

HATE SPEECH BILL INTRODUCED IN ASSEMBLY, PROPOSES UP TO 10 YEAR JAIL TERM



US TROOPS WILL BECOME 'FOOD FOR SHARKS IN PERSIAN GULF' IF THEY TRY GROUND INVASION: WARNS



MARY KOM, 6-TIME WORLD CHAMPION, CONSIDERING MOVE TO PROFESSIONAL BOXING



IN BRIFS

MAOIST WITH RS 5 LAKH BOUNTY NEUTRALISED IN SUKMA ENCOUNTER



Raipur/Sukma: One Maoist cadre was neutralised in an encounter with security forces in the forested hilly terrain under the Polampalli Police Station area of Sukma district in Chhattisgarh on Sunday.

BRS MLA'S ALLEGED UNRULY BEHAVIOUR REFERRED TO ETHICS COMMITTEE

Hyderabad, March 29 : Telangana Assembly Speaker on Sunday referred to the Ethics Committee the incident of alleged unruly behaviour of opposition BRS MLA P. Kaushik Reddy in the House.

Telangana Assembly passes Bill for salary cut for parental neglect

Hyderabad (TSIT): The Telangana Legislative Assembly on Sunday unanimously passed a Bill to deduct 15 per cent of salary from employees neglecting their parents.

The Bill provides for deduction of up to 15 per cent or Rs 10,000 — whichever is lower — from the gross salary of employees found to be neglecting their parents.

SC, ST Welfare and Senior Citizens Minister Adhuri Laxman Kumar moved the motion for passing the Bill, which was adopted with a voice vote.

"Article 21 of the Constitution of India asserts that the right to life includes the right to live with dignity. Parents are an inseparable part of the Indian family system. It is therefore considered necessary to pro-



It does not reflect well upon this society when parents—abandoned and left destitute—shed tears,"

vide enforceable norms among employees who neglect their parents and to ensure that every employee acts as a role model in society," reads the Bill.

The Chief Minister voiced concern that people have forgotten human bonds and emotional ties—ultimately even disregarding the sacred bond of kinship—becoming completely immersed in a relentless pur-

2 Indian ships with LPG cargo sail safely out of Gulf region

New Delhi (TSIT) : Two Indian LPG carriers, BW TYR and BW ELM, carrying a combined LPG cargo of about 94,000 metric tonnes, have safely transited the Gulf region and are moving towards Indian shores.

24x7 and has handled 4523 calls and 8,985 emails since activation. In the past 24 hours, 92 calls and 120 emails have been received.

The Ministry of Ports and Shipping continues to coordinate with the Ministry of External Affairs, Indian Missions, and maritime stake-



All Indian seafarers in the region are safe, and no incident involving Indian-flagged vessels has been reported in the past 24 hours, the statement said.

holders to ensure seafarer welfare and uninterrupted maritime operations. Continuous outreach is being maintained by Indian Missions and Posts with the Indian community in the region, alongside ongoing assistance and issuance of advisories to ensure their safety and well-being, according to the Ministry of External Affairs.

Cong faults govt's foreign policy for Pak, US bonhomie

New Delhi (TSIT): The Congress on Sunday faulted the government's foreign policy for once-isolated Pakistan acquiring new acceptance and respect from US President Donald Trump amid the West Asia conflict.



Claiming that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has not been able to gain any diplomatic leverage with the US, Ramesh said, "That Pakistan has become - in the words of the learned Dr. S. Jaishankar - a 'dalal' is a reflection of the colossal failure of the Modi Govt's foreign policy, diplomatic engagement, and narrative management following India's striking military success in Operation Sindoor."

The Congress MP, General Secretary in charge of party communications, said, "Undoubtedly, President Trump (Mr Modi's 'good friend') has contributed heavily to Pakistan's current respectability."

2026 TN ELECTIONS

DMK promises Rs 2,000 pension, Rs 8,000 household support



CHENNAI (TSIT): The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam on Sunday released its manifesto for the 2026 Assembly election, promising enhanced financial assistance, expanded welfare schemes and large-scale housing initiatives.

The increase in monthly assistance under the Kalaingar Magalir Urimai Thogai scheme to Rs 2,000. Old-age pensions will also be raised from Rs 1,200 to Rs 2,000, while assistance for persons with disabilities will be increased from Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,500.

efit around 4 lakh people, with financial assistance of Rs 1,500 per month for trainees. College students under existing schemes will also see assistance increased to Rs 1,500 per month, and free WiFi will be provided in all government arts colleges.

For farmers, the manifesto promises procurement prices of Rs 3,500 per quintal for paddy and Rs 4,500 per tonne for sugarcane, along with free modern electric pump sets for over 20 lakh beneficiaries.

In the healthcare sector, insurance coverage will be expanded up to Rs 10 lakh, with the income eligibility limit raised to Rs 5 lakh annually. The party has also announced construction of 10 lakh houses over five years as part of its housing push.

Stalin said the manifesto focuses on "six steps towards progress", adding that development and welfare would go hand in hand, while ensuring long-term growth.

77 MAOISTS SURRENDER IN ODISHA;

DGP urges remaining cadres to lay down arms

Bhubaneswar (TSIT) : Odisha Director General of Police (DGP) Y.B. Khurania on Sunday said that coordinated operations by security forces over the past one year have led to the surrender of 77 Maoists and the neutralisation of 27 ultras in the state, while urging the remaining cadres to lay down their arms to avoid action by the forces.



Khurania, who was in Phulbani to attend a special programme to honour security personnel involved in anti-Maoist operations, said that around a year ago, security forces received a call to eliminate the influence of Maoists in the country by March 31, 2026.

The Odisha DGP stated that significant successes have

Operations Group (SOG), Special Intelligence Wing (SIW), and District Voluntary Force (DVF).

"As many as 77 Maoists have surrendered to the Odisha Police, while 23 active Maoist cadres from Odisha have laid down their arms in Chhattisgarh. Security forces have neutralised 27 Maoists in various operations during this period, including 17 cadres - among them a Central Committee member of CPI (Maoist) - who were killed near the Nuapada-Gariaband border in a joint operation carried out by Odisha Police, Chhattisgarh Police, and other security forces on January 25, 2025," DGP Khurania said.

PM Modi says Kerala is ready for change; targets LDF and UDF

Palakkad (Kerala) (TSIT): Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday intensified the BJP-led NDA's campaign for the 2026 Kerala Assembly elections, telling a large gathering in Palakkad that the state was witnessing a "different vibe" and showing signs of political change.



Addressing a rally at Kotta Maidan, PM Modi said the BJP and the NDA were drawing growing support from key sections of Kerala society, especially youth, women and farmers. The PM credited what he described as the alliance's rising acceptance to the blessings of the people, the commitment of party workers and their sac-

rifices on the ground. The Prime Minister sought to project the NDA as an emerging alternative in a state long dominated by the LDF and the UDF.

In a sharp political attack, PM Modi alleged that Kerala had remained trapped for decades in the grip of "selfish politics" under the alternating rule of the Left Democratic Front and the United

Democratic Front. He accused both fronts of failing to unlock the state's full potential and argued that repeated shifts between the two coalitions had not translated into meaningful transformation for ordinary people.

Positioning the NDA as a development-oriented force, the Prime Minister said Kerala's future lay in embrac-

ing a new political direction backed by what he called his guarantees and vision for governance. He asserted that the BJP would work to turn Kerala into a developed state, promising a model of progress that would focus on opportunity, growth and better prospects for coming generations.

The PM's speech appeared to be aimed at reinforcing the NDA's message that Kerala is ready to move beyond traditional bipolar politics.

PM Modi arrived in Palakkad after landing at the Mercy College helipad and travelled to the venue through a roadshow route in the town, where party workers and supporters had gathered in large numbers earlier in the day. Senior BJP and NDA leaders were also present at the event.

Vice President visits Munda's birthplace; says his life, sacrifice still inspire people

RANCHI/KHUNTI: Birsa Munda's life and sacrifice continue to inspire generations, Vice President C P Radhakrishnan said on Saturday after paying floral tributes at the statue of the tribal icon during his visit to Khunti district.

During the visit, Radhakrishnan interacted with the descendants of Birsa Munda at Ulihatu. "After assuming the office of the Vice President, I am deeply moved to once again visit Ulihatu, the sacred birthplace of Bhagwan Birsa Munda. I pay my deepest respects to this great freedom fighter, whose life and sacrifice continue to inspire generations," he posted on X.

Radhakrishnan also said, "I fondly recall the day I took the oath as the governor of Jharkhand. On that very day, I had travelled to Ulihatu, an experience that remains profoundly meaningful." Radhakrishnan was the governor of Jharkhand between 2023 and 2024. "The visionary decision taken in 2021 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to commemorate November 15, the birth anniversary of Bhagwan Birsa Munda, as Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas, has elevated nation-



al awareness and pride in our tribal heritage. "I also had the privilege of being present with the prime minister at Khunti when he announced the PM-JANMAN scheme, a transformative initiative aimed at protecting and empowering particularly vulnerable tribal communities," he said. Radhakrishnan further said, "This two-pronged approach of installing pride and awareness about the rich legacy and struggles of tribal freedom fighters across genera-

tions, while simultaneously empowering tribal communities during this Amrit Kaal, truly embodies the realisation of the rights and dignity for which Bhagwan Birsa Munda fought so valiantly."

The Vice President arrived at the Ranchi airport earlier in the day and was welcomed by Jharkhand Governor Santosh Gangwar, Union minister Sanjay Seth and state minister Sudivya Kumar.

Radhakrishnan also attended the 15th convocation of the Indi-

an Institute of Management (IIM), Ranchi, in the afternoon, where he felicitated the meritorious students.

Congratulating the graduating students, the Vice President encouraged them to choose character over shortcuts and purpose over profit.

Ethical leadership, integrity and trust are the foundations on which enduring institutions are built, he added.

Radhakrishnan said management education must go beyond boardrooms and balance sheets.

"When I say go beyond balance sheets, do not think balance sheet is not important. It is important but your mind and dedication should go beyond balance sheets," he said, while urging students never to apply short-cut methods in life.

"Short-cut methods may give you big success in the beginning but one day, it will be a disaster," he added.

The Vice President also launched IIM Ranchi's virtual reality case repository, which aims to transform the way case studies are taught and understood, making learning more practical, immersive, and aligned with real-world business environments.

Tiger poisoned to death near Satpura Reserve in MP, 5 held

BHOPAL: A radio-collared tiger was allegedly poisoned to death, following which five persons were arrested on Saturday, Madhya Pradesh police said.

The tiger's body was found buried in a pit in West Chhindwara division revenue area on Friday, the official said.

"The tiger was brought from Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve in Umaria in December 2004. It had formed its territory outside the reserve. Five persons have been arrested for poisoning the animal. They have been remanded in judicial custody," STR field director Rakhi Nanda told PTI.

The accused, who laced

tiger kill with poison, allegedly took this step as the big cat had killed their cattle, Nanda added.

The accused are also involved in illegal opium cultivation, the official said.

Meanwhile, wildlife activist Ajay Dubey on Saturday lodged a formal complaint in the matter with Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Member Secretary, National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), Principal Secretary (Forest), MP, among others.

In his complaint, Dubey alleged that no movement was seen in the radio-collar monitor since March 3, but

the forest department ignored the development.

"The tigress was poisoned by poachers and her carcass was found buried in a pit in Sanga Kheda village area under Chhindwara South Forest Division. It is not merely a case of poaching, but a glaring example of administrative and monitoring failure," Dubey said while seeking immediate intervention from higher authorities.

He also sought the removal of STR field director Nanda "for free and fair investigation into the glaring incident".

A total of 14 tigers have died in MP since January this year, he pointed out.

Several 'B teams' were formed to 'break' AIADMK: Palaniswami

CHENNAI: AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami on Saturday alleged that several "B teams" were formed and many tried to "break" the AIADMK by filing cases in court, but all that has been smashed and shattered into pieces.

Without naming expelled AIADMK leader O Panneerselvam, Palaniswami, while garnering votes in North Chennai for the April 23 Assembly polls, here, said, "Several internal problems were created in the party and now see where they (Panneerselvam) have gone."

"The true face (of Panneerselvam) has come

out. The cat is out of the bag. After Amma's (As Jayalalithaa is fondly called, meaning mother) demise, many tried to capture this movement intentionally. But with the help of you all and party supporters, we stopped and have proven that AIADMK is a strong movement," he said.

"After Amma passed away (on December 5, 2016) they thought the party would break. They tried so much to break this party by creating some B teams. But, along with the support of the people and party cadres, all that has been smashed and shattered into piec-

es," he said. Stressing that the party had been started for the welfare of the poor by the late Chief Minister M G Ramachandran, Palaniswami said after his demise the movement got split. "But Amma (Jayalalithaa) united them and fulfilled the dreams of our revolutionary leader (M G Ramachandran)," he said amid thunderous applause from the audience.

The only party to have ruled Tamil Nadu for 31 years is the AIADMK and because of it, the state secured top rank among other states in India, he claimed.

Observing that the party follows democracy,

he said in the DMK it is not so, as no matter how much one toils hard for the party's growth they would not get any recognition. The ruling DMK's objective was to only "loot", he said, and asked the people whether such a party should come to power again. The people replied, "no".

The accident occurred Friday night on Navania Road in Vallabh Nagar area, when an oncoming tractor-trolley hit three youngsters travelling on a motorcycle, police said.

Assistant Sub-Inspector Ramesh Jat said that Rudra Nagda succumbed to injuries during treatment, while two others are undergoing treatment at a private hospital.

20-year-old man died in road accident in Rajasthan's Udaipur

JAIPUR: A 20-year-old man died after a collision between a motorcycle and a tractor-trolley in Rajasthan's Udaipur district, police said on Saturday.

Following the incident, tension prevailed as villagers protested, demanding compensation from the tractor owner.

The accident occurred Friday night on Navania Road in Vallabh Nagar area, when an oncoming tractor-trolley hit three youngsters travelling on a motorcycle, police said.

Assistant Sub-Inspector Ramesh Jat said that Rudra Nagda succumbed to injuries during treatment, while two others are undergoing treatment at a private hospital.

Development projects worth Rs 12Cr launched in Palam area of Delhi

NEW DELHI: Development works valued at over Rs 12 crore were launched in the Palam Assembly constituency on Saturday, with South Delhi MP Ramvir Singh Bidhuri and local MLA Kuldeep Solanki participating in the foundation-laying ceremony.

According to details shared during the event, the projects focus on improving basic infrastructure, including roads, internal lanes, drainage systems and parks in the area. The foundation stones were laid at Gokal Garden, with several works planned across Palam Village, Rajnagar and nearby localities. The planned developments include construction and repair of roads and drains in Palam Village, installation of open-air gyms and children's play equipment in parks, and reconstruction of lanes in Rajnagar.

TMC counters Shah's 'chargesheet' with similar document; seeks answer for Manipur violence

KOLKATA: The Trinamool Congress slammed Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday with a counter to his "chargesheet" against the Mamata Banerjee government, accusing the BJP of trying to polarise the people of poll-bound West Bengal and evade accountability for its own record on a host of issues, including women's safety.

Hours after Shah's press conference here, the incumbent TMC questioned the BJP-led Centre over the prolonged violence in Manipur, women's safety in BJP-ruled states and the Centre's handling of illegal immigration.

Senior TMC leaders Mahua Moitra, Bratya Basu and Kirti Azad held a joint press conference where they targeted the Union Home minister over his criticism of the TMC government on women's safety. "Amit Shah is talking about women's security. What is the condition

of women's safety in BJP-ruled states?"

"Shah should first answer about violence in Manipur, which has bled continuously for the past three years," TMC MP Moitra said.

The counter-charges came after Shah, earlier in the day, sharpened the BJP's campaign for the West Bengal assembly elections, releasing a political "chargesheet" against the TMC government and framing the polls as a battle not merely for Bengal, but for the country's security.

At a packed press conference, Shah alleged that after 15 years of TMC rule, West Bengal had become the country's "principal corridor" for infiltration because of the ruling party's appeasement politics, corruption and political violence.

Rejecting the allegation, the TMC noted that the BJP has been in power at the Centre for over a decade and



has been ruling several border states.

"BJP rules at the Centre. It rules 15 states and most border states through which infiltration is happening. Amit Shah himself is the Union Home Minister. So what exactly has he been waiting for?" senior TMC leader and West Bengal Education minister Bratya Basu said.

Questioning the Centre's claims on infiltration,

Basu asked why the Union Home Ministry had "failed" to identify and deport illegal immigrants.

"Why has the BJP-controlled Election Commission failed to release the names of foreign nationals found on the electoral rolls?" he asked.

In a separate statement, Basu alleged that the BJP was using the issue of infiltration to create divisions in Bengal.

Karnataka BJP MLA Suresh Kumar refuses IPL tickets, slams 'VIP culture'

BENGALURU: Calling the decision to allot two IPL tickets to MLAs "VIP culture", senior Karnataka BJP MLA Suresh Kumar on Saturday said he does not want them.

He expressed surprise that the government was eager to make such an announcement just 24 hours after the discussion in the Assembly. Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said on Friday that the KSCA had agreed to provide two tickets per MLA for the IPL match on March 28 at the city's Chinnaswamy Stadium.

IPL 2026 kicked off here with Royal Challengers Bengaluru facing Sunrisers Hyderabad in the opening match.

Shivakumar had met officials of the Karnataka State Cricket Association, which manages the stadium, a day after legislators across party lines raised the issue in the Assembly regarding improper ticketing and seating arrangements at the city's premier venue.

During the discussion, Speaker U T Khader had asked the government to ensure that every MLA receives four VIP tickets for matches at the stadium.

Kumar also wrote to the Speaker on Saturday, declining the IPL match tickets.

"As per my conscience, I politely decline to accept any IPL match ticket or pass issued

by the government or the KSCA. Therefore, please do not issue any ticket or pass in my name," he said in his letter.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, responding to a reporter's question in Mysuru about Kumar's stand, said, "If someone does not want the tickets, that is fine. Whoever wants to watch the match can go."

When asked whether discussing IPL tickets for MLAs in the Assembly was appropriate, he said, "Tickets were given by the KSCA to MLAs and MLCs in the past as well. Even now, they are giving tickets—this time, instead of one, they have been asked to give two. That's all." The CM said he would try to attend the match if time permitted. "It won't be possible until April 9 due to the by-elections," he added.

Earlier in the day, Kumar said in a statement, "The state government, led by Siddaramaiah, claims to be socialist. It is truly surprising and unfortunate that VIP culture continues even under the rule of this self-proclaimed socialist CM."

"Oh, I forgot! When RCB won the IPL last year, we all saw how this same 'Samajwadi' chief minister took his grandson to the victory stage built in front of the Vidhana Soudha," he added, taking a dig at the government.

Nominations open for Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar

NEW DELHI: The Centre has invited nominations for the Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar (RVP) 2026, a national initiative to recognise outstanding contributions in the fields of science, technology, and innovation.

The awards are administered by the RVP Secretariat, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), the Ministry of Science and Technology, under the chairmanship of the principal scientific advisor to the government.

"The Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar reflects the government's unwavering commitment to fostering excellence in science, technology, and innovation. These awards celebrate the spirit of inquiry and dedication of our scientists and innovators who are driving India's transforma-

tion into a global knowledge leader," Union Minister Jitendra Singh said in a statement on Saturday.

Nominations, including self-nominations, are open across a wide range of domains, including agricultural science, atomic energy, biological sciences, chemistry, defence technology, Earth science, engineering sciences, environmental science, medicine, physics, space science and technology, and others.

The awards will be presented in four distinct categories: Vigyan Ratna to recognise lifetime achievements in science and technology; Vigyan Shri to acknowledge distinguished contributions to the field; Vigyan Yuva-Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar to encourage young scientists (up to 45 years of age).

Himachal CM's Himcare facts incorrect, scheme should not be discontinued: LoP

SHIMLA: A heated debate occurred between the ruling Congress and the opposition BJP in Himachal Pradesh Vidhan Sabha on Saturday during a discussion on a cut motion related to the health department.

Leader of the Opposition Jairam Thakur raised several questions regarding the state government's handling of the Himcare scheme and health services. He also objected to statements made by Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu.

The BJP leader asserted that the chief minister's facts regarding the Himcare scheme are inaccurate. Specifically addressing the issue of bills related to "hysterectomies performed on men".

He said that the medicines in

question are actually used in the treatment of cancer patients and added that an investigation into the matter revealed these medications had indeed been utilised for the treatment of patients suffering from cancer.

The Himcare scheme, launched during the tenure of the previous BJP government, provides free healthcare services to low-income individual groups who are not covered under the Ayushman Bharat Yojana or Jan Arogya Yojana.

He further alleged that the information being provided by the chief minister's health advisor is incorrect.

Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Friday had said that irregularities like bills for

ovarian surgeries of men and implant of expired lenses have come to light during an internal audit of the Himcare scheme, following which a vigilance inquiry has been ordered.

The Leader of Opposition countered and said that if any irregularities occurred within the Himcare scheme, they should be investigated, but discontinuing the scheme entirely would be inappropriate.

He also argued that it is unfair to tarnish doctors' reputations by levelling allegations of irregularities against the scheme. He further alleged attempts are being made to alter the fundamental structure of the Nerchowk Medical University, a move he deemed improper.

Jairam Thakur also raised questions regarding the infrastructure of health services. He said that while introducing robotic surgery in two major institutions is logical, launching it across five locations without adequate infrastructure could impose an additional financial burden on patients.

He also highlighted the issue of termination of outsourced employees who served during the COVID-19 pandemic, stating their removal is unjustifiable given their crucial role during a difficult period.

He also pointed out that the current government took approximately three and a half years to install the PET-scan machine, an initiative for which

the previous government had already laid the groundwork.

Furthermore, Thakur alleged that the procurement of furniture for the medical colleges in Chamba and Hamirpur has remained incomplete for the past year and a half.

The LoP remarked that Union Health Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda is willing to provide funds from the Centre for various health schemes, but the state government must ensure proper utilisation of those funds.

He pointed out that while the state government receives financial assistance from the Centre for numerous schemes, it does not even acknowledge or appreciate it.

Chengalpattu-Melmaruvathur 3rd, 4th railway lines inches forward as Centre sanctions Final Location Survey



CHENNAI: The Union Ministry of Railways has stated that a Final Location Survey (FLS) has been sanctioned for laying third and fourth railway lines between Chengalpattu and Melmaruvathur, covering about 35 km via Madurantakam.

noted in a reply at the Rajya Sabha that a survey has been approved for the preparation of a Detailed Project Report. The proposal is on the busy Chennai-Villupuram corridor, which handles suburban, passenger and freight traffic.

primary stage and will require further approvals, including appraisal by NITI Aayog and the Ministry of Finance, before it can be taken up for execution. No timeline has been fixed as of now. The update comes alongside the Tirupati-Katpadi and Thiruvananthapuram-Kanniyakumari. Of the 4,326 hectares required for ongoing projects in Tamil Nadu, only about 1,052 hectares, or 24 per cent, have been acquired so far. Many projects, including new lines such as Tiruvannamalai, Attipattu-Puthur and Mannargudi-Pattukkottai, have been affected by the acquisition delay. Railway line-Sanction

already been sanctioned and is under execution. The Railways also noted that as of April 2025, 15 projects spanning nearly 1,700 km have been sanctioned in Tamil Nadu, of which around 665 km have been completed. Several works are currently under way, including the Tambaram-Chengalpattu fourth line, Attipattu-Gummidipundi third and fourth lines, Chennai-Cuddalore new line via Mahabalipuram, and doubling projects such as Tirupati-Katpadi and Thiruvananthapuram-Kanniyakumari. Of the 4,326 hectares required for ongoing projects in Tamil Nadu, only about 1,052 hectares, or 24 per cent, have been acquired so far. Many projects, including new lines such as Tiruvannamalai, Attipattu-Puthur and Mannargudi-Pattukkottai, have been affected by the acquisition delay. Railway line-Sanction

1.5L ration shop workers, family members will skip TN 2026 Assembly polls, warns assn

CHENNAI: Fair Price Shop workers across the State have decided to boycott the upcoming Assembly elections, accusing the government of reneging on its promise to create a separate department for the Public Distribution System (PDS).

Announcing the decision, Tamil Nadu Ration Shop Employees' Association general secretary Dinesh Kumar said the protest was triggered by the government's failure to act on a key electoral assurance made in 2021 and warned that 1.5 lakh family members of 30,000 workers would skip polls.

"The DMK had promised to consolidate ration shops functioning under multiple departments and establish an exclusive department for the PDS. Five years on, that assurance has not moved beyond paper," he said.

The association said nearly 30,000 workers, who had supported the promise during the last Assembly polls, now feel "betrayed" and continue to work under fragmented administrative control.

Highlighting their role during crises, Kumar said ration shop employees had ensured doorstep delivery of food grains and relief materials during the COVID-19 pandemic and floods, often at personal risk. "We have functioned as



the government's field interface, delivering every welfare scheme to the people. Yet, our long-pending demand has been ignored," he said.

Kumar, however, said the association remains open to reconsidering its stand if any political party formally endorses their demand and offers a clear assurance to establish a separate department for the PDS. "Should any party commit to fulfilling our long-pending demand, we will review our decision and

extend our support accordingly," he said. Calling it a collective decision, the association warned that around 30,000 employees and their family members, amounting to nearly 1.5 lakh votes, would boycott the election. "We consider this a breach of trust. Having come to power on promises that included our demands, the government has failed to honour them. We will use this election to register our protest," Kumar added.

Meat-based low-carb diet may not aid in weight loss

Chennai Hot on the heels of a deadly Covid-19 pandemic, the recent pneumonia outbreak reported in China is a concern for the rest of the world as our interconnected world still poses risks, said experts on Thursday, while calling on the need for preparing for the worst. A recent post on ProMED Mail, the online reporting system of the International Society for Infectious Diseases, reported that China was experiencing a major pneumonia outbreak with no known cause in children.

It said that the outbreak, causing symptoms such as high fever, and some developing pulmonary nodules is overwhelming paediatric hospitals in the country.

Upon request, Chinese officials informed the World Health Organisation (WHO) that no new pathogens were detected in the outbreak, and instead the illnesses were caused by known seasonal viruses such as the flu and RSV, along with the bacteria Mycoplasma pneumoniae.

Netherlands and Denmark have also reported a similar uptick in pneumonia cases among children. While there is currently no report of a spread, it may be too early to say whether it can spread, said health experts calling for increasing surveillance.

"While the risk of the new China flu threatening India is currently low, the potential for spillover remains. Implementing proactive preventive measures and strengthening public health infrastructure are crucial to safeguard India's health security," Dr Tushar Tayal, Consultant, Internal Medicine, CK Birla Hospital, Gurugram, told IANS.

"In the wake of the pneumonia outbreak in China, vigilance becomes our greatest shield. Although, there is no imminent threat to India, given our robust preparedness. Drawing from our past encounters with novel viruses, our readiness is evident. The lessons learned have fortified our capabilities to effectively address potential challenges posed by emerging infectious agents. However, our interconnected world still poses risks, and in such a case awareness and precautions are potent tools," added Dr Nidhin Mohan, Consultant, Internal Medicine, Narayana Health City, Bengaluru.

A new paper in the Lancet journal shows a significant resurgence of Mycoplasma pneumoniae cases post Covid in several countries including Singapore and Sweden since April.

Last week, the Union Health Ministry noted that it is "closely monitoring the reported outbreak of H9N2 cases and clusters of respiratory illness in children" in northern China. "There is low risk to India from both the avian influenza case reported from China as well as the clusters of respiratory illness," said a statement from the Ministry.

AI can reliably detect emotions at par with psychotherapist

AI systems can reliably determine the emotional states of patients as accurately as a psychotherapist, according to research. The face reflects a person's emotional state. The interpretation of facial expressions as part of psychotherapy or psychotherapeutic research, for example, is an effective way of characterising how a person is feeling in that particular moment. But the process of analysing and interpreting recorded facial expressions as part of research projects or psychotherapy is extremely time-consuming, which is why psychiatry specialists often use less reliable, indirect methods such as skin conductance measurements, which can also be a measure of emotional arousal.

Researchers at the University of Basel in Switzerland said AI could become an important tool in therapy and research. AI systems could be used in the analysis of existing video recordings from research studies in order to detect emotionally relevant moments in a conversation more easily and more directly. This ability could also help support the supervision of psychotherapists, they noted in the study published in the journal Psychopathology. To determine whether



AI systems can reliably determine the emotional states of patients in video recordings, they used freely available

artificial neural networks that were trained in the detection of six basic emotions (happiness, surprise, anger, disgust,

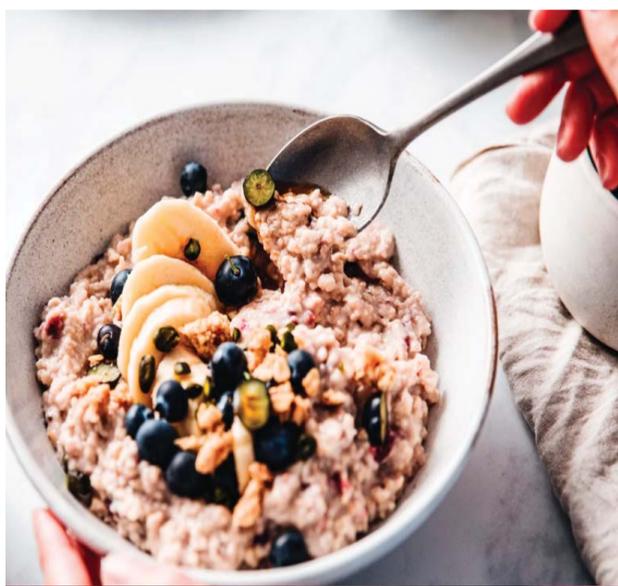
sadness and fear) using more than 30,000 facial photos. This AI system then analysed video data from therapy sessions with a total of 23 patients with borderline personality pathology. The high-performance computer had to process more than 950 hours of video recordings for this study. The results were astonishing: Statistical comparisons between the analysis of three trained therapists and the AI system showed a remarkable level of agreement, the researchers said.

The AI system assessed facial expressions as reliably as a human but was also able to detect even the most fleeting of emotions within the millisecond range, such as a brief smile or expression of disgust. These types of micro expressions have the potential to be missed by therapists or may only be perceived subconsciously. The AI system is therefore able to measure fleeting emotions with an increased level of sensitivity compared to trained therapists. "We were really surprised to find that relatively simple AI systems can allocate facial expressions to their emotional states so reliably," said Dr. Martin Steppan, psychologist at the University's Faculty of Psychology. "Nevertheless, therapeutic work is still primarily about human relationships,

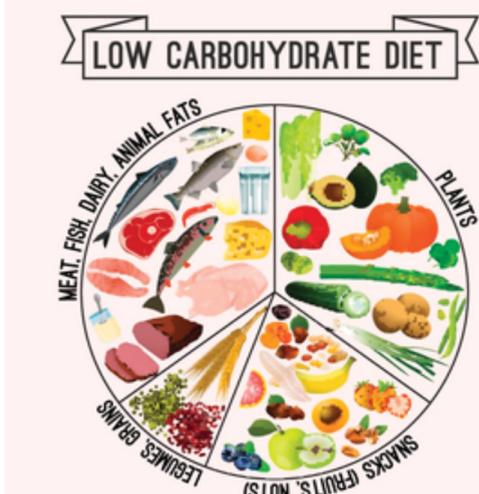
Eat your breakfast, dinner early to reduce heart attack risk

London: Are you one of those people who skip their first meal of the day or eat a late breakfast and dinner? Beware, you may be at risk of heart attack, warns a study. The study suggested eating the first meal of the day at 8 a.m. and dinner by 8 p.m. to avoid risk of cardiovascular disease. Cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of death in the world according to the Global Burden of Disease study, with 18.6 million annual deaths in 2019, of which around 7.9 are attributable to diet. This means that diet plays a major role in the development and progression of these diseases.

The study by French research institute INRAE - National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment showed that having a first meal later in the day (such as when skipping breakfast), is associated with a higher risk of cardiovascular disease, with a 6 per cent increase in risk per hour delay. For example, a person who eats for the first time at 9 a.m. is 6 per cent more likely to develop cardiovascular disease than someone who eats at 8 a.m.



When it comes to the last meal of the day, eating late (after 9 p.m.) is associated with a 28 per cent increase in the risk of cerebrovascular disease such as stroke compared with eating before 8 p.m., particularly in women. Finally, a longer duration of night-time fasting - the time between the last meal of the day and the first meal of the following day - is associated with a reduced risk of cerebrovascular disease, supporting the idea of eating one's first and last meals earlier in the day. For the study, published in Nature Communications, the scientists used data from 103,389 participants to study the associations between food intake patterns and cardiovascular disease. The findings, which need to be replicated in other cohorts and through additional scientific studies with different designs, highlight a potential role for meal timing in preventing cardiovascular disease. The team suggest that adopting the habit of eating earlier first and last meals with a longer period of night-time fasting could help to prevent the risk of cardiovascular disease.



EDITORIAL

When Supply Chains Break, Waste Can Fill the Gap

What if the solution to rising fuel and fertiliser costs is already in our bins? LPG cylinders are running dry in our favourite food establishments. A few more weeks and they will squeeze our household budgets as well. Some 90% of India's LPG imports come through the Strait of Hormuz. The International Energy Agency will release 400 million barrels of oil from emergency reserves, which would cover four days of global consumption. India claims to have more than 60 days of oil reserves, but only two days of LPG reserves. The other impending crisis few people are talking about is fertilisers. The Kharif sowing season is soon upon us and urea and phosphates will be critical ingredients for a hearty crop. Interestingly, these too depend on natural gas. India's fertilisers also predominantly come from the Gulf. Freight rates have reportedly risen ten-fold to account for the risk of passing through the Strait. Remember when Sri Lanka banned costly chemical fertilisers to save money? It cost them over USD 400 million in tea export, nearly half their food production and arguably led to the fall of the government as shortages sparked public anger. You may say we will get our gas and fertilisers from elsewhere. Russia is offering alternatives, after all. Yes, but this will be much more expensive than what we have had so far. Typically, when energy prices rise, anger grows against the government. Will the current government withstand rising food and fuel prices? Or will it strongly subsidise fuel and fertiliser and reverse its hard-earned gains in reducing India's fiscal deficit? I would argue the current crisis may be an opportunity in disguise. We have long struggled to manage our wet waste. Kitchen scrapings, animal dung, sewage water, agricultural waste have long polluted our soil, water and air. Many programmes attempt to salvage value out of organic residues through conversion to biogas or compost. Yet none of these programmes have taken off or sustained momentum after the initial impetus. Consumers are often to blame for this. We are locked into familiar patterns and reluctant to try something new. The stigma of waste-derived material is an added deterrent. I would urge those so inclined to visit some oil dumps or at least look them up on the internet. Given the right infrastructure and human attention, anything can be transformed into a finished product. After all, the most important discovery that boosted food production was a pile of bird guano off the Latin American coast. And of course, animal dung is the oldest fertiliser known to man. Is it all worth it though? Spending thousands of crores from the government exchequer to subsidise biowaste transformation for a passing storm? "This too shall pass," right? Wrong, most likely. This war has been forty years in the making, with all sides declaring it a holy war. There is an adage in foreign policy: "Allies are temporary, interests are permanent." Unfortunately, conflict appears inevitable in this region with ethnic and religious divides. Since we have entered a new state of disorder in geopolitics, supply shortages will be a recurring theme. Two more straits in the South China Sea and the Red Sea are also chokepoints that are likely to be held hostage at some point. Besides war, long-term strategy dictates a transition to renewable sources of energy and fertiliser. Firstly, oil imports may be a much bigger drain on India's finances than subsidies for renewable energy. Moreover, special economic zones and other incentives support India's petroleum industry. India also has strong decarbonisation targets dependent on weaning off of fossil fuels. Decarbonisation would be best done quickly as exports to European countries will soon include a carbon tax. So what needs to be done? Major challenges include inconsistent market prices, lack of adequate storage and transport for feedstocks and products such as biogas and compost. Backyard biogas plant subsidies are set to expire in March 2026. These should be extended. Offtake agreements must be prioritised to ensure steady prices and limit uncertainty. Capital expenditure for storage and transport infrastructure for biogas and compost must be sanctioned. Research into best practices in treatment processes and operations should be incentivised.

How the NEP is Reshaping Autonomy for Minority Institutions

As India's higher education system reorganises itself under the National Education Policy 2020, a quieter constitutional question is taking shape: what happens to institutional autonomy when governance is redefined through standardisation, metrics and centralised regulation? However, most of the public debate on the policy has focussed on its other aspects - curriculum reform, multidisciplinary expansion and institutional consolidation. The Union Budget 2026-27 increased education allocation to Rs 1,39,289 crore, an 8.27% rise that signals NEP implementation has entered its operational phase. Less examined, however, is a constitutional question: how does a governance model built on standardisation, performance metrics and regulatory restructuring interact with the autonomy granted to minority educational institutions? The NEP preserves constitutional protections on paper. Article 30(1) affirms that minorities based on religion or language have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. Yet when oversight shifts from political discretion to technocratic standardisation, the meaning of autonomy can change. The policy proposes replacing the UGC, AICTE and NCTE with a unified Higher Education Commission of India. The Cabinet's approval of the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill in December 2025 advances this framework, bringing all non-medical, non-legal higher education institutions under a single regulatory body. Alongside institutional consolidation, graded autonomy tied to accreditation marks a decisive turn towards performance-based governance. Under existing UGC regula-

tions, universities with high NAAC scores receive greater flexibility in admissions and curriculum design, while those with lower scores face tighter oversight. Institutions are evaluated through common benchmarks: governance structures, faculty qualifications, research output, infrastructure and financial transparency. These metrics operate through a points-based system that privileges certain institutional models. A university that publishes frequently in indexed journals and maintains state-of-the-art labs will score well; one that invests primarily in community outreach or trains teachers for underserved regions may not. Budgetary priorities reinforce this orientation, linking increased allocations to measurable outcomes and employability. In this framework, autonomy becomes something earned and retained through compliance. Quality assurance regimes promise transparency and accountability. Yet standardisation inevitably favours institutional forms aligned with measurable research productivity and infrastructure expansion. Evaluation systems assume that all institutions share the same purpose, and they reward outputs that regulators can easily count and compare. A college that prioritises community access, teaches in a regional language or organises its mission around service to a particular population may find that these commitments carry little weight in the scoring rubric. Minority institutions occupy a distinctive place in India's constitutional design. In T.M.A. Pai Foundation v. State of Karnataka (2002), the Supreme Court affirmed that Article 30 grants minorities substantial autonomy in administration, admissions

and fee structures, subject to reasonable regulation. Crucially, the Court cautioned that regulation cannot "whittle down" the right itself. Autonomy, therefore, has historically meant more than non-interference. It has signified the capacity to preserve institutional character while participating in the national system. When recognition and status are tied to uniform benchmarks, structural tension emerges. Institutions must align internal processes with externally defined criteria to retain accreditation grades, expand programmes or secure funding. NAAC criteria emphasise indexed research publications, UGC-aligned faculty qualifications and infrastructure standards. While these metrics suit research-intensive universities, institutions oriented towards community service, cultural preservation or teaching in regional languages may struggle to perform comparably. Over time, compliance cultures reshape priorities. Hiring committees begin to favour candidates with strong publication records over those with deep community ties. Curricula tilt towards subjects that produce quantifiable research. Governance procedures converge towards models more compatible with prevailing evaluation systems. Recent budgetary decisions illustrate how fiscal design shapes this environment. While overall education spending has risen, allocations for minority-targeted scholarship schemes have been sharply reduced. The Merit-cum-Means Scholarship for professional and technical courses fell from Rs 7.34 crore to Rs 0.06 crore. The Maulana Azad National Fellowship declined from Rs 42.84 crore to Rs 36.14 crore. In 2025-26, the Post-Matric Scholarship

carried a Budget Estimate of Rs 413.99 crore but a Revised Estimate of Rs 0.06 crore before being nominally restored the following year. These figures do not merely signal allocation shifts. They are representative of changing priorities within an outcome-driven framework. What is lost sight of in such a system is that allocation alone does not determine impact. Execution, administrative prioritisation and alignment with dominant performance frameworks matter just as much. Each of these factors determines which schemes gain traction and which languish. In a system increasingly organised around measurable outputs, targeted equity programmes that do not directly contribute to an institution's accreditation score risk becoming peripheral, regardless of their social significance. This is not about overt encroachment on constitutional rights: No provision in the NEP explicitly revokes Article 30 protections, and minority institutions remain free to exist and govern themselves. The pressure is subtler. Institutions that score well on NAAC parameters gain access to greater funding, research grants and programmatic flexibility. Those that do not must submit to closer regulatory scrutiny. In practice, this means that a minority college whose mission centres on community education or vernacular instruction faces a choice: reshape its priorities to match accreditation benchmarks, or accept a lower institutional standing that limits growth. The legal right to operate is never formally challenged. What shifts is the practical capacity to sustain a distinctive institutional identity within a system that rewards a particular model of academic performance.

AGENTIC AI IN WAR: FROM IRAN TO UKRAINE

Minutes before the airstrike, the only thing that had changed was a number on a screen. A young Gazan man was sleeping in a crowded apartment with his parents and younger siblings. Across the border, an Israeli intelligence officer sat in a darkened command center, staring at a list of AI-ranked targets. The system known as 'Lavender' had flagged the man as a 'likely militant' and spat out a coordinate. The officer, under pressure and staring at a long list of similarly ranked targets, hit approve in seconds. Minutes later, the building collapsed. The man, his parents, and the children did not survive. On paper, the AI had simply "cleared" another target. In the street, there was a crater and a family erased by a decision made in moments and never revisited. When news broke of the missile strike that obliterated the Shajareh Tayyebah girls' elementary school in Minab, southern Iran, killing 175 people - over 100 of them schoolchildren - fingers immediately pointed to AI as the villain. Emerging reports now blame outdated human intelligence for the disaster. But the Minab tragedy is a perfect window into the slippery, terrifying world of AI in warfare we have just stumbled into: a place where algorithms promise precision, but human error - or worse - still turns schools into craters. This is agentic AI in war: not a distant sci-fi experiment, but the quiet hand that helps pick a street, a face, a home, and then hands that choice to a human who has just enough time to say yes. The technology is no longer just a lab curiosity. It is now embedded in the very machinery that decides who lives, who dies, and who disappears from the records as if they were never there.

Wars Find New Forms

Wars never really end. They just find new forms and new frontiers. Today, the battlefield is not just trenches, tanks, and infantry; it is also server racks and software. Artificial intelligence has slipped into the ranks of modern warfare, not as a side project,



but as a quiet co-pilot in the chain of killing. In the war with Iran, we are seeing AI used at scale for the first time, a brutal, systematized version of the battlefield automation that first flickered across Ukraine's skies. Agentic AI isn't creeping onto the battlefield; it's kicking down the door to the command center, quietly taking over how modern militaries see, decide, and kill. It promises something chillingly simple: let software do what humans do too slowly, watch every camera, scrape every feed, sift every intercept, and then lean in to whisper to power: "Here is the target. Here is the timing. Here is what happens next." For decades, intelligence work was defined by scarcity: too few analysts, too little time, too many dots to connect. Now the problem is abundance. Armies drown in satellite imagery, drone video, social media chatter, and sensor data. Agentic AI turns that flood into something like a weaponized recommendation engine, ranking threats instead of Netflix shows and turning "collect - analyze - warn" from a bureaucratic cycle measured in weeks into an automated loop measured in minutes.

Maven, Palantir, And The Privatized Kill Chain

Nowhere is that transformation more visible than in the recent confrontation with Iran. According to a leaked Pentagon memo and subsequent reporting, the Maven Smart System, a command-and-control AI platform built by Palantir, has effectively become the US military's central brain for target selection. It ingests surveillance feeds, battlefield reports, and classified intelligence, then evaluates that information to pinpoint targets and generate prioritized strike lists. US officials openly credit Maven with enabling a wave of precision strikes on Iranian assets in a matter of days, not months. Crucially, Maven is no longer a quirky pilot project run out of a Pentagon lab. The Defense Department is moving to designate it a "program of record," locking Palantir's system into the long-term force structure and guaranteeing sustained funding.

Gaza And Iran: AI's Human Toll

The same logic plays out in Gaza, where the human cost is far more visible. Injuries, grief, and rubble do not rate well on a screen, but they are the real outcome of the "efficiency" Israel has termed its AI-assisted systems like "the

Gospel" and "Lavender." These tools analyzed data on most of Gaza's 2.3 million residents, assigned them probabilities, and at one point marked around 37,000 people as potential militants. Iran is no innocent bystander. Tehran's operators use the same AI logic - automate, personalize, and scale to generate fake personas, multilingual disinformation, and synthetic media aimed at shaping narratives in Israel, Europe, and North America. If Palantir's Maven is the flagship of kinetic AI warfare, Iran's campaigns prove the same machinery works just as well when the targets are minds and newsfeeds.

Ukraine's Live-Fire AI Lab

Then there is Ukraine, where AI is less a prestige project than a survival mechanism. Ukrainian officials say their forces now receive over 50,000 drone video feeds from the front every month, an impossible volume for human teams to process without help. AI systems classify vehicles, trenches, and movements, rapidly mapping targets for artillery or loitering munitions. Ukrainian and Russian units alike are fielding drones that can lock onto the image of a target and continue the attack even if the communication link is jammed.

WHEN THE CLOCK RUNS OUT:

A WARGAMER'S GUIDE TO THE NEXT 10 DAYS IN IRAN



Most conflict analysis explains what just happened. Wargaming does something different. Before events occur, you define the specific observable signals that will tell you which war you are actually watching - so that when something happens, you are reading it, not reacting to it. That discipline is not about predicting the future. It is about knowing, the moment a specific signal fires, exactly what it means for what comes next. Four weeks into the 2026 Iran War, the analysis behind this article has been running that wargame in real time. What it has identified is a ten-day window - expiring April 6 - that will determine the shape of this conflict for months. There are specific things to watch that will tell you which future is arriving before it gets here.

The Clock

On March 26, President Trump announced a ten-day pause on strikes against Iranian energy infrastruc-

ture, pushing his deadline to April 6. Before that date, one of these three things can happen: a framework for de-escalation emerges; the deadline passes without one and Trump extends again, further draining whatever credibility his ultimatums still carry; or the pause ends and the US strikes Iranian power plants - triggering what Tehran has publicly committed to, a large-scale counter-attack against Gulf energy and water infrastructure. The third path is the default if the first two fail. That is not a rhetorical warning. It is the structural logic of the situation. Six Things To Watch - And What Each One Means Pakistan has confirmed it is relaying messages between Washington and Tehran. Pakistani Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar stated publicly that the US has shared a 15-point peace proposal, currently being deliberated by Iran. Iran has reportedly responded through unnamed intermediaries and is now awaiting

Washington's reply. Watch for one specific thing: does Iran send back a formal counter-position, or does it return silence while the IRGC continues firing? A counter-position - even a maximalist one - means a live diplomatic back-channel exists. Silence plus continued escalation means it does not. Iran's publicly stated five conditions include war reparations and formal sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz. Neither is acceptable to Washington. But an opening position in diplomacy is not a final one. The question is whether there is a conversation at all. Tripwire 2: What happens to Iran's naval operations in the next 96 hours? | Window: 72-96 hours | On March 26, Israel killed Admiral Alireza Tangsiri - the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Navy commander who personally designed and ran Iran's maritime strategy in the Strait of Hormuz. He controlled which ships could pass, where mines were laid, and

which vessels were targeted by drone boats. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) subsequently stated that all of his key senior commanders were killed in the same strike. Watch whether Iran's maritime operations continue at the same tempo and structure, or whether they stutter and reconfigure. If they continue without a visible gap, Iran pre-positioned a parallel command structure - meaning the institution is more resilient than any individual. If they pause or reconfigure, the strike achieved genuine disruption. Either reading changes what comes next in the waterway through which one-fifth of the world's oil normally flows. Iran's parliament is drafting legislation to formally establish Iranian sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz and create a legal basis for charging ships passage fees. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary-General has confirmed Iran is already collecting this fee, in violation of international law.

'Govt caught off guard in handling energy crisis amid West Asia war': Asaduddin Owaisi at TV9 Network's 'What India Thinks Today Summit 2026'

New Delhi: "India is reeling under an acute energy crisis amid the war in West Asia and the ruling government has been caught off guard and is unable to handle the crunch," said Asaduddin Owaisi, Member of Parliament, and President of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM). He was speaking at the fourth edition of TV9 Network's 'What India Thinks Today Summit 2026', in New Delhi on March 24.



Owaisi pointed out that the BJP-ruled government did not create strategic petroleum reserves even though it has been in power for 11 years. As a result, he claimed today we are facing urea, LPG, gas and crude oil crisis. "After the Assembly elections, the prices of petrol and diesel will be increased," the MP from Hyderabad said. He added that the small vendors are bearing the brunt of the current crisis and the situation will get worse if it drags on. Owaisi questioned: "Why is the US deciding our oil imports? Why is India begging to the US and seeking Trump's approval to buy

Russian oil? Where has our self-respect gone?" He pointed out that all ships of China and Russia are being passed without any hassle from the Strait of Hormuz, but India had to request Iran to give passage to two vessels from the waterway. "Even these vessels aren't carrying enough to meet the demand of fuel and the demand-supply gap is yawning," Owaisi added.

'Doesn't untreated sewage going into Ganga hurt religious sentiments?'

Responding to allegations about an iftar party on a boat and claims that chick-

en biryani waste was dumped into the Ganga, Owaisi underlined that so much untreated sewage flows into the river but nobody is bothered about it. "Doesn't sewage finding its way into river Ganga hurt religious sentiments and cause outrage?" he asked, adding that many cruises and waste released from them also pollute the river.

'Constitution must be upheld'

Citing alleged cases of discrimination and ill-treatment being faced by Muslims in India, he said they are as much citizens of the country as anyone else and did not come from elsewhere. "The Constitution must be upheld — we should have faith in it and run the country in adherence with its principles," the MP pointed out. "This country has no (official) religion. But the ruling party has turned nationalism into Hindu nationalism (given it a Hindu identity)," Owaisi said. He added that he didn't need a certificate to prove that he is an Indian, while raising concern about narratives spread by Hindutava groups about celebrating 'Khooon Ki Holi' on Eid in Delhi's Uttam Nagar.

Hits out at Assam CM

The Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi accused Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma of promoting hatred between religious communities. He alleged that the Assam CM circulated a "violent video" depicting "shooting Muslims" and hit out at his remark urging people to pay Rs 2 less to "miyan Musalman". Owaisi said that if Sarma needed Rs 2, he could give it himself, questioning why a Chief Minister would make such statements. He pointed out

that Sarma is saying that he will create an environment where Muslims will be forced to go out of the state. Owaisi also pointed at that Supreme Court-monitored National Register of Citizens (NRC) exercise in Assam, noting that around 20 lakh people were left out of the list. Of these, he said 2.5 lakh were Muslims while 17.5 lakh were non-Muslims, asking who should then be considered "infiltrators". He criticised the move to grant citizenship to non-Muslims under the Citizenship Amendment Act while asking Muslims to produce documents to prove that they are Indians. He added that with agencies like the Border Security Force and the Home Ministry under government control, questions remain about how infiltrators are entering the state. He further stated that Mizoram CM reportedly said that around 2,000 foreigners entered the state and later moved into Myanmar. Owaisi alleged that Matthew Aaron VanDyke, who was arrested from Kolkata airport recently, was an US agent bringing drones into India and providing drone training.

UltraTech strengthens water availability in Anantapur district through responsible water stewardship



Andhra Pradesh Cement Works, UltraTech's integrated manufacturing unit in Anantapur district, reaffirms its commitment on World Water Day to responsible water stewardship, through focused water management practices and effective governance systems. The unit undertakes proactive efforts for harvesting, reducing, reusing, and recycling water both within its premises as well as within the communities where it operates, through its community water conservation initiatives. The unit's watershed project has seen significant progress since its inception, and in 2025, Andhra Pradesh Cement Works harvested and recharged over 5.5 lakh cubic metres of water, while cumulatively harvesting

and recharging over 22 lakh cubic metres of water since the start of the project. As part of these efforts, the unit undertook the construction of 13 check dams, water tanks and sunken ponds cumulatively in its operating communities (up to 31st March, 2025), benefiting over 3600 farmers in the same period. At the Company level, in FY25, UltraTech harvested and recharged over 16.2 million cubic metres of water through its community watershed projects and conservation initiatives across its units. This has contributed to improved water access, enhanced agricultural productivity and strengthened rural livelihoods in remote locations across India. In addition to its com-

munity water conservation initiatives, UltraTech also takes a multi-pronged approach to water conservation within its manufacturing operations. This includes water harvesting interventions such as turning exhausted mine pits into reservoirs and building rooftop rainwater harvesting structures in addition to increased use of recycled water and initiatives to increase water-use efficiency across manufacturing operations. Cumulatively, through all its water management initiatives, both within its units and in the local communities, UltraTech has helped to reuse, recycle, harvest and recharge over 120 million cubic metres of water in FY25.

ICICI Prudential Life Smallcap 250 Index Fund to enable investors to participate in India's emerging growth stories

Mumbai, March 2026: ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has launched the ICICI Prudential Life Smallcap 250 Index Fund under its Unit Linked Insurance Plans (ULIPs). The fund enables customers to participate in a broad basket of emerging listed companies and build wealth over the long term through a disciplined, index-based approach.

- ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has launched the ICICI Prudential Life Smallcap 250 Index Fund under its Unit Linked Insurance Plans (ULIPs).
- The fund enables customers to participate in a broad basket of emerging listed companies and build wealth over the long term through a disciplined, index-based approach.
- The fund tracks the Smallcap 250 Index, which represents 250 companies ranked 251st to 500th within the Nifty 500 universe.
- However, regulations may restrict the Company from investing in all the stocks in line with their weights in the index from time to time.
- As a result, there could be a possible tracking error. This fund provides exposure to an array of smaller listed businesses that are at the early stage of their growth journey and have the potential to scale over time.

The fund tracks the Smallcap 250 Index, which represents 250 companies ranked 251st to 500th within the Nifty 500 universe. However, regulations may restrict the Company from investing in all the stocks in line with their weights in the index from time to time. As a result, there could be a possible tracking error. This fund provides exposure to an array of smaller listed businesses that are at the early stage of their growth journey and have the potential to scale over time. Commenting on the launch, Mr. Manish Kumar, Chief Investment Officer, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance Company

Limited, said, "The Smallcap 250 Index Fund provides customers with a simple and transparent way to participate in the growth potential of emerging companies and build wealth over the long-term. This makes it suitable for long-term investors seeking a structured exposure to the emerging companies across diverse sectors of the market. The rule-based approach offers diversification across a wide set of businesses while remaining disciplined and aligned with the benchmark. Notably, the fund provides broad-based diversification in 250 emerging companies across sectors

including Financial Services, Healthcare and Capital Goods, among others, enabling investors to participate in multiple emerging companies of the economy through a single fund." As of February 27, 2026, the Nifty Smallcap 250 TRI delivered 15.36% over one year, with a five-year annualised return of 19.04% and since inception return of 15.45%, reflecting its long-term growth potential. Being an equity-linked strategy, the fund's value may fluctuate with market movements. The investment strategy follows a passive, index-mirroring approach, aiming to stay aligned with the

benchmark rather than relying on active stock selection. The index is reviewed and refreshed twice a year to remain consistent with its defined methodology, ensuring a disciplined and transparent investment process. The ICICI Prudential Life Smallcap 250 Index Fund is available as an investment option with some of the Company's popular ULIP products with life cover, such as ICICI Pru Signature Assure, SmartKid Assure with ICICI Pru Signature Assure, ICICI Pru Smart Insurance Plan Plus (SIP+) amongst other ULIP products available on www.iciprulife.com.

Shops and restaurants in Egypt told to close early as energy crisis deepens

Shops, restaurants and cafes in Egypt have been told to close early as part of a raft of temporary measures to combat soaring energy prices caused by the Iran war. Retail and dining premises will have to close by 21:00 (19:00 GMT) each night for the next month, beginning on Saturday. The "exceptional measures" introduced by the Egyptian government also include dimming street lights and roadside advertising, as well as a return to home working for one day a week in April for many. Egypt has been particularly affected by the Middle East conflict and the effective blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, a key shipping route for oil and liquefied natural gas. Global oil prices have skyrocketed since supply via the waterway came to a near-total halt, with fears there could be a knock-on effect on the price of food, medicine and other goods if left unresolved. Even though Egypt has no involvement in the war, its reliance on imported fuel has made it vulnerable to supply shocks. Egypt's Prime Minister



Mostafa Madbouly said on Saturday that its petrol bill alone had more than doubled from January to \$2.5bn (£1.9bn) in March. Hotels and tourist attractions will be exempt from the energy-saving measures, the government has said. Tourism is estimated to make up around a 10th of Egypt's economy. However, several hotels in Cairo, including the Marriott and Cosmopolitan, told broadcaster RFI that they had acquired generators in case of power cuts and would keep their restaurants open for guests irrespective of closing times elsewhere.

While most employees will be told to work from home for one day a week, essential workers - such as those in hospitals, schools and factories - will be excluded. Since Iran began threatening to strike ships transporting good through the Strait of Hormuz, most international shipping through the narrow chokepoint has ceased. Usually, around 20% of the world's oil and gas supply flows through it. US President Donald Trump has repeatedly vented his frustration that allied nations were unwilling to help escort ships through the waterway.

Some ships have passed through the strait since the war began, though several of these had links to Iran, China or India. Thailand said on Saturday that it had reached an agreement with Iran, giving its oil tankers safe passage. The Egyptian government has already raised petrol prices and the cost of taking public transport to limit the impact of the conflict on its public finances. It will also slow down large, energy-intensive state projects and cut government vehicle fuel allowances by nearly a third, news agency Reuters reports.

Kalasalingam Universty : "National Cultural Festival - SPARKZ -2026"



The two day National Cultural Festival - SPARKZ 2026 organised at Kalasalingam University, Srivilliputhur. Pro Chancellor Dr.S. Arivazhagan presided. Vice President Dr. S. Shasi Anand inaugurated the events. Vice President S.Arjun Kalasalingam, Vice-Chancellor Dr. S.Narayanan

and The Registrar, Dr V.Vasudevan felicitated. Director S.A .Dr.M. P. Balakannan welcomed all and detailed the events. Cini Actress Antria, Actor Tovino Thomas, and Actress kayadau Loka, VJ Annamalai, Thiyaam Menon and DJ Gandhi are participated and interacted with students. 1000 students from 50 colleges

and 5000 university students participated in 52 different competitions The Vice President distributed prizes and certificates to the winners. Coordinators Dr.P. Priya, Dr.C. Sangeeta, and Sparks committee, all clubs professors and Students organised excellent. Vote of thanks delivered by Sangeeta.

Affordplan and Association of Healthcare Providers (India) — Tamil Nadu Chapter Partner to Enhance Procurement Transparency for Hospitals in Tamil Nadu

CHENNAI, India — March 28, 2026 — Affordplan and the Association of Healthcare Providers (India) Tamil Nadu Chapter today announced a strategic collaboration aimed at improving the efficiency of healthcare supply chains across Tamil Nadu. Through a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), members of the AHPI-TN will gain access to Affordplan's Procurement Optimization Platform called Procalyx™, a platform designed for product and price discovery in the pharmaceutical and medical device sectors. The healthcare industry has traditionally faced challenges with fragmented procurement data, often leading to price disparities for identical pharmaceutical products and medical consumables. The integration of Affordplan Procalyx™ provides AHPI-TN member hospitals with a standardized framework to evaluate products and market rates, facilitating more informed pur-



chasing decisions. This transparency enables hospital owners to optimize their procurement budgets without compromising on clinical quality. The MOU outlines a framework for preferential access, ensuring that AHPI-TN's member hospitals can integrate these digital tools into their existing workflows with dedicated support. "The primary objective of this partnership is to replace information asymmetry with data-driven decision-making. By utilizing

Affordplan Procalyx™, hospitals can verify market benchmarks for pharmaceuticals and consumables in real time. This structural improvement in the supply chain is a necessary step toward long-term operational sustainability for healthcare providers." Anand Nevatia, Co-Founder, Affordplan said. "As an association, our focus is on the collective stability of our member facilities. High procurement costs and supply chain opacity

remain significant challenges for hospital owners. This agreement with Affordplan provides our members with a practical tool to audit their spending and ensure they are procuring supplies at fair market value, ultimately supporting the financial viability of our healthcare institutions." Dr. Sathish Devadoss, President, AHPI Tamil Nadu Chapter added. "Amid rising healthcare costs, Affordplan's solution offers timely and much-needed

support to our member hospitals. This collaboration strengthens financial visibility while enabling hospitals to optimise resources without compromising on quality of care — a core priority for AHPI-TN." Mr. Adel J. Secretary, AHPI Tamil Nadu Chapter said. "Healthcare supply chains in India have long operated with limited visibility into real-time pricing benchmarks. Procalyx™ is built to change that — giving hospitals a structured, data-backed view of what they are paying versus what the market reflects. For AHPI-TN members, this translates directly into smarter procurement cycles and measurable cost outcomes." Dr. Vicky Kothari, Head — Supply Chain, Affordplan added. "This initiative is designed to address the operational overhead associated with manual procurement, allowing hospital administrators to streamline the acquisition of critical supplies through a verified digital environment.

Iran says its forces are 'waiting' for US ground troops, as more American marines arrive in region

Despite the heavy rain, hundreds of people gathered this morning in a cemetery in the southern suburbs of Beirut for the funeral of three Lebanese journalists killed in a targeted Israeli air strike in southern Lebanon yesterday, an attack that has sparked commotion and anger in this country. The mourners included relatives and other journalists who carried pictures of Ali Shoeb, Fatima Fetoni and Mohamed Fetoni. The emotional ceremony happened in the area known as Dahieh, where the Iranian-backed group Hezbollah holds sway. Other graves were marked with the bright yellow flag of the group. Shoeb was a well-known reporter for Al-Manar, a Lebanese TV station affiliated with Hezbollah. The Israeli military described him as a "terrorist" in the intelligence unit of Hezbollah's elite Radwan Force, but it provided no evidence to support the claim that he played a mili-



tary role in the organisation. The Committee to Protect Journalists said last year that "Israel, in particular, has repeatedly killed journalists whom it subsequently - and in some cases preemptively - alleged were militants, without providing credible evidence to support its claims". It also says that impunity is virtually the norm in Israel in cases where journalists are killed by the country's military. The

Israeli military has not offered any comment on the killings of the Fetonis - Fatima was a correspondent with the Al-Mayadeen channel and her brother worked as a cameraman. Lebanon's President Joseph Aoun condemned the killing of the journalists as a "blatant crime" that "violated the most basic rules of international law". Human rights groups fear Israel is carrying out in Lebanon similar tactics that it employed in Gaza, with deliberate attacks on journalists, healthcare professionals and others, often providing unfounded claims that those killed had military involvement with Hezbollah. The cases are almost never investigated by the Israeli military. Verified video shows damage to a building where the Qatari TV network al-Araby has an office in north-east Tehran. One clip, filmed from

Vafamaneh Street near Heravi Square, shows the building's windows blown out, with debris and dust scattered across the area. Signs on the building indicate a beauty salon, a cafe and another office are also located there. Another video, filmed by al-Araby correspondent Hazem Kallas, shows damage inside the building. Kallas also films outside, where Iranians are gathered near damaged cars, and says adjacent buildings were badly damaged. Al-Araby shared the footage, saying its office in Tehran had been damaged by a missile. It said its staff were unharmed but there was "significant material damage". It's not immediately clear from the videos what the target of the reported strike was. BBC Verify has asked the Israel Defense Forces and the US military's Central Command to comment on what happened. Normally, during the roughly two-week Persian New Year holidays, which

began on 21 March, businesses like tourism and hospitality would flourish. But I've heard it hasn't been the same as last year. A restaurant owner in Tehran, a man in his 30s, told me: "Many businesses are completely shut down now. My situation is not better than theirs. It's been very quiet, and I think I can hold up the business for one month maximum." Some businesses are struggling because of the government-imposed internet outage. Others need to repair their homes after strikes. A woman in her 20s, who had travelled to a northern province to "distract" herself from the war, said: "My mum called me to tell me that all the glasses of our windows had been shattered when a strike happened behind our house in Tehran. Luckily my parents had blankets on them when it happened, and nothing happened to them." There are also those in Tehran suffering with their pets, as the city has seen the heaviest strikes.

It is a story that is gripping Germany and has led to one of its best known TV stars tearfully telling thousands of protesters from a stage in Hamburg how she had to wear a bulletproof vest, due to death threats. A week ago Colleen Fernandes, 44, accused her ex-husband of spreading pornographic deepfakes of her online, in bombshell allegations published by German news magazine Der Spiegel. Her claims have triggered demonstrations, promises to tighten the law and criticism that Chancellor Friedrich Merz has bungled his response. Fernandes' ex-husband, Christian Ulmen, denies the allegations and has not been charged. He is also taking legal action against the magazine that broke the story. His high-profile media lawyers, Christian Schertz and Simon Bergmann, have told the BBC that Ulmen has never "produced and/or distributed deepfake videos of Ms Fernandes or any other individuals. Any such

HOW DEEPPAKE PORN SCANDAL SURROUNDING TV STAR ROCKED GERMANY

claims are false". They argue that what happened between Fernandes and Ulmen is completely unrelated to the German debate surrounding legal loopholes in criminal law over deepfake pornography. Ulmen and Fernandes were for years known as a prominent, celebrity couple chalking up extensive TV, presenting, production, writing and acting roles between them.



claims are false". They argue that what happened between Fernandes and Ulmen is completely unrelated to the German debate surrounding legal loopholes in criminal law over deepfake pornography. Ulmen and Fernandes were for years known as a prominent, celebrity couple chalking up extensive TV, presenting, production, writing and acting roles between them.

ONE ANT FOR \$220: THE NEW FRONTIER OF WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING



The ants are flying in Kenya at the moment. During this rainy season, swarms can be seen leaving the thousands of anthills in and around Gilgil, a quiet agricultural town in Kenya's Rift Valley that has emerged as the centre of a booming illegal trade. The mating ritual sees winged males leave the nest to impregnate queens, who also take flight at this time. This makes it the perfect time to chase down queen ants to sell on to smugglers who are at the heart of a growing global black market, that taps into the pet craze for keeping ants in transparent enclosures designed to observe the insects as they busily build a colony. It is the giant African harvester ant queens, which are large and coloured red, that are most prized by international ant collectors - one can fetch up to £170 (\$220) on the black market, which tends to operate online. A single fertilised queen is able to create a whole colony and can live for decades - and can be easily posted as scanners do not tend to detect organic material. "At first, I did not even know it was illegal," a man, who asked not to be named, told the BBC about how he had once acted as a

broker, linking foreign buyers with local collection networks. Also known as Messor cephalotes, these ants are native to East Africa and known for their distinctive seed-gathering behaviour making them popular with ant collectors. "A friend told me a foreigner was paying good money for queen ants - the big red ones which are easily seen around here," the former broker said. "You look for the mounds near open fields, usually early morning before the heat. The foreigners never came to the fields themselves - they would wait in town, in a guest house or a car, and we would bring the ants to them packed in small tubes or syringes they supplied us with." The scale of the illicit trade in Kenya became apparent last year when 5,000 giant harvester ant queens - mainly collected around Gilgil - were found alive at a guest house in Naivasha, a nearby lakeside town popular with tourists. The suspects - from Belgium, Vietnam and Kenya - had packed the test tubes and syringes with moist cotton wool, which would enable each ant to survive for two months, according to the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS).

FROSTING, SPRINKLES AND LAYERS OF FUN: GIANT CAKE PICNIC HITS SYDNEY



Welcome to Cake Picnic, Sydney edition. It's the viral event that's already sold out dates in San Francisco, New York and Los Angeles. Tickets in Dubai, London and Mexico City were harder to come by than a double-yolk egg. And now it's landed on Australian shores, with a Melbourne event earlier this month boasting 1,600 cakes in one sitting. "I had no idea that I could ever go on tour for cake," laughs Cake Picnic founder Elisa

Sunga, part-time hobby baker and full-time Google employee. "People go on tour for music and whatnot, but for cake? It just seems so whimsical and delightful to be able to do that." The concept is simple. Two years ago, Sunga - who moved to San Francisco aged 12 from her hometown of Baguio City in the Philippines - posted an online invitation for a small gathering with one request: everyone must bring a cake.

IRANIAN ATTACKS ACROSS GULF CONTINUE AS MAJOR INDUSTRIAL SITES HIT

Gulf nations reported a series of attacks as the US-Israel war against Iran entered its fifth week, including strikes on major industrial infrastructure. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) said a number of people had been injured in an Iranian strike on a key aluminium plant in Abu Dhabi, with significant damage reported by operator Emirates Global Aluminium. Meanwhile, state-controlled Aluminium Bahrain said two employees were wounded by an Iranian attack on one of the world's largest aluminium smelting facilities. It comes after Yemen's Iran-backed Houthis entered the conflict on Saturday, raising fears of further economic disruption should they target shipping in the Red Sea.



The group said it had launched a barrage of missiles against Israel targeting "sensitive" military sites, and vowed to continue such attacks. Israel said it had shot down two missiles coming from Yemen. Oil and gas prices have already spiked as Iran has effectively shut the Strait of Hormuz, a key shipping route for global energy supplies between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman.

If the Houthis decided to attack shipping - as it did in support of Hamas after war erupted in Gaza, following the Hamas-led attacks on Israel on 7 October 2023 - it would risk sending energy prices higher. As the war entered its second month, Oman said it was investigating "cowardly attacks" for which no one had yet claimed responsibility after a foreign worker was reportedly injured in a

drone strike on its southern port of Salalah. Kuwait's defence ministry said the radar system at its international airport had been significantly damaged after being attacked by 15 drones. Tehran separately accused Israel of targeting two of its steel production operations, while its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) threatened retaliatory action against the US and Israel after two of Iran's universities were hit. It said Israeli and American universities in the Middle East were considered legitimate targets "until two of their universities are struck". Meanwhile, Israel continued its strikes against Iran and Lebanon, where journalists were killed in a targeted Israeli strike on Saturday, according to their employers.

THREE LEBANESE JOURNALISTS KILLED IN ISRAELI STRIKE, SAY BROADCASTERS

Three Lebanese journalists were killed in a targeted Israeli strike in southern Lebanon on Saturday, their employers have said. Ali Shoeb, a reporter for the Hezbollah-affiliated Al Manar TV, was killed in the town of Jezzine alongside reporter Fatima Ftouni and her brother, cameraman Mohamed Ftouni, both from the channel Al Mayadeen, according to the stations. The strike reportedly hit the journalists' car just before noon local time (10:00 GMT). The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) confirmed it had killed Shoeb, describing him as a "terrorist" from Iranian-backed Hezbollah's elite Radwan Force who had



"operated for years under the guise of a journalist". It said he had worked to "expose the locations of IDF soldiers operating in southern Lebanon and along the border", including during the current fighting, and had used his position "to disseminate Hezbollah propaganda

materials". The IDF provided no evidence to support its claim that Shoeb had a military role. It did not comment on the deaths of Fatima or Mohamed Ftouni. Hezbollah denounced the strike as the "deliberate criminal targeting of journalists". "The enemy's false claims are

nothing but an expression of its weakness and fragility, and a desperate attempt to evade responsibility for this crime," the group said in a statement on Telegram. Lebanese President Joseph Aoun described it as a "brazen crime" that broke the "most basic rules" of international law by targeting reporters, "who are ultimately civilians performing a professional duty". Prime Minister Nawaf Salam likewise condemned the attack in a statement on X, branding it a "flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and a clear breach of the rules that guarantee the protection of journalists in times of war".

PRISON PHONE CALL RECORDINGS RAISE QUESTIONS OVER EX-ABERCROMBIE BOSS' FITNESS FOR TRIAL



Former Abercrombie & Fitch CEO Mike Jeffries was recorded telling his British partner "we're screwed" and in "big trouble" if he was found fit to stand trial on sex trafficking charges later this year, a New York federal court has heard. The audio was part of more than 100 phone calls between the ex-fashion boss and Matthew Smith referred to during a four-day mental competency hearing this week on Long Island. Jeffries' lawyers argue that he is suffering with dementia and late onset of Alzheimer's disease and is unfit to face trial alongside his partner and their alleged middleman James Jacobson, 73, were charged with running a global sex trafficking and prostitution business in October 2024. They have pleaded not guilty to the charges, which carry a maximum sentence of life in prison. Their arrests followed an October 2023 BBC investigation and ongoing podcast series that revealed the trio had been at the centre of a sophisticated operation scouting young men for sex around the world while Jeffries was CEO of Abercrombie & Fitch.

treated for four months in a mental health unit at a federal prison in North Carolina to see if he could regain competency. The 81-year-old had previously been found mentally incompetent last May but prison officials then declared in December that he was fit for trial following his hospital stay. Prosecutors told the court Jeffries frequently complained about prison conditions and was caught on tape describing to Smith how "horrible jail was", adding: "that's why we got to pull this off". Jeffries, his partner Smith, 62, and their alleged middleman James Jacobson, 73, were charged with running a global sex trafficking and prostitution business in October 2024. They have pleaded not guilty to the charges, which carry a maximum sentence of life in prison. Their arrests followed an October 2023 BBC investigation and ongoing podcast series that revealed the trio had been at the centre of a sophisticated operation scouting young men for sex around the world while Jeffries was CEO of Abercrombie & Fitch.



No Kings protesters across the US rally against Donald Trump

Tears and defiance as Lebanese family bury child, 11, killed in Israeli strike

A funeral has been held in a southern Lebanese village for an 11-year-old boy and his uncle who were killed in an Israeli air strike. Jawad Younes and 41-year-old Ragheb Younes were laid to rest in Saksakiyeh on Saturday after their family compound was hit a day earlier. They are among the latest casualties in Israel's offensive against the Iranian-backed armed group Hezbollah, after the group fired rockets into Israel earlier this month amid the war between the US and Israel against Iran. Lebanese health officials say more than 1,100 people have been killed since the escalation began, with civilians increasingly caught in the crossfire. The Israeli military did not



respond to a request for comment on the intended target of the strike that hit the Younes family compound. Hundreds gathered in Saksakiyeh town centre for Jawad and Ragheb's funeral. Women dressed in black robes wailed over the bodies, one of which was draped in Hezbollah's yellow flag - a reflection of the group's support in this largely Shia area.

Mary Kom, 6-Time World Champion, Considering Move To Professional Boxing



Olympic bronze medallist and six-time world champion Indian boxer MC Mary Kom on Sunday said she is considering a move into professional boxing. The 43-year-old, who became the first Indian woman boxer with an Olympic medal when she bronze in the 2012 London Games, is past the age eligibility to compete on the amateur circuit. "What can I say about the high points? Winning six World Championships was incredible. Although I reached a stage where age restrictions prevented me from competing further in amateur boxing for the country, a new opportunity has surfaced in Professional Boxing," she said on the sidelines of Sundays on Cycle event. "I am currently taking some time to consider it. I am working hard and trying to make a comeback to show people what I can still do. Widely considered one of the greatest amateur boxers, Mary Kom also underlined her commitment to grassroots development through her academy

As India eyes hosting major global events such as the 2030 Commonwealth Games and possibly the 2036 Olympics, Mary Kom stressed the importance of sport in building international recognition.

in Manipur. "Personally, I am very involved with my academy. I travel back and forth quite often, sometimes it becomes difficult due to the current situation in Manipur; things can get tough there.

reputation. Sports are what propel a nation forward," she said. She also praised government efforts to strengthen sports infrastructure and promote talent identification, particularly through initiatives such as Khelo India and Fit India Movement. "While we shouldn't compare it directly to the scale of the IPL yet, boxing infrastructure has improved significantly, the government has introduced fantastic facilities through movements like Khelo India and Fit India. There is a growing concern for fitness across the nation now."

Kom highlighted the inclusion of tribal youth in national programmes, pointing to developments in Chhattisgarh. "Regarding the Tribal Games in Chhattisgarh previously, these were localized, but now the government is elevating them to a national level under the Khelo India banner," she said. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya are taking great initiatives to support tribal athletes. In the past, there wasn't enough awareness regarding tribal sports talent. But now, with seven disciplines currently active in Chhattisgarh, that is changing."

"However, I remain deeply committed. Even when I can't be there physically, I manage and oversee the academy through phone calls. My dream is to stay fit for as long as I can, regardless of age," she said. As India eyes hosting major global events such as the 2030 Commonwealth Games and possibly the 2036 Olympics, Mary Kom stressed the importance of sport in building international recognition. "Sports development is absolutely essential. Without sports, it is difficult for a country to build a global

Itauma stops Franklin cold - what next for rising heavyweight?

Briton Moses Itauma reinforced his status as one of heavyweight boxing's brightest stars with a destructive fifth-round stoppage of Jermaine Franklin at Manchester's Co-op Live Arena. The 21-year-old methodically broke down the American - who had been brought in as a genuine test-landing crisp combinations and heavy power punches. Franklin climbed off the canvas in the third round, but was knocked out cold in the fifth by a clean uppercut. "The first two rounds I thought it would go the distance. Then in the fifth round when I caught him with the uppercut, I thought 'did I really do that?'" Itauma said on BBC Radio 5 Live. Talk will now turn to bigger fights and world titles after the unbeaten prospect recorded his 12th stoppage in 14 professional fights. Franklin - stopped for the first time in 27 bouts - had previously only been beaten by British fighters Anthony Joshua and Dillian Whyte. Itauma said he would "love to fight"



unified world champion Oleksandr Usyk but added he will "sit and wait my turn". His promoter, Frank Warren, said the Chatham heavyweight will be back out in July. Around 16,000 fans packed into the Manchester arena bought into the Itauma buzz, greeting him with a warm roar as he was walked to the ring by British rapper

Meekz. Itauma - the prodigy who was sparring seasoned professionals while still at school - was in wonderful form from the first bell, using his speed and variation to send Franklin backtracking. In truth, the knockout felt inevitable even when 32-year-old Franklin managed to recover from a third-round right hand that sent him crashing to the floor.

Hardik Pandya's Rs 12 Crore Ferrari Struggles to Cross Speed Breaker In Mumbai

Since Hardik Pandya got his hands on his new Rs 12 crore Ferrari, he has often been seen driving on the streets of Mumbai. As the Mumbai Indians prepare for their opening match of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 campaign against the Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR), another video of Hardik driving the luxury car in Mumbai has surfaced. However, as is often the case with such high-end sports cars, the low ground clearance made it difficult for Hardik to clear a speed breaker on Mumbai's roads. In the video circulating on social media, Hardik can be seen using a creative technique to get past the speed breaker. The India all-rounder, who also captains



the Mumbai Indians franchise, did not drive straight over it but adopted a careful approach to prevent any damage to his car. After successfully crossing the speed breaker, Hardik stopped to speak with a few police officials, who greeted him with broad smiles, delighted to see the renowned cricketer driving a luxury car rarely

spotted on Mumbai's streets. A robust Mumbai Indians outfit will begin their bid to end a five-year title drought as they take on the Knight Riders on Sunday. It has been some time since the Mumbai Indians, the joint-most successful team in the IPL, lifted the trophy, having won it five times between 2013 and

2020. Last year, the Hardik Pandya-led side finished third after losing to runners-up Punjab Kings in Qualifier 2. However, the Mumbai Indians will feel they have all bases covered to mount a serious challenge for what would be a record-extending sixth title this year. A rejuvenated Rohit Sharma will be keen to return to form with the bat, while Mumbai Indians' all-round strength makes them one of the teams to beat in the tournament once again. Their squad includes a strong core of India's T20 World Cup-winning players, with skipper Suryakumar Yadav, Pandya, Tilak Varma, and Jasprit Bumrah forming the backbone of the side.

Harbhajan Singh Blasts Troll On X In Ugly War Of Words Over R 'Ashwin Comment'

Former India cricketer Harbhajan Singh lost his cool at a fan's insulting comment on social media again, leading to a string of posts on X (formerly Twitter). Harbhajan, who is a part of the commentary panel for the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026, snapped on the internet after a fan said that R Ashwin's arrival in Hindi commentary would finish Harbhajan's career the way the Tamil Nadu cricketer finished his international career. In no mood to let such a comment slip by, Harbhajan lashed out at the fan. It all started when a troll account called West Indies legend Ian Bishop 'more Indian' than Harbhajan, Virender



Sehwag and Navjot Singh Sidhu. Later, the same troll account asked Bhajji to focus on commentary, or else, Ashwin would take over that role too from him. "The elephant walks through the market. Dogs bark a thousand times. Get out of here, Tomy. Not Homie," Harbhajan said in reply to the first insulting

post. In the second post, the legendary India spinner wrote: "Dogs can't digest ghee, and a loser like you can't stomach the reply. Get lost, Tommy." R Ashwin made his Hindi commentary debut in IPL on Saturday as the Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) defeated Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) comfort-

ably in the season opener. Rumours of Harbhajan being jealous of Ashwin have long existed. Last year, the Turbanator even appeared on Ashwin's YouTube channel and even asked the recently-retired spinner if he believed in the 'jealousy' story. "Do you think I am jealous of you? You are sitting with me today, and we have spoken at length. Do you think I am that kind of person?" Harbhajan had asked Ashwin in the video. In reply, Ashwin had said: "Even if you were jealous at one point, it is justified. That is my point. I would never take it the wrong way because we are all human. Naturally, it is bound to be like that."

Virat Kohli Asked To Make Test Return As Captain After Heroics vs SRH In IPL 2026

Former India batter Ambati Rayudu has sparked a fresh debate in Indian cricket by calling for Virat Kohli's return to Test cricket as captain. After witnessing Kohli's match-winning performance against Sunrisers Hyderabad in the Indian Premier League (IPL) opener, Rayudu asked the Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) icon to reconsider his Test retirement. Speaking on a post-match show, Rayudu insisted that Kohli still has plenty to offer in the longest format and should be reinstated as the leader of the side, replacing current skipper Shubman Gill. "I don't think he is anywhere close to the end of his career. I think he still has five or six quality years left in him and, as Sanjay (Bangar) and I were discussing earlier, he should make a comeback in



Test cricket as well, hopefully as a captain," Rayudu said during a chat on ESPNCricinfo. Rayudu's comments underline the respect Kohli continues to command as a red-ball leader. He went on to describe Kohli as the finest Test captain India has produced, praising both his tactical acumen and the aggressive brand of cricket he instilled during his tenure. "We are serious. He is

the best red-ball captain I have seen in Indian cricket, and the way he is batting now, it is a loss for Indian cricket," he added. Kohli, who stepped down from Test captaincy in early 2022, has since focused on his batting across formats. His recent form (in white-ball cricket) has reignited discussions about whether India should consider bringing him back into a leadership role.

Japan Strike Late To Win Scotland Friendly

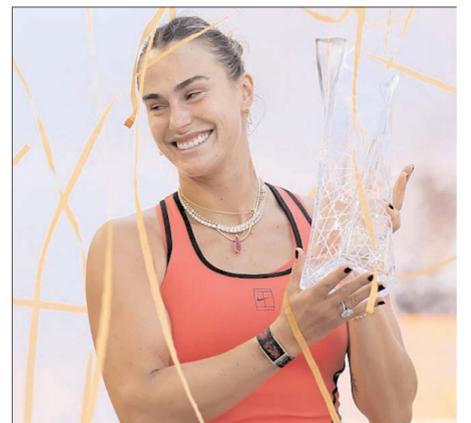
Scotland's first outing since ending a 28-year wait to qualify for the World Cup ended in defeat as Junya Ito's late strike earned Japan a 1-0 win at Hampden Park. In a stark contrast to the jubilant scenes that accompanied a thrilling 4-2 victory over Denmark in November to secure the Tartan Army's trip to North America, a subdued atmosphere contributed to a tame encounter. Japan had left a number of their key men, including Ito, on the bench in preparation for Tuesday's clash against England at Wembley. But they continued their impressive form in friendlies since securing qualification a year ago, which includes a first ever win over Brazil in October, as Ito scored the only goal six



minutes from time. Scott McTominay had Scotland's best chance of the match inside the opening 10 minutes, but the Napoli midfielder's effort was brilliantly saved by Zion Suzuki. Japan then slowly began to take control to extend Scotland's miserable record of not having won a home friendly for the past 10 years. Angus Gunn made a fine save from Ito when the

Genk forward ran clear on goal just after the hour mark. Gunn faces a battle with 43-year-old Craig Gordon to be Steve Clarke's number one for Scotland's opening game of the World Cup against Haiti on June 14. The Nottingham Forest 'keeper did himself few favours in that debate for the winning goal, though, as he went to ground too early and allowed Ito's tame effort to trickle into the net.

ARYNA SABALENKA SINKS COCO GAUFF TO WIN SECOND STRAIGHT MIAMI OPEN TITLE



Aryna Sabalenka won her second straight Miami Open title on Sunday beating Coco Gauff 6-2, 4-6, 6-3 to complete a "Sunshine Double" Indian Wells-Miami sweep. The world number one from Belarus, fresh off her first triumph in the California desert, became the fifth woman - and the first since Iga Swiatek in 2022 - to win both of the elite early season hardcourt WTA 1000 titles. "It means a lot," Sabalenka said after joining Poland's Swiatek, German great Steffi Graf, Belgian Kim Clijsters and fellow Belarusian Victoria Azarenka on the list of women to win both titles in the same year. "My goal always been to put my name in the history, and I just did it." Sabalenka underscored her WTA dominance in a season in which her only defeat to date was her Australian

Open finals loss to Elena Rybakina - who she went on to beat in the Indian Wells title match and in the semi-finals here. She handed Gauff her first career defeat in a hard-court final. The American had won her first nine, including a triumph over Sabalenka in the 2023 US Open championship match. Gauff had also beaten the Belarusian for the title on the red clay of Roland Garros last year. So Sabalenka said she wasn't surprised to see Gauff dig in, even after the Belarusian pocketed the first set with a ruthless display of power and precision. She broke Gauff to open the match and, after Gauff saved three break points in a gritty fifth game, broke the American again in the seventh before serving it out in 37 minutes without facing a break point herself.

FITZPATRICK CREATES HISTORY WITH FIRST DP WORLD TOUR WIN

England's Alex Fitzpatrick claimed his first DP World Tour title at the Indian Open thanks to a strong final nine holes to continue his family's good run of form. The 27-year-old is the younger brother of European Ryder Cup player Matt Fitzpatrick who won last week's Valspar Championship and the siblings have made history as the first to win in successive weeks on the DP World Tour and the PGA Tour. "I'll try and explain [how it feels] without crying," said Alex. "It's been a lot of hard work for a long time. As much as this is the most amazing

thing in the world right now, there's more important things in life than golf so... I'm probably going to cry but yeah, ecstatic. "It can be hard sometimes when you're constantly chasing someone's accolades but luckily it's my brother. It's extremely nice to join him in the winners' ranks and hopefully I can continue to push on. "I idolise him so just trying to be like him in every way so yeah, hopefully we can keep doing well." Fitzpatrick

overhauled defending champion Eugenio Chacarra of Spain, who was four shots clear going into Sunday's final round in New Delhi, to win by two shots. Back-to-back bogeys at the third and fourth did not help the Englishman's cause but Chacarra's tee-shot found the water at the eighth, leading to a bogey and a two-shot swing as Fitzpatrick made his birdie.

Both players birdied the ninth to turn with Chacarra three shots ahead, half of what his lead had been on the sixth tee. Fitzpatrick bogeyed the 10th but birdied the next three, while Chacarra responded at the 13th to stay in front before missing a birdie chance at the 14th. But things turned from the 15th as the Spaniard found a bunker off the tee to start a run of three consecutive bogeys and Fitzpatrick's birdie gave him the lead. Fitzpatrick birdied the 17th to go four ahead and played the par-five 18th cautiously with a double-bogey seven still enough for victory.



"As much as this is the most amazing thing in the world right now, there's more important things in life than golf so... I'm probably going to cry but yeah, ecstatic."

“GOOGLE MY FRIEND” SONGS LAUNCHED BY FAMOUS DIRECTORS

The film “Google My Friend” stars Pranav Rao Rani and Prajakta Gaikwad as the lead pair. The movie is being produced by Divakar Reddy under the Dollars Media and Entertainment banner. Govind Varaha, who has earned recognition as a director with several hit films in multiple languages, is directing this project. T. Venkatesh Reddy and B. Prasannanjanyulu are serving as co-producers. The film is set for a grand theatrical release soon in both Telugu and Marathi languages. The songs launch event of the film was held under the hands of Directors Association President V.N. Aditya, along with Sai Rajesh, V. Samudra, Shailesh Kolanu, and Konda Vijay Kumar. On this occasion: Director Sai Rajesh said: “We watched the songs, teaser, and other content of ‘Google My Friend,’ directed by our Directors Association member and our dear friend Govind. All the content looks very promising. He is making this film simultaneously in Telugu and Marathi. I hope the film gets a good release, brings profits to the producer, and earns recognition for Govind.” Director V.N. Aditya said:



“Our friend Govind Varaha is making the film ‘Google My Friend.’ He is a director who has worked in multiple languages. This movie will soon be released in Telugu and Marathi. I wholeheartedly wish for this film to become a big success. I also hope Govind Varaha goes on to make more pan-India films. Best wishes to the entire cast and crew.” Director V. Samudra said: “It is a happy moment that our friend Govind is making ‘Google My Friend’ in multiple languages. It’s

great that the songs are being released in the presence of Directors Association members. We all bless this film to achieve great success. I wish Govind gains recognition and success in all languages.” Director Konda Vijay Kumar said: “Just like Rama Naidu garu was determined to produce films in all languages, Govind is also making

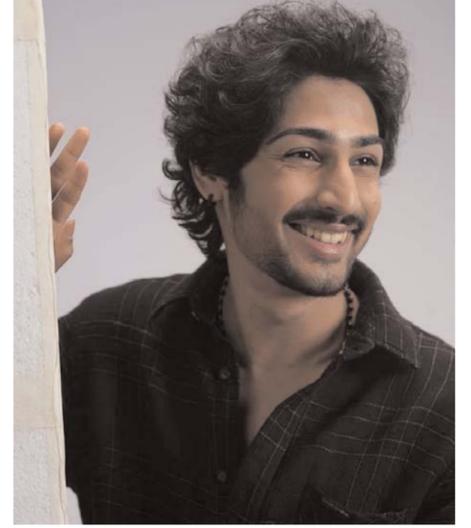
“We watched the songs, teaser, and other content of ‘Google My Friend,’ directed by our Directors Association member and our dear friend Govind. All the content looks very promising. He is making this film simultaneously in Telugu and Marathi.”

films in multiple languages. He is working across Telugu, Malayalam, Odia, Marathi, and other languages. I hope ‘Google My Friend’ achieves success

in every language it releases.” Director Govind Varaha said: “I have directed films like ‘Bala,’ ‘Nenu Nanna Abaddham,’ and ‘Manushulatho Jagratha’ in Telugu. I have also made a few films in Malayalam and one in Marathi. Now, I am making ‘Google My Friend’ in Telugu as well as other languages. I feel fortunate to launch our movie songs today in the presence of my family members from the Telugu Directors Association. It’s a pleasure meeting Shailesh, Samudra, Vijay Kumar, Sai Rajesh, and V.N. Aditya—who are all like family to me. At one point, I felt like I was moving away from the Telugu industry due to working in other languages, but with ‘Google My Friend,’ I am reconnecting. From now on, I will continue making films in Telugu regularly. I am able to do films continuously because of the support from my producers. I thank producers A.M. Rathnam, K.K. Radhamohan, and Chitturi Srinivas for supporting me in this journey.

Vikram Sahidev’s Anakapalli Hard-hitting Teaser Launched

Young actor Vikram Sahidev, known for his impactful performances in films like Rudhramedaevi, Race Gurram, Naa Peru Surya Naa Illu India, and Rowdy Boys, makes his debut as a lead actor with the upcoming intense love drama Anakapalli. The film stars Sandhya Vasishta as the female lead, with Tarak Ponnappa playing a key role. Backed by producers Thrinadha Rao Nakkina and Kandregula Naidu under the Bhavya Sri Movie Makers and Nakkina Narratives banners, and directed by Khagesh Tammineni, the film is co-produced by Kandregula Kumar Raja and is gearing up for release. Today, the makers unveiled a gripping teaser, giving a first look into its world. The teaser begins with a thunderous dialogue from Vikram Sahidev’s character: “Anakapalli... If you want something here, the man in front of you must fear you. If he doesn’t fear, make him taste your fist. If he already knows that taste, make him crave the fight. And if he still doesn’t bow, keep hitting until his skull turns to pulp... We must take what we want.” After this fiery monologue, the teaser smoothly transitions into a rustic village love story. The romance is charming on the surface, but the emo-



tional tension and underlying conflict between the leads add a compelling depth that keeps you hooked. Vikram Sahidev showcases remarkable range, portraying two distinct shades of his character with surprising maturity. He appears fierce and intimidating in the action sequences, yet tender and endearing in the romance. His portrayal of Surya’s pain stands out. Sandhya Vasishta shines as the spirited love interest, while Tarak Ponnappa brings menace with his violent, negative-shaded role. Apart from providing the

story and screenplay, Thrinadha Rao Nakkina also plays the hero’s father, with Indrajaa Absar as the mother. The ensemble includes Mahabub Basha, Srinivas Vadlamani, Kandregula Naidu, Nandini Rai, and Sangeetha Krish in notable roles. Director Khagesh Tammineni skillfully blends love, action, raw intensity, and emotion to create an engaging narrative. Maaya V’s cinematography captures the gritty tone beautifully, while music director Davzand elevates the mood with a striking score. Uday

Suyodhana movie success meet Celebrated grandly



Under the banner of Prajwala Line Creations, the film “Suyodhana” stars Priyadarshi and Drishika Chander as the lead pair, with “Dialogue King” Sai Kumar and senior actress Prema playing key roles. The movie is directed by Y. S. Madhav Reddy and produced by Bosubabu Nidumolu. Released on Friday (the 27th of this month), the film has achieved good success at the box office. On this occasion, the film unit grandly organized a success meet in Hyderabad. During the event: Producer Bosubabu Nidumolu said: “With Suyodhana, we achieved good success on our very first attempt. We aim to deliver an even bigger blockbuster with our next film. Currently, we are receiving a great response from all areas. With the experience gained from this film, we will come before you again with another good project. This time, we are planning to collaborate with a well-known production company. My advice to new producers is to enter the film industry only after gaining some experience and

understanding. Soon, we will announce a new movie with a strong subject. This time, our production will be executed with proper planning.” Distributor Bapiraju said: “Our media friends always take the lead in bringing small films closer to audiences. They are doing the same for Suyodhana as well. In this film, Priyadarshi and Sai Kumar have delivered equally powerful performances. Watching director Madhav’s work, it feels like he is an experienced filmmaker. Every frame looks very good.” Director Y. S. Madhav Reddy said: “The film Suyodhana is receiving a great response from the audience. The number of screens is increasing with every show. It is also getting a good response overseas. Friends from abroad are calling and saying the movie is very good. The performances of Priyadarshi and Sai Kumar are highlights of the film. I request you all to help take our film to a wider audience.” Art director Brahma Kadali and other members of the film team also attended the event.

Suspense Action Family Entertainer “Sugreeva” Set to Hit Screens on April 24



The upcoming film “Sugreeva,” featuring Balu Charan and Kajal Tiwari in the lead roles, is all set for a grand theatrical release on April 24. Produced by M. Pawan Kumar under the SGSV Movies banner, the film is written and directed by Narthu Chiranjeevi. Touted as a suspense action-family entertainer, the film has

completed all its formalities and is ready for the big screen. Speaking about the project, the film unit shared that “Sugreeva” is a beautiful family-oriented story. The plot follows a happy family that faces unexpected incidents and explores the consequences and challenges they overcome to protect their bond.

The first look poster of the film “Yento Antha Sarikothaga”, being produced under the banner of “Ramu Productions,” was grandly unveiled by noted director Sailesh Kolanu.

Speaking on the occasion, Sailesh Kolanu said, “Looking at the poster, I felt a very fresh vibe. Even the title is quite unique and appealing. Nowadays, audiences are encouraging new-age content and fresh storytelling. This film also seems to be a promising attempt in that direction. It is evident that the entire team is working with great energy and passion. It is very interesting that Raj Bonu is handling the story, screenplay, and direction. I believe his narration style will definitely engage the audience. I appreciate producer Ramu garu for backing this project. I sincerely



wish that this content-driven film achieves great success,” he added. The film is written and directed by Raj Bonu,

with Ramu M. as the producer. Music is composed by Rishi M., cinematography is handled by Venu Kottakota, and editing is

done by Harish J.R. Krishna. The film also features dialogues by Sai Surya Ravuri, art direction by Venkat Medishetty, action choreography by Anji, lyrics by Bhaskar Batla, Rakendu Mouli, and Anirudh Shandilya, stills by Prem Kota, and publicity design by AJ Arts. The shooting of the film has been completed, and it is currently in the post-production stage. The makers have announced that the film will be hitting the screens soon. The film unit stated that the movie is being made with a fresh concept and will offer a new cinematic experience along with complete entertainment for the audience

SITSA Curtain Raiser Event Held Grandly Under Raghavi Media

The South Indian Television Serial Awards (SITSA) Curtain Raiser event was held in a grand manner at Ramanaidu Studios in Hyderabad. Organized under the banner of Raghavi Media, the event witnessed the of prominent Telugu television personalities, actors, directors, and producers. SITSA Awards, initiated with the aim of honoring the television serial industry, is set to create history by bringing together serials from four South Indian languages onto a single platform. Until now, each television channel conducted its own awards separately. This initiative of recognizing four languages across four states together is expected to become a milestone in the industry. During the curtain raiser event, details regarding nominations, voting procedures, and expected nominees were discussed, with active participation from



serial artists. Everyone expressed their gratitude to Madhu garu and the Raghavi Media team for providing this opportunity. As the television industry completes 50 years, this is the first time such a large-scale award function is being organized. Speakers at the event highlighted that although TV artists and technicians have been entertaining households for the past 50 years, there has been a lack of proper recognition. Due

to the absence of support from governments and major institutions, only small organizations conducted award events until now. They expressed pride that, through Raghavi Media, the entire South Indian television industry is finally receiving the recognition it deserves. Speaking at the event, Telugu director and TV Directors Association member Satyanarayana said that he had never witnessed such a grand celebration before.

He expressed happiness that, on the occasion of 50 years of television, South Indian languages are being brought together on a single platform. He appreciated Madhu garu’s efforts and stated that anything is possible with determination. He assured full support for the successful conduct of the event in Hyderabad. Senior actor Prabhakar mentioned that Madhu’s determination and the team’s perseverance have brought this vision to life.

Heart-Touching Song ‘Nee Puttuke O Varam’ from the Movie ‘Aaradhya’ Launched



A beautiful and emotionally resonant song titled ‘Nee Puttuke O Varam’ from the upcoming film ‘Aaradhya’ was officially launched today. The film is being produced under the Mana Emotion Pictures banner. The launch event was a grand affair, graced by EX MLC Ramulu Naik, who attended as the chief guest to unveil the track.

Written and directed by KPS Chinna, the song features a soulful musical composition by Gopinath Konda. The visual aesthetics and cinematography for the project are handled by Daniel Madasu. Attendees at the launch event were visibly moved and responded overwhelmingly positively after listening to the heart-touching track.