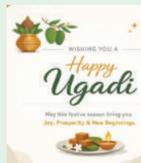


BUZZ POINTS

Tomorrow is a holiday



BUZZ POINTS

State Development with the Blessings of Goddess Nookambika



PAGE 02

Ambati Rambabu Alleges Custodial Torture in Lockup



PAGE 03

Nara Lokesh Dines with Differently-Abled, Stresses Inclusive Development

PAGE 04

Centre Pushes STREE as Nationwide Movement



తేనె వూరికి ఆకుల కోరణాలు  
 శ్రావ్యమైన సన్నాయి రాగాలు  
 అందమైన ముస్సులతో తడి వాకిళ్ళు  
 కొత్త బట్టలతో పిల్లా పాపలు  
 ఉగాది సండుగ సంబరాలు

నూతన తెలుగు సంకల్పం  
**ఉగాది శుభాకాంక్షలు**  
 అభివృద్ధి

Telugu website: <https://telugu.truepointnews.com/>  
 English website: <https://www.truepointnews.com/>  
 Epapers website: <https://epaper.truepointnews.com/>  
 Youtube: [youtube.com/@pointmedia24x7/videos](https://youtube.com/@pointmedia24x7/videos)  
<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.news.point>

# Chandrababu Naidu Extends Ugadi Greetings

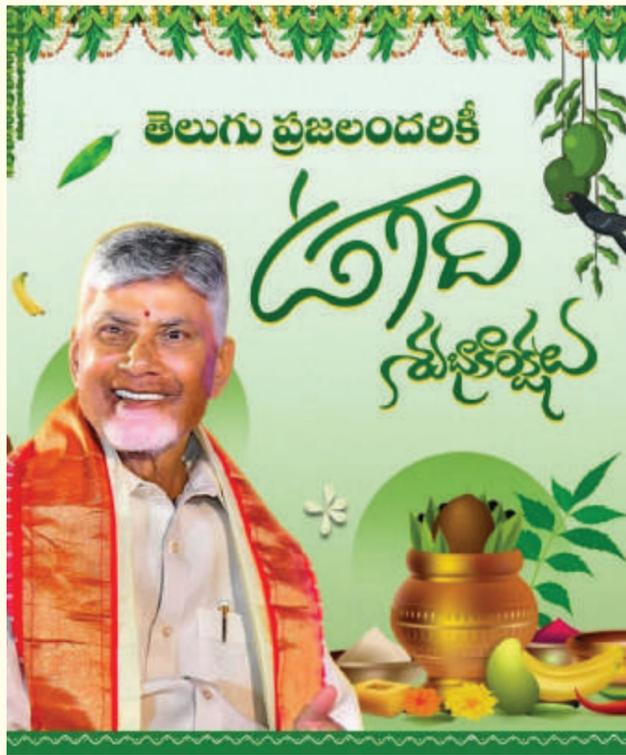
Amaravati, March 18 | TPN Bureau

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief and former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu extended heartfelt greetings to the Telugu people on the occasion of Sri Parabhava Nama Samvatsara Ugadi, the Telugu New Year.

In his message, Naidu described Ugadi as a festival symbolizing the harmonious blend of six tastes, the arrival of the spring season, renewed happiness, and fresh hope for the future. He conveyed his best wishes to all Telugu families and stated that the New Year should bring new light and prosperity into their lives.

He wished that every individual and their family members be blessed with good health, longevity, and abundant wealth. Naidu expressed hope that people's aspirations and goals would be fulfilled, leading to success and overall development in their personal and professional lives.

Emphasizing social progress, the TDP leader highlighted the party's commitment to building a poverty-free and equitable society through the P4 initiative, along



with various welfare and development programs. He urged citizens to benefit from these initiatives so that inclusive growth can be achieved across all sections of society.

Naidu also reiterated his vision under the long-term development roadmap "Swarnandhra Vision 2047." He said the program aims to guide Andhra Pradesh toward sustained economic growth, technological advancement, infrastructure expansion, and improved living standards for all people. According to him, coordinated efforts in implementing welfare schemes and development projects will help transform the state into a leading region in the coming years.

He called upon the people to work together with unity and determination to realize these objectives. Naidu expressed confidence that the Ugadi festival would mark the beginning of new opportunities, renewed energy, and collective progress for the state.

Concluding his message, Chandrababu Naidu once again extended his warm wishes to all Telugu citizens, hoping that the New Year would bring prosperity, peace, and success to every household.

# AP Releases ₹2,000 Crore to Clear Pending Bills of Small Contractors



Amaravati, March 18 | TPN Bureau

The Andhra Pradesh government has released 2,000 crore to clear pending bills of small contractors across the state, bringing relief to thousands of beneficiaries waiting for payments for completed works.

According to official sources, the decision was taken after a review of outstanding dues related to various development projects. The finance department processed the release to ensure that long-pending bills, particularly those of small contractors, are settled on priority. Authorities stated that the move is aimed at improving financial stability among contractors and restoring smooth progress of ongoing public works.

The government has reportedly adopted a systematic approach to clear arrears, focusing first on older and smaller bills. Officials explained that payments will be processed in a phased manner, following established procedures. Works connected to infrastructure development, road maintenance, irrigation-related projects, and other departmental activities are expected to benefit from the fund release.

The decision is expected to support nearly thousands of small contractors who had been facing financial difficulties due to delayed payments. Many contractors had expressed concern over cash flow issues, as pending dues had affected their ability to continue operations and take up new projects. With the latest release, the government aims to ease liquidity pressure and help resume stalled activities.

Officials maintained that clearing pending bills remains a priority for the administration. They added that the government is committed to addressing accumulated dues while maintaining fiscal discipline. Further steps are likely to be taken in the coming weeks to review and release additional funds, depending on departmental assessments and financial availability.

Contractor associations have welcomed the move, stating that timely payments will strengthen confidence in government works and encourage participation in future projects. They also expressed hope that similar measures will continue to ensure transparency and efficiency in the payment system.

The release of ₹2,000 crore marks a significant step toward resolving long-standing payment issues and is expected to accelerate developmental activities across Andhra Pradesh. Further updates on department-wise allocations and additional releases are anticipated shortly as the review process continues.

# Pawan Kalyan Shares Emotional Message on 'Divyangashakti' Scheme

Vijayawada, March 18, 2026

Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan expressed his emotions after participating in the launch of the state government's newly introduced 'Divyangashakti' scheme, aimed at providing free travel facilities to persons with disabilities in APSRTC buses.

The scheme was formally launched by Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu in Vijayawada, in the presence of Pawan Kalyan and other senior officials. As part of the event, the leaders interacted with differently-abled individuals and travelled with them from a bus depot to another location, listening to their experiences and challenges during the journey.

Following the programme, Pawan Kalyan shared a detailed note describing the experience as meaningful and inspiring. He said that interacting directly with persons with disabilities helped him better understand their daily struggles and the financial and social barriers they face. He stated that the initiative reflects the government's commitment



to inclusive development and social welfare.

In his message, the Deputy Chief Minister highlighted that the 'Divyangashakti' scheme is not merely

about free transportation, but about empowering individuals by reducing their economic burden and ensuring greater access to education, employment, healthcare, and other essen-

tial services. He noted that improved mobility can significantly enhance opportunities for differently-abled citizens to lead independent and dignified lives.

Pawan Kalyan also mentioned that conversations with young beneficiaries left a strong impression on him. He appreciated their determination, confidence, and willingness to contribute to society despite challenges. He reiterated that the government is working toward strengthening welfare measures and ensuring that development reaches all sections of society.

The state government has described the 'Divyangashakti' initiative as part of its broader agenda to promote social equality and support vulnerable communities. Officials stated that the programme is expected to benefit a large number of persons with disabilities across Andhra Pradesh by providing them with easier and more affordable access to public transport services.

The launch of the scheme marks another step in the government's ongoing efforts to implement welfare-oriented policies alongside development programmes in the state.

## Centre Pushes STREE as Nationwide Movement

Vijayawada, March 18 | TPN Bureau

In a major push towards women empowerment and sustainable mobility, the Government of India has called on all states to scale up the STREE (Sustainable Transport for Rural Entrepreneurs through Electric Bicycles) initiative into a nationwide movement. The appeal comes following the remarkable success of the pilot programme implemented by Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL), a joint venture under the Ministry of Power.

The pilot project, rolled out across Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Kerala, has emerged as India's largest initiative of its kind. It has benefited around 1,800 women, primarily from Self Help Groups (SHGs), by providing electric cargo bicycles to improve mobility and livelihoods. The programme has resulted in average monthly savings of ₹1,351 per beneficiary, along with increased income opportunities.

Speaking at a national workshop in New Delhi, Union Minister of State for Rural Development Kamlesh Paswan urged state governments to collaborate with the Centre in expanding the initiative. He highlighted that STREE aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of women-led development, green mobility, and a self-reliant rural economy.

"STREE must evolve into a people's movement that empowers women while advancing India's energy efficiency goals,"



Paswan said, emphasizing the importance of coordinated efforts involving the Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Power, EESL, Convergence Energy Services Limited (CESL), and institutions like Indian Institute of Technology Bombay.

The Minister cited global studies indicating that electric micro-mobility can boost women's incomes by 25-40 percent. The STREE initiative addresses mobility challenges by offering affordable, eco-friendly transport solutions. Electric bicycles, with a carbon footprint of just 15 grams of CO per kilometer, also contribute significantly to reducing emissions.

The programme has already delivered tangible results on the ground. In Kuppam, about 59 percent of beneficiaries reported income growth, with average monthly gains of ₹4,601. In Bihar, over 52 percent of women now rely on e-bicycles as their primary mode of transport, reducing dependence on expensive shared mobility.

Secretary of the Ministry of Rural Development Shailesh Kumar Singh highlighted the potential of SHG networks in building a new ecosystem of rural entrepreneurs. These networks are playing a key role in delivering agricultural produce, medicines, educational materials, and digital services,

thereby strengthening last-mile connectivity.

EESL/CESL CEO Akhilesh Kumar Dixit described STREE as a scalable and inclusive model for rural transformation. The Centre has also called for inter-ministerial collaboration, urging departments like the DPIIT and MNRE to support innovation, manufacturing, and renewable energy integration.

Concluding the event, the Minister appealed to all stakeholders to collectively expand the initiative. "Let us transform STREE into a nationwide movement so that millions of women can move towards mobility, dignity, and prosperity," he said.

## APCRDA Allots Returnable Plots to Farmers for Seed Axis Road Project



Amaravathi 18.03.2026 TPN Bureau:

The Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority (APCRDA) has taken a significant step in recognizing the contribution of farmers who provided land for the development of the Seed Axis Road in Amaravati. On Wednesday, the authority allotted returnable plots to eligible farmers through a transparent e-lottery system conducted at its office in Rayapudi.

According to the official press release, a total of 17 returnable plots were distributed among 10 farmers from Undavalli village. These included 6 residential plots and 11 commercial plots. The allotment process was carried out using an online randomisation method, ensuring fairness and transparency throughout the procedure.

Officials stated that the e-lottery was conducted in the presence of the beneficiary farmers to maintain credibility and trust. Before the final allotment, a trial run was performed separately for both residential and commercial categories to demonstrate the system's accuracy. Following this, the live lottery process was successfully completed, and provisional allotment certificates were issued to the farmers.

Speaking on the occasion, Special Grade Deputy Collector and Director (Lands) – Capital City, Sri Vasantha Rayudu, urged the

beneficiaries to complete the registration process without delay. He assured that the APCRDA team would extend full support to the farmers during the next stages of the process.

He further explained that GIS staff and village surveyors will assist the allottees in identifying the exact geographical location of their plots. This step is aimed at ensuring clarity and avoiding any confusion regarding land boundaries or plot positioning.

Senior officials, including Director (Planning) B. Suresh Kumar and Special Deputy Collector A.G. Chinnikrishna, were also present during the programme, along with other APCRDA staff members.

The initiative reflects the government's continued efforts to compensate farmers who contributed land for capital development projects in Amaravati. By adopting a transparent and technology-driven approach, APCRDA aims to build confidence among stakeholders and ensure smooth implementation of infrastructure projects in the region.

The Seed Axis Road is a key component of Amaravati's infrastructure development, and the allocation of returnable plots marks an important milestone in strengthening cooperation between the government and local farming communities.

## 'Divyang Shakti' Scheme Launched in Nidadavolu: Free Bus Travel for Persons with Disabilities

Amaravathi 18.03.2026 TPN Bureau:

Andhra Pradesh Minister for Tourism, Culture and Cinematography, Kandula Durgesh, on Wednesday launched the prestigious "Divyang Shakti" scheme, aimed at empowering persons with disabilities by providing free bus travel facilities across the state. The initiative was formally inaugurated at the "I Love Nidadavolu" centre, where the Minister flagged off an APSRTC bus and marked the beginning of the scheme.

As part of the launch, Minister Durgesh personally boarded the bus, issued the first "zero ticket" to a beneficiary, and travelled along with persons with disabilities up to the MPDO office at Samisragudem. In a gesture of inclusivity and compassion, he later shared a meal with the beneficiaries, interacting with them and understanding their concerns.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister stated that the coalition government, under the leadership of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, is committed to enhancing the dignity and self-respect of persons with disabilities.



He revealed that the scheme would benefit a total of 4,436 individuals in the Nidadavolu constituency, including 1,464 in rural areas, 538 in urban regions, 1,213 in Peravali mandal, and 1,221 in Undrajavaram mandal.

The Minister explained that under the Divyang Shakti scheme, individuals with 40% or more disability, as recognized under the APWD Act, 2016, are eligible for 100% free travel in APSRTC services such as City Ordinary, Metro Express, Palle

Velugu, Ultra Palle Velugu, and Express buses. Additionally, a 50% concession will continue for AC Deluxe, Non-stop, Saptagiri, and inter-state services. Importantly, attendants accompanying persons with disabilities will also receive a 50% fare concession.

Highlighting other welfare measures, Durgesh said the government is providing pensions of ₹6,000 per month to persons with disabilities, making it one of the most supportive initiatives in the country. He added

that individuals with severe health conditions receive ₹10,000, while bedridden persons are provided ₹15,000 as monthly assistance. The government is also supplying two-wheelers to promote mobility and independence.

He further noted that the government is allocating approximately ₹207 crore annually to APSRTC to implement this free travel scheme. Plans are also underway to construct a dedicated building for persons with disabilities in Nidadavolu and to revive loan subsidy schemes for their economic upliftment.

Minister Durgesh reiterated that, unlike the previous government, the current administration is prioritizing the welfare of persons with disabilities and ensuring inclusive development. He also extended advance Ugadi greetings to the people of the constituency.

The event was attended by local representatives, officials, coalition leaders, and a large number of beneficiaries, who expressed gratitude to the government for the initiative.

## State Development with the Blessings of Goddess Nookambika



Amaravathi 18.03.2026 TPN Bureau:

Andhra Pradesh Minister Kollu Ravindra emphasized that the state's progress and prosperity are deeply rooted in the blessings of Goddess Nookambika. Participating in the grand Nookambika Amavari Jatar held in Anakapalli, the Minister offered silk garments to the presiding deity on behalf of the state government, marking a significant spiritual and cultural occasion.

Addressing devotees and officials during the event, the Minister highlighted the importance of preserving religious traditions while simultaneously promoting development. He announced that a magnificent new temple dedicated to Goddess Nookambika has been constructed at an estimated cost of ₹15 crore. The temple has been developed with modern infrastructure and facilities to ensure a seamless and comfortable darshan experience for devotees visiting from across the state and beyond.

The Minister further stated that the government has taken a landmark decision to recognize the Nookambika Amavari Jatar as a state festival. This move comes in response to the long-standing demand of the people of Anakapalli, who have deep-rooted faith in the deity. By granting state festival status, the government aims to elevate the prominence of the jatar, encourage wider participation, and promote the region's cultural heritage.

Highlighting the government's commitment to temple development, Kollu Ravindra noted that several initiatives are being undertaken to improve infrastructure at major religious sites across Andhra Pradesh. He stressed that such efforts not only strengthen spiritual values but also boost local tourism and economic activity, benefiting the surrounding communities.

The jatar witnessed a large turnout of devotees, reflecting the immense faith and devotion associated with Goddess Nookambika. Traditional rituals, cultural performances, and religious ceremonies were conducted with great enthusiasm, adding to the festive atmosphere.

The Minister expressed confidence that the blessings of Goddess Nookambika would bring peace, prosperity, and well-being to the people of Andhra Pradesh. He urged devotees to continue upholding the rich cultural and spiritual traditions that form the backbone of the state's identity.

Local public representatives, government officials, and temple authorities also participated in the celebrations, ensuring the smooth conduct of the event. The recognition of the jatar as a state festival marks a new chapter in preserving and promoting Andhra Pradesh's spiritual heritage while aligning it with developmental goals.

## Divyang Shakti Scheme Launched in Banaganapalle; BC Janardhan Reddy Reviews Public Facilities

Amaravathi 18.03.2026 TPN Bureau:

Roads and Buildings Minister BC Janardhan Reddy inaugurated the "Divyang Shakti" scheme in Banaganapalle, marking another step towards inclusive governance and welfare for persons with disabilities in Andhra Pradesh. The launch event was held at the Banaganapalle APSRTC bus stand, where the Minister participated along with differently-abled beneficiaries and local officials.

As part of the programme, the Minister flagged off the initiative and joined persons with disabilities in an APSRTC bus, travelling from the Banaganapalle bus stand to the local police station. This gesture symbolized the government's commitment to ensuring accessibility and dignity for the differently-abled community. During the journey, BC Janardhan Reddy interacted with the beneficiaries, enquired about their day-to-day challenges, and listened to their concerns regarding mobility, livelihood, and access to government services.

The Minister also sought feedback from the participants on the welfare and developmental initiatives being implemented by the coalition government. He emphasized that public opinion plays a vital role in improv-



ing governance and assured that the government is dedicated to addressing the issues raised by citizens, particularly vulnerable sections like persons with disabilities.

Following the launch, the Minister conducted a thorough inspection of the Banaganapalle bus stand premises. He walked across the entire facility, closely examining the conditions and availability of amenities for passengers. Expressing dissatisfaction over the unhy-

gienic surroundings, he directed officials to take immediate corrective measures to improve sanitation and maintain cleanliness in and around the bus stand.

Highlighting the importance of proper regulation, the Minister instructed authorities to initiate strict action against private shop owners who have encroached beyond their allotted spaces within the bus stand premises. He noted that such encroachments not only incon-

venience passengers but also disrupt the orderly functioning of the transport hub. Ensuring discipline and proper utilization of space, he said, is essential for public convenience.

In addition, BC Janardhan Reddy directed officials to install a free mineral water plant within the bus stand premises. He stressed that providing safe drinking water is a basic necessity and an essential service for passengers, especially in busy transit locations like bus stations. The proposed facility is expected to significantly improve passenger comfort and welfare.

The Minister reiterated that the Divyang Shakti scheme is aimed at empowering persons with disabilities by enhancing their mobility and independence. By enabling easier access to public transportation and engaging directly with beneficiaries, the government seeks to create a more inclusive and supportive environment.

The programme saw the participation of local public representatives, officials, and a large number of persons with disabilities. The initiative reflects the government's continued focus on welfare, accessibility, and improving public infrastructure while ensuring that no section of society is left behind.

# Ambati Rambabu Alleges Custodial Torture in Lockup

Amaravathi 18.03.2026 TPN Bureau:

Former Andhra Pradesh minister and senior YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) leader Ambati Rambabu has made serious allegations of custodial torture, claiming that he was subjected to both physical and mental harassment while in police custody. His statements have intensified the ongoing political tensions in the state and raised fresh concerns over alleged human rights violations.

Rambabu was recently arrested in connection with controversial remarks he allegedly made against Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu. His arrest triggered widespread protests and political unrest, particularly in Guntur district, where his residence and properties were reportedly attacked by rival party supporters.

Following his arrest, Rambabu was taken into custody before being remanded to judicial custody. During this period, he now claims that he was ill-treated inside the lockup. According to his statements, he faced severe physical abuse and was also mentally harassed by authorities. He alleged that such treatment was not only unlawful but also a violation of his



basic rights as a citizen.

The YSRCP has strongly backed Rambabu's claims, accusing the ruling government of engaging in political vendetta and misuse of law enforcement agencies. Party leaders have demanded an independent investigation into the alleged custodial torture and have approached higher authorities, including the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), seeking intervention.

The incident has once again brought the spotlight on custodial violence in India, a long-

standing issue highlighted by several human rights organizations. While authorities have not yet officially responded in detail to Rambabu's allegations, the matter is expected to escalate further if formal complaints are pursued.

Meanwhile, Rambabu's legal battles continue on multiple fronts. He has been remanded in connection with different cases, including allegations related to a Sankranti "lucky draw" scheme and other complaints filed against him. Courts have also directed that he be provided

ed certain facilities during his time in jail, considering his health and status as a former minister.

The Andhra Pradesh High Court has earlier expressed concern over rising political tensions and violence, urging public representatives to exercise restraint in their language and actions. However, the latest allegations by Rambabu are likely to deepen the political divide between the ruling party and the opposition.

Political analysts suggest that the controversy could have broader implications, especially in the context of governance, law enforcement accountability, and democratic norms. If proven, the allegations of custodial torture could lead to serious legal consequences for those involved and further scrutiny of police procedures.

As the situation develops, all eyes are now on the state government and investigative agencies to determine whether an impartial probe will be initiated. Rambabu's claims have not only sparked political debate but have also reignited public discourse on the protection of civil liberties and the need for transparency in custodial practices.

# India AI Impact Summit 2026: Key Highlights, Agreements, and Benefits



Amaravathi 18.03.2026 TPN Bureau:

The recently held India AI Impact Summit 2026 in New Delhi emerged as one of the largest global platforms for Artificial Intelligence collaboration, innovation, and policy dialogue. During a session in the Lok Sabha, Member of Parliament Vemireddy Prabhakar Reddy raised important questions regarding the outcomes, agreements, and benefits of the summit. Responding to these queries, Union Minister of State for Electronics and IT, Jitin Prasada, outlined the major achievements of the event.

Organized in alignment with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision, the summit focused on leveraging Artificial Intelligence to address challenges in critical sectors such as healthcare, agriculture, education, and governance. The event witnessed participation from over 100 countries, including 22 heads of state, along with nearly 10 international organizations. It attracted around 600,000 in-person attendees and over 900,000 virtual viewers, making it one of the most impactful AI gatherings globally and the first of its scale in the Global South.

A key outcome of the summit was the adoption of the India Impact Summit Declaration, approved by 92 countries and international bodies. The event also showcased six global casebooks highlighting AI applications in diverse sectors such as healthcare (in collaboration with WHO), en-

ergy (with IEA), gender empowerment (with UN Women), agriculture (supported by the World Bank), education, and accessibility.

The summit paved the way for massive investment opportunities, with an estimated \$250 billion expected across AI infrastructure, hardware, foundational models, and applications. Global venture capital firms announced significant funding commitments to support AI innovation. Additionally, a leading technology company pledged investments in connectivity, AI hubs, and large-scale training programs aimed at government employees and students.

In terms of agreements, India joined the Pax Silica coalition, strengthening its position in the global AI ecosystem. Furthermore, a Statement of Intent (SoI) was signed between the India AI Mission and Business Sweden to boost trade and investment ties.

The government also emphasized skill development, announcing large-scale training and capacity-building programs to enhance AI and digital skills among citizens. These initiatives are expected to generate employment in AI research, data science, and digital services.

Overall, the summit served as a crucial platform to promote responsible, inclusive, and sustainable AI adoption while reinforcing India's growing leadership in the global AI landscape.

# "Jail is Inevitable for Those Who Killed Uncle": Panchumarthi Anuradha

Amaravathi 18.03.2026 TPN Bureau:

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leader and Legislative Council Chief Whip Panchumarthi Anuradha made strong remarks over a high-profile murder case, asserting that those responsible for killing their "uncle" will inevitably face imprisonment. Her comments have sparked fresh political debate in Andhra Pradesh, bringing attention back to the controversial case.

Speaking to the media, Anuradha stated that the accused cannot escape the law and that justice will prevail. She emphasized that the crime, which allegedly involved the brutal killing of a close family member (referred to as "babai"), is serious in nature and backed by substantial evidence. According to her, the legal process is progressing in a direction that clearly indicates punishment for those involved.

Anuradha criticized opposition leaders for attempting to politicize the issue and mislead the public. She accused certain political groups of trying to divert attention from the gravity of the crime by creating confusion and false narratives. "No matter how much they try to protect the accused, the law will take its course,"



she said, adding that such crimes cannot be justified under any circumstances.

The case has already generated significant public and political interest, with allegations, counter-allegations, and emotional reactions from both sides. It is widely seen as not just a criminal case but also one with political undertones, given the individuals allegedly involved and their affiliations.

Reiterating her stance, Anuradha said that the investigation agencies have gathered enough material to establish the role of the accused. She

pressed confidence in the judiciary, stating that the courts would ensure justice is delivered without bias. "Those who committed the crime will not be spared. Jail is certain for them," she declared.

Her remarks also come amid ongoing criticism of law enforcement and judicial processes in politically sensitive cases in the state. By taking a firm stand, Anuradha sought to project confidence in the system while also sending a strong political message.

Political observers note that such statements often reflect

the larger rivalry between major parties in Andhra Pradesh. While the ruling side emphasizes accountability and justice, the opposition frequently alleges misuse of power and selective targeting.

The "babai murder" reference has emotional and symbolic significance in Andhra Pradesh politics, as past incidents involving family members of prominent leaders have triggered widespread reactions. Anuradha's statement appears to tap into that sentiment, reinforcing the narrative that justice is inevitable regardless of political influence.

Meanwhile, legal proceedings in the case are expected to continue, with further hearings likely to determine the fate of the accused. As the investigation unfolds, more details may emerge that could either strengthen the prosecution's case or provide relief to the defense.

For now, Anuradha's remarks have added momentum to the discourse, underlining the seriousness of the allegations and the expectation of strict legal consequences. The case remains under close watch, both politically and legally, as the state awaits a decisive outcome.

# Bail Granted to Pinnelli; Brother Faces Setback in Ongoing Case

Amaravathi 18.03.2026 TPN Bureau:

In a significant development in Andhra Pradesh politics, relief has reportedly been granted to former MLA Pinnelli Ramakrishna Reddy, while his brother continues to face legal hurdles in connection with the high-profile Palnadu double murder case. The case, which has drawn widespread attention across the state, continues to unfold with contrasting outcomes for the two brothers.

According to reports, the court has granted bail to Pinnelli Ramakrishna Reddy, offering him temporary relief amid ongoing legal proceedings. However, his brother, Pinnelli Venkatarami Reddy, has not received similar relief, dealing a setback to the family in the same case. The differing decisions have once again highlighted the complexity and seriousness of the charges involved.

The Pinnelli brothers were named as accused in the murder of two Telugu Desam Party (TDP) activists in Palnadu district in May 2025. The victims, Javisetti Venkateswarlu and Javisetti Koteswara Rao, were allegedly attacked and killed in a brutal incident that shocked the region and intensified political tensions.

Investigations into the case



suggested that the murders were not accidental but part of a larger conspiracy. The prosecution argued that the accused had a role in planning and executing the crime, while the defense consistently maintained that the brothers were falsely implicated due to political rivalry.

Earlier, both the Andhra Pradesh High Court and the Supreme Court had taken a strict view of the case. The High Court had rejected anticipatory bail pleas, citing prima facie evidence against the accused and the seriousness of the charges. Subsequently, the Supreme Court also dismissed their anticipatory bail petitions

and directed them to surrender, emphasizing the need for custodial investigation in a case of such gravity.

The apex court had also expressed concern over reports that certain sensitive case documents were accessed by the accused, terming the development "unacceptable" and raising questions about procedural integrity.

Against this backdrop, the latest bail decision in favor of Pinnelli Ramakrishna Reddy marks a notable shift in the legal trajectory of the case. Legal experts suggest that such relief could be based on evolving evidence, procedural grounds, or considerations related to custo-

dy duration and cooperation with the investigation.

However, the denial or delay of similar relief to his brother indicates that the court may be viewing individual roles and evidence separately rather than treating both accused identically. This approach is common in criminal cases, especially those involving multiple accused with varying degrees of alleged involvement.

The case continues to carry significant political implications in Andhra Pradesh, as it involves leaders from major political parties. Supporters of the accused have alleged political vendetta, while opponents argue that the law must take its course without interference.

As the investigation progresses and court hearings continue, the focus now shifts to the trial phase, where evidence will be examined in detail. The contrasting outcomes in bail decisions may also influence the legal strategies of both the defense and prosecution in the coming weeks.

Overall, while Pinnelli Ramakrishna Reddy has secured temporary relief, the ongoing legal battle is far from over, with the case expected to remain in the spotlight due to its serious nature and political sensitivity.

# Viveka Murder Linked to Kadapa MP Ticket Issue: YS Sharmila



Visakhapatnam, March 18 | TPN Bureau

Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president YS Sharmila has alleged that the murder of former minister YS Vivekananda Reddy was directly linked to the Kadapa MP ticket issue. Speaking to the media at Visakhapatnam Airport, she made strong remarks and raised several questions about the progress of the investigation into the high-profile case.

Sharmila stated that Vivekananda Reddy had personally told her that Avinash Reddy was not suitable for the Kadapa parliamentary seat. Despite this, she alleged that the ticket was allotted to Avinash Reddy. According to her, this decision created internal political differences. She further claimed that if Vivekananda Reddy had been alive, he would have become a political obstacle to certain individuals, suggesting that this could have been a possible reason behind the crime.

She also criticized what she described as attempts to influence public perception after the incident. Sharmila alleged that there were efforts to portray the death as a natural one and that misinformation was spread in the initial stages. She maintained that the truth should have been presented

clearly to the public from the beginning.

Referring to the investigation, Sharmila said that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) inquiry was initiated after requests from concerned parties and court directions. She questioned why the case has not been conclusively resolved despite several years passing since the incident. She also asked why the probe did not reach its logical conclusion during the period when the ruling party was in power.

She further stated that even after repeated appeals from family members for a transparent investigation, progress in the case has been slow. According to her, justice should not be delayed and the legal process must ensure accountability. She emphasized that the matter is not just a political issue but one related to law and justice.

The remarks have once again brought the Vivekananda Reddy murder case into public and political discussion. The case continues to be under investigation and judicial review. With political leaders making fresh statements, the issue remains sensitive in Andhra Pradesh's political landscape, and further developments are expected as legal proceedings continue.

# Strengthening Mental Health Infrastructure in India: A Step Towards Inclusive Healthcare

Vijayawada 18.03.2026 TPN Bureau:

India is steadily advancing its commitment to strengthening mental health care and overall well-being through policy reforms, institutional expansion, and improved accessibility. A recent press release by the Press Information Bureau highlights the government's renewed focus on enhancing mental health services as part of a broader vision of inclusive and equitable healthcare.

Mental health has emerged as a critical public health concern in India due to rising stress levels, urbanization, and post-pandemic challenges. Recognizing this, the government has taken several steps to improve both the reach and quality of mental health services across the country. One of the key initiatives is the proposed establishment of a second National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS-2) in North India. This institution is expected to serve as a centre of excellence for advanced treatment, research, and training in mental health and neurosciences, addressing the regional imbalance in access to such facilities.

In addition to setting up new institutions, the government is also focusing on strengthening exist-



ing infrastructure. Mental health institutes in cities like Ranchi and Tezpur are being upgraded into regional apex centres. These upgrades aim to enhance specialized care, improve training facilities, and expand research capabilities in mental health services.

Another significant initiative is the proposal to establish emergency and trauma care centres in district hospitals across the country. These centres will provide round-the-clock services, ensuring timely intervention for both physical and mental health emergencies. This move is expected to bridge the gap between urban and rural healthcare sys-

tems and make mental health services more accessible to underserved populations.

The government's approach also emphasizes integration. Mental health services are being incorporated into primary healthcare through schemes like Ayushman Bharat. This integration ensures that mental health care becomes a part of routine health services, thereby reducing stigma and improving early diagnosis and treatment.

Legal and policy frameworks further support this transformation. The Mental Healthcare Act, 2017, guarantees the rights and dignity of individuals with men-

tal illness and ensures access to affordable and quality care. Additionally, national programs such as the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) aim to integrate mental health services into general healthcare systems, particularly targeting vulnerable and marginalized populations.

Overall, these initiatives reflect a comprehensive and forward-looking strategy to address mental health challenges in India. By expanding infrastructure, improving accessibility, and integrating services, the government is laying the foundation for a more inclusive and resilient healthcare system.

## Nara Lokesh Dines with Differently-abled, Stresses Inclusive Development



Mangalagiri, March 18, 2026 | TPN Bureau

Andhra Pradesh IT and Education Minister Nara Lokesh shared a meaningful and compassionate moment with differently-abled individuals by dining with them following the launch of the state government's 'Divyangashakti' scheme in Mangalagiri.

The scheme, which offers free bus travel to persons with disabilities, was launched earlier in the day by Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu in the presence of Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan and other leaders. As part of the programme, the leaders travelled along with beneficiaries, interacting with them and gaining insights into their daily challenges.

Later, at a special gathering in Undavalli, Lokesh joined the beneficiaries for a community meal, creating an atmosphere of warmth and inclusion. He personally interacted with several individuals, listening to their experiences, aspirations, and concerns.

Speaking on the occasion, Lokesh emphasized the importance of ensuring dignity and self-respect for differently-abled persons. He said that individuals with disabilities have immense potential and determination, and with the right support and opportunities, they can achieve great success. He added that society must recognize their abili-

ties rather than focusing on limitations.

The minister reiterated the government's commitment to inclusive growth and welfare. He enquired about the benefits being received by the participants under various government schemes and sought their feedback to further improve service delivery.

During the interaction, some beneficiaries raised concerns regarding employment opportunities and housing support. Responding positively, Lokesh assured them that the government would continue to take steps to address their needs and enhance support systems.

He also highlighted the importance of respectful behavior and language towards differently-abled individuals, urging society to foster empathy and inclusivity. According to him, creating a supportive environment is key to empowering all sections of society.

The event reflected the government's approach of combining welfare initiatives with direct engagement, ensuring that policies are implemented effectively while maintaining a human touch. The 'Divyangashakti' scheme, along with such outreach efforts, is expected to significantly improve mobility, accessibility, and overall quality of life for differently-abled citizens across Andhra Pradesh.

## Employees Urge AP Government to Expedite PRC Appointment and Clear Pending Dues

Vijayawada 18.03.2026 TPN Bureau:

The Andhra Pradesh Joint Action Committee (APJAC) Amaravati has raised serious concerns over delays in fulfilling promises made to government employees, urging the state government to take immediate action on key pending issues. In a press statement released on Wednesday, APJAC leaders expressed dissatisfaction over the government's inaction, particularly regarding the appointment of the Pay Revision Commission (PRC) and clearance of long-pending dues.

The leaders questioned why the government has delayed appointing a PRC Commissioner, especially when it involves no financial burden. They emphasized that the appointment of the 12th PRC Commissioner is crucial for addressing employees' financial concerns and ensuring fair pay revisions. Alongside this, they demanded the immediate announcement of Interim Relief (IR) to provide temporary financial support to employees facing increasing economic pressures.

APJAC also highlighted the plight of retired employees and families of deceased staff, stating that many are yet to receive their rightful dues. The delay in clearing these payments has reportedly caused significant distress, with some retirees passing away before receiving their



benefits. The leaders urged the government to prioritize the clearance of all pending dues without further delay.

A delegation led by APJAC Amaravati Chairman Bopiraju Venkateswarlu and General Secretary Paliseti Damodara Rao submitted a representation to Chief Secretary G. Sai Prasad, IAS, at the Secretariat. They brought to his attention the growing dissatisfaction among employees due to unfulfilled promises made during the elections, delays in updating Dearness Allowance (DA), and lack of progress on other financial

commitments.

The leaders pointed out that due to staff shortages, many employees are already overburdened, often handling the workload of multiple individuals. This, combined with financial stress, is pushing employees into difficult situations. They appealed to the Chief Secretary to convey these concerns to the Chief Minister and ensure swift action to resolve the issues.

In addition to PRC and dues clearance, APJAC demanded regularization of pending contract employees and extension of welfare schemes to outsour-

ing staff. They also called for the restoration of additional quantum of pension benefits for retired employees, as was previously implemented.

The leaders urged the government not to betray the trust placed in it by lakhs of employees and to honor its pre-election commitments. They warned that continued delays could further increase unrest among employees across the state.

During the meeting, APJAC leaders, along with representatives from various employee unions, also felicitated the Chief Secretary as a mark of respect.

## No Issues in Anna Canteens, Says Vijayawada Municipal Commissioner Dhyan Chandra



Vijayawada 18.03.2026 TPN Bureau:

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) Commissioner Dhyan Chandra has assured that all Anna Canteens operating within the city are functioning smoothly and providing services to the public without any inconvenience.

During his inspection visit on Wednesday morning, the Commissioner reviewed the functioning of the Anna Canteen located at Gulabi Thota. As part of his field-level assessment, he personally examined the facilities and interacted with beneficiaries to understand their feedback on the services being provided.

Speaking on the occasion, Dhyan Chandra stated that officials are closely monitoring the operations of Anna Canteens on a daily basis to ensure that people do not face any difficulties. He emphasized that the primary objective of these canteens is to provide affordable and hygienic food to the public, particularly to economically weaker sections.

The Commissioner further noted that feedback from the public is being actively collected and analyzed. Based on these inputs, necessary improvements are being made to ensure that all facilities in the canteens meet the required standards. "We are committed to ensuring that there are no shortcomings in the services provided at any Anna Canteen," he said.

He highlighted that maintaining hygiene is a top priority and that strict measures are being taken to ensure cleanliness across all canteens. Regular sanitation practices are being implemented to provide a safe and healthy environment for

the public. The staff has also been instructed to adhere to quality standards in food preparation and service.

The Anna Canteen initiative has been playing a crucial role in supporting daily wage workers, low-income groups, and other vulnerable sections of society by offering meals at subsidized rates. The Commissioner reiterated that the VMC is taking all necessary steps to strengthen this initiative and enhance its effectiveness.

Dhyan Chandra also directed officials to remain vigilant and responsive to any issues that may arise. He stressed the importance of prompt action in addressing complaints and ensuring uninterrupted services. Continuous supervision, he said, is key to maintaining public trust and satisfaction.

The inspection is part of the ongoing efforts by the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation to improve civic services and ensure that welfare initiatives reach the intended beneficiaries efficiently. By directly visiting the canteens and interacting with the public, the Commissioner aims to ensure transparency and accountability in the system.

Officials from the municipal corporation accompanied the Commissioner during the visit and assured that they would continue to work towards improving the quality of services.

The VMC reiterated its commitment to public welfare and stated that Anna Canteens will continue to operate with a focus on quality, hygiene, and accessibility, ensuring that no citizen faces inconvenience while availing these services.

## “Divyang Shakti Scheme Empowers Persons with Disabilities”: NTR District Collector

Vijayawada 18.03.2026 TPN Bureau:

In a significant step towards inclusive development and social empowerment, the Andhra Pradesh government has launched the "Divyang Shakti" scheme aimed at strengthening the lives of persons with disabilities. NTR District Collector Dr. G. Lakshmiisha stated that the initiative will provide new confidence and opportunities for Divyang individuals to move forward in life with dignity and independence.

Speaking at a program held at the Vijayawada Pandit Nehru Bus Station (PNBS), City Terminal Platform No. 1, the Collector emphasized that the scheme reflects the government's commitment to the welfare of all sections of society. He noted that empowering persons with disabilities is essential for achieving broader developmental goals such as Swarna Andhra and Viksit Bharat.

The scheme was formally launched by the Hon'ble Chief Minister, along with the Deputy Chief Minister and Minister Nara Lokesh, at Mangalagiri. Following the launch, awareness programs were conducted across all constituencies in the district to educate beneficiar-



ies about the scheme and its advantages.

As part of the event in Vijayawada, Collector Lakshmiisha interacted with Divyang beneficiaries and even traveled a short distance with them in a bus to demonstrate the scheme's implementation. He explained that under the Divyang Shakti scheme, persons with 40 percent or more disability, across 21 categories, are now eligible for free bus travel.

This facility is available across various types of buses,

including City Ordinary, Metro Express, Palle Velugu, Ultra Palle Velugu, and Express services. The Collector highlighted that earlier restrictions have been removed, making the scheme more accessible and beneficial for a larger section of Divyang individuals.

He further stated that providing free transportation will not only ease financial burdens but also improve the overall quality of life of persons with disabilities. "Access to free travel will enable them to participate more actively in society, pursue

education and employment opportunities, and lead a more independent life," he said.

The Collector reiterated that inclusive growth can only be achieved when equal opportunities are extended to all sections of society. He emphasized that the government aims to create a supportive ecosystem where Divyang individuals can utilize these opportunities effectively.

Additionally, he mentioned that the scheme will indirectly contribute to the vision of "One Family - One Entrepreneur," by enabling greater mobility and economic participation among beneficiaries.

Officials from the transport department, including District Deputy Chief Traffic Manager T. Saicharan Teja and Bus Stand Deputy Chief Traffic Manager CH. Surya Pawan Kumar, also participated in the program.

The Divyang Shakti scheme is being seen as a progressive move towards ensuring social justice and inclusivity. By addressing mobility challenges and promoting independence, the initiative is expected to bring meaningful changes in the lives of thousands of persons with disabilities across the state.

# CPM Slams Govt Over Pollution, Public Issues During Padayatra

Attili, March 18, 2026 | TPN Bureau  
Senior leader of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), B. Balaram, has strongly criticized the government, alleging a complete failure in controlling industrial pollution and addressing basic public issues in West Godavari district. He remarked that the district has been "taken over by pollution demons," raising concern over deteriorating environmental and living conditions.

The CPM's district-level public awareness padayatra entered its 21st day on Wednesday, covering Attili and Palakoderu mandals. During the yatra, residents submitted several petitions highlighting issues such as lack of housing, house sites, and pensions. Many complained that multiple families are forced to live under one roof and questioned delays in fulfilling housing promises.

Addressing the gathering, Balaram said the once "green" West Godavari district is now facing a severe drinking water crisis, while liquor remains easily available. He alleged that river waters, including those of the Godavari River, are being



polluted due to unchecked industrial activities. He warned that rising pollution levels are contributing to an increase in diseases such as malaria and typhoid.

The CPM leader accused the government of neglecting public welfare, stating that many poor families are not receiving pensions, colonies lack proper roads, and basic infrastructure remains inadequate. He also

pointed out the absence of proper burial grounds for marginalized communities, calling it a serious social injustice.

Highlighting farmers' concerns, Balaram said water shortages are severely affecting agriculture in the district. He added that healthcare schemes like Aarogyasri are not covering all treatments, forcing people to bear heavy medical expenses.

Meanwhile, CPM district secretary JNV Gopalan alleged that residents of government housing colonies in Korukollu were burdened with electricity bills of up to Rs. 19,000 per household after bills were not issued monthly for nearly two years. He termed it unjust and demanded an immediate waiver.

The party demanded that the government clear electricity dues, provide housing to the poor, and address injustices faced by weaker sections. CPM leaders warned of intensified protests if the issues raised during the padayatra are not resolved.

Tension briefly prevailed during the yatra when police reportedly objected to a public address at Attili center, citing restrictions under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code. CPM leaders alleged high-handedness and questioned selective enforcement, demanding action from senior officials.

The party announced that all grievances collected during the 26-day padayatra will be submitted to the District Collector on March 23.

# MP Purandeswari Urges GST Reforms to Protect Tobacco Farmers



East Godavari, March 18, 2026 | TPN Bureau

BJP State President and Member of Parliament Daggubati Purandeswari has appealed to the Central Government to amend certain provisions in the Goods and Services Tax (GST) framework to safeguard the interests of tobacco farmers. Highlighting the concerns of lakhs of Flue-Cured Virginia (FCV) tobacco cultivators in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, she urged immediate intervention to address technical anomalies in taxation.

In a letter addressed to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, Purandeswari pointed out the issue of "tax on tax" affecting tobacco products. Under the current Rule 31D, GST is levied based on the Retail Sale Price (RSP). However, she noted that this structure leads to double taxation, as GST is being imposed again on components like Central Excise Duty and National Calamity Contingent Duty (NCCD), which are already included in the retail price.

She stated that such cascading taxation contradicts the fundamental principles of GST and places an undue burden on the legal tobacco industry. As a result, cigarette prices have risen significantly, making legally manufactured products less competitive in the market.

Purandeswari also expressed concern over the rise in illegal

cigarette trade in India, which has reportedly reached around 26 percent. These illicit products, often sold at nearly 75 percent lower prices due to tax evasion, are attracting consumers and causing substantial losses to government revenue while hurting legitimate businesses.

The MP warned that the weakening of the domestic cigarette industry would have a direct adverse impact on tobacco farmers. She noted that in Karnataka auctions, prices of certain tobacco grades have already dropped to as low as Rs. 40 per kilogram, reflecting growing distress among farmers.

She further highlighted challenges in exports, stating that rising global logistics costs and stiff competition from countries like Zimbabwe and Brazil are adding pressure on Indian tobacco growers. Combined with domestic tax burdens, these factors could severely affect farmer livelihoods.

As a solution, Purandeswari urged the government to eliminate the cascading effect of taxes as per Section 15(1) of the GST Act. She called for a review of Rule 31D to ensure that GST is not levied again on excise and NCCD components.

"This amendment will not only support the industry but also protect the livelihoods of lakhs of rural farming families. It will also help curb illegal trade and improve government revenues," she stated in her letter.

# Pikki Nagendra's 400-Day Rise Marks New Phase in East Godavari BJP

East Godavari, March 18, 2026 | TPN Bureau

East Godavari BJP President Pikki Nagendra is emerging as a dynamic grassroots leader, demonstrating that a political position is not merely a title but a collective responsibility. Rising from an ordinary party worker to district president through dedication and discipline, his journey has become an inspiration for party cadres and youth alike. As he completes 400 days in office, his leadership is being seen as the beginning of a new phase for the party in the district.

Nagendra's political journey began with the Lok Satta movement, but his ideological shift toward nationalism led him to associate with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh in 2011. His work as a swayamsevak helped him develop discipline and commitment, eventually guiding him to join the Bharatiya Janata Party in 2013.

Over the years, he steadily climbed the organizational ladder, holding various responsibilities. Starting with grass-



roots-level roles in 2014, he went on to serve as a district executive member, OBC Morcha vice president, district secretary, and later as district general secretary. In 2023, he was appointed as the state vice president of the party's Kisan Morcha. His consistent performance and ability to connect with cadres earned him recognition among senior leaders.

On January 21, 2025, Nagendra assumed charge as the BJP district president in East

Godavari. Within a short span of 400 days, he has focused on strengthening the party at the grassroots level. He revitalized mandal and booth-level committees, ensuring continuous engagement with workers and creating renewed enthusiasm within the organization. By balancing senior leaders and youth, he has fostered a sense of unity within the party.

Under his leadership, the district unit has actively taken

up public issues, particularly those concerning farmers and infrastructure. The party has also intensified efforts to take central government welfare schemes, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to remote villages in the district.

Speaking on the milestone, Nagendra credited his success to the collective efforts of party cadres and the guidance of senior leaders, including state leadership and Rajahmundry MP Daggubati Purandeswari, along with former state president Somu Veerajulu.

He expressed confidence that this journey will continue beyond 400 days, with a clear goal of transforming East Godavari into a stronghold for the BJP. "We aim to build leadership at every level and align with the vision of our national leadership," he stated.

Party cadres in the district have welcomed his leadership, expressing optimism that his commitment and grassroots approach will take the BJP to greater heights in the coming years.

# Court Orders Seizure of NHAI Office in Rajahmundry Over Compensation Delay



East Godavari, March 18, 2026 | TPN Bureau

In a significant development, a local court in Rajahmundry has ordered the seizure of properties belonging to the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) Project Director's office, expressing strong displeasure over the non-payment of land acquisition compensation for nearly nine years.

The court's directive came in response to a petition filed by MG Medical and Educational Trust, which alleged that its non-agricultural land was acquired by NHAI for a national highway project almost a decade ago. Although the project was completed, the compensation due to the trust remained unpaid despite repeated follow-ups and legal efforts since 2017.

Taking serious note of the prolonged delay and the apparent disregard for earlier orders, the court directed authorities to initiate recovery proceedings by attaching the Rajahmundry Project Director's office building and related assets. The decision has sent shockwaves through the regional NHAI administration.

Under the provisions of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013, compensation must be paid

within one year of land acquisition. Failure to comply attracts an annual interest of 15 percent. Due to the extended delay, the payable amount has reportedly increased significantly, adding to the financial burden on the public exchequer.

The court observed that such negligence not only causes injustice to affected landowners but also leads to substantial financial losses for the government due to mounting interest liabilities. It further remarked that the situation reflects poorly on a reputed central government organization like NHAI.

Representatives of the trust welcomed the ruling, stating they had been pursuing the matter for years without resolution. They emphasized that acquiring land in the name of development while delaying rightful compensation for nearly a decade was both unjust and distressing.

The seizure order has created urgency within the local NHAI office, with officials expected to respond swiftly to avoid further legal complications and safeguard government assets. Observers believe the court's firm action may serve as a wake-up call for authorities to address pending compensation issues more responsibly and ensure timely compliance in future infrastructure projects.

# 'Divyangashakti' Scheme Launched in Nellore, Free Bus Travel for Differently-abled



Nellore, March 18, 2026 | TPN Bureau

In a festive atmosphere, the 'Divyangashakti' scheme providing free bus travel for differently-abled persons was launched in Nellore district on Wednesday.

District Collector Himanshu Shukla formally inaugurated the scheme at the Nellore RTC bus stand. On the occasion, he, along with Mayor Sujatha and RTC Zonal Chairman Sanapureddy Suresh Reddy, travelled in an APSRTC bus along with differently-abled beneficiaries, interacting with them and understanding their needs.

Officials stated that the scheme aims to improve mobility and accessibility for persons with disabilities, enabling them to travel free of cost across

the district and beyond. The initiative is expected to significantly ease their daily commuting challenges and enhance access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities.

The launch event witnessed enthusiastic participation from beneficiaries and the public, with many expressing happiness over the government's initiative. Authorities highlighted that such welfare measures are part of broader efforts to ensure inclusive development and social support for vulnerable sections of society.

The programme was conducted smoothly with the presence of officials and public representatives, marking a positive step toward empowering differently-abled citizens in the district.

# Lord Kodandarama Swamy Blesses Devotees on Hamsa Vahanam



Tirupati, March 18, 2026 | TPN Bureau

As part of the Brahmotsavams at the Sri Kodandarama Swamy Temple, Lord Sri Kodandarama Swamy blessed devotees on the Hamsa Vahanam on the second day of the festivities on Wednesday evening.

The procession commenced at around 7 PM in a grand and devotional atmosphere. The deity, seated on the Hamsa (swan) vahanam, was taken in a ceremonial procession through the temple streets. Devotees gathered in large numbers and offered prayers with deep devotion.

The event was marked by traditional performances, including Chekka Bhajans and Kolatam, while auspicious musical instruments created a spiritually vibrant environment. Decorated elephants led the procession, adding to the grandeur. Devotees offered camphor harati at various

points and had darshan of the Lord.

The Hamsa Vahanam holds deep spiritual significance. The swan symbolizes the ability to distinguish between truth and illusion, known as Atma-Anatma Vivekam. It represents wisdom and purity, and signifies the removal of ego, guiding devotees towards humility and devotion.

Prominent religious heads, including Tirumala Pedda Jeeyar Swamy and Chinna Jeeyar Swamy, participated in the vahanam seva. Temple officials, including Deputy Executive Officer Nagarathna and Temple Inspector Suresh, were present and oversaw the arrangements.

The Brahmotsavams continue to attract a large number of devotees, with each day featuring different vahanam sevas that reflect the rich spiritual traditions associated with Lord Rama.

# Kerala Congress' Silent Power Struggle: Tharoor, Chennithala And Others Eye The Top Job



As Kerala moves closer to the 2026 Assembly elections, the Congress party in the state is witnessing a quiet but intense internal contest. The battle is not against political opponents but within the party itself, as several senior leaders position themselves as potential chief ministerial candidates if the United Democratic Front (UDF) returns to power.

At the centre of this silent struggle are four prominent figures: V. D. Satheesan, Ramesh Chennithala, K. C. Venugopal, and Shashi Tharoor. While they publicly present a united front, each leader is carefully building influence, strengthening support networks, and expanding public appeal ahead of the crucial election.

V. D. Satheesan, the current Leader of the Opposition, holds a natural advantage due to his position. He has emerged as a strong voice against the ruling Left government and has actively taken up issues ranging from governance failures to corruption allegations. His elevation to the top opposition role signaled a shift toward younger leadership in the state unit. However, Satheesan faces challenges as he does not command a strong factional base within the party. His relations with some influential community organizations have also been strained, limiting his broader political reach. To counter this, he has focused on outreach to minority groups, civil society,

and coalition partners, projecting himself as a consensus builder.

Ramesh Chennithala represents experience and organizational depth. A veteran leader with decades of service, he has held key positions both in government and within the party structure. His supporters argue that his earlier tenure as Opposition Leader was constrained by internal dynamics that prevented him from fully capitalizing on public dissatisfaction with the ruling government. Despite past setbacks, he maintains strong connections with party workers and senior leaders across districts. This organizational strength could play a decisive role in any internal leadership contest.

K. C. Venugopal occupies a different space altogether. As a senior national leader closely associated with the party's central leadership, he enjoys significant influence beyond Kerala. His proximity to the high command could become an advantage if the leadership question is decided at the national level, as is often the case in Congress. However, his challenge lies in translating this central influence into grassroots support within the state. While respected within party circles, he lacks the broad mass appeal of some of his rivals.

Shashi Tharoor stands out as the most publicly recognizable face among the contenders. A four-time Member of Parliament from Thiruvanan-

thapuram, he enjoys popularity among urban voters, young professionals, and sections of the middle class. His articulate communication style and international profile have made him one of the party's most visible leaders. However, his independent views and occasional divergence from official party positions have sometimes caused discomfort within the organization. This has led to a complex relationship with the state leadership, even as his popularity among voters remains strong.

The Congress in Kerala has traditionally followed a model of collective leadership, avoiding the projection of a single chief ministerial candidate before elections. Instead, the leadership decision is typically made after the results, based on legislative strength, factional balance, and coalition considerations. While this approach helps maintain unity during campaigns, it also encourages behind-the-scenes maneuvering as leaders attempt to strengthen their claims in advance.

The stakes in the upcoming election are particularly high. Kerala politics has historically seen power alternate between the Left Democratic Front and the United Democratic Front every five years. This pattern was broken when the Left retained power for a second consecutive term in 2021, making the next election a critical opportunity for Congress to stage a comeback.

Publicly, party leaders continue to

emphasize unity and teamwork. Yet their individual outreach programs, distinct political strategies, and factional loyalties suggest an undercurrent of competition. Satheesan is consolidating minority support and coalition leadership. Chennithala is strengthening organizational networks. Venugopal is leveraging national influence. Tharoor is expanding his appeal beyond traditional party structures.

None of the leaders appears willing to step aside, but none can decisively dominate the field either. This delicate balance has created a situation where competition remains intense but largely unspoken.

If the UDF succeeds in winning the election, the real battle may unfold afterward. The choice of chief minister will depend on multiple factors, including the number of legislators backing each leader, the preferences of coalition partners, and the decision of the central leadership.

In essence, the Congress in Kerala is navigating a complex phase marked by both opportunity and uncertainty. The presence of several capable leaders reflects the party's depth, but the absence of a clear frontrunner also highlights internal divisions. Whether this diversity becomes a strength or a weakness will play a crucial role in shaping the party's future in one of India's most politically aware states.

## India-Japan Ties At A Turning Point: How A Takaichi Mandate Could Redefine The Partnership



Japan's political transition under the leadership of Sanae Takaichi comes at a moment of profound global uncertainty — and it could significantly reshape relations with India. With a strong mandate in Tokyo, the two countries have an opportunity not merely to continue their partnership but to transform it into a more strategic, future-oriented alliance suited to an increasingly volatile world.

India and Japan have long shared a special strategic relationship, strengthened during the tenure of former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Their personal rapport helped promote the vision of a "free and open Indo-Pacific," emphasizing democratic values, open trade routes, and regional stability. Abe's assassination slowed that momentum, but continuity in Japanese leadership aligned with his worldview could revive and modernize the partnership.

Today's geopolitical environment makes such cooperation more urgent than ever. Conflicts in the Middle East, tensions in key maritime chokepoints, and disruptions to global trade have exposed the fragility of energy supplies and supply chains. Both India and Japan depend heavily on imported energy, making them vulnerable to shocks in oil markets and shipping routes. Coordinated policies — such as diversifying energy sources, building strategic reserves, and strengthening maritime security — could protect both economies while enhancing their global influence.

The partnership also benefits from deep historical and cultural connections. Civilizational links, particularly the spread of Buddhism from India to Japan, have created a reservoir of goodwill that few bilateral relationships possess. In an era when international relations are often transactional, this foundation of trust offers a significant strategic advantage.

Economically, the two countries are highly complementary. Japan brings advanced technology, capital, and expertise in manufacturing, while India offers a vast market, a growing innovation ecosystem, and a youthful workforce. Past collaborations demonstrate the power of this synergy — from automotive partnerships to major infrastructure projects such as metro rail systems and industrial corridors.

Looking ahead, cooperation in critical technologies will be central. Sectors such as semiconductors, batteries, clean energy, and critical minerals are now essential not only for economic growth but also for national security. By coordinating research, investment, and production, India and Japan could reduce dependence on unstable supply chains and position themselves as key players in future industries.

Defence and security cooperation is another area ripe for expansion. Rather than large, politically sensitive arms deals, both sides could focus on joint development, modular projects, and co-production. Such practical collaboration would build operational familiarity between the two militaries while strengthening deterrence capabilities in the Indo-Pacific region.

Demographics offer a powerful opportunity for mutual benefit. Japan faces a rapidly ageing population and shrinking workforce, while India has one of the world's youngest populations. Structured labour mobility programs, skills partnerships, and technology transfer could address Japan's labour shortages while providing employment opportunities for Indian professionals.

Beyond bilateral gains, the partnership could extend into third regions such as Africa and Southeast Asia. Combining Japanese financing and technological strength with India's entrepreneurial capacity and regional knowledge could create sustainable development models that differ from purely extractive approaches often associated with great-power competition.

Both countries also maintain close ties with the United States, making trilateral or multilateral cooperation feasible. Coordinated strategies among like-minded democracies could help preserve a rules-based international order at a time when global institutions face mounting pressure. Acting together in forums such as the Quad enhances their collective leverage while allowing each nation to maintain strategic autonomy.

However, challenges remain. Bureaucratic hurdles, differences in regulatory systems, and slow project implementation have historically limited the full potential of India-Japan cooperation. Turning ambitious plans into concrete outcomes will require sustained institutional engagement, political will, and clear accountability mechanisms.

A strong Japanese leadership mandate could help overcome these obstacles by enabling decisive policy action. It would also signal continuity to investors, allies, and regional partners, encouraging long-term commitments rather than cautious short-term engagement.

Ultimately, the evolving global landscape — marked by geopolitical conflict, technological rivalry, and economic uncertainty — is pushing India and Japan closer together. Their shared democratic values, complementary strengths, and converging strategic interests position them to play a stabilizing role in Asia and beyond.

If both nations seize this moment, the relationship could move beyond goodwill and symbolic cooperation toward a genuinely transformative partnership. With strong leadership in Tokyo and a willingness in New Delhi to match ambition with execution, India-Japan collaboration may indeed be poised to enter a new and consequential era — one defined not only by shared interests but by coordinated action in shaping the future of the Indo-Pacific and the global order.

# When Crisis Struck, India Stood By The UAE — A Partnership Forged In Trust

During a period of heightened instability in the Middle East, India's swift and firm support for the United Arab Emirates highlighted the depth of a relationship that extends far beyond routine diplomacy. As attacks threatened civilian lives and critical infrastructure, New Delhi's response demonstrated solidarity, reassurance, and strategic confidence in one of its closest partners in the Gulf.

The crisis involved missile and drone strikes targeting civilian areas and key facilities in the UAE, resulting in casualties that included foreign nationals. Among those affected was an Indian citizen, underscoring how closely the safety of the two countries' populations is intertwined. The incident served as a stark reminder that regional instability can directly impact millions of expatriates living far from home.

At the core of India-UAE relations is the vast Indian diaspora in the Emirates. Numbering in the millions, Indians form one of the largest expatriate communities there. They contribute across all sectors of the economy, from construction and services to healthcare, education, technology, and business leadership. Their presence has helped shape the UAE's growth story, while remittances sent home support countless families across India.

Economic ties between the two nations are equally strong. The UAE ranks among India's most important trading partners and serves as a major gateway for Indian exports to the wider Middle East and Africa. Cooperation spans energy, infrastructure, finance, technology, logistics, and investment. This dense web of economic interdependence means that stability in the UAE is vital not only for its own citizens but also for India's economic interests.

When the crisis unfolded, India responded quickly at the highest level. Strong condemnation of the attacks and expressions of solidarity were conveyed directly between the leadership of the two countries. This prompt engagement



reflected a relationship built on trust and frequent communication rather than formal protocol alone. India's diplomatic stance signaled that it viewed the security of the UAE as closely linked to its own regional interests.

Beyond bilateral exchanges, India also supported broader international efforts aimed at addressing the situation and restoring stability. Such actions reinforced the perception that the partnership is both strategic and principled, grounded in a shared desire for peace, economic continuity, and regional security.

Despite fears that the conflict might weaken the UAE's economy or trigger instability, the country's underlying

strengths remain significant. Over the years, it has diversified its economy beyond oil, developed world-class infrastructure, and built substantial financial reserves. These factors provide resilience against external shocks and reassure investors, residents, and partners alike.

The episode also demonstrated how people-to-people ties can strengthen diplomatic relations. Cultural exchanges, tourism, business links, and long-standing personal connections between families across the two countries have created a bond that transcends formal agreements.

Ultimately, India's support during the crisis illustrated a partnership defined

ability. For India, the safety of its citizens abroad, uninterrupted trade flows, and regional stability are crucial concerns. For the UAE, India's backing reinforced confidence that a trusted partner would stand by it during difficult moments.

In international relations, true alliances are tested in times of uncertainty. This episode showed that India and the UAE share not just economic interests but a durable connection rooted in mutual respect, trust, and long-term cooperation. As the geopolitical landscape continues to evolve, this relationship is likely to remain a cornerstone of engagement between South Asia and the Gulf region.

by  
re-  
li-

## Parliament Panel Divided Over VBSA Bill That Could Reshape Higher Education

A parliamentary panel has witnessed sharp disagreements over the proposed Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025 (VBSA Bill), a major reform measure that could fundamentally transform India's higher education system. Critics argue that the legislation may undermine the federal structure of the Constitution by concentrating too much authority in the hands of the central government.

The Bill proposes creating a powerful apex regulator — the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan — to oversee universities and colleges across the country. If implemented, it would replace key existing bodies such as the University Grants Commission, All India Council for Technical Education, and National Council for Teacher Education, consolidating their responsibilities into a single unified framework.

Supporters of the proposal argue that this restructuring would reduce regulatory overlap, streamline governance, and improve the quality and global competitiveness of Indian higher education. The reform is also intended to align institutions with the goals of the National Education Policy 2020, encouraging autonomy, innovation, and



stronger accreditation systems.

However, several panel members and education experts have raised serious concerns. A key issue is that education falls under the Concurrent List of the Constitution, meaning both the Centre and the states share responsibility. Critics fear that a centralized regulator could weaken the authority of state governments over universities, potentially sidelining regional priorities and diversity in academic policies.

Funding mechanisms have also become a contentious point. Some observers worry that if financial

control remains heavily centralized, state-run institutions — especially those in rural or less developed areas — could face disadvantages compared to centrally supported universities.

The Bill has been referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee for detailed scrutiny. This panel is expected to examine the provisions thoroughly, consult stakeholders, and recommend changes before the legislation moves forward.

Supporters maintain that a single regulator is essential to eliminate bureaucratic duplication and create a transparent,

outcome-driven system. Opponents, however, argue that without strong safeguards for states and institutions, the reform could lead to excessive centralization and reduced academic autonomy.

As deliberations continue, the VBSA Bill has emerged as one of the most consequential education reforms in recent years. Its final shape will play a crucial role in determining whether India moves toward a centralized governance model for higher education or adopts a balanced approach that preserves federal principles while pursuing national standards.

## “Can’t Dictate Hearing Schedule”: Supreme Court Pulls Up Bengal In I-PAC Raid Case

The Supreme Court of India has strongly rebuked the West Bengal government in connection with the controversial I-PAC raid case, stating that parties cannot dictate when the court should hear a matter. The sharp observation came during a hearing on a petition filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

The case relates to raids conducted earlier this year at the offices of the Indian Political Action Committee, a political consultancy firm associated with the ruling Trinamool Congress. The ED has alleged that state authorities, including Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, interfered with the investigation while searches were underway as part of a money-laundering probe.

During the proceedings, lawyers representing the state sought additional time to file a detailed response to fresh allegations made by the central agency. They argued that the ED's latest affidavit contained new claims



that required careful examination before a reply could be submitted.

However, the court declined the request for adjournment. The bench made it clear that it would proceed with the hearing based on the material already on record and that the judiciary's schedule cannot be dictated by any party. It emphasized that



court proceedings are not meant to become a contest over securing delays.

The ED opposed the state's plea, describing it as a tactic to stall the case. According to the agency, sufficient time had already been available to prepare a response, and further delay would hinder the investigation into a serious matter.

The central agency has also accused the state leadership of gross abuse of power, alleging that the Chief Minister entered the premises during the search operation with security personnel and removed potentially important material, thereby obstructing the probe.

Despite the state's argument that it felt disadvantaged without filing a complete reply, the court maintained that the hearing would continue. It noted that the rejoinder had been on record for days and that all relevant issues could still be addressed during the proceedings.

The case has sparked significant political and legal debate, as it involves questions about the powers of central investigative agencies, alleged interference by a state government, and the broader balance within India's federal structure. The Supreme Court's firm stance indicates its intention to move forward without allowing procedural delays to stall the matter.

## Kharge's “Married Modiji” Remark On Deve Gowda Leaves PM Modi Laughing



A light-hearted moment in Parliament grabbed national attention when Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge made a witty remark about former Prime Minister H. D. Deve Gowda that even drew laughter from Narendra Modi.

The comment came during Kharge's farewell speech in the Rajya Sabha, where he was reflecting on long-standing relationships with fellow political leaders. Speaking about Deve Gowda, with whom he has shared decades of political association, Kharge delivered a humorous analogy comparing political alliances to a romantic relationship. He said that Gowda had “dated” and “loved” their side but eventually “married” Modi — a remark that instantly triggered laughter across party lines.

Prime Minister Modi, who was present in the House, was seen smiling and laughing along with other members, turning what is usually a tense political arena into a rare moment of camaraderie.

Kharge's quip was widely interpreted as a playful dig at the shifting political alignments of Deve Gowda and his party, which

has at different times allied with both the Congress and the BJP. By framing it as a humorous personal story rather than a direct political attack, Kharge managed to lighten the mood while still conveying his point.

The joke came as Kharge spoke about his long association with senior leaders whose terms in the Upper House are ending. He noted that he had known Deve Gowda for more than five decades and had worked closely with him over the years, making the remark sound more nostalgic than confrontational.

Such moments of humour are relatively rare in today's highly charged political environment, making the exchange stand out. Observers noted that the incident showcased a softer side of parliamentary proceedings, where ideological rivals can still share a laugh.

Overall, Kharge's spontaneous one-liner not only amused the House but also highlighted the fluid nature of Indian politics, where alliances evolve over time. The clip of the exchange quickly circulated online, becoming one of the most talked-about political moments of the day.

## BJP Finalises Assam Poll Strategy, PM Modi To Address Key Rallies



The Bharatiya Janata Party has finalized its seat-sharing strategy for the upcoming 2026 Assam Legislative Assembly election as it gears up for a high-stakes battle in the northeastern state. The ruling alliance, led by the BJP, is aiming to retain power for a third consecutive term and has begun intensifying its campaign across constituencies.

As part of the plan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to address three major public rallies in April, just days before polling. These events are seen as crucial to energizing party workers and consolidating voter support in key regions. His visits are likely to focus on development achievements, welfare schemes, and national security themes, which have been central to the party's campaign messaging.

According to reports, the BJP will contest the majority of the seats, while its allies — including Asom Gana Parishad and Bodoland People's Front — will fight in selected constituencies as part of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). This coordinated approach is designed to avoid vote division and maxi-

mize the alliance's chances across Assam's diverse political landscape.

The state's political environment has also witnessed shifting alliances and defections ahead of the polls, further intensifying the contest. Leaders from opposition parties have joined the BJP, strengthening its organizational base while weakening rivals. Meanwhile, opposition parties are attempting to consolidate their own support through alliances and targeted campaigning.

Polling for all 126 assembly seats is scheduled for April 9, with results to be declared in early May. The election will determine whether the incumbent government under Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma secures another term or faces a challenge from opposition coalitions.

With high-profile rallies, strategic seat allocation, and aggressive outreach efforts, the BJP is positioning itself strongly for the upcoming vote. The participation of the Prime Minister is expected to play a decisive role in shaping the campaign's momentum during the final stretch.

## DGCA's New Passenger Rules: Free Seats, Families To Sit Together On Flights



India's aviation regulator, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), has introduced major passenger-friendly rules aimed at improving comfort, transparency, and affordability in air travel. The new directives primarily address seat allocation practices, an issue that has long triggered complaints from flyers.

### Majority of Seats Must Be Free

Under the revised guidelines, airlines must provide at least 60 percent of seats on every flight without charging any seat-selection fee. The move is intended to prevent airlines from imposing excessive add-on charges and to ensure passengers are not forced to pay extra just to secure a basic seat. This is expected to benefit budget travelers in particular.

### Families and Groups To Be Seated Together

Another important provision requires airlines to seat passengers traveling under the same Passenger Name Record (PNR) together, preferably in adjacent seats. Families and groups often faced situations where they were split across the aircraft unless they paid additional fees for preferred seating. The new rule aims to eliminate that inconvenience.

### Special Protection for Children

The regulator has also reinforced that

children must be seated with at least one parent or guardian traveling on the same booking, without any extra cost. This measure prioritizes both safety and comfort for families flying with minors.

### More Transparency and Passenger Support

Beyond seating, airlines have been directed to maintain transparent policies regarding the carriage of sports equipment, musical instruments, and pets. They must also clearly communicate passenger rights, especially during delays, cancellations, or disruptions, and display this information prominently for travelers.

### Why These Changes Matter

The reforms come after widespread criticism of airlines charging extra for basic services and separating families during travel. By standardizing seat allocation practices and improving transparency, authorities aim to make flying more consumer-friendly and accessible.

Overall, these new rules represent a significant step toward strengthening passenger rights in India's rapidly growing aviation sector. If implemented effectively, they could reduce hidden costs, improve the travel experience, and ensure families can fly together without paying additional fees — a long-standing demand among air travelers.

## Vijay Rejects Alliance Offer of 50–90 Seats, Deputy CM Post: TVK Leader



Actor-politician Vijay and his party Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) have reportedly turned down a major alliance proposal ahead of the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections, according to senior party leader Aadhav Arjuna. The disclosure has sparked intense political discussion across the state.

Speaking at a party meeting, Arjuna revealed that an unidentified political party approached TVK with a highly attractive offer to form an alliance. The proposal allegedly included contesting between 50 and 90 Assembly seats along with a top leadership role — in some versions even a Chief Minister or Deputy Chief Minister position. Despite the scale of the offer, Vijay declined it, emphasizing that political authority should come directly from the people rather than negotiated deals.

Arjuna stated that Vijay is unwilling to compromise the party's independence for positions of power. According to him, the TVK chief believes leadership roles must be earned through electoral victory and public trust, not through pre-poll arrangements driven by political strategy.

Although the party that made the offer was not officially named, remarks

about not yielding to external pressure led to speculation that a national party may have been involved. Nonetheless, TVK leadership has made it clear that it prefers to contest the elections independently rather than as a junior partner in a coalition.

The upcoming Assembly election will mark TVK's major electoral debut, making Vijay one of the most prominent new entrants in Tamil Nadu politics in recent years. Established parties appear to be taking his political rise seriously, as reflected in the scale of the reported proposal.

Tamil Nadu has long been dominated by traditional Dravidian parties, and Vijay's decision signals an attempt to position TVK as a fresh alternative in the state's political landscape. By refusing alliances, he is projecting confidence that the party can build its own support base.

Whether this bold strategy will translate into electoral success remains uncertain, but it has already altered pre-election dynamics and heightened public interest. Vijay's move underscores his ambition to emerge not merely as a political participant but as a decisive force in the state's future governance.

## Russian Oil Tanker Reverses Course, Now Headed to India

A Russian oil tanker that was originally en route to China has reportedly made a dramatic U turn and is now heading toward Indian waters, underscoring shifting energy trade flows as global markets adjust to geopolitical tensions and supply uncertainties.

According to maritime tracking data and industry observers, the vessel altered its course after indications that demand dynamics and pricing conditions in Asia had shifted. While its initial destination was China — traditionally one of Russia's largest crude buyers — the tanker is now steering toward India, where refiners have been increasing purchases of discounted Russian crude amid competitive pricing and flexible terms.

The unexpected redirection highlights India's growing role as a key destination for Russian energy exports. Indian refiners have been actively sourcing crude from Russia, driven in part by attractive discounts compared with other grades available in the global market. This trend has helped fuel rising bilateral trade, even as Western nations have im-



posed sanctions and restrictions on Russian energy shipments following geopolitical conflicts.

Industry analysts note that changes in tanker routes can reflect broader market signals, including refinery demand, freight costs, and geopolitical developments that affect where crude is most competitively priced. The decision to redirect the tanker suggests that Indian buyers are currently willing to secure cargoes that

might otherwise have gone to China, which remains a dominant force in global energy consumption.

The move also comes amid heightened scrutiny of shipping patterns and payment mechanisms involving Russian oil, as buyers navigate complex regulatory environments. Some importers have adjusted their logistics and contractual arrangements to align with sanctions regimes while maintaining steady

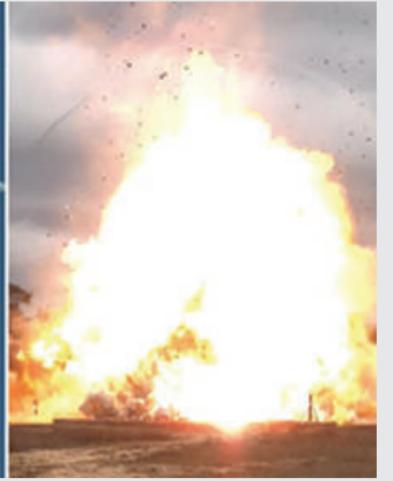
supplies.

For India, the rerouting could help ensure continued inflows of crude at competitive rates, supporting refinery output and domestic energy needs. Local refiners rely on a mix of grades to optimise production and manage costs, and access to discounted Russian barrels has been a key factor in recent procurement strategies.

The tanker's course reversal may also signal subtle shifts in regional energy preferences, with Indian demand possibly outpacing that of other Asian buyers for specific cargoes. Market watchers will likely track similar movements in shipping data to gauge how global crude flows evolve in response to pricing disparities and geopolitical realities.

In summary, the tanker's decision to abandon its original sail plan to China and instead steer toward India reflects the fluidity of today's oil markets. Driven by competitive pricing, demand variations, and geopolitics, such shifts underscore India's emerging importance as a major destination in the global energy landscape.

## US Military Strikes Iranian Missile Sites Near Strait of Hormuz With Heavy Bunker Buster Bombs



In one of the most significant escalations in the Middle East conflict, the United States military conducted airstrikes on Iranian missile sites near the strategic Strait of Hormuz, deploying some of its most powerful conventional munitions to neutralise threats to international shipping and maritime security.

According to military statements, US forces targeted Iranian coastal missile facilities and launch infrastructure believed to house anti ship cruise missiles and other weapons that posed a risk to vessels transiting the vital oil corridor. To penetrate fortified underground positions, the US used 5,000 pound "bunker buster" bombs — high yield deep penetrator ordnance designed to destroy hardened targets that standard bombs may not reach.

The operation marks a major effort to reopen the Strait of Hormuz for safe international navigation. The waterway is one of the world's most important maritime choke points for ener-

gy transport, and Iran's deployment of missiles, naval mines, and drones had effectively disrupted commercial traffic, contributing to volatility in global oil markets.

Officials said the strikes were carried out by aircraft equipped to deliver the heavy penetrators on designated Iranian military sites along the coastline. These munitions are specifically engineered to burrow through earth or reinforced bunkers before detonating, making them suitable for targeting concealed or deeply buried weapon positions.

The use of such powerful conventional weapons underscores the seriousness with which the United States views threats to commercial shipping and regional stability. The presence of Iranian missile systems near the strait had deterred many international partners from attempting to move through the waterway, compounding economic and strategic pressures.

This military action comes amid broader escalation in the Iran Israel US

conflict, which has seen a series of high profile strikes, counter strikes, and losses on both sides. In recent days, clashes have expanded across multiple fronts, involving missile barrages, drone strikes, and diplomatic condemnations.

Regional tensions have also contributed to rising global energy prices, as instability around the Strait of Hormuz raises fears of sustained disruptions to crude oil exports. Ensuring freedom of navigation through the strait is a key priority for many governments and commercial interests, given its role in facilitating roughly a fifth of global oil shipments.

The decision to employ heavy bunker busting ordnance reflects an effort to systematically dismantle Iran's ability to project missile threats in the Gulf. However, the broader conflict remains fluid, with ongoing military activity and the potential for further escalation as international and regional actors respond to recent developments.

## Iran's Leadership Structure Faces Uncertainty After Key Assassinations

Iran's political hierarchy has been shaken by a series of targeted killings of senior officials amid the ongoing conflict with Israel and the United States. The most recent high-profile death is that of Ali Larijani, Iran's top security official and a veteran political figure. Larijani's role had been central in shaping Iran's wartime strategy and serving as a bridge between political and security establishments.

Despite these losses, Iranian authorities maintain that the political system remains intact and will not be destabilised. Senior government ministers have emphasized that institutional frameworks are strong enough to withstand leadership shocks.

The conflict's toll on Tehran's leadership is part of a broader pattern of targeted strikes. Prior to Larijani's death, the country lost other senior figures, including for-



mer top military leaders and advisers. These cumulative losses have sparked questions about who remains in the inner circles of power and who could serve as interlocutors in any diplomatic outreach from the United States and other international actors.

ment and senior clerics to the new leadership.

However, the deaths of multiple senior policy-makers — particularly those known for pragmatism or diplomatic experience like Larijani — have raised doubts about who could engage in negotiations with the US or other external parties. Without seasoned negotiators remaining in Tehran's leadership, diplomatic channels are limited, making de-escalation talks more challenging.

In summary, Iran's leadership continues to operate under strain, maintaining institutional continuity even as key figures are killed. The loss of individuals with experience and cross-border diplomatic recognition complicates the landscape for potential talks with the United States, leaving the path to negotiation uncertain amidst ongoing hostilities.

## Iran Mourns Security Chief Larijani, Warns US and Israel



Iran is in mourning and issuing stern warnings following the death of Ali Larijani, Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, who was killed in a military strike attributed to Israel and possibly the United States. Iranian officials hailed him as a key national figure and vowed that those responsible would face consequences, highlighting rising tensions in the Middle East.

Before his death, Larijani had warned that attacks on Iranian leaders by foreign forces would only make the country "stronger," signaling defiance toward both the United States and Israel. His remarks underscored determination amid escalating hostilities.

Larijani's assassination has been met with widespread condemnation within Iran. Senior leaders have vowed "severe revenge," portraying his death as martyrdom that will strengthen national resolve. He was regarded as a central architect of

Iran's security policies, making his loss particularly significant.

His killing comes amid a series of high-profile losses for Iran's leadership during ongoing conflict with Israel. The attacks have triggered military responses from Iran, heightening tensions across the region and raising concerns over potential further escalation.

International reactions have varied. Russia condemned the strikes, describing them as the "murder" of sovereign leadership and called for an immediate ceasefire and a return to diplomatic talks, reflecting broader global concern over the intensifying violence.

Larijani's death marks a major turning point in the conflict, removing one of Iran's most senior security officials during a critical period. As Iran pledges retaliation and regional tensions rise, the situation remains highly volatile, with the risk of further military escalation.

## About 90 Ships Have Crossed the Strait of Hormuz Despite War



Rising tensions from the ongoing conflict involving Iran, the United States and Israel have put the strategic Strait of Hormuz — a key global oil chokepoint — under intense strain. Yet, maritime movements continue in the area despite the widespread disruption.

Recent maritime data shows that around 90 vessels, including approximately 16 oil tankers, have successfully transited the narrow waterway since the beginning of March. These transits have taken place even as regional hostilities have severely curtailed general shipping traffic, highlighting selective passage rather than widespread closure.

The ships that made the crossing were able to move through the strait during the early part of March, indicating that Iran — which exercises control over the waterway — continues to allow certain vessel movements. This has enabled exports totaling millions of barrels of crude oil, most of which are being shipped out despite the conflict's pressure on global

energy flows.

Iran's continued exports through Hormuz come at a time when much wider maritime traffic has been halted or sharply reduced due to security risks, including missile and drone threats in the region. Insurance costs for vessels in the area have spiked, and many international carriers have avoided the corridor altogether.

The continued flow of oil tankers, even amid risk, underscores the strait's importance to energy markets and Iran's reliance on its exports — especially to buyers in Asia — to sustain revenue and supply. While overall traffic volumes remain far below normal pre conflict levels, the fact that dozens of ships have crossed since early March indicates a limited but notable continuation of commercial activity in one of the world's most critical maritime routes.

The situation remains fluid, with broader shipping patterns and oil export dynamics likely to evolve as the regional conflict continues and as international responses to the crisis unfold.

## Iran's Intelligence Minister Esmail Khatib Reportedly Killed in Israeli Strike



Israel has claimed that its military killed Iran's Intelligence Minister Esmail Khatib in overnight strikes, marking a significant escalation in the ongoing conflict between the two countries. Israeli officials stated that Khatib was "eliminated" in the offensive, though Iran has not yet officially confirmed his death.

According to Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has given the military broad authority to target senior Iranian figures, and further operations could continue without additional political approval. Officials have indicated that more significant military actions may follow, though details remain sparse.

If confirmed, Khatib's death would be the third high-ranking Iranian official reportedly killed by Israel in just a few days. Ear-

lier, Israel said it had targeted Iran's top security official, Ali Larijani, and the commander of the Basij paramilitary force, General Gholam Reza Soleimani, in successive strikes.

The reported assassination comes amid a widening regional conflict. Iran has responded with missile attacks toward Israel and neighboring Gulf states, prompting alerts and interceptions in countries including the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain. The tensions have also affected global oil markets, causing a surge in prices.

Civilian casualties have been reported in Lebanon, where Israeli airstrikes targeted infrastructure linked to Hezbollah and other groups. Authorities there have reported dozens of civilian deaths and hundreds of injuries.

Global powers have expressed concern over the escalating violence. NATO has deployed air defense systems in nearby regions, and diplomatic efforts are underway to prevent further escalation. Meanwhile, Russia and other international actors have condemned the strikes.

Despite Israel's claims, Tehran has been slow to respond or confirm the deaths of its senior officials, making independent verification difficult amid the ongoing conflict.

In summary, the reported killing of Esmail Khatib, along with other senior Iranian figures, represents one of the most serious tactical escalations in the Iran-Israel conflict to date. The situation remains highly fluid, with tensions and military actions continuing to rise across the region.

## Sensex, Nifty Extend Winning Streak for Third Day as Rupee Hits Record Low

Indian benchmark equity indices continued their upward march for a third straight session on March 18, supported by broad-based buying across sectors and encouraging global cues. Despite the strong performance in equities, the Indian rupee weakened further, sliding to a new record low against the US dollar.

The BSE Sensex surged 633 points, or 0.83 percent, to close at 76,704. The NSE Nifty 50 also advanced by 197 points, gaining 0.83 percent to settle at 23,777. During the day, the Nifty briefly crossed the 23,850 mark, reflecting sustained investor optimism and steady demand for stocks.

Buying interest was visible across the market spectrum. Not only did large-cap stocks move higher, but mid-cap and small-cap segments also delivered strong gains, indicating improving risk appetite among investors. The Nifty Midcap 100 index jumped around 2 percent, while the Nifty Smallcap 100 rose about 1.6 percent, outperforming the frontline indices.

In contrast to the buoyant eq-



uity market, the currency market remained under pressure. The Indian rupee depreciated sharply, breaching the 92.50 mark for the first time and closing at an all-time low of 92.63 per US dollar. The decline reflects continued strength in the dollar and persistent global uncertainties, which have weighed on emerging-market currencies.

Among individual stocks, several heavyweight and technology names led the rally. Jo

Financial Services, Tech Mahindra, Infosys, Eternal, and Mahindra & Mahindra were among the top gainers on the Nifty. Meanwhile, some defensive and energy stocks lagged behind, with Coal India, NTPC, Hindustan Unilever, Cipla, and Sun Pharma ending the session in negative territory.

Banking stocks also contributed to the market's rise. The Nifty Bank index climbed roughly 0.82 percent, supported by gains in major financial

stocks. Strength in the banking sector often signals confidence in economic growth prospects, adding further support to the broader market rally.

Overall, the three-day advance suggests that market sentiment has improved after recent volatility. Positive global trends, selective institutional buying, and renewed interest in mid- and small-cap stocks helped sustain the upward momentum.

However, the sharp fall in the rupee highlights underlying macroeconomic concerns. The divergence between a rising stock market and a weakening currency underscores the complex environment facing investors. While equities reflect optimism about growth and earnings, the currency's decline points to external pressures such as capital flows and global economic uncertainty.

In the near term, markets are likely to remain sensitive to international developments, currency movements, and policy signals, making volatility a key theme even as the broader trend remains positive.

## Urban Company Shares Hit 20% Upper Circuit After ₹632 Crore SBI MF Stake Buy



Shares of Urban Company witnessed a sharp surge on March 18, hitting the 20 percent upper circuit during intraday trading after SBI Mutual Fund acquired a substantial stake in the home-services platform. The strong rally reflected renewed investor confidence driven by the entry of a major domestic institutional investor.

The stock rose to an intraday high of ₹131.44 on the NSE after opening nearly 3 percent higher. The surge followed reports that SBI Mutual Fund purchased shares worth around ₹632 crore across the NSE and BSE, indicating a significant vote of confidence in the company's growth prospects.

The spike in trading activity coincided with the expiry of the mandatory lock-in period for pre-IPO investors. With the restriction lifted, early shareholders became eligible to sell their holdings, resulting in large block deals in the market. Several global investors took this opportunity to offload shares, generating substantial volumes on the exchanges.

On the previous trading session, multiple institutional investors collectively sold shares worth over ₹700 crore through block deals. While such large exits typically put downward pressure on stock prices, the simultaneous entry of SBI Mutual Fund absorbed the supply and boosted sentiment, triggering aggressive buying.

The mutual fund is believed to have acquired close to a 4 percent stake through these transactions, purchasing millions of shares at an average price of about ₹110 each. The move represents one of the notable institutional investments in a recently listed technology-driven services company.

Urban Company, known for providing on-demand home services such as beauty treatments, home cleaning, appliance repairs, and wellness services, had debuted strongly on the stock exchanges following its initial public offering. The IPO had attracted robust demand from investors, leading to a premium listing.

Despite the positive market reaction, the com-

pany operates in a competitive and rapidly evolving digital services space. Like many platform-based businesses, it continues to focus on scaling operations while working toward sustainable profitability. Strong revenue growth has been accompanied by margin pressures, making long-term execution a key factor for investors.

The sharp rally underscores how institutional participation can significantly influence stock performance, particularly in companies with relatively limited trading history. Large purchases by well-known fund houses often signal confidence in a firm's fundamentals and future potential.

Overall, the upper-circuit move highlights strong market optimism toward Urban Company following the ownership reshuffle triggered by the lock-in expiry. Investors will now watch closely to see whether the momentum sustains in the coming sessions as the company navigates growth challenges and competitive pressures.

## Paramount Must Prepare for Relentless Challenges Ahead

Paramount Global finds itself at a critical crossroads, confronting a series of battles that could shape its future in the rapidly evolving media and entertainment landscape. From corporate restructuring to industry consolidation and political scrutiny, the company faces mounting pressures on multiple fronts, making resilience and strategic clarity more important than ever.

The most immediate challenge stems from large-scale mergers and acquisitions reshaping the global media industry. Paramount's aggressive expansion strategy, including potential combinations with other major studios, has sparked anxiety among employees, creators, and regulators. Such consolidation may strengthen market position but often brings fears of layoffs, reduced competition, and diminished creative diversity.

Financial pressures add another layer of complexity. Like many legacy media companies, Paramount has struggled with declining traditional advertising revenues and the high costs of competing in the streaming era. Massive investments are required to produce premium content, maintain technology platforms, and attract subscribers in a crowded market dominated by global giants. Heavy debt burdens and fluctuating



profitability further constrain flexibility, forcing difficult decisions on cost-cutting and restructuring.

Political and regulatory risks also loom large. Media conglomerates increasingly operate under intense scrutiny from governments and watchdogs concerned about market dominance and influence over public discourse. Any major deal must navigate antitrust reviews and potential legal challenges, prolonging uncertainty and delaying strategic execution.

Inside the organization, morale issues cannot be ignored. Employees worry about redundancies, shifts in editorial direction, and loss of institutional identity following mergers. Historically, large corporate integrations often result in overlapping roles being eliminated and operations centralized, fueling apprehension across newsrooms and production units.

At the same time, Paramount must reinvent itself technologically. The entertainment industry is undergoing a seismic shift to-

ward digital distribution, artificial intelligence, and personalized viewing experiences. Companies that fail to innovate risk losing relevance, yet transformation demands enormous capital and organizational change.

Despite these obstacles, opportunities exist. Paramount possesses valuable intellectual property, established brands, and a global audience base. Strategic partnerships, technological upgrades, and a renewed focus on high-quality storytelling could help the company regain momentum. However, success will depend on balancing growth ambitions with financial discipline and stakeholder confidence.

Ultimately, Paramount's journey resembles a prolonged campaign rather than a single decisive battle. Each challenge—financial, competitive, political, or cultural—requires careful navigation. The company's ability to adapt while preserving creative strength will determine whether it emerges stronger or becomes another casualty of industry disruption.

In an era defined by relentless change, Paramount must be prepared to fight not one war but many, sequentially and sometimes simultaneously. The outcome will shape not only the company's destiny but also the broader future of global media.

## India's Shrinking Forex Buffer Fuels Calls for Softer Rupee Defence

India's foreign exchange reserves are facing mounting pressure as the central bank continues to intervene to support the weakening rupee. The sustained defence of the currency has steadily reduced the country's financial cushion, prompting economists to suggest that authorities may need to allow the rupee to depreciate more gradually rather than exhaust reserves.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has been actively selling US dollars in the market to curb sharp declines in the rupee, which is trading near record lows. However, this strategy has led to a noticeable drop in foreign exchange assets. Excluding gold, India's reserves now cover about 8.7 months of imports — the lowest level in three years — raising concerns about the economy's ability to withstand prolonged external shocks.

One major factor behind the pressure is the rising import bill, especially due to elevated global crude oil prices. As a large oil-importing nation, India requires substantial dollar outflows to meet energy needs. Higher oil prices widen the trade deficit, increase demand for dollars, and intensify downward pressure on the rupee, forcing the central bank to intervene more frequently.

Economists warn that contin-



ued aggressive intervention could reduce the RBI's capacity to respond to future crises. Some experts argue that exchange rates should act as natural shock absorbers, allowing the currency to weaken when external conditions deteriorate. A gradual depreciation could ease pressure on reserves while helping the economy adjust to global developments.

Recent figures show that India's forex reserves have declined from last year's peak, though they remain substantial by historical standards. Gains in gold holdings have partially offset the fall in foreign currency assets, but the

overall trend underscores the cost of defending the rupee during periods of volatility.

Analysts also caution against trying to maintain a specific exchange-rate level. If underlying economic fundamentals shift — such as persistent high oil prices or capital outflows — defending a fixed rate becomes increasingly expensive and difficult. In such circumstances, allowing controlled depreciation may prove more sustainable.

Another concern is the central bank's forward commitments, which reduce the amount of reserves effectively available for im-

mediate intervention. Some experts believe India may ultimately need a significantly larger reserve buffer to maintain strong protection against global financial turbulence.

In essence, India faces a delicate balancing act. Stabilizing the rupee helps contain imported inflation and market volatility, but excessive intervention risks eroding the reserves needed for long-term economic security. Policymakers must now weigh the benefits of defending the currency against the need to preserve financial resilience in an uncertain global environment.

## Rupee Falls to Record ₹92.63 as Importers Rush to Buy Dollars



The Indian rupee plunged to a new all-time low of ₹92.63 against the US dollar on March 18, pressured by heavy demand for the greenback from importers and persistently high global oil prices. The sharp decline came despite efforts by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to stabilize the currency, underscoring ongoing weakness in the foreign exchange market.

For most of the trading session, the rupee moved within a relatively narrow range after opening slightly stronger. However, in the final hour, dollar demand surged as importers — especially oil marketing companies — rushed to cover their positions ahead of an upcoming market holiday. This sudden spike in demand pushed the currency to its weakest level on record.

The rupee closed at ₹92.63 per dollar compared with ₹92.37 in the previous session, after touching an intraday low of ₹92.64. The domestic

currency has repeatedly hit record lows in recent sessions, reflecting sustained pressure from both domestic and global factors.

Elevated crude oil prices remain a key concern for India, which imports a large majority of its energy requirements. Higher oil costs increase the country's import bill, widen the current account deficit, and boost demand for dollars, all of which exert downward pressure on the rupee.

Global geopolitical tensions have further driven up energy prices, amplifying stress on emerging-market currencies. The rupee has weakened noticeably in recent weeks as uncertainty in international markets has intensified.

Traders indicate that the RBI has been intervening in both domestic and offshore markets to curb excessive volatility and slow the pace of depreciation. While these measures have helped prevent abrupt swings,

they have not been sufficient to reverse the broader weakening trend.

Market participants are now closely watching the ₹93 per dollar level, widely viewed as a critical psychological threshold. If oil prices remain high and dollar demand continues to strengthen, analysts believe the rupee could approach or even cross this mark.

Uncertainty surrounding global monetary policy also continues to influence currency movements. Higher interest rates in the United States typically strengthen the dollar and attract capital flows away from emerging economies, adding further pressure on the rupee.

Overall, the currency's record fall reflects a combination of strong dollar demand, rising import costs, geopolitical risks, and global financial uncertainty. Unless these external pressures ease, the rupee is likely to remain volatile, with the risk of further depreciation in the near term.

## Man Confronts Students Throwing Paper From School Bus, Viral Video Sparks Debate



A viral video showing a man confronting school students for littering has ignited widespread discussion on social media about civic responsibility and appropriate ways to correct public behaviour. The incident, captured on camera and widely shared online, shows pieces of paper scattered across a road after being allegedly thrown from a passing school bus.

According to reports, a motorcyclist noticed the litter on the street and believed it had come from the bus. He then chased the vehicle, pulled alongside it, and eventually boarded it while recording the entire episode. Once inside, he questioned the students about their actions and asked why they had thrown trash onto a public road, challenging them to consider whether they thought it was acceptable behaviour.

The video, posted on social media on March 14, quickly gained traction, drawing tens of thousands of views and reactions. Faces of the students and staff were blurred, and the exact time and location of the incident have not been officially verified.

Online reactions have been sharply divided. Many viewers praised the man for taking a stand and teaching the students a lesson about cleanliness and public responsibility. Supporters argued that such direct action is neces-

sary in a country struggling with littering issues, especially when young people fail to understand the impact of their behaviour on shared spaces.

Others, however, criticized the confrontation. They felt the biker's approach may have been excessive and potentially unsafe, suggesting he should have reported the matter to school authorities instead of confronting minors directly. Some commenters also emphasized that children make mistakes and should be guided rather than publicly reprimanded.

The incident has therefore sparked a broader conversation about how society should address civic misconduct, particularly when it involves young people. While most agree that maintaining cleanliness in public spaces is essential, opinions differ on whether public shaming, direct confrontation, or institutional action is the best solution.

Ultimately, the viral clip highlights a persistent issue — everyday littering — while also revealing deeper concerns about accountability, education, and the role of ordinary citizens in enforcing social norms. It serves as a reminder that building civic sense requires both awareness and constructive guidance, especially among the younger generation.

## Folk Musicians Turn Airport Security Check Into A Magical Musical Moment



Passengers at Jodhpur Airport recently witnessed an unexpected cultural treat when a group of Rajasthani folk artists transformed a routine security check into a lively musical performance. What is usually a quiet, procedural moment suddenly became memorable as traditional melodies filled the terminal.

The artists, led by renowned folk performer Ismail Langa, began singing while passing through the screening area, surprising both travellers and airport staff. Their spontaneous performance featured soulful Rajasthani folk music, instantly creating a warm and festive atmosphere inside the otherwise formal security zone.

The performance was later shared online by the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), which manages airport security across India. Posting the video on its official social-media account, the force described the episode as a "musical moment at the airport," noting how the artist's heartfelt rendition added a touch of sweetness to the travel experience.

According to reports, the group was travelling together when the impromptu performance occurred. Rather than a staged event, the song emerged naturally during the security process, blending traditional culture with a modern travel setting. Passengers nearby paused to watch, many appear-

ing delighted by the unexpected show.

The video captures the troupe's distinctive musical style — rich vocals accompanied by traditional expression — delivered with ease despite the unusual environment. The fusion of heritage art with a contemporary public space created a unique scene rarely witnessed in airports, where strict procedures typically leave little room for spontaneity.

Rajasthani folk music is known for its deep emotional quality, storytelling tradition, and vibrant cultural roots. Performances like this highlight how such art forms continue to thrive beyond formal stages, reaching audiences in everyday spaces.

Online reactions to the clip have been overwhelmingly positive. Many viewers praised the artists for spreading joy and showcasing India's cultural richness in an unexpected setting. Others noted how the moment humanized airport security, turning a routine checkpoint into a shared experience of music and connection.

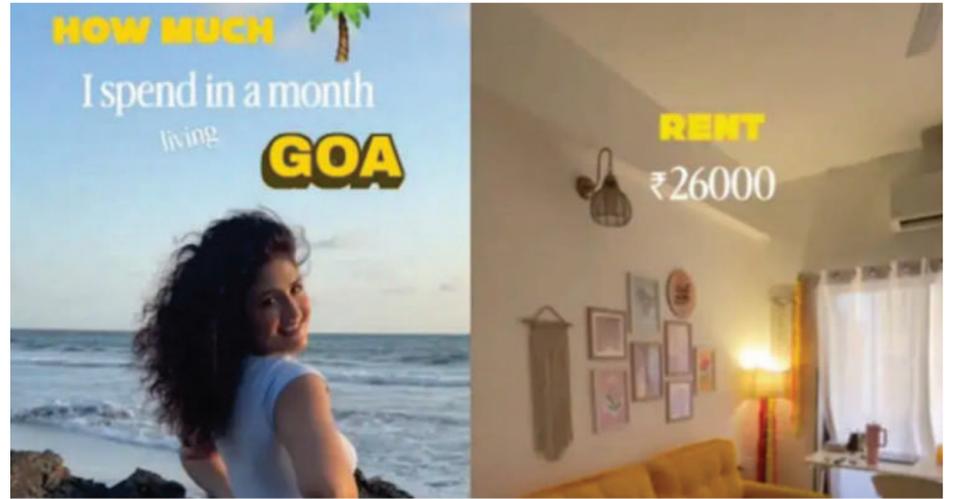
Ultimately, the viral video serves as a reminder that art can emerge anywhere — even in the most ordinary situations. For a brief moment at Jodhpur Airport, travellers were not just passengers rushing to catch flights but an audience brought together by the timeless power of folk music.

## Living Solo In Goa: Techie Reveals ₹82,000 Monthly Expense Breakdown

A software professional has sparked online discussion after sharing how much it costs to live alone in Goa. In a detailed social-media post, the techie revealed that maintaining a comfortable single lifestyle in the popular coastal state costs about ₹82,000 per month — a figure that surprised many who consider Goa a budget-friendly destination.

According to the breakdown, accommodation formed the largest portion of expenses. The techie reportedly lives in a rented apartment, paying a substantial amount for housing due to the demand for well-located homes near workspaces and urban conveniences. Rent alone consumed a major chunk of the monthly budget, reflecting how property prices in Goa have risen with the influx of remote workers and digital nomads.

Food and groceries accounted for another significant share. The individual balanced home-cooked meals with occasional dining out, which pushed monthly food expenses upward. Transportation costs were also notable, as public transport options in



Goa are limited compared to major metros. Many residents rely on private vehicles or rentals, adding to recurring expenses.

Utility bills — including electricity, internet, water, and mobile services — further increased the total. Reliable high-speed internet, essential for tech professionals working remotely, can be a particularly important expense. In addition, routine household costs such

as maintenance, cleaning supplies, and personal care items contributed steadily to the monthly outflow.

Lifestyle spending played a key role as well. The techie allocated money for entertainment, shopping, subscriptions, and leisure activities, reflecting a comfortable but not extravagant way of living. Health-related expenses, insurance, and emergency provisions were also

part of the budget, underscoring the need for financial planning when living independently.

The post triggered mixed reactions online. Some users felt the amount was high for a single person in Goa, arguing that a simpler lifestyle could cost far less. Others noted that the figure seemed reasonable for someone seeking privacy, modern amenities, and a balanced quality of life.

Cost-of-living studies

support this wide variation. Monthly expenses for a single person in Goa can range roughly from ₹35,000 to ₹90,000 depending on housing choice and lifestyle preferences.

Overall, the techie's detailed account highlights an important reality: while Goa is often seen as a relaxed, affordable paradise, living there full-time — especially alone and comfortably — can be significantly more expensive than many people expect.

## ₹1.5 Lakh Salary, Only ₹20,000 Saved: Viral Post Reveals Bengaluru's Costly Reality

A viral social-media post has ignited debate about the true cost of living in Bengaluru after revealing that a professional earning ₹1.5 lakh per month manages to save barely ₹20,000. The story, shared online by a user about his cousin, highlights how even high salaries in India's tech capital can be quickly consumed by everyday expenses.

According to the post, the young software professional moved to Bengaluru for his first job, believing he had achieved financial success. However, within six months, he realised that the city's high living costs significantly reduced his disposable income. Family and friends initially assumed he was doing extremely well, but the reality turned out to be far more complicated.

Rent emerged as the biggest expense. The man reportedly pays around ₹36,000 per month for a small apartment located close to his workplace — a



common choice among professionals trying to avoid long commutes in the city's heavy traffic. Groceries form another major component, costing roughly ₹13,000 to ₹15,000 monthly, reflecting the rising cost of food and daily necessities in urban areas.

Transportation also takes a substantial share of income. Due to congestion and limited public transport convenience,

the professional spends between ₹6,000 and ₹8,000 per month on cabs and auto-rickshaws. Lifestyle expenses add further pressure, with about ₹10,000 to ₹12,000 going toward online food orders, coffee, and weekend outings — costs that many young professionals consider part of maintaining a balanced social life.

After accounting for these recurring expenses and other routine bills,

only a small amount remains for savings at the end of the month. The post resonated widely online, as many users shared similar experiences of struggling to save despite earning what would be considered a high income in most parts of India.

Reactions, however, were mixed. Some commenters argued that careful budgeting and lifestyle adjustments could signifi-

cantly increase savings. Others maintained that Bengaluru's housing prices, traffic-related costs, and urban lifestyle make high expenses unavoidable, especially for newcomers seeking convenience and comfort.

The discussion reflects a broader reality: in major metropolitan hubs, salary figures alone do not determine financial security. High rents, transportation challenges, and lifestyle expectations can quickly erode income, leaving even well-paid professionals feeling financially stretched.

Ultimately, the viral post serves as a reminder that while Bengaluru offers lucrative career opportunities, achieving meaningful savings often requires disciplined spending, strategic housing choices, and long-term financial planning — especially for those living independently in one of India's most expensive cities.

## "Too Comfortable In Germany": Indian-German Couple Moves To India For A New Life

An Indian-German couple has gone viral online after revealing why they chose to leave their stable life in Germany and relocate to India — not because of problems abroad, but because life had become "too comfortable." Their story, shared on social media, has sparked widespread discussion about what truly defines a fulfilling life.

According to the couple, Germany offered everything most people aspire to: financial security, social stability, efficient systems, and a high quality of life. However, over time, that very stability began to feel limiting. They said their daily routine had become repetitive, predictable, and emotionally unchallenging, making it seem as though life was running on autopilot.

In their post, the man, Deepesh Patel, explained that they were not leaving due to common complaints such as cold weather or bureaucracy. Instead, they wanted something entirely differ-



ent — uncertainty, excitement, and personal growth. Despite enjoying comfort and security, they began craving new experiences and a sense of transformation.

The couple also emphasized that they did not want to live with future regrets. They feared look-

ing back and wondering "what if" they had never taken a bold step outside their comfort zone. Ultimately, the desire for challenge outweighed the fear of failure, motivating them to make the move.

India, they said, felt like the perfect destina-

tion for reinvention. They were drawn to the country's vibrant culture, deep traditions, diversity, and dynamic energy. Unlike the predictability they experienced in Germany, India offered what they described as chaos mixed with creativity — an environment where

new perspectives and personal growth are constantly possible.

Their decision quickly attracted attention online. Many social media users praised the couple's courage, calling the move inspiring and refreshing. Some people who had returned to India after living abroad shared similar sentiments, saying they appreciated the country's liveliness, colours, festivals, and sense of community.

Others, however, expressed surprise at leaving a developed country for a more unpredictable environment, highlighting how differently people define happiness and success.

Overall, the viral story highlights a powerful idea: material comfort does not always guarantee fulfillment. For this couple, true satisfaction lay in embracing uncertainty, cultural richness, and the possibility of growth — even if it meant leaving behind a secure life in one of Europe's most stable nations.

## Jasprit Bumrah Set to Lose ₹2 Crore After BCCI Scraps Top Contract Tier

India's premier fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah is set to face a ₹2 crore reduction in his annual earnings following a major overhaul of central contracts by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

The board has abolished the elite Grade A+ category, which previously represented the highest pay bracket in Indian cricket's retainership system. Players in this tier earned about ₹7 crore annually. With the removal of this category, the new top level is Grade A, which carries an annual retainership of around ₹5 crore.

Bumrah, who was earlier part of the A+ group, has now been placed in Grade A, effectively resulting in a ₹2 crore annual pay cut despite remaining one of India's most important players across formats.

Only three cricketers currently occupy the new top bracket: Jasprit Bumrah, Shubman Gill, and Ravindra Jadeja.

### Why BCCI Made This Change

The restructuring reflects changing dynamics in Indian cricket. The A+ category had typically been reserved for players active across all formats and central to the team's plans. With retirements of senior players, workload management concerns, and increasing format specialization, the board chose to eliminate the tier entirely.

This decision has created an unusual situation where a player of Bumrah's stature, still an



automatic selection when fit, faces reduced earnings without any drop in performance or importance.

### Board May Consider Compensation

There are indications that the board is examining ways to address the situation. Officials are reportedly aware that reducing the salary of one of India's leading match winners could be viewed as unfair, and alternative compensation options may be explored.

### Revised Contract Structure

Under the new system:  
Grade A: ₹5 crore annually  
Grade B: ₹3 crore annually  
Grade C: ₹1 crore annually

Previously, Grade A+ stood above these at ₹7 crore.

### Bigger Picture

The move signals a transitional phase in Indian cricket, as the team evolves with new leadership, emerging talent, and shifting priorities. While Bumrah's pay reduction has drawn the most attention, the restructuring could influence how top players are rewarded in the future.

In essence, the loss is not linked to form or selection issues but purely to the removal of the highest salary bracket itself. How the BCCI balances financial policy with recognition of elite performers will remain a key talking point among fans and players.

## Afghanistan's Allah Ghazanfar Sends Emotional Message To India After Deadly Strikes

Young Afghanistan spinner Allah Ghazanfar has issued an emotional appeal to India following devastating air strikes in Kabul that were blamed on Pakistan, expressing grief over civilian casualties and calling for support during the crisis.

The strikes reportedly hit a major drug rehabilitation hospital in the Afghan capital, killing hundreds of people and injuring many more. The facility was known for treating poor patients who could not afford private medical care, making the attack particularly shocking for ordinary citizens. Afghan authorities said large portions of the 2,000-bed centre were destroyed, though Pakistan denied deliberately targeting civilian infrastructure.

Reacting to the tragedy, Ghazanfar condemned the attack and highlighted the suffering of common people. He noted that many victims were vulnerable patients with limited resources, stressing that targeting such a place was devastating



for Afghan society.

Importantly, the cricketer singled out India in his message, describing the country as a close friend of Afghanistan and expressing a desire for stronger engagement and support. His remarks reflected long-standing ties between the two nations, especially in devel-

opment, humanitarian aid, and cricket.

The appeal was not only directed at India but also at the broader international community, urging global attention to the humanitarian impact of the escalating conflict between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Many Afghan public figures, includ-

ing other athletes, have voiced outrage over civilian deaths and called for accountability.

Ghazanfar, considered one of Afghanistan's rising cricket talents, is also set to feature in major international leagues, which has amplified the reach of his message. His statement underscores how sports figures increasingly use their platforms to speak out on political and humanitarian crises affecting their countries.

The incident comes amid sharply rising tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan, with both sides accusing each other of aggression and cross-border militancy. Civilian casualties and damage to critical infrastructure have intensified fears of further escalation and humanitarian distress.

In essence, Ghazanfar's message conveyed grief, solidarity, and a plea for international support, particularly from India, at a time when Afghanistan faces one of its most severe crises in recent years.

## SRH Confirm Pat Cummins To Miss Initial IPL 2026 Matches, Name New Captain

Sunrisers Hyderabad have confirmed that captain Pat Cummins will miss the opening matches of the IPL 2026 season due to injury, forcing the franchise to appoint a temporary leader for the early phase of the tournament.

In Cummins' absence, wicket-keeper-batter Ishan Kishan has been named interim captain. The team has also appointed star opener Abhishek Sharma as vice-captain for the initial games.

Cummins, Australia's pace spearhead and SRH's regular skipper, is currently recovering and is expected to join the squad only after regaining full fitness. Team management indicated that he will miss a few games at the start of the season but is likely to return once cleared.

### Big Leadership Opportunity for Ishan Kishan

The appointment marks a major leadership milestone for Ishan Kishan, who has emerged as one of India's most dynamic T20 batters. Although relatively new to the franchise, he brings captaincy experience from domestic cricket, where he has led his state side in major tournaments.

SRH's decision reflects confidence in younger Indian players to guide the team during a crucial early stretch. With a strong batting lineup featuring aggressive top-order options, Kishan's



attacking approach is expected to shape the team's style of play.

### Abhishek Sharma Named Deputy

Abhishek Sharma, one of SRH's most consistent performers in recent seasons, will serve as Kishan's deputy. His elevation to vice-captain signals the franchise's growing reliance on young core players and leader-

ship depth.

### Impact on SRH's Campaign

The absence of Pat Cummins, a world-class fast bowler and experienced leader, is a significant setback for the 2016 champions. His contribution with both the ball and tactical decision-making has been central to SRH's plans. However, the team hopes the new leadership combination

can maintain momentum until his return.

In summary, Sunrisers Hyderabad will begin IPL 2026 under a fresh leadership setup, with Ishan Kishan captaining and Abhishek Sharma assisting him, while Pat Cummins focuses on recovery. The early matches will be crucial in determining how well the team adapts to this temporary change at the helm.

## "If Anyone Should Have Angst With Gautam Gambhir, It's Me": R Ashwin on Retirement



Former India spinner Ravichandran Ashwin has addressed speculation surrounding his retirement and the role of head coach Gautam Gambhir, stating that he holds no resentment toward the coach despite public narratives suggesting otherwise.

Ashwin revealed that he realized his international career was nearing its end during India's 2024 tour of Australia, when younger spinner Washington Sundar was selected ahead of him for a Test match. That decision, he said, made it clear that the team management was looking toward the future, prompting him to step aside after the series.

Responding to criticism that Gambhir may have forced senior players into retirement, Ashwin dismissed the claim. He remarked that if anyone had a reason to feel upset, it would be him — yet he does not harbor any bitterness. Instead, he expressed respect for Gambhir's philosophy and leadership style.

Ashwin praised the coach for prioritizing the team above individual reputations, noting that Gambhir consistently credits collective effort rather than star performances. He emphasized that Indian cricket is larger than any single player or small group of players, and decisions must ultimately serve the team's long-term interests.

The veteran off-spinner also reflected on his years alongside senior figures such as Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, highlighting the strong bond within the dressing room. According to him, the group never blamed one another during difficult phases and remained united in their goal of winning for the country.

His comments come amid a transitional period in Indian cricket, with several experienced players stepping away and younger talent taking on bigger roles. While some fans viewed the exits as abrupt, Ashwin suggested they were part of a natural evolution rather than the result of conflict or pressure.

By publicly supporting Gambhir, Ashwin sought to quell speculation about internal discord. He portrayed the coach as someone committed to building a cohesive, forward-looking side — even if that means making tough decisions about senior players.

In essence, Ashwin's remarks underline acceptance rather than resentment. Despite being one of the most affected by selection changes, he framed his retirement as a personal realization and a necessary step for the team's future, reinforcing the idea that Indian cricket's success depends on collective strength rather than individual longevity.

## "Call Me": Lalit Modi's Message To Kavya Maran Sparks Buzz After Abrar Ahmed Row



Fugitive businessman and former IPL chairman Lalit Modi has stirred fresh controversy after posting a pointed message seemingly directed at Kavya Maran following backlash over signing Pakistani spinner Abrar Ahmed in The Hundred league auction.

The controversy began when the Sunrisers' sister franchise in England purchased Abrar Ahmed for about £190,000 (roughly 2.3 crore). The move triggered strong reactions from sections of Indian fans, as Pakistani players have not participated in the IPL since 2008 due to political tensions.

Amid the uproar, Lalit Modi posted a cryptic message on social media that many interpreted as advice to the franchise's leadership. He suggested that investing a large amount in a Pakistani player when public sentiment was sensitive could create perception issues, adding that he knew "a thing or two about managing optics and building empires" and urging them to "call me."

Although he did not mention Kavya Maran or the franchise directly, the timing, fee amount, and reference to a Pakistani player made the intended target clear to observers. The message quickly went viral, intensifying debate

around the signing.

The situation had already escalated before Modi's intervention. The signing drew heavy criticism online, and the franchise's social media account was reportedly suspended temporarily amid the backlash.

The episode highlights the complex intersection of sport, business, and geopolitics. While The Hundred is an English domestic competition where franchises can sign players of any nationality, Indian-owned teams often face scrutiny at home when engaging Pakistani athletes due to long-standing tensions between the two countries.

Lalit Modi's involvement added another layer to the controversy, given his own contentious history with Indian authorities and cricket administration. His public suggestion that he could help manage the fallout has been viewed by some as provocative and by others as opportunistic.

Overall, the incident has kept the spotlight firmly on the Sunrisers franchise and its leadership, turning what would normally be a routine overseas league signing into a wider public debate about politics, perception, and the global nature of modern cricket.

## From Bank Employee to Pan-India Director: The Inspiring Journey of Lokesh Kanagaraj



Making a mark in the film industry without any background or connections is extremely difficult. Yet Lokesh Kanagaraj has proven that talent, perseverance, and passion can overcome all barriers. Rising from humble beginnings, he is today one of the most sought-after directors in Indian cinema, with top stars across industries eager to work with him.

Lokesh made his directorial debut with *Maanagaram*, a gritty urban thriller that earned strong critical acclaim. Although the film was appreciated for its storytelling and realistic treatment, it did not become a major commercial success. As a result, opportunities did not come easily, and he had to struggle for a considerable period, facing rejections while continuing to pursue his dream.

His career took a dramatic turn with *Kaithi*, starring Karthi. The action thriller became a massive box-office blockbuster and was widely praised for its gripping narrative, intense screenplay, and innovative presentation. The film's success instantly propelled Lokesh into the spotlight, making him one of the most talked-about directors in South Indian cinema.

From that point onward, there was no looking back. Known for his distinctive

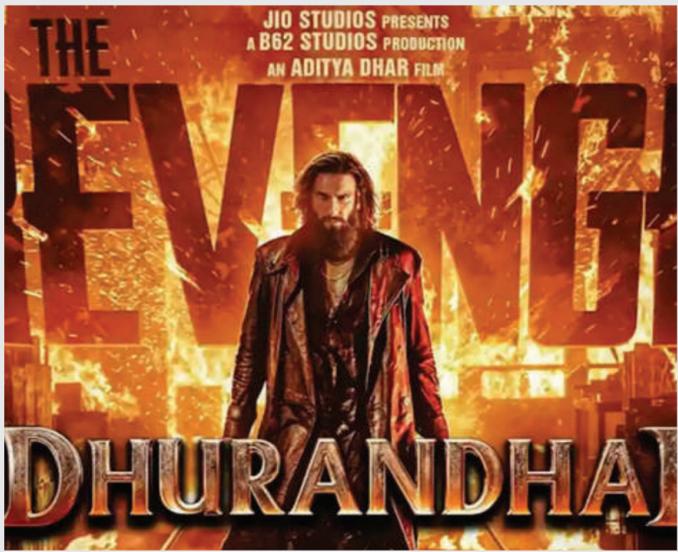
filmmaking style, high-intensity action, and strong storytelling, Lokesh began delivering one major project after another. His films are not just action spectacles but are also recognized for their solid narratives and interconnected cinematic universe, which has further enhanced his reputation as a modern filmmaker.

Interestingly, before entering the film industry, Lokesh worked as a bank employee. However, driven by his passion for cinema, he made the bold decision to quit his stable job and focus entirely on filmmaking. That risk ultimately transformed his life and career.

Today, his popularity extends far beyond Tamil cinema, with leading actors from Kollywood, Tollywood, and even Bollywood expressing interest in collaborating with him. Several of his upcoming projects are already surrounded by huge expectations, and industry buzz suggests that Allu Arjun may soon team up with him for a film.

Lokesh Kanagaraj's journey stands as a powerful reminder that success in cinema does not always depend on lineage or influence. With determination, hard work, and unwavering belief in one's vision, it is possible to rise from an ordinary background to become a pan-India phenomenon.

## 'Dhurandhar 2' Trimmed by Over Six Minutes for Indian Release



The makers of *Dhurandhar 2* have made significant edits to the film's Indian version following directives from the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC). According to recent reports, the domestic release will run more than six minutes shorter than the version being screened internationally.

The official certification process required several cuts and modifications before approval was granted. Most of these changes focus on reducing the intensity of violent sequences. Scenes featuring highly graphic visuals — including moments described as “eye-smashing” and depictions of beheading followed by physical actions — were either shortened or altered to make them less disturbing for Indian audiences.

In addition to trimming action sequences, the CBFC also recommended certain factual corrections. One notable change involves the adjustment of demonisation dates displayed in the film's subtitles. This modification was made to ensure historical accuracy and prevent confusion among viewers.

As a result of these revisions, the Indian theatrical version will have a slightly reduced runtime compared to its overseas counterpart. Such edits are not uncommon for big-budget action thrillers, particularly those containing intense violence or sensitive content. However, these decisions often trigger debate among fans, many of whom prefer experiencing the film in its original, uncut form.

Despite the alterations, the filmmakers have expressed confidence that the core narrative, emotional weight, and cinematic impact of the movie remain unaffected. They maintain that the essential storytelling elements are intact and that audiences will still receive the full intended experience.

With anticipation already sky-high for *Dhurandhar 2*, the difference between the Indian and international versions has added another layer of curiosity. It now remains to be seen how viewers in India respond to the censored cut and whether the trimmed content will influence the film's reception compared to audiences abroad.

## Rakshita Defends 'KD: The Devil' Song Amid Ongoing Controversy

The controversy surrounding the song “Sarke Chunar” from the upcoming Kannada film *KD: The Devil* continues to intensify, with strong reactions from both critics and supporters. The song has drawn criticism from some viewers who claim that its lyrics and visuals are vulgar and inappropriate. In response to the backlash, the family of director Prem has spoken out, with his wife and former actress Rakshita offering a firm defense.

Rakshita argued that songs of this nature are not new to Indian cinema and pointed out that similar content has existed in films for decades. She questioned why this particular song has attracted such intense criticism now, suggesting that the controversy has been amplified largely due to social media. According to her, online platforms often magnify issues beyond their actual scale, turning them into major debates.

She also noted that modern audiences regularly watch films featuring graphic violence, intense action, and explicit themes without raising comparable objections. Targeting a single song while ignoring other forms of provocative content, she said, reflects a selective approach to criticism. Rakshita emphasized that it is unfair to single out one creative element and use it to attack the filmmaker personally.

The former actress expressed particular distress over what she described as personal attacks on her husband. She stated that filmmaking involves immense effort, dedication, and financial risk, and that audi-



ences should recognize the hard work behind a project before passing judgment. Personal criticism, she said, crosses a line and can be deeply hurtful to those involved.

Rakshita also highlighted the challenges faced by the Kannada film industry, especially when it comes to securing theatrical releases. She explained that bringing a Kannada film to theaters

requires significant struggle and perseverance, making it all the more discouraging when controversies overshadow the work.

The debate has sparked mixed reactions across social media. While many users have supported Rakshita's stance and called for creative freedom, others continue to defend the criticism, arguing that filmmakers must be mindful of public sensibilities.

As the discussion continues, the “Sarke Chunar” controversy has become a broader conversation about artistic expression, cultural standards, and the influence of social media in shaping public opinion. Whether the debate will impact the film's release or reception remains to be seen, but it has already ensured that *KD: The Devil* remains firmly in the public spotlight.

## Ram Gopal Varma's Explosive Review of 'Dhurandhar 2' Sparks Massive Buzz

Celebrated filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma has once again grabbed headlines with his trademark sensational comments, this time after watching the upcoming film *Dhurandhar 2* ahead of its release. Sharing his reaction on social media, Varma described the movie as the beginning of a “new cinematic order,” a statement that has quickly become a hot topic across the film industry.

The spy action thriller stars Ranveer Singh in the lead and is directed by Aditya Dhar. Even before Varma's comments, the film was surrounded by significant anticipation. However, his glowing review has taken the hype to an entirely new level. According to him, the movie excels in every aspect and promises audiences a completely fresh and powerful cinematic experience.

Varma went even further by claiming that the film's impact could be “100 times greater” than that of timeless classics



like *Sholay*. In a statement that stunned many, he said those legendary films might appear like television serials when compared to *Dhurandhar 2*. Such remarks, typical of Varma's provocative style, quickly went viral

and ignited debate among movie lovers.

He emphasized that the film's influence would extend far beyond box office collections. In his view, it has the potential to redefine cinematic grammar; au-

diene engagement, and psychological impact, setting entirely new standards for filmmaking. Varma suggested that the movie could fundamentally change existing film formats and storytelling approaches.

Praising director Aditya Dhar, Varma used hyperbolic language to express his admiration, joking that in the future the very spelling of the word “director” might begin with Dhar's name. He also made a striking remark that legendary Hollywood filmmakers like Steven Spielberg and Christopher Nolan should set aside their work and watch the film on its opening day.

Overall, Ram Gopal Varma's over-the-top review has dramatically amplified expectations surrounding *Dhurandhar 2*. Whether the film will live up to these extraordinary claims remains to be seen, but one thing is certain — Varma's endorsement has ensured that the movie is now one of the most talked-about upcoming releases.

## Devi Sri Prasad Opens Up About Acting Debut in 'Ellamma'

Renowned music composer Devi Sri Prasad is all set to step in front of the camera as an actor, marking a new phase in his career. His acting debut comes with the upcoming film *Ellamma*, and his recent comments about the project have generated significant curiosity among fans.

In a recent interview, Devi Sri Prasad revealed that director Venu Yeldandi narrated the story to him, and within just five minutes he was completely convinced. He said the emotional depth of the narrative and its strong spiritual backdrop centered on a goddess immediately struck a chord with him. Because of this instant connection, he did not take much time to think and agreed to the project right away.

The composer-turned-actor also shared that he had received several acting offers in the past. However, none of those scripts impressed him enough or sparked the enthusiasm required to make his acting debut. He had been waiting patiently for a story that truly resonated with him, and he believes *Ellamma* arrived at exactly the right moment.

Reflecting on his career, Devi Sri Prasad pointed out an inter-



esting coincidence. His first film as a music director, *Devi*, also revolved around a divine theme. Now, his debut as an actor is happening through another film rooted in devotion and powerful emotions. He expressed happiness that both milestones in his professional journey share a similar spiritual connection, making them especially meaningful to him.

The recently released glimpse of *Ellamma* has already received a strong response on social media, further raising anticipation. The visuals hint at a film rich in emotion, faith, and intensity, and audiences are particularly eager to see how Devi Sri Prasad performs as an actor.

Having already established himself as one of the most successful and energetic composers in Indian cinema, Devi Sri Prasad is now embarking on a fresh creative journey. Fans are keen to discover whether he can replicate his musical success on screen as well. With a compelling story, spiritual theme, and his enthusiastic commitment, *Ellamma* is shaping up to be one of the most awaited projects marking his transition from music director to actor.