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## One Remanded, Two Absconding for Attacking Police

\*\*\*KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 24 (Indian Chronicle):\*\*\* "One person has been arrested and remanded, while two others are absconding after allegedly attacking police personnel on patrol duty under the Uppal Police Station limits on Tuesday midnight." According to Admin SI Madhava Reddy, Head Constable S. Narasimhulu (HC-2623) along with patrol mobile driver HG Naresh were on night patrolling duty in the Ramanthapur area. At around 11:10 PM, near IDA Uppal, Jersey area, they received information about a group of persons consuming alcohol in a public place. "When the police approached them and informed that drinking in public is an offence, three individuals allegedly attacked the police personnel and attempted to flee. The police managed to apprehend one of them, identified as Balaga Dilleswar Rao (28), a painter and resident of Indiranagar, Ramanthapur. He was arrested and remanded to judicial custody. Efforts are on to trace the other two accused who are currently absconding. Uppal police have registered a case and initiated an investigation."

## BRSV Student Wing Lays Siege to Assembly Leaders Detained by Police in Secunderabad

Indian Chronicle, Secunderabad, March 24: "The BRSV student wing staged an Assembly siege protest demanding the immediate release of job notifications." The protesting students demanded that the government announce a job calendar in the Assembly and clear the pending fee reimbursement dues without delay. They also urged the government to fulfill the promises made to unemployed youth during elections. "The student leaders warned that if their demands are not met, they would intensify their agitation and obstruct the Congress government at every step in the coming days under the leadership of BRSV." Police detained the student leaders who attempted to lay siege to the Assembly and shifted them to Goshamahall Police Station. "The protest was conducted under the leadership of Hyderabad district leaders. Those who participated in the program included Yada Kranthi, Sai Vishal Anand, Rajesh, Abhi Mudiraj, Karan, Chintu, Sonu, Chinnu, Akshay, and other leaders."

## As US sends troops to Gulf, Trump talks to Modi on keeping strategic Hormuz open

New Delhi, March 24

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday spoke with US President Donald Trump, marking their first direct engagement since the outbreak of hostilities in West Asia on February 28, with both leaders stressing the critical importance of keeping the Strait of Hormuz open for global energy flows. The talks came as the US moved to send troops to the Gulf.

Trump dialling Modi was confirmed by US Ambassador to India Sergio Gora, who said the conversation focused on the evolving security situation in the region and its wider economic implications.

"President Donald Trump just spoke with Prime Minister Modi. They discussed the ongoing situation in West Asia, including the importance of keeping the Strait of Hormuz open," Gora said.

Minutes later, Modi said he had a "useful exchange of views" with Trump and underlined India's position on de-escalation. "India supports de-escalation and restoration of peace at the earliest. Ensuring that the Strait of Hormuz remains open, secure and accessible is essential for the whole world. We agreed to stay in touch regarding efforts towards peace and stability," the Prime Minister said in a post on X.

The outreach assumes significance as tensions in the Gulf continue to escalate, disrupting one of the world's most vital maritime arteries. The Strait of Hormuz, linking the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman, handles a substantial share of global crude shipments, making any disruption a direct threat to energy security, particularly for import-dependent economies like India.

Even as diplomatic channels remain active, parallel military signalling continues to intensify. The US is understood to be weighing its options ahead of the end of a five-day pause on strikes targeting Iranian energy infrastructure later this week, even as backchannel efforts explore the possibility of talks with Tehran.

Externally, New Delhi has stepped up engagement with key stakeholders. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met Iran's Ambassador to India Dr Mohammad Fathali and discussed the evolving situation. "Appreciate the support provided to Indians in Iran in these challenging times," Jaishankar



said.

Interestingly, Pakistan, who, according to media reports, has been engaging with both US and Iran as a mediator, has offered that it was ready "to be the host" to facilitate meaningful and conclusive dialogue between the warring camps.

"Pakistan welcomes and fully supports ongoing efforts to pursue dialogue to end the war in West Asia in the interest of peace and stability in region and beyond. Subject to concurrence by the US and Iran, Pakistan stands ready and honoured to be the host to facilitate meaningful and conclusive talks for a comprehensive settlement of the ongoing conflict," Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif posted on X.

On the ground, even as diplomatic efforts remain "fluid", military preparations continue to gather pace. Reports say that Washington is simultaneously moving a large number of troops, especially Special Operations team, indicating escalation in hostilities if talks fail.

## SC orders pensionary benefits to women officers, grants permanent commission

New Delhi, March 24

Women Short Service Commission (SSC) officers in the Army, Navy and Air Force denied permanent commission due to a "systemic disparity" would be entitled to full pensionary benefits, the Supreme Court ruled on Tuesday.

In three separate verdicts on petitions challenging the denial of permanent commission based on policy changes in 2019 and previous Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT) rulings, a Bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi Bagchi used its plenary powers under Article 142 of the Constitution to grant permanent commission to several groups of SSC officers, primarily women, as a one-time measure.

Deciding a petition by Yogendra Kumar Singh and others relating to the Navy, it set aside the need for yet another selection board, noting that the officers had been subjected to three rounds of litigation over 15 years.

Around 25 officers had alleged that their annual confidential reports (ACRs) were "casually graded" during the years they were technically ineligible for permanent commis-



sion. "We are of the opinion that when officers are assessed under the prevailing assumption that they have no future in the service, the appraisal process is inevitably affected from its very inception," the verdict said. As a one-time measure, the Bench directed grant of permanent commission to in-service SSC Women Officers (SSCWOs) inducted prior to January 2009 and SSCWOs who joined after January 2009 in branches excluding law, education and naval architecture.

With regard to cases filed by Lt Col Pooja Pal and others, it said the Army's evaluation process for women officers was "marred by inequality of opportunity" and rooted in a "systemic framework" of discrimination. The top court said for the first decade of their careers, these women were considered "ineligible" for permanent commission as a matter of policy and, consequently, their ACRs were written by officers who assumed the women would only serve a 14-year term.

## National Lok Adalat till March 28 - SP Nithika Panth Appeals to Public

\*\*\*Indian Chronicle. Jade Srinivas, March, 24.\*\*\* "District SP. Nithika Panth, IPS, Urged litigants to utilize the National Lok Adalat being held till March 28 for speedy resolution of cases. She stated that minor criminal cases, traffic challans, and civil disputes can be settled quickly and at low cost through this platform. She emphasized that Lok Adalat helps resolve cases amicably with mutual consent and reduces the burden on courts. The public is requested to make use of this opportunity for quick justice."



## NO SHORTAGE OF PETROL, DIESEL, AND LPG IN TELANGANA PUBLIC URGED TO AVOID PANIC BUYING

is available to meet the regular daily requirements of all citizens across all districts. "Recent reports of long queues and temporary "No Stock" boards at certain retail petrol outlets are strictly the result of sudden, unwarranted panic buying fueled by false rumors. When citizens unnecessarily rush to fill their tanks to full capacity, it creates an artificial scarcity, despite adequate fuel being available at the depots." Furthermore, recent administrative changes regarding advance-payment models by Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) have caused minor, temporary logistical adjustments for some local dealers. This is solely an internal administrative measure and has nothing to do with a lack of supplies. "To manage the situation and ensure equitable distribution, the Central and State Governments, in close coordination with OMCs and the Police Department, are actively monitoring fuel outlets. Strict action will be taken against anyone found hoarding fuel, engaging in black-marketing, or illegally diverting domestic LPG cylinders for commercial use." Appeal to the Public: The Government appeals to all citizens to remain calm and avoid panic buying. We strongly advise the public to trust only official communications and refrain from believing or forwarding unverified rumors on social media. "For any queries or to report irregularities, citizens are encouraged to contact the Civil Supplies Toll-Free Helpline: 1967."



\*\*\*Hyderabad, 24 March 2026: "The Consumer Affairs, Food and Civil Supplies Department, Government of Telangana, categorically clarifies that there is absolutely NO SHORTAGE of Petrol, Diesel, or Domestic LPG anywhere in the state. The supply chain from oil refineries to local depots is fully operational, and self-sufficient stock



## Eight Fined and Warned by Court for Drinking in Public at Midnight

\*\*\*KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 24 (Indian Chronicle):\*\*\* "In the limits of Uppal Police Station, eight individuals were taken into custody for roaming in public places at midnight while consuming alcohol and creating a nuisance. E-petty cases were registered against them, and they were produced before the court. The court imposed fines on all eight individuals and issued a warning. Uppal police cautioned that strict action will be taken against anyone found consuming alcohol in public places and disturbing public peace and order."

## Government Urged to Fulfill Promises to Telangana Movement Activists

\*\*\*NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 24, (Indian Chronicle):\*\*\* "Telangana movement activists have demanded that the state government immediately recognize their contributions and fulfill the assurances made during and after the statehood struggle. At a district-level meeting held on Tuesday at the Retired Employees' Building in Bhuvanagiri, activists and leaders from across the district gathered under the chairmanship of district president Merugu Madhu. The meeting saw participation from a large number of movement activists, political leaders, and supporters. Speakers at the meeting highlighted the crucial role played by activists in achieving the formation of Telangana. Discussions focused on the current challenges faced by activists, the need for their welfare, and the future development of the state while preserving the spirit of the movement. Leaders demanded that the government provide identity cards, pension benefits, and the promised allotment of 250 square yards of land to eligible activists. They stressed that those who sacrificed for the cause of Telangana must be duly recognized and supported. Participants also called for efforts to inspire the younger generation with the ideals of the movement and to continue working towards social justice and inclu-

sive development. The meeting concluded with a resolution to strengthen unity among activists across the district and to intensify efforts to press for their demands. Among



those present were BJP district leader Survi Srinivas, CPI district executive member MD Imran, TLF leaders Kodimala Krishna and Vinod, TRSM district president Palakuru Venkatesham, district general secretary Dasari Sriramulu, Bibinagar JAC convener Muske Jaipal Reddy, CPI leaders Shobhan Babu, Ramesh, Bhaskar, Baddam Venkata Reddy, Auto JAC leaders Gorla Lakshman, Gopa Raju Ganesh, Pandu Ravinder Balan, Atmakur JAC convener Nimma Shekhar Reddy, Chada Shashidhar Reddy, Adepu Srinu, Pasunuri Narasimha, and others.

## Funds sought for drinking water supply



\*\*\*S. Harpal Singh, Adilabad, March 24\*\*\* Adilabad Municipal Chairperson Bandari Anusha Satish has appealed to the State government to sanction an amount of Rs. 54 crore for strengthening and augmentation of drinking water supply in the district head quarter town. She also demanded funds to the tune of Rs. 100 for carrying out various developmental works in town. "In two separate letters addressed to the district in charge Minister Juppally Krishna Rao on March 23, the Chairperson gave details about the expansion of the town in recent years. This expansion has necessitated that new developmental works to be taken up for provision of amenities. "Ms. Anusha Satish said the projected demand for drinking water for the current year was pegged at 32 million litres per day (MLD). This quantum of water was expected to be supplied through the Mission Bhagiratha scheme but only 18 MLD is being supplied at present, she pointed

out. "This has resulted in a short supply to the tune of 14 MLD. The Grid system was designed up to the year 2048, and the demand for that year was stated to be 53 MLD which means that the deficit will progressively increase until that year. "At present the Municipality was drawing about 6.5 MLD of water from its local sources. This, however, will run dry in the summer months and in view of such contingency the Adilabad Municipality has prepared a detailed plan for augmentation of drinking water, the Chairperson informed. "Also, Ms. Anusha Satish pointed out that the Municipality has expanded following merger of gram panchayats lying on the outskirts of the town after the division of districts. There is urgent need for construction of roads, drains and other amenities, she added. "In view of the urgency, she appealed to the government through Mr. Krishna Rao to sanction Rs. 100 crore. The funds may be released as special grants, she sought."

# Indian Chronicle

## Manual scavenging must go

The dehumanising practice of manual scavenging is a blot on any civilised society. The fact that such a profession still exists is a matter of collective shame for India. Despite laws banning the abominable work, it persists across the country, leading to a large number of deaths of workers engaged in sewer line repair and cleaning without critical safety measures. According to official data tabled in the Lok Sabha last week, over 620 sanitation workers have died cleaning sewers and septic tanks across the country since 2017. While 539 families reportedly received full compensation, 52 did not get even a penny. This reflects a cruel apathy on the part of the governments. It is both a legal and moral obligation for the government to ensure that the kin of deceased workers get fair compensation.

### Students Must Focus on Skill Development: Principal Velangini Kumar Kriya 2026 Management Meet Successfully Conducted at Nacharam

Nacharam, Indian Chronicle, March 24: St. PS PG & MBA College for Women, Nacharam, organized the Kriya 2026 Management Meet with the objective of providing students a platform to enhance their management skills, creativity, and leadership qualities. Principal Velangini Kumar emphasized that in today's competitive environment, students must continuously work on developing their skills. She highlighted that management meets and similar initiatives are crucial for bridging academic knowledge with practical abilities. "Around 150 students from 19 MBA and BBA colleges across the twin cities participated in this high-energy, knowledge-driven event. The students engaged in multiple competitions designed to stimulate creativity, strategic thinking, and teamwork. The Smart CEO event, the main attraction of Kriya 2026, allowed students to present innovative business ideas and demonstrate leadership and problem-solving skills in a competitive environment. Alongside this, various other formal and informal activities were conducted to encourage interaction, collaboration, and experiential learning." The program was graced by AVNS Pawan, Co-founder of Colab Cult, as the Chief Guest. In his address, he encouraged students to identify and nurture their hidden talents, cultivate innovation, and approach challenges with confidence. His motivational speech inspired participants to explore new horizons and think beyond conventional boundaries. "Prof. Sushma elaborated on the significance of Kriya 2026, stressing that such events are vital for cultivating leadership qualities, a competitive mindset, and practical business acumen among students. She also outlined how these initiatives help students to apply classroom learning in real-world scenarios, thus preparing them for future managerial and entrepreneurial roles." The event concluded with prize distribution, recognizing outstanding performances and rewarding creativity, analytical thinking, and presentation skills. Business Management Head SriLatha, faculty members, and event organizers actively participated in mentoring and evaluating the students throughout the meet, ensuring a supportive and engaging learning environment. "Kriya 2026 not only provided students with a platform to showcase their talents but also emphasized the importance of skill development, teamwork, and leadership for professional growth, making it a memorable and impactful experience for all participants."

### Harass Women, Face Strict Action: 181 Offenders Arrested in One Month

#### DCP Usharani warns of strict action against offenders

"NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 24, (Indian chronicle): "LB Nagar: SHE Teams in Malkajgiri have intensified their crackdown on harassment, arresting 181 offenders in the last one month. DCP T. Usharani warned that strict action will be taken against anyone involved in harassing women, with no exceptions. According to official data (February 16 to March 15), a total of 223 complaints were received. Of the 181 arrested, 148 are adults and 33 are minors. Harassment cases included 57 through phone calls, 53 via social media, and 113 cases of direct or physical harassment. Police registered 8 criminal cases and 57 petty cases, while 122 individuals were counselled in the presence of their family members. In a shocking case, a man deceived a colleague in the name of love, secretly married her, forced her into abortions, and fled with money and jewellery. He was later arrested by SHE Teams. In another incident, a man harassed a college student and blackmailed her by threatening to upload her photos on



social media. He has been taken into custody. A private company owner was also arrested for inappropriate behaviour and harassing female employees through late-night phone calls. Six men were fined for travelling in women-only metro coaches. Apart from enforcement, SHE Teams conducted 97 awareness programmes, reaching over 14,700 people and educating them on women's safety laws. DCP Usharani urged women not to remain silent and to report harassment immediately via WhatsApp at 8712662111 or approach the nearest police station, assuring complete confidentiality.

# Vaccination Drive Against Foot-and-Mouth Disease Conducted in Choupan Guda Village

"Indian Chronicle" (Jade Srinivas) "March, 24" "A Vaccination program to prevent Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) was successfully conducted in Chaupan Guda Gram Panchayat of Vankidi mandal. The initiative was organized under the supervision of the Animal Husbandry Department to safeguard livestock health in the village. The program was inaugurated in the presence of village Sarpanch Jainu Bai and Deputy Sarpanch Aatram Mutha. Speaking on the occasion, they emphasized that the health of livestock plays a crucial role in the economic stability of farmers and urged all farmers to ensure timely vaccination of their animals. Villagers including Bapurao, Kannu, and Chinnu Bheem Rao actively participated and extended their support to the program. The vaccination process was efficiently carried out by veterinary staff Raju and Vinod Lalaji. "Officials advised farmers to vaccinate their livestock regularly to prevent the spread of diseases and ensure better productivity."



## Newly Elected Manthani Bar Association Leadership Honoured Amid Warm Felicitations



"P. S. ASHOKAN "KARIMNAGAR BUREAU. "Manthani, March 24: "The newly elected executive body of the Manthani Bar Association was accorded a grand felicitation following the successful conclusion of its elections. "In the recently conducted polls, KVLN Haribabu was elected as President, Muskula Sayender Reddy as General Secretary, and Kethireddy Raghobham Reddy as Vice President, marking the beginning of a new leadership tenure within the association. "On Tuesday, at the Bar Association premises in Manthani, the

office bearers were felicitated in a dignified ceremony. Gotikar Kishan Ji, District General Secretary of the Congress Party BC Cell, personally met the newly elected leaders and conveyed his warm congratulations. "Addressing the gathering, he expressed optimism that the new leadership would work with dedication and uphold the values, integrity, and professional standards of the legal community. "As part of the felicitation, the leaders were ceremonially honoured with traditional shawls, reflecting respect and recognition for their achievement."

## Commitment to Cherlapalli Division Development: MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy



"Foundation laid for multiple development works in Cherlapalli" Stormwater drain project launched at Kushaiguda" Steps initiated for permanent solution to monsoon issues" CC road works begin in Chakripuram Colony" Road infrastructure upgraded in Teachers Colony" Assurance to address public grievances" NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 24, (Indian chronicle): "Uppal/Cherlapalli: MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy launched several development projects in Cherlapalli division of Uppal constituency on Tuesday. He inaugurated the construction of a stormwater drain near Pochamma temple in Kushaiguda, aimed at addressing waterlogging issues during the monsoon season. Speaking on the occasion, he said the drainage system would significantly reduce water stagnation and provide relief to residents. Later, he laid the foundation stone for CC road works in Chakripuram Colony, stating that the improved road infrastructure would ease transportation for locals. The MLA also initiated CC road works in Teachers Colony, focusing on enhancing basic civic amenities in the area. He reiterated that efforts would continue to identify and resolve public issues by staying connected with residents. Several party leaders, local representatives, welfare association members, and residents participated in the in large numbers."

## Education sector neglected in state budget Protest in front of the Collectorate under the auspices of TPTF



Sangareddy Indian chronicle correspondent - sunil"Former president Y Ashok Kumar said that the education sector has lost importance in the budget announced by the government and that the education sector is being neglected. Speaking as the chief guest at the protest organized in front of the Collectorate under the auspices of TPTF, he said that the slogan of the independence era is that education and healthcare will not be available to everyone. In the history of any government, the allocations in the budget do not contribute to the development of education. He said that the governments have not given priority to education in their actions, but only in their words. "State Vice President Lakshmaiah Yadav said that the educationists and the teaching community want to allocate 20 percent of the funds, and the Education Commission has recommended at least 18 percent. The government has announced in its manifesto that 15 percent will be allocated. But the government has allocated only 8.22 percent, he said, leaving the education sector in a state of shock. "District President Somasekhar and District Chief Secretary Anumula Ramchander said that the government's step-love is visible in allocating 26,674 crores to the education department instead of 64 thousand crores in the 3,24,234 lakh

crore budget presented by the state government. "He said how it is possible to introduce schemes like pre-primary classes in primary schools, breakfast from primary to intermediate, and student kits from this academic year. The establishment of Young India Integrated Schools, Skill University, and public schools is questionable. It is impossible to implement great schemes with a low budget. As a result, poor children are deprived of education. Education for all remains a myth, he said. "The state government has allocated a low budget to the education sector in the budget and has failed to meet the announced education targets."

In the current budget, the allocations have been reduced to 8.2 percent, increasing only 0.63 percent from last year's allocations. It is shameful that the education system will be radically transformed, while neglecting to strengthen the existing schools and making allocations to the education sector at the same time as the Education Commission report on integrated schools and public schools is being released. He said that this budget will not only further weaken the education sector and create a situation where the poor cannot get quality education, but will also push the school system, which has few facilities, into a more miserable state. "They have been demanding 30 percent allocation for strengthening the education sector for decades. It is regrettable that the gov-

## Wankidi Weekly Market Auction Fetches Higher Revenue for Panchayat

"Indian Chronicle" (Jade Srinivas) "March, 24. "The weekly market (Santha) auction was conducted on Tuesday at the Gram Panchayat office in Wankidi mandal center under the leadership of Sarpanch Chunarkar Satish. Two bidders participated in the auction, and Shankar secured the contract with a highest bid of ₹9.51 lakh. "Compared to last year's auction, which fetched ₹8.49 lakh, this year's bid increased by ₹1.02 lakh, resulting in higher revenue for the Gram Panchayat. The increase in income has brought satisfaction among the local residents. "The event was attended by Wankidi Deputy Sarpanch Deepak Munde, Panchayat Secretary Shivakumar, Bill Collector Govindu, Karobar Shankar, ward members, and villagers."

## Inauguration of CC Road Construction in Bambara Gram Panchayat

"Indian Chronicle" (Jade Srinivas) "March, 24. "The construction of a CC road in Bambara Gram Panchayat has been formally inaugurated with great enthusiasm. The project, sanctioned under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) with an estimated cost of ₹3 lakhs, was launched by Sarpanch Bendare Krishnaji, who performed traditional rituals and broke a coconut to mark the commencement of the works. Along with the Sarpanch,



Deputy Sarpanch Jade Santhosh, Congress Party Mandal President Gurunule Narayana, Congress Seva Dal District President Gurunule Mengaji, Dikonda Mahesh, Karpeta Ramachander, Selvat Kar Petu, Vadai Durgaji, Mengu Patel, Gopal Soyam, Daulat Rao, Field Assistant Ramakrishna Chari, along with Congress leaders and a large number of villagers participated in the program. Speaking on the occasion, the Sarpanch stated that the construction of the CC road would significantly improve transportation facilities in the village and be highly beneficial to the residents. He further added that more such development works would be undertaken to ensure overall progress of the village."

ernment that came to power after promising to allocate 15 percent of the budget to the education sector in its election manifesto has not kept its promise. He said that due to the negligence of the rulers after the formation of Telangana state, the number of 27 lakh students in government schools in 2021-22 has come down to 16 lakh today.

"District Education Department officials should be appointed for new districts, and E.L.T.C. Centers should be strengthened in district education training centers for English language proficiency. The state government, he said, will recognize the fact that quality education is not provided without filling the vacancies in D.I.T. and B.E.D. colleges and will rely on the entire budget allocations to take steps in that direction."

"According to the Telangana Education Commission report, in order to develop the education sector, which has been neglected the most, the government should allocate 20 percent of the funds in this budget for the education sector, release the pension benefits of retired teachers and pending bills in a lump sum, and immediately implement the pending bills of teachers and PRC. A protest demonstration was organized in front of the district collector's office under the auspices of TPTF and a memorandum was submitted to the government through the collector. "Sanjeevaiah, Ashok Kumar, Banoth Ravinder, Vijay Bhaskar, Bhaskar, Venkatarajiah, Mallikarjun, Madhuri, Vasavi, Vasanth, Sandhya, Himabindu, Adiraj, Chandramohan, Narsimlu, Kamrodden, Mekala Srinivas, Ramtirth Narsimlu, Santosh Kumar, Sivashankar, Yadagiri, Ravinder, Suresh, Siddeshwar, Pundarikam, Rajasekhar, Neeli Laxman, Anandha, Wasim, Govardhan, Farooq, Sarfaraz, Chandramohan, Ramchander, Srikanth, Sangareddy, Samel, Mallappa, etc. participated in this protest."

# SIR drive to ensure clean and transparent electoral rolls: Collector

## Political parties urged to play proactive role in verification process.

Khaja Sikander Mohiuddin Staff Reporter, Indian Chronicle Karimnagar, March 24: The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls has been undertaken by the Election Commission to ensure transparency and accuracy in the voter list, District Election Officer and Collector Chitra Mishra said on Tuesday.

Addressing an awareness meeting with representatives of various political parties at the Collectorate conference hall, Ms. Mishra emphasised the need for coordinated efforts by officials and political stakeholders for the successful conduct of the revision exercise.

She said that apart from Booth Level Officers (BLOs), the role of Booth Level Agents (BLAs) appointed by political parties would be crucial in verifying and updating the electoral rolls. Highlighting the significance of the exercise, she noted that the SIR has been conducted eight times since 1951, with the last such revision carried out between 2002 and 2004.

The Collector clarified that the revision process is intended to ensure the inclusion of only genuine voters in the rolls. Names of duplicate voters, deceased persons, those who have permanently migrated, and individuals holding multiple entries would be removed. She urged the public and political parties not to be misled by misconceptions regarding the exercise.

Stressing the importance of participation, she called upon all political parties to appoint booth-level agents without fail. She also stated that objections could be filed in case any eligible voter is left out after the completion of the revision process.

Additional Collector Lakshmi Kiran, RDO Ramesh,



and representatives of various political parties, including B. Ramanareddy (BJP), Abdulla Asim, Syed Barkat Ali, (AIMIM), Satineni Srinivas (BRS), E. Ravinder (TDP), Nampally Srinivas (BJP), M. Vasudeva Reddy (CPI-M), Ramidi Tirupati Reddy and V. Narsingam (INC), attended the meeting. [6:22 PM, 3/24/2026] +91 93907 69610: End

# Intensive Sanitation Drive Conducted in Kapra Circle Under 99-Day Action Plan

“---Garbage Vulnerable Points Cleared, Awareness Drive Conducted for Proper Waste Disposal”---NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 24, (Indian chronicle):“KAPRA: As part of the 99-day “Praja Palana Pragathi Pranalika” program, a large-scale sanitation drive was carried out across Kapra Circle on Monday. The initiative focused on eliminating Garbage Vulnerable Points (GVPs) and improving overall cleanliness in the area. Sanitation teams cleared accumulated waste at multiple GVP locations, including AS Rao Nagar, ensuring a cleaner environment. Houses and commercial establishments in areas prone to garbage dumping were identified, and arrangements were made to link them with Swachh Auto services for daily waste collection. In addition to garbage removal, debris and stones dumped indiscriminately along roadsides were cleared and transported away. Cleaning activities were also extended to roadside stretches and open areas to prevent further dumping. At Radhika Junction, authorities removed hanging and unsafe cables from electric poles to improve public safety and reduce hazards. An awareness campaign was conducted in AS Rao Nagar, where officials educated residents and shopkeepers on responsible waste disposal practices. They were instructed to hand over household waste only to designated Swachh Auto collectors and avoid littering in public spaces. Officials also warned that penalties would be imposed on those found dumping garbage indiscriminately. The drive was carried out under the supervision of Kapra Circle Deputy Commissioner Srihari, along with officials from the Solid Waste Management department, including DE Ravi, Sanitary Supervisor Sudarshan, staff members Ramakrishna, Sudheer, SFA Sujatha, Shirisha, and sanitation workers.



# Actor Babu Mohan Extends Support to Differently-Abled Widow Ahead of Daughter’s Wedding

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 24, (Indian chronicle):“A charitable gesture was extended to support a financially struggling family in Jawahar Nagar ahead of a wedding scheduled for March 25. Prameela, a differently-abled widow residing in CPI Colony, Giriprasad Nagar, had invited representatives of the Pawan Babu Mohan Charitable Trust to her daughter Jyothi’s wedding. Responding to the request, Babu Mohan, Chairman of the trust and film actor, extended support by providing two bags of rice to the family. The assistance was coordinated by Bhanu Reddy, who facilitated the outreach. The initiative is part of the trust’s ongoing efforts to help vulnerable sections, including persons with disabilities, the elderly, and families in distress. Merugu Shivakrishna, State General Secretary of the Telangana Disabled Rights Protection Association, appreciated the support extended to the family and highlighted the need for continued assistance to marginalized communities.



# Karimnagar police host ‘SHE LEADS – 2026’ for women personnel,

## Focus on skill enhancement, health and empathetic policing.



Khaja Sikander Mohiuddin Staff Reporter, Indian Chronicle Karimnagar, March 24: The Karimnagar police on Tuesday organised “SHE LEADS – 2026” (Conference with Women Police Officers 3.0) at Astra Convention, aiming to enhance the skills and confidence of women police personnel.

Police Commissioner Gaush Alam, who inaugurated the conference, said women police officers play a crucial

role in ensuring public safety and maintaining law and order. He called upon them to discharge their responsibilities with a spirit of service and protection, rather than merely exercising authority.

The day-long programme featured a series of sessions focusing on professional development, health, and effective policing practices. Dr. Mohammed Abdul Kalam (Sanskrit-OU) delivered a motivational address, stressing the importance of mental resilience and self-confidence among women officers.

In a session on health and wellness, Ms. Deepthi highlighted the significance of balanced nutrition, proper dietary habits, and yoga in maintaining overall well-being.

Addressing operational aspects, ACP (Huzurabad) V. Madhavi spoke on dealing with victims, accused persons, and protesters with sensitivity and professionalism, underlining the need for empathy in policing.

A free medical camp was also organised as part of the conference, offering general health check-ups under the supervision of the District Medical and Health Officer. Specialised services, including gynaecological consultations and cancer screening by Chalmeda Anand Rao Hospital, and eye examinations by Rekurthi Charitable Trust, were provided.

Additional DCP (Admin) Venkataramana, ACP (CTC) Venugopal, Reserve Inspectors Rajinikanth and Kiran Kumar, along with a large number of women personnel from the Karimnagar Commissionerate, attended the programme. Participants were felicitated at the conclusion of the event.

# In the case of attempted rape of a minor girl

## The accused was sentenced to 7 years in prison and a fine of Rs. 20,000.

“Wanaparthy District SP Sunitha Reddy, IPS”Wanaparthy Correspondent Indian Chronicle “Those who commit crimes against women and children will be severely punished and the police will continue their efforts until justice is served. Going into details, on the night of 31-10-2023, in Gopalpet Mandal, Edu village, the victim minor girl was returning home after turning off her motor at her farm, when the accused Singam Shivadu (father: Pullaiah) from the same village forcibly took her aside and tried to rape her. The victim bravely resisted and escaped from there and later complained to the police. Gopalpet SIS, Venkateshwarlu registered a case and After conducting a comprehensive investigation, collecting eyewitness statements, examining the scene and collecting technical evidence, the accused was ar-

rested and remanded in custody. While Public Prosecutor P. Srinivasachari made strong arguments on behalf of the prosecution, District Chief Judge M.R. Sunitha, who examined the antecedents of the case, passed the verdict, imposing a rigorous imprisonment of 7 years and a fine of 20,000 on the accused. The District SP congratulated the current SI Jagan, Court Liaison Officer, K. Satyam Court Constable Ramesh Nayak, Public Prosecutor, and everyone who worked effectively in this case. On this occasion, the SP said that the safety of women and children is our first priority. We will take strict action against those who commit such crimes. People should come forward without fear and complain - the police department will always stand by you and everyone should cooperate in accordance with the law so that there is no room for crime in the society.

# TB Eradication is Everyone’s Responsibility: Director Sangeeta Satyanarayana

## World TB Day Celebrated Grandly

Indian Chronicle, Secunderabad, March 24:“Director of Health and Family Welfare Department, S. Sangeeta Satyanarayana, called upon everyone to actively participate in the eradication of Tuberculosis (TB) in Telangana.“On the occasion of World TB Day 2026, she attended as the chief guest and inaugurated the ‘100 Days TB Mukta Bharat Abhiyan’ awareness campaign held on Tuesday at the Alumni Auditorium of Gandhi Medical College, Secunderabad.“Speaking on the occasion, she stated that in the first phase, TB diagnostic tests were conducted for 17.09 lakh people across the state. She also mentioned that nutritional support was provided to 4.71 crore beneficiaries under the Nikshay Poshan Yojana. Telangana has achieved the best results in TB eradication in the country, she added.“She emphasized that misconceptions about TB among the public are being addressed, and free diagnostic tests, medicines, and treatment are being provided to all those showing symptoms. The government is also taking steps to boost the morale of patients. She appreciated the efforts of voluntary organizations and healthcare workers contributing to this mission.“Joint Director of Telangana TB Eradication Department, Dr. A. Rajesham, presented the department’s progress report for the past year.“On the occasion, officials and staff from 10 districts who showed



outstanding performance in TB eradication were felicitated and awarded appreciation certificates. Awareness posters were released, and nutritional kits were distributed to TB patients. The ‘100 Days TB Mukta Bharat Abhiyan’ awareness rally was also flagged off.“The event was attended by Regional Director of Central Health Department Dr. M. Anuradha, Director of Public Health and Family Welfare Dr. Ravinder Naik, Telangana TB Association Vice Chairman Dr. Sudheer Prasad, STDC Dr. Rajeswari, WHO TB Consultant Dr. Mahesh, Dr. Blessy, and Health Extension Officer Mogarala Srinivas, among others.

# Four of a Family Hospitalized After Eating Mandi Biryani in AS Rao Nagar

## Incident Surfaces Late as Victims Undergo Treatment

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 24, (Indian chronicle):“Kushaiguda: Four members of a family fell ill after consuming mandi biryani at a restaurant in AS Rao Nagar. Though the incident occurred three days ago, it came to light only recently as the victims have been undergoing treatment in a hospital. According to available information, Umesh, Radhika, Narasimha, and a four-year-old boy, Vihal, who reside locally, had dined at the ‘Delicious Mandi’ restaurant. Shortly after consuming the food, all four developed symptoms including vomiting and diarrhea. As their condition worsened, they were rushed to a private hospital in Jammigadda, where they have been receiving treatment for suspected food poisoning for the past three days. The condition of the child has raised particular concern among family members. The victims alleged that the incident was caused by the restaurant serving substandard and unhygienic food. Locals have questioned the response of food safety authorities and demanded strict action against the restaurant. [6:48 PM, 3/24/2026] Nsr: End



# Vigilance rides in Sadashivapet.. Sudden searches on hotels.. 22 gas cylinders seized!



“Sangareddy, March 24:- Indian Chronicle Correspondent Sunil.”Vigilance and Enforcement and Civil Supply officials conducted lightning rides in Sadashivapet town of Sangareddy district on Tuesday. Searches were conducted in several hotels, bakeries and sweet homes on information that domestic gas cylinders were being used for business purposes contrary to the rules. 6 cases were registered under the AEC Act and 22 gas cylinders were seized. DTCS Swaroopa warned that strict action will be taken if the cylinders allocated by the government for domestic needs are used for business purposes. She clarified that there is no shortage of gas in Sadashivapet town, sufficient stock is available and people do not need to worry. Enforcement team members DSP Venkatesham, CI Pandari, SI Sambasiva and staff participated in these rides.

## Man Drowns While Immersing Ashes in Medak District

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 24, (Indian chronicle):“A tragic incident occurred in Medak district where a man accidentally drowned while immersing ashes in a lake According to the complaint filed by Sunitha Gaikwad (35), a private employee from Kuncharam village of Manoorabad mandal, her brother Mohan passed away on March 19 in Devendra Nagar, Ambedkar Nagar. The last rites were performed on March 23. Later that afternoon, at around 3:00 PM, her husband Nagesh, along with their son, went to Kowkoor Lake to immerse the ashes. At approximately 4:30 PM, their son informed Sunitha over the phone that Nagesh had entered the water and drowned before their eyes. Upon receiving the information, police and DRF (Disaster Response Force) teams rushed to the spot and launched a search operation. The body of Nagesh was recovered from the lake at around 8:30 AM on March 24. The complainant suspects that Nagesh, who did not know swimming, may have accidentally drowned in the lake. Police have registered a case and further investigation is underway.



## Robust Measures to Ensure No Inconvenience to Devotees Attending Sri Rama Navami and Pattabhishekam Celebrations: SP Rohit Raju

“Kukkadapu Naresh Kumar, Bhadradi Kothagudem Staff Reporter, March 24, Indian Chronicle: District SP Rohit Raju announced that, in coordination with officials from other departments, the Police Department is implementing robust measures to ensure that devotees face absolutely no inconvenience during the Sri Rama Navami and Pattabhishekam celebrations scheduled to take place in Bhadrachalam on the 27th and 28th of this month. As part of this initiative, the Police Department has developed a QR code and an online link to help devotees easily locate and reach key areas such as parking lots, the Kalyana Mandapam (wedding hall), designated sectors, and counters for Laddus and Talambralu (sacred rice). He stated that through the online link—<https://ramanavami.4sightai.com/>—devotees can easily navigate to their designated destinations within Bhadrachalam during the dates of the Rama Navami and Pattabhishekam festivities. Furthermore, he informed that security arrangements involving approximately 2,000 police personnel are being put in place to prevent any untoward incidents. Therefore, he requested all devotees to make full use of these facilities and extend their cooperation to the police. Additionally, he appealed to the residents of Bhadrachalam town and its surrounding areas to cooperate with the traffic restrictions imposed by the police during these two days, ensuring a smooth flow of traffic and preventing any issues for the visiting devotees.



## Government Schools and Hospitals Must Stand as Symbols of Quality Service: District Collector Ankit.

“Kukkadapu Naresh Kumar, Bhadradi Kothagudem Staff Reporter, March 24, Indian Chronicle: District Collector Ankit stated that government schools and hospitals should serve as exemplary centers for providing quality services to the public. During an extensive tour of Annapureddypalli Mandal on Tuesday, he conducted surprise inspections of the Erragunta Primary Health Centre and the Kasturba Gandhi Girls' School in Annapureddypalli village, thoroughly reviewing the imple-

mentation of educational and medical services. First inspecting the Erragunta Primary Health Centre, the Collector examined the pharmacy, laboratory, inpatient ward, stock registers, and staff attendance registers. He reviewed the outpatient register and inquired with the staff regarding the daily volume of patients visiting the facility. Speaking with a young boy in the outpatient ward, he learned that the child had come to receive a rabies vaccine following a dog bite; he then verified whether the necessary vaccines were readily available. He also inquired about which hospitals patients are referred to during emergency situations and whether ambulance services are available. Upon noticing the absence of the Medical Officer during the inspection, he questioned the staff regarding the reason; they informed him that the officer was currently on a field visit. The Collector immediately summoned the Medical Officer and sought details regarding his activities. Observing that some staff members were not wearing their prescribed uniforms (aprons), he instructed them to strictly adhere to dress code regulations while on duty. Noting that a significant number of staff members were performing duties on deputation, the District Medical and Health Officer was directed to submit a comprehensive report on the matter. Subsequently, the Collector inspected the Kasturba Gandhi Girls' School, examined the classrooms, and interacted with the students. While observing the special classes for 10th-grade

students, the Collector inquired about the recently held English examination and advised them to prepare systematically for the upcoming Mathematics examination. The teachers were directed to focus on key topics, facilitate the revision of easier lessons, and ensure the students are fully prepared for their exams. Inspecting the midday meals prepared for the students, the Collector verified whether the food was being served in accordance with the prescribed menu. Inquiring into the reasons for the absence of certain items listed in the menu, the Collector tasted the served food to assess its quality. Noticing an excess of salt in the cooking, the Collector advised that it should be used only in appropriate quantities. It was emphasized that, in order to provide nutritious food to the students, all items listed in the menu must strictly be prepared and served. The Collector also inspected the storeroom, checking the quality of the stored food provisions and vegetables. Noting that vegetables are prone to spoiling quickly during the summer season, instructions were issued to utilize only fresh and high-quality produce. The Collector also questioned the unavailability of beetroot and spinach, which were listed in the menu. Furthermore, inquiries were made regarding the establishment of a kitchen garden, and suggestions were offered to take measures to utilize the wastewater generated by the RO plant for cleaning purposes. Upon noticing leaking taps at the school, he issued immediate orders for their repair. Speaking on the occasion, District Collector Ankit stated that government educational institutions and health centers serve as vital hubs for providing quality services to the public. He emphasized the critical need to provide students not only with quality education but also with nutritious food and a hygienic environment. He advised 10th-grade students to study diligently to achieve excellent results, while instructing teachers to provide them with comprehensive guidance. He issued directives to ensure that timely medical services and medicines are available to every patient in government hospitals, and that vaccines and emergency medications are always kept in readiness. He further suggested that ambulance services be kept on standby to facilitate the rapid transfer of patients to higher-level hospitals during emergencies, and urged for the effective implementation of the patient referral system. He warned the staff to maintain discipline in the discharge of their duties, strictly adhere to uniform regulations, and render their services with a sense of responsibility. District Collector Ankit made it clear that no negligence would be tolerated in providing improved educational and medical services to the public, and that strict action would be taken if any lapses were identified. Medical Officer Priyanka, School Headmistress Sarada, officials from relevant departments, and others accompanied the Collector during this inspection.



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## Land Identified for Allocation to TSIIC in Medchal

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 24, (Indian chronicle):“Medchal: Additional Collector Vijayender Reddy inspected a land parcel located in Survey No. 608 of Pudur village in Medchal mandal, Medchal-Malkajgiri district, on Tuesday. The inspection was carried out in connection with the proposed allocation of the land to the Telangana Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (TSIIC). During the visit, Medchal MRO Bhupal briefed the Additional Collector on the details and status of the land. Revenue Inspector Kumar was also present. The move is part of efforts to facilitate industrial development in the region by identifying suitable land for infrastructure expansion.



## Be Ready To Struggle With The Inspiration Of Bhagat Singh – DYFI Call

“Indian Chronicle. (Jade Srinivas)March,24.“A candlelight rally was organized on Tuesday at the district headquarters of Kumuram Bheem Asifabad under the leadership of the District Committee of the Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI). The rally started from Vivekananda Chowrasta, passed through Gandhi Chowk and Ambedkar Chowk, and continued towards the road leading to Gundi village. Speaking on the occasion, DYFI District Secretary Godisela Karthik said that great revolutionaries Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev, who sacrificed their lives challenging imperialism for the freedom of the nation, continue to inspire today's youth. He stated that their courage, sacrifice, and revolutionary spirit have left a lasting impression on the hearts of students and young people across the country. He criticized the BJP-led central government for promoting communal ideology in the education system through the New Education Policy-2020. He alleged that this policy is a conspiracy to distance poor and middle-class students from education. He further said that the history of great freedom fighters is being removed from textbooks and replaced with irrelevant content. Karthik also expressed concern over the rising unemployment issue, stating that both central and state governments are neglecting the unemployed. He demanded the release of a job calendar and provision of unemployment allowance to jobless youth. Additionally, he called for strict measures to eradicate ganja and drug abuse in the district. He urged the district administration to establish a Bhagat Singh Chowk on the road leading to Gundi village in the district headquarters, stating that it would serve as a source of inspiration and help people remember the revolutionary spirit of Bhagat Singh. DYFI District Assistant Secretary Raj Kumar, KVPS District Secretary Durgam Dinakar, CITU District Secretary Jadhav Rajender, along with DYFI leaders Hari, Madhukar, Vamsi, Kishore, Avinash, and others participated in the program.



## Intensive Sanitation Drive at Kodandarama Temple Ahead of Sri Rama Navami

“Indian Chronicle. Jade Srinivas. March, 24.“Asifabad: On the occasion of the upcoming Sri Rama Navami festival, municipal authorities carried out extensive sanitation works on Tuesday in the premises of Sri Kodandarama Temple located in Janakapur of the town. Municipal Chairman Mengre Akash, Vice Chairman MD Ahmed, and Municipal Commissioner Gajanand, along with local councillors, personally inspected the sanitation activities on the ground. During the visit, Chairman Akash and Vice Chairman MD Ahmed issued key instructions to the municipal staff. They directed officials to maintain cleanliness in and around the temple premises and to ensure that all necessary basic amenities are provided so that devotees visiting during the festival do not face any inconvenience. Councillors Kondu



Bharathi, Chiluveru Venkateshwarlu, Jadi Vinod, along with leaders CH Ravi and Shailesh, temple committee members, and municipal officials and staff participated in the program.

## Eden Garden Church to Open in Uppal-Boduppal-Medipally Area

12,000 sq. ft. prayer hall ready for grand inauguration on Friday  
Developed under the leadership of Swaroop Victory and Aruna Victory

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 24, (Indian chronicle):“MEDIPALLY: A new place of worship, Eden Garden Church, is set to be inaugurated on Friday in the Uppal-Boduppal-Medipally region under the Medchal-Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation. The church is located on the Medipalli main road, above D-Mart, and has been constructed over an area of approximately 12,000 square feet. Designed as a spacious and modern prayer facility, it is expected to cater to a large number of worshippers from the surrounding areas. The project has been developed under the leadership of Swaroop Victory and Aruna Victory. The church is equipped with modern amenities and a large prayer hall, making it suitable for regular services, spiritual gatherings, and community activities. Organizers stated that the church has been planned to accommodate people from all sections of society, with facilities designed for inclusive participation. The inauguration ceremony is expected to witness the presence of local residents, community leaders, and invitees in large numbers. Special prayer services and inaugural programs have been arranged as part of the opening event. The launch of Eden Garden Church is expected to



enhance the spiritual atmosphere and serve as a community hub for residents in the area.

## HMT Lake to Be Developed as a Major Tourist Destination – Parameshwar reddy



Nacharam, Indian Chronicle, March 24: In a significant step towards the development of the Nacharam region, HYDRA Commissioner Rangarajan, along with Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy, conducted an inspection of the HMT Lake. INTUC State leader V.S. Prakash Reddy and other local leaders were also present during the visit. During the inspection, Parameshwar Reddy stated that there are comprehensive plans to transform HMT Lake into a major tourist attraction in the near future. He emphasized that the development will not only enhance the beauty of the area but also provide a refreshing and eco-friendly space for the public. He further highlighted that with the Congress government in power in the state, development activities are being accelerated across various sectors. Special focus is being given to the restoration and beautification of lakes, which play a crucial role in maintaining ecological balance and improving the quality of urban life. The leaders discussed key aspects such as cleaning and rejuvenation of the lake, strengthening of its surroundings, and implementation of environmental protection measures. Plans are also being considered to develop walking tracks, greenery, seating areas, and other recreational facilities so that the lake becomes an ideal destination for families and

visitors. Parameshwar Reddy assured that all necessary steps will be taken to preserve the natural ecosystem while developing the lake. He reiterated that the project aims to create a sustainable and attractive public space where people can relax, spend quality time, and enjoy nature. Local residents have expressed optimism over the proposed development, stating that transforming HMT Lake into a tourist spot will not only improve the locality's appearance but also boost local economic activity and provide better amenities for the community.

## Efforts to Develop Kotnaka Bheemrao Children's Park – Municipal Chairman Mengre Akash

“Indian Chronicle. Jade Srinivas. March, 24.“Asifabad: Municipal Chairman Mengre Akash stated that efforts will be made to develop the Kotnaka Bheemrao Children's Park located in the district headquarters of Kumuram Bheem Asifabad. On Tuesday, he visited the park and reviewed the existing conditions. During the visit, repairs were carried out to the sprinklers in the park. He noted that with the summer season approaching, the number of visitors to the park is likely to increase. The Chairman assured that all necessary facilities will be provided for visitors and additional amenities suitable for children will be developed to enhance the park and make it more attractive and user-friendly.



## Bengal SIR: ECI to release first supplementary voter list tomorrow, all 23 districts on high alert



GNS News Agency, March 24

The West Bengal government has put all 23 districts on high alert following state Chief Electoral Officer Manoj Kumar Agarwal's announcement that the first supplementary voter list under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls will be published on Monday. The Home and Hill Affairs Department issued directives to district magistrates to "maintain strict surveillance in sensitive areas, deploy adequate police forces to manage expected crowds

at local administrative offices, and ensure law and order is maintained through close coordination with police commissioners and superintendents."

More than 60 lakh voters have been marked 'under adjudication' in the final SIR rolls that were released on February 28. The supplementary list is expected to bring clarity about the status of a large number of such voters. It has been learnt that nearly 27 lakh cases have been decided by a team of judicial officers drafted from West Bengal and neighbouring states till Friday.

Meanwhile, as per the direction of the Supreme Court, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has established 19 district-level appellate tribunals in Bengal to resolve disputes arising from the SIR. T S Sivagnanam, former Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court, has been appointed as the appellate authority for the high-stakes districts of Kolkata and North 24 Parganas. Other retired judges have been deputed to handle appeals regarding the inclusion or deletion of names in the remaining districts as well. The delay in finalising the list has drawn sharp criticism from Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who alleged that eligible voters were facing unnecessary harassment.

## Bengaluru water bill relief: one-time settlement with 100% interest waiver as dues hit Rs 851 crore

GNS News Agency, March 24

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Saturday announced a one-time settlement scheme from April to June for long-pending water bill dues in Bengaluru with a full interest waiver. A press release from Shivakumar's office said that interest would be waived under this scheme if customers paid the full principal amount during the specified period.

Bengaluru has about 11 lakh water connections under the Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) and 5.11 lakh customers have outstanding dues. As of the end of February, the total outstanding amount stood at Rs 851.33 crore, comprising a principal of Rs 539.43 crore and interest of Rs 311.90 crore. The deputy chief minister stated that the scheme was being implemented for a period of three months — April to June — to make it easier for customers to clear their dues and reduce their financial burden. If customers pay their principal amount in full during this three-month period, the entire interest accumulated up to April 2026 will be waived as a rebate. The scheme applies to all categories of BWSSB customers, including domestic, com-



mercial, and industrial consumers. Outstanding dues of government departments and institutions will also be settled through account reconciliation. The BWSSB will provide each defaulter with details of their RR number, principal amount, interest amount being waived, and the final amount payable. Customers can make payments easily through BWSSB kiosks, the online portal, and various digital payment methods.

## Mainpuri Eid namaz row: video shows SHO stopping prayers offered '300 m away from Eidgah'

GNS News Agency, March 24

A controversy erupted in Uttar Pradesh's Mainpuri district after a video of a police officer stopping namaz on the occasion of Eid in Kurawali went viral on social media. While the officer was heard saying the namaz would not be allowed, officials later said the objection was to the prayer being offered outside the Eidgah. They said it was eventually offered at the predetermined location after senior officials intervened. In the video, Lalit Bhati, Station House Officer, Kurawali, tells the crowd "Nahi hone dunga" (I won't allow this), as the Eidgah's mutawali (caretaker), Shakir Hussain, tells him "Hamesha hoti hai (namaz is always performed here)" and asks him to show the order whereby they are being stopped from offering namaz there. "Yeh namaz awaidhanik roop se par rahe hain, sashan ka adesh hai (They are performing the namaz unlawfully; there's an order from the Government)," the SHO is heard telling the crowd, which had gathered outside the Eidgah to offer namaz.

"Last year, somehow, the namaz was offered at the

chabutara of Gyan Singh, son of Lallu Singh. It was done suddenly, and we had input that it would be done again in the open. The place is about 300 m away from the Eidgah. Thus, we were alert and requested that the namaz be offered only at one place, inside the Eidgah. We were just trying to convince them through words," Bhati said. Asked about the language heard in the video, the SHO said, "We did not use any force. There was some misunderstanding. We were trying to convince them that offering namaz in the open like this is illegal. However, the issue was resolved within five to seven minutes, and the namaz was offered inside the Eidgah."

Speaking to The Indian Express, Neeraj Dwivedi, Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Kurawali, denied that the police officer had threatened anyone. He said some youngsters were trying to offer namaz in the open, outside the Eidgah, and were asked to offer it inside. "Some misunderstanding is being created. There was no issue at all. The namaz was performed peacefully later. They were informed a day in advance that namaz should be offered inside the Eidgah, which has enough space," he said.

## Congress bets on family legacy in crucial Karnataka bypolls amid internal friction



GNS News Agency, March 24

The Congress's reliance on political dynasties remains front and centre as the All India Congress Committee (AICC) finalised its candidates for the upcoming Karnataka bypolls. By fielding the kin of two deceased MLAs—Shamanuru Shivashankarappa and H Y Meti—the party has opted for family continuity over fresh leadership, sparking internal friction along both communal and familial lines. In Davanagere South, which was previously represented by Shivashankarappa, his grandson, Samarth Mallikarjun, will enter the electoral race. Meanwhile, in Bagalkot, Umesh Meti, the son of Meti, will also contest for the first time. The BJP has already announced its candidates for these constituencies: Srinivas T Dasakariyappa will run from Davanagere South, while three-time MLA Veeranna Charanthimath will contest from Bagalkot.

Samarth is a third-generation politician from the Shivashankarappa family. His father, S S Mallikarjun, is the Minister for Mines and Geology in the Karnataka government, while his mother, Dr Prabha Mallikarjun, is an MP from the Davanagere Lok Sabha constituency. Even before the party announced the ticket, and amid intense lobbying by Congress Muslim leaders to field a community leader at the seat, Samarth had filed his nomination papers on Friday.

The move had irked Muslim leaders, who, during a meeting held Saturday with AICC general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala, highlighted the issue and pointed out that more than a third of the voters from the constituency were from the minority community. KPCC president

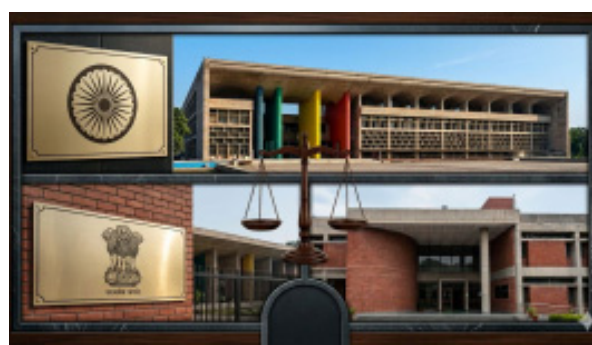
D K Shivakumar downplayed the incident, saying that Mallikarjun had clarified that his son would withdraw the nomination if the party decided otherwise. Congress MLC Abdul Jabbar was among the aspirants for the ticket. The Bagalkot seat was finalised following a dispute among four of Meti's children over who should be the candidate. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah held a meeting with Meti's sons, Mallikarjun and Umesh, and daughters, Bayyakkha and Mahadevi, to reach a consensus. While both his sons were aspirants for the ticket, Mahadevi had threatened to contest from the seat even if the Congress did not field her.

The BJP, meanwhile, had sprung a surprise at Davanagere South by finalising Dasakariyappa. Several state BJP leaders were of the view that GB Vinaykumar—a Kuruba leader who was keen to join the BJP to contest on a ticket—would be the candidate, but the party leadership decided to field the vice-president of its state ST Morcha unit. Charanthimath has contested on a BJP ticket from the Bagalkot constituency since 2004, winning thrice and losing twice. He lost to Meti in 2023 by a margin of 5,878 votes.

GNS News Agency, March 24

Congress BJP spar in House, Gujarat Legislative Assembly, fuel shortage, LPG supply disruptions, LPG shortage, oil supply, LPG supply, LPG supply crisis, LPG crisis, empty lpg cylinders, LPG distribution supply crisis, LPG distribution, LPG crisis, global energy costs, cooking gas price, west asia war, Israel-US-Iran war, Iran conflict, west asia conflict, iran and israel war, iran and israel, us israel war, iran in iran, iran us, us israel iran, us israel, us iran war, iran us war, us israel news, israel iran war news, war news, israel iran news, israel war news, iran war news, war on iran, iran israel war today, war in iran and israel, iran attack israel, israel iran, israel us attack iran, attack on iran, iran attack on us, us and iran, us attack in iran, did iran attack us, us to attack iran, us and israel, us and israel

## Commanding officer can't be crucified for incidents while on leave; Colonel vindicated in landmark verdict



GNS News Agency, March 24

In a judgment with far-reaching implications for military jurisprudence, a division bench of the Punjab and Haryana High Court recently ruled that a commanding officer (CO) cannot be held responsible for incidents involving their unit while on sanctioned leave. The verdict set aside scathing adverse remarks from the Annual Confidential Report (ACR) of Colonel Randeep Singh Guleria, who commanded the 33 Rashtriya Rifles (RR) during a turbulent period in Jammu and Kashmir in 2006. The ramifications of the verdict will be widespread. While it is almost certain that the Union of India will challenge the High Court order in the Supreme Court, it is important to delve into the case, especially as it concerns events that occurred in a counterinsurgency environment in the Kashmir valley. While the officer's application in the Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT) was dismissed, granting him partial relief, the divergent views of the AFT and the High Court are interesting. Civilian deaths and adverse remarks

In 2006, the 33 RR was involved in two separate firing incidents, resulting in the deaths of six civilians, including three children. On February 22, 2006, an incident occurred at Dudipur in the Handwara Tehsil of Kupwara district, Kashmir, when Colonel Guleria's unit opened fire, resulting in the deaths of four civilians, including three children. The Army's chain of command did not appreciate the unit's action, and the Commanding Officer was counselled verbally and in writing several times to prevent the recurrence of such incidents. On August 12, 2006, another incident of firing took place, which led to two civilian deaths. Following these events, the Army's chain of command initiated highly critical ACR entries against Col Guleria, who was commissioned in 1988, labelling him "unfit to command any unit" and "abrasive" in his leadership. The Initiating Officer (IO), the Reviewing Officer (RO) and the Senior Reviewing Officer (SRO), adversely commented upon him as the CO. The RO endorsed the following comments in the ACR:

"Col R.S. Guleria while in command of 33 RR has created a dangerous degree of tension in the unit by various immature actions and utterances. His method of handling various issues, including day-to-day matters has been very abrasive. The unit, under his command has also been guilty of six innocent civilians deaths on two different occasions. He is not suitable to continue in command of 33 RR in the CT operations environment of Kashmir". The IO's remarks said that Guleria is a medium-built officer with good military bearing. Upon assuming command of a Rashtriya Rifles (RR) battalion, he struggled to understand the organisation's dynamics and the environment in which his troops were operating, the IO noted.

## Mann's comeback meets crisis, scenic retreat shelved, and a narrative that briefly lost its voice



GNS News Agency, March 24

In Punjab's political corridors, Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann appears to have returned with renewed vigour and perhaps a point to underline. His recent hospitalisation had triggered predictable political theatre, complete with demands for medical bulletins and barbed remarks about governance from the ICU. Now, barely out of a naturecure institute in Bengaluru, the Chief Minister seems determined to replace speculation with visibility. The schedule tells its own story. A relentless round of public engagements, inaugurations, review meetings and press interactions has taken him from border districts to the Malwa belt. The subtext is clear, business as usual, only more so. Adding a personal footnote to the official narrative, his wife Gureet Kaur has vouched for his fitness routine, complete with an evening volleyball ritual. In political terms, it is less about the sport and more about the optics, the message being served is one of stamina.

The plan had all the ingredients of a picturesque committee meeting. Letters had been sent, bookings confirmed, and a hilltop resort in Parwanoo was ready to host the Vidhan Sabha Privileges Committee. The Punjab Vidhan Sabha panel, chaired by Kulwant Singh Pandori, was scheduled to convene on March 18, with local administration fully informed. And then came a pause that spoke louder than the plan. The meeting was quietly postponed and the sce-

The IO also said Guleria's transactional leadership approach led to disharmony within the unit and created apprehension among all ranks of the battalion. "The tension in the unit coupled with poor drills and procedures led to unfortunate killing of civilians by unit in operations affecting the morale of the battalion. The administrative procedures of unit too need improvement. The officer has aptitude for dealing with civilian populace and government officials. Guleria needs to better his leadership approach and quotient." The SRO comments noted rumblings and turbulence in the unit since Guleria took over. "The two incidents of killing innocent civilians and the discontent in the unit indicate necessity for removal of the CO from Command—a situation I cannot accept in an operationally active area. I consider him unfit to command any unit." All the above adverse comments have now been expunged from the ACR of Colonel Guleria following the High Court judgment. Petition before AFT Col Guleria challenged these remarks, first at the AFT and later at the High Court. He claimed that during the period in question, he was present in the command for only 27 days and absent for 128 days. He also said that he was on sanctioned leave on August 12, 2006, when the second fatal firing incident occurred. Two separate Courts of Inquiry (CoI) had already found him "not blameworthy" for the incidents, he argued. The AFT bench remained unconvinced by these arguments, stating that the issues involved in recording an ACR were distinct from those being examined by a Court of Inquiry.

"The argument that the petitioner being on leave on 12.08.06 and by implication is not responsible for the act of his troops, has got no substance. The sub unit under the command of the petitioner caused the civilians death which reflects that the troops were inadequately trained and did not follow proper drills in spite of counselling given to the petitioner. The Commanding Officer of the unit is responsible for the acts and omissions of the troop, under his command, the AFT said in its order in August 2014. "It is the Commander who gets the Kudos prestige if troops under his command are successful and also is equally responsible for the failure of the troops. The petitioner cannot put himself at a distance with regard to the incident of 12.08.06." High Court sets aside adverse comments. However, the High Court bench strongly disagreed, noting, "Once, an Officer is availing annual leave, how can any incident which occurred during the said period, during which he was on leave, can be attributed to such officer so as to record adverse remarks merely because said officer happens to be Commanding Officer of the Unit". The High Court also frowned on the fact that the officer's ACR recorded the two incidents even though he was not blameworthy by two inquiries. It also said the observation made by the reviewing officer about the petitioner's conduct in his ACR was based on incidents or allegations that are no longer relevant to the petitioner. Therefore, these adverse remarks should not be recorded. "The counsel for the respondents was asked to submit any action/conduct of the petitioner which may justify the adverse remarks recorded in his ACR having been brought on record before the Tribunal or before this court. He has not been able to point out any such single relevant document which justifies such adverse remarks recorded against the petitioner during the period in question in his ACR," the court noted.

nic venue politely set aside. Sources suggest a late realisation that mountain views can sometimes come with political costs. With memories of past governments facing criticism for similar indulgences, discretion edged out destination. In a system where "privilege" is both a committee and a sensitive word, restraint may well be the most defensible luxury. Randhawa tragedy, swift action, watchful reactions

The tragic suicide of Gagandeep Randhawa has cast a long shadow across Punjab's political landscape. The video message attributed to him, naming Cabinet Minister Laljit Singh Bhullar, triggered immediate administrative response, with the Chief Minister seeking Bhullar's resignation. Beyond the formal action, the political choreography unfolded with familiar precision. Expressions of concern arrived promptly from across the aisle. Partap Singh Bajwa, Sukhbir Singh Badal, Sunil Jakhar and Bikram Singh Majithia were all visible and vocal. Noticeably more measured was the response from Amarinder Singh Raja Warring, whose later statement did not go unnoticed in circles where timing often speaks as loudly as words.

For a party that has carefully cultivated the phrase "kattar imaan daar" into a political signature, the timing proved awkward. The Aam Aadmi Party had been amplifying its message through screenings of Dhruv Rathee's take on the Delhi excise case, reinforcing a narrative of vindication around Arvind Kejriwal. Billboards, videos and village-level outreach had been working in tandem to keep the slogan front and centre. Then came a disruption no communication strategy could quite anticipate. The Randhawa tragedy shifted the spotlight from messaging to management. Allegations, responses and counter-responses began to compete with carefully curated claims of integrity. The contrast was stark. One part of the system continued to assert transparency, while another was compelled to address uncomfortable questions. For now, the slogan has not disappeared. It has simply lowered its volume, waiting for a less complicated moment to return to full pitch.

## Congress, BJP spar in House after demand for short debate on fuel shortage turned down

GNS News Agency, March 24

attack iran, us attack iran today, us iran news, iran us news, us news, iran attack news, iran attack today, Khamenei news. When Congress MLAs stood up objecting to the statement, the Speaker said that this is not a UCC issue. Gujarat Legislative Assembly on Tuesday witnessed a heated exchange of words between BJP and Congress members after the Speaker denied permission for a 'short duration discussion' in the House over LPG and petrol 'shortage' in the state amid the war in West Asia. BJP MLAs called the Congress demand a 'premeditated conspiracy' to misguide people and divert attention from the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill, which was tabled in the House on Tuesday, leading to strong reactions from the Congress members.

Soon after Question Hour, Congress MLA Amit Chavda requested the Speaker to allow him to speak on

the issue of shortage of LPG and petrol supply in the state under Rule 108 of the Gujarat Legislative Assembly Rules. He stated that he had already moved a notice under the Rule 108 for 'short duration discussion', which allows members to discuss the matter of urgent public importance without a formal motion or vote. Speaker Shankar Chaudhary declined to accept Chavda's notice stating that he had already allowed a motion under Rule 116 on the same issue on Monday. "We have already accepted a notice under Rule 116 on the same issue so there is no point in accepting this request now," the Speaker said. Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi intervened and accused the Congress MLAs of a "conspiracy". "This is a well planned conspiracy and an attempt to send a 'wrong message' to people. Through rumours (of LPG and petrol shortage) they want to misguide people,"

## Women of Sirmour gets their fare share in land as they were made partners in pattas



GNS News Agency, March 24

A patta is a government-issued land title / record document that recognises a person's legal right to possess and cultivate land. It generally indicates ownership or permanent occupancy rights subject to conditions. A patta is a government-issued land title / record document that recognises a person's legal right to possess and cultivate land. It generally indicates ownership or permanent occupancy rights subject to conditions. Attro Devi, 52, who cannot read or write, does not recall a single moment in her life when her name was included as a partner in any property, maternal or paternal.

But now, a resident of the remote village of Nayya in Gram Panchayat Nayya Padog in Sirmour district, is a joint holder with her two husbands (brothers married to her under the local Jodidara tradition) of a patta for about 5 bighas of forest land. It was granted to them under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006. Under the FRA, designed to protect the rights of Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers, forest land that has been under cultivation or use by families for the last three generations – defined as 75 years prior to December 2005 – can be formally recognised and allotted to them, with strict conditions such as a prohibition on sale.

A patta is a government-issued land title / record document that recognises a person's legal right to possess and cultivate land. It generally indicates ownership or permanent occupancy rights subject to conditions. Attro Devi says she got to know about eight-ten months ago that her name too was on the tehsil papers for the land. "Baad mein tehsil mein bola ki ab yeh zameen meri bhi hai, mera naam behi zameen mein hissedari mein hai (Later, officials told me this land belongs to me as well now, that I have a share in it too)," says the 52-year-old. Along with Attro Devi and her husbands Dharam Singh and Tikka Ram, her 90-year-old

father-in-law Ramu Ram's name appears in the patta. Dharam Singh says: "We have been farming this land for three generations... But now we are certain that nobody can evict us." About Attro Devi's name being on the patta, he says: "We were informed in advance that women would be equal partners in the land."

While Attro Devi is unsure what this implies, not Vinta Devi, 41, from Lambi Dhar village under Gram Panchayat Nainidhar. The 41-year-old, who dropped out after Class 5, laughs: "We have worked alongside our husbands in the fields for years. Do din se main in saab ko keh rahin hoon ki mera bhi naam zameen mein hai (Now, for the past two days, I have been reminding my husband that my name is also in the land records)." Vinta's husband Gopal Dhiman, 46, says he welcomes the government move. "Women's participation has increased in every field these days. It will definitely bring a positive change in society." The family owns 4.5 bighas of originally forest land, which has been cultivated by them for three generations, Dhiman says. Sirmour Deputy Commissioner Priyanka Verma said the initiative was aimed at empowering women and raising awareness about their rights.

"In Sirmour district, 29 eligible OTFD families were selected for land allotment. We decided to hand over the patta documents directly to the women on International Women's Day. Although their husbands were present, the certificates were formally handed over to the women," she told. Verma said forest land rights had already been transferred in tribal districts such as Lahaul-Spiti and Kinnaur. "OTFDs were brought under the ambit of the FRA in 2013. In Sirmour, sincere efforts to recognise land under cultivation began only in the last six to seven months," she said. Dhani Ram Sharma, an environmental activist and head of the Sirmour Van Adhikar Manch, said nearly 90% of the women beneficiaries are Scheduled Castes, and seven of the families are landless.

"These are the first forest rights titles issued under the FRA in Sirmour district. For the rights holders, the title represents not just land ownership but also security, dignity and hope for the future," Sharma said. "It opens the door for millions of marginal and landless families in Himachal Pradesh." Calling the development the outcome of nearly a decade of sustained struggle and collective effort, Sharma said: "The Act was passed in 2006, but OTFDs were included only in 2013. Since 2016, successive governments have attempted to implement the FRA but not very sincerely. However, over the past year, serious efforts have finally been made to implement it," he said.

## Online job offer turns costly for Chandigarh man, duped of Rs 7.44 lakh



GNS News Agency, March 24

A 35-year-old resident of Dhanas has been reportedly duped of Rs 7.44 lakh in an online "work-from-home" scam, following which a case has been registered at the Cyber Crime Police Station in Sector 17. According to the police, the victim was later added to a Telegram group, where he was persuaded to invest money on the promise of higher returns. Over time, he transferred money to multiple bank accounts provided by the accused, believing it to be part of the scheme.

Police said the fraudsters used multiple mobile num-

bers and online platforms, including WhatsApp and Telegram, to execute the scam. The complainant alleged that after investing Rs 1.7 lakh initially, he was encouraged to deposit larger amounts. When he attempted to withdraw his money, his account was allegedly frozen and he was asked to pay an additional Rs 2.5 lakh to "unfreeze" it. Despite making further payments, the accused continued to delay the withdrawal process, giving excuses such as low credit scores and demanding more money. Eventually, they stopped responding altogether, while the Telegram groups and contacts became unreachable. The total defrauded amount has been pegged at Rs 7,44,824.

The complainant has already registered multiple complaints on the Cyber Crime Portal and submitted bank transaction details to the police. Based on his complaint, a case has been registered under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), including cheating, criminal breach of trust, forgery and criminal conspiracy. DSP (Cyber Crime) A Venkatesh said that an investigation is underway to trace the accused, identify the bank accounts involved and recover the defrauded amount. We urge citizens to remain cautious of online job offers promising quick returns and to verify such schemes before making any financial transactions, the DSP added.

## 'We're eager to return to our chosen home': Puneites come back from Dubai to wait out wartime



GNS News Agency, March 24

For many Pune residents who have built their lives in Dubai, the past few weeks have turned a distant geopolitical conflict into an immediate and deeply personal experience. Now back in Pune, several families are choosing to pause and wait, unsure of what will unfold in the coming weeks. "I was picking up my son from school when I got a call from India. My father-in-law told me the UAE was under attack. Initially, it was Abu Dhabi, but soon Dubai also became a target," said Prachiti Parekh, who returned to Pune with her five-year-old son, Kiaan. Her husband Kunal was in Bali, Indonesia, when the escalation began and has since been unable to go back to Dubai due to widespread flight cancellations. He returned to India instead.

"There was panic, given our high-rise residence and my husband's absence. With my son, I sought refuge in a friend's Palm villa, anticipating easier evacuation if needed," she said. What began as confusion quickly escalated. "We hastily gathered essentials and relocated. Soon, strikes intensified—sparring no area. Around Burj Al Arab, the Palm, Burj Khalifa, all areas were targets," Parekh said. "I was trying to stay strong, but the Fairmont Hotel strike, which was just four minutes away from us, was deeply unsettling."

Yet, even in the chaos, Parekh points to the UAE's crisis management systems as a source of reassurance. "Government SMS alerts clarified the interceptions by the UAE's defence systems, alleviating fears. The efficiency—intercepting over 1,800 missiles and drones—was reassuring. Shelter alerts and safety updates followed, offering relief," Parekh said. By day four, Parekh boarded a SpiceJet rescue flight to India, paying upwards of Rs 1.5 lakh. "The journey was intense, but landing in India brought immense relief," she said, adding, "The Government's strength and resilience were truly exemplary. In these tough times, Dubai made us feel like one of their own—an Emirati in spirit. We're eager to return to our chosen home, Dubai."

For others, the crisis unfolded while they were away. Amit Chordia, a Dubai-based businessman in the auto spare parts trade, had travelled to Jakarta with his wife on February 27 for a seven-day meditation camp, leaving behind their two children, aged five and three, in Dubai under the care of staff and a nanny. Amit Chordia with family Amit Chordia reunited with his children in Pune after days of uncertainty, with the young siblings briefly stranded in Dubai

during the crisis. (Photo by special arrangement)

"We left thinking Dubai is one of the safest cities in the world. The children had their routine, everything was normal," Chordia said. "On February 28, the war started. Our two young children were in Dubai, and it became very difficult to focus on anything else," he said. With airports under threat, returning was not easy. "Flights from Bali and Jakarta were continuously getting cancelled, so options were very limited," he said.

Back in Dubai, the children managed briefly with the staff before schools shut. "Nights were the hardest—they would get scared," he said, adding that support systems stepped in. "The staff was very supportive and kept the children constantly on calls, reassuring them that everything would be okay. They also stayed with a cousin-grandfather for a couple of days."

With both parents stranded abroad, the situation was tense. "It was a panic situation. Being unable to reach your children at such a time is extremely difficult," he said. The family eventually arranged for the children to travel to India with their nanny. "Getting tickets for minors without parents required special permissions, but we managed it," Chordia said. After nearly a week, the family reunited in Pune. "That was the biggest relief." The disruption has also impacted business. "Work has come to a standstill. Exports have been affected," he said, adding that he plans to stay in Pune "until there is more clarity".

Shehnaz Chawla Shehnaz Chawla advanced her return to Pune as tensions rose, even as daily life in Dubai continued with caution and order. (Photo by special arrangement) A more measured account comes from Shehnaz Chawla, 50, who has lived in Dubai for over four years. "Everything was operating smoothly. We were not in panic, but we were very observant," she said.

"There was a lot of reassurance from the Government. Leaders were personally visiting public places like malls and telling people the situation was under control," she added. "Of course, we could hear missiles and interceptions—that was unsettling."

With her family in Pune growing anxious, Chawla advanced her travel plans. "We were scheduled to fly at the end of March, but my family insisted, so we postponed," she said. Despite the tensions, Chawla noted that daily life remained functional. "From groceries to delivery services, taxi drivers, even Careem—everything was operating with full cooperation," she said. "Something like this was never expected in a city like Dubai, but the systems were very supportive." Among professionals reassessing plans is Dr Prem Nanda, a Pune-based dentist with a parallel practice in Dubai. "I could continuously hear the bombs, but inside, it still felt safe," he said. "The system kept us protected with regular alerts." Nanda exited Dubai via Oman when Dubai airport was bombed. Originally scheduled to return this week, Nanda has postponed his plans. "I've cancelled my appointments and will stay back until next month," he said. Across Pune, similar conversations are unfolding quietly—in homes, clinics, and social circles where Dubai has long been an extension of everyday life. What stands out is not resentment, but a cautious pause. For now, Pune has become a place of refuge. But for many, Dubai is not a chapter closed—only one briefly interrupted.

## PM Modi to hold roadshow in Bhabanipur, BJP poll campaign set to intensify post Ram Navami

A highly placed BJP source told The Indian Express, "The PM will hold rallies and roadshows extensively across the state. The campaign is set to intensify after Ram Navami." Stating that the prime minister has agreed to hold as many rallies as possible in Bengal, another senior BJP leader said, "There will be a roadshow by the PM in Kolkata, and it will cover Bhabanipur for our candidate Suvendu Adhikari." However, he added that the date for the roadshow has not yet been decided, nor has it been finalised whether the rally will begin or end in Bhabanipur. Apart from PM Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah is expected to address about 12 to 14 public events in the poll-bound state.

Former BJP president J P Nadda and newly appointed BJP national president Nitin Nabin will also hold multiple rallies in Bengal. Whereas Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is expected to participate in eight public programs. According to party sources, Nabin will be in Kolkata on March 24 and March 25.

Actor-turned-politician Mithun Chakraborty is likely to campaign across the state as part of the party's voter outreach program. The campaign plan includes large public meetings, smaller corner meetings, and door-to-door outreach, covering key constituencies across West Bengal. State BJP president Samik Bhattacharya and MP Sukanta Majumdar have also been asked to campaign throughout the state. BJP leader Rahul Sinha, who won the recently held Rajya Sabha elections, will also be campaign-



ing extensively for the party.

"This time, the party's central leadership does not want the Bengal BJP leadership to act in 'side roles'. So, Samik Bhattacharya and Sukanta Majumdar will also campaign on an equal footing with Narendra Modi and Amit Shah," said a senior party leader. Two heavyweight BJP candidates, Suvendu Adhikari, who is contesting from the Nandigram seat and also against CM Mamata Banerjee in Bhabanipur, and Dilip Ghosh, who is contesting from Kharagpur Sadar, will also campaign in other constituencies. According to party sources, Adhikari and Ghosh will campaign in some key constituencies as star campaigners. Tanusree Bose is a dedicated journalist reporting for from Kolkata.

## Back to his roots, but not tradition: 42-yr-old rewrites an exotic farming story



GNS News Agency, March 24

Amrinder Singh, a postgraduate in Physics, has turned 6.5 acres of land into a hub of exotic vegetables and premium leafy greens — earning up to Rs 70 lakh annually while eyeing to break the Rs 1-crore barrier. The journey of Amrinder Singh, who hails from Gunno Majra village in Mohali, Amrinder Singh, is anything but conventional. Having secured a masters degree in Physics in the early 2000s, he moved to Bengaluru where he ran laboratory equipment business. "In Bengaluru, I observed how exotic vegetables and leaves were widely used in fast-food restaurants and global cuisines. I decided to return to Punjab and give farming a try," says Amrinder.

He returned to his roots in 2006 with an idea that was then unfamiliar to most farmers in Punjab: grow what the market demands, not what tradition dictates. "I did a lot of research and started on an acre with lettuce and other leafy greens and exotic vegetables, gradually expanding it to all my farmland by 2014-15," he adds. Today, his fields produce a range of high-value crops rarely associated with the region. From lettuce, rocket leaves (arugula), basil, leek, kale, parsley and celery to colourful varieties of broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage, his farm caters to a niche but rapidly growing segment — premium hospitality and food businesses. "These crops are no longer limited to salads," he says. "Bakeries use rocket and basil leaves for cake decoration, while restaurants use kale, parsley and celery in a variety of cuisines". The shift to exotic vegetable farming has proven lucrative. Depending on quality and demand, his produce fetches between Rs 150 and Rs 350 per kilogram. High-demand crops such as Korean onion, bell peppers and seedless cucumber can generate Rs 10-12 lakh

per acre. With two cropping cycles annually, his total earnings reach Rs 60-70 lakh after expenses.

The farm itself reflects a carefully planned system. Of the total land, one acre is dedicated to bell peppers grown under a polyhouse, while the remaining 5.5 acres are used for open cultivation. Different sections are allocated to specific crops, ensuring both diversity and efficiency. His success, however, is rooted in meticulous planning and scientific methods. He has developed his own nursery system, raising seedlings on-site before transplanting them into the fields. Crop cycles are staggered to ensure year-round production. For instance, rocket leaves mature within 35-40 days and can be harvested repeatedly every few weeks for up to six months, while lettuce and spring onion take around five to six months from nursery to harvest.

Seasonal crops such as broccoli and cabbage are harvested between January and April, while other varieties are rotated throughout the year. "It's a continuous process," Singh explains. "Different varieties grow in different seasons, which keeps production and income steady." His produce is supplied primarily to hotels, restaurants and bakeries across the tri-city region of Chandigarh, Mohali and Panchkula, as well as cities like Ludhiana, Delhi and Jammu. While he also runs a retail outlet, "Exotic Cart" in Chandigarh, bulk supply to institutional buyers remains his core business. The leafy produce is carefully harvested and packed in small boxes to retain freshness and visual appeal, especially for premium buyers.

The transition from conventional farming to exotic crops has not been without challenges. The venture demands intensive labour, market awareness and consistent quality. He employs four permanent workers and hires additional labour during peak seasons. "It is physically demanding," he admits, "but the returns make it worthwhile." Coming from a traditional farming background, Amrinder believes his model represents the future of agriculture in regions like Punjab. With rising input costs and stagnant prices for staple crops, many farmers are struggling to sustain profits. His experience suggests that diversification and alignment with changing consumer preferences can significantly improve incomes. "Even in the early years, I realised the returns were multiple times higher than wheat and paddy," he says. "If done properly, farming can earn more than Rs 1 crore on the same land—and I'm working towards that."

## Breaking the 'fourth wall': Fest reimagines how people experience theatre

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Drawing from the Hasmukh Baradi Theatre Archives, the exhibition traces how Gujarati theatre has evolved from proscenium-bound productions to performances staged in courtyards, streets, and community spaces, using minimal sets and dynamic spatial design. Drawing from the Hasmukh Baradi Theatre Archives, the exhibition traces how Gujarati theatre has evolved from proscenium-bound productions to performances staged in courtyards, streets, and community spaces, using minimal sets and dynamic spatial design. CHALLENGING THE way theatre is traditionally seen and experienced, the fourth edition of All About Natak Fest 2026 is attempting to move beyond the familiar "stage-and-seats" format, inviting audiences into a more immersive and participatory space. Organised by the Theatre & Media Centre (BUDRETI Trust) in New Ranip here, the nine-day festival is centred on the theme "Beyond the Proscenium", a reference to the conventional stage structure where actors perform within a framed space, separated from viewers. Festival director Manvita Baradi said this format, introduced in India during the British colonial rule, created a "picture frame" style of viewing theatre, where audiences

observe from a distance. In contrast, she pointed out, Indian traditions of folk and classical performance, rooted in texts such as the Natya Shastra, have historically been more fluid, interactive, and spatially flexible. "The idea is to break that 'keyhole' perspective," Baradi said, explaining that the festival aims to dissolve the rigid divide between performers and spectators and instead foreground a more direct actor-audience relationship. This approach is reflected across the festival's programming, which combines performances, workshops, masterclasses, and an exhibition built around experimental theatre practices. Drawing from the Hasmukh Baradi Theatre Archives, the exhibition traces how Gujarati theatre has evolved from proscenium-bound productions to performances staged in courtyards, streets, and community spaces, using minimal sets and dynamic spatial design. Each day of the festival has been curated to offer a mix of learning and performance, with masterclasses by theatre practitioners including M. K. Raina, alongside workshops on acting, scenography, and voice. A key highlight of the festival is Ekalu Aakash, written by noted playwright Hasmukh Baradi and directed by Raina, which Baradi described as a significant production within the festival's larger exploration of form and space.

# Patriot missile involved in Bahrain blast likely U.S.-operated, analysis finds



GNS News Agency, March 24

An American-operated Patriot air defence battery likely fired the interceptor missile involved in a pre-dawn explosion that injured dozens of civilians and tore through homes in U.S.-ally Bahrain 10 days into the war on Iran, according to an analysis by academic researchers examined by Reuters. Both Bahrain and Washington have blamed an Iranian drone attack for the March 9 blast, which the Gulf kingdom said injured 32 people including children, some seriously.

Commenting on the day of the attack, U.S. Central Command said on X that an Iranian drone struck a residential neighbourhood in Bahrain. In response to questions from Reuters, Bahrain on Saturday (March 21, 2026) acknowledged for the first time that a Patriot missile was involved in the explosion over the Mahazza neighbourhood on Sitra island, offshore from the capital Manama and also home to an oil refinery. In a statement, a Bahraini government spokesperson said the missile successfully intercepted an Iranian drone mid-air, saving lives. "The damage and injuries sustained were not a result of a direct impact to the ground of either the Patriot interceptor or the Iranian drone," the spokesperson said. Neither Bahrain or Washington has provided evidence that an Iranian drone was involved in the Mahazza incident. The use of costly, advanced weaponry to defend against attacks by far cheaper drones has been a defining feature of the war. The incident points to the risks and limitations of this strategy: The blast from the powerful Patriot, whether or not it intercepted a drone, contributed to widespread damage and casualties, while Bahrain's air defences were unable to prevent strikes that night on the nearby oil refinery, which declared force majeure hours later. When asked for comment, the Pentagon referred Reuters to Central Command, which did not immediately reply to questions. Iran-Israel war: Follow LIVE updates on March 22, 2026. In response to questions sent to the White House, a senior U.S. official said the United States was "crushing" Iran's ability to shoot or produce drones and missiles. "We will continue to address these threats to our country and our allies," the official said, adding that the U.S. military "never targets civilians."

The official did not answer specific questions about the Patriot attack. On February 28, the first day of U.S. strikes on Iran, an Iranian girls school took a direct hit. Investigators at the U.S. Defense Department believe U.S. forces were likely responsible, Reuters first reported, possibly because of outdated targeting data, two U.S. sources previously told the news agency. Video of the aftermath of the Mahazza blast in Bahrain verified by Reuters shows rubble around houses, a thick layer of dust in the streets, an injured man and screaming residents. Both Bahrain and the United States operate U.S. Patriot air defence batteries in the kingdom, a close U.S. ally located on the Persian Gulf that hosts the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet along with the regional U.S. naval command.

On the night of the explosion in Mahazza, the refinery on Sitra came under Iranian attack, according to Bahraini national oil company Bapco. Videos show smoke rising from the facility on the morning of March 9. Reuters could not establish whether the cause of the explosion during a night of Iranian attacks on Sitra would have been immediately apparent to U.S. and Bahraini forces. Bahrain in its statement did not say why it had not mentioned the involvement of a Patriot at the time. Iran's mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the incident. Produced by Raytheon, part of RTX Corp., the Patriot is the U.S. Army's primary high-to-medium-range aircraft-and-missile interceptor system and forms the backbone of U.S. and allied air defences.

Raytheon didn't respond to a request for comment about the incident. Bahrain's government declined to say whether the missile that detonated on March 9, was fired by its own forces or by the United States. But research associates Sam Lair and Michael Duitsman and Professor Jeffrey Lewis of the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey concluded with moderate-to-high confidence that the suspect missile was likely launched from a U.S. Patriot battery located about 7 km (4 miles) to the southwest of the Mahazza neighbourhood. The conclusions of the three American munitions and open-source intelligence researchers, reported here for the first time, were based on their review of open-source visuals and commercial satellite imagery. Reuters showed the Middlebury analysis to two target-analysis experts and one Patriot system missile researcher, who found no reason to dispute its conclusion. One of them, Wes Bryant, a former senior targeting advisor and policy analyst at the Pentagon, said Lair, Duitsman and Lewis's conclusions were "pretty undeniable." A small Gulf state, Bahrain plays a critical role in the security of the Strait of Hormuz, the chokepoint that carries about a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas and has been almost entirely closed by Iran, causing unprecedented disruption to world oil supplies.

Key to the Middlebury analysis was a video shot from an apartment building and shared on social media. The video shows the suspect Patriot roaring across the night sky at low altitude on a northeastern trajectory. It then angled downward and out of sight. A flash of light in the distance appeared to mark its detonation 1.3 seconds later. Hany Farid, a professor at the University of California at Berkeley specializing in digital forensics, reviewed the video for Reuters to determine if it was generated by artificial intelligence. He found "no obvious evidence that the video is fake." Lair, Duitsman and Lewis geolocated the video to a neighbourhood in Riffa, Bahrain's second-largest city. Reuters confirmed the geolocation. The earliest post of the video Reuters could find online was at around 2 a.m. local time on March 9. "The Riffa site's location and orientation are consistent with the trajectory" of that of the suspect Patriot, the analysis said. Multiple videos posted to social media the morning of March 9 show damage to residences in Block 602 of the Mahazza neighbourhood.

The researchers first geolocated the visuals using landmarks that appeared to match commercial satellite imagery of the area and visible street addresses. Reuters independently verified the geolocation. The researchers then traced the trajectory of the suspect missile from Block 602 straight back to what they assessed — based on commercial satellite imagery — was the U.S. Patriot battery based less than half a mile from where the video of the missile in

flight was recorded in Riffa.

A battery consists of a radar unit, a command hub and up to eight launchers that are integrated to detect, track and intercept aircraft and missiles. Using commercial satellite imagery, the researchers determined that five launchers were visible at the Riffa site two days before the March 9 incident. The battery has been there since at least 2009, according to satellite imagery. The Bahraini Defence Force did not start operating its own Patriot systems until 2024, according to a Lockheed Martin press release. The Riffa site has features that are both distinctive to U.S. Patriot batteries in the region and different from those of known Bahrain-operated batteries, the researchers said, including protective walls, unpaved roads and a lack of permanent buildings. Based on these elements, the researchers concluded that the battery is likely operated by the United States, which uses Patriots to defend its naval sites in Bahrain.

The researchers were unable to say with confidence what caused the Patriot to explode. But they added that based on the available evidence, including the pattern and spread of damage on the ground, it appeared to have detonated mid-flight. They concluded that it was possible the Patriot was aimed at a low-flying drone and that the combined explosion of the missile and drone ignited the blast, the analysis said. "If this was the case, this was an irresponsible intercept attempt as it endangered the lives and the homes of allied civilians in a residential area," the analysis said. This scenario matches what Bahrain's government spokesperson said happened: that the Patriot intercepted an Iranian drone and both detonated in the air. However, the analysis said, the direction of the damage and the lack of available evidence of a drone over the neighborhood suggested another scenario, that "the explosion was the result of the detonation of the warhead and unexpended propellant of a Patriot interceptor." Despite the claim by Bahrain, the researchers said it was less likely the missile made contact with a drone.

Reuters could not independently verify the presence or not of an Iranian drone during the incident. The analysis said that videos taken after the attack and photographs released by Bahraini authorities show that the blast damage was concentrated along four streets of Mahazza. A Bahrain television news broadcast on March 9 and a government press release showed an extensively damaged home about 120m from the centre of the main blast area, with interior photos showing holes in a wall created by shrapnel, the analysis said. Robert Maher, an audio specialist who reviewed the video at the request of Reuters, said his analysis supports the approximate location of the explosion over the damaged homes. In the video, a flash is seen about eight seconds in, but an explosion is never heard before the clip ends 19 seconds later. That's because light travels faster than sound. Based on how long the sound would take to reach the person who shot the video, the explosion had to be more than four miles away.

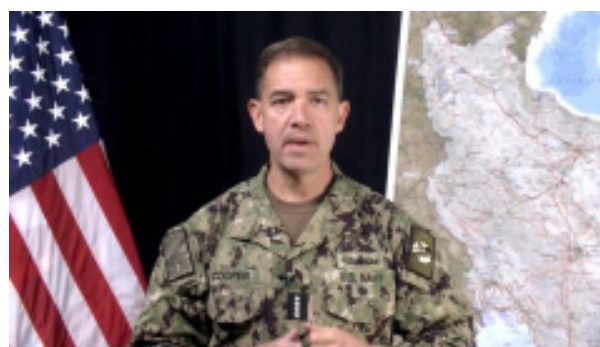
The damaged homes were about 7.4 km (4.6 miles) away, which fits with the timing. When all the damage is considered together, the Middlebury analysis noted, it matches what one would expect if a Patriot missile exploded in the air over a road intersection in the neighbourhood. Pieces of the missile then flew about 120 meters farther and hit another house, the analysis said. Maher said that in the audio from the video he heard no drones or other missiles, although their sounds would have been faint or inaudible if they were more than four miles away from where the video was taken. "I don't see anything that is inconsistent with my observations from the audio," Maher said after reviewing the Middlebury analysis. Defence and industry officials say Patriot misfires are rare, but they do happen, including an errant missile in 2007 that hit a farm in Qatar. In an X post on March 9, U.S. Central Command denounced Iranian and Russian news reports that said the incident in Mahazza was the result of a failed Patriot, calling it a "LIE." It said an Iranian drone struck a residential neighbourhood. Reuters and the Middlebury researchers were unable to obtain or review any visual evidence of missile or drone fragments. Reuters attempted to contact witnesses in Bahrain, but several people declined to speak, citing fear of reprisals. Human Rights Watch has documented arrests of people in Bahrain during the war for posting videos on social media of attacks. In the video of the suspect missile in flight, the Patriot appears to pass a much steeper smoke trail that the researchers said likely belonged to a first interceptor fired moments earlier. Patriots are often fired in pairs to increase the chances that one hits the target. Neither the researchers or Reuters could establish what happened to the first missile. The low trajectory of the second missile and its deviation from the route of the earlier launch could be signs of a possible problem, the researchers said. But they could not rule out the possibility that it was shot in that direction on purpose. Bahrain's spokesperson said any suggestion of malfunction or misfiring of the Patriots in Bahrain "was factually incorrect."

## Don't remove any genuine voter from electoral rolls, parliamentary committee tells EC

A Parliamentary Standing Committee has asked the Election Commission to ensure that no genuine elector is excluded from the voters' lists or subjected to undue hardship during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR), which has concluded in many States and will begin in others soon. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice in its report tabled in Parliament this week, has said that the revision of electoral rolls should be carried out in a fair, transparent and inclusive manner. It has sought adequate safeguards for vulnerable sections, including senior citizens, persons with disabilities, economically weaker sections, and migrant populations.

The committee's recommendations come even as political parties in many States such as West Bengal have raised questions about the entire process and made allegations that the names of many genuine voters were deleted. While the SIR process has been completed in 11 States and Union Territories, the EC has asked 22 other States to begin preparations for the exercise. The final electoral list of Uttar Pradesh is scheduled to be out in April. In West Bengal, names of around 60.06 lakh voters, whose details had "logical discrepancies", are under adjudication by judicial officers. Those names cleared by the officers will be added to the voters' list by way of a supplementary list. Monitoring mechanism The report submitted in Parliament on March 16 said: "The committee takes note of the proposed house-to-house verification by booth-level officers and the uploading of relevant documents on ECINET (Election Commission Integrated Network) with restricted access, as well as the involvement of political parties through booth-level agents".

# U.S. says 'took out' Iran base threatening blocked Strait of Hormuz oil route



The U.S. military declared on Saturday (March 21, 2026) it had taken out an Iranian bunker housing weapons threatening oil and gas shipments in the Strait of Hormuz, as thousands of Iranians marked Id al-Fitr with prayer. The U.S. statement appeared designed to calm the concerns of energy markets and of Washington's sceptical international allies, more than 20 of whom issued a statement vowing to back efforts to re-open the key sea lane.

Admiral Brad Cooper, head of U.S. Central Command, said U.S. war planes had dropped 5,000-pound bombs on an underground facility on Iran's coast that was storing anti-ship cruise missiles, mobile launchers and other equipment. "We not only took out the facility, but also destroyed intelligence support sites and missile radar relays that were used to monitor ship movements," Admiral Cooper said in a video statement, revealing details of a strike first announced on Tuesday (March 17, 2026).

A joint statement by more than 20 countries, including UAE, Bahrain and a statement from the leaders of mainly European countries, including the U.K., France, Italy and Germany, but also South Korea, Australia, the UAE and Bahrain, condemned the "de facto closure of the Strait of Hormuz by Iranian forces". "We express our readiness to contribute to appropriate efforts to ensure safe passage through the Strait. We welcome the commitment of nations who are engaging in preliminary planning," they said. As consumers count the cost of attacks on energy facilities in the Gulf, including the world's largest gas hub, U.S. President Donald Trump has slammed NATO allies as "cowards" and urged them to secure the Strait. Iran has choked the channel, through which around a fifth of the world's crude oil and liquefied natural gas passes during peacetime. Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Tehran had only imposed restrictions on vessels from countries involved in attacks against Iran, and would offer assistance to others that stayed out of the conflict. Iran also denies claims — cited in the 20-country joint statement — that it has deployed mines in the channel.

Remarkable endurance? The standoff has sent crude oil prices soaring, with a barrel of North Sea Brent crude up more than 50% over the past month and now comfortably more than \$105. Analysts, meanwhile, say Iran's Islamic government has survived the loss of its top leaders and that its strike capacity is proving more resilient than expected, with drones, missiles and launchers apparently able to continue retaliatory strikes for another four to six weeks.

## What did the Supreme Court say about paid maternity leave?

The story so far: Last week, the Supreme Court ruled that adoptive mothers could avail themselves of 12 weeks of paid maternity leave regardless of the age of their children at the time of adoption. Striking down Section 60(4) of the Social Security Code, 2020 (previously Section 5(4) of the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961), which limited this benefit only to mothers who adopted children under the age of three months, the Court said that an adoptive mother had the same rights and obligations towards the child as a biological mother.

What is the law on maternity leave in India?

Statutory maternity benefits for working women in India began to be granted in colonial times. The Bombay Maternity Benefit Act, 1929, covered women factory workers. It was followed by similar laws in other parts of the country in the run-up to Independence. In 1961, Parliament passed the Maternity Benefit Act to provide paid maternity leave of 12 weeks to working women across the country. In 2017, the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act not only extended the period of paid maternity leave for biological mothers to 26 weeks, but also inserted a provision extending maternity leave for the first time to adoptive mothers or surrogate mothers. Section 5(4) of the Act stated that surrogate or adoptive mothers legally adopting a child below three months would be entitled to maternity leave for a period of 12 weeks from the date the child is handed over to the mother.

Why was this law considered inadequate?

This provision was challenged in 2021 by Hamsaanandini Nanduri, a lawyer who adopted siblings in 2017. Ms. Nanduri told The Hindu that her Bengaluru-based law firm gave her only six weeks of paid maternity leave. "I could not leave my young children at home to turn up in office after just six weeks, so I took some additional months of unpaid leave. But it made me angry that there was no policy about it," she said. Termining the 12 weeks of maternity leave granted in 2017 to adoptive or surrogate mothers as "mere lip service", the petitioner contended that when compared to the 26 weeks of maternity leave granted to biological mothers, the provision violated the fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution. The three-month limit was unjust to both children and parents, depriving older adoptees from receiving the maternal care they need for their development and integration into their adoptive families, her lawyer argued.

The petitioner also pointed out in Court that adoption procedures take much longer than three months in India. Also, as Ms. Nanduri told The Hindu: "I found on filing an RTI (Right to Information) application with CARA (Central Adoption Resource Authority) that less than 5% of children adopted at that time were under the age of three months."

What did the Court say about motherhood?

The Court made it clear that motherhood cannot be seen through the "narrow lens of biology" alone. It referred to adoption as part of the "right to reproductive autonomy". It noted that "the period of leave plays a crucial role in fostering [an] emotional bond between the mother and the child". The Court added that stress hormone levels in children raised in orphanages are often higher than those in children brought up in a familial environment, which pointed to a greater need for paid maternal leave for older adoptees.

How will the judgment help adoptees and their parents?

Madhumitha Venkataraman started interviewing for

"They're showing a lot of resilience that we didn't perhaps expect, that the U.S. didn't expect, when it took this on," Neil Quilliam of Chatham House told the London-based think tank's podcast. "But the IRGC, the Iranian regime, it's deep, it has these roots, this institutional strength... it's quite remarkable how they've managed to endure." Meanwhile, Tehran marked the end of Ramadan as the war entered its fourth week. Iran's supreme leader traditionally leads Eid al-Fitr prayers, but Mojtaba Khamenei, who came to power earlier this month after his father was killed in US-Israeli strikes, has remained out of the public eye. Instead, the head of the judiciary, Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejei, attended prayers at central Tehran's Imam Khomeini grand mosque, which was overflowing, with worshippers flooding the streets outside. The previous evening, airstrikes had darkened the mood as the city celebrated Nowruz, the Persian New Year. "The atmosphere of the New Year was spreading through the city. Places like Tajrish or Golestan Shahrak, where I went, were full of well-dressed and beautiful women buying flowers," said Farid, an advertising executive, reached by AFP through an online message.

"The Israeli attacks happening exactly at the moment of the New Year were deeply upsetting. The thought that some people could be dying right at the New Year dinner table was painful." Iran's ally Russian President Vladimir Putin sent greetings to Mr. Khamenei, saying he "wished the Iranian people strength on overcoming these severe trials and emphasised that during this difficult time, Moscow remained a loyal friend". Israeli military "unaware" of attack on Natanz nuclear plant According to Iran's atomic energy organisation, the U.S. and Israel targeted a plant at Natanz in Isfahan province, which hosts underground centrifuges to enrich uranium for Iran's disputed nuclear programme and was already damaged in last year's June war. The head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Rafael Grossi, called for "military restraint to avoid any risk of a nuclear accident", but the UN watchdog confirmed that no increase in off-site radiation levels had been reported. Asked about Natanz, the Israeli military said it was "not aware of a strike". "Unsuccessful" ballistic missile attack on Diego Garcia air base Iran launched what a U.K. official told AFP was an "unsuccessful" ballistic missile attack on the U.K. and U.S. military base on Diego Garcia, an island in the Indian Ocean around 4,000 kilometers (2,500 miles) from Iran. If the salvo had reached its target it would have been the longest-range Iranian strike yet. Before the war, according to the U.S. Congressional Research Service, Washington was aware of Iranian missiles that could reach 3,000 kilometres. Iran has "always had missiles of that sort of range that we've known about, maybe not declared", former UK Royal Navy commander and defence expert Tom Sharpe told AFP. The attack "shows that they can still move these mobile launchers around, undetected, spin up and fire without being struck", said Sharpe, adding however that these would not be a "game changer". On Friday (March 20, 2026), the U.K. government said it would allow Washington to use its bases in Diego Garcia and Fairford in England to target Iranian "missile sites and capabilities being used to attack ships in the Strait of Hormuz". The U.K. official confirmed that the attempted missile strike took place before this announcement.

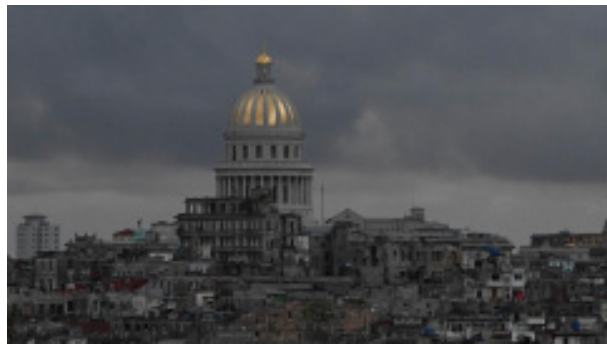


## Why did the Supreme Court strike down Section 60(4) of the Social Security Code, 2020? What did it say about maternity leave for adoptive mothers? What did the Court recommend that the Union government do regarding paternity leave?

jobs as a senior HR executive while waiting for an adoption referral, stipulating in every interview that she would need paid time off to support her child. Several multinational organisations balked at the idea of granting leave for more than a few weeks. But Ms. Venkataraman was finally recruited by a global media company that promised her one year of paid maternity leave. "My son came home at the age of three and a half months in 2023, so I was not eligible for maternity leave under the old law. But because this company was so accommodating, I did not have to choose between my career and my parenting," she said. "There are emotional needs, and not just for the child. The time at home with my son gave me space to grow into motherhood," she said. It is this time and space that other adoptive mothers say they will be entitled to as well, from now. Noopur Goyal's daughter was 15 months old when she came home in 2021. "I worked as a paediatric cardiologist at a top hospital in Delhi. I knew there was no provision for maternity leave, so I had to give up my job," said Dr. Goyal, a single parent who works as a freelance consultant in Noida. "I had brought her into a new world, so I had to be present for her. An adopted child has been uprooted twice. I needed the time at home with her to build attachment and give her a sense of security." Dr. Goyal said she was financially stable to be able to do this, but she is "glad now that there is a law mandating 12 weeks of paid maternity leave for all adoptive mothers."

What did the Court say about paternity leave? The Court also called on the Union government to examine the need for a formal law recognising paternity leave for all fathers, adoptive or biological. Noting that India's legal framework does not adequately account for the role of fathers in childcare, it underlined the importance of shared parenting. As of now, only male government servants are entitled to 15 days' paternity leave for the birth of a child or adoption. Leaves in the private sector are generally determined by company policies.

## Blockade on Cuba: Asphyxiating an island nation



of residents in the capital, Havana, representing some 42,000 customers. A view of Havana city with the National Capitol building in the background, as Cuba reconnected its electrical grid across much of the island, according to the Energy and Mines Ministry, in Havana, Cuba on March 17, 2026. Cuba's Ministry of Energy and Mines said on X that the island had restored the electrical system in the western town of Pinar del Rio and the southeastern province of Holguin and that some "microsystems" were beginning to operate in various territories. Cuba's dependence on oil is structural: it accounts for 83% of total power generation, while oil products make up 56% of total energy consumption by industry, transport, agriculture, and households. For a country that imports roughly 80% of its food, prolonged blackouts are catastrophic as they interrupt refrigeration vital for preserving perishables. The archaic power network has been partially collapsing regularly since October 2024, with three national grid failures in the past four months alone. None of this has deterred the Trump administration which continues to pursue criminally illegal actions. On January 29, Mr. Trump signed an executive order threatening punitive tariffs on any country selling oil to Cuba. This week, he went further, explicitly threatening to "take" the island. Cuba's fuel supplies had been highly dependent on Venezuelan oil under the oil-for-doctors scheme instituted by Hugo Chavez. In 2022, Venezuela supplied 75% of Cuba's oil imports; by 2023, this had dropped to 58% as Mexico emerged as a key supplier with 31%. Venezuela's supply fell from 46,500 barrels per day in December 2025 to zero following Nicolas Maduro's abduction in early January. After the January 29 order, Mexico also halted shipments.

The current crisis is also the culmination of six decades of U.S. economic coercion. What Cubans call the "blockade" began in 1962 following the Cuban Revolution and nationalisation of industries. The embargo was reinforced in 1992 by the Torricelli Act, which prohibited foreign subsidiaries of U.S. firms from trading with Cuba and barred ships that had docked in Cuba from entering U.S. ports for 180 days. The 1996 Helms-Burton Act codified the embargo into law, extended sanctions to foreign companies doing business in Cuba, and allowed U.S. citizens to sue foreign investors using confiscated American property. The first Trump administration redesignated Cuba as a "State Sponsor of Terrorism" in January 2021, days before leaving office, deepening its financial exclusion from world trade. Cuban authorities have documented over 1,000 instances of foreign banks refusing services between 2021 and 2024. In the second Trump administration, U.S. policy towards Cuba is fronted by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, the son of Cuban immigrants who left Cuba in 1956. Mr. Rubio grew up immersed in Miami's Cuban émigré community, where deep hostility towards the socialist government has remained a powerful force. He has openly called for regime change in Havana. "This is our hemisphere," Mr. Rubio declared on X after the Venezuela operation.

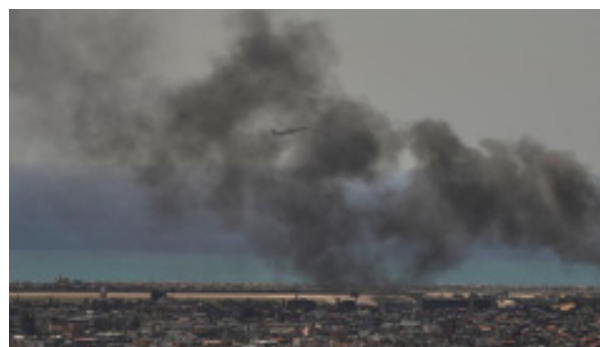
Cuba recently admitted it was in discussions with Washington D.C. and appears willing to make some economic changes. Shortly before Mr. Trump's latest threat, Óscar Pérez-Oliva Fraga, the deputy Prime Minister, said Cuba was open to expatriate Cubans and foreign companies doing business on the island. "We're not just talking about small enterprise, but also the possibility of being able to participate in key sectors of our development," he told NBC.

But Mr. Rubio said the proposed changes did not go far enough and hinted at further pressure. "What they announced yesterday is not dramatic enough. It's not going to fix it. So we've got some big decisions to make," he said. The New York Times reported that U.S. negotiators were demanding the resignation of President Miguel Díaz-Canel.

Cuba has faced and overcome severe economic crises before. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, which provided subsidies averaging \$4.3 billion annually, the island went through what it termed the "Special Period" through the 1990s. GDP fell by 35% between 1989 and 1993 and Cubans faced severe food shortages. The government responded with partial liberalisation, allowing small businesses and decriminalising the circulation of U.S. dollars. More recently, it has permitted micro, small and medium enterprises. But these reforms have proved insufficient against the combined weight of the embargo and subsequent sanctions. This crisis may be more severe still. The Special Period eventually saw Venezuela emerge as an economic lifeline under Chávez. Today, that lifeline has been severed by U.S. military action, and the executive order explicitly threatens any government contemplating humanitarian relief.

While much of the world's attention, including India's, has been focused on the energy crisis triggered by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz — precipitated by U.S. and Israel's illegal actions on Iran — Cuba faces a more deliberate form of strangulation. The Hormuz crisis is a consequence of regional conflict spurred by U.S. actions while Cuba's is the intended outcome of a targeted U.S. policy designed to choke an entire nation into submission. The Cuban government has remained defiant even as it negotiates. President Díaz-Canel responded that the U.S. government wants "to take over the country, its resources, its properties, and even the very economy they seek to suffocate in order to force us to surrender." He added: "Faced with the worst-case scenario, Cuba is guided by one certainty: any external aggressor will face unyielding resistance." Whether that resistance can outlast the blackouts and mounting desperation of ordinary Cubans and whether international support like the Russian fuel shipments will arrive in time remains to be seen.

## Israel attacks Tehran, Beirut as U.S. sends Marines to West Asia



The Israeli military struck Iran and Beirut on Saturday (March 21, 2026) as the U.S. was sending thousands more Marines to West Asia and President Donald Trump accused NATO allies of cowardice over their reluctance to help open the Strait of Hormuz. More than 2,000 people have been killed since the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran on February 28, while Americans appear increasingly concerned at signs the war could expand further as it enters its fourth week.

Israel said it was attacking Hezbollah on Saturday (March 21, 2026) in the Lebanese capital as it steps up airstrikes targeting the Iran-backed militia in the deadliest spill over from the war on Iran since Hezbollah fired on Israel in support of Tehran on March 2. Hezbollah also launched new attacks on Iran on Saturday (March 21, 2026), including on the capital, Tehran, its military said. Vital energy infrastructure in Iran and neighbouring Gulf states has also been attacked, and oil prices have jumped 50% since the war began, threatening global economic shock.

## Why is Israel attacking Lebanon? | Explained



The story so far: As the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran enters its fourth week, another, perhaps more brutal, war is unfolding in the region. On March 16, Israel announced the launch of a ground offensive in Lebanon against Hezbollah. It has also carried out massive air strikes in southern Lebanon and the southern outskirts of Beirut, killing at least 1,000 people and displacing about a million. The ground offensive is concentrated in hilltop towns in southern Lebanon, where the Israel Defence Forces are facing stiff resistance from Hezbollah fighters.

Why did Israel launch the offensive?

On paper, a ceasefire had been reached between Hezbollah and Israel in November 2024. The ceasefire was reached after a month-long campaign aimed at weakening Hezbollah, a Shia militant group and political party in Lebanon that maintains close ties with Iran. When Israel launched its invasion of Gaza after Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack, Hezbollah fired rockets into the Shebaa Farms, a Lebanese territory occupied by Israel. Israel responded with air strikes, triggering further Hezbollah rocket attacks that displaced thousands of Israelis from the Upper Galilee region.

In September 2024, Israel assassinated Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah in an air strike. The Israeli plan was to disrupt Hezbollah's command structure before launching a ground offensive. During the ground battle, Israel pushed Hezbollah fighters away from the border and occupied strategically important regions in southern Lebanon. In November that year, Israel agreed to a ceasefire, but it continued air strikes nearly every day in Lebanon, targeting Hezbollah positions. Hezbollah hardly retaliated. On February 2026, after Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed by a joint Israeli-American air strike, Hezbollah fired hundreds of rockets into northern Israel. Israel retaliated with air strikes, which was followed by the ground offensive.

What is Hezbollah?

Over the past five decades, Israel has carried out multiple attacks in Lebanon. In 1978, Israel launched an incursion into southern Lebanon to push the Palestinian militias based in the region, under the umbrella of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), to the north of the Litani River. In 1982, Israel launched another invasion with the same objective. It managed to force the PLO to relocate from Lebanon, but the consequences of the war led to the rise of Hezbollah as a militant Shia organisation. Iran, where the Shia clergy established an Islamic government in 1979, backed Hezbollah.

When Israeli troops stayed in southern Lebanon to keep a buffer on the Lebanese side of the border, Hezbollah emerged as the major resistance force. Israeli troops, faced

In the U.S., United Airlines said it would cut its scheduled flights by 5% in the second and third quarters, planning for prolonged higher oil prices. The Strait of Hormuz, a conduit for around a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas supplies, has been effectively closed to most shipping since the United States and Israel launched the war against Iran. Mr. Trump on Friday (March 20, 2026) called U.S. allies "cowards" for declining to help open the strait while fighting continued.

Several allies, who were not consulted before the war, have pledged to join "appropriate efforts" to ensure safe passage through the strait, but Germany and France have said fighting must stop first. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said he would speak to Mr. Trump this weekend. Iran is ready to let Japanese-related vessels pass through the Strait of Hormuz, Kyodo News reported on Saturday (March 21, 2026), citing Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi. Japan gets around 90% of its oil shipments via the strait.

The Trump White House, in an effort to increase supply and lower prices, said it would waive sanctions for 30 days to allow the sale of 140 million barrels of Iranian oil stranded on tankers by the war. The administration had previously eased sanctions on a similar amount of sanctioned Russian oil. The Israeli military said before its Saturday (March 21, 2026) attacks it had issued evacuation warnings for seven neighbourhoods in the southern suburbs of Beirut. More than 1,000 people have been killed in Lebanon and over 1 million have been displaced in the Israeli attacks. Mr. Trump said the United States was close to reaching its goals in the war, which include degrading Iran's military and preventing it from developing a nuclear weapon, and might wind down its military effort.

with Hezbollah's guerrilla attacks, were forced to withdraw from Lebanon in 2000 — which was celebrated by Hezbollah as the first "Arab victory against Israel". In 2006, Israel attacked Lebanon again, to dismantle Hezbollah's military infrastructure. After a month-long campaign, Israel had to agree to a ceasefire and pull back. This allowed Hezbollah to rise as a major socio-political and militant movement of Lebanon's sectarian system, where the army is very weak. But Israel has always called Hezbollah — which it designates as a terrorist outfit alongside the U.S. and their Western partners — an "Iranian proxy". There was an uneasy calm along the Israel-Lebanon border after the 2006 war, but it was broken by Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack.

How strong is Hezbollah today?

Hezbollah, because of its long resistance history and battlefield experience, is generally seen as a powerful fighting force. After the 2006 war, they joined the Syrian civil war to fight alongside the forces of President Bashar al-Assad. Hezbollah's involvement played a crucial role in turning around the civil war from 2015 to 2018. Hezbollah, a state within the state in Lebanon, possesses tens of thousands of rockets and missiles. However, in September 2024, Israel's pager explosions, which targeted Hezbollah's mid-level commanders, and killed the group's top leadership, threw it into disarray. Around that time, Abu Mohammed al-Golani, a former al-Qaeda jihadist who was running Syria's Idlib, started a campaign to take over Damascus. The Syrian Army, which was targeted by hundreds of Israeli air strikes, was in a bad shape. Syria's three main supporters were Iran, Russia, and Hezbollah. Russia was busy with Ukraine. And Iran's space for manoeuvre was limited. Hezbollah was pushed back by Israeli attacks. It took only 12 days for Golani's Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (formerly Jabhat al-Nusra, al-Qaeda's Syria branch) to capture Damascus.

The fall of Assad's government in December cut a vital link between Hezbollah and Iran, which further weakened both sides. From the early 1980s, Iran had provided money, weapons and training to Hezbollah, and Baathist Syria acted as a land bridge between Iran and Syria (through Iraq, at least since 2003). In subsequent months, Israel continued to pound Hezbollah and the group hardly retaliated. But Hezbollah was also using this period to rebuild its command structure and replenish its arsenals, preparing for an eventual war. And when Israel and the U.S. killed Khamenei in February 2026, they joined the war, drawing in thousands of troops into Lebanon.

What does Israel want to achieve? Israel has declared that it wants to dismantle Hezbollah's military capabilities, push them away from southern Lebanon, and create a buffer inside the Lebanese territory. Israel has issued evacuation orders for the whole of southern Lebanon and some neighbourhoods in the north of the Litani River. It has bombed some bridges on the river to cut off supplies for Hezbollah. Israel is also pressing the Lebanese government to take action to disarm Hezbollah. Hezbollah's version is that it is defending Lebanese territory. It has fired more than 1,000 rockets and drones at Israel since March 2, in a clear message that it still possesses attack capabilities. Israel is also facing stiff resistance in the hilltop towns of southern Lebanon, particularly in Khiam, a high plateau overlooking the Hula Valley in the south. While Israel seeks to push Hezbollah out militarily, an approach it tried several times in the past and failed, Hezbollah, though weakened by regional developments, is resisting with asymmetrical tactics. It is the Lebanese people who are caught in the middle.

## Qatar confirms 6 people killed in helicopter crash in Persian Gulf

Qatar said on Sunday (March 22, 2026) six people have been confirmed killed in a Qatari helicopter crash in the Persian Gulf nation's territorial waters. The Interior Ministry said one person is still missing from the crash, which took place the day before. The Ministry of Interior announces that its specialized teams are carrying out search and rescue operations in the country's territorial waters, following a helicopter crash, as reported by the Ministry of Defense. The Defence Ministry blamed "technical malfunction" for the helicopter crash. The Interior Ministry's statement didn't clarify the nationality of the dead or say if they were civilian or military. Three Turkish nationals including a serviceman were on board a helicopter that crashed in Qatar's territorial waters, alongside three Qatari servicemen, the Gulf country's defence ministry said on Sunday (March 22, 2026).

The Turkish Defence Ministry meanwhile said that "a



Qatari armed forces helicopter, which was carrying out a training exercise as part of the Qatar-Turkey Joint Forces Command, crashed into the sea."

Two ships moving through the Atlantic Ocean have caught the attention of maritime intelligence companies and geostrategists across the world. The Anatoly Kolodkin, owned by the Russian government and carrying an estimated 7,30,000 barrels of crude oil, is heading towards energy-starved Cuba in clear defiance of Donald Trump's illegal energy blockade of the socialist island-nation. Shipping tracker firm Kpler reported that the Kolodkin could reach Cuba as early as . It would not be the first tanker attempting to bring Russian fuel to Cuba in recent weeks. The Sea Horse, loaded with 2,00,000 barrels of gas oil believed to be from Russia but owned by a Chinese firm, was headed to Cuba before it abruptly halted in the middle of the Atlantic last month — likely fearing consequences from the U.S. government. If the Russian ships arrive, defying the U.S. blockade, they will be Cuba's first energy shipments in three months.

Even so, the relief would be temporary. The 7,30,000 barrels of crude can produce diesel, gasoline, and jet fuel, while also helping power the electric grid, Jorge Piñón, a former oil executive who studies Cuba's energy at the University of Texas, told The New York Times. But the crude would first need to be refined, and Cuba's refineries are highly inefficient, meaning it would likely take several weeks and waste oil in the process. The Russian shipment, Mr. Piñón said, would give Cuba "breathing room of no more than 30 days".

The morning after Mr. Trump's comments about "taking" Cuba earlier this week, Dmitry Peskov, a Kremlin spokesman, told reporters that Russia was in close contact with Cuba about its energy crisis and was "ready to provide all possible assistance." Cuba, he added, is "an independent sovereign state that faces major economic difficulties due to the suffocating embargo imposed on the country." Russia's help would be a massive succour to a desperate Cuba. The country's entire electricity grid collapsed this week, leaving about 10 million people without power. Although the government managed to partially restore supply to parts of Havana, the consequences have been disastrous for ordinary Cubans. A report from the ground in Havana by The Guardian indicated that there are few cars on the roads, most airlines serving the island have suspended flights, the Canadian company Sherritt International has shuttered nickel mining operations in Cuba, state offices have closed, and schools have partly suspended classes. Many, the newspaper reported, are struggling with spoiled food, stifling heat, and sleepless children.

Cuba's latest blackout underscores deepening economic crisis | In pictures City lights during a blackout, leaving around 10 million people without power amid a U.S.-imposed oil blockade, in Havana on March 16, 2026. While Cuba produces 40% of its petroleum and has been generating its own power, it hasn't been sufficient to meet demand as its electric grid continues to crumble

People gather on a street during a blackout as Cuba's, in Havana on March 16, 2026. President Miguel Díaz-Canel on Friday (March 13) said the island had not received oil shipments in three months and was operating on solar power, natural gas and thermoelectric plants. People walk on a street during a blackout in Havana on March 16, 2026. A massive outage over a week ago affected the island's west, leaving millions without power. Another major blackout affected western Cuba in early December. Street vendors chat on the Malecón during a blackout in Havana on March 16, 2026. This was the third major blackout in Cuba over the past four months. People walk on the street during a blackout in Havana on March 16, 2026. President Miguel Díaz-Canel on Friday (March 13) said that the government has had to postpone surgeries for tens of thousands of people.

Gladys Valdes, 76, prepares coffee during the blackout, in Havana on March 16, 2026. "Cuba right now is in very bad shape," President Donald Trump said, a day after Cuba's third nationwide blackout in four months as the socialist island's economy suffers under U.S. sanctions. People sit on the side of a street during a blackout. The government also has blamed its woes on a U.S. energy blockade after President Donald Trump in January warned of tariffs on any country that sells or provides oil to Cuba. A person stands on a balcony during a blackout as Cuba's national electric grid collapsed, in Havana on March 16, 2026. The Trump administration is demanding that Cuba release political prisoners and move toward political and economic liberalisation in return for a lifting of sanctions. A mototaxi drives on a street during a blackout, in Havana on March 16, 2026. William LeoGrande, a professor at American University who has tracked Cuba for years, said the country's energy grid hasn't been maintained properly and its infrastructure is "way past its normal useful life." A man uses a flashlight during a blackout as Cuba's, in Havana on March 16, 2026. State-owned media reported that by late on March 16, 2026, power had been restored to 5%

## Trump threatens Iran with power plant strikes over Hormuz blockade

Israeli officials said that Iranian forces had for the first time fired long-range missiles, expanding the risk of attacks beyond West Asia, even as an Iranian strike injured dozens of people not far from Israel's nuclear site.

Iran launched two 4,000-kilometre-range ballistic missiles at the U.S.-UK military base Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, Israeli military chief Eyal Zamir said. The Israeli military said it was the "first time" Iran had used long-range missiles since the United States and Israel began attacking Iran on February 28. "These missiles are not intended to strike Israel. Their range reaches European capitals - Berlin, Paris, and Rome are all within direct range," Mr. Zamir said in a statement. A source at Britain's Defence Ministry said the attack had occurred before the government gave specific authorisation on Friday (March 21) for the U.S. to use British military bases to carry out strikes on Iranian missile sites. More than 2,000 people have been killed in Iran since the U.S. and Israel began their attacks. In Israel, 15 people have been killed in Iranian strikes

since the war started.

Late on Saturday (March 21, 2026), Iranian missiles hit the southern Israeli cities of Dimona and Arad, injuring dozens of people, including children, in separate strikes. Iran's Revolutionary Guards said in a statement early Sunday (March 22, 2026) that they targeted "military installations" and security centers in southern Israel.

Israeli army spokesperson Brigadier General Effie Defrin said in a post on X that the country's air defenses were functioning but did not intercept the strikes. "We will investigate the incident and learn from it," he said. Israel's secretive nuclear reactor is about 13 kilometers southeast of Dimona. Both cities lie near several military sites, including Nevatim Air Base, one of the country's largest. "This has been a very difficult evening in the battle for our future," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a statement released by his office following the strike on Arad. "We are determined to continue striking our enemies on all fronts," the statement said.

## New START's expiry risks pushing the world to unchecked nuclear rivalry



On February 5, the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) officially expired, marking the end of the last remaining bilateral agreement constraining the nuclear arsenals of the U.S. and Russia. The New START treaty emerged from a period of diplomatic reset between Washington and Moscow in the late 2000s. Its predecessor, START I, was signed in 1991 and expired in December 2009. While the 2002 Moscow Treaty was still in effect, it lacked the rigorous verification and monitoring mechanisms typically of the START era. Negotiations for a successor began in earnest in April 2009 after a meeting between then U.S. President Barack Obama and his Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev in London. The drafting process involved several rounds of talks in Geneva and Moscow. In April 2010, the two leaders signed the treaty in Prague and, after a contentious ratification process in the U.S. Senate and approval by the Russian Federal Assembly, entered into force on February 5, 2011.

New START set up verifiable limits on the strategic offensive arms of both nations and mandated that both parties reach these limits within seven years (by February 5, 2018) and maintain them thereafter. It capped the number of deployed strategic warheads to 1,550 and imposed similar limits on the numbers of heavy bombers, ICBMs, and SLBMs, allowed 18 on-site inspections a year, prohibited each party from interfering with the other's National Technical Means (e.g. satellites), mandated data exchange, and setup a bilateral commission to resolve issues. However, throughout its existence, New START faced several hurdles that eventually contributed to its demise. Perhaps foremost: Russia often argued that U.S. missile defence systems undermined the strategic balance, suggesting that if one side could neutralise the other's retaliatory strike, the 'mutually assured destruction' dynamic would be broken. Conversely, the U.S. expressed concerns over conventional prompt global strike capabilities, where precise conventional warheads are placed on ballistic missiles — systems that New START counted under its nuclear limits.

In the latter half of the treaty's life, Russia also unveiled several novel strategic systems, including the Sarmat heavy ICBM and the Avangard hypersonic glide vehicle. While the U.S. successfully argued that these should be counted under New START, other systems like the nuclear-powered underwater drone Poseidon and nuclear-powered cruise missile Burevestnik remained outside the treaty's technical definitions, creating friction. The treaty was originally set to expire in 2021. Just days before the deadline, the Biden administration and the Kremlin agreed to a one-time, five-year extension, moving the expiration date to February 5, 2026. But in February 2023, after the conflict in Ukraine escalated and undermined bilateral relations, President Vladimir Putin said he was suspending Russia's participation in New START because, Moscow said, the U.S. was seeking a "strategic defeat" of Russia and that western aid to Ukraine made on-site inspections in Russia im-

possible. The U.S. soon followed by withholding its own data and notifications. Negotiations for a successor treaty, often called Post-New START, have been stalled throughout 2024 and 2025. In late 2025, a Russian proposal for a voluntary one-year informal adherence to the 1,550 limit was met with scepticism in Washington, where the Trump administration signalled a preference for a "better deal" instead.

Thus, today, the legal constraints on the world's two largest nuclear arsenals have dissolved. For the first time since 1972, there are no legally binding limits on the number of strategic nuclear weapons the U.S. and Russia can deploy. The formal channels to verify the locations and status of nuclear forces have ceased to exist, forcing intelligence agencies to rely entirely on satellite imagery and other unilateral methods. And sans the 1,550 cap, both nations possess the technical capability to move thousands of stored warheads to existing missiles, an action previously prohibited by the treaty.

As a result, while the classical logic of deterrence, that each side refrains because it expects a catastrophic response, still holds, the environment in which each government assesses the credibility of the other stands to change. Without the New START infrastructure, both sides will fall back to unilaterally collecting and interpreting data, which is more error-prone and easier to politicise. This uncertainty also interacts with contemporary deterrence problems that weren't there during the early Cold War, when deterrence took shape: the entanglement of nuclear and non-nuclear strategic systems and the premium both sides place on non-contact options like precision conventional strikes and cyberattacks, which can threaten nuclear command and control without crossing a nuclear threshold. This is why analysts such as Karim Haggag of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute have stressed the loss of predictability rather than the appearance of new warheads alone.

You do it first. Second, the expiry of New START makes the prospect of including China and other nuclear states in a larger nonproliferation regime harder in practice. Washington can now argue that it shouldn't be the only state constrained while Beijing grows, and Moscow can argue that it shouldn't accept constraints while NATO's aggregate capabilities shape its security environment. Exactly these arguments have been the stumbling block for the Post-New START talks. It's also harder because China's public line has been that its arsenal isn't comparable in size to those of the U.S. and Russia and that therefore it's "not fair or reasonable" to demand it enter their disarmament framework at this stage. Without an active U.S.-Russia treaty that demonstrates reciprocal restraint, China's incentive to accept intrusive transparency measures is also weak. Beijing can plausibly argue that the two largest arsenals first need to reestablish verifiable limits and only then can they ask others to take on similar obligations. The same logic already complicates the involvement of other nuclear-armed states, including India, Pakistan, Israel, and North Korea. In 2025, Arms Control Association board chairman Thomas Countryman argued that the most realistic near-term path is a regime with three prongs: the U.S. and Russia establishing measures to restore a basic level of transparency, even informally at first; the P5 group standardising definitions and modest transparency practices; and setting up of nonproliferation tools such as hotlines, launch notifications, incident prevention, and fissile material security, to involve more states without immediately forcing them to count each other's warheads. In fact the existing P5 process is often cited as one of a few standing forums for this kind of incrementalism even though its output and momentum have been uneven in recent years.

## AI's next investment cycle belongs to applications

The artificial intelligence (AI) industry has reached a crossroads. For years, companies poured money into infrastructure such as data centres, chips and underlying models. Now, the big question is not about AI working, but whether it can be profitable. The solution lies in concrete AI applications, and not just having more training or larger GPU clusters.

AI infrastructure versus AI applications In 2025, companies spent around \$320 billion on AI infrastructure. Despite this huge investment, foundation model businesses have thin profit margins. High inference costs cut into revenue and competition keeps prices down. For instance, OpenAI reached \$13 billion in annualised revenue by August 2025 but still lost \$5 billion in 2024. This approach is not sustainable; it is a short-term fix supported by venture capital and corporate money hoping for better returns.

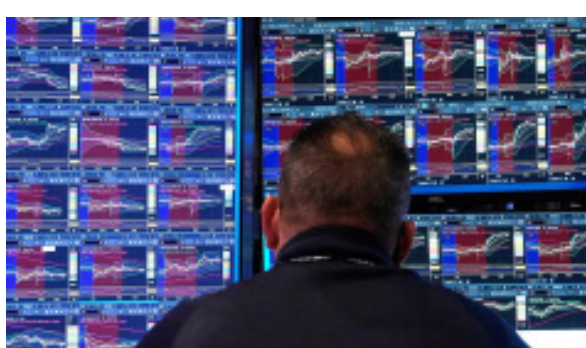
The story is different for AI applications. In 2025, businesses spent \$19 billion on AI applications, making up more than half of all generative AI spending. This is over 6% of the total software market, reached just three years after ChatGPT was launched. More importantly, this spending proves real market demand: companies are no longer only testing AI. They are using it widely. At least 10 AI products now bring in over \$1 billion in annual recurring revenue, and 50 products make more than \$100 million. Meta's \$2 billion purchase of Manus in December 2025 shows this shift. Manus, a Singapore startup, launched its AI agent just nine months earlier and quickly reached \$125 million in annual revenue by supplying a simple but effective AI product that gets tasks done — not just talks about them — thus proving both technical ability and business success. Investors want companies with real customers, not just technology. By the third quarter of 2025, there were 265 private equity deals involving AI applications, a 65% increase from the previous year, and 78% were add-on acquisitions for existing portfolio companies. Strategic mergers and acquisitions in AI hit record highs by Q3, with deal values up 242% from the year before.

Where the real value is Real value is emerging in the departmental AI segment. In 2025, coding tools made up \$4 billion of the \$7.3 billion departmental AI market, making them the largest segment. Half of all developers now use AI coding tools every day, a number which rises to 65% in top-performing companies. When ServiceNow bought Moveworks or Nvidia purchased several AI startups, these were not infrastructure deals. They were investments in companies that help customers achieve real business results with AI. The foundation model landscape itself tells the application story. Anthropic now commands 40% of enterprise LLM spending, up from 24% last year and 12% in 2023, while OpenAI's enterprise share fell to 27% from 50% in 2023. Anthropic did this by dominating coding applications, where it holds a market share of 54% compared to OpenAI's 21%. Applications drive infrastructure adoption and founda-



tion models, not the other way around. Morgan Stanley reports that generative AI reached a 34% contribution margin in 2025, its first profitable year, and this could rise to 67% by 2028 as infrastructure costs fall and efficiency improves. However, most of these profits go to companies selling complete solutions, not just raw computing power. Private investors now have to decide which use cases will create the next wave of real value, not just add a simple interface to ChatGPT without real value. But solutions built for specific verticals such as health care, law, finance and manufacturing (those that are deeply integrated into workflows, use unique data, and become essential to operations) are the businesses that are worth serious investment. The free market distributes resources well when investors focus on fundamentals, beyond mere stories. Revenue, customer retention, growth rates and paths to profitability matter again. Right now, circular financing obscures true demand. For instance, of Microsoft's reported Azure AI revenue, quite a lot comes from OpenAI's spending on compute at heavily discounted rates that essentially cover only Microsoft's costs. Applications break this pattern because they generate revenue from outside the circular financing loop. Core issues For governments, the next phase will raise tough questions about competition, especially as foundation model providers begin to build their own applications. When OpenAI launches coding tools or Anthropic develops enterprise solutions, it puts pressure on independent application builders who do not have the same infrastructure advantages. Copyright issues are also becoming more important as the source of training data becomes a key legal concern. Privacy rules will need to adapt to address AI agents that access large amounts of personal and business information. Policymakers should not hurry into strict regulations. The application layer needs room to experiment, fail and improve until it finds product-market fit. But still, rules about competition, especially reviews of acquisitions that prevent big companies from buying and shutting down potential rivals, are important. The trend of acqui-hires (where startups are bought mainly for their staff and then closed) often leaves employees stranded and can hurt the energy and the innovation that the sector needs.

## Stocks mostly rise as traders ignore AI-fuelled sell-off on Wall Street



Stocks mostly rose Wednesday (February 4, 2026) as investors brushed off another tech-fuelled sell-off on Wall Street, while precious metals continued their recovery on dip-buying following a two-day collapse. Oil prices also extended gains on a fresh pick-up in U.S.-Iran tensions after an American jet shot down an Iranian drone in West Asia, just as the two sides prepared to hold key nuclear talks. Assets across the board have endured a volatile start to February owing to a surge in the dollar, geopolitical tensions and the possibility of another U.S. government shutdown.

Concerns over artificial intelligence have also kept traders on their toes amid questions over the vast sums invested in the sector and warnings of a bubble that could pop at any time. The latest flare-up came in New York, where markets were spooked by news that AI startup Anthropic — which created the Claude chatbot — had revealed a tool that could be used by firms to carry out legal work.

The announcement hit firms in the software, financial services and asset management industries. Downbeat sales projections from Advanced Micro Devices compounded the darker mood. Shares in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Sydney, Seoul, Singapore, Mumbai, Wellington, Taipei, and Bangkok rose but Tokyo and Manila slipped. London, Frankfurt, and Paris advanced at the open.

The mixed day pointed to a return of stability after two days of sharp swings sparked by AI concerns and Donald Trump's hawkish pick to lead the Federal Reserve, which dampened interest rate cut bets. Precious metals rose for a

second day, after tanking on Friday and Monday as the U.S. President's tapping of Kevin Warsh — a former Fed Governor — sent the dollar surging. The greenback had been taking a battering for most of last week on worries Mr. Trump was happy to have a weaker currency. Gold was sitting just above \$5,070 an ounce and silver around \$89 — both well off last week's record highs of \$5,595 and \$121 but up from the lows of \$4,597 and \$71 seen in the past two days. "Investors and traders are dipping their toes in the waters after the clear-out of a lot of the froth and leveraged speculative positions," said Saxo Markets' Neil Wilson.

This "A" might give them confidence that perhaps the worst of the volatility is over; and B) prices had plunged so much so fast they think it's worth a go at these levels. "A lot of people sitting on the sidelines for months feeling every day they'd missed their chance to get in will be part of this renewed wave of buying."

Oil prices rose after it emerged a U.S. fighter jet had taken out an Iranian drone that approached an aircraft carrier on Tuesday. That was the second clash that day between the two in West Asian waters, after Iranian forces attempted to detain a U.S.-flagged tanker in the Strait of Hormuz. The incidents come after Washington and Tehran agreed to talks despite Mr. Trump's repeated threat of military action against Iran — and Iran's warning that it would respond with strikes on U.S. vessels and bases. White House spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt told Fox News that U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff is still expected "to have conversations with the Iranians late this week". Traders were cheered by news that Mr. Trump had signed into law a congressional spending bill to fund government agencies while buying more time for lawmakers to negotiate over the administration's controversial immigration crackdown. Negotiations had broken down following the killing of two U.S. citizens by federal agents in Minneapolis, the Minnesota city which has become the flashpoint for the Republican President's policies. However, lawmakers now have just two weeks to negotiate a full-year Department for Homeland Security bill. In corporate news gaming giant Nintendo tanked 11% — its biggest loss in 18 months — after releasing disappointing quarterly earnings and amid concerns about its profitability due to a shortage of memory chips.

## Snap reports upbeat fourth-quarter revenue as holiday season boosts ad spending

Snap beat Wall Street estimates for fourth-quarter revenue, as more advertisers turned to the social media platform during the holiday season, sending its shares up over 5% in extended trading. The Snapchat-parent said total active advertisers on the platform rose 28% in the fourth quarter, underscoring strength in direct response ads and growth in new ad formats such as Sponsored Snaps and Promoted Places.

The results come as a relief for investors as advertisers increasingly rely on platforms such as Meta and TikTok, which are preferred due to their larger user base. The social media company faced major hiccups ranging from U.S. President Donald Trump's changing trade policies and a technical issue in its advertising platform last year, dragging its shares down around 25% in 2025.

Snap said on Monday it implemented platform-level age verification in Australia to comply with a new law requiring users to be at least 16, resulting in the removal of over 400,000 accounts. Revenue rose 10% from a year earlier to \$1.72 billion in the quarter ended December 31, exceeding analysts' average estimate of \$1.70 billion according to data compiled by LSEG. It expects first-quarter revenue to be between \$1.50 billion and \$1.53 billion, slightly below estimates of \$1.55 billion.

The forecast does not include revenue from the Perplexity integration, a \$400 million deal announced last year, as Snap said the companies "have yet to mutually agree on a path to a broader roll out". The company's current-quarter



outlook for adjusted earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization of \$170 million to \$190 million was above estimates of \$177.9 million, as it pivots toward profitable growth by tighter cost control. It reported net income of \$45 million in the fourth quarter, compared with \$9 million a year earlier. Its 2025 net loss narrowed to \$460 million from \$698 million in 2024.

The company has been doubling down on augmented reality smart glasses with the launch of independent unit, Specs, last month, and also diversifying its revenue stream by focusing on its subscription service Snapchat+. Subscribers for Snapchat+ rose 71% to 24 million in the fourth quarter. Daily active users of Snapchat rose 5% from a year earlier to 474 million, but fell 7% by 3 million from the prior quarter.

## Russia bombards Ukraine with drones and missiles a day before planned peace talks

Russia carried out a major overnight attack on Ukraine in what President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Tuesday (February 3, 2026) was a broken commitment to halt striking energy infrastructure as the countries prepared for more talks on ending Moscow's four-year-old full-scale invasion. The bombardment included hundreds of drones and a record 32 ballistic missiles, wounding at least 10 people. It specifically took aim at the power grid, Mr. Zelenskyy said, as part of what Ukraine says is Moscow's ongoing campaign to deny civilians light, heating and running water during the coldest winter in years.

"Taking advantage of the coldest days of winter to terrorise people is more important to Russia than diplomacy," Mr. Zelenskyy said. Temperatures in Kyiv fell to minus 20 degrees Celsius during the night and stood at minus 16 degrees Celsius on Tuesday. NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte visited Kyiv in a show of support. He said that the overnight strikes raise doubts about Moscow's intentions on the eve of talks, calling them "a really bad signal." He said it was clear that the attacks only strengthen Ukrainians' resolve. Officials have described recent talks between Moscow and Kyiv delegations as constructive. But after a year of efforts, the Trump administration is still searching for a breakthrough on key issues such as who keeps the Ukrainian land that Russia's Army has occupied, and a comprehensive settlement appears distant. The talks in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, are scheduled for Wednesday (February 4) and Thursday (February 5, 2026). Mr. Zelenskyy said Ukraine is ready to discuss how to end the fighting "but no one is going to surrender." A Kremlin official said last week that Russia had agreed to halt strikes on Kyiv for a week until February 1 because of the frigid temperatures, following a personal request from U.S. President Donald Trump to Russian President Vladimir Putin. However, the bitter cold is continuing and so are Russia's aerial attacks. Mr. Zelenskyy, however, accused Russia of breaking its commitment to hold off its attacks on Ukraine's energy assets, claiming the weeklong pause was due to come into force last Friday. "We believe this Russian strike clearly violates what the American side discussed, and there must be consequences," he said. Mr. Trump claimed Mr. Putin "kept his word" on the temporary pause. "It was, it's a lot," Mr. Trump told reporters. "You know, one week is — we'll take anything, because it's really, really cold over there." He added that he wanted Mr. Putin to extend the pause. "I would have liked him to," he said. "I want



him to end the war." The bombardment of at least five regions of Ukraine comprised 450 long-range drones and 70 missiles, Ukrainian officials said. Russian officials provided no immediate response to Mr. Zelenskyy's comments. Ukraine says Russia has tried to wear down Ukrainians' appetite for the fight by creating hardship for the civilian population living in dark, freezing homes. It has tried to wreck Ukraine's electricity network, targeting substations, transformers, turbines and generators at power plants. Ukraine's largest private power company, DTEK, said that the overnight attack hit its thermal power plants in the ninth major assault since October. NATO show of support Mr. Rutte addressed the Ukrainian parliament during his visit and said that countries in the military alliance "are ready to provide support quickly and consistently" as peace efforts drag on. Since last summer, NATO members have provided 75% of all missiles, and 90% of those used for Ukraine's air defence, under a financial arrangement whereby alliance countries buy American weapons to give to Ukraine, he said. European countries, fearing Moscow's ambitions, see their own future security as being on the line in Ukraine. Kyiv apartment blocks left without power. In Kyiv, officials said that five people were wounded in the strikes that damaged and set fire to residential buildings, a kindergarten and a gas station in various parts of the capital, according to the State Emergency Service. By early morning, 1,170 apartment buildings in the capital were without heating, Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said. Russia also struck Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region, where injuries were reported, and the southern Odesa region. The attack also damaged the Hall of Fame at the National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War, in Kyiv, Ukrainian Culture Minister Tetiana Berezhna said.

## ‘Need enough buffers to deal with any kind of volatility, inflation impact to be seen through multiple channels’, says Nomura’s Sonal Varma



settle at even higher? There is significant uncertainty on how this plays out, so it does make sense to work with various scenarios.

Our assessment right now is that if this is a short-duration impact, let's say 2-3 months of a peak impact, and then it settles down maybe slightly above where we started out in terms of energy prices, but lower than where we are right now, in that scenario, the growth impact will be negative but it should not be substantially negative. So, for FY27, we are currently working with a real GDP growth assumption of around 7%. Prior to the Iran conflict, our number was closer to 7.1% with upside risk. The reason I say that is if you look at the last 12 months, we have seen a substantial amount of fiscal easing, monetary easing, liquidity easing, macroprudential easing in India, and therefore, the combined impact of this countercyclical policy easing has already sown the seeds of a cyclical recovery. So, a lot of our lead indicators actually do suggest that prior to this conflict, there is this tailwind to some of the domestic cyclical growth sectors that is playing out. Whether it is in car sales or commercial vehicle sales, a lot of this is going to show up in the coming period.

Second, one of the big issues last year has been the 50% US tariff that has now reset lower. So, there should be some positives from that side and third, to the extent that the government is protecting consumers, so, if there is a wedge in terms of government either cutting the excise duty on petrol, diesel, or giving more subsidies to the OMCs, that is, protecting consumers in the process, there is some impact on firms, but the consumers are still protected, credit growth is picking up. So, there are reasons to believe that growth can still be around 7% if we settle on average around \$90 per barrel. Now, if you are talking about a scenario where oil goes to \$130 and stays there for 2-3 quarters, then we need to think about second-order effects because the extent of demand destruction globally as well as in India would be a lot more substantial. For instance, we will see more pass through to consumers happen in that scenario. There's a risk that countries globally will turn more protectionist and prevent exports in order to basically boost their own domestic supply. But that can create ripple effects at a global level. Central banks will face a very challenging trade-off between growth and inflation. And, in some scenarios, they will need to make the tough choice of whether they need to raise interest rates in order to prevent second-round effects or inflation expectations from getting anchored. And then there's a risk of how capital flows and financial conditions tighten in that environment. So I think, as the Chief Economic Advisor stated, the scenario of \$130 over a sustained period of time, is a scenario when non-linear economic effects could lead to greater negative impact on growth. Right now though, if we assume around \$90 on average for FY27, with near-term prices higher but then settling down slightly lower, I do think that there are still tailwinds that can support growth. In the next two months, March, April, May, when there is gas rationing, and companies are being forced to reduce their output because of not sufficient supply, there will be some impact on production, but the underlying drivers of growth right now still look reasonable.

You spoke of self-sufficiency. Which areas are at the top of your mind?

Absolutely, because any step we take today to increase our strength will take multiple years to play out. So, this is definitely a long-term strategy. One sort of common theme, because this cuts across different sectors, but one of the common themes is in general — diversification is the name of the game. So, not putting all your eggs in one basket is clearly a strategy that needs to be applied, whether it be about who we are doing trade with, who we are buying energy from, where we are getting investment from, I think diversification is definitely quite important. Now on the macro side, I think we usually look at foreign exchange reserves as a buffer. In the current environment where you have one shock after the other. And even when you're running a current account deficit, that's less than 1% of the GDP, it's still difficult to actually fund it because you have capital outflows. The need to have higher foreign exchange reserves as a buffer, for instance, becomes quite important.

Two, I think some of the things that you mentioned, like within energy, the immediate priority is to build more inventory and have more buffers. For instance, the government strategic petroleum reserves has around 37 million barrels. The commercial stocks are a bit higher on the private side. But overall, in terms of the number of days of cover, we have on crude oil should be a lot higher. And, similarly having those buffers not just for crude oil but for some of the products, whether it's on petrol, diesel, LPG, building inventory comes at a cost but there needs to be some buffer on this side. Simultaneously, from a more longer-term perspective, the question is: what is the kind of energy mix we want to power our economy because we will need a lot more energy going forward. If you look at what's driving growth going forward globally, a lot of it is actually technology, AI, data centres in investment. And these are very, very energy intensive. So how do we move further away from pure dependence on fossil fuels towards more of both renewables but also the debate on how much should be the share of nuclear power in terms of driving some of our energy needs. Third, the rare earth is a long-gestation process, in terms of mining, processing, it is going to take multiple years. But it is a critical input on anything with green tech related. This is an important chokepoint globally. And therefore, a focused policy agenda on the entire value chain on rare earth is important. We can also have partnerships with various countries globally which are rich in some of these minerals, so that you also depend on more partners, like-minded partners, to source some of these critical elements. And, finally, on defence, it's become extremely clear that the geopolitical environment that we are living in, increasing our defence abilities across the spectrum is an important part of the game plan for being robust as a country. So, from the strategic autonomy perspective, these are some of the dimensions. I am sure there are many more that we will realise, but, these would be top of mind. The problem seems to be stark on the current account deficit front. Your projections show a significant jump. How do you see that situation playing out for India in this scenario? In the near-term, the external sector still looks challenging because we have the impact of high oil price on the current account dynamics. And in India's case, since we have not passed on the pump price increase to consumers, the elasticity of consumer demand is relatively inelastic. So, you have higher demand plus you have the higher cost of import because of the price effect. The typical sensitivity is every 10% increase in oil price worsens the current account deficit by about 0.4% of GDP. So, if we continue to average at \$100 per barrel, then we are looking at 2% or higher as a percentage of GDP in terms of the current account deficit.

## Experts decode supermodel Cindy Crawford's '6-8.30 am' routine: From red light therapy to Pilates power



Cindy Crawford once ruled the runway. From Victoria's Secret shows to campaigns for big-ticket luxury brands like Chanel, Ralph Lauren, Valentino, and Calvin Klein, she was everywhere, winning hearts. Recently, the supermodel posted a video on Instagram giving us a quick peek into her "6-8.30 am" morning routine that "sets me up to have a great day!" Let's decode her routine in detail:

Upon waking, she listens to the Bible as an audiobook while dry-brushing her skin. Next, she uses gua sha and a cleanser, followed by the red light therapy wand. Dry brushing can help remove dead skin cells, leaving the skin looking and feeling smoother. It also helps to stimulate lymphatic drainage, which can improve immune function and overall health. Red light therapy, on the other hand, uses specific wavelengths of red and near-infrared light to stimulate cellular activity. "Red light therapy, also called low-level light

therapy, uses specific wavelengths of red and near-infrared light to stimulate cellular activity," says Dr Shweta Nakhawa, Consultant Dermatologist at KIMS Hospitals, Thane. "It has credible scientific backing when used correctly and in appropriate settings. Unlike UV light, red light does not damage the skin. Instead, it penetrates the surface at a controlled depth and targets cells beneath.

Crawford then has a tablespoon of apple cider vinegar, and goes for a walk on the grass for grounding. After swimming in the jacuzzi for a while, she will get ready for a workout. According to Ipsita Chakraborty, senior nutritionist at Hungry Koala, vinegar, especially apple cider vinegar, contains acetic acid, which has been shown to increase the production of digestive enzymes and stomach acid. This can help break down food more effectively. Before she hits the gym, she will make coffee with a scoop of collagen powder and check some emails. Slight stretches to warm up her body and a few minutes of reverse recline, and then jumping on a trampoline till her Pilates instructor arrives. Dr Vajalla Shrivani, chief fitness consultant at Tone 30 Pilates, said that trampoline or rebounder workouts, often seen as a fun alternative to traditional cardio, burn about 200-280 calories in 30 minutes, depending on intensity. However, they offer the added advantage of engaging multiple muscle groups, including the core, legs, and stabilising muscles. Pilates, on the other hand, helps build muscle while protecting the joints, improves hip and knee stability, and sharpens balance, all of which are crucial as we age. The reformer's controlled resistance allows the body to move safely through a wide range of motion, helping reduce stiffness and correct long-standing muscle imbalance.

## ‘Ghar me dal, chawal, mom, dad, wife and children...’: Suniel Shetty draws contrast between khush dikhna and rehna



On a recent episode of the Raj Shamani Podcast, Suniel Shetty reflected on how social media has quietly reshaped our idea of happiness, turning it into something to be displayed rather than experienced. He shared on the podcast, "We believe that in social media apne aap ko khush dekhna ke liye humko ye ye karne ke zaroorat hai. Lekin sachhai mei woh nahi hai. Main humesha kehta hu khush rehne ke liye ghar me dal chawal achar aur mom dad wife children around, and it's bliss. But khush dikhne ke liye sahi restaurant chahiye, uska photo chahiye... aur jab khaane lagte ho khaana thanda hai... khush dikhane ke liye papad belne padte hein, khush rehne ke liye kuch zyada nahi karna padta."

His observation reflects a larger psychological shift. According to Dr Pavitra Shankar, "social media platforms act like a stage where people present an edited version of their lives." Over time, she explains, external validation, likes, comments, shares get tied to self-worth, making happiness feel like something that must be performed.

## We asked AI for 10 active listening techniques; here is what it said

With a fleeting attention span due to social media, people often forget the "art of listening". This results in several individuals seeking help from AI bots for both personal and professional problems. In times when ChatGPT has become more like a shrink, we asked the platform to share 10 active-listening techniques for two individuals. Here's what it said. ChatGPT advised putting away distractions like mobile phones and multitasking to focus on the speaker. Dr Murali Krishna, Visiting Consultant – Psychiatry & Counselling Services, Aster RV Hospital, Bangalore, shared the importance of active listening: Effective communication. "Your constant eye contact and open body language, together with your complete focus on others, create a secure environment because you protect their personal space. The process helps people share more while it establishes trust, which develops throughout the relationship," he stated.

### 2. Show you are listening

According to ChatGPT, one should use small cues, such as "hmm", "I see", or simply nodding to signal that you are listening to the speaker. To verify this technique, Dr Krishna shared that sending cues to the speaker is crucial, as it helps people stay connected while maintaining conversation flow. "People need to show their real selves because mechanical responses and exaggerated replies create fake impressions. The small signals in therapy sessions assist patients to continue speaking about their most sensitive and difficult topics," he said.

### 3. Don't interrupt

ChatGPT advised people to get hold of their overexcitement, allowing the speaker to finish their thoughts first. Dr Krishnan stressed that allowing someone to complete their speech demonstrates both respect and patience. "People need time to express their emotions, especially when they experience high levels of stress. The process of emotional processing gets interrupted by disruptions, which leads to people withdrawing from their current situation," he shared.

### 4. Reflect back

The generative AI chatbot suggests repeating the speaker's words in one's own words. Commenting on the technique, Dr Krishnan noted that the ability to transform spoken words into different expressions is a reliable method for assessing comprehension. "Your listening skills extend beyond word recognition because you process the complete meaning of the spoken content. The process of reflection needs to contain all spoken material together with its emotional context," he said, adding that, "The speaker establishes a strong connection through their complete un-



derstanding of their emotions together with the actual details of the situation."

### 5. Ask open-ended questions

"Encourage deeper sharing: 'What made you feel that way?' instead of yes/no questions," ChatGPT shared. According to Dr Krishnan, open-ended questions offer two benefits: they enable people to discover new things and show their true selves.

### 6. Validate feelings

ChatGPT further advises listeners to acknowledge the speaker's emotions even if they don't fully agree. Dr Krishnan explained that validation plays a crucial role in emotional support, establishing a safe space for the speaker to open up without feeling defensive. "The process of validation requires people to recognise emotional experiences without needing to support bad behaviour or incorrect thoughts. The method enables people to connect with others who face similar challenges when it is executed perfectly," he said.

### 7. Avoid jumping to solutions

ChatGPT stressed that sometimes people want to be heard, not fixed, suggesting that the listener ask first before offering solutions to the speaker. "People in emotionally charged situations want understanding instead of receiving advice," Dr Krishnan said. He further explained, "In psychiatric care, the emphasis is on exploring the issue thoroughly before considering interventions. The eventual solution process becomes more effective through collaborative solutions that meet the specific needs of the individual."

### 8. Notice non-verbal cues

The artificial intelligence chatbot further asked the listener to pay attention to facial expressions, tone, pauses, and body language. "Non-verbal communication often shows people what they cannot express through spoken words. Facial expressions and vocal tone, together with body posture and pauses, provide essential information about a person's emotional state.

## Ishan Kishan and the thousand rupee fine: Inside the making of SunRisers' temporary captain



GNS News Agency, March 24

The ground was directly opposite the hotel. A personal car was waiting for Ishan Kishan. He ignored it and got into the e-rickshaw with his teammates. "Despite being an India player, he travelled in an e-rickshaw with us," recalls Sunny Gupta, assistant coach of Jharkhand. It was an invitational tournament in Kolkata, small stakes, away from the lights. Nobody would have noticed if Kishan had taken the car. He would have. He had also kept one rule for the team — anyone who walked in late to catch the bus had to pay a thousand rupees fine. He enforced it without exception. "His grounded nature has helped him grow. We have seen how small success does change players but in Kishan's case things have been different."

That quality — the refusal to separate himself from the group, the insistence that the same rules apply to everyone — is what SunRisers Hyderabad are counting on as Kishan takes over the captaincy while Pat Cummins recovers from injury. It is borrowed time. But borrowed time has a way of revealing character. When Kishan took over Jharkhand's captaincy earlier this year, the first thing he did was set the rules of the room. No negative vibe inside the dressing room. No coach would scold a player in public — only one on one. If a batsman or bowler had a bad day, they would not sit with their head down. "One thing Ishan was clear about was that the dressing room needs to be a happy place irrespective of win and loss," Gupta says. The rules were not decorative. He told his teammates even if they get out, it's fine but there should be clear thought in their approach. In the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy final against Haryana, Jharkhand had decided to target the opposition off-spinner. It was the plan. Kishan went out and played

three dot balls, took a single, and found himself at the non-striker's end — standing next to his batting partner, having failed to do the very thing he had asked of everyone else. "If I don't hit him, then what face will I show back in the dressing room?" Then he charged. Those who have watched Kishan closely over the last two years describe a man most people haven't seen. "People perceive him as a laughing boy but he is different when it comes to planning," Gupta says. "He will sit studying opponents — mapping each player, watching endless video — before concluding his meeting. Sometimes two hours before he's done." The laughing face is real. So is the two-hour meeting. Teammate Virat Singh recalls Kishan pulling him aside when the captaincy began. The message was clear — they wanted to become a champion team, and players would get recognition only when the team won. "He is not the kind who believes only in talking. If the team has decided to score quickly, he will be the first one to raise his hand." Singh watched Kishan walk the talk in one Syed Mushtaq Ali game — quick wickets had fallen, the situation had changed, but Kishan played exactly the aggressive brand he had promised. No retreat from the plan. Only accountability to what he had said. The trust runs both ways. Singh had wanted to learn the reverse sweep. He asked Kishan how he played it. "From that day, every time I went out to bat, he was standing behind to see me and guiding me. So he wins that trust," Singh says. The road back was not straightforward. Kishan drifted out of the international side, the absence stretching long enough for doubt to settle in. The return came through domestic cricket, through the Jharkhand captaincy, through runs that piled up consistently enough to force the selectors' hands. By the time the T20 World Cup arrived he was in the eleven, contributing at the top, finishing what he started.

Now comes SunRisers. Cummins will return. The captaincy is temporary. But the opportunity is real — and the dynamic shifts. In Jharkhand, Kishan was leading younger cricketers who looked up to him. In the IPL, the dressing room is full of internationals, players with their own reputations and methods. "If the players start understanding him there, then I think his work will be very easy," Singh says. "I think he is going to succeed." Ishan has surely learnt a lot from Mahi bhai," Singh says. "His quality is that he knows which players to talk to, kisse kab jaabi deni hai, kisse pyar se kaam nikalwana hai and when to increase their confidence."

## R Ashwin on Cameron Green: 'If he bowls only two overs, then they should deduct 2 crores'

GNS News Agency, March 24

Cameron Green was purchased in the auction for 25.20 Crores. However, his fitness has been a concern, and Australia have used him judiciously because of the same. Former Indian cricketer R Ashwin opined that if Green is not bowling enough overs for the Kolkata Knight Riders due to workload management, they should have the power to reduce his salary. "There is a question about Cameron Green. Will Cricket Australia allow him to bowl all four overs? That is also a possibility. In this scenario, the Australian board is saying to Green that he can play in the IPL, but Test cricket is very important for us, so you can play only this much of workload," R Ashwin said on his YouTube channel.

"IPL teams also should have an opportunity where if he bowls only two overs, then they should deduct 2 crores. Why not? If he is not able to deliver his four overs, then you should have the right to cut their money, right? When you came into the IPL auction, the expectation was that you will bowl all four overs, and also bat. If there is no restriction on bowling, then great, but if there is restriction the team should be allowed to cut from the contract money," he elaborated.

"Imagine if you are Shah Rukh Khan, and you have paid 25 crores for a player. But then he comes and says that, 'Sir, I will bowl only one over today, or bowl only 10 balls a day'. How will you feel?" R Ashwin said. After his debut season with Mumbai Indians in 2023, where he lit up the IPL stage with 452 runs and six wickets, his perfor-



mance dipped the following season when he represented Royal Challengers Bengaluru, scoring 255 runs and taking 10 wickets. Green missed out in 2025 due to injury. Battling injuries and poor form since, Green has struggled to make an impact in national colours, and another former cricketer, Subramanyam Badrinath, questioned whether the Australian has it in him to win games all by himself. "You've signed him for 25 crores, and he is woefully out of form. He struggled massively for Australia in the T20 World Cup. Cameron Green went for so much purely because of the hype. He is not worth that much. Has he single-handedly done anything in the IPL? Australian players always get hyped up, and he benefited from that. I believe it was a bad move by KKR," Badrinath said on his YouTube channel.

## 'If they score 250, they might concede 250': Aakash Chopra flags SRH's bowling weakness ahead of IPL 2026

GNS News Agency, March 24

Heading into the 19th season of the Indian Premier League (IPL), Sunrisers Hyderabad's (SRH) bowling unit looks one of the weakest among all 10 teams. With skipper and leader of the pace attack, Pat Cummins, already set to miss the initial phase of IPL 2026 due to workload management by Cricket Australia, and the franchise having let go of Mohammed Shami ahead of the mini-auction, SRH's bowling attack appears inexperienced and toothless.

The availability of Sri Lankan pacer Eshan Malinga is also in doubt after Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) made it mandatory for him to clear a fitness test before issuing a No Objection Certificate (NOC). While the likes of Travis Head, Ishan Kishan, Abhishek Sharma, Heinrich Klaasen, Liam Livingstone, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Aniket Verma and Salil Arora make the Hyderabad-based franchise one of the most explosive batting units in the IPL this season, their bowling is where the weakness lies.



Heading into the 19th season of the Indian Premier League (IPL), Sunrisers Hyderabad's (SRH) bowling unit looks one of the weakest among all 10 teams. With skipper and leader of the pace attack

Former Indian cricketer Aakash Chopra pointed out that if SRH manage to score 250, their bowling unit is such that it can concede those 250 as well.

"There will be challenges because the bowling has been dealt a serious blow. Pat Cummins was already not there. So the bowling was already slightly weak, and if Eshan Malinga is also not there, it means you will have to play Brydon Carse, or else you won't be able to play with Indian bowling. When I see their bowling, it has Amit Kumar, Praful Hinge, Sakib Hussain, Omkar Tarmale, Jaydev

Unadkat, Zeeshan Ansari, Harshal Patel, Shivam Mavi, Shivang Kumar and Harsh Dube, but the bowling is weak. How they manage the bowling will be a challenge because if they score 250, they might concede 250. Their bowling looks like that. Unfortunately, that much might not be seen in their bowling," said Chopra on SRH's bowling attack on his YouTube channel. However, Chopra is hopeful that SRH bowling coach Varun Aaron could bring a change of fortune for the bowling unit.

"Varun Aaron has seen them. He said he has seen

Shivang, Harsh, and all other bowlers, that Shivam Mavi is bowling very well, and that they would be fine, and I will find out when I see them. I am hoping I find out," said Chopra.

"However, at this point in time, when you see the team on paper, you see their entire bowling unit as a challenge, in which spin, especially, gets highlighted because with Zeeshan Ansari and Shivang Kumar, I really don't think they are going with a very strong bowling attack. Spin is a definite, definite weakness. You cannot ignore that at all," he added.

## How Candidates' challenger Matthias Blübaum's former University studied "eye gaze patterns" to understand chess excellence



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Candidates challenger Matthias Blübaum studied math and physics at the Bielefeld University on a campus adjoining the Teutoburg Forest. Bielefeld's Cluster of Excellence Cognitive Interaction Technology (CITEC) also researched chess brains through expert behaviour, attention and decision-making in chess competitive games. Back in 2016, the Universität de Bielefeld, released first findings of project "Ceege", which sought to explore the secret of successful chess players, by recording players' eye movements and facial expressions.

According to the university blog post dated 23 December 2016, on uni.bielefeld.de, researchers revealed their preliminary results and explained why Norwegian grandmaster Magnus Carlsen again earned that year's title of world chess champion yet again. Dr. Kai Essig and his colleagues also researched which computer models could predict a player's behavior in a game. "Chess is one of the oldest — and most popular — board games," the blog post started, citing a chess board, game or computer as a classic gift option on Christmas Eves.

"There are numerous theories on how the brain controls attention and solves problems in both everyday situations and game situations," Professor Dr. Thomas Schack was quoted as saying by the University blog. The sports scientist and cognitive psychologist heading the CITEC research group "Neurocognition and Action — Biomechanics" as well as the chess research project, added, "The game of chess is an ideal object of research for testing these theories because chess players have to be extremely attentive and make decisions in quick succession as to how they will proceed."

Ceege in fact was a joint collaboration with Inria Grenoble Rhones-Aples, a research institute in France. The project name stands for "Chess Expertise from Eye Gaze and Emotion." "We are investigating individual game tactics, chess players' behavior towards one another, and their body language," Dr. Kai Essig, who together with Thomas Küchelmann worked on the project, said. "With the findings from this project, we will be able to predict in the future how strong an individual chess player is, and how high the

chances are that a player wins a match. It appears that we will even be able to recognize a series of optimal moves that will increase the player's probability of winning." The various research techniques include eye tracking glasses allowing players' gaze positions to be measured, while video cameras record their facial expressions and body language. Professor Dr. James Crowley and his team from the Institute Inria meanwhile focussed on chess players' emotions, capturing for instance microexpressions — facial expressions that are only recognisable for a few milliseconds — as well as gestures, heart and respiratory rate, and perspiration.

More than 120 participants had so far played chess under observation in the 2016 pilot study. Of these, a third were chess experts, and the other two-thirds novices. "The current study and the pilot study already show that chess experts show significant differences in their eye movements," said Kai Essig to the university blog. "Chess experts concentrate for most of the time on the main chess pieces that can make or break the game in respective situations. The experts control their attention more efficiently than novices." According to Essig, amateurs jump very frequently from one figure to the next with their gaze, and look at nearly all the pieces on the board, regardless of whether they play an important role in the particular game situation.

Ceege used special glasses, and with the knowledge gleaned from their project, the researchers closely followed the chess world championship in November of 2016. "Early in the tournament, it was already apparent that Magnus Carlsen would win. He had shown more initiative in the first six matches. It was hardly possible for his opponent Sergej Karjakin to dominate the game," physicist Thomas Küchelmann said. The study though back then sought to observe more minutely. Küchelmann explained: "In order to make concrete predictions, we would have actually had to measure Carlsen's and Karjakin's game with our test equipment. It would have been interesting to measure, for instance, Carlsen's emotional reaction to his missed end game opportunities, and his mistake in the eighth match, which he lost, along with Karjakin's emotional reactions to running out of time in the tie-breaker." The 2016 experiment led the researchers to develop an electronic chess assistant, which would analyze the weaknesses of chess novices and experts, using eye tracking for instance, and train players by providing tips and explanations. The assistant would recommend which move is optimal in the particular situation. "Looking forward, it would also be conceivable to integrate this assistive system into a robot. With their physical presence, robots could motivate players in a different way than for example an assistant operating verbally on a tablet," explained Thomas Schack in the blog. The "Ceege" research project ran for three years, through February 2019. The Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) and the French research funding body, Agence Nationale de la Recherche (ANR) provided funding to the time of €300,000 for the Bielefeld research.

## Irfan Pathan on PBKS: 'If one owner says, 'We need to field this specific team because we want results,' and another owner says, 'Play a specific combination'



GNS News Agency, March 24

Punjab Kings, although they reached the final last season, have been quite inconsistent with their performance over the years. They reached the final in 2014 and went into the semis in 2008. Irfan Pathan, who has played for the franchise, has revealed what errors the franchise has made over the years. "There was a clear lack of coordination (during the second year (2009), the IPL moved to South Africa, where we didn't perform well. The first year (2008), we played the semifinal, so the leadership should have continued, but by the third year, the leadership had changed," Pathan said on Star Sports.

"In that, there was a big issue between the coaches, what the coaches who don't come from a cricket background were saying, and what the owners, who don't have a cricket background, were thinking. This has been the case with Punjab," he added. Pathan further went on to slam the lack of coordination the owners have had in the initial years. "I feel that, initially, the owners seemed like good owners. If you talk about one-on-one interactions, they were very good there. But internally, what was visible from the start was a lack of coordination, which greatly impacted decision-making." "For example, if one owner says, 'We need to field this specific team because we want results,' and another owner says, 'We want to play a specific combination,' and if things don't work out on the field, it creates a huge difference. I think, initially, that was the issue," he added. However, Pathan also acknowledged that things might have improved of late. "Looking at the current situation, it seems things have changed a lot; they have tried to provide much more stability. But if you have changed twelve captains over so many years, it means the stability that should be there in leadership hasn't been visible. And when there isn't stability in leadership, players won't feel secure. And if players aren't secure, they won't be able to perform in such a difficult league where the competition is always high. Until a few years ago, this was definitely an issue with Punjab," Pathan elaborated.

## 'Not a good sign... power goes out completely & doesn't come back': Hikaru Nakamura flags concerns in Cyprus ahead of Candidates 2026

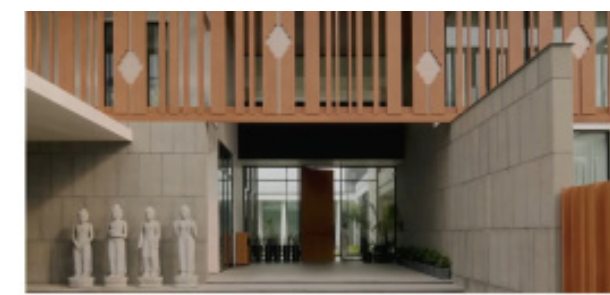
GNS News Agency, March 24

American Grandmaster and World No. 2 Hikaru Nakamura has raised concerns over the playing conditions in Cyprus, where, in exactly one week's time, the all-important and prestigious Candidates Tournament 2026 is scheduled to take place. Cyprus is also being dragged into the ongoing war between the US, Israel, and Iran.

Nakamura, who is believed to have set up his pre-event camp in Cyprus for nearly the last two months, said the frequent and extended power cuts in the Mediterranean island are not a good sign ahead of the tournament. "It's not a good sign when power goes out completely in parts of Cyprus and doesn't come back for an extended period of time," Nakamura posted on his social media account on X, expressing his concern. Nakamura isn't the first player to flag concerns about playing conditions in Cyprus; Indian Grandmaster Koneru Humpy also said she does not want to risk competing in a country that is not too far away from nations like Lebanon and Israel, which are actively involved in the ongoing war in the Middle East. "I am not sure (if I will play at the Candidates). It depends upon the situation. Right now, I am a bit concerned about safety with the drone attacks and warships deployed (in the Mediterranean Sea) coming into the picture. And very recently, there has been bombing happening between Israel and Lebanon because of Hezbollah. So I am a bit hesitant to travel because of this. If the situation continues like this, I am really doubtful

of my participation," Humpy told The Indian Express. "It's not a good sign when power goes out completely in parts of Cyprus and doesn't come back for an extended period of time... The risk of playing the Candidates in Cyprus was made apparent at the start of the month when a drone launched from Lebanon struck a British air force base on the island. The RAF Akrotiri base, which the drone damaged on March 1, is about 85 kilometres east of Cap St Georges Hotel and Resort, which will host the Candidates tournament. Cyprus is a missile's length away from Lebanon, which, through proxies of Iran, has been attacking Israel. German tech billionaire Wadim Rosenstein recently offered Germany as a safe alternative to FIDE for hosting the Candidates event, which acts as the challenger tournament for the World Championship. "FIDE has already been informed of our readiness to support and provide an immediate solution if required," Rosenstein wrote on X on Thursday. "Should it be necessary, we stand ready to act immediately. We can organize the Candidates Tournament in Germany, ensuring maximum safety and reliability for all participants and officials." Rosenstein is the Chairman of Germany-based WR Group Holding, and through the company WR Chess, Rosenstein supports multiple chess events around the world in addition to supporting players. WR Chess also has a pre-existing relationship with FIDE, having partnered with the global governing body of chess to host the FIDE World Team Rapid and Blitz Championship.

## Inside the 20,000-sq-ft Amritsar mansion that doubles as Ranveer Singh aka Hamza's palatial bungalow in Dhurandhar 2



If you're left impressed by that palatial home of Ranveer Singh's character Hamza in Aditya Dhar's spy thriller Dhurandhar 2: The Revenge, we're happy to inform you that property actually exists in India. The filming took place at Ananda, a one-acre plot situated in Amritsar, Punjab. With a built-up area of 20,000 square feet, this architectural marvel finished construction in 2024. Key scenes from the sequel were shot at this property. These include the lavish party Hamza throws at home, the instance when his wife Yelena (Sara Arjun) points a gun at him, and even their last scene together. Ananda is named after Lord Buddha, as a 25-foot-Singhasana overlooks a huge fire pit in the courtyard, around which guests can sit and share stories with each other in ancient fashion. The swimming pool is surrounded by banana and bamboo trees. The property hits a sweet spot between indoors and outdoors, tradition and modernity, and minimalism and maximalism.

A spiral staircase connects the two floors of Ananda. Credit: 23DC Architects. A spiral staircase connects the two floors of Ananda. (Photo Credit: 23DC Architects) Sticking to theme of Buddha, a quadruplet of

monolithic Angkor-style Buddhist statues guard the entrance foyer. With flat roofs, free-flowing floor plans, and frugal ornamentation, the property incorporates several elements of modern architecture. But it also pays homage to tradition and culture as the mid-century furniture in the living area has been imported from China. If one steps indoors, the ground floor features a double-volume living room, dining areas, a living room, and a guest bedroom with a backyard view and a service kitchen. The primary bedrooms exist on the first floor, which one can reach via a dramatic spiral staircase. The details of those resting chambers have been kept under wraps to protect the privacy of the guests.

The fire pit at Ananda. Image Credit: 23WC Architects. The fire pit at Ananda. (Photo Credit: 23DC Architects) This is not the first time that a mansion from a Ranveer Singh film has gained instant popularity. The Gaur Mulberry Mansions in Noida, Uttar Pradesh served as the setting of his character Rocky Randhawa's ancestral palace in Karan Johar's 2023 hit family comedy Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani. The massive 35,000 square feet property is reminiscent of the White House in Washington DC. Dhurandhar 2, co-produced by Aditya Dhar and Lokesh Dhar's B62 Studios and Jyoti Deshpande-led Jio Studios, is the sequel to their 2025 blockbuster Dhurandhar. That film became the highest grossing Indian film ever at the domestic box office, earning over Rs 890 crore. It also turned out to be the fourth highest grossing Indian film ever worldwide, amassing over Rs 1300 crore. Along with Ranveer Singh, Sanjay Dutt, Arjun Rampal, R Madhavan, Sara Arjun, and Rakesh Bedi also reprise their roles from the first part in Dhurandhar 2: The Revenge. The film has already grossed over Rs 500 crore at the global box office within just four days of release.

## Only 60% brutality is shown in Dhurandhar 2, says action director Aejez Gulab: 'Aditya Dhar wanted things to look manly, said think as brutal as you can'

Anyone who has watched the Dhurandhar franchise—both the prequel and the latest sequel—knows that the films are relentlessly high on action from start to finish. The intense brutality has drawn criticism from some quarters, with several viewers admitting they had to look away during certain scenes. For action enthusiasts, however, it has been nothing short of a spectacle. At the heart of this visceral storytelling is action director Aejez Gulab, who recently revealed that director Aditya Dhar gave the team complete freedom to push the boundaries of brutality.

Speaking to Hindi Rush, Aejez shared, "We had shot all the brutality in detail, but what you see in the film is just 60%. Since we're in the OTT era and kids may eventually watch it, we had to tone it down."

Elaborating on the creative process, he added, "Aditya Dhar gave us full freedom. He said, 'Aejez bhai, think as brutal as you can. Kill in the most intense ways you can imagine.' And we did exactly that, while he added his directorial touch. Aditya is extremely calm and sharp-minded, but when it comes to action, his thinking operates on a completely different level." While several sequences were meticulously planned and rehearsed, others were conceived on the spot. Recalling a particularly violent moment, Aejez Gulab said the scene where Hamza uses debris to smash an aide of Major Iqbal inside a masjid was improvised during filming. "A lot of ideas were created on the spot. Aditya wanted the action to feel 'manly'—not just simple pushes or throws," he explained. The film's grand climax, which runs for over 30 minutes, was especially demanding. "The masjid sequence alone took six days of rehearsal and 14 days to shoot. Maintaining continuity was extremely challenging. Every department—from hair and makeup to costume—worked tirelessly, tak-



ing reference photos after each shot to recreate the same look with precision the next day," he said.

Aejez also broke down the intense chain fight between Arjun Rampal and Ranveer Singh, where Rampal's character nearly strangles Ranveer's character. "We obviously couldn't use a real chain, so we designed a rubber prop. It wouldn't cut the skin, but it still caused pain—and Ranveer bore it. So did Arjun. Both of them got injured multiple times during that climax," he revealed. Despite the injuries, neither actor slowed down. "They wouldn't stop—even during rehearsals, they pushed each other for real. They were so immersed in the scene that even after getting hurt, they refused to take breaks. We use lighter props for safety, but when used with force, they still hurt. In that chain sequence, we even had to stretch Ranveer Singh's eyes when Arjun tightened the chain around his face," he added.

## RJ Balaji reveals how Suriya replaced Vijay in Karuppu despite 'Thalapathy' being impressed with the story: 'He felt it was a big idea'

Not just Suriya's fans, but even the Tamil star himself has pinned high hopes on the upcoming action drama Karuppu, expecting it to finally let him break free from his ongoing dry spell. Following the colossal bombing of director Siva's Kanguva (2024) and the underperformance of Karthik Subbaraj's critically acclaimed Retro (2025), Suriya is in dire need of a bona fide success and is hopeful that the RJ Balaji directorial will be it.

Unlike his previous filmmaking ventures, such as the Nayanthara-starrer Mookuthi Amman (2020) and his own Veetla Vishesham (2022), Balaji has opted for a larger canvas this time, aiming to ensure that Karuppu exudes mass appeal and impresses a wide range of audiences. While the movie will encompass everything one would expect from a Balaji directorial, he recently revealed that Karuppu would also fully satisfy Suriya's fans. In a conversation with Times of India, he also mentioned that his aim was to create something like 'Superstar' Rajinikanth's Baasha (1995), Muthu (1995), and Padayappa (1999), which were out-and-out entertainers.

Referring to his hero, named Saravanan — the embodiment of the guardian deity Karuppuswamy — the director described him as a great-looking man who fights powerfully, acts brilliantly, dances well, smiles, is funny, and can do pretty much everything. Pointing out that acting isn't just about crying loudly or shouting, Balaji maintained that it's also about screen presence, which he said Suriya has in abundance. This, he stated, helped him realise Karuppu in the way he envisioned. When asked what his "style" as a filmmaker is, Balaji stated that he wants to create entertainers that engage the entire audience. Citing movies like Padayappa, Mudhalvan (1999), and Ghilli (2004) that still have high rewatch value, Balaji expressed his desire to make such films that people love watching, even for the nth time.

Despite Karuppu being a large-scale, big-ticket movie, RJ Balaji asserted that he hasn't followed the pan-India formula, thus avoiding its pitfalls, such as bringing in actors



from various industries just for the sake of it. He maintained, however, that he expects the movie to perform well across South India, as all states have deities that resemble Karuppuswamy in spirit.

During the conversation, Balaji also commented on how he ended up at Suriya's doorstep with the project after initially trying to launch it with actor-politician 'Thalapathy' Vijay. Mentioning that he started writing Karuppu in 2023, Balaji said he approached Vijay with it after realising it needed a star of significant stature, and also since the latter had already asked him for a script around 2021-22. Upon hearing the subject, Vijay exclaimed that it was a massive film and asked if he could start right away. However, the director wasn't ready to rush, as helming a Vijay movie was a huge responsibility. "He felt it was a big idea... and it was. He told me he was looking for something in my style — like LKG (2019) or Mookuthi Amman — something satirical, something that families could watch in a light, enjoyable way," Balaji noted. He mentioned that although they met and discussed the project a couple of times afterwards, it didn't materialise, and he eventually parted ways with Vijay, satisfied that the star liked his story. He then narrated it to Suriya, who agreed to do it, and that's how Karuppu took shape. Also starring Trisha Krishnan,

## The 50 grand finale: Prince Narula invites backlash on social media after he sacrifices finale spot for Shiv Thakare, netizens say 'Scripted drama to gain public sympathy'



The 50 grand finale: Reality star Prince Narula has emerged as a strong contender on the gaming-based captive reality show The 50. During the semi-finals on Saturday night, Prince secured a spot in the finale alongside Rajat Dalal, Mr. Faisu, and Immortal Kaka. However, in a surprising move, he chose to make a 'big' sacrifice by giving up his place in the finale to Shiv Thakare. While the gesture left contestants emotional, many netizens criticised Prince, calling it a calculated publicity stunt.

After competing strongly in the game for 26 days, Prince Narula decided to hang up his boots. Making a voluntary exit, Prince said, "When I came here on the first day, a lot of people lined up behind me to lead them; that was my victory. I came on this show for my wife, and when I saw so many of my brothers were here too, I had to lead them. If Faisu hadn't won today, I would have given this to him. I see him as the best competition. This is the end of my journey, I write my own victory and defeat. I don't wish to go forward in the game, and want to give my ticket to the finale to Shiv. I want him to go ahead." In another video, Prince said, "I thank you, guys, for inviting me. I am breaking my own winning streak. I want to go home and meet my daughter. She is my trophy. I was here to show the Gen Z that when we play, it's hard to defeat us. I want the youngsters to come forward now and take my legacy forward. I am okay to see anybody win, except for Rajat Dalal. In terms of the task, his contribution in the show has been zero."

Fans react to Prince Narula's sacrifice on The 50 Prince Narula was often accused of flaunting his past victories during The 50. However, when he chose to quit the game voluntarily, he faced significant backlash from fans on X. One of them wrote, "Funny how he was scared to even enter the unsafe zone in the previous task, and he's giving away a finale ticket like it means nothing. Something doesn't add up." Another user wrote, "Bcoz Prince knows he can't win in finale against Faisu and Rajat to sacrifice kardo." A third internet user shared, "Bhayankar pr chah rahi hai bhai, Prince badhiya game khel raha hai, woh toh finale jayega he lekin

usne pehle jeetke Shiv ko de Diya taki sympathy bhi mile aur log acha bolenge aur wese bhi badmein toh woh finale jayega he. Makers uske taraf jo hain (This is some crazy PR strategy. Prince is playing a great game, so he will be in the finale, but before that, he gave the chance to Shiv so that he gets sympathy and praise from people, any which ways makers are biased towards him)."

One of the users also pointed out, "Scripted drama to gain public sympathy for the Prince." With the latest development, the makers of The 50 have also received criticism. One of the users noted, "Scripted hai kya show, captive se jyada scripted vibes aati hai. Yeh tyaagdari kyun... like kuch bhi ho raha hai (Is the show scripted? More than captive, it has scripted vibes. Why this sacrifice? It seems anything is happening)." Another user also said, "Bhai yeh kesa show hai jidhar banday ticket to finale kisi aur ko de rhy aur show wale accept bhi kr rhy. (What kind of a show is this, where a person is giving away the ticket to the finale and the makers are accepting it?)" Urvashi Dholakia, Shiv Thakare, and Rajat Dalal react to Prince's decision. While some of Prince Narula's fellow contestants were moved by his gesture, others viewed it as a strategic move. Shiv Thakare, who was surprised by Prince's decision, said, "I feel blessed that he chose me, but I feel the weight of this sacrifice. I would have been happier to win this on my merit." Urvashi Dholakia went on to criticize the move and said, "He could have given this to Krishna if he wanted; she was also extremely deserving. She was also on his team. But he chose a male over a female."

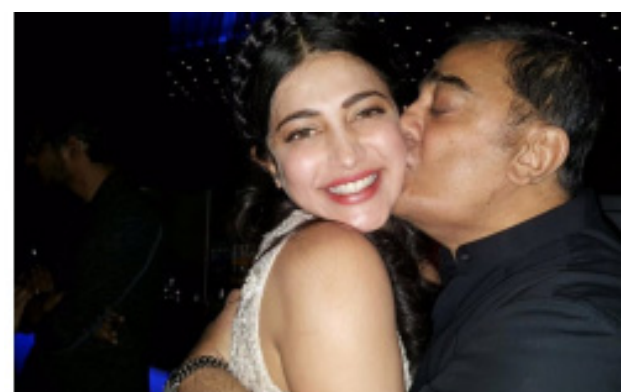
Rajat Dalal also criticized the decision and said, "When someone is alone, all the claims he has made are at stake. So it's better to leave everything behind than face defeat. At least tomorrow, he can say that he quit, rather than saying he lost." Rajat also told Urvashi later, "I liked this fear Prince had. He has earned so much that he fears losing it. If he didn't want to win the show, why did he come on it? Had he made his gang strong, he wouldn't need to handhold them. Not once did he take my name to win. I actually wanted to fight, but it was his moment, so I stepped back."

Don't Miss: Divya Agarwal confirms turning down Khatron Ke Khiladi 15, slams Prince Narula's 'regressive' approach on The 50: 'Looked like a desperate attempt to win' The 50 found its top 5 in Rajat Dalal, Immortal Kaka, Mr. Faisu, Shiv Thakare, and Krishna Shroff. The grand finale will take place tonight on Jio Hotstar at 9 pm and on Colors TV at 10:30 pm. The show has garnered an impressive viewership throughout. The winner of the show will not get the prize money; one of his lucky fans will win the prize pot of Rs 50 lakhs. This is a developing story based on recent social media trends and reality show broadcasts; the claims regarding "scripted" content and "PR stunts" are based on viewer opinions. As the competition reaches its conclusion, viewer discretion is advised when interpreting contestant motivations and show outcomes.

## From cringe Instagram reels to 'working like beasts': Shruti Haasan reveals the unseen side of Kamal Haasan and Rajinikanth

Shruti Haasan doesn't fight the fact that she's a product of nepotism. The actor-singer is the daughter of seasoned Tamil actor-filmmaker Kamal Haasan and actor Sarika. She claims that being the daughter of her parents helped her singing career even more than her acting career. Though she began singing at a young age, she was completely "untrained" then. "When people say nepo and stuff, I never really fight it because it's so easy for me to say my first opportunity to sing was in appa's film for Illayaraja sir. This is no ordinary shit," said Shruti. She made her singing debut when she was just five, with the song "Potri Paadadi Ponne" in Bharathan's 1992 Tamil action film Thevar Magan, starring Kamal Haasan, who also produced and wrote the movie. "He (Illayaraja) always said I have a strong voice. Because he came home once, and I screamed for my parents. He was like, 'Range hai,'" recalled Shruti, laughing. However, she added that the same "dominant" voice that impressed Illayaraja becomes a problem for her outside of singing. "I wasn't yelling at you. I was just saying 'I'm proud of you,'" said Shruti, claiming that her "quality of voice", combined with people not being used to "women giving it back" doesn't work in her favour.

Shruti Haasan went on to train formally at the age of 14 under veteran music composer Suresh Wadkar, followed by Pandit Manohar Kulkarni, before she completed her vocal training at the Musicians Institute in California. "So, I've had just incredible gurus from all races. My roots are Hindustani Classical," added Shruti. She claimed that she's never gone up to Kamal Haasan or her Coolie c-star Rajinikanth for advice on career strategy. "The only tip is



that they're both so hardworking. And it's not hardworking like yaar main itna kaam kar raha hu. I'm so tense. They're chupchaap hardworking. They will give their lives for it quietly. They're not creating tension. They're maintaining their offices and their families, and working like beasts. That trick is beautiful," said Shruti.

She clarified that she and Kamal Haasan don't discuss work as much as the "normal baap-beti stuff". "He sends lots of reels on Instagram. There are some cringe reels. Then I'd tell him, 'This aunty is really not funny, appa' (laughs). But he'll also send really artistic stuff. Then he'll send a little girl singing, which I know is a callback to me. That's cute. He loves when people are cooking in villages in reels," added Shruti.

## Karthi's 'Marshal' directed by Tamizh set for Deepavali release

Chennai: Director Tamizh, who is directing the eagerly awaited action entertainer 'Marshal', featuring actor Karthi in the lead, has now disclosed that his film is likely to release for Deepavali this year.

The director, who is also known to be a writer, while participating in an event, was asked about his upcoming film 'Marshal'. Choosing to drop an update, Tamizh said, "This will be a film that happens in the year 1965. I have completed two schedules of shooting. We have shot for 48 days until now. We will resume shooting on the 15th again. We should be there for Deepavali."

Sources close to the unit say that the film is being made on a lavish scale. There are also rumours that the film is to be made in two parts. However, none of this has been officially confirmed. For the unaware, actor Karthi's upcoming film with director Tamizh, best known for having made the film 'Tanakaaran', has been titled 'Marshal'. The film, which will feature Kalyani Priyadarshan as the female lead, will also have actors Sathyaraj, Prabhu, Lal, John Kokken,



Easwari Rao and Murali Sharma in pivotal roles.

On the technical front, Marshal will have music by the young music sensation Sai Abhyankar and cinematography by Sathyan Sooryan. Well-known editor Philomin Raj will be the editor of the film. Production design will be by Arun Venjaramoodu.