

HYDERABAD HEADLINES

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IRAN SHUTS HORMUZ STRAIT AGAIN, CEASEFIRE UNDER THREAT



A fragile ceasefire in the West Asia conflict is under strain after Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz, prompting the United States to seek its reopening. Fresh Israeli strikes on Hezbollah in Lebanon have escalated tensions, with over 100 deaths reported. US Vice President JD Vance termed the truce "fragile." Disputes over terms, continued Israeli operations, and uncertainty over Iran's nuclear programme threaten peace efforts, even as mediation by Pakistan and the United Nations continues.

TEHRAN



Gujarat Titans Clinch Last-Gasp Win

STADIUM 11

Deepika Shuts Down Trolls Over Dhurandhar 2 "Silence"



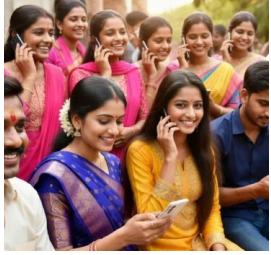
BOX-OFFICE 12

SHORT TAKES

India issues urgent advisory for citizens in Iran

The Indian Embassy in Iran has issued an urgent advisory asking Indian nationals to leave Iran at the earliest. The embassy has cautioned citizens to exit only through designated routes suggested by officials and avoid travelling to international border areas without proper guidance or information. For assistance, Indians have been asked to contact the embassy through helpline numbers: +989128109115, +989128109109, +989128109102, +989932179359, or email at cons.tehran@mea.gov.in.

NEW DELHI



TRAI Proposes Voice-Only Plans

In a significant move aimed at reducing mobile expenses for millions of users, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India has proposed a new set of guidelines that could make voice-only mobile plans more affordable and widely available.

MONEY MATTER 09



The Litmus Test of Democracy..

Assembly elections across West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Puducherry have reached a decisive stage, with more than 174 million voters set to influence both state leadership and the broader national political landscape.

OPINION 06

Women's Quota: The 2029 Countdown Begins

Union Cabinet clears draft bills for early implementation of women's quota law

NEW DELHI, APR 8

The Union Cabinet is learnt to have cleared on Wednesday draft bills which seek to implement the Women's Reservation Act before the 2029 parliamentary polls and increase the number of Lok Sabha seats to 816 with 273 reserved for women. Sources privy to the development said a meeting of the Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the draft bills for the amendments to the law, Nari Shakti Vandan Adhinyam, more commonly known as the Women's Reservation Act. While a Constitution amendment bill will tweak the Adhinyam, another ordinary bill will amend the Delimitation Act -- to pave the way for redrawing of constituencies. Yet another bill will ensure the law's im-



plementation in Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir and Puducherry, which are the three Union territories with legislature. The government has extended the budget session of Parliament and a special three-day sitting will be held from April 16 to 18, where the

amendment bill is expected to be passed. The provision to provide 33 per cent reservation to women in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies was brought by amending the Constitution in 2023, but it would have come into effect after the completion of the

delimitation exercise on the basis of the 2027 Census. Therefore, it was expected to come into force only in 2034 if the present law remains as it is. According to the broad contours of the available information, the number of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >

CSR is an Investment, Not an Expense

CM Revanth Reddy holds a meeting with company representatives

Hyderabad, April 8: Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has invited corporate firms to actively participate as partners in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, stressing that such contributions should be seen as investments in society rather than mere expenditure.

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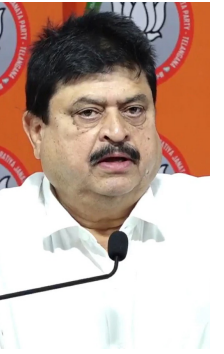
WOMEN'S RESERVATION TO BE IMPLEMENTED FROM 2029: T-BJP CHIEF

HYDERABAD, APRIL 8

Telangana BJP President N. Ramchander Rao on Wednesday said that 33% reservation for women in legislative bodies will be implemented from the year 2029 general elections. Addressing res-

idents of Shilpa Park Apartments in Kondapur, the BJP leader described the "Nari Shakti Vandan Adhinyam", introduced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, as a landmark step towards women's empowerment and political inclusion.

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Ponguleti hits back at BRS, warns against 'false propaganda'



HYDERABAD, APRIL 8

Telangana Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy launched a sharp attack on Bharat Rashtra Samithi leaders, including K. Chandrashekar Rao, K. T. Rama Rao and T. Harish Rao, accusing them of spreading "baseless allegations" against the Congress government. Addressing a press conference at the Secretariat, the minister warned BRS leaders to "stop spreading

lies" or face consequences, asserting that the present government would expose alleged irregularities during their tenure.

On the Nadargul land issue, Ponguleti said all key decisions, including registrations and mutations of 373 acres, were taken during the BRS regime between 2014 and 2016. He questioned how the current government could be blamed for past actions and cited development

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >



Sridhar Babu accuses BRS leaders of misleading farmers on land acquisition

SPECIAL 02

Vivek explores German skill training model

SPECIAL 02

TRUCE ANNOUNCED AT DAWN, MISSILES ANSWER BY DUSK

BY C SUBRAHMANYAM

A hurried US-Iran ceasefire declaration triggers immediate hope across global markets, but within hours, missile and drone alerts rip through Gulf skies and Israel. The contradiction exposes a volatile reality: diplomacy has spoken, but the battlefield has not yet listened.

The announcement came like a diplomatic thunderclap. A two-week pause, declared in the dead of night by Donald Trump, endorsed in quick succession by Iran's Supreme National Security Council, and brokered through Islamabad's corridors of power under Shehbaz Sharif. On paper, it looked like a decisive intervention to halt a conflict that had been spiralling since late February.



But before the ink could settle on this fragile understanding, the sky over the Gulf lit up again. Sirens. Interceptors. Aerial engagements. From the UAE to Saudi Arabia, from Kuwait to Israel, the night echoed with the unmistakable signature of incoming threats. This was not

an isolated breach. It was a synchronised theatre of alerts unfolding across multiple sovereign airspaces within hours of a declared ceasefire. This is where the narrative fractures.

"A ceasefire declared in capitals means little if launch pads have not received the message."

THE GAP BETWEEN COMMAND AND CONTROL

In modern warfare, especially one driven by decentralised command structures and high-frequency launch cycles, a ceasefire is not a switch. It is a process. Orders must travel through layers of command, through units already in motion, through launch systems already primed. Iran's military apparatus, particularly the Revolutionary Guard network, operates with operational autonomy in several theatres. When a ceasefire is declared at the top, it does not instantly freeze every trigger finger on the ground. Missiles already launched do not reverse course.

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2,322 additional nursing appointments within two days: Raja Narasimha



HYDERABAD: Minister for Health Damodar Raja Narasimha announced that the process of filling additional 2,322 nursing positions will be completed within the next two days. The Minister attended the Safe Motherhood Day celebrations held at the Midwifery Training Institute in Boyaguda, an event conducted under the Praja Palana Pragathi Pranalika initiative. During his remarks, he emphasised that the State government is prioritising the recruitment of nursing professionals in hospitals. Over the past two years, the government has reinforced the healthcare system by addressing more than 10,000 vacancies, the majority of which were nursing roles, he said.

"We are creating new nursing colleges to enhance opportunities for students. In order to support international career prospects, we are also facilitating English, German, and Japanese language training for nursing students," Minister Raja Narasimha noted. Additionally, the Minister highlighted that the government is enhancing midwifery services within the state to promote natural births. As part of this initiative, midwifery training has been provided to 370 nurses. "We will establish midwifery training institutes in government nursing colleges and will also work towards decreasing the number of Cesarean deliveries," he stated.

Komatireddy inaugurates urban PHC in Nalgonda town



NALGONDA

Reinforcing the government's focus on accessible and quality healthcare for the poor, Roads & Buildings and Cinematography Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy inaugurated a newly built Urban Primary Health Centre (UPHC) at Manyam Chelka in Nalgonda town on Wednesday. Constructed at a cost of ₹1.91 crore, the facility was launched as part of the ongoing Health Week celebrations under the Praja Palana-Pragathi Pranalika programme.

Speaking on the occasion, Komatireddy Venkat Reddy said the new UPHC would ease the

burden on the Nalgonda Government General Hospital, which has been witnessing a surge in patient footfall.

"Developed with a ₹50 lakh contribution from Prateek Foundation alongside government funds, the new UPHC has been equipped with necessary infrastructure, medical equipment, and staffing," he said. Stressing on improved service delivery, the Minister directed doctors to provide comprehensive primary care, conduct basic diagnostic tests, and ensure timely referrals to higher centres when required.

"Special focus should be on the elderly, pregnant women, and vulnerable sections in surrounding

areas," he said. In a significant announcement, the Minister revealed that an eye hospital would be established on three acres of land in collaboration with Prateek Foundation and LV Prasad Eye Institute, aimed at expanding specialised care in the district.

To address gaps in medicine availability, a mechanism has been put in place through the foundation to supply essential drugs via a designated private medical outlet based on doctors' prescriptions, he said.

The Minister also stated that arrangements would be explored to provide meals to patients visiting the UPHC with support from Akshaya Foundation.

Highlighting urban development works, Komatireddy Venkat Reddy said Nalgonda, now a municipal corporation, is being equipped with improved civic infrastructure including CC roads, drainage, drinking water supply, and healthcare facilities. Works to beautify and expand the Manyam Chelka junction are also underway, he said.

Mayor Burri Chaitanya Srinivas Reddy said the UPHC would benefit residents of Manyam Chelka and nearby wards, while appreciating the contribution of Prateek Foundation. MLC Shankar Naik lauded the government's efforts in strengthening public healthcare.

Auction begins for 1,400+ shops in 2BHK colonies from April 9

HYDERABAD

The sale of over 1,400 shops located in Double Bedroom (2BHK) housing colonies under the CURE initiative will begin on April 9 through open auction across Hyderabad and surrounding districts.

The District Collectors of Hyderabad, Ranga Reddy, Medchal-Malkajgiri and Sangareddy have issued notifications for auctioning shops spread across 36 colonies. The first phase will cover 273 shops in 8 colonies in Ranga Reddy district, scheduled for April 9 and 10.

The shops, ranging from 60 to 400 sq ft, have been developed within the colonies to support local commercial activity and meet residents' daily needs. Housing Corporation Managing Director V.P. Gautham said the properties will be sold on an "as is, where is" basis, with upset prices set significantly below market rates to encourage participation.

Interested bidders can inspect the shops in advance and must register at the respective RDO offices by 11 AM on auction days by submitting the required Earnest Money Deposit (EMD). Additional information regarding the sale of these shops, the interested parties may contact the respective Housing Project Directors of



the concerned districts. Officials said the revenue generated from the auctions will be used exclusively for the maintenance and development of the same colonies. Resident Welfare Associations will be formed under the Cooperative Societies Act to manage these funds through a dedicated corpus, ensuring self-sustained upkeep of facilities such as lighting, elevators and water systems.

The auction schedule for other districts is as follows:

- Hyderabad: 77 shops in 10 colonies (April 15-16)
- Medchal-Malkajgiri: 892 shops in 12 colonies (April 15 & 17)
- Sangareddy: 372 shops in 6 colonies (April 15-18 and April 21)

Authorities said the initiative aims not only to support maintenance of housing colonies but also to generate employment and improve access to essential goods for the residents. (NSS)

Reservations key to social equity: BRAOU VC



HYDERABAD

Prof. Ghanta Chakrapani, Vice-Chancellor of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, emphasized that reservations are crucial for ensuring equity and inclusiveness in society.

Speaking at a symposium on "Reservations - Democracy - Challenges" organized as part of Social Empowerment Week, the VC said reservations enable fair distribution of opportunities aligned with population proportions and are rooted in democratic

values. He highlighted that social justice goes beyond economic upliftment, stressing dignity and equality for all communities.

Eminent speakers who included Prof. S.Malleswari, Former Vice-Chancellor, Satavahana University, Prof. Channa Basavaiah, Former Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, Osmania University, Sri Juluru Gouri Shankar, Former Chairman, Sahitya Academy, Telangana, Prof. Pallavi Kabde, Dean Faculty of Social Sciences, Dr. A. Rama Devi, Coordi-

nator, BC Cell and others addressed the symposium.

Prof. Anand Pawar, Prof. Rabinathan Solomon, Prof. Vaddanam Srinivas, Prof. P.Venkata Ramana, Prof. B.Srinivas, Prof. N.Rajani, Prof. K.Rani Rajitha Madhuri, Prof. K. Krishna Reddy, and Prof. Prameela Kethavat, Non-Teaching Employees Association Members K. Prem Kumar, Viswanath, Miya Jani, Dr. Yakesh Daida, All Directors, Deans, Heads of Branches, Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff Members, representatives of service associations participated in the program.

The eminent speakers underlined that

- * Reservations must continue until caste inequalities are eradicated
- * Equal representation is central to democracy
- * Cultural and social barriers still hinder true equality

The event concluded with a call for continued dialogue to build a more inclusive society.

Sridhar Babu accuses BRS leaders of misleading farmers on land acquisition

HYDERABAD

Minister for IT and Industries D. Sridhar Babu on Wednesday alleged that leaders of the BRS were attempting to politicise farmer protests in Vikarabad district and mislead people on land acquisition. In a statement, he alleged that the 'political yatras' undertaken by BRS leaders were aimed at creating confusion among farmers, casting aspersions on the government, and hindering industrial development and investments in the State.

Sridhar Babu said Vikarabad, which he described as neglected during the previous regime, was now being brought into the development mainstream through planned industrial and infrastructure initiatives, and termed the criticism by opposition leaders as "crocodile tears".



Highlighting the need for land for industrial growth, he noted that existing industrial parks such as Chandanvelly and Sitarampur had limited land available for new units, while some parcels were affected by legal disputes and lack of access infrastructure. In this context, the government had decided to create a

land bank for future industrial requirements.

He added that areas including Kodangal, Pargi had been identified for industrial expansion, with proposals to improve connectivity through radial roads and the Regional Ring Road (RRR). The Minister said land acquisition would be

undertaken strictly in accordance with the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013, following due process, including preparation of a Detailed Project Report (DPR) and necessary approvals. Dismissing allegations on compensation as "baseless", Sridhar Babu said affected landowners would be provided compensation and rehabilitation benefits, including house sites, in accordance with the law. Appealing to the public, Sridhar Babu said industrial development would generate employment, reduce migration, and improve infrastructure in the region. He urged farmers not to be misled by what he described as politically motivated campaigns, and assured that the government would ensure justice and support to all affected families.

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Women's reservation to be implemented from 2029: T-BJP chief

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Regarding ongoing electoral processes, Rao clarified that the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls is a routine exercise by the Election Commission of India, last conducted in 2002, and necessary to remove discrepancies caused by migration, deaths and address changes. He urged the citizens to use Forms 6, 7 and 8 for new voter registration, deletions and corrections to ensure protecting voting rights. Expressing concern over irregularities, he alleged abnormal voter concentrations in parts of Hyderabad's Old City and claimed illegal immigrants, including Rohingyas, have secured voter IDs with political support. He advocated a "Detect - Delete - Deport" approach to clean voters lists. Rao also praised the Centre's economic management amid global tensions, stating that India has maintained stability despite rising global oil prices.

CSR IS AN INVESTMENT, NOT AN EXPENSE

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At a meeting with representatives of various companies, the Chief Minister highlighted education, healthcare and water resource conservation as priority sectors for CSR spending. He urged corporates to independently choose sectors of their interest and contribute funds accordingly. Revanth Reddy said CSR initiatives should deliver "100% positive outcomes" and assured that the government would extend full support to companies in implementing their projects. He added that investment in education, in particular, should be viewed as building the future of the state.

Pointing out that nearly 44% of Telangana's student population is concentrated in Hyderabad, the CM emphasised the collective

responsibility of government and corporates to ensure quality education. He also urged companies to allocate CSR funds for the development of regions where they utilise local infrastructure. To streamline utilisation of CSR funds, the government has appointed a Special Chief Secretary to coordinate with companies and facilitate projects across sectors such as skill development, heritage conservation and environmental protection. The Chief Minister appreciated contributions already made by groups like Raheja, Ramky and Yashoda Foundation towards the education sector, and welcomed the positive response from other corporate representatives, who expressed readiness to support initiatives in education, healthcare and heritage conservation. Senior officials and industry representatives attended the meeting.

Ponguleti hits back at BRS, warns against 'false propaganda'

> FROM PAGE 1

activities carried out during 2021-22 as evidence of earlier involvement. He maintained that the present government only stepped in legally after assuming office, filing counter-affidavits in court in 2025, while accusing the previous regime of inaction. Rejecting allegations involving his family, the minister challenged BRS leaders to prove any link, stating he would publicly apologise if such claims were established. On the Vattinagulapalli issue, he described it as a private family dispute unrelated to the government, adding that the matter is sub judice and the government would abide by the court's verdict. Similarly, he dismissed claims regarding the Kotwalguda crusher as "false," clarifying it is a long-standing private entity with no ownership link to him.

Using strong language, Ponguleti accused BRS leaders of corruption during their decade-long rule from 2014 to 2023 and alleged they were attempting to shift blame onto the current administration. He also questioned the growth of their assets during their time in power.

The minister further alleged a nexus between certain real estate firms and BRS leadership, and accused a section of the media of acting in their favour. He asserted that the government is open to transparent investigations, including CBCID probes, and vowed that alleged irregularities in land and mining sectors under the previous regime would be exposed. Concluding, Ponguleti said the Congress government is functioning with integrity and that the allegations against it are politically motivated, adding that the truth would emerge through investigations and court proceedings.

Vivek explores German skill training model

HYDERABAD

Minister for Labour, Employment and Mines Dr. G. Vivek Venkatswamy met key officials at the Chamber of Skilled Crafts - Handwerkskammer (HWK) in Hannover, Germany, on Wednesday. The HWK is a self-governing public body in Germany that represents the interests of the skilled crafts sector. With 53 regional chambers across the country, the HWK serves as a central point of contact for craft businesses, their employees, and

apprentices. During the interaction, the Minister discussed their education and training models, workplace practices, and institutional strategies aimed at strengthening human resources and enhancing skill development. On the occasion, the Minister also met and interacted with HWK Campus CEO Volker Schmolz. The Minister and his delegation later visited the training centres, where they reviewed the curriculum and interacted with trainers and administrative staff.

Rs 2 lakh bribe trap: Hyd airport cops held by ACB

HYDERABAD

In a major anti-corruption crackdown, the Telangana Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) trapped two police officers from the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport Police Outpost for allegedly demanding Rs.5 lakh bribe and accepting Rs.2 lakh as part payment. The accused - Sub-Inspector U.K. Siddeshwar (A1) and Inspector Sampathi Kanakaiah (A2) - were caught by the ACB's Ranga Reddy unit while taking the bribe from a complainant. The money was allegedly sought to file a charge sheet and to avoid implicating and arresting the

complainant's family members in a case at Shamshabad's RGI Airport Police Station. Thus the accused performed their duties improperly and dishonestly to obtain undue advantage. Searches at the inspector's (A2) residence led to the seizure of Rs.33.97 lakh in cash, along with property documents, which are now under scrutiny. Both the officers have been arrested and will be produced before the Special ACB Court in Nampally for judicial remand. The case is under investigation, while the complainant's identity has been kept confidential for security reasons.

Women's Quota: The 2029 Countdown Begins

> FROM PAGE 1

Lok Sabha seats would be increased from the present 543 to 816, with 273 seats reserved for women. The reservation will also be done on a "vertical basis" with seats allocated for SCs and STs. The redrawing of the constituencies will be done on the basis of the 2011 census rather than the proposed 2027 census. A similar exercise will be carried out for state assemblies, where seats will be reserved on a pro-rata basis. Responding



to a question, a government functionary said, "No bill has ever mentioned the number of seats and nor

the proposed bill will," apparently referring to the proposed Delimitation Act amendment. Once approved by Parliament, the proposed laws will come into force on March 31, 2029 and will help reserve seats in the next Lok Sabha elections and assembly elections in Odisha, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Andhra Pradesh.

Addressing an election rally in Kerala on April 4, the prime minister had said the NDA government has given 33 per cent reservation to women in the Lok Sabha and Legis-

lative Assemblies through a law in 2023.

Modi had urged all parties that this is an issue related to women's empowerment, and so they should, with an open mind and without any political calculations, fully support it and become partners in winning the trust of the country's mothers and sisters. In September 2023, President Droupadi Murmu gave her assent to the Nari Shakti Vandana Bill. The law is officially known as the Constitution (106th Amendment) Act.

Man held for abusive comment on actress' video

HYDERABAD

The Cybercrime Police of Cyberabad commissionerate apprehended a man from Guntur for posting an abusive comment on a social media platform.

The accused, Chennaiah Runjala, reportedly posted the offensive remark after watching a video of actress Renu Desai on YouTube. Police traced and brought him to the Cyber Crime Police Station, Gachibowli, where his mobile phone was seized as evidence.

According to the police, the accused, during his free time, frequently watches the reels on YouTube. After watching a reel of actress Renu Desai, he posted an abusive and offensive comment from his YouTube account. Based on a complaint, the Cybercrime Police apprehended the accused and informed him of the reasons for his apprehension and brought him to Cyber Crime Police Station, Gachibowli. During verification, the accused produced his mobile phone through which he had posted the said comment.

Police urged the citizens to maintain responsible online behaviour and warned that objectionable posts can invite legal action. Citizens are encouraged to use digital platforms responsibly and report any cyber offences to the nearest Cyber Crime Police Station or through the 1930 Cyber Helpline.

Joint Inspection in Cyberabad Commissionerate Limits

- Suggestion to construct rainwater drains and sewerage lines separately
- Decision to build sewerage trunk main lines to prevent sewage mixing into rainwater drains
- Visit by MD Ashok Reddy along with Cyberabad Commissioner Srujana

HYDERABAD

A joint action plan has been initiated under the supervision of the Water Board, Cyberabad Municipal Corporation, and Irrigation Department to develop trunk mains and prevent sewage from mixing into rainwater drains within the Cyberabad Municipal Corporation limits.

In this context, on Wednesday, Cyberabad Municipal Commissioner Srujana, Water Board MD Ashok Reddy, and Municipal Zonal Commissioner Hemanth conducted an inspection within the commissionerate limits. As part of measures to protect lakes—from Durgam Cheruvu to Ibrahim Cheruvu—from sewage contamination, discussions were held with officials regarding upcoming works. These include the



expansion of box drains and sewerage trunk mains from Malkam Cheruvu to Nekkampur, as well as works to be undertaken at Chitrapuri Colony STP, Khaja Kunta STP, Nanakramguda STP, and up to Ibrahim Cheruvu in Nekkampur.

During the visit, officials inspected several key locations and reviewed the current flow of sewage, the condition of rainwater drains, and the feasibility of trunk main construction. Special attention was given to identifying areas where sewage mixes with stormwater drains during the rainy season, and officials were directed

to prepare a permanent action plan to resolve this issue. They instructed that all sewerage lines within the commissionerate be surveyed and mapped to identify points where sewage enters rainwater drains. Based on this, proposals should prioritize the construction of trunk mains in those areas. It was emphasized that all sewage flows must be diverted to Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs), and strict guidelines were issued to ensure that every drop of sewage is treated.

All sewage should be transported through trunk mains to nearby treatment plants and released into

the Musi River only after complete treatment. Strict measures were ordered to ensure that untreated sewage does not enter the Musi River under any circumstances.

Additionally, considering the upcoming rainy season, officials were advised to increase the capacity of stormwater drains, completely separate sewerage and rainwater systems, and modernize the network connected to trunk mains. They were also instructed to install new pipelines where necessary, upgrade old lines, and implement a strict monitoring system to prevent any mixing of sewage in drains. Coordination among all departments was emphasized.

Officials were also asked to assess consumer demand for the reuse of treated water in these areas. Each STP must include a unit for supplying treated water, along with infrastructure such as treated water storage (sumps). It was suggested to set up dedicated tanker filling points to supply treated water for gardening, construction, flushing, landscaping, and other uses. Water Board Project CGMs Padmaja and Sujatha, CMC Chief Engineer Sri Lakshmi, Irrigation EE Mallesh, and other officials participated in the program.

Headmaster, clerk trapped by ACB in ₹15k bribe case in Mahabubabad

HYDERABAD

In a significant anti-corruption crackdown, the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Wednesday caught a headmaster and a school assistant red-handed while accepting a bribe of Rs.15,000 in Mahabubabad district. The accused, J. Ravi Kumar (A1), Headmaster of ZPHS Ayodhyapuram and Mandal Education Officer (MEO) of Gudur, along with G. Chandra Mouli (A2), School Assistant and in-charge clerk, were trapped by the ACB Warangal Unit at ZPHS, Gudur. According to officials, the duo allegedly demanded the bribe from a complainant to process Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS) retirement benefit bills and forward them to the Accountant General's (AG) office.

Acting on a complaint, ACB officials laid a trap and caught them while accepting the amount. The tainted cash was recovered from the possession of the second accused at his instance. Officials stated that both the officers misused their positions to obtain undue advantage. The accused have been arrested and will be produced before the Special Judge for SPE & ACB cases in Warangal for judicial remand. Further investigation is underway, while the identity of the complainant has been kept confidential for security reasons.

ENGINEERING AND OTHER ANCILLARY WORK

Tender Notice No.: 06 of 2026. Dated: 07-04-2026; E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work; **Tender No.:** SRDENGHY-06-2026; **Name of Work:** Construction of passenger amenities building, one number distributed E.I. Cabin, three numbers E.I. LOC Huts, Sr.COO office complex (80mx8m), new parcel office (100x8) Sqm. and provision of 48 bay shed for passenger, parcel platform and extension of existing platforms along with provision of new platform and other ancillary works at Guwahati railway station in connection with Guwahati Yard remodeling work (Re-Tender). **Tender Value:** ₹62,89,22,159.58; **Earnest Money:** ₹1,25,38,500/-; **Date & time of closing/opening of tender at 13:00 hrs. on 07-05-2026.** For complete information please visit in website www.ireps.gov.in

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COMPREHENSIVE ANNUAL MAINTENANCE CONTRACT

E-Tender Notice No. S&T/APDJ/01; dated: 02-04-2026. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **SN.1. E-Tender No.:** AP-ST-01-2026-27; **Name of Work:** Comprehensive Annual Maintenance Contract of Siemens make Electronic Interlocking at 16 Stations for a period of Three (03) years i.e. 36 Months in Alipurduar Division. **Advertised Tender Value:** ₹5,06,98,414.08; **Bid Security:** ₹10,14,000.00. E-tenders will be closed at 15:00 hrs. on 28-04-2026 and will be opened on 28-04-2026 after closing. The complete information with tender document of above e-tender will be available in website www.ireps.gov.in

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SOUTHERN RAILWAY

(Electrical (General), Construction, Egmore, Chennai)

Tender Notice No: E-HQ-CN-MS-EOT-1-2026-27, Dt:04.04.2026. For and on behalf of the President of India, The Deputy Chief Electrical Engineer / General / Construction / Southern Railway / Egmore, Chennai - 600 008 invites E-Tender for the following work.

Name of the work: Perambur New Railway Hospital - Phase-II - Electrification of C and E Block in New Railway Hospital, Perambur.

Tender Notice No. and Date	E-HQ-CN-MS-EOT-1-2026-27, Dt:04.04.2026.
1 Period of Completion	12 Months
2 Approximate Cost of Work	Rs. 37854574.66
3 Cost of Tender form	Nil
4 Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)	Rs. 757100/-
5 Tender Closing Date & Time	29/04/2026 11:00 Hrs.
6 Tender Opening Date & Time	29/04/2026 11:30 Hrs.

Complete details can be seen on www.ireps.gov.in.

Deputy Chief Electrical Engineer, Construction, Chennai, Egmore, (For and on behalf of President of India)

MP Vamsi flags 'bias against Telangana'

PEDDAPALLI/ HYDERABAD

Peddapalli Congress MP Gaddam Vamsi Krishna on Wednesday accused the Centre of discriminating against Telangana while inaugurating the Ambedkar Premier League cricket tournament at Singareni Stadium in Godavari Khani. Addressing the gathering, he alleged that the Union Government was favouring Andhra Pradesh with higher fund allocations while neglecting Telangana. He also questioned Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy for not

securing the state's interests despite being elected from Telangana. The MP highlighted disparities in infrastructure, pointing out that Andhra Pradesh has nine airports compared to just one in Telangana. He said the issue was raised during the recent Parliament Budget Sessions. Vamsi Krishna asserted that efforts would continue until approval is granted for an ESI hospital in Ramagundam. He also demanded an increase in Singareni pensions to Rs.10,000 per month and exemption of Singareni workers from income tax.

GITAM Scholar Earns Ph.D. in Mathematics

HYDERABAD

GITAM Deemed to be University, Hyderabad, proudly congratulates Dr. Pappula Ashok on the successful completion of his Ph.D. in Mathematics under the guidance of Dr. D. Mallikarjuna Reddy, Associate Professor, School of Science. His doctoral research, titled "Cryptocurrency Price Prediction Using Hybrid Deep Learning Models: A Comprehensive Comparative Time Series Analysis," explores advanced approaches to forecasting highly volatile digital assets such as Bitcoin (BTC), Ethereum (ETH), and BinanceCoin (BNB).

The study evaluates traditional statistical models, machine learn-



ing techniques, and deep learning architectures, and introduces hybrid models to enhance predictive accuracy. The findings demonstrate that hybrid deep learning models—particularly the BiLSTM-GRU framework—significantly outperform conventional and standalone

models across key performance metrics, offering improved accuracy and robustness in cryptocurrency price prediction.

This research underscores the growing potential of hybrid AI models in financial forecasting and provides valuable insights for investors, analysts, and the broader fintech ecosystem.

The GITAM leadership, including Prof. D. S. Rao, Pro Vice-Chancellor; D.V.V.S.R. Varma, Resident Director; Dr. M. Reza, Principal, School of Science; and Dr. JadavGandesh, Head, Department of Mathematics and Statistics, congratulated Dr. Ashok on his achievement and commended his contribution to impactful research.



Minister Jupally travels in metro like a common man

HYDERABAD

Tourism, Culture, and Excise Minister Jupally Krishna Rao surprised everyone by traveling in the metro like an ordinary passenger in the city. Departing from usual protocols, he boarded the metro in a very simple manner. To attend a private event in the city, he traveled from Erramanzil station to Miyapur by metro.

Upon reaching the station, the minister personally purchased a ticket and proceeded to the platform. As the train was crowded, he did not try to find a seat

and instead stood along with fellow passengers during the journey. During this time, he interacted with co-passengers and inquired about the facilities of the metro service.

Passengers were initially surprised to see the minister among them, but they happily interacted with him after he greeted them. Many passengers showed interest in taking selfies with him, and the minister patiently obliged by posing for photos. On this occasion, he remarked that the metro greatly helps people reach their destinations quickly without traffic congestion.

BRS MLC slams Telangana Budget, calls it 'deceptive'

HYDERABAD

BRS MLC Dasoju Sravan Kumar on Wednesday launched a sharp critique of the Telangana Budget 2025-26 at a roundtable organised by Telangana Adhyayana Samacharana Kendram (TASK), in Hyderabad. He alleged that the state has slipped from a Rs.779 crore surplus to a Rs.9,420 crore revenue deficit under the current government led by chief minister A. Revanth Reddy. Citing CAG data, he claimed the government relied on borrowings almost daily, violating FRBM norms.

Sravan Kumar further accused the government of underutilisation of funds across the sectors, noting that housing saw only a fraction of allocated funds spent, while welfare schemes for SC/ST/OBCs and minorities also lagged significantly. He alleged "manipulation of figures" in revenue projections and criticised it as Hyderabad-centric development, warning it could harm balanced regional growth. The BRS leader also flagged unmet promises to farmers, unemployed youth, pensioners, women, and minorities, demanding transparency, fiscal discipline, and equitable development across the districts.

Governor unveils statue of Moturi Satyanarayana



HYDERABAD

Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla on Wednesday paid rich tributes to Padma Bhushan Dr. Moturi Satyanarayana, describing him as a visionary freedom fighter who dedicated his life to national integration and the spread of Hindi in South India.

He said Dr. Moturi Satyanarayana viewed language as a powerful instrument for unity and nation-building and worked tirelessly to promote linguistic harmony across the country.

The Governor said that though a Telugu, Moturi Satyanarayana chose Hindi

as a language that could unite people and be understood by all. He went to North India to propagate the language and played a pioneering role in establishing the Central Hindi Sansthan in Agra, thereby strengthening efforts to promote Hindi across regions.

The Governor was speaking after unveiling the statue of the late Moturi Satyanarayana, founder of the Central Institute of Hindi, and releasing his biography, along with the Kendriya Hindi Sansthan quarterly magazine Samvaya Dakshini, at a programme held at the Central Institute of Hindi, Bapuji Nagar,

Bowenpally, Secunderabad. Addressing the gathering, Shri Shukla said it was a matter of pride and honour to commemorate a personality who devoted himself to the freedom struggle and to promoting Hindi as a medium of national consciousness. He noted that Dr. Moturi Satyanarayana's efforts to popularise Hindi and awaken national sentiment led to his imprisonment, but his determination never wavered.

The Governor observed that Moturi Satyanarayana firmly believed the spread of Hindi would strengthen national unity while respecting India's linguistic diversity. In the Constituent Assembly of India, he played a significant role in promoting Indian languages and in establishing Hindi as the official language, he added.

Highlighting his institutional contributions, Shukla said Moturi Satyanarayana translated his vision into reality by establishing the Central Hindi Teaching Board, which continues to lead efforts for the promotion of Hindi. He described the unveiling of the statue and release of publications as not merely ceremonial, but a tribute to ideals of linguistic harmony, national consciousness and cultural unity.

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SHORT TAKES

Govt cancels permission for Harish Rao's public meeting in Wanaparthy

HYDERABAD, April 8 (NSS): The Telangana government on Wednesday cancelled the permission for a public meeting by former minister and senior BRS leader T. Harish Rao in Wanaparthy. The meeting was planned in support of farmers protesting against the Gollapalli Reservoir project in Revally mandal. He had decided to organize the meeting on April 9 upon receiving approval from the state. Farmers in the Gollapalli area have been staging protests for the past 100 days against construction of Gollapalli Reservoir. BRS leader and former minister Singireddy Niranjan Reddy slammed the move, alleging suppression of opposition voices, and said the party would approach the High Court for necessary relief.

Telangana, Ghana to explore synergy in healthcare, technology

HYDERABAD, April 8 (NSS): Kwasi Obiri-Danso, the High Commissioner of the Republic of Ghana, paid a courtesy call on Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy at his residence in Hyderabad on Wednesday. Kwasi Obiri-Danso visited Hyderabad for the first time since assuming his responsibilities as High Commissioner. The High Commissioner expressed his desire to see continued relations between Ghana and Telangana. He called for mutual cooperation across the fields of education, science and technology, healthcare, and commerce. The Chief Minister responded positively to these proposals.

Telangana HC defers verdict on Justice P.C. Ghose Commission

HYDERABAD: The Telangana High Court on Wednesday adjourned its verdict on petitions challenging the Justice P.C. Ghose Commission report to April 22. The commission was set up to probe alleged irregularities in the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project, including the Medigadda, Annaram and Sundilla barrages. Petitioners, including former chief minister K. Chandrababu Naidu, former minister T. Harish Rao and others, argued that the commission's findings are baseless, and due process under the Commissions of Inquiry Act was not followed and that no opportunity for cross-examination was provided. The state government defended the commission, stating it was constituted in the public interest. The court had completed hearings on March 12 this year and initially scheduled the verdict on April 8, but has now postponed it to April 22.

Tripartite Agreement under BioNEST Incubation Program

HYDERABAD
The Tripartite Agreement Signing Ceremony under the BioNEST Co-Incubation Program was successfully conducted at NAARM, Hyderabad, between a-IDEA, ICAR-NAARM (ICAR-National Academy of Agricultural Research Management); ICAR-Indian Institute of Rice Research (IIRR) and the selected startup/individual (Ventas Biosolutions LLP and Mrs. Lakshmi VSD Rudraraju - Individual). The event marked a significant milestone in fostering innovation and strengthening collaboration between research institutions and emerging startups in the agri-biotech ecosystem. The program commenced with a welcome address by Dr. Ranjit Kumar, CEO of a-IDEA and Principal Scientist, ICAR-NAARM, who provided an overview of the BioNEST Incubation



Women reservation would be implemented from 2029



HYDERABAD

Telangana state BJP President N Ramchander Rao today asserted that 33 per cent reservations for women in legislative bodies would be implemented from 2029 general elections.

He was addressing a gathering after meeting residents of Shilpa Park Apartments in Kondapur. He said Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam introduced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was a landmark decision for women's empowerment. This was a monumental step toward ensuring greater political representation for women," he stated.

Clarifying the ongoing electoral processes, Rao emphasized that the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) was a routine procedure conducted by the Election Commission of India (ECI) to sanitize voter lists. He further clarified that SIR has been conducted multiple times in the past in 1956, 1965, 1970, 1980, 1990, and lastly in 2002. Due to the long gap since the last major revision, many discrepancies have crept into the lists because of voter migration, address changes, and deaths.

He urged citizens to use Forms 6, 7, and 8 for new registrations, deletions, or cor-

rections to ensure their voting rights are protected.

BJP state chief expressed concern over falling voting percentages caused by outdated lists and "suspicious" voter concentrations. He pointed out anomalies in the Old City of Hyderabad, where hundreds of votes are registered under a single household.

He alleged that illegal immigrants, including Rohingyas, have obtained voter IDs and Aadhaar cards with the support of the MIM party.

Rao advocated for the "Detect - Delete - Deport" strategy through the SIR process to ensure justice for genuine voters and to eliminate illegal duplicate votes.

He lauded the Central Government's management of the economy despite international tensions involving Iran, Israel, and the USA. He noted that while global oil prices surged by 17 to 50 per cent, the Modi government successfully stabilized domestic prices and prevented shortages. The state party president remarked that under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi, India has strengthened its diplomatic standing globally, ensuring the nation remains secure, peaceful, and on a steady path of development.

Telangana is an ATM for Congress", Kavitha slams Revanth Reddy's Governance

Jagruiti growing, Kavitha launches scathing attack on congress-BRS

Massive Influx into Jagruiti - 1,000 Gadwal supporters join Kavitha ahead of party launch

Gongalla Ranjith Kumar joins Telangana Jagruiti with 1,000 supporters

Kavitha vows Grassroots movement and Padyatra for public issues

HYDERABAD

Telangana Jagruiti President Kalvakuntla Kavitha today declared that 25th April 2026 will be a defining moment in the state's history, signaling the introduction of "fresh blood and a new political culture" to the soil of Telangana.

The announcement came during a significant induction ceremony at the Telangana Jagruiti office in Banjara Hills, where Gongalla Ranjith Kumar, President of the Nadigadda Hakkula Porata Samithi, formally joined the

organization along with 1,000 supporters from the Jogulamba Gadwal district.

Vision and Political Stand

Addressing the gathering, Kavitha emphasized that the upcoming party would break away from traditional politics to adopt a people-centric approach based on three pillars - Questioning, Fighting for Public Issues, and Resolving the problems.

She criticized both the ruling Congress and the opposition BRS for neglecting public issues, stating that "Jagruiti" has become the only voice the public trusts to represent their concerns.

She further added that the party will work closely with people at the grassroots level, undertake padyatras, and develop a comprehensive agenda with the help of international experts, which will be unveiled on April 25.

Allegations against State Leadership*

Kavitha launched a scathing attack on Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, accusing him of:

- The "ATM" Allegation: She alleged that Telangana has been turned into an "ATM" for the Congress party to fund elections across India.
- Governance Critique: She mocked the Chief Minister's subservience, claiming he remains standing even during phone calls with Rahul Gandhi.
- Broken Promises: She highlighted the government's failure to implement Rythu Bharosa and complete farm loan waivers, accusing the CM of spreading lies in other states like Kerala while Telangana farmers suffer.

She alleged that the current government has misled the people and is prioritizing political interests over public welfare.

Criticism of Central Government Handling

Kavitha questioned the Chief Minister's "mysterious silence" regarding Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decisions. She specifically pointed to the national project status granted to Upper Bhadra, warning that it would starve the combined Mahabubnagar district of vital Tungbhadra water. "Why is Revanth Reddy 'Gup-Chup' (silent) when it comes to questioning Modi?" she asked.

Focus on Gadwal and Grassroots Issues

Welcoming Ranjith Kumar, Kavitha called for an end to the "Gadi" (feudal) politics that has dominated Gadwal for 70 years. She demanded immediate solutions for handloom workers and seed cotton farmers, insisting that "contractor politics" must be replaced by the "activist's flag." She expressed confidence that Telangana Jagruiti will expand its grassroots presence across villages.

Statement by Gongalla Ranjith Kumar

Gongalla Ranjith Kumar expressed his unwavering faith in Kavitha's leadership, stating: "Kavitha Akk's commitment is legendary. Once she gives her word, she never backs down, regardless of the challenges. While others conspired to sideline her, she has emerged as the strongest voice for SC, ST, and BC communities. We will carry the Jagruiti flag to every village in the undivided Mahabubnagar district."

DGP's warning ignored as officers still fall to ACB traps

HYDERABAD

"Uniform and corruption cannot go together... Those entrusted with maintaining law and order must not develop a habit of illegal earnings; strict action will be inevitable," warned Director General of Police B. Shivdhar Reddy in a letter addressed to police personnel across the state immediately after assuming office.

In his letter, the DGP clearly emphasized that everyone—from Home Guards to IPS officers—must work with integrity and transparency. He urged officers to treat poor and vulnerable people visiting police stations with compassion and ensure justice for them. He also instructed that police stations should not be turned into platforms for civil settlements and made it clear that indiscipline would not be tolerated.

However, despite such strong directives from the top, recent raids by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) indicate that some officers at the ground level have not changed their old practices. Currently, under the supervision of ACB Director General Charu Sinha, the Anti-Corruption Bureau has intensified its operations across the state.

Recently, at the RGIA Airport Police Outpost in Shamshabad, Inspector Sampathi Kanakayya and



Sub-Inspector U.K. Siddheshwar demanded a bribe of ₹5 lakh to file a charge sheet in a case and to avoid arresting the accused's family members. While accepting ₹2 lakh, they were caught by ACB officials. During a search at the inspector's residence, ₹33,97,000 in cash was recovered. Both were remanded on Wednesday.

Similarly, in Malkajgiri Cyber Crime Police Station, two Armed Reserve Sub-Inspectors, Pramod Goud and Jatavath Babu Naik, were caught accepting ₹1 lakh to avoid

arresting an accused in a cyber-crime case. Corruption is not limited to cities; it is also prevalent in districts. In Nirmal district, Manda SI T. Ashok was caught taking a ₹20,000 bribe to dismiss a complaint against him. In Madhapur, SI Gandra Vinay demanded ₹50,000 for issuing notices and was trapped by the ACB.

In Warangal, KUCI SI P. Srikanth was caught red-handed while accepting ₹15,000 through his private driver for releasing seized vehicles. In Siddipet Commissionerate

limits, Mulugu SI Vijay Kumar took ₹50,000, while in Medak district, Tekmal SI Rajesh was caught taking ₹30,000 for issuing notices. Notably, the Tekmal SI tried to escape into fields upon seeing ACB officials but was chased and caught. At least now, police personnel must reform their conduct and move toward the "fair, firm, friendly, and professional" policing envisioned by the DGP. ACB DG Charu Sinha has urged the public to report any bribe demands without hesitation by calling the ACB toll-free number 1064.

Telangana Study Forum Leads Massive Rally for World Peace

Strong Condemnation of War and US Hegemony; Call for a Greener, Peaceful Future

HYDERABAD

In the wake of escalating global tensions following the February 28 attack by the United States, which reportedly led to the death of Iran's top leader Ayatollah Khamenei, concerns over global instability have intensified. Condemning the war and its far-reaching consequences, the Telangana Study Forum organized a massive World Peace Rally in Hyderabad.

The rally commenced from V.M. Home and proceeded up to Kothapet, witnessing participation from intellectuals, academicians, environmentalists, students, and civil society members. Participants carried placards and raised slogans advocating peace, global harmony, and an end to war.

Criticism of US Dominance

Forum President N. Srinivasa Chari, who inaugurated the rally, strongly criticized what he described as the hegemonic and authoritarian policies of the United States. He stated that such actions are destabilizing global peace and pushing nations toward conflict.

"Development Possible Only in Peace" - Kodandaram

Chief Guest Professor Kodandaram emphasized that sustainable development is only possible in a peaceful world. He noted that wars disproportionately affect innocent civilians, especially children and the elderly. He further highlighted the economic consequences of war, including rising prices of essential commodities, fuel shortages, and disruptions affecting households, hostels, and businesses worldwide.

Severe Impact on Children and Environment

Eminent educationist and environmentalist Dr. Komatireddy Gopal Reddy expressed deep concern over



the loss of innocent lives, particularly schoolchildren.

"War is not just a conflict between nations—it is the destruction of future generations. It damages the environment irreversibly. We must strive for a greener world, a cleaner world, and a peaceful world," he stated.

Global Fear and Instability Rising

Professor Rajendra Babu remarked that the actions of the United States

are creating widespread fear and uncertainty among nations. He urged the global community to collectively condemn such actions and work toward peace.

Environmental Damage a Major Concern

Senior advocate K.V.L. warned that wars inflict irreversible damage on the environment, posing a serious threat to future generations and ecological balance.

Strong Condemnation by Telangana Activists

Kacham Satyanarayana, President of the Telangana Activists Welfare Association, strongly condemned what he termed as the authoritarian approach of the United States and called for united global efforts to restore peace.

Prominent Participants

The rally was attended by several prominent personalities including Ayachitam Sridhar, Prem Maheshwar Reddy, Sreevani, Rangareddy, Baer Balakishan, Srishailam Yadav, and others.

Key members of the Telangana Study Forum such as General Secretary Rajamahender Reddy, Vice Presidents Somireddy, Komatireddy Gopal Reddy, Bhogam Laxmaiah, Treasurer Satyanarayana, Sriramulu, Venugopal, Saidulu, Prasanna Chari, Madhuchari, Gannaju Satyanarayana, Chandramouli, Karunakar Reddy and others actively participated and made the event a success.

NEXT DOOR

What's running now is Telugu Desam 3.0 version!

AMARAVATI:

We are bringing comprehensive changes to the Telugu Desam Party from the grassroots level to the Politburo. In every term, 33% (one-third) new members should be included—that is our intention. A village-level leader should have the opportunity to rise up to the Politburo. Our approach must evolve with changing times; only then can we remain relevant among the people for decades, said TDP National General Secretary Nara Lokesh. As part of cadre training programs, Minister Lokesh met with party cluster, unit, and booth in-charges under the initiative called "Coffee Conversations." Speaking on the occasion, he said the Telugu Desam Party is now moving forward with a new approach under Version 3.0. A membership number for party cadre is like an Aadhaar card. By entering the number, one can track how much work an individual has done. Positions will be given based purely on performance, without any recommendations. During the party's recent foundation day, while we sat on the ground, ordinary workers sat beside Chandrababu—this reflects the unexpected changes happening within the party.

Telugu Desam — A Political

Training classes will be conducted continuously throughout the year. No recommendations needed... performance alone will determine positions. After June, everyone must go into the public field! No need to take Jagan seriously. Minister Lokesh interacts informally with cadre in TDP training sessions

cal University

The main goal of training classes is to strengthen the party from the grassroots and recognize and encourage hard-working workers. From now on, training sessions will be conducted continuously throughout the year at cluster, unit, village, and Mandal levels. The Telugu Desam Party is like a political university. In Telangana, many current and former leaders—including Chief Ministers—have emerged from TDP. Between 1989–94, Chandrababu Naidu, as General Secretary, energized the cadre through training programs. However, this is the first time since the party's formation that such large-scale grassroots training is being conducted.

Not Leaders... The Party is Permanent!

TDP is a cadre-based party. Leaders must shed the mindset of "I am the king, I am the minister." Neither Lokesh nor any other leader is permanent—the party is permanent.

A capable leader builds future



leadership. In the past, the party suffered by relying on individuals; now we depend on systems instead. Despite implementing large-scale development and welfare programs between 2014–19, we faced defeat. To remain in power long-term, we should take the BJP as a model. Their success lies in disciplined cadre committed to party ideology. Like our "My TDP" app, they have a similar system. From grassroots workers to Union Ministers, everyone performs their assigned responsibilities effectively.

Success

I contested from Mangalagiri, a constituency where we hadn't won since 1985, and lost in my first attempt. After five years of hard work, I won the last election with a majority of over 91,000 votes. Despite that victory, we fell short in 20 booths in the constituency. I am working to overcome that. Confidence is key to achieving anything.

Any issues within the party should be resolved through internal discussions. Sulking and staying at home is injustice to the party. I even fought a battle with Chandrababu for party reforms.

Let's Make Mahanadu a

Preparations for Mahanadu, our party's biggest festival, have begun. Everyone must work hard to make it successful.

Chandrababu's Shadow is Our Protection

We faced difficulties for five years under oppressive rule. Temples were attacked, party workers were targeted, and around 35,000 false cases were filed.

After the coalition government came to power, we reviewed and removed 60% of these cases. Now that good times have returned, we must not forget past hardships.

Do not become arrogant due to power. Move forward with patience and tolerance. Work tirelessly for our ideology. Chandrababu is like a great tree whose shade protects us. Leaders who act independently without discipline will be warned three times; if they don't change, responsibilities will be reassigned. No post in the party is permanent—everyone must remember this.

No Need to Take Jagan Seriously

No one needs to take YSRCP leader Jagan seriously. Yesterday he said one thing; today he talks about three capitals again. Even now, he is not close to the people. He has installed a 30-foot iron barricade around his house. Af-

ter TDP's defeat in 2019, Chandrababu stayed among the people, understood their problems, and led movements like the sand agitation within a year. He listens to party workers and continues to stay connected with them, also exploring ways to financially strengthen the cadre. Positions alone are not the measure of working in the party. Those who didn't get opportunities now will be given chances again.

Honeymoon is Over... Let's Go to the People!

The honeymoon period is over. Everyone must now go into the public and work. From June, we will launch programs to take government achievements to every household. It is the responsibility of the cadre to effectively communicate these programs. Every booth is crucial. Despite a 94% strike rate, we lagged in 4,600 booths across the state—leaders must focus on these. Let's work tirelessly to strengthen the party. Let's implement the six resolutions announced at the last Mahanadu. The principle that "the worker is the leader" has already been implemented. Development can continue only if the coalition returns to power. Lokesh called upon everyone to take the message to the people that only when Chandrababu Naidu is strong, everyone will be happy.

Will the sentiment repeat in Mylavaram?

VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 08

Mylavaram is considered a stronghold for the TDP. In the past, Devineni Uma won from here and became a minister. In 2019, YSRCP captured the seat for the first time. Then in 2024, TDP regained victory here. Vasantha Krishna Prasad, who won on behalf of YSRCP in 2019, joined TDP in 2024 and contested the elections wearing the party's yellow scarf, winning once again.

However, a certain sentiment continues in the Mylavaram constituency. There has been no instance where the people elected the same leader more than twice. Regardless of the party, voters have given a leader victory twice, but for the third time, they preferred a new candidate. There are two angles to this. Even beyond party lines, no individual leader has managed to win more than two consecutive times here. In the 1985 and 1989 elections, people voted heavily for the Congress party, electing its candidates regardless of who they were. The same trend continued in the 1994 and 1999 elections, when TDP candidates were elected irrespective of the individual. But after that, the situation changed. Leader-centric politics and the influence of social groups began to emerge. In the 2009 and 2014 elections, politics became centered around individual leaders. As a result, Devineni Uma Maheswara Rao won consecutively twice, regardless of party dynamics. This trend continued further. In the 2019 and 2024 elections, Vasantha Krishna Prasad also secured back-to-back victories. Now the question is—what next? If this ongoing sentiment continues, there is a possibility that in the next election, the constituency may move toward a change in leadership. It remains to be seen whether efforts will be made to break this sentiment or not.

LoP in Andhra Council writes to Guv over 'incorrect, incomplete' info presented on govt borrowings

VISAKHAPATNAM, APRIL 8

Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council, Botcha Satyanarayana has written to Governor S. Abdul Nazeer that the State Finance Department presented incorrect and incomplete information on government borrowings for 2024-25 and 2025-26 in the Council. In his letter, Botcha Satyanarayana said the reply given by the Principal Finance Secretary to a starred question in the February 2026 session understated the actual borrowings and omitted key components. He requested the Governor to intervene and impress upon the government the need to provide accurate and complete data to the legislature.

"The Finance Department

stated that total borrowings for 2024-25 were Rs. 60,485 crore. However, the CAG audited Finance Accounts clearly show that the actual net liabilities are about Rs. 81,082 crore. This leaves a gap of more than Rs. 20,500 crore which is not justifiable," he said. The YSR Congress Party on Wednesday released a copy of Botcha's letter to the media. Explaining the discrepancy, Botcha pointed out that three major components were possibly excluded. "Borrowings under Ways and Means Advances from RBI were not included, even though they are classified as internal debt in official records. Net liabilities under Public Account such as deposits and reserve funds were also ignored, despite them being used to bridge the fiscal deficit. Adjustments



related to GST compensation loans were reduced without valid justification," he said. He wrote that when the fiscal deficit itself is over Rs. 81,000 crore, presenting a much lower borrowing figure gives a misleading picture of the State's finances. "Such omissions create a false impression that the government's debt burden is lower than it actually is," he said. Botcha also stated that the government's claim that there

were no off-budget borrowings in 2025-26 is incorrect. "Government backed corporations like MARKFED and Civil Supplies Corporation have been allowed to raise loans with state guarantees. These entities depend entirely on government support and such borrowings clearly fall under off budget liabilities as per Government of India guidelines," he said.

He also highlighted inconsistency in the Finance Department's approach. "When details were sought for borrowings from 2014-2024, both Public Debt and Public Account were included. But for 2024-25 and 2025-26, Public Account was excluded. This change in approach raises serious concerns," he said.

Botcha stressed that providing incorrect or incomplete

information to the Legislature undermines accountability. "Officials are expected to present facts transparently. Any deviation from this principle affects the credibility of the Finance Department and weakens public trust," he said.

He requested the Governor to intervene and ensure corrective action. "The reply should be withdrawn and replaced with accurate figures that are consistent with CAG audited accounts. Responsibility must also be fixed for the discrepancies," he said.

"The Legislature represents the people, and any misleading information placed before it amounts to misleading the public. It is essential that transparency and integrity are upheld in matters of public finance," Botcha added.

Alkem launches A-to-Z Daily multivitamin

MUMBAI, APRIL 8, 2026

Alkem Laboratories Ltd. (BSE: 539523, NSE: ALKEM, "Alkem" and its subsidiaries) today announced the launch of A to Z Daily, an everyday multivitamin supplement for adults, for providing holistic nutritional support to the body and mind.

A to Z Daily tablets are formulated with a total of 26 essential vitamins, minerals and botani-

cals to provide balanced nutritional support. The key vitamins and minerals include Vitamin B complex, Vitamin D3, Vitamin C, Zinc, and Iron that help in boosting energy levels, reducing fatigue and improving immunity. The product also contains clinically-researched botanicals such as Ashwagandha, Bacopa monnieri (Brahmi), Panax ginseng, and an amino acid L-theanine, which help in managing stress and anx-

ety, improving sleep quality and supporting the cognitive function. Unlike conventional multivitamins that address only nutritional deficiencies, A to Z Daily is designed as an everyday support supplement for people to maintain physical energy while staying mentally composed through daily pressures and routines. It is intended for consistent, long-term use as part of a preventive wellness approach. Commenting

on the launch, Dr. Vikas Gupta, Chief Executive Officer, Alkem, said, "Our current lifestyles are placing sustained demands not just on physical health but also on mental well-being. People are increasingly experiencing stress, fatigue, and reduced ability to stay focused. Nutritional supplementation can play a supportive role in addressing these challenges when designed thoughtfully. A to Z Daily brings together essential

ingredients to provide a balanced, everyday support for both body and mind. It is positioned not as a quick fix, but as a consistent, long-term approach for people seeking to manage everyday stress while improving overall vitality." A to Z Daily provides 100% of the recommended daily allowance (RDA) of 19 vitamins and minerals, helping bridge common dietary gaps and support overall nutritional adequacy in adults.

Southern Railway registers Strong Signal & Telecom Performance in FY 2025-26

CHENNAI, APRIL 08:

Southern Railway has achieved significant milestones in the Signal & Telecommunication (S&T) domain during FY 2025-26, reinforcing its commitment to safety, reliability and modernisation of train operations.

Focusing on improving the safety and reliability of signals, Electronic Interlocking (EI) works surpassed targets with 15 installations against 12 planned. The reliability of the Interlocking logic has been enhanced by replacing Route Relay Interlocking (RRD) and Panel Interlocking (PI) with Electronic Interlocking (EI) with Electronic Interlocking. With the implementation of Electronic Interlocking, the process route setting and signal clearance by the Station Master is made fool proof thereby improving overall safety.



Similarly, LC Gate Interlocking also exceeded Railway Board's target with 19 works completed during the year. Interlocking of Level Crossing Gates ensures proper closure of Gates for road traffic before permitting the passage of trains, thereby eliminating manual dependency on gatekeepers. In the area of train detection systems, Block Proving Axle Counters (BPAC) achieved 100% completion, enhancing

safety by ensuring that block sections are clear before train movements. Automatic Block Signalling (ABS) works reached 70.5 route kilometres against a target of 73.7 RKM, significantly improving line capacity and enabling smoother train operations. With approximately one signal for every 1 Km in the section, ABS facilitates the handling of more trains within the block section. This paves the way for

enhanced line capacity and efficiency of train operations, especially on high density routes handling premium trains like Vande Bharat capable of speeds up to 130 Km/h. Recently, Southern Railway commissioned ABS in Jolarpettai - Doddampatti (47.27 Km) section.

Additionally, Double Distant Signalling (DDS) commissioning at stations has exceeded targets (45 against the target of 44), while DDS at level crossings recorded a remarkable 160% achievement (32 against the target of 20). This system is essential for sections handling high-speed trains as it helps regulate train speeds by providing advance signalling information, thereby supporting higher speeds over longer distances. Speed enhancement of sections beyond 110 kmph can be done either with ABS or DDS

in signal systems. On the other hand, Electrically Operated Lifting Barriers (EOLB) witnessed 74 installations against a target of 100, with efforts are ongoing to accelerate progress in this area. In this system, manual lever and interlocking has been replaced with electric motorised mechanisms, enabling faster and more efficient opening and closing of LC gates, thereby assisting gatekeepers and enhancing safety.

Safety at level crossings received a major boost with the installation of Emergency Sliding Booms (ESB), where 128 units were commissioned against a target of 100. This facility serves as an additional safety measure to control road traffic in case of failure of LC gate mechanisms. Passenger amenities and surveillance infrastructure also witnessed steady growth.

MoPNG Sustains LPG Supply Amid Global Energy Crisis; Over 18 Crore Cylinders Delivered

NEW DELHI, APRIL 08

Amid a global energy shock that has disrupted fuel availability and triggered shortages across several regions, India has ensured continued access to LPG for its households, maintaining stability at scale under challenging external conditions. Given India's ~60% import dependence for LPG and the concentration of global supplies through the Strait of Hormuz, the Government moved swiftly to secure supplies and augment domestic availability. Targeted interventions, including measures to enhance domestic production and diversify sourcing across multiple geographies, have ensured that supply lines remain stable. As a result, LPG distribution across the country continues at scale, with over 18 crore cylinders delivered since 1 March 2026 and more than 60 lakh cylinders supplied daily. The average delivery timeline remains approximately three days. The Government also recognises that in some locations, consumers have experienced delays in cylinder deliveries. These instances have largely been localised and transient, arising from demand surges and last-mile operational constraints. Focused steps are

being undertaken to streamline distribution, improve delivery timelines, and strengthen field-level monitoring to address such issues promptly. Importantly, there have been no widespread supply disruptions, and LPG availability across distributorships remains stable. Continuous monitoring and coordination with Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) are ensuring that operations remain smooth and responsive. At the same time, the Government has taken calibrated steps to protect consumers from global price volatility. The impact on households, particularly Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) beneficiaries, has been kept limited, reinforcing the Government's commitment to affordability.

At a time when several economies are witnessing significant disruptions, India's ability to maintain LPG supply continuity while safeguarding consumer interests underscores the strength and resilience of its energy ecosystem. The Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas remains committed to ensuring safe, affordable, and uninterrupted LPG access for every household, while continuing to strengthen the efficiency and transparency of the distribution network.

Skoda Auto Volkswagen India starts production of the new Taigun at its Pune plant

Striking new design elements deliver a bold, refreshed appeal. Shaped by customer feedback, premium features offer greater convenience and practicality. The new Taigun delivers European driving dynamics, superior comfort, and uncompromising 5-star safety.

PUNE, 08 APRIL 2026

Skoda Auto Volkswagen India Private Limited (SAVWIPL) today announced the start of production of the new Volkswagen Taigun at its state-of-the-art plant in Pune. The new Taigun reinforces the Group's 'Make in India, for India and the world' vision, combining high levels of localisation, precision manufacturing, and a deeper on-ground understanding of Indian customers. The new Volkswagen Taigun builds on the strong foundation laid by its predecessor with striking new design elements that deliver a bold and refreshed appeal. The latest iteration of Taigun delivers an edgy new design with premium features. The vehicle is built for India's versatile driving conditions while staying true to Volkswagen's DNA of European driving dynamics, superior comfort, and uncompromising 5-star safety. Commenting on the development, Piyush Arora, Managing Director & CEO, Skoda Auto Volkswagen India Private Limited, said, "The start of production of the new Volkswagen Taigun underscores the maturity of our world-class manufacturing ecosystem in India. Our Indian manufacturing facilities are geared to deliver global-quality vehicles with high levels of localisation, enabling us to respond quickly to what customers demand in India and in export markets. The Taigun stands as a perfect example of this approach, engineered in line with Volkswagen's global benchmarks

and produced in India with a sharp focus on efficiency, quality, and safety. As we roll out the new Taigun, we are further solidifying India's position as a strategic production and export base for the Group." Nitin Kohli, Brand Director, Volkswagen India, said, "Since its launch, the Taigun has been instrumental in strengthening the brand's SUV strategy. It has played a pivotal role in bolstering our product portfolio for discerning Indian buyers and their aspirations. The new Taigun is central to our strategic plan for the model line-up that will drive meaningful growth. The start of production for the new Taigun at our Chakan facility is a moment of great pride for us. It continues to signify our commitment to the Indian consumers who choose to own premium German-engineered products. We are certain the new Taigun will build on the success of its predecessor and elevate customer experience." Since its debut in 2021, the Volkswagen Taigun has earned a strong reputation for dynamic performance, refined comfort, and robust safety, establishing itself as a trusted choice in India and global markets. Over 143,000 units of the Volkswagen Taigun have been produced in India already, with around 30 percent of total production exported to markets around the globe. With production now underway, the new Volkswagen Taigun is set to further strengthen the brand's SUV portfolio with a fresh offering that blends design, practicality, comfort, and performance.

Fire breaks out in Mumbai high-rise; no injuries, five rescued

MUMBAI: (APR 8)

A fire broke out in a 20-storey residential building in the Goregaon (East) area of Mumbai on Wednesday evening, officials said, adding that nobody was injured. The blaze

was confined to part of the eighth floor of Emerald No. 1, Royal Palms Estate, on Aarey Road, officials stated. Five people were rescued safely, and over 20 others were moved to a refuge area after the blaze erupted, according to officials.

EDITORIAL

Suriname President Passes Away:

A Profound Loss for the Global Indian Diaspora

THE FINAL COUNTDOWN: KERALA, ASSAM, AND PUDUCHERRY PREPARE FOR THE BALLOT

Public campaigning for the April 9 Assembly elections in Kerala, Assam and Puducherry concluded on Tuesday and voting will take place in a single phase across all three regions — 126 seats in Assam, 140 in Kerala, and 30 in Puducherry. The results will be declared on May 4. In Kerala, the incumbent LDF led by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan is seeking a third consecutive term. No alliance has achieved such a feat in the State, but the LDF mounted an audacious campaign premised on a claim that 'there is no alternative' to the LDF. The emergence of the BJP — it won its first Lok Sabha seat in the State in 2024 — as a notable force in the State has further confused the Kerala electorate. Each of the three formations has accused the other two of having an understanding beneath the open posturing. The UDF is attempting to convert the momentum that it gained in the Lok Sabha and local body elections into an Assembly victory. The LDF is counting on its 10 years of welfare governance. The Congress has replicated its model of guarantees covering key vote blocs such as college students and women. The party managed to resolve the internal disputes over ticket distribution, but senior leaders are angling for the Chief Minister's post, counting their chickens before they hatch. The CPI(M) had to contend with at least four of its senior leaders leaving the party and contesting as UDF candidates.

In Assam, the campaign has been dominated by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who is seeking a second term and a third for the BJP-led NDA. He has formulated a strident version of anti-Muslim rhetoric, Hindutva, and indigenous identity politics and welfare schemes, particularly the Orunodoi direct benefit transfer to around 40 lakh women. Other promises by the BJP are measures against illegal encroachment, implementation of the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, a Uniform Civil Code excluding tribal areas, and two lakh government jobs. The campaign concluded with the Congress responding in kind to Mr. Sarma's highly personalised campaign against Congress's campaign leader Gaurav Gogoi. Mr. Sarma has been alleging that Mr. Gogoi has links with Pakistan. The Congress alleged that Mr. Sarma's wife holds three passports — the UAE, Antigua and Barbuda, and Egypt — and may be preparing to flee in the event of defeat. A six-party alliance led by the Congress is fighting on an uneven battlefield in Assam. In Puducherry, an NDA government led by All India N.R. Congress (AINRC) leader N. Rangasamy has been in power since 2021. With only 30 seats, the personal standing of individual candidates could play a bigger role in the outcome than grand politics in the Union Territory.

The sudden death of Chandrika Prasad Santokhi on March 30 has come as a profound emotional shock to many. It is not merely a national loss for Suriname, but one that resonates deeply among Indian-origin communities across the Caribbean, South America, and beyond. His life and leadership symbolized the enduring connection between diaspora identity and global statesmanship, making his passing particularly poignant and reflective for millions who trace their roots to the Indian subcontinent.

Santokhi belonged to a distinguished tradition of Indian-origin leaders who rose to prominence far from their ancestral homeland while preserving deep cultural roots. This illustrious lineage includes visionary figures such as Cheddi Jagan of Guyana, Basdeo Panday of Trinidad and Tobago, and Anerood Jugnauth of Mauritius. Each of these leaders demonstrated how cultural identity and modern governance could co-exist harmoniously, inspiring generations within and beyond their nations.

Their journeys proved that the Indian diaspora could not only adapt but also lead with distinction in diverse multicultural societies. During Santokhi's tenure as President of Suriname from 2020 to 2025, relations between India and Suriname strengthened considerably across cultural, economic, and diplomatic dimensions. High-level engagements marked this golden period of bilateral ties.

The historic visit of President Droupadi Murmu to Suriname, Santokhi's own official visit to India, and his warm meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi reflected a deepening strategic partnership. These interactions went beyond protocol; they fostered genuine goodwill and opened new avenues for cooperation in trade, energy, and cultural exchange. Following his passing, Prime Minister Modi publicly expressed heartfelt grief, describing Santokhi as a valued friend of India and underlining the importance of his role in fostering strong bilateral ties.

Santokhi was a proud torchbearer of Indian values and heritage. His ancestors had arrived in Suriname in the 19th century as indentured labourers from Bihar, part of the larger wave of Indian migration

that shaped the cultural fabric of the Caribbean and South America. Like countless others, they carried with them not just their labour but an entire civilizational legacy. Santokhi spoke Bhojpuri fluently and remained deeply connected to Indian traditions throughout his life. His very name—Chandrikaprasad Santokhi—echoed the linguistic and cultural legacy of his forebears, serving as a living link between the plains of Bihar and the lush landscapes of Suriname. His presidency offered several visible and memorable expressions of this identity.

When he took the oath of office on July 16, 2020, the ceremony was necessarily modest due to the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet it became unforgettable for its symbolic depth. Santokhi recited sacred Sanskrit mantras and shlokas with solemn reverence, presenting Indian spiritual traditions on a national stage for the first time in such a prominent manner. This gesture not only honoured his roots but also highlighted Suriname's broader ethos of multicultural acceptance, tolerance, and mutual respect among its diverse ethnic groups.

Despite facing serious economic challenges, including high inflation, debt burdens, and the lingering effects of the pandemic, Santokhi pursued bold reforms aimed at long-term stability and sustainable growth. His government entered into a comprehensive agreement with the International Monetary Fund, emphasizing fiscal discipline, transparency, and structural reforms. These difficult but necessary steps gradually steered Suriname toward economic recovery, restored investor confidence, and enhanced the country's financial credibility on the global stage.

Santokhi's pragmatic approach balanced immediate hardships with a clear vision for a more resilient future. Throughout his presidency, Santokhi maintained a particularly close and affectionate relationship with Suriname's Indian-origin population, which constitutes roughly 27% of the country's citizens. He actively participated in cultural and religious festivals, including Diwali, and Holi.

During his tenure, Diwali gained increased official recognition, with national celebrations and public holidays that

brought communities together in joyous harmony. His ability to bridge governance with authentic cultural representation strengthened social cohesion and gave renewed confidence and pride to diasporic communities, both in Suriname and abroad. In 2023, Santokhi was conferred the prestigious Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award, one of India's highest recognitions for overseas Indians. This honour acknowledged not only his political achievements but also his consistent efforts in preserving and promoting Indian heritage, language, and values in distant lands. The award was a powerful affirmation of the Indian government's commitment to celebrating the global Indian diaspora.

His passing also invites deeper reflection on the broader tradition of Indian-origin leadership worldwide. Cheddi Jagan, for instance, was among the first leaders of Indian descent to head a government outside the Indian subcontinent. Born to parents from Uttar Pradesh's Basti district, he played a crucial role in shaping Guyana's post-independence political identity through his commitment to social justice and democracy. Similarly, Basdeo Panday became Trinidad and Tobago's first Indian-origin Prime Minister in 1995, earning widespread respect for his sharp intellect and oratory skills, and affectionately nicknamed the "Silver Fox." Anerood Jugnauth, with ancestral roots in Uttar Pradesh's Ballia district, served multiple terms as Prime Minister and later as President of Mauritius, leaving behind a legacy of political stability, economic development, and social harmony.

These leaders shared a common thread: they preserved their linguistic, cultural, and religious traditions while advancing democratic governance and inclusive development in their adopted nations. Santokhi stood firmly within this proud lineage, contributing his own significant chapter to this inspiring global narrative.

Today, Indian-origin leadership continues to shape global politics in meaningful ways. Figures such as Guyana's President Mohammed Irfaan Ali, former Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, and Mauritius Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth carry forward this rich tradition with distinction. Even in re-

cent years, Rishi Sunak's tenure as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom exemplified the remarkable global reach of the Indian diaspora, with ancestral roots tracing back to Punjab before migration to East Africa and eventually Britain. Santokhi's legacy rests on three enduring pillars: an unwavering commitment to the rule of law, dedication to pragmatic economic reform, and passionate advocacy for multicultural harmony.

"He was a proud man and the most important leader of Bhojpuris of the world. Under his leadership, Suriname witnessed greater recognition of cultural diversity, with Indian festivals celebrated at the national level, reflecting a broader embrace of pluralism and unity in diversity. His sudden death marks the end of an important era, but his life and achievements continue to inspire," says Ajit Dubey, President of President of International Bhojpuri Conference.

Chandrika Prasad Santokhi demonstrated convincingly that cultural pride and effective global leadership are not mutually exclusive but mutually reinforcing. For Indian-origin communities worldwide, his remarkable journey serves as a powerful reminder of their potential to contribute meaningfully to their adopted nations while staying deeply rooted in their ancestral heritage.

India, along with the global community, would do well to honour his contributions by continuing to nurture this proud tradition of diaspora leadership. In remembering Santokhi, we celebrate not just one man, but the enduring spirit of resilience, cultural continuity, and enlightened statesmanship that defines the best of the Indian diaspora.



VIVEK SHUKLA

Assembly Elections: The Litmus Test of Democracy and Emerging Power Equations

The ongoing assembly elections in five states have brought Indian politics to a boiling point. From Kerala to Assam, West Bengal to Tamil Nadu, and the Union Territory of Puducherry, political activity has reached its peak. Amid the roar of rallies, a shower of promises, and sharp exchanges of allegations and counter-allegations, this festival of democracy has now reached a decisive turning point. Every political party is in the arena with its agenda, manifesto, and strategy, striving to win over voters.

This election is not merely about forming governments; it is a referendum on the performance of the past five years and a defining moment that will shape the political future. Across these five states, a total of 824 assembly seats and approximately 174 million voters are involved. This is not just a numbers game but a political battlefield connected to 116 Lok Sabha seats, which could significantly influence national politics. The election schedule is equally interesting: voting in Assam, Kerala, and Puducherry will take place on April 9, Tamil Nadu on April 23, and West Bengal in two phases on April 23 and 29. The results will be declared on May 4, making it clear where public confidence lies.

This election scenario is complex and multi-dimensional. While ruling parties are highlighting development work, welfare schemes, and slogans like "double engine government," the opposition is aggressively raising issues such as unemployment, inflation, social inequality, and administrative failures. The contest is no longer just for power but has evolved into a competition of ideologies, policies, and development models.

West Bengal has emerged as the focal point of national

attention, where the political temperature is at its highest. In the 294-seat assembly, around 64.4 million voters will decide the outcome. In the last election, the Trinamool Congress secured a sweeping majority, while the BJP emerged as the principal opposition. This time, the contest has intensified further. The Trinamool Congress is banking on its "Bengal model," women empowerment schemes, and regional identity, whereas the BJP is emphasizing "double engine governance" and issues like infiltration. Employment, corruption, and administrative transparency are also central to the discourse. Analysts believe this will be a neck-and-neck contest—on one side is Mamata Banerjee's political legacy, and on the other, the BJP's opportunity to expand in eastern India.



Assam's election is equally significant. In its 126-seat assembly, around 22.5 million voters will play a decisive role. The key question is whether the BJP can return to power for a third consecutive term or if the Congress and its allies can stage a comeback. Under Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, the BJP is focusing on development, infrastructure, and security. Meanwhile, the opposition is targeting the government on issues like CAA-NRC, unemployment, and regional identity. The active involvement of national leaders has further elevated the importance of this election, which could impact the balance of power in the Northeast.

In South India, Tamil Nadu and Kerala present distinct political landscapes. In Tamil Nadu, Dravidian politics continues to dominate, limiting the role of national parties. In the 234-seat assembly, around 56.7 million voters will cast their votes. The DMK alliance, which won the last election, is again campaigning on its "Dravidian model," social justice, and welfare schemes. The AIADMK alliance, on the other hand, is attacking the government over inflation, electricity issues, and local concerns. The entry of actor Vijay's party has introduced a new dimension, especially among young voters.

Kerala, with its 140 seats and 27 million voters, has tradition-

ally been known for alternating governments. However, the Left Front made history by winning consecutive terms in the last election. If it secures a third term, it will mark a new political chapter. The Left is emphasizing its achievements in health, education, and social welfare, while the Congress-led UDF is focusing on inflation, unemployment, and corruption. The BJP is also trying to expand its presence, making the contest increasingly triangular.

Though small, Puducherry's politics is highly sensitive and decisive. In its 30-seat assembly, around 944,000 voters will participate. Coalition politics plays a crucial role here, where even minor vote differences can determine power. The NDA, which won the last election, aims to retain control, while the Congress and regional parties are striving for a comeback.

A common factor across all these states is that vote share does not always translate directly into seat share. Even a small difference in votes can lead to a large difference in seats. This is why political parties are strengthening their strategies down to the booth level. Social media and digital campaigns have added a new dimension, where the battle of narratives is being fought not only on the ground but also online. In terms of issues, no single factor dominates this election. Employment, inflation, education, healthcare, agrarian distress,

and women's empowerment are emerging differently across states, adding to the complexity and intrigue of these elections.

Politically, these elections are being seen as a semifinal for the 2029 Lok Sabha elections. With 116 parliamentary seats at stake, the results could reshape national politics. If the BJP maintains its hold in Assam, performs strongly in West Bengal, and strengthens its presence in South India, its national position will become more robust. Conversely, if the Trinamool Congress retains power in Bengal, Mamata Banerjee could remain a central figure in opposition politics. A Left victory in Kerala would energize leftist politics, while continuity of the DMK in Tamil Nadu would reinforce the trajectory of Dravidian politics.

Overall, these elections are not just a contest between political parties but a true test of democracy. Voters may appear silent, but beneath that silence lies a deep process of reflection and decision-making. On May 4, when the results are announced, it will become clear who understood the aspirations of the people and who needs introspection. This grand festival of democracy will once again reaffirm that the ultimate power rests with the people—and their verdict alone determines the direction and destiny of the nation's politics.

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YOGESH KUMAR GOYAL
senior journalist

IS IT SO?

Poised upon the fragile edge of longing
for beauty, for becoming
O mind, mirrored in chambers of illusion,
what is it you truly behold?
A form or the fading echo
of a self you have forgotten?
In the unrest of thought's unceasing tides,
when inquiry begins to erode its own shore,
why does awareness dissolve
into a silence
that refuses even the shape of an answer?
"Is it so?"
not merely a question,
but a tremor of the soul,
adrift in the undercurrents of unknowing;
not doubt alone,
but a diaphanous veil
softly dimming the face of truth.
Eyes may see
yet remain untouched by vision;
words may fall upon the ear
yet never awaken meaning.
This is not living,
but a mirage
where meaning arrives only to vanish.
Beauty
is not the contour cast by a mirror,
but the quiet flame
kindled in the unseen.
Speech
is not the utterance of sound,
but the music of humanity
woven upon the loom of silence.
Wealth may crown the body with pride,
yet only virtue charts the course of life.
If affection is the sky,
empathy is the boundless beyond it.
Life
a universe slipping through a single drop
Time
a witness dissolving
within the brevity of a moment.
Therefore
let each instant be embraced as illumination
let the heart be shaped
in the likeness of compassion.
When truth begins to breathe within,
questions surrender into stillness;
the whisper "Is it so?"
unfurls into quiet knowing:
"It is."
And then
you are no longer merely human,
but the very essence of humanity
not a passing shadow cast by illusion,
but a living flame of the eternal.

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



15 IAS officers transferred in Haryana

CHANDIGARH: (APR 8)

The Haryana government transferred 15 IAS officers with immediate effect on Wednesday.

Among those who have been transferred are Vineet Garg, Chairman, Haryana State Pollution Control Board. He has been posted as the additional chief secretary to the government's printing and stationery department, relieving Raja Shekhar Vundru of the charge, a government order said. Ajay Kumar, Deputy Commissioner, Gurugram, has been transferred and posted as the deputy principal secretary-II to the chief minister against a newly-created post.

Cabinet clears bills to fast-track women's quota law

NEW DELHI: (APR 8)

The Union Cabinet is learnt to have cleared on Wednesday draft bills which seek to implement the Women's Reservation Act before the 2029 parliamentary polls and increase the number of Lok Sabha seats to 816 with 273 reserved for women.

Sources privy to the development said a meeting of the Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the draft bills for the amendments to the law, Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, more commonly known as the Women's Reservation Act.

While a Constitution amendment bill will tweak the Adhiniyam, another ordinary bill will amend the Delimitation Act -- to pave the way for redrawing of constituencies.

DIAGNOSIS DENIED, POWER UNCHECKED: WHEN WORDS TURN INTO WARNING SIGNS

BY DR. VYAKARNAM NAGESHWAR, GEOPOLITICAL ANALYST

Donald Trump's recent rhetoric is not just aggressive but increasingly unpredictable, raising concerns about behavioural patterns at the highest level of power. The sharper question now is directed at Robert F. Kennedy Jr., whose silence highlights a deeper issue of accountability among those positioned closest to influence. There are moments in public life when political rhetoric demands to be taken at face value. And then there are moments when it demands to be examined more closely. What we are witnessing now appears to be the latter. Donald Trump has never been a conventional communicator. His style has always been combative, disruptive, and deliberately provocative. But what stands out in the current phase is not just aggression—it is the frequency, the intensity, and the unpredictability of his words. Consider his remarks on Mohammed bin Salman. This was not the language of



calibrated diplomacy. It was personal, unscripted, and openly hierarchical. In another instance, his comments directed at Iran moved beyond strategic signalling into territory that sounded impulsive and excessive. The choice of words matters because, in geopolitics, language is not merely expression—it is policy in motion.

WHEN LANGUAGE SHIFTS, SIGNALS SHIFT

In global politics, words are never casual. They are read as signals, interpreted as intent, and often treated as precursors to action. When that language turns inconsistent or impulsive, it

complicates diplomacy and increases the risk of miscalculation. On the domestic front, his repeated attacks on Kamala Harris have crossed from political criticism into personalised derision. That shift is significant. It reflects not just a political contest, but a pattern of communication that is increasingly unrestrained. The question, therefore, is not whether Trump is being Trump. The question is whether this pattern deserves a different kind of scrutiny. And that brings us to Robert F.

Kennedy Jr.

Kennedy has built a reputation as someone who chal-

lenges systems, interrogates evidence, and insists that science must guide public discourse. His work, including Vax-Unvax: Let the Science Speak, places him firmly in the space of health accountability. Which is precisely why his silence in this context is drawing attention. If patterns of behaviour begin to raise questions about cognitive or neurological stability, is it enough to look away? In public health, the answer is straightforward. Early signals matter. Patterns matter. And intervention matters.

THE SILENCE AROUND POWER

Public health frameworks emphasise early recognition of behavioural patterns. In politics, however, similar concerns are often sidestepped due to loyalty or convenience. This creates a gap between what is observed and what is acknowledged. Leadership, however, operates in a far more complex space. There are political loyalties, strategic calculations, and institutional hesitations. But none of these eliminate the core issue: when behaviour at the high-

est level appears increasingly erratic, who is responsible for raising the flag? This is not about diagnosis from a distance. It is about recognising patterns that are visible in plain sight. Because the implications are not confined to one individual. They extend to global stability. When a leader's words become unpredictable, the systems that depend on those words—diplomacy, deterrence, negotiation—also become uncertain. That uncertainty is the real story. And the silence around it may well be the bigger concern.

THE MISSING PROTOCOL ON LEADERSHIP FITNESS

Unlike other high-stakes professions, political leadership does not operate under a transparent, standardised system for evaluating cognitive fitness. There are no universally accepted benchmarks, no periodic disclosures, and no independent oversight mechanisms. This absence leaves critical questions dependent on public debate rather than institutional process—often after concerns have already intensified.



Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Records Impressive Growth in FY 2025-26

MALIGAON, 08 APRIL, 2026:

The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) is pleased to report a significant increase in passenger traffic and revenue of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR) for the financial year 2025-26. Recognised globally as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the DHR holds a unique place among India's historic mountain railways. The iconic "Heritage Train" continues to attract tourists and railway enthusiasts from across the world with its breathtaking scenic beauty, rich legacy and distinctive travel experience. Recent passenger friendly initiatives, improved services and tourism focused efforts have further enhanced its appeal, strengthening its position as one of the most cherished and sought after heritage rail journeys. In FY 2025-26, passenger footfall increased to 2.15 lakh, while earnings rose to over Rs. 25 crore. This represents a growth of approximately 17.72% in passenger traffic and 14.71% in revenue over the previous year, highlighting the

growing popularity and sustained demand for the iconic "Heritage Train" while also contributing significantly to local employment and tourism-driven economic growth in the Darjeeling region.

The impressive growth has been achieved through a multi-pronged approach adopted by NFR, focusing on enhancing passenger experience while preserving the historic charm of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway. Key initiatives include curated tourism experiences, tailored services, strengthened stakeholder engagement and continuous improvements in infrastructure and passenger comfort. The rising patronage of the DHR is contributing significantly to the local economy by supporting livelihoods and promoting tourism across the Darjeeling hills.

The performance of FY 2025-26 reaffirms the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway's status as one of India's most treasured railway legacies and a symbol of rich cultural and engineering heritage. NFR remains committed to preserving this iconic marvel for future generations.

Panic spreads as 3,700 names deleted in Bengal village after SIR adjudication

Tension is palpable among residents of Malda's Mahisbathani village, where 3,700 names out of 27,000 voters have been struck off in the post-SIR adjudication process. As per electoral rules, voters whose names have been deleted can approach the appellate tribunal, but they will not be able to participate in the first phase of voting.



The fate of nearly 4,000 voters in a village in West Bengal's Malda hangs in the balance, with the voter list for the first phase already frozen, leaving them -- like lakhs of others across the state -- unable to cast their vote on April 23. Their future as voters now remains uncertain, as the Supreme Court-mandated Ap-

pellate Tribunal will decide their status if they choose to appeal. Whether they will be able to vote in the next elections -- the 2029 Lok Sabha polls -- will be decided by the tribunal once it begins functioning in full capacity. Tension is palpable among residents of Malda's Mahisbathani village, where 3,700 names out of 27,000 voters have been struck off in the post-SIR adjudication process.

process. Notably, the panchayat includes several villages such as Kadamtali, Rahutgram, Baluola, and Sugabathan. In the run-up to previous elections, these villages would come alive -- party offices would open, walls would be painted with slogans, and the area would be filled with symbols, with candidates campaigning amid drums and fanfare. But this time, that vibrancy is missing, leaving residents disheartened. Residents of Kadamtala expressed disappointment, saying that elections usually bring a festive atmosphere to the village, but that is absent this time. "Around 400-500 names have been removed from each booth in that village. In Booth No. 23 alone, 428 names have been deleted. So who will vote this time?" asked one resident. Similarly, a resident of an adjacent village said that names have been

removed from multiple booths there as well. People are living in fear, unsure of the consequences of being unable to vote. He also alleged that most of those whose names were deleted in his village are Muslims. Political parties in the area are deeply concerned over the removal of 3,700 names from the panchayat, claiming it has impacted their vote base. Congress candidate Bhupendranath Haldar told the media that names were deliberately removed through a conspiracy, preventing people from exercising their voting rights, which he said is not a good sign for democracy. The Trinamool Congress made similar allegations, claiming that the Election Commission has removed names across the state, causing hardship to ordinary people, though efforts are being made to restore names on the voter list.

AAP crackdown: 501 raids, 202 gangsters arrested in Punjab

The coordinated action, carried out with the Anti-Gangster Task Force, also involved verification drives and preventive action against suspects.

The operation led to the arrest of 202 individuals during the day-long crackdown, the party said in a post on X, highlighting the state

government's continued action against organised crime.

According to official information cited in the post, the campaign was launched earlier this year under the directions of Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann as part of a sustained effort to dismantle gangster networks and curb organised crime in the state. Police teams from all dis-



tricts, in coordination with the Anti-Gangster Task Force (AGTF), have been conduct-

ing simultaneous raids and intelligence-based operations across Punjab since the launch of the drive. On Day 77, apart from the arrests, authorities also acted against proclaimed offenders and other suspects during the course of the operation. The raids were carried out at multiple locations identified through prior mapping and intelligence inputs.

Meanwhile, the anti-drug campaign 'Yudh Nashian Virudh' continued alongside the anti-gangster operations. On the same day, 112 alleged drug smugglers were arrested, with police recovering 5.8 kg of heroin, a quantity of in-toxicant tablets and capsules, and cash believed to be linked to drug proceeds. Officials said the twin drives are part

of a broader strategy to target organised crime, narcotics networks, and their financial and logistical support systems across the state. The latest action comes amid continued efforts by Punjab Police to intensify enforcement through coordinated, large-scale operations aimed at disrupting criminal networks and maintaining law and order.

Haryana to Aid UPSC, HPSC & Judicial Prelims Qualifiers: CM Saini

CHANDIGARH, APRIL 8:

Haryana Chief Minister Sh. Nayab Singh Saini announced that youth who clear the preliminary examinations of UPSC, HPSC, and Judicial Services will be provided financial assistance by the state government to support their further coaching expenses. e stated that under the "Mukhyamantri Yuva Pratibha Protsahan Yojana", economically weaker candidates will receive financial assistance ranging from ₹25,000 to ₹70,000.

The Chief Minister was addressing a felicitation ceremony for newly selected candidates of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) held here today. On this occasion, Cooperation Minister Sh. Arvind Sharma, Chief Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister Sh. Rajesh Khullar, Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister, Sh. Arun Kumar Gupta, Commissioner and Secretary of the Information, Public Relations and Languages Department, Dr. Amit Kumar Agrawal, OSD to the Chief Minister, Sh.

Coaching to be provided through evening classes in government universities
Thinking, planning, and decisions of an IAS officer determine the direction of India's future: CM Nayab Singh Saini
Felicitation ceremony held for Haryana's newly selected candidates in UPSC examination

Bharat Bhushan Bharti and Sh. Rakesh Sandhu, Additional Director (Administration) Smt. Varsha Khangwal, Director, Shahid Samark Dr. Kuldeep Saini, along with other senior officers, were present. Sh. Nayab Singh Saini said the present government had committed in its manifesto to launch the Mukhyamantri Yuva Pratibha Protsahan Yojana, and fulfilling that commitment, financial assistance will now be provided to economically weaker youth who clear the preliminary stages of UPSC, HPSC, and Judicial examinations. He further detailed that students from families with an annual income up to ₹1 lakh will receive ₹70,000, those with income up to ₹1.80 lakh will receive ₹60,000, those with income between ₹1.80 lakh and ₹3 lakh will receive ₹50,000, and those with income between ₹3 lakh and ₹5 lakh will receive ₹25,000. The Chief Minister



also announced that coaching for UPSC and HPSC examinations will be provided in all government universities of the state through evening classes, ensuring that more youth can benefit and succeed in these competitive exams. Sh. Nayab Singh Saini said that the thinking, planning, and decisions of an Indian Administrative Service officer determine the direction of the nation's future, as their decisions impact the lives of millions. He congratulated the newly selected candidates for their remarkable

achievement, stating that success in such examinations is not easy, as lakhs of candidates appear, but only those with unwavering focus and dedication succeed. He especially encouraged Akansh Dhull, who secured the 3rd rank in the UPSC Civil Services Examination, along with 77 successful candidates from Haryana. He emphasized that the Indian Administrative Service is not merely a job but a responsibility, a duty, and a platform for public service. He advised the newly selected officers that every deci-

sion they make should consider the hopes of the poorest citizens and its impact on them. The Chief Minister highlighted that Haryana's youth have excelled not only in civil services but also in fields like medicine, engineering, management, and technology, reflecting the abundance of talent in the state. He emphasized that the government is committed to providing the right opportunities and direction. He added that over the past eleven and a half years, a transparent and fair system has been established in Haryana, restoring confidence among youth. The state government has provided more than 1.8 lakh government jobs purely on merit, without favoritism or corruption. He cautioned the newly selected officers about future challenges such as administrative complexities, political pressures, and adverse social situations, stating that those who overcome these

obstacles will be true administrators. Sh. Nayab Singh Saini emphasized that the Constitution should be the guiding force for every IAS officer, promoting equality, justice, liberty, and fraternity, and urged them to rise above all forms of discrimination and serve the public selflessly. He said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi, India is progressing rapidly and gaining global recognition, moving steadily towards the goal of a developed nation. He described young officers as the driving force behind this transformation. Commissioner and Secretary, Information, Public Relations and Languages Department, Dr. Amit Kumar Agrawal, welcomed the Chief Minister and the newly selected candidates. He stated that Haryana is not only strong in sports but also leading in intellectual development.

Iranian oil heads to India after China detour, ending 7-year import freeze

India is set to receive a shipment of crude oil from Iran this week, with the cargo arriving after a tanker initially headed towards China was rerouted to Indian shores, ending a seven-year hiatus in imports from Tehran after Washington temporarily lifted sanctions on Iranian oil to stabilise strained global supplies.

Shipping data from the London Stock Exchange Group (LSEG) and Kpler show that the Curaao-flagged very large crude carrier Jaya has been chartered to deliver Iranian crude to India's east coast. The vessel's journey suggests a rerouting, having initially moved towards Southeast Asian waters, reportedly with China as a potential destination, before altering course towards India. The cargo has been procured by Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), which has not yet issued an official response to queries on the development. In a further indication of renewed flows, another tanker, Jordan, is also signalling India as its discharge point, news agency Reuters reported. India last imported Iranian oil in May 2019, when US sanc-

tions forced refiners to halt purchases despite Tehran being a key supplier offering favourable terms. Since then, Indian refiners have relied heavily on alternative sources, including West Asian producers and the United States. The latest development comes against the backdrop of supply disruptions triggered by the conflict in West Asia, which has affected shipments through critical chokepoints such as the Strait of Hormuz. The tightening supply scenario has prompted both policy flexibility in Washington and renewed buying interest among Indian refiners. Although the shipment is set to arrive after the US and Iran agreed to a ceasefire, the purchase was made earlier this month. The oil ministry last week confirmed that domestic refiners had begun sourcing crude from Iran amid the evolving situation. It also indicated that payment mechanisms for such transactions are not currently posing a hurdle, suggesting that temporary sanctions relief has enabled smoother trade flows. Experts view the return of Iranian crude to India's import basket as a potential relief for refiners grappling with volatile prices and supply uncertainty.

India's renewable growth strong; hurdles mostly technical

BY APARNA BOSE

NEW DELHI: (Apr 8) While India's progress in the renewable-energy sector has been "tremendous", the hindrances in large-scale implementation of solutions are more "technical than actual", a top government official said on Wednesday. Talking to PTI Videos, Suman Chandra, Director at the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, said there are technical problems of transmission not having kept pace with the solar and

wind deployment, and that the government is solving it. "Our progress has been tremendous. We sit at a capacity of 250 gigawatts and we are the third-largest employer of renewable energy. Hindrances are more technical than actual. We have technical problems of transmission not having kept pace with the solar and wind deployment, and that is being solved as we go forward," Chandra told PTI on the sidelines of the Responsible Renewable Energy Summit held here on Wednesday.

BEIRUT, APR 8 (AP)

Israeli strikes hit several commercial and residential areas in central Beirut without warning on Wednesday, hours after a ceasefire was announced in the US-Israeli war with Iran. Lebanon said at least 112 people were killed and hundreds were wounded in what was one of the deadliest days in the latest Israel-Hezbollah war. US President Donald Trump told PBS News Hour that Lebanon was not included in the deal because of the Lebanese militant Hezbollah group. When asked about Israel's latest strikes, he said, "That's a separate skirmish." Israel had said the agreement does not extend to its war with the Iran-backed Hezbollah, although mediator Pakistan said it does. The fleeting sense of relief among Lebanese after the ceasefire announcement turned into panic with Israel's military called its largest coordinated strike in the current war, hitting more than 100 Hezbollah targets within 10 minutes in Beirut, southern Lebanon and the eastern Be-

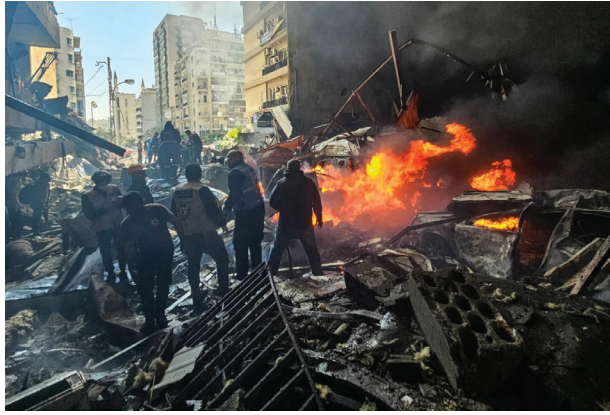
kaa Valley. Black smoke towered over several parts of the seaside capital, where a huge number of people displaced by war have taken shelter. Explosions interrupted the honking of traffic on what had been a bustling, blue-sky afternoon. Ambulances raced toward open flames. Apartment buildings were struck. Associated Press journalists saw charred bodies in vehicles and on the ground at one of Beirut's busiest intersections in the central Corniche al Mazraa neighbourhood, a mixed commercial and residential area. Using forklifts, rescue workers removed smoldering debris and sifted through ruins for survivors. There was no sign of Hezbollah launching strikes against Israel in the first couple of hours after the attacks. In response to the attacks on Lebanon, Iran later Wednesday said it will once again halt the movement of oil tankers in the Strait of Hormuz, the country's state-run media reported.

A deadly midday barrage

Central Beirut has been targeted before, but not by so many strikes at once and in

Israel strikes Beirut

More than 100 killed and hundreds wounded.. Says Iran truce doesn't apply to Lebanon



the middle of the day. Israel had rarely struck central Beirut since the outbreak of the latest Israel-Hezbollah war on March 2 but has regularly struck southern and eastern Lebanon and Beirut's southern suburbs. Lebanon's Minister of Social Affairs, Haneed Sayed, in an interview with The Associated Press condemned Israel's

wide range of strikes, calling it a "very dangerous turning point." "These hits are now at the heart of Beirut â€¦ Half of the sheltered (internally displaced people) are in Beirut in this area," she said, adding that she had just driven by areas hit. She said Lebanon's government is ready to enter into negotiations with Israel for an end to hostilities,

an offer that the Lebanese president previously made. Israel has not responded. "There are calls and efforts being made as we speak," Sayed said. Prime Minister Na waf Salam in a statement accused Israel of escalating at a moment when Lebanese officials were seeking to negotiate a solution, and of hitting civilian areas in "utter disregard for the principles of international law and international humanitarian law - principles it has, in any case, never respected." Lebanese President Joseph Aoun called the Israeli attacks "barbaric." Lebanon's health ministry said that along with the 112 killed, at least 837 were wounded, warning that this is not the final count. Israel's military said it had targeted missile launchers, command centers and intelligence infrastructure. It accused Hezbollah fighters of trying to "blend

into" non-Shiite Muslim areas beyond their traditional strongholds. Residents and local officials denied that the buildings hit were military sites. "Look at these crimes," said Mohammed Balouza, a member of Beirut's municipal council, at the scene of a strike in Corniche al Mazraa. An apartment building behind a popular shop selling nuts and dried fruit had been hit. "This is a residential area. There is nothing (military) here." An Israeli warning and a defiant Hezbollah. As the smoke rose Wednesday, Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz warned Hezbollah leader Naim Kasseem that "his turn will come." In 2024, Israel killed Hezbollah's previous leader, Hassan Nasrallah, with an airstrike. Katz called Wednesday's strikes the largest blow against Hezbollah since the attack that caused paggers used

by hundreds of its members to explode almost simultaneously in September 2024. Before the new strikes, a Hezbollah official told the AP that the group was giving a chance for mediators to secure a ceasefire in Lebanon, but "we have not announced our adherence to the ceasefire since the Israelis are not adhering to it." He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to comment publicly. The Hezbollah official said the group will not accept a return to the pre-March 2 status quo, when Israel carried out near-daily strikes in Lebanon despite a ceasefire being nominally in place since the last full-blown Israel-Hezbollah war ended in November 2024. "We will not accept for the Israelis to continue behaving as they did before this war with regards to attacks," he said. Hezbollah had fired missiles across the border days after the United States and Israel attacked Iran on Feb. 28, sparking a regional war. Israel responded with widespread bombardment of Lebanon and a ground invasion. The Israeli military chief of staff, Lt Gen.

Eyal Zamir, said the attacks are to protect Israel's northern residents, who have come under heavy fire. Since the war started and before Wednesday's attacks, Israeli airstrikes killed more than 1,530 people in Lebanon, including more than 100 women and 130 children. The Israeli military has said it has killed hundreds of Hezbollah fighters. More than 1 million people have been displaced in Lebanon. Early Wednesday, after the Iran ceasefire was announced and before Israel struck, many displaced people sleeping in tents on the streets of Beirut and the coastal city of Sidon had begun packing their belongings in preparation to return home. Families at a sprawling displacement camp on Beirut's waterfront later expressed confusion and despair. "We can't take this anymore, sleeping in a tent, not showering, the uncertainty," said Fadi Zaydan, 35. He and his parents had prepared to head back to the southern city of Nabatieh. Instead, they decided to wait things out in Sidon, a bit closer to home.

JD Vance to lead team for peace talks with Iran in Pak, 1st round on April 11

The White House is moving quickly from battlefield pressure to diplomacy, with US President Donald Trump dispatching a high-level team led by Vice President JD Vance to Pakistan for the first round of US-Iran talks this Saturday.



Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said President Trump is dispatching his Iran negotiating team, led by Vice President JD Vance, to Pakistan for talks, with the first round scheduled for Saturday. Leavitt added that Vance will be joined by senior Trump advisers Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff for the negotiations in Islamabad. "The first round of those talks will take place on Saturday morning local time, and we know we look forward to those in-person meetings," Leavitt told reporters. The announcement signals a shift from confrontation to diplomacy, even as the White House maintains a hard public line. Leavitt said Iran's ability to arm proxy groups in the region has been significantly curtailed following US and Israeli strikes that began on February 28. "Iran can no longer distribute weapons to its proxy groups," she said, framing the military campaign as having reshaped the balance ahead of negotiations. The White House also made clear that reopening the Strait of Hormuz remains a top priority for Washington, with no room for restrictions or tolls on global shipping. Leavitt said Presi-

dent Trump wants the waterway fully open to oil tankers and commercial traffic. "The immediate priority of the president is the reopening of the strait without any limitations, whether in the form of tolls or otherwise," she said. Leavitt added that the US has already seen an uptick in vessel movement through the strait, even as uncertainty continues over security and access. She declined to say who currently controls the strategic waterway, which handles roughly 20% of the world's seaborne oil and LNG flows, making it one of the most critical chokepoints in global energy supply. Leavitt also revealed that earlier proposals from Tehran had been outright rejected. "The Iranians originally put forward a 10-point plan that was fundamentally unserious, unacceptable and completely discarded," she said, adding that it was "literally thrown in the garbage by Trump." However, she said a revised Iranian proposal presented on Tuesday has opened the door to talks. The new framework could now "align with our own, 15-point proposal" and serve as the basis for negotiations aimed at ending the conflict.

Iran won the war, Mojtaba Khamenei supervising everything: Supreme Leader's aide

The representative of the Iranian Supreme Leader in India emphasised that it was US President Donald Trump who 'surrendered' and accepted all of Iran's conditions for a ceasefire.



Iran Supreme Leader's representative in India asserted that Tehran was the "winner" of the war and scotched speculation over the health of Mojtaba Khamenei, saying he was supervising everything. In an exclusive interview with India Today, Dr Abdul Majid Hakeem Ilahi emphasised that it was US President Donald Trump who "surrendered" and accepted all of Iran's conditions for a ceasefire. The remarks come on a day the US and Iran reached a two-week ceasefire deal after a month of fighting, which has left over 2,000 dead. While announcing the truce, Trump said he received a 10-point proposal from Iran for an end to the war. In return, Iran has agreed to temporarily reopen the Strait of Hormuz, the vital corridor

through which one-fifth of the global oil and gas passes. A report in Axios claimed it was Mojtaba, who has remained out of public view since being named the Supreme Leader after the death of his father in US-Israeli strikes, who nudged his negotiators to move towards a deal. However, several experts doubted whether Mojtaba was calling the shots in Iran, as US and Israeli intelligence claimed he was "unconscious" and "unable to be involved in any decision making".

WHO WON THE WAR?

Dr Ilahi, however, asserted that Mojtaba was healthy. "We have a council under the leadership of the new Supreme

Leader, who is making decisions. Mojtaba is healthy and supervising everything," he said. He also declared Iran as the "winner" of the month-long war, which saw much of its senior leadership being wiped out in the missile barrage by the US and Israel. However, despite being pounded daily, Iran did not collapse and kept up a sustained region-wide retaliation. "The winner of this war is Iran because they (the US) accepted the conditions submitted by us. He (President Trump) is the one who surrendered," Dr Ilahi said. He also mocked Trump, underscoring that neither was there a regime switch nor had Iran's map changed.

ON HORMUZ, PAKISTAN

A key point in Iran's 10-point proposal was its control over Hormuz. It sought a provision allowing Iran to levy a transit fee on ships passing through the strait. In fact, as per some reports, Iran is already charging a \$2 million toll for the safe passage of ships. Dr Ilahi said it was important for Tehran to maintain control over the key waterway. "We want to have a very good relationship and friendship with all countries. We don't want to change anything. We should have control over the Strait. Our enemies should not be using it against us," he said. During the conflict, Iran allowed oil tankers of five "friendly" countries - India, Iraq, China, Russia, and Pakistan - to transit Hormuz. Shedding light on Pakistan's role as mediator between the US and Iran, Dr Ilahi underlined that Tehran did not seek any particular country's help. "We didn't ask any country to be a mediator between Iran and the US. Some countries have come and gathered to stop this war.

Hezbollah not part of ceasefire deal: Netanyahu vows to continue strikes in Lebanon

The Israeli military said it targeted over 100 Hezbollah command centres and military sites across Beirut, the Bekaa Valley, and southern Lebanon. Lebanon's health ministry reported 112 deaths and 837 injuries.



As tension across the Middle East refused to die down despite a ceasefire between the US and Iran earlier on Wednesday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Israel will continue striking Hezbollah in Lebanon despite the agreement with Tehran, asserting that the militant group is not covered under the peace plan. "The ceasefire with Iran will not include Hezbollah and Israel will continue to strike them," he said, signalling that military operations against the Lebanon-linked group would continue. As the ceasefire was announced on Wednesday morning, Israel launched its most intense wave of strikes on Lebanon since its conflict with Hezbollah began last month. The Israeli military said it targeted over 100 Hezbollah command centres and military sites across Beirut, the Bekaa Valley, and southern Lebanon, describing it as its largest coordinated attack. Lebanon's health ministry reported 112 deaths and 837 injuries. In a statement, Hezbollah condemned what it called Israel's "barbaric aggression" and said the at-

tacks underscored its "natural and legal right to resist the occupation and respond to its aggression". However, Netanyahu clarified for a second time in the day that Hezbollah was never a part of the ceasefire agreement, provisioning a two-week pause to military hostilities between the warring parties. "We accomplished together massive achievements," he stressed, "our fighters on the front, and you in the rear," he said, adding the "bottom line" of the campaign is that "Israel is stronger than ever, and Iran is weaker than ever". In a video address to the nation a day after the US-Iran ceasefire announcement, Netanyahu said the agreement was reached "in full cooperation" with Israel and stressed that Israel "was not notified at the last minute". He added that the ceasefire "is not the end," stating that Israel still has "more goals to achieve" and could pursue them "by agreement or renewing the fighting". Reiterating Israel's military posture, Netanyahu declared that Israel "is ready to return to fighting at any time," warning that "the finger is on the trigger".

North Korea fires ballistic missiles, dismisses Seoul's diplomacy hopes

South Korea's presidential Blue House convened an emergency National Security Council meeting on Wednesday, calling the earlier launches a provocation that violated UN Security Council resolutions, according to media reports. It urged Pyongyang to end such tests.



North Korea fired multiple ballistic missiles on Wednesday, adding to a launch a day earlier, South Korea's military said, extending a series of tests that have strained hopes in Seoul for easing tensions. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said North Korea fired an additional unidentified missile at around 2:20 pm (0520 GMT) on Wednesday from the Wonsan area towards waters off its east coast. Earlier on Wednesday, North Korea launched several unidentified short-range ballistic missiles also from near the same area, the JCS said. The missiles flew about 240 km (150 miles), it said, adding that South Korean and U.S. authorities were conducting a

detailed analysis. South Korea's military also said it had detected the launch of a suspected ballistic missile from near Pyongyang on Tuesday. South Korea's presidential Blue House convened an emergency National Security Council meeting on Wednesday, calling the earlier launches a provocation that violated UN Security Council resolutions, according to media reports. It urged Pyongyang to end such tests. The Japan Coast Guard said the latest missile fell into the sea about 10 minutes after launch. Tokyo said no missiles entered its territorial waters or exclusive economic zone. Pyongyang's actions "threaten peace and security in the region and the international

community," Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kihara said. According to South Korea's Yonhap news agency, citing military officials, the projectile launched on Tuesday was probably a ballistic missile that flew eastwards before showing signs of an abnormality in the early stage of flight and disappearing.

SOLID-FUEL SYSTEMS

The incidents mark North Korea's fourth, fifth and sixth ballistic missile launches this year, following two launches in January and a third in March. South Korea typically announces North Korean ballistic missile launches promptly, as such tests violate U.N. Security Council resolutions against the North's missile programme. Pyongyang rejects the U.N. ban and says it infringes its sovereign right to self-defence. The launches could reflect routine weapons development and may be linked "to ongoing engine and propulsion testing, including work on solid-fuel systems," said Kim Dong-yup, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul. Pyongyang has been seeking to upgrade its strike capability

with solid-fuel missiles that are often easier and safer to operate and require less logistical support than liquid-fuelled weapons.

HOSTILE ENEMY

Some analysts noted the latest launches followed a combative statement by North Korea indicating Pyongyang saw no shift in its hostile stance towards Seoul despite hopes of a thaw in relations. Jang Kum Chol, a senior official at North Korea's foreign ministry, said the South was engaging in wishful thinking if it thought Pyongyang was ready to see Seoul as anything other than an enemy. "The identity of the ROK, the enemy state most hostile to the DPRK, can never change with any words or conduct," Jang was quoted as saying by state media KCNA late on Tuesday, using the acronyms for the formal names of South and North Korea. The remarks contrasted with a North Korean statement on Monday, which said South Korean President Lee Jae Myung was "very fortunate and wise" to convey regret to Pyongyang for drone incursions earlier this year.

Hormuz control, uranium enrichment at core of Iran's 10-point US truce plan

Iran claimed a "historic victory" over the US and Israel after US President Donald Trump stepped back from threatened strikes and agreed to a two-week ceasefire. On its part, Tehran has also laid out a sweeping 10-point proposal that it says Washington has agreed to in principle.



However, conflicting and multiple versions of statements attributed to Iranian officials circulated in both Farsi and English and carried by state and semi-official media, with some clearly outlining the 10-point plan and others making broader political claims, including on uranium enrichment. Shortly after Trump's announcement on Tuesday night, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi tweeted that Tehran would halt its defensive operations if attacks against Iran stopped. He added that Iran's armed forces would coordinate safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz during the ceasefire, and noted that Tehran was reviewing a 15-point proposal from Washington. Araghchi also said the US had accepted

the "general framework" of Iran's own 10-point plan as a basis for negotiations. Also confirming the ceasefire, Iran's Supreme National Security Council said the US had suspended its "bombing and attack" campaign and accepted the two-week, "double-sided" ceasefire after being compelled by Tehran's military and political pressure. "Iran achieved a great victory and forced the criminal America to accept its 10-point plan," the Council said, claiming that Washington had agreed to key demands including regulating passage through the Strait of Hormuz, ending attacks on Iran and its regional allies, recognition of Iran's nuclear enrichment rights, lifting of sanctions, and withdrawal of US forces from the region. The Council further asserted that the US had been

pushing for a ceasefire for over a month, but Iran repeatedly rejected deadlines, choosing instead to continue the conflict until its objectives were met. "The war has thus continued until today, the 40th day," it said, adding that Tehran prioritised "the enemy's regret and desperation" and the removal of long-term threats. Despite the ceasefire, Iran signalled that hostilities are not fully over. It said the pause in fighting is conditional and tied to negotiations over the implementation of its proposal, warning that the battle could continue if its demands are not met. "This does not mean an end to the war and Iran will accept an end to the war only when, in view of Iran's acceptance of the principles envisaged in the 10-point plan, its details are also finalised in the negotiations," it said, adding, "Our hands remain upon the trigger, and should the slightest error be committed by the enemy, it shall be met with full force." Meanwhile, Trump told AFP that Iran's uranium would be "perfectly taken care of" under the deal, without elaborating on the mechanism.

WHAT'S IN IRAN'S 10-POINT PROPOSAL

- A US commitment to ensure no further acts of aggression against Iran
 - Continued Iranian control over the Strait of Hormuz
 - Acceptance of Iran's uranium enrichment rights
 - Lifting of all primary sanctions
 - Lifting of all secondary sanctions
 - Termination of all resolutions against Iran by the UN Security Council
 - Termination of resolutions by the International Atomic Energy Agency's Board of Governors
 - Payment of damages to Iran for war losses
 - Withdrawal of US combat forces from the region
 - Cessation of hostilities across all fronts, including Lebanon
- Tehran framed the ceasefire as a strategic pause rather than a conclusion to the conflict, stating that its "immense achievements" must be consolidated and that new regional equations should reflect "Iran's power and sovereignty."

TRAI Proposes Mandatory Voice-Only Plans to Cut Mobile Costs

BY SUNIL VEER

In a significant move aimed at reducing mobile expenses for millions of users, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has proposed a new set of guidelines that could make voice-only mobile plans more affordable and widely available. As per the draft proposal, telecom operators may soon be required to introduce dedicated voice-only recharge plans. These plans are intended specifically for users who do not rely on mobile data services, offering calling and SMS benefits at substantially lower prices compared to the currently

prevalent bundled packages. At present, most prepaid and postpaid plans come bundled with data services, effectively compelling even basic users to pay for internet access they may neither need nor use. TRAI's proposal seeks to address this issue by ensuring that consumers have the option to opt for simpler and more economical voice and SMS-only packs. The proposed move is expected to particularly benefit several sections of society, including senior citizens, rural populations, low-income groups, and individuals using basic or feature phones. By introducing such targeted plans,



the regulator aims to make mobile services more inclusive and cost-effective.

If the proposal is implemented, telecom companies will be obligated to offer

these voice-only options alongside their existing data-centric plans. This is ex-

pected to enhance consumer choice, improve pricing transparency, and allow users greater control over their mobile spending. Currently in the draft stage, the proposal is open for review and consultation. Once finalized, it has the potential to bring about a notable shift in the telecom sector by prioritizing affordability and aligning services more closely with the diverse needs of users. Bottom Line: If approved, TRAI's initiative could lead to significantly lower mobile bills and provide meaningful financial relief to a large segment of the population.

RBI Keeps Repo Rate Unchanged at 5.25%, Maintains Neutral Stance

MUMBAI, APRIL 8



The Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, Sanjay Malhotra, on Wednesday announced that the policy repo rate will remain unchanged at 5.25 percent, while the central bank continues to maintain a neutral monetary policy stance. Addressing the first monetary policy review of the current financial year, the Governor said the decision comes at a time when the global economy is facing unprecedented challenges, including heightened geopolitical tensions, the ongoing conflict in West Asia, and disruptions in global supply

chains. He noted that a temporary ceasefire in the West Asia conflict had been announced earlier in the day. Despite global uncertainties, he emphasized that India's macroeconomic fundamentals remain strong, supported by robust growth and relatively low inflation prior to the escalation of the West Asia crisis.

Markets Rally on U.S.-Iran Ceasefire; Sensex Surges Nearly 4% in Early Trade

MUMBAI, APRIL 8

Indian equity markets witnessed a sharp rally in early trading on Wednesday, buoyed by positive global cues and a steep decline in crude oil prices following the announcement of a temporary ceasefire between the United States and Iran. The benchmark BSE Sensex surged 2,775.73 points, or 3.71%, to reach 77,392.31 in early trade. Similarly, the NSE Nifty climbed 815.2 points, or 3.52%, to 23,938.85, reflecting strong investor sentiment across sectors. Among the 30 Sensex constituents, InterGlobe Aviation emerged as the top gainer, soaring nearly 10%. Other major gainers included Larsen & Toubro, Bajaj Finance, Adani Ports, Bajaj Finserv, and Mahindra & Mahindra. In contrast, Tech Mahindra was the only stock trading in the red during the session. A key driver behind the rally was the sharp fall in global oil prices.



es. Brent crude dropped 13.24% to \$94.80 per barrel after the U.S. and Iran agreed to a two-week pause in

military action and ensured safe passage through the strategically crucial Strait of Hormuz.

Market experts noted that the easing of geopolitical tensions has significantly reduced concerns about disruptions in global energy supply. Hariprasad K., Research Analyst and Founder of Livelong Wealth, said the ceasefire has removed a major overhang on global markets, leading to improved investor confidence. Echoing similar views, V.K. Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Investments Limited, stated that the ceasefire has "dramatically altered the near-term market scenario," adding that the sharp correction in crude prices is likely to support a bullish trend in equities. Global markets also reflected optimism. Key Asian indices, including South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225, China's SSE Composite Index, and Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index, were trading significantly higher. Meanwhile, U.S. markets ended on a flat note in the previous session. Investors are also closely watching the outcome of the Monetary Policy

Committee (MPC) meeting of the Reserve Bank of India, chaired by Governor Sanjay Malhotra, with the policy decision scheduled to be announced later in the day. On the institutional front, Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) remained net sellers, offloading equities worth ₹8,692.11 crore on Tuesday. In contrast, Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) provided support by purchasing stocks worth ₹7,979.50 crore, according to exchange data. In the previous trading session on Tuesday, the Sensex had risen 509.73 points, or 0.69%, to close at 74,616.58, while the Nifty gained 155.40 points, or 0.68%, ending at 23,123.65. Bottom Line: The ceasefire-driven easing of geopolitical tensions and falling crude oil prices have triggered a strong rally in Indian equities, boosting market sentiment and raising expectations of continued upward momentum.



Tata Motors Expands India's Most Comprehensive Electric CV Portfolio

Launches Tata Intra EV Pickup at an unmatched price of Rs. 11.95 lakh

NEW DELHI, APRIL 8

Tata Motors, India's largest commercial vehicle manufacturer, today strengthened its leadership in electric commercial mobility with the launch of the all-new Tata Intra EV Pickup. Expanding its electric small commercial vehicle portfolio, the new pickup brings together the proven strengths of the trusted Intra platform with a purpose-built electric architecture—delivering a dependable, high-earning solution for India's evolving cargo requirements. It will be available across Tata Motors' commercial vehicle dealerships nationwide, at an unmatched starting price of Rs. 11.95 lakh (ex-show-rooms).

momentum is being enabled by progressive Government policies and strong collaboration across customers, partners and suppliers, accelerating India's transition to cleaner and more sustainable mobility. Shaped by deep insights from real-world operations and engineered for demanding duty cycles, the Intra EV Pickup introduces electric capability into one of the country's most versatile pickups. It enables operators to move heavier loads, run longer routes and operate with greater confidence, while benefiting from lower operating costs and a reduced environmental footprint. Speaking about the Tata Intra EV Pickup, Mr. Pinaiki Haldar, Vice President & Business Head - SCVPU, Tata Motors Ltd., said, "The all-new Intra EV Pickup has been developed with a clear focus on earning capability and everyday usability, combining one of the highest payload capacities in its segment with strong performance, long range and high uptime, all at a segment-beating price. Its comfortable, crash-tested cabin, car-like driving dynamics and thoughtfully integrated features are designed to reduce fatigue and improve productivity across long operating hours. As adoption of cleaner technologies accelerates, Tata Motors remains committed to raising industry benchmarks and making electric cargo mobility a practical, confident choice for businesses."

MUFG Bank acquires 20% stake in Shriram Finance for ₹39,618 crore

NEW DELHI, APRIL 8

MUFG Bank has acquired a 20% equity stake in Shriram Finance Limited (SFL) by subscribing to 47.11 crore equity shares through a preferential issue, marking the largest cross-border investment in India's financial services sector. The shares were allotted at ₹840.93 apiece, taking the total transaction value to approximately ₹39,618 crore. The deal received all necessary regulatory clearances,

including approval from the Competition Commission of India. With this investment, MUFG Bank—part of Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group—will hold a 20% stake in SFL on a fully diluted basis, strengthening its footprint in India's fast-growing financial sector. SFL said the partnership would help enhance access to diversified and cost-effective funding, while also enabling adoption of global best practices in governance and risk management. The company expects the capital infusion

to accelerate growth across its key segments, including MSME and retail lending. MUFG, on its part, said the investment reflects its long-term commitment to India and aims to support financial inclusion and sustainable economic growth by leveraging its global expertise and network. The deal is seen as a significant milestone, deepening strategic collaboration between the two institutions and boosting investor confidence in India's NBFC space.

Lyfe Hotels launches Mediterranean rooftop restaurant 'HI-Lyfe' in Bhubaneswar

HYDERABAD, APRIL 8

Lyfe Hotels has launched 'HI-Lyfe', a Mediterranean-themed rooftop restaurant and bar in Bhubaneswar, marking its third dining destination in the city. Set against panoramic skyline views, HI-Lyfe offers a Mediterranean-inspired menu featuring cuisines from Italy, Morocco, Turkey, Lebanon and Spain. The offerings include grilled dishes and shareable plates such as harissa prawns, Turkish lamb koftas, Lebanese mezze platters, wood-fired flat-



bread and patatas bravas. The bar menu complements the dining experience with Mediterranean-themed cocktails, including signature drinks like Medina Flame, Zagora Orchard and Nomad's Trail, alongside lighter options with floral and citrus notes. Designed as an open-air rooftop space, the restaurant blends ambient lighting, curated music and a relaxed yet vibrant setting, catering to both casual gatherings and high-energy evenings. Sonal Sahoo, co-founder of Lyfe Hotels, said the concept reflects evolving dining preferences, with a growing demand for global flavours and shared experiences. HI-Lyfe is set to open in April 2026 and is expected to emerge as a key dining and nightlife destination in the city.

How the GST Created a Formalisation Cascade

MEGHA PATNAIK

India's informal sector generates roughly 45% of GDP, per the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI, 2025). Low-income countries typically collect just 10-14% of GDP in taxes, far below the 30-40% in high-income nations (Besley and Persson 2014). For India, the stakes exceed lost revenue: policy distortions sustain a dual economy, where small, unproductive firms persist alongside a formal sector (La Porta and Shleifer 2014). Exemptions for tiny firms—such as pre-GST thresholds below Rs. 1.5 crore turnover—discourage growth and productivity investments (Bento and Restuccia 2017). Value-added tax (VAT) addresses this elegantly. Buyers claim credits only with invoices from registered suppliers, who in turn need credits from their own providers. This creates private incentives for documentation demands throughout the chain, making the tax self-enforcing. The Kelkar Task Force (2004) championed this for India's GST. de Paula and Scheinkman (2010) modeled "formalization cascades," while Pomeranz (2015) showed experimentally in Chile that credits deter evasion. But does this propagate in emerging economies? My new re-



search (Patnaik 2026) provides the first empirical evidence: post-2017 GST, formalization cascades from large firms upstream.

Pre-GST Fragmentation vs. GST's Design

Before July 2017, India's indirect taxes layered chaotically: central excise on manufacturing, state VAT on intra-state sales, and non-creditable Central Sales Tax (CST, 2-4%) on interstate deals. A manufacturer buying out-of-state inputs paid CST without credit; excise then hit the full value (including embedded CST); state VAT piled on top. Effective rates often exceeded statutory sums. Firms responded by avoiding interstate trade, duplicating facilities across states, or sourcing from unregistered suppliers to dodge taxes. GST unified this into a destina-

tion-based tax with seamless credits for all inputs—goods, services, intra- or interstate. Credits require suppliers to register and report sales, linking buyers and sellers directly (Gadenne, Nandi, and Rathelot, forthcoming). Large formal firms, hungry for credits, now pressure suppliers to formalize.

Firm-Level Evidence from Difference-in-Differences

Using CMIE Prowess data on 12,024 firms (2013-2022), I exploit pre-GST cascading exposure in a difference-in-differences setup. I compare input tax credits and material costs for firms variably hit by cascades. The median firm paid indirect taxes equal to 8.2% of raw material costs (IQR: 0.9-16.9%). High-exposure firms gained strongest incentives to demand formal invoices

post-GST. High-exposure firms boosted documented inputs by 6% and cut indirect taxes by 8%. Effects concentrate in private Indian manufacturers, rife with informal procurement; government firms and foreign subsidiaries, audit-heavy, show none. Figure 1's event-study plots confirm: pre-GST coefficients hover near zero; post-GST effects grow steadily over five years, roughly doubling by year five. This rules out one-off reclassifications, revealing sequential cascades—firm A demands from B, B from C, upstream. Figure 1. Effect of Input Tax Credit Exposure on Indirect Taxes Years Relative to GST (2017). Source: Patnaik (2026). Notes: Coefficients from event-study regressions with firm fixed effects and in-

dustry-year fixed effects. Reference: k=-1 (FY 2016-17, pre-GST); k=0 (FY 2017-18, post-GST). Shaded 95% confidence intervals (firm-clustered SEs). Macro Propagation and Efficiency Gains Macro data pins cascades to large Prowess firms—already formal, credit-motivated. Their share of national GST collections dropped from 46% to 30%, signaling faster growth from smaller, newly formal suppliers. These giants pull suppliers into the net; registered suppliers then pull their upstream providers. The effect matches Pomeranz (2015)'s Chile audit findings initially but grows larger, favoring self-enforcing VAT over audits. GST equalized effective tax rates (indirect taxes/raw materials) across firms: their spread fell 72%. Uneven burdens distort inputs and misallocate resources, as in Hsieh and Klempner (2009) for India/China. Firms now choose suppliers by productivity, not tax quirks. My estimates understate impacts, as Prowess covers pre-GST firms only—post-GST entrants likely widened equalization further. GST thus ignited cascades, shrinking India's dual economy. Self-enforcing taxes prove powerful for formalization in informality-heavy nations.

US court allows Adanis' plea for pre-motion hearing in SEC case

NEW DELHI, APRIL 8

A US court has accepted a plea by lawyers representing Gautam Adani and Sagar Adani seeking a pre-motion conference to dismiss a complaint filed by the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). The US District Court for the Eastern District of New York said it had received the defendants' request and granted it, directing both parties to coordinate and schedule the conference. Counsel for the Adanis informed the court they plan to move for dismissal of the SEC's complaint by April 30. They also outlined key grounds for

dismissal, including lack of personal jurisdiction, claims being extrajurisdictional, and allegations being too vague to be actionable. The defence argued that the case involves non-US entities and activities conducted outside the United States, placing it beyond the SEC's legal scope. They also contended that the complaint fails to establish any concrete legal violation. According to the filing, a 2021 \$750 million bond issuance by Adani Green Energy Limited was conducted outside the US under regulatory exemptions, with only a small portion later resold to certain US-based investors.

HOW ARTEMIS II CREW TRAINED TO OBSERVE AND PHOTOGRAPH MOON



The Artemis II crew has now broken the record — previously held by Apollo 13 — for the farthest distance any humans have ever travelled from Earth. The crew also completed a flyby of the moon's far side and sent back some amazing images of the lunar surface.

I am a professor, an explorer and a planetary geologist, specializing in the study of meteorite impact structures. I am also a member of the First Artemis Lunar Surface Science Team and have been supporting NASA in developing the geology training for Artemis astronauts.

The flyby was particularly exciting as it offered a stunning new perspective of the lunar surface. It also provided the first operational test of a new science team and evaluation room at Mission Control in NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas.

And it was fantastic to see the Artemis II crew conduct observations and take photographs of geological landforms on the moon's surface — putting their training with me at the Kamestastin Lake impact structure, on the territory of the Mushuau Innu First Nation in northern Labrador, into practice.

A new view of the moon

Unlike the Apollo missions, that orbited at approximately 110 kilometres above the surface of the moon, Artemis II was at a much higher altitude — around 6,545 kilometres above the lunar surface.

This greater distance allowed the crew to view the moon as a full disk, including regions near both the North Pole and South Pole.

The moon, viewed from Earth and by Artemis II crew. T marks the Tycho crater; O marks the Orientale crater. (GR Osinski using NASA images)

The crew was also able to take targeted photographs of various geological landforms on the lunar surface as part of the Artemis II science program. One of the primary goals of these investigations is to inform future missions, including the planned first journey back to the lunar surface with Artemis IV as soon as 2028.

A close-up view taken by the Artemis II crew of Vavilov Crater on the rim of the older and larger Hertzprung basin. The right portion of the image shows the transition from smooth material within an inner ring of mountains to more rugged terrain around the rim. The image was captured with a

handheld camera at a focal length of 400 millimetres, around the far side of the moon. (NASA)

A new science team

One of the highlights of NASA's livestream during the mission has been the direct conversations between two good friends: Canadian astronaut Jeremy Hansen and science officer Kelsey Young.

Science officers are the senior flight controllers responsible for lunar science and geology objectives during Artemis missions.

They act as the main interface between the wider Mission Control team and the Artemis II science team, which is located in a totally separate room called the Science Evaluation Room (SER).

Both science officers and the evaluation room are brand new for NASA's Artemis program; they did not exist during the Apollo program.

We have been developing the structure and defining roles in the SER for the first Artemis mission to the moon's surface. But there is nothing like a real mission to test and refine how the science team should work.

Artemis science officers, from left, Kelsey Young, Trevor Graff, and Angela Garcia stand at the new SCIENCE console in the Mission Control Center at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston. (NASA/Josh Valcarcel)

A crash course in lunar geology

If you listened in to NASA's livestream and heard any of the geological descriptions the astronauts were giving, I hope you were impressed — I certainly was!

Their knowledge is a testament to the geology training that NASA has provided the crew in the months and years since they were selected for the Artemis program.

Artemis II Pilot Victor Glover, Commander Reid Wiseman, and Mission Specialist Jeremy Hansen configure their camera equipment shortly before beginning their lunar flyby observations. (NASA)

First, the crew participated in a crash course in lunar geology called "Lunar Fundamentals." This weeklong, classroom-based training offered them the basics to understand lunar geology and the processes that shape the moon's surface — primarily impact

cratering and volcanism.

However, as somebody who has been teaching for more than 20 years, I know the best place to learn about geology is in the field. That's why NASA also took the Artemis astronauts to a series of field sites in the United States, Iceland and Canada.

Early in their training, in September 2023, three of the crew members — Hansen, Christina Koch and back-up crew Jenni Gibbons — undertook geology training at the Kamestastin Lake impact structure in northern Labrador. Then the entire crew travelled to Iceland in August 2024.

Kamestastin Lake training expedition

I was honoured to play a leading role in the Kamestastin Lake training. This location was chosen because it offers a similar landscape to the surface of the moon.

Gordon Osinski (centre) explains the processes that formed the 28-kilometre diameter Kamestastin Lake impact structure to Canadian Space Agency astronauts Jeremy Hansen (left) and Jenni Gibbons (right). (Canadian Space Agency)

The Kamestastin Lake crater was formed approximately 35 million years ago by the impact of an asteroid between one and two kilometres in diameter. Not only are rocks like breccias and impact melt rocks produced by the asteroid's impact well preserved here, but the crater also formed in a rock called anorthosite — the exact same rock that makes up the lunar highlands.

In addition to participating in the geology training itself, I was largely responsible for the logistics of this expedition.

Kamestastin is in a remote part of northern Labrador, so we flew in via Twin Otter aircraft and established a temporary base camp. From tents to pots and pans and food for 16 people, there was a lot to take care of. We then used zodiac boats to travel around the crater.

Heading back to basecamp after a wet day in the field at Kamestastin Lake. Clockwise from left: Gordon Osinski (Western University), André Gariepy (CSA), Christina Koch (NASA), Jenni Gibbons (CSA), Raja Chari (NASA), and Jeremy Hansen (CSA). (G. Osinski)

Sacred Innu stories of the moon

Kamestastin Lake and the surrounding region are on the territory of the Mushuau Innu First Nation. A key part of my role in the training was liaising with the First Nation, which has been following Hansen on this historic mission.

A highlight for me was sitting around the fire on one of our last nights with Innu Guardians from Natuashish and hearing about how sacred the moon is to them — as it is to many Indigenous Peoples around the world.

They also told us the story of Tshakpeesh, an Innu hero who teaches that with courage, hard work and perseverance, one can always overcome difficulties.

As the Artemis II crew return from its journey, I am struck by the parallels. The crew has shown the world what can happen if we work together towards a common goal with courage, hard work, perseverance and humility.

GLOBAL SEMICONDUCTOR REVENUE SET TO CROSS \$1.3 TRILLION IN 2026: GARTNER

New Delhi: Global semiconductor revenue is projected to exceed \$1.3 trillion in 2026, marking the fastest growth in over two decades, according to a report released on Wednesday.

The report by research firm Gartner said the industry is expected to register a 64 per cent growth in 2026 amid strong demand from artificial intelligence (AI) processing, data centre infrastructure and rising memory prices.

"Amid high demand for AI processing, data centre networking and power, and memory price inflation, the semiconductor industry is projected to achieve a third consecutive year of double-digit growth in 2026," said Rajeev Rajput, Senior Principal Analyst at Gartner.

The report further highlighted that total semiconductor revenue is expected to rise from \$805.3 billion in 2025 to \$1,320.2 billion in 2026, and further to \$1,554.5 billion in 2027.

Memory revenue is forecast to nearly triple to \$633.3 billion in 2026 from \$216.3 billion in 2025, largely due to inflation in memory chip prices.

As per Gartner's analysis, Dynamic Random Access Memory (DRAM) prices are estimated to increase by 125 per cent and NAND flash prices by 234 per cent in 2026, with any significant price correction unlikely before late 2027.

The report noted that AI semiconductors are expected to account for around 30 per cent of total industry revenue in 2026 and will remain the primary growth driver.

Spending by hyperscalers on AI infrastructure is projected to grow by more than 50 per cent, boosting demand for AI accelerators, including GPUs and custom chips.

However, the report also cautioned that rising memory prices could delay demand in non-AI segments until 2028.

"Technology suppliers should prepare for higher prices in the first half of 2026, followed by moderating increases through the rest of the year," Rajput said, advising CIOs and IT leaders to be cautious about long-term supply agreements with unfavourable pricing terms.



One Of Earth's Deadliest Volcanoes Is Slowly Reloading With Magma: Study

A powerful underwater volcano near Kyushu is slowly refilling with magma, according to a new study, raising fresh questions about the future risks posed by one of Earth's most explosive volcanic systems.

The Kikai Caldera triggered the massive Akahoya eruption around 7,300 years ago, the largest known eruption of the Holocene period. Scientists estimate it released about 160 cubic kilometres of material, far exceeding eruptions such as Novarupta in 1912 and Mount Pinatubo.

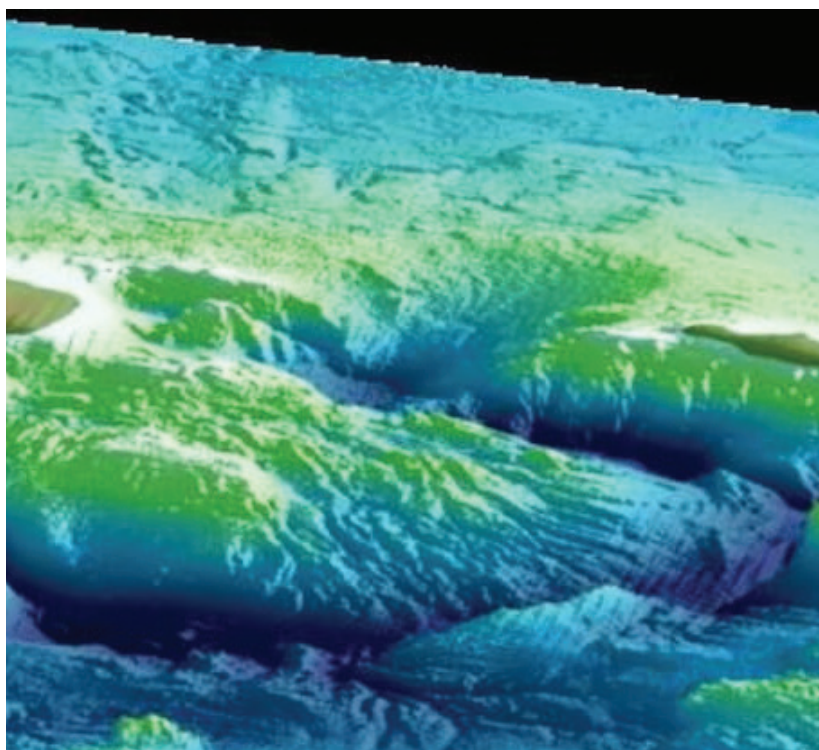
New Magma Chamber Identified

Researchers from Kobe University and the Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology conducted detailed seismic surveys beneath the caldera. Their findings reveal a large magma chamber, believed to be the same source that powered the ancient eruption.

However, the magma now present appears to be newly injected rather than leftover material. Scientists also confirmed the gradual formation of a lava dome over the past 3,900 years, indicating ongoing volcanic activity.

Lessons for Global Volcano Monitoring

Experts say the findings could help improve understanding of eruption cycles in large calderas worldwide, including Yellowstone and Lake Toba.



Although the volcano has only produced minor eruptions in recent decades, its history suggests it is capable of far more destructive events. With dense populations now living in the region, even a smaller eruption could have serious consequences.

The study, published in Communications Earth and Environment, highlights the importance of monitoring magma build-up to improve early warning systems for future eruptions.

NASA Shares "Heavenly View" Of Milky Way Taken By Artemis II Crew

The Artemis II astronauts on Tuesday (April 7) captured a breathtaking view of our galaxy, the Milky Way, stretching across deep space. The image, which was taken after a successful lunar flyby, shows a starfield filled with thousands of stars and shining clouds of dust.

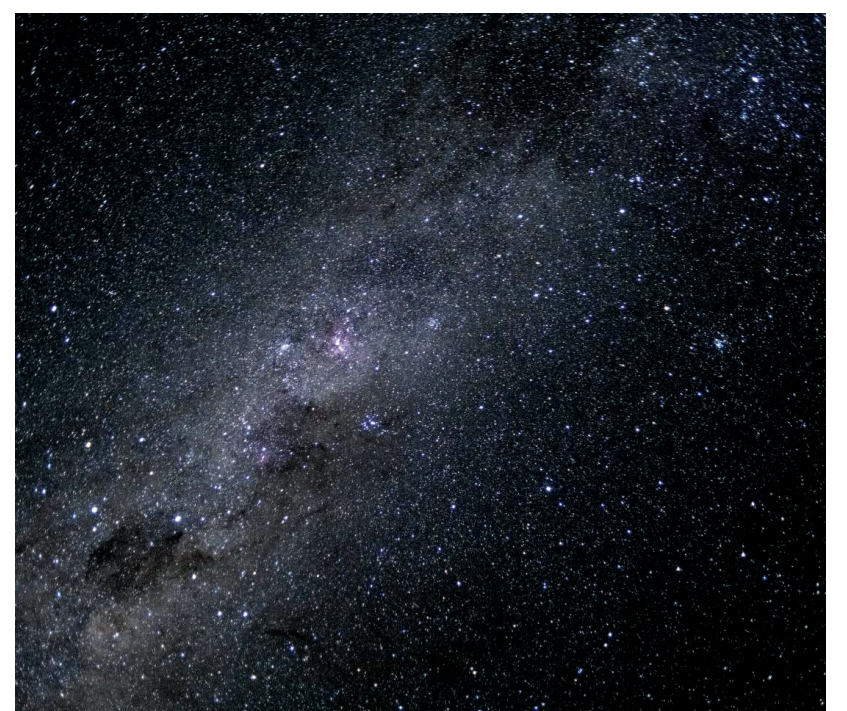
"The Milky Way's elegant spiral structure is dominated by just two arms wrapping off the ends of a central bar of stars," NASA wrote as the caption, describing the magical Milky Way. "Spanning more than 100,000 light-years, Earth is located along one of the galaxy's spiral arms, about halfway from the center."

Also read | US-Based Firm Lures Employees Back To Office With \$2000 Wellness Stipend

In the image, countless stars sparkle sharply due to the absence of Earth's atmosphere. The serene image captures the beauty of the universe beyond our planet.

"I've been living this for 5 days, I went back in time to my Natural Sciences and Geography classes, they make me very happy! grateful to be able to live this," one user wrote in the comment section.

"We're all made from the same star stuff. Thanks to the Artemis crew and NASA for bringing all of humanity together on this historic mission! So inspiring to space camp kids like me!" another user wrote.



One simply called it a "heavenly view". The Artemis II crew flew around the Moon, capturing images of the lunar surface and Earth. The team of astronauts, consisting of Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, Christina Koch and Jeremy Hansen, has shared stunning images from their lunar flyby, showcasing Earth from near

the Moon and dramatic Earthset moments.

The astronauts took turns looking out Orion's windows, capturing photos of the Moon's far side and Earth's crescent shape. They observed the lunar surface from new angles, providing valuable insights into lunar geology.



Batters, Rashid, Prasad star as GT edge DC by one run in a humdinger

IPL 2026
'He is ready for next big step': Harbhajan praises Sooryavanshi



NEW DELHI: Former India spinner Harbhajan Singh praised Rajasthan Royals' teenage opener Vaibhav Sooryavanshi after his fearless performance against Mumbai Indians' talismanic Jasprit Bumrah in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 clash at the Barsapara Stadium in Guwahati on Tuesday.

The 15-year-old stunned everyone when he smashed a six on the very first ball of Bumrah's over, a rare sight against one of the best bowlers in the world. Harbhajan, who was on commentary duty, was left amazed by the youngster's confidence and aggressive mindset, even saluting him for the effort.

Harbhajan also highlighted that such confidence at a young age is a strong sign of a bright future and shows that Vaibhav is prepared to take on bigger challenges ahead. "This battle between Vaibhav Sooryavanshi and Jasprit Bumrah was one to show who is better. Vaibhav played an amazing shot on the first ball of Bumrah's over in the RR-MI match. This boy is ready to dominate. Don't go by his age. Yes, he is 15 years old, but he is ready for the next big step," Harbhajan told Jio Hotstar.

NEW DELHI
Gujarat Titans edged Delhi Capitals by one run in a humdinger finish in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026, which will be replayed in the minds of everyone inside the Arun Jaitley Stadium for a long time to come. David Miller very nearly pulled off the impossible, but the run out of Kuldeep Yadav on the last ball led to one of the great IPL finishes going in GT's favour, as they got their first win of IPL 2026.

Fifties from a returning Shubman Gill, Jos Buttler, and Washington Sundar had powered GT to 210 for 4, a total that looked competitive but gettable. Buttler was back to his devastating best with the bat by hitting a 27-ball 52, laced with three fours and five towering sixes. Gill, back in action after a muscle spasm in his neck ruled him out in the last game, was elegant in collecting the majority of his runs through leg-side to top-score with 70 off 45 balls, laced with four boundaries and five sixes.

He also shared a commanding 104-run partnership with Sundar, who hit his first IPL fifty via a 32-ball 55, studded with six boundaries and two sixes. For DC, Lungi Ngidi changed the complexion at the back end with his slower balls to end up with 1-24 in his four overs, even as the rest of his bowling counterparts had an economy rate above eight.

But Miller had been extraordinary -- arriving at the crease with Delhi still some distance from the target, he retired hurt on 12 due to an injured left hand. When he came back, boundaries came in clusters off his bat. Miller ended up at 41 not out off 20 balls, but it wasn't enough to give DC a win, as they ended up at 209/8.

The pivotal moment came with two runs needed off two balls: Miller turned down a single off the penultimate ball, gambling on finishing it himself rather than trusting Kuldeep with the equation. Prasad, with nerves of steel, denied him the winning finish with a short, slower ball, as Kuldeep was run out by a sharp throw from Jos Buttler, leaving Miller and DC heartbroken.



KL Rahul had given Delhi every reason to believe with a fluent 92 off 52 balls, laced with 11 fours and four sixes. But Rashid Khan had done the bulk of the damage with the ball through figures of 3-17 to keep GT alive in the game, as they eventually won the match in a dramatic fashion. Sai Sudharsan got GT's innings moving with a clip and a backfoot drive through backward point off Mukesh Kumar, but holed out cheaply to the pacer after chopping onto his stumps. That brought Buttler to the crease, and his vintage version duly arrived.

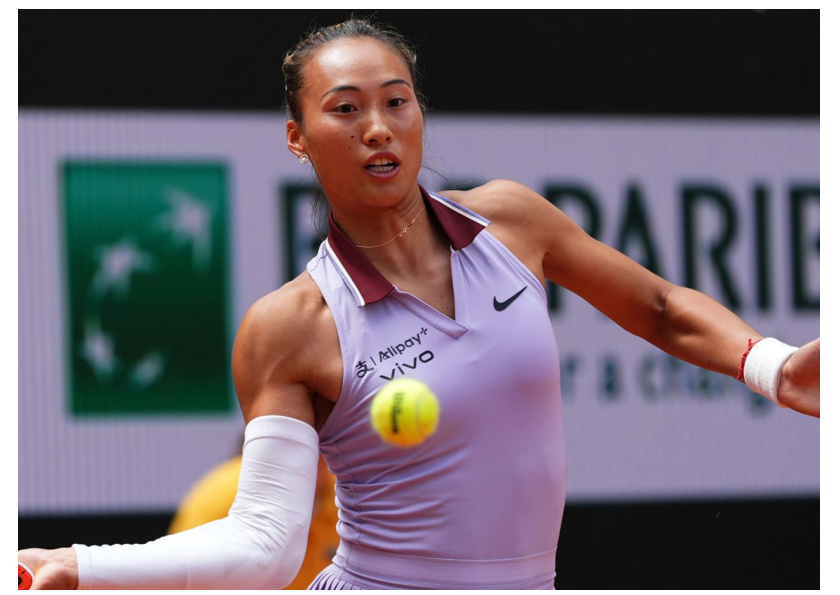
He lofted Mukesh for six, went inside-out against Axar for four and six, and then made Mukesh's third over a feast -- a scoop over fine leg, a flat six down the ground, a lofted drive over extra cover, as 23 runs came off it.

Buttler eventually reached fifty in 24 balls, before Kuldeep's short ball, skidding through low as he went for the pull, castled him. Gill, who had watched from the other end with quiet satisfaction, then found his partner in Sundar. Their 104-run partnership was full of attacking shots and elegant timing at its core -- Sundar pulling three consecutive short balls from Vipraj Nigam for boundaries,

including a no-ball that added a free hit, before Gill dispatched a full toss flat over the bowler's head. Gill brought up his fifty in 33 balls and kept accelerating, pulling and lofting Kuldeep for a brace of sixes, before Ngidi's slower ball ended his stay at 70. Washington brought up his first IPL fifty off 33 balls before miscuing to mid-off. A brace of boundaries from Glenn Phillips took GT to exactly 210. It was a good total - though the 58 runs from the last six overs, with eight wickets in hand, lingered as a question.

Delhi's pursuit began brightly - Pathum Nissanka smashed three fours off Siraj in the first over, timing each drive with an unhurried elegance. Rahul found his rhythm quickly - a pick-up flick off Rabada, a six over long leg, and then Nissanka demolished Ashok Sharma's final power-play over for 23 runs, including a flat six over mid-off and an inside-out drive over cover off the slower ball.

Prasidh had Nissanka holing out for 41, but Rahul shifted gears entirely -- a nonchalant loft over Prasidh's head, and then a six over long-off. A pull past square leg and a cut behind point helped Rahul register a magnificent 29-ball fifty and break free from his lean run.



Zheng Qinwen withdraws from WTA Stuttgart Open due to injury; Top four in fray

STUTTGART

China's Zheng Qinwen has withdrawn from next week's WTA 500 event in Stuttgart due to injury, the tournament organisers announced on Wednesday. The main draw of the Stuttgart Open will be held from April 13 to 19 and will involve some of the world's top players.

Zheng's withdrawal from the Stuttgart Open means her clay-court debut of the 2026 season will be delayed. Alexandra Eala of the Philippines, currently ranked world No. 46, will replace Zheng Qinwen in the main draw, reports Xinhua.

In a statement, the Stuttgart Open said: "We wish Qinwen a speedy recovery and hope to see her back on the court in Stuttgart very soon."

Zheng's most recent tournament appearance came at the WTA 1000 Miami Open in March, where she lost 6-3, 6-4 to world No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus in the fourth round and missed out on a place in the quarterfinals.

Known as the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix, the Stuttgart Open was held on indoor hard courts from 1978 to 2008. Held a few weeks before the French Open at Roland Garros, the Stuttgart Open has

been contested on indoor clay courts since 2009. The state-of-the-art Porsche Arena in Stuttgart, Germany, has hosted this tournament since 2006. The event has a total commitment of \$1,206,446, and the singles main draw will include 28 direct entries, while the doubles draw will have 16 teams competing. This year's event will have the world's top four-ranked players -- Aryna Sabalenka, Elena Rybakina, Iga Swiatek, and Coco Gauff.

Other Top 10 players set to return to Stuttgart are the two-time Grand Slam runner-up Jasmine Paolini (No. 7), the 19-time WTA winner Elina Svitolina (No. 8) plus Mirra Andrejeva (No. 10), one of the 2025 season's biggest risers. Jelena Ostapenko, the 2017 French Open champion, will be back competing in the Porsche Arena as the title holder.

Barbora Krejickova, the winner of the Grand Slams in Paris (2021) and at Wimbledon (2024), and Qinwen Zheng will be continuing their comebacks in Stuttgart after injury. The circle of favourites also includes the world No. 11 Ekaterina Alexandrova, together with Linda Noskova. One week ago, the world No. 13 reached the semifinals of the renowned WTA 1000 event in Indian Wells.

Nirbhay Soin wins men's singles title in ITF



LACKNOW

IC-82680P Major Nirbhay Singh Soin has made the entire organisation proud with his outstanding achievement at the ITF Masters "Friends Cup" Tennis Tournament, where he clinched the Men's Singles 30+ title after a series of high-intensity matches.

In the semifinal, he was part of a thrilling and highly competitive encounter that kept spectators on the edge of their seats. Facing a strong opponent, he displayed remarkable grit, stamina, and experience to secure victory in a marathon match lasting over three and a half hours, winning 6-4, 5-7, and 10-6 in the decider tie-break. His aggressive play in the final moments and ability to hold composure under pressure were truly exemplary.

What makes this achievement even more inspiring is that Major Soin is a Type 1 diabetic and competes while being

on a full-time insulin pump. Despite this demanding medical condition, he continues to perform at an elite level, setting a powerful example of resilience, discipline, and mental strength. His journey is a testament to the fact that physical challenges can be overcome with determination and the right mindset.

His success has also brought significant media attention and recognition, with coverage and photographs featured in leading newspapers such as Hindustan Times, Times of India, Navbharat Times, and Dainik Jagran. This not only highlights his personal achievement but also brings great visibility and pride to the organisation.

Major Nirbhay Singh Soin's accomplishment is not just a sporting victory, but a source of deep motivation for all -- reinforcing the spirit of perseverance, courage, and excellence. Truly inspirational!

World No. 1s Wang, Sun lead China in World Team Championships in London

BEIJING

China announced on Wednesday its roster for the upcoming ITTF World Team Table Tennis Championships Finals in London, with top-ranked Wang Chuqin and Sun Yingsha among those selected in the squad for the mega event.

The 10 players to represent China are Wang Chuqin, Lin Shidong, Zhou Qihao, Xiang Peng, and Liang Jingkun in the men's team, and Sun Yingsha, Wang Manyu, Chen Xingtong, Kuai Man, and Wang Yidi in the women's team. On the men's

side, Wang and Lin qualified directly through past results or world ranking, while Zhou and Xiang secured their places through the team trial. The coaching group decided to give the final spot to 29-year-old Liang, reports Xinhua.

Wang Hao, head coach of the men's team, said the decision was made after discussion within the coaching group and consultation with qualified players and experts.

"Liang's experience, stability, and performance in crucial matches at the World Championships and Asian Championships are obvious. Though



he didn't achieve good results after the Asian Championships due to injury, his form began improving after rehabilitation," Wang said.

Speaking of the team world championships campaign, Wang said, "The competition is always intense on the men's side, and we have seen the rapid progress of players from other teams. We cannot take the title for granted and need to go all out for it."

For the women's team, Sun and Wang Manyu qualified directly, while Chen, Kuai, and Wang Yidi secured their places through the team trial.

"They are the five highest-ranked players within the team and represent the highest level of the team," said women's team head coach Ma Lin.

"This is the first team competition after the new coaching group was established. Hopefully, everyone can do well in preparation and competition and deliver a satisfying result," chief coach Qin Zhijian noted.

China has won 11 consecutive men's team titles and six straight women's team titles in the tournament. The World Team Table Tennis Championships Finals in London will be held from April 28 to May 10.

Injury-free Katik Tyagi ready to take 'responsibility' for KKR

NEW DELHI

Delhi Capitals (DC) bowling coach Munaf Patel said there is still no clarity on when Australia left-arm fast bowler Mitchell Starc will join the franchise for IPL 2026, even as the Axar Patel-led side have won both of their matches without him. Ahead of IPL 2026 season, DC had said they were awaiting a word on the NoC for Starc, who would miss the initial few matches due to his workload being managed by Cricket Australia (CA), keeping the international schedule in mind. But days later, it emerged that Starc is currently recovering from shoulder and elbow injuries.



"I ask people around everyday, about the timing of his arrival and by when he is coming and what the details are because he is important for us, as a main bowler. Actually I also have the same question everyday. Till now there is no update on when he will come because the update will come from the Australian board, his physio, or trainer," said Munaf in the

pre-match press conference on Tuesday.

DC have won both of their matches so far in this season in Starc's absence and are aiming to complete a hat-trick of wins when they take on a winless Gujarat Titans at the Arun Jaitley Stadium on Wednesday.

Munaf, a member of India's 2011 Men's ODI World Cup-winning team, left no doubt about Starc's stature in the IPL, adding that he's in a league of his own alongside India's ace pacer Jasprit Bumrah. "We have won two matches now, so I don't think we are missing Starc. But in the upcoming matches, if he doesn't do well, then it depends on that."

Bayern Munich coach Kompany forgets about his 100th game anniversary

BERLIN

Vincent Kompany appeared to pay little attention to the milestone of his 100th game as Bayern Munich coach as the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium provided the stage for one of the most significant wins of his tenure.

The 39-year-old was focused instead on the work still to be done to secure the reigning German champions' place in the 2026 UEFA Champions League semifinals. In front of thousands of Bayern fans who stayed in the stadium after the final whistle to celebrate the team, he chose to speak about his appreciation for Real Madrid star Vinicius Junior rather than dwell on an important moment in his own career, reports Xinhua. "We all want players that are different. Vinicius should stay the way he is. He has my full support," he said after admitting that the hug at half-time was his first meeting with the outstanding winger.

Although he has been the architect of Bayern's current success, the former Manchester City defender instead pointed to the mood in his team's dressing room, saying there was silence because "as we know we could have scored more goals."

Bayern's first win there in 25 years appeared almost secondary to the wider significance of the display, which underlined Kompany's growing stature as a coach. His humble approach was again evident as players and club officials praised his consistent way of working.

Billie Jean King Cup: Adkar, Yamalapalli lead India's recovery against NZ



NEW DELHI

Straight sets wins from Vaishnavi Adkar and Sahaja Yamalapalli eased Team India to victory against New Zealand in their second match of the Billie Jean King Cup Group I - Asia/Oceania fixture in New Delhi on Wednesday. The hosts bounced back hours after conceding their opener versus Thailand at the Delhi Lawn Tennis Association Complex.

Representing India in the singles' rubbers, the 21-year-old Adkar, who made her BJK Cup bow in the previous match, defeated New Zealand's Aishi Das 6-2, 6-4. Yamalapalli sealed the win with a 6-1, 6-3 victory over Valentina Ivanov before Rutuja Bhosale and Anika Raina paired up to face Monique Barry and Erin Routcliffe to close out the tie.

Showing no signs of any hangover from her open-

ing-day defeat, Adkar came out sharp, breaking Das early to move 2-0 ahead in the first singles rubber on Day 2. She tightened her grip with another break in the fifth game, shutting the door on any comeback and closing out the set 6-2 with authority.

Adkar carried that momentum into the second set, striking early once again, though Das responded well to draw level at 4-4. The Indian, however, raised her level at the right moment, breaking decisively before serving out the match 6-2, 6-4 in an hour and 30 minutes. Yamalapalli was even more dominant in her outing against Ivanov, racing through the opening set with three breaks of serve to seal it 6-1. She carried that same control into the second, dictating play from the baseline with authority and consistently pushing her opponent onto the back foot.

Rayo Vallecano look for European history in Conference League

MADRID

Spanish side Rayo Vallecano has a chance to make European history on Thursday when it hosts AEK Athens in the first leg of the UEFA Conference League quarterfinal. The tie gives Rayo a chance to reach a European semifinal for the first time after playing in the quarterfinals of the UEFA Cup in the 2000-2001 season, when they lost to Deportivo Alaves.

The side from the working-class Madrid neighbourhood of Vallecas goes into the game after taking a big step toward La Liga survival with



a 1-0 home win over Elche on Friday, and coach Inigo Perez will have virtually his full squad available, with the exception of wingers Fran Perez and Ilias Akhomach, who have slight physical problems. AEK

Athens will provide a difficult test, with the Greek side immersed in the title race after an impressive away win over Olympiakos at the weekend. The visiting side has been tough to beat this season, with

just five defeats in 47 games in all competitions.

The highly-rated Inigo Perez has tended to rotate his team between La Liga matches and the Conference League and is likely to continue doing so on Thursday, with players such as Gerard Gumbau, Alfonso Espino, Ivan Balliu, Pedro Diaz, and perhaps Nobel Mendy coming into the starting lineup.

Fellow Spanish side Celta Vigo are in Europa League action on Thursday with a quarterfinal first leg away to German side FC Freiburg, which currently sits eighth in the Bundesliga. Celta's win in Va-

lencia last weekend lifted the club to sixth in La Liga, just one point behind Betis, which is in Europa League action on Wednesday, and the club from northwestern Spain has an excellent chance of finishing fifth, which could bring a place in next season's Champions League. Coach Claudio Giraldez recently extended his contract with Celta and will have talismanic striker Iago Aspas available for the game, along with Matias Vecino, but he will be without central defender Carl Starfelt and midfielder Hugo Alvarez, who suffered a twisted ankle in Valencia.



Allu Arjun's 'Raaka' What A Secret Planning!

Pushpa star Allu Arjun's latest film, being directed by Atlee, has taken everyone by surprise with its title Raaka. Not just the title, even the first look has caught many off guard. And the secrecy maintained by Allu Arjun and Atlee is getting a commendable response from all corners. Usually, some information leaks out before big announcements. But this time, even media circles couldn't figure out the title in advance. That clearly shows how tightly the team handled things. If you look at the title Raaka, it seems to be derived from words like "Rakshasudu" or "Rakasa", hinting at a darker, intense character. However, to date, there is no clue for the so-called 'insider report' updates regarding the same. Some say that, knowing for a fact that people in his team love giving such updates to a few media folks, Allu Arjun hasn't even shared the title with anyone. Other than Allu Arjun, Atlee, Kalanithi Maran, and the poster designer, none knows the title until yesterday. Probably this is the first time a title hasn't leaked yet, almost 2-3 days in advance, and took everyone by surprise with the poster itself. Of course, revealing the title through leaks will kill out the curiosity, and this type of surprise is what works out like a bang. For example, even though the production house hasn't confirmed, everyone knows from the last six months that NTR-Neel's film is titled "Dragon". By keeping the title in the news for a long time, surely the excitement around the title reveal gets diluted. That's the reason the secret planning of Bunny and Atlee is getting admired now.

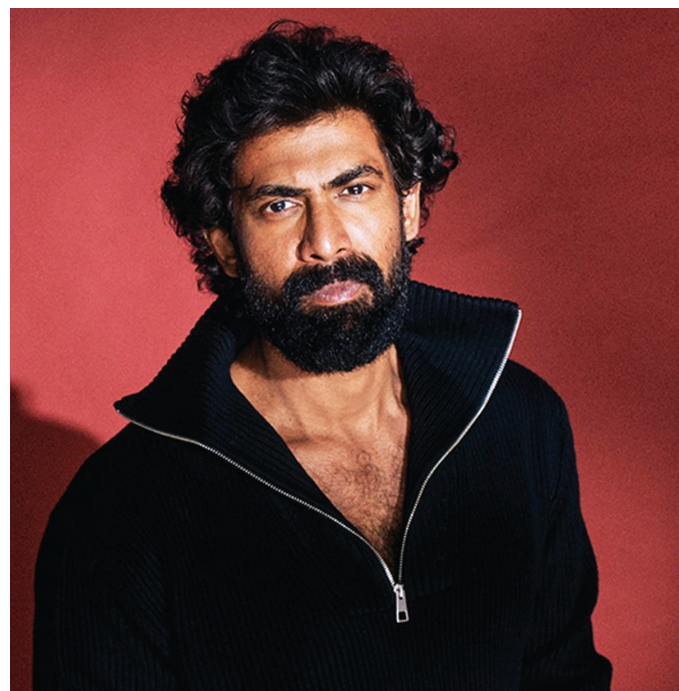
PEDDI, THE PARADISE, FAUJI... ALL FACING DELAYS



2026 is turning into a year of delays and postponements for Telugu cinema. The summer holiday season, usually packed with big-ticket releases, will pass without a single film from senior stars like Chiranjeevi, Nandamuri Balakrishna, Venkatesh Daggubati, or Akkineni Nagarjuna. Even top stars such as Prabhas, Ram Charan, Allu Arjun, and NTR are absent from the release calendar this season. More surprisingly, some high-profile projects are being pushed far ahead. Dragon, which was initially slated for a June 2026 release, has now reportedly been postponed to 2027. Several other big films — Vishwambhara, Peddi, The Paradise, and Fauji — are also facing repeated delays. Vishwambhara, starring Chiranjeevi, has been stuck in post-production for a long time. Originally planned for a January 2026 release, it was postponed indefinitely. Although there were brief plans to target July, it now appears unlikely to meet that timeline, with no clear release date in sight. Peddi, featuring Ram Charan, has once again been delayed. According to overseas distribution sources, the team is considering June 4 or June 25 as possible release dates. However, June 4 depends on the postponement of Toxic; otherwise, June 25 seems more feasible. Even then, another delay cannot be ruled out. The Paradise, starring Nani, was initially scheduled for a March 27 release. Due to production delays, it was pushed to August. However, there is now strong buzz that director Srikanth Odela, known for his uncompromising approach to quality, is planning the film as a major pan-Indian spectacle and may shift it further to December. Meanwhile, Fauji, starring Prabhas and directed by Hanu Raghavapudi, has also revised its release plans. Initially aimed for a Dasara release, the period action drama is now likely targeting early December 2026, riding on growing hype and expectations.



Rana Daggubati Set for a Special Role in Jai Hanuman?



After playing a whacky cop in 'Kaantha', Rana Daggubati is reportedly gearing up for an exciting return to the big screen. The actor, known for powerful performances in films like Baahubali: The Beginning and Nene Raju Nene Mantri, is said to be in talks to play a key role in the upcoming socio-fantasy film Jai Hanuman. In recent years, Rana has been more active behind the scenes as a producer, while several of his acting projects faced delays or were shelved. Naturally, fans have been eagerly waiting for his return as an actor—and this project could mark that much-awaited comeback. According to industry buzz, Rana has finalized a crucial role in Jai Hanuman, though details about his character are being kept tightly under wraps. The film is directed by Prasanth Varma and stars Rishab Shetty in the lead role. The project was recently launched in a grand manner at Hampi, with shooting expected to commence soon. Backed by Mythri Movie Makers, the film is being planned as a big-budget pan-India spectacle. Prasanth Varma and Rishab Shetty are currently working out shooting schedules to kickstart production. Rana, who made a strong debut with Leader under Sekhar Kammula, has built a diverse filmography over the years. From intense roles in films like Krishnam Vande Jagadgurum to his Bollywood appearances in Dum Maa-ro Dum and Baby, he has consistently showcased versatility. However, it was his portrayal of Bhallaladeva in Baahubali that earned him nationwide acclaim. With Jai Hanuman, Rana seems poised to step back into the spotlight—this time in a powerful, possibly mythological avatar.



Deepika Padukone Gives Befitting Reply to Trolls Over Her 'Silence' on Dhurandhar 2

Mumbai: Dhurandhar: The Revenge has been garnering praise from the Bollywood celebrities ever since its release in theatres on March 19. However, the alleged silence of Deepika Padukone, wife of Ranveer Singh, on the film's success has been a point of discussion among the fans of the couple. Deepika Padukone has now broken her silence regarding the ongoing chatter on the internet and highlighted her support for husband Ranveer Singh and Dhurandhar after she skipped the sequel's screening in Mumbai. Taking to her Instagram handle, Deepika Padukone commented on a reel on social media which highlighted her absence at the Dhurandhar 2's screening and asked if "her silence was a delivery statement or is it the internet reading too much into celebrity social media silence?" Deepika has addressed the long-pending discussion with a befitting reply in the comment section of the post.

Taking to the comment section, Deepika wrote, "The latter my friend... P.S. I watched it way before any of you did. Now who is the joke on?" While the netizens came in support of her, saying, "Have you forgotten she stays with him?" Ranveer Singh and Deepika Padukone are a prominent Bollywood power couple who married in 2018 after dating since 2013, following their collaboration in Goliyon Ki Raasleela Ram-Leela. Renowned for their on-screen chemistry in films like Bajirao Mastani and Padmaavat, they welcomed their first child, daughter Dua, in September 2024. 'Dhurandhar: The Revenge', the sequel to last year's 'Dhurandhar', has shown remarkable performance at the box office. The critics and moviegoers have been praising the performance of Ranveer Singh in the film. 'Dhurandhar' franchise marks Aditya Dhar's second directorial venture after his National Award-winning debut 'Uri: The Surgical Strike', which starred Vicky Kaushal. The second features a powerful lineup including Arjun Rampal, R Madhavan, and Sanjay Dutt, with a cameo appearance by Yami Gautam. In the first part, Akshaye Khanna played a key role as gangster Rehman Daka. The film's music, including the track 'Aari Aari' composed by Shashwat Sachdev in collaboration with Bombay Rockers, has also contributed to its popularity among audiences.

ANNA LEZHNEVA SHARES PAWAN KALYAN FAVOURITE FOOD DURING FAN CHAT

Power star Pawan Kalyan always enjoys huge craze among fans. Recently he came before audience with the film Ustaad Bhagat Singh. This movie was directed by Harish Shankar and featured Sreeleela as the female lead. Meanwhile his wife Anna Lezhneva recently entered social media. She has been very active and is regularly sharing posts. She is also posting photos related to the mega family. In a short time, she gained good followers and attention online. Recently Anna interacted with fans through a chat session. Many fans asked different questions and she answered them in a simple and friendly way. During this interaction she also shared interesting details about her personal life and

about Pawan Kalyan. One fan asked her, if she knows cooking. Anna replied that she learned cooking from her mother in law. She said she learned many dishes like dosa, idli, chutney, curries, dal, fish pulusu, gongura, palak paneer, prawns curry and biryani. She also said that she learned more vegetarian dishes and enjoys cooking at home. Another fan asked about Pawan Kalyan's favourite food. Anna gave a sweet answer. She said that Pawan Kalyan likes masala chicken curry made by his mother very much. She also said that she learned how to cook that dish from her. Along with that she shared that he also likes fish pulusu made by his sister in law Surekha. Anna continued to answer many more questions from fans.

