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YUKI BHAMBRI, MICHAEL VENUS LOSE TIGHT FIRST ROUND CONTEST IN MIAMI OPEN



MAMATA MEETS CHRISTIAN CLERGY, COMMUNITY LEADERS AHEAD OF EASTER AND BENGAL POLLS

Siliguri, March 24 (TSIT) West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday held a closed-door meeting with leaders of the Christian community at Chalsa in the northern part of the state, signalling an aggressive outreach to minority and tea-garden populations ahead of the Assembly elections. She also visited St. Lucy Church in Jalpaiguri district, and interacted with the leaders of the Christian community. Banerjee, who arrived at Chalsa in the Doars region earlier in the day, was received by locals and members of the clergy, including church fathers from across the tea belt. During the interaction, Banerjee engaged with representatives of multiple churches from the plantation region, home to large tribal communities and thousands of women tea workers. Political observers view the meeting as a calculated move to consolidate support in a region that has traditionally witnessed intense multi-cornered contests. "I also had the opportunity to visit St. Lucy Church in Batabari, where I interacted with members of the community and the (church) fathers, and offered my prayers for peace, prosperity, and the well-being of all. I pray to the Almighty to guide us, protect us from forces of division and discrimination, and keep us united as one family," she later said in a Facebook post.

BRS mismanaged finances, Congress delivering welfare with accountability: Bhatti

Hyderabad TSIT BUREAU: Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, in his budget reply speech (Part-2) in the Assembly, launched a strong attack on the previous BRS government, accusing it of financial mismanagement, neglect of welfare schemes, and failure to support key sectors like agriculture, health, and education. He stated that the previous government failed to allocate adequate funds to Rajiv Aarogyasri and even delayed payments to hospitals. In contrast, the present Congress government has allocated 50,700 crore for welfare and is implementing schemes effectively without making "empty promises."



On farm loan waivers, Bhatti Vikramarka said BRS had failed to fulfill its promise of 1 lakh waiver, releasing only partial amounts that covered interest but not the principal. He highlighted that the Congress government, immediately after assuming power, waived 2 lakh farm loans by depositing 20,600 crore directly into farmers' accounts. The Deputy CM strongly criticized BRS for neglecting women's empowerment, stating that the previous regime failed to support self-help groups. He announced that under "Indiramma Rajyam," the government aims to create one crore women millionaires by extending 1 lakh crore in loans over five years, with 10,000 crore annually allocated for interest-free loans.

He also pointed out that the previous government ignored centrally sponsored agricultural schemes, resulting in loss of central funds. The current government has deposited 3,000 crore to leverage 10,000 crore from the Centre and is ensuring the state's 40% share to access remaining funds. Highlighting financial discipline, Bhatti said the previous regime left thousands of crores in pending bills, including Rs.4,600 crore in employee dues. The present government has cleared an additional Rs.6,000-Rs.6,500 crore and is consistently clearing around Rs.730 crore every month. Medical reimbursements and supplementary salaries have also been fully cleared. In the education sector, he accused the previous government of neglecting students by delaying hostel and diet charges. The Congress government has increased diet charges by 40% and cosmetic charges by 200%, while ensuring timely fund releases. Bhatti Vikramarka also criticized opposition members for disrupting Assembly proceedings, including tearing copies of the budget instead of engaging in constructive debate. On housing, he said Rs.22,500 crore was allocated for Indiramma Housing Scheme, urging MLAs to speed up construction works,

assuring timely release of funds directly to beneficiaries. The Deputy CM announced the establishment of Young India Integrated Residential Schools with Rs.200 crore investment per constituency, along with Telangana Public Schools to improve access to quality education. Skill development initiatives, including advanced technology centres and scholarships, are also being rolled out to boost employment opportunities. He further noted that despite these initiatives, the opposition staged walkouts and protests, showing lack of interest in development and job creation. Accusing the previous BRS government of burdening the state with massive debt due to reckless borrowing, Bhatti said debt servicing rose sharply from 7 crore in 2014-15 to 66,545 crore in 2024-25. He emphasized that the Congress government is responsibly managing finances by repaying more than it borrows. Over two years, the government borrowed 1.59 lakh crore but repaid 1.85 lakh crore, reducing the debt burden. Concluding his speech, Bhatti Vikramarka said the previous regime had weakened both the economy and governance, while the present government is committed to restoring fiscal discipline and delivering welfare with accountability.

CM Revanth Raises Concerns Over Delimitation, Seat Increase; Targets Centre and Opposition

Hyderabad TSIT BUREAU: Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy made strong remarks on the proposed delimitation exercise and the reported 50% increase in Parliament seats, expressing concerns over its potential impact on southern states. Chief Minister stated that any increase in Lok Sabha seats should be done in a manner that maintains balance between northern and southern states. He alleged that the Centre is showing discrimination against southern states and warned that increasing seats purely on a population basis would disadvantage the South. Revanth Reddy said that a 50% increase in seats could allow northern states to dominate the formation of the Union government, thereby reducing the political significance of southern states. "This could lead to a situation where governments are formed without the need for support from southern states," he remarked. Calling the proposal a "final bullet," the Chief Minister urged all political parties to come together and deliberate before moving forward with such a crucial decision. He also stated that the issue would be taken to the people during upcoming election campaigns in southern states. On broader political issues, Revanth Reddy highlighted Telangana's distinct historical and political identity, stating that its socio-political fabric differs from other regions. He recalled that people from the region had actively resisted oppressive



regimes in the past. Commenting on national politics, the Chief Minister said that regional leaders from the South risk losing representation in national decision-making if current trends continue. He also took aim at BRS leadership, describing former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao as only a political rival, while alleging internal conflicts within the BRS family over positions. He urged KCR to play an active role as Leader of the Opposition. Referring to recent electoral outcomes, Revanth Reddy claimed that the BRS has suffered defeats in by-elections, panchayat, and municipal polls, and alleged setbacks even in key constituencies like Jubilee Hills. The Chief Minister expressed confidence that the Congress party would defeat both BRS and BJP in the upcoming elections and asserted that the people of Telangana would continue to support his leadership in the coming decade. On international matters, Revanth Reddy commented on India's foreign relations, suggesting that stronger diplomatic engagement is needed to address global conflicts.

INDIA 6TH MOST POLLUTED COUNTRY; UP'S LONI WORLD'S MOST POLLUTED CITY

New Delhi: India is the sixth most-polluted country when it comes to levels of fine particulate matter, a major air pollutant, while UP's Loni is the most polluted city across the globe and Delhi is at the fourth spot, according to the World Air Quality Report, 2025. The eighth edition of the report published by IQAir, a Swiss air quality technology company, analysed data from monitoring stations across 9,446 cities in 143 countries, regions and territories. According to the report, Pakistan is the most polluted country, followed by Bangladesh, Tajikistan, Chad and Congo, with India at the sixth spot. Among the ten most polluted cities across the globe, five are from India—Loni, Byrnhat, Delhi, Ghaziabad and Ula. "The world's 25 most polluted cities were all located in India, Pakistan and China, with India home to three of the four most polluted. Loni, India, was the most polluted city, recording an annual average PM2.5 concentration of 112.5 µg/m³—a nearly 23 per cent increase from 2024 and more than 22 times the WHO guideline," the report said. Comparing this year's report to the previous year, 54 countries experienced a rise in the annual average of PM2.5, 75 saw a drop, two remained unchanged and 12 were newly represented in this year's dataset. "Only 14 per cent of global cities met the World Health Organization (WHO) annual PM2.5 guideline of 5 µg/m³, down from 17 per cent the previous year. Only thirteen countries/territories met the WHO annual average PM2.5 guideline—French Polynesia, Puerto Rico, US Virgin Islands, Barbados, New Caledonia, Iceland, Bermuda, Réunion, Andorra, Australia, Grenada, Panama, Estonia," the report said.

Women's reservation must ensure fair delimitation: CM Stalin



HIGHLIGHT POINT:
Stalin also expressed concern over the timing of the move, noting that introducing such a major policy decision when the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) is in force is unprecedented.

CHENNAI (TSIT): Chief Minister MK Stalin on Tuesday said that while he fully supports the implementation of women's reservation, it must be carried out in a manner that ensures fair representation for all States. Referring to recent reports suggesting that women's representation may be based on the 2011 Census, he said in a post on social media platform X that such a move would be contrary to the provisions of the Constitution (128th Amendment) Bill, 2023, which envisages implementation only after delimitation based on the Census conducted post-2026. He also expressed concern over the timing of the move, noting that introducing such a major policy decision when the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) is in force is unprecedented. At the same time, Stalin reiterated that the DMK

has consistently supported women's empowerment and would back women's reservation without preconditions. However, he stressed that the current proportional representation of States should not be altered under any circumstances. "To ensure fairness, delimitation and redistribution of constituencies must include a constitutional safeguard guaranteeing the existing share of representation for at least the next 30 years," he said. The Chief Minister also urged the Union government to convene a special session of Parliament in early June to take up constitutional amendments related to delimitation, increase in seats, and protection of States' representation, alongside the implementation of women's reservation.

Two LPG ships carrying 92,600 tonnes LPG on way to India from Hormuz: Govt

New Delhi, March 24 (TSIT): The government on Tuesday said that two LPG carriers, Pine Gas and Jag Vasant, have safely crossed the Strait of Hormuz and are on their way to India. Rajesh Kumar Sinha, Special Secretary, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, said during an inter-ministerial briefing that the Pine Gas vessel will arrive at New Mangalore port on March 27, which carries 45,000 metric tonnes of LPG. "Jag Vasant will arrive at Kandla port on March 26, carrying 47,600 metric tonnes of LPG. Twenty Indian-flagged vessels remain to the west of the Strait of Hormuz," Sinha informed. Earlier, ship-tracking data showed that the vessels Jag Vasant and Pine Gas were moving through the strategically important Strait of Hormuz after receiving approval for safe



passage. A full transit through the Strait of Hormuz typically takes around 14 hours, as per reports. The development comes at a time when the Strait, a key global route for oil and gas shipments, has been severely affected by rising tensions following US and Israeli strikes in the region late February. Jag Vasant loaded LPG from Kuwait, while Pine Gas picked up its cargo from Ruwais in the UAE. They had remained stuck in the region due to the tensions before now being allowed to

move. Earlier this month, two other Indian-flagged LPG carriers successfully completed similar journeys through the Strait. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday emphasised the government's plans and measures to insulate citizens from global oil shocks while highlighting the Centre's endeavour to keep the global energy supply routes intact and operational. Briefing the Rajya Sabha on the West Asia crisis, PM Modi made a strong pitch for self-reliance in every sector, including global fuel transportation and maritime corridors. "Atmanirbharta is the only solution to insulate the country and countrymen from global shocks. Presently, about 90 per cent of Indian trade is carried out on foreign ships, making us dependent on foreign players," he said.

Iran gets new security chief: Zolqadr appointed as Larjani's successor

Tehran (TSIT) : Mohammad Baqer Zolqadr has been appointed as the new Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, replacing Ali Larjani who was killed in an Israeli attack last week, the Iranian media reported on Tuesday quoting a statement issued by Mehdi Tabatabai, the Iranian President's Public Relations aide. It was stated that Zolqadr has been appointed with the approval and consent of leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Mojtaba Khamenei and by the decree of President Masoud Pezeshkian. Zolqadr, a veteran commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), used to serve as the Secretary of the Expediency Council.



PM Modi and US President Trump discuss West Asia situation, Strait of Hormuz

New Delhi, March 24 (TSIT) : Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump spoke over phone on Tuesday, discussing the ongoing situation in West Asia and the importance of keeping the Strait of Hormuz open. "President Donald Trump just spoke with Prime Minister Modi. They discussed the ongoing situation in the Middle East, including the importance of keeping the Strait of Hormuz open." US Ambassador to India, Sergio Gor wrote on X. The conversation between both leaders comes amid the ongoing conflict in West Asia which began following the February 28 strikes carried out



by the United States and Israel on Iran, which resulted in the killing of Iran's Supreme

Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. In response, Iran launched drone and missile

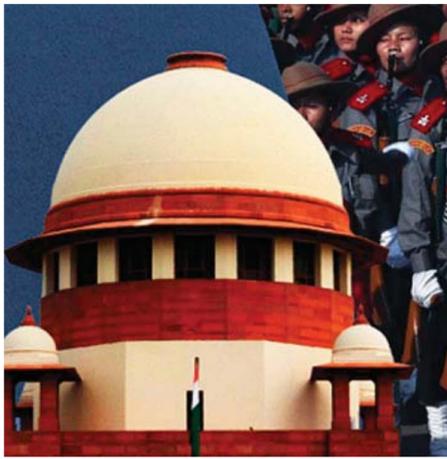
attacks targeting the US and Israeli facilities, regional capitals, and allied forces in West Asia. The conflict has added pressure on global markets and energy prices remain sensitive to developments in the region. President Trump and PM Modi have shared a high-profile political partnership over the years, highlighted by large public events and diplomatic engagements. The two leaders have frequently praised each other publicly, emphasising cooperation in areas such as trade, defence, and strategic partnerships between the United States and India.

SC grants pension relief to women SSC officers denied permanent commission

New Delhi, Mar 24: In a landmark ruling, the Supreme Court of India on Tuesday held that women Short Service Commission (SSC) officers in the armed forces who were denied Permanent Commission (PC) due to arbitrary assessments are entitled to full pensionary benefits.

A bench led by Chief Justice Surya Kant, along with Justices Ujjal Bhuyan and N. Kotiswar Singh, invoked its extraordinary powers to ensure complete justice, ruling that such officers would be "deemed" to have completed the mandatory 20 years of qualifying service for pension, even if they were released earlier.

The verdict came on a batch of petitions, including those filed by Sucheta Edan and others, challenging denial of Permanent Commission following policy changes in 2019 and earlier decisions of the Armed Forces Tribunal.



The court observed that Annual Confidential Reports (ACRs) of women officers were often graded casually under the assumption that they would not be considered for long-term career progression. "This adversely affected their overall merit," the bench

noted. Addressing cases across the Indian Army, Indian Navy, and Indian Air Force, the court found that criteria introduced in 2019—such as service length and performance benchmarks—were implemented hastily, particularly in the Air Force,

depriving officers of a fair chance.

Exercising powers under Article 142 of the Constitution of India, the court directed that, as a one-time measure, all SSC women officers considered for Permanent Commission by selection boards between 2019 and 2021 shall be deemed to have completed 20 years of service. Pension will be calculated accordingly, with effect from November 1, 2025. However, the bench declined to order reinstatement, citing concerns over operational effectiveness, while making it clear that such considerations cannot be used to deny financial benefits. The Centre had earlier defended its policy as gender-neutral, stating that elimination of officers is part of maintaining a youthful profile in the armed forces.

Delhi Assembly budget session begins with 'Kheer Ceremony'



New Delhi, Mar 24: The budget session of the Delhi Legislative Assembly commenced on Monday with the traditional 'Kheer Ceremony', marking the formal start of proceedings.

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta reiterated her government's commitment to the vision of a 'Developed Delhi, Green Delhi', stating that the upcoming budget would play a key role in meeting the

aspirations of nearly 30 million residents of the national capital.

She said the ceremony symbolises prosperity, good fortune, and a commitment to public welfare, values that would be reflected in the forthcoming budget.

The event witnessed participation from various sections of society, including farmers, students, teachers, do-

ctors, members of the transgender community, women drivers, and media personnel. Farmers also honoured the chief minister with a traditional turban. Addressing the gathering, Gupta said the government's second budget would accelerate development in Delhi, strengthening infrastructure and enhancing the overall quality of life for its residents.

PDP MLA proposes new divisions, 16 districts in J&K reorganisation Bill



Srinagar, Mar 24: In a move that could reshape the administrative structure of Jammu and Kashmir, People's Democratic Party MLA Waheed Ur Rehman Para has introduced a Private Member Bill in the Legislative Assembly proposing the creation of two new divisions and 16 districts. The proposed Jammu and Kashmir Territorial Administrative Reorganisation Bill, 2026 seeks to establish a structured legislative framework for carving out administrative units, moving away from what it describes as ad-hoc executive decisions that have historically determined boundaries in the region. The Bill comes amid the Union Territory's ongoing

transition following the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019. At its core, the proposal calls for the creation of two new divisions—Chenab Division with headquarters at Doda and Pir Panjal Division with headquarters at Rajouri—potentially ending the long-standing two-division system of Jammu and Kashmir.

It also proposes 16 new districts, equally divided between Kashmir and Jammu regions. In Kashmir, the suggested districts include Tral-Awantipora, Ashmuqam-Pahalgam, Beerwah, Sopore, Handwara, Gurez, Tangdhar-Karnah and Norabad. In Jammu, eight "hill districts" have been proposed, including Nowshera, Bhadarwah,

Banihal, Thatri, Akhnour, Billawar, Kotranka and Mendhar. The draft emphasises the need to bring governance closer to people in remote and mountainous areas, citing challenges such as difficult terrain, scattered populations and poor connectivity. While framed as an administrative reform, the proposal carries political significance, as demands for separate divisions in regions like Chenab Valley and Pir Panjal have persisted for years, with local leaders alleging marginalisation under the current system.

The Bill also outlines a transparent process for reorganisation, including consultations with District Development Councils, inviting public feedback, and placing reasons for

changes before the Assembly. It empowers the government to reorganise sub-divisions and tehsils based on factors such as population, terrain and accessibility. Although the Financial Memorandum states that the Bill does not involve immediate expenditure, the creation of new administrative units would require substantial investment in infrastructure and staffing over time.

Private Member Bills rarely become law, especially in a Union Territory where key powers rest with the Centre. However, the move is seen as politically significant, signalling an attempt by elected representatives to assert a greater role in shaping governance structures in Jammu and Kashmir.

Murder in Raidighi triggers political clash amid personal motive claims

Kolkata, Mar 24: The discovery of a BJP worker's body in Raidighi, located in South 24 Parganas, led to heightened tension across the region on Tuesday. While the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has alleged a politically motivated killing, police have taken a different stance, arresting the victim's wife and her alleged partner based on a family complaint.

The deceased, Kishor Majhi (39), held the position of vice-president of BJP's Booth No. 216. The incident occurred in Mena village under the Dighirpar Bakultala Gram Panchayat within the Raidighi Assembly constituency.

On Monday night, locals found Majhi's severely injured body near a pond close to his residence. He was immediately taken to the Raidighi Rural Hospital, where doctors declared him dead on arrival.

Police reached the scene soon after being alerted, recovered the body, and sent it for post-mortem. Early findings indicate that the killing may be linked to a personal dispute rather than political rivalry.

During the investigation, three individuals were initially detained. Later, authorities arrested Majhi's wife, Anima Das, along with her alleged partner, Gobinda Haldar. The arrests followed a formal com-

plaint lodged by the victim's father.

A relative of the deceased stated that ongoing domestic conflict, allegedly due to an extramarital relationship involving Haldar, had created tension within the household. The family dismissed any political angle in the case.

Bishwa Chand Thakur, Superintendent of Police for the Sundarbans district, confirmed that both accused are being questioned.

Despite the police's findings, the incident has ignited a political confrontation. BJP leader Palash Rana visited Majhi's residence and accused authorities of attempting to downplay the case. He claimed that the police and local All India Trinamool Congress leadership were misrepresenting the murder as a personal dispute to suppress the truth.

In response, Bapi Haldar of the Trinamool Congress rejected the allegations, asserting that the incident stemmed from a "love triangle" and accusing the BJP of exploiting the situation for political gain. As investigations continue, the case remains at the center of both criminal inquiry and political debate in the region.

Congress flags 'setback' if Pakistan mediating in US-Iran talks



New Delhi, Mar 24: The Indian National Congress on Tuesday said reports suggesting Pakistan may be acting as an intermediary between the United States, Israel and Iran would be a "severe setback" for India if proven true.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said multiple international media reports indicate Pakistan's role in facilitating communication between Washington and Tel Aviv on one side and Tehran on the other. "If these reports are true, they represent a severe setback and rebuff to India," Ramesh said, criticising the government's foreign policy approach.

He claimed that

despite India's "undoubted military successes" in Operation Sindoor, Pakistan has performed better diplomatically in the aftermath, gaining renewed global relevance despite earlier internal and external challenges. Ramesh also alleged growing proximity between Pakistan's establishment and US President Donald Trump, citing recent engagements with Pakistan's military leadership.

The Congress leader further criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi, particularly over his recent visit to Israel shortly before the escalation of hostilities, calling it a "disastrous choice" that weakened India's potential role as a mediator.

Nitish Kumar re-elected JD(U) chief for fifth straight term



Patna, Mar 24: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has been re-elected as the national president of Janata Dal (United) for a fifth consecutive term. The election was held on Tuesday, March 24, where Kumar was elected unopposed as no other candidate filed nomi-

nations for the post. The party had set a deadline of 2.30 pm for withdrawal of nominations, and with no challengers in the fray, his continuation as president was confirmed. According to the party, national election officer Aneel Prasad Hegde was set to issue the official certificate of election to Kumar later in the day. Kumar's re-election comes just days after he was elected as a member of the Rajya Sabha. Several senior party leaders, including working president Sanjay Kumar Jha, Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh, and Bihar minister Shrawan Kumar, are expected to be present during the formal

PM Modi calls for state vigilance as West Asia crisis raises concerns

New Delhi, Mar 24: Narendra Modi on Tuesday urged state governments to strengthen monitoring systems for migrant workers and vulnerable communities, warning that the ongoing conflict in West Asia could pose serious challenges for India in the months ahead. Addressing the Rajya Sabha, the Prime Minister stressed the need for coordinated action between the Centre and states to effectively manage the potential fallout of the crisis.

He highlighted that during periods of uncertainty, economically weaker sections—including labourers and migrant workers—are often the hardest hit. To mitigate this, he called on states to ensure timely delivery of benefits under the PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana and to establish dedicated mechanisms for tracking and addressing the needs of



vulnerable groups. Modi also raised concerns about the possibility of black marketing and hoarding, urging authorities to remain vigilant

and respond swiftly to any such incidents to protect consumers.

Emphasising the importance of unity, he called for a "Team India"

approach to maintain economic stability and growth despite global uncertainties. He encouraged states to continue implementing reforms and take proactive steps to navigate the evolving situation.

Drawing parallels with India's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Prime Minister said that cooperation between the Centre and states had previously ensured effective crisis management, from testing and vaccination to maintaining essential supplies. However, he noted that the current situation is dynamic and requires a different strategy. He urged both governments and citizens to remain patient, alert, and prepared, as the effects of the conflict could be prolonged.

Reassuring the public, Modi said the government is closely monitoring developments and is committed

Adambakkam still without MRTS halt as SR remains tight-lipped about reasons

CHENNAI: Train services on the newly opened MRTS stretch between Velachery and St Thomas Mount have brought a sigh of relief to many commuters but those who had hoped for a stoppage at Adambakkam railway station continue to be sorely disappointed, as the Southern Railway remains tight-lipped on the reasons and timeline for not introducing a halt.



The Southern Railway's construction wing, which is executing works at the station, has also not clarified what caused the delay or the issues flagged during the inspection by the Chief Commissioner of Railway Safety (CCRS), Janak Kumar Garg. "They are yet to hand over the station to us," said an SR official from the

Chennai division. While passenger amenities including escalators and lifts are being installed at both Adambakkam and Puzhuthivakkam stations, trains are halting only at the latter, with Adambakkam being skipped citing 'operational reasons'. Meanwhile, videos circulating on X have drawn attention to a possi-

ble design concern at the station. Footage shared online shows a noticeable gap between the train and platform where the track curves. "This is why MRTS trains don't stop at Adambakkam. Authorities had nearly 20 years to fix it. As the track curves, the platform gap widens significantly, posing a serious safety

risk," said Amrit Subramaniam on X. Following the extension of MRTS services to St Thomas Mount, SR has reported a sharp increase in ridership. Footfall at Velachery station has risen from around 35,000 to nearly 70,000 commuters since March 14, reflecting strong public response to the long-pending link. However, the absence of a stop at Adambakkam continues to frustrate residents.

"It looks like we need to wait some more and travel to St Thomas Mount for my commute," lamented Sahana, a resident of SBI Colony in Adambakkam. With no clear timeline from railway authorities, commuters remain uncertain about when trains will begin halting at the station.

Tamil Nadu: 26 degrees approved for jobs in public service

CHENNAI: In order to provide clarity on the qualifications required for jobs in public service, the Higher Education Department has approved more than 20 degrees offered by various universities. A decision was taken in this regard at the 39th equivalence committee meeting recently, which recommended 26 degree courses for 2026-2027 as equivalent. The department secretary P Shankar, in a GO, said that BSc Advanced Zoology and Biotechnology offered by Government Arts College Coimbatore, affiliated to Bharathiar University, was equivalent to BSc Zoology for the purpose of employment in public services. Similarly, MSc (five-year integrated course) Life Sciences awarded by Bharathidasan University was equivalent to MSc Zoology, and BSc Computer Science awarded by Bharathiar University is equivalent to BSc Computer Application.

Ten AI-focused startups pitch at YNOS Gladiator event

CHENNAI: Ten early-stage startups pitched AI-led solutions at 'Gladiator: The Startup Pitch Arena', (AI Edition 2026) organised by YNOS, bringing together founders, investors and incubation heads for early-stage funding discussions. Atlas, Chillbot, Prediscan, Sky1, Embryo, Farm Vaidya, Sudama Health, Sustainabyte, Gogo cabs and Wacto presented healthtech, agri-tech, mobility, energy and enterprise solutions.



Prediscan, led by Dr Karthik, showcased an AI-based retinal scan that detects cardiovascular risk within 60 seconds using existing hospital infrastructure, and is currently under clinical trials. Sudama Health present-

ed a nurse-led telemedicine model for rural areas, integrating diagnostics and AI-backed systems. Sustainabyte pitched an AI platform to optimise energy consumption in chiller systems, while Farm Vaidya, led by Ramaru Pravin, demonstrated a voice-based advisory platform delivering multilingual farm guidance through phone calls. Chillbot presented a robotic beverage dispens-

ing system for hospitality applications, while Gogo cabs was among the mobility-focused pitches. Investors including Kaushik Srikanth (The Chennai Angels), Mitali Agarwal (IN44 Capital), Chandran Krishnan (The Campus Angels), Joseph Basker (FinCetus Solutions), Yurek Raj (Greater Pacific Capital) and others from angel networks and venture funds attended the event.

Tamil Nadu: Lawyer arrested under PocsO Act



CHENNAI: A 31-year-old lawyer was arrested on Tuesday for sexually assaulting a 12-year-old girl over a period of time. The survivor's father, who works as a ministerial staff at a local police station, lodged a complaint at the Tirumangalam All Women Police Station that his daughter was

sexually assaulted at their home on Monday. Their relative, the lawyer, entered her residence when she was alone and sexually assaulted her. She shared the ordeal with an administrator at her dance school, who informed her parents. A case under the PocsO Act was registered, and the

India launches first global study on Ayurveda as add-on TB treatment

New Delhi, Mar 24: Marking World Tuberculosis Day, India has announced the world's first clinical study to scientifically evaluate Ayurveda as a complementary therapy alongside standard Anti-Tuberculosis Treatment (ATT).

The study is a joint initiative between the Department of Biotechnology and the Ministry of Ayush. It will enrol 1,250 newly diagnosed tuberculosis patients across eight institutions to assess the impact of Ayurveda when used alongside conventional treatment.

The research will focus on key health indicators such as body weight, nutrition, disease progression, quality of life, safety, and tolerability. It aims to provide scientific evidence on whether integrative approaches can improve recovery outcomes in TB patients.

Union Minister of State for



Science and Technology Jitendra Singh said the initiative reflects a "whole-of-science" and "whole-of-government" approach by combining modern biotechnology with traditional medicine systems. Rabinarayan Acharya noted that the project has progressed through extensive consultations

and protocol approvals, while Debasisa Mohanty highlighted that advanced tools such as DEXA scans, MRI, immune profiling, metabolomics, and single-cell RNA sequencing will be used to study the disease in depth. India, which accounts for nearly 25% of the global tubercu-

losis burden, has seen a 21% decline in TB incidence over the past decade, reaching around 187 cases per 100,000 population in 2024. Quoting Narendra Modi, Singh said the progress reflects sustained national efforts toward eliminating TB. Under the National TB

Elimination Programme, the country has intensified early diagnosis, universal drug susceptibility testing, digital adherence technologies, and patient-centric care.

न्यायालय : द्वितीय अति. प्रधान न्यायाधीश, कुटुंब न्यायालय रायपुर (छ.ग.) (पौडासीन अधिकारी - डी.एन. भगत)
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 * अनावेदक - पता क्र-1- उम्र 36 वर्ष, निवासी श्री जयंती जैन, निवासी नं. 27/32, विजय नगरी हाउस, प्रभाकर, श्रीनिवास अड्डा, स्ट्रीट 7 बंगला, श्री महिंद्र के पास, राव कान्हेय, चेन्नई (तमिलनाडु), 600001
 पता-क्र. 02-साल मुकाम-35/18, रामकृष्ण, 7 वें बंगला, चेन्नई (तमिलनाडु) 600001.
 उपरोक्त आवेदिका डॉ.ती. राना 34 वर्ष, निवासी पुन सिंह राना, संवय नगर उडको रोड, राजपुर वृष्ठी आगरा (छ.ग.), हाल मुकाम प्लाट नं.-8, शिव विला, सेंट जोसेफ टाउन, अमलीबीह, रायपुर, जिला-रायपुर छ.ग. के द्वारा आवेदक किन्हे एक अवेदक पर अवेदिका धारा 13 हि.वि.अ. का मामला माननीय न्यायालय के समक्ष प्रस्तुत किया गया है। अतः आप को सूचित किया जाता है कि आप दिनांक 16.04.2026 को दिन के 11:00 बजे इस न्यायालय के समक्ष व्यक्तिगत रूप से (स्वयं) उपस्थित होकर अपना जवाब / कथन प्रस्तुत करें। यदि आप अपने पक्ष में कोई लिखित तथ्य / दस्तावेज प्रस्तुत करना चाहे तो वह भी उपरोक्त दिनांक 16.04.2026 को प्रस्तुत कर सकते हैं। यह सूचना दिनांक को सार्वजनिक अकाशवाणी से जाता है अथवा किसी कार्यालय न्यायालय की कार्यवाही स्थिति हो जाती है, तो अगले कार्यालयीन कार्यदिन पर प्रकरण की सुनवाई की जावेगी। मेरे हस्ताक्षर एवं न्यायालय की मूहर से आज तारीख 2 माह 03 मं. 2026 को जारी किया गया।
 स्थान: रायपुर दिनांक 02/03/2026
द्वितीय अति. प्रधान न्यायाधीश, कुटुंब न्यायालय रायपुर (छ.ग.)

Blue Monday isn't real, but sadness is – and it plays a vital role in children's development

January can feel exhausting. With the magic of Christmas and New Year fading fast, returning to routine brings with it an undeniable emotional slump. But is it really the saddest month?

The idea of "Blue Monday" caught on in 2005, when British psychologist Cliff Arnall announced that he had identified the saddest day of the year using a mathematical formula that factored in climate, post-holiday debt, and dwindling motivation in keeping up with New Year's resolutions. The scientific community quickly (and correctly) dismissed the idea as pseudoscience – far from a psychological finding, Arnall's formula was revealed to be a marketing ploy designed for a travel agency. The agency's proposed cure for the winter blues was, naturally, to purchase a holiday.

You can't schedule sadness. Blue Monday continues to appear each January in the media and in ad campaigns, despite a total lack of evidence that one specific day on the calendar is linked to an overall peak in unhappiness.

Sadness is a complex human response, not a programmed event. While winter weather can certainly affect your mood, there are commercial interests surrounding the concept of sadness, which seek to influence behaviour by encouraging people to consume objects or experiences.

Indeed, some brands have made sadness into a profitable resource, presenting products or experiences as solutions to the same unhappiness they perpetuate. They use the idea of the "saddest day of the year" to influence consumption patterns, leveraging the "misery is not miserly" effect which links low emotional states to increased spending.

This kind of marketing can also influence the emotional dynamics of many households.



It creates expectations that are difficult to fulfil, encourages materialism, and creates tensions between adults and children. This all feeds into broader feelings of unhappiness.

But there is further risk when these messages reach children directly. When young people are told that "negative" emotions can be combatted through shopping or digital, artificial distractions, it weakens their ability to recognise, understand and manage what they feel. This makes it vital that we factor media discourse into children's emotional education.

Sadness and the developing mind from an obstacle to be overcome, sadness plays a fundamental role in children's development. At a very early age, they learn that expressing sadness can gain them the support

of parents and carers, and that in most cases, it is much more effective than other emotions in getting attention and solace.

Furthermore, sadness helps to readjust goals after a failure, allowing children to modify their approaches and expectations in the face of adverse situations. It also drives introspection processes that allow children to reflect on what they feel, their values, and how they relate to others. Experiencing sadness therefore contributes to moral growth.

Emotions linked to loss, disappointment and injustice help children to build their sense of right and wrong, develop sensitivity to the suffering of others, and strengthen their empathy. In fact, recent studies have found that experiencing sadness is linked to an increased ability to put oneself in another's shoes.

Adult responses to sadness. The way adults respond to sadness has a decisive impact on how children learn to manage it. A warm, sensitive and caring family environment benefits emotional development, while tense, cold and critical interactions hinder it. Family dynamics – the emotional models that determine the quality of conversations and availability of support – are what shape the way a child interprets and expresses sadness. School and social environments are also key. Children who feel supported not only experience sadness less intensely, but also develop greater confidence to cope with it.

Guiding children in recognising and managing sadness is a way to help them develop resilience. When they learn strategies for coping with difficult emotions – talking, asking for help, putting their feelings into words, identifying what they need – they acquire internal resources that enable them to face future challenges. This resilience translates into stronger self-esteem and a more realistic and confident perception of their own abilities.

Cultural values and beliefs also play a part in determining which expressions of sadness are accepted, considered appropriate, or suppressed. This means the expression and regulation of sadness vary significantly between cultural and social environments. Understanding these differences allows us to better support children's emotional processes, and avoid misinterpreting their behaviour. When faced with commercial messages like those surrounding Blue Monday, adults must recognise that this emotion is a natural part of growing up – not just one day of the year – and offer children spaces where they can feel heard, supported and understood.

Demographic crisis: China tries everything to make babies

Declaring childbirth a patriotic act. Nagging newlyweds about family planning. Taxing condoms. To get its citizens to have babies, the Chinese Communist Party has pulled every lever. The efforts have largely failed.

For the fourth year in a row, China reported more deaths than births in 2025 as its birth rate plunged to a record low, leaving its population smaller and older. The government said 7.92 million babies were born last year, down from 9.54 million in 2024. The number of people who died in 2025, 11.31 million, continued to climb. The latest figures were reported alongside economic data showing China's economy grew 5% in 2025. The number of births for every 1,000 people fell to 5.63, the lowest level on record since the founding of the People's Republic of China, according to official data.

Around the world, governments are contending with falling birth rates. But the problem is more acute for China: Fewer babies mean fewer future workers to support a rapidly growing cohort of retirees. A worsening economy has made addressing the challenge even more difficult. "China is facing a severe challenge posed by an extremely low fertility rate," said Wu Fan, a professor of family policy at Nankai University. China's top leaders have redoubled their efforts to try to boost the national birth rate enough to reverse the decline, something that demographers said is probably impossible now that China has crossed a demographic threshold where its fertility rate is so low that its population is shrinking.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
NATIONAL COMPANY LAW TRIBUNAL, AHMEDABAD BENCH-I
 1st and 2nd Floor, Corporate Bhawan, Beside Zydus Hospital, Off S.G. Highway, Thaltej, Ahmedabad-380 059. Phone No. (079) 2685 4591, Email: courtoffice-ahm@nclt.gov.in
PUBLICATION NOTICE OF NEXT DATE OF HEARING.
IA/462 (AHM) 2023 in CP(IB) 5 of 2017
Mr. Kedarram Ramratan Laddha, Ex-Liquidator and Authorised Representative of M/s. Steel Konnect (India) Private Limited
V/s
Mr. Varun Vijay Gupta & Ors.
NCLT/AHM/Pub/ IA/462(AHM)2023 in CP(IB) 5 of 2017/504/2026.
 An application under Section 14, 17(1)(D), 68, 70 to 74 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 was filed by Mr. Kedarram Ramratan Laddha, Ex-Liquidator and Authorised Representative of M/s. Steel Konnect (India) Private Limited and was listed for hearing on 17.02.2026 and the said application is now fixed for hearing before the Hon'ble Tribunal, NCLT Ahmedabad on 06.04.2026.
 As per the direction issued by the Hon'ble Tribunal vide its order dated 17.02.2026, the Respondents, Mr. Varun Vijay Gupta (R-1), Mrs. Chitra Gandhi (R-4), PDS&A Steel Solution Private Limited (R-5), Mr. Rajendra G. Rabari (R-6) and Mr. Chandresh R. Patel (R-7) are hereby directed to remain present through himself or its directors or authorized person or through an advocate or professional duly appointed by you, as may be advised on 06.04.2026 at 10.30 A.M. before the National Company Law Tribunal, Ahmedabad Bench-I. You are further directed to file reply, if any, within two weeks physically as well as through e-mode from the date of publication of notice with advance copy to opposite side.
 TAKE NOTICE that in default of your appearance on the specified day & time the matter will be heard and determined in your absence in accordance with the provisions of law.
 Date: 24.02.2026
 Place: Ahmedabad
 Sd/-
 Court Officer
 NCLT Ahmedabad Bench-I

NORTHERN ARC CAPITAL LIMITED
 Regd. Office: 10th Floor, Phase-I, IIT-Madras Research Park, Kanagapuram, Village, Taramani, Chennai - 600113, Tamil Nadu.
RULE - 8(1) - POSSESSION NOTICE
 Whereas, The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Northern Arc Capital Ltd under Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued a Demand Notice dated 18th March, 2025 calling upon the Borrower (1) M/S.KUMAR AUTOMOBILES (Business Name) (2) Mr. M SIVAKUMAR (Borrower) & (3) Mrs. S LAKSHMI (Co Borrower) having address at Door No 19/12, Amirthammal Colony, Agaram, Jawahar Nagar, Chennai-600082 Tamil Nadu., to repay the amount mentioned in the notice INR 36,53,822 (Rupees Thirty Six Lakh Fifty Three Thousand Eight Hundred Twenty Two Only) as on 12th March, 2025 within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower/ Guarantor/Co Borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Physical Possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him / her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on this possession notice dated 23rd March, 2026.
 The Borrower/Guarantor/Co Borrower and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of Northern Arc Capital Ltd for an amount of INR 36,53,822 (Rupees Thirty Six Lakh Fifty Three Thousand Eight Hundred Twenty Two Only) as on 12th March 2025, costs, etc. thereon
DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY
 All That Piece and Parcel Of Land and Building Situated at Plot No.4 Part, Old Door No.19, New Door No.12, Amirthammal Colony, Peravallur Village, Purasawalkkam-Perambur Taluka, Chennai District, Comprised In R.S. No. 34/4, Part and 34/5 Part, T.S. No.32, Block No.23, T.S. No.184, Block No.26, Patta C.No.255/83, As Per Patta T.S.No.1/16, Measuring For An Extent Of 866Sq.ft. Out Of 1730 Sq.ft. Southern Being As Per New T.S.No.1/23, As Bounded, North : Settlement Of Property For M. Murali; South-Property In T.S.No.1/61 East-Amirthammal Colony; West-Plot No. 3, Measuring 40 Feet;North To South On The Northern Side : 44 Feet; East To West On The Southern Side : 40 Feet;North To South On The Eastern Side : 20 Feet 9 Inches;North To South On The Western Side : 20 Feet 6 Inches, Situate Within The Registration District Of North Chennai And Sub-Registration District Of Sembiam.
 Place: Chennai, Tamil Nadu
 Dated: 25th March 2026
 Sd/-
 Authorized Officer
NORTHERN ARC CAPITAL LIMITED

EDITORIAL

The \$2 Trillion Wipeout: How The Market Exposed Gold's Biggest Lie

A recent collapse of gold and silver prices, erasing nearly \$2 trillion in market value within hours, appears to defy macroeconomic logic but should not be read as some market anomaly. It can be better understood as a structural inflexion point on how volatile markets are eroding trust and faith in secured instruments of investment. When geopolitical logic allows a surge in safe-haven demand amid one of the sharpest military escalations in West Asia seen in decades, precious metals witnessed a violent sell-off. This inversion of historical behaviour signals a deeper transition: the displacement of geopolitics by monetary liquidity as the primary driver of global asset prices. From War Premium to Rate Shock The immediate trigger was geopolitical. The February 28 US-Israel strikes on Iranian infrastructure, combined with threats to disrupt the Strait of Hormuz, which carries nearly 20% of global oil and LNG flows, pushed Brent crude above \$119 per barrel, a surge of around \$50 per barrel. Historically, such conditions would generate a "gold-to-war" rally. Instead, markets processed the shock through a different channel. Rising energy prices fuel inflation, prompting expectations of tighter monetary policy; this drives up real interest rates, increasing the opportunity cost of holding non-yielding assets like gold and consequently exerting downward pressure on its price. This transmission mechanism reflects a regime shift. Oil no longer drives gold directly; it operates through central bank reaction functions. Elevated crude prices reinforced expectations of a "higher-for-longer" rate environment, effectively neutralising gold's inflation-hedge appeal. Empirically, the divergence was stark: gold fell approximately 3.8% intraday despite escalating conflict, silver declined over 7%, reflecting both financial and industrial stress, gold posted consistent weekly declines throughout the escalation period. The safe-haven function did not merely weaken; it failed under conditions where it should have been strongest.

Yield-Bearing Safety Replaces Gold

The more fundamental driver lies in the transformation of global monetary conditions. The nomination of Kevin Warsh as Federal Reserve Chair introduced a credible expectation of aggressive quantitative tightening and sustained policy rigidity. Markets rapidly repriced. American 10-year yields rose to around 4.3% (more than half a year high), 30-year yields approached 4.8%, signalling long-term inflation persistence, rate hike probabilities re-entered forward curves for late 2026.

This redefined the concept of safety.

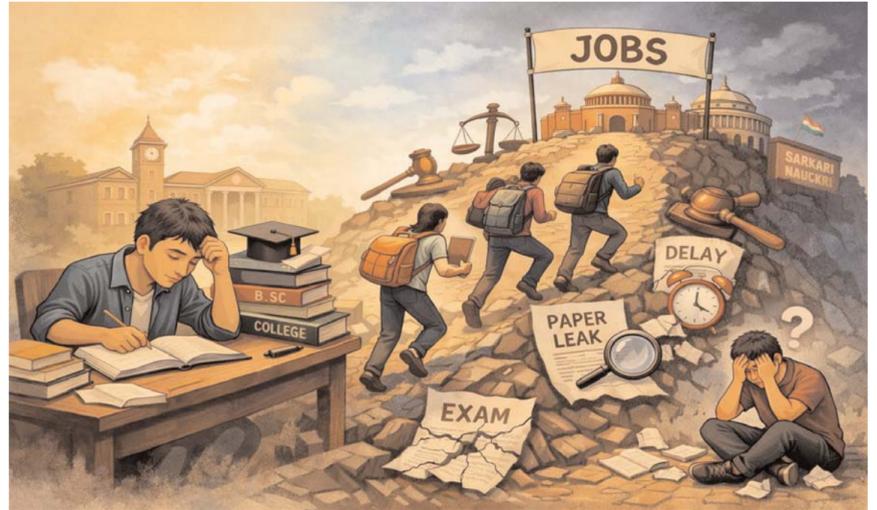
Gold, a non-yielding asset, must now compete against sovereign instruments offering 4-5% nominal returns. The opportunity cost is no longer theoretical - it is quantifiable and immediate. Safety has shifted from "store of value" to "store of value with yield". In such a regime, even geopolitical crises fail to offset the gravitational pull of real returns. Capital allocation becomes a function of yield differentials, not fear. The Mechanics of Collapse While macro conditions explain direction, they do not explain velocity. The scale of the \$2 trillion wipeout reflects market structure fragility, particularly the role of leverage. The 2025 rally during which gold rose over 60% was accompanied by elevated speculative positioning (over 60,000 COMEX long contracts in silver) and record ETF inflows of around 4,000 tonnes, as well as increased use of leveraged derivatives and algorithmic strategies. When prices began to correct, the system transitioned from equilibrium to cascade - technical breakdown below key levels (\$4,708 Fibonacci; \$4,400 psychological), margin calls on leveraged positions, forced liquidations across futures and ETFs, liquidity withdrawal, creating "air pockets" in order books. Exchanges amplified the process; margin requirements for silver were raised by over 15%, forcing additional deleveraging.

LOSING EDUCATION IN THE RACE FOR A JOB



PRIYANKA SAURABH

Today's youth is experiencing a time when opportunities abound, but the path to access them has become more complex and competitive than ever before. The increasing number of competitive exams, their lengthy procedures, and uncertain results, particularly for government jobs, have left both students and parents deeply confused. The CET (Common Eligibility Test) was presented as a major hope in this context, but the experiences of the past years raise serious questions about this hope. In Haryana, the examination process failed to gain the desired momentum during the five-year period between 2019 and 2024. As a result, only one examination was fully completed during this period, and some related recruitments are still entangled in judicial proceedings. Even in the 2024-25 cycle, only the preliminary examination has been conducted so far. Given the slow pace at which the entire process is progressing, it is not unfounded to fear that the final results may take a long time to be released. But this problem isn't limited to Haryana. The situation with government recruitment processes is more or less similar in almost all states. Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and even the northeastern states have consistently faced problems such as delayed recruitment exams, paper leaks, judicial disputes, and delayed results. In many states,



exams aren't held for years, and when they are, the process is so lengthy that it tests both the age and patience of candidates. This has a profound impact on the mental, educational, and social lives of young people. Every year, millions of students graduate and seek employment, but the number of available government positions remains extremely limited. For example, if millions of candidates across the country appear for a single exam, the number of those selected is limited to thousands. In such a situation, considering government employment as the ultimate goal and relying solely on it becomes an extremely risky decision. The most worrying aspect of this entire scenario is the rapid spread of a "non-attendance" culture. A trend is being observed in almost every state of the country, where students are avoiding regular college and university classes in the name of preparing for competitive exams. They assume that to achieve success, they must completely break away from the traditional education system. But this thinking is gradually proving detrimental to

their future. In fact, college life isn't just about earning a degree. It's a time when a student's intellectual, social, and emotional development takes place. Class participation, interaction with teachers, group discussions, presentations, and co-curricular activities—all of these contribute to the development of a person's personality. When students lose these opportunities, they lose out not only on subject knowledge but also on essential life skills. Another serious side effect of the non-attendance culture is that students' academic foundations weaken. They become focused solely on passing exams rather than delving deeply into the subject matter. Often, after failing competitive exams, they are left with neither a strong academic record nor any alternative career options. As a result, they lose confidence and suffer from mental stress. It's also worth noting that today's world is extremely technologically advanced. Digital platforms have revolutionized education. Online coaching, video lectures, digital notes, test series, and virtual classrooms are available in every corner of

the country. Therefore, the idea that it's necessary to drop out of college to prepare for competitive exams is completely misguided. Students can prepare effectively alongside their regular studies. By adopting a balanced and practical strategy, students can make the best use of the three years of their undergraduate education. In the first year, they should focus on their studies and engage with general knowledge, newspapers, and current affairs. This strengthens their intellectual foundation. In the second year, they can strengthen their grasp of subjects like mathematics, reasoning, and language. They can also clarify their basic concepts through NCERT books. By the final year, they should make a clear decision whether they want to pursue higher education or pursue competitive exams. Higher education and private sector opportunities are also rapidly expanding across various states in the country. New doors are opening for youth in fields such as IT, management, healthcare, startups, skill-based jobs, and freelancing.

What Iran Might Really Demand From Trump Before It Backs Down

As the fourth week of the US-Israeli military campaign against Iran unfolds in March 2026, what is emerging is not merely another episode of kinetic escalation in the Middle East, but a familiar interplay between coercion and diplomacy that has long defined Washington's engagement with Tehran. President Donald Trump, never one to shy away from grand declarations, has signalled movement toward what he calls a "comprehensive resolution" even as the fog of war continues to obscure both intent and outcome.



The trajectory to this moment has been predictable in its broad contours. Deadlines issued in 2025 demanding Iran's complete nuclear rollback - cessation of enrichment, dismantling of infrastructure, and abandonment of proxy networks - were never likely to be met on American terms. The subsequent resort to force, led by Israeli strikes and reinforced by US strikes on nuclear and leadership targets, reflects a classic escalation ladder: diplomacy first as an ultimatum, then as justification for military action. Tehran, for its part, has stayed consistent in its denials of nuclear weapon ambitions even as its regional posture and capabilities have drawn sustained scrutiny.

The Choreography Around The Talks

Trump's announcement on March 23 of "very good and productive conversations" with Iranian representatives, alongside claims of near-total agreement, must be read less as a breakthrough and more as a tactical pause. The much-touted 15-point framework, still shrouded in secrecy, appears to follow the logic of maximalist demands softened by the promise of sanc-

tions relief and normalisation. Nuclear disarmament remains non-negotiable in Washington's framing, with Trump underscoring that Iran "is not going to have a nuclear weapon" - a reiteration that collapses diplomacy into a singular objective. Yet, what is equally striking is the choreography around the negotiations. The emergence of Pakistan as a mediator, with a high-level summit in Islamabad reportedly involving figures such as Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, reflects a pragmatic widening of diplomatic channels. The involvement of familiar Trump-era interlocutors like Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner suggests that back-channel diplomacy remains central to this effort, even as public rhetoric oscillates between conciliation and coercion.

At its core, this approach is vintage Trump: a fusion of "maximum pressure" with transactional deal-making. Iran is cast as a long-standing destabiliser, its nuclear ambitions framed as imminent and existential, particularly for Israel. Military action, in this narrative, becomes both punitive and preventative - degrading capabilities while forcing Tehran to the negotiating table before any potential "breakout" moment. The

subsequent offer of a deal is positioned as magnanimity, though it leaves little room for Iranian agency beyond capitulation.

What's At Stake

The proposed framework, if it indeed mandates the physical removal of enriched uranium, possibly with external facilitation, marks a significant escalation in demands compared to earlier nuclear agreements. It also raises questions about sovereignty and enforceability that Tehran is unlikely to concede easily. Iran's outright denial of formal talks underscores this tension, while scepticism in Israeli strategic circles points to fears of premature de-escalation that could dilute hard-won military gains.

Should the framework hold - and that remains a considerable "if" - the implications would be far-reaching. A verifiable dismantling of Iran's nuclear programme, coupled with constraints on its proxy networks, would significantly alter the regional balance. Energy markets, long hostage to instability in the Strait of Hormuz, could stabilise, offering relief to a jittery global economy. For Washington, it would represent a reaffirmation of non-proliferation credibility

without the burdens of prolonged military engagement.

What Failure Could Look Like

But the risks are equally stark. Iran's strategic culture, shaped by resilience under pressure, suggests that any pause may well be tactical. Failure of talks could trigger intensified strikes on critical infrastructure, asymmetric retaliation across the region, and further volatility in energy flows. Divergences between Washington and Jerusalem, particularly if speed is prioritised over strategic depth, could complicate alliance dynamics. Moreover, the broader signal this sends to other aspirant nuclear states remains ambiguous: coercion may deter, but inconsistency could just as easily embolden.

What is being witnessed is not a clean pivot from war to peace, but a continuation of conflict through different means. Trump's 15-point framework embodies this duality - an attempt to translate battlefield leverage into diplomatic closure. Whether it delivers a genuine reset or merely a temporary lull will depend not on rhetoric but on the hard realities of verification, compliance, and mutual distrust.

'UNDECLARED EMERGENCY' IN BENGAL



After you read this column, you may want to Google Article 356 (1) of the Constitution of India. To put it in a sentence, under this Article, the Union government can assume powers and responsibilities of a state legislature, take over the working of the state and govern it through the office of the President. Which is why it is also known as President's Rule. In June 2021, Narendra Modi had tweeted, "The Dark Days of Emergency can never be forgotten. The period from 1975 to 1977 witnessed a systematic destruction of institutions. Let us pledge to do everything possible to strengthen India's democratic spirit, and live up to the values enshrined in our Constitution".

Empty words.

In the last week, a Chief Minister and two former Chief Ministers have spoken up. Omar Abdullah: "These sweeping transfers only happen in non-BJP ruled states & especially in West Bengal but that's no surprise. However, West Bengal will

once again prove what I have always believed to be true - officers don't win elections for political parties, the leaders of political parties do. No amount of effort by the Election Commission to gerrymander will change the results. Come counting day Mamata Didi will win a thumping majority". Akhilesh Yadav: "The conspiracy the BJP is plotting by removing the DG of police, other senior officials in West Bengal, will not work. The people will vote for Mamata Banerjee". Arvind Kejriwal: "The BJP has turned the Election Commission into its weapon to win elections through deceit. What is happening today in West Bengal is exactly what happened in the Delhi elections as well. Names were struck off the voter list, the police administration gave free rein to the BJP's thuggery, and the entire administration was engaged in ensuring the BJP's victory. The very fabric of democracy was torn apart. Today, Mamata Didi too is fighting to save democracy. In this struggle, we stand with her". Then, on the

floor of Parliament, your columnist said: "The Home Ministry should ensure they perform (their duties) in Parliament. But currently, the Home Ministry is more interested in doing an 'undeclared Emergency' in Bengal". All this is not hollow rhetoric. Here is what is happening. Transfer of senior officials of the state government: Within hours of the announcement of the elections in Bengal, the Election Commission of India (ECI) issued unilateral directions to transfer senior officials, without any rationale or explanation. These included the Chief Secretary, the Home Secretary, the DGP, and hundreds of other officials from different departments at various levels. All this being done, without consulting the state government, is both unusual and unprecedented. Another example of the ECI being a law unto themselves. Electors, candidates under 'adjudication': At the time of writing, there is still no clarity on who is eligible to vote, and who is not. 60 lakh names in Bengal are up in

the air. Even some candidates are in this list of 'to be adjudicated'. With elections weeks away, when will all these pending claims be resolved? Why is the right of a genuine citizen to vote, or stand for election, under threat? Deployment of 2 lakh central forces: 480 companies of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) have already been deployed in Bengal. Indications are that the ECI will deploy another 2,000 companies. This will take the total number of CAPF personnel to over two lakh. 700 companies will be retained in the state, even after polling is completed. Unprecedented. Model Code of Conduct (MCC): The MCC comes into effect immediately after the announcement of election dates. Consider this: On 14 March, Narendra Modi visits Bengal and announces developmental projects. On March 14, Narendra Modi visits Assam and announces developmental projects. On March 15, the ECI announces the dates for the elections. What a glorious coincidence!

OIL TRADERS BET MILLIONS MINUTES BEFORE TRUMP'S IRAN TALKS POST

Traders bet hundreds of millions of dollars on oil contracts just minutes before US President Donald Trump announced on Monday that the US would postpone strikes against Iranian energy infrastructure. Market data reviewed by the BBC shows the volume of trade spiked around fifteen minutes before a social media post by the president announcing the move. The price of oil fell sharply after the announcement, dropping 14% in a matter of minutes. Traders who bet on the unexpected move would have made money. Some market analysts say the unusual activity opens up the possibility that the bets may have been placed with prior knowledge of the decision. The BBC has contacted the White House for comment. A spokesman told the Financial Times that it did not "tolerate any administration official illegally profiting off of insider knowledge". Global financial markets have been rocked by the Middle East conflict, with share prices sliding as the cost of oil and gas soared, but on several occasions hope of a potential end to the war has seen volatile movements with oil falling sharply and stock markets rising. On Saturday, Trump threatened to "obliterate"



Iran's power plants if it did not re-open the Strait of Hormuz, through which about 20% of the world's oil and gas normally pass, within 48 hours. Markets were closed that day, but fell sharply across Asia when they re-opened on Monday morning, while the price of oil started to climb. However, at 07:04 Eastern Time (11:04 GMT) on Monday, before US markets opened for the week, the president posted on his Truth Social platform that Washington had held "VERY GOOD AND PRODUCTIVE CONVERSATIONS" with Tehran over a "COMPLETE AND TOTAL RESOLUTION" to hostilities. Immediately, stocks bounced and the price of oil dipped to as low as \$84 (£63) per barrel for the bench-

mark US price. Observers have since scrutinised what happened in financial markets in the minutes leading up to the president's post. At 06:49 ET, traders placed 734 bets on WTI crude oil contracts on the New York Mercantile Exchange (Nymex). One minute later, that number had jumped to 2,168. That's equivalent to about \$170m. The same pattern can be seen in traders buying contracts for Brent crude, the other major oil benchmark. Between 06:48 and 06:50 ET, the volume of trades rose from 20 to more than 1,650. That's about \$150m in contracts. Data for previous Mondays shows that far fewer trades are normally made at that time of day.

Similar trades also happened on Monday with futures contracts for the S&P 500, Euro Stoxx 50, and other markets. This means traders placed bets on the value of the largest firms listed in the US and Europe rising minutes before Trump's announcement. "This appears abnormal, for sure," says Mukesh Sahdev, chief oil analyst at XAnalysts. "At that time, there were no indications that any serious talks had been taking place between the US and Iran. So to place so much money on oil going down raises questions". The timing of the bets has raised questions over whether they were made with prior knowledge of the president's announcement. "Just before he posted on

social media, quite a lot of people took out contracts that would allow them to profit from the oil price falling," said Rachel Winter, a partner at the wealth management firm Killik & Co. "So there has been some speculation about insider trading. We don't know if that's true, but hopefully there will be some sort of investigation into that," she added. Later on Monday, the Iranian government denied that any talks had taken place, calling them "fake news". Oil prices crept up again after those comments. In a post on X, the Speaker of Iran's parliament, Mohammad-Bagher Ghalibaf, said "fake news is used to manipulate the financial and oil markets and escape the quagmire in which the US and Israel are trapped." The BBC has contacted the US financial regulator, the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, as well as the Financial Conduct Authority in the UK. This is not the first time that US foreign policy has been linked to a flurry of betting activity. In January, wagers surged on Polymarket, a crypto-powered predictions platform, as gamblers bet on Venezuela's president Nicolás Maduro being out of power by the end of the month.

Elon Musk's Starlink blocked from operating in Namibia



Namibia has rejected an application by Elon Musk-owned Starlink for a licence to provide satellite internet services in the country, dealing the company a second setback in southern Africa. The Communications Regulatory Authority of Namibia (Cran) announced the decision without giving reasons for its refusal, but noted that Starlink's Namibian subsidiary did not have local ownership. Starlink has not yet commented on the decision. It operates in about 25 African countries but has faced regulatory challenges in others, including South Africa, where ownership rules have also blocked its entry. Namibian law requires that at least 51% shares in any telecommunications company must be owned by citizens or local entities. Namibia is a former colony of Germany, and was under the rule of South Africa's white-minority regime until it gained independence in 1990. It then adopted policies aimed at increasing local ownership in businesses and tackling racial inequality. On its website, Starlink says it has established a local company that will partner with Namibian firms and create employment opportunities. Cran

He has strongly criticised the country's black economic empowerment policies, alleging that they act as a barrier to foreign investment. The government challenged this view, saying Starlink was welcome to operate in South Africa "provided there's compliance with local laws". It also noted that more than 600 US companies, including computing giant Microsoft, were operating in South Africa in compliance with its laws - and "thriving". The black empowerment policies were introduced after white-minority rule ended in 1994, in an attempt to tackle the racial injustices of the past. This has included adopting legislation requiring investors to give local black firms a 30% stake in businesses in South Africa. Starlink provides internet services via a huge network of satellites.

SBI MUTUAL FUND FILES DRAFT PAPERS WITH SEBI FOR IPO

Highlights

■ SBI Mutual Fund, the country's largest fund house, on Thursday filed preliminary papers with capital markets regulator SEBI to raise funds through an initial public offering (IPO).

March 2026: SBI Mutual Fund, the country's largest fund house, on Thursday filed preliminary papers with capital markets regulator SEBI to raise funds through an initial public offering (IPO). The proposed maiden public offering is entirely an offer for sale (OFS) of up to 20.37 crore equity shares, with no fresh issue component, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP). The offering will see promoters, State Bank of India (SBI) and Amundi India Holding, pare their stakes. SBI Funds Management Ltd is a joint venture between SBI and Paris-based Amundi, holding 61.98 per cent and 36.40 per cent stake, respective-

ly. The company is the country's largest asset management firm, with a quarterly average assets under management (QAAUM) of nearly Rs 12.5 lakh crore as of December 2025. SBI Mutual Fund, sponsored by SBI and established in 1987, was the first non-UTI mutual fund in India. A consortium of merchant bankers has been appointed to manage the issue, including Kotak Mahindra Capital, Axis Capital, BofA Securities India, HSBC Securities and Capital Markets (India), ICICI Securities, Jefferies India, JM Financial, Motilal Oswal Investment Advisors and SBI Capital Markets.

CHINA DIALS BACK ON FUEL PRICE HIKES TO 'REDUCE BURDEN' ON DRIVERS

China has dialled back on planned fuel price hikes in a bid to "reduce the burden" on drivers, as energy costs surge amid the Iran war. The local price of petrol has jumped by about 20% since the start of the conflict, which has seen Iran effectively close one of the world's busiest oil shipping channels, the Strait of Hormuz. Gasoline and diesel prices were initially set to rise by 2,205 yuan (€239; \$320) and 2,120 yuan per tonne respectively - but after government adjustments, the increases will be nearly halved to 1,160 yuan and 1,115 yuan, starting Tuesday. More than 300 million people in China drive cars that run on petrol or diesel, with Gulf countries a major source of the country's oil. Long queues of cars had formed outside petrol stations in multiple Chinese cities over the weekend, with some stations having to post notices that they had run out of fuel. The latest price hike was the country's fifth and largest of the year so far - even with the reduction. On Tuesday, the price of Brent crude oil jumped above \$100



a barrel - a day after prices plunged, as conflicting accounts of potential talks between US and Iran emerged. Beijing has over the years taken advantage of lower crude prices and the abundance of supply from Gulf states to build one of the world's biggest oil reserves, Ole Hansen, Saxo Bank's head of commodity strategy, told the BBC last week. In January and February of this year, Beijing bought 16% more crude compared to the same time period a year earlier, according to its customs administration. Iran, whose oil is sanctioned by the US, has been a key supplier of cheap crude for China, with reports suggesting that Beijing buys more than 80%

of Iran's oil exports. Hansen said that estimates show China has built up reserves of around 900 million barrels - just under three months' worth of imports. Figures from Columbia University, cited by Chinese state media, said China had petrol reserves of some 1.4 billion barrels. Despite its reserves, Beijing has shown signs of caution to manage its supplies in the short-term. Authorities in China reportedly ordered its oil refineries to temporarily cease fuel exports, in an attempt to keep domestic prices under control. China's government did not respond to BBC queries on the matter. Barrels from Saudi Arabia and Iran account for more

than 10% of its imports each, according to the US Energy Information Administration (EIA). "To mitigate the impact of abnormal increases in international oil prices, ease the burden on downstream users and ensure stable economic operations and public welfare, temporary regulatory measures have been adopted," China's state planner said in a statement on Monday. The price hikes were implemented by the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), which reviews petrol and diesel prices every 10 days and adjusts based on global prices of crude oil. Other countries across Asia have also implemented a range of cost-cutting measures to help cushion the blow of soaring global energy prices. Government employees in the Philippines have been ordered to work four days a week, Sri Lanka has declared every Wednesday a holiday for public institutions, and Thailand and Vietnam have encouraged citizens to work from home in an attempt to conserve fuel.

Cosmetics giant Estée Lauder in merger talks with owner of Jean Paul Gaultier and Rabanne



US cosmetics giant Estée Lauder is discussing a potential merger with Puig, the Spanish company behind best-selling fragrances such as Rabanne and Jean Paul Gaultier. Estée Lauder is one of the world's leading manufacturers of skin care, makeup and fragrances, owning brands such as Clinique, Bobbi Brown and Tom Ford. A deal could create a \$40bn (£30bn) beauty giant, according to Financial Times, although Estee Lauder said that no final decision had been made. "Unless and until an agreement is signed between the companies, there can be no assurances regarding the deal or its terms," it said in a statement. Puig, which is

based in Barcelona, was founded in 1914 and is still controlled by the Puig Family. The group, which also owns fashion label Dries Van Noten and fragrance giant Carolina Herrera, sells its products in 150 countries and had revenue of more than 5bn (£4.3bn) in 2025. Estee Lauder, who died in 2004, founded her namesake cosmetics company in 1946 in New York with her husband Joseph. It started with just four products but has grown to become the second largest cosmetics company in the world after L'Oréal. However, it was forced to cut jobs last year amid sluggish sales and is trying to revitalise its business.

Philippines declares energy emergency over Iran conflict

The Philippines has become the world's first country to declare a state of national energy emergency in response to the conflict in the Middle East.



President Ferdinand Marcos Jr said he had signed an executive order to safeguard energy security, citing the "imminent danger posed upon the availability and stability" of the country's energy supply.

ures to ensure energy stability and protect the broader economy.

The US-Israel war with Iran and the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz - a key shipping route - have sent shock waves through global energy markets, causing shortages and price rises.

Under the order, a committee has been formed to oversee the orderly distribution of fuel, food, medicines, and other essential goods.

The Philippines imports 98% of its oil from the Gulf, and the price of diesel and petrol has more than doubled in the country since the war broke out on 28 February.

The government has also been empowered to directly purchase fuel and petroleum products to shore up supplies.

On Tuesday, Marcos said the move would give the government the legal authority to impose meas-

The declaration will remain in place for one year, unless it is extended or lifted by the president.

It follows calls from several

senators, who urged Marcos to acknowledge the "emergency-level" hardship faced by Philippine families due to soaring oil prices.

The price of petrol and diesel spiked again on Tuesday, rising to more than double its pre-war level in February.

Since hostilities in the Middle East began, the government has offered subsidies to transport drivers, reduced ferry services, and implemented a four-day work week for civil servants to save fuel.

Earlier on Tuesday, Energy Secretary Sharon Garin said the country had about 45 days of fuel supply left.

Garin told reporters the country would "temporarily" depend more heavily on coal-fired power plants to meet its energy needs in response to the surging costs of liquefied natural gas (LNG).

Asia is particularly exposed

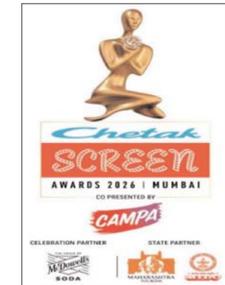
Chetak Screen Awards: Dhurandhar leads with 24 nods; Saiyaara and Homebound follow ahead of April 5 ceremony

The Indian Express Group's Screen Academy has unveiled the full slate of nominees across 31 categories for its upcoming Chetak Screen Awards ceremony on April 5, celebrating the best of Hindi cinema and OTT from 2025. Aditya Dhar's spy thriller Dhurandhar received the highest number of nominations at 24, with Mohit Suri's Saiyaara earning 17 and Neeraj Ghaywan's Homebound picking up 15. The nominations span theatrical and OTT releases, reflecting the breadth and evolution of contemporary Indian storytelling.

A rigorous, merit-first process
Having been established in 1995, the Screen Awards are anchored in editorial integrity and governed by the Screen Academy, an independent, not-for-profit body of more than 50 acclaimed filmmakers, artistes, and cultural vic-

es. Over 95% of Academy members participated in the evaluation process, with an average of 38-40 members scoring each category using a trimmed mean (Olympic) methodology to ensure fairness and neutrality. To further strengthen the process, Professor Priya Jaikumar, Chair of Cinema and Media Studies at the University of Southern California's School of Cinematic Arts, developed a detailed scoring rubric for Academy members. For the first time in 20 years, a film award show will be broadcast live. With a special partnership with YouTube, Screen Awards will offer open access to global audiences in line with The Indian Express Group's digital-first approach. It will also be broadcast live on Sony Entertainment Television and Sony Liv.

Nominees



Best Action
120 Bahadur
Chhaava
Deva
Dhurandhar
Jaat
Best Actor (Female)
Triptii Dimri - Dhadak 2
Yami Gautam Dhar - Haq
Sonal Madhusankar - Humans in the Loop
Konkona Sen Sharma - Metro... In Dino
Monika Panwar - Nishaanchi
Radhika Apte - Sister
Midnight
Kriti Sanon - Tere Ishk

Mein
Best Actor (Female) - OTT
Film
Fatima Sana Shaikh - Aap
Jaisa Koi
Sanya Malhotra - Mrs
Radhika Apte - Saali
Mohabbat
Saba Azad - Songs of
Paradise
Mia Maelzer - Stolen
Farida Jalal - The Great
Shamsuddin Family
Shreya Chaudhry - The
Mehta Boys
Best Actor (Male)
Vicky Kaushal - Chhaava
Siddhant Chaturvedi -
Dhadak 2
Ranveer Singh -
Dhurandhar
Vishal Jethwa -
Homebound
Ishaan Khatter -
Homebound
Manoj Bajpayee -
Jugnuma: The Fable
Adarsh Gourav -
Superboys of Malegaon
Best Actor (Male) - OTT
Film

Manoj Bajpayee - Inspector
Zende
Abhishek Bachchan -
Kaalidhar Laapata
Nawazuddin Siddiqui -
Raat Akeli Hai: The Bansal
Murders
Abhishek Banerjee - Stolen
Shubham Vardhan - Stolen
Best Actor in a Supporting
Role (Female)
Divya Dutta - Chhaava
Sheeba Chadha - Haq
Shalini Vatsa -
Homebound
Dolly Ahluwalia - Sitaare
Zameen Par
Manjiri Púpala -
Superboys of Malegaon
Best Actor in a Supporting
Role (Male)
Akshaye Khanna -
Dhurandhar
Rakesh Bedi - Dhurandhar
Naseeruddin Shah -
Gustaakh Ishq
Saurabh Shukla - Jolly
LLB 3

Israel and Iran continue to strike each other after US says plans for talks with Tehran remain 'fluid'

In our previous post we brought you images of daily life continuing in Tehran, but it comes amid the backdrop of ongoing conflict in the Middle East. Since the start of the war in Iran, 82,417 "civilian units" across the country have been damaged by airstrikes, according to the president of the Iranian Red Crescent. The humanitarian organisation's president says that "a total of 281 hospitals, clinics, and pharmacies have also been targeted". Due to rolling internet blackouts and government restrictions on independent journalism, we have less access to imagery showing the impacts of this conflict in Iran than we in other parts of the Middle East. While we don't yet have verified photos of Israeli attacks on Iran today, images from inside Tehran show that daily life continues despite the ongoing conflict. China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi has spoken to his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi. In translated text from Chinese state media,



Aragchi reportedly told Yi: "Iran is committed to a comprehensive ceasefire, not just a temporary one". He also explained that "Hormuz is open to all, and ships can pass safely, but countries currently at war are not being considered". The state media-provided readout of the conversation says Yi stressed: "Talking is always better than fighting" and urged for all parties to "seize every opportunity and window of opportunity for

peace and initiate the peace process as soon as possible". The Lebanese presidency says the war "could have been avoided" if Israel had responded to calls to withdraw its occupancy in parts of southern Lebanon. Earlier, Israel announced its intention to take control of a large part of southern Lebanon - up to the Litani River. The waterway connects the region to northern Lebanon and lies around 30km (19 miles) from the coun-

try's border with Israel. Israel has blown up five bridges in the region, which it says were being used by Hezbollah. In a post on X, the Lebanese Presidency account cites President Joseph Aoun as saying that "Israel's bombing of bridges aims to isolate villages and towns south of the Litani from the rest of the Lebanese regions". Israel's Defence Minister Israel Katz says troops will establish a security zone up to the Litani River, and displaced residents will not be allowed back until northern Israel is safe. It comes as Israeli strikes continue to hit parts of the country's south, and Israel's Defense Forces say a new wave of strikes on Lebanese fuel sites has been completed. A civilian contractor working for the United Arab Emirates armed forces has been killed in Bahrain, the UAE's ministry of defence says. In a statement, it says the serviceman, a Moroccan national, was killed "following an Iranian missile attack" that targeted Bahrain. The ministry of defence says the attack also resulted in five injuries to members of the UAE military. The Israeli military says it has completed a wave of strikes across Lebanon "targeting fuel stations" that it says were being used by Hezbollah. Over the past day, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) says, it has targeted fuel stations belonging to the company Al-Amama. It says this organisation is "controlled" by

Hezbollah and "serves as significant financial infrastructure" supporting its activities. "As part of the strikes, fuel stations in various areas of Lebanon were targeted and rendered inoperable," the IDF adds, explaining the stations had been used to fuel trucks transporting weapons and fighters. Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has volunteered his country as a venue for peace talks between Iran and the US. "Subject to concurrence by the US and Iran, Pakistan stands ready and honoured to be the host to facilitate meaningful and conclusive talks for a comprehensive settlement of the ongoing conflict," he writes on social media. Meanwhile India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi says he has had a phone call with US President Donald Trump, in which the pair "had a useful exchange of views on the situation in West Asia". Modi says he and Trump agreed to keep in touch "regarding efforts towards peace and stability".

Cuba's mothers-to-be prepare to give birth in a country plunged into darkness



Since the Trump administration imposed a near-total fuel blockade on Cuba three months ago, Mauren Echevarria Peña has been inside a ward in Havana's specialist maternity and neonatal hospital. Mauren, 26, is expecting her first baby, but her pregnancy has been complicated. "I've had gestational diabetes and chronic hypertension," she explains, sitting on a bed at the Ramón González Coro maternity hospital. With her baby boy due this week, Mauren is understandably nervous. Not only has she had to endure weeks of bed rest and constant supervision, but she must now give

birth in a nation experiencing rolling blackouts and days-long power cuts. Over the weekend, there was another nationwide collapse of the crumbling electrical grid. Still, Mauren is grateful for the attention she's received from the medical staff who have been working around the clock under extremely challenging conditions. The BBC was granted access to the state-run facility as a coalition of international solidarity movements arrived in Havana with boxes of aid donations for the maternity hospital. "They have done everything they can for me at the hospital," she says, while her doctors are in the room. "They've given me the medicines and insulin I need for the health of baby and the placenta." Mauren strikes a defiant tone, saying that the country will always "find a way to move forward" in a crisis, but admits to being worried about the prospect of potentially giving birth during another blackout.

Danes vote as PM Mette Frederiksen seeks third term after Greenland boost



Danes are voting in an election with Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen's Social Democrats aiming for a third term. Frederiksen, 48, called the vote months earlier than expected, buoyed by popular support for her handling of US President Donald Trump's threat to annex Greenland, an autonomous Danish territory. Her Social Democrats have lost support since the 2022 elections and she is facing a strong challenge from two parties on the centre-right, including the Liberal Venstre party of Defence Minister Troels Lund Poulsen. Denmark is run by coalition governments and Tuesday's vote will decide whether power will stay with a left-win bloc or move to the right. Latest opinion polls give Frederiksen's Social Democrats by the far the largest share of the vote, on more than 20%, well ahead of the Liberals and Green Left. Although the election is not being fought on the Greenland crisis, Frederiksen is gambling that the "Trump bump" that boosted her poll numbers after her defiant stance on Greenland will be enough to hand her a third term in a tight election race.

Denmark, which has long been one of the closest US allies in Nato, has rebuffed Trump's bids to take over Greenland, and the Danes and their European partners sent a military contingent to the island last January. Broadly-speaking, however, there is a wide consensus in Denmark on foreign policy, so it is domestic concerns that have dominated the campaign trail. Instead, the state of the economy and the cost of living are key issues, with Frederiksen proposing a 0.5% wealth tax for the richest 20,000 Danes. The high level of pesticides in drinking water because of pig farming and agriculture has also become a concern for voters, with some parties including Frederiksen's calling for a ban. However, her party's lead in the polls is not likely to be enough to maintain the 90 seats she needs to hold a majority in parliament. After a commanding win in 2022, Frederiksen led a coalition across the middle, that saw her Social Democrats team up with the centrist Moderates and right-of-centre Liberals, and all three parties are down significantly in the polls.

DECLINE IN MIGRATORY FISH POPULATIONS PROMPTS FIGHT FOR PROTECTION



Fish species that undertake migrations through rivers, lakes and ponds are facing a combined threat from dams, pollution and overfishing preventing them from reaching their breeding grounds. The golden mahseer and gongon catfish are some of the thirty flagship fish species which have now been prioritised for global conservation by the UN in a new report. A team of international scientists

assessed more than 15,000 species of freshwater migratory fish - which make up half of all fish species - and found their numbers had dropped by an estimated 81% in the last half century. The authors said for too long the group has been ignored but "are an essential part of people's livelihoods". "Freshwater fish support hundreds of millions of people around the world, so for humans, they're very important."

ISRAEL SAYS IT WILL TAKE CONTROL OF LARGE BUFFER ZONE IN SOUTHERN LEBANON

Israeli troops will control a large swathe of southern Lebanon as part of their campaign against Hezbollah, Defence Minister Israel Katz says. Katz said troops would establish a security zone up to the Litani River, about 30km (19 miles) from the Lebanon-Israel border and displaced residents would not be allowed back until northern Israel was safe. Five bridges "used by Hezbollah for the passage of terrorists and weapons" had been blown up, he said. The latest escalation began after Iranian-backed Hezbollah fired rockets into northern Israel in retaliation for the killing of Iran's supreme leader and nearly-daily Israeli attacks on Lebanon despite the November 2024 ceasefire. Since then, more than 1,000 people have been killed in Lebanon, according to the



Lebanese health ministry, including at least 118 children and 40 health workers. More than a million people have been displaced, which could lead to a major humanitarian crisis. Israeli officials say the aim is to protect communities in northern Israel from Hezbollah attacks. Southern Lebanon is the heartland of Lebanon's Shia Muslim community, Hezbollah's main support base. Lebanon's gov-

ernment has vowed to disarm Hezbollah, which was created in the 1980s in response to Israel's occupation of Lebanon during the 15-year Lebanese civil war. But, so far, the group has refused to discuss the future of its weapons. In his briefing with defence chiefs on Tuesday, the Israeli defence minister said the Lebanese government had done "nothing". The Israel Defense Forces (IDF), Katz said, was now "manoeuvring into Lebanese territory to seize a front line of defence, eliminating Hezbollah terrorists and destroying the terrorist infrastructures that were established there, and the houses in the Lebanese border villages, which serve as terrorist outposts for all intents and purposes". Katz added that their purpose would be "to create a defensive space and keep the threat away" - based on the model followed in Rafah and Beit Hanoun - major population centres in the Gaza Strip which have been largely destroyed by air strikes and remain under Israeli military control. The thousands of Lebanese residents who have been displaced "will not return south of the Litani River until security is guaranteed for the residents of the north" of Israel, he said.

AUSTRALIA AND EU AGREE SWEEPING TRADE DEAL IN FACE OF GLOBAL UNCERTAINTY

Australia and the European Union have agreed a sweeping free trade deal after eight years of negotiations. The deal signed in Canberra is worth about A\$10bn (\$7bn; £5.2bn) and was described as a mutual "win-win" by Australia's prime minister and the visiting European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. She described the deal as having a focus on "collective resilience" in a world that is "deeply changing". As well as removing almost all tariffs on trade, the two sides agreed to increase co-operation on defence and critical minerals. European carmakers welcomed the deal but farmers in both Europe and



the EU and India announced a landmark trade deal after nearly two decades of on-off talks. Another major trade deal the EU struck with the Mercosur bloc of South American countries was recently derailed in the European Parliament, amid criticism from the farming lobby. "Today we are telling an important story to a world that is deeply changing. A world where great powers are using tariffs as leverage and supply chains as vulnerabilities to be exploited," von der Leyen told a news conference in Canberra - a nod to Trump's use of tariffs and China's control of the critical minerals market.

opposed to increases. Tuesday's accord in Canberra is the latest trade deal struck by Brussels as it tries to diversify its global trading relationships, given the fast changing geopolitical landscape and unpredictability of US President Donald Trump. In January

At least five killed in massive wave of Russian strikes across Ukraine, officials say



At least five people have been killed in Russian strikes across Ukraine, after a massive overnight aerial bombardment targeted several regions across the country. A 61-year-old woman was killed when a drone hit an electric train in Kharkiv early on Tuesday, authorities said, while other deaths were reported in Zaporizhzhia, Kherson and Poltava. Officials said the attacks were among the worst in ten days, and came hours after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky had warned of a forthcoming "massive strike" in his nightly address. Russian strikes targeting energy infrastructure also disconnected Moldova's key power link with Europe, President Maia Sandu said, warning the situation remained "fragile". Sirens wailed across Ukraine on Monday night as Russia launched a barrage of missiles and drones at the country. Seven ballistic missiles, 23 cruise missiles, four air-launched guided missiles and 392 drones were used in the attack, the Ukrainian Air Force said in a statement

on Telegram. Air defence units intercepted 25 missiles and 365 drones, it added. In a post on X on Tuesday, Zelensky said: "These numbers clearly show that more protection is needed to save lives from Russian strikes. It is important to continue supporting Ukraine." Attacks of this scale have been occurring roughly once a week or every ten days in recent months, and there had been mounting fears in the past few days that another wave of strikes was imminent. "Please pay attention to air raid sirens tonight," Zelensky said earlier in his video address to the nation on Monday. "Intelligence says Russia may be preparing a massive strike." This time the attack focused on cities other than the capital, Kyiv. Damage was reported in eleven regions, Zelensky said. Among the worst affected was the south-eastern city of Zaporizhzhia, which was struck by six drones followed by six ballistic missiles. One person was killed and nine injured after a residential high-rise building was hit, local authorities said.



Search for four missing soldiers after Colombia plane crash kills 66

Married at First Sight star Mel Schilling dies at 54



Married at First Sight dating coach Mel Schilling has died of cancer at the age of 54, her husband has said on Instagram. Schilling, who was part of the reality TV show's cast since 2016, was diagnosed in December 2023 and said earlier this month that the disease had spread to her brain. She "passed away peacefully today, surrounded by love", a statement from

husband Gareth said on Tuesday. "To most of you, she was Mel Schilling - matriarch of MAFS and queen of reality TV. To Maddie and me, she was our wee Melsie: an incredible mum, role model, and soulmate," he wrote. He said she used "all of her remaining strength" in her final moments to whisper a message for daughter Maddie and him "that will sustain me for the rest of my life". "Even then, her only thought was for Maddie and me," he said. Life is fleeting. "This is a woman who became a new mum and a TV star at 42 - and nailed both," he wrote. "This is a woman who, through two years of chemotherapy, when she could barely lift her head from the pillow, never complained and never stopped showing courage."

COMPLAINT FILED OVER FIFA WORLD CUP TICKET PRICES



Football Supporters Europe has filed a formal complaint against Fifa over "excessive ticket prices" at this summer's World Cup. FSE, along with Euroconsumers, said football's world governing body has "abused its monopoly position" in setting prices for the tournament, which begins on 11 June. In December Fifa introduced a small number of "more affordable" \$60 (£45) tickets for all 104 matches following widespread criticism

of its pricing structure. FSE has called on Fifa to abandon dynamic pricing - variability based on demand - and freeze prices for the April release of tickets. It also demanded greater transparency for fans when purchasing tickets, with at least 48-hour notice of availability in each category and where those seats will be. BBC Sport has contacted Fifa for comment. The complaint by FSE and Euroconsumers to the European Commission

says Fifa has taken advantage of its position "to impose excessive ticket prices and opaque and unfair purchasing conditions and processes on European fans". It said in a statement: "Fifa holds a monopoly over ticket sales for the 2026 World Cup and has used that power to impose conditions on fans that would never be acceptable in a competitive market." FSE and Euroconsumers alleged "six

Highlights

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specific abuses" of Fifa's position. They include accusing Fifa of bait advertising - illegal under EU consumer law - with its later release of cheaper tickets "so scarce" that it advertised a price "not genuinely available". About 400 £45 tickets have been made available for England and Scotland's group matches. FSE director Ronan Evain said the group had no option but to approach the European Commission because of Fifa's "failure to engage in meaningful consultation". "Fifa point to their unconfirmed sales figures as validation of their unfair

ticket practices, while the reality is they leave loyal fans with no other choice - pay up or lose out," Evain said. According to Fifa, almost seven million tickets have been made available for the tournament, which will be co-hosted by the US, Canada and Mexico. For one person to attend eight matches - one in each round - at the World Cup, it will cost about £5,225 in the lowest price range, £8,580 in the middle tier and £12,350 for the most expensive tickets. In 2022 it would have cost £1,466, £2,645 or £3,914 respectively, although that was for seven games.

WWE RAW, MARCH 23 RESULTS: OBA FEMI BEATS BROCK LESNAR AGAIN, SETH ROLLINS ARRESTED



The WWE Raw on 23 March 2026 produced another dramatic night of action and storyline twists, as the powerhouse Oba Femi once again outlasted Brock Lesnar to assert his absolute dominance. In a display of sheer physical force, Femi slipped out of an F5 attempt by Lesnar and clotheslined "The Beast Incarnate" out of the ring for the second consecutive week. This established Femi as a legitimate threat to Lesnar's legacy as they hurtle towards their inevitable clash

at WrestleMania 42. The biggest development from the night came in the form of Seth Rollins, who was arrested by local authorities after clashing with Paul Heyman. Despite a standing restraining order meant to protect the "Wise Man," Rollins bypassed security by appearing atop the commentary desk. After landing a swift punch on Heyman, "The Architect" was tackled by police, cuffed, and led out of the TD Garden in Boston, leaving his immediate future in a cloud of

legal uncertainty. In the mid-card, Penta successfully retained the Intercontinental Championship against Dominik Mysterio. The match was defined by outside chaos as Stephanie Vaquer attacked Liv Morgan at ringside, while a returning Finn Balor distracted Mysterio by brawling with JD McDonagh. This allowed Penta to capitalise on the confusion, securing the pinfall and ensuring the title remained firmly around his waist.

Who Is Kal Somani: US-Based Entrepreneur Who Bought IPL Franchise Rajasthan Royals In Record-Breaking Deal

A consortium headed by US-based entrepreneur Kal Somani acquired IPL franchise Rajasthan Royals for a record-breaking amount of 1.63 billions dollars (more than Rs 15,000 crore). According to reports, Somani was backed by American businessman Rob Walton, of the Walmart family, and the Hamp family. The sale made Rajasthan Royals the costliest franchise in the history of IPL and the sale will come into effect after IPL 2026. Somani was already an investor in RR since 2021. "We see huge potential with this investment, and we are excited for the future of the IPL," he had said at the time. The franchise was previously owned by Emerging Media Ventures, which is headed



by businessman Manoj Badale. Other stakeholders included RedBird Capital Partners and Lachlan Murdoch, among others. The sale process was initiated late last year with investment bank The Raine Group acting as advisor. There were a number of bidders including Aditya Birla Group and US-based sports

investor David Blitzer but the consortium headed by Somani emerged as the eventual winner in the ownership race. Who is Kal Somani? Kal Somani is a US-based entrepreneur with over 15 years of experience across sectors like ed-tech, artificial intelligence, sports technology and data privacy. He is based out of

Scottsdale, Arizona and is the founder of multiple ventures like tech services firm IntraEdge. Truyo and has deep associations with AI governance initiatives. He has also made some investments in the sports space as he is the co-owner of the Motor City Golf Club and an early investor in ventures like TGL Golf League and TMRW Sports. "Kal is an existing investor in the franchise. The deal is subject to approval from the BCCI and will be signed soon. The price of USD 1.63 billion reflects how far the IPL has come as a brand," a well-placed source told PTL. "If you look at the sale of the latest IPL entrants Lucknow Super Giants, it is way more than that.

"Here To Win, Not To Participate": Head Coach Ashish Nehra On Gujarat Titans' Approach In IPL 2026

Gujarat Titans have outlined their clear approach ahead of IPL 2026, with Head Coach Ashish Nehra stating that the team remains focused on competing and winning. Speaking at Shubharambh 2026, a landmark evening that brought together the full squad, franchise owners, partners and fans, Nehra said the Titans are not looking to change their way of playing. "I don't think there's a need to think differently this season. In fact, I don't have to think, the players do. They have to think. They have to play; I'm sitting outside," he said, highlighting the team's trust in players and their decision-making. Reinforcing the team's mindset, Nehra added, "From day one, our mindset has been clear, we are not here to participate, we are here to compete and win. For a new team, it's easy to think it might take time, but that was never our approach." Since joining the IPL in 2022, Gujarat Titans have been one of the most consistent teams, reaching the playoffs in three of their first four sea-



sons and winning the title in their inaugural campaign in 2022. On continuity within the group, Nehra said, "You're talking about a captain who has been with the team from day one and has seen that journey. I don't think we are looking to do anything different this season." Shubharambh 2026 marked the start of the new season, while reflecting on the franchise's five-year journey. Showcasing the unity, ambi-

tion and Gujarat-first ethos that continues to define the franchise, the event blended reflection, recognition and cultural celebration, reinforcing the team's deep-rooted connect with its fans and the state. Gujarat Titans will begin their IPL 2026 campaign against Punjab Kings in Mullanpur on March 31, before returning to Ahmedabad for their first home fixture on April 4 against Rajasthan Royals.

CRISTIANO RONALDO'S SON DATING 27-YEAR-OLD BRAZILIAN MODEL?

With Cristiano Ronaldo nursing an injury that is set to keep him out of action for the time being, his son has been making waves on social media over his personal life. While it is usually the Portuguese great who finds himself in the headlines for his dating life, wild rumours have recently spread online linking his son, Cristiano Ronaldo Jr., with a 27-year-old Brazilian model. A couple of pictures of Cristiano Jr. with a woman surfaced on the internet, and fans quickly stitched together a story. Social media claims suggest that Cristiano Jr. met the 27-year-old Brazilian model in Dubai and began dating her. However, it must be noted that Ronaldo's son is only 15 years old, making the rumour both implausi-



ble and inappropriate. In the past, Cristiano Jr. has clarified in interviews and family shows that he is not dating anyone. Ronaldo's partner, Georgina Rodriguez, once teased him about a "crush," but it turned out to be just a friend, not a girlfriend. In I Am Georgina Season 3, Episode 5, Georgina spoke about Cristiano Jr.'s supposed crush during a family

trip to Disneyland Paris. Georgina and her sister Ivana playfully asked him about a girl named Soraya, to which he quickly replied, "She was a friend, but we don't talk anymore." Previously, some fans even linked Cristiano Jr. to Delfina Suarez, the daughter of former Barcelona striker Luis Suarez. Both children are of a similar age.

Australian-Born Ryan Williams Likely To Make India Debut As Khalid Jamil Names Squad For Hong Kong Qualifier

Australian-born forward Ryan Williams could make his much-anticipated India debut after being named in head coach Khalid Jamil's 23-member squad for the AFC Asian Cup 2027 Qualifier against Hong Kong on March 31 in Kochi. Williams was included in the squad after FIFA cleared his change of association, paving the way for the 31-year-old winger to represent India at the senior international level. He had earlier been part of India's preparatory camp for the Bangladesh qualifier but missed out on the lineup due to pending documentation. With all formalities now complete, he is in line to make his debut against Hong



Kong. Already ruled out of qualification for the Asian Cup, India will look to sign off their campaign on a positive note with a blend of experience and youth in the squad. Williams, whose mother hails from an Anglo-Indian family in Mumbai, will thus become only the second foreign-born foot-

baller of Indian origin to play for the country after Japan-born Arata Izumi, who represented India between 2013 and 2014. A versatile attacker currently playing for Indian Super League side Bengaluru FC, Williams relinquished his Australian passport last year to play for India. Born in Perth in 1993, Williams began his professional journey in England after joining Portsmouth's academy in 2010. He broke into the senior side a year later, making his debut against Middlesbrough, before going on to have stints with clubs such as Fulham and Barnsley. On the international stage, Williams represented Australia at the youth level.

Yuki Bhambri, Michael Venus Lose Tight First Round Contest In Miami Open



=India's Yuki Bhambri and his Kiwi partner Michael Venus made a first round exit from the Miami Open following a narrow loss to John-Patrick Smith and Sander Arends in Miami. Yuki and Venus went down 6-4, 5-7, 13-15 in a round of 32 contest to the Australian-Dutch combine in one hour 52 minutes. There was little separating the two teams. Smith and Arends converted half of their four break points while Yuki and Venus were able to convert the couple of break points they earned in the match. It was the first meeting between Arends and Smit, and, Yuki and Venus. Yuki had reached the semifinals of the Indian Wells alongside Andre Goransson earlier this month. The 33-year-old Indian had famously made the semifinals of the US Open last year with Venus. Bhambri and Venus started strongly, taking the opening set 6-4. However, their opponents responded in the second

set, edging it 7-5 to force a deciding super tiebreak. The final set proved to be a tightly contested affair, with Smith and Arends eventually prevailing 15-13. The match remained closely balanced throughout, with both teams converting two break points each. Smith and Arends capitalised on two of their four opportunities, while Bhambri and Venus converted both chances they created. This was the first meeting between the two pairs, with little separating them across key statistical areas. Bhambri had entered the tournament on the back of a strong run earlier this month, reaching the semifinals at Indian Wells alongside Andre Goransson. The 33-year-old had also enjoyed a standout 2025 season, including a semifinal appearance at the US Open with Venus. <https://thebridge.in/tennis/indian-wells-open-yuki-bhambri-ousted-in-semis-56129>

WORLD CHAMPION SMITH TO FACE PUELLO IN SHEFFIELD

Britain's WBC light-welterweight champion Dalton Smith will make the first defence of his title in front of his home fans in Sheffield on 6 June. The unbeaten Smith, 29, will face two-time former world champion Alberto Puello from Dominican at Utilita Arena. Smith won the world title in his 19th professional fight with a stunning fifth-round stoppage victory over Subriel Matias in Brooklyn in January. "New York was a trip of a lifetime, but now it's about bringing big world title fights to

Sheffield," said Smith. "It's straight into a mandatory defence, so you expect world-class opponents. There's no denying Puello is a top boxer - he's a two-time champion for a reason. "Puello's an awkward southpaw, but it's well known I love that style. It will be a big performance from me in my homecoming." Puello, 31, held the WBA title from 2022 to 2023 and the WBC title from 2024 to 2025. He has won 24 professional fights, with his only defeat coming when he lost his belt to Matias in July. "New York

was a trip of a lifetime, but now it's about bringing big world title fights to Sheffield and it's great to start my reign as champion back at the Utilita Arena," Smith said. "It's straight into a mandatory defence so you expect world class opponents. There's no denying Puello's a top boxer. He's a two-time champion for a reason." Puello is a two-time junior welterweight champion having won titles in 2022 and 2025 before the only defeat of his career against Matias in July 2025. "This is another mega fight com-

ing to British shores -- and another one for fight fans to enjoy on the Global Home of Boxing, DAZN. Dalton's win in Brooklyn will live long in the memory. It was an incredible night. Now he has the chance to cement his legacy and forge his name into folklore," promoter Eddie Hearn said. "Dalton is the Steel City King and Alberto Puello -- a formidable, former two-time world champion in his own right -- will be in for one tough night with an electric atmosphere awaiting him in Sheffield."



Soori, R Ravikumar, Mythri Movie Makers #Soori 07, #MythriTamil03 Announced, Blood Followed The Flood



Mythri Movie Makers, one of India's most dynamic production houses known for crafting intriguing and larger-than-life entertainers across multiple languages, has unveiled its third Tamil venture, #MythriTamil03. The film features the talented Kollywood actor Soori in the lead, directed by R Ravikumar, and produced by Naveen Yerneni and Y Ravi Shankar. The announcement arrived with an intense, visually arresting poster. The protagonist is shown from behind, waist-deep in murky floodwater. His reflection ripples in distorted shapes, adding a surreal edge. A weapon clenched in his right-hand hints at danger and survival. Around him lies a trail of wreckage—shattered utensils, scattered debris, and an overturned gas cylinder, capturing the raw aftermath of destruction. A dim red glow pouring through a doorway ahead casts an ominous silhouette, heightening the mood of

dread. Hovering above the submerged reflection, the words "BLOOD FOLLOWS THE FLOOD" amplify the sense of devastation and imminent violence. The tone is gritty, mysterious, and loaded with foreboding, suggesting a narrative rooted deeply in emotional intensity and chaos. Soori is currently in top form after the success of Kottukkaali, Viduthalai, Maamanan, and more. Director R Ravikumar has carved a niche in science fiction with acclaimed films like Indru Netru Naalai and Ayalaan. Meanwhile, Mythri Movie Makers has previously ventured into Tamil with Good Bad Ugly starring Ajith and Dude starring Pradeep Ranganathan. With this successful trio joining hands and the announcement poster sparking instant curiosity, #Soori07/#MythriTamil03 has already begun building anticipation. More details are awaited.

"Band Melam" should become a big hit: King of Entertainment Sree Vishnu at the pre-release event



The blockbuster pair Harsh Roshan and Sridevi, who impressed audiences with "Court," are coming together again with "Band Melam." The film is being produced under the banner of Kona Film Corporation, presented by Mango Mass Media, under the guidance of blockbuster writer Kona Venkat. Kavya and Sravya are producing the movie. Directed by Satish Javvaji, the film is set to release on March 26.

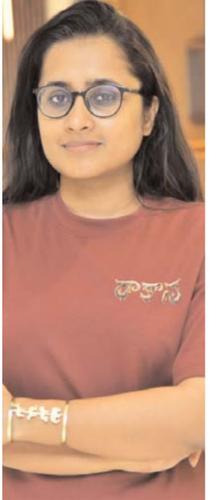
Ahead of the release, a pre-release event was held on Monday. Star writer Vijayendra Prasad, sensational directors VV Vinayak and Bobby, actor-producer Bandla Ganesh, Oscar winning lyricist Chandrabose, King of Entertainment Sree Vishnu, and renowned producer Suresh Babu attended as chief guests. Speaking at the event, Sree Vishnu said: "All the seniors have given their blessings to 'Band Melam,' and I hope they all come true. Roshan played my son in 'Swag.' I said back then that Roshan is very talented and will become a big hero. Within these three years, films like 'Court' and 'Band

Melam' have come out. Sridevi performed very well in 'Court.' I wish this Kakinada girl gets many more good opportunities. I am a big fan of Vijay Bulganin's music. All the best to director Satish. Everyone is talking about the climax of 'Band Melam.' The film gives very positive vibes, and I hope it becomes a big hit. Kona garu lives and breathes cinema. It's rare to see such a passionate producer. I hope he continues to make good films and introduce new artists and directors." Director Bobby said: "A Kona Venkat film feels like our own film. He has great taste in stories and has promoted this movie extensively. I worked with him on

'Adhurs,' and we are always in sync. After watching the teaser, I felt Roshan would become a big hero. Suresh Babu garu analyzes films very well, and he too appreciated Roshan after watching this film. Sridevi's journey is inspiring. 'Band Melam' will be a blockbuster on March 26. Satish is lucky to be part of Kona's camp. Vijay always delivers great music. This is the first time Kona garu has produced a film in his daughters' names. I wish the film great success." Ace Producer and Distributor Suresh Babu said: "Kona garu showed me this film. Satish has made it wonderfully. Roshan and Sridevi performed very well.

"Our Film Is a Theatrical Experience Driven by Visuals and Folklore, Like Chandamama Katha Blended With Stylised Technology and Comedy": Manasa Sharma on Rakasa

Riding on growing digital traction and strong pre-release buzz, Rakasa is steadily emerging as a distinctive genre-driven entertainer. Headlined by Sangeeth Sobhan and Nayan Sarika, and produced by Niharika Konidela under Pink Elephant Pictures in collaboration with Zee Studios, the film marks the feature directorial debut of Manasa Sharma. Positioned as a fantasy adventure comedy rooted in folklore and powered by stylised visuals and evolving technology, the project has drawn attention for its unique tonal blend. Ahead of the trailer release, director Manasa Sharma interacted with print media, sharing insights into the film's concept, making and her journey.



dy film?
Manasa Sharma: It is a fantasy adventure comedy.

Q: Can you tell us about your background?

Manasa Sharma: Rakasa is my debut feature film. I made a Bench Life web series, and I was the creator and writer of Oka Chinna Family Story. I'm a post graduate and I'm from Srikakulam.

Q: So this is your third project?

Manasa Sharma: No, fourth. I made the Mad House series in 2018 on YouTube, then Bench Life, Oka Chinna Family Story, and now Rakasa.

Q: Is this a majorly come-

Q: Horror?
Manasa Sharma: Well, you might presume that from the trailer, but after seeing the trailer releasing tomorrow, you'll get more context. The film majorly is a fantasy but blended it with comedy and crafted a good story.

Hrithik and Ryan Gosling connect across continents for an exclusive project hail mary conversation



Two global icons come together in a crossover moment that left fans excited across continents. In a landmark moment for the first time, Indian superstar Hrithik Roshan and Hollywood actor Ryan Gosling have come together for an exclusive virtual conversation — a meeting of two icons united by their shared passion for

space, science, and the power of storytelling. The conversation builds on the extraordinary global momentum sparked by Hrithik Roshan's association with Project Hail Mary, following a collaboration video that captivated audiences worldwide. This newly unveiled exchange stands as one of the most exciting cross-cultural collaborations of the decade. Bringing together two of the world's most influential stars, the conversation offers fans a rare and candid glimpse into their creative worlds. At the heart of their discussion was the film itself, with both stars reflecting on what makes Project Hail Mary a singular cinematic experience, and what it

means to bring this story to Indian audiences. The conversation took a nostalgic turn as the duo drew compelling parallels between the film and Hrithik's beloved Koi... Mil Gaya — exploring how science fiction, at its best, transcends borders through emotional truth and universal wonder. Beyond the film, the exchange was marked by mutual admiration, with both stars acknowledging each other's work and hinting at the possibility of future collaborations—leaving fans with much to look forward to. Directed by the acclaimed filmmaking duo Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, Project Hail Mary follows Ryland Grace, played by



Ryan

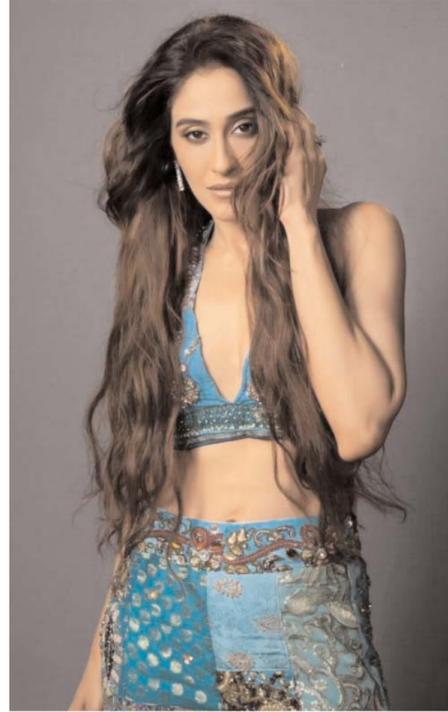
Gosling, a lone astronaut who wakes up aboard a mysterious spacecraft with no memory of who he is or the mission that brought him there.

Hania Aamir says goodbye to hit Pakistani drama 'Safar kathin tha'

One of the biggest Pakistani drama hits of 2026, Meri Zindagi Hai Tu, has finally come to an end after a successful four-month run. The show aired its final episode on March 22, wrapping up with episode 34, which was released in two parts. Lead actress Hania Aamir, who played Dr. Ayra, took to Instagram to bid an emotional farewell to the series. Sharing behind-the-scenes glimpses from the sets, Hania expressed gratitude for the journey and the love the show received. Captioning the post, she wrote, "Safar kathin tha, par manzil pyari. Farewell, lovers," leaving fans emotional as they bid goodbye to her character. Meri Zindagi Hai Tu, which premiered in late 2025, featured Bilal Abbas Khan as Kamyar, alongside a strong supporting cast including Ali Rehman Khan, Aly Khan, Javeria Abbasi

and Vardah Aziz. Written by Radain Shah and directed by Mussadiq Malek, the show emerged as a

massive digital success, even crossing 1 billion views on Indian YouTube dur-



Regina Cassandra Pops Off In Statement Desi Chic

Regina Cassandra has been a familiar face in Bollywood for over one and a half decades, making her debut with the romantic comedy Siva Manasulo Sruthi alongside Sudheer Babu. Over the years, she has built a steady career with notable films like Kotha Janta, Subramanyam for Sale, and Jyo Achyutananda. Known for her versatile choices, Regina has balanced lead roles with strong supporting and even negative characters, proving her range as an actress. Now at 35, Regina is once again grabbing attention, not just for her acting but also for her stunning transformation. In her latest photoshoot,

she confidently flaunts her toned abs, showing the result of her disciplined fitness routine. The pictures highlight her bold and modern style, where she embraces a glamorous yet powerful look, reflecting both elegance and strength. In the shoot, Regina is seen wearing a striking turquoise outfit featuring a stylish bralette top paired with patchwork pants. The intricate embroidery and shimmering details add a rich, ethnic-meets-contemporary vibe to the look. Her open, flowing hair and minimal accessories keep the focus on her outfit and physique, while her confident pose enhances the overall appeal.