

OM NAMO VENKATESAYA



24-03-2026

Total pilgrims: 78,381

Tonsures: 25,451

Hundi kanakalu: 4.46CR

Waiting Compartments: 31

Approx. Darsan Time for Sarvadarshanam (with out SSD Tokens) - 12-15H

TO BOOK YOUR ADS CALL

99484 80279, 73307 78889

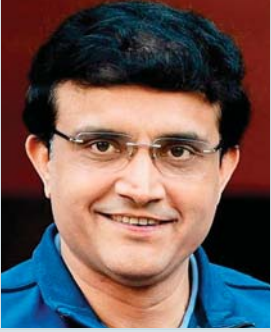
GOLD JUMPS RS 5,091 TO RS 1.44 LAKH/10G AS SOFT DOLLAR BOOST SAFE-HAVEN DEMAND



DEMOCRATS FLIP FLORIDA STATE SEAT THAT INCLUDES TRUMP'S MAR-A-LAGO HOME



'IPL BIGGER THAN PREMIER LEAGUE': SOURAV GANGULY IN AWE OF RAJASTHAN ROYALS' RS 15,000 CRORE SALE



WORLD | NEWS

SPORTS | NEWS

INDIA'S MARKETS TO RECOUP LOST GROUND, RBI RATE HIKE UNLIKELY



New Delhi, March 25 (TSIT): India's markets are likely to recoup some lost ground after the US announced a five-day reprieve for Iran's energy infrastructure, a report said on Wednesday. Radhika Rao, Senior Economist and Executive Director at DBS Bank, predicted that the RBI will keep rates on hold in 2026, while addressing specific pockets of strain. The bar for rate hikes is high, due to the "stagflationary" shock and exogenous nature of the event risk, the report said. "Foreign reserve coverage ratios are at a healthy level, providing sufficient firepower to the authorities, with signs of regular intervention presence in spot and forwards," the bank said in a note. Banking system liquidity returned to a modest deficit amid advance tax outflows and strong foreign-exchange intervention. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) infused Rs 793 billion via an overnight Variable Rate Repo (VRR) auction and announced plans for a three-day auction worth Rs 1 trillion.

INDIA BOOK OF RECORDS RECOGNISED MP'S FREE HEALTH CAMP: SCINDIA



Shivpuri (TSIT): A week-long free health camp organised in Madhya Pradesh's Shivpuri district has been officially recognised by the India Book of Records, Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said on Wednesday. The multi-specialty health camp was organised from March 17 to March 24 at Shivpuri district hospital under the joint aegis of the Madhavrao Scindia Health Service Mission, the Rotary Regional Medical Mission, and the Madhya Pradesh government. Facilities ranging from the diagnosis of complex ailments such as eye, dental, and bone conditions to advanced medical consultations and high-tech robotic surgeries were made available at the camp. Equipped with state-of-the-art technology, the medical camp ensured that every patient received timely and high-quality treatment. The initiative not only strengthened access to healthcare services but also opened new avenues for medical care for people residing in rural and remote areas. Physicians were enrolled in consultations, both in person and virtually, who conducted diagnostic tests and provided complex treatment services to patients at the camp, thereby directly benefiting thousands of families in the region. Notably, Shivpuri district under the Gwalior region falls under the Guna Lok Sabha constituency.

RAHUL, KHARGE TARGET CPM-BJP 'UNDERSTANDING', PITCH UDF AS KERALA'S ONLY ALTERNATIVE



Kozhikode (TSIT): Signalling that the alleged CPM-BJP nexus will remain a central theme of the United Democratic Front's (UDF) election strategy, particularly in the politically crucial Malabar region, Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday stepped up their campaign in Kerala, sharpening their attack on the ruling Left Democratic Front (LDF). Addressing a massive United Democratic Front (UDF) rally at Kozhikode beach, both leaders sought to position the UDF as the only credible alternative in the upcoming Assembly elections. In a virtual address from Delhi, opposition leader Rahul Gandhi framed the electoral contest as a fight not between two, but effectively one front. "In reality, there are only two forces — the UDF and a partnership between the BJP and CPM," he said, accusing both parties of pursuing similar policies and failing to remain accountable to the public. He alleged selective targeting by central agencies, questioning why corruption cases are not being registered against Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, while Congress leaders face scrutiny from agencies like the Enforcement Directorate. "This itself is proof of a deal between the BJP and CPM," he claimed.

No fuel shortage, say oil firms; urge public to avoid panic buying

NEW DELHI (TSIT): State-owned oil companies on Wednesday said there is no shortage of petrol, diesel or LPG in the country, urging citizens not to believe rumours circulating on social media or resort to panic buying. Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), the nation's largest oil firm, said "there is no shortage of petrol or diesel", adding that its outlets are "well-stocked and fully operational". It cautioned that rumours "can create unnecessary concern and disrupt normal supply patterns" and urged citizens to "avoid panic buying and rely only on verified information". Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) termed reports of fuel shortages in certain areas "completely unfounded", asserting that "there is no shortage of fuel across the nation". The company said India is a net exporter of petrol and diesel and has "adequate stocks of crude oil, petrol, diesel and ATF", with supply chains operating "smoothly without any disruption". It added that it remains "fully operational and committed to ensuring uninterrupted fuel supply". Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) also said there is "no shortage of petrol, diesel or LPG across the country", with supplies remaining stable and stocks adequate. It advised customers not to be misled by rumours or engage in panic buying, and to "continue with normal consumption patterns", adding that it is committed to ensuring "an uninterrupted and seamless fuel supply" across its network. While the war in West Asia has disrupted crude oil, LNG



It advised customers not to be misled by rumours or engage in panic buying, and to "continue with normal consumption patterns", adding that it is committed to ensuring "an uninterrupted and seamless fuel supply" across its network.

and LPG supply chains, India with its diversified sourcing has been able to secure enough supplies of crude oil (the raw material used to make fuels like petrol and diesel) from West Africa, Latin America and the US. The disruption in liquefied natural gas (LNG) due to India's largest supplier's facilities in Qatar being hit in the war, has led to prioritisation of the fuel to domestic users and CNG while some curtailment has been done for industrial users like fertilizer plants. LPG is the most impacted by the war as the country relied on imports to meet 60 per cent of its demand.

India-US defence ties in focus as Vikram Misri meets US war policy chief Colby

New Delhi (TSIT) Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri met US Under Secretary of War for Policy Elbridge A. Colby on the sidelines of the India-US Defence Policy Group meeting on Wednesday, underscoring renewed momentum in bilateral defence cooperation and strategic engagement between the two countries. The officials exchanged views on strengthening defence ties, enhancing regional security and further consolidating the broader strategic partnership. Colby, who arrived in India this week for high-level discussions with senior government officials, is engaging with New Delhi at a time of heightened global geopolitical tensions, especially amid the protracted West Asia crisis. The visit aims to advance objectives outlined by US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in their February 2025 joint statement, and to implement the Framework for the U.S.-India Major Defense Partnership.

Colby's visit, his first official trip to India in this capacity, was enthusiastically welcomed by United States Ambassador to India Sergio Gorr, who posted on social media that he looked forward to hosting the senior defence official. The discussions coincide with a period of intensified India-U.S. cooperation, as both countries navigate regional security challenges and seek to institutionalise defence collaboration, including joint exercises, technology partnerships and deeper policy coordination to address shared threats in the Indo-Pacific and beyond. In related remarks across policy forums in New Delhi, Colby has emphasised that the US views India as a key partner in maintaining a favourable balance of power in the Indo-Pacific, highlighting the need for pragmatic cooperation even amid differences on certain issues.

India rejects Pakistan remarks on Andrabi sentencing, calls out support for terror outfit

New Delhi (TSIT) India on Wednesday strongly rejected Pakistan's criticism of the sentencing of Kashmiri separatist leader Asiyah Andrabi, saying Islamabad had "no locus standi" to comment on India's internal judicial matters and accusing it of backing terrorism. Responding to media queries on Pakistan's statement, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said New Delhi "categorically rejects" the remarks issued in support of a banned terrorist organisation and its members. "Pakistan has no locus standi to comment on matters internal to India or its judicial processes. However, one is not surprised that a country, which has long been sponsoring terrorism, has come up with such a statement condoning violence and killing of innocent people," he said. The sharp response came a day after a Delhi court sentenced Andrabi, founder of the banned outfit Dukhtar-e-Millat, to life imprisonment under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. Her associates, Nahida Nasreen and



Fehmida Sofi, were awarded 30-year jail terms. The trio had been convicted in January in a case linked to anti-national activities, including promoting secessionist ideology and conspiring against the state. Prosecuted by the NIA, they were found guilty under multiple provisions of the IPC and anti-terror laws. Pakistan termed the verdict a "grave miscarriage of justice" and alleged suppression of fundamental rights in Jammu and Kashmir, urging international intervention. Rejecting the allegations, India said Pakistan should instead "introspect on the grave and systematic human rights violations it continues to perpetrate".

IRAN-ISRAEL WAR

Iranian military mocks Trump's claim of US-Iran negotiations

Tehran (TSIT) The Trump administration has offered a 15-point ceasefire plan to Iran, according to a person briefed on the contours of the plan but who was not authorised to speak publicly about it. The ceasefire plan was submitted to Iran by intermediaries from Pakistan, who have offered to host renewed negotiations between Washington and Tehran. The proposal comes as the US military is preparing to call up at least 1,000 more troops from the 82nd Airborne Division to supplement some 50,000 troops already in the region. The New York Times reported earlier on Tuesday

that the 15-point plan had been delivered to Iranian officials. The Pentagon is also in the process of deploying a pair of Marine Expeditionary Units that will add about 5,000 Marines and thousands of sailors to the region. Meanwhile, an Iranian military spokesperson mocked US attempts at a ceasefire deal on Wednesday, insisting that the Americans were only negotiating with themselves. Lt Col Ebrahim Zolfaghari, a spokesperson for the Iranian military's Khatam Al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, made the statement in a pre-recorded video aired on state television. Zolfaghari's statement came



shortly after the Trump administration sent a 15-point ceasefire plan to Iran through

Pakistan. "Our first and last word has been the same from day one, and it will stay that

way: Someone like us will never come to terms with someone like you," Zolfaghari said. "Not now, not ever." — with Agencies Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday briefed Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman about Islamabad's diplomatic efforts to de-escalate the tenuous West Asia situation. Sharif, in a statement on X, reiterated Pakistan's strong condemnation of the recent attacks on the Kingdom and reaffirmed Islamabad's unwavering solidarity and unequivocal support for Saudi Arabia in these challenging times. "I also briefed His Royal Highness on

Pakistan's diplomatic outreach efforts for regional peace and stability. We agreed to remain in close coordination," he said. Sharif said that during the call, he appreciated the Kingdom's restraint and, "I stressed the urgent need for de-escalation", and an end to hostilities. Dubai: At least 1,000 troops from the 82nd Airborne Division will be sent to the Mideast in the coming days, three people with knowledge of the plans told The Associated Press. The Pentagon is also in the process of deploying two Marine units that will add about 5,000 Marines and thousands of sailors to the region.

IndiGo appoints former Air India Express MD Alope Singh as CSO

NEW DELHI: InterGlobe Aviation Ltd., the operator of IndiGo, has named former Air India Express managing director Alope Singh as its chief strategy officer (CSO) as part of a wider leadership transition within the airline.

Singh is set to take over from April 6, when he will head long-term strategy and enterprise transformation.

The appointment comes as India's largest airline by market share undergoes a leadership transition.

Former chief executive Pieter Elbers stepped down earlier this month, which led to a reshuffle within the senior leadership team.

Singh will initially report to Rahul Bhatia, the managing director, before transitioning to the incoming chief executive once a successor is appointed.

The step indicates a structured approach to maintaining leadership continuity and enhancing strategic clarity during organisational shifts.

With more than 30 years in the aviation sector, Singh most recently served as managing director of Air India Express, overseeing operational enhancements and growth over a five-year period.

He has previously served in senior capacities at Air India and Oman Air, building experience across full-service and low-cost aviation segments.



The leadership changes come after a challenging phase for IndiGo, which faced one of the most significant disruptions in its two-decade history in late 2025. The airline has since stabilised operations and is now focused on long-term growth and efficiency.

Strengthening the strategy function reflects a shift toward centralised planning and execution led by transformation amid rising competition in both domestic and global markets.

IndiGo's efforts to maintain leadership continuity while sharpening strategic focus will be closely observed in the near term. In the absence of a new chief executive, Singh is set to play an important role in shaping what comes next.

As IndiGo reassesses its leadership and operational strategies, emphasis is likely to remain on global expansion tempered by cost discipline, an approach central to its business model.

WB elections: Abhishek starts campaign from Patharpratima; declares 5 pledges

KOLKATA: Trinamool Congress leader Abhishek Banerjee outlined five key welfare pledges as he began campaigning for the West Bengal Assembly polls on Tuesday from the South 24 Parganas district's Patharpratima, setting a target of winning the seat by a margin of more than 40,000 votes.

Canvassing for party candidate Samir Kumar Jana, the TMC national general secretary said the election would be an opportunity to "teach the BJP a lesson" and asserted his party would return to power in the state for a fourth consecutive term.

"The victory margin in Patharpratima must cross 40,000 this time," said the nephew of TMC supremo and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

In the 2021 Assembly polls, TMC won the seat by 22,134 votes. Jana has been representing the seat in the Assembly since 2011, when the TMC unseated the



CPI(M)-led Left Front in the state..

Highlighting the party's development record and future roadmap, Abhishek Banerjee, the Lok Sabha MP from Diamond Harbour, announced what he termed the TMC's "five pledges" if the party returns to power.

These include continuing the Lakshmi Bhandar scheme, providing financial assistance to women, ensuring pucca houses for

all under housing schemes, doorstep delivery of healthcare services, piped drinking water to every household even if the Centre withholds funds, and old-age pension for all senior citizens within five years.

He also said that if the TMC forms the government again, the state would introduce a Rs 30,000 crore agriculture budget aimed at strengthening rural livelihoods and boosting farmers' incomes.

Banerjee acknowledged concerns over healthcare services in Patharpratima and said the incumbent TMC's manifesto already included a commitment to taking healthcare to people's doorsteps and establishing 'Sebashray' facilities in every block.

Launching the campaign from Patharpratima, which falls under his Diamond Harbour Lok Sabha constituency, he said the campaign would conclude in Diamond Harbour ahead of the assembly polls.

Reiterating the TMC's frequent charge against the BJP-led Union government, Banerjee accused the Centre of withholding funds meant for several welfare schemes in West Bengal.

"The Centre has stopped funds for the rural housing scheme, the 100-day job programme, road projects, Sarva Shiksha Mission and drinking water schemes. De-

spite this, development work has continued," he said.

Banerjee claimed that development in Patharpratima over the past 15 years under the TMC dispensation was "10 times" what had been achieved between Independence and 2011.

He also said the demand for a bus terminus in Patharpratima would be examined through a survey and taken up if found feasible.

During the rally, Banerjee also referred to the controversy surrounding the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, alleging that anxiety over possible deletion of names had led to several deaths in the district.

"There is no value for human life for the BJP, but for us every life is precious," he said.

The rally witnessed heavy mobilisation of TMC workers in the area, with elaborate security arrangements and a helipad set up near the venue for Banerjee's arrival.

Rohini Bar calls for strike over police inaction after lawyer's kin shot dead

NEW DELHI: The Rohini Court Bar Association (RCBA) on Tuesday called for a strike on March 25 to protest police inaction after a brutal attack at an advocate's house, which resulted in his brother being shot dead.

On March 19, miscreants attacked the house of Advocate Pawan Bhardwaj, which resulted in his brother's death, while his father and nephew suffered bullet injuries.

The executive committee of RCBA noted that even though the incident had been captured on nearby CCTV cameras, police had not arrested a single person involved in the attack in the six days following the incident.

RCBA strongly condemned the attack and requested senior police officials to take immediate and proper action.

"Accordingly, it has been unanimously resolved that a Strike/Abstinance from Work is called for tomorrow, i.e., 25th March 2026 to show solidarity and brotherhood among the members of the fraternity," RCBA said in its notice, signed by President Rajiv Tehlan and Honorary Secretary Pardeep Khatri.

"All members are requested to support Advocate Pawan Bhardwaj and his family in this difficult time and to cooperate," they added.

They clarified that bail and stay matters will remain exempted from the strike.

They also requested the Principal District and Session Judge of North and North West districts, along with the judicial officers of the two districts, to cooperate and not pass any adverse order during the strike.

Kharge questions Govt on Energy crisis, Diplomacy after PM's West Asia statement

NEW DELHI: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday sharply criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent address in the Rajya Sabha, calling it "an exercise in obfuscation" and demanding answers to what he described as "three fundamental questions" on India's foreign policy, energy security and the safety of Indian maritime interests amid the ongoing West Asia conflict.

In a statement posted on X, Kharge said the Prime Minister's 20-minute speech failed to provide clarity at a time when the country is facing mounting challenges due to the conflict, which has now stretched beyond three weeks and triggered a global energy crisis.

"The 20-minute statement by Prime Minister Modi in the Rajya Sabha was, at best, an exercise in obfuscation," Kharge said, adding that the govern-

ment must explain whether India's long-standing strategic autonomy has been compromised. He alleged that the Prime Minister's "inconsistent and swinging diplomatic posture" had altered the balance of India's foreign policy, particularly after his recent engagement with Israel. "Why did the Prime Minister fail to take Parliament and the nation into confidence about this apparent shift, and what concrete steps have been taken to restore India's strategic autonomy?" he asked.

Raising concerns over maritime security, Kharge claimed that dozens of Indian-flagged vessels remain stranded in the Strait of Hormuz despite diplomatic outreach. "Nearly 37-40 Indian-flagged ships, carrying around 1,100 sailors, remain stranded... Why has India failed to secure safe passage for its own vessels?" he said, contrast-

ing the situation with what he described as smoother transit for countries such as China, Russia and Japan.

The Congress chief also questioned the government's claims of diversifying energy imports, a key point highlighted by Modi in Parliament. "If diversification has been achieved, why are citizens still facing shortages, long queues, black marketing, and sharp price rises across the country?" Kharge said, seeking detailed data on current suppliers of crude oil, LNG and LPG and the quantities being imported.

He warned that India is confronting a "deepening energy crisis" and criticised the government for what he termed inadequate preparedness. Referring to the Prime Minister likening the situation to the COVID-19 crisis, Kharge said, "The nation cannot forget the tragic suffer-



ing during the pandemic... Is the Prime Minister now suggesting that 140 crore Indians must once again fend for themselves?"

The remarks come a day after Modi addressed the Lok Sabha and reiterated the government's position on the West Asia conflict, emphasising diplomatic engagement, energy security

measures and evacuation efforts for Indian nationals. The government has maintained that it is in constant touch with key stakeholders, including Iran, Israel and the United States, to push for de-escalation and ensure safe shipping routes through the Strait of Hormuz, a critical artery for global energy supplies.

Administration issues strict directives, says no unrest to be tolerated during Bengal polls

KOLKATA: The state administration on Tuesday issued strict directives to all government departments, employees and officials in West Bengal, making it clear that "no unrest will be tolerated" during the upcoming Assembly elections.

The instructions were issued as part of the state and the Election Commission of India's coordinated efforts to ensure a free and peaceful electoral process.

The communication emphasised a zero-tolerance approach towards any disruption, and directed officials to strictly adhere to a six-point guideline aimed at maintaining law and order during the polls.

The directives call for a violence-free election, clearly stating that violence in any form will not



be tolerated. Authorities have also stressed ensuring a fear-free environment, where voters are not subjected to intimidation.

"No provocation will be allowed during the election process, and any attempt to disturb the atmosphere must be dealt with firmly," a

senior bureaucrat said.

Special emphasis has been laid on preventing electoral malpractices such as bogus voting, with officials asked to remain vigilant.

The guidelines also mandated measures to prohibit booth capturing, booth

jamming and any unlawful gathering at polling stations.

Additionally, stringent action has been mandated against any attempt to obstruct voters, including intimidation, preventing them from stepping out to vote or "source jamming".

"All such incidents must invite strict action in accordance with the law," the official said.

The administration has directed that these instructions be communicated to every government employee, with departments required to send compliance reports to a designated email ID.

Meanwhile, additional central forces are being deployed across the state to ensure there are no security lapses.

Influential Mizoram student group issues code of conduct for tourists

AIZAWL: Mizoram's apex student body, the Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP), on Tuesday issued an advisory for tourists, emphasising the need for cultural sensitivity and social etiquette as visitor numbers in the state continue to climb.

In a statement, the influential student body underscored that while Mizoram remains a welcoming destination, visitors must prioritise respect for the Mizo way of life.

The advisory covers digital content creation, the protection of vulnerable groups, and strict adherence to legal entry requirements.

Expressing specific concern regarding social media creators, the MZP has cautioned non-locals against producing digital material that could "malign the Mizo people, their religion, or their society."

The guidelines explicitly forbid taking photographs or videos of private residences and churches with-

out prior permission.

Furthermore, tourists are requested to avoid "exaggerated or inappropriate" behaviour in public spaces and to portray the community accurately rather than in a misleading light.

The MZP stated it "strongly disapproves" of the unauthorised filming of women and children, citing concerns over public misconceptions.

The organisation also discouraged the practice of "random street interviews" by vloggers seeking information on Mizo heritage.

Instead, travellers are encouraged to consult "knowledgeable and authoritative sources" to ensure the dissemination of accurate historical and cultural data, the organisation said.

"Mizos are protective of their women and children," the statement said, adding that the local

community or legal authorities would take necessary action against any inappropriate behaviour.

The MZP noted that mutual respect is a "cornerstone of life in Mizoram" and stated it would not tolerate the disrespectful treatment of workers in the transport sector.

The organisation reminded all visitors of the mandatory Inner Line Permit (ILP) requirement for entry into Mizoram.

The student group said that while it supports the government's tourism initiatives, the people's hospitality should not be mistaken for weakness, and local cultural boundaries must remain respected.

Mizoram is steadily emerging as the fastest-growing tourist destination in the Northeast, catalysed by the railway connectivity and a surge in high-value infrastructure investments, Governor VK Singh had said in the assembly last month.

Seat-sharing talks with smaller parties in final stages, says AIADMK chief

CHENNAI: AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami on Tuesday said seat-sharing talks with allied parties like TMC(M) and IJK were nearing completion. Releasing the party's poll manifesto for the April 23 Assembly elections, Palaniswami told reporters: "Seat sharing talks with smaller parties are in the final stages. Negotiations are going on with Tamil Maanila Congress-Moopanar, Puratchi Bharatham party and IJK. We will announce it in a day or two." Following Monday's announcement regarding major NDA partners such as BJP and PMK, he said, "We will announce specific constituencies for the parties shortly."

India must strengthen cyber, electronic warfare capabilities to counter threats: Arunachal guv

ITANAGAR: Arunachal Pradesh Governor KT Parnaik on Tuesday said India must strengthen cyber, space and electronic warfare capabilities to effectively counter any potential threats from neighbouring countries.

Addressing a two-day seminar at Likabali Military Station in Lower Siang district on March 23 and 24, he stressed that faster decision-making, unified command structures and improved logistics are crucial for rapid mobilisation of forces and coordinated operations.

Highlighting the

changing nature of conflicts, he said India needs to strengthen capabilities in cyber defence, satellite surveillance, electronic warfare and AI-enabled intelligence systems.

"Enhancing institutions such as the Defence Cyber Agency and the Defence Space Agency would help secure communications, disrupt adversary networks and maintain information dominance," he added.

Sharing his experience of more than four decades in the armed forces, the governor said strategic cooperation with part-

ners such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue strengthens deterrence and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

"Joint exercises, intelligence sharing and co-ordinated maritime presence improve collective preparedness and send a clear signal against unilateral aggression," he said, adding that strong military readiness, technological superiority and robust alliances will help build an effective deterrence framework to safeguard national interests.

Drawing from his ex-

tensive service along the northern borders from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh, including tensions in Bhutan, the governor said China invests heavily in cyber capabilities, recognising cyberspace as a key domain for both defensive and offensive operations.

He said the Chinese military also prioritises electronic warfare and spectrum dominance, employing electronic surveillance, jamming and countermeasures to disrupt adversaries while safeguarding its own communications.

Police bust interstate investment fraud racket, arrest 11 in New Delhi

NEW DELHI: Delhi Police has busted an alleged interstate investment fraud racket operating from Delhi and Mumbai by arresting 11 accused involved in duping victims on the pretext of high returns, an officer said today. According to police, the case came to light after a 60-year-old man was allegedly cheated of Rs 22.67 lakh through an online investment scam.

"An e-FIR was registered on November 21, 2025, after the victim reported being lured via a social media advertisement that misused a minister's speech to promote AI-based trading," said Amit Goel, Deputy Commissioner of Police (South-west).

The victim was initially

persuaded to register on a platform and was subsequently contacted by fraudsters posing as investment advisors, the officer said.

Adding to his statement further, he said that the victim was convinced to invest funds in the name of a private firm before cutting off all communication.

"A special team tracked the money trail and analysed digital evidence, leading to the identification of a syndicate operating from Rohini and Netaji Subhash Place in Delhi," the officer mentioned.

While probing in this case, raids were conducted at both the locations that resulted in the arrest of five accused who were found

running a front office to open and operate mule bank accounts.

Further investigation subsequently revealed a larger network with links to Mumbai.

"The cheated amount was routed through multiple bank accounts before reaching a second-layer account in Goregaon East," the officer said.

Subsequent raids were conducted in Rajasthan which led to the arrest of four more accused involved in this case.

Police said the racket facilitated cyber fraudsters, allegedly based in Cambodia, by providing them with bank accounts to route illegal funds.

Mangaluru: Relief for hotels as commercial LPG cylinder distribution resumes



Mangaluru, Mar 25: In a major relief to the hospitality sector, the distribution of commercial LPG cylinders has resumed in the city. The supply had been severely hit following the conflict in Iran, leaving hoteliers struggling to sustain operations. Following a directive from the union government to supply at least 50% of the required commercial cylinders to hotels, public sector oil companies have intensified their distribution efforts. Several hotels in

the city have already started receiving the much-awaited stock.

Strict guidelines for supply

The distribution, however, comes with a set of stringent regulations. Dealers are required to submit documentation to the oil companies detailing the number of commercial cylinders a hotel has procured over the past three months. Based on this historical data and the current demand, the companies have initiated partial

supply. A local dealer confirmed that supplies have started trickling in since Monday.

The government directive specifies that hotels can currently be supplied with 50% of the average volume they consumed over the last two months. While the full 50% quota has not yet reached all establishments, hoteliers expressed relief that the complete halt in supply has finally ended.

Shipment arrivals at New Mangaluru Port

The supply chain is expected to stabilize further as shipments have begun arriving at the New Mangaluru Port. Two days ago, a vessel carrying 17,000 metric tonnes of LPG docked at the port, and more ships are expected to arrive within the next 48 hours. This influx of raw material is likely to smoothen the distribution of the 50% commercial gas quota.

Mangaluru: CA Shantharama Shetty re-elected as chairman of IRCS Dakshina Kannada unit

Mangaluru, Mar 25: CA Shantharama Shetty has been re-elected as the chairman of the Dakshina Kannada district unit of the Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) for the 2026-2029 term. In the elections held for the executive committee, Dr B Sachidananda Rai was elected as the vice-chairman, while Gurudatta Nayak took charge as the treasurer. The swearing-

in ceremony took place at the Dakshina Kannada deputy commissioner's office on Tuesday, where DC Darshan H V, who serves as the president of the district Red Cross unit, administered the oath to the newly elected board members and extended his best wishes. The newly elected committee includes CA Shantharama Shetty, Dr B Sachidananda Rai,

Gurudatta Nayak, Dr Satish Rao, Yatish Baikampady, Pushparaj Jain, Dr Sumana B, and P B Harish Rai. Notably, this marks CA Shantharama Shetty's fourth consecutive term as the chairman of the Dakshina Kannada district unit. He also currently serves as a member of the National Management Body of the Indian Red Cross Society in New Delhi.

51 Unsold Properties in Zones 1 & 2 to be Taken Over by BNCC – Pommala Sunil Kumar

Bengaluru : In connection with non-payment of property tax, 51 properties in Zones 1 and 2 of Bengaluru North City Corporation, with pending dues amounting to Rs.1,37,14,934, will be taken over by the Corporation as a final recovery measure, informed Commissioner Pommala Sunil Kumar.

As per the Greater Bengaluru Governance Act, 2025, action is being taken under the Property Tax Assessment, Collection and Management Rules, 2024 in cases of non-payment.

Accordingly, show-cause notices and demand notices have been issued to defaulters, and their details have been published on the Corporation's official website. Repeated intimation has also been given through SMS and by affix-



ing notices at the respective property locations.

Despite providing sufficient opportunities, the defaulting properties were subjected to distress sale (auction) as per law. Auctions were conducted on 27.02.2026, 06.03.2026, and 13.03.2026. As a final step, the 51 properties that remained unsold in these auctions will now be taken over by the Corporation.

The properties will be deemed as sold to the Corporation at a notified value (in line with guideline value). From this amount, all pending prop-

erty tax dues, penalties, interest, and administrative expenses will be fully recovered.

Any remaining balance, after adjusting the dues, will be refunded to the property owners through bank transfer, ensuring transparency and fairness. The properties will then be transferred to the Corporation free of encumbrances, and ownership records will be updated accordingly.

Appeal to the Public:

Citizens are urged to pay their property tax dues on time and avoid such stringent recovery measures. Bengaluru North City Corporation remains committed to transparent, lawful, and citizen-centric governance, and will continue to take strict action to ensure effective tax collection.

Kochi/Kerala

The only genuine vote for change is a vote for UDF said Congress President Kharge

Kozhikode : Every vote for BJP is a vote gifted to the LDF. The people of Kerala understand this clearly. The only genuine vote for change is a vote for UDF said Congress President Kharge.

Speaking at public rally he said that, Keralam is speaking in one voice - We want change, we want UDF. LDF's 10-year record of failure. The LDF has had two full terms: ten years, to transform Keralam. What do they have to show ? Keralam's debt is approaching Rs. 6 lakh crore. There is a burden of almost Rs. 1.7lakhs on every single Malayali he alleged.

LDF government didn't even spare the god. They stole gold from Babrimala Temple. What can one expect from such people? Keralam now has the highest drug cases in India. This is what LDF has done: They have made Keralam the drug capital of India.Keralam's public health sector is in ruins: hospital infrastructure is crumbling, there are medicine, equipment and staffing shortages. LDF is destroying a health system that was once a global model.

LDF-BJP Conspiracy

People here say that there is a secret understanding between CPI(M) and BJP in Keralam and it has a name: Communist-JantaParty (CJP). Look at what NDA is doing here in Keralam, where they know they cannot win. BJP is fielding weak candidates specifically to help LDF. They are not trying to win, they are trying to help LDF win

Keralam & Kozhikode's Secular Soul

Keralam is the land of Sree Narayana Guru,Mahatma Ayyankali. Here, diverse communities have lived, worshipped, and thrived together for centuries. Kozhikode welcomed Arab merchants, Chinese traders, Portuguese explorers - people from all walks of life, all



communities,and made them all feel at home. Kozhikode has lived for more than 500 years with thespirit of true secularism. It is what Congresshas always stood for.

BJP does not understand Keralam:

it is alien to this land, alien to its history, alien to its values. I have spent my entire life fighting BJP's politics of hatred and division, and I will not let it take root in Keralam.

The LDF claims to be secular, but is a party that protects BJP's agenda. It is complicit.The true defenders of Keralam's secular fabric have always been, and will always be the UDF.

Today, that spirit is under threat from an LDF government and BJP nexus that has ignored Malabar for ten years, and their politics that sees diversity as a problem to be solved.

Malabar today faces fewer government jobs and inadequate healthcare. Kozhikode and the rest of North Kerala have been treated as an afterthought by the LDF and as a target of hate politics by the BJP.

This election is Kozhikode's

moment to say: we will not be ignored, and we will not be divided.

Kerala's Youth Deserves To Be the Focus Let me speak directly to the young people of Kozhikode & Keralam. You are talented, connected, ambitious. And you deserve a government that matches your ambition. LDF promised 40 lakh jobs - like Modi promised 2 crore jobs every year, instead gave historic unemployment - every third youth unemployed

There are only 'backdoor' appointments available in Kerala under the LDF Government. If you are close to LDF leadership and CM, there is a red carpet waiting for you - no matter the merit.

And now, the world outside is uncertain too: The Gulf, home to millions of Malayalis, is torn apart by war and instability. The bread and butter of Malayali families depended on is under threat.

To every youngster: this election is yours. You have the numbers to decide it. And you have the right to demand change.

I also know the football mania

Wodeyar Express to Halt at Ramanagar Following Centre's Approval

RAILWAYS CLEARS KEY REQUEST
RAISED BY UNION MINISTER H.D.
KUMARASWAMY



Railway Board has now approved the stoppage, with implementation scheduled from an early convenient date. The directive also calls for close monitoring of ticket sales and passenger usage at the station.

The move is expected to benefit a large number of daily commuters, students, and residents of Ramanagar and surrounding areas, strengthening last-mile connectivity between

Mysuru and Bengaluru, one of the state's busiest corridors.

Welcoming the decision, Union Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy stated, "the approval of a stoppage for the Wodeyar Express at Ramanagar addresses a long-pending public requirement. This will significantly improve connectivity for commuters and contribute to the region's socio-economic activity."

He further added, "I appreciate the prompt and considered response of the Hon'ble Railway Minister in addressing this request. Such coordinated efforts are essential to strengthening infrastructure and public service delivery." The Railway Board's order has been communicated to the General Manager (Operations) and concerned officials of South Western Railway, Hubballi, for immediate compliance. This development underscores the Centre's continued focus on improving rail infrastructure and responding to region-specific demands through coordinated policymaking and execution.

“Loan Burden Rising in Karnataka,” Says R. Ashoka, Slams State

Budget

Bengaluru : Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has pushed Karnataka into a situation where the government is forced to take new loans to repay old loans. This is a “Credit Budget,” said Opposition Leader R. Ashoka, criticising the government. Speaking in the Assembly after Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's reply during the Budget discussion, Ashoka said: “I have already called the Budget presented by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah a ‘Credit Budget.’ As the Chief Minister himself suggested, I studied it in depth. No matter how deeply I examined it, all I could see was loans everywhere. If I call him ‘Siddaramaiah the Loan King’ (S a R mayya), he may feel embarrassed. When Basavaraj Bommai was Chief Minister, he presented a Budget with surplus savings. Why did Siddaramaiah, who came after him, present a Budget with a fiscal deficit?” The Chief Minister claims he has taken loans only for development. He has borrowed Rs.1.32 lakh crore. Out of this, Rs.84,000 crore has been allocated for capital expenditure, while the remaining money is being spent on guarantees. Siddaramaiah changes everything as per his convenience. He claims he has released the entire amount earmarked for guarantees, but no one knows where the Rs.5,000 crore allocated for Gruha Lakshmi has gone. That money has not reached 1.26 lakh women. In the Food Department, Rs.657 crore meant for Annabhagya in 2025 has not been released, he alleged. Ashoka said that whenever any government presents a Budget, newspapers carry positive reports the next day.

Instructions to Inspect Roads, Drains and Footpaths Ahead of Monsoon: Dr. Rajendra K.V

Bengaluru : In view of the upcoming monsoon, Commissioner of the Bengaluru West City Corporation, Dr. Rajendra K.V., stated that a comprehensive inspection of roads, drains, and footpaths should be carried out and necessary precautionary measures should be taken in advance to prevent any inconvenience. A meeting was held with officials of the concerned department to review precautionary measures required ahead of the monsoon, road maintenance, upkeep of storm water drains, and the installation works related to GAIL and GAIL Gas pipelines. The Commissioner instructed officials to take strict and timely action in this regard. Measures to Prevent Water Stagnation:

He directed officials to take necessary preventive measures to ensure that no untoward incidents occur during the monsoon season. Proper



arrangements should be made so that rainwater flows smoothly without stagnation within the corporation limits, and special attention should be given to ensure that no area experiences flooding. Maintenance of SWD and Shoulder Drains: He instructed officials to remove silt and waste that obstruct the flow of water in SWDs and shoulder drains, ensuring smooth and uninterrupted water flow. Inspection of Footpaths:

Officials were directed to inspect the condition of footpaths and take necessary action, including laying stone desk where required, to ensure safe and convenient movement for pedestrians.

Ward-Level Inspections:

As part of monsoon preparedness, Assistant Engineers were instructed to conduct field inspections at the ward level and make necessary arrangements in advance.

Road Widening Measures: Officials were instructed to identify locations where required and undertake road widening works in the interest of the public. The works should be implemented effectively in coordination with the concerned departments.

GAIL and GAIL Gas Pipeline Works: The Commissioner directed that pipeline installation works of GAIL and GAIL Gas should be carried out strictly in accordance with prescribed conditions and regulations. He also instructed officials to coordinate with the concerned departments regarding road cutting and to clear pending matters related to GAIL Gas at the earliest. Chief Engineers Swayamprabha and Vishwanath, Superintendent Engineers, Executive Engineers of various divisions, Assistant Executive Engineers and other officials were present at the meeting.

EDITORIAL

A Northern Discomfort for Mamata Banerjee

There is a particular weather to political voyages: not the weather the meteorologist reads, but the climate that surrounds a leader as she steps from the capital, Kolkata, into places that hold both memory and mystery. Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's sudden pivot north after unfurling the Trinamool Congress manifesto in Kolkata last week felt like that kind of atmospheric change - as if the very air of West Bengal had shifted its axis, and she, who has long been mistress of the south (Central Bengal) and the city (Greater Kolkata region and the metropolis), was now testing the gusts of a different wind. There are journeys that are outward but inward at the same time - trains that are maps of the self, landscapes that reflect an inner composition. Banerjee's barnstorming of North Bengal over the past three days has a similar double vision. On the surface, it is a tautly strategic exercise: rallies in Maynaguri, Dabgram-Fulbari, Naxalbari; speeches on the grounds of Jabravita High School and Nandaprasad High School; logistics checked and rechecked by cops and administrators. Underneath, though, there is an old story being reread - of a leader known for populist intimacy, threading herself through markets and alleys, now reaching for constituencies that have long been resistant to her voice. Mamata Faces a Challenge From Saffron, Not Erstwhile 'Red Brigade' Historically, Naxalbari was the place where the CPI-ML had its genesis, hence the Naxalite movement. But that was decades ago, in the era of 1967 to 1969, when the Maoists under Charu Mazumdar and Kanu Sanyal had begun the peasant uprising. Mamata Banerjee, however, rushed to the erstwhile revolutionary zone not to face the gauntlet from the Red revolutionaries but to meet an electoral challenge from a different hue: the Saffron brigade. Numbers, of course, are blunt and crystalline companions to any political pilgrimage. In the last assembly round, the TMC's wounds in the north were visible not just in seats but in the geometry of votes: 23 seats out of 215 for Banerjee's TMC party, while the BJP pocketed 30 of 77 in that very region; a vote share where TMC's 44.53% faced the BJP's 42.27%, margins thin enough to be measured in gestures and grievances.

North Is a Different Mood If the map of Bengal is divided into quadrants of mood and memory, the north stands as a different country to which Mamata must now become an eligible immigrant: not only to be seen, but to be heard, recognised, forgiven, persuaded. There is a peculiar restlessness in Cooch Behar these days, as if a quiet tea-stall conversation has spilled into the high rooms of power. The TMC - long accustomed to the rhythms of Bengal's politics - now finds itself tugged in different directions, not by an external foe but by the uneasy strains of its own inside chorus. With the assembly elections approaching, dissatisfaction has seeped into the veins of the party in the district, making what was once a simple contest into something nettlier. Consider Khokon Mian, whose resignation reads less like a rupture and more like a small, telling admission of a larger unsettlement. Once a close companion of Rabindranath Ghosh - the district's steady hand for more than 20 years - Mian has moved across the aisle to the Congress Party. In such moments, allegiance shifts not because of one glaring betrayal but because the ground beneath many feet feels less sure. Ghosh himself, a former MLA and minister, has been quietly sidelined after the party declined to give him the Natabari ticket. His response was characteristically low-key: a retreat, a pause. "I am taking a break and am currently resting," he said. But the unease is not his alone. A cluster of senior figures - former ministers like Binay Krishna Barman and Jiten Barman, and Suchismita Deb Sharma, who leads the district's women's wing - have also found themselves without tickets. They have not staged loud rebellions; instead, their silence and absence from campaigning is conspicuous, a negative space on the political canvas that observers cannot help but notice.

Expensive fees of private schools, big claims and reality



(Advertisements Guarantee Success, But Results Matter—Are Parents Getting Value for Their Money?) In today's world, education is no longer just a means of acquiring knowledge, but has also become a booming business. From cities to small towns, the number of private schools is constantly increasing, and along with them, so are their promotional strategies. Attractive advertisements for schools are seen in newspapers, billboards, social media, and even at local events. Each school bills itself as "the best," "a future builder," and a "guarantee of success." But the real question is: do these claims match reality, or are they simply a way to exploit the expectations and emotions of parents? Today's parents are more aware than ever, but they are equally concerned about their children's future. They want their children to attend a good school, receive the best facilities, and progress in life. This thinking often leads them to spend beyond their means. Many families pay their children's fees by cutting back on their own needs, taking out loans, or working extra. They believe that attending an expensive school means a better education and guaranteed success. Private schools understand this psychology and exploit it to their fullest in their advertising. They prominently showcase their campuses, infrastructure, smart classrooms, air-conditioned facilities, sports activities, and other modern resources. They also make tall claims about success in competitive examinations such as medical, engineering, law, and defense services. Advertisements often present the achievements of a select few students as if they reflect the school's overall

performance. But when we examine these claims more closely, a different picture emerges. The reality is that the success rate in competitive exams is very low. Whether it's medical entrance exams, prestigious engineering exams, or exams related to law and defense services—the number of students who succeed is often limited. Sometimes, only a handful of students manage to pass these exams in an entire year. Therefore, it's natural to question whether the claims made by the school are true. It's also important to note that preparing for these competitive exams isn't possible solely through schooling. Most students seek out separate coaching institutes, where they are specifically prepared for these exams. They invest additional time, effort, and resources. Therefore, if a school takes full credit for these students' success, it could be misleading to parents. Board exam results are also a key measure of a school's quality. However, even here, it's often seen that very few students achieve 90 percent or higher. The number of students scoring above 95 percent is even lower. If a school claims to be a leading institution in its region, it's expected that its results will be at a similar level. However, this expectation often falls short. The issue of fees is the most sensitive aspect of this entire topic. Private school fees are constantly rising, and in many cases, they are beyond the financial reach of middle-class families. Beyond fees, there are numerous additional expenses—such as transportation, uniforms, books, annual fees, activity fees, etc. Overall, the cost of a child's education becomes quite substantial. It's important to understand that schools require funding to operate. Good teachers, modern facilities, security, and co-curricular activities all have an expense. But problems arise when there's a mismatch between fees and the quality of education. If a school charges high fees, it's not unreasonable to expect it to provide the same level of quality. Recognizing this problem, the government has enacted rules and regulations to regulate fees in many states. Fee regulation committees have been established to prevent

arbitrary fee hikes by schools. However, in practice, these regulations appear to have limited impact. Parents are often unaware of their rights and are hesitant to speak out. In this situation, the role of parents becomes extremely important. Instead of making decisions based solely on advertisements, they should seriously analyze the school's actual performance, the quality of the teachers, and past results. If possible, they should talk to other parents and learn about their experiences. It is essential to understand the difference between the school's claims and reality. Additionally, if parents feel that the school is not being transparent or making false claims, they should speak out collectively. Uniting forces and demanding answers from the school management, and filing a complaint with the relevant education authorities or board, if necessary, can be an effective step. This can not only resolve the problem but also prevent similar situations in the future. It's also important that we don't limit the definition of success solely to marks and competitive exams. Every child is unique, with varying interests and abilities. The goal of education should not be merely passing a single exam, but rather ensuring the child's overall development. A good school is one that helps children become self-reliant, confident, and responsible citizens. In today's times, it's crucial to understand that no school can guarantee success. School merely provides a platform from which a child begins their journey. Their success depends on their hard work, the guidance they receive, and the environment they are exposed to. Ultimately, education should be viewed as a service, not just a business. Schools have a responsibility to maintain transparency, be accountable to their claims, and maintain parental trust. Parents also have a responsibility to be informed, make informed decisions, and speak out when necessary. Only if balance and trust is maintained between these two parties, can we create an education system that can truly brighten the future of children, and not just remain an expensive affair.

How Minority Seats Could Decide Who Wins Kerala This Time



Kerala is once again on the cusp of a tightly fought electoral contest, with the ruling Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the opposition United Democratic Front (UDF) locked in a familiar battle, even as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) attempts to expand its footprint in a state where it has historically struggled. For decades, Kerala's politics followed a predictable rhythm. Since 1982, voters alternated between the LDF and UDF every five years, ensuring no government grew too comfortable in power. That pattern was dramatically broken in 2021 when the LDF, led by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, secured a second consecutive term. Now, as Vijayan completes a decade in office at the age of 80, the question is whether Kerala will revert to its instinct for change.

revived hopes of a comeback. After ten years out of power, the Congress-led alliance appears hungry. The LDF has long been considered the 'majority' party of Kerala that enjoys Hindu support, while the UDF enjoys minority backing. However, the BJP's rise in the state has come at the expense of the UDF, with the saffron party pulling some Hindu votes from the opposition bloc. The UDF has in its fold the IUML and the Kerala Congress, which respectively cater to 27% Muslims and 18% Christians.

Kerala's Electoral Geography To understand Kerala's electoral dynamics, one must look beyond statewide narratives and examine its zonal and demographic structure.

The state is broadly divided into three regions:

- North Kerala (48 seats): Muslim-heavy, with around 47% Muslim population.
- Central Kerala (53 seats): Christian-influenced, with about 28% Christian popula-

tion.

- South Kerala (39 seats): Predominantly Hindu, and the BJP's strongest zone.

As much as 63% of the Muslim population of the state resides in the North, while 56% of Christians reside in the Central zone.

A few key districts are also critical to the results:

- Three districts, which have more than 30% Muslim population - Kasargod, Kozhikode and Malappuram - account for 34 seats.
- Five districts - Ernakulam, Idduki, Kottayam, Pathnamthitta and Thrissur - have 33 seats, accounting for more than 30% Christian population.
- Five districts - Waynad, Malappuram, Ernakulam, Idduki, Kottayam - have 47 seats and make up for more than 50% minority population (Muslim + Christian)
- Nine districts - Kasargod, Kozhikode, Kannur, Palakkad, Thrissur, Alappuzha, Pathanamthitta, Kollam and Thiruvananthapuram - are Hindu-majority and account for about 93 seats. The

Congress is considered traditionally strong in the North zone. South has the highest Hindu population, and it's here that the BJP is the strongest, though it has also made some inroads in the Christian belt, winning the Thrissur Lok Sabha seat from the Central zone. In municipal corporations, it successfully installed its Mayor in Thiruvananthapuram.

How LDF Broke The Trend In 2021

In 2011, the UDF won the elections narrowly, bagging 72 of the 140 seats, while the LDF got 68. Of the 34 Muslim-dominated seats, the UDF won 20, while the LDF bagged 14. Of the 33 Christian-dominated seats, the UDF had won 22, while the LDF had won 11. And, of the 47 minority majority seats (what are minority majority seats), the UDF won 37 - a strike rate of 79% - while the LDF got just 10. This gave an edge to the UDF. In 2016, the LDF won the elections as the trend of alternate governments continued, getting 91 seats as against the UDF's 49.

Inside Iran's 'Leader-Proof' War Machine, Designed To Absorb Every Blow

On March 17, an Israeli airstrike killed Ali Larijani, the Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council and the man who Israeli reports termed the "de facto" leader of Iran since late 2025. On March 24, Iran replaced him with Mohammad Baqar Zolqadr. Zolqadr is a member of the Expediency Discernment Council (which reconciles disputes between Parliament and the Guardianship Council) and had earlier held the Secretaryship of that Council under Sadeq Larijani (Ali Larijani's brother) as Chairman. Larijani himself had been among the prominent faces of the Iranian response to US/Israeli attacks that began on February 28, and his formidable professional experience and philosophical scholarship are, by now, well-known. He served as Speaker in Parliament (2008-2020), as a member of the Expediency Discernment Council, and as Advisor to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei since 2020. But this article focuses on a different role.

■ Authoritarianism Is Just One Instrument Among Many Iran's system of government, a theocracy superimposed on a working democracy, has often been mistaken as relying solely on authoritarian hardline instruments in its domestic and foreign policies. But for Tehran's post-1979 rulers, authoritarianism has only ever been one instrument among many to serve one principal goal: preserving the Islamic Republic. Functionally, this has not meant a dogmatic hardline and conservative posture that is blind to popular resentment and disquiet; this would never work for a revolutionary government that replaced a monarchy on the back of national unrest. Rather, having learnt key lessons from the Shah era, the Iranian system found a way to let popular pressures find their own vents; for the elected institutions to oscillate between Reformists and Conservatives (Principlists). This is even as the overall system ensured that only those who ultimately proved their belief in preserving the system's fundamentals held office. A Club Of Advisors, Individuals Crucially, even as the Supreme Leader



is the highest political office in Iran, the Leader's choices are also strongly driven by which advisors/individuals are more influentially dominant at any given point, which has also meant a constant tussle between camps. Within this dialectical system, key actors have long performed a 'bridging role', whether by design or by chance, in determining Tehran's domestic and foreign policies. Rather than their formal positions, their strength is drawn from proximity to the Supreme Leader and the support they command within sections of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (Sepah-e-Pasdaran) as veterans of the force. Such actors display their unquestionable faith in the broader Islamic Republic's governing system and are affiliated with conservative camps, but also adopt pragmatic positions on specific issues. For Iran's Principlists, such 'pragmatic conservatives' are also important to undercut Reformist politics.

■ Ali Larijani And Who He Competed With Ali Ardashir Larijani was one such actor, commanding support from a significant section of the Sepah and competing for influence with conserva-

tives Mohsen Rezaei, Mohammad Ghalibaf, and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (each of whom have their own bases in the IRGC). Except Ahmadinejad, the other three have all reflected their own distinctive brands of pragmatic politics, with all four having engaged in significant fraternal political fights across the 2000s and 2010s. This has often caused the Leader's intervention to re-arrange their formal positions and has occasionally also caused public spats between these individuals and formal state institutions. In 2009, for instance, Larijani launched a public tirade against the powerful Guardian Council as well as the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, an organisation he formerly headed. In that year of unprecedented domestic political crisis due to widespread electoral fraud - triggering demonstrations termed the 'Green Movement' - Larijani maintained "that insofar as enough people believed the election was fraudulent that their opinion should be respected". This was even as the Supreme Leader categorically backed Ahmadinejad's election victory over Reformist candidate Mir Hussein Mousavi, amidst a harsh clampdown on protesters. Larijani's

approach to the Green Movement was a textbook example of his bridging role as a pragmatic conservative. For anyone else, it would arguably be political suicide. There are numerous such examples of positions that a hardliner would not have been expected to otherwise adopt.

■ A 'Bridge' Himself? That his proximity to the Leader grew over the years instead of diminishing is testimony to Larijani's relationship with Khamenei as well as with the informal structures of power within the Islamic Republic. Larijani's record of crafting and improving the Republic's internal security strategy (with stronger clampdowns on dissent) as well as his experience in guiding strategic choices (such as by over-seeing nuclear negotiations during his first SNSC Secretariat term; 2005-07) also enhanced his significance. Consequently, by late 2025, Larijani was formally re-appointed as SNSC Secretary and authorised to lead the crackdown on massive protests that shook Iran in late December and early January (and which prompted Trump's publicly stated interest in attacking Iran). By March, just as the Leader had turned to him earlier to tackle internal threats in peacetime, the system turned to him for tackling external threats in wartime, post-Khamenei's death. Formally, Iran is presently governed by the Interim Leadership Council. But given that the system's composite units are facing a moment of deep external crisis, the influence of bridging actors has increased exponentially, with the system attributing them with decision-making and nodal authority.

■ After Larijani Ali Larijani's successor, Mohammad Zolqadr, is also an IRGC veteran but not a bridging actor of Larijani's ilk. However, his appointment is proof that Iran's wartime posture is showing significant continuity, without large-scale changes. In 2002, as the US prepared to invade Iraq, Zolqadr had outlined with striking precision the strategy that Iran is presently following in the current war.

Iran rejects US peace plan as 'excessive' and issues five conditions to end war, state media reports

US House of Representatives Speaker Mike Johnson says the United States is "wrapping up" its war with Iran. "I think we're wrapping up Operation Epic Fury. That's what I think. And I think it'll be done in short order and that'll be right on schedule," Johnson tells US media in Washington DC. His comments come after US President Donald Trump said his administration was talking to the "right people" in Iran who wanted to "make a deal". Iran has since rejected a peace plan sent by the US, labelling it as "excessive". After days of questions, the Pentagon has now officially confirmed the deployment of some ground troops to the region. In a statement to the BBC, a spokesperson said some elements of the 82nd Airborne Division headquarters, some "division enablers" and the 1st Brigade Combat Team will be deploying to the Middle East. For security reasons, the spokesperson declined to give further details. The make-up of these units tells us a lot about



what capabilities are being brought in for possible use in the conflict. Based in North Carolina, the 82nd Airborne is seen as one of the military's top conventional combat units, with some elements always ready to deploy anywhere in the world within 18 hours. These troops are trained to parachute or helicopter into a target area and seize it. In the case of Iran, they could give the US an option to seize Kharg Island or other key territory.

The unit, however, is meant for mobility and lacks heavy equipment for sustained combat. The 1st Brigade Combat Team, or 1st BCT, is a New York-based part of the 10th Mountain Division and is fully equipped for sustained combat, or "full spectrum" operations in military terms. Iran's state broadcaster Press TV says, quoting a "senior political-security official", that Iran has rejected a US proposal aimed at ending the current

war. Press TV hasn't named the official, nor their rank or title, but reports the official says: "Iran will end the war when it decides to do so and when its own conditions are met." Iranian officials have repeatedly said they want a complete end to the war, not just a ceasefire. According to Press TV, the official outlined five conditions, including: A complete halt to "aggression and assassinations" by the enemy The establishment of

concrete mechanisms to ensure that the war is not reimposed on the Islamic Republic Guaranteed and clearly defined payment of war damages and reparations The conclusion of the war across all fronts and for all resistance groups involved throughout the region International recognition and guarantees regarding Iran's sovereign right to exercise authority over the Strait of Hormuz Press TV says Washington has been pursuing talks through various diplomatic channels, but Tehran sees the proposals as "excessive". White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt says there will be a briefing for reporters at the White House today, with questions about Iran expected to dominate. The briefing was not on the previously announced schedule, and it's unclear why it was added. Donald Trump has a busy schedule today, though we may only catch glimpses of him. Most of the president's events are closed to the press,

including his intelligence briefing and a series of policy meetings this afternoon. In the evening, Trump will make a short trip to nearby Union Station, Washington's main train terminal, for a National Republican Congressional Committee fundraiser. He's likely to make remarks there, and it would be surprising if he didn't at least mention Iran. While it's difficult to independently verify all figures, the death toll from the war in the Middle East appears to have surpassed 4,500. Here's a snapshot: Iran has suffered the heaviest losses, with US-based rights group HRANA estimating 3,291 deaths - including 1,455 civilians. In Lebanon, where Israel is carrying out strikes against Hezbollah, 1,072 people have been killed, according to the Lebanese health ministry. According to Iraqi authorities, at least 81 people have died in Iraq, mostly members of the Hashed al-Shaabi (Popular Mobilisation Forces, PMF), which has links to Iran.

Danish PM fails to secure majority in party's weakest election showing since 1903



Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen's Social Democrats won the most votes in Tuesday's Danish general election but slumped to its weakest performance since 1903, as her coalition bloc failed to secure a majority. With 21.9% of the vote, Frederiksen's party still has by far the most seats, but her left-wing grouping has fallen well short of the 90 seats needed to form a majority. The Social Democrats have been in power since 2019, and Frederiksen told cheering supporters she was "sorry that we did not get more votes". In a message of defi-

ance, she added: "There is nothing today that can make me sad that the Social Democrats have once again become the Danes' absolute favourite political party." The Social Democrats' main right-wing rival, the Liberal party Venstre, also had its worst showing for a century, with just 10.1%, falling behind the Green Left SF. Frederiksen still has a chance to stay in power for a third term, however Denmark is typically run by coalition governments, and so tough negotiations - which could take days or weeks - now loom. Twelve different political parties were on the ballot paper, and this tightly contested race has come right down to the wire. Claiming a total of 84 seats, the "red bloc" of left-wing parties have clinched a small lead over the "blue bloc" on the right, who have 77 seats combined. Both blocs have fallen short of the 90 seats that are needed for a majority in Denmark's 179-seat parliament.

Democrats flip Florida state seat that includes Trump's Mar-a-Lago home



Democrats are projected to win a special election for a Florida legislative district that includes Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago home in Palm Beach, marking another upset in the president's backyard. Democrat Emily Gregory, a first-time candidate, defeated Trump-backed Republican Jon Maples in a race for the open Florida District 87 state House seat. The result is a reversal from 2024, when a Republican won the district by 19 percentage points. Democrats have performed well in special elections during Trump's second term, and Gregory's victory could indicate momentum for the party heading into this year's congressional midterm elections. "When I started this nine months ago, I obviously thought it was possible," Gregory told MSNBC on Tuesday night. "I might have done some crazy calculus to decide that this was a flip opportunity, but it was," she later added. "And we did it. So my math worked." When asked about Trump being her constituent, Gregory said she didn't really think about it. "He's one of 115,000 registered voters in

District 87," she said. Ken Martin, the chair of the Democratic National Committee celebrated the victory on X, saying voters had "sent a message". "If Democrats can win in Trump's backyard, we sure as hell can win anywhere across the country. Onward to November!" Martin wrote. The Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee (DLCC), which helps Democrats in state level races, also celebrated the victory. Gregory's win "proves Republicans are vulnerable everywhere," DLCC President Heather Williams said in a statement. "If Mar-a-Lago and Tampa are vulnerable, imagine what's possible this November." Trump himself backed Maples, endorsing him in a Truth Social post and urging "great patriots" to vote in the special election. Republican Congressman Byron Donalds, who is now running for governor of Florida, filmed an endorsement with Maples urging voters to choose him. Democrats have flipped several state House seats in special elections since Trump took office at the beginning of 2025.

MSE completes the process of Appointment of Market Makers for Equity Segment



March 25, 2026, Mumbai — MSE to initiate the process of Deepening of Liquidity from April 1, 2026 MSE announces the successful completion of the appointment of Market Makers for its Equity Segment. This development is expected to strengthen market depth, support efficient price discovery, and enhance the

overall trading experience. Effective April 1, 2026, MSE will initiate liquidity enhancement measures as part of its continued efforts to deepen market participation and create a more vibrant trading ecosystem. These steps reflect MSE's ongoing commitment to fostering a transparent, efficient, and competitive marketplace for all stakeholders.

'There's no safety anymore': Palestinians warn of expanding West Bank settler violence

"This assault wasn't just meant to burn the houses but also to kill - to kill women and children," says Barhan Omar, standing in the charred ruins of his family's large villa, which Israeli settlers attacked on Sunday. "They came in big numbers. This was organised terrorism," he tells me, fighting back tears. "What's terrifying is that you're sitting in your house with your children, then suddenly you come under fire." The Palestinian bank manager says settlers shot at his home in Deir al-Hatab, near Nablus, as well as setting it alight, and that he and his children escaped only by hiding on their roof. Across the occupied West Bank, there has been a new spate of settler violence in recent days. During the rampage in Deir al-Hatab, at least 10 people were injured - most-



ly by thrown stones, with one man shot in the foot. This is a village that has not previously experienced such a major attack, unlike other parts of the West Bank. It followed the funeral of a young Israeli, Yehuda Sherman, at the nearby settlement of Elon Moreh, which was attended by hundreds of mourners and several leading Israeli politicians. The 18-year-old was killed when his all-ter-

rain vehicle was reportedly hit by a Palestinian in a pickup truck near the outpost where he lived. Settlers believe he was attacked, while Palestinians insist it was an accident. Already there had been a new surge in attacks by extremist settlers since the start of the Iran war. While world attention has been diverted to new regional conflicts, six Palestinians have been killed

by settlers, the UN says. In another shocking incident two weeks ago, residents of Khirbet Humsa in the northern Jordan Valley accused settlers of sexually assaulting a man and beating others as they ordered them off the land. Israeli police have since made seven arrests. It follows a trend seen during the Gaza war, triggered by the Hamas-led attacks on Israel in October 2023; there was a sharp acceleration in settler violence and settlement growth fast-tracked by the Israeli government. Last year set a record for the most extensive expansion of settlements and planning approvals since the UN began its monitoring. All settlements are seen as illegal under international law. Outposts are set up without Israeli government approval.

GHANA DEMANDS COMPENSATION FOR SLAVERY IN LANDMARK UN VOTE

Slavery was the "most horrendous crime that took place in the history of mankind", Ghana's foreign minister has told the BBC ahead of a landmark vote at the UN General Assembly. Member states are set to vote on a resolution - led by Ghana - to recognise the transatlantic slave trade as "the gravest crime against humanity". The proposal urges UN member states to consider apologising for the slave trade and contributing to a reparations fund. The resolution is likely to face resistance, as countries like the UK have long rejected paying reparations, saying today's institutions cannot be held

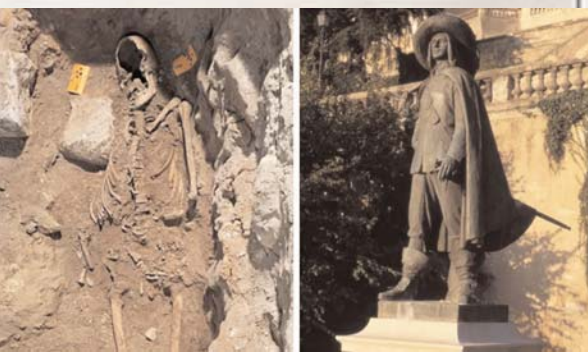


responsible for past wrongs. But the proposal's advocates, which include the African Union and the Caribbean Community, say it is a step towards healing and justice. Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa, Ghana's foreign minister, told the BBC's

Newsday programme: "We are demanding compensation - and let us be clear, African leaders are not asking for money for themselves. We want justice for the victims and causes to be supported, educational and endowment funds, skills training funds." The

campaign for reparations has gained significant momentum in recent years - "reparatory justice" was the African Union's official theme for 2025 and Commonwealth leaders have jointly called for dialogue on the matter. Ablakwa also said that, with the resolution, Ghana was not ranking its pain above anyone else's, but simply documenting a historical fact. Between 1500 and 1800, around 12-15 million people were captured in Africa and taken to the Americas where they were forced to work as slaves. It is estimated that over two million people died on the journey.

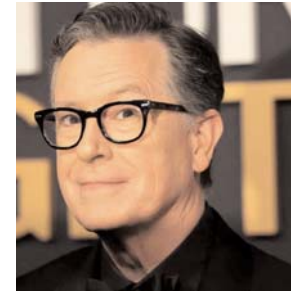
Musketeer d'Artagnan's remains believed found under Dutch church



More than 350 years after the death of legendary French musketeer d'Artagnan, remains have been found under the floor of a Dutch church that may well have been his. Jos Valke, who is deacon at St Peter and Paul Church in Maastricht, helped unearth the skeleton and is 99% certain that the remains belong to Charles de Batz de Castelmor, a close aide to France's Sun King Louis XIV who was known as Count d'Artagnan. D'Artagnan was killed during the Siege of Maastricht in 1673, but later immortalised in the adventure stories of Alexandre Dumas as a friend of the Three Musketeers. His remains were long rumoured to have been buried in the church but no evidence has been found until now. Deacon Valke told the BBC that nobody had dug under the floor until now, but as a few tiles had been broken it was decided to have a look. They first found a wall and took out a brush to dig further. At this point an archaeologist was called, who discovered the skeleton beneath where the altar table had stood 200

years ago. "We became quite silent when we found the first bone," he said, adding that there were several pointers indicating that the skeleton belonged to the Sun King's right-hand man. "He was buried on sacred ground below where the altar was; we found the bullet that put an end to his life and we found a coin from 1660 in his grave, and it was from the bishop who attended Mass for the Roi Soleil." The archaeologist who took part in the excavation is more cautious. "I'm a scientist, but my expectations are high," Wim Dijkman told regional public broadcaster Omroep Limburg, adding that he preferred to wait for DNA confirmation of the skeleton's identity. A sample has been taken from the remains and is currently being analysed in Germany, while some of the bones have been taken to the Dutch city of Deventer to assess the skeleton's age, where it is from and whether it is male or female. "I've already been researching d'Artagnan's grave for 28 years. This could be the highlight of my career," said Dijkman.

TALK SHOW HOST STEPHEN COLBERT TO WRITE NEW LORD OF THE RINGS FILM



US TV host Stephen Colbert has announced his next move after his late-night talk show ends - co-writing a new Lord of the Rings film. Colbert, who is well-known to be a JRR Tolkien superfan, will adapt an early section of the first Lord of the Rings novel, The Fellowship of the Ring, with his son, screenwriter Peter McGee. In a clip of a call with director Peter Jackson,

Colbert said it would "be its own story that could fit into the larger story", and remain "completely faithful to the books while also being completely faithful to the movies that you guys had already made". TV network CBS announced the cancellation of Colbert's late-night show last summer, and it will end in May after 33 years. Colbert said he came up with the idea for the film, reportedly titled The Lord of the Rings: Shadow of the Past, but "did not think I would have the time" to work on it. "As much as I love it, I knew I couldn't do that [film] and do the show at the same time. But it turns out I'm going to be free starting this summer.



Estonia and Latvia say territories hit by stray Ukrainian drones

CSK's New Replacement Recruit To Miss Three Weeks Of IPL 2026

AGENCY
Mumbai: Five-time champions Chennai Super Kings (CSK) have named speedster Spencer Johnson as a replacement for the injured Nathan Ellis for the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026. Johnson will join CSK for Rs 1.5 crore as a replacement for Ellis, who has been ruled out of the tournament due to a hamstring injury. Johnson, who has played 13 international games (5 ODIs and 8 T20Is) for Australia and has 18 international wickets to his name, has previously represented the Gujarat Titans (GT) and the Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) in the IPL. However, Johnson will not be available for the first three weeks of IPL 2026. The IPL starts on March 28. "He is set to join the squad between April 21-23," CSK wrote in a post on X. Having developed a reputation as one of the finest



bowlers in the T20 circuit, particularly for his exceptional death-overs skills, Nathan Ellis' absence will undoubtedly dent CSK's title chances. "Chennai

Super Kings (CSK) have picked a player replacement for injured Nathan Ellis for the upcoming TATA Indian Premier League (IPL). Spencer

Johnson will join CSK for INR 1.5 crore as a replacement for Ellis. Johnson, who has played 13 international games - 5 ODIs and 8 T20Is - for Australia and

has 18 international wickets against his name, has previously represented Gujarat Titans (GT) and Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) in IPL," the IPL's official statement read. With Ellis out of the squad, the pace options left for CSK apart from Johnson are all-rounders Jamie Overton and Shivam Dube, New Zealand's Zak Foulkes, uncapped Indian pacers Gurjanpreet Singh and Mukesh Chaudhary, and New Zealand stalwart Matt Henry. Henry looks set to lead the Super Kings' pace attack, but CSK do not have a proven death-overs specialist in their squad. Playing for the three-time IPL champions KKR last season, Johnson featured in only four games and took one wicket, with best figures of 1/42. CSK will start their season on March 30 against the inaugural champions Rajasthan Royals in Guwahati.

FLOORED BY IPL MEMES, ANANYA BIRLA SHARES FAN POSTS ON HER MEET WITH SHUBMAN GILL

Entrepreneur and singer Ananya Birla recently found herself at the centre of light-hearted social media chatter following a meeting with Gujarat Titans captain Shubman Gill. The encounter took place during a promotional event held in anticipation of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 season. During the exchange, Gill presented Birla with a signed jersey-a gesture that immediately captured the attention of fans and ignited a digital frenzy. What followed was a barrage of memes and humorous posts that transformed a standard corporate moment into a viral sensation. Fans showcased their wit by exaggerating the camaraderie between the two, cleverly blending cricket-centric humour with witty references. Rather than shying away from the spotlight, Birla appeared thoroughly amused by the creativity of the online community, even resharing several of the most inventive memes on her own



social media accounts. She admitted to being floored by the sheer ingenuity of the reactions, which added a playful twist to what was originally a formal business engagement. The partnership holds significant weight behind the scenes, as Birla Estates has stepped on board as the principal sponsor for the Gujarat Titans for the 2026 season. This intersection of Gill's rising stature in international cricket and Birla's prominent business and musical career perfectly

illustrates the evolving landscape of Indian entertainment. The IPL is increasingly viewed as a premier entertainment property rather than a purely sporting platform. As a result, the overlaps between sport, celebrity culture, and corporate branding become more seamless with every passing season. This particular meeting, amplified by the power of meme culture, highlights how the league continues to fuel massive digital conversations.

Shubman Gill's Banter Targetting Ashish Nehra For Blasting Teammates Over Dropped Catches

After missing the T20 World Cup, Shubman Gill will have a point to prove in IPL 2026, starting March 28. The Gujarat Titans captain has emphasised clarity and composure in leadership as the team prepares for the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026. Speaking at a recent Gujarat Titans event in Ahmedabad, Gill highlighted the importance of staying true to oneself and maintaining calm in pressure situations. "I think I'm just being myself, and the calmness comes from a sense of belief and security that I have within my group and in my own game," Gill said. He added, "Staying calm in any situation gives you an eagle-eye view - you're able to look beyond the moment, see the bigger picture, and have a much clearer, long-term



vision." However, he does not want the GT fast bowlers to be calm. "I want them to be quite like how Ashu Pa (GT coach Ashish Nehra) was. I keep getting reels where Ashu Pa is acknowledging some of the dropped catches," he said cheekily. The video Gill is referring to is years old, where left-arm pacer Ashish Nehra can be

seen giving a piece of his mind to his own Indian teammates for dropping catches. Gujarat Titans have been among the most consistent teams in the IPL since their debut, including a title-winning first season and a runners-up finish in 2023. Building on this foundation, Gill's approach reflects continuity in leadership, with a

focus on clarity, confidence, and trust within the group. Gujarat Titans' Shubharambh 2026, a landmark event, brought together players, leadership, partners, and fans - marking the start of a new season while reflecting on the franchise's journey and growth over the years. Providing further insight into the team's preparation, Gujarat Titans' Director of Cricket Vikram Solanki highlighted the importance of continuity and stability in building the squad. "As far as this season is concerned and putting a squad together, we had a really good year last year. We just fell at the final hurdle. We made very small changes at the auction; it just needed a little bit of adjustment," Solanki said.

Yograj Singh Furious With Ravichandran Ashwin Over Arjun Tendulkar, IPL Comment: "Whoever He Is"

Arjun Tendulkar has moved to the Lucknow Super Giants ahead of IPL 2026 after spending three seasons with the Mumbai Indians. Arjun, son of India great Sachin Tendulkar, plies his trade for Goa in domestic cricket and is an all-rounder. He took three wickets in IPL 2023 in four matches for the five-time champions Mumbai Indians. He did not take any wicket in the only match he played in IPL 2024. At the IPL 2026 auction, Lucknow Super Giants picked him up for Rs 30 lakh. India spin great Ravichandran Ashwin, however, opined that Arjun will not get a chance in the LSG playing XI as the side already has quite a few top Indian pacers. "Arjun Tendulkar khelega hi nahi (Arjun Tendulkar won't play at all),



and let's not even go there. I think it is very difficult because there are Mayank Yadav, Mohsin Khan, Avesh Khan, and Mohammad Shami in this lineup. There are so many fast bowlers. How will he play? I don't think he makes any case unless and until there are a lot of injuries," Ashwin said

on his YouTube channel. Ashwin's statement was not taken well by Yograj Singh, former India player and father of Yuvraj Singh. Yograj had briefly coached Arjun in the past. "He is talking bullshit. This guy Ashwin, whoever he is. He should know what to talk about somebody. Somebody's

sitting on the television and talking, 'Oh, he can't do this, he can't do that.' Arey tum kya ho bhai (Who are you? What are you?)" Yograj said on InsideSport. "When cricketers talk like this... He is Sachin Tendulkar's son, that is a different story. When he was here, I told Yuvi that all of you are concentrating on the wrong thing regarding Arjun Tendulkar. He is not a bowler; he had a spine problem, and his hands come down from 45 degrees. When he was here, I was talking to him. I told his coach as well when he was with the Goa team. When he (Arjun) was batting, this guy was hitting sixes and boundaries. I told the coach, 'What the hell are you people doing? If you can't do it, send him to me,'" he added.

LACK OF TALENT & SCARRED BY PAST - ITALY'S 'TORTUROUS' CAMPAIGN

When Fabio Cannavaro hoisted the World Cup trophy into the air at the Olympiastadion in July 2006, it was supposed to signal the beginning of a new era for Italian football. The Azzurri had defeated a star-studded France team - including Zinedine Zidane and Thierry Henry - on penalties in a remarkable final in Berlin, Germany, to become only the second nation to win the World Cup for a fourth time. But almost two decades on, the triumph is a stark contrast to Italy's current fortunes. After failing to qualify for Russia 2018 and Qatar 2022, Italy are on the brink of becoming the first former winners to miss out on three consecutive tournaments. It must be mentioned they did beat England to win



the Euros in the midst of that in 2020 but that has proved an outlier. Italy must win two play-off games, starting with a home semi-final against Northern Ireland on Thursday, to reach this summer's World Cup. To describe Italy's qualifying campaign as anything other than eventful would be quite the understatement. The campaign was only one

match old when Luciano Spalletti was dismissed from his position as manager after a 3-0 defeat by Norway in June. Although the 66-year-old remained in charge for a further three days - overseeing a win against Moldova - his departure was an early indicator of the challenges the four-time World champions would encounter.

"Not Doing Stupid Arrival Videos": Jason Gillespie Tells PSL Franchise On Camera

Former Pakistan Test head coach Jason Gillespie has returned to the country, this time as coach of Pakistan Super League (PSL) franchise Hyderabad Kingsmen. Drawing on lessons from his controversial stint with the national team, the former Australia pacer has made it clear that his new role will be "strictly business" from the outset. In a video circulating on social media, Gillespie refused to take part in the customary "arrival videos" at the team hotel, firmly stating his position. "I am not coming down. I have a lot of work to do. I'm not going to shoot those stupid arrival videos," Gillespie said in the clip. Despite his no-nonsense approach, Gillespie has expressed genuine enthusiasm about working with



Pakistani talent again. "I'm very excited to be part of the Kingsmen team in Hyderabad. Lots to look forward to and I can't wait to get started," he told ESPNcricinfo in January. Fallout With PCB Gillespie's decision to join a PSL franchise surprised many, given how abruptly his association with the Pakistan national team ended. He resigned as

Pakistan's red-ball coach just days before a two-Test series in South Africa, following a fallout with the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB). "I was coaching the Pakistan Test side. The PCB sacked our senior assistant coach with ZERO communication with me about it. As Head Coach, I found this situation completely unacceptable. There were a number of other issues that left me completely humiliated," Gillespie wrote on X (formerly Twitter) during a Q&A session. He had also criticised PCB chief Mohsin Naqvi for failing to attend a "Connection Camp" in person. While Gary Kirsten flew in from South Africa and Gillespie from Australia, Naqvi only joined virtually despite being based in Lahore.

'IPL Bigger Than Premier League': Sourav Ganguly In Awe Of Rajasthan Royals' Rs 15,000 Crore Sale



Legendary India captain Sourav Ganguly reflected on Rajasthan Royals (RR) becoming the costliest Indian Premier League (IPL) franchise, as they were bought for USD 1.63 billion (more than Rs 15,000 crore). Ganguly, who faced the very first ball of the inaugural IPL season in 2008, marvelled at the league's growth, comparing its current stature to powerhouse leagues in other sports like the Premier League and the NBA. Ganguly praised the fact that the IPL has expanded to such a sporting phenomenon despite being active for only two to three months of the year. "It's great news for the IPL. When it started in 2007, and as I've said before, I faced the first ball of the league in 2008 - RCB versus KKR. To see where the IPL has reached now is phenomenal," Ganguly said, in response to a question by NDTV. "It also shows how much the game has expanded. Some of the buyers are from the United States, and the interest in Indian cricket in that part of the world is

fantastic," he added. Ganguly compared the IPL to leagues like the NBA and the Premier League to highlight the extent of its growth. "I think it (IPL) is as big (as the NBA). The broadcast rights are as big as anywhere in the world. To put IPL in the same bracket - broadcast rights are at times bigger than an EPL game," Ganguly said. "The numbers involved are mind-boggling for a sports franchise that plays for just two-and-a-half to three months a year," he added. On Tuesday, a consortium led by US-based entrepreneur Kal Somani emerged as the winner in the bid to acquire Rajasthan Royals. The consortium reportedly acquired 100 per cent of the franchise at a valuation of USD 1.63 billion (Rs 15,286 crore). Somani is the founder of IntraEdge, Academician, and Truyo.AI. He is backed by American businessman Rob Walton, of the Walmart family, and the Hamp family, who own majority stakes in National Football League (NFL) side Detroit Lions.

SHIFFRIN WINS RECORD-EQUALLING SIXTH WORLD CUP

B Mikaela Shiffrin has won a record-equalling sixth overall women's World Cup title. Needing a top-15 finish in the final race of the season, the American was 11th in the giant slalom in Lillehammer, Norway. Shiffrin, who won her third Olympic title with slalom gold last month, is the most successful skier in World Cup history with 110 wins. Austrian Annemarie Moser-Proell won six World Cups from 1971 to 1979. "I'm really, really grateful to be in this position. It's really a big emotion," Shiffrin said. Shiffrin ended the season

with 1,386 points, 87 clear of Germany's Emma Aicher. Aicher needed to win in Lillehammer and hope Shiffrin finished outside the top 15, but finished 12th after completing her final run once the title had been decided. "It's quite emotional," said the American. "This thing sums up the whole season of work and fighting... I have to say to Emma that her skiing has been just outstanding and today it was just so cool to watch her." Canada's Valerie Grenier won the race, a combined 0.43 seconds clear of Norway's Mina Fuerst Holtmann and Austrian

Julia Scheib, who had already secured the giant slalom Crystal Globe. The final overall points tally was 1,410 for Shiffrin with Aicher 87 behind. The overall title is decided by points from all four disciplines, with Aicher an all-rounder while Shiffrin has not skied downhill for two years and competed in only a few of the super-Gs. The most successful skier in World Cup history with 110 wins has, however, won nine of 10 slaloms, the bedrock of her season, and taken the globe in that discipline for a record ninth time. She was also overall

World Cup champion in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2022 and 2023. The only other female skier to win six overall World Cup titles was Austrian Annemarie Moser-Proell, who won five in a row from 1971-75 and her sixth in 1979. On the men's side, Austrian Marcel Hirscher holds the outright record of eight. "I'm really, really grateful to be in this position now," said three-times Olympic champion Shiffrin, whose slalom gold medal at last month's Milano Cortina Games was another highlight of her year. "It's really a big emotion but I'm also grateful for the fight."



Rakasa Builds Buzz with Strong Trailer Impact and Global Release Momentum

Visually, the trailer lands with immediate impact, pulling you into a world shaped by torch-lit interiors, dense textures and towering fortress spaces that feel raw, lived-in and rooted in folklore. What begi vins with a sense of familiarity gradually opens into something far larger, as glimpses of action, a looming demonic presence and survival stakes start to take over. This shift is handled with clarity, allowing the grounded village setting and the expanding supernatural threat to coexist without losing grip. There's a constant sense of build, like something is closing in, and the background score drives that progression, moving from lighter, playful beats into a more intense, atmospheric surge that heightens the overall experience. And that momentum is clearly spilling beyond the screen. The title glimpse has crossed 1.9 million views, while the teaser has pushed past 3 million across platforms, reflecting a growing pull towards the film's world. The music has only amplified that momentum "Rapappa," "Padhe Padhe," and "Snake Dance" have each crossed the million mark, together shaping the soundtrack into a full-blown chartbuster. It's not just numbers stacking up; the film is steadily finding its space in conversations, playlists and repeat watches, building a sense of anticipation that's becoming hard to ignore. On the business front, Rakasa is gearing up for a



Highlights

- Visually, the trailer lands with immediate impact, pulling you into a world shaped by torch-lit interiors, dense textures and towering fortress spaces that feel raw, lived-in and rooted in folklore. What begi vins with a sense of familiarity gradually opens into something far larger, as glimpses of action, a looming demonic presence and survival stakes start to take over. This shift is handled with clarity, allowing the grounded village setting and the expanding supernatural threat to coexist without losing grip.

wide global release, backed by a strong distribution network across territories. The film's Telugu States theatrical rights have been acquired by Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Movie Makers, while overseas distribution is being handled by Atharvana Bhadrakali Pictures, planning a release across more than 350 screens in key international markets including the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe, Canada and Australia . Distribution

responsibilities for the North America and United Kingdom markets are being managed by Prathyangira Cinemas, ensuring a structured and extensive rollout. Overseas premieres are scheduled for April 2, 2026 , a day ahead of the worldwide release. Further strengthening the film's commercial ecosystem, the digital streaming rights have been acquired by Netflix, while the audio rights have been secured by

Saregama, one of India's leading music labels. Headlined by Sangeeth Shobhan, who has recently strengthened his connect with younger audiences through MAD and MAD Square, Rakasa places him in a role that moves beyond his familiar space into a more layered narrative setting. He is paired with Nayan Sarika, while the film features a vibrant ensemble including Vennela Kishore, Brahmaji, Tanikella Bharani, Ashish

Vidarthi, Getup Srinu, Sukwinder Singh, Annapurna , Anoopsingh Thakur, Ramana Bhargav, Vasu Inturi, Rohini (Jabardasth) and Rohan (#90's), bringing together a mix of performers that add depth and tonal balance to the film's world. Produced by Niharika Konidela and Umesh Kumar Bansal under Pink Elephant Pictures in collaboration with Zee Studios, Rakasa reflects Niharika's continued focus on backing content-driven cinema. Marking the feature directorial debut of Manasa Sharma, known for Oka Chinna Family Story and Bench Life, the film builds on a writing-led foundation, with Mahesh Uppala contributing as Additional Screenplay writer. The technical team includes music by Anudeep Dev, cinematography by Raju Edureolu and editing by Anwar Ali, with action choreography by Vijay. Production design by Ramanjaneyulu, along with art direction by Pulla Vishnu Vardhan and costumes by Sandhya Sabbavarapu, further shape the film's immersive folklore setting. With its visually mounted folklore world, rooted narrative core and humour that flows effortlessly within its storytelling, Rakasa continues to build strong momentum across both content and market fronts. Carrying a clear theatrical intent and growing anticipation, the film is set to arrive worldwide on April 3, 2026, positioning itself as a distinctive big-screen experience.

Barbarikudu The Sannaf Ghatotkacha Movie Grand Opening of Ram Laxman's Disciple Krishna as Indian Hero



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Movie Makers,
Renuka Ellamma
Creations banners T.
Barbarikudu is the latest
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the latest film under the
direction of Sivajhansi
Regala, produced by
Malleshwarudu, Anthati
Naresh Kumar and Anthati
Rajesh Kumar. Barbarikudu,
the most ambitious film, recently
celebrated a grand pooja. It
seems that this film is going
to open with the story of a
warrior from Mahabharata
Kurukshetra war. Sivajhansiregala,
who worked as an assistant
director for many films in the
Telugu film industry as a
disciple of famous music

director MM Keeravani's father Shiv Shakti Dutta, is making his directorial debut with this film. The story of a warrior from India's biggest epic Mahabharata is going to be screened to capture the hearts of Telugu people. In this regard, the passion of the director as well as the producers should be appreciated. Movies like this are not produced unless there is love and affection. In this regard, the producers of the film T. Malleshwarudu, Anthati Naresh Kumar and Anthati Rajesh Kumar were successful in the beginning. They are confident that the film Barbarikudu that they are making will definitely win the hearts of the audience. Many people know less about the history of Barbarikudu. The makers say that with this film,

everyone will know how great a warrior he is. Krishna Bharat, who choreographed fights for many super hit films and is the disciple of Ram Laxman and the son-in-law of stunt master Badri Master, is being introduced as the protagonist through this film. Along with him, Ravi Shankar, who convinced with his excellent voice and impressed as a villain on screen, is playing a prominent role in this film. Sameta Gandhi, Jabardast Chittibabu, Anand Bharti and others are acting along with him. Shyam K Naidu who has given good cinematography for many films is working as DOP for this film. Also, editor Karthik Srinivas, music director GM Satish, along with whom Bhanu, who has recently given super hit songs, is choreographing the master. The makers said that they will provide updates regarding the film soon.

'I stopped eating animal products,' says Samantha, gets trolled

Tollywood star Samantha Ruth Prabhu has once again found herself at the centre of online discussions, this time over her views on veganism. Known for embracing a plant-based lifestyle in recent years, the actress has often spoken about compassion, sustainability, and mindful living. Now, a video of Samantha is surfacing online in which she is seen explaining her decision to turn vegan. The clip is going viral, drawing mixed reactions from netizens. In the video, Samantha reflects on the idea of empathy and the contradictions in human behavior when it comes to animals. She says she loves her pet dog but once questioned why she continued consuming other animals for food. Calling it a matter of regaining empathy, the actress shared that this realization led her to completely give up animal products. Samantha said, "I love my dog Hash, but I choose to kill another animal for my lunch and my dinner because that animal is not my pet. So, this is why you can love your pet and choose to eat an animal in the afternoon and the night. But then you can love your family, but you can't love people who are suffering outside because it's it stems from that same thing, right? So I wanted my empathy back and that's when I decided that no I'm going to stop eating any kind of animal product." While some appreciated her perspective, several social media users were quick to criticise her remarks. A section of users pointed out the use of leather

products and animal-derived ingredients in fashion and cosmetics, questioning the consistency of such choices. One said, "Then stop using costly Leather Items and promoting them which are made up of animal skin. Don't wear such costly items. Buy an electric car." Others argued that eating non-vegetarian food is part of the natural ecosystem and should not be equated with cruelty in the same way as other industries. Another commented, "Will the dog do the same? ... No right ... That's how the ecosystem works ! ... Eating non-veg is not as cruel as killing animals for leather, beauty products and other products" "Makeup items do have animal ingredients , so..." one more netizen wrote. Despite the debate, Samantha continues to advocate for conscious living and often shares glimpses of her vegan lifestyle on social media. On the work front, she has an exciting lineup ahead, including the Telugu film Maa Inti

Bangaram, slated for release on May 15, 2026, which she is also producing. She will also be seen in the Netflix series Rakt Brahmand: The Bloody Kingdom, directed by Raj & DK.

The actress was last seen in Citadel: Honey Bunny. In the video, Samantha reflects on the idea of empathy and the contradictions in human behavior when it comes to animals

