

HYDERABAD HEADLINES

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PAK AIRSTRIKES HIT AFGHANISTAN, KABUL CLAIMS 400 DEAD

Pakistan carried out overnight airstrikes in Afghanistan targeting what it called terrorist infrastructure, but the Afghan Taliban-led government alleged the hit a rehabilitation hospital in Kabul, killing at least 400 people and injuring hundreds. The strikes, part of Operation Ghazab Lil Haq, have sharply escalated tensions between the two neighbours, with both sides trading claims over targets and casualties while warning of further action.

BEYOND BORDERS 08



Markets End In Green As Wall Street, Asian Peers Edge Higher

MONEY MATTERS 09

Sanjay Dutt-Nora Fatehi Song 'Sarke Chunar' Draws Ire for Vulgar Lyrics

NEXT DOOR 05



SHORT TAKES



CABINET TO MEET ON MARCH 20

Telangana Council of Ministers will meet on March 20 in the Legislative Assembly. Chaired by Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, the meet will focus on key policy matters, including approval of the state Budget to be presented by Deputy CM Bhatti. Chief Secretary K. Ramakrishna Rao has asked all members to attend.

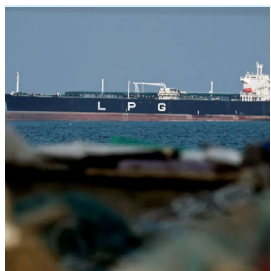
HYDERABAD



1 lakh+ startups have women directors: govt

More than one lakh startups in India have at least one woman director or partner, reflecting the rising participation of women in the country's entrepreneurial ecosystem, the government informed Parliament on Tuesday.

MONEY MATTERS 09



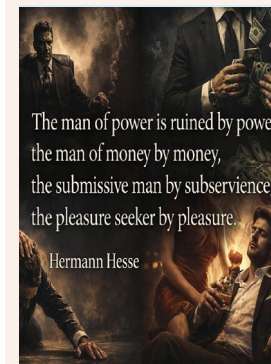
Gas Crisis Becomes a Test of Energy Security

The conflict between the US-Israel and Iran has once again reminded the world how fragile the energy lifelines of the modern global economy are. Tensions in the Strait of Hormuz and disruptions in maritime traffic have severely disturbed the supply chain.

OPINION 06

THE DAILY MANTRA

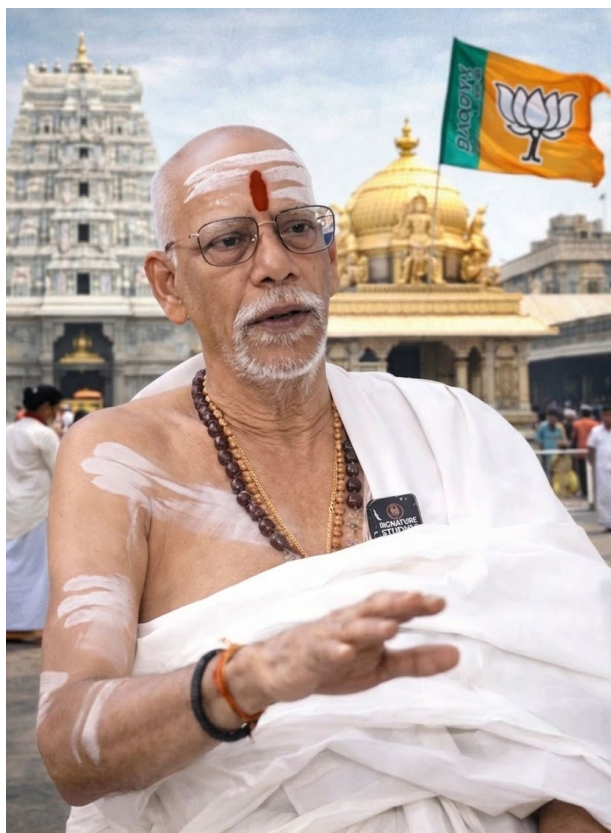
DESTINY @ HABITS



A person is ultimately ruined by the very thing they center their life around.

It's not saying power, money, obedience, or pleasure are inherently bad — but when they become your identity or obsession, they consume you.

Collected by Venna Srinivasa Reddy



KANCHIPURAM ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCY:

BJP'S MISSING FACE?

KANCHIPURAM: A TEMPLE TOWN, A POLITICAL TEST

WILL BJP SPOT THE OPPORTUNITY OR MISS THE SIGNAL?

A SEAT THAT LOOKS ORDINARY ON PAPER, BUT ISN'T

BY CHATURVEDULA SUBRAHMANYAM

Kanchipuram sits outside BJP's current list of priority constituencies, but its cultural weight makes it strategically significant. The party lacks a locally embedded face capable of converting religious and social influence into electoral traction. C.R. Nataraja Sastri, with deep roots in temple administration and grassroots outreach, fits that gap, though alliance constraints and caste dynamics remain key barriers. The decision to consider such a candidate will ultimately reflect whether

BJP is prioritising immediate wins or long-term ideological positioning in Tamil Nadu.

At first glance, Kanchipuram Assembly constituency does not scream "high priority battleground." It is not among the 50-odd seats the BJP has internally flagged based on 2024 Lok Sabha vote share. It is not an urban growth centre like Coimbatore or Chennai. Nor is it part of the southern belt where the BJP has shown incremental traction. But elections in Tamil Nadu are not always won on spreadsheets.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >

KTR accuses Congress govt of failing to honour Assembly promises

HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) working president K. T. Rama Rao on Tuesday launched a sharp attack on the Congress-led Telangana government over the Governor's address in the Assembly, alleging that the government had eroded the credibility and sanctity of the constitutional process by failing to honour its own promises.



Addressing the Assembly during the debate on the Governor's speech, KTR said that a Governor's address carries immense importance as it reflects the policy direction and

commitments of the ruling government. However, he alleged that the present government had reduced it to a mere formality devoid of accountability.

He recalled that during the first Governor's address after the Congress came to power, then Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy had publicly stated that the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >

AI Pilot Helps Farmers Plan Kharif Sowing

NEW DELHI, MAR 17

The government has conducted an AI-based pilot to provide localised monsoon onset forecasts to support Kharif sowing decisions. The project, led by the Department of Agriculture in collaboration with the Development In-

novation Lab-India, covered parts of 13 states for the 2025 season. Using a blended model combining NeuralGCM, ECMWF's AI system and 125 years of IMD rainfall data, forecasts were shared via SMS through the M-Kisan portal to over 3.88 crore farmers in five languages. Sur-

veys in Madhya Pradesh and Bihar showed 31-52% of farmers adjusted sowing time, crop choice and inputs. The Centre now plans to scale the system nationally with support from IITM, IMD and ISRO, integrating improved dynamical models into the AI framework for 2026.

Govt forms SIT for farmhouse drugs case; Chevella DCP to lead

Hyderabad, March 17: The Telangana government has taken a key decision regarding the Moinabad farmhouse drugs case. It has constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) under the leadership of Chevella DCP Yogesh Gautam. DGP Shivadhar Reddy issued orders to this effect. The SIT is set to investigate the origins and background of the party held at the farmhouse belonging to BRS leader and former MLA Rohit Reddy. Furthermore, the SIT will conduct inquiries into the Dubai connections, Namith Sharma's real estate business dealings, and the illicit drug trade involved in the case.

It is a known fact that the Telangana Eagle and Moinabad police raided a party held on March 14 night at a farmhouse located in Azinagar, Moinabad mandal, Ranga Reddy district.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >

Protests force govt to respond: kavitha

Hyderabad, March 17: Alleging large-scale injustice in the demolition of houses in Velugumatta, Telangana Jagruthi president K. Kavitha on Tuesday strongly criticised the government, stating that 750 homes belonging to poor families were razed without prior notice or warning.

She said sustained protests by Telangana Jagruthi and the Dharma Samaj Party forced the government to respond. As part of the relief measures, land has reportedly been allocated to 300 families at the same site, while financial assistance has been announced for 110 others. However, Kavitha pointed out that relief has so far reached only about 410 families, leaving a large number of affected households without support.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >

BJP Praises Nitin Nabin's Rajya Sabha Entry

Seeks DGP Action Over Alleged Attacks on Cadre

HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

The Telangana BJP unit on Monday hailed the election of party leader Nitin Nabin to the Rajya Sabha from Bihar.

In a statement, Telangana BJP president N. Ramchander Rao lauded Nabin's elevation, highlighting his experience as a five-time MLA from Bankipur and his tenure in key ministerial roles. He said Nabin's administrative experience, commitment to public service, and understanding of grassroots issues would strengthen parliamentary proceedings and contribute to national progress. Rao extended his congratulations and wished him a successful tenure in the Upper House.

Meanwhile, senior BJP leaders submitted a representation to the state Director General of Police (DGP), alleging a series of attacks on party workers



across Telangana.

They cited a recent incident in Nalgonda district, where BJP leader Doti Kiran Yadav was reportedly assaulted following political rivalry after municipal elections. The leaders claimed the case was registered under bailable sections despite the seriousness of the attack and demanded stricter action, including charges of attempted murder.



They also pointed to similar incidents in Vikarabad and other parts of Nalgonda, accusing the police of inaction and bias in favour of the ruling Congress. The BJP leaders called for an impartial investigation and stringent action against those responsible. Senior leaders, including M. Jayasree and N.V. Subhash, were present during the submission.

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JEEVAN REDDY TARGETS MLA SANJAY, QUESTIONS PARTY LOYALTY

Hyderabad : Former Minister and senior Congress leader T Jeevan Reddy on Tuesday launched a scathing attack on Jagtial MLA Sanjay, questioning his political allegiance and accusing him of interfering in Congress party affairs. Reddy, talking to newsmen, expressed anguish over strained political ties, calling the breakdown of a four-decade relationship painful. He criticised Sanjay for allegedly influencing internal party matters and candidates selection while simultaneously calling for cooperation. "I am currently enduring that very pain. As for Jagtial MLA Sanjay, I don't even know which party he belongs to? Yet he is offering to have me work together with him. There is nothing wrong with collaborating with the state government for the sake of development. However, is it justifiable for him to interfere in the internal affairs of the Congress party, trample upon our rights, and dictate the selection of candidates", Reddy asked. Raising pointed questions, Reddy asked how Sanjay - claimed to be associated with BRS - could propose working with Congress leaders. He also blamed the MLA for creating issues within the municipality and pressuring party members. These remarks have intensified political tensions in the Jagtial constituency.

Paddy bonus delivering Rs. 25,000 extra to farmers: Bhatti

HYDERABAD

Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka stated that instead of Rythu Bharosa, farmers are benefiting with about ₹25,000 each through the paddy bonus.

Recognising the hard work of farmers, a bonus of ₹500 per quintal is being deposited directly into the accounts of those cultivating fine paddy. Under the Rythu Bharosa, ₹9,000 crore was credited to farmers' accounts within just nine days, Bhatti Vikramarka reminded.

He further said that over ₹20,000 crore per year is being deposited into the accounts of women under interest-free loan schemes through Self-Help Groups, and so far ₹57,000 crore has been credited. Bhatti Vikramarka emphasised that when women prosper, families and the state as a whole progress. The Deputy Chief Minister criticised BRS leaders, stating that the people of the state are well aware of the lack of respect they show towards women.

Bhatti Vikramarka said KTR appears to be speaking without proper understanding and said that if they



truly cared about women's development, they would have given women adequate representation in their cabinet. He affirmed that the government is continuing to provide interest-free loans and aims to make one crore women millionaires, regardless of obstacles.

Bhatti Vikramarka criticised the previous government for making promises about double-bedroom houses but failing to deliver over ten years. In contrast, he said the present government has sanctioned ₹5 lakh per house and initiated construction.

In the first phase, 4.5 lakh houses (3,500 per constituency) are being built, with ₹22,500 crore allocated in a single tranche for Indiramma housing—calling it a record in the country's history.

Bhatti Vikramarka said the present government is fulfilling the six guarantees promised during elections, while the previous regime failed to implement key promises such as double-bedroom houses, one job per household, a Dalit Chief Minister, and land distribution to the landless poor even after ten years in power.

BRS party is conspiring to weaken Congress party: State Minister Sridhar Babu

HYDERABAD

State Minister Sridhar Babu today held an informal interaction with media regarding current political developments. He alleged that the BRS party was attempting to weaken the Congress party precisely because the latter was currently strong.

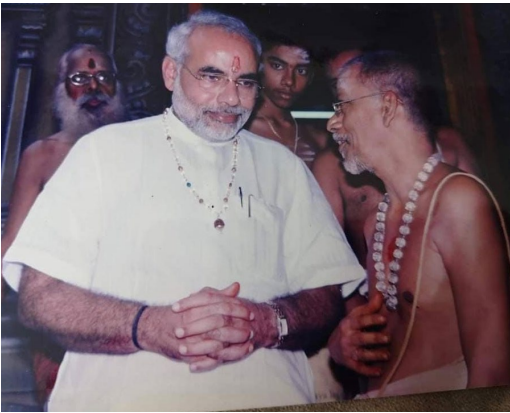
Responding to the issue involving the veteran congress leader Jeevan Reddy, he stated that Reddy had not sought any specific posts but merely raised concerns regarding local issues. He clarified that Jeevan Reddy would receive the full support of the Congress party.

Sridhar Babu suggested that former Chief Minister KCR, being an experienced leader, ought to attend the Legislative Assembly Command was currently deliberating on nominated posts while portfolio allocations would be decided by Chief Minister. He revealed that the AICC would determine, who the Chief Minister would be in the future. Criticizing the previous administration, he alleged that the former government had left behind pending arrears amounting to ₹15,000 crore owed to retired employees. He however added that these were now



being portrayed as arrears incurred by the current government. He stated that the pending Assembly Floor Committees would be constituted shortly. Responding to the proposal put forward by Anirudh Reddy regarding the production of Ippavuvu (Mahua flower) liquor, Sridhar Babu described it as a commendable idea. He criticized the BRS party for contrasting their approach with that of the Congress party. He mocked that while Congress party was actively working among the people—scoring "sixers" (major victories)—the BRS party was confining its campaigning solely to social media platforms. He remarked that if this trend continues, the BRS party might eventually find itself left out of the Assembly altogether. Emphasizing that no one should speak in a manner that insults any community, he stated that the party MLA Mandula Samel had already offered an explanation regarding the matter and would provide further clarification if necessary. Minister Sridhar Babu alleged that the BRS party failed to nominate a Rajya Sabha candidate precisely because they lacked confidence in their own MLAs.

CONTINUATION FROM PAGE 1



BJP'S MISSING FACE?

FROM PAGE 1

Kanchipuram is a constituency where identity, culture, and local networks intersect in ways that defy conventional electoral modelling. Roughly 2.2 to 2.4 lakh voters, a 17 percent Scheduled Caste population, a significant Vanniyar presence, and a layered mix of urban temple economy and rural hinterland make it a politically sensitive microcosm. And yet, as of mid-March 2026, the BJP has no visible candidate, no local face, and no declared intent for the seat.

2021 RESULTS: COMPETITIVE, NOT CLOSED

Let's look at the hard numbers

- DMK (C.V.M.P. Ezhilarasan): 1,02,712 votes (44.77%)
 - PMK (AIADMK alliance): 91,117 votes (39.71%)
 - Victory margin: 11,595 votes (~5%)
- This is not a landslide seat. A swing of 6-7% vote share is enough to flip it.

Now factor in 2026 dynamics:

- BJP and AIADMK are back in alliance mode
- Anti-incumbency, even if mild, exists in pockets
- Vanniyar consolidation remains fluid
- Temple-centric mobilisation remains underleveraged politically

This is not a "safe DMK seat." It is a contestable constituency with the right candidate and narrative.

BJP'S TAMIL NADU STRATEGY: DATA-DRIVEN, BUT SELECTIVE

- The BJP's approach in Tamil Nadu is clear:
- Focus on 50-65 constituencies where it crossed 20% vote share in 2024 Lok Sabha polls
- Build organisational depth in urban and semi-urban clusters
- Leverage alliance arithmetic for incremental gains

By this logic, Kanchipuram falls outside the immediate strike zone.

But here lies the contradiction. The BJP is simultaneously attempting to build a cultural and civilisational narrative in Tamil Nadu, centred around temples, heritage, and identity. If that is the long-term project, then ignoring Kanchipuram — arguably one of the most symbolically significant temple towns in India — raises strategic questions.

THE MISSING PIECE: A LOCAL FACE WITH CULTURAL CAPITAL

Elections in Tamil Nadu are leader-driven at the top but network-driven at the constituency level.

Kanchipuram today presents a peculiar situation:

- DMK has incumbency plus structure
- AIADMK has residual base but weakened leadership clarity
- BJP has ideological messaging but no embedded local figure

This is where the conversation around C.R. Nataraja Sastri becomes relevant.

CRN: NOT A POLITICIAN, BUT NOT AN OUTSIDER

C.R. Nataraja Sastri operates in a space that politics often tries to access but rarely controls: temple administration and community mobilisation.

For over three decades, his association with the Sri Kamakshi Ambal Temple ecosystem has translated into:

- Direct engagement with thousands of devotees daily
- Organisation of large-scale homams and religious events, some reportedly drawing multi-thousand participation
- Annadhanam programmes serving 2,000-3,000 people during major events
- Social outreach in nearby areas like Kooram, including medical camps targeting vulnerable communities

Add to that

- Leadership in the Kanchipuram District Cricket Association (KDCA)
- Youth outreach through sports and cultural programmes
- Informal but visible interaction with senior BJP leadership, including state-level visits as recently as late 2025

This is not electoral capital in the traditional sense. But it is relational capital, which in Tamil Nadu often precedes political conversion

KANCHIPURAM BY THE NUMBERS

- Total voters: ~2.3 lakh
 - SC population: ~17%
 - 2021 winning margin: ~11,600 votes
 - Vote share gap to overturn: ~5-6%
 - Key influencers: Temple networks, Vanniyar blocs, local welfare structures
- Reading the data: Competitive seat, not structurally locked

CAN SOCIAL CAPITAL BECOME ELECTORAL CAPITAL?

This is the central question. History offers mixed answers.

Tamil Nadu has seen:

- Cultural figures successfully transition into politics
- But also socially influential individuals fail without booth-level machinery

For CRN, three challenges stand out:

- Caste Arithmetic
Kanchipuram is not a homogenous constituency. Vanniyar mobilisation (historically linked to PMK) and SC voting blocs are decisive. Any candidate must build cross-community acceptability.
- Alliance Constraints
If the seat is allocated to AIADMK, BJP's role becomes secondary, regardless of candidate strength.
- Electoral Infrastructure
Managing 200+ polling booths, voter mobilisation, and last-mile logistics require a structured political organisation, not just goodwill.

WHAT A WINNING CAMPAIGN NEEDS HERE

- Booth-level penetration across 200+ polling stations
- Coalition-building across caste lines
- Conversion of religious networks into voter networks
- Narrative that blends development with cultural identity

WHY BJP MAY STILL LOOK AT A PROFILE LIKE CRN

Despite these constraints, there is a reason why such profiles remain relevant in BJP's Tamil Nadu expansion plan. The party is attempting a three-layered strategy:

- Electoral gains in the short term
 - Organisational expansion in the medium term
 - Cultural anchoring in the long term
- A candidate like CRN fits strongly in the third category and partially in the second.

In a constituency like Kanchipuram, that combination is not insignificant.

THE POLITICAL CALCULUS AHEAD

- As of now:
- No official shortlist includes CRN
 - No media speculation links him to a ticket
 - No public campaign signals are visible
- But candidate selection in Tamil Nadu often evolves late, especially within alliances. If BJP chooses to contest Kanchipuram directly, it faces a choice:
- Go with a conventional political face
 - Or experiment with a culturally embedded figure
- That choice will reveal how the party is balancing immediate winnability versus long-term positioning.

Protests force govt to respond: kavitha

FROM PAGE 1

She also alleged lack of transparency in the administration's handling of the issue, claiming that requests for appointments with district officials, including the Collector and Joint Collector, were denied. The government, she said, must take responsibility for ensuring housing, interim rent, education for children and basic necessities until permanent rehabilitation is completed.



Dharma Samaj Party, criticised the relief measures, stating that extending assistance to only a section of the affected families was unacceptable. He demanded that all victims be provided with proper housing based on the value of their demolished homes, along with adequate infrastructure and interim support.

He also questioned the adequacy of the ₹5 lakh compensation and allocation of 75 square yards of land, calling the package insufficient.

Fact-finding panel constituted

In response to the incident, a fact-finding committee has been constituted comprising retired Justice Chandrakumar, retired Army Major Madan Kumar, along with professors, lawyers, social activists and journalists. The panel is expected to visit Khammam, interact with affected families and officials, and submit a report with recommendations. Kavitha urged intellectuals and civil society members to take note of the issue and called on the government to cooperate with the committee.

Opposition raises concerns over compensation

Visharadhan Maharaj, president of the

Panel flags due process concerns

Major Madan Kumar said the compensation offered would not be enough for rebuilding houses and noted that the committee would assess the ground situation before making recommendations. Justice Chandrakumar said that actions carried out without due process undermine democratic principles and warned that such issues, if left unaddressed, could lead to public unrest.

Next steps

The committee is set to conduct a detailed inquiry in Velugumata and submit its findings to the government, urging corrective measures to ensure justice, rehabilitation and dignity for all affected families.

Gayatri Charitable Trust Wins High Praise at Grand Ugadi Awards in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

Gayatri Charitable Trust received high praise for its outstanding service to society during a grand Ugadi Awards and Women's Day Awards programme held at Aero Villa Villas in Shamshabad, Hyderabad. The event was organized by the trust to honour eminent personalities from different fields for their valuable services to society. Awards were presented to achievers in music, literature, and social service, making the programme both meaningful and inspiring.

Eminent Avadhani and Padma Shri awardee Brahmarsi Madugula Nagaphani Sharma attended the event as the chief guest. Speaking on the occasion, he said the services of Gayatri Charitable Trust are excellent and highly commendable. He appreciated the trust for presenting Ugadi awards to distinguished personalities who have made notable contributions in various fields. Praising the trust president, Sharma said that AVR Murthy has been his favourite disciple for the past 40 years. He said Murthy always works for the welfare



of society and follows the values he believes in with dedication. He added that everyone should take AVR Murthy as an ideal. Sharma also explained the importance of Ugadi and spoke about the significance of the Telugu New Year. He said that people with good thoughts and good actions would see positive results, while those who follow wrong paths would face difficulties. Addressing the gathering, Gayatri Charitable Trust President AVR Murthy said the trust was started with the noble aim of serving society. He said the organization would continue its service activities and honour those who are working for the betterment of the community.

KTR accuses Congress govt of failing to honour Assembly promises

FROM PAGE 1

"six guarantees" promised by the Congress would be given legal status, and that the Chief Minister had even signed a file to that effect.

KTR questioned what had happened to that file and demanded answers from the government.

"Where is the file signed by the Chief Minister granting legal status to the six guarantees? If such an important document has disappeared, a Special Investigation Team (SIT) must be constituted immediately to trace it," he demanded.

KT Rama Rao further said that when the very first Governor's address lacked credibility due to unfulfilled assurances, the value of subsequent addresses also comes into question.

"If the Chief Minister's signed file itself has no value, how can people trust this government? Every declaration made by the Chief Minister today carries zero value in the eyes of the public," he remarked.

He accused the Congress of failing to deliver on its promises despite claiming that the guarantees would be implemented within 100 days. "The Congress said each family would benefit to the tune of ₹2.5 lakh. Even after over two years, can the government show a single family that has received such benefits?" he asked.

KTR also criticised Ministers for making contradictory statements in the Assembly and urged the Speaker to ensure accountability. "If false statements are made even in the Assembly, what hope is there for truth outside?" he said, adding that the legislature must uphold truth and responsibility.

“Live Programme on TSAT: TGCHE Unveils New Job-Oriented Courses for A.Y 2026–27”

HYDERABAD

The Telangana Council of Higher Education (TGCHE) successfully conducted a live awareness programme through TSAT on the introduction of new courses for the academic year 2026–27. The programme witnessed active participation from students, faculty members, industry representatives, and other stakeholders.

On this occasion, Chairman, TG-CHE, Prof. V. BalakistaReddy stated that the new courses have been designed with a vision to attract large-scale investments through Public-Private Partnership (PPP). He mentioned that, for example, the maritime sector alone has the potential to attract investments of nearly ₹3 lakh crore, and that these initiatives are expected to generate around 20 lakh employment opportunities in total. He further explained that these courses have been structured keeping in view the growing youth population in the country and the massive workforce expected to be ready by 2030.

Additionally, he stated that, in



line with the aspirations of the Hon'ble Chief Minister, Sri Anumula Revanth Reddy, nearly 39 new courses are being designed for undergraduate and postgraduate students in Telangana. He noted that these courses are being developed with the primary objective of creating employment opportunities for unemployed youth as part of achieving the Vision 2047 goals envisioned by the Chief Minister.

He further stated that job-oriented courses are being introduced in key sectors such as Aerospace, Defence, Maritime, FinTech, Climate Science,

Life Sciences, and Food Technology. He opined that these courses would play a crucial role in strengthening Hyderabad's position as a hub for pharma, aerospace, and life sciences.

Prof. E. Purushotham, Vice-Chairman-I, elaborated on the newly introduced courses in Social Sciences, while Prof. S.K. Mahmood, Vice-Chairman-II, explained the Science stream courses. Prof. Sriram Venkatesh, Secretary, TG-CHE, provided an overview of general and multidisciplinary course structures.

TGCHE has prioritized Industry-Academia collaboration by sign-

ing MoUs with various industries. The curriculum will integrate practical learning through internships, fieldwork, and industry projects, all of which will carry academic credits under the revised credit system.

Emphasizing the role of technology, the Council has partnered with IIT Madras to introduce AI-enabled tutors and digital learning modules. These AI tutors will provide 24/7 personalized academic support, bilingual (Telugu and English) learning, and real-time doubt clarification.

The Council is also implementing Flexible Academic Pathways, en-

abling students to earn a Certificate after one year, Diploma after two years, Degree after three years, and Honours Degree after four years.

The Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) will allow students to store and transfer credits, enabling flexible learning and re-entry into education. Special focus has been given to rural students by introducing courses such as Land, Agriculture, and Rural Development. Additionally, Climate Science and Environmental Studies have been prioritized to address global environmental challenges.

TGCHE aims to gather feedback from stakeholders over the next four months and finalize the curriculum and faculty training by June–July 2026. During the interactive session, stakeholders raised several questions, which were addressed by the officials. TG-CHE reiterated its commitment to a student-centric education system and assured that all valuable suggestions would be incorporated. The programme concluded successfully with active engagement and meaningful discussions.

After 15 months, eight-year-old boy succumbs to dog bite in Telangana

HYDERABAD: For 15 months, Manchikatta Maniteja's life hung in the balance on a life support ventilator, as his parents desperately tried to save their eight-year-old son. But on Monday, March 16, the child breathed his last. It was any other day on December 26, 2024, for Maniteja and his parents, Manchikatta Srinivas and Madhavi, who were attending a relative's marriage in their hometown in Telangana's Jagtial district, said local reports.

MANIPUR STATE POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY LIMITED
(Regd. Office: Secure Office Complex, 3rd Floor, North AOC, A. T. Line Imphal West, Manipur-795001)

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

No.2/112(Civ-Comp.Wall-B-Store)/2025-MSPDCL-TECH/170326/15-22: Manipur State Power Distribution Company Limited (MSPDCL), a Government of Manipur enterprise, invites Sealed Tender from civil license contractor/Firms for the below work:

TS No. 105/2/2025- "Re-Construction of Compound Wall at Eastern Side of Yurembam, Store Division, MSPDCL (Part-B)"

The tender details and documents shall be available from 20/03/2026 to 02/04/2026 on payment of cost of tender of **Rs. 500/- (non-refundable)** at the office of the **General Manager (Purchase), MSPDCL, Secure Office Complex, 3rd Floor, North AOC, Imphal-West.**

Last date of Submission of Tender:
06/04/2026 (upto 11.00 A.M)

Date of Opening: 06/04/2026 (Time: 2.00 P.M.)
Venue: MSPDCL Conference Hall

sd/-
(I. Saratchandra Singh)
General Manager (Purchase), MSPDCL

Imphal, 17th Mar, 2026

Nationwide Caste Census Based on Occupations Needed: V. Srinivas Goud



The Telangana model should be implemented across the country

HYDERRABAD

Former Minister V. Srinivas Goud participated as the chief guest at a round table meeting organized by the Federation of Indian Cultural Associations (FIKA) at the Constitution Club of India in New Delhi. Union Minister of State for Power Shripad Naik, former Karnataka Minister Malikayya Guttedar, JDS leader Balraj Guttedar, FIKA President Kumar Goud, and representatives from various states attended the meeting.

During the meeting, former minister V. Srinivas Goud explained, through a

PowerPoint presentation, the various development initiatives undertaken for the welfare of traditional occupational communities during the BRS government in Telangana.

He demanded that, in the caste census being conducted for the first time in India, all occupational communities should be brought under one umbrella and a comprehensive census based on traditional occupations should be carried out. He suggested that communities known by different names in different states—such as Goud in Telangana, Ediga in Karnataka, Shetty Balija and Ediga in Andhra Pradesh, Nadar in Tamil Nadu, Billava, Jaiswal, and Halwadiya in Kerala—should all be categorized under a single caste name, “Kalal,” for census

purposes. This, he said, would provide clarity on how many people are engaged in each occupation and their economic conditions.

The meeting resolved that the Telangana model should be implemented nationwide. It called for the adoption of welfare schemes based on traditional occupations in all states, such as free distribution of sheep to Yadavas, fish seed to Mudiraj communities, the Neera policy for the Goud community, reservations in wine shops, abolition of tree tax, and free TFT licenses.

They also urged the Central Government to introduce a Central Neera Policy, promote the cultivation of palm trees (coconut, date, toddy palm, and other varieties), and provide marketing facilities for their products.

It was stated that under the leadership of Chief Minister Kalvakuntla Chandrashekar Rao (KCR), Telangana had become a leading state in the agricultural sector over the past 10 years, and had set an example for the nation by implementing numerous welfare schemes for communities dependent on traditional occupations.

He noted that such development and welfare schemes implemented in Telangana are not present in other states, and demanded that both the Central and State governments adopt and expand the Telangana model across the country.

CM congratulates Nandini Sidha Reddy

HYDERABAD: Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy expressed happiness over noted poet and writer Nandini Sidha Reddy receiving the Central Sahitya Akademi Award for 2025. He extended his congratulations to Nandini Sidha Reddy.

The Chief Minister described Sidha Reddy as a humanist who poignantly portrayed the crises faced by humanity and the breakdown of human relationships during the COVID-19 pandemic in the poetry collection Animesha. He praised Sidha Reddy for using words as weapons during the Telangana movement and for spreading its spirit.

Sanjay Kumar Conducts Safety Inspection between Guntakal - Bellari section

HYDERABAD

Sanjay Kumar Srivastava, General Manager, South Central Railway conducted Safety Inspection of the Guntakal - Bellari Section of Guntakal Division, today i.e., 17th March 2026. He was accompanied by Shri Chandra Sekhar Gupta, Divisional Railway Manager, Guntakal Division and other senior officials from division.

The General Manager commenced rear window inspection from Guntakal, where he examined the safety aspects of Railway Tracks, Curves, Level Crossings, Signalling System and Bridges in the section and discussed on



the various safety aspects with the Officials.

During inspection, he enquired on the density and track congestions of the section and discussed on operational challenges. He instructed DRM, Guntakal to make advance plan with all the concerned departments such as engineering, signal and op-

erations etc., before taking the track for maintenance works, so that the punctuality can be maintained during maintenance period. The officials detailed to the General Manager on critical and sensitive areas of the section and also on hand plans for strengthening of track and enhancing of sectional speed.

NTR Memorial Trust Award to GITAM

HYDERABAD

The NTR Memorial Trust honoured GITAM Deemed to be University, Hyderabad, with a Certificate of Appreciation on 17 March 2026, in recognition of its generous contributions and steadfast support towards the Trust's initiatives. The certificate highlighted GITAM's selfless commitment, noting that its efforts have played a vital role in bringing positive change to the lives of the underprivileged and continue to inspire the broader community.

The award was presented by Nara Bhuvaneshwari, Managing Trustee of the Trust, to D.V.V.S.R. Varma, Resident Director, GITAM Hyderabad. Over the past four years, GITAM has been actively organizing voluntary blood donation drives, reinforcing the life-saving importance of blood donation while fostering compassion, social responsibility, and



a spirit of service among students. The initiative has been widely appreciated, with organizers commending students for their generosity and selfless contributions that help save lives and encourage others to participate in such noble causes. The GITAM leadership, along with Prof.

D.S. Rao, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Ambika Philip, Director – Hospitality & Campus Life, Heads of Institutions, Heads of Departments, and faculty members, lauded the initiative and reaffirmed their commitment to continuing such impactful community service programmes.

MANIPUR STATE POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY LIMITED
(Regd. Office: Secure Office Complex, 3rd Floor, North AOC, A. T. Line Imphal West, Manipur-795001)

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

No.2/111(Civ-Comp.Wall-A-Store)/2025-MSPDCL-TECH/170326/07-14: Manipur State Power Distribution Company Limited (MSPDCL), a Government of Manipur enterprise, invites Sealed Tender from civil license contractor/Firms for the below work:

TS No. 104/2/2025- "Re-Construction of Compound Wall at Eastern Side of Yurembam, Store Division, MSPDCL (Part-A)"

The tender details and documents shall be available from 20/03/2026 to 02/04/2026 on payment of cost of tender of **Rs. 500/- (non-refundable)** at the office of the **General Manager (Purchase), MSPDCL, Secure Office Complex, 3rd Floor, North AOC, Imphal-West.**

Last date of Submission of Tender:
06/04/2026 (upto 11.00 A.M)

Date of Opening: 06/04/2026 (Time: 2.00 P.M.)
Venue: MSPDCL Conference Hall

sd/-
(I. Saratchandra Singh)
General Manager (Purchase), MSPDCL

Imphal, 17th Mar, 2026

MANIPUR STATE POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY LIMITED
(Regd. Office: Secure Office Complex, 3rd Floor, North AOC, A. T. Line Imphal West, Manipur-795001)

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

No. 2/110(Civ-Toi-IED-IV)/2025-MSPDCL-TECH/170326/01-07 : Manipur State Power Distribution Company Limited (MSPDCL), a Government of Manipur enterprise, invites Sealed Tender from civil license contractor/Firms for the below work:

TS No. 103/2/2025- "Construction of Ladies & Gents Toilet at IED-IV Office, Khuman Lampak, MSPDCL"


The tender details and documents shall be available from 20/03/2026 to 02/04/2026 on payment of cost of tender of **Rs. 500/- (non-refundable)** at the office of the **General Manager (Purchase), MSPDCL, Secure Office Complex, 3rd Floor, North AOC, Imphal-West.**

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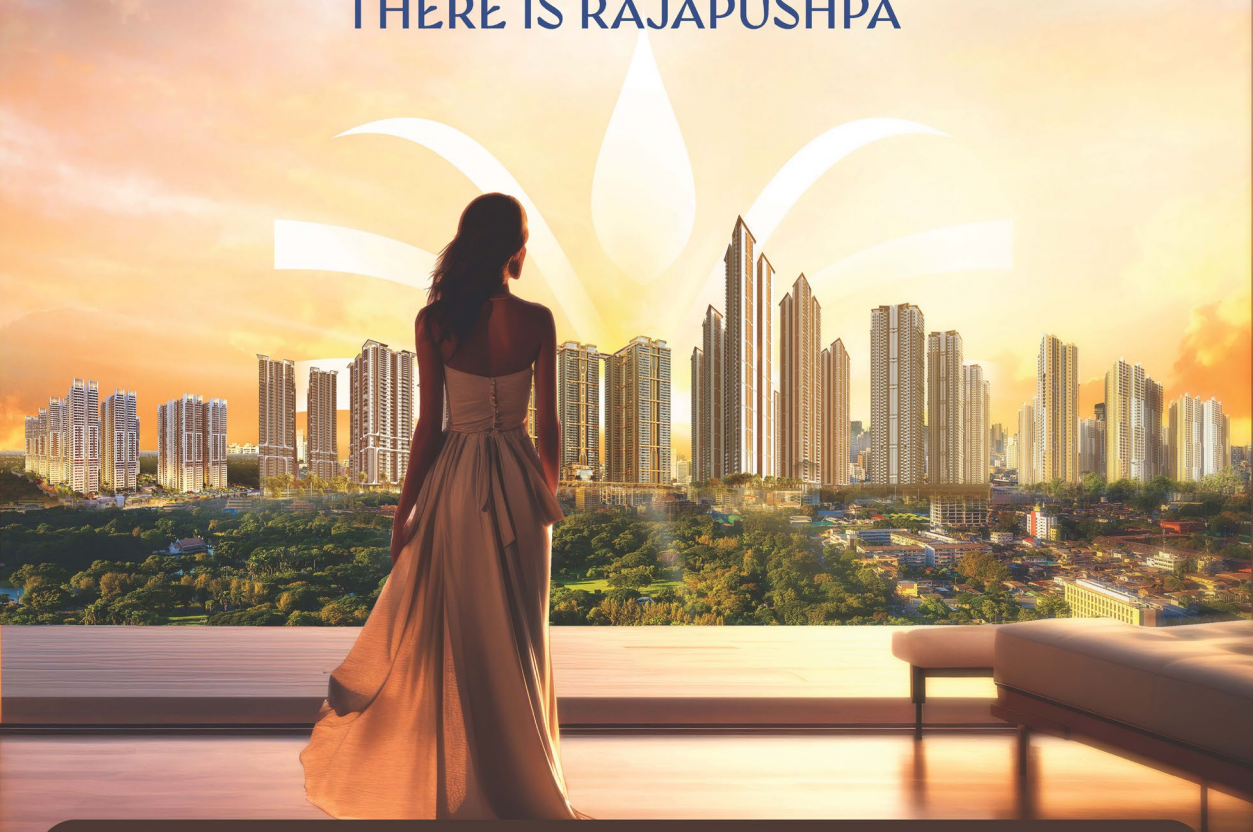
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General Manager (Purchase), MSPDCL

Imphal, 17th Mar, 2026



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SHORT TAKES

Jagga Reddy should be made as TPCC chief: State Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy

HYDERABAD: State Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy today made significant remarks regarding the TPCC post. He engaged in a casual chat with the media in the Assembly lobby. He advocated for appointing senior party leader Jagga Reddy as the TPCC President. He lauded Jagga Reddy as a "mass leader" who is always amidst the people. He described Jagga Reddy as "another PJR," while noting that he immediately extends a helping hand to anyone in distress. He asserted that if Jagga Reddy were to become the PCC Chief, the Congress party would secure 100 assembly seats in the upcoming elections.

Rs. 8.44 cr 'mobile scam'? BRS demands probe into Poshan Abhiyan procurement

HYDERABAD: BRS spokesperson Krishank Manne has alleged a major price discrepancy in the procurement of smartphones under the Poshan Abhiyan scheme by Telangana government. The BRS leader said that the Women and Child Welfare department, led by Minister Seethakka, awarded a contract worth Rs.54.19 crore for supplying 38,130 Samsung Galaxy A06 (4GB/64GB) devices. He claimed the government had paid Rs.14.213 per phone, while the market price listed by Samsung is Rs.11,999. This allegedly resulted in an excess payout of around Rs.8.44 crore. The BRS leader questioned the pricing mechanism and demanded a 'fair, transparent, and independent investigation' into the tender process, stating that the bulk procurement should ideally reduce costs.

Free heart check-up camp by KIMS Sunshine on March 20 in Hyd

HYDERABAD: KIMS Sunshine Hospitals will organise a free cardiac medical camp on March 20, here at Mumuru Kapu Vidyarthi Vasathi Gruham, Kachiguda. The camp will offer various services, including 2D Echo, ECG, blood pressure, sugar tests, and specialist consultations, led by cardiologist expert Dr. Sridhar Kasturi and his team. This initiative marks the first phase of a 10-month-long healthcare campaign by the hospital. Organisers have urged the public to take advantage of the camp to address heart-related health issues. Anjanareddy, Executive officer of Mumuru Kapu Vidyarthi Vasathigruham, has assured full cooperation to this program which is in line with the objectives of the trust deed of the Mumuru Kapu Vidyarthi Vasathigruham.

DGP Hands Over House Site Pattas to Balimela Martyrs' Families



HYDERABAD

Director General of Police B. Shivahar Reddy stated that the brutal massacre in the Balimela Reservoir, in which Maoists killed 38 personnel, left an irreparable pain for the police department. On Tuesday, he handed over house site pattas to the families of the police personnel who were martyred in the Balimela incident at the DGP office.

Speaking on the occasion, the DGP said that the incident on June 29, 2008, in which Maoists carried out a sudden attack killing a total of 38 personnel, including 32 brave Greyhounds commandos, plunged the state police into deep grief. He recalled that he had taken charge as SIB DIG just two months before the incident, and facing such a tragedy remains a bitter memory even today.

He said that efforts to allocate land on the outskirts of Hyderabad for the families of the martyrs, with the in-

intention of supporting them, continued for many years. He expressed satisfaction that the long wait of nearly 18 years has finally come to an end.

He credited Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy for resolving the issue through special initiative, ensuring justice for the affected families. On behalf of the Telangana State Police and the families of the martyrs, the DGP expressed gratitude to the Chief Minister for fulfilling their long-pending demand.

It is known that on June 29, 2008, Maoists launched a sudden attack on a launch carrying around 60 Greyhounds commandos and police personnel in the Balimela Reservoir near Chitrakonda in Malkajgiri district of Odisha. The boat sank following gunfire and grenade attacks from Maoists positioned on the hills. In this tragic incident, 38 personnel, including 32 Greyhounds commandos, lost their lives.

In recognition of their sacrifice, the

then government issued GO No. 339 in 2013, allotting 200 square yards of house sites to the families of the martyrs. Initially, two acres of land were allocated in Survey Nos. 23 and 27 of Gajularamaram village in Quthbullapur mandal. However, due to encroachments on that land, an alternative 3.10 acres in Survey No. 16 of the same village was identified.

Due to discrepancies between the survey numbers mentioned in the GO and the actual land on the ground, registration faced obstacles, causing the families to wait nearly 13 years for the pattas. To resolve the issue, the government issued revised orders (GO No. 132) on October 18 last year, regularizing the land allocation in Survey No. 16 at Gajularamaram. Following this, pattas were officially handed over on Tuesday by the DGP to 33 beneficiaries, who are the heirs of the martyrs.

Earlier, Greyhounds Additional DGP Anil Kumar said that distribu-

tion of house sites to the families of Greyhounds martyrs had been delayed due to various reasons. Despite technical delays, he expressed gratitude to the Chief Minister and revenue officials for granting the house sites.

Intelligence Additional DGP Vijay Kumar, SIB IGP B. Sumathi, Greyhounds Commander Raghavender Reddy, Quthbullapur MRO Ashok Kumar, and family members of the martyrs attended the program.

Special Operation Medals for Greyhounds officers

Four Greyhounds officers who displayed excellence were awarded the 'Union Home Minister's Medal for Excellence in Special Operations' for the year 2024. Group Commander Jajala Raghavender Reddy, Senior Commandos Tippani Rakesh and Uduthanuri Mallaiah, and Junior Commando Ganta Sai Kumar were selected for these awards. The DGP congratulated them on the occasion.

Geetha Murthy has been appointed organizational incharge

HYDERABAD

It is known that the State Government has reorganized the boundaries of several divisions in Greater Hyderabad and created new divisions. The state party has decided to expedite the process of appointing new presidents for these newly formed divisions.

As per the directions of BJP State President N. Ramchander Rao, the following individuals have been appointed as organizational in-charges (observers) for the respective districts.

Name of Organizational In-charge - Districts

- M. Dharma Rao, Former MLA - Ranga Reddy Urban
- Aljapur Srinivas, Senior Leader - Ranga Reddy Rural
- Goli Madhusudhan Reddy, Former Kisan Morcha President - Medchal Urban
- S. Ramachandra Reddy, Former District President - Medchal Rural
- K. Geetha Murthy, Former Mahila Morcha President - Sangareddy, Golconda Goshamahala
- Ranjith Mohan, District In-charge - Hyderabad Central
- Devaki Vasudeva Rao, State Treasurer - Mahankali Secunderabad
- Dr. V. Muralidhar Goud, Former State Secretary - Bhag-



yanagar Malakpet. **Guidelines to be followed in the election of Division Presidents**

- Must have active party membership.
- Should be below 45 years of age.
- Must have previously held some responsibility at the mandal (local) level within the party.
- Preference should be given to women wherever possible.

In the newly formed divisions, a division-level meeting should be conducted, and feedback should be collected from at least 25 party workers in accordance with the above guidelines. The names and details of all those willing to take up the responsibility of Division President should be gathered.

The assigned organizational in-charge (observer) for your district should be consulted in advance and invited to the district core committee meeting. After discussions in the core committee meeting, three (3) names from each division should be finalized and sent to the state party office through the district organizational in-charge.

Subsequently, the state party will review the three proposed names from each new division and appoint one among them as the Division President.

Therefore, district presidents are requested to immediately initiate appropriate planning to complete this process as quickly as possible

Malkajgiri MP Etela Rajender spoke in Parliament on the Railway Budget

NEW DELHI

He thanked the Speaker Om Birla for giving all MPs an opportunity to speak. He mentioned that over the past 20 months, he has met the Union Railway Minister several times, and that the minister has never refused any request made so far.

He said that with the support of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Railway Minister is striving to place India among the leading nations, and that appreciation from MPs across party lines is proof of this.

He requested that all railway projects in Telangana be completed. He thanked the government for progressing the long-pending Kazipet Coach Factory, a 40-year dream of the people of North Telangana.

He urged speedy completion of the Manoharabad-Kothapalli railway line. He also thanked the government for completing the Charlapalli railway station at a cost of ₹450 crores, and for undertaking modernization of the Nampally, Secunderabad, and Kachiguda railway stations with ₹1500 crores. These are expected to be inaugurated soon by the Prime Minister.

He expressed gratitude for approving three high-speed train routes:

Hyderabad to Pune
Hyderabad to Bengaluru
Hyderabad to Chennai

He noted that the DPR (Detailed Project Report) for the 136 km railway line from Armur to Adilabad has been completed and requested allocation of funds.

He pointed out that Ramagundam, Bhupalpally, and Manuguru are coal mine areas,



and that millions of devotees visit the Sammakka-Saralamma Jathara festival. Hence, he requested construction of a new railway line from Ramagundam to Manuguru via Bhupalpally, including connectivity for the Sammakka-Saralamma route.

He also requested preparation of a DPR for the Kazipet-Karimnagar new railway line.

He mentioned that the DPR for the Mahabubnagar-Nalgonda line is already complete and urged allocation of funds.

He raised concerns about increasing accidents due to people crossing railway tracks in major cities like Hyderabad and Kolkata as train speeds increase. He requested construction of crossings (for pedestrians, scooters, and cars) wherever necessary across all states. He also highlighted accidents involving wildlife in forest areas and urged appropriate safety measures.

Finally, he requested that Bollaram railway station be sanctioned under the Amrit Bharat Station scheme.

Telangana should become a national model in natural farming

- Growing global demand for natural farming products
- Plan to cultivate natural farming on 61,125 acres
- Farmers' festival to begin at Narmetta from the 20th of this month

HYDERABAD

As part of the National Natural Farming Mission, the State Agriculture Department launched a program to distribute farmer kits. The program was inaugurated today at the Secretariat by Honorable Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao.

On this occasion, during the "Rythu Nestham" program, the minister directly interacted with farmers practicing natural farming across the state through Rythu Vedikas, understanding their experiences and challenges.

The minister stated that Telangana should emerge as a model for the entire country in the field of natural farming. Considering the increasing global demand for natural farming, he advised farmers to adopt this method on a larger scale. He



said the scheme is being implemented with an outlay of ₹42 crore, with plans to take up natural farming across 61,125 acres in 489 clusters statewide. A total of 61,125 farmers have been selected, and training programs are being conducted at Rythu Vedikas. Additionally, two "Krisi Sakhis" have been appointed for each cluster, each receiving an honorarium of ₹5,000 per month.

To support farmers who are unable to prepare bio-inputs like Beejamrutham, Jeevamrutham, and Dashaparni on their own, the government is encouraging the establishment of Bio-Resource Centres (BRCs), allocating ₹1 lakh for each center. On the occasion of the Ugadi festival, a Farmers' Festival will be organized

at Narmetta starting from the 20th of this month. Around 150 special stalls will be set up under the departments of agriculture, animal husbandry, and allied sectors to benefit farmers.

On the 22nd of this month, the first installment of Rythu Bharosa funds will be released by the Chief Minister at Narmetta. The minister recalled that immediately after coming to power, the government implemented a farm loan waiver of ₹20,600 crore in a single phase. He also stated that during the Kharif season, ₹9,000 crore was credited to farmers' accounts within just 9 days.

The minister called upon farmers from across the state to participate in large numbers in the Farmers' Festival and in-

structed officials to make necessary arrangements.

In this direction, he suggested that AEOs, model farmers, and scientists should work in coordination to provide necessary guidance to farmers.

He also mentioned that the government is taking special measures to promote the cultivation of oilseeds, pulses, and millets. He explained that oil palm cultivation can provide stable income to farmers and is less affected by natural disasters, birds, and animal-related damages.

The event was attended by Telangana State Seeds Development Corporation Chairman Anvesh Reddy, Agriculture Secretary K. Surendra Mohan (IAS), and Agriculture Director B. Gopi (IAS).



Governor Extends Ugadi Wishes at Lok Bhavan Celebrations

HYDERABAD

Shiv Pratap Shukla, Governor of Telangana, participated in the Pre-Ugadi celebrations held at Lok Bhavan in Somajiguda, Hyderabad, on Tuesday. Addressing distinguished guests, invitees, Lok Bhavan family members, and artists, the Governor conveyed heartfelt greetings on the occasion of Ugadi, marking the beginning of the "Parabhava" Nama Samvatsara. He wished for prosperity, good health, and happiness in every household in the coming year.

Highlighting the significance of the "Parabhava" year in the 60-year cycle, the Governor said it symbolizes overcoming ego and negative thoughts, laying the foundation for

success and growth. He expressed confidence that the New Year would bring progress and development to all.

He emphasized that Ugadi represents a new beginning and noted that the traditional Ugadi Pachadi, with its six tastes, reflects the blend of joys and challenges in life. The Governor called upon people to move forward with dedication and a spirit of service, learning from past experiences.

Expressing hope for abundant rainfall and agricultural prosperity, he wished for the continued development of Telangana and the nation. He concluded by extending Ugadi greetings once again and raised slogans of "Jai Telangana" and "Jai Hind."

KTR dares Deputy CM: Prove Rs.57,000 cr SHG loans disbursed, I'll resign

HYDERABAD

BRS working president and MLA K. T. Rama Rao on Tuesday challenged Deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka to prove the disbursement of Rs.57,000 crore in interest-free loans to women self-help groups (SHGs), daring him to produce a Government Order. "If you show proof, I will resign immediately", KTR said, accusing the government of misleading the Assembly and making false claims.

Reacting to this in the state Assembly during reply to the Governor's address, Minister Seethakka countered that the SHGs had faced restrictions under the previous BRS regime and claimed that the present Congress government was removing barriers to empower women.

Bhatti Vikramarka hit back sharply, accusing KTR of "irresponsible remarks" and for allegedly neglecting women's empowerment during the previous BRS rule. "You were in power for 10 years, yet you completely neglected women's empowerment. The entire state is watching to see what respect you accord to the women within your own household", Bhatti remarked.

Minister D. Sridhar Babu added that



the opposition was trying to divert attention from the issue. He alleged that the previous BRS government had not disbursed even a single rupee in loans to the women of the state. KTR dismissed the claims as part of a "cinematic show" around Congress party's 'Six Guarantees', and termed the government's claim of Rs.57,000 crore disbursement as incorrect.

SEETHAKKA SLAMS KTR OVER WOMEN'S WELFARE ALLEGATIONS

HYDERABAD: Minister for Panchayat Raj Seethakka lashed out at BRS MLA KT RamaRao, accusing him of making baseless allegations against the state government regarding women's welfare. Speaking in the Assembly on Tuesday during the discussion on the motion of thanks to the Governor's address, Seethakka stated that their government is working with the objective of transforming one crore women into millionaires. She said the Congress government has set a clear objective for women's empowerment and urged the opposition to cooperate in this endeavour, acting as a responsible opposition party. Seethakka further explained, citing statistics, that loans exceeding ₹57,000 crore have been sanctioned to women's self-help groups across the state to date. The Minister stated that it is inappropriate for the opposition to ridicule every scheme introduced by the government.

"Restore Rs. 1,070 cr first": Harish Rao targets CM ahead of Siddipet visit

HYDERABAD

BRS senior leader and former minister T. Harish Rao has slammed Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, urging him to restore Rs.1,070 crore in the cancelled development funds before visiting Siddipet. In an open letter to CM, Harish Rao accused the CM of acting with "vindictiveness" towards Siddipet and halting development works initiated during the BRS regime. He claimed that the projects worth over Rs.1,070 crore were progressing but were abruptly cancelled after the change in government, leading to a standstill in development for over two years. "The current administration had not only neglected the development of Siddipet but had also completely cancelled the funds sanctioned during the BRS government's tenure. All development works have come to a standstill for the past 27 months due to the cancellation of these funds", he remarked.

BJD Issues Show-Cause to 6 MLAs Over RS Cross-Vote

BHUBANESWAR: (MAR 17)

A day after cross-voting by some party MLAs in favour of BJP-backed Independent candidate Dilip Ray in the Rajya Sabha elections, the opposition BJD on Tuesday issued show cause notice to six lawmakers to explain their action, considered to be "breach of trust".

BJD Chief Whip Pramila Mallik, in a letter to six BJD MLAs - Chakramani Kanhar (Baliguda), Naba Kishor Mallick (Jayadev), Souvic Biswal (Choudwar-Cuttack), Subasini Jena (Basta), Ramakanta Bhoi (Tirtol) and Devi Ranjan Tripathy (Banki), asked them to reply to the show cause notice by 5 pm on March 20.

TASA GOC Major General Ajay Misra calls on Andhra Gov, CM

AMARAVATI: (MAR 17)

General Officer Commanding (GOC) of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh Sub Area, Major General Ajay Misra called on Governor S Abdul Nazeer and Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu here on Tuesday. Misra's visit was aimed at promoting military-civil fusion and enhancing synergy between the state and the Indian Army across key areas. "GOC Ajay Misra paid a courtesy call on Naidu at the state secretariat," said an official release.

I want Nayanthara: AIADMK MP's crass remark at women safety rally sparks row

An AIADMK leader, CV Shanmugam, has sparked outrage for making a crude and derogatory remark involving actor Nayanthara during a women's safety protest.

An AIADMK MP from Tamil Nadu has come under sharp criticism for making a sexist and derogatory remark involving actor Nayanthara while participating in a protest on women's safety. Intended as a dig at Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin, the MP asked whether if his "dream" was to marry Nayanthara, the government would fulfil it. His comments were in reference to Stalin's recent remarks urging people in Tamil Nadu to share their dreams, assuring that the government would strive to fulfil them. The controversy has been further amplified by the irony that the remarks were made during a party-led protest demanding greater safety

A Journey Towards Inclusion & Dignity

CM Chandrababu to Launch Free Bus Travel for Persons with Disabilities under 'Divyang Shakti'

AMARAVATI, MARCH 17:

In a significant step towards inclusive governance and social empowerment, the Government of Andhra Pradesh will launch the Divyang Shakti Scheme tomorrow, providing free travel in RTC buses for persons with disabilities across the state. The initiative is being rolled out as a special Ugadi offering, reaffirming the government's commitment to dignity, mobility, and equal opportunity for all citizens.



Hon'ble Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu will formally inaugurate the scheme at Amaravati, in the presence of Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, Minister Nara Lokesh, and BJP Andhra Pradesh President PVN Madhav. Following the inauguration, the Chief Minister, along with other dignitaries, will travel alongside beneficiaries, symbolising the government's people-centric approach. A special community lunch will also be hosted by the Chief Minister for persons with disabilities, underscoring a message of inclusion and solidarity. The Divyang Shakti Scheme is expected to benefit over 12.76 lakh people, including 11.16 lakh persons with disabilities, along with their attendants, across Andhra Pradesh.

Key features of the scheme include:

- Free bus travel for persons with disabilities in RTC services, including Stree

- Shakti buses
- 50% fare concession for attendants accompanying eligible beneficiaries
- Applicable to individuals with over 40% disability
- Expanded coverage across categories ranging from 4 to 21 types of disabilities
- Annual financial support of ₹207 crore to APSRTC by the government for implementation

In a statewide effort, MLAs will simultaneously launch Divyang Shakti programmes in their respective constituencies. They will accompany beneficiaries in RTC buses and participate in community meals. The scheme is being implemented in line with the Chief Minister's announcement made on December 3, on the occasion of International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The scheme builds on the success of the Stree Shakti Scheme, under which 52 crore journeys have been undertaken by women free of cost, with the government making a cumulative investment exceeding ₹1,826 crore to support their mobility and empowerment.

With Divyang Shakti, Andhra Pradesh continues to set a benchmark in welfare delivery ensuring mobility, access, and dignity for every citizen.

Additional 24,000 metric tonnes of LPG for Andhra Pradesh:CM

Officials asked to ensure delivery of gas cylinders to prevent inconvenience to people

AMARAVATI:

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu said that Andhra Pradesh currently has sufficient LPG reserves for 15 days and assured that there is no need for public concern. He said that while the state has 14,000 metric tonnes of LPG stock and an additional 24,000 metric tonnes available at Visakhapatnam.

The Chief Minister conducted a review on LPG stocks, cylinder distribution and the piped gas network at RTGS centre in secretariat today. He directed officials to ensure that cylinders are not diverted to the black market by using e-KYC and OTP verification systems. He instructed gas companies to increase production in the short term



and improve distribution efficiency to prevent inconvenience to people. Additionally, he called for studying alternative options that can be made available to the public immediately, including reviewing the availability of induction stoves in the state. The Chief Minister also reviewed the expansion of piped gas connections as an alternative to LPG.

He directed officials to further expand the City Gas Distribution (CGD) network across the state. He emphasized utilizing natural gas produced within Andhra Pradesh and supplying it to consumers through a piped network.

The CM asked officials to explore opportunities to maximize the use of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) and Piped

Natural Gas (PNG). Recalling past efforts, he noted that LNG was allocated to the state earlier and pipelines were extended up to Kondapalli.

The Chief Minister directed officials to prepare an action plan for expanding piped gas supply immediately. Officials informed that natural gas is currently being supplied through CGD networks by AG&P, Bhayanagar Gas Limited, GGPL, IOCL, and Megha Gas. They also stated that supply is being carried out through 198 CNG stations and infrastructure is in place to provide 1.68 lakh domestic connections.

The Chief Minister advised sensitizing motorists about traffic rule violations and sending them concise awareness messages under citizen

safety initiatives. He directed that electricity bill payment links be made available through an app or WhatsApp governance for user convenience. He instructed officials to expedite the launch of the AP One app being developed for this purpose. He also emphasized assessing how government departments are utilizing Data Lake and AWARE systems. With summer approaching, he directed that AWARE be used to take advance measures regarding drinking water, heatwaves, and cattle fodder. He also instructed strict action on crimes against women and drug control.

Senior officials and representatives from petroleum companies, GAIL and ONGC attended the review meeting.

Public resentment growing against Andhra govt: Jagan Reddy

AMARAVATI, MARCH 17

Former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and YSR Congress Party president Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday said there is widespread public resentment against the coalition government. Addressing YSRCP leaders and cadres from Ongole, he said he would embark on a padyatra to take up people's issues. He said the coalition government had benefited no section of society. He added that discussions in every household were centred on how he had accomplished so much and why Chandrababu Naidu was not doing the same. YS Jagan claimed he was driven by a noble intent to serve the people and said he implemented numerous welfare and development schemes in this spirit. He alleged that Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu wanted power only for corruption. The YSRCP chief stated that in just two years, Chandrababu had incurred Rs 3.30 lakh crore without fulfilling any of his poll promises. He said all YSRCP schemes had been scrapped, while the government's own schemes had not taken off. He asked where all the money had gone and alleged rampant corruption.

Stating that the coalition government had only three years left, Y.S. Jagan said he would embark on a padyatra in 1.5 years. He said he planned to spend one-and-a-half years among the people through



the padyatra. He urged party cadres to work together and expressed confidence that the YSRCP would return to power. Jagan claimed the YSRCP stood for values and credibility. He said the party was built by its cadre and its strength lay in its value-based approach. He said the contrast between YSRCP governance and that of the coalition was clearly visible. He said the YSRCP had inherited the state in shambles with just Rs 100 crore in 2019. "Despite COVID, we took corrective measures and put the state back on track. Though there were pressing issues and obligations, we did not stop welfare activities and implemented our manifesto in both letter and spirit, which surprised many," he said. The former Chief Minister said that out of the Rs 3.31 lakh crore loans taken by the YSRCP government, Rs 2.7 lakh crore was spent on welfare. He claimed state revenues were falling and lands were being given away at throwaway prices. He also alleged that capital Amaravati works were steeped in corruption.

Congress Suspends 3 Odisha MLAs Over RS Cross-Vote

The opposition Congress in Odisha on Tuesday suspended three of its MLAs for voting for BJP-backed Independent candidate Dilip Ray, helping him win the Rajya Sabha polls, according to a party statement.



These MLAs are Ramesh Chandra Jena of Sanakhemundi, Dasarathi Gomo of Mohana and Sofia Firdous of Barabati-Cuttack. They voted for Ray during the Rajya Sabha elections on Monday, according to the party. Announcing their suspension, the state Congress in a social media post said, "Those who betray Congress are betraying the nation."

State Congress media cell chairperson Arabinda Das said the decision was taken after careful review of their actions, which were deemed detrimental to the party's interests. He said the party's action will be intimated to the speaker for their disqualification from the assembly. State Congress president Bhakta Charan Das said, "This act of betrayal was unexpected from these MLAs. We will ensure that they are disqualified from the assembly under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution." He said the party's national leader-

ship has been apprised of the decision. Apart from the three Congress MLAs, eight BJD MLAs had also voted in favour of Ray, leading to the defeat of the opposition "common candidate" Datteshwar Hota. Congress had decided to back BJD candidate Hota in a strategic understanding. The Congress media cell chairperson said Gomango was the party's Gajapati district president twice. "The party did not expect this from him. Jena was a strong leader, but he destroyed himself. Sofia Firdous had a very bright future. She has ended her chances of winning in Cuttack. We will go ahead with the disqualification process," he said. Ahead of the polling, the Congress had moved eight of its MLAs to Karnataka to "shield them from inducements".

Elections were held for four Rajya Sabha seats in the state. BJP bagged two of them, the BJD secured one, besides Ray's victory.

Dr. Peruka Raju Conferred Sahiti Award 2026



New Delhi/Hyderabad, March 17: Renowned poet, writer and multilingual scholar Peruka Raju has been selected for the prestigious Sahiti Award 2026 by the GMK & Adilila Foundation, in recognition of his significant contribution to Indian literature.

The award was presented at a special Ugadi event in Hyderabad, honouring his impactful writings across multiple Indian languages,

with Telugu at the core. His works, known for their social consciousness and literary richness, creatively reflect the concept of Shadruchulu (six flavours), offering a unique reading experience.

A native of Telangana, Dr. Raju currently serves in the Indian Army (Madras Regiment). Apart from his literary achievements, he is also engaged in social service and founded the voluntary organisation "My Gift," promoting

the idea that encouragement is the greatest support.

Dr. Raju has received several honours and is regarded as a prominent national literary voice. His upcoming 13th book, "Saagu," a collection of stories in Indian languages, is set for release soon.

The event was attended by several dignitaries, including S. Venugopala Chary and other prominent figures from literary, political and cultural fields.

Mamata vs Suvendu Set for Bhabanipur Battle

The Trinamool Congress announced its candidates for the West Bengal Assembly elections, declaring it will contest 291 of the 294 seats while leaving three constituencies for its ally BGPM.

It's official. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee will lock horns with opposition leader Suvendu Adhikari in Kolkata's Bhabanipur, setting up a mouth-watering contest in the 2026 assembly elections. This was announced by the Trinamool supremo herself while releasing the candidate list for the high-stakes polls, which will see Mamata eyeing a record fourth consecutive term. Bengal goes to polls in two phases (April 23 and 29), with results to be declared on May 4.

In Nandigram, where Suvendu is the sitting MLA, the

TMC has fielded Pabitra Kar, a former BJP panchayat chief and a close aide of the former Trinamool leader. Interestingly, Kar rejoined the TMC minutes before the candidate list was released.

THE BHABANIPUR BATTLE

Suvendu, a one-time loyalist of Mamata, defeated the TMC chief by a little less than 2,000 votes in Nandigram in 2021. It prompted Mamata to contest from Bhabanipur to get back in the state assembly. She won the bypolls by over 58,000 votes. By fielding Suvendu from Bhabanipur, the BJP has taken the battle to Mamata's home turf. She has won the seat three times since 2011. The BJP can take comfort from the TMC's underwhelming performance in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls in the seat. In 2024, the TMC's lead in the Bhabanipur assem-



bly segment narrowed to just 8,297 votes. Comparatively, its margin was over 28,000 in the 2021 assembly elections.

MAMATA ATTACKS BJP, POLL BODY

The ruling party in Bengal has laid strong emphasis on wide representation across gender and social categories. The party has fielded 53 women, along with 95 candidates from SCs and STs, and 48 from minority communities. To beat anti-incumbency, the



party has dropped 74 sitting MLAs. Overall, the TMC will contest 291 of the 294 seats, while leaving three constituencies in the Darjeeling district for its ally Bharatiya Gorkha Prajatantrik Morcha (BGPM). Before announcing the list, Mamata threw a challenge to the BJP and exuded confidence of winning 226 seats. She also took aim at Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar over the transfer of bureaucrats and

senior police officials in Bengal. "The BJP's commission is playing a good game at the party's behest. However, the BJP has no chance. This time your seats will decrease compared to the last time. This is the fight of Astitva of West Bengal. Bengal will win. 'Dilli ka laddu' will not win," she said.

WHO ARE IN TMC'S CANDIDATE LIST?

The candidate list features a mix of political heavyweights, newcomers, and prominent faces from the film industry.

Actor Soham Chakraborty has been nominated from Karimpur, while IPS officer Prasan Banerjee has been fielded from Chanchal in Malda.

Senior TMC leader Madan Mitra will contest from his bastion Kamarhati, while actor Sayantika Banerjee has been fielded from Baranagar. Singer Aditi Munshi will

contest from Rajarhat Gopalpur, while Jharna Sardar has been nominated from Sandeshkhali. Sandeshkhali came into the limelight in 2024 over allegations of land grab and sexual assault of women by former TMC leader Shahjahan Sheikh and his aides. The list also includes popular filmmaker Raj Chakraborty, who will contest from Barrackpore. Another actor, Lovely Maitra, has been nominated from Sonarpur, while party spokesperson Kunal Ghosh will contest from Belegata. In Uluberia Uttar, former Rajya Sabha MP Ritabrata Banerjee has been given a ticket, while Shiranya Banerjee, son of senior leader Kalyan Banerjee, will contest from Uttarpara. Debangshu Bhattacharya, who coined the term "Khela Hobe" in 2021, has been nominated from Chinsurah.

SWR Postpones Departmental Promotion Examinations

Scheduled on 17th & 18th March 2026 in Hubballi
HUBBALLI, MARCH 17

A total of 12 Departmental selection exam covering the staff of Hubballi Division and Headquarters were scheduled to be held on 17th and 18th March, 2026 at RRC, Hubballi. However, on 17th March 2026 at around 08:30 hrs, members of Kannada Rakshana Vedike (Narayana Gowda) staged a protest at the entrance of the RRC office, Hubballi, restricting the entry of candidates and examination staff. The protestors demanded that the departmental promotional

examinations be conducted in Kannada language as well. It has been indicated that the matter regarding inclusion of Kannada as a medium for departmental examinations will be taken up for discussion at an appropriate level, and the decision will be made based on the outcome of such deliberations. In Hubballi Division and Headquarters, the CBT examinations scheduled on 17th and 18th March 2026 have been postponed in view of the prevailing situation.

Revised dates for the postponed examinations will be notified in due course.

EDITORIAL

WANGCHUK'S RELEASE:
A TEMPORARY CALM IN
LADAKH'S ONGOING STORM

Activist Sonam Wangchuk's release on March 14 ended a months-long legal and political standoff between his allies and Ladakh's leadership on one hand and the Centre on the other. Detaining him under the National Security Act 1980, the Centre alleged that he was the "chief provocateur" of the September 2025 violent clashes in Leh that left four dead, and dubbed his presence in the region a catalyst for an "Arab Spring-like" mobilisation to force its hand on Ladakh's constitutional status. The Centre also argued that given Ladakh's borders with China and Pakistan, continued "instigation" by a high-profile figure such as Wangchuk threatened territorial stability. About six months later, the Ministry of Home Affairs modified its order, intending to create an environment of "peace, stability, and mutual trust" and resume formal talks with the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA). But even as a judicial commission was still investigating the September violence, Wangchuk's legal team and his wife Gitanjali Angmo had successfully undermined the government's case. Foremost, the alleged evidence of incitement was a translation of a short speech padded with pages of "aspersions" — a legally dubious pattern seen in the Elgar Parishad, Delhi liquor scam, and G.N. Saibaba cases. His lawyers also pointed to Wangchuk's social media posts condemning the unrest that day.

The Supreme Court had also expressed serious concerns over Wangchuk's health in Jodhpur jail. His release came just three days before the Court's final hearing on the matter, letting the Ministry to avoid a potentially embarrassing ruling that could have deemed the detention arbitrary. But while Wangchuk's release has defused the immediate tension, the political situation remains fundamentally unresolved. Two days on, Leh saw massive rallies for the first time since September 2025, while Kargil observed a shutdown, with local leaders saying that the agitation for constitutional safeguards would continue. Talks between Ladakh bodies and the Ministry have however been inconclusive, with LAB and the KDA reiterating their demands for statehood and Sixth Schedule status — already recommended by the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes and promised in the BJP's 2020 election manifesto. Crucially, other activists, including Deldan Namgyal and Smanla Dorjey, remain in detention. In effect, what Wangchuk's detention was meant to serve is unclear, beyond allowing the Centre to brandish its heavy hand, worsening his health, and stalling negotiations. Unless the Centre can negotiate in good faith with the Ladakhi leadership and provide concrete timelines, the people of Ladakh will not get their due.

REWIND

Our new Parliament's first session, though brief, has left many seasoned MPs and impartial observers uneasy and concerned about its future. Outwardly, the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha more or less completed on schedule the business set out before the two Houses. Mrs. Indira Gandhi spoke in strong democratic idiom and accents and, on a couple of occasions, even helped the new Speaker, Mr. Bal Ram Jakhhar, to maintain order by restraining what are described in the Central Hall as her "young stormtroopers". She also made it a point to be present in the House on important occasions, notwithstanding her preoccupation with developments in Afghanistan which "continue to cast their sinister shadow over the sub-continent. Inwardly however, Parliament has suffered in its capacity for smooth and purposeful functioning. Certain time-honoured traditions have not only not been upheld by the ruling party but ignored and subverted. The Opposition leaders, too, have not helped matters by their inability to overcome petty personal considerations and unitedly stand up for healthy conventions.

Nothing has caused the veterans greater dismay than Mrs. Gandhi's first act vis-a-vis the new Parliament: the choice of an incumbent for the high office of Speaker upon which depends the basic health of Parliament and the curious manner in which the Prime Minister and her advisers went about the task. This has become even more pointed since the importance of the Speaker's office has been fully understood and recognised over the past three decades. Jawaharlal Nehru laid emphasis on the prestige and authority of the Speaker time and again. Speaking on March 8, 1958 on the occasion of the unveiling of the portrait of Speaker Vithalbai Patel in the Lok Sabha, Nehru candidly observed: "The Speaker represents the House. He represents the dignity of the House, the freedom of the House and because the House represents the nation, in a particular way, the Speaker becomes the symbol of the nation's freedom and liberty. Therefore, it is right that that should be an honoured position, a free position, and should be occupied always by men of outstanding ability and impartiality."

Nehru did not stop at mere platitudes and pious sentiments. He

Towards
Confrontation
In Parliament

drew a clear distinction between his responsibility as Prime Minister and Leader of the House and an important distinction which, alas, has not always been observed. As the Leader of the House, he showed the greatest respect to the Speaker and did much to build up healthy conventions and the Chair's prestige and authority. By his own conduct, Nehru also encouraged the Speaker to be independent and impartial. As I wrote once, I recall seeing a visibly agitated Nehru graciously submit to Speaker Mavalankar's ruling in the early 'fifties firmly disallowing him from making a second statement in one day in contravention of the rules. Curiously, however, nothing concrete came to be done to establish tried conventions designed to ensure the impartiality of the office of Speaker. The one sure way of achieving this was to politicise the Speaker well and truly and to see that he was entitled to keep himself entirely aloof from party politics.

However, nothing was done despite the initial lead given by Vithalbai Patel in the pre-independence days and the healthy convention vainly sought to be established by Mavalankar following independence. Vithalbai, who succeeded Sir Frederick Whyte as India's first Indian Speaker in 1925, dissociated himself from the Swarajist Party of which he was an active member prior to his election and during his entire term of office he kept himself aloof from party interest. What is more, in the election of 1926, he did not stand on Congress ticket but contested as an independent and was returned unopposed. In 1951 and again in 1953, the Conference of Presiding Officers, under Mavalankar's leadership, expressed the view that the Speaker should dissociate himself from party politics and, towards this end, "a convention should be established that the seat from which the Speaker stands for re-election should not be contested." Nehru and the Congress Working Committee accepted the suggestion in principle. But the other parties refused to go along. India may, no doubt, have failed

to provide for the uncontested election of the Speaker to the Lok Sabha and adopt the British maxim: Once a Speaker, always a Speaker. But we have at least evolved a convention under which a Speaker is sought to be chosen unanimously through informal consultations initiated by the Leader of the House. Such consultations have been held all these years, including 1977. Such consultations have been held all these years, including 1977. But for the first time this year the ruling party ignored the Opposition altogether and did not even extend to it the courtesy of going through the motions of holding consultations. Matters were made worse by two factors. First, the new Lok Sabha had among its members Mr. B.R. Bhagat, a former Speaker even though he was elected this time on a Congress (U) ticket. Second, the new House also had among the members of the ruling Congress (I) four former, experienced Speakers of State Assembly — Mr. Hari Nath Mishra from Bihar, Mr. Gulsher Ahmed from Madhya Pradesh, Mr. S.P. Patil from Maharashtra and Mr. Braj Mohan Mohanty from Orissa. Mr. Mishra, incidentally, became a Minister in Bihar for the first time in 1952.

A consensus could have been attempted by the Government and the Opposition on the name of Mr. Bhagat in view of his experience and standing at the Centre. True, Mr. Bhagat is today a member of the Congress (U). However, contrary to an erroneous impression, nothing barred his election as the Speaker simply because he belonged to the Opposition and not to the ruling party. In 1962, Mr. Hukum Singh, an Akalimember, was elected Speaker by virtue of his merit, standing and experience: he was Deputy Speaker earlier. Likewise, a consensus could have been attempted on one of the four Speakers from the State Assemblies at least a couple of whom had done well by the high office. Instead, Mrs. Gandhi quietly handpicked little-known Mr. Bal Ram for the high office and, showing both imagination and initiative, outmanoeuvred the

Opposition by getting Mr. Bhagat himself to second the name of the Congress (I) candidate. Incidentally, Mr. Bhagat was pulled out of bed late the previous night by Mr. Bisham Narain Singh, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, to get his signature on the proposal. Mr. Bal Ram accompanied Mr. Singh as a matter of courtesy and propriety — and to renew his acquaintance with Mr. Bhagat.

All this is not to detract in any way from Mr. Bal Ram's own stature, undoubted merit and proven ability as a man of drive and learning. In a short period, he has already won many friends by his culture and courtesy. His speech following election as Speaker struck the right note and held out to the Opposition a much-needed assurance. "I shall," he said, "do everything in my power to uphold the Constitution and be guided by its letter and spirit for conducting the business of the House." As the Speaker, he added, I shall not speak "only one language and that is the language of the House." Give time, he may surprise the doubting Thomases, as did Mr. Sanjiva Reddy earlier to emerge as one of India's most successful and independent Speakers. What has been stated in the preceding paragraphs is only intended to emphasize the need for functioning according to accepted democratic norms. Nothing prevented Mrs. Gandhi from seeking the prior support of the Opposition for the unanimous election of Mr. Bal Ram, especially in view of its ready willingness to accept the ruling party's candidate and opt for an uncontested return.

Not only that, Mrs. Gandhi and her party have done no better insofar as the choice of the Deputy Speaker is concerned. All accepted conventions have been set aside in spirit, if not in letter. The Deputy Speaker's office should have gone to a member of the Opposition in every sense of the term. Mr. Lakshmanan, who was elected to the office on Friday last by a voice vote, is no doubt formally a member of the DMK and sits in the Opposition. But Mrs. Gandhi was less than fair to the office and to the time-honoured convention by ig-

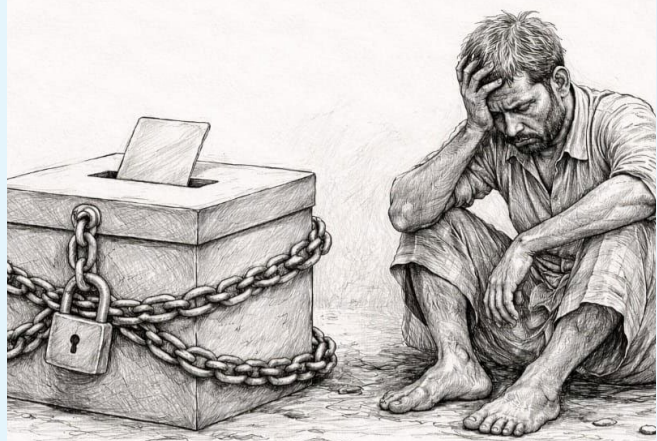
noring the fact that the DMK is a close ally of the Congress (I) party an ally which played a crucial role in helping her win hands down in Tamil Nadu. Every consideration should have been extended to the opposition in the matter by Mrs. Gandhi for choosing the Deputy Speaker, who often chairs the House proceedings for more than half the day. This may have provided Mrs. Gandhi some personal satisfaction against the backdrop of the happenings of the past two years. But it struck a blow against accepted rules of the parliamentary game.

The Opposition, for its part, has shown total lack of imagination and initiative in the face of Mrs. Gandhi's steam-roller majority and the threat it poses to free debate in the House. For one thing, it could have proposed Mr. Bhagat for Speakership as a matter of tactic to put Mrs. Gandhi in a spot before she sought his support. For another, it should not have rested content merely with putting up the name of Mr. Dhanik Lal Mandal for Deputy Speakership. His name should have been pressed to a division, just to register the point. Originally, I am told, it had been decided to press the issue to a formal vote. But top leaders decided at the last minute on their own to make "a gesture" ignoring the fact that every single parliamentary battle counts in winning friends and influencing voters.

A ten-day session is admittedly rather brief to draw conclusions about the future. But the portions are there for all to see. Already the Government and the Opposition have clashed openly in the Rajya Sabha and a critical amendment voted to the motion of thanks for the President's address. In the Lok Sabha, meanwhile, both sides appear to have moved towards confrontation, as reflected in the rowdy interludes during the session's last two days. (at one stage, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee was constrained to raise his voice to assert: "Let it be decided once and for all whether he can speak in this House or not?") The inter-session period should clearly be devoted on all sides to review what has happened and to take steps to mend matters. Both the Government and the Opposition are equally important in a Parliamentary democracy for orderly progress and national well-being.

BY INDER JIT
(RELEASED ON 5 FEB 1980)

POLITICS



What kind of politics is this?
A politics without direction!
A game without a goal—
That kills for power and control.

Schemes stay stuck on paper,
Never reaching the poor.
Speeches echo from platforms,
Campaigns full of empty promises.

No one dares to question lies,
Justice has vanished from sight.
Leaders change like chameleons,
Shifting shades in the sunlight.

The system itself is a curse!
With colorful chairs and grand shows,
They fool us daily
With false plans and catchy slogans.

They speak sweetly, then betray.
They sell the nation for profit,
While the people, broken and hungry,
Beg for their basic rights.
Politics is a disease now—
Worse than cancer!

During elections, bribes flow.
In homes, votes are sold.
For a sip of liquor,
We sell away our future.

Who's to blame for this?
The leaders we trusted
Are looting us blind.
The dream of democracy is dead!

Our votes—once our power—
Now turned into chains.
No honesty, no truth—
Politics has lost its way.

We bow before criminals
Dressed in white robes.
Politics has become their business,
And we their slaves—
knowingly or not!

Tell me, my friend,
Will this ever end?

You must understand,
You must rise!
Don't fall for their traps,
Or walk their crooked roads.

Break the cycle,
Wake up—step forward!
Only then will we see
True leadership and real change.

No leader is born great.
No god will descend to save us.
The people must rise up!

True politics lies in service,
In justice—and in action.

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

Questions Rising from Gas Queues: How Secure is India's Energy System?

Gas Crisis Becomes a Test of Energy Security

The conflict between the United States—Israel and Iran in the Middle East has once again reminded the world how fragile the energy lifelines of the modern global economy are. Tensions in the Strait of Hormuz and disruptions in maritime traffic have severely disturbed the global energy supply chain. The impact is being felt most sharply in import-dependent countries like India. In India, the shortage of cooking gas (LPG) has become a topic of discussion from Parliament to the streets. Long queues outside gas agencies are being seen in many cities. Hotels and restaurants are shutting down due to the shortage of commercial cylinders, and reports of black-marketing are emerging regularly. This situation is not merely a temporary supply disruption but a serious indication of the structural weaknesses in India's energy security.

In the global energy map, the Strait of Hormuz plays a decisive role. This nearly 21-mile-wide sea route, connecting the Persian Gulf to the Arabian Sea, is considered the world's most critical energy chokepoint. Nearly 20 percent of global oil and gas supplies pass through this narrow passage. Major energy-exporting countries such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Iraq rely on this route to transport their vast oil and gas reserves to global markets. Therefore, whenever war or military tension increases in this region, the global energy system becomes unstable. The present conflict has produced the same effect. Iran's warnings about restricting maritime activities and possible attacks on vessels in the Hormuz region have halted several tankers. LPG and LNG cargo ships have been delayed at sea, delivering a major shock to import-dependent countries.



For India, the crisis is more serious because LPG has become increasingly important in the country's energy structure over the past decade. India now consumes more than 30 million tonnes of LPG annually, but domestic production cannot meet even half of this demand. The remaining requirement is fulfilled through imports from Gulf countries. Estimates suggest that 80–90 percent of the LPG imported by India passes through the Strait of Hormuz. This is why even a minor disruption in this route has an immediate and visible impact on Indian households. The harsh reality is that the energy security of millions of Indian families depends significantly on a single narrow maritime passage.

Interestingly, petrol and diesel supplies have remained relatively stable during this crisis. Petrol pumps have not witnessed long queues, nor have prices surged suddenly. This is because India has developed a relatively flexible supply system for crude oil in recent years. Today, India imports crude oil from more than 40 countries. Oil from Russia, the United States and several African nations reaches India through routes that do not depend on the Strait of Hormuz. Moreover, India maintains strategic petroleum reserves where millions of barrels of crude oil are stored for emergency situations. These reserves and diversified supply sources ensure that

petrol and diesel availability is not immediately affected. The situation is very different in the case of LPG. LPG must be stored in liquid form under high pressure and in specialized tanks, which makes large-scale storage expensive and technically complex. As a result, India does not have a significant strategic LPG reserve. Available estimates indicate that the limited LPG stock in the country is barely sufficient for two to three days of consumption. Consequently, even a minor disruption in imports quickly affects the market and household consumers. This structural weakness has deepened the present crisis.

Another important aspect of the crisis cannot be ignored. Over the past decade, the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana has provided cooking gas connections to millions of poor households. The scheme has played a significant role in freeing rural women from smoke-filled kitchens and promoting clean energy. In 2014, India had around 140 million LPG connections; today the number has risen to more than 330 million. While this represents a major social transformation, it also means that India's domestic energy system is now more dependent than ever on a steady supply of LPG. When that supply is disrupted, millions of families feel the impact in their daily lives.

The crisis is not limited to household kitchens. Industries,

hotels, restaurants, small businesses and food-processing units also depend heavily on LPG and natural gas. When supply becomes limited, gas allocation to these sectors is reduced first so that domestic consumers can be prioritized. As a result, industrial production slows down, small businesses face financial stress, and employment is affected in many places. From steel and metal industries to roadside eateries and small restaurants, numerous sectors are bearing the brunt of the shortage. The government has taken some emergency measures to address the situation. Refineries have been instructed to maximize LPG recovery during crude oil processing. Certain petrochemical products are being temporarily diverted toward LPG production. Efforts are also being made to procure additional LPG cargoes from regions such as the United States and West Africa. Temporary restrictions on commercial cylinder supplies have been imposed to prioritize domestic consumers. While these steps may provide short-term relief, a long-term solution requires a far more comprehensive policy framework.

In reality, this crisis is not merely the result of a war. It exposes a gap in India's energy policy that has not received sufficient attention for years. While strategic reserves were created for crude oil, supply sources were diversified and refining capacity was expanded, similar foresight was not applied to LPG and gas security. If India had developed adequate LPG strategic reserves or gas storage infrastructure, the current situation might not have been so severe. It is also essential to accelerate the expansion of the piped natural gas network so that the domestic energy system is not dependent solely on cylinder-based supply. Energy

security is not only an economic issue but also an important dimension of national security. When a nation's kitchens, industries and transportation systems rely heavily on external supply, global geopolitical events can directly create internal instability. This is why developed countries constantly work on diversifying energy sources, developing alternative energy, and building large-scale storage capacities. India must move more seriously in the same direction.

Energy crises are rarely sudden; they are usually the outcome of structural challenges developing over time. At this moment, what is needed is restraint, responsibility and robust policy planning. No one can predict when the Middle East conflict will end or when normal conditions will return to the Strait of Hormuz. But one lesson is clear: global energy supplies may be interconnected, yet they remain extremely fragile. If future crises are to be avoided, India must prioritize diversification of energy sources, development of gas storage infrastructure, expansion of renewable energy and increased domestic production. Otherwise, every global conflict will continue to expose Indian households and the national economy to the same cycle of uncertainty and vulnerability.



YOGESH KUMAR GOVAL
(Author is a senior journalist and has been active in literature and journalism for 36 years)

Panel Urges Study on Missing Persons Tracking in Delhi

NEW DELHI: (MAR 17)

A parliamentary panel has recommended that the Delhi Police undertake a sociological study with reputed universities and research institutions on missing persons' cases for policy formulation, preventive strategies and improved tracking mechanisms. In its report tabled in both Houses of the Parliament on Tuesday, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs noted that cases relating to missing persons, particularly women, children and vulnerable individuals, have "significant social and security implications" in a metropolitan city like Delhi. The panel, chaired by MP Radha Mohan, was of the view that a data-driven and research-oriented approach is necessary to understand the underlying socio-economic, demographic and behavioural factors contributing to such cases.

Dressing up massacre as military op: India slams Pak for Kabul hospital attack

The strike on a drug rehabilitation hospital in Kabul, which killed over 400 and left nearly 300 injured, comes amid a sharp escalation in the conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

India shredded Pakistan over the air strike on a drug rehab centre in Kabul, which the Taliban claimed killed over 400 people, calling it a "barbaric massacre" and a cowardly and unconscionable act of violence. The strike on the Omid Addiction Treatment Hospital in Kabul, which left nearly 300 injured, comes amid a sharp escalation in the conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) stated the targeted facility "can by no means be justified as a military target." "Pakistan is now trying to dress up a massacre as a military operation," the



MEAs said. India's response came after Pakistan rejected the allegations and claimed it "precisely targeted" military installations and terrorist infrastructure in Kabul. The Shehbaz Sharif government further emphasised that secondary detonations after the strike indicated the presence of "large ammunition depots". At the core of the conflict is Islamabad's continued assertion that the Taliban was offering a safe haven to the

The Pakistan-Afghanistan conflict, which escalated last month after a fragile ceasefire that was agreed last year, may potentially further destabilise the region already grappling with the fallout from the Iran war. "It reflects Pakistan's persistent pattern of reckless behaviour and its repeated attempts to externalise internal failures through increasingly desperate acts of violence beyond its borders," the MEA further said. India also highlighted the timing of the strike, noting that it came during the holy month of Ramadan. "There is no faith, no law, and no morality that can justify the deliberate targeting of a hospital and its patients," the statement said.

WHAT IS THE SITUATION IN KABUL? Visuals on social media showed massive flames engulfing a single-storey building, with bedding and blankets strewn around. Rescue workers rushed fervently to take out bodies on stretchers. Officials told the BBC that some 2,000 people were being treated at the hospital in Kabul when it was targeted. The Afghan health ministry's spokesperson said there were no military facilities near the hospital. Eyewitnesses told Reuters that it felt like three bombs exploding consecutively. "The whole place caught fire. It was like doomsday," said Ahmad, 50, one of the few lucky patients to survive. "My friends were burning in the fire, and we could not save them all," he further said.

The area struck by Pakistan was formerly a US military base and used to be known as a notorious hangout for drug addicts. After the Taliban took over in August 2021, following the withdrawal of troops by the US, they turned it into a drug rehabilitation centre.

Adopted child no different: SC strikes down 3-month cap for maternity leave

The Supreme Court on Tuesday held that denying maternity leave to women adopting children above three months was unconstitutional, recognising the right to a dignified life for adoptive parents and the child. A bench of Justice Pardiwala and Justice Mahadevan clarified that an adoptive mother should be entitled to maternity leave of 12 weeks, irrespective of the age of the adopted child.



"Classification under social security act ignores the emotional and physical adjustment required. Adoption is an equal exercise of the right to reproduction," the bench ruled. The court underlined that adoption was "an equally valid path" for the creation of a family. "An adopted child is no different from so called 'natural' child. The act of adoption carries equal if not more profound affirmation of parenthood," the bench said. The court also pointed out a practical flaw in the law. The bench said that, given the procedural requirements to declare a child "legally free for adoption", children below three months are rarely adopted. Significantly, the Supreme Court also urged the Centre to bring a law recognising paternal leave as a social security benefit. The judgment came on a PIL filed by one Hamsanandini Nanduri, who contended that the age-based restriction was arbitrary and violative of Article 14 of the Constitution.

The purpose of maternity protection does not vary with the way the child is brought into the life of the mother. Women adopting an older child are similarly placed as women who adopt a child less than 3 months old," the top court said. Crucially, the court held that such age restrictions under Section 60(4) of the Social Security Code, 2020, violated the right to equality under Article 14. The section envisaged that women would be eligible for maternity leave only if they adopt children who are less than 3 months old. It has not been struck down.

'ADOPTION VALID PATH FOR FAMILY CREATION'

While acknowledging that biological and adoptive mothers are distinct categories, the Supreme Court said such a distinction cannot be used to deny

PM speaks with UAE President, stresses safe passage through Strait of Hormuz

PM Modi strongly condemned recent attacks targeting the United Arab Emirates that led to the loss of innocent lives and damage to civilian infrastructure. He reiterated India's firm stance against such acts of violence.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said he spoke with Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, extending advance Eid greetings and discussing the evolving situation in West Asia.

In a post on X, Modi strongly condemned recent attacks targeting the United Arab Emirates that led to the loss of innocent lives and damage to civilian infrastructure. He reiterated India's firm stance against such acts of violence.

"I spoke with my brother, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan,

President of the United Arab Emirates, and extended my advance Eid greetings to him." PM Modi said in the post.

"We discussed the current situation in the West Asia region, and I reiterated India's strong condemnation of all attacks targeting the United Arab Emirates, which resulted in the loss of innocent lives and damage to civilian infrastructure." Modi further stated.

Both leaders also emphasised the importance of ensuring the safety and freedom

of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, a key global shipping route.

The two sides agreed to continue working closely to restore peace, security, and stability in the region at the earliest.

The PM's initiative comes after the UAE faced the most intense barrage of Iranian attacks among the Gulf countries since the US-Israel war on Tehran began. Civilian and business infrastructure in Dubai and other hubs have been targeted.

Rail Capacity Set to Surge in Assam

MALIGAON, 17 MARCH, 2026:

Doubling Projects Underway



In a major boost to railway infrastructure in the Northeast, the Hon'ble Prime Minister laid the foundation stone for the Furkating - New Tinsukia Doubling Project on 13th March, 2026. Spanning a total length of 194 kilometres and with an estimated cost of approximately Rs 3634 crores, this important initiative will significantly enhance rail capacity, improve operational efficiency and strengthen connectivity across Upper Assam and adjoining regions. Work on this project is being taken forward in a planned manner. The Furkating - New Tinsukia section is a vital rail link under Northeast Frontier Railway, catering to both passenger and freight traffic. Doubling of this section will help decongest the existing line, ensuring faster, smoother and more reliable train operations. The project is expected to benefit several

long-distance and intercity services while supporting economic growth in the region. Work on this section is currently in progress. At the same time, the Lumding - Furkating Double Line Project is also progressing steadily. The Lumding - Furkating section, spanning approximately 140 km, is a crucial rail corridor under Northeast Frontier Railway. Sanctioned during 2024-25 with an estimated cost of Rs 2123.70 crore, the project aims to decongest one of the busiest single-line sections in the region. Once completed, the doubling work will

significantly improve train operations, reduce delays and enable seamless movement of both passenger and freight traffic. Work on this project is currently underway. The project is being executed in multiple phases with a target completion by January 2028. Key milestones include phased commissioning starting from May 2026, covering important stretches such as Naojan - Sarupathar, Dhanisiri - Rangapahar and Dimapur connectivity sections. The project includes construction of 19 major bridges, 161 minor bridges and development across 20 stations, reflecting the scale and complexity of the initiative. Northeast Frontier Railway remains committed to the timely execution of these strategic projects, which align with Indian Railways' vision of modernizing infrastructure and improving connectivity across the Northeast region.

Haryana Plans Green Hydrogen Policy Rollout

CHANDIGARH, MARCH 17:

Mega Project Takes Shape at Panipat
Chief Secretary Anurag Rastogi chairs high-level review meeting of Green Hydrogen project

The Haryana Government is set to introduce a Green Hydrogen Policy soon to promote clean energy in the state. Alongside, India's first mega Green Hydrogen project with a capacity of 10,000 tonnes per annum (TPA) is being established at Panipat under a PPP model by Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL). A high-level meeting chaired by Chief Secretary Sh. Anurag Rastogi was held to review the progress of the project. It was informed that the plant will supply green hydrogen to the IOCL Panipat Refinery and is targeted for commissioning by December 2026. The project is expected to play a key role in advancing India's clean energy goals and the Prime Minister's Panchamrit commitments. Discussions during the meeting also focused on ensuring adequate power

supply for the project. Senior officials, including Additional Chief Secretary (Energy) Anurag Agarwal, Managing Director HVPNL, J. Ganesan, Director General of Industries & Commerce Yash Garg, and Director of New & Renewable Energy Dr. Sangeeta Tatarwal, were present. Commissioner and Secretary, Industries & Commerce Department, Dr. Amit Kumar Agrawal, informed that a new industrial policy is being formulated, with Green Hydrogen identified as a thrust sector. The project is expected to significantly transform Haryana's industrial landscape, particularly by enabling decarbonisation of high-emission sectors such as refining and steel. It will help position the state as a hub for low-carbon refining and green steel pro-

duction. Incentives under the SIGHT scheme of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy are likely to attract large-scale investments. Fertiliser and ammonia units in and around Panipat are also expected to benefit by shifting to green ammonia, reducing dependence on fossil fuels. The initiative is expected to generate substantial employment opportunities. Under the National Green Hydrogen Mission, achieving a capacity of 250 KTPA in Haryana could create around 40,000 direct jobs and 1.2 lakh indirect jobs across various sectors. The project is also likely to contribute significantly to the state's GDP and strengthen the vision of Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini to build a robust green hydrogen economy in Haryana.

Patna HC Clears NHAI to Acquire Waqf Land

PATNA: (MAR 17)

The Patna High Court on Tuesday set aside a Bihar State Waqf Tribunal order that had restrained the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) from carrying out construction on certain plots in Bihar's Samastipur district. Justice Bibek Chaudhuri held that the tribunal had exceeded its jurisdiction in staying the acquisition and construction work on land recorded as mosque and kabristaan properties. "The learned tribunal is absolutely without jurisdiction in passing the impugned order of injunction," the court observed, adding that the tribunal had "failed to appreciate the law".

Changes in the pattern of Train Services

CHENNAI, MARCH 17:

In view of engineering works in Jolarpettai Main Cabin in Chennai Division, the following changes have been made in the pattern of train services:

Partial Cancellation/Short Termination of Train Services:

Train No. 66550 KSR Bengaluru - Jolarpettai MEMU scheduled to leave KSR Bengaluru at 08.45 hrs on 18th, 19th and 24th March, 2026 will be partially cancelled between Somanayakkanpatti and Jolarpettai. The train will be short terminated at Somanayakkanpatti.

Train No. 56108 Erode - Jolarpettai Passenger scheduled to leave Erode at 06.00 hrs on 18th, 19th and 24th March, 2026 will be partially cancelled between Tirupattur and Jolarpettai. The train will be short terminated at Tirupattur.

Train No. 20672 Bengaluru Cantonment - Madurai Vande Bharat Express scheduled to leave Bengaluru Cantonment at 13.30 hrs on 18th and 19th March, 2026 will be regulated for 45 minutes enroute.

Train No. 56107 Jolarpettai - Erode Passenger scheduled to leave Jolarpettai at 14.45 hrs on 18th, 19th and 24th March, 2026 will be partially cancelled between Jolarpettai and Tirupattur. The train will originate from Tirupattur at its scheduled departure timings of 14.55 hrs.

Train No. 66549 Jolarpettai - KSR Bengaluru MEMU scheduled to leave Jolarpettai at 15.00 hrs on 18th, 19th and 24th March, 2026 will be partially cancelled between Jolarpettai and Somanayakkanpatti. The train will originate from Somanayakkanpatti at its scheduled departure timings of 15.12 hrs.

Regulation of Train Service:

Train No. 20672 Bengaluru Cantonment - Madurai Vande Bharat Express scheduled to leave Bengaluru Cantonment at 13.30 hrs on 18th and 19th March, 2026 will be regulated for 45 minutes enroute.



Indian Railways Enters 'Super-Fast Transformation' Phase: Ashwini Vaishnaw

New Delhi, March 17:

Union Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Tuesday said that Indian Railways is undergoing a major transformation, becoming faster, safer, more comfortable and modern, while continuing to serve the common man and middle class at affordable prices.

Replying to the discussion on the Demands for Grants (2026-27) in Parliament, the Minister emphasised that the government remains committed to improving travel experience, especially for economically weaker sections, without increasing the financial burden on passengers.

Vaishnaw described the current phase as a shift from "slow growth" to "super-fast transformation," calling it the beginning of a new era for the national transporter. He noted that Indian Railways now operates on a vast network of about 1.37 lakh km, running over 25,500 trains that support both passenger movement and freight, playing a crucial role in economic growth.

Highlighting affordability, the Minister said the government subsidizes nearly 45% of passenger ticket costs, ensuring fares remain significantly lower than in neighbouring and developed countries. He added that the Railways continues to prioritize non-AC coaches to cater to the

needs of common citizens.

On infrastructure and services, Vaishnaw announced the introduction of 200 new intercity trains and 238 suburban trains for Mumbai, equipped with automatic door-closing systems to enhance safety and efficiency in short-distance travel.

The Minister also pointed to employment generation, stating that Railways has provided around 5 lakh jobs over the past decade, including 1.43 lakh direct jobs in the last two years, while also creating millions of indirect employment opportunities through ongoing projects.

He further highlighted improvements in station amenities and the adoption of technology-driven maintenance practices, which are redefining the travel experience across the country.

The Minister noted that the record budget allocation of ₹2.78 lakh crore in the Union Budget 2026-27 reflects the government's strong commitment to railway modernization.

Vaishnaw also underscored the impact of merging the Railway Budget with the General Budget, stating that it has led to increased financial support, faster decision-making, and improved transparency through institutional monitoring involving the Finance Ministry and NITI Aayog.

Gurugram Man Jumps with Toddler Amid Depression

The deceased, identified as Rahul, was originally a resident of Delhi and had been living on rent with his family in a society in Gurugram. The incident occurred on Tuesday morning at the 'Joy Ville' residential complex. Police said they received information around 8 am about a man jumping from a multi-storey building in Gurugram's Sector 102 near the Dwarka Expressway. When officers reached the spot, both Rahul and his daughter were found dead.

Rahul ran a school in Delhi's Kirari area along with his wife, catering to students up to Class 5. Officials said he had been dealing with serious health issues and mental stress for some

time and was reportedly undergoing treatment.

"The deceased had been dealing with serious health and mental problems for some time. At this stage, this appears to be a case of depression," said Ashok Kumar, police spokesperson, Gurugram headquarters.

Though Rahul lived in Tower 9 of the society, he jumped from the 23rd floor of Tower 5 with his daughter. The police confirmed that no suicide note was recovered from the scene. Both bodies were sent for post-mortem and later handed over to the family.

Ashok Kumar added, "Rahul's mental distress appears to have been the reason behind this tragic act.

Serious gaps: AAP slams BJP after Atal canteens shut in Delhi over LPG crisis

AAP said that LPG shortages have led to the closure of Atal Canteens, disrupting a welfare initiative aimed at providing meals at Rs 5. The party alleged that the situation exposes "serious gaps" in the BJP-led Centre's supply management, adding that the worst impact is being felt by economically vulnerable groups who depend on these services.

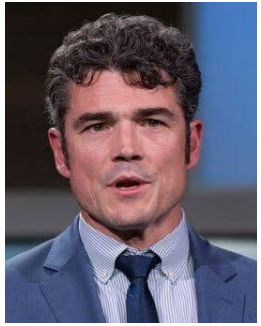
A fresh political flashpoint has emerged over an alleged shortage of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), after the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) claimed that several Atal Canteens were forced to shut operations, affecting access to sub-



sidised meals for the urban poor. In a post on X, AAP said that LPG shortages have led to the closure of Atal Canteens, disrupting a welfare initiative aimed at providing meals at Rs 5. The party alleged that the situation exposes "serious gaps" in the BJP-led Centre's

supply management, adding that the worst impact is being felt by economically vulnerable groups who depend on these services. The AAP's response came after a media report highlighted that at least four Atal Canteens in the national capital had shut

down due to gas shortages. According to the report, facilities at Pratap Camp, Kalkaji, Anna Nagar near ITO, and R K Puram were affected, leaving beneficiaries without access to subsidised food. The reported closures have raised concerns about continuity in welfare delivery, particularly for daily wage workers and low-income residents who rely on such schemes for affordable nutrition. Meanwhile, amid growing concerns over a potential LPG crunch, the Centre on Monday urged consumers to use the fuel judiciously. It also indicated plans to expand piped natural gas (PNG) infrastructure as a long-term measure to reduce dependence on LPG cylinders.



Trump's top counter terrorism aide resigns

MAR 17

Joe Kent, the director of the National Counterterrorism Center, announced Tuesday he was resigning over the war in Iran — a stunning defection that shows how President Donald Trump's decision to strike Tehran has divided some of the most loyal corners of his administration. "I cannot in good conscience support the ongoing war in Iran," Joe Kent, the head of the national counterterrorism center, said in a resignation letter posted to X on Tuesday morning. "Until June of 2025, you understood that the wars in the Middle East were a trap that robbed America of the precious lives of our patriots and depleted the wealth and prosperity of our nation." Kent did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Spokespeople for the White House and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, which houses the NCTC, also did not immediately respond to requests for comment on Kent's statement.

Trump nominated Kent for his post in February 2025. He was confirmed by the Senate last July.

Kent closely aligned himself with Trump as part of an unsuccessful run for Congress in 2022, when he claimed the 2020 election was stolen and called Jan. 6 rioters "political prisoners." He ran again in 2024 and lost to Rep. Marie Gluesenkamp Perez (D-Wash.), who won a second term.

US Shares Video of Iran Strike Operations

The US shared a video of strikes on Iran, with US Central Command saying its forces continue to "hunt and destroy" threats, as the conflict with Iran enters its third week. The escalation comes alongside Israeli claims of targeting top Iranian figures and Tehran's call for global condemnation of the US-Israeli attacks.



The United States on Tuesday released a video showing fresh strikes on Iranian targets, with US Central Command saying its forces were continuing operations against threats in the region. In a post on X, CENTCOM said, "US forces continue to hunt and destroy Iranian targets that pose threats to Americans and Iran's neighbours," alongside an 18-second clip showing multiple

blasts from precision strikes. The video comes as the US-Israeli military campaign against Iran enters its third week, with both sides intensifying attacks and no signs of de-escalation. Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said he had ordered the "elimination of senior officials of the Iranian regime," signalling a continued focus on high-value targets.

IRAN URGES GLOBAL

CONDEMNATION Amid the escalating conflict, Iran has called on the international community to condemn the US-Israeli offensive. Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi told United Nations chief Antonio Guterres that disruptions in the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz could not be viewed separately from the ongoing war. In remarks shared on his Telegram account, Araqchi urged states and global

institutions concerned with peace and security to take a stand against the attacks on Iran.

TOP IRANIAN FIGURES TARGETED

On the battlefield, Israel claimed significant gains. Defence Minister Israel Katz said the military had killed Iran's security chief Ali Larijani and Gholamreza Soleimani, the head of the Basij militia, in overnight airstrikes. The Basij is a paramilitary force linked to Iran's Revolutionary Guard and is often deployed to suppress domestic unrest. Iranian state media, however, did not immediately confirm Larijani's death and instead published a handwritten note attributed to him, adding to uncertainty around the claim. If confirmed, his killing would mark one of the highest-profile assassinations in the conflict so far, following the

reported death of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in the opening phase of the war.

NO LET-UP IN HOSTILITIES

There has been no pause in fighting, with Iran launching fresh missile attacks on Israel overnight, demonstrating its continued long-range strike capability despite sustained bombardment. The Israeli military said it was targeting "Iranian regime infrastructure" in a new wave of strikes across Tehran, alongside operations against Hezbollah sites in Beirut. Israeli officials have also indicated readiness for a prolonged campaign, with plans reportedly in place for at least three more weeks of military operations, underscoring the scale and intensity of a conflict that has already left thousands dead and threatens wider regional escalation.



Israel posts photo of Netanyahu ordering strikes on Iran leadership amid death buzz

The Israeli Prime Minister's office on Tuesday shared a photograph of Benjamin Netanyahu reportedly ordering strikes targeting senior figures in Iran's leadership, as it moved to counter a surge of unverified claims online about his death.

Iranian strikes — claims that Israeli authorities and independent fact-checkers have repeatedly debunked, reiterating that the prime minister is alive and continuing to conduct state business. Israeli officials have presented the image as evidence of Netanyahu directly overseeing decisions on targeted strikes against Iran's leadership, against the backdrop of a widening Israeli-US offensive involving sustained air and missile attacks on Iranian military and strategic assets.

Posted on the government's official X handle, the image was captioned: "Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordering the elimination of senior Iranian regime officials," and showed him in a command setting as tensions with Iran remain sharply escalated. The post comes amid a swirl of online speculation, including conspiracy theories suggesting Netanyahu had been killed or incapacitated

Tensions between the two sides have reached rare highs, with Israeli strikes reportedly killing senior Iranian figures, including Ali Larijani, while Tehran has responded with waves of missile and drone attacks across the region.

Iran confirms deaths of Larijani, Basij head Soleimani



MAR 17

Top Iranian security official Ali Larijani and the commander of Iran's internal Basij militia, Gholamreza Soleimani, have been killed, Iran's state media confirmed hours after Israel claimed to have killed the two.

In a statement carried by Iran's semi-official Mehr news, the country's Supreme National Security Council confirmed the assassination of its secretary, Larijani. "After a lifetime of striving

for the elevation of Iran and the Islamic Revolution, he finally reached his long-cherished wish, answered the call of truth, and proudly attained the blessed rank of martyrdom in the service front", a statement from the council carried by Mehr read.

The news came after Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) confirmed Soleimani's killing.

Larijani is the highest-ranking Iranian official killed in US-Israeli attacks on Iran since former Iranian



Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was assassinated on the first day of the war on February 28.

Larijani was last seen publicly on Friday, attending an Al-Quds Day rally in support of Palestinians in Tehran, along with President Masoud Pezeshkian.

He has been a key political figure in the Iranian hierarchy for years, at one time leading the nation's nuclear negotiations with the West. Previously, he was also the speaker of the Iranian parliament.

Afghanistan Warns Pakistan of 'Teeth-Breaking' Response

KABUL, MARCH 17

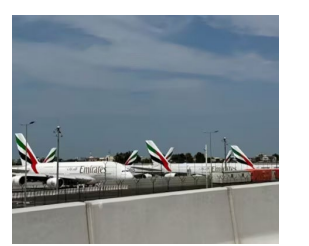
Afghanistan's Ministry of Interior spokesperson Abdul Matin Qane on Tuesday warned that the country will give a 'teeth-breaking response' to the airstrikes carried out by Pakistan in Kabul, local media reported.

Afghan officials said that the strike targeted the 2,000-bed Omid Addiction Treatment Hospital in Kabul's Pul-e-Charkhi area, killing at least 400 people and injuring 250 others. Qane said recovery efforts were being made on Tuesday as emergency teams were searching for bodies under the rubble, Afghanistan-based Ariana News reported. Qane said Afghanistan considers Pakistan's latest strike as major escalation and warned of a response. He said, "Such attacks cannot go unanswered," reiterating that Afghan authorities consider the incident a violation of Afghanistan's sovereignty, Ariana News reported. The incident marks a sharp escalation in tensions

between Afghanistan and Pakistan in recent weeks due to airstrikes, artillery fire, and accusations from both sides. Afghan authorities have condemned what they term Pakistan's military operations in Afghanistan, especially in eastern and southeastern provinces. In recent weeks, Afghan officials have said that strikes and shelling incidents have caused casualties and damage to infrastructure. Meanwhile, Islamabad has claimed it is targeting militant groups that are using Afghan soil for launching attacks in Pakistan. Earlier on March 14, deputy spokesman of the Afghan government Hamdullah Fitrat said that Pakistani airstrikes claimed four lives and injured 25 others in the Afghan capital Kabul early Friday. The official said Pakistan, apart from Kabul, also conducted air raids on Kandahar, Paktika, Khost and Nangarhar provinces on Thursday night and Friday. An oil depot was targeted in Kandahar, Xinhua News Agency reported.

Blast in Dubai as UAE intercepts Iranian missiles, airport ops resume

Loud explosions were heard in Dubai on Tuesday as authorities in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) continued to intercept Iranian missiles, as the US-Israeli conflict continues with no immediate signs of de-escalation.



A drone struck an oil tank near Dubai airport, triggering a massive fire. Flight operations were suspended for several hours, and Air India cancelled all its flights to Dubai for the day.

Operations at Dubai International Airport were briefly suspended earlier today before resuming later, and air defence systems were activated in the city as well as in other parts of the Emirates. A drone attack also sparked a fire today at an oil tank farm in Fujairah, an emirate on the country's east coast with the Gulf of Oman that has been repeatedly targeted by Tehran. No one was injured in the incident. In other Gulf countries, Saudi Arabia said its air defence systems intercepted a dozen drones over its vast Eastern Province, home to key oil infrastructure. In Qatar, a fire broke out in an industrial area after a missile was intercepted over the gas-rich nation, the country's interior ministry said. Explosions were also heard in Doha, Qatar's capital, as air defence systems intercepted incoming Iranian projectiles on Tuesday morning. Iran, which has been targeting US bases and interests across the Gulf, has recently stepped up its attacks after the US bombed Kharg Island, a key hub that handles around 90 per cent of the country's crude oil exports. On Monday, an Iranian

A similar drone strike occurred on March 7, when passengers inside the airport rushed into train tunnels on the airfield after an alert was sounded. Earlier, on March 1, both the airport and the landmark Burj Al Arab hotel sustained damage in an overnight Iranian attack, leaving four people injured at the airport. Earlier this week, Iran called for the evacuation of three major ports in the Emirates, 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.

The war, which is in its third week, has killed at least 1,300 people in Iran, at least 850 in Lebanon and 12 in Israel, according to officials in those countries. The US military says 13 US service members have been killed and about 200 wounded.

All of Cuba hit by blackouts as power grid collapses amid US sanctions

Officials in Cuba reported an islandwide blackout Monday in the country of some 11 million people as its energy and economic crises deepen and its power grid continues to crumble. The Ministry of Energy and Mines on X noted a "complete disconnection" of the country's electrical system and said it was investigating, noting there were no failures in the units that were operating when the grid collapsed. Lzaro Guerra, the ministry's electricity director, told state media late Monday that crews were trying to restart several thermoelectric plants, which are key to restoring power.

"It must be done gradually to avoid setbacks," he said. "Because systems, when very weak, are more susceptible to



failure." As night fell, candles began to burn in some homes while the sounds of children playing and singing with their mother filled one dark house in Havana. "We have to prepare a mattress for the girls here so that they can sleep here because we have no choice," said Yuneici Cecilia Riviaux, as she motioned to an open door. "I don't have a rechargeable

fan or a generator." It was the third major blackout in Cuba over the past four months. Tomas David Velazquez Felipe, a 61-year-old resident of Havana, said the relentless outages make him think that Cubans who can should just pack up and leave the island. "What little we have to eat spoils," he said. "Our people are too old to keep suffering."

By Monday night, state-owned media reported that crews had restored power to 5% of Havana's residents, representing some 42,000 customers, as well as several hospitals across the island. Officials said they would prioritise the communications sector next, all while warning that the small circuits restored so far could fail again.

Sri Lanka shifts to 4-day work week to conserve oil stocks amid Hormuz crisis

Sri Lanka has moved to a four-day work week to conserve fuel as the Middle East war disrupts oil supplies through the Strait of Hormuz, while Bangladesh has begun rationing fuel and Pakistan has shifted offices to remote work to ease an emerging energy crunch.

As the conflict in the Middle East disrupts global oil routes, Sri Lanka has moved to a four-day work week in a bid to conserve fuel and avoid another crippling energy crisis, reported Channel News Asia. The decision comes as the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most vital shipping corridors for oil, has been effectively closed



following Iran's retaliation against the US and Israel. With the conflict now entering its third week, countries heavily dependent on imported energy are scrambling to stretch supplies. Sri Lanka, still recovering from its devastating economic meltdown in 2022, has acted swiftly to reduce fuel consumption before the situation worsens.

SRI LANKA BRACES FOR

ANOTHER FUEL SQUEEZE

Officials said state institutions across the country will operate only four days a week starting Wednesday as part of emergency measures to preserve fuel reserves. Commissioner-General of Essential Services Prabath Chandrakerthi said the new schedule will also apply to schools and universities and could remain in place indefinitely. "We are also asking the private sector to follow suit and declare every Wednesday a holiday from now on," he told reporters after an emergency meeting chaired by President Anura Kumara Dissanayake. The move is designed to reduce commuting and ease pressure on the country's fuel supplies.

Pak Lies Exposed After Kabul Hospital Strike

Several eyewitnesses told Reuters that the air strikes hit hospital rooms when patients were offering evening prayers. The building soon caught fire, and several patients were burned alive.

The accounts of several eyewitnesses exposed the lies of Pakistani authorities that they hit a military infrastructure and not a hospital in Kabul. On Monday, Pakistan launched military operations in Kabul and Nangarhar that the Afghan Taliban government says hit the Omar Addiction Treatment Hospital in Kabul, killing 400 and injuring over 250 people.

Islamabad strongly denied the claims; Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's spokesperson for foreign media, Mos-

harraf Zaidi, said no hospital in Kabul was targeted in the Pakistani operation. Further, its Defence Ministry said that the strikes "precisely targeted military installations and infrastructure in Kabul and Nangarhar that had close ties with Afghan terrorist groups". The Ministry further added that these infrastructures were used to launch terrorist activities targeting civilians in Pakistan.

EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS EXPOSE PAK LIES

Several eyewitnesses in Kabul countered Pakistan's claims. Speaking to news agency Reuters, many said that they heard sounds of three explosions when people in the hospital were offering evening prayers. Two of the explosions struck rooms and patient areas. "The whole place



caught fire. It was like doomsday," a patient named Ahmad told Reuters. "My friends were burning in the fire, and we could not save them all," he said. The strikes damaged multiple facilities at the hospital. "When I arrived (last night), I saw that everything was burning, people were burning. Early in the morning, they called me again and told me to come back because

there are still bodies under the rubble," Haji Fahim, working as an ambulance driver in the hospital, told Reuters. Several buildings were severely damaged in the attack. Buildings were reduced to heaps of wood and metal, with only a few bunk beds still intact, while blankets, personal belongings and bedding were strewn about.

PAK ATTACK SIMILAR

TO ISRAEL, SAYS AFGHAN GOVERNMENT

The Afghan government said the Pakistani airstrikes were similar to Israel's action in Gaza. Sharing photos and the videos of the survivors on X, Hamdullah Fitrat, Deputy Spokesperson of the Afghan government, wrote, "#Martyrs of the Night of Power. The crimes of Pakistan's oppressive military regime, which made people forget the crimes of the Zionist regime. The martyrs of Shab-e-Qadr, the peak of oppression." The incident also drew condemnation from several Afghan cricketers. Navin-ul-Haq, who is set to play for Kolkata Knight Riders in this year's IPL, wrote on Facebook, "Hard to find any difference between Israel and the Pakistani regime. Period." Rashid Khan and Mohammad

Nabi also condemned the incident. "Tonight in Kabul, hope was extinguished at a hospital. Young men seeking treatment were murdered in a bombing by the Pakistani military regime. Mothers waited at the gates, calling their sons' names. On the 28th night of Ramadan, their lives were cut short," Nabi wrote, sharing a video on X.

PHOTOS, VIDEOS SPELL DEVASTATION

The wreckage in Kabul is staggering. What was once a 2,000-bed hospital has been reduced to a sprawling field of debris, as captured in recent footage following the airstrike. Amid the moment of grief and panic, rescue operations are underway in Kabul. The injured have been moved to nearby hospitals for further treatment.

Ujjain Student Killed in Canada, Family Alleges Assault

An Indian student from the city of Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh has died in Canada after suffering serious injuries in a case of alleged assault in the city of Fort St John in British Columbia on Friday. The family of the Indian victim, Gurkirat Singh Manocha, said he was assaulted while on his way from work and then ran over by the attackers. Manocha had gone to Canada 15 months ago. This comes as Canada accounted for the highest number of Indian students dying after violent assaults while abroad between 2018 and 2025. According to a report by the Canadian news outlet CBC, the victim, Gurkirat Singh Manocha, was injured during an incident near the Charlie Lake boat ramp out-

side Fort St John late on the night of March 13. Officers from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) responded to reports of an altercation in the area shortly after 11 pm. The RCMP said several people were involved in the confrontation. Manocha was found with serious injuries following the incident. According to authorities, friends transported him to a hospital, but he later died from his injuries.

CBC reported that the case has been taken over by the RCMP North District Major Crimes Unit, and quoted Sergeant Devin Huff as saying, "The North District Major Crimes Unit is urging anyone with information to come forward and speak with investigators."

Over 1 lakh startups have at least one woman director, govt tells Parliament

NEW DELHI, MARCH 17

More than one lakh startups in India have at least one woman director or partner, reflecting the rising participation of women in the country's entrepreneurial ecosystem, the government informed Parliament on Tuesday.

In a written reply in the Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Jitin Prasada said that out of 2,12,283 startups recognised by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade as of January 31, 2026, as many as 1,02,054 startups have at least one woman director or partner.

The government noted that the Startup India initiative,



launched in 2016, continues to play a key role in strengthening the innovation ecosystem by promoting investments and supporting startups at various stages of growth.

To further boost the startup ecosystem, several schemes have been rolled out, including the Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS), the Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SIS-

FS) and the Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups (CGSS).

Under the Fund of Funds for Startups, investments of around ₹25,859 crore have been committed through SEBI-registered Alternative Investment Funds, of which approximately ₹2,995 crore has been directed towards women-led startups.

Similarly, under the Startup India Seed Fund Scheme, funding of about ₹592 crore has been approved through incubators, with nearly ₹294 crore allocated to women-led startups, indicating targeted support for women entrepreneurs. The Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups has facilitated loans worth around ₹925 crore, including approx-

imately ₹39 crore extended to women-led startups, thereby improving access to credit for such enterprises.

The government also highlighted that only a relatively small proportion of recognised startups have ceased operations. According to data from the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, a total of 6,789 startups have been categorised as closed, of which 2,950 had at least one woman director or partner.

These measures, the government said, are aimed at promoting inclusive growth, strengthening the startup ecosystem and encouraging greater participation of women in entrepreneurship across the country.

SAI Parenteral's files RHP for Rs. 285-crore IPO; price band set at Rs. 372-Rs. 392

HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

SAI Parenteral's Limited has filed its Red Herring Prospectus (RHP) with Securities and Exchange Board of India, the Registrar of Companies (RoC), Hyderabad, and stock exchanges for its proposed Initial Public Offering (IPO), the company said on Tuesday.

The IPO, scheduled to open on March 24 and close on March 27, comprises a fresh issue of shares worth up to ₹285 crore and an offer-for-sale (OFS) of up to 31.57 lakh equity shares by existing investor shareholders. The price band for the issue has been fixed at ₹372-₹392 per share, with a face value of ₹5 each.

The company plans to list its shares on the National Stock Exchange and the Bombay Stock Exchange. Arihant Capital Markets Ltd is acting as the Book Running Lead Manager, while Bigshare Services Pvt Ltd is the registrar to the issue.

As per the allocation



structure, up to 50% of the issue is reserved for Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs), at least 35% for retail investors, and a minimum of 15% for Non-Institutional Investors (NIIs).

Commenting on the development, Chairman and Managing Director Anil KK said the IPO marks a key milestone in the company's growth journey and will help accelerate its expansion plans. The proceeds from the fresh issue will be utilised to strengthen its global formulations business and expand its Contract Development and Manufacturing Organisation (CDMO) capabilities, particularly in injectables and oral solid dosage segments.

He added that the company's recent acquisition of Nomed Pharmaceuticals is expected to enhance its global footprint, provide access to new markets in Australia and New Zealand, and strengthen its intellectual property portfolio.

SAI Parenteral's is a diversified pharmaceutical formulations company with operations in India and Australia, focusing on branded generics and CDMO services. Its product portfolio includes sterile injectables, oral solids, liquids and topical formulations. The company operates five manufacturing facilities in India, with accreditations such as GMP, WHO-GMP, TGA (Australia) and PIC/S compliance.

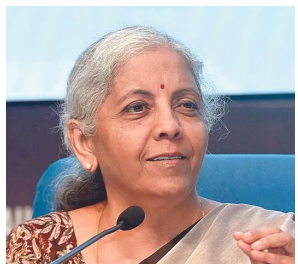
Entire LPG output rise directed to households: FM Nirmala

NEW DELHI, MARCH 17

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman clarified on Tuesday that the entire 25 per cent increase in domestic LPG production is being supplied to households as cooking gas.

Speaking in the Rajya Sabha, the Finance Minister also highlighted that 65 per cent of the total LPG consumed in India is imported, and as much as 90 per cent of this quantity is shipped through the Strait of Hormuz. The government is ensuring a steady flow of LPG even in these turbulent times, she said, and further clarified that there is no energy shortage in India today.

In order to address the shortage from imports, refineries have maximised their output, she noted. Talking about the economy, she said that despite the war raging in the Middle East, India has been able to maintain its economy. "We're able to stand up and face such situations," she remarked. She went on to say that it is the position of the Indian economy today that gives it the strength to meet unforeseen problems.



In addition, the capital outlay for infrastructure projects such as highways, ports and railways that spur growth and create jobs in the economy has been increased to Rs 12.2 lakh crore, she pointed out.

India's domestic refineries have stepped up LPG production to fill the gap in imports caused by the disruption due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz because of the Iran war, according to a statement issued by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

"LPG supply continues to be monitored in view of the prevailing geopolitical situation. No dry-outs have been reported at LPG distributorships. Delivery Authentication Code (DAC) coverage has been expanded from 53 per cent before the crisis to about 72 per cent to prevent diversion

of cylinders at the distributor level," the statement said.

Two Indian-flagged LPG carriers safely crossed the Strait of Hormuz before arriving in India on March 16 and 17, as the government continues to closely monitor maritime operations in the Persian Gulf region amid the evolving geopolitical situation in West Asia. MT Shivalik and MT Nanda Devi — carrying approximately 92,712 metric tonnes of LPG — crossed the Strait of Hormuz early Friday.

Major ports are prioritising berthing for LPG vessels to ensure the timely discharge of cargo and continuity in energy supply. Over the past few days, six LPG vessels have been received at major Indian ports. Additionally, ports are providing safe anchorage areas for vessels loaded with cargo bound for the Gulf region that are currently unable to transit due to prevailing conditions.

The online bookings of LPG cylinders have increased from about 84 per cent to around 90 per cent, which will enable a more orderly distribution of the cooking gas to households.

Nita Ambani awarded for social impact, women empowerment initiatives

NEW DELHI, MARCH 17

Nita M. Ambani was honoured with the KISS Humanitarian Award 2025 at a grand ceremony held in Bhubaneswar on Tuesday.

The award was presented at the campus of the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences in recognition of her contribution to social development through the Reliance Foundation.

The honour was conferred on her by Nobel Laureate Mohan Munasinghe and Achyuta Samanta, founder of KISS, KIIT and KIMS.

The ceremony was attended by nearly 40,000 tribal students, who welcomed her with traditional performances.

In her address, Nita Ambani said she felt proud to receive the award and dedicated it to the entire team of the Reliance Foundation.

She praised Achyuta Samanta for building world-class institutions like KIIT and KISS, calling them a matter of pride for the country.

She expressed gratitude for the warm welcome and said she would always remember the love and affection shown by the students.

She also spoke about Odisha's rich culture and traditions, adding that the state's people share a deep connection with nature.

Encouraging the students, she emphasised that there is no difference between boys and girls and that both have equal potential to succeed.

She urged them to dream big and work hard to achieve their goals, while also staying on the path of honesty and righteousness.

"Seeing the students at KISS gives her confidence that India's future is bright," Nita Ambani said.

She described her visit to the institutions as a special and memorable experience.

The KISS Humanitarian Award, instituted in 2008, is the highest honour given by the institute. It recognises individuals and organisations for their outstanding humanitarian work across the world.

NCLT approves Adani plan for JP Associates

MUMBAI, MARCH 17

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has approved the resolution plan submitted by an Adani Group firm for Jaiprakash Associates Ltd, according to a disclosure made on Tuesday. Adani Enterprises Ltd informed stock exchanges that the tribunal orally pronounced its order on March 17, clearing the resolution plan dated October 14, 2025. The company said detailed disclosures will follow once the written order is issued.

Adani Enterprises had earlier emerged as the successful resolution applicant after its proposal was approved by the Committee of Creditors (CoC) in November 2025, despite a competing ₹12,505-crore bid from Vedanta Group, which had received clearance from the Competition Commission of India.

The resolution plan may be implemented either directly by Adani Enterprises or through its group entities and special purpose vehicles, including Adani Power Limited, Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Limited and others, the company said.

Meanwhile, Jaiprakash Associates stated that the plan does not provide any recovery for equity shareholders, as the liquidation value is insufficient to cover secured creditor dues. Consequently, the exit value for existing shareholders has been fixed at nil under the delisting process. The debt-laden company, the flagship of the Jaypee Group, is facing claims of around ₹57,185 crore, with National Asset Reconstruction Company Ltd among its key lenders. It was admitted into insolvency proceedings in June 2024.

Jio Payments Bank launches UPI-based cardless cash withdrawal service



Hyderabad/Mumbai, March 17: Jio Payments Bank Limited (JPBL), a subsidiary of Jio Financial Services Limited, on Tuesday launched a UPI-based cardless cash withdrawal service through its Business Correspondent (BC) network.

The new facility allows customers to withdraw cash by scanning a UPI QR code and authorising the transaction via their UPI app, removing the need for debit cards or ATM visits, the bank said in a statement.

The service is aimed at customers in rural and semi-urban areas, offering a simple and assisted way to access cash while using digital payment platforms. It is also expected to help first-time users become more comfortable with UPI transactions.

JPBL said the initiative bridges the gap between digital payments and physical cash access, while promoting wider adoption of Unified Payments Interface among cash-dependent users.

Markets End In Green As Wall Street, Asian Peers Edge Higher

MUMBAI, MAR 17

Markets opened positive on Tuesday. The BSE Sensex started the trading session at 75,826.68, higher by 0.43 per cent. The NSE Nifty50 opened with a gain of 84.40 points or 0.36 per cent at 23,493.

The Nifty MidCap and the Nifty SmallCap indices were trading 0.13 per cent and 0.25 per cent higher, respectively. Eternal, Tata Steel, and Mahindra & Mahindra shares were the top gainers in the Nifty50 index.

However, investor remains

cautious due to FII selling and geopolitical tensions. Buying by Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) helped the markets bounce back sharply. On MCX, silver rate rose 2 per cent to Rs 2,61,457 per kg while gold price advanced 0.8 per cent to Rs 1,56,996 per 10 grams. Markets across the Asia-Pacific also rose, tracking overnight gains on Wall Street. The Dow Jones also ended with gains of 390 points. The S&P 500 and Nasdaq both ended with gains of a percent each.

BHIM app ropes in Dhoni as brand ambassador

HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

NPCI BHIM Services Limited on Tuesday appointed former India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni as the brand ambassador for the BHIM Payments App.

The company said the partnership marks a strategic push in its next phase of growth, focusing on scale, financial inclusion and building long-term user trust.

Developed on the infra-

structure of the National Payments Corporation of India, BHIM has been a key player in India's digital payments ecosystem and is nearing a decade of operations.

MD and CEO Lalitha Nataraj said the association aims to position BHIM as a preferred digital payments platform for households nationwide, with trust as a core pillar.

Dhoni said the app's sim-

ilarity and accessibility make it well-suited to drive wider adoption of digital payments across India, particularly among new users.

Repositioned as "Bharat Ka Apna Payments App," BHIM has expanded its reach across Tier 1, 2 and 3 cities, focusing on ease of use, regional language support and accessibility. The app supports over 15 languages and is optimised for low-connectivity environ-

Samsung Rolls Out 'Ugadi Special' Festive Offers on AI-Powered Home Appliances

GURUGRAM, MARCH 17

Marking the festive occasion of Ugadi, Samsung has announced a limited-period 'Ugadi Special' campaign, offering attractive discounts and finance options on its Bespoke AI home appliance range. The offers, valid until March 22, 2026, aim to encourage consumers to upgrade to smarter, AI-enabled appliances.

As part of the campaign, customers can avail cashback benefits of up to ₹20,000 on a wide selection of Bespoke AI refrigerators, washing machines, air conditioners, and microwaves. Additionally, the company is providing zero down payment options on select products, making premium appliances more accessible during the festive season.

In a bid to enhance customer value, Samsung is also of-



fering free installation for its latest 2026 range of air conditioners, along with a five-year comprehensive warranty, ensuring long-term reliability and peace of mind.

The festive deals are available through Samsung's official website, major online platforms, and select retail outlets across India.

Focus on AI-Driven Smart Living
Samsung's Bespoke AI appliances are designed to deliv-

er enhanced convenience, efficiency, and connectivity. The air conditioners in the lineup feature AI-powered fast and comfort cooling, which adapts airflow for optimal performance.

The 2026 AC range also integrates SmartThings Home Care, enabling proactive monitoring and maintenance alerts, such as filter cleaning reminders and gas level detection.

In the kitchen segment, Be-

spoke AI refrigerators come equipped with AI Vision Inside technology, which can identify stored food items and assist in better food management.

Meanwhile, Bespoke AI washing machines utilize AI Wash technology to automatically adjust water usage, detergent levels, and wash cycles based on load weight and fabric type.

Samsung's SmartThings Family Care further adds to the ecosystem by providing activity updates, medication reminders, and location-based alerts, supporting families in managing daily routines more efficiently.

With these offerings, Samsung aims to combine festive savings with next-generation technology, promoting a smarter and more connected lifestyle for Indian consumers.

NMDC-GMDC Alliance to Boost India's Rare Earth Sector

HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

In a significant move to strengthen India's critical mineral ecosystem, NMDC Limited and GMDC Limited have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate in the exploration and development of Rare Earth Elements (REEs) and associated minerals.

The agreement, formalized at NMDC's headquarters in Hyderabad, aims to build an integrated and sustainable supply chain for critical minerals in India. The partnership will focus on identifying rare earth deposits, expanding research and development capabilities, and promoting environmentally responsible mining practices.

The MoU was signed in the presence of Amitava Mukherjee, Chairman and Managing Director of NMDC, and Roopwanti Singh, Managing



Director of GMDC, along with senior officials from both organisations. The agreement came into effect on March 16, 2026, and will remain valid for two years.

As part of the collaboration, a Steering Committee and a Working Group will be established to assess opportunities and drive the proposed initiatives forward.

The partnership is expect-

ed to accelerate the development of rare earth mining and related downstream industries across the country, aligning with India's growing focus on strategic and critical minerals. Speaking on the occasion, NMDC CMD Amitava Mukherjee underscored the importance of rare earth elements, stating that they are central to energy security, defence preparedness, and the

vision of a self-reliant India. He added that the collaboration with GMDC aims to create a resilient and robust supply chain for these vital resources.

Both companies are also exploring the potential for deeper engagement through joint ventures, special purpose vehicles, and other strategic business collaborations in the future.

Easy Tips to Grow Bottle Gourd in Your Garden or Balcony

The first heat of summer brings long, sunny days, and the ideal opportunity to watch your garden come alive. Among the leafy vines climbing fences and trellises, bottle gourd stands out. It is a hardy, fast-growing plant that changes small spaces into productive green corners.

Growing it at home is not just about vegetables on your plate; it is about creating a mini ecosystem where flowers attract bees, leaves provide shade, and each new gourd is a small reward for your care. Early summer gives your plants the warmth and light they need to survive, making it the ideal season to start.

1. Choose quality seeds and a sunny spot

Begin with good-quality seeds or healthy seedlings. Opt for varieties that do well in warm conditions and are suited to your available space, whether a terrace, patio, or backyard plot. Place the plant where it will receive at least six to eight hours of sunlight each day; this is essential for vigorous vine and fruit growth.

2. Prepare the soil

Bottle gourd grows in well-draining, fertile soil enriched with organic matter such as compost or well-rotted manure. A mix that holds moisture yet allows air to reach the roots will support healthy growth.

If you are growing in containers, choose deep pots or grow bags with good drainage holes. Filling them with a mix of garden soil, compost, and coarse sand or perlite will provide the ideal environment for roots to flourish.

3. Sow the seeds and support the vines

Soak the seeds in water overnight to help them sprout more quickly. Sow them about two to three centimetres deep in the soil and thin to the strongest seedling once they emerge, usually within seven to 14 days in warm weather. Bottle gourd is a climber, so installing a sturdy trellis, bamboo frame, or netting at the time of planting will give the vines something to climb as they grow. Vertical growth improves air circulation, saves space, and keeps fruits off the ground, reducing the risk of rot and disease.

4. Watering and feeding for healthy growth

Keep the soil consistently moist, especially during dry spells and while flowers and fruits are forming. Rigorous watering several times a week is preferable to light sprinkling, as it encourages stronger root development. Feeding the plants every few weeks with organic fertiliser such as vermicompost, cow manure, or liquid seaweed improves soil fertility and supports vine growth. Mulching around the base helps retain moisture and moderates soil temperature.

5. Pruning and pest management

Pruning excess side shoots helps the plant focus its energy on producing fruit. Watch for common pests such as aphids and whiteflies; organic sprays like neem oil can help keep them in check. Remove yellowing or damaged leaves to maintain good airflow around the vines.

6. Pollination tip

Bottle gourd produces separate male and female flowers, and while bees do much of the work naturally, you can improve fruit set by hand-pollinating early in the morning with a soft brush, transferring pollen from male to female flowers.

7. Harvesting your gourds

Gourds are ready to pick when they are firm, light green, and around 20 to 30 cm long, usually about 60-75 days after sowing in warm conditions. Regular harvesting encourages the plant to keep producing more fruits throughout the season.

Final tips

Regularly weed around your plants to reduce competition for nutrients.

In early summer's intense heat, make sure there is shade in the hottest part of the day for young seedlings.

Growing on a terrace or balcony? Pots with vertical support make the most of limited space.



PROTEIN-RICH RICE VARIETY FROM ODISHA IS FIGHTING INDIA'S 'HIDDEN HUNGER'

From Odisha's hills to Uttar Pradesh's plains, farmers are growing CR Dhan 310 — India's first officially released high-protein biofortified rice — designed to tackle protein deficiency through a daily staple.

What's in your bowl of rice?

For over two-thirds of India, the answer is comfort, tradition, and sustenance. It's the foundation of a meal, the filler of bellies, the canvas for dals and curries. But what if that same humble bowl could do more? What if it could be a powerful weapon in the long fight against a silent enemy called 'hidden hunger'? Across India's vast and varied agricultural tapestry, a quiet revolution is sprouting — not through protests or high-tech gadgets, but through the patient work of farmers and scientists. At the heart of this story are two men who have never met.

Two farmers, one shared experiment

In Bakingia village, nestled amid the forested hills of Kandhamal in Odisha, 46-year-old Hemanta Pradhan tends his paddy fields with the practised eye of generations before him. Hundreds of miles away, in Sangramnagar village in Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh, 35-year-old Rajesh Singh Yadav works the fertile alluvial plains that have long sustained his community. Different landscapes, different farming histories yet their journeys converge on one unlikely common ground.

Rethinking rice: beyond yield

Born in the laboratories of the Cuttack-based ICAR-National Rice Research Institute (NRI), CR Dhan 310 was imagined differently from the yield-obsessed breeding programmes of the Green Revolution era. Scientists began with a provocative question: what if a bowl of rice could fight hidden hunger, not just fill a plate? Conventional rice, while rich in carbohydrates, contains only six to eight percent protein in milled form and loses much of its iron, zinc and vitamins during polishing. CR Dhan 310 pushes that boundary to over 10 percent protein — 10.2-10.3% in polished rice — while also offering higher glutenin fractions that are easier to digest and moderate zinc content.

What Makes CR Dhan 310 Different?

- Over 10% protein content in polished rice
- Higher digestible glutenin protein fraction
- Moderate zinc levels
- Comparable yields to popular high-yielding varieties
- Familiar grain type and cooking quality

In villages where rice is eaten two or three times a day, this nutritional shift becomes more than a marginal tweak. It becomes a quiet intervention against protein-energy malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies — the invisible crisis known as "hidden hunger." "Biofortified rice is developed through conventional breeding or, in some cases, genetic approaches to enhance its nutritional profile, particularly micronutrients that are often deficient in diets," explains Dr Krishnendu Chattopadhyay, Principal Scientist (Plant Breeding) at ICAR-NRI, Cuttack.

Starting with high-yielding Naveen, his team — including Dr Srigopal Sharma, Torit Baran Bagchi, Dr Avijit Das, and Bishnu Charan Marndi — stacked protein traits while keeping familiar architecture. In



2018, they won the ICAR's (Indian Council of Agricultural Research) Nanaji Deshmukh Award.

Kandhamal: A test in tribal terrain

In 2025, the SAHARA organisation introduced CR Dhan 310 to farmers in five villages of Odisha's Kandhamal district. Sixty-five farmers cultivated the variety across 60 acres. The yields — about six quintals per acre — were modest compared to national trials but significant for challenging rainfed hill terrain.

For Hemanta Pradhan, the shift came with questions:

- Would his family accept the taste?
- Would traders buy an unfamiliar grain?
- Would higher protein translate into visible health benefits?
- Over two seasons, as he watched the plants withstand dry spells and produce well-filled panicles, scepticism turned into cautious optimism.

Uttar Pradesh: Scaling through collectives

In eastern Uttar Pradesh, the introduction followed a more organised route. Prayag Samrudhi Producer Company sourced foundation seed from ICAR-NRI and began with just four farmers before expanding to 34 others across multiple villages. "People here are used to smaller, aromatic varieties," recalls Anita Yadav, associate project director at the Grameen Foundation for Social Impact (GFSI), who has directly worked with more than 45,000 farmers on sustainable agriculture, financial inclusion and market access.

"Introducing a new, non-aromatic grain that looks different and is marketed primarily on its protein content needed patient hand-holding," shares Anita Yadav. Training sessions on biofortification, on-field demonstrations, and the use of digital advisory tools such as the Rice Expert App became crucial to building trust. Training sessions, on-field demonstrations and digital advisory tools played a critical role in building trust among farmers accustomed to small, aromatic varieties.

Improved agronomic practices such as the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) and Alternate Wetting and Drying (AWD) further strengthened outcomes. By the second season, yields averaged around 54.6 quintals per hectare, with some farmers achieving as high as 78 quintals per hectare.

Women at the centre of the seed system

● In 2022, ICAR-NRI signed MoUs with seven Farmer-Producer Companies in Uttar Pradesh for seed production and commercialisation.

● Together, these FPCs counted around 7,444 members — 57% of them women — signalling a deliberate attempt to place women farmers and agripreneurs at the centre of the value chain. Seed production rose steadily, with projections indicating expansion beyond pilot plots into broader market channels. Acceptance, however, remains gradual. Many consumers still prefer aromatic or traditional varieties. As plain table rice, CR Dhan 310 may not immediately rival specialty grains in urban kitchens. Where it may find stronger footing is in value-added and institutional segments:

Baby food formulations for Anganwadis

- Poshan Kit blends under government nutrition schemes
- Rice-based snacks and extruded products
- School feeding programmes
- Here, its higher protein content becomes a clear selling point rather than an invisible trait.

Nutrition, processing and reality

Clinical Nutritionist Sonal H Chandalia points out that while the protein advantage is real, milling reduces fibre — making the glycemic index comparable to other milled cereals. The nutritional upgrade exists, but processing methods influence its final impact.

CR Dhan 310 is part of a broader biofortification push that includes zinc- and iron-rich rice varieties and ongoing exploration of nutrient-enhanced crops. Rather than treating agriculture and nutrition as separate silos, biofortification attempts to embed health directly into staple crops — turning everyday food into preventive intervention.

A revolution, season by season

The road to mainstream acceptance is slow and relational. NGOs, FPCs and farmer groups invest in awareness, training and negotiation with traders. Neighbours watch early adopters carefully before taking the plunge. Yet with every harvest, more households taste the grain. More FPO meetings discuss branding and institutional markets. More farmers begin to see potential beyond a single season's income.

For Hemanta Pradhan, it is the sight of full panicles against Kandhamal's hills. For Rajesh Singh Yadav, it is the hope that his grain might one day reappear as fortified baby cereal or a school snack. CR Dhan 310 shows how innovation rarely arrives with spectacle. It travels through trust, persuasion and patience — until, quietly, it reshapes the everyday bowl of rice.



CHILDHOOD PASSION BEHIND \$11M SHRIMP FARMING SUCCESS IN GUJARAT

Driven by a childhood fascination with aquatic life, Surat-based Dr Manoj Sharma has transformed Gujarat's barren coastal lands into thriving shrimp farms, reshaping both the landscape and the local economy. Originally from Nanded, Maharashtra, his early curiosity about fish evolved into a professional calling after he narrowly missed admission to medical school. He went on to pursue a Master's degree in Aquaculture Management from the Central Institute of Fisheries Education (CIFE), Mumbai.

In 1994, Sharma moved to Olpad in Gujarat, where he identified the untapped potential of shrimp farming in salt-affected, unproductive lands. At the time, aquaculture had little presence in the largely vegetarian state, and awareness about shrimp farming was minimal. Despite facing early setbacks such as viral outbreaks and legal challenges, he remained determined. Starting in 2005 with just four hectares, he initially sold shrimp by the roadside. Over time, he founded Mayank Aquaculture Private Limited (MAPL) and expanded operations to 400 hectares, producing around 1,000 tonnes annually, with a turnover of ₹75-100 crore.

To support collective growth, Sharma co-founded the Surat Aquaculture Farmers Association (SAFA) with a few farmers. Today, it includes over 500 members, fostering collaboration and sustain-



able practices in the region. His contributions have earned him several accolades, including recognition from the National Fisheries Development Board and the World Aquaculture Society, along with being featured in a DD National documentary as the "Father of the Blue Revolution in Gujarat."

Sharma believes India has immense potential to expand shrimp farming and has outlined five key reforms to achieve this. First, he advocates for a unified land lease and water resource policy to make barren lands more accessible for aquaculture. Second, he recommends standardised power tariffs across states to reduce operational costs for farmers. Third, he highlights the need to promote shrimp consumption within India, reducing dependence on exports and strengthening the domestic market.

Additionally, Sharma calls for integrating aquaculture into agricultural policies, ensuring farmers receive benefits like insurance and financial incentives. Finally, he stresses the importance of raising public awareness about the nutritional benefits of seafood, encouraging healthier dietary choices.

Through these measures, Sharma envisions a "Blue Revolution" in India, similar to the Green, White, and Pink revolutions, aimed at boosting food security, creating livelihoods, and driving economic growth. His journey demonstrates how innovation, persistence, and strategic thinking can turn overlooked resources into engines of prosperity.





There is more to Indian cricket than just a couple of people, says R. Ashwin



KOLKATA

The realisation that it was time for him to retire from Test cricket dawned on former India all-rounder Ravichandran Ashwin when the younger and less experienced Washington Sundar was preferred over him for a Test match in Australia.

During India's tour of Australia in 2024, senior bowler Ashwin lost his place in the XI and decided to retire at the end of the series.

At an event in Kolkata on Tuesday, Ashwin opened up about the moment he realised his time with the Indian team had come to an end. "At Perth, I was the senior bowler. Washi (Washington Sundar) played that Test, and I realised that my time was up," he said.

His retirement after the Brisbane Test prompted criticism of the team management, especially after Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli also stepped away following the series. Head coach Gautam Gambhir faced trolling on social media amid suggestions that senior players had been pushed towards retirement. Ashwin, however, dismissed that narrative and backed Gambhir's approach.

"I like Gautam, and many people may have different opinions about him, but he is someone who always puts the team ahead of individuals," Ashwin said. "He credits the team, not individuals, and that's something I admire."

Ashwin also spoke about the culture within the Indian dressing room and the importance of looking beyond individual stars. "There is more to Indian

cricket than just a couple of people," he said.

Reflecting on his long association with Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, Ashwin highlighted the bond within the group during their years together. "The best part about us was that none of us blamed each other. We all wanted India to win and make the country proud. We were motivated to do that," he said.

Ashwin, who finished his Test career with more than 500 wickets, also shared his views on the challenges facing the Indian Test team during the ongoing transition. "The team is in transition. Playing against spin is a problem, but for me, batting is not that big an issue. We will produce batters," he said. "Bowling is not as effective as batting, and that's where the concern lies."



Sanju Samson felicitated by Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan after T20 WC win

NEW DELHI

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan honoured India wicketkeeper-batter Sanju Samson, who played a pivotal role in India's triumphant campaign at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup earlier this month.

Vijayan hosted the World Cup champion at his official residence, Cliff House, on Monday (March 16), to acknowledge his achievements.

The 31-year-old Samson came dressed in traditional attire for the ceremony, during which Vijayan handed him a commemorative memento bearing the message, "We salute Sanju Viswanath Samson."

The keepsake also highlighted his crucial contributions during the tournament's knockout phase, including a 97 off 50 balls against the West Indies in the Super 8 stage, an 89 off 42 in the semi-final against England, and

another 89 off 46 in the final versus New Zealand.

Sharing the moment on X, Vijayan wrote, "Had the pleasure of hosting India's pride and Kerala's own, Sanju Samson, at Cliff House yesterday. Conveyed the profound love and joy of the people of Kerala. May he draw strength from his recent achievements and continue to scale new heights. Wishing him the very best!"

Samson's journey in the tournament was not without challenges. He had initially been left out of India's playing XI for their opening match, with the team management opting for Ishan Kishan as the wicketkeeper alongside opener Abhishek Sharma. His place in the squad had also come under scrutiny after he managed only 46 runs across five matches in a home T20I series against New Zealand ahead of the global event.

Despite the early doubts, Samson turned the narrative around with a string of

match-winning performances, emerging as one of the standout players in India's successful campaign.

Following the celebrations, the Kerala batter has now turned his attention to the upcoming season of the Indian Premier League, where Samson will make his debut with Chennai Super Kings, five-time champions of the tournament.

They will begin their IPL 2026 campaign against Samson's former franchise, the Rajasthan Royals, to whom they traded Ravindra Jadeja and Sam Curran, in Guwahati on March 30. The side will then face Punjab Kings at home on April 3, travel to take on Royal Challengers Bengaluru on April 5, and return home to play Delhi Capitals on April 11. Chennai will be looking to bounce back strongly this season after finishing at the bottom of the table in IPL 2025 with just four wins from 14 matches.

Formula 1

Alex Albon backs Thai Grand Prix plans amid government change



BEIJING: Williams driver Alex Albon says plans for a Formula 1 race in Thailand are well advanced, but there is uncertainty following the change in government. London-born Albon, who races under the Thai flag, has been involved in discussions around a potential Thai Grand Prix around the streets of the capital, Bangkok, including meetings with senior officials and the Sports Authority of Thailand. "I've had a few meetings with the now ex-prime minister," Albon told Xinhua during the Chinese Grand Prix weekend. "The Sports Authority of Thailand is a big part of getting this underway, and there's a huge Thai tourism incentive as well." Under former Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra, Thailand had shown interest in bringing F1 to the country as part of a broader push to boost high-value tourism and global visibility.

CRICKET

A moment I will cherish for the rest of my life: Rawal



NEW DELHI: The Delhi & District Cricket Association honoured India's World Cup champions, Pratika Rawal and Udhav Mohan, at the Sports Journalists Federation of India National Convention, hosted by the Delhi Sports Journalists Association on Monday. The recognition ceremony was held as part of the SJFI convention's Golden Jubilee celebrations, bringing together administrators, journalists, and sportspeople to acknowledge achievements in Indian sports. During the event, DDCA awarded Rawal, a member of India's historic women's ODI World Cup win in 2025, a cash prize of ₹11 lakh. Additionally, Mohan, who won the Under-19 World Cup with the national junior team, received a prize of ₹5 lakh. Speaking at the ceremony, DDCA President Rohan Jaitley said,

Conway, bowlers star as NZ level series with clinical win over SA

HAMILTON

A disciplined all-round performance helped New Zealand register a convincing win over South Africa in the second T20I and level the five-game series 1-1 at Seddon Park in Hamilton on Tuesday.

Asked to bat first, New Zealand built their innings around a steady knock from Devon Conway (60 off 49), who anchored the top order and ensured the hosts had a solid platform. The opener rotated the strike well and found timely boundaries, allowing New Zealand to recover whenever South Africa's bowlers struck.

South Africa managed to pick up wickets at regular intervals through their pace attack and spin options, preventing the hosts from run-

ning away with the innings in the middle overs. However, New Zealand's batters ensured the run rate never dipped significantly, thanks to a 12-ball 21 and a 14-ball 20 by Nick Kelly and skipper Mitchell Santner, respectively.

The hosts then accelerated in the closing stages of the innings, capitalising on a few loose deliveries to add valuable runs in the death overs and post a competitive total. The late flourish from Cole McConehie (18 off 12) and Josh Clarkson (26 not out off nine balls) proved crucial in pushing the score to a level that kept the pressure firmly on the visitors heading into the chase. Chasing a modest total, South Africa began cautiously with Wiaan Mulder and Connor Esterhuizen at the top.



Telangana men's TT team wins bronze

at the 87th UTT Senior National Table Tennis Championships being held at Ahay Prashal Stadium in Indore

They lost to the ultimate winners, PSPB, in the semi-finals after defeating Karnataka in the Quarter Finals. Telangana Team: SFR Snehit, Mohammad Ali, Varun Shankar, Swarnendu, Trishul Mehra, Somnath Ghosh (Coach), Chaitanya (Manager)

Semi Finals: PSPB bt Telangana 3-0 (Payas Jain bt Mohammed Ali 11-9, 9-11, 11-6, 11-7, Manav Thakkar bt Snehit 11-7, 11-7, 7-11, 11-13, 11-4, Harmet Desai bt Swarnendu 11-7, 8-11, 11-8, 11-6)

Quarter Finals: Telangana bt Karnataka 3-1 (K.J. Aakash bt Swarnendu 11-7, 11-7, 11-9, P. Yeshwanth lost to Snehit 9-11, 3-11, 11-13, Atharva Nawarange lost to Mohammed Ali 11-5, 8-11, 9-11, 4-11, Aakash lost to Snehit 7-11, 11-7, 6-11, 8-11)

Ridhima, Tvesa, and Jasmine ready for battle in 6th leg of WPG Tour

NOIDA

Ridhima Dilawari, Tvesa Malik, and Jasmine Shekar, who between them have won four of the five events held so far this season on Women's Pro Golf Tour (WPGT) 2026, will lead a big field of 53 players at the sixth leg of the tour, which has a prize fund of Rs. 17 lakh.

While Jasmine won the first leg this season, Ridhima won the second and the fourth, and Tvesa Malik won the third leg. The strong field at the Jaypee Wishtown Golf Course will also see strong contenders like Amandeep Drall, a former Indian Open runner-up, Anvitha Narendran, Seher Atwal, Neha Tripathi, Heena Kang, Jahanvi Bakshi, Vidhatri Urs, and Saanvi Somu.

The event at Jaypee Wishtown Golf Course, Noida, will



also see seven amateurs in the field. The presence of amateurs has become significant as they have regularly been in contention in recent years.

In fact, the fifth leg was won by an amateur, Lavanya Gupta, who is not playing this week. However, the field includes amateur Mahreen Bhatia, who is the defending champion and won the last leg of the 2025 season at the same venue.

Working with Southee will improve my skills, says KKR's Vaibhav Arora

KOLKATA

Ahead of the new season of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026, three-time champions Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) pacer Vaibhav Arora is focused on evolving his game and sharpening his skillset as he prepares for the challenges ahead in the season.

The 28-year-old pacer from Ambala, who made his debut for the franchise in 2023, has taken 36 wickets in 32 matches in his IPL career so far with an impressive strike rate of 17.72. He also played a key role in KKR's title-winning campaign in IPL 2024, claiming 11 wickets in 10 matches.

As the team gears up for the upcoming season, Arora has been putting in extensive work during the training camp, focusing on improving different aspects of his bowling. "Overall, the preparation is solid. We're playing practice matches and also honing our variations in the nets. As a fast bowler, you always want to prepare



well and improve your skills so that you can execute them effectively in match situations," he said.

Arora is particularly excited about the opportunity to work closely with former teammate Tim Southee, who has joined the franchise as bowling coach this season. The former New Zealand captain brings enormous experience to the role, having taken more than 700 international wickets and previously represented KKR for three seasons between 2021 and 2023.

Squash: Indian stars target home victory as Indian Open begins in Mumbai

MUMBAI

The second edition of the Indian Open begins tomorrow at Mumbai's iconic Brabourne Stadium, promising five days of intense squash. The tournament features a strong lineup of India's top players alongside international competitors, with 30 matches scheduled in both men's and women's categories. Players will compete for PSA ranking points and the prestigious title. The Indian Open, sanctioned by the Professional Squash Association (PSA) and organised by the Squash Rackets Federation of India (SRFI), is a PSA Copper event with equal prize money for men and women. It serves as a vital platform for Indian players to face top international opponents at home and acquire essential competitive experience.

Much of the focus will be on top seed and defending champion Anahat Singh, returning after a breakthrough year on the PSA Tour. She will be accompanied by top Indian players Ramit Tandon, Veer Chotrani, Abhay Singh, and veteran Joshua Chinappa, all aiming to make a significant im-



pression in front of the home crowd.

The tournament also boasts a competitive international lineup, including Yahya Elnawasay, Nadien Elhammam, and Enora Villard. This creates several exciting matchups in both the men's and women's draws throughout the week. Before the tournament, players Anahat Singh and Ramit Tandon

expressed their views on the upcoming event and the increasing chances for Indian squash players to compete domestically.

Speaking on the magnitude of the tournament, Ramit Tandon said, "Players really enjoy coming to India because of the culture and hospitality, and last year many players on the PSA

Tour told me this was one of the best events of the year. The facilities provided at the tournament are exceptional and playing at home also brings a different kind of pressure with friends, family and Indian fans watching the action. The Indian Open gives Indian players the chance to compete against the best and allows younger athletes to watch and learn from them."

Looking forward to the tournament, Anahat Singh added, "I had a strong training period in the build-up to the tournament, which has helped me focus on improving different areas of my game. Coming into this tournament, the idea is to stay consistent with what I have been working on in practice and approach every match with the same mindset. Playing at home in front of Indian fans is always special, and I am really looking forward to competing at the Indian Open and giving it my best throughout the week."

With squash set to be part of the next Olympic Games, tournaments like this are an important step as we continue working towards the bigger goal." As squash prepares to debut at the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics.

AbRAR Ahmed not concerned by backlash on signing by Indian owners: Report

MUMBAI

Pakistan's mystery spinner AbRAR Ahmed is not losing sleep over the possible backlash, specifically comments from former Indian great Sunil Gavaskar, on his signing by an Indian-owned franchise, Sunrisers Hyderabad, in the auction for the upcoming edition of The Hundred, a news report said on Tuesday.

AbRAR, ranked as high as number two in the ICC rankings until last month and now third, was signed by Sunrisers Hyderabad, which owns Sunrisers Hyderabad in the Indian Premier League, for 190k Pounds Sterling last week.

The franchise owners are facing severe backlash in India over the signing, but AbRAR is not worried by comments over the move, Telecom Asia Sport said in a report. Gavaskar called the signing an indirect way to fund the Pakistan military, which, in turn, kills Indian soldiers. While the Pakistan Cricket Board and AbRAR are tight-lipped on the backlash.



Kiran Abbavaram Teams Up With Dear Comrade Director

A new web series is currently being planned by Amazon Prime Video, and it is already creating a lot of interest among movie lovers. The series will be directed by Bharat Kamma who earlier directed the popular film Dear Comrade starring Vijay Devarakonda and Rashmika Mandanna. This time, Bharat Kamma is working on a political drama series that promises to be different and interesting. Young actor Kiran Abbavaram has been chosen to play the lead role in this project. This will be his first major collaboration with Bharat Kamma and also an important project in his career. According to early reports, the makers are planning to reveal the first look of the series during the Ugadi festival. Along with the first look poster, the title of the series will also be officially announced. Ugadi is considered a special occa-

sion, and the team wants to start the promotions on this festive day. For now, the title "Guvvala Cheruvu Gattu" is being widely discussed in film circles. Though it has not been officially confirmed yet, many people believe this could be the final title of the series. The project is said to be one of the biggest web series coming from Amazon Prime in terms of budget and scale. The makers are reportedly spending a good amount of money to make the series look grand and realistic. The story is expected to explore political themes and social issues in a powerful way. Another exciting aspect of the series is its casting. Sources say the show will feature many surprising actors in important roles. The makers are planning to bring together talented artists to make the story more engaging.

SREELEELA SPOTTED WITH "ICCHIPADESE GOTHRAM, IRAGADEESE NAKSHATRAM"



Actress Sreeleela recently grabbed everyone's attention at the airport with a stylish look that also carried a special message for fans of Pawan Kalyan. The young actress was seen wearing a black jacket that had a powerful dialogue printed on it from the pre-release event of the upcoming film Ustaad Bhagat Singh. The dialogue on the jacket read, "Ichhipadese Gothram, iragadeese Nakshatram." Meanwhile same as it, "Preminche Gothram, Seva Chese Nakshatram," line was spoken by Pawan Kalyan during the grand pre-release event of the film and quickly became popular among fans. When Sreeleela wore the jacket with this dialogue, it created excitement among people who saw her at the airport.

Sreeleela kept her look simple yet stylish. She wore a black jacket along with casual travel wear, making her appearance comfortable and fashionable at the same time. The highlight of her outfit was clearly the special jacket with words "Ichhipadese Gothram, iragadeese Nakshatram," which seemed to be designed as a tribute to the film and its powerful dialogue.

Sreeleela kept her look simple yet stylish. She wore a black jacket along with casual travel wear, making her appearance comfortable and fashionable at the same time. The highlight of her outfit was clearly the special jacket with words "Ichhipadese Gothram, iragadeese Nakshatram," which seemed to be designed as a tribute to the film and its powerful dialogue. Fans who noticed the jacket immediately shared photos and videos on social media. Many people appreciated Sreeleela for showing her support for the film and for Pawan Kalyan. Since she is also part of Ustaad Bhagat Singh, her appearance with the special jacket created even more buzz around the movie. Ustaad Bhagat Singh is one of the most awaited Telugu films of the year. The movie is directed by Harish Shankar and produced by Mythri Movie Makers. The film has already generated huge expectations among fans because it marks another collaboration between Pawan Kalyan and Harish Shankar after their blockbuster film Gabbar Singh. Sreeleela plays an important role in the film, and the makers have already hinted that her character will have high energy and entertainment value. With the film set to release on March 19 as an Ugadi special, excitement among fans is increasing every day.



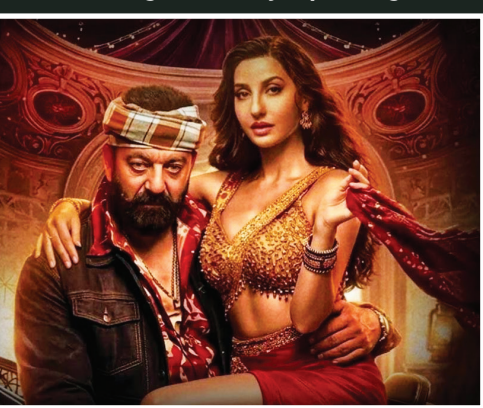
Sanjay Dutt-Nora Fatehi Song 'Sarke Chunar' Draws Ire for Vulgar Lyrics

New Delhi: "Sarke Chunar" from Sanjay Dutt's "KD The Devil" is the focus of outrage for its sexually explicit lyrics with all-round criticism and the song itself disappearing from the official YouTube page though it was played endlessly and shared on social media. A video of the Hindi song, featuring Dutt and Nora Fatehi, was released on YouTube two days ago and quickly went viral for its shock value. The Kannada film, which will be dubbed in four languages, will release on April 30.

The song has come to the notice of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry and there are plans to send a notice to YouTube since the film itself has not been released, a government source said.

Following the furor, the Hindi version can't be seen anymore on YouTube. However, the Kannada, Malayalam, Telugu and Tamil versions are still available on the video sharing platform. Anand Audio has the music rights to the movie, which is backed KVN Productions.

The Hindi song is by Mangli and the lyrics are originally by Prem, the director of the movie. Raqeeb Alam is credited for the Hindi version. The music is by Arjun Janya. Musician Armaan Malik and filmmaker Onir were amongst the many expressing their distress. "Wish I could unhear it," said Malik, known for hits such as "Bol Do Na Zara", "Wajah Tum Ho" and "Sab Tera". "This showed up on my timeline and I had to replay it just to make sure I heard it right. Sad to see commercial songwriting hit a new low. I am genuinely at a loss of words," he wrote on X.



Filmmaker Onir questioned why the song was not banned. "And the Censor board is busy with The naming of a film #GhooskorPandat. Strange country we are becoming... opposing Valentines day celebration, interfaith marriage/celebration while ok with this rubbish," he wrote on X. Many others on social media also called out the makers for lowering the standard of music. "Sad to see how normalised cheap and vulgar lyrics have become in mainstream songs. Shock value isn't creativity. Bollywood music once had poetry, emotion and depth - we deserve that standard again," one user wrote on X.

"Today's level of music is so cheap and disgusting," wrote another. One user on X said the song should be "banned with immediate effect". "This is so shameful, just for some money people write such songs, compose music for this nonsense and singers perform them. Even actors dance and perform on such disgusting content," wrote a social media user.



Pawan Kalyan's Next With Malayalam Director

There is strong buzz in the Telugu film industry about a possible collaboration between Power Star Pawan Kalyan and director Mohan Raja. This news has quickly become a hot topic among fans and movie lovers. If the project happens, it is expected to be a big and exciting film. Malayalam director Mohan Raja is well known for directing several successful films in South Indian cinema. In Telugu, he recently directed Chiranjeevi's film God Father. The movie had a lot of expectations before its release. However, after it hit the theatres, the response was only average at the box office. Even though the film did not become a huge blockbuster, many people appreciated Mohan Raja's stylish direction and presentation.

Now, reports say that Mohan Raja is planning a new project with Pawan Kalyan. This news has created a lot of curiosity because Pawan Kalyan is one of the biggest stars in Telugu cinema. Whenever he signs a new film, it immediately becomes a major talking point in the industry. At present, Pawan Kalyan is busy working on his upcoming film Ustaad Bhagat Singh. The movie is being directed by Harish Shankar and has already created massive hype among fans. Posters and updates from the film are getting strong attention on social media. Fans are eagerly waiting to see Pawan Kalyan in this powerful role.

Because of his busy schedule, the project with Mohan Raja may start only after Pawan Kalyan completes his current commitments. Sources say that early discussions have already taken place, but the official announcement has not been made yet. If this collaboration becomes official, it will definitely raise expectations among audiences.



Buzz: A R Rahman Peddi Songs To Kickstart IPL 2026?

According to reports, music maestro A R Rahman is to perform for songs at IPL 2026. The cricket tournament is set to kickstart from 28 March in an extravagant manner. In the first match RCB the reigning champions are clashing with SRH. In the meantime, sources are hinting at Oscar winner Rahman doing a live performance and set to play songs from his Telugu movie Peddi at the inaugural match. Ahead of the start of the IPL, CSK is planning to organise grand celebrations and as a part of it, an event will be organised on 22 March 2026.

Inside talk is Rahman will be gracing the event and will be performing for songs live. It is known that Peddi stars Ram Charan in the lead role under the direction of Buchi Babu Sana. The film features Janhvi Kapoor as the female lead while Jagapathi Babu, Divyendu Sharma and Shiva Rajkumar are playing important roles. The film is racing for release on 30 April 2026. Peddi songs like Chikri Chikri have already busted the musical charts and set to enthral cricket fans too. The much awaited film is slated for release on April 30 worldwide.

