



**'Historic opportunity lost': Kiren Rijju slams Opposition's stand on Women's Bill**

NATION | NEWS

**Ceasefire with Israel brings respite to Lebanon, but obstacles to peace remain**

WORLD | NEWS



**Actor Jacqueline Fernandez has taken an important step in the money laundering case connected to Sukesh Chandrashekar.**

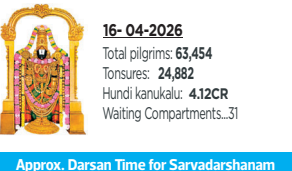
CINEMA | PAGE



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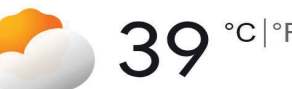
**OM NAMO VENKATESAYA**



16-04-2026  
Total pilgrims: 63,454  
Tonsures: 24,882  
Hundi kanakalu: 4,12CR  
Waiting Compartments: 31

Approx. Darshan Time for Sarvadarshanam (with out 550 Tokens), 18 H

WEATHER



39 °C | °F

Precipitation: 10%  
Humidity: 29%  
Wind: 10 km/h

GOLD RATE



24K ₹ 1,56,450/-

**Govt allows 15 major banks to import gold, silver up to March 2029**

New Delhi (TSIT): The Union Government on Friday allowed 15 major banks, including State Bank of India, HDFC Bank, and ICICI Bank, to import gold and silver from April 1, 2026, to March 31, 2029. The Union Bank of India and Sberbank have been authorised to import only gold during this period. The notification has been issued by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT). The move is part of the government's ongoing effort to streamline bullion imports and ensure they are routed through regulated and traceable channels.

**BENGAL POLLS: Counting centres reduced to 87**



Kolkata (TSIT): The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Friday announced that the number of counting centres for the forthcoming two-phase elections in West Bengal later this month has been reduced to 87. The number of counting centres was 90 in the 2016 state assembly polls, which was subsequently increased to 108 in 2021. This year, the number has been reduced to 87, according to a Commission notification issued on Friday afternoon. Of the 87 counting centres, the maximum will be in South 24 Parganas with 12, followed by 8 in North 24 Parganas and 6 in Hooghly. The least will be for Kalimpong, Alipurduar, and Jhargram with one each. The two-phase polling in West Bengal will be held on April 23 and April 29. Counting will be conducted, and the results declared on May 4. At the same time, the Commission informed on Friday that till 9 p.m. on Tuesday, the total number of property defacements removed stood at 18,38,572. Of these, 15,80,892 were cases related to public property defacements, and the remaining 2,25,170 were related to private property defacements.

**CM Revanth urges Centre to procure 30 LMT boiled rice, seeks Rs.1,468.94 crore arrears...**

Hyderabad  
TSIT BUREAU:

Chief Minister A.Revanth Reddy, along with Civil Supplies Minister N.Uttam Kumar Reddy, met Union Minister for Food and Public Distribution Pralhad Joshi in New Delhi on Friday and urged the Centre to procure 30 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) of boiled rice from Telangana during the ongoing Yasangi (Rabi) season.

During the meeting held at the Union Minister's residence, the Chief Minister explained that paddy harvested in the Yasangi season is ideally suited for milling into parboiled rice. He presented statistical data on the supply of Custom Milling Rice (CMR) over the past six Yasangi seasons and highlighted the increasing national demand for boiled rice.

Revanth Reddy informed the Union Minister that Telangana is expecting a production of around 90 LMT of paddy this season and is ready to supply 30 LMT of parboiled rice with 5 per cent broken content, along with 5 LMT of raw rice with 10 per cent broken content.

Responding positively, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi gave in-principle approval for the procurement of boiled rice from Telangana. The Chief Minister and the Civil



Supplies Minister also urged the Centre to release pending arrears of Rs.1,468.94 crore related to the procurement of additional levy from the 2014-15 Kharif season. They highlighted that Telangana ensures prompt payments to farmers within 48 hours of procurement and sought early release of dues in view of financial pressures on the Civil Supplies department.

Additionally, the Chief Minister requested the Union Minister to resume the distribution of Fortified Rice Kernels (FRK), which were earlier supplied through schools, hostels, and ICDS centres to address anemia and nutritional deficiencies among children.

**Govt wants to change India's electoral map, anti-national: Rahul on women's quota bills**

Rahul on women's quota bills

NEW DELHI (TSIT):

Lacing his speech in the Lok Sabha with analogies and jibes at the government, Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Friday said the constitution amendment bill has nothing to do with women's reservation and is instead an attempt to change the country's electoral map to retain power - an "anti-national act".

Participating in a debate on three bills related to amendments to the women's quota law and the setting up of a delimitation commission, the Congress leader said the proposal does not address women's empowerment.

"This (bill) is an attempt to change the country's electoral map, using and hiding behind India's women," he said, calling it a "shameful act". Gandhi said the government should bring back the 2023 Women's Reservation Act for implementation, assuring the opposition's full support for its immediate passage.

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"brutal, cruel, and unforgiving treatment" of the OBCs, Dalits, minorities, and

women."What is being attempted here is a bypass of the caste census.

They are trying to avoid giving power, representation to my OBC brothers and sisters, and instead take power away from them," Gandhi said, adding that the real agenda is "Manuvaad over Samvidhan". He also alleged that the government wants to ensure that the caste census has no bearing on representation for the next 15 years.

They want to "kick the ball down the street", he said. Calling the government's move to bring the bill a "very

dangerous thing", Gandhi said, "You (government) are scared of what is happening in the politics of this country, you are scared of the erosion of your strength, and you are trying to rejig the Indian political map. "You have done it in Jammu and Kashmir, you have done it in Assam, and now you are imagining that you can do it in the whole of India," he said.

Gandhi said the government is telling southern, northeastern, and smaller states that for the BJP to remain in power, "we are going to take away representation from you".

"What the government is doing is nothing short of an anti-national act. Under no circumstances will the opposition allow the government to do this. The entire opposition will defeat this attempt of yours to attack the nation state and deprive OBCs and Dalits of their rightful place in society," Gandhi said. "You call OBCs Hindus, you call Dalits Hindus, but you do not give them any space in the power structure of the country," he said.

**INDIA bloc allies creating roadblocks to women's reservation using 'why, ifs and buts': HM Shah**



New Delhi (TSIT)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday said that there is near-unanimous support for the Women's Reservation Bill, barring Opposition parties in the INDIA bloc, which he accused of putting roadblocks in its passage by raising objections to its "method" of implementation.

"Each and every lawmaker extended support to the women's reservation Bill. But INDIA bloc parties opposed the Bill by raising doubts and apprehensions, and by questioning it with 'ifs and buts'," HM Shah said.

He said the Opposition's disagreement over the Bill may ostensibly relate to the modalities of implementation, but

asserted that, in reality, they are opposed to women's reservation itself.

Setting out a roadmap for implementation, the Home Minister said that "one nation, one vote" is a key principle of democracy, and that the government intends to implement the women's reservation framework by the 2029 Lok Sabha elections. Slamming the Opposition, he said, "Those opposing the expansion of constituencies under delimitation are depriving backward classes and Dalits of greater representation."

Explaining the rationale behind the proposed increase in the number of constituencies under the delimitation exercise, Home Minister Shah said that several Lok Sabha constituencies have become too large for Members of Parliament to manage effectively.

He pointed out that in some constituencies, the number of voters has risen to up to 40 lakh, making it difficult for MPs to address local issues adequately.

**Visakhapatnam Tops Swachh Andhra Rankings; CM Naidu pushes green action plan**



Amaravati (TSIT):

Visakhapatnam district has secured the top rank in the State's Swachh Andhra performance under the Swarna Andhra-Swachh Andhra programme, followed by Vizianagaram and Guntur districts in second and third places respectively.

The rankings were based on sanitation indicators such as door-to-door waste collection, segregation of wet and dry waste, household toilet coverage, and compliance with ODF Plus standards. Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu suggested involving third-party agencies in future assessments to improve transparency.

Chairing a review meeting

at Amaravati, the Chief Minister directed officials to implement a strict, time-bound action plan to meet Swachh Andhra targets. He stressed that accountability at every level was essential and warned that failure to achieve targets would lead to review and corrective action.

Naidu instructed municipalities to construct public toilets where needed and establish waste-to-energy plants across designated zones. He also called for old dumping yards to be cleared and transformed into green spaces, especially near towns and villages.

Officials informed the meeting that of the 153 lakh tonnes of urban waste generated since June 2024, nearly 114 lakh

tonnes had already been cleared. The Chief Minister directed that 100 per cent waste clearance be achieved by June, along with the removal of 10 lakh metric tonnes of rural waste. He also emphasized full implementation of door-to-door waste collection and scientific waste processing. Coordination with MARKFED was suggested for compost marketing, while community soak pits connected to drainage systems were proposed to improve wastewater management and groundwater recharge.

For welfare hostels and residential schools, the Chief Minister ordered proper waste segregation, rooftop solar systems, improved greenery, hygienic kitchens, and a long-term net-zero approach.

Naidu further directed officials to expand air quality monitoring by adding 53 manual stations to the existing 83 centres. He set a target to make all villages in the state ODF Plus by September, and increase the state's green cover from 31.33 per cent to 37 per cent by 2030, and further to 50 per cent by 2047.

**4 Maoists killed in gunfight with security forces in Jharkhand's Hazaribag**



HAZARIBAG (TSIT)

Four Maoists were killed in a gunfight with security forces in Jharkhand's Hazaribag district on Friday, police officials said. The encounter took place in the Batuka forest area within the Keredari police station limits, following a tip-off, they said. One of the ultras killed has been identified as Sahdeo Mahto, who carried a bounty of Rs 15 lakh on him. SDPO of Barkagaon, Pawan Kumar, said, "Four Maoists have been killed in the gunfight. No security personnel were injured in the operation."

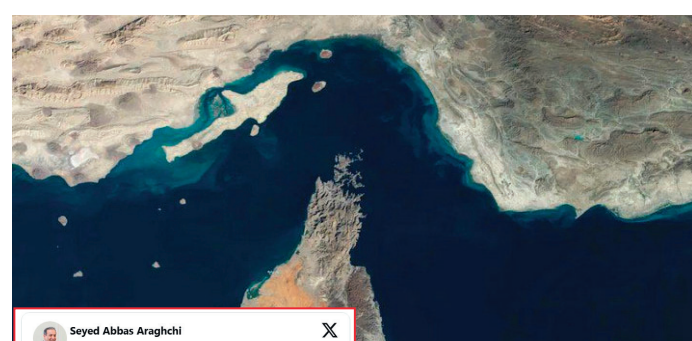
**Iran Fully Reopens Strait of Hormuz to Commercial Shipping Amid Lebanon Ceasefire**

Teheran (TSIT)

In a major relief to global markets grappling with recent oil and LPG supply concerns, Iran has fully reopened the Strait of Hormuz to all commercial shipping. The strategic move, announced on Friday, is explicitly tied to the continuation of the ongoing ceasefire in Lebanon.

Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi confirmed the decision, stating that vessels can now freely transit the critical waterway, provided they adhere to designated maritime protocols.

"In accordance with the ceasefire agreement in Lebanon, in the coordinated route already announced by the Islamic



Republic of Iran Ports and Maritime Organization, the route will be fully open for the passage of all commercial ships through the Strait of Hormuz for the remaining ceasefire period," Araghchi said in an official statement. The Strait of Hormuz is one

of the world's most strategically vital maritime choke points, serving as a primary artery for international oil and gas trade.

Recent geopolitical tensions in the Middle East had raised severe alarms over potential supply chain disruptions, making Tehran's latest announcement a highly anticipated development for global economic sectors.

While the reopening brings immediate stability to international trade routes, Iran has outlined a strict condition: all transiting ships must travel exclusively through the navigational corridors established by the country's maritime authorities. Moving forward, unrestricted commercial access through the strait remains contingent upon sustained peace efforts and the active ceasefire in Lebanon.

**Action cannot be taken without direction from Delhi: Shivakumar on suspending 2 leaders**

"We have to act based on guidance. They may blame me, but I don't bother about such accusations. We have to work under party discipline," he said.

Bengaluru (TSIT):

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister and State Congress President D.K. Shivakumar on Friday said that there was nothing personal in the action taken against the two minority leaders of his party for anti-party activities, as action 'cannot be taken without direction from Delhi'.

Speaking to reporters in Bengaluru on Friday, Deputy CM Shivakumar said, "There is nothing personal in the action taken against minority leaders. The party has its own report. When action is initiated against a sitting



MLA or MLC, it cannot be done at our level without direction from Delhi."

Responding to questions about whether the development sends a wrong signal to the minority community, he said, "The Congress party exists to deliver justice to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, farmers, OBCs, and minorities."

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Rahul Fighting Against BJP's 'Hissa Chori' Jagga Reddy



Hyderabad (TSIT) TPCC Working President T. Jagga Reddy stated that Rahul Gandhi is strongly raising his voice in Parliament against what he termed as the BJP's 'Hissa Chori' (share theft). Addressing the media in Sangareddy, Jagga Reddy alleged that the BJP government is attempting to manipulate the delimitation process to secure power for a fourth term. He warned that such arbitrary delimitation could undermine democratic representation and urged people to remain vigilant. He clarified that the Congress party is not opposed to the Women's Reservation Bill, but

pointed out that there are several flaws in the current version. He said Rahul Gandhi is fighting in Parliament to ensure necessary corrections are made so that the bill truly benefits women. Jagga Reddy further accused the BJP of gradually curtailing the freedoms and rights of citizens. He emphasized that Rahul Gandhi's fight is aimed at safeguarding democracy and protecting the constitutional rights of the people. Calling upon the public to support Rahul Gandhi, he urged citizens across the country to stand united against what he described as anti-democratic policies of the BJP government.

Trump calls PM Modi 'Friend', hails talks amid West Asia tensions



New Delhi, Apr 17: US President Donald Trump on Thursday described Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a "friend" and said he had a "very good talk" with the Indian leader amid ongoing diplomatic

developments linked to West Asia and regional security concerns. Responding to a query, Trump said, "I had a very good talk with him, and he's a friend of mine from India, and he's doing great. We had a very good conversation." The remarks follow PM Modi's recent statement that he had received a call from Trump, during which the two leaders reviewed progress in bilateral ties and discussed key strategic issues. "Received a call from my friend President Donald Trump. We reviewed the substantial progress achieved in our bilateral cooperation in various sectors. We are committed to further strengthening our Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership in all areas," Modi said in a post.

Avoid Irresponsible Remarks, Focus on Governance: BRS leaders

Kothakota wanaparthi district: BRS leaders have advised the current MLA to refrain from making statements beyond his stature and instead focus on governance, utilizing the mandate given by the people. They asserted that criticizing former MLA Ala Venkateshwar Reddy, who played a key role in the development of Devarakadra, is unwarranted. Speaking to the media on Friday, former ZP Vice Chairman Vaman Goud, former ZPTC Pogaku Vishveshwar, former MPP Guntha Mounika Malles, former Market Committee Chairman Saka Bala Narayana, and former CDC Chairman Beesam Chennakeshava Reddy expressed their views.



They stated that the remarks made by the present MLA G. Madhusudan Reddy against former minister Harish Rao were inappropriate and made without proper understanding. They added that Ala Venkateshwar Reddy has strongly condemned those comments. The leaders criticized the Congress government, stating that even after nearly 28 months in

power, it has failed to implement the six guarantees and 420 promises made to the public. They highlighted that several bridge construction works in areas such as Madanapuram, Kanimetta, Jangamayapalli, Pamapuram, Veer Raghavapuram, Apparala Thippadampalli, Sisi Kunta, Devarakadra, and Varne Muthyalampalli were completed during Ala Venkateshwar Reddy's tenure. They also noted that check dams and water conservation works were executed effectively. The leaders advised that one should understand their own standing before making remarks against Ala Venkateshwar Reddy.

'Historic opportunity lost': Kiren Rijiju slams Opposition's stand on Women's Bill

New Delhi, April 17 : Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju lashed out at the opposition after the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill was defeated in the Lok Sabha on Friday, saying that they have "lost the opportunity of a historic moment". Rijiju's reaction came in the aftermath of the Bill securing 298 votes in favour and 230 against, thereby failing to cross the two-thirds majority threshold required for constitu-



tional amendments. "The results have come on such a historic and important Bill, which aimed at giving respect and rights to the country's women. The Opposition did not support it. It is very unfortunate," he said.

Raise Wages, Clear Pending Dues of NREGS Workers: CPM Leader



Kothakota wanaparthi district : CPM Mandal Secretary Bobbili Nixon has demanded that the government increase daily wages of NREGS (employment guarantee) agricultural labourers to Rs.400 and immediately clear the pending wages of the last two months along with arrears from the previous year. On Friday, he visited ongoing NREGS works in Ullem and Kondanathavelli villages of Kothakota mandal and interacted with workers. He said nearly 30% of the rural population comprises landless agricultural labourers who are facing partial unemployment. With even 100 days of work not being ensured annually, many families are struggling for survival, forcing poor sections—especially SCs, STs, BCs, and others—to migrate to towns in search of livelihood. He urged the government to continue the scheme in its original spirit and ensure basic facilities at worksites, including drinking water, tools, and shelters.

Golden Hour Response Can Save Lives: IGP Dr. Gajjarao bhupal

Kothakota, Wanaparthi Dist (TSIT) : Inspector General of Police Dr. Gajjarao Bhupal, IPS, emphasized that timely response during the Golden Hour can significantly reduce fatalities in road accidents. He stated that the first hour after an accident is crucial for saving lives and urged everyone to have basic knowledge of first aid and emergency response.



The IGP attended a training programme organized under the Praja Palana-Pragati initiative, along with District Collector Adarsh Surabhi and In-charge SP Dr. Vineeth, IPS. The programme provided comprehensive training to around 1,000 participants, including municipal representatives, ambulance drivers, auto and lorry drivers, youth, students, and NGO members on first aid, emergency response, and

safer transportation of accident victims. As part of the event, CPR training and eye screening camps were conducted for drivers to enhance road safety. Awareness was also created on traffic rules, and participants took a pledge to follow safety norms. Addressing the gathering, Dr. Bhupal said that immediate medical assistance during the Golden Hour can prevent many deaths. He highlighted

that nearly 50% of road accident fatalities in the country involve two-wheeler riders and stressed that wearing helmets is a simple yet life-saving measure. He also urged car passengers to wear seat belts to reduce the severity of injuries. Expressing concern, he noted that a majority of accident victims are youth aged between 18 and 40 years, calling it a serious loss to the nation. He advised opting for

Police must adopt technology ahead of criminals: DGP



Karimnagar: State DGP Shivdhar Reddy said police must stay ahead of criminals by adopting modern technology and upgrading their skills. Addressing officers during the 'Arrive Alive' road safety week programme, he stressed that crime patterns are rapidly changing, with cybercrime and drug abuse emerging as major challenges. He urged police personnel to remain vigilant and adapt to new technological trends to effectively tackle such crimes. Recalling his early service in Karimnagar, the DGP highlighted the need for continuous learning and skill development

among police forces. He referred to past high-profile cases related to crypto currency and online frauds, stressing the importance of preparedness in dealing with such offences. Karimnagar Police Commissioner Goush Alam presented a review of law and order through a presentation. The DGP appreciated the efforts of the district police in maintaining security and solving key cases. He also felicitated officers and staff for their performance, encouraging them to continue working with dedication. Senior police officials and personnel attended the programme.

Shivanth Reddy Releases Poster for Mega Dharna

Hyderabad TSIT: Telangana Youth Congress State General Secretary and Mahabubnagar District In-charge Shivanth Reddy released a poster announcing a mega dharna to be held on April 18 at Indira Park Dharna Chowk, Hyderabad. The poster was unveiled by Nagarkurnool MLA Kuchukulla Rajesh Reddy. The protest is being organized under the leadership of Telangana Youth Congress opposing the US trade agreements entered into by Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the United States. Speaking on the occasion, Shivanth Reddy alleged that the agreements would adversely affect India's domestic industries, pose a threat to data security, and impact sectors like dairy. He called upon youth and party cadres to participate in large numbers and make the dharna a success. Nagarkurnool District Youth Congress President Kothapalli Vinod Kumar, Constituency President Tirupati, and several Youth Congress leaders and members were present during the programme.



CPR training, eye camp held for school bus drivers

Mahabubabad (TSIT): As part of the 'Arrive Alive-2026' programme under the state's 99-day Public Administration Progress Plan, a CPR training and eye medical camp was organised for school bus drivers in the district. The programme, conducted under the supervision of DTO Jaipal Reddy, was held at VRN Gardens, with around 150 drivers participating. The initiative aimed to enhance road safety awareness and equip drivers with life-saving skills. DSP Tirupati Rao attended as chief guest and stressed the importance of defensive driving, driver alertness, and avoiding mobile phone use while driving.



RELIANCE DIGITAL LAUNCHES 'DIGITAL DISCOUNT DAYS' OFFERS



Reliance Digital has announced its 'Digital Discount Days' campaign ahead of Akshaya Tritiya, offering attractive deals on a wide range of consumer electronics. Under the campaign, customers can avail instant discounts of up to Rs.26,000 on leading bank cards and cashback of up to Rs.30,000 on finance options. The company is also offering up to 50% off on the second product across categories such as audio devices, wearables, mobiles, and laptops. Popular brands like Marshall, JBL, boAt, and OnePlus are part of the

promotion. Products like Bluetooth speakers, headphones, and accessories are available at significantly reduced prices. Daily-use items such as wireless mouse, power banks, and small kitchen appliances are also included, with prices ranging from Rs.300 to Rs.750. The campaign, promoted under the theme #CrazyUnbelievableDeals, aims to enhance the shopping experience. Through its service arm Reliance Rescue, the company is also ensuring fast installation and reliable after-sales support for customers.

Yellamma Cheruvu Beautification Works Accelerated :- Additional Collector



THE SOUTH INDIA TIMES HUSNABAD : As part of the Husnabad town beautification initiative, the government has accelerated efforts to transform Yellamma Cheruvu (Yellamma Lake) into a picturesque and aesthetically pleasing landmark. In this context, Additional Collector (Local Bodies) Abdul Hameed conducted a field inspection on Friday to oversee the ongoing development and beautification works at Yellamma Cheruvu within the town limits. Accompanied by Municipal Chairperson Dandi Lakshmi, Commissioner T. Mallikarjun, and other public representatives, he inspected the works currently underway along the lake bund. Speaking on the occasion, the Additional Collector inquired with officials regarding the progress of the walking track, protective wall, and greenery enhancement works being constructed around the lake. He issued directives to develop the lake into a full-fledged tourism hub, equipped with all necessary amenities, to serve as a source of recreation and relaxation for the town's residents. He

issued clear instructions to the officials, emphasizing that there must be absolutely no compromise on the quality of the work under any circumstances, and directed them to complete all major construction activities before the onset of the monsoon season. Speaking subsequently, Municipal Chairperson Dandi Lakshmi stated that development programs are being undertaken to transform the very landscape of Husnabad town, adding that their primary objective is to turn Yellamma Cheruvu into a wonderful recreational hub for the local community. Municipal Vice-Chairperson Chittari Padma, Ward Councillor Bhukya Sampath, officials from various departments, and municipal staff members participated in this event.

TGEJAC holds protest over pending employee issues



Hyderabad: The Telangana Employees Joint Action Committee organised a protest at Bheema Bhavan, Abids, demanding resolution of long-pending employee issues. The programme was led by Katkuri Srikanth and Ganduri Venkateshwar, with participation from employees, teachers, pensioners, and CPS staff. Leaders including Maram Jagadeeshwar and Eluri Srinivas Rao attended and expressed support for the demands. Key issues raised included announcement of the Pay Revision Commission with 51% fitment, implementation of the Employees' Health Scheme, clearance of pending bills, abolition of the Contributory Pension Scheme, and regularisation of outsourced employees. Participants urged the government to address their concerns at the earliest, stating that the protest reflects growing dissatisfaction among employees.

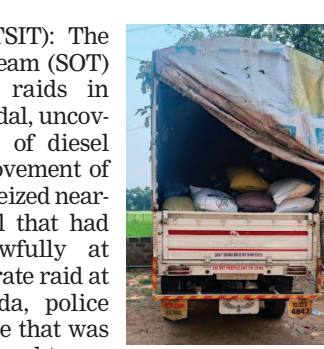
People should take advantage of the Praja Darbar programme :- Collector Divakara TS



Mulugu, April 17, TSIT : People should take advantage of the Praja Darbar programme organized in the villages so that people's problems can be known and solved locally. District Collector Divakara TS said in a statement on Friday that the programme will be organized in Sarvapuri and Rainigudem villages of Mulugu Mandal on Saturday. State Minister Seetakka will be the Chief Guest in this programme which will be held in two villages. People should take advantage of this opportunity.

ILLEGAL RATION RICE, DIESEL SEIZED IN SOT RAIDS AT CHOUJARIGUDEM

RANGA REDDY (TSIT): The Special Operations Team (SOT) conducted surprise raids in Choujarigudem mandal, uncovering illegal storage of diesel and unauthorized movement of ration rice. Officials seized nearly 350 litres of diesel that had been stocked unlawfully at Galigudem. In a separate raid at Vepa Kuccha Thanda, police intercepted ration rice that was being illegally stored and transported. An investigation is underway to identify those involved, and officials indicated that strict action will follow based on the findings.



RANGA REDDY JAC URGES PRC ANNOUNCEMENT BY JUNE 2



RANGA REDDY (TSIT) Ranga Reddy District Employees Joint Action Committee (TGEJAC) Convenor Dr. K. Rama Rao has called on the State government to announce the pending Pay Revision Commission (PRC) by June 2. Protesting delays in addressing long-standing issues of employees, teachers, workers, and pensioners, JAC members staged demonstrations across mandal and district centres on Friday, wearing black badges during lunch hours. The JAC noted that nearly 30 months have passed since the formation of the 2nd PRC committee, with no report yet released.

## Women's Reservation a Historic Milestone After 75 Years, Says Kumaraswamy

New Delhi : Union Minister H. D. Kumaraswamy on Thursday described the advancement of the Women's Reservation framework as a "historic" step in India's democratic journey, stating that the move marks a transformative reform nearly 75 years after Independence.



Speaking in the Lok Sabha, Kumaraswamy said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India is undergoing "deep and meaningful transformation," with governance increasingly anchored in reform, stability and long-term vision.

He noted that the government's decision to expand the strength of the Lok Sabha would enable greater participation of women in legislative bodies, calling it a foundational step towards strengthening democracy. "This is not a favour to women, but a recognition of their strength and contribution to society," he said, describing women as embodiments of "Shakti" and central to nation-building.

The Minister also invoked political legacy, recalling that the idea of 33 per cent reservation for women was first proposed in 1955 by former Prime Minister H. D. Deve Gowda when he was Chief Minister of Karnataka. He noted that Deve Gowda later introduced the proposal in Parliament in 1996, though it could not be passed at the time due to lack of political support.

Kumaraswamy said the current move fulfills a long-standing vision and brings "great joy to half of the nation's population," adding that he felt privileged to be part of the government at a time when such a reform is being realised.

Turning to the Opposition, the Minister accused the Congress of being "obstructionist," alleging that it had historically resisted progressive reforms and continues to create misleading narratives around key policy decisions. He also dismissed concerns raised over delimitation and its potential impact on southern states as "fear mongering," stating that such views do not reflect the broader sentiment across the region.

Referring to political developments in the South, Kumaraswamy said the position taken by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. K. Stalin does not represent all southern states, citing Andhra Pradesh under N. Chandrababu Naidu as an example where political parties have supported the amendment. In a sharp remark targeting the Congress-DMK alliance, Kumaraswamy referred to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi calling himself a

"younger brother" to DMK leadership, and said recent developments suggest that "the elder brother appears upset, while the younger brother continues to seek affection." The comment underscored what he described as growing imbalances within the Opposition alliance.

He further criticised Rahul Gandhi for inconsistencies in his position on reservation, particularly on proportional representation, and said the Congress had lost the ability to frame independent arguments, instead following regional narratives.

Addressing concerns over delimitation, Kumaraswamy said the government has ensured a 50 per cent uniform increase in parliamentary seats across states, guaranteeing that no state would lose its existing representation. He added that India, despite its vast population, continues to have fewer elected representatives than countries such as the United Kingdom, making expansion necessary.

## CJI Justice Surya Kant, CM Siddaramaiah to Inaugurate Global Sustainable Energy Summit in Bengaluru

Bengaluru : Chief Justice of India, Justice Surya Kant, and Chief Minister of Karnataka Siddaramaiah, will inaugurate the two-day International Conference on "Sustainable Energy: An Agenda for India @ 2047 - Reimagining Law, Policy, and Innovation for Energy Justice" on April 18, 2026, at Shangri-La, Bengaluru.



The conference is being jointly organised by the Commonwealth Legal Education Association (CLEA) and the Department of Energy, Government of Karnataka, bringing together leading jurists, policymakers, industry experts, and academicians from across India and abroad. The Inaugural Session will

be led by Chief Justice of India, Justice Surya Kant, who will deliver the inaugural address. This high-level inaugural session will set the tone for deliberations on India's energy future, with a strong focus on sustainability, innovation, and energy justice. The conference highlights Karnataka's leadership in the energy sector, with the Department

of Energy advancing progressive policies, fostering innovation, and supporting the State's contribution to India's long-term energy goals and Net Zero commitments.

The event aims to provide a platform for dialogue on India's energy transition, policy, and governance, aligning with the national vision for energy security and sustainability by 2047. Highlighting India's evolving energy landscape and reinforcing the importance of collaborative policy and legal frameworks.

The conference will conclude on 19 April 2026 with a valedictory session featuring distinguished dignitaries and outlining the way forward with key recommendations and insights.

The conference will prominently highlight the initiatives and leadership of the Department of Energy, Government of Karnataka, under the leadership of K.J. George, Hon'ble Minister for Energy, and under the guidance of Gaurav Gupta, IAS, Additional Chief Secretary Energy. Other senior leaders, including Dr Ram Prasath Manohar, Managing Director, KPTEL; Dr N. Shivashankar, Managing Director, BESCOM; and K.P. Rudrapaiah, Managing Director, KREDL, will participate in the deliberations, showcasing Karnataka's leadership in the energy sector.

## Congress leaders are searching for stones even in curd; fear that Modi will become PM again: Opposition Leader R. Ashoka

Verdict in former Minister Vinay Kulkarni's murder case delivers a blow to politically motivated murders

Bengaluru : Congress leaders are finding faults (searching for stones) even in curd regarding the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (Women's Reservation Act) and the delimitation of constituencies. Earlier they welcomed the bill, but now they are creating unnecessary hurdles, said Opposition Leader R. Ashoka. Speaking to reporters, he said Congress leaders are now demanding religion-based reservation. There is no provision for religion-based reservation in the Constitution framed by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. All women in the country are supporting this bill, he added.

Tamil Nadu CM Stalin has little wisdom. Similarly, Congress leaders are also claiming that injustice is being done. Earlier, it was Congress leaders themselves who decided how many Lok Sabha seats there should be. Delimitation of constituencies has always been done on the basis of population. In Karnataka, the number of Lok Sabha seats will increase from 28 to 42. There will be no reduction in the number of seats any



where. In Kerala, seats will rise from 20 to 30, and in Tamil Nadu from 39 to 59. Despite this, they are opposing it. If this is implemented, Narendra Modi will become Prime Minister again, and everyone will have to pack their tents and leave — this is the fear among opposition leaders. No injustice is being done to the southern Indian states. No state is losing any seats. Opposition leaders do not want development. Everyone is speaking in a way that supports Congress's dynastic rule, he said.

The government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is bringing women's equality by introducing

women's reservation. Congress leaders had tried similar efforts in the past but failed. The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam has created new history by providing reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. Along with this, delimitation of constituencies will be carried out based on population. This will ensure representation for everyone. I congratulate Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah for this, he said.

Welcome Verdict In the murder case involving former Minister Vinay Kulkarni, two witnesses have testified. This is a good example of what happens when people commit murder at the behest of politicians. If the CBI investigation had not taken place, the police department would have closed the case. Now everything has been proven and it is clear who the culprits are. The court has ruled that Vinay Kulkarni himself got the murder done. This verdict will be a death knell (tilanjali) to politically motivated murders in the political arena.

It is a welcome judgment, he said.

Tughlaq Darbar The government should have taken a decision before the children of the state started learning Hindi. There was no need to create a Tughlaq Darbar (chaotic situation) during exam time. I too am a Kannada activist. I participated in the Gokak movement and was hospitalised after being injured in the leg by a police lathi charge.

In Hosur, most people speak Kannada. There are also many Kannadigas in Kasaragod. If Kannada is not there, it becomes a problem. In Urdu schools, students first study Urdu, then English as the second language, and Kannada only as the last language. If there is no three-language formula, Kannada will not exist there either. When it comes to students' issues, they should have formed a House Committee and discussed it, or called a Legislative Assembly session for discussion. Instead, taking a sudden unilateral decision is not right.

## Take Action Against Underperforming Solid Waste Management Contractors: Commissioner K. N. Ramesh

Bengaluru: In response to the increasing solid waste management issues within the corporation's jurisdiction, the Commissioner of Bengaluru South Municipal Corporation, K. N. Ramesh, held a high-level meeting with senior officials of the Solid Waste Management (SWM) department. To ensure the city's cleanliness, the Commissioner issued the following strict directives to the officials: List Bulk Waste Generators



Conduct a survey of bulk waste generators within the corporation limits and ensure that waste collection is being handled strictly through authorized empanelled vendors. Attendance and Supervision Instructions were given regarding the daily performance of Auto Tippers (ATs) and compactors. The

Commissioner also directed a close watch on the attendance and responsibilities of Marshals, Link Workers, and supervisors of Pourakarmikas (PKs). Action Against Underperforming Contractors In the interest of the public, the Commissioner ordered

that notices be issued to contractors who fail to perform satisfactorily and recommended their termination. Additionally, he directed officials to impose heavy fines on those found littering on the roads. Towards a Plastic-Free City...

## West City Corporation Commissioner inspects preparations in Padmanabhanagar area

Bengaluru : West City Corporation Commissioner Dr. Rajendra K.V. conducted a site inspection in Padmanabhanagar division regarding the proposed road widening, ward-level sanitation works, and preparations for Census-2027.



Inspection related to road widening: Under the current budget's B-SMILE scheme, he visited and inspected a stretch of about 1.2 km of Ittamadu Road proposed for road widening in the Padmanabhanagar area. He instructed surveyors, town planners, and revenue officials to jointly inspect the site and take appropriate action. Inspection of sanitation on Ittamadu Road: He inspected the sanitation system on Ittamadu Road in

Hosakerehalli Ward and directed health inspectors and marshals to ensure proper waste management on roads. He also instructed strict enforcement of penalties against those who dump garbage illegally.

Inspection related to Census 2027 and guidance to enumerators: At 5th Cross, T.G. Layout in Hosakerehalli Ward, as part of Census 2027

preparations, he personally visited and reviewed the block-wise and household listing process along with enumerators and supervisors. He observed the data collection process and instructed enumerators to ensure proper information gathering. He also called upon property owners to pay the current year's property tax and encouraged awareness about obtaining e-Khata. Deputy Commissioner (Administration) Sayida Afreeen Banu, Superintendent Engineer Jayashankar, town planners, executive engineers, revenue officials, enumerators, and other concerned officers and staff were present during the inspection.

## THESE INITIATIVES AIM TO ENSURE GENDER JUSTICE, EQUALITY AND THE FULL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN : C.N.MANJUNATH



Delhi (TSIT): MP C N Manjunath Stated that, These initiatives aim to ensure gender justice, equality and the full participation of women in shaping India's socio-economic-political and cultural landscape.

Speaking on Women Reservation Bill, 2023 (Nari Shakti Vanda Adhiniyam), he said that, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has a vision for fully developed India or a Vikasit Bharat by 2047. India aims for Vikasit Bharat by 2047 necessitating full and equal participation of Indian women. The government of India recognizes the immense power through women's meaningful participation. Shifting from women development to women lead development. A multifaceted strategy is being implemented to empower women by addressing their health, safety, education, employment and entrepreneurship. The women reservation bill has been first introduced by the Rajeev Gandhi lead govt but it came into the full swing in 1996 when Shri H D Deve Gowda Ji's govt and at that time the Law Minister Ramakant D Khalap had introduced it in Parliament but unfortunately it was not successful at that time.

## Minister Warns Hospital Directors Over Drug Shortages, ICU Bed Crisis and Poor Sanitation

STRICT DEPARTMENTAL ACTION WARNED

BENGALURU : Medical Education and Skill Development Minister Dr. Sharanaprakash R. Patil on Friday issued a stern warning to hospital directors across Karnataka, threatening severe departmental action over persistent complaints of drug shortages, inadequate ICU capacity and poor sanitation in government-run hospitals.



Chairing a departmental review meeting at Vikasa Soudha, Dr. Patil cited observations made by the Lokayukta and widespread public complaints regarding drug availability at hospitals functioning under the medical education department.

Pulling up hospital heads for reactive drug procurement practices, the minister asked pointedly "Why do you wait until drug stocks are exhausted before inviting tenders?" He directed all government hospital and college heads to initiate

procurement tenders at least three months in advance of anticipated shortfalls — a move aimed at eliminating stock-outs that have disrupted patient care.

Responding to acute complaints about ICU bed shortages, Dr. Patil sought a direct explanation from the head of trauma and emergency care centre in Victoria hospital. As an immediate remedial measure, he directed additional chief secretary Mohammed Moshin and director of medical educa-

tion Dr. BL Sujatha Rathod to designate an entire floor of the upcoming 10-storey Victoria Hospital building for additional ICU beds. The new facility is scheduled to be inaugurated by chief minister Siddaramaiah on May 2.

Dr. Patil did not spare hospital management on the issue of sanitation and lift, warning directors to ensure washrooms remain clean and lift functional at all hours. "During my district visits, complaints about unclean washrooms are routine. Clean wash-

rooms are not a luxury they are a matter of basic human dignity," the minister stated firmly.

The engineering section of the department was directed to fast-track all pending civil works, with a strict deadline of end of May set for near-completion buildings. The Minister made clear that further delays would not be acceptable.

In a significant financial concern, Dr. Patil reprimanded hospital heads for failing to claim AB-ARK (Ayushman Bharat - Arogya Karnataka) scheme bills to their full eligible extent, with some institutions claiming as little as 60% of their entitlement. "Only 100% claims can make an institution self-sustaining. There must be no lapses in this duty," he warned, stressing that under-claiming directly undermines the financial health and service capacity of public hospitals.

## Commissioner Directs Prompt Redressal of Public Grievances

Bengaluru : Commissioner Pommala Sunil Kumar has directed officials to respond promptly to complaints received from citizens and ensure timely resolution of issues. He made these remarks while directly receiving grievances from citizens during the Phone-In Programme held today from 7:00 AM at the Commissioner's Office Hall on Amruthahalli Main Road.

During the programme, the Commissioner personally heard complaints from various wards, primarily related to solid waste management, road repairs, and other civic issues, and issued strict instructions to the concerned officials for immediate resolution.

51 Calls, 61 Grievances Registered A total of 61 grievances were registered through 51 calls received during today's programme. All complaints were reviewed, and officials were directed to take



immediate action. Since the launch of the Phone-In Programme on September 26, a total of 1,690 grievances have been registered over the past 29 weeks, out of which 1,240 have been resolved.

Complaints pertaining to other civic bodies and departments have been forwarded to the respective authorities. The Commissioner has directed officials to resolve the remaining 322 grievances at the earliest.

Weekly Initiative The Phone-In Programme is being

conducted every Friday to directly hear citizen grievances and ensure quick resolution. The initiative has received a good response from the public and will continue regularly.

**NOTICE OF LOSS OF SHARE CERTIFICATES (FOR CLAIM FROM IEPF AUTHORITY)**

Pursuant to Rule 8 of the Investor Education and Protection Fund (Accounting, Audit, Transfer and Refund) Rules, 2016, NOTICE is hereby given that the following share certificates issued by The Federal Bank Limited, registered in the name of person specified herein are reported to have been lost:

Name of Holder	Folio No.	No. of Shares	Crt. No.(S)	Distinctive Numbers	
				From	To
SUMAN WADHWA	56051	5310	506313 605399	16356596 1709733928	16359250 1709736582

Any person who has a claim in respect of the said securities should lodge such claim with evidence to the Bank, at its Registered Office, The Federal Bank Ltd, Reg. Office: P.B. No.103 Federal Towers, Aluva, Kerala - 683 101 or to its Share Transfer Agents, Integrated Registry Management Services Private Limited, "Kences Towers", 2nd Floor, No.1 Ramakrishna Street, North Usman Road, T Nagar, Chennai 600 017, within 15 days publication of this notice, else the Company will proceed to settle the claim in favour of the registered holder(s). The Company shall not entertain any claim thereafter. Any person dealing with the above said shares will be doing so at their own risk.

Place: Aluva | Date: 18.04.2026 | Company Secretary

# EDITORIAL

## Amir Hamza Attack Was A Symptom. A Deadlier Storm Is Brewing Within Lashkar

In the midst of the Iran war and its threatened re-emergence in an even fiercer avatar, some welcome news. Hamza, a founding member of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), was shot by unknown gunmen in Lahore and is said to be currently in critical condition. The elimination of any terrorist anywhere is to be greeted with a sigh of relief. But the Lashkar is in a category of its own. As American negotiators label Iran as the worst terrorist state in the world, nothing Tehran has in its armoury can match what Pakistan has in its quiver of terrorist groups.

### Amir Hamza As A Day 1 Node

Available reports say unidentified attackers opened fire on Hamza outside a news channel office in Lahore while he was walking on the streets. Hamza is no ordinary terrorist. A fiery speaker and writer, he was picked up by Zaki Ur Rehman Lakhvi in 1985, when he was a student at a madrassa in Punjab. This was long before the LeT was even formed. He was taken to meet Hafeez Saeed at his residence, and as a result of these and other meetings, the first 'institution' of the Lashkar, the Markaz Da'wa-al-Irshad (MDI), was established. Its publications division was headed by the enthusiastic Hamza, then in his early 20s. He also edited the monthly magazine Mujallah Ad-Dawah and the Al Jarar, the inflammatory rhetoric of both of which directly led to an increase in the membership of the organisation to more than 10,000 in less than three years. The tenor of these and other publications reveals some interesting aspects other than 'jihad' - primarily against India and then the US - and the whole 'heaven' rewards belief. It specifically endorses the Pakistan Army as the 'Army of Islam', contrasting it with corrupt politicians and civilians, and thereby justifying its every action. Hamza's position was that every Pakistani should be a 'symbolic Minister of Defence'. Another recent one was this: "When their combined fist of self-defence lands on the terrorists, we could see Modi falling flat on his face". All this was bolstered by references from the Quran and Sunna, providing a solid base for the Army, particularly the Chiefs whom Hamza eulogised to the hilt. But Hamza is not just talk. He went to the then Soviet Union to tie up with Salafist groups, and later to Iran to bolster Sunni resistance to the Shia majority. He was also at the core of the Afghan jihad, and, therefore, is well-linked with members of the original Taliban and the mujahideen. He was also a fundraiser of note, and, all in all, is a central figure of the Lashkar, embodying their absolute hatred for India and the US.

### What His Loss Means

He's the historical memory of the group, and losing him would hit LeT leaders hard. The organisation, however, will survive, and perhaps even thrive as younger and even more radical leaders come up. That's the core of the issue. Lashkar has never been without its internal feuds. For instance, a major fissure was reported following the second marriage of Hafiz Saeed to a much younger woman, which, together with operational reasons, led to the estrangement between him and the operational chief Zaki-ur-Rehman. Following the 26/11 attack in Mumbai, Pakistan faced immense pressure to clean up its act, and several Lashkar leaders were 'arrested' and given showpiece sentences. Hamza, however, seems to have got away, and, in fact, seems to have been given yet another group to head: the Jaish-e-Manqafa. This helped the LeT raise financial resources, even as known fronts like the Falah-e-Insaniyat were shut down. That this was done with the full knowledge of the Pakistan 'establishment' is without doubt.

## Women's Reservation in Parliament: Constitutional Need or Political Strategy?



PRIYANKA SAURABH

The question of women's reservation in Parliament is deeply intertwined with the development and inclusive nature of Indian democracy. Since independence, it has been expected that all sections of society should receive equal and equitable representation in democratic institutions, but the reality is that women's participation has remained limited for a long time. Against this backdrop, the 106th Constitutional Amendment Act, passed in 2023, known as the Nari Shakti Vandan Act, emerged as a historic initiative. This Act provides for the reservation of one-third of the total seats in the Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, and the Delhi Legislative Assembly for women, including proportionate sub-reservations for women from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. This provision was made by adding new Articles 330A, 332A, and 334A to the Indian Constitution, which not only define the scope of reservation but also determine its duration and implementation process. However, the most significant and controversial feature of this Act is that its implementation is linked to the next census and the subsequent delimitation process. This provision has given rise to a significant debate as to whether linking women's reservations to delimitation is a true constitutional requirement or a deliberate political strategy. The answer to this question is not simple, as it involves a combination of constitutional interpretation, political interests, and administrative feasibility.



From a constitutional perspective, Parliament has the power to make special provisions for women under Article 15(3). Furthermore, Articles 82 and 170 provide for delimitation of seats in the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies, based on the census. Article 334A, added to the Nari Shakti Vandan Act, specifies that seats reserved for women will be rotated after each delimitation. This arrangement appears logical at first glance, as it ensures that the benefits of reservation reach different regions equally and are not limited to a single region. Yet, the question remains whether it was necessary to necessarily link this entire process to delimitation. If we look at the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, implemented at the local body level, reservation for women was implemented immediately, even though the delimitation process occurred later. This suggests that delimitation is not a mandatory condition for implementing women's reservation, but rather was added for administrative convenience.

Furthermore, several women's reservation bills introduced between 1996 and 2010 did not contain such a condition, indicating that this provision was added later in a specific political context. Analyzing this provision from a political perspective, it becomes clear that linking women's reservation with delimitation provides a strategic advantage to ruling parties. Women's representation in the current Lok Sabha is around 15 percent, while in state assemblies it is even lower. If 33 percent reservation were implemented immediately, a large number of seats held by current male MPs would be affected, which would naturally lead to political discontent and protests. This problem can be mitigated by increasing the number of seats through delimitation, as new seats can be reserved for women without directly displacing existing MPs. Furthermore, the delimitation process itself is a politically sensitive issue, as it impacts the balance of representation between different states. Several states in South India have

expressed concern that, despite their success in population control, their number of seats may be relatively reduced after delimitation, while northern states may gain more. In this context, linking women's reservations to delimitation appears to be part of a broader political equation, attempting to balance the interests of different regions and classes. Another important issue is that the Act does not provide a separate sub-reservation for women from the Other Backward Classes. This is considered a significant shortcoming from a social justice perspective, as it may limit the benefits of reservation primarily to women from relatively privileged classes. Furthermore, this provision does not apply to the Rajya Sabha and Legislative Councils, limiting the opportunity to increase women's representation in the upper houses. Another practical aspect of this entire system is that the actual benefits of women's reservation are being delayed due to delays in the census and delimitation process.

## Challenges For The First BJP Government In Bihar

The swearing-in of Samrat Choudhary as Bihar's first-ever BJP chief minister on Wednesday marks a decisive political transition ending the long dominance of Nitish Kumar of Janata Dal (United) and ushering in a new phase of governance. Choudhary's promotion to the CM's post follows the exit of Nitish Kumar, who stepped down after being nominated to the Rajya Sabha. It also marks a major political transition in Bihar after more than two decades of Kumar's supremacy. Although Choudhary is the face of the government, Bihar remains a coalition system involving the BJP, JD(U) and other regional parties. This builds inherent tension for the top man. Choudhary inherits not just power, but a structurally constrained state battling poverty, migration, weak industrialisation, and entrenched social fault lines. His tenure will be judged not by continuity, but by transformation. The BJP's rise to the "big brother" role signals a shift in power balance, but also introduces friction over caste equations, leadership space, and policy priorities. Keeping symbolism aside, the real test for Choudhary and the BJP begins now. Continuing social coalition Bihar politics is inseparable from caste. Choudhary's elevation as an OBC leader (belongs to Koeri/Kushwaha community) is a calculated move to consolidate backward caste support. Though Choudhary is the central leadership's pick, some within the party's traditional organisational structure have been sceptical about his suitability since he comes from outside the 'original' BJP cadre (having previously been in RJD and JD(U)). The RSS may still have reservations about his leadership style or background. The state's social fabric remains



fragmented amidst upper castes (traditional BJP base), OBCs and EBCs (politically decisive), Dalits and Mahadalits and Muslims (significant minority bloc). Choudhary must now find ways to get support of the EBCs and Dalits to counter the RJD's strong base. For maintaining a broad coalition without alienating key groups - especially in a post-Nitish political landscape - Choudhary will require careful calibration, not just rhetoric. Being the first BJP Chief Minister in Bihar is both an opportunity and a burden. Expectations from the party, the central leadership, and voters are unusually high. The onus is on Choudhary to prove that the BJP can govern independently in Bihar. For this, he must deliver faster results than previous regimes and prepare the ground for future electoral dominance. In fact, Choudhary's failure would not just be personal - it would raise questions about the BJP's long-term strategy in eastern India. Need for structural transformation For nearly two decades, Bihar focused on restoring governance-improving roads, law

and order, and welfare delivery. These gains, while significant, have plateaued. The next phase demands structural economic change: industrialisation, job creation, and urbanisation. The key challenge is shifting Bihar from stability to actual transformation. Despite recent claims of growth above 10% and millions lifted out of poverty, Bihar still ranks among India's poorest states in per capita income. The state's economy remains heavily dependent on agriculture and remittances from migrant labour. Inheriting a legacy which contains neither a manufacturing base nor major private investment, Choudhary faces the classic 'low-income trap'. Perhaps, the most politically explosive challenge is unemployment. Bihar sends millions of workers to states like Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Delhi every year. Government job creation - such as the announcement of over 30,000 posts - offers limited relief in a state of over 120 million people. The BJP's 'double engine' promise - alignment with the central government - raises expectations of large-scale invest-

ment. Last year, in May, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced massive infrastructure investments and projects worth over Rs 48,000 crore, which signal intent. But Bihar's challenge is not just building roads or metros; it is converting infrastructure into economic productivity. Past experiences have shown that infrastructure announcements alone do not translate into sustainable employment. Delivering jobs, not just schemes, will define Choudhary's credibility among youth. Without industrial corridors, skilled labour, and policy stability, these remain isolated gains. The gap between infrastructure creation and economic transformation remains wide. Administrative and governance issues As the deputy chief minister, Choudhary has built his political persona partly around a tough law-and-order approach, crackdowns on mafias, fast-track courts, and policing reforms. However, Bihar's crime narrative is complex. While stricter policing may produce short-term optics, deeper issues - political-criminal nexus, and policing capacity - require systemic reform. The risk is that governance becomes overly focused on visible enforcement rather than institutional strengthening. Similarly, Bihar's governance capacity remains uneven. While welfare delivery has improved, issues persist. There are leakages in government schemes; local governance institutions are weak and bureaucracy faces capacity constraints. Choudhary's experience as finance and home minister gives him administrative grounding, but scaling governance reforms across districts is a different challenge altogether.

## Can Donald Trump Face An 'Arrest Warrant' - Like Netanyahu And Putin?

Many in America and across the world are still trying to shake off the shock of President Donald Trump's warning to Iran last week that "a whole civilisation will die" unless Tehran agreed to a deal to end the war and reopen the Strait of Hormuz. Some called him "unhinged", others said he was "unfit for office", and a few even argued that such a statement bordered on the language of a war crime. No one in living memory imagined a moment when the world would seriously debate the possibility of an American president being dragged before the International Criminal Court. George W. Bush came close to such scrutiny, but the conversation never quite crossed into the mainstream the way it has now.

### 'Unfit For Office'

Can ICC laws, created to hold leaders accountable for war crimes, ever be applied to a sitting American president? Trump's remarks, which critics say appear to threaten large-scale destruction of infrastructure and the killing of millions of civilians, drew concern from global figures, including UN chief António Guterres and Pope Francis. Some in the US went even further. Former CIA Director John Brennan warned that Trump's rhetoric made him "unfit for office" and argued that the "25th Amendment was written with Donald Trump in mind". Many are comparing the situation with arrest warrants issued by the ICC against Vladimir Putin and Benjamin Netanyahu. Both leaders come from countries that are not members of the ICC. Yet the court still asserted jurisdiction, arguing that the alleged crimes were linked to territories that fall under its authority. The comparison does not suggest Trump faces an



imminent warrant. Rather, it raises a pertinent question: if the legal logic applies to other powerful leaders, could it apply to a US president?

### What ISS Really Is

To understand that question, it helps to step back and look at what the ICC actually is. The court was created by the Rome Statute in 2001 to prosecute individuals accused of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. It does not try countries, it tries people. Prime Ministers, generals and militia leaders can fall within its scope. The idea behind the court is that for the most serious crimes, no one should be above the law. But we all know that the reality is more complicated. The ICC depends on political cooperation. It has no police force. It relies on countries to arrest suspects. Trump's rhetoric towards Iran is being examined through this lens. He has spoken

about bombing Iran "back into the stone ages" and warned that a "civilisation will die". Critics say such language suggests the intent to destroy an entire civilisation and that in itself amounts to a war crime. Some Democratic lawmakers have described such rhetoric as crossing a dangerous legal threshold.

### The 1991 Experience

The ICC has previously charged Russian commanders for attacks on Ukraine's electrical infrastructure. These cases argue that targeting energy systems that sustain civilian life can constitute war crimes when the humanitarian impact is disproportionate. The US itself has wrestled with this issue. During the 1991 Gulf War, the US military struck Iraq's power grid. Subsequent studies documented severe civilian consequences. After that, US military doctrine evolved. In later conflicts, including Kosovo in 1999 and Iraq in 2003, efforts were

made to disable rather than permanently destroy infrastructure. Trump's rhetoric, critics argue, suggests a departure from that cautious approach.

### The 'Immunity'

The legal debate also intersects with domestic developments. In 2024, the US Supreme Court ruled in Trump v. United States that Presidents enjoy broad immunity from criminal prosecution for official acts. This ruling strengthened protections for presidential decisions, including those involving foreign policy and the use of force. Critics say this creates a situation where a president may face little domestic legal risk for actions taken in office. That has shifted attention outward, towards international accountability mechanisms. Yet the US is not a member of the ICC. It signed the Rome Statute but never ratified it and later withdrew support. The US position is that the court could be used politically against American officials. As a result, the US does not recognise ICC jurisdiction over its citizens. This is the first major obstacle to any case involving a US president. But it is not an absolute barrier. The ICC has two main ways to claim jurisdiction: crimes committed on the territory of a member state and referral by the UN Security Council. The Security Council route is blocked, as the US holds veto power and could block any referral. The territorial route is more complex. If alleged crimes occur on the territory of a state that is party to the Rome Statute, the ICC may claim jurisdiction even if the accused leader comes from a non-member country. This is the logic used in previous cases. In theory, it could apply to any leader, including a US president, if jurisdictional conditions are met.

# Oil prices plunge as Iran says Strait of Hormuz 'open' during ceasefire

Oil prices have plummeted after Iran said the Strait of Hormuz would be "completely open" to commercial ships for the remainder of the ceasefire. The cost of a barrel of Brent crude fell to \$88 dollars a barrel, having been above \$98 earlier on Friday. The Strait of Hormuz is a narrow strip of water linking the Gulf to the Arabian sea, through which a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas is typically transported. "The passage for all commercial vessels through Strait of Hormuz is declared completely open for the remaining period of ceasefire," Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said. Global markets also rallied on the announcement, with the major US stock indices rising in early trading. The S&P 500 rose by 0.8%, while the Nasdaq and Dow Jones Industrial Average (DJIA) were both up by more than 1%. European shares also rose in reaction to the news. The Cac index in Paris and Dax in Frankfurt both climbed by more than 2%, while London's FTSE 100 rose by around 0.5%. The Strait of Hormuz has been



effectively shut by Iran since the US and Israel launched military strikes in the country in late February. Tankers have been unable to pass through, drastically reducing the amount of oil and gas available on global markets and causing prices to spike. Before the conflict, Brent crude was trading at under \$70 per barrel. It rose above \$100 before reaching a peak of more than \$119 per barrel in March. Sharp rises in the price of oil have pushed up the price of petrol and

diesel for drivers, as well as sparking concerns over the supply of jet fuel, leading to fears airlines will have to ground flights. The closure of the key waterway has also cut off a major supply line of fertiliser, used by farmers, raising the prospect of higher food prices as a result of the conflict. A third of the world's key fertiliser chemicals pass through the Strait, and prices have risen steeply since the outbreak of war. However, hours before Araghchi's statement,

motoring group the RAC said petrol and diesel prices had fallen slightly in the UK for the first time since the US-Israel war with Iran began. Pump prices began to ease on Thursday and continued on Friday, it said, though it remains far more expensive to fill up a tank than it did in February. Iran's decision to re-open the Strait of Hormuz followed a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Lebanon. US President Donald Trump welcomed the move, writing on Truth

Social: "IRAN HAS JUST ANNOUNCED THAT THE STRAIT OF IRAN IS FULLY OPEN AND READY FOR FULL PASSAGE. THANK YOU!" Trump added that Iran had agreed "to never close the Strait of Hormuz again... it will no longer be used as a weapon against the world". But, in a follow up post, he said a naval blockade of Iran will remain "in full force and effect" until a permanent deal to end the US-Israel war with the country is agreed. Despite Iran's announcement, one oil and gas shipping operator told the BBC it "doesn't change anything" immediately. "We don't feel like we need to be taking unnecessary risks and our company approach is that we won't be the first to go through the Strait", the operator, who did not want to be named, said. Another company, Stena Bulk, which operates oil tankers in the region, said it was "monitoring developments closely". "The safety of our crew and vessels governs every routing decision, and we will not transit until we are satisfied it is safe to do so", the company added.

## The Premia Academy records 100% success rate in the CBSE 10th-grade examination

**HYDERABAD: 17th April, 2026:** The Premia Academy, a leading international school in Hyderabad, has officially achieved a 100 per cent pass rate for the third consecutive year in the CBSE 10th grade board results. All 36 students who appeared for the examination brought immense pride to the institution, maintaining a high school average of 82 per cent. Leading the results is Shaik Ridha, who scored a remarkable 97.4 per cent. The batch demonstrated significant academic depth, with seven students scoring between 90% and 100%, and 14 students achieving between 80% and 90%. Notable high achievers include M. Anirudh with 95 per cent and Himanshu Goyal with 94 per cent, while several other students crossed the 90 per cent mark, including Harini Alwala, Uzair Malik, Abdul Mannan, and Riyanka Yedwadkar. The subject-wise highest scores further highlight the breadth of talent within the institution: Artificial Intelligence: A perfect 100 - Shaik Ridha and Mazzuddin Ahmed; English: 98 - Shaik Ridha, Sreekruthi Gavva, Harini Alwala, and Abdul Mannan; Science: 98 - Shaik Ridha



Hindi: 96 - Shaik Ridha; Social Science: 96 - M. Anirudh; Mathematics: 93 - Himanshu Goyal and M. Anirudh. In tandem with these results, The Premia Academy has announced a scholarship test on April 25, 2026, for students entering the 11th grade (MPC and BiPC streams) to provide a holistic learning environment for deserving candidates. Ms Sindhuri Reddy, Founder and Managing Director, expressed her pride in the community's collective effort: "It is heartening to receive such an overwhelming achievement from the students. This success is not just

about academic scores, but a reflection of our school's ethos. These outcomes prove that when a leader combines a sharp strategic mind with a genuine heart for her team, the results are extraordinary". Ms Trupti Rao, Principal, highlighted the strength of the academic team: "Great results are born from a motivated team. The Premia Academy stands firm and indomitable in imparting high-quality education, and we are extremely delighted with our students' performance. Our teachers didn't just deliver a syllabus; they inspired a love for learning, ensuring every student was supported to reach their personal best".

## MCX Gold Up Over 1%, Silver Prices Surge 4% After Iran Frees Hormuz Movement

Gold and silver prices surged on the Multi Commodity Exchange on Friday, even as crude oil plunged more than 11% after Iran signalled that the Strait of Hormuz would remain open for commercial shipping. Gold futures on the Multi Commodity Exchange extended gains in late trade, with the June 2026 contract rising 1.14%, or Rs 1,748, to Rs 1,54,900 per 10 grams as of 7:21 PM IST on Friday, according to MCX data. The contract traded near the day's upper range of Rs 1,55,500, reflecting sustained investor demand despite easing geopolitical tensions after Iran signalled that the Strait of Hormuz would remain open for commercial shipping. At the same time, MCX silver jumped 3.89%, or Rs 9,672, to Rs 2,58,300 per kilogram, making it one of the sharpest single-session gains in recent weeks. International silver prices rose 4.2% to \$82.03 an ounce, outperforming gold and platinum across the precious metals complex. The gains came despite expecta-



tions that easing geopolitical tensions in the Gulf would normally reduce demand for safe-haven assets such as gold. Analysts said the reopening of Hormuz has not removed uncertainty entirely, but shifted investor focus toward lower inflation, weaker US dollar expectations and the possibility of lower interest rates. Falling crude prices are expected to ease inflationary pressures in the US, which could strengthen the case for the Federal Reserve to cut rates. Lower real interest rates tend to support gold because the metal does not offer any yield. Silver, however, out-

performed because of its stronger industrial linkages. Analysts said the sharp fall in oil prices could reduce manufacturing and transport costs, supporting demand from sectors such as solar panels, electronics and electric vehicles. Despite the easing in war risk, investors remain cautious because the ceasefire is temporary and unresolved issues such as uranium enrichment and long-term control over Hormuz continue to cloud the outlook. Silver outperformed gold as easing oil prices boosted industrial demand hopes, while lower rate expectations and a weaker

dollar supported bullion. According to Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, gold continues to show further upside potential, with prices likely to move towards the Rs 1,58,000-Rs 1,60,000 range, where supply pressure is expected to emerge. On the downside, he said a sustained break below Rs 1,50,000 could trigger extended profit booking, which may drag prices towards the Rs 1,48,000-Rs 1,46,000 range. He added that the near-term bias remains cautious but supported by underlying strength, with macro uncertainty and geopolitical developments expected to drive momentum. Saumil Gandhi of HDFC Securities said gold prices continued to rise amid signs of easing tensions in West Asia, which could reduce the risk of further escalation and damage to energy infrastructure. He added that this supports expectations of softer oil prices, eases long-term inflation concerns and reduces the likelihood of additional rate hikes by central banks.

## US STOCK MARKET TODAY:

### S&P 500 Breaches 7,100 For First Time, Nasdaq Hits New Record High

S&P 500, Nasdaq and Dow Jones Industrial Average opened higher on Friday. Iran declared that the Strait of Hormuz was "completely open" for all commercial vehicles, till the end of ceasefire with the United States. While S&P 500 breached 7,100 for the first time, Nasdaq hit a record high. Minutes into the trade, the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 683.19 points or 1.43%, S&P 500 also rose over 0.79%, while Nasdaq was up 0.99%. However, as trading progressed the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose by 1,005 points, or 2.1%. The S&P 500 traded up 1.3% and Nasdaq Composite gained 1.5%, with both hitting new all-time intraday highs. Crude on the other hand fell after Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi announced the "complete" opening of Strait of Hormuz till the ceasefire with the United States ends on April 21. The decision, he said, has been



taken in view of the temporary truce announced in Lebanon. "In line with the ceasefire in Lebanon, the passage for all commercial vessels through Strait of Hormuz is declared completely open for the remaining period of ceasefire, on the coordinated route as already announced by Ports and Maritime Organisation of the Islamic Rep. of Iran," he posted on X. Boeing Co. and Salesforce Inc rose

over 3%, while Home Depot Inc., Goldman Sachs Group Inc., Apple Inc., and Amazon.com Inc. were up over 2%. On the other hand, Coca-Cola Co., Johnson & Johnson, Walmart Inc. were among the losers for the day. Netflix after announcing its results fell 11%, posting its biggest fall since April 2022. As the US market opened, spot gold rose 1.56% to \$4,864.79 an ounce. Even as stocks

gained, crude prices fell with the West Texas trading 10.55% lower at \$84.70 per barrel. Brent crude futures also fell 9.46% to \$89.99. The Bloomberg Dollar Index fell 0.5%, with the British Pound rising 0.4% at \$1.3587 and the Japanese yen was up 0.5%. Bitcoin, the largest traded cryptocurrency was up 2%, rising for the fifth straight day and posting the longest winning streak since Jan. 5, 2026.

## Forex kitty jumps USD 3.8 bn to reclaim USD 700-bn mark

**Highlights**  
INDIA'S FOREX RESERVES JUMPED USD 3.825 BILLION TO USD 700.946 BILLION DURING THE WEEK ENDED APRIL 10, SAYS RBI.



**Mumbai:** India's forex reserves jumped USD 3.825 billion to USD 700.946 billion during the week ended April 10, says RBI. In the previous reporting week ended April 3, the overall reserves had jumped USD 9.063 billion to USD 697.121 billion. The kitty had expanded to an all-time high of USD 728.494 billion during the week ended February 27 this year, before the onset of the Middle East conflict which led to several weeks of a drop as the rupee came under pressure and

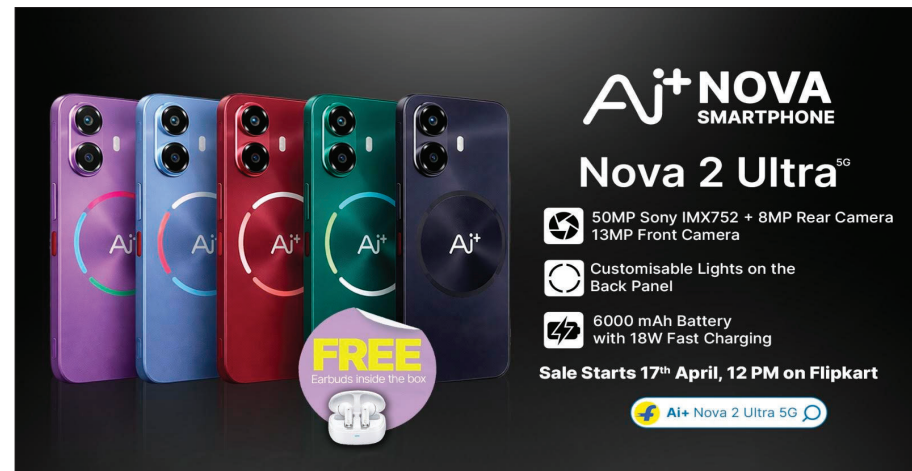
the RBI had to intervene in the forex market through dollar sales. For the week ended April 10, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased by USD 3.127 billion to USD 555.983 billion, the central bank's data showed. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include effects of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units, such as the euro, pound, and yen, held in the foreign exchange reserves. Value of gold

reserves increased by USD 601 million to USD 121.343 billion during the week, the RBI said. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were up USD 56 million to USD 18.763 billion, the apex bank said. India's reserve position with the IMF was up USD 41 million to USD 4.857 billion at the end of the reporting week, according to the apex bank's data. In the previous reporting week ended April 3, the overall reserves had jumped USD 9.063 billion to USD 697.121 billion.

## Ai+ Smartphone Nova 2 Ultra's Day 1 Sale to begin on April 17, 2026, 12:00 noon onward

\*Ai+ Smartphone has announced the sale commencement of its latest device, Nova 2 Ultra, as part of the newly launched Nova Series. Designed as the most complete expression of the Nova lineup, the Nova 2 Ultra will be available exclusively on Flipkart and select retail outlets starting April 17 at 12 noon (Day 1 of Sales). Post Day 1, Nova 2 Ultra will again go on sale on April 24, 2026, giving an opportunity to the fans to catch hold of one of the most promising smartphones from the Ai+ Smartphone repertoire. Furthermore, the launch of Nova 2 Ultra builds on the strong momentum of Nova 2, which witnessed an exceptional Day 1 response with all units selling out within 15 minutes underscoring robust consumer demand and growing affinity for the Nova series. Nova 2 Ultra will be available at the following pricing:

6GB + 128GB | 14,999 onwards  
8GB + 128GB | 16,999



onwards Exchange any phone and get 2,000 additional off (working or damaged phone) "With Nova 2 Ultra, we wanted to push what is possible at this price point - a Sony camera system, a flagship-grade display, and a design that actively responds to how you use your phone. This is for users who want everything, without having to choose between performance and personality," said Madhav Sheth, CEO, Ai+

Smartphone and Founder, NextQuantum Shift Technologies. **Performance and Display Built for More** The Nova 2 Ultra is powered by the MediaTek Dimensity 7400 chipset with an octa-core CPU clocked at 2.6GHz and Mali-G615 MC2 GPU, paired with VC cooling for sustained performance through demanding tasks. It runs on Android 16 with NextQuantum OS, delivering

a smooth, optimised experience with real-time privacy transparency through the NextPrivacy Dashboard. The 6.78-inch 1.5K punch-hole AMOLED display with a 120Hz refresh rate and 1800 nits HBM peak brightness delivers vivid, true-to-life visuals with fluid scrolling whether users are streaming content or navigating everyday tasks. Backing it all is a 6000mAh battery with 40W fast charging, ensuring the device keeps up through even

the most demanding days. **A Camera and Design Built to Stand Out** The Nova 2 Ultra is equipped with a 50MP Sony Sensor IMX752 primary camera and an 8MP wide-angle lens, backed by Matrix AI Camera processing for detailed, accurate images across conditions. A 13MP front camera ensures sharp selfies and high-quality video calls. The IP68-rated build features dynamic, customizable lights in the back panel for calls & notification and more. It also has customizable action keys for gaming and storage expandable up to 1TB. Available in Blue, Green, Purple, Black, and Red, each finish is designed to make a statement. **What's in the Box** The Nova 2 Ultra comes with free earbuds inside the box with 18W charger, a USB Type-A to Type-C cable, a transparent TPU case, a screen protection film, and a SIM card tray ejector, user guide.

# Iran reopens Strait of Hormuz as Trump says US blockade will continue until deal is made

The situation in the Strait of Hormuz and the wider Gulf region is still murky and messy, despite the well-received announcement by Iran's foreign minister that it is "fully open for commercial traffic while the cease-fire lasts".

We are not back to where we were on 27 February, before the US and Israel began this latest conflict. Will Iran still insist that ships follow its newly designated route to the north of the pre-existing tanker lanes?



This is a route called the Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) that has been functioning smoothly for everyone since it was first ratified by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) in 1968. Will Iran still demand military inspections of shipping by IRGC officials? Its announcement also mentions only commercial shipping. The US Navy's Fifth Fleet is headquartered in Bahrain - inside the Gulf and therefore past the Strait of

Hormuz. So, the US is not likely to accept having its naval warships locked out of the Gulf. Meanwhile it is far from clear if the Islamic Republic will accept the proposed long-term multinational force for the Strait of Hormuz when Iran wants to "exercise its right of sovereignty" over the waterway. Finally, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz says it is in the "immediate interests" of the parties to increase

efforts towards peace. He says Germany supports the ongoing efforts to achieve "a quick diplomatic agreement" between the US and Iran and also hails the "historic opportunity" for Hezbollah and Israel to make efforts towards a lasting peace. Merz repeats calls for Iran to open the Strait of Hormuz fully in a way that is lasting, secure and "toll free", and says despite the recent "good news" on this

front, there must be no restrictions on its opening. Germany is willing to contribute to the mission to promote freedom of navigation through the strait, he says, including the possible participation of its armed forces and activity such as mine clearing. Such a plan would need to be approved by the UN and Germany's parliament, he says, adding that US participation would be "desirable." Italian Prime

Minister Georgia Meloni is next and says opening the strait is a fundamental principle of international law, applicable also to "every other strait or shipping channel". She continues saying ceasefires in Lebanon and Iran have "to be part and parcel of any serious process of negotiations to resolve the crisis in the middle east". She also says that it is "vital" for Iran to give up its "quest for nuclear weapons".

Meloni adds that the mission Starmer announced will now focus on the ships that are now in the area around the strait, making sure there are no mines and providing assurance to maritime shipping industry. She calls this a "purely defensive mission" and says Italy will provide "a certain number of naval units". British Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer then speaks saying the leaders welcome the news that Iran is opening the Strait of Hormuz but adds that it

needs to be a long lasting and workable solution. He says the international leaders came together to promote a unified message that the strait must be opened without tolls and without restrictions. Starmer calls for shipping to resume as soon as conditions permit to manage the economic shock. He says France and the UK will lead an international mission to protect freedom of navigation "as soon as conditions allow, strictly peaceful and defensive". He continues saying there will be a planning conference in London next week, with a dozen countries set to contribute assets to the mission. He finishes by saying "our citizens need to see a return to peace and stability".

French President Emmanuel Macron begins the news conference by setting out the "very severe consequences" the closure of the Strait of Hormuz has had "for the whole of the planet and the global economy".

## Three charged with arson on Persian media offices



Three people have appeared in court charged over the attempted arson attack at the offices of a Persian language media organisation in north-west London. An ignited container was thrown towards the Volant Media building in Park Royal at about 20:30 BST on Wednesday, but landed in a car park where the fire quickly went out. Oisín McGuinness, 21, Nathan Dunn, 19, and a 16-year-old boy appeared side-by-side in the dock at London's Westminster Magistrates' Court charged with arson with intent to endanger life. The three British nationals spoke only to confirm their per-

sonal details during the hearing. The charge stated the amount of damage caused to the grounds of Volant Media was "unknown". There were no reports of any damage or injuries following the attempted attack. Police said the suspects left the area in a black four-wheel-drive vehicle. Two nearby buildings had been evacuated as a precaution, but were quickly reopened after police confirmed there was no wider risk to the public. McGuinness has also been charged with dangerous driving on Woodberry Gardens, in north-west London, on the same date as the attempted arson.

## Mugabe's son pleads guilty to pointing a gun in South Africa



The youngest son of Zimbabwe's late former leader Robert Mugabe has pleaded guilty to pointing a firearm and illegally being in South Africa. Bellarmine Mugabe entered guilty pleas to the two charges after he was arrested in February following the shooting of a 23-year-old man at his home in Johannesburg. The 28-year-old has been held in custody alongside co-accused Tobias Matonhodze, and appeared at the court in Alexandra on Friday. Lawyers for the men told the court they were prepared to return to their native Zimbabwe at their own expense if they do not receive a custodial sentence. Matonhodze, 33, pleaded guilty to attempted murder, defeating the ends of justice, illegal immigration and possession of ammunition. Mugabe - who was also previously charged with attempted murder - spoke only to confirm that he understood the charges and to enter his pleas after he had reached a deal with prosecutors. The National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) did not say what had happened to the charge of attempted

murder he had faced. Both men were arrested on 19 February after police were called to Mugabe's home in the upmarket Johannesburg suburb of Hyde Park. A man, believed to be a security guard, was taken to hospital in a critical condition after he was shot. Prosecutors previously told the court that the shooting followed a row between the three men inside the property, and that the victim was shot twice in the back outside as he tried to flee. Authorities, who conducted a search of the home, have yet to find the gun. Sentencing proceedings have been postponed to 24 April, the NPA said. Since Mugabe's arrest, the case has faced several delays and his bail hearing was postponed twice. This not the first time Mugabe has had a brush with the law. In 2024 he was arrested for allegedly assaulting a police officer in the Zimbabwean border town of Beitbridge. He was given bail but a warrant for his arrest was later issued after he failed to appear in court, Zimbabwe's state-run Herald newspaper reported at the time.

## SINGER D4VD ARRESTED ON SUSPICION OF MURDERING TEENAGE GIRL

US singer D4vd has been arrested on suspicion of murdering a teenage girl who went missing last year, police say. The star, whose legal name is David Anthony Burke, was the target of a grand jury investigation into the apparent murder of Celeste Rivas Hernandez, whose remains were found in his Tesla in September. The Los Angeles Police Department said on Thursday that the 21-year-old was being held without bail and the case will be presented to the District Attorney's office on Monday. In a statement to US media, Burke's lawyers said: "Let us be clear - actual evidence in this case will show that David Burke did not murder Celeste Rivas Hernandez and he was not



the cause of her death." They added: "There has been no indictment returned by any grand jury in this case and no criminal complaint filed. David has only been detained under suspicion." Police earlier said they had arrested Burke "for the murder of Celeste Rivas".

## Ceasefire with Israel brings respite to Lebanon, but obstacles to peace remain

At the stroke of midnight, gunfire and fireworks celebrated the start of the ceasefire in Beirut. Throughout the morning, smiling crowds gathered along roads leading to Lebanon's south, the heartland of Hezbollah, playing revolutionary music and waving the group's yellow flag as they started their journey back to where they had been forced from by the war. This is, initially, a 10-day ceasefire after six weeks of a devastating conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shia Muslim militia and political party. But it brings some respite for a country exhausted by the war. More than 2,100 people have been killed, Lebanese health authorities say, and over a million, or roughly one in five of the population,



have been displaced - creating a pressing humanitarian crisis. Mattresses on top of cars and families on motorbikes indicated that people were on the move - but many are not returning to stay. In some places, the damage is too extensive and for some there is nothing to go back to at all. Some towns and villages near the border remain under Israeli occupation. But

in the Hezbollah-controlled southern suburbs of Beirut, known as Dahieh, the streets remained relatively quiet. The area has been hammered by Israel during the war, and many residential buildings have been reduced to rubble. In the city's waterfront, where hundreds of displaced families have been living in improvised tents, some said they feared return-

ing. Announced by US President Donald Trump, the ceasefire leaves open questions. First, it does not mention the withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon, which has raised fears that parts of the country will remain occupied even after the war. Israeli officials say their goal is to create a so-called security buffer zone, several miles deep, and many residents of those areas may not be allowed to go back. Secondly, there is the issue over Hezbollah's weapons, which has long divided this country. Disarmament is a demand of the US, Israel and many Lebanese, who accuse the group of defending the interests of its patron, Iran, and dragging the country into unnecessary wars.

## PALESTINIANS HAND OVER SUSPECT IN 1982 ATTACK ON JEWISH RESTAURANT IN PARIS

French authorities have detained a 72-year-old man considered a key suspect in a grenade and gun attack on a Jewish restaurant in Paris in 1982, in which six people were killed. Hicham Harb was extradited by the Palestinian National Authority on Thursday, in response to a request last September by France's National Anti-Terrorism Prosecutor's Office (PNAT). Harb, whose real name is Mahmoud Khader Abed Adra, is suspected of directing the attack in the Rue des Rosiers and acting as one of the gunmen who shot at diners. French President Emmanuel Macron thanked the Palestinian Authority



and said it was "a concrete demonstration" of judicial co-operation resulting from France's recognition of a Palestinian state in September 2025. On arrival at the Villacoublay air force base near Paris, Harb was placed in detention, PNAT said. No-one has ever been

convicted of carrying out the six killings inside and outside the Jo Goldenberg restaurant in the historically Jewish Marais quarter of Paris, in which more than 20 other people were wounded. The attackers initially threw a grenade into the restaurant and at least three men then

went in firing machine guns as people tried to escape. Last year, France's highest judicial court, the Court of Cassation, ordered a trial for six suspects, of whom three are in absentia and living in the West Bank, Jordan and Kuwait. The Rue des Rosiers attack was blamed on a Palestinian splinter group founded by notorious militant Abu Nidal, who was shot dead in Iraq in 2002. Nidal's organisation broke away from the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and was blamed for a string of deadly attacks that claimed 900 lives, mostly in the 1980s, including assassinations, plane hijackings and shootings at airports and on a Greek cruise ship.

## Runaway wolf finally captured after nine-day search in South Korea



Neukgu, the two-year-old wolf who broke loose from a South Korean zoo and captured the nation's attention, has finally been captured following a nine-day-long search. Neukgu was captured near an expressway on Friday at 00:44 local time (16:44 GMT), according to the government of Daejeon, the central city where his zoo was located. Upon a medical examination, Neukgu's pulse and body temperature were normal, authorities said. Hundreds of rescue officials had been deployed to find the wolf, and there were a couple of times when authorities came close to getting him - but each time the net seemed to be closing in, Neukgu would slink away. Authorities had nearly caught him earlier this week, when the local fire department received a report on Monday night that Neukgu had been spotted on a mountain about 2km (1.2 miles) away from O-World, the zoo and theme park from which he had broken loose. A video of the wolf scampering on a road in the dark, illuminated by the headlights of a vehicle, was also uploaded on social media. Authorities pounced on the lead, launching a search-and-rescue mission, but ulti-

mately he escaped again. The elusive Neukgu has inspired a meme coin, hailed by its creators as a "wolf that wouldn't stay caged" and a "symbol of independence". Born in 2024, Neukgu is part of a programme as O-World to restore the Korean wolf, which once roamed the Korean Peninsula but is now considered extinct in the wild. But after a life in captivity, some worried that he wouldn't be able to survive in the wild. Animal rights groups were also concerned that Neukgu would be killed during the capture process - something that happened to Porongi, a puma that had escaped from the same zoo in 2018. Even South Korea's president Lee Jae Myung publicly prayed for Neukgu's safe return home, in a post on social media. Those fears have been put to rest now that Neukgu has been safely caught. Authorities launched another search operation in the Anyeong-dong area on Thursday evening after receiving a tip-off. It was there that they finally caught him, shooting him in the thigh with a tranquilliser gun from 20m (66ft) away before whisking him back to the zoo.

## NAPLES BANK ROBBERS HOLD 25 PEOPLE HOSTAGE THEN VANISH THROUGH TUNNEL

Several armed men robbed a bank in broad daylight in Naples, holding 25 people hostage before making their escape via a tunnel. Police surrounded a branch of Crédit Agricole in the southern Italian city shortly after the robbery began around midday local time (10:00 GMT). Local outlets reported that they negotiated with the robbers before the hostages could be released, about two hours into the robbery. Firemen could be seen smashing in a window with battering rams and helping people climb out from inside in videos shared on social media. Some hostages simply shook off the shards of glass and walked on. But others looked visibly shaken, crying



and hugging their relatives. Six people, who were in a state of shock, were offered medical assistance. One man later told local news site Fanpage.it that the robbers

had locked them into a room and that, while they were armed, "they did not use violence". Nobody was seriously injured. "Thanks to the swift response... all the hostages

were freed shortly after 13:30 without serious injuries," regional official Michele di Bari said in a statement. A large crowd of bystanders, local residents and firefight-

### Highlights

Several armed men robbed a bank in broad daylight in Naples, holding 25 people hostage before making their escape via a tunnel.

ers gathered in the square waiting for developments, while ten of thousands of people tuned into a livestream from the scene of the crime. Members of the special forces of the carabinieri armed police were urgently flown in

from Tuscany. It was not until several hours later that they stormed the bank by breaking a window. Several shots and the loud noises of stun grenades could be heard on the live feed shortly after. But by then, the robbers had reportedly escaped through a tunnel, local media reported. It was thought they could have vanished into the sewer system. The video feed later showed a number of carabinieri and firefighters peering into a manhole nearby as a crowd continued to mill about the square. Fanpage.it reported that it was not yet possible to quantify the value of the loot taken because the robbers had seized personal safety deposit boxes rather than cash.



# IPL 2026: Kolkata Knight Rider Set 180-Run Target for Gujarat Titans

Cameron Green, Kolkata Knight Riders' Rs 25.2 crore recruit, is solid at one end after scoring his fifty. He has kept KKR hopeful of a competitive total against Gujarat Titans in their IPL 2026 clash at the Narendra Modi Stadium tonight. Green has scored his fifty, putting his foot on the accelerator. Kagiso Rabada has picked up two wickets, while Mohammed Siraj and Ashok Sharma have claimed one each so far. Earlier, KKR captain Ajinkya Rahane called it right at the toss and made a bold decision to bat first. 18.2-Kartik Tyagi has been run out! It was a good yorker from Prasad Krishna. He beat Tyagi with it. As the batter was trying to stay inside the crease, non-striker Cameron Green ran and made it to the end. Kartik had no option left. He had to leave his crease and sacrifice his wicket for Green. Mohammed Siraj has been smashed for a six by



Kartik Tyagi. He tried to test the batter with a bouncer and ended up leaking the maximum. That went over the square leg. Seven came off the over. Sunil Narine is OUT! Smart bowling from Mohammed Siraj. He bowled it fuller outside off, well away from Narine's body. The KKR southpaw threw his bat to it and found a thick outside

edge. Glenn Phillips took a stunning catch at backward point. KKR are eight down. Ashok Sharma gets yet another wicket through a slower ball. It was bowled at 105.9 kmph. Ramandeep Singh smashed it across the line but failed to clear the fence. He found Mohammed Siraj to the wide of long-on. Nine runs and a wicket come

off the final over of Kagiso Rabada. He ends his bowling quota with superb figures of 3 for 29. He struck twice in the Powerplay and never looked back. Kagiso Rabada strikes again! Rinku Singh's lean patch continues as the batter registers his third consecutive single-digit score. Rabada came over the wicket and bowled a good length,

angling away from Rinku. The KKR batted found an edge on it to the wicketkeeper. Prasad Krishna strikes! He gets the wicket of Anukul Roy. The partnership for the fifth wicket has been broken. Kolkata Knight Riders are five down. They are, however, still in a good position to cross 200, with Cameron Green solid at the other end. Cameron Green slams his first half-century in IPL 2026! He gets there in 34 balls! This has been a fighting knock from the star player of Kolkata Knight Riders. He started the tournament poorly and was subjected to some heavy criticism due to his big price tag of Rs 25.2 crore. This knock, however, will help him gain confidence. KKR are 121/4 in 12.5 overs vs Gujarat Titans. Rashid Khan tossed it up and Cameron Green took up the challenge. He jumped out of his crease and smashed that over the long-on for a biggie.

## Elena Rybakina, Coco Gauff Cruise Into Stuttgart Quarter-Finals

Top seed Elena Rybakina beat Diana Shnaider in straight sets to qualify for the quarter-finals of the WTA clay-court event in Stuttgart on Thursday as reigning French Open champion Coco Gauff also advanced. The 26-year-old Rybakina, who was champion in the German tournament in 2024 but skipped last year's event, relied on her service game as she won 6-2, 6-4 against the unseeded Russian in one hour and 12 minutes. Shnaider, ranked 19th in the world, improved in the second set but was undone by double faults at crucial moments, allowing Kazakh Rybakina to capitalise. Rybakina capped the match off with her ninth ace and will next take on Canada's Leylah Fernandez, who beat Zeynep Sonmez in three sets late on Thursday. Fernandez won 6-7 (2/7), 6-1, 7-6 (7/5). World number three Gauff kicked off her bid for a first Stuttgart title with a straight sets win over Liudmila Samsonova. The American second seed won 7-5, 6-1 to book a quarter-



final clash with Czech Karolina Muchova to be played on Friday. Gauff said she modelled her clay court game on 14-time French Open winner Rafael Nadal, but said she was still trying to catch up to the Spanish legend. "The greatest clay court player is Rafa. I don't quite play like him but I try to hit my forehand like him," Gauff said, adding: "I'm like the Walmart version of Rafa - I don't want to be obliterated online. Earlier on Thursday,

Muchova came from a set down to beat Elise Mertens 1-6, 6-3, 6-0 to book a clash with Gauff. World number nine Mirra Andreeva pushed past American Alycia Parks in straight sets in their last 16 clash to extend her winning streak to six matches. Sixth seed Andreeva is in fine form having won the clay event in Linz last week. She eliminated defending champion Jelena Ostapenko on Wednesday and breezed past Parks 7-6 (7/3), 6-3.

## Russell 'would understand' if Verstappen leaves F1

George Russell says Formula 1 "would not want to lose" Max Verstappen - but he would "understand" if the four-time world champion decided to leave the sport this year. Verstappen said at the Japanese Grand Prix that he was considering his future in F1 because of his dissatisfaction with how the cars behave under new rules introduced this year. Russell, who has had a difficult relationship with Verstappen in the past, said: "Formula 1 is bigger than any driver, so you wouldn't want to lose Max, because I think we all enjoy racing against Max." But the British driver added: "You'd understand if he stayed and you'd understand if he went." Verstappen's concerns centre on the new power-units introduced this year, and the degree of ener-



gy management required. The engines have a near 50-50 split between internal combustion and electrical power. This, as well as a series of complex regulatory constraints, has introduced a new form of driving and racing. Verstappen does not enjoy either of the two main changes - qualifying laps are no longer on the limit at all

times, in the traditional sense, because of the need to recharge the battery; and racing is being affected by the large variations in battery charge level and the new "overtaking" and "boost" modes - all of which leads to huge speed differentials between cars. Russell said he believed Verstappen's complaints were influenced by

the fact the Dutch driver's Red Bull team have not started the season with a competitive car. "I didn't enjoy driving the 2022 car when it was porpoising up and down, killing everybody's backs," said Russell, whose Mercedes team have won all three races this year. "The car was big, it was heavy. The high-speed corners, it wasn't very pleasant to drive around. But he didn't have the same complaint, because he was winning." Now, the complaints that he has currently are different to the complaints of Mercedes, Ferrari and McLaren, because we're at the front end of the grid. This is only natural, and you do understand and recognise the frustration," Russell said. Verstappen's success was also an important factor in his thinking.

## Mumbai Indians Break Silence On Jasprit Bumrah's Wicket-Less Show, Make Big Confession

Jasprit Bumrah, widely regarded as the finest pace bowler across all formats in the world, has strangely not picked up a single wicket in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 campaign for the Mumbai Indians so far. Bumrah's wicketless run has also seen the franchise lose four matches on the trot, after winning their opening clash of the season. When Mumbai Indians coach Mahela Jayawardene was asked about Bumrah's struggles, he outrightly refused to admit that the marquee pacer is going through a bad run. In fact, he stressed the team's inability to create pressure in the powerplay with other bowlers as the reason behind Bumrah's lack of wickets. Mumbai



Indians have struggled to take wickets in the powerplay this season, despite possessing Deepak Chahar and Trent Boult - two proven performers in the first six overs. Jayawardene feels the lack of early breakthroughs

has hurt MI's campaign, as it allows opposing batters to play safely against Bumrah. "Yeah, I mean, I think Booms (Bumrah) is bowling well; it's just that we're not putting pressure in the powerplay. They know they don't need to

take too much risk against Booms, and while we've tried a few different things, which he is trying as well, the opposition is batting well. I can't quite put a finger on it and say he hasn't taken wickets for a specific reason, but as a unit, we've lacked that penetration on different surfaces. That is something we need to work on," the former Sri Lanka captain told reporters on Thursday. READ | 'It's Not Just On Hardik Pandya': Mahela Jayawardene Passionately Defends Under-Fire MI Captain Jayawardene further backed Bumrah to overcome this rough patch, suggesting that once he starts picking up wickets, he might not stop for the rest of the campaign.

## Real Madrid Season In Tatters, Alvaro Arbeloa Looking Shaky After Euro Exit

Serial Champions League winners Real Madrid bared their fangs but left Munich staring down the barrel of a second consecutive season without a major trophy with coach Alvaro Arbeloa's tenure looking tenuous. Nine points behind La Liga leaders Barcelona, Los Blancos seem destined to end a troubled campaign empty-handed after their dramatic European quarter-final exit against Bayern on Wednesday. Arbeloa's side took the lead three times at the Allianz Arena and until Eduardo Camavinga's 86th minute red card had every chance of going through after digging deep and going blow-for-blow with the Bavarian giants in a thrilling clash. A late double for Bayern consigned Madrid to a 4-3 defeat on the night - one on which Arbeloa said his team gave "their souls and their lives" - and a 6-4 aggregate loss. "An honourable exit that will not provide consolation or avoid another revolution," wrote Spanish newspaper AS after a heady night in Munich. That revolution could cost Arbeloa his job and Los Blancos are braced for pain and possible change in the weeks and months to follow. "I've always tried to help the club in the best



way I can, and that's how it will be until the last day," Arbeloa told reporters after the match. "I'm not at all worried (about my future) and I will understand perfectly any decision that the club takes. 'I'm a man of the club - if I'm hurt today it's not for me, it's for Real Madrid, and because this year we will not win our 16th (Champions League title). Failure in the Spanish capital is rarely tolerated under president Florentino Perez without someone paying the price.

## Vinod Kampli's Wife Left Fuming Over "False Claims" Over Ex Cricketer's Health

Former India cricketer Vinod Kampli hasn't been in the best of health for a long time. But serious concerns over his health emerged a few days ago when a friend of his revealed that Kampli has a 'clot in his brain' which has started to affect his memory. However, the retired cricketer's wife Andrea Hewitt has labelled the claims lies, saying someone is spreading misinformation about his health. "By God's grace, Vinod is fine. I don't know who is spreading false information about his health," Kampli's wife Andrea Hewitt told India Today. It was Kampli's friend and a former first-class umpire, Marcus Couto, who claimed that the former



cricketer is battling a serious health crisis. "Ever since he was hospitalised in Thane about 18 months ago, Kampli has had a clot in his brain. His memory is not good. He remembers things and then forgets about them. That's all due to that clot in his brain," Couto told The Times of India. "Kampli has given

up drinking, but he tends to smoke at times. Smoking is completely forbidden for him, because it puts him at risk of a brain stroke, as per the doctor Aadil Chaglia (famous neurosurgeon), who has been monitoring Kampli's treatment," he added. "He (Kampli) seemed to be in decent health.

## Novak Djokovic Pulls Out Of Madrid Open Due To Injury



Former three-time winner Novak Djokovic has pulled out of the Madrid Open beginning next week as he needs more time to recover from a shoulder injury. The former world number one and 24-time Grand Slam winner has not played since losing to Briton Jack Draper in the Indian Wells fourth round just over a month ago. "Madrid, unfortunately I won't be able to compete this year," the Serbian 38-year-old posted on Instagram on Friday. "I'm continuing my recovery in order to be back soon. Hasta pronto!" The current world number four

lost to Carlos Alcaraz in the Australian Open final at the beginning of February before hinting that retirement may be just around the corner. He pulled out of the Doha Open later that month due to fatigue. He reached the fourth round in Indian Wells but then pulled out of Masters 1000 events in Miami and Monte Carlo due to his shoulder injury. He has played just two tournaments this year. The news is another blow for Djokovic with time running out to be fit for the year's second Grand Slam, the French Open, which begins in Paris in a month's time.

## Quinton de Kock Surpasses MS Dhoni And Rohit Sharma, Becomes 1st Foreign IPL Star to Achieve Major Feat

Quinton de Kock - he came, he saw and he conquered. Playing his first match of IPL 2026, Quinton de Kock slammed an unbeaten ton. De Kock's 112\* and a gritty 50 from Naman Dhir pulled Mumbai Indians out of the doldrums and lifted them to an under-par 195/6 against Punjab Kings in their Indian Premier League match here on Thursday. Confined to warming the bench so far, de Kock replaced Rohit Sharma and smashed his third IPL hundred to lead an inspirational fightback for the troubled Mumbai Indians, who had slipped to 15/2 in three overs and had their

backs firmly pressed against the wall. With the ton, de Kock surpassed MS Dhoni on the elite list of designated wicket-keepers in the IPL to have scored most 50-plus scores. Most 50-plus scores by a designated wicketkeeper in the IPL 31 - KL Rahul 25 - Quinton de Kock\* 24 - MS Dhoni 21 - Dinesh Karthik 21 - Rishabh Pant 20 - Sanju Samson He is also the first overseas player to score a century for three different IPL teams. Players to score hundreds for three IPL teams KL Rahul - Punjab Kings, Lucknow Super Giants, Delhi Capitals Sanju Samson - Delhi Capitals, Rajasthan Royals, Chennai

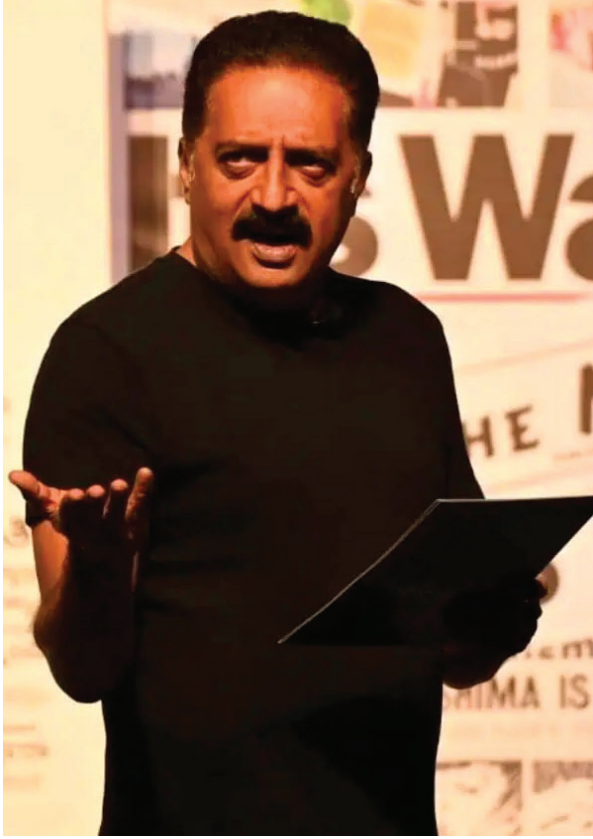
Super Kings Quinton de Kock - Delhi Capitals, Lucknow Super Giants, Mumbai Indians De Kock's 112\* against PBKS is the highest score by any MI batter in the first innings of an IPL match. He broke the record held by Rohit Sharma (109 vs KKR, 2012). Sanath Jayasuriya's 114\* against Chennai Super Kings remains the highest individual score by a Mumbai Indians batter in IPL history. The veteran Proteas batter was in his element during his unbeaten ton - a 60-ball 112 not out (8x4s, 7x6s) and his first IPL hundred since 2022 - clobbering the ball powerfully on the leg side and picking

boundaries with precision and terrific timing on the off side. India and Punjab Kings pacer Arshdeep Singh (3/22) swung the ball prodigiously with immaculate lengths to snaffle two key wickets early on, while a third came late in the innings. After beating Ryan Rickelton (2) persistently with deliveries that swung away from the left-hander, Arshdeep had the South African caught at deep square leg on a shortish ball. He was all over India T20I skipper Suryakumar Yadav (0), luring him outside off on the first ball and beating him with swing to have a thick edge flying to short third man.



## Prakash Raj in legal trouble over Ramayana comments

Versatile actor Prakash Raj is once again in the midst of controversy, this time over his remarks on the Ramayana. During his speech at the Kerala Literature Festival, a video surfaced where he made several comments about the epic that have angered many, particularly in the Hindu community. Prakash Raj, in his speech, described Lord Rama and his brother Lakshmana as North Indians who travelled to the South. He claimed that they stole fruits from a field owned by Ravana, a South Indian tribal figure, which led to a confrontation. He sarcastically added that the dispute over stolen fruits later escalated into a war, humorously referring to it as a fight over a Rs. 2000 GST bill.



### ■ PUBLIC OUTRAGE AND CRITICISM

The video quickly went viral, drawing widespread criticism from social media users and Hindu groups. Many accused Prakash Raj of mocking Hindu beliefs and disrespecting the sacred text. Some also pointed out that his comments were intended to create a divide between North and South India, stirring regional tensions. There has been significant backlash on social media, with people demanding legal action against the actor. Some users have called for filmmakers to reconsider casting him in future projects, including high-profile films

like Varanasi and Drishyam 3, due to his controversial statements.

### ■ LEGAL ACTION AND FUTURE CONSEQUENCES

As a result of the outrage, a criminal case has been reportedly filed against Prakash Raj. Allegations include offending religious sentiments and promoting divisive views. The actor, known for his outspoken views on politics and religion, has yet to comment on the legal developments. This controversy is not the first time Prakash Raj has found himself at the centre

of public criticism. In the past, he has made headlines for his outspoken political opinions and anti-religious comments. However, his latest remarks on the Ramayana seem to have crossed a line for many, causing significant damage to his public image.

### ■ PRAKASH RAJ'S UPCOMING FILM

Workwise, Prakash's latest film is Adivi Sesh, Mrunal Thakur and Anurag Kashyap's Dacoit. His next is SS Rajamouli's Varanasi with Mahesh Babu, Priyanka Chopra Jonas and Prithviraj Sukumaran.

## Chethabadi" – A film set against the backdrop of Banamathi with JD Chakravarthy in the lead

CHETHABADI FIVE LANGUAGES AUDIO RIGHTS GRABBED BY SAREGAMA AUDIO LABEL



The title "Chethabadi" has been revealed for a film starring versatile actor JD Chakravarthy in the lead role. Based on real-life incidents, the film is set against the backdrop of Banamathi. The movie is being jointly produced by reputed production houses M3 Media and Maha Movies. Presented by Maharshi Kondla, the film is written and directed by Suryas, with Mahendra Nath Kondla serving as the producer. Music is composed by Achu Rajamani, while noted lyricist and Oscar winner Chandrabose is also part of this project, adding to its appeal.

Cinematography is handled by Mirilan Nazeer and editing by Vamsi.

This intriguing film, inspired by real incidents and set in a Banamathi backdrop, is expected to keep audiences on the edge of their seats with its horror and mystery elements.

The recently released pre-look poster has already generated curiosity about the film.

On the occasion of JD Chakravarthy's birthday, the makers revealed details about his role in the film.

The team announced that he will be seen in a completely different avatar, portraying both a hero and a villain, some-

thing he has not done before.

Even before the commencement of regular shooting, the film's audio rights for five languages have been acquired by music giant Saregama. While it is common to release the same song in multiple languages, this film offers a unique approach: one song will be released in Telugu, while different songs with the same visuals will be released in other languages, making it a special attraction.

Regular shooting of the film is set to begin next month. The team also states that the film will be made with high technical standards.

## 'O ANDALA RAKSHASI' TO RE-RELEASE ON APRIL 24



The film 'O Andala Rakshasi', directed by multi-talented filmmaker Sheraz Mehdi, who also played the lead role, is set for a re-release on April 24 following positive audience demand. The movie had earlier received a good response during its initial release. On this occasion, a special screening was at Prasad Labs, Hyderabad, followed by a media interaction with the film's team. Speaking to the media, director Sheraz Mehdi

said: "I chose this subject with the intention of highlighting the need to protect women from deception and exploitation. This film is not based on glamour; it is a strong women-oriented story. It shows how innocent women are being misled in society and also conveys that those who commit such crimes will face strict consequences."

## Heartfelt Romantic Drama 'Band Melam' Set to Premiere on Telugu ZEE5 from April 24



Telugu ZEE5 is all set to premiere the heartfelt romantic drama Band Melam, from April 24. Written and directed by Sathish Javvaji, Band Melam is produced by Kavya Kona and Shravya Kona under the banner of Kona Film Corporation. The film stars Harsh Roshan and Sridevi Apalla in the lead roles, reuniting after their acclaimed collaboration in Court. Set in a picturesque rural backdrop, Band Melam narrates the emotional journey of Giri (Harsh Roshan) and Raaji (Sridevi Apalla), childhood friends whose bond deepens into love as they grow older. The story unfolds against the vibrant setting of a local musical band, beautifully weaving themes of music, culture, tradition, and the challenges love faces in a changing social landscape. With its rooted sto-

rytelling and soulful emotions, Band Melam adds another meaningful title to ZEE5's strong slate of Telugu originals and premieres that celebrate authentic voices and regional narratives. Lead actor Harsh Roshan shares, "Band Melam is a simple yet powerful love story that feels very real. Giri's journey is deeply emotional and rooted in rural life. I'm happy that this film is reaching audiences through ZEE5, where stories like this truly find their home." Sridevi Apalla adds, "Raaji is a character full of warmth, innocence, and strength. The story reflects emotions many people will relate to. Streaming on ZEE5 gives Band Melam the perfect platform to connect with viewers across regions." Do not miss to watch Band Melam from April 24th on Telugu Zee5.

## Big Twist: Jacqueline Agrees to Become Approver

Actor Jacqueline Fernandez has taken an important step in the money laundering case connected to Suresh Chandrashekar. She has told a Delhi court that she is ready to become an approver, which means she is willing to give information to help the investigation. This comes as a big shock as she earlier denied of all the charges. As per the reports, the court has asked the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to respond to her request and scheduled the next hearing for April 20. In the meanwhile, the court also directed the actress to follow the proper legal process in her request getting considered. She has to officially approach the

ED, which will then record her statement and decide whether to support her request. The case is about a ₹200 crore extortion racket run by Suresh, who allegedly cheated several rich people. The ED claims Jacqueline received costly gifts from him, which may be linked to illegal money. Multiple times in the past, she made statements that she has no idea of all that happened but now, there seems to be a change in her stand. Jacqueline says she did not know about any illegal activities and we have to see what happens next in the case.

After hearing her submission, the court asked Jacqueline to file a formal application with the appropriate authority before any

decision could be made. Her counsel confirmed the direction, saying she would now have to follow the proper legal procedure. This move comes months after the legal battle intensified, and it could change the direction of the entire case. But what exactly happened, and why is this such a big deal? Here's the full story.

### ■ JACQUELINE SIGNALS WILLINGNESS TO TURN APPROVER

During the hearing, Jacqueline expressed her readiness to become an approver essentially meaning she is willing to cooperate with investigators and provide details about the case. The court, however, clarified that she must first

submit a formal

request to the Enforcement Directorate (ED). As per procedure, the probe agency will record her statement. Only after evaluating her cooperation can the ED decide whether to move an application before the court to grant her approver status. So while her willingness is now on record, the legal process still has several steps ahead. The development came after the Supreme Court earlier refused to cancel criminal proceedings against her. Jacqueline had chal-



lenged the Delhi High Court's decision, but the top court declined to entertain her plea. That meant the case against her would continue, keeping her entangled in the investigation.

## GAME OF THRONES MOVIE TITLE ANNOUNCED: 'AEGON'S CONQUEST'



## Sree Vishnu Launches The Gripping Trailer Of Arjun Ambati's 'Paramapada Sopanam', Releasing On April 24

Arjun Ambati, who has built a good following with his unique script choices, is gearing up for his next release, 'Paramapada Sopanam'. Directed by Naga Siva, a former disciple of star director Puri Jagannadh, this action thriller is set to hit the screens on April 24.

As the release date is fast approaching, the makers have intensified their promotional campaign. On this note, talented actor Sree Vishnu officially launched the theatrical trailer of the film and shared his best wishes with the team. Speaking after the launch, Sree Vishnu said, "I just watched the trailer, and it is very interesting and gripping. It definitely creates the excitement of watching a solid thriller. I hope Arjun Ambati scores a big success with this film. I have known director Naga Siva for a long



time; he is a hardworking and talented person. My best wishes to everyone who worked on 'Paramapada Sopanam.'" The trailer looks highly promising, blending thrilling elements with a relevant social message. Director Naga Siva seems to have perfectly adapted his

guru Puri Jagannadh's signature 'mass and class' style. This is clearly visible in the way Arjun Ambati's action episodes and romantic beach sequences with the leading lady, Jennifer Emmanuel, are showcased. The music is composed by Davzand, who recently delivered a hit album for

Ravi Teja's 'Eagle'. The already released tracks, 'Chinni Chinni Tappulevo' and 'Bhoom Bhoom', have garnered a great response on YouTube. Overall, the trailer raises hopes that 'Paramapada Sopanam' will be a perfect entertainer for all sections of the audience.