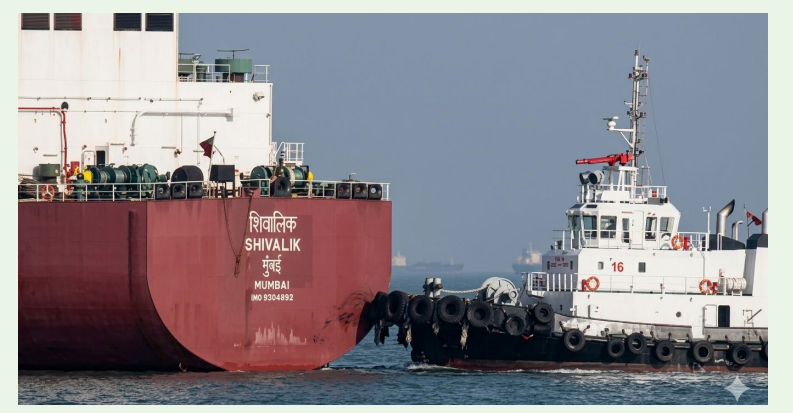


# HYDERABAD HEADLINES

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## GAS SUPPLY RELIEF FOR INDIA AS LPG TANKER 'SHIVALIK' ARRIVES FROM QATAR

India is set to get relief from recent LPG supply concerns with the arrival of the tanker Shivalik at Mundra Port in Gujarat. The vessel, carrying between 40,000 and 46,000 metric tonnes of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), completed its journey from Ras Laffan Port in Qatar. Owned by the Shipping Corporation of India, Shivalik navigated the strategic Strait of Hormuz before docking today at Mundra Port in Kutch district. Another LPG tanker, Nanda Devi, also departed from Ras Laffan Port and is en route to Gujarat. It is expected to reach Kandla Port at around 6:30 AM on March 17.



## UPI Rules Digital Payments with 81% Share

MONEY MATTERS 09

## Bangkok Man Held With Ganja in Photo Frame



NEXT DOOR 05

NEW DELHI

### SHORT TAKES



#### Robot 'Arrested' in Macau -

In Macau, a humanoid robot was "arrested" by police after startling a 70-year-old woman on a public street. Authorities led the android away, and the operator received a warning for the unusual incident.

SPECIAL 02



#### TG sets massive 90 lakh MT paddy target for Rabi

Minister for Irrigation and Civil Supplies N. Uttam Kumar Reddy unveiled a comprehensive action plan to achieve unprecedented paddy procurement target of 90 lakh metric tonnes during the ongoing Rabi season.

SPECIAL 02



#### When It Counted, India Stood With The UAE

On 11 March, the United Nations Security Council adopted the historic Resolution 2817, condemning in the strongest possible terms Iran's unprovoked attacks on the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, and Jordan.

OPINION 06

### THE DAILY MANTRA

#### ENEMY WITHIN

It's not enemies that break you, it's trusting the wrong friends.



Even the strongest individuals are not destroyed by enemies. They are weakened by betrayal from within their circle. True wisdom comes when someone learns:

- who deserves trust
- who deserves distance

Collected by Venna Srinivasa Reddy



## Governor, CM unveil Telangana Thalli statue at Assembly

Hyderabad, March 16: Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla, along with Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, unveiled the 'Telangana Thalli (Mother Telangana)' statue on the premises of Legislative Assembly on Monday. Legislative Council Chairman Gutha Sukender Reddy, Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad

Kumar, Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka, along with several Ministers and other dignitaries, were present on the occasion. Earlier, accompanied by the Chief Minister, the Governor paid floral tributes to the statues of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar located within the Assembly premises.



Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday unveiled a 58-foot statue of Potti Sriramulu at Shakhmuru Park in Amaravati. Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, Union Minister Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani and several state ministers attended the event.

AMARAVATI

## Odisha ICU Fire: 10 Dead, 11 Hurt



Bhubaneswar: At least 10 patients died and 11 hospital staff were injured after a fire broke out in the ICU of SCB Medical College and Hospital early Monday, reportedly due to a short circuit. Mohan Charan Majhi ordered a judicial probe and announced ₹25 lakh ex-gratia for the families of the deceased. The blaze erupted between 2.30 am and 3 am in the Trauma Care ICU, where critically ill patients were undergoing treatment. The chief minister, who visited the hospital with Health Minister Mukesh Mahaling, directed officials to ensure proper treatment for the injured and review fire safety measures at the facility.

NEXT DOOR 05



## One Battle After Another Dominates 98th Oscars

One Battle After Another won Best Picture at the 98th Oscars, along with Best Director, Adapted Screenplay, and Supporting Actor. Michael B. Jordan won Best Actor, Jessie Buckley Best Actress, and Autumn Durald Arkapaw became the first female and Black cinematographer to win for Sinners. Netflix's KPop Demon Hunters, del Toro's Frankenstein, and Mr. Nobody Against Putin also took home major awards. The ceremony, hosted by Conan O'Brien, mixed celebration with social and political commentary.

BOX OFFICE 12

## Governor: TG Targets Global Model

Hyderabad, March 16: Telangana Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla stated that the State government is building a Telangana that is a leader in innovation, a haven for the vulnerable, and a model for the world. The Telangana Assembly's Budget Session commenced on Monday, marked by the Governor's address to a joint assembly of both legislative chambers. During the joint session of the Telangana Legislature, Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla presented the Congress government's ambitious objectives and

highlighted its accomplishments since assuming leadership in Telangana. He elaborated on the administration's strategic blueprint, 'Telangana Rising-2047,' which envisions the state evolving into a \$3 trillion economy by 2047, with an intermediate milestone of \$1 trillion set for 2034. The Governor also indicated that the state's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) for the 2025-26 fiscal year is projected to reach Rs. 17.82 lakh crore.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >

## CM Revanth Directs MLAs to Be Present

Hyderabad, March 16: Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy ordered all Congress MLAs and MLCs, including women legislators to attend the budget session of the Assembly and Legislative Council and participate in the debates actively.

The Chief Minister emphasized that there should

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >



## Telangana Poet Nandini Sidda Reddy Wins Sahitya Akademi Award

HYDERABAD, MARCH 16

Celebrated poet and first President of the Telangana Sahitya Akademi, Dr. Nandini Sidda Reddy, has been honored with the Central Sahitya Akademi Award for his outstanding contribution to free verse poetry.

Dr. Sidda Reddy received the award for his poetry collection "Animesha," which

has been widely praised for its depth and literary merit.

A native of Bandaram village in Kondapak mandal, Siddipet district, Dr. Sidda Reddy has long been a leading voice in Telangana's literary community. The Manjeera Writers' Association lauded his achievement, describing it as a proud moment for the state's literary fraternity.

CITY BEAT 03

## KTR Accuses Govt of Backstabbing Farmers

HYDERABAD, MARCH 16

Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) working president and former minister K.T. Rama Rao strongly criticised the Congress government in Telangana for what he described as a betrayal of farmers and the people of the state. He alleged that the Congress government has deceived every section of society by failing to fulfil the promises it made before coming to power.

KTR said that the BRS will raise these issues forcefully during the ongoing Assembly budget session and expose what he called the Congress party's betrayal of Telangana. He particularly criticised the government's alleged plan to allocate ₹1000 crore to Rahul Gandhi while neglecting farmers in the state.

Continuing the tradition of paying homage to the martyrs who sacrificed

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >

## Ramchander Rao Likely for BJP National Panel

Hyderabad, March 16: According to sources, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Telangana president, Ramchander Rao, may soon be promoted to the party's national committee. The former MLC and senior BJP leader was announced as the BJP Telangana president in June 2025 and officially assumed office on July 1, 2025. After taking charge, the party contested the panchayat and municipal elections across the state. Although the BJP did not win a significant number of seats in these elections, the

party succeeded in expanding its presence across many parts of Telangana.

Ramchander Rao, known as a quiet and low-profile politician, may continue as the state party chief for another three months. However, sources indicate that once the BJP announces its full-strength national committee, Rao could be promoted to a position at the national level.

This development is reportedly linked to senior leaders who supported Rao's appointment as Telangana BJP presi-



dent. These leaders are expected to move to different wings of the national party around June 2026. After their shift, they may no longer have the influence to intervene in the selection of a new Telangana BJP president. By that time, Rao would also have completed nearly one year in the role.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >

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### Courtesy Meeting of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy with Eminent Indian Economist



**HYDERABAD:** Revanth Reddy, the Chief Minister, held a courtesy meeting with a prominent Indian economist in the CM's chamber at the Assembly. Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka, Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy

### Allocate Rs.60,000 cr for BC welfare: BC leaders

Hyderabad, March 16 (NSS): An all-party meeting of BC intellectuals and political representatives demanded Rs.60,000 crore allocation for Backward Classes welfare in the upcoming Telangana budget. Addressing the meeting, Dundra Kumara Swamy, Chairman of the BC Reservations Struggle Coordination Joint Action Committee (JAC) and National President of BC Dal, said budget allocations must reflect the 'population share of Backward Classes'. With the state budget expected to exceed Rs.3 lakh crore, he urged the government to earmark substantial funds for education, employment, self-employment and economic empowerment of BC communities.

# Telangana sets massive 90 lakh MT paddy target for Rabi season: Uttam

HYDERABAD

Minister for Irrigation and Civil Supplies N. Uttam Kumar Reddy unveiled a comprehensive action plan to achieve unprecedented paddy procurement target of 90 lakh metric tonnes during the ongoing Rabi season.

Addressing officials, including additional collectors, district civil supplies officers, and district managers of the Civil Supplies Corporation at a preparatory meeting for Rabi season here on Monday, the Minister projected paddy cultivation across 54.48 lakh acres, yielding an estimated 152.03 lakh metric tonnes.

The Telangana State Civil Supplies Corporation Limited has set an ambitious target of procuring 90 lakh metric tonnes—60 LMT coarse and 30 LMT fine—at the government-fixed Minimum Support price. To facilitate seamless, farmer-friendly operations, the state will establish 8,251 paddy purchase centres operated by IKP, PACS, and others, equipped with modern tools, adequate storage, transport, and weather vigilance measures, he said.

Emphasising zero distress sales, the Minister assured full procurement of every grain,



backed by robust monitoring, godown identification, and on-ground support to safeguard farmers' interests. He assured farmers that every grain will be procured at the government-fixed MSP without any distress sales.

There will be unprecedented network of 8,251 paddy purchase centres in Telangana. This massive decentralised network is designed to minimise hassles for farmers and enable on-the-

spot procurement with modern facilities, Uttam Kumar Reddy said.

The Minister reiterated the MSP rates fixed for the season at Rs 2,389 per quintal for Grade A and Rs 2,369 per quintal for common variety. These rates, the Minister stressed, will provide a significant boost to farmers' income and act as a safety net against market fluctuations.

Uttam Kumar Reddy outlined key measures that officials

must implement immediately to achieve the "record level procurement" target. All procurement will strictly adhere to the announced MSP rates, ensuring transparency and farmer confidence.

Sufficient gunny bags (gunnies) have already been positioned across centres. Officials have been directed to arrange adequate vehicles well in advance for seamless movement of paddy from PPCs to rice mills.



## Two Arrested Within Six Hours for Brutal Murder in Chilkanagar

HYDERABAD

In a swift breakthrough, Uppal Police of the Malkajigiri Commissionerate arrested two accused within six hours of a brutal murder in Chilkanagar on Sunday night. The accused, Bantho Santosh alias Santho (28), a Rapido rider, and Podishetty Tarun (22), a car driver, both residents of Uppal, allegedly stabbed Paruvula Sudheer Kumar to death following a dispute.

According to police, the incident occurred on March 15 around 7:30 pm after Santosh and Tarun called Sudheer to the Chilkanagar ground to settle an ongoing quarrel. Sudheer arrived on a motorcycle with his friend Imran Khan. During an argument, Santosh allegedly took out a knife and stabbed Sudheer. As the victim tried to flee, the duo chased him and

stabbed him multiple times, killing him on the spot before fleeing. Police registered a case under Sections 103(i) read with 3(5) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita at Uppal Police Station. Acting swiftly, police teams tracked down and apprehended both the accused on March 16. Officers recovered the knife used in the crime, two mobile phones, an Activa scooter, and the clothes worn during the offence.

Police said the accused and the deceased were long-time friends, and the murder was triggered by a recent quarrel related to a housewarming function and heated exchanges over phone and WhatsApp.

The operation was carried out under the supervision of DCP Uppal K. Suresh Kumar, along with senior officers and teams from Uppal Police Station and the Special Operations Team.

## KTR Jokes with Raja Singh in Assembly Lobby, Sparks Lighthearted Moment

HYDERABAD

A brief but amusing exchange between the leaders from rival parties drew attention on the sidelines of the Telangana Assembly Budget Session here on Monday.

As the session began with the Governor's address to both the Houses, former minister K.T. Rama Rao spotted Goshama-hal MLA T. Raja Singh stepping out of the BJP Legislature Party (BJLP) chamber in the Assembly lobby. Noticing him, KTR jokingly asked how a leader currently suspended from the Bharatiya Janata Party could enter the BJLP chamber and playfully told him to "come out" of the room. BJP MLA Payal Shankar, who was present nearby, responded in a lighter vein by inviting KTR to step inside



the BJLP chamber as well. KTR laughed and remarked that if he entered the room, the media might spin a different narrative, before walking away smiling.

Later, Raja Singh described the BJLP chamber as his "old

home", saying he could visit anytime as his friends were still there. However, he said he had not yet decided whether to re-join the party, adding that time would reveal "who will plead with whom".

## Tummala to Launch Distribution of 'Farmer Kits'

HYDERABAD

Training programmes on the National Natural Farming Scheme will be conducted at Rythu Vedikas across the state, with Agriculture Department officials distributing farmer kits to selected natural farming farmers.

As part of the Rythu Nestham programme, comprehensive training on the National Natural Farming Scheme will be provided through a video conference, following which the kits will be distributed district-wise by public representatives.

A total of 61,125 farmers have been selected under the scheme and organised into 489 clusters, with 125 farmers in each cluster. The programme aims to provide special training on organic and natural farming practices and encourage farmers to adopt sustainable agriculture.

Under the initiative, two Krishi Sakhis (agriculture assistants) will be selected and trained for each cluster. They will create continuous awareness



among the 125 farmers in their cluster about natural farming methods. Farmers practising natural farming will also receive certification.

To support the initiative, bio-input preparation centres will be set up to

produce natural farming solutions and supply them to farmers. Incentives will also be provided to encourage farmers to adopt natural farming practices.

The formal launch of the 'Farmer Kits' distribution programme will be

held on Tuesday at 10 a.m. at the State Secretariat by Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao.

The distribution will take place across the 489 clusters, benefiting 61,125 farmers statewide.

Each Farmer Kit contains items aimed at promoting awareness and recognition of natural farming, including a cloth bag, field diary (Kshetra Darshini diary), identity card, special calendar, cap, pen, and a small pocket diary.

Following the inauguration at the Secretariat, the kits will be distributed to farmers at Rythu Vedikas in the respective districts by local public representatives.

Officials said the government's initiatives to promote natural farming would significantly benefit farmers.

— Dr B. Gopi, IAS  
Director of Agriculture  
Agriculture Department  
Hyderabad, Telangana.

### CONTINUATION FROM PAGE 1

## Governor: TG Targets Global Model

FROM PAGE 1

anticipating a growth rate of 10.7 percent and a per capita income of Rs. 4.18 lakh.

"Telangana stands at the threshold of an extraordinary transformation. This Budget is not just about financial allocations—it is about shaping a stronger, more resilient Telangana. It is a roadmap for progress, a commitment to justice, and a promise to every citizen that their aspirations matter," the Governor said. He stated that the resolve of the government is unshakable and every policy, every initiative, and every reform introduced is aimed at creating opportunities, empowering people, and driving inclusive growth. The vision is clear, the direction is set, and the momentum is unstoppable, he said.

The Governor said Telangana would compete with the developed global cities and countries and reiterated that taking inspiration from the successful models across the globe Telangana would achieve 3 trillion dollar economy by 2047.

The Governor said the state government has prepared plans to promote Eco-Temple Tourism, integrating spiritual heritage with sustainable development in Telangana. In preparation for the upcoming Godavari Pushkaralu next year, the government will undertake the development of temples located along the banks of the Godavari River,

from Basar to Bhadrachalam, ensuring better infrastructure and facilities for pilgrims.

Through these initiatives, the government continues to strengthen Telangana's spiritual heritage while promoting tourism and regional development, he said. Shiv Pratap Shukla further stated that the State government is revitalizing Hyderabad's ecological corridor through the 55 km Musi Riverfront Transformation Project, extending from the Osman Sagar and Himayath Sagar reservoirs to Gandhi Sarovar.

He said the Phase-I of the project is currently under implementation. As part of Musi rejuvenation, Godavari phase 2 & 3 projects are already sanctioned and works are in brisk progress. This project will provide 2.5 TMC water for Musi rejuvenation by linking Osman Sagar and Himayath Sagar and 300 MGD drinking water to CURE area. As a part of Musi rejuvenation, 45 STPs are operational and 39 STPs are under construction. The treated water will be supplied to the Data Centres, landscaping of ORR, other industrial use, and for construction industry, the Governor said. He informed that the government is undertaking the prestigious Gandhi Sarovar Project at the confluence of the Musa and Esa rivulets, envisioned as a world-class experiential centre dedicated to the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi.

## CM Revanth Directs MLAs to Be Present

FROM PAGE 1

be good coordination between the government Whips and MLAs in the House during the discussion. Participating in the CLP meeting, Revanth Reddy said the Peoples government is presenting a third budget in the session and the Governor's address outlined the government's priorities and future plans and it served as a roadmap for the government.

Revanth Reddy said that every member must speak and respond strictly in accordance with the party line and the government. "The roadmap we formulate now will serve as the agenda for the upcoming elections," he said. The Chief Minister said that debate on the failures of

the previous government does not require and it is the right time to focus on our future plans and how to fulfill the people's aspirations. The Government Whips were instructed to coordinate in the House in the selection of the topics and the issues during the debates.

"We must ensure that the House proceedings are conducted efficiently without allowing discussions to be sidetracked or House time to be wasted," he said. The Chief Minister stressed the participation of women members in the debates. "The damage caused by individuals will ruin the entire system. Our survival in politics depends entirely on upholding and preserving the integrity of the system" he said. The Chief Minister noted that the

previous BRS government did not allow the opposition to speak on important issues. The then-CLP leaders—Bhatti Vikramarka and Jana Reddy were also denied the opportunity to speak. He was also suspended for the entire session and for the duration of the tenure as an MLA, was barred from entering the House, Revanth Reddy recalled. Stating that all the Assembly committees will be constituted soon, Revanth Reddy suggested to the MLAs and MLCs to tour other states and study the best practicing policies. The MLAs were also ordered to focus more attention on the drinking water crisis in summer. The 99-Day "Praja Palana - Pragati Pranali" should be taken directly to the people at the grassroots level, he said.

## KTR Accuses Govt of Backstabbing Farmers

FROM PAGE 1

their lives for the formation of Telangana, the BRS Legislature Party visited the Telangana Martyrs' Memorial (Gun Park) before attending the Assembly session. BRS MLAs and MLCs paid tributes to the martyrs and staged a protest at the memorial, raising slogans against the Congress government.

During the protest, BRS leaders demanded the immediate implementation of the promises made by the Congress government, particularly the Six Guarantees. They also demanded that the government grant legal status to these guarantees and allocate adequate funds in the state budget for their implementation.

KTR pointed out that the Congress party had promised

to implement the Six Guarantees within 100 days of coming to power and had even declared that legal status would be granted to these guarantees in the very first Cabinet meeting after assuming office. However, he said that even after two and a half years in power, the government has failed to provide legal backing to the Six Guarantees.

KTR criticised the government for failing to implement key welfare schemes for farmers. He said that during the BRS government led by K. Chandrashekar Rao, Rythu Bandhu funds used to be credited to farmers before the sowing season. In contrast, he said, farmers are now completing harvests without receiving any support from the government, and there has been no clarity from the state

on when the assistance will be released.

He said the BRS will question the government during the Assembly session on why it is prioritising political expenditures while neglecting farmers. "This is why we are raising the slogan - 'Not Rahul Bandhu, give Rythu Bandhu; ₹1000 crore for Rahul, but a betrayal for farmers,'" he said.

KTR further accused the Congress government of deceiving multiple sections of society. He said the government had promised a budget allocation of ₹1 lakh crore for weaker sections over five years. With two budgets already presented and the third underway, at least ₹60,000 crore should have been allocated by now, but there is no clarity on this commitment, KT Rama Rao said.

## Ramchander Rao Likely for BJP National Panel

FROM PAGE 1

If the change takes place, senior leaders in the national leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party are believed to already have clarity on the next candidate for the Telangana BJP president post. The party also sees political opportunity in the state as the opposition role of the Bharat Rashtra Samithi is perceived to be weakening. The BJP is reportedly preparing seriously for the upcoming Greater Hyderabad municipal elections. The party aims to contest around 300 seats, including 150 newly created divisions and the existing 150 divisions. Strengthening its presence in Greater Hyderabad and the newly formed municipal corporations could help the BJP build momentum ahead of the next general elections.

## Robot 'Arrested' in Macau Authorities intervene after humanoid startles 70-year-old on public street



MACAU

A bizarre incident in Macau saw police "arrest" a humanoid robot after it startled a 70-year-old woman on a public street, leaving her briefly hospitalized as a precaution.

Social media footage showed the human-like robot standing close to the elderly woman and raising its metal arms, prompting her to berate the machine in Cantonese. "You're making my heart race. You can do plenty but you want to cause this mess? You're crazy," she exclaimed, while onlookers watched.

Two police officers were then seen leading the robot away along the footpath. Authorities confirmed that the woman, who had been checking her phone at the time, was not physically injured and was later discharged from the hospital.

Investigations revealed that the robot belonged to an education centre and was being operated remotely by a 50-year-old man. He admitted the robot's mixed programming may have startled the woman on the narrow

street. The operator apologized and received a formal warning.

The android involved is reported to be a G1 model, unveiled by Chinese robotics company Unitree in May 2024. Standing 130 cm tall and weighing 35 kg, the G1 features 23–43 joint motors, a 360-degree perception camera, a chest-mounted speaker, and artificial intelligence that allows it to perform precise operations and "evolve" over time. The base model is priced at USD \$13,500. Robots like the G1 have appeared in public spaces globally, from food delivery machines to humanoid navigating streets. Last September, a Unitree G1 was spotted roaming Brisbane, Australia, as part of university robotics research.

John Roberts, Professor of Robotics at Queensland University of Technology (QUT), said the robot allows students to study the current capabilities and limitations of humanoid machines. "Our focus is on understanding how these robots will be used in the future and what needs to be done to reach that point," he said.

## KTR says Sahitya Akademi Award to Nandini Sidha Reddy is a matter of pride for Telangana

**HYDERABAD**  
BRS Working President K. T. Rama Rao expressed happiness over noted poet, writer, Telangana activist, and the first Chairman of the Telangana Sahitya Akademi Nandini Sidha Reddy receiving the Sahitya Akademi Award. He praised that receiving such a prestigious honor is a matter of pride for the entire state of Telangana. On this occasion,

he conveyed his heartfelt congratulations to Sidha Reddy on behalf of himself and the party. KTR stated that Nandini Sidha Reddy conducted extensive research in modern Telugu poetry and rendered distinguished services to the Telugu literary field through his invaluable writings. He also said that Sidha Reddy's contribution in establishing the Manjeera Writers Association and enriching Telugu literature is unforgettable.

## Central Sahitya Akademi Award for writer Nandini Sidha Reddy

**HYDERABAD,**  
Renowned poet, writer and Telangana activist Nandini Sidha Reddy has been conferred the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award, by the ministry of culture, in the Prose Poetry category for his poetry "Animesha". Sidha Reddy, the first chairman of the Telangana Sahitya Akademi, hails from Bandaram village in Kondapaka mandal of Siddipet district. Through his literary works, he has played a significant role in showcasing the cultural and literary richness of Telangana.



Sidha Reddy founded the Manjeera Writers' Association, which has been instrumental in promoting Telangana literature. Earlier, his work "Nageti Salallo" earned him the Nandi Award for Best Lyrics. Former Chief Minister and BRS President K. Chandrashekar Rao congratulated Sidha Reddy on receiving the Sahitya Akademi Award. KCR said the award for "Animesha" - a collection of long-form poetry reflecting the global crisis during the COVID-19 Pandemic - was well deserved. The anthology poignantly depicts the social disruptions and the strain on human relationships during the pandemic.

## KCR Congratulated Nandini Sidha Reddy

**HYDERABAD,**  
The former Chief Minister of Telangana and BRS President K. Chandrashekar Rao expressed happiness that the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award - 2025, presented annually by the Government of India, has been conferred on noted Telangana poet and writer Nandini Sidha Reddy. On this occasion, KCR congratulated Nandini Sidha Reddy and conveyed his best wishes. KCR said it is a great achievement that the award has been given to the long poetry collection "Animesha", which vividly portrays the global crisis faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially the breakdown of human relationships, through touching poetry. He described Nandini Sidha Reddy as a poet who deeply understands the spirit and fragrance of Telangana's soil and who has documented the life of Telangana through his literary works, making the state proud.

## Dak Adalat on March 24 in Hyd South East Postal Division

**HYDERABAD**  
The Hyderabad South East Postal Division will conduct a "Divisional Level Dak Adalat" to address public complaints related to postal services on March 24 at 12 noon. The Adalat will be held at the Office of the Senior Superintendent of Post Offices, Hyderabad South East Division, located on the first floor of the Charminar Head Post Office building, Hyderabad - 500002.

Members of the public who have grievances regarding postal services under the jurisdiction of the Hyderabad South East Division can submit their complaints to "The Senior Superintendent of Post Offices, Hyderabad South East Division, Hyderabad - 500002" on or before March 23. The letters and envelopes should be clearly superscribed "Divisional Level Dak Adalat".

## AIMIM Disrespects National Anthem in Assembly, BJP Condemns Walkout

**NV Subhash, BJP Chief Spokesperson and Incharge Telangana**  
**HYDERABAD**



The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Monday strongly condemned the conduct of an AIMIM member who allegedly walked out of the Assembly when the National Anthem was being played on the opening day of the State's Budget Session. BJP State Chief Spokesperson and Media In-charge N. V. Subash termed the act as deeply condemnable and an insult to the nation and its constitutional values. He said it was shocking that a party which repeatedly claims that the Constitution is "in danger"

representatives are expected to set an example by upholding the dignity and traditions associated with national symbols. Walking out during the playing of the National Anthem, he said, undermines the spirit of unity and respect that binds the country together. The BJP leader further urged the AIMIM leadership to clarify its stand on the issue and explain why its member chose to leave the Assembly at such a solemn moment. "Those who constantly lecture others about constitutional values must first demonstrate respect for the nation and its institutions," he remarked. Subash reiterated that the BJP will continue to uphold and defend the dignity of national symbols and will not remain silent when such acts of disrespect occur in public institutions.

## Utilise One-Time Settlement scheme: Karnan appeals to CURE residents

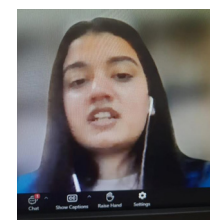


**HYDERABAD**  
Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) Commissioner R.V. Karnan has urged property taxpayers to take advantage of the One-Time Settlement (OTS) Scheme, which offers a 90% rebate on interest for pending property tax dues. The Commissioner stated that the scheme will remain in force until March 31, and appealed to citizens to make the most of this opportunity. He informed that out of 28.08 lakh property taxpayers in the CURE area, around 16.88 lakh taxpayers have already paid their property tax. Speaking at a press conference at the GHMC Head Office on Monday, the Commissioner stated that property tax collections in the CURE area, which includes GHMC, MMC, and CMC, has seen a notable increase.

By the same date in the previous financial year, the total collection stood at ₹1,984 crore, whereas ₹2,186 crore has been collected so far in the current financial year, he said. To promote transparency and accountability in tax payments, GHMC has facilitated online property tax payments through platforms such as MeeSeva centres, the GHMC website www.ghmc.gov.in, Citizen Service Centres, and the MyGHMC mobile application, Karnan said. The Commissioner also warned that strict action will be taken under the GHMC Act against property owners who fail to clear their long-pending tax dues. Apart from tax payments, several services such as property assessment, corrections, and other related services are also available through the MyGHMC application. He reiterated that GHMC is committed to providing efficient and technology-driven governance across its jurisdiction. The Commissioner further stated that, as part of the State Government's "99 Days - Praja Palana, Pragathi Pranalika" initiative, several special drives have been conducted from March 6 to 16 across 6 zones, 30 circle offices, and 150 wards within GHMC limits. Karnan said sanitation has been given top priority across GHMC limits, with focused efforts to eliminate Garbage Vulnerable Points. He also highlighted the successful conduct of the Mega E-Waste Drive, emphasizing that sanitation will continue to remain a key focus during the Praja Palana - Pragathi Pranalika implementation period, with the aim of making Greater Hyderabad a cleaner and healthier city. With only 15 days remaining for the OTS deadline, GHMC has intensified its public awareness campaign to encourage taxpayers to avail the scheme, he said. The Commissioner stated that awareness campaigns are being conducted across the CURE area at the grassroots level. So far, publicity has been carried out through 100 bus shelters across the city. Special awareness videos and audio messages have been prepared and are being widely broadcast through cable news channels, FM radio stations, and social media platforms, he added.

## Online Training Session on Science Direct AI Tool - Leapspace

**HYDERABAD**  
The Knowledge Resource Centre (KRC) at GITAM Deemed to be University, Hyderabad, organised a one-day online training session on the ScienceDirect AI tool, Leapspace, on 16 March 2026, aimed at enhancing researchers' ability to discover and analyse scholarly literature more effectively.



Shivalika Verma, Customer Success Manager at Elsevier, served as the resource person for the session. She provided practical guidance on utilising the ScienceDirect AI-powered platform Leapspace for advanced literature discovery, research insights, and academic collaboration. During the session, she explained how the tool leverages Scopus data and ScienceDirect full-text resources to generate deeper research insights. The training covered key features such as Explore Topics, Find Experts, and Find Funding, enabling researchers to navigate emerging research areas and identify collaboration and funding opportunities. Under the Explore Topics feature, Verma highlighted current research themes such as developments in solid-state battery technology, emerg-

ing questions surrounding the impact of microplastics on human health, and recent breakthroughs and debates in CRISPR gene editing. While demonstrating the Find Experts feature, she guided participants on identifying leading authors and researchers in areas such as generative AI safety, PFAS contamination and remediation, and large language model evaluation research. She also explained the Find Funding feature, which helps researchers locate potential grants supporting early-stage PFAS research in agriculture, studies on microplastics and human health, and initiatives promoting open science and research infrastructure. Earlier, Pranav Shukla of Elsevier explained how the organization is supporting research initiatives at GITAM. Faculty members and research scholars from various departments of GITAM actively participated in the session. The hands-on online training programme was conducted under the overall supervision of S.P.A. Balasubramanian, Director - KRC, and K. Ramakrishna, Deputy Librarian, while K. Durga Prasad, Assistant Librarian, coordinated the programme.

**SOUTH CENTRAL RAILWAY**  
Tender Notice No. : 23-CWMLGDS-ET-2025-26, Dated : 13-03-2026

**Chief Workshop Manager / Lallaguda** acting for and on behalf of the President of India invites E-Tenders against Tender No. 23-CWMLGDS-ET-2025-26 closing date 04-04-2026 at 11:00 hours. Bidders will be able to submit their original / revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through online payment modes available on IREPS portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through demand draft, banker's cheque, deposit receipts, FDR etc., are not allowed.

**SI. No. : 1. Tender Number :** 23-CWMLGDS-ET-2025-26, Dated : 13-03-2026. **Description of work :** Stripping and Fitting of Air Brake Equipment in Coaches at Carriage Workshop, Lallaguda, Secunderabad. **Approximate Cost (Rs.Ps.) :** 6,06,32,102.83. (Rupees Six Crore Six Lakh Thirty Two Thousand One Hundred Two and Eighty Three Paise only). **Earnest Money Deposit (Rs.) :** 4,53,200/- (Rupees Four Lakh Fifty Three Thousand and Two Hundred only). **Period of Completion :** 24 Months. **Date of Closing :** 04-04-2026 11:00 hours.

**1. Website Particulars :** www.ireps.gov.in  
**2. Notice board location where complete details of tender can be seen :** Office of the Chief Workshop Manager, Carriage Workshop, Lallaguda, Secunderabad - 500017.

**Tender Notice No. : NED/E-51, 52 & 53/2025-26, Dated : 12-03-2026.**

Offers are invited for the following E-Tenders on www.ireps.gov.in.  
**SI.No. : 1. NED/E-51/2025-26. Name of the work :** Provision of AT Supply for Intermediate block signalling (IBS) huts of CRU, PAU, MQL, LBG and PBN in MUE-PBN section in Nanded Division - Electrical Arrangements. **Approximate cost :** Rs. 28,08,745.15/-. **Bid Security :** Rs. 56,200/-. **Validity of offer :** 60 days. **Period of completion :** 6 Months. **Available at :** www.ireps.gov.in, under Nanded Division Administration. **Date and time of closing :** 15:00 Hours of 03-04-2026.

**SI.No. : 2. NED/E-52/2025-26. Name of the work :** Nanded Division Extension of Lalwadi Pit line No-1 by 03 Coaches - Electrical Arrangements. **Approximate cost :** Rs. 94,84,305.00/-. **Bid Security :** Rs. 1,89,700/-. **Validity of offer :** 60 days. **Period of completion :** 12 Months. **Available at :** www.ireps.gov.in, under Nanded Division Administration. **Date and time of closing :** 15:00 Hours of 03-04-2026.

**SI.No. : 3. NED/E-53/2025-26. Name of the work :** Provision of proper earthing arrangement to all electrical assets, duly improving the existing earth pits over Nanded Division. **Approximate cost :** Rs. 50,77,422/-. **Bid Security :** Rs. 1,01,600/-. **Validity of offer :** 60 days. **Period of completion :** 6 Months. **Available at :** www.ireps.gov.in, under Nanded Division Administration. **Date and time of closing :** 15:00 Hours of 03-04-2026.

For Tender document, details of eligibility criteria, special conditions, etc. go to our web site as mentioned above. It is advised to check if there is any corrigendum published online before submission of offer.

**Divisional Railway Manager (Elec.), Nanded.**

**TENDER NOTICE No. : 23 to 24\_DRM\_W\_HYB\_26, Dated : 12-03-2026.**

On behalf of the President of India, **Divisional Railway Manager/Works, Hyderabad Division, South Central Railway, Secunderabad** invites Open Tenders for the following works through e-procurement up to 15:00 hours of 06-04-2026.  
**Tender No. : 23\_DRM\_W\_HYB\_26. Name of the work :** Hyderabad : Secunderabad - Dhone Section :- Proposed Extension of existing Bridge No.472 in connection with proposed PORS Depot at Ulindakonda station. **Approximate Value Rs. :** 90,80,206/-. **Earnest Money Deposit Rs. :** 1,81,600/-.

**Tender No. : 24\_DRM\_W\_HYB\_26. Name of the work :** Hyderabad Division : (1) SSE/Pway/MBNR Jurisdiction : Proposed safety related Yard improvement & up gradation works at various yards (2) SSE/Pway/GWD Jurisdiction : Proposed safety related Yard improvement & up gradation works at various yards (3) SSE/Pway/KRNT Jurisdiction : Proposed safety related Yard improvement & up gradation works at various yards. **Approximate Value Rs. :** 6,77,53,050/-. **Earnest Money Deposit Rs. :** 4,88,800/-.

**Divisional Railway Manager/ A2683 Works / Hyderabad.**  
For further tender conditions / details and for downloading the tender documents, Please visit website at <https://www.ireps.gov.in> or [www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in](https://www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in)

**SOUTHERN RAILWAY**  
**CARRIAGE & WAGON WORKS**  
Tender Notice No: CWPER-BRAKEVANUPGRADATION  
For and on behalf of the President of India, Chief Workshop Manager, Carriage & Wagon Works, Southern Railway, Perambur, Chennai -23 invites e-tender for the following work as per the tender notice given in e-tender portal [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in).

Name of work	Approximate cash value (Rs.)	Earnest Money Deposit (Rs.)	Bidding start date	Tender closing date & time	Cost of tender form (Rs.)	Period of Completion
Upgradation of Brake Van during POH at Carriage & Wagon Works, Perambur.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	13,87,26,648.00	8,43,600,00/-	30.03.2026	13.04.2026 at 15.00 Hrs.	NIL	24 Months

**Website Address: www.ireps.gov.in**  
Office Address: Chief Workshop Manager, Carriage & Wagon Works, Southern Railway, Ayanavaram, Chennai-600 023.

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766 000 55 00 | [www.rajapushpa.in](http://www.rajapushpa.in)

## SHORT TAKES

### NAARM hosts national workshop to boost fisheries start-ups

**HYDERABAD:** A two-day national workshop on "Strengthening Academia-Industry Linkage in the Fisheries Sector" began at the National Academy of Agricultural Research Management (NAARM) here on Monday. Chief guest B. K. Behera, Chief Executive of the National Fisheries Development Board, highlighted the vast start-up opportunities in fisheries, urging the students to utilise government funding schemes and create employment. The workshop aims to bridge the gap between academic research and commercial application by promoting collaborative research, curriculum development, technology transfer and start-up incubation. P. E. Vijay Anand, India Lead for Soy Excellence Centres, stressed the need to update fisheries curriculum with business and entrepreneurship skills.

### TGSRTC plans spl buses for Ugadi, Ramadan rush

**HYDERABAD:** The Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) has announced special bus services ahead of the upcoming Ugadi and Ramadan festivals to manage the surge in passenger traffic. Heavy travel demand is expected on March 17 and 18, with return-journey rush likely on March 23 as people travel back after the celebrations. Special buses will be operated during these peak days to ensure smooth transportation for passengers travelling to their native places. As per GO 16 issued in 2003, the corporation is authorised to revise fares for special festival buses to cover diesel and maintenance costs. Accordingly, TGSRTC has decided to charge up to 1.5 times the regular fare for these special services. The revised fares will apply only to the festival special buses operating within Telangana and to neighbouring states during the specified dates, while regular bus fares will remain unchanged.

### Rs.300 cr pharma & electronics boost: CIL, Chematva JV to set up facility

**HYDERABAD:** Cambridge Isotope Laboratories (CIL), in partnership with Chematva Chiral Solutions Pvt Ltd, has announced a strategic joint venture to establish an advanced manufacturing facility in Genome Valley in Hyderabad, with an investment of up to Rs.300 crore over the next three years. The project is expected to generate over 250 high-skilled jobs and strengthen India's capabilities in manufacturing stable isotope-labelled compounds used in pharmaceutical research, diagnostics, OLED materials and semiconductor applications. The announcement followed a meeting between the company delegation and Telangana IT and Industries Minister Duddilla Sridhar Babu.

## TGCHE Releases on Multidisciplinary UG and PG Programmes in Emerging Areas

HYDERABAD,

The Telangana Council of Higher Education (TGCHE) today released a comprehensive brochure detailing the newly introduced multidisciplinary Undergraduate and Postgraduate programmes in emerging and future-oriented areas. The brochure was formally released by Prof. V.Balakista Reddy, Chairman, TGCHE, Prof. E. Purushotham, Vice-Chairman-I, Prof. SK Mahmood, Vice-Chairman-II and Prof. Sriram Venkatesh, Secretary, TGCHE.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chairman stated that the new academic initiatives are designed to align higher education in Telangana with emerging global trends, industry requirements, and the aspirations of the youth. The programmes are part of a broader vision to strengthen the higher education ecosystem and to prepare students for future careers in rapidly evolving sectors.

The newly introduced courses cover a wide range of emerging fields including Artificial Intelligence, Cyber Security, FinTech, Defence and Security Studies, Aviation and Air Traffic Management, Tourism and Hospitality, Healthcare Management, Biomedical Sciences, Climate Science, Rural Development, Maritime Management and other interdisciplinary domains. These programmes are designed to combine strong academic foundations with practical, industry-oriented skills.

The Chairman highlighted that the programmes are aligned with the vision of "Rising Telangana 2047" and the national aspiration



of "Viksit Bharat 2047," aiming to equip Telangana's youth with the knowledge, skills and competencies required for the future workforce. He emphasized that Telangana's young population is a great asset and empowering them through innovative and relevant education is a key priority.

A key feature of the new academic framework is the CORE-PURE-RARE model, which integrates urban, peri-urban and rural perspectives into higher education. Under this model, students will participate in credit-based coursework, fieldwork and projects that address the developmental needs of different regions of the state, thereby contributing to inclusive and balanced regional development.

The programmes also offer several student-friendly features such as flexible three-year and four-year undergraduate structures, multiple entry and exit options, and the Academic Bank of Credits that allows

students to pause and resume their studies without losing academic progress. Additionally, internships, industry projects and field-based learning will form an integral part of the curriculum.

TGCHE is also introducing an AI Tutor Initiative. These AI-enabled academic tutors will assist students in doubt clarification, bilingual explanations, coding support and academic guidance, particularly benefiting students from rural backgrounds. The initiative is intended to support and complement the role of teachers in delivering quality education.

The Chairman called upon students and parents to actively participate in these awareness programmes and make the best use of the opportunities created through the new courses. He reiterated that TGCHE is committed to working closely with universities, industry partners and research organisations to maintain high academic standards and to

create better career prospects for the youth of Telangana. The brochure provides detailed information about the new programmes, their objectives, course structure, career opportunities and the academic framework under which they will be implemented across universities and colleges in Telangana.

The Telangana Council of Higher Education (TGCHE) request the media to extend wide publicity to the Live Awareness Programme on Undergraduate and Postgraduate Courses in New and Emerging Areas, which will be broadcast on TSAT tomorrow from 3:00 PM to 5:00

PM. Students, parents, and all stakeholders are encouraged to watch the programme to gain information about the newly introduced multidisciplinary programmes and future career opportunities. The live programme can be viewed through the following link: <https://youtube.com/live/4Gv07daaH2s>.

## Telangana Assembly budget session to continue till March 30

HYDERABAD

The ongoing Telangana Assembly Budget Session will continue until March 30, 2026. The decision was taken during the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) meeting held under the chairmanship of Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar. The Assembly sessions commenced here on Monday with an address by Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla to both the Houses. Following the Governor's address, the Speaker adjourned the House until Tuesday.

Later, the BAC meeting was held in the Speaker's chamber to decide the schedule for the budget session. It was resolved that the budget session would be conducted from March 16 to March 30.

According to the schedule, discussions on the Motion of Thanks to the Governor's address will take

place on March 17 and March 18. Deputy chief minister and finance minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka is set to present the State Budget in the Assembly on March 20. Discussions on the Budget will be held from March 23 to March 26.

A discussion on the Appropriation Bill is scheduled for March 30, marking the conclusion of the session. The Assembly will also observe holidays on the occasion of Ugadi, Ramadan and Sri Rama Navami. Deputy Chief Minister Mallubhatti Vikramarka, Minister Duddilla Sridhar Babu and Government Whip Beerla Ilaiah attended the BAC meeting.

Representing the BRS, MLAs T. Harish Rao and KP Vivek were present. BJP MLA Aleti Maheshwar Reddy, AIMIM leader Akbaruddin Owaisi and CPI MLA Kunamneni Sambasiva Rao also participated in the meeting.



STATE AGRICULTURE MINISTER TUMMALA NAGESWARA RAO EXPRESSED HIS GRATITUDE TO CHIEF MINISTER REVANTH REDDY FOR ANNOUNCING RYTHU BHAROSA

## CM trying to erase Telangana's History: Kavitha slams CM Revanth over "Telangana Thalli" Statue

HYDERABAD

Kalvakuntla Kavitha, President of Telangana Jagruthi and former MP, on Monday accused Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy of attempting to erase the history of Telangana movement by altering the representation of Telangana Thalli (Mother Telangana).

Reacting to the unveiling of a statue of "Telangana Thalli" at the Telangana Legislative Assembly by Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla, Kavitha said the depiction without the traditional Bathukamma was an insult to Telangana's cultural identity and the spirit of statehood movement.

She alleged that the leaders who played no role in the Telangana agitation were now attempting to distort its history. Bathukamma, she said, symbolises the essence of Telangana culture, and the original image of Telangana Thalli holding Bathukamma was shaped by the people during the statehood struggle.

Kavitha asserted that changing the symbolic representation of Telangana Thalli amounts to erasing the memories and sacrifices of the movement. She warned that the depiction without Bathukamma would not be accepted and declared that once her party returns to power, the original Telangana Thalli



statue representing the movement era would be installed at the same location. She further said that the statue installed by the Congress government would be respectfully shifted to the party's office.

### Arrest of Visharad Maharaj unlawful

Kavitha condemned the arrest of Visharad Maharaj, president of the Dharma Samaj Party, who had reportedly gone to extend support to victims in Velugumatla in Khammam district. Calling the arrest illegal, she criticised the police for allegedly harassing him by moving him between multiple police stations and demanded his immediate release.

## Harish slams Cong govt over state water rights

HYDERABAD

Harish Rao, BRS Deputy Floor Leader and former minister, launched a sharp attack on the Congress government in Telangana, accusing Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy of failing to safeguard the state's water rights in the Krishna River and Godavari River basins.

Addressing a press conference at the Assembly Media Hall here on Monday, Harish Rao alleged that the Congress government had adopted an "irresponsible and shortsighted" approach, allowing injustice to Telangana in river water allocations. He claimed the state's interests had effectively been "mortgaged" to neighbouring N. Chandrababu Naidu's government in Andhra Pradesh.

The BRS leader contrasted the current situation with the previous BRS regime under former chief minister K. Chandrashekar Rao, stating that the earlier government had worked extensively to secure Telangana's share of river waters. He said the BRS government ensured protection of Telangana's rights under the Bachawat Tribunal award and pushed major irrigation projects to utilise the allocated share.

He claimed that out of the 1,400 TMC of water available in the Godavari basin, 968 TMC had been secured for Telangana, while Andhra Pradesh was allocated 518 TMC. He also noted that projects totalling about 400 TMC were taken up during the BRS tenure to utilise the



state's share. Accusing the Centre of siding with Andhra Pradesh state, the BRS leader alleged that the BJP-led Central government was supporting attempts to divert Telangana's water. Referring to a meeting of irrigation officials from both states held in New Delhi on January 30, Harish Rao said Andhra Pradesh had proposed arguments claiming there were no specific state-wise allocations in the Godavari basin. He criticised the Telangana government for failing to respond to the meeting minutes even after more than a month, questioning whether the government had effectively conceded Telangana's share.

Harish Rao also questioned the role of

the Central Water Commission and the Godavari River Management Board in revisiting tribunal allocations. He pointed out that approvals for multiple projects in the Godavari basin were granted based on the tribunal award.

The BRS leader further alleged that Andhra Pradesh was now seeking nearly 775 TMC of Godavari water and warned that Telangana's rights were under threat.

Demanding immediate action, Harish Rao urged the Congress government to respond strongly to the Centre and ensure protection of Telangana's water rights in both the Krishna and Godavari river basins. (NSS)

## BRS slams Governor's speech, says govt 'forced false claims'



HYDERABAD

BRS leaders on Monday strongly criticised the Governor's address at the start of the Telangana Assembly Budget session, alleging the Congress government forced the Governor to present misleading claims.

Former minister Vemula Prashanth Reddy said the speech delivered by Governor Shiv Pratap

Shukla was "hollow" and failed to reflect the realities in the state.

Addressing the media at the Assembly, he alleged that the Congress government compelled the Governor to present falsehoods while ignoring key election promises such as the party's "Six Guarantees" and "420 promises".

Prashanth Reddy said the Governor's address contained no reference to welfare promises, includ-

ing the Rs.2,500 monthly financial assistance pledged to women. He also claimed that issues concerning farmers, unemployed youth, the elderly, widows and persons with disabilities were completely absent from the speech.

The BRS leader further accused the government of misleading the public about employment, alleging that while it claimed to have provided 60,000 jobs, only around 12,000 posts had actually been filled.

Echoing the criticism, BRS MLA Padi Kaushik Reddy said the Governor's speech did not mention the Six Guarantees even though the Congress government was presenting its third budget since coming to power under Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy. He alleged that the promised Rs.15,000 assistance under the Rythu Bharosa scheme had not yet been disbursed to farmers.

BRS leaders said they would continue to raise the issue in the Assembly until the Congress government fulfils all the promises made to the people. (NSS)

## Karnan conducts surprise inspection in Goshamahal, Karwan circles



HYDERABAD

As part of the State government's 99-day programme "Praja Palana - Pragathi Pranalika", GHMC Commissioner R.V. Karnan conducted surprise early-morning inspections in Goshamahal and Karwan circles on Monday.

During the visit, the Commissioner inspected the ongoing junction development works at Bhagat Singh Junction. He also reviewed the functioning of the Indiramma canteen at the location and instructed officials to immediately undertake patchwork on the surrounding roads to improve com-

muting conditions for the public. The commissioner also reviewed the maintenance of public toilets being managed under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. Interacting with the caretaker, he verified the attendance of sanitation staff and directed officials to ensure that the facilities are kept clean and hygienic at all times.

Later, accompanied by Zonal Commissioner (Golconda) Mukunda Reddy, Assistant Commissioner (Sanitation) Ravi Kiran, officials from the engineering and sanitation wings, and Ramky representatives, the commissioner conducted a walk-through inspection of nearby roads

and Garbage Vulnerable Points (GVPs). During the inspection, he instructed officials to remove encroachments near the Ambedkar community hall and directed that the facility be made ready for inauguration on the occasion of Ugadi, the Telugu New Year. Subsequently, Karnan inspected the 100-foot road at Jiyaguda, where he reviewed the progress of sanitation and road maintenance works and directed officials to expedite development activities in the area. Officials including the zonal commissioner, SE, EE, DEEs, AEs and sanitation staff from Karwan circle were present during the inspection.

## HPV Vaccine can prevent 90% of cervical cancer: Awareness drive for girls in HYD

HYDERABAD

On the occasion of National Vaccination Day, the Press Information Bureau (PIB) Hyderabad organised a 'VARTA' awareness programme to educate adolescent girls about the importance of the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine in preventing cervical cancer. The programme was held at a government school in Musheerabad and targeted girls aged 14-15 years as part of the national HPV vaccination campaign launched on February 28 for a 90-day period. A dramatised presentation was also staged to spread awareness about the vaccine. Addressing the gathering, PIB Additional Director General Shruthi Patil said the campaign aims to ensure every 14-year-old girl receives the vaccine free of cost as a preventive measure against cervical cancer, contributing to a healthier India. Senior Medical Officer Dr. Chandini clarified misconceptions about the vaccine.

## Development Is Real Tribute to Sriramulu: CM

AMARAVATI, MARCH 16:

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Monday said that the true tribute to martyr Potti Sriramulu lies in ensuring the all-round development of Andhra Pradesh. He said people should draw inspiration from Sriramulu's sacrifice and work collectively for the progress of the state. The Chief Minister made these remarks while unveiling a massive bronze statue of Potti Sriramulu at Shakamuru Park in Amaravati as part of the leader's 125th birth anniversary celebrations. The monument has been named the "Statue of Sacrifice", symbolising the martyrdom and dedication of Sriramulu.

The 58-foot statue was installed by the Amarajeivi Potti Sriramulu Memorial Trust to commemorate Sriramulu's historic 58-day fast-unto-death demanding a separate state for Telugu-speaking people. Built on about 6.80 acres inside Shakamuru Park, the statue stands as the first major monument in Amaravati dedicated to the martyr. Officials said the first phase of the Potti Sriramulu Memorial Park was completed in a record six months. The statue was built using about 26 tons of bronze and supported by a 42-ton iron structure. In the second phase, the trust plans to construct a museum, auditorium

**Statue of Sacrifice" to Keep Sriramulu's Sacrifice Alive... State Achieved Through Sriramulu's Sacrifice... Capital Built Through Farmers' Sacrifice Government Order to Recognize All Vaishyas as Arya Vaishyas Instead of Different Sub-Names Government Supporting Arya Vaishyas to Conduct Business Without Difficulties**



and skill development centres to educate visitors about the life and ideals of Sriramulu. Addressing the gathering, Chandrababu Naidu said Potti Sriramulu belonged to all sections of society and not to any single community. "Potti Sriramulu is a symbol of inspiration. The 58-foot statue represents his 58-day fast and therefore the name 'Statue of Sacrifice' is appropriate. Just as there are iconic monuments like the Statue of Liberty and the Statue of Unity, Andhra Pradesh now has its own Statue of Sacrifice," he said. The Chief Minister recalled that Sriramulu fought for the dignity and identity of Telugu people at a time when they lacked

recognition. Inspired by the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi, he dedicated his life to social reform and the cause of a separate state for Telugu speakers. Chandrababu Naidu said Sriramulu continued his public service despite personal tragedy after losing his wife and children. He participated in several social movements and also fought for temple entry rights for Dalits, undertaking a 29-day hunger strike for the cause. Later, Sriramulu launched his historic fast demanding a separate state for Telugu people. The 58-day fast ultimately led to his death, triggering widespread protests across the region. His sacrifice compelled the central



government to begin the process of reorganising states in India on linguistic lines. The Chief Minister said the Telugu community had faced many historical challenges. Initially, Telugu-speaking regions were under the Madras Presidency. Following Sriramulu's sacrifice, Andhra State was formed in 1953 with Kurnool as its capital. Later, Hyderabad became the capital of the unified Andhra Pradesh, helping the Telugu community progress economically and culturally. After the bifurcation of the state in 2014, Amaravati emerged as the capital of the new Andhra Pradesh. Chandrababu Naidu said Amaravati represents the aspira-

pooling system to build the capital. Their contribution, he said, reflects the same spirit of sacrifice shown by Potti Sriramulu. The Chief Minister said the farmers' struggle between 2019 and 2024 had become a historic movement. The present alliance government of TDP, Jana Sena and BJP is committed to rebuilding the state while balancing development and welfare programmes. Speaking about infrastructure projects, Chandrababu Naidu described the Polavaram Project as the lifeline of Andhra Pradesh. He said the project had suffered setbacks earlier but construction is now progressing rapidly. The government aims to complete the project and dedicate it to the nation before the upcoming Pushkaram festival. He emphasised that every citizen should have a home and every state should have a capital city that people can proudly identify with. Amaravati will be developed into a world-class capital, he said, adding that within the next three years people will witness major transformation in the region. The Chief Minister also announced decisions concerning the Arya Vaishya community. He said the government would issue a Government Order recognising all Vaishya groups collectively as Arya Vaishyas instead of using different sub-names.

With the announcement of Assembly elections in Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala, along with the Union Territory of Puducherry, political activity across the country has gained new momentum. Voting will take place for a total of 824 Assembly seats in these regions, reflecting the political aspirations and preferences of nearly 174 million voters. Compared with previous elections, polling this time is scheduled in fewer phases, which observers view as an important administrative adjustment intended to streamline the electoral process. According to the schedule, polling in Assam, Kerala, and Puducherry will take place on April 9. All 234 Assembly seats in Tamil Nadu will go to the polls on April 23. In West Bengal, however, voting will be conducted in two phases: the first phase on April 23 covering 152 seats, and the second phase on April 29 for the remaining 142 seats. The outcomes of these elections are being closely watched across the country, as they may influence not only the politics of these states but also broader national political trends. The significance of these elections extends beyond the contest for power. They also represent a test of the health and strength of India's democratic system. In particular, West Bengal has long been known for intense political rivalry. The ruling All India Trinamool Congress and the principal opposition Bharatiya Janata Party are engaged in a fierce political contest for dominance in the state. In the past, such competition has sometimes led to incidents of electoral violence and political tension. For this reason, the upcoming election in West Bengal is seen not only as a struggle for political power but also as a test of whether democratic processes can function without fear or violence. At the core of democracy lies the right of every citizen to vote freely and without intimidation, pressure, or inducement. In a country as large and diverse as India, maintaining such conditions is a complex task. The Election Commission must therefore monitor multiple aspects of the electoral process to ensure fairness and transparency. These include the deployment of security forces, the proper functioning of polling stations, the safety of electronic voting machines, and the accuracy of voter rolls. The Commission must also ensure that political parties and their workers adhere strictly to the model code of conduct. West Bengal has become a particular focus of attention in this context. For decades, the state has witnessed episodes of political confrontation during elections. Many political observers believe that the possibility of a change in power could intensify political tensions. The government led by Mamata Banerjee faces the challenge of retaining power, while the opposition seeks to expand its influence. In such circumstances, the responsibility of the Election Commission becomes even greater to ensure that the electoral process remains peaceful and credible. The political landscapes of Kerala and Tamil Nadu also attract attention because of their distinctive patterns. In Kerala, political power has traditionally alternated between two major alliances, creating a highly competitive yet structured political environment. Tamil Nadu's politics, meanwhile, is strongly shaped by regional parties that command deep social and cultural influence. Although electoral competition in these states is intense, there has generally been a tradition of relatively peaceful voting. Assam presents a somewhat different political context. Elections in the state are significant not only for its own governance but also for the broader political dynamics of northeastern India. The outcome there is often interpreted as an indicator of political trends across the region. Despite these varied political contexts, a common question arises during every election: Are political parties sufficiently committed to democratic values? Electoral competition is natural and even necessary in a democracy. However, when it turns into hostility, personal attacks, or violence, it undermines the very spirit of democratic governance. Unfortunately, in the intense race for electoral victory, political parties sometimes overlook the need for restraint and respect for democratic norms. In such circumstances, the responsibility for ensuring fair elections cannot rest solely with the Election Commission. Political parties and their leaders must also demonstrate responsibility and maturity. By respecting the code of conduct and encouraging disciplined behaviour among their supporters, they can contribute significantly to a healthier democratic process. Equally important is the role of voters themselves. In any democracy, the ultimate authority rests with the people. If voters remain aware, vigilant, and committed to democratic values, they will support leaders who uphold those principles. Citizens must recognize that their vote is not merely an expression of political preference but also a decision that shapes the direction of the nation's democratic journey. The elections in these five regions therefore carry significance beyond the immediate results. If conducted in a peaceful, transparent, and credible manner, they will strengthen public faith in democratic institutions and present a positive example to the world. India is widely regarded as the world's largest democracy, and its electoral processes attract international attention. Ultimately, elections are not just contests between political parties; they are also tests of democratic ideals. The elections in Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Puducherry will be judged not only by who wins or loses, but by whether democratic values—fairness, civility, tolerance, and public trust—are upheld throughout the process.

## Democratic Values at Stake as the Political Battle Begins

In a vast democratic nation like India, elections are far more than a routine exercise to change governments. They represent a test of democratic maturity, public trust, and political culture. Whenever elections are announced in any state or region, political activity naturally intensifies. Campaigns gather momentum, political leaders address rallies, and parties reach out to voters with promises and competing visions for governance. Accusations and counter-accusations also become common as parties attempt to highlight differences with their rivals. Yet, at the center of this entire process stands an institution whose responsibility is crucial to the credibility of the democratic system—the Election Commission of India. It is this constitutional body that ensures elections are conducted in a free, fair, and peaceful environment.

With the announcement of Assembly elections in Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala, along with the Union Territory of Puducherry, political activity across the country has gained new momentum. Voting will take place for a total of 824 Assembly seats in these regions, reflecting the political aspirations and preferences of nearly 174 million voters. Compared with previous elections, polling this time is scheduled in fewer phases, which observers view as an important administrative adjustment intended to streamline the electoral process. According to the schedule, polling in Assam, Kerala, and Puducherry will take place on April 9. All 234 Assembly seats in Tamil Nadu will go to the polls on April 23. In West Bengal, however, voting will be conducted in two phases: the first phase on April 23 covering 152 seats, and the second phase on April 29 for the remaining 142 seats. The outcomes of these elections are being closely watched across the country, as they may influence not only the politics of these states but also broader national political trends. The significance of these elections extends beyond the contest for power. They also represent a test of the health and strength of India's democratic system. In particular, West Bengal has long been known for intense political rivalry. The ruling All India Trinamool Congress and the principal opposition Bharatiya Janata Party are engaged in a fierce political contest for dominance in the state. In the past, such competition has sometimes led to incidents of electoral violence and political tension. For this reason, the upcoming election in West Bengal is seen not only as a struggle for political power but also as a test of whether democratic processes can function without fear or violence. At the core of democracy lies the right of every citizen to vote freely and without intimidation, pressure, or inducement. In a country as large and diverse as India, maintaining such conditions is a complex task. The Election Commission must therefore monitor multiple aspects of the electoral process to ensure fairness and transparency. These include the deployment of security forces, the proper functioning of polling stations, the safety of electronic voting machines, and the accuracy of voter rolls. The Commission must also ensure that political parties and their workers adhere strictly to the model code of conduct. West Bengal has become a particular focus of attention in this context. For decades, the state has witnessed episodes of political confrontation during elections. Many political observers believe that the possibility of a change in power could intensify political tensions. 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- Lalit Gargg, Writer, Journalist, Columnist

## National Safety Week 2026 Observed at Carriage Repair Workshop, Hubballi

HUBBALLI, MARCH 16:

The Carriage Repair Workshop (CRW), Hubballi of South Western Railway observed National Safety Week 2026 on 13/03/2026 with enthusiasm to promote awareness on workplace safety, health and environmental protection among employees.

Shri Vijay Singh Yadav, Chief Workshop Manager, UBLS, graced the programme as the Chief Guest. Shri Ravindranath N. Rathod, Joint Director of Factories, Karnataka, attended as the Guest of Honour, while Ms. Chinmayi Toragal, Assistant Director of Factories, Hubballi Division, participated as the Special Guest. The programme aimed to enhance awareness on workplace safety practices and the importance of proper use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). A Workplace Safety Gallery was also set up showcasing various safety measures and best practices followed in

the workshop. The event was organized by the Safety Department under the leadership of Shri Srinivas Sadashiv Bellary in coordination with the Civil Defence team under the guidance of Shri Ashok Kumar G. ACMT/UBLS and Shri Ramesha H. K., Factory Manager & Dy. CWM (P&P)/UBLS. During the programme, the Civil Defence team demonstrated important life-saving techniques related to fire-fighting, first aid and rescue operations to help employees effectively respond during workplace emergencies. A large number of workshop employees witnessed the demonstrations and benefited from the awareness and hands-on learning. Addressing the gathering, Shri Vijay Singh Yadav emphasized that safety must be an integral part of daily work practices, particularly in workshops dealing with heavy machinery and mechanical operations. He appreciated the safety initiatives implemented in

the Hubballi workshop, including the Permit to Work system for contractors, safety orientation programmes, provision of PPE and regular inspection and certification of equipment in compliance with the Factories Act and Karnataka Factories Rules. The workshop has also strengthened emergency preparedness through facilities such as a dedicated ambulance, Civil Defence training for staff and periodic mock drills. Regular environmental monitoring of noise levels, air quality and Effluent Treatment Plant water is also being carried out to ensure a healthy workplace environment.

As part of Safety Vision 2026, several initiatives have been planned including Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA), strengthening of the On-Site Emergency Plan, comprehensive safety audits, fire load assessment and structured safety training programmes for employees.

## Indian Delegation Visits Ayurveda Institute in Panchkula

CHANDIGARH, MARCH 16

The global acceptance of India's traditional medical system, Ayurveda, is steadily increasing. In this context, a delegation from Sweden visited the National Institute of Ayurveda (NIA), Panchkula, to learn about Ayurvedic treatment methods. On their arrival at NIA, Deputy Medical Superintendent (DMS) Dr. Gaurav Garg welcomed the delegation and briefed them about various Ayurvedic treatment practices. Dean In-charge Prof. Satish Gandharv also informed the delegation about the functioning of the institute and its academic activities. The delegation appreciated the Ayurvedic treatment methods being practiced at the National Institute of Ayurveda. Dr. Gaurav Garg informed the delegation that under the aegis of the Ministry of AYUSH, Government of In-

dia, treatment is being provided to patients through Ayurvedic medical practices at the National Institute of Ayurveda under the guidance of Vice Chancellor Professor (Dr.) Sanjeev Sharma and Dean Professor Gulab Chand Pamnani. He added that around 400 to 500 patients visit the institute daily for consultation and treatment across its 12 OPDs, where they are treated by specialist doctors. Medical Officer Dr. Shishna conducted a tour of the institute for the delegation and explained in detail about the OPD and IPD facilities. The delegation visited the OPD and IPD sections along with the Panchakarma unit, central laboratory, physiotherapy unit, pharmacy, registration branch, and operation theatre. Gabija Gadliu-skaite and Rita Zilenaite, who led the delegation, appreciated the traditional Indian system

of medicine and said that the demand for Ayurvedic treatment is increasing in European countries, and people's trust in Ayurveda is becoming stronger. Many patients in several European countries are benefiting from Indian systems of medicine. They also praised the National Institute of Ayurveda, functioning under the Ministry of AYUSH, for establishing a distinct identity in Ayurvedic treatment. The delegation is visiting India under the leadership of Swami Aditya, Coordinator of the Indo-Baltic Society for Consciousness, Lithuania. During their visit, they are touring different states of India, including tourist destinations as well as educational and Ayurveda-related institutions. On this occasion, Dr. Rajendra, Dr. Vivek Gupta (Raipur Rani), and Richa Bhargava were also present.

## ECI appoints Special Observer for the General Election

NEW DELHI, MARCH 16:

Election Commission of India (ECI) has appointed a Special Observer for the ongoing General Election to the Legislative Assembly of Assam, 2026.

ECI announced the schedule for the general elections to Assam along with 4 other State/UT on Sunday, 15th of March 2026. The date of polling in Assam will be on the 9th of April 2026, and counting is scheduled on the 4th of May 2026.

Chief Election Commissioner Shri Gyanesh Kumar in his Press Conference announcing the schedule for the elections yesterday had assured that elections in all states, including Assam, would be peaceful.

The Special Observer, Shri Manjeet Singh is a retired IAS Officer of the Rajasthan cadre.

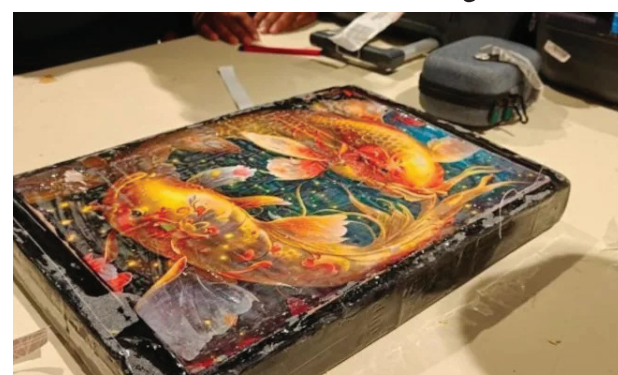
ECI appoints the Special Observer to Assam in exercise of its powers under Article 324 of the constitution of India.

The Special Observer will visit Assam regularly to observe the poll-preparedness and the conduct of the general elections in the State and give inputs to the Commission wherever necessary.

As the eyes and ears of the Commission, the Special Observer will further bolster the conduct of elections in a free, peaceful, impartial and transparent manner in Assam.

## Bangkok Man Held With Ganja in Photo Frame

Acting on suspicion during routine baggage screening, officials intercepted the passenger and examined the luggage. What appeared to be an ordinary photo frame soon raised red flags. When officers broke it open, they discovered 1.125 kg of hydroponic ganja concealed inside.



In a dramatic seizure at Karnataka's Kempegowda International Airport, customs officials uncovered hydroponic ganja worth Rs 39.37 lakh

cleverly hidden inside a photo frame carried by a passenger arriving from Bangkok. Acting on suspicion during routine baggage screening, officials intercepted the passenger and examined the luggage. What appeared to be

an ordinary photo frame soon raised red flags. When officers broke it open, they discovered 1.125 kg of hydroponic ganja concealed inside in a carefully planned attempt to evade detection.

The passenger was immediately taken into custody and is being questioned by customs authorities. A case has been registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, and officials have launched a detailed investigation to trace the origin and intended network behind the smuggling attempt.

## 10 killed in massive fire at state-run hospital in Cuttack; short circuit suspected

Ten patients were killed and 11 hospital staff injured in a massive fire at SCB Medical College and Hospital in Odisha's Cuttack. A short circuit in the ICU's AC or medical equipment is suspected to have caused the blaze.



At least 10 patients were killed and 11 hospital staff injured after a massive fire broke out at SCB Medical College and Hospital in Odisha's Cuttack early on Monday, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said. The blaze erupted in the trauma care unit and is suspected to have been triggered by a short circuit in the ICU's air conditioning system or medical equipment. The Odisha government has ordered a judicial enquiry into the incident. According to

preliminary information, the blaze started around 3 am on the first floor of the trauma care unit, where 23 patients were undergoing treatment, Chief Minister Majhi said. Initially, seven people were killed in the fire at the trauma ward before the rescue operation started, and three others later died after inhaling smoke triggered by the fire, he said. Within minutes, thick smoke engulfed the ICU ward, triggering panic among people. Despite swift action by hospital staff and fire safety personnel to evacuate patients, the thick smoke and intensity of the blaze proved fatal for several who were already in critical condition.

Three fire tenders battled the flames for hours before bringing the situation under control. Dozens were rescued and shifted to a ward for continued life support. Following the incident, Chief Minister Majhi rushed to the hospital to review the situation and met with the victims' families and those injured. He then announced a compensation of Rs 25 lakh for the families of those who died in the tragedy. "There were 23 patients admitted into the ward. Seven people initially died inside the ward before the rescue operation. Three people later died due to inhaling of smoke after they were rescued. A total of 10 people have died now," he told reporters. He also said that 11 medical officials joined their hands in the rescue operation, risking their lives, and

they are under treatment in a ward in the hospital. Odisha's Health Secretary Aswathy S. Cuttack's District Collector Dattatraya Bhausaheb Shinde and Cuttack's DCP Rishikesh Khilari also supervised the rescue operations. A suspected electrical short circuit in the ICU's air conditioning system or medical equipment may have triggered the blaze. A high-level probe has been ordered to ascertain the exact cause and examine possible lapses in fire safety protocols.

Established in 1944, the SCB Medical College and Hospital is one of the oldest and largest government medical institutions in eastern India. It serves as the largest referral hospital in Odisha, receiving critical patients from across the state and neighbouring regions.

EDITORIAL

RESTORING THE MAJESTY OF  
PARLIAMENT AMID DEEPENING  
PARTISANSHIP

The Lok Sabha rejected by voice vote, on March 11, a resolution under Article 94(C) of the Constitution for the removal of Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla from office, but only after a hostile debate on the functioning of the House deepened the wedge between the government and the Opposition. In principle, Parliament is the foundation of representative democracy, and its routine functions act as an instrument that holds the cabinet accountable. As a forum for government-Opposition interaction, it is meant to operate in a structured, methodical way. Single-party dominance has eroded all these formal and informal functions of legislatures at all levels, and the Lok Sabha, sadly, has become a platform for political partisanship. In recent years, the chairs of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha have been dragged into political conflict. In 2024, there was an Opposition resolution to remove Jagdeep Dhankhar as Rajya Sabha Chairman. Though the resolution did not pass, he resigned as Vice-President for unexplained reasons. The Opposition has raised concerns over the Lok Sabha's functioning, but what precipitated their protest into a formal resolution for Mr. Birla's removal was, possibly, his statement that he had confidential knowledge that Congress women MPs might act against Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the House floor.

Opposition MPs are routinely denied the opportunity to raise substantive issues, though the government cites statistics in its rebuttal. The Speaker had disallowed Leader of the Opposition (Lok Sabha) Rahul Gandhi from quoting former Army Chief M.M. Naravane's unpublished memoir, which discusses Prime Minister Narendra Modi's role in the 2020 military standoff with China. The microphones of Opposition MPs are frequently switched off during debates. The Opposition has pointed out that in February, Mr. Gandhi was interrupted 20 times while speaking during the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address and also blocked from raising the Gautam Adani investigation issue in the U.S. and the EU-U.S. trade deal. The government argued that the Opposition was given 56% of Zero Hour time, and that NDA MPs, despite their majority, received 321 supplementary questions against the Opposition's 364 during his tenure.

Home Minister Amit Shah said that the House's productivity during Mr. Birla's tenure had been high and that it had debated in 14 regional languages. Mr. Shah also cornered Mr. Gandhi for being frequently absent from the House. The resolution and the debate manifested a deeply fractured polity in need of urgent corrective measures. The ruling majority and the Opposition must rise above partisanship and restore the majesty of Parliament.

Open Forum

Oil & Gas Crisis  
ECONOMY LIKELY  
TO BE AFFECTED

Predictions and projections may not turn out to be accurate. While promises of politicians mostly are found to falter, this may not be the same in case of professional economists who predict something based on some scientific calculations. In this connection, the West Asian crisis has complicated the situation in most countries of the Third World, including India, which is heavily dependent on oil and gas imports.

It is a well-known fact that the world remains dependent on reliable oil and gas supplies, even though two-thirds of global spending in the energy sector now go to cleaner alternatives such as solar power. While oil now meets a smaller share of global energy needs than it earlier used to - less than 30 percent, according to the International Energy Agency - the world uses almost twice as much of the fuel as it did in the early 1970s. And natural gas used to heat homes and generate electricity, underpins much more of the economy than it used to. According to experts, the post-oil world is still a future proposition. The world can be said to be just in the middle stages of an energy transition as such change takes time.

Meanwhile, a sustained rise in crude oil prices could widen India's current account deficit, push up inflation and affect economic growth, pointed out most economists. However, Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, informed the Lok Sabha that the government does not expect inflation to rise substantially due to the recent spike in global crude prices. It hovers below \$100 per barrel presently from just below \$70 per barrel in end February. However, prices analysts believe that the price may eventually stabilise at around \$85 per barrel compared to last year's average of \$69 per barrel though Fitch projected a few

THE ESCALATING CRISIS IN WEST ASIA HAS RENEWED CONCERNS ABOUT INDIA'S HEAVY DEPENDENCE ON IMPORTED OIL AND GAS, WITH ECONOMISTS WARNING THAT SUSTAINED RISES IN CRUDE PRICES COULD WIDEN THE CURRENT ACCOUNT DEFICIT, FUEL INFLATION AND SLOW ECONOMIC GROWTH. WHILE THE GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THE IMPACT WILL REMAIN MANAGEABLE FOR NOW, THE SITUATION HIGHLIGHTS THE URGENT NEED FOR INDIA TO DIVERSIFY ENERGY SOURCES AND ACCELERATE DOMESTIC ALTERNATIVES SUCH AS BIOGAS, COAL GASIFICATION AND ETHANOL.

days back the global crude oil to average \$70 per barrel in 2026.

According to SBI Research and many other studies, if the oil prices reach the \$120 mark per barrel, which at present appears quite unlikely, GDP growth may fall to around 6 per cent. One may mention here that before the continuation of the tensions in West Asia, may lead to food inflation. Up to \$100 per barrel, the impact on current account deficit, inflation and growth is expected to be manageable but if it crosses that mark, the impact may be exponential, rightly stated Soumya Kanti Ghosh, the Chief Economic Adviser of SBI.

If that situation occurs, which may be ruled out at this juncture, the country may face a problem situation and in the present atmosphere it remains to be seen how the RBI balances inflation management with currency stability. It is gratifying to note that Moody's Rating and its Indian affiliate, ICRA, stated that the West Asian conflict should have limited near-term impact on India's banking system though real GDP growth would be 6.4 per cent of GDP.

One may mention here that crude imports from Russia remained at the top of India's oil basket despite US warning New Delhi against purchases from Moscow for which an additional levy of 25 per cent was imposed. Indian oil purchases from Moscow picked up in 2023 after the Ukraine war, which went up to 1.5 to 2.1 million barrels a day. It is interesting to note that India never stopped sourcing crude from Russia despite President

Trump linking the withdrawal of a 25 per cent penalty tariff in the proposed trade deal framework to New Delhi's purported pledge to halt such purchases. Much to the relief of India, the US recently announced a 30-day waiver to India to purchase Russian oil. It "removed a point of friction" that was never in anyone's interest to sustain.

The problem arises regarding gas imports. India may face serious disruptions in supply of fertilizers and raw materials in the next Kharif season, starting June, if the blockade of the Hormuz Strait continues due to the conflict in West Asia, according to insiders. Any reduction in the supply of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to urea manufacturers in the coming weeks could impact production of the key soil nutrient ahead of the Kharif planting season. As is well known, Kharif crops account for more than half of India's foodgrain production as major crops such as rice, pulses, oilseeds, cotton and sugarcane are sown during the season. On average, fertilizer companies produce around 2.5 million tonnes of soil nutrients per month.

If LNG supplies are not normalised, production could be affected, industry experts pointed out, highlighting that production of fertilizers usually begins in end March. At present 60 per cent of LNG used in urea manufacture is imported from Qatar. The blockade of shipping routes in the Gulf would obviously push up prices of DAP and urea and impact the government's food subsidy expenses. Regarding LPG, India imports

60 per cent from West Asia and the longer the conflict lasts, households as well as commercial users are expected to suffer though indications point to an early settlement.

Right now, it is important for the country to tap other sources like Australia and Canada but, in the long-term, there is need to scale up biogas production in India. Simultaneously also, India has enough compostable biomass to meet at least 75 to 80 percent of our gas needs. And compost can easily replace fertilisers where by valuable foreign exchange would be saved.

With nearly 40 per cent of India's LNG flow hit due to the present conflict, the government is reportedly working on an alternative plan for industries, including priority segments such as fertiliser. The Petroleum Ministry is working on the plan and an early solution is awaited. Fertiliser units may be given enough supply to operate on optimum level, according to informed sources. This is a lean season for the industry as the Kharif season starts in June and production of fertilisers picks up from early May or late April. The Union Fertiliser Ministry stated that agencies had imported soil nutrients in large quantities, which added up to 9.8 M.T. till the end of February. Import of another 1.7 M.T. has been tied up for the next three months and their arrival is awaited.

An interesting plan that would be of great help in availability of gas is through coal gasification that converts coal to synthetic gas, consisting of

carbon monoxide and hydrogen. Through this process, it would be possible to harness the vast coal reserves efficiently and sustainably. But the most interesting and encouraging aspect in this regard is the use of ethanol. While India scrambles to secure LPG supply, its ethanol distilleries are operating below full capacity. India's ethanol capacity has grown to 1822 crore litres supported by 500 distilleries nationwide.

Experts believe that diverting 250 crore litres towards cooking would serve nearly 20 million households without compromising Ezo blending targets. It may be mentioned here that ethanol burns cleanly producing primarily CO2 with water vapour. Meanwhile, HPCL and IIT, Guwahati have developed an ethanol-fuelled cookstove and the former recently announced plans for ethanol ATMs at retail outlets to enable households' refills.

Street vendors can safely rely on such stoves without causing any pollution. Bio-ethanol cooking can be considered a safe alternative as it is with domestic production rather than import-dependent LPG. It would be prudent to evolve a long-term plan that needs to be evolved immediately, especially in the gas sector, and how much dependence can be eased not just on West Asia but also reducing imports as a whole. Even the post-oil scenario could further add momentum to increase production of clean energy in India in the coming years.



DHURJATI  
MUKHERJEE

THE BAZAAR OF BONDS

This is an age that has quietly turned the garden of human hearts into a bazaar. Here, no one pauses to ask about fragrance—only the price of petals is carefully weighed. Once, relationships rose like seeds touching soil, growing in silence through the patience of the earth. Now they hang from weighing scales, threads of price swaying in the restless air of trade. The groom no longer reveals his heart—he raises instead the glowing arithmetic of his salary, numbers flickering like neon wounds in the sleepless night. The bride no longer searches for the quiet lake of a soul; her gaze travels along measured shorelines—a house, a car, a future mapped in possessions. Once marriage was a confluence—two rivers losing themselves in a sacred meeting of waters. Now it resembles two ledgers opening across the counter of a careful bargain. Where are these bonds drifting? Where are we drifting? Humanity itself has become a fragile grain caught between grinding stones—greed turning on one side, ego on the other. Between them hearts are crushed like harvest beneath a mill, their silent dust rising into the breath of our age. Houses rise higher, walls grow thicker—yet within them

the chambers of the heart echo hollow. A thousand lamps are lit, yet the inward flame fades without witness. Beauty—like dew resting on the eyelid of dawn—melts away when sunlight arrives. Wealth—like dust lifted by wandering winds—changes direction with the slightest storm. But a good heart is something deeper. It is the unseen root hidden in the dark patience of earth—silent, yet holding the whole tree upright when storms begin to speak. Youth—the flower called perfection has never bloomed in nature's garden. But the heart that understands another can bloom anywhere and call it joy. Do not carry your relationships to the bazaar. Do not place love upon the cold scales of price. For if you do—Time, the silent and incorruptible judge, will one day pronounce its final verdict: Where love becomes commerce, a structure may stand and be called a house—but a home will never be born. You may light a thousand lamps, yet the radiance of hearts will not return. And when the noise of life fades and evening gathers around the soul, a human being will discover that all the bargains are over... and the only companion still waiting beside him is loneliness.

...: Dr. Peruka Raju ...  
7810032847

BURNING POINT

When It Counted, India Stood With The UAE

On 11 March, the United Nations Security Council adopted the historic Resolution 2817, condemning in the strongest possible terms Iran's unprovoked attacks on the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, and Jordan. The resolution passed with 13 votes in favour. Not a single nation voted against it.

India did not just vote in support. India co-sponsored the resolution, joining 135 nations in putting its name to a text that leaves no room for ambiguity. Iran's indiscriminate and cowardly aggression against infrastructure, civilian populations, and sovereign territory are a violation of international law, a threat to regional stability, and a danger to global economic security.

This resolution sends a clear and unified message that the international community will not tolerate attacks on our sovereignty or the deliberate targeting of civilians and critical infrastructure.

What Iran Has Done

Since 28 February, in an act of sustained aggression, Iran has launched ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and drones against the UAE and neighbouring countries. The UAE has borne the brunt of these attacks, facing down 278 ballistic missiles, 15 cruise missiles, and a staggering 1,540 drones as of 12 March.

Despite Iran's claims, excuses, and justifications, these are not precision strikes against military targets. Iranian munitions have struck residential neighbourhoods, commercial districts, and civilian infrastructure. In the UAE alone, civilians of multiple nationalities have been killed and injured, including an Indian national whom His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the President of the UAE, personally visited in hospital.

Iran's unprovoked, hostile actions are not directed at the states that declared war on it, but rather at its neighbours - countries that have played a significant role in efforts to avert escalation. The UAE categorically rejects any narratives seeking to justify this aggression and views it as further evidence of Iran's short-sighted policies. We remain resilient in the face of any threat and are fully capable of safeguarding our sovereignty, stability, and security. Any



aggression will not go unanswered, and the UAE stands fully prepared to address such threats.

The Safety Of Indians In The UAE

Since the outbreak of the conflict, I have been in daily contact with Indian families in the UAE and across India. The question I consistently hear is: "Are our people safe?" I would like to use this opportunity to dispel concerns directly to the Indian public.

The safety, security, and well-being of everyone in the UAE remains the nation's top priority. The UAE is home to more than 200 nationalities, including a substantial Indian community, who live together in peace and harmony. This spirit of openness and stability continues to define the UAE today. Daily life continues without disruption. Essential services, including energy, water, telecommunications, transport, healthcare, and supply chains, are operating at full capacity.

The UAE's integrated air defence network has intercepted an overwhelming majority of the incoming threats. Our civil defence systems are operational; our hospitals prepared; and our emergency protocols are functioning exactly as designed.

His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan has made it clear that all nationals living in the UAE, whether they be Emirati or Indian "are all our responsibility". Indians in the UAE are far beyond being considered our guests. They are teachers, engineers, doctors, entrepreneurs, and labourers, whose contributions are woven into the very fabric of our society.

In 2024, the UAE was the second-largest source of remittances to India, contributing \$21.6 billion of India's record \$129.4 billion in inflows. The over four million Indians residing in the UAE are not an abstract number. They proudly represent families

and communities in Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and every state in between, whose livelihoods depend on a stable, functioning, and secure UAE. Their safety is an obligation we take seriously.

A Word On Predictions Of "Dubai's Demise"

I have read, with interest, the commentary in some quarters suggesting that the current conflict marks the end of Dubai, the collapse of the UAE's economic model, or the beginning of a mass exodus. I understand the instinct behind these narratives. Conflict is alarming, and alarm generates dramatic headlines.

However, allow me to offer the facts.

The UAE's non-oil sectors now account for 75 per cent of GDP. Our sovereign wealth funds hold \$2.49 trillion in assets, making the UAE the third-largest sovereign wealth holder in the world, behind only the United States and China. S&P Global affirmed our AA/A-1+ credit rating with a stable outlook just days ago, noting that the UAE's consolidated net asset position will reach approximately 184 per cent of GDP in 2026, with government liquid assets at roughly 210 per cent of GDP. Our average budget surplus over the past five years has been 5.6 per cent of GDP.

This is not an economy that collapses under pressure, it is one that is built to last.

The UAE's foundations have been nurtured by five decades of leaders who planned not for the next quarter, but for the next generation.

Bilateral trade between the UAE and India reached \$100 billion in FY 2024-25. In January 2026, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, UAE President, visited India and both nations agreed

to double that figure to \$200 billion by 2032. The UAE is India's third-largest trading partner and second-largest export destination. To certain commentators glibly predicting the UAE's downfall, I would gently suggest they revisit their predictions in 12 months. The cranes will still be turning. The thousands of flights each week will still be landing. And the millions of people who have chosen to build their lives in the UAE will still be here, because they understand something that distant commentators sometimes do not - the UAE faces pressure head on, we do not succumb to it.

What Comes Next

The current crisis has not weakened the UAE, and it will not. Instead, it has demonstrated the depth of the UAE's national structure, the resilience of its institutions, the cohesion of its society, and the strength of its international standing. The UAE has once again proven itself to be a nation built on a firm foundation, a clear vision, and the ability to face challenges with resolve, wisdom, and a profound sense of responsibility. India's decision to co-sponsor Resolution 2817 is a statement of principle. It reflects the depth of a relationship that extends far beyond diplomacy to a genuine shared connection between our two peoples, nurtured over a decade of personal trust between President His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.

The solidarity India has shown towards the UAE from the very outset of this crisis has not gone unnoticed. Prime Minister Modi was among the first world leaders to personally telephone His Highness, strongly condemning the attacks. That call came before any formal resolution or multilateral statement. It was a message of brotherhood, and the UAE received it clearly.

We will remember who supported us, and as our President His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed affirmed, "I promise, we will emerge stronger than before. Without doubt."

- ABDULNASSER ALSHAALI,  
AMBASSADOR OF THE  
UAE TO INDIA

Disclaimer: These are the personal opinions of the author.

## N.E Railway operating additional trips Anand Vihar to Gorakhpur

GORAKHPUR, MARCH 16, 2026:

For the convenience of passengers during the Holi festival, the Railway Administration has decided to run two additional trips of the already operating 05575/05576 Saharsa-Anand Vihar Terminal-Saharsa via Gorakhpur Holi Special Train.

**These additional services will operate:**

From Saharsa on 18 and 25 March 2026 (Wednesday) From Anand Vihar Terminal on 24 and 31 March 2026 (Tuesday)

**Train No. 05575** - Saharsa to Anand Vihar Terminal Holi Special The train will depart from Saharsa at 20:00 hrs on 18 and 25 March 2026 (Wednesday) and will stop at the following stations: Garh Barouni (20:22), Supaul (20:47), Saraigarh (21:45), Nirmali (22:02), Ghoghardiha (22:15), Jhanjharpur (22:37), Sakri (23:02), Shisho (23:40).

**On the next day it will reach:**

Janakpur Road (00:47), Sitamarhi (01:35), Baigania (02:12), Raxaul (03:20), Narkatiaganj (04:30), Bagaha (05:02), Kaptanganj (08:22), Gorakhpur (09:50), Basti (10:50), Gonda (12:15), Sitapur (15:45), Shahjahanpur (17:22), Bareilly (18:34),

Moradabad (21:25), Hapur (23:22).

**On the third day it will depart:**

Ghaziabad (00:27) and reach Anand Vihar Terminal at 01:05 hrs.

**Train No. 05576** - Anand Vihar Terminal to Saharsa Holi Special (Return Journey) The train will depart from Anand Vihar Terminal at 05:15 hrs on 24 and 31 March 2026 (Tuesday) and stop at: Ghaziabad (06:05), Hapur (06:48), Moradabad (09:10), Bareilly (10:40), Shahjahanpur (11:52), Sitapur (14:15), Gonda (16:30), Basti (17:50), Gorakhpur (19:40), Kaptanganj (20:47), Bagaha (23:20).

**On the next day it will reach:**

Narkatiaganj (00:20), Raxaul (01:15), Baigania (02:02), Sitamarhi (02:45), Janakpur Road (03:17), Shisho (04:05), Sakri (06:02), Jhanjharpur (06:27), Ghoghardiha (06:47), Nirmali (08:05), Saraigarh (09:00), Supaul (09:32), Garh Barouni (09:47) and finally arrive at Saharsa at 10:30 hrs.

Coach Composition The train will consist of 22 coaches, including:

- 2 Generator-cum-Luggage Vans
- 2 General Second-Class Coaches
- 4 Sleeper Class Coaches
- 14 AC Third Economy .

## New Wagon POH Workshop at Bashbari to Boost Freight Operations in Northeast

Prime Minister Laid Foundation Stone for New Wagon POH Workshop at Bashbari

MALIGAON, 16 MARCH, 2026:

Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi dedicated and laid the foundation stone for various railway infrastructure development projects in Kokrajhar, Assam on 13.03.2026. During the programme, this includes the Wagon Periodic Overhaul (POH) Workshop at Bashbari in Kokrajhar district, a project of the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) being developed at an estimated cost of above Rs. 256 crores. The workshop is being developed over about 669 acres under the Alipurduar Division to strengthen freight wagon maintenance capacity in the Northeast. Once completed, it will en-



hance the reliability and availability of freight wagons by increasing repair capacity and reducing turnaround time, thereby improving operational efficiency, supporting growing freight movement and generating employment opportunities in the region. The project is being executed under the Gati Shakti Unit of NFR at

Maligaon, with pre-construction activities currently in progress. The workshop at Bashbari is expected to significantly strengthen wagon maintenance capacity in Northeast India, reduce dependence on distant workshops and improve the reliability and safety of freight wagons operating across the

region. Major infrastructure works include construction of a 3000-metre boundary wall with fencing, a G+2 administrative building, a covered workshop shed with embedded tracks, and a road over bridge (ROB) alongwith permanent way materials such as rails, sleepers and ballast. Electrical infrastructure will include 33 kV transmission line connectivity, substations, DG backup systems, high mast and LED lighting, while signalling, telecom and advanced mechanical facilities such as EOT cranes, CNC portal wheel lathe, wheel press and bogie manipulators will be installed to support modern wagon maintenance operations. Apart from strengthening railway operations, the

workshop is expected to bring significant socio-economic benefits to Bashbari and the wider Kokrajhar district by generating employment, promoting skill development and encouraging the growth of ancillary industries. The project also aligns with the Memorandum of Settlement signed on 27th January 2020 between the Government of India, the Government of Assam and Bodoland groups for the development of the Bodoland Territorial Region. Targeted for completion by December 2027, the workshop will further boost regional development, with planned rail and road connectivity from Bashbari Railway Station and Gauripur Road to ensure smooth operational access.

## PM condoles the loss of lives in fire mishap at a hospital in Cuttack

PM announces ex-gratia from PMNRF

NEW DELHI, MARCH 16:

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has condoled the loss of lives due to a fire mishap at a hospital in Cuttack, Odisha. Shri Modi also wished speedy recovery for those injured in the mishap. The Prime Minister announced an ex-gratia from PMNRF of Rs. 2 lakh to the next of kin of each deceased and Rs. 50,000 for those injured. The Prime Minister posted on X: "The mishap at a hospital in Cuttack, Odisha, is deeply painful. Condolences to those who have lost their loved ones. I pray for the speedy recovery of the injured. An ex-gratia of Rs. 2 lakh from PMNRF would be given to the next of kin of each deceased. The injured would be given Rs. 50,000: PM"

## Haryana Vidhan Sabha members pays tribute to the departed souls

CHANDIGARH, MARCH 16

Haryana Chief Minister, Sh. Nayab Singh Saini, while reading the obituary resolutions during the ongoing Budget Session of the Haryana Vidhan Sabha on Monday, expressed deep sorrow over the demise of Smt. Prem Kaur Kalyan, mother of Speaker, Haryana Vidhan Sabha, Sh. Harvinder Kalyan, and the death of seven people in an accident at a construction site in Gurugram. He expressed his condolences to the bereaved families. The Chief Minister said that the demise of Smt. Prem Kaur Kalyan on March 13, 2026, is deeply saddening. Praying for peace to the departed soul, he wished strength and courage to the



bereaved family to bear this loss in this difficult time.

The Chief Minister also expressed deep grief over the tragic and untimely death of seven people who were buried alive after a mound of soil collapsed during excavation work at a construction site in Gurugram on March 9. He said that this is a very pain-

ful incident and expressed his heartfelt condolences to the families of the deceased. He also expressed deep sorrow over the death of workers in an accident in the Safidon area of Jind district. The Chief Minister said that the government stands with the affected families in this hour of grief and all possible assistance will be provided. Deputy Speaker, Haryana Vidhan Sabha, Dr. Krishan Lal Middha also expressed his condolences while paying tribute to the departed souls. Leader of Opposition Sh. Bhopinder Singh Hooda expressed condolences to the deceased on behalf of his party. After this, the members paid tribute to the departed souls by observing a two-minute silence in their memory.

## Safety Training Held at Rail Coach Factory Kapurthala

KAPURTHALA, MARCH 16:

A one-day Safety Training programme was organized at Rail Coach Factory (RCF), Kapurthala in collaboration with the Directorate of Factories, Punjab, Chandigarh and the Punjab Industrial Safety Council, Chandigarh. The programme was conducted at the Technical Training Centre of RCF. Around 100 participants, including supervisors, technical staff, and contract workers, took part in the programme. During the event, Deputy Director of Factories, Kapurthala, Gurjant Singh addressed the participants and emphasized the importance of workers' health, safety, and welfare at the workplace. Technical sessions related to safety were conducted by experts. Shri Som Raj (Gold Medalist) delivered a session on First Aid, Shri Sangeetpal Singh



spoke on the Factories Act, 1948, Shri Vikas Kumar presented on Electrical Safety, and Shri J. K. Tomar shared insights on Welding Safety. Shri Jaspreet Singh and Shri Joga Ram from the Directorate of Factories Office were also present on the occasion. During the programme, Safety Officer Shri Ashok Kumar Meghwal organized a quiz on occupational safety topics, and prizes were distributed to participants who gave correct answers. At the conclusion of the programme, Chief Safety Officer Shri Jagmeet Singh delivered the vote of thanks and urged everyone to adopt safe working practices.



## India Post to Launch 24 Speed Post with Next-Day Delivery in Six Cities

NEW DELHI, MARCH 16:

The Department of Posts is set to launch its new 24 Speed Post service on March 17, 2026, offering next-day guaranteed delivery for urgent consignments in six major cities. The launch will be officiated by Shri Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, Union Minister of Communications, and Dr. Chandra Sekhar Pemasani, Minister of State for Communications, at Rangbhawan Auditorium, Akashwani Bhawan, New Delhi, at 12:30 PM. In the first phase, the service will be available in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad. The new service promises assured D+1 and D+2 delivery timelines through dedicated processing windows and priority air transmission. Additional features include OTP-based secure delivery, end-to-end tracking with SMS alerts, buy-now-pay-later options for businesses, free bulk pickup, API integration, centralized billing, and a money-back guarantee for delays. The initiative aims to strengthen India Post's premium express delivery capabilities, catering to businesses and individual customers with urgent and time-sensitive consignments.

## 3 minors lure 8-year-old girl to godown, rape her in Delhi; detained

Three boys aged 12 and 13 years have been detained on charges of raping a girl at a godown near her house in southeast Delhi's Okhla.



the spot and began an enquiry.

An eight-year-old girl was allegedly raped by three boys after luring her to a godown near her house in southeast Delhi's Okhla, police said on Monday. The accused, aged between 12 and 13 years, have been detained following the incident. According to police, the girl alleged that the boys - one being a 12-year-old and the remaining two aged 13 - took her to a godown in Okhla Phase-II on March 12 and 13 during the daytime. She told investigators that the accused approached her on the road, lured her to a godown, removed her undergarments and took turns to rape her. The matter came to light after a PCR call was received on March 14 at Okhla Industrial Area Police Station regarding the alleged sexual assault of a minor. A police team immediately rushed to

Considering the sensitive nature of the case, a woman officer was associated with the probe. The victim was later taken to All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) for medical examination, where doctors recorded a history of sexual assault. Based on the girl's statement, police registered an FIR under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act. Police said the three juveniles were detained within hours of the case being registered and added that further investigation is underway.

## CBI arrests UP man for trapping, sending people to cyber scam compounds abroad

The accused has been identified as Krishna Kumar Lakhwani, a resident of Uttar Pradesh's Kanpur. Those allegedly trapped by him were forced to run scams targeting people in India, according to the CBI. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested an individual who was allegedly involved in recruiting unsuspecting Indian nationals for organised cyber fraud syndicates running out of "scam compounds" in Cambodia and several other countries, officials said on Sunday. The accused has been identified as Krishna Kumar Lakhwani, a resident of Uttar Pradesh's Kanpur. Those allegedly trapped by him were forced to run scams targeting people in India, according to the CBI. Lakhwani would allegedly lure young job-seekers using advertisements for lucrative roles, including data entry and customer support executives, abroad, officials said. According to the CBI, he would charge USD 300-400

from the candidates. He allegedly made travel arrangements, and those who fell into his trap were transported through Delhi to Cambodia, where they were coerced into participating in cyber-fraud operations, per the probe agency. The trafficked individuals, popularly referred to as "cyber slaves", would be coerced into carrying out fraud operations from the "scam compounds" while being subjected to intimidation, wrongful confinement, and confiscation of passports, official said. "Based upon the source information and surveillance, the accused, Krishna Kumar Lakhwani, was tracked and intercepted upon his arrival in India and brought to the CBI office for questioning," the CBI said. It added that his mobile phone was examined in the presence of witnesses. The examination yielded several videos of him interviewing candidates for recruitment to the scam compounds, the central agency claimed.

## HAWAIJAR PRODUCTION TRAINING HELD FOR IDPS

IMPHAL, MARCH 16:

The Central Agricultural University (CAU), under the All India Coordinated Research Project on Post-Harvest Engineering and Technology (AICRP on PHET), organized an entrepreneurship development and hands-on training programme on fermented soybean (Hawaijar) production at Lamboikhongnangkong in Imphal West district. The programme was conducted especially for internally displaced persons (IDPs) currently staying at the Lamboikhongnangkong relief camp. It forms part of the AICRP on PHET's ongoing extension initiatives aimed at supporting livelihood generation in different parts of Manipur. Speaking on the occasion, Dr Thangjam Anand Singh, Senior Scientist of CAU Imphal, highlighted that Hawaijar production has strong potential as a sustainable livelihood activity, particularly



for women entrepreneurs who wish to generate income from home-based enterprises. He noted that Hawaijar produced in Manipur is widely appreciated for its distinctive flavour and quality, and the growing demand across the region presents promising opportunities for small-scale food processing industries. Dr Anand further assured that CAU will continue extending support to people residing in relief camps by organizing skill-based training programmes and providing follow-up technical guidance to promote livelihood opportunities. Another

resource person, Dr Heisnam Nandita Devi, Senior Scientist at CAU, explained the process of preparing value-added products such as pickles and other fermented food items from Hawaijar, stressing the importance of maintaining hygiene and proper fermentation techniques for quality production. Approximately 50 participants attended the training programme, during which Sanasam Menthobli Devi conducted a live demonstration on practical Hawaijar preparation techniques, allowing participants to gain hands-on experience.

## Forgive all, go in peace: Emotional farewell for Harish Rana, surrounded by family

The video surfaced days after the Supreme Court allowed Harish Rana to die with dignity - a historic first court-ordered case of passive euthanasia in India. The court acknowledged the medical opinion that Rana will never recover and that the tubes that feed him are only prolonging his pain.

blinking and gulping in the video, the only movements he has been able to perform for the last 13 years after a fall left him with severe, and irreversible, brain damage. The video also shows a Brahma Kumari sister caressing Harish's forehead with a wistful smile while his stoic mother watches quietly from behind. "Sabko maaf karte hue, sabse maafi mangte hue, tum jao (Forgive everyone, seek forgiveness from all, and go in peace)," says Brahma Kumari Lovely in the video.

Kumari Lovely is connected with 'Prabhu Milan Bhavan', a Brahma Kumari center in Ghaziabad. The Rana family has long been associated with the Brahma Kumari movement, a women-run spiritual organization founded in 1937 and headquartered in Mount



Abu. "This is a very emotional moment for the family of Harish Rana. Whenever someone leaves the body, even for a moment or permanently, it is painful for close family members who share deep emotional bonds," she told India Today TV. The video surfaced days af-

ter the Supreme Court allowed Harish Rana to die with dignity - a historic first court-ordered case of passive euthanasia in India. The court acknowledged the medical opinion that Rana will never recover and that the tubes that feed him and keep him alive are only prolonging a pain that the 32-year-old is not even able to communicate.

Following the court's order on March 11, Harish Rana was moved to a palliative care unit at Delhi's All India Institute Of Medical Sciences where a medical board will formulate an end-of-life care plan.

While medical experts agreed his state was irreversible, the Supreme Court had to clarify that withdrawal of nutrition and medical tubes - beyond ventilator support - could legally constitute passive

euthanasia. A bench of Justices JB Pardiwala and KV Viswanathan delivered the historic verdict, enabling the family to end life support in a hospital setting, allowing Harish Rana to die with dignity. The case has sparked fresh debate in medical and legal circles about end-of-life rights in India. Rana, an engineering student at Panjab University, suffered head injuries after falling from the fourth floor of his paying guest accommodation in 2013 and has been in a coma since. Shortly after the ruling, Rana's father said that the Supreme Court permitting the withdrawal of artificial life support to his son wouldn't bring any personal benefit to the family. But he added that the decision could help others facing similar situations.

## HOUSING FOR YOUNG ADULTS

NEW DELHI, MARCH 16:

'Land' and 'Colonization' are State subjects. Therefore, schemes related to housing for their citizens including young adults, first-time homebuyers, working professionals etc. are implemented by States/Union Territories (UTs). However, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) supplements the efforts of States/UTs by providing Central Assistance under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Urban (PMAY-U) since 25.06.2015 to provide all weather pucca houses with basic civic amenities to eligible urban beneficiaries including youth and working professionals across the country. Based on the learnings from the experiences of implementation of PMAY-U, MoHUA has revamped the scheme and launched PMAY-U 2.0 'Housing for All' Mission with effect from 01.09.2024 for implementation in urban areas across the country to construct, purchase

and rent a house by 1 crore additional eligible beneficiaries at affordable cost in next five years. The scheme is implemented through four verticals i.e., Beneficiary Led Construction (BLC), Affordable Housing in Partnership (AHP), Affordable Rental Housing (ARH) and Interest Subsidy Scheme (ISS). Under ISS vertical all eligible beneficiaries including young adults and working professionals having annual household income up to ₹9 lakh may avail 4% interest subsidy up to ₹1.8 lakh for the housing loan up to ₹25 lakh with the house value up to ₹35 lakh. In addition, MoHUA launched Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHCs) as a sub-scheme of PMAY-U in July 2020 to provide affordable rental accommodation to urban migrants, students and young professionals, thereby expanding housing options beyond home ownership. Based on the learnings of ARHCs, a dedicated vertical of Affordable Rental Housing (ARH) has been provisioned under PMAY-U 2.0. The basic purpose of the ARH vertical is to promote construction of affordable rental housing close to the workplaces of the intended beneficiaries. By promoting housing near employment hubs and workplaces, the scheme aims to reduce travel time and expenses, improve productivity and quality of life and create more inclusive and sustainable urban communities. Based on the project proposals submitted by States/UTs, a total of 125.15 lakh houses, including 13.67 lakh under PMAY-U 2.0, have been sanctioned by the Ministry, so far across the country. Of the sanctioned houses, 116.57 lakh houses have been grounded, of which 97.30 lakh are completed/delivered to the beneficiaries as on 02.03.2026.

This information was given by the Minister of State for Housing & Urban Affairs, Shri Tokhan Sahu in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha today.

## Fire at Dubai airport contained, some flight ops resume after 6-hour suspension

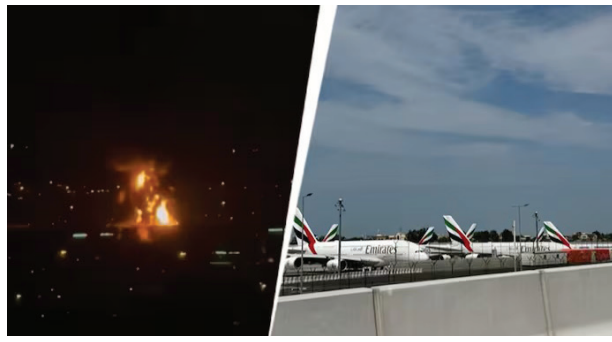
A drone strike hit a fuel tank near Dubai International Airport, sparking a massive fire that briefly halted flight operations. After 6-hour suspension, some flight operations resumed at the airport.

A massive fire broke out near Dubai International Airport early on Monday after a drone strike hit a fuel tank in the vicinity of the facility, leading to suspension of flight operations as a precautionary measure amid the ongoing US-Israel-Iran war in the Middle East. As the airport operations were disrupted, Air India announced the cancellation of all its flights to Dubai for the day.

Dubai authorities said civil defence teams were immediately deployed to contain the

blaze, and no injuries had been reported so far in the incident at one of the busiest international airports in the world, located close to the city centre in Dubai. The fire was doused after two hours.

A purported video of the incident widely circulated on social media showed massive flames visible from a considerable distance, indicating the scale of the blaze. India Today could not independently verify the authenticity of the video. "A drone incident in the vicinity of Dubai International Airport (DXB) affected one of the fuel tanks. Dubai Civil Defence teams are currently working to bring the fire under control. No injuries have been reported so far," the Dubai Media Office said. As the Dubai airport operations were affected, Air India announced



that "Air India and Air India Express flights to and from Dubai have been cancelled for the day", adding that its ad-hoc flight operations to and from Abu Dhabi, Ras Al Khaimah, and Sharjah will continue as announced. More than five hours after the drone attack was reported, officials announced that flight operations at the airport were gradually resuming for select destinations.

Air defence alarms were also sounded in parts of the city after the attacks, and the UAE authorities announced that their systems were intercepting missiles and drones launched from Iran. "UAE air defences are currently responding to incoming missile and drone threats from Iran. MOD asserts that the sounds heard are the result of the Air Defence Systems intercept-

ing missiles and drones," the UAE Ministry of Defence said. The strike comes a day after Iran called for the evacuation of three major ports in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), marking the first time Tehran has threatened a neighbouring country's non-US assets. Iran accused the US of using ports, docks and hideouts in the UAE to launch recent strikes on Kharg Island, home to the main terminal handling Iran's oil exports. Tehran has been targeting US bases and interests across the Middle East since the outbreak of the US-Israeli war on Iran on February 28, which killed Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and caused widespread damage to its strategic and administrative infrastructure. Gulf Arab nations have since faced

more than 2,000 missile and drone attacks targeting a wide range of locations, including US diplomatic missions, military bases, and critical infrastructure such as oil facilities, ports, airports, hotels, and residential and commercial buildings. Dubai Airport has been targeted by drones multiple times, with the most recent attack reported on March 7. Visuals showed a massive plume of smoke engulfing the area, while passengers waiting for flights inside the airport rushed into train tunnels at the airfield after an alert was sounded. Earlier, on March 1, the airport and the landmark Burj Al Arab hotel sustained damage in an overnight Iranian attack. Four people were injured at the airport, the emirate's media office said early Sunday.



## US jets strike military facilities near Iran's Chabahar free trade zone

Established in 1992 to attract foreign investment and bypass traditional and congested trade zones, the Chabahar free trade zone acts as a major industrial and transit hub in Iran.

Sounds of intense explosions were heard near Iran's Chabahar free trade zone as the United States launched fresh airstrikes on Monday, an Al-Jazeera report said, citing Voice of America. The airstrikes reportedly targeted and struck Iran's military facilities. It is unknown whether the airstrikes caused any casualties. The free trade zone is located in Iran's southeastern Sistan and Baluchistan Province near the border with Pakistan. Established in 1992 to attract foreign investment and bypass traditional and congested trade zones, the Chabahar free trade zone acts as a major industrial and transit hub in Iran. It is also Iran's only oceanic port with direct access to the Indian Ocean. The trade zone provides a transit corridor to several other Central Asian countries,

like Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan and also provides access to Afghanistan. This is not the first time the United States has launched an attack near Chabahar. The military facilities in the province came under attack on February 28, the very first day of the combined US-Israel airstrike that targeted military installations across Iran and killed the erstwhile Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The attacks came amid the escalating Middle East conflict. On Monday, a massive fire broke out near Dubai International Airport after a drone strike hit a fuel tank in the vicinity of the facility, leading to the suspension of flight operations as a precautionary measure amid the ongoing US-Israel-Iran war in the Middle East.

Dubai authorities said civil defence teams were immediately deployed to contain the blaze, and no injuries had been reported so far in the incident at one of the busiest international airports in the world, located close to the city centre in Dubai. The fire was doused after two hours.

## Pak reported over 3,600 child abuse cases in 2025

ISLAMABAD: (MAR 16)

At least 3,630 child abuse cases were reported across Pakistan in 2025, marking an 8 per cent increase from the year before that, according to data released by a non-profit organisation on Monday. Sahil, an Islamabad-based entity which monitors violence against children and women, said in a statement that the cases had been reported in 81 different newspapers from across the four provinces, as well as Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) region. "In the year 2025, a total number of 3,630 child abuse cases have been reported in 81 different newspapers," according to the organisation.

## Israel approved Iran strikes two days after PM Modi's visit, says envoy

Israeli Ambassador to India Reuven Azar said Israel approved strikes on Iran two days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's February visit, stressing the decision was based on operational timing.



Israel approved military strikes against Iran two days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi concluded his visit to the country in February, Israeli Ambassador to India Reuven Azar said on Monday, dismissing the discussions linking the timing of the operation and PM Modi's trip. Azar clarified that the situation in the region was already volatile when Modi visited Israel on February 25-26, and that the operational opportunity for the strike

emerged only after the Prime Minister had left. "It was evident that the situation is very volatile in our region even before Prime Minister Modi came (on February 25-26, 2026)."

When it comes to the decision to strike, the operational opportunity came only after PM Modi left. The cabinet decision to approve the operation happened only two days after," Ambassador Azar said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Israel on February 25 for his second visit in nine years and departed for Delhi the following day after holding a series of discussions and talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Two days later, in the early hours of February 28, Israel, in coordination with the United States, launched a large-scale military campaign against Iran, accusing

Tehran of developing nuclear weapons even as talks on a potential nuclear deal were underway. The strikes killed the country's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and several other key officials, and destroyed major administrative and military assets.

The Congress had termed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel "shameful" and "ill-timed," saying it created the perception of a political endorsement of military escalation, something it said runs contrary to India's longstanding commitment to a rules-based international order. Salman Khurshid, chairman of the Congress Foreign Affairs Department, said the party was "deeply concerned" about Modi's visit to Israel at a time of heightened tensions, the outbreak of hostilities,

and the palpable risk of a wider conflict in West Asia. "This (attack) was fully expected given their military build-up in the last few months. Mr Modi nevertheless chose to go to Israel, where he displayed the highest moral cowardice. He declared that India stood with Israel and got himself an award for saying so. This Israeli visit was shameful and it is even more so in light of the war that has been launched by two of Mr Modi's 'good friends,'" said Jairam Ramesh.

However, the Israeli ambassador said the operational opportunity to strike Iran emerged only after Prime Minister Narendra Modi left the country, and the decision to launch the attack was taken subsequently, even though the regional situation was already volatile.

## US Diversity Visa Returns, But Indians Gain Little

The US has restarted the lottery system for a segment of Green Cards, officially known as the Diversity Immigrant Visa programme, after a pause. The rules for a Green Card, which is considered the last step towards American citizenship, have been made stricter. But the change won't impact Indians, who are already in a years-long queue for a Green Card.

The stricter US rules require applicants to submit details and upload a scanned copy of their passport as part of the initial application stage. The change was announced by the US State Department as part of a broader effort to strengthen identity verification and reduce systematic fraud. The programme had recently been paused after the



December 2025 Brown University mass shooting where the perpetrator was revealed to have won the lottery in 2017. Under this new regulation, applicants entering the Diversity Immigrant Visa (DV) lottery must provide information about a valid and unexpired passport, and upload a digital scan of the passport's biography and signature page as part of the application. Accord-

ing to the US-based immigration services firm, Envoy Global, individuals who fail to upload their passport details will have their applications automatically disqualified. This requirement will come into effect on April 10, 2026, and is expected to apply to the upcoming DV-2027 lottery, expected to open in late 2026.

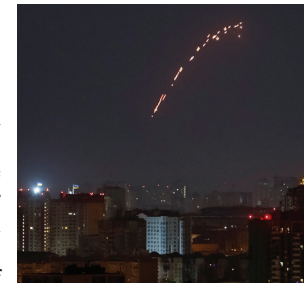
According to the immigration services firm, Boundless Immigration, the change to the DV programme is aimed at reducing fraud and improving the vetting process of applicants. It cited a State Department ruling which found more than two and a half million duplicate entries in the DV programme of fiscal year 2025. The requirement for submitting passport details earlier in the application process will make

it harder for third parties to submit fraudulent or unauthorised entries. The passport requirement itself is not entirely new. A similar rule had previously been introduced in 2019 to reduce fraud, but it was later struck down by a US federal court in 2022. The court had then held that the government did not follow public notice and comment procedures required by federal law before enacting the rule, and rejected the government's claim that immigration regulations are exempt because they implicate "foreign affairs." The DV programme, also known as the Green Card lottery, is a US government programme for receiving an immigrant visa followed by a permanent resident card, and was established by the Immigration Act of 1990.

## Russia downs 250 Ukrainian drones attempting to attack Moscow: Mayor

BY VINAY SHUKLA

MOSCOW: (Mar 16) Russian air defences intercepted and destroyed 250 Ukrainian drones targeting the capital over the weekend, Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyannin said on Monday. The mayor's remarks came as some of the major airports curtailed their operations on Monday morning. "Thank you to the Ministry of Defence's Air Defence System for your professional and dedicated work," Sobyannin wrote in a social media post, noting that about 250 fixed-wing drones, directly approaching the capital or on the second line of defence, were shot down.



## UAE orders arrests of 35, including 19 Indians, over misleading content amid war

The UAE on Sunday ordered the arrest of 35 individuals, including 19 Indians, for publishing video clips on social media platforms that contained misleading and fabricated content amid regional tensions due to the Israel-US-Iran war.



The United Arab Emirates' (UAE) official news agency Wam said the accused have been referred for an expedited trial. The latest list has 25 individuals of various nationalities, including 17 Indians, listed under different sections, separate from the 10 people, including two Indians, who were named and ordered to be arrested on Saturday. According to a statement released by the Attorney-General Dr Hamad Saif Al Shams, the move follows rigorous monitoring of digital platforms to combat the spread of fabricated information and artificial content intended to incite public disorder and undermine general stability. "Investigations and electronic

monitoring revealed that the defendants were divided into three groups that committed various acts. These included the publication of real clips related to current events, the fabrication of clips using AI, and the promotion of a state practising acts of military aggression while glorifying its leadership and military actions," it said. The first group of 10 accused published and circulated authentic video clips documenting the passage and interception of missiles on the country's airspace or the resulting impact. They also filmed gatherings of individuals monitoring these events, appending commentary and sound effects sug-

gesting active aggressions to incite public anxiety and panic. Such footage risked exposing defensive capabilities and allowing hostile accounts to promote misleading narratives, the statement said. This group comprised five Indians, one Pakistani, one Nepali, two Filipinos, and one Egyptian. The second group published fabricated visual content created through AI or recirculated footage of incidents from outside the country while falsely claiming they occurred within it. These clips contained synthetic scenes of explosions and missiles, often featuring national flags or specific dates to grant credibility to false claims and

mislead the public, it said. This group, comprising seven individuals, includes five Indians and one each from Nepal and Bangladesh. The third group of six accused published content glorifying a hostile state and its political and military leadership, promoting its regional military aggressions as achievements. This involved praising leaders of that state and recirculating propaganda that serves hostile media discourse and harms national interests, the statement added. In this, five of the six accused are Indians, and one is Pakistani. Two other individuals, both Indians, also face charges for similar offences, the statement said. Earlier on Saturday, a Wam report quoted Attorney-General Shamsi as saying that the public prosecution has commenced interrogating the 10 defendants and ordered their remand in custody. The attorney-general explained that such acts constitute crimes punishable under the law by imprisonment for a period of no less than one year and a fine of no less than AED 1,00,000.

## Trump warns of very bad future for Nato if allies fail to help reopen Strait of Hormuz

US President Donald Trump has warned that the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) could face a "very bad" future if its member states fail to support Washington's efforts to reopen the strategic Strait of Hormuz, amid the ongoing US-Israeli war with Iran.



In an interview with the British daily Financial Times, Trump urged allies, particularly European countries, to join what he described as a "team effort" to secure the key maritime checkpoint through which nearly one-fifth of the world's oil supply passes. The waterway has been largely blocked by Iran following the outbreak of the war more than two weeks ago. "It's only appropriate that people who are the beneficiaries of the Strait will help to make sure that nothing

bad happens there. If there's no response or if it's a negative response, I think it will be very bad for the future of Nato," Trump said, arguing that Europe and China are heavily dependent on oil from the Gulf, unlike the US.

Nato is a military alliance of 31 countries from North America and Europe formed to provide collective defence, meaning an attack on one member is considered an attack on all. The US is Nato's most powerful member and plays a leading

role by providing the largest share of military capabilities, funding, and strategic leadership within the alliance. "We have a thing called Nato. We've been very sweet. We didn't have to help them with Ukraine. Ukraine is thousands of miles away from us... But we helped them. Now we'll see if they help us. Because I've long said that we'll be there for them, but they won't be there for us. And I'm not sure that they'd be there," the Financial Times quoted the US President as saying.

Trump also indicated that his planned meeting later this month with China's Xi Jinping could be postponed if Beijing does not help in efforts to reopen the strait. He said China, which relies heavily on Gulf oil imports, has a strong interest in restoring safe passage for tankers.

The comments come as tensions continue to esca-

late across the Middle East since the US and Israeli military campaign against Iran began on February 28. Tehran has effectively restricted tanker traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow waterway through which nearly one-fifth of the world's oil supply passes. Oil prices have surged amid the disruption, with international crude climbing above USD 100 per barrel since the conflict began, a sharp jump from around USD 72-73 before the war. Trump has repeatedly said that the US Navy would escort oil tankers through the strait. However, no concrete steps in that direction have been announced so far. The White House has said discussions are ongoing with multiple countries about forming a coalition to escort ships through the waterway, though details of the potential operation have not yet been finalised.

## Hyderabad Gets India's First AI-Powered 640-Slice CT Scanner

HYDERABAD, MARCH 16

In a major boost to diagnostic imaging in the country, Vista Imaging and Medical Centre has installed the uCT 960+ advanced AI-powered 640-slice CT scanner at its facility in Hyderabad, becoming one of the first diagnostic centres in India to deploy this cutting-edge technology.

The installation was made possible through a collaboration between Medikabazaar and United Imaging Healthcare, bringing one of the world's most advanced computed tomography systems to the city's growing healthcare ecosystem.

The uCT 960+ sets a new benchmark in CT imaging by combining ultra-wide detector coverage, high-speed scanning and AI-driven image reconstruction. The system is



designed to deliver highly detailed images while reducing radiation exposure, enabling doctors to conduct accurate diagnostics in cardiology, neurology, oncology, trauma care and

preventive health screening.

With its 640-slice capability, the scanner can capture the entire heart in a single rotation, enabling highly precise cardiac imaging. It can also

perform ultra-fast whole-body scans, which are particularly useful in emergency situations such as stroke evaluation and trauma cases where rapid diagnosis is critical.

The facility was formally inaugurated by Telangana Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka in the presence of Uttam Kumar Reddy, Minister for Irrigation, CAD, Food and Civil Supplies, along with leading doctors and officials from the state.

Speaking on the occasion, VP Thirumalai, President - Medical Imaging Business at Medikabazaar, said the launch reflects the company's commitment to strengthening India's diagnostic infrastructure by enabling healthcare providers to access advanced medical technologies that improve clinical efficiency and patient outcomes.

## Medicover Hospital-SEC Launches Obesity Clinic

Inaugurated by Hyderabad District Collector Ms. Dasari Harichandana

HYDERABAD, MARCH 16

In response to the rising health concerns associated with obesity, Medicover Hospital, Secunderabad has launched a dedicated Obesity Clinic to provide comprehensive care for weight-related health issues.

The clinic was inaugurated by \*Hyderabad District Collector Ms. Dasari Harichandana.\* Speaking on the occasion, she said that obesity is rapidly increasing due to unhealthy dietary habits and lack of physical activity in today's lifestyle, leading to several health complications such as diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular diseases. She emphasized that obesity can be effectively controlled through early medical consultation and timely lifestyle modifications.

The newly launched Obesity Clinic will offer comprehensive services including BMI assessment, nutritional counselling, hormonal evaluation, exercise guidance, and bariatric surgery whenever required.

\*Dr. Pawan Addala, Chief



Consultant Surgical Gastroenterologist & Program Head

- Liver and Pancreas Transplant, said,\* Obesity is not merely excess body weight; it is also a major cause of fatty liver disease, cardiovascular disorders, and gastrointestinal problems. With proper medical supervision and, when necessary, bariatric surgery, long-term solutions can be achieved.

\*Dr. Madhava Vepula, Senior Consultant Endocrinologist,\* stated that obesity affects hormonal balance in the body and can lead to several complications including Type-2 diabetes, thyroid disorders, and sleep apnea. She added that obesity can be managed effectively through personalized diet plans, exercise, and medical management based

on individual health conditions.

Doctors explained that obesity not only increases body weight but also affects the functioning of multiple organs in the body. They highlighted that it is a major contributing factor for health issues such as Type-2 diabetes, high blood pressure, sleep apnea, fatty liver disease, joint pain, and hormonal disorders.

The event was attended by Medical Gastroenterologists Dr. Krishna Gopal Bhandari, Dr. Santosh M. Narayanakar, Dr. Ajay Shesherao Shinde, DMHO Dr. Venkati, Regional Director Dr. Janaki Ram, Center Head Krishnaveni, Medical Superintendent Dr. Prashanth, along with doctors and healthcare experts from the hospital.

## Dalal Street Rebounds; Sensex, Nifty Climb 1%

MUMBAI, MARCH 16

The Indian stock market ended higher on Monday as benchmark indices recovered strongly in the last leg of trading, snapping a three-day losing streak.

Gains in auto and banking stocks helped lift the market despite weakness in broader indices.

The benchmark Sensex rose 939

points, or 1.26 per cent, to close at 75,502.85. Meanwhile, the Nifty climbed 257.70 points, or 1.11 per cent, to settle at 23,408.80.

Commenting on Nifty technical outlook, experts said that the immediate support for the index is placed around 23,200-23,100, while a stronger base remains near 22,950.

"On the upside, 23,500 remains the key resistance level, and a deci-

sive breakout above this zone could extend the recovery toward 23,800 in the near term," an analyst stated.

"However, failure to sustain above the 23,400-23,500 supply band may lead to renewed consolidation within the 23,000-23,500 range," as per market analyst.

Market sentiment improved towards the end of the trading session as investors bought shares in the auto

and financial sectors.

The rally helped the benchmark indices recover from the losses seen over the past three sessions.

However, the broader markets did not perform as strongly as the main indices. The Nifty Midcap 100 ended 0.43 per cent lower, while the Nifty Smallcap 100 closed 0.65 per cent down.

## Hard Rock Coffee Machines Set for India

Hyderabad, Mar 16:

EBG Group on Monday announced a strategic brand licensing partnership with Hard Rock International to introduce a premium range of Hard Rock-branded coffee machines and small kitchen appliances in the Indian market.

As part of its India entry strategy, the initiative will be supported by a planned investment of ₹100 crore, with the company targeting revenue of ₹500 crore over the next five years. The collaboration aims to tap India's fast-growing premium home appliance segment, currently estimated at around ₹29,000 crore and expanding at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of about nine per cent.

Globally, Hard Rock operates across hospitality, entertainment, retail and licensed lifestyle categories and is regarded as one of the world's most recognisable music-led brands.

The partnership marks Hard Rock's entry into India's premium home appliance segment, bringing its design-focused brand identity to modern kitchens.

Under the licensing agreement, EBG Group will design, develop, manufacture and distribute a curated portfolio of Hard Rock-branded products aligned with the brand's contemporary lifestyle positioning. The companies aim to capture around five per cent of the market within the first few years of operations.

## 3 Lakh Hits for GoStats App

NEW DELHI, MARCH 16

The government on Monday said that GoStats -- a mobile application that provides access to official data such as GDP, inflation and employment statistics -- has recorded more than 3 lakh hits till February 2026, the Parliament was informed on Monday.

The mobile application has also registered 17,475 downloads so far, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Statistics and Programme Implementation, Rao Inderjit Singh, said in a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha.

The minister said the app had 2,576 active users in February 2026.

According to the govern-



ment, onboarding of datasets, visualisations and infographics on the application is an ongoing process.

At present, the app provides data and visualisations from nine major statistical products, including National Accounts Statistics, Consumer Price Index, Wholesale Price Index, Household Consumption Expenditure Survey, Periodic Labour Force

Survey, Index of Industrial Production, Annual Survey of Industries, Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises and the Economic Census.

These datasets cover 12 key socio-economic indicators available through the mobile platform.

The GoStats application also hosts 178 infographics to help users access and understand official statistics more easily.

In terms of user feedback, the application has received a rating of 4.9 out of 5 on the Google Play Store and 4.8 out of 5 on the iOS App Store.

However, the government said there is currently no proposal to integrate the GoStats application with other national data platforms.

The mobile application was launched in June last year as part of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation's (MoSPI) digital data dissemination initiatives aimed at providing key statistical indicators to stakeholders on the go.

The app also includes an inbuilt feedback section, and inputs received from users are analysed to further improve its functionality and user experience.

Moreover, the government also said that MoSPI has initiated several measures to strengthen accountability in data collection and dissemination, including placing Advance Release Calendar (ARC) of its statistical products on the Ministry's website.

## Victory of Safety Culture: Reduction Plant Sets a New Benchmark — Jayesh Pawar

BY SANJAY DWIVEDI

**Renukoot (Sombhadra):** In today's era of rapid industrial development, while production capacity is crucial, workplace safety is equally important. When an industrial unit treats safety not merely as a set of rules but as a core value of its work culture, the results are truly remarkable. The Reduction Plant winning the Overall Safety Championship Trophy during the recently held Safety Week celebration stands as a strong example of this positive approach and collective commitment.

Sharing this information on the occasion of National Safety Week, Head Reduction at Hindalco Renukoot, Jayesh Pawar, stated that the performance of the Reduction Plant this year has been highly impressive and inspiring. During the Safety Week competitions, employees and contract workers of the plant actively participated and secured first positions in most of the events. This clearly demonstrates that safety for them is not just a formality but an integral part of their working style. Achieving this recognition after several years also indicates that awareness and discipline regarding safety in the plant have steadily strengthened.

He further said that the development of a strong safety culture in any industrial organization does not happen overnight. It is the result of continuous vigilance by employees, the foresight of management, and the constant monitoring by the safety team. The success of the Reduction Plant reflects this collective energy. Timely guidance, encouragement, and the availability of necessary resources by the Unit Head and HR leadership have played an important role in strengthening safety systems.

The meticulous planning of the safety team, regular inspections, and proactive initiatives have also been the foundation of this achievement. Early identification of risks, adherence to safe work practices, and continuous efforts to keep employees aware have contributed significantly to creating a safer and more disciplined workplace.



Although this achievement is a matter of pride and celebration, excellence in safety is a continuous process. It requires strict adherence to all Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), active reporting of potential hazards and near-miss incidents, and the effective implementation of risk assessment and permit systems before undertaking critical tasks.

Regular training programs, toolbox talks, and behavioral-based safety initiatives should also continue to enhance employees' capability and awareness. In the industrial sector, it is equally important to promote visible safety leadership so that safety becomes a natural part of everyday work culture rather than being limited to special events.

When every employee considers safety as a personal responsibility, accidents can be minimized and sustainable production can be ensured.

The achievement of the Reduction Plant is not merely about winning a trophy; it sends a strong message that with the right vision, collective efforts, and disciplined work culture, industrial organizations can set new benchmarks in safety. Undoubtedly, this success symbolizes the commitment and teamwork of the entire Reduction Plant family. It is hoped that this achievement will inspire even higher safety standards in the future and serve as an exemplary model for other industrial units as well.

## Gold futures decline Rs 2,225 to Rs 1,56 lakh/10g

**New Delhi:** Gold prices fell by ₹2,225 to ₹1.56 lakh per 10 grams in futures trade on Monday amid weak global cues and a stronger US dollar. On the Multi Commodity Exchange, gold futures for April delivery declined 1.4% to ₹1,56,241 per 10 grams with a turnover of 7,881 lots.

Analysts said the fall in precious metals was driven by rising crude oil prices, which climbed above \$100 per barrel, fuelling inflation concerns and reducing expectations of a US Federal Reserve rate cut.

## Feb Wholesale Inflation at 2.13%

NEW DELHI, MARCH 16

The annual rate of inflation based on the All India Wholesale Price Index (WPI) number is 2.13pc (provisional) for the month of February 2026 (over February 2025), an official statement said here on Monday. The positive rate of inflation is driven due to increase in prices of other manufacturing, manufacture of basic metals, non-food articles, food articles and textiles.

On a month-on-month basis, the WPI increased by 0.25 per cent in February compared with January, indicating a mild upward movement in wholesale prices during the month.

Among the three major

components of the index, the primary articles group, which has a weight of 22.62 per cent, witnessed a 0.52 per cent decline in February compared to the previous month. The fall was mainly due to lower prices of food articles and minerals. Within the primary articles segment, food articles declined by 1.33 per cent, while mineral prices fell by 1.21 per cent during the month. However, crude petroleum and natural gas prices increased by 4.17 per cent, and non-food articles rose by 0.83 per cent, partially offsetting the decline.

The fuel and power category, which carries a weight of 13.15 per cent, recorded a 1.17 per cent increase dur-

ing February compared with January. The rise was mainly attributed to higher prices of mineral oils, which increased by 2.05 per cent during the month.

However, electricity prices declined marginally by 0.27 per cent, which moderated the overall increase in the fuel and power group. On a year-on-year basis, inflation in the fuel and power segment remained negative at around - (minus) 3.78 per cent, reflecting lower fuel prices compared to the same period last year.

The manufactured products group, which has the highest weight of 64.23 per cent in the WPI basket, registered a 0.47 per cent increase in February over the previous month.

## Vijay Sales Announces Ugadi Festive Offers with Discounts up to 60%

HYDERABAD, MARCH 16

Electronics retail chain Vijay Sales has announced special festive offers to mark Ugadi, with discounts of up to 60 per cent across a wide range of consumer electronics and home appliances.

As part of the celebrations for the Telugu New Year, customers can avail attractive deals both in stores and online across categories such as televisions, smartphones, laptops, kitchen appliances and cooling products.

With the summer season approaching, the retailer is offering air conditioners starting from ₹24,299 and air coolers from ₹4,990, while refrigerators are available from ₹8,990. Televisions are being



offered from ₹8,990 with discounts of up to 65 per cent. Audio products are available with up to 60 per cent off, with large speakers starting from ₹3,499 and personal audio devices from ₹489.

In the mobile category, smartphones are available from ₹6,399 and iPhones from ₹54,900 inclusive of

cashback offers. Smartwatches start from ₹1,099. For productivity devices, laptops are priced from ₹35,690, MacBooks from ₹84,990 and iPads from ₹30,990.

Customers can also purchase kitchen and home appliances such as air fryers from ₹2,699, microwaves from ₹5,999 and other kitchen ap-

pliances starting from ₹529. Water purifiers are available from ₹6,199, while personal care products start at ₹499.

To make shopping easier, the company has also curated products across multiple price segments ranging from under ₹1,000 to above ₹30,000. Customers shopping online or in stores can earn 0.75 per cent loyalty points through the MyVS loyalty programme, redeemable on future purchases.

In addition, the retailer is offering instant discounts and cashback benefits for customers using credit cards from major banks on select transactions.

The festive offers are available at Vijay Sales stores as well as on the company's website.



## Indian Railways Announce Shri Ramayana Yatra

Spiritual tourism in India is a booming sector driven by over 450,000 heritage sites and top destinations such as Varanasi, Rishikesh, Tirupati, Amritsar and Ayodhya, among others. Besides domestic tourists, every year millions of visitors from around the world come to India for pilgrimage, yoga and wellness. To further promote pilgrimage tourism, Indian Railways has launched a 17-day Shri Ramayana Yatra tour covering key Ramayana sites across India and Nepal.

The Shri Ramayana Yatra tour will kick off on March 30, covering iconic locations associated with the life of Lord Rama. During the 16-night/17-day journey, the train will reportedly stop at prominent places such as Ayodhya, Nandigram, Sitamarhi, Janakpur, Buxar, Varanasi, Prayagraj, Shringverpur, Chitrakoot, Nashik, Hampi and Rameshwaram.

### THE TRAIN OPERATING FOR THE 17-DAY SHRI RAMAYANA YATRA TOUR

The tour will be conducted on the Bharat Gaurav Deluxe AC tourist train as part of Indian Railways' efforts to promote pilgrimage tourism alongside luxury. The state-of-the-art train is well equipped with modern amenities, according to officials at the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation.

The train has three categories of accommodation - First AC, Second AC and Third AC - and features a modern kitchen, two restaurants, sensor-based washroom functions, shower cubicles in coaches, foot massagers, as well as CCTV cameras and security guards for enhanced security in each coach.

The tour will begin at Sadarjung Railway Station, with its first destination being Ayodhya, where tourists will visit the Ram Janmabhoomi Temple, Hanuman Garhi and Ram Ki Paidi.

Following this, the train will travel to Nandigram to visit the Bharat-Hanuman Temple and Bharat Kund. The train will also cover destinations like Sitamarhi in Bihar, from where tourists will travel



by road to Janakpur in Nepal to visit Janaki Temple, the birthplace of Sita, Dhanush Dham temple and Parashuram Kund. The other spots covered in the tour include:

### BUXAR: RAM REKHA GHAT, RAMESHWAR NATH TEMPLE.

**Varanasi:** Tulsi Manas temple, Sankat Mochan temple, Kashi Vishwanath temple and Ganga Aarti. **Sitamarhi (Uttar Pradesh):** Sita Samahit Sthal (Sita Mata temple).

**Prayagraj:** Triveni Sangam, Hanuman Temple and Bharadwaj Ashram.

**Shringverpur:** Shring Rishi Temple.

**Chitrakoot:** Gupt Godavari, Ram Ghat and Sati Anusuya Temple.

**Nashik:** Trayambkeshwar temple, Panchvati (Sita

gufa and Kalamaram temple).

**Hampi:** Anjanadri Hill, Virupaksha temple and Vitthal Temple.

**Rameshwaram:** Ramanathaswamy temple and Dhanushkodi.

The train will return to Delhi on the 17th day of the journey, covering approximately 7,560 km in total. Talking about the package prices, the Railways has fixed the amount at Rs 1,14,100 per person for 3AC, Rs 1,51,225 for 2AC, and Rs 1,64,940 for 1AC. The lowest charge is Rs 1,11,630 for travellers, based on triple occupancy.

The package includes train travel in the selected class, accommodation in three-star hotels, all vegetarian meals, transfers and sightseeing in AC coaches, travel insurance and the services of IRCTC tour managers for a total of 150 passengers.

## DUBAI ATTRACTIONS OFFER FREE ENTRY AND DISCOUNTS AS IRAN-ISRAEL WAR

As tensions continue to rise in the Gulf region following the ongoing conflict involving the United States, Israel and Iran, several attractions and businesses in Dubai are offering free entry and discounts for residents and visitors. The city's hospitality and entertainment sector has introduced these initiatives to help families relax during a tense period. With schools starting their spring break early, the offers also give residents more options to spend time with their children. Community support has often been visible in the UAE during uncertain times. Businesses across sectors are now stepping in with small gestures that help residents take a break and enjoy leisure activities.

### FREE ACCESS AT ATLANTIS ATTRACTIONS

One of the biggest offers comes from Atlantis The Palm, which has opened two of its major attractions for free for a limited period. Visitors can access Aquaventure World and The Lost Chambers Aquarium without paying an entry fee between March 10 and March 22. As reported by the Economic Times, guests can claim up to four complimentary tickets per booking. A regular day ticket usually costs around AED 175.

### AQUAVENTURE EXPLAINED THE IDEA BEHIND THE OFFER IN A STATEMENT:

"This UAE school holiday, Aquaventure world is offering complimentary daily tickets for residents and visitors as a small gesture to help everyone unwind, and enjoy a day together at the world's largest waterpark."

However, visitors must reserve their tickets online in advance as walk-in entries are not available.

### FREE ENTRY TO DUBAI'S FLOWER GARDEN

Residents can also visit the Dubai Miracle Garden without paying an entry fee. The at-

traction is offering complimentary entry to UAE residents from March 15 to March 31. Visitors only need to show their valid Emirates ID at the entrance.

The garden is known for its colourful installations and themed displays made entirely from flowers. It currently features more than 150 million flowers spread across 72,000 square metres.

### INTERACTIVE ATTRACTIONS JOIN THE INITIATIVE

Another attraction offering a unique deal is House of Hype.

According to Khaleej Times, the first 50 visitors each day from March 15 to March 22 will receive free entry if they arrive wearing clothes that feature the colours of the UAE flag.

Inside, guests can explore more than 25 themed zones and interactive experiences.

Meanwhile, Jungle Bay Waterpark is offering a limited number of complimentary family tickets until March 31. The park is located at Destination Mina Seyahi and requires advance booking for the free passes.

### HOTEL DISCOUNTS AND STAYCATION OFFERS

Hotels are also introducing special offers for residents planning short breaks within the country. Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts has launched a staycation package across several properties, including dining options, family activities and 2-for-1 spa treatments. Another property, LEVA Hotel, is offering a 20 per cent discount on room bookings until the upcoming Eid al-Fitr holiday.

Together, these initiatives aim to give residents and visitors affordable ways to unwind while the region navigates an uncertain geopolitical situation.



## ASIA'S LARGEST TULIP FESTIVAL KICKS OFF IN SRINAGAR

Tulip season is here! The perfect time to enjoy vibrant blooms and breathtaking spring scenery at the Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden, formerly the Model Floriculture Centre in Srinagar, is arriving on March 16. Counted as the largest tulip garden in Asia, it is spread across an area of about 30 hectares.

As spring has already arrived at the Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden, several pictures and videos of the iconic tourist destination are surfacing on social media. The garden will open its doors to visitors starting March 16, with Chief Minister Omar Abdullah inaugurating it, as announced by officials.

Mathoora Masoom, Director of Floriculture in Kashmir, said, "We will have more than 70 varieties of tulips this year," reported ANN News. She further revealed that preparations for the opening have been completed and that the department has made efforts to enhance the garden's appeal. "We have tried to improve the experience by adding selfie points and decorative planters so that visitors get a pleasant atmosphere," she added.

This year, the garden will feature around 1.5 million spring-blooming bulbs, including more than 70 varieties of tulips, which will typically remain in bloom for about 15 to 20 days, depending on weather conditions.

The tulip garden attracts thousands of visitors every year. In 2024, it recorded more than four lakh visitors, including tourists and locals, while in 2023 the garden

saw over 3.5 lakh visitors. Last year, however, the tourism sector in Kashmir suffered a major setback following a terror attack on tourists in Pahalgam in April, killing 26 people on the spot.

With the garden's opening this month, the tourism industry is hopeful for strong tourist footfall this year.

Situated in the foothills of the Zabarwan Range, the iconic tourist destination offers breathtaking views with the majestic Dal Lake in the background.

The garden was opened in 2007 to boost floriculture and tourism in the Kashmir Valley, as part of tourism initiatives by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir.

Built on sloping ground in a terraced fashion and consisting of seven terraces, the garden is also home to many other species of flowers - hyacinths, daffodils and ranunculus - apart from tulips.

The Tulip Festival is an annual celebration held at the garden that aims to showcase the range of flowers during the onset of the spring season in the Kashmir Valley.

Best time to visit: Early mornings (before 9 am) or late afternoons offer fewer crowds and better lighting.

Transport details: The garden is located near Cheshma Shahi, about 12-18 km from the city centre and the airport. Private taxis and local buses are the best transport options.

Other tips: Spring in Kashmir offers pleasant weather for travel. Hence, dress in layers and wear shoes for a comfortable visit.



# Khushi Tripathi scripts history, becomes India's first 5th-degree Taichi black belt

LUCKNOW MARTIAL ARTIST EARNS RARE INTERNATIONAL DISTINCTION AFTER CLEARING ELITE EXAMINATION IN TAIWAN; ACHIEVEMENT HAILED AS A MILESTONE FOR INDIAN SPORT AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

**Samudrala Kiran**  
**,Correspondent**

**LUCKNOW**

Lucknow's Khushi Tripathi has created history by becoming the first Indian to be awarded the prestigious 5th-degree Taichi black belt, a rare distinction in the world of martial arts that places her among the highest-ranked practitioners of the discipline.

The achievement marks a major moment for Indian sport, particularly in Taichi, an art widely regarded as one of the most demanding forms of moving meditation, internal energy control and disciplined combat training.

Tripathi, a promising martial artist from Uttar Pradesh, has already brought laurels to the country by winning five medals at the international level — two gold and three silver — in events held in Russia, the United States, Thailand and Armenia. With her latest feat, she has added a rare national record to her growing list of accomplishments.

The 5th-degree black belt was conferred after she appeared in the high-level Taichi black belt examination conducted by the International Taichi Kwan Federation in Taipei, Taiwan. The examination, held once every two years, is considered one of the most rigorous assessments in the discipline and is meant for only the most

advanced practitioners.

Taichi is not merely a system of self-defence. It is considered a rare martial art that combines rhythmic movement, breath control, mental focus, spiritual discipline and mastery over inner energy. Experts say reaching the 5th-degree level requires years of relentless practice, patience and technical excellence, making the honour one of the highest in the field. Speaking after her achievement, Tripathi said Taichi had shaped her life beyond sport.

"Taichi is not just a martial art, but an art of living. My goal is to empower every daughter of Uttar Pradesh through this martial art so that she does not have to depend on anyone else for her safety," she said.

Tripathi has also built a strong reputation for her work in women's self-defence training. Since 2013, she has been conducting free training programmes for thousands of girls across Uttar Pradesh to help them protect themselves from harassment and eve-teasing.

In 2020, she was among the trainers involved in the online master training segment of Mission Shakti, the women's safety and empowerment initiative launched by the Uttar Pradesh govern-

ment. Over the years, she has delivered self-defence training in schools, colleges, universities, NSS camps, NCC platforms and several public and private institutions across the state.

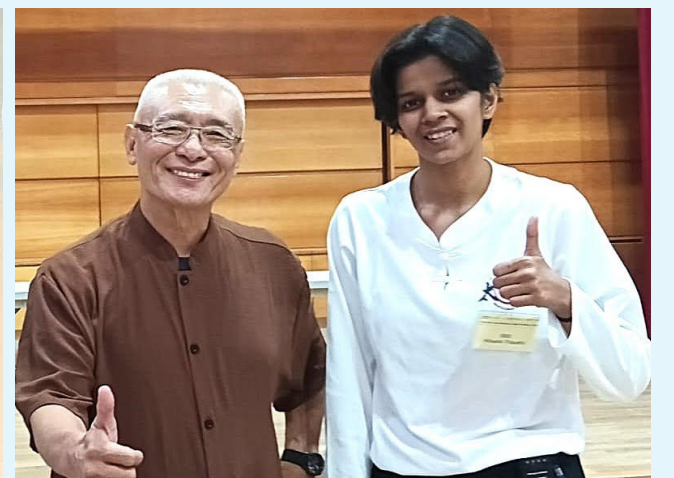
Her outreach has extended to organizations and institutions such as Tata Consultancy, Apollo Super Speciality Hospital, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, the Air Force Wives Welfare Association, the



**Mr. William Nelson -Vice Chairman of the World Taichi Chuan Federation congratulated Khushi**

Army Wives Welfare Association, the Kumaon Regiment, the Garhwal Regiment, the Signal Regiment and spiritual organisations, where she has trained women and girls free of cost.

Gyan Prakash, Secretary General of the Uttar Pradesh Kung Fu Association, said the 10th International Judges Seminar and High-Level Black Belt Examination was organised in October 2025 under the supervision of International Taichi Kwan Federation President



**Mr. Ronghui Wu-Vice Chairman of the World Taichi Chuan Federation congratulated Khushi for Achieving 5 degree Black Belt in Taichi**

Mr. Ye Van Kwan at the Taichi training section of Taiwan's Ministry of Sports and Education.

According to him, 76 senior Taichi trainers from 22 countries participated in the process, which included multiple rounds of online seminars and examinations before the final certification was awarded this week. World Taichi Federation Secretary General Mr. Peter Tsai congratulated Tripathi on her success and expressed hope that she would play an important role in expanding Taichi in India and contributing to the broad-

er goals of fitness, discipline and public well-being. Tripathi's achievement has been widely welcomed by office-bearers of the Indian Kung Fu Association, the Uttar Pradesh Kung Fu Association, sports enthusiasts and social organisations, many of whom described her as a symbol of dedication, discipline and women's empowerment. With this accomplishment, Khushi Tripathi has not only set a new benchmark in Indian martial arts but has also emerged as an inspiring face of courage, service and sporting excellence.

**IPL 2026**

## LSG begin training camp in Lucknow, Pant and Shami to join



**LUCKNOW:** Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) have commenced their training camp ahead of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 at the Bharat Ratna Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana Stadium in Lucknow on Monday. The franchise said captain, wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant, and veteran pacer Mohammed Shami are due to link up with the squad on Tuesday after arriving in Lucknow in late hours on Monday. In the session held on Monday, batters Akshat Raghuvanshi, Abdul Samad, and Himmat Singh, along with all-rounders Ayush Badoni, Shahbaz Ahmed, and Arshin Kulkarni, impressed in the nets. The pace attack of Arjun Tendulkar, Mayank Yadav, Avesh Khan, and wrist-spinner Digvesh Rathi drew praise from the coaching staff for their speed and accuracy. LSG's Global Cricket Director Tom Moody and head coach Justin Langer provided technical guidance throughout the sessions.

**RACING**

## 'Contributes to Indian casualties': Gavaskar slams SRH owners



**NEW DELHI:** Former India captain Sunil Gavaskar has strongly criticised the decision of SunRisers Hyderabad to sign Pakistan spinner Abrar Ahmed in the 2026 auction of The Hundred, saying Indian franchise owners should avoid recruiting players from Pakistan due to the sensitive political relationship between the two nations. Gavaskar also questioned whether sporting success should outweigh national concerns, arguing that Indian-owned entities must remain mindful of the wider implications of such decisions, as the money earned by Abrar could be used against India. "The furor created by the acquisition of a Pakistani player by the Indian owner of a franchise in The Hundred is hardly surprising. Ever since the Mumbai attacks in November 2008, Indian franchise owners have simply ignored Pakistani players for the IPL," Gavaskar wrote in his column for Mid-Day.

## ISL 2025-26: 10-man Punjab hold FC Goa to 1-1 draw at home

**NEW DELHI**

A 10-man Punjab FC side produced a resilient performance to hold FC Goa to a 1-1 draw in the Indian Super League (ISL) 2025-26 at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in New Delhi on Monday. The result saw FC Goa extend their unbeaten run and move to fourth in the standings with nine points, while Punjab FC sit eighth with five points. FC Goa's Dejan Dražić was adjudged Player of the Match.

However, the Goan side faced a tough challenge and survived thanks to a goal by Dejan Dražić as Punjab led the game till the 53rd minute after Nsungusi Jr Effiong scored in the 27th minute in the key encounter.

Punjab FC head coach Panagiotis Dilmpertis made two changes in midfield, bringing in Leon Augustine for the injured Nikhil Prabhu and Samir Zeljković in place of Bede Osuji. FC Goa head coach Manolo Márquez named an unchanged starting XI.

Punjab started the match strongly, controlling possession and creating early pressure down the flanks. The left-back Muhammed Uvais delivered a series of dangerous crosses, and the hosts created the first shot on target in the 15th minute when Dani Ramirez's corner found Uvais, whose header was safely collected by FC Goa goalkeeper Hrithik Tiwari.

The Shers continued to dictate the tempo and were rewarded in the 27th minute. A move initiated in midfield found Manglenhang Kipgen, who threaded a precise through ball to Nsungusi Jr Effiong. The striker showed com-



posure with his first touch, curling a left-footed effort into the top corner to give Punjab the lead.

Punjab kept up the pressure in the closing stages of the first half. Ramirez tested Tiwari with a long-range effort in the 37th minute, while Nsungusi Jr's attempt a moment later was gathered comfortably by the goalkeeper. Kipgen, too, tried his luck from a distance but failed to keep his effort on target.

FC Goa struggled to clear their lines for much of the half but came close to equalising in stoppage time. Sandesh Jhingam headed narrowly wide from a Dražić cross, while Pol Moreno missed the target shortly after. Punjab nearly conceded an own goal when a header from Uvais struck the woodwork, but the

hosts managed to maintain their advantage heading into the break.

The match took a dramatic turn early in the second half. Just three minutes after the restart, Punjab were reduced to ten men when goalscorer Nsungusi Jr was shown a straight red card. FC Goa capitalised on the numerical advantage soon after. In the 53rd minute, Brison Fernandes turned in midfield before laying the ball off to Dražić, who struck a right-footer from outside the box into the bottom corner to bring the visitors level at 1-1. Goa continued to push forward, with Udanta Singh heading narrowly over from a corner in the 60th minute and Dražić missing a free header moments later after a well-delivered cross from the right.

## Abhishek, Ishan in race to captain SRH in initial games in Pat Cummins' absence

**NEW DELHI**

India's left-handed opener Abhishek Sharma and wicketkeeper-batter Ishan Kishan are in the race to lead Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) in their initial matches in their Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 campaign, as regular captain Pat Cummins is unavailable as he is still recovering from a back injury.

SRH, the IPL 2016 winners, will begin their IPL 2026 campaign against defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru on March 28. Cummins has not played competitive cricket since the third Ashes Test in Adelaide in December 2025, after being out of action post the tour of West Indies due to a lumbar bone stress injury in his lower back.

He was subsequently ruled out of the remaining Ashes matches and the 2026 ICC Men's T20 World Cup due to the same issue. IANS understands that Abhishek and wicketkeeper-batter Ishan Kishan, who were members of the Indian team that won the 2026 Men's T20 World Cup, are in the race to lead SRH in Cummins' absence. Kishan, who has been in the SRH camp since the 2025 IPL, captained Jharkhand to winning the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy title in the recent domestic season and has understandably strong credentials to lead the side in Cummins' absence. Abhishek, meanwhile, joined SRH ahead of IPL 2019 and has been a mainstay with the side - forming an ultra-attacking opening partnership alongside Australia's Travis Head. While the in-form Kishan hit three fifties in India's triumphant T20 World Cup win, Abhishek finally found mojo to smash a half-centu-



ry off just 18 balls in the final, which India won by 96 runs.

"Pat Cummins is recovering from the injury, but he mostly needs to clear his fitness tests, and then he will join the team. He is ready to play, but he has to clear the fitness tests and then join the SRH set-up. As Cummins will take more time, the team management is still deciding if either Ishan or Abhishek will lead SRH.

"If all goes well, then whoever is the interim SRH captain will attend the IPL 2026 captains and managers meet, to be held on March 25 at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai.

"A customary photoshoot of all ten captains with the tournament's trophy will also be held there," said a source familiar with the matter to IANS on Monday. If Abhishek becomes SRH's captain, this will be the first time he has captained an IPL side, which will also be the case if Kishan gets the leadership armband. But Cummins' absence for the initial IPL 2026 games is a huge blow for SRH.

## DDCA Prez Jaitley hands Pratika Rawal Rs.51 lakh reward

**NEW DELHI**

The Golden Jubilee edition of the Sports Journalists Federation of India (SJFI) National Convention concluded with a grand closing ceremony at the Arun Jaitley Stadium on Monday, with Delhi & District Cricket Association (DDCA) President Rohan Jaitley emphasising the importance of the relationship between sports administrators and journalists.

"The balance between cricket administration and journalistic reviews is very important. Whether it be criticism or feedback, for an administrator, it is exceptionally important. We need to realise where we are going wrong. It is important to know our mistakes. It is important to rectify them," said Jaitley.

Jaitley also announced a cash prize of ₹5 lakh for the Akash Rawal-led North Zone team, the winners of the JK Bose Inter-Zonal T20 Cricket Tournament. "Since the North Zone has won, on behalf of the association, I would want to announce a cash prize of ₹5 lakh for the winning side," he added.

On the occasion, the DDCA also felicitated India Women's World Cup-winning



cricketer Pratika Rawal with a ₹51 lakh reward and honoured India U-19 Men's World Cup squad member Uddhav Mohan with a cash award of ₹11 lakh. The four-day Golden Jubilee convention, hosted by the Delhi Sports Journalists Association (DSJA), brought together sports media professionals from across the country for meetings, competitions, and networking.

On the first day of the Convention, Smt Raksha Khadse, Minister of State (MoS), Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, and sports secretary Hari Ranjan Rao graced the occasion, addressing the visiting jour-

nalists from across the country.

On Saturday, the journalists had a special interaction with Member of Parliament and former Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports Anurag Thakur.

The programme also featured a major sports conclave with International Cricket Council (ICC) Chairman Jay Shah, Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) Vice President and Rajya Sabha Member of Parliament Rajiv Shukla, and Archery Association of India Honorary Secretary General Virendra Sachdeva.

Several dignitaries and stakeholders

from the sports and corporate ecosystems were felicitated during the Day 4 proceedings of the convention. Among those honoured were Svayam Founder Sminu Jindal, Adimazes Founder Akhilesh Yadav, WordsWork Communications Consulting Founder and CEO Neha Mathur Rastogi, RPL Industries Chairman Rakesh Mishra, and Rajasthan United Football Club (RUFC) Chairman Krishan Kumar Tak.

The SJFI President and Secretary also honoured Sangeeta Baroova, the first woman President of the Sports Journalists Federation of India, and felicitated 18 state presidents and secretaries.

"Hosting the Golden Jubilee convention in the capital has been a monumental honour for the DSJA," said the President of the Delhi Sports Journalists Association, Abhishek Tripathi. "Our goal was to create an environment where the fraternity could celebrate its legacy while also enjoying the sports we cover daily."

The President of the Sports Journalists Federation of India, Saraju Chakraborty, added, "Reaching fifty years is a testament to the resilience of sports journalism in India. This convention celebrated our history while setting a progressive tone

for the future." Sabi Hussain, Secretary of the Delhi Sports Journalist Association, thanked the sponsors, stating that organising a four-day event of this magnitude would not have been possible without the support of partners from across the sports and corporate ecosystem.

On the sporting front, North Zone won the JK Bose Inter-Zonal T20 Cricket Tournament, defeating East Zone by 10 wickets. East Zone scored 135/6 in 20 overs, with Pranab Shil scoring an unbeaten 47.

North Zone chased down the target in just 9.5 overs, led by Rishabh Singh's unbeaten 87. In another match, West Zone defeated South Zone by 10 wickets after bowling them out for 97.

The AC Bali Table Tennis Tournament also witnessed intense competition, with the Sports Journalists Association of Mumbai-1 winning the team championship. Amol Karhadkar won the men's singles title and paired with Ashwin to win the men's doubles title as well. The evening concluded with a dinner hosted by DDCA President Rohan Jaitley, bringing the landmark Golden Jubilee convention to a celebratory close.

# MICHAEL B. JORDAN WINS BEST ACTOR FOR SINNERS, TAKING HOME HIS FIRST OSCAR

**Los Angeles:** Michael B. Jordan has been building toward a performance like "Sinners" for over 20 years. Now he has the best actor Oscar as his reward in what proved to be a hugely popular win. Jordan got one trophy for playing identical twins Smoke and Stack in the blues-seeped supernatural horror film set in 1930s Mississippi that earned a record 16 Academy Award nominations and won four.

Last year's winner, Adrien Brody, announced Jordan's name Sunday night, setting off a wild celebration inside the Dolby Theatre. Teyana Taylor, a supporting actress nominee for "One Battle After Another," joined the standing ovation, mouthing, "Yes!" Jordan was cheered loudly as he made his way through the backstage photo and interview rooms. The win is Jordan's first Oscar.

"I've been doing this for 25 years and there's a lot of people who have seen me grow up in this industry," he said backstage, "and they looked out for me when they didn't have to." Jordan is eager to pass on that support. "I'm really big on the next generation, so, try to be an example," he said. "I'm not a big talker, I'm about action. I like to lead by example."

Jordan is the sixth Black man to win the best actor trophy. He joins Will Smith ("King Richard," 2020), Forest Whitaker ("The Last King of Scotland," 2006), Jamie Foxx ("Ray," 2004), Denzel Washington ("Training Day," 2001) and Sidney Poitier ("Lilies of the Field"), who was the first in 1963.

"I stand here because of the people that came before me — Sidney Poitier, Denzel Washington, Halle Berry, Jamie Foxx, Forest Whitaker, Will Smith," he said on stage, "and to be up amongst those giants, amongst those greats, amongst my ancestors, amongst my guys, thank you everybody in this room and everybody at home supporting me over my career."

Jordan added, "I know you guys wanted me to do well and I want to do that because you guys bet on me, so thank you for keep betting on me. I'm going to keep stepping up, and I'm going to keep being the best version of myself I can be."

The other nominees were Timothée Chalamet in "Marty Supreme," Leonardo DiCaprio for "One Battle After Another," Ethan Hawke of "Blue Moon" and Wagner



Moura in "The Secret Agent." Chalamet had been the early Oscar favorite after wins at the Golden Globes and Critics Choice Awards. But Jordan surprised himself by winning at the Actor Awards, giving him momentum in the final days of Oscar voting.

"Sinners" reunited Jordan and writer-producer-director Ryan Coogler. They go back to their first collaboration in 2013. "You're an amazing person," Jordan told Coogler from the stage. "You gave me the opportunity and space to be seen." Jordan's breakthrough film role came in Coogler's "Fruitvale Station" for which he received critical praise playing a real-life man who was killed by police. It was Coogler's directorial debut, and they followed with "Creed," "Black Panther" and now "Sinners."

Jordan's initial acting success came in television. He had a small yet pivotal role in "The Wire" in 2002, followed by the daytime drama "All My Children," in which he replaced Chadwick Boseman, and "Friday Night Lights." He and Boseman later acted together in "Black Panther" and were close friends until Boseman's death from colon cancer in 2020. Jordan dedicated his acting award from this year's NAACP Image Awards to Boseman. Jordan, a 39-year-old who also produces and directs, was named People

magazine's "Sexiest Man Alive" in 2020. Jordan shared Oscar night with his mother, Donna, who hugged her son upon hearing his name, and his father Michael A. Jordan, as well as his two siblings. He espoused the values that he was taught growing up in Newark, New Jersey. "I'm just walking my path, just trying to be locked in," he said backstage. "Dream big, man, and be kind and be honest. That's how I try to live."

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## COMPLETE LIST OF 2026 ACADEMY AWARDS WINNERS

**Ryan Coogler** won best original screenplay for "Sinners," which entered the night with a record-breaking 16 nominations.

### HERE IS AN LIST OF WINNERS

**Best picture:** "One Battle After Another"

**Best Actress:** Jessie Buckley, "Hamnet"

**Best Supporting Actress:** Amy Madigan, "Weapons"

**Best Supporting Actor:** Sean Penn, "One Battle After Another"

**Director:** Paul Thomas Anderson, "One Battle After Another"

**Original Song:** "Golden" from "KPop Demon Hunters," EJAE, Mark Sonnenblick, Joong Gyu Kwak, Yu Han Lee, Hee Dong Nam, Jeong Hoon Seon and Teddy Park

**Original Score:** "Sinners," Ludwig Göransson. Animated Film "KPop Demon Hunters"

**Animated Film:** "KPop Demon Hunters"

**International Film:** "Sentimental Value," Norway

**Documentary Feature:** "Mr. Nobody Against Putin"

**Casting Cassandra Kulukundis:** "One Battle After Another"

**Best Sound:** Gareth John, Al Nelson, Gwendolyn Yates Whittle, Gary A. Rizzo and Juan Peralta, "F1"

**Cinematography:** Autumn Durald Arkapaw, "Sinners"

**Original Screenplay:** "Sinners," Ryan Coogler

**Best Actor:** Michael B. Jordan, "Sinners"

## OSCARS 2026: KOTA SRINIVASA RAO NAME MENTIONED 'IN MEMORIAM SEGMENT'

**Hyderabad:** Late veteran actor Kota Srinivasa Rao was remembered in the 'In Memoriam' segment of the 98th Academy Awards, with the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences acknowledging his contribution to Indian cinema. The annual tribute honours notable film personalities from around the world who passed away in the previous year. Along with Kota, veteran Indian artistes B. Saroja Devi and Manoj Kumar were also featured in the segment. Director S. V. Krishna Reddy, who worked with the actor in several films including Rajendrudu Gajendrudu, Mayalodu, Vinodam, Yamaleela, and Ahvanam, said the recognition was well deserved. "It is an enviable honour, and he truly deserves it. He featured in most of my films; I even lost count after a point. His discipline, dedication



unique expressions brought life and humour to every scene," he noted. Born in Kankipadu in Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh, Kota Srinivasa Rao made his film debut with Pranam Khareedu. Over a career spanning more than four decades, he acted in over 750 films across Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Hindi cinema.

to his craft, and comic timing were exceptional," he said. Krishna Reddy recalled that although Kota was widely known for negative roles, he often explored the actor's comic abilities. "Except for the evil tantric role in Ghatothkachudu, I mostly used his comic side. His



## Salman Khan-Starrer 'Battle of Galwan' Retitled as 'Maatrubhumi'



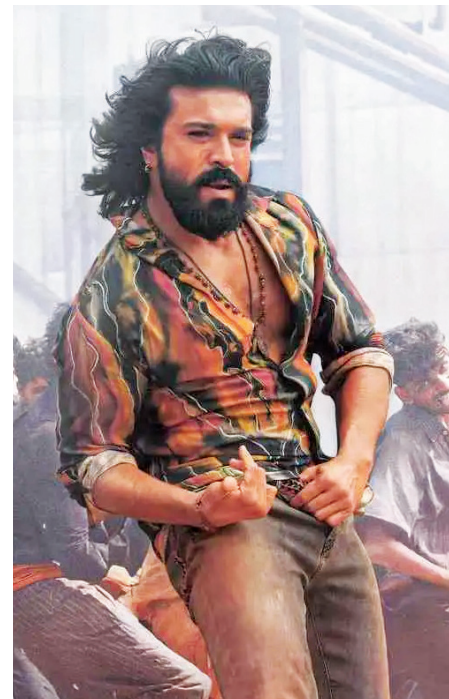
**New Delhi:** Bollywood superstar Salman Khan on Monday said his upcoming film "Battle of Galwan" has been renamed as "Maatrubhumi". The much-anticipated film is based on the 2020 Galwan Valley conflict between India and China and it is directed by Apoorva Lakhia of "Shootout at Lokhandwala" fame. The actor did not provide any reason for the sudden name change of the movie. The movie now also carries the tagline, "May War Rest In Peace". The new title is likely inspired by the film's first track "Maatrubhumi", sung by Arijit Singh.

"May War Rest In Peace. #Maatrubhumi," Salman wrote in the captions of the film's poster carrying the new title. The film is inspired by the military standoff in eastern Ladakh in May 2020. Clashes at the Galwan Valley in June that year resulted in a severe strain in ties between India and China. Twenty Indian Army personnel laid down their lives in the Galwan Valley clashes.

In February 2021, China officially acknowledged that five Chinese military officers and soldiers were killed in the clashes though it is widely believed that the death toll on the Chinese side was much higher.

Khan essays the role of Bikkumalla Santosh Babu, who laid down his life along with 19 other soldiers of the 16 Bihar Regiment during the clash. On Khan's 60th birthday, he shared the teaser of the film, which drew criticism from China's Global Times. The newspaper claimed the movie to be a cinematic exaggeration and blamed it for distorting facts. A government source at the time said, "India has a tradition of cinematic expression. A movie titled 'Haqqeqat' was made in 1964 and the theme was the India-China war of 1962. Another film '120 Bahadur' was made recently on the legendary battle of Rezang La. Cinemas are an artistic expression and India does not restrict it."

## WHO IS THE HOT ITEM DANCER FOR PEDDI?



It is already known that Ram Charan will be returning to the big screen with his next film Peddi, which is releasing on April 30. As the firm is preparing for its release in a month from now, the promotional campaign is happening. The makers had already released a couple of songs, and it should not be too long before the trailer of the film is also released. Meanwhile, the discussion has actively started about the upcoming item song in the film. The makers of Peddi are planning to shoot a special item song, and the team is currently searching for a top heroine to feature in it. Considering the massive buzz surrounding the film, many actresses are said to be interested in appearing in the song. However, the main challenge for the team is managing dates. Since the shoot has to happen soon, the actress chosen must be able to adjust her schedule quickly.

Several big names are reportedly under consideration, including Mrunal Thakur, Samantha Ruth Prabhu and Pooja Hegde. The makers are said to have prepared a list with many popular actresses, as the film's craze is high and most heroines would be willing to appear in the special number. But with limited time left for the shoot, the team might have to finalize someone who is available at short notice. It remains to be seen whom director Buchi Babu Sana and his team will eventually lock for the much anticipated song.