

HYDERABAD HEADLINES

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"Chal Re Man Vrindavan," by Hema Malini mesmerised the audience

HOME LAND 07

Kangana Calls Out Superstar Domination



BOX - OFFICE 12



Devotees parade beautifully decorated idols of Goddess Gauri and Lord Isar during a colorful procession marking the Gangaur festival in Indore district, Madhya Pradesh, on Saturday

..: INDORE

SHORT TAKES



10 BEST HILL STATIONS TO VISIT.

Summer in India can feel overwhelming, and there's nothing quite like heading to the hills for a breath of cool air. From misty forests to rolling tea gardens, the country's hill stations offer the perfect break from scorching temperatures. Here are some of the finest places to unwind, recharge and enjoy the mountains.

FOCUS POINT 10



A RS.20K CRORE LIFELINE FOR MFS

The TMC on Friday unveiled its manifesto for the West Bengal assembly elections, focusing on welfare expansion, women and minority outreach, and targeted social schemes as it seeks a fourth consecutive term.

HOME LAND 07



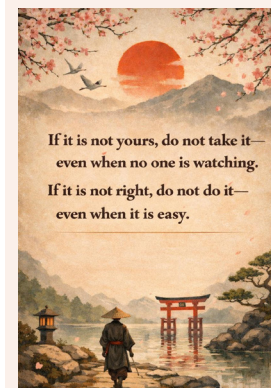
WAR MAY REDO UNION BUDGET

India faces mounting economic turbulence as escalating conflict in West Asia disrupts energy supplies, spikes shipping costs, and triggers capital outflows, raising the prospect of a significant recalibration of the Union Budget in the upcoming Monsoon Session.

OPINION 06

THE DAILY MANTRA

INTEGRITY



If it is not yours, do not take it— even when no one is watching. If it is not right, do not do it— even when it is easy.

- A person's true character is revealed not in public, but in the quiet moments when choices are made alone.
- To live with honor is to respect what belongs to others.
- Act with integrity in all things.

Collected by

Venna Srinivasa Reddy



Eid-ul-Fitr Celebrated with Devotion Across Telangana

HYDERABAD, MARCH 21

Eid-ul-Fitr was observed with traditional fervour and devotion across Telangana on Saturday, marking the conclusion of Ramadan. Faithful congregated at mosques and Eidgahs across the state for special prayers, reflecting the spirit of religious observance and community togetherness. In Hyderabad, AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi offered prayers

at the Eidgah ground, joined by several other political leaders. Authorities ensured smooth arrangements for the occasion, with police deploying personnel to manage crowds and maintain order, allowing prayers and celebrations to proceed without disruption.

The city's historic Lad Bazar witnessed a surge in festive activity on Friday night as

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Bhadrachalam Set for Agama-Compliant Upgrade

CM Revanth to Lead Bhadrachalam Temple Makeover

HYDERABAD:

Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Sunday directed officials to initiate a comprehensive redevelopment of the historic Sri Seetha Ramachandra Swamy Temple in Bhadrachalam, ensuring all works strictly adhere to Agama Shastra traditions. The move aims to preserve the temple's spiritual sanctity while upgrading infrastructure for devotees. Accompanied by Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka and

other cabinet members, the Chief Minister reviewed architectural designs and layouts for the redevelopment project, which will be executed in three phases. The first phase, scheduled for completion by March 31, 2027, will focus on critical infrastructure improvements to accommodate the upcoming Godavari Pushkarams.

Focus on Pilgrims and Heritage

Officials were instructed to prioritize

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >



Modi, Iran President Discuss West Asia Peace

In Call with Modi, Iran President Proposes Regional Security Framework, Urges India's BRICS Role to End Hostilities

NEW DELHI, MAR 21

In a phone conversation on Saturday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian discussed rising tensions in West Asia, condemning attacks on critical infrastructure and emphasizing the need for regional stability.

Amid Tehran's effective blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, which has disrupted global energy supplies, Modi highlighted the importance of keeping shipping lanes "open and secure."

Significantly, President Pezeshkian proposed the establishment of a regional

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >

SIT Seizes Former BRS MLA's Farm-house in Hyd Drug Probe

HYDERABAD, MAR 21

The nine-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Telangana Police has intensified its investigation into the high-profile drug consumption case at a farmhouse in Moinsabad. In a major move, authorities have officially seized and sealed the farmhouse belonging to former BRS MLA Pilot Rohit Reddy.

The action follows a surprise raid last week where police reportedly found several high-profile individuals—including Rohit Reddy, his brother Ritesh Reddy, and TDP MP Putta Mahesh Kumar Yadav—allegedly consuming narcotics. Along with the

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KTR Pushes 'Six Guarantees' Through Private Member Bill

HYDERABAD, MARCH 21

K.T. Rama Rao, working president of Bharat Rashtira Samithi, on Saturday announced that his party will introduce a Private Member Bill in the state legislature to ensure implementation of the Congress party's 'Six Guarantees'. KTR criticized the government, stating that despite A. Revanth Reddy approving the guarantees soon after assuming office and their mention in the Governor's address, there has been "no progress even after 800 days".

He said the BRS will seek permission from the Speaker of the Assembly and Chairman of the Legislative Council to introduce the Bill during the current session. "If the Congress is sincere, it should allow the Bill to be taken up and passed" he asserted. Citing a precedent



On the occasion of Ramadan, BRS Working President KTR attended the celebrations held at the residence of former Deputy Chief Minister mahmoodali and conveyed his greetings.

during the N.T. Rama Rao government where a Private Member Bill was approved, KTR urged the ruling Congress to follow suit. He said the proposed legislation would make welfare schemes - such as support for farmers, women, students and youth - legally binding, preventing the government from evading its commitments,

including schemes like Rythu Bandhu.

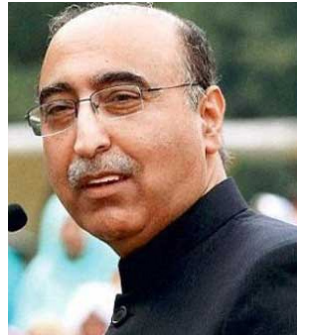
KTR added that BRS would reach out to leaders across various political parties for support and also seek public feedback. He called on the citizens to pressure their MLAs to back the Bill, warning that the party would explore legal options if it is not passed.

Nuclear Threat Warning: Delhi, Mumbai in Pak Envoy's Statement

BASIT, WHO SERVED AS ISLAMABAD'S TOP DIPLOMAT IN NEW DELHI FROM 2014 TO 2017 FRAMED INDIA AS PAKISTAN'S "DEFAULT" TARGET IN A WORST-CASE SCENARIO WHERE THE US TARGETS ITS NUCLEAR ASSETS.

NEW DELHI, MAR 21

As tensions in the West Asia intensify with the ongoing Iran war involving the United States and Israel, a controversial statement by former Pakistan High Commissioner to India Abdul Basit has raised fresh concerns about regional security. Speaking about a hypothetical worst-case scenario, Basit, who served as Islamabad's top diplomat in New Delhi from 2014 to 2017 suggested that Pakistan could strike India if faced with an existential military threat from the US or Israel. Basit



framed his statement around a deteriorating regional situation, saying, "Let's say the situation in Iran worsens and Israel positions itself closer to us. Suppose a scenario develops where the United States also views our nuclear program negatively or attempts to destroy our nuclear capability."

Though, he emphasised that such a scenario was highly unlikely but proceeded to outline its implications. "I am talking about a worst-case scenario, something

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STRONG EPOXY FOR ANY SEASON • ANY REASON

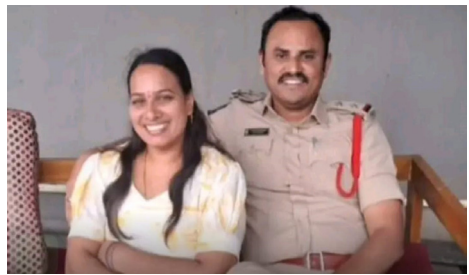


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Karimnagar Two Town sub-inspector dies by suicide



HYDERABAD Karimnagar Two Town sub-inspector Chandrashekhar tragically took his own life at his mother-in-law's residence in Seethampeta village, Jammikunta mandal, Karimnagar district on Saturday. This incident occurred just four days after the death of his wife, Divya, who also died by suicide. Reports indicate that Chandrashekhar's decision to end his life was a consequence of profound grief over his wife's passing and was further complicated by rising suspicions surrounding the circumstances of Divya's death. His body has since been transferred to Jammikunta hospital. Divya, a resident of Seethampeta, had married SI Chandrashekhar in 2016. On Tuesday, March 17th, her husband followed his usual routine, dropping their two children at school before commencing his duties. Earlier that morning, Divya had consumed a mixture of oleander flowers and leaves, having been suffering from abdominal pain. She subsequently contacted her parents to inform them of her actions. Despite being rushed by her husband to a Hyderabad hospital, Divya succumbed to her condition during treatment. Following Divya's death, her relatives reportedly made accusations against Chandrashekhar, alleging his culpability in her suicide, and attempted to confront him. Her funeral rites were eventually conducted by her parents amidst protests from villagers and relatives. Chandrashekhar reportedly visited his in-laws' home on Saturday for the fifth-day ritual. When he did not emerge from his room, his family became concerned. Upon investigation, they discovered him deceased by hanging. He was immediately transported to a private hospital in Jammikunta, where medical professionals pronounced him dead.

CM Revanth Reddy inaugurates BRS-era projects, says Harish

HYDERABAD

Former Minister and Member of the Legislative Assembly for the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) has strongly criticised Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy for claiming credit for development projects executed during the BRS regime.

He also accused the Chief Minister of demonstrating bias against the Siddipet Assembly constituency by halting all ongoing development initiatives.

Speaking to the media at his camp office in Siddipet on Saturday, Harish Rao released an open letter criticising the Congress government's approach towards the constituency.

He said that in the last two and a half years, not a single new development project has been sanctioned for Siddipet by the present government. Harish Rao stated that all the projects being inaugurated during the Chief Minister's visit were approved, funded, and completed during the previous BRS government.



"The effort is ours, but the credit is being claimed by Revanth Reddy," Harish Rao remarked, adding that while the Chief Minister's name may appear on foundation stones, the people of Siddipet will always remember K. Chandrasekhar Rao.

The BRS MLAs highlighted that the ₹300 crore oil palm factory at Narmeta is a BRS initiative. Land measuring 62 acres was acquired through TGIIC,

farmers were encouraged to cultivate oil palm, and infrastructure including water supply was developed during the previous government, he reminded.

Harish Rao pointed out that the factory depends on Kaleshwaram project waters, which were earlier criticised by Revanth Reddy. "It is unfortunate that the same project is now being relied upon," he said. Harish Rao further stated that several

health infrastructure projects inaugurated now were also developed during his tenure as Health Minister. The BRS MLA strongly criticised the government for cancelling ₹1,07,00 crore worth of development works in Siddipet, alleging political vendetta. He also accused the Chief Minister of shifting the Veterinary College project, which had already begun in Siddipet, to his own constituency Kodangal.

Rs.5,000 cr demand: Brahmin asso slams govt over 'neglect'

HYDERABAD

The Global Brahmins Welfare Association on Saturday accused the state government of 'grave injustice' to the Brahmin community in the annual budget presented in the state assembly and demanded an immediate allocation of Rs.5,000 crore for its welfare.

Addressing a press meet at the NSS in Hyderguda here, association leaders Giriprasad Sharma and Rudraveena Balasubrahmanyam urged the state government to release all pending dues and strengthen the Brahmin Corporation with a full-time IAS officer. They alleged that no funds had been released for schemes introduced during the previous BRS regime and criticised the

current dispensation for inaction.

Further, they said that if the state government is averse to the name "Brahmin Corporation", they would have no objection to renaming it after as "Sonia Gandhi Corporation". They demanded for immediate appointment of an IAS officer to head the corporation while noting that although the previous government had established the Brahmin Corporation, it had failed to appoint a dedicated IAS officer to the post.

Claiming that nearly 20 lakh Brahmin families depend on traditional priesthood and related services, they sought urgent intervention for their economic uplift. Association members warned of intensified protests if their demands are ignored.

Ministers meet Congress leader Jeevan Reddy amid resignation rumours

HYDERABAD

Following reports that senior Congress leader T. Jeevan Reddy intends to resign from the party, Ministers D. Sridhar Babu and Adhuri Laxman Kumar engaged in discussions with him.

Acting on directives from TPCC in-charge Meenakshi Natarajan, the Ministers, accompanied by Choppadandi MLA Medipally Satyam and other party members, visited Jeevan Reddy's residence in Jagtial on Saturday. Their meeting, which lasted over an hour, focused on persuading Jeevan Reddy to re-

consider his decision to leave the Congress, a party he has been affiliated with for the past forty years.

They emphasised the ongoing need for his contributions and expertise in the future. The Ministers also reportedly addressed local political challenges and other matters, assuring him of a prominent role within the party through consultations with the high command.

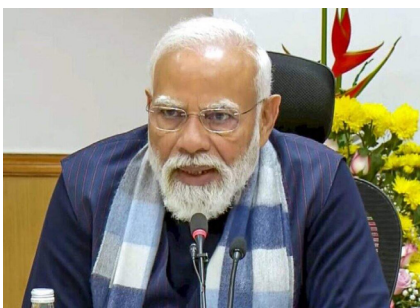
In response, Jeevan Reddy affirmed that his decision remains unchanged and indicated that he would provide comprehensive details on Sunday.

PM Modi likely to visit Telangana in next two weeks

HYDERABAD

Indications are that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Telangana is imminent, with the trip anticipated within the next ten to fifteen days. According to reports, Prime Minister Modi is set to participate in election campaigning in Tamil Nadu in the run-up to the State Assembly elections. Within this framework, local dignitaries have apparently conveyed a request to the Prime Minister, proposing a visit to Telangana, an invitation that the Prime Minister has subsequently agreed to.

As part of this tour, there is a possibility



that Narendra Modi will launch several development initiatives, including the inauguration of AIIMS Bibinagar. Additionally, the

BJP is planning to organise a public meeting for Prime Minister Modi at the Parade Grounds in Secunderabad in connection with the Greater Municipal elections.

Furthermore, reports suggest that the state leadership has already signalled to local leaders regarding Modi's upcoming tour. As part of this initiative, Union Minister Kishan Reddy has scheduled an internal meeting with leaders from the Secunderabad area. It is understood that the GHMC elections and Modi's tour will be the primary agenda items for this meeting. Meanwhile, Modi's visit is expected to boost morale among the state BJP cadres. (NSS)

CM Revanth to inaugurate oil palm factory in Narmeta today



HYDERABAD

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy is scheduled to officially open an oil palm factory located in Narmeta village, within the Nangunuru mandal of Siddipet district on Sunday.

In preparation for the Chief Minister's visit, Ministers Tummala Nageswara Rao, Ponnamp Prabhakar, and Vivek Venkatswamy have been overseeing the arrangements to guarantee its smooth execution. They have convened review meetings with the district collector, the police commissioner, and other relevant officials.

During his visit, the Chief Minister will inaugurate an oil palm factory and unveil a commemorative pylon. Subsequently, Revanth Reddy

will visit the stalls set up at the venue. He will also lay the foundation stone for Telangana's first oil refinery.

Ministers have instructed officials to take precautionary measures to ensure that people attending the public meeting do not face any inconveniences. They issued specific directives to officials regarding the helipad, meeting venue, security, drinking water, traffic management, vehicle parking, electricity, sound systems, fire safety, ambulance services, and other related arrangements.

Meanwhile, Farmers' festivals have already been underway at the oil palm factory premises for the past three days. Farmers from various districts are flocking in large numbers to attend these festivals.

Advocate Kiran Kumar elected to Telangana State Bar Council

HYDERABAD

Advocate Kiran Kumar Ganamaneni has been elected as a member of the Telangana State Bar Council, with his victory confirmed during the vote counting. The elections, conducted across the state in January, saw results declared after an extended counting process over the past month.

Kiran Kumar brings significant experience to the role, having previously served as Secretary and President of the Nampally Bar Association. He

also held the position of President of the Telangana State Federation.

Addressing supporters after his win, Kiran Kumar pledged to work diligently to resolve issues faced by advocates and to promote welfare of the legal fraternity. He emphasised his commitment to collaborating with fellow Bar Council members to push for enactment of the Advocates Protection Act. He expressed heartfelt gratitude to all those who supported and contributed to his victory.

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Modi, Iran President Discuss West Asia Peace

FROM PAGE 1

security framework comprising West Asian countries to ensure peace and stability without foreign interference, according to an Iranian readout of the talks. He also called on India, as the current BRICS chair, to leverage its "independent role" in curbing US-Israel hostilities against Iran.

The Iranian president rejected Washington's claim that the US military offensive against Iran was aimed at preventing Tehran from acquiring nuclear weapons. He emphasized that the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had consistently opposed nuclear weapons, issuing both administrative and religious directives to prohibit any development in this area. Separately, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar spoke with his Iranian counterpart Seyed Abbas Araghchi to discuss the West Asia conflict and its wider regional implications.

In a post on 'X', PM Modi conveyed Eid and Nowruz greetings to Pezeshkian, expressing hope that the festive season brings peace, stability, and prosperity to West Asia. He also condemned attacks on critical infrastructure in the region, highlighting their threat to regional stability and the disruption of global supply chains. Modi reiterated the importance of safeguarding free-

dom of navigation and ensuring that shipping lanes remain open and secure, while appreciating Iran's continued support for the safety of Indian nationals in the country. This marked the second phone conversation between Modi and Pezeshkian in ten days, reflecting growing global concern over attacks on West Asian gas hubs.

According to the Iranian readout, Pezeshkian reaffirmed Iran's willingness to engage in dialogue with world leaders, including on the sidelines of the United Nations, for the verification and oversight of Tehran's peaceful nuclear activities. He described the actions of the US and Israel against Iran as "profoundly inhumane and unethical" and strongly condemned them.

The president reiterated that establishing a regional security framework composed of West Asian countries is essential for ensuring peace and stability through regional cooperation, free from foreign interference. He stressed that ending the ongoing conflict requires an immediate cessation of aggressions by the US and Israel.

Referring to India's BRICS presidency, Pezeshkian called for the bloc to play an independent role in halting aggressions against Iran and safeguarding regional and international peace and stability. The Iranian readout noted that PM Modi emphasized the security

of the Strait of Hormuz and the importance of freedom of navigation in the Persian Gulf. Modi underlined that pursuing war serves no one's interests and urged all parties to move toward peace promptly, based on his consultations with global leaders.

The situation has caused global oil and gas prices to surge, following Iran's near blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow shipping lane connecting the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, which handles roughly 20 percent of global oil and LNG supplies. West Asia remains a key source of energy for India.

Pezeshkian also dismissed US allegations portraying Iran as a source of regional instability, asserting that "it is Israel that carries out attacks and assassinations in Lebanon, Gaza, Iran, Iraq, and Qatar," often justifying these actions under the pretext of maintaining security and peace. He further highlighted the tragic school attack in Minab, stating that US military actions from neighboring bases led to the martyrdom of 168 innocent schoolchildren.

Amid escalating concerns in West Asia, PM Modi also held discussions in recent days with Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, the Jordanian King, French President Emmanuel Macron, and Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim to coordinate responses to the regional crisis.

Bhadradri Set for Agama-Compliant Upgrade

FROM PAGE 1

the construction and modernization of Pushkar Ghats near the temple, ensuring minimal disruption to daily rituals and visitor experience. CM Reddy emphasized the need to balance modern amenities with the temple's historic glory. "The development must reflect the temple's historical

grandeur while preparing for the future. We aim to complete the initial phase before the Godavari Pushkarams to provide world-class facilities to pilgrims," the Chief Minister said.

The review meeting was attended by senior ministers Konda Surekha, Tummala Nageswara Rao, and Pongulati Srinivas Reddy, as well as

MPs Vem Narendar Reddy and Balaram Naik. Chief Secretary Ramakrishna Rao and other top bureaucrats were also present.

Plans for the second and third phases are being finalized to ensure a holistic transformation of the temple precincts, often referred to as the "Ayodhya of the South."

Eid-ul-Fitr Celebrated with Devotion Across Telangana

FROM PAGE 1

thousands of shoppers thronged the area, with women visiting bangle shops and markets reflecting the festive cheer in preparation for the celebrations. Several leaders extended greetings to the public on the occasion. Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla, Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, Union Minister G.

Kishan Reddy, and BRS president K. Chandrasekhar Rao conveyed their wishes. Governor Shukla highlighted the significance of Ramadan as a period of self-discipline and spiritual reflection, urging citizens to uphold dignity and respect the sanctity of life. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy emphasized that Eid is a time for compas-

sion, generosity, and unity. He expressed hope that the festival would bring peace, prosperity, and harmony to every home while strengthening the spirit of brotherhood across communities. The celebrations across Telangana were marked by large participation, smooth management, and messages of unity and goodwill from leaders.

SIT Seizes Former BRS MLA's Farmhouse in Hyderabad Drug Probe

FROM PAGE 1

premises, several luxury vehicles belonging to the attendees have also been confiscated.

Illegal Land Usage Allegations

Beyond the narcotics investigation, the property is now under scrutiny for land irregularities. Preliminary findings by revenue officials suggest the farmhouse may have been constructed on assigned land, which is legally prohibited from being sold or registered. While the 2.20-acre plot (Survey No. 177/33) was reportedly registered in the name of Rohit Reddy's father, Vithal Reddy, in 2006, official 'Bhu Bharati' records list a different individual as the owner. Authorities are now investigating how the registration was facilitated and which officials may have bypassed norms to allow it.

Arrests and Supply Chain Revelations

The SIT has made a breakthrough in the supply chain with the arrest of Abhishek Singh, a software engineer and alleged drug peddler. Singh was apprehended based on information pro-

vided by another accused, Kaushik Ravi.

Key details emerging from the probe include

Procurement: Drugs were allegedly picked up near Hyderabad's Outer Ring Road (ORR) by Rohit Reddy's driver.

Consumption: Investigations suggest drugs were consumed by several attendees during the party. Medical Evidence: Toxicology reports have indicated the use of cocaine mixed with alcohol among some guests, while others tested positive for multiple narcotic substances.

Expanding the Net

Digital forensic teams are currently analyzing Abhishek Singh's mobile data to identify other potential clients and expand the scope of the investigation. This case adds significant legal and political pressure on Rohit Reddy, who previously gained prominence during the "MLAs' poaching case." Given the involvement of sitting representatives and influential figures, the SIT is under heavy pressure to ensure a watertight investigation.

Nuclear Threat Warning: Delhi, Mumbai in Pak Envoy's Statement

FROM PAGE 1

that is among the impossibilities, because Pakistan has the capability to defend itself," he said.

'Only option would be India'

Elaborating on this hypothetical situation, Basit argued that if Pakistan were attacked by the United States and was unable to respond directly due to range or operational limitations—India would become the default target.

"If the US attacks Pakistan and we cannot reach their bases in the Gulf or strike Israel, then what would be our only option? India," he said. He further added that

in such circumstances, Pakistan would not hesitate. "We would have nothing else to do. Even if our range does not extend there, if someone casts a hostile eye on us, we would, without hesitation, attack India—Mumbai, New Delhi—we would not hold back."

Basit also suggested that consequences would be secondary in such a scenario. "Whatever happens afterward would be dealt with later and we should not hold back either," he said, reiterating that such a situation remains unlikely but possible in theory.

Iran war escalation adds to regional anxiety

Basit's remarks came at a time when the conflict involv-

ing Iran, the United States and Israel has entered a more volatile phase. Over the past three weeks, military strikes and counter-strikes have expanded across multiple fronts, with Israel reportedly targeting locations in Tehran and Beirut, while US forces remain engaged in strategic operations in the region.

Despite signals from US President Donald Trump about a possible exit strategy and claims of nearing key military objectives, the conflict continues to evolve unpredictably. Analysts warn that the widening scope of the war increases the risk of unintended consequences, including the involvement of additional regional actors.



RAMADAN CELEBRATIONS IN TELANGANA



FLO Hyd steps into silver jubilee year; new leadership takes charge

HYDERABAD

FLO Hyderabad marked a major milestone as it entered its 25th year, unveiling plans for grand Silver Jubilee celebrations alongside its Annual Session, which also witnessed a leadership transition.

Seetha Reddy Gaddam assumed charge as the new Chairperson of FLO Hyderabad, succeeding Prathibha Kunda, while Khushboo Daga took over as Chairperson of YFLO (Young FICCI Ladies Organization) Hyderabad from Pallavi Jain. The transition was formalised through a ceremonial exchange of medals and signing of the charter. Padma Shri awardee and renowned Kuchipudi exponent Deepika Reddy attended as chief guest, highlighting the importance of dedication and consistent practice. She emphasised values such as equality in parenting and noted that respect for women is vital for societal progress. She also unveiled "Connect, FLO's in-house magazine."

Outgoing Chairperson Prathibha Kunda described her tenure, themed "Power to Empower", as a year of impactful collaboration. Under her leadership, FLO conducted 12 speaker sessions, 7 workshops, and 12 empowerment programmes, while onboarding 202 new members. Key initiatives included StyleTatva, which drew over 10,000 visitors and facilitated ₹45 lakh in MSME reimburse-

ments, alongside skill and education programmes benefiting thousands of women and girls. Efforts like the Dokra Revival Initiative and a large-scale job fair further strengthened community outreach.

Outgoing YFLO Chairperson Pallavi Jain reflected on her theme "Knowledge is Power", stressing continuous learning and the value of national exposure through FICCI in shaping leadership.

New FLO Chairperson Seetha Reddy Gaddam outlined her vision - "Engage, Empower, Elevate" - with a focus on expanding initiatives such as StyleTatva, Pragathi Pathi, Skill Centre at Sangareddy, Her Roots, Digital Saathi, and Telangana Samskruthi. She also pledged to revive traditional arts like Banjara needle craft to support sustainable livelihoods. Taking over as the 21st YFLO Chairperson, Khushboo Daga shared her vision "Together - We Progress", focusing on capability building, cross-sector learning, and holistic growth. She underscored the importance of collective progress and empowering women as a driver of broader societal and economic development.

The Annual Session celebrated past achievements while setting the stage for an ambitious future, with Silver Jubilee events expected to further strengthen FLO and YFLO's impact on women's empowerment and leadership. (NSS)

SOUTHERN RAILWAY

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Office of the Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer, Electric Loco Shed, Erode

E-Tender Notice

Online tender is invited for the following work:

Tender No	Description of Work
SA_A_RS_ED_OT_25_26_22, Dated: 20-03-2026	Works contract for Repair / reconditioning of Auxiliary Motors of Three Phase electric locomotives available at Electric Loco Shed, Southern Railway, Salem Division, Erode.
SA_A_RS_ED_OT_25_26_24, Dated: 20-03-2026	Repairing and Maintenance of Roof mounted Cab AC units for Minor Inspection and Major Schedule available in Three Phase electric locomotives of Electric Loco Shed, Southern Railway, Salem Division, Erode.

All details regarding the tender are available at <https://www.jreps.gov.in>
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Osmania University VC Meets Governor

Extends Invitation for International Women's Conference 2026

HYDERABAD

The Vice-Chancellor of Osmania University, Prof. Kumar Molugaram, called upon His Excellency, the Governor of Telangana, Shri Shiv Pratap Shukla, today to formally congratulate him on assuming office as the Governor of the State and the Chancellor of Osmania University.

During the courtesy visit, the Vice-Chancellor briefed His Excellency on the illustrious 108-year legacy of Osmania University, highlighting its historical significance and its current academic and administrative functioning. He further informed the Governor about the significant grant of Rs. 1,000 crores sanctioned by the Government of Telangana under the leadership of the Honourable Chief Minister, Shri A. Revanth Reddy Garu, dedicated to the holistic upliftment and infrastructure development of the university.

The Vice-Chancellor extended a formal invitation to His Excellency to grace the inaugural ceremony of the Osmania Uni-



versity International Women's Conference (OUIWC) 2026 as the Chief Guest. His Excellency graciously accepted the invitation to inaugurate the prestigious three-day conference, which is scheduled to be held at the university campus from March 24 to 26, 2026.

The Vice-Chancellor was accompanied by Prof. M. Vijulatha, Principal of the University College of Science and the Convener of OUIWC 2026. Also pres-

ent at the occasion was Shri M. Dana Kishore, IAS, Special Chief Secretary to the Government of Telangana.

His Excellency expressed his appreciation for the university's enduring academic contributions and discussed the roadmap for the upcoming international summit, which aims to bring together global scholars to discuss pivotal themes in women's empowerment and leadership.

Transform TTD temples into global spiritual hubs, says CM Naidu



TIRUMALA

AP Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Saturday called for transforming temples under Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams into state-of-the-art spiritual centres blending tradition with technology.

Reviewing the AI-based Integrated

Command and Control Center (ICCC), he stressed seamless monitoring of devotees' journey from queue to darshan, ensuring comfort, efficiency and zero inconvenience. He also directed expansion of Annadanam and Pranadanam services, skill-based training for Srivari Seva volunteers, and adoption of TTD systems as a national model.

Tirumala is rapidly evolving into a tech-driven spiritual hub with the AI-enabled "Govinda" system at its Integrated Command Center optimizing crowd management and pilgrim services. The system predicts footfall, wait times, and capacity, helping authorities handle an average daily influx of around 73,000 devotees. Notably, wait time during Vaikunta Ekadashi has been reduced by 27%. Officials said real-time dashboards, predictive analytics, and digital monitoring are transforming Tirumala into a model for smart temple management.

In a push for sustainability, Chief Minister Naidu emphasized a pollution-free Tirumala with plans for electric mobility, renewable energy, and strict environmental monitoring. Authorities are considering restricting private vehicles beyond Tirupati while promoting eco-friendly transport solutions. With paperless systems, smart security, and integrated healthcare under Pranadanam, Tirumala aims to emerge as a global benchmark in spiritual, environmental, and technological excellence.



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HAPPY RESIDENTS

20+
PROJECTS

ONGOING PROJECTS



NARSINGI



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SHORT TAKES

Unhygienic samosa unit busted in Hyd; Rs.5 lakh stock seized



HYDERABAD: The Hyderabad Task Force's H-FAST (Hyderabad Food Adulteration Surveillance Team), in close coordination with the Kulsumpura Police, raided an illegal samosa manufacturing unit in Jiyaguda and seized unhygienic food stock worth Rs.5 lakh. During the raid, it was found that the unit was engaged in large-scale preparation of samosas under extremely unhygienic conditions without possessing any valid FSSAI license, Trade License, or Fire Safety clearance. The unit, run by the accused Abdul Rasheed (73), was operating without valid licenses and using spoiled/substandard ingredients, including stale boiled eggs and reused oil thereby endangering public health. Over 1,900 samosas and raw materials were confiscated. The accused has been apprehended, and further investigation is underway.

Rs.10 LAKHS TOTTD

Tirumala, March 21 (NSS): Tirupati MLA A Srinivasulu, donated Rs. 10 lakhs to the TTD run Sri Venkateswara Prasadana Trust on Saturday. In this regard, he handed over the Demand Draft of the donation to the Honorable Chief Minister of AP Nara Chandrababu Naidu at the Ranganayakula Mandapam.

Rs.25 cr food lab boosts pilgrim safety in Tirumala



TIRUMALA

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Saturday inaugurated a state-of-the-art Food Analysis Laboratory, first of its kind temple-proximate lab in the country, for Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) in Tirumala, built at a cost of Rs.25 crore. Equipped with over 50 advanced instruments, the lab will test food and water quality to ensure safety for lakhs of pilgrims. Spread across 12,000 sq ft, it features separate chemical and microbiological wings. Funded by FSSAI and AP government (Rs.25 cr for core lab, Rs.3.5 cr for e-tongue / e-nose, Rs.1.1 cr for power set up) the

new 12,000 sq ft lab dedicates 6,000 sq ft each to chemical and microbiological analysis. Using advanced technologies like GC-MS, LC-MS and ICP-MS to test fatty acids, pesticides, volatiles, mycotoxins, drugs, additives, heavy metals in food/water, respectively, the facility will also analyze raw materials for Srivari prasadam and Annaprasadam, including laddus. The lab is expected to test 1,000 - 1,500 samples every month, strengthening quality control in temple operations. TTD chairman BR Naidu, EO M Ravichandra, Addl. EO Ch Venkaiah Chowdary, board members, FSSAI executive director Panda from New Delhi, CFTRI director Giridhar and others were present. (NSS)

BRS to introduce Bill to grant legal sanctity to Six Guarantees

HYDERABAD

Putting the ruling Congress on the spot, the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) has decided to introduce a Private Member Bill to grant legal sanctity to the Six Guarantees. It has also sought the support of all political parties, including the Congress.

If the Congress was committed to implementing the Six Guarantees, it should extend unconditional support to the Bill to be introduced in the current Budget session, BRS working president KT Rama Rao said at a press conference here on Saturday. On the first day in office on December 7, 2023, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy signed the initial file to pave the way for the "Abhayasthanam" Act, which includes the six guarantees. A week later, then Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan reiterated this commitment while addressing members of the Assembly and Council, he said.

Even after more than 800 days, there has been no progress in implementing the guarantees, Rama Rao said, adding that this prompted the BRS party to prepare the Private Member Bill. He added that the BRS would also trace the first



file signed by the Chief Minister. The party will approach the Speaker's Office in the Assembly and the Chairman's Office in the Legislative Council to seek admission of the Bill.

Rama Rao also urged the public to pressure MLAs and MLCs to support the Bill. "We will distribute copies of the Bill to all Members in the House and seek their backing," he said.

The BRS working president said the Bill was aimed at forcing the government to act, alleging that it had deceived all sections of society after securing votes

with promises of the six guarantees. If the Congress was sincere about implementation, it should allow the Bill to be taken up for discussion in the House, he added. Citing precedent, Rama Rao said that during the tenure of former Chief Minister late NT Rama Rao, BJP floor leader Ch Vidyasagar Rao had introduced a Private Member Bill and it was approved. He said such a precedent exists in united Andhra Pradesh.

"Since both the ruling Congress and the opposition BRS support legal backing for the guarantees, there should be no hurdle in passing the Bill," he stressed.

Rama Rao said the Bill represents the interests of farmers, women, students, government employees and youth, who were let down by the Congress government. He also outlined the benefits of the proposed Bill. Referring to the Chief Minister's proposal to deduct traffic challans amount from bank accounts, he said that once the Bill is passed, benefits under the six guarantees could reach people automatically. "In case of any delay, people can approach the courts. The government will be compelled to fulfill its promises," he said.

Rabi procurement drive in two weeks; state ramps up storage, logistics

HYDERABAD

With the 2025-26 Rabi paddy procurement set to begin in two weeks, Civil Supplies Commissioner M. Stephen Ravindra (IPS) on Saturday directed the district collectors to immediately identify and prepare additional storage facilities across the state.

At a meeting with the rice millers here at civil supplies bhavan, the Commissioner stressed seamless procurement with a focus on transport, quick unloading, and adequate deployment of labour at the purchase centres to avoid delays for farmers. Millers assured full cooperation with the government.



To address packaging needs, millers were asked to return 10 crore old gunny bags out of the 35 crore pending stock. Officials also finalized Kharif 2025-26 FCI accounts, approving allocation of 3.5 lakh metric tonnes of Custom Milling Rice (CMR) from 5.22 lakh metric tonnes of paddy.

The government has cleared pending milling charges in 10 districts, while representations from millers on dues and issues have been taken up for review.

Authorities said all measures are being closely monitored to ensure smooth and hassle-free procurement for farmers across Telangana.

Telangana braces for week of thundershowers, gusty winds

HYDERABAD

The India Meteorological Department (IMD), Hyderabad in its weather forecast on Saturday has indicated more thundershowers along with lightning in parts of the State till March 28, interspersed with dry spells that will last for a day or two.

For March 22, the forecast looked at light to moderate rain or thundershowers very likely occurring at isolated places over Telangana. Day temperatures are likely to be below normal by 2 to 3 degrees Celsius during the next two days and gradual rise by 2 to 4 degrees Celsius during next five days.

"Thunderstorm accompanied by lightning and gusty winds very likely to occur at isolated places in Peddapalli, Jayashankar Bhupalpally, Mulugu, Bhadradi Kothagudem, Khammam, Nalgonda, Suryapet, Mahabubabad, Nagarkurnool districts," it said.

After two days of dry weather, according to the forecast, parts



of the State will receive another spell of thundershowers between Wednesday, and Saturday. Thunderstorm accompanied by lightning and gusty winds are likely to occur at isolated places in Adilabad, Kumram Bheem Asifabad, Mancherial, Nirmal, Nizamabad,

Jagtial, Peddapalli, Warangal, Hanamkonda, Siddipet, Vikarabad, Sangareddy, Medak and Kamareddy districts. The forecast indicated light rains accompanied by isolated thundershowers for Friday and Saturday.



Government faces criticism over reversal on paddy cultivation policy

HYDERABAD

The Congress government in Telangana has come under criticism for what is being termed a policy reversal on paddy cultivation, after initially encouraging farmers to grow the crop extensively and now advocating crop diversification. Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy and Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao have recently urged farmers to move away from paddy cultivation and instead focus on commercial crops. During the previous BRS government, then Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao had repeatedly encouraged farmers to diversify crops, citing multiple constraints associated with paddy cultivation. The government promoted oil palm, groundnut and other commercial crops, urging a shift away from paddy.

In 2022, the State pushed oil palm cultivation aggressively, setting a target of 30 lakh acres by 2025-26. The Cabinet had also approved a subsidy of Rs 26,000 per acre for oil palm farmers.

While in opposition, the Congress had criticised the BRS government's stance on



discouraging paddy cultivation. Revanth Reddy, then TPC president, had asserted that it was the State's responsibility to procure paddy and reassure farmers.

Past statements of Revanth Reddy, now circulating on social media, show him questioning the BRS government over procurement policies. He had earlier asked why, despite a Rs 2.5 lakh crore budget, the State could not ensure paddy procurement and why the issue was being linked to the Centre.

However, after coming to power, the Congress government initially encouraged large-scale paddy cultivation, assuring farmers that every grain would be procured. The government

has now shifted its stance, citing the Centre's reluctance to procure paddy from Telangana, and is urging farmers to adopt crop diversification and take up commercial crops. Addressing the Assembly, the Chief Minister acknowledged that paddy cultivation alone may not ensure remunerative returns for farmers.

He directed ministers to prepare a comprehensive plan to promote crop diversification before the conclusion of the budget session. The Agriculture Minister, speaking at a Rythu Mela in Siddipet, said the Centre had made its procurement policy clear and advised the State to align accordingly. He appealed to farmers to shift towards alternative crops such as oil palm

Eid celebrations peaceful in Hyd, CP extends greetings



HYDERABAD

Eid-ul-Fitr was celebrated with devotion and harmony across the city, with thousands offering special prayers at the Mir Alam Eidgah here on Saturday.

City Police Commissioner V.C. Sajjanar supervised the security arrangements and later extended festive greetings, distributing chocolates to children. He expressed satisfaction over the peaceful conclusion of Ramadan and credited coordinated efforts by police and other departments concerned for smooth celebrations. He extended his

gratitude to religious elders and other state government departments for their cooperation in making the festival arrangements.

Senior police officials, including Taseer Iqbal (Additional CP - South Range), D. Joel Davis (Joint CP - Traffic), N. Swetha (Joint CP - North Range), R. Venkateswarlu (DCP - CAR Headquarters), S. Srinivas (DCP - Rajendranagar Zone) and Avinash Kumar (DCP - Traffic) were present, while authorities ensured hassle-free arrangements for prayers and festive activities across the city.

West Asia impact should not be passed on to flyers, says Ram Mohan Naidu

NEW DELHI

Union Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu on Saturday said the government is taking steps to ensure that any impact of the ongoing war situation on the aviation sector is not passed on to passengers, even as it rolls out new passenger-friendly measures.

"The impact is definitely going to be there on oil prices and Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF), but it should not be transferred to passengers," the minister told reporters, underlining the government's focus on keeping air travel affordable.

He said the Centre is in constant consultation with airlines and multiple ministries, including civil aviation, external affairs, and petroleum and natural gas, to manage the evolving situation and minimise disruptions.

Calling it a "multi-departmental exercise", Naidu said regular feedback is being taken from airlines to



ensure smooth operations and protect passenger interests.

At the same time, the minister highlighted a series of new initiatives aimed at improving passenger experience, building on the expansion of India's aviation network under the UDAN scheme.

He said the government has directed airlines to offer at least 60 per cent of seats free of charge in terms of seat selection, addressing concerns over additional charges levied on passengers.

Naidu also said airlines have been asked to be more flexible in allowing

passengers to carry sports equipment and musical instruments, subject to safety norms, while efforts are underway to ensure all airlines introduce clear pet travel policies.

In addition, the government is working to increase awareness about passenger rights, including compensation in case of delays, cancellations and other disruptions. These guidelines will be widely publicised, including in regional languages, to ensure better accessibility.

Highlighting operational challenges, the minister said some airports in West Asia are currently non-operational due to the prevailing situation, but the government is actively coordinating with airlines and international regulators to ensure smooth travel on key routes.

He reiterated that passenger convenience remains a priority and the government will continue to take measures to strengthen the aviation ecosystem while shielding travellers from external shocks.

Space crunch hits JNAFAU plans of launching new programs

HYDERABAD

Space constraints have come to scuttle the Jawaharlal Nehru Architecture and Fine Arts University's (JNAFAU) ambitious plans of introducing new programmes in the emerging areas. Following demand from students, the JNAFAU, which is one of its kind universities in the country, made plans to offer programmes in cinematography and filmmaking, and several other areas. However, these proposals continue to remain on the paper as there is no scope for construction of the new academic blocks in the present campus. The last set of new courses - BTech Planning, BDesign Interior Design, BTech Digital Techniques for Design and Planning - were introduced when the university was established in 2008. These programmes, along with fine arts courses, are being offered by the university ever since it came into being.

National Seminar on Social Media on March 22

HYDERABAD

A national seminar on the topic "Social Media - Good and Bad" (Social Media - Impact: Positive and Negative) will be organized on Sunday in Hyderabad by the Telangana State Union of Working Journalists (TUWJ), Media Education Foundation, India (MEFI).

According to a statement by TUWJ President K. Virahat Ali and MEFI Managing Trustee Devulapalli Amar, the seminar will begin at 11:00 AM at the Suravaram Pratap Reddy Auditorium in the Press Club, Basheer Bagh.

They stated that this national seminar is being con-

ducted in connection with the 11th plenary of the Indian Journalists Union (IJU), which will be held in Vijayawada from the 27th to 29th of this month.

M. K. Venu, Founding Editor of the well-known New Delhi-based website The Wire, will attend as the chief guest and deliver the keynote address. Senior journalist Mulugu Somasekhara will preside over the event.

At a time when diverse opinions are being expressed about the nature and impact of social media, the organizers have appealed to journalists to attend the seminar in large numbers.

Minister Calls for Stronger Diabetes Research

Young medical professionals should contribute to diabetes research, Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh has said.

The Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology, Earth Sciences was presented with the MV Lifetime Achievement award by the MV Hospital for Diabetes for his contributions to diabetes research, during the inauguration of the three-day national conference 'MVCON 2026' organised by the hospital here. Workshops, practical training in debridement, and advanced wound care techniques and other events were held as part of the conference, a press release said. The minister, on Friday, said that he felt deeply indebted to Tamil Nadu and extremely honoured to receive the MV Lifetime Achievement Award 2026, according to the release.



Orissa HC Slams Odisha's Anti-Encroachment Policy Implementation

CHANDIGARH: MAR 21, 2026

According to a report of The Times of India, a bench comprising Chief Justice Harish Tandon and Justice Murahari Sri Raman made the observations on March 18 after examining an affidavit submitted by Champua tehsildar Rakesh Kumar Panda, who appeared before the court in compliance with earlier directions. The affidavit, filed through Additional Government Advocate Sanjay Rath, informed the court that a field inspection carried out on February 19 had identified 22 individuals allegedly encroaching on government land in the tehsil. Legal proceedings have already been initiated against them under applicable laws. While taking note of the steps initiated, the court emphasised that removal of encroachments from government land is a fundamental responsibility of the state, as such land is meant for public use and welfare. At the same time, the bench pointed out that despite a declared strict policy, its execution on the ground remains inadequate. The court also noted a growing number of PILs being filed by citizens, highlighting official inaction on encroachments.

Rahul Gandhi to Launch Kerala Campaign from Kozhikode on March 25

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 21

Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi's election campaign in Kerala will commence on March 25 with a massive rally in Kozhikode, marking the start of what is expected to be an intense and wide-ranging outreach across key locations in the state. Kerala will go to the polls on April 9 to elect 140 legislators. Incidentally, with a record-breaking performance in the December local body polls, the Congress-led UDF stunned the Left. However, led by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and aiming for a historic third consecutive term, the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front is going all out. The BJP, which currently has no representation in the Assembly, is also upbeat about making its presence felt in the new House. Announcing the programme, campaign

BJD suspends six party MLAs for cross-voting in RS polls in Odisha

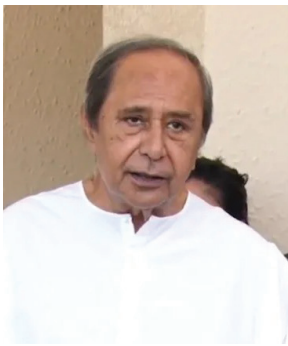
BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 21

The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) on Saturday suspended six of its MLAs for alleged anti-party activities, including cross-voting in the recent Rajya Sabha elections.

In an official statement, the party said the action was taken following the issuance of show-cause notices by the Chief Whip, examination of the legislators' replies by the party's Disciplinary Committee, and a final decision by the Political Affairs Committee (PAC). "The MLAs have been suspended with immediate

effect for their involvement in anti-party activities, including cross-voting in the Rajya Sabha election, in violation of the core principles of the party's constitution, which mandates absolute adherence to collective decisions," a statement by the BJD chief Naveen Patnaik said. The suspended MLAs are Chakramani Kanhar (Baliguda); Naba Kishore Mallick (Jayadev); Souvic Biswal (Choudwar-Cuttack); Subasini Jena (Basta); Ramakanta Bhoi (Tirtol); and Devi Ranjan Tripathy (Banki).

Party sources indicated that the action stems from allega-



tions that the legislators voted in favour of a BJP-backed Independent candidate, Dilip Ray, during the Rajya Sabha polls, defying the party line. Earlier, the MLAs had been

served show-cause notices on March 17 seeking an explanation for their conduct.

"You are therefore called upon to show cause within 3 days of issuance of this notice as to why a disciplinary action should not be initiated against you, including suspension from the Biju Janata Dal; and appropriate legal and constitutional proceedings should not be initiated on the ground that by your conduct you have voluntarily given up the membership of the Biju Janata Dal," read the notice.

In response, they reportedly challenged the notices,

terming them "illegal, arbitrary, and unconstitutional," and warned of legal action if they were not withdrawn. They also cited provisions under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, alleging that the notices amounted to punishable offences.

It is pertinent to mention that as many as 11 legislators, eight from the BJD, including two suspended MLAs and three from the Congress, cross-voted during the Rajya Sabha biennial elections held on Monday, resulting in the victory of BJP-backed candidate Dilip Ray.

Japanese company ready to invest around ₹4,000 crore in Haryana

CHANDIGARH, MARCH 21

TDK delegation meets Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini at Bharat Electricity Summit-2026

Haryana has emerged as a preferred destination for foreign investors. This is evident from the growing interest of global companies expressing their willingness to invest in the state. At the Bharat Electricity Summit-2026, a Japanese company has also shown interest in investing around ₹4,000 crore in Haryana. During the summit, a delegation of Japanese company TDK Corporation met Haryana Chief Minister Sh. Nayab Singh Saini along with Union Minister for Power, Housing and Urban Affairs Sh. Manohar Lal. During the meeting, the delegation expressed its intent to invest approximately ₹4,000 crore in Haryana to establish a new plant. The company plans to set up a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) unit in the state. It is noteworthy that TDK Corpo-

ration has already an established facility spread over 180 acres in Sohna, Haryana.

Haryana attracting investor interest continuously

Under the leadership of Chief Minister Sh. Nayab Singh Saini, Haryana is steadily progressing in the industrial sector. Not only domestic but also international companies are consistently making significant investments in the state. The state government's new industrial policy is providing continuous incentives and facilities. The budget presented by Chief Minister Sh. Nayab Singh Saini has given special emphasis to the industrial sector, contributing to the development of a robust industrial ecosystem in Haryana.

New momentum to 'Ease of Doing Business' in Haryana

It is noteworthy that on the call of Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi, Haryana Chief Minister Sh. Nayab Singh Saini has taken significant steps to further strengthen the 'Ease of Doing Business' in the state. This has led to increased investment inflow. Under a new initiative of the state government, continuous engagement is being maintained with industry stakeholders to address challenges related to production costs, logistics and procedural processes. These reforms have not only boosted investor confidence but have also significantly benefited small and medium enterprises. The Haryana Government is consistently working to strengthen the global supply chains of Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs). For this, necessary infrastructure, skill development and

policy support are being reinforced to establish Haryana as a major manufacturing hub. This initiative aligns with the vision of 'New India' envisioned by Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi, which emphasizes self-reliance, industrial growth and global competitiveness. All these efforts are being coordinated by the Department of Foreign Cooperation. Haryana is the only state where such a dedicated department is fully operational. During the meeting, Advisor to the Chief Minister Sh. Pawan Choudhary; Fumio Sashida, CEO, TDK Corporation; Hideaki Seki from TDK Energy; Takahiro Suto from TDK Energy Devices; Kazunobu Miyake; Naoki Katayose from TDK Power Supply; Kentaro Oka, Chief Electric, Nishal; and other dignitaries were present.

Minor girl sexually assaulted by relatives, police detain two

SRIJATA MISHRA

A disturbing case of a sexual assault involving a minor was reported within the Town Police Station limits in Odisha's Dhenkanal. According to the official complaint, the victim was allegedly targeted by two of her relatives while she was home alone.

Local authorities initiated an investigation into the matter following a formal written statement from the minor.

Details Of The Incident
The assault reportedly occurred while the victim's mother was away at a hospital. According to the complaint, the two accused relatives arrived at the residence and knocked on the door.

UNI land should be reclaimed with a big heart and 65 years of service should be respected

AINEF Vice President Purna Chandra Rao appeals to Delhi Land and Development Department

VIJAYAWADA (AMARAVATI), MARCH 21:

The United News of India (UNI) has approached the court challenging the orders of the Land and Development Office on 20-23 March cancelling the allotment of land to the leading national news agency United News of India (UNI) in 1979 under the jurisdiction of the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, challenging the delay in assigning buildings as per the specifications set by the department. The reasons for this were the financial difficulties of the organization and delay in sanctioning the construction of the concept. Since then, After the Hon'ble High Court New Delhi hearing, the

court rejected the UNI argument and issued a notice to the office without giving even a day's notice, with a heavy police presence, to seize the office and seize the land and take action if it exceeds the limit.

However, the court's verdict should be respected, but it is regrettable that the leading news organization in the country, UNI, despite being the fourth estate, has not been given at least a week's time, respecting the services it has rendered to the country, said Chaladi Purnachandra Rao, national vice president of the All India Newspaper Employees Federation, (AINEF) in a statement. He urged the Land and Development Department to immediately withdraw its

orders by giving some time to the press.

In fact, Purnachandra Rao alleged that the main reason for the delay in the construction of UNI buildings was the lack of permits rather than the economic situation. Some forces, even though it is in a very prime locality, have somehow prevented the construction of the building from being approved by some forces. Therefore, taking this matter into consideration, he urged the Land and Development Department to form a society with UNI employees and hand over the land with a big heart to protect the freedom of the press, thereby ensuring that the employment of hundreds of employees is not disrupted.

K'taka: Four-year-old killed in Bengaluru road accident

BENGALURU, MAR 21

The accident occurred at Hanumanthegowdanapalya near Nelamangala town on the outskirts of Bengaluru, when a speeding canter lorry allegedly ran over the child in front of her mother. The deceased has been identified as Nishika, the elder daughter of Rajendra and Lavanya. According to police, Lavanya was walking to the Anjaneya Swamy temple in Gollahalli with her children after celebrating Ugadi. She was carrying her younger child in her arms and holding Nishika's hand as they headed for darshan. Police said the accident took place when a canter lorry, reportedly driven at high speed on a narrow road, hit the child due to the driver's

negligence. While the vehicle approached the mother and the children, Lavanya and the younger child managed to escape unhurt. Nishika, however, died on the spot. Following the incident, angry locals gathered at the spot, vandalised the lorry by smashing its windows, and thrashed the driver before handing him over to the police. A case has been registered at the Madanayakanahalli Police Station. The police have taken the driver and the vehicle into custody and launched further investigation. It may be recalled that two children, including a toddler, were killed in Bengaluru on February 11 after a school bus rammed a scooter. Nagana Gowda, a constable, was riding the scooter when the accident took place.

BJP names 9 candidates in Puducherry after finalising seat-sharing deal

PUDUCHERRY: MAR 21, 2026



The arrangements were finalised after Chief Minister and AINRC leader N Rangasamy held talks with Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya at a private hotel in Puducherry. The BJP on Saturday released a list of nine candidates for the April 9 Assembly polls in Puducherry. This came after the ruling AINRC and the BJP-AIADMK combine on Friday reached an agreement for the Assembly polls in the Union territory. While the AINRC will contest 16 seats, the BJP-AIADMK combine will contest the remaining 14 seats. The saffron party has fielded PML Kalyanasundaram from Kalapet and G N S Rajasekaran from Thirunallar. A Namassivayam will contest from Mannadipet. VP Ramalingam will enter the fray from Rajbhavan while A Johnkumar will contest from Mudaliarpet. Embalam R Selvam will enter the fray from Manaveli, TKSM Meenatchisundaram from Neravy TR Pattinam, and A Dineshan from Mahe. Theppanthan will seek election from Oussudu, a Scheduled Caste reserved seat.

The arrangements were finalised after Chief Minister and AINRC leader N Rangasamy held talks with Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya at a private hotel in Puducherry. The BJP, from its kitty, has allocated two seats each to the AIADMK and the Lakshia Jananayaga Katchi (LJK), AINRC sources said. Although Rangasamy maintained all along that the LJK, headed by Jose Charles Martin, should not be accommodated in the alliance, the chief minister agreed to include the party in the front following his meeting with Mandaviya.

In the 2021 Assembly elections, the AINRC contested 16 seats and won 10, the BJP contested nine seats and won six, while the AIADMK contested five and drew a blank.

The single-phase polling for 30 seats will be held on April 9, and the results will be declared on May 4.

Major Relief for the Livestock Sector

Exemption from development charges for livestock farmers in urban areas
Relaxation in building permission fees
Announcement by Minister Kinjarapu Atchannaaidu

AMARAVATI, MARCH 21:



State Agriculture and Animal Husbandry Minister Kinjarapu Atchannaaidu announced that a major decision has been taken to strengthen the livestock sector in the state and provide significant relief to livestock farmers and small farmers. As per the Government Order issued by the Municipal Administration & Urban Development Department, dairy farms, sheep/goat rearing centers, piggery units, and other livestock farms located within the jurisdiction of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and Urban Development Authorities (UDAs) have been granted complete exemption from betterment charges and development charges. Additionally, the building permission/license fees for these farms have

been reduced and aligned with the fees collected in Gram Panchayats. The minister stated that this decision will significantly reduce the financial burden on farmers and small agricultural workers dependent on livestock in urban areas, thereby improving their livelihoods. It will also promote self-employment and economic growth among more people. He further mentioned that this decision fulfills the assurance given by Chief Minister Chandrababu during the CM Conclave meeting held in June last year.



A New Chapter Begins: Under Mesha Lagnam Basivi Venkata Sai Krishna and Nandini's Wedding Bliss

SAMUDRALA KIRAN | CORRESPONDENT

Ongole, March 21, 2026: In a day graced by love, tradition, and cherished family bonds, Basivi Anji Babu's younger son, Basivi Venkata Sai Krishna, exchanged vows with Inabatini Venkateshwar Rao, Padmaja's youngest daughter, Nandini, in a ceremony that radiated warmth and happiness. The couple tied the knot in full regalia on Saturday, March 21, 2026, at 8:38 AM, marking the beginning of a new chapter blessed by kin and well-wishers alike. The auspicious moment unfolded under Mesha Lagnam, at the S.G.V.S. Mahasabha, nestled on South Bypass Road next to Aster Ramesh (Sanghamitra) Hospital in Ongole. Family members and friends gathered to witness the union, lending their voices in prayers, blessings, and joyful well-wishes for the newly weds. Family blessings and closeness stood as a corner-

stone of the day. Basivi Venkata Saikrishna's elder sister, Shilpa - brother-in-law I. Hanuma Kumar, and his second elder sister, Maunika - brother-in-law Rohit Patel, stood as pillars of support, reflecting the strong family ties that have long defined the couple's journey. Friends, relatives, and well-wishers from near and far joined to bless the couple, sharing in the exuberance and sentimental moments of the celebration. The ceremony, marked by traditional rituals and heartfelt vows, conveyed a deep sense of heritage, love, and commitment that the families hold dear. As the couple embarks on this shared life, the community is invited to celebrate with them, offering blessings for a future filled with harmony, mutual respect, and enduring affection. The day served as a poignant reminder of how families, communities, and friends come together to celebrate love in its most beautiful form.

MP: Teen commits suicide after his mother was sexually assaulted

BHOPAL/DEWAS, MARCH 21

A 17-year-old boy from Bhikupura village under Udaynagar police station area in Dewas district, Madhya Pradesh, committed suicide on Saturday after consuming pesticide. He took the extreme step under severe distress after his mother was allegedly sexually assaulted in a field by Sunil Malviya, who has since been arrested. The tragic incident has triggered widespread anger, leading to violent protests, a road blockade, and attacks on the accused's property, highlighting serious allegations of police inaction. According to police officials, family accounts and local reports, the assault occurred earlier, prompting the victim's mother and relatives to approach the Udaynagar police station on Friday night to file a complaint. However, no immediate action was tak-



en, reportedly due to the unavailability of a female officer required for such sensitive cases. Villagers and the family expressed deep frustration over the delay, which they believe contributed to the boy's extreme distress. On Saturday morning, the teenager consumed pesticides in a fit of despair. He was immediately rushed to Bagli Hospital, but he succumbed to poisoning en route. Enraged by the death and perceived police negligence, relatives and villagers placed the body on the Pun-

japura-Bagli road in Bhikupura, blocking traffic and chanting slogans against the police.

The mob then targeted the home of the accused, Sunil Malviya, pelting stones, vandalising the property with hammers, and attempting to set his motorcycle ablaze.

Police intervened to prevent further escalation. Villagers demanded the immediate arrest of the accused and the demolition of his house using a bulldozer. Tensions rose as arguments broke out between the crowd and officers.

A heavy police force was deployed to restore order. Senior officials, including ASP (Traffic) Harnarayan Batham, Bagli SDOP Sanjay Singh Bais, and Udaynagar TI CL Raikwar, reached the spot to calm the situation. They clarified that the case pertains to the sexual assault of a woman. When the family arrived at the station the previous night, a female officer of the required

rank was not present, so one was summoned from Bagli.

By the time the victim returned to the station, the boy had already consumed the pesticide. He was rushed for treatment but died before reaching the hospital. Police have since arrested the accused, Sunil Malviya. The Sub-Divisional Magistrate has been consulted, and the accused's property is under inspection for any illegal constructions; appropriate action will follow if violations are found. Senior officers have been informed about the allegations of police delay.

The incident has sparked outrage across the region, raising questions about the timely handling of sexual assault complaints and support for victims' families in rural areas.

Investigations into both the assault and the suicide continue, with calls for swift justice to prevent further unrest.

EDITORIAL

THE DRAVIDIAN FORTRESS:
CAN THE "MODEL" HOLD AGAINST
A FRAGMENTED OPPOSITION?

In a country where the Hindutva right wing has held not just an ascendant but a hegemonic position across States, Tamil Nadu remains one of the striking exceptions. It is probably the only State where the BJP is a marginal player despite a favourable religious demographic that has helped its politics elsewhere. This owes much to the political idiom of social justice and Tamil identity that has limited political competition to the two Dravidian parties for decades, with national forces reduced to junior partners. The Dravidian-dominated party system has been sustained due to these parties' capability to combine welfare with development, even as competitive welfarism has entrenched caste-based patronage networks and corruption that drives political variables. As he seeks re-election for the DMK, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin will bank on the idea that his party's "Dravidian Model" has been beneficial. In the last five years, Tamil Nadu has managed impressive GSDP growth rates — the country's highest (11.19%) among major States in 2024-25 — and become an industrial powerhouse. The DMK will also seek to capitalise on the popularity of its welfare measures, especially the cash transfer to poor women scheme. Yet, beneath this macro picture lie issues that the Opposition will harp on: corruption at various levels of governance has fuelled discontent beyond sections that have not benefited from welfare.

Former Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, now the undisputed leader of the AIADMK after years of factional intrigue following the death of J. Jayalalitha, leads the Opposition charge in alliance with the BJP and the PMK alongside others. The alliance does not bill itself as an ideological coalition unlike the DMK-led alliance, and also carries internal contradictions such as incorporating the AIADMK-breakaway, the AMMK. But its strategy is to let the concentrated votes of the PMK (in the north), the BJP (in the south and western belt) and the AMMK (pockets in the delta and southern regions) accrue to itself. Mr. Palaniswami must also manage the BJP's ambition to expand its share among contested seats lest the party eat into the AIADMK's base. The ideologically taut DMK-led alliance with the Congress, Left, the VCK and smaller parties has helped it secure parliamentary, Assembly and local body wins in the last decade. But the steady growth of Seeman's NTK and the emergence of a wildcard in the actor Vijay-led TVK could complicate the contest. If the TVK splits the anti-incumbency votes, it would benefit the DMK-led coalition. But if the Vijay-led party manages to win over youth and minority religious community votes, it could equally hurt the ruling coalition. The outcome will determine whether the Dravidian framework that has kept the BJP at the margins can hold in an increasingly fragmented arena.

FORGET NOT — FORSAKE NOT

Forget not the first whisper awakened in your silence, the fragrance of dreams distilled from your tears the fragile hope that shimmered in the dark that is your soul's eternal flame. Forget it not.

Forsake not the kindness that gathers like swans in your heart, the quiet sweetness that lingers in your words anger is but a fleeting spark, but compassion is a light that outlives time. Forsake it not.

Forget not the unseen footsteps that carried you through storms, the gentle hands that steadied your fall the past is a patient teacher its wounds, sacred script, its triumphs, silent signatures. Forget it not.

Forsake not when truth is swallowed by the tides of greed, when desire disguises itself as need your truth is your center, your conscience your star let that light remain unextinguished. Forsake it not.

Forget not within failure rests the seed of becoming, within tears, the quiet birth of light time, the relentless sculptor, shapes through struggle, yet reveals the masterpiece within. Forget it not.

Forsake not when words grow hollow and values fade thin, when pride ignites a fire that consumes within stand as a shadow of unwavering honesty for that alone endures as breath eternal. Forsake it not.

Forget not your heart, a spectrum of love's many hues, a lotus of fragrance in every expression life is an ocean, your soul its wandering vessel, and dharma the wind that gives it direction. Forget it not.

Forsake not when hatred obscures and envy blinds, when darkness seeks dominion over the mind; your inner world is a lighthouse unyielding let no shadow claim that light. Forsake it not.
Final Invocation
Forget not your origin, forsake not your worth; for when roots remain steadfast, humanity endures on earth. And when values stand unshaken, success bows in quiet grace crowning your journey with time's eternal embrace.

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

Economic Highlights

War May Redo EDIBLE OIL, PULSES,
Union Budget DRUGS TO BE DEAR

INDIA FACES MOUNTING ECONOMIC TURBULENCE AS ESCALATING CONFLICT IN WEST ASIA DISRUPTS ENERGY SUPPLIES, SPIKES SHIPPING COSTS, AND TRIGGERS CAPITAL OUTFLOWS, RAISING THE PROSPECT OF A SIGNIFICANT RECALIBRATION OF THE UNION BUDGET IN THE UPCOMING MONSOON SESSION. WITH THE RUPEE WEAKENING SHARPLY, FOREX RESERVES DECLINING, AND FREIGHT AND INSURANCE COSTS SURGING BY UP TO 400%, POLICYMAKERS ARE CONFRONTING A CASCADING CRISIS AFFECTING INFLATION, TRADE, AND FISCAL STABILITY. THE FALLOUT FROM ATTACKS ON CRITICAL GULF ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE—VITAL TO INDIA'S OIL IMPORTS, REMITTANCES, AND EXPORTS—HAS INTENSIFIED PRESSURE ON GOVERNMENT FINANCES, POTENTIALLY FORCING HIGHER BORROWINGS, SPENDING CUTS, AND A STRATEGIC PIVOT IN ENERGY AND ECONOMIC POLICY.

Severely singled by the Iran firing missiles across West Asia, India may have to go for drastic changes in the Union Budget by the Monsoon Session as prices soar, gas crisis derails households and businesses, FPI outflows near a record and the rupee has a mighty fall. The rupee forex reserves are down by \$ 7.1 billion.

The cost of shipping gone up by 300 to 400 per cent to hit commodity prices. Iran's targeting of Arab Gulf states has sharpened Delhi's concerns. India's equities in the Arab world - diaspora, remittances, energy, trade and institutional ties - are far deeper. India has been vocal about the "damage and destruction" there.

The blasting of Qatar gas facilities impacts India critically. So does US-Israel attack on Iran's crucial petroleum island Kharg and preparations for US marine assaults. European nations like Germany, Norway and others are withdrawing their support to the war. US President Donald Trump has lambasted UK for not bidding his orders. The retreat of US ships Abraham Lincoln and Gerald Ford have added to the criticism. Iran's missiles are hitting critical US establishments hurting its companies like Exxon and others.

Europe is worried about its energy security as US sanctions already closed access to the Russian oil. Even India has reduced purchases from Russia. The developments are likely to hit India's expenses, needing cut in constructions in the railways, transport, office and other sectors, look for a new energy policy with less dependency on petroleum as also inflation likely to hit the roof impacted by the rising global prices not only of fuel but



most essentials.

It is likely to call for a revision of the Rs 5 -lakh crore budget allocations as financial and economic dynamics changes despite India safely keeping off the shadow of the war and supporting the US-Israel initiative. A redraw through a supplementary budget in the monsoon session could be more than a reality. Sectors like energy and defence may gain, while aviation, paints, and oil marketing companies face pressure.

The government might resort to more borrowings as also tighten the belt for development and welfare allocations. The country may have to rethink on its reconstruction activities of the railway stations, various government buildings and may be many transport and other activities like the suburban metro network and the glamorous bullet train.

The present borrowings are of about Rs 17 lakh crore. Interest rates for commercial borrowing are also rising making repayments expensive. The government has, meanwhile, announced a Rs 1000 crore war chest to meet the rising shipping and insurance expenses across the world. The impact still is uncharted.

The present Union Budget is to

be formally passed by Parliament in a few days. Despite some relief in gold price fall of 7 percent, the country using it as an alternate currency for foreign trade payment, as the rupee falls to Rs 93.7 to a dollar. The surprise rise of the dollar may upset many calculations.

Imports have been falling during the last two years. The customs duty collections witnessed a notable decline, dropping approximately 7 percent year-on-year between April and November 2025 (FY26) to around Rs 1,429 billion, compared to Rs 1,541 billion, also a fall, during the same period in 2024.

Customs duty collections in India for 2024-25 remained flat, projected at Rs 2.33 trillion compared to previous years, reflecting a stagnant trend rather than a sharp fall, while their share of GDP declined to 0.7 percent. It could be more acute this year. Overall, revenue collections could be hit as also there could be more demands for relief and incentives.

Edible oils, Pulse,
Pharma to soar

It is likely to impact imports of edible oil, fertiliser, pulses, gas, pharma raw materials, health

care, helium-based MRI, air-conditioners, cars, trucks and many other products. Even imported electronic goods, chips, electric vehicles, batteries and other items are also to have inflated prices. It can increase electric generation, governance and transportation costs by several notches.

The higher premium for shipping insurance has jolted the traders. The demand for war coverage has heavy cost. Industry can expect some relief with the Rs 1000 crore war chest but actuals may be more.

Every day the meter is ticking. Like a time bomb. Shipping giants are billing Indian exporters up to \$3,000 per container in war surcharges -- on cargo that sailed before the war began -- as the Strait of Hormuz shuts down. Average premium rates have increased from 0.3 to 3 percent

India's economic links with West Asia run deep: the region accounts for 17 percent of India's exports, supplies 55 percent of its crude oil and generates 38 percent of its remittances, according to Jefferies, a brokerage firm. The fallout for India could show up in four places: energy, remittances, its Gulf diaspora and the loss of strategic Iranian port, Chabahar. Gulf tensions have triggered a

shipping crisis, with major carriers imposing war surcharges of up to \$3,000 per container—even on cargo already at sea—causing a 300-400% spike in freight costs. Indian exporters, especially small firms, are hardest hit as flat charges often exceed cargo value. Shipments remain stranded at Gulf ports, with no legal or regulatory relief due to force majeure protections and insurance gaps. Perishables risk spoilage, threatening farm prices, while payment delays could spark RBI compliance issues and working capital stress.

Despite rhetoric on India-Iran ties, relations have long been constrained by Iran's global isolation, pushing India to deepen engagement with key Gulf states—making regional instability a far greater concern for Delhi. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's reluctance to criticise Israel during his recent visit, just days before the strikes, risks eroding India's perceived neutrality, something Iran is unlikely to overlook, observes former Indian ambassador to Iran, KC Singh.

The coming days may have more trouble and increased financial rigours for India, including further job and production losses. It's a difficult situation and the country has to chart out the new course during such turbulence.



SHIVAJI SARKAR

Special on World Water Day (22 March)

Now or Never for
Water Conservation

Water scarcity has become a grave problem for almost all countries across the world. Although nearly three-fourths of the Earth's surface is covered with water, only about 1-1.5% of it is suitable for drinking and daily use. This is why World Water Day is observed every year on 22 March to spread awareness about water conservation and management. The day was declared by the United Nations in 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, and the first World Water Day was observed on 22 March 1993.

In its true sense, this day is meant to understand the importance of water, to become aware in time about its conservation, and to pledge to save it. The theme for World Water Day 2026 is "Water and Gender." This theme highlights the often unequal relationship between gender and access to water, emphasizing that the burden of the global water crisis falls disproportionately on women and girls. It also underlines the need to include them in leadership and decision-making processes. Water management is indeed a gender issue, as women and girls are often responsible for collecting water, while their access to sanitation facilities remains limited. Currently, around two bil-



lion people worldwide do not have access to safe drinking water, and due to the lack of clean water, millions fall ill and die prematurely. According to the International Atomic Energy Agency, only about 3% of the Earth's total water is fresh, of which nearly 2% is locked in glaciers and polar ice. The remaining 1% is used for drinking, irrigation, agriculture, and industries. The rest is either saline or otherwise unsuitable for human use. Of this 1%, nearly 95% exists as groundwater deep beneath the Earth's surface, while the rest is available as surface water in rivers, lakes, ponds, canals, and soil moisture.

Clearly, most of our water needs are met through groundwater, but even this resource is insufficient to meet the growing demands. While

the population continues to rise rapidly, groundwater levels are steadily declining, making the crisis inevitable. According to a report, nearly three billion people across the globe are already facing water scarcity, and in developing countries, the situation is even more severe, affecting about 95% of the population.

The rapidly emerging global water crisis could take a dangerous turn in the future. Experts have begun to warn that just as wars have been fought over oil, conflicts over water may become a reality in the coming years. There is even a possibility that the next world war could be fought over water. Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan had also cautioned that water scarcity could become a major cause of conflict in the future.

Therefore, it is the need of the hour for people worldwide to understand the value of this precious resource and contribute to its conservation at every level. Unfortunately, in addition to overexploitation, we have also polluted our traditional water sources such as rivers, ponds, and springs. India, once known for its abundance of rivers, has seen hundreds of them disappear or degrade. Wells and ponds that once existed in every village and locality have almost vanished today.

A crucial question arises: when the amount of usable water is already limited and groundwater levels are declining, how will we meet our future needs? The answer lies in rainwater. However, due to inadequate rainwater harvesting, its potential remains largely untapped. About 15% of rainwater evaporates, nearly 40% flows into rivers, and the rest is absorbed into the ground, contributing slightly to groundwater recharge. In my book PRADUSHAN MUKT SAAANSEIN, published with the support of the Hindi Academy, Delhi, I have elaborated in detail how the failure to conserve rainwater in India is proving to be our biggest shortcoming. If we focus on conserving rainwater, we can effectively utilize the water that otherwise goes to waste and significantly reduce the water crisis. Recognizing water as a fun-

damental human need, a valuable national asset, and a vital natural resource, India introduced the National Water Policy in 1987 for the planning and development of water resources. However, its implementation needs to be strengthened. While population growth and declining water availability are major contributors to the crisis, factors such as misuse, mismanagement, and contamination of water further aggravate the problem. We must understand that water is a priceless gift of nature and cannot be artificially created by humans. The growing water crisis can only be addressed through widespread public awareness, effective government initiatives, and active participation of every citizen in saving every drop of water.



YOGESH KUMAR GOYAL

The author is a senior journalist, an expert in environmental issues & author of widely discussed book "PRADUSHAN MUKT SAAANSEIN" Published with the courtesy of Hindi Academy, Delhi

CM Nayab Singh Saini calls for stronger India-Africa cooperation at Bharat Electricity Summit held in New Delhi

India and Africa must grow together through trust and cooperation: CM.. Haryana-Africa ties are "heart to heart": Chief Minister

CHANDIGARH, MARCH 21

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini emphasized the need for deeper India-Africa cooperation while addressing the India-Africa Strategic Partnership session at the Bharat Electricity Summit 2026 in New Delhi. He highlighted that in an evolving global landscape, stronger partnerships based on trust, shared goals and mutual growth are essential for sustainable development.

The Chief Minister stated that Haryana is rapidly advancing efforts to strengthen its engagement with African nations. He noted that the state has built a strong reputation not only in industry and economic growth but also in agriculture, animal husbandry, dairy and horticulture. By collaborating in these sectors, both India and African countries can benefit from shared knowledge, technology and experience, ultimately accelerating development. The summit session was chaired by Union Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, while Union Minister of State Shripad Yesso

Naik also addressed the gathering. Speaking to delegates and ministers from African countries, Saini described the relationship between Haryana and Africa as "heart to heart," going beyond conventional business partnerships. He pointed out that there is immense scope for cooperation in agriculture and allied sectors. Areas such as modern farming techniques, improved seed quality, irrigation systems, dairy development and agro-based industries offer opportunities for mutual growth. The Haryana government, he said, is committed to facilitating institutional partnerships, boosting investments and promoting knowledge exchange in these fields. Saini expressed confidence that India-Africa relations will gain new momentum in the coming years. He stressed that the summit is more than just a diplomatic gathering—it is a platform to build a shared future through collaboration and collective progress. He also underlined that India and Africa share deep historical ties, cultural connections and similar developmental



Haryana Chief Minister, Sh. Nayab Singh Saini attending the India-Africa Partnership Meeting during the Bharat Electricity Summit 2026, chaired by Union Minister of Power, Housing and Urban Affairs, Sh. Manohar Lal, in New Delhi on March 21, 2026. Union Minister of State for Power and New & Renewable Energy Sh. Shripad Yesso Naik is also seen in the picture.

aspirations, making them strong voices of the Global South. Referring to the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Chief Minister said that India-Africa relations are rooted in equality, trust and mutual respect. He emphasized that inclusive growth remains central to this partnership, ensuring that development benefits reach all sections of society. Highlighting Haryana's achievements, Saini said that despite being small in geographical size, the state has emerged as a leader in agriculture, manufacturing and innovation.

He added that Haryana is unique in having a dedicated Department of Foreign Cooperation, which he personally oversees to promote global partnerships in trade, investment, skill development and cultural exchange. On the energy front, Saini credited Manohar Lal Khattar for transforming Haryana's power sector. He said the state has achieved profitability in power distribution, ensured 24-hour electricity supply in over 90 percent of villages and reduced transmission losses significantly. Haryana, he added, is ready to share its exper-

tise in energy management, digital governance and efficient service delivery with African countries.

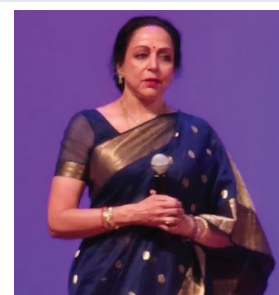
The Chief Minister also highlighted ongoing collaborations with countries such as Kenya and Tanzania in agriculture, where Haryana farmers can contribute to enhancing productivity. He pointed out that nations like Uganda, Ethiopia and Rwanda present opportunities in energy generation and infrastructure development. He referred to growing cooperation with the Tanzania Investment Centre, which is opening new avenues in sectors like trade, agriculture, fertilizers and energy. According to him, such engagements and high-level dialogues are boosting investor confidence and strengthening economic ties. Saini further spoke about Haryana's diversified economy, which includes agriculture, manufacturing, MSMEs and a rapidly growing startup ecosystem. He identified multiple areas of cooperation with African regions. Southern African nations like South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe offer poten-

tial for multi-sector partnerships. West African countries such as Nigeria, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire provide opportunities in agribusiness, food processing and dairy value chains. East Africa presents scope in agri-tech, irrigation, water management, healthcare and renewable energy, while North Africa offers prospects in textiles, logistics, food processing and solar energy. Emphasizing digital transformation, the Chief Minister described the Bharat Electricity Summit as a symbol of a technology-driven economy. He said Haryana aims to keep its markets open and make trade more attractive while leveraging its digital advancements. He added that the state can support African nations in improving public services, education, healthcare, financial inclusion and digital literacy. Addressing global challenges, Saini highlighted climate change as a critical issue requiring joint action. He called for stronger cooperation between India and African nations in renewable energy, water conservation and environmental protection.

"Chal Re Man Vrindavan,"

by Hema Malini mesmerised the audience

MATHURA:



Swami Haridas Auditorium has a surprise guest today in Mathura MP Hema Malini, who agrees to sing beautiful Bhajans to test installed sound and lights at the auditorium complex before its inauguration. The auditorium with a sitting capacity of 1000 is one of the largest in UP and is the brainchild of Hema Malini, Janardan Sharma, MP representative Hema Malini said. Actor-turned-politician Hema Malini is an ardent devotee of Lord Krishna. She is popularly known for her role in movies and her performances of various Leelas of Lord Krishna through her dance dramas. Her beautiful singing came as a surprise for many in the audience. The audience which was mesmerised by her singing of "Chal Re Man Vrindavan," requested her for another song. With her singing of "Main Krishna Gun Gaun" the entire auditorium was immersed in the devotion of Lord Krishna. Hema Malini also called an expert from industry to assist in checking of sound and light systems at the auditorium, ja-

nardan Sharma said. Before inauguration, installed lights and sound are tested, calibrated, and tuned today. The auditorium is almost complete, and the test is conducted for various parameters, Kapil M. Singh, executive engineer for UP Jal Nigam, said. The complex, built at the cost of 42.15 crore, houses an auditorium, open-air theater, dormitory, and some accommodation and will host major cultural events and will promote religious and cultural specialities of the region, he added. A RasLeela called Brhamar Geet was also performed by artists of Geeta Shodh Sansthan and Rasleela Academy Vrindavan. The vice president of the Uttar Pradesh Braj Teerth Vikas Parishad, Shailesh Mishra, was also present.

Man arrested for raping, killing niece in Lucknow

LUCKNOW: (MAR 21)

A man was on Saturday arrested for allegedly raping and killing his 17-year-old niece in Lucknow, the police said. On March 19, the victim's brother filed a complaint against his maternal uncle Kuldeep Maurya (28) alleging that he had taken his sister away on his motorcycle. The complainant told police that he and his sister live at their maternal uncle's home. He alleged that on the evening of March 18, around 8.30 pm Kuldeep left the house on his motorcycle, taking the girl along with him under the pretext of visiting a doctor in Pili Colony.

Shahi: Yogi Govt Turns UP from 'BIMARU' to Top Performer

LUCKNOW/DEORIA: MARCH 21:

Uttar Pradesh Agriculture Minister Surya Pratap Shahi on Saturday said the state's agriculture sector has seen significant transformation over the past nine years under Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. Speaking in Deoria, he claimed the current government has delivered the strongest performance in agriculture since the state's formation. He said wide-ranging reforms, expansion of irrigation, direct financial support and use of modern technology have helped Uttar Pradesh emerge as a strong agricultural model. According to him, the government has focused on increasing farmers' income, improving productivity

Highlighted major transformation in agriculture sector, said, Yogi government has helped farmers more than any government has ever done
Loan waiver of RS36,000 crore for 86 lakh farmers under the Yogi government
RS15 lakh crore paid to sugarcane farmers as dues
Foodgrain production in UP increased from 547 lakh metric tonnes to 737 lakh metric tonnes in last 9 years



and ensuring self-reliance. Highlighting past challenges, the minister said farmers earlier struggled due to lack of fertilizers, water and electricity, along with delayed procurement and payments. After 2017, the government addressed these issues through targeted measures. A major decision was the waiver of ₹36,000 crore in loans, benefiting around 86 lakh farmers.

This step, he said, provided relief and helped farmers restart their activities. The government also improved irrigation by repairing canal systems and completing pending projects, benefiting over 30 lakh hectares of land. More than 92,000 solar pumps have been installed under the PM-KUSUM scheme with subsidies of up to 60 percent, ensuring reliable irrigation. Addition-

ally, electricity bills of 16 lakh farmers' tube wells have been waived, with the government bearing a cost of ₹3,600 crore.

Special emphasis has been placed on sugarcane farmers. The minister said pending dues were cleared, with total payments reaching ₹3.15 lakh crore. Sugarcane prices were increased from ₹300 to ₹400 per quintal, strengthening farmers' financial stability.

Under the PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi, more than 3 crore farmers in the state have received ₹99,500 crore directly in their bank accounts through Direct Benefit Transfer, ensuring transparency. Similarly, the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana has provided ₹5,660.33 crore to over 67 lakh farmers as compensation for crop losses. Foodgrain pro-

duction has increased from 547 lakh metric tonnes in 2017 to 737 lakh metric tonnes in 2024-25, making Uttar Pradesh the top producer in the country. The state also leads in milk production and in crops such as wheat, paddy, mango and sugarcane.

The minister said modern farming practices are being promoted through machinery and drone technology, including initiatives like 'Drone Didi'. He added that 20 new Krishi Vigyan Kendras have been set up, and a new agricultural university is being developed in Kushinagar. Concluding, Shahi said Uttar Pradesh has moved beyond its earlier "BIMARU" tag and emerged as a leading agricultural state, with agriculture now a strong pillar of its economy.

Operation of Summer Special Train between Lokmanya Tilak Terminus – Banaras – Lokmanya Tilak Terminus

GORAKHPUR, MARCH 21, 2026:

For the convenience of passengers during the summer season, the Railway Administration will operate the bi-weekly special train 01073/01074 Lokmanya Tilak Terminus – Banaras – Lokmanya Tilak Terminus. This train will run: From Lokmanya Tilak Terminus: from April 1 to April 30, 2026, every Wednesday and Thursday From Banaras: from April 3 to May 2, 2026, every Friday and Saturday A total of 10 trips will be operated Train Schedule Details
01073 Lokmanya Tilak Terminus – Banaras Bi-weekly Special: Will depart from Lokmanya Tilak Terminus at 12:15 PM on every Wednesday and Thursday (April 1-30, 2026), stopping at: Thane – 12:36 PM Kalyan – 12:55 PM Igatpuri – 2:45 PM Nashik Road – 3:15 PM Jalgaon – 6:45 PM Bhusaval – 7:15 PM Khandwa – 9:00 PM Itarsi – 11:55 PM
Next day: Rani Kamalapati – 1:15 AM Bina – 8:00 AM Veerangana Lakshmbai (Jhansi) – 10:30 AM Orai – 12:00 PM Govindpuri – 2:45 PM

Fatehpur – 4:20 PM Subedarganj – 5:55 PM Arrival at Banaras at 11:30 PM
01074 Banaras – Lokmanya Tilak Terminus Bi-weekly Special (Return Journey): Will depart from Banaras at 5:30 AM on every Friday and Saturday (April 3 – May 2, 2026), stopping at: Subedarganj – 9:45 AM Fatehpur – 12:00 PM Govindpuri – 1:35 PM Orai – 3:22 PM Veerangana Lakshmbai Jhansi – 5:30 PM Bina – 10:30 PM
Next day: Rani Kamalapati – 1:10 AM Itarsi – 2:50 AM Khandwa – 5:53 AM Bhusaval – 8:15 AM Jalgaon – 8:50 AM Nashik Road – 11:25 AM Igatpuri – 1:10 PM Kalyan – 3:00 PM Thane – 3:20 PM Arrival at Lokmanya Tilak Terminus at 4:40 PM

Coach Composition: The train will consist of a total of 22 coaches, including: 9 Sleeper Class coaches 1 AC 2-tier coach 6 AC 3-tier coaches 4 General Second Class coaches 2 SLRD (Seating-cum-Luggage Rake with Divyangjan facilities) coaches

Wife's call and sudden blast: UP man killed in Iranian airstrike on Saudi

SITAPUR, UP: MAR 21, 2026

A pale of gloom has descended on Baghain village in Uttar Pradesh's Sitapur district, after Ravi Gopal, a 26-year-old labourer from the village, lost his life in a missile attack in Riyadh amid the war in the Middle East. However, the family is struggling to repatriate Ravi's body, alleging that authorities have largely remained silent so far. On the night of March 18, after completing his work at a factory, Ravi was speaking on the phone with his wife, Ritu, when a sudden explosion occurred. The call disconnected

abruptly, and his phone went dead shortly after. Ritu recounted that their call began around 8:20 PM and was normal until the explosion was heard in the background at 9:53 PM, after which the connection was lost. Despite repeated attempts, the family could not reach him again. The next day, a friend informed the family about Ravi's death in a missile strike. On March 18 (Wednesday), Saudi Arabia claimed it downed four Iranian ballistic missiles targeting Riyadh, and some debris fell near a refinery south of the city. The Indian national likely died after being hit by falling debris.

Rare fog, chilly end-March morning in Delhi-NCR. Here's what's happening

NEW DELHI: MAR 21, 2026

Friday's persistent showers led to a sharp dip in temperature, with the maximum settling at 21.7 degrees Celsius, making it the coldest March day since 2020. The rainfall also significantly improved air quality, pushing it into the "satisfactory" category for the first time in nearly five months. A day after heavy rain in Delhi-NCR cleaned up the air and saw the capital recording its coldest March day in six years, residents on Saturday woke up to a rare spell of dense fog, triggering low visibility conditions. The minimum temperature dipped



to 13 degrees Celsius, 3.5 degrees below normal, as a chilly wind swept the National Capital Region. According to the IMD, the minimum temperature on Saturday is expected to be around 14 degrees Celsius and the maximum 27 degrees Celsius. Friday's persistent showers led to a sharp dip in temperature, with the maximum settling at 21.7 degrees Celsius, making it the coldest March day since 2020. The rainfall also significantly improved air quality, pushing it into the "satisfactory" category for the

first time in nearly five months. This marked the first such day in about five months (161 days), with the last time the city recorded 'satisfactory' air quality on October 9, 2025, when the AQI stood at 99. The early morning fog coincided with Eid, as worshippers braved the chill to flock to various mosques across Delhi. The IMD has forecast more rainfall across the National Capital Region on Saturday evening. "A large-scale thunderstorm activity is currently being witnessed across India," said India Meteorological Department's Akhil Shrivastava, adding that conditions are likely to remain cloudy today.

J&K LG Thanks PM, Minister for Fisheries Grant

JAMMU: MARCH 21

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Minister for Panchayati Raj and Fisheries Rajiv Ranjan Singh for the Rs 111.66 crore Central grant to implement a fisheries development project. Sinha said he was thankful to the prime minister and the Union minister for releasing the funds aimed at strengthening the fisheries sector in the Union Territory. "I am grateful to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Minister of Panchayati Raj and Fisheries Rajiv Ranjan Singh for releasing the Central share of Rs 111.66 crore to implement the approved fisheries development project in J-K," Sinha said.

Iranian Navy guided India's LPG vessel via Strait of Hormuz last week

NEW DELHI: MAR 21, 2026

The development comes as tensions in the region have disrupted global shipping routes and heightened risks for energy transportation through one of the world's most critical chokepoints.



Amid escalating conflict in the Middle East involving the US and Israel, who are pitted against Iran, the Iranian Navy last week guided an Indian liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) tanker through the Strait of Hormuz along a pre-approved route, following diplomatic engagement by New Delhi, according to a senior officer onboard the vessel, Bloomberg reported. The officer, who spoke to Bloomberg on the condition of anonymity as the crew were not authorised to speak publicly, said the tanker was one of two Indian ships allowed to make the sensi-

tive crossing. The development comes as tensions in the region have disrupted global shipping routes and heightened risks for energy transportation through one of the world's most critical chokepoints. During the transit, the vessel remained in radio contact with the Iranian Navy, which collected detailed information including the ship's flag, origin, destination and crew nationality, the report added. All crew members were Indian. The ship was then guided along a designated path, suggesting a controlled passage system being implemented by Tehran. "It

seems that Iran is allowing select vessels to transit Hormuz after verification which takes place during the ships' transit inside Iranian waters," said Martin Kelly, head of advisory at EOS Risk Group. "While ships are being allowed to transit, it is mostly only to the benefit of Iran." The Strait of Hormuz handles nearly a fifth of global oil shipments, making it a vital artery for energy supplies. Since the war began in late February, the route has seen multiple attacks involving missiles and drones, resulting in fatalities among seafarers and a sharp rise in insurance costs.

There have also been reports of naval mines in the area, further increasing risks for commercial vessels. According to the officer, the Indian tanker had been anchored in the Persian Gulf for about ten days before receiving clearance to transit on the night of March 13. Prior to entry, the crew undertook emergency preparations, including readying life rafts, amid uncertainty over safe passage. The crossing itself was complex. The tanker sailed with its automatic identification system switched off and experienced GPS disruption due to interference linked to the conflict, significantly extending the journey. Several vessels in recent days have reportedly navigated through a narrow corridor between the Iranian islands of Larak and Qeshm, staying close to the Iranian coastline for safety. On exiting into the Gulf of Oman, the Indian tanker was met by Indian Navy ships, which escorted it onward. The vessel has since continued its journey to India.

NEW DELHI IN TOUCH WITH TEHRAN External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said the safe passage of Indian-flagged gas carriers reflected ongoing diplomatic engagement with Iran, though no blanket arrangement exists. He added that dialogue remains active as India seeks to safeguard its energy supply routes. India has also deployed naval assets in the region to escort vessels through the Strait of Hormuz and the North Arabian Sea. Around 22 Indian ships are currently stranded in the wider area, with escort operations continuing amid persistent threats. The episode highlights how diplomacy and selective coordination are enabling limited maritime movement even as the conflict intensifies. However, with Iran appearing to exert tighter control over shipping lanes, uncertainty is likely to persist, keeping global energy markets and maritime security on edge in the coming weeks.

Bihar: Lightning kills 6, injures 10 others

PATNA, MARCH 21

A sudden change in weather has disrupted normal life across Bihar, with storms, heavy rainfall, hail, and lightning continuing from Friday into Saturday. The severe conditions have caused widespread damage across multiple districts, claiming six lives and leaving at least ten others injured due to lightning strikes. Rainfall has been reported in several districts, including Patna, Bagaha, Bettiah, Banka, Gopalganj, Raxaul, and Khargaria. In Patna, heavy showers were accompanied by hailstorms, while Raxaul is facing severe waterlogging. Lightning strikes have also damaged trees, property, and agricultural fields. In Gaya district, two farmers died after being struck by lightning in the Dumaria and Wazirganj areas. In Jamui,

a 15-year-old student lost her life due to a lightning strike in the Chakai area. In Mokama (Patna district), ten labourers sustained burn injuries after lightning struck near them; they are currently undergoing treatment and are reported to be out of danger. In Araria, two children died, and another was injured after a wall collapsed during the storm. In Kishanganj, a woman died due to lightning, while a poultry farm incident led to the death of around 4,000 chickens. Fires caused by lightning strikes on palm trees have also been reported in Samastipur, Patna, and Muzaffarpur. The adverse weather has severely impacted agriculture, with maize and wheat crops suffering extensive damage from strong winds, rain, and hail, raising concerns among farmers.

Iran says US-Israel hit Natanz nuke facility again, no radioactive leak reported

DUBAI, UAE: MAR 21, 2026

The nuclear facility, located nearly 220 kilometres (135 miles) southeast of Tehran, had been targeted by Israeli airstrikes in the 12-day war between Iran and Israel in June 2025, and by the United States. Iran's Natanz nuclear enrichment facility was hit in an airstrike on Saturday, the official Iranian news agency Mizan reported. There was no radiation leakage, it said, as the war in the Middle East entered its fourth week.

Natanz, Iran's main enrichment site, was hit in the first week of the war and several buildings appeared damaged, according to satellite images. The United Nations' nuclear watchdog had said that "no radiological consequence" was expected from that earlier strike. The nuclear facility, located nearly 220 kilometres (135 miles) southeast of Tehran, had been targeted by Israeli airstrikes in the 12-day war between Iran and Israel in June 2025, and by the United States. The strike comes a

day after US President Donald Trump said he was considering "winding down" military operations in the Middle East even as the United States is sending three more amphibious assault ships and roughly 2,500 additional Marines to the region. Trump's post Friday on social media followed an Iranian threat to attack recreational and tourist sites worldwide and another day of the airstrikes and drone and missile attacks that have engulfed the region. The mixed messages from the United States came after another climb in oil prices plunged the US stock market, and was followed by a Trump administration announcement it was lifting sanctions on Iranian oil already loaded on ships, a move aimed at wrangling soaring fuel prices.

The 3-week-old war has shown no signs of abating, with Israel saying Iran continued to fire missiles at it early Saturday, while Saudi Arabia said it downed 20 drones in just a couple of hours in the country's eastern region, which is home to major oil installations. The



attacks came a day after Israeli airstrikes hit in Tehran as Iranians celebrated the Persian New Year, known as Nowruz, a normally festive holiday that has been muted by the war.

TRUMP SAYS US NEAR COMPLETION OF ITS GOALS

The US and Israel have offered shifting rationales for the war, from hoping to foment an uprising that topples Iran's leadership to eliminating its nuclear and missile programs. There have been no public signs of any such uprising and no end to the war in sight. On social

media, Trump said, "We are getting very close to meeting our objectives as we consider winding down our great military efforts in the Middle East."

That seemed at odds with his administration's move to bolster its firepower in the region and request another USD 200 billion from Congress to fund the war. The United States is deploying three more amphibious assault ships and roughly 2,500 additional Marines to the Middle East, an official told The Associated Press. Two other US officials confirmed that ships were deploying, without

saying where they were headed. All three spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive military operations. Days earlier the US redirected another group of amphibious assault ships carrying another 2,500 Marines from the Pacific to the Middle East. The Marines will join more than 50,000 US troops already in the region. Trump has said he has no plans to send ground forces into Iran but also has asserted that he retains all options.

IRAN THREATENS ATTACKS BEYOND THE MIDDLE EAST

Iran's top military spokesperson, General Abolfazl Shekarchi, warned Friday that "parks, recreational areas and tourist destinations" worldwide will not be safe for the country's enemies. The threat renewed concerns that Tehran may revert to using militant attacks beyond the Middle East as a pressure tactic.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei praised Iran's steadfastness in the face of war in a written statement read on Iranian television to

mark Nowruz. Khamenei has not been seen in public since he became supreme leader following Israeli strikes that killed his father, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and reportedly wounded him.

With little information coming out of Iran, it was not clear how much damage its arms, nuclear or energy facilities have sustained in the punishing US and Israeli strikes, which began February 28 — or even who was truly in charge of the country. But Iran's attacks are still choking off oil supplies and raising food and fuel prices far beyond the Middle East. The Israeli military said early Saturday that it began a wave of strikes targeting Iran-backed Hezbollah militants in Beirut's southern suburbs. Smoke was seen rising, fires broke out, and loud explosions were heard across parts of central Beirut, hours after the Israeli army renewed evacuation warnings for seven neighbourhoods. Israeli strikes targeting Hezbollah in Lebanon have killed more than 1,000 people and displaced more than 1 million, according to the Lebanese government.

India's proactive diplomacy fosters Taiwan engagement and Indo-Pacific stability

TAIPEI, MARCH 21



The establishment of another Taipei Economic and Cultural Centre in Mumbai and the participation of Taiwanese think tanks at the recent Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi underscore India's intent to deepen engagement with Taiwan. India should also explore collaborating with Southeast Asian countries in elevating Taiwan's role in addressing regional economic, governance and security matters, a report has suggested.

"Over the last decade, India, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has invested huge political capital in transforming its engagement with Southeast and East Asian countries under its Act East Policy. Consequently, ties between India and these countries have reached a new high. Unlike his predecessors, Modi has focused on building defence and security cooperation with ASEAN countries under the

Act East policy," a recent report in 'Taipei Times' detailed. "New Delhi's expanding cooperation with Kuala Lumpur, Hanoi and others on defence sends a clear message about India's desire to play a major role in promoting peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region. The establishment of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited's first regional office in Kuala Lumpur in 2023 is of great significance in strengthening India's defence presence in the region," it added.

According to the report, India's proactive steps are a welcome development for Taiwan. Facing Chinese assertiveness, Taiwan could benefit from India's defence diplomacy, which would forge a middle path to help promote stability in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait.

No US base out of reach? What Iran's 4,000 km Diego Garcia strike bid means

NEW DELHI: MAR 21, 2026



Iran launched two intermediate-range ballistic missiles aimed at the US-UK military base Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean on Saturday, according to the semi-official Mehr news agency. Although neither missile struck the base, the attack signals a dramatic escalation in Tehran's operational reach. Mehr described the targeting of Diego Garcia as a "significant step that shows the range of Iran's missiles is beyond what the enemy previously imagined." US officials, speaking to the Wall Street Journal, reported that one missile failed mid-flight while a US warship fired an SM-3 interceptor at the second. It remains unclear if the interception was successful.

UNCHARTED MISSILE CAPABILITIES EXPOSED

The strike drew attention because Diego Garcia lies roughly 4,000 kilometres from Iran. Which is double the publicly acknowledged range of Tehran's ballistic missiles. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi had previously said the country's missiles could reach 2,000 kilometres. Even though the attack did not land on target, it forces the world to reconsider Iran's true capabilities. By attempting a strike at this distance, Iran demonstrated the potential to extend its reach far beyond previous estimates, creating uncertainty for US and UK strategic planning in the Indian Ocean. This attempt reshapes the risk map, according to media reports. It's a political message: no US base is entirely out of reach.

DIEGO GARCIA: STRATEGIC HUB IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

Diego Garcia is a pivotal platform for US power projection, hosting heavy bombers, surveillance aircraft, and critical logistics infrastructure. The attempted missile strike compels the US to deploy high-end missile-defence resources to a remote location. While reports suggest one missile was intercepted and the other failed, Iran achieves a strategic impact simply by forcing the US to engage defensive measures. "The technical outcome matters less than the demonstration of reach," a defence source noted.

BROADER GEOPOLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

The missile attempt occurred amid escalating tensions in the Strait of Hormuz, where Iran has previously targeted commercial shipping and US forces. The UK recently approved US operations from its bases in the Middle East under the framework of "collective self-defence." A Downing Street spokesperson said ministers had "condemned Iran's expansion of targets to include international shipping" and warned the strikes "risk pushing the region further into crisis and worsening global economic impact." US President Donald Trump commented on the delay in UK approval, saying, "It's been a very late response from the UK. I'm surprised because the relationship is so good. They should have acted faster." The Pentagon is responding by deploying additional warships and thousands of Marines to the Middle East, reinforcing protection of strategic sea lanes and allied interests.

10 killed, 4 missing in massive South Korea factory fire

SEOUL: MAR 21, 2026

At least 10 people were killed and 59 others injured after a fire, likely triggered by an explosion, broke out at an auto parts factory in the South Korean city of Daejeon. Four others are still missing and rescue operations are underway to find them.



South Korean rescue workers on Saturday recovered 10 bodies from the charred wreckage of an auto parts factory in the central city of Daejeon, where a blaze likely triggered by an explosion injured at least 59 others and left four missing. The Ministry of the Interior and Safety said 25 people were seriously injured, but officials didn't immediately confirm whether any were in life-threatening condition.

More than 500 firefighters, police and emergency personnel were deployed to contain the fire and conduct rescue operations after the fire broke out Friday afternoon.

Videos and photos from the scene showed thick gray smoke billowing from the complex and some workers jumping from a building.

Nam Deuk-woo, fire chief of the city's Daedeok district, said the blaze destroyed a

factory building that firefighters initially could not enter over fears it might collapse. Searches for the missing workers began late Friday after officials deployed unmanned firefighting robots to cool the structure and conducted a safety inspection.

The fire was reported at about 1:18 pm (local time). Nam said the cause was not immediately known, but the blaze appeared to have spread

rapidly, with witnesses reporting an explosion.

Firefighters focused on preventing the blaze from spreading to an adjacent facility and removing chemicals from the site. Nam said workers recovered more than 100 kilograms of highly reactive chemicals from the site. Some people were injured when they jumped from the building to escape, while others suffered from smoke inhalation, Nam said.

About 120 vehicles and pieces of equipment including aircraft, an unmanned water cannon vehicle and two firefighting robots for hard-to-reach areas, were deployed along with hundreds of personnel. President Lee Jae Myung called for the full mobilisation of personnel and equipment to contain the fire and support rescue operations.

US grants 30-day waiver for Iranian oil sales to ease global supply crunch

NEW DELHI: MAR 21, 2026

The Trump administration has issued a 30-day sanctions waiver allowing the sale of Iranian oil stranded at sea, in a bid to ease global energy supply pressures triggered by the ongoing US-Israel war with Iran. Announcing the move on X, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said the step is aimed at quickly stabilising markets by unlocking existing supply. "By temporarily unlocking this existing supply for the world, the United States will quickly

bring approximately 140 million barrels of oil to global markets," he said. The waiver permits the sale of Iranian crude and petroleum products already loaded on vessels between March 20 and April 19, according to a Treasury Department license. Officials stressed that the authorisation is limited and does not allow new production or fresh purchases. Bessent framed the decision as a targeted intervention to counter disruptions caused by the conflict. "This temporary, short-term authorisation is strictly limited

to oil that is already in transit and does not allow new purchases or production," he said. He added that the move would expand global energy supply and help ease price pressures. "We will be using the Iranian barrels against Tehran to keep the price down as we continue Operation Epic Fury." The waiver marks the third such easing in recent weeks, following earlier relaxations on Russian oil. Bessent said the administration has already worked to bring hundreds of millions of additional barrels into the market.

Satellite images show deadly Pak strike on Kabul's Omid Hospital

NEW DELHI: MAR 21, 2026

At least 400 people were killed and more than 250 were injured after Pakistan carried out cross-border airstrikes in Afghanistan's Nangarhar province on February 20 and 21. Islamabad said the strikes precisely targeted terrorist camps and were launched in response to recent attacks inside Pakistan. However, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan has put the death toll at 143. Satellite images captured on March



20 show the aftermath of the strikes on Kabul's Omid Hospital, a 2,000-bed facility. What was once a cluster of organised buildings, including one large roofed structure and several smaller surrounding facilities, now lies in rubble. The layout appears consistent with a civilian rehabilitation centre rather than the regimented formations typically associated with a military installation. The facility is located at the former Camp Phoenix, a NATO base once operated by the US Army.

Trump rejects ceasefire, says US 'obliterating' Iran amid war

NEW DELHI: MAR 21, 2026

US President Donald Trump has ruled out any ceasefire with Iran, signalling that US and Israeli military operations will continue despite growing calls for de-escalation.

Speaking to reporters at the White House on Friday, Trump said he is open to talks but not a pause in fighting. "Look, we can have dialogue, but I don't want to do a ceasefire. You know, you don't do a ceasefire when you're obliterating the other side," he said. The remarks high-

light Washington's hardline position as the conflict deepens into a prolonged regional crisis, with continued strikes and rising tensions across the Middle East. Trump portrayed Iran's military as significantly weakened after weeks of sustained attacks. "They don't have a navy. They don't have an air force. They don't have any equipment," he said, suggesting that continued pressure would further erode Tehran's capabilities. Despite leaving the door open for diplomacy, Trump made clear that negotiations would not come at the cost of halting military action. "We could have dialogue, but I don't want to do a ceasefire," he re-

iterated before departing for Florida.

Trump struck a triumphant tone, asserting that US strikes have dismantled Iran's military infrastructure. "I think we've won," he said. "We knocked out their navy, their Air Force, we knocked out their anti-aircraft, we've knocked out everything." He added, "We're roaming free but from a military standpoint, they're finished," even as he acknowledged Iran continues "clogging up" the Strait of Hormuz.

STRAIT OF HORMUZ: IT WILL OPEN ITSELF

Trump described securing the vital shipping lane as a relatively straightforward



task but said it would require broader international involvement. The strategic waterway, which carries about a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas, has been largely shut to shipping since the US and Israel launched their offensive against Iran. "It's a simple military

maneuver but you need a lot of help. You need ships, you need volume," he said, adding that "NATO could help us but they so far haven't had the courage to do so." He urged major energy-dependent nations to step in. "It would be nice if the countries, including China Japan would get involved. China uses it 90% of their energy, Japan is 95% of the energy, it would be nice if those countries would get involved. Despite disruptions, Trump expressed confidence the situation would resolve. "At a certain point, it will open itself."

ISRAEL ALIGNMENT AND WAR GOALS
Trump said the United

States and Israel are closely aligned in their objectives. "The relationship is a very good one. We want more or less similar things. We want victory, both of us, and that's what we've got," he said, adding he expects Israel to follow Washington's lead on ending the conflict.

KHARG ISLAND STRIKE PLANS UNCLEAR

Asked about potential US action against Iran's key oil hub at Kharg Island, Trump declined to reveal specifics. "I may have a plan, I may not," he said. "It's certainly a place that people are talking about. But I can't tell you that."

CONDEMNATION OF EXECUTIONS IN IRAN

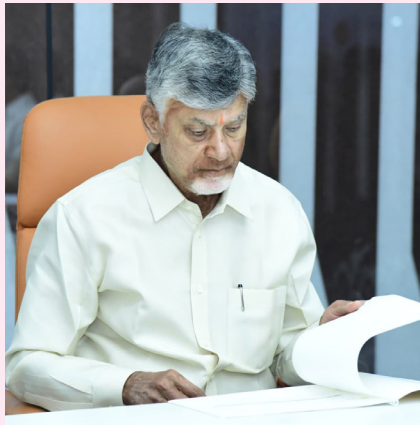
Trump also condemned Iran's reported execution of three protesters. "These are thugs and animals and horrible people," he said. "Can't hit anybody harder than we've hit them. But I'm not surprised, they executed three young people for protesting." Trump's remarks come as the conflict continues to widen, disrupting global energy routes and drawing calls for international intervention. While Washington signals continued military pressure, it is also pushing allies and major economies to play a greater role in securing the Strait of Hormuz. Meanwhile, the United States is deploying thousands more Marines

to the Middle East, as Trump criticised Nato allies for what he described as reluctance to support efforts to reopen the Strait of Hormuz. The war, which began on February 28, has expanded beyond initial flashpoints, raising concerns of wider regional instability and prolonged disruption to global energy routes. With key energy routes disrupted and infrastructure across Iran and neighbouring Gulf states under attack, oil prices have surged roughly 50% since the war began on February 28, raising fears of a wider global economic shock. The conflict has already killed more than 2,000 people, mostly in Iran and Lebanon.

CM to lay foundation for Arcelor Mittal Nippon Steel India Plant

at Nakkapalli of Anakapalli district along with union ministers on March 23

Arcelor steel plant to be set up with an investment of Rs 1,35,964 Crore provides employment opportunity for one lakh people



Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh is going to witness major industrial revolution as Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu along with Union Ministers will lay foundation for Arcelor Mittal Nippon Steel India project on March 23 at Rajayyapeta in Nakkapalli mandal of Anakapalli district. A leading steel producer Arcelor Mittal Nippon Steel India (AMNS India) is preparing to establish a greenfield integrated steel plant in the state with a capacity of 17.8 million metric tonnes per annum. The project,

with a massive investment of Rs 1,35,964 crore, is expected to generate employment opportunities for around one lakh people, both directly and indirectly. Spread across 5,465 acres, the project will be developed in two phases—7.3 million metric tonnes capacity in the first phase and 10.5 million metric tonnes in the second phase. Alongside the steel plant, AMNS India will also set up a captive port with a capacity of 50 million metric tonnes over 316 acres, with an additional in-

vestment of Rs 11,198 crore. This is expected to create another 6,000 jobs. The establishment of the AMNS India plant is poised to transform the Visakhapatnam Economic Region into a major industrial hub. The greenfield steel plant will also enable AMNS India to play a significant role in meeting the growing demand in India's steel market. The state government is extending full support to ensure the speedy completion of the project. A four-lane road is being developed to connect the steel

plant to NH-16. Several dignitaries from both central and state governments including Chief Minister as chief guest, Union Minister for Steel and Heavy Industries H.D. Kumaraswamy, Minister of State Bhupathiraju Srinivasa Varma, Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan and Minister for IT & Human Resources Nara Lokesh will attend the programme. AP Legislative Assembly Speaker Chintakayala Ayyannapratrudu, Ministers Anitha and T.G. Bharath, and MP C.M. Ramesh will

attend as distinguished guests. ArcelorMittal Executive Chairman Lakshmi Mittal and AMNS India Chairman Aditya Mittal will also participate. As per schedule Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu will reach Rajayyapeta in Nakkapalli mandal by helicopter. At 3:40 PM, he will visit the Experience Zone and review the steel plant model. He will then unveil the foundation plaque along with Union Ministers and participate in the signing of MoUs, before returning to Amaravati.

GOLD RUSH

India's timeless asset is shining brighter in 2026

IN THE BUSTLING gold souks of Zaveri Bazaar or the digital vaults of apps like Groww, gold remains India's eternal love affair. As of February 2026, with 24-carat prices hovering near ₹75,000 per 10 grams—up 15 per cent year-on-year—investors are flocking back. Why now? Global tensions, rupee depreciation, and persistent inflation at 5.2 per cent make gold a fortress against uncertainty. Unlike volatile stocks or crypto's wild rides, gold offers stability rooted in cultural reverence and economic savvy.

For the urban professional in Ghaziabad or Mumbai, gold ETFs and sovereign gold bonds (SGBs) top the



charts. SGBs, issued by RBI, yield 2.5 per cent annual interest plus capital gains linked to gold prices—tax-free if held to maturity (8 years). Last year's tranche saw oversubscription by 150 per cent, signalling smart money at play. ETFs, traded on NSE/BSE like Gold BeES, mirror spot prices with liquidity; they've delivered 12 per cent CAGR over five years, outpacing fixed deposits in real terms.

Sceptics point to storage hassles and making charges for physical gold (5-10 per cent premium), but digital alternatives slash costs. Platforms like Paytm Gold or MMTCP-PAMP let you buy grams affordably, redeemable as coins or jewellery. Data from

WGC shows Indian households hold 25,000 tonnes—11 per cent of global reserves—yet millennials prefer paper gold, with ETF inflows hitting ₹4,000 crore in Q1 2026. Risks? Over-allocation (cap at 10-15 per cent of portfolio) and short-term dips from US Fed hikes. Still, experts like Motilal Oswal's Swati Kulkarni forecast 10-12 per cent returns, fuelled by Akshaya Tertiary demand and central bank buys (RBI added 72 tonnes in 2025). Bottom line: In India's growth story—projected 7 per cent GDP this fiscal—gold isn't just bling; it's a hedge. Start small via SGBs or apps, diversify, and let this yellow metal polish your wealth.

NTPC, Africa50 team up to expand power projects in Africa

NEW DELHI, MAR 21



In a significant move aimed at strengthening India-Africa energy ties, NTPC Ltd. has initiated discussions with Africa50 to expand cooperation across the African power sector.

The meeting between NTPC's Chairman and Managing Director and Africa50 CEO Alain Ebobisse focused on exploring joint development opportunities in a wide range of energy projects. These include conventional and renewable segments such as coal, gas, solar, wind and floating solar power.

Both sides also discussed facilitating power trading across the African continent, reflecting a broader vision of building integrated and efficient energy markets. A comprehensive framework agreement covering multiple areas of collaboration in Africa's power and energy sector was also deliberated upon during the talks.

The meeting took place on the sidelines of the Bharat Electricity Summit 2026, being held from March 19-22 here under the aegis of the Ministry of Power.

The engagement underscores NTPC's growing focus on expanding its global footprint and fostering sustainable energy partnerships in emerging markets, particularly in Africa, where demand for reliable and diversified energy solutions continues to rise.

A Rs.20,000 crore lifeline for microfinance sector

NEW DELHI, MARCH 21

In a significant move to strengthen financial inclusion and support small borrowers, the government has launched a revamped credit guarantee scheme aimed at boosting the microfinance sector and improving credit flow to underserved segments.

The new Credit Guarantee Scheme for Microfinance Institutions (CG-SMFI-2.0), introduced by the Ministry of Finance, is expected to enable loans worth up to Rs 20,000

crore, benefiting nearly 36 lakh borrowers across the country. The scheme is designed to encourage banks and financial institutions to extend loans to microfinance institutions by reducing their lending risk.

Under the framework, a substantial portion of the loan amount will be backed by guarantee cover, particularly benefiting smaller microfinance institutions that often face funding constraints.

To ensure affordability for end borrowers, the scheme also includes

provisions to cap interest rates, making credit more accessible to low-income households and small entrepreneurs. The guarantee support will be managed through National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited, which will help enhance lender confidence and improve liquidity in the sector.

The initiative comes at a time when the microfinance industry has been facing challenges in accessing funds, leading to a slowdown in lending activities. By addressing these

concerns, the government aims to revive credit flow and support income-generating activities, especially in rural and semi-urban areas. The scheme will remain operational until June 30, 2026, or until the targeted guarantee amount is fully utilised.

With this move, the government is seeking to stabilise the microfinance ecosystem while ensuring that affordable credit reaches millions of small borrowers, thereby supporting livelihoods and driving inclusive economic growth.

Government notifies new IT Rules 2026 for stricter compliance

NEW DELHI, MAR 21

The government has notified the Income Tax Rules, 2026, which will come into effect from the 1st of next month. The new rules aim to enhance compliance through stricter disclosures while simplifying tax procedures by reducing the number of rules.

The rules mark a major overhaul of procedural and compliance systems under direct taxation. The Ministry of Finance has informed that the rules implement provisions of the Income-tax Act, 2025, replacing older procedural systems and incorporating updated definitions, compliance structures, and new reporting mechanisms. It stated that under the new rules, companies will have to maintain share registers, hold general meetings, and pay dividends only within India. This will imply stronger domestic control over dividend distribution.

The Ministry added that the Income Tax Rules, 2026, have also strengthened stock exchange compliances. Stock exchanges will now be required to maintain audit trails for seven years, prevent deletion of transaction records, and submit monthly reports on modified transactions to improve transparency and data integrity.

The new rules have also granted additional powers to India's tax authorities for cross-border taxation. For non-resident income attrition, tax authorities can estimate income using a percentage basis, global profit ratios, or any other reasonable method.

The Income Tax Rules, 2026, have introduced clear guidelines for complex cases such as debenture conversions, income disclosure schemes for assets, and cross-border restructuring. A zero-coupon bond framework has been introduced to enhance regulatory oversight. The new approval system requires applications 3 months before issuance, investment-grade ratings from two agencies and defined fund usage timelines.

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Medicover Hospitals Launches Family Dental Packages

on the Occasion of World Oral Health Day

Family Dental Packages Introduced Under the Theme "Smile Brighter This Summer"

HYDERABAD, MARCH 20



On the occasion of World Oral Health Day, Medicover Hospitals organized a special dental health awareness program at Medicover Hospital Hitech City unit in Hyderabad.

Under the theme "Smile Brighter This Summer," special dental packages for families were launched, along with a free dental check-up initiative for senior citizens.

The program was inaugurated by chief guests Nabha Natesh, Raja Ravindra, along with Dr. A. Sharath Reddy, Executive Director & Senior Interventional Cardiologist, and P. Hari Krishna, Executive Director, Medicover Hospitals India.

On this occasion, Medicover Hospitals announced a free dental check-up facility for senior citizens until April 15, 2026.

As part of the Summer Special Family Dental Package, family members will receive dental consultation, digital OPG X-ray facility, and 30% discount on all dental treatments.

The package has been made available at a special discounted price of ₹1,999/-, and the offer will remain valid until June 30, 2026.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. C. Sharath Babu, Prosthodontist & Implantologist, said that oral health plays a vital role in overall body health, and many diseases can be prevented early through proper care of teeth and gums. He emphasized that maintaining proper oral hygiene is especially important during the summer season.

Mahesh Deglurkar, Chief Business Officer, along with medical experts, also participated in the program.

REC and PFC organise Session at Bharat Electricity Summit 2026

Focusing on Advancing 'Make in India' in Power Distribution

NEW DELHI, MARCH 21



On the third day of the Bharat Electricity Summit 2026, a high-level Vendor Development Session titled "Advancing Make in India for Power Distribution" was successfully convened. The session was co-hosted by REC Limited and Power Finance Corporation, bringing together over 150 senior representatives from the Ministry of Power, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Central Electricity Authority, leading distribution utilities, Indian Electrical and Electronics Manufacturers' Association, OEMs, vendors, suppliers, and industry associations. KPMG served as the Knowledge Partner for the session.

The session was chaired by Shashank Misra, Joint Secretary (Distribution), Ministry of Power, and commenced with welcome remarks by T. S. C. Bosh, Director (Projects), REC Limited, who set the context for delibera-

tions. Industry perspectives were presented by IEEMA, followed by insights from leading DISCOMs on best practices, including SCADA indigenization and the application of AI/ML in power distribution.

A panel discussion moderated with senior officials—Pranav Tayal (Director MoP), Saurav Kumar Shah (Executive Director PFC), and Prabhakar Singh (Executive Director REC)—highlighted India's preparedness to strengthen domestic manufacturing and supply chains.

The discussion emphasized scaling proven DISCOM practices such as compact substations, planned underground cabling with GIS-

based fault management, SCADA-DMS-OMS integration, and RT-DAS, while addressing critical gaps in import-dependent materials. The panel also underscored the need to reinforce standards, interoperability, and testing infrastructure to ensure reliability and resilience at scale.

The session concluded with closing remarks by Ravi Dhawan, Director (Distribution), Ministry of Power.

The Bharat Electricity Summit 2026 continues to serve as a pivotal platform for fostering collaboration among industry, government, and utilities, aligning efforts towards the vision of a Viksit Bharat 2047.R

Tata Motors launches QWD Harrier.ev variant at ₹26.49 lakh

MUMBAI, MARCH 21

Tata Motors' electric mobility arm Tata.ev has launched a new variant of its flagship electric SUV, the Tata Harrier.ev, making its dual-motor Quad Wheel Drive (QWD) technology more accessible to customers.

The newly introduced Fearless+ QWD 75 persona is priced at ₹26.49 lakh (ex-showroom) and brings high-performance capabilities, including 504 Nm torque and a 0-100 kmph acceleration time of 6.3 seconds. Built on the acti.ev+ architecture, the SUV is designed to deliver strong off-road performance with six



terrain modes, along with features such as Off-Road Assist and Boost Mode.

The dual-motor QWD system enhances traction and stability, enabling the vehicle to perform efficiently across diverse terrains. The model also offers a range of premium features, including powered and ventilated front seats, a 360-degree camera, JBL 10-speaker audio system, dual-zone climate control, ambient lighting, and rear passenger comfort enhancements.

In terms of safety and ownership assurance, the vehicle comes with a 5-star Bharat NCAP rating and an

unlimited lifetime battery warranty. Commenting on the launch, Vivek Srivatsa, Chief Commercial Officer of Tata Passenger Electric Mobility, said the move aims to make advanced performance and off-road capabilities more attainable. He noted that the Harrier.ev has seen strong customer response, with over 13,000 units delivered in six months.

The Harrier.ev lineup now spans multiple variants, with prices starting from ₹21.49 lakh and going up to ₹28.99 lakh (ex-showroom). The company has also introduced a new exterior colour option, Seaweed Green, across all variants.

MUMBAI, MARCH 21

Alkem Laboratories on Saturday announced the launch of its semaglutide injection in India, offering a more affordable treatment option for patients with type 2 diabetes and those requiring chronic weight management.

Marketed under the brand names Semasid, Obesema, and Hepaglide, the therapy is administered as a once-weekly subcutaneous injection. The company has priced its pre-filled disposable injection pen at ₹1,800 for a month's dosage—trans-

lating to a weekly cost starting at ₹450—aimed at improving accessibility to the treatment.

Semaglutide, a widely used therapy for glycaemic control and weight reduction, has been approved by the Drug Controller General of India following a review of Phase 3 clinical trials conducted in the country. The medication is prescription-based and must be used under medical supervision.

In addition to disposable pens, Alkem has introduced reusable injection pens designed for higher maintenance doses. These allow

patients to replace only the medication cartridge instead of purchasing a new device each time, helping reduce long-term treatment costs and improve adherence.

Commenting on the launch, CEO Dr. Vikas Gupta said the company's goal is to make advanced therapies more accessible. He noted that the indigenously developed semaglutide, combined with patient-friendly delivery devices and a strong distribution network, is expected to expand access and support better health outcomes across a wider population.

MUSSOORIE, UTTARAKHAND

Often called the "Queen of the Hills," Mussoorie is known for its sweeping views of the Doon Valley. The pleasant summer weather makes it ideal for strolling along Camel's Back Road or riding the cable car to Gun Hill. Its small-town charm, cafes and waterfalls make for a gentle, scenic getaway.

NAINITAL, UTTARAKHAND

Built around a serene pear-shaped lake, Nainital is a favourite summer escape for families. Travellers can enjoy boating, lakeside walks and the bustling Tibetan Market. With viewpoints such as Snow View and nearby hill towns like Bhimtal, the region offers plenty of peaceful corners to explore.

DARJEELING, WEST BENGAL

Famous for its tea gardens and the iconic toy train, Darjeeling offers a cool retreat with views of Kanchenjunga on clear days. The vibrant markets, monasteries and colonial-era charm make it an inviting destination. Its mix of culture, scenery and excellent local food creates a memorable mountain break.

OOTY, TAMIL NADU

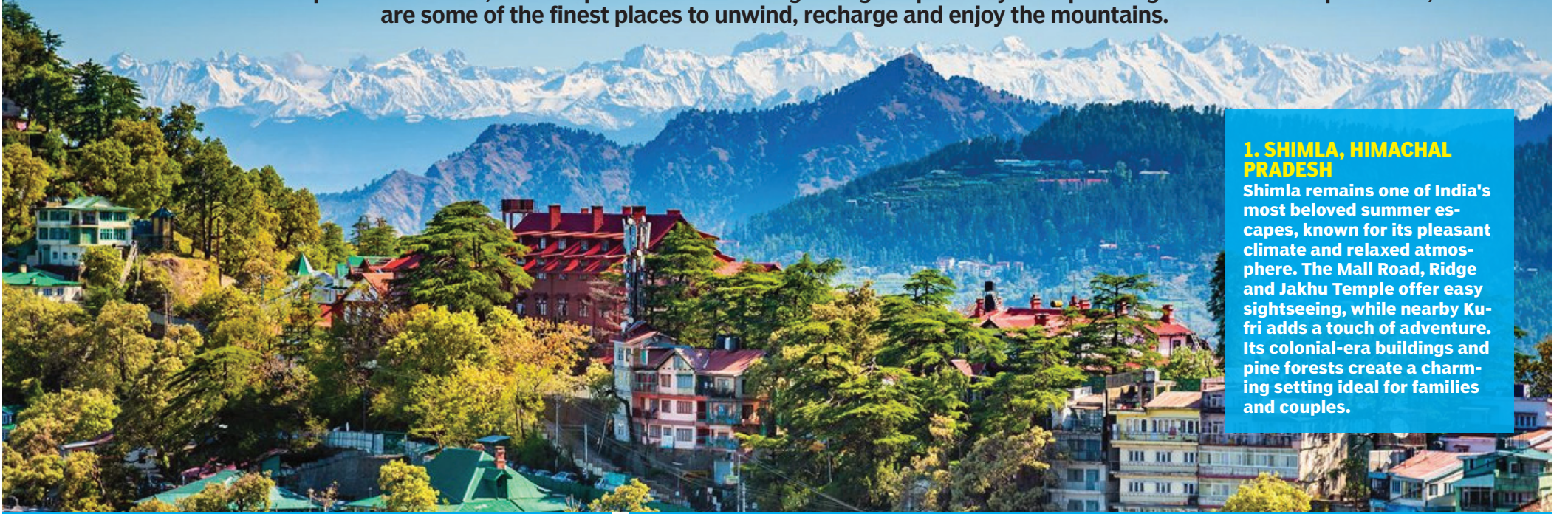
Ooty's misty landscapes and rolling tea estates make it one of South India's classic hill holidays. Visitors love its botanical gardens, lakes and gentle countryside trails. The Nilgiri Mountain Railway adds a nostalgic touch, making the journey as magical as the destination itself.

MOUNT ABU, RAJASTHAN

Rajasthan's only hill station, Mount Abu offers a welcome cool break from the desert heat. Nakki Lake, the Dilwara Temples and various viewpoints create a balanced mix of relaxation and culture. Its greenery and peaceful surroundings make it perfect for a restful summer holiday.

10 BEST HILL STATIONS TO VISIT IN INDIA FOR SUMMER HOLIDAYS 2026

Summer in India can feel overwhelming, and there's nothing quite like heading to the hills for a breath of cool air. From misty forests to rolling tea gardens, the country's hill stations offer the perfect break from scorching temperatures. Whether you prefer serene lakesides, colonial architecture or pine-lined walks, the hills promise a refreshing change of pace. If you're planning a summer escape in 2026, here are some of the finest places to unwind, recharge and enjoy the mountains.



1. SHIMLA, HIMACHAL PRADESH
Shimla remains one of India's most beloved summer escapes, known for its pleasant climate and relaxed atmosphere. The Mall Road, Ridge and Jakhu Temple offer easy sightseeing, while nearby Kufri adds a touch of adventure. Its colonial-era buildings and pine forests create a charming setting ideal for families and couples.

COORG, KARNATAKA

Known as the Scotland of India, Coorg charms visitors with its coffee estates, waterfalls and misty hills. The cool weather makes every nature walk feel soothing, and the region's rich Kodava culture adds depth to the experience. It's an excellent choice for travellers seeking quiet luxury and natural beauty.

SHILLONG, MEGHALAYA

Shillong stands out for its pine forests, waterfalls and vibrant local culture. The city's cool temperatures make it ideal for exploring viewpoints, cafes and nearby natural attractions like Cherrapunji. Its music scene, cuisine and friendly vibe give it a unique place among India's hill destinations. No matter which hill station you choose, the mountains offer the perfect escape from the summer heat and a chance to slow down and breathe easy.



MANALI, HIMACHAL PRADESH

Manali offers a blend of mountain scenery, outdoor activities and lively cafes. Surrounded by snow-kissed peaks and the Beas River, it's perfect for travellers seeking trekking, rafting or simply a peaceful walk in Old Manali. With Solang Valley and Rohtang Pass nearby, there's always something exciting to explore.



MUNNAR, KERALA

Munnar, Kerala With lush tea plantations stretching across the hills, Munnar feels like a calm, green world of its own. The cool weather, wildlife sanctuaries and curving mountain roads make it a refreshing escape. It's ideal for travellers who love nature, quiet viewpoints and scenic drives.



GUREZ TO WARWAN: 6 STUNNING KASHMIR VALLEYS TOURISTS MISS

Kashmir is known for its famous lakes and meadows, but if you look beyond these usual postcard spots, you'll find valleys that feel almost untouched by time. These hidden corners are surrounded by quiet forests, snowy peaks and clear rivers that wind past tiny villages. Travellers who step away from the common routes discover a calmer, softer side of Kashmir that rewards their curiosity with stunning views. Each valley has its own charm, shaped by local traditions, old pathways and landscapes that look almost painted. If you're searching for beauty that still feels pure and untouched, these secret valleys definitely deserve a place on your travel list.

1. GUREZ VALLEY

Cradled by the snow-laden peaks of the Habba Khatoon range, Gurez Valley offers a raw, dramatic landscape unlike anywhere else in Kashmir. The Kishanganga River cuts through the valley, creating views that feel impossibly serene. Its remote location has helped preserve local Dard-Shina culture, making your visit not just scenic but culturally rich

as well.

2. WARWAN VALLEY

Warwan is one of Kashmir's most remote and enchanting valleys, surrounded by towering Himalayan walls and lush alpine meadows. It remains largely untouched due to limited access, which adds to its unspoiled charm. Clear streams, traditional wooden homes and pastoral scenes make it a paradise for trekkers and solitude seekers.

3. BANGUS VALLEY

Bangus, a vast bowl-shaped meadow in North Kashmir, stretches out like a green carpet beneath towering ridgelines. It's perfect for those who love open spaces, silence and slow travel. The rich biodiversity and gentle slopes make it ideal for nature walks, picnics and photography far from tourist crowds.

4. LOLAB VALLEY

Known as the "Land of Love and Beauty," Lolab Valley is a peaceful expanse of orchards, springs and

paddy fields. Tall poplars line the roads, creating a postcard scene at every turn. The locals are warm and welcoming, and the valley offers a glimpse into traditional Kashmiri rural life.

5. TULAIL VALLEY

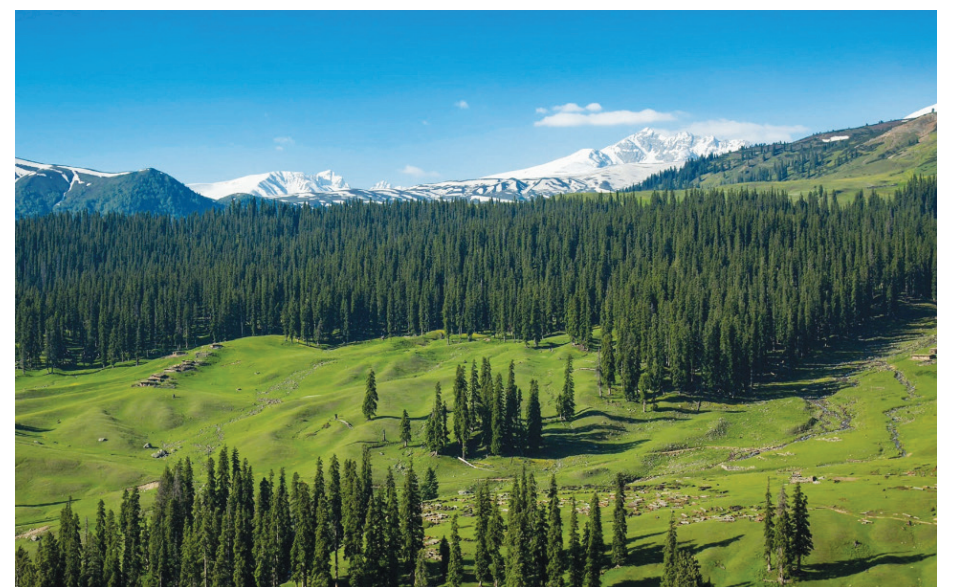
Tulail lies just beyond Gurez and feels like another world altogether, with wooden houses dotting the slopes and river views stretching endlessly. The drive itself is an adventure, weaving through high mountain passes and pure wilderness. It's a place where time seems to slow down, allowing visitors to truly disconnect.

6. DAKSUM VALLEY

Daksum is a lush, forested retreat where evergreen trees blanket the hillsides and icy streams run through rocky beds. The cool air and peaceful trails make it ideal for travellers seeking a restful escape. It's also a gateway to higher Himalayan treks, adding an adventurous edge to its natural calm.

A journey to these hidden valleys reveals a quieter, deeper beauty of Kashmir that stays with you long after you leave.

KASHMIR TO HOST NATIONAL TOURISM MART IN APRIL



Jammu and Kashmir will host a major national-level tourism event next month in a bid to revive visitor inflow to the Valley after last year's Pahalgam massacre that left 26 people dead and dealt a severe blow to the sector. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah announced that Kashmir Travel Mart 2026 will be held on April 14 and 15, bringing together around 250 tourism stakeholders from more than 20 states across the country.

"J&K Tourism is set to host the Kashmir Travel Mart-2026 on 14-15 April, bringing together around 250 stakeholders from over 20 states across the country," the chief minister said in a post on X. He said the event would showcase the region's tourism potential through craft safaris, curated destination tours and business-to-business engagements.

The chief minister described the event as a "significant initiative aimed at strengthening tourism linkages and further positioning Kashmir as a premier global travel destination". The tourism sector in Kashmir had witnessed a strong surge in recent years but suffered a major setback after the attack on tourists in Pahalgam last year, followed by heightened tensions between India and Pakistan. Several tourist destinations were tempo-

rarily closed in the aftermath of the incident, significantly affecting tourist arrivals. Officials said the proposed travel mart would be the largest outreach initiative of the present government aimed at rebuilding confidence in the sector and reconnecting the Valley with the domestic tourism market.

The government's efforts to revive tourism are already showing early signs of recovery. The Valley has recorded strong tourist footfall this year, particularly after heavy snowfall at major destinations. Large numbers of visitors are also arriving to witness the blooming tulips at the Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden, located at the foothills of the Zabarwan Range. The garden, which opened this week, is displaying around 18 lakh tulips of more than 70 varieties, along with nearly one lakh other bulbous flowers, including daffodils, hyacinths and narcissus.

Tourism stakeholders in the Valley welcomed the initiative. Mushtaq Ahmad Chaya said such measures were necessary to revive the sector and rebuild confidence among visitors. He said tourism players across the Valley would extend full support to the event, adding that initiatives of this nature were essential for the region's economy at a time when the industry was recovering from last year's setback.





'Top-10 is bare minimum': Saurav Ghosal sets high bar for Anahat, calls for mass push

DP World PGTI Open

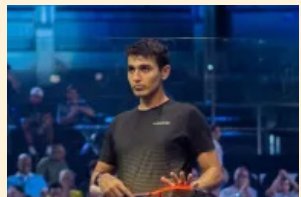
Rashid Khan is best-placed Indian in tied second



NUH: MJ Daffue will take a four-stroke advantage into the final day of the US\$300,000 DP World PGTI Open after recording five under thru 12 holes on Saturday at Classic Golf & Country Club. The South African, who started the third round tied in the lead with Rashid Khan, continued his impressive form into day three, delivering six birdies and a solitary bogey to reach 16 under par for the week. His round was halted with six holes to play, with the start of play having been delayed (fog) and later suspended due to darkness.

Squash

Hana Moataz, Abhay Singh advance to Indian Open final



MUMBAI: Hana Moataz and Abhay Singh rose to the occasion with commanding performances to storm into the finals of the Indian Open, registering hard-fought 3-1 victories in their respective semi-finals on Saturday. Second seed Hana Moataz shook off a slow start to outclass her third-seeded compatriot Nadien Elhammy 3-1 (11-8, 5-11, 11-5, 11-7). The opening game was a closely fought see-saw battle, with the lead changing hands at regular intervals before Moataz edged ahead to take it 11-8. The second followed a similar pattern early on, but Nadien found momentum midway, breaking away at 7-5 and closing it out 11-5 to level the match.

NEW DELHI

Former India No. 1 Saurav Ghosal has set a bold benchmark for teenage sensation Anahat Singh, saying a place in the world's top-10 should be the 'bare minimum,' while also calling for a structural overhaul of men's and women's squash to expand India's talent base through mass participation. Backing Anahat as a rare talent, Ghosal said the youngster possesses a near-complete game along with the right ecosystem to succeed at the highest level.

"Anahat is definitely an exception. She is brilliant in what she does. Her ceiling in terms of potential is very, very high. She's done well now. She has a great mentality. Physically, she's good. The only thing is we're trying to make her a bit stronger, which will help her. But in terms of getting balls back and stuff like that, she's really good," Ghosal told IANS in an exclusive interview.

He highlighted her tactical awareness and composure as standout qualities, saying, "She has skill and understanding of the game and the variation of it, that she has a skill to do the variations, which is unique in terms of the game and the composure to do it. And on top of that, what she also has is she has the support and the guidance around her."

Ghosal pointed to the strong support system around her, including former World No. 1 Grégory Gaultier, experienced coach Stéphane Galifi, and himself, as a key factor in her development.

"She has Grégory Gaultier, who's the former world number one and world champion, who's coaching her. Stéphane Galifi is a top player from before, who has been training her in India. I mentor her. So she has the perfect mix that she can hope for. You can't get it better than this," he said. He set his



expectations clear, and, at the same time, cautioned against placing undue pressure on the young player, stressing the importance of enjoyment in sustaining long-term success.

"If she continues to kind of listen, absorb, put the work in, stay focused, there's no reason why, at the very least, she is not going to be a mainstay in the top 10 for a considerable period of time. She could go higher as well. But I'm just saying the top 10 is like a bare minimum. If she doesn't do that, then something has gone wrong somewhere. Look, with Anahat, we should not put undue pressure on her. She enjoys playing. She genuinely enjoys playing. That is important

for her to have throughout her career," he said. Turning to the broader Indian landscape, Ghosal said while the men's game is showing encouraging signs, depth remains a concern, and stressed the need to build stronger competition within the country to push elite players further.

"In terms of the boys, look, in terms of the overall strength, this is the first time we have four in the top 50, which is a good sign. We don't have someone who's kind of saying that we have, like, a sort of Anahat sort of say in some ways, where like a top 10. But you never know, sometimes things change, people flower later. The only thing I would say is that we need to create more of a

bench strength, both in the women's and the men's. Because outside the top three or four, we don't really have so much pushing them from behind. And it's always good to have as many players behind you, because that just makes you better," he noted.

Drawing comparisons with global leaders, Ghosal pointed to internal competition in countries like Egypt and called for a mass-participation model, suggesting that squash should be introduced widely in public schools in India.

"Because you can train with these players daily. And Egypt has that. The world number one plays with the world number three, three plays with the five, it just makes

everyone better. I would probably sit with the Indian sports ministry and the people who kind of, the education ministry, to find a way to get every single public school kid to try squash at some point in time in their early school life up to the age of like 12 or 13, and every single one should try it," he said.

He believes such an approach could unlock hidden talent and create a pipeline of champions, adding that existing infrastructure, including schools like Kendriya Vidyalaya, could be leveraged as hubs to expand access.

"And I'm pretty sure that if we have the numbers trying it, we will have champions coming out. If we have champions, it'll just breed more interest in the game, parents will get involved, thinking that, oh, we can become world champions or Olympic champions,

and things like that. There are certain public schools, like Kendriya Vidyalaya, that actually do have squash courts in them already. So obviously that's an easy fix. We should kind of almost like make each of these schools as satellite centres and get all the other schools in the nearby vicinity to come play it," Ghosal explained.

Reflecting on his own journey, Ghosal also spoke about how his understanding of success has evolved over time, moving beyond a win-loss definition. He cited his experience at the 2022 Asian Games as a turning point in perspective, after narrowly missing out on an individual gold medal.

"When I was growing up, everything, in terms of the definition of success, was basically defined by whether I won or lost. You either win or you lose. In the immediate aftermath, you feel like it's all a waste, specifically like the last 12 months where everything was geared towards the Asian Games, and it's come to nothing," he said.

Alana King strengthens case for 2026 Women's T20 WC selection after three-fer against WI

KINGSTOWN

Leg-spinner Alana King has strengthened her case for inclusion in Australia's squad for the 2026 ICC Women's T20 World Cup after marking her return to the format with a three-wicket haul against West Indies in St Vincent.

Alana, playing her first T20I in nearly a year, took 3-14 in the opening match of the series to remind selectors of her quality. Competition among Australia's spinners remains strong, with captain Sophie Molineux and Georgia Wareham also in contention. But Alana said she was realistic but hopeful about her chances of entering Australia's squad. "I'd love to (see four spinners), but I don't think that's go-



ing to be the case with the T20 World Cup. I think it's all going to be conditions-based and we'll wait and see, but any chance that I can get the ball in my hand, I'm absolutely stoked.

"I can only control what I can control and when given that op-

portunity, I'm glad that I can take it. Hopefully, I keep getting those opportunities and putting my hand up, but I'll focus on this series at the moment before we look forward to the World Cup," Alana was quoted as saying by ICC on Saturday.

The 2026 Women's T20 World Cup is set to take place in England from June 12 to July 5. Six-time champions Australia is in Group A of the tournament alongside India, South Africa, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Netherlands. Alana's T20I career has been a stop-start once since her debut in 2022. After a year as a regular, she was out of the side for almost two years before returning in early 2025,

when she played five matches against England and New Zealand and took six wickets. "I've said this before, but they (the selectors) have given me some feedback a few years ago when I took it to my stride and got some great exposure at the Perth Scorchers and they've helped me become a three-phase bowler."

IPL 2026 is likely to be MS Dhoni's last year in the yellow jersey: Robin Uthappa



NEW DELHI

Former India batter Robin Uthappa said he is expecting for IPL 2026 to be MS Dhoni's final year of playing for the Chennai Super Kings (CSK), adding that the five-time champions should look to persist with Ruturaj Gaikwad as captain instead of replacing him with Sanju Samson.

At 44, veteran wicketkeeper-batter Dhoni will be playing in his 10th edition of the IPL. "I don't think CSK should hand over the leadership duties to Sanju Samson. You have to give Ruturaj Gaikwad time to settle as captain. He has been leading the team since 2024. No matter what people say, he is coming out of the shadow of MS Dhoni.

"You want him to come out completely and stand in his own light. You want to see what he can produce. You want him to lead the team when MS is not playing and stand on his own, without that overwhelming feeling of always being under that energy. So I think you can see Dhoni being a little more hands-off.

"IPL 2026 is likely to be his last year in the yellow jersey. I see him playing more of a mentor-cum-player role this year. I don't see him batting at number seven. I see him batting at number eight. Knowing that he is on his way out, he wants to wean himself out.

"I think he will do that. Only then will we see the true potential of Ruturaj Gaikwad as captain. Give him a few years. If it doesn't work, you always have Sanju Samson in the team to handle the captaincy duties," said Uthappa on JioStar.

Uthappa also cast doubt on 2016 winners Sunrisers Hyderabad's title

prospects, saying their aggressive batting approach may not be enough to win without stronger bowling support. SRH have injury issues in regular skipper Pat Cummins and Eshan Malinga, who are nursing injuries and are likely to be unavailable for the initial stage of the competition.

SRH, to be led by Ishan Kishan, will open their IPL 2026 campaign against defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru on March 28. "SRH's aggressive batting is entertaining to watch. But batting like that won't help them win the IPL. Their bowling is a bit on the weaker side. Bowlers are the ones who make you win the trophy. In Hyderabad, where they play seven matches, the pitch is a batting paradise. It is a super belter wicket."

"Even someone like Mohammed Shami could not be penetrative on those flat wickets. You need a bowler like Bhuvneshwar Kumar. He is a very clever guy. He swings the ball, changes pace, bowls yorkers. At the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium, you don't want to put too much pace on the ball because the ball does not seam around much.

"I don't think SRH have the bowling unit right now that can back the instability their aggressive batting can cause if the top order does not fire. We saw what happened last season. Apart from Abhishek Sharma, Travis Head and Heinrich Klaasen, no other batter was able to step up. When the top order failed, the bowlers were not able to defend the totals. So I won't consider SRH as a serious title contender this season," he concluded.

Aditi moves to tied-3rd after strong second day; Aaron Rai and Theegala miss the cut in Valspar

MENLO PARK

Aditi Ashok carded a second round of 6-under 66 to move into T-3 alongside world number one Jeeno Thitikul of Thailand. Both Ashok and Thitikul carded rounds of 6-under 66 following their opening even par rounds to move up into T-3 alongside Karis Davidson, Nelly Koroda, Hye-Jin Choi, Minjee Lee and Jin Hee Im.

Hyo Joo Kim extended her lead as she fired a second round of 2-under 70 to move four shots clear of her closest rival, Gaby Lopez of Mexico. Kim is now at 11-under par. Lopez had carded 5-under 67 on the first day and followed it up with a round of 2-under 70 to hold the second place at 7-under heading into the weekend. Ashok started her second round on the front nine and had four consecutive birdies starting on the third hole. A fifth birdie on the eighth had Ashok at 5-under par before the turn.

On the back nine a birdie on the 11th was followed by the only bogey of the day on the 13th before a late birdie on the 18th allowed her to move into T-3 with a total score of 6-under par.

Hyo Joo Kim began her second day on the back nine and made two bogey against one birdie by the turn before she played a bogey free front nine which included three birdies to extend her lead to four strokes by the end of the round.

Aaron Rai carded a second round of 5-over 77 and missed the cut at the Valspar Championship despite a strong opening round that had placed him in the top 10. Rai totalled 3-over par (68-77).

Sahith Theegala also missed the cut. Theegala began the week with a difficult first round and had left himself too much



ground to cover on the second day if he was to make cut. He carded an even par 72 on the second round to finish the week at 6-over par (77-72).

Sungjae Im continues to lead the field after the second round and is the only player in the top four with a PGA Tour win. Im carded 2-under 70 for the second round and is one stroke ahead of his closest rival, David Lipsky. Im has a total score of 9-under par (64-69).

Aaron Rai began his second round on the back nine with a birdie before making three bogeys and a double bogey by the turn to have dropped five strokes in the first nine holes of the day. On the front

nine Rai opened once more with a birdie only to make another four bogeys and one more birdie. The seven bogeys and one double bogey brought his score for the day to 6-over par and an early close to the week.

The other players in the top four are David Lipsky in second place at 8-under. Doug Ghim and Tour rookie Chandler Blanchet are Tied-3rd is at 7-under par.

Defending Champion Viktor Hovland made it the second year running that the defending champion missed the cut at Valspar as he missed his first cut on the tour since the Players Championship in 2025.





Locked and Loaded: What's Peddi Target In USA?

The United States box office has been largely volatile in the recent years as the audience are not turning up as expect even for big films. This has now created a peculiar situation where even big hero films are having to be sceptical. According to the latest developments, Peddi has secured US rights for around Rs25 crore, acquired by Prathyangira distribution. This sets a massive target of nearly \$3 million in the United States, which is significant given the current tight market conditions.

Achieving such numbers will be challenging, but with Ram Charan leading the film, there is confidence that his strong fan base and box office pull could make it possible. The raw and rustic approach of the film could also help with the audience to the theatres in reasonable numbers. Experts say the film's success in the US will depend heavily on its marketing, release strategy, and audience reception. If these elements align well with Ram Charan's star power, hitting the \$3 million mark is within reach.

Despite the competitive environment in the overseas market, the combination of a top star and an appealing film can drive exceptional results. Distributors and trade insiders are closely watching the US release, as it could set new benchmarks for Telugu films abroad. Overall, while the target is ambitious, Ram Charan's presence and the right promotional push could help Peddi perform strongly and achieve impressive returns for its US distributors.

Kangana Calls Out Superstar Domination



Kangana Ranaut alleges that superstars bully filmmakers in Indian film industry. Actress and politician Kangana Ranaut is often seen sharing her candid opinion on subjects others refrain from talking about. In her latest Instagram post, the 'Queen' actress alleged that superstars bully filmmakers in the Indian film industry.

Kangana said that while in Hollywood, filmmakers usually have a bigger or at least equal name than that of the prominent actors, which is not the case in Bollywood.

The 'Emergency' actress pointed out that the Indian filmmakers do not get enough credit for their work and are often overworked and underpaid.

She took to the Stories section of her official Instagram handle and wrote an appreciation note for director Aditya Dhar on the overwhelming success of his recent release "Dhurandhar 2".

Kangana penned on the photo-sharing app, "The best thing about Dhurandhar success is that Aditya Dhar is a superstar director is established, Hollywood superstar directors are always bigger than superstar actors. Eg: Spielberg, Tarantino, Nolan. We never give our filmmakers enough respect or credit. They are over worked, underpaid and bullied by superstars as a result of that I never meet any young person insider/outsider who dreams of becoming a film maker or director of photography or any other technician. (sic)".

"Everyone claims to be talented, but they only want to be actors. Here is a superstar filmmaker shining brighter than any hero. Today, so many youngsters are watching his story who will aspire to be like him and take the film industry to greater heights!! Salutations, sir @adityadharfilms," added Kangana.

It must be noted that while Kangana showered Dhar with praises in her post, she did not tag protagonist Ranveer Singh or any other cast member from "Dhurandhar 2".

Prior to Kangana, many members from the entertainment industry, such as Allu Arjun, Vijay Deverakonda, Mahesh Babu, Ram Charan, and Jr NTR, lauded Dhar for his impeccable cinematic vision.

Grand Audio Launch Held for "Diamond Decoit"; Hook Step Contest Announced



Hyderabad: The audio launch of the upcoming Telugu film "Diamond Decoit" was held in a grand manner at Prasad Labs, with several film personalities in attendance. Directed by Surya G. Yadav and produced by Partha Gopal, who also plays the lead role alongside Meghana, the film is described as a family-oriented emotional revenge drama with a fresh concept.

The event's chief guest, V. N. Aditya, officially released the songs, which are being distributed through Madhura Audio. Praising the film's music and visuals, he

said the songs composed by Peddapalli Rohith were melodious and the film's production values impressive. He expressed confidence that the movie would entertain audiences and wished the team success.

As part of the promotional campaign, the makers announced a hook step challenge for the song "Maradalive," inviting participants to create reels and submit them via WhatsApp. The contest offers a first prize of ₹1 lakh and a second prize of ₹50,000, aimed at encouraging new talent.

Speaking on the occasion, producer-actor Partha Gopal said the project had been shaped through years of dedication by director Surya G. Yadav, overcoming multiple challenges. He added that the teaser, trailer, and songs have already received a positive response, and the team is planning to release the film in April. Director Surya G. Yadav highlighted the collective effort of the cast and crew, noting that the film blends strong family emotions with a revenge-driven narrative. He also appreciated the contribution of the technical team, especially the music and background score.

Lead actress Meghana expressed confidence that audiences would connect with the film, while music director Peddapalli Rohith said the project stands out as a content-driven film and hoped it would continue to receive audience support. The film's technical crew includes editor Srinivas and cinematographer Achanta Shiva, among others.

Naga Chaitanya on Exploring the Darker Space for VFX-heavy Vrushakarma



Naga Chaitanya is consciously reinventing his on-screen image, moving away from the romantic "lover-boy" roles that defined his early career toward darker, more intense narratives. His upcoming pan-India film "Vrushakarma", a big-budget mythical thriller, marks a significant step in that transformation. In an interview, the actor described the project as a deliberate attempt to explore unfamiliar territory. Known for choosing varied roles, Chaitanya said this film allows him to enter a darker, morally complex space he hasn't previously explored. The film, directed by Karthik Dandu of "Virupaksha" fame and produced by BVS Prasad, is expected to release across India in 2026, including a simultaneous Tamil version aimed at expanding his audience in Tamil Nadu.

Chaitanya credits his recent role as Thandel Raju in "Thandel" for sparking this creative shift. The film, based on real-life events, gave him a deeper connection to storytelling and inspired a period of professional introspection. Engaging with real people and their stories, he said, fueled his "creative hunger" and pushed him to pursue more challenging roles. In Vrushakarma, Chaitanya plays an adventurous treasure hunter navigating a supernatural world filled with ancient curses and eerie, bat-like entities. The film is being described as the most VFX-heavy project of his career, presenting a new set of challenges. Acting in front of green screens and imagining complex visual elements required multiple takes and a high degree of mental visualization. Despite the difficulty, he called the process both "fun and gruelling."

To prepare for the role, Chaitanya underwent four months of intensive workshops under director Dandu's guidance. These sessions focused on developing a raw and visceral physicality suited to the character. At the same time, the production team, led by Sri Nagendra Tangala, built large practical sets—especially for cave sequences and the climax—to balance digital effects with tangible environments.

Describing this phase as "Chaitanya 2.0," the actor emphasized that his evolution is intentional and aligned with changing audience tastes. He has long wanted to be part of a large-scale spectacle with mythological elements, and "Vrushakarma" fulfills that ambition. While a promotional glimpse of the film has already been released, Chaitanya revealed it represents only a fraction of the final product. He expressed particular excitement about the climax, saying the final 30–35 minutes will set a new benchmark for Indian cinema.

NIHARIKA KONIDELA SHINES IN RAAKAASAA SNAKE DANCE SONG WITH CATCHY BEAT

The makers of Raakaasaa have released a brand-new song called "Snake Dance," and it is already creating a strong buzz on social media. This song is not about perfect dance steps or stylish choreography. Instead, it is all about fun, energy, and enjoying the moment without any pressure. With its catchy beat and lively vibe, the song pulls listeners in from the very first second.

The team itself describes the track as "zero choreography, zero expectations, just pure madness." This simple idea is what makes the song special. Anyone can dance to it. You don't need to be a trained dancer. You just need to feel the rhythm and move freely. That is why the hashtag #SnakeDance is quickly trending among fans.

The music for this energetic song is composed by Anudeep Dev, who has given it a fast and addictive beat. The vocals are another major highlight. Popular singers like Benny Dayal, Ritesh Rao, Vinayak, Lakshmi Meghana, and Maneesha Pandrangi have brought great life to the track with their voices. The lyrics, written by RR Dhruvan, are simple and fun, making the

song easy to remember and sing along.

What makes the song even more interesting is the presence of Niharika Konidela. Known as a producer, she surprises everyone by appearing in the song and showing her fun dance moves. Her performance adds a fresh and unexpected element, which fans are loving. Along with her, actors like Sangeeth Shobhan, Nayan Sarika, Vennela Kishore, Brahmaji, and Getup Srinu also appear in the song, making it feel like a big celebration.

Raakaasaa is a comedy horror fantasy film, and this song fits perfectly with its entertaining theme. It looks like a promotional track where the entire cast comes together to have fun. The colorful visuals and cheerful mood make it enjoyable to watch again and again.

The film is set to release in theatres worldwide on April 3, 2026. With songs like "Snake Dance" already gaining attention, the excitement around Raakaasaa is growing steadily. Fans are now eagerly waiting to see what more the movie has to offer.