



# Daily Current Affairs

26<sup>th</sup> Feb 2026



## BANKING, FINANCE & BUSINESS

### Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman launches NMP 2.0 asset monetisation pipeline in New Delhi

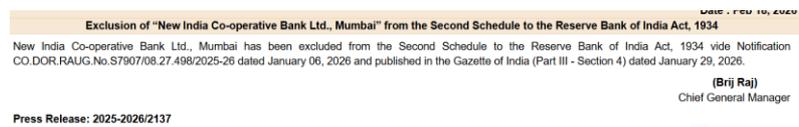
- **Nirmala Sitharaman**, Union Minister of Finance (MoF), launched the second phase of the National Monetisation Pipeline called **National Monetisation Pipeline 2.0 (NMP 2.0)** in New Delhi.
- **NMP 2.0** focuses on **asset monetisation**, which means using **under-utilised or existing infrastructure assets** to generate government revenue and attract fresh investments for economic development.
- The pipeline was formulated by **NITI Aayog** in consultation with infrastructure ministries, aligned with the **Asset Monetisation Plan 2025–30** announced in the **Union Budget 2025–26**.
- The **NMP 2.0 target** estimates an aggregate monetisation potential of **₹16.72 lakh crore**, including private sector investment of **₹5.8 lakh crore**, during **FY 2025–26 to FY 2029–30**.
- The target under **NMP 2.0** is **2.6 times higher** than the target under NMP 1.0.
- The Finance Minister stated that **NMP 1.0** achieved nearly **90%** of its **₹6 lakh crore** target, demonstrating successful implementation of asset monetisation reforms.
- The initiative supports the vision of **Viksit Bharat @2047** by promoting **accelerated infrastructure development** and economic growth momentum.
- **Asset monetisation** helps in **recycling productive public assets**, enabling **capital expenditure (CAPEX)** funding while reducing budgetary pressure on the government.
- The policy aims to **mobilise funds** for new infrastructure projects and support **sustainable economic expansion** through public asset value unlocking.

FM Nirmala Sitharaman Launches Second Phase Of Asset Monetisation Pipeline Of Central Ministries & Public Sector Entities



### New India Co-operative Bank Limited removed from Second Schedule of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 from February 2026

- **New India Co-operative Bank Limited., Mumbai, Maharashtra** has been removed from the **Second Schedule** of the **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934**, which lists **scheduled banks** in India, effective from **February 2026**.
- Removal from the **Second Schedule** means the bank loses its status as a **scheduled bank**, along with privileges such as access to **RBI refinance facilities** and participation in **monetary policy operations** and **liquidity support mechanisms**.
- **Scheduled bank status** is granted under **Section 42** of the **RBI Act, 1934**, subject to fulfilment of requirements such as **minimum capital, reserve maintenance, and regulatory compliance norms**.
- **Exclusion from the schedule** follows the bank's **voluntary amalgamation** with **Saraswat Co-operative Bank Ltd.**, which was approved in **August 2025** to ensure stability after a significant **misappropriation scam**.
- The action highlights **RBI's strict regulatory supervision** to ensure **financial system stability** and **depositors' protection** in the banking sector during institutional transitions.



### Recent News :

- In Dec 2025, The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) included Mumbai-based Model Co-operative Bank Limited. in the Second Schedule of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, granting it “Scheduled Bank” status.

## Reserve Bank of India Issues Regulatory Guidelines for Bank Lending to Real Estate Investment Trusts

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released **draft amendment directions** across five regulatory frameworks covering **commercial banks, small finance banks (SFBs), and All India Financial Institutions (AIFIs)** regarding credit facilities, concentration risk management, and financial disclosure norms.
- The draft allows **regulated entities** to provide finance to **Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs)** subject to **prudential safeguards, risk management standards, and exposure limits**.
- Banks may lend to **SEBI-registered REITs** in India, while **overseas branches** may lend to foreign REITs only in jurisdictions having a **strong insolvency or bankruptcy legal framework**.
- Banks can lend only to **listed REITs** that have been operational for at least **3 years**, have positive **net distributable cash flows** for the last **2 years**, and have **no adverse regulatory action** in the past **3 years**.
- Lending is permitted only if **Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs)** under the REIT structure are not under **financial stress**.
- Banks must follow a **Board-approved lending policy**, ensure continuous monitoring of **end-use of funds**, and confirm that **trust deeds** permit borrowing.
- The **aggregate bank exposure** to a REIT and its **SPVs/holding companies (Holdcos)** cannot exceed **49% of the REIT asset value**, unless the Board prescribes stricter limits.
- Banks must carefully evaluate **cash flow stability** and **debt servicing capacity** before extending credit to REIT entities.
- The framework strengthens **prudential regulation, financial stability, and safe infrastructure financing channels** in the banking system.

### ‘Banks can fund only listed REITs with 3-year history’

Our Bureau  
Mumbai

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) plans to allow banks to lend to SEBI-registered real estate investment trusts (REITs) provided the trusts are listed and have a minimum three-year operational history with positive cash flows, according to Reserve Bank of India (Commercial Banks – Credit Facilities) (Draft) Second Amendment Directions, 2026.

Alongside, the central bank also issued updated draft guidelines for bank's exposure to infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs). These are similar to the one issued for bank lending to REITs.

#### CREDIT EXPOSURE

The central bank said the aggregate credit exposure of all banks to the borrowing REIT and its underlying SPVs/holdcos (special purpose vehicles/holding companies) taken together, cannot exceed 49 per cent of the value of the REIT's assets as on March 31 of the previous financial year or such lower limit as may be decided by

the bank's board.

Lending to a REIT by a bank can only be by way of loans not involving bullet or ballooning principal repayments.

A bank should strictly monitor the end use of funds lent to REITs to ensure that this route is not being used to finance activities which are not permitted, such as land acquisition, even where such acquisition forms part of a project.

Overseas branches can lend to REITs constituted overseas if an effective insolvency/bankruptcy mechanism, either statutory or regulatory, is available in the relevant jurisdiction.

As REITs are trusts, the bank will need to be mindful of the legal provisions in respect of these entities especially those regarding enforcement of security.

#### BANK FINANCING

Where bank financing is for the purpose of refinancing of existing term loans of SPVs, it shall be ensured that it is undertaken only in respect of completed projects that have received a completion certificate (CC), occupancy certificate (OC) or their equivalent.

### Recent News :

- In Feb 2026, The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) allowed banks to lend directly to Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) with prudential safeguards to deepen credit access for the real estate sector.

## Reserve Bank of India revises Lead Bank Scheme to boost priority sector credit flow at district level

- The Reserve Bank of India issued **revised guidelines on the Lead Bank Scheme (LBS)**, superseding earlier instructions to strengthen **credit coordination and financial inclusion mechanisms**.

**RBI invites public comments on the Draft Circular on Lead Bank Scheme (LBS)**

Reserve Bank had announced, as part of the **Statement on Developmental and Regulatory Policies dated February 06, 2026**, that revised guidelines on the Lead Bank Scheme would be issued shortly to streamline the operational aspects.

Accordingly, the **draft Circular** on the revised guidelines of the Lead Bank Scheme has been issued today for public comments.

The revised guidelines aim to finetune the objectives of the Scheme; the structure, membership and agenda of various fora under the Scheme; clear delineation of roles and responsibilities of key functionaries; and provisions to further strengthen the State Level Bankers' Committee and Lead District Manager offices, among others.

The comments / feedback on the draft Circular may be submitted by **email** with the subject line "Feedback on the Draft Circular on Lead Bank Scheme".

The last date for submission of comments is **March 06, 2026**.

(Brij Raj)  
Chief General Manager

- The scheme was originally introduced in **1969** to promote **priority sector lending** and inclusive economic growth.
- The **Lead Bank Scheme** aims to coordinate **banks, government agencies, and developmental institutions** to improve **credit flow** to priority sectors and enhance **financial inclusion** across districts.

### Key Highlights :

- The **revised framework** introduces a **three-tier structure** consisting of:
  - **Block Level Bankers' Committee (BLBC)**
  - **District Consultative Committee (DCC)**
  - **District Level Review Committee (DLRC)**
  - **State Level Bankers' Committee (SLBC / UTLBC)** at the apex level.
- The **RBI** will designate one **commercial bank** as **Lead Bank** in each district to coordinate **credit delivery** and **development initiatives**.
- Each district will have:
  - **Lead District Manager (LDM)** appointed by the **Lead Bank**.
  - **District Development Manager (DDM)** appointed by **NABARD**.
  - **Lead District Officer (LDO)** appointed by **RBI**.
- **BLBC meetings** must be held at least **twice annually**, including planning for **Block Credit Plans** based on credit potential.
- **DCC meetings** are chaired by the **District Collector / District Magistrate** and include banks, **RBI representatives, NABARD officials**, and government departments.
- **SLBC meetings** include **state government officials, RBI, NABARD, banks**, and other stakeholders to resolve **regional banking and credit issues**.
- Banks must maintain a **Credit-Deposit (CD) Ratio** of **60%** for **rural and semi-urban branches** (All-India basis).
- **CD Ratio monitoring norms:**
  - **40–60% CD Ratio** → monitored by **DCC**.
  - **Below 40%** or declining credit → reviewed by **DCC sub-committee** with **corrective action plans**.
  - **Below 20% CD Ratio** → classified as **special category districts**, requiring **state government infrastructure** and credit support.
- Banks must prioritise opening **Core Banking Solution (CBS)-enabled outlets** in **Tier-V** (population >5,000) and **Tier-VI unbanked rural areas**. At least **25% of new banking outlets** must be established in such regions.
- The **revised guidelines** aim to **streamline operations**, strengthen **institutional accountability**, and improve **district-level economic development planning**.
- The **draft guidelines** were released for **public comments**, with the last date for submission being **6 March 2026**.
- The framework strengthens **lead bank coordination**, enhances **state-level monitoring**, and supports **sustainable financial inclusion growth** in India.

**Reserve Bank of India proposes stricter norms for loan recovery agents to protect borrowers from harassment**

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** issued **draft amendment directions** to standardize **loan recovery practices** and regulate the conduct of **recovery agents** across regulated financial entities.
- The guidelines aim to ensure **fair recovery practices**, **borrower protection**, and **ethical conduct standards** for lender staff and recovery agents.
- **Recovery agents** must complete **certification training** from the **Indian Institute of Banking and Finance (IIBF)** or equivalent accredited institutions.
- Banks must **publicly display** updated lists of **recovery agents** at branches and digital platforms to ensure **transparency and accountability**.
- **Recovery agents** must carry valid **identity cards**, **authorization letters**, and **loan recovery notices** while visiting borrowers.
- Agents are permitted to contact borrowers only between **8:00 AM and 7:00 PM**, respecting **borrower privacy** and preferred communication timings.
- **Legal action** cannot be the first step in recovery; recovery must follow **due process**, with authorized representatives only allowed to visit borrower premises.
- **Recovery agents** must provide **official receipts** for all collections to maintain **financial transaction transparency**.
- The guidelines mandate **due diligence checks**, formal **code of conduct** compliance, and proper **training requirements** for recovery personnel.
- The new recovery framework will become effective from **1 July 2026**, replacing earlier recovery conduct provisions.
- The initiative strengthens **consumer protection**, **ethical banking practices**, and **regulatory supervision** of loan recovery operations in India.

### Regulator mulls relaxations in reporting norms for brokers

Press Trust of India  
New Delhi

To boost the ease of doing business, markets regulator SEBI on Friday proposed additional relaxations to reporting norms for stock brokers, including exempting certain demat accounts held by brokers who are also primary dealers from tagging requirements.

Further, brokers that are banks or primary dealers will be required to report only those bank accounts used for stock broking activities, SEBI proposed.

"All demat accounts maintained by stock brokers should be appropriately tagged. Further, this shall not be applicable for the demat accounts used exclusively for activities other than stock broking activities by stock brokers, which are also primary dealers."

"Stock broker which is also bank or primary dealer shall be required to report to

the stock exchanges only those bank accounts that are used for their stock broking activities," SEBI said in its draft circular.

#### KEY EXEMPTIONS

Under the current rules, brokers are required to maintain properly named and tagged bank and demat accounts and report the opening and closure of such accounts to the stock exchanges.

Certain exemptions were earlier provided to brokers that are banks.

In its draft circular inviting public comments on proposed relaxations, SEBI suggested that the earlier requirement regarding reporting of certain demat accounts by brokers had been deleted.

Instead, depositories will share details of demat accounts opened or closed by stock brokers directly with the concerned stock exchanges, as per a mechanism jointly decided by them.

## Reserve Bank of India issues revised Kisan Credit Card guidelines to boost agricultural credit access

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** issued **draft revised guidelines for Kisan Credit Card (KCC)** to expand coverage, improve **agricultural financing**, and streamline loan operations.
- The **revised KCC framework** applies to **commercial banks**, **Small Finance Banks (SFBs)**, **Regional Rural Banks (RRBs)**, and **rural cooperative banks** to ensure uniform implementation across India.
- The guidelines apply to **new KCC loans** and existing loans during **renewal or review cycles**.
- **Crop seasons** have been standardized as **12 months** for short-duration crops and **18 months** for long-duration crops to ensure uniform repayment and loan planning cycles.
- **Marginal farmers** are defined as farmers owning **up to 1 hectare** of land, while **small farmers** own more than 1 hectare but **up to 2 hectares** of land.
- The **KCC loan tenure** has been extended to **6 years** to better match long agricultural crop cycles.
- **Drawing limits** will now be based on **scale of finance** per crop season, ensuring credit reflects actual cultivation and input costs.

Revised Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Scheme	
Reserve Bank had announced, as part of the <b>Statement on Development and Regulatory Policies</b> dated February 09, 2026 that revised guidelines on KCC are proposed to be issued consolidating those on agriculture and allied activities, with a view to expand coverage, streamline operational aspects and address emerging requirements. Accordingly, the following draft Directions are being issued for public comments.	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commercial Banks - Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Scheme</li> <li>Small Finance Banks - Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Scheme</li> <li>Regional Rural Banks - Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Scheme</li> <li>Rural Co-operative Banks - Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Scheme</li> </ol>	
2. The following major changes in the KCC Scheme are reflected in the draft guidelines: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To bring in uniformity in loan sanction and repayment schedules, crop seasons have been standardized in terms of months (i.e. short duration crops (12 months) and long duration crops (18 months))</li> <li>To ensure proper dovetailing of loan tenure with crop seasons especially for the longer duration crops, the tenure of KCC has been extended to 6 years.</li> <li>To ensure that farmers receive adequate credit based on actual cost of cultivation, drawing limits under KCC has been aligned with the scale of finance for each crop season.</li> <li>To enable farmers to access finance for technological interventions such as soil testing, real time weather forecasts and organic/pood agricultural practices certification etc such expenses has been added as eligible components within 20% additional component towards repairs and maintenance of farm assets.</li> </ol>	
3. The comments / feedback on the draft Master Directions may be submitted by the regulated entities and members of public / other stakeholders on or before <b>March 6, 2026</b> through the following channels: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the 'Connect 2 Regulator' section on the website by following the corresponding hyperlink provided against each document in the page where they are hosted; or</li> <li>by email with the subject line 'Feedback on (Full name of the draft Amendment Directions (including the type of Regulated Entity))'.</li> </ol>	

- Farmers can use an **additional 20% credit limit** for **technology-driven agriculture** practices such as soil testing, weather forecasting, and organic certification.
- A **flexible KCC credit limit** of **₹10,000 – ₹50,000** is available for **marginal farmers** based on landholding size and crop type.
- **Eligible borrowers** include **owner cultivators, tenant farmers, sharecroppers, Self Help Groups (SHGs), and Joint Liability Groups (JLGs)**.
- Farmers engaged in **animal husbandry, fisheries, and allied agricultural activities** are also eligible for **working capital credit**.
- Banks shall **waive collateral security and margin requirements** for agricultural loans up to **₹2 lakh** per borrower.
- **Voluntary pledge of gold or silver** as collateral is allowed but requires **explicit borrower declaration**, without violating collateral-free lending norms.
- For KCC loans under **crop hypothecation** or stock tie-up arrangements, banks may **waive collateral security** for loans up to **₹3 lakh**.
- Banks must submit **KCC loan data reports quarterly** within **15 working days** after quarter-end using the prescribed RBI reporting format.
- The initiative strengthens **agricultural credit accessibility, financial inclusion, and modernisation** of rural farming finance systems.

**Reserve Bank of India tightens norms to curb mis-selling of financial products through new draft marketing and sales rules**

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** issued draft **Responsible Business Conduct Amendment Directions, 2026** under **Section 35A of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949**, to strengthen **customer protection** in financial product marketing and sales.
- The proposed **Commercial Banks – Responsible Business Conduct Directions, 2026** require banks to ensure customers clearly understand financial products and obtain **explicit customer consent**, while establishing a mechanism to seek **customer feedback** within **30 days** of a product sale.
- In cases of **mis-selling**, banks must **refund the full amount paid** and provide **additional compensation** for financial losses incurred by customers, in accordance with the bank's approved policy.
- A **Direct Selling Agent (DSA) / Direct Marketing Agent (DMA)** is defined as an agent or agency engaged by banks to market or sell banking or **third-party financial products** and services, and banks must maintain an **up-to-date list** of these agents.
- Banks must use **separate application forms** for each financial product, clearly specifying the product type—such as **insurance, mutual funds, pension schemes, or hybrid financial products**—along with their **key features and risks**.
- The guidelines aim to prevent **mis-selling practices** (including **forced bundling** and **dark patterns**), enhance **transparency** in financial product distribution, and strengthen **ethical banking conduct**.
- The new regulatory framework will come into force from **1 July 2026**.
- The initiative supports **consumer financial protection, responsible banking practices, and trust-based financial services delivery** in India.

**RBI tells banks to refund, compensate customers in instances of mis-selling**

**MORE TIGHTENING.** Banks must ensure that employees/DSAs do not push the sale of products and services

**Our Bureau**

The RBI on Wednesday issued comprehensive draft instructions on advertising, marketing and sales of financial products and services to banks to prevent mis-selling and compulsory bundling of financial products.

Further, to ensure that customers understand the financial product they buy, banks will have to seek customer feedback within 30 days of sale, per the draft Reserve Bank of India, Commercial Banks – Responsible Business Conduct, Amendment Directions, 2026, which will come into effect on July 1.

If mis-selling is established, banks have to refund the entire amount paid by the customer for purchase of the product/service. They also have to compensate customers for any loss that arises due to mis-selling. Re-



**TROUBLESHOOTING.** Banks should compensate customers for any loss that arises due to mis-selling for a financial product/service is marketed/sold to a particular customer, its suitability and appropriateness for the customer should be determined by the bank. This will be based on an analysis of the features, risks, return attributes, time horizon, complexity, fee structure vis-à-vis the customer's age, income, level of financial literacy and risk tolerance. Banks must ensure that their policies and practices neither create incentives for mis-selling, nor encourage employees/direct selling agents (DSAs) to push the sale of products/services.

**DARK PATTERNS** Also, banks can neither resort to dark patterns such as

fake countdown timers to force quick decision over such sale, product/services and prevent its purchase or cancellation at the time of checkout from a platform without the user's consent.

Banks have been made accountable for third parties they engage with that benefit of customers, any agent of the bank, or representative of a third party, who is present with the bank's premises for the sale of the product/service, should be present with the bank's employees, including clear on-person identification.

**CODE OF CONDUCT** A bank based on the instructions mentioned in these directions, shall put in place a code of conduct for marketing and sales of financial products/services, which shall be applicable to the bank's own employees as

well as DSAs/DMA (direct marketing agents), and third parties. The central bank said a bank may engage only in required financial products and services for which they have permission.

A bank may, at its option, act as an insurance broker independently, subject to the condition, per Draft Reserve Bank of India (Commercial Banks – Understanding of Financial Services) Amendment Directions, 2026, which will come into effect from April 1.

Banks may undertake agency business on a fee basis without any risk participation. This shall be explicitly disclosed upfront to customers. They have to ensure that the third-party product and service providers (TPSP), whose products are being sold, have robust customer grievance redressal mechanisms in place. The bank may facilitate the redressal of grievances.

**NATIONAL AND STATE NEWS**

## AI Impact Summit 2026 Concludes with Adoption of New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact

- The **AI Impact Summit 2026** concluded in **New Delhi** with the adoption of the **New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact**, endorsed by **89 countries and international organizations** worldwide.
- The summit marked a significant step in global artificial intelligence governance and cooperation.
- India led the call for **“Artificial Intelligence for All”** rooted in **equity, accessibility, and shared global progress**.
- The declaration outlines **seven pillars of action** and introduces new global platforms to ensure that artificial intelligence remains collaborative, trusted, resilient, and efficient for humanity.

The AI Impact Summit 2026, held in New Delhi on 18–19 February, concluded with the adoption of the **New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact**, marking a significant milestone in global cooperation on artificial intelligence.

As on 21 February, 2026, 88 countries and international organisations had endorsed this declaration. Since then, 3 more countries - Bangladesh, Costa Rica and Guatemala have joined the declaration, taking the total number of signatories to 91 countries and organisations.

Accordingly, the Press Release dated 21 February (ID: 2231208) on the subject stands updated with inclusion of 3 new signatories:

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2231208&reg=3&lang=2#text=Guided%20by%20the%20principle%20of%20Respecting%20national%20sovereignty>

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### Key Highlights

- The summit focused on building a **shared global framework for responsible, inclusive, and sustainable artificial intelligence growth**.
- Guided by the Sanskrit principle “Sarvajan Hitaya, Sarvajan Sukhaya” meaning welfare for all and happiness for all, the declaration stresses that **benefits of artificial intelligence must be equitably distributed across nations and communities**.
- The declaration is **voluntary and non binding**, but it sets a strategic direction for global artificial intelligence governance and multilateral cooperation.
- It emphasizes:
  - **International cooperation and multi stakeholder engagement**
  - **Respect for national sovereignty in artificial intelligence regulation**
  - **Development of trustworthy, accessible, secure, and energy efficient artificial intelligence systems**
- The New Delhi Declaration is structured around **seven pillars forming the backbone of global cooperation**:
  - **Democratizing artificial intelligence resources to ensure affordable access to infrastructure**
  - **Promoting economic growth and social good through scalable artificial intelligence solutions**
  - **Ensuring secure and trusted artificial intelligence through safety standards and transparency benchmarks**
  - **Advancing artificial intelligence for scientific research and global collaboration**
  - **Expanding access for social empowerment and inclusive adoption**
  - **Strengthening human capital development through skilling and artificial intelligence literacy**
  - **Building resilient and energy efficient artificial intelligence systems and infrastructure**
- Participation from countries across Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Americas, along with international organizations such as the **European Union** and the **International Fund for Agricultural Development**, reflects broad global consensus on responsible artificial intelligence development.

### RECENT NEWS

- Delhi government has approved the Chief Minister Skill Development Scheme to support artisans linked with khadi, handloom, and cottage industries. Announcing the

decision, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said artisans are the real custodians of Delhi's cultural heritage and must be connected to modern markets.

### Jharkhand Presents ₹1.58 Lakh Crore 'Abua Dishom Budget' for FY 2026–27

- The **Government of Jharkhand** presented a **₹1.58 lakh crore Budget** for the Financial Year 2026–27 in the State Assembly.
- The Budget was tabled by Finance Minister **Radhakrishna Kishore** under the leadership of the **Jharkhand Mukti Morcha**-led government.
- The Budget has been termed the **"Abua Dishom Budget"**, reflecting the government's emphasis on regional identity, inclusive governance and welfare-oriented development.



Jharkhand finance minister Radha Krishna Kishore with CM Hemant Soren in Ranchi on Tuesday (HT PHOTO)  
The Jharkhand government on Tuesday tabled ₹1.58 lakh crore budget for the upcoming financial year 2026-27 in the Assembly, an increase of around nine per cent in the total annual outlay as compared to the current fiscal, with major focus on social sector, school education and

### Key Highlights

- The total proposed outlay for Financial Year 2026–27 is **₹1.58 lakh crore**, indicating a significant expansion in public expenditure to support development and social welfare programmes across the state.
- The allocation marks an **increase of ₹13,000 crore** compared to the previous Financial Year 2025–26 Budget of ₹1.45 lakh crore, showing enhanced fiscal commitment and broader spending priorities.
- The term **"Abua Dishom"**, meaning "Our Land" in a local tribal dialect, underlines the government's focus on tribal identity, grassroots empowerment and region-centric development.
- The Budget aims to address the aspirations of **poor and economically weaker sections**, with targeted welfare measures intended to improve living standards and social security coverage.
- **Farmers and rural communities** are key focus groups, with expected emphasis on agricultural support, rural infrastructure development and livelihood enhancement initiatives.
- Given Jharkhand's significant tribal population, the fiscal plan prioritizes **tribal welfare, social justice and equitable distribution of resources** across districts.
- The Budget also places importance on **women's empowerment**, aiming to strengthen schemes that promote financial inclusion, social protection and economic participation of women.
- The enhanced allocation is expected to support improvements in **infrastructure, health, education and public service delivery**, contributing to overall socio-economic development.
- The higher outlay reflects the government's strategy to stimulate economic activity, expand development initiatives and maintain fiscal discipline while pursuing inclusive growth.

### RECENT NEWS

- Jharkhand has delivered a proud sporting moment at the national level. At the Para Throwball National Federation Cup 2026, the state's women's team produced a disciplined and confident performance to win the gold medal.

### About Jharkhand:

- Capital: Ranchi
- Chief Minister: Hemant Soren
- Governor: Santosh Gangwar
- National Parks: Betla National Park
- Wildlife Sanctuaries: Palamau Wildlife Sanctuary, Hazaribagh Wildlife Sanctuary, Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary, Koderma Wildlife Sanctuary, Mahuadanr Wolf Sanctuary, Topchanchi Wildlife Sanctuary

### Delhi Approves 20% Quota for Ex-Agniveers in Police Constable Recruitment

- **Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena** has approved a **20 per cent reservation for former Agniveers in Delhi Police constable (executive) posts.**
- The decision follows amendments to the **Delhi Police (Appointment and Recruitment) Rules, 1980.**
- The move is aimed at providing structured employment opportunities to ex-Agniveers after completion of their four-year military service and strengthening the police force with trained and disciplined personnel.



New Delhi: Lieutenant governor VK Saxena has approved an amendment to Rule 9 of Delhi Police (Appointment & Recruitment) Rules, 1980, to reserve 20% of the posts of male constable (executive) in it for former Agniveers. They will also be granted exemption from the physical efficiency test and relaxation of three years in the prescribed upper age limit of 25 years.

The candidates from the first batch of the Agnipath

scheme will receive an age relaxation of five years.

### Key Highlights

- A **20 per cent quota** has been introduced for former Agniveers in male constable (executive) posts in Delhi Police, ensuring dedicated recruitment space for defence-trained youth.
- Former Agniveers will be granted **three-year relaxation in the upper age limit** beyond the existing eligibility bracket of 18 to 25 years. For the first batch of Agniveers, the age relaxation has been extended to **five years**, providing additional flexibility during the transition phase.
- Eligible ex-Agniveers will be **exempted from the Physical Efficiency Test**, recognising the rigorous physical and military training they undergo during their four-year service period.
- The reform aims to ensure **smooth absorption of trained military personnel** into civilian policing roles, thereby reducing retraining requirements and enhancing operational readiness.
- The Agniveer recruitment system was introduced under the **Indian Armed Forces** in 2022, where youth aged 17.5 to 21 years are inducted for a four-year tenure, with only a portion retained for permanent service and the rest exiting with financial and skill-based benefits.
- Delhi Police currently has a sanctioned strength of **42,452 male constables (executive category)**, who are primarily responsible for law enforcement, crime prevention, patrolling duties and maintenance of public order. The new quota is expected to enhance efficiency and discipline within the force.
- The decision also addresses concerns regarding **post-service employment pathways** for Agniveers under the Agnipath framework and reflects a broader policy direction of integrating defence-trained youth into civilian security and law enforcement sectors.

### Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Address Israeli Parliament During Historic Israel Visit 2026

- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** will become the **first Indian Prime Minister** to address the plenary session of the **Knesset** during his two-day official visit to **Israel**.

- The visit has been described as historic by Israeli Prime Minister **Benjamin Netanyahu** and marks a significant milestone in India Israel bilateral relations.
- Prime Minister Modi will also hold high-level discussions with President **Isaac Herzog**.

### Key Highlights

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will **address the Knesset plenary session** becoming the first Indian Prime Minister to do so. Addressing the Israeli Parliament is regarded as a high diplomatic honour and reflects the elevation of bilateral ties.
- This will be **his second visit to Israel**, following his landmark 2017 visit that strengthened cooperation and elevated India Israel relations to a strategic partnership level.
- During the visit, he will hold **bilateral talks with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Isaac Herzog**, focusing on defence cooperation, innovation, security collaboration, agricultural technology, water management and regional stability.
- The official programme at the Israeli Parliament will begin with a ceremonial welcome at the Weil Courtyard, followed by signing of the guestbook in the Chagall State Hall and a joint photograph session.
- A **special plenary session will be held in honour of the visiting Prime Minister**, where key Israeli leaders including the Speaker and Opposition representatives will deliver remarks.
- The Knesset is the **unicameral legislature of Israel comprising 120 members**, responsible for law-making and government formation. Plenary sessions are formal sittings where important debates, speeches and decisions take place.
- Diplomatic relations between **India and Israel were established in 1992**, and cooperation has since expanded in defence, agriculture, water management, science and technology. India is one of Israel's major defence partners, while Israel supports India with advanced agricultural and irrigation technologies.
- The visit highlights **India's balanced West Asia policy**, maintaining strong relations with Israel while also engaging constructively with Arab nations. It further strengthens political trust and strategic collaboration between the two democracies.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be embarking on a two-day state visit to Israel from tomorrow. The Prime Minister is scheduled to hold wide ranging talks with his Israeli counterpart, Mr Benjamin Netanyahu in Tel Aviv. Later, a series of programmes will be held in Jerusalem. Ambassador of India to Israel J. P. Singh has termed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel as historic. Talking to Akashvani News in Jerusalem, Mr Singh said, 'India and Israel are on the same page on the issue of terrorism.' He added that whenever there has been a crisis,

### About Delhi:

- Chief Minister: Rekha Gupta
- Lieutenant Governor: Vinai Kumar Saxena
- Capital: New Delhi
- Wildlife Sanctuaries: Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary, Yamuna Biodiversity Park, Aravalli Biodiversity Park

### **"Badhna Hai Toh Yahan Judna Hai" Campaign Launched to Strengthen Digital Skilling Ecosystem**

- The **Government of India launched** a nationwide awareness campaign titled **"Badhna Hai Toh Yahan Judna Hai"** to expand participation in the **Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH)**.

- The campaign was launched by Union Minister of State (I/C) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship **Jayant Chaudhary** on the sidelines of the **India AI Impact Summit 2026**.

Union Minister Shri Jayant Chaudhary Launches Nationwide Campaign "Badhna Hai Toh Yahan Judna Hai" to Accelerate India's Digital Skilling Movement Through SIDH

Published On: 22 FEB 2026 8:15PM by PIB Delhi

In a major push to deepen India's digital skilling ecosystem and accelerate progress toward a **Viksit Bharat**, **Shri Jayant Chaudhary**, Minister of State (I/C) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and Minister of State for Education, Government of India, launched a nationwide awareness campaign titled "**Badhna Hai Toh Yahan Judna Hai**" on the sidelines of the India AI Impact Summit 2026.

As part of its nationwide outreach, the campaign brings on board legendary actor **Amitabh Bachchan**, whose enduring popularity and wide public appeal are expected to further strengthen awareness and participation in **Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH)**, India's integrated digital platform for skilling, employment, and lifelong learning.

The campaign aims to further expand access to SIDH, which has already onboarded more than 1.5 crore registered candidates, emerging as one of the country's largest unified digital skilling platforms. As India moves rapidly toward a **Viksit Bharat** and navigates the transformative impact of artificial intelligence, automation, and digital innovation, SIDH is positioned to the extent require enabling citizens to upskill, reskill, and future-proof their careers.

Speaking at the launch, **Shri Jayant Chaudhary** said, "India's digital strength has been globally recognized through transformative initiatives such as **India Stack**, and now the **Skill India Digital Hub**. These platforms have expanded access to public services and skill development at an unprecedented scale. SIDH exemplifies how digital public infrastructure can power lifelong learning and create real economic opportunity, especially in an era defined by AI and automation. Through **Badhna Hai Toh Yahan Judna Hai** campaign, we are urging every Indian to connect with this ecosystem and take the next step in their growth journey."

Built as a mobile-first, AI-enabled platform, SIDH integrates multiple government skilling initiatives, offers industry-aligned and future-ready courses, and provides personalized recommendations based on learner interests and career goals. The platform also features an LMS-enabled central learning hub, digitally verified credentials, QR-code-enabled personalized digital CVs, Aadhaar-based eKYC registration, OTP-enabled mobile access, and availability in more than 21 Indian languages, ensuring inclusivity and ease of access to all.

**Key Points**

- The campaign aims to accelerate progress towards **Viksit Bharat** by strengthening India's **digital skilling ecosystem**.
- Legendary actor **Amitabh Bachchan** has been roped in to promote awareness and boost nationwide participation in SIDH.
- Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH)** is India's integrated digital platform for **skilling, employment and lifelong learning**.
- SIDH has onboarded **over 1.5 crore registered candidates**, making it one of the country's largest unified digital skilling platforms.
- The platform is **mobile-first and AI-enabled**, offering **industry-aligned and future-ready courses** with personalised recommendations.
- SIDH integrates **multiple government skilling initiatives** into a single digital ecosystem, reducing fragmentation and improving access.
- Key features include **LMS-enabled central learning hub, digitally verified credentials, QR-code enabled digital CVs, Aadhaar-based eKYC registration and OTP-enabled mobile access**.
- The platform is available in **more than 21 Indian languages**, ensuring inclusivity and wide accessibility.
- SIDH caters to **students, graduates, working professionals and aspiring entrepreneurs**, supporting upskilling and reskilling needs.
- The campaign will be rolled out across **digital platforms, social media and QR-enabled touchpoints** to enable seamless registration.
- The initiative promotes the vision of "**Lifelong Learning for Prosperity – for anyone, anytime, anywhere**", aligning with India's goal of becoming a global skill capital.

**INTERNATIONAL NEWS**

**President of the Federative Republic of Brazil Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's State Visit to India from 18–22 February 2026**

- Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva**, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, undertook a **State Visit to India** from **18–22 February 2026** at the invitation of **Narendra Modi**.

**Key Highlights :**

- During the visit, President Lula participated in the **2nd India Artificial Intelligence (AI) Impact Summit 2026** held in **New Delhi** and held high-level bilateral meetings to strengthen the **India–Brazil strategic partnership**.
- The President of India, **Droupadi Murmu**, received President Lula at **Rashtrapati Bhavan** and hosted a **state banquet** in his honour.



- **PM Narendra Modi** and **President Lula** held bilateral talks at **Hyderabad House, New Delhi**, focusing on **trade, technology, and strategic cooperation**.
- President Lula announced a target to increase **bilateral trade to USD 30 billion by 2030** from the current **USD 15.21 billion**, where India maintains a **trade surplus** of about **USD 1.5 billion**.
- The visit witnessed the inauguration of the **ApexBrasil office in New Delhi** to promote **trade and investment cooperation** between the two countries.
- The **India–Brazil Economic Forum** discussed cooperation in **defence, renewable energy, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, technology, and Artificial Intelligence (AI)**.
- Both countries also discussed expanding the **India–Mercosur Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA)** to enhance **economic integration**.
- Multiple **MoUs** were signed in sectors including **MSMEs, postal services, pharmaceuticals, trade promotion, R&D, rare earths and critical minerals, steel, digital trade (e-COO), education, cinema, and heritage preservation**.
- Both countries agreed to extend **multiple-entry tourist and business visas from 5 years to 10 years**, strengthening **people-to-people connectivity** and tourism growth.
- The visit reinforced **India–Brazil cooperation** in **emerging technologies, AI development, and global south partnerships**.

## AWARDS AND HONOURS

### 79th British Academy Film Awards 2026 Held in London

- The **79th British Academy Film Awards 2026** were held at the **Royal Festival Hall in London**.
- The ceremony was organized by the **British Academy of Film and Television Arts** and hosted by **Alan Cumming**.
- The night was dominated by *One Battle After Another*, which won six awards including Best Film. India recorded a historic achievement as *Boong* won Best Children's and Family Film, marking the first-ever win for an Indian production in this category.

The 79th British Academy Film Awards were held at London's Royal Festival Hall on 22 February 2026. *One Battle After Another* led the night with six awards, including Best Film, Best Director, and Best Adapted Screenplay. *Sinners* and *Frankenstein* each secured three awards, while *Hamnet* was named Outstanding British Film. India's *Boong* made history by winning Best Children's and Family Film, marking the first-ever win for an Indian production in this category.

### Key Highlights

- *One Battle After Another* emerged as the **top winner with six awards**, including:
  - **Best Film**
  - **Best Director – Paul Thomas Anderson** (first Best Director BAFTA win)
  - **Adapted Screenplay – Paul Thomas Anderson**
  - **Supporting Actor – Sean Penn**
  - **Cinematography – Michael Bauman**
  - **Editing – Andy Jurgensen**
- *Sinners* secured three awards:
  - **Original Screenplay – Ryan Coogler**
  - **Supporting Actress – Wunmi Mosaku**
  - **Original Score – Ludwig Göransson**
- *Hamnet* won two major awards:
  - **Outstanding British Film**
  - **Leading Actress – Jessie Buckley**
- **Major Acting Awards:**
  - **Leading Actor – Robert Aramayo** for *I Swear*\*\*
  - **Supporting Actor – Sean Penn**

- **Supporting Actress – Wunmi Mosaku**
- **EE Rising Star Award – Robert Aramayo**
- **India’s Historic Win:**
  - *Boong* won **Best Children’s and Family Film**, marking a significant milestone for Indian cinema at the BAFTA Awards 2026.
- **Other Major Category Winners:**
  - **Outstanding Debut by a British Writer, Director or Producer – My Father’s Shadow**
  - **Film Not in the English Language – Sentimental Value**
  - **Documentary – Mr. Nobody Against Putin**
  - **Animated Film – Zootropolis 2 also known as Zootopia 2**
  - **Casting – I Swear (Lauren Evans)**
  - **Costume Design – Frankenstein (Kate Hawley)**
  - **Make Up and Hair – Frankenstein**
  - **Production Design – Frankenstein**
  - **Sound – F1**
  - **Special Visual Effects – Avatar Fire and Ash**
  - **British Short Animation – Two Black Boys In Paradise**
  - **British Short Film – This Is Endometriosis**
- **Special Honours:**
  - **BAFTA Fellowship – Donna Langley**
  - **Outstanding British Contribution to Cinema – Clare Binns**

#### About BAFTA

- The awards are presented annually by the **British Academy of Film and Television Arts** to honour excellence in British and international cinema.
- First held on 29 May 1949 in the United Kingdom.
- Officially known as the EE British Academy Film Awards since 2013.
- Broadcast by the **BBC** since 1956.

#### Our Lady of Grace Cathedral Wins UNESCO Asia-Pacific Award of Merit 2025

- The **475-year-old Our Lady of Grace Cathedral** in Vasai, Maharashtra received the **Award of Merit** at the **UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation 2025**.
- It became the **only religious site from India** to receive recognition in the 2025 edition of the awards.
- The announcement was made in **Bangkok, Thailand**, during the **25th anniversary ceremony** of the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation.
- A total of **10 projects from six countries** were recognised in 2025, namely **China, India, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal and Vanuatu**.
- The awards are presented under four categories:
  - **Award of Distinction** (Highest Honour)
  - **Award of Merit**
  - **Award for New Design in Heritage Contexts**
  - **Special Recognition for Sustainable Development**
    - The **Award of Distinction (2025)** was jointly conferred on:
      - **Sihang Warehouse Conservation Project** (China)
      - **Iwami Ginzan Library Conservation Project** (Japan)
- **Nepal secured two Awards of Merit** in the 2025 edition.

A 475-year-old cathedral in Vasai, Maharashtra, has received the Award of Merit at the 2025 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation. The recognition honours the restoration of Our Lady of Grace Cathedral in Papedy village, an effort led by the parish community rather than state funding or corporate support.

- A total of **90 entries from 16 countries** were evaluated by a **seven member international jury**, marking the highest number of submissions in the award's history.
- The recognition highlights India's growing global presence in **cultural heritage conservation and restoration efforts** under international platforms.

### APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

#### Rob Jetten sworn in as youngest Prime Minister of the Netherlands

- **Rob Jetten (Rob Arnoldus Andreas Jetten)** was sworn in as the **youngest-ever Prime Minister of the Netherlands** at the age of **38**, becoming the **first openly gay head of government** in Dutch history.
- He succeeded **Dick Schoof**, who had served as Prime Minister since **2024** and continued in a **caretaker role** after the government collapse in **June 2025**.
- The **oath ceremony** was administered by **King Willem-Alexander** at **Huis ten Bosch Palace**, located in **The Hague**.
- **Rob Jetten** leads a **minority coalition government** formed after the **October 2025 general election**.
- His party, **Democrats 66 (D66)**, a **centrist and pro-European party**, performed strongly in the election, securing **26 seats**.
- The **coalition government** includes the **Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA)** and the **People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD)**.
- The coalition holds **66 out of 150 seats** in the lower house of the **Dutch Parliament (Tweede Kamer)**, requiring continuous support from **opposition parties** to pass legislation.
- His appointment marks a **historic milestone** in **inclusive leadership** and **Dutch politics**.



#### About Netherlands :

- Capital : Amsterdam
- Currency : Euro

#### Abhinav Bindra completes term on International Olympic Committee Athletes' Commission

- **Abhinav Bindra**, India's first individual Olympic gold medallist, completed his **eight-year tenure (2018–2026)** as **Vice-Chair of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Athletes' Commission** on **February 23, 2026**.
- He was succeeded by **Humphrey Kayange** (Kenya, rugby) as **Second Vice-Chair of the IOC Athletes' Commission** during the **Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics**.



#### About Abhinav Bindra :

- **Abhinav Bindra** won India's **first individual Olympic gold medal** in **Men's 10-metre Air Rifle** at the **2008 Summer Olympics** held in **Beijing, China**.

- He became the **first Indian** to simultaneously hold both the **World Championship title (2006)** and the **Olympic title** in the same event.
- His major achievements include **seven medals** at the **Commonwealth Games (CWG)** and **three medals** at the **Asian Games (AG)**.
- He received prestigious honours including the **Arjuna Award (2000)**, **Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna (2002)**, and **Padma Bhushan (2009)** for his contribution to sports.
- He authored the book "**A Shot at History**", published in **2011** by **HarperCollins India**.
- He was elected as an **IOC Member in 2018**, elevated to **Vice-Chair in 2024**, and his current **IOC membership term** continues until **2028**.

#### About IOC's Athletes' Commission:

- The **IOC Athletes' Commission**, established in **1981**, is chaired by **Pau Gasol** and includes Vice-Chairs **Maja Włoszczowska**, **Humphrey Kayange**, and **Oluseyi Smith**, along with **10 elected** and **7 appointed** members.

### DEFENCE NEWS

#### 7th Edition of Joint Military Exercise 'Dharma Guardian' Begins in Chaubattia, Uttarakhand

- **Dharma Guardian**, the 7th edition of the **India–Japan Joint Military Exercise**, began at **Chaubattia, Uttarakhand**, from **24 February to 9 March 2026**.
- The exercise strengthens **defence cooperation** between **India and Japan**, particularly in **semi-urban warfare** and **tactical coordination**.
- The exercise involves **120 personnel** from each side, with **Japan** represented by the **32nd Infantry Regiment** and **India** represented by the **Ladakh Scouts**.
- The exercise is conducted **alternately in India and Japan** and serves as a **key pillar of bilateral defence cooperation**.
- The main objective is to enhance **interoperability, jointness**, and **synchronized tactical procedures** for joint military operations in semi-urban environments under **Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter**.
- Training modules focus on **high physical fitness, joint operational planning**, and **modern combat tactical drills** using **advanced technology**.
- Tactical activities include establishing **Temporary Operating Bases**, developing **Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) grids**, and setting up **Mobile Vehicle Check Posts (VCPs)**.
- Specialized mission training includes **cordon and search operations, heliborne missions**, and **house intervention drills** in hostile environments.
- The exercise also focuses on **physical conditioning** and **operational readiness** in challenging terrains.
- Previous editions: **6th edition** held at **East Fuji Training Area, Japan (2025)** and **5th edition** at **Rajasthan, India (2024)**.
- Exercise Dharma Guardian is an annual exercise between the Indian Army and the Japanese Ground Self Defence Force conducted in 2018.
- The exercise reflects a shared vision of a **“Free and Open Indo-Pacific”**, strengthening **regional stability, security cooperation**, and **rules-based international order**.

INDIA-JAPAN JOINT EXERCISE 'DHARMA GUARDIAN' COMMENCES IN CHAUBATTIA, UTTARAKHAND

Posted On: 24 FEB 2026 4:46PM by PIB Delhi

The 7th edition of the annual Joint Military Exercise 'DHARMA GUARDIAN' between the Indian Army and the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) commenced today at the Foreign Training Node, Chaubattia in Uttarakhand. The exercise will be conducted from 24 February to 9 March 2026.

This edition brings together a 120-member contingent from each side, with the JGSDF represented by troops from the 32nd Infantry Regiment and the Indian Army contingent drawn from the Ladakh Scouts. The exercise is held alternately in India and Japan and remains a key pillar of defence cooperation between the two nations.

The aim of Exercise 'DHARMA GUARDIAN' is to strengthen military collaboration and enhance combined capabilities to undertake joint operations in a semi-urban environment. Over the next two weeks, participating troops will focus on achieving high levels of physical fitness, refining joint planning processes and synchronising tactical drills. The Joint Exercise is anchored in employment of modern technology, enhancing interoperability and contemporary operational aspects.

Key tactical activities during the exercise include:

- Establishing a Temporary Operating Base
- Developing an Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) grid
- Setting up Mobile Vehicle Check Posts
- Conducting Cordon and Search Operations in hostile environment
- Executing Heliborne Operations
- Undertaking House Intervention Drills

## ACQUISITIONS & MERGERS

### Tata Consumer Products Limited acquires advanced food and nutrition technologies from CSIR-National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology

- **Tata Consumer Products Limited (TCPL)** formalised the transfer of indigenously developed **food and nutrition technologies** from the **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research – National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (CSIR-NIIST)** to promote national goals in **health, nutrition, and food security**.
- The collaboration highlights **science-led innovation, industry–research partnership**, and alignment with the Government of India’s priority to translate scientific research into **real-world solutions**.
- Under the agreement, **CSIR-NIIST** transferred **two key technologies** to **TCPL** for large-scale deployment and consumer applications.
- The first technology, **“Smarter Rice”**, is a **nutritionally enhanced rice** formulation with **higher protein content, lower Glycaemic Index (GI)**, and improved **micronutrient availability**, while maintaining regular rice consumption patterns.
- The second technology, **“Coffee Crema Technology”**, enhances **crema stability, texture, aroma retention**, and overall sensory experience in brewed coffee, strengthening **TCPL’s coffee portfolio**.
- **TCPL** and **CSIR-NIIST** also signed a **sponsored research agreement** to develop **Low-Sodium Salt Technology**.
- The **Low-Sodium Salt Innovation** aims to reduce **sodium intake** without compromising taste, supporting India’s **public health objectives** and wellness-driven consumer trends.
- The initiative strengthens **domestic innovation, scalable food technologies**, and **nutrition security**, reinforcing India’s **food and public-health ecosystem**.

Tata Consumer Products Collaborates with CSIR-NIIST to Advance Science-Backed Food and Beverage Innovations

NEWS PROVIDED BY  
Tata Consumer Products Limited →  
19 Feb, 2026, 17:59 IST

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- Technology Transfers – For Smart Rice Technology & Coffee Crema Technology
- Sponsored Research Agreement – For Low Sodium Salt Technology

BANGALORE, India, Feb. 19, 2026 (PRNewswire) – Tata Consumer Products Limited (TCPL), the consumer products company, today formalized the transfer of select indigenously developed food and nutrition-focused technologies from Council of Scientific & Industrial Research – National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (CSIR-NIIST), aimed at advancing national objectives in health, nutrition, and food security. Reinforcing its commitment to science-led innovation and staying ahead of evolving consumer

## APPS & PORTALS

### Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan launches AI-integrated Teacher App 2.0 for education sector

- **Dharmendra Pradhan**, Union Minister of Education (MoE), launched **Teacher App 2.0**, powered by **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**, in **New Delhi**, Delhi.
- The app was developed by **Bharti Airtel Foundation** in collaboration with **CK-12 Foundation**, a California-based global nonprofit organisation.
- The initiative aims to accelerate **AI adoption** in India’s **K–12 (Kindergarten to Class 12) ecosystem**, aligned with **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** and **Viksit Bharat @2047**.
- **Teacher App 2.0** integrates **45+ AI-enabled tools** for **lesson planning, personalised learning, pedagogy**, and **classroom management**.
- The platform provides **2,500+ hours of training modules**, including **Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN)**, and offers collaborative spaces like the **Teachers’ Lounge**.

Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan Launches Teacher App 2.0- Powered By AI In Collaboration With Bharti Airtel & CK12 Foundation



- The app currently supports over **two lakh educators** across India as a **free-for-life digital platform**, helping enhance classroom teaching, **reduce preparation time**, and improve learning outcomes.
- The platform draws insights from **Satya Bharti Schools** and plans integration with **Indian Large Language Models (LLMs)** such as **BharatGen** and **Sarvam**, launched at the **Artificial Intelligence Impact Summit 2026**.
- **Teacher App Version 1.0**, launched in **November 2024**, was a one-stop platform for pedagogy guidance and lesson planning resources.

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

### North Atlantic Treaty Organization launches Arctic Sentry mission to enhance Arctic security and surveillance

- **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** launched the “**Arctic Sentry**” mission, to strengthen **security, surveillance, and military coordination** in the **Arctic and High North**.
- The mission aims to integrate ongoing operations of member nations into **multi-domain defence operations** covering **land, sea, air, cyber, and intelligence surveillance** domains, under the leadership of **Joint Force Command Norfolk**.
- The initiative comes amid **geopolitical tensions** following the **Greenland strategic crisis** and concerns raised by **Donald Trump** regarding **Arctic strategic dominance** and **security interests**.
- The **Arctic Sentry mission** strengthens **collective defence capabilities**, enhances **maritime and aerial monitoring**, and improves **strategic preparedness** in polar regions against rising **Russian and Chinese activity**.



#### About NATO :

- **NATO** is an **intergovernmental military alliance** formed to promote **peace, collective defence, and security cooperation** among member nations.
- **NATO** was established on **4 April 1949** through the signing of the **North Atlantic Treaty**, also known as the **Washington Treaty**.

## MOUS AND AGREEMENT

### NIPER Raebareli Signs MoU with Boehringer Ingelheim India;

- The **National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research Raebareli** (Uttar Pradesh), including its **Centre of Excellence for Novel Drug Delivery Systems**, signed a **Memorandum of Understanding with Boehringer Ingelheim India Private Limited** to strengthen pharmaceutical education, research collaboration and innovation.
- The objective of the MoU is to **align academic curriculum with industry requirements**, thereby improving employability and practical competencies of students in the pharmaceutical sector.
- The partnership will facilitate **guest lectures, expert interactions, short term training programmes and workshops**, enhancing hands-on learning and industry exposure.

#### NIPER, Boehringer Ingelheim sign MoU for academic and research collaboration

Our Bureau, New Delhi  
Monday, February 23, 2026, 10:15 Hrs (IST)

National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPER), Raebareli and Boehringer Ingelheim India Pvt. Ltd has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen academic and research collaboration in areas such as pharmaceutical technologies, novel drug delivery systems, academic exchange, and capability building programmes.

On the occasion, Cohort 2 of AMRITVA (Alliance for Medicinal Research, Innovation, Translation & Value Acceleration) to strengthen India's innovation system and enable translation of research outcomes into viable pharmaceutical products and entrepreneurial ventures was also launched.

AMRITVA is implemented by the Startup Incubation and Innovation Centre (SIIC), IIT Kanpur, in partnership with the National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPER), Raebareli. This is an initiative supported under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) by Boehringer Ingelheim India.

Manoj Joshi, secretary, Department of Pharmaceuticals, ministry of chemicals and fertilisers in New Delhi, while signing the agreement, said that the role of collaborative partnerships between academia and industry in strengthening the research-to-market pipeline. He noted that such initiatives are critical for advancing domestic innovation capabilities, encouraging entrepreneurship, and ensuring wider access to cost-effective healthcare solutions.

As part of Cohort 2, five innovators have been selected for grant support aimed at facilitating the commercialization of their research. Financial assistance of Rs. 8 lakh each has been provided to three faculty-led projects, while two research scholar-led projects have been awarded Rs. 6 lakh each.

- During the event, **Cohort 2 of the Alliance for Medical Research, Innovation, Translation and Value Acceleration (AMRITVA)** was launched to further promote research commercialization and innovation.
- Under **AMRITVA Cohort 2, five innovators have been selected for grant support**, including **three faculty-led projects and two research scholar-led projects**, to help translate research into market-ready solutions.
- The AMRITVA programme is implemented by the **Startup Incubation and Innovation Centre IIT Kanpur**, functioning under the **Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur**, in partnership with NIPER Raebareli.
- The initiative aims to **strengthen India's pharmaceutical innovation ecosystem**, promote academia-industry collaboration and accelerate value-driven research translation.

## India's First Quantum and Artificial Intelligence University Campus to be Set Up in Amaravati

- The **National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology (NIELIT)**, under the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**, signed a **Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Andhra Pradesh** on at the India Artificial Intelligence Impact Summit to establish **India's first dedicated Quantum and Artificial Intelligence University campus in Amaravati**.
- The initiative aligns with Andhra Pradesh's proposed **Andhra Quantum Mission** and aims to develop **Amaravati as the nucleus of the Quantum Valley initiative**, positioning the state as a global quantum innovation hub.
- The Memorandum of Understanding was signed in the presence of **Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, S. Krishnan (Secretary, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology), Dr. M. M. Tripathi (Director General, NIELIT) and C. V. Sridhar (Mission Director, Amaravati Quantum Valley)**.
- The upcoming campus will function as a **specialised Quantum and Artificial Intelligence focused university**, anchored within NIELIT's **Deemed-to-be University framework**, making it the **first institution in India exclusively dedicated to Quantum and Artificial Intelligence domains**.
- The campus will focus on frontier areas including **Quantum Computing and Quantum Algorithms, Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, Quantum Communication and Cybersecurity, Quantum Hardware and Systems Engineering, High Performance Computing, and Artificial Intelligence–Quantum Convergence Research**.
- Academic and research integration at the campus will include Undergraduate, Postgraduate and Doctor of Philosophy programmes, advanced research laboratories, industry linked Centres of Excellence, deep technology incubation and entrepreneurship support, and global academic and research collaborations.
- The initiative is expected to **strengthen India's deep technology ecosystem, build next generation talent, and enhance national capabilities in quantum technologies and artificial intelligence**, supporting India's ambition to become a global leader in emerging technologies.
- NIELIT is an Autonomous Scientific Society under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, mandated to promote education, skilling, research and

NIELIT to Establish India's First Dedicated Quantum & AI University Campus in Amaravati

MoU signed between NIELIT and Government of Andhra Pradesh

Posted On: 21 FEB 2026 1:01PM by PIB Delhi

At the India AI Impact Summit, the National Institute of Electronics & Information Technology (NIELIT), under the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Andhra Pradesh on 20<sup>th</sup> February, 2026 to establish India's first dedicated Quantum and Artificial Intelligence University campus in Amaravati.

This landmark collaboration marks a significant step toward strengthening India's deep-tech ecosystem and aligns with Andhra Pradesh's vision to build a globally competitive quantum innovation hub through its proposed Andhra Quantum Mission. Amaravati is poised to emerge as the nucleus of the state's ambitious Quantum Valley initiative.

capacity building in Electronics and Information and Communication Technology domains.

- NIELIT has been granted **Deemed-to-be University status by the Ministry of Education**, with its main campus at Ropar (Punjab) and eleven constituent campuses across India, along with an extensive network of **56 centres, over 750 accredited institutes and more than 9,000 facilitation centres** supporting digital skilling and certification nationwide.

**About Andhra Pradesh:**

- Chief Minister: N. Chandrababu Naidu
- Governor: S. Abdul Nazeer
- Capital: Amaravati
- National Parks: Sri Venkateswara National Park, Papikonda National Park
- Wildlife Sanctuaries: Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary, Pulicat Lake Bird Sanctuary, Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary, Rollapadu Wildlife Sanctuary, Krishna Wildlife Sanctuary

**NDMA Signs MoU with AcSIR and CSIR-NIScPR to Strengthen Disaster Management Research & Response**

- The **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)**, under the Ministry of Home Affairs, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research (AcSIR)** and the **CSIR-National Institute of Science Communication and Policy Research (CSIR-NIScPR)** to enhance collaborative efforts in **Disaster Management Research and Response (DMRR)**.
- The agreement aims to strengthen **research, capacity building, policy support and knowledge sharing** to improve national disaster risk reduction mechanisms and build long term resilience.
- The MoU integrates **science, technology and policy frameworks** to enhance disaster preparedness, promote interdisciplinary academic research, and strengthen science communication related to disaster risks across India.
- As part of the collaboration, a **Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) programme** will be launched by AcSIR at CSIR-NIScPR with institutional support from NDMA to promote specialised research in disaster management.
- The three institutions will undertake **joint research projects, policy studies and structured capacity building programmes** focused on disaster risk reduction and response systems.
- The partnership is expected to improve evidence based policy formulation, enhance institutional preparedness and strengthen India’s overall disaster resilience framework.



**SPORTS NEWS**

**Delhi Open 2026: Stefanos Sakellaridis Clinches Maiden ATP Challenger Singles Title**

- **The Delhi Open 2026** concluded with an exciting finish as Greece's **Stefanos Sakellaridis** won the men's singles title after defeating **Great Britain's Oliver Crawford** in a closely contested final.
- The **21-year-old** secured his **first singles title** on the **ATP Challenger Tour**, marking a significant milestone in his professional career.



In tennis, Greece's Stefanos Sakellaridis lifted the Delhi Open 2026 men's singles title after defeating Great Britain's Oliver Crawford in the final yesterday. The 21-year-old clinched his maiden ATP Challenger Tour singles crown with a 7-5, 5-6, 7-6 victory. Staging a remarkable comeback in the deciding set, he won the final tie-break 8-6 on his second match point.

### Key Highlights

- Stefanos Sakellaridis defeated Oliver Crawford with a scoreline of 7-5, 5-6, 7-6 in a thrilling three set final.
- The decisive set was decided through a tie break, where the Greek player demonstrated strong mental resilience.
- Sakellaridis won the final tie break 8-6 on his second match point, completing a determined comeback in the deciding set and lifting his maiden ATP Challenger singles trophy.
- In the doubles category, India's **Siddhant Bantia** partnered with Bulgaria's **Alexander Donski** to win the title.
- They defeated India's **Niki Kaliyanda Poonacha** and Thailand's **Pruchya Isaro** in the final.
- The Delhi Open has witnessed notable Indian achievements in previous editions. **Saketh Myneni** and **Sanam Singh** won the doubles title in 2015, while **Yuki Bhambri** and **Mahesh Bhupathi** emerged as doubles champions in 2016.
- **Somdev Devvarman** remains the only Indian to win the singles title at the Delhi Open, achieving back to back victories in 2014 and 2015.
- Since then, no Indian player has secured the singles crown.
- The Delhi Open forms part of the ATP Challenger Tour, which is the second highest tier of international men's professional tennis after the ATP Tour.

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- The **AI Impact Summit 2026** concluded in **New Delhi** with the adoption of the **New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact**, endorsed by **89 countries and international organizations** worldwide
- The **Government of Jharkhand** presented a **₹1.58 lakh crore Budget** for the Financial Year 2026–27 in the State Assembly
- **Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena** has approved a **20 per cent reservation for former Agniveers in Delhi Police constable** (executive) posts
- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** will become the **first Indian Prime Minister** to address the plenary session of the **Knesset** during his two-day official visit to **Israel**
- The **Government of India launched** a nationwide awareness campaign titled **“Badhna Hai Toh Yahan Judna Hai”** to expand participation in the **Skill India Digital Hub**
- The **79th British Academy Film Awards 2026** were held at the **Royal Festival Hall** in **London**
- The **475-year-old Our Lady of Grace Cathedral** in Vasai, Maharashtra received the **Award of Merit** at the **UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation 2025**
- The **National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research Raebareli** (Uttar Pradesh), including its **Centre of Excellence for Novel Drug Delivery Systems**, signed a **Memorandum of Understanding** with **Boehringer Ingelheim**

- India Private Limited** to strengthen pharmaceutical education, research collaboration and innovation
- The **National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology (NIELIT)**, under the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**, signed a **Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Andhra Pradesh** on at the India Artificial Intelligence Impact Summit to establish **India's first dedicated Quantum and Artificial Intelligence University campus in Amaravati**
  - The **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)**, under the Ministry of Home Affairs, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research (AcSIR)** and the **CSIR-National Institute of Science Communication and Policy Research (CSIR-NIScPR)** to enhance collaborative efforts in **Disaster Management Research and Response**
  - **The Delhi Open 2026** concluded with an exciting finish as Greece's **Stefanos Sakellaridis** won the men's singles title after defeating **Great Britain's Oliver Crawford** in a closely contested final
  - **Nirmala Sitharaman**, Union Minister of Finance (MoF), launched the second phase of the National Monetisation Pipeline called **National Monetisation Pipeline 2.0 (NMP 2.0)** in **New Delhi**.
  - **New India Co-operative Bank Limited., Mumbai, Maharashtra** has been removed from the **Second Schedule** of the **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934**, which lists **scheduled banks** in India, effective from **February 2026**.
  - The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** released **draft amendment directions** across five regulatory frameworks covering **commercial banks, small finance banks (SFBs)**, and **All India Financial Institutions (AIFIs)** regarding credit facilities, concentration risk management, and financial disclosure norms.
  - The **Reserve Bank of India** issued **revised guidelines** on the **Lead Bank Scheme (LBS)**, superseding earlier instructions to strengthen **credit coordination** and **financial inclusion** mechanisms.
  - The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** issued **draft amendment directions** to standardize **loan recovery practices** and regulate the conduct of **recovery agents** across regulated financial entities.
  - The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** issued **draft revised guidelines** for **Kisan Credit Card (KCC)** to expand coverage, improve **agricultural financing**, and streamline loan operations.
  - The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** issued **draft Responsible Business Conduct Amendment Directions, 2026** under **Section 35A** of the **Banking Regulation Act, 1949**, to strengthen **customer protection** in financial product marketing and sales.
  - **Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva**, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, undertook a **State Visit to India** from **18–22 February 2026** at the invitation of **Narendra Modi**.
  - **Rob Jetten (Rob Arnoldus Andreas Jetten)** was sworn in as the **youngest-ever Prime Minister of the Netherlands** at the age of **38**, becoming the **first openly gay head of government** in Dutch history.
  - **Abhinav Bindra**, India's first individual Olympic gold medallist, completed his **eight-year tenure (2018–2026)** as **Vice-Chair** of the **International Olympic Committee (IOC) Athletes' Commission** on **February 23, 2026**.
  - **Dharma Guardian**, the **7th edition** of the **India–Japan Joint Military Exercise**, began at **Chaubattia, Uttarakhand**, from **24 February to 9 March 2026**.
  - **Tata Consumer Products Limited (TCPL)** formalised the transfer of indigenously developed **food and nutrition technologies** from the **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research – National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (CSIR-NIIST)** to promote national goals in **health, nutrition, and food security**.

- **Dharmendra Pradhan**, Union Minister of Education (MoE), launched **Teacher App 2.0**, powered by **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**, in **New Delhi**, Delhi.
- **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** launched the “**Arctic Sentry**” mission, to strengthen **security**, **surveillance**, and **military coordination** in the **Arctic and High North**.

