unveiled

- **The "Statue of Sacrifice":** Named the Statue of Sacrifice, the monument stands exactly 58 feet tall, symbolically representing the 58-day hunger strike Sriramulu undertook in 1952. His sacrifice led to the creation of a separate Andhra State from the Madras Presidency and paved the way for the linguistic reorganization of states across India.
- **Location and Construction:** The statue is located at Shakhamura Park in Amaravati, covering a 6.8-acre site. It was constructed by the Potti Sriramulu Memorial Trust in a record time of six months, using 26 tonnes of bronze and 42 tonnes of iron. It is noted as the first major monumental sculpture installed in the greenfield capital.
- **Memorial Project Phases:** This unveiling marks the completion of the first phase of a ₹150 crore project. The second phase will include a museum, a photo gallery, an auditorium, and a skill development center.

Asia's Largest Tulip Garden Inaugurated in Srinagar

- **Asia's Largest Record-Breaking Display:** Spanning approximately 30 hectares (74 acres) at the foothills of the Zabarwan Range, the garden is officially recognized by the World Book of Records (London) as the largest of its kind in Asia. For the 2026 season, a record 1.8 million tulip bulbs comprising over 70 varieties have been planted, including a significant portion imported from the Netherlands.
- **Early Bloom & Extended Variety:** Due to an unusually warm February, the garden opened nearly 10 days ahead of schedule. In addition to the massive tulip display, the 2026 show features nearly one lakh other bulbous flowers, such as daffodils, hyacinths, muscari, and ranunculus, to create a more diverse and continuous "sheet of flowers" effect across the seven terraces.
- **New Visitor Facilities:** For the first time, the Floriculture Department has introduced online ticket booking to manage the heavy footfall (which surpassed 8.25 lakh visitors last year).

Vikram K Doraiswami appointed as Ambassador of India to the People's Republic of China

- **Seasoned Diplomatic Profile:** A 1992-batch Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer, Doraiswami is currently serving as India's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom. He will succeed the incumbent ambassador, Pradeep Kumar Rawat, and is expected to take up the assignment in Beijing shortly.
- **Extensive Regional Expertise:** This appointment marks a return to China for Doraiswami. He previously served at the Indian Embassy in Beijing for four years (1996–2000) and holds a diploma in the Chinese language from the Chinese University of Hong Kong. His past roles include serving as Ambassador to South Korea and Uzbekistan, and High Commissioner to Bangladesh.

- **Strategic Timing:** His appointment comes at a critical juncture as India and China continue high-level diplomatic engagements to resolve the prolonged border standoff in eastern Ladakh.

Indian educator & Alakh Pandey makes Forbes World's Billionaires List 2026

- **Billionaire Debut at 34:** Following PhysicsWallah's successful Initial Public Offering (IPO) in November 2025, Alakh Pandey entered the global rich list with a net worth of \$1 billion. At 34 years old, he is recognized as one of India's youngest self-made billionaires, ranking 3,332 globally.
- **India's Billionaire Surge:** Pandey is part of a record-breaking year for India, which produced 229 billionaires in 2026 (up from 200 in 2025). India now maintains the third-highest number of billionaires globally, trailing only the United States and China. Notably, his co-founder Prateek Maheshwari also joined the list this year.
- **The "YouTube to IPO" Journey:** Forbes highlighted Pandey's unconventional path as an engineering college dropout (from HBTI Kanpur) who started teaching on a YouTube channel in 2016.

Elon Musk Tops Globally in Forbes World's Billionaires List 2026

- **Record-Breaking Net Worth:** Elon Musk's net worth reached a staggering \$839 billion, making him the richest person ever documented by Forbes. He is the first individual in history to surpass the \$800 billion milestone, putting him on a clear trajectory to potentially become the world's first trillionaire.
- **Massive Wealth Surge:** His fortune increased by approximately \$500 billion in just one year. This "meteoric rise" was primarily driven by the soaring valuation of Tesla and the strategic merger of his space company, SpaceX, with his AI startup, xAI. SpaceX is reportedly targeting an IPO valuation of around \$1.5 trillion later in 2026.
- **Dominance Over Peers:** The gap between Musk and the rest of the list has widened significantly. His wealth is now more than three times that of the world's second-richest person, Google co-founder Larry Page (\$257 billion).

DEFENCE NEWS

India Participates in Sea Dragon Naval Exercise 2026

- **Multi-National Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW):** Hosted at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, the exercise brings together five key Indo-Pacific partners: the USA, India, Australia, Japan, and New Zealand. It focuses on advanced "submarine hunting" drills, progressing from tracking simulated targets to detecting and monitoring a live submarine in deep-water environments.
- **The "Dragon Belt" Competition:** The exercise features a competitive format where participating aircrews are graded on their speed, tracking accuracy, and seamless

coordination. The highest-scoring unit is awarded the prestigious Dragon Belt. Notably, the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) is the defending champion, having won the belt in 2025.

- **High-Intensity Training & Interoperability:** The drill involves over 200 cumulative hours of in-flight training. It leverages the commonality of the Boeing P-8 platform used by the US, India, Australia, and New Zealand, alongside Japan's Kawasaki P-1.

Indian Navy launches IOS SAGAR 2026

- **Expanded Participation (IONS Chairmanship):** This edition coincides with India assuming the chairmanship of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) in February 2026. Consequently, the program has expanded significantly, featuring participation from naval personnel of 16 IONS member nations, up from 10 countries in the inaugural 2025 edition.
- **Operational Training Model:** The initiative is designed as a "living" operational engagement. It begins with professional training at naval establishments in Kochi, followed by a sea phase where international personnel are embedded onboard an Indian Naval Ship. They train and sail alongside Indian crews, participating in real-time navigation, seamanship, and maritime security drills.
- **Strategic Vision (MAHASAGAR):** IOS SAGAR is a key operational pillar of India's broader maritime vision—SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region).

Indian Army Conducts Exercise 'Amogh Jwala' at Babina Field Firing Ranges

- **Technology-Driven Mechanised Warfare:** The 13-day exercise was executed by the White Tiger Division to validate "multi-domain" operational capabilities. It focused on the seamless integration of traditional mechanised forces with advanced technologies, including Apache attack helicopters, fighter aircraft, and unmanned aerial systems (UAS).
- **First-Time Operational Validations:** A major marker of this exercise was the first-time validation of attack helicopters operating in direct, integrated synergy with mechanised units. It also tested counter-drone systems and network-enabled battlefield platforms designed to shorten decision cycles and deliver "decisive combat effect" in real-time.
- **Focus on the "Future-Ready" Force:** The culmination was witnessed by Lieutenant General Dhiraj Seth (GOC-in-C, Southern Command). He emphasized that the drills successfully fused Electronic Warfare (EW), Air Defence (AD), and night-fighting capabilities.

BANKING NEWS

RBI Wins 'Initiative of the Year' Award for '.bank.in' Domain Rollout

- **Global First in Cyber-Security:** With this initiative, India became the first country globally to mandate a secure, exclusive, and verifiable internet domain specifically for its banking system. The award recognizes this as a "global benchmark" in financial cybersecurity, helping to strike a major blow against phishing and domain-spoofing frauds.
- **Mandatory Migration & Exclusivity:** The RBI mandated that all licensed banks—including public, private, small finance, and foreign banks—migrate their official websites and net banking portals to the .bank.in extension by October 31, 2025. Only RBI-regulated entities are permitted to use this domain, ensuring that any URL ending in .bank.in is a guarantee of legitimacy for the consumer.
- **Collaborative Implementation:** The rollout was executed through a high-level collaboration involving the National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI) and the Institute for Development and Research in Banking Technology (IDRBT), which serves as the exclusive registrar.

Keki M. Mistry appointed Interim Chairman of HDFC Bank

- **Sudden Resignation of Atanu Chakraborty:** The appointment follows the abrupt resignation of the previous Part-time Chairman, Atanu Chakraborty, on March 18, 2026. In his resignation letter, the former IAS officer and ex-Finance Secretary cited "certain happenings and practices within the bank" over the last two years that were "not in congruence" with his personal values and ethics.
- **Interim Tenure and Experience:** Keki Mistry has been appointed for a specific interim period of three months. A qualified Chartered Accountant with over 40 years of experience, Mistry is a stalwart of the HDFC group, having previously served as the Vice Chairman and CEO of HDFC Limited before its historic \$40 billion merger with HDFC Bank in 2023.
- **Focus on Governance Continuity:** The RBI's swift approval of Mistry—who was already a Non-Executive Director on the board—is seen as a move to ensure stability at India's largest private-sector lender.

SPORTS NEWS

Sarfaraz Ahmed Announces Retirement from Int. Cricket

- **Historic Leadership Milestone:** Sarfaraz is the only Pakistan captain to win two major ICC tournament finals against India. He led Pakistan to victory in the 2006 Under-19 World Cup and the 2017 ICC Champions Trophy. Under his captaincy, Pakistan also achieved a world-record streak of 11 consecutive T20I series victories and reached the No. 1 spot in the ICC T20I rankings.
- **Statistical Legacy:** Having made his debut in 2007, Sarfaraz represented Pakistan in 100 matches as captain across all formats. He finished his international career with 6,164 runs

(including 6 centuries) and a total of 371 dismissals (315 catches and 56 stumpings) as a wicketkeeper. His last international appearance was the Perth Test against Australia in December 2023.

- **Transition to Coaching and Selection:** His retirement follows his recent appointment to the PCB's revamped four-member national selection committee on March 5, 2026.

India topped medal tally at World Para Athletics Grand Prix 2026

- **Record-Breaking Medal Haul (New Delhi):** India finished the New Delhi leg (March 11–13, 2026) with a massive total of 208 medals, including 75 gold, 69 silver, and 64 bronze. This placed India far ahead of Russia (35 medals) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (3 medals).
- **Standout Performers:** Double Paralympic bronze medallist Preeti Pal was a star of the meet, clinching two gold medals (including the women's 200m T35–T37). Other major gold medallists included Paralympic champions Sumit Antil (Javelin F64), Praveen Kumar (High Jump), and Navdeep (Javelin F41).
- **Strategic Global Context:** The 2026 Grand Prix circuit serves as a critical qualification and classification platform for the upcoming 2026 World Para Athletics Championships and the 2028 Los Angeles Paralympics.

Sumit Antil won gold in men's javelin throw at World Para Athletics Grand Prix 2026

- **Leading an All-Indian Podium:** Competing in the combined F43/F44/F64 category, Antil secured gold with a powerful throw of 69.25 meters. His performance led a clean sweep for India, with compatriots Pushpendra Singh (56.91m) and Poonam Ram (49.48m) taking silver and bronze, respectively.
- **Exceeding "Off-Season" Expectations:** Antil noted that the result was better than anticipated, as he is currently in an "off-season loading phase" of training. He had expected a throw in the range of 67–68 meters but managed to surpass that mark despite not being at his competitive peak.
- **Targeting the 75m Milestone:** Following this win, Antil reaffirmed his ultimate goal: becoming the first para-javelin thrower in history to breach the 75-meter mark. He plans to use upcoming international events, including the Nottwil Grand Prix in May, to build momentum toward this historic target for the 2026 Asian Para Games.

India to Host World Indoor Athletics Championships 2028

- **Host City & Venue:** The championships will be held in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, at the Kalinga Indoor Athletics Stadium. Completed in 2024, it is the largest indoor athletics stadium in South Asia and has received Category 1 certification from World Athletics.

- **A Historic First for India:** This marks the first time India will host a global track and field championship. India will also become only the fourth Asian nation to host this biennial event, following Japan (1999), Qatar (2010), and China (2025).
- **Strategic Bid Win:** India's bid, led by the Athletics Federation of India (AFI), successfully beat out competition from New Zealand. The decision was announced during the 240th World Athletics Council Meeting in Toruń, Poland, ahead of the 2026 edition.

AWARD NEWS

Tamil Poet & Lyricist Vairamuthu Wins Jnanpith Award 2025

- **A Historic "First" for Tamil Poetry:** While he is the third Tamil writer to receive India's highest literary honor (following Akilan in 1975 and Jayakanthan in 2002), he is the first to win it specifically for Tamil poetry. The previous two recipients were primarily recognized for their prose and novels.
- **Ending a 24-Year Wait:** This award returns to Tamil Nadu after a nearly quarter-century gap. The last Tamil recipient, Jayakanthan, was honored in 2002. Vairamuthu dedicated the win to "Tamil society and its people," noting that it fulfills a long-standing desire for Tamil poetry to be recognized at this national level.
- **Recognition of a Prolific Career:** The honor acknowledges his vast literary contribution, which includes over 37 books and roughly 7,500 film songs. Notable works highlighted by the committee include his Sahitya Akademi-winning novel KallikattuIthikasam, as well as KaruvachiKaaviyam and Thanneer Desam.

Jessie Buckley Wins Best Actress at Oscars 2026

- **Historic Win for Ireland:** Buckley made history as the first Irish performer ever to win the Oscar for Best Actress. While Irish actors have been nominated in this category before (such as Saoirse Ronan and Ruth Negga), Buckley is the first to take home the statuette.
- **Role in Hamnet:** She won for her portrayal of Agnes Shakespeare, the wife of William Shakespeare, in Chloé Zhao's adaptation of Maggie O'Farrell's bestselling novel. The film explores the couple's grief following the death of their 11-year-old son, Hamnet.
- **A "Mother's Day" Dedication:** Since the ceremony coincided with Mother's Day in the UK and Ireland, Buckley delivered an emotional speech dedicating the award to the "beautiful chaos of a mother's heart."

Indian Animated Film CHYIMI Wins Best Director Award

- **Policeman-Director Profile:** The film was directed by Dr. Partha Sarathi Mahanta, a senior IPS officer currently serving as the Inspector General of Police (IGP) in Assam

and the Commissioner of Police, Guwahati. His achievement highlights a unique blend of public service and creative excellence.

- **Global Recognition for Regional Stories:** CHYIMI is an Assamese-language animated short. The award recognizes its artistic direction and its ability to present a narrative rooted in local Assamese culture that resonates with a global audience, proving that animation can transcend linguistic and geographical boundaries.
- **NYSAF and International Exposure:** The New York Short Animation Festival (NYSAF) is a prestigious platform for innovative storytelling. Through the festival's partnership with Cine Universitario UACJ in Mexico, CHYIMI will also receive special screenings in Mexico, further expanding the international footprint of Indian regional animation.

RITES Wins National Mobility Award 2026

- **Award Category:** RITES received the award in the "Metro, Rail & Multimodal Integration" category. This recognition highlights the company's excellence in designing future-ready, sustainable, and integrated transport systems that provide seamless connectivity across different modes of travel.
- **Context of the Win:** The award was presented during the 2nd Elets National Mobility Summit & Awards, organized in collaboration with the Telangana Transport Department. The summit focused on the "MAHASAGAR" framework and India's vision for smart, modern infrastructure under PM Gati Shakti, where RITES' role in urban transit and logistics planning was singled out as a benchmark.
- **Triple Recognition in 2026:** This is the third major accolade for RITES in early 2026. Previously, on January 30, it won the "Excellence in Sustainable Engineering" award for its work on the USBRL (Kashmir Rail Link) project.

Tata Group Chairman N Chandrasekaran receives honorary Knighthood

- **The Honor (KBE):** Chandrasekaran was presented with the insignia of the Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (KBE). The award was presented by the British High Commissioner to India, Lindy Cameron, on behalf of King Charles III at a ceremony in New Delhi.
- **Recognition of Economic Impact:** The award recognizes his leadership in driving massive investments in the UK. The Tata Group is one of the largest Indian employers in Britain, with 19 subsidiaries (including iconic brands like Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) and Tetley) and over 70,000 employees. Key recent milestones include the £4 billion electric vehicle battery gigafactory in Somerset and a £1.25 billion investment in green steelmaking at Port Talbot.
- **"Honorary" Distinction:** As a foreign national, the knighthood is "honorary." While it is one of the highest honors awarded by the British Sovereign, recipients are not permitted

to use the title "Sir" or "Dame" before their name; instead, they may use the post-nominal letters "KBE" after their name.

Former Indian Ambassador Jawed Ashraf Conferred France's Legion d'honneur Rank of 'Commandeur

- **Highest French Distinction:** The Legion d'honneur is France's highest civilian and military honor. Jawed Ashraf was elevated to the rank of Commandeur, which is a rare and prestigious promotion from the rank of Officier he received previously. It recognizes his "exceptional contribution" to elevating the India-France Strategic Partnership to historic heights.
- **Key Architect of Strategic Ties:** Serving as India's Ambassador to France from 2020 to 2025, Ashraf played a central role in several landmark agreements, including the Horizon 2047 Roadmap, the fast-tracked delivery of Rafale fighter jets, and the expansion of the civil nuclear partnership at Jaitapur.
- **Symbol of Diplomatic Success:** The award was presented by the French Foreign Minister during a special ceremony in Paris.

Professor Kaveh Madani Named 2026 Stockholm Water Prize Laureate

- **Historic Milestones:** At 44 years old, Madani is the youngest laureate in the prize's 35-year history. He also holds the distinction of being the first United Nations official and the first former politician (having served as Iran's Deputy Head of the Department of Environment) to receive this prestigious award.
- **The "Water Bankruptcy" Concept:** Madani is globally recognized for coining the term "water bankruptcy." Unlike a temporary "water crisis," this framework describes a chronic, systemic, and often irreversible state where water systems have "overspent" their natural hydrological means. His 2026 Global Water Bankruptcy Report shifted the global narrative from short-term crisis management to long-term systemic governance.
- **Integrating Game Theory:** The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences cited his pioneering work in integrating game theory and decision analysis into water management.

APPOINTMENT & PERSON IN NEWS

Govt appoints KV Ramana Murty as member of SEBI

- **Three-Year Tenure:** Murty has been appointed for a period of three years from the date he assumes charge, or until further orders. His appointment was approved by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) on March 11, 2026, filling a key vacancy on the regulator's board.
- **Vast Administrative Background:** A 1991-batch officer of the Indian Defence Accounts Service (IDAS), Murty previously served as the Additional Controller General

of Defence Accounts. He is not new to SEBI, having earlier served as a part-time member on the board as a representative of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.

- **Strengthening the SEBI Board:** With his induction, the SEBI board now has its full quota of four whole-time members (joining Kamlesh Chandra Varshney, Amarjeet Singh, and Sandip Pradhan).

Dr Santosh Kumar Singh appointed as DIG in CISF

- **Profile and Cadre:** Dr. Santosh Kumar Singh is a 2011-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of the Chhattisgarh cadre. Prior to this central deputation, he served as the DIG (CCTNS/SCRB) at the Chhattisgarh Police Headquarters and has held leadership roles (SSP/SP) in major districts like Raipur, Bilaspur, and Korba.
- **National Recognition (Nijat Campaign):** He is widely recognized for launching the "Nijat" campaign, an intensive anti-drug and de-addiction initiative. The campaign earned international acclaim, including the prestigious IACP Award (International Association of Chiefs of Police), for its effectiveness in combining strict law enforcement with community-based counseling.
- **Appointment Terms:** His appointment to the CISF is on a deputation basis for a period of five years (or until further orders).

Arun Mammen Re elected as the ATMA Chairman

- **Continuation of Leadership:** Arun Mammen, the Vice Chairman and Managing Director of MRF Ltd, has been re-elected as the Chairman of ATMA. This marks his second consecutive term leading the apex body of the Indian tyre industry, having first taken over the role during ATMA's Golden Jubilee year in 2025.
- **New Vice Chairman:** Rajarshi Moitra, the Managing Director of Bridgestone India Pvt Ltd, has been appointed as the new Vice Chairman. Moitra succeeds Hiroshi Yoshizane, reflecting the association's strategy of involving both major domestic and international tyre manufacturers in its leadership structure.
- **Change in Executive Leadership:** Along with the chairman's re-election, Sanjay Chatterjee (previously Assistant Director General) has been elevated to the post of Director General of ATMA. He will take over on April 1, 2026, following the retirement of long-serving Director General Rajiv Budhraja on March 31.

Uniqlo appoints Jasprit Bumrah as Brand Ambassador for India

- **LifeWear Philosophy:** The partnership is centered on Uniqlo's "LifeWear" philosophy, which focuses on creating simple, high-quality, and functional clothing designed to improve everyday life. The collaboration highlights the synergy between Bumrah's off-field persona—characterized by quiet confidence and authenticity—and the brand's minimalist aesthetic.

- **AIRism Campaign:** The association kicked off with a major campaign for the AIRism Oversized T-shirt. A 30-second campaign film was released showing Bumrah in relaxed, everyday moments off the field, drawing a parallel between his consistent excellence as a fast bowler and the effortless comfort of the AIRism range.
- **Strategic Market Expansion:** This move is part of Uniqlo's strategy to deepen its engagement with the Indian market and reach a wider audience beyond metropolitan centers. Bumrah joins a prestigious list of Uniqlo global ambassadors that includes tennis legend Roger Federer, British tennis star Emma Raducanu, and former Indian cricketer Rahul Dravid.

Himachal Government Signs MoU with Dairy Board to Boost Dairy Sector

- **Infrastructure Expansion & "Him" Brand:** A major centerpiece of this deal is the construction of a ₹250 crore fully automated milk processing plant at Dhagwar (Kangra district).
- **Digital Transformation (ERP):** The third MoU focuses on implementing Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software within Milkfed (HP State Cooperative Milk Producers' Federation).
- **Enhanced Procurement Incentives (Dugdh Protsahan Yojana):** To encourage local production, the government has introduced a direct incentive of ₹3 per litre for farmers who transport their milk personally to procurement centers.

Tata Steel Signs MoU with USTB to Develop Low-Carbon Steelmaking Technologies

- **"Cradle of China's Steel Industry":** The partner institution, USTB (founded in 1952), is a premier research university known as the "Cradle of China's Steel Industry." The partnership will leverage USTB's specialized experimental and pilot-scale facilities to test new metallurgical ideas before they are scaled up for industrial use at Tata Steel's plants.
- **Global Decarbonization Roadmap:** This move aligns with Tata Steel's broader goal of achieving Net Zero by 2045. By partnering with a leading global academic institution.
- **Synergy with the "Hisarna" Project:** This collaboration enhances Tata Steel's Hisarna technology by integrating Carbon Capture (CCS) and Hydrogen-based reduction, aiming to transition from low-carbon to near-zero emission steel production.

NBSL appoints Mahendra Singh Dhoni as Brand Ambassador for BHIM App

- **"Bharat Ka Apna Payments App" Campaign:** The partnership is part of a major rebranding and expansion effort to position BHIM as "Bharat Ka Apna Payments App." The goal is to move beyond being just a functional tool and become the preferred digital payment choice for every Indian household, especially in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities.

- **Focus on Trust and Inclusivity:** The selection of MS Dhoni is a strategic move to leverage his national reputation for trust, reliability, and composure—qualities the app wants to associate with digital transactions. To drive financial inclusion, the app has been optimized for low-connectivity environments and now supports more than 15 regional languages.
- **Strategic Growth Phase:** As BHIM approaches a decade of operations, NBSL (led by MD & CEO Lalitha Nataraj) aims to use this association to deepen user confidence and scale adoption.

Ravi Mittal appointed as Deputy Secretary at PMO

- **Officer Profile & Background:** Ravi Mittal is a 2016-batch IAS officer of the Chhattisgarh cadre. Notably, he holds an MBBS degree from Maulana Azad Medical College (Delhi) and an M.A. in Public Management from JNU. He is recognized as a young, tech-savvy bureaucrat who cleared the UPSC exam in his first attempt without formal coaching.
- **Key Previous Roles:** Before this central deputation, he served in high-profile roles in Chhattisgarh, including Commissioner of Public Relations and Joint Secretary in the Chief Minister's Secretariat. He also earned significant acclaim as the District Collector of Jashpur (the home district of CM Vishnu Deo Sai), where he implemented innovative "Rural Industrial Parks" and the "Jash Pure" branding initiative for tribal self-help groups.
- **Recognition of Excellence:** His elevation to the PMO follows his receipt of the Excellence in Governance Award (2025) in the category of Startups and Innovation.

Railway Board appoints Sudeep Prasad as GM at DFCCIL

- **Designation and Tenure:** Sudeep Prasad has been appointed as the Additional General Manager (Commercial Coordination) at DFCCIL's Corporate Office in Noida. The appointment is for a standard deputation period of three years, or until further orders, whichever is earlier.
- **Professional Background:** He is a 2010-batch officer of the Indian Railway Service of Mechanical Engineers (IRSME). Prior to this move, he was serving at the policy level as Director (Efficiency & Research) within the Railway Board. His career includes extensive experience in rolling stock maintenance and operational efficiency, notably serving as Director of Planning (Mechanical) and in various leadership roles within Central Railway.
- **Strategic Objective:** His move to DFCCIL is aimed at strengthening commercial coordination and project execution as India accelerates its freight infrastructure vision.

OBITUARY NEWS

Former AIFF General Secretary Kushal Das passed away

- **Longest-Serving General Secretary:** A Chartered Accountant by profession, Das served as the General Secretary of the AIFF for 12 years (2010–2022). His tenure was one of the longest in the federation's history, during which he oversaw the structural modernization of "Football House" and the creation of several new administrative departments.
- **Architect of Major Tournaments:** He played a pivotal role in bringing world-class football to India, most notably serving as a key organizer for the 2017 FIFA U-17 World Cup, which set global attendance records. He also secured the hosting rights for the 2022 AFC Women's Asian Cup and the 2022 FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup.
- **Commercial and Youth Development:** Das was instrumental in securing the landmark marketing partnership with Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL) in 2010, which led to the launch of the Indian Super League (ISL).

Veteran Bollywood Actress Madhu Malhotra passed away

- **Versatile Career and Iconic Appearance:** Over a career spanning more than 100 films, her most memorable screen presence was in the 1983 blockbuster Hero. She lip-synced the legendary "gypsy woman" role in the iconic song Lambi Judaai, which remains a cult classic in Indian cinema.
- **Key Roles in Major Hits:** She was a regular collaborator with directors like Subhash Ghai and Anil Sharma. She is highly regarded for her role as "Budh's ladylove" in the multi-starrer Satta Pe Satta (1982) and featured in several other hits including Karz, The Great Gambler, Vishwanath, and Vidhaata.
- **Final Years and Legacy:** Having debuted in the 1975 horror film Andhera, she eventually moved away from the limelight in the late 1990s.

Legendary Actor & Martial Artist Chuck Norris passed away

- **Martial Arts Pioneer:** Before his Hollywood career, Norris was a world-class fighter. He was a six-time undefeated World Professional Middleweight Karate Champion (1968–1974) and founded his own martial arts system, Chun Kuk Do (now the Chuck Norris System). He held high-ranking black belts in multiple disciplines, including Tang Soo Do, Taekwondo, and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu.
- **Iconic Film & TV Career:** He rose to global fame after his legendary "Colosseum fight" against Bruce Lee in The Way of the Dragon (1972). He went on to headline 1980s action blockbusters like Missing in Action and The Delta Force. However, he is perhaps most beloved for his eight-season run as Cordell Walker in the hit CBS series "Walker, Texas Ranger" (1993–2001).