

TO BOOK YOUR ADS CALL

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AS SONIA GANDHI ATTACKS CENTRE ON KHAMENEI, CRITICS CITE SADDAM EPISODE



GULF WAR JOLTS INDIA'S ENERGY LIFELINE AS LNG CUTS, SOARING FREIGHT AND \$100 OIL THREAT LOOM

New Delhi (TSIT) Indian firms that use LNG are gearing up for cuts in supplies and higher prices for natural gas, which runs their turbines, arc furnaces, smelters, and other heavy machinery besides being feed for fertiliser and petro-chemical companies.

CAUGHT BETWEEN CONFLICT AND COMPETITION: PV SINDHU'S HARROWING FEW DAYS



T20 WORLD CUP

IN BRIFS

Priyanka Gandhi highlights Sonia Gandhi's column criticising Govt's silence on Iran leader's killing



New Delhi (TSIT) Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vaidya on Tuesday drew attention to an editorial column written by Congress Parliamentary Party (CPP) Chairperson Sonia Gandhi, sharply criticising the union government's response to the reported killing of Iran's sitting head of state during ongoing diplomatic negotiations.

Indian operators resume flights to select West Asian cities

New Delhi (TSIT) Indian airline companies have announced the resumption of regular and special flights to select cities in West Asia starting Tuesday. Private carrier SpiceJet said it will operate one special flight each from Fujairah (United Arab Emirates) to Delhi and Kochi, and two special flights to Mumbai, on Tuesday and over the next few days.

CM REVANTH UNVEILS 99-DAY 'PRAJA PALANA PRAGATI PRANALIKA' ACTION PLAN



Hyderabad: Chief Minister A.Revathi Reddy on Tuesday outlined an ambitious 99-day action plan titled 'Praja Palana Pragati Pranalika' during a Collectors' Conference, calling for inclusive governance, technology-driven monitoring, and grassroots participation in development programmes across Telangana.

Chief Minister directed officials to ensure that ward members, sarpanches, municipal councillors, chairpersons, corporators, and mayors are made active partners in the 99-day programme. He instructed district administrations to conduct one-day training sessions at district headquarters to educate elected representatives about their duties and responsibilities and provide them with printed reference material.

He also directed that details of beneficiaries under various welfare schemes including new ration cards, fine rice distribution, Indiramma houses, free electricity up to 200 units, loan waivers, free bus travel for women, and 500 gas cylinders be publicly shared during gram and ward sabhas. District-level impact data must be presented transparently to the people.

colleges in the State. PHCs, CHCs, and other local health institutions should refer patients to these colleges, which are equipped with advanced technology, qualified doctors, and faculty.

He stressed the use of facial recognition technology for beneficiary verification across government schemes to ensure that only eligible persons receive benefits. Noting that facial authentication in Aasara pensions helped remove three lakh ineligible beneficiaries, he said technology must be leveraged effectively to prevent misuse.

To address road safety issues, a dedicated WhatsApp number should be provided for reporting potholes and accident-prone spots for prompt repairs. Strict action, including fines and cases, must be taken against illegal dumping of garbage and construction debris along ORR and service roads.

Details of working women's hostels, boys' and girls' hostels in cities and towns must be documented, with proper permissions and accountability

The Agriculture Department was instructed to conduct soil testing and provide timely data to farmers, guiding them on suitable crops based on soil conditions and market demand. Officials were told to simplify the urea app interface and demonstrate nano-urea benefits at the field level. Collectors must submit district-wise reports on crop diversification potential.

- KEY MILESTONES INCLUDE: APR 2 ▶ GRAM SABHA PROGRAMMES APR 16 ▶ MANDAL-LEVEL EVENTS MAY 2 ▶ CONSTITUENCY-LEVEL EVENTS MAY 22 ▶ DISTRICT-LEVEL PROGRAMMES JUN 2 ▶ STATE FORMATION DAY CELEBRATIONS

Five-Phase 99-Day Plan

The 99-day programme will be implemented from March 6 to June 12 in five phases, with the Planning Department acting as the nodal agency. The programme will cover 10 thematic areas including sanitation, health, road safety (Arrive Alive), welfare, child safety and anti-drug measures, farmer welfare, education, youth and sports, women's empowerment, and environment.

Preparatory meetings will be held in all erstwhile districts under the leadership of Ministers on March 6. Foundation stones and inaugurations of development works will be undertaken department-wise during the 99 days, with monitoring through a dedicated mobile application. Chief Minister emphasized that the initiative must translate into visible, measurable improvements in governance and public service delivery across Telangana.

PM Modi reaffirms solidarity with Qatar, Kuwait and Oman; calls for dialogue to restore regional stability

New Delhi (TSIT) Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday held separate telephonic conversations with the leaders of Qatar, Kuwait and Oman, reiterating India's strong condemnation of any violation of their sovereignty and territorial integrity and underscoring the urgent need for dialogue and diplomacy to restore peace in West Asia.

"We stand firmly in solidarity with Qatar and strongly condemn any violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity. We emphasized the urgent need to restore peace and stability in the region through dialogue and diplomacy," Modi said.

He also conveyed appreciation for the Qatari leadership's continued support and care for the Indian community residing in the country during what he described as a challenging period. In a separate outreach, Prime Minister Modi spoke with the Crown Prince of Kuwait, Sabah Al-Khaled



Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, reaffirming India's support for Kuwait.

"India condemns violation of Kuwait's sovereignty and territorial integrity and stands with its people in this difficult hour," the Prime Minister said. Both leaders underscored the importance of dialogue and diplomacy in restoring regional peace and stability. Modi also appreciated the Kuwaiti leadership's continued efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of the Indian community in Kuwait.

The Prime Minister also held a conversation with

Haitham bin Tarik, Sultan of Oman, during which the two leaders exchanged views on recent developments in West Asia. Modi condemned any violation of Oman's sovereignty and territorial integrity and emphasized that sustained diplomatic engagement remains essential for the earliest restoration of peace and stability in the region. He expressed deep appreciation for Oman's ongoing support to the Indian community living and working in the country. India has consistently advocated respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, while calling for the peaceful resolution of conflicts through dialogue and diplomatic channels.

The Gulf region is home to millions of Indian expatriates, and New Delhi maintains close political, economic and people-to-people ties with Qatar, Kuwait and Oman. Ensuring the safety and welfare of the Indian diaspora remains a key priority in India's engagements with these countries.

INDIA HAS AMPLE STOCKS OF CRUDE OIL, PETRO PRODUCTS TO TIDE OVER IRAN CRISIS

New Delhi (TSIT) : India is in a reasonably comfortable position as far as crude oil, LPG and LNG are concerned, with a stock of 25 days of reserve for crude and 25 days of products, including the quantity that is in transit on ships headed for the country's ports, according to government sources.

India imports over 85 per cent of its crude oil requirement, of which around 50 per cent is supplied by Middle Eastern countries through the Strait of Hormuz, flows from which has been disrupted following the Iran war.

However, India has diversified its oil sources by increasing imports from Africa, Russia, and the US and building resilience through strategic reserves. An official said that the country's oil marketing compa-



nies (Indian Oil, Bharat Petroleum and Hindustan Petroleum) have supplies for several weeks and continue to receive energy supplies from several routes. In addition, the government has directed the oil marketing companies not to export petroleum products so that the buffer stock is further enhanced. India has strengthened its energy security by diversifying its oil imports to countries outside the Gulf in the past few years, and a large volume of supplies does not come through the Strait of Hormuz now, a senior official said.

Total Lunar Eclipse observed in India, Blood Moon captivates skies



Bhopal/New Delhi (TIST): Skywatchers around the world witnessed a spectacular "total lunar eclipse", popularly known as a "Blood Moon" due to the Moon's striking reddish hue during totality. In India, the event was eagerly awaited as "Chandra Grahan", marking the first lunar eclipse of the year and coinciding with cultural significance, including preparations for festivals like Holi in some traditions. A lunar eclipse occurs when the Earth positions itself directly between the Sun and the Moon, casting its shadow across the lunar surface.

India's internet users cross 1.02 billion: TRAI



NEW DELHI, MARCH 3 (TSIT): India's telecom sector continued its growth momentum in the December 2025 quarter, with internet subscribers crossing the 1.02 billion mark and overall telephone connections rising sharply, according to the latest performance report released by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India on Tuesday. The TRAI released its Indian Telecom Services Performance Indicator Report for the quarter ending December 31, 2025. The report showed steady growth in internet users, telephone subscribers, revenues and average earnings of telecom companies. The total number of internet subscribers increased

from 1,017.81 million at the end of September 2025 to 1,028.61 million by the end of December 2025, registering a quarterly growth of 1.06 per cent. Out of the total internet users, 983.29 million were wireless subscribers, while 45.32 million were wired users. The broadband subscriber base crossed the 1 billion mark and stood at 1,007.35 million - reflecting steady demand for high-speed data services. The total number of telephone subscribers in the country saw a strong jump during the quarter. It increased from 1,228.94 million in September to 1,306.14 million in December, marking a quarterly growth of 6.28 per cent and a year-on-year growth of 9.77 per cent. Overall tele-density in India improved from 86.65 per cent to 91.74 per cent during the same period. Wireless subscribers, including mobile and fixed wireless access (FWA) users, rose by 76.45 million during the quarter to reach 1,258.77 million. Wireless tele-density also increased from 83.36 per cent to 88.41 per cent.

'I and Siddaramaiah are like milk & honey': Shivakumar amid 'leadership tussle' in Karnataka

Bengaluru, Mar 3 : Amid the "leadership tussle" in Karnataka, state Deputy Chief Minister D. K. Shivakumar on Tuesday emphasised on "unity" in the Congress, saying that he and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah are like milk and honey.

Speaking to reporters in Bengaluru, praising Chief Minister Siddaramaiah over his clarification on phone tapping allegations by opposition leaders, Shivakumar said the CM had spoken words of experience and has observed him closely.

"The relationship between the two of us is certainly like milk and honey. Time will answer everything," the Deputy CM said. Clarifying his stand further on the Chief Minister's post, Shivakumar said he has not discussed the issue until now. Shivakumar announced that he will be organising a dinner on March 10 on the occasion of completing six years as Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee president.



Regarding his continuation as KPCC president, Shivakumar said new leadership should emerge. Shivakumar further responded to the phone tapping allegations raised by Union Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy, asserting that he has never spoken about destabilising the leadership and emphasising unity within the Congress party. "There are 175 MLAs and MLCs in the Congress party and questioned the political narrative surrounding leadership changes. Referring indirectly to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he remarked, "Did Modi Saheb not become Prime Minister? Didn't he rise to that position

without any background in the state?"

On the issue of a possible change in the Legislative Council Chairman, he said he would discuss the matter with the Chief Minister. Siddaramaiah had made the statement on Tuesday while dismissing allegations by Union Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy and Leader of the Opposition R. Ashoka that phones were being tapped to monitor Deputy Chief Minister and State Congress President D.K. Shivakumar. He had called the charges "baseless" and politically-motivated.

He alleged that ever since the Congress returned to power in the state, Opposition leaders had been attempting to create a rift between him and Shivakumar. "As much as they try to sow discord, it will not affect the cordial relationship we share," the Chief Minister said, asserting that both he and Shivakumar remained committed to the party's high command.

Indians stranded in Dubai return safely, recount harrowing experiences; families celebrate return

Kolhapur (Maharashtra), March 3 : A group of 25 people from the Hupre area of Kolhapur, stranded in Dubai amid escalating tensions in the Middle East, safely reached Kolhapur this morning. They were aboard one of the two flights that evacuated Indians from the Gulf countries.

The hotel where this group was staying in Dubai and its surrounding area came under attack. Risking their lives, they travelled by road from Dubai to Abu Dhabi before boarding the flight back to India. Upon arrival, families celebrated their safe return, with elders shedding tears of joy. The travellers recounted witnessing the attacks in Dubai, the conditions at the airport, and plumes of smoke rising after aerial assaults. In a gesture of support, the Dubai administration

provided each passenger with Rs 26,000. Speaking to IANS about the ordeal, Shital Barge, part of a group that travelled to Dubai on February 24, said, "Dubai is a very good and developed country.

We had gone to see Dubai, but before coming back, we also faced this scare. It feels very good to be back in our motherland. Along with us, there was another group from Kolhapur of 22 people who could not get a flight yet." Another passenger, Tukaram Raut, described the relief of returning home. "Coming back, I am feeling very happy; being with family brings a lot of peace. We had gone to Dubai on the 24th; the five days there were very good... we visited and saw different locations. But when the conflict started, it was very frightening.



## SC takes cognisance of trial court relying on AI-generated 'fake' verdicts

**NEW DELHI:** Taking cognisance of a trial court relying on alleged non-existing verdicts that were generated with the help of artificial intelligence (AI), the Supreme Court has said a decision based on such fake judgments would not be an error in decision making but would amount to misconduct.



A bench of Justices P S Narasimha and Alok Aradhya has said it will examine the matter in detail and issued a notice to Attorney General R Venkataramani, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta and the Bar Council of India.

The court has also appointed senior advocate Shyam Divan to assist it in the matter.

"We take cognisance of the trial court deploying AI-generated non-existing, fake or synthetic alleged judgments and seek to examine its consequences and accountability as it has

a direct bearing on the integrity of the adjudicatory process," the bench said.

"At the outset, we must declare that a decision based on such non-existent and fake alleged judgments is not an error in the decision making. It would be a misconduct and legal consequence shall follow. It is compelling that we examine this issue in more detail," the bench said in its February 27 order.

The issue cropped up before the apex court while it was hearing a plea challenging a January order of

the Andhra Pradesh High Court that came on a suit filed for an injunction.

The top court said the case assumes considerable institutional concern, not because of the decision that was taken on the merits of the case, but regarding the process of adjudication and determination.

"Issue notice to the attorney general, solicitor general and the Bar Council of India," it said.

The court noted that pending the suit's disposal, the trial court had appointed an advocate-commissioner

to note the physical features of the disputed property.

The bench pointed out that the petitioners had challenged the advocate-commissioner's report by raising certain objections.

It noted that the trial court, in its order passed in August last year, dismissed the objections and in the process, relied on certain judgments.

The petitioners then challenged the trial court's order, contending that the verdicts referred to and relied on were non-existent and fake.

The top court noted that the high court had considered the objection and realised that the judgments were AI-generated.

It said after recording a word of caution, the high court had proceeded to decide the case on merits and dismissed the civil revision petition, affirming the decision of the trial court.

## Criminals will be behind bars within a month of BJP govt in Bengal: Rajnat Singh

**HOWRAH:** Defence Minister Rajnat Singh on Monday asserted that criminals in West Bengal would be "in jail or God knows where" within a month of a BJP government coming to power in the state.

He, however, said eliminating joblessness in Bengal, from where a significant number of people migrate for work to other states, would take around five to 10 years.

Singh was addressing a 'Parivartan Yatra' rally at Amta in Howrah district. "Within a month of formation of a BJP government in Bengal, criminals will either be in jail, or God knows where," he said.

He added that a BJP government in Bengal would create jobs for the youth. "It will take us five to 10 years to eliminate the problem of joblessness here," Singh said.

The minister claimed that 7,000 companies have left the state since the TMC came to power in 2011.

He said that while on the one hand industries and youth were leaving the state in search of greener pastures, "the government here is openly inviting illegal immigrants."

Singh asserted that the BJP will stop infiltration if it comes to power in the



Defence Minister Rajnat Singh speaking at a podium.

state. "We will drive out every illegal immigrant from the state," he said, urging people to ensure double-engine government for the state, with the BJP in power in both Bengal and the Centre. Singh alleged that the Trinamool Congress (TMC) was dividing people in the state.

"The BJP does not engage in politics merely to form governments, but to reform society. The TMC, on the other hand, is dividing the people of the state," he said.

He asked Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, "Why are those involved in crimes not punished in the state? You have run the government for 15 years.

Why has poverty not been eradicated in West Bengal, and why do women not feel safe?"

Accusing Banerjee of favouring criminals, Singh said, "Her affection is for the criminals, the corrupt, and people of a particular religion."

He added that criminals now believe nothing will happen to them under her regime.

Singh claimed that according to NCRB records, the highest incidents of atrocities on women take place in Bengal.

"In Bengal, rule of law breakers prevail and not that of the law," he alleged. Stating that the time for change in Bengal has come, he urged the people of the poll-bound state not to falter this time.

"The soil of Bengal is giving the clarion call that TMC's atrocities will not continue anymore in the state," he said.

He added that violence and fear of atrocities against women were widespread.

"If anyone dares to harm the womenfolk of the state, they will be taught a lesson by a BJP government," he said.

"Situation has turned so bad in the state that people are afraid, and women think twice before venturing out of their houses," Singh said.

## Nagpur blast: Probe points to company's negligence; safety agencies also liable, says minister

**NAGPUR:** Maharashtra minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule on Monday said prima facie there was "negligence" on the part of the Nagpur-based SBL Energy Limited, where a blast claimed 19 lives, and safety measures were not followed by the explosives manufacturer.



The Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO), the Directorate of Industrial Safety and Health (DISH) and the labour commissionerate also failed to ensure safety practices in explosive manufacturing units in the region, and their accountability must be fixed, Bawankule told reporters here.

Nineteen persons died and 23 were injured after a blast occurred at the SBL Energy Limited factory, a mining and industrial explosives manufacturer, at Raulgaon in Katol tehsil of the district on Sunday. Of the injured persons, 13 were in critical condition, the district guardian minister

said. He said the company will pay a compensation of Rs 75 lakh to the families of each of the deceased and Rs 25 lakh to the injured persons. Besides, the Centre will give Rs 2 lakh and the state government will provide Rs 5 lakh to the families of the deceased.

The victims' families will get a total compensation of Rs 82 lakh, Bawankule said. A rehabilitation package will also be drawn up for those who suffered physical disabili-

ties in the incident, he added. The blast took place at the detonator assembly plant of SBL Energy Limited, the minister informed.

He held a meeting with state minister Ashish Jaiswal, Ramtek MP Shyamkumar Barwe, Katol MLA Sharad Singh Thakur, the divisional commissioner, district collector, superintendent of police, and officials of PESO and DISH in connection with the incident.

## Battle should happen only for good of humanity, not for selfish reasons: RSS calls for peace in world

**NEW DELHI:** The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) on Monday called for peace in the world, saying battles should only happen for the good of humanity and truth, not for "selfish" reasons.

Addressing an event here, RSS national publicity and media department head Sunil Ambekar also expressed concern over the safety of Indians stranded in various locations abroad due to the prevailing situation in West Asia.

The senior RSS functionary's remarks came amid widening conflict in West Asia after the United States and Israel targeted Iran in coordinated attacks over the weekend that killed Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and dozens of other senior figures. Iran retaliated by firing drones and missiles at Israel and US military installations around the Gulf, and also at the global business hub of Dubai.

In an apparent reference to the prevailing situation, Ambekar said, "Many things are happening in the world. Wars are happening.

It would certainly be good if there is a peaceful resolution. India always wants peace and progress in the world."

"If there is a battle, it should be for the good of humanity and truth, not for selfish reasons... We wish that peace be established across the world," the senior RSS functionary told the gathering.

Ambekar also expressed concern over the safety of Indians stranded abroad due to prevailing situations in West Asia.

"Indians are stranded in different parts of the world due to the war... I wish that they come out of this crisis at the earliest and get relief," he added.

The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) has reviewed the evolving situation in West Asia and expressed concern over the safety and security of the large Indian expatriate community in the region. The CCS also directed all departments concerned to take necessary and feasible measures to assist Indian nationals affected by the developments.

The CCS, which met last evening

under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, also underscored the importance of an early cessation of hostilities and a return to dialogue and diplomacy. There are around 10,000 Indian citizens who live, study and work in Iran, while over 40,000 live in Israel. The number of Indians who live in the Gulf and West Asia is about 9 million.

Currently, the airspace of West Asia is almost closed.

With flight services disrupted due to the military escalation in West Asia, hundreds of Indians are stranded in Dubai, Doha and other key hub airports, with many of them taking to social media to appeal to the Indian government for assistance.

India has in the past successfully evacuated thousands of Indians from different parts of the world, including West Asia, amidst conflicts.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said Indian missions across the region are in continuous contact with nationals, and helplines have been activated.

## Sleepless nights for families awaiting their children's return from Iran

**NEW DELHI:** Kunwar Shakeel broke down in tears as he explained how his daughter, who went to Iran to study medicine, is now stuck in the war-torn country and has no idea when she will be able to return.

"We spoke to her on Monday morning. There was a bomb blast near her college," the 49-year-old told PTI while sobbing on the phone. The daughter of Shakeel, an Old Delhi resident, studies in the Islamic Azad University in Tehran.

"She is in the sixth semester," Shakeel said, adding that his daughter was supposed to board a plane to India on Tuesday but is now waiting for evacuation.

He said the situation has gotten worse after Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was killed on Saturday. According to officials, thousands of Indians studying in Iran are currently waiting for evacuation as the situation has turned into a full-scale military conflict.

"My daughter informed us that heavy bombing took place around her college premises and it has increased in the last two days," Shakeel said.

For many parents, the developments are scary and they are stuck in limbo as phone and internet connectivity has almost died.

"My daughter has to try at least 40 times before a call gets connected," Zubiya Khan, a resident of Malviya Nagar whose daughter is studying in Tehran, told PTI. She said internet connectivity has completely been cut off in Iran and parents are relying on sporadic trunk calls.

"My daughter just completed third year of MBBS and was preparing for an exam that was supposed to be held on March 5. But the situation escalated and now, they have nowhere to go," she said.

Parents said their only hope is the Indian government now and they are praying that their children are rescued soon.

"In 2025, the government launched Operation Sindhu and brought all of our kids back safely. We are hoping that something similar will be done by our government soon," Zubiya Khan told PTI.

Parents also informed that Indian students are surviving on limited food ration.

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their only hope is the Indian government now and they are praying that their children are rescued soon.

"In 2025, the government launched Operation Sindhu and brought all of our kids back safely. We are hoping that something similar will be done by our government soon," Zubiya Khan told PTI. Parents also informed that Indian students are surviving on limited food ration. "Food is limited in their accommodation. They are not sure how long this situation will last and when their supplies will be replenished. We spoke to her this morning and my daughter was crying profusely. Everyone in her hostel is really scared," Zubiya Khan said. Momin Khan, national representative of the All India Medical Association (AIMA) and the president of its Jammu and Kashmir chapter, said at 7 am local time on Tuesday, students from various

## Celebrate Holi with dignity, harmony, avoid vulgar songs: Adityanath

**GORAKHPUR:** Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday appealed people to celebrate Holi with dignity, avoid vulgar songs and refrain from using chemicals or force while applying colours, saying festivals bring joy only when observed in peace and harmony.

Addressing a gathering at the 'Bhakt Prahlad Shobhayatra' organised by Shri Shri Holika Dahan Utsav Samiti at Pandehata in Gorakhpur, he said Holika Dahan should be performed in a manner that does not cause inconvenience or damage to anyone's property.

"Holi songs should be sung in the true spirit of the festival. There should be no obscenity. Whenever vulgarity creeps into songs, it diminishes the significance of our festivals," he said, adding that every daughter, sister and trader should feel safe during the celebrations.

The chief minister said only colours and gugal should be used during Rangwali Holi, and mud and chemicals must be avoided.

"Do not apply colour on someone's face forcibly. There may be elderly people, children, the sick or fami-



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath speaking at a podium.

lies going through grief who may not wish to participate. No one should be compelled," he said.

Adityanath also urged people to ensure that Holika Dahan is organised at a safe distance from homes and establishments to prevent any damage. Holi symbolises the triumph of order over chaos and truth over falsehood. Referring to the mythological story of Prahlad and Holika, he said society must remain vigilant against corruption, anarchy and negativity, likening them to "Holika" that must be consigned to flames, he said.

The CM said that just as Lord Vishnu took the Narasimha avatar to end tyranny, society must remain firm

against mafia, terrorism and disorder to protect the righteous.

Adityanath also spoke about redevelopment works in the Pandehata area, describing it as a "heritage corridor" that has been widened and redesigned.

He said the locality, once marked by narrow lanes and congestion affecting traders and devotees of the Kalibari temple, is being transformed into one of the most attractive corridors of the city.

"Nobody has to be displaced for development. The effort is to ensure that people prosper and get opportunities to expand their businesses," he said, adding that shopkeepers affected by space constraints would be accommodated in a nearby new complex at reasonable rents.

He thanked local residents and traders for supporting the redevelopment initiative and said development progresses from the grassroots upwards.

The chief minister claimed that earlier, festivals in Uttar Pradesh were often marked by tension and curfews, but the situation has changed. "Today there is no curfew, no riots.

## Will 'remove infiltrators from Bengal'; Hindu refugees have nothing to worry: Amit Shah

**MATHURAPUR:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday escalated the BJP's "infiltration" pitch in West Bengal, declaring that while "only names are being deleted now" from the state's electoral rolls under the SIR, infiltrators would be "removed from the state" once the party comes to power, raising the stakes ahead of the 2026 Assembly polls.

Launching the BJP's 'Poroborton Yatra' from Mathurapur in South 24 Parganas district in the state, his first visit since the publication of the post-SIR rolls on Saturday, Shah sought to draw a clear distinction between "infiltrators" and "Hindu refugees", assuring the latter that they have "nothing to worry" and would not lose

citizenship under a BJP government.

The Union minister slammed the TMC government over what he described as years of unchecked infiltration under Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's watch, signalling that border security and citizenship will anchor the BJP's final electoral push in the run-up to 2026.

Shah also rolled out a string of promises, including the implementation of the Seventh Pay Commission for state government employees within 45 days of the BJP coming to power, filling up all vacant government posts by December, and restoring abolished permanent posts within two months.

"Right now, only names are being deleted from voter

rolls, and Mamata Didi is nervous. Once the BJP forms the government, we will identify and remove every infiltrator from Bengal," he said, addressing a gathering in the coastal belt abutting the Sundarbans and close to the porous Indo-Bangladesh frontier.

His remarks came days after the post-SIR rolls recorded 63.66 lakh deletions, 8.3 per cent of the electorate, reducing the voter base to just over 7.04 crore ahead of assembly polls likely to be held in April. More than 60.06 lakh electors have also been placed in the "under adjudication" category, subject to scrutiny in the coming weeks. Shah also sought to reassure Hindu refugees from Bangladesh.



"If Mamata Banerjee had not opposed the CAA, every Hindu refugee from Bangladesh would have received citizenship by now. But I have come to tell all Hindu refugees that you don't have to worry. The BJP government is here for you. Not a single refugee will lose their citizenship," he said, reiterating the Citizen-

ship Amendment Act plank. The SIR churn has been sharpest in the Matua belt across North 24 Parganas, Nadia and parts of north Bengal, where community leaders claim nearly 40 per cent of the community has been impacted, a development that could reverberate across 40-50 Assembly seats

where the Dalit Hindu refugee bloc anchors the BJP's post-2019 citizenship pitch.

Shah alleged that the "TMC has made Bengal a swarg (heaven) for infiltrators," asserting that the border state's security had been compromised by what he called appeasement politics.

"Recently, the Bengal budget allocated just Rs 80 crore for Science and Technology but Rs 5,700 crore for madrasas. I ask you, Mamata Didi, is your agenda to promote science and provide jobs to Bengali youth, or to spend thousands of crores on appeasement?" he said.

The TMC cannot ensure security in a border state like West Bengal because it allows infiltration, the home minister said, asserting that

"Mamata Didi says our Poriborton Yatra is about capturing power. I want to tell her that for us, change does not mean the chief minister's chair. For us, change means freeing West Bengal from infiltrators, from corruption, securing the borders, ensuring the safety of mothers and sisters, and establishing the rule of law," Shah said.

Listing alleged scams, he accused the TMC of institutionalising graft and said several of its leaders had landed in jail.

"And the DGP who provided protection to all these scams is being sent to the Rajya Sabha by Mamata Banerjee," he said, criticising the TMC's decision to nominate former DGP Rajeev Kumar to the Tinner House.

## Kumaraswamy Slams Siddaramaiah Over Phone Tapping Allegations, Calls Charges "Baseless"

Bengaluru : Union Minister \*H. D. Kumaraswamy has expressed strong displeasure over what he termed as baseless allegations levelled against him by Chief Minister \*Siddaramaiah\* in connection with the phone tapping controversy.

In a detailed media statement, the Union Minister directly took on the Chief Minister, questioning both the intent and the substance of the accusations.

"I have lost power twice. You are aware that history never remains silent. Nor can you escape its judgment, Mr. Siddaramaiah. Had I engaged in phone tapping, I might have retained power at any cost. If I had chosen that path, I could have uncovered what plots were unfolding within Siddavahana. But I had no such desire, nor do I regret what I lost. It is that guilty conscience which now haunts you like a shadow. Phone tapping is not my trait if anything, it is an invention of the Congress party and a culture you seem to have inherited," he said sharply. Kumaraswamy further



remarked, "I presume you have found yourself with ample leisure time these days. Instead of focusing on governance, you appear pre-occupied with issuing counters. When someone cries 'pumpkin thief' and pats his own shoulder in anxiety, what am I to do? It is the media that has been speaking about phone tapping. I merely responded. Observing your elaborate narratives, one is compelled to conclude that you display greater enthusiasm for targeting others than for administering the State."

Phone Tapping an Extension of the Chair Battle Stating that the Opposition

is merely discharging its duty, Kumaraswamy said, "When the people generously gave you 140 seats, the expectation was governance not public squabbling. Both the Opposition and sections of the media suspect that the phone tapping episode is an extension of the ongoing chair battle within your own party. Where questions arise, the Opposition will ask them. Answer them. Avoid diversion and speak the truth. Is not \*Satyameva Jayate\* your stated principle? Why waste time weaving stories?"

He added, "I served two brief terms as Chief Minister. Neither was a fully independent government. Why

would I indulge in such acts? Unlike you, I do not subscribe to the practice of sitting in comfort and destabilising homes by politically brainwashing legislators. I have witnessed both your earlier five-year tenure and your present intelligence apparatus."

"I Have No Interest in Measuring Congress' Internal Democracy"

Kumaraswamy said he had no fascination for measuring the "diameter and radius" of internal democracy within the Congress party. "Even after more than a century of existence, must the Congress repeatedly insist that it alone embodies internal democracy? A party that imposed Emergency upon the nation and tightened its grip around the neck of democracy cannot claim deep democratic roots. Invoking Mahatma Gandhi for political gain, appropriating democracy for expediency, and wielding social justice for electoral harvest that has been your politics. It is for this reason that India steadily moves towards a Congress-free future," he asserted.

## Karkala: Massive fire breaks out near Ramasamudra; fire brigade, municipality control blaze

Karkala, Mar 3: A major fire that had been sporadically appearing over the last five days near Swaraj Maidan, adjacent to the Ramasamudra area, spread extensively on Tuesday. Municipal and fire brigade personnel had to toil hard for several hours to bring the situation under control. To prevent the flames from spreading fur-

ther, two municipal tankers and two fire brigade vehicles were deployed in a continuous operation. The firefighting efforts were led by municipal environment engineer Laila Thomas and her team of officials, alongside fire brigade assistant station officer Chandrashekhar. Personnel including Rupesh, Ganesh,

Dinesh, Muzambir, and Bhimappa were actively involved in dousing the flames. Former municipal member Winnibold D'Souza expressed suspicion that the fire might have been caused by miscreants. He noted that individuals often frequent the area for leisure and may have discarded lit cigarettes or bidis,

leading to such incidents. The operation to extinguish the fire continued uninterrupted from 12 noon on Tuesday until the evening. Officials noted that even a slight delay or lapse in caution could have allowed the fire to reach nearby residential zones, potentially leading to a major disaster.



POPULAR MLA AND LEADER OF OPPOSITION IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY R. ASHOKA DISTRIBUTED COPIES OF THE PERMANENT APPOINTMENT ORDER TO THE CIVIC WORKERS WORKING IN THE PADMANABHA NAGAR ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCY. MANDAL PRESIDENT LAXMIKANT, STATE OBC FUND PRESIDENT A.H. BASAVARAJI, BJP LEADERS KABBAL UMESH, VENKATASWAMY NAIDU, VENKATESH, AND GBA OFFICIALS WERE PRESENT ON THE OCCASION.

## Jeevanahalli Outreach: Energy Minister K J George Engages with Residents During Padayatra, inspects Infrastructure and Housing Works

Bengaluru : Energy Minister and MLA of Sarvagnanagar constituency, K J George conducted a padayatra in Jeevanahalli today, listening to the grievances of residents. He stated that it is the responsibility of public representatives to provide basic infrastructure so that people can lead a dignified life and affirmed that he is working in that direction.

During the padayatra across Jeevanahalli, the Minister reviewed various ongoing development works and instructed officials to complete them at the earliest. He gathered information from residents regarding drinking water, electricity, roads, housing schemes, and traffic congestion management. He directed officials to ensure that all pending works in the constituency are completed within stipulated timelines. Review of Housing Schemes

In Jeevanahalli, a well-equipped residential complex has been constructed for those engaged in traditional occupations. The Minister instructed officials to urgent-



ly provide necessary amenities. He inspected houses being constructed at Muddappa Garden, Chettappa Garden, and Gangman Quarters, and directed contractors to complete the multi-storey housing project undertaken by the Slum Development Board.

Responding to women who requested additional housing units, he assured them that more houses are being constructed and that allotments will be made on a priority basis to the houseless.

Discussion with Residents' Association At High Street Park, the Minister held a meeting with office-bearers of the Cooke Town Residents' Association and received a list of their demands. He instructed concerned officials to replace old and damaged transformers by the end of March. He also directed police officials to install CCTV cameras in Jeevanahalli using MLA Local Area Development funds and to ensure monitoring through the nearest police station. The Energy Minister

visited a skill development training centre run by Kelachandra Foundation in Jeevanahalli and interacted with trainees. He assured the centre's head of necessary support. Later, he visited an anganwadi and a lower primary school in Sathy Nagar supported financially by Embassy Golf Links Business Park, where he interacted with children.

Ramzan Greetings and Food Kit Distribution

In Kammanahalli, within the Sarvagnanagar constituency, the Minister joined Muslim community members for afternoon prayers as part of Ramzan observances. He participated in a food kit distribution program organized under the leadership of Baba Ali Khan and distributed food kits to hundreds of women present at the event. Along with the Minister, local leaders - Raghu Devaraj, Chakravarthy, Asha, Roopa, Minister Special Officers and officials from GBA, Bangalore Water Supply Board, BESC, and the Police Department officials participated in the padayatra.

## Issue Circular Mandating Installation of Separate Bins in Buildings with More Than Three Floors: Maheshwar Rao



Bengaluru : In the jurisdiction of Bengaluru East City Corporation, Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao has directed officials to immediately issue a circular mandating the installation of separate bins for wet and dry waste in buildings with more than three floors. Speaking at the public grievance meeting held today at the East City Corporation, he stated that to effectively address waste management issues, all buildings with more than three floors must compulsorily install separate bins for wet and dry waste collection. After issuing the circular, notices should be served to the concerned buildings, instructing them to mandatorily install the bins within their premises. Health officials were directed to ensure compliance. Action for Borewell Road Development: For the widening of Borewell Road, abandoned properties reserved for road expansion must be taken over by the

Corporation and road development work should be undertaken. Officials were instructed to visit the site, conduct an inspection, and take necessary action. Directions for Footpath Development: Officials were instructed to inspect major roads within the KR Puram Assembly Constituency and prepare a list identifying areas where footpaths require repairs and where new footpaths need to be constructed. Development works should be taken up in a phased manner. He also directed the removal of encroachments on footpaths in AECS Layout. Prepare Micro Plan for Waste Management: Citizens raised concerns regarding waste dumping along roadsides and in vacant sites within the East City Corporation limits, as well as irregularities in door-to-door waste collection. Responding to these concerns, the Chief Commissioner directed officials to identify problem areas and prepare a micro plan to systematically resolve waste management issues.

150 Grievances Received: Around 150 citizens participated in today's public grievance meeting and directly submitted their petitions to the Chief Commissioner.

## Commissioner Inspects Railway Parallel Road Works



Bengaluru: Commissioner of Bengaluru North City Corporation, Pommala Sunil Kumar, inspected the ongoing white topping work at Railway Parallel Road, NTP Layout (near Sahakar Nagar RUB) in the Vidyaranya Division this morning.

During the inspection, he directed that the white topping work be completed at the earliest. He instructed officials to confirm the K-RIDE alignment and proceed with the work. He also stated that if the work is not completed within the stipulated time, penalties will be imposed on the contractor. Engineers from the Corporation and BSMILE, along with other staff, were present during the inspection. Through these programmes, special emphasis has been laid on GVP elimination, reduction of blackspots, beautification of public spaces, and strengthening environmental cleanliness.

## EDII Leads the Celebration of Rural Women Entrepreneurship at WEutsav 2026

Bengaluru : The vibrancy of India's rural enterprise ecosystem came alive in Bengaluru today as WEutsav, a one-day exhibition celebrating rural women entrepreneurship, was held at the Koramangala Indoor Stadium. The event was supported by the Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII), Ahmedabad, and organized by WeAct.

The exhibition was inaugurated by Dr. Sunil Shukla (Director General, EDII), in the presence of Mr. Daniel Thomas (Vice President, Corporate Social Responsibility), Prof. Dr. Yathindra L. (Director - NIFT), Mr. Pinaki Srimany (Associate Vice President, Corporate Social Responsibility), Mr. Suneel Kumar (Joint Director, DIC, Bengaluru), Ms. Kirthika Tharan (Founder, Hepta Senz), and Dr. Raman Gujral (Director, Department of CSR Partnerships, EDII). WEutsav brought together rural women entrepreneurs from 15 states and witnessed a footfall of approximately 2,000+ visitors. With sales worth Rs. 10,00,000, the exhibition unfolded a vibrant array of handmade, craft-based, sustainable products rooted in India's rich cultural heritage.

Designed as an immersive experience, WEutsav featured state-wise experience zones, live craft demonstrations, cultural performances, and well-curated sales stalls. Visitors engaged



directly with women entrepreneurs, witnessing the journey of products from raw material to finished craft, while understanding the stories of resilience, skill, and enterprise behind each creation. At its core, WEutsav highlighted the transition from skill development to sustainable entrepreneurship, emphasizing livelihood creation, women's economic empowerment, and access to markets for rural enterprises. The exhibition was open to the public and offered free entry, attracting students, institutions, corporates, and citizens keen to support women-led rural businesses. The event also celebrated individual achievements and impact. WeAct member Ms. Noorjahan was honoured with the University of Notre Dame Award for Business Building under the Business Initiative, for creating sustainable economic impact through enterprise. Ms. Sajini and Ms. Renuka were

awarded cash prizes of Rs. 1,70,000 each under the Coca-Cola Microgrant, in recognition of their efforts to create sustainable livelihoods and drive economic empowerment at the grassroots level. WEutsav further encouraged youth engagement, with participation from 25+ top colleges and 50+ college students in an entrepreneurship-focused initiative aimed at fostering innovation and enterprise thinking. Outstanding student teams were announced as winners and recognized for their innovative business ideas, reinforcing the importance of nurturing the next generation of entrepreneurs. Through WEutsav, WeAct reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening rural entrepreneurship ecosystems by providing women entrepreneurs with visibility, market linkages, and recognition, with institutional support and guidance from EDII.

## Sarkar Nyaybele Angadi' movie poster release news

UNION MINISTER V. SOMANNA JOINS 'SARKAR NYAYBELE ANGADI'

Union Minister V. Somanna releases poster of 'Sarkar Nyaybele Angadi' movie

Bengaluru: You may know that a movie is coming out in Kannada with the name 'Sarkari Nyaybele Angadi'. Now this movie has quietly completed its shooting. As the name of the movie suggests, it is a movie with a storyline that revolves around 'Sarkari Nyaybele Angadi' and the ration system. It is special that the entire shooting of this movie with a rural storyline was done in Mandya district. The poster of this movie, which has actress Ragini Dwivedi, actors Kumar Bangarappa, Doddanna and other artists in the lead roles, was released by Union Minister of State for Water Resources and Railways V.



Somanna. Speaking on the occasion, Union Minister V. Somanna said, "With the aim that the common people and the poor should not suffer from hunger, the central and state governments are working to deliver groceries and food to the people through 'Government Fair Price Shops'. However, due to some shortcomings in this system, this purpose is not being effectively fulfilled. Now, the 'Government Fair Price Shop' film team is going to tell the audience about this issue by making a movie. Such an effort by the film team is truly commendable. When social issues are told through movies, it effectively reaches the audience. May this movie create awareness and be successful," he wished. Speaking on the occasion, the film's lead actor Kumar Bangarappa said, "This is the first movie to be made in the entire country on the government fair price shop and ration system."

## 34 Leading Global Scientists Write to Minister N.S. Boseraju, Back Karnataka's Q-MINT Initiative

67 GVP Eliminations / Blackspot Beautification Drives - Total 87 Tonnes of Waste Cleared

Bengaluru: With the objective of keeping the city clean, beautiful, and healthy and to create awareness among citizens regarding cleanliness of public spaces, a week-long "Mega Cleanliness Drive for a Beautiful City" has been organized across all 7 divisions of the Bengaluru North City Corporation from 01.03.2026 under the guidance of the Commissioner, Pommala Sunil Kumar.

On the third day, i.e., 03.03.2026, from morning till afternoon, a total of 1,263 participants including RWAs, citizens, and volunteers took part in 67 GVP elimination and blackspot beautification programmes, through which approximately 87 tonnes of waste were cleared. Extensive cleanliness works were undertaken across all divisions of the Corporation. Under this campaign, 67 Garbage Vulnerable



Points (GVPs) were eliminated and blackspot beautification works were carried out. Waste, silt, debris, and tree branches were removed. The mega cleanliness drive was carried out under the guidance of Commissioner Pommala Sunil Kumar

and Joint Commissioners Mohammed Naem Momin and Pallavi, with coordinated efforts of DGM Rashmi, all divisional AGMs, Health Inspectors, Marshals, Supervisors, Link Workers, Pourakarmikas, volunteers, and local organizations.

# EDITORIAL

## Iran To Venezuela, Why Does Trump Prefer To Attack Only On Weekends?

The United States and Israel conducted pre-emptive military strikes on Iran, attacking the latter's capital, Tehran, Isfahan, Bandar Abbas and several other locations around the capital. Iran responded fiercely, and since February 28 - a Saturday - the entire Middle East has been at war with Iran.

Before the outbreak of war, the United States and Iran were engaged in nuclear deal negotiations, with a deadline set for Friday, February 27. The talks failed, and on the weekend, the US attacked. Interestingly, on January 3, 2026 - a Saturday - the US intervened in Venezuela and captured its President, Nicolas Maduro, and airlifted him to New York. Similarly, on December 25, 2025 - a national holiday - President Donald Trump approved an attack on the Islamic State in Nigeria. On June 22, 2025 - again a Sunday - the US launched airstrikes on Iran, hitting its nuclear facilities. All the attacks have one thing in common: they occurred on a weekend. While this might seem coincidental, there are multiple underlying reasons Trump chooses to avoid bombings on weekdays.

### The 'Flight To Safety' Zone

Global stock market indices such as the US S&P 500, the UK FTSE 100, the Nikkei 225 in Japan, the CAC 40 in France, or the BSE Sensex in India operate from Monday to Friday, with no trading over the weekend. If a military action takes place on Monday, investors would react to the news in real-time, causing a sudden sell-off of stocks, with no room for gradual repricing, a phenomenon with step-by-step readjustment to market realities and the ongoing developments in a conflict. Several studies have been conducted to examine the abnormal effects of war on the stock market. Existing literature has proved that there is a direct impact of global conflicts or big world events on stock markets, with research even analysing the impact of major events during World War II, such as Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour, the fall of Warsaw, the failed assassination attempt on Hitler, the death of US President Roosevelt or the atomic bombings in Japan. Such events are called 'blips', with a direct impact on stock markets. Global conflicts, which cause such brief disruptions, affect stock market performance. But when there is a 48-hour market silence over a weekend, it forces investors to speculate. On the first trading day - usually a Monday - there is a sudden sell-off of "risky" assets, which leads to investors buying less risky assets such as gold or treasury bonds. In a 2019 study published in *The Review of Financial Studies*, the authors defined such events as 'Flight To Safety' days - that is, days when equity returns are negative, and bond returns are positive. Following two days of intense attacks across the Gulf, US stocks initially experienced a sudden sell-off when markets opened on Monday. However, they managed to recover by the close of the trading day. The predictable increase in the value of US Treasury Bonds reflected investors' preference for safe havens, such as gold and bonds.

### Why Investors Move To Gold

If a conflict strikes oil-producing countries in the Gulf region, oil prices are the first to react to any development. QatarEnergy has immediately stopped LNG production, and the Saudi Aramco oil refinery was in flames after a drone strike. However, all countries have been cautious about attacking energy infrastructure. On Monday, the oil market absorbed the weekend shock. A barrel of Brent crude oil was trading at about \$79 by lunchtime in London, up about \$6 or 8.5% on the day. As the price of oil increases, so does inflation, since fuel-dependent sectors such as airlines and transportation face the brunt.

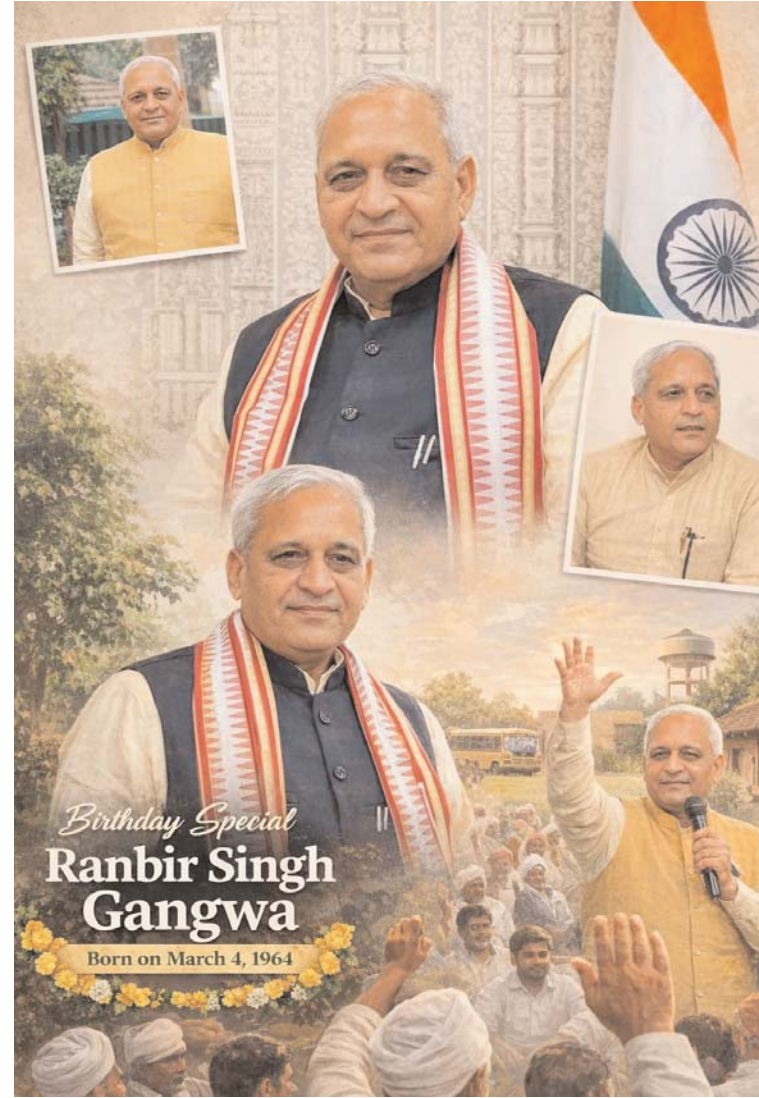
# LESS TO SAY, MORE TO DO: RANBIR SINGH GANGWA



**PRIYANKA SAURABH**

(Who started from the village, lived for the village - a leader of the people, a personality connected to the ground, the true voice of the village, the farmers and the poor)

(Ranbir Singh Gangwa is a leader in Haryana politics whose identity is forged not by noise but by work. Rising from the soil of the village, he made public service his core mantra. His journey from Zila Parishad to Cabinet Minister is a story of constant struggle, organizational loyalty, and public trust. As Minister of the Public Works Department and Public Health Engineering Department, his focus is clear: better roads, clean drinking water, and a transparent system. He believes that strong villages are the foundation of a strong Haryana. With this vision, he is prioritizing road expansion, water supply, and rural infrastructure. His simplicity, clean image, and grassroots connection are his greatest strengths. By becoming the voice of the backward classes, farmers, and the poor, Ranbir Gangwa has proven that if politics is conducted with honesty and a spirit of service, change is visible at the grassroots level.) Ranbir Singh Gangwa is considered one of the few leaders in Haryana politics who rose from a rural background to become a Cabinet Minister through persistent struggle, organizational commitment, and public service. Today, he is the Cabinet Minister for the Public Works Department (PWD) and Public Health Engineering Department in the Haryana government, and Nayab Singh Saini plays a key role in the cabinet. His life is a source of inspiration for the backward classes, farmers, and rural society. Ranbir Singh Gangwa was born on March 4, 1964, into a potter (Prajapati) family in Gangwa village, Hisar district,



Haryana. His father, Rajaram, and mother, Kesar Devi, were from a simple rural background. Raised in limited resources, Gangwa received a higher secondary education and early developed an interest in social work. Living in a rural environment, he deeply understood the problems of farmers, laborers, and the backward classes, which later shaped his political career. His first formal election was for the Zila Parishad. In 2000, he contested the Hisar Zila Parishad elections, where he faced initial defeat. However, this defeat strengthened him. In 2005, he won re-election and became a Zila Parishad member, later rising to the position of Vice President. During this time, he accomplished significant work to improve rural roads, drinking water, education, and health facilities. This

period laid a strong foundation for his political career. In 2009, he contested the Nalwa Assembly constituency on an Indian National Lok Dal ticket. He lost the election to senior Congress leader Sampat Singh, but his political influence remained. In 2010, he was elected to the Rajya Sabha on behalf of the Indian National Lok Dal. As a Rajya Sabha member, he raised issues related to Haryana's rural and backward classes at the national level and earned recognition for his activism. In 2014, he was elected MLA from the Nalwa Assembly constituency. He defeated veteran leaders like Sampat Singh and former Deputy Chief Minister Chandramohan. As an MLA, he accelerated development work in the area and maintained constant communication with the public. In 2019,

he joined the Bharatiya Janata Party and won the Nalwa seat again. He was appointed Deputy Speaker of the Assembly, where he played a key role in ensuring the smooth and orderly conduct of the House proceedings. In the 2024 assembly elections, the BJP nominated him from the Barwala assembly constituency. This was a new political challenge, but Ranbir Gangwa turned it into an opportunity. He won a historic victory in Barwala, leading the BJP to victory there for the first time. Following this victory, he was inducted as a cabinet minister in the Nayab Saini cabinet. This was a significant milestone in his nearly 34-year political struggle. After becoming a cabinet minister, Ranbir Gangwa was given responsibility for the Public Works Department (PWD) and the Public Health Engineering Department. He clarified that his aim was to make the department transparent and accountable. Haryana's road network spans approximately 30,664 kilometers. The PWD has a target of re-carpeting 6,500 kilometers of roads for 2025-26. A strict monitoring system has been implemented to ensure quality and curb corruption. Under the Public Health Engineering Department, his focus is on providing clean drinking water, pipeline expansion, and water conservation schemes in rural areas. Through the Haryana Golden Jubilee Mahagram Yojana, infrastructure in villages is being strengthened. He believes that strong villages are the foundation of a strong Haryana. Ranbir Gangwa is considered a strong representative of the backward classes. He holds a strong influence in the Prajapati community and is known for championing the cause of the OBC community. His simplicity and unassuming demeanor make him popular among the general public. A key feature of his political career is his clean image. He has no criminal cases against him in his 34 years in public life. His declared assets and liabilities are transparently disclosed in his election affidavits, reflecting his integrity and accountability. Ranbir Singh Gangwa's life embodies the message that through persistent hard work, grassroots connections, and dedication to public service, one can reach great heights. His journey from Zila Parishad to Cabinet Minister is an inspiring tale of struggle and determination.

## Not Oil Alone: The 'Big Money' Driving Trump's Blitz On Iran

When Israel and the US launched coordinated action against Iran last year during the 12-day war, the strategic rationale was front and centre. That Iran cannot be allowed to develop nuclear weapons remains an existential demand for Tel Aviv and guides Washington's regional security and dominance imperatives. The Trump administration's withdrawal from the JCPOA, leading Iran to block the IAEA from inspecting its nuclear sites, became the turning point for the Trump administration's hardening stance against Tehran. This inflexion point coincided with the perfect regional storm started by the October 7 attacks by Hamas and Iran's brazen siding with regional proxies to make it a Zionist-Islamist war.



### It Can't Be 'Stability' Alone

In all these, the Trump administration used its economic lens to look for its own interests in the region. In the absence of any direct economic interests in the Middle East, strategic goals alone couldn't have been persuasive enough for the Trump administration, which is openly fixated on economic benefits. Furthermore, a military engagement in Iran - a definitely long-drawn one - is a starkly counterintuitive proposition to Trump's political promise of being a President who did not start new wars, rather stopped them. Yet, to see the Trump administration take his bold but unpredictable chances against Iran makes it certain that there are economic underpinnings that may be guiding his extant strategic logic. Specifically so, because Trump's second presidency remains strongly tethered to an economic rationale in the region, and generally so because Iran's proxies across the region, which acted as its layered defence network, are incapacitated and at their weakest.

American economic interests in the Middle East have dwindled over the years, even as America has turned its fortunes from being an energy importer from the region to a net ener-

gy exporter to the world. As such, at the forefront of strategic interests in the Middle East for the US is its alliance with Israel. It remains the only country in the region that America can truly rely on, despite its military presence scattered across the region. Yet, the Trump administration's current bets in the Middle East are all economic at heart. One of the key issues on which the Trump administration has focused since his first term has been the question of regional normalisation between Israel and other partners through the Abraham Accords, on which the broader network of regional economics could be based. While the US came as the enforcer, the UAE was the economic behemoth of the region, and India was a player that commanded across-the-board good relations in the region and represented the anchor of the Indo-Pacific as one of the most dynamic regions in the world economically.

### Spanner In Trump's Works

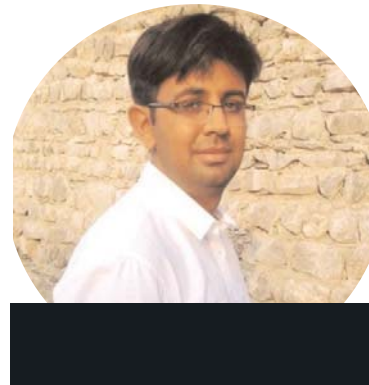
These goals were interrupted by the Hamas attacks on Israel on October 7, 2023, throwing the region into a tailspin. Not surprisingly, the Biden administration's efforts after the Trump administration were built to consolidate rather than experiment or neglect in the region. As such, it was

under his administration that India, Israel, the UAE and the United States convened the first leaders' summit on July 14, 2022, to establish the I2U2 Group. The following year, another economic initiative India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC), was announced in September 2023 following a meeting in New Delhi between the leaders of India, the US, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Italy, France, Germany, and the European Commission on the sidelines of the G20 Summit.

### The 3 Pegs' For Middle East

The second Trump administration came to office after the war in Europe and the Middle East had changed the region considerably. But his presidency took on an extended economic rationale, which placed the Middle East on three pegs: first, enforcing peace in the region may be difficult, but if there was any time in history when regional peace and stability could be externally induced, it was now; second, much of America's economic interests, most prominently its desire to supply energy to the Indo-Pacific countries after Trump resumed drilling oil and gas, banked on peace and stability in the Middle East, and America saw Iran as the outlier in Trump's peace project.

## Holi, changing society and new definitions of decorum



Holi isn't just a festival, it's a celebration of the collective consciousness of Indian society. It's a time of color, joy, an occasion to untangle the knots of the heart and shake off the dust from relationships. But with time, every tradition faces new questions. Today, as the format of Holi celebrations in universities and public spaces is changing, one segment of society is excited, while another is concerned. This conflict makes this discussion serious. Traditionally, Holi has been celebrated within the family and community sphere. Village squares, neighborhood courtyards, and rooftops—all served as natural platforms for celebration. Relationships were clearly defined; the banter between brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, the banter between sisters-in-law, and the colors and abir of friends—all carried a cultural and social context.

The joy of the festival was collective, but the boundaries were also clear. Today, the scene has changed. In co-educational universities, students study together, organize events together, and celebrate together. In the age of social media, the celebration is no longer a private experience; it has become a public display. Colors, music, dance, and crowds—all of these create an atmosphere that is different from the traditional Holi. This change is making a section of society uncomfortable. The main question isn't why girls are playing Holi or why boys are accompanying them. The real question is: are decorum and dignity pre-



served under the guise of celebration? Is anarchy gaining ground in the name of freedom? Are personal boundaries being broken in the excitement of the crowd? The distinction between "girl" and "woman" also comes into discussion here. Society often teaches daughters the importance of decorum from childhood, while sons are given more freedom.

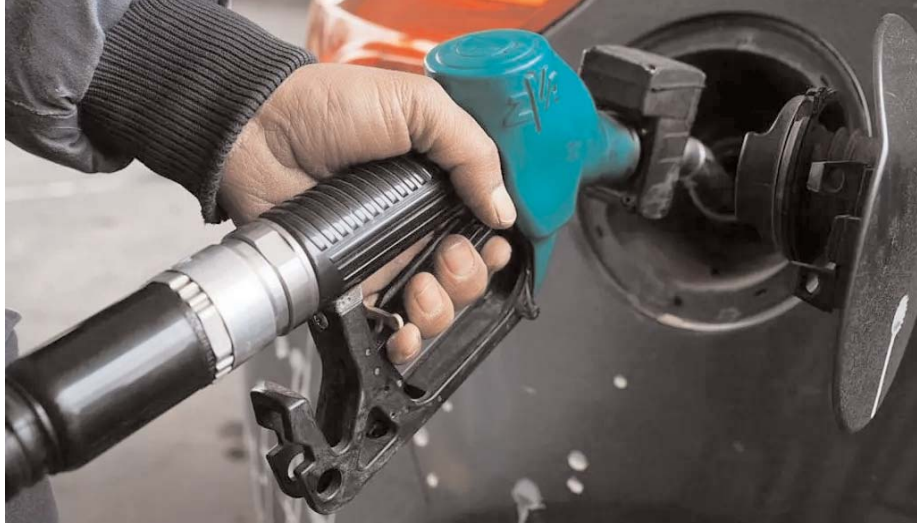
When daughters participate in public celebrations, it is considered a departure from tradition. But is this viewpoint justified? If equal opportunities are accepted in education and public life, why not equal participation in cultural events? On the other hand, it's equally true that mob behavior isn't always restrained. Incidents like molestation, forced coloring, and lewd comments on Holi have been a concern for society for years.

Therefore, parents' concerns cannot be completely dismissed. Their concern isn't just about preserving tradition, but also about the safety and dignity of their daughters. The concept of "consent" becomes crucial here. Clear consent is the foundation of any social interaction in modern society. If a student voluntarily participates in a celebration in a safe environment, they cannot be faulted simply because they deviate from the traditional framework. However, if the event lacks security, oversight, and a clear code of con-

duct, concerns are natural. The role of the university administration becomes crucial here. Security arrangements, complaint mechanisms, and clear guidelines should be mandatory for any mass event. It is the administration's responsibility to ensure that no student feels uncomfortable. A clear "no means no" policy and strict adherence to it can keep the celebration healthy. Society also needs to introspect. Do we only see daughters as a matter of domestic dignity? Do we assume that their active participation in public spaces is inherently inappropriate? If daughters are advancing in education, sports, politics, and business, why should their presence at cultural events be judged on a different yardstick? Tradition is not static; it changes with time. What seems "new" today may become the norm tomorrow. But change does not mean abandoning values. Dignity, respect, and safety—these values are eternal. The question is: are we ready to apply these values to the new environment? The core message of Holi is to erase social distinctions. It's a day when colors unite everyone—caste, class, age, and gender are left behind. If we embrace this core sentiment, we must also recognize that daughters and sons are equally a part of this celebration. Still, turning celebrations into performance is a cause for concern.

## Gas and oil prices soar and shares tumble as crucial shipping lane threatened

Gas prices have spiked and stock markets indexes tumbled after an Iranian official said his country would "set fire" to anyone trying to pass through the key Strait of Hormuz shipping route. As the conflict between Iran and the US and Israel continued, the UK gas price surged by more than 46%, following sharp gains on Monday pushing it to its highest price for three years. Brent Crude Oil climbed by more than 5% to just over \$81 a barrel. In the UK, the FTSE 100 index fell by 2.6% while stocks markets in France and Germany also dropped. Investors are weighing the impact of the conflict on the global economy including what it could mean for inflation and interest rates. There are fears rising prices could have a similar impact to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine four years ago which pushed up the cost of energy, causing price rises for businesses and consumers around the world. UK gas prices rose to over 165p a therm on Tuesday which it last traded at a year after the start of the Ukraine war. It fell back to 146p a therm by early afternoon. The boost to the gas price came after QatarEnergy, one of the world's biggest



exporters, halted production following "military attacks" on its facilities. It subsequently announced that it would stop producing other materials including aluminum, methanol and urea used for fertiliser. UK gas prices have now doubled since the US and Israel began a wave of air strikes on Iran on Saturday. Higher gas prices could put pressure on household energy bills, although any impact would not be seen in the UK until July because a price cap has been put in place until then. Oil prices have not risen as sharply as there is greater flexibility in sourcing additional crude compared to

gas. Nevertheless, rising oil prices can affect the economy by making things such as motor fuel, transport and food more expensive. If inflation - the pace of price rises - picks up, then this may make central banks less likely to cut interest rates in the months ahead. Share indexes recovered some lost ground by early afternoon but were still trading lower. In the UK, the FTSE 100 was 2.6% lower. Germany's Dax fell 3.6% while in France, the CAC-40 slid by 2.9%. Shipping through the Strait of Hormuz is crucial to the global economy, with about 20% of the world's oil and gas passing through the water-

way. But traffic has come to a halt after several vessels were attacked in recent days. Ebrahim Jabbari, an adviser to the commander-in-chief of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), told state TV that ships "should not come to this region. They will certainly face a serious response from us". As well as pushing up prices on global energy markets, the conflict has triggered a rise in how much it costs to transport oil. Hiring a supertanker to move oil from the Middle East to China reached an all-time high on Monday of more than \$400,000 (£298,300) per day, almost double the cost last week, according to

data from the London Stock Exchange Group. Sanne Manders, president of logistics technology platform Flexport, told the BBC the Strait of Hormuz was "effectively closed". It is partly down to carriers not willing to take the risk, but also due to "insurance companies not being willing to insure this risk anymore", he told the Today programme. He added that carriers were likely to start raising rates "for any shipping in the world" in anticipation of higher fuel prices. US President Trump is facing concerns that the conflict in the Middle East could push up the cost of living. He is scheduled to meet Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Energy Secretary Chris Wright on Tuesday to discuss the issue. Crude oil prices could pass \$100 a barrel if the disruption to shipments is prolonged, Srinivaasan Balakrishnan from risk research firm Avellon Intelligence said. He predicted that if it held at that level US petrol prices could rise by up to 25 cents a gallon. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Washington would announce plans on Tuesday to deal with rising energy prices "We knew that going in would be a factor."

## SC angry after junior judge cites fake AI-generated orders

The problems in the case in Andhra Pradesh arose in August last year when a junior civil judge in the trial court in Vijaywada city passed an order in a case about a disputed property. The court had previously assigned an official to survey the property and file a report, which the defendants in the case objected to. The judge dismissed their objection, citing four past legal judgements - all of which were later found to be AI-generated. AI programmes have vastly simplified tasks in the workplace but generative AI systems are known for their ability to "hallucinate" and assert falsehoods as fact, even sometimes inventing sources for the inaccurate information. The defendants challenged the order in the state's high court, pointing out that the cited orders were fake. The high court acknowledged this, but accepted that the junior civil judge had made the error in "good faith" and went on to agree with the trial court's decision anyway. In its order, the high court said that "the citations may be non-existent, but if the learned trial court has considered the correct principles of law and its application to the facts of the case is also correct, mere mention-



ing of incorrect or non-existent rulings/citations in the order cannot be a ground to set aside the order". The high court had also sought a report from the junior judge who had used the AI-generated rulings. She told the court that this was her first time using an AI tool and she had believed the citations to be "genuine". She had no intention to misquote or misrepresent the rulings and that "the mistake occurred solely due to the reliance on an automatic source", the high court wrote. The high court also advocated for the "exercise of actual intelligence over artificial intelligence". Following this, the defendants appealed again, taking the matter to the Supreme Court, which was

less forgiving about the impact of AI. Coming down sternly against the fake judgements, the top court last Friday stayed the lower court's order on the property dispute. It said the use of AI while making judgements was not simply "an error in decision making" but an act of "misconduct". "This case assumes considerable institutional concern, not because of the decision that was taken on the merits of the case, but about the process of adjudication and determination," the top court said. The court said it would examine the case in more detail and issued notices to the country's Attorney and Solicitor General, as well as the Bar Council of India. In another case last month.

## OPENAI TO CHANGE DEAL WITH US MILITARY AFTER BACKLASH

OpenAI says it is making changes to the "opportunistic and sloppy" deal it struck with the US government over the use of its technology in classified military operations. On Monday OpenAI chief executive Sam Altman said the company planned to add language to its agreement, including explicitly prohibiting the use of its systems to spy on Americans. The deal had emerged on Friday following a fallout between OpenAI's rival Anthropic and the Department of Defense, over concerns around the use of its AI model Claude for mass surveillance and in fully autonomous weapons. But it has raised questions over how AI is used in war and how much power rests with government and private companies. A statement made on Saturday by OpenAI claimed its agreement with the Pentagon had "more guardrails than any previous agreement for classified AI deployments, including Anthropic's". But on Monday, Altman posted on X to say further changes were being made, including



making sure its system would not be "intentionally used for domestic surveillance of U.S. persons and nationals". As part of the new amendments, intelligence agencies such as the National Security Agency would also not be able to use OpenAI's system without a "follow-on modification" to the contract. Altman added the company had made a mistake by rushing "to get this out on Friday". "The issues are super complex, and demand clear communication," he said. "We were genuinely trying to de-escalate things and avoid a much worse outcome, but I think it just looked opportunistic and sloppy." OpenAI has faced backlash from users follow-

ing its announcement it was working with the Pentagon. Day-over-day uninstalls of the company's Chat GPT mobile app reportedly surged to 295% on Saturday, compared to a typical 9%. Meanwhile, Anthropic's Claude rose to the top of Apple's App Store ranking, where it still remains on Tuesday. The AI model was blacklisted by the Trump administration following Anthropic's refusal to drop a corporate "red-line" principle that its technology should not be used to create fully autonomous weapons. Despite this, the use of Claude in the US-Israel war with Iran has since emerged, hours after Trump's ban. The Pentagon declined to com-

ment on its dealings with Anthropic. How AI is used by the military AI is used in a number of ways in the military, for example streamlining logistics or quickly processing large amounts of information. The US, Ukraine, and Nato all use tech from Palantir, an American company which provides data analytics tools to government customers for intelligence gathering, surveillance, counterterrorism and military purposes. The UK Ministry of Defence recently signed a £240m contract with the firm. At the end of last year, the BBC spoke to some of those involved in integrating Palantir's AI-powered defence platform Maven into Nato. The software brings together a huge range of military information, from satellite data to intelligence reports, which can then be analysed by commercial AI systems such as Claude to help make "faster, more efficient, and ultimately more lethal decisions where that's appropriate" said Louis Mosley, head of Palantir's UK operations.

## BLENDERS PRIDE PACKAGED DRINKING WATER UNVEILS 'THE ONE AND ONLY', CELEBRATING THE POWER OF SUCCESS WITH DISTINCTION

**March 2026:** In its newest campaign, the brand showcases that in a world of many, only one rises above all with their unmistakable aura, confidence and style - akin to its cultural leadership and legacy. Blenders Pride Packaged Drinking Water, a cultural icon that has elevated the idea of success for generations, unveils its newest campaign "The One And Only" - a compelling new narrative of success. In today's world, where markers of success have become increasingly visible and crowded, the brand reasserts a timeless truth - True success lies in distinction - that draws admiration and sets one worlds apart. The new campaign captures this spirit, portrayed by three protagonists - Avanti Nagrath, Kirandeep Chahal and Mahieka Sharma - each embodying a different facet of the brand. Avanti radiates charisma with her fearless confidence and individuality, Kirandeep evokes desire with her magnetic and unapologetic presence, and



Mahieka inspires awe with poise and quiet admiration - all in an aspirational world filled with many equals - yet where they and hence, the brand itself, stand a cut above the rest and unmistakably command everyone around them. Rooted in style and substance, the brand has consistently shaped aspirational success in modern Indian culture - from leading with innovations, pioneering many industry-firsts to building iconic fashion platforms. With "The One And Only", it now charts the course of its next

evolution, speaking directly to a new generation of bold achievers who seek more than recognition - they seek admiration & influence. The 360-degree integrated campaign has been launched across Digital & Social platforms including the ongoing ICC T20 World Cup, front page ads on leading Newspapers and impactful Outdoor sites across major cities, driving widespread visibility and reinforcing the brand cultural leadership. Debasree Dasgupta, Chief Marketing Officer, Pernod Ricard

India, said "Blenders Pride has always believed in the power of success with style and stature. "The One And Only" presents a defining new idea of success, one that's fueled by distinction. It brings forth the cultural context that, today, the aspiring youth in India aims to not just be successful but stand apart with assurance. With this narrative of success, Blenders Pride captures the resounding aspirations of the youth, while further strengthening its position as an inspiring cultural leader."

## Apollo Hospitals Vice Chairperson Upasana Kamineni Konidela Inaugurates 1000th Apollo Pharmacy Store in Telangana

**Hyderabad 2026:** Upasana Kamineni Konidela, Vice Chairperson - CSR, Apollo Hospitals, inaugurated the 1000th Apollo Pharmacy store in Telangana, marking a significant milestone in Apollo's continued effort to expand access to quality healthcare. India's largest and most trusted pharmacy network now operates across all 33 districts of Telangana and employs more than 10,000 people across its retail, digital and supply chain ecosystem.



available across all districts, strengthening essential healthcare access across urban and semi-urban communities. Apollo currently services more than 1.65 lakh medicine orders daily and plans to add over 200 new pharmacy stores in Telangana over the next three years. Expressing her thoughts on the milestone, Upasana Kamineni Konidela said, "This milestone is not only about expanding access to quality healthcare, but also about creating meaningful and sustainable employment

opportunities especially for women across Telangana. As we grow, we are committed to building inclusive workplaces that empower women with stable careers, leadership opportunities, and financial independence, enabling them to uplift their families and communities." Through its omni-channel platform, Apollo 24/7, Apollo offers an integrated continuum of care including teleconsultations with Apollo doctors, diagnostic services, and customised insurance solutions all accessible from the comfort of home.

## ESCORTS KUBOTA LAUNCHES NEW 'SOUTH SPECIAL' PADDY TRACTOR SERIES

Introduces Shaurya, first dedicated paddy-focused range under the Powertrac brand Escorts Kubota Limited, the agri-machinery and construction equipment major, announced the launch of Powertrac Shaurya, a new 'South Special' paddy tractor series comprising five variants across the 39 HP to 52 HP category range. The launch marks the first time the Powertrac brand is introducing a dedicated paddy and wetland-focused series developed specifically for the paddy-growing regions of Southern India, including Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, strengthening the company's presence in a key mechanization segment. Escorts Kubota operates three tractor brands in India - Kubota, Farmtrac and Powertrac - catering to premium, entry-premium and value segments respectively. Powertrac Brand represents the company's value and mass segment



offering across multiple agricultural applications. Developed for paddy cultivation, the Shaurya series is engineered for reliable operations in wetland and water-logged field conditions. It incorporates cassette-type sealing across critical aggregates to help prevent water and mud ingress during operations and features a sharp turning radius of 3.1 metres to support manoeuvrability in small and medium-sized field conditions. The tractors are equipped with a fully constant mesh

gearbox with 8 forward and 2 reverse gears and offer Sensi-1 hydraulic lift in the 1600-2000 kg range, depending on the variant. An independent PTO lever with double clutch configuration enables controlled implement operations and supports advanced applications such as baler usage. PTO speed options include dual PTO offering 540/1000 and reverse PTO, supporting diversified paddy applications. A perforated elevated platform for paddy use and protected wiring harness

routing inside the fender channel are integrated to support operations in wetland environments and long working hours. The Shaurya series models are also equipped with an adjustable slider seat with anti-slippery pads. Commenting on the launch, Nikhil Nanda, Chairman and Managing Director said, "Southern India is central to Escorts Kubota's next phase of growth, and we are strengthening our presence through focused, high-quality, application-led products.

The launch of Shaurya is in line with these objectives as we deepen our presence in paddy markets and expand our regional footprint." Akira Kato, Deputy Managing Director said, "Our product development begins with field conditions rather than standard platforms. Shaurya has been engineered specifically for paddy and wetland operations in Southern markets to deliver reliability in demanding applications." Bharat Madan, Whole-time Director and CFO said, "This introduction strengthens our participation in the paddy segment in Southern markets and improves the regional composition of our tractor portfolio. Focused expansion in such application-driven segments is important to maintaining portfolio strength across cycles." Neeraj Mehra, Chief Officer - Tractor Business Division added, "Powertrac Shaurya is designed specifically for wetland farming."

# US warns of Iranian attack on Saudi oil city as Trump tells Tehran it's 'too late' to talk



The UAE's Fujairah media office says a fire broke out after debris fell from a drone that had been intercepted by air defences, but it adds the fire has been put out and no injuries reported. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz is expected to arrive at the White House in a few hours' time to meet with Donald Trump - the US president's first meeting with a foreign leader since strikes began in Iran. The visit has been long-planned and was announced before the US-Israeli military operation began, but both leaders are now focused on their interests in the Middle East as fighting escalates. While Germany has neither endorsed or supported the operation, the country has - along with France and the UK - called on Iran's leaders to stop their retaliatory strikes. In a joint statement on Sunday, those three countries said they would "take steps to defend our interests and those of allies in the

region", including, potentially, by "enabling necessary and proportionate defensive action" to destroy Iran's capability to fire drones and missiles. Trump will likely be hoping that Germany takes those steps and the two leaders will most certainly discuss Iran's future. Conflict in the Middle East has caused oil and gas prices to jump, but it may also lead to poorer crop yields and

higher food prices if it continues to impact global shipping. The continued closure of the Strait of Hormuz would lead to higher global prices of staples like corn, wheat and rice because the waterway is vital to shipping one-third of the world's urea - an essential ingredient in fertiliser, the chief executive of Yara has told World Business Express. "In some crops, you could see

reductions [of yields] of up to 50%," said Svein Tore Holsether, who runs the world's second-largest fertiliser company. The timing of the closure means supply of urea is constrained at a time when farmers and growers are buying fertiliser to apply it to fields, he said. Iran's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, Ali Bahreini, has cast doubt on the prospect of negotia-

tions with the United States. "For the time being we are very doubtful about the usefulness of negotiation," Ali Bahreini told reporters in Geneva on Tuesday, according to the Reuters news agency. It comes after US President Trump declared it was "too late" to talk in a post on his Truth Social messaging platform. I've been speaking to people inside Iran following a new wave of strikes. Omid, in his twenties, says people are becoming uneasy about how long the situation will go on for. "I had assumed they would target certain officials like [Iran's former Supreme Leader] Khamenei and that it would be over by now," he says. "There is a greater security presence on the streets, but the streets themselves are empty. Some shops have closed, particularly those near the affected areas... I heard the sound of explosions today in Tehran just now". Pouya, in his thir-

ties, tells me that prices have gone up since the attacks started. The cost of rice and potatoes have increased drastically, he says from Pardis - a city near Tehran. From the city of Karaj, Shayan says it's very difficult to get online now. "The price of everything has gone up," he says. "I didn't hear any strikes today; it feels like the calm before the storm," he adds. Maryam, in her twenties and in northern Tehran, sent me a text to say: "The attacks last night were terrible. Our house was shaking. We were preparing to leave the area because our home is near where the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] had issued an evacuation order. Before we could set off, they struck." In an update on the messaging app Telegram, the Israel Defense Forces says it has begun a large-scale wave of strikes targeting infrastructure in Iran's capital, Tehran. It says there will be more details to follow.

## Death toll in 'surprise' attack in South Sudan rises to 178, local official says



The number of people killed in an attack in South Sudan on Sunday when a group of unidentified men launched an assault in the north of the country has risen to 178, a local official has told the BBC. Describing the attack as carried out by dozens of armed youth, Ruweng Administrative Area's Information Minister James Monyluak Mijok alleged that they came from neighbouring Unity state and were linked to the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO). The SPLA-IO has denied any involvement in the attack, accusing the authorities of politicising

the violence. The UN has repeatedly warned that the country is at risk of sliding back into full-scale civil war. Medical aid groups have described the scale of casualties as alarming, even for a region that has experienced repeated outbreaks of violence. A diplomatic source quoted anonymously by the AFP news agency on Monday put the death toll at 70 but said it could increase. "The dead include 90 children, women and elderly people, as well as 79 members of regional forces, including police," Mijok said, adding that many of them had been buried in a mass grave.

## ZELENSKY FEARS TRUMP'S IRAN WAR COULD HURT UKRAINE



President Volodymyr Zelensky has warned that the war in the Middle East could leave Ukraine struggling to source air defence missiles. He also said there was "a risk" Ukraine's allies could be distracted by the conflict, and forget his country's defence against Russia's full-scale invasion. "We could find ourselves having difficulty obtaining missiles and weapons to defend our skies," he told Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera. "The Americans and their allies in the Middle East might need them to defend themselves, for example Patriot missiles." Asked if there was a risk the United States and the European Union could forget Ukraine's defence while focused on the Middle East, Zelensky replied: "Of course, it's a risk. But I hope the Iranian crisis remains a limited operation and doesn't turn into a long war. We know firsthand how bloody it risks being." For years Ukraine has become accustomed to being in the eyes of the world. Last week the streets of Kyiv thronged with Western leaders marking the grim, fourth anniversary of the moment

Russia launched its all-out war. But a few days later, people here in Ukraine's capital have felt an almost tangible shift of focus away to another conflict. Some here have pointed out the reaction of Gulf residents to drone strikes that in Kyiv would prompt no more than a shrug. But more fear what the fighting in the Middle East might mean for them. Zelensky's remarks illustrate that uncertainty. On one hand he is gloomy, pointing to the risks that Ukraine's defence against Russia becomes a forgotten war. There is already uncertainty about whether the latest planned talks with the US and Russia will take place. He is also aware the vast numbers of air defence interceptor missiles being fired off by Gulf countries could lead to a global shortage, making such weapons more expensive and harder to find. That was certainly true last summer when Israel and the US attacked Iran's nuclear facilities. "Israel was under Iranian attack then, and missile delivery programs for us were slowed down," Zelensky said. "It hasn't happened yet, but I fear it could happen again."

## THE LITTLE TOWN MAKING NEARLY ALL OF CHINA'S LANTERNS



In China, red lanterns could guide a traveller to safety in cold winter alleyways, be symbols of power outside an imperial hall, or act as a call to religious devotion when hung in a temple. They are also absolutely synonymous with lunar new year celebrations right across the vast country and link today's Chinese people with the culture of their ancestors. To imagine how many lanterns would be hung here, at any given time, is like trying to count how

many trees would be in the Amazon. And yet it is claimed that a remarkable 80% of the country's lanterns are still made - by hand - in one small town in Hebei Province. Walking around the dusty streets of Tuntou you see evidence of lantern making everywhere you go. A view through an open door into a courtyard might reveal a small group of villagers sitting on stools and making lanterns while they chat, while down the main street, red lanterns are piled up one on top of the other. Nobody seems to know just how many hundreds of years ago the craft started in this part of northern China but, if you're born in Tunou, you are immersed in lantern making from a very young age.

## SIX US SOLDIERS KILLED IN IRANIAN STRIKE ON KUWAIT BASE



Six American soldiers were killed in an Iranian strike against a military facility in Kuwait on Sunday, the US has confirmed. US Central Command originally said three soldiers died in the incident but officials confirmed on Monday that the death toll had doubled, after one person succumbed to their injuries and two more bodies were found in the rubble. Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth confirmed a US bunker in Kuwait was hit after a missile was launched during Iran's original retaliation evaded air defences. The six deaths are the only fatalities confirmed by the US military since it launched a

new war against Iran with Israel. Hegseth said a "powerful weapon" struck a "tactical operations centre that was fortified", without providing further details about the site's location. Three US military officials with direct knowledge of Iran's attack told the BBC's US partner CBS News that the service

members were in a makeshift office space in Kuwait. They questioned whether the building had been adequately fortified, telling CBS News a trailer was being used as an office, with 12ft (3.7m) steel-reinforced concrete barriers to shield it. The US has a long-standing defence relationship with Kuwait, and more

than 13,000 American soldiers are stationed in the Gulf nation. Iran has responded to attacks against it by launching missiles at Gulf countries allied with the US. Bahrain, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Qatar have all also seen strikes. Separately in Kuwait, the US confirmed three fighter jets were downed after what it described as an incident of "friendly fire" on Monday. Footage showed the jets spiralling to the ground. The pilots involved all managed to eject and survived the incident. Iran state media claimed the Iranian military had shot down the jets, without providing evidence.

## US NATIONALS URGED TO LEAVE MIDDLE EAST AS CONFLICT SPREADS



The US has urged its nationals to immediately leave most of the Middle East due to "serious safety risks", as the US-Israeli war against Iran widens. On Monday, the US State Department said Americans should "depart now via commercial means" from Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, the occupied West Bank and Gaza, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. Washington has so far not organised any evacuations in the region, where many flights have been cancelled or suspended since the US and Israel began striking

Iran on Saturday. Iran responded by firing missiles and drones at Middle Eastern nations allied to the US. Between 500,000 and one million US nationals are estimated to be living in the Middle East. Exact official numbers are not available as Americans are not

required to register with US authorities when they move abroad. American citizens were urged to check "the latest security updates" with nearby embassies and consulates, and given hotlines for if they need help leaving the region. The US embassy in Jerusalem said

on Monday that it "is not in a position at this time to evacuate or directly assist Americans in departing Israel", adding that it would be closed on Tuesday. It later said Israel had "begun operating shuttles to the Taba Border Crossing [with Egypt]" but warned that the embassy "cannot make any recommendation (for or against)" using it. On Tuesday, France said it was ready to fly back those of its citizens who were most at risk in the Middle East. French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot told the country's BFM TV broadcaster this could be done using both commercial and military flights.

## MEXICAN DRUG LORD 'EL MENCHO' BURIED IN GOLDEN COFFIN



Infamous Mexican drug lord Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes, also known as "El Mencho", was buried in a golden casket by his family on Monday. The cartel leader died after being wounded in a firefight between his bodyguards and Mexican special forces personnel deployed to capture him in late February. The 59-year-old founder of the feared Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) was the country's most-wanted man, while the US had offered a \$15m (£11.2m) reward for information leading to his arrest. His death triggered widespread retaliatory violence in which cartel members set fire to vehicles and blockaded roads across 20 Mexican states. Members of the National Guard were out in force to prevent fresh violence from breaking out during the colourful funeral near Guadalajara in Jalisco state, a stronghold for the cartel. Large floral tributes were seen being carried into the funeral home ahead of the ceremony, including one shaped like a rooster in a reference to his love of cock-fighting. According to AFP news agency, five lorries were needed to take all the tributes to the cemetery, most of which had been sent

anonymously. The funeral procession was accompanied by a band playing ranchero music and narcocorridos - songs praising drug lords. The traditional song El Muchacho Alegre ("The Cheerful Boy") was played as Oseguera's gold-coloured coffin arrived at a chapel located inside the cemetery grounds, local media reported. After an hour-long ceremony, the mourners - many of whom concealed their identities using face masks - followed the coffin as it was carried to the grave. Mexican media noted that the plot was relatively plain compared with those of other drug lords, which are often topped by large mausoleums. Under Oseguera's leadership, the CJNG became a powerful transnational criminal organisation which spread from its stronghold in Jalisco into many other Mexican states, where it engages in drug production and trafficking. Oseguera's killing by Mexican special forces has been seen as a victory for President Claudia Sheinbaum's government, which has come under increasing pressure by her US counterpart Donald Trump to do more to combat drug trafficking.

## US sanctions Rwanda's military and top commanders over fighting in DR Congo



The US has imposed sanctions on the Rwandan army and four of its senior commanders, accusing them of fuelling the conflict in neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo. Fighting has persisted despite a US-brokered peace deal in December between the Congolese and Rwandan governments aimed at ending the long-running conflict in eastern DR Congo. The US treasury department accused the Rwandan army of undermining the peace deal by training, equipping and fighting alongside the M23 rebel group. Rwanda swiftly rejected the accusations, saying the sanctions had unfairly targeted one side and "misrepresent the reality and distort the facts

of the conflict". Kigali denies supporting the M23, despite overwhelming evidence, and says its military presence in the region is a defensive measure against threats posed by armed groups in DR Congo to Rwanda's security. The sanctions come three months after Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi and his

Rwandan counterpart Paul Kagame signed the Washington Accords, aimed at ending hostilities. The ceremony was hosted by US President Donald Trump, who expressed optimism that it would bring lasting peace and described the signing as "historic". The M23 rebels were not signatories but have been part of a

parallel peace process led by Qatar, a US ally that has strong ties with Rwanda. Days after the Washington deal, the M23 captured the strategic Congolese city of Uvira, near the border with Burundi, forcing thousands to flee. The group later withdrew under pressure from the US government. However, the treasury department said on Monday that the M23's continued presence near Burundi's border "carries the risk of escalating the conflict into a broader regional war". It said that the rebels' offensives would have been impossible without the "the active support and complicity" of the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) and key senior officials.

## Trump voters back him on Iran - but that could change if war drags on

The US strikes on Iran may be the biggest story around the world, but in Texas - where voters head to the polls on Tuesday to select the Democratic and Republican nominees in November's midterm congressional elections - it appears mostly to be an afterthought. At least for now. At a banquet hall in the central Texas town of Waco on Monday, Ken Paxton, the Republican state attorney general running for the US Senate, made a pitch to voters that was heavy on domestic red meat for his conservative audience. Immigration, government spending and gun rights were top issues. Iran was mentioned in passing, as Paxton praised Americans

for making political change with ballots not bombs. After the event, Paxton spoke to reporters, who pressed him on his views on the ongoing military conflict. The candidate, who has a firmly established reputation as a Donald Trump loyalist, did not break ranks with the US president. "I am very glad that he did it," he said. "Iran is a great threat to our country." The Senate primary fights are the marquee matchup in Texas on Tuesday, with contested races for both the Democrats and Republicans. While those on the left have been comfortable criticising Trump and his decision to launch the Iran operation, Republicans have tended.



## Arjun Tendulkar, Saaniya Chandhok Mehendi Ceremony: Sachin Tendulkar, Wife Anjali, Daughter Sara Look All Decked Up



Arjun Tendulkar, IPL cricketer and son of India great Sachin Tendulkar, is getting ready for his marriage with Saaniya Chandhok. Ahead of the main ceremony, which is expected to be held on March 5, the first visuals of the couple's Mehendi ceremony went viral on Tuesday. Both the Tendulkar and Chandhok families got together for a lavish ceremony. Some reports claimed Yuvraj Singh and his wife Hazel also attended the ceremony. Sachin recently invited top dignitaries like Prime Minister Narendra Modi, President Droupadi Murmu and others for the wedding ceremony, which is expected to be held on March 5, 2026. "Jab beta koi ladki ko ghar leke aata hai, introduce karne ke liye, then you know ke beta bada ho gaya hai (When a son brings a girl home to introduce her, then you know that the son has grown up). They look madly in love with each other. Arjun, I have to say I am extremely proud of you to have found someone so special who loves you as much as you love her," said Sachin recently at a ceremony. Arjun and Saaniya got

engaged in August 2025. Arjun, who was recently traded from the Mumbai Indians to the Lucknow Super Giants in the Indian Premier League (IPL), is a regular in the Indian domestic cricket circuit. Saaniya is a successful entrepreneur and comes from a prominent background. She is the granddaughter of well-known Mumbai businessman Ravi Ghai and has reportedly been a close part of the Tendulkar inner circle for quite some time. Arjun has carved out a distinct path in domestic cricket, transitioning from his early days in Mumbai to becoming a vital bowling all-rounder for Goa. A tall left-arm fast bowler and a capable lower-order batsman, he made a sensational Ranji Trophy debut for Goa in 2022 by scoring a century, famously emulating his father's feat of reaching three figures in his maiden first-class match. While he has faced the inevitable pressure of carrying a legendary surname, he has shown glimpses of his potential during his IPL stint with the Mumbai Indians. He will be under the spotlight again as he dons the LSG jersey next season.

## PGTI Nexgen: Imran Ali Mollah And Pankaj Maandiyia Take The Honours In Round One

**Phillaur:** Imran Ali Mollah and Pankaj Maandiyia took the honours in Round One of the INR 25 lakh Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI)'s NexGen Phillaur Open 2026 presented by R S Gill, being played at the Ranjitgarh Golf Club in Phillaur, Punjab on Tuesday. Imran and Pankaj shot scores of three-under 68 at the Par-71 course to hold the joint lead at the second event of the 2026 DP World PGTI NexGen season. A bunch of six players were in tied third place at two-under 69. The six players included joint leader Imran's brother, Irfan Ali Mollah, Md Muaj, Krishna Verma, Rohit Boken, Ajay, and Aditya Raj Singh Chahal. While Imran Ali Mollah produced five birdies and two bogeys in his first round, Pankaj Maandiyia made five birdies and a double-bogey. The 54-hole event features a field of 90 players. The top



35 players and ties will make the cut at the end of round two on Wednesday. The NexGen Tour was launched by the PGTI last year with the objective of providing equal playing opportunities to all professional golfers of India and to increase the bench strength in Indian golf, which in turn increases competition and the level of golf. The NexGen also aims to take professional golf to Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities in

India, thus expanding the reach of the sport within the country. The prize purse for each NexGen event has been increased from INR 20 lakh to INR 25 lakh this season. The NexGen season will be the next three NexGen events of the season, which will be played at Lucknow Golf Club (March 10 - 12), Golden Greens Golf & Country Club, Gurugram (March 17 - 19), and Patna Golf Club (March 24 - 26).

## "Who Brought Him?" BCCI's Crystal Clear Stance Amid Demands Of Auqib Nabi Selection

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is facing an intense push to select Jammu & Kashmir pacer Auqib Nabi for the national team, especially following his standout campaign in the victorious Ranji Trophy season. BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia, when asked about the potential selection of Nabi for India's Test team, admitted that the 29-year-old pacer has caught everyone's attention with his performances; however, he noted that selection rests purely in the hands of the selectors, who have been monitoring him closely. Nabi finished the Ranji Trophy campaign with a whopping 60 wickets to his name in 10 matches. He was the highest wicket-taker of



the tournament, bagging seven five-wicket hauls, the most of any bowler this season. "He has played very well. His contribution has been major to the success of the team. He took five wickets in the quarter-final, five wickets in the semi-final, and left nothing in the final. His spell changed the final.

So, everybody is taking note of it," Saikia told the Times of India. "We have entrusted our selectors to be present at each and every Ranji Trophy game. In the final and in other matches, our selectors were present. I am sure they have done their job well. He was already in

the limelight. The selectors will take a call," Saikia said that selectors were present to watch Nabi and other members of the J&K team during the Ranji Trophy campaign. He noted that while local selectors brought him into the J&K team, the national selectors will now decide if and when to bring him into the India squad. "The BCCI has set the stage right so that no proper talent goes unnoticed. When selectors are present, their only focus is on players' performances, which they are tracking closely. That is why so many players from small and lesser-known places are getting opportunities to represent the country." "Regarding Nabi, he has come from Baramulla.

## "I Moulded My Game Around Dave": Tristan Stubbs Relishes Batting With Childhood Hero David Miller

It's easy to comprehend why Tristan Stubbs would gravitate towards Paarl Royals captain David Miller. For years, Miller was one of the youngest members of the Proteas squad — free-spirited, carefree, always ready for a surf or a round of golf. It sounds very much like the way Stubbs, 25, goes about his business now. They also happen to perform the same role for the national team: finishing off innings in high-pressure situations. And instead of viewing "Stubbo" as a threat, Miller embraced the kid from Knysna and took him under his wing when he joined the Proteas back in 2022. It was a full-circle moment for Stubbs, who had grown up trying to imitate his idol Miller every time he walked to the crease for Grey High School in Gqeberha. "I



love batting with Dave [Miller]. I pretty much watched him my whole junior years and tried to mould my game around Dave and the way he plays the backend," Stubbs said. "They have both matured in the interim — Miller is now married and a father to a doting little boy,

Ben, while Stubbs has graduated to Sunrisers Eastern Cape captain — but at heart, their relationship remains as strong as ever. It was certainly evident when they batted together in the double Super Over contest against Afghanistan, when Stubbs smashed a six off the final

delivery to tie the game for the second time. Stubbs followed it by launching a six off the first ball in the second Super Over before Miller assumed control, bashing two further maximums to get the Proteas over the line by the barest of margins. The high-intensity power-hitting display contrasted with their 35-run, 21-ball partnership against India in the first Super Eights clash last Sunday. Stubbs adopted a more measured approach after Pretoria Capitals star Dewald Brevis was dismissed, choosing to rebuild with Miller before launching a full-on assault again. He became even more calculated after Miller departed for 63 off 35 balls in the 16th over, before blazing away in the final over to finish unbeaten on 44 off 24 balls.

## Caught Between Conflict and Competition: PV Sindhu's Harrowing Few Days



When PV Sindhu boarded her flight on February 28, she was thinking about match preparation, court conditions and the long week ahead at the All England Open Badminton Championships in Birmingham. Within 15 minutes of landing in Dubai, those thoughts were replaced by uncertainty. "I landed at around 1 pm. By 1.15 pm, all flights were suspended," Sindhu said, recounting the moment the scale of the disruption began to sink in. What initially appeared to be a routine delay soon escalated into a complete airspace closure. For hours, passengers waited without clarity. Some of Sindhu's fellow Indian players had transited through Dubai just a few hours earlier and were already on their way to Birmingham. "If I had left a little earlier, I might have made it too," she reflected. Chaos at the Airport As the situation worsened, Dubai airport descended

into confusion. Flights across terminals were cancelled. Immigration was temporarily shut. Internal trains stopped functioning. Thousands of passengers were left stranded, unsure whether to wait, reroute or abandon plans altogether. Sindhu and her team were eventually told they would be moved to a transit hotel. Even that process took hours. Her coach, who had remained at the airport longer, heard a loud explosion-like sound barely 100 metres away. There was smoke. People began running. Airport authorities rushed passengers out and arranged transport to a different hotel. "It was very frightening," Sindhu said quietly. Even after being shifted, the sense of danger lingered. From their hotel rooms, the team heard loud noises multiple times. Emergency alerts flashed across their phones, advising them to stay indoors and away from windows.



Cristiano Ronaldo's Rs 750 Crore Private Plane Leaves Saudi Arabia Amid War

## "NOBODY WILL REALLY APPRECIATE":

## Jasprit Bumrah Picks The Turning Point Of India vs West Indies T20 World Cup Clash

While Sanju Samson was the hero of India's win over West Indies in the T20 World Cup 2026 Super 8 match on Sunday - a victory that took the team into the semi-finals - there were other crucial contributions too. Jasprit Bumrah picked Shivam Dube's two boundaries in the 19th over as his favourite moment from the match after India successfully chased down a mammoth target of 196 runs in a must-win game at Eden Gardens in Kolkata. Reacting to a question about his favourite moment from the match, Bumrah said, "The two fours that Dube hit. Nobody will really appreciate that. But the people who really know cricket know that those two fours really released the pressure for us. Because sometimes, 9-8 runs



in the last over can get tricky," according to a video posted by ICC. In the match, West Indies posted 195/4 after opting to bat, powered by contributions from Roston Chase (40), Hope (32), Shimron Hetmyer (27), and an unbeaten 76-run partnership between Jason Holder (37\*) and Rovman Powell (34\*). India's bowlers were led by

Jasprit Bumrah, who returned figures of 2/36. Bumrah took a couple of wickets in the match, conceding 36 runs in his four overs. He said, "The wicket was holding up, so we wanted to use our variation. We didn't want to bowl too fast because that was an easy option. Hit our back of length, use our change of pace. We wanted to

make run-scoring as difficult as possible. And today was a good day when I got some wickets." In reply, India overcame an early setback before a series of partnerships guided them home. Sanju Samson played a key role in the chase, stitching crucial stands with Suryakumar Yadav and Tilak Varma, as India sealed a five-wicket victory to progress further in the tournament. Speaking about Sanju Samson's knock, Bumrah said, "I'm really happy for him because, you know, in the last month he's had a little bit of an up-and-down journey. To keep a good mindset, sometimes being in and out, it can be difficult for you as a cricketer. You want stability, you can sometimes question yourself. But come this day.

## Lakshya Sen Stuns Defending Champion Shi Yuqi In Thriller At All England Championships



India's Lakshya Sen gave a fine display of his mental strength and physical prowess, defeating China's Shi Yu Qi in a gripping three-game contest that swung on razor thin margins and relentless pace in Birmingham on Tuesday. Lakshya prevailed 23-21, 19-21, 21-17 in the contest that was as physical as it was tactical, marking his first victory over the former world No. 1 in a BWF World Tour event. Lakshya had defeated the Chinese in the Asian Games team championships in 2023. "Lakshya was very calm and composed today. Right from the start, he made Shi work hard for every single point, and eventually the Chinese player began to tire," Vimal told PTL. "At one stage in the second game, I felt Lakshya was getting a bit fatigued, but he recovered well and raised his level. His attacking play was excellent too. "Overall, it was a very confidence boosting win," he added. Lakshya looked sharp from the outset, opening up an 11-7 lead at the mid-game interval in the first game with sharp angled smashes and quick interceptions at the net. He stretched it to 17-12, repeatedly breaking

down Shi's defence with steep cross-court winners and tight net exchanges. However, the contest turned dramatic when Lakshya squandered leads of 18-12 and 19-16. Shi suddenly came alive, reeling off three straight points to draw level at 20-20. The Chinese saved three game points in a tense finish and forced 21-all after another burst of attacking play. Lakshya earned a fourth opportunity but let it slip before Shi's backhand found the net to hand the Indian a fifth game point. This time Lakshya sealed it with a decisive cross court smash to pocket the opener. After the change of ends in the second game, Shi made a positive start. Lakshya punished a short lift and unleashed a thunderous down the line smash to edge 6-5 ahead, but a miscued toss handed the Chinese the initiative at 9-8. Shi entered the break with a three point cushion. The rallies grew longer and more punishing as both players engaged in a fierce physical battle. It became difficult to single out one dominant aspect as the match boiled down to who was fractionally better in key moments.

## “Repu Udayam 10 Gantalku” First Look Unveiled, Promises a Gripping Race Against Time



The pulse of Telugu cinema is hitting a high note with the unveiling of the first-look poster for the upcoming suspense thriller, “Repu Udayam 10 Gantalku”. Presented by Mango Mass Media, the film promises a high-stakes narrative where every second is a battle for survival. The intense first-look poster released today features a “ticking clock” theme that has instantly grabbed the attention of cinephiles.

The poster showcases a versatile ensemble including Abhinav Gomatam, Hebah Patel, Chaitanya Rao, Kireeti Damaraju, Vasu Inturi, Sahithi Avancha, and Mohith against a striking contrast of icy blue and fiery red. At the center of the frame is a massive, weathered metallic clock, looming like a silent judge over the characters who are shown in a dead sprint. Every element of the design screams “Race Against Time,” signaling a deadline that

threatens to change everything. Directed by Chendu Muddu and produced by Ram Veerapaneni, the film is being mounted with top-tier production values. With the promising tagline “In Cinemas Soon,” the announcement sets the stage for what many are calling the next big suspense hit of the season. The team is currently busy with post-production, and an upcoming announcement is expected to drop shortly.

## “SAMPRAADAYINI SUPPINI SUDDHAPUSANI” WILL APPEAL TO AUDIENCES OF ALL SECTIONS AS AN OUT-AND-OUT ENTERTAINER: ACTRESS LAYA

After classic entertainers like Missamma, Adirindaya Chandram, and Tata Birla Madhyalo Laila, Shivaji and Laya have reunited for Sampraadayini Suppini Suddhapusani. Following the successes of Little Hearts and Raju Weds Rambayi, prominent producers Bunny Vasu and Vamsi Nandipati are releasing the film in association with ETV Win. The recently released trailer has raised huge expectations for the movie. Presented as a crime-comedy family thriller, Sampraadayini Suppini Suddhapusani is being produced by Shivaji himself under the Sri Shivaji Productions banner, presented by Rikki in association with ETV Win, and directed by Sudheer Sriram. The film is set to release in theatres on March 6. On this occasion, Laya interacted with the media and shared details about the film.

### HOW DID IT FEEL TO ACT WITH SHIVAJI AGAIN AFTER NEARLY 20 YEARS?

It has been almost 20 years since Shivaji garu and I acted together. When I was first approached, I assumed it was a family drama. But when I learned it was an out-and-out comedy entertainer, I felt happy because comedy is my favorite genre. It's a film that connects with everyone. The comedy genre appeals to all

age groups. Along with humor, the film has an interesting twist and thrilling elements. It falls under the dark comedy genre — essentially a comedy crime thriller. I felt a unique vibe the moment I heard the story.

### WHAT IS YOUR ROLE LIKE IN THE FILM?

I play the character Uttara. I've never seen myself in such a role before. Even I felt very excited when I heard about it. Mine is a strong character who dominates even a powerful role like Mangapathi's. Shivaji garu encouraged me a lot. I really liked my role. The scenes between Shivaji and me will be highly hilarious.

### WAS THE FILM INITIALLY PLANNED FOR OTT? NOW IT'S RELEASING IN THEATRES?

Initially, it was planned for a theatrical release. But at one stage, it was said that it would stream on OTT. Since I am used to seeing myself on the big screen, I was a little disappointed when I heard that. However, many prominent people who watched the film felt that it deserved a theatrical release, so it is now coming to theatres.

My daughter was very upset when she heard it might release on OTT. She always wants to watch my films on the silver screen. Now that it's releasing in theatres, we are very happy.

### WHAT ARE YOUR EXPECTATIONS FOR THE FILM?



### HOW DID IT FEEL TO ACT WITH SHIVAJI AGAIN AFTER NEARLY 20 YEARS?

The trailer has been well received and everyone says they liked it. The film will be very entertaining. It's a movie that will satisfy all sections of the audience. People will walk out with the satisfaction of having watched a good film.

### HAVE YOU NOTICED ANY CHANGES IN SHIVAJI?

Cinema is his passion. He

constantly thinks about how to take the film to the audience. He loves cinema in every way. Compared to earlier, his love for films has grown even more now.

### IS THERE ANYTHING SPECIAL ABOUT YOUR ROLE IN THIS FILM?

Laya is often associated with emotional roles — making others cry or crying on screen. But in this film, I make others cry! It's a role I thoroughly enjoyed. It's a somewhat selfish character who mainly thinks about her husband and family. She wants her husband to always be well and happy — that's her mindset.

### WHAT KIND OF ROLES WOULD YOU LIKE TO DO?

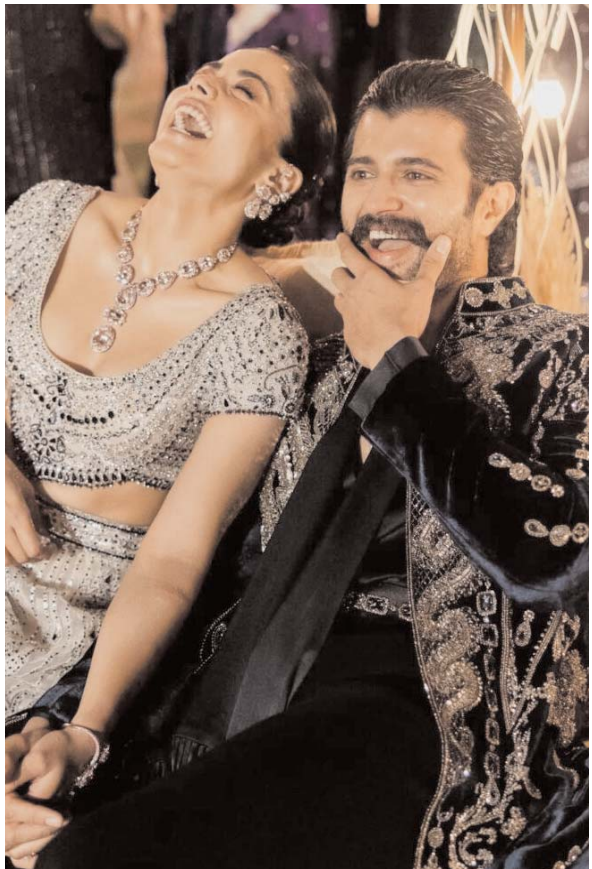
I'm not particular that I must only do lead roles. If lead roles come, I'll do them. But even if it's a small role, I'll accept it if I like the story and my character.

The scope for female roles is limited, so I want to choose the best among what comes my way. I've already done soft roles, so I now want to do strong characters. Though I may look soft, when I have to say something, I say it strongly. In Vadhalu, audiences will see another side of me.

### YOUR UPCOMING FILMS?

In Vadhalu, I'm playing the wife of Jagapathi Babu. I'm also doing a film with Srikanth, directed by Nageswara Reddy. It's a socio-fantasy film in the style of Yamaleela. Vadhalu is a psychological thriller. I'm trying different genres.

## VIJAY DEVERAKONDA AND RASHMIKA OVERWHELMED BY FANS' LOVE NATIONWIDE



Mumbai: The newlywed couple, Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandanna, expressed their gratitude to their admirers across the country for showering them with so much love and affection as they commence their journey together. As part of the celebration, Vijay and Rashmika recently distributed sweets in several cities across the country and also performed ‘Annadanam’ in various temples. Expressing their joy, they shared a video of themselves distributing sweets to the crowd gathered outside the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam temple in Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad, where Vijay and Rashmika recently offered prayers after getting married. In another post, they dropped a

heartfelt gratitude note that read, “Today, as we begin our life together, our hearts are full. So much of who we are is because of the love we have received from the loving people across our beautiful country. It means so much to us to share this day and celebration with you by sharing a simple meal. With all our gratitude and love, We seek all your blessings.” On February 28, Vijay and Rashmika made the announcement of sharing their joy with their admirers through a social media post that went, “To the beautiful people of this country. You have always been a part of our journeys and our love. And it would make us truly happy to celebrate our wedding with all of you.

## D/O PRASAD RAO KANABADUTALEDHU CREATES A DIGITAL MILESTONE – 75 MILLION STREAMING MINUTES WITHIN 75 HOURS ON ZEE5

The Telugu ZEE5 Original D/O Prasad Rao Kanabadutaledhu has stormed the digital space, recording a remarkable 75 million streaming minutes within just 75 hours of its premiere. The emotionally charged suspense thriller has rapidly emerged as one of the platform's most talked-about releases, reflecting the powerful connection it has forged with audiences across regions. At the heart of the series lies an intense and deeply personal father-daughter story. Headlined by Rajeev Kanakala in a deeply impactful performance, the show explores themes of love, fear, responsibility, and resilience through the lens of a father searching for his missing



daughter. Rajeev Kanakala's portrayal of Prasad Rao has resonated strongly with viewers for its emotional authenticity and layered restraint. His performance anchors the narrative, allowing audiences to experience the turmoil, hope, and vulnerability of a parent pushed to the edge. Vasanthika, who

plays the daughter central to the mystery, brings emotional depth and quiet strength to the screen. Her presence elevates the emotional stakes of the story, making the father-daughter dynamic the true emotional spine of the series. Udaya Bhanu adds further weight with her commanding screen presence, while the

supporting cast enriches the investigation and dramatic arcs with convincing performances. Beyond its emotional core, the series has connected with audiences through its gripping narrative progression and immersive storytelling style. Each episode sustains tension while deepening character layers, resulting in strong binge engagement. The screenplay balances suspense with human drama, ensuring that the mystery unfolds alongside powerful emotional moments that stay with viewers. The series is written and directed by Poluru Krishna, known for his rooted storytelling approach and ability to blend emotional drama with suspense-driven narratives.

## ROHIT ROY CALLS EMRAAN HASHMI 'EASIEST ACTORS TO DIRECT'



## MANCHU MANOJ & BHUMA MOUNIKA REDDY CELEBRATE 3 YEARS OF TOGETHERNESS

## A partnership built on shared purpose, rooted in family, and driven by a vision larger than cinema

Actor, entrepreneur, and cultural force Manchu Manoj and businesswoman Bhuma Mounika Reddy celebrate their third wedding anniversary today. The couple tied the knot on March 3, 2023, in a ceremony that blended traditional grandeur with personal warmth, surrounded by close family and well-wishers. What many don't know is that their relationship was first forged not through film circles or formal introductions, but through a shared love for social aerobics a space where discipline met energy, and where two people with parallel ambitions discovered they were running in the same direction. Three years on, their family

has grown beautifully. The couple are proud parents to son Dhairav, a spirited young boy with a love for sport and strategy, and daughter Deva Sena Shoba MM affectionately nicknamed “MM Puli” by her father who was born on April 2, 2024, and has already become a beloved presence among fans on social media. Together, they are building a home anchored in values, ambition, and joy. Professionally, the years since their marriage have marked a powerful resurgence for Manoj. Back-to-back blockbusters Bhairavam and Mirai reaffirmed his formidable screen presence and mass appeal, with audiences and critics alike celebrating his versa-

tility and raw energy. He is currently shooting for his next film David Reddy, which has already generated significant buzz, and has signed a slate of exciting projects that promise to take his career into an entirely new orbit. The best, as they say, is yet to come. Beyond the screen, Manoj launched Mohana Raga Music in November 2025 a music label dedicated to promoting emerging talent, encouraging experimental sounds, and elevating Telugu music on a global platform. Through this initiative, he continues to champion fresh voices and innovative artistry, reinforcing his commitment to nurturing the creative ecosystem beyond cinema.

Mounika, meanwhile, has been quietly building an empire of her own. As the Founder and CEO of Namaste World Celebrating Kids, she has scaled a homegrown toy brand to over 75,000 units sold across 300+ retail stores nationally, including Hamleys, Mothercare, Amazon, and FirstCry all entirely self-funded, with zero paid promotions. The brand has secured a distribution partnership with Reliance and is now preparing to expand its direct-to-consumer operations. Under her leadership, Namaste World is not just a business; it is a movement to put Indian-made, culturally rooted toys in the hands of every child.

