

# HYDERABAD HEADLINES

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## TN Congress offers conditional support to Vijay

The Congress on Tuesday offered conditional support to TVK chief Vijay, saying that he shouldn't seek the support of the lone winner from the BJP in the State, or any alliance partner of the BJP. The decision came after an online meeting of the office bearers of the Congress. The party had earlier claimed that Mr. Vijay has sought their support in government formation in Tamil Nadu and its leadership has directed the State unit to take a final decision on the matter. Top Congress leaders held a meeting at party chief Mallikarjun Kharge's residence on Tuesday evening.



## Samson Kartik set up CSKs win

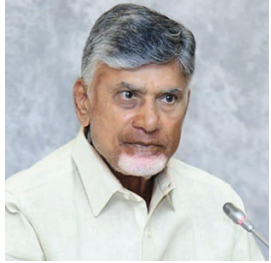
STADIUM 11

## INDIAN STARS GEAR UP FOR CANNES



BOX-OFFICE 12

### SHORT TAKES



#### CM orders release of Rs 1 cr each to all districts

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu directed officials to ensure uninterrupted drinking water supply in the state. He instructed the Chief Secretary to release Rs 1 crore to each district to strengthen water supply systems.

NEXT DOOR 05



#### 2026 Elections: A Verdict on Leadership Deficits

Elections aren't just votes—they're mirrors of unfulfilled dreams. Tamil Nadu, Bengal, and Kerala's incumbents crashed due to youth disillusionment, industrial neglect, scandals, and arrogant leadership blind to ground realities.

OPINION 06



#### Cognizant eyes up to 15,000 job cuts

The possible job cuts come at a time when many large IT firms are restructuring. Slower spending by clients, rising automation, and the growing use of AI are changing the way companies operate.

MONEY MATTER 09

## Skill development is vital for jobs: Raghuram Rajan

Addressing malnutrition is crucial for development of human resources

Robust growth and investment flow depends on Ease of doing policies

CM Revanth Reddy urges Raghuram Rajan to make recommendations on integration of AI and education

CM says skills university and ATCs provides skill development among youth

CM Revanth Reddy holds a meeting with former RBI Governor



Hyderabad: Former Reserve Bank of India Governor Raghuram Rajan emphasized that enhancing the skills among the job seekers would provide more employment opportunities to them. Rajan stressed that addressing the issue of malnutrition is crucial for the development of human resources.

During a meeting presided over by honourable Chief Minister Shri A Revanth Reddy on the future development plans of the Telangana State on Tuesday,

the former Reserve Bank Governor said that the establishment of new industries and investments flow depends significantly on the government's "Ease of Doing Business" policies. He underscored the need to provide encouragement to the startups which would yield even more beneficial results.

On this occasion, CM Revanth Reddy appealed to Raghuram Rajan to make recommendations and also suggestions regarding the formation of a committee to examine the

integration of AI into the curricula of school, higher, technical, and medical education. The Chief Minister also briefed about the establishment of the Skills University and Advanced Training Centers (ATCs) to facilitate the creation of middle-level employment opportunities.

The former RBI Governor remarked that if AI is utilized in a proper and systematic manner, it will prove beneficial for everyone.

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## KAPIL SIBAL'S EXPLOSIVE CHARGE 'ELECTION STOLEN, NOT WON'

IN BENGAL: INSTITUTIONAL MUSCLE OR PEOPLE'S VERDICT THAT SHOOK THE FOUNDATIONS?

SIBAL ALLEGES: EC, CENTRAL FORCES & 2.5 MILLION VOTERS DISENFRANCHISED — THIS ELECTION WAS STOLEN, NOT WON

A sweeping political change in West Bengal has triggered a sharp institutional debate. Kapil Sibal alleges that the BJP's massive win is the result of systemic bias, not voter choice. Mamata Banerjee echoes the charge, while the Election Commission of India faces tough questions on voter roll deletions and process transparency. The central question now is simple but serious: was this a clean mandate or a contest clouded by doubt?

BY C. SUBRAHMANYAM

The Bharatiya Janata Party has delivered a decisive electoral performance in West Bengal. Crossing the 200-seat mark is not just a victory, it is a political takeover. For over a decade, Mamata Banerjee and the All India Trinamool Congress dominated Bengal's political landscape. That dominance has now been punctured in a dramatic fashion.

And when an incumbent chief minister loses her own seat, it sends a powerful political message: the electorate was ready for change.

THE BIG NUMBERS  
• BJP crosses 200 seats  
• Nearly 9 million names deleted in roll revision  
• Around 2.5 million flagged as disputed voters  
• High turnout despite trimmed rolls

SIBAL'S CLAIM: A CHALLENGE TO THE SYSTEM

Kapil Sibal's intervention is significant because of who he is a senior advocate, a parliamentarian, and someone who understands

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## Telangana Positions as Aerospace Hub



HYDERABAD, MAY 5

Telangana is making a planned effort to position itself as a strategic partner for global aerospace companies and to evolve into a research and development (R&D) hub in the sector, Minister for IT and Industries Duddilla Sridhar Babu said. He was speaking after laying the foundation stone for the ₹453-crore manufacturing facility of Spain-based ITP Aero - India at Hardware Park (Phase 3) in Shamshabad, Rangareddy district on Tuesday. The facility, to be set up on 10 acres, will manufacture critical components for aircraft engines.

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## Bhatti urges PM Modi to grant national project status to Pranahita-Chevella



HYDERABAD, MAY 5

In view of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Karimnagar, Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka urged that the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Pranahita-Chevella project, which was designed during the Congress government in the undivided Andhra Pradesh, be immediately declared a national project. Bhatti Vikramarka, along with Ministers Duddilla Sridhar Babu, Tummala Nageshwar Rao, and Ponnampalapati Prabhakar, performed the ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of a compressed biogas plant set up by Biostratum Technologies Private Limited at Pantaluguri Thota in Gambhirapet village of Sircilla district on Tuesday. He reminded that, as per the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, the then Central government

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >

## All Aboard! Vizag Officially Becomes SOUTH COAST RAILWAY HQ

NEW DELHI, MAY 5

The Railway Ministry has issued a gazette notification formally announcing the creation of the South Coast Railway (SCoR) Zone, with its headquarters in Visakhapatnam. The move marks a major administrative reorganisation aimed at strengthening railway infrastructure and operations in Andhra Pradesh.

Divisions Finalised  
The newly formed zone will comprise four key divisions—Guntakal, Guntur, Vijayawada, and Visakhapatnam. These divisions were earlier part of the South Central Railway and are now reorganised under the new zone to improve regional management and efficiency.



#### Key Allocation Change

In a significant decision, the high-revenue Kothavalasa-Kirandul (KK) Line—known for its crucial role in iron ore freight movement—has been placed under the Rayagada Division of East Coast Railway. This line, which connects mineral-rich regions to ports, has been removed from the Visakhapatnam Division under the new structure.

#### Strategic Importance

The KK Line is one of the most profitable freight corridors in the country, primarily facilitating the transport of iron ore from Chhattisgarh to ports along the east coast, including Visakhapatnam Port. Its reassignment is expected to have operational and revenue implications for the new zone.

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## Bhu Bharati SERVER CRASH

HYDERABAD, MAY 5

The registration process for land sales, purchases, and mutations has been completely halted throughout Telangana.

This interruption is primarily due to technical problems affecting the server of the newly launched 'Bhu Bharati' portal. Since Tuesday morning, the portal has been out of service, leading to hundreds of stalled registrations statewide.

As a result of the server outage, many people have been left waiting for long periods at sub-registrar offices. Buyers and sellers who traveled from far away for their registrations have experienced significant difficulties.

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# Cabinet approves proposal to increase number of Supreme Court judges by 4

NEW DELHI, MAY 5:

The Union Cabinet on Tuesday cleared a proposal to increase the strength of the Supreme Court from the present 34 judges to 38, including the Chief Justice of India. Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said a bill will be brought in the next session of Parliament to raise the apex court's strength by four judges. The sanctioned strength of the top court is 34 judges, including the CJI. At present, the apex court has two vacancies. Once the bill is cleared by Parliament and is enacted, the sanctioned



number of Supreme Court judges will stand at 38. The strength of the Supreme Court was last increased from 30 to 33 (excluding the Chief Justice of India) in 2019. The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act 1956, as originally enacted, provided for

the maximum number of judges (excluding the chief justice of India) to be 10. This number was increased to 13 by the Supreme Court (Number of Judges), Amendment Act, 1960, and to 17 by another amendment to the law. The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Act, 1986, augmented the strength of the Supreme Court judges from 17 to 25, excluding the CJI. Subsequently, a fresh amendment in 2009 further augmented the strength of top court judges from 25 to 30. The strength of the Supreme Court was increased to 33 (excluding the Chief Justice

of India) by further amending the original law in 2019. Article 124(3) of the Constitution states the qualifications to become a Supreme Court judge. An Indian citizen who has either served as a high court judge for at least five years or as an advocate for 10 years, or is a distinguished jurist can be appointed to the top court. The strength of the Supreme Court is increased based on the recommendation of the CJI, who writes to the Union Law Minister. After consulting with the Finance Ministry, the Department of Justice in the law ministry moves the Cabinet with a draft bill.

# HAL OBC Employees Association Slams 2027 Census Draft Over Caste Omission



MEDCHAL-MALKAJIRI, MAY 05

The HAL OBC Employees Welfare Association has criticized the initial 2027 self-enumeration census questionnaire, igniting a renewed debate over how caste is represented in national data. The association's president, Ravi Mudhiraj, condemned the draft for omitting a dedicated category for Backward Classes (BC) and Other Backward Classes (OBC), noting that individuals from these communities are currently directed to register under an "Others" category. This, he argues, risks distorting the demographic picture and undermining efforts to allocate welfare resources equitably. Mudhiraj highlighted that while the questionnaire explicitly lists Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), the absence of a separate BC/OBC column could undercut a significant portion of the population. He warned that relegating BCs to a generic label may prevent an accurate understanding of their population share, with potential repercussions for policy decisions and the fair distribution of benefits, particularly in Telangana. The association is now calling for a

formal revision of the census form before the survey proceeds, urging that all 40-plus requested BC sub-castes be explicitly listed in the questionnaire. Mudhiraj stated that the state's census exercise should begin only after these categories are recognized and enumerated, arguing that accurate data is a fundamental right rather than a discretionary option. In their public remarks, the HAL OBC Employees Welfare Association insisted that a properly inclusive census form would ensure that BC and OBC communities are accurately represented from the outset. They emphasized that the current draft's structure could undermine the integrity of the data and, by extension, the equitable design of welfare programs and representation. What's next for the controversy remains unclear, but the association's appeal has intensified scrutiny of the central government's approach to caste classification in national data collection. Stakeholders, researchers, and policymakers will be watching closely to see whether an amended questionnaire is released before the 2027 census rollout, with potential implications for how social groups are documented and served in the years ahead.

# Wall Writing Campaign Launched Ahead of PM Modi's Hyderabad Rally

HYDERABAD, MAY 5

Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar has launched a wall writing campaign to mobilize people for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's public meeting scheduled on May 10 at the Secunderabad Parade Ground.



Leaders Meet on Mobilization

A meeting was held in Karimnagar under district president Gangadi Krishna Reddy, attended by key leaders including Payal Shankar and Deputy Mayor Sunil Rao, along with other senior leaders.

During the meeting, strategies were discussed to ensure large-scale mobilization and the success of the public gathering.

Key Points

Leaders said this would be Modi's first visit to the state after recent developments

and after assuming office for a third term. They urged every BJP worker to attend voluntarily and ensure strong participation, especially from Karimnagar.

They also called for extensive promotion through media, social media, and grassroots outreach at village, ward, and mandal levels. Arrangements for transport, food, and basic facilities were emphasized.

Leaders said that making the meeting a success would send a strong political message about the BJP's strength in the state ahead of future elections.

# 2 Indian journalists win Pulitzer Prize for highlighting cyber fraud

New York, May 5: Indian journalists Anand RK and Suparna Sharma have won the prestigious Pulitzer Prize for their work highlighting digital surveillance and cyber fraud. Anand and Sharma won the award, announced on Monday, in the Illustrated Reporting and Commentary category. They share the award with Natalie Obiko Pearson of Bloomberg.

According to the Pulitzer Prizes website, the award-winning work titled "rAPPEd", produced for Bloomberg, narrates the "riveting account" of a neurologist in India who was held under a "digital arrest" through her phone, using a blend of "visuals and words" to underscore the "growing global challenges of surveillance and digital scams". The Pulitzer Prizes, administered by Columbia University, are regarded as among the highest honours in journalism, literature and music composition, recognising excellence in reporting and storytelling.

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# "ELECTION STOLEN, NOT WON"

FROM PAGE 1

the constitutional framework deeply. When he says the election was "stolen, not won", he is not merely criticising a political opponent. He is questioning the neutrality of institutions. That is a serious charge in any democracy. Mamata Banerjee has gone even further, calling the Election Commission compromised. Rahul Gandhi has also flagged concerns about institutional bias. So clearly, this is not an isolated protest. It is a broader opposition narrative taking shape.

"WHEN ELECTIONS ARE QUESTIONED, IT IS NOT JUST A PARTY THAT FEELS DEFEATED, IT IS TRUST THAT TAKES A HIT."

THE VOTER LIST FLASHPOINT

At the heart of this controversy is the revision of electoral rolls. The Election Commission says it was a necessary clean-up exercise. Removing duplicates, correcting errors, ensuring that only genuine voters remain on the list; that is part of maintaining electoral integrity. But the scale here is what raises eyebrows. Nearly 9 million deletions is not routine. It is massive. And within that, the focus is on about 2.5 million voters who were flagged and, in many cases, removed after adjudication. Opposition parties claim that this process disproportionately affected certain communities and that many genuine voters were unable to navigate the documentation requirements in time. The Commission, on its part, maintains that due process was followed. This is where perception and procedure begin to diverge.

QUESTIONS THAT NEED ANSWERS

- What were the exact criteria used in AI-based flagging?
- How many appeals were allowed versus rejected?
- Was there uniformity across constituencies?
- Did any group face disproportionate exclusion?

CENTRAL FORCES: SECURITY OR SUSPICION?

West Bengal has a long history of electoral violence. The deployment of central forces is meant to ensure that voters can cast their ballots freely. From one perspective, their presence enabled a more peaceful election. From another, it created discomfort among sections of voters who felt the environment was not entirely neutral. The truth, as often happens in elections, may lie somewhere in between. "Free and fair elections are not just about rules, they are about confidence in those who enforce them."

THE POLITICAL REALITY CHECK

Even as these allegations gain traction, one cannot ignore the political context. The BJP's rise in Bengal has been gradual but steady. Issues around governance, corruption allegations, and grassroots dissatisfaction with the ruling party have been building over time. Elections are ultimately about voters making choices. And this time, a large section appears to have voted for change. So the opposition's challenge is two-fold: question the process, but also introspect on the political disconnect.

WHY BENGAL SHIFTED: BEYOND THE NUMBERS

On the ground, the signals were visible well before polling day. There was fatigue with the status quo in several districts. Local grievances, especially around administration and access to welfare benefits, began to shape voter behaviour. The BJP capitalised on this mood with targeted campaigning and organisational push. The result was not just a swing. It was a consolidation of a new political base.

THE INSTITUTIONAL MOMENT OF TRUTH

For the Election Commission, this is a defining moment. In a democracy, credibility is everything. It is not enough to conduct elections; it is equally important to be seen as impartial. Detailed disclosures, transparency in data, and clarity on processes can go a long way in addressing concerns. Because once doubts take root, they are not easily erased.

BETWEEN TRUST AND DOUBT

West Bengal has delivered a decisive mandate. That much is clear. But the shadow cast by allegations from leaders like Kapil Sibal ensures that the story does not end with the results. It moves into a more complex space, where electoral outcomes and institutional trust intersect. For the winners, the responsibility is governance. For the institutions, the responsibility is credibility. And for the opposition, the task is to separate political messaging from provable facts. Because in the end, democracy is sustained not just by ballots cast, but by the belief that every ballot counted equally.

# SOUTH COAST RAILWAY HQ

FROM PAGE 1

Background

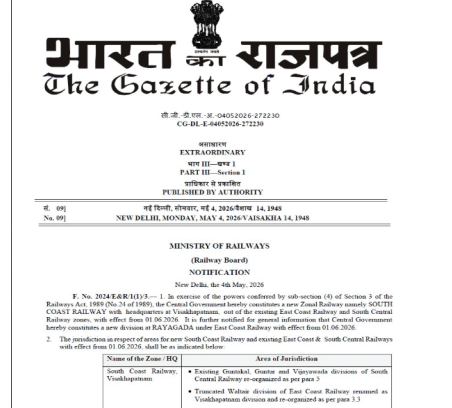
The South Coast Railway Zone was first announced in 2019 as part of the bifurcation commitments following the formation of Andhra Pradesh after the creation of Telangana. However, its operationalisation had been delayed due to administrative and logistical challenges.

Political Reactions

According to reports, leaders from the ruling coalition in Andhra Pradesh had sought the retention of the KK Line under the Visakhapatnam Division, but were unable to secure it.

Objective of Reorganisation

The restructuring is part of Indian Railways' broader strategy to decentralise operations, improve freight handling efficiency, and enhance passenger services in the region. The new zone is also expected to boost infrastructure development, generate employment, and improve connectivity across coastal Andhra Pradesh.



# Bhatti urges PM Modi to grant national project...

FROM PAGE 1

had promised to grant national status to one major irrigation project in Telangana, and said that the present government had a responsibility to fulfill that promise. The Deputy Chief Minister said that while the BJP government, which came to power in 2014, granted national project status to the Polavaram project in Andhra Pradesh, not giving the same status to even one project in Telangana is proof of discrimination against the state.

Bhatti stated that the Telangana government purchases every crop grown by farmers at the Minimum Support Price (MSP) fixed by the Centre. However, he criticised the Centre for creating hurdles in lifting the grain procured by the state and

delaying the release of funds, calling it a betrayal of farmers.

He urged the Centre not to avoid responsibility by announcing MSP only for a few crops and ignoring the rest, and demanded that the Centre procure every grain collected by the state and release funds in time. Highlighting a new revolution in agriculture, Bhatti Vikramarka said the Congress government is putting into practice the idea of producing biogas using paddy straw as a raw material. He also called on farmers to adopt crop diversification to make agriculture more profitable and said that financial conditions would improve only when farmers reduce dependence on paddy and shift toward profitable crops such as horticultural crops, millets, and oil palm.

# Telangana Positions as Aerospace Hub



FROM PAGE 1

Commercial operations are expected to commence next year. Sridhar Babu said the State government is preparing a comprehensive roadmap to move beyond component manufacturing and build a stronger aerospace ecosystem.

He said Telangana is among the fastest-growing aerospace and defence hubs, and attributed this to its industrial ecosystem, noting that the State has received the Centre's 'Best State for Aerospace' award for five consecutive years.

Several global aerospace and defence companies, including Boeing, GE Aviation, Safran, Lockheed Martin, and the Tata Group, have a presence in the State, he said, adding that the entry of ITP Aero would further expand the global reach of "Made in Telangana" products. The Minister said the State is also

focusing on next-generation technologies such as drone technology and satellite communications, with emphasis on infrastructure development, innovation, R&D, and building an industry-ready workforce. He said efforts are being made to position Telangana as a global leader in these emerging areas.

The facility is expected to generate employment for around 350 highly skilled professionals initially in areas such as precision engineering, advanced manufacturing, and quality control, with the workforce projected to increase to about 600 in the coming years.

Senior executives of ITP Aero, including CEO Eva Azoulay, MD Carlos Azola, Vice-President (Operations) Valantis Gorono, and ITP Aero India MD Sandeep Sharma, were present.

# Skill development is vital for jobs...

FROM PAGE 1

He further suggested that adopting an industrial policy similar to Tamil Nadu could help attract greater investments. Raghuram Rajan also observed that data centers entail significant consumption of both electricity and water. On this occasion, he stated that he intends to visit Hyderabad within the next three to four months.



Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka affirmed that the state possesses all the necessary facilities including required land and infrastructure for industrial growth. Electricity is also being generated to meet the future requirement, the Deputy CM said that amenities including an international

airport and the Outer Ring Road are already in place and fully operational. In addition to establishing Regional Ring Roads, the government was developing radial roads and creating specialized clusters for industries. Law and order was also being maintained with great rigor.

The state has already been divided into three distinct zones to facilitate a focused approach toward development, the Deputy CM elaborated that the administration is moving forward based on the "CURE, PURE and RARE model". The Young India Skills University has been established to enhance skill development among the youth. The ITIs (Industrial Training Institutes) are being

upgraded into ATCs (Advanced Training Centers) to impart vocational skills to students. He remarked that CM Revanth Reddy is working tirelessly, around the clock, for the development of the state and requested Raghuram Rajan to offer appropriate advice and suggestions for the industrial growth of Telangana.

State IT and Industries minister D Sridhar Babu, stated that the prevailing conditions in Telangana are highly conducive to ease of doing business. He explained to Raghuram Rajan that the government is providing the necessary favorable environment and infrastructure required for the Pharma, IT, and Data Center sectors.

## KTR should stop at the outskirts before entering Warangal and apologize to the people

■ If you were given power for ten years, you must first explain what you did for the farmers of Warangal

■ Even the Devadula project was not completed during your ten-year rule.

HYDERABAD

You did not bring even a single irrigation project dedicated to Warangal. After spending ₹1.89 lakh crore on irrigation, what did you give to Warangal?

You promised to set up chili processing units in Narsampet and Manukota. Show where they were established. What does former IT Minister KTR, who wears suits and boots, know about agriculture?

Does your visit to Warangal indicate that KCR will not come?

Since the Kakatiya period itself, this region developed in irrigation through tanks like



Ramappa and Pakala. But in ten years of BRS rule, what have you done beyond desilting a few tanks?

You created a situation where even drinking water is not supplied once in three days in Warangal, Kazipet, and Hanamkonda cities. You promised to make Warangal a smart city but did not take any steps in that direction. You turned the Hanamkonda bus stand into a complete mess. Are you coming again to deceive the people of Warangal with your hollow promises?

— **Parlappalli Srisaiah,**  
TRS Leader

When in power, KTR ignored activists at Kakatiya University.

Now you are coming again to Warangal in the name of a farmers' meeting?

You did not even allocate a single rupee to Kakatiya University—why are you coming to Warangal now?

You promised there would be no contract employees if you came to power—why was that promise not fulfilled?

You neglected the university instead of funding it, which could have produced educated individuals.

Not even a single hostel

building was constructed in Kakatiya during your tenure.

You said you would establish an IIT in Elkathurthy—where is it?

What happened to the super-specialty hospital in Warangal?

During BRS rule, lands of Kakatiya University were encroached upon.

Now the Congress is doing the same.

It was BRS that weakened Warangal, which once fueled the movement.

With what face are you coming again? KTR must answer.

## 'BJP-BRS nexus' alleged: TPCC chief demands clarity on CBI probe

HYDERABAD

TPCC Chief Mahesh Kumar Goud on Tuesday alleged a "clandestine understanding" between the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS), questioning the saffron party's silence on a CBI probe into alleged BRS irregularities.

The Congress leader said the BJP, which had earlier demanded a CBI probe, was now merely targeting the Congress without initiating any action. Goud challenged Union Minister Bandi Sanjay Kumar to clarify whether a CBI inquiry would be launched before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Telangana visit.

Citing poll data, he pointed to a sharp jump in BJP votes in Sirilla—from 18,000 in Assembly elections to 72,000 in Lok Sabha polls—raising suspicions of BRS support. Defending the Congress government, he said paddy procurement was being carried out through 8,575 centres and highlighted a Rs.500 bonus for fine-quality rice, with Rs.2,500 crore already credited to farmers' bank accounts.



## Private Consultancy Cheats 35 People by Promising Norway Work Visas

■ CM Praja Vani Incharge Chinna Reddy Orders Inquiry

HYDERABAD

On Tuesday, victims lodged a complaint at CM Praja Vani stating that a private consultancy named iBook cheated 35 graduates from various districts of the state by promising to provide employment in Norway on work visas.

Praja Vani Coordinator Bojja Amarendar Reddy examined the complaint in detail and brought it to the notice of CM Praja Vani Incharge Dr. G. Chinna Reddy. He endorsed it to the Cyberabad Police Commissioner, suggesting that justice be done to the victims and a comprehensive inquiry be conducted. The complaint mentioned that the iBook consultant collected Rs. 5 lakh from each individual, issued fake work permits and fake Norway visa

appointment letters, and after realizing they were cheated, the victims filed a complaint at the KPHB Police Station. An FIR was registered under 146/2026. The victims requested that justice be done for them.

**Minority Gurukul Non-Teaching Staff Approach Praja Vani for Resolution of Issues**

A large number of non-teaching staff working in Minority Gurukul schools came to CM Praja Vani and submitted a representation to Incharge Dr. G. Chinna Reddy, requesting the provision of PF, ESI, and health card facilities, along with a pay hike as per rules.

During the CM Praja Vani program held at Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Praja Bhavan on Tuesday, the non-teaching staff of Minority Gurukul schools appealed to Chinna Reddy for resolution of their issues. Chinna Reddy spoke over the phone with senior officials of the concerned department and made efforts to resolve the problems.

## GITAM to Conduct Entrance Exam on May 17

HYDERABAD

The School of Science at GITAM Deemed to be University, Hyderabad, will conduct the GITAM Admission Test (GAT-2026, Phase-3) on May 17, 2026, for admission into its undergraduate and postgraduate science programmes. Interested candidates can submit their applications online on or before May 14, 2026, through the university's official admission portal.

Recognized by the University Grants Commission and accredited with an A++ grade by National Assessment and Accreditation Council, the School of Science has emerged as a leading center for interdisciplinary education and advanced research. The institution offers a dynamic academic environment supported by experienced faculty with global exposure, promoting innovation,

deep-tech research, and entrepreneurship. At the undergraduate level, the School offers four-year B.Sc. (Honours) programmes in Biotechnology, Chemistry, Food Science & Technology, Microbiology, Physics, and Statistics, along with flexible minor options in Management, Social Sciences, Data Science, and Quantum Computing.

**Two flagship professional programmes include:**

B.Sc. Computer Science and Cognitive Systems (3 years): A multidisciplinary programme combining computing and cognitive sciences, aligned with industry demands in artificial intelligence and emerging technologies.

B. Optometry (5 years): Offered in association with L V Prasad Eye Institute, this programme prepares skilled eye care professionals with strong clinical

training and employability.

At the postgraduate level, the School offers two-year M.Sc. programmes in Biotechnology, Chemistry (Analytical, Organic, and Pharmaceutical specializations), Data Science, Food Science & Technology, and Physics (Material Science). Full-time Ph.D. programmes with fellowship support are also available across multiple scientific disciplines.

Highlighting the future-focused curriculum, Dr. M. Reza, Principal, stated that advanced domains such as Data Science and Quantum Science are integrated into the programmes to meet global industry demands. Students benefit from early research exposure, internships from the second year, and interactions with leading scientists and industry experts. The university maintains strong collaborations with premier

institutions such as Indian Institutes of Technology, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, and Defence Research and Development Organisation, along with industry leaders including Pfizer, Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, and Tata Consultancy Services, ensuring strong research opportunities and placement outcomes.

GITAM's Unified Student Scholarship Framework offers merit-based fee waivers of up to 100%, 70%, 60%, and 40%, making quality education accessible to a wider pool of students. Candidates may apply through GAT or submit valid scores from national-level examinations such as JEE, TS EAMCET, AP EAPCET, JAM, or equivalent. The UG selection process includes a personal interview scheduled on May 17, 2026, with results announced on the same day.

## Farmer rythu commission chairman and team met Ravanth

HYDERABAD

Farmer Commission Chairman Kodanda Reddy and commission members met Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy at his residence in Jubilee Hills.

The Farmer Commission submitted a report to the Chief Minister on crop diversification. Minister Vakiti Srihari also participated in the meeting. Key points from the Chief Minister during the meeting: The government intends to hold a comprehensive



discussion on crop diversification. A special discussion on crop diversification will be arranged in the Assembly.

Further study should be conducted, and constructive suggestions should be brought forward.

## Modi Visit to telangana review meeting on the arrangements to be made on CS

HYDERABAD

In view of the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Telangana on May 10, a review meeting on the arrangements to be made was held on Tuesday by Chief Secretary K. Ramakrishna Rao at the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Telangana State Secretariat.

He reviewed the details of the arrangements being made for the Prime Minister's visit and directed officials of all departments to ensure proper coordination and make adequate arrangements.

During this visit, the Prime Minister will inaugurate several development programs. He will also participate in a public meeting on the same day. Accordingly, the Chief Secretary instructed the police department to make necessary security arrangements, maintain law and order, and ensure proper traffic and bandobast arrangements as per the Blue Book guidelines. Officials of the Fire Services Department were instructed to deploy sufficient fire engines at Begumpet Airport, helipads, and all venues. Health department officials were directed to arrange necessary medical facilities.

Police, GHMC, and Roads & Buildings Department officials were instructed to



inspect the roads along the Prime Minister's convoy route and complete any required repairs on a war footing.

The Electricity Department was directed to ensure uninterrupted power supply in all areas to be visited by the Prime Minister.

All departments were advised to work in coordination to ensure the successful conduct of the Prime Minister's visit.

The meeting was attended by DGP C.V. Anand, Special Chief Secretaries Vikas Raj, Naveen Mittal, Dana Kishore,

and Vani Prasad; Home Secretary Shikha Goel; Intelligence Additional DG Anil Kumar; Police Commissioners of Hyderabad, Cyberabad, and Malkajgiri—V.C. Sajjanar, Ramesh, and Sumathi; Fire Services DG Vikram Singh Mann; GHMC Commissioner R.V. Karnan; Cyberabad Municipal Commissioner Srjana; Malkajgiri Municipal Commissioner Vinay Krishna Reddy; Information & Public Relations Special Commissioner Mukunda Reddy; Hyderabad Water Works MD Ashok Reddy, and others.

## BASF picks Hyderabad for new global digital hub

HYDERABAD

In a landmark endorsement of Hyderabad's ascent as a global enterprise capital, the BASF, one of the world's largest chemical companies, on Tuesday signed a Letter of Intent (LOI) with the Telangana government to establish a Global Service Hub and a Global Digital Hub in Hyderabad. The hubs are slated to begin operations in the second quarter of 2026.

The LOI was exchanged between Sarvesh Singh, CEO, Telangana Life Sciences, and Tobias Dratt, President, Global Business Services at BASF, in the presence of Minister for IT and Industries Duddilla Sridhar Babu.

Speaking at the occasion, Sridhar Babu underscored Hyderabad's emergence as one of India's most dynamic and fast-growing destinations for Global Capability Centres (GCCs) and signalled that the government's ambitions reach far beyond what has already been achieved. "Today, Hyderabad stands among the fastest-growing GCC hubs in



the country, surpassing most major cities and adding over 75 GCCs in the past year alone," said Sridhar Babu. "We are now setting our sights even higher, with a target of over 100 new GCCs and more than 1 lakh jobs this year," he said.

The Minister outlined a bold vision for Hyderabad's next phase of growth—one that moves decisively from incubation to innovation.

"As we evolve from an incubation destination into a leading innovation and engineering capital, this growth is being anchored by forward-looking initiatives

that will define the next decade," he added.

BASF's arrival and its commitment to building a 3,000-strong workforce in Hyderabad is a direct validation of this vision, Sridhar Babu said.

Founded over 160 years ago, BASF operates across more than 200 countries, runs 234 manufacturing facilities worldwide, and employs over 1,08,000 people globally with annual revenues of approximately \$60 billion (₹5 lakh crore). Its decision to anchor critical global operations in Hyderabad following a rigorous competitive evaluation across multiple geographies is a powerful signal of the city's maturity as an enterprise destination. The twin hubs (GCCs), to be operated under BASF Global Business Services Private Limited, will support BASF's worldwide operations across finance, human resources, supply chain, regulatory services, and in-house consulting. Once fully operational, the two hubs are expected to collectively employ 3,000 skilled professionals in a phased manner.

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## Revanth heads to Delhi for high-level meetings today



**HYDERABAD:** Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy is set to visit New Delhi on Wednesday. The purpose of his trip is to secure approvals for Phase-2 of the Metro project. While in New Delhi, he plans to meet with several Union Ministers to discuss various development and welfare initiatives related to the state of Telangana. Additionally, the Chief Minister is expected to have discussions with senior leaders of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) during this visit. Topics likely to be addressed in these meetings include cabinet expansion, appointed positions, and recent issues. Amidst these developments, the UDF has celebrated a significant victory in Kerala, in which Revanth Reddy was instrumental. Presently, there are ongoing discussions within the Congress party regarding the next Chief Minister of Kerala, with several names being considered.

## BJP Condemns Minister Konda Surekha's Remarks



**HYDERABAD:** The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Tuesday strongly condemned the remarks made by Minister Konda Surekha, terming them irresponsible, inappropriate, and unbecoming of a public representative. In an official statement, State BJP Chief Spokesperson and Media In-charge, N.V. Subash said the Minister's comments against BJP leaders—particularly her criticism of party meetings, slogan-raising such as "Jai Shri Ram," and references to Prime Minister Narendra Modi—reflect a serious lack of understanding of democratic functioning and constitutional freedoms. "These remarks expose her poor grasp of how political parties operate in a democracy, as well as a disregard for the constitutional right to free speech. They also betray a lack of basic political decorum," Subash said.



## Sub-committee decides to procure sorghum (jowar) along with maize

- Decision announced by Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao
- State government already procuring maize
- Government continuing procurement with state funds despite lack of support from the Centre

### HYDERABAD

Keeping in view the interests of farmers in the state, a Cabinet Sub-Committee has taken a key decision that the government will procure sorghum (jowar) along with maize. Announcing the decision taken in today's sub-committee meeting, Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao said this move would provide significant relief to farmers. He also expressed gratitude to the Chief Minister and sub-committee members on behalf of farmers.

The Minister stated that the state government had repeatedly requested the Centre to include maize and jowar under the Price Support Scheme (PSS) and undertake procurement. However, he criticized the Centre for not responding to these requests.

He pointed out that in most other states, governments do not procure maize and jowar, forcing farmers to sell in the open market at available prices. In contrast, Telangana is procuring these



crops to safeguard farmers' interests. **Procurement Details** During the current Yasangi (Rabi) season, the state set up 278 procurement centres Procured around 5.50 lakh metric tonnes of maize

Purchases are being made at Minimum Support Price (MSP) to protect farmers from price fluctuations

In the previous Kharif season, about 3.76 lakh metric tonnes of maize were procured at a cost of ₹902.80 crore

**New Decision on Jowar**

With farmers beginning to bring jowar produce to markets and facing low prices, the sub-committee decided that the state government will procure jowar as well, similar to maize. This is expected to provide strong financial support to jowar farmers.

### Crop Data

Maize cultivation: ~11.21 lakh acres with an average yield of 26.57 quintals per acre

Jowar cultivation: ~3.68 lakh acres with expected average yields

**Financial Commitment** The Minister noted that the state government has spent nearly ₹6,000 crore in a single year on procurement of various crops. These measures are strengthening the rural economy and ensuring income security for farmers.

Despite lack of support from the Centre, the state government continues to step in to protect farmers. The Minister emphasized that farmer welfare remains the top priority and that this decision will provide much-needed assurance to jowar farmers.

## Public welfare is the government's main objective: Damodar Raja Narasimha

### SANGAREDDY

State Health Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha stated that public welfare is the government's main objective and that it is committed to the overall development of all sections of society.

As part of the "Praja Palana - Pragathi Pranalika 99-day action plan," a programme was held on Tuesday at Sri Rama Gardens in Jogipet-Andole Municipality under the Department of Women, Children, Differently-abled and Senior Citizens Welfare. The Minister attended as the chief guest.

Focus on Anganwadi system Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said the government is committed to strengthening the Anganwadi system. He announced that:

Vacant posts in Anganwadi centres will be filled soon

Steps will be taken to construct permanent buildings for all Anganwadi centres

Anganwadi teachers, supervisors, and helpers must per-



form their duties responsibly

The government will not tolerate negligence or irresponsibility He also reiterated that the government is giving high priority to education, health-care, women's empowerment, and welfare. **Welfare measures announced**

The Minister assured that issues faced by the public will be addressed promptly. He also announced:

Filling of vacancies for Anganwadi teachers and helpers

Strengthening of service delivery at grassroots level

During the programme, the Minister distributed:

10 free scooters to persons with disabilities

286 smart phones to Anganwadi teachers

### Participants

The event was attended by District Library Institution Chairman Anjayya, Municipal Chairman and Vice Chairman, Additional Collector Pandu, District Women & Child Welfare Officer Lalitha Kumari, CDPOs, Anganwadi supervisors, teachers, and beneficiaries.

## Free UPSC 2027 coaching announced for minority students in Telangana

### HYDERABAD

The Telangana Minorities Study Circle has invited applications for its free coaching program for UPSC Civil Services Examination (CSE) 2027 for the academic year 2026-27. The initiative, run under the Department of Minorities Welfare, aims to support minority students with quality training and resources.

The program offers digital classrooms, expert faculty, library access and Wi-Fi fa-

ilities, with accommodation under consideration. Admissions will be based on merit through a screening test. The rule of reservation is 33.33% of seats to women candidates and 05% to physically challenged students. Online Applications Forms can be submitted from May 7, and the last date for receiving it is May 31. Screening test will be conducted on June 14 (Sunday). Candidates applying for the first time must appear for the screening test, which will be conducted at minority resi-

dential schools across district headquarters in Telangana.

As for the eligibility criteria, the applicants must belong to minority communities (Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist or Parsi) and hold a general or professional degree. The annual family income should not exceed Rs.5 lakh. Interested candidates can apply online through the official portal: <https://cet.egg.gov.in/tmreis>. For further details, candidates can contact 040-23236112 during working hours.

## TGHRC cracks down on advance fee collection by pvt schools

### HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Human Rights Commission (TGHRC) has taken a firm stand against the practice of advance fee collection by private schools, directing the authorities to initiate action in a recent case from Boduppal. The Commission, headed by Dr. Justice Shameem Akther, was hearing a complaint alleging that a private school in Boduppal demanded 50% of the annual fee in advance for the 2026-2027 academic year. The complaint also highlighted that parents were being compelled to make upfront payments for books and uniforms, often through designated vendors.

Taking serious note of the issue, the Commission observed that such practi-

ces are 'improper, arbitrary, and violate established legal principles' that prohibit the commercialization of education. It reiterated that education is a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution and cannot be treated as a profit-driven enterprise.

The TGHRC further emphasized that forcing parents to bear a heavy financial burden in one go, along with the lack of transparency in procurement of study materials, raises serious concerns about fairness and accountability in the education system. Acting on the complaint, the Commission recommended that the District Educational Officer of Medchal-Malkajgiri district take appropriate action against erring institutions.

## Praja Natya Mandali to hold 4th conf in Hyd on May 25-26

### HYDERABAD

The Telangana unit of Praja Natya Mandali will host its 4th State Conference in Hyderabad on May 25 and 26. A preparatory meeting of the Reception Committee was held at Satyanarayana Reddy Bhavan under the chairmanship of CPI Hyderabad District Secretary Stalin.

MLC and professor M. Kodandaram, who is serving as Chairman of the Reception Committee, highlighted the organization's historic role in nurturing artists and fueling resistance movements through cultural expression. He noted that during periods of feudal oppression, Praja Natya Mandali played a vital role in mobilizing people through folk arts, theatre and music.

Referring to historical struggles linked with the Andhra Mahasabha, he said cultural movements were seen as powerful tools to intensify resistance. Drawing parallels to present-day challenges, Kodandaram criticized rising living costs and alleged that people were being distracted from real

issues. At a time when the prices of all essential commodities, including LPG cylinders, petrol, and fertilizers are skyrocketing, the public was being misled through religious gatherings. He stressed that politics should serve society meaningfully but lamented its current state, calling for a renewed cultural movement to counter oppression, poverty and divisive ideologies.

Speaking at the meeting, CPI State Assistant Secretary E. T. Narasimha underscored that meaningful societal change can only be achieved by strengthening cultural struggles alongside political efforts. He emphasized the power of cultural mediums like songs and plays in shaping public opinion. Organizers appealed to the public for financial support and active participation to ensure the success of the conference. Kamatham Yadagiri (CPI Hyderabad District Assistant Secretary), Srinivas (State President of TPNM), K. Lakshminarayana, CPI Hyderabad District Executive Committee members and others attended the meeting.

## "CBI drama to divert from Modi rally": Bandi Sanjay slams CM Revanth KARIMNAGAR

Union Minister Bandi Sanjay Kumar on Tuesday accused Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy of staging "CBI dramas" to divert attention from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's upcoming rally on May 10th and the BJP's recent electoral gains. After visiting a paddy procurement centre in Kazipur in Karimnagar, Sanjay highlighted severe hardships faced by the farmers, including long waiting periods, lack of basic amenities, and alleged exploitation by middlemen through deductions and commissions.

The Union minister questioned the state government's procurement pace despite Central support and accused it of ignoring farmers' distress. Sanjay also raised issues such as delays in acting on power purchase irregularities and alleged reluctance to act against BRS chief and former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao. Referring to the issue of writing a letter to the Centre by Revanth Reddy, Sanjay asked, "Will you admit that you are incapable of arresting KCR? You should state precisely that fact in the letter that you are writing to the Centre."

## Stephen Ravindra inspects paddy procurement; calls for faster transportation

### HYDERABAD

Civil Supplies Commissioner Stephen Ravindra on Tuesday conducted a surprise inspection at Pedakaparthi procurement centre in Chitaly mandal of Nalgonda district, directing officials to speed up unloading, vehicle movement, and paddy transportation.

As part of the Rabi paddy procurement process, Civil Supplies Commissioner Stephen Ravindra directed officials to increase unloading operations at rice mills. He also instructed them to enhance vehicle rotation, expedite transportation of paddy from procurement centres, and deploy additional lorries and hamalis.

During the visit, Stephen Ravindra reviewed details such as the quantity of paddy received so far, availability of hamalis, truck sheets, vehicles tagged to mills, tarpaulins, and other logistics with district collector B. Chandrashekar and officials.

Officials informed that 25,000 quintals of paddy had been received at the Pedakaparthi centre so far, out of which 7,000 quintals had been procured, with tab entry completed. They added that around 15,000 metric tonnes of paddy were still available



at the procurement centre. As it is a major center, 10 to 20 additional lorries have been arranged, the Collector said.

He further explained that advance information was given to millers to avoid any shortage of hamalis, and about 30 hamalis were deployed at each procurement center, with 30 to 35 workers engaged at mills as well.

The Commissioner stressed that tab entry must be completed 100 percent. Stephen Ravindra also enquired

about the use of dryers and cleaning processes for paddy at the procurements centers. He reviewed the availability of gunny bags and tarpaulins and instructed officials to arrange additional tarpaulins wherever required.

Later, he visited Siddhartha Rice Industries at Vattimarthy, where he enquired about the number of hamalis and was informed that 35 workers were engaged. He directed the management to increase unloading and

vehicle rotation. He also reviewed the system-based uploading of paddy details and tab entry records.

The Commissioner instructed officials to focus on procurement centres with pending tab entries. He also directed that if mills face space constraints, paddy should be shifted to intermediate godowns. Additionally, he instructed the transport department deputy commissioner Vani to arrange more vehicles to speed up transportation.

## Naidu Hails Gazette Nod for Vizag Railway Zone

AMARAVATI:

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu expressed happiness over release of Gazette notification by the Railway Ministry for the establishment of South Coast Railway Zone with Visakhapatnam as its headquarters. He stated that this marks the fulfillment of a long-cherished dream of the people of Andhra Pradesh. Responding on social media platform X, the Chief Minister thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw for issuing the historic Gazette in response to the state's request. He announced that the new railway zone will officially commence operations from June 1 with Visakhapatnam as its headquarters. As part of the reorganisation of the Waltair Division, key sections such as Palasa-Ichhapuram will be merged into the Visakhapatnam division, which is expected to significantly transform the transport landscape of North Andhra. The Chief Minister further noted that improved coordination between the newly formed Visakhapatnam division and Raigad division will strengthen the railways. He expressed confidence that the development will contribute significantly to the overall growth of the state, particularly boosting industrial development in North Andhra.

## NIA Files Chargesheet in ISIS-Linked Bioterror Poison Plot

NEW DELHI: (MAY 5)

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has filed a chargesheet against three people, including a doctor, for their alleged involvement in an ISIS-linked conspiracy to carry out mass poisoning in public spaces using a biological toxin, an official statement issued on Tuesday said. The accused -- Hyderabad-based Dr Syed Ahmed Mohiuddin and co-accused Azad and Mohammad Suhel from Uttar Pradesh -- have been chargesheeted before a special NIA court in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, it said. Working under the guidance of their respective Islamic State-linked foreign-based handlers, the accused had operated in a coordinated manner to recruit vulnerable youth radicalised by the handlers to support jihad and spread terror through prohibited weapons and bioterrorism, said the NIA statement.

## India-Vietnam Strategic Ties Get Boost After Doval-To Lam Meet

NEW DELHI: (MAY 5)

National Security Advisor Ajit Doval on Tuesday met Vietnamese President To Lam focusing on boosting the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries. The talks took place hours after Lam arrived in New Delhi on a three-day visit to India. It is his first state visit to the country after being elected as the president this month. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Vietnamese leader will hold wide-ranging discussion on Wednesday that is expected to explore ways to shore up bilateral ties in areas of trade, defence and critical technologies.

# Andhra emerging as global hub for next-generation manufacturing: Lokesh

AMARAVATI, MAY 5

Andhra Pradesh is positioning itself as a global hub for next-generation manufacturing and digital infrastructure, said state minister Nara Lokesh on Tuesday.

He stated that Andhra Pradesh is moving beyond hosting data centres to manufacturing the components that power the global data boom.

The minister announced that a foundation stone will be laid on Wednesday for a new chiller manufacturing facility at Sri City. The state government sees this as a significant milestone in its industrial and digital infrastructure journey.

"With world-class industrial ecosystems like Sri City, strong policy support, and our unwavering focus on speed and scale, Andhra Pradesh is positioning itself as a global hub for next-generation manufacturing and digital infrastructure," said Lokesh, the minister for information technology, electronics & communications and human resources development. "Andhra Pradesh is not content with being just a host for data centres - we are determined to become the engine that powers them. The groundbreaking of Carrier Global Corporation's facility at Sri City marks a defining moment in our journey to build a full-stack data infrastructure ecosystem - from energy and data centres to the manufacturing of the components that sustain them," he said in a statement. According to an official release, the investment by Carrier represents Andhra Pradesh's strategic pivot from being a destination for data centres to becoming a global hub for manufacturing the critical components that power the digital economy. Andhra Pradesh is rapidly

emerging as one of India's most significant data centre destinations, anchored by large-scale global investments and a forward-looking policy framework. In recent weeks alone, a landmark \$15 billion Google AI data centre hub - one of the largest digital infrastructure investments in India - has broken ground in Visakhapatnam, with a planned 1 GW hyperscale capacity. This is complemented by proposals such as Reliance Industries' ₹1.6 lakh crore 1.5



GW data centre cluster, alongside multiple commitments from global and domestic players. With an overall pipeline estimated at over ₹6 lakh crore and a targeted capacity of ~6 GW, Andhra Pradesh is positioning itself well ahead of the current national capacity, building a scale that few regions globally can match, said the release. "This momentum, backed by progressive policies such as dedicated power frameworks for data centres, is transforming the state - particularly Visakhapatnam - into a premier hub for AI, cloud, and digital infrastructure. Carrier's entry further strengthens this ecosystem - bringing advanced cooling technologies that are indispensable for next-generation data centres, AI infrastructure, and high-performance computing environments," it said. The state is focussing on building a complete value

chain - from data centre infrastructure to component manufacturing, including cooling and thermal management systems; power and energy management solutions; precision engineering components and electronics and control systems. By integrating manufacturing with digital infrastructure, Andhra Pradesh aims to create a self-sustaining ecosystem that reduces import dependency, boosts exports, and positions India as a global leader in data infrastructure manufacturing, the government said. Sri City's evolution into a major HVAC and electronics hub makes it central to this strategy. With ₹12,000 crore invested in cooling and AC manufacturing, 25,000 direct jobs created in the segment, a strong supplier base contributing ₹4,600 crore in investments, the state eyes 60 per cent share in India's AC production by 2027.

meeting and no longer and the expiration of the said period of five years shall operate as a dissolution of the Assembly." According to the Election Commission, the tenure of current Bengal Assembly began on May 8, 2021, and expires on May 7. After that, the Governor will have to set in motion the process of constituting a new Assembly, which means the new MLAs will have to take oath and a new government will have to be elected. What is the seat tally in Bengal after the election

# Mamata Banerjee says won't resign

## What happens if an outgoing CM refuses to step down

**Mamata Banerjee resignation news: The BJP has secured a clear majority in the Bengal elections. Here's what the Constitution says about what happens if Mamata indeed refuses to resign.**



Mamata Banerjee West Bengal election result 2026: From left, TMC leader Firhad Hakim, Outgoing West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, party MPs Abhishek Banerjee and Kalyan Banerjee at a press conference in Kolkata on May 5. PTI photo "We have not been defeated. I will not resign. Question does not arise of me visiting Raj Bhawan," Banerjee said in a press conference, flanked by party members Derek O'Brien and Abhishek Banerjee. By convention, after an Assembly election, the outgoing CM goes to Raj Bhawan to tender their

resignation to the Governor. Banerjee alleged Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah were "directly interfering" in the West Bengal elections, and Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar was the "villain of this election". She also said the TMC would set up a fact-finding mission and the next steps would be decided after discussion within the party. But what happens if after an Assembly election, the sitting CM refuses to resign? Here's

what the Constitution says. "During the pleasure of the Governor" Article 164 of the Constitution says that, "The Chief Minister shall be appointed by the Governor and the other Ministers shall be appointed by the Governor on the advice of the Chief Minister, and the Ministers shall hold office during the pleasure of the Governor." Thus, technically, the Governor of a state can dismiss the Chief Minister, although various safeguards

are in place for this to not become an arbitrary exercise. A line of Supreme Court rulings have interpreted that power of the Governor primarily flows from the "aid and advice" of the Council of Ministers. Also, if the Governor asks one CM to step down and wants to invite another candidate for the post while the Assembly's tenure is still on, there has to be a floor test, where each side tries to prove their majority (who has the support of more than half the sitting MLAs) in the House. As a last resort, President's Rule (Article 356) can be imposed if no stable government can be formed. **The tenure of a state Assembly** Article 172 of the Constitution says that, "Every Legislative Assembly of every State, unless sooner dissolved, shall continue for five years from the date appointed for its first

In a landmark victory, the BJP has secured 207 seats, while the TMC got 80 seats. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee lost from the Bhabanipur seat. The Congress has won two seats, TMC rebel Humayun Kabir's Aam Janata Unnayan Party won two seats, and the CPI(M) and All India Secular Front won one each.

# CM orders release of Rs One crore each to all districts

**to ensure uninterrupted drinking water supply CM's nod for vehicle registrations at dealers**

AMARAVATI:

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu directed officials to ensure uninterrupted drinking water supply in the state. He instructed the Chief Secretary to release Rs 1 crore to each district to strengthen water supply systems. During a review meeting at Secretariat today the Chief Minister also approved measures to simplify vehicle registration processes. He gave green signal to designate vehicle dealers as additional registration authorities, ensuring that vehicle registrations are completed within 24 hours.

The Chief Minister emphasised the need to expand the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in delivering government services. He proposed the constitution of an expert advisory council to guide effective AI adoption. He also suggested a workshop to promote the use of drones across sectors. Referring to best practices, he asked officials to study the drone-based monitoring system used in Madhya Pradesh for mining operations and explore its implementation in Andhra Pradesh.

In view of rising summer temperatures, the Chief Minister directed officials to create awareness among people on precautionary measures using technology platforms. He instructed that drinking water, buttermilk and ORS

packets be distributed in heatwave-prone areas with the cooperation of voluntary organisations. The Chief Minister stressed that government departments must continuously innovate to improve citizen service delivery. He underlined that public connect is key to building trust and credibility in governance. Departments must adhere to defined service standards and ensure responsiveness to public needs. He directed RTGS officials to closely monitor agricultural markets and take timely measures to ensure farmers do not face difficulties in getting fair prices for their produce. Senior officials were instructed to undertake regular field visits to monitor the implementation of government schemes and welfare programs. Secretaries are to spend at least three days in the field every month, Heads of Departments six days and District Collectors eight days, engaging directly with people. The Chief Minister also suggested using call centres to collect citizen feedback and emphasized adopting best practices for service delivery. He noted that departments showing focused attention are achieving better results and urged others to follow suit. Minister for Information and Public Relations Kolu Parthasarathi, Chief Secretary G Sai Prasad and senior officials participated.

# 'Not servant of any political party': Bengal CEO hits back at Mamata Banerjee

KOLKATA, MAY 5

West Bengal Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Manoj Kumar Agarwal on Tuesday hit back at outgoing Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee over the allegation that the Bengal CEO had worked for the BJP during the Assembly polls. Agarwal asserted that he is a public servant and "not a servant of any political party". Speaking to IANS, Agarwal said: "(Bengal) CEO has worked for the people. I have not come here to work for the BJP or any other party."

"I have cleared UPSC and come here on my own merit. I am here to work for the people. I am a public servant, not a servant of any political party, political individual or political post," he added. Reacting to Banerjee's allegation that she was kicked during her visit to a counting centre, the Bengal CEO denied having received any such formal complaint.

He said, "There would have been CCTV footage if she had been beaten up. If somebody is attacked, he or she will file a complaint."

Meanwhile, Trinamool Congress MP Kalyan Banerjee came in support of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's allegation of counting misappropriation by the Election Commission (EC) in the Assembly poll results. "There has been misappropriation in the counting of votes this time," he told reporters. He further alleged that the counting agents of Trinamool Congress were "brutally assaulted and thrown by the CRPF". "It is a great threat to democracy. There was no transparency in the counting," the Trinamool MP further alleged. He also questioned: "If they (EC) wished to maintain transparency, why was CCTV not there, whose footage could be shown to the outsiders. Why was it not shown in the press counters?" Accusing the BJP and the EC, Kalyan Banerjee reiterated: "They have looted everything during counting." He further claimed that there is no such rule that a chief minister has to resign upon being defeated. "It is not mandatory for the chief minister to resign, as after a period of time, the Assembly is dissolved." Earlier in the day, Mamata Banerjee had ruled out the possibility of voluntarily tendering her resignation to the Governor as the outgoing Chief Minister.



# Gujarat: PM Modi to offer prayers at Somnath Temple, inaugurate Sardar Dham complex in Vadodara on May 11

VADODARA/GIR SOMNATH

The Prime Minister is scheduled to begin his visit at the Somnath Temple, where he will perform darshan. Ahead of the visit, District Collector N.V. Upadhyay chaired a high-level review meeting, directing officials to complete all necessary arrangements within set timelines, including uninterrupted power supply, traffic regulation, parking management and sanitation along designated routes. Barricading and other logistical measures are being put in place, and security deployment is being strengthened, with the administration placed on alert. Separate coordination meetings have also been held

in Gandhinagar, under the chairmanship of Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi, to oversee administrative and security planning for the Prime Minister's engagements across the state. The Prime Minister will then travel to Vadodara to inaugurate the Sardar Dham Bhavan-3, also known as the Shri Dushyant and Daksha Patel Complex, constructed near Vaghodia Crossing on NH-8A adjacent to L&T Knowledge City. The complex, built at an estimated cost of Rs 150 crore and spread across approximately 4.75 lakh square feet, includes 278 accommodation rooms, an NRI guest house, an e-library, a career guidance centre, training facilities and an auditorium with a seating capacity of around



1,000. During the visit, the Prime Minister will also be conferred the 'Sardar Ratna' award by leading organisations of the Patidar community in recognition of his role in social reforms. The event is expected to be attended by Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, Deputy Chief Minister, members of the state cabinet and representatives from various

sectors. Sardar Dham Trust president Gajji Sutaria, who invited the Prime Minister to the programme during a recent meeting in New Delhi, said the inauguration is part of "Mission 2026" and reflects ongoing efforts to expand educational infrastructure. "Under Mission 2026, Sardar Dham One, Two and Three are being developed. The Prime Minister will inaugurate the Rs 150 crore Sardar Dham building in Vadodara, built for the benefit of around 2,000 sons and daughters," he said. He added, "The organisation is working towards the holistic development of youth by bringing together donors, industrialists, traders and government schemes. Sardar Dham has already completed

Phase One and Phase Two projects, where thousands of students are residing, and further projects are underway in Rajkot, Surat and Mehsana. There is also a plan to establish a Sardar Dham University." Former Gujarat minister Gordhan Zadia said the new facility is designed as more than a residential space. "This is not just a hostel or boarding facility. It has been developed as a centre for overall development, including coaching, start-up support, business guidance and skill development for youth," he said. He added that the Prime Minister will inaugurate the complex and participate in a programme where organisations of the Patidar community will honour him.

# Save the Survival of Single-Screen Theatres

AMARAVATI:

Representatives of the Andhra Pradesh State Cine Exhibitors Association met State Cinematography Minister Kandula Durgesh on Tuesday at the Velagapudi Secretariat to bring to the government's attention the severe financial crisis being faced by single-screen theatres in Andhra Pradesh.

On this occasion, they submitted a memorandum covering several key issues related to the revival and survival of theatres. The association members expressed concern that single-screen theatres, which have entertained common audiences for decades, are now heading towards clo-

Representation by Andhra Pradesh State Cine Exhibitors Association to Cinematography Minister Kandula Durgesh. Minister Durgesh assures a positive decision after discussion with Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu



sure due to competition from multiplexes and the impact of OTT platforms. They explained to the minister that exhibitors are sinking into debt as they are unable to bear

rising electricity charges, municipal taxes, and minimum maintenance costs. They mainly requested an increase in maintenance charges from ₹3 to ₹7 for non-AC theatres

and from ₹5 to ₹15 for AC theatres. They also stated that this would generate additional revenue for the government in the form of GST. They further proposed that 20% of the additional ticket price permitted by the government for big-budget films should be allocated for theatre maintenance. They also requested relief from commercial electricity tariffs and a reduction in municipal property taxes for theatres. Responding after carefully hearing the exhibitors' issues, Minister Kandula Durgesh said that the government has a responsibility to protect thousands

of families dependent on the film industry. He stated that single-screen theatres are a part of Telugu culture and assured that he would bring these issues to the attention of Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu and work towards a quick and positive resolution. The meeting was attended by Andhra Pradesh State Cine Exhibitors Association President K.S. Prasada Rao (Alankar Prasad), members Gorantla Babu (Gorantla Complex, Ongole), Gaurishankar Ramu (Guntur Gauri Shankar Theatre), Bhagavan (General Manager, SP Theatres), Omkar, and others.

# 3 Sri Lankan nationals held at IGI Airport with marijuana worth Rs 11.6 crore

NEW DELHI: (MAY 5)

Customs officers at the Indira Gandhi International Airport have booked a case of alleged drug smuggling after seizing marijuana worth Rs 11.63 crore from three Sri Lankan passengers arriving from China, officials said on Tuesday. The three passengers, who had arrived from Pudong, China,

on April 29, were intercepted at the Green Channel on the basis of profiling and subjected to X-ray screening and detailed examination. "A total of 12 polythene packets containing green-coloured narcotic substance suspected to be ganja/marijuana were recovered from multiple trolley bags," an official statement said.

EDITORIAL

OPEN FORUM

# India's Economic Strategy BOOST TO MANUFACTURING?

## THE DIGITAL GUILLOTINE: INDIA'S ESCALATING ASSAULT ON ONLINE EXPRESSION

The Union government's aggressive exploitation of questionable regulatory powers to suppress lawful digital speech represents a severe and rapidly intensifying hazard to India's democratic fabric. Through amendments to the IT Rules, 2021—regulations already standing on precarious constitutional footing—the administration has effectively coerced platforms like Meta and X into compliance. By enforcing a frantic three-hour window for content removal, the state ensures that tech giants have no practical opportunity to contest orders. Failure to comply risks the loss of "safe harbor" immunity, exposing platforms to litigation and, more chillingly, threatening their employees with individual criminal prosecution. Using the pretext of combating AI-generated misinformation, the state has instituted a repressive regime capable of stifling any discourse at its whim. This systematic crackdown is dismantling the internet's potential as a vital alternative space for public grievances. In a society guided by representative democracy, raw and independent expression is essential; yet, by weaponizing Sections 69A and 79(3)(b) of the IT Act, 2000, the government is purging specific content and entire accounts to tilt the public narrative in its favor. This strategy shows a blatant disregard for the constitutional freedoms of the citizenry and the economic stability of digital creators. The government has meticulously constructed this censorship framework, showing no moral hesitation regarding its long-term impact. Consequently, the targeting of independent media and critical voices has become routine. While some takedowns are eventually rescinded, they often force creators to compromise their anonymity. Furthermore, this entire apparatus operates behind a shroud of secrecy, as the state refuses to release comprehensive data regarding the scale of its digital intervention. The Sahyog Portal: By granting police officers nationwide access to the "Sahyog" portal, the government has hyper-charged Section 79(3)(b) requests, turning them into a rubber stamp for censorship that the IT Act never intended to authorize. Clear Supreme Court precedents defining "actual knowledge" of illegality have been ignored. Even more concerning, the Karnataka High Court has bypassed the landmark Shreya Singhal vs. Union of India ruling, even as the executive avoids formalizing these powers through parliamentary legislation. Major social media companies have largely abdicated their role as gatekeepers of free speech, opting for the convenience of automated compliance over the friction of legal resistance. While X has shown some defiance against the Sahyog portal, it remains under immense pressure from ongoing litigation in the Delhi and Karnataka High Courts. Those currently in power must consider the precedent they are setting. The ease with which Opposition-led states have already begun utilizing the Sahyog portal suggests that the tools of today's repression will inevitably become the weapons of tomorrow's government. Unless checked, this campaign against online speech ensures that future administrations—regardless of party—will operate by these same destructive rules.

"the country enters the fiscal year 'at the intersection of domestic resilience and external turbulence'"

"India's share of global manufacturing has remained stagnant at around 2.8 percent for a decade"

The spectacular victory of the BJP in the states of West Bengal, Assam, and Puducherry puts on the party the extra burden of reviving the states. With Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, banking on domestic consumption and its sheer absorbing capacity, boosting the economy may work to a limited extent. She requested industry captains to step up and capture the domestic demand currently met by foreign markets. "Business are importing a lot of tools which are intermediary, so there is some more agility which I expect from the Indian industry".

The recent observations of the finance minister to step up manufacturing to counter imported goods and stop valuable foreign exchange outflow is well-timed. However, considering this fiscal, economists are of the opinion that rural income and consumption and crop yields may decline due to week rains and possible El Nino impact. There is thus a need to go deep into the problem, for which the government has to be specific and come out with an action plan in clarifying the challenges faced by Indian manufacturers and what could be done to start producing import substitution products in the country.

India's share of global manufacturing has remained stagnant at around 2.8 percent for a decade, which indeed is quite low for a country aspiring to gain developed status while China has occupied a share of 30 percent. Reports indicate that the production linked incentive scheme launched by the government has primarily attracted assembly operations rather than high-value manufacturing. Most of these assembly units are dependent on import of components from China. Thus, increased exports of the country mean increased imports from China. Modi has failed to build the indigenous base in India though some progress has been made.

China appears to have emerged as an integral part of the Indian



manufacturing supply chain, exporting close to \$150 billion in FY26, a report published by trade intelligence firm GTRI observed. Even as it accounted for around 16 percent of India's total imports, China's dominance is significantly higher in industrial goods, supplying as much as 30.8 percent of the country's requirements. Four vital sectors such as electronics, machinery, computers and organic chemicals were the largest recipient of Chinese imports. Together they accounted for 66 percent of India's total imports from China valued at around \$82.6 billion. This dependence is less about consumption and more about weak domestic production.

Indian industry relies heavily on Chinese inputs which include electronic parts, EV batteries, solar modules, APIs and speciality chemicals that are hard to replace at scale. As a result, analysts rightly point out that even as India tries to grow exports, its supply chains remain tied to China which is undoubtedly far ahead in technology and efficiency. Chinese hegemony in the Indo-Pacific remains firm as India cannot stand the competition of Beijing. As New Delhi recalibrates its foreign policy to accommodate Beijing's rise, most countries realize that India is no longer an aspiring peer competitor.

Meanwhile, reports indicate that foreign investors pulled more than \$20 billion out of Indian equities in the first four months of this calendar year, surpassing last year's record annual exit as a surge

in crude oil prices triggered by the West Asian conflict dented sentiment. The exodus has been exacerbated by a hawkish stance from the US Federal Reserve, which has held rates making the US Treasury yield more attractive alongside a strengthening US dollar.

If depreciation pressure persists, the RBI may have to explore steps to curb oil-related dollar demand in the spot market, restrict gold imports and tighten monetary policy. The surge in oil prices above \$120 per barrel may lead to inflation concerns intensifying.

The declining rupee, which is now around Rs 95 per dollar, has been an area of concern with cost of imports rising added to the increase in the price of oil and gas as well as subsidies on fertilisers and industrial raw materials with the onset of the West Asian conflict and uncertainty around the US-India trade deal. Thus, the country enters the fiscal year "at the intersection of domestic resilience and external turbulence", as per a government report with the future looking not quite encouraging.

Even the IMF has warned that risks for the country are tilted towards high inflation, wider fiscal and external deficits and slower growth, specially is energy and fertiliser supply disruptions persist. The crude oil basket averaged \$113 per barrel in March, just under \$115 per barrel through April end.

It can be discerned that the lack of manufacturing boost may obviously be related to lack of technological upgradation and ensuring

economies of scale, on the one hand, and the inflow of financial support and participation, on the other. The only area of satisfaction is that some foreign tie-ups have been reached in recent times, which could see some advance in manufacturing. With reference to the finance minister's pointer to the private sector to boost manufacturing, it needs to be stated that there are various indigenous items which do not compare with imported ones, both in quality and pricing. The oft-repeated economic jargon of achieving economies of scale needs to be achieved.

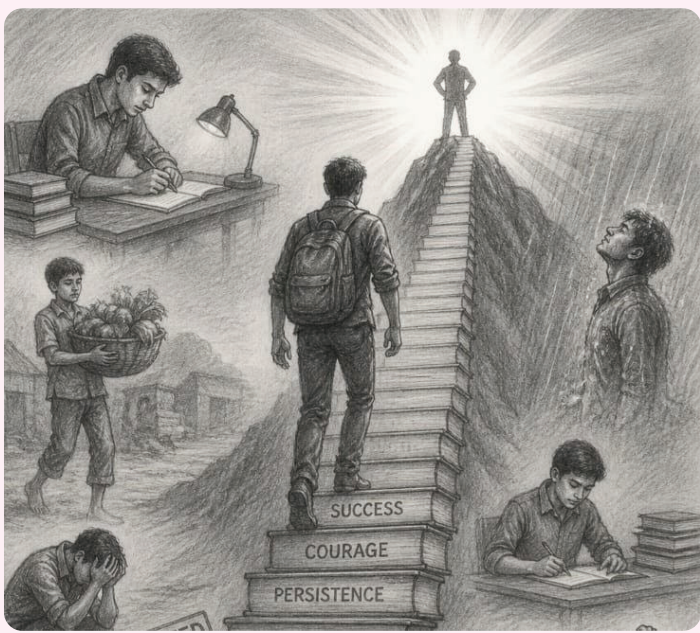
Most analysts are of the opinion that India's competitive power and global influence is fast slipping and has very little assertive power. In evolving our economic strategy, it is necessary to bring about changes in policy making along with technological innovations as well as economic efficiency for India's emergence as a key player in the global arena. What the government plans to do remains to be seen but in this critical scenario, India has to face the challenges with determination.

As regards Indian diplomacy, it needs to be said that the country has rightly maintained contacts with Iran and our leaders have openly stated that the country would purchase oil and gas from whichever source offers the lowest price. India's relation with China has greatly improved and this needs to be maintained for the country is dependent on the latter for vital imports in the electronics, pharma, auto and various other sectors.



DHURJATI MUKHERJEE

## "A SMALL STEP — COVENANT WITH THE SUMMIT"



A small job  
so they name it.  
Yet a small flame  
teaches the night its limits.  
An ordinary attire  
threaded with hours,  
lined with hunger;  
but in the ribcage  
a sky rehearses its ascent.  
Public scorn  
not a fall,  
but the last shiver of darkness  
before the first syllable of dawn;  
a single instant  
striking flint in the soul.  
The spark did not ask for mercy  
it learned the grammar of fire,  
it honed the will to a blade of light,  
it tempered breath into vow.  
Resignation  
no drifting leaf  
but a quiet covenant  
signed with tomorrow.  
Defeats came  
tides that took the shore three times;  
still, a deeper current  
kept its course,  
a patient storm  
kept carving a coast out of stone.  
Again, the step

again, the rise  
until footsteps remembered  
they were a staircase,  
and faltering dreams  
remembered they were dawn.  
In lean fields  
a gold seed endured;  
through hard rains  
it learned the art of becoming  
root to resolve,  
branch to brightness.  
A small job  
not small at all  
the first line of a long inscription,  
cut toward the summit.  
Humiliation  
a splinter of spark  
held to the heart,  
it becomes a consecrating flame  
a rite of ascent.  
O heart  
when failure is wind,  
be the mountain that answers  
let success arrive as weather  
a rain of light at your feet.  
For the path is not granted  
it is made  
and a single, faithful step,  
rightly aimed,  
outlives the horizon.

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

# The 2026 Assembly Elections: A Verdict on Leadership Deficits

In a democracy, elections are far more than mere instruments of political transition; they serve as a stark mirror reflecting the unfulfilled aspirations of the people and the structural failures of the ruling class. The recent defeat of incumbent governments in Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Kerala in the 2026 Assembly elections is no mere coincidence. It is a textbook case of leadership miscalculations, willful ignorance of ground realities, and a failure to adapt to changing times.

It begs the question: Did these ruling parties make these mistakes unknowingly, or was it a result of arrogance? A deep dive into the dynamics of these states reveals the underlying truth

### The Paradigm Shift in Youth Aspirations: The Tamil Nadu Narrative

In Tamil Nadu, the defeat of the DMK government led by M.K. Stalin and the unprecedented rise of actor Vijay's Tamizhaga Vetri Kazhagam (TVK) did not happen in a vacuum. For decades, Dravidian politics was anchored by emotional rhetoric centered on language, cultural supremacy, and social justice. However, today's digital-native youth find these narratives obsolete; they are looking for employment, robust economic growth, and transparent governance.

Furthermore, industrial development remains heavily skewed towards the Chennai, Kanchipuram, and Chengalpattu belts, leaving southern and central Tamil Nadu facing severe industrial backwardness. The resulting regional imbalances and the heavy debt burden incurred to fund welfare schemes have sparked anxiety among the middle class about the state's economic future.

Compounding these issues, the DMK faltered on multiple fronts: strained seat-sharing negotiations, an indifferent attitude toward corruption allegations, and a failure to accommodate new-generation leaders from within the minority and other communities.

Elections aren't just votes—they're mirrors of unfulfilled dreams. Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Kerala's incumbents crashed due to youth disillusionment, industrial neglect, corruption scandals, and arrogant leadership blind to ground realities.



This led to a division in the traditional vote bank, creating a vacuum that Vijay's TVK successfully filled by rallying youth and women across caste lines, making significant inroads into the DMK's traditional stronghold.

### Shattered Trust and Rising Anger: The West Bengal Verdict

West Bengal's political shift away from Mamata Banerjee can be traced directly to a profound crisis of confidence. The mishandling of the RG Kar Medical College tragedy and the atrocities in Sandeshkhali sowed seeds of deep resentment and insecurity among women voters. BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari masterfully capitalized on this social unrest, branding the TMC's tenure as a "regime of lawlessness." While the TMC's Lakshmi Bhandar scheme offered temporary relief, it proved to be a band-aid on a gaping wound, failing to address the systemic lack of employment opportunities. The lack of industrial growth has forced rural and urban youth to migrate to other states, distancing them from the ruling party. On the ground, widespread corruption

and the notorious "cut-money" culture in the distribution of welfare funds and MGNREGA (rural employment) schemes alienated the common man. Even within the marginalized minority communities, the younger generation is looking beyond handouts; they demand quality education and sustainable jobs. Additionally, the Matua community, deeply concerned about the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the protection of their rights, threw its weight behind the BJP. The TMC failed to recognize the cultural identity and aspirations of these social groups, leading to a major setback in vote consolidation. Meanwhile, the state BJP unit successfully mobilized disgruntled elements and grassroots cadres, effectively transforming the RG Kar and Sandeshkhali incidents into a potent movement for women's empowerment and identity.

### The Industrial Stagnation: The Kerala Conundrum

Kerala is currently caught in a precarious economic trap. With its debt-to-GSDP ratio reaching alarming lev-

els, the state has been forced to borrow heavily simply to keep the administration and basic welfare schemes running. The middle class and educated youth are deeply worried about the impending tax burdens. The state suffers from a severe lack of skilled job opportunities. Accusations of nepotism and irregularities in public sector recruitment have triggered a massive brain drain, forcing Kerala's youth to migrate to countries in the Gulf and Europe. The lack of industrial development and self-employment opportunities has crippled the state's economic engine. Additionally, allegations of corruption within the LDF's flagship projects severely eroded its credibility. Pinarayi Vijayan's top-down, centralized decision-making style and the perceived arrogance of his ministers widened the gulf between the party and the people. The Congress-led UDF seized this opportunity, presenting a progressive, people-centric alternative that successfully countered the ruling front.

### A Case of Hubris, Not Ignorance:

Political analysts argue that these failures were not a result of ignorance. They were the direct consequence of hubris and the intoxication of power. The ruling dispensations operated under the delusion that the electorate would remain loyal regardless of the administration's shortcomings. By turning a deaf ear to the daily struggles and aspirations of the common people, they alienated themselves from reality. This verdict sends a chilling message to the political class: No leader is invincible. When politicians fail to align their actions with the expectations of the people, the electorate will not hesitate to pull the plug. The writing is on the wall—adapt to the demands of the modern electorate, or face the winds of change.

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## MANIPUR NCC BAGS MULTIPLE HONOURS AT NER ANNUAL AWARDS 2026

**SHILLONG, MAY 5:** The National Cadet Corps fraternity of Manipur has achieved remarkable success at the NCC North Eastern Region Annual Awards 2026, held at NCC Group Headquarters, Shillong on May 5, 2026. The awards were presented by Meghalaya Sports and Youth Affairs Minister Shri Wailadmiki Shylla in the presence of Additional Director General, NCC NER, Major General Anurag Vij. Among the awardees, First Officer Bheigyachandra Singh of 14 Manipur Battalion NCC was honoured as the Best Male Associate NCC Officer of the North Eastern Region. Second Officer Harishkumar Khundrakpam of 1 Manipur Air Squadron NCC received the Best Male Associate NCC Officer of Manipur award, while Second Officer Thokchom Prava Devi of 14 Ma-



## NFR Records a Consistent Freight Performance

**MALIGAON, 5 MAY, 2026:** The Railways' crucial role in supporting public distribution systems and daily consumer needs. During the same period, 99 rakes were unloaded in Tripura, 32 in Nagaland, 20 in Arunachal Pradesh, 14 in Manipur and 8 in Mizoram. Additionally, within the jurisdiction of NFR, West Bengal recorded the unloading of 203 rakes, while Bihar accounted for 166 rakes, comprising both essential and non-essential commodities, further strengthening inter regional supply chains. The movement of essential commodities and industrial goods remains crucial for meeting public needs and supporting economic activities across the region. Through close monitoring and coordinated efforts by field units, NFR has improved turnaround time and unloading efficiency, reaffirming its commitment to reliable freight operations and the socio-economic development of the Northeast.

## Punjab elections will be Modi's endgame, Kejriwal says while addressing state MLAs

Kejriwal also took a jibe at the seven defected MLAs who recently switched sides and joined hands with the Bharatiya Janata Party. Calling them an enemy that damaged the party internally, Kejriwal said that the BJP stole seven seats that belonged to the people of Punjab.



Launching a scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in his latest speech, addressing the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) legislators in Delhi, Arvind Kejriwal said that the Punjab election will be PM Modi's endgame in the country. "They have won elections

in Assam, Bengal, Maharashtra, Bihar, Delhi, and in several other states. However, the Punjab elections, scheduled for next February, will not just stop the BJP's Ashwamedha horse but will also mark an end to Narendra Modi's government," said Kejriwal. Adding further, he mentioned that Modi will

witness a severe downfall in Punjab and will not win a single election anywhere in the country. Further, Kejriwal took a jibe at the seven defected MLAs who recently switched sides and joined hands with the Bharatiya Janata Party. Calling them an enemy that damaged the party internally, Kejriwal said that the BJP stole seven seats that belonged to the people of Punjab.

"These seats were not anyone's property. Those belonged to Punjab, and its people and the BJP tampered with that," Kejriwal added.

He also blamed the centre for allegedly not providing the dues to the state.

**KEJRIWAL LASHED OUT AT BJP OVER BEN-**

### GAL ELECTIONS

In his speech, Kejriwal said that the BJP won the Bengal election by illegitimate means. "The West Bengal election was not merely an election. For the past four months, we have witnessed sheer chaos being unleashed across the state. They employed similar tactics in Bihar and Maharashtra, and I saw it firsthand in my own constituency within the Delhi Assembly. Before I was imprisoned, there were 148,000 registered voters in my constituency. However, upon my release, that number had dropped to 106,000. These people have effectively purged 42,000 votes," Kejriwal said, taking a dig at the SIR process.

## Cabinet Clears Major Push for Cotton, Sugarcane, MSMEs and Maritime Sector

**DELHI, MAY 5:**

In a series of key economic decisions, the Union Cabinet chaired by Narendra Modi on Tuesday approved multiple initiatives aimed at boosting agriculture, strengthening industry resilience, and enhancing infrastructure. The decisions span the cotton and sugar sectors, MSME credit support, and maritime development, reflecting a broad strategy to drive growth and self-reliance.

The Cabinet approved the Mission for Cotton Productivity with a financial outlay of ₹5,659.22 crore for the period 2026-27 to 2030-31. The mission aims to address stagnation in cotton output, improve quality, and enhance India's competitiveness in global textile markets. Aligned with the government's "5F" vision—Farm to Fibre to Factory to Fashion to Foreign—the initiative focuses on the entire cotton value chain. A major thrust of the mission is the development of high-yielding, climate-resilient, and pest-resistant seed varieties. The government plans to promote advanced farming practices such as High Density Planting System (HDPS), closer spacing, and integrated crop management. Special emphasis will also be placed on Extra Long Staple (ELS) cotton, which is crucial for premium textile production.

To improve quality, the mission will modernize ginning and processing units and strengthen cotton testing infrastructure with globally benchmarked standards. Branding and traceability will be enhanced under the "Kasturi Cotton Bharat" initiative to position Indian cotton as a premium, sustainable product in international markets. Digital integration of mandis will ensure better price discovery and direct market access for farmers.

The mission also promotes sustainability through cotton waste recycling and diversification into natural fibres like flax, bamboo, and banana. Initially covering 140 districts across 14 states, the programme is expected to benefit around 32 lakh farmers. The government aims to increase cotton productivity from 440 kg per hectare to 755 kg per hectare and achieve a production target of 498 lakh bales by 2031.

In another significant decision, the Cabinet approved a Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of ₹365 per quintal for sugarcane for the 2026-27 season. This price is based on a recovery rate of 10.25% and represents a 2.81% increase over the previous season. Farmers will receive an additional ₹3.56 per quintal for every 0.1% increase in sugar recovery above the base rate. To protect farmers, the government has ensured that no deductions will be made for sugar mills with recovery rates below 9.5%, guaranteeing a minimum price of ₹338.3 per quintal. The FRP is significantly higher than the estimated cost of production of ₹182 per quintal, providing a margin of over 100%. The decision is expected to benefit nearly 5 crore sugarcane farmers and around 5 lakh workers employed in sugar mills and related sectors. The government highlighted that timely payments to farmers have improved, with over 99% of dues cleared in the previous season and nearly 89% cleared in the current season so far. To support businesses facing global uncertainties, particularly due to the West Asia crisis, the Cabinet approved the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) 5.0. The scheme aims to provide additional credit support to MSMEs, non-MSMEs, and the airline sector. Under the scheme, MSMEs will

receive 100% credit guarantee coverage, while non-MSMEs and airlines will receive 90% coverage. Eligible borrowers can access additional credit of up to 20% of their peak working capital utilization, capped at ₹100 crore. Airlines, however, can avail up to ₹1,500 crore under specific conditions.

The loans will have a tenure of five years for most sectors, including a one-year moratorium, while airlines will get a seven-year tenure with a two-year moratorium. The scheme will be operational until March 31, 2027, and aims to generate an additional credit flow of ₹2.55 lakh crore. The initiative is expected to help businesses manage liquidity challenges, maintain operations, and safeguard jobs. By ensuring access to timely credit, the scheme will also strengthen supply chains and support overall economic stability.

In the infrastructure sector, the Cabinet approved the development of a state-of-the-art ship repair facility at Vadinar in Gujarat with an investment of ₹1,570 crore. The project will be jointly implemented by Deendayal Port Authority and Cochin Shipyard Limited. The facility will include a 650-metre jetty, floating dry docks, and advanced workshops. Its strategic location near major shipping routes and ports like Mundra and Kandla makes it ideal for servicing large vessels. The project aims to address the current gap in India's ship repair capacity, especially for ships longer than 230 metres. Once operational, the facility will be capable of repairing vessels up to 300 metres in length, reducing India's dependence on foreign shipyards and saving valuable foreign exchange. It is also expected to generate around 290 direct jobs and 1,100 indirect employment opportunities, while boosting MSMEs and ancillary industries. Overall, these Cabinet decisions under a multi-sectoral approach to economic development. From empowering farmers and strengthening industries to building infrastructure and enhancing global competitiveness, the initiatives reflect a comprehensive strategy to drive India's growth and self-reliance in the coming years. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, today has approved 03 (Three) projects of Ministry of Railways with total cost of Rs. 23,437 crore (approx.). These projects include: a) Nagda - Mathura 3 and 4 Line b) Guntakal - Wadi 3 and 4 Line c) Burhwal - Sitapur 3 and 4 Line The increased line capacity will significantly enhance mobility, resulting in improved operational efficiency and service reliability for Indian Railways. These multi-tracking proposals are poised to streamline operations and alleviate congestion. The projects are in line with the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's Vision of a New India which will make people of the region "Atmanirbhar" by way of comprehensive development in the area which will enhance their employment/self-employment opportunities. The projects are planned on PM-Gati Shakti National Master Plan with focus on enhancing multi-modal connectivity & logistic efficiency through integrated planning and stakeholder consultations. These projects will provide seamless connectivity for movement of people, goods, and services. The 03 (Three) projects covering 19 Districts across the states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana will increase the existing network of Indian Railways by about 901 Kms.

## Railway Multi-Tracking Projects Approved by the Union Cabinet

**NEW DELHI:**

Under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved 3 key railway projects with an estimated cost of ₹23,437 crore to strengthen the Indian Railways network.

**Project Details**  
These projects will add about 901 km of new railway lines (3rd and 4th lines):

- Guntakal - Wadi (3rd & 4th Line): Passing through Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Telangana.
- Nagda - Mathura (3rd & 4th Line): Connecting Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.
- Burhwal - Sitapur (3rd & 4th Line): Aimed at reducing con-



gestion in Uttar Pradesh.

- **Total Cost:** ₹23,437 crore
- **Timeline:** Target completion by 2030-31
- **Coverage:** Benefits 19 districts across 6 states, covering 4,161 villages and about 8.3 million people
- **Freight Capacity:** Additional 60 million tonnes per annum (MTPA)

- **Environmental Benefits:**
  - Reduction of about 370 crore liters of oil imports
  - Cut in 185 crore kg of CO2 emissions
  - Equivalent to planting 70 million trees
- **Integrated Infrastructure:**
  - These projects are part of the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan, aimed at coordinated infrastructure development. Overall, these multi-tracking projects will reduce train delays and significantly improve both passenger and freight movement. Connectivity in Telugu states like Andhra Pradesh and Telangana is expected to improve substantially.

## Cabinet clears Rs 1,570 crore project to set up Ship Repair Facility at Gujarat's Vadinar

**NEW DELHI, MAY 5**

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved a Rs 1,570 crore proposal on Tuesday for the development of a state-of-the-art Ship Repair Facility at Vadinar in Gujarat, marking a major expansion of the national ship repair ecosystem. The project will be jointly implemented by the Deendayal Port Authority (DPA), which is the administrative authority that runs the Kandla port, and the Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL).

The project is planned as a brownfield facility with a 650 metres jetty, two large floating dry docks, workshops and associated marine infrastructure. Vadinar's natural deep draft, connectivity to



major shipping routes, and proximity to key ports such as Mundra and Kandla make it an optimal location for repair operations, particularly for large commercial and foreign-flagged vessels, according to an official statement issued after the CCEA meeting.

The project will also create opportunities for skill development and generate direct and indirect employment, while enabling the growth of

maritime ancillary services and MSMEs in the surrounding region. The Vadinar Ship Repair Facility will directly address a critical gap in India's ship repair infrastructure, as the country currently lacks adequate domestic capacity to repair large vessels exceeding 230 m in length. By enabling repair of vessels up to 300 m, the facility will allow high-value repairs of large vessels within India. This will significantly reduce dependence on foreign shipyards and curb foreign exchange outflow, the statement said.

Enhanced turnaround times and strengthened repair capability on the western coast will improve the overall competitiveness of Indian ports. The project is expected to create sustainable employment, generating approximately 290 direct and around 1,100 indirect jobs across ship repair, logistics, and ancillary industries, while catalysing a broader maritime industrial ecosystem, the statement said. The initiative will contribute to regional economic growth and support India's long-term maritime objectives under Maritime India Vision 2030 and Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047, the statement added.

## CM Saini Rolls Out Free Single Donor Platelets in Haryana Hospitals

**Chief Minister extends birthday greetings to Union Minister Manohar Lal Union Minister Manohar Lal's life is a source of inspiration for all, says CM**  
**CHANDIGARH, MAY 5**

Haryana Chief Minister, Sh. Nayab Singh Saini said that Haryana has become the first state in the northern region to initiate free Single Donor Platelets for dengue patients in government hospitals. Dengue patients are also provided reimbursement of Rs. 11,000. A total of 154 blood centers are currently operational in the state. The government surpassed last year's target by collecting more than 4.5 lakh units of blood against the target of 3.3 lakh units. Haryana has also received the Blood Donation Excellence Award from the Government of India for the second consecutive year for the highest

blood donation in 2024-25, he said. The Chief Minister was addressing a programme organized in Ladwa, Kurukshetra, on Tuesday on the occasion of the birthday of Union Minister for Power and Housing, Sh. Manohar Lal. The Chief Minister, accompanied by the Vice Chairperson of Haryana State Child Welfare Council, Sh. Suman Saini and former Minister of State Subhash Sudha also offered prayers and participated in the Havan Yagya. He later inaugurated the blood donation camp by cutting the ribbon and honored blood donors with badges and certificates. The Chief Minister expressed happiness at being present among people at the blood donation camp organized on the



sacred land of Kurukshetra on the occasion of the Union Minister's birthday. Extending birthday greetings to Sh. Manohar Lal, the Chief Minister, said that his life is an inspiration for all. He added that throughout his political and social life, he has always given top priority to service, transparency, and public welfare. Organ-

izing a blood donation camp on his birthday is a true reflection of his values. He said that Indian culture and scriptures emphasize that service to humanity is service to God, and blood donation is the highest example of this feeling. When a person donates blood, they not only save a life but also bring hope and happiness

to a family on the verge of losing a loved one. The Chief Minister emphasized that blood donation is superior to any other form of charity as it is directly linked to saving lives. Despite significant scientific advancements, no artificial substitute for blood has been developed, which highlights that one human being remains essential for saving another's life, he said. The Chief Minister said that the demand for blood has increased rapidly. Whether it is accident victims, cancer patients, individuals undergoing major surgeries, or children suffering from diseases like thalassemia and hemophilia, all depend on blood for survival. Statistics indicate that in India, someone needs blood every two seconds, and one out of every ten hospitalized patients requires blood. This is a serious situation that demands collective efforts. He stated that aware and dedicated citizens can

help bridge this gap, and even a small initiative can bring a new beginning in someone's life. Sh. Nayab Singh Saini further said that according to medical science, a healthy individual between the ages of 18 and 65 can safely donate blood. It has no negative impact on the body; rather, it encourages the formation of new blood. Therefore, misconceptions must be removed, and awareness must be spread. He added that the Haryana Government is continuously working to modernize healthcare facilities, promote voluntary blood donation, and ensure the quality of blood bank services. He said that with the support of blood donors, free blood is being provided in the state to patients suffering from thalassemia, hemophilia, HIV-positive cases, pregnant women, and people suffering from anaemia. In addition, free blood is also provided to patients admitted in government hospitals.

## NSA Doval, Vietnam President To Lam discuss strengthening strategic partnership

NEW DELHI

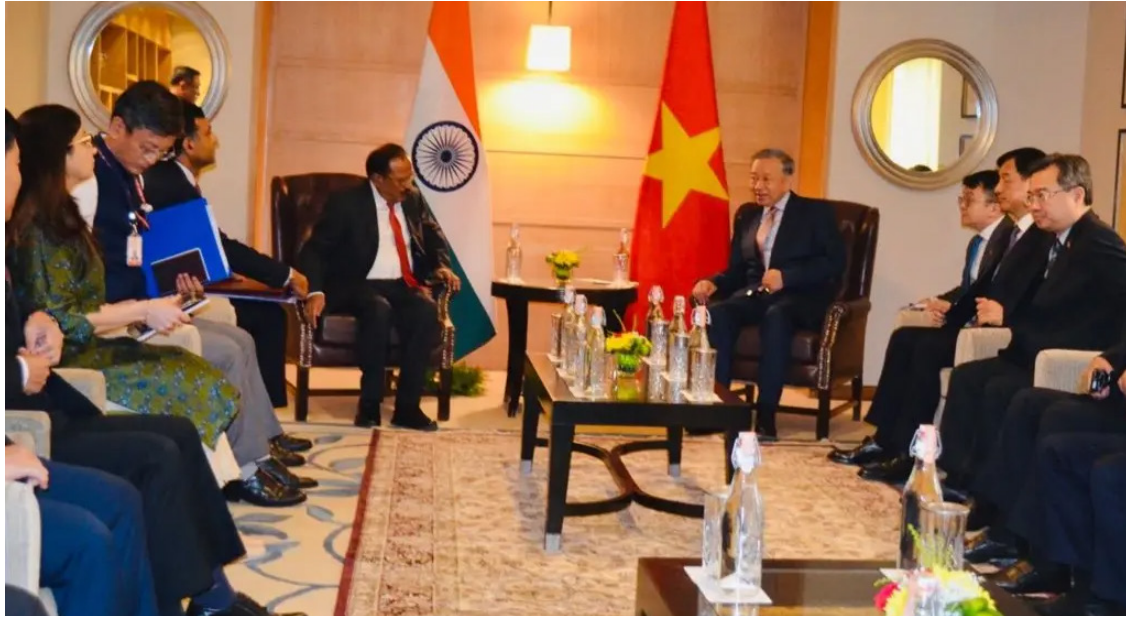
National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval called on Vietnam's President To Lam on Tuesday, holding discussions on strengthening comprehensive strategic partnership between the two nations.

"NSA Shri Ajit Doval called-on General Secretary, President Mr. To Lam of Vietnam. They exchanged views on strengthening the multifaceted comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries. Mr. To Lam looked forward to his meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the engagements scheduled over the next two days," Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal posted on X.

Earlier in the day, President To Lam arrived in New Delhi on a three-day State Visit to India. Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Nityanand Rai welcomed the visiting leader at airport.

The MEA stated that President To Lam's visit to India will strengthen bilateral ties.

"Chao mung, Excellency! General Secretary, President of Vietnam, Mr. To Lam, has arrived in New Delhi on his first State Visit to India. He was ac-



corded a warm welcome and received by Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai," Jaiswal posted on X.

"This year, we are marking the milestone of 10 years of India-Vietnam Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. The visit will further strengthen our multifaceted and robust bilateral re-

lations," he added. President To Lam landed in Delhi after offering prayers at the Mahabodhi Temple in Bihar. Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary extended a warm welcome to the Vietnamese President upon his arrival in Gayaji.

To Lam, also the General Secretary

of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, will be in India till May 7. This is his first visit to India after being elected as the President of Vietnam last month.

During his visit, President To Lam will be accorded a ceremonial welcome at the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan

on Wednesday. Following this, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will hold wide-ranging discussions with President To Lam across the spectrum of bilateral relations, along with regional and global issues of mutual interest.

President Droupadi Murmu will also hold a meeting with the visiting leader. Other leaders are also expected to call on President To Lam in New Delhi.

During his visit, President To Lam is also scheduled to travel to Mumbai. He will visit National Stock Exchange, meet Maharashtra Chief Minister and Governor. He is also scheduled to attend a business forum in Mumbai.

"India and Vietnam share historical and civilisational ties, which have steadily deepened over the years. President To Lam's visit coincides with the special occasion of the two countries marking the 10th anniversary of the elevation of relations to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, agreed during the visit of Prime Minister Modi to Vietnam in 2016," the MEA stated earlier.

"The engagement between leaders is expected to provide fresh momentum to the robust bilateral relations and open new avenues for cooperation between India and Vietnam," it added.



## Pakistan's escalating minority persecution no longer a 'quiet crisis'

ISLAMABAD

A leading minority rights organisation on Tuesday warned that escalating persecution of religious minorities in Pakistan is no longer a "quiet crisis" but a glaring indictment of both national failure and global indifference.

According to the Voice of Pakistan Minority (VOPM), year after year, reports reflect the same grim pattern: "targeted violence, systemic discrimination, and a justice system that too often turns away from those most in need of protection", with the situation continuing to deteriorate.

Citing the latest findings from the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, the rights body stated that the report reinforced a long-known reality — "Pakistan remains a place where faith can become a fatal liability". It added that Pakistan's continued designation as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) is not merely bureaucratic language — "but a reflection of lived fear, shattered families, and silenced voices."

The rights body highlighted a more disturbing pattern

of forced conversions and marriages involving Christian girls across the country, some of them barely in their teens.

"These are not isolated incidents — they form a recurring narrative of abduction, coercion, and legal erasure. Families are left powerless, often receiving nothing more than an official declaration that their daughter now belongs to another faith and another household. The emotional devastation is immeasurable: parents grieving children who are still alive, yet irretrievably taken," the VOPM mentioned.

Highlighting the persistent threat of mob violence, the rights body said, "Accusations — often unverified — can ignite collective fury within hours. Entire communities live under the shadow of sudden unrest, where a rumour can become a death sentence. The normalisation of such vigilante justice reflects a deeper societal fracture, where the rule of law is overshadowed by fear and fanaticism." The VOPM emphasised that the international community faces a moral test, noting that designations like CPC should not be reduced to symbolic gestures.



## USFDA and DCA was Conducted the second Regulatory Forum

HYDERABAD

The Second Regulatory Forum between the United States Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) and the Drugs Control Administration (DCA), Telangana was conducted on 5th May, 2026 at the DCA Headquarters, Vengal Rao Nagar, Hyderabad.

USFDA officials Mr. Greg Smith, Country Director; Ms. Lisa Flores, Regulatory Specialist (Pharmaceuticals); Mr. Rafeeq Habeeb, Regulatory Specialist (Pharmaceuticals); and Mr. Dhruv Shah, Senior Technical Advisor attended the forum.

The regulatory forum served as a knowledge-sharing platform aimed at exchanging and learning best

regulatory practices related to the inspection of medical products and the advancement of public health. Several technical sessions on Advanced Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) concepts were delivered by USFDA investigators during the forum.

DCA officers presented their recent initiatives, inspection approaches, and inspection trends, particularly with regard to Revised Schedule M and sterile manufacturing facility inspections.

The forum significantly enhanced the understanding of DCA inspectors regarding USFDA regulatory requirements and best practices, strengthening collaborative efforts in regulatory practices and public health.

## 'Project Freedom' to protect 'innocent' commercial shipping from Iranian aggression in Hormuz: US

WASHINGTON

US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth and Joint Chiefs Chairman Air Force Gen. Dan Caine have outlined "Project Freedom" as a limited, defensive military mission aimed at restoring commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz amid rising tensions with Iran.

Hegseth said the operation was ordered by President Donald Trump to "restart the free flow of commerce through the Strait of Hormuz under the umbrella of Project Freedom," stressing that it is "separate and distinct from Operation Epic Fury."

He described the mission as "defensive in nature, focused in scope, and temporary in duration, with one mission, protecting innocent commercial shipping from Iranian aggression."

According to Hegseth, US forces will not enter Iranian waters or airspace, adding, "We're not looking for a fight," but warning that Iran "cannot be allowed to block innocent countries and their goods from an international waterway."

The Secretary of War accused Iran of "harassing civilian vessels, threatening mariners from every nation indiscriminately and weaponising a critical choke point," calling it "a form of international extortion."



Caine said the objective of the operation is to "facilitate the safe passage of international commercial shipping" through the strait, which has been repeatedly attacked in recent weeks.

He noted that the Strait of Hormuz is a "vital transit route for approximately one-fifth of the global oil consumption," underlining the global stakes involved.

The US has deployed significant military assets to support the mission, including more than 15,000 personnel, guided-missile destroyers, helicopters and over 100 aircraft to provide round-the-clock

protection for vessels transiting the area. Caine said an "enhanced security area" has been established along the southern side of the strait, where US land, naval and air forces are positioned to detect and defeat threats.

Hegseth described the effort as creating a "red, white and blue dome" over the strait, providing continuous overwatch for commercial shipping. He said two US-flagged merchant vessels have already transited the strait under escort, demonstrating that "the lane is clear," with more ships expected to follow in the coming days.

Caine said Iran has fired

at commercial vessels nine times since a ceasefire was announced, seized two container ships and attacked US forces more than ten times, though "all below the threshold of restarting major combat operations."

Despite these incidents, Hegseth emphasised that "the ceasefire is not over" and that the operation is designed to remain limited while ensuring freedom of navigation. He also said the mission is intended to be temporary, with the United States expecting allies and global stakeholders to eventually assume responsibility for securing the waterway.

## US calls allies to secure Hormuz route

WASHINGTON

The United States on Tuesday urged its allies to step up and share responsibility for securing the Strait of Hormuz, signalling a push towards a broader international role in safeguarding one of the world's most critical shipping lanes.

Secretary of War Pete Hegseth said Washington expects partner nations to contribute to maritime security even as US forces lead a new mission to protect commercial vessels from Iranian threats.

"The world needs this waterway a lot more than we do," Hegseth said, adding that the US is working to stabilise the situation before handing over responsibility to other countries. He said

the United States is encouraging countries such as Japan, Australia and European partners to play a greater role, while making clear that Washington will not delay action in the meantime.

"We're not waiting for them to do so. We're looking to set the conditions to hand to them," he said. The call comes as the US implements "Project Freedom", an operation aimed at ensuring safe passage for commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz following weeks of Iranian attacks and disruptions. Joint Chiefs Chairman Air Force Gen. Dan Caine said Iran has "repeatedly threatened and attacked commercial shipping" in recent weeks, seeking to "effectively cut off commercial traffic and damage the global economy."

## Rights watchdog raises alarm over Chinese language and cultural policies in Tibetan schools

NEW YORK

Human Rights Watch (HRW), a US-based advocacy group, has accused Beijing of imposing Chinese-medium education and ideological indoctrination on kindergarten children as part of its efforts to forcibly assimilate Tibetans.

In a 72-page report titled 'Start with the Youngest Children: China Uses Preschools to 'Integrate' Tibetans', the rights body documented that a 2021 Ministry of Education directive — the Children's Speech Harmonisation plan — mandates the use of standard Mandarin Chinese for all preschool instruction in ethnic minority areas.

Although the kindergartens in theory can still offer supplementary sessions for minority children in their own language, it said, minorities no longer have the legal authority to organise them independently.

Expressing grave concern over Chinese policies in Tibet, the HRW said that by severely restricting Tibetan-language education in early childhood



— a critical stage for language acquisition and identity formation — the Chinese government is accelerating the erosion of Tibetan language and culture.

"The Chinese government, by targeting kindergartens, is accelerating its campaign to deprive Tibetan children of their mother tongue and their culture and identity. This policy is not about education quality but about forcibly as-

similating Tibetans at an early age into a Han-centric national identity," said Maya Wang, Deputy Asia Director at HRW.

According to HRW, China's language policy is combined with intensified political and cultural indoctrination, with preschool curricula in Tibetan areas increasingly emphasising "patriotic education", loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party, and identification

as members of the "Chinese nation". "Children are taught to celebrate Han Chinese festivals, recite Han Chinese classics, sing patriotic songs, and participate in activities glorifying the military and revolutionary history. Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan cultural practices—

core elements of cultural and ethnic identities are absent from the curriculum," it added. The rights body further stat-

ed that China's policies contravene its obligations under international human rights law, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which guarantees children belonging to minorities the right to use their own language and requires states to ensure education respects children's cultural identity.

Stressing that the Chinese government should reverse policies mandating Chinese-medium education in preschools, restore genuine bilingual education options, and end political indoctrination in early childhood settings, the HRW called on foreign governments and the UN to press Beijing to comply with its international obligations and to allow independent access to Tibetan areas and schools.

"Language loss on the scale taking place in Tibet is not accidental — it is Chinese government policy. Unless China's practices change, an entire generation of Tibetan children will grow up cut off from their own language, culture, and heritage," said Wang.

## IFJ CENTENARY CONGRESS 2026 BEGINS IN PARIS

MARKS 100 YEARS OF GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

By Asem Bhakta Singh, President, AMWJU

PARIS

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) officially commenced its landmark Centenary Congress in Paris on 4 May, marking 100 years since the organisation's founding in the French capital. The four-day event, running from 4-7 May, has drawn over 300 delegates representing journalists' unions and associations from across the globe.

The Congress opened with an inaugural ceremony at the Théâtre de la Concorde on 4 May. The working sessions from 5-7 May are being held at Novotel Paris Est, Porte de Bagnolet, to define the global media agenda for 2026-2029.

A Century of Solidarity

Held under the theme '100 years of international solidarity for strong journalism and trade unionism', the event is hosted by IFJ's French affili-



ates — SNJ, SNJ-CGT, CFDT Journalistes, and Force Ouvrière.

IFJ President Dominique Pradalié underlined the significance of returning to the federation's birthplace. "We mark a century of solidarity and trade union struggles for press freedom, quality journalism, and fair working conditions," Pradalié said, adding she hoped delegates would leave Paris with "renewed strength, hope, and unity."

Global Representation

Among the international delegates is the Indian Journalists' Union (IJU) team comprising:

1. Geethartha Pathak, President, IJU

2. Sabina Inderjit, IFJ Vice President and Secretary General, IJU

3. Shamim Ahmad, President, Journalists Union of Assam and Vice President, Gender Council

Navigating a Changing Landscape

While celebrating its past, the Congress is focused on threats and opportunities facing modern journalism. Key items on the 2026-2029 working programme include:

1. Artificial Intelligence: Frameworks to protect editorial integrity and jobs amid AI adoption

2. Safety and Surveillance: Rising physical and digital risks to reporters worldwide

3. Gender and Youth: Promoting newsroom equality and making the profession viable for the next generation

As the IFJ's highest decision-making body, the Congress will vote on the federation's direction and policy for the next three years, reinforcing the role of unions in safeguarding the future of the fourth estate.

## RBI Draft: New Rules for Bank, NBFC Property Buys

MUMBAI: (MAY 5)

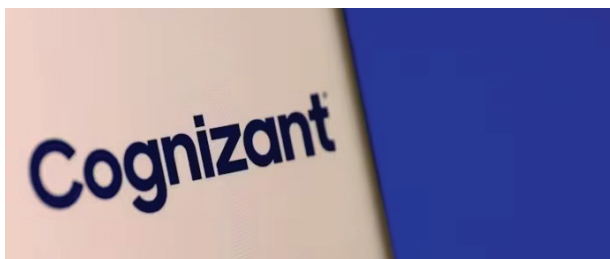
The Reserve Bank of India on Tuesday issued draft guidelines to lay down norms for acquisition of immovable assets by regulated entities, including banks and NBFCs, in exceptional cases as part of loan recovery processes. Regulated entities (REs) are, in normal course, not expected to come into possession of non-financial assets in lieu of their regular lending operations. However, in exceptional cases, where the exposures become non-performing and legal or contractual remedies have been invoked, REs may, as part of recovery strategy, acquire ownership of an immovable asset furnished as collateral security.

## Cognizant eyes up to 15,000 job cuts, India likely to see biggest impact

The possible job cuts come at a time when many large IT firms are restructuring. Slower spending by clients, rising automation, and the growing use of AI are changing the way companies operate.

Another round of job cuts could be on the way in the IT sector. Cognizant is reportedly considering a major workforce reduction, and a large number of employees in India may be affected.

**POTENTIAL LAYOFFS UNDER PROJECT LEAP**  
IT services company Cognizant is said to be planning to reduce its workforce by around 12,000 to 15,000 employees globally. Most of these job cuts are expected



to take place in India, according to sources cited by Moneycontrol. On April 29, the Nasdaq-listed firm said it expects to incur between \$230 million and \$320 million in severance costs under its new initiative, called Project Leap. However, it did not share any official numbers on job losses.

Cognizant currently employs over 357,000 people worldwide, with more than 250,000 based in India.

### WHY THE CUTS MAY HAPPEN

Industry experts say there is a clear shift in how IT services are being delivered. Companies are moving away from the traditional pyramid model, where a large number of junior employees support a smaller group of senior staff. One executive said clients are no longer willing to fund training for freshers and are not comfortable with large, layered teams. This

change is pushing companies to rethink their workforce structure. The estimate of potential layoffs is based on rough calculations of salary and severance costs across different regions. In India, the average annual salary is assumed to be around Rs 15 lakh. With severance pay typically around six months' salary, the cost per employee comes to about Rs 7.5 lakh. Based on this, a large part of the restructuring budget could impact around 12,000 to 13,000 employees in India alone, mentioned the report. Sources said that these figures are only estimates and the final number could change depending on how the restructuring is carried out. Meanwhile, Cognizant's CEO, Ravi Kumar S, said the

changes are part of a global programme that will affect different parts of the organisation. He also pointed out that the company is moving towards a "broader and shorter pyramid" structure. This includes a mix of digital tools and human workers, reflecting a shift towards automation and AI-driven services.

### WIDER TREND IN IT SECTOR

The possible job cuts come at a time when many large IT firms are restructuring. Slower spending by clients, rising automation, and the growing use of AI are changing the way companies operate. As a result, firms are adjusting their workforce to stay efficient in a rapidly evolving industry.

## REC Limited Extends CSR Assistance of ₹11.55 Crore to Sankara Eye Hospital in Bihar

NEW DELHI, MAY 5:

REC Limited, a Maharatna CPSE under the Ministry of Power, marked a significant milestone in healthcare accessibility with the inauguration of the Sankara Eye Hospital in Saharsa, Bihar. Funded through a ₹11.55 crore CSR grant under the flagship initiative "Bringing Vision to Bihar," the facility was opened to the public in a high-profile ceremony. The hospital was inaugurated by Shri Giriraj Singh, Hon'ble Union Minister, alongside Shri TSC Bosh, Director (Projects), REC Limited, and other senior government dignitaries.

### A Roadmap for Vision Restoration

The new facility is set to transform the ophthalmic landscape of Northern Bihar. Over the next five years, the project is structured to deliver:

● **1.5 Lakh Outpatient Consultations:** Providing comprehensive screenings and special-

ized eye care.

● **40,000 Cataract Surgeries:** Focusing on the eradication of preventable blindness through advanced surgical intervention.

● **Inclusive Healthcare:** A dedicated mandate to provide free and subsidized services to underserved and economically marginalized communities.

● Utilization of the ₹11.55 Crore CSR Grant.

**REC Limited's financial support has equipped the hospital with modern medical infrastructure, including:**

● **Advanced Ophthalmic Technology:** Cutting-edge diagnostic and surgical equipment.

● **Rural Outreach Fleet:** Specialized vehicles to conduct eye-screening camps in remote villages.

● **Operational Infrastructure:** Fully equipped patient wards and sterile operation theaters.

## Force Motors launches New Force Traveller N Range

### Key features in the New Force Traveller N:

- All-new car-like cockpit with digital cluster and 9-inch infotainment screen
- Improved NVH for a quieter cabin experience
- New ergonomically designed seats
- New front facia with DRL and LED turn indicators
- All-new HVAC system for improved cabin cooling
- Moulded roof with modular construction design across all variants
- Enhanced structural integrity (improved BIW build)
- Reduced number of body joints through improved design and manufacturing techniques
- Comprehensively re-engineered sheet metal structure
- Robust manufacturing and

quality systems enhancing fit, finish, and overall aesthetics

11. Advanced manufacturing, including robotics and automated door hemming, improve build quality, efficiency, and consistency

**Pune, 5 May 2026:** Force Motors Limited, India's largest van maker and a leading automotive manufacturer, today launched the New Force Traveller N Range comprising of ambulance, delivery van, and school bus applications. Significantly enhancing the company's product portfolio, with meaningful improvements in comfort, convenience, reliability, and performance, while also helping reduce total cost of ownership and simplify maintenance—the new Force Traveller N Range delivers a more refined and elevated ex-



perience across every customer touchpoint. With this launch, Force Motors will transition entirely to the new Force Traveller N Range, with all future production aligned to the new range, replacing the current-generation Traveller. With over four decades of legacy, the Force Traveller is a true segment creator that continues to lead with over 70%

segment share. Serving diverse needs, from ambulances and school buses to delivery vans, the Traveller has set industry benchmarks, emerging as India's most preferred ambulance platform and the fastest-growing school bus manufacturer in its category. Expressing his views on the launch of the new Force Traveller N Range, Mr.

Prasan Firodia, Managing Director- Force Motors Limited said, "The Force Traveller has been a well-established product in India's shared mobility space for many years and continues to lead its segment. With the new Force Traveller N Range, we've focused on improving what matters, guided by inputs from owners, drivers, and passengers to enhance comfort, usability, reliability, and cost of ownership, while reducing downtime and enabling better utilisation for fleet operators. At the same time, we've strengthened how we build the Traveller. Learnings from Urbana have helped refine our manufacturing processes and quality systems, bringing greater consistency and improved overall build quality. In many ways, the new Force

Traveller N Range builds on the strong trust the Force Traveller has earned over the years, while making it more refined, capable, and better suited to today's customer expectations".

Reflecting this focus on real-world usability, the new Force Traveller N Range brings a comprehensive set of upgrades across key aspects of the product experience. Significantly elevating the in-cabin environment, it introduces enhancements delivering a more contemporary and car-like experience, including an all-new car-like cockpit with digital cluster and 9-inch infotainment screen, new ergonomically designed seats, and improved NVH for a quieter cabin experience. This is complemented by an all-new HVAC system for improved cabin cooling.

## Rs 4,500 Cr Boost: Six Major Co-Working Operators to Expand

NEW DELHI: (MAY 5)

India's top-six co-working operators are likely to invest Rs 4,000-4,500 crore in 2026-27 and the next fiscal year to expand their portfolio of managed office spaces amid rising demand from corporates, according to Crisil Ratings. In a statement on Tuesday, rating agency Crisil noted that corporates are adopting flexible workspaces for agility and to save costs.

"Indian flexible workspace (flex) segment is set to increase its capacity by 16-18 per cent over this and next fiscal years to 140-145 million square feet -- after an expansion with 23 per cent CAGR over the past three fiscal years..." Crisil said.

## Young Woman Beats Rare Disease at Medicovert

### Life-Threatening Post-Abortion Complication; Advanced Multidisciplinary Care Preserves Fertility

HYDERABAD, MAY 2026:

In a remarkable feat of advanced gynecological and interventional care, Medicovert Hospital's successfully managed an exceptionally rare and life-threatening post-abortion complication in a 32-year-old woman, preventing catastrophic bleeding and preserving her uterus through a highly coordinated multidisciplinary approach.

The patient, who had a history of previous cesarean section and recurrent pregnancy losses, presented with continuous vaginal bleeding for over 25 days after undergoing a dilation and curettage (D&C) procedure for a missed abortion at six weeks of pregnancy. Despite initial medical treatment elsewhere, the bleeding persisted, significantly affecting her health and raising concerns of severe internal complications.

Upon comprehensive evaluation at Medicovert Hospital, advanced ultrasound and



MRI scans revealed a rare and life threatening condition. Its a combination of Grade 3 retained products of conception (RPOC), secondary uterine arteriovenous malformation (AVM), and a previous cesarean scar niche (Isthmocele). This complex condition posed an extremely high risk of sudden, life-threatening hemorrhage, where conventional treatment could have resulted in emergency hysterectomy and permanent loss of fertility. Recognizing the complexity and urgency, Medicovert's specialists devised a carefully planned, step-wise, fertility-preserving treatment strat-

egy involving interventional radiology and advanced minimally invasive gynecological surgery. A multidisciplinary team followed, Dr. Sai Teja, Consultant Interventional Radiologist, performed a highly specialized Uterine Artery Embolisation (UAE), selectively blocking abnormal uterine blood vessels and significantly reducing the risk of massive bleeding. Simultaneously after Successful embolisation, Dr. Perum Prithivi, Consultant Robotic and Laparoscopic Gynecological Surgeon, performed Hysteroscopic RPOC Resection along with Laparoscopic Repair of

the Previous Cesarean Scar Niche (Isthmocele). During the complex surgery, the team meticulously addressed dense adhesions between the uterus and anterior abdominal wall, bladder adhesions at the scar site, and deeply embedded retained pregnancy tissue within the uterine wall—all through precision-driven minimally invasive techniques. Post-operative angiography confirmed complete exclusion of abnormal vascular circulation, and the procedure was completed successfully without major complications. The patient recovered well, with only a brief fever episode managed conservatively, and was discharged in stable condition.

Speaking about the rare case, Dr. Perum Prithivi said, "This was an extraordinarily challenging case due to the coexistence of uterine AVM, retained products, and cesarean scar niche (Isthmocele). Such patients are at very high risk of severe hemorrhage,

and hysterectomy often becomes the only life-saving option. Our multidisciplinary strategy with prior embolisation allowed us to safely control bleeding, completely avoid hysterectomy, and most importantly preserve the patient's fertility and reproductive future." Dr. Sai Teja added, "Endovascular uterine artery embolisation played a decisive role in stabilizing this high-risk condition, minimizing blood loss, and enabling safe definitive surgery."

This rare success story highlights Medicovert Hospital's excellence in handling complex gynecological emergencies through cutting-edge diagnostics, interventional radiology, and advanced laparoscopic expertise. By combining innovation, precision, and patient-centric care, Medicovert continues to redefine women's healthcare—offering hope, safety, and fertility preservation even in the most challenging medical scenarios.

## Sudha Reddy Honors South Indian Roots at Met Gala 2026

NEW YORK, 5TH MAY 2026:

At the 2026 Met Gala, billionaire philanthropist and style icon Sudha Reddy returned to the red carpet with a look that balanced spectacle with substance, wearing a custom creation by India's leading couturier Manish Malhotra. Conceived in collaboration with global celebrity stylist Mariel Haenn, the ensemble titled "The Tree of Life" was a profound dialogue between heritage, craftsmanship and contemporary couture.

Rooted in Machilipatnam style of Kalamkari, one of India's oldest textile traditions, the look reinterpreted the 3,000-year-old storied art form through a contemporary, sculptural lens. Traditionally hand-painted with natural dyes, Kalamkari is known for

its intricate depictions of mythology, nature and cosmology. Its most enduring motif, the Tree of Life, symbolizing balance, growth and interconnectedness of all life forms, became the central anchor of the ensemble. In keeping with this year's 'Costume Art' theme, the ensemble moved beyond fashion into a constructed immersive narrative where couture, craftsmanship and culture converged. Realised over 3,459 hours by more than 90 artisans, the ensemble brought together zardozi, marodi, resham and metalwork, merging traditional Indian hand-embroidery techniques with couture innovation. Drawing deeply from the landscape of her city of origin, the design incorporated symbolic motifs tied to the region's identity: the the Palapitta (Indian Roller), the J mmi Chettu (Prosopis



Cineraria), and the Tangedu (Tanner's Cassia alongside celestial references to Kalpavriksha (the wish-fulfilling tree of abundance), Surya (the Sun god) and Chandra (the Moon god). Each element, rooted in seasonal festivals and cultural

traditions of Telangana, was intricately embedded throughout the ensemble to portray a living map of heritage. A sculpted, corseted silhouette in deep royal blue formed the foundation of the ensemble, anchored by Manish Malho-

tra's signature swirl construction. Antique gold zari embroidery flowed across the surface, while the Tree of Life emerged in intricate zardozi spanning velvet, silk, and tulle. The Palapitta appeared delicately along the bodice in fine marodi work, while peacock motifs unfurled across the embroidered 7 meter lavishtail, enhancing its sense of scale and drama. A sheer tulle cape softened the structured form, hand-embroidered in resham and subtly accented with antique gold zari, with delicate depictions of Hyderabad's flora and fauna. The ensemble was further elevated by a dramatic installation at the upper back—a sculpted metal vine crafted entirely by hand in brass, copper, and silver. At its centre stood the Kalpavriksha, surrounded by motifs including the Jami Chettu, Tangedu, Surya,

Chandra and the Palapitta. The monochromatic sapphire-wash palette extended into the jewellery, drawn from Reddy's personal collection and valued at \$15 million, lending the look a sense of museum-worthy maximalism. At its centre was a Victorian-finished necklace featuring triangular and pear-shaped rose-cut diamonds arranged in delicate floral clusters, anchored by the striking 550-carat 'Queen of Merelani' deep violet-blue tanzanite sourced from Tanzania's Merelani Hills. The suite was completed with a 23-carat yellow diamond ring alongside a 30-carat rose-cut polki diamond ring from Rajasthan. A collector-grade Dolce & Gabbana minaudière added a final flourish—its theatrical, baroque silhouette rendered in metal and fully encrusted with brilliant crystals. Her ensemble

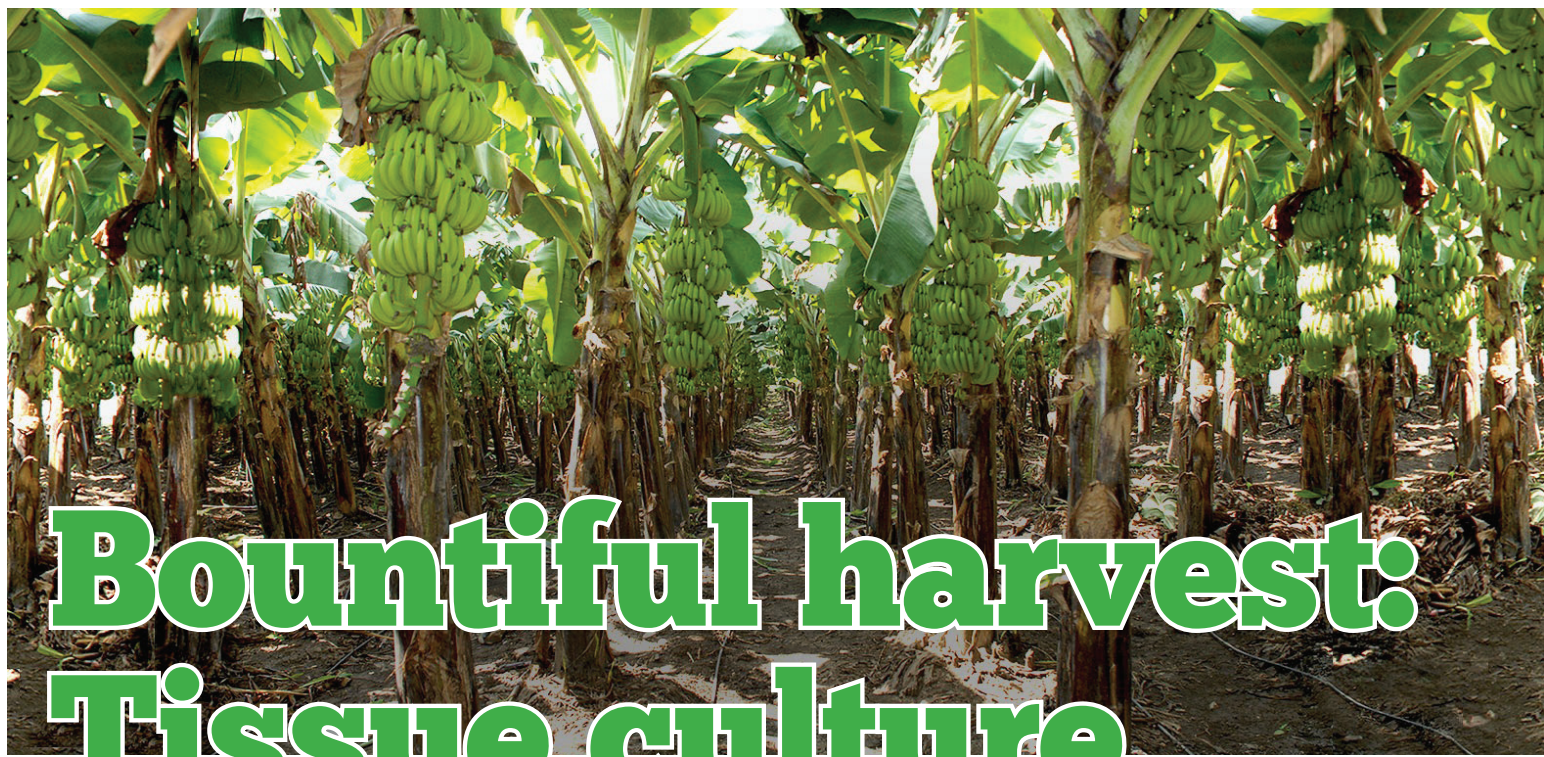
was elevated by a custom Manish Malhotra clutch, detailed with vintage zardozi embroidery and finished with elegant gold tassel accents.

Guided by the cinematic sensibility of celebrity stylist Mariel Haenn, a trusted collaborator to global icons like Rihanna, Pharrell Williams, Gwen Stefani and Jennifer Lopez—the look was completed with intentional, minimalist beauty - soft contouring, diffused smoky cat-eyes, sleek low ponytail and gold-chrome French tip nail art. Through this appearance, Sudha Reddy connected regional Indian artistry with the global stage, reinforcing her commitment to cultural storytelling. Since her 2021 debut and her subsequent appearance in 2024, Reddy has carved a distinct trajectory, elevating Indian couture and craftsmanship.

## Rs 5,659 Cr Boost for 5-Year Cotton Productivity Plan

NEW DELHI: (MAY 5)

The government on Tuesday announced a five-year mission to increase the productivity of the cotton crop with an outlay of Rs 5,659.22 crore. According to an official statement, the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved "Rs 5659.22 crore for Mission for Cotton Productivity (2026-27 to 2030-31) to address bottlenecks, declining growth, and quality concerns in India's cotton sector." India's cotton production stood at 291 lakh bales of 170 kg each during the 2025-26 crop year (July-June), according to the government's latest estimate.



# Bountiful harvest: Tissue culture banana cultivation

Banana cultivation has always taken a back seat in crop preference in Tamil Nadu as only a few farmers are bold enough to grow the crop in large areas. Though there are many reasons such as strong winds (the plant falls down during strong winds), heavy rainfall or monsoon failure attributed to this, absence of proper marketing channels appears to be the main reason for

many farmers to move away from banana crops. But farmers of Theni, Chinnamanur, and Uthamapalayam regions of Tamil Nadu have a different story to tell. They grow the crop in a minimum of 2-3 acres and are fully satisfied with the returns. These farmers mainly grow tissue cultured (TC) Grand Naine banana variety.

Grand Naine is popular because it has a relatively good shelf life, is an attractive golden yellow in colour at maturity and is internationally acceptable, both as a fresh fruit and in processed form, according to Mr. S. Narayanan, Vice President, Marketing, Jain Irrigation Systems Ltd, Coimbatore. With an initial investment of Rs. 80,000-85,000 per acre these farmers get a yield of 38-40 tonnes per acre which amounts to Rs. 1,50,000-1,60,000 per acre as gross income and a net income of Rs.70,000 -75,000 per acre annually.

Farmers are advised to go in for two ratoons, which gives them a net income of about Rs. 1 lakh each, per acre. Thus in about 27-30 months, with intensive cultivation, farmers can get a net income of Rs. 2.25 to 2.50 lakhs per acre, according to Mr. Narayanan. "The TC planting material costs Rs. 12 per plant from us and we make sure that it is delivered at the farmer's site anywhere within Tamil Nadu. The

cost of establishing drip irrigation system in an acre comes to Rs. 20,000 -25,000 which can be recovered in the first crop itself," said Narayanan.

### Planting distance

The field must be ploughed well and furrows formed six feet apart, and planting should be done at a distance of 5-6 feet apart in each furrow. Planting is done at a depth of six inches in the furrows. Required quantities of organic manure, 5 gms of phorate and 200 gm neem cake are applied in each pit. Watering immediately and thereafter is done through drip irrigation. Fertilization starts from 10th day onwards and a detailed fertilization schedule is provided to each farmer, he said. The plants are earthed up twice till up to the 75th day up to a height of 1.5 to 2 feet from the ground level. All these farmers have adapted well to the use of in-line system of drip irrigation, which provides a kind of strip wetting all along the plant row directing the root growth

along the wet area. With the tendency of banana roots to grow as long as 1.00 metre and more, quite early, strip wetting helps in feeding the roots better, which in turn gets converted into active plant growth and performance, explained Narayanan.

### Ratoon management

Keeping the field and neighborhood free of weeds generally is advised to avoid spread of infestations. Though the TC plants, which are supplied are generally healthy and virus free, field contamination can be avoided only by keeping the field free of weeds. Ratoon management is important for sustained income. In a place like Theni, three ratoons have been done in 24-25 months. Once the flowers emerge and all the fruits have fully opened, the bunches are covered using a "skirting bag" which prevents the tender fruits from insect attack, besides maintaining uniform temperature inside. "This is important for colour and fruit development," he said.

### Value addition

The farmers have also standardized the harvesting and packing methods locally, according to Mr. Narayanan. This value addition has a ready market in metros like Chennai and Kochi besides Coimbatore, Madurai, and other markets in Kerala. The price realization is quite high (at present the fruits are sold for about Rs. 10 - 11 per kg at Koyambedu market in Chennai). The farmers have already sent consignments to Mumbai and Kolkata.

### Word of caution

But Mr. Narayanan has a word of caution for those interested in growing this variety, suggesting visit the farmers' fields at Theni, Chinnamanur, Uthamapalayam to get first hand information. With Indian agriculture, particularly, horticulture, set for a take off, and with retail chains showing interest, the future looks bright especially for grand naine banana cultivators.



# Growing muskmelon as precision crop is highly profitable

Muskmelon is a fruit crop cultivated widely by farmers in our country particularly during the summer season. The fruit is used for making sherbets and desserts which have a cooling effect on the body. Though it is mainly

a summer crop it is now being cultivated throughout the year in Tamil Nadu, thanks to the Precision Farming technology from the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu.

Mr. C. Boopathy, a beneficiary farmer of the precision farming technology (PFT) in Morappur village of Dharmapuri district in Tamil Nadu has grown muskmelon in his one hectare farm.

### Net profit

"I had spent about Rs. 90,000 as cultivation cost and was able to get a gross income of Rs. 3,60,000. Deducting the expense I have earned a net profit of Rs. 2,70,000 solely from muskmelon," he says. The seedlings are raised in pro trays which are filled with cocopeat and grown in a shade net nursery under protected condition. They are ready for transplanting in the main field on 12th day of sowing, according to him.

### Healthy plants

The root growth is excellent when the seedlings are grown in pro trays and the seedlings are resistant to pests and diseases. All the plants are uniform, healthy and the pro trays can be easily taken to the main field for transplanting, according to Dr. E. Vadivel, Director, Ex-

tension Education, TNAU. About 20,000 seedlings are required for planting in one hectare. The field was readied using a chisel plough and disc (once) and then by cultivators, four times (with the help of a tractor). Then the seedlings were planted on raised beds of 1x4 feet (one foot height and four feet wide beds). About 25 tonnes of farm yard manure (FYM), 2 kg of biofertilizers such as Azospirillum or Phosphobacteria and 470 kg of super phosphate were applied (for one hectare) as a basal application before the last ploughing. Water soluble fertilizers were applied through fertigation pipes (similar to drip irrigation pipes) which avoid water wastage. The fertilizer application is done based on the time and the stage of the crop. Unlike crops grown under the conventional system, precision crops come to harvest at an earlier stage. For example, this melon was harvested on the 65th day after planting.

### Uniform fruit growth

Under normal practices har-

vesting can be done after the 75th day after planting. In addition there are more number of flowers in the plant and the fruit growth is also uniform, according to Dr. R.I. Muthuvel, Assistant Professor, Horticulture. Also, the fruits can be harvested in a single harvest unlike conventional system where 3-4 harvests are required. Major pests affecting the crop are beetles, white flies and fruit borers. Beetles and white flies can be controlled by spraying 2gms of Carbaryl or 0.5 gms of Acetamiprid diluted in one litre of water. Spraying 2 ml of Trizophos or 2gm of Thiodicarb or Methomil in one litre of water is found effective for the control of fruit borers. The fruit weight is also more compared fetches a good price in the market due to higher sweet content and shelf life, according to Dr. Muthuvel. "I was able to harvest two fruits from a single vine he said. Each fruit weighed 1.25 - 1.5 kg. About 45 tonnes of fruit was harvested from a hectare and sold at Rs. 5 to 12 a kg," said Mr. Boopathy.

Under this initiative, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi, has been supporting the ICAR-Central Institute of Agricultural Engineering, Bhopal since 2018-19. Building on this support, the institute has implemented a series of targeted interventions from April 2019 onwards, focusing on awareness generation, technology dissemination, skill development, and direct benefit transfer to rural beneficiaries.

The programme has made a substantial impact, reaching 10,509 beneficiary families covering a rural population of 52,545 across 80 villages in districts of Bhopal, Ujjain, Datia, Vidisha, and parts of Tamil Nadu. This was achieved through a combination of direct benefit transfer and the organization of 176 training programmes, skill development initiatives, and field demonstrations. Year-wise progress reflects the sustained outreach of the programme: 1,399 families (6,995 individuals) benefited in 2019-20; 1,014 families (5,070 individuals) in 2020-21; followed by 1,009 (5,045) in 2021-22; 2,355 (11,775) in 2022-23; 1,070 (3,850) in

2023-24; 1,403 (7,015) in 2024-25; and 2,759 families (13,795 individuals) in 2025-26.

A major component of the initiative has been capacity building through structured training programmes on agricultural engineering and allied sectors. Farmers and rural youth were trained in enterprise development in food processing, including soybean processing, along with farm mechanization, renewable energy applications, and efficient irrigation practices. These efforts significantly enhanced awareness and capabilities for adopting modern agricultural technologies and establishing agri-based enterprises.

The distribution of agricultural tools, equipment, and input materials under direct benefit transfer has been instrumental in strengthening livelihoods. A total of 11,917 agricultural tools and equipment, 37 tonnes of quality seeds (wheat, gram, and maize), and 20 tonnes of fertilizers were distributed among beneficiaries. The use of improved seeds alone led to a 20-30% increase in wheat productivity in selected villages of Bhopal district.

Mechanization support through tools such as manually operated cono weeders, hand ridgers, inclined plate planters, Naveen dibblers, twin wheel hoes, vegetable transplanters, stalk uprooters, and dryland weeders has significantly reduced drudgery and improved operational efficiency. Around 40-50% of beneficiaries have adopted these technologies, resulting in nearly a 20% increase in productivity of crops such as wheat, soybean, rice, and vegetables.

Post-harvest and value-addition interventions have further strengthened income generation. A set of soybean processing equipment including wet grinders, storage tanks, and pressure cookers was distributed to 151 beneficiaries, enabling them to produce value-added products such as soya milk, tofu, tomato puree, and fruit-based items at the household level. Equipment like spiral graders, manual air screen cleaners, sack holders, and maize shellers have seen 100% adoption, improving cleaning and grading efficiency and enabling farmers to secure nearly 20% higher market returns.

The Government of India, through the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MSJ&E), has been implementing the Central Sector Scheme of Special Central Assistance (SCA) to the Scheduled Castes Sub Plan (SCSP) since 1980, with a focus on advancing the socio-economic development of Scheduled Caste (SC) communities, particularly those living below the poverty line. The scheme is designed to expand livelihood opportunities and address critical developmental gaps.

# Farm Mechanization Boosts Rural Jobs and Growth.



# From Hill Streams to Hatcheries

ICAR-CIFRI Leads India's First Breakthrough in Captive Breeding and larval rearing of Channa stewartii

In the crystal-clear hill streams of the upper Brahmaputra, Channa stewartii the Assamese snakehead has long shimmered as a hidden jewel of Northeast India's aquatic biodiversity. Measuring barely 20 cm, yet adorned with iridescent blue fins and elegant stripes, this visually captivating species has rapidly gained prominence in the ornamental fish trade, fetching ₹600-1200 per pair. How-

ever, its growing market demand has come at a cost. With most supplies still sourced from the wild, increasing pressure on fragile hill-stream ecosystems has raised serious concerns about overexploitation and habitat degradation. The absence of a standardized captive breeding protocol had, until recently, constrained both conservation efforts and sustainable commercialization.

Recognizing this critical gap, the ICAR-Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute, Barrackpore initiated a pioneering intervention under the AINP on Ornamental Fish Breeding and Culture at its Regional Centre, Guwahati. Beginning in April 2024, nearly 30 wild-caught brooders (200-230 g each) were carefully acclimatized in controlled conditions to initiate systematic breeding research.

The brooders were maintained in cemented tanks thoughtfully designed to replicate their natural habitat. By incorporating sand substrates, bamboo structures, and earthen refugia, researchers recreated a semi-natural ecosystem that minimized stress and encouraged natural breeding behaviour, laying the foundation for successful captive propagation.

Scientific precision guided every step of broodstock management. Water quality parameters were consistently maintained within optimal ranges, while a carefully curated live feed earthworms, ant larvae, and aquatic invertebrates enhanced gonadal maturation and reproductive readiness. This conditioning led to the identification of a mature breeding pair, clearly exhibiting sexual dimorphism: males with nuptial tubercles and active milt release, and females with distended abdomens and ova release.

The selected pair was transferred to a semi-natural FRP tank, where a remarkable transformation unfolded. The species exhibited a fecundity range of 1,578-2,769 eggs (217-346 eggs g<sup>-1</sup>), producing spherical, buoyant eggs of approximately 820 µm in diameter. In April 2026, a historic milestone was achieved the first successful natural captive breeding and larval rearing of Channa stewartii in India. With a hatching success of 73%, the larvae (~8.4 mm) displayed notable parental care before being safely shifted to rearing systems.

The success extended beyond breeding to



the subsequent larval rearing phase under controlled conditions. The larvae demonstrated healthy emergence from hideouts and active free-swimming behaviour, marking a critical advancement in completing the propagation cycle of this high-value ornamental species.

This achievement represents a significant breakthrough in ornamental fisheries, demonstrating for the first time the feasibility of hormone-free natural breeding through optimized environmental design and broodstock management. It establishes a replicable, eco-friendly approach for sustainable fish production.

Reflecting on the success, Dr Pradip Dey, Director, ICAR-CIFRI, emphasized that captive breeding of Channa stewartii offers a clear pathway for sustainable ornamental fisheries. He highlighted the need to scale hatchery production under PMMSY, reduce pressure on wild stocks, and promote aquapreneurship among youth and farmer groups. He further stressed the importance of establishing a robust framework for captive-bred certification and regulated

harvesting, along with regional clustering in Northeast India through convergence among ICAR, KVVKs, and State Fisheries Departments for effective last-mile delivery. He also congratulated the team for this landmark achievement.

This achievement is far more than a technical success. It establishes a sustainable pathway to reduce dependency on wild stocks, thereby alleviating ecological pressure on vulnerable hill-stream habitats. Simultaneously, it opens new avenues for aquapreneurship, enabling farmers and rural youth to cultivate a premium ornamental species with strong market demand.

As the first documented report of captive breeding of Channa stewartii in India, this work lays a strong scientific foundation for future research on large-scale propagation, genetic improvement, and commercialization strategies. Ultimately, it reflects a powerful convergence of conservation and enterprise where science not only safeguards biodiversity but also transforms it into a sustainable engine of livelihood and innovation.



# CSK ride on Samson's unbeaten 87, bowlers' impressive show, beat DC by eight wickets

**IPL 2026**

## 'We're striving for that perfect game,' says Haddin

**HYDERABAD:** Punjab Kings (PBKS) are focused on returning to winning ways as they face Sunrisers Hyderabad on Wednesday in the Indian Premier League (IPL). Despite two narrow losses recently, the Kings remain at the top of the table with 13 points and are focused on playing their best cricket as the season enters its final weeks. Speaking ahead of the match at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium, Assistant Coach Brad Haddin said the team is taking a lot of confidence from how the middle order has stepped up. He pointed to the recent performance of Suryansh Shedge, who hit a fearless 57 off 29 balls against the Gujarat Titans, as a big positive for the squad's depth. "The partnership of Marcus Stoinis and Suryansh, we thought, was really good in the circumstances of the game under pressure."

**NEW DELHI**

A crowd of 32,160 turned up for the Delhi Capitals-Chennai Super Kings clash in Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026, but the Arun Jaitley Stadium felt like a fortress painted yellow. The chants of "CSK, CSK" rolled across the stands as Sanju Samson delivered a knock worthy of that backdrop - a commanding 87 not out off 52 balls, blending timing and power impressively to steer CSK to a big eight-wicket win with 15 balls to spare.

The victory keeps the five-time champions in sixth place, but crucially just two points adrift of the crowded playoff zone. On a sticky pitch offering grip and turn, Akeal Hosein (1-19) and Noor Ahmad (2-22) set the tone to restrict DC to 155/7. Samson then unfurled strokes of authority by hitting seven fours and six maximums to take CSK home.

What stood out was not just Samson's authority on pitch easing out, but also the way he played sensibly and took the chase deep in a classic CSK style. He also shared an unbro-

ken 114-run stand off 66 balls with Kartik Sharma, who hit an impressive 41 not out off 31 balls, to keep DC's bowlers under pressure and pick two crucial points for CSK and spread happiness in the sea of yellow jerseys in the stands.

CSK began their chase of 156 with patience, as Samson exquisitely lofted Axar Patel for six, while Ruturaj Gaikwad was lucky to have an outside edge off Mitchell Starc to get a four. DC brought in their big guns - Axar, Mitchell Starc, and Lungi Ngidi - quickly in a bid to get wickets, but didn't get any breakthrough. The breakthrough eventually came in the fourth over when a struggling Gaikwad flicked to deep square leg off Ngidi.

Boundaries were scarce until Urvil Patel lit up the innings with two towering sixes off Ngidi before closing Power-play at 44/1. But Urvil's aggression was ended by Axar, who got one to grip and turn, which the batter missed and was stumped swiftly by KL Rahul.

With Kartik Sharma joining Samson, CSK's chase began to move into calmer waters, as signs emerged of the pitch easing. After



Kartik pulled Axar for four, Samson whacked a poor short ball from Kuldeep Yadav for six. When T Natarajan came in, Samson used his wrists and feet well to club him for fours over long-off and extra cover.

After Kartik lofted Kuldeep inside out over deep extra cover for six, Samson unleashed carnage on him - a floaty leg-break launched high to the second tier at long-on and then pulling a short ball disdainfully over deep midwicket. With pressure mounting, Kuldeep went flatter and quicker down leg,

only for Samson to paddle him fine for four.

By the time Samson pushed a flighted ball to long-off, he raised his fifty off 32 balls, as the crowd buzzed with chants of 'CSK, CSK'. Starc's return brought no respite as Samson leaned into a drive on an overpitched ball and then threw his bat in the channel outside off-stump to beat backward point and pick consecutive boundaries.

Samson's surge continued as he dismantled Natarajan's variations with a mix of timing and brute force. On the short ball, Samson rocked back to cleanly pull over square leg for six, before lofting a slower ball over long-off for six and swiping hard through mid-wicket for four. The crowd was left in awe when Samson nailed the cover drive off Ngidi for four, while Kartik brought out paddle and drive to get his boundaries. The duo then knocked off the remaining runs easily to give CSK another clinical victory.

Previously, opting to bat first on a two-paced pitch, DC slipped into trouble as CSK's spinners got the ball to turn and grip while the pacers hit hard lengths. Reeling at 69/5, Tristan Stubbs held one end to hit a 31-ball 38 while impact player Sameer Rizvi counter-attacked with sweeps and pulls to hit an unbeaten 40 off 24 balls.

The pair added 65 runs off 47 balls for the sixth wicket to lift DC to a fighting total. DC's innings began with promise but soon became a familiar tale of collapse and recovery. Pathum Nissanka swept Hosein's first ball for four, before chopping past backward point for another boundary. Though Hosein

found some turn and even made a loud lbw appeal in the first over, KL Rahul found the fence with a creamy extra cover drive, before cutting Hosein for another boundary. But Mukesh Choudhary's change of pace undid Nissanka, as he pulled to mid-on sans footwork. The power-play was patchy for DC as Hosein got one to grip and beat an advancing Rahul in flight, as he sliced to cover, and DC ended power-play at 37/2.

Karun Nair briefly counter-attacked, but swept straight to short fine leg off Noor. One brought two for CSK as Rana swept to backward square leg off the wrist-spinner. Axar Patel's lean run continued when he mistimed a back-foot drive to cover. At 69/5 in 11 overs, DC were starting at another sub-par total till Stubbs and Rizvi came into the picture.

Dropped early on by Noor off Gurjapneet, Stubbs seized the reprieve by pulling and lofting the pacer for a brace of sixes. Rizvi immediately found rhythm - a premeditated pull off Mukesh went for six, followed by inventive sweeps off an expensive Anshul Kamboj.

## Ambati Rayudu as been appointed as the head of Cricket operations

**HYDERABAD**

Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA) The Apex Council of the Hyderabad Cricket Association, is pleased to announce the following key decisions and initiatives aimed at strengthening governance, transparency, and cricketing excellence:

### Committee Cricketing Operations

Ambati Rayudu has been appointed as the Head of Cricket Operations. He will oversee cricketing activities, development programs, and operational efficiency within HCA. His vast experience as an international cricketer is expected to bring professional insight and inspire the next generation of Hyderabad cricketers.



commence from May 12, 2026. The season will feature A Division and B Division T20 Championships. Detailed schedules, team registrations, and playing conditions will be communicated to all affiliated units well in advance to ensure smooth conduct of the league.

### POSH Committee

A POSH (Prevention of Sexual Harassment) Committee will be constituted shortly to ensure a safe and inclusive environment for all stakeholders. The Committee will comprise members as mandated under the POSH Act, 2013, and will establish a strictly confidential and sensitive mechanism for reporting and addressing complaints, ensuring that no complainant faces any form of retaliation or bias.

### Revamping of HCA Academy

The HCA Academy will undergo comprehensive revamping to enhance player development, infrastructure, and training standards. The revamped Academy will focus on structured age-group programs, qualified coaching staff, modern training equipment, and regular assessment systems to identify and nurture talent at the grassroots level.

Build elite-level cricketers through scientific training. Provide year round coaching & performance programs.

Establish Hyderabad as a high-performance cricket hub.

These initiatives reflect the commitment of the Apex Council to promote transparency, professionalism, and the overall growth of cricket in Hyderabad.

### Anti-Corruption Unit

An Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) will be established to ensure integrity in all cricketing activities. The unit will be headed by Hon'ble Vijender Pingle, who will serve as the Chairman. The ACU will work in close coordination with the BCCI's ACU framework and will conduct regular awareness sessions for players, officials, and support staff.

### Grievance Redressal Mechanism

A dedicated email ID has been created for reporting grievances related to cricketing matters and corruption: hcagrievance@gmail.com

All grievances will be acknowledged promptly and addressed in a time-bound manner. Strict confidentiality will be maintained at every stage of the redressal process to protect the identity and interests of the complainant.

### League Season 2026-27

The HCA League Season 2026-27 will

## IPL 2025-26: Aizawl avoid relegation after draw with Gokulam Kerala

**HYDERABAD**

Gokulam Kerala FC twice came from behind to hold Aizawl FC in a 2-2 draw in a Relegation Stage fixture of Indian Football League (IPL) 2025-26 at the Deccan Arena in Hyderabad, on Tuesday.

Aizawl FC have thus secured their safety from relegation with 13 points from 11 matches, while Gokulam Kerala FC remain in the relegation spot with nine points, making their final game against Namdhari FC a relegation decider. By dint of this result, Real Kashmir FC too are now safe from relegation.

Zomuansanga gave Aizawl the lead in the 10th minute, which was equalised by Mirjalol Kasimov in the 17th. The former then converted a penalty in the 32nd minute, but Gursimrat Singh equalised again in the 43rd to give Gokulam the crucial point.

The match began at a frantic pace, with the first quarter providing end-to-end action as Gokulam Kerala FC repeatedly fell into Aizawl's offside traps. Aizawl FC broke the deadlock from a swift counter-attack in the 10th minute when Zomuansanga sold goalkeeper Shibinraj Kunniyil with a clever shoulder dummy, disguising his shot towards the far post before executing a powerful finish to record his fifth goal of the season.

However, Gokulam Kerala FC responded swiftly, deliv-



ering a killer blow just seven minutes later. Mirjalol Kasimov stepped up to a free-kick in the 17th minute and unleashed an absolute thunderbolt to draw his side level.

The flow of the match became erratic and stop-start, but the People's Club remained highly organised in their transitions and deservedly reclaimed the lead.

A push by Gokulam Kerala FC defender Lalbiakhua inside the box in the 32nd minute resulted in a penalty. Zomuansanga confidently converted the ensuing spot-kick to complete his brace and put Aizawl FC 2-1 ahead.

Trailing once again, the Malabarians capitalised on the chaotic tempo to find a second equaliser just before the interval. From a 43rd-minute free-kick routine, Gursimrat Singh applied the second touch, popping

a header over the stranded Aizawl goalkeeper, who was caught flat-footed for what should have been a regulation save. The first half ended with five minutes of stoppage time and a massive blow for Gokulam, as they were forced into three changes, including an injury to goalkeeper Shibinraj, who was replaced by Kamaludheen A.K.

Despite Aizawl FC starting the game stronger, Gokulam Kerala FC went into the break as the happier side after clawing their way back to 2-2.

The tempo dropped significantly in the second half, with the game stuck in first and second gear for the opening twenty minutes. Aizawl FC eventually ramped up the pressure, dominating the final half-hour in search of a third goal. However, substitute goalkeeper Kamaludheen produced a couple

of crucial saves to keep the visitors at bay. Gokulam Kerala FC almost snatched a dramatic winner against the run of play in the 86th minute.

Substitute Benjamin Thomas Kuku set up Thabiso Brown for a point-blank one-on-one opportunity, but the forward opted for an acrobatic back-volley that failed to alter the scoreline. After nine tense minutes of stoppage time, the referee blew his whistle to confirm a 2-2 stalemate, a fair reflection of a fiercely contested battle.

The match statistics reinforced the closely fought nature of the contest, with both teams committing 10 fouls and receiving two yellow cards each. Aizawl FC controlled the overall tempo, dominating possession with 60 per cent while registering 13 shots and winning seven corners.

## Athletic Bilbao confirm Edin Terzic as new first team coach



**MADRID:** Athletic Bilbao on Tuesday confirmed Edin Terzic as the club's replacement for Ernesto Valverde as first-team coach from the end of the season. The 43-year-old Germany-born coach has agreed a two-year contract until the end of June 2028 and returns to coaching after a two-season break following his departure from Borussia Dortmund. Terzic has experience working in Borussia Dortmund's youth system and also served as assistant to Slaven Bilic at Turkish side Besiktas and at West Ham United. "Edin Terzic has agreed a deal to become Athletic Club's head coach for the next two seasons," the club said in a post on social media.

## KSS Memorial shooting: Ganga Singh wins 50m Rifle 3P title, Kamaljeet

**NEW DELHI/BHOPAL**

Army marksman Ganga Singh clinched a gold medal in the Men's 50m Rifle 3 Positions event at the 24th Kumar Surendra Singh Memorial Shooting Championship being held at the Madhya Pradesh State Shooting Academy in Bhopal.



Ganga Singh shot a total of 357.8 in the final to finish on top of the podium. Railways' Arjun Babuta secured the silver medal with 356.9, while fellow Railways shooter Swapnil Suresh Kusale claimed bronze with 343.7. Army's Sidharth Gaur finished fourth with 332.3. In qualification, Punjab's Harjas Singh topped the field with a score of 586-25x, followed by Maharashtra's Rudranksh B. Patil with 584-31x. Arjun Babuta shot 584-28x

## Substitutes inspire East Bengal's comeback against Mumbai City FC

**MUMBAI**

With second-half goals from substitutes Youssef Ezzejjari and Nandha Kumar overturning Brandon Fernandes' early strike, East Bengal FC came from behind to defeat Mumbai City FC 2-1 in Indian Super League (ISL) 2025-26 at the Mumbai Football Arena in Mumbai on Tuesday.

The Red and Gold Brigade produced a strong second-half display to claim three points and move to the top of the table with 21 points from 10 matches, ahead of Jamshedpur FC on goal difference. Mumbai City FC, meanwhile, slipped to fifth with 19 points from 11 matches, suffering their first home defeat of the season. East Bengal centre-back Kevin Leonel Sibille was named the Player of the Match for his defensive performance.

Petr Krátky's side started on the front foot with early pressing, but centre-backs Sibille and Anwar Ali stood firm in the opening exchanges. Despite that, the Islanders struck first. In the 8th minute, left-back Akash Mishra's long throw into the box created commotion, and midfielder Brandon Fernandes reacted quickest to fire a left-footed shot into the top left corner.

Mumbai City FC continued to create clearer openings. Around the



quarter-hour mark, winger Vikram Pratap Singh surged down the right before his effort was blocked by defender Jaekson Singh. Lallianzuala Chhangte was denied a good opportunity soon after, while Vikram missed with an attempted chip following a lofted pass from midfielder Joni Kauko.

East Bengal FC gradually grew into the game but struggled to break into the final third. Midfielder Mohammed Rashid forced a save from

goalkeeper Phurba Lachenpa in the 28th minute, while Edmund Lalrindika and captain Saul Crespo saw efforts go off target or blocked.

Mumbai City remained the more threatening side, with Brandon testing goalkeeper Prabhukhan Singh Gill again before the interval.

Oscar Bruzón made three attacking changes at half-time, introducing forward Miguel Figueira, striker Youssef Ezzejjari, and midfielder Souvik Chakrabarti. The impact was

immediate, as East Bengal pushed higher and began to test the Mumbai City defence.

The equaliser arrived in the 58th minute. Following a challenge by Kauko inside the box, East Bengal were awarded a penalty. Substitute Ezzejjari stepped up and converted with a powerful strike into the bottom corner, despite Lachenpa guessing the right way.

Mumbai City attempted to respond quickly. Chhangte forced a sharp save from Gill in the 61st minute, but East Bengal held firm. Around the 71st minute, the visitors took the lead.

After a move initiated by Figueira, substitute Nandha Kumar cut in from the left and struck from the edge of the box. The effort took a slight deflection off defender Bijay Chhetri and beat Lachenpa to make it 2-1.

The Islanders pushed hard in the closing stages. Jorge Ortiz tested Gill from distance, while Chhangte delivered a dangerous cross that saw substitute Gyamar Nikum hit the woodwork in stoppage time. Kauko and Ortiz both had late efforts saved or narrowly off target, but East Bengal's defence held resolute.

After an extended period of added time, East Bengal FC secured a vital away victory, completing a comeback that underlined their attacking depth and tactical flexibility.

## Football: India begin AFC U17 Asian Cup quest against Australia

**JEDDAH (SAUDI ARABIA)**

India begin their fourth continental campaign of the year on Wednesday when they face Australia in the AFC U17 Asian Cup 2026, at the King Abdullah Sports City Pitch C. The Blue Colts have been clubbed in Group D alongside Australia and Uzbekistan, as DPR Korea, who were supposed to be the fourth team in the group, pulled out of the tournament just a few days ago.

India head coach Bibiano Fernandes is no stranger to the continental competition at this age group, having previously led the team to the AFC U16 Championship 2018 and the AFC U17 Asian Cup 2023. In between, India had qualified for the AFC U16 Championship 2020 as well, though the edition was called off due to the onset of the pandemic. While he has had different experiences, Fernandes' approach remains unchanged. "With experience, you understand the demands of this level better. Every tournament is different, but the expectations remain high."

## SRK + Deepika = FIRE!

Shah Rukh Khan and Deepika Padukone are generating buzz online after visuals from the set of their upcoming film King surfaced on social media. The actors were recently spotted filming a romantic song sequence on a beach in Cape Town, drawing significant attention from fans. Dressed in breezy, neutral-toned outfits, the duo was seen walking toward each other before performing choreographed steps against a golden sunset backdrop. Several clips showed the actors rehearsing multiple takes, pausing between shots and returning to their marks. Despite the restricted nature of the location, a large crowd gathered nearby to

catch a glimpse of the shoot.

The actors reportedly arrived in South Africa last week to begin filming, starting with the song sequence. Leaked footage has also hinted at a track that fans speculate could be associated with Ed Sheeran. Online reactions have been largely enthusiastic, with fans praising the pair's on-screen chemistry. Some users noted similarities to their previous collaboration in Pathaan, particularly the beach song "Besharam Rang," which was also directed by Siddharth Anand. Meanwhile, reports indicate that additional scenes, including an intense climax sequence, are also being filmed in Cape Town. In re-

sponse to the circulation of leaked content, director Siddharth Anand issued a public appeal on social media platform X, urging fans not to share unauthorised footage. He emphasised that the team is working diligently to deliver a high-quality cinematic experience and requested audiences to wait for official releases.

Separately, it has been reported that Deepika Padukone is expecting her second child with Ranveer Singh.



## MAJOR CHANGE FOR CHIRU'S VISHWAMBHARA

Already its more than 2 years that Megastar Chiranjeevi's Vishwambhara is in the making. Till now, there's no sign of when the film is actually hitting cinemas. Directed by Vassishta of Bimbisara fame, the film's poor VFX led to a major backlash on the teaser that was released more than a year ago. Since then, the film is in the post-production only. And now, the film had undergone a major technical change. Reports are coming that the Vishwambhara team has brought in Hari Gowra to handle the background score, while keeping legendary Oscar-winning composer M. M. Keeravani in charge of the songs. On paper, it looks

like a simple division of work. But in reality, this is a very strategic move. Because Vishwambhara isn't a regular commercial film. It's mounted as a fantasy-heavy, VFX-driven spectacle where the background score does half the storytelling. And that's exactly where someone like Hari Gowra fits in. His work in films like HanuMan and Mirai proved that he delivers elevation and emotional highs in larger-than-life setups. At the same time, retaining Keeravani for songs ensures the musical soul doesn't get diluted. Now that Vishwambhara has split responsibilities to get the best of both worlds, we have to see if that works in the movie's favour. Interestingly, Hari Gowra has already started working on the re-recording. That indicates the makers are giving serious importance to post-production, in a bid to lock the release date real quick. Already the film is hugely delayed, so when's it hitting the cinemas?



## INDIAN STARS GEAR UP FOR CANNES GLITZ

**Alia, Aishwarya Return; Tara Sutaria Debuts as Regional Cinema Shines**

French Riviera Buzz – As the world's premier celebration of cinema approaches, the Cannes Film Festival is set to kick off later this month, with Indian stars already making headlines for their anticipated appearances on the red carpet. While some familiar faces from Bollywood and beyond are returning, many will make their debut at Cannes 2026. This year's festival will also showcase India's rich and diverse regional cinema. There will be participation from prominent filmmakers and actors representing various languages and industries.

**Bollywood Icons Lead the Charge**  
Alia Bhatt, Aishwarya Rai To Return, Tara Sutaria Will Make Debut At Cannes 2026  
Among the most iconic is Aish-

warya Rai, a longstanding fixture at the festival for over two decades, who will grace the red carpet once again. According to HT, Alia Bhatt will return to Cannes after her memorable debut last year. She will join other Indian luminaries, including Karan Johar, Mouni Roy, and Pooja Batra. The entertainment portal also reported that Tara Sutaria will make her Cannes red carpet debut. It is ahead of the release of her upcoming film, Toxic.

**Official Delegation & Regional Powerhouses**  
India's official delegation will feature filmmaker Ashutosh Gowariker. He has been appointed as the new director of the International Film Festival of India (IFFI). Regional cinema stars will also be making their presence felt—Punjabi cine-

ma will be represented for the first time with Ammy Virk and Roopi Gill promoting their film Chardikala.

Veteran Marathi actors Ashok Saraf and Nivedita Saraf are expected to attend, along with Prajakta Mali and producer Kedar Joshi. They are all set to walk the Cannes red carpet in traditional Marathi attire. Gujarati & Malayalam Make Waves Gujarati cinema will be represented by actor-producer Mansi Parekh, who will attend alongside her husband, singer and producer Parthiv Gohil.

Additionally, filmmaker Chidambaram, known for Manjummel Boys, will showcase Malayalam cinema's finest with his upcoming film Balan: The Boy, which is being presented at the Cannes market.



## THE ODYSSEY' TRAILER: MATT DAMON'S HEROIC RETURN BEGINS

Christopher Nolan's hotly-anticipated epic The Odyssey released a new trailer on Monday night and audiences are certainly in for a cinematic feast judging by the latest clip.

The Universal Pictures release doesn't hit theaters until July 17, but the hype is building and will only increase after the latest trailer which gives us closer look at Greek hero Odysseus' long, torturous and fantastical trip home from the Trojan War, back to Kingdom of Ithaca to save his wife and son.

In the clip we see glimpses of the key players including Matt Damon in the lead role, Odysseus' son Telemachus (Tom Holland), Odysseus's wife Penelope (Anne Hathaway), the nymph Calypso (Charlize Theron) and Penelope's snivelling suitor Antinous (Robert Pattinson) who is seeking to marry the queen and become the ruler of Ithaca. The trailer also features Odysseus's servant Eumaeus (John Leguizamo) and Jon Bernthal as Menelaus, the Greek king of Sparta and Agamemnon's

brother. The main cast also includes Zendaya as the goddess Athena, Benny Safdie as Agamemnon, Himesh Patel as Eurylochus, Mia Goth as Melanthe, Jimmy Gonzales as Cepheus and Lupita Nyong'o and Will Yun Lee in an unspecified roles.

We also have our first proper look at the not-so mythical Cyclops. The film is an adaptation of Homer's ancient Greek epic the Odyssey, and includes the sirens and other elements of mythology.

Nolan shot the film entire-



ly on Imax cameras, and the battle scenes in the trailer, which look quite incredible are sure to be awe-inspiring once viewed in theaters on the correct large screen format.

Though Nolan is surefire thing at the box office given his stellar track record, The Odyssey is still something of a gamble given the source material may not be familiar to general audiences and the budget of the film is reported to be \$250 million, making it the Oscar-winning director's most expensive film of his career.

## LUCAS MUSEUM OF NARRATIVE ART SETS ITS FIRST STAR WARS EXHIBIT

Just in time for May the 4th, the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art has revealed details of its first Star Wars installation, titled Star Wars in Motion. Part of the museum's inaugural Cinema exhibition, it will spotlight transportation across George Lucas' first six films, from Luke's Landspeeder in A New Hope to General Grievous' Wheel Bike in Revenge of the Sith. The exhibition will

celebrate the imaginative vehicles that helped define the saga, from racers and transporters to flying ships. It is one of more than 30 opening installations, all curated by George Lucas and Mellody Hobson from the museum's founding collection. Opening Sept. 22, the museum will feature over 1,200 objects across 100,000 square feet, exploring visual storytelling through art, comics, photography, film, and more.