



PUBLIC RESENTMENT GROWING AGAINST ANDHRA GOVT: JAGAN REDDY

ISRAEL SAYS IRAN'S SECURITY CHIEF ALI LARIJANI HAS BEEN KILLED IN STRIKE



ROHIT SHARMA ENGAGES IN HILARIOUS BANTER WITH MUMBAI INDIANS STAR AFTER HITTING HIM FOR A SIX: "CATCH IT"



SHORT TAKES

RBI WINS GLOBAL INITIATIVE OF THE YEAR AWARD

Mumbai, March 17 (TSIT): The Reserve Bank of India has been selected for the prestigious 'Initiative of the Year Award' by London-based Central Banking in recognition for its launching the 'bank.in' domain...

SIDDARAMAIAH SLAMS RAILWAYS FOR CANCELLING EXAMS OVER KANNADA ROW



Bengaluru, March 17 : Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday criticised the Railway Department for abruptly cancelling promotion examinations for railway employees after protests by Kannada organisations over the denial of an option to write the test in Kannada...

Women Empowerment a Top Priority: Bhatti



Hyderabad, March 17 (TSIT): Reaffirming the State Government's commitment to women's empowerment, Deputy Chief Minister Bhadrachari Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu stated that the government is working with dedication to uphold the dignity, self-respect, and self-reliance of women...

healthcare, and family needs, thereby improving their quality of life. The Deputy Chief Minister emphasized that the overall development of the state is closely linked to the progress and empowerment of women...

President Murmu Serves Akshaya Patra's 5 Billionth Meal, Marks 25 Years of Service

New Delhi (TSIT): The Akshaya Patra Foundation marked a historic milestone of serving 5 billion meals while completing 25 years of dedicated service to humanity at a grand event held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre in New Delhi.

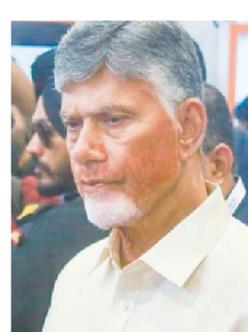


President Murmu served the 5 billionth meal at the Akshaya Patra Foundation, an implementing partner of the Government of India's PM POSHAN initiative...

menting partner of the Government of India's PM POSHAN initiative, currently serves nutritious mid-day meals to over 2.35 million children across 16 states and 3 Union Territories. In Telangana alone, the Foundation provides around 2.5 lakh meals daily through five centralized kitchens.

Different-abled in Andhra Pradesh to get free bus travel facility

Amaravati (TSIT) : The Andhra Pradesh government is set to launch a scheme, offering free bus travel to differently-abled citizens across the state. Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu will launch the 'Divyang Shakti' scheme on Wednesday as a special Ugadi gift for 12.7 lakh differently-abled people.



The government said that the scheme underscores its renewed focus on social equity, mobility, and last-mile dignity, while also reinforcing its governance narrative of "welfare with scale."

Chief Minister Naidu and senior leaders will travel alongside beneficiaries on RTC buses post-launch. The Chief Minister will also host a community lunch for people with

disabilities, reinforcing the administration's emphasis on empathy-led governance. The Divyang Shakti Scheme is expected to benefit over 12.76 lakh individuals, including 11.16 lakh persons with disabilities and their attendants...

PAK KILLS 400 IN STRIKE ON KABUL HOSPITAL, INDIA TERMS IT 'COWARDLY ACT'

Kabul (TSIT) At least 400 people were killed and over 250 injured after a Pakistani airstrike hit the Omid Addiction Treatment Hospital in Kabul on Monday night, March 16, even as Pakistan denied targeting any civilian sites and maintained its strikes were directed at military targets...

INDIA, CHINA SEEN AS KEY MEDIATORS AS HORMUZ TENSIONS DEEPEN, US ALLIES HOLD BACK

New Delhi, March 17 (TSIT) As the war in West Asia grinds on, with the failure of a decisive win and reluctance of USA's allies to be part of a naval fleet patrolling the Strait of Hormuz, analysts here feel the time has come for a "quiet international mediation effort"...



Washington and Tehran are trusted by both. US President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping have already spoken to each other on the crisis. It makes sense for them to step in with a quiet effort...

Centre releases over Rs 1,789 crore to strengthen rural local bodies in 5 states

New Delhi, March 17 (TSIT) : The government on Tuesday said it has released more than Rs 1,789 crore under the 15th Finance Commission grants to strengthen rural local bodies in five states. The Centre released Untied Grants for Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)/Rural Local Bodies

(RLBs) in Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana and Maharashtra during FY 2025-26. This release covers allocations pertaining to different financial years and aims to further strengthen rural local governance.

amounting to Rs 232.60 crore has been released for all eligible 33 District Panchayats (DPs), 146 Block Panchayats (BPs) and 11,693 Gram Panchayats (GPs). Additionally, Rs 8.0238 crore of the withheld portion of the first installment have been released to 1 DP, 8 BPs and 350 GPs.

Sanju Samson felicitated by Kerala CM after T20 WC win



New Delhi, March 17 (TSIT): Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan honoured India wicketkeeper-batter Sanju Samson, who played a pivotal role in India's triumphant campaign at the ICC

Men's T20 World Cup earlier this month. Vijayan hosted the World Cup champion at his official residence, Cliff House, on Monday (March 16), to acknowledge his achievements.

NATO declined to join US military campaign against Iran: Trump

Washington, March 17 (TSIT) : President Donald Trump said Tuesday that most NATO allies have declined to join the US military operation against Iran, criticising the alliance and asserting that Washington does not need foreign support. "The United States has been informed by most of our NATO 'Allies' that they don't want to get involved with our Military Operation against the Terrorist Regime of Iran," Trump said in a statement.

considered NATO, where we spend Hundreds of Billions of Dollars per year protecting these same Countries, to be a one-way street - We will protect them, but they will do nothing for us, in particular, in a time of need," he said. He also claimed that US forces had significantly degraded Iran's military capability. "Fortunately, we have decimated Iran's Military - Their Navy is gone, their Air Force is gone, their Anti-Aircraft and Radar is gone, and perhaps, most importantly, their Leaders, at virtually every level, are gone," Trump said.



desire, the NATO Countries' assistance - WE NEVER DID!" he said. Trump extended the same position to key US

partners in Asia. "Likewise, Japan, Australia, or South Korea," he said, adding: "WE DO NOT NEED THE HELP OF ANYONE!" The comments build on remarks Trump made a day earlier in the Oval Office, where he expressed frustration that some US allies were not willing to contribute militarily. "What does surprise me is that they're not eager to help," Trump said. "There are some countries that greatly disappointed me."

which they do, be very helpful." He said the response fell short of expectations. "He says, well, I'd like to ask my team," Trump said. "I said, you don't have to worry about a team. You don't have a team. You're the prime minister, you can make a decision." Trump said later offers of support did not carry weight. "I said, I don't want them anymore. I don't want them any more. I want them before we start. I don't need your aircraft carriers after we've already won." He also linked the issue to long-standing US troop deployments abroad. "We have 45,000 troops in Japan. We have 45,000 troops in South Korea. We have 45,000, 50,000 troops in Germany," he said. "We defend all these countries."

Hyd: Cyberabad Police apprehend Man for Posting Abusive Comment on Social Media

Hyderabad, Mar 17 : The Cybercrime Police have apprehended a man for allegedly posting an abusive and offensive comment on a social media platform, the Cybercrime police said on Tuesday.

The accused, identified as Kotipalli Venkanna, a security guard by profession, was traced during an investigation into objectionable content posted online.

Police said he had posted the comment on a video of actress Renu Desai shared on Instagram.

According to police, the accused was taken into custody from Madhapur and brought to the Cyber Crime Police Station in Gachibowli.

During verification, he produced the mobile phone used to post the comment.

Police said the case was detected following monitoring of social media content and subsequent investigation to identify the individual responsible.

Issuing an advisory, Cyberabad Police urged citizens to maintain responsible behaviour on social media platforms and refrain from posting abusive, defamatory or offensive content.

They warned that such actions could attract legal consequences under relevant provisions of law.

The police also encouraged the public to report cyber offences to the nearest cybercrime police station or through the 1930 cyber helpline.

Ashwini Vaishnav Highlights KAVACH Expansion, Railways Growth in Lok Sabha



New Delhi: Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav informed the Lok Sabha that KAVACH 4.0 was technically qualified and updated on July 16, 2024, following which work covering nearly 20,000 km has been taken up.

He emphasized that KAVACH is not just a device but a comprehensive safety system requiring a full telecom network, including optical fibre cables along railway tracks, data centres at stations, and telecom towers at intervals of 2.5 to 3 km. He described the efforts to implement such a large-scale system as highly

commendable. Highlighting the transformation of Indian Railways under the leadership of Narendra Modi, the minister noted a significant rise in cargo capacity. Freight movement increased from 1,055 million tonnes during 2004-2014 to 1,617 million tonnes last year, and is expected to reach 1,650 million tonnes by the end of March.

He stated that with this growth, Indian Railways is set to become the world's second-largest cargo carrier, reflecting a decade of rapid modernization and infrastructure expansion.

Telangana: KTR accuses Congress of playing 'biggest fraud' after making 420 promises

Hyderabad, March 17 : Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) working president K. T. Rama Rao on Tuesday launched a sharp attack on the Congress government in Telangana and remarked that the 'credit' for playing the 'biggest fraud' in the world after making 420 promises in the elections goes to the Congress party.



Speaking on the motion of thanks to the Governor's address in the Assembly, he claimed that nowhere in the world has a party made such a large number of promises in the elections and then failed to honour them.

He accused the Congress of failing to deliver on its promises despite claiming that the guarantees would be implemented within 100 days. "The Congress said each family would benefit to the tune of Rs 2.5 lakh. Even after over two years, can the government show a single family that has received such benefits?" he asked. KTR said that a Governor's address carries immense importance as it reflects the policy direction and commitments of the ruling government. However, he alleged that the present government had

reduced it to a mere formality devoid of accountability. He recalled that during the first Governor's address after the Congress came to power, then Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy had publicly stated that the "six guarantees" promised by the Congress would be given legal status, and that the Chief Minister had even signed a file to that effect. KTR questioned what had happened to that file and demanded answers from the government.

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

KTR further said that when the very first Governor's address lacked credibility due to unfulfilled assurances, the value of subsequent addresses also comes into question. "If the Chief Minister's signed file itself has no value, how can people trust this government? Every declaration made by the Chief Minister today carries zero value in the

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

The BRS leader alleged that the state administration had deteriorated over the past 28 months. He accused the government of mounting debts, financial mismanagement, diversion of funds, and prioritising political propaganda over development. "All that remains today are debts, dues, diversions, commissions, bulldozer politics, and abuses," he said.

He also criticised the government for allegedly spending Telangana's resources on political campaigns in other states while failing to bring funds from the Centre. "You go to Delhi not to secure funds but to offer them. That is the difference," he said.

On the economic front, KTR pointed out that Telangana,

once among the fastest-growing states, was now witnessing a slowdown. He questioned the decline in revenues, including GST collections, registrations, and vehicle revenues, and attributed it to "negative policies and negative mindset." He further alleged that industries and IT employment were declining and dismissed claims made at investment summits as exaggerated propaganda. He also accused the government of attempting to erase the legacy of former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhara Reddy, stating that Telangana's development itself stands as a testament to his contributions.

On welfare measures, KTR criticised the government for failing women, farmers, pensioners, and unemployed youth. He questioned the status of promised schemes such as Rs 2,500 monthly assistance to women, interest-free loans, farm loan waivers, and unemployment benefits. The BRS leader also alleged that existing schemes introduced by the previous government had been discontinued or weakened.

India Post launches 24- and 48-hour premium delivery services across major cities

New Delhi, March 17 : In a move aimed at strengthening India's logistics network, Union Minister Jyotiraditya M. Scindia on Tuesday launched three new premium delivery services of the Department of Posts in the national capital. The services - 24 Speed Post, 48 Speed Post and 24 Speed Post Parcel - are designed to offer faster and time-bound delivery across key cities.



The launch event was attended by Minister of State for Communications Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani along with senior officials of the postal department.

The initiative is part of the government's broader effort to modernise India's logistics system and improve delivery efficiency. Speaking at the event, Scindia said the launch marks a major step for India Post as it looks to reinvent itself and provide better services to customers in India and abroad.

"On this day that we are announcing to millions of our customers worldwide that under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India Post is committed to every single citizen across the length and breadth of this country and to every international customer," Scindia stated.

The Department of Posts introduced these services after conducting extensive pilot runs over the past three months.

The 24 Speed Post and 24 Speed Post Parcel services will offer next-day delivery between six major metro cities - New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru and Hyderabad.

These services will include features such as real-time tracking, OTP-based delivery confirmation and compensation in case of delays.

Deliveries will also be available on Sundays and holidays, except national holidays.

Meanwhile, the 48 Speed Post service will ensure delivery within two days between these cities.

It is aimed at providing a reliable and time-bound solution for document delivery, supported by tracking and SMS alerts.

Initially, the services have been launched in the six metro cities and will be expanded to other Tier-1 and Tier-2 cities in phases.

The move is expected to benefit e-commerce firms, small businesses, start-ups and individual customers by enabling faster movement of parcels.

Sonowal felicitates crew of LPG ships Shivalik and Nanda Devi

New Delhi, March 17 : Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal on Tuesday interacted with the brave crew members of Indian-flagged LPG carriers Shivalik and Nanda Devi, expressing the nation's gratitude for their courage and unwavering sense of duty in ensuring the safe transit of critical LPG cargo here.

Addressing the seafarers via video conferencing, Sarbananda Sonowal said the interaction was a "heartfelt expression of the nation's gratitude" to the crew, who ensured the safe delivery of vital LPG supplies despite operating in a high-risk maritime environment.

"It is a matter of immense pride to recognise the courage, dedication and professionalism of the crew of Shivalik and Nanda Devi. Your efforts ensured the safe passage of critical LPG cargo, strengthening India's energy security," Sarbananda Sonowal said. The minister noted

that both vessels remained stationed in a high-risk zone for nearly two weeks amid heightened security concerns before continuing their voyage to India. Sonowal said the crew demonstrated exceptional calmness, vigilance and professionalism under challenging conditions.

The interaction was attended by Vijay Kumar, secretary, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Shyam Jagannathan, director general of shipping, Capt. B.K. Tyagi, chairman and managing director, Shipping Corporation of India; Capt. Sukhmeet Singh and the crew of Shivalik, and Capt. Dhiraaj Kumar Agrawal, along with the crew of Nanda Devi.

Earlier, the two Indian-flagged LPG carriers safely crossed the Strait of Hormuz before arriving in India on March 16 and 17, as the government continues to closely monitor maritime operations in the Persian Gulf region amid the evolving geopolitical situation in West Asia.

INDIA'S FIRST 'SMART COCHLEAR IMPLANT' SURGERY PERFORMED AT KIMS HOSPITALS, SECUNDERABAD

Hyderabad, March 17, 2026: In a significant milestone for hearing healthcare in India, doctors at KIMS Hospitals, Secunderabad, have successfully performed the country's first Smart Cochlear Implant surgery on a three-year-old child suffering from severe hearing loss. The procedure marks an important advancement in cochlear implant technology and opens a new chapter in the treatment of profound hearing impairment.



Cochlear implantation is typically recommended for individuals with severe to profound hearing loss generally when hearing aids fail to provide sufficient benefit. In this case, the child had a hearing loss of more than 70 per cent, making the advanced implant a suitable option.

What makes the newly introduced Smart Cochlear Implant unique is its ability to receive future upgrades. In conventional cochlear implants, once the internal device is surgically implanted, it remains unchanged for life, and only the external sound processor can be upgraded. However, the new smart implant allows the internal implant firmware to be upgraded in the future, enabling the inte-

gration of improved signal-processing technologies without the need for another surgery.

In simple terms, much like smartphone applications that receive updates over time and gain new features, the smart cochlear implant can be enhanced with technological advancements. This capability ensures that patients can continue to benefit from evolving hearing technologies, extending the long-term usefulness of the implant.

Doctors explain that cochlear implantation is not just a surgical procedure but part of a comprehensive rehabilitation process that includes audiological evaluation, device programming and speech therapy.

The surgery was performed by a team led by Dr. Janardhan Rao Jagini, Head of the ENT Department and Senior Cochlear Implant Surgeon at KIMS Hospitals, Secunderabad. The team also included Dr. Shivaprasad Boddupalli, Chief Audiologist and Cochlear Implant Clinical Specialist, and Dr. Divya, Audiologist.

Experts emphasize that cochlear implantation at an early age significantly improves a child's chances of developing normal speech and language skills. By receiving the smart cochlear implant at the age of three, the child is expected to have better hearing ability and improved language development in the future.

With this achievement, KIMS

NTR Memorial Trust Award to GITAM

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



Varma, Resident Director, GITAM Hyderabad. Over the past four years, GITAM has been actively organizing voluntary blood donation drives, reinforcing the life-saving importance of blood donation while fostering compassion, social responsibility, and a spirit of service among students. The initiative has been widely appreciated, with organizers commending students for their generosity and selfless contributions that help save lives and encourage others to participate in such noble causes. The GITAM leadership, along with Prof. D.S. Rao, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Ambika Philip, Director - Hospitality & Campus Life, Heads of Institutions, Heads of Departments, and faculty members, lauded the initiative and reaffirmed their commitment to continuing such impactful community service programmes.

PROTIUM FINANCE LIMITED
(Formerly known as Growth Source Financial Technologies Ltd.)
Registered & Corporate Office: Address: 7th Floor, Block B2, Phase - I
Nillion Knowledge Park, Pahadi Village, Off. Western Express Highway,
Cama Industrial Estate, Goregaon(E), Mumbai - 400063, Maharashtra.

PUBLIC NOTICE (Under Rule 3 (1) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002)
SUBSTITUTED SERVICE OF NOTICE U/s 13 (2) OF SECURITISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the Borrowers as mentioned below that since they have defaulted in repayment of the Credit facility availed by them from Protium Finance Limited (Formerly known as Growth Source Financial Technologies Ltd. and before that known as Growth Source Financial Technologies Private Limited), the said credit facility has been classified as **Non-Performing Assets** in the books of NBFC as per RBI guidelines thereto. Thereafter, NBFC has issued demand notices to below mentioned respective borrower under section 13(2) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (SARFESI Act) on the last known addresses of the said borrowers thereby calling upon and demanding from them to pay the amounts mentioned in the respective Demand Notice/s within 60 days from the date of the respective Notice/s, as per details given below, together with further interest at the contractual rate on the below mentioned amount and incidental expenses, cost, charges etc. as stated in the said demand notices. However, the service is also being done by us by way of this publication as per Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 (SARFESI Rules).

S. No.	Loan Account No./Name and address of Borrower and Co-Borrower/s	Date of 13(2) Notice	Date of NPA
1.	Loan A/c No.: 65087EEL2473419 (Borrower) 1. ASP Vegetables Through its Proprietor Selva Ganesh Kumaran J S/o Jayandran, (Co-Borrower) 1. Selva Ganesh Kumaran J S/o Jayandran, 2. Aishwarya W/o Selva Ganesh Kumaran J, Address: No 61/62 Main Road Alangulam Madurai Tamil Nadu 627851 (Borrower 1.) No 14/40 Maraiman Kovil Street Alangulam Madurai Tamil Nadu 627851 (Co-Borrower 1. & 2.)	04.03.2026	02.03.2026

Description of the said property: Tirunelveli registration district, Alangulam SRO, Alangulam taluk, Alangulam village, TDTA Padmalai street old ward no. 9 for new ward no. 8 survey no. 883/4 in which land extent of - 0.00.88 hectares for which land situated old survey no. 427 in which land measuring east west 32.50 feet and south north 27 feet in total 877.50 sq. feet equal to 81.521 sq. meter land with existing western side facing 2 shops including northern and southern facing 4 shops with door no. 24, 25, 25A, 25B, 25C, 25D, 25E and EB connection no. 07-018-006-1, 07-018-006-242, 07-018-006-243, 07-018-006-244, 07-018-006-244, 07-018-006-244, situated within the following boundaries including all other common rights: East - House belongs to Arunachalander; West - South north street; North - Building belongs to Mohan; South - Building belongs to Arumuga Velalar; together with all other rights, buildings, improvements and easements appurtenant thereto.

We hereby call upon the borrower stated herein to pay us within 60 days from the date of this notice, the outstanding amount of more particularly stated in respective Demand Notices issued together with further interest thereon plus cost, charges, expenses, etc. thereof failing which we shall be at liberty to take proceedings against the above secured Asset(s)/Immovable Property (ies) under Section 13(4) of the said Act and the applicable Rules not limited to taking possession and selling the secured asset entirely at the risk of the said borrower(s)/co borrower (s)/equal legal Representative(s) at their own cost and consequences.

Please note that as per section 13(13) of the SARFESI Act, all of you are prohibited from transferring by way of sale, lease or otherwise, the aforesaid secured assets without prior written consent of the Bank. Any contravention of the said section by you shall invoke the penal provisions as laid down under section 29 of the SARFESI Act and / or any other legal provision in this regard.

Please note that as per sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, if the dues of Protium Finance Limited (Formerly known as Growth Source Financial Technologies Ltd) together with all costs, charges and expenses incurred by Protium Finance Limited (Formerly known as Growth Source Financial Technologies Ltd) are tendered to Protium Finance Limited (Formerly known as Growth Source Financial Technologies Ltd) at any time before the date fixed for sale or transfer, the secured asset shall not be sold or transferred by Protium Finance Limited (Formerly known as Growth Source Financial Technologies Ltd) and no further step shall be taken by Protium Finance Limited (Formerly known as Growth Source Financial Technologies Ltd) for transfer or sale of that secured asset.

Date: 18.03.2026, Place: Tamil Nadu

Sd/-, For Protium Finance Limited, Authorized Officer

Actor Rajinikanth breaks silence on Aadhav Arjuna remarks, calls it 'untrue'

CHENNAI: Actor Rajinikanth on Tuesday (March 17) issued a statement condemning Aadhav Arjuna, General Secretary (Election Campaign Management) of Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), for making what he described as an "untrue comment" about him. In the statement, Rajinikanth said Aadhav Arjuna had recently made a false remark about him, before expressing gratitude to leaders across parties, including Leader of Opposition Edappadi K Palaniswami, VCK chief Thol Thirumavalavan, PMK's Anbumani Ramadoss, MLA SP Velumani, Tamil Maanila Congress chief GK Vasan, Tamilaga

Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (TMMK) president John Pandian, and Pugazhenthii. He also thanked BJP leaders, including State president Nainar Nagenthran and K Annamalai, along with Union Minister L Murugan and Tamil Nadu Minister Raghupathi. In addition, Rajinikanth thanked members of the film industry, including Ameer and G Dhananjayan, media personalities Nakkheeran Gopal and Rangaraj Pandey, and his fans for their continued support. "Time does not speak but waits and answers. Long live Tamil Nadu! Long live the people of Tamil Nadu! Jai Hind!" he said, while concluding the statement.

Tamil Nadu sees major observer deployment as ECI strengthens election supervision

CHENNAI: Tamil Nadu has emerged as a key focus in the ongoing Legislative Assembly elections, with the Election Commission of India (ECI) deploying a significant number of Central Observers to ensure smooth and transparent polling across the state. Out of the total 1,111 observers deployed nationwide, Tamil Nadu alone accounts for 136 General Observers, 40 Police Observers, and 151 Expenditure Observers, covering all 234 Assembly Constituencies. The high number of Expenditure Observers in particular reflects the Commission's emphasis on strict monitoring of campaign spending and prevention of inducements to voters. The ECI's move is part of a broader effort to guarantee that elections are conducted in a violence-free and inducement-free environ-



ment. Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar has stressed that every voter must be able to cast their vote without fear or favour, with observers acting as the Commission's on-ground representatives to enforce these standards. Observers assigned to Tamil Nadu have been instructed to reach their respective constituencies by March 18, 2026. Once deployed, they will make their contact details public and hold daily meetings with candidates, political party representatives, and citizens to address

complaints and election-related concerns. The deployment is being carried out under Article 324 of the Constitution and relevant provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1951. Officials noted that Tamil Nadu's extensive observatory presence underlines the Commission's intent to ensure close scrutiny and efficient management of the electoral process at every stage. With polling approaching, the enhanced supervisory mechanism is expected to play a crucial role in maintaining electoral integrity across the state.

Jolarpettai signal maintenance to impact Bengaluru, Erode train services



CHENNAI: Southern Railway has announced changes in train services owing to signal maintenance work at Jolarpettai. According to a press release, the MEMU train departing from Bengaluru to Jolarpettai at 8.45 am on March 18, 19, and 24 will operate only up to Somanayakkanpatti. Services between Somanayakkanpatti and Jolarpettai will remain partially cancelled. Similarly, passenger trains leaving Erode for Jolarpettai on the same dates will be short-terminated at Tirupattur. Services between Tirupattur and Jolarpettai will be cancelled. The affected trains will return from their respective short termination points. Meanwhile, the Vande Bharat Express departing from Bengaluru Cantonment to Madurai will leave 45 minutes late on March 18 and 19, departing at 2.15 pm instead of its scheduled 1.30 pm.

Madras High Court order quashes Ramadoss's pre-poll bid to seize party

CHENNAI: In a major setback to Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) founder S Ramadoss in his bid to take over the reins from his son Anbumani, the Madras High Court has refused to vacate the interim stay imposed on the proceedings in a civil suit. In a further blow to the senior politician, the HC directed the civil court to hear all pending matters only after May 10, once the Assembly poll is over, dashing the senior leader's chances ahead of the election. The suit had been instituted before the civil court by Ramadoss seeking an injunction restraining Anbumani from using the name, symbol, and flag of the Pattali Makkal Katchi



(PMK). In response, Anbumani filed an application seeking rejection of the case. Additionally, Vadivel Ramanan, the party's general secretary aligned with Anbumani, moved an application seeking to implead himself as a party.

As no orders were passed on his impleading application, Vadivel Ramanan approached the Madras High Court seeking a stay on the civil court proceedings. The High Court had accordingly granted an interim stay.

Subsequently, Ramadoss filed a petition seeking to vacate the interim stay. When the matter came up for hearing before Justice TV Thamilselvi, counsel appearing for Anbumani asked the courts to refrain from intervening, as the electoral process had commenced.

During the hearing, the HC asked Ramadoss's counsel how the civil court could pass orders after the election schedule had been announced.

Counsel for Ramadoss argued that the dispute was an internal party matter and had no connection with the electoral process. After considering the submissions of both parties, the HC held that any order passed in the present proceedings would have a bearing on the ongoing electoral process. Consequently, the HC declined to vacate the interim stay on the civil court proceedings. Further, it directed that all pending interlocutory applications before the civil court shall also remain stayed, and that the matters be taken up for hearing only after the conclusion of the elections, and post the matter to May 10.

Thoothukudi: Pattinamarudur excavation starts after Budget announcement

THOOTHUKUDI: Archaeological excavation work commenced at Pattinamarudur near Thoothukudi on Tuesday, implementing the State government's 2025-26 Budget announcement to find proof of an ancient trading settlement in the area. A team led by the archaeology department director, Ajaykumar, began work after receiving official clearance. In the first phase, scientific measurements were undertaken to dig trenches approximately 20 metres by 20 metres at identified locations. The work is underway, and steps are being taken to establish an archaeological department



office at the site. The State government had announced the declaration of around 300 acres in Pattinamarudur as an archaeological site and allocated funds in the Budget, signalling its focus on heritage research and site-based development. The excavation marks the operational rollout of that announcement. The move

follows earlier recommendations from the Thoothukudi district administration, which had urged a detailed study of the area based on findings documented by archaeology enthusiast Rajesh Selvarathi. He had identified evidence suggesting Pattinamarudur functioned as an ancient trading settle-

ment, including a rectangular well, burial urns, potsherds, inscriptions, iron objects and marine fossils such as shells. Based on these findings, the district collector had referred the proposal to the archaeology department and also communicated with central authorities. A team of Debasree conducted a field study in January. Rajesh Selvarathi said, "The excavation at Pattinamarudur has begun. This marks a milestone in Tamil Nadu's archaeological history. The artefacts expected to be unearthed will strengthen the preliminary evidence already documented from the surface."

Madras High Court reserves verdict on pleas challenging CCTV tender for TN Assembly polls



CHENNAI: The Madras High Court on Tuesday reserved orders on writ petitions challenging the eligibility criteria in a major surveillance tender floated for the upcoming Tamil Nadu Assembly elections. The case has drawn attention due to concerns that the conditions could restrict fair competition in a high-value public contract. The petitions, filed by Delhi-based Innovatiview India Limited and Chennai-based I-Net

Secure Labs Private Limited, alleged that the tender conditions imposed by the office of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) were excessively stringent and effectively excluded several capable bidders from participating in the process. The case has drawn attention due to concerns that the conditions could restrict fair competition in a high-value public contract. The petitions, filed by Delhi-based Innovatiview India Limited and Chennai-based I-Net Secure Labs Private Limited, alleged that the tender conditions imposed by the office of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) were excessively stringent and effectively excluded several capable bidders from participating in the process.

Quantum Transformation: TiS3 Nanoribbons Become Superconductors Under Pressure



A study has shown that compressing TiS3 nanoribbons transforms them from insulators to superconductors, enabling electricity transmission without energy loss. This discovery opens new possibilities for advancing energy-efficient technologies and material science. According to a study in the journal Nano Letters, compressing nanoribbons made of titanium and sulfur can significantly alter their properties, transforming them into materials capable of conducting electricity without energy loss. The authors have made the discovery during their painstaking search for new materials that can transmit electricity without loss of energy, a hot topic

that has for long haunted the scientific community. "Our research focuses on one such promising material: TiS3 nanoribbons, which are tiny, ribbon-like structures made of titanium and sulfur. In their natural state, TiS3 nanoribbons act as insulators, meaning they do not conduct electricity well," says Mahmoud Rabie Abdel-Hafez, an associate professor at University of Sharjah's Department of Applied Physics and Astronomy. "However, we discovered that by applying pressure to these nanoribbons, we could change their electrical properties dramatically," adds Abdel-Hafez, who is the study's main author. Experimental Findings

The scientists exposed TiS3 to gradual pressure. As they increased the pressure, they found that the TiS3 system underwent a series of transitions, from being insulators to becoming metals and superconductors, for the first time. TiS3 materials are known to work as good insulators, but it is the first time scientists have discovered that under pressure they can function as superconductors, paving the way for the development of superconducting materials. (A) Temperature-pressure phase diagram of TiS3. (B) Photograph and SEM image of quasi-1D microstructure. Credit: Nano Letters (2024). [https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.](https://doi.org/10.1021/acs)

nanolett.4c00824 "Superconductors are special because they can conduct electricity with zero energy loss, which is incredibly valuable for technological applications," says Abdel-Hafez. "[But] imagine a world where electrical power could be transmitted without any energy being wasted as heat. This would revolutionize how we use and distribute electricity, making everything from power grids to electronic devices far more efficient." It is exactly this potential which the authors tout as a breakthrough: the potential of TiS3 to turn into materials causing no waste when transmitting electricity. By carefully controlling the pressure applied to these materials, the authors identified the exact points where they changed from one state to another. "This is significant because understanding these transitions helps us learn how to manipulate other materials in similar ways, bringing us closer to discovering or designing new superconductors that can operate at higher temperatures and more practical conditions," notes Abdel-Hafez.

The study shows that TiS3 has the potential to become such materials when subjected to the right conditions. By gradually increasing the pressure on the investigated materials, the authors observed that they transitioned from being insulators (poor conductors) to metals (good conductors) and finally to superconductors (perfect conductors with no energy loss). Discovering that TiS3 materials can become superconductors under pressure is certain to help scientists understand more about the conditions required for superconductivity. This knowledge is crucial for developing new materials that might be superconductors at higher, more practical temperatures, the authors maintain. Collaborative Efforts and Future Prospects "This research not only enhances our understanding of

superconductivity but also demonstrates the power of international collaboration in achieving groundbreaking scientific results," affirms Sweden's Uppsala University Professor of Physics and Astronomy, a co-author. The project is part of the University of Sharjah's research quest to develop materials that can transmit electricity without energy loss, offering new insights into how pressure can transform the electrical properties of TiS3 nanoribbons.

EASTERN RAILWAY
Bid No. GEM/2026/07/360559 Dated: 16.03.2026. Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer/BGB, Carriage & Wagon Workshop, Eastern Railway, Liliuh, Howrah-711204 invites E-Tenders for the following work: **Item Category:** Custom Bid for Services - Mechanized Cleaning of Liliuh Railway Colony as per scope of work. **Similar Category:** • Facility Management Service - Outcome Based; • Cleaning, Sanitation and Disinfection Service - Outcome Based; **Office Name:** Carriage And Wagon Workshop Liliuh. **Bid End Date & Time:** 06.04.2026, 15:00:00; **Bid Opening Date & Time:** 06.04.2026, 15:30:00; **Bid Offer Validity (from End Date):** 90 (Days); **Contract Period:** 3 Year(s); **Minimum Average Annual Turnover of the Bidder (For 3 Years):** 181 Lakh(s); **Years of Past Experience Required for same/similar Service :** 1 Year(s); **Past Experience of Similar Service required:** Yes; **MSE Relaxation for years of Experience and Turnover:** No; **Startup Relaxation for years of Experience and Turnover :** No; **Document required from seller:** Experience Criteria, Bidder Turnover, Certificate (Requested in ATC). "In case any bidder is seeking exemption from Experience/Turnover Criteria, the supporting documents to prove his eligibility for exemption must be uploaded for evaluation by the buyer; **Type of Bid:** Two Packet Bid; **Time allowed for Technical Clarifications during technical evaluation:** 2 Days; **Estimated Bid Value :** ₹ 3,60,55,108.45; **EMD Details:** **Advisory Bank:** State Bank of India; **EMD Amount:** ₹ 3,30,280.00; **ePBG Details:** **Advisory Bank:** State Bank of India; **ePBG Percentage (%) :** 5.00; **Duration of ePBG Required (Months) :** 38. **Tender Notice is also available at websites :** www.indianrailways.gov.in / www.treps.gov.in **Follow us at :** @EasternRailway @easternrailwayheadquarter

Suryoday Small Finance Bank Limited
 Regd. & Corp. office: 1101, Sharda Terraces, Plot 65, Sector - 11, CBD Belapur, Navi Mumbai - 400614. CIN: L5923MH2008PLC261472.
 Under Section 13 (2) of The Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002
 Whereas the undersigned is the Authorised officer of the M/s. Suryoday Small Finance Bank Ltd. ("SSFBL") under Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(2) read with Rule 3 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued Demand Notices under Section 13(2) of the said Act, calling upon the following Borrower(s), Co-Borrower(s), Guarantor(s) to discharge in full their liability to the Company by making payment of entire outstanding including up to date interest, cost and charges within 60 days from the date of respective Notices issued and the publication of the Notice as given below and as way of alternate service upon you. As security for due repayment of the loan, the following Secured Asset (s) have been mortgaged to SSFBL by the said Borrower(s), Co-Borrower(s), Guarantor(s) respectively.

Name of Borrower / Co-Borrower/ Guarantor	Date of Demand Notice	06.02.2026
237000017596, 1. MR. KISHORE KUMAR	Date of NPA	03.02.2026
TAMILSELVAN S/O DHANDAPANI TAMILSELVAN, 2. MRS. V. KALPANADEV VELUSAMY W/O KISHORE KUMAR TAMILSELVAN, 3. SRI KARANA TRADING ASSOCIATES THROUGH ITS PROPRIETOR KISHORE KUMAR TAMILSELVAN	Total Outstanding Amount in Rs.	Rs. 38,45,411.79/- as on 05.02.2026

Description of Secured Asset(s) Immovable Property (ies) : All That Piece And Parcel Of Land And Building Bearing In Door No.201, Plot No.20, Old T.S.No.91/3, At Present New T.S.No.91/3(part, Ward 4 For An Total Extent Of 1575 Square Feet Situated At Valliyammal Layout, Keapa Polachi Town, Polachi Taluk, Pollachi Sub Registration District, Previously Tiruppur Registration District, Now Coimbatore South Registration District, Being Bounded On The North Of: 30 Feet East West Road, South Of: Plot No.20 Krishnaveni Land, East Of: Plot No.21, West Of: Plot No. 19, Measurement: North-East West-35 Feet, South-East West-35 Feet, East-South North-45 Feet, West-South North-45 Feet, Total Extent Of 1575 Sq. Feet, With All Easements Rights And Pathway. The Property Is Situated As Per Tsr Ward D Polachi, Block 33, T.S.No.2224, At Valliyammal Layout.

Place : Coimbatore **Authorised Officer**
Date : 18.03.2026 **Suryoday Small Finance Bank Limited**

Protium
 (Formerly known as Growth Source Financial Technologies Ltd.)
 Registered & Corporate Office Address: 7th Floor, Block B2, Phase - 1 Nirton Knowledge Park, Pahadi Village, Off. Western Express Highway, Cama Industrial Estate, Goregaon(E), Mumbai-400063, Maharashtra.
SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES
E-auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.
 Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower / Co-Borrower/ Mortgagee (s) that the below described immovable properties mortgaged to the Secured Creditor, the Symbolic Possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Protium Finance Ltd. and the same shall be referred herein after as Protium Finance Ltd. The Secured Assets will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" basis through E-Auction. It is hereby informed to General public that we are going to conduct public E-Auction through website <http://bankauctions.in/>.

1. Account Number	GS134EEL246365
2. Name of Borrower, Co-Borrower/ Mortgagees	(A) Umra Foot Wear Through Its Proprietor Siraj Sabther Ali K A S/o Abdulalam (B) Ruhana Thasveen A B W/o Siraj Sabther Ali K A (C) Siraj Sabther Ali K A S/o Abdulalam All Having Address At: VPS Garden Vethupalayam, Mangalam Post Office, Mangalam, Tamil Nadu 641663. Also At- Number 2 Umra Complex Mangalam Palladam Tiruppur, 641663, Tamil Nadu, Tamil Nadu 641663. Also At- Site Number 327 1A1 Site Number 40 VPS Nagar Vethupalayam Mangalam Tiruppur South Tiruppur Tamil Nadu 641663, Tamil Nadu 641663.
3. Date of Demand Notice	17th Sep 2025
4. Amount as per Demand Notice U/s 13(2)	Rs. 32,80,272.69 /- (Thirty Two Lakh Eighty Thousand Two Hundred Seventy Two Rupees and Sixty Nine Paise Only)
5. Date of Symbolic Possession	9th Jan 2026
6. Amount as on date	Rs. 3550461.97/- (Rupees Thirty-five lakh fifty thousand four hundred and sixty-one and paise nine seven only)
7. Descriptions Of The Immovable Property/Properties:	In Tiruppur Registration District, Tiruppur Joint 1 Subregistration District, Tiruppur South Taluk, Mangalam Village, In S.No.327 New S.No.327/1A1/1 Land Measuring Phc 6.53.0 PAC.16.12 At Rs.22,19 One Part Pac.2.26 Of Land Was Converted Into Land And Named As Vps Nagar In This Site No.40, Was Bounded As Follows: Boundaries: South: Of 20 Ft Wide East To West Road; North: Of Site No.35; West: Of Land Belonging To Ganesh; East: Of Site No.39; In This Middle: East West On Both Sides 23 Ft North South On Both Sides 59 Ft Admeasuring 1357 Sq Ft Or 126.0653 Sq.mtr Of Land With R.C Building, Doors, Windows, Electricity Connection, Water Connection And Both Deposits, All The Fittings, And Usual Rights To Roads And Common Pathways Etc., Further Having Mamool Road And East To West Itteri Road To Walk And Ply Vehicles To Reach The Above Said Property. (Title Doc No. 774/2022)
8. Reserve Price	Rs. 26,17,380/- (Rupees Twenty-six lakh seventeen thousand three hundred eighty only)
9. Earnest Money Deposit	Rs. 2,61,738/- (Rupees Two Lakh Sixty-One Thousand Seven Hundred Thirty Eight Only)
10. Bid Increment Amount (In Rs.)	Rs. 5,000/-
11. E-Auction Date and Time	07th April 2026 at 11:00 am to 2:00 PM (with unlimited extension of 5 min each)
12. EMD Submission Last Date	06th April 2026 up to 5:00 PM
13. Inspection Date	25 March-2026 BETWEEN 11:00 AM TO 5:00 PM

1. All interested participants / bidders are requested to visit the website <https://bankauctions.in> & <https://protium.co.in/> For details, help, procedure and online training on e-auction, prospective bidders may contact Mr. Nilesh D Pawar Contact number: 814200725 / 814200066 email: nitesh@bankauctions.in, info@bankauctions.in & For further details on terms and conditions please visit <https://bankauctions.in> & <https://protium.co.in/> to take part in e-auction
 * THIS IS ALSO A STATUTORY 15 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER RULE 8(6)/ Rule 9 (1) OF SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES,2002
Date: 18.03.2026 **Sd/-, For Protium Finance Limited**
Place: TAMIL NADU **Authorised Officer**

EDITORIAL

Why A TVK-NDA Alliance Is Just A BJP Fantasy

Over the past week, speculation around a possible alliance between Vijay's Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has dominated the political chatter in Tamil Nadu. But even at first glance, the idea has always seemed more fantasy than feasible strategy. The BJP has certainly done its part to keep the conversation alive. A noticeably softer stance towards Vijay following the Karur episode and repeated public statements about "keeping doors open" also pointed to a calibrated effort by the party. The transfer of the stampede case to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) also led to the impression of Vijay being in the grip of the Centre.

It All Makes Sense...On Paper

The calculations are tempting. A consolidation of anti-DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) votes - currently split between the TVK and the AIADMK (All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) - could, in theory, tilt the scales decisively. However, the leaders of the parties and their objectives mean that this could be a long shot, even if not an impossible one, pre-poll. Start with the AIADMK. Under Edappadi K. Palaniswami, Leader of the Opposition and former Chief Minister, the party cannot afford to cede leadership. Doing so would be tantamount to political self-destruction. Tamil Nadu's electoral history has long been defined by a bipolar contest between the DMK and the AIADMK. To surrender that position is to risk irrelevance.

Then there is Vijay. His political appeal is built entirely around himself as the central figure - he is the leader voters are meant to rally behind. He has explicitly framed his campaign in those terms, even declaring that he is effectively "the candidate in all 234 constituencies". This is not the language of compromise. Vijay cannot play second fiddle - not to Palaniswami, and certainly not within a coalition led by the BJP. His politics demands primacy. If these two factors explain why a TVK-AIADMK alliance has failed to materialise, the third obstacle is the BJP itself. Aligning with a national party carries electoral risks for Vijay, particularly among minority voters, who make up a significant share of Tamil Nadu's electorate. More importantly, such a move would hand the DMK a powerful narrative weapon - reinforcing its longstanding claim of being the sole defender of Tamil identity and state autonomy against the Centre. These are not minor tactical disagreements; they are structural incompatibilities rooted in the core political identities of all three players.

Reality Is Much More Complex

Yes, surveys suggest that the TVK could command close to 20% of the vote. On paper, adding that to the NDA's base makes for a formidable base - perhaps even enough for a sweep. But elections are not spreadsheets. Ground realities are fluid, and voter behaviour rarely aligns neatly with hypothetical projections. There is also growing speculation that the TVK could emerge as the principal challenger to the DMK, potentially displacing the AIADMK as the number-two force in the state. But this, too, remains uncertain. While Vijay's popularity is undeniable - arguably unmatched in Tamil Nadu today - translating star power into sustained electoral success is an entirely different challenge. Add to that the undercurrents of anti-incumbency against the DMK, and the electoral landscape becomes even more unpredictable. Tamil Nadu And Pre-Poll Alliances Of course, politics is no stranger to unlikely alliances. But such "strange bedfellows" typically emerge after elections, when numbers dictate necessity. Pre-poll alliances, especially in a state like Tamil Nadu, require ideological alignment, leadership clarity, and voter coherence, none of which exists in this case.

In Numbers: The Curious Reason Iran Eased Down Its 'Drone Swarms' After March 9

The recent Iranian strike campaign against the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has largely been viewed through images of drones striking skyscrapers and residential buildings. But it can also be understood through the dataset emerging from daily interception reports. Beginning on February 28, Iranian forces have launched nearly 1,800 drones and missiles towards the UAE, according to compiled data and interception timelines based on the daily releases shared by the UAE's Ministry of Defence. While interception rates remained high and protected key locations, a closer examination of the data reveals a structured operational campaign. The pattern suggests that Iran's objective was not necessarily infrastructure destruction but imposing economic and operational strain on advanced air-defence networks. Based on the data compiled, we can bucket the strike pattern broadly into three distinct phases: an initial saturation attack, a sustained drone attrition campaign, and a sudden decline in attack intensity.

Phase 1: Shock Saturation
The campaign opened with massive waves of projectiles on February 28 and March 1. On February 28, approximately 346 incoming drones and missiles were detected, including 137 ballistic missiles and more than 200 drones. The following day saw an even larger wave of 362 projectiles, the highest of the campaign. This opening phase bears the hallmarks of reconnaissance-by-fire, a tactic used to map defensive systems by forcing them to respond. Large multi-weapon combinations can force the defending nation to activate radars,

Phase 2: The Drone Swarm Campaign
After the initial shock phase, the nature of the attacks changed. Between March 2 and March 8, the number of incoming threats stabilised at roughly 120-160 projectiles per day. However, the composition shifted dramatically toward drones. Across this period, drones accounted for nearly 90% of incoming threats, while ballistic missile launches dropped to single digits on most days. This shift reveals the core logic of the campaign: drone swarm saturation. Iranian Shahed-type drones are relatively inexpensive compared with the sophisticated air-defence missiles used to inter-

Phase 3: Sudden Drop in Attack Intensity
The campaign entered a third phase with an abrupt decline



cept them. Estimates place the cost of these drones at roughly USD 20,000 to USD 50,000 per unit, while the defending interceptor missiles can cost USD 3-6 million for Patriot systems and up to USD 12 million for THAAD interceptors. This asymmetry forms the economic centre of the strategy. Analysts estimate that Iran spent USD 11-27 million producing the drones used in one wave of attacks, while the defending side spent hundreds of millions of dollars on interceptors to destroy them. Across the broader campaign, the UAE may have spent between USD 1.45 billion and USD 2.28 billion on air-defence responses, compared to USD 177 million to USD 360 million worth of Iranian drones and missiles. In other words, the defender may have spent five to 10 times more money defending than the attacker spent attacking.

deploy interceptors, and thereby reveal its response patterns. The heavy use of ballistic missiles in this opening phase is particularly notable. Ballistic weapons are one of the most valuable assets in Iran's repertoire and their early deployment served both a psychological and operational purpose.

cept them. Estimates place the cost of these drones at roughly USD 20,000 to USD 50,000 per unit, while the defending interceptor missiles can cost USD 3-6 million for Patriot systems and up to USD 12 million for THAAD interceptors. This asymmetry forms the economic centre of the strategy. Analysts estimate that Iran spent USD 11-27 million producing the drones used in one wave of attacks, while the defending side spent hundreds of millions of dollars on interceptors to destroy them. Across the broader campaign, the UAE may have spent between USD 1.45 billion and USD 2.28 billion on air-defence responses, compared to USD 177 million to USD 360 million worth of Iranian drones and missiles. In other words, the defender may have spent five to 10 times more money defending than the attacker spent attacking.

cept them. Estimates place the cost of these drones at roughly USD 20,000 to USD 50,000 per unit, while the defending interceptor missiles can cost USD 3-6 million for Patriot systems and up to USD 12 million for THAAD interceptors. This asymmetry forms the economic centre of the strategy. Analysts estimate that Iran spent USD 11-27 million producing the drones used in one wave of attacks, while the defending side spent hundreds of millions of dollars on interceptors to destroy them. Across the broader campaign, the UAE may have spent between USD 1.45 billion and USD 2.28 billion on air-defence responses, compared to USD 177 million to USD 360 million worth of Iranian drones and missiles. In other words, the defender may have spent five to 10 times more money defending than the attacker spent attacking.

cept them. Estimates place the cost of these drones at roughly USD 20,000 to USD 50,000 per unit, while the defending interceptor missiles can cost USD 3-6 million for Patriot systems and up to USD 12 million for THAAD interceptors. This asymmetry forms the economic centre of the strategy. Analysts estimate that Iran spent USD 11-27 million producing the drones used in one wave of attacks, while the defending side spent hundreds of millions of dollars on interceptors to destroy them. Across the broader campaign, the UAE may have spent between USD 1.45 billion and USD 2.28 billion on air-defence responses, compared to USD 177 million to USD 360 million worth of Iranian drones and missiles. In other words, the defender may have spent five to 10 times more money defending than the attacker spent attacking.

cept them. Estimates place the cost of these drones at roughly USD 20,000 to USD 50,000 per unit, while the defending interceptor missiles can cost USD 3-6 million for Patriot systems and up to USD 12 million for THAAD interceptors. This asymmetry forms the economic centre of the strategy. Analysts estimate that Iran spent USD 11-27 million producing the drones used in one wave of attacks, while the defending side spent hundreds of millions of dollars on interceptors to destroy them. Across the broader campaign, the UAE may have spent between USD 1.45 billion and USD 2.28 billion on air-defence responses, compared to USD 177 million to USD 360 million worth of Iranian drones and missiles. In other words, the defender may have spent five to 10 times more money defending than the attacker spent attacking.

Incoming threats fell sharply:

March 8: 134
March 9: 93
March 10: 27
March 11: 52
March 12: 36

Several factors could explain this shift. One possibility is that launch infrastructure was disrupted, either through airstrikes or covert operations targeting Iranian launch sites and drone facilities, which we have seen happen. Another is that the early waves depleted forward-positioned drone stocks, forcing a temporary pause while logistics were reorganised. A third possibility is strategic restraint. Iran may have sought to demonstrate its ability to sustain drone pressure without triggering a wider regional war.

Defensive Performance

Despite all this, the UAE's defensive systems appear to have performed effectively. Across most days of the cam-

aign, interception rates remained between 95 and 99%, based on the data compiled here, suggesting the successful operation of a layered defence network likely involving systems such as THAAD, Patriot PAC-3, and shorter-range anti-drone defences. But, incoming projectiles will penetrate. Around 60 projectiles did penetrate and strike the UAE territory or nearby areas, representing a penetration rate of approximately 3-4%. In the context of things, this is a strong defensive outcome.

The Temporary Dip in Interception Rates

One of the more interesting signals in the data appears later in the campaign. On March 9 and March 10, the UAE's interception rates dipped to roughly 88%, the lowest levels recorded during the attack window, even if the absolute number of successful penetrations remained relatively small (the UAE's defence ministry stopped publishing interception rate data after March 11).

A Humbled Donald Trump Is Now 'Demanding' Help From Friends

US President Donald Trump's attempt to mobilise a broad-based multinational naval coalition to secure the Strait of Hormuz reflects a familiar tension in contemporary geopolitics: the gap between American expectations of burden-sharing and the willingness of partners to assume risk in crises not of their making. Despite Washington's sustained exhortations - directed at key energy-dependent actors such as Japan, South Korea, European NATO members, and even China - there has been little by way of tangible response. No meaningful allied naval deployments have materialised. This hesitation is not accidental; it is rooted in both strategic calculation and political discomfort.



Iran's Calculated Moves
Iran, for its part, has avoided the escalatory optics of a formal blockade while effectively transforming the Strait into a selective chokepoint. By allowing relatively unhindered passage to countries it does not view as hostile - such as China, India, and Turkey - while complicating transit for US-aligned states through asymmetric tactics, Tehran has engineered a calibrated disruption. The result is a partial paralysis of a waterway that carries nearly a fifth of global oil flows. This has driven up prices and disproportionately burdened Western economies. Against this backdrop, Trump's emphasis on burden-sharing appears less a strategic innovation and more a necessity born of constraint. His argument, that countries reliant on Gulf energy should "protect their own interests", has been framed in transactional terms. Yet this framing has failed to resonate. Instead, it has reinforced perceptions of

an America seeking to externalise the costs of a crisis it helped precipitate. The reluctance of partners is also tied to the origins of the confrontation. The strikes against Iran - undertaken by the United States and Israel - were not preceded by extensive coalition-building or diplomatic groundwork. Consequently, many allies interpret the unfolding situation as a narrowly conceived strategic venture rather than a collective security challenge. European capitals, including Berlin and Paris, have been explicit in distancing themselves, underscoring that this is not a NATO mandate.

A Risk-Riddled Sea

Operational realities further compound the problem. The Strait of Hormuz is not merely a transit corridor; it is a highly contested maritime environment where Iran's asymmetric capabilities - mines, drones, missiles, and fast-attack craft - can impose high costs. For many states, the prospect of deploying high-value naval assets into what could quickly become a "kill zone" is strategically untenable, particularly in the absence of overwhelming force or a clear political objective. Domestic politics also matters. In countries like Japan

and South Korea, heavy dependence on imported energy has not translated into strategic assertiveness. Instead, it has heightened sensitivities about entanglement in external conflicts. Public opinion remains cautious, if not outright resistant, to military involvement. European governments, still shaped by the legacies of prolonged interventions, are similarly disinclined towards escalation. Despite its deep energy stakes in the Gulf, China, too, has shown little appetite for alignment with the US-led initiative. Participation would not only risk entanglement in a volatile theatre but also signal strategic convergence with Washington at a time of intensifying rivalry.

Demanding, Not Asking For Help

Trump's rhetorical approach has arguably aggravated these structural constraints. Public admonitions about the "ingratitude" of allies, warnings of consequences for NATO, and ultimatums directed at partners have produced defensiveness rather than solidarity. In international politics, coercive persuasion rarely substitutes for prior consensus-building. Iran, meanwhile, has exploited these fissures with

notable dexterity. By ensuring that not all stakeholders are equally affected, it has reduced the incentive for collective action. Those less impacted see little reason to incur risks to restore flows that primarily benefit Western economies. What emerges is a picture of strategic misalignment. The US seeks coalition support for a crisis shaped by its own unilateral choices, while its partners weigh costs, risks, and political optics - and largely opt for caution. Trump's optimism about eventual support sits uneasily with the reality that, without a shift in approach, the burden will remain disproportionately American. In that sense, this episode underscores a broader lesson: coalition-building cannot be improvised in the midst of a crisis. It requires prior legitimacy, shared ownership, and a clear articulation of common stakes - elements that, in this instance, appear to be in short supply. Other major aviation hubs within the UAE also experienced disruption. Abu Dhabi International Airport saw traffic fall to roughly half of normal levels at certain points, while Al Maktoum International Airport experienced traffic fluctuations as flights were diverted.

THE SHADOW OF A TRUMAN MOMENT IN THE IRAN WAR

Wars often produce moments when leaders feel compelled to seek a decisive stroke that will end the conflict once and for all. History shows that such moments can generate choices that would have seemed unthinkable only months earlier. When Harry S. Truman authorised the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, the decision emerged from precisely such wartime pressures. As the conflict involving the United States, Israel and Iran intensifies today, the world must ensure that a similar moment of desperate calculation does not arise again. The lesson of that moment in history is not that such weapons can end wars, but that once the logic of escalation begins to dominate wartime decision-making, even the most unthinkable options can enter the realm of strategic calculation. The mere possibility that such debates could arise is reason enough for policymakers everywhere to approach the present conflict with extreme caution. An Unravelling War

As the war drags on, both Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu will face mounting pressure to produce decisive results. Wars rarely remain confined to their original scope once expectations of rapid victory begin to fade. Political leaders must demonstrate progress, military planners search for breakthroughs, and public narratives increasingly revolve around the need for a conclusive outcome. In this environment, media speculation about "exit strategies" or "off-ramps" for Washington can unintentionally increase pressure on decision-makers. Even well-intentioned commentary can shape the cli-



mate in which leaders make decisions, potentially nudging them toward harder, more dramatic actions.

The Nuclear Threat Is Very Much There

Neither the United States nor Israel lacks the technological capability associated with advanced nuclear arsenals. The nuclear arsenals of advanced powers today are far more sophisticated than the devices used in 1945. While their existence is intended primarily as deterrence, prolonged wars have historically forced strategic communities to examine every available option. Even the discussion of such possibilities is deeply unsettling, yet ignoring the pressures that produce such debates can be dangerous.

A Leader Challenged?

For that reason, policymakers and societies on all sides must recognise the full range of choices that prolonged wars can place before leaders. For Iran's leadership and its wider strategic community, absorbing this reality may be essential if catastrophic escalation is to be avoided. From Tehran's perspective, the conflict may well be seen as existential. Yet history also shows that wars

framed as existential struggles can generate the most dangerous strategic decisions. The intellectual climate in Washington has also evolved. A number of influential voices in Washington now argue that the United States has become excessively risk-averse and that restoring global credibility requires a more assertive posture. Such arguments reflect a broader shift toward the language of renewed deterrence and strategic competition. Yet this very logic can make it politically harder for leaders to conclude conflicts without visible demonstrations of strength.

The 1945 Atomic Bombing

The outcome of this conflict will also be watched closely by other major powers. In 1945, the atomic decision was shaped not only by the desire to end a brutal war but also by the strategic message it sent to rival states observing the emergence of a new geopolitical era. Today, other significant powers will similarly draw lessons from how the United States manages both the conduct and the conclusion of this conflict. This is why cool judgment is essential at this stage of the war. Whether the origi-

nal decision to go to war was wise or ill-advised is now largely beside the point. Once a conflict has begun, the overriding priority must be to prevent escalation into something far more dangerous.

India's Unique Position

In such moments, the international system can benefit from the quiet diplomacy of actors that retain a degree of strategic autonomy. Among emerging nations, India stands out as a major emerging power in this regard. Despite its energy dependence on the Gulf and deep economic engagement with the United States, India has consistently demonstrated a capacity to maintain independent channels of communication across geopolitical divides.

This unique positioning may allow New Delhi to explore, discreetly and without public fanfare, avenues for de-escalation with Washington, Tel Aviv and Tehran alike. At moments of heightened tension in international politics, the world sometimes requires what might be called an "adult in the room": a state capable of engaging all sides while remaining aligned exclusively with none.

IRAN HITS KEY UAE OIL PORT AND DUBAI AIRPORT

AGENCY
Tehran: The United Arab Emirates' (UAE) biggest port and oil storage facility, Fujairah, and Dubai's international airport have come under further drone attacks as Iran continues to target Gulf transport and oil infrastructure. Flights were temporarily suspended on Monday after a fire broke out near the airport after a "drone-related incident". A fire also raged after a drone attack on the strategically important port and industrial zone at Fujairah, one of the largest oil storage facilities in the region. And a rocket attack on a car killed a Palestinian national on the outskirts of the UAE capital, Abu Dhabi, the city's Media Office reported. The attack occurred in the Al Bahria area, it said. UAE air defence systems intercepted six ballistic missiles and 21 drones on Monday, the Defence Ministry said. Iran has launched over 1,900 missiles and drones at the UAE since the start of the war near Dubai's airport, which is the world's busiest for international pas-



sengers. Some flights were delayed, while others were cancelled altogether, in another hit to the UAE's image of safety and stability. The country's energy sector came under attack as a drone hit an oil storage tanker on Saturday, and another drone hit the oil facilities on Monday, causing a fire. Oil loading activities at the port were halted for a time while damage assessments were carried out. Fujairah sits on the UAE's eastern coast, on the Gulf of Oman - rather than the Persian Gulf - and so vessels do not need to navigate the Strait of Hormuz to reach it. The location means

the port plays a "crucial" role in "helping keep global supplies moving" when the Strait of Hormuz is blocked by Iran, Dubai-based Justin Harper, editor of CEO Middle East - who regularly speaks to Dubai's oil industry executives - told the BBC. "If tensions with Iran disrupt the chokepoint, the UAE can still export oil through Fujairah via pipelines from the oilfields in Abu Dhabi," he said. The port city is "ideally placed to bypass the Strait of Hormuz", said Dubai-based oil analyst Matt Stanley, who works for commodities data provider Kpler. "The UAE's state oil

company Adnoc have their oil tankers there, it is crude grade oil which is what the Asian buyers want. "Iran hitting a storage tanker and oil facilities at Fujairah "shows the vulnerability of Gulf infrastructure", Stanley told the BBC. "Iran wants to disrupt the flow of energy". The port city is close to India and the "first stop out of the Middle East on the way to Singapore and China", Stanley said. "Fujairah is on the old Silk Road, the maritime route, and it picked up a lot of business bunkering - that is providing fuel, food, water - for container ships that have

Highlights

■ The United Arab Emirates' (UAE) biggest port and oil storage facility, Fujairah, and Dubai's international airport have come under further drone attacks as Iran continues to target Gulf transport and oil infrastructure.

been at sea for 25 or 30 days." Fujairah is like a "huge vending machine" for ships, Stanley added. Despite the attacks on Dubai, Harper says the business community there is "resilient". Restaurants have been offering deals to get people back into restaurants and "the malls still seem to be busy". People "underestimate Dubai and its ability to survive a downturn", he added. Last week the UAE's Minister of State Lana Nusseibeh vowed in a BBC interview that her country would "bounce back" from the conflict, insisting that its economy was "resilient".

ISUZU MOTORS INDIA ANNOUNCES NATIONWIDE 'ISUZU I-CARE PRE-SUMMER CAMP'



AGENCY
Chennai, 17 Mar 2026: In a constant endeavour to reaffirm ISUZU's commitment to provide best service and ownership experience, Isuzu Motors India will be conducting a nation-wide 'ISUZU I-Care Pre-Summer Camp' for its range of ISUZU D-MAX Pick-ups and SUVs. This service camp is aimed at offering customers exciting benefits and preventive maintenance checks for a hassle-free driving experience during the season across the country. An initiative of 'ISUZU Care', the pre-summer camp will be organised across all ISUZU authorised dealer service outlets, between 23rd - 28th March 2026 (both days inclu-

sive). During this period, customers can also avail special offers & benefits for their vehicles. The Pre-Summer Camp will be organised at all authorised service facilities of ISUZU located in Agra, Ahilyanagar, Ahmedabad, Ambikapur, Anantapur, Baramulla, Bareilly, Barmer, Baruch, Bathinda, Bengaluru, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Bikaner, Bilaspur, Calicut, Chatrapathi Sambhaji Nagar, Chennai, Chikkamagaluru, Coimbatore, Dhule, Delhi, Dibrugarh, Dimapur, Durgapur, Ernakulam, Gandhidham, Gorakhpur, Gurugram, Guwahati, Howrah, Hubballi,

Hyderabad, Indore (2), Jaigaon, Jaipur, Jalandhar, Jammu, Jodhpur, Kadapa, Kalaburagi, Karnal, Kayamkulam, Khammam, Kolhapur, Kolkata, Kottayam, Kurnool, Latur, LB Nagar (Hyderabad), Leh, Lucknow, Ludhiana, Madurai, Mandi, Mangaluru, Mehsana, Mohali, Mumbai (Nerul & Borivali), Mundra, Mysuru, Nagpur, Nasik, Nellore, Nizamabad, Noida, Patna, Pune, Raipur, Rajahmundry, Rajkot, Ratnagiri, Satara, Shivamogga, Sikar, Siliguri, Solapur, Surat, Theni, Thrissur, Tirunelveli, Tirupati, Trichy, Thiruvananthapuram, Vadodara, Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam.

AI FIRM ANTHROPIC SEEKS WEAPONS EXPERT TO STOP USERS FROM 'MISUSE'

The US artificial intelligence (AI) firm Anthropic is looking to hire a chemical weapons and high-yield explosives expert to try to prevent "catastrophic misuse" of its software. In other words, it fears that its AI tools might tell someone how to make chemical or radioactive weapons, and wants an expert to ensure its guardrails are sufficiently robust. In the LinkedIn recruitment post, the firm says applicants should have a minimum of five years experience in "chemical weapons and/or explosives defence" as well as knowledge of "radiological dispersal devices" - also known as dirty bombs. The firm told the BBC the role was similar to jobs in other sensitive areas that it has already created. Anthropic is not the only AI firm adopting this strategy. A similar position has been advertised by ChatGPT developer OpenAI. On its careers website, it lists a job vacancy for a researcher in "biological and chemical risks", with a salary of up to \$455,000 (£335,000), almost double



that offered by Anthropic. But some experts are alarmed by the risks of this approach, warning that it gives AI tools information about weapons - even if they have been instructed not to use it. "Is it ever safe to use AI systems to handle sensitive chemicals and explosives information, including dirty bombs and other radiological weapons?" said Dr Stephanie Hare, tech researcher and co-presenter of the BBC's AI Decoded TV programme. "There is no

international treaty or other regulation for this type of work and the use of AI with these types of weapons. All of this is happening out of sight." The AI industry has continuously warned about the potential existential threats posed by its technology, but there has been no attempt to slow down its progress. The issue has gained urgency as the US government calls on AI firms while launching war in Iran and military operations in Venezuela.

Anthropic is taking legal action against the US Department of Defence, which designated it a supply chain risk when the firm insisted its systems must not be used in either fully autonomous weapons or mass surveillance of Americans. Anthropic co-founder Dario Amodei wrote in February that he didn't think the technology was good enough yet, and should not be used for these purposes. The White House said the US military would not be governed by tech companies. The risk label puts the US company in the same boat as the Chinese telecoms firm Huawei, which was similarly blacklisted over different national security concerns. OpenAI said it agreed with Anthropic's position but then negotiated its own contract with the US government, which it says has not yet begun. Anthropic's AI assistant, called Claude, has not yet been phased out, and is currently still embedded in systems provided by Palantir and being deployed by the US in the US-Israel Iran war.

INFOSYS STOCK HIT 6-YEAR LOW, MARKET VALUATION DROPS BELOW RS 5 TRILLION

AGENCY
Mumbai, March 17: Shares of Infosys came under sharp selling pressure on Tuesday, with the stock hitting an over six-year low during intra-day trade. The stock slipped as much as 3 per cent to Rs 1,215.15 on the BSE, falling below its previous low of Rs 1,215.45 recorded in April 2023. This marks its weakest level since December 2020. The recent fall has been significant. So far in calendar year 2026, Infosys shares have declined around 25 per cent, much steeper than the 11.4 per cent drop seen in the Nifty 50. The correction reflects growing concerns over the company's revenue growth outlook amid an uncertain demand environment. The sharp decline in share price has also eroded the company's market value. During the session, Infosys' market capitalisation slipped below Rs 5 trillion, touching around Rs 4.93 trillion. However, by afternoon trade at around 1:35 PM, the stock recovered slightly to Rs 1,234, down 1.3 per cent from its previous close, with market capitali-



sation hovering near the Rs 5 trillion mark. In last five days, the shares have delivered a negative return of 4.69 per cent to its investors. In past month, the stock tumbled over 11.3 per cent. In last six months, the shares dropped nearly 19 per cent. On year-to-date (YTD) basis, Infosys fell more than 24 per cent. However, in last one year, the drop is nearly in the same range with dropping over 22.5 per cent. Meanwhile, the company has scheduled a board meeting on April 22 and 23, 2026. During the meeting, the board will consider and approve the audited financial results for the quarter

and full financial year ended March 31, 2026. It will also discuss the recommendation of a final dividend for the financial year. By 12:40 pm, at intra-day lows, all Nifty IT constituents extended losses, with several frontline names witnessing sharp declines on the NSE. Persistent Systems fell around 3 per cent to Rs 4,496.70, while Wipro dropped 3.5 per cent to Rs 188.25. Coforge emerged as the top loser, plunging 6.7 per cent to Rs 1,008.10. Other major IT stocks also traded lower, with Oracle Financial Services Software (OFSS) declining

2.79 per cent to Rs 6,234.50, Infosys falling 2.77 per cent to Rs 1,215.10, and TCS slipping 2 per cent to Rs 2,360. HCLTech dropped 2.32 per cent to Rs 1,297.70, while LTIMindtree and Mphasis fell 2.35 per cent and 2.43 per cent to Rs 4,108.10 and Rs 2,030.50, respectively. Tech Mahindra was relatively resilient but still declined 1.59 per cent to Rs 1,318.20.

AI disruption concerns weigh on sentiment

The sector is witnessing profit booking amid growing concerns that generative AI could disrupt core service lines such as application development, testing and maintenance, which account for a significant portion of IT companies' revenues.

Nvidia CEO signals shift in tech landscape

In addition, Jensen Huang, CEO of Nvidia, recently said that "physical AI has arrived" and that every industrial company will become a robotics company, signalling a shift in technology trends.

NMDC GMDC SIGN AN MOU Join Forces to Unlock Rare Earth Potential

Hyderabad, 17 March 2026: Indian mining powerhouses - NMDC Limited and GMDC Limited signed a Memorandum of Understanding to explore collaborations in Rare Earth Elements and associated minerals on Monday. Guidance for this strength-based partnership is to develop an integrated and sustainable critical mineral supply chain for India. This partnership paves the way for exploration of rare earth deposits in the country, along with the expansion of RD capabilities and carbon conscious initiatives in this sub-sector. The two companies signed the Understanding in the presence of Shri Amitava Mukherjee, CMD, NMDC and Shri Roopwant Singh, IAS, Managing Director, GMDC



March 16, 2026 for a period of two years, the MOU recommends the formation of a Steering Committee and Working Group to evaluate and enrich the proposed collaboration. This tie-up is expected to boost the development of rare earth mining and downstream operations nationwide. Speaking on this move, Shri Amitava Mukherjee said, "India's interest in Rare Earth Elements is now a strategic national priority. These minerals sit at the heart of energy

security, defence capability, and the push for a truly self-reliant Bharat. Mining companies have been called upon to rise to the occasion. NMDC with GMDC is determined to build a resilient critical mineral supply chain for the country as soon as possible." NMDC and GMDC, with their respective momentum in critical mineral mission and rare earth corridor, are also looking at the possibilities of a Joint Venture, Special Purpose Vehicle and strategic business collaborations going forward.

Bank of America settles over Epstein claims

AGENCY
NYC: Bank of America has agreed to settle a lawsuit brought on behalf of victims of Jeffrey Epstein, who had accused the bank of facilitating his sex trafficking operation. Terms of the deal, which now goes to the court for approval, were not immediately disclosed. It marks the third such settlement by a major bank, after JP Morgan Chase and Deutsche Bank agreed to pay out \$290m (£218m) and \$75m respectively. Sigrid McCawley, a lawyer for the victims, said in a statement that the resolution was "one more step on the road to much deserved justice". Bank of America declined to comment. The proposed class-action lawsuit was filed in October by a Florida woman who says she was abused by Epstein "on at least 100 occasions" between 2011 and 2019 and held two accounts at Bank of America at the direction of his business team. It alleged that the bank had "a plethora of information regarding Epstein's sex trafficking operation but chose profit over protecting



the victims". It cites a record of "incredibly alarming and erratic banking behavior" in her own Bank of America accounts, which were used by Epstein's team. It also points to more than \$150m paid to Epstein by billionaire Leon Block, co-founder of Apollo Global, to Epstein for "purported 'tax and estate planning advice'", via Block's Bank of America account. Block, who stepped down from Apollo amid scrutiny of his Epstein ties, has denied wrongdoing. He was due to be questioned as

part of the case later this month. Bank of America had previously urged the court to dismiss the lawsuit, saying it had provided routine services to people who at the time had no known links to Epstein, and that any suggestion that it "was more deeply involved" was "threadbare and meritless." Rakoff ruled in January that Bank of America must face Doe's claims that it knowingly benefited from Epstein's sex trafficking and obstructed enforcement of the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act. Among the transactions Doe flagged were payments to Epstein by Apollo Global

Doe alleged merely that it provided routine services to people who at the time had no known links to Epstein, and that any suggestion that it "was more deeply involved" was "threadbare and meritless." Rakoff ruled in January that Bank of America must face Doe's claims that it knowingly benefited from Epstein's sex trafficking and obstructed enforcement of the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act. Among the transactions Doe flagged were payments to Epstein by Apollo Global

Management's (APO.N), opens new tab billionaire co-founder, Leon Block. Block stepped down as Apollo's chief executive in 2021 after a review by an outside law firm found he had paid Epstein \$158 million for tax and estate planning. He has denied wrongdoing and said he was unaware of Epstein's criminal conduct. Block had been scheduled on March 26 to be questioned under oath by lawyers for Doe and Bank of America. The deposition is not expected to go forward because of the settlement. A scheduled May 11 trial will also not take place if Rakoff approves the settlement. Doe's lawyers have also sued other alleged enablers of Epstein's sex trafficking, and in 2023 reached settlements of \$290 million with JPMorgan Chase (JPM.N), opens new tab and \$75 million with Deutsche Bank (DBK.G.DE), opens new tab on behalf of his accusers. Epstein died in a Manhattan jail cell in August 2019 while awaiting trial on sex trafficking charges.

ISRAEL SAYS IRAN'S SECURITY CHIEF ALI LARIJANI HAS BEEN KILLED IN STRIKE

AGENCY
Tehran: Ali Larjani's death, if confirmed, is undoubtedly a massive body blow to the regime in Tehran. I first came across him in Geneva in the 1980s when he was involved in various negotiations taking place at the UN. Back then, he was a diplomat who you could see was intelligent and sought different angles on matters of discussion. In recent decades he has become a key figure inside the regime of the Islamic Republic, particularly since the killing of the former Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. But he was also seen as a pragmatic figure. While he said some tough, war-like things in recent weeks, over the years he's been seen as a man of flexibility, a man you can do business with. Israel's foreign minister, Gideon Saar, says "Iranians are safer" without top security official Ali Larjani and Basij commander Gholamreza Soleimani, after the Israeli military says it killed both of them in strikes. Speaking in

Jerusalem, Saar says Israel is weakening Iran's "repression mechanism". He adds that the regime can only be toppled by the Iranian people but that cannot be done without external help. In wide-ranging remarks, Saar also says Iran's effective blocking of the Strait of Hormuz is a "global problem" following US President Donald Trump's call for other countries to help stabilise the shipping channel. Israel says it has killed Iran's security chief Ali Larjani in a strike, and will "continue hunting down" the leaders of the country. As the graphic below shows, many of the country's pre-war senior figures have been killed. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's death was announced on 28 February, following the first day of US-Israeli strikes on Iran. Also killed in the first wave of strikes were security adviser Ali Shamkhani, defence minister Amir Nasirzadeh, Revolutionary Guards commander General Mohammad Pakpour, and armed forces chief of staff



Abdollah Mousavi. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) says Ali Larjani was "one of the most veteran and senior figures within the Iranian regime leadership" after announcing the Iranian security chief had been killed in a strike. After Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed, the IDF says, Larjani "functioned as the leader of the Iranian regime" and led its combat against Israel and neighbouring countries. The Israeli military also links

Larjani with a crackdown on anti-establishment protesters in Iran, suggesting he "advanced violent enforcement measures and repression operations". Iran is yet to confirm Larjani's death, and state media has published a photo of a handwritten message said to have been issued by him, which was also posted on his social media accounts. A statement from Ali Larjani, posted by Iranian media outlets earlier this morning, seems to be

nothing more than a message written to mark the funeral of Iranian sailors killed almost two weeks ago. In an earlier statement, issued hours before Israel claimed to have killed him, Larjani bemoaned the lack of support for Iran from fellow Muslim countries. "No Islamic government stood alongside the people of Iran," he complained, "except in rare cases and limited to political positions." The language of the message, addressed to Muslims worldwide, suggested that the top security official believed Iran's cause might resonate on the streets of Muslim nations, even if their governments had largely turned their backs. "The United States and Israel on one side and Muslim Iran and the forces of resistance on the other," he wrote. "Which side of this battle do you stand on?" Larjani reserved special scorn for Gulf countries which have hosted American forces or conducted rapprochements with Israel. "Is Iran expected to sit idly by

while American bases in your countries are used to attack it?" he asked. Iran's Ministry of Intelligence says in a statement that it has confiscated "hundreds of Starlink devices sent by the enemy" - referring to the US and Israel, Iranian news outlets are reporting. The statement says that according to law, acquiring and using Starlink is a "crime" and during the war anyone doing so will be dealt with at the "highest penalty". Using Starlink in Iran carries a punishment of up to two years in prison. It is still very difficult to contact those inside Iran during the internet outage that has been in place since the start of the war, but tech-savvy residents have been using SpaceX's Starlink devices and sharing their connections with others. A member of the United Nations Iran fact-finding mission says investigators are seeking access to the site of a deadly strike on a school carried out at the beginning of the conflict.

SUSPECTED SUICIDE ATTACKS KILL AT LEAST 23 IN NORTH-EAST NIGERIA



AGENCY
Nigeria: At least 23 people have been killed and 108 injured by a series of suspected suicide bombings in Maiduguri, marking one of the worst recent attacks on the capital of Borno state. A post office, a popular weekly market and the University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital were hit within minutes of each other at around 19:30 local time (18:30 GMT) on Monday, police in the north-eastern state say. The sites, which are among the city's busiest locations, had drawn large crowds after the day's Ramadan fast was broken. Nigeria's military has

blamed the attack on militants from the notorious Boko Haram group. Boko Haram originated in Maiduguri and the city became the epicentre of the Islamist group's insurgency, which began in 2009. However, the state capital had been enjoying a relatively stable period after intensified military operations had pushed armed groups into remote border areas. "Preliminary investigation reveals that the incidents were carried out by suspected suicide bombers," Borno police said in a statement, adding that an investigation was under way to establish the identity of the attackers.

Trump says presidents 'should not have learning disabilities' as he mocks Newsom's dyslexia



AGENCY
White House: Donald Trump has said he believes people with learning disabilities should not be president, as he renewed his taunts at California Governor Gavin Newsom over his dyslexia. President Trump said Newsom, a potential Democratic White House contender, was "dumb". He also made fun last week of the California governor's difficulty with reading and spelling, prompting Newsom to call him "a brain-dead moron". The National Center for Learning Disabilities told the BBC it was "disturbed by and strongly condemns" the Republican president's remarks. Dyslexia, a learning condition that disrupts how the brain processes written language, affects as many as one in five Americans. "With a low IQ person, you know, because Gavin Newsom has admitted that he is a, that he has learning disabilities," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office on Monday. "Newsom" is Trump's nickname for the governor. "Honestly, I'm all

for people with learning disabilities, but not for my president. I don't want, I think a president should not have learning disabilities, OK And I know it's highly controversial to say such a horrible thing." He added: "The President of the United States, Gavin Newsom, admitted that he has learning disabilities, dyslexia. Everything about him is dumb." Newsom made fun of Trump for appearing to accidentally refer to the governor as president. "NO THANK YOU, WE BELIEVE IN FREE ELECTIONS!" he posted on X. During an on-stage conversation last month with the mayor of Atlanta, Georgia, Newsom discussed his dyslexia. "I'm like you," the governor told the audience as he cited his poor exam results and difficulty reading. "You've never seen me read a speech, because I cannot read a speech," he added. His remarks to a predominantly black audience sparked a chorus of conservative claims that he was talking down to African-American voters.

Columbia University protester released after one year in immigration custody



AGENCY
Gaza: A Palestinian woman who was detained during Gaza war protests at Columbia University has been released after a year in immigration detention in Texas, her lawyers say. Leqaa Kordia, 33, was among more than 100 demonstrators arrested out-

side the New York City college's campus in April 2024, but she was released. She was arrested again in March 2025 during a routine immigration check-in. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said she had overstayed her student visa, which was terminated in 2022 "for lack of attendance".

TRUMP SEEKS TO DELAY MEETING WITH XI IN CHINA

AGENCY
Beijing: US President Donald Trump said on Monday that he is planning to delay a high stakes visit to China later in March by about a month because of the Iran war. "We've requested that we delay it a month or so," he told reporters at the White House, adding that it was important that he remained available to oversee the war. The meeting between Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping is currently set to take place between 31 March to 2 April, following their last face to face talks in October last year. Chinese foreign affairs spokesman Lin Jian said on Tuesday that Beijing and Washington are in talks over "the timing and related



matters of President Trump's visit to China". China also rejected any connection between the delayed meeting and issues around the Strait of Hormuz - a critical waterway for global energy shipments from the Gulf. "We have noted that the US side has publicly clarified these false reports by the media, stating that

said he had proposed the delay solely to make sure he was around to manage the war. "I'm looking forward to being with him," he said, referring to Xi. "We have a very good relationship." "There's no tricks to it either," Trump added. "It's very simple. We've got a war going on. I think it's important that I be here." The Iran war has eclipsed most of Trump's other foreign policy priorities, faced with an intensifying conflict and disruptions to the global oil supply, which has threatened to raise prices in the US. US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said on Monday that the meeting's delay would not be due to Washington's request that Beijing help in the Gulf, or any trade disagreements.

FROM TORNADOES TO BLIZZARDS, SEVERE WEATHER BATTERS PARTS OF THE US

AGENCY
Texas: Tornadoes, thunderstorms and blizzard conditions are forecast to pummel parts of the eastern US. More than 34 million people were under tornado watches from Florida to New Jersey. Nearly 3ft (0.9m) of snow has fallen in Minnesota, Wisconsin and northern Michigan since the storm began this weekend, according to the National Weather Service (NWS). The bulk of the storm is expected to churn off the east coast into the Atlantic by Tuesday, with abnormally cold weather to follow in its wake. Over 11 million people are under blizzard warnings, and another four million are



under winter storm warnings, according to the BBC's US partner CBS. By Monday evening, nearly 4,600 flights had been cancelled and almost 11,300 delayed, according to flightaware.com. The bulk of the flight cancellations and delays were at Chicago's

O'Hare International airport and LaGuardia in New York. More than 406,000 customers were without power, a third of them in Michigan, followed by Virginia and North Carolina. In Minnesota, over 25in (63.5cm) of snow fell in parts of the state by Monday morning. More snow and

strong winds were forecast. "Whiteout conditions are expected and will make travel treacherous and potentially life-threatening," the NWS said. Minnesota Governor Tim Walz has authorised the state's National Guard to support emergency operations, CBS said. Severe thunderstorms were expected in parts of North Carolina, South Carolina and West Virginia, where NWS has predicted hail and "a tornado or two possible". Tornado warnings were issued between 10:00 and 11:00 local time in parts of northern Virginia. A similar warning was issued for parts of the Florida panhandle.

Utah bereavement author found guilty of fatally poisoning her husband



AGENCY
Utah: A Utah mother who published a children's book about grief after the sudden death of her husband has been found guilty of his murder. A jury found that Kouri Richins killed her husband in March 2022 by poisoning him with a fentanyl-laced drink. The jury deliberated the case for about three hours before reaching its verdict on Monday. During the trial, the court heard how Richins, 35, had racked up millions of dollars in debt, had taken out life insurance policies on her husband, and was having an extramarital affair. Prosecutors called more than 40 witnesses, including the woman who said she sold the drugs used to kill Eric Richins. Her defence team chose to not call any witnesses, and rested their case without having her take the stand to testify in her own defence. Richins was also found guilty of fraudulent benefits after her husband's death at their home outside the ski resort

town of Park City. Prosecutors said during the trial that she falsely believed she would inherit his estate worth more than \$4m after he died. They also said she was planning a future with another man, whom she had been having an affair with. Officials said Richins was found to have poisoned her husband's sandwich in an earlier incident, nearly killing him, before later increasing the dosage until he died. She was also found guilty of attempted murder over this incident. Richins pleaded not guilty to all the charges. The most serious, aggravated murder, carries a sentence of 25 years to life in prison. "She wanted to leave Eric Richins but did not want to leave his money," said Summit County prosecutor Brad Bloodworth. Richins was arrested in March, 2023 - two months after she published the picture book Are You With Me?, which she said was designed to help people - including her three children - cope with the death of a loved one.



Pakistan air strike kills at least 100 at Kabul drug rehab centre

Sri Lanka declares Wednesdays off as Asian countries try to conserve fuel



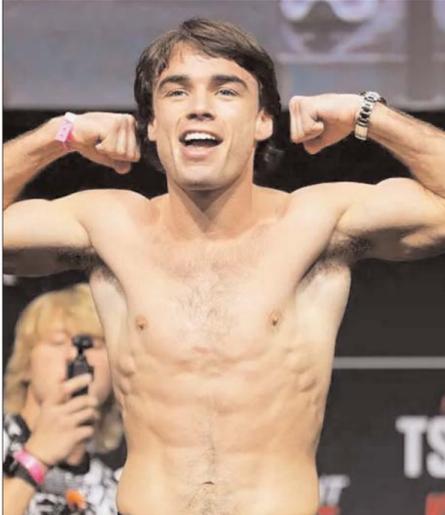
AGENCY
Dhaka: Sri Lanka has declared every Wednesday a holiday for public institutions to conserve fuel as the island nation grapples with possible shortages in the wake of the US and Israel's war with Iran. "We must prepare for the worst, but hope for the best," President Anura Kumara Dissanayake said at an emergency meeting with senior officials on

Monday. This is the latest in a series of belt-tightening measures undertaken by Asian countries since the war choked off the Strait of Hormuz, which used to carry millions of barrels of oil from the Gulf into the region. Nearly 90% of all the oil and gas flowing through the strait last year was bound for Asia, which is the world's largest oil-importing region.



Following Pimblett's footsteps - but Riley is 'different animal'

A team-mate of Paddy Pimblett, the 26-year-old signed with the promotion after winning the first 11 fights of his career, eight by knockout. Like some of the UFC's biggest stars before him - such as Pimblett, Conor McGregor and Tom Aspinall - Riley compiled his unbeaten record in Cage Warriors. Cage Warriors president Graham Boylan has overseen the development of each one of those stars, and in Riley he saw something different. Speaking to BBC Sport last year, Boylan described Riley as a "different animal" and "already a polished athlete", whereas "Paddy and Conor were still on their way up" while in Cage Warriors. It came as little surprise then, when faced with adversity after being out-grappled in the first round of his UFC debut against Bogdan Grad in November, Riley responded with a thundering left hook



to claim victory. Many fighters have crumbled in similar situations, joining the UFC with big reputations and finding the step up in compe-

tion too big - but not Riley. "I went through a lot of adversity in Cage Warriors. I feel like with some fighters it takes maybe 10 to 15 fights to

get a bit of adversity. I had it three fights in, where I'd been fighting the best," Riley tells BBC Sport. "So when that moment came against Grad it was nothing new, I've felt this before, it was easy work." On Saturday at UFC London, Riley faces American Michael Aswell Jr in a featherweight bout at O2 Arena. It is just Riley's second fight in the UFC but the contest serves as the co-main event, illustrating the star power the UFC believes the Liverpoolian can generate. For many fighters this could bring added pressure, but Riley is already acclimatising to the attention of being a star. Before his interview with BBC Sport, he jokes around with team-mates at his gym in Liverpool, throwing darts at a board he got a week prior during a social media skit at the PDC World Darts Championship. During his time in Cage Warriors, he was the face of the promo-

tion, headlining multiple shows for which fans would buy tickets mainly to watch him. He is already flourishing in the public eye, so performing at the 20,000-capacity O2 Arena does not bring added pressure. "I said to my coaches and people close to me, it feels no different to Cage Warriors in a sense," he says. "It could be in a park, on a street, in a little social club, in an arena with 20,000 people. Once the cage is shut, it doesn't feel any different." On Saturday at UFC London, Riley faces American Michael Aswell Jr in a featherweight bout at O2 Arena. It is just Riley's second fight in the UFC but the contest serves as the co-main event, illustrating the star power the UFC believes the Liverpoolian can generate. For many fighters this could bring added pressure, but Riley is already acclimatising to the attention of being a star.

Sania Mirza Returns Home For Eid After Tense Days In Dubai

Former India tennis star Sania Mirza has returned to Hyderabad for Eid after spending tense days in Dubai, where she lives with her son, amid security concerns and uncertainty in the region. Mirza said she decided to travel to India after hearing fighter jets overhead and learning that debris from an intercepted projectile had fallen close to her home in Al Barsha. "We heard fighter jets above our house and saw interceptions," Mirza said. "There was debris that fell around 400-500 metres from where we live." While she said she never felt directly unsafe, the uncertainty - especially with a young child at home - prompted the decision to leave temporarily. "You don't want your child going through that. He was asking questions," she said. "It didn't feel unsafe, but it did feel uncertain and unsettling." Mirza lives in Dubai for much of the year, where her seven-



year-old son Izhaan goes to school. She said the family will decide when to return depending on how the situation develops. "School is supposed to start next week, but we'll monitor the situation," she said. "I'm lucky that I can come back to Hyderabad and still have a home here with family." Eid homecoming Mirza said returning to Hyderabad during Ramadan is along-standing tradition. "I come every Eid," she said. "We try to spend the last week of Ramadan in Hyderabad because Ramadan here has to be experienced. It's always nice to be around family."

Australian Players Warned Not To Travel To This Pakistan City For PSL After Air-Strike On Afghanistan: Report

With 400 people killed in Kabul, Afghanistan, after airstrikes from Pakistan, the future of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) is in doubt. The problems for the PSL have increased after travel disruptions caused by the Iran-Israel-US war. The question now is whether the PSL will see its entire foreign contingent play in the league. Several Australian players like Steve Smith, David Warner, Marnus Labuschagne and Glenn Maxwell are set to play the 2026 PSL. The league will start on March 26, two days before the 2026 Indian Premier League (IPL) begins. Australian coaches like Tim Paine and Jason Gillespie are also part of the league. Now, according



to a report by Australian publication CODE Sports, as quoted by Times Now, the Australian government has granted permission for the players to travel to Pakistan, but they have been advised to stay away from Peshawar. The city is set to host a PSL match, but the Australian government has labelled it

a "do not travel" zone due to the conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan. This puts a question mark on the fixture between Peshawar Zalmi and Rawalpindiz at the Imran Khan Cricket Stadium on March 28. Both teams have Australian players. Aaron Hardie is with Zalmi, while Jake Fraser-McGurk

was picked by Pindiz. The report added that Australian players have been assured evacuation by private flights if needed. Afghanistan players withdrew their names from the first-ever players' auction held ahead of the 11th edition of the Pakistan Super League (PSL). A franchise owner confirmed initially that players like Mujeeb Ur Rehman, Seddiquallah Atal, Mohammad Nabi, Waqar Salamkheil and Fazal Haq Farooqi had registered for the auction held in Lahore on Wednesday. But they withdrew their names following backlash over the direct signing of Afghanistan opener Rahmanullah Gurbaz by Peshawar Zalmi.

Rohit Sharma Engages In Hilarious Banter With Mumbai Indians Star After Hitting Him For A Six: "Catch It"

Indian cricket team star batter Rohit Sharma engaged in hilarious banter with his Mumbai Indians teammate Shardul Thakur after hitting him for a six during practice. During the net practice ahead of IPL 2026, Shardul delivered a length delivery on the middle stump and Rohit dispatched it for a massive six over long-on. Following the shot, the star batter hilariously mocked the bowler by saying - "Catch it... in the stands". Mumbai Indians will begin their campaign on March 29 with a match against Kolkata Knight Riders at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai. Rohit Sharma has won six IPL titles, including one with Deccan Chargers and five



as captain of the Mumbai-based franchise, making him the joint most successful captain in the tournament's history. The veteran opener joined Mumbai in 2011 and became captain in 2013. Sharma then took MI to their maiden IPL title in his first season as captain and went on to lead MI for 11 years before he

of the Final as Mumbai beat Chennai Super Kings to win their second IPL title. MI went on to win the IPL in 2017, 2019 and 2020 under Rohit's leadership. On Monday, MI officially commenced pre-season training, marking the first session of the upcoming 2026 campaign. Head coach Mahela Jayawardene led the session on the ground, joined by bowling coaches Paras Mhambrey and Lasith Malinga, fielding coach Carl Hopkinson, and the full strength and conditioning and physiotherapy support teams, according to a release. Mahela Jayawardene, Head Coach, Mumbai Indians, said, "There's always something special about the first day of pre-season."

Indorama Ventures Open Golf Championship Tees Off With Record Prize Purse

The greens of Kalhaar Blues & Greens Golf Club in Ahmedabad came alive as the second edition of the Indorama Ventures Open Golf Championship teed off with a record prize purse of 300,000 US dollars, making it the highest prize money event ever hosted in Gujarat under the Professional Golf Tour of India. Jointly staged by Indorama Ventures and DP WORLD PGTI, the four-day tournament featured 143 players competing over four rounds on the challenging par-72 course, known for its 14 water hazards that demand precision and strategy. The field included some of India's top professionals such as Yuvraj Sandhu, Veer Ahlawat, Manu Gandas,



and Shaurya Bhattacharya, alongside a smaller but competitive international contingent. The global lineup, however, was impacted by the ongoing Iran-Israel war, which disrupted travel plans for many international golfers. Originally, more than 70 foreign players were expected, but only 12 international professionals managed to reach Ahmedabad.

Among them were players like Matthias Schwab, Clement Sordet, and Jhared Hack, adding global competition to the tournament. "It will be a great event. The prize money has increased and although the tournament has been affected by the ongoing tensions, it will still be a fantastic competition. India has a great future in golf."

Belgium Cricket League: Zaheer Khan Joins Antwerp Anchors As Co-Owner

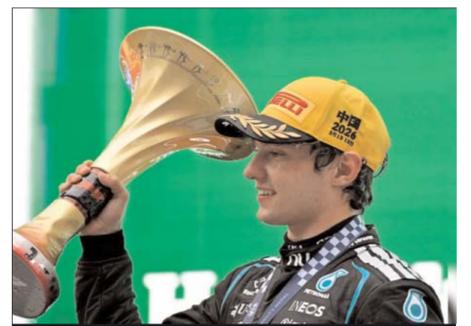
Antwerp Anchors, a franchise in the EUT20 Belgium Cricket League, on Monday announced that former India fast bowling legend and World Cup winner Zaheer Khan has joined the club as a Co-Owner. One of the most celebrated left-arm pace bowlers of his generation, Zaheer brings to the Antwerp Anchors not only his iconic cricketing stature but a deep passion for growing the game in new markets - a mission central to the EUT20 league's founding vision. The EUT20 Belgium Cricket League will be played from June 4 to 14 in Brussels, marking a historic milestone for cricket in continental Europe. The tournament brings together



er some of the most recognizable names in global T20 cricket, playing for franchise teams that represent Belgium's rich multicultural landscape. Zaheer Khan will be formally introduced as Co-Owner and Partner of the Antwerp Anchors in all official league communications, marketing materials,

and media engagements. His involvement extends beyond ceremonial - as a stakeholder, he will play an active role in shaping the franchise's cricketing identity and long-term direction. "Europe is a big canvas for cricket, and I genuinely believe we are only at the beginning of what is possible here."

"It's A Starting Point": Kimi Antonelli Sets Sights On More F1 Glory After Chinese GP Triumph



Kimi Antonelli said Monday that he is eyeing further Formula 1 success after the teenage Italian announced himself on the world stage with victory in the Chinese Grand Prix. The 19-year-old won his maiden GP from pole position on Sunday and was greeted by media and enthusiastic fans as he touched down in his native Bologna. "I'm so happy for the win and to have brought the Italian flag back onto the highest step of the podium," Antonelli told reporters. "It's a starting point and I hope I can keep going because we're on the right track. It won't be easy." Antonelli, who took over Lewis Hamilton's old seat at Mercedes at the start of the 2025 season, is the first Italian to win an F1 GP since Giancarlo Fisichella 20 years ago. He finished in front of Mercedes teammate George Russell and Ferrari's Hamilton after becoming the youngest

pole sitter in F1 history. And Antonelli even hinted that he was aiming to become the first Italian to win the drivers' championship since Alberto Ascari in 1953. "I've removed a bit of weight from my shoulders, I'm more relaxed. It's the kind of result which gives you strength and more awareness of what you can do," he said. "There's another, bigger step, which is the most difficult. I'm sure that if I do everything well we can get there." Antonelli's win was huge news in Italy and led to tennis superstar Jannik Sinner dedicating his Indian Wells triumph to F1's rising star. "I was really surprised by Sinner's homage, I sent him a message because I really appreciated it, it was really nice of him," he said. Antonelli sits four points behind Russell in the world championship standings with the Japanese GP coming up on March 29.

RADUCANU WITHDRAWS FROM MIAMI OPEN BECAUSE OF ILLNESS

Emma Raducanu has withdrawn from this week's Miami Open as she continues her recovery from a recent illness. The British number one became unwell while playing in the Middle East last month, and is still suffering with post-viral symptoms. She had a first-round bye for the event at Miami Gardens in Florida from 17 to 29 March. Raducanu decided to play last week's event in Indian Wells, and reached the third round before losing in just 52 minutes to the world number six Amanda Anisimova. The 23-year-old has 215 ranking points to

defend from reaching the quarter-finals in Miami last year, but has decided it would be best to take a break to recover fully. Raducanu beat both Anisimova and the then top 10 player Emma Navarro before losing to Jessica Pegula in three sets in last year's quarter-finals. Raducanu had already decided not to play in Great Britain's Billie Jean King Cup tie in Melbourne next month, but is currently scheduled to return to the tour in three weeks' time. She has entered the WTA event in Linz, which would be her first clay-court tournament of the season.

Emma Raducanu has withdrawn from this week's Miami Open as she continues her recovery from a recent illness. The British number one became unwell while playing in the Middle East last month, and is still suffering with post-viral symptoms. She had a first-round bye for the event at Miami Gardens in Florida from 17 to 29 March. Raducanu decided to play last week's event in Indian Wells, and reached the third round before losing in just 52 minutes to the world number six Amanda Anisimova. The 23-year-old has 215 ranking points to defend

from reaching the quarter-finals in Miami last year, but has decided it would be best to take a break to recover fully. Raducanu beat both Anisimova and the then top 10 player Emma Navarro before losing to Jessica Pegula in three sets in last year's quarter-finals. Raducanu had already decided not to play in Great Britain's Billie Jean King Cup tie in Melbourne next month, but is currently scheduled to return to the tour in three weeks' time. She has entered the WTA event in Linz, which would be her first clay-court tournament of the season.



Prominent Director V.V. Vinayak released the song 'Makkulu Makkulu College' from the film 'Pithapuram lo'



Directed by the renowned filmmaker Mahesh Chandra, the movie 'Pithapuram lo' features a lead cast comprising Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Prudhviraj, Kedar Shankar, Mani Chandana, Annapurnaamma, Sunny Akhil, Virat, Sai Praneeth, Srilu, Prathyusha, and Rehana. The film bears the subtitle 'Ala Modalaindi' (Thus It Began). Produced under the banner of Mahesh Chandra Cinema Team, the movie was bankrolled by Dundigalla Balakrishna, Akula Suresh Patel, and F.M. Murali (Godavari Kittayya). With music direction by G.C. Krish, the film's song—titled 'Makkulu Makkulu College-u, Yavvana Markata Garage-u'—was officially unveiled by the celebrated director V.V. Vinayak. The lyrics for this song were penned by Sriram Tapasvi. Speaking on the occasion,

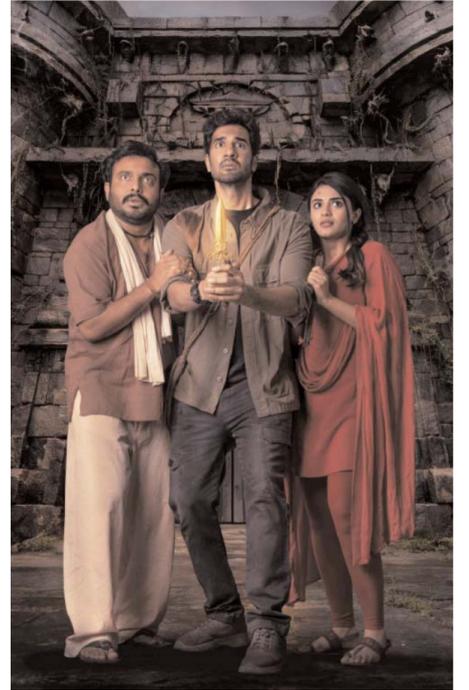
Vinayak remarked, "I previously worked as a co-director under Mr. Chandra Mahesh for the film 'Cheppalani Undi'. Subsequently, I made my debut as a director with the movie 'Aadi'. Mr. Chandra Mahesh is a person I hold in very high regard. He was, in fact, one of the favorite directors of the legendary producer D. Ramanaidu. With 'Pithapuram lo', he has crafted a youthful entertainer that weaves together three distinct love stories. I wholeheartedly wish for this film to become a massive hit. Furthermore, I hope that the producers reap excellent profits from this venture." Director Chandra Mahesh stated, "We are releasing the trailer for this film later this week." "We will release the film in April. This will stand out as one of the finest films of my career," he stated.

"RAKASA" TELUGU STATES RIGHTS BAGGED BY SRI LAKSHMI NARASIMHA MOVIE MAKERS IN A BIG-TICKET DEAL

The upcoming fantasy-comedy entertainer Rakasa has registered a major business milestone ahead of its theatrical release. The Telugu States theatrical rights of the film have been bagged by Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Movie Makers in a big-ticket deal, underlining the strong trade confidence the project has generated in the lead-up to its release. The development marks a significant step in the film's release journey, signalling that the industry sees considerable potential in the film's theatrical prospects. The deal further strengthens the film's expanding distribution network as the makers prepare for a wide global rollout. While Sri Lakshmi

Narasimha Movie Makers will be releasing the film across the Telugu States, RaaKaaSaa is simultaneously gearing up for a large-scale overseas launch. International distribution will be handled by Atharvana Bhadrakali Pictures, which is planning a release across more than 350 international screens, spanning key territories including the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe, Canada, and Australia. Distribution responsibilities for the crucial North America and United Kingdom markets will be handled by Prathyangira Cinemas, ensuring the film reaches audiences across major overseas hubs.

Overseas premieres are scheduled for April 2, 2026, a day ahead of the film's worldwide theatrical release. Beyond theatrical distribution, the film has also secured notable non-theatrical partnerships that further reinforce its market positioning. The digital streaming rights have been acquired by Netflix, while the audio rights have been bagged by Saregama Music, one of India's most reputed music labels. These alliances collectively add to the film's commercial ecosystem and underline the growing anticipation surrounding the project. The promotional campaign for Rakasa has also been generating strong digital traction. The film's



Deepthi Srirangam Crowned Miss Infinity of India 2026 at a Grand Finale Celebrating Beauty, Talent, and National Unity

Hyderabad, March, 2026: The much-anticipated Miss Infinity of India 2026 Grand Finale was successfully hosted in Hyderabad, marking the culmination of an inspiring four-month journey that began with nationwide auditions and witnessed participation from aspiring contestants across the country. The prestigious pageant received an overwhelming response with over 500-600 entries from across India. Following multiple rounds of auditions and screenings, the competition shortlisted the most promising participants, leading to the selection of exceptional finalists representing 30 states,

each embodying the culture, diversity, and spirit of their region. The grand finale featured multiple competitive rounds where contestants showcased their confidence, intelligence, talent, personality, and elegance, making it a spectacular display of beauty with purpose. After an intense and inspiring competition, Deepthi Srirangam from Andhra Pradesh was crowned Miss Infinity of India 2026, marking a remarkable milestone in her journey. Her victory stands as a testament to seven years of hard work, perseverance, and unwavering dedication, inspiring aspiring young women across the

country. The event was graced by renowned music composer Koti, who attended as the Chief Guest and extended his encouragement and support to the participants. The competition was evaluated by an esteemed jury panel comprising: Actress Mounika Kalapala, Actress Naksha Saran, Dr. Akshaya (Cosmetologist) J. Pranoo, and Entrepreneur & Movie Producer Jawahar. The visual grandeur and stage presentation of the evening were elevated under the creative direction of Show Choreographer Maneendra Kumar, whose expertise added elegance and professionalism to the event. More than just a beauty pageant, Miss Infinity of India 2026 served as a powerful platform promoting women's empowerment, confidence, cultural diversity, and national unity. With participants from diverse backgrounds, the event beautifully reflected the essence of India—where diversity becomes strength. The organizing team expressed immense pride in successfully hosting the national-level event and reaffirmed their commitment to creating meaningful opportunities for young women to pursue their dreams with confidence and determination.

Universal Music India forms exclusive partnership with Anirudh Ravichander's new label Albuquerque Records

Universal Music India, a division of Universal Music Group, the world leader in music based entertainment, today announces an exclusive partnership with Albuquerque Records – the independent record label recently launched by singer-composer Anirudh Ravichander. The partnership will see Universal Music India and Albuquerque Records release future pop and hip hop music by Anirudh Ravichander, and future artists signed to the label. The first release under the label is planned to release early April featuring Anirudh. The global part-

nership will see Universal Music India work closely with Albuquerque Records to expand the influence of Anirudh's artistry. In time the label will become home to emerging pop and hip-hop artists from the region. Anirudh's track record over the last 15 years has been enviable and unparalleled. Debuting as a composer in 2012 with his global viral hit 'Why This Kolaveri Di', he has amassed over 13 billion audio streams across his over 770+ tracks, making him the No.1 South Indian artist on Spotify in terms of total streams. Additionally, he is one of the most coveted composers in the Tamil Original Soundtrack (OST)



space, with many global chart topping successes, including Hukum, Vaathi Coming, Arabic Kuthu, Monica, A23 Theme, Aaja Raja, Aya Sher and more. Universal Music India has maintained a steady focus on the South Indian region, working closely with the rich artistry and culture which spans the four key

south language markets (Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada and Telugu). The arrangement with Anirudh, one of the region's most accomplished artists, will help further the presence of groundbreaking music from this region on the global stage. Additionally, it further expands Universal Music India's presence in pop and hip-hop, genres associated with some of the most influential names in the South Indian market. Commenting on the partnership, Devraj Sanyal, Chairman & CEO, Universal Music India; SVP Strategy, AMEA, said: "Anirudh represents the future of Indian music bold,

original, and with enormous potential. At Universal Music India, identifying transformative talent is our superpower, and this partnership reflects that belief. We're proud to stand behind Anirudh as he embarks on his next chapter, and helps take more Indian music to the world." Anirudh Ravichander commented: "Albuquerque Records was built to be an artist-backed, homegrown label focused on nurturing independent talent and taking their sound to the global stage. Universal Music India's leadership in pop and hip-hop made them the natural partner."

PRIYA PRAKASH TURNS HONG KONG STREETS STYLISH



■ Priya Prakash Varrier, who has been waiting for a strong comeback for the last couple of years, is now gearing up for her upcoming Malayalam OTT web series Cousins and Kalyanams, which will stream on JioHotstar. While fans are curious about her next project, Priya is also keeping them engaged on social media with beautiful travel pictures from Hong Kong.

'VANAJEEVI RAMAIAH' BIOPIC INTO MULTIPLE LANGUAGES

The life story of Padma Shri awardee, Vanajeevi Daripalli Ramaiah, popularly known as 'Koti Plante Ramaiah', has come to the silver screen. The biopic 'Vanajeevi Ramaiah' based on the life of this great man who gave an environmental message to the society has been selected in the best short films category in the prestigious Gaddar Awards presented by the Telangana government. Produced by Nidigonda Naresh Kumar Prajapati, Bhusham Rabindranath and Lingampally Chandrasekhar, the film is directed by Nandi awardee Vemuganti and has music by Ballepalli Mohan. Recently ChitraUnit organized a special preview screening at Prasad Lab in Hyderabad. Telangana State Cultural Sarathi Chairperson Vennela, TJS Chief Professor



Kodandaram, political analysts V. Prakash, Tanneru Babu Rao, Naga Mahesh, film celebrities Tanikella Bharani, Tammareddy Bharadwaja and others were present and congratulated the film. The film team revealed that they have decided to release the film in Indian

languages as well. Director Vemuganti said, "We have made this film with the intention of serving the nature of Ramaiah who planted crores of plants to become an inspiration for the future generations. Soon we will bring this biopic in Indian languages as well." Music director

Ballepalli Mohan also expressed the same sentiment and said that the film is being dedicated as a tribute to nature lover Ramaiah. Daripalli Ramaiah of Reddypally village has earned special recognition for himself in environmental protection.

FARHANNA BHATT, AWEZ DARBAR'S DANCE AT IFTAR SPARKS OUTRAGE

