

LIQUOR POLICY CASE: DELHI HC ISSUES NOTICE TO KEJRIWAL ON ED PLEA



CHINA IS TRYING TO PLAY PEACEMAKER IN THE IRAN WAR - WILL IT WORK?



VAIBHAV SOORYAVANSHI REVEALS 'SECRET' DIET BEFORE HITTING 15-BALL HALF-CENTURY FOR RR VS CSK IN IPL 2026



IN BRIFS

INDIAN CITIZEN INJURED IN DRONE ATTACK IN UAE

Dubai (TSIT) An Indian national was injured when he was hit by shrapnel from a drone intercepted by the air defence system in the United Arab Emirates on Wednesday, local government said. The incident occurred near the Umm Al Thuob Industrial Area in Umm Al Qaiwain, one of the seven emirates, state-run WAM news agency reported. The Umm Al Qaiwain Government Media Office confirmed that the relevant authorities in the emirate responded to an incident that occurred near a facility in the Umm Al Thuob Industrial Area, resulting from falling shrapnel following the successful interception of a drone by air defence systems. "The incident led to the injury of one Indian national," the agency quoted the office as saying. Earlier last week, five Indians were injured in the UAE when debris fell in the vicinity of the Khalifa Economic Zones Abu Dhabi (KEZAD) as a ballistic missile was intercepted by the country's air defence system, local media reported on Saturday. Before that, on Thursday, an Indian national was among the two killed in the UAE when debris of missiles intercepted by the country's air defence system fell on a street, Abu Dhabi Media Office reported. Starting February 28, the US and Israel have launched a massive joint attack on Iran and with the Islamic nation's retaliation, it has extended to the entire Gulf region.

UPI OUTAGE: USERS REPORT FAILED TRANSACTIONS ACROSS CITIES

New Delhi, April 1 : Digital payment services faced disruption across India on Wednesday, leaving many users unable to complete transactions through UPI platforms. According to outage tracking platform Downt detector, complaints surged sharply during the day -- indicating a widespread issue. The impact appeared significant on State Bank of India, which saw over 500 outage reports, while UCO Bank recorded around 40 complaints. Overall, UPI-related downtime reports also crossed 40, with numbers continuing to rise as more users flagged issues. The disruption was not limited to a single region, with users from cities like New Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Jaipur and Pune reporting failed transactions and payment errors. In the case of SBI, the outage appeared more widespread, with complaints also coming in from Kolkata, Guwahati and Chennai. Meanwhile, UCO Bank users facing issues were largely concentrated in New Delhi, Jaipur and Kolkata. Many users took to X to share their experience. While some expressed frustration over failed payments, others were unsure whether the issue was with their bank or their own devices. Several users reported transactions getting stuck midway, while in some cases UPI apps failed to load completely. Responding to the situation, SBI said on social media that a scheduled maintenance activity had been extended till 12:30 pm on April 1. The bank warned that services such as UPI, IMPS, YONO, internet banking, NEFT and RTGS may face disruptions during this period. It advised customers to use alternatives like UPI Lite, eRupee (CBDC) app and ATM services in the meantime, while apologising for the inconvenience caused.

"Hello Kerala" CM Revanth Strikes Political Pitch in Campaign Trail

Hyderabad (TSIT): Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy launched an energetic campaign in Kerala, combining cultural connect with sharp political criticism while canvassing support for Congress-led UDF candidates. Opening his speech with "Hello Kerala...", he engaged the crowd in Malayalam and Telugu, praising Kerala as a model state in education, literacy, and human development. He highlighted the legacy of Congress stalwarts like K. Karunakaran, Oommen Chandy, and A. K. Antony for transforming the state into "God's Own Country." Taking aim at the BJP-led Centre and the ruling Left government, Revanth Reddy alleged both failed to deliver development, jobs, and investments. He said while one promotes "communal politics" and the other claims communism, both have resulted in unemployment and stagnation. The Chief Minister raised concerns over migration of



Kerala youth to Gulf countries, urging the Union Government to introduce support schemes for returning workers amid global uncertainties. He also criticized both governments for failing to control inflation and rising living costs.

Reaffirming Congress' commitment to inclusive development, he promised that a Congress-led government would boost investments and create employment opportunities. Adding a lighter touch, he referenced football star Lionel Messi,

saying Telangana brought him to Hyderabad and Kerala could do the same under Congress rule. Concluding with popular Malayalam phrases, he urged voters to back Congress in the Assembly elections, expressing confidence of victory.

THIS IS NOT OUR WAR, STRAIT OF HORMUZ MUST REOPEN: UK PM STARMER

reopen: UK PM Starmer London, April 1 (UNI UK's Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Wednesday sought to clear his stand on the West Asia war, saying the conflict is not UK's war, and reassured the British public that the

UK will not be drawn into the fighting, while outlining a decisive plan to protect national security, energy supplies, and the economy. "This is not our war," Starmer said, "we will not be drawn into the conflict.



That is not in our national interest," as he underlined the fact that the conflict in the Middle East has now entered its second month, prompting urgent action from the UK government. The Prime Minister stressed that UK's priority

is de-escalation and the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, a critical energy artery in the region. "The most effective way we can support the cost of living in Britain is to push for peace and maritime security in the Gulf," he said.

RAJYA SABHA PASSES CAPFS ADMINISTRATION BILL TO STREAMLINE RECRUITMENT AND SERVICE RULES

New Delhi (TSIT) The Rajya Sabha on Wednesday approved the Central Armed Police Forces (General Administration) Bill, 2026, a key legislation aimed at standardizing recruitment, deputation, promotion and service conditions of senior officers across India's Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs). The Bill, introduced in the Upper House on March 25, seeks to create an overarching legal framework to regulate Group A General Duty officers and other senior personnel in the forces, addressing what the government described as a fragmented regulatory system that has led to litigation and administrative challenges in recent years. According to the provisions of the legislation, the central

government will be empowered to frame rules governing recruitment, deputation, promotions and service conditions for officers across five CAPFs - the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Border Security Force (BSF), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), and Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB). The government may also extend the law to other forces by amending the schedule through notification. A significant feature of the Bill is its overriding authority, which allows the central government to frame rules "notwithstanding any other law, judgment, or court order," while ensuring that existing rules and financial benefit orders remain in force until revised.

'Not even God safe in God's Own Country': Rajnath Singh targets LDF, UDF

Thiruvananthapuram, April 1 : Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday launched a sharp political offensive in Kerala, alleging that "not even God is safe in God's Own Country", as he accused both the Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the United Democratic Front (UDF) of corruption and appeasement politics. Campaigning for NDA candidate Vatsala Prasanna Kumari in Paravur, Singh invoked a Biblical analogy, saying Judas betrayed Jesus for silver coins, and alleged that the LDF had "betrayed Lord Ayyappa for gold". He further claimed that those responsible for the alleged gold theft were being shielded, adding that a photograph had surfaced showing a senior Congress leader alongside the accused. The Defence Minister asserted that the



alleged Sabarimala gold theft would be probed by the CBI and demanded strict action against those accused of looting public wealth. Taking aim at both fronts, Rajnath Singh alleged that despite their political rivalry, the LDF and UDF were "two sides of the same coin" when it comes to corruption. "Their flags may be different, but their thinking is the

Amaravati will remain as one and only capital: CM Naidu

Nellore: Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu reiterated that Amaravati will remain as one and only capital of Andhra Pradesh state, asserting that no one can shift it "even an inch." He expressed happiness over the passage of the Capital Bill in Parliament granting legal status to Amaravati. Addressing a public meeting during the Pedala Sevalo programme at Vinjamuru in Nellore district today, the Chief Minister said Amaravati symbolizes the self-respect of the people of Andhra Pradesh. He termed the approval of the bill in the Lok Sabha as a matter of pride for the state and said it removes all uncertainties surrounding the capital's future. The Chief Minister thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, along with leaders of various parties who supported the bill. He criticized previous regimes for creating confusion with a three-capital proposal and alleged that they neglected legislative responsibility on the capital issue. The Chief Minister highlighted that the government is implementing large-scale welfare measures through the Pedala Sevalo initiative on the first of every month. He noted that Andhra Pradesh spends Rs 2,750 crore monthly on pensions, sig-



nificantly higher than neighboring Tamil Nadu. He said schemes like Thalliki Vandanam and Deepam 2.0 are being implemented effectively, with free LPG cylinders and plans to provide piped gas to households. An annual subsidy of Rs 2,400 will be credited to beneficiaries' accounts.

On irrigation, he stated that the Centre has released Rs 1,300 crore for the Polavaram Project, which the government aims to dedicate to the nation before Godavari pushkaram. The Chief Minister announced Rs 34 crore for bringing water from the Somasila canal to Vinjamuru's Patacheruvu and assured that the tank will be filled by October. He praised local efforts in water conservation.

TRUMP TO ADDRESS NATION ON IRAN CONFLICT

Washington, April 1 : US President Donald Trump will address the nation on Wednesday night (Thursday morning, India time) with an update on the ongoing conflict with Iran, the White House said, as fighting involving the US and Israel enters its second month. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt announced the address, saying: "Tune In: Tomorrow night at 9 PM ET, President Trump will give an Address to the Nation to provide an important update on Iran." This would be his first address to the nation from the Oval Office of the White House after the Iran war started on February 28. The address to the nation comes amid intensifying military activity and mounting questions over Washington's next steps. The Trump Administration is signalling two fold approach which encompasses both military resolve and a potential diplomatic opening. The US-Israeli campaign against Iran has stretched into its second month, with recent polling showing growing public unease over the trajectory of the conflict and the risk of deeper American involvement.



TVK flags security lapse for Vijay; letter to MHA sparks row over official name error

Chennai, April 1 : The Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) has written to the Union Home Ministry alleging inadequate security arrangements for its President, actor-turned-politician Vijay, during his ongoing election campaign in Tamil Nadu. The development has triggered controversy after the letter reportedly mentioned the name of a serving Governor instead of a current Union Home Ministry official. In its communication addressed to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the party claimed that despite Vijay being provided 'Y' category security, the arrangements on the ground during campaign



events were insufficient and raised concerns over his safety as well as that of the public attending the rallies. The issue came to the fore following Vijay's nomination

filing on March 30 from the Perambur Assembly constituency. After submitting his papers, he had planned a series of campaign programmes across Perambur,

Kolathur and Villivakkam constituencies. Party sources said necessary permissions were obtained and a structured campaign plan had been put in place. However, the actor-politician reportedly cut short parts of his campaign, citing inadequate police protection. While he addressed gatherings in Perambur and Kolathur, his scheduled visit to Villivakkam was cancelled at the last minute. TVK leaders claimed that the security deployment was insufficient to manage both the crowd and potential threats, prompting the decision. Subsequently, the party lodged a formal complaint

with the Tamil Nadu Chief Electoral Officer, seeking immediate intervention to ensure proper protection during campaign events. Continuing its escalation, TVK executive C.T.R. Nirmal Kumar is said to have forwarded a detailed representation to the Union Home Ministry highlighting these concerns. Amid this, a fresh controversy erupted when a copy of the letter surfaced in public. The document reportedly referred to Ajay Kumar Bhalla as the Union Home Secretary — an apparent factual error, as he is currently serving as the Governor of Manipur and no longer holds that position in the ministry.

# Nalanda University's revival symbol of commitment to re-establish its glory in modern form: Prez Murmu

**RAJGIR:** President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday said the revival of Nalanda University is a symbol of national and international commitment to re-establish its glorious heritage in a modern setting.

Addressing the convocation ceremony of the university here, she said the ancient Nalanda university had been a great centre of knowledge for about eight centuries, and its fall was a monumental loss not only for India but also for the entire world.

"Its revival is a symbol of national and international commitment to re-establish the university's glorious heritage in a modern setting," Murmu said.

The President expressed confidence that Nalanda University will emerge as a leading global educational institution at a time when the "world faces many complex challenges, and the need for compassionate, independent and critical thinking" is greater than

ever. "At the same time, the benefits of its progress should also reach the society where it is established," she asserted.

The President appreciated the university's community outreach initiatives to connect with traditional knowledge systems.

Murmu congratulated graduating students and said their achievements are the result of perseverance, discipline, and intellectual commitment.

Conferring degrees to the graduates, the President said the students of the institute receive a "shared inheritance" of humanity.

"Students graduating from here receive two things -- a degree and an inheritance. While the degree is their personal achievement, the heritage of humanity they inherit here is a shared one," Murmu added.

The President also awarded gold medals to 36 students of the Nalanda



University. She expressed happiness that over half of the graduating students this year comprised students from more than 30 countries.

"Today's ceremony is a reaffirmation of a promise that knowledge shall endure, that dialogue shall prevail, and that learning shall continue to serve humanity," she said.

On the occasion of Mahavir Jayanti, the President said, "Lord Mahavir and Buddha spread the message

of non-violence, compassion and love to the entire humanity from this region of Bihar."

She said that some of the finest minds in the history of Buddhist thought lived and worked in Nalanda.

"For close to eight centuries, ancient Nalanda was the intellectual heart of Buddhist scholarship in Asia. I am confident that Nalanda University can emerge as a leading global centre for Buddhist studies. I encourage the university

to invest in this field with resolve, depth and openness," Murmu said.

The President said that Nalanda University must embody the spirit of enquiry, dialogue, and synthesis to regain its glorious tradition. "The ancient Indian traditions of learning were never rigid. Instead, they encouraged enquiry, dialogue, and synthesis. Nalanda must once again embody this spirit, and bring together knowledge systems from across disciplines and cultures," she said.

Such a development, the President said, will be in sync with the government's renewed emphasis on holistic, multi-disciplinary, and value-based education through the National Education Policy-2020.

She also took part in a tree-planting event before the convocation ceremony, and praised the university's commitment towards achieving the goal of net-zero emissions.

# Telangana Minister seeks urgent additional LPG supplies from Centre for autorickshaws

**HYDERABAD:** Telangana Civil Supplies Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy on Tuesday urged Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri for urgent additional LPG supplies by the Centre in view of shortages being faced by LPG autorickshaws in the state, mainly in Hyderabad. In a letter addressed to Puri, Reddy said the domestic LPG supply is being maintained at 10 per cent to meet essential household needs, and commercial LPG allocations are being regulated in accordance with the Union government's guidelines. However, the auto LPG segment in Telangana has been significantly impacted, he said.

A large number of autorickshaws in the state operate on LPG and as per available data, around one lakh LPG autorickshaws are plying in the state, he said.

The auto LPG distribution network in Telangana comprises both PSUs and private operators, with PSUs, including IOCL,



and BPCL, collectively accounting for a share of 20 per cent operating 33 outlets, while private operators operate network of 110 outlets accounting for 80 per cent market share.

"Due to prevailing supply constraints, there is a shortfall of around 55 MTs per day of auto LPG, the majority of private outlets are facing a dry-out, leading to disruptions in public transport services and consequent public disorder," Reddy said.

Reddy urged the union minister to ramp up auto

LPG availability at PSU outlets and immediately issue instructions to IOCL, HPCL and BPCL to support the private marketing companies by supplying the deficit LPG to private entities engaged in auto LPG distribution.

While the current price of auto LPG at public sector outlets is Rs 75 per litre, the private marketing companies are selling at Rs 93 per litre, he said, adding regulatory measures should be put in place to prevent unwarranted price increase by private entities during the crisis.

# ACE Awards 2026 Celebrate Student Excellence at GITAM Hyderabad



Hyderabad (TSIT): The ACE Awards 2026 at GITAM Deemed to be University celebrated excellence, innovation, and holistic student achievements, showcasing the vibrant campus life of the institution. The event recognized students

across diverse categories including Innovation & Technology, Creative Excellence, Social Impact, and Leadership. Sporting achievements were also honored with awards such as Best Athlete (Men & Women), Team of the Year, Emerging Sports Talent, and Excellence in Sports Performance. Student clubs and Special Interest Groups (SIGs) were applauded for their creativity, collaboration, and contributions to campus engagement, strengthening a sense of community among students. The initiative reflects GITAM's commitment to nurturing well-rounded, future-ready individuals by encouraging both academic and co-curricular excellence. The event also featured inspiring success stories from awardees, motivating fellow students. The event was attended by Prof. D. S. Rao, DVVSR Varma, Resident Director, and Ambika Philip, Director – Hospitality & Campus Life, who presented the awards. The program was coordinated by Fizah Ahmed, Manager – Student Life, and Suraj Vadapally, Manager – Sports.

# RINS Launches 3rd Vascular Neurosurgery Hands-on Workshop in Hyderabad

Hyderabad: The Renova Institute of Neurological Sciences (RINS) has launched the 3rd edition of its "Skill Training and Hands-on Workshop on Vascular Neurosurgery," marking a significant step toward advancing surgical precision and innovation.

The two-day workshop, being held on April 1-2 at the College of Veterinary Science, Rajendranagar, is organized in collaboration with the PAN Research Foundation and Cerebrovascular Society of India, with support from P.V. Narasimha Rao Telangana Veterinary University.

The program was inaugurated by Prof. M. Gnana Prakash in the presence of eminent neurosurgeons including Dr. D. Raja Reddy and Dr. I. Dinakar.

Hosting over 60 neurosurgeons, fellows, and residents from across the country, the workshop focuses on advanced, hands-on training modules such as microvascular suturing, vessel anastomosis, live operative training, and endovascular simulation using modern technologies.

Course Directors Dr. Syed Ameer Basha Paspala and Dr. T. V. Ramakrishna Murthy emphasized that the initiative aims to enhance technical expertise, promote innovation, and build multidisciplinary collaboration in neurovascular surgery.

The workshop brings together leading experts, faculty members, and researchers, reinforcing Hyderabad's position as a hub for advanced medical education and training.



# Ayurveda most sustainable system for lifestyle-related diseases: Haryana CM

**CHANDIGARH:** Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Tuesday said Ayurveda is the most sustainable system of care for managing lifestyle-related diseases such as stress, diabetes and hypertension.

Addressing the golden jubilee celebrations of Shri Dhanwantri Ayurvedic College and Hospital here, he said Ayurveda promotes a holistic balance of physical, mental and spiritual well-being.

The chief minister said the Haryana government is strengthening the AYUSH sector by upgrading infrastructure, promoting research and expanding services.

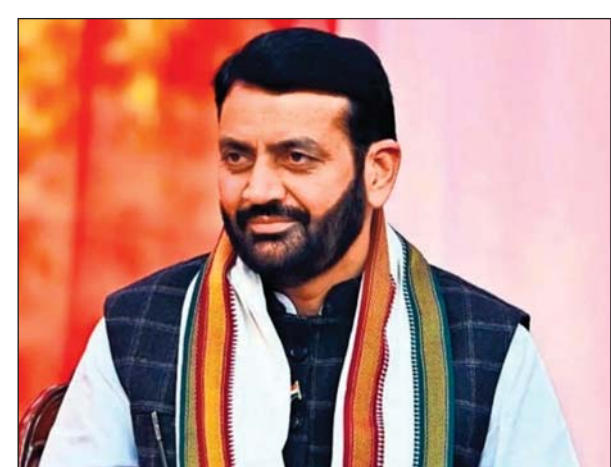
He added that Shri Krishna AYUSH University has been established in Kurukshetra at a cost of

around Rs 500 crore.

He said AYUSH wings have been set up in all districts under the National Health Mission, and 572 AYUSH medical officers have been recruited to expand services at the grassroots level.

Saini said around 400 Ayurvedic dispensaries and 138 sub-health centres have been upgraded into Ayushman Arogya Mandirs (AYUSH) while Panchakarma centres are being set up in every district.

He added that the construction of Baba Khetanath Government Ayurvedic College and Hospital in Narnaul has been completed while several AYUSH institutions in Nuh, Ambala, Hisar and Panchkula are at different stages of development.



Highlighting yoga's global recognition, he said International Yoga Day is observed on June 21 following an initiative by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The chief minister said the state is promoting yoga

in rural areas through yoga and Vyayamshalas in villages, with 965 already operational and work underway on more.

He urged students to contribute to the future of Ayurveda through innovation and research.

# Bhadradi Urban Bank Achieves 1030 Cr Turnover

**Khammam:** Bhadradi Cooperative Urban Bank Limited has achieved a turnover of ₹1030 crore for the financial year ending March 31, 2026, marking a significant milestone in its growth journey.

Speaking at a held at the bank's head office, Chairman Cherukuri Krishna Murthy said the bank has maintained steady growth over the past 29 years, consistently providing an 18% dividend to shareholders annually. With 25 branches spread



across eight districts in Telangana, the bank has earned a reputation for reliability and trust.

He attributed the achievement to the continued sup-

port of shareholders, customers, and staff, congratulating them for their role in the bank's success. During the event, former directors honored the founding

members, including Gurrum Uma Maheshwar Rao, Rekhalu Bhaskar, Maddi Babu, and Arvapalli Niranjan, recognizing their contributions to the institution's growth. Vice-Chairmen Sanne Udaya Pratap and Venulapalli Venkateswara Rao, along with directors, CEO Dasari Venugopal, and staff members, expressed appreciation for the leadership of Chairman Cherukuri Krishna Murthy and the collective efforts that led to this achievement.

# World Autism Day: Expert Calls for Early Detection and Awareness

Hyderabad: As the clock strikes midnight tonight, landmarks across the globe will glow in brilliant blue – a symbol of unity on World Autism Awareness Day, observed every April 2nd since 2008 under the United Nations banner. Here in Hyderabad, at KIMS Cuddles, we join this movement not just with lights, but with knowledge and compassion. As a pediatric neurologist with over a decade of experience in neurodevelopmental disorders, I've witnessed firsthand how early awareness can rewrite the story of countless children and families. Today, I share my insights to dispel myths, highlight hope, and urge you – parents, educators, and communities – to become part of the solution. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is more than a diagnosis; it's a lifelong neurodevelopmental condition that shapes how individuals perceive and interact with the world. Globally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 1 in 36 children (up to) is identified with ASD, with boys diagnosed four times more often than girls. In India, while exact figures are elusive due to underdiagnosis, studies from the Indian Academy of Pediatrics suggest prevalence rates around 1 in 100 urban children. The "spectrum" nature means no two cases



are identical: some children might excel in pattern recognition or memory but struggle with social cues, while others face profound communication challenges alongside sensory sensitivities. From my clinic at KIMS Cuddles, I've seen the subtle red flags emerge as early as infancy. Parents often recount how their toddler avoided eye contact during play, fixated intensely on spinning objects, or melted down over changes in routine – like a preferred toy being moved. Delayed speech milestones, such as not babbling by 12 months or losing acquired words by 18 months, are common. Repetitive behaviors,

like hand-flapping or lining up toys meticulously, and sensory quirks – hypersensitivity to lights, sounds, or textures – paint the picture. If your child lines up cars obsessively instead of pretending to drive them, or shies away from cuddles, these aren't just quirks; they could signal autism. Early screening tools like the Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers (M-CHAT) can flag risks before age two, opening doors to intervention that dramatically improves outcomes. Yet, stigma and misinformation hinder progress. Let me bust some pervasive myths head-on. No, vaccines do not cause autism – exhaustive studies, including a landmark Danish cohort of over 650,000 children, confirm this unequivocally. Parenting styles aren't to blame either; autism stems from a complex interplay of genetics (over 100 genes implicated) and early brain development factors, possibly influenced by prenatal exposures. And crucially, autism isn't a "disease" to cure. It's a different wiring of the brain, often accompanied by extraordinary gifts: hyper-focus leading to expertise in math, music, or art. Think of historical figures like Albert Einstein or modern icons like Temple Grandin, whose autistic traits fueled groundbreaking contributions.

# Harvest Day at The Premia Academy – From Soil to Soul

Hyderabad: 01st April, 2026: The Premia Academy, known for its forward-thinking vision RAISE, continues to nurture young minds through meaningful, real-world learning experiences. At Premia, education goes beyond textbooks—where a simple rhyme like "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" inspires dreams, and those dreams are rooted in hands-on action. The school recently celebrated its Harvest Day, a joyful culmination of an experiential farming journey led by students of middle school, while younger learners witnessed and learned from their efforts. From compost to crop, students were deeply involved in every stage—preparing compost, watching it transform into manure, ploughing the soil, and creating the Premia Mini Kitchen Garden. With patience and care, they sowed seeds, nurtured them daily, and observed their growth—learning not just how plants grow, but how responsibility grows within. Their journey reflected a powerful rhythm: they touched the soil, nurtured life, and harvested pride. The excitement peaked as students stepped into the role of young farmers, harvesting crops they had grown with their own hands. This beautiful experience connected learning with life, teaching sustainability, empathy, and respect for nature. Harvest Day at Premia was not just an event—it was a celebration of effort, growth, and vision, sowing seeds of knowledge that will stay with students for a lifetime.



"Tax Plunder on Karnataka": CM Siddaramaiah Slams Centre

Bengaluru: Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has strongly criticized the Union Government over what he termed as "tax injustice," questioning whether the current system amounts to "tax terrorism" or "tax plunder."



In a press statement, Siddaramaiah alleged that for every one rupee contributed by Karnataka in taxes, the state receives only 15 paise in return. He stated that while the Centre collected over 4.50 lakh crore from the state in the last financial year, Karnataka received only 79,000 crore.

The Chief Minister pointed out that despite being one of the top contributors to GST—ranking second in total collections and first in growth rate—the state gets only about 52% in return. He blamed the "flawed implementation" of GST for causing significant financial losses to Karnataka.

Targeting BJP leaders, including Basavaraj Bommai and R. Ashoka, Siddaramaiah accused them of remaining silent on the issue when it mattered and failing to defend the interests of Kannadigas.

He further alleged that the Centre has weakened Karnataka's financial position by denying its rightful share under the Finance Commission, withholding cess and surcharge revenues, and underfunding centrally sponsored schemes. This, he said, has forced the state to rely on borrowing.

Citing rising national debt under Narendra Modi, Siddaramaiah noted that the country's debt has surged from 51.06 lakh crore in 2014 to 214 lakh crore in the 2026-27 Budget, placing a significant burden on citizens, including those in Karnataka.

Addressing a meeting of the Arya Vaishya community at Sri Vasavi Kalyana Mantapa in Davanagere, Bommai campaigned in favor of BJP candidate Srivivasa Dasakariyappa. He appealed to the community to make a "calculated decision" and ensure BJP's victory, expressing confidence that the party could end its 30-year losing streak in the constituency.

"Power Battle in May": Bommai Urges Voters to Back BJP in By-Poll



Davanagere: Former Chief Minister and MP Basavaraj Bommai predicted a fierce political battle for power in May and urged voters to support the BJP in the ongoing by-election.

Addressing a meeting of the Arya Vaishya community at Sri Vasavi Kalyana Mantapa in Davanagere, Bommai campaigned in favor of BJP candidate Srivivasa Dasakariyappa. He appealed to the community to make a "calculated decision" and ensure BJP's victory, expressing confidence that the party could end its 30-year losing streak in the constituency.

Bommai alleged that the Congress government led by Siddaramaiah had neglected backward classes and diverted funds meant for their development. He accused the government of misusing resources, including funds allocated for SC/ST welfare, and termed the administration as "corrupt."

The BJP leader claimed that political infighting within the ruling party has only paused due to the by-election and warned of a major power struggle in the coming months. He called on voters to "oust the corrupt government" and bring back a people-oriented BJP.

Senior leaders including B. S. Yediyurappa and G.M. Siddeshwara were present at the event, expressing confidence in the victory of BJP candidate Srivivasa Dasakariyappa.

EARA Group Launches Luxury Project 'Amidst Nature' in Bengaluru

Bengaluru: EARA Group has officially entered the luxury real estate segment with the launch of its flagship project, 'Amidst Nature', a premium residential development in Kaggalipura near Kanakapura Main Road.



Spread across 18 acres, the project is designed as a low-density, multi-phase community featuring residential plots, future apartments, and select commercial spaces. Phase I, comprising 141 villa plots ranging from 2400 to 3500 sq. ft., is expected to be completed within 18 months, with prices starting from 1.92 crore.

The project stands out for its compliance-first approach, offering full approvals from BMRDA and RERA, along with clear land titles and audit-ready documentation. With infrastructure such as underground cabling, fiber connectivity, and wide internal roads already in place, buyers can begin construction immediately.

Founder and CEO E. Lakshminarayana Reddy, with over 18 years of experience in Bengaluru's real estate sector, emphasized transparency and buyer confidence as core principles. The project also benefits from strong connectivity, located close to the proposed Peripheral Ring Road and major transport corridors.

With 'Amidst Nature', EARA Group aims to redefine luxury living by combining legal clarity, infrastructure readiness, and over 45% of the area is dedicated to open spaces, complemented by eco-friendly planning and modern amenities including a swimming pool, sports courts, and amphitheatre.

Request to Operate Train via Hubballi, Gadag Bypass

Bengaluru: With the completion of the 9.60 km double-line railway work between Alamatti and Wandal, which has been open for traffic since March 25, Infrastructure Development Minister M. B. Patil has urged the introduction of a long-pending express train service between Bengaluru and Vijayapura.

He has written a letter regarding this on March 30 to Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav and Minister V. Somanna.

In the letter, he stated that the Alamatti-Wandal section, part of the Gadag-Hotgi double-line project, has now been completed. During an earlier meeting, it was mentioned that once this work was finished, an express train between Bengaluru and Vijayapura could be introduced. He has now requested that this be given priority.

He highlighted that thousands of people from Vijayapura and Bagalkote districts travel daily to Bengaluru for education, healthcare, administrative work, and business, and this train service would greatly benefit them.

Currently, the train journey between the two cities takes about 15 hours, which is inconvenient. He stressed the need to reduce this travel time to around 10 hours. He also requested that trains departing from Bengaluru be given a limited stop to Hubballi, and that trains proceeding to Vijayapura should be routed via the Hubballi and Gadag bypass lines.

Renowned Drs from Bangalore drives chickenpox immunization for underprivileged Girls through G.A.U.R.I initiative

Bangalore : Dr.Anuradha Vinod, pediatrician from Manipal Hospital, & Dr Sandesh Alva, pediatrician from Apollo Clinic in Electronics City, Bangalore, have taken a strong step forward to promote equitable healthcare by vaccinating underprivileged girls against chickenpox. This effort was part of G.A.U.R.I. (Generating Awareness on Underprivileged Girls' Right to Immunization). An initiative by Novo Medi Sciences Pvt. Ltd. focused on improving access to the chickenpox vaccine for girls from marginalized communities. The event was supported by CRY (Child Rights and You), to further strengthen its impact. The initiative encouraged people across the country to show their support for immunization



rights through a simple missed call, and what began as a symbolic gesture of solidarity has grown into a wider movement advocating for preventive healthcare access for deprived girls. Gaps in protection continue to persist, as several

important vaccines are not covered under India's Universal Immunization Programme (UIP). As a result, many children miss out on essential vaccinations, including the chickenpox vaccine, which remains outside the programme and therefore out of reach for many families. These disparities are particularly evident in rural regions and among low-income households, where access to comprehensive immunization is more limited compared to urban and affluent communities. This leads to continued variation in vaccine coverage across geographies and socioeconomic groups.

Dr. Anuradha Vinod, pediatrician from Manipal Hospital, Bangalore, shed light on the motivation behind this initiative, stat-

ing, "Chickenpox is a preventable disease, yet many children—particularly underprivileged girls from communities—remain unvaccinated. Ensuring timely immunization for every underprivileged girl child is crucial for building healthier communities. Through the G.A.U.R.I. initiative, the initiative has worked to raise awareness and directly address gaps in vaccine access for underprivileged girls. I am proud to have been part of this initiative, which demonstrates how collaborative efforts with communities can help us protect children from preventable diseases." Despite the fact that chickenpox is avoidable, many children—especially underprivileged girls from communities—do not have the vaccination.

Building healthier communities requires ensuring that all impoverished girls receive timely vaccinations. Through the G.A.U.R.I. program, the effort has sought to increase awareness and directly address gaps in impoverished girls' access to vaccines. I am honored to have contributed to this project, which shows how working together with communities may help shield kids from diseases that can be prevented." Dr. Sandesh Alva, pediatrician from Apollo Clinic in Electronics City, Bangalore, explained.

PHONE-IN PROGRAMME EVERY FRIDAY TO IMPROVE CITIZEN SERVICES IN NORTH CITY CORPORATION

Bengaluru: With the objective of directly listening to public grievances within the jurisdiction of the Bengaluru North City Corporation, the Commissioner of the North City Corporation, Pommala Sunil Kumar, has launched a weekly Phone-In Programme for citizens. This week's Phone-In Programme will be held on Friday, April 1st, 2026, from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. During this period, citizens can speak directly with the Commissioner regarding various civic issues such as road potholes and repair works, maintenance of streetlights, door-to-door garbage collection and disposal, removal of hazardous trees and branches, mosquito control measures, control of stray dogs, development and maintenance of parks, removal of unauthorized banners and posters, clearance of encroachments on footpaths, issues related to e-Khata, and other civic-related problems. All grievances received during the Phone-In Programme will be registered on the "Sahaaya 2.0" portal and immediately forwarded to the concerned depart-

Action plan to be prepared for comprehensive development of KR Market: Maheshwar Rao

Bengaluru: Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao instructed officials to prepare an action plan for the comprehensive development of KR Market and to set a timeline for completion of the works. During his visit to KR Market under the Bengaluru Central City Corporation limits today, he reviewed the situation along with officials and stated that a detailed action plan should be prepared covering proper waste disposal, installation of CCTV cameras, concreting of internal roads, providing proper connectivity to the flower market, and other development works. He directed officials to submit a report within one week along with a clear timeline for completion of these works.



the earliest. Proper connectivity to the flower market:

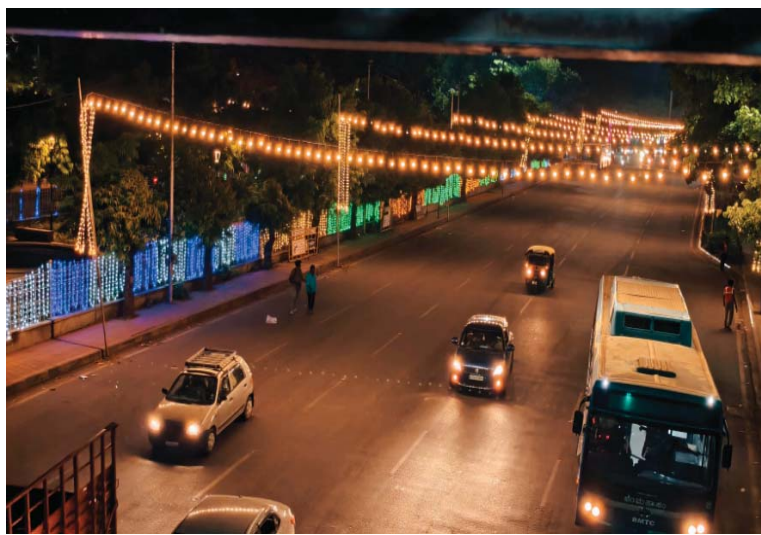
He also instructed that all necessary locations in KR Market be assessed for installation of CCTV cameras from a safety perspective, and that a report be submitted immediately, followed by swift action to install the cameras. In addition, he noted that the internal roads in the market are in poor condition and directed that they be repaired and a concrete layer be laid. At the KR Market junction, asphalt work has been completed, and the service road has been developed with concrete. In this regard, officials were directed to facilitate smooth vehicular movement from the flyover down ramp at

Representatives of the market association stated that lack of proper connectivity to the flower market is causing inconvenience to citizens. Responding to this, the Chief Commissioner inspected the site and instructed officials to provide proper access. He also directed that necessary safety measures be imple-

mented near staircases to ensure smooth movement of the public. Provision of trolleys and crates: Officials informed that a comprehensive plan has been prepared for scientific disposal of waste generated in the market. Trolleys and crates are being arranged for collection of waste in vegetable, fruit, and flower markets.

Preparations Intensified for Bengaluru Karaga Mahotsav

Bengaluru: Commissioner of Bengaluru Central City Corporation, Rajendra Cholan, reviewed the measures undertaken by the City Corporation in view of the historic Bengaluru Karaga Mahotsav. On this occasion, he inspected the Dharmaraya Swamy Temple and surrounding areas, and instructed officials of various departments to work in coordination to ensure that the Karaga Mahotsav is conducted without any obstacles and to strive for its success. Measures taken by the Bengaluru Central City Corporation for the Karaga Mahotsav:



Road, Town Hall Road, JC Road, and other areas. The colorful lighting has enhanced the visual appeal. Potholes on main roads

and streets along the Karaga procession route from Dharmaraya Swamy Temple have been filled to ensure smooth movement.

Cleanliness Drive and Removal of Black Spots: Daily cleaning operations are being carried out. Special attention is given to the temple surroundings and procession routes. Waste is cleared in two shifts, with additional sanitation workers and auto tippers deployed. Garbage-prone "black spots" caused by public littering have been cleared.

Beautification Works: Beautification has been undertaken by painting curbs along roads near Corporation Circle (in front of the GBA head office), Town Hall, KG Road, and surrounding areas. Road dividers, roadside areas, and islands are being cleaned regularly, and plants are watered daily to maintain greenery. The health department has arranged for doctors, nursing staff, and ambulances for emergency services.

Protium PROTIUM FINANCE LIMITED (Formerly known as Growth Source Financial Technologies Ltd.) E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

ICI Home Finance Corporate Office: ICI Home Finance Company Limited ICI HFC Tower, Andheri - Kurla Road, Andheri (East), Mumbai - 400059, India. Branch Office: Ground Floor, Sri Raghavendra Mansion, No. 2767/B, New No. 83/B, Kamtharuji Road, 1 Main, Saraswathipuram, Mysore - 570009, Branch Office: Shop No. 131/16C, 2nd Floor, 9th Cross, 9th Cross, Opp. To Tirumalagiri Venkateswara Temple, J P Nagar, 2nd Phase Above Central Bank, Bangalore - 560078

# EDITORIAL

## Why A 'Defeat' Is Now Essential For The Disoriented Left In Kerala

An expression attributed to King Louis XV of France is "Après moi, le deluge" (After me, the deluge). Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's desperate attempts to cling to power with a public relations overdrive might be reminiscent of the nihilistic statement. For, the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M), which the octogenarian has been leading since 1998 in Kerala, is showing clear signs of decay.

The undivided Communist Party, which came to power democratically in the first election held to the state Assembly in 1957, has been an integral part of Kerala politics ever since. However, unlike its uninterrupted 34-year stint in West Bengal, the Left had never managed to win a successive term in Kerala until 2021, when Vijayan managed to buck that trend. The initial euphoria notwithstanding, a section of the Left base in Kerala has been increasingly vocal about leaders getting drunk on power and using all means to perpetuate it. Bengal Redux?

In Gangster State: The Rise And Fall of the CPI-M in West Bengal, author Sourjya Bhowmik uses the iconic lines "it was the best of times, it was the worst of times" from Charles Dickens to describe the final term of the party in Bengal. He recalls how the party went from its peak to getting decimated in 2011, wondering if the youth were drawn to it due to ideology or were driven merely by power. Such a situation has also been brewing in Kerala for a while now, shaped by the trappings of power and visible loss of Communist values.

So much so that poet and Kerala Sahitya Akademi president K Satchidanandan himself came out publicly demanding that the Left should stay out of power for a term to regenerate itself. This was reminiscent of poetess Mahaswetha Devi publicly questioning the Buddhadeb regime in West Bengal in 2007. Satchidanandan's exhortation has since come to vertically split Kerala's literary and cultural space. Noted litterateurs Sarah Joseph, Kalpetta Narayanan, and MN Karassery have all reiterated his prophecy that the Left will be beyond salvation in the state if it gets another term.

### A String Of Desertions

Satchidanandan was particularly critical of Vijayan's appeasement of community leaders like Vellappally Natesan, despite the latter making several sectarian statements against the Muslim community. The rot the CPI-M is seeing in Kerala has been visible even in the electoral arena, with several veteran leaders across the state deserting the party ahead of the polls. These include G Sudhakaran, the seniormost leader of the party outside Malabar, and the duo of TK Govindan and P Kunhikrishnan in Kannur. Those who quit have referred to ideological issues, such as an alleged right turn of the party under Vijayan's stewardship, along with nepotism and corruption.

It was inconceivable even a decade ago that there would be desertions (likened to apostasy in the past) in the CPI-M's Kannur unit, where tribal kinship to the party trumped every other societal connection. G Sudhakaran's quitting, who had served as minister under Vijayan during the first term, came as a jolt to the party in its cradle in Travancore.

If P Kunhikrishnan's rebellion in Kannur was sparked by corruption perpetuated by Payyannur MLA PI Madhusodanan, his candidature as an independent (supported by the Congress) was prompted by the CPI-M's refusal to act against the erring leader. Veteran TK Govindan's exit was a reaction to the candidature of PK Shyamala - wife of namesake MV Govindan, the CPI-M state secretary - thrust down the Kannur district committee by the party. In fact, this is a repetition of the 2021 arrangement when the CPI-M-nominated R Bindu - wife of then state secretary A Vijayaraghavan in Irinjalakkuda - was elevated as minister, along with PA Mohammed Riyas, son-in-law of Vijayan.

## 'Go Get Your Oil': Is Trump About To Cut And Run On His Own War?

Iran's stubborn resistance and its ability to withstand the US and Israel's relentless military campaign for over a month have disrupted Donald Trump's calculations. The war's increasing economic and political costs have pushed him to seek a quick exit. He now wants to leave Iran in two to three weeks, whether or not there is a deal. His comment, ahead of a national address on Wednesday evening, underlines a stark reality: even after losing its leadership and suffering significant damage to its military and economic infrastructure, Tehran has shown no signs of being as desperate as Trump to end the war.

In his latest comment at the Oval Office on Tuesday, Trump insisted again that Iran was "begging" for a deal, adding that whether it happens is irrelevant to America's timetable. Iran strongly denied that it was engaged in negotiations with the US to reach a deal, while admitting that messages had been exchanged between the two sides. Iran's president, Masoud Pezeshkian, has said his country has the "necessary will" to end the war with the United States and Israel as long as certain conditions are met. Trump's comment came amid a growing buildup of US forces in the Gulf. Thousands of US Marines have already reached the region and many more are on their way. The US military also began flying B-52 bomber missions over Iran on Tuesday for the first time in the war, a sign that Trump is keeping the option open of escalating in the belief that it would help end the conflict swiftly.

### Trump's Ever-Changing Wishlist

Trump has maintained that the US has achieved its goal of addressing Iran's nuclear programme, despite roughly 450 kg of enriched uranium still being present in Iran, believed to be hidden in Isfahan. His previous objective of regime change also remains unfulfilled, although he says the regime has already changed. He claims that Iran's new regime is reasonable, disregarding the fact that more hardline elements now appear



to be in control of the country. Some of his Gulf allies, including the UAE and Saudi Arabia, want him to carry on the military operation for that reason. The most important strategic card Tehran has played in the war has been to block the Strait of Hormuz, through which about a fifth of the world's oil and gas passes. The near-closure of Hormuz, along with attacks on US bases and energy targets in Gulf countries, has driven global crude oil prices to \$117 per barrel on Tuesday and the average petrol price in the US to exceed \$4 per gallon for the first time in nearly four years. Now, Trump claims Hormuz is a problem for other countries to handle. Oil prices fell after Trump's comments about leaving Iran.

### Allies No More?

Donald Trump has been angry with America's European allies for their refusal to get more involved in the Iran war, particularly for not sending their warships to protect ships at Hormuz. "Go get your own oil," from

the Strait of Hormuz, Trump said on Tuesday, lashing out at his allies. But his anger at US partners in Europe is not limited to Hormuz. He wants them to join the American and Israeli military in fighting Iran, a war he started with Israel, without any consultation with his allies.

"You'll have to start learning how to fight for yourself, the USA won't be there to help you anymore, just like you weren't there for us," Trump told his European allies in a post on Truth Social on Tuesday.

Two weeks ago, he had angrily declared, "We don't need anybody; we're the strongest nation in the world", adding that his request for assistance in reopening the Strait of Hormuz instead amounted to a "loyalty test of America's allies".

What Trump forgets is that unlike previous US Presidents, he went to war with Iran without building any support at home or abroad. President George HW Bush in 1991 formed a coalition of more than 40 countries when he launched Operation Desert

Shield to free Kuwait from Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. Two decades later, his son, President George W Bush, also received support from his allies for launching another war against Iraq, though it was based on the false premise of getting rid of weapons of mass destruction. Europe was part of both coalitions, though the second time, France and Germany didn't join America's war.

### Not Europe's War To Lose

NATO members in Europe have made clear that the current conflict in the Gulf is not their war. They do not feel obliged to join it because no NATO country has been attacked. On the other hand, Iran has been hit by the US and Israel. They have reminded Trump that the only time NATO's Article 5, which states that an attack on one member is an attack on all, was invoked was when the US suffered terror attacks on September 11, 2001, by al-Qaeda. Back then, NATO had joined America in a coalition to invade Afghanistan.

## ON APRIL FOOLS' DAY, A Reality Check For US, Iran And The World

As a new month dawns, the confrontation between the United States, Israel, and the Islamic Republic of Iran has transitioned from a series of shadow plays into a high-stakes war of attrition. What began as a devastating campaign of maximum destruction has evolved into a kinetic reality where the definitions of "victory" and "survival" are increasingly at odds. In evaluating where the conflict stands today, one must look past the daily skirmishes and analyse the diverging strategic goals, the resilience of the Iranian state, and the looming threat of regional devastation.

### A Fundamental Mismatch

At the heart of the current deadlock is a fundamental asymmetry in what each side is fighting for. For the Iranian leadership, the conflict is existential; it reached that threshold on Day One, when the Supreme Leader and much of his family were killed. History suggests that when a regime perceives a threat as a "war of survival", it gains a grim kind of domestic strength. Despite internal dissent and economic hardship, the external pressure from the US and Israel has, for the moment, allowed the regime to consolidate its grip on the military apparatus and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The "horizontal escalation" doctrine, under which Iran dispersed its military authority in a "mosaic" pattern to independent regional commanders, allowing them to continue the fight, launching missiles and drones even when instructions were unable to reach them from Tehran, has underscored Iran's resilience in the face of severe military adversity. This has been compounded by the Yemen-

based Houthi rebels joining the war on Iran's side, firing missiles to disrupt shipping via the Red Sea and the Bab el-Mandeb strait, "the Gate of Tears". The willingness of Iran and its allies to hit whatever targets they can, and their ability to inflict damage on the prosperous Gulf countries whose "safe haven" image is crucial to their success, has already given Tehran an upper hand and increased the costs to the rest of the world - leading many outside the region to seek a swift end to the war. In contrast, for the United States, this remains a "war of choice". While the rhetoric from Washington is maximalist, the political commitment is subject to the whims of an election cycle and waning public appetite for another "forever war".

This creates a paradox: Iran wins simply by surviving and maintaining its (undoubtedly degraded) effectiveness, which its critics might dismiss as "nuisance value" - specifically its ability to choke the Strait of Hormuz - while the US must achieve a far more overwhelmingly convincing result to claim success. If the month ends with the Iranian flag still flying over its primary naval assets and nuclear facilities, the strategic momentum arguably sits with Tehran.

### A Divergence Between The US And Israel?

But it gets worse. While the US and Israel are aligned in their desire to see a diminished Iran, their tactical endgames have begun to diverge in a way that complicates the coalition's thus-far unified front. The Israeli doctrine is clear: For Israel, the Iranian threat is viewed through a permanent, existential lens. Their strategy is often described as "mowing the lawn" - a relentless effort to

degrade Iranian proxies and nuclear capabilities to the absolute minimum. (Hence the assault on Lebanon, where Hezbollah resides, in parallel with the war on Iran.) To Jerusalem, any deal that leaves the Iranian infrastructure, and its network of allies and proxies in the region, intact is merely a stay of execution.

The American calculus is more difficult to figure out, given the extraordinary statements by President Trump, at press conferences and on Truth Social, that seem to change logic, intentions and desired outcomes with dizzying and bewildering rapidity. But inasmuch as one can glean a consistent thread in his pronouncements, it would seem that Washington appears more interested in a transactional halt to the conflict.

The US strategy involves a dual track of building pressure through heavy troop deployments (estimated at 10,000 additional personnel this month) and the threat of targeted strikes on Kharg Island or other energy hubs, to force a diplomatic capitulation. Iran, in turn, accuses the US of proposing negotiations while planning military strikes - a tactic that the Americans have twice used already. (Diplomats from both countries were at the negotiating table under Omani mediation when the current war was launched on February 28.) How then, they ask, can they trust that negotiations will be sincere and not merely a cover for further attacks?

This friction is most visible in the "Hit List" problem. Diplomacy requires a stable interlocutor, yet continued assassinations of high-ranking Iranian officials - the strategy favoured by Israeli intelligence - undermine the very channels the US

might use to negotiate a face-saving exit for both sides. Who will you negotiate with if you kill those who have the authority to negotiate?

### The Case Of The 'Wounded Lion'

As a new month starts and we approach the April 6 deadline set by the Trump administration, the risk of a "next stage" escalation is at its highest point since the conflict began. The deployment of US troops suggests a shift from containment to the potential seizure of strategic Iranian islands and, judging by Trump's latest blood-curdling threats on Truth Social, far worse. However, the costs of such a move are astronomical. Iran's primary deterrent is not its conventional air force, but its ability to turn the Persian Gulf into a graveyard for global energy infrastructure. Should the US or Israel target Iranian power plants or refineries, Tehran is expected to retaliate by targeting desalination plants and oil terminals in the neighbouring Gulf states. This creates a "Wounded Lion" scenario: states like Saudi Arabia and the UAE may privately wish for the US to "finish the job" and remove the Iranian threat forever, yet they are simultaneously the most vulnerable to the resulting blowback.

### Russia And China

The conflict is no longer a regional vacuum. The reports of deepening military cooperation between Moscow and Tehran have begun to change the mathematics of the war. Russia's alleged supply of advanced drone technology and potential electronic warfare support could provide Iran with a replenished toolkit to offset US technological superiority.

## Why 2 Gulf States Want Iran War To Continue - Even As They're Battered By It

When the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia signed the Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement (SMDA) with Pakistan, a number of members of Iran's Strategic community had expressed optimism. Since the agreement had followed Israel's first and unprecedented attacks on Qatar - even if on Hamas members it alleged were being sheltered there - these strategic thinkers felt it would strengthen anti-Israel cooperation and alliance in the region. Some in Iran even expressed willingness to join the alliance, as just a couple of months prior to the SMDA, Iran had fought its first direct war against Israel. It had ended in a stalemate, but it put Iran on notice. No longer was the conflict between the two adversaries in the shadows, fought through proxies. Now, any confrontation would be direct. The current war - named Operation Epic Fury and Roaring Lion by the US and Israel, respectively, has laid that optimism to rest. Since the early days of the war, American media have reported that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), the de facto power behind the throne, had been urging the US to go to war with Iran. In public posturing, though, the kingdom has struck a different note. It has called for diplomacy, for easing of tensions between the Kingdom and Iran.

### A Decades-Old Problem

For Saudi Arabia, as indeed for other states of the Gulf Cooperation Council - UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar - Iran has been a threat since the Islamic Republic was born in 1979, and whose ideology and motto has been to import the Revolution. The Gulf monarchies are one of the last absolute monarchies in the world.



Regime survival is prioritised over everything else. Over the decades, Iran has been a challenge to Saudi leadership of the Muslim world, with its support for Palestinians, the import of its ideology, and by propping up proxies in neighbouring Arab countries. Even though Shiites constitute only 13-15% of the entire Muslim world, Iran, with its strategically located proxies, was able to create the Shia crescent, stretching all the way from Iran through Iraq, Lebanon and into Syria. Today, Syria is back in the Sunni fold, but the Saudis have the Houthis close to their borders, with Yemen on one hand and the Popular Mobilisation Forces of Iraq on the other - both of them Iran's proxies. Moreover, though Saudi Arabia is overwhelmingly Sunni, it has a Shia population inhabiting the very sensitive region where its oil wells are located.

### Can't Be Underestimated

At the same time, Iran, which has been under major sanctions for decades, has proved how battle-hardened it is, first through its eight years of war with Iraq, later with the proxy wars it fought with the US and

Israel, and now in its direct confrontation with both. The Saudis and Emiratis, however, having invested billions of dollars in procuring expensive and modern weapons systems, have practically lost their military campaign against the ragtag Houthis of impoverished Yemen, who have even succeeded in targeting Saudi Aramco. The 2023 "truce" between Iran and Saudi Arabia, brokered by China, had been a moment of great hope. In hindsight, however, it was only a camouflage for the deep-seated suspicion and the great trust deficit between the two.

### The Post-Oil World

For the Saudis and the Emiratis, the prime concern now is the pursuit of development for a post-oil world. The UAE began earlier, positioning Dubai and Abu Dhabi as the cities of the future, as important trade and logistics hubs and as finance and tax havens. For the Saudis, it is Vision 2030 - moving to a non-oil economy to accommodate the large youth population, and focusing on creating an economy driven by tourism, projects like the NEOM city, IMEC connectivity and

logistical hubs, AI, etc. Constant conflict and the threat of war is a major obstacle to these plans. The Hamas-Israel war, beginning from 2023 October, has been an irritant, and the non-settlement of the Palestinian issue has only played up the ineffective Arab role in the region. Instead, it was the Houthis and Hezbollah - Iran's proxies - who intervened on behalf of Palestinians and demonstrated their ability to disrupt global trade along the Red Sea by closing the Bab-el-Mandeb, a vital waterway for Saudi and Emirati shipping. It is possible that these considerations were at play when, as per the first New York Times report, the Saudi reportedly urged the US to launch an attack on Iran. Now, after the war has actually begun, the Saudis and Emiratis realise just how insecure their defence proximity to the US has rendered them. For decades, their security has been tied to the US, but there is no defence pact between them that would activate American involvement should the Arabs go to war. Neither did the US care to inform them when it went to war with Iran.

CHETAK SCREEN AWARDS:

# Dhurandhar leads with 24 nods; Saiyaara and Homebound follow ahead of April 5 ceremony

The Indian Express Group's Screen Academy has unveiled the full slate of nominees across 31 categories for its upcoming Chetak Screen Awards ceremony on April 5, celebrating the best of Hindi cinema and OTT from 2025.

Aditya Dhar's spy thriller Dhurandhar received the highest number of nominations at 24, with Mohit Suri's Saiyaara earning 17 and Neeraj Ghaywan's Homebound picking up 15. The nominations span theatrical and OTT releases, reflecting the breadth and evolution of contemporary Indian storytelling.

To further strengthen the process, Professor Priya Jaikumar, Chair of Cinema and Media Studies at the University of Southern California's School of Cinematic Arts, developed a detailed scoring rubric for Academy members.

For the first time in 20 years, a film award show will be broadcast live. With a special partnership with YouTube, Screen Awards will offer open access to global audiences in line with The Indian Express Group's digital-first approach. It will also be broadcast live on Sony Entertainment Television and Sony Liv.



**A rigorous, merit-first process**

Having been established in 1995, the Screen Awards are anchored in editorial integrity and governed by the Screen Academy, an independent, not-for-profit body of more than 50 acclaimed filmmakers, artists, and cultural voices. Over 95% of Academy members participated in the evaluation process, with an average of 38-40 members scoring each category using a trimmed mean (Olympic) methodology to ensure fairness and neutrality.

**Nominees**

**Best Action**

120 Bahadur  
Chhaava  
Deva

Dhurandhar  
Jaat

**Best Actor (Female)**

Triptii Dimri - Dhadak 2  
Yami Gautam Dhar - Haq  
Sonal Madhusankar - Humans in the Loop  
Konkona Sen Sharma - Metro... In Dino  
Monika Panwar -

**Nominees**

Nishaanchi  
Radhika Apte - Sister  
Midnight

Kriti Sanon - Tere Ishk Mein  
Best Actor (Female) - OTT Film

Fatima Sana Shaikh - Aap  
Jaisa Koi  
Sanya Malhotra - Mrs  
Radhika Apte - Saali  
Mohabbat

**Best Actor (Male)**

Saba Azad - Songs of Paradise  
Mia Maelzer - Stolen  
Farida Jalal - The Great  
Shamsuddin Family

Shreya Chaudhry - The Mehta Boys  
Best Actor (Male)

Vicky Kaushal - Chhaava  
Siddhant Chaturvedi - Dhadak 2  
Ranveer Singh - Dhurandhar  
Vishal Jethwa - Homebound  
Ishaan Khatter - Homebound  
Manoj Bajpayee - Jugnuma: The Fable  
Adarsh Gourav - Superboys of Malegaon  
Best Actor (Male) - OTT Film

Manoj Bajpayee - Inspector Zende  
Abhishek Bachchan - Kaalidhar Laapata  
Nawazuddin Siddiqui - Raat Akeli Hai: The Bansal Murders  
Abhishek Banerjee - Stolen  
Shubham Vardhan - Stolen  
Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Female)

Divya Dutta - Chhaava  
Sheeba Chadha - Haq  
Shalini Vatsa - Homebound  
Dolly Ahluwalia - Sitaare  
Zameen Par  
Manjiri Pupala - Superboys of Malegaon  
Best Actor in a Supporting

**Role (Male)**

Akshaye Khanna - Dhurandhar  
Rakesh Bedi - Dhurandhar  
Naseeruddin Shah - Gustaakh Ishq  
Saurabh Shukla - Jolly LLB 3

Deepak Dobriyal - Jugnuma: The Fable  
Best Background Score

Chhaava  
Dhurandhar  
Haq  
Homebound  
Saiyaara  
Best Choreography

Ui Amma - Azaad  
Bhasad Macha - Deva  
Shararat - Dhurandhar  
Panwadi Song - Sunny  
Sanskari Ki Tulsi Kumari  
Dilbar Ki Aankhon Ka - Thamma  
Best Cinematography

Dhurandhar  
Homebound  
Humans in the Loop  
Jugnuma: The Fable  
Superboys of Malegaon  
Best Costume

Chhaava  
Dhurandhar  
Gustaakh Ishq  
Homebound  
Superboys of Malegaon

# Maruti Suzuki exports surge over 34% to reach an all-time high of 4.47 lakh vehicles in FY 2025-26



**New Delhi, 1 April 2026:** Maruti Suzuki India Limited ("Maruti Suzuki") today announced that it achieved its highest-ever export volume of over 4.47 lakh vehicles in FY 2025-26. This is a robust growth of more than 34 per cent over FY 2024-25. With this feat, the Company is expected to continue its position as India's No. 1 passenger vehicle exporter\* for the fifth consecutive year. FY 2025-26 marked the commencement of export of the Company's first Battery Electric Vehicle (BEV), the e VITARA. Following the flag-off by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, at the Company's Hansalpur facility in August 2025, export of the BEV started to European and other international geographies.

Notably, the Hansalpur facility is the global production hub for e VITARA. During the year, Maruti Suzuki also commenced exports of 'Across', which is sold as VICTORIS in the Indian market. Maruti Suzuki has a strong mix of sedan, small cars, SUVs and LCV in its robust 18 model export portfolio. With the inclusion of Battery Electric Vehicle in its powertrain mix, the Company is increasingly able to cater to varied customer preferences across emerging and developed markets alike. Link for Photos Speaking on the milestone, Mr. Hisashi Takeuchi, Managing Director & CEO, Maruti Suzuki India Limited said, "In the current global environment where trade conditions remain chal-

lenging, exports assume a crucial role in supporting economic resilience of a country. Our push for exports reflects our continued commitment to national priorities. Exports of 4.47 lakh vehicles, with a growth of over 34 per cent is our responsible contribution towards this mission." He added, "With exports to over 100 countries and a portfolio of 18 models, the widest among all OEMs in India\*, we are well positioned to cater to diverse customer needs across markets. This geographical diversification is also enabling the company to effectively manage market risks. Aligned with the vision of 'Make in India, Make for the World', we remain committed to make continued progress in exports."

# NMDC Scripts history with its highest ever 53 MT production output

1st April 2026, Hyderabad - NMDC, India's largest iron ore producer and Responsible Miner, has achieved a historic landmark with the production of 53 MT of iron ore in FY26, becoming the first company in India's mining history to surpass the 50 MT annual production mark. The achievement goes beyond a numerical feat, symbolising the growing strength and momentum of India's mineral sector, with NMDC continuing to contribute a significant share to the nation's iron ore supply and powering the backbone of its steel industry. The company produced 5.35 MT and sold 5.90 MT of iron ore in the month of March 2026, with an exceptional growth of 51% and 40% respectively over CPLY. The total production output reached 53.15 MT with a marvelous growth of 21% and sales reached 50.23 MT, with a 13% jump, marking its best ever volumes since inception. The record output is driven by robust performance from NMDC's major iron ore mines - Kirandul



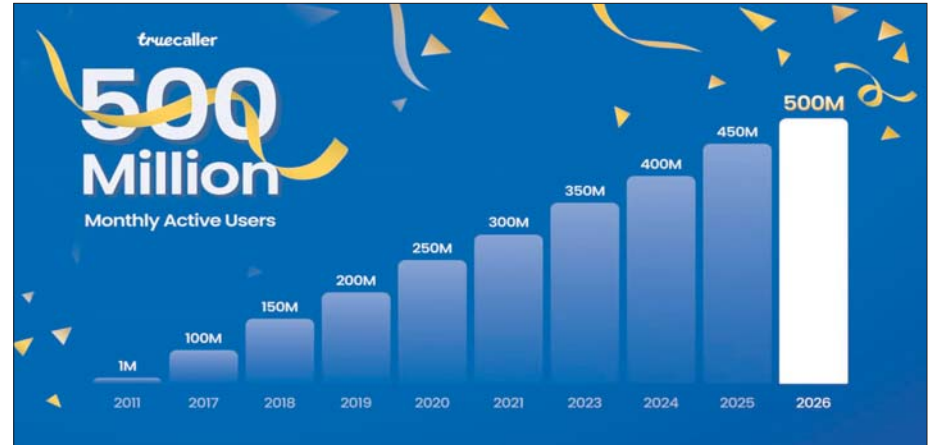
and Bachel in Chhattisgarh and Donimalai in Karnataka, recording their best ever performance in company history. FY26 has also been a defining year of expansion and transformation for NMDC, with the inauguration of international office in Dubai, the successful operationalisation of first coal mine in Jharkhand and the commissioning of Deposit 4 at Bailadila in Chhattisgarh, further strengthening its production capabilities and diversification strategy. NMDC has entered FY27 with strong momentum and a focused

growth outlook. On the occasion, Shri Amitava Mukherjee CMD, NMDC said, "Crossing 50 million tonnes is not just a production milestone for NMDC, it is a moment of pride for us and India's mining sector. As India's steel demand surges with rapid infrastructure growth, NMDC stands ready - stronger, larger and more future-focused than ever. 2026 has set our spirits high, with a new coal mine in Jharkhand, a new iron ore mine in Bailadila and this record output. With this strong momentum, we have set a decisive pace for FY27

and with our expansion plans backed by optimised resource development initiatives, we are confidently progressing towards our larger vision of powering Viksit Bharat." NMDC's high-grade iron ore continues to power the operations of some of India's leading steel producers, playing a critical role in enabling the nation's infrastructure development, manufacturing growth, and expanding steel demand. As India moves steadily towards its \$5 trillion economy goal and strengthens its global leadership, demand and consumption of iron ore is expected to surge. NMDC is strategically augmenting its capacities to meet this rising demand and enable sustained economic growth. Building on this historic milestone, the company is accelerating its expansion roadmap with an ambitious vision of achieving over 100+ MT of iron ore production capacity by 2030 through new mining projects, capacity enhancements and infrastructure development.

# Truecaller: A Product Now Used by Over 500 Million People Globally, Built With India at its Core

**India 2026:** Truecaller, the leading global platform for safe and trusted communication, today announced that it has surpassed 500 million users worldwide, marking a significant milestone in the company's mission to build trust in communication. The platform continues to see significant user growth, adding over 50 million users in 2025 alone. Truecaller has crossed 350 million in India alone and 150 million users outside of India as demand for protection against spam, scam and unwanted communication continues to grow globally. Truecaller also crossed 4 million paying subscribers globally earlier this year, further strengthening one of its key revenue streams. "This is an important milestone for us, but it also says something bigger about the world we live in," said Rishit Jhunjhunwala, CEO of Truecaller. "More and more people need help navigating spam, scams, and unwanted communi-



cation every day. Reaching 500 million users shows the scale of that need, and the trust people place in Truecaller to help make communication safer. Our commitment remains focused on continuously strengthening Truecaller with smarter technology and new capabilities that protect users before, during, and after every call or message. Ultimately, our aim is to build a safer, more trusted communication ecosystem for everyone. We now have our sights set on the next milestone: 1 Billion users.

With over half a billion people using the platform every month, Truecaller has evolved beyond being just a caller identification application. It has become an essential part of how communication works safely in the digital age, a daily-use trust layer that helps people verify identities, avoid fraud, and make informed decisions about who they interact with. Today, Truecaller operates as a global digital utility platform, embedded into everyday communication habits for hundreds of millions of people. From identifying unknown callers to

preventing fraud and enabling safer messaging, the platform has become a habitual, daily-use service that supports safer interactions across the phone ecosystem. Despite serving more than half a billion users globally, the company remains relatively lean, with a team of approximately 470 employees building and operating the platform for users around the world. The company will continue to report the average number of monthly and daily active users on a quarterly basis in connection with its interim financial reports.

# TRAI Assesses Network Quality Across Kadapa City and their adjoining areas in a Andhra Pradesh State (under Andhra Pradesh Licensed Service Area)

**Tirupati, April 01, 2026:** The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) released its Independent Drive Test (IDT) findings for the Andhra Pradesh Licensed Service Area (LSA), covering extensive city of Kadapa surrounding areas in the month of February 2026. The drive tests conducted under the supervision of the TRAI Regional Office, Hyderabad, were designed to capture real-world mobile network performance across diverse usage environments- Urban Zones, Institutional Hotspots, rural residential areas etc. Between 17th February 2026 to 19th February 2026, TRAI teams conducted detailed tests for 395.6 Kms Kadapa City drive test, 5.1Kms Walk Test and 8 Hotspot locations. Technologies evaluated included 2G, 3G, 4G, and 5G, reflecting the service experience of users across multiple handset capabilities. The findings of the



IDT have been intimated to all the TSPs concerned.

**Key Parameters Assessed:**  
a) Voice Services: Call Setup Success Rate (CSSR), Drop Call Rate (DCR), Call Setup Time, Call Silence Rate, Speech Quality (MOS), Coverage.

**The overall mobile network performance in Kadapa city is summarized below:**  
Call Setup Success Rate: Airtel, BSNL, RJIL and VIL have 99.59%, 93.74%, 99.17% and 96.36% call setup success rate respectively in Auto-selection

mode (5G/4G/3G/2G).

b) Data Services: Download/Upload Throughput, Latency, Jitter, Packet Drop Rate, and Video Streaming Delay.

Average download speed of Airtel (5G/4G/2G) is 131.28 Mbps, BSNL (4G/3G/2G) is 14.34 Mbps, RJIL (5G/4G) is 229.13 Mbps and VIL (4G/2G) is 28.57 Mbps. CSSR: Call Setup Success Rate (in %), CST: Call Setup Time (in seconds), DCR: Drop Call Rate (in %) and MOS: Mean Opinion Score.

# Global Headwinds Intensify – Can India Inc Stay the Course

**Mumbai, 1st April 2026:** According to CareEdge Ratings Credit Ratio, which measures the proportion of rating upgrades to downgrades, stood at 1.93 times in the second half of fiscal 2026, lower than 2.56 times observed in the first half. During this period, 363 entities were upgraded and 188 were downgraded. While the credit ratio remains above the 10-year average of 1.55, the moderation suggests early signs of stress amid a more challenging environment. The downgrade rate, at 7%, remains below the long-term average of 10%; however, the moderation in upgrades, from the long-term average of 15% to 13% in the current period, suggests that improvement in credit profiles is becoming more selective. Nevertheless, reaffirmations remained high at 80%, indicating that the bulk of the rated universe continues to hold its ground even as the external environment grows more complex. This relative stability is underpinned by the continuing corporate deleveraging trend, as also highlighted in



our Oct. 2025 edition of the Credit Quality Assessment. Total gearing remained low at 0.50 times as of Mar. 31, 2025, compared with Sachin Gupta, Executive Director and Chief Rating Officer, CareEdge Ratings, commented on the evolving economic landscape, stating, "The escalation of the West Asia conflict has added a new and potent layer of uncertainty. Given India's high dependence on energy imports, a prolonged conflict situation could have cascading effects — fuelling inflation, widening the current account deficit, exerting pressure on

fiscal balances, and weighing on growth. In this context, CareEdge estimates that if crude oil were to average USD 100 per barrel in FY2027, GDP growth could moderate to 6.5%, while inflation may rise to 5.1-5.3%." He further added, "While domestic policy measures and relatively stronger corporate balance sheets provide some cushion, the critical question is whether these domestic levers will be sufficient to keep credit quality on course if the global environment deteriorates further. For now, the answer leans towards yes — but the

margin for comfort is narrowing." Amidst the emerging geo-political environment, the credit ratio for the manufacturing and services sector improved to 2.06 times in H2FY26, up from 1.72 times in H1FY26. Ranjan Sharma, Senior Director, CareEdge Ratings (Corporate Ratings), noted, "The upgrades during H2FY26 were fairly broad-based, with key sectors driving the momentum being pharmaceuticals, auto ancillaries, real estate leasing, mid-sized entities in capital goods and agricultural food products, along with hospi-

tality and healthcare in the services space. On the flipside, sectors bearing the brunt of downgrades were small-sized commodity trading and distribution entities, seafood exporters, and paper and paper product companies. The chemical sector continued to face pressure from the twin forces of Chinese dumping and weak global demand. Looking ahead, the sudden outbreak of conflict in West Asia has introduced sectoral vulnerabilities that did not exist around a month ago. Industries like airlines, ceramics, chemicals, glass, fertilizers, oil marketing companies, basmati rice exporters, packaging, tyres, synthetic textiles, gas distribution, cement, paints, semiconductor & electronics, auto ancillaries, and hospitality — face earnings headwinds if the West Asia conflict prolongs. MSMEs, in general, are likely to be the most vulnerable to these shocks. However, Corporate India's deleveraged balance sheets, are expected to provide some cushion in the near term."

# Donald Trump says he's considering leaving Nato as Starmer says UK will host talks on Strait of Hormuz

Donald Trump says "Iran's New Regime President" has asked the US for a ceasefire. In a statement on Truth Social, he does not mention the top official by name, but describes the individual as "much less Radicalized and far more intelligent than his predecessors". He adds: "We will consider when Hormuz Strait is open, free, and clear. Until then, we are blasting Iran into oblivion or, as they say, back to the Stone Ages!!!" The United Arab Emirates (UAE) says five ballistic missiles have been launched from Iran today. There have also been 35 drone attacks, says the update by the country's ministry of defence. This brings the total number of ballistic missiles launched from Iran to 438, and drone attacks to 2,012, it adds. Iran's retaliatory attacks against US allies in the Gulf have continued unabated since the beginning of the US and Israeli strikes on 28 February. In the UAE alone, two members of



the country's armed forces have been killed since then, in addition to one military contractor and nine civilians, the latest briefing says. In his latest written message, Iranian Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei reaffirms support to the leader of Lebanon's Iran-backed armed group Hezbollah, Naim Qassem. The message also expresses "appreciation for Hezbollah's condolences" following the killing of for-

mer Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, Mojtaba Khamenei's father, on 28 February - the first day of US and Israeli strikes. Mojtaba Khamenei has not been seen in public or featured in Iranian media since succeeding his father on 8 March. Israel, however, had previously vowed, both before and after his succession, that he would be a target. US President Donald Trump said that Mojtaba

Khamenei was "either dead or in very bad shape, because no one has heard from him". Meanwhile, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva said that Khamenei's absence from public view was due to "security considerations". "We are heading towards a major, major disruption." That's what Fatih Birol, the head of the International Energy Agency (IEA), is warning. He

tells the In Good Company podcast that shortages of jet fuel and diesel will soon be felt in Europe. "April will be much worse than March", he says, because there were still be some cargoes of oil and gas arriving at ports around the world that had been loaded up before war broke out. "In April, there is nothing," he says, estimating that the loss of oil "will be twice the loss of oil in March". Describing shortages of jet fuel and diesel as "the biggest problem today", Birol says that "we are seeing [the shortages] already in Asia", but this supply issue will "soon" be felt in Europe. Donald Trump's latest warning that he might be thinking of pulling out of Nato clearly stems from a major fit of pique over the reluctance of members to play a more active role in the war with Iran. Put aside for a moment the fact that joining wars of choice beyond Europe was never the purpose of the

alliance, and that the US attacked Iran, not the other way around. The president's disenchantment with Nato has been well known for a decade. Angry over the failure of members to spend 2% of their GDP on defence, Donald Trump came close to pulling out in 2019, according to Nato's former chief Jens Stoltenberg. Trump's ambivalence and occasional outright hostility towards Nato have already led to calls for Europe to take a more leading role. In a report published last week, the MPs and peers that make up the parliamentary Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, said this should be an increasingly urgent priority. "The UK and its European allies," they wrote, "must develop a clear plan for a transition towards greater European leadership of Nato." Of all the warnings in President Trump's arsenal, leaving the Nato military alliance is among those he's wielded the most.

## US journalist Shelly Kittleson kidnapped in Baghdad



A US freelance journalist has been kidnapped in the Iraqi capital Baghdad, and one of the suspects is linked to an Iran-backed militia, Iraqi and US officials say. Shelly Kittleson was abducted on Tuesday evening, said Al-Monitor, a news outlet for which she has contributed articles. The Iraqi interior ministry said security forces had chased the reporter's abductors in a pursuit that resulted in one of the kidnappers' cars overturning and the arrest of one suspect. A US state department official said an individual with ties to an Iranian-aligned militia group, Kataib Hezbollah, was detained by Iraqi authorities. Dylan Johnson, assistant secretary of state for global public affairs, confirmed the abduction of an American journalist, without naming Kittleson. He posted on X: "The State Department previously fulfilled our duty to warn this individual of threats against them and we will continue to coordinate with the FBI to ensure their release as quickly as possible." It is understood that US officials had contacted Kittleson a number of times to warn of threats against her, including as late as Monday night. The US state department said in a statement to the BBC: "Due to privacy and other considerations, we have nothing further to share at this time."

## Divorced couples in Japan can now share custody of their children



Divorced couples in Japan are now allowed to share custody of their children, after a landmark revision to Japan's Civil Code took effect on Wednesday. Before the amendment was approved by parliament in 2024, Japan was the only G7 country that did not recognise the legal concept of joint custody. Custody was typically granted to one parent - in most cases the mother - who had power to cut off the other parent's access to their children. Domestic and international criticism has been mounting against the sole custody system in Japan, which critics say led many divorcees to become estranged from their children after losing custody of them. Previously, divorcing couples in Japan were free to decide custody and visitation arrangements. But if they went to court over it, custody would only be awarded to one parent. Under the new law, a family court can decide whether to grant sole or joint custody to divorcing couples. Parents who divorced under the old system are also now eligible to have their custody arrangement reviewed by the family court. The Civil Code revision

also mandates child support payments after divorce, allowing the parent living with the child to claim 20,000 yen (€95; \$125) from their ex-spouse every month. Some are hopeful that the changes will help prevent cases of parental abduction, which have come into the spotlight in recent years - especially after allegations made by foreigners with Japanese ex-spouses. In 2023, Japanese table tennis star Ai Fukuhara was accused by her Taiwanese ex-husband of abducting their son. He said she had cut off contact with him and refused to bring their son back to Taiwan. The pair later came to a settlement. During the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, a French father who was based in Japan staged a hunger strike, calling attention to what he said was the kidnapping of his children by his ex-wife. While some see the joint custody bill as a way to solve such controversies, not everyone is supportive of the revision. Some previously told BBC that they feared joint custody would force women to maintain ties with husbands even in cases of domestic violence.

## Mass robotaxi malfunction halts traffic in Chinese city



A mass robotaxi outage in the Chinese city of Wuhan caused at least a hundred self-driving cars to stop mid-traffic, sparking renewed debate around the safety of driverless vehicles. Local police said initial findings suggested a "system malfunction" caused multiple vehicles to stop in the middle of the road on Tuesday. Videos on social media have documented the outage, with one appearing to show it

resulting in a highway collision, although police said no injuries had been reported and passengers exited their vehicles safely. Baidu did not immediately respond to a request for comment. According to the police statement, posted on social media site Weibo, the cause of the incident is still under further investigation. Baidu operates its Apollo Go driverless taxi service in dozens of cities across the world.

## CHINA IS TRYING TO PLAY PEACEMAKER IN THE IRAN WAR - WILL IT WORK?

As the war in the Middle East enters its second month, choking the world's energy supply and sending oil prices soaring, China is trying to step in as a peacemaker. It comes as President Donald Trump says US military action in Iran could end in "two to three weeks", but there is no clear sense yet of how that will happen or what comes after. China joins Pakistan, which has emerged as an unlikely mediator in the US-Israel war against Iran. Officials in Beijing and Islamabad have presented a five-point plan with the aim of bringing about a ceasefire and re-opening the vital Strait of Hormuz. Pakistan, which has been a US ally in the past, seems to have won over Trump to mediate this conflict. Beijing, however, is



entering the fray as a rival to Washington, ahead of crucial trade talks between Chinese leader Xi Jinping and Trump next month. China's backing on this is "very important," says Zhu Yongbiao, a Middle East expert and director of the Centre for Afghanistan Studies at Lanzhou University. "Morally, politically and diplomatically, China is providing comprehensive support with the

hope that Pakistan can play a more distinctive role." It is also a turnaround for Beijing, whose official response to the war has so far been quite muted. So why is China stepping in now? The peace plan was drafted after Pakistan's foreign minister flew to Beijing to ask for Chinese support for the country's efforts to negotiate an end to this conflict. His efforts appear to have

worked. China's Foreign Ministry said the two were making "new efforts towards advocating for peace." The joint statement agreed that dialogue and diplomacy were "the only viable option to resolve conflicts", and it called for waterways, including the blockaded strait, to be protected. It's not just about oil, although that will be a concern. China, the biggest importer of crude oil in the world, has enough stockpiled to get it through the next few months. Beijing will likely have decided to play the role of peacemaker because the war in Iran jeopardises something Xi covets: stability. China needs a stable global economy as it is heavily reliant on selling goods around the world as it tries to revive an ailing domestic economy.

## Israel intensifies Lebanon attacks and hits areas not in Hezbollah's control

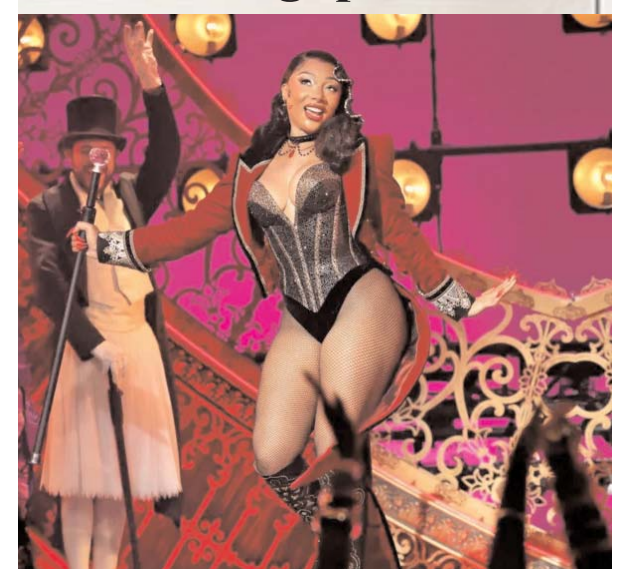
Israel has intensified its attacks on Lebanon this week, hitting areas outside of Hezbollah's control on Tuesday. Strikes without warning hit a vehicle north of Beirut and the Jnah neighbourhood in the heart of the capital. Attacks also continued in the city's southern suburbs and the country's south, both where Hezbollah has a strong presence. A building was destroyed on the road to Beirut's airport after an evacuation order, and in the south, a strike hit a health facility, killing a paramedic, according to Lebanon's health ministry. Israel's military said it had hit Hezbollah infrastructure in



Beirut and killed a senior commander and another senior figure from the Iran-backed armed group. Hezbollah joined the ongoing regional war on 2 March, sending missiles towards Israel, after the US and Israel attacked the armed group's ally Iran on 28 February.

of the capital was attacked after midnight. The Lebanese health ministry said the Al-Zahraa Hospital had received and treated "a number of those injured in the air strike". Hassan Jalwan, who lives near Jnah, told AFP he heard several "big explosions" overnight. "Nobody knows what's happening," he said, adding that "displaced people have been sleeping in the open" in the area. The Dahieh neighbourhood to the south of Beirut, where Hezbollah has a strong presence, continues to be a target. A building was destroyed on Tuesday in Gobeiry on the road to the airport following an evacuation order.

## Megan Thee Stallion taken to hospital during Moulin Rouge performance



Rapper Megan Thee Stallion had to be taken to hospital mid-way through her performance of Moulin Rouge! The Musical, in New York on Tuesday night, her representative has confirmed. "Megan started feeling very ill and was promptly transported to a local hospital, where her symptoms are currently being evaluated," the spokesperson told US media outlets. "We will share additional updates as more information becomes available." The musician, 31, is performing as Zidler - the show's eccentric master of ceremonies - marking her highly anticipated Broadway debut. Her hair stylist, Kellon Deryck, wrote on X: "Everyone say a prayer for Megan, we are all at the hospital." Megan Thee Stallion, whose real name is Megan Pete, is scheduled to play Zidler until 17

May, the Moulin Rouge website says. Ahead of her premiere, she expressed excitement for briefly substituting concerts with theatre performances. "HOTTIES IM ON BROADWAY!!!" she wrote on social media after her first performance on 24 March, referencing her fanbase, called the "hotties". Megan Thee Stallion is best-known for hits including Savage, WAP and Body. In 2021, she won three Grammy awards for Best Rap Song, Best New Artist and Best Rap Performance. The following year she was nominated for Album of the Year. Harold Zidler was first played by Danny Burstein in the original Broadway cast of Moulin Rouge, and won a coveted Tony award in 2020 for it. More recently, celebrity drag artist Bob the Drag Queen played Zidler in the musical for eight weeks earlier this year.



Russian military plane crash kills 29 in occupied Crimea

## 'MY SIX-YEAR-OLD HAS NOSE-BLEEDS': CHIANG MAI AIR POLLUTION SPARKS HEALTH FEARS



Tirayut Wongsantisuk and his wife moved to Chiang Mai in the 2010s, drawn by the hilly region's cool air and lush greenery. But worsening air quality in the Thai city, especially during this time of the year, have prompted them to consider relocating for the sake of their children. Two of their daughters have experienced frequent nosebleeds. "I've been thinking,

maybe we really should move during this time... because if something bad happens to our child, we'll feel terrible forever," Tirayut, 41, told the BBC. Smoke from raging fires have choked parts of northern Thailand this past week, with Chiang Mai ranking among the world's most polluted cities, according to monitoring group IQAir.



## Inaugural Little Andaman Pro 2026 To Kick Off India's Surfing Season As Asian Games Debut Beckons

Surfing Federation of India, the governing body for the sport of surfing in India, announced India's 2026 surfing season opener, Little Andaman Pro 2026 - National Surf & SUP Championship, scheduled from April 9-12, 2026. The Little Andaman Pro 2026 will debut in a highly anticipated season of Indian surfing just ahead of India's first-ever campaign at the Asian Games 2026 in Japan later this year.

The four-day surfing extravaganza will see India's top surfers and stand-up paddlers vying for the top honors at the stunning Butler Bay Beach in the Andaman Islands, bringing competitive surfing to one of the country's most pristine and untapped coastal destinations for the very first time. Presented by Andaman and Nicobar Tourism and organized by Surfing Federation of India, the event will bring together top surfers from across the country to compete in the Senior Division across



Surfing and Stand-Up Paddle (SUP) disciplines, with registrations already underway for the event. TT group has come onboard as the official sponsor for the 2026 Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan. "This is a landmark moment for Indian surfing. As we stare at India's surfing debut at the Asian Games later this year, starting the national season at a world-class location like Little Andaman speaks loudly about our

2025 edition in Mahabalipuram, ultimately securing the maximum allocation of four slots, two each in the men's and women's categories for the 2026 Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan. "This is a landmark moment for Indian surfing. As we stare at India's surfing debut at the Asian Games later this year, starting the national season at a world-class location like Little Andaman speaks loudly about our

intent to take the sport deep into our coast-rich country. We are constantly working to give more competition time to our talented athletes across diverse conditions, which is critical for their growth at the international level. Surfing is a community driven sports and as we expand our reach to the Andaman's we want to create opportunities for local communities, nurture young talent, and position India as a serious contender

in global surfing", said, Mr. Arun Vasu, President Surfing Federation of India. Mr. Vasu further added "The progress of Indian surfers on the international stage has been extremely encouraging. From securing our first Asian Games quotas to winning medals at continental championships, we are seeing the results of sustained grassroots development and structured competition."

The Little Andaman Pro 2026 will take place at Butler Bay, widely regarded as one of India's most promising surf locations. Unlike many mainland beach breaks, the reef break at Butler Bay produces long, clean waves that allow surfers to execute more technical maneuvers and extended rides, making it ideal for high-performance competition. For many Indian surfers who typically train on beach breaks, competing in reef conditions presents a valuable opportunity to enhance technical skills and broaden competitive experience.

## Skechers, The Comfort Technology Company, Back For Season 3 With Mumbai Indians

Skechers, The Comfort Technology Company, continues its association with the Mumbai Indians, coming back as the Official Kit Partner for the third consecutive year, ahead of India's premier T20 cricket season. Building on a successful partnership, Skechers will once again outfit Mumbai Indians players with high-performance kits, while also bringing fans closer to the team through official merchandise designed for both on-field performance and off-field expression. This season's player jersey is finished with refined gold accents, bringing a sharper, premium edge that reflects the team's legacy and winning mindset. The fan jersey is designed for versatility-made to be worn beyond match day. Rooted in a shared spirit of movement and Mumbai's relentless energy, the jersey stands for team pride, grit, and performance earned on the field and carried off it. In



support of the new kit launch, Skechers will roll out a digital-first content series, featuring Tilak Varma, Shardul Thakur and Ryan Rickelton, capturing the intersection of sport, style, and fandom. The campaign aims to amplify the connection between the team and its fans during the season, while reinforcing Skechers' positioning at the forefront of performance and lifestyle. Rahul Vira, CEO, Skechers South Asia, said, "Mumbai Indians are a team that embodies the consistency, resilience, and

fearless spirit that aligns naturally with Skechers' performance-led philosophy. As we enter the third year of our partnership, we look forward to bringing fans closer to the team through footwear and apparel that combine innovation, comfort, and style, while celebrating the energy and ambition that define modern-day cricket." A Mumbai Indians spokesperson added, "At Mumbai Indians, the jersey represents more than just the team; it reflects our mindset, pride, and expectations.

## Tears, Despair And Unreal Scenes As Italy Miss Out On FIFA World Cup Qualification Again

Italy's collapse in the qualification campaign has left the footballing world stunned, with images of distraught players and inconsolable fans painting a picture of heartbreak that transcends sporting boundaries. The catastrophe unfolded for Italy as they took on Bosnia and Herzegovina in Tuesday's breathless qualification play-off final. The Azzurri blew their chance to reach this summer's tournament in North America with a 4-1 penalty shoot-out defeat. Italy, once synonymous with defensive mastery and tournament pedigree, faltered when it mattered most, unable to summon the grit and tactical clarity that has defined their



greatest triumphs. For a nation that prides itself on footballing heritage, the absence from the world's biggest stage for the third consecutive time feels like a cultural wound, reopening scars from recent failures and raising uncomfortable questions about the direction of Italian football. What makes this

setback so surreal is the comparison between Italy's recent European Championship glory and their repeated inability to navigate World Cup qualification. The despair in the stands, the disbelief among pundits, and the raw emotion on the pitch underline a crisis of identity: how can a team capa-

ble of continental brilliance stumble so dramatically on the global stage? The fallout will be fierce-calls for structural reform, tactical reinvention, and a renewed focus on nurturing attacking flair. Yet beyond the technical analysis lies a deeper truth: Italy's absence from the World Cup is not just a sporting disappointment, but the repeated destruction of a football giant. Esmir Bajraktarevic shot the winning spot-kick in Zenica where the Bosnians booked a place in Group B and matches against co-hosts Canada, Switzerland and Qatar, and plunged Italy into a new nightmare.

## Vaibhav Sooryavanshi Reveals 'Secret' Diet Before Hitting 15-Ball Half-Century For RR vs CSK In IPL 2026

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi lit up IPL 2026 in Rajasthan Royals' first match against Chennai Super Kings in Guwahati. The wonder-kid slammed a 15-ball half-century, the third fastest in IPL history, in a 128-run chase. The fast knock ensured RR successfully chased down the target in just 12.1 overs. After the match, there was a funny interaction between RR's Dhruv Jurel and Rishabh Pant. Jurel told the 15-year-old: "Well played, youngster. Once again, very well played." In reply, Sooryavanshi said: "Aaj Rajbhog mithai kha ke gaya tha match mein. (Ate Rajbhog mithai - a kind of sweet dish - before the match)." Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's sensation-



al start to the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 has already turned heads, with former India cricketer Sanjay Bangar predicting a blockbuster season for the teenage sensation after Rajasthan Royals' dominant eight-wicket win over Chennai Super Kings on Monday. Dropped for nought,

new-ball bowler who challenges top batters internationally. He toyed with Khaleel Ahmed, who swings the ball both ways. He got the better of Anshul Kamboj, known for hitting the deck hard with good-length deliveries. He even made life difficult for mystery bowler Noor Ahmad. "At the age of 15, he dominated four quality bowlers with his fearless batting and forced them to move away from their strengths. Henry had to bowl slower balls. Khaleel had to try different things. He put pressure on all of them. That shows Vaibhav, with his fearless approach, is getting into the minds of established bowlers. I admired that quality in his innings.

## Man Utd are closing in on Champions League - how has Carrick done it?

When Manchester United's director of football Jason Wilcox addressed the club's players after Ruben Amorim's dismissal on 5 January and told them the aim was Champions League qualification, he was sending out a message. After all, internally in their financial planning, and externally in communication with supporters, the stated target from the previous summer had been a return to European competition, most likely through the Europa League. Wilcox was choosing to reinforce a point that just because Amorim had been sacked and a caretaker boss was being sought, it did not mean the season was being written off. The hierarchy making the big decisions might have changed,



but the chaos Ralf Rangnick's short tenure descended into when he was picked to guide United to the end of the season following Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's dismissal in November 2021 were fresh in the memory. Wilcox wanted focus and determination, not apathy and a lack of accountability. United were not at rock bottom when Carrick replaced

Darren Fletcher, who had spent two games as interim boss, on 13 January. One defeat in nine in the Premier League. One point off fifth spot. The problem was they had just drawn against three relegation candidates - Wolves, Leeds and Burnley, and their next two games were against title rivals Manchester City and Arsenal.

## 'THAT WAS BAD' - POTTS ON HIS ASHES HORROR SHOW

There were various lows during England's terrible Ashes tour of Australia, many of which have been pored over endlessly in recent months. Few, though, were as brutal as the horror show Matthew Potts suffered in Sydney. Taken apart by Travis Head, he conceded 141 runs in 25 wicketless overs. Had he conceded six more he would have returned the worst figures by an England seamer in Tests. "There's a little period of reflection where you sum up your day's work and look back at it," Potts says, speaking almost three months on. "I just had three words: 'That was bad.'" Potts' first three overs cost 25 runs, while he ended day



two with figures of 0-58 from seven. When he was first brought into the attack on day three, Head pounced immediately, flogging boundaries from each of the Durham seamer's first three

balls. Potts conceded 100 runs after 15.1 overs. He was not used at all by captain Ben Stokes in the second innings as Australia chased 160 for a five-wicket win. "Sometimes you have to roll with the punches," he says. "I got dealt a few punches and I didn't throw too many the other way.

## Raducanu pulls out of another tournament after illness



Emma Raducanu has delayed the start of her clay-court season as she continues her recovery from a viral illness, according to her representatives. The British number one was due to play at the Linz Open in Austria next week, but BBC Sport was told on Wednesday she has withdrawn from the WTA 500 event. It is understood Raducanu, 23, wants to focus on making a full recovery before returning to competitive action on the clay. The world number 28 started feeling unwell while playing during February's Middle East hard-court swing. She competed in Indian Wells last month, but then decided to skip Miami. It has led to another period of uncertainty for Raducanu. Her career has been littered with injury and physical issues since winning the Grand Slam title in New York as a teenage qualifier. Last sea-

son she made encouraging strides, completing a half-century of matches in a season for the first time. But it has been another stuttered start this year. The opening three months have seen a familiar mix: signs of progress, chastening defeats, a coaching change and disruption caused by her health. Raducanu has played six tournaments this season, winning seven of her 14 matches. Four of those wins came in a run to the Transylvania Open final, where she was aiming for a first title since her shock US Open triumph in 2021. Raducanu hopes to return for the Madrid Open, which is the opening WTA 1000 event of the European clay-court season. Raducanu's withdrawal from Linz comes a day after fellow Briton Jack Draper pulled out of the Monte Carlo Masters as he continues his cautious comeback following an arm injury.

## Retirement Loading: Lionel Messi In Tears As He Plays His Final Game In Argentina

In his final game at home, an emotional Lionel Messi struggled to hold back tears as he lined up with his teammates for the last time on Argentinian soil on Tuesday. Messi's Argentina faced Zambia at La Bombonera in Buenos Aires in a friendly, with the former Barcelona star scoring one goal and setting up another. Argentina went on to thrash Zambia 5-0, before beginning the defence of their World Cup crown. Messi, restored to the starting line-up by coach Lionel Scaloni after Argentina's lacklustre win over Mauritania last Friday,

made an instant impact in Tuesday's friendly at La Bombonera. The 38-year-old superstar set up the opening goal for Julián Álvarez before bagging his 116th goal for Argentina with an individual strike just before half-time. Tuesday's game marked a World Cup send-off for the reigning champions, who will face Algeria, Austria and Jordan in Group J of the finals in June. As Messi stood with his teammates on the pitch, the crowd's songs and chants moved him to tears. In a video that surfaced on social media, the Inter Miami forward could be seen wiping

his eyes, realising it was the last time he would play in front of his home fans. Argentina will also play a friendly against Serbia in June and are seeking to arrange another warm-up fixture before the tournament. Messi is firmly expected to captain Argentina into what will be a record sixth World Cup finals as the South American giants target back-to-back titles. The Inter Miami playmaker once again demonstrated his enduring influence on the Albiceleste with a typically decisive contribution in a comfortable win. Álvarez fired Argentina into

the lead after just four minutes when Messi effortlessly controlled a lofted pass on the edge of the area and threaded a ball into the feet of the Atlético Madrid striker to score. Messi doubled Argentina's lead with the 902nd goal of his career two minutes before half-time, working a clever one-two with Liverpool midfielder Alexis Mac Allister before tucking a low finish past Zambia goalkeeper Willard Mwanza. Messi could have added to his tally just after half-time when Argentina were



awarded a penalty following Albert Kangwanda's foul on Thiago Almada.

## Malavika Nair Promises Thrilling, Emotional Ride in 'Biker'

I have played an impactful character with scope for performance in Biker. Biker is a high adrenaline, high octane film. It will connect emotionally with all the family audience: Heroine Malavika Nair Charming Star Sharva's most awaited sports drama Biker. Malavika Nair is playing the heroine in this film and Rajasekhar has played a powerful role. Directed by Abhilash Reddy and produced by the prestigious banner UV Creations, this film, which is being made as India's first complete motocross drama, has already created a huge buzz. The film will hit the theatres on April 3. On this occasion, heroine Malavika Nair shared the highlights of the film in a press conference.

**How did the biker journey start?**  
I heard the story in April 2024. I liked it a lot. Director Abhilash has written a character with very fresh content. Biker is the first motocross film in India. I am very excited for this film. It is a high adrenaline, high octane film. The music is amazing.

**What will your character be like in this?**  
I don't want to reveal too much about my character.

My role in this is like a bridge to the story. The role of family is very crucial in the life of a sportsman. In this, the wife and husband take any decision together. The story unfolds in three timelines. My character also keeps evolving. I have done a good impactful role with scope for performance.

**How was it working with Sharwa?**  
In real life, we are both introverts. We don't talk much. But in the film, we have good chemistry in terms of characters. Sharwa is very spontaneous. We interacted even better during promotions.

**You're comparing a biker to FI, right?**  
Motocross sport is very difficult to shoot. The music technically definitely gives a good high. Also, there are good family emotions in it. The father-sun emotion is special. Every character has a good arc in this movie.

**Are there dance numbers in this?**  
It has the song "Pretty Baby". Shekhar Master has choreographed it very beautifully. The audience will enjoy it a lot.

**Do you have scenes with Rajasekhar?**  
There are. It was a good experience to act with him. Even

though he is so senior, he is very close to everyone on the set. He listens to anything we say. That is a very great quality. A very kind person.

**Tell me about the music?**  
The music in this movie is very special. Ghibran has done a wonderful job with the background music. He has composed memorable soundtracks for each character. There is a good high in terms of music.

**About director Abhilash Reddy?**  
Abhilash is a very clear director. He clearly knows what the story and characters need. He also completes the shooting on time. He is a good leader. Biker is different from his previous films.

**The reason you make films so selectively?**  
I want to do a new character every time. I want to do characters with different layers. If such characters come up, I will definitely do them.

**What is your selection of stories like?**  
Before doing a character, I keep the audience in mind. We make films for them. I also make sure that the character connects with me personally. If it feels new, I will definitely do it. I am very happy with my journey so far.



## Carmeni Selvam is a film that gives hope to those struggling with debt: director Ram Chakri

Carmeni Selvam' is a bilingual film made in Telugu and Tamil under the Pathway Productions banner, produced by Arun Rangarajulu and directed by Ram Chakri. Versatile actor Samuthirakani plays the lead role, while Gautham Vasudev Menon appears in a key role. The film also stars Lakshmi Priya, Abhinaya, Karthik Kumar, Badava Gopi, Kothandam, Karan Chakravarthi, Shankara Narayanan V, and Haritha Parakod in important roles. The movie is set for a grand theatrical release on April 3 in both Telugu and Tamil, distributed by PVR INOX Pictures.



**ON THIS OCCASION, DIRECTOR RAM CHAKRI SHARED HIS THOUGHTS:**

"I watched 'Arya' as my first Telugu film. After that, I watched 'Anand' and 'Godavari.' At that time, I understood one thing very clearly, the Telugu film industry beautifully embraces two very different storytelling styles. On one side, there are energetic, commercial films like 'Arya,' and on the other, there are realistic, heart-touching films like 'Anand' and 'Godavari' by Sekhar Kammula. That balance inspired me a lot. I never got

the opportunity to work directly with Sekhar Kammula garu, but I consider him my teacher and mentor. I learned a great deal by watching his films. I also thank my directing mentor K. V. Guhan garu. Both of them have been major sources of inspiration for me. Coming to 'Carmeni Selvam,' the film is based on middle-class life. Everyone who watches it will connect with the story. Especially for those who are struggling with debt, this film will give them courage. Debt is quite common in middle-class families, and we are showing how it affects relationships within

the family and the decisions they make. The film is very realistic. Samuthirakani garu has brought out every shade of his character brilliantly. As a middle-class husband and father, he has delivered a deeply emotional performance. Along with him, Gautham Menon garu, Lakshmi Priya, and Abhinaya have also delivered performances that will impress the audience. Our technical team has been very supportive. When it comes to music, we are introducing a new concept for this film. Under the title 'Music as a Service,' our music director Ramanujan and his team worked collaboratively. They believe music is not just the work of a composer or singers, but a collective effort involving instrumentalists, sound engineers, mixing teams, and many other technicians. Through this concept, our goal is to give credit and share revenue with everyone who contributed to each song. This is our small effort to recognize the real heroes behind the music. Our DOP Yuvaraj Dakshan and editor Jagan have great experience. When you watch the film in theaters, you will understand how grandly we have presented the story visually.

## "King Buddha – We Want World Peace" Title Song Launch by Sri Lankan Minister Dr. Sunil Senevi

The title song "King Buddha – We Want World Peace" was officially launched by Sri Lanka's Minister of Buddhism Religious Affairs, Dr. Sunil Senevi, at a grand event held at ITC Kakatiya, Hyderabad. Speaking at the event, Dr. Sunil Senevi praised director Satya Reddy's noble initiative of promoting global peace through the film King Buddha. He emphasized the need to end ongoing conflicts across the world, including tensions between Iran-Israel and Ukraine-Russia, and appreciated the film's strong message advocating peace. He expressed happiness that the film has been initiated in the United States and is being shot across several Buddhist countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Indonesia. He also assured full support from Sri Lanka for upcoming shooting schedules. He remarked that King Buddha will



stand as a unique film in world cinema history for being shot across numerous Buddhist nations. Recalling the devastating impact of atomic bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, he stressed that

the world must avoid another global war and adopt the path of peace. He stated that Buddhism remains a guiding force for global harmony and highlighted that thousands of Buddhist monks are con-

ducting peace walks worldwide, receiving immense public support. Dr. Sunil Senevi also revealed that he had watched some portions of the film shot in Hollywood and lauded director Satya Reddy for his exceptional work. On this occasion, the King Buddha film team honored the minister with floral garlands and traditional shawls. Director Satya Reddy, speaking at the event, said that after a 30-year-long career in cinema, bringing the story of Gautama Buddha to the global audience through King Buddha is a dream come true. He announced that the film is planned for a worldwide release in over 100 languages in 2027. He further stated that the film is being made with cutting-edge technology never seen before. Currently, key sequences depicting the birth, childhood, and education of Gautama Buddha are being filmed in Nepal, including locations in the Himalayas, Lumbini, and Kathmandu.

## Soulful Melody 'Idhi Kalano' From Vijay Antony's Vanda Devullu Unveiled

After delivering a blockbuster like Bichagadu, the multi-talented Vijay Antony is teaming up once again with director Sasi for their upcoming film Vanda Devullu. The project is produced by Ramanjaneyulu Javvaji under the Sarvanth Ram Creations banner, presented by Vijay Antony Film Corporation and Fatima Vijay Antony. The film features Vijay Antony, Swasika, Ajay, Kavya, Shakthi, Padini, Karnas, Balaji Sakthivel, Divakar, Aruldoss, Bucks, Vinodhini, Munishkanth, and Kodangi Vadivel in key roles.

The recently released first-look poster has already generated strong buzz, especially with the intense, mass-appeal appearances of Vijay Antony and Swasika receiving terrific response. Now, the team has unveiled the soothing melody 'Idi Kalano', and it has instantly struck a chord with listeners. Balaji Sriram's compo-



sition stands out as the heart of the song. The tune flows like a gentle breeze. It's soft, immersive, and emotionally resonant. The arrangement beautifully blends subtle orchestration with a warm melodic structure, allowing the emotions

to breathe. The interplay of strings and soft percussion elevates the romantic mood, making it a classic Vijay Antony-style soulful number with a fresh musical texture. Lyricist Bhashyasree contributes deeply poetic lines

that perfectly capture the delicate emotions of love, longing, and dreamlike connection. His writing paints vivid emotional imagery, making the song feel intimate and heartfelt. The soothing vocals of Shibhi Srinivasan and Sireesha Bhagavatula further enrich the song. Their voices complement each other beautifully, delivering a calm yet emotionally charged performance. The tenderness in their rendition amplifies the song's romantic flavour, making every note linger in the listener's mind. The visuals featuring Vijay Antony and Swasika add another layer of charm. Their screen presence, subtle expressions, and the graceful way they portray their blooming affection make the song visually captivating. SB Darshan Kirlosh handles the cinematography. Balaji Sriram is the music director, Harish Yuvaraj serves as the editor, and Bhashyasree has penned the dialogues.

## ANU EMMANUEL TURNS HEADS IN RED



## "PALLICHATTAMBI" IS A BEAUTIFUL EMOTIONAL FILM THAT THE WHOLE FAMILY CAN WATCH TOGETHER: TOVINO THOMAS & KAYADU LOHAR

Malayalam star Tovino Thomas is playing the lead in the big-budget film "Pallichattambi." The movie is being produced by Noufael, Brijesh, and Chanakya, Chaitanya, Charan under the banners of Worldwide Films and C Cube Bros Entertainments. Directed by Dijo Jose Antony, the film features Kayadu Lohar as the female lead. The movie has generated huge expectations at a pan-India level and is set for a grand theatrical release on April 10th in five languages: Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and Kannada. In a recent interview, Tovino Thomas and Kayadu Lohar shared highlights about the film. Hero Tovino Thomas said: - I have known director Dijo

for a long time. We had been wanting to work together on a project and had discussed several ideas. However, due to my existing commitments, I couldn't collaborate with him immediately. We stayed in touch, and when he narrated the story of "Pallichattambi," I found it very exciting and decided to take it up. After completing my earlier commitments, and once Dijo finished his other projects including "Jana Gana Mana," we began working on this film. Initially, there was a change in producers, and we brought new producers on board. - According to the story, the hero needed to look physically strong and powerful enough to take on villains. So I gained weight for the

role. Until then, I had been dieting, but I stopped for this film. I also changed my hairstyle and mustache to achieve a strong look. Working with Dijo is very comfortable, he's calm on set and never seems to lose his temper. - During breaks from shooting, I like to go on vacations. I enjoy traveling and spending time with my family. I don't prefer hectic back-to-back schedules. Taking breaks helps me observe the industry from an outsider's perspective. Although I'm part of the industry, I like to look at it objectively. I've had discussions about several Telugu projects, but none have been finalized. I am currently in a strong position in Malayalam cinema, and moving to another language

might affect those who trust me with projects there. Even without doing a Telugu film, I'm happy that Telugu audiences appreciate my Malayalam movies. - I have previously worked with producers Noufael and Brijesh, who distributed my earlier films. Director Dijo ensured that there were no compromises in anything required for this project. I'm also happy that producers Chaitanya, Chanakya, and Charan from Telugu cinema joined this film. Jakes Bejoy has enhanced the intensity and emotional depth of the film with his music. I've worked with him before, he's an excellent composer. - "Pallichattambi" is a fictional story inspired by incidents from 1950s Kerala. It portrays the social condi-

