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DEVELOPED TAMIL NADU FOR DEVELOPED INDIA MODI GOVERNMENT'S RESOLVE



IN BRIFS

Iran yet to elect new supreme leader: Iran official in India

New Delhi (TSIT): Iran has not yet elected the successor of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Syed Ali Khamenei, who was assassinated in a joint US-Israeli airstrike last week, a senior Iranian official said Thursday, March 5.



to elect a new leader is still underway. "This news is not true because, till now, they (the council) have not chosen or nominated anyone, and the process is still underway," Hakeemelahe told PTI in an interview when asked about some media reports claiming that Ayatollah Khamenei's son, Mojtaba Khamenei, has been elected as his successor.



Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar files his nomination for the Rajya Sabha polls in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP National President Nitin Nabin, in Patna on Thursday.

Nitish Kumar files papers for Rajya Sabha election from Bihar

New Delhi (TSIT) Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar filed his nomination papers for the Rajya Sabha polls on Thursday. The Janata Dal-United chief filed the nomination in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah at the office of Assembly Secretary Khyati Singh.

the Rajya Sabha earlier in the day, saying this was the only House of which he had not been a member.

In a post on X, Nitish announced the move that will change the dynamics of Bihar politics. The BJP will have its Chief Minister in the state with Nitish's son Nishant as Deputy Chief Minister.

"For more than two decades, you have consistently placed

your trust and support in me, and it is on the strength of that trust that we have served Bihar and all of you with complete dedication. It was the power of your trust and support that has enabled Bihar today to present a new dimension of development and dignity. For this, I have expressed my gratitude to you many times in the past as well," Nitish said.

T20 WC:

India beat England by 7 runs to set up final vs NZ

Mumbai, March 5 (TSIT) : India clinched a thrilling seven-run victory over England in the second semi-final of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup at the iconic Wankhede Stadium to confirm set up a final date with New Zealand at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad. The Men in Blue are now just one step away from becoming the first team to defend their T20 World Cup crown and lift the title twice.



Batting first, India posted 253/7 against England, powered by Sanju Samson's explosive 89 off 42 balls. Samson continued his rich form in the tournament, smashing 89 off 42 balls, laced with eight fours and seven sixes. The right-hander dominated the England bowlers from the outset and anchored India's innings with aggressive strokeplay across the ground. After Abhishek Sharma fell early for nine, Samson stitched a crucial 97-run partnership for the second wicket with Ishan Kishan, who made a quickfire 39 off 18 balls. Samson then added another 43 runs for the third wicket along

side Shivam Dube, who contributed a brisk 43 off 25 deliveries.

Samson brought up his half-century in just 26 balls, his second successive fifty in the tournament, before eventually falling while attempting an expansive shot, caught by Phil Salt off Will Jacks. Late cameos from Hardik Pandya, who scored 27 off 12 balls, and Tilak Varma, who struck 21 off just seven balls, helped India surge past the 250 mark. For

England, Will Jacks and Adil Rashid picked up two wickets each but struggled to contain India's aggressive batting display. Coming to the chase, England suffered early setbacks as Pandya, Jasprit Bumrah and Varun Chakaravarthy picked one wicket each in the powerplay, but the Englishmen looked unfazed by the blows to take their total to 68/3 at the end of the sixth over.

ECI TEAM LED BY GYANESH KUMAR ARRIVES IN KERALA TO REVIEW POLL PREPAREDNESS

Kochi (TSIT): A delegation of the Election Commission of India (ECI) led by Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar arrived here on Thursday for a three-day visit to review the State's preparedness for the upcoming Assembly elections. During the visit from March 5 to 7, the Commission will hold a series of review meetings with senior officials, including the Chief Electoral Officer, district election officers and top police officials to assess the readiness of the election machinery across the State. The delegation will examine key aspects of election management such as the status of electoral rolls, preparedness of polling stations, deployment of personnel, availability of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and security arrangements. The Commission is also scheduled to interact with representatives of recognised political parties and review voter awareness programmes as part of efforts to ensure smooth and transparent conduct of the Assembly polls. Earlier in the day, CEC Gyanesh Kumar interacted with officials who had worked with him during his tenure as Collector of Kochi over tea during his Kerala visit.

LOP GANDHI FLAGS THREAT TO INDIA'S OIL SUPPLY AMID WEST ASIA TENSIONS



New Delhi, March 5 (TSIT): Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, on Thursday voiced concern over the escalating tensions in West Asia and their potential impact on India, saying the country's energy security is at risk and calling for decisive leadership in the face of global uncertainty. In a post on X, LoP Gandhi said the world has entered a "volatile phase" and cautioned that "stormy seas lie ahead."

Highlighting India's dependence on energy imports, he noted that more than 40 per cent of the country's oil supplies transit through the Strait of Hormuz, making them vulnerable amid rising hostilities in the region. He added that at a situation is even more precarious for LPG and LNG supplies. "The conflict has reached our backyard, with an Iranian warship sunk in the Indian Ocean. Yet the Prime Minister has said nothing," Gandhi

said in his post. He stressed that at such a critical juncture, India requires "a steady hand at the wheel" to navigate geopolitical and economic challenges. In a sharp attack on PM Narendra Modi, Gandhi alleged that the country has a "compromised PM who has surrendered our strategic autonomy", asserting that strong and independent foreign policy leadership is essential to safeguard national interests.

The remarks come amid escalating tensions after the Iranian frigate IRIS Dena — which had recently participated in the Milan naval exercise in India — was sunk in the Indian Ocean in a US strike. Iran has condemned the attack as an "atrocious act at sea," while Washington has acknowledged responsibility. The incident has heightened concerns over security in critical maritime corridors, including routes vital for India's oil and gas supplies. Experts note that the unfolding crisis around the Strait of Hormuz has exposed the vulnerability of energy-importing nations like India at a critical juncture. With fertiliser supplies, LNG flows and crude shipments under strain just ahead of the key planting season, the risks extend beyond fuel prices to food security and inflation.

Tenure of Nitish as Bihar CM will always be remembered: Amit Shah



Patna, Mar 5 (TSIT) Union Home Minister Amit Shah today said that tenure of Nitish Kumar as Bihar Chief Minister will always be remembered for his historic achievements in all sectors to accelerate pace of development of the state. Shah, after Kumar filed his nomination paper for Rajya Sabha, said that he had historic achievements as Bihar Chief Minister during the last 20 years. Kumar had the credit to pull out Bihar from dark age of "Jungle Raj" that had prevailed during the RJD regime till 2005, he added. "When Kumar had taken reins of the state, there were complete chaos in all sectors including road, electricity and law and order", the union Minister said adding that Kumar due to his sincere efforts and commitment to the interest of people of Bihar, succeeded in providing power supply to all villages of the state.

Andhra to give financial incentive for third child to boost population growth

Amaravati (TSIT): The government of Andhra Pradesh has proposed an incentive of Rs 25,000 to couples having third child to help maintain demographic balance. Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday announced this while unveiling draft population management policy in the state Assembly, proposing various measures to address declining birth rate. The government also proposes to give Rs 1,000 per month as nutrition assistance to third child for five years and free education till 18 years.



HIGHLIGHT POINT:

- N. Chandrababu Naidu announced a draft Population Management Policy offering Rs.25,000 incentive, Rs.1,000 monthly support for five years, and free education till 18 years for couples having a third child to improve the state's declining birth rate. The policy aims to raise the Total Fertility Rate from 1.5 to 2.1, introduce maternity and paternity leave benefits, and expand support systems like IVF services, childcare centres, and working women's hostels to maintain demographic balance.

To encourage more child-births, the government is planning to provide 12 months maternal leave and two months paternal leave. Voicing concern over the state's current Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 1.5, he said the government was taking steps to improve the TFR to 2.1 which is ideal to maintain demographic balance. Stating that the population management policy, claimed to be the first of its kind in the country, will be a gamechanger to increase population, he proposed financial incentives for childbirth. The CM announced that the

hold a discussion on this issue among the people for a month.

The policy will be finalized by the end of this month and will be implemented from April 1. He revealed that changes will be made in the policy after examining the results after a year.

Expressing serious concern over falling Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in Andhra Pradesh from 3.0 in 1993 to 1.5 at present, the Chief Minister said this posed threat to economic growth with fall in number of young working people. He cautioned that the state will face ageing problem like in Japan, South Korea and Italy. Citing the report of 2023, he said 6.70 lakh births were reported per year. If the same situation continues by 2047 the ratio of aged people, will be increased up to 23 per cent. He warned that if the TFR decreases further, the workforce will decline, resulting in slow down of economic growth. He explained that this draft policy was designed with the idea that if the government does not intervene, more damage will be done. He stated that population growth in line with the changing times is not a burden but a blessing for the state. He said that family planning has been given priority for years and that the focus will now be on 'population care'.

Military conflict cannot resolve issues; India, Finland back peace efforts in Ukraine and West Asia, says PM Modi

New Delhi (TSIT) : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said India and Finland agree that military conflict alone cannot resolve global disputes and reiterated their support for efforts aimed at bringing peace to regions affected by war, including Ukraine and West Asia. Addressing a joint press meet with Finnish President Alexander Stubb during his visit to India, Modi said both countries shared a commitment to dialogue, diplomacy and the rule of law while calling for an early end to ongoing conflicts. "India and Finland both believe in the rule of law, dialogue and diplomacy. We agree that military conflict alone cannot resolve any

issue," Modi said. "Whether it is Ukraine or West Asia, we will continue to support every effort aimed at bringing a swift end to the conflict and achieving peace."

Welcoming Stubb on his first visit to India as Finland's President, Modi described him as "a well-known global leader" and "a respected thinker and author," adding that it was an honour for India that the Finnish leader was the chief guest at this year's Raisina Dialogue. The Prime Minister said the world was currently passing through a period of instability and uncertainty, with conflicts continuing in several regions. "From Ukraine to West Asia, many parts of the world are witnessing conflict. In



INDIA AND FINLAND BOTH BELIEVE IN THE RULE OF LAW, DIALOGUE AND DIPLOMACY. WE AGREE THAT MILITARY CONFLICT ALONE CANNOT RESOLVE ANY ISSUE," MODI SAID

such a global environment, India and Europe, two major diplomatic powers, are entering a golden phase of their relationship," he said, adding that growing cooperation between the two sides was strengthening global stability, development and shared prosperity. Highlighting economic

ties, Modi referred to the recently concluded India-European union Free Trade Agreement earlier this year, calling it a historic development that would further strengthen trade, investment and technology collaboration between India and Finland. "At the beginning of

2026, a historic India-European union Free Trade Agreement was concluded. This agreement will further strengthen trade, investment and technology cooperation between India and Finland," he said. The Prime Minister said the two countries were working to elevate bilateral ties into a future-oriented partnership focused on emerging technologies and sustainability. "We are shaping India-Finland relations into a strategic partnership in digitalisation and sustainability," Modi said. "This partnership will accelerate and energise our cooperation in several high-tech sectors, ranging from AI to 6G telecom, and from clean energy to quantum computing."

KTR ALLEGES 'CONSPIRACY' BEHIND MUSI PROJECT, WARNS AGAINST DEMOLITION OF POOR PEOPLE'S HOUSES

Hyderabad (TSIT) Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) Working President K T Rama Rao on Thursday inspected areas along the Musi River that were developed during the previous BRS government and interacted with families who claim they may lose their homes under the Congress government's proposed Musi development plan. Speaking to the media after the visit, KTR said the Musi river could be beautified without demolishing houses or displacing poor families. He stated that during the BRS regime the riverfront was developed in areas such as Nagole without damaging a single house. Alleging that the present government was planning large-scale demolitions, KTR claimed that nearly 1.5 lakh houses were under



threat in the name of the Musi project. He accused the Congress government of marking houses with red signs and creating fear among residents living along the river. KTR further alleged that the project cost was being inflated from Rs 16,000 crore to around Rs 1.5 lakh crore and warned of a possible large-scale corruption attempt in the name of river development.

EDITORIAL

Iranian Ship Sinks: How A 2016 Deal With US Could Spell Trouble For India

The coordinated action of the US and Israel against Iran has fast emerged as a watershed moment for security dynamics in the Middle East. On March 4, the US Department of War confirmed that a torpedo launched by an American submarine sank the Iranian frigate IRIS Dena off the coast of Sri Lanka, near Indian waters in the Indian Ocean. This attack has introduced a new naval dimension into the conflict, which has thus far remained limited to air power. Touted as the first major naval casualty in the Indian Ocean since the Second World War, the attack by the US on the Iranian warship is significant in many ways for the security dynamics in the Indian Ocean, as well as for India's own interests in the region.

Two Other Ships Waiting In Colombo

The IRIS Dena was subjected to the torpedo attack while it was returning to Iran after having recently participated in the Indian Fleet Review and Exercise MILAN in Vishakhapatnam in February 2026. Following the attack and destruction of the warship, in compliance with obligations under international laws, the Sri Lankan Navy and Air Force promptly initiated search and rescue efforts. At least 87 people on board the ship have died as a result of this attack. While those who have been rescued are being treated in Sri Lanka, two other Iranian warships have reportedly taken refuge in Colombo. Given that this took place close to India's territorial waters, and soon after the warship and its personnel participated in an exercise hosted by the Indian Navy, a rethink must be set in motion in New Delhi about what this development entails and how it can best be navigated.

The LEMOA Agreement

However, what appears to somewhat complicate matters for New Delhi is the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) signed between India and the US in 2016, designed to facilitate logistical support, supplies, and services between the two countries for refuelling and replenishment. In a nutshell, the agreement mandates the scope for the US to use Indian facilities and bases to replenish and refuel its naval assets, and vice versa. At this juncture, when the US Navy's actions must cause unease in India, New Delhi must cautiously balance future demands for the use of Indian facilities from the US. Given President Trump's emphasis on ensuring that its partners live up to the expectations and demands of Washington, New Delhi must tread carefully on how to ensure that it does not become a party to this conflict, even indirectly. This is especially crucial at a time when India's neighbourhood finds itself at the cusp of being embroiled in this conflict. Importantly, speculations remain rife on whether Pakistan may join the conflict given its security pact with Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the torpedo strike in the Indian Ocean has prompted many to believe that the conflict is now playing out in India's backyard.

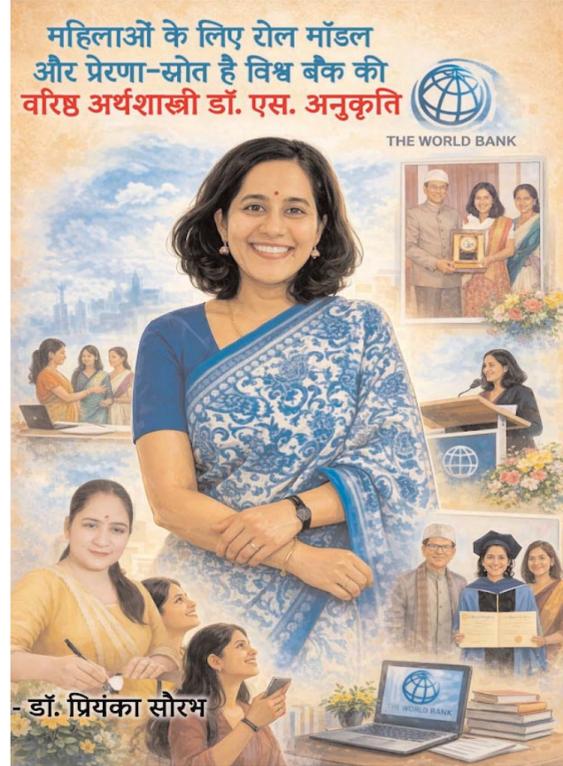
While India and the US have significantly advanced maritime cooperation in the context of the wider Indo-Pacific to establish and sustain a rules-based order in the region, the latest US attack appears to have turned the Indian Ocean into a new flashpoint in Washington's actions against Iran. This significantly risks escalation of tensions in the Indian Ocean, rendering the sea lines of communication and maritime trade routes vulnerable to disruption, resulting in adversarial implications for New Delhi, whose interests remain deeply anchored in preserving a free and open order in the region. Escalating securitisation of its maritime neighbourhood remains a significant challenge for India.

Dr. S. Anukriti, Senior Economist at the World Bank, is a role model and source of inspiration for women

(March 8 - International Women's Day Special)

(During her education, Dr. S. Anukriti received the National Award from the Government of India, the GE Fund Scholarship in the United States, the Vickrey and Harris Awards, and a research scholarship from Columbia University. She also received the World Econometric Society's inaugural Young Researcher Award. A former fellow at Harvard University, Boston (USA), Dr. Anukriti is currently a fellow at Columbia University, Manhattan (USA) and the Institute of Labor Economics, Bonn (Germany). In addition to India and the United States, she has traveled to more than twenty countries, including Canada, Peru, Puerto Rico, Bermuda, England, Scotland, Spain, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Bangladesh, Kenya, and Ethiopia. Dr. Anukriti specializes in development economics and, while serving as a consultant with the World Bank nearly a decade and a half ago, worked on a variety of topics, including gender equality, the economic status of women globally, women's illiteracy and backwardness, and child malnutrition. Dr. Anukriti, who has been living in the United States for the past two decades, may now be an American citizen, but she has remained a true American citizen. He still has a deep attachment to his birthplace Narnaul (Haryana) and his native country India and the soil of India.

Looking at Dr. Anukriti, one might not imagine that this ordinary-looking young woman is the prestigious Dr. S. Anukriti, holding the important position of Senior Economist at the World Bank, Washington, D.C. (USA). But it's true. Upon joining the World Bank as an economist, Dr. Anukriti also became a member of the ten-member Human Resources Committee of this apex banking institution that regulates the global economy. Currently, she is co-chair of the World Bank's Center for Research on Women and Jobs, a member of the Technical Advisory Group of the PF-Impact Consortium, an active contributor to the Development Impact Blog, and a member of two committees, "We-Define" and "We-Connect," of the Bangladesh-based social science research institute, the Brac Institute of Governance and Development. Earlier, Dr. Anukriti's husband Siddharth Ramalingam, who was a



professor of economics at BC University, Boston (USA) for seven years, has also been a professor at Harvard University and a senior consultant at the World Bank and is currently working as a strategic and planning manager in a multinational company based in Washington DC (USA).

Dr. Anukriti is extraordinary despite being ordinary. Her outstanding achievements have made her a role model and source of inspiration for young people, especially women. Dr. Anukriti has been incredibly talented and extraordinary since childhood. She never took a single rupee as pocket money from her parents, nor did she ever stand on the street and buy anything from a street vendor. She never attended a single day of tuition, yet she set a record by scoring 94.6 percent in the CBSE 10+2 (non-medical) exam. Dr. Anukriti was born in Narnaul, Haryana, but spent eighteen years in Hisar and seven in Delhi. Now, for twenty years, she has lived in America, one of the world's most developed and

prosperous countries. Yet, she has never been touched by ostentation or ostentation. Whether it's summer or winter, she adapts to the Indian environment as soon as she arrives. She has been travelling by air for two decades, has visited more than twenty countries, even travels locally by metro or AC bus, but apart from a bicycle, she does not even know how to ride an Activa.

The beloved daughter of senior literary figure and educationist Dr. Ram Niwas 'Manav' and former economics lecturer Dr. Kanta Bharti, and a gifted individual with exceptional talent, Dr. Anukriti has achieved world-class achievements. After earning a BA in Economics (Hons) from St. Stephen's College, Delhi, and an MA (Economics) from the Delhi School of Economics, she simultaneously received three degrees: an MA (Economics), an MPhil, and a PhD from Columbia University, Manhattan (USA), one of the world's leading universities.

Dr. Anukriti, who always excelled in her studies, has received education

from world-class institutions, but unlike other students, she never faced any difficulty in getting admission. After completing her 10+2 education in schools in Hisar, she completed her BA Economics (Hons) from St. Stephen's College, Delhi. She then applied for an MA (International Relations) at Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, an MA (Economics) at the Delhi School of Economics, and an MA (Mathematics) at the Indian Statistical Institute, and was selected for all three. Of these, she chose the Delhi School of Economics. Furthermore, after completing her MA (Economics) from the Delhi School of Economics, she applied for a PhD at six leading US universities: Rochester, Brown University, Wisconsin-Madison, Columbia University, New York, and Maryland, and was selected by all six. Anukriti chose Columbia University, Manhattan (New York), and earned three degrees: an MA (Economics), an MPhil, and a PhD. But even more remarkable is that after earning her PhD, she was appointed to seventeen universities or equivalent institutions in six countries, including the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Australia, and India, of which she joined BC University. Dr. Anukriti was never a financial burden on her parents. During her education and research, she received awards such as the GE Fund Scholarship in the United States, the Vickrey and Harris Awards, and the Columbia University Research Scholarship. During her six-year PhD program at Columbia University, she did not have to rely on even a single rupee of financial assistance from her parents. Dr. Anukriti says, "I wouldn't call my journey difficult, but looking back, I realize that few people can make the journey from a small, backward town in Haryana to the World Bank. It's especially difficult for girls and women to prioritize their education and career in many states of India. However, thanks to the support and encouragement of my family, I didn't face any such difficulties. My parents raised me and my brother (who became an Indian Police Service officer) in a way that never limited our goals or aspirations to our city, state, or country. Initially, moving from a small town in Haryana to St. Stephen's College in Delhi felt like a significant difference, and it took some time to adjust."

A DARK TRUTH:

Why Iran, Ukraine Get Bombed, But Pak, Israel, N Korea Don't

Events have moved very fast since Israel and the US launched joint strikes on Iran on February 28. Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, has been killed in an American strike on his compound. Scores of other high-ranking Iranian officials, including the head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, have also been killed. An Iranian warship returning from a naval exercise in India has been sunk by an American submarine right off the coast of Sri Lanka - the first such attack in the Indian Ocean region after the Second World War. The Hormuz Strait lies paralysed. Iran is retaliating by launching missiles and drones not only at Israel but also at US military bases across the region, as well as at Azerbaijan. In the process, it has created divisions between itself and the Arab states, too. The UAE announced it was withdrawing its ambassador from Tehran and closing down its embassy there. The Saudis have warned that they would make available all their resources to help their "Arab brothers". Iran seems to be pretty isolated, with its allies, Russia and China, issuing statements condemning the joint attacks and the assassination of Ayatollah Khamenei but not expressing any proclivity to intervene militarily.



In fact, it must be remembered that the latest attacks came when negotiations between the US and Iran were ongoing in Oman and were close to a breakthrough. This is a great violation of the international rules-based order. Iran is infinitely weaker militarily than both the US and Israel. Its air force is non-existent, and it has no nuclear weapons, unlike the US and Israel. The message to militarily smaller, non-nuclear states is unmistakable. An unintended consequence of Operation "Epic Fury" may well be unchecked nuclear proliferation.

So, where do things go from here?

The Darkest Nuclear Age

Twenty-three years ago, around this same time, George Bush, together with the UK, launched its assault on Iraq to topple the government of Saddam Hussein, on the false premise that Hussein was stockpiling weapons of mass destruction. There is an eerie similarity this time around. Trump justified the war on Iran by saying that he was not going to allow Tehran to acquire nuclear weapons. But less than a year ago - last June - when America had bombed Iran, he had declared that he had annihilated Iran's nuclear facilities.

'Get That Bomb'

For, after all, this has become an oft-repeated pattern - militarily strong states attacking weaker ones. Take Iraq, for instance. Half the size of Iran, the Anglo-US coalition could attack it only because it knew Iraq did not have weapons of mass destruction. It has been the same in the case of Ukraine. At the time of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Ukraine had been a nuclear state. It voluntarily gave up nuclear weapons in exchange for security guarantees. Yet, Russia invaded it. It is doubtful whether Russia would

have taken this step had Ukraine retained its nuclear arsenal. Coming back to Iran, everything it has been accused of doing by Israel and the US, which makes up the casus belli for the war, is true of Pakistan, too. Iran is accused of instrumentalising terrorism as policy, but so does Pakistan. If Iran is guilty of creating proxies that target Israel, all the different jihadi groups that Pakistan has created remain India-centric. If Iran is said to be guilty of exporting terrorism to the world, so is Pakistan, whose name has cropped up in most terror attacks across the world. Yet, the difference in the policy pursued towards Iran and Pakistan by successive US administrations could not be starker. And the reason is only one - Pakistan is a nuclear state, while Iran is not. It is extremely doubtful whether Iran could have been attacked in this manner had it possessed nuclear arms.

What Iran Really Possessed - And What It Didn't

It was years ago that Iran eschewed the pursuit of nuclear weapons. It is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). The Ayatollah had even issued a fatwa against the pursuit of weapons of mass destruction.

How 12 'Insurers' Sitting In London Paralysed Hormuz - All With A Phone Call

Edward Lloyd used to keep a coffee house on Tower Street in the City of London since around 1688. The establishment was nothing remarkable to look at. Ship captains who had docked at Wapping would walk up to exchange intelligence: which vessel had come home safely from the Indies, which had not, where pirates had last been reported. Merchants and moneylenders followed. Those willing to shoulder a portion of a voyage's risk began writing their names and their accepted liabilities below the details of the insured - beneath - literally. Underwriters. From this arrangement of wooden tables and coffee cups grew Lloyd's of London and, over three and a half centuries, the entire legal and financial architecture of marine insurers that makes global seaborne trade possible. In March 2026, the successors to those Tower Street underwriters did something more consequential than any naval fleet. They picked up the telephone.

When The Underwriter Hangs Up

Hours after Operation Epic Fury began on February 28, war risk underwriters started cancelling policies for transits of the Strait of Hormuz. Seven members of the International Group of Protection and Indemnity Clubs issued 72-hour cancellation notices on March 1. All twelve followed. The International Group covers approximately 90% of the world's ocean-going tonnage. These clubs cover the full suite of liabilities, including cargo damage, crew injury, and environmental pollution. Without their backing, a vessel becomes an economic pariah. Ports refuse entry, cargoes go unloaded, banks withhold financing, charters evaporate. By March 3, maritime tracking platforms recorded zero active tanker transits inside the strait. Not because of Iranian mines. Not because the Fifth Fleet had sealed the approaches. Because the underwriter had hung up. The numbers are worth stating plainly. The Strait of Hormuz handles roughly 20 million barrels of crude and petroleum products daily, a fifth of global demand forced through a



tectonic bottleneck 21 miles wide between Iran and Oman. As much as 20% of all seaborne LNG passes through the same narrows. Baseline war-risk premiums before hostilities stood at 0.25 per cent of hull value, approximately USD 250,000 per voyage. Within 48 hours of the first strikes, rates had risen to 1% (a million dollars per transit), and for tankers with American or Israeli connections, no rate was available at any price. QatarEnergy halted LNG production at its facilities at Ras Laffan and Mesaieed after Iranian strikes. European benchmark gas prices rose nearly 50%. Asian LNG spot prices jumped 39%. As many as 150 vessels lay at anchor in open waters off Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, waiting for orders that did not come.

A Complex Web Of Insurers

The mechanism deserves examination, shorn of jargon. The International Group is not a free market. It is a tightly coordinated oligopoly. Twelve mutual clubs, administered from a London secretariat, whose pooling agreement shares liabilities above USD 10 million across the membership. Behind them sits a reinsurance layer, and behind that a retrocession market of roughly USD 41 billion that explicitly excludes war risks, it covers earthquakes and storms, not missiles and drones. When

seven clubs cancelled simultaneously, no backstop existed to replace them. European insurance regulation (Solvency II) actively incentivised withdrawal, as geopolitical uncertainty rises, so do capital adequacy requirements, making it rational for firms to cancel rather than hold exposure while slowly raising reserves. The Red Sea disruption since late 2023 had already drained global war-risk buffers by the time Hormuz became a question. The Tanker War of the 1980s is instructive by contrast. Between 1984 and 1988, roughly 500 merchant vessels were attacked in the Persian Gulf. Insurance premiums spiked. Flags changed. Yet trade continued, because war risk insurance itself did not withdraw entirely from the market. What changed in March 2026 is that the retrocession layer (the reinsurers' reinsurers) declined to carry the exposure at any price. As Skuld, one of the twelve clubs, put it in its notice: "reinsurers' appetite for war risk exposure is tightening, and in practical terms, it will result in reinsurers withdrawing capacity at short notice." The market ceased to exist. Operation Praying Mantis crippled Iran's operational naval capacity in eight hours on April 18, 1988. The International Group's clubs needed less than seventy-two hours in 2026 to close the same strait without firing a single shot.

INDIA'S NO.1 COMPACT SUV:

Maruti Suzuki Brezza leads a decade of SUV growth in India

New Delhi, March 2026: The Brezza has consistently retained its position among India's top 10 bestselling cars for a decade.

Maruti Suzuki has empowered the growth of the compact SUV segment with the Brezza. Compact SUVs currently account for 31% contribution in the passenger vehicle industry. Maruti Suzuki India Limited (Maruti Suzuki) celebrates the 10th anniversary of India's No.1 Compact SUV*, the Brezza. Since its introduction in 2016, the Brezza has established the Compact SUV segment as one of the largest segments in the Indian passenger vehicle industry. As a youthful urban SUV, the Brezza perfectly captures the trend of today's customer aspirations as an extension of their personality and a trusted partner in their adventures and daily lives. The Brezza's success story is a testament to its unparalleled market leadership and customer trust. As India's No.1 Compact SUV*, the Brezza has maintained its position among India's top 10 bestselling passenger



vehicles for a decade. Speaking on this milestone, Mr. Partho Banerjee, Senior Executive Officer, Marketing & Sales, Maruti Suzuki India Limited, said, "The Brezza story is one that has empowered the SUV era in India. Conceptualised, designed and developed with new-age customer aspirations, the Brezza's authentic SUV DNA and feature-loaded cabin have constantly redefined customer expectations with each new model launch. As we reflect on its

journey through the decade on its 10th anniversary, it's worth noting that the Brezza has not just consistently retained its position as India's most loved SUV; it has also steadily expanded the market share for the entire compact SUV segment to 31% contribution to today." "The Brezza name today is synonymous with SUVs and continues to command strong brand consideration, with 56% of customers considering it as their predetermined choice. We at Maruti

Suzuki are deeply thankful to our customers for making the Brezza their SUV of choice for a decade. We remain committed to offering our customers the perfect blend of style, technology, performance, and appeal that wins brand love," he added. A true symbol of success, the Brezza won over 28 of the most recognised automotive awards in its first year, including the coveted Indian Car of the Year (ICOTY) 2017. From its early sporty, glamorous

image to today's powerful, hot and tech avatar, the Brezza has evolved over two generations with a drive for constant innovation. The Brezza makes a strong connect with today's dynamic customers who like to play by their own rules as driven, confident, adventure seekers who look for a commanding SUV with a bold driving experience. The Brezza is an SUV that adds "More Power to Your Play," ensuring the SUV serves as an extension of its owner's personality, empowering them to make the most of every moment.

The latest generation Brezza is powered by a 1.5L petrol engine with Progressive Smart Hybrid Technology, advanced 6-speed automatic transmission with steering-mounted paddle shifters, 360-view camera, electric sunroof, Head-Up Display, Smart Play Pro+ with surround sound, and 6 airbags, Electronic Stability Program (ESP+2) with Hill Hold Assist as standard, reinforcing Maruti Suzuki's commitment to safety and innovation.

Musk tells jury 'people read too much' into his posts



Multi-billionaire technology tycoon Elon Musk told a jury in California on Wednesday that stock market investors read too much into his social media posts. He was defending himself against claims from investors, who have accused him of trying to manipulate markets with a series of misleading messages in the run-up to his 2022 purchase of Twitter. Musk said posts he wrote after he had struck a deal to buy the platform were "extremely literal" and not intended to try to reduce the price he would have to pay. "I was simply speaking my mind," he said when asked if he had considered the impact of his posts, including one in which he declared his takeover plans on hold. "People tend to read too much

into things that I do," he said. At other points in the trial, Musk said repeatedly that his tweets represent what is in his head at any given time. "What I think privately is what I say publicly, there's no difference," he said. The dispute marks the first lawsuit over Musk's 2022 Twitter purchase to make it to trial, but his social media habit has landed him in legal trouble before. In earlier fights, he has successfully beaten back claims that he misled Tesla investors and committed defamation via his posts. The trial, which started on Monday in San Francisco, is expected to last three weeks. Investors are seeking unspecified monetary damages from Musk, which they say they are owed given they acted on

his allegedly misleading statements, including when he claimed he was "terminating" the deal in July. "If this was a trial on whether I've made stupid tweets, I'd say I'm guilty," Musk said at one point. When Musk was asked if he at one point told Twitter's board he would "hunt them down for the rest of time", he did not deny doing so. "I was pretty upset with the Twitter board because I thought they had engaged in fraud," Musk said. Brian Belgrave, who is leading the class of individual investors suing Musk, told the court on Monday that he sold thousands of Twitter shares in July 2022, believing that Musk was no longer going to buy the platform because of his public posts and comments.

The Disney Adventure Arrives in Singapore, Disney Cruise Line's First Ship to Homeport in Asia

Hyderabad, March 05, 2026 – Disney Cruise Line today celebrated a landmark occasion as the Disney Adventure made its much-anticipated arrival to its new home port of Singapore. Excitement and pride filled the electric atmosphere as the ship approached the Marina Bay Cruise Centre Singapore with a stunning water salute, this evening. The skies lit up with a dazzling array of fireworks to welcome the Disney Adventure, marking the start of an extraordinary new chapter in cruise vacation experiences for guests in the region. The Disney Adventure will set sail on her maiden voyage from Singapore on 10 March 2026, embarking on three- and four-night sailings at sea designed for families and guests of all ages. Drawing on over 100 years of storytelling from Disney, Pixar and Marvel, guests onboard the ship can look forward to world-class entertainment, immersive dining experiences, and artful accommodations. The Disney Adventure will continue Disney Cruise Line's tradition and reputation of delivering the most magical and relaxing vacations at sea, bringing this

immersive Disney storytelling to more people globally than ever before. "The arrival of the Disney Adventure in Singapore marks a significant milestone in our global expansion, introducing Disney cruising to Asia for the very first time," said Joe Schott, president of Disney Signature Experiences. "Honoring Disney Cruise Line's legacy of unforgettable journeys, our newest ship brings together our signature storytelling and creativity in an exciting new destination." The launch of the Disney Adventure is part of an unprecedented period of growth for Disney Signature Experiences, which currently has more expansion projects under way than ever before. For Disney Cruise Line, that growth includes moving toward a 13-ship fleet by 2031 following other ship debuts over the last two years including the Disney Treasure and Disney Destiny. Singapore's position as Asia Pacific's leading cruise hub is anchored by comprehensive airlinks with direct flights from over 160 cities, and world-class cruise infrastructure, including the

recently expanded Marina Bay Cruise Centre Singapore. In 2025, Singapore's cruise industry grew to achieve over 2 million passenger throughput received from 375 ship calls. The Disney Adventure's five-year homeporting commitment marks a major milestone to catalyse fly-cruise demand and capture a significant share of the region's rapidly expanding cruise audience. The ship is expected to generate substantial economic impact across tourism and maritime sectors while reinforcing Singapore's role as a leading cruise hub in Asia Pacific. Melissa Ow, Chief Executive, Singapore Tourism Board said, "Disney Cruise Line's decision to homeport their newest ship in Singapore is a testament to our appeal as a premier cruise destination. Singapore's repertoire of compelling onshore tourism experiences is a fitting complement to the Disney Adventure's unique entertainment-led vacation at sea. The Disney Adventure's arrival brings us a step closer towards realising our Tourism 2040 vision to drive quality tourism growth.

Together with Disney Cruise Line, we're excited to bring magical experiences to travellers from around the world." The Disney Adventure will offer seven different themed areas for guests to enjoy and explore onboard, with itineraries designed to entertain guests for multiple days at sea. It will also debut a series of firsts and exclusives to the region – from regionally authentic cuisines to unique retail experiences and original entertainment offerings. Besides the fleet's signature international food spread, guests can look forward to enjoying a wide array of dining options onboard, from regional Asian food favorites to innovative drinks, including bubble tea. Complementing the spectacular food and beverage offerings will be nearly 17,000 square feet of retail space where guests can look forward to exclusive collections and shop to their hearts' content. Several retail experiences on the Disney Adventure are new to the Disney Cruise Line fleet, including the World of Disney Store, National Geographic Store, and the Duffy and Friends Shop.

Oasis Fertility Opens New Centre in Khammam, Expanding Access to Advanced Fertility Care

Khammam, 05 March, 2026: Oasis Fertility, one of India's trusted fertility care networks with over 16 years of clinical expertise, has announced the launch of its new, full-fledged fertility centre in Khammam, further strengthening its established presence across Telangana. Over the years, Oasis Fertility has built a wide network of centres across the state, enabling couples in both urban and regional locations to access specialised fertility care closer to home. The Khammam centre reflects this continued commitment to ensuring consistent, science-led fertility care across Telangana. Fertility outcomes are closely linked to timely evaluation and appropriate medical guidance. In many regional areas, delays in diagnosis and intervention often occur due to distance from specialised centres. The Khammam centre addresses this gap by offering consultations, diagnostics, and advanced fertility treatments all under one roof, allowing couples to access end-to-end fertility care



locally. Reinforcing Oasis Fertility's science-led approach, Dr. Durga G. Rao, Medical Director and Co-Founder, Oasis Fertility, said, "For over 16 years, Oasis Fertility has built trust through evidence-based medicine, ethical clinical protocols, and personalised treatment pathways. With the launch of our centre in Khammam, we are extending this experience and science-led approach to couples in the region, ensuring they receive timely and appropriate fertility care." Speaking on the launch, Pushkaraj Shenai, CEO, Oasis Fertility, said,

"Fertility rates in Telangana have been steadily declining, and timely access to fertility evaluation remains a challenge, particularly in the interior regions. Bringing structured fertility care closer to where people live is essential. The Khammam centre enables couples in the region to pursue parenthood through evidence-based fertility care, in the good hands of science." Dr Venkata Sireesha K, Consultant and Fertility Specialist, Oasis Fertility – Khammam, said, "Couples in and around Khammam often had to travel to larger

cities for specialised fertility evaluation and treatment. With this centre, they can now access consultations, diagnostics, and advanced treatments such as IUI, IVF, ICSI, and PGT-A at one location, backed by experienced specialists and comprehensive facilities." With this launch, Oasis Fertility continues to deepen its presence across Telangana, reinforcing its commitment to providing accessible, comprehensive, and science-led fertility care for couples across both established cities and emerging regions. About Oasis Fertility: Established in 2009, Oasis Fertility is a leading reproductive health-care provider with 35+ centres across India. With a strong focus on scientific excellence, ethical care, and high IVF success rates, Oasis has helped healthy babies come into the world. The centres offer a wide spectrum of male and female fertility treatments including IVF, IUI, ICSI, and fertility preservation, backed by advanced laboratory systems, personalised care, and holistic wellness support.

Stock markets rebound in early trade tracking rally in global peers

Mumbai: Stock market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty bounced back in early trade on Thursday, March 5, tracking a rebound in global equities, after facing heavy losses in the past few trading sessions due to the conflict in West Asia. The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 550.27 points to 79,666.46 in early trade. The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 171.45 points to 24,651.95. From the Sensex pack, Adani Ports, Reliance Industries, NTPC, Bharat Electronics, Tata Steel and Larsen & Toubro were among the major gainers. HCL Tech, Tech Mahindra, ICICI Bank and Asian Paints were among the laggards. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, jumped 2.86 per cent to USD 83.73 per barrel. In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi rebounded sharply and jumped 10 per cent. Japan's Nikkei 225, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index were also quoting higher. The US



market ended in positive territory on Wednesday. "On the global front, US markets ended the previous session on a firm note, while South Korea's Kospi index is trading sharply higher, gaining more than 10 per cent, offering some supportive external cues," Ponnudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 8,752.65 crore on Wednesday, while

Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought stocks worth Rs 12,068.17 crore, according to exchange data. On Wednesday, the Sensex tumbled 1,122.66 points or 1.40 per cent to settle at 79,116.19, falling for the fourth straight session. The Nifty dived 385.20 points or 1.55 per cent to end at 24,480.50, registering its third day of decline. The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 550.27 points to 79,666.46 in early trade.

NOVATR 2024-25 REPORT: BIM-LED CAREER GROWTH IN CIVIL ENGINEERING

India, March 5, 2026 – Novatr, a leading edtech platform focused on upskilling professionals in the Architecture, Engineering, and Construction (AEC) sector, has released its Civil Engineering Career Success Report (2024-2025). The report highlights consistent career outcomes, industry adoption, and improved employability among civil engineers, reinforcing Novatr's role in preparing infrastructure professionals for BIM-led, data-driven project environments across India and global markets. As large-scale transportation projects and buildings increase, civil engineers must move beyond traditional execution roles and contribute to planning, coordination, and digital delivery. The Union Budget 2026 reinforces this shift by emphasising skills, industry alignment, and workforce readiness to support India's expanding infrastructure sector.

Over the past two years, Novatr has enabled civil engineering professionals to translate these policy priorities into measurable career outcomes, supporting transitions from site-based workflows into high-impact roles in BIM (Building Information Modelling), digital project coordination, and infrastructure planning, roles that are now central to modern project delivery.

Career Growth and Placement Outcomes (2024-2025)
Over the recent assessment period until 2025, Novatr has facilitated over 200 successful career transitions among engineering professionals across India and international markets. Learners achieved an average salary increase of 36%, reflecting a focus on sustained career growth beyond basic skill acquisition.

Industry Adoption and Hiring Landscape
Leading infrastructure con-

sultancies, EPC firms, and BIM-focused organisations such as The BIM Engineers, Techtur, ECOMS, Brick & Bolt Home Construction, One Click BIM, BIM Studio, Metaguisse, BIM Tree, and multiple construction and infrastructure firms have hired graduates from Novatr's civil engineering program. Hiring trends indicate a strong industry shift toward BIM-enabled civil workflows, with employers prioritising professionals who can integrate design intent, construction sequencing, quantity take-offs, and coordination across multidisciplinary teams. This demand spans both traditional infrastructure majors and emerging digital-first engineering consultancies.

Geographic Reach and Infrastructure Hubs
Placements over the last few years demonstrate a strong national reach aligned with India's infrastructure growth corridors. Hiring has

been centred in Mumbai, Pune, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Delhi NCR, and Chennai, with increasing traction across Tier II infrastructure hubs supporting highways, industrial parks, and smart city projects. This geographic distribution reflects where BIM adoption, large-scale infrastructure investments, and global project outsourcing are most active. To strengthen regional impact, Novatr has continued to expand employer partnerships in Tier II and Tier III cities and develop cohorts aligned with region-specific infrastructure needs.

Leadership Perspective
Commenting on the findings, Harkunwar Singh, Co-Founder, Novatr, said: "Civil engineering is undergoing a structural shift. BIM and digital delivery are no longer optional and are becoming foundational to how infrastructure projects are planned, coordinated,

and executed. At Novatr, we focus on enabling civil engineers to move beyond traditional roles and build future-ready capabilities. This report reflects how outcome-driven, practice-led learning can directly translate into long-term career growth." From Employment to Infrastructure Entrepreneurship Beyond placement outcomes, the report highlights Novatr's role in strengthening long-term career pathways. Over the past two years, several civil engineering alumni have launched independent BIM consultancies, infrastructure planning studios, and project support firms, servicing regional developers, EPC contractors, and international clients. Many of these alumni-led ventures have gone on to recruit talent from within the Novatr ecosystem, creating a self-reinforcing network of digitally skilled civil engineering professionals contributing to India's infrastructure capacity.

IRAN TARGETS HEADQUARTERS OF IRANIAN KURDISH FORCES IN IRAQ



Iran's military has said it has targeted the headquarters of Iranian Kurdish forces in northern Iraq, stepping up strikes on Kurdish regions in both Iran and Iraq. The military said it attacked "Kurdish groups opposed to the [Islamic] revolution in Iraqi Kurdistan with three missiles". One person was killed and three injured in the strikes on Tuesday and Wednesday, the BBC has confirmed. Tehran is intensifying its attacks on Iranian Kurdish groups in Iraq amid reports that US President Donald Trump wants them to join the fight against Iran, as US and Israeli strikes continue. Kurdish Iranian opposition parties in Iraq have denied reports that some of their forces have crossed into Iran. "This is not true. Do not believe it," said Hanna Hussein Yazdan Pana of the Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK). "Not a single Peshmerga [fighter] has moved. No-one moves alone."

She said six Kurdish opposition groups - which recently formed a coalition - were coordinating their plans but needed the Americans to pave the way for a move. She told the BBC nothing would happen this week. "It's not about the hours or days. We cannot move if the air above us is not cleaned. We need to see weapons depots [of Iran's security forces] being destroyed. Otherwise, it would be suicidal."

Pana also called for a no-fly zone to provide protection for Kurdish forces. "The regime is very brutal," she said, "and the most advanced weapon we have is a Kalashnikov." There has been growing speculation that Trump wants Kurdish forces to join the war, to provide boots on the ground. The White House has denied a report that the president is considering arming them. On

Wednesday, the BBC visited the scene of the Iranian attack on attacks on two separate Kurdish opposition groups. One base was hit by a ballistic missile at about 11:00 local time (08:00 GMT) on Wednesday, injuring four Kurdish Peshmerga fighters. One died later from his injuries. One building at the base had been crushed, with rubble and twisted metal strewn over a wide area. There

was also a hole in the ground, gouged out by a missile. At another base - belonging to the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KDPI) - the BBC saw the aftermath of a double drone strike on Tuesday, which was said to have injured one civilian. A senior political leader of the KDPI told the BBC he believed that the Kurds would be fighting in Iran soon - but did not give an exact timeline. He would not comment on reports that Trump has spoken to the KDPI leader in recent days. A fighter called Hassan, 25, armed with an AK-47, said he was eager to go to Iran to fight for freedom. "We are closer than ever," he said. Sir Simon Cass, a former British ambassador in Tehran, described Iran as "a patchwork of different ethnicities" with a Persian majority and significant minorities of Kurds, Balochs, Arabs and Azeris. "If the United States and Israel find a way to ignite some of those groups into armed insurrection against the regime, it

will be another problem which the regime needs to manage. It will be extremely difficult," he told BBC Radio 4's Today programme. Cass said Iranian Kurdish opposition fighters were "relatively lightly armed" and "under normal circumstances you would not expect them to be able to stand up to the strength of the Iranian armed forces". "However, if they are supported by special forces from other countries who can call in air support - that could be a different matter," the former diplomat added. More than 30 million Kurds inhabit a mountainous region straddling the borders of Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Iran and Armenia. They make up the fourth-largest ethnic group in the Middle East, but they have never obtained a permanent nation state. About 10% of Shia Muslim-majority Iran's 91 million population are Kurds, who are mainly Sunni Muslims and live mostly in the country's north-western regions.

TEXAS LAWMAKER ADMITS 'LAPSE IN JUDGEMENT' IN AFFAIR WITH AIDE



US Congressman Tony Gonzales has admitted to having an extra-marital affair with an aide, having previously denied that the relationship happened. The Texas Republican, who is married with six children, said the relationship with married staff member Regina Santos-Aviles, who died by suicide last year, was a "mistake" and a "lapse in judgement". "I take full responsibility for my actions," Gonzales, 45, told a podcast. His admission came hours after a House of Representatives panel launched an ethics investigation into the relationship, and ahead of a primary runoff election. Gonzales had

previously dismissed the allegations as "blackmail" and a "co-ordinated" attack to unseat him. The primary race to decide whether Gonzales can remain as the congressional district's Republican candidate is headed towards a May runoff after neither Gonzales nor rival Brandon Herrera crossed the 50% vote threshold earlier this week. Whoever becomes the party's nominee will stand in November's midterm election. The district, which runs along the US-Mexico border, is heavily Republican-leaning. Gonzales was endorsed by US President Donald Trump before the affair allegations surfaced. The lawmaker is now facing growing calls for his resignation, including from fellow Republicans. Among them are South Carolina Congressman Nancy Mace, who has accused him of "predatory behaviour". Santos-Aviles died in September 2025, after setting herself on fire near her home in Uvalde, Texas.

Global order is 'breaking down', Carney tells Australian parliament



With the post-war "global architecture breaking down from consecutive crises" Australia and Canada should work together as "strategic cousins", Mark Carney has told the Australian parliament. The question for middle powers was whether they would write the new rules that determine security and prosperity or "let the hegemonies dictate outcomes", the Canadian prime minister said. Carney said the two countries should cooperate further to boost sovereign capabilities including in the areas of critical minerals, defence and AI. The speech echoed previous statements, including a speech in Davos in January in which he said the "old order is not coming back" and urged middle powers to band together. Many countries were deciding to increase their sovereign autonomy, Carney said on Thursday, the first time a Canadian prime minister has addressed parliament in Canberra in almost 20 years. "This impulse is understandable when the rules no longer protect you." He joined his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese at a

press conference afterwards, where the pair announced measures they said would deepen relationships across several areas, including defence, security and between the countries' space agencies. Australia would also join the G7 Critical Minerals Alliance, which Carney called the "largest grouping of trusted democratic mineral reserves in the world". Canada and Australia produce one-third of the world's uranium and lithium and more than 40% of its iron ore. "Australia and Canada must seek and create new ways to stand with - and for - each other," Albanese said ahead of Carney's address to parliament, noting the two countries were bound together by shared convictions and values. As the conflict in the Middle East spreads across the region, both leaders, who backed the de-escalation. "The world wants to see a de-escalation and wants to see Iran cease to spread the destinations of its attacks," Albanese said. "We're seeing Gulf states that have not been involved attacked across the board, including the attacks on civilian and tourist areas as well."

Ethiopia experiments with 'smart' police stations that have no officers



Computer tablet screens glow inside a row of partitioned booths at a new-style Ethiopian police station. There is no commotion. There is no front desk, no bench of anxiously waiting civilians, no officer calling out names. It is a pilot project of what is being called a "smart" - or unmanned - police station in the Bole district of the capital, Addis Ababa, is the latest chapter in Ethiopia's bid to catch up with the digital revolution.

A large monitor on the wall cycles through welcome messages as well as images of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. But at the moment there are uniformed officers standing by to demonstrate how the system works, which makes it feel more like a tech showroom. Recently opened, the staff "are here to help people get used to it", the police's head of technology expansion department Cdr Demissie Yilma tells. Inside a booth, he taps a screen and goes through the steps to make a report. Demissie selects the type of incident - a crime, a traffic report or a general concern - enters the details and presses a button to submit the comment.

Starmer says UK sending four fighter jets to Qatar and confirms first repatriation flight has taken off

Starmer is asked whether the UK's stance of defensive military activity, rather than offensive military activity, could change. Starmer doesn't directly say, but says the government is working with allies and the US and have been doing so "for some time". The US is using military bases to launch the strikes into Iran, he says, adding: "That is the understanding and arrangements that we've got in place." Starmer says the conflict "could continue for some time". He reassures those in attendance that the UK will do everything it can to protect British lives and uphold British values. Starmer ends his address, and now moves onto questions. Starmer moves on to the economic impact of the war, specifically the impact on oil and gas facilities and



shipping through the Strait of Hormuz. He says the UK government will work with industries affected, and allies, to respond to any impact. He says the UK has the right plan to decrease its dependence on volatile markets and to create "the energy security and independence that we need". He says it is "sad" that some will use the current geopolitical situation "to divide us". Which, he says, is why the

government is reaching out to communities in the UK, especially Jewish and Muslim ones, to make sure they have "appropriate support". The prime minister says "we should come together in this moment", and that the "scared" British citizens that are stuck in the region "come from all backgrounds". "The armed forces who protect them come from all backgrounds too," he adds. That

was a clear effort from Sir Keir Starmer to manage expectations for the British citizens stuck in the region who want to come back to the UK. He announced that the first repatriation flight from Oman - which was meant to take off yesterday but scuppered by technical issues - is now in the air, and said that around 4,000 Britons had already made it home. But that is just a tiny fraction of the 140,000 British nationals who have told the government they are in the Middle East. "This is a huge undertaking," he said. "It's not going to happen overnight." The government's private hope - but it is just a hope, not an expectation - is that the conflict will calm in time for the government not to have to find a way to evacuate all of those people.

NEPALIS VOTE IN FIRST ELECTION SINCE GEN Z UPRISING FOR CHANGE

Millions of Nepalis have voted in the country's first general election since violent youth-led protests toppled the government last September. Corruption, economic stagnation and inequality were the main issues in the vote. They sparked the uprising in which 77 people died, many of them protesters shot by police. The election represents a crossroads for Nepal, pitting the establishment against a new generation of politicians advocating for angry, young Gen Z voters hungry for change. Counting the votes cast for the Nepalese parliament's 275 seats is expected



to take several days, and results are not expected before next week. Nepal's mountainous terrain makes it slow and difficult to transport ballots, which are tallied by hand. Nearly 19 million people, including almost a million first-time voters, were reg-

istered to take part in the 5 March ballot for the House of Representatives. The Election Commission, speaking shortly after polls closed, said it expected voter turnout to be around 60%. Voting was largely peaceful, and there was a huge security pres-

ence across the country. Leading candidates include KP Sharma Oli, the prime minister toppled in the protests, and Balen Shah, a former rapper who resigned as Kathmandu's mayor in January to take him on in his constituency, the Jhapa 5 seat, one of the key election races. For Oli, the election will be a major test. He and his party, the Communist Party of Nepal UML, have insisted the protests were not a referendum on his leadership and that he is still beloved by the public. He told the BBC he's confident he will win this election.

CHINA SETS LOWEST ECONOMIC GROWTH TARGET SINCE 1991



China has cut its annual economic growth target to a range of 4.5%-5%, the lowest expansion goal since 1991 as it grapples with challenges both at home and abroad. It is the first time the target has been lowered since it was cut to "around 5%" in 2023. A target was not set in 2020 due to the pandemic. The details were released during China's biggest political gathering, known as the "two sessions", alongside the release of some details of the 15th Five Year Plan for the world's second largest economy. Beijing aims to reshape its economy as it faces issues like weak consumption, a shrinking population, an ongoing property crisis, global trade tensions and an energy crunch due to the Iran war. One China analyst told the BBC that the lower target gives China "more room to manage the economy" without being forced into making huge financial commitments just to hit a precise goal. "China has used flexible targets before, particularly during the pandemic, but it's not the norm," Jason Bedford from the East Asian Institute research group added. The two sessions event, which began on

Wednesday and usually runs for at least a week, brings the country's leaders together for back-to-back meetings. Details of China's gross domestic growth (GDP) target and its objectives under its latest Five Year Plan were included in a 46-page report published by Premier Li Qiang, seen by the BBC. The full text of the plan, which will outline China's economic development objectives to 2030, will be voted on during the closing day of the gathering. It is expected to be released by state media one or two days later. Li told delegates that the Five Year Plan will include investments in innovation, high-tech industries, scientific research and more efforts to boost household consumption. His comments underline Beijing's concerns that weak domestic consumption makes the country too reliant on exports, as well as highlighting its ambitions to upgrade the country's manufacturing industries. The report outlines plans for more than 100 major projects over the next five years to expand China's industrial capacity, with a focus on science and technology, transportation and energy.

US SUB SINKS IRANIAN WARSHIP IN INDIAN OCEAN, HEGSETH SAYS

An American submarine sank an Iranian warship in the Indian Ocean, the US defence secretary has said. Pete Hegseth said the ship was sunk by a torpedo on Tuesday and died a "quiet death". He did not name the vessel. His announcement came after Sri Lanka said its navy had responded to a distress call on Wednesday morning from an Iranian ship, the Iris Dena, which had gone down about 40km (25 miles) from its southern coastline. Eighty bodies from the frigate were found by rescuers, a Sri Lankan defence official told BBC Sinhala. Another 32 were rescued, the country's navy said. Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said the US had "perpetrat-



ed an atrocity at sea, 2,000 miles away from Iran's shores". "Frigate Dena, a guest of India's Navy carrying almost 130 sailors, was struck in international waters without warning," he wrote in a post on X early on Thursday. "Mark my words: The US will come to bitterly regret precedent it has set." A Sri Lankan navy

spokesman said some 180 people were believed to have been aboard the Iris Dena, based on the ship's documentation. The survivors were "seriously injured" and had been taken to a hospital in the southern port of Galle, Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath said. Hegseth told a news conference on

Wednesday that a US submarine had sunk an Iranian warship "that thought it was safe in international waters". He also claimed it was "the first sinking of an enemy ship by a torpedo since World War Two". While it is the first time since 1945 that an American submarine has sunk an enemy ship this way, the UK and Pakistan have both sunk vessels using torpedoes since then. Video released by the US Department of Defense showed a ship being struck, causing the stern to rise up before exploding. Earlier, Sri Lankan navy spokesman Budhika Sampath had rejected reports that the Iris Dena had been attacked by a submarine.

HOW VENEZUELAN PRISONERS SMUGGLED MESSAGES OUT OF JAIL

In a small flat in a social housing complex near Caracas, Adriana Briceño holds up what looks like a piece of rubbish, but hidden on the old chocolate bar wrapper is a message. The words scrawled on it were written by her son and are addressed to Ángel Godoy, the boy's father and Briceño's husband, while Ángel Godoy was a prisoner in Venezuela's notorious El Heliocoide jail. "Daddy, take this to sweeten things a little," reads the blue ink. "We love you." Originally built in the 1950s as a luxury shopping centre, El Heliocoide was never completed and was later taken over by Venezuela's feared intelligence services. It became a symbol of government

repression. A United Nations investigation documented it was where people who had been arbitrarily arrested or forcibly disappeared were taken and, in some cases, tortured. Recently released detainees like Godoy have described brutal conditions in interviews with the BBC. He is one of the hundreds of political prisoners arrested under President Nicolás Maduro and held in Venezuela's vast detention system, sometimes for years. More than 600 people have been released since Maduro was seized by US forces in a military operation at the start of January, but according to prisoners' rights group Foro Penal, hundreds more are still behind bars.

India Take Big 'Playing XI' Call For T20 World Cup Semi-Final vs England



AGENCY Mumbai: England captain Harry Brook won the toss and opted to bowl against India in their T20 World Cup 2026 semi-final clash at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai. While England made one change to their side, with Jamie Overton replacing Rehan Ahmed, the Indian team named an unchanged XI. The winner

of the match will advance to the final to face New Zealand at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Thursday. The Kiwis hammered South Africa in the first semi-final at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata on Wednesday riding on Finn Allen's 33-ball century, the fastest in the history of the tournament. England captain Harry

Brook said it looks like a good wicket for chasing. "Looks a good wicket, hope to get a good start and then chase it down. India have a lot more experience, we'll try and assess conditions and play at our best. T20 is fickle. The way we've played, we've scraped through and hold us in good stead," he said at the toss. India captain Suryakumar

Yadav said he would have batted first anyway. "We'd have batted.

Wind around, don't think there'll be dew. Mood in camp is positive. We've tightened the screws; our brand of cricket has been different. Best wicket, credit to the curator and groundsman," he said. Suryakumar has a reason for considering batting first because he reckons dew will not play a big role in the match. To counter the possibility of dew later in the evening, an anti-dew repellent has been applied to the ground, which should help maintain a fair balance between the two teams. Samson, meanwhile, was motoring along. The Indian opener brings up a half-century off just 26 balls to blow the wind out of England's sails. India have dominated the Powerplay, racing to 67 despite losing the wicket of Abhishek Sharma. Samson has gone berserk, unleashing a flurry of boundaries and sixes to put England under the pump.

UNABLE TO LEAVE INDIA, West Indies Coach Daren Sammy's Desperate Plea To Return Home

West Indies Coach Daren Sammy shared a desperate plea on social media as he and his team continue to wait for clearance to travel back home. West Indies were eliminated from the T20 World Cup after a defeat against India in the Super 8 stage. Yet, the players haven't been able to fly back home due to international airspace restrictions triggered by the US and Israeli strikes on Iran. With there being little to no clarity over when the situation would return to normal, enabling the West Indies team to fly back home, Sammy's post summed up the mood in the camp. I just wanna go home," Sammy posted on X (formerly Twitter), as he helplessly awaits the green flag to board the return flight from India. Cricket West Indies Working On A Solution Cricket West Indies said it is working closely with the ICC and relevant government authorities for ensure safe travel of the players. Flight operations in



the Gulf region are currently suspended with damage also reported at the Dubai International Airport, which is one the busiest in the world. "Cricket West Indies (CWI) wishes to advise that the departure of the West Indies Senior Men's Team from India, following their exit from the ICC Men's T20 World Cup, has been delayed due to international airspace restrictions," the board said in a statement. "These restrictions are a direct result of the security threats posed by military action in the Gulf

Region, which has impacted several international flight routes and required airlines to adjust scheduled services for safety reasons." The team lost to India in a must-win Super Eight match in Kolkata to bow out of the tournament. "CWI appreciates the understanding and concern of our fans, families, and stakeholders during this time," the statement added. A BCCI official told PTI on condition of anonymity, "West Indies are still here. There's no confirmation when they will leave."

BALE SAYS SECRET BACK INJURY ENDED HIS CAREER

AGENCY Mumbai: Gareth Bale has revealed he carried a secret injury throughout his career, with the problem eventually leading to his early retirement. Bale, 36, won five Champions League titles with Real Madrid to become one of Britain's most successful players. He called time on his playing days at the age of 33 shortly after playing for Wales at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. He has now disclosed details of a back injury suffered while a teenager at Spurs that he says contributed to his decision to step away from the game. Speaking on the Stick to Football podcast, Bale said: "I tore my disc in my back when I was 18 at Tottenham.

I played my whole career with that. "I had a lot of calf injuries which was due to my back. I never came out and said this when I was playing because some people would say 'he's making excuses'. "It was manageable but over time it caught up with me." Bale's move to Real Madrid in 2013 broke football's transfer record and he says the Spanish giants were aware of the issue. He called the problem "manageable" but said it hung over his time in La Liga, where he played a key role in the club's return to European dominance. He says he was even forced to brush his teeth while standing on his heels because of the risk of injury to his calf. "I never knew when it would

come," he said, "and obviously people were like, 'oh, he doesn't look after himself [but] I would literally make sure my calves and soleus were bulletproof. "But again, if it misfires and it goes, there's nothing I could do about it. I'd have an injection in my back to calm it all down." Arguably Wales' greatest footballer, Bale broke records for appearances and goals for the men's national side having made his debut as a 16-year-old.



Pakistan Cricket Board Breaks Silence On Reports Of T20 World Cup Star Misbehaving With Female Hotel Staff

On Thursday, a news report in Pakistan media claimed that a member

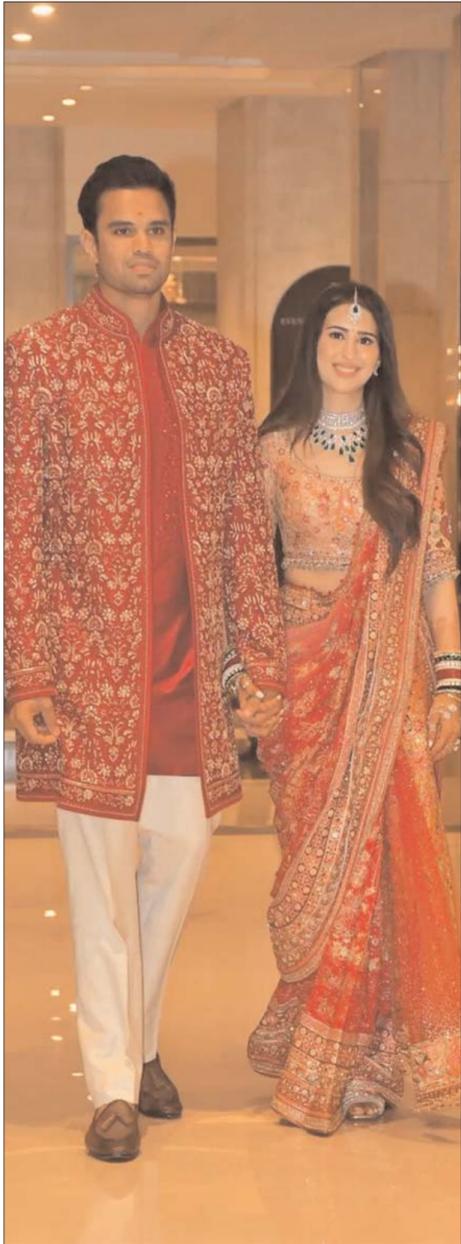


of its T20 World Cup squad was reported and later fined for misbehaving with a female staff member during their stay at a hotel in Kandy, Sri Lanka. The alleged incident happened before Pakistan's last Super 8 match against hosts Sri Lanka and is being talked about in whispers in Pakistan Cricket Board and team circles, Telecom Asia

Sport reported. However, the Pakistan Cricket Board has refuted the claims. "The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has taken serious notice of baseless and fake news aired by ARY News regarding Pakistani left-arm fast bowler Salman Mirza," the board said in a statement. "PCB strongly

condemns the broadcast of such unverified and misleading information and considers it malicious and irresponsible journalism. The board reserves the right to take appropriate action against those involved in spreading false news." According to the earlier report in Telecom Asia

Sport, "The top management of Golden Crown Hotel wanted the matter to be dealt with strongly but Cheema apologised on behalf of the player and fined him for misbehaviour." Though Pakistan won that match by five runs, the team failed to reach the semi-finals on net run-rate and returned home in batches on Sunday and Monday. The said player is also likely to appear before the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) disciplinary committee and is likely to be punished further. The report said that Pakistani players and backroom staff have a history of misconduct on tours. Young batter Haider Ali was arrested by Manchester Police last year on charges of raping a girl on the Pakistan Shaheens tour of England.



ARJUN TENDULKAR AND SAANIYA CHANDHOK KEEPS IT CLASSIC

AGENCY Mumbai: Arjun Tendulkar, son of cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar, married entrepreneur Saaniya Chandhok in a grand yet intimate ceremony in Mumbai on March 5. The celebrations took place at The St Regis Mumbai in South Mumbai and drew a star-studded guest list from the worlds of cricket, Bollywood and business.

The wedding had been eagerly anticipated ever since the couple's engagement on August 25 last year. In the lead-up to the big day, several lavish pre-wedding celebrations had already taken place, including a mehendi ceremony at Mahalaxmi Racecourse and another high-profile gathering in Jannagar hosted by the Ambani family. When the couple finally walked down the aisle, their wedding ensembles stayed rooted in tradition. Instead of experimenting with contemporary pastels, both the bride and groom chose classic shades of red, creating a striking and coordinated wedding look.

■ SAANIYA CHANDHOK'S TIMELESS RED BRIDAL SAREE Saaniya Chandhok opted for a traditional bridal aesthetic, choosing a classic red saree that emphasised heritage and elegance. The richly embellished fabric featured detailed borders along with sequins and stone work that added a subtle sparkle to the look. She styled the saree in a traditional seedha pallu drape,



often associated with formal North Indian and Gujarati bridal styles. Her blouse, designed with half sleeves, was intricately embroidered with dense silver threadwork that echoed the ornate detailing of the saree. Her jewellery completed the bridal ensemble beautifully. Saaniya wore a delicate maang tikka with an emerald

drop, a heavy Polki or Kundan choker, and the customary red-and-white chooda stacked alongside green glass bangles for a layered, multi-coloured effect. Keeping the rest of her styling minimal, she left her hair open in a centre-parted style and paired it with soft, dewy makeup and a bold red bindi. The overall look balanced

classic bridal tradition with a modern sense of restraint. ■ ARJUN TENDULKAR'S REGAL YET MINIMAL ENSEMBLE Arjun Tendulkar complemented the bride's traditional look with an equally refined outfit. He wore a regal red kurta layered with an open bandhgala-style jacket featur-

ing delicate embroidery. The detailing on the jacket added richness without overwhelming the overall look. Underneath, he wore a matching silk kurta that kept the base of the outfit clean and structured. He paired the ensemble with off-white or cream slim-fit trousers, creating a sharp contrast against the deep red tones of the

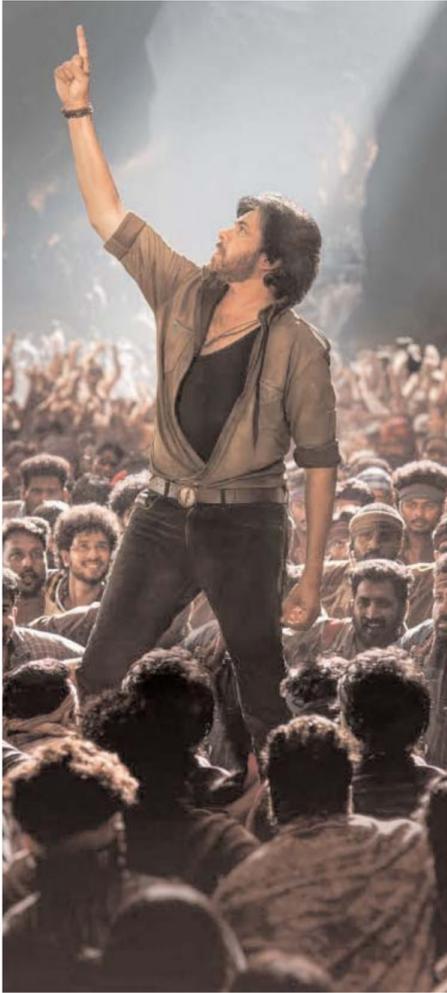
upper layers. His grooming remained understated, with neatly styled swept-back hair and a clean-shaven face, giving the outfit a princely finish. The coordinated colour palette between the couple created a cohesive wedding aesthetic rooted in traditional Indian craftsmanship while still feeling contemporary.

Ustaad Bhagat Singh Preponed to March 19

The most awaited film from Tollywood, Ustaad Bhagat Singh, is all set to arrive earlier than expected. The makers have officially preponed the release to March 19, locking a sensational release window filled with back-to-back long weekends and extended holiday advantage for nearly two weeks.

This massive entertainer marks the blockbuster reunion of Pawan Kalyan and Harish Shankar, a combination that previously created box office history with Gabbar Singh. The duo is now geared up to recreate that magic and deliver a powerful theatrical experience that fans have been eagerly waiting for.

Keeping the film's timelines and overall vision in mind, the team has brought Thaman on board for the background score. DSP's songs will make you dance, while Thaman will handle the background score. This decision has been made to ensure smooth progress without any delays. This move comes after mutual discussions and has been taken in the best interest of the film. With a blockbuster combination leading the charge and a dynamic musical duo elevating the experience, Ustaad Bhagat Singh is shaping up to be more than just a film — it promises to be a grand celebration and a lifetime memo-



The celebrations begin early for fans. Mark the date: March 19.

'Band Melam' to be released on March 26 on the occasion of Sri Ram Navami



Harsh Roshan and Sridevi, who impressed with the movie 'Court', will come before the audience again with 'Band Melam'. The film is being helmed by blockbuster writer Kona Venkat. The film is produced by Kavya and Shravya under the banner of Kona Film Corporation under Mango Mass Media. Directed by Satish Javaji, this movie is going to release on March 26. It is known that the content left till now has created interest in the audience. 'Band Melam' teaser, trailer, mass peppy song 'Tippu

Kuntnaav', nice melody song 'Palleoni Sandallanni Meeve' have raised the expectations of the movie among the audience. This film which has already created a good buzz among the youth audience is going to be released on the occasion of Sri Rama Navami with the blessings of Sri Ram. The makers have planned a grand release of this movie on March 26. As the promotions get enough time, the film unit is also planning to reach the audience in a different style. Details of other promotional content and events will be announced soon.

'Carmeni Selvam' Telugu and Tamil Bilingual Set for Grand Release on April 3, 2026; PVR INOX Pictures Comes On Board as Theatrical Distribution Partner

The upcoming film Carmeni Selvam is set for a grand bilingual release in both Tamil and Telugu on April 3, 2026. The film features an ensemble of critically acclaimed performers who command a strong presence in both the Tamil and Telugu markets, Samuthirakani is ready to deliver a path-breaking performance that is a clear departure from his usual repertoire.

The film also stars Gautham Vasudev Menon known for terrific performances playing a pivotal role. Accomplished actresses Abinaya and Lakshmi Priya are roped in to bring depth and intensity to the film's emotional core. The film is bankrolled by Pathway Productions. Today makers announced that PVR INOX pictures associated with Pathway Productions as the official theatrical distribution partner.

Strengthening its nationwide footprint, Carmeni Selvam is all set to have a grand release. This Relatable tale for the modern Era has already sparked significant curiosity with its first look poster. Makers are planning to raise curiosity with the teaser coming soon. The film follows the journey of Selvam, a principled car driver, as he navigates a complex world of modern pressures. What begins as an emotional monologue of a common man unfolds



into a high-stakes drama that explores the fragile balance between honesty and survival. Sharing his vision, Writer-Director Ram Chakri said, "Carmeni Selvam is a story that belongs to the common

man, and we are thrilled that it is now ready for both our Tamil and Telugu audiences. Partnering with PVR INOX Pictures ensures that this story of heart and grit reaches the grand stage".

The Final Emotional Moment Was Really Touching - I Cried a Lot and Realized I Should Be More Friendly With My Kids



The team of D/O Prasad Rao to Kanabadaledu, streaming on ZEE5, celebrated the remarkable success of the series with a grand success after it crossed 100 million streaming minutes within just one week of release. The emotionally charged series, directed by Poluru Krishna and produced by K. V. Sriram, has struck a chord with audiences for its intense performances and strong emotional core. The event brought together the cast and crew who shared their experiences and gratitude for the overwhelming response. Cinematographer K. Mahesh Kumar expressed his happiness about the reception and the collaboration behind the project. He said, "Good morning everyone. I'm really happy today. This is a hat-trick for producer Sriram and director Krishna, and I'm happy to be part of that hat-trick. Special thanks to Jayanth and all the artists who have been very supportive during the work. Thank you."

Actor Raag Satya became emotional while addressing the gathering and recalled predicting the success of the series during the pre-release event itself. Reflecting on the response from audiences, he said, "Hello everyone, a warm welcome to everyone especially the media. I fixed it at the pre-release event itself that there shall be a success meet and that day has arrived. I'm enjoying this success wholeheartedly. It released on Feb 27 and since that day from around 10 AM I've been getting continuous calls. Everyone has been praising it. Even I was unable to watch the episodes properly because the calls were so continuous. They specifically mentioned a couple of scenes that made them cry. One such scene is me controlling Bindu Chandramouli garu. My own sister connected to that scene a lot and became very emotional. I didn't do it alone, the director made me do it. We actors are just like water — whatever vessel we are put into, the shape is decided by the director. Thank you Krishna. I and Sriram share nearly a 20-year relationship. We met during a shoot and since then we have stayed connected. A special thanks to the ZEE5 team, Jayanth

and Anuradha garu. Rajeev Kanakala was so good that he reminded me of my own father and I truly felt Vasanthika was like my own daughter-in-law." Actor Dr. Prasad Rao spoke about how widely the series has resonated with viewers. "I will not be surprised if the ongoing success of this compels you to edit the series as a feature film. Today when I went to the bank on some work, the staff there spoke vividly about the series and how engaging it was and some even started identifying me because of it. The cinematographer did an amazing job and his combination with the director was excellent. It was really great working with Udaya Bhanu garu and Rajeev Kanakala." Actor Koteswara Rao praised director Poluru Krishna for maintaining strong quality in the project. "Hello all. First of all a big thanks to the team because of whom we are standing here today. I've been working with Krishna from the series Recce. He is incredible at enhancing the quality of the project regardless of the budget. DOP Mahesh is also on the same wavelength as the director.

Since COVID the audience's taste has changed and they are looking for genuine entertainment. Director Krishna did a great job regarding that and the reason for the success of this series is that it feels genuine." Actress Bindu Chandramouli spoke warmly about the experience of working on the project. "Hello all, we are lucky to be part of this web series. Thank you Krishna for choosing me. He has so much clarity of thought and making and that clarity really reflected when I saw the series. He is really a brilliant director. Vasanthika and I share a genuine bond and that reflected on the screen. Thank you sweetheart, she is a beautiful actress. Rajeev Kanakala sir was amazing. It looks like Krishna sir reminded everyone about the acting capacity of Rajeev sir through this series. Even we felt like someone had written something like this for us to perform. Udaya Bhanu garu was excellent and thanks to Sriram garu for being such a supportive producer. A special thanks to ZEE5 and Jayanth garu.

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