

# HYDERABAD HEADLINES

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## SANGAM SHOWDOWN! STATE VS SANKARACHARYA: THE BATTLE THAT SHOOK PRAYAGRAJ!

Abuse of State Power Against Jyotirmath Sankaracharya Ji  
A Civil Society Fact-Finding Report on Prayagraj Magh Mela 2025  
FACTS AND FIGURES  
M. Hegdekar, Prof. Dr. J. J. Joshi  
Prof. Madhu Kulkarni  
Prof. Dr. S. S. Kulkarni  
Smt. Rishi Rathour

**Sangam of power and pride How the state walked into a sacred procession and walked straight into a national storm**

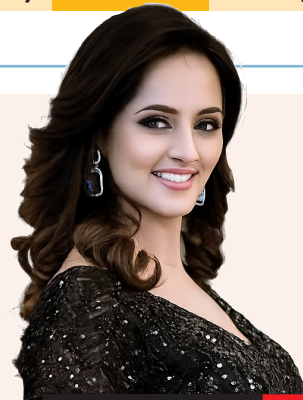
A civil society fact finding report on the Prayagraj Magh Mela confrontation has ripped open a fierce national debate on the limits of State authority over Hindu religious institutions



**STARC, RAHUL, POREL, ASHUTOSH KEEP DC'S PLAYOFFS HOPES**

STADIUM 11

**JYOTI POORVAJ RADIATES GRACE IN PINK GLAMOUR**



BOX-OFFICE 12

SPECIAL 02

### SHORT TAKES



I'm not cheap or low-standard; Rajinikanth clarifies he is not 'jealous' of CM Vijay

Rajinikanth's clarification comes after Vijay's Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam emerged as the single-largest party and formed the government with the support of smaller allies, a development that could reshape Dravidian politics in Tamil Nadu in the years

NEXT DOOR 05



CNG prices increased in Delhi-NCR by Re 1, second hike in 2 days

CNG will now cost Rs 80.09 per kg in Delhi, while consumers in Noida and Ghaziabad will pay Rs 88.70 per kg. The latest increase comes just two days after CNG prices were raised by Rs 2 per kg on Friday, resulting in an overall hike of Rs 3 per kg.

MONEY MATTER 09



**SIR: What Fear Shivering the Punjab Politicians?**  
When the sound of a wolf's footsteps is heard, some animals, even of opposite nature, become alert, begin to warn one another and gather in groups. A similar kind of stir has now begun to be seen in Punjab. Whether it is Congress or Aam Aadmi Party or other parties excluding BJP, all the north and south poles are seemingly active on the same page, but why?

OPINION 06

## Congress govt deceived public: Union Minister Kishan Reddy

HYDERABAD

Union Minister Kishan Reddy today alleged that the Congress government had deceived the public by making promises under the guise of various "declarations." He said that the situation remains stagnant—exactly where it started—with absolutely no progress made in Telangana.

Addressing media persons at the state BJP office, he criticised that the State government finds itself in a dire situation where it is unable to procure even basic food grains and added that it was now attempting to deflect the blame for its own negligence onto the Central government and its officials.

He claimed that the farm loan waiver scheme had not been fully implemented and added that the government had deceived both agricultural laborers and tenant farmers after making specific promises to them. He claimed that hundreds of thousands of farmers have turned into bank defaulters due to the state government's sheer negligence.

"In various regions, the farmers



have taken to the streets to stage protests demanding that the government procure their grains.

It remains baffling why the State government is failing so miserably today, especially given that the Central government is extending substantial and robust support regarding the grain procurement. Just as the BRS party previously attempted to level baseless allegations against the Central government, the Congress party is now engaging in the exact same behavior," he alleged.

Commenting on the cotton crop, he said that the Central government had announced a Minimum Support Price (MSP) of ₹8,660 per quintal and added that this support price had been set by the Central government in a manner designed to ensure a profit of ₹6,000 per acre for every farmer. "If a farmer cultivates 10 quintals of cotton on a single acre, there is a potential for them to earn a profit of ₹46,000," he noted.

Reddy said that in Telangana, the Central government procures the

two primary crops grown in the region—food grains and cotton. "While the Central government procures food grains through the State government machinery, it procures cotton directly.

While the Central government procures every single kilogram of cotton without any complications, the State government is displaying gross negligence when it comes to the procurement of food grains. We are currently providing a 45-kilogram bag of Urea to the farmers at a price of ₹242. However, the Central Government is spending Rs. 2,500 on every bag.

Even though global fertilizer prices have risen today, the Centre has been benefiting farmers for many years by refraining from increasing the price of the urea by even a single rupee. The State Government—which had previously stated that the BRS administration failed to implement the "Fasal Bima Yojana" (Crop Insurance Scheme) and promised that the Congress government would do so—has, to date, failed to implement it," he said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >



## New pensions rollout from June 2: Vivek

HYDERABAD

Minister for Labour, Employment and Mines Gaddam Vivek Venkata Swamy announced that the state government plans to roll out new pensions starting on June 2. On Sunday, the Minister visited Miryalaguda in the Nalgonda district, where he took part in several events, including paying his respects at the funeral of senior Congress leader Kodi Rekka Shouri.

During his remarks, the Minister pointed out that no pensions had been distributed during the ten years of the BRS administration. He emphasised that the state government operates transparently in the procurement of

paddy grain and is committed to supporting the underprivileged by ensuring timely delivery of Indiramma houses.

Vivek Venkatswamy also mentioned that Advanced Technology Centers will be established in Miryalaguda and Nakirekal, with construction on these projects set to begin soon.

He assured that the factories are being regularly monitored to guarantee worker safety. The Minister stated that new protocols will be developed to prevent accidents in the pharmaceutical industry. Government Whip and MLA Vemula Veeresham, MLA Bathula Lakshma Reddy, and MLC Shankar Naik participated were also present.

## TG EAPCET-2026 results released

HYDERABAD

The results for the TG EAPCET-2026, which were held for admissions into B.Tech, B.Pharmacy, B.Sc., and Agriculture programs in the state, were announced on Sunday.

Government Advisor K. Keshava Rao, along with TGCE Chairman Prof. V Balakista Reddy, Education department Secretary Dr. Yogita Rana, JNTU-Hyderabad Vice Chancellor Prof. T. Kishan Kumar Reddy, Commissioner of Technical and Collegiate Education A. Sridevasena and TG EAPCET 2026 convener Prof. K. Vijaya Kumar Reddy, made the official announcement at the Golden Jubilee Hall on the JNTUH campus in Kukatpally.

The EAPCET exams took place from May 4 to May 11. The tests for the Agriculture and Pharmacy streams occurred on May 4 and 5, while the Engineering stream exams were scheduled from



May 9 to 11. Approximately 300,000 students participated in the examinations.

A total of 2,10,766 students registered, with 1,97,242 attending the examination, and out of these, 1,44,704 students (73.36 percent) qualified in the engineering stream. In the A&P stream, 90,977 students applied, 84,954 participated in the exam, and 73,294 (86.27 percent) achieved qualification. The results have been posted on the website <https://eapcet.tgche.ac.in>. Prof. Balakista Reddy announced that the admission schedule for undergraduate engineering programs will be released within a week.

## CM Revanth, Bhatti to attend Kerala CM's swearing-in today

HYDERABAD

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy and Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu will attend the swearing-in ceremony of the new Chief Minister of Kerala, scheduled to take place at the Thiruvananthapuram Central Stadium on Monday.

Congress leader V. D. Satheesan is set to take oath as the next Chief Minister of Kerala after being unanimously elected as the leader of the Congress Legislature Party (CLP), marking a major political transition in the state following the United Democratic Front's (UDF) decisive electoral victory.

The alliance secured 102 seats in the 140-member Assembly, bringing an end to a decade-long Left rule in the Kerala state.

## Bandi Bhagirath's iPhone Sent to Forensic Lab

### Will Any Secrets Be Revealed?

HYDERABAD

Pet Basheerabad police arrested Bandi Sai Bhagirath in a POC SO case and seized his iPhone for forensic analysis. Investigating officers are also planning to seek his custody for further interrogation. Bhagirath was arrested on Saturday in connection with a POC SO case registered based on a complaint filed on May 8 by the mother of a minor girl. The police confiscated his iPhone as part of the investigation.

After the case was registered against him, Sai Bhagirath had reportedly been absconding. On Saturday night, a special operations team of the Cyberabad police arrested him near Appa Junction in Narsingi. After taking him into custody, he



was shifted to the Pet Basheerabad police station, where police questioned him for nearly two hours and recorded his statement. His mobile phone was also seized. DCP (Kukatpally) Ritiraj personally supervised the investigation at the police station.

Following the interrogation, at around 11:30 PM, he was taken to the primary health center in Medchal for

medical examinations. Later, he was produced before a magistrate, who remanded him to 14 days of judicial custody. He was subsequently shifted to the Central Jail in Cherlapally.

Police have sent the mobile phone seized from Bhagirath for forensic analysis of the data stored in it. Investigators believe the data could play a crucial role in linking him to

the alleged crime. There is considerable curiosity about whether any "secrets" may emerge from the device.

Meanwhile, police are expected to file a petition on Monday seeking Bhagirath's custody for further investigation. Officers reportedly want to take him to four locations where the victim allegedly faced sexual assault. On Saturday, Pet Basheerabad police, along with the Qutbulpur Tahsildar, visited those four locations.

In the complaint, the victim's mother reportedly expressed suspicion that several other individuals may also have been involved in the case. Accordingly, the FIR mentions "Bandi Sai Bhagirath and others." Bhagirath's legal team is also likely to file a bail petition in court on Monday.

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### Debt, Despair, and Disappearance: Balanagar Mason Still Unfound 14 Months Later

**MEDCHAL-MALKAJGIRI:** The family of 30-year-old mason Ganta Durga Rao is still awaiting answers more than a year after his disappearance from their home in Panchasheela Colony, Balanagar. Police say Durga Rao left for work around 9:30 am on April 23, 2025, and did not return. He reportedly left his mobile phone behind, and a video on the device shows him stating he was leaving due to severe financial strains and family troubles. Following a complaint from his wife, Ganta Satyarani, Balanagar CI Narasimha Raju filed a case and initiated an investigation. Despite periodic search efforts over the past year, Durga Rao's location has not been determined. His wife and children say the lack of updates has caused them significant distress. Balanagar police continue to investigate and have asked anyone with information to contact the Balanagar police station.



### Women's Commission team led by Gadwal Vijayalakshmi calls on Deputy CM



**HYDERABAD:** The newly appointed Chairperson of the Telangana State Women's Commission, Gadwal Vijayalakshmi, along with members Chityala Swetha, Uzma Zakir, Nunavath Radha, Shashikala, and Yadava Reddy, made a courtesy visit to Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka at Praja Bhavan on Sunday. During this visit, they presented a bouquet of flowers, honored him with a shawl, and expressed their appreciation. Earlier in the day, Vijayalakshmi and her fellow members also met Minister for Panchayat Raj Seethakka at Praja Bhavan, where Seethakka congratulated them on their recent appointments to the Women's Commission. The Telangana government has recently reconstituted the State Women's Commission, appointing former GHMC Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi as its new Chairperson.

# Sangam of power and pride How the state walked into a sacred procession and walked straight into a national storm

BY CHATURVEDULA SUBRAHMANYAM

A civil society fact finding report on the Prayagraj Magh Mela confrontation has ripped open a fierce national debate on the limits of State authority over Hindu religious institutions. The report accuses the Uttar Pradesh administration of humiliating Jyotirmath Sankaracharya His Holiness Avimuktshwaranand Saraswati Ji, violently disrupting a centuries old ceremonial palki procession, assaulting devotees and Ved Vidyarthis, and later pursuing controversial criminal proceedings under the shadow of political hostility. The report is not merely about a mela dispute. It is about the collision between bureaucratic power and ancient religious authority at the banks of the Sangam. It asks a dangerous constitutional question with far reaching political consequences: can a secular State become the referee of Hindu religious legitimacy?

## THE DAY THE STATE TRIED TO COMMAND THE SANGAM

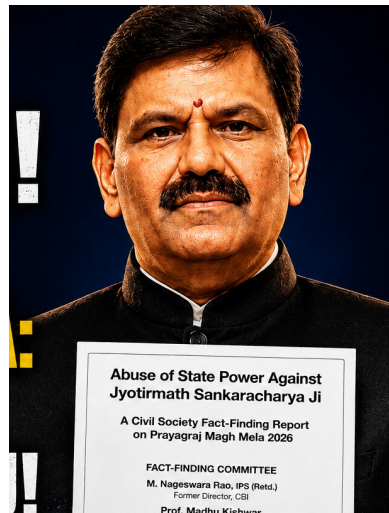
India has seen many spectacles at Prayagraj. Saints. Kings. Pilgrims. Revolutionaries. Political slogans floating in winter fog. But what unfolded on the sacred occasion of Mauni Amavasya this year was something far more unsettling. It was the spectacle of the modern State stepping into a sacred religious procession not as facilitator but as master. The fact finding report titled Abuse of State Power Against Jyotirmath Sankaracharya Ji does not speak in whispers. It fires in volleys. Compiled by former CBI Director M. Nageswara Rao, Prof. Madhu Kishwar and social worker Ritu Rathaur, the report paints a chilling portrait of what it calls a systematic and deliberate humiliation of one of Hinduism's highest religious offices during one of the holiest congregations on earth. And the most damaging part for the establishment is this: the report says the procession was not illegal, secretive or sudden. It was fully known to the administration. The route was coordinated. Police escort had been assigned. Officials

had advance information. The palki procession moved for nearly two kilometres under official supervision without disturbance. Then, suddenly, near the Sangam, the machinery of the State allegedly slammed the brakes. The Sankaracharya was reportedly ordered to step down from the ceremonial palki and proceed on foot. Not requested. Ordered. That single moment now sits at the centre of a political volcano. Because the report insists this was not

about crowd control. It says this was about authority. About who commands the sacred stage when religion and power stand face to face under the same sky.

## A PALLAKI IS NOT A VEHICLE. IT IS AN INSTITUTION.

One of the strongest sections of the report demolishes the logic allegedly used by officials to justify the obstruction. Authorities reportedly argued that vehicles were not permitted beyond a point near the Sangam. But the committee points out that a ceremonial palki is not a motor vehicle. It is part of the institutional and religious identity of the office itself. And here lies the deeper wound. The report repeatedly argues that the palki procession is not ornamental pageantry. It is an ancient religious practice woven into the continuity of the Sankaracharya tradition itself. It cites historical continuity, constitutional protection and even ju-



says there was no legal justification for force because the procession was peaceful, pre approved and under police escort itself. If these findings gain

## THE SILENCE OF THE OFFICIALS

One of the most striking revelations inside the report is not merely what was said but what was not said. The committee claims it repeatedly attempted to contact administrative and police officials, including senior authorities connected to the incident, but received no response. The report says several journalists were also reluctant to formally depose because of apprehensions about possible consequences. That silence now hangs heavily over the controversy because unanswered allegations often become more politically dangerous than answered ones.

dicial recognition to establish that the ceremonial movement of the Sankaracharya is inseparable from the dignity of the Peetham. In simple language, the report is saying this: forcing the Sankaracharya to abandon the palki was not administrative adjustment. It was symbolic dismantling of religious authority in public view. That is why emotions exploded. Because millions of Hindus may see this not as a traffic management issue but as the moment bureaucracy tried to discipline a centuries old spiritual institution like an errant office file.

## WHEN THE SANGAM TURNED INTO A BATTLEGROUND OF IMAGES

Nothing burns faster in public memory than a powerful image. And the report contains several. It alleges that Ved Vidyarthis were dragged by their shikhas during police action. Devotees were assaulted. Participants were detained. The sacred procession collapsed into confrontation. These are not ordinary allegations. They strike at motional nerve centres inside Hindu religious consciousness. The report

wider acceptance, the political damage could become severe. Because the ideological backbone of the ruling establishment rests heavily upon its image as guardian of Hindu sentiment. Yet here stands a report accusing the same State machinery of humiliating one of Hinduism's highest spiritual offices at the Sangam itself. That contradiction is dynamite.

## THE REAL WAR WAS NEVER ABOUT ONE PROCESSION

Read between the lines of this report and a far larger struggle begins to emerge. The committee argues that Hindu religious institutions have gradually been pushed under expanding bureaucratic supervision while institutions of other faiths remain largely outside similar State structures. That argument will ignite fierce national argument in drawing rooms, television studios, legal circles and religious forums. The report attacks the structure of the Prayagraj Mela administration itself. It says the statutory framework is dominated entirely by government functionaries while traditional Hindu religious authorities remain outside the

system. That criticism goes to the heart of the matter. The report asks whether one of the oldest religious congregations in human history has slowly been transformed into a bureaucratically managed State spectacle where saints must function at the pleasure of administrators. That is not merely a religious question. It is a civilisational question.

## THE POLITICAL TEMPERATURE RISES SHARPLY

The report becomes politically explosive when it connects the confrontation to the Sankaracharya's earlier criticism of BJP and RSS linked policies. It references his objections regarding temple demolitions during the Kashi corridor works, criticism concerning alleged State control over Hindu institutions, opposition relating to cow protection issues and objections surrounding aspects of the Ayodhya temple construction process. Then comes the committee's most controversial conclusion. It says the subsequent targeting followed these confrontations. The implication is unmistakable. The report is effectively alleging that ideological dissent from within the Hindu religious fold itself became intolerable to the ruling establishment. That is a politically dangerous allegation because it comes not from secular activists or Opposition politicians but from figures deeply rooted inside the Hindu religious and intellectual ecosystem.

## THEN CAME THE PCOSO SHADOW

Just when the mela confrontation had already become explosive, another storm erupted. The report examines the PCOSO proceedings initiated against the Sankaracharya and describes the sequence as deeply troubling. It highlights alleged inconsistencies in police conduct, contradictions in the prosecution narrative and procedural irregularities. It also references the Allahabad High Court observations while granting anticipatory bail. The committee's conclusion is devastatingly blunt. It says the criminal process appeared to have been used to harass and publicly discredit the Sankaracharya. This takes the controversy far beyond mela management. Now the debate enters the frightening territory of whether criminal law itself can become an instrument in ideological and institutional battles. That allegation alone ensures this report will haunt political discourse for months.

## THE CHIEF MINISTER NOW

## STANDS INSIDE THE STORM

The report directly references public remarks made by Yogi Adityanath questioning the use of the title "Sankaracharya". Then the committee delivers a politically loaded counterstrike. It notes that Yogi Adityanath himself became Mahant through an established process of religious succession similar in principle to the appointment of the Jyotirmath Sankaracharya. That comparison transforms the argument from theological disagreement into a direct political challenge. The report also refers to the Kalanemi remark allegedly made in public discourse around the controversy and interprets it as inappropriate when directed toward a religious figure. For the government, this is no longer a routine controversy. It is now a legitimacy battle inside the larger Hindu religious landscape itself.

## THIS REPORT HAS OPENED A DOOR THE ESTABLISHMENT MAY FIND HARD TO SHUT

Governments survive scandals. Administrations survive inquiries. Political storms come and go. But some controversies carry deeper historical electricity because they touch identity, memory and faith all at once. This report has entered exactly that territory. Its real power lies not merely in the allegations it makes but in the larger fear it evokes among many believers: that ancient Hindu institutions are slowly being forced into bureaucratic obedience under the language of administration. Whether one agrees with the report or rejects it completely, one truth is now undeniable. The Sangam controversy has burst far beyond Prayagraj. It has become a national argument about the limits of State power over religion.

## WHEN POWER ENTERS SACRED SPACE

At the Sangam, three rivers meet. This year, another confluence appeared there. Religion. Politics. Power. And when those three currents collide, the water becomes dangerously turbulent. The State may possess police, files, laws and administrative machinery. But religious institutions possess something governments can never manufacture through notification or force. Civilisational legitimacy. The real struggle unfolding after Prayagraj is, therefore, not about one procession or one confrontation. It is about whether India's sacred institutions will remain autonomous pillars of faith or slowly become ceremonial tenants inside an expanding fortress of bureaucratic authority. That question now stands before the nation like a blazing torch at the banks of the Sangam.

## Grand Birthday Celebrations of Dr. Kota Neelima

\* Reflect Public Affection and Congress Unity in Sanath Nagar

HYDERABAD

The birthday celebrations of Dr. Kota Neelima, PCC Vice President and Congress Party Incharge for the Sanath Nagar Constituency, were held on a grand scale at Begumpet Paiga Palace, turning the occasion into a vibrant display of public affection, political enthusiasm, and Congress party unity.

The celebrations were organized under the leadership of senior Congress leaders Vishal Sudam, Ravikiran Devulapalli, Pramod, Abhishek Adapa, Pranav Yadav, Khamar Hameed, Rajeshwari, and Padmavathi. The event began at 6 PM and continued with great enthusiasm until 2 AM, witnessing the participation of more than 2,000 party workers, supporters, women, youth, and well-wishers from across the constituency and the state.

Mahesh Kumar Goud attended the programme as the chief guest and extended heartfelt birthday wishes to Dr. Kota Neelima. Khairatabad DCC President Motta Rohith, minority leaders Faheem Qureshi and Feroz Khan, along with several senior Congress leaders, public representatives, social activists, and leaders from various party wings,



also participated in the celebrations.

The venue was filled with festive spirit as supporters gathered in large numbers to greet Dr. Kota Neelima. A massive cake-cutting ceremony was held amid loud cheers, slogans, and celebrations by Congress workers and well-wishers. Women leaders presented flower bouquets and conveyed their blessings, while the enthusiastic participation of youth added energy and vibrancy to the event. Speaking on the occasion, several Congress leaders praised Dr. Kota Neelima's commitment to public service and her consistent efforts in addressing the issues of the people of Sanath Nagar. They said her strong connection with the people and her dedication to the constituency have earned her widespread respect and affection.

Addressing the gathering, Dr. Kota

Neelima expressed deep gratitude for the love, blessings, and support extended to her. She said the affection shown by the people had further increased her responsibility toward public service.

"Your love and affection have strengthened my responsibility. I will continue to work with greater dedication for the development of Sanath Nagar constituency and for resolving the issues faced by the people," Dr. Kota Neelima said.

She also thanked the Congress leaders, party workers, women, youth, supporters, and well-wishers who stayed late into the night and made the celebrations memorable. Service activities and hospitality arrangements were also organized for all attendees, making the programme a grand and successful celebration marked by warmth, unity, and festive enthusiasm.

## Hyderabad corporate leader re-elected to World FZO Board

HYDERABAD

Hyderabad-based corporate leader Srikanth Badiga has been re-elected as a Member of the Board of Directors of the prestigious World Free Zones Organisation (World FZO) for a second term of four years, from 2026 to 2030.

The election took place during the Annual General Assembly of the World FZO held alongside the 12th World FZO World Congress in Panama City, Panama. The 12th World Free Zones Organisation (WFZO) World Congress was one of the world's largest global gath-

erings focused on free zones, Special Economic Zones (SEZs), international trade, logistics, investment promotion, and economic policy. The World Free Zones Organisation is a leading global non-profit organisation representing free zones, Special Economic Zones (SEZs), industrial parks, and related economic authorities worldwide. Announcing the development, the Export Promotion Council for EOUs & SEZs (EPCES) stated that Srikanth Badiga, Group Director of the Hyderabad-based Phoenix Group and Chairman of EPCES, has been re-elected to the World FZO

Board of Directors in recognition of his continued contribution to the global free zones and export ecosystem. EPCES is a Government of India-recognised export promotion council that supports companies operating in Export Oriented Units (EOUs), Special Economic Zones (SEZs), and Free Trade Warehousing Zones (FTWZs). Badiga's re-election is seen as significant recognition of India's growing role in the global SEZ and trade ecosystem and reflects the increasing international engagement of Indian industry leadership in shaping global trade and investment policies.

CONTINUATION FROM PAGE 1

## Congress govt deceived public: Union Minister Kishan Reddy

> FROM PAGE 1

Noting that Telangana currently accounts for the highest grain production in the region, he said that When the Centre steps forward to procure this grain, the procurement process must be conducted in a manner that ensures no difficulties arise for the farmers.

### Extend support to SIR:

Union Minister Kishan Reddy today urged all political parties to extend their support for the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of voters by the Election Commission of India in the state. He said that the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls was about to commence in the state and added that the schedule had already been released for holding it. "Through the effective implementation of this SIR, efforts would be undertaken to remove the votes of deceased individuals as well as duplicate entries. "A voter's name should appear in only one location. The Congress party leader Rahul Gandhi once famously declared that he would drop bombs and he would unleash the "Brahmastra".

True to his words, there is indeed a pressing need to eliminate duplicate votes. I am not finding fault with what Rahul Gandhi said; rather, if an individual holds voting rights in more than one location, the rolls must be cleansed of such anomalies. That responsibility lies with the Election Commission. However, political parties, too, must take the initiative to assist in this process," he said.

Reddy said that All political parties should appoint Booth-Level Agents and extend their full cooperation to the Election Commission during the exercise. Currently, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy appears to lack confidence in the



Booth-Level Officers. Furthermore, Revanth Reddy is attempting to cast aspersions upon state government employees by unfairly attributing religious motives to them. Recently, while addressing a meeting, he urged everyone to step forward and take an active role. The Chief Minister himself is making provocative statements, alleging that the Central Government is attempting to have your votes deleted. Whom are you trying to incite against whom, Revanth Reddy? Is it the employees of Telangana? Mr. Narendra Modi does not visit every polling booth personally; it is government officials, who go door-to-door.

The Agents representing various political parties accompany these officials. Instead of acknowledging this reality, why are you attempting to defame the Central Government," Reddy asked.

He urged the political parties to Send their polling booth agents out and Deploy them to accompany the respective Booth Level Officers (BLOs). "Ensure that no errors occur. Do not limit yourselves merely to making political statements. Do not attempt to sling mud at the Election Commission (EC). This process of Special

Summary Revision (SSR) is not taking place for the first time now; it occurred numerous times during the Congress regime, yet no one raised any objections back then," he said.

Targeting CM Revanth over his comments on the hike in petrol and diesel prices, he said that the rates had been hiked in an "undemocratic" manner. "However, this is not a matter that lies within the control of the Central Government; it is a consequence of global factors, specifically the impact of international conflicts. In the past—whether crude oil prices were low globally or during other specific instances—the Central Government reduced the excise duty. The Centre also requested the state governments to reduce their respective VAT rates.

Responding to Modi's appeal, several states did indeed reduce their VAT rates. "However, Telangana was one of the states that refused to reduce it at that time. In fact, Telangana currently levies the highest state-level tax on fuel in the entire country. I appeal to the State Government to consider the breakdown—the refinery base cost ranges from ₹52 to ₹56, the dealer commission is between ₹4 and ₹5 and the Central Government's excise duty stands at ₹6 to ₹7. The Telangana government levies a tax amounting to 35.20% on every liter of fuel sold. If the price rises by ₹3 today, 35.20% of that increase also accrues to the State government.

The Value Added Tax (VAT) currently in force is the highest in the entire country—a level unmatched anywhere else. I ask Revanth Reddy: why is the Telangana government—which is so quick to criticize the Centre—not reducing its own VAT? The State derives the bulk of its revenue from petrol, liquor, land sales, and property registrations," he said.

**Rare and Complex Pelvic Tumour Surgery Successfully Performed at Pure Ortho Hospitals**



HYDERABAD

Doctors at Pure Ortho Hospitals, Sainikpuri, successfully performed a rare and highly complex pelvic tumour surgery on a 32-year-old man who had been suffering from a massive tumour for nearly 10 years, significantly improving his chances of recovery. The patient was diagnosed with a huge osteochondroma measuring 20 cm x 30 cm in the pelvic region, which showed suspicious signs of malignant transformation into chondrosarcoma (bone cancer).

Due to the tumour's challenging location and surgical risks, several doctors had reportedly declined surgery, while treatment costs quoted elsewhere were financially difficult for the patient and his family. The patient later approached Orthopaedic Specialist Dr. V. S. Abhilash Kumar at Pure Ortho Hospitals after learning about his expertise in handling complex musculoskeletal tumour cases. Following detailed clinical evaluation and review by a Multi-Disciplinary Tumour Board, a definitive treatment strategy was finalized.

The surgery was successfully performed under the leadership of Dr. V. S. Abhilash Kumar, supported by Dr. Uday Sekhar Reddy, Dr. Manoj Pudari, Dr. Sai Karthikeya Badri, and Dr. Sai Krishna C S through a wide local excision procedure aimed at complete tumour removal with safe surgical margins to reduce recurrence risk. Importantly, despite the complexity of the case, the treatment was delivered in a cost-effective and affordable manner, enabling the patient to access advanced specialized surgical care without an overwhelming financial burden. The procedure was supported by the Anesthesiology and Critical Care team led by Dr. Jayanth Varma and Dr. Lakshmi Kumar Jasti, while post-operative ICU care was managed by Dr. Goutham Reddy. Early rehabilitation under Dr. Sree Ram L helped initiate mobility and recovery. The patient is currently in a stable condition and recovering well, doctors said.

**KTR Demands Dismissal of Union Minister Bandi Sanjay for Fair Probe in POCSO Case**



HYDERABAD

Speaking at a party event held in LB Nagar, Hyderabad, Bharat Rashtia Samithi (BRS) Working President made strong remarks over the POCSO case involving the son of Union Minister Bandi Sanjay and demanded the immediate dismissal of the Union Minister to ensure a fair and impartial investigation. KTR stated that the Prime Minister repeatedly speaks about "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao," but said justice cannot be achieved if such slogans remain merely political rhetoric.

He remarked that perhaps for the first time in India, a situation has arisen where a look-out notice had to be issued against the son of a sitting Union Minister. KTR questioned how the accused was allegedly hidden for nine days and asked who protected him during that period.

Stating that an impartial investigation is impossible while the Union Minister continues in office, KTR demanded that the Central



Government immediately remove Bandi Sanjay from the Union Cabinet. He said individuals accused of misusing power and influence in such sensitive matters continuing in constitutional positions is not only an insult to Telangana but to the entire country.

KTR alleged that while the Union Minister's son committed injustice against a minor girl, the victim's parents themselves were subjected to intimidation and pressure by the Union Minister. He accused Bandi Sanjay of personally threatening and harassing the victim's family. He further alleged that Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy attempted to dilute the seriousness of the case. KTR accused both the BJP and Congress leadership of working together to suppress the issue by branding it as a "honey trap" and allegedly influencing sections of the media to avoid reporting on the matter.

KTR warned that if those in positions of power are allowed to escape accountability, it would discourage women and minor girls from coming forward in future cases of abuse or harassment. He said that unless strict action is taken, society would send a dangerous message that influential individuals are above the law. Demanding immediate action, KTR reiterated that the Union Minister must be dismissed and the investigation conducted

transparently and independently. KTR also praised the courage of the victim's mother and parents for standing firm despite alleged threats and pressures. He said the family neither yielded nor stepped back even when both state and central leaders allegedly attempted to suppress the case.

Calling the struggle for justice "historic and courageous," KTR said the fight undertaken by the victim's family for justice against the accused Bhageerath deserves appreciation and support from society.

He lauded the efforts of the BRS women's wing, women leaders and activists, student organisations, and social media activists for relentlessly pursuing justice in the case. KTR stated that BRS women leaders protested aggressively across Telangana, approached the Women's Commission, the DGP, and even protested at Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's statue demanding justice for the victim. He also appreciated senior BRS leader Dr. R.S. Praveen Kumar for strongly taking up the issue and supporting the victim's family.

KTR concluded by stating that due to the collective struggle of BRS cadres, women leaders, student activists, and public pressure, the accused was finally forced to surrender/arrest proceedings began, bringing at least some hope of justice for the victim.

**Medical shops across the country to shut down on the 20th of this month**



HYDERABAD

The All India Organisation of Chemists and Druggists has called for a nationwide shutdown in protest against the online sale of medicines. They are demanding that the central government revoke the guidelines issued during the COVID

period. The organization alleges that fake and dangerous medicines are being supplied through online platforms. They are also demanding a complete stop to online medicine services in the interest of public health. More than 1.24 million medical shops are expected to remain closed.

**SOUTHERN RAILWAY**

**E-Tender Notice No.SA-E4-2026-27-W1-W4 Dated : 15/05/2026**  
Divisional Railway Manager / Electrical / Salem Division, Salem - 5 for and on behalf of the President of India Invites E-Tender for the under mentioned works. Online bids only will be accepted. For detailed NIT, qualification criteria, bidding document, tender submission etc., can be viewed / downloaded from website portal [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in).

E-Tender Notice No. Date and Name of work	Details
1) SA-E4-2026-27-W1 Dt 15.05.2026 Salem Division - Improvement to drainage facilities including roof covering in subway in lieu of L.C. No. 92.93,104 in Jolarpettal-Salem section - Electrical arrangements.	Approx. cost Rs. 4,54,851.00/- EMD - Rs. 9100/- Completion Period - 4 Months
2) SA-E4-2026-27-W2 Dt 15.05.2026 Advanced Trip maintenance facilities at Diesel loco shed, Erode, General Lighting arrangements to room for section activities (size 20 m x 6m) at Diesel loco shed Erode as per Drawing No. : Sr.DEE/RS/LS/ED-WP-541 (ALT-2) Electrical Arrangements.	Approx. cost Rs. 5,74,686.00/- EMD - Rs. 11,500/- Completion Period - 4 Months
3) SA-E4-2026-27-W3 Dt 15.05.2026 Provision of IRS type platform Shelter at Eight NSG-6 Stations - 2 bays each at Mayanoor (MYU) Virarakiyam (VRQ) Perugamani (PGN), Murthipalayam (MPLM) Lalapet (LP) Sithalavai (SEV) Pettavathalai (PLI) & Chavadipalayam (CVD) Stations - Electrical Arrangements.	Approx. cost Rs. 54,22,421.00/- EMD - Rs. 1,08,500.00/- Completion Period - 6 Months
4) SA-E4-2026-27-W4 Dt 15.05.2026 Salem Division - Replacement of Defective LTUG Cable feeding important loads over SSE/Electrical / Erode Section.	Approx. cost Rs. 70,00,014.00/- EMD - Rs. 1,40,000.00/- Completion Period - 6 Months
<b>For all the works Closing Time &amp; Date</b>	<b>15.00 hrs. on 08.06.2026</b>
<b>For all the works Bids Opening Time &amp; Date</b>	<b>15.30 hrs on 08.06.2026</b>

All Addendum / Corrigendum, Time extension, Clarifications, etc., will be uploaded in the website portal [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) only and will not be published separately in Newspapers. Bidders should regularly visit website to keep themselves updated.

Divisional Railway Manager (Electrical), Salem.

**Education Is Not Just Reading — It Is Recognizing**

**LOTUS LAP PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

HYDERABAD

"Education means not just reading, but recognizing, understanding, and connecting learning to life." "Education is not merely the act of reading words from textbooks. True education begins when students recognize the meaning behind those words, understand them deeply, and connect them with nature, society, and real-life experiences. Learning becomes meaningful only when it transforms thinking, influences decision-making, and develops knowledge that benefits society. In one powerful statement, our educational philosophy can be summarized as: 'Education is not just reading; it is recognizing.'"

— Dr. Komatireddy Gopal Reddy

**F**ounded in 1999, Lotus Lap Public Schools has been dedicated to providing quality education, value-based learning, and holistic personality development for more than 25 years. The institution has shaped the future of thousands of students by identifying their hidden talents and transforming them into knowledgeable individuals, responsible citizens, and future leaders.

**Learn - Recognize - Understand - Lead**

The Unique Educational Model of Lotus Lap Public Schools

Lotus Lap Public Schools has developed a distinctive four-stage educational model that transforms learning into a meaningful journey of knowledge.



Students apply their knowledge in practical situations and develop the confidence and responsibility to become leaders.

**Recognizing — The Gateway to True Education**

Recognition is the doorway to knowledge.

When a student sees a tree, they do not see only leaves; they see biology.

When they look at numbers, they recognize mathematical principles.

When they observe society, they understand history, economics, and civics.

When they read language, they grasp the meaning behind words.

This ability to recognize patterns and connections forms the foundation of deep learning.

are the pillars of meaningful education.

Lotus Lap Public Schools nurtures children's natural curiosity and develops them into confident and independent thinkers.

**Holistic Personality Development**

Education at Lotus Lap Public Schools goes far beyond academic scores. Equal emphasis is placed on:

- \* Intellectual growth
- \* Emotional maturity
- \* Moral values
- \* Communication skills
- \* Creativity
- \* Social responsibility
- \* Leadership qualities

The schools are distinguished by their unique Student Progress Tracking System, concept-based teaching, skill development programs, value education, personalized attention, experienced faculty, and a safe and caring learning environment.

**Invitation to Parents**

Parents are warmly invited to visit their nearest Lotus Lap Public Schools campus to experience the teaching methodology, student progress tracking system, facilities, and holistic development approach, and to make the right decision for their child's future.

**Lotus Lap Public Schools**

Education That Teaches Children Not Just to Read, But to Recognize, Understand, and Lead.

Where Every Child's Progress Is Measured, Monitored & Celebrated.

**Learn**  
Students study academic concepts in a systematic and structured manner. Every concept is taught clearly, simply, and in an engaging way.

**Recognize**  
Students are trained to identify what they learn in nature, society, numbers, events, and everyday life.

**Understand**  
Students analyze concepts deeply, explore cause-and-effect relationships, and grasp the true meaning behind principles and ideas.

**Lead**

**Every Experience Is a Classroom**  
At Lotus Lap Public Schools, the entire world becomes a learning environment:

- \* A tree is a lesson in biology.
- \* A garden is a laboratory of biodiversity.
- \* A family is a school of values.
- \* Society is a classroom of social sciences.

- \* Conversation is language learning.
- \* Travel is an experience in geography.
- \* Community service is leadership training.

**Curiosity Is the Foundation of Learning**

Asking questions, investigating causes, observing carefully, exploring possibilities, conducting experiments, and proving ideas

LEARN • RECOGNIZE • UNDERSTAND • LEAD

**STRONG EPOXY FOR ANY SEASON • ANY REASON**

**TOLL-FREE NUMBER: 040 45474612**

**ENQUIRE NOW**

## SHORT TAKES

**Weekly express train between Charlapalli and Tiruchanur sanctioned**

**HYDERABAD:** The Central Government has delivered a good news to railway passengers in the two Telugu speaking states—particularly to devotees traveling for the 'Darshan' (holy sighting) of Venkateswara Swamy of Tirumala. Following the initiative taken by Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy, the Ministry of Railways has officially approved a weekly express train service between Charlapalli and Tiruchanur. The Union Minister expressed his special gratitude to the Railway Minister and the officials of South Central Railway for sanctioning this train, taking into consideration of the passenger volume and demand. These new weekly express services are set to become available to passengers starting Sunday (May 17, 2026). The Train Number 17059 (Charlapalli - Tiruchanur) will depart from Charlapalli every Sunday night at 21:30 hours and arrives at Tiruchanur the following day (Monday) at 12:30 PM.

# Social Welfare Gurukul Students Create a Sensation in EAPCET-2026

**Social Welfare Gurukuls Shine in Agriculture and Medicine Streams**

**Gurukul System Lays a Strong Educational Foundation for the Aspirations of Poor Families**

**HYDERABAD**

Students of the Telangana Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society (TGSWREIS) have once again delivered outstanding performance in the EAPCET-2026 results, earning appreciation across the state.

Students from the Colleges of Excellence (COEs) run under TGSWREIS achieved top ranks in the Agriculture and Medicine streams, further elevating the academic standards of Gurukul institutions.

On this occasion, Welfare Minister Shri Adhuri Laxman Kumar expressed happiness over the results and stated that these achievements stand as proof that students from poor, Dalit, tribal, backward, and rural backgrounds have displayed remarkable talent at the state level, marking the beginning of a new educational revolution in Telangana Gurukuls.

"Once given an opportunity, Social Welfare Gurukul students can also



create wonders," Minister Adhuri remarked.

He further stated that under the leadership of Chief Minister Shri A. Revanth Reddy, the government has been giving special focus to strengthening the Gurukul education system. With the support of Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka, the government has been continuously releasing funds for quality education, modern infrastructure, special coaching, digital learning, and competitive exam training programs for students.

The minister emphasized that the sacrifices of parents, the determination of students, and the relentless ef-

forts of teachers are the main reasons behind these achievements.

He added that the results achieved by students despite financial hardships and rural backgrounds are truly inspirational for society.

TGSWREIS Secretary (FAC) Smt. Kambhampati Sharada stated that Gurukul students have consistently achieved success this academic year in major examinations such as SSC, Intermediate, JEE, NEET, and EAPCET, reflecting the institution's educational excellence.

She explained that the academic monitoring system was strengthened to identify students' potential and pro-

vide them with goal-oriented training.

Regular grand tests, daily practice sessions, special study hours, subject-wise mentoring, doubt clarification classes, and interactive sessions with experts helped boost students' confidence, she said.

She particularly praised the Botany, Zoology, Physics, and Chemistry faculty members for working with dedication from morning till night for the success of the students. Teachers also played a key role in motivating students and helping them overcome examination stress, she added.

She further stated that the trust placed by parents in Gurukul institutions for their children's future has become even stronger with these achievements. Due to the quality education, discipline, safety, and special coaching for competitive exams being provided in Gurukuls, students from poor families are now able to seize opportunities at the national level.

On this occasion, TGSWREIS Secretary (FAC) Smt. Kambhampati Sharada congratulated the students who secured top ranks, along with their parents, lecturers, principals, and academic teams. She affirmed that the Gurukul Society will continue moving forward with a comprehensive action plan to achieve even better results at the national level in the future.



## BJP condemns harassment of Gau Rakshaks by police ahead of Bakrid

**HYDERABAD**

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) strongly condemned the alleged harassment of Gau Rakshaks by the police in connection with Bakrid-related incidents.

Referring to the incident reported at Attapur on Friday, the party alleged that the police, under pressure from the MIM, were filing false cases against Gau Rakshaks and volunteers instead of maintaining law and order in a fair manner.

The BJP stated that while every religion in India has the right to practice its faith with dignity, the sentiments and beliefs of other communities must also be respected. The party said that cows hold deep spiritual, cultural, and emo-

tional significance for Hindus. The party termed it unacceptable that Gau Rakshaks and voluntary workers were being harassed and treated like criminals. It demanded that the government and police ensure that no illegal activities take place and that Hindu sentiments are not hurt.

BJP Telangana demanded that the police immediately stop filing what it described as false cases against Gau Rakshaks and volunteers. The party also urged the police to act impartially, respect the sentiments of all communities, and maintain peace and harmony.

The BJP asserted that it would continue to stand firmly in support of Gau Rakshaks, Gau Sevaks, and the protection of Hindu sentiments.

## Rethink, Rebuild, Rise to End AIDS Epidemic

**(On the occasion of "World AIDS Vaccine Day" on 18 May)**

**H**uman Immuno Virus (HIV) continues to be a major public health challenge. Sub-Saharan Africa carries the greatest burden, over 7.7 million South Africans are living with HIV, and an estimated 39.9 million people were living with HIV worldwide. Even though AIDS vaccine dream hasn't been realised completely, the antiretroviral therapy (ART) has revolutionised treatment, turning HIV into a manageable condition. "World AIDS Vaccine Day", also known as "World HIV Vaccine Awareness Day", observed on 18 May annually since 1998, is more than only a date but also a global reminder of how far we've reached, how much to be covered, and how essential our collective commitment is. This day focuses on championing volunteers, community members, health professionals, and scientists committed to finding a safe HIV vaccine. The theme of the day emphasises "Rethink, Rebuild, Rise" urges health workers, policy makers to adapt strategies to end this epidemic.

**Breakthrough in HIV Vaccine Research & Challenges Remain:**

Over 30 years passed since HIV was identified as the cause of AIDS. However, researchers continue in their mission to design a suitable vaccine for HIV-



AIDS. Treatment and preventive measures exist to help those impacted by HIV - AIDS. A viable vaccine is still the only means to prevent its spread. There is reason for optimism. Scientific advances have brought new hope to the AIDS vaccine development field such as mRNA vaccines, Broadly Neutralizing Antibodies (bNAbs), Mosaic Vaccines, and VRC01 and AMP Trials. Despite reasonable progress in the development of AIDS vaccine, we're still facing major hurdles in its development like the rapid mutation of HIV strains making it difficult in designing the vaccine. Funding shortfalls, stigma & misinformation, and access & equity, if vaccine exists are also hunting in the design of AIDS vaccine.

**What is the Way Out !**

The development of vaccine depend upon supporting the institutions who are striving hard to find a suitable vaccine solution, building the vaccine literacy among communities, tackling the misinformation about AIDS vaccines, pushing for people-centered policies, empower-

ing the youth leaders in the field, and celebrate the unsung heroes in this domain. Most importantly, lack of educational information, preventive measures, and medical treatment are the leading causes of HIV spread. There are vaccines for many bacteria, virus-borne diseases, but there is no treatment and vaccine for those infected by HIV. Let's get tested, support HIV/AIDS patients, raise funding, encourage treatment, and listen to those who are dealing with vaccine development. World AIDS Vaccine Day was inspired by a powerful call by Bill Clinton in 1997, urging the world to concentrate on the development of a preventive HIV vaccine. This day has evolved into a symbol of hope and determination for scientists, healthcare professionals/workers, clinical trial participants, and health research advocates. It's not just a day of remembrance. It's a day of action. Let's remember those working for humanity to find a virus to combat HIV and abolish AIDS.

**- Dr Burra Madhusudhan Reddy**  
9949700037.

## Committee on Telangana activists' recognition holds first meeting

**HYDERABAD**

The State Government is taking significant steps to officially recognize the services and sacrifices of the activists, who fought for the realization of Telangana state and to accord them the respect they deserve. In this context, the members of the 'Committee for the Recognition of Telangana Movement Activists' held their inaugural meeting on Saturday at the residence of Advisor to the state Government . K. Keshava Rao located in Banjara Hills of the city . During the meeting, a comprehensive discussion was held regarding the committee's future course of action, the process for identifying the activists and the guidelines and procedures to be implemented.

It is noteworthy that, acting upon the directives of Chief Minister A.



Revanth Reddy, the special committee was constituted to identify those, who participated in the Telangana movement and to accord due recognition to their services and sacrifices at the governmental level. Students, youth, government employees, civil society organizations and political leaders played pivotal

roles in the prolonged struggle for the attainment of the statehood. During the course of the movement, many individuals sacrificed their lives while others sustained physical disabilities. Furthermore, cases were registered against numerous activists, leading to situations where they were compelled to en-

sure imprisonment.

The government's decision to constitute this committee assumes great significance, given the long-standing demands from various quarters to accord recognition to the activists, who dedicated their lives to the formation of the Telangana state. The committee is tasked with the mission of preserving the history of the movement and ensuring that the sacrifices made by these activists are commemorated and conveyed to future generations. Dr. K. Keshavarao will serve as the Chairman of this committee. State Minister Ponnampati Prabhakar, MLC Professor Kodandaram, MLA and Whip Addanki Dayakar, former MLA S. Ramulu Naik and activist Mothe Shobhan Reddy have been appointed as members of the committee.

## Social activist Ragupal death anniversary held

**HYDERABAD**

Hyderabad: Several speakers lauded social activist Ragupal as an exemplary leader, who, throughout his life, never wavered from the ideologies and values he believed in, describing him as the very embodiment of idealism. Ragupal's first death anniversary commemoration was held on Sunday at the Sundarayya Vignana Kendram in Hyderabad. CPI(M) senior leader Sarampalli Mallareddy unveiled a book written by Sambaraju Yadagiri, which focuses on Ragupal's life and work.

The first copy of the book was presented to CPI(M) Politburo member B.V. Raghavulu. Speaking at the event, B.V. Raghavulu noted that while Hyderabad's progress in the 1990s was driven by public sector undertakings and their employees, the IT sector currently holds sway

over the city. He pointed out that while education and healthcare were under government control in the past, they had now fallen under private dominance, becoming inaccessible to the common people. He explained that the education sector had become even more profitable for corporate entities today than the industrial sector and noted that while the industrial sector yields an annual profit of around 20 percent, the education sector was currently generating profits ranging from 33 to 50 percent.

He further stated that industrialists and corporate educational institutions were effectively dictating terms to legislative bodies and added that private sector exploitation had emerged as a major societal issue today. He remarked that a situation had arisen where working with honesty and integrity was no longer an

easy task. He observed that it was plainly evident how those, who dare to fight against this dominance were being brought to heel through the application of various tactics—ranging from persuasion and incentives to division and coercion.

He remarked that they were living in times where even those, who lead honest lives are viewed with suspicion—a society that deems only those, who amass wealth, regardless of the means, as truly great. He pointed out that a doctor, who provides superior medical care at an affordable cost often fails to receive due recognition. He noted the prevailing situation where doctors receive commissions—or "percentages"—directly proportional to the number of diagnostic tests and medications they prescribe, thereby enabling them to extract exorbitant sums of money from patients.

## TTD excels in forest wealth conservation

**TIRUMALA**

The forest department of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has been protecting the rich forest wealth of Seshachalam Hills since 1980, maintaining ecological balance while catering to the spiritual needs of millions of devotees.

By safeguarding the forest areas spread across the sacred Seshachalam Hill ranges in the Eastern Ghats, the department is playing a crucial role in biodiversity conservation. The TTD forest department oversees a total forest area of 2,719 hectares. According to the latest India State of Forest Report (ISFR), an impressive 89.40% forest cover has been recorded under TTD limits, placing it among the leading institutions in the country in terms of green cover. Nearly 2,431 hectares are under forest vegetation, significantly contributing to carbon storage, climate regulation, and biodiversity conservation. The TTD forest department functions under the supervision of the Deputy Conservator of Forests. There are four forest ranges in total — two in Tirumala and two in Tirupati — each headed by a Forest Range Officer. At the field level, Deputy Range Officers, Forest Station Officers, and supporting staff coordinate forest protection activities.

As part of forest protection measures, 24-hour flying squad teams continuously patrol the forest areas to curb illegal tree felling and poaching activities. To prevent forest fires, special fire lines are being maintained, and trained teams respond swiftly to ensure effective fire control measures. Every year, around 26.5 kilometers of fire lines are being maintained. As a part of biodiversity conservation efforts, TTD has undertaken a major initiative to restore native vegetation in place of exotic Acacia plantations.

## Online darshan accommodation quota for August

**TIRUMALA**

The details regarding the online quota of various arjita sevas, darshans and accommodation to be released by the TTD for the month of August are as follows: Srivari Arjitha Seva tickets (Srabhatam, Thomala, Archana, and Ashtadala Padapadmaraadhana Seva) on May 18th at 10AM.

Registration for these Seva tickets via the Electronic Dip system will be open online until 10AM on May 20. Tickets will be allotted to those who successfully make the payment between May 20 and 12noon on May 22.

TTD will release the online quota for Kalyanam, Unjal Seva, Arjitha Brahmotsavam, and Sahasra Deepalankara Seva tickets on May 21 at 10AM. Similar-

ly, the tickets related to annual Pavitrotsavams (23-08-26 to 25-08-26) will also be released on May 21 at 10AM, while the Virtual Sevams and their corresponding Darshan slots on May 21 at 3PM.

The online quota for Anga Pradakshinam tokens will be released on May 23 at 10 AM and Srivani Trust Darshan tickets at 11AM, for the elderly, differently-abled, and those suffering from chronic illnesses, the at 3PM.

The Special Entry Darshan tickets will be released on May 25 at 10AM and for accommodation in Tirumala and Tirupati will be released online on the 25th at 3:00 PM. Devotees are requested to book Srivaru's Arjitha Sevams and Darshan tickets through the website https://ttdevasthanams.ap.gov.in.

## Over 200 leaders and workers join TRS

**Leaders from the Boath, Khairatabad, Amberpet, and Narsapur constituencies joined in large numbers**

**Party chief Kalvakuntla Kavitha welcomed them by draping party scarves**

**HYDERABAD**

A large number of leaders and workers from various political parties joined the Telangana Rakshana Sena (TRS). On Sunday, at the party office in Banjara Hills, TRS chief Kalvakuntla Kavitha welcomed them into the party by draping party scarves around them.

More than 200 leaders and workers joined the TRS under the leadership of former Boath MLA Rathod Bapurao. Under the leadership of senior leader Mateen, Muslim women from the Amberpet constituency joined the TRS. From the Khairatabad constituency, Narasimha joined the TRS along with his supporters. Several youths from the Narsapur constituency also joined the TRS.



## AP CPDCL enters in to a land mark Agreement with EESL

VIJAYAWADA, MAY 17:

The Andhra Pradesh Central Power Distribution Company Limited (APCPDCL), under the Energy Department of the Government of Andhra Pradesh, has taken another landmark step towards promoting large-scale energy efficiency and consumer savings by entering into a strategic agreement with Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL), a joint venture under the Ministry of Power, Government of India. The initiative comes close on the heels of APCPDCL securing an overall 'A' Grade in the Consumer Service Rating of DISCOMs (CSR) for FY 2024-25, issued by the Ministry of Power, Government of India, reflecting the utility's growing reputation for consumer-centric governance, operational excellence and service reliability.

Under the guidance of the Energy department the APCPDCL has achieved remarkable progress across technical, operational, financial and consumer service parameters, emerging as one of the best-performing DISCOMs in the country.

### Major Achievements...

#### Technical Milestones

- Distribution losses reduced significantly from 7.95% in FY 2024-25 to 6.85% in FY 2025-26.
- System Average Interruption Duration Index (SAIDI) improved from 51:03:00 Hours/Consumer/Year to 49:12:50 Hours/Consumer/Year.
- System Average Interruption Frequency Index (SAIFI) improved from 77.41 interruptions to 75.41 interruptions per consumer annually.
- Agricultural feeder segregation reached 71% as on May 13, 2026, compared to 25% a year earlier.
- 83% of 11kV feeders have been bifurcated as against 40% earlier.
- 41% of 33kV feeders have been bifurcated as against just 9% last year.

#### Operational Milestones

- Under the Consumer-Led Solar Model, 39,364 systems with 140.60 MW capacity were synchronized

by May 13, 2026, compared to 6,250 systems with 22.35 MW capacity in March 2025.

- Around 22,368 systems were synchronized under the Utility-Led Aggregation Model.

• APCPDCL awarded projects for 191.5 MW solar power capacity under Feeder Level Solarisation of Component-C of PM-KUSUM.

- Land acquisition has been completed or is in advanced stages for 51 out of 55 substations for solar plant development.

• APCPDCL received the prestigious SKOCH Governance Award for construction of innovative 33/11kV Containerised Substations across NTR and CRDA circles.

- Smart meter installation crossed 10,50,747 as on May 12, 2026, compared to 4,25,834 a year earlier.



#### Financial Milestones

- APCPDCL achieved more than 100% collection efficiency during FY 2024-25 due to aggressive arrears recovery.
- The DISCOM collected Rs 2,050.99 crore from State Government departments against a demand of Rs 951.14 crore.

#### National Rankings and Ratings

- Long-Term ACUTE Rating improved from BB+ to BBB.
- Short-Term ACUTE Rating improved from A4+ to A3+.
- APCPDCL secured overall Grade 'A' in the CSR rankings issued by the Ministry of Power in March 2026.

• In PFC's Integrated Ratings & Rankings Report, APCPDCL improved from 'C' Grade to 'B' Grade, with its national rank improving from 40 to 23 among DISCOMs.

• APCPDCL secured 9th rank among 66 utilities in the Distribution Utilities Ranking (DUR) Report for FY 2024-25 issued by the Ministry of Power. Under these positive developments of Discom, as part of the latest initiative, EESL has tied up with APCPDCL to make energy-efficient appliances more accessible and affordable through APCPDCL's extensive consumer network and digital outreach systems. EESL operates its e-commerce platform, EESLmart.in, which promotes energy-efficient appliances such as LED bulbs, induction cooktops, BLDC fans, and energy-efficient air conditioners. The organization has already partnered with more than 50 major DISCOMs across the country to expand the reach of energy-efficient products. The latest partnership combines APCPDCL's extensive

consumer outreach across urban, semi-urban and rural regions with EESL's expertise in bulk procurement and digital commerce. Under the agreement, APCPDCL will promote EESL's quality-assured and warranty-backed star-rated products through multiple official channels, including website integration, QR codes, electricity bill messaging, SMS campaigns, WhatsApp outreach and awareness drives at customer service centres. These promotional initiatives will direct consumers to EESL's online portal for seamless purchase and doorstep delivery of energy-efficient appliances. The collaboration is expected to deliver substantial benefits to consumers by reducing household electricity consumption by nearly 25 to 35 percent, thereby lowering electricity bills while also supporting the State and Central Governments' clean energy and energy efficiency goals.

EESL will manage end-to-end backend operations including e-commerce platform man-

agement, inventory handling, order processing, payment gateway integration, product supply, logistics and after-sales service support. The agreement is initially valid for three years with provision for further extension through mutual consent. The agreement was signed on behalf of EESL by Animesh Mishra and on behalf of APCPDCL by Chief General Manager P. Subramanyam in the presence of CMD Sri P. Pulla Reddy, Shri. Akhilesh Kumar Dixit, CEO, EESL has congratulated Shri. P. Pulla Reddy, CMD, APCPDCL for securing A Grade in Centre's CSR report for greater consumer services, P. Pulla Reddy said that, under the visionary leadership and guidance of N. Chandrababu Naidu, continuous monitoring by Hon'ble Energy Minister Gotipati Ravi Kumar and support from Special Chief Secretary Sri K. Vijayanand, APCPDCL is committed to providing world-class power supply standards while aggressively promoting renewable energy and energy efficiency initiatives for the benefit of consumers across Andhra Pradesh.

### SP MLA Writes Letter in Blood Over Statue Delay

KANPUR (UP): (MAY 17)

Samajwadi Party legislator Amitabh Bajpai on Sunday publicly wrote a letter in blood, protesting the alleged delay in installing the statue of freedom fighter Ganesh Shankar Vidyarathi in Kanpur. "Murti kahan hai? Kab lagegi? (Where is the statue? When will it be installed?)," he wrote in the letter, standing barefoot and wearing only a vest near the platform built for the statue at the Mall Road memorial site. Bajpai, the MLA from Kanpur's Arya Nagar constituency, later announced that the blood-written message would be sent to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath by post on Monday.

## I'm not cheap or low-standard

### Rajinikanth clarifies he is not 'jealous' of CM Vijay

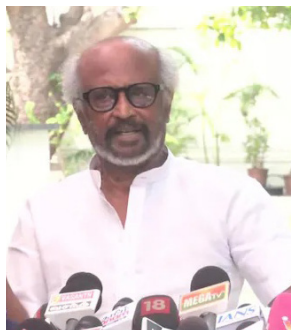
Rajinikanth's clarification comes after Vijay's Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam emerged as the single-largest party and formed the government with the support of smaller allies, a development that could reshape Dravidian politics in Tamil Nadu in the years ahead.

Superstar Rajinikanth on Sunday cleared the air around his meeting with DMK chief MK Stalin after his party's defeat in the recently concluded Tamil Nadu Assembly election, saying he met the former CM as a friend, but it was misconstrued as disapproval of Vi-

jay becoming the next Chief Minister.

Rajinikanth's clarification comes after Vijay's Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam emerged as the single-largest party and formed the government with the support of smaller allies, a development that could reshape Dravidian politics in Tamil Nadu in the years ahead.

Addressing a press conference at his residence in Chennai's Poes Garden, the legendary actor said he was not jealous of Vijay becoming the Chief Minister, as he is not in politics. "Why would I be jealous of Vijay? Maybe if Kamal (Haasan) became the CM, I might get jealous," he said in jest. Rajinikanth



said that he congratulated Vijay as soon as the election results showed his party winning the polls, though he admitted he was surprised to see Vijay become the state's CM in his first-ever election. He also said that he was holding the press meeting because many criticisms

were being made about him in connection with the election and that if he did not respond, they would be accepted as the truth. "Rajini is not a cheap or low-standard person to speak unnecessarily about anything else," he further said. The Kollywood legend said that his friendship with Stalin goes beyond politics, adding that he was saddened by the former CM's defeat in Kolathur. Stalin, who had represented the seat three times in the past, lost to TVK's VS Babu by nearly 9,000 votes. Noting the 24-year age gap between him and the new Tamil Nadu CM, Rajinikanth also praised Vijay for independently earning recognition by standing

against the two major Dravidian parties — DMK and AIADMK. Rajinikanth's latest statement on Vijay's spectacular political debut contrasts with his earlier silence on the matter. On May 12, when reporters asked about Vijay assuming office as the new CM, he chose not to comment.

Instead, he smiled, folded his hands in greeting, and walked past without making any statement.

The controversy surrounding his meeting with Stalin, coupled with his initial silence over Vijay's victory, highlights the actor's political significance in Tamil Nadu, where cinema and politics often intersect.

### CM-elect Satheesan announces Kerala Cabinet, 21 ministers to take oath tomorrow

VD Satheesan unveiled the 21-member Cabinet and said the full UDF ministry would take oath at 10 am on Monday. He said the list balanced social and regional representation, with portfolio talks almost complete.



Shamsudeen, KM Shaji and VE Abdul Gafoor.

VD Satheesan unveiled the 21-member Cabinet and said the full UDF ministry would take oath at 10 am on Monday. Kerala Chief Minister-designate V D Satheesan on Sunday announced his 21-member Cabinet ahead of the swearing-in ceremony of the new government in the state.

Addressing a press conference, Satheesan said the oath-taking ceremony would take place at 10 am and noted that, after six decades, an entire UDF Cabinet would take oath together.

"After 60 years, the entire UDF cabinet is set to take the oath tomorrow at 10 AM. We have completed the entire process within 24 hours, a feat unprecedented in the history of Kerala. This was possible because, even after the elections, Team UDF remains Team UDF. The leaders respect each other," he said.

Satheesan said the alliance had submitted the list of 20 ministers to the Governor and added that, including himself, 21 ministers would take oath on Monday. He said the Congress party would have 11 Cabinet ministers.

"We have 63 MLAs. Consequently, there are many individuals who could not be accommodated in the cabinet, in fact, more eligible than many others who were selected," he said.

Satheesan said the Cabinet list was finalised after discussions among alliance leaders and with the approval of the Congress high command. He said the coalition considered social and regional balance while selecting ministers. The Congress nominees in the Cabinet are VD Satheesan, Ramesh Chennithala, K Muralidharan, Sunny Joseph, Bindhu Krishna, AP Anil Kumar, PC Vishnunadh, M Liju, Roji M John, T Siddique, OJ Jaaneesh and KA Thulasi.

The IUMML ministers in the Cabinet are PK Kunhalikutty, PK Basheer, N

The other ministers are Mons Joseph from Kerala Congress, Shibu Baby John from RSP, Anoop Jacob from Kerala Congress (Jacob), and CP John from CMP.

The UDF also decided to appoint senior legislator Thiruvanchoor Radhakrishnan as Speaker of the Assembly, while Shanamol Usman will serve as Deputy Speaker. On the swearing-in ceremony, Satheesan said senior Congress leaders including Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra are expected to attend.

He said Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu and Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar would also participate in the ceremony.

Satheesan said Leader of Opposition and former Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, BJP state president Rajeev Chandrasekhar, Binoy Viswan and several other leaders would attend the event.

When asked if Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay would attend the swearing-in ceremony, Satheesan said, "No, till now there is no information that he will be coming."

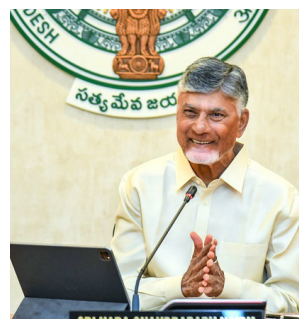
On portfolio allocation, Satheesan said, "The portfolios we are discussing, the final discussions are going on. In accordance with established protocol, we are required to submit the list of portfolios to the Governor tomorrow. Once the Governor grants his assent, the list will be formally issued as a gazette notification."

## Naidu Urges Centre to Safeguard Tobacco, Aqua Farmers

AMARAVATI, MAY 18

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday urged the Centre to review the revised taxes and excise duties to protect the interest of tobacco farmers and also sought measures to help crisis-hit aqua farmers. The Chief Minister has written separate letters to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Minister for Commerce & Industry Piyush Goyal regarding the issues faced by tobacco farmers in the state. Chandrababu Naidu highlighted the difficulties being

encountered by Flue-Cured Virginia (FCV) tobacco farmers in Andhra Pradesh. Naidu, whose Telugu Desam Party (TDP) is a key partner in the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre, pointed out that tobacco farmers are facing hardships due to the revised tax regime on cigarettes, which came into effect on February 1, 2026. He stated that the interests of tobacco farmers are being adversely affected by the increase in the GST rate on cigarettes from 28 per cent to 40 per cent, coupled with a hike in excise duty—ranging from Rs 2,050 to Rs 8,500 per thou-



sand cigarettes—depending on the category and length of the cigarette. In his letter, the Chief Minister revealed that market purchases have slowed down significantly due to the impact of

"tax-on-tax" increases, involving levies such as GST, Excise Duty, and the National Calamity Contingent Duty. CM Chandrababu noted that while the opening price for a kilogram of tobacco stood at Rs 280 during last year's auction, it has dropped to Rs 250 this year. He highlighted that farmers are incurring losses as the companies purchasing tobacco have reduced their procurement volumes. The CM explained that exporters are also facing difficulties against the backdrop of prevailing global geopolitical conditions. The letter revealed that the livelihoods

of nearly 43,000 farmers in the state, along with hundreds of thousands of workers dependent on this sector, are currently at risk. In a letter, the Chief Minister noted that excessive taxation on legal cigarettes poses a risk of illicit tobacco products entering the market. CM Chandrababu also wrote a separate letter to Piyush Goyal, regarding the crisis facing aqua farmers and shrimp exporters in Andhra Pradesh. He noted that the 50 per cent tariff imposed by the United States on shrimp exports is resulting in an overall tax burden of 60 per cent on Indian exports. The Chief

Minister stated that, as a result of this situation, aqua products exported from Andhra Pradesh are being severely impacted. In the letter, the CM highlighted the risk of potential losses to the current aqua exports from AP, which are valued at Rs 25,000 crore. The Chief Minister wrote that a situation has arisen where 2.5 lakh aqua farming families and over 30 lakh workers in the state face the threat of losing their livelihoods. He informed the Central minister that prices for aqua products have currently dropped by 20–25 per cent even within the domestic market.

## Ashwini Vaishnav Flags Off Bengaluru-Mumbai Train

HUBBALLI, MAY 17:

Railway Minister Shri Ashwini Vaishnav virtually flagged off Train between Bengaluru - Mumbai today, marking a major step in strengthening connectivity between Karnataka and Maharashtra. He stated that long-pending demands of South & North Karnataka are now being fulfilled. He announced that the Vande Bharat Sleeper service between Bengaluru and Mumbai is expected to be started soon. Highlighting infrastructure growth, he noted a significant increase in railway funding in recent years, accelerating project execution across Karnataka. Under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme, 61 stations are being redeveloped at a cost of ₹2,160 crore, with 9 already completed. Bengaluru Cantonment station is being redeveloped at ₹485 crore and Yeshwantpur at ₹367 crore.

Since 2014, about 1,750 km of new railway lines have been constructed in Karnataka, and complex electrification and works which is Hassan-Man-



galuru section have been completed and testing is going on.

On the Bengaluru Suburban Railway Project, he stated that work is progressing across all four corridors. For the Baiyappanahalli-Chikkabanavara and Heelalige-Rajanukunte corridors, land acquisition has been completed and station works are currently under progress. The KSR Bengaluru-Devanahalli alignment has been jointly approved by the State Government and the Railways, and the geotechnical survey has been completed. The Kengeri-Whitefield alignment was recently approved, and survey work will commence

shortly. And he said that the suburban rail network will integrate key hubs, including the airport, Electronic City, Marathahalli, and Hebbal.

He further stated that Karnataka currently operates 12 pairs of Vande Bharat trains. Testing on the Bengaluru-Mangaluru route is underway and will soon improve coastal connectivity to Madgaon.

Shri Vaishnav also highlighted that bullet train corridors connecting Bengaluru with Hyderabad and Chennai have been approved.

He further noted that, with a long-term vision to connect Mumbai, Bengaluru, and other major cities, the network is



expected to expand to 7,000 km.

Union Minister Shri V. Somantha, while addressing the gathering during the flagging off of Train No. 16553/54 SMVT Bengaluru - Lokmanya Tilak Terminus Express, expressed his gratitude to Shri Ashwini Vaishnav for sanctioning the new Bengaluru-Mumbai train, stating that it will greatly benefit passengers on one of the busiest routes and further boost Karnataka's development.

He highlighted that Karnataka currently operates 12 pairs of Vande Bharat trains covering 14 districts. He noted that a Vande Bharat Sleeper

maintenence depot will be established at Thanisandra at a cost of ₹270 crore, along with a chair car maintenance facility at SMVT Bengaluru costing ₹52.73 crore. Doubling of Baiyappanahalli-Hosur (₹1,116 crore), Bettahalasuru-Rajanukunte (₹248 crore), and quadrupling works around Bengaluru (₹1,347 crore) are being undertaken to enhance capacity.

Shri Somantha informed that automatic signalling works are being implemented across key sections, including Yesvantpur, KSR Bengaluru, Lottogollahalli, Baiyappanahalli, Penukonda, Mysuru, and Jolarpettai, at a total cost

of ₹6,396 crore. Highlighting overall growth, he stated that Karnataka has received a record railway budget allocation of ₹7748 crore. Since 2014, about 3,840 km of railway lines have been developed and 3,742 km electrified, taking the state close to 100% electrification. He added that the number of ROBS/RUBs has increased from about 150 before 2014 to 707 now, with 146 more to be completed within the next one year, and all level crossings targeted for elimination in the next three years.

Dignitaries present on the occasion included Shri P. C. Mohan, Hon'ble Member of Parliament, Bengaluru Central; Shri Lehar Singh Siroya, Hon'ble Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha; and Shri Tejasvi Surya, Hon'ble Member of Parliament, Bengaluru South, who joined the event via video conference. Shri Ashutosh Kumar Singh, Divisional Railway Manager, Bengaluru Division, and senior officers from South Western Railway were also present on the occasion.

EDITORIAL

**THE OPPORTUNITY COST OF CARE:  
THE HIDDEN BARRIERS IN THE NEW  
LABOUR HEALTH INITIATIVE**

The Union Labour Ministry has announced that it will provide a free annual health check-up to workers aged 40 years or more, following an existing provision in the new Labour Codes. The programme will be implemented through the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC). For workers in hazardous conditions, such as handling toxic chemicals or operating heavy machinery, check-ups are mandatory; if illness is detected, ESIC hospitals and dispensaries will provide free treatment. India already has a few workers' health obligations on paper, including under the Factories Act 1948 (only within factories), the ESI Act 1948, and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSH) Code 2020. The new programme will be financed through the well-endowed ESI fund, although the government is still shoring up the number of beds and doctors available via PM-JAY-empowered facilities. At this time, operational evidence suggests that insured workers will be the main beneficiaries.



Commendable though the initiative is, its success is not guaranteed. At present, only around 31 crore of 94 crore workers are on the e-Shram portal, whose integration with ESIC is still in its early stages in many States. Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya also failed to address how a woman working in a garment home unit or as a domestic worker could access the longer maternity leave if she has no 'employer'. Annual check-ups for women also warrant specific medical staff needs whereas many ESIC camps are crowded and dominated by men. As with many of its predecessors, the programme does not address the opportunity costs of accessing health care, forcing workers to continue contending with lost wages. An ESIC facility may also refer a worker to another centre if it lacks the resources for specific tests, leading to repeat visits and added time and cost. The new programme focuses predominantly on non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. Heat-related illnesses are not explicitly recognised as occupational diseases under the ESI Act whereas construction and agriculture workers are most at risk of them. Waste-pickers and sanitation workers on the other hand face greater risk of infectious diseases such as hepatitis and leptospirosis. The scheme offers screening but does not mandate proactive vaccination. The government must meet workers where they are, through mobile occupational health units and — as the OSH Code 2020 stipulates for organised workers — at their places of work, and provide tokens to compensate them for time spent on check-ups. Otherwise, any scheme of this nature will not improve upon the already deficient system.

# SIR: What Fear Shivering the Punjab Politicians?

When the sound of a wolf's footsteps is heard, some animals, even of opposite nature, become alert, begin to warn one another and gather in groups. A similar kind of stir has now begun to be seen in Punjab. Whether it is Congress or Aam Aadmi Party or other parties excluding BJP, all the north and south poles are seemingly active on the same page, but why? Which wolf's scent they are smelling in the bushes? What is fearing them? The imminent threat is implementation of SIR in Punjab. Special Intensive Revision (SIR) preparatory, activities related to the revision of electoral rolls, exercise will be undertaken from June 15 to June 24, 2026 and Booth Level Officers (BLOs) will undertake door-to-door visits across Punjab from June 25 to July 24, 2026 for filling voter verification

28 lakh people were not able to vote despite their genuine right." After meeting with CEO, Dr. Amar Singh, the Congress representative, said, "We have raised those issues of SIR, which have created fear among people. As done in Bihar and West Bengal, those should not be done in Punjab. At least spare Punjab." Harpal Singh Cheema, AAP leader and Finance Minister of Punjab, in a tweet on 14th May @AAPPunjab commented, "The people of Punjab will not accept BJP's SIR! Continuing to misuse the Election Commission, it wants to find a way to gain power by cutting votes from Punjab through SIR. The people of Punjab are aware of these tricks of BJP and 3 crore Punjabis will strongly oppose this unprincipled action of BJP." Cabinet Minister, Punjab, Dr. Bal

have proved it beyond any doubt that the Bharatiya Janata Party government at the centre with the help of a compliant Election Commission of India can swing the electoral outcome in its favour with the fraudulent exercise of Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls", he observed while noting that Punjab is headed for elections, within less than ten months, may be earlier. "What is the urgency to hold this exercise here?" he asked. The PCC president asked why the SIR exercise was not carried out in Punjab along with the states like Uttar Pradesh and Goa, where it was held six months ago, as these two states are also scheduled to go for elections at the same time as Punjab.

He pointed out, in the case of Bengal, 27 lakh genuine voters were disenfranchised. "Since there was not enough time, their appeals for inclusion in the voter list were not settled before the elections. They lost the right to vote", he said, while cautioning against repeating the same process here. "The Election Commission of India wants to repeat the same exercise in Punjab", he said, adding, "we are confident that we will defeat their design". He said, the party has asked its rank and file to ensure that not a single genuine voter is denied the right to vote with this fraudulent exercise of SIR.

Warring also appealed to other political parties in the state to beware and keep their political differences aside and ensure that Punjab voters are not disenfranchised just ahead of elections because the BJP suspects them not to vote for it. "Let us resolve not to allow the same thing happening in Punjab as happened in Bihar and Bengal", he remarked. Former Cabinet Minister and Member of the Congress Working Committee (CWC), Vijay Inder Singla, has reached out to the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of Punjab through a formal letter, advocating for a robust drive to register young voters during the upcoming Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise. A media release of May 15, 2026 states that Singla highlighted that the timing of the revision, coming so close to the Assembly elections, often leads to a trust deficit between the Election Commission, political parties, and the public. He stressed the necessity for the process

to be conducted with absolute fairness and transparency to prevent the recurrence of issues previously seen in other states.

Expressing deep concern over the low engagement of the younger generation, Singla pointed out that according to 2024 data, only about 40% of eligible youth in the 18-19 age group were enrolled as voters. He emphasized that the vision of a "New Punjab" can only be realized through the fresh ideas of young minds. He further noted that the state requires innovative policy approaches to tackle pressing issues such as crime, drug addiction, the agricultural crisis, and unemployment, all of which demand the active participation of the Punjabi youth in the democratic process.

To address the existing enrolment gap, Singla suggested that the State Election Commission should launch targeted social media campaigns to reach out to the tech-savvy younger demographic. He also called for the sensitization of Booth Level Officers (BLOs), who will be tasked with door-to-door physical verification from June 25 to July 24, to ensure they actively enlist new voters. Closing his appeal, the former MP expressed his hope that the Commission would treat this matter with the highest priority to ensure every eligible young voter is empowered to shape the future of Punjab. Will the Punjab Chief Electoral officer ensure that no foul play will happen in the entire process and every eligible voter gets the chance to utilize his franchise? The process will not create a West Bengal like situation. Transparency must not only exist but also be visible to the common man; this is the true test of democracy. - E P Features.



forms. However, Mrs. Anindita Mitra, Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), Punjab, in a meeting with political parties' representatives cleared that the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Punjab will be carried out in a completely transparent manner and the primary objective of the exercise is to ensure inclusion of every eligible citizen in the electoral rolls while removing ineligible persons from the list, but despite this assurance, why the political parties of state are smelling some fearing particles in the air yet to blow?

Ferry Sofat, Aam Aadmi Party representative, says, "First of all, except for one party, we were concerned about the problems that had been created in the whole country with the S.I.R. which every party had to face. West Bengal is the major example where 90 lakh votes were cut and 27-

bir Singh commented on May14, @AAPPunjab, "In West Bengal, BJP has formed the government by siphoning off 9.1 million votes and creating nearly 600,000 fake votes. This BJP policy is a major challenge for Punjab. All of us will have to come together and stand guard at every single booth so that BJP cannot play this dirty game in Punjab." Punjab Congress president Amarinder Singh Raja Warring, in a statement to media on May 14, 2026, questioned the timing of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls in Punjab when the state was headed for the assembly elections less than ten months from now. Reacting to the announcement by the Election Commission of India on the matter, Warring said, Punjab could have waited till the elections to assure the people that there was no hidden agenda behind the SIR in the state. "Bihar and West Bengal elections



JAG MOHAN THAKREN

Senior Journalist, Columnist & Political Analyst  
Chandigarh  
Mob & WhatsApp 8557033198

## THE ROAR BEYOND THE BORDER

Beyond the barbed and frozen line,  
Where silent stars refuse to shine,  
Where winter sharpens death like steel  
And mountains guard what warriors feel—

There walks a soul no storm can bend:  
An Indian soldier till the end. Not born from comfort, gold, or throne,  
But forged through sacrifice alone; His heartbeat drums through midnight air  
Like thunder wrapped inside a prayer. Fear has never worn his name,  
Nor defeat survived his flame; For when his boots strike ice and stone,  
Even darkness shakes to its bone.

One cry of "Vande Mataram!" Can split the heavens like a storm;  
One breath from lungs that burn for land Can break oppression's iron hand.  
When enemy rifles pierce the snow, He rises like the fires below;  
Not with hatred, blind and wild, But with the wrath of Bharat's child.  
He guards not soil and dust alone — He guards each dream the nation sows:

A mother waiting through the night, A child who wakes in freedom's light.  
The tricolor above him flies Not merely cloth beneath the skies,  
But living threads of sacrifice Woven through with priceless lives.  
His weapon is not iron alone; It bears the weight of every home,  
The silent tears no mothers show, The seeds of peace the brave men sow.

And should he fall on frozen ground, No grief can make his glory drown;  
For every drop of martyr's blood Returns as strength within the mud. Martyrs never truly die —  
They rise each time the flags fly high; They march through every anthem sung,  
Through every land and every tongue.



O Youth of India, rise and see — Freedom was never gifted free;  
It breathes because, through night and scar, A soldier stands where dangers are.  
Do not lose your soul to ease, To hollow fame or fleeting peace;  
For history crowns the hearts that rise With truth and fire within their eyes.  
Become the courage this land needs, The strength that serves through selfless deeds;  
For nations are not built by stone, But by brave hearts that stand alone.  
And when the final bugles call, When twilight shadows slowly fall,  
One truth shall blaze through every scar — That India sleeps in peace tonight  
Because her soldiers guard the light Between the darkness and the dawn...  
Unbroken. Watchful. Marching on. JAI HIND!  
VANDE MATARAM!

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

## From Incentives to Impact: How Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme is Powering Atmanirbhar Bharat

The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme, launched by the Government of India in 2020, aims to strengthen the domestic manufacturing sector, reduce dependence on imports, and transform India into a global manufacturing hub. In line with the vision of "Atmanirbhar Bharat," This scheme promotes investment, exports, job creation, and technological advancement. The Government has allocated approximately ₹1.97 lakh crore for 14 key sectors such as electronics, pharmaceuticals, automobiles, textiles, telecom, and solar energy to promote self-reliance. The scheme has attracted investments of over ₹2 lakh crore and generated additional production value exceeding ₹18.7 lakh crore. Through increased industrial production, India's manufacturing capacity has significantly improved, contributing to overall GDP growth. More than 12.6 lakh direct and indirect jobs have been created across the country. With companies like Apple and Samsung expanding production in India, the country has become one of the leading smartphone manufacturing hubs in the world. Mobile phone exports have crossed ₹1.5 lakh crore, significantly boosting foreign exchange earnings. Overall exports under the PLI scheme have exceeded ₹8 lakh crore, improving India's trade performance. In the pharmaceutical sector, the production of bulk drugs in India has increased, reducing dependence on imports. The automobile PLI scheme has promoted electric vehicle manufacturing and advanced technological production. Telecom equipment manufacturing has also increased, helping reduce foreign imports. Over 1,300 manufacturing units have been established across various states, promoting regional industrial development. The scheme has created opportunities for local suppliers and allied industries, supporting Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). By promoting local production, innovation, exports, and employment, this scheme has strengthened India's eco-

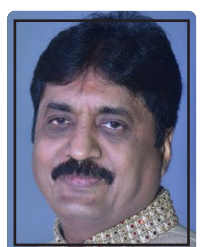


nomically and brought the country closer to the goal of Atmanirbhar Bharat. Among the 14 sectors covered under this scheme, the electronics sector has shown the best results, especially in mobile phone manufacturing. India has become the second-largest mobile phone manufacturing country in the world, with exports crossing ₹1.5 lakh crore in 2024-25. Companies like Apple and Samsung have significantly expanded their production in India. The pharmaceutical sector has also achieved notable success by increasing domestic production of bulk drugs and medical devices, thereby reducing dependence on imports. The automobile and auto components sector has grown rapidly due to increased investment in electric vehicle manufacturing and advanced automotive technologies. The telecom sector has succeeded in domestic production of telecom equipment, helping India reduce imports and strengthen its digital infrastructure. The food processing sector has increased exports of processed food products and created employment in rural areas. The textile sector, especially technical textiles, has attracted new investments and improved export competitiveness. Solar PV module manufacturing has also expanded rapidly under this scheme, contributing to renewable energy goals. Although the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme

has achieved significant success, it also faces several major challenges. One of the key issues is delays in implementation and project approvals across multiple sectors. In the solar manufacturing sector, only about 31 GW of the targeted 65 GW capacity by 2025 has been commissioned. High capital investment requirements in sectors such as semiconductors, solar PV, and advanced batteries are another major challenge. Many companies struggle to comply with strict Domestic Value Addition (DVA) norms required to receive incentives. In the automobile PLI scheme, due to localization requirements, only 16 out of 84 eligible companies have been able to qualify for incentives. In sectors like electronics and solar manufacturing, dependence on imports of raw materials and components especially from China continues. Frequent policy changes and trade policy uncertainty are also affecting investor confidence. The solar PLI scheme has achieved only about 14% of its polysilicon capacity target by mid-2025, indicating weak upstream manufacturing growth. Infrastructure issues such as delays in land acquisition, high logistics costs, and inadequate power supply are slowing industrial expansion. Some experts also believe that job creation in certain sectors has been lower than expected. Therefore, although the scheme has boosted manufac-

turing and exports, it still faces challenges such as implementation delays, import dependence, high costs, regulatory compliance issues, and infrastructure gaps. To strengthen the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme further, the government should simplify approval processes and ensure the timely disbursement of incentives to industries. Greater support should be provided to Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) so they can participate in supply chains and increase domestic value addition. In particular, local component manufacturing in sectors such as electronics and solar energy should be promoted to reduce India's dependence on imported raw materials. Improving infrastructure such as transport, logistics, ports, and power supply will help industries reduce production costs. For advanced manufacturing sectors, the government should invest more in skill development and technical training to build a highly skilled workforce. Stable trade policies and long-term policy clarity are needed to boost investor confidence. To enhance the global competitiveness of Indian industries, greater focus should be placed on research, innovation, and technology transfer. Regular monitoring and sector-wise performance reviews will help identify issues early and improve the implementation of incentive schemes.

By doing all this, the goals of Atmanirbhar Bharat can be achieved.



DR. P. SUBRAMANYACHARY,  
Professor, School of Commerce  
and Management, Mohan  
Babu University, Sree Sainath  
Nagar-517102, Tirupati, Mobile:  
8309082823



## North Eastern Railway has opened a temporary Passenger Waiting Hall

LUCKNOW, MAY 17TH, 2026:

In a welcome move to enhance passenger amenities, the North Eastern Railway has opened a temporary Passenger Waiting Hall on Platform No. 6 at Lucknow Junction Station (near Airawat Heritage Engine). The new facility, with a seating capacity of approximately 70 passengers, is available free of cost. It is equipped with comfortable seating arrangements, toilets, mobile charging points, fans, tables, and other basic amenities to provide comfort to waiting rail passengers. This initiative is expected to greatly benefit passengers, especially during peak hours and for those with longer layovers.



## Delhi Police asks personnel to use public transport following PM's save fuel appeal

BY BHASKAR MUKHERJEE

NEW DELHI: (May 17) Delhi Police has directed its personnel, particularly those posted at the Police Headquarters and offices connected by Metro, to use public transport for routine commuting following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to reduce fuel consumption and unnecessary expenditure, an official told PTI.

The General Administration Branch (GAB) of Delhi Police headquarters, with the approval of Senior officers, has issued a set of directions, containing 13 measures aimed at reducing avoidable vehicular movement, conserving electricity and ensuring economical use of government resources across all districts and specialised units of the force.

According to the order, staff posted in offices having Metro and public transport connectivity, especially at PHQ, have been encouraged to use public transport for daily commuting.

# Kurukshetra University to Get Maharana Pratap Chair, Study Centre: CM Saini

CHANDIGARH, MAY 17

Haryana Chief Minister Sh. Nayab Singh Saini announced that a Study Centre and a Chair in the name of Maharana Pratap will be established at Kurukshetra University. Besides this, the name of the Government Women's College located at Baragadh in Shahzadpur will be changed to Maharani Padmavati Government College. The Chief Minister made these announcements on Sunday at the state-level function organized at Shahzadpur in Ambala under the "Sant-Mahapurush Samman Evam Vichar Prasara Yojana" on the occasion of Maharana Pratap Jayanti. He also announced Rs. 5 crore for various development works in the Naraingarh Assembly constituency, Rs. 31 lakh for the construction work of the Rajput Hostel and con-



Haryana Chief Minister, Sh. Nayab Singh Saini addressing the gathering during a State-level function organised on the occasion of Maharana Pratap Jayanti, at Shahzadpur, Ambala district on May 17, 2026.

struction of a pucca drain in Shahzadpur. Earlier, the Chief Minister also unveiled the renovated statue of Maharana Pratap. Governor of Mizoram General (Dr.) Vijay Kumar Singh specially attended the function. Chief Minister Sh. Nayab Singh Saini said that Maharana Pratap was such a great warrior that merely taking his name fills every heart with a wave of patriotism. He said Maharana Pratap was born in the Rajput community at a time when Indian society was overshadowed by

injustice and oppression and efforts were being made to destroy our glorious culture and hurt religious sentiments. He inherited bravery and valour from Maharana Kumbha and Rana Sanga and after assuming power in Mewar, set unparalleled examples of courage, valour and heroism. His horse 'Chetak' and elephant 'Ramprasad' were also extraordinary like him and set examples of sacrifice for the protection of the nation, religion and honour.

The Chief Minister said that when Maharana Pratap assumed power in Mewar, half of Mewar had already come under Mughal rule. To liberate his birthplace and karmabhoomi from the Mughals, Maharana Pratap spent nearly 20 years in forests. He accepted eating grass rotis but never accepted defeat. He said Maharana Pratap was born in the brave Rajput community. Rajput is not a symbol of a caste, but a symbol of justice and truth. This community has given great rulers to the country. The community holds a leading place among those who sacrificed for the honour, pride and dignity of the nation during India's freedom struggle and after Independence.

any harm to come to the country's civilization and culture continue to guide us even today. Inspired by his bravery, our armed forces have defeated enemies many times in wars.

Sh. Nayab Singh Saini said that recently we observed the anniversary of Operation Sindoor. A year ago, under the capable leadership of Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi, our armed forces taught a lesson to the terrorists who killed unarmed civilians in Pahalgam. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, the country is today emerging as a strong India and the strength of India is being acknowledged across the world. This is the same strong India envisioned by great personalities like Maharana Pratap. The heroic tales of Maharana Pratap are the pride of our history.

# ASRTU All India Conference Concludes Grandly in Mussoorie

MUSSOORIE, (UTTARAKHAND), MAY 17:

The All India Conference of the Association of State Road Transport Undertakings (ASRTU) was held prestigiously in Mussoorie, Uttarakhand. The meeting was chaired by ASRTC Chairman and TGSRTC Vice Chairman & Managing Director Mr. Y. Nagi Reddy, IPS. Chairpersons, Executive Directors (EDs), and senior officials from RTCs across the country participated in the conference and discussed the progress of the transport sector in detail. A key meeting was also held with vendors supplying spare parts to RTC organizations. Speaking on the sharp increase in spare parts prices due to ongoing global war situations, Chairman Y. Nagi Red-

**RTC MD Y. Nagi Reddy Highlights Telangana's Achievements on National Platform**  
**Special Committee Formed to Control Spare Parts Prices Amid Global War**  
**Conditions: Association Chairman Y. Nagi Reddy, IPS**



dy made several important suggestions on how RTCs can overcome the issue. He announced the formation of a special committee to continuously review price trends and ensure that RTCs are not burdened financially. "Telangana Leads in Environmental Protection - More Electric Buses Soon" Addressing

eco-friendly electric buses in the future and transform Hyderabad into a completely pollution-free city. Nagi Reddy also emphasized that TGSRTC is emerging as a leader in the use of Information Technology (IT) in the public transport sector. By adopting modern technology in line with changing times, the corporation is not only improving passenger services but also digitizing its internal operations. He highlighted that advanced technology is being extensively used in the management of RTC garages, which are considered the backbone of the organization. Through complete digital monitoring of vehicle fitness, spare

parts availability, and maintenance schedules, bus efficiency has improved significantly, enabling safer and more reliable services for passengers. The Chairman also specially mentioned the successful implementation of the "Mahalakshmi" free bus travel scheme for women in Telangana. Representatives and officials from various states appreciated Telangana RTC for creating a new milestone in the transport sector by achieving a record 10 billion passenger journeys within a short span through this scheme. TGSRTC Executive Director (ED-O) CH. Venkanna, along with RTC Chairpersons and senior transport officials from Uttarakhand, Karnataka, Odisha, and other states, also participated in the conference.

# Rahul Demands Pradhan's Sacking Over NEET Leak

NEET-UG 2024 paper leak: This was the second consecutive day that the Congress MP trained his guns on the government over the paper leak, demanding Pradhan's resignation.



Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Sunday reiterated his call to sack Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over the NEET-UG 2026 paper leak and questioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi for not dismissing him despite repeated failures.

This was the second consecutive day that the Congress MP trained his guns on the government over the paper leak, demanding Pradhan's resignation. an-

dhi questioned PM Modi's silence on the matter. "Why aren't you dismissing the Education Minister who keeps failing repeatedly?" he said in a post on X.

The Rae Bareilly MP drew a comparison between the NEET paper leaks of 2024 and 2026, arguing that little has changed due to a

persistent lack of accountability. The only difference this time, he pointed out, was that no re-examination had been conducted in 2024. In his first direct attack on PM Modi and Pradhan over the issue on Saturday, Gandhi said that 22 lakh NEET students had been betrayed and asked

the Prime Minister to either remove the Education Minister immediately or take responsibility himself. He accused Pradhan of refusing to take responsibility for the controversy. "Dharmendra Pradhan ji, India's Education Minister, says he has nothing to do with this. A committee had made a recommendation, but they threw it in the dustbin. They said people from the Opposition are sitting in the committee. That doesn't mean anything," he said in a video posted on X.

The Congress leader further alleged that a nexus involving the RSS, BJP, and university officials had damaged the country's education system. "This is



## RPF of NFR Ensures Passenger Security

with Swift Arrests of Theft Suspects

MALIGAON, 17 MAY, 2026

The Railway Protection Force (RPF) of North-east Frontier Railway has once again reaffirmed its steadfast commitment to passenger safety and security by successfully carrying out a series of operations at various locations across the zone. On 12th May 2026, a team from Anti Drugging, Guwahati apprehended one individual, onboard Train No. 22450 (New Delhi - Guwahati) Purvottar Sampark Kranti Express for involvement in theft of passenger belongings. Two stolen mobile phones valued at approximately Rs 30,000/- were recovered from his possession. The accused, along with the recovered item, were handed over to GRP/Guwahati, where a case under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) has been registered. In another operation on the same day, RPF/Post/Katihar (East) personnel apprehended one person at

Katihar Railway Station. A stolen mobile phone worth approximately Rs 32,000/- was recovered. The accused was subsequently handed over to GRP/Katihar, which registered a case under appropriate sections of BNS.

Further continuing its crackdown, on 13th May 2026, CIB team of Rangiya apprehended one-person onboard Train No. 15933 (New Tinsukia - Amritsar) Express at Rangiya Railway Station with two stolen mobile phone worth approximately Rs 25,000/- The accused was handed over to GRP/Rangiya for further legal proceedings. These successful operations underscore the vigilance and swift response of RPF personnel in ensuring the safety and security of passengers and their belongings. Northeast Frontier Railway remains committed to providing a safe and secure travelling environment and appeals to passengers to stay alert and promptly report any suspicious activities to the railway authorities.

## Another batch of 'jihadi' drug seized from Dehradun, 2 including Syrian arrested

The NCB said a Syrian suspect led investigators to a Dehradun factory allegedly used to make Captagon. The raid under Operation RAZEPILL led to a 227.2 kg seizure, two arrests and a wider probe.



The Narcotics Control Bureau has busted an alleged international Captagon or the 'Jihadi drug' manufacturing network under a major crackdown codenamed Operation RAZEPILL, seizing 227.2 kg of Captagon tablets and powder and arresting two people, including a Syrian national, officials said. According to investigators, the Syrian accused revealed during interrogation that the Captagon pills recovered earlier from Neb Sarai in New Delhi had been illegally manufactured at a factory in Dehradun, Uttarakhand, in November 2025 with the help of another Syrian accomplice. Acting on the disclosures, NCB officials carried out a late-night raid on May 16 at the premises of M/s Green Herbal in Dehradun. During the search operation, officials discovered sophisticated machinery allegedly being used for large-scale

illicit drug production, including tablet-making, granulation, capsule-filling, coating, sealing and blister packaging machines. Authorities also recovered raw materials, chemicals, capsules and packaging material from the factory premises. Investigators alleged that the factory owner had rented out the facility for illegal drug manufacturing and charged around Rs 50,000 per day for its use. Officials further said the factory owner had previously been linked to two separate narcotics cases involving the supply of Tramadol and other prescription tablets, investigated by Dehradun Police and the NCB Delhi zonal unit. The factory owner has now been arrested and produced before a magistrate. Officials confirmed that two people have been arrested so far in connection with the case, while further investigation is underway to identify additional links in the network.

## Dr. Malik Warns Drug Abuse Hurting Youth

CHANDIGARH, MAY 17

National Seminar Against Drug Abuse on May 31  
Chandigarh Administrator and Punjab Governor to Attend as Chief Guest



President of Jat Sabha Chandigarh/Panchkula and former Director General of Police of Haryana, Dr. Mahendra Singh Malik, said that drug addiction is weakening the country's younger generation, and if society does not act in time, the long-term consequences will be severe and frightening. Dr. Malik was chairing a meeting of the executive committee of Jat Sabha here today. He finalized preparations for the national seminar to be held on May 31 to spread awareness against drug abuse and assigned responsibilities to members of the executive committee. After the meeting, Dr. Malik informed that Punjab Governor and Chandigarh Administrator Shri Gulab Chand Kataria will be the chief guest at the national seminar organized

by Jat Sabha, while former Member of Parliament and Additional Solicitor General of India Shri Satya Pal Jain will preside over the event. He further stated that former Supreme Court judge Shri Madan Lokur, former Assam DGP Shri K.C. Reddy, Lieutenant General Shri Sukhdeep Singh Sangwan, Additional Solicitor General of India Shri D.P. Singh, former DGP Dr. K.P. Singh, Dr. H.K. Bali, Joint Secretary to the Government of India Dr. Am-

arpreet Duggal, Senior Drug Controller Ms. Sarika Malik, Chairperson of the Sociology Department at Panjab University Chandigarh Professor Vinod Kumar, and Beach Wrestling India President Shri Rohtash Singh Nandal will speak as keynote speakers at the seminar. Similarly, Director General of the Narcotics Control Bureau Shri Anurag Garg, Chandigarh DGP Dr. Sagar Preet Hooda, and retired IPS officer Shri G.S. Malhi will participate as

panelists to raise awareness among youth against drug abuse. Among those present at today's meeting were Jat Sabha Senior Vice President and Senior Advocate Shri Ramkumar Malik, Vice President Shri Jaipal Punia, Secretary Shri B.S. Gill, along with M.S. Faugat, J.S. Dhillon, Naresh Dahiya, Vimal June, Ramphal Nain, Dr. Satyavrat Dhankhar, Manbir Singh Sangwan, Surender Bangar, Mrs. Rajvanti Mann, Rakesh Gill, Satish Kumar, Prem Singh, Dr. Satbir Singh Saini, Jaimal Malik, Kapil Malhan, Satbir Singh Dhankhar, and many other executive committee members.

Photo Caption: Members of the Jat Sabha executive committee arrived at Jat Bhavan Chandigarh to prepare for the national seminar.

## 350 Tonne Cutterhead Lowered for Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train Project

GORAKHPUR 17 MAY, 2026

A significant milestone was achieved for the Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train project with the lowering of the first cutterhead of Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) at Vikhroli in Mumbai (Maharashtra). With a diameter of 13.6 meters, weighing a massive 350 tonnes, this component marks the final step in the primary assembly of the TBM's main shield.

Two TBMs, each weighing over 3,000 tonnes, are currently being assembled to construct a 16 km portion of the 21 km Mumbai tunnel. This includes a 7 km stretch under Thane Creek, which will serve as India's first undersea rail tunnel. These machines are the largest ever deployed for rail tunnel construction in the country.



**Glance:**  
• Dimensions: With a diameter of 13.6 meters, the cutterhead is designed to excavate a single tunnel large enough to accommodate both the up and down lines of the high-speed corridor.  
• Its 350-tonne weight is equivalent to approximately 250 passenger cars (midsize SUVs).  
• Arriving in five separate shipments, the unit was joined on-site using 1,600 kg of

muck enters to the muck chamber of the machine. It helps in collection, directing flow of the muck onto the pipeline system for removal from the tunnel.

This TBM will start its journey of approx. 6 km from Vikhroli and head towards Bandra Kurla complex under dense city landscape and Mithi river before being retrieved at under construction Mumbai Bullet train station at BKC. Various monitoring instruments are being used to ensure safe excavation of the tunnel and all the structures in the nearby area. These include Surface Settlement Points (SSP), Optical Displacement Sensors (ODS) or tilt meters, BRT (By reflect target/3D targets), Strain Gauge for micro strains in tunnel surface, Seismograph for Peak Particle Velocity (PPV) or vibration & seismic wave monitor.

## Tibetans urge Chinese Communist Party to release Panchen Lama immediately

BEIJING

The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) and Tibetans, Tibetan Buddhists and Tibet supporters around the world have urged Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to release 11th Panchen Lama immediately and restore his rights and freedoms under China's laws and its international commitments.

According to the statement released by International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), Chinese authorities kidnapped a six-year-old Tibetan boy, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima on May 17, 1995, just days after Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama recognised him as the reincarnated Panchen Lama, one of Tibetan Buddhism's most important leaders. Although Tibetans in exile celebrated the Panchen Lama's 37th birthday in April.

## PM Modi dedicates global honour to 1.4 billion Indian people and India-Sweden friendship

GOTHENBURG

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday dedicated the 'Royal Order of the Polar Star', Degree Commander Grand Cross, which he received in Sweden, to the 1.4 billion people of India and to the enduring friendship between both the countries, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

"The conferment of the award marks a milestone in the India-Sweden Strategic Partnership and reflects the shared commitment of the two countries to advancing bilateral cooperation and contributing to global peace and prosperity," the MEA noted.

Prime Minister Modi expressed his deep gratitude to Swedish Crown Princess Victoria and to the people of Sweden for the global honour. The Prime Minister noted that the conferment of the Royal Order of the Polar Star is a reaffirmation of the historic ties and civilisational bonds between India and Swe-



den, and a tribute to the warmth and affection that unite the people of both the countries, the MEA said. Prime Minister Modi is the first Asian leader to be conferred the award.

'Royal Order of Polar Star' Commander Grand Cross is the utmost recognition and honour that can be conferred upon a Head of the government.

The Swedish Crown Princess Victoria presented Prime Minister

Modi with the Royal Order in a ceremony at the County Governor's residence, in the presence of Sweden's Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson. This is the 31st global honour for PM Modi. The Swedish King Carl XVI Gustaf decided to confer the 'Royal Order of the Polar' Commander Grand Cross upon Prime Minister Modi, according to the Swedish Prime Minister's office.

PM Modi and his Swedish counterpart Kristersson also exchanged special gifts commemorating Rabinranth Tagore and the enduring civilisational and intellectual ties between India and Sweden, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

According to MEA, the gift from Kristersson comprised a box containing two replicas of hand-written epigrams by Rabinranth Tagore, accompanied by a small explanatory text

and a photograph of Tagore taken in 1921 during his visit to Uppsala University. The originals, recently discovered in the Swedish National Archives, were created by Gurudev Tagore during his visits to Sweden in 1921 and 1926.

PM Modi presented to Kristersson a set of collected works of Rabinranth Tagore, along with a specially handcrafted bag from Shantiniketan with motifs that Tagore chose to empower local artisans. The bag symbolises Tagore's philosophy that art is not meant to be confined to galleries, but to breathe life into everyday objects, bridging the gap between the intellectual and the functional.

"These gifts symbolise the shared cultural and intellectual heritage between India and Sweden, and pay tribute to the enduring legacy of Rabinranth Tagore. The exchange of gifts also coincides with the centenary of Gurudev's historic visit to Sweden in 1926," the MEA said.



## Swedish PM Ulf Kristersson announces upgraded cooperation areas for India-Sweden

GOTHENBURG

Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson shared the upgraded cooperation areas for India-Sweden at the joint press meet at the European Round Table for Industry on Sunday, along with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Prime Minister Kristersson said that India and Sweden are expanding the cooperation into innovation, emerging technologies, AI, space and geospatial technology, along with the green transition. "As for concrete outcomes of today's meetings, first, we have agreed to launch a joint innovation partnership 2.0 and to set up a joint centre for science and technology to connect academic institutions in both countries," the Swedish Prime Minister detailed on the enhanced cooperation.

"We will enhance our political dialogue on security and defence-related matters, including through a dialogue between our country's national security advisors," he added. He also announced a leadership group for industry transition called LEAD-IT, which will be co-chaired by India and Sweden.

"Through LEAD-IT, we will continue to drive this global movement for accelerating the green transition of heavy industry," he added. "Sky is not the limit for the Sweden-India partnership," Kristersson said, mentioning that Indian Space Research Organisation and Sweden's National Space Agency have joined forces since the 1980s. "I'm very pleased that our two space organisations have signed an MoU to collaborate on an instrument that will be part of the Venus orbiter mission. So Sweden is proud to be on our way to Venus together with India," the Swedish Prime Minister noted.

He said that India and Sweden have a joint ambition to double our bilateral trade and investments within five years, but with the current speed, he believed it can be sooner.

"I regard this Free Trade Agreement (FTA) not as the end of the road but the beginning of a new journey. Sweden, together with India and with our European friends, is very committed to making sure this partnership lives up to its true potential," he added, thanking President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He said that the India-European Union (EU) FTA is estimated to create some 23,000 new jobs in Sweden, with more than 6,000 of them here in the Gothenburg region.

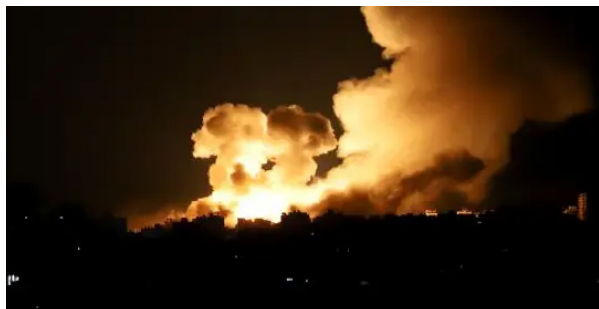
## Israel claims killing Hamas operations commander in air strike

JERUSALEM

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) on Sunday claimed that it has eliminated the Hamas operations headquarters Commander who advanced terror plots against Israeli forces.

"IDF forces in the Southern Command eliminated Bahaa Baroud yesterday, a commander in the operations headquarters of the Hamas terror organisation," the IDF said on social media platform X. It detailed that Baroud operated throughout the war and particularly in recent times to plan and advance numerous terror plots by Hamas against the IDF forces in the Gaza Strip and the citizens of Israel.

"Baroud posed an immediate threat to IDF forces and was elim-



inated in a precise aerial strike," the IDF claimed.

It emphasised that steps were taken prior to the strike to minimise harm to civilians, including the use of precise weaponry and aerial observations. The IDF last week claimed that it had destroyed a Palestinian Islamic Jihad weapons production site and weapons storage facility in north-

ern Gaza. The IDF said that "the site had been used by the organisation's production array, as well as by Hamas for the production of explosive devices and the storage of additional weapons intended to harm Israeli civilians and Israel Defence Forces troops".

The IDF under the Southern Command are deployed in the area. The IDF last month noted

that it had destroyed 14 km of underground tunnels in the northern Gaza Strip.

It mentioned that, as part of the operation, the brigade's forces, in cooperation with fighters from the Yahalam unit, have so far destroyed around 14 km of underground tunnels. Sleeping rooms and numerous weapons were located inside the tunnels as the brigade's forces continued the mission of clearing the area.

The IDF said that the Northern Brigade forces and the Yahalam unit under the command of Division 252 have been operating in recent months in a targeted operation to destroy Hamas' underground infrastructure, in the northern Gaza Strip in general and in the Beit Hanoun area east of the Yellow Line, in particular.

## PM Modi receives warm welcome from Indian community in Sweden

GOTHENBURG (SWEDEN)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi received a warm welcome from members of the Indian community as he landed in Sweden's Gothenburg on Sunday.

The PM met members of the Indian community who had gathered in large numbers to welcome him. Members of the Indian community carrying flags of Sweden and India were chanting 'Modi Modi' while welcoming PM Modi. PM Modi and his Swedish counterpart, Ulf Kristersson, witnessed cultural performances and an orchestra performance. Swedish opera singer Charlotta Hultsdang sang 'Vaishnavi Jana To' while welcoming the Indian PM.

PM Modi stated that the warmth and the affection of the Indian community in Gothenburg were "truly heartening."



"The warmth and affection of the Indian community in Gothenburg were truly heartening. Their deep connection with India and their contribution to strengthening India-Sweden ties make us all very proud," he posted on X. "It is heartening to see the timeless thoughts of Bapu continue to reverberate in Sweden. Swedish opera singer Charlotta Hultsdang sang 'Vaishnavi Jana To' during the welcome in Gothenburg.

## South Korean FM urges Tehran to clarify stance on attack on HMM Namu vessel

SEOUL

South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Hyun held phone talks with his Iranian counterpart, Abbas Araghchi, on Sunday and urged Tehran to clarify its stance on a recent attack involving a vessel operated by his country in the Strait of Hormuz, the Foreign Ministry said.

During the talks, Cho said that the South Korean government is conducting an additional investigation into the attack on the HMM Namu, a Panama-flagged cargo ship operated by South Korean shipping firm HMM Co., and asked the Iranian side to clarify its position on the facts surrounding the incident, according to the ministry, Yonhap news agency reported.

Cho also stressed the need to ensure the safety and free-



dom of navigation for all vessels, including South Korean ships, in the conflict-hit strait.

In response, Araghchi shared Iran's position on the current situation in the Middle East and agreed on the need to restore safe passage in the crucial waterway, while calling for a swift end to the ongoing standoff, the ministry said. The two sides agreed to maintain close communication to help ensure the safety of South Korean vessels and crew members in the strait.

## Trump may use Taiwan arms as China leverage: US envoy

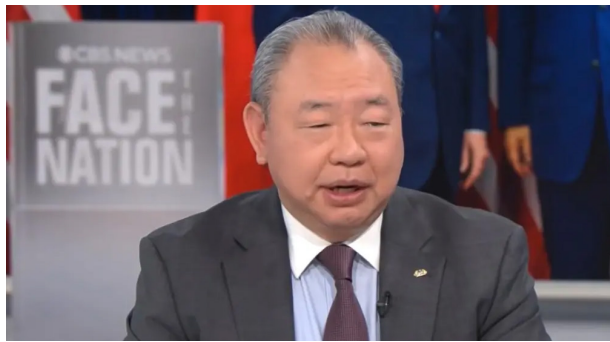
WASHINGTON

Concerns are growing in Taiwan after President Donald Trump indicated that future US arms sales to Taipei could become part of broader negotiations with China following his summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing.

Taiwan's representative to the US, Alexander Yui, warned on Sunday on CBS News that Taiwan needed continued American weapons support to deter what he described as growing Chinese aggression across the Taiwan Strait.

"If we want to prevent a war from happening, I think it's best that Taiwan is strong, able to defend itself," Yui said.

The comments came after Trump suggested in interviews and remarks following the Beijing summit that Taiwan-related arms sales could be used as a "negotiating chip" with Chi-



na. "It's a very good negotiating chip for us, frankly," Trump said, according to ABC News.

President Trump also noted that he wanted both Taiwan and China to "cool down", while stopping short of committing to approve a new weapons package sought by Taipei.

But he also made clear that Taiwan wanted Washington to hear "our side of the story" after Trump spent two days in Beijing hearing Chinese concerns about the self-governed island. "He heard only their side

of the story," Yui said. China claims Taiwan as part of its territory and has repeatedly warned against foreign military support for Taipei. Beijing has increased military pressure on Taiwan in recent years through air incursions, naval patrols and military exercises around the island.

Yui rejected Beijing's claims that Taiwan was provoking tensions. "We're not the ones creating all this trouble," he said.

"It is China... creating all these problems." Former US Defence Secretary Robert Gates also addressed Taiwan tensions during an appearance on CBS News, warning that China could attempt to pressure Taiwan through blockades or economic strangulation rather than an outright invasion. "They could create a blockade or a quarantine around Taiwan anytime they wanted," Gates said.

Taiwanese audiences that the US had not formally changed its longstanding Taiwan policy, noting that both Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio had publicly maintained support for stability in the Taiwan Strait.

But he also made clear that Taiwan wanted Washington to hear "our side of the story" after Trump spent two days in Beijing hearing Chinese concerns about the self-governed island. "He heard only their side

## Trump-Xi summit ends without breakthroughs: Experts

WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump returned from a high-profile summit in Beijing with Chinese President Xi Jinping facing growing questions over whether the closely watched meeting produced any major strategic breakthroughs between the world's two largest powers, according to experts.

The two-day summit dominated Sunday political talk shows in the US, where officials, analysts and critics debated the significance of Trump's China trip amid rising tensions over Taiwan, trade, Iran and global supply chains.

Trump described the visit as "a tremendous success" and "a historic moment" during remarks highlighted on ABC News.

But several major announcements remained vague, while questions persisted over tariffs, Taiwan, and the broader direction



of US-China relations. Former US Defence Secretary Robert Gates said on CBS News that the primary achievement of the summit appeared to be stabilising an increasingly fragile relationship between Washington and Beijing.

"I think that the main objective

for the administration... was simply to keep a lid on the relationship," Gates added.

He said that both sides were trying to "keep a floor under it so it doesn't deteriorate". Trade remained one of the biggest unresolved issues. Trump told report-

ers that tariffs "didn't come up" during his meetings with President Xi, despite the central role tariffs have played in US-China tensions during both of his presidencies.

US Trade Representative Jamie-Son Greer later clarified on both CBS News and ABC News that

trade negotiations had largely been handled by the leaders met.

Greer said Washington and Beijing had agreed to establish new "Board of Trade" and "Board of Investment" mechanisms aimed at formalising economic engagement between the two countries. The administration also claimed China had agreed to purchase Boeing aircraft and expand imports of American agricultural products, though detailed terms were still being finalised.

One of the summit's most sensitive issues involved Taiwan.

Trump indicated he could use future US arms sales to Taiwan as a "negotiating chip" with Beijing, triggering concern in Taipei and among American lawmakers.

Taiwan's Representative to Washington, Alexander Yui, warned on CBS News that Taiwan needed continued American weapons support to deter Chinese

pressure. Meanwhile, Gates cautioned that China posed a broader strategic challenge to the US than any previous rival, including the Soviet Union.

"We have not faced a country that was as technologically advanced as we are," Gates said.

The summit also unfolded amid growing tensions in the Middle East and fears over the Strait of Hormuz, a critical route for global oil shipments. Greer said Trump had pressed Xi not to provide material support to Iran and had sought Chinese cooperation in keeping the Strait open.

Democrats, however, accused Trump of returning from Beijing with symbolism rather than substantive achievements.

House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries said on ABC News that Trump had gone to China "on bended knee" after being "consistently out-negotiated".



## Pak Army's global recognition overshadowed with back-to-back attacks at home: Report

ISLAMABAD

After Islamabad hosted the US-Iran peace talks, the Field Marshal Asim Munir-led Pakistan Army has received tremendous international media attention, despite being "incapable" of addressing the relentless wave of terror attacks in their homeland, a media report said.

According to the Global Terrorism Index 2026, Pakistan has, for the first time, topped the list of countries most affected by terrorism, editor Nitin J. Ticku wrote in the EurAsian Times.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan accounted for a staggering 74 per cent of these attacks and 67 per cent of the fatalities, the report said, adding that the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) have wreaked havoc on the Pakistani military and have, in fact, grown bolder, "more sophisticated, and more lethal".

"While Asim Munir's army was busy projecting power and hogging the global spotlight — mediating between the US and Iran, dispatching fighter jets and troops to Riyadh — it was shockingly losing ground at home to the very militant groups it once nurtured," it said.

Since the outbreak of the US-Iran conflict in late February 2026, terror attacks within Pakistan have not

only continued but also intensified in several regions, especially the ones bordering Afghanistan.

Ticku notes that earlier this year, the BLA carried out one of its most coordinated attacks in years, launching strikes across at least nine districts, including the capital Quetta and the port city of Gwadar. The attacks reportedly targeted police stations, banks, markets, and security installations, killing dozens of civilians and soldiers.

He mentioned that in February, a major suicide bombing struck a Shia mosque in Islamabad, killing at least 31 worshippers. The attack, one of the deadliest in the capital in recent years, was widely attributed to ISIS-Khorasan. In one notable incident in April, a car bombing at a police post in Fateh Khel killed over 20 officers.

In a very rare incident, the Baloch insurgents also ambushed a Coast Guard patrol near Gwadar, killing three officials. "It was the first recorded incident of the BLA attacking a Pakistani maritime vessel," the editor highlighted.

Giving an account of the attacks in May, Ticku reminded that on May 7, six people, including two children, were killed when mortar shells hit a market in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan, which borders Afghanistan.

## Prudential to acquire 75% stake in Bharti Life Insurance for Rs 3,500 crore

NEW DELHI: (MAY 17)

UK-based Prudential plc on Sunday announced to acquire a majority 75 per cent stake in Bharti Life Insurance for Rs 3,500 crore from Bharti Life Ventures Pvt Ltd and 360 ONE Asset Management. Currently, Prudential is a partner with ICICI Bank with around 22 per cent stake in the life insurance venture. With the announcement of a majority stake in Bharti Life Insurance, Prudential has to pare back its stake in the existing venture to comply with regulatory requirements. This is the second exit from a long-standing foreign insurance venture partner, following Allianz's exit from Bajaj Finserv last year.

## Silver import curbs, US-Iran tensions to keep bullion market volatile next week: Analysts

NEW DELHI: (MAY 17)

Gold and silver markets brace for a volatile week ahead amid the government's latest curbs on silver imports, movement in crude oil prices and global uncertainty surrounding the US-Iran conflict, analysts said. On the economic front, investors will closely track Chinese economic data, US housing numbers, PMI data, weekly jobless claims and minutes of the FOMC meeting, they added. On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold futures rose Rs 6,017, or 3.94 per cent, during the past week to settle at Rs 1.58 lakh per 10 grams.

## HFCL bags Rs 106 crore export order for optical fibre cables

NEW DELHI: (MAY 17)

Telecom gear maker HFCL has bagged an order of USD 11.07 million (about Rs 106 crore) for the supply of optical fibre cables overseas, a company filing said on Sunday. The company has to complete the supplies by August 2026. "We are pleased to inform all stakeholders that the Company has secured export order worth around USD 11.07 million (equivalent to about Rs 106.19 crore), for the supply of optical fibre cables, through its overseas wholly owned subsidiary, from a renowned international customer," the filing said.

## CNG prices increased in Delhi-NCR by Re 1, second hike in 2 days

CNG will now cost Rs 80.09 per kg in Delhi, while consumers in Noida and Ghaziabad will pay Rs 88.70 per kg. The latest increase comes just two days after CNG prices were raised by Rs 2 per kg on Friday, resulting in an overall hike of Rs 3 per kg.



The prices of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) were increased by Re 1 per kg in Delhi-NCR on Saturday, marking the second hike in fuel prices this week as rising global crude oil rates continue to put pressure on oil marketing companies. With the latest revision, CNG in Delhi will now cost Rs 80.09 per kg, while consumers in Noida, Greater Noida and Ghaziabad will pay Rs 88.70 per kg. The latest increase comes just two days after CNG prices were raised by Rs 2 per kg on May 15, taking the cumulative increase in CNG rates to Rs 3 per kg in 48 hours.

The earlier hike had come alongside an increase in petrol and diesel prices across the country. On May 15, petrol and diesel rates were raised by

Rs 3 per litre for the first time in more than four years as state-run fuel retailers began passing on part of the losses caused by soaring international crude oil prices amid the ongoing US-Iran war.

With the revision, petrol in Delhi now costs Rs 97.77 per litre, up from Rs 94.77, while diesel is priced at Rs 90.67 per litre compared to the earlier Rs 87.67. Prices vary across states due to differences in value-added tax.

**HORMUZ DISRUPTION BEHIND PRICE SPIKE**  
CNG prices were also increased in Mumbai earlier this week, where the fuel now costs Rs 84 per kg. However, prices of piped natural gas supplied to households and domestic LPG cylinders have remained unchanged for now.

five poll-bound states, including West Bengal.

**PETROL, DIESEL AT HIGHEST LEVEL SINCE 2022**

Petrol and diesel prices are now at their highest levels since May 2022. Fuel rates had largely remained unchanged since April 2022, barring a one-time reduction of Rs 2 per litre in March 2024 ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. In Mumbai, petrol now costs Rs 106.68 per litre and diesel Rs 93.14 per litre. In Kolkata, petrol prices have risen to Rs 108.74 while diesel costs Rs 95.13. Chennai has also seen prices increase, with petrol now retailing at Rs 103.67 and diesel at Rs 95.25 per litre. Industry sources said the latest hikes remain modest compared to the scale of increase in global crude prices and that oil marketing companies continue to absorb significant losses. According to industry estimates, retailers are still losing around Rs 11 per litre on petrol and Rs 39 per litre on diesel despite the revisions. Private fuel retailers had already increased prices earlier. Nayara Energy raised petrol prices by Rs 5 per litre and diesel by Rs 3 in March, while

Shell increased petrol prices by Rs 7.41 and diesel by Rs 25 per litre from April 1. In Bengaluru, Shell currently sells petrol at Rs 119.85 per litre and diesel at Rs 123.52.

**GOVT PUSHES FUEL CONSERVATION MEASURES**

Meanwhile, the government has also stepped up fuel conservation efforts. Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently urged citizens to reduce unnecessary travel, adopt work-from-home practices where possible and conserve fuel as high energy prices threaten to widen India's current account deficit and strain foreign exchange reserves. Some state governments have already advised departments to reduce travel and physical meetings.

Analysts warned that the combined impact of higher petrol, diesel and CNG prices could eventually slow demand growth and add to inflationary pressures. India's retail inflation rose to 3.48 per cent in April 2026 from 3.40 per cent in March, while wholesale inflation climbed to a 42-month high of 8.3 per cent, driven largely by rising fuel and energy costs.

## Global oil prices to stay in \$90 to 110 per barrel range during 2026: Moody's

NEW DELHI, MAY 17

Oil prices in the global market are likely to remain in the high range of \$90 to 110 per barrel "as there is little prospect of a swift and durable settlement between the US and Iran and with it the full reopening of the Strait of Hormuz", according to a Moody's global report on geopolitical risks.

Moody's said even if safe passage in the Strait were to resume in the next six months, the oil market would remain supply-constrained, with persistently higher and more volatile energy prices and broader knock-on effects through costs, demand and financing conditions for exposed borrowers. "We now expect Brent crude in the \$90-110 per barrel range for much of this year, with significant volatility, including occasional fluctuations outside this range in response to new developments," it said in the report. Moody's said the transit flows will gradually improve, but through bilateral channels rather than a general reopening. This would allow some incremental improvement in energy transit flows from near-zero now, but the process will be slow, opaque and subject to interruption. "We expect oil importers -- particularly China, India, Japan and Korea -- to negotiate pas-



sage bilaterally with Iran, potentially through coordinated transit corridors such as those reportedly emerging near Larak Island and through Omani territorial waters," the report said.

However, the report states that a return to pre-conflict traffic volumes in 2026 is unlikely, it said. The disruption to shipping through the Strait has become a structural supply constraint to global energy flows rather than a temporary supply shock, Moody's said, adding that it expects the disruptions to continue through autumn. Moody's also warned that persistently higher energy prices and scarcity of energy products will feed into headline and core inflation. Moody's expects inflation in India to average 4.5 per cent in 2026, up from 3.5 per cent in its earlier estimate. "This will complicate the path for monetary policy across major economies, raise production costs across energy-intensive sectors, erode household purchasing power and tighten financing conditions for exposed borrowers," the report added.

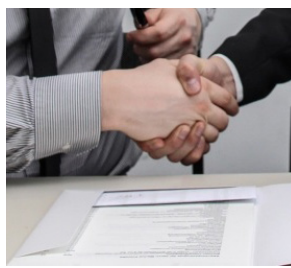
## Prudential to Buy 75% Stake in Bharti Life Insurance

NEW DELHI, MAY 17

Bharti Enterprises announced on Sunday that Prudential Plc has agreed to acquire a 75 per cent majority stake in Bharti Life Insurance Company Limited from Bharti Life Ventures Pvt Ltd and other selling shareholders.

Prudential is an insurer and asset manager operating across Asia and Africa, while Bharti Life is one of India's life insurance providers. Bharti Enterprises Founder and Chairman Sunil Bharti Mittal said: "We are delighted to welcome Prudential Plc as the controlling shareholder

of Bharti Life, further accelerating its growth trajectory." "Prudential's experience and global scale, combined with Bharti's strong track record, create a formidable alliance to tap into the immense potential of India's life insurance sector," he added. Mittal further stated that the partnership would create new opportunities for employees and strengthen ties between India and the United Kingdom. Prudential plc Chief Executive Officer Anil Wadhvani said India remains a key market for the company. "By acquiring a controlling stake in Bharti Life, we are bringing together



Prudential's nearly 180 years of global insurance expertise and Bharti's strong and growing local presence to serve the savings and protection needs of Indian consumers," he said. He said the company aims to support the Viksit Bharat Initiative and contribute to the goal of "Insurance for All

by 2047" by expanding access to insurance products and services in India.

Wadhvani also said Prudential values its long-standing partnership with the ICICI group of companies in India.

360 ONE Founder, MD, and CEO Karan Bhagat said the firm's private equity funds had made a meaningful investment in Bharti Life Insurance and had seen strong growth in the business.

"Today's transaction reflects both its current performance and long-term potential," Bhagat said. He added that 360 ONE looked forward to continuing the distribu-

tion of Bharti Life's products through its network following Prudential's investment.

Bharti Enterprises said the investment would support Bharti Life's next phase of growth by strengthening product offerings and expanding distribution reach.

The company added that Bharti Life's local presence, combined with Prudential's insurance expertise, is expected to improve access to life and health protection solutions across India.

The transaction is subject to regulatory approvals and other conditions, the company statement added.

## Market recap: Top 10 firms bleed Rs 3.12 lakh crore in market cap; Reliance biggest loser

Last week, the combined market capitalisation of nine of the top 10 most valued firms fell by Rs 3.12 lakh crore, with Reliance Industries registering the sharpest decline. Broader market sentiments also remained weak with the 30-share BSE Sensex dropping 2,090.2 points, or 2.7%, while the 50-share NSE Nifty slipped 532.65 points, or 2.2%. Markets ended the week lower, breaking out of their three-week consolidation phase amid lingering geopolitical tensions in West Asia, per-

sistent weakness in the rupee, and rising inflationary concerns," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, told PTI. He added that crude oil prices rising above the \$105-per-barrel level aggravated concerns around imported inflation, fiscal stress, and pressure on corporate margins. Within the top-10 list, Bharti Airtel was the only company to see gains during the week. Reliance Industries' valuation declined by Rs 1,34,445.77 crore, bringing it down to Rs 18,08,420.81 crore. State



Bank of India followed with a drop of Rs 52,245.3 crore, taking its valuation to Rs 8,88,862.32 crore. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)

lost Rs 47,415.04 crore in market value, ending at Rs 8,19,062.65 crore, while Bajaj Finance saw its valuation shrink by Rs 27,892.28 crore to Rs 5,66,717.74 crore. HDFC Bank's market capitalisation eased by Rs 20,630.01 crore to Rs 11,82,069.25 crore, and ICICI Bank recorded a decline of Rs 14,290 crore, leaving it at Rs 8,92,385.39 crore. Larsen & Toubro's valuation went down by Rs 9,078.87 crore to Rs 5,37,542.34 crore. Hindustan Unilever lost Rs 3,970.8 crore, taking its market val-

ue to Rs 5,33,592.18 crore, while Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) saw a fall of Rs 2,182.12 crore to Rs 5,05,367.32 crore. On the other hand, Bharti Airtel added Rs 42,470.13 crore to its valuation, which rose to Rs 11,60,525.16 crore. Even after the weekly fluctuations, Reliance Industries retained its position as the country's most valued firm, followed by HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, TCS, Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro, Hindustan Unilever, and LIC.

## India becomes largest market for KitKat globally for Nestle

KitKat has now become the second brand in Nestle's portfolio, after Maggi, to emerge as the largest market globally

India has emerged as the largest market globally for KitKat, the iconic chocolate-coated wafer bar of Swiss food and confectionery major Nestlé, driven by strong consumer penetration, product innovation and aggressive marketing investments, according to the company. India, which had been

the second-largest market for the brand over the last two-three years, has now become its biggest market globally, underscoring India's growing importance for the iconic chocolate wafer brand sold in over 85 countries.

"India is now the largest market for KitKat globally, and the brand has accelerated its market share growth over the last few years," Nestlé India chairman and managing director Manish Tiwary said during a recent media interaction.



## Gautam Adani launches Rs 150 crore rural eye care initiative in Bihar

Together, the Adani Centre for Eye (ACE) and Adani Training in Ophthalmic Medicine (ATOM) will create an ecosystem that will be capable of performing 3.3 lakh eye surgeries annually and training 1,000 eye care professionals every year.

Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani on Sunday performed the groundbreaking ceremony for a Rs 150-crore vision care initiative, which will include a centre for advanced and affordable treatment of eye-related ailments, and a training facility for eye health professionals, in Bihar's Saran district.

Together, the Adani Centre for Eye (ACE) and Adani Training in Ophthalmic Medicine (ATOM) will create an ecosystem that will be capa-



ble of performing 3.3 lakh eye surgeries annually and training 1,000 eye care professionals every year. The Adani Group said that it will be one of the world's largest rural health ecosystems dedicated to eye care, once the project is completed. Both the facilities will be attached to the Akhand Jyoti Eye Hospital at Mastichak, which is situated about

70 km from Patna. Mrityunjay Tiwari, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the Akhand Jyoti Trust, a non-profit organisation that runs the hospital, also attended the groundbreaking ceremony. In a formal statement, the Adani Group said that Rs 150 crore has been pledged by Adani Foundation, the corporate social responsibility (CSR) arm

of the business conglomerate, for the two projects.

Speaking at the event, Gautam Adani said he believed in the philosophy of "seva hi sadhana hai" (service is worship) and announced a "personal commitment of Rs 500 crore" to the non-profit Akhand Jyoti Foundation with an aim to boost "long-term humanitarian and communi-

ty health care mission across the country." The billionaire industrialist was also joined by his wife, Dr Priti Adani, who is also the Chairperson of Adani Foundation, at the ceremony. "The Adani Foundation will additionally establish a 200-bed hospital in Pirpainti, near the Adani Group's upcoming ultra-supercritical thermal power plant in Bihar's Bhagalpur district to strengthen long-term healthcare access and community outreach in eastern Bihar," the Adani Group said in its release. Moreover, in a post on X, Gautam Adani described Bihar as "a land that has historically given the nation a new consciousness and direction."

"Adani Akhand Jyoti Foundation would seek to take the spirit of service born in Bihar to underserved communities across India," the business tycoon wrote further.

## India's gems, jewellery exports down 9.07% in April at \$2,226.45 million

Gold jewellery exports was down 21.77% to \$841.54 million in April, compared to \$1,075.67 million for the same period last year

The total exports were \$2,448.53 million (₹20,952.26 crore) in the same month in 2025, as per the data by the industry apex body GJEPC. India's gems and jewellery exports declined by 9.07% at \$2,226.45 million (₹20,825.01 crore) in April following the West Asia conflict, the Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council said. The total exports were \$2,448.53 million (₹20,952.26 crore) in the same month in 2025, as per the data by the industry apex body GJEPC. "Decline in exports is mainly due to the ongoing conflict in West Asia, which has caused worldwide disruptions affecting exports. Besides geopolitical tensions, exports to the US, a major



export market for the gems and jewellery industry, were also affected because there is still no clarity on the tariffs," GJEPC Chairman Kirit Bhansali told PTI. Meanwhile, data from the GJEPC revealed that the overall export of cut and polished diamonds declined 19.65% in April at \$890.91 million compared to \$1,108.74 million for the same period last year. Export of polished lab-grown diamonds dipped 15.53% to \$93.28 million in April from \$110.43 million last year. Gold jewellery exports was down 21.77% to

\$841.54 million in April, compared to \$1,075.67 million for the same period last year. The total export of plain gold jewellery at \$341.08 in April 2026 showing a decline of 47.06% against \$644.33 for the same period of the previous year. However, the exports of studded gold jewellery grew 16.02% at \$500.46 in April compared to \$431.35 for the same period last year. Silver jewellery exports in the previous month surged by 444% to \$268.38 million against \$49.33 million in the same month last year.



# Thinking of joining a co-working space?

## Here are four ways to make the most of it

Co-working spaces have become a familiar part of the working landscape. A convenient alternative to working from home or an employer's office, they have become the favoured option of millions of the world's freelancers, entrepreneurs and remote workers.

In the UK, there are over 4,000 co-working venues to choose from. Prices vary, depending on location and facilities, but with a dedicated desk costing around £200 per month, it's worth knowing how to make the most of what these spaces offer.

So how do you choose the right co-working space for you? And how do you get the maximum benefit? Here are four practical tips to consider:

### 1. Identify your needs

Not all co-working spaces serve the same purpose. Some people are simply looking for a quiet desk outside the home, while others want a social environment where they can meet people, exchange ideas and build connections.

Being clear about what you want, whether it's productivity, networking opportunities or skill development, is the first step.

Smaller, independently run spaces often place greater emphasis on community building, with managers who organise regular informal events such as "lunch and learn" sessions or workshops. These environments can create more opportunities for social interaction and learning.

By contrast, larger corporate-style spaces may offer more

polished facilities and business services, but with fewer opportunities for facilitated interaction. Choosing the right co-working environment means considering the type of space and how you plan to use it.

### 2. Give it a try

Co-working spaces are often advertised as being open and inclusive. But research I worked on with colleagues shows that experiences can vary depending on factors such as age, gender or professional background.

Some spaces will probably feel more welcoming than others, particularly ones where equality, diversity and inclusion are a deliberate part of their design and ethos.

Many spaces are now also set up with specific groups in mind.

For example, some cater to female entrepreneurs, while others offer tailored support for neurodivergent workers.

Before committing, it's worth visiting a space, attending an event, or trying a short term pass (for a couple of days or a week) to see whether it feels like a good fit.

### 3. It's more than a desk

It's easy to treat co-working spaces as simply a place to work. But research suggests much of its value lies in the connections, community and everyday interactions it makes possible.

Casual conversations in the kitchen or spontaneous exchanges over lunch can help build communication skills, expand professional networks, and spark new collaborations. Evidence suggests that these benefits tend

to be particularly strong for those who are newer to a city, earlier in their careers, or working independently. They may have less established local networks or fewer everyday opportunities for office-based interaction, making them more likely to seek out social connections within co-working spaces.

If you only show up, put your headphones while you work and then leave, you may miss out on some of the main advantages of co-working – the opportunity to connect with others and become part of a community. Making the most of these spaces often means being willing to take that first step, engage with others and gradually find your own circle.

### 4. Take advantage

If your work involves special-

ised tools, digital technology or continuous skill development, you may need more than just wifi and coffee from a co-working space. Many now offer access to specialist software and cutting edge equipment such as 3D printers or virtual reality devices, which can be costly or difficult to access by yourself. Some go a step further and organise workshops and training sessions, or even events that reflect the latest developments in a particular field. These resources can be particularly valuable for independent workers including freelancers and the self-employed, who may not have access to structured on-the-job training through an employer.

Using them can help you build practical, up-to-date technical and digital skills, especially as new technologies and AI continue

to reshape the skills demanded in many industries. So don't overlook what's on offer, whether it's a workshop, a new tool, or a piece of equipment. Making use of these opportunities can help you stay adaptable, keep learning and be better prepared for what comes next.

Overall then, co-working spaces can offer valuable opportunities to learn new skills, build networks and adapt to changing ways of working. But these benefits are not automatic and they are not the same for everyone.

Getting the most out of co-working often depends on how you use the space and whether it matches your needs. At its best, co-working is not just about renting a desk, but about finding an environment where you can connect, learn and grow.



## The graduate jobs market is tough right now

### An entrepreneurship expert explains how to go it alone

For entrepreneurs, something that starts out as a simple idea can transform into a thriving business that brings financial rewards, confidence and personal growth. These days, graduates may look at forecasts for a tightening jobs market and decide their future is as an entrepreneur rather than an employee.

The business world is brimming with opportunity. I have researched entrepreneurship for years, and have found that rapid technological evolution, shifting consumer preferences and a growing focus on sustainability are creating an exciting landscape for bold graduates.

However, success is never guaranteed – like anyone else they'll need to understand their market, and know their competitors, target audience and growth potential. This is where graduates should put the research skills they honed as a student to good use. This can help them to avoid costly mistakes – things like overestimating demand for their business idea or underestimating the level of competition, for example.

My book, *The Millennial Millionaire*, demonstrates that successful young entrepreneurs tend to share certain traits: resilience, calculated risk-taking and a willingness to learn from failure. These char-

acteristics remain essential in 2026, particularly as markets become more volatile with persistent inflation, shifting interest rate expectations and growing geopolitical tensions.

Graduate entrepreneurship has evolved over the years, and the traditional linear career where someone stayed with one employer, moving up through the ranks through their working life, is a thing of the past. My book highlights how younger entrepreneurs increasingly pursue business ownership not only for financial independence but also for autonomy, creativity and social impact.

However, it can still be tricky for graduates to make a mark. And entrepreneurship is not a level playing field, either. Rising costs for utilities and essential overheads, competitive markets and unequal access to capital disproportionately affect certain groups. Women generally have less access to capital compared to men, and this is more pronounced for some ethnic minority women. Young people may not have enough personal savings.

Entrepreneurship cannot be separated from questions of diversity and inclusion. Graduate entrepreneurs can face both opportunity and inequality when starting a

venture. In this context, migrant communities often have a wealth of valuable "rags to riches" stories that they can share.

According to some of my other research, many Asian entrepreneurs in the UK started with virtually no money but used determination and family resources to build multimillion-pound businesses.

For example, the billionaire owner of a string of airport hotels Surinder Arora came from the Punjab as a child. He worked for British Airways and dreamed of being a pilot – but instead invested in a B&B to serve airline crews. These lessons remain highly relevant: entrepreneurship does not occur in isolation – it is shaped by relationships, identity and experience.

### A unique time to go it alone

AI is clearly a game-changer, making this a unique time to launch a business that can be built with AI in mind rather than struggling to keep up. Today's market is more connected, tech-driven and socially conscious than ever, and tech-savvy graduates are well-positioned to seize these opportunities. Sustainability is no longer optional – consumers expect brands to align with their values and demonstrate social responsibility.

### 1. Understand your introverted strengths

Introspection is not shyness or a lack of confidence. It is about how you process energy and information. Many introverts are deep thinkers, strong listeners and thoughtful communicators; qualities that can help to build meaningful professional relationships.

You do not need to work the room. Focusing on one or two deeper conversations is often more powerful than spreading your energy too thinly. When introverts approach networking with curiosity rather than performance, it often becomes more natural and far more effective.

### 2. Understand why networking feels harder for introverts

Across my research and developed further in my book, I emphasise that networking is work. It uses cognitive and emotional energy, after all. Busy rooms can be overstimulating and small talk can be draining. And the expectation to perform socially can create pressure long before an event even begins.

### 3. Redefine what networking is

At its core, networking is about connection. When you think of it as an opportunity to learn from others rather than to impress them, the pressure lifts. A single

sincere exchange might be remembered far longer than a flurry of rushed introductions. People respond to warmth, attentiveness and genuine interest.

### 4. Prepare in ways that suit your temperament

Preparation is one of the great advantages introverts bring to networking. Being clear about why you are attending an event can help shape the experience and reduce the sense of overwhelm. Identifying a couple of people you would like to meet can help you feel more anchored. And having a few conversation-openers ready (perhaps about the topic of the event or shared interests) can create a sense of ease. A simple, one-sentence introduction is often all you need to start a conversation without forcing anything.

### 5. Choose environments that work for you

Not every setting suits every temperament. Introverts often thrive in more structured or intimate settings: roundtables, smaller workshops, breakfast events or even one-to-one coffee chats. Large, unstructured rooms can feel overwhelming, and choosing alternatives is not avoidance, it is strategy.

### 6. Follow up in your own way

Introverts often shine in the quiet, reflective stage of relationship-building:

the follow-up. A personalised LinkedIn note or a brief invitation to continue the conversation can go a long way. This deliberate, thoughtful style of nurturing professional relationships is something introverts often do better than they realise.

### 7. Protect your energy

Networking uses real energy. Feeling drained afterwards is not a flaw; it is biology. Planning downtime before and after events, limiting the number of events per week, and taking breaks during busy sessions helps to maintain balance. Introverts need energy management. Building in recovery time, protecting your quiet and giving yourself permission to rest is essential for maintaining any kind of sustainable networking practice.

### 8. Depth over volume

Professional culture often celebrates the loudest voice in the room. But long-term relationships grow from listening, curiosity and your presence – all qualities that introverts naturally bring. That is a core theme I return to in my research: you do not need to dominate a room to make meaningful connections. You just need to network in a way that works for you.

Start small. Protect your energy. Trust your quieter strengths. Depth, not volume, is where introverts shine.



## Eight tips for introverts who want to get ahead at work

Networking is so often presented as a kind of performance – confident handshakes and quick conversations in crowded rooms. But for many people, particularly introverts, these situations feel more draining than energising. Building contacts and generating opportunities in this way may sound like something that extroverts are naturally better at. But this assumption, and the idea that introverts must therefore be at a disadvantage, is misleading. Networking does not have to mean being the most visible person in the room. It can simply be about building relationships in a way that feels genuine and sustainable. In my research on women entrepreneurs, including interviews for my new book, *Permission Granted*, I have seen introverts thrive when they lean into their natural strengths rather than trying to put on an outgoing persona.

Of course men can be introverts too, and face the same misconceptions. Whoever you are, and wherever you are on your career ladder, here are my top tips for succeeding at work as an introvert.





# RCB seal playoff berth with 23-run victory against Punjab

DHARAMSHALA



## 'The match was lost in the powerplay,' says Iyer after PBKS's defeat to RCB

DHARAMSHALA

Punjab Kings skipper Shreyas Iyer admitted that his side lost the match in the power-play after suffering a 23-run defeat against Royal Challengers Bengaluru in their IPL 2026 clash in the Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association Stadium in Dharamshala on Sunday.

Chasing a massive target of 223, Punjab Kings were rocked early as Priyansh Arya, Prabhsimran Singh, and Shreyas himself were dismissed cheaply inside the first three overs. The early collapse left the hosts struggling at 19/3, making the chase difficult despite a spirited fightback later in the innings.

"Obviously, they got off to a great start and then started taking on the bowlers right after the power play. I think getting to 222 was a commendable performance, and we weren't able to take wickets in the bowling that much, but yeah, I think the match was lost in the powerplay," Iyer said after the game.

Punjab Kings eventually finished at 199/8 despite aggressive knocks from Shashank Singh and Marcus Stoinis. Shashank smashed 56 off just 27 deliveries while Stoinis contributed 37 off 25 balls, but the required run rate proved too steep after the early damage. Reflecting on the difficult chase, Shreyas pointed to the absence of strong starts from openers Arya and Prabhsimran, both of whom had been among the team's most consistent performers this season.

"Absolutely. We were three down, and the majority of our run scorers were Prabhsimran and Priyansh. The starts they used to give us in the power play, obviously, we couldn't get this time, and also me coming in and getting out early," he said. "Really disappointed, but commendable performance by Shashank and Stoinis, and also a few others in the middle. I think we were up there with almost 10 and over, but yeah, fell short. Tremendous bowling by Bhuvu and Hazlewood," he added. Bhuvneshwar Kumar provided RCB the perfect start with two wickets in the opening overs, while Josh Hazlewood picked up important breakthroughs in the middle and death overs to stop Punjab Kings' recovery.

Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) became the first team to qualify for the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 playoffs after defeating Punjab Kings by 23 runs in a high-scoring contest at the Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association Stadium on Sunday.

Defending a massive total of 222/4, RCB produced a disciplined bowling effort led by Rasikh Salam Dar, who claimed three wickets, to restrict Punjab Kings to 199/8 despite a fighting half-century from Shashank Singh. The victory helped RCB move to 18 points from 13 matches and secure a place in the playoffs.

Punjab Kings endured a disastrous start to the chase as Bhuvneshwar Kumar removed Priyansh Arya for a duck in the opening over. The experienced pacer struck again in his next over when Prabhsimran Singh edged a good-length delivery to first slip after scoring just two runs.

RCB tightened their grip further when impact substitute Rasikh Salam Dar dismissed Punjab Kings skipper Shreyas Iyer for one.

With wickets falling around him, Cooper Connolly launched a counter-attack alongside Suryansh Shedge. Shedge took on Josh Hazlewood with a boundary and a six, while Connolly attacked Rasikh to help Punjab Kings recover to 49/3 at the end of the Power-play.

Connolly continued to play aggressively before Romario Shepherd provided the breakthrough in the eighth over. Attempting another big shot, Connolly was caught at deep square leg after scoring 37 off 22 balls, including three fours and three sixes.

Shedge then stitched together a useful partnership with Marcus Stoinis as the pair rebuilt the innings with regular boundaries and sensible strike rotation. However, RCB struck again when Virat Kohli completed a sharp catch at long-off to dismiss Shedge for 35 off 22 deliveries.

Punjab Kings still had hope with Stoinis at one end and Shashank Singh launching an aggressive assault at the

other. Shashank changed the momentum of the chase by smashing three sixes in an over off Suyash Sharma before adding more boundaries to keep the required run rate under control. Stoinis also shifted gears and struck consecutive boundaries against Rasikh as Punjab Kings reached 146/5 after 15 overs, needing 77 runs from the final five overs.

Shashank continued to fight hard and produced a stunning helicopter shot against Bhuvneshwar Kumar as the chase remained alive. However, Hazlewood delivered a crucial breakthrough in the 17th over by trapping Stoinis lbw for 37 off 25 balls.

Despite losing his partner, Shashank kept attacking and completed a rapid half-century in just 22 balls. But with little support from the other end, the required rate continued to climb.

RCB finally sealed the match in the final over when Rasikh dismissed Shashank, who was caught at long-on after a superb knock of 56 off 27 deliveries, featuring four boundaries and four sixes. Rasikh then picked up another

wicket on the final ball as the Punjab Kings finished at 199/8.

Earlier, RCB posted 222/4 riding on an unbeaten 73 from Venkatesh Iyer and Virat Kohli's 58. Devdutt Padikkal also made an important contribution with a quickfire 45.

Asked to bat first, RCB managed only 17 runs in the first two overs as Kohli and Jacob Bethell took time to adjust to the conditions. Bethell struggled for timing and was eventually bowled by Harpreet Brar for 11 off seven balls.

Padikkal then shifted the momentum immediately by hitting a six off his first delivery.

Kohli also joined the attack as the duo mixed aggressive strokeplay with smart strike rotation to keep the scoreboard moving quickly. Their partnership helped RCB reach 61/1 at the end of the Power-play.

Punjab Kings introduced Yuzvendra Chahal to slow the scoring rate, but the leg-spinner conceded 21 runs in his opening over. Kohli and Padikkal added 76 runs for the second wicket before Brar struck again, dismissing

Padikkal for an entertaining 45 off 25 balls, including four boundaries and three sixes.

Kohli continued to dominate and completed his fifty in just 31 deliveries. He later fell for 58 off 37 balls after being caught at deep mid-wicket off Chahal.

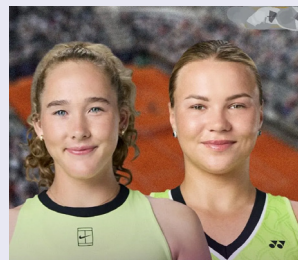
Venkatesh Iyer then took charge in the death overs. After a slow start, he accelerated brilliantly and completed his fifty off 29 balls. The left-hander remained unbeaten on 73 off 40 deliveries, smashing eight fours and four sixes. Tim David provided late support with a quick 28 off 12 balls as RCB crossed the 220-run mark.

### Brief scores:

Royal Challengers Bengaluru 222/4 in 20 overs (Venkatesh Iyer 73\*, Virat Kohli 58, Devdutt Padikkal 45; Harpreet Brar 2-35, Yuzvendra Chahal 1-42) beat Punjab Kings 199/8 in 20 overs (Shashank Singh 56, Cooper Connolly 37, Suryansh Shedge 35; Rasikh Salam Dar 3-36, Bhuvneshwar Kumar 2-38) by 23 runs.

### Italian Open

## Andreeva-Shnaider clinch doubles title



ROME: Russian pair Mirra Andreeva and Diana Shnaider underlined their growing dominance on the women's doubles circuit by capturing the Italian Open title with an emphatic straight-sets victory here on Sunday. The duo defended seventh seeds Cristina Bucsa and Nicole Melichar-Martinez 6-3, 6-3 in a one-sided final that lasted just 69 minutes at the Foro Italico. The triumph marked the pair's second WTA 1000 title together and their third trophy as a team overall, further strengthening their reputation as one of the most dangerous partnerships on tour heading into Roland Garros. Rome also provided the perfect response after their disappointment in Madrid earlier this month, where Andreeva and Shnaider finished runners-up following a defeat to doubles specialists Katerina Siniakova and Taylor Townsend in the final. This time, however, there was little room for drama. From the opening exchanges, the Russian duo controlled the pace of the match with aggressive returns and sharp net play, rarely allowing Bucsa and Melichar-Martinez to build sustained momentum. After taking the first set with authority,



## Rahul, Porel, Ashutosh help DC hunt down 194, beat RR by five wickets

NEW DELHI

Wicketkeeper-batter KL Rahul top-scored with a composed 56 off 42 balls as Delhi Capitals sealed a thrilling five-wicket victory over Rajasthan Royals at the Arun Jaitley Stadium here on Sunday. The win has lifted DC from eighth to seventh place in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 standings, as they signed off from their home fixtures in IPL 2026 on a high. After Mitchell Starc's 4-40 kept a marauding RR to 193/8, Rahul anchored the chase with his characteristic calmness, while sharing a key 105-run partnership with Abhishek Porel, who hit 51 off 31 balls.

Ashutosh Sharma then stepped in late as the impact player to steer DC home via an unbeaten five-ball 18, as it proved to be a tense, see-saw contest that swung repeatedly before the hosts finally held their nerve and completed the chase with four balls to spare, and kept their slim playoff hopes alive.

Chasing 194, Rahul had not even settled at the crease when fortune intervened, as Yash Raj Punja dropped him at short fine leg off Jofra Archer, apart from an overthrow giving DC four extra runs. Keeping all that aside, Rahul and Porel set about dismantling the RR bowling attack with a combination of audacity and intent, as DC reached fifty in just four overs.

Porel, the aggressor from the outset, drove and whipped Archer for a four and six, before ramping, cutting, pulling, and punching Brijesh Sharma for four boundaries. Rahul, meanwhile, was doing what he does best - rotating strike and hitting boundaries off loose balls with surgical precision. When Adam Milne dropped short in the fifth over, he rocked back and smoked a pull full over deep mid-wicket for six.

The hundred of the opening pair - DC's second 100-plus opening stand of IPL 2026 and both coming versus RR - arrived in the ninth over when Rahul pumped Punjab straight over the sight screen for six. Porel brought up his fifty off 30 balls before holing out to long-on off a slower ball from Brijesh in the 11th over, even as an unperturbed Rahul reached his fifty in the 12th over off 34 balls.

RR's move to bring back Archer for his third over worked well when he drew a rash drive from Sahil Parakh, and a thick outside edge was comfortably caught by Dhruv Jurel. Dasun Shanaka dealt a huge blow to DC when Rahul attempted to punch off his slower delivery, but chopped on to his stumps without any footwork.

The pressure of the asking rate going past ten brought out sloppy misfields from RR, but it consumed Tristan Stubbs, who shaped for a pre-mediated scoop, but was caught by a sprinting deep backward square leg.

## Dimitrov, Goffin headline men's qualifying draw

PARIS

Grigor Dimitrov and David Goffin will be the top favourites to secure spots in the main draw when the men's singles qualifying rounds for the French Open start in Paris on Monday. Dimitrov is set to headline the qualifying draw, making his first appearance in qualifying for a Grand Slam tournament since the 2011 Australian Open. Former quarterfinalist Goffin is also in the field, aiming to compete in the main draw in Paris for the 14th time.

Dimitrov will face Jaime Faria in the opening round. The former World No. 3 holds a 21-15 record in Paris. Dimitrov's best result at Roland Garros came in 2024, when he reached the quarter-finals.

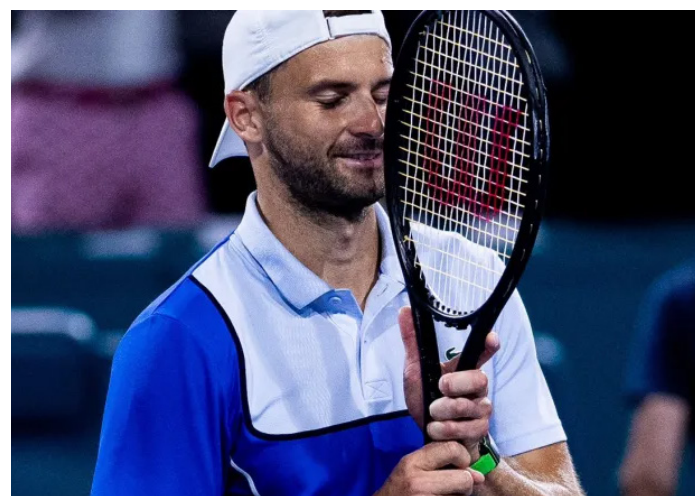
Goffin will begin his campaign against Chun-Hsin Tseng. The Belgian made his Roland Garros de-

but as a qualifier in 2012, when he reached the fourth round and lost to Roger Federer in four sets. Last year, the 2016 quarter-finalist fell to Alexander Zverev in the second round.

Andrea Pellegrino, who recently reached the third round at the ATP Masters 1000 event in Rome, also features in the draw, aiming to make his major main-draw debut in Paris. Jesper de Jong, Emilio Nava, Sho Shimabukuro, and Coleman Wong are also in the field.

The qualifying tournament for Roland-Garros 2026 will be conducted from May 18 to May 22 at the Stade Roland-Garros in Paris, marking the start of the French Open season before the main draw begins on May 24. Matches will be held on Court Suzanne-Lenglen and Courts 2-15.

The men's qualifying draw features a mix of former top players,



clay-court specialists, and rising prospects. Other notable entrants include Hugo Gaston, Pedro Martinez, Otto Virtanen, and Daniel Merida. Players must win three

matches to secure a spot in the main draw. Several French players, including Florent Bax, Robin Bertrand, and Sascha Gueymard Wayenburg, are also competing, re-

flecting the tournament's emphasis on local talent. Goffin, a former World No. 7, has been handed a wild card into the qualifying along with several teenagers, highlighting Roland-Garros' focus on youth development.

The women's qualifying draw is equally competitive, featuring former Grand Slam champions and top-ranked players aiming to return to the main draw. Key names include Bianca Andreescu, Sloane Stephens, Karolina Pliskova, Paula Badosa, Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova, and Martina Trevisan. Sixteen players from qualifying will advance to the main draw, complemented by eight wildcards.

Women's qualifying wildcards include Kristina Mladenovic, Tahlia Kokkinis, Daniel Jedic, and Daphne Mpetshi Perricard, alongside other young French talents.

## East Bengal in pole position after Derby draw against Mohun Bagan

KOLKATA

A goal by Jason Cummings in the dying minutes of the match meant the Kolkata Derby once again lived up to its billing as Mohun Bagan Super Giant and East Bengal FC played out a dramatic 1-1 draw in a pulsating Indian Super League clash at the Salt Lake Stadium on Sunday.

In front of a packed crowd and with the ISL title race hanging in the balance, fortunes swung wildly before substitute Edmund Lalrindika's 85th-minute strike for East Bengal was cancelled out by another substitute Jason Cummings' dramatic equaliser five minutes later.

The result kept the title race wide open. Both East Bengal and Mohun Bagan now have 23 points from 12 matches, though the Red-and-Gold Brigade remain on top due to a superior goal difference of 18 compared to Mohun Bagan's 13. Mumbai City FC and Punjab FC are also on 22 points, with the two sides set to meet on May 21.

East Bengal, however, will clinch the ISL crown if they beat Inter Kashi in their final match, considering Mohun Bagan fail to overcome the goal difference equation.

The latest chapter of Indian football's fiercest rivalry added further drama to a fixture steeped in histo-



ry. The two Kolkata giants have now met 349 times across competitions, with East Bengal leading the head-to-head record with 129 wins to Mohun Bagan's 105, while 115 matches have ended in draws. East Bengal have scored 324 goals in the derby compared to Mohun Bagan's 286. Their previous meeting had ended in a goalless draw in the Super Cup at Margao on October 31, 2025.

With so much at stake, both sides started aggressively and looked determined to seize control from the opening whistle. Mohun Bagan carved out the first meaningful opportunity in the fourth minute when Liston Colaco danced past defenders

before releasing Subhasish Bose on the left. Bose's cutback found Sahal Abdul Samad inside the box, but the midfielder's poor first touch allowed East Bengal to escape.

The response was immediate. A long kick from East Bengal goalkeeper Prabhshukhan Singh Gill released PV Vishnu clean through on goal in the fifth minute, only for Abhishek Tekcham to produce a crucial last-ditch tackle after Vishal Kaith was beaten. The game continued at a frantic pace. Manvir Singh threatened after capitalising on a lapse from Anwar Ali, while at the other end Anton Sojberg came agonisingly close in the 14th minute.

## India go down to Malaysia but qualify for QF in Sepak Takraw World Cup

KUALA LUMPUR

The Indian men's team went down to hosts Malaysia in a Group C match but topped the Men's Quadrant and still managed to qualify for the quarter-finals of the 2026 Sepak Takraw World Cup being played in the Malaysian capital on Sunday.

Asian Champions India went into their final league match with two wins against South Korea and Singapore, while Malaysia had suffered a shock defeat to South Korea in the previous encounter after opening the competition with a win over Singapore. But the hosts' national quartet bounced back to win the must-win match against India by two sets to one scoreline and secured a place in the last-eight stage.

Malaysia, India and South Korea recorded two wins each and finished on the same points. But India and Malaysia advanced to the quarterfinals due to their superior overall game points tally. Overall, India finished as the group winner while Malaysia was the runner-up. India had defeated South Korea 2-1 and Singapore 2-0.

The match was played at Stadium Titiwangsa amidst a lively

atmosphere with strong crowd support for the Malaysia team.

However, the Indian line-up of Ram Kumar Sharma, Yunam Akash, Bobby Kumar, and Sorokhaibam Malemnganba Singh made a strong start by winning the opening set against the Malaysian team comprising Muhammad Affuddin Mohd Razali, Muhammad Shaharil Aiman Halim, Amirul Zazwan Amir, and Aidil Aiman Azwawi.

The Indians capitalised on a service error by Aidil early in the match, which affected the Malaysian side's momentum and claimed the first set 15-13, according to a report by local news agency Bernama. The second set saw an intense battle as both teams traded points before Malaysia edged India 17-15 to force a deciding set, which the home side dominated to win 15-10 and sealed victory in the match.

The Malaysian captain, Amirul Zazwan, said the national squad learned from mistakes made in the opening set to bounce back strongly in the second and third sets in their mission to reach the quarterfinals. "This was a do-or-die match for us because we had already lost to South Korea this morning, so we really wanted to win."

# Toxic Slowly Becoming Non-Toxic at Box Office Buzz?

At the same time, Yash is also busy with another highly anticipated project, Ramayana. Reports say that preparations for promotions and other work related to that movie may begin soon.

When the teaser of Toxic was released for the first time, the film created huge excitement across India. Fans of Yash were eagerly waiting to see him on screen again after the massive success of KGF. The stylish first look and dark theme of the movie increased expectations among movie lovers. Many believed that Toxic would become another big pan-India blockbuster for the actor. At now, the situation looks slightly different. The movie has been facing continuous delays and there is still no official clarity about the new release date. Because of this long silence from the makers, some fans are slowly starting to lose interest in the project. Earlier, reports suggested that the film would release on June 4. However, after the postponement, the production house did not share many updates. Usually, fans expect regular announcements, posters, or small glimpses to keep the excitement alive. Since that is not happening with Toxic, discussions about the film have reduced on social media compared to before. At the same time, Yash is also busy with another highly anticipated project, Ramayana. Reports

say that preparations for promotions and other work related to that movie may begin soon. Because both films are huge projects, fans are curious to know how Yash will manage them together. Even with the delays, Toxic still has a strong star cast and a talented technical team. The film is directed by Geetu Mohandas and features actresses Nayanthara, Kiara Advani, Huma Qureshi, Tara Sutaria, and Rukmini Vasanth in important roles. This combination still keeps some curiosity alive among audiences. Many fans now hope that the makers will soon announce a proper release plan and restart promotions. If the team releases exciting content at the right time, the film may quickly regain its lost momentum. Until then, movie lovers are waiting for an official update about the future of Toxic.



With her versatility across languages and strong screen presence, Jyoti Poorvaj continues to shine as a talented actress and producer in South Indian cinema. In this stunning portrait, Jyoti Poorvaj (also known as Jyothi Rai) captivates with her flowing dark hair, expressive eyes, and elegant pink saree-style outfit that highlights her timeless charm and confidence. Born on 23 February 1985 in Madikeri, Karnataka, Jyoti began her career in television serials, gaining popularity with shows like Jogula. She made her film debut

in 2017 with the Tulu drama Madipu, directed by Chethan Mundadi. She has since built a strong presence in Kannada cinema with notable roles in films such as Supplier Shankara, Dia (2020), Gandhada Gudi, Sitarama Kalyana, 99, and Jersey Number 10 (2023). Jyoti has successfully ventured into Telugu cinema as well and is currently generating massive buzz with her ambitious sci-fi action thriller Killer (also known as KillR or Killer: Dream Girl), directed by Poorvaj. She plays a powerful central role in this female-driven project, which is in post-production and slated for release in 2026. She is also associated with other upcoming multilingual projects including A Masterpiece. With her versatility across languages and strong screen presence, Jyoti Poorvaj continues to shine as a talented actress and producer in South Indian cinema.

## Jyoti Poorvaj Radiates Grace in Pink Glamour

## Malavika Mohanan Reacts Strongly To Questions About Vijay

The actress also spoke warmly about Vijay. She revealed that she has known him for the last seven years and shares a friendly bond with him. Actress Malavika Mohanan recently reacted strongly after being asked uncomfortable questions about C. Joseph Vijay during a public event. The actress later shared a detailed clarification on social media and requested the media to maintain respect during interviews. During the event, a reporter asked Malavika about Vijay's travels and also mentioned actress Trisha Krishnan. The question reportedly made Malavika uncomfortable. She immediately responded by asking why such questions were being asked. Her reaction quickly became a major topic on

social media, with many people supporting her. Later, Malavika posted a message explaining her feelings. She said that she respects journalists and media members, but felt that a few questions asked at the event were unnecessary and sensational. According to her, such questions crossed personal boundaries and created unwanted discussions. The actress also spoke warmly about Vijay. She revealed that she has known him for the last seven years and shares a friendly bond with him. Malavika said Vijay is someone she deeply respects and admires. She also mentioned that she feels grateful to call him a friend. Malavika further praised Vijay's journey from cinema to politics. She said watching his growth over the years has been inspiring. She requested everyone to keep future conversations respectful for the sake of all people involved. The actress had earlier worked with Vijay in the blockbuster film Master. The action drama was directed by Lokesh Kanagaraj and became a huge success at the box office. The movie also featured Vijay Sethupathi in an important role. In one of her earlier interviews, Malavika had shared memories from the shooting of Master. She described Vijay as a calm, disciplined and focused person on set. She also said he later became a very close friend who is always approachable and supportive. Meanwhile, Vijay's political journey has also attracted huge attention in Tamil Nadu. After becoming the Chief Minister, many people started comparing his rise to legendary actor-politicians like N. T. Rama Rao, M. G. Ramachandran and J. Jayalalitha.



## Peddi Trailer Said To Be Full Of Goosebumps

### Inside Talk

Chiranjeevi called the trailer "three minutes of pure firepower." He praised Ram Charan, Buchi Babu and music director A. R. Rahman for giving their best work. The excitement around Peddi is increasing day by day. Starring Ram Charan and directed by Buchi Babu Sana, the movie is already one of the most awaited Telugu films of the year. Now, the latest inside talk about the trailer is creating even more hype among fans. According to reports from industry circles, the trailer of Peddi is said to be around three minutes long and packed with powerful moments. People who reportedly watched the trailer early are saying it delivers complete goosebumps from start to finish. The combination of emotion, action, elevations and background music is said to be extraordinary. The biggest surprise came from Megastar Chiranjeevi himself yesterday. Before the official release, Chiranjeevi watched the trailer and shared his reaction on social media. His comments immediately went viral among Mega fans. Chiranjeevi called the trailer "three minutes of pure firepower." He praised Ram Charan, Buchi Babu and music director A. R. Rahman for giving their best work. He also said the trailer goes beyond expectations and has emotion, elevation and madness at the next level. The Megastar even leaked a powerful dialogue from the movie in his famous "ChiruLeaks" style. The dialogue was, "Meerandaru nenu aadanani anukuntunna... nenu poraanu saar." Chiranjeevi jokingly apologized to Buchi Babu for leaking the line and said he could not control his excitement after watching the trailer. Peddi is being made as a rural sports action drama with a grand scale and strong emotional content. The movie also stars Janhvi Kapoor in the female lead role. The film will release worldwide on June 4, 2026.

## Ruhani Sharma Turns Heads With Her Stunning Glam Look

Actress Ruhani Sharma continues to impress audiences with her elegant fashion choices and consistent performances in South Indian cinema. Actress Ruhani Sharma continues to impress audiences with her elegant fashion choices and consistent performances in South Indian cinema. Known for her charming screen presence and expressive acting, Ruhani has slowly built a strong fan following across Telugu and Tamil film industries. Her latest stylish appearance is now grabbing attention on social media, where fans are praising her

classy beauty and effortless glamour. Ruhani first became popular with her memorable performance in the Telugu romantic drama Chi La Sow. Over the years, she proved her versatility by choosing performance-oriented roles along with commercial entertainers. Recently, she gained appreciation for her role in Saindhav starring Venkatesh Daggubati. Her performance added emotional depth to the film and once again showcased her acting abilities. The actress is also busy with multiple upcoming projects across languages, making her one of the promising talents in the South film industry. Apart from movies, Ruhani remains highly active on Instagram, regularly sharing stunning photo-shoots and fashion moments that keep fans engaged. With beauty, talent, and smart script selection working in her favor, Ruhani Sharma is steadily climbing the ladder in Indian cinema. Her latest glamorous avatar is once again proving why she remains a favorite among young movie lovers and fashion followers alike.



## Keerthy Suresh Gives Clarity About Surgery

Actress Keerthy Suresh has finally given clarity to the rumours about her weight loss and health. The actress, who once appeared slightly chubby on screen, is now looking very slim and fit. Because of this sudden transformation, many people on social media started making comments about her appearance. Some even claimed that she had undergone surgery to lose weight, while others worried that she might be facing health issues. Now, Keerthy has given a clear answer to all these rumours through her latest fitness journey video shared on social media. In the video, she explained that her transformation is completely the result of hard work, proper diet, regular workouts, and yoga. She indirectly made it clear that she did not undergo any surgery. Keerthy revealed that she did not pay much attention to fitness in 2013. Later, she decided to focus seriously on her health and body. She started following a high-protein diet and reduced carbohydrates in her meals.

The film will release worldwide on June 4, 2026