



## TG Budget at Rs 3.24 lakh cr as Welfare, Capex in Focus



Hyderabad: The Telangana government on Friday presented a Rs 3.24 lakh-crore Budget tied to welfare for the financial year 2026-27, up by nearly Rs 20,000 crore over the previous year, introducing nine schemes, including the nation's first

'Indiramma family life insurance scheme' benefiting 1.15 crore families in the state. The government has prioritised its flagship programmes such as Musi riverfront development and Hyderabad Metro Rail Phase 2 and 3, besides fulfilment of poll promises. While allocations to some of the schemes relating to Six Guarantees of the Congress have been reduced, the overall outlay for welfare schemes has been increased. Capital expenditure is projected to be enhanced substantially in the new financial year. Noticeably, the Indiramma Family Life Insurance Scheme has been introduced covering all citizens of the state. Under the scheme, life insurance cover of Rs 5 lakh will be provided to each of the 1.15 crore families in the state. A budgetary allocation of Rs 4,000 crore has been made for the proposed scheme. Presenting the budget in the Assembly, Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka said that the main objective of the scheme is to ensure the welfare of all people in Telangana, without any discrimination based on social or economic status—be it poor, middle class, or wealthy. The mega insurance scheme will be launched on June 2 (TG Formation Day) this year.



### SSC Exam Likely To Be Scrapped, Says Revanth

HYDERABAD: Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Friday said the state government is considering scrapping the SSC Public Examinations for class 10 and aligning changes in the education policy with the National Education Policy 2020. Speaking informally to media persons, he said the government is preparing an education framework enabling students to pursue schooling from pre-primary to Class 12 within a single institution by merging the SSC Board and the Board of Intermediate Education into one body. He clarified that the Telangana Education Commission recommendations are not final. A separate committee constituted to study education reforms is yet to submit its report. Any changes will be implemented only after detailed examination, he said.



### 73 Rajya Sabha MPs Have Criminal Cases: Report

The Rajya Sabha is one of the highest ranked legislative houses in India and political parties generally prefer to send only reputed and socially refined candidates for this position. But the latest reports are suggesting that a significant portion of the Raja Sabha House has people with criminal cases. According to the latest report from the audit department, the affidavits submitted by Rajya Sabha MPs has projected a peculiar trends. Out of the 229, Rajya Sabha MPs Who had submitted their affidavit it is being established that 73 of them have criminal cases filed against them. The total headcount in the Rajya Sabha is 232 and as of now, the affidavits of the other 3 candidates is not yet analysed due to their unavailability. What is more shocking is that four out of these 229 candidates have a murder recharge file against them. 27 of the total 99 BJP Rajya Sabha MPs have criminal cases against them while 12 of the 28 Congress MPs face criminal charges. All 3 MPs from BRS have these cases and 2 out of 7 MPs from YCP also happen to have the criminal record.

### Only 8.2% allocation to education 'shameful': ABVP

Hyderabad: ABVP National Executive member Jeevan on Friday strongly criticized the State budget for allocating only 8.2% of funds to the education sector, calling it 'shameful'. He stated that this allocation is far too low for the development of the sector. He demanded the government to allocate at least 15% of the budget to education. Jeevan pointed out that the north-eastern States, like Nagaland and Tripura, prioritise education and allocate around 20% of their budgets to the sector. In contrast, he expressed concern that the Telangana government, which claims to be a "people's government" and a "student-friendly government," is not giving adequate priority to education. Telangana news portal He emphasised that the State's future depends on education; allocating sufficient funds to strengthen the education sector is essential.



The long-pending Pranahita Chevella project will receive top priority in the irrigation sector for the new financial year 2026-2027. The state government has earmarked Rs 22,615 crore for the irrigation department, funds which are being utilised to construct the Pranahita project, the Palamuru Rangareddy lift project, and various other pending works. In the budget, the government mentioned it was correcting a historic mistake committed by the previous administration by taking up the Ambedkar Pranahita-Chevella Project in the erstwhile Adilabad

### Pranahita-Chevella gets top priority

district. Other critical pending projects include the Mahatma Gandhi Kalwakurthy, Jawahar Nertempadu, Rajiv Bheema, and Makthal-Narayanpet-Kodangal lift irrigation schemes. Work will also continue on the Srisailem Left Bank Canal, Udayasamudram, Dindi, and Devadula schemes, alongside the Sitarama and Chinna Kaleshwaram projects. Smaller initiatives like the Gouravelli, Errupalem, and various Vagu projects in the Kerameri and Jainoor mandals are also included in this comprehensive financial roadmap.

### TG debt to reach 29% of GSDP

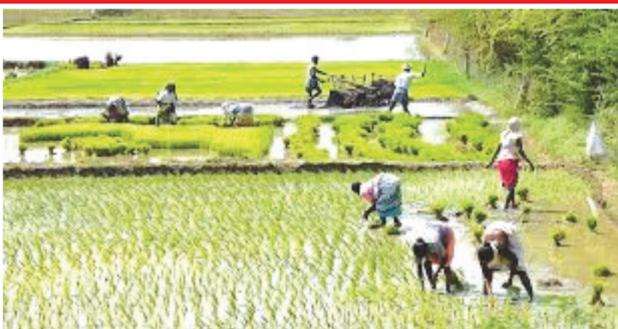
The state's mounting debt burden is projected to reach an alarming 29 per cent of the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) in the 2026-27 financial year. The State government has estimated the total debt at Rs 5.62 lakh crore in the new financial year, compared to Rs 5.06 lakh crore in the current year. According to statistical data in the Budget report, the government expects to mobilise Rs 22,345 crore as loans from the Union government, Rs 14,309 crore from autonomous bodies, Rs 25,716 crore through special securities, and Rs 37,067 crore from reserve funds and deposits. In the last two financial years, the percentage of outstanding debt (FRBM loans) stood at 28 per cent of the GSDP, which is now projected to increase to 29 per cent.

### "Jagan Betrayed Sharmila": Vijayamma's Shocking Statement

It appears like YS Vijaya Lakshmi (Vijayamma) is mincing no words in saying Jagan Mohan Reddy has betrayed his sister, Sharmila. In a notarized Affidavit of the ongoing case in the NCLT, she said Jagan had done injustice to his sister and her children regarding assets. She stated that no division of assets ever took place, and that all assets existing up until YS's passing remained family assets. "It was YSR's intention that all his assets be distributed equally among his four grandchildren. This was, in fact, his directive. This is a truth known to all those close to the family. Every asset allocated to Sharmila in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) rightfully belongs to her. Jagan drafted the MoU in accordance with Sharmila's entitlements," she said. Vijaya Lakshmi says Jagan even gave less assets to Sharmila even while drafting the MOU. "In reality, he allocated to her even less than what was rightfully due to her.



### Telangana Farmers' Association slams budget cuts



Hyderabad: The Telangana Farmers' Association has strongly condemned the state government for reducing allocations to agriculture in the 2026-27 budget, despite declaring the current period as Agriculture Year. In a press statement, the association noted that while the Finance Minister announced Rs 23,179 crore for agriculture this year, last year's allocation stood at Rs 24,000 crore, marking a significant cut. The body described this reduction as regrettable and contradictory to the government's own claims of prioritising the primary sector. The statement pointed out that key promises such as loan waivers, Rythu Bharosa instalments, crop bonuses, and minimum support price commitments were conspicuously missing from the budget. Crucially, tenant farmers remain excluded from official records, leaving them without any financial protection. Highlighting the ongoing rural crisis.

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### TG energy sector receives massive Rs 21,285 cr allocation

The Energy department has been allocated substantial funds of Rs 21,285 crore to strengthen supply infrastructure and provide free power to educational institutions and agriculture in the new financial year. More than 90 per cent of this budget will be used to implement free power supply schemes.

### NRR Slams Telangana Budget as 'Numerical Gimmickry'

Hyderabad: Telangana BJP president N. Ramchander Rao branded the Congress government's 2026-27 Budget a "numerical gimmickry," calling it a failed, false, and fancy exercise with no results in welfare or development after two-and-a-half years in power. At a press conference, Rao mocked finance minister and Deputy CM Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka for "reading last year's speech verbatim," and described the Budget



as "extremely disappointing." He criticised the education allocation, noting that despite a claimed ₹1,000 crore hike, it amounts to just 8.6 per cent of the total — far below Andhra Pradesh's 13 per cent and Bihar's 25 per cent.

Monday, March 23, 2026

# Congress Leaders Are Heirs of Gandhi's Legacy-Ponnam



Karimnagar: Backward class welfare minister Ponnam Prabhakar on Thursday criticised the BJP, asserting that the Congress represents the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi. Speaking at Ugadi celebrations at the Congress office in Karimnagar, he accused BJP leaders of pursuing divisive politics and said the Congress alone could safeguard the aspirations of Telangana. Responding to remarks

by Union minister Bandi Sanjay Kumar on Assembly decorum, he said concerns over members leaving during the national song should be formally raised with the Speaker. "Everyone must respect the national anthem and song. If there is a violation, the Speaker is the custodian of the House to address it," he said. The minister also questioned the BJP leader's political record. "Is it not true that

Bandi Sanjay himself suppressed senior leaders within the BJP to rise to his current position?" he asked, adding that Sanjay and Union minister G. Kishan Reddy were building their politics on false claims. Defending the state government's agenda, he said India's progress in education and healthcare was driven by reforms under Congress leaders from Jawaharlal Nehru to Manmohan Singh. He also criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi, alleging a lack of contribution to Telangana's development. On the Musi Riverfront project, he said the government would proceed only after ensuring rehabilitation of those affected. "If Sabarmati can be developed in Gujarat, why shouldn't the Musi be transformed for the benefit of the poor in Telangana?" he said, accusing the BJP and BRS of attempting to stall the project. He concluded by expressing hope for a prosperous "Parabhava Nama Samvatsaram" and successful implementation of welfare schemes.

## Poetry for Cultural Heritage and Linguistic Diversity

(On the occasion of "World Poetry Day" on 21 March)

Poetry has served as a powerful tool for storytelling, artistic expression, articulating social attitudes, raising miseries of mankind, capable of touching hearts, inspiring minds of all ages, bringing people together, shaping human thoughts and emotions, presenting ecstatic experience to readers, a form of artistic expression, and preserving shared values across civilisations. In 1999 the UNESCO established "World Poetry Day" to be observed on 21 March annually emphasising poetry's role in cultural heritage and linguistic diversity. The theme of 2026 World Poetry Day is "Poetry for Peace, Unity and Cultural Expression" to highlight poetry's role in fostering harmony, and expressing deep human emotions. "Power of Poetry: Poetry connects people across borders, fostering mutual understanding and respect. Poetry also serves as a catalyst for cultural exchange and social unity. Poetry's yet another role has been in preserving endangered languages and increasing linguistic diversity, making it an essential tool for education and inclusion by addressing UNO's Sustainable Development Goals like quality education, reducing inequalities, and also to ensure peace, justice, and strong institutions. On this day poets, writers, and readers are encouraged to share their works, participate in local events, and celebrate the transformative power of words are to be recognised with due respect. It is an opportunity to reflect on how poetry bridges divides, preserve languages, and inspires hope. Let's join on this day the global celebration and honour the creativity, beauty, and resilience of poetic expression. The significance of this day is to preserve linguistic diversity, encourage creativity, promote literature and arts, foster global networking, and celebrate popular poets.

Dr Burra Madhusudhan Reddy

## HC verdict on Velugumatla Bhoodan lands a victory for poor, says BJP

Telangana BJP State Treasurer Devaki Vasudeva Rao has hailed the recent High Court verdict regarding Velugumatla Bhoodan lands in Khammam district as a significant victory for marginalised poor families and a strong rebuke to the state government. Responding to the judgment, he expressed gratitude to the judiciary for delivering justice to the victims. Rao recalled that ever since the houses of poor families were illegally demolished in Velugumatla, the BJP had stood firmly by the affected residents. He highlighted the dedicated efforts of BJP State President Ramchander Rao, Etela Rajender, National ST Commission member Hussain Naik, and Union Minister of State for Home Bandi Sanjay Kumar, who personally visited the site to assure support. He stressed that the relentless ground-level struggle by party leaders and workers had finally culminated in this essential judicial relief. The High Court has directed the government to re-build houses for all those who lost their homes on Bhoodan lands and to allot both house sites and constructed dwellings. Rao demanded the immediate implementation of these orders by the concerned officials, including the MRO, RDO, and District Collector. He recalled how police had previously attacked BJP leaders, including himself, when they stood by the victims. Despite sustaining injuries, he stated that the party continued to fight for the poor, and today's verdict was the fruit of that struggle. Rao accused certain leaders of misrepresenting survey numbers 147, 148, and 149 as government lands for real estate interests.



## Bandi Alleges Congress-BRS Nexus, Targets State Government

KARIMNAGAR: Union minister of state for home affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar on Thursday alleged a tacit understanding between the ruling Congress and the Opposition BRS, claiming that the two parties were protecting each other from political scrutiny. Addressing the media during Ugadi celebrations at his residence in Karimnagar, he said the BRS was not questioning the government over its six guarantees, while the Congress was shielding BRS leaders from investigations into alleged past corruption. He also objected to the alleged boycott of "Vande Mataram" by AIMIM legislators in the state Assembly, and criticised Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar and the state government for not taking action. The Union minister accused the government led by A. Revanth Reddy of failing farmers, alleging that about Rs 41,000 crore in 'Rythu Bharosa' dues remained pending for farmers, tenant farmers and agricultural labourers. He demanded immediate release of the funds, stating that dues amounted to nearly Rs 30,000 per acre for farmers and Rs 36,000 for labourers, and urged the rural population to question ministers over the issue. On the Musi River rejuvenation project, he said the BJP was not opposed to cleaning the river but objected to demolition of houses without rehabilitation. He called on the government to complete double-bedroom housing and ensure full rehabilitation before proceeding. He also referred to the Sabarmati riverfront project in Gujarat as a model, stating it focused on development without displacing the poor. Criticising remarks by the Chief Minister, he said statements about "crushing opponents" raised concerns, alleging they were directed at party leaders planning dissident meetings. He also responded to comments by state minister Sridhar Babu on his portfolio, stating that the ministry of home affairs is a key arm of the Union government and credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi with promoting representation of backward classes and scheduled tribes in the Cabinet.

## Class 9 boy sexually assaults 4-year-old girl in Telangana

Hyderabad: A Class 9 boy allegedly sexually assaulted a four-year-old girl in Bhadradi-Kothagudem district on Thursday, March 19. The 14-year-old accused lured the girl into his residence on the pretext of playing games and committed the crime. The girl returned home and informed her parents, who then approached the Ashwaraopet Police and filed a complaint. Based on the complaint, the Ashwaraopet police registered a case under Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act 2012 against the accused and the investigation is underway. In December 2025, a minor girl was sexually assaulted in Hyderabad by an assistant director and his accomplice, who promised to give her a role in a film. The accused were identified as assistant director Shivareddy and accountant Anil.

## Kaleshwaram project enabled oil palm cultivation in Siddipet, says Harish Rao

Siddipet: Former Minister T Harish Rao said the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP) helped realise the dream of cultivating oil palm in Siddipet. Addressing a gathering at the inauguration of a Rythu Mela at the Oil Palm Factory in Narmetta of Nanganur mandal on Thursday, Rao said he had visited Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageshwar Rao's native place in 2018, where he saw farmers in Khammam district reaping rich benefits from oil palm cultivation. He said he was surprised to see many oil palm farmers living in gated community-style villas and owning cars. When he sought permission from the Indian Institute of Oil Palm Research (IIPR) to take up oil palm cultivation in Siddipet, Rao said the institute initially refused, citing low atmospheric moisture in the district. However, when they approached the IIPR again in 2021 after the completion of Kondapochamma Sagar, Mallanna Sagar, Ranganayaka Sagar and Ananthagiri Sagar, apart from taking up Gouravelly reservoir works, he said permission was granted as the water spread area had increased considerably and canals were flowing through the district. Rao said the BRS government simultaneously decided to establish an oil palm factory while farmers were taking up plantation. Due to sustained encouragement, he said the area under oil palm cultivation increased to 12,000 acres within two years during the BRS rule. The former



Minister said the oil palm factory works were taken up by allotting 62 acres of land, sanctioning Rs 300 crore, constructing a 20-crore-litre pond and providing other infrastructure facilities. He thanked Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageshwar Rao for closely monitoring the works of the oil palm factory to ensure its completion even after the Congress came to power. Stating that Siddipet now has the second-largest area under oil palm cultivation after Khammam district, Rao said only about 2,000 acres were brought under the crop in two years and three months after the Congress came to power.

## Telangana govt seeks 22,700 crore loan for Rabi paddy procurement



Hyderabad: The Telangana government has empanelled the Telangana State Cooperative Marketing Federation Ltd (TG MARKFED) as an additional agency to procure 95 lakh tonne paddy from farmers in the Rabi marketing season 2025-26. A government order was issued to that effect by K Surendra Mohan, Agricultural Production Commissioner (APC) and Secretary to the government,

Agriculture and Cooperation Department, on Wednesday, March 18. A loan, amounting to Rs 22,700 crore, is being sought from the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) for paddy procurement through TG MARKFED, without linking it to the existing outstanding loans and other loans of the agency. The loan is being secured with the state government acting as the guarantor, permitting TG MARKFED to obtain it. The Managing Director of TG MARKFED has been authorised to transfer the obtained loan amount into the account of the Vice-Chairman and Managing Director of the Telangana Civil Supplies Corporation.



# Hyderabad Voice

Monday, March 23, 2026

## Snake Creates Scare at Telangana Assembly

Hyderabad: A snake created a scare among the staff posted outside Telangana Assembly here on Friday. Even as the staff and the police were on regular duty on the Assembly premises, a snake was spotted at the media point creating a scare among everyone. A traffic police constable then rushed to the media point and captured it. He then handed it over to the snake charmers to release it in the forest.

# CM Revanth Wants World Class Cinema At Hyderabad

Telangana chief minister Revanth Reddy has been very particular about the enhancement of the prospect of Telugu Cinema at the cultural hub of Hyderabad. He has a very strong advancement on this matter, and let us have a look into the same. At the prestigious Gaddar Film Awards, Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy laid out an ambitious vision to position Hyderabad as a global hub for the film industry, on par with its established strength in IT and pharma sectors. Emphasizing the city's cinematic legacy, he credited legends like N. T. Rama Rao, Akkineni Nageswara Rao, D. Ramanaidu, and Krishna for bringing the film industry to Hyderabad, while acknowledging



the relentless efforts of Ramoji Rao in strengthening its infrastructure. The Chief Minister announced that the government will soon introduce a single window online policy to streamline film production permissions. This initiative aims

to provide all necessary approvals in one place, making the filmmaking process faster and more efficient. He highlighted that Hyderabad will be promoted as an international filmmaking destination, inviting global industries from countries like Japan, South Korea, and the United States. He also pointed out that the expansion of platforms like Netflix, including its upcoming GCC center, reflects Hyderabad's growing global appeal in the entertainment sector. The government, he said, is committed to transforming the film industry into a major economic driver, positioning it alongside IT and pharma, while ensuring a safe and attractive environment for global investments.



## BJP's Rao Urges Women To Stay Cool on Gas Supplies Amid Global Tensions

Hyderabad: BJP state president N. Ramchander Rao on Thursday commended the Centre's efforts to maintain stability in India even as the West Asia conflict has disrupted gas supplies and caused an increase in fuel prices in many G20 countries. "Celebrate Ugadi joyfully — every stove lit, every kitchen active. Ignore rumors," he added. Rao specifically appealed to women not to panic over misinformation from "vested interests" regarding domestic gas and petrol availability. "No need for long queues or rushed bookings. Gas agencies confirm regular supplies, with cylinders delivered in 2-3 days," Rao said. Speaking after Panchanga Sraavanam and Ugadi celebrations at the state BJP office, Rao said that domestic gas supply faced no major issue, though commercial LPG supplies had dipped temporarily by 40 per cent and this would be resolved as ship carrying gas are unloaded, he said. Rao highlighted the Panchangam speaker's emphasis on science, technology, and ancient wisdom driving progress, quoting, "If you are not updated, you will be outdated." He urged embracing Telugu culture alongside modern tech advancements, and noted that the BJP training sessions reinforced this aspect. Praising India's stability under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a global symbol amid worldwide unrest, Rao drew parallels to the victory over Covid-19. He called for unity to build a stronger nation, viewing Ugadi as a chance to shed ego, selfishness, and anger for personal renewal.



## Rythu Discom Seeks ERC's Licence

Hyderabad: Telangana's third power distribution company, Telangana Rythu Power Distribution Company Limited (TGRPDCL), has filed a licence application with the Telangana Electricity Regulatory Commission (ERC) on Ugadi. The ministry of corporate affairs (MCA) had granted incorporation approval on March 18. Rythu discom chairman and managing director Musharruf Faruqui said the state aimed to deliver dedicated, reliable power to farmers through this farmer-centric entity. The third discom was formed with an IAS officer as CMD, with four directors from existing discoms and key officials as shareholders, as per March 11 government orders setting up the entity. About 51 engineers and staff from southern and northern discoms have been deputed to the corporate office of the third discom to ensure quality services for agriculture, marking a key step toward specialized rural power supply.

## Five B.Tech students go missing in Godavari river in Telangana

Bhadrachalam: Five B.Tech students went missing after being swept away by strong currents in the Godavari River in Bhadrachalam of Bhadrachalam district on Friday, police said. The incident occurred when a group of seven students, who had come to the area during the Ugadi holidays, entered the river for a bath near a stretch at Kolligudem sand ramp in Etapaka mandal. According to officials, the students—pursuing second-year B.Tech at a college in Amaravati—were taking photographs when they were suddenly caught in the strong flow of water and swept away. While two of them managed to swim back to safety, five others went missing. The missing students have been identified as Abhiram, Srikar, Teja, Satish and Navadeep. Abhiram and Srikar are stated to be natives of the Bhadrachalam area.

## Cong Announces Office Bearers For 13 DCCs And One Corporation



Hyderabad: The Congress on Thursday appointed 855 office-bearers in 13 districts and a municipal corporation, under the Sanghatan Srijan Abhiyan to reinforce the organisation from

the grassroots. Some of the committees now have close to 100 district-level executives, including vice-presidents, general secretaries, secretaries and executive members. PCC president B. Mahesh Kumar Goud formally released the list on Ugadi. The districts with full-fledged committees include Khairatabad (90), Nirmal (65), Nagarkurnool (32), Khammam (80), Peddapalli (58), Medak (61), Nizamabad (89), Wanaparthy (32), Nizamabad Corporation (33), Mancheril (50), Komaram Bheem-Asifabad (54), Yadadri-Bhongir (66), Adilabad (61) and Kamareddy (84). On November 22, AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge had cleared the appointment of presidents for 33 district committees besides the corporations of Karimnagar, Khammam and Nizamabad. The Sangathan Srijan Abhiyan is a major organisational restructuring initiative to strengthen its grassroots presence and democratise leadership. According to party sources these appointments were made after a rigorous review process involving AICC observers. Party officials were assigned to each district to conduct detailed reviews and engage with local party workers and stakeholders.

## Good News for Students: Rs 2,000 Monthly Scholarship Announced

The Telangana government has announced a major boost for students across the state. From now on, students pursuing Intermediate courses within Telangana will also receive mid-day meals, a move aimed entirely at promoting their welfare, according to Deputy Chief Minister Bharti Vikramarka. In addition, the government has declared that students enrolled at IITs and Advanced Technology Centres (ATCLs) will be granted a monthly Rs 2,000.

# Telangana presents Rs 3.24 lakh crore budget for 2026-27

Hyderabad: Telangana Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka on Friday presented a budget of Rs 3.24 lakh crore for 2026-27. Presenting the third full-fledged budget of the Congress government in the state Assembly, he pegged the revenue and capital expenditure at Rs 2.34 lakh crore and capital expenditure at Rs 47,267 crore respectively. "For the financial year 2026-27, I propose a total expenditure of Rs 3,24,234 crore, revenue expenditure of Rs 2,34,406 crore, and capital expenditure of Rs 47,267 crore," he said. Last year, the finance minister had presented a Rs 3.04 lakh crore budget for 2025-26. Telangana's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) recorded a growth rate of 10.7 per cent during 2025-26 against the national growth rate



of 8 per cent. At current prices, Telangana's GSDP stands at Rs 17,82,198 crore. "Telangana's growth rate is 2.7 per cent higher than the national average growth rate. Likewise, the state's GSDP accounts for 5.0 per cent of the national GDP, making Telangana a strong growth engine for the country," he said. He stated that although India's growth rate has declined to 8 per cent from 9.8 per cent in 2024-25, Telangana's GSDP growth rate increased from 10.6 per cent in 2024-25 to 10.7 per cent in 2025-26. Telangana news portal The per capita income of Telangana in

2025-26 was Rs 4,18,931, with a growth rate of 10.2 per cent. "The national per capita income stood at Rs 2,19,575, while the growth rate was only 6.9 per cent. Compared to the national per capita income, Telangana's per capita income is higher by Rs 1,99,356. That is, it is 1.9 times higher." The finance minister revealed that the state has set a great goal of transforming the economy, which is currently at 200 billion US dollars, into a one trillion US dollar economy by 2034 and a three trillion US dollar economy by 2047. To achieve this objective, the government is preparing special sector-wise plans. He claimed that despite facing many challenges and financial pressures, Telangana is moving rapidly on the path of development.



## BRS stages walkout from Telangana Assembly amid budget speech

Hyderabad: Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) legislators staged a walkout from the Telangana Assembly during the budget speech on Friday, March 20, citing the Congress government's "unfulfilled promises." As a mark of protest, the BRS leaders put flowers on their ears while Finance Minister Bhatti Vikramarka was presenting the budget. They also yelled "fraud fraud" during the budget speech, while referring to the promise of providing one tola of gold, creation of 2 lakh jobs and other assurances made earlier. With the budget speech allegedly ignoring the pending promises, they staged a walkout. In a video shared on social media, the BRS legislators were seen protesting at the Assembly entrance and raising slogans such as "Creation of 2 lakh jobs annually (not fulfilled)" against the budget.

## CM assures regularisation of sada bainama land on Ugadi



Hyderabad: Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy announced on Thursday, March 19, that soon the state government will resolve the issue of registering the land purchased before 2020 by farmers through sada bainama (sale deeds written, agreed and signed on white papers). Revanth Reddy was speaking at the "Sri Parabhava Nama" Ugadi celebrations held at Ravindra Bharathi in Hyderabad, where he made the announcement on Sada Bainama registrations. In October 2020, the then Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) government had issued government order (GO) 112 to register the lands purchased through Sada Bainama, which was a process followed by farmers even since India attained independence. Under Sada Bainama, the seller of the land and the buyer used to enter an agreement signed on a white paper, which itself was considered a land transfer document,

though it was never entered in the revenue records of the state. When GO 112 was issued, more than 9 lakh farmers applied for the regularisation/registration of those lands. However, the GO was contested in the Telangana High Court by one Shinde Devidas from Nirmal district, who contended that the regularisation of those lands didn't have a legal backing under the then Telangana Rights in Land and Pattadar Passbooks Act of 2020, which then led to the launch of the Dharani revenue portal. The High Court had then issued interim orders preventing the state government from going ahead with the implementation of GO 112. On August 26, 2025, a division bench comprising the then Chief Justice, Alok Aradhe, and Justice GM Mohiuddin lifted the interim stay issued in November 2020. Advocate General A Sudarshan Reddy had argued that the state government was committed to regularising lands purchased under sada

bainamas, if they were in continuous possession for at least 12 years prior to 2014. In its ruling, the bench had observed that since the old Telangana Rights in Land and Pattadar Passbooks Act was repealed and replaced by the Telangana Bhu Bharati (Record of Rights in Land) Act, 2025, the public interest litigation (PIL) filed on the basis of the previous law had become redundant.

The Congress government had also promised before the 2023 Assembly elections that if it came to power, sada bainama lands would be regularised. During the Telangana Assembly session on Wednesday, March 18, some of the BRS MLAs raised the issue of sada bainamas, urging the state government to regularise them, so that those farmers could access various benefits of government schemes. The chief minister's announcement on the Ugadi festival is being seen as a great relief to the farmers who purchased lands under sada bainama, which are mostly small extents of land, giving them hope which has evaded them for decades. Speaking at the Ugadi event, Revanth Reddy said that the state government is committed to the welfare of the farming community, working to make them the "kings" by promoting agriculture as a lucrative profession. The Chief Minister prayed to god for the people's prosperity, peace and protection from natural disasters.

### Irregularities in Telangana integrated school tenders: Harish



Hyderabad: Senior BRS leader and former minister T Harish Rao on Friday, March 20, levelled serious allegations over the allocation of Integrated Residential School tenders in Telangana, claiming irregularities and political bias in the process. Speaking during an informal interaction at the BRS Legislative Party office on Friday, March 20, Harish Rao said the tendering process lacked transparency and pointed to what he described as unusually high bid values. He stated that tenders for 76 schools have been finalized so far, with all contracts quoted at excess rates ranging from 4.59 percent to 4.99 percent. According to him, the uniformity in these figures raises suspicion about the fairness of the bidding process. Harish Rao alleged that in chief minister A Revanth Reddy's constituency, Kodangal, a contract was awarded to KLSR Company at an excess rate of 4.95 percent. He further claimed that a vehicle used by the chief minister is registered under the same company's name, suggesting a possible conflict of interest. He also said that several constituencies represented by ministers witnessed similar tender allocations at comparable excess rates, and noted that nine of the projects were awarded to KLSR Company alone. The BRS leader alleged that constituencies represented by BRS MLAs were denied Integrated Schools entirely. In contrast, he claimed that 10 MLAs who were elected on BRS tickets but later joined the Congress party were allotted these projects, indicating what he termed as "political favouritism" in project distribution. Drawing a comparison with the previous BRS government led by K Chandrashekar Rao (KCR), Harish Rao said that development initiatives such as Mission Kakatiya and Mission Bhagiratha were implemented uniformly across all 119 constituencies without discrimination. He asserted that the earlier administration ensured equal development regardless of political affiliation. Accusing Congress ministers of distributing tenders among themselves, Harish Rao said he would raise the issue during the upcoming Assembly budget sessions.



### Jagga Reddy leads grand Ugadi celebrations in Sangareddy

Like every year, Ugadi celebrations at Ram Mandir here were held with great enthusiasm this year as well. Under the leadership of TPCC working president T Jagga Reddy, the festivities were organised grandly at Ramnagar Ram Mandir. Reddy himself participated in the bhajan programme, the singing songs and devotional hymns. A proces-

sion was taken out in Ramnagar while singing bhajans and devotional songs, accompanied by the Pelala Laddu prasadam. Later, the traditional "UttiKottadam" (pot-breaking ritual associated with Lord Krishna) was conducted at the temple. After that, following the long-standing tradition, the prasadam was thrown from the top of the shrine

towards the devotees. Devotees believe that receiving the laddu on Ugadi brings good luck. Thousands gathered at the temple and competed to receive the prasadam. TGIIC chairperson Nirmala Jagga Reddy participated in the programme along with Reddy's daughter Jaya Chaitanya Reddy, son Bharat Sai Reddy, and other family members.

### Farmers Duped of Rs. 3.18 Crore as Financier Flees in Jagtial

Karimnagar: A resident of Endapalli mandal headquarters allegedly absconded after duping dozens of villagers of about Rs 3.18 crore in Jagtial district. Among his victims were farmers and labourers, who he lured with promises of high interest rates, before selling his own properties and vanishing overnight. Locals said they were gathering details to file a police complaint. The fraud came to light when several victims gathered at the gram panchayat (GP) office to lodge a complaint. Suspicion arose three days ago when the accused's house was found locked and his mobile phone remained switched off. Upon further inquiry, victims discovered that he had sold his house and agricultural land a few weeks ago.



### Konda Surekha Invites Revanth Reddy for Seetha Rama Kalyanostavam in Bhadrachalam

Hyderabad: Endowments Minister Konda Surekha invited the Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy for Seetha Rama Kalyanostavam as part of Sri Ramanavami Thirukalyana Brahmotsavam in Bhadrachalam. The Thirukalyana Mahotsavam of Bhadrachalam Sri Seetha Ramachandra Swamy Temple will be conducted on March 27. Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy and other officials were also present on the occasion. Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao invited Revanth Reddy and Bhatti Vikramarka for 'Praja Palanalo Rythu Utsavalu' from March 19 to 22. The government will release the Rythu Bharosa funds on March 22.

### Tension at Siddipet oil palm factory as BRS, Congress workers trade slogans

Siddipet: Tension prevailed for a while at the Oil Palm Factory in Narmetta as BRS cadres and Congress workers raised slogans against each other on Thursday. The incident occurred when former Minister T Harish Rao arrived at the venue to participate in the inauguration of the Rythu Mela, while Congress Ministers Thummala Nageswar Rao, Ponnamp Prabhakar and other leaders were present on the premises. BRS cadres raised "Harish Rao zindabad" slogans on seeing their leader, prompting Congress workers to raise counter-slogans. Police intervened and dispersed the crowd. Meanwhile, Congress Ministers and Harish Rao repeatedly appealed to both groups to remain calm and ensure that the meeting proceeded smoothly.

### ASHA workers protest at Ponnamp Prabhakar's camp office in Husnabad, detained



Hyderabad: Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) workers staged a protest at Transport Minister Ponnamp Prabhakar's camp office in Husnabad on Friday, March 20, claiming that workers had not received payments for the past 10 months. They were later taken into custody by the police and shifted to the Akkannapet Police Station. Last month, on February 23, ASHA workers had gathered at the Commission of Health and Family Welfare's office at Koti in Hyderabad, demanding a fixed honorarium of Rs 18,000 per month. However, they were not allowed to submit their representation to the Commissioner and were detained by the police. The demand for a fixed Rs 18,000 monthly honorarium has been the principle demand of the ASHA workers for several years.

# PM Invites Global Investors to Invest in Power Sector



## Chiranjeevi And Narayana Murthy Honest Appeal To AP Govt

Megastar Chiranjeevi and veteran revolutionary personality R Narayana Murthy have made an honest appeal to the government of Andhra Pradesh regarding film awards event and here's a look into their request. Veteran Telugu cinema icons Chiranjeevi and R. Narayana Murthy have jointly emphasized the need to revive and strengthen institutional support for the film industry, particularly through the long-pending Nandi Awards. Their appeal highlights a growing concern within Tollywood that recognition and encouragement from governments play a crucial role in sustaining creative excellence. Chiranjeevi pointed out that the halted Nandi Awards should be reinstated to honor talent across crafts and to motivate filmmakers, technicians, and artists. He gave the implication that leaders in Andhra Pradesh, including Pawan Kalyan, N. Chandrababu Naidu, and Cinematography Minister Kandula Durgesh, to take proactive steps in supporting the industry. This was a very much needed prompt and positive approach taken by Chiranjeevi Echoing similar sentiments, R. Narayana Murthy drew comparisons with Telangana's leadership under Revanth Reddy, suggesting that Andhra Pradesh should also actively recognize and encourage cinema personalities. He stressed that the film industry is not just entertainment but a significant cultural and economic force. Together, their voices reflect a broader demand from within the industry for acknowledgment, policy support, and revival of prestigious awards that celebrate Telugu cinema's legacy and future.

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday invited global investors to invest in the power sector, urging them to "make, invest, innovate, and scale" in India. In a written message read out by Union Power Secretary Pankaj Aggarwal at the Bharat Electricity Summit 2026, Modi said India stands at a defining moment in its energy journey as the world's fastest-growing major economy. "I invite the global community to make in India, innovate in India, invest in India, and scale with India. I'm confident this summit will catalyse meaningful dialogue and enduring partnerships to power India's growth," Modi said. Modi said the summit aims to bring the whole power and energy ecosystem onto a single platform to exchange ideas, foster collaboration, and chart a shared path to power growth and improve life. "It reflects our collective resolve of electrifying growth and bringing sustainability, connecting globally, and advances India's vision of a Viksit Bharat by 2047," he stated. India stands at a defining moment in its energy journey, as the world's fastest-growing major economy, we are strengthening infrastructure and ensuring reliable energy access for all, he noted. Our renewable energy progress is a testimony to this commitment. Over 50 per cent non-fossil fuel capacity has already been achieved, with a clear pathway to 500 gigawatt by 2030, he noted. Initiatives like one sun, one world, one grid underscore our vision for global cooperation, he pointed out. India is evolving into a reliable energy partner in building resilient supply chains, advancing battery manufacturing, creating green jobs, and enabling investments through bold reforms, Modi added. The SHANTI Act



2025 opens new frontiers in nuclear energy, while PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana is driving distributed generation and sustainable consumption, he noted. Reforms and distribution are equally significant in reducing AT&C losses and improving finances in 2024-25, signalling a more efficient and sustainable sector with vast opportunities across the value chain, making India a compelling destination to invest in weight and scale, the Prime Minister said in his written message. The four-day Bharat Electricity Summit 2026 began on Thursday.



## 73 Rajya Sabha MPs Linked to Criminal Cases, 31 Billionaires Revealed: ADR Report

New Delhi: Around 32 per cent of sitting Rajya Sabha MPs have declared criminal cases against themselves, while 14 per cent are billionaires, according to a report by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR). The report is based on an analysis of affidavits of 229 out of 233 Rajya Sabha MPs. One seat from Jharkhand is currently vacant, while affidavits of three MPs were unavailable. The analysis includes 37 recently elected members. Of the 229 MPs analysed, 73 (32 per cent) have declared criminal cases, with 36 (16 per cent) of them facing serious charges. One MP has declared a case of murder, four have cases of attempt to murder, and three have cases related to crimes against women. Party-wise, 27 of 99 BJP MPs, 12 of 28 Congress MPs, four of 13 TMC MPs, and four of 10 AAP MPs have declared criminal cases. Three MPs from CPI(M) and BRS each have disclosed criminal cases. The report also found 31 MPs (14 per cent) having a net worth of billions of rupees. Among major parties, six BJP MPs, five Congress MPs, four YSRCP MPs, two AAP MPs, two BRS MPs, and three NCP MPs have declared assets exceeding Rs 100 crore. The average assets of a Rajya Sabha MP stand at Rs 120.69 crore. Among major parties, the average assets per MP are Rs 28.29 crore for BJP, Rs 128.61 crore for Congress, Rs 17.70 crore for TMC, and Rs 574.09 crore for AAP. Other parties include YSRCP (Rs 522.63 crore), SP (Rs 399.71 crore), BJD (Rs 105.63 crore), and DMK (Rs 11.90 crore). BRS MP Bandi Partha Saradhi has declared the highest assets at over Rs 5,300 crore, followed by AAP's Rajinder Gupta with over Rs 5,053 crore, and YSRCP's Alla Ayodhya Rami Reddy with over Rs 2,577 crore. On the other end, AAP MP Sant Balbir Singh is the poorest, with assets worth about Rs 3 lakh.

## Arrest of Ukrainians a legal matter, under probe: India



New Delhi: India on Thursday said that the case involving arrest of six Ukrainian nationals is a "legal matter" and Indian government agencies are investigating the matter. Addressing a weekly media briefing on Thursday, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal also stated that India has received consular access request for those arrested from the Ukrainian Embassy. When asked about Ukraine's statement about the arrest of its six nationals, Jaiswal stated, "You all know about the case and we are also aware it. As you know that this is a legal matter, the relevant GoI agencies are investigating it presently. We had a related question as to whether we have received consular access request. Yes, we have received consular access request and this will be addressed

keeping in mind the legal requirements that are involved in this particular case." An American and six Ukrainian nationals face charges under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), they have been sent to 11-day custody by a special NIA court in Delhi. Earlier in the day, the Ukrainian Embassy in India expressed serious concern over the detention of six Ukrainian nationals, terming it "orchestrated and politically motivated." The Ukraine Embassy expressed rejection of any insinuations about the possible involvement of Ukrainian state in supporting terrorist activities. The Embassy stated: "Taking into account publicly available information in the case concerning the detention of six citizens of Ukraine, including media reports.

## Selfish interests, desire for dominance root cause of global conflicts: Bhagwat

NAGPUR: Selfish interests and the desire for dominance were the root cause of conflicts in the world, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat said on Friday, asserting that lasting peace can only be achieved through unity, discipline and adherence to dharma. Addressing a gathering in Nagpur, Bhagwat said that for 2,000 years the world has experimented with various ideas to resolve conflicts with little success. Religious intolerance, forced conversions and ideas of superiority and inferiority still exist, he pointed out. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief was speaking at the gathering after laying the foundation stone for the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's office in the city. Bhagwat said that India's ancient wisdom teaches that "all are connected and one", and called for a shift from conflict to harmony and cooperation. He further noted that even modern science is gradually moving towards this understanding. The



RSS chief noted that selfish interests and the desire for dominance were the root cause of conflicts in the world, and said lasting peace can only be achieved through unity, discipline and adherence to dharma. Highlighting the importance of conduct, Bhagwat said dharma cannot remain confined to scriptures, but must be reflected in people's behaviour. Discipline and adherence to moral values require sustained practice and often involve personal hardship, he said.

## YCP Permanently Closed the Door for Balineni?

Ongole politics took a big twist after Balineni Srinivasa Reddy, who is a distant relative of YS Jagan and a senior leader from the region moved away from YSR Congress. He quickly left Jagan camp after the 2024 election and joined Janasena. In the meanwhile, there have been reports about Srinivasa Reddy's participation in Janasena activities. In the early stages of his time at the Pawan Kalyan party, he took part in several events and meetings. But he had gone rather silent over the last few months, which has led to a series of political speculations. On that note, there has been a recent talk in the political circles that the senior leader could be dissatisfied with the lack



of accreditation that he is getting in Janasena and could be potentially plotting a move back to YCP. However, Balineni seems to have noticed that the YCP may have closed the

doors for him. He came up with a new social media post that appears to indirectly address the rumours and ongoing speculation surrounding his political future. Earlier, Balineni shared a couple of pictures of himself and his son with the deputy chief minister, Pawan Kalyan, and came up with an interesting caption for the same. "He is not just a leader to us... Trust, support, shelter" he wrote. This is perhaps an indication of the fact that he is still in good terms with Pawan Kalyan, and wishes to continue with this camp in the future as well. On the other hand, Jagan has also indirectly confirmed the Ongole Assembly seat to Ravi Babu, who has been with the party for a long time.

Estd : 1996

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## Education

**VOICE OF WORDS**

Monday, March 23, 2026



### IIIT-Delhi Invites Applications for M.Tech. and Ph.D. Programs for the 2026 Academic Session

New Delhi: IIIT-Delhi announces the admissions for the coming academic year 2026-2027 for the postgraduate and doctoral programs. The institute is offering opportunities for aspiring engineers and researchers across the nation with M.Tech. admissions beginning on March 16, 2026 while Ph.D. admissions are already open. Aspirants are invited to apply for M.Tech. and Ph.D. courses among the comprehensive academic courses. The institute has opened online applications for its M.Tech. programs for this session from March 16, 2026. Master of Technology programs are available in a range of advanced and industry-focused areas. These programs aim to cultivate robust technical skills and research proficiency. The institute provides M.Tech. in Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) with specializations in Artificial Intelligence, Data Engineering, Information Security & Mobile Computing, M.Tech. in Computer Science and Engineering – Research (CSE-Research), M.Tech. in Electronics and Communication Engineering (ECE) with specializations in VLSI & Embedded Systems, Communications and Machine Learning and M.Tech. in Computational Biology (CB). The last date of application submissions is April 13, 2026. The Ph.D. program at IIIT-Delhi offers different fields like Computer Science and Engineering, Electronics and Communications Engineering, Computational Biology, Human-centred Design, Mathematics and Social Sciences and Humanities. Those interested in applying can do so via the official admissions portal. All applications must be submitted on or before April 8, 2026. Speaking about the admissions, Prof. Sumit J. Darak, Dean of Academic Affairs, said, "IIIT-Delhi's postgraduate and doctoral programmes are designed to equip students with advanced knowledge and hands-on experience in building complex systems. With a strong emphasis on interdisciplinary learning, a research-driven curriculum, and opportunities for industry internships, the programmes enable students to continuously learn and adapt, empowering them to contribute meaningfully to the rapidly evolving world of technology." IIIT Delhi encourages students for roles that deal with advanced research in the tech world. Interested candidates can find detailed information about admission procedures on the official admissions pages of the institute.

## New Zealand To Launch Short-Term Graduate Work Visa, Extend Post-Study Work Benefits For International Students

New Zealand has announced a set of significant changes to its work visa policy, introducing new pathways for international students to transition from education to employment. The updates, which will roll out in phases from April 2026, are expected to impact thousands of students, including a large number from India. Under the revised rules, new employment conditions for open work visa holders will come into effect from April 20, 2026. In addition, the government will introduce a new Short Term Graduate Work Visa and expand eligibility for the existing Post Study Work Visa later in the year. Officials say the changes are aimed at making visa rules easier to understand while ensuring that international graduates are better aligned with the country's labour market needs. The move also reflects New Zealand's broader strategy to strengthen its position as a preferred study destination.

**New Short Term Graduate Work Visa.** Another major highlight is the announcement of a new visa, named the Short Term Graduate Work Visa. It is expected that this new visa will be rolled out in late 2026. With the help of this new visa, the visa holder will be granted up to six months of open work rights.

**Features:**

- The new visa will offer the holder up to 6 months of open work rights.
- It is expected that the new visa will be used as a bridge for those students who are graduating and are going into full-time work.
- The new visa needs to be applied for within 3 months after the expiry of the student visa.

**Eligibility criteria:**

- The student



**New Zealand To Launch Short-Term Graduate Work Visa, Extend Post-Study Work Benefits**

needs to have NZD \$5,000 for living expenses.

- The qualification needs to be NZQCF level 5-7.
- The qualification needs to be for at least 24 weeks of full-time study in New Zealand.
- English language, foundation, or bridging courses are not eligible.
- The student needs to ensure that they have not held a previous Post Study Work Visa. However, there are certain restrictions as well. The visa holders will not be able to start their own business or sponsor anyone for work or student visas. They can only work under a formal employment agreement.

**Post Study Work Visa eligibility expanded**

In another major shift, eligibility for the Post Study Work Visa will be extended to include graduates completing a Graduate Diploma at NZQCF Level 7, provided they also hold a bachelor's degree.

**Key changes:**

- Graduate Diploma holders at Level 7 now eligible.
- Must have studied

full-time in New Zealand.

- Bachelor's degree can be from New Zealand or overseas.
- Visa validity up to 1 year, depending on study duration. Applicants will need to submit proof of both their graduate diploma and bachelor's degree, along with academic transcripts. Unlike the short-term visa, Post Study Work Visa holders will continue to have the ability to support partners and dependent children, subject to immigration conditions.

**What it means for students**

The revised framework is intended to provide greater flexibility and opportunities for students after they graduate from university. Though it is true that a short-term visa serves as a security blanket for students who fail to find employment immediately, it is also true that the revised Post Study Work Visa opens more opportunities for a larger number of graduates.

### Nottingham Trent University Offers Scholarships Up To Rs 18.9 Lakh For Indian Students Across UG, PG Programmes; Up To 50% Fee Waiver



Study In UK: Nottingham Trent University has announced a major expansion of its scholarship support for Indian students, offering financial

aid of up to £15,350 across undergraduate and post-graduate programmes. The UK-based university said the move is aimed at making its courses more accessible to high-achieving Indian applicants, at a time when interest in studying in the UK continues to grow. The scholarships are largely merit-based and reward academic performance, leadership potential and a student's overall contribution beyond the classroom. Scholarships for Indian Students at Nottingham Trent University (NTU).

- Excellence Scholarship (Undergraduate).
- 50% or 25% tuition fee waiver in the first year.
- Additional £3,000 per year after first year
- Total support up to £15,350 (50%) or £10,675 (25%).
- Postgraduate Scholarships.
- Awards range from £2,000 to £12,500 depending on course.
- Undergraduate Executive Dean's Scholarship.
- £5,000 tuition fee reduction.
- NTU International Merit Scholarship.
- £3,000 award.
- NTU International Scholarship.
- £2,000 award.
- Sibling Loyalty Reward.
- 20% reduction in tuition fees.
- Applicable if sibling is already studying at NTU.
- MBA Excellence Scholarship.
- Up to 50% tuition fee waiver.

University officials say the wide range of scholarships reflects a continued focus on attracting talented Indian students and supporting them through their academic journey. To be considered, applicants must first secure an offer for an eligible course. Scholarships are competitive and are awarded based on academic achievements as well as the student's profile. Application Deadlines. The applications will be processed in three rounds with deadlines for the applications set for March 25, April 22, and June 24, 2026. Students are advised to apply early to allow time for visa applications.

## NEP 2020: Sweeping Education Reforms Stalled By Slow Implementation, Stakeholders Call For Urgent Action



In the last more than ten articles, the status of implementation of major NEP 2020 recommendations were discussed; in all areas from school to higher education to other areas including integration of skills or IKS, the implementation process has been found to be slow and much below the target speed. Several deadlines and objectives have, therefore, not been achieved. It is a matter of concern for many of us in the academic world as we were expecting things to move much faster so that desired goals could be achieved. It is difficult to assess the definitive reasons for the slow pace of

implementation particularly for the "substantive recommendations" at the ground level. One reason could be lack of political will, which is difficult to agree with, as the government particularly at the central level has substantive majority and it is serious as well as sincere in implementing it. May be the country is too big, and it is not possible to implement any policy without active support from state governments. But even in many of the ruling party ruled states, the process is equally slow, and it is difficult to comprehend reasons for the same. The second reason that is more realistic is that

the recommendations are not "incremental" but "sweeping" in nature and therefore, the implementation bodies are at a loss as to how to proceed. For example, making the "school education outcomes" across the School Boards equal in terms of skills and competencies is a complex task. It will require humongous changes in the syllabus, curriculum, and teaching pedagogies across the schools; neither the system nor the teachers are ready for such transformation and hence, the process is slow. In some State Boards, the syllabus is changed up to 2nd or 3rd standard till now and if the pace remains the same, it might take a decade before congruence in the curriculum of all Boards is achieved. We are not sure when the "specialization free" 11th & 12th standard education will start at school level. It might take years. Similarly, the proposed migration to 4-year degree course is proving to be non-starter in many universities / colleges. Either the students are not convinced about the utility of migration in terms of better career prospects, etc., or the system itself is not ready for the voyage because of lack of infrastructure, faculty readiness, among others. The resultant effect is felt on the ground through low interest of the students for the shift to the new system. One other weak area has been IKS. One of the critical objectives of NEP 2020 was to bring back Indian ethos in education system through integration of "Indian Knowledge System (IKS)". Our interaction at various levels reveals that institutions are not adequately ready in terms of teaching preparedness of the various domains / subjects of IKS. And therefore, the process of implementation has been slow and lopsided. Similar is the case of integration of "skills" or "entrepreneurship" with education curriculum. Overall, there is lot of uncertainty and anxiety in the minds of teachers; there is lack of awareness among students. The situation described above is not a happy one as strategically we might get "stuck in the middle." There is, therefore, a need to move strategically, cautiously but with a quick speed, and taking into confidence all the stakeholders, including at state level, education being in the Concurrent List. Private players like Higher Education Forum (HEF) should be taken on board for creating a "think tank" for implementation of all the major policies of NEP 2020 in a holistic and phased manner.

### '1,000 Indians Still In Iran, 23,000 Students In Gulf Could Not Appear In CBSE Exams': MEA To Parliament Panel

New Delhi: Nearly 1,000 Indians are still in Iran amidst the ongoing conflict in West Asia while 23,000 school students based in Gulf region could not appear in the CBSE final examinations due to the turmoil. This was conveyed by the Ministry of External Affairs to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs at a meeting held here on Wednesday. "Well, there are about 1,000 still in Iran, but not all of them necessarily wish to leave," chairman of the panel Shashi Tharoor told reporters here after the meeting. The Congress leader said Class 10 and Class 12 students based in Gulf region have not been able to write their ongoing CBSE final examinations. "I asked if there could be any steps taken to address their plight. And I gathered that there has already been consultations between the MEA and the Ministry of Education about ensuring that CBSE makes remedial arrangements for 23,000 students in the Gulf who could not write the exams," he said. Tharoor said the meeting had comprehensive discussions on West Asia and all attendee MPs had questions.



International News

**VOICE OF WORDS**

Monday, March 23, 2026



## Trump postpones his China trip to focus on the war in Iran

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump is delaying a diplomatic trip to China that had been planned for months but began to unravel as he pressured Beijing and other world powers to use military might to protect the Strait of Hormuz. Trump said Tuesday while meeting with Irish Prime Minister Micheál Martin in the Oval Office that he would be going to China in five or six weeks' time instead of at the end of the month. He said he would be "resetting" his visit with Chinese President Xi Jinping, without elaborating. Trump's visit to China is seen as an opportunity to build on a fragile trade truce between the two superpowers, but it has become tangled in his effort to find an endgame to the war in Iran. Soon after pressing China and other nations to send warships to secure access to Middle Eastern oil over the weekend, Trump indicated his travel plans were up in the air, though he also indicated Tuesday that the US didn't need any help after being rebuffed by other allies. In a Sunday interview with the Financial Times, Trump said he wanted to know whether Beijing would help secure the strait before he departed for the late-March summit. On Monday, he told reporters that he had requested to delay the trip about a month because of the demands of the war. "I think it's important that I be here," Trump said. "And so it could be that we delay a little bit. Not much." Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, who met with Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng in Paris this week for a new round of talks meant to pave the way for Trump's trip,

said any changes to the schedule would be because of logistics, not because Trump was trying to pressure Beijing. Trump is urging other nations that rely on Middle Eastern oil to help police the Strait of Hormuz, a waterway through which about one-fifth of the world's traded oil usually flows. He has singled out China, noting that it gets about 90% of its oil from the strait while the US gets a minimal amount. He also made appeals to Japan, South Korea, Britain and France. There have been no takers so far, and China has been noncommittal. "We strongly encourage other nations whose economies depend on the strait far more than ours," Trump said at the White House on Monday. "We want them to come and help us with the strait." Trump is framing the war as a favor to the world being carried out by the US and Israel, saying it's now time for others to do their share to protect the strait. Some world leaders have directly rebuffed the notion and objected to the US' military approach. Trump's trip to China carries major geopolitical consequences as the two nations seek stability in the wake of a trade war that led to soaring tariffs before both sides eased off. Trump and Xi agreed to a one-year trade truce last fall, and Trump later agreed to a state visit to Beijing. He also went to China in 2017, during his first term. China's foreign minister said last week that the country looks forward to a "landmark year" in its relationship with the US. He added that China's attitude "has always been positive and open, and the key is for the US side to meet us halfway."

## Iranian strikes cause extensive damage at major Qatar gas hub



DOHA: Two waves of Iranian strikes caused "extensive damage" at Qatar's main gas hub, the country's state-run energy firm said on Thursday, with President Donald Trump warning Iran against further attacks on the facility. Iran had vowed to target energy infrastructure across the Gulf after a strike that Trump said was carried out by Israel on Iranian facilities at South Pars field, Iran's part of the world's largest known gas reserve. Missile strikes on the Ras Laffan Industrial City on Qatar's north coast on Wednesday caused damage to a gas-to-liquids facility and early on Thursday sparked "sizeable fires

and extensive further damage" to several liquefied natural gas facilities, QatarEnergy said in a statement. Qatar's interior ministry said crews brought all fires under control at the Ras Laffan site, without reporting any injuries. The country's defence ministry said Qatar was attacked by ballistic missiles from Iran, targeting the energy hub. While the UK maritime agency reported on Thursday that a projectile hit a vessel near Ras Laffan and that all crew were safe. Qatar is one of the world's top liquefied natural gas producers, alongside the United States, Australia and Russia. Trump on his Truth Social platform threatened to "massively blow up the entirety of the South Pars Gas Field" if any further attacks took place at Ras Laffan. He said Israel was responsible for the strike on South Pars. Israel's government has not commented. The Gulf has borne the brunt of Iran's reprisals for the US-Israeli strikes that sparked the Middle East war in late February, with Tehran targeting US assets as well as striking energy facilities. The feared energy shock caused by the war has shaken international markets and pushed up prices globally. Oil prices surged more than 5 percent on Thursday on supply concerns and stocks sank as news of the attacks on Gulf energy facilities spooked investors. Qatari authorities said there were no reports of injuries from the Ras Laffan attacks, which caused a vast fire that illuminated the night sky and could be seen from roughly 30 kilometres away, an AFP journalist reported.

## UN Condemns Pakistani Airstrike On Kabul Hospital, Calls Independent Investigation Immediately

United Nations: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres "strongly condemns" the deadly Pakistani air strike on a hospital in Kabul and has called for an independent investigation into the incident, his Deputy Spokesperson Farhan Haq said on Wednesday. Afghanistan's Taliban government has said that more than 400 people were killed in the Pakistani attack on a drug rehabilitation hospital overnight Monday-Tuesday, marking a sharp escalation in Islamabad's onslaught on its neighbour. Haq said the Secretary-General recalled that under international law, patients, medical personnel, and medical facilities, including hospitals, must be respected and protected at all times. He added that Guterres had called for an "independent and impartial investigation into the incident". International humanitarian law grants special protection to medical facilities and personnel and considers attacks on them to be war crimes. Haq said that according to the World Health Organization (WHO), ten health facilities were damaged by air strikes. He said Guterres reiterated his



call for de-escalation and the immediate cessation of hostilities, urging all parties to comply with their obligations under international law, including the protection of civilians. Haq added that the Secretary-General welcomed the temporary cessation of hostilities agreed to by Pakistan and Afghanistan for Eid and hoped it would be extended. The spokesperson listed the wide-ranging devastation in

Afghanistan resulting from Pakistan's attacks, based on assessments by UN agencies. Between March 6 and Tuesday, air strikes and cross-border attacks have impacted at least ten provinces, including Kabul, Haq said. UN partners report that 115,000 people have been forced to flee, and more than 300 shelters have been destroyed or damaged. About 160,000 people are facing hunger, he added.



## Saudi Arabia reserves 'right to take military actions' over Iran attacks: FM

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia has not ruled out military action in response to repeated missile and drone attacks from Iran, Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan said on Thursday. Speaking to reporters following a meeting in Riyadh of foreign ministers from the region, Prince Faisal said that Iran "tries to pressure its neighbours" with attacks. "The kingdom is not going to succumb to pressure, and on the contrary, this pressure will backfire... and certainly, as we have stated quite clearly, we have reserved the right to take military actions if deemed necessary," he said. Saudi Arabia reported more Iranian attacks on Wednesday, as the foreign minister hosted his counterparts from about a dozen Arab and Islamic countries for talks on the fallout from the Middle East war. Several strong blasts were heard in the Saudi capital on Wednesday, according to AFP journalists, while the defence ministry said it had intercepted ballistic missiles. "The targeting of Riyadh while a number of diplomats are meeting... I think that's the clearest signal of how Iran feels about diplomacy," Prince Faisal said. "It doesn't believe in talking to its neighbours." Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud chairs a consultative meeting of foreign ministers from a group of Arab and Islamic countries in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, Thursday. The Saudi foreign minister condemned the repeated "targeting of civilian sites" across the Gulf, dismissing Iran's justification that it was targeting US interests in the region as "weak". "Neither Saudi Arabia nor the Gulf states would accept... blackmail, and escalation will be met with escalation," he said.

## 'Pakistan Missiles Could Hit US': US National Intelligence Director Tulsi Gabbard

Washington: Director of US National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard on Wednesday warned that Pakistan's advancing missile programme could eventually put the United States within range, flagging it as part of a growing set of global threats to the American homeland. Presenting the intelligence community's 2026 Annual Threat Assessment, Gabbard said China and Russia are developing advanced delivery systems capable of bypassing US missile defences, while North Korea already has intercontinental ballistic missiles that can reach American soil and continues to expand its nuclear arsenal. She added that Pakistan's long-range ballistic missile development could evolve into intercontinental systems capable of striking the US, placing it in a category of emerging strategic concern for American security planners. "The IC assesses that China and Russia are developing advanced delivery systems meant to be capable of penetrating or bypassing US missile defences. North Korea's ICBMs can already reach US soil, and it is committed to expanding its nuclear arsenal," she said. "Pakistan's long-range ballistic missile development po-



tentially could include ICBMs with the range capable of striking the Homeland," Gabbard told members of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. Her 34-page assessment of the World Threat gave a similar assessment. "Pakistan continues to develop increasingly sophisticated missile technology that provides its military the means to develop missile systems with the capability to strike targets beyond South Asia, and if these trends continue, ICBMs that would threaten the US," the report said. According to the report, during the past year, South Asia remained a source of enduring security challenges for the US. India-Pakistan relations remain a risk for nuclear conflict given past conflicts where these two nuclear states squared off, creating the danger of escalation. "The terrorist attack last year near Pahalgam, in the Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kash-

mir, demonstrated the dangers of terrorist attacks sparking conflict. President Trump's intervention deescalated the most recent nuclear tensions, and we assess that neither country seeks to return to open conflict, but that conditions exist for terrorist actors to continue to create catalysts for crises," it said. Gabbard told lawmakers that the US secure nuclear deterrent continues to ensure safety in the Homeland against strategic threats. However, Russia, China, North Korea, Iran and Pakistan have been researching and developing an array of novel, advanced, or traditional missile delivery systems with nuclear and conventional payloads, that put our Homeland within range. "The IC assesses that threats to the Homeland will expand collectively to more than 16,000 missiles by 2035, from the current assessed figure of more than 3,000 missiles," she said.

## Israeli PM Netanyahu Claims Top Iranian Official Ali Larjani Killed In Airstrikes

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday, in a video message, claimed that Iran's national security chief, Ali Larjani, had been killed in an airstrike by Israeli forces. "This morning, we eliminated Ali Larjani. Ali Larjani is the boss of the Revolutionary Guards, which is the gang of gangsters that effectively runs Iran. Alongside him, we also eliminated the commander of the Basij - these are the helpers of the gangsters, who spread terror in the streets of Tehran and other cities in Iran against the population," he said. "There too, we are operating; operating from the air with Air Force aircraft and with UAVs. We are undermining this regime in the hope of giving the Iranian people an opportunity to remove it. This will not happen at once; it will not happen easily. But if we persist, we will give them an opportunity to take their fate into their own hands," he added. He further said, "At the same time, we are assisting our American friends in the Gulf. I spoke at length with President Trump yesterday on this matter. There is cooperation between our air forces and our navies, between myself and President Trump and his team."

# VOICE OF WORDS

## BUSINESS



### Geo-Political Tensions May Hit Economy And Road Transport Sector, Warns Industry Leader

Mumbai, March 17: Expressing concern over the evolving geo-political situation in the Middle East and its potential ripple effects on India's economy, senior transport leader Bal Malik Singh has urged the Government of India to take proactive and preventive measures to safeguard key sectors, particularly the road transport and MSME ecosystem. Highlighting the emerging risk of an "energy war" leading to shortages of crude oil, gases, and allied products, he noted that early signs of disruption are already visible across industries. Rising input costs, reduced production, and operational challenges are beginning to impact factories, small businesses, and trading establishments across the country. The road transport sector, which serves as the backbone of India's supply chain, is witnessing a gradual slowdown in movement due to reduced industrial output. In certain segments, vehicle movement has reportedly declined by up to 50%, with fears that this could worsen to 70-80% if the situation persists, Bal noted. Further concerns include rising costs of tyres, fuels, lubricants, and essential inputs like AdBlue (urea), along with the shutdown or increased pricing at highway dhabas and eateries, adversely affecting the driver community. There is also a growing risk of driver migration due to reduced work. He further stated that the industry stands committed to supporting national interests and ensuring continuity of supply chains, provided adequate relief and policy backing are extended during this critical period.



### RBI Announces Rs 75,000 Crore Three-Day Variable Rate Repo Auction On March 20 To Manage Banking Liquidity

Mumbai: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday said it will conduct a three-day variable rate repo (VRR) auction of Rs 75,000 crore on March 20. The auction will take place between 9:30 AM and 10:00 AM on March 20, and the reversal of these funds will take place on March 23, as per the central bank's release. The central bank announced the auction based on the current and evolving liquidity conditions of the banking system, the release added. Currently, the liquidity in the banking system is estimated to be in surplus of around Rs 81,963.69 crore. On March 17, the RBI injected Rs 48,014 crore of transient liquidity into the banking system via a seven-day VRR auction. Before this, the central bank had infused Rs 3.50 lakh crore durable liquidity into the banking system through open market purchase (OMO) of government securities. In the last few months, the RBI has been infusing heavy liquidity into the banking system in order to keep overnight rates under check.

Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Thursday condemned strikes on Gulf energy facilities as "unacceptable", as fresh attacks on gas hubs heightened global concern amid the ongoing West Asia conflict. MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal called the attacks "deeply disturbing" and reiterated New Delhi's call to avoid targeting energy infrastructure, warning they risk worsening global energy flows. "India had previously called for the avoidance of targeting civilian infrastructure, including energy infrastructure, across the region. Recent attacks against energy installations in different locations across this region are therefore deeply disturbing and only serve to further destabilise an already uncertain energy scenario for the whole world," Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing. "Such attacks are unacceptable and need to cease," he added. Jaiswal also said the country's energy supplies had already been impacted by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. "Now with the latest attacks our LNG supply is going to be impacted," he said. "We are in touch with all the stakeholders there to see how best we can secure our energy needs and ensure unimpeded transit for our cargo," the MEA spokesperson



added. MEA Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal addresses a weekly briefing in New Delhi on Thursday, March 19, 2026. Notably, Qatar's main gas facility has suffered extensive damage after several rounds of Iranian strikes, raising fresh energy supply concerns as the Middle East war grinds on. Iran hit the Ras Laffan refinery, the world's largest liquefied natural gas (LNG) facility, on Wednesday in retaliation for an Israeli attack on its South Pars gas field. The attacks on Ras Laffan and other energy facilities drove Brent crude up more than 10% at one point to over \$119 a barrel, before prices pared gains. The assault on Ras Laffan has also stoked fears of wider disruptions to fuel supplies, including for India, which relies on Qatar for over 40% of its LNG needs — crucial for power generation, industry, fertiliser production and household cooking. Qatar is one of the world's top LNG producers, alongside the United States, Australia and Russia. With gas shipments already reduced, New Delhi fears a fresh supply crunch, rising costs and deeper economic strain across sectors dependent on steady.

## Oil, natural gas prices soar as Iran attacks Gulf energy facilities; Brent crude nears USD 114

BANGKOK: Global oil and natural gas prices soared Thursday after Iran attacked a key natural gas facility in Qatar that can supply one-fifth of the world's gas as well as two oil refineries in Kuwait. The attacks added to fears the energy crisis triggered by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz to tanker traffic may be longer and more extensive than feared, with lasting damage to oil and gas production. Brent crude, the international benchmark, rose to near \$114 per barrel, up from under \$73 per barrel on the eve of the war. The European TTF benchmark for natural gas prices traded 24% higher on Thursday. The Iranian attack hit the Ras Laffan terminal for shipping out liquefied natural gas in Qatar. Qatar normally supplies some 20% of the world's consumption of LNG, which can be carried by ship. The facility shut down after a drone attack. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz to most tanker traffic has left the gas with nowhere to go. World shares retreated after stocks on Wall Street slumped as oil prices resumed their climb. U.S. stocks also sagged due to a report that said inflation was primed to worsen even before the war with Iran sent oil and gas prices spiking. That, and comments from the head of the Federal Reserve, led investors to expect there's less chance of getting the lower interest rates that they crave. U.S. futures were little changed, while Treasury yields pushed higher, lending still more strength to the U.S. dollar, which has gained against other major currencies since the war began. Oil prices have soared because the war has disrupted the Persian Gulf's energy industry. Iran is intensifying its attacks on its Gulf Arab neighbors' energy infrastructure as it hits back following an Israeli attack on its main natural gas field. If the disruptions keep oil and gas prices high for long, they could create a debilitating wave of inflation for the global economy. U.S. benchmark crude oil gained 1.1% to \$96.45 a barrel early Thursday, while the Henry Hub future contract, the benchmark for U.S. natural gas, gained 3.3%. In Asian share trading, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 fell 3.4% to 53,372.53 as the Bank of Japan opted to keep its benchmark interest rate on hold at 0.75%, citing the war with Iran.



New Delhi: Led by robust growth in corporate tax receipts, the government on Wednesday said that India's net direct tax collections stood at 7.19 per cent year-on-year to Rs 22.8 lakh crore as on March 17 in the current financial year, according to the finance ministry's data. The ministry's data also showed that the gross direct tax collections rose to Rs 27.14 lakh crore, up by 4.86 per cent from a year ago, while refunds declined 5.86 per cent to Rs 4.34 lakh crore, aiding the rise in net collections. The overall net direct tax mop-up includes net corporate tax of Rs 10.91 lakh crore, non-corporate tax of Rs 11.32 lakh crore and securities transaction tax (STT) of Rs 55,717 crore. With the data, it has been observed that the corporate tax remained the key driver of growth, with net collections rising to 10.91 lakh crore from Rs 9.68 lakh crore in the year-ago period, an increase of about 12.8 per cent. However, the overall data showed a steady momentum in FY26, with the latest provisional data indicating moderate growth even as the government banks on stronger gains to meet its Budget targets. The data further showed that advance tax collections during the period rose 6.42

per cent to Rs 11.13 lakh crore, with the increase partly moderated by weaker growth in non-corporate tax payments.

### Bharat Electronics Secures Rs 1,011 Crore Orders Across Defence & Technology Segments In March 2026



Bengaluru: Bharat Electronics is continuing its steady deal momentum, adding fresh orders across defence and technology segments as demand for advanced electronic systems remains strong. Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), a Navratna defence public sector undertaking, has received new orders worth Rs 1,011 crore since its last disclosure on February 25, 2026. The latest inflows highlight continued traction in both defence and non-defence segments, strengthening the company's overall order pipeline. The newly secured contracts cover a wide range of products and systems. These include communication equipment, radar warning and jamming systems, fire control systems,

and electro-optic sights. The diversity of orders reflects BEL's broad capabilities across critical defence electronics and integrated system solutions. The company's order book also includes fire detection and warning systems for fighter aircraft, high energy laser solutions, and head-up displays. In addition, BEL has secured projects related to automatic train supervision systems and software solutions, indicating a mix of defence and civilian technology applications. Beyond equipment supply, the orders include upgrades, spares, services, shelters, jammers, and strategic components.



### Govt allocates Rs33,660 crore for industrial parks, states to allocate land

The government on Wednesday approved an allocation of Rs 33,660-crore under Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna (BHAVYA), aimed at developing 100 plug-and-play industrial parks to boost domestic manufacturing and attract investments. Under the scheme, industrial parks ranging from 100 to 1,000 acres will be developed across the country, with a minimum area of 25 acres in North East and hilly areas over a six-year period from FY27 to FY32. In the first phase, 50 parks will be taken up. However, the land needs to be allotted by the respective state governments. "The state government will be the primary sponsor for taking up parks for development under the scheme. But the private sector can also come in for development of parks. However, they have to come through the state government," said Amardeep Singh Bhatia, Secretary, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT). The Centre will provide financial assistance of up to Rs 1 crore per acre for developing core infrastructure such as internal roads, along with several value-added facilities. Once the land allotment is done by the state government, the corresponding funds will be allocated by the National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation (NICDC). In some cases, additional funding requirements can be met through debt, stated the DPIIT secretary. While the central government expects nearly 90% of the funds to come from states, it can also opt to allocate more funds if needed. For projects involving private participation, there will be a tripartite model involving three stakeholders — the state government, the Centre through NICDC, and private developers. The exact contribution from each party will depend on the agreed project structure. There will be a single window clearance mechanism to ensure hassle-free setting up of manufacturing units. The government aims to ensure that even smaller businesses get access to affordable manufacturing units. "Big businesses usually develop their own infra, but smaller firms who want readily available infra will be beneficial," added Bhatia. In addition, the cabinet has approved the use of up to 25% of the total project cost for external infrastructure, subject to certain conditions, marking a significant expansion in the scope of support under the programme.



# VOICE OF WORDS

## HEALTH

### Hidden risk in eye drops?

#### What parents need to know about PHMB



A widely used preservative in eye drops, PHMB, is drawing concern among experts for its potential impact on children's eye health. Doctors warn that long-term use may affect the cornea and recommend minimising exposure by opting for safer, preservative-free alternatives where possible. Eye drops are often seen as one of the safest and most routine medications. Parents use them without much hesitation for infections, dryness or even long-term vision care. But eye specialists are now raising concerns about a commonly used ingredient that may not be as harmless as it seems.

At the centre of this discussion is Polyhexamethylene biguanide or PHMB, a preservative widely used in multidose eye drops. It helps keep the solution sterile, but emerging evidence suggests it could have unintended effects, especially on children's developing eyes.

PHMB is a strong antimicrobial agent added to eye drops to prevent bacterial contamination. This is particularly important in bottles that are used multiple times. It works by breaking down microbial cell membranes and genetic material. This helps eliminate harmful organisms such as *Pseudomonas* and *Staphylococcus*, which can cause serious eye infections. So while it plays an important role in keeping the medicine safe, experts say it is also important to look at its long-term impact on the eye. 'It protects the bottle, but may affect the eye,' says expert.

According to Dr Mihir Kothari, paediatric ophthalmologist and cataract surgeon, the concern lies in how this preservative interacts with delicate eye tissues over time. "PHMB is effective at preventing contamination in multidose bottles. However, while it protects the bottle, emerging scientific evidence suggests it may also affect the delicate tissues of the eye, particularly when used repeatedly over long periods," he explains. Laboratory studies have shown that PHMB can trigger cellular stress and even cell death in corneal and conjunctival cells at concentrations similar to those used in eye drops. For short-term treatments, the risk may be limited. The concern grows when these eye drops are used regularly over months or years. "Clinically, chronic exposure to preserved eye drops has been associated with ocular surface irritation, tear film instability, corneal staining, dryness, and delayed epithelial healing," says Dr Kothari. This means that while the drops may help treat one condition, they may also affect the eye's natural surface over time. The concern becomes more serious in children, especially those undergoing long-term treatments such as for progressive myopia or other chronic conditions. A child's ocular surface is still developing, which makes it more sensitive to repeated exposure.

"Because the paediatric ocular surface is still developing, prolonged exposure to certain preservatives may increase the risk of ocular surface inflammation and potential limbal stem cell stress over time," Dr Kothari notes. In simple terms, what seems like routine treatment could quietly affect how the eye heals and maintains itself. There is some good news. Eye care technology has improved significantly in recent years. Many experts now recommend reducing preservative exposure, especially for long-term use, and switching to safer options where possible.

## Is the flexitarian diet just a trend or a gut-friendly way to eat? Senior gastroenterologist explains

Is the flexitarian diet just another trend or actually good for your gut? A gastroenterologist explains how this balanced, fibre-rich way of eating supports digestion, reduces inflammation, and offers a sustainable approach without strict restrictions. The flexitarian diet has been quietly doing the rounds for a while now, often sitting somewhere between "just another trend" and something that actually sticks. It's not loud like keto or as rigid as veganism. And maybe that's the point. It leans more towards balance than extremes, which already makes it feel a bit more doable in real life. But does it actually hold up when you look at it through a gut health lens? Turns out, it does. At least according to specialists who spend a lot of time thinking about digestion, microbiomes, and all the things we usually ignore until something feels off. According to Dr Sandeep Kulkarni, Consultant - Gastroenterologist & Hepatologist, Sahyadri Super Specialty, the flexitarian approach isn't just another passing fad. "It is actually a style of eating that aligns well with current recommendations for long-term gut health," he explains. At its core, the diet is largely plant-based. Vegetables, fruits, legumes, whole grains, nuts, seeds. But there is still room for animal products in moderation. That mix matters more than people realise. "A high-fibre, plant-based diet essentially feeds the trillions of bacteria in our gut," he notes. And those bacteria aren't just passive residents. They actively help manage symptoms like bloating, irregular bowel movements, and even mild inflammation that often stems from low fibre intake. Fibre doesn't just "help digestion" in a vague way. There's more going on. As Dr Kulkarni puts it, "Gut bacteria break down fibre to produce short-chain fatty acids, which the body uses as fuel." These compounds do quite a bit. They reduce inflammation in the intestines, support the integrity of the gut lining, and generally keep things moving smoothly. It's also not just about eating more plants, but eating a variety of them. Different



plants feed different strains of bacteria. So, a more diverse plate often means a more resilient gut. Or at least, one that complains less.

One of the reasons the flexitarian diet feels sustainable is because it doesn't cut things out completely. And that's a big deal. Strict diets can look good on paper but tend to fall apart in practice. Sometimes they even leave nutritional gaps. "Allowing occasional intake of lean meats, eggs, or dairy helps meet essential nutrient requirements like protein, iron, and vitamin B12," Dr Kulkarni explains, adding that this can be done "without relying heavily on processed or fatty animal products." It's less about elimination, more about proportion. Which, honestly, is easier to stick with. Probably not a fad. At least not in the way most diets are. The flexitarian approach leans on variety, moderation, and consistency. Nothing too dramatic. But those are exactly the things gut health seems to respond to best.

As Dr Kulkarni sums it up, "When you focus on whole, minimally processed foods and maintain balance, it becomes a sustainable, gut-friendly lifestyle rather than a short-term trend." Not flashy. But effective. And sometimes, that's enough.

## Can Ayurveda help manage PCOS naturally? Here's what expert says



Ayurveda approaches PCOS as a result of internal imbalance rather than a standalone condition. By focusing on digestion, lifestyle, stress management, and herbal support, it aims to restore hormonal balance naturally. PCOS is often spoken about like a checklist. Irregular periods. Acne. Weight gain. Hormones gone off track. But for many women, it doesn't feel that clinical. It feels confusing, slow-moving, and at times, deeply frustrating, especially when solutions seem temporary or surface-level. Ayurveda approaches this differently. Not as a single condition to fix, but as a sign that something in the body has gone out of rhythm.

In conventional conversations, PCOS is usually framed as a hormonal disorder. Ayurveda widens that lens. "PCOS is rarely seen as just a reproductive issue. It reflects an imbalance across systems like digestion, metabolism, stress, and lifestyle," says Stuti Ashok Gupta, Ayurvedic expert and Amrutam co-founder. Which means the question shifts from what's wrong with the ovaries to what's happening across the body.

What the body is trying to say  
Ayurveda links reproductive health to Artava (the menstrual system) and Shukra dhatu (reproductive tissue), both of which depend on overall internal balance. When routines become erratic, digestion weakens, or stress lingers in the background, that balance starts to slip. And the body responds.

Irregular cycles, acne, and hair fall aren't random symptoms. They're signals. "Ayurveda encourages us to read these signs, rather than suppress them," Gupta explains.

One of the first places Ayurveda looks at is Agni, or digestive strength. If digestion is sluggish, the body



struggles to process nutrients and eliminate waste efficiently. Over time, that can influence metabolism and hormonal regulation. "Supporting digestion helps the body recalibrate, from nutrient absorption to hormonal balance," says Gupta. It's not the most obvious starting point, but often the most foundational one.

Ayurveda doesn't rely on one big intervention. It leans on consistency. Regular meals, sleep cycles, and movement begin to stabilise the body's internal clock. Even small shifts, like eating on time or reducing processed foods, can create noticeable changes over weeks.

Then there are practices like Abhyanga, a simple self-massage with warm oil. "It helps calm the nervous system and is particularly useful when stress and hormonal imbalance overlap," Gupta notes.

Where herbs fit in

Herbal support is part of the approach, but not the whole solution. Ingredients like Lodhra, Shatapushpa, and Guduchi have traditionally been used to support menstrual health and maintain balance. But they work best alongside lifestyle changes, not in isolation. That's a key distinction Ayurveda makes: there's no shortcut to balance. Ayurveda can feel slow, especially in a world used to quick results. But that pace is intentional. It focuses on restoring rhythm through digestion, routine, and gradual correction, rather than forcing rapid change. And when that balance begins to return, the improvements tend to be quieter, steadier, and more sustainable. PCOS isn't always something to "fix" overnight. Sometimes, it's something to understand and respond to differently. Ayurveda offers that shift in perspective. Not a quick solution, but a slower, more considered path back to balance.

# VOICE OF WORDS

## WOMEN

### Losing hair fast? Dermatologist reveals 3 science-backed treat- ments that actually work



Dermatologist Dr Joyce Park says hair loss is common and often treatable with a simple, consistent routine. She recommends focusing on proven treatments such as Minoxidil 5%, cautious use of tretinoin, and optional dermarolling, rather than trying multiple products at once. Dermatologist shares a no-nonsense hair regrowth routine that actually makes a difference. Hair loss can feel deeply personal. A widening part, extra strands in the shower, or a thinning hairline can quickly dent confidence. But dermatologists say the problem is far more common than people realise — and in many cases, it can be managed with the right treatment and patience. According to Dr Joyce Park, a board-certified dermatologist trained at Stanford and NYU, the biggest mistake people make when trying to treat hair loss is overcomplicating their routine. Instead of trying every trending product, she recommends focusing on a few science-backed treatments and using them consistently. “Hair loss is incredibly common, often fixable, and there are real science-backed options that work,” she explains in a recent video shared online. Why consistency matters more than complicated routines. When hair thinning starts, many people rush to try multiple treatments at once, oils, supplements, serums and devices. But dermatologists warn that this “everything at once” approach can irritate the scalp and make it harder to see what actually works. Dr Park emphasises that hair regrowth is usually slow and gradual. A routine built around a few effective treatments, followed consistently for months, tends to deliver better results than constantly switching products.

#### **The foundation: Minoxidil 5%**

One of the most widely recommended treatments for hair thinning is Minoxidil, a topical medication that helps stimulate hair follicles and extend the hair growth phase. Dr Park says Minoxidil 5% remains the foundation of most hair-loss routines. It is typically applied to the scalp once or twice daily. For people with sensitive scalps, once-daily application may be enough. The goal is not maximum quantity but regular use over time. Dermatologists note that visible improvement can take several months, so patience is essential.

#### **Can tretinoin help the scalp?**

Another ingredient that is sometimes used in conjunction with hair loss products is Tretinoin, which is well known for use in acne treatment and for skin texture improvement. In some cases, a dermatologist may suggest using a small amount of it on the scalp since it is thought to aid in the absorption of other products, such as Minoxidil. This should be done with care and under medical supervision, as tretinoin can irritate the scalp if overused.

#### **Dermarolling: Optional, not essential**

Microneedling tools such as dermarollers are increasingly popular in hair-growth routines. These devices create tiny micro-injuries in the scalp, which may stimulate blood circulation and support hair growth. Dr Park says dermarolling can be used once or twice a week at most, but it should be done gently and on a clean scalp. She also advises avoiding strong treatments like Minoxidil or tretinoin immediately after dermarolling, as this combination can lead to irritation.

#### **A gentler option: Scalp massage**

On days when dermarolling is not used, a soft scalp massage can help distribute topical treatments and improve blood flow. The key is a light touch.

## Why Gen Z is choosing natural enhance- ments over dramatic beauty makeovers

Gen Z is reshaping the aesthetics industry with a strong shift from dramatic transformations to subtle, preventive treatments. Instead of fixing ageing later, they're investing early in natural-looking, skin-focused care. Here's why prevention is the new correction.

The era of quiet beauty: How Gen Z is transforming the aesthetics industry. There's a quiet revolution happening inside dermatology clinics and aesthetic studios across India, and it has nothing to do with dramatic facelift results or exaggerated, Instagram-style transformations. Instead, young people in their early 20s are walking in with a very different mindset: preserve, maintain, and enhance, but don't change who I am. This shift is a cultural reset in terms of beauty standards, where one's natural features count for more than filters, and authenticity is more important than perfection. Unlike the past, where aesthetic procedures were mostly reactive, fixing wrinkles, tightening loose skin, or reversing sun damage, Gen Z is embracing aesthetic medicine proactively. They're investing early, not to look different, but to look like the most refreshed version of themselves. As Dr Soumya Sachdeva, Consultant Dermatologist, Max Superspeciality Hospital & Theya Wellness Clinic, notes, today's generation doesn't wait for ageing to show up before seeking solutions; they believe in subtle, science-backed prevention. Subtlety is replacing dramatic, artificial change. Gone are the days when overfilled lips, stiff



foreheads, and extreme contouring were seen as aspirational. The new aesthetic language is soft, effortless, and invisible. Patients now ask for results that make them look well-rested, not altered. Dr Sachdeva explains that younger patients increasingly opt for minimal enhancements that do not scream “I've had work done” but subtly elevate natural proportions. From creators talking about skincare routines, dermatology truths, and even behind-the-scenes treatment processes, Gen Z is more informed on the subject than any generation prior. They know the difference between collagen lasers and fillers, and they understand the risks of overdoing procedures. Access to real information has made preventive aesthetics feel as normal as exercising or eating healthy.

## The ‘rainbow diet’ for glowing skin: Expert reveals foods that boost collagen and brightness

Healthy, glowing skin doesn't just depend on skincare products, diet plays an equally important role. Celebrity skin coach Bhuvneshwari Jadeja Shaktawat explains that nutrient-rich foods, antioxidants and proper hydration can significantly improve skin health from within. Celebrity skin coach shares diet tips for healthy glowing skin.

Celebrity skin coach shares diet tips for healthy glowing skin. Generally, one would associate healthy and glowing skin with skincare products and/or facials. However, according to skin experts, what one eats may play a role in healthy and glowing skin as much as, or even more than, skincare products and/or facials. Healthy and glowing skin starts from within, and the food one eats daily plays a role in the hydration, production of collagen in the skin, and aging of the skin. Celebrity skin coach Bhuvneshwari Jadeja Shaktawat, founder of Skin Studio by Bhuvneshwari, believes that diet plays a key role in maintaining healthy skin. “Eat your way to better skin’ is absolutely correct. Whatever we eat shows on our body. Better skin starts from within by eating antioxidant-rich, hydrating and nutrient-dense foods,” she says. Why diet matters for your skin. The skin is the body's largest organ and reflects internal health more than we often realise. Nutrients from food help support essential functions such as collagen production, hydration balance and protection from environmental stress. According to Shaktawat, a balanced diet can also help manage common skin concerns. “Diet plays a vital role in managing skin conditions like acne, dryness and dullness. Taking care of nutrition provides a long-term internal approach



to skincare,” she explains.

The rainbow diet for healthy skin. One of the easiest ways to promote healthy skin is by consuming a “rainbow diet” as recommended by experts. The “rainbow diet” is a diet where you consume fruits and vegetables with different colours. These colours represent various vitamins, antioxidants, and minerals.

“Different colours of food provide different nutrients. Eating a rainbow of fruits and vegetables ensures your body receives a wide range of vitamins that support glowing skin,” Shaktawat says.

A simple daily routine for healthier skin

#### **Morning:**

To begin the day, a handful of dry fruits and seeds such as almonds, raisins, walnuts, and flax seeds can be taken. These can be accompanied by green tea or lemon honey water.

#### **Breakfast:**

Breakfast is a meal that needs to be nutrient-rich. Options such as eggs

with a fruit salad, juices, and vegetable-rich poha are healthy.

#### **Afternoon:**

Buttermilk can be a part of the lunch menu. It is particularly beneficial during the summer season. It helps hydrate the body. Other options include squeezing lemon in dal or having a salad before the meal.

#### **Evening Snack:**

A handful of makhana with fruits is a healthy option for the evening.

#### **Dinner:**

Dinner needs to include nutrient-rich and anti-inflammatory foods. These include ingredients such as leafy greens, avocados, nuts, berries, tomatoes, and sweet potatoes. These are all beneficial for the production of collagen and hydration. Options such as salmon, tofu, vegetable dishes, and green salads are healthy. As Shaktawat puts it, healthy skin begins with everyday choices. “Glowing skin starts from the inside out. What we eat ultimately reflects on our skin,” she says.

# VOICE OF WORDS

## SPORTS

### Saurav Ghosal appointed sports commissioner of World Premier Squash



NEW DELHI: India's squash icon Saurav Ghosal was on Thursday appointed as the sports commissioner of the World Premier Squash, a new global professional competition scheduled to be held later this year. Ghosal is India's only male player to reach the top 10 in the PSA World Rankings, Ghosal boasts 11 titles, nine Asian Games medals, and two decades of elite competition. He has also served as the men's president of the Professional Squash Association (PSA) and as co-chair of the joint Athletes Commission of the PSA and World Squash, the sport's global governing body. "As Sports Commissioner for

World Premier Squash (WPS), Ghosal will set and oversee the league's complete sporting framework, spanning competition formats, player qualification pathways, and officiating standards," said a WPS statement on the league whose inaugural edition will be held in August. "WPS combines elite professional competition with an open global pathway using multimodal AI on the edge. Of the 24 players in the league, including reserves, eight will be elite professionals." Through AI-enabled challenges hosted on the Future of Sports Platform (FSP), competitors worldwide can qualify for up to 16

of the remaining spots -- requiring no agents, no ranking history, and no geography. It is a direct, merit-based entry point," the release added. Ghosal said the league has the potential to give the sport, which will make its debut at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, its next big player. "The best squash players in the world came through communities, clubs and courts far from the spotlight. World Premier Squash honours that by using AI-enabled challenges on the FSP platform to connect every corner of the global squash family, and giving the sport's next great player, wherever they are, a genuine path to the top," said Ghosal.

## Indian Grandmaster Koneru Humpy Still Unsure Of Candidates Participation, Reiterates Safety Concerns In Cyprus

New Delhi: Indian Grandmaster Koneru Humpy is still undecided about competing at the prestigious Candidates Tournament in Cyprus this month but reiterated her concerns regarding the safety situation in the host country amid the West Asia conflict. The Candidates, which will decide the challengers to the world championship crowns currently held by D Gukesh (men) and Ju Wenjun (women), is scheduled to begin on March 28. "I know that alone, I may not be able to change anything. But regardless of whether I play in the Candidates or not, I felt it was important to express what I genuinely feel," she posted on 'X' on Wednesday. "I'm truly grateful to everyone who has shown their support. For those who cannot understand the sensitivity of this situation, I choose to leave it at



that," she added. Earlier this week, the two-time Women's World Rapid Champion and former women's world title challenger, had said that she was hesitant to travel and was considering withdrawing from the tournament. This came after a British air base in Cyprus endured a drone attack earlier this month, raising fears that the conflict, which began with US and Israeli strikes on Iran, could seriously affect the security at the island as well. However, FIDE CEO Emil Sutovsky brushed off the concerns, saying there is nothing even "remotely dangerous" to

warrant a change of venue. Gulf countries are currently caught in the crossfire and the air space over the region has been largely shut. "Our plans have not changed. We are in the final stages of preparing (for) the Candidates Tournament. Of course, we are monitoring the situation," Sutovsky had said. "Cyprus is not too far from, let's say, the war zone or conflict zone, but at the same time, it is not directly involved in any way and is not in a state of war," he added. Cyprus, which is the third largest island on the Mediterranean sea, is situated south of Turkey and is a member of the European Union. Besides Humpy, R Vaishali has also qualified for the women's Candidates while R Praggnanandhaa is the lone Indian in fray in the Open section.

## Power, Precision And Pressure: JSW Indian Open 2026 Begins With A Bang

Mumbai: The JSW Indian Open 2026 burst into action with high drama on Day 1, as a series of closely fought encounters headlined an action-packed opening day at the CCI in Mumbai. India's Om Semwal delivered the standout performance of the day in a nail-biting five-game thriller against Sebastian Salazar from Mexico. In a match that swung both ways, Semwal held his nerve in the decisive moments to clinch a hard-fought 3-2 victory. Equally compelling was Egypt's Yassin Shohdy, who staged a remarkable comeback after losing the opening set 10-12. Showing resilience and composure, Shohdy edged a tight second game 13-11 against France's Manuel Paquemar before taking control to close out the match 3-1, underlining his fighting spirit. Another competitive fixture saw Switzerland's Ambre Allinckx overcome Netherlands' Tessa ter Sluis 3-1, while Egypt's Ibrahim Elkabbani registered a solid 3-1 win against India's Suraj Kumar Chand in a well-contested battle. The rest of the day saw a series of dominant performances from top contenders. Hong Kong's Chi Him Wong cruised past Ayaan Vaziralli 3-0, while Sofia Mateos secured convincing straight game-win over



Shameena Riaz. Matthew Lai and Danielle Ray were equally clinical, both registering comfortable 3-0 victories in their respective matches to kick off their campaigns in style. The excitement continues to build as Day 2 promises another thrilling line-up, with Indian stars Veer Chotrani, Joshna Chinappa, Anahat Singh, Abhay Singh and Ramit Tandon set to begin their campaigns, much to the anticipation of the home crowd.

## North Korea Qualifies For The Women's World Cup; first time since 2011



Australia : North Korea has qualified for the Women's World Cup for the first time since a doping saga in 2011 led to its long absence from top-tier international tournaments. Hong Song Ok scored a hat trick in a 4-0 win over Taiwan on Thursday in playoffs at the Women's Asian Cup to determine the confederation's fifth and sixth qualifiers for next year's World Cup in Brazil. Angela Beard and Jaelyn Sawicki scored in a six-minute span to help the Philippines secure a World Cup spot with a 2-0 victory over Uzbekistan in the afternoon game. There were six guaranteed World Cup spots on offer at the continental championship, with Australia, Japan, China and South Korea assured places as quarterfinal winners. The quarterfinal losers went into playoffs at the Gold Coast for the fifth and sixth spots. Taiwan and Uzbekistan still have another chance to qualify for Brazil via inter-confederation playoffs. The Women's Asian Cup concludes Saturday with the final between Australia and Japan. North Korea's comeback Back in 2011,

North Korea officials blamed traditional medicines based on deer glands for causing the squad's five positive tests for steroids at the Women's World Cup. After two players were caught during the tournament, FIFA tested the rest of the North Korean squad and found three more positive results. A subsequent ban resulted in North Korea missing the 2014 Asian Cup. It failed to qualify for 2018 and missed the 2022 tournament because of travel restrictions imposed in the COVID-19 pandemic. Head coach Ri Song Ho's young North Korea squad in Australia included players he guided to the Under-20 Women's World Cup title in 2024. The three-time champions were playing at the Women's Asian Cup for the first time since losing the 2010 final to Australia, and narrowly lost to the Matildas in the quarterfinals after placing second to 2022 champion China in Group B. "We'll play harder to become champions next time," the 22-year-old Hong said in comments translated for a tournament social media post. Philippines qualifies again The Philippines had nine shots at goal in the first half without being able to break the deadlock but Beard needed only two minutes

following the interval to make it 1-0. The ex-Australia youth international perfectly timed her run to the edge of the box and leaped to drive a left-foot volley into the net after Jael-Marie Guy's long, high cross from the right. Guy crossed from the right again for Sawicki to double the lead with a header in the 52nd to ensure the win. The Philippines bench cleared at the fulltime whistle as the substitute players sprinted onto the pitch and joined their teammates to celebrate back-to-back World Cup qualification. With a view to World Cup qualifying, Philippines coach Mark Torcaso rotated his team in the quarterfinals and it resulted in a 7-0 loss to Japan, Asia's top-ranked women's team. With a first-choice starting lineup restored, the Philippines had too much fire power for Uzbekistan. "It's another step in the right direction for Philippines women's football," defender Hali Long said, "and just shows that we belong on the world stage." The final Australia and two-time champion Japan will meet in the final for the third time in four Women's Asian Cups. Japan beat South Korea 4-1 in Sydney in the semifinal on Wednesday, a night after Sam Kerr's Australia edged defending champion China 2-1 in Perth. Japan beat Australia in back-to-back finals in 2014 and '18.

## India drawn with China in Thomas, Uber Cups



The Indian men's and women's teams found themselves in tough draws for the Thomas and Uber Cups respectively after being clubbed with defending champions China, the Badminton World Federation announced on Wednesday. The 34th edition of the Thomas Cup and 31st Uber Cup are slated to be held at Horsens, Denmark from April 24-May 3. The Indian men's team, who had made history winning its first-ever title in 2022, have been placed in Group A alongside China, Canada and Australia. India had lost to eventual winners

China in the quarterfinals of the last edition in 2024. In the Uber Cup, the Indian women's team also finds itself in Group A with reigning and 16-time champions China. Hosts Denmark and Ukraine complete the group. India had bowed out in the quarterfinals in the previous edition, losing to Japan. China boasts of a formidable men's line-up with Shi Yu Qi (world No. 2) and Li Shi Feng (No. 7), besides Weng Hong Yang (No. 17) and Lu Guang Zu (No. 18). India however, will draw confidence from Lakshya Sen's recent form as the

Paris 2024 semi-finalist stunned Feng en route to a runner-up finish at the All-England Championships earlier this month. India had created history in 2022 by winning their maiden Thomas Cup title in Bangkok, becoming only the sixth nation to lift the trophy after a 3-0 win over 14-time champions Indonesia in the final. India qualified for the 2026 Thomas Cup through their position in the BWF men's team rankings following the Badminton Asia Team Championships. The women's team also secured their Uber Cup berth via the world rankings.

## Lionel Messi scores 900th career goal but Miami crash out of CONCACAF Champions Cup

Argentine superstar Lionel Messi bagged the 900th goal of his glittering career on Wednesday but could not prevent Inter Miami from crashing out of the CONCACAF Champions Cup on away goals after a 1-1 draw with Nashville. Messi, 38, scored his milestone goal after just seven minutes to put Miami 1-0 up in the second leg of their last-16 clash in the regional club competition. But Nashville's Cristian Espinoza lashed in a 74th-minute equalizer to make it 1-1 on aggregate, and after holding Miami at bay for the remainder of the game, the visitors from Tennessee advanced to the quarter-finals on the away goals rule. Miami's exit was a bittersweet ending to what had promised to be a night of celebration after Messi's early opener in what was the club's final game at their Chase Stadium home in Fort Lauderdale. Messi's strike took the Argentine's tally to 81 goals for the MLS champions following his move to Florida in 2023.



## Eesha Rebba Brings South Spice In Saree Swagger

Eesha Rebba, who was recently seen in the comedy-drama *Om Shanti Shanti* alongside Tharun Bhascker, is once again catching everyone's attention with her latest stunning pictures. The actress, known for her natural charm and graceful screen presence, shared a series of photos that highlight her effortless beauty and stylish appeal. In the photos, Eesha is seen wearing a soft beige saree that gives a calm and classy vibe. The saree has a delicate border, adding a subtle touch of design without overpowering the look. She paired it with a sleeveless, printed blouse that adds a modern twist to the traditional outfit. The flowing pallu and her playful pose bring life to the pictures, making them feel lively and full of movement. Her choice of minimal jewelry, including statement earrings, keeps the focus on her outfit and natural glow. Her makeup is kept light and fresh, enhancing her features without looking heavy. Her hair is left open in soft waves, adding to the breezy and relaxed feel of the shoot. The outdoor setting with greenery and a blurred background adds a soft, dreamy effect to the visuals.



## What's Happening With Swayambhu

Nikhil's upcoming pan India film *Swayambhu* is now likely to shift its release from April 10 to April 17, though an official confirmation is still awaited. The teaser created decent buzz, but the team now needs stronger promotions to stay ahead in a crowded April release window. Films like *Adivi Sesh's Decoit* and *Sharwanand's Biker* are set to dominate early April with heavy publicity. This makes it important for *Swayambhu* to step up its marketing, especially with a powerful trailer that highlights its scale and visuals. There were earlier comparisons with *Baahubali*, but the team is expected to present more original and striking visuals to build its own identity. Inside reports suggest the film has several high impact episodes, and if promoted well, it could attract family au-



diences and open strong at the box office. Directed by Bharat Krishnamachari, the film stars Samyuktha Menon and Nabha Natesh as the female leads. With *Peddi* arriving on April 30, releasing earlier gives *Swayambhu* a safe two week window. If the film clicks, it can still hold good screens even after new releases. Set against a war drama backdrop, *Swayambhu* features Nikhil in a warrior role, performing several risky stunts, making it one of his most ambitious projects so far.

## Nagarjuna Fans In Confusion After 'Made In Korea'



Without any big announcement and without making an iota of noise, Telugu superstar Nagarjuna Akkineni has locked his 100th film. Though he has appeared in grey-shaded roles in movies like *Kubera* and *Coolie*, that didn't help the senior star amass any major success. That brought him to his 100th movie, for which he picked up a relatively unknown filmmaker, Ra Karthik.

The most stunning thing is that, right now, the film "*Made In Korea*", which debuted on Netflix, is getting a lot of attention due to Nagarjuna's fans, as the film is directed by Ra Karthik only. In fact, the emotion is good in the movie "*Made In Korea*", but all that is shown only on a surface level and in an unrealistic manner. As this director is now carving

Nagarjuna's iconic 100th movie, fans are said to be quite confused after watching the film, because it is neither stunning nor poor. Many are wondering what type of film he's making with Nagarjuna now. Earlier, the director made his debut Tamil film, which was released in Telugu as "*Ninnila Ninnila*", featuring Ashok Selvan and Ritu Varma, and the film is mostly travel-based. Even now, "*Made In Korea*" is based on emigrating out of the country in search of work and going to Korea. If we look at these two movies, many are wondering what sort of content he would have narrated to Nagarjuna other than a travel-centric story?

## Rakasa Telugu States Rights Sold in Big Deal



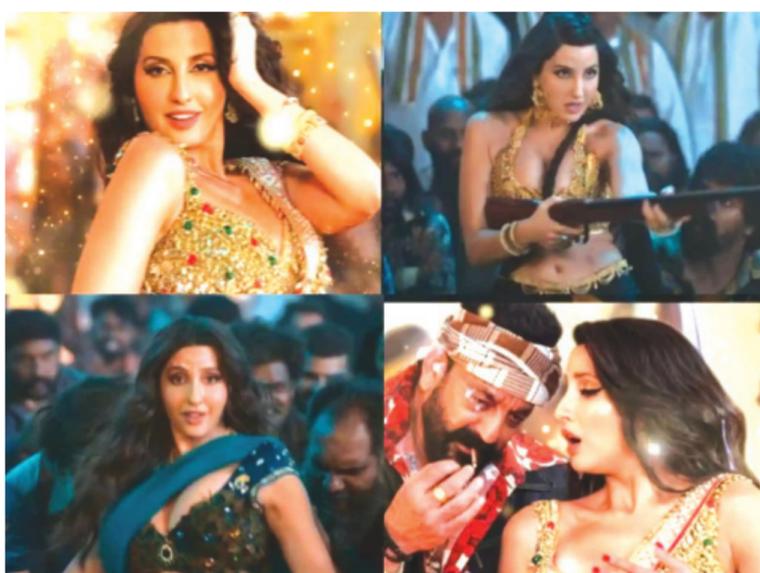
The upcoming Telugu fantasy comedy film *Rakasa* is creating strong buzz even before its theatrical release. The film has now achieved an important milestone in its business journey. The theatrical rights for the Telugu states have been acquired by Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Movie Makers in a big deal. This agreement shows that the film has gained strong confidence from the trade circles. With this deal, the distribution plan for the film has become stronger. The company will release the movie across Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. At the same time, the makers are also preparing for a large international release. The overseas distribution of the film will be handled by Atharvana Bhadrakali Pictures. The film is expected to release on more than 350 screens across major international markets. The movie will be released in countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe, Canada, and Australia. In key markets such as North America and the United Kingdom, distribution will be managed by Prathyangira Cinemas.

## Nidhhi Agerwal Elevates Noir Couture Game Boldly

Glamour in Tollywood has gone to the next level in recent years, with top heroines turning every appearance into a fashion moment. Red carpets, photoshoots and even casual events have become more competitive as actresses experiment with bold silhouettes, edgy styling and global trends. From sleek gowns to dramatic couture, every look is now about making a strong impact. This growing fashion race has made the industry more exciting, as fans wait to see who brings the most unforgettable style every time. Nidhhi Agerwal is one of the actresses who is matching this glam wave with confidence. She has been trying bold and modern fashion, and her latest black outfit shows her evolving style. The look featured a structured corset with sheer detailing and a halter neckline, paired with a body-hugging long skirt. The waist cut-outs added a daring touch, while the soft drape of the skirt balanced the bold upper half. She kept her accessories minimal and styled her hair in a sleek way, which made the entire look strong and elegant. After *The Raja Saab*, she does not have any confirmed movies right now. It will be interesting to see how her career moves forward. She has tried her luck in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu films, but she has not got a big success yet. At present, her career is again at a slow phase, and fans are waiting to see what kind of projects



## Most Unaccepted Lyrics In The Item Song



Bollywood is often praised for making progressive films in Indian cinema. At the same time, many commercial films still rely on outdated and problematic themes. A similar debate has now started around a newly released song from the film *KD: The Devil*. The song titled *Sarke Chunar Teri Sarke* features Bollywood actress Nora Fatehi, who is widely known for performing in popular dance numbers. The visuals follow the typical item song format with glamorous presentation and noticeable skin exposure. However, the main criticism from social media users is about the lyrics. Many viewers say the words are vulgar and carry a tone that disrespects women. A particular line from the song has been widely circulated online. The lyrics go: "Pahle uthale, ander wo dale, neeche ek boond na girae, khali kar ke nikale, mujh pe na girana mujhe lagta hai dar." The translated meaning of the line is: "First lift it, put it inside, don't drop even a single drop below, empty it fully and then pull out, don't spill on me, I feel scared." Because of this wording, many people on social media have expressed anger and criticised the filmmakers. Some users have also questioned the decision of the performers and the film's team to be part of a song with such lyrics.