

HYDERABAD HEADLINES

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DC CHASE 226 RETURN TO FORM

STADIUM 11

RAASHI KHANNA STUNS IN EMERALD LOOK



BOX -OFFICE 12



CM Announces Pay for Strike, Cases Withdrawn

CM Revanth Reddy interacts with the representatives of the various RTC unions who met the CM today

SPECIAL 02

SHORT TAKES



April 2026 Sets GST Record in Telangana

Telangana recorded its highest-ever GST collections in April 2026, reaching ₹4,621 crore, a 35% increase from ₹3,433 crore last year. This marks the strongest monthly performance since GST implementation. The state has maintained collections above ₹4,000 crore for four consecutive months. Including VAT and professional tax, total revenue stood at ₹7,570 crore. Telangana ranked second nationally in growth, driven by economic recovery, investment inflows, and improved tax compliance, officials said.

HYDERABAD



SIX KILLED IN ORR HORROR CRASH NEAR SHAMSHABAD

In a tragic road accident on the Outer Ring Road (ORR) near Shamshabad, six persons, including two children, lost their lives after a car rammed into a stationary lorry at Exit-16. The impact was so severe that the car got lodged beneath the lorry, trapping the victims inside.

Rescue teams struggled to extricate the bodies from the mangled vehicle. One person sustained critical injuries. Police suspect over-speeding as the primary cause of the accident. All seven occupants were from the same family, residents of Sircilla, who were returning to Hyderabad after visiting Yadagirigutta Temple.

HYDERABAD

Oil Companies Fuel Shocker!

Commercial LPG cylinder prices hiked by a steep Rs. 993 Proposed Domestic LPG Hike of Rs. 50 and Fuel Price Jump also in the Cards

NEW DELHI

The energy landscape in India took a sharp turn on Friday, as oil marketing companies (OMCs) announced a record-breaking hike in commercial LPG prices. In a move attributed to the escalating energy crisis in West Asia and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, the price of a 19-kg commercial LPG cylinder has been hiked by a staggering Rs. 993. Effective immediately, a commercial cylinder in Delhi now costs Rs. 3,071.50, up from its previous rate of Rs. 2,078.50. This represents the single largest daily increase in the history of fuel pricing in India. Other metros saw even sharper spikes, with Kolkata reaching Rs. 3,202 and Mumbai hitting Rs. 3,024. In Hyderabad, the Commercial Cylinder costs a whopping Rs. 3,315. The latest hike in the price of 19-kg commercial LPG cylinders used by hotels and restaurants has dealt a "severe blow" to the hospitality industry already reeling under the impact of clo-



sures and job losses, and will aggravate the situation, industry associations said on Friday. They urged the government to intervene and roll back the hike. Pradeep Shetty, Spokesperson, Hotel And Restaurant Association (Western India) - HRAWI & Vice President, FHRAI (Federation of Hotels and Restaurants Association of India), said, "Due to the recent rise in LPG prices, a 10 to 15 per cent hike in menu

prices is imminent. But even that may not be enough to absorb the impact. We urge the government to urgently intervene, roll back this hike and stabilise LPG prices to give the sector some breathing space. Without immediate relief, the hospitality industry, a key employment generator, faces an existential crisis". "With commercial LPG prices now having risen by a staggering Rs 1,332.50 within just three revisions, the sector is fac-

ing an unprecedented escalation in operating costs at a time when businesses are already struggling with supply disruptions, reduced operational capacity and weakened cash flows," Shetty said. He highlighted that many establishments are already operating with curtailed hours, limited menus and alternative cooking arrangements due to inconsistent supply and rising fuel costs.

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C.V. Anand, Assumes Charge as Director General of Police, Telangana



HYDERABAD, MAY 1

C.V. Anand assumed charge as the Director General of Police of Telangana State on Friday. On this occasion, several public representatives and senior police officers met DGP and conveyed their greetings. Addressing a press conference held at his office, Shri C.V. Anand expressed his gratitude to the Chief Minister Shri A. Revanth Reddy and the State Government for reposing confidence in him and entrusting him with the responsibility of leading the Telangana Police.

The DGP affirmed that he would work tirelessly to fulfill the aspirations of the

Government and ensure a strong sense of security among the people. While emphasizing that maintaining law and order and effective crime investigation remain the core responsibilities of the police, he stated that the system would be further strengthened through the integration of advanced technology in tune with changing times.

Highlighting ongoing reforms, Shri Anand noted that the Telangana Police is undergoing transformative changes, with a shift towards proactive policing by anticipating and preventing crimes rather than merely reacting after their occurrence.

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Uttam Conducted a Vedio conference with District collectors

Hyderabad, May 1: Minister for Irrigation and Civil Supplies Uttam Kumar Reddy, along with Minister for Agriculture Tummala Nageswara Rao and Chief Secretary Ramakrishna Rao, conducted a video conference with district collectors today and reviewed ongoing programs across the state.

During the review, detailed discussions were held on paddy procurement, implementation of the 99 Days Praja Palana Pragati Pranalika, conduct of Prajavani, preparations for the Census, and arrangements for the upcoming NEET examina-



Uttam Demands Rollback of LPG Hike

Addressing the collectors, Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy stated that the state has achieved the highest-ever paddy procurement in the country, setting a new national record.

He appreciated the coordinated efforts of district administration and directed officials to ensure seamless procurement operations, timely payments to farmers, and adequate infrastructure at procurement centers.

The Minister emphasized the importance of proactive governance and instructed district collectors to respond immediately to any negative news items related to procurement. He underlined that prompt clarification and corrective action are essential to maintain public confidence.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >

June 2 Deadline for Journalist Plots: Ponguleti

Hyderabad, May 1: Minister for Revenue, Housing, and Information & Public Relations Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy has clarified that the State government is committed with honesty and sincerity to allotting house sites to eligible journalists. He referenced the earlier statements made by Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, who mentioned

that he would take all opinions into account and aim to resolve the issue by June 2. The Minister on Friday convened a meeting in his office at the Secretariat with representatives from the Jawaharlal Nehru Housing Society, Journalists' Housing Society, Deccan Journalists, and the Telangana Housing Societies.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >



Sumathi assumes charge as Malkajgiri Police Commissioner

Hyderabad, May 1: Senior IPS officer B. Sumathi officially took on her role as the Commissioner of the Malkajgiri Police Commissionerate on Friday. At the welcoming ceremony, she received a warm reception from senior police officials and staff. Upon taking charge, Sumathi spoke to the media, expressing both joy and a profound sense of responsibility as she became the first female Police Commissioner of Malkajgiri.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >



Govt Rolls Out PJR Awards, Aid for Gig Families

Hyderabad, May 1: Minister for Labour, Employment and Mines Dr. G. Vivek Venkatswamy announced that the state government will institute the 'P. Janardhan Reddy Lifetime Achievement Awards' to honour distinguished individuals for their outstanding contributions to the labour sector. The awards will be presented annually on the occasion of May Day. The decision has been taken in recognition of the lifelong struggle and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >



"May Day Blow" as KTR Opposes LPG Hike

Hyderabad, May 1: Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) working president K. T. Rama Rao on Friday demanded an immediate rollback of the steep LPG price hike, calling it a "May Day gift" that burdens workers and the poor.

Addressing May Day celebrations at Telangana Bhavan, KTR alleged that the BJP-led Central government had increased cylinder prices by nearly Rs.1,000 in one go - an "unprecedented" move.

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CM Announces Pay for Strike, Cases Withdrawn

Hyderabad: Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has reiterated his government's commitment to addressing the demands of Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) employees and strengthening the organisation financially and operationally.

During a meeting held at his Jubilee Hills residence with representatives of various RTC trade unions, the Chief Minister responded positively to their requests. He announced that wages for the three-day strike period of RTC workers would be released and cases filed against employees during the strike would be withdrawn. He directed Transport Minister Ponnampalapati Prabhakar and senior officials to take immediate steps to implement these decisions.

Union leaders expressed gratitude to the Chief Minister for initiating efforts to resolve long-pending issues. Revanth Reddy said the RTC workers had supported the Congress during elections and assured that the government remains committed to safe-

guarding their interests. He also emphasised that the government is working on a structured action plan to improve the RTC's financial stability, service quality, and overall dignity.

The Chief Minister noted that the number of buses has been increased and new staff recruited to improve revenue generation. He also announced plans for infrastructure expansion, including the construction of an international-standard bus terminal over 150 acres in Shamshabad and allocation of 100 acres at Gajularamaram for another terminal.

Highlighting financial challenges faced by the corporation, Revanth Reddy pointed out that RTC spends nearly ₹2,000 crore annually on diesel. To reduce this burden, the government is planning to procure 1,000 electric buses and expand connectivity with metro rail networks. He said mini-buses would also be added to improve last-mile connectivity and operational efficiency.

The Chief Minister stated that while RTC

debts were not accumulated during the Congress tenure, the government is making sincere efforts to clear outstanding liabilities. He added that pending compassionate appointments are being addressed and decisions on financial matters, including the Pay Revision Commission (PRC), will be taken soon. He urged unions to discuss and present workable solutions for a long-term resolution.

Revanth Reddy also cautioned workers against being influenced by opposition politics, stating that the organisation has already suffered losses due to instability. He stressed the need for cooperation between employees and management to revive and strengthen RTC. He assured that no driver would lose their job under any circumstances.

The Chief Minister further said that under the 'Mahalakshmi Scheme,' the government has provided around ₹8,000 crore support to RTC. Despite financial constraints, ₹1,000 crore has already been released to

wards clearing pending employee dues. He instructed officials to ensure smooth communication between workers and depot managers to avoid misunderstandings.

Calling for an end to strikes and protests, he said such actions harm the organisation's recovery efforts. He appealed to employees to work together with the government to ensure RTC's revival and long-term sustainability. He also reaffirmed that the government stands firmly with workers and is committed to resolving all their issues in a phased manner.

The meeting was attended by MPs Vem Narendar Reddy and Anil Kumar Yadav, Special Chief Secretary Vikas Raj, Chief Minister's Principal Secretary Srinivasa Raju, RTC MD Y. Nagireddy, MLAs Makkan Singh Thakur and Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy, along with representatives from multiple RTC unions, including Telangana Mazdoor Union, Staff & Workers Federation, National Mazdoor Union, Karmika Parishad, and others.

SPECIAL ON DEVARSHI NARAD JAYANTI (MAY 2)

Devarshi Narad: The Patriarch of Socially-Oriented Journalism

The image of Narad Muni has been crafted as a mythological character who gossips—carrying tales from one place to another and creating discord—but in reality, his primary objective is consistently seen as conveying the plea of every devotee to God. Wandering from one world to another, he has played the role of an active and meaningful correspondent by performing the task of news gathering. Through communication, he works to unite rather than divide and is the first father figure of journalism. Along with being the sage of the gods, he is the correspondent of the public sphere as the universe's first divine journalist. He is considered the divine messenger of the gods and a pioneering practitioner of communication. He is regarded as the first such messenger—or journalist—of the universe, who exchanged information while orbiting from one world to another.

It is believed that Devarshi Narad was born on the Pratipada day of the Krishna Paksha of the month of Jyeshtha. Therefore, Narad Jayanti is celebrated every year on this day, which is being observed on May 2nd this year. On this day, Devarshi Narad is worshipped after performing the puja of Lord Vishnu and Mother Lakshmi. Narad, who wanders singing the praises of Lord Vishnu with the sweet melody of his Veena and always chanting "Narayan-Narayan," is considered the Guru of Maharishi Vyas, Maharishi Valmiki, and the profoundly wise Shukdev. In some scriptures, Narad Muni is also considered Trikaladarshi (knower of the past, present, and future) and an incarnation of Vishnu. According to the Shrimad Bhagwat Purana, Lord Vishnu took his third incarnation in the universe in the form of Devarshi Narad. In some places, he is also described as a disciple of Brihaspati.

According to religious Puranas, Devarshi Narad, who was proficient in many arts and sciences, was taught music by Brahma himself, and Lord Vishnu explained to him the various forms of Maya (illusion). It is believed that Devarshi Narad, by giving sermons to several supreme devotees of Lord Vishnu such as Bhakta Prahlad, Bhakta Ambarish, and Bhakta Dhruv, inclined them toward the path of devotion. He was the one who arranged the marriage of Bhrgu's daughter Lakshmi with Lord Vishnu. By counseling Indra, the king of gods, he facilitated the marriage of the celestial dancer Urvashi with Pururava. Furthermore, by conveying the accounts of the oppression of the public by many tyrannical demons to God, he became the medium for their destruction. He inspired Maharishi Valmiki to compose the Ramayana. This is why Narad Ji, who has remained worthy of respect across all eras, times, disciplines, and classes, is remembered as a poet who kept information about all worlds, a brilliant strategist, and an influential orator.

How Devarshi Narad, the benefactor of the common people, would become distressed himself upon seeing various creatures in pain on Earth is also mentioned in a mythological tale. According to the story, once Devarshi Narad went to Vaikuntha and requested Lord Vishnu, stating that he was very sad to see people on Earth in distress because there, those walking the path of righteousness do not prosper, while those doing wrong do. Lord Vishnu said, "O Narad! It is not so; everything that is happening is occurring through destiny." He asked what exactly Narad had seen to make such a claim. Then the Devarshi said that he saw a cow stuck in marshy land in the forest. A thief came there, and even after seeing the cow stuck, instead of helping, he climbed over her to cross the marsh and escape; later, he found a bag full of gold coins. Moments later, an old sage arrived and, after great effort, pulled the cow out of the marsh, but upon going a little further, that same sage fell into a deep pit and was injured. What kind of justice is this? After listening to the Devarshi, Lord Vishnu said that the thief who ran away by stepping on the cow was destined for a great treasure, but due to this sin, he received only a few coins; whereas the sage had to fall into the pit because death was written in his fate, but because of the merit earned by saving the cow, his death was transformed into a minor injury. Lord Vishnu explained to him that a person's fate is determined by their actions (Karma).

Devarshi Narad, a vast reservoir of virtues and proficient in all scriptures, is described in the scriptures as a "God of the mind" who recognizes any happening or mishap in time. He is considered a connoisseur of the Vedas and Upanishads, an expert in justice and religion, a profound scholar of the scriptures, an expert in history and Puranas, a knower of medicine, a yogi, a master of astrology and music, a leader of the sentiment of devotion, and a knower of the past. He is a mythological character who is complete in elemental knowledge (Tatvgyan). The famous 'Narad Purana,' containing twenty-five thousand verses, was composed by the Devarshi himself, in which he presented the discourse on many subjects like salvation, religion, music, Brahma-knowledge, and atonement, along with the glory of devotion to Lord Vishnu. Additionally, there is an excellent text on music titled 'Narad Samhita.'



YOGESH KUMAR GOYAL
senior journalist

Oil Companies Fuel Shocker!

FROM PAGE 1

This latest revision will further strain margins and make operations increasingly unsustainable. Shetty observed that many establishments have already shut down temporarily; this latest hike will accelerate closures and job losses. Meanwhile The Andhra Pradesh Star Hotels Association on Friday said the steep hike in commercial cooking gas cylinder prices has dealt a severe blow to the hospitality industry, leaving restaurants and hotels with no option but to raise menu prices by 10 percent.

Opposition parties, including Congress, TMC, and Samajwadi Party, have strongly criticised the government over a sharp increase in commercial LPG prices, calling it an "election

bill" that will burden citizens after recent polls. They allege the move will hurt small businesses and make food more expensive, demanding an immediate rollback.

Meanwhile, reports suggest a possible ₹50 hike in domestic LPG prices, though officials say no final decision has been taken. Rising global crude prices, which have crossed \$120 per barrel, are being cited as the reason for pressure on fuel subsidies.

There is also speculation of a ₹5 per litre increase in petrol and diesel, but the government has denied any immediate price revision. Analysts warn that if these hikes materialise, inflation and transport costs could rise further, impacting households and the food sector.

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C.V. Anand, Assumes Charge as DGP... Police...

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He stressed the importance of early detection systems, stating that minor issues, if left unattended, could escalate into major problems. The DGP underscored his commitment to women's safety and the prevention of child trafficking, asserting that these issues would be addressed with utmost seriousness and without compromise. Expressing concern over the growing threats of cybercrime and drug abuse among the youth, he announced that the Cyber Security Bureau would be further strengthened and 'Anti-Drug Committees' would be established in educational institutions to safeguard young people.

To enhance road safety, he stated that a dedicated 'Traffic Management and Road Safety Bureau' would be set up to ensure uniform enforcement of traffic regulations across the State. He also warned that stringent action would be taken not only against conventional crimes like theft but also against

organized crimes such as food adulteration, real estate fraud, betting, and smuggling.

On departmental reorganization, Shri Anand informed that personnel previously engaged in anti-Naxal operations in specialized units such as Greyhounds and SIB would be redeployed to priority areas like cybercrime and narcotics control. He further stated that the Government is committed to filling approximately 19,000 police vacancies, with 5,000 posts already approved.

He emphasized the revival and strengthening of key departments such as ACB and CID, along with enhanced inter-departmental coordination to improve overall efficiency. The DGP also highlighted plans to expand the use of artificial intelligence and drone technology in policing. He noted that collaborations with organizations such as Google would be explored, particularly for initiatives like traffic signal synchronization.

Additionally, police person-

nel would be trained as 'first responders' in coordination with HYDRA and the Fire Department to effectively handle emergencies and disasters. A special drive would be undertaken to repair non-functional CCTV cameras across the State, and the use of AI in documentation would be enhanced to ensure accuracy in investigations and prevent technical lapses.

Concluding his address, the DGP stated that he would adopt a 'macro-management' approach, granting operational freedom to field officers while closely monitoring performance through regular crime review meetings.

DG (Law & Order) Shri Mahesh M. Bhagwat, TSLPRB Chairman Shri V.V. Srinivasa Rao, DG SPF Smt. Swathi Lakra, Hyderabad Police Commissioner Shri V.C. Sajjanar, DG CID Charu Sinha, DG Greyhounds & OCTOPUS Shri Anil Kumar, and other officers were present at the press conference.

"May Day Blow" as KTR Opposes LPG Hike

FROM PAGE 1

He warned that the hike, with commercial cylinders touching Rs.3,315 in Hyderabad, would severely hit hotels, small businesses, and self-employed workers. KTR said the rise could trigger food price inflation and force closures in the hospitality sector, risking lakhs of jobs. He also criticised the Centre for increasing fuel prices through heavy taxation, linking it to rising inflation and the falling rupee.

Urging nationwide opposition to fuel price hikes, the BRS leader called on the Union government to immediately withdraw the increased LPG,

Uttam Conducted a Vedio conference...

FROM PAGE 1

Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao highlighted the need for close coordination between agriculture and civil supplies departments to support farmers effectively, especially during procurement operations. He directed the collectors to take steps for quick purchase of maize and paddy.

Reviewing the 99 Days Praja Palana Pragati Pranalika, the Chief Secretary instructed the collectors to make proper arrangements for the constituency level programme to be held on 2nd May as per the standard operating procedure and schedule. On Prajavani, the Chief Secretary informed that the government has decided to decentralize Prajavani programme. It will be held at the division level on the

4th of May across the state. All the division level officers should be present, he added. He reiterated the importance of addressing public grievances empathetically and in a transparent and time-bound manner. Collectors were instructed to personally monitor grievance redressal systems and ensure that citizens receive prompt responses.

Preparations for the Census were also reviewed, with officials asked to ensure readiness in terms of manpower, training, and logistical arrangements. Chief Secretary emphasized the need to promote self enumeration in a big way. Similarly, regarding the NEET examination to be held on 3rd May, collectors were directed to make comprehensive arrangements to ensure

smooth and fair conduct of the examination, including coordination with law enforcement and education departments. Uninterrupted power supply, drinking water, sanitation, transportation, storage of question papers, ensuring dual layer frisking at exam centres and following the protocols as per the NTA guidelines have to be taken care, he added.

Secretary Agriculture Surendra Mohan briefed the collectors about the farmers week being observed from the 4th to 9th of this month as part of Praja Palana Pragathi Pranalika and the day wise activities to be taken up during the week. Activities relating to soil health management, promotion of horticulture crops and

expansion of oil palm area, long term and short term crop loans through banks, agricultural mechanization, awareness to farmers on PM KUSUM Scheme and activities relating to animal husbandary, fisheries and irrigation will be taken up during the farmers week.

Special Chief Secretary PR&RD Danakishore asked the collectors to prepare action plan to achieve targets under the MGNREGA. He also directed the collectors to conduct special drive to increase membership in Red Cross.

Civil Supplies Commissioner Stephen Ravindra, Principal Secretary Health Christina Chongthu, Secretary Planning Gaurav Uppal, Director Agriculture Gopi and other officials attended the meeting.

Sumathi assumes charge as Malkajgiri Police Commissioner

FROM PAGE 1

She emphasised that her main goal is to deliver public services that are transparent and efficient. Sumathi expressed her commitment to maintaining Malkajgiri Commissionerate's status as a peaceful area, vowing to uphold law and order without compromise. The new Police Commissioner noted that modern technology would play a significant role in crime prevention, including the use of the AI-based "TG QUEST" system. Additionally, Sumathi pointed out that, in response to the evolving landscape, a strict, process-oriented, and results-driven approach would be implemented to combat the rising number of cybercrimes, ensuring that victims can access timely and effective justice. She highlighted the importance of focusing on the prevention, identification, and thorough investigation of drug trafficking and consumption, which has become a serious societal issue. Sumathi further mentioned that AI-driven surveillance systems would be introduced to help protect youth from drug addiction. Given the rising traffic congestion within the Commissionerate, she also announced that traffic management would be a priority, with measures implemented to ensure a smooth commute for all.

Govt Rolls Out PJR Awards, Aid for Gig Families

FROM PAGE 1

commitment of the late P. Janardhan Reddy, who tirelessly fought for the rights of the working class, labourers, and oppressed sections during his political career. Acting on a representation submitted by former MLC Ramulu Nayak, the government has directed the Labour Commissioner to frame detailed guidelines and eligibility criteria for identifying deserving recipients, he said. The Minister stated that the awards will be conferred starting from May Day next year. On the occasion, Vivek also presented the 'Shrama Shakti Awards' to prominent trade union leaders, workers, and management representatives. The awards recognised organisations

that have diligently implemented labour laws and ensured the welfare of their workforce, as well as labour leaders who have made significant contributions to workers' rights, Vivek said. More than 100 awardees received the Shrama Shakti honours and expressed their gratitude to Minister Vivek Venkatswamy and the state government for the recognition.

Fulfilling the assurance given by Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, the Minister provided financial assistance to the families of two deceased gig workers on the occasion of May Day.

A cheque of ₹5 lakh each was handed over to the families of delivery personnel Garlapati Shashidhar Reddy and Dharavath

Mahesh, who lost their lives while on duty. The Minister appreciated the efforts of Telangana Gig and Platform Workers union leader Shaik Salauddin for actively pursuing the issue and ensuring that the affected families received due compensation.

Vivek Venkatswamy released a booklet titled 'Achievements and Activities Report' during the May Day celebrations held at Ravindra Bharathi on Friday. The publication highlights the key achievements and initiatives undertaken by the departments of labour, employment, training, factories and boilers. It also outlines future priorities and policy suggestions aimed at strengthening these sectors in the coming years.

June 2 Deadline for Journalist Plots: Ponguleti

FROM PAGE 1

Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy consulted with the society members about the founding dates of the Hyderabad-based Journalists' Housing Societies, the membership count, eligibility requirements, and other pertinent information. An initial review indicated that, aside from the Jawaharlal Nehru Housing Society, there are around 2,424 qualifying journalists among the other three societies.

During the meeting, the Minister remarked that resolving challenges would be more achievable if all societies collaborated. He proposed that all societies unite to establish a Joint Action Committee

(JAC). He also stated that house sites would be allocated to eligible journalists who are not members of any journalistic associations and urged everyone to support the allocation process to ensure it is handled without any criticism or doubt. Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy recalled that the previous administration, the Congress government, was responsible for the earlier allocation of house sites to journalists.

He went on to mention that a pro-people government is now addressing the long-standing housing issue faced by the Jawaharlal Nehru Journalist Housing Society, which had been unresolved for 18 years. Although a meeting was held with

journalists' families at Ravindra Bharathi to formally allocate the land, the matter has regressed due to legal challenges. The Minister reiterated the government's dedication to improving the welfare of journalists and assured that they would take proactive measures to resolve the long-standing housing plot issue, aiming to conclude it by June 2.

He also highlighted that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is optimistic about the situation and is willing to allocate housing plots in "Future City" not just to MLAs and bureaucrats but also to journalists residing in Hyderabad.

On the occasion, Ponguleti Srinivas Red-

dy had a separate meeting with representatives from the Jawaharlal Nehru Journalist Housing Society, suggesting that the society should disclose the matter, pass a resolution, and present it to the government.

However, the members, noting they had contributed Rs 2 lakh towards housing plots 18 years ago, requested the Minister to prioritise their Society during the allocation process, considering their long-standing commitment.

Media Academy Chairman K. Srinivasa Reddy, Special Commissioner of the department of Information and Public Relations G. Mukunda Reddy, CPRO Malsur, and others participated in the meeting.



"We will turn former Maoists' ideas into laws": Teenmaar Mallanna



- TRP manifesto will be released only after approval from former Maoists
- Patel Vanajakka formally assumes charge as Women's President of Telangana Rajyadhikara Party
- Massive joining of former Maoists into TRP under Teenmaar Mallanna's leadership

HYDERABAD

On the occasion of May Day, hundreds of former Maoists, activists, lawyers, and youth from various districts joined the Telangana Rajyadhikara Party (TRP). Under the leadership of party chief and MLC Teenmaar Mallanna, they formally joined the party, pledging to work towards achieving political power.

Key leaders who joined the party

From Khammam and Warangal regions:
Upendra Bhai (Khammam), the wife of Gopanna (who died on railway tracks in Kazipet in 2017 and was a former ZPTC from Thorur), advocate Padmakka (Hanumakonda), Chiluvuru Ramya (Mancherial), Anasuya and Swarnakka (Mulugu), and several others joined to fight for women's rights.
Praveen, who played a key role in the "Bharat Bachao" movement, and Dadi Ravanna from Warangal also joined. Former BLF members Sangam Samanna (Warangal) and Babanna (Rudram), along with many others including



Ravi (Thumukunta), Bhikshapati Yadav, Prithvi, Saritha, Ellanna (Kushaiguda market leader), Rajanna Yadav (Boinpalli), Sai Krishna (Apar Nagaram), and Ramana (Venkampalli), joined the party. Leaders called upon everyone to work tirelessly to bring TRP to power.

Mallanna's Key Statements

Mallanna stated that, for the first time in Telangana's history, former Maoists and activists are entering democratic politics and elections. Speaking at Bashir Bagh Press Club, he said TRP will serve as a platform to achieve the goals for which they once fought in forests.

Patel Vanajakka as Women's President

As announced earlier, senior former commander and author of "Adavi Putrika", Patel Vanajakka, formally assumed charge as Women's Wing President. Mallanna said her leadership would strengthen the party.

Manifesto with Maoists' approval

Mallanna criticized other parties for using Maoist ideology but not allowing them into legislative systems. He said TRP will finalize its manifesto only after getting approval from former Maoists. The party aims to bring Maoists into the Assembly and transform their ideas into laws.

Party slogan

"Our slogan is: No one should eat another's wealth; everyone should get their fair share."

50% reservation for women

Mallanna announced that TRP is ready to provide 50% reservation for women in upcoming elections.

Padayatra and expansion

He announced a large statewide foot march and upcoming massive public meetings, including in Bhuvanagiri, to recruit more members.

Target: Power in 2029

He expressed confidence that TRP will form a BC-led government in 2029.

On joining BJP earlier

Mallanna clarified that he joined the BJP in the past only to protect himself after alleged threats from the previous government. Otherwise, he claimed, he might not have survived.

"Ultimate goal is political power"

Mallanna thanked former Maoists for continuing their struggle through democratic means and assured them that TRP would support them and take them to the Assembly.

Speech by Patel Vanajakka

Reason for joining

She said Mallanna had invited her six months ago, and after discussions with her colleagues, she decided to join now, citing current social conditions

Condition of BCs

She expressed concern that backward classes lack proper recognition and representation even after decades of independence

On Constitution and governance

She criticized the weakening of the Constitution drafted by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and alleged that "Manuvadi" ideology is dominating governance

Women's representation

She highlighted the lack of adequate representation for women in legislatures and expressed concern about future reservations benefiting only ruling elites

Support for Mallanna

She urged people to support Mallanna, calling him a hope for marginalized communities

Criticism of policies

She accused the BJP government of handing over forests to corporates and suppressing movements

Personal background of Vanajakka

She shared that she was born in a poor tailor's family in a remote village (Nagaram, Bhupalpally area) and had to quit studies at 16. She clarified that she belongs to a BC community and got the surname "Patel" after marriage

Future plans

She called for a "social revolution" inspired by leaders like Jyotirao Phule, Savitribai Phule, Ambedkar, Shahu Maharaj, and Periyar

More joinings expected

Party sources said more former Maoists and activists are expected to join soon, with a large public meeting planned in Bhuvanagiri

GITAM Scholar Awarded Ph.D. in Chemistry

HYDERABAD

GITAM Deemed to be University, Hyderabad, proudly announces that Dr. Nagarapu Laxmi Kumari has been awarded a Ph.D. in Chemistry under the guidance of Dr. Chithaluri Sudhakar, Department of Chemistry, School of Science.

Her doctoral research, titled "Advanced Synthetic Approaches for the Preparation of Critical Intermediates and APIs in Clofarabine, Decitabine, Belinostat and Bortezomib," presents innovative and efficient strategies for synthesizing key pharmaceutical intermediates and active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs). The study emphasizes the use of cost-effective reagents under mild reaction conditions, enabling rapid, high-yield, and scalable processes suitable for industrial application.

Dr. Kumari's work introduces practical and industry-oriented synthetic methodologies that hold significant promise for the development of an-



tancer drugs. By addressing critical challenges in the preparation of these life-saving therapeutics, her research contributes meaningfully to advancements in medicinal chemistry and pharmaceutical manufacturing.

The leadership of GITAM, including Prof. D.S.Rao, Pro Vice-Chancellor; D.V.V.S.R. Varma, Resident Director; Dr.

M. Reza, Principal, School of Science; and Dr. Gousia-Begum, Head, Department of Chemistry, extended their congratulations to Dr. Laxmi Kumari for her academic excellence and impactful research. Her achievement stands as a testament to her dedication and marks a valuable contribution to the future of cancer therapeutics.

50 days to Yoga Day: Telangana gears up for grand Yoga Mahotsav at Kanha

HYDERABAD

The countdown to the 12th International Day of Yoga (IDY 2026) begins with a grand "Yoga Mahotsav 2026" to be held on May 2 at Kanha Shanti Vanam, near Hyderabad.

Organised by the Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga under the Ministry of Ayush, the event marks the 50-day countdown to the global celebration of yoga. The programme will begin at 6 am, with large-scale participation expected from yoga enthusiasts across the country performing the Common Yoga Protocol.

A key highlight will be a mass demonstration of Bhujangasana, with participants aiming to set a record in the Asia Book

of Records. Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy and Union Minister of State Prataprao Jadhav will attend the event, alongside Kamlesh D Patel (Daaji), President, Heartfulness.

Highlighting the initiative, Prataprao Jadhav urged citizens to adopt yoga as a daily practice through the "Yoga 365" campaign, promoting holistic health and well-being.

Secretary, Ministry of Ayush, Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, and Joint Secretary, Ministry of Ayush, Ms. Monalisa Dash, along with Senior officials from Ayush, Yoga Gurus, experts from Ayush systems and modern medicine, and Yoga practitioners from across the country, will also be present. The event will see participation from in-

ternational diplomats and representatives, reflecting yoga's growing global appeal.

This programme will witness wide international participation, with Consulate Generals and representatives of the Heartfulness Institute joining virtually from across the globe—including Singapore, China, Vietnam, Colombia, Malaysia, Brazil, and even the Uganda refugee camp—along with participants from centres across India. Ayush Aahara will also be distributed during the programme. With global virtual participation and nationwide engagement, the Yoga Mahotsav is set to energise the run-up to International Day of Yoga 2026, reinforcing yoga's role in preventive healthcare.

Father convicted under POCSO, gets 20-yr jail term in Cyberabad

HYDERABAD

A Fast Track Special Court in Medchal-Malkajgiri district has sentenced a 37-year-old man to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment for sexually assaulting his minor daughter in Jeedimetla.

The accused, Asgar Ali, a labourer originally from Bihar and residing in Gampala Basthi, Subash Nagar, was also fined Rs.35,000 in connection with the case registered at Jeedimetla Police Station.

According to police, the case came to light on May 6, 2025, when the victim's mother lodged a complaint. The family had migrated to Hyderabad in 2019 for livelihood. The complainant alleged that her husband, who was

addicted to alcohol and often violent, had sexually assaulted their 15-year-old daughter on multiple occasions. The incident surfaced when the younger daughter informed her mother about the abuse. Upon confrontation, the accused reportedly admitted to the act, claimed it was a mistake, turned violent, and fled.

Police arrested him on May 8, 2025, after gathering evidence by the investigating officer. Following investigation, a charge sheet was filed under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and the POCSO Act.

After a full-fledged trial, Fast Track Special Judge K. Venkatesh convicted the accused and awarded Rs.3 lakh compensation to the victim.

Hyd to witness 'Zero Shadow Day' at Birla Planetarium on May 9

HYDERABAD

The GP Birla Archaeological Astronomical and Scientific Research Institute will host a special public observation of the 'Zero Shadow Day' at the B M Birla Science Centre on May 9, 2026.

This rare phenomenon occurs when the Sun is directly overhead, causing vertical objects to cast 'no shadow'.

As for the event on May 9 at Birla Planetarium, it will be between 11.30 am and 12.30 pm, the peak moment will be 12.12 pm (Solar Noon).

Besides, the event includes 1) Guided solar observation sessions; 2) Interactive science demonstrations and 3) Student-friendly hands-on activities. The event is free and open to the public, with organisers encouraging visitors to bring simple objects to observe the effect. Visitors are encouraged to bring umbrellas, water bottles, and simple household objects like scales to observe the shadow disappearance.

Narayan Seva Sansthan Empowers 745

Differently - Abled Individuals with 815 Artificial Limbs and Calipers: A New Ray of Self-Reliance

HYDERABAD

Narayan Seva Sansthan (NSS), a leading NGO dedicated to empowering persons with disabilities, will organize a large-scale free Narayan Modular Artificial Limb and Calipers Fitment Camp in Hyderabad on Sunday, May 3.

The initiative is being organized under the joint aegis of CSR partner Make A Change Foundation (UK), Golden Jubilee, and Shri Swaminarayan Temple Willesden (UK). The camp will be held at Exhibition Grounds, Nampally, Hyderabad (Telangana), from 08:00 AM to 06:00 PM.

The press conference was addressed by spokespersons: Ms. Alka Choudhary - Patron, Narayan Seva Sansthan; Mr. Mahendra Singh Rawat - Hyderabad Ashram Head; and Mr. Hari Prasad Ladda - Camp In-charge.

Only pre-selected differently abled beneficiaries will be able to avail the benefits of this camp. On this occasion, 745 differently-abled individuals will be provided with a total of 815 Narayan Modular artificial limbs and calipers free of cost.

At the camp, expert doctors and a skilled technical team will carry out the fitment of advanced Narayan Modular



limbs. Differently abled individuals will also receive specialized training on walking, maintaining balance, and effectively using the assistive devices in daily life, empowering them to live with greater confidence and independence.

Speaking on the initiative, Prashant Agarwal, President, Narayan Seva Sansthan, said, "Keeping in mind the growing needs of differently-abled individuals, such camps are being organized across various cities in the country like Delhi, Bangalore, Indore, Agra, and Meerut to extend support to as many differently abled individuals as possible. Our goal is to provide artificial limbs to every person in need, enabling them to lead a self-reliant and dignified life."

All beneficiaries were identified during a measurement camp conducted by the organization on February 1. The camp will also feature a felicitation ceremony honouring CSR partner organi-

sations, social workers, and donors for their invaluable support, which continues to transform hundreds of differently abled lives.

More than a distribution drive, this initiative represents a holistic effort to restore dignity, self-reliance, and quality of life for persons with disabilities, bringing to life the ethos of "Service to humanity is service to God."

Established in 1985, Narayan Seva Sansthan has been selflessly serving humanity for decades. Its founder, Kailash Manav, has been honoured with the Padma Shri for his contributions. The organization's President, Prashant Agarwal, received the National Award for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities in 2023.

To date, NSS has provided more than 39,591 free artificial limbs and has offered free medical treatment to over 452,000 differently-abled individuals.

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ONGOING PROJECTS

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SHORT
TAKES

BC leaders turn up heat on Centre over social justice

HYDERABAD: Former minister Boda Janardhan and BC Dal chief Dundra Kumaraswamy along with leaders from 20 BC organisations, met Telangana Rashtra Sena (TRS) chief Kalvakuntla Kavitha demanding stronger pressure on the Centre for BC rights. They discussed key national issues concerning BC reservations, caste enumeration and Women's representation. The leaders flagged the absence of an Other Backward Classes (OBCs) column in the ongoing enumeration, warning that lack of credible data will weaken policy planning. While backing 33% Women's reservation.

'Ham roads scam proven': Harish Rao targets govt over tender irregularities

HYDERABAD: BRS MLA T. Harish Rao has alleged massive irregularities in road tenders under the present Congress government, claiming his earlier warnings about a "HAM roads scam" have now been validated. Talking to newsmen, the BRS leader said tenders in the Panchayat Raj and R&B departments were awarded at 22-25% above estimates, inflating costs from Rs.11,000 crore to nearly Rs.15,000 crore in R&B, and Rs.6,000 crore to Rs.8,000 crore in Panchayat Raj. Harish Rao also raised concerns over sovereign guarantees for contractor loans and questioned the government's stance on mobilization advances.

Kadiyam fires salvo at KCR, calls BRS rule 'family-centric'

HYDERABAD: Rebel MLA Kadiyam Srihari on Friday launched a scathing attack on former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao and the BRS party, accusing them of sidelining internal dissent and prioritizing family interests. Speaking at a public meeting in Station Ghanapur, Srihari alleged that the formation of Telangana ultimately benefited only the Kalvakuntla family. He also criticized the division of Warangal district despite his objections. Referring to remarks by Telangana Rakshana Sena president K. Kavitha, he said KCR must answer allegations from within his own family. Srihari said he is now working with the Congress party for the development of his constituency, citing corruption and arrogance in BRS as reasons for his exit.

Pranahita-Chevella revival moves gain momentum

- Uttam wants officials to be ready with plans a technical proposals
- Proposals for gravity-driven irrigation in focus
- Minimizing submergence in Maharashtra is priority
- Alternative alignments studied by experts from IIT Hyderabad and RV Associates
- Moves afoot for repairs to Medigadda, Annaram, Sundilla under NDSA guidance
- Sustainable irrigation support for Adilabad and Ranga Reddy districts



viability. He directed officials to prepare complete documentation, alternative alignments, cost-benefit analyses, and geo-technical details, before venturing to inter-state talks.

HYDERABAD

As the Congress government in the state intensified efforts to revive the Pranahita-Chevella Lift Irrigation Project, aiming to correct what it describes as design and execution flaws introduced under the previous BRS regime's Kaleshwaram redesign, the Irrigation Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy TODAY instructed officials to thoroughly prepare detailed plans and technical proposals for discussions with the Maharashtra government regarding the construction of the Tummidihatti barrage. At a high-level review meeting held with the officials here, he directed the irrigation department to plan it by minimizing submergence in Maharashtra territory and Chaprala wild life sanctuary. Telangana will be ready to provide compensation for any affected areas. The Maharashtra government had previously agreed to a 148-metre height, and a balanced approach to construction with lower-cost, gravity-assisted flow where possible.

Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy emphasised that all future decisions and communications must be backed by comprehensive study, technical merit, and economic

Focus on gravity-Oriented flows

The original Pranahita-Chevella project, conceived under the Congress government before the state bifurcation, envisioned a barrage at Tummidihatti on the Pranahita River (a Godavari tributary) to divert water primarily through gravity canals and minimal lifts to irrigate upland areas, including parts of Adilabad, and onward to regions like Ranga Reddy (Chevella tail-end areas) via the Yellampalli reservoir.

It aimed to serve roughly 2-2.5 lakh acres in northern Telangana with lower operational costs, relying on a more natural flow after initial diversion. In contrast, the BRS government redesigned it as the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP), introducing multiple barrages (Medigadda, Annaram, and Sundilla) and extensive pumping infrastructure to target a much larger ayacut of 18.5 lakh acres.

While this expanded the command area became excessively dependant on the operation of lift-heavily, besides being complex and expensive, their operations increased power costs and structural failures. The redesign reportedly sidelined gravity flow advantages and left tail-end areas in Ranga Reddy and other upland zones underserved

compared to the original vision. The head works of the Project including the Tummidihatti barrage and the distributory system remained a non-starter, with the BRS government excluding these components. The government has already spent around Rs 11,000 crore on Pranahita-Chevella components, with 71.5 km of canal works executed in stretches.

Revival efforts focus now on integrating viable existing infrastructure while prioritising cost optimisation and gravity flow to Yellampalli.

Alternative Alignments Under Study

Four alternative alignment proposals for linking Tummidihatti to Yellampalli (and onward to Sundilla) are under active examination by experts from IIT Hyderabad and RV Associates. These studies aim to reduce land acquisition, lower pumping requirements, shorten tunnel and canal lengths, and enhance overall feasibility and efficiency. Expedited geological and geo-technical surveys are also progressing at the Tummidihatti site to support these options.

Parallel Restoration of Kaleshwaram Barrages

While reviving the original concept, the government is fast-tracking urgent repairs to the Kaleshwaram barrages at Medigadda, Annaram, and Sundilla before the monsoon, under technical guidance from the National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA).

The Minister has issued specific instructions on testing protocols, including Standard Penetration Tests (SPT) every 1.5 metres, permeability tests every 3 metres, and deeper drilling even upon hitting rock. A coordination committee has been directed to visit sites immediately and set clear timelines. Once operational, the project is expected to deliver reliable water at reduced operational costs compared to the heavy-lift redesign.



Government Committed to Resolving Issues

Deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka Meets Employee Unions

HYDERABAD

Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka reiterated that the people's government is working with utmost sincerity to resolve the issues faced by employees in the state. On Friday evening, he held a detailed meeting with leaders of various employee unions at Mahatma Jyotirao Phule Praja Bhavan. During the meeting, he listened carefully to the employees' representations and gave positive assurances regarding their concerns.

Employees are a bridge between the government and the people:

Praising the services of employees, the Deputy CM made key remarks:

"Employees act as a bridge between the government and the people. The welfare schemes implemented by the people's government are reaching the doorsteps of the common people at the grassroots level largely because of the crucial role played by employees," Bhatti Vikramarka said.

Employee unions thank the government: Union leaders expressed happiness that, compared to the past, the government is now focusing on financial discipline along with

employee welfare. They thanked the Deputy CM, stating that after the people's government came to power, government employees have been receiving their salaries on the first of every month, providing relief to thousands of families. They also appreciated the allocation of ₹1,000 crore every month for clearing pending benefits of retired employees.

During the meeting, union leaders mainly raised long-pending issues such as PRC (Pay Revision Commission), DA (Dearness Allowance), and health cards. Responding to this, the Deputy CM said that all these matters would be discussed comprehensively in the Cabinet Sub-Committee and that a decision would be conveyed to employees soon. He clarified that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is taking a positive approach toward resolving employees' issues.

He assured that the demands raised would be brought to the Chief Minister's attention and that Cabinet sub-committees would deliberate on these matters. He expressed confidence that a positive decision would be taken soon.

The meeting was attended by TGEJAC leaders Maram Jagadeeshwar, Eluri Srinivasa Rao, Devarakonda Saidulu, Lachireddy, along with several senior officials and representatives of employee unions from various departments.

NTPC Ramagundam celebrates International Workers' Day



Dr Srinivas Vooradi

PEDDAPALLI

NTPC Ramagundam celebrated International Workers' Day (May Day) on Friday at May Day Park within the plant premises. Executive Director for NTPC (Ramagundam & Telangana) Chandan Kumar Samanta graced the occasion as the Chief Guest, joined by all General Managers and Heads of Departments, demonstrating their solidarity and support for the workforce. The celebration recognized the vital contributions of workers and underscored their essential role in the organization's growth and success.

Addressing the gathering on the occasion, the Executive Director commended the dedication, resilience, and hard work of employees at all levels, highlighting the significance of unity, safety, and a shared commitment to excellence. He also reaffirmed NTPC's focus on employee welfare and inclusive growth. Employees across various departments participated in the celebrations enthusiastically, showcasing a remarkable sense of unity and collective pride. The observance served as a powerful reminder of the dignity of labor, reinforcing NTPC's pledge to cultivate a supportive and progressive work environment. All employees came together to celebrate the spirit of May Day with enthusiasm and respect.

PIGEON FEEDING DRAWS SUMMER CROWDS



People feed pigeons at the Musalamjung Bridge in the Old City, as summer vacations for schools and colleges begin, drawing families and children to the historic spot where flocks gather in large numbers, creating a lively scene along the riverfront.

Minister Vivek reaffirms commitment to workers' rights in Telangana

HYDERABAD

Minister for Labour and Mines Dr. G. Vivek Venkatswamy has reaffirmed the government's strong commitment to protecting workers' rights and ensuring their welfare in Telangana.

Vivek Venkatswamy, along with Tourism Minister Juppally Krishna Rao, Bellampalli MLA G. Vinod, Peddapalli MP Gaddam Vamsi Krishna, labour leaders, and officials, took part in the May Day celebrations at Ravindra Bharathi in Hyderabad on Friday. Speaking on the occasion, the Minister recalled that in the past, workers faced severe challenges such as lack of basic rights, long working hours, and absence of minimum wages.

He noted that earlier leaders fought hard to secure these rights for labourers who were subjected to exploitation. Referring to his father, former union minister Kaka Venkatswamy, he said that large-scale labour movements were witnessed during his tenure as labour minister.

Vivek said that today, there is a positive shift with managements and workers moving forward together in a more cooperative environment.

Vivek Venkatswamy stated that achieving the target of a \$3 trillion economy by 2047 requires collective effort, with a special focus on skill development for workers.

He said around 20,000 youth are being trained through 120 Advanced Technology



Centres (ATCs) across the state, with special opportunities being extended to workers' children.

Vivek also highlighted the introduction of agriculture-related courses aimed at enhancing productivity.

"A total of ₹90 crore has been allocated to the Labour department in the budget. Through TOMCOM, youth are being trained and provided employment opportunities in countries like Germany," he said. The Minister also announced that the insurance cover for construction workers has been increased from ₹5 lakh to ₹10 lakh, and assured that steps will be taken for the welfare of hamalis (head-load workers).

Vivek further stated that, inspired by Rahul Gandhi's vision, the Telangana government has introduced a special law to

provide legal protection to gig and platform-based workers.

He added that better medical services are being provided to workers through ESI, and efforts are underway to further expand these services.

Speaking on the occasion, Tourism Minister Juppally emphasised that workers play a crucial role in nation-building and that no matter how much is done for them, it is never enough. He stressed that no individual should be looked down upon based on their work, and dignity should not be determined by the nature of one's job.

Juppally Krishna Rao called for treating workers like family members and supporting them. He also noted that enacting laws alone is not sufficient, and there must be a humanitarian change in individuals and institutions.

Peddapalli MP Gaddam Vamsi Krishna recalled that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar gave significant importance to workers' rights in the Constitution. He said Ambedkar's advocacy for the 8-hour workday continues to guide society even today.

The MP said 120 ATCs across the state will create employment opportunities for many. He assured that he would raise workers' issues in Parliament. Labour department Secretary Dasari Harichandana, Labour Commissioner Pamela Satpathy, labour leaders, and a large number of workers participated in the programme.

Failure Isn't Final: Balanagar CI Inspires Class 10 Students After Results

MEDCHAL-MALKAJGIRI

As Telangana's Class 10 results were announced, anxiety and disappointment gripped many students and parents across the state. At Balanagar Zilla Parishad High School, Circle Inspector Narasimha Raju chose to respond with empathy, meeting students who could not clear the exams and encouraging them not to lose hope.

A special counselling and motivation programme was organized at the school to support students during the emotionally sensitive period following the results. Speaking to them, CI Narasimha Raju said that an examination result reflects only a student's performance at a particular moment and should never be seen as the final judgment of their abilities.

"The result assesses your performance in that moment. It does not determine



your personality or your future," he told the students, urging them to stay strong and continue their journey with confidence.

Using a simple but powerful example, he compared life to a wave. "A wave is my role model — not because it falls, but because it gets up again every

classmates.

"Do not link your children's marks with your own prestige. Do not compare them with others. This is the time to recognize their talents and stand by them," Narasimha Raju said.

He reminded students that academic marks are not the only measure of success and that many people who faced difficulties in school later excelled in different fields through hard work, discipline and self-belief.

"Defeat is not the end of life. It is the first lesson for another success," he said.

The programme aimed to shift the focus from marks to mental well-being, encouraging students and families to view the results as one step in a longer journey. CI Narasimha Raju's message left students with a sense of reassurance that failure is temporary, but courage and perseverance can shape a brighter future.



HC Rejects FIR Plea Against Rahul, Backs Right to Criticise Govt

PRAYAGRAJ (UP): (MAY 1)

The Allahabad High Court on Friday dismissed a petition seeking an FIR against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for an alleged controversial remark in 2025, saying criticism of government action or policies is essential in parliamentary democracy. Justice Vikram D Chauhan passed the order after hearing the petition filed by Simran Gupta, who had challenged a Sambhal court's rejection of her plea seeking directions to lodge an FIR against Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha. Dismissing the petition, Justice Vikram D Chauhan observed, "In parliamentary democracy, criticism of government action or policies is not only permitted but is essential. Therefore, criticism or ideological difference may not by itself be an offence."



ED Panel Clears 800 PMLA Cases on Emerging Threats

NEW DELHI: (MAY 1)

A new risk assessment committee created within the ED has led to the registration of close to 800 money laundering cases in about seven months against "emerging" threats like digital arrest, foreign interference and lobbying against national interest and intellectual property fraud among others. The Risk Assessment Management Committee (RAMC) is chaired by a Special Director rank officer of the agency posted at its headquarters in Delhi. Beginning in October 2025, the RAMC is mandated to vet all cases before they are taken up under the stringent provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), according to the new guidelines accessed by PTI.

Congress launches drive in Mizoram to groom new generation of political voices

AIZAWL: (MAY 1)

The Congress on Friday announced the launch of a talent hunt programme in Mizoram, aimed at identifying and nurturing a new generation of political communicators and grassroots leaders. Speaking at a press conference in Aizawl, Congress national spokesperson Ritu Choudhary said the initiative will focus on building talent across three key verticals -- spokespersons, research coordinators, and publicity coordinators -- to strengthen democratic dialogue and public engagement. The programme is part of the party's 'National Talent Hunt' announced in July last year to train and empower the next generation of media spokespersons and panellists.

Andhra Pradesh CM promises to set up labour 'addas' to help workers

AMARAVATI, MAY 1

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Friday announced that labour 'addas' will be set up across the state to support workers by upgrading their skills. In the first phase, 15 such centres will be established in major cities and towns. The Chief Minister made the announcement after distributing Shramashakti awards to outstanding workers and employers at Pamidimukkala village in Krishna district on International Workers' Day. Chandrababu Naidu stated that these labour addas would be developed into skill development centres where workers can upgrade



their skills. New ESI hospitals will also be set up in places like Achyutapuram, Guntur, Kurnool, Sri City and Amravati to improve workers' healthcare. The Chief Minister emphasised that just as workers work tirelessly, the government is equally committed to the development

of the state. He highlighted that the Telugu Desam Party symbol reflects workers and farmers and reaffirmed commitment to uplift poor families, including enabling their children to become entrepreneurs. Naidu said the welfare measures for workers include Rs 25,000 financial

assistance for the marriage of construction workers (also applicable to their daughters), Rs 20,000 support for childbirth, Rs 60,000 assistance in case of natural death, and Rs 20,000 for funeral expenses. In addition, four labour courts are also available for dispute resolution. The Chief Minister said the government derives satisfaction from people's happiness and considers welfare spending a responsibility, not a burden. Regarding Machilipatnam Port, he said land acquisition was done in 2014, but the previous government cancelled tenders in 2019, causing delays. At present, breakwater, dredging and offshore works are progressing rapidly. He stated

that the target is to complete the port by December this year. The Chief Minister stated that major investments are coming into the state, including a large data centre investment by Reliance, following interest from companies like Google. He praised reforms in Panchayati Raj led by Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan and education reforms by Education Minister Nara Lokesh. He said the reforms in the education sector led to improved Class 10 results.

The Chief Minister criticised the opposition, alleging destructive governance in the past and stating that the current government has been rebuilding systems over the last 22 months.



Southern Railway TRD Assets Achieve Record Performance in 2025-26

CHENNAI, MAY 1:

Southern Railway has achieved a significant milestone in 2025-26 with its Traction Distribution (TRD) assets registering their best-ever performance, reflecting a sharp improvement in reliability and maintenance standards across the zone. During the financial year 2025-26, Southern Railway recorded just 3 asset failures, a noteworthy reduction from 13 failures in 2024-25, marking an impressive 77% improvement. This outstanding performance places Southern Railway among the best performing zones in TRD asset management. This achievement is the result of a paradigm shift in maintenance culture, driven by constant monitoring and proactive leadership. The sustained guidance of the General Manager Shri R. N. Singh and the Principal Chief Electrical Engineer Shri Ganesh, along with Headquarters officials and the committed support of Divisional Railway Managers, has been instrumental in achieving this rare feat. Regular follow-up of Special Maintenance Instructions issued by RDSO from time to time, coupled with strict adherence to Modification sheets and schedules, ensured meticulous upkeep of all TRD assets. This structured and

disciplined approach enabled Southern Railway to close FY 2025-26 with practically zero overdue asset maintenance.

The improved TRD performance has translated into clear and tangible benefits for passengers:

- Better punctuality with minimal traction-related disruptions
- Seamless train operations across electrified routes
- Reduced detentions and delays, ensuring smoother journeys
- Enhanced safety and reliability, particularly in high-density sections

What is a TRD Asset?

With 100% electrification of tracks, TRD assets now span virtually every inch of the railway network. Any failure in these assets has the potential to stall train movements in a section and adversely impact punctuality. The significant reduction in failures, therefore, has a direct and meaningful impact, not only in improving punctuality, but also in enhancing the overall safety of train operations across electrified sections. Highly reliable TRD systems also contribute to the robust functioning of signalling infrastructure, as traction power supply feeds several critical signalling assets. Improved TRD performance, therefore, strengthens the backbone of safe and efficient train operations.

May Day: CM presents Srama Sakthi awards

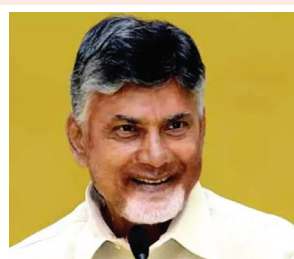
Labour Addas to be set up across the state to upgrade skills of daily wage workers

New ESI hospitals to be set up to protect workers health.. Target set to complete Machilipatnam port this year:CM

PAMARRU:

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu announced that Labour Addas will be set up across the state to support workers. In the first phase, 15 such centres will be established in major cities and towns. The Chief Minister distributed Shramashakti awards to outstanding workers and employers at Pamidimukkala village in Krishna district today. Speaking on the occasion, he said these Labour Addas would be developed into skill development centres where workers can upgrade their skills. New ESI hospitals will also be set up in places like Achyutapuram, Guntur,

Kurnool, Sri City and Amravati to improve workers' healthcare. The Chief Minister emphasized that just as workers work tirelessly, the government is equally committed to the development of the state. He highlighted that the Telugu Desam Party symbol reflects workers and farmers and reaffirmed commitment to uplift poor families, including enabling their children to become entrepreneurs. The Chief Minister said the welfare measures for workers include Rs 25,000 financial assistance for marriage of construction workers (also applicable to their daughters), Rs 20,000 support for child birth, Rs 60,000 assistance in case of



natural death, Rs 20,000 for funeral expenses. In addition four labour courts are available for dispute resolution. The Chief Minister said the government derives satisfaction from people's happiness and considers welfare spending a responsibility, not a burden. He stated that damage to the Polavaram diaphragm wall

under the previous government has now been rectified at a cost of Rs 1,000 crore. The project will be completed and dedicated to the nation by 2027. He said efforts are underway to ensure no water scarcity in the Krishna delta. He credited the Pattiseema lift irrigation project for supporting agriculture in the region. Regarding Machilipatnam Port, he said land acquisition was done in 2014 Previous government cancelled tenders in 2019 causing delays. At present breakwater, dredging and offshore works are progressing rapidly. Target set to complete the port by December this year. He added that major investments are coming

into the state, including a large data center investment by Reliance, following interest from companies like Google. The Chief Minister criticised the opposition, alleging destructive governance in the past and stating that the current government is rebuilding systems over the last 22 months. He reiterated that electricity charges will not be increased though previous government increased power tariffs multiple times. He praised reforms in Panchayati Raj led by Pawan Kalyan and education reforms by Nara Lokesh leading to improved Class 10 results. Ministers Kollu Ravindra, Vasamsetti Subhash, MP Balashowry and others were present.

Rough weather, no life jacket: Video shows moments before Jabalpur cruise tragedy

A video shows tourists aboard the Bargi Dam cruise boat shortly before it overturned in strong winds in Jabalpur. The footage has sharpened focus on safety lapses as the death toll reached nine.



A video recorded moments before a cruise boat capsized in Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur shows tourists enjoying cool weather and strong breezes, unaware of the danger building around them. The visuals, now circulating widely on social media, capture passengers soaking in the pleasant conditions as gusty winds sweep across the water. The force of the wind is evident in the footage. Within minutes, however, the weather turned hostile, and

the vessel overturned, killing nine passengers onboard. The footage shows that none of the passengers was wearing a life jacket at that point. Some managed to put them on later, a move that helped save several lives. Officials estimate that around 25 people survived due to the use of safety gear. The accident occurred on Thursday evening at the Bargi

Dam on the Narmada River, where a sudden storm lashed the area. The boat, caught in rough waters and strong winds, lost balance and capsized. The death toll rose to nine on Friday after five more bodies were recovered from the submerged vessel. At least six people remain missing. So far, 28 passengers have been rescued. Rescue operations

are ongoing, with teams from the Army, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) searching the reservoir. Low visibility continued to hamper efforts, with officials suspecting that more bodies could still be trapped inside the wreckage. Deputy Inspector General Atul Singh said the sunken vessel will be retrieved only after ensuring no one remains inside. He added that local construction workers were among the first responders and played a crucial role in evacuating survivors. Eyewitnesses said the weather deteriorated rapidly, with strong winds making the water choppy. Several passengers reportedly raised alarms and urged the crew to turn back, but their warnings went unheard as the boat drifted

before capsizing. Some locals later helped rescue passengers wearing life jackets using ropes. Madhya Pradesh Tourism Minister Dharmendra Bhav Singh Lodhi confirmed that four bodies were recovered on Thursday and five more during early Friday operations. He said a detailed probe has been ordered, including an investigation into alleged lapses in the use of life jackets. Following the incident, the state government has suspended the operation of similar cruise vessels and initiated an inquiry into the tragedy. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi conduced the tragedy and announced an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh from the PM National Relief Fund (PMNRF) for the next of kin of the deceased and Rs 50,000 for the injured.



Ranchi boy, 7, sets world record by swimming across Palk Strait within 10 hours

The Palk Strait is challenging due to strong currents, sea waves, and unpredictable weather. However, Ishank Singh overcame these obstacles to swim the 29-kilometre stretch between Talaimannar in Sri Lanka and Arichalmunai in Dhanushkodi.

cles to swim the 29-kilometre stretch between Talaimannar in Sri Lanka and Arichalmunai in Dhanushkodi. He began his swim at 4 am and completed it at 1:50 pm. As he set foot on the sands of Rameswaram, he was warmly welcomed by officials and supporters. Singh's achievement was praised by Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren, who described the seven-year-old swimmer as an "extraordinary talent." "Ishank's success is a remarkable example of discipline and unwavering dedication to his goal. He has brought pride not only to Jharkhand but to the entire country," he wrote on X. Previously, this record was held by Jay Jashwanth from Tamil Nadu, who completed the swim in 10 hours and 30 minutes at the age of 10 in 2019.

A seven-year-old Indian boy created history on Friday by becoming the youngest to swim across the Palk Strait. Ishank Singh from Jharkhand's Ranchi successfully crossed the strait, which lies between India and Sri Lanka, in 9 hours and 50 minutes. The watery is challenging due to strong currents, sea waves, and unpredictable weather. However, Singh overcame these obsta-

Mamata Banerjee raises EVM swap charge. Is that even possible?

West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee asked Trinamool Congress workers to keep a round-the-clock watch on EVM strongrooms in Kolkata after alleging a plot to swap machines during transit. Can EVMs in the strongrooms be swapped? What do the Election Commission protocols say?

the state's last and second phase of Assembly polls on April 29. Standing guard, Mamata told Trinamool Congress workers to maintain a 24-hour vigil around all strongrooms in Bengal. Mamata alleged that the BJP would try to manipulate EVMs in their storage and transport. Citing an alleged CCTV video, Matata alleged that BJP workers were tampering with the EVMs in places like Kolkata's Netaji Indoor Stadium. Even as West Bengal Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Manoj Kumar Agarwal dismissed the TMC's allegations of suspicious activities with the EVM, can such malpractices be actually carried out in strongrooms with round-the-clock surveillance? The CM's concern came days ahead of counting of the votes for the West Bengal Assembly polls. The Bengal election, with record polling, marked the most intense run-to-the-wire poll battle in the state. Several exit polls predicted the opposition BJP getting a lead



over the incumbent Trinamool. Facing her toughest challenge since the 2011 polls where she trounced the CPI(M), Mamata Banerjee on Thursday directed her workers to closely monitor the movement of EVMs. "During this critical window, when the EVMs are being moved from storage to the counting halls, they [the BJP] have hatched a plot to swap the machines," Mamata claimed. However, contrary to the allegations, manipulating or swapping EVMs during storage and transportation is far more difficult than it appears,

according to experts. Over the years, the ECI has implemented multiple layers of safeguards to secure the machines and ensure maximum transparency in the entire process. Hence, against the backdrop of Mamata Banerjee's allegations, here's a glance at how the ECI ensures the sanctity of the EVM machines, from the day of polling, to the day of counting.

HOW EVMs ARE TRANSPORTED, STORED AFTER POLLING

In his book An Undocumented Wonder: The Making of the Great Indian Election, former Chief Election Commissioner SY Quraishi detailed the safeguards the ECI employs to prevent tampering with EVMs during storage and transit. After polling concludes, Quraishi wrote that the EVMs are sealed with paper seals and placed in plastic boxes, which are also sealed. They are transported directly from polling stations to

designated strongrooms. These strongrooms are locked and sealed in the presence of candidates, their agents, and the ECI's observer. Candidates and their representatives are also permitted to affix their own seals on the strongroom locks and may maintain a vigil until counting begins, with necessary facilities provided for the purpose. In addition, armed police personnel maintain round-the-clock security, supplemented by continuous video recording and CCTV surveillance. The sealed storage hall is opened only on the day of counting, again in the presence of candidates, their agents, and the ECI's observer. Quraishi wrote that the secure transportation of sealed EVMs, election staff, and records along predetermined routes to strongrooms and receipt centres is treated as a top priority. Candidates are allowed to accompany EVM-carrying vehicles and affix seals at storage sites.

Stalin urges Centre to rollback commercial LPG price hike

CHENNAI: MAY, 1

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Friday demanded that the Centre immediately rollback the hike in commercial LPG cylinder prices. The price of commercial LPG was hiked by the steepest ever Rs 993 per 19-kg cylinder on (May 1), marking the third straight monthly increase due to rising global energy prices linked to the West Asia con-

flict. In his social media X platform, the DMK chief alleged that as predicted before the polls, the BJP-led union government has raised LPG prices immediately after the elections concluded. "When global crude oil prices fell, the benefits were not passed on to the people," he said, accusing the Centre of "using the West Asia war crisis as an excuse to raise the prices without regard for public welfare".

EDITORIAL

FANNING THE FLAMES:
BALANCING CLIMATE
VULNERABILITY AND LIVELIHOODS
IN THE NILGIRIS

The Nilgiris district in Tamil Nadu, along with the adjacent forest divisions of Mudumalai, Coimbatore, and Erode, has recently grappled with wildfires of such magnitude that they escalated into a crisis necessitating intervention from the Indian Air Force. Despite the severity, these intense blazes are not necessarily anomalous; rather, they represent an acute manifestation of a recurring seasonal phenomenon. The regions of Parsons Valley and Pykara in the Nilgiris have emerged as the most severely affected, though significant outbreaks were also documented across the Masinagudi and Singara ranges. A particularly aggressive blaze originated in Wenlock Downs, spreading with alarming speed across the landscape.

The window from February to May constitutes the traditional fire season for this geography. By April, authorities noted that soaring temperatures combined with powerful winds had forged a "conducive environment" for disaster. The wind proved especially treacherous, lofting embers over established firelines—a factor that partially clarifies why this particular season saw such widespread breakouts. In areas like Pykara, the fires burned with greater intensity and duration due to a heavy accumulation of biomass and dense invasive undergrowth, making them significantly harder to extinguish. Furthermore, the Nilgiris' characteristic steep terrain and sparse road networks hampered the rapid deployment of firefighting crews and heavy equipment to remote hotspots.

That said, human activity remains a primary catalyst for most ignitions. Local tribespeople frequently enter the forests to collect wood for making brooms—a practice under the watchful eye of officials—while herders occasionally set fire to dry grasslands to stimulate the growth of fresh fodder. These traditional practices, alongside discarded smoking materials, are common sources of accidental fires. This year, the situation was further complicated when a blaze crossed into the Coimbatore division after Kerala forest personnel reportedly initiated a controlled burn without adequate coordination with their Tamil Nadu counterparts. Some officials have even voiced suspicions regarding arson by miscreants, allegedly motivated by frustration over the Forest Department's handling of tiger-related livestock deaths. Paradoxically, while they are sometimes blamed, local communities are almost always the first-responders who attempt to contain these blazes.

While none of these individual triggers are unprecedented, their convergence with an exceptionally hot summer provided the perfect fuel for this year's intensity. Indeed, climate variability—as distinct from long-term climate change alone—is steadily elevating the baseline level of risk. When all other variables remain constant, a hotter and drier summer inevitably produces fires that can overwhelm even the most meticulously prepared defenses.

Recognizing this, authorities had initiated their planning as early as March, establishing dedicated control rooms, carving out firelines, ensuring wildlife had access to water sources away from human settlements, clearing combustible weeds, and launching public awareness campaigns. However, because many activities that contribute to fire risk are deeply intertwined with the livelihoods and cultural traditions of local residents, they cannot be simply banned without providing viable economic alternatives. Ultimately, managing the seasonal fires of this region is shifting from a challenge of short-term emergency planning to one of long-term structural adaptation.

OPEN FORUM

India-New Zealand FTA: Govt Cheers—But Farmer's Union Fears

India and New Zealand signed FTA on April 27, 2026, which cheers the governments of both the countries, whereas the Indian farmers union is showing concerns over the pact, why so?

Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, in a tweet termed the FTA signing ceremony as a landmark moment in the India-New Zealand partnership! "Today marks a landmark moment in the India-New Zealand partnership!"

I am delighted that the India-New Zealand FTA signed today will add unprecedented momentum to our developmental partnership. It reflects the deep trust, shared values and ambition that bind our two nations. This agreement will greatly benefit our farmers, youth, women, MSMEs, artisans, startups, students and innovators. It will open new avenues for growth, create opportunities and deepen our synergy across sectors. The investment commitment of \$20 billion by New Zealand will further strengthen our cooperation in agriculture, manufacturing, innovation and technology, paving the way for a more prosperous and dynamic future for both countries."

Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal and New Zealand's Minister for Trade and Investment Hon. Todd McClay signed the landmark India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement. New Zealand's Minister Todd McClay said that India-New Zealand FTA Opens "Once-in-a-Generation" Opportunities, Marks New Chapter in Bilateral Ties.

The signing of the India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement marks a new and significant chapter in the bilateral relationship, reflecting shared ambition, deepening engagement, and a commitment to mutually beneficial growth, said Mr. McClay. Speaking on the signing, Mr. McClay called the India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement a "once-in-a-generation" opportunity that will boost exports, create jobs, and strengthen bilateral economic ties. He highlighted strong participation from New Zealand businesses at the signing and said the pact will improve market access, reduce trade barriers, and support MSMEs. He also emphasised deep people-to-people links, including the Indian diaspora's contribution in New Zealand, and longstanding cultural and sporting ties. Describing India as a key partner in a changing global landscape, he expressed confidence that the agreement will deepen cooperation and deliver shared prosperity.

Indian Minister, Piyush Goyal, said, "A new generation trade deal for Viksit Bharat @2047, encompassing Tariffs, Talent, Investment and Farm Productivity, empowering youth, farmers, women, artisans, farmers and MSMEs."

Minister Piyush Goyal said the India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement was concluded in nine months and marks a key milestone in India's engagement with developed economies,

aligned with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. He noted that India is signing its seventh FTA in the last three and a half years, with plans for agreements with the European Union and the United States, taking the total to nine FTAs with 38 advanced economies, covering nearly 65-70% of global GDP. He also highlighted expected US\$20 billion investment inflows under the agreement and said New Zealand has opened access in 118 sectors, with MFN commitments in 139 sectors.

A PIB press release, after signing the FTA, divulges that Farms, fisheries and factories will see a boost, Zero-duty market access on 100% of India's exports. India has offered market access in 70 % lines covering 95% of New Zealand's Bilateral Trade and commitment of USD 20 billion investment to India to fuel agriculture, manufacturing, infrastructure, start-ups, innovators and emerging technologies.

The release clears that to ensure protection to farmers, rural economies and the domestic industry, Market access excludes dairy, key agricultural products, coffee, milk, cream, cheese, yoghurts, wheat, cereals, onions, sugar, spices, edible oils, and rubber. Claiming the agreement as farmer friendly, the FTA also highlights the Agricultural productivity partnerships and Centres of Excellence for apples, kiwifruit and Manuka honey to elevate productivity, farmer incomes and knowledge transfer.

Salient Features of the FTA
The FTA eliminates duty on 100% of Indian Exports.

A USD 20 billion investment commitment over 15 years strengthens long-term economic and strategic cooperation.

Through Agricultural Productivity Partnership, the FTA collaborates with farmers to boost productivity and integrate them in the global value chains.

India has offered market access in 70.03% of the tariff lines while keeping 29.97 % tariff lines in exclusion, which covers 95% of New Zealand's Bilateral Trade.

Certain products are kept in exclusion such as dairy (milk, cream, whey, yoghurt, cheese etc.), animal products (other than sheep meat), vegetable products (onions, chana, peas, corn, almonds etc.), sugar, artificial honey, Animal, vegetable or microbial fats and oils, Arms and Ammunition, Gems and Jewellery, Copper and Articles (Cathodes, Cartridges, Rods, Bars, Coils etc.), Aluminium and articles thereof (Ingots, billets, wire bars) among others.

30.00% of tariff lines will have immediate duty elimination, covering wood, wool, sheep meat, leather-raw hides etc.

35.60% of tariffs are subject to phased elimination over 3, 5, 7, and 10 years, including petroleum oil, malt extract, vegetable oils, and selected electrical and mechanical machinery, peptones etc.

4.37% of products face tariff reductions, such as wine, pharmaceutical drugs, polymers, aluminium, iron and steel articles etc

0.06% fall under tariff rate quotas, including M nuka honey, apples, kiwi fruit, and albumins including milk albumin.

What fears the Farmers' Union?

On the other hand, an umbrella of farmers' union, All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) is criticizing the FTA and demanding its scrapping. Stating it an onslaught on Indian Agriculture, the AIKS alleges that by signing the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with New Zealand, the RSS-BJP-led Union government has surrendered the interests of farmers before the demands of global finance. The farmers' body in a press release on 29th April, states, "The All-India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) is of the firm opinion that the latest FTA is a continuation of a slew of disastrous FTAs signed by the Modi dispensation in the recent past. The common denominator in all these FTAs is an unprecedented servitude to imperialism and a hatred against farmers and other rural working people. The New Zealand FTA has come at a time when Indian farmers are facing an existential crisis. The US-imperialism-induced West Asian crisis is increasing the price of fertilisers and aggravating the agrarian crisis."

The Statement issued by Ashok Dhawale, President and Vijoo Krishnan, General Secretary of AIKS divulges, "According to New Zealand sources, tariffs on nearly half of their exports to India would be eliminated immediately on the day the Agreement enters into force. Tariff-free entry covers nearly 80 percent of their exports once the FTA is fully phased in. While the Modi government is trying to paint a picture that they have succeeded in protecting 'sensitive sectors' including dairy, agricultural products, etc., a close look into the Fact Sheet reveals that there are very serious loopholes. There are some conditions attached to the market access India promised. However, monitoring such access restrictions does not usually go beyond the printed words in the clauses and sub-clauses of the agreement."

The AIKS alleges that the New Zealand FTA has significantly reduced the basic customs duty on New Zealand apples. The AIKS has consistently demanded a 100% import duty on apples. This reduction could make apples from New Zealand substantially cheaper, directly affecting the livelihoods of the 1.75 lakh families who depend on apple farming. Since apple farmers in New Zealand are highly subsidised, the dismal state support provided to Indian apple farmers cannot match their competitive advantage.

Similarly, the Commerce Ministry is reiterating that core dairy products like milk, cheese, cream, yoghurt, whey, etc. are excluded and that this is addressing the concerns of dairy farmers. The Indian dairy industry consists of crores of landless and marginal farmers—the majority of them hailing from socially marginalized sections—with meagre state support. However, a critical look into the details of the FTA reveals that

there are several loopholes. For example, the FTA allows the removal of import duties on certain high-value dairy products, such as bulk infant formula—a product considered as essential for the nourishment and healthy development of infants. This could hugely benefit New Zealand-based dairy big business and harm the class interests of Indian dairy farmers. Apart from this, there is a commitment to implement a dedicated fast-track mechanism to facilitate the duty-free supply of New Zealand products to India for further manufacturing and export. This would also clearly benefit corporate players.

On one hand Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi claims that this agreement will greatly benefit our farmers and the salient Features flashed by the Indian government also highlights that certain products are kept in exclusion such as dairy (milk, cream, whey, yoghurt, cheese etc.), animal products (other than sheep meat), vegetable products (onions, chana, peas, corn, almonds etc.), sugar, artificial honey, Animal, vegetable or microbial fats and oils etc. But on the contrary, the farmers' union alleges that as the Indian dairy industry consists of crores of landless and marginal farmers—the majority of them hailing from socially marginalized sections—with meagre state support and the FTA allows the removal of import duties on certain high-value dairy products, such as bulk infant formula—a product considered as essential for the nourishment and healthy development of infants. This could hugely benefit New Zealand-based dairy big business and harm the class interests of Indian dairy farmers.

AIKS also alleges that the FTA will directly affect the livelihoods of the 1.75 lakh families who depend on apple farming. Since apple farmers in New Zealand are highly subsidised, the dismal state support provided to Indian apple farmers cannot match their competitive advantage. Dr. Inderjeet Singh, the National Vice-President of AIKS, when contacted by Edit Page Features, says, "Dairy sector is very vulnerable regardless of the denial of the government to the contrary. Indian dairy farmers have very high stakes if FTA with developed countries come into operation." The government of India should take the farmers in confidence and clear their doubts, so as to ensure them that their interests shall be watched without any ifs and butts.



JAG MOHAN THAKEN

THRONE OF SELFISH DARKNESS

Man self-entombed in the caverns of his own contrivance, where mind, unmoored, mutates into a quiet beast; in the undertow of self-interest, truth recedes—an echo thinning into absence. In every guise, upon every throne, he desecrates the sacred countenance of Nature, splintering her wholeness into a thousand distorted mirrors of his desire. The green hush of mountains withers behind veils of smoke the fragrance of flowers, once a hymn of life, now flees—exiled into poisoned air. Humanity—a forgotten invocation; Goodness—a veena-string, charred into silence. No small, no great only a fracture of conscience; learning ascends in noise, while culture collapses in quiet and emptiness is enthroned at the summit of speech. Within the circus of selfish assemblies, the filaments of relationship fray and fall; man, illusionist and audience alike, deceives himself with rehearsed delusions. In dwellings stripped of meaning, the cries of souls are interred unheard; life is reduced to a puppet of breath, its strings singed in the ash of severed bonds.

Though he knows—nothing endures, still he architects palaces of pretense upon the dust of dissolving ground—a master mason of mirage. Nature speaks—unceasing, austere; yet he averts his listening,



surrendered to currents of cruelty, mistaking ruin for progress. Like a chariot unbridled, unbraked, reason careens beyond its own recall restraint erodes, steadiness shatters, reverence recedes—and folly, unashamed, embraces its own extinction. If this be the way—what remains? Let this question course through the arteries of the earth. For somewhere, still a pulse persists: a faint, unextinguished rhythm of humanity a tender bud of goodness, gathering the courage to become. That single drop suffices to cleave the empire of self, and summon, from the far horizon, a sunrise of truth.

...: Dr. Peruka Raju ...
7810032847

How has the performance of the ED been in curbing economic offences?

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) is a specialized law enforcement and economic intelligence agency of the Government of India. It was initially established on May 1, 1956, as an "Enforcement Unit" under the Department of Economic Affairs to investigate violations of foreign exchange laws. In 1957, it was renamed the Enforcement Directorate. The agency functions under the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance. Its primary objective is to investigate economic offences such as money laundering, violations of foreign exchange laws, and financial frauds. While its headquarters is located in New Delhi, it has zonal offices in major cities across India. Over time, it has emerged as a key institution in controlling black money and financial irregularities. During investigations, it has the authority to attach properties, arrest accused persons, and conduct searches. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) is the principal agency responsible for enforcing major economic laws in India. It primarily implements the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA), which deals with money laundering offences and grants powers such as search, seizure, arrest, and attachment of illicit assets. It also enforces the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA), which regulates foreign exchange transactions, payments, and investments. Prior to FEMA, the agency implemented the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, 1973 (FERA) until 2000. Additionally, it operates under the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018, which enables action against economic offenders who evade prosecution by fleeing abroad, including confiscation of their properties. In certain cases, it also invokes provisions of the Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities Act, 1974 (COFEPOSA).

The Enforcement Directorate (ED), over its nearly 70-year history since 1956, has achieved significant success in the areas of identifying, safeguarding, attaching, and recovering illegal assets. Since the implementation of this law, more than 5,000 money laundering cases (ECIRs) have been registered. According to official reports,

in the last decade alone, assets worth approximately ₹1.55 lakh crore have been attached under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). Of these, about ₹1.07 lakh crore have been confirmed by Adjudicating Authorities, indicating strong legal sustainability. In the financial year 2024-25 alone, assets worth over ₹30,000 crore were attached, marking the highest figure ever recorded in a single year. Among the major cases, those involving Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi, and Mehul Choksi are significant. In these cases, assets worth around ₹18,170 crore have been attached, of which more than ₹9,300 crore has been returned to banks and the government. In the Pearls Agro-tech Corporation Limited (PACL) Ponzi

scam case, the Enforcement Directorate attached assets worth over ₹22,656 crore, making it one of the largest single-case attachments in India. In investigations related to the Reliance Anil Ambani Group, reports indicate that by 2026, the total value of attached assets has exceeded ₹16,310 crore. Other major cases include attachments worth over ₹14,500 crore in the Sterling Biotech case, as well as cases related to coal mining scams, liquor scams, hawala rackets, cyber frauds, and illegal wealth accumulated through corruption. Overall, although final convictions are often delayed due to lengthy court processes, the ED has emerged as one of the most powerful financial enforcement agencies in India in terms of asset identification and protection.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) appears to be recording a high success

rate in cases where investigations have been completed. According to official statistics as of March 31, 2025, the ED registered 7,771 money laundering investigation cases, filed 1,739 prosecution complaints, and completed trials in 47 cases. Out of these, convictions were secured in 44 cases, resulting in a conviction rate of 93.61% in completed trials. Additionally, as per information provided by the government to Parliament in February 2026, special courts delivered judgments in 58 cases as of December 31, 2025. Among these, convictions were secured in 55 cases, with a total of 123 accused persons found guilty. This raised the conviction rate to 94.82%. However, critics argue that only a very small proportion of the total registered cases have reached final judgment, mainly because money laundering trials often take several years to conclude. This indicates that while the Enforcement Directorate is strong in presenting evidence and proving offences in completed cases, the overall speed of case disposal remains relatively slow.

Although this agency has played an important role in curbing economic offences, it has faced several criticisms. In particular, there have been frequent allegations that investigations are selectively conducted against opposition political leaders and rival business groups. Concerns have also been raised about delays in completing investigations, resulting in cases remaining pending for many years. Some legal experts have questioned the wide-ranging powers of arrest, search, and attachment of properties granted under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. The relatively low number of convictions compared to the total number of registered cases has also attracted criticism. Opposition groups argue that prolonged investigations, even before final judgments are delivered, can damage the reputation of individuals. There are also criticisms regarding the lack of transparency in the selection of cases and the leakage of information to the media during investigations. Business communities have expressed concerns that prolonged proceedings under the Foreign Exchange Management Act and money laundering investigations create

uncertainty and impose a heavy compliance burden. Therefore, although the Enforcement Directorate is a powerful financial enforcement agency, debates continue regarding its accountability, fairness, efficiency, and institutional independence.

Several reforms are needed to enhance public confidence in this institution. The agency should maintain complete political neutrality and conduct investigations strictly based on evidence. Establishing transparent criteria for case selection and periodically publishing performance statistics will help build trust. Completing investigations more quickly and filing charge sheets within a fixed timeframe can reduce unnecessary delays. Strong judicial oversight over arrests, searches, and attachment of properties will help protect civil liberties. Improving evidence collection, adopting forensic accounting practices, and providing professional training can increase the conviction rate and strengthen the institution's credibility. There should also be an independent grievance redressal mechanism to address complaints of misuse of authority. Reducing the leakage of information to the media during investigations will help ensure fairness and protect individuals' reputations. Regular audits by parliamentary or statutory bodies can enhance accountability. Greater use of technology and improved coordination with other agencies can make investigations more efficient. By consistently adhering to the rule of law, transparency, and professional standards, public trust in the Enforcement Directorate can be significantly strengthened.



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NDA to Cross 100 Seats, Himanta Sarma Set to Return as Assam CM

GUWAHATI, MAY 1

Assam Minister Ashok Singhal on Friday exuded confidence over the National Democratic Alliance's prospects in the state Assembly elections, asserting that the alliance would secure a massive mandate and cross the 100-seat mark in the 126-member House.

Speaking to reporters, Singhal said the people of Assam would deliver an "unprecedented response" on May 4, when the election results are scheduled to be declared. He claimed that the National Democratic Alliance's performance would reflect strong public support for the incumbent government.

The minister further said that Himanta Biswa Sarma would return as the Chief Minister of Assam for a third consecutive term, adding that the Bharatiya Janata Party-led alliance remained firmly placed across the state.

Taking a swipe at the Opposition, Singhal said their



dreams of forming the next government were far removed from political reality. He sarcastically extended "best wishes" to Opposition parties for their aspirations, while maintaining that voters had already made up their minds in favour of the National Democratic Alliance.

Fresh seat and vote share projections for the Assembly elections in Assam on Thursday indicate a strong advantage for the ruling alliance led by the Bharatiya Janata Party, projected to secure 102 seats, with a margin of error of plus or minus 9 seats.

According to the exit poll by Today's Chanakya, the Opposition alliance led by

the Indian National Congress is projected to win 23 seats, with a margin of error of plus or minus 9 seats. In contrast, others are expected to remain marginal at around one seat.

If the trend holds, the Bharatiya Janata Party-led combine would comfortably retain power in the 126-member Assembly.

In terms of vote share, the Bharatiya Janata Party alliance is projected to receive around 50 per cent, with a possible fluctuation of three percentage points. The Congress-led bloc is estimated to secure 38 per cent of the votes, while other parties and independents together may account for 12 per cent.

The projections reflect a significant consolidation of support for the ruling alliance, driven by organisational strength and welfare outreach. However, they also noted that campaign momentum, candidate selection, and regional factors could still influence the outcome before polling.

Shivraj Launches PMGSY-IV in Odisha to Boost Rural Roads

BHUBANESWAR, MAY 1

Union Minister for Agriculture & Farmers Welfare and Rural Development Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Friday launched the fourth phase of the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY-IV) in Odisha, marking a major push for rural connectivity in the state. The project was inaugurated at a special programme held in Rayagada district in the presence of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water Minister Ravi Narayan Naik on Friday. The Union Minister formally handed over the approval letter for PMGSY-IV to the Chief Minister on the dais. Besides this, Chief Minister Majhi also announced several new road projects for Rayagada district and inaugurated multiple drinking water and infrastructure projects on the occasion. Addressing the gathering, Chouhan said that the double-engine government is working with full commitment for the holistic development of Odisha. The Union Minister said that



he had not come empty-handed but had brought concrete development initiatives that would directly benefit villages, the poor, farmers, labourers, women and youth across the state. Emphasising the importance of rural connectivity, he said roads are not merely a means of transportation, but lifelines for employment, education, healthcare and overall socio-economic progress. Under the first phase of PMGSY-IV, Odisha has been sanctioned 827 new roads spanning 1,701.84 km at a total cost of Rs 1,698.04 crore. In this phase, 898 villages across eight districts -- Kandhamal, Keonjhar, Khordha, Koraput, Malkangiri,

Nabarangpur, Rayagada and Sambalpur -- will be provided with all-weather road connectivity. A total of 827 new roads covering around 1,702 km will be constructed, with funding shared between the Centre and the state in a 60:40 ratio. In addition, supplementary financial support is being provided for the completion of previously sanctioned but unfinished road projects to ensure that even the remotest regions are connected to the mainstream of development. He said that Rs 630.61 crore has been approved for the completion of pending houses under Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin.



Grand Felicitation Ceremony Organized by Dishita Mahila Mandal Renusagar

"Self-reliance is the foundation of holistic development of individuals and society" - Indu Singh

BY SANJAY DWIVEDI

Anpara, Sonbhadra: Dishita Mahila Mandal Renusagar organized a grand felicitation ceremony to honor the officers, employees, and volunteers who contributed directly and indirectly to various social upliftment initiatives carried out throughout the year.

The dignified event was held at the auditorium located within the office premises of Dishita Mahila Mandal Renusagar. The program was conducted by the Secretary of the Mandal, Ms. Tulika Srivastava, who expressed heartfelt gratitude to all contributors for their support in the successful execution of various activities undertaken during the year. On this occasion, individuals who made outstanding contributions were felicitated. Addressing the gathering, senior member Ms. Indu Singh appreciated the commendable efforts of Dishita Mahila Mandal Renusagar in the field of social development. She emphasized that self-reliance is the cornerstone of comprehensive growth for both individuals and society. She stated that when individuals progress through their own skills, hard work,

and resources, they achieve empowerment and lead a life of dignity. She further added that the initiatives undertaken by the Mandal in the areas of education, healthcare, sanitation, and women empowerment are not only supporting the needy but are also playing a significant role in creating awareness and promoting self-reliance within the community. Such efforts, she said, will prove to be a milestone in bringing positive transformation in society. The program concluded with a vote of thanks and best wishes for everyone's bright future, along with an appeal to continue supporting social causes in the future as well. On this occasion, senior members of the Mandal including Ms. Reena Jain, Ms. Menaka Arora, Ms. Reena Patra, Ms. Ritu Harshvardhan, Ms. Ritu Dave, Ms. Karabi Das Mishra, and Ms. Savita Chaudhary were present. Officials from Hindalco Renusagar, including Mr. Shashikant Dubey, Mr. Sanjeev Srivastava, Mr. Sadanand Pandey, Mr. Santosh Srivastava, Mr. Nitin Srivastava, and Mr. Balwant Singh, along with other members of Dishita Mahila Mandal, also attended the "Ceremony."

Rajasthan: Gehlot demands fair probe of assault involving BJP MLA

JAIPUR, (MAY 1)

Former Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot on Friday demanded a fair probe into a case of alleged assault involving a BJP MLA from Sriganaganagar, police said. The demand came after Rajasthan Police on Thursday arrested three persons for allegedly assaulting BJP legislator Jaideep Bihani. In a post on X, Gehlot said that while the MLA had earlier accused the Rajasthan Urban Infrastructure Development Project (RUIDP) officials of assault. They held a press conference on Friday and levelled counter-allegations against the legislator, also displaying their injuries before the media.

Delhi Constable Among 7 Held in ₹50 Lakh Azad Market Robbery

NEW DELHI, (MAY 1)

Delhi Police constable with a criminal past and six other persons have been arrested in connection with the robbery of Rs 50 lakh in north Delhi's Azad Market area, with police recovering most of the looted amount, officials said on Friday. The constable -- Samay Singh (38), posted in the 5th Battalion of Delhi Police -- allegedly played a key role in planning the heist. He was arrested on April 30 from Rajasthan's Dausa after evading arrest for several weeks, they added. Police said Singh had earlier been arrested in a robbery case in December 2024 and was released on bail in May 2025.

Sarnaik Asks Raj Thackeray to Clarify Stand on Marathi for Hindi Speakers

DHARASHIV, (MAY 1)

Maharashtra Transport Minister Pratap Sarnaik on Friday said Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) president Raj Thackeray should make it clear whether he wanted Marathi to be taught to Hindi-speakers living in the state. "Raj Thackeray's stand keeps changing every day. MNS workers have started (Marathi) classes to teach Hindi-speakers in some places, but he says why should Marathi be taught to Hindi-speakers," said Sarnaik.

Mass Mobile Siren Alert Likely to Sound Nationwide Tomorrow

NEW DELHI:



Today a loud siren sound may be heard at once on millions of mobile phones across the country. However, the central government has clarified that people do not need to be afraid or worried about this.

Today a loud siren sound may be heard at once on millions of mobile phones across the country. However, the central government has clarified that people do not need to be afraid or worried about this.

For future natural disasters like floods, cyclones, or earthquakes, the government has de-

veloped a new system called SA-CHET to alert everyone at the same time. To check whether it is working properly, the Department of Telecommunications and the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) are conducting this test together.

What will happen

You will receive a message on your mobile phone, along with a loud siren sound. This is

only a test, so you don't need to take any action upon seeing the message or hearing the sound. This emergency alert system works based on the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP). This technology, recommended by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), is currently implemented in 36 states and union territories across the country.

Over 49.8 lakh LPG cylinders delivered in a day, fresh bookings at 41.6 lakh

NEW DELHI, MAY 1

More than 49.8 lakh domestic Liquefied Petroleum Gas cylinders were delivered on April 30, while fresh bookings were recorded for 41.6 lakh cylinders, as the supply of cooking gas remains normal in the country, with no dry-outs reported at retail distributorships despite the supply chain disruption due to the Middle East conflict. Online domestic Liquefied Petroleum Gas cylinder bookings have increased to 98 per cent, while authentication code-based deliveries to the registered mobile number of the consumer have increased to around 93 per cent to prevent diversion at the distributor level. Retail prices of petrol and diesel remain unchanged despite the global spike in oil prices, and adequate stocks of both fuels are available at all petrol pumps across the country. However, oil marketing companies are undertaking calibrated price revisions aligned with prevailing international trends for a small set of products catering primarily to commer-



cial and industrial segments, such as jet fuel and commercial Liquefied Petroleum Gas, the statement said. Meanwhile, enforcement actions continue across the country to curb hoarding and black marketing of Liquefied Petroleum Gas. More than 2,300 raids were conducted across the country on Thursday. Public sector oil companies have strengthened and continued surprise inspections, imposing penalties on 342 Liquefied Petroleum Gas distributorships, and 73 have been suspended so far. Show-cause notices were issued to 46 Liquefied Petroleum Gas distributors on Thursday, and penalties were imposed on six distributorships, while one was suspended. The supply of cook-



Amit Shah inaugurates exposition of holy Buddha relics in Leh

LEH/JAMMU, (MAY 1)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday inaugurated a sacred holy relics exposition of Tathagata Buddha and the 2569th Buddha Purnima celebrations in Leh during his two-day visit to Ladakh. The function was held at

Jivetsal in the Photang-Choglamsar area of Leh town, officials said. The revered Piprahwa relics of Tathagata Buddha -- ancient sacred remains and associated objects linked to the lord discovered at Piprahwa, near the Nepal border in present-day Uttar Pradesh, arrived in Leh on Wednesday.

Punjab and Haryana may be geographically distinct, but one cultural identity binds us- Chief Minister

CHANDIGARH, MAY 1

Haryana Chief Minister, Sh. Nayab Singh Saini on Friday underlined the deep cultural and spiritual bond shared between Punjab and Haryana, stating that while geographical boundaries may be different between the two states, their soul, traditions, and way of life remain intrinsically connected. Addressing a large gathering at Pojewal in Punjab during the 24th Barsi Samagam of Satguru Brahmanand Ji Maharaj Bhuriwale, the Chief Minister said that the shared heritage of both states is shaped by the teachings of revered saints, whose influence transcends borders and generations. On the occasion, he also announced a financial assistance of Rs. 11 lakh to support the institution's ongoing efforts in promoting girls' education.

Emphasising the universal appeal of saints, Sh. Nayab Singh Saini remarked that

CM attends 24th Barsi Samagam of Satguru Brahmanand Ji Maharaj Bhuriwale at Pojewal, announces Rs. 11 lakh for girls' education initiatives



ensuring the upliftment of the last person continues to guide policy-making. He said that both the Centre and the State government are committed to translating these ideals into meaningful action on the ground. Highlighting the transformative role of education, especially for girls, Sh. Nayab Singh Saini said that the legacy of Satguru Brahmanand Ji Maharaj Bhuriwale lives on through institutions in the region, including four colleges and three schools dedicated to girls' education. In a similar spirit, the Haryana Government has worked to ensure that higher education is accessible within a 20-kilometre radius across the state, enabling lakhs of young women to pursue studies without any hindrance, said the Chief Minister. The Chief Minister also acknowledged the saint's lifelong efforts to promote

healthy living and to combat social evils such as drug abuse. The awareness he created continues to inspire the youth to choose a disciplined and purposeful life. In his message to young people, the Chief Minister urged them to embrace modernity without losing touch with their cultural roots. He said that the teachings of Satguru Brahmanand Ji Maharaj Bhuriwale serve as a moral anchor in challenging times. He further said that although the saint may no longer be physically present, his spiritual legacy, teachings, and blessings will continue to illuminate the path for generations to come. Raja Sabha MP, S. Satnam Singh Sandhu, former MP, Sh. Avinash Rai Khanna, and several other distinguished dignitaries also remained present on the occasion.

Railway Board Reviews Ongoing Infrastructure Projects in NFR

MALIGAON, 1 MAY, 2026:

Shri Vivek Kumar Gupta, Member (Infrastructure), Railway Board, visits Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) and held a comprehensive review meeting at Maligaon to assess the progress of ongoing infrastructure projects and development works across the zone. The meeting was attended by General Manager of N. F. Railway, Shri Chetan Kumar Shrivastava and General Manager (Construction), Shri Ashish Bansal, along with other senior officials of NFR. Detailed discussions were held on key infrastructure initiatives, project timelines, and strategies for expediting execution to strengthen railway connectivity in the Northeast region. As part of his visit, Shri Gupta will undertake a comprehensive window trailing inspection on 2nd May, 2026 from Kamakhya to Dimapur to review track conditions, safety meas-

ures and infrastructure status along the route. After reaching Dimapur, he is scheduled to review on progress of the Dimapur-Kohima new line railway project, along with other ongoing infrastructure works in the state. The visit underscores the continued focus of Indian Railways on enhancing connectivity and accelerating development in the Northeast. During the meeting, the operational status and progress of several key infrastructure projects in the region were reviewed in detail. Major projects including the Jiribam-Imphal, Sivok-Rangpoand Murkongselek-Pasighat were discussed with a focus on expediting their execution. In recent years Northeast Frontier Railway has achieved significant progress in railway infrastructural work. A major milestone was achieved by connecting the capital of Mizoram with the rest of the country through the rail network for the first time.

Construction on Rs 119-crore lift irrigation project begins in home district of Chhattisgarh CM

RAIPUR, (MAY 1)

Construction work began on Friday on a Rs 119-crore lift irrigation project, which will provide irrigation to more than 4,930 hectares of land across 13 villages in the home district of Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai. Sai inaugurated the construction of the pressurised lift irrigation system at his native village Bagia in Jashpur district, officials said. The project, being implemented under the Centre's SAMRI-DHI-M-CAD (Moderniza-



tion of the Command Area Development and Water Management) scheme, will provide irrigation to 4,933 hectares of land across 13 villages Bagia, Uskuti, Rajoti, Sujibahar, Chongribahar, Bansbahar, Dokda, Sikaria, Patratoli, Gahiradohar, Bibahal, Nariyandand and Dhududand, they said.

Bangladesh fuel crisis worsens; panic buying triggers long queues at petrol pumps

WASHINGTON

The United States has again placed India on its Priority Watch List for intellectual property concerns, citing continued gaps in enforcement and long-standing issues in patent protection.

The designation came in the 2026 Special 301 Report released by the Office of the US Trade Representative (USTR), which reviews how trading partners protect and enforce intellectual property rights.

India remains among six countries on the Priority Watch List, alongside China, Russia and Indonesia.

The report said India has taken some steps to strengthen its IP regime. These include adding more examiners and improving awareness. But it said progress remains uneven.

"India remains one of the world's most challenging major economies with respect to the protection and enforcement of



IP," the report said. Patent issues remain a key concern. The report pointed to long delays in approvals. It also cited "excessive reporting requirements" and prolonged opposition procedures.

The USTR said restrictions on patentable subject matter, especially in the pharmaceu-

tical sector, continue to affect companies. The report also flagged concerns over the lack of an effective system to protect test data used to obtain marketing approval for drugs and agricultural chemicals.

Enforcement remains weak, it said. Authorities face coordination gaps. Penalties often do

not deter violations.

"India's overall IP enforcement remains inadequate," the report said. High levels of piracy and counterfeiting continue. The report cited illegal streaming, software use and counterfeit goods as persistent problems. Trademark enforcement also faces delays. Com-

panies report long backlogs in opposition cases and concerns over examination quality.

The report said India lacks a dedicated law on trade secrets. Companies face difficulty protecting proprietary information. Despite the concerns, the USTR noted some positive steps. India amended patent

rules in 2024. The changes aim to improve efficiency and reduce burdens. The US said it will continue to engage India through trade talks and the Trade Policy Forum. "Using all the enforcement tools we have to address unfair trade practices is a top priority," US Trade Representative Jamie-Greer said.

"American innovators, creators, and brand owners rely on robust IP protection and enforcement," Ambassador Rick Switzer said.

The Special 301 Report is an annual review of intellectual property protection among US trading partners. Countries on the Priority Watch List face closer scrutiny and engagement from Washington. India's inclusion reflects continuing differences between the two countries on intellectual property policy. The issue has long featured in trade discussions, especially in pharmaceuticals and digital sectors.



Singaporean PM warns Mideast crisis to prolong supply disruptions, raise recession risks

SINGAPORE

Singaporean Prime Minister Lawrence Wong warned on Friday that supply disruptions stemming from the Middle East crisis are likely to persist and could worsen in the months ahead, raising the risk that some economies slip into recession.

"Globally, inflation will rise, spreading from energy to food and then other essentials. Some economies may well slip into recession, and Singapore will feel the impact directly," Wong said in a May Day Rally speech.

Even if the Strait of Hormuz reopens, Wong said "we should not expect this crisis to be over anytime soon," citing damage to ports and energy infrastructure, the need to clear shipping lanes of mines, and the time required to restore confidence.

"It will take months at least before the situation stabilises," he said.

The strait has been closed for more than two months, with effects already seen in higher prices and tighten-

ing supply, Wong said. Asia has been particularly affected due to its heavy reliance on energy and other critical imports from the Gulf, he added.

"Some countries in our region are already facing fuel shortages," he said, noting that airlines have cut flights and factories are reporting delays.

He warned the disruptions "will not stop at energy," with fertilizer, food and other essential inputs likely to be affected next. "We can expect shortages in more items to emerge," he said.

Wong also said Singapore's economic growth will slow this year while inflation rises, placing "real pressure on businesses, workers and households," Xinhua news agency reported. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres also warned that the crisis in the Middle East is worsening, encouraging opening a "pathway to peace".

"The consequences of the Middle East crisis grow dramatically worse with each passing hour," he said on a post on X.

Ex-Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina flags industrial setbacks, job losses in Labour Day message

DHAKA

Marking International Labour Day on Friday, former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed grave concern, stating that the progress achieved in the country's industrial and agricultural sectors over the last one and a half decades has faced setbacks since August 5, 2024.

Hasina alleged that the "retaliatory actions" of the previous interim government led by Muhammad Yunus resulted in the closure of thousands of factories, including the garment sector, while 2.1 million workers lost their jobs in a year.

"It is with regret that I say the momentum we built in industry and agriculture over one and a half decades has been disrupted after August 5, 2024. Due to the retaliatory actions of the unelected Yunus government, thousands of factories, including garment industries, have been shut down. Within just one year, 2.1 million workers lost their jobs. By September 2025, 3 million people had fallen into extreme poverty. This trend of crisis continues," read a statement issued by Hasina, which was posted by the Awami League on its social media platform X. International Labour Day, also known as May Day, is an annual observance honouring the historic movements.

India's new strategic maritime hub takes shape at Great Nicobar

NEW DELHI

The Great Nicobar Project, work on which is underway, aims to transform the Great Nicobar into a strategic maritime and economic hub by leveraging its proximity to the global East-West shipping route and reducing dependence on foreign transshipment ports keeping in view India's defence and national security, an official statement said on Friday.

The project, which will strengthen India's strategic presence in the Andaman Sea and Southeast Asia, seeks to balance port-led economic growth with calibrated environmental safeguards and protection of indigenous communities.

The major infrastructure components of the project comprise a 14.2 million twenty foot equivalent unit (MTEU) International Container Transshipment Terminal, a Greenfield International Airport, a 450 MVA gas-solar power plant, and a planned township, according to an official factsheet issued on Friday.

India's ports lack deep water berths for large ships. Because of this, cargo is routed through Colombo and Singapore. India loses substantial revenue as a result.

Countries like Myanmar, China and Sri Lanka are already building deep water facilities to capture this trade.

In this context, the International Container Trans-



shipment Port (ICTP) at Galathea Bay is being developed as part of the Holistic Development of Great Nicobar Island under the Island Development programme.

Along with the proposed airport, township, and power plant, the Galathea Bay transshipment port forms a major infrastructure component of the overall Great Nicobar Project.

The port is strategically important because it is located close to the East-West international shipping route, about 40 nautical miles away, and has natural water depth of more than 20 metres.

"This strategic location gives it an advantage to attract both gateway and transshipment cargo, reduce India's dependence on foreign ports

like Colombo, Singapore and Klang," the statement noted.

The development follows a regulated environmental framework, diversion of 1.82 per cent of island forest cover, and compensatory afforestation planned over 97.3 square km.

The island has world class ecological resources that can attract international and Indian tourists.

An international airport is necessary to improve connectivity and open up the island to tourism.

The island is close to international tourist destinations like Senang City, Phuket Island and Langkawi Island.

Port Blair airport currently handles around 1.8 million passengers annually.

The new airport is expect-

ed to handle at least 1 million passengers when it opens and grow to nearly 10 million passengers per year thereafter.

The planned township is intended to support the residential, commercial and institutional requirements arising from the port-led development of the island.

It will provide essential urban infrastructure for personnel, service providers and associated economic activities, in line with the overall integrated development framework.

"Tribal welfare remains central, with no displacement proposed for Shompen and Nicobarese communities and a net increase in notified tribal reserve area through re-notification measures," the statement added.

USCIS flags 100 H-1B cases linked to DEI roles

WASHINGTON

The US immigration authorities have identified about 100 H-1B visa cases linked to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) roles, according to an official response to a senator, as the administration steps up scrutiny of the programme.

In a letter dated April 21, the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Director Joseph B. Edlow said the agency reviewed H-1B petitions filed between fiscal years 2021 and 2024 following concerns raised by Senator Eric Schmitt.

"This initial analysis identified approximately 100 cases where the position title referenced 'diversity,' 'equity,' 'inclusion' or similar terms, and the role appeared to be DEI-related to some degree," Edlow wrote.

He added that "several unrelated financial roles, including terms such as 'private equity,' were excluded."

The review marks part of a broader policy push under President Donald Trump targeting DEI programmes. Edlow said Trump had taken action through an Executive Order titled 'Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing'. He also cited a presidential proclamation issued on September 19, 2025, "Restriction on Entry of Certain Non-immigrant Workers, under which certain H-1B petitions filed at or after 12:01 a.m. EDT on September 21, 2025.

South Korea: Lee vows zero compromise on workplace safety in Labor Day address

SEOUL

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung on Friday pledged unwavering commitment to workplace safety in his address to mark Labor Day at Cheong Wa Dae. "I will neither compromise nor make concessions on workplace safety," he said, vowing to build a "normal" country where no worker ever has to risk their life at work.

"Safeguarding workers is

the most basic responsibility of any nation and any business," he said. The president also pushed back against the notion that worker welfare and business growth are incompatible, stressing the two are mutually dependent. "We can only move forward by breaking free from the outdated thinking that being pro-business means being anti-worker," he said. "Growth has a future only when labor stands behind it" he said.

Amid growing concerns that artificial intelligence (AI) threatens jobs, the president sought to reassure the public that the government prioritises people over productivity.

"As technologies advance, the prevailing view is that machines powered by artificial intelligence will largely replace human labor," he said.

"But it is not right to ask workers to sacrifice themselves in the name of productivity," he

said, adding that growth that leaves workers behind is not growth at all. Lee called workers "the backbone of our economy," who keep things running on the ground and drive the spending that fuels growth.

It marked the first time a Labor Day event has been held at Cheong Wa Dae. The event brought together some 130 participants, including key figures from labor, management and government, as well as workers from diverse occupations, to mark the occasion. It also marked the first time two major umbrella labor unions -- the Federation of Korean Trade Unions and the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions -- that are said to hold different political views both took part in such an event, Yonhap news agency reported. South Korea had initially observed Labor Day on May 1 before it was renamed "Workers' Day" in 1963. The government restored the name to Labor Day last year and designated it as a national holiday earlier this year, allowing all workers to take the day off.

Rights group condemns Pakistani military strike in Balochistan, four civilians injured

QUETTA

A leading human rights organisation has strongly condemned a Pakistani military operation in Balochistan's Kharan district, which reportedly injured four civilians and led to the enforced disappearance of another individual.

Citing reports, the Human Rights Council of Balochistan (HRCB) mentioned that mortar shelling by Pakistani forces on April 25 struck a residential area in Lijay region of Kharan, seriously injuring two women, a man, and a one-year-old child. The victims identified as Bibi Zakira, Bibi Shafiq, Hafiz Tahir, and Nadia were reportedly denied transportation for urgent medical care.

Additionally, raising alarm over the enforced disappearance of local doctor Shah Jahan during the operation, the rights body said that he was taken to an undisclosed location while his home was reportedly set on fire.

"The abduction of civilians during military operations and



the collective punishment of families are unacceptable and unlawful practices. Reports of looting of shops, seizure of goods, and destruction of private property by Pakistani forces and affiliated militias deepen concerns over the lawlessness imposed on local populations under the cover of security operations," the HRCB stated. The rights body stressed that Pakistani authorities are violating "constitutional obligations, domestic laws, and international human rights commitments" through enforced disappearances, collective punishment, and

abuses against civilians in Balochistan. "The continued militarisation of Balochistan has created an atmosphere where civilian lives, dignity, and security remain under constant threat," it added.

The HRCB called on international human rights bodies to take urgent note of the worsening situation in Balochistan.

Meanwhile, Paank, the Baloch National Movement's Human Rights Department, strongly condemned the enforced disappearance of a 32-year-old student, Malik Baloch, a resident of the Tal Dary Khan region of the Mas-

tung district in Balochistan.

Citing reports, the rights body stated that Malik was taken by personnel of Pakistan's Frontier Corps (FC) and Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) on the evening of April 28 from the Polytechnical College of Technology hostel in the provincial capital Quetta.

Expressing grave concern over Malik's safety and well-being, Paank called on the Pakistani authorities to immediately disclose his location, while ensuring his safe release. As violence against civilians continues to escalate across Balochistan, a sit-in protest staged by the students outside Bolan Medical College (BMC) in Quetta entered its ninth consecutive day on Thursday, with demonstrators demanding the release of Khadija Baloch.

According to the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC), Khadija was abducted on April 21 by Pakistani security forces from the BMC female hostel in Quetta and shifted to an undisclosed location.

From petrol to food, why could everything get costlier together

A mix of higher oil prices, a weaker rupee and monsoon risks is putting pressure on India's economy. The overlap could lift household costs, limit policy choices and raise stagflation concerns.

Oil price shocks remain the biggest threat to economy. The rupee is hitting record lows, energy costs are climbing, and key sectors are beginning to feel the strain. While consumers have been shielded from a direct hit so far, with petrol and domestic LPG prices largely unchanged, the pressure is surfacing elsewhere. Commercial LPG prices have already been raised sharply, and airlines are warning of

rising aviation fuel costs. It doesn't look like a crisis yet. But the warning signs are hard to ignore. From fuel bills to grocery expenses, a quiet squeeze may be building across Indian households. The reason is not one single trigger, but a combination of forces hitting the economy at the same time. Together, they are creating a situation where costs across sectors could rise simultaneously. As highlighted in the Finance Ministry's recent assessment, it is this convergence, not just one factor, that is making the current moment more difficult to manage.

A PERFECT STORM IS COMING?
India has faced these challenges before, but rarely all at

once. Manoranjan Sharma, Chief Economist at Infomercs Ratings, says the overlap itself is the problem. "India has faced these shocks before, but this alignment is disruptive," he said. "Rising oil prices widen the current account deficit, a weak rupee raises import costs, and monsoon risks threaten food supply." He adds that these pressures don't act separately — they reinforce each other. "Cumulatively, they amplify feedback loops—faster inflation, tighter policy space, and weaker investor confidence." This is exactly what policymakers are worried about — multiple risks interacting and making the situation harder to control.

HOW IT HITS YOUR POCKET



For consumers, the impact may not come as a sudden shock, but as a steady rise in everyday costs. Higher oil prices increase fuel costs. That raises transportation expenses, which then push up the price of goods and food. At the same time, a weaker rupee makes imports more expensive, adding another layer of cost pressure. "If the monsoon under-

performs, supply tightens further, causing persistent, broad-based inflation hitting daily expenses," Sharma said. In simple terms, petrol, vegetables, packaged goods — everything can get costlier at the same time.

IS THERE A RISK OF A DOUBLE HIT?
Economists are also watching for a more worrying scenario. "The situation hints at

a mild stagflation risk—rising inflation alongside decelerating growth," Sharma said. He explains that high oil prices can reduce demand, currency weakness can discourage investment, and a weak monsoon can hit rural incomes. The risk is not extreme yet, but it is rising. This mirrors the concern flagged in official assessments as well — that inflation could rise even as growth slows.

WHY THE GOVERNMENT HAS LIMITED OPTIONS
Managing this situation is not easy. Each policy tool comes with trade-offs. "Rate hikes can curb inflation but slow growth. Tax cuts or food releases strain fiscal balances. Supporting the rupee uses finite reserves," Sharma said.

In other words, solving one problem can worsen another. This is why economists say the current phase is less about quick fixes and more about careful balancing.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR HOUSEHOLDS
For most people, the impact may be gradual but noticeable. "Households are likely to face a gradual squeeze—rising costs for essentials reduce disposable income," Sharma said. This could lead to cutbacks in spending, delayed purchases, and a shift towards cheaper alternatives. The pressure may not feel dramatic at first, but it builds over time.

THE BIGGEST RISK RIGHT NOW
Among all the factors, one stands out. "Oil remains the

primary threat," Sharma said. "India is highly exposed to oil shocks, which drive inflation, weaken the rupee, and strain fiscal health." With crude prices already elevated and global tensions ongoing, this remains the key variable to watch.

NOT A CRISIS, BUT A TIGHT SPOT
Despite these risks, India's economy still has buffers, strong domestic demand, government spending, and a stable financial system. But the margin for error is shrinking. What makes this moment different is not just the pressure, but the way multiple pressures are building together. And for consumers, that could mean one thing, higher costs, across the board.



Fuel prices may go up by Rs 4-5/litre, LPG cost by Rs 40-50/cylinder: Sources

India has so far managed to shield consumers from global volatility, but sustained crude levels above \$100 could test this stability.

Sources said the government is closely monitoring the evolving situation in West Asia, which has contributed to the recent surge in crude oil prices. Fuel and LPG cylinder prices are likely to be raised, with the government weighing a hike as global crude oil prices surge amid escalating tensions in West Asia, top government sources said. Petrol and diesel prices may increase by around Rs 4-5 per litre, while domestic LPG cylinders could see a hike of about Rs 40-50. If approved, this would be the first increase in petrol and diesel prices in nearly four years, with retail rates largely frozen since 2022. IndiaToday.in had earlier reported a strong likelihood of a fuel price hike, given mounting pressure on oil marketing companies (OMCs). The government, however, had recently ruled out the possibility of an increase immediately after the conclusion of the assembly polls. The trigger is the sharp rise in global crude oil prices, driven by the West Asia war. Concerns over potential supply disruptions, shipping risks and prolonged instability have pushed up benchmark crude prices in recent weeks, increasing input costs for oil marketing companies. With retail fuel prices unchanged, oil companies have been absorbing losses, leading to under-recoveries. Elevated crude prices are also adding to the government's fiscal burden, limiting its room to cushion consumers through subsidies or tax cuts.

8th Pay Commission to visit Hyderabad, Srinagar, Ladakh: What does this mean?

The 8th Pay Commission is taking its discussions beyond Delhi, with visits planned to Hyderabad, Srinagar and Ladakh. But what does this outreach mean for government employees and pensioners awaiting revisions?



The first round of discussions under the 8th Pay Commission has now come to a close, marking an important step in the process that will eventually decide future salaries and pensions of central government employees. The meetings, which began in Delhi on April 28, concluded on April 30, 2026, after hearing a range of demands from employee representatives.

EMPLOYEES PUSH FOR HIGHER PAY AND REFORMS
During the three-day discussions, representatives from various employee groups raised several key concerns. These included demands for better pay structures, changes in pension systems, and improvements in service conditions. The Commission

used these meetings to gather feedback and understand the expectations of employees before moving towards drafting its recommendations. Officials say this consultation stage is crucial, as it sets the direction for the final report.

NEXT STOP: HYDERABAD, SRINAGAR AND LADAKH OUTREACH
With the Delhi meetings now over, the Commission is moving to the next phase of outreach. It has lined up visits to Hyderabad on May 18-19, Srinagar from June 1 to June 4, and Ladakh on June 8, 2026. As part of this, stakeholders have been asked to submit their memorandums and request meetings through the official portal within the given timelines.

WHY THIS STAGE MATTERS
This phase of consultations is seen as a key opportunity for employees and pensioners to make their voices heard. The suggestions and concerns raised during these meetings will play a direct role in shaping the Commission's final recommendations. These recommendations are expected to influence salary structures, pension benefits, and overall service conditions for lakhs of central government employees across India. For now, the process is still at an early stage, but for many employees, this is the moment to put forward what they believe should change.

GST at record Rs 2.43 lakh crore in April, but domestic demand growth slows

A major part of April's growth came from import-related revenues. GST collected on imports rose sharply by 25.8% to Rs 57,580 crore.



India's GST collections touched a new peak in April 2026, offering a positive headline number. However, a closer look shows that much of this growth is being driven by imports, while domestic demand appears to be growing at a slower pace.

RECORD NUMBERS, STEADY RISE
Gross GST collections stood at Rs 2.43 lakh crore in April, up from Rs 2 lakh crore in March. Compared to April last year, this marks a growth of 8.7%. Net collections, after adjusting for refunds, came in at Rs 2.11 lakh crore, showing a 7.3% rise year-on-year. Over the past few years, GST revenues have steadily climbed, from Rs 1.67 lakh crore in April 2022 to the current record level, highlighting improved compliance and a broader tax base.

IMPORTS DRIVE THE SURGE
A major part of April's growth

came from import-related revenues. GST collected on imports rose sharply by 25.8% to Rs 57,580 crore. This spike is linked to rising global prices and supply disruptions, particularly due to geopolitical tensions in West Asia. Higher crude prices also played a role in pushing up import values.

DOMESTIC DEMAND SHOWS MILD SIGNS OF SLOWING
While overall collections are strong, domestic GST growth was more modest. Gross domestic revenue grew 4.3% to Rs 1.85 lakh crore. At the same time, refunds increased significantly, especially on the domestic side. Total refunds rose 19.3%, with domestic refunds jumping over 50%. This reduced the net gains from domestic collections.

EXPERT VIEW: WHAT'S

inverted duty structure, spiked by 54%."

COMPLIANCE CHANGES AND ONE-OFF FACTORS
Jalan highlighted that policy and compliance changes also played a role in April's numbers. "A major compliance shift also shaped April's inflows: the recalibration of ITC set off sequencing on the GST portal," he said, referring to changes in how tax credits are adjusted. He added that some collections were supported by advance payments linked to tax disputes. "Additional support to domestic collections came from pre-deposits linked to Section 74 orders for FY 2019-20 issued before March 31, 2026."

RISING REFUNDS AND BUSINESS CONCERNS
Another key issue is the rise in refunds and input tax credit (ITC) accumulation, especially under the inverted duty structure. "These refunds exclude the growing ITC accumulation on input services, which continues under GST 2.0's deepened inverted duty framework. While this accumulation has maintained collections, it has simultaneously raised business expenses," Jalan noted.

How to Spend, Save and Invest on ₹50,000 Monthly Income

Managing money at Rs 50,000 a month isn't just about covering expenses, it's about making choices that shape your financial future. But are you allocating it in the right way?

The salary credit message comes in, and for a moment, everything feels sorted. Rent is paid, groceries are stocked, maybe there's a dinner plan for the weekend. And then, somewhere in between, a thought creeps in, i.e., am I actually managing this Rs 50,000 well enough for my future? It's a question many young earners don't always say out loud. But it sits there, quietly. How much should you spend, how much should you save, and where does investing fit in? To understand what a sensible approach looks like, I spoke to experts, I spoke to experts, and

what emerged was less about rigid rules and more about balance.

THERE'S NO PERFECT FORMULA, ONLY A PRACTICAL ONE

At this income level, textbook rules often don't hold up in real life. International tax expert CA Nishant Shanker puts it simply, "At this income level, practicality matters more than textbook rules." He suggests a flexible split, around 60-65% for expenses, 20-25% for savings and investments, and 10-15% for protection like insurance and emergency buffers. But he also acknowledges reality. If rent or EMIs are high, savings may start lower. The key is to gradually increase them over time.

WHY THE 50-30-20 RULE DOESN'T ALWAYS WORK

The popular 50-30-20 rule sounds neat, but city life often has other plans. "The 50-30-20



rule is a useful starting point but is often not practical in Indian metros," says Shanker. Adil Shetty, CEO of BankBazaar, echoes a similar view, "The framework remains relevant, but its proportions need to reflect real cost structures." In simple terms, you may need to spend more on essentials initially, but what matters is consistency, not perfection.

BUILD A SAFETY NET, BUT DON'T WAIT TO INVEST

One of the biggest dilemmas is whether to build savings first or start investing. The answer? Do both. "An emergency fund of at least 3-6 months of expenses should be built," says Shanker. For a Rs 50,000 salary, that's roughly Rs 1-2 lakh. Shetty agrees: "A parallel approach,

where a portion goes into emergency savings and a smaller portion into investments, can work well." The idea is simple, i.e., protect yourself while still allowing your money to grow.

CONTROL FIXED COSTS BEFORE THEY CONTROL YOU

Rent and EMIs can quietly eat into your financial freedom. "Fixed expenses should ideally not exceed 40-50% of income," Shanker advises. Shetty suggests small tweaks like reviewing rent, cutting unused subscriptions, or avoiding early big loans. These may seem minor but can make a big difference over time.

SPEND WITHOUT GUILT, BUT WITH A PLAN

Budgeting doesn't mean cutting off all joy. Shanker advises setting aside 10-15% for lifestyle spending. "The focus should be on planned and conscious

spending rather than impulsive consumption." This balance allows you to enjoy your money without guilt, while still staying on track.

THE MISTAKES THAT CAN SET YOU BACK

At this stage, a few wrong moves can have a lasting impact. Shanker highlights common errors like delaying investments, taking on high EMIs too early, and not having clear goals. Shetty adds a strong warning: "Avoid chasing quick returns through risky investments. A loss can derail your entire plan at this income level." The lesson is clear—steady progress beats quick wins.

THE SMALL SHIFTS THAT MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

If there's one habit that can change everything, it's this: save first, spend later. Shanker

stresses that even though it may seem similar mathematically, prioritising savings upfront builds discipline over time. He also underlines the importance of starting insurance early and understanding the difference between assets that grow wealth and expenses that only consume it. Shetty reinforces the idea of gradual improvement: as income rises, increase savings instead of lifestyle costs.

SO, WHAT'S THE RIGHT WAY TO MANAGE Rs 50,000?

There's no single answer, but there is a clear direction. Cover your essentials, build a safety net, start investing early, and keep your spending in check. Don't aim for perfection. Aim for consistency. Because at the end of the day, it's not about how much you earn, it's about how wisely you use it.

Will your minimum pension rise from Rs 1,000 to Rs 7,500? Find out who benefits

Pensioners across the country may soon see a shift in their monthly income if the proposed changes go through. Here's what we know so far and who could benefit.



For many retirees, a monthly pension of Rs 1,000 has long felt inadequate in today's cost of living. Now, there may be some relief on the horizon. The government is considering a sharp increase in the minimum pension under the Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS-95), and the proposed jump is significant.

A LONG-PENDING DEMAND

The minimum pension could be raised to Rs 7,500, according to sources. This demand has been gaining traction for years, especially from labour unions who argue that

the current amount is far too low to support basic needs. A parliamentary panel has also backed the idea, adding weight to the proposal. While no final decision has been announced yet, expectations are building.

WHO WILL BENEFIT THE MOST

If approved, the revision will directly help pensioners under EPS-95, many of whom are from lower-income backgrounds. For them, even a modest increase can make a meaningful difference in managing daily expenses, healthcare, and rising inflation. Alongside the pension revision, the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation is working on making fund access easier. ATM-based withdrawals may soon become a reality, allowing subscribers to access their money more quickly. There is also a pro-

posal to offer an interest rate of 8.25% on provident fund deposits, though it is still awaiting approval.

A SYSTEM BECOMING FASTER AND SIMPLER

Recent data shows that EPFO has improved its claim settlement process, with more claims being processed faster and with less paperwork. Digital upgrades and automation have helped reduce delays, making the system smoother for users. For now, all eyes are on the pension decision. If the hike goes through, it could bring much-needed financial relief to millions of retirees across the country.

Paytm sees strong user trust and high merchant stickiness post PPBL action

India's leading UPI payments app, Paytm, continues to operate without any disruption across core operations following the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) action on Paytm Payments Bank Ltd. (PPBL), with brokerage firms indicating no material impact on its business and pointing to the company's earlier separation of its core operations from the banking entity as a major factor supporting management credibility. In its disclosure to the exchanges last week, Paytm (One 97 Communications Ltd.) said its services continue to operate normally for users and merchants, and reiterated that it has no material business arrangements with the payments bank, and

no board or management overlap with PPBL, stating that the latter operates independently. The company had also earlier impaired its investment in PPBL as of March 31, 2024, and stated there is no direct financial impact on its business, reinforcing strong governance and investor confidence. Brokerage firms tracking the company said the RBI action on PPBL has limited direct impact on Paytm's core business operations, given the structural separation between the listed entity and the payments bank, which they say supports confidence in the business and its compliance framework, and addresses concerns around Paytm trust following the regulatory action.

The Skyward Sanctuary

A Comprehensive Guide to Terrace Gardening



As urbanization continues to swallow open green spaces, the modern city dweller is increasingly looking upward to find a connection with nature. The concrete jungle, characterized by soaring temperatures and gray vistas, has found a formidable adversary in the terrace garden. More than just a hobby, rooftop cultivation is a sustainable lifestyle choice that transforms barren slabs of concrete into vibrant, life-sustaining ecosystems. In this feature, we explore the intricate world of terrace gardening—from its structural requirements and heat-mitigating properties to the art of plant selection and the safety precautions necessary to keep your skyward sanctuary thriving.

The Anatomy of a Terrace Garden: Key Features

A terrace garden, often referred to as a "roof garden," is a garden on the roof of a building. While the concept sounds simple, it involves a sophisticated blend of horticulture and engineering.

The Weight-Bearing Capacity

Before the first pot is placed, one must understand the load-bearing capacity of the structure. A terrace must be able to support the weight of the growing medium (soil), the containers, the water retained within that soil, and the plants themselves as they grow. Modern terrace gardening often utilizes "lightweight" solutions, such as coco-peat and perlite, to minimize the structural burden.

Drainage and Waterproofing

The most critical feature of any rooftop garden is its drainage system. Unlike traditional gardens where water seeps into the earth, rooftop water must be channeled away efficiently to prevent

seepage. This involves:

Waterproofing Layers: Applying a high-quality bitumen or polymer coating to the roof.

Drainage Cells: Plastic mats that create a gap between the pots/soil and the floor, allowing water to flow freely toward the drains.

Geotextiles: A fabric layer that prevents soil particles from clogging the drainage system while allowing water to pass through.

Container Diversity

From traditional terracotta pots and UV-treated grow bags to raised wooden beds and recycled crates, the "features" of a terrace garden are often defined by the containers used. Each material offers different levels of breathability and insulation for the roots.

Nature's Air Conditioner: Controlling Summer Heat

One of the most compelling arguments for terrace gardening in tropical and temperate climates is its ability to act as a natural thermal insulator. During peak summer, concrete roofs absorb a massive

amount of solar radiation, which is then conducted into the living spaces below.

The Urban Heat Island Effect

In cities, buildings and roads absorb heat, making urban areas significantly hotter than surrounding rural landscapes. Terrace gardens help mitigate this by replacing heat-absorbing surfaces with living, breathing vegetation.

How Plants Cool Your Home:

Shading: The most direct benefit is the physical shade provided by the foliage. Large-leaved plants and climbers on trellises prevent the sun's rays from hitting the roof surface directly.

Evapotranspiration: This is the biological equivalent of sweating. Plants release water vapor into the air through their leaves. This process consumes heat energy from the surrounding environment, effectively lowering the ambient temperature by several degrees.

Thermal Mass of the Soil:

A layer of moist soil acts as

a buffer. While dry concrete heats up rapidly, the water content in a garden's potting mix takes much longer to warm up, keeping the ceiling below significantly cooler. Studies have shown that a well-maintained terrace garden can reduce the indoor temperature of the top floor by 3°C to 5°C, leading to a significant reduction in air conditioning costs and energy

consumption.

Selecting the Right Flora: Choosing Your Sky-Dwellers

Not all plants are suited for the harsh, windy, and sun-drenched environment of a rooftop. Selection must be based on the intensity of sunlight your terrace receives and the amount of time you can dedicate to maintenance.

The Sun-Lovers (Succulents and Cacti)

If your terrace is exposed to direct, scorching sun for more than 8 hours, succulents like Aloe Vera, Jade, and various Agaves are ideal. They store water in their fleshy leaves and require minimal intervention.

The Kitchen Gardeners (Vegetables and Herbs)

Terraces are perfect for organic vegetable gardening.



Essential Precautions: Protecting Your Home and Yourself

While the benefits are many, a terrace garden requires a disciplined approach to prevent damage to the building's structural integrity.

1. Systematic Waterproofing

Never start a garden on a roof that has existing cracks or dampness. Ensure the roof is treated with a specialized waterproof chemical coating. Periodically check the ceiling below for any signs of moisture.

2. Wind Protection

Wind speeds are higher on rooftops. Tall plants can act as sails and tip over, or even be blown off the roof in a storm.

Anchoring: Secure tall pots or use heavy containers for large shrubs.

Windbreaks: Use bamboo screens or sturdy trellises to break the force of the wind.

3. Avoid Overloading

Distribute the weight of your pots along the perimeter of the roof, near the beams and columns, rather than in the center of a slab. Use lightweight potting mixes (one part soil, one part compost, one part coco-peat) to reduce the total weight.

4. Pest Management

Rooftop gardens can attract pests like aphids, mealybugs, and even birds. Use organic deterrents like Neem oil sprays or garlic-chilli extracts. Avoid chemical pesticides if you are growing edibles to ensure your harvest is truly organic.

5. Proper Irrigation

Watering is a double-edged sword. Under-watering kills the plants in the summer heat, while over-watering leads to stagnation and seepage.

Drip Irrigation: Installing a simple drip system is the most efficient way to water a terrace garden, as it delivers moisture directly to the roots and minimizes runoff.

Timing: Always water early in the morning or late in the evening to minimize evaporation.

Green Leafy Veggies:

Spinach, amaranth, and fenugreek grow well in shallow containers. **Summer Staples:** Tomatoes, chillies, brinjals (eggplant), and okra thrive in the heat, provided they are watered consistently.

Herbs: Mint, basil, lemongrass, and coriander are excellent for beginners and provide a fresh aroma to the rooftop.

The Vertical Climbers

To maximize cooling and space, use climbers on trellises. Money plants, Bougainvillea, and Balsam Pear can create "green curtains" that shield your walls from the sun.

Flowering Ornamentals

For aesthetic appeal, Hibiscus, Periwinkle (Vinca), Marigolds, and Adeniums (Desert Rose) are hardy choices that can withstand the rigors of a

rooftop environment.

The Future is Green

Terrace gardening is more than a decorative addition to a home; it is a revolutionary tool for urban sustainability. By cooling our homes, providing fresh organic produce, and offering a sanctuary for birds and bees, these "sky gardens" address the environmental challenges of the 21st century. Whether you start with a single pot of basil or a full-scale rooftop forest, the act of gardening on a terrace is a rewarding journey. It demands patience and precaution, but in return, it offers a cooler home, a clearer mind, and a slice of nature in the heart of the city. As we move toward a "greener" future, the answer may not lie in the ground beneath our feet, but on the roofs above our heads.



Strategic Expansion

NAREDCO Telangana Outlines the Future of the City's Skyward Surge

In a recent comprehensive media interaction, Koppula Sridhar Reddy, the President of the Telangana Chapter of the National Real Estate Development Council (NAREDCO), provided a master-class on the current state and future trajectory of Hyderabad's real estate market. Speaking against a backdrop of global economic shifts and local infrastructure breakthroughs, Reddy's insights paint-

ed a picture of a city transitioning from a high-growth hub to a potential global real estate destination. As the city moves through the first half of 2026, Reddy emphasized that the market is no longer driven by the "speculative frenzy" of previous years. Instead, it has entered a phase of sustained, high-value growth anchored by genuine home buyers and large-scale institutional investments.

Budgetary Impact: Rising crude oil prices are inflating the manufacturing and transportation costs of cement and steel. To combat this, Reddy shared that NAREDCO-affiliated developers are adopting disciplined procurement strategies, such as bulk-buying materials in advance and diversifying vendor bases to ensure project timelines remain on track despite global volatility.

Policy Advocacy: Redefining Affordable Housing

A key highlight of Reddy's press engagement was NAREDCO's aggressive push for policy reforms. He argued that the current definitions of "affordable housing" are outdated given the rising land and construction costs in a growing metropolis like Hyderabad. "We are advocating for an upward revision of the price ceiling for affordable homes, raising it from ₹45 lakhs to ₹90 lakhs," Reddy stated.

NAREDCO is also appealing for:

Tax Concessions: Exempting Goods and Services Tax (GST) for low-cost housing. **Reduced Registration Fees:** Cutting fees to 2% to lower the entry barrier for first-time buyers.

Faster Approvals: Streamlining construction permits to reduce the "holding cost" for developers, which ultimately lowers prices for the consumer.

Technology and the Future: The AI Transformation

Addressing the elephant in the room—Artificial Intelligence (AI)—Reddy offered a refreshing perspective. While there are fears that AI might disrupt the IT sector (the backbone of Hyderabad's buyer pool), Reddy argued that it would transform rather than diminish demand. "AI is moving Hyderabad up the value chain," he explained. The shift from backend call centers to high-end AI research and innovation labs means that while the type of jobs might change, the income levels of those professionals are rising. This, in turn, fuels the demand for smart, technology-integrated homes and premium gated communities.

Sustainability and Net-Zero Goals

Finally, Reddy touched upon NAREDCO's commitment to the "Shashwat Nirman" initiative. He emphasized that the future of Hyderabad's real estate is inextricably linked to green building norms. Under his leadership, the council is collaborating with the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) to certify more projects, with a long-term vision of making the state's real estate sector net-zero by 2047.

A Strategic Optimism

K. Sridhar Reddy's interaction with the media sent a clear signal to investors and homeowners alike: Hyderabad is no longer a city of "quick wins" but a market for long-term stability. By balancing infrastructure growth with policy advocacy and sustainability, Reddy and NAREDCO are steering the city's real estate sector through a period of profound global and local transition. For the home buyer, his message was simple: those waiting for a drastic fall in prices may find themselves left behind, as the city's robust demand floor and rising construction costs make now a strategic window for entry.

The Subterranean Reservoir

Why Recharge Water Pits are the Future of Urban Summer Resilience

As the mercury climbs and summer sun begins its relentless bake, a familiar anxiety settles over many households: the water crisis. In cities and suburban localities across the globe, the story is often the same—dry borewells, erratic municipal supply, and an increasing reliance on expensive water tankers. While we often look to the sky for rain, the real solution to our summer thirst lies beneath our feet. The Recharge Water Pit—a simple, engineered solution for rainwater harvesting—is emerging as the most effective tool for homeowners to secure their personal water needs while simultaneously reviving the local groundwater table. This feature explores how these pits work, their role in summer water management, and how they foster a healthy "water bank" for the entire community.

Effective Pit:

The Catchment: Usually the rooftop or the open paved areas of a house where rain falls. **The Conduit:** Pipes that lead the water from the catchment to the pit.

The Desilting Chamber:

A small initial tank that traps heavy silt, leaves, and debris before the water enters the main pit.

The Filter Media: This is the "heart" of the pit. It typically consists of layers of boulders at the bottom, followed by gravel (jelly), and a top layer of coarse sand. This natural filtration ensures that the water entering the aquifer is clean.

Catering to Summer Needs:

The "Bank Account" Analogy To understand why a recharge pit is vital for summer, think of the groundwater table as a community bank account. **The Problem:** During the sum-

mer, everyone is "withdrawing" water through borewells and pumps. If no one is making "deposits," the account eventually hits zero.

The Solution:

During the monsoon and rainy spells, a recharge pit allows a homeowner to deposit thousands of liters of water into the ground. By increasing the local hydrostatic pressure, recharge pits ensure that borewells do not go dry when the heat intensifies. In many cases, homeowners who have installed recharge pits report that their borewell water levels remain stable even when their neigh-



Benefits Beyond the Home:

Community Impact

Water is a shared resource. A single recharge pit doesn't just benefit one house; it contributes to the "water bubble" of the entire locality.

1. Preventing Localized Flooding

During heavy downpours, urban drainage systems often choke, leading to waterlogging on streets. Recharge pits absorb this excess runoff, acting as a pressure-release valve for municipal drains and keeping your driveway and street dry.

2. Preventing Soil Subsidence

In areas with heavy clay or loose soil, a drastically depleted water table can lead to soil contraction, which may cause cracks in building foundations. Maintaining a healthy water level keeps the soil "plump" and structurally sound.

3. Sustaining Local Greenery

A healthy groundwater table supports the roots of large trees in the neighborhood. These trees, in turn, provide the shade and transpiration needed to lower the local ambient temperature during the summer, creating a "cool island" effect.

A Market Defined by Resilience

One of the most striking points Reddy raised was Hyderabad's ability to defy national trends. While many of India's top tier-I cities saw a marginal dip in residential sales in early 2026, Hyderabad held its ground with nearly 9,541 homes sold in the first quarter alone. Reddy attributed this resilience to the city's evolving economic engine. "Hyderabad is no longer just an IT and Pharmaceutical hub; it is a thriving innovation center," he noted. He specifically highlighted the influx of Global Capability Centres (GCCs), which accounted for over 40% of recent office space absorption. These centers bring in high-value roles, creating a new class of "premium" buyers who are looking for more than just a roof—they are looking for an elevated lifestyle.

The Geography of Growth: Beyond the Outer Ring Road

A significant portion of the interaction focused on the "where" of the next growth wave. Reddy identified specific corridors that are poised to take the lead:

The Shamshabad-Budvel Belt: With proximity to the

international airport and proposed bullet train corridors, these areas are becoming the next frontier for residential and commercial expansion.

The ORR-RRR Corridor: The space between the existing Outer Ring Road (ORR) and the upcoming Regional Ring Road (RRR) is becoming a prime investment zone.

Established Hotspots: Areas like Kokapet, Tellapur, and Mokila continue to lead in market demand due to their robust infrastructure.

The Challenges: Cost Pressures and Global Disruptions

Reddy did not shy away from the challenges facing developers. He voiced serious concerns regarding the impact of the Middle East crisis on global supply chains.

Material Costs: He revealed that the gas shortage has hit the ceramics industry hard, causing the price of tiles and sanitaryware to surge by 10% to 20%, with some specialized products seeing hikes of up to 60%.



Nissanka, Rahul fifties guide Delhi Capitals to their highest chase ever

'Opening for Delhi Capitals gives me clarity and comfort,' says KL Rahul

NEW DELHI

Delhi Capitals wicketkeeper-batter KL Rahul said batting at the top of the order has given him clarity and comfort, adding that the role suits his game and preparation.



In IPL 2026, Rahul has been DC's batting lynchpin, scoring 358 runs in eight games at an average of 51.14 and strike-rate of 185.49, including hitting an unbeaten 152 and two fifties. "Playing as an opening batter for Delhi Capitals makes my life a bit easier. Knowing that this is where I am going to bat, and that it is a permanent position, helps me prepare better. Of course, nothing is truly permanent in a team sport."

"Sometimes you have to shift up or down the order and be flexible in your mindset. But walking into the season knowing that this is where I will mostly start helps me find a clear game plan. It gives me clarity on what I need to do this season, and that has really helped me. "I have always batted at the top of the order, at least in T20 cricket and the IPL. It is a position where I have spent a lot of time, so I know how to manage my game. I understand what kind of process I need to follow to help the team. It is a very comfortable role for me. I am happy that I am at the top," Rahul said on JioStar's 'Superstars' show. The right-hander, who has been an opener in T20 cricket for a long time, further said stepping out of his comfort zone in the past has helped him grow as a cricketer. "I enjoy the role of an opener in all formats. That's what I have always done as a youngster growing up."

"In my younger days, playing junior cricket, and even when I started playing international cricket, I was always opening the batting. So, it is a position that I am very used to. It feels like known territory and a comfortable place. But yes, I have been shifted up and down the order. "That has also helped me understand my game a lot better. It has helped me grow as a cricketer and as a person. When you are challenged, when you are put in difficult conditions, and when you are forced to get out of your comfort zone, you either come out a much better person, or you crumble. In my case, I found a way to always come out stronger and do what is required for the team," he added.

Associate cricket

Cricket Canada appoints Monty Desai as men's team head coach



TORONTO: Cricket Canada has appointed Monty Desai as head coach of the men's national team. Desai brings over 20 years of international coaching experience, including leading Nepal to regain ODI status and qualify for multiple ICC global events. He is widely respected for instilling belief, structure, and competitive discipline in emerging cricket nations. He has coached across multiple international systems, contributing to the success of Nepal, Afghanistan, the UAE, and the West Indies. He played a key role in Nepal's resurgence.

IPL 2026

RCB could've won by taking wickets not by defending runs: Bhuv



AHMEDABAD: Senior pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar said Royal Challengers Bengaluru's best chance of beating Gujarat Titans in IPL 2026 lay in taking wickets quickly rather than defending runs, as the defending champions lost by four wickets at the Narendra Modi Stadium. "If you look at the scenario, there was some help for seamers, and we had Romario (Shepherd), third seamer. So, we wanted to take a chance. Suyash (Sharma) is someone who is not easy to pick. We wanted to get wickets as quickly as possible. "So, that's the reason he (Krunal Pandya) didn't bowl. We couldn't have won the match by defending runs. We could have won by taking wickets, and the bowlers who bowled."

JAIPUR

KL Rahul, Pathum Nissanka, and Nitish Rana powered a strong chase after Mitchell Starc's timely wickets had kept the target within reach as Delhi Capitals (DC) beat Rajasthan Royals (RR) by seven wickets in a high-scoring Match 43 of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 in Jaipur on Friday.

Chasing a tough 226 after RR scored 225/6, Delhi started at a brisk pace, even though Jofra Archer continued his trend of opening the bowling. Archer gave up 11 runs in his first over, which was his second-most expensive first over this season. DC took advantage of this. They raced to 49 for 0 in four overs, one of the best starts against RR this season, and they did it without losing a wicket. This was different from previous blazing starts of 57/1 and 55/2. Nissanka set the pace early, taking advantage of anything short. Of his half-century, 30 runs came from five pulls and four flicks, showing how RR's bowlers struggled to find the right lengths against him. Delhi soared past 70 in the Power-play, something they hadn't done even in their 264-run outing earlier this season.

Rahul played a perfect supporting role before speeding up. He targeted Ravi Bishnoi, RR's main wicket-taker, scoring 26 runs off just nine balls, a big leap from his earlier results against the leg-spinner. By the ninth over, DC were cruising at 108 for 0, clearly in control of the chase.

Nissanka reached a rapid 52 off 26 balls in the Power-play but slowed down once the field spread. He man-



aged just 10 runs outside the power-play before getting out at 110 for 1 in 9.3 overs while trying a reverse sweep off Ravindra Jadeja.

Rahul kept the energy high. He got to his fifty in 27 balls, scoring 32 off 14 deliveries outside the powerplay and ensuring the asking rate, close to two runs per ball, stayed under control. At 120 for 1 in 11 overs, DC were well ahead.

The scoring rate didn't drop as Rana, batting at No. 3, played an important role. Starting cautiously at 6 off 6, he soon broke free, hitting Jadeja for two sixes in one over. His rapid 33 off 16 balls kept RR at bay, with DC needing just 60 runs off the

last 10 overs, and the asking rate never exceeded 12. Earlier, Rajasthan Royals set a solid total with skipper Riyan Parag leading them from the front with a superb 90 off 50 balls. RR stumbled early to 12 for 2, but Parag and Dhruv Jurel (42 off 30) rebuilt, moving to 56 for 2 in the Power-play and 91 for 2 in 10 overs.

Parag then sped up, overpowering Kyle Jamieson with 32 runs off 12 balls, pushing RR to 166 for 3 in 16 overs. However, Starc's impact was key. He took out Jadeja and Parag in quick succession, slowing things down to 173 for 5.

A late flurry from Donovan Ferreira (47 off 14) helped RR reach 225 for 6,

setting a challenging chase.

Despite a shaky moment towards the end when DC lost two well-set batters quickly, leaving 49 needed off 28 balls, the target remained manageable. Tristan Stubbs and Ashutosh Sharma made sure there were no hiccups in the later stages as DC cruised to a seven-wicket victory.

Brief scores:

Rajasthan Royals 225/6 in 20 overs (Riyan Parag 90, Donovan Ferreira 47 not out; Mitchell Starc 3-40, Kyle Jamieson 1-48) lost to Delhi Capitals 226/3 in 19.1 overs (KL Rahul 75, Pathum Nissanka 62; Ravindra Jadeja 1-33) by seven wickets.

Sayali, Saima and Humaira named Icon Players for inaugural T20 Mumbai Women's League

MUMBAI

The Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) has named Sayali Satghare, Saima Thakor and Humaira Kazi as the Icon Players for the inaugural T20 Mumbai Women's League, marking a key step in shaping the competition ahead of its first season.

Sayali will represent SoBo Mumbai Falcons, while Saima and Humaira join Thane Sky Risers and Aakash Tigers, respectively.

Both Sayali and Saima have been part of the India set-up and bring international experience to the league, while Humaira is a consistent domestic performer with India A exposure.

The player auction for both the T20 Mumbai League and the T20



Mumbai Women's League will be held on Saturday (May 2). A total of 2,411 players, including 2,048 men and 363 women, have registered for the auction, underlining the scale and depth of the city's cricketing talent pool.

Teams in the women's league

will have a squad size of 16 to 18 players, while men's teams will comprise 18 to 20 players, ensuring depth and competitive balance. MCA President Ajinkya Naik said, "The selection of Icon Players sets a strong foundation for the inaugural T20 Mumbai

Women's League. This league has been envisioned as a long-term platform to nurture talent, strengthen the domestic structure and contribute meaningfully to the growth of the women's game in India. These players bring proven quality, experience and leadership, which will elevate the standard of the competition and inspire young talent across the city."

Rajdip Gupta, Chairman, League Governing Council, added, "These Icon Players are central to building strong team identities and a competitive ecosystem. Their presence ensures that the league begins with the right mix of experience and ambition as we look to create a high-performance platform for women's cricket."



Zverev joins Federer, Nadal & Sinner feat with Madrid QF win

MADRID

Alexander Zverev maintained his impressive consistency at the ATP Masters 1000 level at the Madrid Open, where he eased past Flavio Cobolli 6-1, 6-4 inside Manolo Santana Stadium to book his place in the semi-finals. With his 90-minute victory, the German became just the fourth man to reach the semi-finals at each of the first four Masters 1000 events of the season since the series began in 1990, joining Roger Federer (2006), Rafael Nadal (2010, 2011) and Jannik Sinner (2026).

Moreover, with his win over Cobolli, with which he improved to 3-1 in the pair's ATP head-to-head series, Zverev also moved to 179 tour-level victories on clay, breaking his tie with Philipp Kohlschreiber for the most by a German man in the Open Era.

The world number three did not give Cobolli a look-in on the Caja

Magica's centre court. With some impressive serving, Zverev was only truly challenged one time in the match, when it came to crossing the line. At 5-4 up and serving for the second set, the Hamburg native suddenly found himself having to fend off two break points, something he did with aplomb. As if he had ice flowing through his veins, he produced two huge serves and finished off the job. Looking to extend his perfect 3-0 record in Madrid semi-finals, Zverev will next face 21-year-old Belgian Alexander Blockx in Friday's evening session. Blockx, the World No. 69, earlier defeated defending champion Casper Ruud 6-4, 6-4 to reach his maiden Masters 1000 semifinal.

Blockx-Zverev will be a clash of contrasts; this is the first venture into the last four of an ATP tournament for Blockx, while Zverev will be playing in his seventh semi-final in the last eight Masters 1000s.

Nishikori, who defeated Djokovic & Federer, to retire at the end of 2026 season



NEW DELHI

Japanese tennis star Kei Nishikori has announced his decision to retire at the end of the 2026 season. Nishikori has been a critical figure for Japanese tennis, not only becoming the highest-ranked player in the country's history, but also the first to break into the world's Top 10. The Japanese star has climbed as high as No. 4 in the PIF ATP Rankings.

"Today, I have an announcement. I have decided to retire from professional tennis at the end of this season," Nishikori wrote in a lengthy post he shared on social media.

"Since I was a child, I have been passionate about tennis and I have continued to pursue it with only one dream in my heart: I want to compete on the world stage." Reaching the ATP Tour, playing

at the highest level of competition, and maintaining a presence in the Top 10 is something I am extremely proud of. Whether in victory or defeat, the special atmosphere I felt in packed arenas is irreplaceable," he added.

The 36-year-old owns 12 ATP Tour titles, including two on home soil in Tokyo in 2012 and 2014. The winner of 451 tour-level matches has also competed at the Nitto ATP Finals four times (2014-16, 2018), reaching the semi-finals twice (2014 and 2016). Nishikori enjoyed the best season of his career in 2014, when he won four tour-level titles and posted a 54-14 record, according to the ATP Win/Loss Index.

That season, the Japanese star reached the US Open final, upsetting then-World No. 1 Novak Djokovic in the semi-finals. Nishikori also advanced to the last four

at the ATP Masters 1000 event in Miami, where he defeated Roger Federer in the quarter-finals, ATP reports. Nishikori most recently competed in a tour-level event at last year's Cincinnati Open. He played in an ATP Challenger event last week in Savannah, Georgia. "My love for tennis and my belief that I could become a stronger player always brought me back to the court. I feel that all of these experiences have enriched and shaped my life. I am deeply grateful [for] my family and to everyone who has supported me at all times," Nishikori wrote. "To be honest, I still wish I could continue my playing career. Even so, looking back on everything up to this point, I can proudly say that I gave it my all. "I am truly happy to have walked this path. I will cherish every moment of the remaining matches and fight to the very end," he wrote.

Santner sidelined for a month after scans reveal ACL shoulder injury

AUCKLAND

New Zealand all-rounder and white-ball captain Mitchell Santner is set to be sidelined for at least a month after scans revealed a grade three ACL shoulder injury, New Zealand Cricket (NZC) said on Friday. Santner injured his left shoulder while fielding for his Indian Premier League side Mumbai Indians in their recent match against the Chennai Super Kings. He was spotted in the dressing room with an ice pack around his shoulder during the chase as MI used a concussion substitute for him. Santner first sustained a niggle to his non-bowling shoulder while fielding in the game against Delhi Capitals on April 4 and sat out of the match against Rajasthan Royals on April 7. He featured against Royal Challengers Bengaluru on April 12 and also played against Gujarat Titans on April 20 but suffered another injury to the same shoulder while fielding against CSK and was thus ruled out of the tournament.

The five-time winner MI signed South African left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj as a replacement for Santner, who has played four matches for the Mumbai Indians in IPL 2026, claiming five wickets for 125 runs. The 34-year-old allrounder returned home to New Zealand this week and saw a specialist this morning who confirmed a rest and rehabilitation period of at least one month, NZC said.

The diagnosis means Santner is unavailable for the one-off Test against Ireland and the first Test against England, with his availability for the second and third Tests to be evaluated at a later date. The one-off four day Test against Ireland begins at Stormont in Belfast on May 27, with the three Tests against England to be played at Lord's (June 4-8), The Oval (June 17-21) and Trent Bridge (June 25-29), respectively.

12-member Indian shotgun squad set for second ISSF World Cup stage

NEW DELHI

A 12-member Indian shotgun squad is all set to take part in the year's second International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) World Cup Shotgun stage in Almaty, Kazakhstan, beginning with team arrivals on Saturday.

A total of 284 athletes representing 42 national Olympic committees are in the fray for the five Olympic events on the 10-day roster. Eight members of the Indian squad are also travelling to compete as RPO (ranking points only) shooters.

Competitions begin with the men's and women's skeet qualifiers on Monday (May 04, 2026) with the finals following the next day. The two trap finals are listed on May 09th with the fifth and last final, the trap mixed team, scheduled next Saturday on May 10th, 2026.

The shotgun squad began their international engagements in Tangier, Morocco, in March where the first world cup stage was played.

Day one of competitions will feature three Indian Olympians, senior pro



Mairaj Ahmad Khan and Anantjeet Singh Naruka in the men's skeet and Raiza Dhillon in the women's skeet. All three will be seen in international action for the first time this year.

Besides the all-conquering Italians, Indian shooters will be up against top shooters from strong shotgun nations like Finland, Denmark, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Greece, Peru and Qatar among others. Hosts Kazakhstan also have a quality squad and strong representation from China and Russia, the latter entered as Individual Neutral Athletes (AIN), will ensure that Indian shooters will have to be at their very best to get to the podium.

NTRNeel: Script Is Getting Changed

For a long time, the shoot of KGF fame director Prashant Neel and stunning star hero Jr NTR's latest movie, tentatively titled "Dragon", is going through a rough patch. Though the producer Mythri Movie Makers has earlier clarified that they are taking a break, an unusual one,



just the one that occurs between two schedules, it's now coming out that the rumours earlier heard were true. Apparently, it has come out that Jr NTR got severely upset after the release of War 2 and the subsequent result of the movie. That pressure has gotten into the sets of Prashant Neel's movie too, as the actor is actually doing a negative shaded role in the movie Dragon. Convincing the director Prashant Neel, NTR is said to have made him do enough changes to the script, such that there will not be a War 2 like backlash after Dragon releases. While this is put down as a rumour by many people close to NTR and his PR team, a producer from the production house has now given clarity on this.

None other than Mythri Movie Makers CEO Cherry confirmed that after the failure of WAR 2, director Prashant Neel is making changes to the script of "Dragon". While promoting his latest production venture Jetlee, which is hitting cinemas on May 1st, Cherry stated that the shooting of Dragon has restarted and the film will come out on the said time without any worries. He stated that after War 2's release, the director and hero thought of making certain changes to Dragon, and did it. Well, that explains everything.

RAASHII KHANNA TURNS HEADS IN EMERALD CORSET LOOK

Raashii Khanna slays in this bold and confident photoshoot at the #Lukkhe trailer launch. Dressed in a striking emerald green snakeskin-textured corset gown, she exudes power, glamour, and effortless style. With her wavy hair, intense gaze, and statement green cross necklace, the actress perfectly channels fierce energy against the vibrant yellow backdrop. Raashii Khanna made her acting debut in a supporting role in the Hindi film Madras Cafe (2013) opposite John Abraham. She made her Telugu lead debut with Oohalu Gusagusalade (2014), winning the SIIMA Award for Best Female Debut. She rose to fame with successful Telugu films like Supreme, Tholi Prema, and Venky Mama, and expanded her range in Tamil cinema with Imaikkaa Nodigal and Sardar.

Known for her versatility across Hindi, Telugu, and Tamil industries, Raashii has delivered strong performances in Yodha (2024) and The Sabarmati Report. She is currently leading the much-talked-about Prime Video series Lukkhe.



After SVC, Another Telugu Banner for Salman?

That Bollywood Superstar Salman Khan has green signalled a big-budget entertainer for Tollywood's marquee producer Dil Raju and director Vamshi Paidipally is a known news and the regular shooting of this untitled project is already underway. The film is targeting EID 2027 for a massive pan-India release.



Meanwhile, another successful production house with Tollywood roots is in talks to pool money bags for Salman Khan's superhero film which is

currently in discussion stages. Recently, it was revealed that Salman Khan is going to take plunge into the superhero genre with The Family Man creators Raj and DK for an interesting film. The filming is likely to commence in October this year and will be produced by Atul Agnihotri.

According to the latest buzz in Bollywood circles, Atul Agnihotri has reportedly approached Mythri Movie Makers of Tollywood to come on board as studio partner for Salman Khan's film to make it even more bigger in terms of scale and vision.

Mythri Movie Makers have already expanded their horizon beyond Tollywood with a bunch of upcoming pan-India projects including a big hit in Hindi Jaat. Now, they aim to make a strong footprint in Bollywood as well and might agree to come on board for Salman Khan's film. This will be the first time that Salman Khan is going to work with Tollywood producers for back-to-back projects.

Ironically, these two production houses are at odds over the theatre percentage system, which has surprised everyone.

If everything goes as planned, an official announcement about this project will be made very soon and the collaboration with Mythri Movie Makers will also be revealed during this occasion.

Most-Awaited Combo Of NBK-Koratala Announced

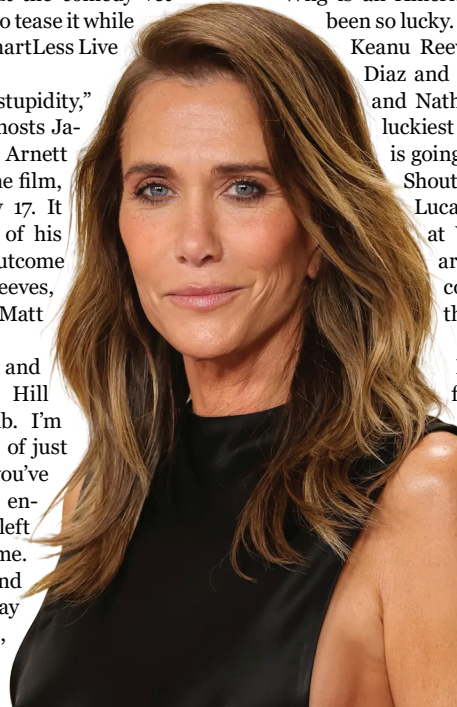
Nandamuri Balakrishna who is presently working on his new project #NBK111 under the direction of Gopichand Malineni announced his next big movie. Balakrishna joins hands with blockbuster maker Koratala Siva for NBK112, which is going to be power-packed action entertainer. The announcement poster of this

most-awaited combination features the stirring line, "Power Meets Purpose, Mass Becomes A Moment," signalling a film packed with explosive elevation.

Koratala Siva readied a script suitable for the stardom of Balakrishna, and the actor too is said to be spellbound by the story and his character. This combination alone garner massive anticipation, since both NBK and Koratala are popular for doing mass-appealing entertainers. NBK112 is expected to go on floors in the second half of this year. More details of NBK112, including producer are awaited.

Jonah Hill Teases 'Cut Off' as "PURE STUPIDITY"

Jonah Hill may not have made it to the CinemaCon main stage during Warner Bros. studio presentation to promote his upcoming film, Cut Off, but the comedy vet didn't miss a chance to tease it while under the lights at SmartLess Live on Saturday.



"Next one is pure stupidity," Hill told SmartLess hosts Jason Bateman, Will Arnett and Sean Hayes of the film, due in theaters July 17. It comes on the heels of his Apple TV original Outcome starring Keanu Reeves, Cameron Diaz and Matt Bomer.

Asked to elaborate and share the concept, Hill said this: "It's dumb. I'm about to go on a run of just the dumbest shit you've ever seen in your entire life. I hope you left your brains at home. It's called Cut Off and Kristen Wiig and I play two dumb ass heirs, rich kids in their mid-40s who get

cut off by their rich parents, played by Bette Midler and Nathan Lane. It is like Step Brothers, Clueless and Trading Places. Classic comedy. It's so great, and Kristen Wiig is an American treasure. I've been so lucky. I last worked with Keanu Reeves and Cameron Diaz and now Bette Midler and Nathan Lane. I'm the luckiest guy, and this one is going to be in theaters. Shout out [Michael De Luca and Pam Abdy] at Warner Bros. We are trying to bring comedy back to theaters."

Hill directed from a script he co-wrote with Ezra Woods. If it feels like a return to the spotlight for Hill, well, he would say the same thing.

"I've been gone for a while, so I'm kind of coming back and I'm like excited because I got all, like, serious for a while and I wasn't as happy," Hill explained of a quiet few years of not appearing in any major films after Kenya Barris' You People and Adam McKay's Don't Look Up. "Then I had my family and I got happy, and now all I want to do is be funny again. That's why I said yes [to being on SmartLess]. I'm, like, I want to go fucking be funny in front of a crowd and that'd be awesome."

Hill appeared giddy to be on stage, a moment his fans may have thought might never come after he released a statement in August 2022 announcing he would be stepping back from media appearances and public facing events due to 20 years of anxiety attacks. He credits his family for the vibe shift. "If you're bummed, you don't feel like being that funny, right? The first thing I thought about when I had my kids and was so stoked, it was like I connected to back when I was just like 12 and I was just being funny for fun," he explained. "That's the thing I fell in love with my whole life."

After directing two films, Hill said he's stoked to be an actor for hire. "I might take a job," he said. "I'm like, dude, I'm so excited to just put on the t-shirt you tell me to put on and go be funny."

Peddi: Producers announce June 4 as new release date

The official release date for Ram Charan's "Peddi" has been finalized. Interestingly, while director Buchi Babu Sana had announced June 25 as the release date just a couple of days ago, the producers have now confirmed June 4, 2026 as the new date. "Peddi" features Ram Charan as a village sportsman and is set in the Uttaraandhra region. The period drama is said to blend emotional storytelling with action, set against a sports backdrop. Ram Charan has undergone a significant physical transformation, appearing in two distinct looks. A previously released glimpse showcased his rugged avatar as a village wrestler, which received strong appreciation.

Janhvi Kapoor plays the female lead in this film, directed by Buchi Babu Sana, with music composed by AR Rahman.

Britney Spears Arrested Over Alleged DUI

Pop star Britney Spears on Thursday was charged with driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs, prosecutors outside Los Angeles said -- but she could avoid jail time with a plea deal. The criminal complaint does not specify which substance the 44-year-old singer was allegedly using when she was arrested in early March. Spears is scheduled to be arraigned on Monday in a courtroom in Ventura County, which borders Los Angeles County. She is not required to attend the hearing because the charge is a misdemeanor, and can be represented by her attorney, prosecutors said in a statement. Following her arrest, a representative for the singer described the incident as "completely inexcusable" and said Spears would "take the right steps and comply with the law."

Since then, she checked herself into rehab. Prosecutors said in their statement that Spears could avoid jail time by agreeing to a plea deal -- a typical move in cases with no prior convictions, no injury, a low blood alcohol level and defendants who voluntarily enter a rehab program. Such a move would likely result in a guilty plea for reckless driving involving drugs and/or alcohol, which would see her placed on probation for 12 months. She would also have to take a court-ordered driver safety class and pay a fine. "This offer will be extended to Ms Spears on Monday," prosecutors said.

