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## Councilor Kalpana distributed Eid Mubarak Tofa

"Sangareddy Indian Chronicle Correspondent March 20 (Sunil)"In ward 11 of Jogipet town of Andol mandal of Sangareddy district, Councilor Kalpana distributed 'Ramzan Tofa' distributed by the state government in the backdrop of Ramzan festival. Speaking on the occasion, Councilor Kalpana said that municipal development will be done under the leadership of Minister Damodar Rajanarsimha. Congress leaders Nagaraju and others participated in the program.

## Government allocates Rs13,679 crores for health department

*This is the highest allocation for the health department in the history of Telangana, said Health Minister Damodaran Rajanarsimha*

...."Sangareddy Indian Chronicle Correspondent March 20. (Sunil)"The Telangana State Budget 2026 was introduced in the Assembly by State Finance Minister Batti Vikramarka. In this context, ₹13,679 crores have been allocated for the health department in this budget. Minister Damodaran Rajanarsimha expressed happiness in this context. He said that this is the first time in the history of Telangana that such a large allocation has been made for the health department. Minister Damodaran stated that their goal is to provide better medical treatment to the poor....

## MLA Daggupati reviews arrangements for Ramzan prayers



Anantapur: Inview of the upcoming Ramzan festival, Anantapur Urban MLA Daggupati Prasad personally inspected arrangements at Eidgah grounds to ensure smooth conduct of special prayers.

The MLA visited Eidgah grounds at Ashok Nagar and Indira Nagar along with municipal officials, religious leaders, and TDP minority representatives. Thousands of devotees are expected to gather at these venues for Ramzan prayers.

Taking note of recent rainfall, Prasad directed officials to ensure thorough cleaning of the grounds and removal of waste. He instructed authorities to make adequate arrangements for drinking water and shamianas to provide relief to devotees. He also emphasized the

need for proper traffic management to avoid congestion on routes leading to the Eidgah and called for designated parking facilities and enhanced security measures.

The MLA urged officials to promptly address any issues and ensure that devotees face no inconvenience during the prayers.

Extending Ramzan greetings to the Muslim community, Prasad appreciated their month-long fasting and discipline, expressing hope that the festival brings peace and prosperity. He also advised devotees to take precautions against the summer heat.

Several leaders, including Minority Cell representatives and local TDP leaders, were present during the inspection.

## Water Problems Resolved in Ward

...."Indian Chronicle""(Jade Srinivas)"February,20."Asifabad: The drinking water problem that had persisted for the past few days in the 16th ward of the town has now been resolved. Residents were facing severe difficulties due to the malfunctioning of the water motor in the area. Upon learning about the issue, 16th Ward Councilor Dudala Lakshmi responded immediately. With the support of Municipal Chairman Mengre Akash, Vice Chairman MD Ahmed, and officials, a new water motor was arranged and installed. On Thursday, Municipal Chairman Akash, Vice Chairman MD Ahmed, and Councilor Dudala Lakshmi jointly installed the new motor and restored the water supply in the ward. Speaking on the occasion, the Municipal Chairman and Vice Chairman stated that their primary goal is to ensure there is no water shortage anywhere in the town. They also mentioned that preventive measures are being taken in advance to avoid drinking water issues during the summer season. The ward residents expressed their gratitude to Councilor Lakshmi and the municipal authorities for responding promptly and resolving the issue. BRS party leaders Dudala Ashok, Ippa Nagaraju, municipal staff, and ward residents participated in the program.



## War shock: Premium petrol hiked by Rs 2/litre, industrial diesel Rs 22

Amid the escalating conflict in West Asia and the disruption of crude flows through the Strait of Hormuz, the price of premium or higher-grade petrol was on Friday increased by Rs 2 per litre while the rate of bulk diesel sold to industrial users was hiked by about Rs 22 a litre even as the toll of Indian nationals killed in the region rose to six.

There is no change in rates of regular petrol and diesel for consumers. At an inter-ministerial briefing here, Petroleum Ministry Joint Secretary Sujata Sharma said the hike applied only to premium variants of petrol, which constituted a small share of total consumption.

"The price of the premium category of petrol has been increased. Normal petrol prices remain unchanged," she said, reiterating that fuel pricing remained deregulated and was determined by oil marketing companies (OMCs) based on global trends.

Industry sources said premium 95-octane petrol prices in Delhi had been raised by Rs 2 per litre, from Rs 99.89 to Rs 101.89. Bulk diesel supplied to industrial users has also seen a sharp increase of about Rs 22 per litre, rising to Rs 109.59. However, retail prices of normal petrol and diesel remain unchanged at Rs 94.77 and Rs 87.67 per litre, respectively.

The increase comes against the backdrop of volatile global crude markets, with oil prices briefly touching USD 119 per barrel before easing to around USD 108 amid intensifying hostilities involving Iran. India, which imports nearly 88 per cent of its crude oil and about half of its natural gas, much of it routed through the Strait of Hormuz, remains vulnerable to such disruptions.

Despite the pressures, Sharma said there was no immediate plan to raise retail fuel prices, with OMCs expected to absorb the impact for now. "There is no increase in price for the common man," she said, noting that premium petrol accounted for only 2-4 per cent of

total sales.

The government also sought to allay concerns over fuel availability, stating that all refineries were operating at high capacity and adequate stocks of petrol, diesel and LPG were being maintained. Domestic LPG production has been ramped up by over 40 per cent compared to pre-crisis levels.

However, officials acknowledged that the LPG situation remained "worrying", though no supply disruptions had been reported at distributorships. Panic booking of cylinders has declined significantly from 89 lakh on March 13 to around 55 lakh on Thursday, closer to pre-war levels.

Meanwhile, one more Indian national was confirmed killed in Saudi Arabia capital Riyadh, taking the total number of fatalities to six, while one person remains missing. The government said Indian missions are in touch with local authorities for repatriation of mortal remains and tracing the missing individual.

The Ministry of External Affairs said evacuation efforts from conflict-hit areas were ongoing. So far, 913 Indian nationals have been moved out of Iran via neighbouring Armenia and Azerbaijan. All 284 Indian pilgrims stranded in Iran have returned safely. Since February 28, around 3 lakh passengers have returned to India from the region, with special flight operations continuing despite airspace restrictions in several Gulf countries. On the maritime front, the government said 22 Indian-flagged vessels with 611 Indian seafarers remain in the western Persian Gulf region, with no incidents reported in the past 24 hours. More than 513 Indian seafarers have been repatriated so far.

Diplomatic outreach also continued, with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar holding talks with his Australian counterpart Penny Wong. "Shared our assessments of the ongoing West Asia conflict. Also discussed Indo-Pacific issues," Jaishankar said in a post on X.

# Belt shops abound in villages....!

Alcohol sales are booming, alcohol is flowing like rivers in the villages  
Belt shops in the street named after Targets""Three glasses, six bottles  
The relevant authorities are acting as if they have not seen the rampant sales.  
Belt shops are popping up everywhere...!  
More than four or five per village...!  
Masks for the eyes of excise officers..!  
People are demanding action against belt shops.  
Alcohol is a poison in the green world.

...."Wanaparthy Correspondent (Indian chronicle )"Chinnambavi mandal, the belt shop business is booming. Liquor is flowing freely. The belt shop business is booming, regardless of the temple or school. Wine shops are becoming more and more like bars. In the previous government, they sold inferior liquor and sold it at high rates. However, the owners of the liquor shops are running Gallico belt shops in the name of targets and are charging an additional Rs. 40 to 50 on each bottle of liquor day and night, filling the pockets of drug lords. With this, the belt shops' racket has become three bottles and six paise. The excise officials who were supposed to stop the belt shops are acting as if they were caught. Chinnambavi Mandal, Wanaparthy District Three flowers and six in different villages In the green world of alcohol, like nuts It's a mess. The town's belt shops They are springing up like mushrooms. Ordinary people The money earned by working all morning Families are being ruined by alcohol. They are throwing it on the street. Chinnambavi Mandal In the villages within the area, vil-

lage committees, Auctioning in lakhs in the name of farmer committees Belt shops continue to operate. Belt shops in various villages Three bottles into six pieces This scam is made by the officials. It will be a smooth ride in the blink of an eye. The villagers are worried. This thread is right in the eyes of the authorities. Continuing Excise Officers The police are looking over there. No, to the village in Chinnambavi mandal Four five belt shops Ongoing. Officials are It seems that they are intoxicated. With the monthly payments, they are unable to focus on the liquor shops. Since there are so many liquor shops in the villages, they are wasting their money by drinking alcohol and wasting their time. Since they are earning a meager income, their families are in dire straits. Some of them, who are middle-class, are not doing any work and are reaching the liquor shops in the morning and are getting into debt by selling liquor. Grocery stores in name only. What they sell is liquor. Many people are running grocery stores in name only and are selling liquor inside. Locals allege that the fact

that liquor shops are being run in bus stands in some villages makes it look like a festival at night, creating problems for the residents of the surrounding colonies. They are selling it in big fridges in these villages. Drunk in the middle of the houses Fighting until midnight That they are causing a lot of trouble Various villagers are accusing. Belt Excise, police to curb shops Department officials are normal Criticism that they are drunk Months are passing. How many belts are there in the villages Complete that the shops are conducting Information available at Excise till date No action was taken against any shop. Accusations are



being made. At least now. The higher authorities responded. Belt shops should be controlled. Many villagers want it.

# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## Supreme Court's move on adjournments signals push for faster justice

It is said that justice delayed is justice denied. This axiom is particularly true in the Indian context. The pendency of cases in courts is a huge legacy issue in the country. A steady rise in arrears, regardless of periodic increases in judicial strength, has been a constant phenomenon since Independence. One of the major reasons responsible for the huge pendency is the thriving culture of adjournments. Against this backdrop, the Supreme Court's latest order tightening the rules on adjournment is a welcome move that could go a long way in improving judicial efficiency and reducing procedural delays. The apex court has drawn a clear line between necessity and convenience by restricting adjournments to truly exceptional circumstances, such as bereavement or serious health issues. Equally significant is the emphasis on transparency and accountability: parties must now disclose specific reasons and the number of prior adjournments. This is expected to curb frequent deferment. Currently, the deep-rooted culture of adjournments prolongs the agony of litigants and perpetuates the cycle of backlog. The pendency of cases in Indian courts crossed the 5-crore mark in 2024. These include over 4.4 crore cases in district and tehsil courts and around 64 lakh in high courts. Over 92,000 cases are pending in the Supreme Court. Frequent adjournments on flimsy grounds have been the bane of the justice delivery system. Hearings are repeatedly deferred, and litigants are left waiting for years, sometimes decades, for closure. At present, courts frequently grant multiple adjournments beyond the prescribed limit, slowing down the process of administering justice and putting a strain on both courts and litigants. Moreover, the legal system in the country is neither pocket-friendly nor easily affordable, and requires investment of money, time and effort. The majority of those seeking judicial relief belong to the middle-class. In such circumstances, delays impose a substantial financial burden on citizens and erode public confidence in the judiciary. The apex court's circular acknowledges this reality and introduces appropriate procedural changes. It emphasises that adjournments should not be sought as a routine. Additionally, the SC has barred consecutive adjournments without judicial scrutiny. Requests for adjournments must follow a prescribed format and be submitted through the designated email address.

## Grand Panchanga Sraavanam Ceremony Held by Ramanthapur Reddy Welfare Association

### Under the Leadership of Pasula Prabhakar Reddy

“Kishore Vaddepalli, Uppal, March 20 (Indian Chronicle):” On the occasion of Ugadi and the beginning of the Sri Parabhava Nama year, a grand Panchanga Sraavanam (almanac reading) program was organized on Thursday evening under the auspices of the Ramanthapur Reddy Welfare Association. The event was held under the leadership of Association President Pasula Prabhakar Reddy. The Panchanga Sraavanam was conducted by priest Harikrishna Sharma, where a large number of members and representatives of the Reddy Welfare Association participated and made the program a success. During the session, Harikrishna Sharma explained the significance of the Parabhava Nama year and presented astrological predictions, including zodiac and horoscope readings. Following the



program, President Pasula Prabhakar Reddy felicitated priest Harikrishna Sharma in recognition of his contributions. Prominent attendees included Working President Tadisenra Surender Reddy, Advisory Committee Member Dharma Madhava Reddy, General Secretary Arjuna Indrasena Reddy, Treasurer Ravi Narasimha Reddy, Pochampally Dayakar Reddy, Pasumati Bucchi Reddy, Devara Narasimha Reddy, Kalvakuntla Ashwin Kumar Reddy, Joint Secretary Godala Pratap Reddy, Depa Gopal Reddy, Library Secretaries Munda Ravi Kumar Reddy and Vemula Venkat Reddy, Internal Auditor Narra Jagadeeshwar Reddy, Youth Wing members Vanampalli Srinivas Reddy, Palla Jalandhar Reddy, Rama Sahayam Srinivas Reddy, and others.

## Develop PM SHRI Schools as Model Institutions: Nodal Officer

“Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), March 19,” Kumram Bheem Asifabad: Central Nodal Officer Amit Katoch has emphasized that PM SHRI schools should be developed into model institutions. He made these remarks during a review meeting held at the District Collectorate, where he spoke alongside District Collector K. Hariitha. He directed officials to strengthen key aspects in the district's 18 PM SHRI schools, including increasing student enrolment, promoting Maths and Science circles, Eco Clubs, Atal Tinkering Labs, vocational education, and computer education. He also stressed the need to improve infrastructure and focus on the construction of additional classrooms. “District Collector Hariitha stated that steps are being taken to ensure quality education in schools and assured that Central Government programmes would be implemented in a coordinated manner.” The meeting was attended by Additional Collector David, Regional Joint Director Satyanarayana Reddy, District Education Officer L. Lalitha, State Coordinator Satish, Finance Ac-



counts Officer Jadi Devaji, Academic Monitoring Officer Uppulati Srinivas, Mandal Education Officers, headmasters, and other officials.

## Promoting Religious Harmony Among Students – Grand Ugadi & Ramadan Celebrations at DSG School



Nacharam, Indian Chronicle, March 20: Deccan Springs Global School, Nacharam, witnessed vibrant and meaningful celebrations of Ugadi and Ramadan, reflecting the spirit of unity in diversity. The celebrations were organized in the school premises with great enthusiasm, where students, teachers, and staff actively participated and showcased the richness of Indian culture, traditions, and values. The program was graced by School Chairman K. Navaneetha Rao, Managing Director K. Naveen Kumar, Director Dr. Kamala Manohar Rao, Core Operations Head Kishore Kumar Reddy, Principal Swarna Akkineni, Vice Principal, and coordinators, whose presence added significance to the occasion. As part of the Ugadi celebrations, students presented a variety of cultural and informative programs highlighting the importance of Ugadi Pachadi, symbolizing the different flavors of life, and the significance of the Telugu New Year. They also performed Panchanga Sraavanam, explaining the astrological and cultural importance of the new year. The students' performances were colorful, educational, and highly engaging, receiving appreciation from everyone present. On this occasion, teachers and guests extended their heartfelt Ugadi greetings and blessed the students for a prosperous and successful year ahead. In connection with the holy month of Ramadan, students conducted

special presentations focusing on the importance of fasting (Roza), which teaches self-discipline, patience, empathy, and devotion. Through speeches and activities, they emphasized values such as kindness, charity, and service to humanity. The program beautifully conveyed messages of peace, unity, and mutual respect among different religions, leaving a strong impact on the audience. The celebrations also highlighted the importance of cultural awareness and inclusivity in educational institutions. By celebrating festivals of different religions together, the school created an environment of mutual understanding and respect among students from diverse backgrounds. Speaking on the occasion, Chairman K. Navaneetha Rao and Managing Director K. Naveen Kumar stated that such celebrations play a vital role in nurturing values beyond academics. They emphasized that festivals like Ugadi and Ramadan provide an opportunity for students to learn about traditions, develop respect for all religions, and strengthen the spirit of unity and harmony. The management further added that the school is committed to holistic education, where along with academic excellence, equal importance is given to moral values, cultural awareness, and social responsibility. The event concluded on a joyful note, leaving students inspired and enriched with knowledge about cultural diversity and harmony.

## Big Shock to BRS – Leaders and Cadres Leaving Party in Uppal Constituency, Massive Joining into Congress

### In the presence of Uppal Constituency Congress In-charge Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 20 (Indian Chronicle):” The BRS party has suffered a major setback in the Uppal Division, as several leaders from Lakshminarayana Colony have joined the Congress party in large numbers. Under the leadership of the Uppal Division Congress, and in the presence of Uppal Constituency Congress In-charge Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy, a large number of BRS leaders and workers formally joined the Congress party. Parameshwar Reddy welcomed them by draping party scarves. Speaking on the occasion, he stated that people-centric governance is being carried out in the state under “Indiramma Rajyam.” He added that with Chief Minister Revanth Reddy implementing the six guaran-

tees, leaders and workers from various parties are increasingly turning towards Congress. Those who joined the Congress party include Lakshminarayana Colony leaders Ramulu, Sattaiah, Venkataiah, Bikshapati, Satyanarayana, Raghupathi Reddy, Prashanth, Naresh, Jakar, Lingachari, Bhaskar Reddy, Lakshman, and Boddu Raghunath. Colony president Lucas, along with Venkat Reddy, Surender Reddy, Kandi Shrawan Reddy, Ganesh Naik, Upendar Reddy, Agam Reddy, Molakalapalli Rajesh Mudiraj, Sunku Shekhar Reddy, Vijay Kumar, Balayya Babu, Kishan Naik, Satti Reddy, Rajanna, Dharmender Naik, Jangaiah, VasNaik, Suman Naik, and other Congress leaders participated in the program.



## Man Arrested for Murdering Pregnant Woman After Marriage Promise

“Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan) March 19,” A man has been arrested for allegedly murdering a woman after deceiving her with a false promise of marriage and impregnating her. According to police, the accused, K. Jalapathi, a resident of Jahindpur, had been in a relationship for several years with the deceased, Sammakka, a resident of Kondapalli village in Panchikalpet mandal. He allegedly promised to marry her but later betrayed her trust and made her pregnant. When Sammakka questioned him about when he would marry her, the accused allegedly plotted to kill her. On Saturday evening, he reportedly took her to a forest area near Jahindpur, assaulted her, and murdered her by suffocation. Kagaznagar DSP Waheeduddin arrested the accused and produced him before the court, following which he was remanded to judicial custody.



## Ugadi Celebrations Mark Grand Birthday Felicitations of Sri N.V.S.S. Prabhakar

Nacharam, Indian Chronicle, March 20: On the auspicious occasion of the Ugadi festival, a grand birthday celebration of respected BJP State leader and former MLA of Uppal, Sri N.V.S.S. Prabhakar, was in a festive and enthusiastic atmosphere. The program was conducted under the leadership of Sangishetti Ravindra Sagar, DC Member of Medchal district. The event witnessed the active participation of several prominent leaders including Women President Sabitha Yadav, Division Secretary Vemula Ramesh Sagar, Booth President P. Lingam Goud, along with leaders V. Srinivas Sagar, Srinivas Kuruma, Anand, and Madhu. BJP leaders from



Mallapur and Shakti Sai Nagar divisions, along with women leaders and sisters, attended the program in large numbers and made the event a grand success. During the programme, the leaders and party members felicitated Sri N.V.S.S. Prabhakar with great respect and honor, recognizing his service and dedication to the party and society. On this special occasion, thousands of leaders, party workers, and people from the Uppal constituency gathered to convey their heartfelt birthday wishes. The atmosphere was filled with joy and a spirit of unity as everyone came together to celebrate both the Ugadi festival and the birthday of a respected leader.

## TDP Leader Pabbati Shekhar Reddy Felicitates Uppal Media Club Committee Full support assured for public service Media unity is a strong platform for society

“Kishore Vaddepalli, Uppal, March 20 (Indian Chronicle):” The newly elected committee of the Uppal Media Club (Print & Electronic Media), which stands as a symbol of media unity in the Uppal region and an inspiration to press clubs in the suburban areas of Greater Hyderabad, was grandly felicitated by senior TDP leader and former Chiluka Nagar Division president, Pabbati Shekhar Reddy. On the occasion, he invited the committee members, honored them with shawls, and extended his congratulations. Speaking at the event, he appreciated the efforts of senior journalist and President Vaddepalli Kishore for bringing together print and electronic media representatives onto a single platform. He stated that media unity plays a crucial role in delivering accurate and comprehensive information to society. He advised media representatives to uphold professional ethics and move forward with mutual cooperation. He also assured his full support for all public service initiatives. The program was attended by former Telugu Yuvatha Uppal constituency president Bajaru Hemanth Goud, Dr. Rambabu, Shiva, Vishnu Goud, Mahesh, media representatives, and press club members.



## Ramzan gifts distributed door-to-door by State Leader Bannala Praveen Mudiraj



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 20 (Indian Chronicle):” BRS party State leader Bannala Praveen Mudiraj, along with party leaders and mosque committee members, visited the homes of Muslim brothers and sisters and distributed Ramzan gifts in Chiluka Nagar and Beerappa Gadda divisions. Speaking on the occasion, Praveen Mudiraj said that they personally went door-to-door to extend Ramzan greetings and distribute gifts to Muslim families in the division. He added that moving away from the old practice of making people stand in queues near mosques to receive Ramzan gifts, it felt very satisfying to deliver the gifts directly to their homes. He also mentioned that the Muslim women expressed happiness in receiving the gifts at their doorstep. He assured that this tradition would be continued every year. He further stated that since the people of the division elected his wife, Bannala Geetha, as Corporator, it is his responsibility to ensure that every government benefit reaches their homes. Senior BRS leaders Edulla Kondal Reddy, Kokkonda Jagan, Muddam Srinivas Yadav, Balakrishna Goud, Shyam, Balu, District Praveen, Chinna, and mosque committee members Md. Farooq, Md. Akram, Azad, Baba Boy, Md. Rafiq and others participated in the program.

# Vertex Viraat's Progress Limited EMI Holiday Offer in Miyapur

Hyderabad: As Hyderabad's residential corridors continue to expand, the Miyapur micro-market is attracting increasing attention from homebuyers seeking connectivity, lifestyle amenities, and long-term value. Among the projects currently drawing interest in this belt is Vertex Viraat, a large residential development offering 2 and 3 BHK Xtra Edge homes designed around thoughtful planning and lifestyle infrastructure. At present, the project is introducing a limited-time financial advantage for homebuyers. Vertex Viraat is offering an EMI Holiday till January 2027, valid for the first 50 customers. For buyers evaluating their finances carefully, this structure provides a meaningful cushion, allowing them to secure a home today while easing the financial burden during the near-term construction phase. For many homebuyers, such an arrangement offers the flexibility to plan their finances more comfortably over the next several months while their home moves closer to completion. A Podium-Level Lifestyle Concept One of the most distinctive aspects of Vertex Viraat is its multi-layered lifestyle planning, which separates recreation, leisure, and daily conveniences into thoughtfully designed zones. At the podium level, the project introduces a sports-focused lifestyle deck that includes facilities such as a skating rink, futsal court, cricket practice nets, and a dedicated pets park. This elevated area is designed to create a safe and traffic-free environment where residents can engage in sports and outdoor activities. Complementing this is a still-level amenity zone, a concept that is relatively uncommon in the Miyapur area. Here, residents can access indoor and wellness-oriented amenities including indoor games areas, swing courts, a tot-lot for children, yoga and meditation spaces, and a gymnasium. Everyday conveniences have also been integrated into the planning, with provisions such as an air-conditioned bus bay for comfortable pick-up and drop-offs and a dedicated e-commerce parcel management zone. Together, these elements create what planners describe as an elevated lifestyle deck with sports above, leisure below, and daily conveniences seamlessly integrated. Construction Progress Across Multiple Phases Another key factor drawing attention to the project is the visible pace of construction across multiple towers simultaneously. These towers are heading towards

handover readiness for interiors. Many finishing elements such as balcony railings, window installations, flooring, and electrical fit-outs are already nearing completion, reflecting the advanced stage of development. Meanwhile, Phase 2, comprising Towers A and E, has achieved structural completion up to 30 floors. Finishing works are currently progressing across these towers as well. With several towers moving through advanced stages at the same time, the project demonstrates strong on-ground execution and construction momentum. Focus on Construction Quality Beyond speed, the project also places emphasis on construction quality by incorporating materials and systems from established European and Indian brands. Among the brands being used are Kommerling for uPVC windows, Saint-Gobain glass, Havells electrical fittings, KEI cables, TKE elevators, Berger paints, and MFE formwork systems. In Phase 1, Heading Towards Handing Over for Interiors A Well-Connected Miyapur Location Location continues to be one of Miyapur's strongest advantages, and Vertex Viraat benefits from its proximity to several key urban connections. The project offers walkable access to the Miyapur Metro Station through its rear entry, enabling residents to connect easily with other parts of the city. Road connectivity also allows convenient travel to major employment hubs such as Hitech City and Gachibowli. In addition, the surrounding area already hosts a wide ecosystem of schools, hospitals, supermarkets, and essential services, making it suitable for families seeking a well-rounded residential environment. A Timely Opportunity for Homebuyers With construction progressing steadily across phases, lifestyle infrastructure taking shape, and a location that benefits from metro connectivity, Vertex Viraat presents a compelling proposition for buyers evaluating homes in the Miyapur corridor. The EMI Holiday till January 2027, currently available for the first 50 customers, adds an additional financial dimension to the opportunity. For homebuyers who prefer to align their purchase decisions with both visible project progress and practical financial planning, the current window represents what many observers describe as a strategically timed opportunity in one of Hyderabad's rapidly developing residential zones.

## Farmers Should Achieve Development Through Dairy Industry



Arvapalli Nagesh Khammam District Nelakondapalli Mandal Staff Reporter March 20, (Indian Chronicle): Assistant Director of the Animal Husbandry Department, Khammam Division, Ramani, advised that farmers should achieve economic development through the dairy industry. On Thursday, a vaccination drive to prevent foot-and-mouth disease was launched by Sarpanch Praveen in Tirumalapuram Gram Panchayat. Speaking on the occasion, the Assistant Director emphasized that every farmer must ensure their livestock are vaccinated. She stated that only when ani-

mals remain healthy can farmers achieve financial growth. She also urged farmers to take preventive measures in advance. She further mentioned that farmers can significantly improve their livelihoods through dairy farming and added that the government is implementing several programs to protect livestock. Participants in the program included Nelakondapalli AD Srinivasa Rao, Cheruvu Madaram Veterinary Officer Dr. Sahitya, Sarpanch Kamadan Praveen, and Gopala Mitras Edavalli Narasimha Rao, Boyapati Narayana, Nageswara Rao, Rama Rao, among others.

## State Development Depends on Workers' Labor: Trade Union Leader Sheikh Subhan

Arvapalli Nagesh Khammam Staff Reporter March 20, (Indian Chronicle): Trade union leader Sheikh Subhan stated that the development of the state is possible only through the hard work of laborers. He said that after the Congress party came to power in Telangana, workers have high expectations from the state government's third budget to be presented. He demanded that the Congress government must reflect the promises

made before the 2023 Assembly elections in this budget. He highlighted that Anganwadi workers and helpers, who provide essential services in the state, are not receiving proper wages and rights. Therefore, he demanded that Anganwadi workers should be paid at least ₹26,000+ per month. Helpers should receive at least ₹18,000+ per month. He insisted that these wages should be implemented in accordance with the Minimum Wages Act. He also called for: Implementation of a pension scheme; Provision of gratuity and PF benefits; Inclusion of retirement benefits in the budget. He emphasized that Anganwadi workers, who work for the future of children, deserve respectable salaries. Further demands include: Mandatory inclusion of workers' demands in the budget; Increase in minimum wages; Clarity on regularization of contract employees; Significant wage hike for Anganwadi and AASHA workers; Clearance of pending benefits for construction workers; Implementation of unemployment allowance; Allocation of a special budget for labor welfare schemes and boards. He also pointed out that workers in post-matric hostels have not received salaries for the past 13 months and demanded immediate release of pending bills. Criticizing the four labor codes introduced by the central government, he said they are harmful to workers. He urged the state government to pass a resolution in the Assembly not to implement these la-

bor codes in Telangana. Otherwise, he warned that strong labor movements would be launched.

## Grand Ugadi Celebrations at Pachala Katta Someswara Temple

### Panchanga Sraavanam Conducted

Bhuvanagiri Town's 'First Citizen' Participates in the Panchanga Sraavanam Program: Thangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar (Mandava Srisaillam - Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau - Indian Chronicle - March 20): On Thursday, marking the occasion of Ugadi—the New Year of the Parabhava Samvatsaram—grand and traditional celebrations were held, along with special prayers, at the renowned pilgrimage site of Sri Pachala Katta Someswara Temple in Bhuvanagiri town. The festivities were conducted under the supervision of the Temple Chairman, Kolluri Raju. Subsequently, the Panchanga Sraavanam (listening to the annual almanac predictions) ceremony was conducted under the leadership of the

temple's Chief Priest, Kappaganthula Nagaraju Sharma. Distinguished guests attended the event, including Bhuvanagiri Municipal Chairperson Thangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar, Vice-Chairperson

Pothamsetti Manjula Venkateswarlu, former Municipal Chairperson Barre Jahangir, Ward Councillor Thotakura Vijayalakshmi Venkatesh Yadav, Councillor Nakoti Nagu, Challaguruvula Raghuvabu, former Temple Chairman Devarakonda Narasimha Chari, Gas Chinna, Barre Nares, and others. Following the proceedings, Ugadi Pachadi (the traditional festive delicacy) was distributed to the attendees under the guidance of the Temple Chairman and the Chief Priest. During the event, prayers were offered for the well-being of all residents of Bhuvanagiri town in this new year, wishing for everyone to prosper in happiness and joy.

## Former Malkajgiri District Youth Congress President Kandi Shraavan Reddy Participates in Ugadi Panchanga Sraavanam Event

KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 20 (Indian Chronicle): On the occasion of the Ugadi festival, former Medchal-Malkajgiri Youth Congress President Kandi Shraavan Reddy performed special (ritual prayers) at the Ramalayam temple in Habsiguda. Later, he formally inaugurated and participated in the Panchanga Sraavanam (almanac reading) for the new Telugu year, Sri Parabhava Nama Samvatsaram. He also received theertha prasadam and conveyed Ugadi greetings to all Telugu people, wishing them prosperity and happiness in the new year. Several dignitaries attended the event, including Division President Gannaram Vijay Kumar, Ramalayam Chairman Chintala Baburao, temple priest Gattu Srinivasa Charyulu, Congress Party Division Youth President Vasu Nayak, and leaders Suman Nayak, Sai Kiran, Lakshmi Narayana, Ravi, and others.



## Grand Ugadi Celebrations in Chilkanagar

Water Distribution Camp Organized under the Leadership of Mulakalapalli Rajesh Mudiraj Chief Guest Parameshwar Reddy inaugurates the water distribution camp after participating in Ugadi celebrations



Kishore Vaddepalli, Uppal, March 20 (Indian Chronicle): On the occasion of Ugadi, Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy stated that people should strive to achieve success in the New Year. He participated as the chief guest in the Ugadi celebrations held in Chilkanagar Division and inaugurated a water distribution camp (Chalivendram) organized by Chilkanagar Division Congress Party President Mulakalapalli Rajesh Mudiraj. Speaking on the occasion, Parameshwar Reddy said that in the Sri Parabhava Nama Samvatsaram (Telugu New Year), everyone should make good use of the opportunities available to them and achieve success. He also assured that he would work towards the development of Chilkanagar Division in the coming year. He appreciated Mulakalapalli Rajesh Mudiraj for organizing the water distribution camp, especially as summer temperatures are rising, and said that such initiatives help provide relief to the public from the heat. Chilkanagar



Division Congress Party In-charge Akkiti Agam Reddy, Kompalli Balaraju, Garike Yadagiri, Amareshwari, Salla Prabhakar, Nallavelli Mahender, Gandikota Ganesh, Dundagula Shankar, Mamu, Sriramulu, Amar, Bhaskar Reddy, Srinivas, Jangir, senior leaders Kurelli Yadagiri, Kondra Ramulu, Ram Charla Balaram, Palnati Kishtayya, Jaripothula Chandrayya, Marapaka Sailu, Pagidam Ram Narasayya, Palnati David, B.M. Kiran, Kasim, Rebel Bhaskar, Palnati Ramesh, Guggula Ramulu, Kanukuntla Ravi, Kanukuntla Swamy, Vajjala Anjaneyulu, G. Nares, Chukka Parashuram, Sukka Haribabu, Gandhi Praveen, Naroju Radhakrishna, Janganna, Satyam, Tiju Thomas, Jagadeesh, Sonu, Gopi, Shobha Reddy, Samatha, Sumalatha, Renuka, Rangamma, Sandhya, Sona, Kiran, Vamsi, Sandeep and many others participated in the program.

## Just like every year, may abundant rains fall this year as well, causing the state to flourish with golden harvests.

Bhuvanagiri Municipal Chairperson, Thangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar Extending Ugadi festival greetings to the residents of Bhuvanagiri town: Bhuvanagiri Municipal Chairperson Thangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar... and PCC Delegate Thangallapalli Ravikumar. "I am continuously engaged in voluntary service activities, providing significant assistance to underprivileged students. Thangallapalli Ravikumar

(Mandava Srisaillam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... March 20): Bhuvanagiri's "First Citizen," Thangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar, stated that—just as in previous years—she hopes for bountiful rains this year, enabling the state to thrive with rich, golden harvests. Furthermore, she extended her Ugadi festival greetings to the residents of Bhuvanagiri town, her admirers, brothers and sisters, Congress Party leaders and activists, and leaders of other political parties—expressing her gratitude for the affection and support with which they elected her as the Municipal Chairperson. Speaking on this occasion to Mandava Srisaillam—the Indian Chronicle Bureau In-charge for the Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district—Bhuvanagiri



Municipal Chairperson Thangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar affirmed that she would always extend her full support and cooperation to steer Bhuvanagiri town onto a path of development, working alongside the town councilors, relevant municipal officials, and leaders from other opposition parties. She expressed that both she and her husband, PCC Delegate Thangallapalli Ravikumar, are deeply indebted to the Congress Party High Command—as well as to State Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, the joint-district ministers Komatireddy Venkat Reddy and Uttam Kumar Reddy, Government Whip Beerla Ilaiah, Bhuvanagiri MP Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy, and Bhuvanagiri MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy—for recognizing her husband's dedicated services to the party and for bestowing upon her the privilege of serving as the Bhuvanagiri Municipal Chairperson. She further stated that she feels profoundly grateful for the opportunity to serve the people of Bhuvanagiri town—both as their Mu-

nicipal Chairperson and as a daughter of their own community—and urged the town's residents to immediately reach out to her via phone call regarding any issues they may face, assuring them that she would strive to resolve their problems without delay. Come what may, she affirmed that she would strive to transform Bhuvanagiri town into a model municipality with the cooperation of the district ministers, the Government Whip, and the local MP and MLAs. On this occasion, she stated that she would work tirelessly—with the support of her husband, Ravikumar—to resolve various issues within the town, including problems related to roads, drinking water, and drainage systems; to undertake repairs and desilting of the Bhuvanagiri Pedda Cheruvu (Large Tank) canal; to carry out development works to make the Bhuvanagiri Fort accessible to the public; and to resolve issues facing residents across all residential colonies. Speaking on the same occasion, PCC Delegate Thangallapalli Ravikumar expressed his deep indebtedness to the senior leaders of the Congress party for recognizing his years of service to the party and, with the support of the party high command, the State Chief Minister, the district ministers, the Government Whip, and the local MP and MLAs, for providing his wife with the opportunity to serve as the Chairperson of the Bhuvanagiri Town Municipality. He further explained that, regardless of the challenges, he would exert every effort to shape Bhuvanagiri into a model town and develop it into the number one municipality in the state—a goal he intends to achieve with the cooperation of key party functionaries, the district ministers, MLAs, the MP, the Government Whip, local councilors (from both the ruling and opposition parties), and various community leaders. He added that, for several years, he has been actively engaged in voluntary service activities—standing as a pillar of support for underprivileged students and consistently extending whatever assistance he could towards the construction of new temples and their subsequent development. On this occasion, he stated that he himself had pursued his education through sheer hard work; therefore, he urged any underprivileged students facing difficulties with their studies to meet him directly, assuring them that he would extend whatever assistance he could to support them. Marking the auspicious festival of Ugadi, he extended his festive greetings to the townspeople, leaders of both ruling and opposition parties, fellow town councilors, members of the media, his well-wishers and admirers, and to everyone in the community.

## Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy extends support to medical student

Cheque handed over to Soumya under the leadership of BRS senior leader Masa Shekhar



“Kishore Vaddepalli, Uppal, March 20 (Indian Chronicle): “With the belief that ‘If the student earns the rank, the fee is my responsibility,’ Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy has been supporting medical students across the constituency. Through his own funds via the BLR Trust, he has been paying fees for many underprivileged students and earning appreciation as a role model for other leaders. Soumya, daughter of Yasareni Balaraju, a resident of Chikanagar, is currently studying MBBS first year at a Government Medical College in Komaram



Bheem district. Upon learning about her financial situation, Chikanagar senior leader Masa Shekhar brought Soumya to the residence of MLA Lakshma Reddy and explained her family's condition. Responding immediately, MLA Lakshma Reddy provided financial assistance by handing over a cheque to support her education. Soumya's family members expressed their heartfelt gratitude to MLA Lakshma Reddy and Masa Shekhar. Gaurayya also participated in the program.

## A Large Number of Athletes Should Participate in the Prime Minister's Sansad Krida Mahotsav: Padamati Jagannathan Reddy, Co-organizer for Bhuvanagiri Assembly Constituency

“(Mandava Srishailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... March 20):- BJP leaders inspected the venue designated for the Prime Minister's Sansad Krida Mahotsav 2026, specifically reviewing the premises where the prize distribution ceremony is scheduled to take place. Speaking on this occasion, Padamati Jagannathan Reddy—the Co-organizer for the Bhuvanagiri Assembly constituency regarding the Prime Minister's Sansad Krida Mahotsav—announced that the prize distribution ceremony for the winners of the Prime Minister's Sansad Krida Mahotsav held within the Bhuvanagiri Parliamentary constituency will be held on Sunday, March 22, 2026, at 4:00 PM. The event will take place at the grounds of the Government Junior College in Bhuvanagiri. The Chief Guest for this ceremony will be the Honorable Governor of Telangana, Shri Shiv Pratap Shukla. Distinguished guests include the Union Minister of State, Shri B.L. Verma, and MP Dr. [Name]. K. Laxman, singer Rahul Sipligunj, prominent sports personalities, and others will participate in this event. He requested that athletes, youth, intellectuals, educationists, representatives from the Red Cross, Rotary Club, Inner Wheel Club, and various youth associations—as well as public representatives, government officials, non-officials, students, retired employees, physical education teachers,



and sports enthusiasts—participate in large numbers to make this program a success. Participants in this event included Bhuvanagiri Assembly Constituency Co-organizer Patnam Kapil; Bhuvanagiri Town Organizer Kattamoju Usha Kiran; BJP leaders Narla Narsing Rao, Chanda Mahender, Maya Dasharath, and Vijayanthi; Councilor Bandaruru Swarnalatha; Ratnapuram Srishailam; Enugu Satish Reddy; Md. Mohammed; Taduri Kumar; Naresh; Bhuvanagiri Siddhulu; and others.

## Madiga Issues Presented to Mand Krishna Madiga

Nacharam, Indian Chronicle, March 20: Mand Krishna Madiga, President of the M.R.P.S., has assured that he will work towards resolving the issues faced by the Madiga community in Uppal constituency. The concerns were brought to his attention under the leadership of District President Pang Pranay Kumar Madiga, senior leaders, and M.R.P.S. Uppal Constituency In-Charge Korapaka Anji Madiga. “During the meeting, representatives highlighted the obstacles faced in the installation of

memorial statues in Mallapur NTR Nagar. They also raised key issues such as the lack of political representation for the Madiga community in Uppal constituency and the conduct of various political parties. In response, Mand Krishna Madiga assured that he would dedicate special time to the Uppal constituency and make efforts to resolve these issues. The program was attended by senior journalist Eil Santosh, President Ramesh, General Secretary Somulu, Yadagiri, Ajay, Kranti, Jani, Dayanand, and other Madigas from various divisions.

## On the occasion of Etela Rajender's birthday, BJP State leader Vemulakonda Somashekar Goud participated in a blood donation camp.



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 20 (Indian Chronicle): “Marking the birthday of BJP Central Executive Member, leader of backward and weaker sections, and Malkajgiri Member of Parliament Etela Rajender, a blood donation camp was organized at his residence, as has been done every year since his election victory. BJP State OBC Morcha former official spokesperson Vemulakonda Somashekar Goud took part in the camp and donated blood. “On this occasion, MP Etela Rajender and former Uppal MLA N.V.S.S. Prabhakar stated that blood donation helps save the lives of many ??? and needy people in times of emergency. They appreciated Vemulakonda Somashekar Goud for his noble act of donating blood. “Leaders including Jilala Ravinder Reddy, Bommagani Raghupathi Goud, Alkapuri Suresh Patel, Katta Bhaskar, and Banothu Ramesh Naik from Habsiguda division also participated in the birthday celebrations of Etela Rajender.

## Mobile phones not allowed in examination centers: District Collector P. Pravinya

“Sangareddy, Indian Chronicle correspondent sunil March 20:- “District Collector P. Pravinya has clarified that mobile phones are not allowed in examination centers during the ongoing class 10 exams in the district. He instructed the officials to strictly follow the rules. He said that all precautions should be taken to conduct the ongoing class 10 exams in the district in a transparent and strict manner. “She gave directions in a review meeting held with Chief Superintendents, MEOs and departmental officers through video conference from the Collector's Camp office on Friday. “It was clarified that no one should bring mobile phones into the examination centers and

that no one, including the staff at the center, should have mobile phones. He advised that each hall should be thoroughly inspected before the start of the examination. He said that CCTV cameras have been installed in all centers and monitoring is ongoing. “He said that flying squads are being appointed for each examination center and continuous inspections are being conducted. It was clarified that the responsibility of the concerned Chief Superintendent and MEOs lies with them in case of any incidents. “If subject teachers are being used as clerical staff, they should be relieved immediately and SGT cadre teachers should be appointed. “In the wake of unseasonal rains, it was suggested that the question papers and answer sheets should be transported safely in closed vehicles. “The officials were asked if there were any problems in the conduct of the exams. “District Education Officer Venkateswarlu, MEOs, Chief Superintendents and departmental officials participated in this meeting.

## BRS party leaders start Kabaddi competitions in Koppunuru village



“Wanaparthy correspondent Indian Chronicle: “Kabaddi competitions were organized for the youth under the auspices of Bharat Rashtira Samithi party on the occasion of Ugadi festival in Koppunuru village under Chinnambavi mandal Wanaparthy Distric. The first prize of Rs. 2000 was given to the Bharata Simha Kabaddi team, which won the final in this kabaddi competition, by senior TRS leaders Vulupala Maheshwar Reddy and Koppunuru TRS party president Dega Shekhar Yadav. The second prize was Rs. 1000 in cash to the Ravi Teja Kabaddi team by Thagaram Ugra Narasimha. For the mental happiness of the youth, for physical strength, and to bring talented Kabaddi players from the rural level to the limelight in India BRS leaders spoke on the occasion that the Rashtira Samithi will always work hard. The Bharat Rashtira Samithi Party has made a success of organizing

a taluka level kabaddi tournament in Chinnambavi mandal center, and the Bharat Rashtira Samithi Party's goal is to organize more sports for the youth in the future and bring talented players to the limelight and take them to the district level, state level, and national level. Bharat Rashtira Samithi leaders, sixth ward member Badikila Satyanarayana, 12th ward member Bijinamula Jagadish, Dega Shekhar Yadav, Ulpala Maheshwar Reddy, Kathi Narayana, Thagaram Vakil Balakishhtayya, Thagaram Nagaraju, Hitler Narasimha, Thagaram Maddileti, Kathi Raju, Thagaram Gopal, Devarapogu Shiva, Kesireddy Dinesh Reddy, Gondi Sumanth, Bandari Shiva, Burga Balu, Prakash, and others participated in this program. Congratulations to the winning team and the runner-up team.

## BSP Demands 25% Reservation for Underprivileged Students in Private Schools

Nacharam, Indian Chornical, March 20: Mandral Narsing Rao, BSP Uppal Constituency President, has urged the state government to reserve 25% of seats in private educational institutions for underprivileged students. Speaking to the media, he highlighted that the Supreme Court, on August 27, 2009, had directed the central government to implement the Right to Education (RTE) Act, but even after more than a decade, no private school in the state has fully complied with the law. “He explained that the RTE Act, as per G.O.Ms. 42 and 44, mandates the reservation of seats in private and aided schools for marginalized sections of society. Specifically, 5% of seats should be allocated to orphans and children with disabilities, 10% for Scheduled Castes (SC), 4% for Scheduled Tribes (ST), and 6% for Backward Classes (BC), minority communities, and economically weaker sections. Collectively, this amounts to 25% of all seats that must be reserved in every private school. “Mandral Narsing Rao criticized the state's failure to enforce the Act, calling it a major setback for educational equity and the rights of underprivileged children. He emphasized that strict compliance with the RTE Act is crucial in the current academic year to ensure that children from marginalized communities receive the opportunity for quality education. “He also warned that if private schools fail to implement the 25% reservation immediately, the BSP will organize protests and campaigns to press for strict enforcement of the law. Mandral Narsing Rao called upon all parents, educators, and civil society groups to support this initiative, stressing that education is a fundamental right and must be accessible to all children regardless of their economic or social background.



## Ramadan gifts were distributed to Muslim families in Koppunur village

“Senior party leader Jangam Beachupalli Yadav “The village headman, Vaddeman Bichanna “Village Sub-Sarpanch Agganna Garu Sudarshan Reddy “Wanaparthy correspondent Indian Chronicle “In Koppunuru village under Chinnambavi mandal, the leaders of the Muslim Mosque Committee along with Congress Party leaders handed over the Ramadan gifts to Muslim families near the village mosque as a gift for the Ramadan festival, which is given by the Telangana State Government to minorities every year as a gift for the Ramadan festival. Sarpanch Vaddeman Bichanna and senior Congress Party leaders Beachupalli Yadav handed over the Ramadan gifts to Muslim families near the village mosque. Those who received the Ramadan gifts The beneficiaries thanked the state Chief Minister Yanamala Revanth Reddy and state minister Jupally Krishna Rao. Deputy Sarpanch Agganagar Sudarshan Reddy, First Ward Member Thagaram Srinivasulu, former Single Win-



dow Director Balu Yadav, Telugu Madhu, Thagaram Kansiram, Kandi Maddileti, Medipalli Indrasena Reddy, Thagaram Ravi Varma, Vaddeman Vishnu, Itikyalu Rammohan, Pasula Bharat Yadav, Laxman Yadav, Lingaswamy, Venkateswarlu, Thagaram Pedda Lakshmaiah, Kathi Robo Narasimha, Vaddeman Kurmaiah, Talari Narasimha, Muslim brothers and sisters participated in this program.

## Paytm Introduces Built-in Calculator to Confirm Total Amount Before Payment

“Enable instant calculation of total bill amount directly within the Paytm payment screen before completing a transaction “Eliminate the need to switch between the Paytm app and a separate calculator while making everyday payments “Simplify on-the-spot bill calculations during purchases at grocery stores, vegetable markets, pharmacies and local shops “Paytm (One 97 Communications Limited), India's full stack merchant payments leader serving MSMEs and enterprises, and a leading financial services distribution company, and the pioneer of mobile payments, QR codes, and Soundbox, has introduced a built-in calculator within its payment screen that allows instant calculation of the total amount before making a payment. The calculator works directly within the Paytm payment flow, removing the need to switch to a separate calculator app or rely on mental

calculations. “The total amount is displayed both in figures and in words, helping improve clarity and reduce the chances of payment errors. The addition is designed for everyday retail payments such as grocery purchases, vegetable markets, pharmacies, bill splits, and payments to local merchants where prices are often communicated verbally and totals need to be calculated on the spot. “Paytm Spokesperson said, “Our approach has always been to build practical solutions around everyday payment needs. We have introduced this built-in calculator within the payment screen to simplify the process of adding up amounts before paying while also displaying the total in figures and in words for improved accuracy. “By enabling quick calculations within the payment screen itself, Paytm aims to make mobile payments faster, simpler and more accurate during everyday transactions.

## Former MLA NVSS Prabhakar greets MP Eatala Rajender on his birthday with a lotus flower

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 20 (Indian Chronicle): “On the occasion of the birthday of Malkajgiri MP Eatala Rajender, former BJP MLA NVSS Prabhakar warmly felicitated him and extended his greetings by presenting a lotus flower. On this occasion, Prabhakar wished that Eatala Rajender be blessed with good health and a long life, and continue his service to the people.



## Apache attack helicopters and mechanised forces unite in Army Southern Command's latest drill



GNS News Agency, March 20

The Pune-based Southern Command of the Indian Army conducted Exercise Amogh Jwala at the Babina field firing ranges in Uttar Pradesh to validate technology-driven mechanised warfare capabilities in a multi-domain operational environment. The 13-day exercise from March 6 to 18 validated the deployment of mechanised forces with newly inducted Apache attack helicopters, fighter aircraft, drone and counter-drone systems and network-enabled battlefield platforms. A press statement read, "The Exercise Amogh Jwala validated new operational concepts, force structures, procedures and protocols relevant to modern warfare. It demonstrated the integrated employment of mechanised forces with attack helicopters, fighter aircraft, unmanned aerial systems, counter-drone systems and network-enabled battlefield platforms under a robust com-

mand and control architecture." "The exercise featured high-tempo mechanised operations with synchronised fire and manoeuvre, real-time drone-enabled surveillance and target acquisition, precision engagement and the seamless integration of advanced battlefield technologies. Advanced surveillance systems, secure communication networks and precision firepower enhanced battlefield transparency and enabled faster, real-time decision-making." Lieutenant General Dhiraj Seth, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Southern Command, witnessed the culmination of the exercise. He complimented the participating troops for their professionalism, operational excellence and battle readiness.

"The Army Commander emphasized that technology absorption, jointness and the seamless integration of land, air, cyber, space, Intelligence Surveillance & Reconnaissance (ISR) and Electronic Warfare (EW) capabilities are fundamental to building an agile, adaptable and combat-ready force capable of dominating the evolving battlespace across the full spectrum of multi-domain operations," the release said. "Integrated air-land manoeuvres, battlefield air-space management for Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) and counter-UAS operations, and reorganized force structures incorporating emerging technologies were also validated during the exercise. The drills highlighted the effective fusion of Electronic Warfare (EW), Air Defence (AD) and night-fighting capabilities, alongside intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets, reflecting the growing combat edge of a networked and future-ready force," the release added.

## 'Maintaining guideline of 2 subzis on plate is tough': Gujarat's iconic college canteens face LPG supply crunch

GNS News Agency, March 20

Nearly 20 days into the West Asia conflict, the shortage of LPG cylinders continues to affect educational institutions, particularly residential campuses, in Gujarat, with canteen and mess operators warning that prolonged disruption could force them to switch to alternative cooking methods or change their menus. At the canteen of B J Medical College in Ahmedabad, operator Jitendra Singh Tomar said he is running on his last LPG cylinders, with fresh supplies yet to arrive despite expectations of improvement.

"I am still on the last cylinder. The cylinders haven't come yet. The distributor has told us they should arrive within the next 2 to 3 days. If new cylinders don't arrive soon, we may have no option but to start cooking on a wood-fired stove," Tomar said on Wednesday. B J Medical College, the largest in Gujarat, has at least 650 students across its undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Ipg shortage A similar concern has emerged in Vadodara, where campus eatery operators say the shortage is starting to affect day-to-day cooking. "The college has a guideline where at least two subzis must be served. Because of that, we cannot reduce the menu. We will try to continue somehow," Tomar said. Tomar, who has been operating the canteen for the past year, said a prolonged shortage could make it increasingly difficult for vendors serving large student populations. "If the situation continues like this, there will be a lot of difficulty. We hope the government finds a solution soon," he added. Tomar, who has been running the canteen for the past year, said a prolonged shortage could make it increasingly difficult for vendors serving large student populations. "We hope the government finds a solution soon," he added. A similar concern has emerged in Vadodara, where campus eatery operators say the shortage is starting to affect day-to-day cooking.

At the Arts Faculty canteen of the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, operator Rahul Kharwal said they are already on the verge of running out of LPG cylinders. "The last cylinder we had is almost finished. If we don't get an-



other one soon, it will become difficult to cook. From tomorrow, we may only be able to sell ready-made items like samosas and puffs," Kharwal said. Located near the Hansa Mehta Library on the Arts Faculty campus, the canteen primarily serves vegetarian snacks such as vada pav, as well as tea and coffee to students and faculty members. Kharwal said that while operations are continuing for now with the remaining gas, menu changes may soon become unavoidable. "At present, we are managing with whatever gas is left, but once it finishes, we will have to cut down on freshly cooked items. We might prepare a few things at home and bring them to the canteen, but it will not be possible," he said. He added that there is no clarity yet on when fresh cylinders will be available and the shortage is being felt widely across food establishments. "Everyone who depends on LPG cylinders is facing the same problem. Until supplies improve, it will be difficult to continue normal cooking," Kharwal said. With many students relying on campus canteens for affordable meals and snacks, operators say a prolonged LPG cylinder shortage could seriously disrupt daily food services in educational institutions. On March 16, the Gujarat Government increased the weekly LPG supply quota by 20 per cent for essential and semi-essential services, including commercial ones.

## Amidst tension in Uttam Nagar, Delhi Police seek more companies of paramilitary forces for Eid



GNS News Agency, March 20

Security personnel stand guard during the "Virat Aakrosh Sabha" called by the United Hindu Front over the death of Tarun (25), due to an alleged fight during Holi at Uttam Nagar, in New Delhi on March 15. (ANI Photo) Security personnel stand guard during the "Virat Aakrosh Sabha" called by the United Hindu Front over the death of Tarun (25), due to an alleged fight during Holi at Uttam Nagar, in New Delhi on March 15. (ANI Photo)

Amid ongoing tension in Dwarka's Uttam Nagar following the death of a 26-year-old man over a water balloon incident during Holi, the Delhi Police have requested the Union Ministry of Home Affairs to provide 10 additional paramilitary companies for deployment during Eid. Personnel of the Rapid Action Force (RAF) and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) were deployed following communal tension in the locality after March 4, when Tarun Kumar was beaten to death following a dispute with his Muslim neighbours during Holi. Since then, the security forces have remained deployed in the area.

More than 150 pickets have been set up in Uttam Nagar and its neighbouring area, Chhawla, to prevent any untoward incidents during the festival. The local police have also appealed to people not to spread rumours via social media or any other medium. The arrangements are being made, especially after the calls for violent retribution followed, with fringe groups on social media urging a "Khoon ki Holi" on Eid, sources said. A senior police officer told The Indian Express that security has already been tightened in JJ Colony, Uttam Nagar, particularly in Blocks A, B, and C. Police personnel from neighbouring districts have also been keeping a vigil in the locality for the past two weeks. "For the Eid festival, additional deployment will be put in place. This

includes reserve police forces and paramilitary personnel. We have requested the Centre to provide 10 more companies," the officer said. The Delhi Police also cracked down on social media accounts spreading rumours regarding the incident. During the investigation, 14 accounts on X were identified, and eight provocative posts were found on Instagram. The police have contacted social media platforms and requested that they remove all such content, said officers. Besides, the Delhi Police stepped up security across the city and made elaborate arrangements to prevent any disturbances or untoward incidents during Eid.

## No-fly zone declared in Pune this Sunday: Drones banned due to vice-president's visit to ashram

The Pune city police have declared a 'no-fly zone' in its jurisdiction on Sunday, March 22, as a security measure during the visit of Vice-President C P Radhakrishnan. The vice-president is visiting Nisargopchar Ashram in Uruli Kanchan. Deputy Commissioner of Police Vivek Masal, who holds the additional charge of special branch, issued a press release stating that the vice-president will land at the technical airport in Lohegaon by flight, and then head to the ashram by car. After attending the programme, he will return to the airport by car and fly back to Delhi, the press release added. The Nisargopchar Ashram in Uruli Kanchan is run by the Nisargopchar Gramsudhar Trust, founded by Mahatma Gandhi on April 1, 1946. The police stated that it has been observed that during events attended by VIPs, organisers, or participants use drones to film the programme. To prevent this, a 'no-fly zone' has been declared for 24 hours on March 22 within the jurisdiction of the Pune city police, as per Section 24 of the Drone Rules, 2021. The police said that no drones will be allowed to fly in the city for photography or video recording during this period, as per the police commissioner's orders. Those found in violation of these orders may face legal action, the police added.

## Hammering 'Hindu khatre mein hai' narrative: Congress leader Husain Dalwai says Maharashtra's new anti-conversion law could target interfaith couples



GNS News Agency, March 20

The Maharashtra Freedom of Religion Bill, 2026, which the Legislative Assembly passed on March 16, reveals the government's intent to control personal choices regarding faith and marriage, according to former Congress Rajya Sabha MP Husain Dalwai. The Bill aims to prohibit religious conversions carried out through coercion, fraud, allurement, or marriage. In an interview with The Indian Express, the president of Maulana Azad Vichar Manch says Maharashtra has long prided itself on its legacy of progressive social reform, built on the ideologies of Jyotirao Phule, Shahu Maharaj, and B R Ambedkar. However, he argues that the recent legislation serves a political narrative rather than a genuine social need. Edited excerpts.

Q. What will be the impact of the Maharashtra Freedom of Religion Bill 2026?

Husain Dalwai: The purpose of this legislation is to instil fear within the Hindu community. Through this law, the BJP government wants to continuously hammer the idea that Muslims are a threat to Hindus. Their age-old slogan, "Hindu khatre mein hain (Hindus are in danger)", gets a legislative voice here. But it remains unexplained: where is the threat to Hindus, who are the overwhelming majority in India?

Q. There is some concern within the right wing about the shrinking Hindu population. What are the facts?

Husain Dalwai: Across all castes and religions, families are moving toward having only one or two children. This trend is visible among Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, and Sikhs alike. People realise that smaller families allow for better education and healthcare, especially given current inflation. "If we look at the statistics, Hindus constitute approximately 80 per cent of Maharashtra's population, while Muslims are about 12-14 per cent. These proportions have not undergone any drastic shift that would justify panic. The trend of smaller families is now seen even among slum dwellers, not just the educated elite.

Q. How will you explain the 'love jihad' narrative?

Husain Dalwai: This is a narrative used solely to

polarise society. The right to interfaith marriage is protected by the Indian Constitution. When two adults take a decision, no one has the right to oppose it. In my own family, I have nieces and nephews who chose interfaith marriages; nobody was forced to change their religion. While some marriages fail, that happens within communities as well. We already have the judiciary and existing laws to handle fraud or coercion. There was no need for a new, redundant law.

Q. What about the concerns regarding religious conversion?

Husain Dalwai: I would ask a counter-question: What is the government's response to Dr B R Ambedkar's decision to convert to Buddhism (in 1956)? That was a mass conversion. We must reflect on the circumstances that lead people to such decisions. Don't look at social issues through a narrow prism. These are complex issues that should be addressed without prejudice. The state should respect individual freedom.

Q. How will this legislation impact minorities in the state?

Husain Dalwai: I don't see this as just a majority-versus-minority issue. Anyone who chooses an interfaith marriage will be subjected to hardship under this law. As for minorities, they will not buckle under political pressure; they will fight for their constitutional rights.

Q. What are your societal concerns?

Husain Dalwai: We are gradually distancing ourselves from the ideology of Shahu, Ambedkar, and Phule, which has been essential to the progressive development of Maharashtra. It is well-known that right-wing organisations are promoting a divisive and discriminatory agenda in the name of Hindutva. This poses a significant threat.

Q. How will you explain Shiv Sena (UBT)'s support for the legislation?

Husain Dalwai: It was very unfortunate. The legislation was a golden opportunity for the Opposition parties to show their unity and stand against the legislation. Shiv Sena (UBT) president Uddhav Thackeray should have stood by the ideology of his grandfather Prabodhankar Thackeray, who was a great social reformer. The Hinduva advocated by Prabodhankar Thackeray was inclusive and progressive.

Q. How does this law help the government if there are no immediate elections?

Husain Dalwai: It serves as a distraction. The government uses these bills to divert attention from real issues, such as unemployment and the economic crisis. Our state schools are in a pathetic condition; more than 200 have shut down recently. State hospitals lack basic infrastructure and medicine. These are the issues that truly concern the poor, but they are never addressed.

## For the first time, Pune RTO to switch to 3-letter vehicle registration as MH-12 series nears exhaustion



GNS News Agency, March 20

With over 43 lakh vehicles registered and the two-letter alphabet series nearing exhaustion, Pune's Regional Transport Office is preparing to shift to a three-letter registration format, which is so far implemented only in Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Ahmedabad, and Chennai. Pune's Regional Transport Office (RTO), which issues registrations under the 'MH-12' code, has reached the 'ZG' series in its two-letter alphabetical sequence — and with just a few combinations remaining before 'ZZ', the entire two-letter system is expected to be exhausted within three to four months. Once that happens, new vehicles registered in Pune will carry a three-letter alphabetical code in their num-

ber plates for the first time.

Vehicle registration in India follows a standard format governed by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) and managed through the National Informatics Centre (NIC). The format — State Code, RTO Code, Alphabet Series, and a four-digit number — was designed to accommodate a progressively expanding pool of registrations. For Pune, this means a vehicle goes from MH-12 A 0001 (single letter) to MH-12 AA 0001 (two letters), and eventually to MH-12 AAA 0001 (three letters) once all prior combinations are exhausted. Each series runs from 0001 to 9999. As of the end of February, the city had 43,55,380 registered vehicles — including 29,88,810 motorcycles, 9,19,961 motor cars, 1,42,197 autorickshaws, and 22,196 buses, among other categories. A surge in vehicle sales driven by the festive season and auspicious occasions has accelerated the pace at which registration numbers are being consumed, prompting the RTO to begin planning for the transition. Swapnil Bhosale, Deputy Regional Transport Officer, Pune, told The Indian Express, "Discussions are ongoing with the State Transport Department, and a final proposal will soon be submitted to implement the new system. Currently, the 'ZG' series is going on, and the two-alphabet series will end in roughly three to four months. In the meantime, we will get the proposal approved from NIC and enforce the new three-letter series consequently."

## More accessible, less intimidating, this Colaba gallery is rethinking how Mumbai experiences art

GNS News Agency, March 20

Strangers House in Colaba doesn't feel like a gallery when you first walk in. There is no white cube, no hushed reverence around the art. Instead, it feels like you've entered someone's home, one that has been lived in, left behind, and quietly reassembled over time. "I wanted to see how people could come together without fear of judgment," said Sumesh Sharma, who curates the space. "Strangers can walk in, and they should feel at home." It is this simple idea that shapes the gallery. Inside, the space carries a calm, almost silent presence. Artworks hang on the walls as one might display cherished objects. A small library in the living room invites visitors to sit and read, though books don't leave the space. Old furniture, left behind by migrants decades ago, forms seating nooks, while a narrow wooden staircase leads to a loft, an attic-like exhibition space. The entrance to Strangers House, marked by a modest wooden sign, opens into a space that feels more like a home than a gallery. The entrance to Strangers House, marked by a modest wooden sign, opens into a space that feels more like a home than a gallery. "We didn't want the pretentiousness of formal galleries. They can feel mentally inaccessible and intimidating. Art should not scare people," he said.

The building, Clark House, itself holds layers of history. It once functioned as the Strangers Guest House between 1940 and 1962, home to long-term residents like "executives from abroad, sailors, people who had nowhere else to stay." It was run by a man from Baghdad and a woman from Eastern Europe, both of Jewish heritage, offering shelter during a turbulent time. After the Second World War, it became home to Ram Bahadur Thakur & Co. run by the

Sharma family. The upper loft features sculptural works by Bhushan Bhombhale, using primary colours and found materials to explore form and everyday life. The upper loft features sculptural works by Bhushan Bhombhale, using primary colours and found materials to explore form and everyday life. The space has also hosted moments of remembrance, including the annual Lidice Memorial Day, marking the 1942 Nazi massacre of a Czechoslovak village. Artists such as K.K. Hebbar and Chintamani Kar contributed works to the Lidice Collection. "We wanted the building to continue as a space for strangers, for displaced voices," he said. That ethos shapes the gallery today. Sharma believes all art is political. "Even abstract work carries a politics," he said, pointing to practices like repainting walls in rural India, layers of colour that echo in the works shown here. Even the use of primary colours — red, blue and yellow, often dismissed in formal art spaces — is significant. "The demand for sophistication often denies someone else their reality. Art here doesn't have to impress; it has to express." A ground floor room displaying Patna Kalam works from an exhibition by Mahesh Soundatte and Akshay Maksudpur, set within a preserved domestic interior. (A ground floor room displaying Patna Kalam works from an exhibition by Mahesh Soundatte and Akshay Maksudpur, set within a preserved domestic interior. Strangers House actively platforms voices of Dalit artists, marginalised communities, and those without access to established galleries. "You can't dismantle caste if you only give a voice to the mainstream," he said. The approach is also global, bringing together local practitioners with artists from abroad.

## 'Adulterated' paneer: 3,900 kg milk products seized in Hyderabad, was 'exposed to dust, flies, contaminants'



GNS News Agency, March 20

Six people were arrested for selling adulterated paneer and other milk products in Hyderabad's Ganj Bazar, located close to the city's Mahankali temple. In the inspection conducted by the Hyderabad police commissioner's task force and the Food Safety Office (FSO), a total of 3,892 kg of dairy products including paneer, khoa, white cream, ghee and kalakhand worth Rs 11.11 lakh were seized. Police have arrested six people, identified as Jaipal Singh Rajpurohit, Kolariya Vaibhav, Naresh Kolariya, Prem Anil Vyas, Ram

Kishore Kolariya and Laxmi Narayana Kolariya. According to Hyderabad police, during the inspection, it was found that the establishments run by these individuals were "allegedly engaged in procuring and selling adulterated and unhygienic paneer and other dairy products sources from unknown origins", the police have said.

The adulterated products were being sold in bulk quantities to catering services, hotels, and other customers at approximately Rs 280 per kg. "The products were falsely projected as quality paneer," a press release from Hyderabad city police said. "The inspection revealed that the paneer and other dairy items were stored in open plastic covers, exposed to dust, flies and contaminants, making them unsafe for human consumption," the press release read. The products also "lacked proper labeling, including brand name, manufacturing date, expiry date, and pest control records, indicating serious violations of food safety standards," Hyderabad police said. "The accused persons, along with the seized material, were handed over to the Station House Officer, Mahankali Police Station, for further legal action," the release read. Hyderabad city police have been leading other food security busts in the recent past, with the city police having a special wing to do food security inspections.

## LPG shortage drives surge in ready-to-eat food sales

GNS News Agency, March 20

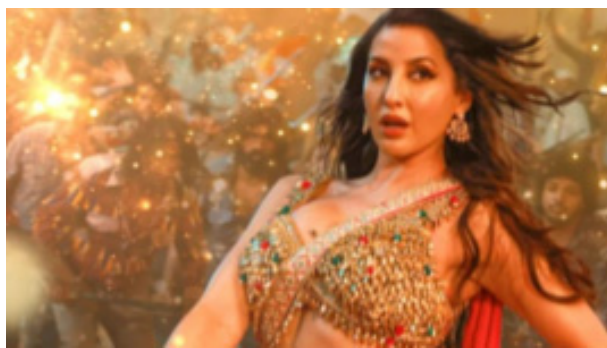
The scarcity of commercial LPG cylinders has triggered a shift in purchasing trends among consumers, with e-commerce and quick commerce platforms recording a sharp rise in sales of ready-to-consume meal solutions. According to Amazon India records, ready-to-consume meal options such as instant noodles, snacks, packaged meals and beverages have seen a 15% growth in sales. "Over the past few weeks, we have seen consistent growth in demand for convenient, ready-to-consume meal solutions that require minimal cooking time. This growth is broad-based, spanning metros like Hyderabad, Kolkata and Chennai, as well as tier-2 and tier-3 cities such as Sonapat and Panaji," an Amazon India spokesperson said.

Meanwhile, Amazon Now has recorded a 20% month-on-month increase in ready-to-eat and packaged food purchases, particularly in metropolitan cities like Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru. The company also noted rising demand in categories such as staples, pulses, dry fruits and nuts. The surge in ready-to-eat meal consumption corresponds with



disruptions in LPG supply, which have been linked to the ongoing crisis in West Asia. At the same time, online marketplaces and retail stores across Mumbai are witnessing increased demand for induction cooktops, which use electromagnetic technology to heat cookware directly, eliminating the need for LPG cylinders.

## Sarke Chunar Teri Sarke song controversy: After backlash, director Prem apologises, says he will 'rewrite' it



GNS News Agency, March 20

Hours after the Centre announced that the Nora Fatehi and Sanjay Dutt-starrer song Sarke Chunar Teri Sarke in the Kannada movie KD: The Devil has been banned, director Prem apologised Wednesday and said he did not "intend to write a vulgar song or to hurt anybody's feelings". The controversy over the song, featuring Sanjay Dutt and Nora Fatehi, erupted after the filmmakers released the audio on YouTube, where netizens criticised the lyrics, calling them vulgar and objectifying women.

This is the first time in Kannada film history that the Centre has removed a song following criticism over its alleged vulgarity. In a video, Prem, who also wrote the lyrics of the song, said that "nobody will commit a mistake with an intention to do it". "I have written songs about god, mother, brothers, and love. People have expectations, especially from my songs, when a movie is all set to be released. I wrote this song from my perspective, keeping a bottle (alcohol) and a pickle in mind. I did not intend to write a vulgar song or to hurt anybody's feelings. I do not know how people have understood it. However, it may have hurt some people. My family and I have been abused online. I wish them good luck." "My intention was never to hurt anyone, and I want to apologise ... I will re-write the song in such a way that it won't hurt anyone and release it nationwide," he said. His statement came after Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Ashwini Vaishnav informed in Lok Sabha Wednesday that the song has been removed from YouTube.

"I would like to say this clearly that we should follow the reasonable restrictions imposed by the creators of the Constitution of India on freedom of speech. Freedom of speech cannot be absolute. It must be in the context of society and culture," Vaishnav said. The minister said that "hard actions should be taken" for the "protection of children and women and deprived groups of people." NHRC notice, women's panels

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) also issued a legal notice to the filmmakers, prompting them to remove it from YouTube late Tuesday. On Tuesday, Advocate Vineet Jindal approached the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) and filed a complaint demanding that the song be banned as the visuals were obscene, harmful, especially for children and women. The Women's Rights Commissions of Karnataka and Haryana also raised concerns about the song's lyrics. During a recent press meet, when Prem was questioned by the media, he defended the song's lyrics, saying he had written them in a different context. After the controversy unfolded, Nora Fatehi said on Wednesday that the song was shot in Kannada three years ago and she was unaware of the Hindi song. "When I was invited for the launch at the event, I saw the Kannada version, first of all, I had a major issue with because they didn't take any approval from me when they created that lyrical version, they used very unflattering photos, and if anyone knows me, they know that I have to approve all my photos. Then they created an AI-generated image of Sanjay Dutt with me, which I'm already against. I was already feeling really irritated at the event when I saw what I saw," she said. "I just want to say thank you for the backlash. Because of that, they've been able to take it down, so thank you," she said in the video. Singer Mangli also posted her apology on Instagram. "Out of respect for public sentiment, the song has been removed from all platforms. I sincerely apologise to each and every one of you for the unintended mistake. It was never meant to hurt anyone's sentiments, and we truly regret the oversight." In December last year, Prem faced backlash for another song from KD: The Devil, Ananthamma Jodethu Kano, over its lyrics. However, the filmmaker said that it was colloquial usage.

## Karnataka seeks Governor's approval to regulate honorary doctorates awarded by varsities

GNS News Agency, March 20

Flagging the lack of regulation in granting honorary doctorates, the Karnataka Higher Education Department has sought the formation of an expert panel to clear the honorary awards granted by universities in the state. Minister for Higher Education Dr M C Sudhakar, in a letter dated March 12, has sought approval from the Governor, who is also Chancellor of state-run universities, to constitute the panel.

The proposed committee will review existing norms and recommend guidelines. This is expected to ensure transparency and uniformity in all public, private, and deemed-to-be universities of the state, while conferring the recognition. Under the existing system, the names for candidates are shortlisted by the university syndicate, which is cleared by a committee constituted by the Governor.

According to the letter, current provisions under the Karnataka State Universities Act, 2000, empower universities to confer honorary doctorates on distinguished individuals for their contributions. But, the absence of clear guide-



lines has led to instances where multiple universities confer the honorary doctorate to the same person, which has raised questions about the credibility of the awards. Sources said that the letter was sent to the Governor last week, and the department was hopeful of getting clearance for the said committee. "Such a committee is essential because the honorary doctorates cannot be awarded randomly without assessing whether an individual is qualified," an officer said.

## Karnataka ministers seek ban on DJ music in processions over noise concerns



Objecting to obscene music played during processions, Karnataka Labour Minister Santosh Lad Wednesday urged the government to put an end to loud DJ sets. Speaking in the Assembly, Lad said DJ music has become a major problem across the state. "May it be any jayanthi, without an item song, (the procession of the deity) does not move forward," he said, calling such developments intolerable. "Such item songs and DJ music are not good for culture," he said, urging the government to put an end to DJ music during processions.

Kannada and Culture Minister Shivaraj Tangadagi sup-

ported Lad's view and asked the Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to cooperate with the government. "An order will have to be issued stopping it. There are a lot of problems caused by DJ music," Tangadagi said.

The discussion comes amid tensions reported in several parts of the state, stemming from confrontations between groups, as processions with loud DJ sets passed by places of worship. IT/BT Minister Priyank Kharge said DJ culture is new and noted that there were several objections to the type of songs played during processions, backing the demand to ban such sets. BJP legislator S N Channabasappa, however, appeared to object, saying that if there was one thing the government had to ban, it was the prayer calls at mosques made through loudspeakers. Kharge responded, saying that the Supreme Court order was not related to azaan. "The Supreme Court has specified decibel levels, may it be for azaan or bhajan," he said. Assembly Speaker UT Khader intervened and suggested the government issue an order curbing the use of DJ sets. Senior BJP legislator S Suresh Kumar also raised concerns about the issue, saying several cardiac patients with pacemakers suffered due to loud music during such processions. "Children too are affected... We should think about it seriously," he said.

## Jailed ex-SP MLA's 2 sons among 6 booked after blast in Farrukhabad house

blast in Farrukhabad house, six booked after blast in Farrukhabad house, Vijay Singh, Nala Machratha area of Farrukhabad, Samajwadi Party, Lucknow news, Uttar Pradesh news, Indian express, Current affairs. The case has been filed under BNS sections 288 (Negligent conduct with respect to explosive substance), 125 (Act endangering life or personal safety of others) and 131 (assault or criminal force otherwise than on grave provocation).

A day after a powerful explosion ripped through the four-storey house of jailed former Samajwadi Party MLA Vijay Singh in the Nala Machratha area of Farrukhabad, police on Wednesday registered an FIR against all the injured six persons, including his two sons, officials said. Vijay's sons Abhishek Singh alias Sikki and Avinash Singh alias Vikki are both in their 30s. Vijay, who is serving life sentence in connection with the 1997 murder of BJP leader Brahm Dutt Dwivedi, is currently lodged in Varanasi jail.

The other injured were identified as Ishu Chaurasia (29), Ramveer Yadav (60), Rasu Mishra (35) and Bhaiyalal (40). Police said the explosion occurred in the basement of the residential building, causing extensive damage there. The impact of the blast also led to structural damage in other parts of the building. Hearing the loud explosion, nearby residents rushed to the spot and helped evacuate the injured. The injured were shifted to a hospital for treatment. The former MLA's wife, Danyanti Singh, who was in another room at the time of the incident, escaped unhurt. Farrukhabad Superintendent of Police Arti Singh said the exact cause of the blast will be known only after a detailed investigation.

A bomb disposal squad and a forensic team reached the spot and collected samples and debris to ascertain the



cause of the blast. A team of the Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) also visited the spot. Police also secured CCTV footage from cameras installed on the premises as part of the probe. The case was registered against the six at the Kotwali police station under provisions of the Explosive Substances Act and sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Meanwhile, a gas cylinder on the premises was found intact with no signs of leakage or impact, it is learnt. The SP said that the injured, who were stable, were not cooperating with the investigation. The case has been filed under BNS sections 288 (Negligent conduct with respect to explosive substance), 125 (Act endangering life or personal safety of others) and 131 (assault or criminal force otherwise than on grave provocation). DIG (Kanpur range) Harish Chander, who visited the spot, said the intensity of the blast was high, as evident from the damage to the roof, doors and walls of the house. A gas cylinder was found in the room, he added. Vijay Singh has been in jail since 2017, after the Allahabad High Court upheld a trial court verdict sentencing him and slain gangster Sanjeev Maheshwari to life imprisonment.

## 'Avoid provocative language for views':? Akhilesh Yadav reaches out to social media influencers



GNS News Agency, March 20

Akhilesh Yadav reaches out to social media influencers, Akhilesh Yadav, 2027 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections, Samajwadi Party, Lucknow news, Uttar Pradesh news, Indian express, Current affairs. "Akhilesh Yadav ji asked them to present facts. He assured them complete support from him and the party in case they face any police action or legal cases for showing correct information against the government," the party leader said.

After roping in political consultancy firm I-PAC to handle his party's campaign for the 2027 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections, Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav on Wednesday sought support from social media influencers and YouTubers while cautioning them to avoid using provocative language in their content for views and followers. Yadav interacted with nearly 200 social media influencers from various districts across UP who create social and political content in Hindi and other local languages, during a programme—Digital Democracy Dialogue—at the party headquarters in Lucknow. The party is learnt to have identified youngsters who run YouTube channels and work as social media influencers in their local ar-

reas and have a large number of followers. "The main criteria for their selection was that they were presenting unbiased content on local issues and also communicating the message of the Samajwadi Party to the masses," said a senior party leader. "For example, some of them showed content on the problems people are facing due to the LPG crisis," he added. Some influencers expressed their fear of action by authorities for showing "negative content", he further said. "Akhilesh Yadav ji asked them to present facts. He assured them complete support from him and the party in case they face any police action or legal cases for showing correct information against the government," the party leader said.

"Nearly 142 YouTubers and social media influencers are working for the BJP and they create content favouring the BJP's agenda. Today we gathered nearly 250 young influencers and asked them to support the SP by presenting facts from the ground," said another leader who attended the meeting. In the meeting, Yadav also asked the gathering to not use any such language and words which may upset any individual section of society. Sources said the SP had taken support of social media and youtubers in 2024 Lok Sabha polls too. "But those who worked that time were mostly SP workers and were in small numbers only. Today we had independent voices who also present what the Opposition says. The SP has a dedicated IT team which will also provide them content in support of the party's ideology," said that leader. Sources said many of the social media influencers who attended the meeting create videos in regional languages like Bhojpur, Awadhi, Bundelkhandi, and their support can help the SP in reaching out to more people in the state. Party chief spokesperson Rajendra Chaudhary said, "Akhilesh Yadav in the meeting advised that we should have simplicity in behaviour and language. We must be disciplined. We have not to provoke anybody. The SP never compromises with its principles."

## Amid Congress criticism, two of its veteran MPs justify Centre's West Asia policy

New Delhi: Shashi Tharoor and Manish Tewari, both Members of Parliament from the Congress party, have publicly defended India's foreign policy amid the conflict in West Asia involving Iran, Israel, and the US. The two veterans have expressed support for India's skilful management of the situation, emphasising the importance of safeguarding its own interests in the region. Shashi Tharoor, in an op-ed, justified India's 'silence' as a responsible statecraft and not moral surrender as claimed by many, while Manish Tewari said it was "not India's war" and justified India's stand on watching the developments unfold from a distance.

Tharoor, who also heads the Standing Committee on External Affairs, referred to Jawaharlal Nehru's policy of non-alignment to deflate the claims (made by Cong-led opposition) that India was taking sides by tilting towards the powerful US-Israel axis. "India's diplomacy has always been

about balancing principle with pragmatism. Jawaharlal Nehru's policy of non-alignment was not a refusal to take moral positions, but a recognition that India's sovereignty and survival depended on avoiding entanglement in Cold War hostilities," Tharoor wrote in the article. Stating out the realities of an increasingly multipolar world in today's era, he wrote, "India practises 'multi-alignment'—engaging with diverse powers, sometimes in tension with one another, while keeping our national interest paramount." He admitted that the war on Iran is unjustifiable under international law but opined that India's 'silence' is not an endorsement of that war, but it's rather a recognition that our national interest requires prudence, not posturing. For a government to recognise geopolitical realities and weigh consequences for India's economy and strategic position before taking a public stand is not 'moral surrender'.

## FBI investigating whether departed U.S. counterterrorism official Joe Kent leaked classified info



the last year into political foes of President Donald Trump, including former FBI Director James Comey and New York Attorney General Letitia James.

Prosecutors have repeatedly struggled to make charges stick amid rejections from judges or to secure indictments in the first place. Additional details about what the investigation, which was first reported by Semafor, is examining were not immediately available. Mr. Kent disclosed his departure from the administration in a statement on X in which he cited his concerns about the justification for military strikes in Iran and said he "cannot in good conscience" back the war against Iran. "Iran posed no imminent threat to our nation, and it is clear that we started this war due to pressure from Israel and its powerful American lobby," Mr. Kent wrote. Mr. Trump later told reporters that he always thought Mr. Kent was "weak on security" and if someone in his administration did not believe Iran was a threat, "we don't want those people." Other Trump administration officials, including CIA Director John Ratcliffe, have since sought to distance themselves from Mr. Kent and his assessment. A phone message was left on Wednesday night for Mr. Kent, who previously ran unsuccessfully for Congress, with a former campaign manager.

The FBI is investigating whether Joe Kent, who resigned his position as a top U.S. counterterrorism official this week in protest of the Iran war, improperly shared classified information, a person familiar with the matter said on Wednesday (March 18, 2026). The investigation precedes Mr. Kent's resignation on Tuesday from his role as director of the U.S. government's National Counterterrorism Centre, said the person, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss an ongoing FBI inquiry. But it comes as the Justice Department has undertaken multiple investigations over

## 'Don't put cart before horse': Court rejects Lalu's plea seeking unrelieved documents for trial

GNS News Agency, March 20

A Delhi court has rejected the pleas of former Railway Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav and his wife Rabri Devi seeking over 1,600 unrelieved documents to prepare their defence in the land-for-jobs case trial, saying they were designed to "condemn the trial to a maze at the very outset." Special Judge Vishal Gogne underlined that providing these documents en bloc would not only "place the cart before the horse" but also throw the judicial process into "complete disarray." He also dismissed the applications of two other accused — personal secretary (PS) of Lalu Prasad, R.K. Mahajan, seeking one unrelieved document, and a former appointing authority, ex-general manager of railways, Maheep Kapoor, seeking 23 unrelieved documents. Unrelieved documents are materials seized by investigating agencies but not relied on in the prosecution complaint. The land-for-jobs case relates to Group D appointments made in the West Central Zone of the Indian Railways in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, during Lalu Prasad's tenure as the railway minister between 2004 and 2009, in return for land parcels gifted or transferred by the recruits in the names of the RJD supremo's family or associates, according to the CBI.



provision of unrelieved documents to the accused would not only place the cart before the horse but also throw the trial proceedings into complete disarray," the court added. The court highlighted that providing unrelieved upon documents was "a sparing discretion" to be exercised by it at the appropriate stage of proceedings and that such discretion would be governed by the necessity and desirability. "The relied upon documents are only 421, while the unrelieved upon documents are 1,675. The court finds the prayer for being provided with all unrelieved documents to be designed to condemn the trial to a maze at the very outset, and that too when the accused have not even begun to lay out any particular defence by way of questions, suggestions or a projected defence," Judge Gogne said.

He said if the court was to rule upon the relevance, necessity or desirability of the production of hundreds, if not thousands, of unrelieved documents even before the witnesses uttered a single statement and even before a single volley had been fired upon them during cross-examination, it would be "drawn into expressing mind upon the relevance of unrelieved documents only to suit the defence." The judge also said he could sense a "latent" or "underlying intent" by the applicants to drag proceedings into an exercise where the provision of 1,675 unrelieved documents would conceivably be followed by a plethora of applications seeking missing or illegible documents. "A court of trial must guard against latent motives of applicants apart from unreasonable outcomes," he said. Regarding Mahajan's plea, the judge said it was "entirely self-serving" for him to contend that cross-examination would be hampered by the non-availability of a CBI file, which was not even a relied upon document.

He said, "The court would reiterate that the statutory scheme of trial cannot be inverted so that proceedings turn into a trial of unrelieved documents to the detriment of relied documents." In its order, the court also highlighted the charges against Lalu Prasad Yadav that he allegedly abused his official position as the then Union railway minister to ensure appointments of certain persons to Group D posts in the Indian Railways. In an alleged quid pro quo, the candidates so appointed or their family members sold or gifted their respective land holdings to the family members of Lalu Prasad, and co-applicant Rabri Devi was one such member, the court said. His then personal secretary, Mahajan, allegedly abused his official position, in conspiracy with him and others, to ensure many such appointments by communicating lists of nominees canvassed by Lalu Prasad with various general managers, including Kapoor, who were the appointing authority, it said.

## Israel will not attack Iranian gas field any more: U.S. President Donald Trump

A day after Israel attacked energy facilities in Iran's South Pars gas field and Tehran retaliated by hitting energy infrastructure in three Persian Gulf countries, U.S. President Donald Trump on Thursday (March 19, 2026) said the U.S. was not part of the Israeli attack and that Tel Aviv will not target the Iranian gas field any more.

"Israel, out of anger for what has taken place in the Middle East [West Asia], has violently lashed out at South Pars Gas Field in Iran. A relatively small section of the whole has been hit. The United States knew nothing about this particular attack, and the country of Qatar was in no way, shape, or form, involved with it, nor did it have any idea that it was going to happen," Mr. Trump wrote in a social media post. "Unfortunately, Iran did not know this, or any of the pertinent facts pertaining to the South Pars attack, and unjustifiably and unfairly attacked a portion of Qatar's LNG gas facility," he added. "No more attacks will be made by Israel pertaining to this extremely important and valuable South Pars Field unless Iran unwisely decides to attack a very innocent, in this case, Qatar - in which instance the United States will massively blow up the entirety of the South Pars Gas Field." Iran on Wednesday evening (March 18, 2026) said several phases at the South Pars gas field came under attack and launched missiles at energy facilities in Qatar, the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Qatar's state-run energy firm Qatar Energy said on Wednesday that its main Ras Laffan Industrial City came under attack. On Thursday (March 19, 2026), it said several of the company's LNG

facilities were hit by Iranian missiles causing "extensive damage". The United Arab Emirates (UAE) suspended operations at Abu Dhabi's Habshan gas facility after authorities said debris of intercepted missiles fell on the site. The Bab oil field in the Emirate and a refinery near the Saudi capital Riyadh were also targeted. In a statement, the UAE Foreign Ministry said the Iranian attacks "constitute a dangerous escalation and a violation of international law. The UAE reserves its full right to take all necessary measures to protect its sovereignty and national security, and to safeguard its national interests." The Foreign Ministry of Qatar declared "the military attaché and the security attaché at the [Iranian] embassy [in Doha], in addition to the staff of the two attaché offices 'persona non grata,'" and asked them to leave the country within 24 hours.

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan said the kingdom reserves the right to take military actions "if deemed necessary" in response to the Iranian attacks. "What little trust there was before has completely been shattered... We're going to use every lever we have — political, economic, diplomatic and otherwise — to get these attacks to stop," he said. Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) said Tehran did not want to target energy infrastructure but the war entered a new phase after South Pars was targeted. "With the enemy's aggression against energy infrastructure, Iran has effectively entered a new stage of the conflict, and the necessity to defend the country's energy infrastructure compelled a retaliatory strike against American-linked energy facilities," the IRGC said in a statement.

## U.S. weighs military reinforcements as Iran war enters possible new phase



GNS News Agency, March 20

President Donald Trump's administration is considering deploying thousands of U.S. troops to reinforce its operation in West Asia, as the U.S. military prepares for possible next steps in its campaign against Iran, said a U.S. official and three people familiar with the matter. The deployments could help expand Mr. Trump with additional options as he weighs expanding U.S. operations, with the Iran war well into its third week.

Those options include securing safe passage for oil tankers through the Strait of Hormuz, a mission that would be accomplished primarily through air and naval forces, the sources said. But securing the Strait could also mean deploying U.S. troops to Iran's shoreline, said four sources, including two U.S. officials. Reuters granted the sources anonymity to speak about military planning. The Trump administration has also discussed options to send ground forces to Iran's Kharg Island, the hub for 90% of Iran's oil exports, the three people familiar with the matter and three U.S. officials said. One of the officials said such an operation would be very risky. Iran has the ability to reach the island with missiles and drones.

The United States carried out strikes against military targets on the island on March 13 and Trump has threatened to also strike its critical oil infrastructure. However, given its vital role in Iran's economy, controlling the island would likely be viewed as a better option than destroying it, military experts say. Any use of U.S. ground troops - even for a limited mission - could pose significant political risks for Mr. Trump, given low support among the American public for the Iran campaign and Mr. Trump's own campaign promises to avoid entangling the U.S. in new West Asia conflicts.

Trump administration officials have also discussed the possibility of deploying U.S. forces to secure Iran's stocks of highly enriched uranium, one of the people familiar with the matter said. The sources did not believe a deployment of ground forces anywhere in Iran was imminent but declined to discuss specifics of U.S. operational planning. Experts say the task of securing Iran's uranium stockpiles would be highly complex and risky, even for U.S. special operations forces. A White House official, speaking on con-

dition of anonymity, said: "There has been no decision to send ground troops at this time, but President Trump wisely keeps all options at his disposal." The president is focused on achieving all of the defined objectives of Operation Epic Fury: destroy Iran's ballistic missile capacity, annihilate their navy, ensure their terrorist proxies cannot destabilize the region, and guarantee that Iran can never possess a nuclear weapon.

The discussions come as the U.S. military continues to attack Iran's navy, its missile and drone stockpiles and its defense industry. The U.S. has carried out more than 7,800 strikes since launching the war on February 28 and damaged or destroyed more than 120 Iranian vessels so far, according to a factsheet released on Wednesday by the U.S. Central Command, which oversees the roughly 50,000 U.S. troops in the West Asia. U.S. casualties

Mr. Trump has said his goals go beyond degrading Iran's military capabilities and could include securing safe passage through the Strait and preventing Iran from developing a nuclear weapon. Ground forces could help broaden his options to address those goals, but carry significant risk. Even without any direct conflict in Iran, 13 U.S. troops have been killed so far in the war and about 200 have been wounded, although the vast majority of the injuries have been minor, the U.S. military says. For years, Mr. Trump has rallied against his predecessors for getting involved in conflicts and has vowed to keep the United States out of foreign wars. But more recently he has refused to rule out the possibility of "boots on the ground" in Iran. A senior White House official told Reuters that Trump has various options for acquiring Iran's nuclear material but has not decided how to proceed. "Certainly there are ways in which it could be acquired," the official said, adding: "He hasn't made a decision yet." In written testimony to lawmakers on Wednesday (March 18, 2026), Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard said Iran's nuclear enrichment program had been obliterated by strikes in June and the entrances to those underground facilities had been "buried and shuttered with cement."

The sources said the discussions on U.S. reinforcements go beyond the arrival of an Amphibious Ready Group next week in the West Asia, with an attached Marine Expeditionary Unit that includes more than 2,000 Marines. But one of the sources noted that the U.S. military was losing a significant number of forces with the decision to send the USS Gerald R Ford aircraft carrier to Greece for maintenance after a fire on board the vessel. Mr. Trump has also oscillated on whether the U.S. should secure the Strait of Hormuz. After initially saying the U.S. Navy could escort vessels, he called on other countries to help open the key water way. With little interest from allies, Trump on Wednesday mused about simply leaving. "I wonder what would happen if we 'finished off' what's left of the Iranian Terror State, and let the Countries that use it, we don't, be responsible for the so called 'Strait?'" Mr. Trump posted on Truth Social.

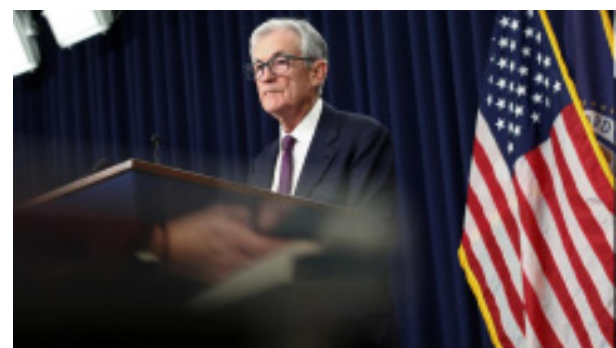
## U.S. Fed holds rates unchanged over 'uncertain' Iran war implications

GNS News Agency, March 20

The U.S. Federal Reserve kept interest rates unchanged as expected Wednesday, in defiance of President Donald Trump as the world's largest economy battles stubborn inflation, weak labour demand and an "uncertain" economic outlook due to the war in Iran. The 11-1 vote kept rates steady at a range of 3.50% to 3.75%, with officials flagging one expected rate cut by the end of the year.

"The implications of developments in the Middle East for the US economy are uncertain," the Fed said in a statement. The central bank cut rates three consecutive times late last year before holding them steady at its January meeting. It has a dual mandate of maintaining inflation near a long-term target of two percent while ensuring maximum employment. With war in the West Asia causing global oil prices to spike, potentially fuelling widespread inflation and curbing growth, analysts said policymakers were unlikely to make any immediate moves. Affordability has been a key political issue for Mr. Trump, who has repeatedly called for rates to be slashed even as price increases have remained stubbornly high. "Uncertainty about the economic outlook remains elevated," the Fed said Wednesday (March 18, 2026), while noting that economic activity was "expanding at a solid pace." Job gains have remained low, and the unemployment rate has been little changed in recent months. Inflation remains somewhat elevated. "The Fed also released its quarterly summary of economic projections, expecting fourth-quarter GDP growth to come in at 2.4 percent year-on-year.

The Fed raised its inflation outlook, now expecting the personal consumption expenditure (PCE) measure to stand at 2.7% by December 2026, up from an earlier estimate of 2.4 percent. Single dissenting vote The knock-on effects of the war in Iran, particularly oil supply shocks, have dominated headlines since the United States and Israel launched strikes on February 28. Central banks tend to ignore the inflation effects of short-term price shocks, but it is unclear how long the war will last. Before the war, a rate cut was expected as soon as this summer, with another possible later in the year. The only dissenting voice on Wednesday came from Fed Governor Stephen Miran, a close ally and former economic advisor of Trump, who voted for a quar-



ter-point cut to interest rates. The statement defied analyst expectations of a more fragmented Fed, since the central bank's two mandates are potentially in conflict with one another. For now, it appeared Fed policymakers were mostly in consensus to wait and see. Central banks tend to ignore the inflation effects of short-term price shocks, but it is unclear how long the war will last. While U.S. consumer inflation has dropped from a peak of 9.1% during the Covid pandemic, it remains well above the Fed's target, leaving households battered by years of price increases. "Unlike other countries, which have already achieved some level of price stability," the United States has yet to reach this point after five years, said Diane Swonk, chief economist at KPMG. She warned that, depending on how long the Iran war lasts, inflation could again soar past four percent. The Fed's other mandate, of managing unemployment, has also shown potential need for intervention. The United States unexpectedly lost 92,000 jobs in February, government data showed, while the unemployment rate rose to 4.4 percent. Analysts say a relatively steady unemployment rate has been masking churn beneath the surface — with sluggish labor demand covered by a drop in workers due to Trump's immigration crackdown. Swonk noted that uncertainty due to the Iran war and its knock-on effects would further curb labor demand. "Uncertainty acts as its own tax on the economy, and one of the first lines of defense that firms do is they freeze hiring," she said. Recent data ahead of the Fed meeting was not encouraging, with U.S. GDP growth revised sharply lower in the final months of 2025.

## Iran hits Gulf energy sites after attack on its gas field

Iran on Wednesday night struck oil facilities in Persian Gulf countries, following the U.S. and Israeli strikes on gas facilities in Iran's southern Bushehr province. This came hours after Israeli air strikes killed Iran's Intelligence Minister Esmael Khatib, the third high-profile assassination in 24 hours. Moments ago, parts of the gas facilities located in the South Pars Special Economic Energy Zone in Asaluyeh were struck by projectiles fired by the American-Zionist enemy," Iranian state television reported on Wednesday (March 18, 2026) evening.

The South Pars/North Dome mega-field is the largest known gas reserve in the world. Iran had earlier warned that any attack on its energy infrastructure would trigger retaliatory strikes at energy facilities in the region. Qatar's state-run energy company said that fires set by Iranian strikes on its main gas facility had caused "extensive damage". "QatarEnergy confirms that Ras Laffan Industrial City this evening has been the subject of missile attacks," the firm said in a statement. "All personnel have been accounted

for and no casualties have been reported at this time." Qatar said that attacks were a "direct threat to its national security". "Qatar considers this assault a dangerous escalation, a flagrant violation of its sovereignty, and a direct threat to its national security," the Gulf state's Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

According to late night reports, a second round of loud explosions rang out over Riyadh, after authorities previously said they intercepted four missiles. "Five complexes, two refineries, two petrochemical complexes, and a gas field in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates have become now legitimate targets for Iranian retaliation," the IRGC said in a statement. The facilities named in the warning are the Samref Refinery and Jubail Petrochemical Complex in Saudi Arabia, the Al-Hosn Gas Field in the UAE, and the Al-Mesaieed Holding and Petrochemical Complex, as well as Phases 1 and 2 of the Ras Laffan Refinery in Qatar. Earlier in the day, Israel's Defence Minister Israel Katz said an overnight strike on

## Early indications show Israel tank fire hit U.N. Lebanon base, Ghanaian peacekeepers wounded



Initial findings by an internal U.N. inquiry suggest Israeli tank fire hit a U.N. position in southern Lebanon on March 6, wounding Ghanaian peacekeepers, according to a Western military source, underscoring the growing risks as Israeli operations expand. The U.N. peacekeeping mission known as UNIFIL is stationed in southern Lebanon to monitor hostilities along the demarcation line with Israel — an area that is at the heart of clashes between Israeli troops and Iran-backed Hezbollah fighters. The mission, which will be halted at the end of 2026, has been sporadically caught in the crosshairs of both Israel and Hezbollah over the last couple of years, but with Israel considering a broader ground operation, the risks could be greater in the coming weeks. Lebanon was pulled into the war in West Asia when Hezbollah fired rockets at Israel that ignited a new Israeli offensive against the group. Three shells fired from Israeli tank

According to the source, the preliminary conclusions led by UNIFIL's Force Commander Reserve with support from explosive ordnance disposal specialists indicated that three strikes at the al-Qawzah base were direct hits from the main gun of an Israeli battle tank. "Israeli involvement in the attack against UNIFIL is undeniable, given that these munitions were manufactured by Israel Military Industries (IMI)," the source said. Ghanaian peacekeepers wounded

The findings of UNIFIL's probe have not been previously reported. UNIFIL had said on March 6 that Ghanaian peacekeepers were wounded amid heavy firing and called

the incident "unacceptable," but did not say at the time who was responsible. "That investigation is not yet complete. Once it is finalized, it will be shared with the parties, per usual practice," said UNIFIL spokesperson Kandice Ardiel. "Nonetheless, we reiterate the obligation of all actors to ensure the safety and security of peacekeepers and avoid harm to civilians. Any deliberate attack on peacekeepers is a grave violation of international humanitarian law and a violation of resolution 1701." Israel's military did not immediately respond to a request for comment. IMI could not immediately be reached for comment. Elbit Systems, a major Israeli defense contractor that owns IMI, also did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Lebanese prime minister's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Highlighting the concerns surrounding U.N. peacekeepers, UNIFIL said on Sunday that another group of peacekeepers were likely fired upon earlier that day on three separate occasions in southern Lebanon, "likely by non-state armed groups." It said no peacekeepers were injured. UNIFIL ability to carry out mission tested. The M339 HE-MP-T round can be used in anti-personnel, anti-helicopter, anti-materiel, anti-armour and anti-structure roles.

The shots were fired within a five-minute window, indicating repeated fire rather than a single stray round, the source said, adding that the base's location and coordinates were well known to all parties operating in the area, raising serious concerns over the safety of U.N. personnel. Three Ghanaian soldiers were wounded, according to the Ghanaian army. "This escalation, far from being isolated, is part of a worrying dynamic, severely testing UNIFIL's ability to carry out its peacekeeping mission," the source said. The Israeli military occupies five posts within Lebanon and despite a ceasefire last year had frequently carried out airstrikes in the country's south that it says are targeting Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah. U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701, among other provisions, states that no armed forces should be operating in southern Lebanon except the U.N. peacekeepers and the Lebanese military. Israel has repeatedly accused Hezbollah of trying to rearm and the Lebanese armed forces of failing to disarm the group.

## Qatar declares two Iranian embassy officials 'persona non grata' over attack on gas facility

Qatar, on Thursday (March 19, 2026), declared Iran's military and security attaches "persona non grata" and ordered them to leave the country within 24 hours, following Iran's attack on a massive gas facility in Qatar.

"Qatar considers both the military attache and the security attache at the embassy, in addition to the staff of the two attache offices "persona non grata", and requests that they leave the country within a maximum period of (24) hours," Qatar's Foreign Ministry said in a statement. The decision was announced during a meeting on Wednesday (March 18, 2026) between Director of Protocol at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ibrahim Yousif Fakhro, and Iranian Ambassador to Qatar Ali Salehabadi.

"The ministry explained that this decision comes in response to repeated Iranian targeting and the blatant aggression against the State of Qatar, which violated its sovereignty and security, in a flagrant breach of the principles of international law, United Nations Security Council Resolution No. (2817), and the principles of good



neighbourliness," the statement added. Qatar said that the continuation of this hostile approach by Iran will be met with "additional measures", adding that Qatar "reserves the right to take all necessary measures to protect its sovereignty and security, in accordance with the provisions of international law."

## As West Asia war threatens gas supply, remembering a gas grid India never built

The ongoing war in West Asia has plunged the world into a deep energy crisis. In India, the availability of domestic fuel, LPG, has been hit due by the disruption in supplies from the Persian Gulf. The global energy crisis is reminiscent of the Oil Shock of 1973 when members of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) cut oil production and slashed exports to protest the U.S.'s support for Israel in the Yom Kippur War. India responded by exploring alternative sources of energy, offshore oilfields in Bombay High, and by experimenting with new technologies.

The idea of using gasified coal to meet some of India's fuel needs first emerged in 1955 when Syed Husain Zaheer, director of the Regional Research Laboratory Hyderabad (RRLH) — now the CSIR-Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (IICT) — and later director-general of CSIR, submitted a plan to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru for a cross-country national gas grid. The plan envisaged the use of fuel gas produced from gasifying of coal and its supply through pipelines for domestic and industrial use. Zaheer believed fuel gas of high calorific value could be produced by completely gasifying non-caking fuels such as shale coal, lignite, and bituminous coal, all found in India. The technology involved gasifying coal using high pressure to form hydrocarbons and using oxygen to maintain a high thermal efficiency. It started with converting the sulphur present in the coal to hydrogen sulphide (H<sub>2</sub>S) and small amounts of carbonyl sulphide (COS). Sulphur compounds are then removed from the gas stream and separated acid gas is further processed to recover elemental sulphur. The gas was further cleaned using water scrubbing to remove any remaining particulate matter. In the 1940s, coal gasification was used at a commercial scale to provide town gas for street lighting in Europe and the U.S. But the concept's techno-economic feasibility had yet to be established for Indian coal. To start with, Zaheer proposed a "Town Gas Supply Scheme" for Hyderabad based on gasifying the coal found in the Singareni collieries and piping it to the city. If a gasification plant was established at Kothagudem, gas could be supplied not only to Hyderabad but also to several towns along the 290-km-long route, per the plan. Based on surveys of fuel consumption, population and demand projections, family income, and fuel demand trends, Zaheer proposed a pressure gasification plant of 7.5 million cubic feet capacity, and suggested the gas pipeline could be laid along the railway track to facilitate easy maintenance and inspections. To demonstrate the technology's feasibility, pilot studies were needed, which in turn required funding. Zaheer's idea did not find any takers in the Central government or the CSIR. On the energy front, the policy focus at the time was on finding petroleum reserves and the development of nuclear energy, besides harnessing hydroelectric power from large dams.

So in 1961, Zaheer urged Nehru to make a policy decision to establish several plants for manufacturing town gas based on coal gasification in select coal belts and link-

ing them through a countrywide grid. Nehru liked the plan and observed that it was "a modern and more economical method, and it will bring enormous relief to the railways". But the Ministry of Steel, Mines and Fuel pointed to the "infeasibility of the plan for transporting gas over long distances". The Planning Commission, the Coal Council, and the CSIR as well remained cold to the proposal and were reluctant to fund a pilot plant to test coal gasification. When Nehru appointed Zaheer the CSIR director-general in 1962, Zaheer got a chance to implement his idea to develop a pilot plant at RRLH. But the going was not easy as the plan required importing equipment. The wars of 1962 and 1965 did not help, delaying the procurement of machinery from Germany, and there was a massive cost overrun due to the devaluation of the rupee. The pilot plant for coal gasification set up by the Regional Research Laboratory, Hyderabad.

The project came to a halt as soon as Zaheer's term ended in 1966. His successor, Atma Ram, formed a committee to review the project. The panel gave an adverse report saying "it would not be advisable to establish and operate the plant in a manner proposed by RRLH" and suggested that the imported equipment be disposed of. Back then, there was strong opposition to CSIR labs setting up pilot plants to demonstrate technologies they had developed. This was despite the RRLH having already been running a successful semi-commercial pilot plant on another coal technology: low temperature carbonisation. Following the RRLH model, the National Chemicals Laboratory in Pune and the Indian Institute of Petroleum in Dehradun erected pilot plants as well. After several reviews and controversies, the coal gasification project at RRLH received the go-ahead in 1972 and the crates of imported machinery were opened seven years after they had landed in Hyderabad. The project also received an unexpected boost: the Oil Shock in October 1973. The shortage of petroleum products sent the government scurrying for alternative fuels, recognising that "in the perspective of the country's long-term energy requirements, consideration should be given to installing small to medium coal gasification plants to produce gas". "It is now abundantly clear that a coal-based energy strategy is the only realistic course for us," Prime Minister Indira Gandhi announced, recognising the past mistakes. In her inaugural speech at the Indian Science Congress session at Bhubaneswar in January 1977, she admitted, "Had we listened, in the early '60s, to Dr Husain Zaheer's plea, and based our chemical feedstock policy not merely on oil but on the abundant coal reserves, we would have withstood the oil crisis with much less strain." However, by the time RRLH erected the coal gasification pilot plant, the technology had moved to the next level. The pilot plant was used as a test bed for research on the integrated gasification combined cycle (IGCC), in collaboration with Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL), which commissioned the first such plant in 1985. Unlike coal gasification to produce town gas, IGCC combined gas production from coal with electricity generation.

## Oil prices fall more than \$2 as Iraqi, Kurdish authorities agree to export deal



Oil prices fell more than \$2 per barrel on Wednesday (March 18, 2026) to pare some of Tuesday's (March 17, 2026) sharp gains after the Iraqi government and Kurdish authorities reached a deal to resume oil exports via Turkey's Ceyhan port, providing modest relief to concerns about supplies from West Asia.

But with no signs of a de-escalation of the Iran conflict, which has left oil exports from West Asia largely halted, Brent futures prices have settled above \$100 per barrel for the prior four consecutive sessions. After rising more than 3% on Tuesday, Brent futures retreated \$2.26, or 2.19%, to \$101.16 a barrel by 0429 GMT on Wednesday. The U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude dropped \$2.99, or 3.11%, to \$93.22. Iraq's Oil Minister Hayan Abdel-Ghani said oil flows from Ceyhan were expected to start at 07.00 GMT on Wednesday, according to state media. Two oil officials said last week that Iraq was seeking to pump at least 1,00,000 barrels per day of crude through the port.

## Children have borne the brunt of Israel-U.S. aggression

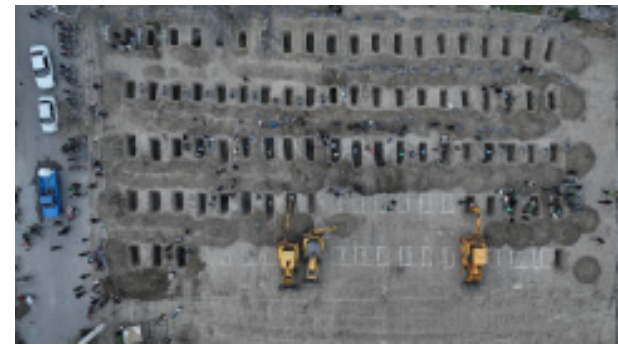
On the morning of February 28th, as hundreds of young girls were attending their classes in Minab's Shajareh Tayyebah school, the building was struck by a missile. Residents and rescuers, who rushed seeing black smoke rising in place of the school, found blood-stained backpacks, severed arms, and dead children buried under piles of rubble. Their school was likely struck by one of the U.S.'s Tomahawk cruise missiles, claimed to be one of the most precise guided weapons in the world. The school was one of the casualties in the targeted attacks by the U.S. on Iran, in conjunction with Israel.

Later reports confirmed that around 168 children, mostly aged between seven and 12, were killed in the attack. The school was located adjacent to a naval compound operated by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Though U.S. President Donald Trump initially suggested that Iran itself — despite not having Tomahawk missiles — may have been responsible for these attacks, media reports and the U.S.'s preliminary military investigations suggest the attack was a result of the U.S.'s use of outdated targeting data. The Pentagon elevated its probe into the matter last week. A UN inquiry is also underway to investigate the fatal strike. Amnesty International, this week, said that the strike points to a failure by the U.S. forces to take feasible precautions to avoid civilian harm. However, the girls in Minab weren't the only ones who paid the price of the ongoing war. More children are estimated to have been killed in the daily strikes launched by the U.S. and Israel on Iran in separate instances. Less than two thousand kilometres away in Lebanon, more than a hundred children have been killed by Israel's campaign since March 2. Reports indicate that Israeli airstrikes have completely wiped out generations of families in the country in less than two weeks. The death toll due to the ongoing conflict in Lebanon is reported to be rising faster than any other previous war that the country had previously endured.

What happened in Minab and what is unfolding in Lebanon aren't isolated instances. Data points to a more troubling pattern — the U.S. and Israel together accounted for around 62% of "external attacks" that ended with a child casualty since 1996. External attacks refers to acts of aggression or military involvement by an actor on foreign soil. The Hindu analysed events of external attacks that were recorded by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project. While over 66,000 events of external attacks have been lethal (ending with any fatalities), around 4% of such reported attacks have ended up with at least one child fatality. Incidences of attacks were used as a proxy, as data for child fatalities under external attacks were not separately maintained. These events offer a reliable snapshot of the extent of attacks against children during conflict. However, fatalities in individual events may be significantly higher. The

"The news provided some relief to the market. Any additional volume finding its way back to the market is valuable under the current situation, so prices moved down to reflect that," said LSEG senior analyst Anh Pham. "But we are still in a \$100 per barrel oil environment, and the crisis around the Strait of Hormuz shows no sign of stopping yet," Anh Pham said.

"Oil production from Iraq's main southern oilfields, where most of its crude is produced and exported, has plunged 70% to just 1.3 million bpd," sources said on March 8, as the Iran conflict effectively shut the vital Strait of Hormuz through which some 20% of global oil passes. Iran confirmed on Tuesday that its security chief Ali Larjani had been killed in an Israeli attack. He is the most senior figure targeted since Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed on the first day of the U.S.-Israeli war at the end of February 2026. A senior Iranian official said Iran's new supreme leader had rejected de-escalation offers conveyed by intermediary countries. The U.S. military said on Tuesday it had targeted sites along Iran's coastline near the Strait of Hormuz because Iranian anti-ship missiles posed a risk to international shipping there. "Larjani's death and the U.S. military's strikes on Iranian coastal positions near the Strait of Hormuz raised some hopes that the conflict could end sooner," said Mingyu Gao, chief researcher for energy and chemicals at China Futures. "U.S. crude stocks rose by 6.56 million barrels in the week ended March 13," market sources said, citing American Petroleum Institute (API) figures on Tuesday. A Reuters poll showed that U.S. crude oil stockpiles were expected to have risen by about 3,80,000 barrels in the week to March 13.

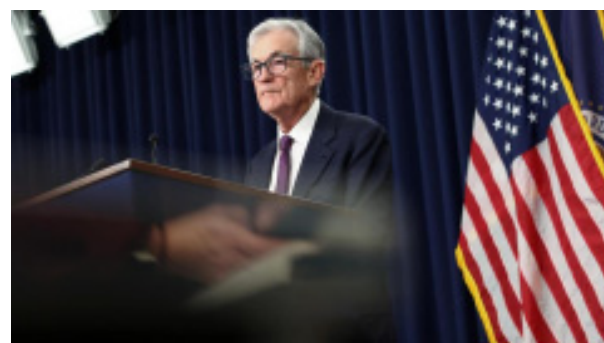


data only pertains to confirmed events of deaths, therefore cases of missing children or unreported events of deaths are not included in the analysis. A further look at the 4% reveals that close to 2,500 reported cases of external attacks have ended with a child fatality between 1996 and 2026.

A country-wise analysis of these events show that Israel accounted for about 41% of all external attacks that ended with a child fatality. That is, about one in every nine lethal attacks (11%) launched by Israel since 1996 has killed at least one child. No other country recorded such events as high as Israel. The figures reflect the violent escalations in Gaza and West Bank since October 7, 2023 including instances when children were killed while receiving aid; via airstrikes; and in refugee camps. Close to 20,000 children have been killed in Gaza between October 7, 2023 and August, 2025. Infants alone accounted for 10% of these figures. This is despite the fact that Israel, globally, only accounted for 14% of lethal external attacks. Meanwhile, Russia alone accounted for 56% of lethal external attacks since 1996. Less than 2% of them have been reported to kill a child. As for the U.S., which ranked second, in terms of external attacks carried out by countries that resulted in a child fatality, data shows that roughly 7% of its lethal external attacks resulted in a child casualty. The United Nations Security Council identifies killing and maiming of children as one of the six grave violations against children in times of war. Children in these conflict zones might also be exposed to other atrocities such as recruitment by armed groups, sexual violence, abduction and denial of humanitarian access.

Days after the Minab school strike, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child said in a statement that the strikes on civilian infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, serve as a stark reminder that children are among the most vulnerable in armed conflicts. It added that children must never be treated as collateral damage. However, with intensifying attacks and more buildings falling to rubble, children are at an increasing risk of becoming exactly that.

## Pakistan's long-range ballistic missiles could potentially target U.S.: Tulsi Gabbard



include missiles capable of targeting the US. In a testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee, Ms. Gabbard, the Director of National Intelligence, also said that the threats to the U.S. were set to expand collectively from more than 3,000 missiles at present to more than 16,000 missiles by 2035.

"The U.S. secure nuclear deterrent continues to ensure safety in the Homeland against strategic threats. However, Russia, China, North Korea, Iran and Pakistan have been researching and developing an array of novel, advanced, or traditional missile delivery systems with nuclear and conventional payloads that put our Homeland within range," Ms. Gabbard said.

She said the U.S. Intelligence Community assesses that threats to the Homeland will expand collectively to more than 16,000 missiles by 2035, from the current assessed figure of more than 3,000 missiles. "The IC assesses that China and Russia are developing advanced delivery systems meant to be capable of penetrating or bypassing US missile defences," Ms. Gabbard said.

The U.S. top intelligence official said that North Korea's ICBMs can already reach U.S. soil, and it is committed to expanding its nuclear arsenal. "Pakistan's long-range ballistic missile development potentially could include ICBMs with the range capable of striking the Homeland," Ms. Gabbard said. She said that Iran has previously demonstrated space launch and other technology it could use to begin to develop a militarily viable ICBM before 2035, should Tehran attempt to pursue the capability. "However, these assessments will be updated as the full impact of Operation Epic Fury's devastating strikes on Iran's missile production facilities, stockpiles, and launch capabilities is determined," Ms. Gabbard said.

GNS News Agency, March 20

United States' intelligence chief Tulsi Gabbard on Wednesday (March 18, 2026) told lawmakers that Pakistan's long-range ballistic missile development could

## Can the ED file writ petitions before Courts? | Explained



On January 20, the Supreme Court agreed to examine whether the Enforcement Directorate (ED) is entitled to invoke the writ jurisdiction of constitutional courts to seek relief. A Bench comprising Justices Dipankar Datta and Satish Chandra Sharma admitted separate petitions filed by the Kerala and Tamil Nadu governments challenging a Kerala High Court ruling that upheld the agency's right to do so. Taking note of the substantial question of law raised by the Opposition-ruled States, the Bench directed that the matter be listed for hearing after four weeks.

When can courts issue writs?

In India, the Supreme Court is vested with the power to issue prerogative writs under Article 32 of the Constitution, while High Courts exercise a similar jurisdiction under Article 226. These writs trace their origins to English common law, where they evolved as extraordinary remedies issued by the sovereign in situations where ordinary legal remedies were unavailable or ineffective. The Constitution recognises five such writs — habeas corpus (to secure the release of a person from unlawful detention), mandamus (to compel a public authority to perform a statutory or public duty), prohibition (to restrain a lower court or tribunal from acting beyond its authority), certiorari (to quash an order of a lower court or tribunal for lack of jurisdiction or illegality), and quo warranto (to question the legality of a person's claim to a public office).

While Article 32 enables the Supreme Court to issue writs primarily for the enforcement of fundamental rights, Article 226 vests High Courts with broader authority, allowing them to issue writs not only for enforcing fundamental rights but also "for any other purpose", including the enforcement of legal rights and the review of administrative action. However, the grant of such writs is discretionary, and courts may decline relief where an effective alternative remedy is already available. Further, under Article 361 of the Constitution, a writ of mandamus cannot be issued against the President or the Governor of a State with respect to the exercise and performance of the powers and duties of their office. A writ also does not ordinarily lie against private individuals or bodies, except in cases where the state is alleged to have acted in collusion with a private party in violation of constitutional or statutory provisions.

Why did Kerala approach the SC?

The dispute traces its origin to a September 26, 2025 ruling of a Division Bench of the Kerala High Court, which held that the ED, established by the Union government under Section 36 of the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (1999 Act) pursuant to a June 2000 notification, is a statutory body entitled to invoke the writ jurisdiction of High Courts under Article 226 of the Constitution. The ruling arose from a writ petition filed by the ED challenging the Kerala government's decision to constitute a Commission of Inquiry (Col) in connection with the diplomatic gold smuggling case. The case relates to the seizure of 30 kg of gold, valued at ₹14.82 crore, from diplomatic baggage arriving from the United Arab Emirates at the Thiruvananthapuram International Airport on July 5, 2020. The National Investigation Agency subsequently registered a case under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, alongside parallel proceedings initiated by the ED under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA).

The case later emerged as a flashpoint between the Centre and the State after Swapna Prabha Suresh, the prime accused, released an audio clip alleging that ED officials had coerced her into implicating persons holding high office in the State. Similar allegations were subsequently made in a letter by a co-accused. Acting on these allegations, the Pinarayi Vijayan government had tasked the inquiry commission to probe if there was a conspiracy afoot against the State's leaders and, if so, to unearth the identity of those behind the plot. The ED, thereafter, through its Deputy Di-

rector, approached the High Court challenging the May 7, 2021, notification constituting the Col. It sought a writ of mandamus to call for the relevant records and a writ of certiorari to quash the notification on the ground that it was wholly without jurisdiction and contrary to law.

However, the Kerala government questioned the ED's locus to maintain a writ petition, contending that it is merely a department of the Union government and not a juristic person or body corporate capable of suing or being sued. It further argued that the agency's only available remedy lay under Article 131 of the Constitution, which vests the Supreme Court with exclusive jurisdiction to adjudicate disputes between the Centre and the States. To buttress its contention, the State also relied on the Supreme Court's 2003 ruling in Chief Conservator of Forests, Government of Andhra Pradesh versus Collector, which had deprecated the practice of Centre and State governments filing writ petitions against each other before High Courts.

What did the High Court rule?

In August 2021, a single judge of the High Court rejected the State government's objection to the maintainability of the ED's writ petition, observing that ED officers exercise statutory powers and that the agency cannot be treated as merely a department of the Union government. The State's appeal against this decision was dismissed by a Division Bench in its September 2025 ruling. The Bench, comprising Justices Sushrut Arvind Dharmadhikari and Syam Kumar V.M., reiterated that the ED is a statutory body and that its officers are designated statutory authorities under Sections 48 and 49 of the PMLA. Rejecting the State's contention that the agency lacked juristic personality and the capacity to sue, the Bench observed that such an objection amounted to a "trivial defect" and was "a matter of form and not substance", which could not defeat the ED's statutory right to seek recourse under Article 226 of the Constitution.

What have Kerala and Tamil Nadu argued before the top Court?

In its appeal before the top court, the Kerala government objected to the High Court's characterisation of its challenge to the maintainability of the ED's writ petition as a "trivial defect". It pointed out that the Supreme Court, in Chief Conservator of Forests, had held that the capacity of a legal entity — natural or artificial — to sue or be sued is a matter of considerable importance and that proceedings would fail if the necessary party lacked such capacity. The State further contended that the Deputy Director of the ED, being only an officer and not a juristic person, lacked the locus to file a writ petition. "Hence, he also could not have filed a writ petition. Therefore, the finding of the High Court that the Deputy Director of Enforcement has locus standi to institute the writ petition is erroneous... Neither the provisions of the 1999 Act nor the PMLA confer any legal personality on the ED so as to entitle it to be treated as a juristic person competent to sue," the petition stated. Tamil Nadu, supporting Kerala's challenge, submitted that it had been engaged in nearly identical circumstances. It alleged that the ED had indulged in a "gross and blatant abuse of the process of law" by filing a writ petition before the Madras High Court in connection with proceedings relating to alleged illegal mining in the State. In a separate appeal before the Supreme Court, Tamil Nadu argued that the Kerala High Court's ruling had "emboldened the ED to venture a similar line of action" before the Madras High Court in its case.

What are the possible implications?

"It is contested whether the ED can be placed on the same footing as statutory bodies such as the Securities and Exchange Board of India or the Reserve Bank of India, which are juristic entities with perpetual succession and an express statutory capacity to sue and be sued", Alok Prasanna Kumar, co-founder of the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, told The Hindu. He noted that the ED is widely regarded as an instrumentality of the Union government, prosecuting cases on its behalf rather than functioning as an autonomous legal entity. Mr. Kumar further pointed out that the ED does not have any independent legal rights vis-à-vis State governments. "State governments do not owe any 'public duty' to the ED that could justify the issuance of a writ of mandamus or certiorari against them. At best, the allegation may be that a State has encroached upon the powers of the ED as an arm of the Union government. Such a claim would have to be pursued as a Centre-State dispute under Article 131 of the Constitution, over which the Supreme Court has exclusive jurisdiction", he said.

## Gauhati High Court lists PIL amid Assam vote row

The Gauhati High Court on Wednesday (January 28, 2026) listed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) seeking judicial intervention into the alleged large-scale misuse of objections during Assam's Special Revision of electoral rolls, amid a controversy over remarks made by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. The PIL, filed by advocate F.Z. Mazumder under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, challenges what the petitioner describes as false, fraudulent, and mala fide filing of Form-7 objections during the revision exercise ahead of the 2026 Assam Assembly elections.

The petition alleges impersonation, identity misuse, and a failure of the election authorities and the State administration to conduct a transparent enquiry or initiate penal action against those responsible. Mr. Mazumder has sought the constitution of a high-level independent judicial enquiry, preferably headed by a sitting or retired judge, to examine the alleged abuse of the statutory objection mechanism and to ensure that no voter is deleted from the rolls based on disputed or forged complaints.

He said that the election authorities' inaction enabled arbitrary deletion proceedings, compelling lawful voters to defend their right to vote based on fraudulent complaints. The PIL cited extensive media reports from late January detailing instances of voters wrongly marked as "dead" or "shifted", and of individuals named as complainants who denied filing objections altogether. The petitioner argued that the alleged misuse threatens the constitutional mandate of free and fair elections and disproportionately impacts marginalised and less-literate voters. The court directed the respondents — the Centre, Assam Government, Election Commission of India, and State Electoral Officer — to file their replies before February 24, the date of the hearing.

Potentially inflammatory the court listing came on the day the Assam unit of Trinamool Congress (TMC) issued a statement, objecting to the Chief Minister's remarks on alleged "vote theft" during the Special Revision process. In a letter to the Chief Justice of Gauhati High Court, TMC's State senior Vice-President Dulu Ahmed said the Chief Minister publicly acknowledged irregularities in the voter



revision exercise but failed to order action against those allegedly involved. The letter said that despite opposition parties submitting information related to alleged manipulation to the Election Commission, no visible steps were taken. It further objected to the Chief Minister's alleged use of 'Miya', a pejorative term for Bengali-speaking Muslims, and calls for social and economic exclusion of the community.

Mr. Ahmed said the Chief Minister's public statements allegedly include "indications of removal of names of genuine Muslim voters from the electoral rolls, with mala fide intention and without any basis." He also said that such "repeated communal references" have the "potential to inflame religious sentiments and disturb the order amongst Hindus and Muslims" in Assam. Seeking guidelines restraining public functionaries from making statements that may incite communal disharmony, he requested the court to direct the Assam Government and the Election Commission to ensure that the ongoing Special Revision of poll rolls is conducted strictly in accordance with the law, without religious or communal bias. According to the draft electoral roll published on December 27, 2025, Assam has 2.51 crore voters after 4.78 lakh were marked dead and 5.23 lakh were found shifted, while 53,619 multiple entries were deleted.

## 'I am calling it off': Arijit Singh retires from playback singing



"I am calling it off, it was a wonderful journey," said Arijit Singh on Tuesday (January 27, 2026), announcing that he will not be taking up any new assignments as a playback singer, a decision that sent shockwaves across his fan base. In a message shared on his social media pages, Mr. Singh said he has decided to step away from playback singing, a move that comes at the peak of his career as one of the most popular and in-demand voices in Hindi cinema.

"Hello, Happy New Year to all. I want to thank you all for giving me so much love all these years as listeners. I am happy to announce that I am not going to be taking any new assignments as a playback vocalist from now on. I am calling it off. It was a wonderful journey," he wrote. The 38-year-old, however, clarified that he would continue to make music independently and complete existing commitments. "God has been really kind to me. I am a fan of good music and in future will be learning more and do

more on my own as a small little artist. Thanks again for all your support. I still have to finish some pending commitments, will finish them. So you might get some releases this year. Just to be clear that I won't stop making music," he added. While Mr. Singh did not elaborate on the reasons behind his decision, the announcement was met with disbelief with many fans expressing their dismay in the comments section. "Too soon sir, can't be real," wrote one user.

Mr. Singh's rise in the Indian music industry has been nothing short of meteoric. He started out as a contestant on reality show Fame Gurukul in 2005 and made his playback debut in 2011 with Phir Mohabbat from the Emraan Hashmi-starrer Murder 2. He broke into the big league with the soulful hit Tum Hi Ho from Aashiqui 2 in 2013. The success of the song made him a household name. After that, Mr. Singh quickly became the voice of many moods, be it love, heart-break or happiness. He went on to deliver a string of chartbusters such as Channa Mereya, Agar Tum Saath Ho, Raabta, Kesariya, Gerua, Ae Dil Hai Mushkil and Chaleya. Over the years, he has lent his voice to nearly all of Hindi cinema's leading stars — from superstars Salman Khan and Shah Rukh Khan to actors like Ranbir Kapoor and Ranveer Singh. Mr. Singh recorded songs in multiple Indian languages, including Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Marathi, and collaborated with leading composers and filmmakers. His work earned him numerous Filmfare Awards, including multiple Best Male Playback Singer honours. In July 2025, Mr. Singh edged past global pop stars Taylor Swift and Ed Sheeran to emerge the most followed artist on music streaming platform Spotify with 151 million followers.

## Vietnam and the EU upgrade ties as US tariffs reshape global trade



GNS News Agency, Feb 2

Hanoi: Vietnam and the European Union on Thursday upgraded ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership, Vietnam's highest diplomatic level, as both recalibrate trade amid disruptions to global finance driven by U.S. tariff pressure. The upgrade places the EU on the same diplomatic footing as the United States, China and Russia and was announced during a visit to Hanoi by European Council President Antonio Costa.

"At a moment when the international rules-based order is under threat from multiple sides, we need to stand side by side as reliable and predictable partners," Costa said, adding that the partnership is about "developing spheres of shared prosperity." Costa arrived in the Vietnamese capital Hanoi after India and the European Union

reached a free trade agreement on Tuesday after nearly two decades of negotiation. Vietnam's President Luong Cuong called the move a "historic milestone." The announcement comes less than a week after Vietnam reelected Communist Party General Secretary To Lam as the country's top leader, endorsing his vision of economic growth driven by aggressive reforms.

Vietnam has been a major beneficiary of globalization, emerging as a key export hub for electronics, garments and consumer goods as multinational firms shifted production away from China. That export-led growth has helped lift incomes and transform the economy, but Vietnam's large and persistent trade surplus has drawn criticism, particularly from the U.S. and increasingly from Europe, where officials have raised concerns about market access. For the EU, the deal strengthens access to one of Asia's fastest-growing manufacturing hubs and supports efforts to diversify supply chains as trade tensions increase. Bilateral trade in the first 11 months of 2025 reached more than \$66.8 billion, up 6.6% from a year earlier. The EU is Vietnam's fourth-largest trading partner, third-largest export market and fifth-largest import source. Vietnam is the EU's biggest trading partner in Southeast Asia. Vietnam hopes to continue growth to become a rich nation by 2045 and is aggressively seeking new markets to reduce reliance on the U.S., which is its largest export destination that absorbs about 30% of the goods Vietnam sends abroad. The two sides signed a free trade agreement in 2020.

## China executes 11 members of Myanmar-based syndicate in crackdown on scam operations



GNS News Agency, March 20

Bangkok: China executed 11 members of a Myanmar-based family crime syndicate that killed 14 Chinese citizens and ran scam and gambling operations worth more

than USD 1 billion, authorities said. The Wenzhou city Intermediate People's Court announced the execution in a statement on Thursday morning. It sentenced the 11 people to death in September. They included Ming Guoping and Ming Zhenzhen, who the court found led the scam and gambling operations, as well as key group members Zhou Weichang, Wu Hongming and Luao Jianzhang. The group filed an appeal that was rejected by the court in November.

The family members were detained in November 2023 when Chinese authorities exerted pressure on authorities in the border areas shared with Myanmar to crack down on scams. Scam parks have become an industrial scale business in Southeast Asia, especially Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos, where a mix of trafficked and willing labour have carried out digital scams on victims around the world. Authorities in the region face growing international pressure from China, the US and other nations to address the proliferation of criminal activity.

## Bangladesh's ousted leader Hasina denounces the upcoming election from her exile in India

From her exile in India, Bangladesh's ousted leader Sheikh Hasina has slammed the country's upcoming election after her party was barred from the polls, remarks that could deepen tensions ahead of the pivotal vote next month. Hasina, who was sentenced to death for her crackdown on a student uprising in 2024 that killed hundreds of people and led to the toppling of her 15-year rule, warned in an email to The Associated Press last week that without inclusive and free and fair elections, Bangladesh will face prolonged instability. She also claimed that Bangladesh's interim government led by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus deliberately disenfranchised millions of her supporters by excluding her party — the former ruling Awami League — from the election. "Each time political participation is denied to a significant portion of the population, it deepens resentment, delegitimises institutions and creates the conditions for future instability," she wrote. "A government born of exclusion cannot unite a divided nation," Hasina added. More than 127 million people in Bangladesh are eligible to vote in the February 12 election, widely seen as the country's most consequential in decades and the first since Hasina's removal from power after the mass uprising. Mr. Yunus' interim administration is overseeing the process, with voters also weighing a proposed constitutional referendum on sweeping political reforms. Campaigning started last week, with rallies in the capital, Dhaka, and elsewhere. Mr. Yunus returned to Bangladesh and took over three days after Hasina fled to India on August 5, 2024, following weeks of violent unrest. He has promised a free and fair election, but critics question whether the process will meet democratic standards and whether it will be genuinely inclusive after the ban on Hasina's Awami League. There are also concerns over security and uncer-

tainty surrounding the referendum, which could bring about major changes to the constitution. Mr. Yunus' office said in a statement to the AP that security forces will ensure an orderly election and will not allow anyone to influence the outcome through coercion or violence. International observers and human rights groups have been invited to monitor the process, the statement added. The Election Commission of India (ECI) says some 500 foreign observers, including from the European Union and the Commonwealth, are expected to watch the polls on February 12. Human rights and minority groups have accused the interim authorities of failing to protect civil and political rights. Hasina's party has alleged arbitrary arrests and deaths in custody of its members, claims that the government has denied. Critics have also voiced alarm over the growing influence of Islamist groups and attacks on minorities, particularly Hindus. There are also growing concerns over press freedoms under Mr. Yunus, with several journalists facing criminal charges and the offices of the country's two leading dailies coming under attack by angry protesters. Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), led by Tarique Rahman, 60, has emerged as the leading contender in the vote. Mr. Rahman, the son of former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia — Hasina's chief rival who died last month — returned home in December after more than 17 years in self-imposed exile. He has promised to work for the stability of this South Asian nation of 170 million people. Mr. Rahman's main rival in the February vote is a coalition of 11 allied groups headed by an Islamist party, the Jamaat-e-Islami. Under Hasina, Jamaat-e-Islami was under severe pressure and barred from elections. Its top leaders faced executions or prison terms on war crimes charges related to Bangladesh's independence war against Pakistan 1971.

## Centre's offer to states: Expedite piped natural gas rollout, get additional commercial LPG supplies



panies, which operate PNG networks, have said that many local bodies levy high right-of-use and pipeline digging charges and lease rents, which has dampened the CGD investment climate. He also cited the slow pace of rollout of PNG connections for household use—just 1.6 crore connections are functional against a minimum work programme commitment of 12.63 crore. "It is known that excessive taxes on a fledgling business could have strangulating effect on other consequential economic activities of that business. Therefore, needless to say that having reasonable taxes/other charges on CGD activity will lead to revenue buoyancy from attendant economic activity. Thus, to improve the investment environment and expedite adoption of natural gas as a clean fuel and substitution of scarce LPG supply, the State Government may require the local bodies (and for State owned infrastructure) to minimise the level of charges levied on the business CGD entities and improve ease of doing business," Mittal wrote.

In a media briefing on Wednesday, Petroleum Ministry Joint Secretary Sujata Sharma said that with incentives on the table, the "onus is on states and UTs to take this reform forward and expedite approvals". She said that the LPG supply situation remains concerning, even as the OMCs continue to maintain LPG supplies to households at regular levels. Sharma also said that priority sectors continue to receive protected natural gas supplies, including 100% supply to the household PNG and compressed natural gas (CNG) for transport segments, while supplies to industrial and commercial consumers are being regulated at around 80%. Although natural gas supplies to India have also been hit due to the Strait of Hormuz's closure, the situation is not as concerning as in the case of LPG. India depends on imports to meet roughly half of its natural gas needs, with 55-60% of the imports coming through the Strait. Over the past few days, the government has been appealing to consumers to switch to PNG if it is available in their vicinity. Some CGD companies have also announced incentives like some volumes of free gas and waiver of connection charges to encourage consumers to sign up for PNG connections.

The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) has also advised CGD companies to deploy additional resources and step up outreach to provide connections quickly to consumers wherever networks are available. According to the government's estimates, there are roughly 60 lakh households that are in the vicinity of PNG coverage, and can quickly switch to piped gas connections. As against 33.3 crore households with LPG connections, the number for PNG connections stands at around 1.5 crore. But while LPG is supplied in portable cylinders, PNG requires pipeline connectivity at the doorstep. Apart from prioritising LPG supplies to households over commercial and industrial consumers, the government ordered refiners to maximise LPG production, and directed them to divert propane, butane, and other streams from petrochemical manufacturing to LPG production. According to Sharma, these measures have led to an increase of 40% in domestic LPG production vis-à-vis pre-West Asia conflict levels, and a further increase is likely over the next few days. The government has also increased waiting times between cylinder bookings by households from 21 days to 25 days in urban areas and 45 days in rural areas to check hoarding behaviour and manage demand and supply. The government has also activated alternative fuel streams like kerosene, fuel oil, biomass, and even coal for commercial consumers to help them cover their LPG shortfall.

Close on the heels of urging states to help expedite expansion of piped natural gas (PNG) access and coverage amid the shortage of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) due to the West Asia conflict, the Centre on Wednesday said that it would incentivise the states that do so by allocating additional volumes of LPG for commercial use beyond the current allocation of 20% of demand. Under the proposal, states could get up to 30% of the commercial LPG demand if they take some specific measures to enable faster rollout of PNG infrastructure. This comes amid the Centre's appeal to LPG consumers—commercial users as well as households—to shift to PNG, wherever feasible, to take some pressure off of LPG supplies.

With the effective halt in maritime traffic through the critical chokepoint of the Strait of Hormuz, India's LPG supplies have been majorly hit. The country depends on imports to meet 60% of its LPG needs, and 90% of those flow through the Strait of Hormuz—the narrow maritime passage between Iran and Oman that connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman. This effectively means that roughly 55% of India's LPG consumption volumes are currently unavailable. While the government has prioritised LPG supplies to households, commercial and industrial users like restaurants are facing severe shortages of the fuel.

In a letter to the chief secretaries of all states and union territories on Wednesday, Petroleum Secretary Neeraj Mittal wrote, "In the current LPG shortage scenario due to Middle East crisis, OMCs (oil marketing companies) are providing 20% commercial LPG for states. It would be a smart move at this stage for States to enable transition of LPG consumers to PNG. Therefore, it is proposed that even while LPG for commercial is in short supply, its allocation to be increased to 30% provided States can help in long-term transition to PNG." In the letter, Mittal wrote that states can get an additional 1% commercial LPG allocation for formation of state and empowered district level committees with local body executive representation for approving CGD applications and resolving grievances. Another 2% allocation will be made if the state or UT issues orders to grant deemed permissions to all old applications by CGD companies, and also to the new ones "after lapse of 24 hrs of application", for laying pipelines.

"3% additional allocation for introduce a 'Dig and Restore scheme' for CGD entities so they can dig and restore on their own, eliminate restoration charges and substitute them with a Bank Guarantee up to a maximum of Rs 10 lakh per kilometre to ensure satisfactory restoration of digging/laying of pipelines. 4% additional allocation for reducing the annual rental/lease charges for laying/operating CGD network to zero," Mittal wrote. States and UTs that implement all these four measures will get LPG allocation to meet 30% of demand for the fuel from commercial consumers. Mittal said that city gas distribution (CGD) com-

## 'National interest paramount': India will prioritise domestic demand before deciding on extra fuel requests from neighbours

Some of India's neighbouring countries—primarily Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and the Maldives—have sought additional fuel supplies from New Delhi beyond the volumes that are regularly supplied to them. Some of India's neighbouring countries—primarily Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and the Maldives—have sought additional fuel supplies from New Delhi beyond the volumes that are regularly supplied to them. (Image generated using AI)

Amid requests from some of India's neighbours for additional fuel supplies amid the supply squeeze due to the West Asia conflict, the government on Wednesday said that it will prioritise meeting domestic fuel demand first before deciding on any of these requests. India is among the top refiners globally, and is a net exporter of petroleum fuels. In addition to commercial exports by India's private sector refiners, public sector oil companies supply fuels to neighbouring countries that include Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

"Rashtrahit sarvopari (national interest is paramount)...First, the domestic demand has to be met, and if there is a surplus, then a decision would be taken by an appropriate authority," Petroleum Ministry Joint Secretary Sujata Sharma told reporters at the government's press briefing on the West Asia conflict. According to Sharma, supply of crude oil and major fuels like petrol and diesel is currently adequate in India, and no shortage has been reported from any part of the country. Indian refineries are also operating at optimal levels, she said. Speaking on the same issue at the briefing, ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhi Jaiswal said, "We have received these requests, and we are examining those requests, keeping in mind our own requirements and availability." Some of India's neighbouring countries—primarily Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and the Maldives—have sought additional fuel supplies from New Delhi beyond the volumes that are regularly supplied to them. With the effective halt in vessel movements through the critical maritime chokepoint of the Strait of Hormuz, global oil and gas supply has been hit, leading to tightness in physical supplies and a surge in oil and gas prices. Unlike China, India has so far not moved to ban fuel exports. One-fifth of global oil and natural gas supplies usually transit through the Strait of Hormuz—the narrow waterway between Iran and Oman that connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman.

India is heavily dependent on West Asia for its energy imports, with a huge chunk of those supplies coming through the Strait of Hormuz. Around 2.5–2.7 million bpd of India's crude imports—accounting for around half of the country's total oil imports—have transited the Strait in recent months; the longer-term average is around 40%. This oil is mainly from Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Kuwait; India doesn't buy Iranian oil due to American sanctions on Tehran. India's dependence on the Strait for liquefied natural gas (LNG) and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) supplies is greater than for crude. Roughly 60% of India's LNG imports come through the Strait of Hormuz; the figure is a staggering 90% in the



"Rashtrahit sarvopari (national interest is paramount)...First, the domestic demand has to be met, and if there is a surplus, then a decision would be taken by an appropriate authority," Petroleum Ministry Joint Secretary Sujata Sharma told reporters at the government's press briefing on the West Asia conflict

case of LPG.

In the case of crude oil, India has managed to partly cover the loss in Hormuz volumes by ramping up imports from other regions. India's Russian oil imports, which had been on a downward trajectory for the past few months, have also shot up significantly since the West Asia conflict began on February 28. In the case of LNG, there is some stress, although supplies to priority sectors are being maintained at fairly high levels. On the LPG front, however, there is a supply crisis due to the extreme dependence on West Asia for the fuel.

Apart from prioritising LPG supplies to households over commercial and industrial consumers, for whom the supply has been cut to a fraction of earlier volumes, the government ordered refiners to maximise LPG production, and directed them to divert propane, butane, and other streams from petrochemical manufacturing to LPG production. According to Sharma, these measures have led to an increase of 40% in domestic LPG production vis-à-vis pre-West Asia conflict levels, and a further increase is likely over the next few days. India currently has 22 merchant vessels stuck in the Persian Gulf, and a majority of those are oil and gas tankers. They cumulatively hold 3.2 lakh tonnes of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), 2 lakh tonnes of LNG, and 16 lakh tonnes of crude oil destined for India. According to Jaiswal, India continues to be in constant contact with all relevant governments at various political and diplomatic levels and is making efforts to ensure that Indian vessels can achieve safe and unhindered transit to maintain the country's energy security. The efforts have seen some success, as two India-flagged LPG tankers arrived at Indian ports from the Persian Gulf earlier this week.

## Kriti Sanon's 'haircut therapy': Decoding the psychology of why a new look resets your mood



The urge to chop your hair off hits the hardest when you are going through a particularly tumultuous phase of life. A new colour, feathery bangs or a fresh fade has the power to turn your bad mood upside down, and Kriti Sanon can attest to that. On social media, she shared a few photos of her latest look. "A good haircut is my kinda therapy! ?????????? It's an instant reset, mood uplift & new energy! ??," the Do Patti actor mentioned in the caption of her Instagram post.

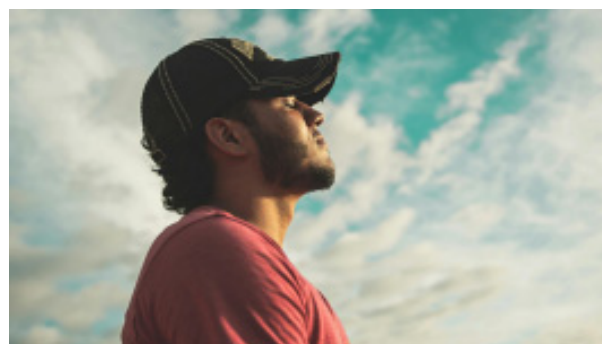
Why is a haircut associated with a better mood?

Deepti Chandy, Therapist & COO, Anna Chandy & Associates, said that a haircut is often described as a refresh, even a detox, because psychologically, we link it to a shift in mood. After a breakup or a period of emotional upheaval, many people feel an almost immediate urge to cut their hair, get bangs, or experiment with colour. The act itself becomes symbolic. "By changing something external

and visible, we attempt to mark an internal transition. It feels like a reset—a way of signalling that something has shifted," she said. For both women and men, hair is closely tied to identity and self-image. Chandy explained that it significantly shapes how we see ourselves and how we believe others perceive us. "For many women, shaving their head can feel like losing more than just hair; it can feel like shedding aspects of vanity or culturally defined femininity. This underscores how emotionally charged hair can be and how deeply it is woven into personal identity," she told indianexpress.com.

At the same time, altering one's hair offers a sense of control. During moments of uncertainty, such as a breakup or a major life change, modifying one's appearance can feel like reclaiming agency. Chandy shared that it becomes a tangible action in situations where much feels intangible. A new haircut can signal renewal, quietly declaring, "This is a new version of me." "Ultimately, it is less about the hair itself and more about the meaning attached to it—reinvention, autonomy, and the comfort of choosing change on one's own terms," she added. According to her, changing one's appearance can positively impact mood. "When we get a new hairstyle, it is not just about the change itself—it is also about the validation that often follows. People notice, they compliment you, and you begin to feel better about the choice you have made," said Chandy, adding that this response creates a positive feedback loop. "You feel good about doing something new, others reinforce it with their reactions, and that affirmation strengthens your confidence. This cycle of change and validation contributes directly to an uplift in mood," she concluded.

## 'Why am I feeling pain on my left side when I take a deep breath?'



A sharp pain on the left side while taking a deep breath can be unsettling, often raising more questions than answers. While it may sometimes be harmless, it's not something to ignore. So when a user recently asked on Quora: "Why am I feeling pain on my left side when I take a deep breath?", we sought answers from an expert. According to Dr Arunesh Kumar, Director & HOD—Pulmonology, Paras Health, Gurugram, "pain on the left side while taking a deep breath is often related to structures involved in breathing, such as the lungs, pleura (lining of the lungs), chest wall muscles, or ribs." He adds that common causes include muscle strain, pleural inflammation, or minor rib injury, though in some cases it may also be linked to lung infections or reduced lung expansion. Less commonly, more serious conditions, such as a clot in the lungs or cardiac

issues, may be responsible.

Distinguishing between a simple strain and something more concerning is key. Dr Kumar explains, "muscle strain pain is typically localised, worsens with movement or certain positions, and may improve with rest or mild pain relief." It often follows physical exertion or sudden movements. In contrast, "pain from underlying lung or pleural conditions is usually sharper, specifically worsens with deep breathing or coughing, and may not improve with rest." This kind of pain tends to persist and may signal an underlying issue that needs attention. The intensity and onset of pain can also offer clues. As Dr Kumar notes, serious conditions should be suspected when pain is sudden or worsening, particularly when breathing difficulty is present. "Conditions like pulmonary embolism often present with abrupt chest pain and breathlessness, while pleurisy causes sharp pain with each breath." Pneumonia, meanwhile, may bring chest discomfort along with fever and cough. He also highlights warning signs that shouldn't be overlooked: shortness of breath, persistent cough, fever or chills, rapid heartbeat, fatigue, or in rare cases, coughing up blood. The presence of these symptoms alongside chest pain increases the likelihood of a more serious condition.

Importantly, Dr Kumar advises that "immediate medical help should be sought if the pain is severe, sudden, or associated with breathlessness, dizziness, or fainting." Any chest pain that feels unusual, does not improve, or worsens quickly should be treated as a medical emergency.

## 'You are not even working that hard': Abhinav Shukla addresses rumours of jealousy over wife Rubina Dilaik's success; how self-awareness gets rid of insecurity



It's not uncommon for insecurities to creep into relationships. However, actor Abhinav Shukla is challenging that notion by openly acknowledging that his wife, Rubina Dilaik, is more successful and admired than he is—and doing so without any resentment. In a recent conversation on a podcast with Shardul Thakur, Abhinav addressed the rumours that he's jealous of Rubina's career growth and clarified why that couldn't be further from the truth. He said, "I see her effort-to-reward ratio, which is way higher. She puts in more effort aur uska reward bhi usko milta hai (she gets rewarded for that). I am a distracted genius. Aaj idhar chale gaye kal, udhar chale gaye... so uss hisab se mujhe kaam mila hai (Today I went here, tomorrow I went there... so based on that, I got work). When I see that, how can you be jealous? You can see yourself. You are not even working that hard, and you are not sacrificing that much in your life. Rubina is doing well, and that's why she is getting the reward. So when you see how you can be jealous, you can only be inspired."

He added that Rubina has never made him feel insecure in their relationship, mentioning, "First of all, Rubina is very sensible, she has never let me feel insecure, and this is a chain reaction type. I also put in efforts, and there is no misunderstanding just because we are people with two different levels of popularity. I think that's how two mature people behave. I think umar ka yehi toh benefit hai (this is the benefit of growing old)."

Gurleen Baruah, existential psychotherapist at That Culture Thing, tells indianexpress.com, "Self-awareness is the foundation that prevents success from becoming a battleground between partners. When a person is anchored in their worth—not defined by external comparisons—they are able to see their partner's achievements without feeling diminished. It's not about tallying who is ahead; it's about recognising that love asks for presence, not competition. A self-aware partner understands that their role is not to match or surpass, but to witness, support, and build a shared life where both can thrive in their own unique ways. Instead of asking, 'Am I enough compared to them?' the deeper, quieter question becomes, 'Am I being the person I want to be, alongside them?' In that shift, jealousy loses its grip, and love reclaims its ground."

How can couples maintain emotional balance and avoid insecurity?

When outside opinions and rumours start to build pressure, couples stay strong not by fighting every story, but by protecting the trust they share with each other. Baruah notes, "Emotional balance comes from knowing that their relationship is built on real conversations, shared values, and not on what the world thinks. Problems like insecurity and resentment often grow when partners start looking outward for approval." Practical strategies that help include setting clear emotional boundaries with the outside world—reminding each other that not every opinion needs a response. Regular check-ins also matter: creating safe spaces where

both partners can speak openly about any doubts or feelings before they grow into resentment. Celebrating private wins—moments of connection, support, and honesty—helps reinforce that their real story is the one they are writing together, not the one others are imagining.

## New online portal to simplify birth and death certificate registrations in Telangana

Hyderabad: A new portal, Civil Registration System (CRS), is to be launched soon to enable online registration of birth and death certificates. The initiative aims to provide a digital platform for applying for and processing birth and death certificate registrations online. The Central government has launched the CRS portal and made it mandatory for all states to implement it. Presently, the GHMC is authorised to issue birth and death certificates to residents of Greater Hyderabad, and the Secunderabad Cantonment Board (SCB) in the Cantonment. "Different states have been following different systems in issuing birth and death certificates. As a result, thousands of illegal certificates were being generated to get government benefits," an SCB senior official told 'Telangana Today'. GHMC officials, who noticed 26,000 fake birth and death certificates a few months ago, recommended criminal action against the responsible outsourcing staff. Once the CRS system is launched, the applicant will get birth and death certificates within three days and a maximum of five days at the Mee Seva centres concerned by paying Rs 30 per document. Birth certificates are key documents to obtain admission for school education, Indian passport, EPIC cards (voter ID cards), driving licence, PAN card,

## Why Manchester City's tweak in approach and inability to replace Kevin De Bruyne has resulted in Erling Haaland's recent dip in goal-scoring form



GNS News Agency, March 20

There was no remota, only a crushing feeling. As Pep Guardiola stared blankly into the horizon, Manchester City — playing most of the game with 10 men — were dumped out of the UEFA Champions League by Real Madrid 5-1 on aggregate. With their Premier League season hanging by a thread, having fallen 9 points behind Arsenal with a game in hand, Pep Guardiola's chances of silverware might hinge only on the domestic cups — where they face the Gunners in Sunday's EFL Cup final and then lock horns with Liverpool in the FA Cup quarterfinals on April 4. These are not easy fixtures on a normal day but considering City's stuttering form, the task looks tall. But how did it get to this position? When the season started, City looked to have all bases covered. But a potential problem has been lurking behind the scenes since last season — a Kevin de Bruyne-shaped hole and its impact on star striker Erling Haaland. Ever since the Belgian left City, Haaland's main supply line appears to have shrunk. Even though he still raked in the goals, they were bound to dry up as seen over the last one month, as before his strike against Real on Tuesday, his last goal came on February 12.

This might be due to City's slight tweak in formation where Guardiola has frequently deployed two strikers, which often doesn't play to Haaland's strengths when his team dominates possession but gets closed down near the final third. With the more favoured 4-3-3 where he plays as the

central attacker with assistance from two wingers and a No. 10 behind him, the Norwegian looks more like the behemoth of old. But with City's wide array of attacking talents, sometimes in order to line up to their strengths, Guardiola risks nullifying Haaland's impact, leaving him starved of service. The style City currently employ sees the players moving the ball around the edge of the opponent's penalty box, trying to find a perfect pass. (AP Photo) The style City currently employ sees the players moving the ball around the edge of the opponent's penalty box, trying to find a perfect pass. Couple that with City's midfield not firing on all cylinders and Haaland has looked pretty isolated up top, with chances coming at a premium. He is at his most ruthless when barreling at defenders with the ball pinged over his shoulder, which was the case during de Bruyne heydays. The two almost had a telepathic understanding with the Belgian often finding the striker from virtually impossible scenarios, leading to the barrage of goals during City's most ruthless phase.

In de Bruyne's absence, Phil Foden could have been moulded for that role but the Englishman hasn't had the best of 2026 with his role slowly diminishing in the starting XI. The 25-year-old hasn't started in crucial encounters — such as the ones against Real Madrid and Liverpool — which says a lot about his current form. The style City currently employ sees the players moving the ball around the edge of the opponent's penalty box, trying to find a perfect pass. During that time, Haaland constantly moves around inside the area, jockeying for space. But City's ponderous approach results in the striker waiting for the ball to arrive and when it eventually does, the chance of scoring has usually gone. The big Norwegian is not a typical Guardiola player but over the years has proved to be a devastating goal threat. But that was when he had the likes of de Bruyne, Ilkay Gundogan, Bernardo Silva and Rodri controlling the midfield and the small pockets in and around the goal, providing him with the desired service. With the first two having left the club and Silva and Rodri far from their best, the new crop of City midfielders have more often than not failed to work according to Haaland's strengths.

## Lionel Messi joins 900 club, scores landmark goal for Inter Miami in Champions Cup

GNS News Agency, March 20

Star footballer Lionel Messi scored his 900th career goal to become only the second player to reach the landmark in football after Cristiano Ronaldo. Messi brought up the milestone with a left-footed strike in Inter Miami's 1-1 draw with Nashville SC in the Round of 16 CONCACAF Champions Cup on Wednesday. Messi took a pass in the middle of the box in the seventh minute, controlled the ball, spun and lined a low shot through a maze of defenders and into the far corner of the net. Messi, who has won the Ballon d'Or eight times, reached the landmark in his 1,142nd appearance for club and country, nearly 100 games fewer than Ronaldo, who took 1,236 games to reach the milestone in September 2024.

Portuguese forward Ronaldo has now reached 965 goals and has targeted the 1,000-mark before he quits the game. The majority of Messi's goals came during his spell at Barcelona, where he scored 672 times. He added 32 at Paris St-Germain and 81 for Inter Miami and scored 115 for Argentina, with whom he won the World Cup in 2022. Messi's teammates have been able to depend on him at crucial times with 175 of his goals coming in knockout matches, including 35 in finals. His 129 goals in Europe's Champions League is second only to Ronaldo's 140. Messi's



milestone goal came on a bittersweet night for Inter Miami, who exited the competition on away goals after the first leg of their tie ended 0-0. Messi to lead Argentina in friendly match vs Guatemala. Messi was also called up for a friendly match against Guatemala on March 31 as Argentina gear up to defend their FIFA World Cup title. The game at La Bombonera in Buenos Aires was arranged after the Finalissima between Argentina and Spain on March 27 in Qatar was called off because of the conflict in the Middle East.

## 'Papa 1310-1315 se khelte the': Arjun Tendulkar and Rishabh Pant discuss Sachin's bat weights in IPL camp



GNS News Agency, March 20

While his stronger suit remains his left-arm pace bowling, Arjun Tendulkar's commitment to batting cannot be questioned. Like his legendary father, Sachin Tendulkar, Arjun prefers heavier willows as he revealed in a chat with his new IPL captain, Rishabh Pant, during Lucknow Super Giants' preparatory camp. In a video shared by the franchise on social media, Pant is seen enquiring Arjun about his bat weights. Arjun replied that they weighed about 1220

grams, relatively heavier than the average bat used by professionals. The 26-year-old also touched upon Sachin's affinity towards exceptionally heavy willows. "1220. Touch karo hi jaata hai. Papa toh 1310-1315 se khelte the. 1200 se halka main jata nahi hoon (1220). It travels just if you touch. Dad used to play with 1310-1315. I do not go for anything below 1200," Arjun said.

Pant also lauded Arjun for his commitment to the game, enquiring about his practice with former India all-rounder Yuvraj Singh a day after his wedding earlier this month. "Yuvi pa ke saath you were also practising? Yuvi pa ke saath full-time. Shaadi ke agle din hi? You're so enthu bhai (You were also practising with Yuvraj? Full-time with Yuvraj. The next day after the wedding itself? You're so enthu brother)," Pant said. Having made his T20 debut in 2021, Arjun was first signed up in the IPL by the Mumbai Indians the same season. Ahead of the IPL 2026 mini-auction in December, Arjun was traded by MI for his first stint outside the five-time champions. LSG acquired the services of Arjun at his base price of INR 30 lakh. In 29 T20Is, Arjun has snapped up 35 wickets at a strike rate of 16.0 besides aggregating 189 runs with the bat. Arjun has played only five IPL games in all, picking up three wickets.

## IPL not the best T20 league in the world for player welfare and rights: WCA rankings

GNS News Agency, March 20

The Indian Premier League (IPL) may have firmly established its position as cricket's biggest T20 franchise tournament and among the most-followed sports leagues in the world. However, a recent study reveals there's still room for improvement in several key areas involving the cricketers themselves.

According to a recent ranking released by the World Cricketers' Association, the IPL has slipped behind newer franchise leagues worldwide in terms of players' rights and welfare. The BCCI's cash cow league ranks only third, behind England's The Hundred and the South Africa-based SA20 competition. The WCA rated IPL at 62.6 on the said metrics, behind The Hundred's 75.2 and SA20's 68. However, the cash-rich IPL remained on top, earning the high-

est points for average payment and payment reliability, while still falling behind in areas such as "right to organise" and "dispute resolutions", according to a Reuters report.

The IPL came under widespread scrutiny in January after the BCCI insisted that the Kolkata Knight Riders release Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman amid backlash over ongoing political tensions between India and its eastern neighbours. The controversy escalated following which Bangladesh boycotted the T20 World Cup co-hosted by India in February-March, citing safety concerns. WCA Chief Executive Tom Moffat said in a statement on Thursday that while cricket had benefited from the increasing number of domestic competitions in recent years, it was important to ensure players were taken care of.

## Pakistan 'not to be taken lightly', says coach Craig Fulton after India drawn together in hockey World Cup



GNS News Agency, March 20

India has been drawn in a competitive Pool D alongside a resurgent Pakistan, a tricky England, and the upstarts Wales, with all group-stage matches scheduled at the Wagener Hockey Stadium in Amstelveen, Netherlands. (Photo: Hockey India) India has been drawn in a competitive Pool D alongside a resurgent Pakistan, a tricky England, and the upstarts Wales, with all group-stage matches scheduled at the Wagener Hockey Stadium in Amstelveen, Netherlands. might be a no-contest on paper — with India unbeaten against them in the last 17 matches, a run stretching a decade — but coach Craig Fulton has warned that Pakistan are a side 'not to be taken lightly' after the two sides were drawn in the same group of this year's hockey World Cup.

India has been drawn in a competitive Pool D alongside a resurgent Pakistan, a tricky England, and the upstarts Wales, with all group-stage matches scheduled at the Wagener Hockey Stadium in Amstelveen, Netherlands. India will open their campaign against Wales on August 15, followed by a crucial match against England

on August 17, before facing Pakistan on August 19 in what is expected to be one of the most high-voltage encounters of the group stage. Reacting to the draw, Fulton highlighted the intensity and challenge of the group, particularly pointing to Pakistan's rich hockey heritage and unpredictable style of play. "We're excited. It's a strong group, but that's exactly what you want at a World Cup — to be tested against the best," he said, adding that the team is motivated and clear in its preparation. "The mood in the camp is very positive. The players are motivated and hungry, and knowing our opponents now gives us real clarity and focus going into our preparation."

He further elaborated on the different tactical challenges each opponent presents. "England are a well-organised, physical side who are also top seed in our pool. Pakistan bring flair, unpredictability, and a rich hockey tradition — never a side to take lightly. Wales are making their mark on the international stage and will be full of energy and determination," Fulton explained. "We respect every opponent in this pool, but we back ourselves against all of them." With months to prepare, Fulton emphasised the importance of refining key areas such as structure, pressing, and finishing. "We'll be working hard on our structure, our press, and our finishing — the fine margins that decide games at this level," Fulton noted. "Every opponent in this pool has different strengths, so our preparation will be tailored and detailed. The next few months are about peaking at exactly the right moment." Fulton's India have been under pressure recently, with the team losing all four matches in the home leg of the FIH Pro League. The team did reasonably well in Australia, holding the giants to draws in the double-headers last month. India will return to action in the Pro League in June when they will travel to the Netherlands and England, where they will play Pakistan twice in the build-up to the World Cup.

## 'Bhaiya is irreplaceable': Rajasthan Royals' new captain Riyan Parag on Sanju Samson

GNS News Agency, March 20

The Royals, who are the winners of the inaugural edition of the IPL, are looking to fill the void left behind by Sanju Samson, who was traded to Chennai Super Kings in exchange for Ravindra Jadeja and Sam Curran after IPL 2025 ended. Parag, meanwhile, paid rich tribute to his predecessor at the helm in a press event, saying that Samson was irreplaceable.

"We never thought of replacing him (Sanju Samson). Can you replace Rohit Sharma or Virat Kohli? No. In the same manner, Sanju bhaiya is irreplaceable," Parag told journalists in an interaction. "We can try someone with a similar skill set or ask someone to bat in his position, but he cannot be replaced. This year, the focus is to plan better and finish games, which we couldn't do in the previous edition." Samson left Rajasthan Royals with a long list of accolades, even though he could not guide them to the title in his reign. He took over captaincy from Steve Smith in 2021 at the age of 26. He led Rajasthan Royals in 67 matches, winning 33 and losing 32. He took the team to the playoffs twice: in IPL 2022 (where the Rajasthan Royals made it to their first final since 2008 before losing to Gujarat)



and then in IPL 2024. Given his captaincy record at the Jaipur-based franchise, Samson was Rajasthan Royals' most successful captain in the IPL. In fact, in 2024, he shot past the legendary Shane Warne's record of leading the Rajasthan Royals in the most number of matches. A year later, Samson became the most successful skipper in terms of number of wins in 2025. He was also the only Royals captain to have led the team into two playoffs in IPL, even though Warne is the only captain to help RR win a title.

## Where did Chinese Candidates contender GM Wei Yi disappear to, before re-emerging in 2024? 'College, because...'



A prodigy at 15, when he is said to have played a quirky sacrificial attack, the 26-year old has taken his time to line up for his first Candidates

Chinese GM Wei Yi, qualified for the Candidates after reaching the 2025 FIDE World Cup final, and the former prodigy is making headlines 10 years after he first emerged with an eye popping opening at age 15 to stun the world. Two years after Ding Liren lost his World championship crown to D Gukesh, Wei has lined up for the Candidates as the sole Chinese in the 8-player field. While the American stars Fabiano Caruana and Hikaru Nakamura are slated to be favourites, alongside R Praggnanandha of India, Wei Yi is being talked of as the dark horse.

The Chinese however played very sparsely between 2018 and 2024, when it was reported he completed his studies at the Tsinghua University's School of Economics and Management. The Yancheng, Jiangsu-born GM, is on 2754 ELO ratings, just nine below his peak 2763. But even when he played infrequently during his University years, he did not drop below 2722.

However he opted to go to college which tends to be the norm in Chinese chess, and described those years in an interview given to a YouTube channel named Underpromoted. "The decision to go to college was important. It had its advantages and disadvantages. First of all I learnt to make friends," he said. "Earlier my life was only about chess. The people I interacted with were mostly related to chess." It broadened his horizons. "In college I met many more impressive people, in finance, in math.. From these people you can learn a lot. And they make you feel the world is very big, not just about chess. You realise there are many accomplished people in the world and perhaps you are not so special," Yi said.

Also there was his technical College curriculum, but college offered him one of the best memories. "Also I realised

time is precious. At the beginning I wasn't interested. Some classes were extremely boring. Even though I didn't sleep like some of my classmates did. Gradually I realised we should use time well," he told the Reddit interview in December of 2024. It are into dedicated chess years, but the Chinese insisted it was what he chose. "It had a negative impact on my chess. As a professional player you need to train everyday in order to maintain your skill level. But there are academic responsibilities." Also in 2020 pandemic happened. Most tournaments went offline. So I didn't lose out much because there were no tournaments to play in. So you focus on studies. In life you have to make decisions. Can't get best of both worlds." College liberated him from 'Zunjing gantian', a term that literally means to look at sky from bottom of the well.

The Chinese who started chess at 7 in 2006, after playing for 2 years, was packed off to another city Nantong because his parents thought he needed a stronger coach. "Parents had to return to work, so I went to live at my coach's place. Leaving home makes you lonely. I called home every night. But it made me independent, strengthened my endurance," he told Underpromoted. The assurance that he was special came from the Li Chengzi Cup, considered a "College entrance cup" where he finished 6th in his first year. All top names have played in this and a major influence was Ding Liren who won most times for the competition for those from age 6 to 20.

When he played China's top domestic meet, his coach would field him on Board 1 which had top Chinese names Wang Yue Wang Hao. "They would be very excited because they thought I was easy to beat," he recalled to Reddit. He lost most save his last match where he beat Ni Hua, a top player. "But I kept wondering if my opponent had spent earlier night playing video games or something. That doubt stayed," he recalls. In 2010, his parents would put together a small prize kitty to prepare the National team in a warmup tournament for the Guangzhou Asian Games, where he saw the top names from up close.

In 2015, Wei Yi came into global focus after playing a chess social media declared "immortal" game against Cuban GM Lazaro Bruzon before winning a Super event in 2017. Speaking on Powerplaychess YouTube, the host recalled Wei Yi's famous "sacrificial attacks" for which he is famous. "These are romantic games with old fashioned openings. At the World Cup (where he finished Runnersup in Chennai), he had those sacrificial attacks. But at times he showed no ambition, just defended. But he has unusual attacking ideas. And can play risk averse. His game is difficult to judge," the host said. His only win came off a quirky line. He however goes in with a win at Tata Steel Chess after a tiebreak and a reputation to leave Magnus Carlsen irritated by straight draws. In his own brutal, biting manner, Carlsen had said, "Wei Yi is really good. But I don't think he is capable of winning enough games to win the Candidates."

## Unhappy with Amitabh Bachchan's casting, financiers abandoned Zanjeer; director mortgaged house to make film: 'It flopped on release'



Amitabh Bachchan got fever when Zanjeer flopped, Prakash Mehra would. When Zanjeer was declared a flop, people thought Prakash Mehra was set to end his life; Amitabh Bachchan was down with fever: 'Dad mortgaged house, jewellery' How Prakash Mehra mortgaged his wife's jewellery to save 'Zanjeer' after Dharmendra sold the script for Rs 3500. When cinephiles revisit Zanjeer, they often remember the birth of the "Angry Young Man," the rise of Amitabh Bachchan, and the vision of filmmaker Prakash Mehra. Yet, the story of how the film came to life—and how Mehra risked his lifetime savings on it—remains lesser known. It was 1972. Prakash Mehra, still relatively new to the industry, had collaborated with Dharmendra on Samadhi. The film turned out to be a superhit, earning praise for the director-actor duo. Keen to capitalise on this success before it faded, Mehra was determined to make another film that would cement his place in the industry.

His first choice was Dharmendra, who was equally interested. Soon, Dharmendra shared a script he had acquired from Salim-Javed—then far from the iconic status they would later achieve. Mehra loved the script, bought it from the actor, cast a struggling actor, and even mortgaged his house and his wife's jewellery to fund the film. But when it initially flopped, it seemed like everything had fallen apart—until a call from Kolkata changed the fate of Mehra, Amitabh Bachchan, and turned Salim-Javed into a phenomenon. In a recent interview with Vicky Lalwani, Puneet Mehra, son of the late filmmaker, recounted the journey.

He shared: "My father and Dharmendra had done a film together called Samadhi. That film worked at the box office and thus formed the duo of Prakash Mehra and Dharmendra. Public demanded another collaboration. My father was fairly new in the industry while Dharmendra was well-established. It was Dharmendra who had the script of Zanjeer with him. When Dharmendra shared the script with my father, he fell in love with it. However, Dharmendra was at his peak and extremely busy star. He had no dates for the longest time. This made my father worried. He had an urgency to make another film before people forget him. He requested Dharmendra if he could buy that script. After discussions with his family, Dharmendra sold that script to my father for just Rs 3500, which was a lot back then." He continued: "Now, the new problem was if not Dharmendra, then who? After Dharmendra they went to Rajkumar, who at that time was shooting for a film in Hyderabad. He agreed to do the film, but requested my father to do it in Hyderabad. That wasn't possible because it was the story of a policeman in Mumbai, and the familiarity of the city was needed in the shoot. So this didn't work out. They then went to Dev Anand. His objection to the script was that there were no songs in it. And he was mainly a musical hero. My father's argument was that it was the story of a policeman, and he can't be dancing and singing in the film."

Puneet recalled: "At this time of uncertainty, it was Pran sir who called my father and suggested Amitabh Bachchan's name. It was around the same time when the film Bombay to Goa was released. He called and said: 'Ladke mein baat hai.' Post this call, my father and Javed Akhtar went to Mumbai's Ambar-Oscar-Minor theatre to

watch the film Bombay to Goa. It was one of the fight scenes of Amitabh Bachchan that convinced them that he was the actor they were looking for." He added: "Many distributors backed out when they heard that Dharmendra was replaced with a struggling actor Amitabh Bachchan. Although he had been in a few successful films, most of the credit was given to his co-stars like Mehmood in Bombay To Goa and Rajesh Khanna in Anand. But because my father had a strong conviction and was also the producer of the film, he stayed fixed on Amitabh Bachchan. He mortgaged our house and my mother's jewellery to release the film at his own risk. However, when the film released, it didn't work. Hearing this news, Amitabh was down with fever. And my father, who had gambled his entire life on this film, true to his habit, went to Worli Sea Face to smoke cigarettes with all the stress and thoughts." This was long before corporatisation of the Hindi film industry when filmmakers often made films with their savings or after mortgaging their homes and properties. This continued till the early 2000s when corporate cultures and foreign studios came in and made the process more structured. "The film was declared a flop in the first week, however, we received a call from Kolkata that people are lining up outside theatres to watch the film. Quickly, the phone started ringing from multiple places and then there was no turning back. It is funny how people in his office thought he was under duress. They ran to inform him 'sir koodna mat, film hit hai.'" Zanjeer also marked a turning point for writers Salim-Javed, who famously painted their names on the film's posters overnight to claim credit for its screenplay—forcing the industry to acknowledge writers more prominently.

However, another version of the story suggests that Dharmendra stepping away from the film was influenced by a personal family matter. In an interview with Instant Bollywood, Bobby Deol recalled: "When Zanjeer was offered, Dad wanted to do it. However, humari ek cousin thi, aur unki shayad koi problem ho gayi thi Prakash Mehra Ji se. (We had a cousin who apparently had some issues with Prakash Mehra). She came to the house one day and said, 'Aapko meri kasam, agar aapne yeh film ki toh aap meri dead body dekhoge' ('Swear on me, if you do this film, you'll see my dead body'). So my father had to give up on Zanjeer."

Meanwhile, in another interview, Javed Akhtar offered a different perspective. Speaking to IFP, he said: "No one was willing to do the film because those were the times of Rajesh Khanna, and super hit music of RD Burman, and Lakshmikant Pyarelal, and here we had written a script, where the hero had no songs, romance or light-hearted scenes. People just couldn't understand what kind of hero he was. He is only angry the whole time. So no actor was willing to do it. We kept insisting to Prakash Mehra to cast Amitabh Bachchan. Problem was every time Prakash Mehra was convinced to cast him, one of Amitabh's films would fail. He (Mehra) would get discouraged." He added: "I saw some of his films which didn't do well—Parvana, Bombay To Goa, and some of his excerpts in Guddi and suddenly I felt after watching these few films that this man is a major talent and both of us (Salim-Javed) agreed on this. We were like, 'My God, what an actor he is!'" Actor Raza Murad, in a separate interview with The Filmy Charcha, echoed the sentiment: "When Prakash Mehra wanted to make Zanjeer, he went to Dilip Kumar, Dharmendra, Dev Anand, Rajkumar, and they all refused for some or the other reason. The subject was extremely hero-oriented, yet these superstars rejected it. Nobody knows why, but one can say that luck wanted Amitabh Bachchan to lead the film. When nobody wanted him, and Prakash Mehra had no option, Jaya Bachchan (then Jaya Bhaduri) recommended that he take Amitabh Bachchan—and the rest is history."

## Dhurandhar 2 ending explained: Post-credit scenes, hidden twists and part 3 possibility



Dhurandhar 2: The Revenge is finally out in theatres, and just as director Aditya Dhar had teased before release, the film delivers a layered ending with multiple twists—especially in its post-credit scenes. Ahead of the release, Dhar had hinted at a major surprise and urged audiences to stay back till the end credits. While many speculated this could be an announcement for a third instalment, the film instead leaves viewers with an open-ended, thought-provoking conclusion. The story culminates with Ranveer Singh's character—Hamza, also known as Jaskirat—surviving yet another near-death situation and being sent back to India. After successfully dismantling a Lashkar-e-Tayyeba camp with the help of Baloch fighters, Hamza is arrested and tortured by Pakistani forces, who discover his true identity as an Indian agent. However, Ajay Sanyal manages to extract him and bring him back safely.

Dhurandhar 2 post-credit scenes explained. The film features two post-credit sequences, both adding crucial layers to the narrative. The first post-credit scene dives into Hamza's past, showing how Jaskirat was trained as a spy after being rescued by Ajay Sanyal during his life imprisonment. It also revisits several elements used throughout the film—including invisible ink techniques, chemical tools, and the strategies he employs to survive deadly encounters, including one involving Arjun Rampal's character. One of the chemicals referenced is also linked to an illness affecting underworld don Dawood Ibrahim.

The narrative then returns to the present, revealing a major twist—Hamza is rescued with the help of Jameel Jamali, played by Rakesh Bedi, who is revealed to be an Indian agent planted in Pakistan's political system nearly 45 years ago. This sequence also hints at another twist—Hamza's wife, Yalina (played by Sara Arjun), may have deeper ties to India than initially revealed.

Hamza is eventually sent back to India, where he reunites with Ajay Sanyal. In a quiet, emotional moment, he

returns to Pathankot—without informing Sanyal—to see his mother and sister. The film ends with him caught in an internal conflict: whether to reunite with his family or continue living as a covert agent.

Dhurandhar 2's second post-credit scene adds further context to his escape. It reveals why Pakistani army official General Shahnawaz, played by Raj Zutshi, ultimately lets Hamza go. Initially resistant, Shahnawaz changes his stance after Ajay Sanyal shows him a compromising video in which he is seen sharing sensitive information about Pakistan's nuclear program with Israel. Fearing exposure, he backs down, allowing Hamza to leave. Meanwhile, when questioned by Pakistani forces, Shahnawaz deflects responsibility, suggesting that such decisions are made at "higher levels," adding a layer of political intrigue. While neither of the post-credit scenes explicitly confirms a third instalment, they certainly leave the door wide open.

## Amazon Prime Video 2026 slate out: Hrithik Roshan backs Storm, Mess; teasers hint at gritty drama and dark humour

Amazon Prime Video has announced its 2026 content slate, and among the most talked-about additions are two projects backed by Hrithik Roshan's banner, HRX Films, a series titled Storm and the film Mess. Teasers for both titles were released alongside the announcement. "I became an actor out of fear of failure, every instinct my body says this is going to be impossible but I pushed through that impossibility and out of that space HRX was born out of the journey from hopelessness to inspiration, that was the transformation," he said. Storm teaser Directed and created by Ajitpal Singh, known for Tabbar, Storm brings together a strong ensemble including Parvathy Thiruvothu, Alaya F, Srishti Shrivastava, Rrama Sharma, Saba Azad, Rajit Kapoor, Gautam Rode.

The series revolves around five women navigating personal struggles, ambitions and hidden truths. The official synopsis reads, "Five women—each nursing wounds, dreams, and deadly secrets—are drawn into a web of deception that threatens to crush them or set them free when a sustainable housing project unravels into a deadly

## Dhurandhar 2 Movie Review: Ranveer Singh's 4-hour marathon lacks the 'maza' of the original despite blood and bazookas



Dhurandhar 2 Movie Review and Rating: It isn't as if the people responsible for the action set-pieces haven't gone all out in this one, with bombs and guns blasting away, jeeps careering around vast stretches of sand, men—as ever, scant place for women in this all-male ensemble—swarming everywhere, stabbing, shooting, killing. But except for a couple of sequences, where the adrenaline gets pumping, the rest is pretty ho-hum: imagine a character actually saying 'we don't have problems with Pakistan as such, only those Pakistanis who are terrorists' or words to that effect. Haaww, whatever happened to all that Islamophobia? The poor ISI chap is the only one left spouting anti-India sentiments, the rest are content to blow each other up. And that vaunted inclusion of 'Bada Sahab', standing in for the dreaded Dawood Ibrahim, is a bit of a bore: sometimes, the more hype, the more the expectation, the more of a let-down it is.

I missed Akshaye Khanna's stylish Rehman Dakait, the Baloch overlord who keeps the warring warlords of Lyari under his thumb, who gets bumped off in the first part: I was really hoping he would magically re-appear. Though Khanna's smirk was never allowed to slip off, there was no doubt that he kept things humming, and his sexy little shimmy, along with Flipperachi's catchy tune, was a high.

The challenge was a no-brainer: would Aditya Dhar's Dhurandhar 2 be able to equal or better part one, which ratcheted a potent mix of slick action, lifting music, gruesome violence, and straight-up propaganda to a such a height that it left, in its wake, rapt viewers, unprecedented box office gains and an unparalleled anticipation for the follow-up? Dhurandhar 2 Movie Review Dhurandhar 2 Movie Review: Ranveer Singh fails to deliver same maza as Dhurandhar. Short answer: no. On all counts, this nearly four hour marathon featuring the dangerous alleys of Karachi underworld Lyari now being lorded over by our patriotic super spy Jaskirat Singh Rangji aka Hamza Ali Mazari (Ranveer Singh) continuing his duel against the blood-thirsty ISI Major Iqbal (Arjun Rampal) and his cohorts, including SP Chaudhury Aslam (Sanjay Dutt) and a zillion bazooka-toting bozos, is simply not entertaining enough, forcing us to ask, after each headlined 'chapter', is that all you've got?

This is what happens when you bludgeon us from the

get-go with so much spurting blood, broken bones, flying limbs, torn bodies, flayed skin in part one. Did I leave anything out? The extreme violence in the first part left us so numb, that nothing in the second—not even the most vicious ploy which ends with a limbless body being blown up in smithereens, or even a severed head being kicked—can shock us. The CBFC also seems to be confused about which of the cuss words it needs to mute, and which it allows the characters to spray about, fouling the air. Because the film blatantly showed its hand in the first part with its non-stop array of murderous Baloch characters and an artful mix of fact and fiction—talking wistfully of 'ek din aisi sarkaar ayegi' etc—the apology for note-bandi (which many soothsayers correctly predicted) was almost expected. This duly happens, under the ever watchful eye of IB chief Ajay Sanyal (R Madhavan) and his deputy (Manav Gohil), with the film triumphantly telling us that the overnight demonisation was indeed a masterstroke because it stopped yet another dastardly ISI plan in its tracks. And all the sabre-rattling hyper-nationalism acted out through hyper-masculine slo-mo striding becomes a blur all too soon: how much jai jingoism can a movie spew? Yawn.

Cool hoods always make things better, and no one in this second part comes close, with Rehman Dakait's loyal brother and would-be Lyari heir (Danish Pandor) being sidelined, Dutt's cop clomping thobbihsly about, and the gold-toothed Rampal being constantly de-langed by his foul-mouthed, confined to the wheelchair-father: their sequences have a little more zing than some of the more stretched-out high-octane set-pieces. Sara Arjun, reprising her part as the lone important woman in this all-male ensemble, gets a few scenes which she makes the most of; her father, the weasley politician Jameel Jamali (Rakesh Bedi) returns too, and he is as effective as he was in the first part. So is Gaurav Gera as Jaskirat's embedded local handler, who gets an interesting little slice, all to himself.

Finally, it is Ranveer Singh who keeps us looking, all through the plodding first half, and in the slightly-more speeded up post-interval section, with his light-eyed gaze turning steely and soft by turns, keeping the flag waving. The pain of Jaskirat—his backstory is tightly told—is transmuted into the fire that keeps Hamza burning, and Ranveer makes a handy meal of both sides of the coin, luxe locks firmly in place. I have to say that torture doesn't suit him; Vicky Kaushal did a better job of being strung up and savaged in Chhava. But an unexpectedly moving coda makes up the finale, leaving the door open for more adventures. The first part had left me conflicted: yes, its intent was propaganda, but it was wrapped in pacy, racy storytelling, embellished with some terrific musical flourishes, and I was quite taken by all the to-ing and fro-ing, and shooting and scooting. In the second part, to paraphrase a character, itna maza nahin aaya. Dhurandhar 2 cast: Ranveer Singh, Arjun Rampal, Sanjay Dutt, R Madhavan, Sara Arjun, Rakesh Bedi, Danish Pandor, Gaurav Gera, Manav Gohil, Raj Zutshi

Dhurandhar 2 director: Aditya Dhar

Dhurandhar 2 rating: 2 stars

## Mohan Babu unveiled as 'Shikanja Maalik' in Nani's The Paradise



Hyderabad: The makers of director Srikanth Odela's eagerly awaited action entertainer 'The Paradise', featuring Telugu star Nani in the lead, on the occasion of actor Mohan Babu's birthday on Thursday revealed the name and the look of the character he plays in the film. Using the film's official social media handle, the makers released a BTS video of the actor while shooting for 'The Paradise' and wrote, "Wishing the legendary @themohanbabu Garu a very Happy Birthday. Once again, Cinema will witness his supreme villainism as 'SHIKANJA MAALIK' in #TheParadise. #LiveLikeMohanBabu Happy Ugadi. GRAND RELEASE WORLDWIDE ON AUGUST 21st, 2026. #JadalZamanaFromAug21 Natural Star @NameisNani in an @odela\_srikanth cinema. An @anirudhofficiala musical."

The much-awaited film is slated to hit screens worldwide on August 21 this year. 'The Paradise', which is backed

by SLV Cinemas, was originally set for a grand release on March 26, 2026. However, its makers chose to postpone the film's release to August 21. The new date picked by the unit for the release thrusts The Paradise straight into a rare three-week festival wave. The first week gets a strong mid-week boost with Onam and Milad-un-Nabi, followed by Raksha Bandhan in the second weekend, and Janmashtami in the third.

For a high-budget spectacle of this scale, this extended holiday stretch offers an exceptional runway at the box office. Only recently, the makers of the film had disclosed that actor Sampoorne Babu plays a character called 'Biryani' in the film. The film has triggered huge expectations among fans and film buffs for a number of reasons. For the unaware, Srikanth Odela previously served as an assistant director to ace director Sukumar in 'Nannaku Prematho' and 'Rangasthalam'. He made his directorial debut with 'Dasara', which featured Nani in the lead. The film garnered critical acclaim and became a box office success, crossing the ₹100 crore mark. Now, Odela and Nani have teamed up again for 'The Paradise'. Well-known Bollywood actor Raghav Juyal too is a part of 'The Paradise'. It may be recalled that the makers of the film had welcomed actor Raghav Juyal on board the film's unit last year. Also, actor Raghav Juyal, who is basking in the success of 'Bads of Bollywood', has already announced that he will be changing his look for the film. It is to release in eight languages namely Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, English, Spanish, Bengali, Kannada, and Malayalam.



Sawant. Speaking about the collaboration, Hrithik Roshan said, "Storm marked the start of something special with Prime Video, and Mess feels like a natural next step for us at HRX Films. Our partnership with Prime Video has allowed us to explore bold, innovative storytelling, and this project embodies that spirit perfectly. Rajesh brings a distinctive voice both as a producer and director, with a rare ability to blend comedy with compelling narratives. His creative vision for Mess has been extraordinary from the start."