

# HYDERABAD HEADLINES

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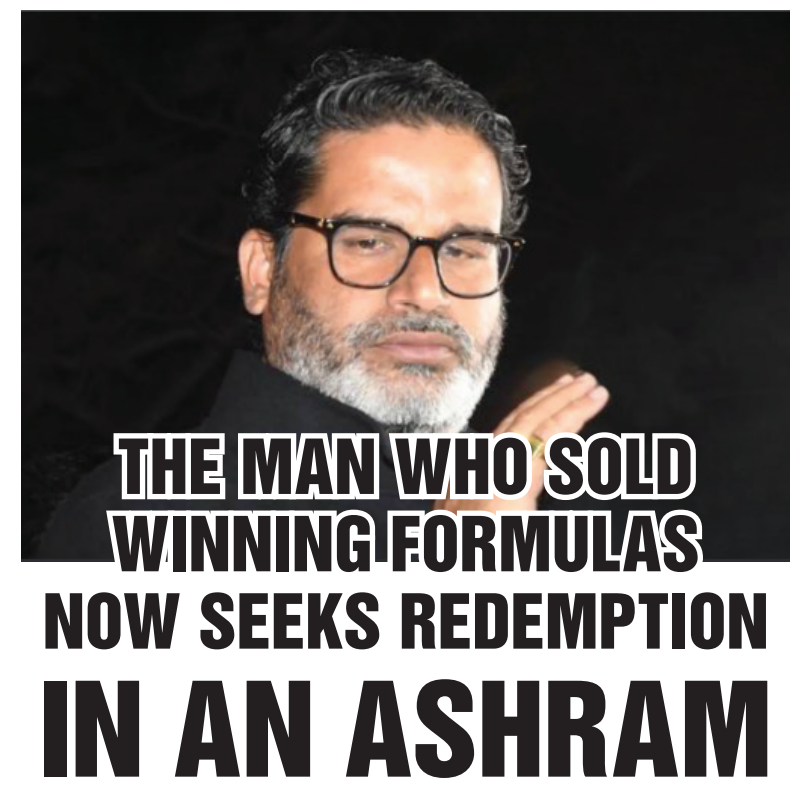
## SRH SHINE BUT MISS TOP TWO RACE

STADIUM 11

## TELANGANA HANDLOOMS SHINE AT CANNES



BOX -OFFICE 12



## THE MAN WHO SOLD WINNING FORMULAS NOW SEEKS REDEMPTION IN AN ASHRAM

PRASHANT KISHOR ABANDONS PATNA COMFORT TO WAGE A LONG POLITICAL SIEGE FROM THE SOIL OF BIHAR

BY C. SUBRAHMANYAM

After suffering a humiliating electoral collapse in Bihar despite towering publicity and relentless political projection, Prashant Kishor has walked away from the political comfort zone of Patna's elite circuit and shifted into the Bihar Navnirman Ashram near Indian Institute of Technology Patna. The move is not a routine relocation. It is a calculated political declaration. The country's most celebrated election strategist is now attempting the hardest conversion in democratic politics: from backroom mastermind to mass leader. Bihar is watching with narrowed eyes. Admirers call it sacrifice. Critics call it stagecraft. But one fact now towers above the dust and noise: Prashant Kishor has decided not to retreat after defeat. He has decided to disappear into Bihar's political trenches and fight a long war.

### KICKER BOX WHAT THE ASHRAM REALLY REPRESENTS

The Bihar Navnirman Ashram is not merely a residence. It is an image correction laboratory, a political training bunker and a symbolic declaration that Prashant Kishor is preparing for a prolonged ideological and organisational war instead of a short electoral adventure.

### BIHAR HAS ALWAYS DISTRUSTED READY MADE SAVIOURS

There is a stubborn political instinct buried deep inside Bihar. The state has repeatedly shown that it does not surrender easily to polished political packaging. Bihar respects struggle.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >

## Reservation vs. Reality: SC Raises Crucial "Creamy Layer" Question

### Supreme Court Raises Concerns Over Elite Families Capturing Reservation Benefits



"IF BOTH PARENTS ARE IAS OFFICERS, EMPLOYED IN GOVERNMENT SERVICE, AND FULLY SETTLED IN LIFE, WHY SHOULD THEIR CHILDREN STILL RECEIVE RESERVATION BENEFITS?"

— SUPREME COURT BENCH (Justice B. V. Nagarathna & Justice Ujjal Bhuyan)

NEW DELHI, MAY 22

The Supreme Court of India has expressed serious concern over families that have already benefited from reservations and achieved social and economic advancement continuing to seek the same quota benefits for future generations. The court raised a key question: "If both parents are IAS officers, employed in government service, and fully settled in life,

why should their children still receive reservation benefits?" These remarks were made today by a bench comprising Justice B. V. Nagarathna and Justice Ujjal Bhuyan while hearing petitions related to the "creamy layer" criteria and reservation exclusions among backward classes.

**"We Cannot Exit the Reservation System if Quotas Continue for Generations"**

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >

## Target is a \$3 Trillion Economy

### TG growth rate at 10.7%: Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti at the Bankers' Meeting

HYDERABAD, MAY 22

Telangana Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka stated that the state government is giving top priority to welfare schemes, economic self-reliance, construction of Future City, women empowerment, and Musi River rejuvenation.

He participated in the 49th State Level Bankers' Committee meeting held on Friday at Mahatma Jyotirao Phule Praja Bhavan. Minister Tumtala Nageswara Rao, Special Chief Secretary Dana Kishore, Finance Principal Secretary Sandeep Kumar Sultania, Finance & Planning Secretary Gaurav Uppal, RBI Regional Director Chinmaya Mohan, SBI CGM Nilesh Dwivedi and others



attended the meeting.

Speaking on the occasion, Bhatti Vikramarka said the people's government is firmly committed to transforming Telangana into a \$3 trillion economy by 2047. He said it is

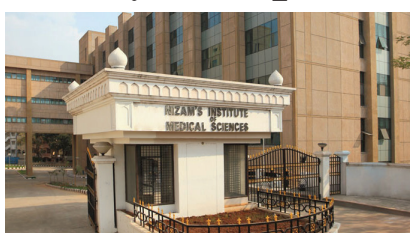
a remarkable achievement that total bank deposits in the state have reached nearly ₹9.43 lakh crore, while advances touched ₹12.34 lakh crore. Telangana's Credit-Deposit ratio of 130.78% is exceptional, he added.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >

## Tesla EV Showroom in Hyderabad...

Hyderabad, May 22: EV giant Tesla is planning to open a sales and service center in Hyderabad soon. Tesla India representatives met Telangana IT and Industries Minister Sridhar Babu and discussed expansion plans in the city. The minister said Telangana has a strong ecosystem for EVs, semiconductors, AI, and advanced mobility technologies, making Hyderabad an ideal destination for Tesla's growth. He assured full support from the state government for Tesla's investments and related industries in TG.

## NIMS achieves rare milestone of 2k kidney transplants



Hyderabad, May 22: Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS) has achieved a rare milestone by completing 2,000 kidney transplant surgeries, emerging as one of the country's leading government healthcare institutions in organ transplantation. The institute created a record as a government hospital with 2,000 kidney transplants under a single institutional programme.

Announcing the achievement on Friday, NIMS Director Dr. Beerappa said the institute completed its first kidney transplant in 1989, and has now successfully crossed the 2,000-transplant mark. He credited the extraordinary commitment and coordinated efforts of the Urology and Nephrology departments, along with the supporting

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >

## KTR ALLEGES GOVT MORE FOCUSED ON LAND DEALS THAN FARMERS

HYDERABAD, MAY 22:

BRS working president and MLA K.T. Rama Rao on Friday accused the Congress government of prioritising "plundering lands" over farmers' issues. Speaking at Telangana Bhavan, KTR alleged large-scale land irregularities and claimed Rajya Sabha MP Vem Narender Reddy had encroached assigned



land in Kesamudram via a "Bhoomi Harathi" scheme. He pointed to recent ACB raids and alleged associates of the Chief Minister illegally occupied high-value Shamshabad land. KTR criticised Civil Supplies Minister Uttam Kumar

Reddy for denying farmer deaths linked to procurement delays, and said only 35% of grain procurement was done despite the government's 80% claim. He challenged CM Revanth Reddy to visit villages with him to see the ground reality, saying, "Farmers are suffering while the government is more interested in sacks of money than sacks of grain."

## DATTATREYA DEMANDS MAJOR WAGE REVISION FOR TELANGANA WORKERS

Hyderabad, May 22: Former Governor and Union labour minister Bandaru Dattatreya criticised the Telangana government's recent minimum wage revision as "token and inadequate." In a statement from Hyderabad, he said workers had waited

nearly 14 years for a meaningful increase but received only a cosmetic hike despite rising costs of education, healthcare, rent and transport. Dattatreya demanded new minimum wages of Rs.22,000 for unskilled, Rs.27,000 for semi-skilled,

Rs.31,000 for skilled and Rs.36,000 for highly skilled workers. He said about 1.2 crore workers in Telangana deserve wages that ensure dignity and security, warning economic growth is hollow without improved worker welfare.

## 4 Women Killed in Tiger Attack



BY SADANAND BEMBRE

Komaram Bheem Asifabad, May 22: A tragic incident occurred in Maharashtra's Chandrapur district when a tiger attacked a group of 13 women who had entered the Gunjehi-Pawanpar forest area under Sindewahi tehsil to collect tendu leaves. Four women — Kavita Mohurle (45), Anita Mohurle (46), Sangeeta Chaudhary (40),

and Sunita Mohurle (35) — died on the spot. Panic gripped nearby villages after the incident, while forest officials launched search operations in the area.

### Rising Tiger Movement Triggers Fear

Increasing tiger movement around Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve has intensified human-wildlife conflict in forest fringe villages. Officials say tigers often mistake people bend-

ing in forests or agricultural fields for wild prey and attack them. Similar incidents were reported earlier in Kadamba region of Komaram Bheem Asifabad district. Experts believe growing human movement in tiger habitats is the key reason behind rising encounters.

### Human Blood Taste May Alter Tiger Behaviour

Wildlife experts warn that a

tiger's behaviour may change after attacking humans, making it more dangerous in the future. Such tigers may begin approaching villages more frequently, considering humans as easy prey. However, forest officials clarified that not every tiger involved in an attack turns into a "man-eater," and most incidents happen due to sudden encounters or fear reactions inside forest zones.

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# "Uppala Gopala Rao: A Guardian of Justice and Humanity"

MEDCHAL-MALKAJGIRI,  
MAY 22

In the quiet predawn hours of Friday, the community of Kukatpally Housing Board mourned the loss of a visionary social leader, Uppala Gopala Rao, who passed away at the age of 90 after a prolonged illness. Residing in the Malaysian Township (Rain Tree Park), once celebrated as Asia's largest colony, Rao's life was a testament to unwavering dedication to social justice and the empowerment of marginalized communities. His passing leaves a profound void, not only in the hearts of his family—his wife, two sons, and a daughter—but also among countless individuals whose lives he touched through his selfless contributions.

Born on January 3, 1936, in Brahmanamkodu village in Guntur district, Rao was instilled with a sense of social responsibility



from a young age. His journey began in the rice mill industry, where he established the first rice mill in Miryalguda, not just as a business venture but as a means to uplift those in need. His entrepreneurial spirit was driven by a

commitment to empower the underprivileged, laying the groundwork for a life devoted to public service.

In 1976, Rao founded Praja Aalochana Vedika, an initiative aimed at ensuring equitable resource distribution among hard-working individuals. Through this platform, he organized gatherings that challenged social injustices and demanded accountability from those in power. Rao's belief in the pivotal role of journalism in democracy led him to support and collaborate with journalists, advocating for transparency and integrity in public discourse. His actions resonated deeply within the community, inspiring many to engage in the fight against societal wrongs.

Rao's legacy is marked by his annual recognition of municipal sweepers—individuals often overlooked yet vital to the community's functioning. By honoring

their dedication and providing cash prizes for top students, he fostered a culture of respect and motivation, reinforcing the idea that every contribution counts, no matter how small. Even in death, Rao's commitment to service shines brightly; he chose to donate his body to Apollo Medical College for scientific research and education, a final act of generosity that embodies his lifelong mission of giving back to society.

Uppala Gopala Rao's unwavering devotion to justice, fairness, and community empowerment has left an indelible mark on the hearts of many. His life was not merely about advocacy; it was about instilling hope and sparking change in the lives of those who felt unheard. As we remember this remarkable leader, let us carry forward his legacy of compassion and activism, striving to honor his vision of a just society where every voice matters.

## Uttam hits back at KTR, warns procurement politics will 'Backfire'

HYDERABAD, MAY 22

Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy on Friday hit back at BRS working president K.T. Rama Rao, accusing him of spreading falsehoods to cover his party's procurement shortcomings. Uttam said the Congress government is executing the largest-ever Rabi paddy procurement in Telangana despite manpower shortages and logistical challenges. He cited official figures up to May 21 showing 54.29 lakh tonnes of arrivals and 46.21 LMT procured — about 85% completion — with transactions for over 6.32 lakh farmers and Rs 7,841 crore credited to accounts. Uttam rejected KTR's claims of gunny bag shortages, saying nearly 20 crore bags were positioned and over 13,000 trucks deployed daily. He noted the Congress had outperformed past BRS seasons and recalled the 2024–25 record procurement of 60.44 LMT and Rs 10,882 crore MSP payments. He condemned attempts to politicise farmer deaths, calling them shameful, and insisted the government's "farmer-first" procurement model ensured fair deals, faster payments and transparency.

## Telugu States in a Furnace: When Heat Becomes a Warning, Not a Season

J M R DUNGA

The heat arriving over Andhra Pradesh and Telangana is no longer behaving like a season. It feels more like an occupation. Day after day, temperatures push into extremes that blur the boundary between discomfort and danger. The air feels heavy—less like atmosphere, more like pressure. What is unfolding is not an ordinary Indian summer stretching its limits. It is the visible edge of a larger planetary shift, where climate systems are no longer stable enough to be predictable. Nights offer little escape. The ground holds the day's heat like a memory it refuses to release. To call this "just weather" is to miss what science repeatedly warns us about: extreme heat is becoming the new normal, not an exception.

### A Climate That No Longer Follows Memory

Heatwaves today are patterns assembling themselves into permanence. Meteorological shifts like El Niño alter moisture flows and weaken the cooling influence of monsoon winds, while persistent high-pressure systems act like an invisible lid, trapping heat close to the surface. It is a slow suffocation of circulation—air moves less, cools less, and lingers more. However, the atmosphere alone is not responsible; human transformation of land has intensified what nature began. Where fields once reflected sunlight and absorbed rain, concrete expanses now store heat through the day and release it long after sunset. Cities like Hyderabad, Vijayawada, and Visakhapatnam are heating up structurally. A farmer in the interior belts no longer reads the sky the way his father did, and a street vendor measures his day by how long he can stand before the heat becomes unbearable. These are early indicators of a shifting climate economy.

### The Hidden Architecture of Heat

Deforestation has stripped away natural cooling systems that balanced temperature cycles. Wetlands are disappearing quietly, replaced by construction and extraction. Greenhouse gases from industries and vehicles accumulate like an invisible blanket that thickens year after year. The irony is brutal: the very tools used to survive heat—air conditioners, refrigerators, energy systems—feed the cycle that intensifies it. Each AC unit cools a room while subtly heating the street outside, turning indoor comfort into an unpaid thermal debt outdoors. Even water bodies are shrinking or vanishing, stripping the land of its ability to regulate temperature swings. The landscape begins to behave less like a living system and more like a heat-absorbing surface.

### A Crisis of Unequal Responsibility

Climate change origins are far from evenly distributed. Industrial economies built over centuries emitted the majority of greenhouse gases responsible for current warming trends, yet the consequences arrive most sharply in regions that contributed least. This is where climate stops being only an environmental issue and becomes a question of justice. A construction worker in a small town lives inside the outcome of carbon emissions, and a farmer pays the price in lost yield and rising uncertainty, while the benefits of industrial growth remain historically concentrated in a few parts of the world.

### A Future That Narrows If We Don't Act

If current trends continue, heat will become a structural limitation on life itself. By mid-century, parts of South India could regularly experience temperatures approaching thresholds that challenge basic human endurance. Productivity will decline because the environment will no longer allow people to work safely for long hours. Water stress will deepen as evaporation accelerates and groundwater levels fall. Agriculture will become increasingly unstable, forcing shifts in cropping patterns and rural migration. Energy systems will strain under simultaneous demand spikes for cooling, and health systems will face rising cases of heatstroke, dehydration, and kidney-related illnesses. Inequality will sharpen in the most literal way: those who can afford cooling will survive more comfortably, while those who cannot will endure the full weight of exposure.

### Between Policy and Reality

Global agreements like the Paris Accord signal awareness, but awareness alone does not reduce temperature. Some cities experiment with reflective roofing, green architecture, and water-sensitive urban design, while others rethink road materials to reduce heat absorption. These are now survival technologies. Policy must move beyond symbolism. Renewable energy expansion, restoration of water bodies, protection of remaining green cover, and redesign of urban spaces are delayed necessities.

### What Still Remains in Human Hands

Despite the scale of the crisis, the response is not entirely out of reach. Cities can be redesigned, landscapes partially restored, and consumption patterns shifted. Heat accumulates, which means reversal requires an accumulation of effort, policy, and restraint. Individual choices matter because they reshape the demand that drives the crisis. Planting trees, reducing energy waste, choosing shared transport, and protecting local water systems are distributed forms of resistance to a warming system when multiplied across millions.

### The Final Signal

What is happening in Telugu states is a preview of what much of the world may experience more frequently in the decades ahead. The heat is demanding a response. Nature is no longer surprising us; it is responding to us with precision, intensity, and memory. The question is whether we are willing to act while the air still allows us to.

## CONTINUATION FROM PAGE 1

## NIMS achieves rare milestone of 2k kidney transplants

FROM PAGE 1

medical staff, for this landmark accomplishment.

Dr. Beerappa also expressed gratitude to Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy and Health Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha for their continued support in strengthening advanced healthcare services at NIMS, particularly for economically weaker sections.

The milestone assumes greater significance as NIMS has served as a lifeline for poor and middle-class patients suffering from end-stage renal disease. Of the 2,000 transplant recipients, nearly 95 per cent received treatment completely free of cost through the Aarogyasri health insurance scheme and the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF).

Beyond the transplant surgery itself, the Telangana government is also providing lifelong post-transplant immunosuppressive medications free of cost under the Aarogyasri scheme, significantly reducing the long-term financial burden on patients.

Congratulating the Urology team, Dr. Beerappa said the department played a pivotal role in building the transplant programme into one of the most successful in the public healthcare sector. The team has handled several highly complex procedures, including kidney transplants involving multiple renal vessels, paediatric transplants, and repeat transplant surgeries.

NIMS also holds the distinction of performing South India's first robotic kidney transplant in a government hospital, highlighting the growing technological capabilities of Telangana's public healthcare

YEAR / PERIOD	TRANSPLANTATIONS
1989 - June 2017	1,000
July - Dec 2017	58
2018	111
2019	103
2020	26
2021	103
2022	93
2023	137
2024	134
2025	163
2026	72
TOTAL	2,000

institutions.

Meanwhile, Health Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha congratulated the doctors and staff of NIMS for the remarkable achievement, stating that the success once again demonstrates Telangana's capacity to deliver world-class advanced healthcare through government hospitals.

He said the state government is committed to expanding organ transplantation services across public hospitals to ensure that high-end, life-saving treatment remains accessible free of cost to the poor.

The Minister recalled the recent establishment of an advanced Organ Transplant Centre at Gandhi Hospital, equipped with six modular operation theatres and modern infrastructure. He also said an Organ Transplant Centre of Excellence is being set up at TIMS Hospital, Sanathnagar.

In addition, the government is working to establish organ retrieval centres across the state, which will significantly strengthen the organ transplant ecosystem and expand access to advanced transplant services within the public healthcare system, he added.

## Reservation vs. Reality: SC Raises Crucial "Creamy Layer" Question

FROM PAGE 1

During the hearing, Justice B. V. Nagarathna observed that education and economic empowerment help individuals attain a higher social status. She remarked that once a family has already reached an advanced position through reservation benefits, it may not be appropriate to continue expecting the same quota benefits for their children.

She stated that if this trend continues, "we may never be able to move beyond the reservation system." The court stressed the need to seriously examine this issue and maintain a balance between social justice and equal opportunity.

The bench further explained that while a person may originally belong to a socially and educationally backward group, the circumstances of their children change

significantly once the parents attain higher positions through reservations.

### Concern Over Benefits Not Reaching the Most Backward

The court also expressed concern that if only a few advanced families within backward communities continue to capture all opportunities, the poorest and most marginalized people within the same communities would suffer injustice.

The bench emphasized that reservation benefits should not remain limited to a select few but must also reach the "last person" at the lowest level of society. The court indicated that it is closely examining whether the current implementation of creamy layer rules for OBCs is sufficiently scientific and fair.

### Indra Sawhney Judgment and Current Rules

## Target is a \$3 Trillion Economy

FROM PAGE 1

He also appealed to banks to adopt a more positive approach towards educational loans, saying student loans are investments in the future of the youth. He stated that the people's government has proved that welfare and development can progress together like twin engines. The Deputy CM reiterated the government's commitment to inclusive development, farmer welfare, women empowerment, and employment generation.

He noted that the entire world is now focusing on renewable energy, and said Telangana is making steady progress in the solar power sector. He urged banks to actively support solar projects, rooftop solar panel installations, and other environmentally friendly

initiatives through financial assistance. He also stressed the need to bring more people under social security and insurance schemes. Bhatti Vikramarka said banks should function not merely as financial institutions that collect deposits and provide loans, but as strategic partners in the state's development. Since public money ultimately reaches banks, he said it is important to decide strategically which sectors should receive loans based on their contribution to the state's GDP and employment generation.

The Deputy CM said the Telangana government aims to make the state a \$3 trillion economy by the financial year 2047. Though it is a big dream, he said it is certainly achievable considering Telangana's

current growth rate. He pointed out that while the national average growth rate stands at 8.2%, Telangana is growing at 10.7%. Similarly, while the national per capita income is ₹2.1 lakh, Telangana's per capita income has reached ₹4.18 lakh, making it one of the leading states in the country.

He further said that the government is moving ahead rapidly with key projects including the rejuvenation of the Musi River, construction of Future City, and the Regional Ring Road. With Telangana witnessing rapid urbanisation, he said the services sector holds enormous opportunities for growth.

To strengthen women's economic empowerment, Bhatti Vikramarka announced that

interest-free loans for Self Help Groups in the state are being increased from ₹5 lakh to ₹10 lakh. He said the government has decided to focus on large-scale loan distribution to women's groups in Hyderabad this year.

He noted that Hyderabad offers immense opportunities for women in business, small industries, and medium enterprises, and called for special focus on young women entrepreneurs from slum areas.

The Deputy CM also revealed that several industrial hubs and clusters will soon be developed in the state. These include sectors such as pharma, Fab City, steel, leather, and textiles. The aim, he said, is to attract both national and international investments into Telangana.

# THE MAN WHO SOLD WINNING FORMULA...

FROM PAGE 1

It respects endurance. It respects leaders who absorb dust, humiliation, ridicule and uncertainty over years before claiming legitimacy. This is precisely where Prashant Kishor misread the battlefield during his political launch. He understood voter data. But Bihar is not merely data. It is emotion, caste memory, social insecurity, migration pain, regional pride and generational distrust wrapped into one explosive democratic theatre. A consultant can manufacture campaign momentum for an existing political force. But building a movement from zero is a completely different species of combat. That requires emotional ownership over public suffering. Bihar has not yet decided whether PK possesses that quality or merely studies it clinically.

### THE SHIFT FROM SHEIKHPURA HOUSE TO BIHTA IS PACKED WITH CAREFULLY ENGINEERED SYMBOLISM

The optics are impossible to miss. A prominent political operator leaves an upscale Patna residence

and shifts into an ashram style set-up near Bihta. The visual language is unmistakable. Simplicity. Sacrifice. Reflection. Discipline. Grassroots immersion. The move taps directly into the emotional grammar of Indian political history where austerity has often been used to establish moral seriousness. Prashant Kishor knows symbolism better than most professional politicians. He understands that Bihar still responds to visible hardship more than elite sophistication. The vocabulary of padayatra, village engagement, silence, introspection and ashram politics carries enormous psychological force in a state shaped by socialist movements and Gandhian imagery. But symbolism is only the opening act. The public eventually asks one brutal question: Can symbolism survive contact with electoral reality? "The strategist who once controlled election war rooms has now locked himself inside Bihar's political furnace to discover whether he can survive without borrowed leaders and borrowed machinery."

### HIS BIGGEST ENEMY TODAY IS NOT NITISH KUMAR OR THE BJP

His biggest enemy is public suspicion. A large section of Bihar still views him as an outsider to mass politics despite his Bihar roots. They see brilliance. They see intellect. They see communication skill. But they are still uncertain whether he belongs emotionally to Bihar's wounded political landscape or merely analyses it with professional detachment. That trust deficit is real. And that is precisely why the ashram experiment matters. By physically relocating himself away from Patna's insulated political ecosystem, Kishor is attempting to erase the perception that he is merely a consultant wearing politician's clothing. This is a battle for emotional legitimacy. Without that legitimacy, no political movement survives in Bihar for long.

### THE JAN SURAJ PROJECT NOW ENTERS ITS MOST DANGEROUS PHASE

The early glamour period is over. The TV fascination has faded. The novelty factor has evaporated. Now begins the unforgiving stage of organisational politics where both committees matter more than

headlines and village relationships matter more than social media applause. This is where many ambitious political experiments collapse. Cadres become restless. Funding dries up. Local leaders defect. Public attention shifts elsewhere. And the architect slowly becomes isolated inside his own rhetoric. Prashant Kishor clearly understands this danger. That is why his new political grammar is shifting from high visibility spectacle to long term organisational embedding. He appears ready to trade instant noise for slow construction. Whether Bihar rewards patience is another matter entirely.

### THE IRONY THAT HAUNTS PRASHANT KISHOR

Indian politics has rarely produced a figure with such a striking contradiction. For years, Prashant Kishor was treated as the invisible engineer capable of helping almost anybody win elections. Political heavyweights depended upon his strategy cells, survey systems and communication machinery. Rivals feared his calculations. Supporters celebrated his precision. Yet when

he entered the battlefield under his own banner, the magic evaporated. This irony now shadows every political move he makes. His critics mock him as the man who won elections for everybody except himself. His supporters argue that long term movements are not built in one election cycle. Both sides may contain fragments of truth. Because the real test before him is not whether he understands politics. The real test is whether Bihar is willing to emotionally adopt him as one of its own political warriors instead of merely admiring him as an intelligent commentator on its failures.

### HE IS ALSO BETTING AGAINST BIHAR'S OLD POLITICAL FORMULA

That makes this political gamble even more explosive. Prashant Kishor is trying to challenge the entrenched structure of Bihar politics where caste arithmetic, inherited loyalties, patronage systems and identity mobilisation dominate electoral outcomes. He speaks the language of education, migration, employment, governance failure and social transfor-

mation. It sounds persuasive in urban debates. But Bihar's electoral machine runs on deeply embedded social equations that do not collapse overnight because somebody delivers sharp speeches. This is why his mission resembles a long siege rather than a quick electoral campaign. He is trying to alter political behaviour itself. And political behaviour in Bihar has survived far bigger storms.

### THE ASHRAM MAY YET BECOME HIS MOST POWERFUL POLITICAL WEAPON

There is nevertheless a possibility that many established parties are underestimating him. Unlike conventional politicians trapped inside election cycles, Kishor appears willing to think in decade long timelines. He is younger than many entrenched Bihar power centres. He understands digital communication, data analysis and modern political organisation at a level few regional leaders can match. If he successfully combines that technical sophistication with genuine grassroots embedding, Jan Suraj

could eventually emerge as a disruptive force rather than a failed experiment. That possibility explains why his opponents continue to watch him carefully despite his electoral setback. Because political history often punishes those who laugh too early.

### THE ASHRAM GAMBLE NOW ENTERS ITS MOMENT OF TRUTH

The move from Sheikhpura House to Bihar Navnirman Ashram is not about real estate. It is about reinvention after humiliation. Prashant Kishor has now entered the most dangerous chapter of his public life. No more borrowed leaders. No more backstage operations. No more safe distance from electoral consequences. The strategist now stands exposed before the electorate as a direct political claimant. And Bihar, with its ruthless political memory and unforgiving democratic instincts, will decide whether this ashram becomes the birthplace of a durable movement or merely the quiet shelter of a man who mistook strategic brilliance for mass connection.

# Tourism Conclave on "Destination Telangana – Road Ahead" at NITHM on May 23

HYDERABAD

The National Institute of Tourism and Hospitality Management (NITHM), jointly promoted by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and Government of Telangana under the aegis of the Youth Advancement, Tourism & Culture (YAT&C) Department, will organize a Tourism Conclave on the theme "Destination Telangana – Road Ahead" on Saturday, May 23, 2026 at the NITHM Campus, Gachibowli, Hyderabad.

Hon'ble Minister for Tourism, Culture and Archaeology, Prohibition & Excise Juppally Krishna Rao will attend the conclave and address the gathering. The conclave is being organized as part of the celebrations marking the Govern-

ment of Telangana's 99 Days Praja Palana Pragathi Pranali.

The programme will commence with Telangana Tourism poster exhibitions, plantation of saplings on the campus and inaugural addresses by senior officials. Special Chief Secretary, YAT&C Department Vani Prasad, MD, TGTDC and Chairman, TGTC will also address the gathering. The event will witness the signing of MoUs and launch of the Telangana Tourism "Brand Kit".

The conclave will feature a series of panel discussions involving tourism industry leaders, hospitality experts, policymakers and stakeholders on the future roadmap for Telangana tourism.

The CEO's Panel Discussion

"Destination Telangana – Road Ahead" will be chaired by Tarun Singh Chauhan, TCS Consulting. The panel includes tourism and hospitality industry leaders such as D. Ramchandram, Co-Chairman, Tourism Committee FTCCI; Nagesh Pampati, President, TAAI Telangana Chapter; Aditya Deendayal, ED, Alankrita Resort; Abhishek Patawar, CEO, Wedding by Patawar; and Arnab Gupta, GM, Taj Deccan.

Another key session on "Towards Preserving Heritage and Making Cities Tourist Friendly – Role of Stakeholders" will be chaired by Prof. Arjun Rao Kuthadi, Director, Department of Heritage, Government of Telangana. Jayesh Ranjan IAS, Special Chief Secretary, Hyderabad Metro-

politan & Urban Development Department, Government of Telangana, will participate virtually. E.Veda Kumar Manikonda, GC Member, INTACH, New Delhi, will also speak during the session.

A stakeholders' panel discussion on "Making Telangana the Hub for Green and Sustainable Tourism" will be chaired by Ranjeet Nayak IFS, Director, Department of Tourism. A.V. Rao, Vice President, Ramoji Film City and Dr. G.B.K. Rao, Chairman, Pragati Resorts, will participate as panel speakers. The conclave aims to deliberate on strategies for tourism promotion, destination development, heritage conservation, sustainable tourism practices and strengthening Telangana's tourism ecosystem.

## ACB raids RR dist deputy collector over land scam allegations

HYDERABAD

Officials of the Anti-Corruption Bureau conducted raids on the residence of Ranga Reddy district Deputy Collector Vamsi Mohan and eight other places in connection with a disproportionate assets case booked against him, and inspected the Urban Land Ceiling (ULC) section of the Medchal-Malkajgiri Collectorate on Thursday.

Vamsi Mohan, who earlier served as RDO in Serilingampally, is facing allegations of illegally registering large extents of government land during his tenure. Investigators suspect that nearly eight acres of government land in Abudullapurmet and Pignipuram were misappropriated and registered in the name of his father-in-law before being transferred to real estate developers through gift deeds. The ACB is also probing allegations that huge sums of money exchanged hands in connection with the disappearance and manipulation of crucial ULC files.

## An Innovative Student Mentorship Initiative at GITAM

HYDERABAD

GITAM Deemed to be University is set to introduce another innovative initiative aimed at empowering students through meaningful guidance and mentoring. Dr. Rojeena Mathew, Director – Training, Mentoring & Career Guidance (TMCG), GITAM Career Guidance Centre, has launched a unique interactive program titled "Talk Time" to help students address their academic, career, and personal development concerns.

As part of the initiative, Dr. Mathew will dedicate one-and-a-half hours daily from 4:00 PM to 5:30 PM between 11 May and 31 December 2026, offering 15-minute one-on-one interaction slots for students. The sessions will be available on all working days, excluding Saturdays and Sundays. The program is designed to provide students with a comfortable and open platform to discuss issues related to Skill Development & Industry Readiness, Career Guidance & Pathways, Mentorship & Professional Growth, and Feedback & Concerns. The initiative encourages students to freely express their ideas,

clarify doubts, seek direction, and receive constructive guidance in a supportive environment.

Highlighting the purpose of the initiative, Dr. Mathew stated that "Talk Time" is intended to create genuine and meaningful conversations where students can openly share their thoughts, seek clarity on important decisions, discuss ideas they have been hesitant to voice, and gain fresh perspectives

on challenges affecting their academic and professional growth. Students have been advised to come prepared with clear discussion points, while booking their slots, utilize the opportunity responsibly, and ensure purposeful interaction as the number of available slots is limited.

Students may reserve their appointment slots by scanning the QR code or through the booking link provided by Dr. Mathew.

## TELANGANA FARMERS IN DIRE DISTRESS, SAYS BJP LEADER

HYDERABAD, MAY 22

BJP legislature party leader Aleti Maheswar Reddy on Friday alleged that farmers across Telangana were facing severe distress due to procurement failures, inadequate infrastructure and unfulfilled promises by the Congress government.

Addressing mediapersons at the BJP state office here, the BJP leader said farmers were unable to sell crops cultivated through "immense toil" and were increasingly falling prey to middlemen amid delays in procurement operations. He cited shortages of transport lorries and gunny bags, along with malfunctioning paddy and maize procurement centres, as major issues troubling farmers ahead of the monsoon season.

Maheswar Reddy accused the Congress government of betraying its poll promise of procuring "every grain" of 10 different crops at remunerative prices and failing to implement the promised Rs.7,500 per acre Rythu Bharosa support scheme. He also criticised the alleged deduction of four kilograms per bag at procurement centres.

Questioning Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy's claim that 80 percent procurement had been completed, the BJP leader said the actual figures were far lower. According to him, only 24 to 35 percent procurement had taken place so far, despite official targets running into crores of metric tonnes.

## TELANGANA Polytechnic Common Entrance Test. Results Through MeeSeva WhatsApp

\*Results will reach directly to the candidates mobile who are already registered

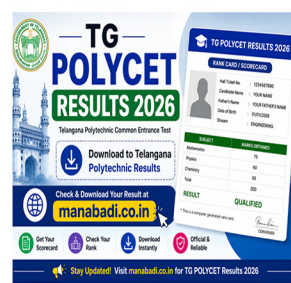
HYDERABAD

Under the visionary leadership of Hon'ble Minister for ITE&C, Sri D. Sridhar Babu Garu, MeeSeva continues to enhance its citizen-centric services to ensure greater convenience, accessibility, and transparency for the people of Telangana.

MeeSeva, the State's flagship digital service delivery platform, has further expanded its reach through the

introduction of the MeeSeva WhatsApp/Chatbot platform, an additional digital channel "WhatsApp/Chatbot MeeSeva" launched on 18th November 2025 to provide seamless access to essential government services.

The Government of Telangana's Electronic Service Delivery (ESD) division is pleased to announce the integration of TGPOLYCET Results on the MeeSeva WhatsApp/Chatbot platform, enabling citizens across the State to access their results instantly via WhatsApp on 23/05/2026, from 11:30 am onwards.



Process of TGPOLYCET Results on MeeSeva WhatsApp. 1. The POLYCET results will be delivered directly to candidates through the official MeeSeva Telangana WhatsApp number (8096958006). 2. This is an outbound ser-

vice, and no user action or request is required.

3. Once the results are officially released, eligible candidates will automatically receive their result notification.

4. The POLYCET Results will be shared as a PDF document on the candidate's registered mobile number via WhatsApp.

5. Candidates can view and download the result instantly for their reference.

This initiative ensures fast, secure, and transparent delivery of examination-related services directly to students and parents.

## UoH, IIT-H join hands to build semiconductor talent hub

HYDERABAD

In a major boost to India's deep-tech and semiconductor ecosystem, the University of Hyderabad and the Indian Institute of Information Technology, Hyderabad (IIT-H) signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Thursday, to strengthen collaborative research, innovation and academic programs.

The partnership brings together two of Hyderabad's leading neighbouring institutions located in the Gachibowli tech corridor, aiming to create a strong academic-industrial ecosystem in semiconductor science, VLSI, embedded systems, and other deep-tech domains.

Under the agreement, both the institutions will share access to specialized laboratories, high-performance computing



(HPC) facilities and library resources. The collaboration is expected to accelerate joint research publications, intellectual property generation, industry-focused innovations and competitive research grants.

The MoU also opens avenues for co-teaching, interdisciplinary projects, and joint supervision of postgraduate and PhD scholars in line with AICTE and UGC norms. Importantly, the institutions plan to introduce collaborative degree programs

in emerging fields such as VLSI and Semiconductor Technologies. Officials said the initiative would help produce industry-ready talent aligned with national priorities in advanced electronics and semiconductor manufacturing.

The agreement was signed in the presence of Prof. J. Anuradha, Vice-Chancellor In-Charge of UoH, and Prof. Sandeep K. Shukla, Director of IIT-H, along with senior academic and administrative representatives from both institutions. The designated coordinators for the collaboration are Prof. S. V. S. Nageswara Rao and Dr. L. D. Varma Sangani from UoH's Centre for Advanced Studies in Electronics Science and Technology (CASEST), and Dr. Abhishek Srivastava and Dr. Zia Abbas from IIT-H's Centre for VLSI and Embedded Systems Technology (CVEST).

## ED arrests Heera Group chief Nowhera Shaik in Rs.3,000 cr investor fraud case

HYDERABAD

The Directorate of Enforcement (ED), Hyderabad Zonal Office, has arrested Nowhera Shaik under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in connection with the multi-crore Heera Group investment fraud case involving alleged cheating of over 1.72 lakh investors across the country.

She was apprehended on May 21 from Gurugram, Haryana, and later produced before the Special PMLA Court in Hyderabad, which remanded her to judicial custody.

According to the ED, investigations were initiated based on multiple FIRs registered by Telangana and Andhra Pradesh police against Nowhera Shaik, Molly Thomas, Biju Thomas and Heera Group companies for allegedly defrauding investors of more than Rs.3,000 crore. The investigating agency alleged that deposits were collected from investors across India by promising returns of nearly



36 percent annually through investments in Heera Group companies. However, the promised profits and principal amounts were allegedly not returned.

ED officials said the accused diverted investors' money through company accounts into personal accounts and acquired huge movable and immovable assets using the alleged proceeds of crime.

During the probe, the ED attached several properties linked to the case under PMLA provisions. The agency also

accused Nowhera Shaik of attempting to delay and derail the investigation by allegedly submitting false claims and affidavits before the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court later permitted the ED to auction attached properties even before completion of trial proceedings to facilitate repayment to investors through the Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO). So far, ED has auctioned several properties and recovered around Rs.122 crore.

Further, the agency alleged

that Nowhera Shaik repeatedly failed to cooperate in executing sale deeds for auctioned properties and ignored court directions to surrender before jail authorities.

Following continued non-cooperation, the Special PMLA Court cancelled her bail and issued a non-bailable warrant (NBW) against her on May 7, 2026. ED officials said she went absconding and was eventually traced to an AIR BNB property in Gurugram, where she was allegedly staying under a fake identity using forged Aadhaar documents in the name of "Shaik Khamar Jahan" along with associate Sameer Khan.

A joint operation by ED and Haryana Police led to her arrest. The ED also revealed that another accused, Kalyan Banerjee, was arrested earlier in January for allegedly impersonating an advocate and attempting to interfere in ED auction proceedings linked to the case. Further investigation is underway.

## SHORT TAKES

### SCRWVO conducts seminar on water conservation & waste management

**KARIMNAGAR:** The South Central Railway Women's Welfare Organisation (SCRWVO), Secunderabad Division, organized a seminar on rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge and solid waste management at railway stations at Sanchalan Bhavan here on Friday. Dr. R. Gopalakrishnan, DRM of Secunderabad division, attended as chief guest, while Sandhya Gopalakrishnan, President, SCRWVO-SC Division, was the guest of honour. Addressing the gathering, DRM Gopalakrishnan stressed the importance of sustainable practices, water conservation and scientific waste management in railway operations. Sandhya Gopalakrishnan highlighted the need for public awareness and community participation to ensure long-term environmental sustainability. Experts including Dr. Kiran Kumar and Dr. Aarati Bhandare delivered technical sessions on groundwater recharge and scientific waste disposal methods at railway stations. The event was attended by officers of Secunderabad Division and members of SCRWVO-SC Division. The programme reflected the joint commitment of Secunderabad Division and SCRWVO-SC Division towards promoting environmental awareness, resource conservation and sustainable practices across railway establishments.

# Telangana Emerging as a Role Model in Digital Transformation

- **Comprehensive Roadmap to Bring Citizen Services Closer to the People**
- **Building a Robust Ecosystem Connecting Next-Generation Innovation, Talent, and Economic Growth**
- **Minister Sridhar Babu at the "Digital Transformation Finance Summit 2026"**



at Novotel HICC on Friday.

**HYDERABAD**  
Telangana is strategically positioning itself as a national role model in digital transformation, according to State IT and Industries Minister Duddilla Sridhar Babu. The government is developing a comprehensive roadmap aimed at delivering citizen-centric services with greater efficiency, transparency, and accessibility directly to the public.

The Minister was speaking as the Chief Guest at the "Digital Transformation Finance Summit 2026," organized by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India

Addressing the gathering, Mr. Sridhar Babu stated that the global economy is undergoing an unprecedented digital shift, with transformative digital ecosystems redefining traditional operational models. He emphasized that nations capable of adapting swiftly to this evolving digital landscape will lead the future global economy.

He noted that India has emerged as one of the world's largest digital economies, with remarkable advancements ranging from digital payments to digital public infrastructure. According to him, Telangana has become a major growth engine driving India's digi-

tal transformation journey.

The Minister highlighted that the State Government is proactively building a future-ready ecosystem that integrates next-generation innovation, skilled talent, and sustainable economic growth. Telangana is moving forward with the ambitious vision of contributing 10% to India's GDP by 2047.

Speaking about the evolving role of finance professionals, he observed that Chartered Accountants, once primarily associated with bookkeeping and auditing, have now transformed into strategic business advisors for corporate enterprises. He further pointed out that emerging technologies

such as Artificial Intelligence, Data Analytics, and Cybersecurity are creating significant opportunities in the financial sector, while simultaneously introducing complex challenges including cyber frauds, deepfakes, crypto scams, and cybercrime threats.

In this context, the Minister stressed that Chartered Accountants must expand their focus beyond traditional financial auditing and actively contribute towards cyber assurance and digital risk management. He also called for greater emphasis on skilling, upskilling, and reskilling to meet the demands of rapidly evolving technological trends.

Mr. Sridhar Babu invited professional institutions and industry experts to collaborate closely with the Telangana Government in strengthening the state's digital and cybersecurity ecosystem.

The summit was attended by several distinguished dignitaries, including Anand Mohan Bajaj, Abhishek Solanki, Rajagopal Sharma, Sahil Malik, Harshavardhan, Shailaja Rani Jampala, Rajesh Thapar, and Vinayak Godse, among others.



## Cong turning "Future City" into real estate venture: Harish Rao

**HYDERABAD**

Former minister and BRS MLA T. Harish Rao on Friday accused the Congress government of converting the proposed "Future City" into a real estate-driven project at the cost of original Pharma City vision. He asserted that the BRS would completely scrap the "Future City" initiative and revive the Pharma City project if voted back to power.

Speaking to media during an overseas tour, Harish Rao claimed that the Union Environment Ministry had granted clearance specifically for Pharma City, with conditions mandating that 75 percent of the land be used for pharmaceutical industries and only 25 percent for ancillary purposes. He alleged that the present government had reversed this ratio by prioritising commercial activities over pharma development, calling the move legally untenable.

He further alleged that the state government was misleading the High Court by claiming continuity of the Pharma City project while deviating from the approved plan. Citing parliamentary provisions, he said any major deviation would require the acquired lands to be returned to farmers.

Defending the original Pharma City concept initiated during the BRS regime, Harish Rao said the project was envisioned to generate massive employment and retain pharmaceutical investments in the region. He accused the Congress government of sitting idle for over two-and-a-half years and reducing the project to a land-distribution exercise aimed at commercial gains through "back-end deals".

He reiterated that a full-fledged Pharma City, as originally conceived by the BRS government, would be established at the same location once the party returns to power.

## Political power for Bahujans is possible only through unity

- **In the people's government, only Malas are getting seats and positions**
- **There are 50,000 Madiga voters in every constituency**
- **Former minister Motkupalli Narsimulu**
- **With the support of BCs, Madigas can attain political power**
- **Call to hoist the flag of Madiga Mahashakti**
- **Madiga community gathering organized under the leadership of Sagarapu Prasad**



though there are 7 million Madigas in the state, upper castes such as Reddys, Kammas, and Velamas continue to dominate power, while using Madigas and other Bahujan communities merely as pawns and vote banks.

He stated that if Madigas vote for their own community candidates, their true strength would become evident, and upper castes would realize the power of the vote. He said that there are more than 50,000 Madigas in every constituency in the state, and if they unite and vote together, Madigas—with the support of BCs (Backward Classes)—

could establish political power.

He called for the Madiga Mahashakti flag to fly high and criticized the ruling authorities for neglecting the proper implementation of reservation benefits. He also alleged that in the Congress-led people's government, seats and ministerial posts were being given only to Mala families. Others who participated in the event included BC Political Front state chairman Balagoni Balaraj Goud, Professor Kanakayya, Durgayya Goud, Bandaru Sudhakar, KV, Macharla Saidulu, David, Mastan, Dayanandam, Jayashankar, Surayya, and others.

## HYD division holds 74th DRUCC meet, members seek new trains & better amenities

**HYDERABAD**

The 74th Divisional Railway Users Consultative Committee (DRUCC) meeting of South Central Railway's Hyderabad Division was held on Friday at Hyderabad Bhavan, Secunderabad, under the chairmanship of Santosh Kumar Verma, divisional railway manager. The meeting reviewed key achievements and development works carried out during 2025-26 and the ongoing financial year, including progress under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme. Officials also briefed the members on passenger amenity projects and infrastructure upgrades across the division.

DRUCC members appreciated the developmental initiatives and sought introduction of new trains, additional stoppages, special train services and improved passenger facilities such as lifts and escalators at stations.

The DRM assured the members that all representations and suggestions would be examined as per existing railway guidelines and necessary action taken. D.S. Rama Rao, Additional Divisional Railway Manager; Dr. Anirudh Pamar. Z, Secretary and Senior Divisional Commercial Manager and other Branch Officers of Hyderabad Division present in the meeting.

## Sports Grounds Should Be Made Plastic-Free

### "Youth for Clean Telangana" Program Held Grandly

**HYDERABAD**

Sports Authority of Telangana Chairman Shivasena Reddy said that the authority is working to transform all sports grounds in the state into plastic-free zones.

As part of the "Praja Palana Pragati Pranalika" initiative, the "Sports and Youth Week Celebrations" featured the "Serve and Support - Youth for Clean Telangana" program, which was conducted grandly across the state today. Under the supervision of the Youth and Sports Department, Clean and Green activities were successfully organized in stadiums across all districts of Telangana.

The main state-level celebrations were held at Lal Bahadur Stadium in Hyderabad in an enthusiastic atmosphere, with participation from youth, athletes, and parents.

Under the leadership of the Sports Authority of Telangana, similar programs were conducted at GMCB Stadium, KBR Indoor Stadium, Saroor Nagar Indoor Stadium, Gymkhana Grounds, and the Cycling Velodrome Stadium in the twin cities.

Sports Authority Chairman Shivasena Reddy and Managing Director Dr. A. Sony Baladevi attended the event held at LB Stadium.

Speaking on the occasion, Chairman Shivasena Reddy said that



athletes, parents, coaches, and staff should maintain cleanliness in playgrounds and surrounding areas, and all stadiums should be developed as plastic-free sports grounds. He added that the Telangana government is giving high priority to sports and, through the Praja Palana-Pragati Pranalika initiative, is organizing Youth and Sports Week celebrations while systematically planning for sports and youth development based on public feedback.

Managing Director Dr. A. Sony Baladevi stated that the Sports and

Youth Week celebrations being conducted under the Praja Palana Pragati Pranalika are continuing successfully across the state. She said the programs are receiving tremendous support from youth, athletes, parents, and various sections of society.

She further noted that the Sports Authority of Telangana is striving to increase interest in sports among people of all age groups and communities. Maintaining cleanliness in playgrounds and sports fields, she said, teaches athletes discipline and dedication.

## Telangana Education Commission Chairman Akunuri Murali resigns

**HYDERABAD**

A significant event has emerged in the realm of government education in Telangana. Akunuri Murali, a retired IAS officer and the Chairman of the State Education Commission, has unexpectedly resigned from his position. He on Friday presented his resignation letter to Chief Secretary K. Ramakrishna Rao.

The Telangana government had previously formed an Education Commission aimed at strengthening and reforming the state's educational framework, appointing Akunuri Murali as its leader. However, his sudden resignation—occurring four months prior to the completion of his term—has ignited considerable discussion in both political and educational spheres.

In his resignation letter to the Chief Secretary, Akunuri

Murali explained that he had fulfilled the obligations and tasks assigned to him as Chairman of the Education Commission. He indicated that his decision to resign was based on the successful completion of his responsibilities.

As a vocal advocate for enhancing government schools and improving educational standards within the state. He has proposed multiple recommendations to the government aimed at facilitating significant reforms in the education sector.

Nonetheless, questions are now being raised about the reasons behind his resignation during his active term: was the completion of his duties truly the only factor, or were there other internal issues involved? The government's response to this situation remains to be seen.

## Kavitha stages protest near Secretariat over grains procurement delays

**HYDERABAD**

Kalvakuntla Kavitha, president of the Telangana Rakshana Sena (TRS) party, staged a dharna near the Telangana Secretariat here on Friday, accusing the state government of neglecting farmers and failing to procure crops on time.

As part of the protest, Kavitha symbolically spilled paddy grain onto the road, alleging that the government was treating farmers with "disdain" and pushing them into severe distress. She said the protest was aimed at drawing the attention of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and the state administration to the hardships being faced by Telangana farmers.

The TRS leader alleged that the Chief Minister had not conducted a single review meeting on agriculture during the last two-and-a-half years. She claimed the farmers cultivating paddy, jowar and sunflower were suffering because of delays



in procurement and demanded immediate purchase of crops without any deductions in weight.

Expressing concern over reports of farmer deaths at procurement centres, she said the government must "wake up" and respond to the crisis. "Farmers are dying while

waiting at procurement centres. This protest is to remind the government of its responsibility", she noted.

Police later detained Kavitha along with several party activists and shifted them to the Falaknuma police station.

## Eco-friendly Creatures - Turtles and Tortoises

**(On the occasion of "World Turtle Day" on 23 May)**

Both turtle and tortoises are lovable shelled creatures who play tremendous roles in their respective ecosystems. Whether it's by digging holes that are habitable for other creatures or cleaning up dead fish from beaches by eating them, there are more than enough reasons to ensure their protection. Even though they belong to same family, the difference between a turtle and tortoise is that turtles spend time near or in the water where as tortoises are primarily land creatures.

**World Turtle Day 2026 Theme**

Rarely is there an animal more beloved by humanity than the turtle. These shelled creatures can be found in all corners of the globe and have found their way into parables, mythology, literature, poetry and all forms of popular media. Each year,

May 23rd is dedicated to our slow friend, the turtle and tortoise to promote and protect their co-existence and also their habitats by celebrating "World Turtle Day" since 2000.

The theme of World Turtle Day-2026 is "Turtle Protector Pledge" to encourage people to take person vow to help and protect this lovable shelled creature. This day promotes these noble reptiles and their place and encourages people to take action to help protect the common pet and the endangered. Turtles are characterized by their cartilaginous very hard shell that acts as a shield from other animals. They are the cold-blooded animals live up to 150 years. There are over 320 known species of turtles, and many of them, around 70 percent are endangered. These omnivores live both in water and on land. Let's bring awareness about their conservation needs.

— Prof Burra Madhusudhan Reddy  
994700037

## Robbery, relative and husband: The plot thickens in Delhi double murder case

NEW DELHI: (MAY 23)

A new angle has emerged in the double murder of a woman and her teenage son in southeast Delhi, with police detaining a distant relative of the deceased who was seen in CCTV camera footage and is suspected to have entered the house on friendly terms before the killings, police sources said on Friday. Investigators, however, said the role of the victim's husband remains under scrutiny, and all angles are being probed to crack the case. Sharda Sahu (38) and her 13-year-old son, a Class 7 student, were found dead with stab wounds inside their house in Gali No. 10 of Govindpuri in the early hours of Thursday.

## NEET-UG candidates can submit bank details for fee refund till May 27: NTA

NEW DELHI: The National Testing Agency (NTA) on Friday opened a dedicated portal for NEET-UG 2026 candidates to submit their bank account details for refund of examination fees after the entrance exam was cancelled earlier this month. In a public notice, the agency said candidates can log in to the NEET-UG 2026 registration portal using their credentials and access the refund link to submit preferred bank account details for processing of fee refunds. "In continuation of the Public Notice dated 12.05.2026 regarding refund of examination fee for NEET (UG)-2026 candidates, the National Testing Agency hereby informs all candidates that a dedicated facility has been made available on the NEET (UG)-2026 registration portal for submission of preferred bank account details for processing of fee refund," the notice said.

# CM Urges Vigilance, Public Alerts Amid Severe Heatwave

AMARAVATI:

In view of the severe and increasing temperatures and heat wave conditions prevailing across the state, Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu directed officials to be more vigilant and take immediate steps to protect people from the impact of extreme heat.

The Chief Minister instructed officials to identify the highest temperatures areas and continuously issue warnings and advisories to residents in those areas. He also directed local authorities to declare holidays in areas experiencing extreme heat, depending on the prevailing conditions. Officials informed the Chief Minister that the heat wave intensity has in-

creased significantly due to severe El Niño conditions. Responding to this, the Chief Minister emphasised the need to provide relief to the public by ensuring the availability of drinking water, buttermilk, and ORS packets in crowded places and public gathering areas.

He instructed District Collectors to spread awareness about heat wave safety measures and ensure continuous dissemination of information through media and social media platforms. Stressing that protecting lives is the government's top priority, the Chief Minister urged people to take precautions while stepping outdoors during peak heat hours. He advised elderly persons, pregnant women, chil-



dren and those with health issues to avoid going outdoors between 11 AM and 4 PM. The Chief Minister also directed District Collectors and mandal-level officials to remain fully prepared to handle emergency situations arising due to the extreme weather.

Officials informed the Chief Minister that 1,349 heat shelters and cooling centers have

been established in urban areas, while arrangements have been made at 446 traffic junctions to provide shade for motorists and police personnel. The Chief Minister also suggested providing water troughs and earthen pots for animals and birds suffering due to the heat.

The Chief Minister directed officials to ensure there is no shortage of drinking water in rural and urban areas and instructed them to supply water through tankers wherever required. He also called for the establishment of emergency response centers in different parts of the state.

Officials informed the Chief Minister that during the severe El Niño year of 2015, the state recorded a peak tem-

perature of 50.1°C, and this year too, temperatures have reached as high as 48°C under similar conditions. They further noted that temperatures have risen from 45°C to 48°C over the past three days.

Responding to this, the Chief Minister stressed the importance of increasing green cover across the state, noting that improved groundwater levels contribute to greenery and help mitigate the impact of extreme temperatures. He cited Annamaya district as an example, stating that it has recorded comparatively lower temperatures than other districts.

Chief Secretary G Sai Prasad and senior officials from various departments attended the review meeting.

## India successfully test-fires Agni-1 ballistic missile from Odisha

India test-launched the short-range ballistic missile Agni-1 from Chandipur in Odisha on Friday. The launch validated key parameters and underlined the Strategic Forces Command's operational readiness.

India successfully test-launched the short-range ballistic missile Agni-1 from the Integrated Test Range at Chandipur, Odisha, on Friday, the Ministry of Defence said. The test was carried out under the aegis of the Strategic Forces Command, which handles the country's strategic nuclear arsenal.

According to the Ministry of Defence, the launch validated all operational and technical parameters of the missile system. Officials said the missile followed its predetermined trajectory and hit the target area with the desired accuracy. The suc-

cessful test reaffirmed the Strategic Forces Command's operational readiness and the reliability of the Agni-1 missile system, which forms part of India's credible minimum deterrence capability.

Agni-1 is a single-stage, solid-fuelled, road-mobile short-range ballistic missile with a strike range of 700-900 km. The missile can carry a payload of up to 1,000 kg and is capable of delivering both conventional and nuclear warheads.

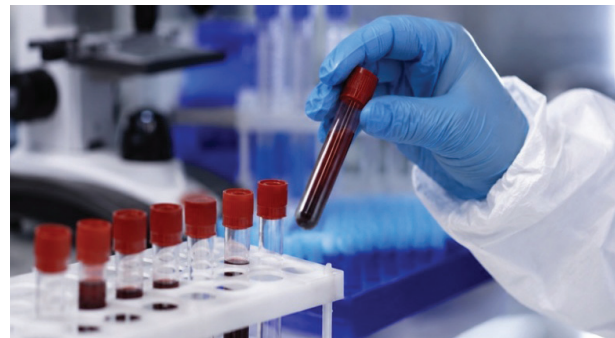
India inducted Agni-1 into service in 2004, and the Strategic Forces Command currently operates the missile system. The missile provides India with a quick-reaction, high-precision strike capability against targets in the region.

The Defence Research and Development Organisation developed the Agni series of missiles under India's Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme. The

# K'taka on high alert after WHO declares Ebola outbreak global health emergency

BENGALURU, MAY 22

The Karnataka Health Department has stepped up surveillance and preparedness measures across the state following the World Health Organization's (WHO) declaration of the ongoing Ebola Disease (ED) outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Uganda as a "Public Health Emergency of International Concern" (PHEIC) on May 17, 2026. According to an official statement issued by the Health Department, "In Bengaluru, the Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Chest Diseases (RGICD) has been designated as the isolation centre, while the Epidemic Diseases Hospital has been identified as the quarantine and treatment centre. "In Mangaluru, Srinivas Port Hospital under the New Mangalore Port Author-



ity (NMPA) has been identified as the quarantine centre, while Wenlock District Hospital has been designated as the isolation and treatment facility." The Health Department stated that samples from suspected Ebola cases would be collected and sent through the National Institute of Virology (NIV), Bengaluru, for confirmatory testing at NIV Pune. The public has been advised not to panic

and to rely only on official information issued by health authorities. Officials said persons returning from Ebola-affected countries should undergo self-monitoring and health observation for 21 days after arriving in India. In case of symptoms, they have been advised to immediately report to the nearest health facility. The department said it was continuously monitoring the global situation and had taken

all necessary precautionary and preparedness measures to handle any potential health emergency. Health authorities clarified that no Ebola cases had been reported in India so far. However, considering the volume of international travel and trade, precautionary measures have been intensified to prevent any possible outbreak. Ebola is a severe viral disease that can cause symptoms including fever, weakness, muscle pain, sore throat, headache, vomiting, diarrhoea, stomach pain, rash and red eyes. The disease spreads through direct contact with the blood, organs or body fluids of infected persons, as well as contaminated materials such as bedding, clothes and syringes. Healthcare workers and close family members of infected persons are considered to be at higher

risk. As part of the preparedness measures, the state has strengthened surveillance and monitoring of suspected cases under the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP). Coordination has also been enhanced with airports and Points of Entry (PoEs).

The department said dedicated quarantine and isolation facilities had been identified, while referral ambulance services had been kept ready. Training of healthcare personnel and infection prevention and control measures have also been intensified.

Authorities added that adequate stocks of personal protective equipment (PPE), medicines and laboratory facilities were being ensured across the state. Rapid Response Teams (RRTs) have also been placed on alert.

# Nashik Police File 1,500-Page Chargesheet in TCS Case

NASHIK, MAY 22

The Nashik Police filed a 1,500-page chargesheet on Friday against the accused in the sexual harassment case involving the Nashik BPO unit of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS). A total of nine FIRs have been registered against the accused. Of these, a chargesheet has currently been filed in only one case. An official statement issued by the team of Nashik Police Commissioner Sandeep Karnik revealed that the

Special Investigation Team (SIT) -- which is probing the allegations -- has uncovered evidence regarding the forced religious conversion of the victim, an act that has caused offense to religious sentiments. The police have also seized original documents used by the accused to alter the victim's name and identity. Furthermore, digital and technical evidence has been retrieved in the form of WhatsApp chat screenshots obtained from the mobile phones of both the victim and the accused.



The chargesheet names Danish Ejaz Shaikh, Tausif Bilal Attar, Nida Ejaz Khan, and Matin Majid Patel as the accused. Consequently, none of them have been granted

bail. The 1,500-page primary chargesheet was filed before the Additional Sessions and Special Court situated at Nashik Road, under Sections 61(2), 64, 68, 69, 46, 75, 319C(8), 299, 238, 249, and 3(5) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), as well as Sections 3(0)(w)(i), 3(0)(w)(ii), 3(2)(v), 3(0)(s), and 3(0)(k) of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. This marks the first chargesheet to be filed following the investigation into allegations of rape

and causing offense to religious sentiments, which were originally registered at the Deolali Police Station in Nashik. Also, there are eight other FIRs registered by TCS employees at the Mumbai Naka Police Station. This development has brought some relief to the victim and her supporters who had been demanding swift action. The case gained widespread attention after details of alleged systematic harassment at the workplace surfaced, triggering outrage across Maharashtra.

Police officials have assured that the probe is being conducted thoroughly to ensure justice. The filing of the detailed charge-sheet is being seen as a crucial milestone that could pave the way for the trial to commence in the near future. The incident has also sparked discussions about workplace safety, especially for women in large corporate setups in tier-two cities like Nashik. Many employees have called for stricter internal policies and better grievance redressal mechanisms within the IT sector.

# India, Cyprus Elevate Ties

NEW DELHI, MAY 22:

India and Cyprus on Friday elevated their ties to a strategic partnership and unveiled a five-year roadmap for defence cooperation as Prime Minister Narendra Modi held wide-ranging talks with Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides. The two sides signed six agreements to provide for deeper cooperation in areas of innovation, technology, education and culture besides agreeing to soon conclude a comprehensive partnership on migration and mobility. The pacts firmed up included one on establishing a joint working group on counter-terrorism. The talks between the two leaders primarily focused on boosting ties in trade and investment, critical technologies, education, and implementation of the ambitious India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor. In his media statement, Modi highlighted that the strategic partnership will unlock commercial capital and open new avenues for Indian companies in Cyprus's infrastructure, energy, and agriculture sectors, while simultaneously boosting investment in India's booming shipping and maritime indus-

## Unveil 5-Year Defence Roadmap



tries. "The relationship between India and Cyprus has stood the test of time and again, with today's decision to upgrade the ties to strategic partnership, we are going to give new ambition and new momentum to our relationship," he said. Following the talks, the two sides also announced the establishment of a cyber security dialogue. Modi also referred to the upswing in India-Europe relationship and said it has entered a new golden era. "Cyprus not only currently holds the Presidency of the European Union Council, but is also emerging as an important investment gateway between India and the whole of Europe,"

he said. "Cyprus is one of India's top 10 investors; over the past decade, investment from Cyprus to India has almost doubled. Trust has grown between the two countries." The India-EU free trade agreement has opened up many new opportunities. "Capitalising on this, we aim to double this investment again in the next five years. And to realize this commitment, today we are elevating our trusted relationship into a strategic partnership," he said. In his remarks, Christodoulides, who kick started his three-day visit to India on Wednesday, said India and Cyprus decided to set up a joint task force for cooperation in key sec-

tors such as infrastructure and shipping. The president said the partnership between the European Union and India must become even stronger in "these times of growing geopolitical uncertainty." "Because together, the EU and India, the world's largest democracy, can play a defining role not only for our regions, but also for global stability and prosperity." Christodoulides also hailed the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) and said Cyprus, located at the crossroads of three continents and the gateway to Europe, stands ready to contribute actively to it. The president also said that Cyprus and the Cypriot people deeply value India's "longstanding support in our efforts to reunify Cyprus, and for your steadfast support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus." "Today's meeting stands as confirmation that Cyprus and India are not simply strengthening bilateral ties. We are building a partnership with strategic depth and global relevance. For our countries, our peoples and

for our respective regions," he said. In his comments, Modi described the defence and security cooperation between the two nations as an important pillar of the ties. "Today we also decided to further strengthen cooperation in cybersecurity, maritime security, and counter-terrorism," he said. Modi said Indian professionals and students living in Cyprus are strengthening the ties between the two sides. "To further strengthen these ties, we have agreed to soon conclude a comprehensive Migration and Mobility Partnership, as well as a Social Security Agreement," he said. "The friendship between India and Cyprus is both strong and futuristic. A shared belief in values like democracy and the rule of law is the foundation of our partnership," Modi said. "We respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations. India is and will remain fully committed to these principles," he said. At a media briefing, Secretary (West) in the Ministry of External Affairs Sibi George said UPI will be operational in Cyprus from 2027.

# India to Build 'Smart Borders' Along Pak, Bangladesh: Amit Shah

NEW DELHI, MAY 22:

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday said the government will launch a tech-enabled "smart border" project by the next year to make the 6,000-km fronts with Pakistan and Bangladesh impenetrable and ensure that the "conspiracy" to change the demography of the country is defeated. Delivering the annual Rustamji Memorial lecture hosted by the Border Security Force (BSF) here, the minister also reiterated that the government will find each and every infiltrator and send them out of India. K F Rustamji was the founding father and the first director general of the BSF, the world's largest border guarding force with about 2.70 lakh personnel tasked to guard Indian borders with Pakistan on the west and Bangladesh on the east. It was raised in 1965. "The government of India has decided that not only will we stop infiltration but we will find each and every infiltrator and send them out of the country," Shah said. He added his government will not allow "artificial change in our demography being attempted from the other side."



"I want to assure BSF troops that we will launch the smart border project within the 60th year of its raising and we will make the Bangladesh and Pakistan borders impenetrable through major technical assistance," Shah said. The "smart border" will use technology, drones, radars and smart cameras to help create an impenetrable border, he told the gathering. Calling these two borders "vulnerable" and a "cause of concern" for the country from the security point of view, Shah said these fronts (about 1,289 km with Pakistan and 4,096 km with Bangladesh) cannot be guarded with "traditional" methods. The concept of border security should not be seen in isolation but as a "territorial responsibility" involving all agencies and state governments, he said. He said these borders

currently face threats like illegal infiltration, smuggling of drugs, weapons and arms through drones apart from cattle, fake Indian currency notes and organised crime. "It is most important to identify future dangers, and it is our responsibility to stop the artificial demographic change being attempted from the other side (of the border) through infiltration, and, for this, we have to remain alert and vigilant," he told the officers and jawans in attendance. Shah said the Modi government brought a "radical" change to the security policy and border protection perspective since it took charge in 2014. "We have defeated all three attacks carried out by Pakistan whether it was in Uri (2016), Pulwama (2019), or Pahalgam (2026)...we have given them a befitting response by striking deep inside Pakistan," he said. Shah asserted that gone were the days when talks used to happen after a terrorist attack and when Naxalites used to undertake massacres without any fear. "We have aligned our security perspective with the spirit of the Constitution to strengthen it... all this, in a way, is a declaration of a new defence doctrine," he said.

EDITORIAL

THE COUNT OF CONTRADICTIONS:  
NAVIGATING THE LEGISLATIVE AND  
SOCIAL STAKES OF CENSUS 2027

The Supreme Court was not wrong to dismiss a petition that sought to stall the caste census, which is part of the ongoing Census 2027. The Chief Justice of India remarked, in support of the caste count, that “any government of the day must know how many people are backward and how many need welfare”. In April 2025, the Narendra Modi government had made a turnaround to announce caste enumeration alongside the fresh census, the first such exercise since 1931. Mr. Modi had earlier derided the idea as a sign of “urban Naxal” thinking, and the RSS had warned that such surveys were attempts to fracture Hindu society. The Congress, too, had made a dramatic turnaround in its historical position to demand a caste census. Early governments of independent India decided not to enumerate caste with the census. The dominant thinking then was that counting caste communities would only reinforce the institution of caste that the state wanted to dismantle. On the one hand, state policies sought to create a casteless society, while on the other, they also accounted for caste identities for positive discrimination in legislative representation and employment. This dual approach to caste that was baked into the nation’s founding principles has created a paradox that continues to this day. The clamour for a caste census is the latest manifestation of it.

The Census itself has been long overdue. The decennial population survey was originally due in 2021 but was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic and logistical hurdles. The caste enumeration will take place in the second phase and will involve asking every individual their caste, rather than merely recording whether they belong to a Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe, as in previous Censuses. The delay in the Census has a bearing on planning of all sorts. In India, a considerable portion of state policy is directly or indirectly linked to the caste profile of the target group. The one attempt at a post-Independence national caste count came in 2011. The open-ended caste identification process of the Socio-Economic and Caste Census produced over 46 lakh distinct caste names and 8 crore data errors, rendering the dataset unusable. Most of its findings remain unpublished. The Modi government is still grappling with the challenge of finding the appropriate methodology for an accurate enumeration of caste communities. A caste census detracts from the effort to eradicate caste as it ossifies identities, but is helpful if viewed alongside other socioeconomic indices to better target welfare measures and ensure representation. The annihilation of caste must remain a goal, and people must be allowed to classify themselves as casteless if they so wish.

Biodiversity in India:  
A Crisis and a Call for Balance

India's Ecological Wealth  
and Its Global Importance

From the Himalayas to the sacred Ganga, and from the Western Ghats to the mangrove-rich coastal regions, India represents a unique blend of geography, culture, and ecology. This is not merely a land of landscapes; it is a living ecosystem where human life and nature are deeply intertwined. In such a setting, biodiversity is not an external concern; it is the foundation of existence. Although India occupies only 2.4% of the world's land area, it supports nearly 7-8% of global recorded species. This extraordinary richness makes it one of the world's most significant biodiversity hotspots. Any damage to

India's biodiversity is not just a national treasure but a global ecological lifeline. From the Himalayas to the mangroves, the country's rich ecosystems support millions of species and human livelihoods alike. Yet rapid development, pollution, and climate change are pushing this delicate balance toward crisis, making environmental protection essential not only for nature but for humanity's survival and future sustainability.



this system is not confined within national borders; it has global ecological consequences.

From Development to  
Degradation: A Growing  
Imbalance

In the pursuit of rapid economic growth, nature has often been treated as an unlimited resource. Forests have been cleared, rivers polluted, and ecosystems fragmented. For decades, environmental costs were ignored in the name of development. However, this approach has reached a breaking point. What was once considered an “environmental issue” has now become a structural crisis affecting food security, water availability, public health, and economic stability. Environmental degradation is no longer separate from development; it is its limiting factor. Biodiversity refers to the vari-

ety of all living organisms plants, animals, and microorganisms and the ecosystems they form. It is not a random collection of species but a carefully balanced system where every element has a role. When this balance is disturbed, the effects ripple across the entire system. A decline in one species can trigger a chain reaction affecting food chains, ecosystems, and human survival. In simple terms, biodiversity is the invisible support system of life.

From Ecosystem Stress  
to Human Crisis:

One of the clearest impacts of biodiversity loss is visible in agriculture. Pollinators such as bees and butterflies are essential for

The loss of biodiversity is closely linked with increasing climate instability. Rising temperatures, unpredictable monsoons, floods, and heatwaves are becoming more frequent. Cities like Chennai have experienced devastating floods, while northern India regularly faces extreme heat conditions. Mangroves, which act as natural barriers against storms, are disappearing. Forests that once regulated rainfall patterns are shrinking. These changes clearly show how ecological damage increases human vulnerability.

Environmental degradation also has serious social impacts. Forest dependent communities and indigenous populations are among the most affected. When forests disappear, their livelihoods, traditions, and cultural identities are threatened. In addition, disturbed ecosystems increase the risk of new diseases. When natural habitats are disrupted, human-animal interactions rise, creating conditions for the spread of new pathogens. Thus, biodiversity loss is also a public health concern.

Human Pressure on  
Natural Systems:

Human activity continues to place immense pressure on ecosystems. Deforestation for urban expansion, industrial growth, and agricultural land use is accelerating habitat loss. Pollution of air, water, and soil has become widespread. At the same time, natural resources are being consumed faster than they can regenerate. Overfishing has reduced marine populations, while excessive groundwater extraction has lowered water tables. Climate change further worsens the situation by pushing species beyond their survival limits. Invasive species also disrupt native ecosystems, causing long-term ecological imbalance.

Rethinking Development  
for a Sustainable Future:

To address this crisis, development must be redefined. Economic growth cannot come at the cost of ecological destruction. Wetlands, forests, and rivers must be seen as essential natural infrastructure. Wetlands reduce flooding, recharge groundwater, and reg-

ulate urban temperatures. Their destruction leads to long term environmental and economic losses. Similarly, sustainable agricultural practices can restore soil health and reduce dependence on chemical inputs. Investing in renewable energy such as solar, wind, and green hydrogen is also crucial. These transitions not only reduce pollution but also create new employment opportunities. Sustainability and development must move forward together.

A circular economy approach based on reduce, reuse, recycle, and regenerate can significantly reduce environmental pressure. Waste should no longer be seen as an endpoint but as a resource within a continuous cycle. Equally important is the role of indigenous and rural communities. Their traditional knowledge systems are deeply connected to ecological balance. Recognizing their rights and involving them in conservation efforts is essential for meaningful progress.

A Defining Choice for India:

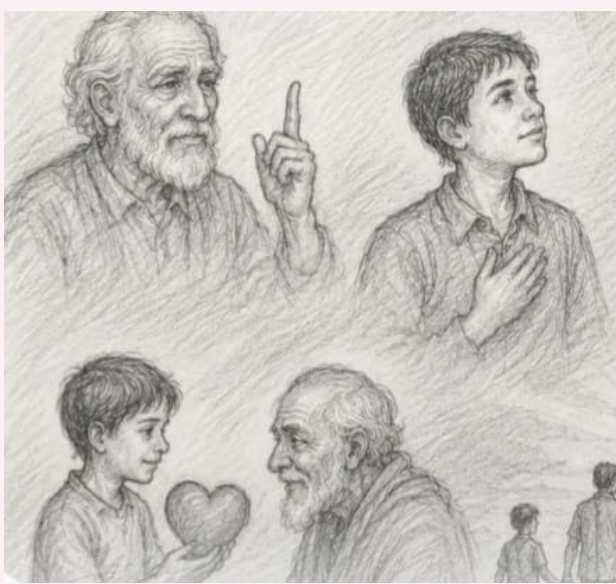
India stands at a critical crossroads. With its demographic strength, technological capacity, and cultural philosophy of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam”, the country has the potential to lead global sustainability efforts. However, true progress must go beyond GDP. It must also reflect the health of forests, rivers, and ecosystems. Biodiversity is not separate from human survival; it is its foundation.

Protecting nature is not an option. It is a necessity for survival. The decisions taken today will determine not only the environment of tomorrow but the future of human civilization itself.



KINJARAPU AMARAVATHI  
Member, PLUS NGO

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Where are the ones, so full of delight,  
Who called their kids by names so bright?  
Whose tender voices, soft and true,  
Made childhood dreams feel fresh and new?

Where are the hearts, so big, so wide,  
Who cared for orphans, stood by their side?  
Who fed the hungry, wiped their tears,  
And calmed their pain, their darkest fears?

Where are the souls who believed in trust,  
In love and kindness, warm and just?  
Who sang of life with melodies sweet,  
With faith and hope, they took no defeat?

Where are the ones who thought so wise,  
To do no harm, to tell no lies?  
Who chose the good, ignored the bad,  
And found in truth the joy they had?

Where is the world of real embrace,  
Beyond the screens, beyond the chase?  
Where innocence once brightly shone,  
Now lost in reels, yet never gone?

Where are the hearts, both kind and pure,  
That saw the world, yet stayed secure?  
Who gave with love, with hands so free,  
And dreamed of a world in harmony?

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

Politics Should Focus on Public Issues  
Rather Than Anti-Sanatan Narratives

In the contemporary landscape of Indian politics, a discourse has steadily emerged that has shifted political debate away from core public concerns such as development, education, healthcare, employment, and social justice, and instead centered it around religious identity and faith. This discourse revolves around “support for Sanatan versus opposition to Sanatan.” On one side are those who regard Sanatan culture as the eternal foundation of Indian civilization and life, while on the other are certain political statements and tendencies that many perceive as being opposed to Sanatan values. The issue is not whether one agrees or disagrees with a particular ideology; rather, the real question is whether religion should become the central axis of politics, or whether politics should remain focused on the actual concerns of people's lives.

India's democracy is founded upon a secular Constitution, where the role of the State is neither to promote nor oppose any religion, but to safeguard the rights of all citizens equally. Political parties, too, bear the responsibility of prioritizing public welfare, development, and national unity. However, in recent years, religious discourse has increasingly occupied the center stage of political debate. Sanatan is not merely a religious term; it represents the cultural consciousness, philosophical outlook, and value system of Indian civilization. Ideals such as “Satyam Vada, Dharmam Chara” (Speak the truth, follow righteousness), “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” (The world is one family), and “Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah” (May all be happy) are integral expressions of this worldview.

Therefore, when political statements employ derogatory or aggressive language regarding Sanatan, their impact extends beyond religion and touches the cultural and emotional fabric of millions. The controversy surrounding the remarks made by a leader from Tamil Nadu comparing Sanatan Dharma to a disease became widely debated precisely because it was perceived as hurting the sentiments of a large section of society. Several opposition parties attempted to distance themselves from the statement, recognizing that remarks perceived as

offensive toward the faith of millions could create political discomfort in a country like India. It is important, however, to understand the historical and social context behind movements such as the Dravidian movement. Their original struggle was against social inequalities and caste-based dominance. Yet, when the discourse of social reform begins to appear as opposition to an entire faith or culture, it risks losing broader public acceptance. It is equally true that many opposition parties do not describe themselves as anti-Sanatan; rather, they claim to oppose social evils, caste discrimination, and inequality. Their emphasis is on social justice and constitutional values—a viewpoint fully legitimate in a democracy, as every tradition requires introspection and reform.

Indian civilization itself has a long tradition of dialogue, debate, and self-reflection. Great reformers and spiritual leaders such as Gautama Buddha, Mahavira, Kabir, Guru Nanak, Dayananda Saraswati, and Mahatma Gandhi questioned social distortions, but their objective was reform—not division. The problem arises when political language loses balance. When criticism shifts from reform to rejection, it creates social polarization. In a pluralistic nation like India, such tendencies are not conducive to democratic health. Under the leadership of Narendra Modi, the discourse of cultural nationalism and civilizational identity has gained greater prominence over the past decade. Initiatives such as the construction of the Ram Temple, redevelopment of cultural and spiritual centers, and revival of heritage spaces have strengthened cultural confidence among many sections of society and have also yielded political benefits.

At the same time, several opposition parties have at times appeared uncomfortable in adapting to this changing political sentiment. In some cases, they struggled to balance secularism with public faith; in others, statements by individual leaders created political challenges. Electoral trends across states have shown that caste equations and traditional vote banks alone are no longer sufficient. Voters increasingly value cultural identity, development, and national narratives alongside economic concerns.

Yet, there is another side to this debate. Should politics be driven primarily by religious identity? Should pressing concerns such as unemployment, education, healthcare, environmental degradation, agrarian distress, economic inequality, and social fragmentation recede into the background? These questions are equally vital.

Over recent years, certain remarks by leaders from parties such as Congress, Samajwadi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party, Trinamool Congress, DMK, and others regarding Sanatan and Hindu faith have been interpreted by sections of society as insensitive toward Hindu sentiments, and political consequences have followed. However, this issue cannot simply be reduced to “Hindu opposition versus political opposition.” India is a democratic and pluralistic nation where every political party has the right to oppose governments, policies, or leadership. Yet, when such opposition appears to conflict with the cultural and religious sentiments of the majority, it may carry political costs.

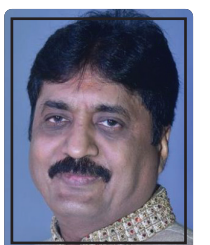
Sanatan in India is not viewed merely as a religious identity; it is widely regarded as a symbol of philosophy, culture, tolerance, tradition, and civilizational continuity. Consequently, insensitive language or negative signaling toward it often evokes strong public reactions. At the same time, democratic maturity requires that political discourse remain centered on governance, policies, and public welfare rather than religious polarization. Political parties must preserve the balance between criticism and respect for the nation's cultural consciousness and religious sensitivities because, ultimately, people support leadership that understands their emotions, traditions, and national ethos.

Indian politics must rise above a “religion versus religion” framework and move toward a discourse centered on “people and their problems.” Citizens seek both temples and employment, faith and opportunity, culture and modernity. Religious polarization alone cannot become the foundation of sustainable national progress. Political parties should move beyond accusations of “anti-Sanatan” or “anti-Hindu” politics. If reforms within traditions are needed, they should

be pursued through respectful language and constructive engagement. Social justice should not imply cultural rejection, and cultural nationalism should not mean denial of alternative perspectives. The strength of Indian civilization lies in its diversity and tolerance. India embraces Shankaracharya and Buddha, Mahavira and Kabir, the Vedas and the Constitution alike. It has always valued dialogue above conflict. Therefore, politics too must adopt a language that unites society rather than divides it.

At a time when the world is struggling with conflicts, cultural tensions, and identity-based politics, India possesses the message of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam”—the world as one family. This, indeed, reflects the true spirit of Sanatan: inclusion, compassion, and coexistence. Political parties must introspect and ask themselves: Do they wish to lead society toward religious confrontation or toward national reconstruction? If politics remains trapped in disputes over faith, the real issues of public life will continue to be neglected. But if it respects culture while prioritizing development, education, healthcare, and social harmony, India can emerge as a stronger and more balanced nation.

Sanatan means eternal, and the eternal is that which embraces all. Therefore, neither blind opposition nor blind support can offer solutions. What India needs is balanced politics, thoughtful vision, and a commitment to national interest above all else. The maturity of Indian democracy lies in respecting faith while ensuring that politics remains a vehicle of public welfare. Only then will democracy become stronger, and society more harmonious.



LALIT GARGG  
Writer, Journalist,  
Columnist

**Railway minister inaugurates Delhi-Bhuj train service via Rajasthan's Jalore**  
JODHPUR: (MAY 22)

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Friday flagged off a new train service from Jalore in Rajasthan and said it was for the first time that this region was getting direct rail connectivity with Delhi and Jaipur. Though it was inaugurated from Jalore, its scheduled service will operate between Bhuj and Delhi via Jalore, Pali and Ajmer. Vaishnaw said that the people of the Jalore region had long needed better rail connectivity, which has now been fulfilled through the new rail service. He said that this new rail service will play an important role in the development of Jalore and the surrounding areas and provide passengers with better and convenient travel facilities.

## NDA May Lose Rajya Sabha Seat as EC Announces June 18 Polls

NEW DELHI, MAY 22:

The NDA is likely to lose one Rajya Sabha seat in the biennial elections for 26 seats in 12 states across the country, while the Congress-led opposition is set to gain three. The Election Commission on Friday announced elections for 26 Rajya Sabha seats on June 18 following the retirement of incumbents, including former prime minister HD Deve Gowda, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and party leader Digvijaya Singh, besides two Union ministers Ravneet Singh and George Kurian. In a statement, the EC said the elections for the Rajya Sabha seats will be held in 10 states where 24 incumbents are retiring on different dates beginning June 21 to July 19. Of the total 26 seats where elections are being held, the NDA currently has 18, the Congress four while one seat is with the JMM and three are



with the YSRCP. The NDA is likely to get 17 seats in these elections, while the Congress will get five, the JMM two and the TVK one. The NDA currently has 149 MPs in the upper house while the opposition has 78 and non-aligned regional parties have 17 MPs in the 244-member house. The Rajya Sabha elections will be held in four seats each in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Karnataka, three seats each in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, two seats in Jharkhand and one seat

each in Manipur, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram. Besides, one seat each in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu will also go to the polls on June 18. The last date for filing of nominations is June 8, according to the EC. In a separate notification, the EC also announced by-elections to fill the vacancies created by the NCP's Sunetra Pawar in Maharashtra and the AI-ADMK's C Ve Shanmugam in Tamil Nadu following their resignations after they were elected to the state assem-

blies. While the NDA is set to bag Pawar's seat, going by its strength in the state assembly, the TVK is likely to get the lone Rajya Sabha seat from Tamil Nadu going for a bypoll. The tenure of Pawar's seat will be till July 4, 2028 while that for the Tamil Nadu seat will be till June 29, 2028. In Andhra Pradesh, the TDP will win all the four states for the Council of States and the BJP will bag all four seats in Gujarat. In Jharkhand, the JMM-Congress alliance is likely to win both the seats, but the BJP which has 21 seats of its own may try to bag one seat with the help of cross-voting by four opposition members. In Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, the Congress will get one seat each while the BJP will win two seats in each of the states, going by their current numbers. In Karnataka, the Congress will win three seats and the BJP will get only one seat. Among those who

are retiring from the Rajya Sabha are Gowda, Congress president Kharge (both from Karnataka), Union ministers Ravneet Singh (Rajasthan) and George Kurian (Madhya Pradesh), former chief minister Digvijay Singh, and Congress leader Shaktisinh Gohil. Besides Ravneet Singh, the members whose tenure is ending in Rajasthan are Neeraj Dangi of the Congress and Rajendra Gehlot of the BJP. Rajasthan has a total of 10 Rajya Sabha seats. The BJP and the Congress currently have five members each. Given the present strength of parties in the 200-member Rajasthan Assembly, the BJP is expected to win two of the three seats, while the Congress is likely to secure one. The BJP has 118 MLAs in the Assembly, while the Congress has 67 members. The BSP has two MLAs, the Bharat Adivasi Party four, the Rashtriya Lok Dal one, and Independents eight.



## NFR Successfully Completes Major Curve Realignment Work in Simaluguri - Moranhat Section

MALIGAON, 22 MAY, 2026:

Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has successfully completed a major curve realignment work in the Simaluguri - Moranhat section under Tinsukia Division in connection with the permanent removal of a Permanent Speed Restriction (PSR). The significant infrastructure improvement involved conversion of an existing 3-degree curve into a smoother 2-degree curve through cut and connection of track along with shifting of Overhead Equipment (OHE) masts and wires. The work was executed successfully with close coordination among the Engineering, Operating and Traction Distribution (TRD) departments during the traffic block period, reflecting the strong teamwork and operational efficiency of the division.

During the execution of the block, the existing 3-degree curve was seamlessly connected with a newly aligned 2-degree curve laid on fresh formation of ap-

proximately 500 metres length. The project involved a maximum track slew of 7.7 metres and was completed with utmost precision and safety. To ensure smooth and safe train operations, machine tamping using a Duomatic machine was also carried out before passage of the first train. With successful completion of this important infrastructure work, the existing Permanent Speed Restriction (PSR) of 95 kmph over a stretch of 500 metres has been permanently removed and the section is now fit for Maximum Permissible Speed (MPS) of 110 kmph. This development will significantly enhance train mobility, improve punctuality and provide smoother and more efficient train operations in the section. Northeast Frontier Railway remains committed towards continuous infrastructure modernization, strengthening of safety measures and enhancement of operational efficiency for providing safer, faster and more reliable rail services across its network.

## Punjab to Tackle Stray Dog Menace as per SC Guidelines: CM Mann

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said the state will enforce the Supreme Court's stray dog directives in crowded public spaces. The move sharpens the debate between public safety concerns and animal welfare safeguards. Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Tuesday said the state government would strictly implement the recent Supreme Court directives regarding the management of stray dogs in public spaces, amid rising concerns over dog bite incidents and public safety across the country. The Punjab government will strictly follow in letter and spirit the Supreme Court order given on 19th May 2026. As per the SC orders, we will remove stray dogs from all high-footfall public spaces so that children, senior citizens and families can move freely without fearing for their safety. We will create and maintain an adequate number of dog shelters where these stray dogs can be cared for properly," read his tweet. The announcement follows the Supreme Court's May 19, 2026 order directing all states and Union Territories to immediately remove stray dogs from high-footfall public institutions such as schools, hospitals, sports complexes, railway stations and bus



depots. According to Mann, the Punjab government will begin removing stray dogs from crowded public areas to ensure the safety of children, senior citizens and families. He also said the state would establish and maintain proper dog shelters for relocated animals. The Chief Minister stated that the government would act strictly within the legal framework laid down under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and the Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules, 2023. Under the Supreme Court's directions, stray dogs picked up from sensitive public spaces will be sterilised, vaccinated and shifted to shelters instead of being released back into the same areas. The court also permitted euthanasia only in cases involving confirmed rabid dogs, incurably ill animals or dogs found to be demonstrably dangerous. Officials said the ruling marks a significant shift from

earlier policies that allowed sterilised dogs to be released back into their original localities after vaccination.

The Supreme Court, while hearing suo motu proceedings related to rising dog attacks and rabies concerns, observed that public safety must remain a priority, particularly in areas frequently accessed by children and vulnerable groups. The court has also directed authorities to create adequate shelter infrastructure and warned that High Courts would monitor implementation in respective states. Action may be initiated against civic bodies or officials found negligent in complying with the directives. Punjab had earlier initiated efforts to manage stray dog populations through pilot projects, including the launch of a dog sanctuary model in Ludhiana in January 2026. The latest announcement has triggered mixed reactions. While several residents and public safety groups welcomed the move, some animal welfare activists expressed concern over possible misuse or improper implementation of the policy. The issue has reignited the national debate over balancing animal welfare with public safety amid increasing reports of stray dog attacks in urban areas.

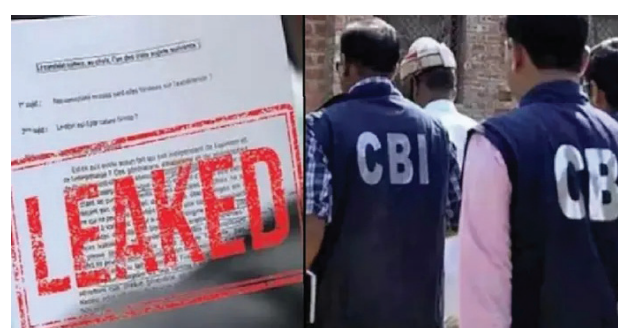
## CBI arrests NTA-appointed expert in NEET-UG 2026 Physics paper leak

The CBI has arrested another key accused in the alleged NEET-UG 2026 paper leak case, claiming she was the source of leaked Physics questions. The accused, an NTA-appointed expert from Pune, allegedly shared questions that later matched the actual exam paper sets.

Another key accused, identified as Manisha Sanjay Havaldar, has been arrested by the CBI after extensive interrogation in connection with the alleged NEET-UG 2026 paper leak case.

Havaldar, who is currently employed at Seth Hiralal Saraf Prashala in Pune, Maharashtra, was allegedly involved in the NEET-UG 2026 examination process as an expert appointed by the National Testing Agency (NTA). According to the CBI, she had complete access to the Physics question papers. The agency alleged that during April 2026, she shared several Physics questions related to the NEET exam with co-accused Manisha Mandhare, who was arrested earlier on May 16.

Investigators said the questions allegedly shared by Havaldar matched those that eventually appeared in the



Physics sections of multiple NEET UG paper sets.

SEARCHES CONDUCTED ACROSS MAJOR CITIES

As part of the ongoing investigation, the CBI has conducted searches at several locations across the country and seized multiple incriminating materials, including laptops, mobile phones, bank statements, and documents. Officials said forensic and technical analysis of the seized material is currently underway.

The CBI had registered the case on May 12, following a written complaint from the Department of Higher Education under the Ministry of Education regarding the alleged leak of NEET-UG 2026 question papers. Soon after the FIR was filed, special investigation teams were formed and raids were conducted at multiple locations nationwide. Several suspects

were subsequently detained and questioned.

11 ACCUSED ARRESTED SO FAR

So far, 11 accused have been arrested from Delhi, Jaipur, Gurugram, Nashik, Pune, Latur, and Ahilyanagar in connection with the case.

According to the CBI, the investigation has now uncovered what it describes as the "actual source" of the question paper leak. The agency also claimed to have identified and arrested intermediaries who allegedly mobilised students willing to pay lakhs of rupees for access to "special coaching sessions" where questions purportedly appearing in the NEET-UG 2026 examination were allegedly shared in advance.

The CBI said the investigation remains ongoing and reiterated its commitment to conducting a "comprehensive, impartial and professional" probe into the matter.

## Gurugram: Power outage hits several parts after transformer fire at Sector-72 substation

GURUGRAM (HARYANA):

A major power outage hit several parts of Gurugram on Friday evening after a fire broke out following a fault in the main transformer at the 220 KV power station in Sector-72, officials said. According to Sandeep Chugh, PRO of Dakshin Haryana Bijli Vitran Nigam (DHBVN), the disruption was triggered due to a technical fault, which led to an oil leak and subsequent blast in the current transfer circuit. "Power Supply Restored from the 220 KVA Power Station in Sector 72, Gurugram", the department said, adding that the "Blast Was Caused by Oil Leakage in the Current Transfer Circuit." Officials further confirmed that "Power Supply to 7 Power Stations Disrupted Due to the Blast in the Current Transfer Circuit", following which electricity department personnel were deployed on-site to carry out emergency repairs.

"Electricity Department Employees Repaired the Circuit and Restored Power Supply," the statement said. The XEN was also present at the site. The fault occurred at around 7:50 pm and led to widespread disruption across multiple 66 KV substations in sectors 15, 38, 44, 46, 52 and 56. Rapid Metro services were also briefly affected but were restored by 8:15 pm, officials said. According to the XEN (Executive Engineer) of the

Haryana Electricity Distribution Corporation, an oil leak in the transfer circuit escalated before the operator could trip the breaker, resulting in a transformer explosion and fire. "Before the operator could attempt to trip the breaker to prevent a fire, the transformer exploded, and a fire broke out," the XEN said, adding that the blast led to the rupture of the collars of the Current Transformer (CT), which further triggered faults in adjacent systems. Due to the incident, two major 220 kV substations in Sector 56 and Sector 52 were shut down, along with five linked 66 KV substations, resulting in a large-scale blackout across the network, another Executive Engineer, Anil Malik, added.

Rapid Metro services, which operate from the Sector 56 power station, also came to a halt at 7:50 pm but were restored around 8:25 pm. "By 10:10 pm, the department had fully restored the entire system on its end. Currently, there is no impact on the power supply," officials said. Authorities also stated that the primary cause of the fault and damage was excessive heat (thermal heating). Restoration work has been completed, and replacement equipment has been dispatched to the site, with officials expecting full replacement of damaged components within the next 2-3 hours. "No further issues are anticipated during the night," officials added.

## CM Nayab Invites Japanese Investment in Haryana

CHANDIGARH, MAY 22

Haryana Chief Minister Sh. Nayab Singh Saini said that India and Japan have shared a strong strategic and economic partnership for many years. He stated that resilient supply chains can be built in collaboration with Japan to create a next-generation industrial ecosystem, paving the way for a smarter, greener and more prosperous future. The Chief Minister was addressing the Indo-Japan Conclave held in New Delhi on Friday. Haryana Industries and Commerce Minister Rao Narbir Singh was also present at the event. Sh. Nayab Singh Saini invited Japanese investors attending the conclave to partner with Haryana in the fields of innovation, manufacturing, technology, sustainability, and future-oriented development. He said that Japan's advanced technology and cooperation are playing a significant role in several major development projects across India. He stated that if the most vibrant and successful model of India-Japan partnership can be seen in any Indian state, it is Haryana, where Japanese investment, industrial development, and technological cooperation have accelerated growth. Addressing the conclave,

the Chief Minister said that Haryana has today become the largest hub for Japanese industries in India. Nearly 394 Japanese industries and over 600 Japanese business establishments are currently operating in the state. He added that the India-Japan partnership continues to grow stronger. Referring to his visit to Japan in October last year, the Chief Minister said that Japanese companies had responded very positively during the visit. Nine reputed Japanese companies expressed their commitment to invest around Rs. 5,000 crore in Haryana. This trust, he said, is making Haryana a "Home Away From Home" for Japanese companies. He emphasized that the relationship goes beyond business-to-business or government-to-government ties, and that Haryana gives greater importance to H2H - "Heart to Heart" relationships. The Chief Minister said that India and Japan share a trust-based partnership founded on common values such as trust, discipline, harmony, respect for tradition, and commitment to excellence. In today's world, trust-based partnerships are the most valuable.

**Haryana Preferred Destination for Japanese Investors**  
The Chief Minister said it is



worth considering why Japanese companies have specifically chosen Haryana for investment. He explained that the reason is not only the state's geographical location or investment promotion policies, but also Haryana's understanding and adoption of Japanese work culture. He said Japanese industries place special emphasis on quality, operational stability, disciplined workforce, reliable supply chains, and long-term commitment, and Haryana has successfully met all these standards. Based on these principles, Haryana has developed its entire industrial ecosystem. Today, areas such as Gurugram, Manesar, Sonapat, Bawal, and Jhajjar are not merely industrial clusters, but examples of strong India-Japan industrial integration. Haryana, he said, is no longer just an investment destination for Japan, but a trusted strategic partner.

**Naraingarh to Become a New Centre of Japanese Industrial Partnership**

being developed in Jhajjar and the proposed Japanese cluster at Naraingarh will give a new direction to India-Japan industrial partnership.

**Chief Minister Invites Japanese businessmen to Invest in Haryana**

The Chief Minister urged Japanese investors to expand their businesses in Haryana, stating that the state offers all essential facilities and modern infrastructure for investment. He invited them to invest in residential, commercial, and industrial development projects. Since Haryana manufactures nearly 50 percent of the country's cars and 33 percent of two-wheelers, Sohna and Kharkhoda IMTs present excellent opportunities for investment in the automobile sector. He also said that Haryana is rapidly emerging as a logistics hub and the Delhi-NCR region is being developed into a modern logistics network. Investors can explore opportunities in dry ports, container freight stations, and multimodal logistics parks. The Chief Minister further stated that the state government has focused not only on "Ease of Doing Business" but also on "Speed of Doing Business." More than 140 services are now available digitally under one roof, and the approval time for projects has been

reduced from 24 days to 12 days. Highlighting the importance of MSMEs, the Chief Minister said that the next major chapter of India-Japan partnership will be written in the MSME sector. Haryana has over 13 lakh registered MSMEs providing employment to more than 65 lakh people. He said that Haryana's MSMEs in sectors such as auto components, engineering products, electronics, textiles, chemicals, and industrial manufacturing can become an important part of global supply chains in collaboration with Japanese industries. To support this vision, the state government is promoting joint ventures, technology transfer, skill partnerships, and institutional collaboration mechanisms. During the event, Daikin Company MD Kamaljeet Singh Jawa presented mementos to Chief Minister Sh. Nayab Singh Saini and Industries and Commerce Minister Rao Narbir Singh. Among those present on the occasion were Industries and Commerce Department Commissioner and Secretary Dr. Amit Kumar Agrawal, Advisor to CM, Foreign Cooperation Department, Pawan Choudhary, Chief Coordinator Industries Sunil Sharma, Media Advisor to the Chief Minister Raees Jaitly, along with several Japanese investors.

## One killed, three injured in UP's Sambhal as SUV rams into truck on Ganga Expressway

SAMBHAL (UP): (May 22) A 24-year-old man was killed while three others were injured after their Scorpio vehicle collided with a truck while allegedly attempting to overtake it on a stretch of the Ganga Expressway here on

Friday evening, police said. The incident took place near Kisoli village under Bahjoi police station area, they said. According to police, the injured persons were initially admitted to a hospital for treatment.

## Nepal requests UN to postpone LDC graduation until 2030 citing economic risks

KATHMANDU

Nepal has formally requested the United Nations to defer its scheduled graduation from the Least Developed Country (LDC) category, citing mounting economic challenges, global uncertainties, and concerns over the country's preparedness for the transition.

Nepal was due to graduate from the LDC category in November 2026, a milestone that would mark the country's progress in human development and economic resilience.

However, as the deadline approaches, concerns have intensified among policymakers and the private sector regarding the potential economic consequences of losing preferential trade benefits currently available to LDCs. Nepal's private sector has been lobbying strongly against graduation, arguing that the country is not yet prepared for the transition.

Speaking at a regular press briefing, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lok Bahadur Poudel Chhetri said Foreign Minister Sishir Khanal had



sent a formal request to the Chair of the UN Committee for Development Policy (CDP) on May 13, seeking a postponement of Nepal's graduation date until November 2030.

According to the ministry, the request is based on five major concerns. First, Nepal cited the adverse effects of regional conflicts in West Asia and disruptions in global supply chains, which have affected remittance inflows, trade, and overall economic stability. The government referred to the World Bank's projection that Nepal's economy would grow by only 2.3 per cent in the current fiscal year

2025/26, ending in mid-July, reflecting a challenging economic environment.

Second, Nepal highlighted the anticipated loss of duty-free and quota-free market access available under the LDC framework, particularly in developed countries. "Nepal's manufacturing and processing sectors remain vulnerable and could face significant setbacks, with potential employment losses estimated at up to 35 per cent due to the loss of duty-free and quota-free market access," Chhetri said. Third, Nepal said the implementation of its Smooth Transition Strategy — de-

signed to prepare the country for graduation — had been delayed, affecting the country's preparedness for graduation.

Fourth, the government stressed that Nepal's economy has yet to fully recover from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Ongoing geopolitical tensions and the increasing effects of climate change have further complicated recovery efforts, Chhetri said.

Fifth, Nepal pointed to the economic repercussions of conflicts in West Asia, particularly tensions involving the United States and Iran, which have affected remittance flows from Nepali migrant workers while contributing to higher food, fertilizer, and energy prices. The government said these developments have negatively impacted tourism and the broader economy.

Nepal is the second country to request a deferral of its graduation date after Bangladesh. In February, Bangladesh formally requested the UN body to postpone its graduation by three years. Bangladesh, Lao PDR, and

Nepal are currently scheduled to graduate from the LDC category in November 2026, while the Solomon Islands is set to graduate in 2027, followed by Cambodia and Senegal in 2029.

LDC graduation is determined based on three criteria: Gross National Income (GNI) per capita, the Human Assets Index (HAI), and the Economic and Environmental Vulnerability Index (EVI).

A country may graduate by meeting at least two of the three criteria in two consecutive triennial reviews or by achieving a per capita income more than three times the graduation threshold.

Nepal has long met two of the three criteria — the Human Assets Index and the Economic and Environmental Vulnerability Index — and has now also met the GNI threshold. According to the National Statistics Office, Nepal's per capita income for fiscal year 2025/26 is projected to remain unchanged at USD 1,535, the same level recorded in the previous fiscal year.

## China driving new space arms race: Pentagon

WASHINGTON

The United States needs to rapidly expand its military space capabilities amid mounting concern over China's growing advances in space warfare, senior Pentagon officials have told lawmakers this week, warning that future conflicts will depend heavily on dominance in orbit. Top US military leaders told lawmakers the Space Force requires a major increase in funding, manpower and combat capabilities to counter emerging threats from China and maintain American military superiority in space.

Speaking before the House and Senate Armed Services Committees, Space Force Chief General B Chance Saltzman described the current environment as a "generational shift" in military space competition. "Our adversaries are constantly working to take away our military and economic advantages in the space domain," Saltzman said. The proposed FY2027 budget includes a landmark USD 71.1 billion allocation for the Space Force, representing one of the largest increases since the service was established in 2019. Saltzman said the funding would help the US build new missile warning systems, resilient satellite networks, space-based targeting systems and counter-space capabilities.



## Trump says Iran wants nuclear deal with US

WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump has said that Iran was eager to reach a deal with the United States but warned that Washington would continue to pressure Tehran because "Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon".

Trump made the remarks on Friday at the White House during the swearing-in ceremony of new Federal Reserve Chairman Kevin Warsh, where he mixed economic messaging with comments on national security and America's military posture.

"We have the greatest military in the world," the US President said while discussing his administration's economic and defence policies. Referring to Iran, Trump added, "Iran is dying to make a deal. We'll see what happens, but we hit them hard, and we had no choice because Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon."

The US President did not provide details about possible talks with Tehran or explain what actions he was referring to when he said the US had "hit them hard".

But the comments reflected his continued focus on Iran's nuclear ambitions and the broader US strategy of military and economic pressure.

Trump linked American military strength with what he described as a broader national revival driven by manufacturing

investment, tariffs and economic growth.

"We're going to be submitting a military budget for \$1.5 trillion," he said. He also added that the United States was witnessing unprecedented investment and industrial expansion. "We're building factories, car plants, everything, AI, everything all over the country," Trump said.

"Nobody's ever seen anything like it," Trump added that economic growth and military power were closely connected.

He said tariffs had helped bring manufacturing back to the United States and claimed the country had secured "\$18 trillion being invested in the United States" during the first 11 months of his administration.

The US President also referenced a conversation with Chinese President Xi Jinping while discussing US military capabilities. "I was with President Xi, and I said to him, 'We have the greatest military in the world,'" Trump said.

The remarks came as the Trump administration continues to frame Iran's nuclear programme as one of the top threats facing US national security. Trump has repeatedly said Tehran must never acquire a nuclear weapon and has linked that position to broader US efforts to strengthen military readiness and expand defence spending.

## UN allocates up to \$60 mn to accelerate response to Ebola outbreak in Congo

GENEVA

UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Tom Fletcher, has said that he is allocating up to \$60 million from the world body's Central Emergency Response Fund to accelerate the response to the Ebola outbreak in Congo and the wider region.

"We need to get ahead of this Ebola outbreak," Fletcher said in a statement.

While the humanitarian community is fully mobilised, he said, "the epidemiological context is challenging: there are not yet licensed vaccines or treatments for the Bundibugyo strain", as reported by Xinhua news agency.

Noting that these are some of the most difficult operating en-



vironments in the world for the life-saving work, with conflict and high population movement, Fletcher said the United Nations is working to secure safe and sustained access for frontline responders, including to areas controlled by armed groups.

"It is essential that there is no obstruction to our response. We must have access to all routes --

air, land and water -- across the affected areas," he added.

The UN Relief Chief underscored that containment depends on fast, coordinated action at the community level, stressing the importance of strong communication with governments, and effective early warning and detection systems.

Fletcher said he is in close con-

tact with UN humanitarian coordinators and the teams in Congo, Uganda and South Sudan, and more staff from key UN agencies and partners are being deployed this weekend to reinforce the effort. "Meanwhile, Norway will contribute 50 million Norwegian kroner (\$5.39 million) to the World Health Organisation (WHO)'s Contingency Fund for Emergencies following a new Ebola outbreak in Congo, with confirmed imported cases in Uganda," the Norwegian government said on Friday.

"When dangerous diseases break out, every hour counts. We must be able to respond immediately, before the situation escalates," Norwegian Minister of International Development Aasmund Aukrust said in a press

statement. "The fund can release resources within 24 hours, and WHO has already disbursed \$3.9 million to support the response to the Ebola outbreak," according to the statement.

"Several of Norway's partners are supporting efforts in contact tracing, laboratory capacity, treatment and community information. Norway's long-term partnerships with Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, and the Pandemic Fund will also play a role in the continued response," according to the statement.

The WHO on Friday revised its risk assessment to "very high" at the national level, while remaining "high" at the regional level and "low" globally.

## Indian, Chinese Americans targeted: US lawmakers

WASHINGTON

A group of Democratic lawmakers has introduced a House resolution condemning what they described as racist rhetoric targeting Indian Americans and Chinese Americans after President Donald Trump amplified a controversial social media post questioning birthright citizenship and immigrants' loyalty to the United States.

The resolution, introduced by Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi alongside Congressman Ted Lieu and Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal, says such rhetoric fuels discrimination and violence at a time of rising 'anti-Asian' hate in the United States. The measure follows Trump's April 22 amplification on Truth Social of a post by radio host Michael Savage that used derogatory language about India and China and questioned immigrants' loyalty to America. "When President Trump amplifies racist rhetoric targeting Indian Americans and Chinese Americans, it sends a dangerous message at a time when both communities.

## India, Cyprus agree to deepen ties in defence industry, connectivity

NEW DELHI

Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, at their meeting held here on Friday, agreed to elevate the relations between the two countries to a strategic level with deeper cooperation in defence and transport connectivity, according to senior government officials.

Noting that Prime Minister Modi visited Cyprus last year, the officials said that the "traditionally excellent relations" have now been elevated to a strategic level. "Over the past year, we have seen several important developments in our bilateral relations," an official said.

"Cyprus is interested in strengthening cooperation with the Indian defence industry and also wants the defence industries of the two countries to work together. President Nikos Christodoulides is reported to have highlighted that the European Union is investing more than 150 billion euros through the SAFE instrument to enhance defence and security across the EU and its member states. Cyprus is eligible for 1.2 billion euros, and is interested in enhancing its military capabilities and exploring the possibility of procuring from India," an official said.

## Algerian law criminalising French colonisation takes effect

ALGIERS

An Algerian law criminalising French colonisation has officially entered into force following its publication in the country's Official Gazette, according to local media.

The law declares France's colonisation of Algeria from 1830 to 1962 and its "direct and indirect effects that persisted beyond this period" a "state crime," and lists 31 "impermissible" colonisation crimes, including intentional homicide, deliberately directing military attacks against civilians, and the use of unconventional and internationally-prohibited weapons.

The law was described by officials as "a step to preserve national memory and honour the sacrifices made during the colonial period," Xinhua news agency reported.

It states that Algeria will pursue all legal and judicial means to ensure France's "official recognition" of its colonial past, including proper handling of matters related to the nuclear explosion and the restitution of "stolen" Treasury assets.

It states that anyone promoting colonisation through various means with the aim of justifying French colonisation or denying its criminal nature will be punished with impris-

onment and a fine. Algeria's upper house of parliament adopted in April a draft law criminalising French colonisation, a month after the lower house passed the same legislation.

In December, the lower house unanimously adopted the draft law calling for an official apology from France and affirming Algeria's right to reparations. However, Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune later clarified that Algeria seeks France's recognition of its crimes rather than financial compensation. To this end, a joint parliamentary committee was established to resolve differences between the two houses and produce a unified text. The final version adopted by both houses reportedly removed broad reparations clauses and apologies from France, while retaining provisions related to victims of French nuclear tests in the Sahara.

The diplomatic rift between Algeria and France has deepened recently, fueled by disputes over immigration, historical grievances, and France's backing of Morocco regarding Western Sahara. Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune has maintained that direct talks with French President Emmanuel Macron are the only path to resolving these bilateral issues.

## Pentagon pushes for AI combat aircraft

WASHINGTON

The US Air Force is rapidly accelerating development of autonomous combat aircraft designed to fight alongside manned fighter jets, as Pentagon leaders warned that future wars against adversaries like China would demand larger, cheaper and more survivable air fleets.

Senior Air Force officials told lawmakers this week that Collaborative Combat Aircraft, or CCA, had become central to America's future air combat strategy, marking one of the clearest signs yet of the Pentagon's shift towards artificial intelligence-driven warfare.

The programme received repeated attention during hearings before both the House and Senate Armed Services Committees as lawmakers pressed the Air Force over how it planned



to balance expensive next-generation fighters with lower-cost autonomous systems.

Air Force Secretary Troy Meink described the aircraft as a "massive cost efficient force multiplier" that would operate alongside manned fleets such as the F-35, F-22 and future F-47 fighter aircraft.

"When we talk about an unmanned fighter aircraft, for all practical purposes, that's what a CCA is," Meink said. "It is really a way to build a large num-

ber of lower cost fighter aircraft that will support and operate in collaboration with the manned fleet." Air Force Chief of Staff General Kenneth Wilsbach said the systems were already demonstrating significant progress, with multiple autonomous flights completed by competing contractors. "The autonomous systems are working," Wilsbach told Senators. "We're learning from it and adjusting as we go."

The FY2027 budget request includes \$1.4 billion for Collaborative Combat Aircraft development as part of a broader Air Force modernisation push that also includes the F-47 fighter, B-21 bomber and advanced battle management systems.

Pentagon officials said that autonomous systems would allow the US military to rapidly increase combat mass while reducing operational costs.

## Nato eyes arms buildup amid Hormuz tensions

WASHINGTON

Nato allies must urgently expand defence production and protect freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Nato Secretary General Mark Rutte said after talks in Sweden.

The two leaders met on the sidelines of the Nato Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Helsingborg on Thursday ahead of the alliance summit scheduled in Ankara later this year. The discussions focused on defence spending, military production, Iran and maritime security.

Rubio and Rutte discussed "strategic imperatives for the Alliance, including increased Allied defence spending, the upcoming Nato Summit in Ankara, and expanded Transatlantic defence production," State Department spokesperson Tommy

Pigott said in a readout of the meeting. The readout also added that the two leaders discussed "US opposition to protectionist measures that risk Nato interoperability and readiness, weaken the Transatlantic defence industrial base, and jeopardise the ability to deliver equipment to our warfighters."

Rutte said Nato countries were now sharply increasing defence budgets. "The good news is the money is now coming in," the Nato Chief added.

"Defence spending is rapidly ramping up." But he warned that Nato's defence industrial base was struggling to meet demand. "This is a problem in Europe, this is a problem in the US," Rutte said. "This will be a big issue at the Ankara Summit."

Rubio said the alliance needed to accelerate weapons and munitions production to prepare for



future threats. "It is clear to the world, to all of us in the Alliance and beyond, that we simply are not able to produce munitions today at a rate that are necessary for future needs," he added. He described the upcoming summit as "probably one of the more important leaders' summit in the history of Nato". Rubio also referred to divisions within the alliance over recent US military

actions in the Middle East. "The President's views -- frankly, disappointment -- at some of our Nato Allies and their response to our operations in the Middle East, they are well documented," he said. Iran and maritime security emerged as another key issue during the talks. Rutte said Nato Ministers were deeply concerned about threats to navigation in the Strait of Hormuz.

"I hear from many of my colleagues here that it's not acceptable that freedom of navigation is basically trampled upon as it is at the moment," he added.

He also praised US actions against Iran's military capabilities. "The US degrading the nuclear capability of Iran but also the long-range missile capability of Iran, is crucial for the Middle East, for Europe, for the whole world," Rutte said.

Rubio accused Iran of attempting to impose a "tolling system" in the Strait of Hormuz. "There is not a country in the world that should accept that," he said, adding: "That's just not acceptable. It can't happen." He said the US was supporting a Bahrain-backed resolution at the United Nations Security Council aimed at protecting freedom of navigation in international waters.

## Asthma care: Doctor calls for early control, cautions against

over-reliance on  
reliever inhalers

Hyderabad, May 22nd, 2026: Asthma management in India continues to lean heavily towards symptomatic relief, leading to poor disease control and worsening of the condition. Doctor highlights the critical need to focus on early asthma control and a shift from only short-term relief measures to appropriate long-term management for better patient outcomes and quality of life. Asthma is often treated as an episodic illness with patients reaching for their reliever inhalers as soon as symptoms such as shortness of breath or coughing arise. However, asthma is a chronic condition caused by inflammation in the airway. "Asthma management should focus on treating the inflammation at the earliest.

Poorly controlled asthma may increase the risk of structural airway changes and persistent inflammation leading to frequent flare-ups and hospitalizations. There may also be progressive decline in lung function which makes the disease hard to manage," Dr. Ramakrishna Reddy, Consultant Pulmonologist, Mana Hospital, Hyderabad said. To address this inflammation, inhaled corticosteroids (ICS) treatment is recommended. Controller inhalers, or anti-inflammatory inhalers, should be used regularly to treat the underlying airway inflammation and help maintain long-term control, instead of relying only on reliever inhalers, particularly short-acting beta-agonists (SABA), that provide temporary relief by relaxing the airway muscles during an asthma episode. Asthma affects around 35 million people in India. Almost 90% of patients who require ICS treatment, are not receiving or using it, according to a research report published in Lung India journal. This shows the gap in asthma management and the need to improve awareness around controller inhaler-based treatment. "Reliever inhalers may provide temporary relief from symptoms but they do not treat the root cause of the disease. Asthma management should focus on long-term control of inflammation in lungs using inhaled corticosteroids and adherence to prescribed treatment.

# Sensex, Nifty end week higher as banking shares drive gains

**Investor sentiment lifted by easing US-India tensions and hopes of stability. Stock markets closed higher on Friday, supported by gains in banking and financial stocks, a stronger rupee and hopes of easing tensions in the Middle East after signs of progress in talks between the US and Iran.**



The BSE Sensex ended at 23,199 points, or 0.31% higher at 75,415.35. The Nifty 50 gained 64.60 points, or 0.27%, to close at 23,719.30. Markets stayed largely range-bound through the session but managed to hold gains as investors bought financial and select consumption stocks. Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Investments Limited, said domestic markets remained supported by lower-level buying and stable global cues. "Domestic markets traded with a mild positive bias, supported by buying at lower levels and moderately constructive global cues expecting easing tensions in the Middle East," he said.

He added that globally, the artificial intelligence investment theme continued to support sentiment, while financial stocks led gains in India along with selective buying in auto and consumption shares. **BANKS, FINANCIALS LEAD MARKET GAINS** Private banks and financial stocks were among the biggest contributors to the rally. Axis Bank rose 2.52%, while ICICI Bank gained 1.77%. HDFC Bank added 0.97%, and Bajaj Finance climbed 0.85%.

Among sectoral indices, Nifty Private Bank rose 1.49%, while Nifty Financial Services gained 1.13%, making them the top-performing sectors of the day. Other notable

gainers included Trent, up 3.01%, Asian Paints, which gained 1.56%, and UltraTech Cement, up 0.82%. However, weakness in IT, pharma and media stocks limited the market's upside. TCS fell 0.45%, while Infosys declined 0.61%. Sun Pharma dropped 2.43%, becoming one of the top laggards on the Nifty. Sectorally, Nifty Media fell 1.47%, Nifty Healthcare slipped 1.52%, and Nifty IT was down 0.37%.

**MIDDLE EAST TALKS LIFT SENTIMENT** Investor sentiment improved after reports suggested some progress in talks between the US and Iran aimed at ending the nearly three-month-long conflict. Markets

also took support from expectations that easing tensions in the Middle East could help cool crude oil prices and reduce pressure on inflation. Analysts said hopes of geopolitical stability helped improve risk appetite globally.

**RUPEE RECOVERS AFTER RBI SUPPORT**

The Indian rupee also strengthened sharply against the US dollar, supporting overall market mood. The rupee rose 0.53% to close at 95.69 against the dollar, moving above the 96-per-dollar mark for the first time in a week. The recovery came after aggressive intervention by the Reserve Bank of India to support the currency. Reuters reported that the RBI stepped in to slow the rupee's fall after it weakened from around 94.50 to nearly 97 against the dollar.

A stronger rupee is generally seen as positive for markets because it reduces imported inflation and supports foreign investor confidence.

**BROADER MARKET TRADE MIXED**

Broader market indices showed mixed movement. Nifty Midcap 100 ended 0.14%

higher, while Nifty Smallcap 100 slipped 0.15%. Among other sectors, Nifty Auto rose 0.12%, Nifty Metal gained 0.44%, and Nifty PSU Bank added 0.22%. Nifty Realty and Nifty Oil & Gas ended marginally lower. India VIX, often called the market's fear gauge, stood at 17.91, showing that volatility concerns still remain despite the market recovery. Nair said markets continue to remain range-bound. "Strong DII inflows are cushioning the downside, while persistent FII selling is limiting the upside," he said. According to him, the market currently remains in a "buy-on-dips and sell-on-rallies" phase. "A sustained uptrend will likely require geopolitical stability and softer oil prices, which would strengthen macro conditions and improve FII sentiment," he added.

Overall, markets ended the week on a positive note, supported by financial stocks, rupee recovery and hopes of easing geopolitical tensions, though investors remain cautious due to continued uncertainty around oil prices and foreign fund flows.

## IRCTC Launches Revamped Golden Chariot

Luxury Train for Season 2026-27 with Exclusive Promotional Offers

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY 2026:

for those who prefer movement to stillness—an onboard sanctuary designed to reinvent the body and mind.

The Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd. (IRCTC), the tourism arm of Indian Railways and a Navratna Public Sector Enterprise under the Ministry of Railways, introduces the newly upgraded Golden Chariot Luxury Train for the 2026-27 tourist season. The Golden Chariot, long celebrated for tracing South India's layered history and lush panoramas, returns this season in a reimagined form that marries old-world romance with contemporary comfort. Step inside and the carriage exhales a new calm: hand-picked upholstery in muted tones, lacquered wood surfaces warming the light, and cabins refreshed with plush linens and subtly scented bath amenities that speak of quiet luxury. Mealtimes are staged with international-brand crockery and crisp white linens, while Smart TV and Wi-Fi streaming bring a private cinema into the cabin without disturbing the carriage's tranquil rhythm. Safety and service have been modernised with discreet CCTV, advanced fire-alarm systems and a polished hospitality team; selected house pours are offered as a thoughtful, unobtrusive touch. Accommodating up to 80 guests across 40 artfully appointed cabins, the Golden Chariot offers an intimate canvas for slow, indulgent travel. The accommodation mix has been configured to suit varied needs: 13 double-bed cabins, 26 twin-bed cabins and one cabin thoughtfully designed for differently abled guests, all finished with the same attention to materiality and comfort that defines the train. Dining and social life aboard are shaped by three signature venues. Ruchi and Nalapaka—two fine-dining restaurants—stage an exquisite sequence of Indian and international dishes presented on premium crockery and linens; their service is measured, quietly exacting. Madira, the lounge bar, supplies a pleasant counterpoint: a curated assortment of beverages poured with discretion, the soft clink of glass punctuating conversation. For restoration between excursions there is the Arogya Spa & Fitness Centre, where tradition and contemporary wellbeing meet. Expect the aromatic lift of Ayurvedic oils, skilled therapies that ease travel fatigue, and a compact fitness area with modern equipment

Selected departure dates covered under the promotional offer are:

- 24 October 2026 – Pride of Karnataka
- 31 October 2026 – Glimpses of Karnataka
- 19 December 2026 – Glimpses of Karnataka
- 26 December 2026 – Pride of Karnataka
- 02 January 2027 – Pride of Karnataka
- 30 January 2027 – Pride of Karnataka
- 06 February 2027 – Glimpses of Karnataka
- 20 February 2027 – Jewels of South
- 27 February 2027 – Pride of Karnataka
- 13 March 2027 – Pride of Karnataka

## Deepa Jewellers Gets Final SEBI Nod for its IPO

HYDERABAD, MAY 22

Hyderabad-based Deepa Jewellers has received final approval from the capital markets regulator, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) for its initial public offering (IPO). The Company had filed its IPO papers with SEBI on December 29, 2025. The IPO is a fresh issue of up to Rs 250 crore and an offer for sale of up to 11,848,340 shares by promoters – Ashish Agarwal and Seema Agarwal. Incorporated in 2016, the company is an organized B2B designer, processor and supplier of hallmarked gold jewellery, primarily having operations in Telangana, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. According to a CRISIL Report, the company is one of the key processors and suppliers of vaddanam and CNC machine cut bangles, distributing to jewellery retail chains and standalone stores. It is engaged in the business of processing 22-karat gold jewellery, job-work services and

trading of jewellery and related products. The company designs, processes and sells a wide range of hallmarked plain gold and precious stone studded jewellery, operating through an outsourced manufacturing model, supported by a network of 40 karigars. Its products primarily include vaddanam (waist belt), CNC machine cut bangles, gents kada, vanki (armlet), dandpatti (bajuband), gundlamala haaram (traditional neck piece), gundlamala necklace, kangan, earring, mangtika (forehead pendant), maatil (ear chain), champasaralu (ear-to-hair chain), jada (braid ornament), and rings. In addition to its core jewellery processing, the company also undertakes job work assignments, wherein it receives raw material from its customers, which it processes and delivers finished ornaments to them. Furthermore, the company is also engaged in the trading of silver ornaments, 18 and 20-karat gold ornaments, precious stones and gold bullion.

## RBI to transfer record Rs 2.87 lakh crore dividend to govt for FY26

This move is expected to give the government additional financial room at a time of geopolitical uncertainty and global economic challenges.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday announced a record dividend payout of Rs 2.87 lakh crore to the central government for the financial year 2025-26. The move is expected to give the government additional financial room at a time of geopolitical uncertainty and global economic challenges. The surplus transfer is higher than last year's payout and marks the biggest dividend transfer by the central bank so far.

**DIVIDEND HIGHER THAN LAST YEAR** For 2024-25, the RBI had transferred Rs 2.69 lakh crore to the government. That was 27.4% higher than the amount paid in 2023-24. Earlier, the RBI had paid Rs 2.1 lakh crore as dividend for 2023-24, while the pay-



ment stood at Rs 87,416 crore in 2022-23. The decision to transfer the dividend was taken during the 623rd meeting of the RBI's Central Board of Directors, chaired by Governor Sanjay Malhotra.

**RBI INCOME AND BALANCE SHEET GROW**

In a statement, the RBI said its net income before risk provisioning and transfer to statutory funds stood at Rs 3,95,972.10 crore in FY 2025-26. This was higher compared to Rs 3,13,455.77 crore recorded in FY 2024-25. The central bank also reported a sharp rise in the size of its balance sheet. As of March

31, 2026, the RBI's balance sheet expanded by 20.61 per cent to Rs 91,97,121.08 crore.

**BIG RELIEF FOR GOVERNMENT FINANCES** The record dividend comes as a financial boost for the government, offering extra fiscal space amid global uncertainties. A higher surplus transfer from the RBI can help support government spending and ease pressure on public finances. The RBI's annual surplus transfer to the government remains an important source of non-tax revenue and is closely watched every year for its impact on fiscal planning.

## ICICI Lombard Launches 30-Minute Roadside Assistance Promise

HYDERABAD, 22ND MAY:

ICICI Lombard General Insurance, one of India's leading private general insurers, today announced the launch of Service Assure, a new commitment under its IL Smart Assist (Road Side Assistance) offering. A one-of-the-industry's first roadside assistance promises, Service Assure commits to reaching private car customers within 30 minutes across eight metro cities when their vehicle breaks down or is involved in an accident. The launch coincides with the company's 25-year milestone and marks the next step in its journey of converting motor insurance from a claims-service category into a service assurance category. Service Assure is available in Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Pune and Ahmedabad. A vehicle breakdown is among the most stressful moments a car owner faces, made worse by the uncertainty of when help will actually arrive. While roadside assistance has been widely available in India for years, response times have largely been left vague in customer communication. Service Assure changes that by putting a specific, measurable, customer-facing time commitment at the centre of the experience. When a customer's vehicle breaks down

or meets with an accident, they simply call ICICI Lombard's toll-free number 1800 2666. The company verifies the policy, confirms the customer's exact location via WhatsApp, and assigns a trained technician or a towing truck where required, at which point the customer receives the technician's or driver's details and the 30-minute Service Assurance clock begins. If the service is delayed beyond the promised time, the customer receives a confirmation call along with a set of pre-defined service benefits, including personalised assistance from a claims expert, a vehicle check-up to identify the cause of the breakdown, customer distress support and replenishment of the First-Aid Kit. Service Assure follows ICICI Lombard's June 2024 launch of Smart Saver Plus, one of industry-first add-on under which the company motor repair turnaround of five days at selected preferred partner garages for claims up to ₹50,000. An assurance on the quality of workmanship for a period of 24 months or 10,000 kms post-repair whichever is earlier for the repairs carried out at the Selected Preferred Partner Garage is also provided. With IL Smart Assist - Service Assure, the company is now extending the same assurance-led approach upstream from the re-

pair moment to the breakdown moment itself. Together, the two offerings reflect a deliberate, multi-year shift in how ICICI Lombard is reshaping the motor insurance experience: moving the category from claims service to claims assurance, and now to an assurance that begins the moment a customer needs help on the road. Commenting on the launch, Mr. Gaurav Arora – Chief Commercial Lines & Motor (Underwriting & Claims), ICICI Lombard, said, "A year and a half ago, with Smart Saver Plus, we made a promise to our customers about the time we take to repair their car. With Service Assure, we are now making a promise about the time we take to reach them in the first place. Each step takes us closer to a simple idea – that motor insurance should be measured not just by what it pays, but by how quickly and reliably it shows up." Mr. Manish Vij – Founder, Global Assure (Service provider for Service Assure), said, "A vehicle breakdown can leave drivers stranded for hours—uncertain, and waiting endlessly for help. At Global Assure, we know that when you're stuck on the road, every minute matters. That's why we are thrilled to partner with ICICI Lombard to bring our 30-Minute Service Assurance to their customers across the top 8 cities.

HYDERABAD, 22 MAY 2026

Octave, in partnership with IIIT Hyderabad and HYSEA, successfully hosted the May 2026 edition of the HYSEA TechForward Series on Friday, 22 May 2026, at Octave's office in HITEC City, Hyderabad. The 23rd edition of TechForward, an industry-research monthly talk series, brought together a curated group of over two hundred industry leaders, academic researchers, enterprise technologists, and AI practitioners to deliberate on one of the most critical enablers of Industrial AI adoption - data readiness at scale. Themed "Industrial AI: The Data Challenge", the seminar focused on AI-ready data foundations, under the guiding tagline: "What it takes to get industrial data into a state where AI delivers reliable value." The discussions highlighted how Industrial AI success is increasingly determined not just by algorithmic sophistication, but by the quality, structure, governance, and contextual integrity of underlying industrial data systems. Across the seminar session and roundtable discussions, participants examined the persistent challenges faced by industrial enterprises, including fragmented and siloed data land-

## Octave Hosts HYSEA-IIIT Hyderabad TechForward Series



scapes, legacy OT-IT integration barriers, inconsistent data standards, limited contextual labeling of machine and process data, and the difficulty of scaling AI pipelines across heterogeneous operational environments. The dialogue also emphasized that without strong data engineering and governance frameworks, AI deployments in industrial settings risk becoming brittle, non-replicable, or difficult to scale across business units.

The event was chaired by Sekhar Konidena, Vice President – Product and Services, Octave, who spoke on Octave's work in solving real-world industrial challenges. Industry perspective on AI deployment and data transformation was provided by Suresh Kadambari, Vice President – Product Development, Octave, joined by colleague Srinivas Mallepally. The academic

keynote was delivered by Prof. Vineet Gandhi, Associate Professor at IIIT Hyderabad. His address underscored the intersection of research and industry needs in building robust, generalizable AI systems for complex industrial environments, with particular emphasis on data-centric AI approaches and the importance of structured representations of real-world industrial signals. Speaking at the event, Sekhar Konidena, Vice President – Product and Services, Octave said, "Industrial AI is not primarily an algorithm challenge—it is a data challenge. The organizations that scale AI successfully will be those that build unified, trusted, and continuously evolving data foundations, treating data with the same strategic rigor as their core industrial operations. Industry-academia collaborations

like this are essential to defining what truly AI-ready enterprises look like in practice". Adding to this, Suresh Kadambari, Vice President – Product Development at Octave, said, "Industrial AI is constrained less by model sophistication and more by the maturity of the underlying data ecosystem. Large-scale enterprises require structured, context-aware, and interoperable data foundations supported by embedded governance, domain-aligned architecture, and continuously refined data operations. Only through resilient and intelligently managed data infrastructure can AI progress from experimental capability to dependable enterprise-grade industrial intelligence." Prof. Ramesh Loganathan, Professor & Dean of Research/Innovation Outreach, IIIT Hyderabad said, "As the IT industry moves up the value chain, intensifying the engagement between industry and academic research is a critical need. This TechForward seminar series is an attempt at seeding these conversations, which is why this is a travelling series." He noted that bridging the gap between academic research and industrial deployment requires sustained collaboration, particularly in the areas of data-centric AI design,

robust annotation strategies, and domain-aware model development for industrial applications. The HYSEA TechForward Series continued to serve as a strategic platform for fostering collaboration between academia, industry, and innovation ecosystems. Flt Lt. Bipin Pendyala, President, HYSEA, said, "Tech Forward has evolved into a strong platform that brings together industry, academia, and startups to shape conversations around emerging technologies. Over the past two years, the series has successfully connected research, innovation, and enterprise needs to address real-world business challenges. As AI reshapes the global technology landscape, Hyderabad is uniquely positioned to lead with its strong enterprise ecosystem, research depth, and innovation culture. We thank Octave for partnering with us for the May 2026 edition and contributing to the vision of building AI-ready industrial and enterprise ecosystems." The May 2026 edition saw strong participation from technology leaders, enterprise architects, members of Hyderabad's deep-tech ecosystem and students, reinforcing the city's growing role as a hub for industrial AI innovation and digital transformation.



# Homebuying trends

Gen Z women lead home buying despite slowdown

In US, single Gen Z women are buying homes at a significantly higher rate than their male counterparts even as overall first-time homebuying activity has fallen to its lowest level in decades, according to survey data from the National Association of Realtors (NAR) as reported AP. Single Gen Z women accounted for 35 per cent of all homebuyers in their generation, while single Gen Z men represented 18 per cent, according to NAR data covering home purchases made between July 2024 and June 2025. The survey included buyers across age groups ranging from Gen Z, defined as people aged 18-26, to members of the Silent Generation aged 80-100. Among all generations surveyed, Gen Z recorded the largest share of single women homebuyers. Despite the trend, Gen Z overall accounted for only 4 per cent of all homebuyers during the survey period. At the same time, the share of first-time homebuyers across age groups dropped to its lowest level since records began

er, who spent years saving half her salary and working two jobs before purchasing a house at the age of 24. "I've always been a really independent person and I just wanted my own place to have peace and quiet by myself," LaFluer said, AP quoted. Her search began in 2021 during a period of intense housing competition fuelled by historically low mortgage rates. She eventually purchased a three-bedroom house in Baldwinsville, New York, in 2023 for \$175,000. "I feel like it was meant to be and this just ended up being the perfect house for me and my dogs," she said. LaFluer, a content creator for a video game company, said living with her mother and paying lower rent helped her save approximately \$20,000 for the down payment. Gen Z homebuyers continue to face multiple challenges, including lower earnings at early stages of their careers, student loan burdens and lower marriage rates. According to NAR, the median annual income of Gen Z homebuyers stood at \$76,000 in 2024, the lowest among all generations surveyed. Affordability also remains under pressure after years of rising home prices. The median US home sales price reached \$417,700 last month, up 0.9 per cent compared with a year earlier. However, younger buyers are also increasingly relying on family support and exploring grants and first-time buyer assistance programmes. According to

NAR, one in ten Gen Z homebuyers also used retirement savings from their 401(k) plans toward down payments. Mariah Berry followed a different route, saving aggressively while many of her peers were spending on lifestyle activities. "I did not go out and was driving an old beat-up car," Berry said. "It was not fun." Her savings eventually helped her buy a two-bedroom home in Charleston, Tennessee, in 2023 at the age of 23. "I do think it's pretty frickin' awesome that I'm a homeowner and that I became a homeowner at 23," she said. "I will say that after I put in the offer, I wanted to puke. I was like, 'Oh my God, did I do the right thing?'" Across generations, single women continued to outpace single men in home purchases. Single women accounted for 25 per cent of all homebuyers during the July 2024-June 2025 period, while single men represented 11 per cent. The trend has persisted for decades. According to NAR, the share of homes bought by single women peaked at 22 per cent in 2006 during the housing boom, while single men's share reached a peak of 12 per cent in 2010. Jessica Lautz, NAR's deputy chief economist, said there are several reasons behind the long-term shift. "It wasn't until the 1970s where women were legally protected to have a mortgage on their own," Lautz said. "And they have embraced this and been very strongly embracing this."

in 1981. First-time buyers often face additional financial hurdles because they do not have equity from previous homeownership to help fund down payments. That was the case for Bri LaFluer

A floor that stays naturally cool even during peak summer heat, without any air conditioning or modern cooling system. No electricity involved, no imported stone or chemical coating either. Just lime, iron oxide, water, and a finishing touch of coconut oil. This is Kaavi flooring, an ancient technique from the southern Indian region of Kerala. It is around 300 years old, and yet it still manages to surprise people today. What makes it even more interesting is not just the cooling effect but the simplicity behind it. In a world obsessed with marble, tiles, and artificial cooling systems, this traditional method quietly shows another way of living with heat instead of fighting it. Experts say it reflects how earlier generations designed homes around climate, not convenience. And somehow, it still works.

**Kerala's kaavi flooring's surprisingly cool underfoot effect: What is the science behind**

Kaavi flooring has a strange reputation among those who have experienced it. People often describe it as "ice-cool underfoot," especially during hot afternoons. That might sound exaggerated, but the feeling is consistently mentioned in older homes where it still exists. Unlike modern flooring materials that trap and slowly release heat, Kaavi surfaces appear to remain stable throughout the day. Even when the sun is strong outside, the floor does not feel aggressively hot. It just stays calm and steady. There is no mechanical cooling involved and no hidden system.

Just natural material behaviour that seems to work quietly in the background, helping traditional homes remain comfortable in humid climates without relying heavily on electricity, air conditioners, or artificial cooling technologies.

**How Kaavi flooring is made**

The process behind Kaavi flooring is simple but extremely labour-intensive. Artisans begin with a mixture of lime, iron oxide, and water. This paste is carefully spread across prepared surfaces by hand. There is no cement used in the traditional method, which already sets it apart from modern construction practices. Once the base layer is applied, it is left to cure naturally. The setting process takes time, sometimes days, depending on conditions. After it hardens, the surface is polished repeatedly using coconut oil. This polishing is not a quick step. It can take hours of continuous rubbing. The goal is to create a smooth, reflective surface that gradually develops a soft shine. Over time, the floor becomes more polished naturally with use. Experts suggest that the combination of lime-based material and oil treatment might contribute to its cooling effect, although exact scientific explanations are still debated.

**How lime and coconut oil help Kaavi flooring resist heat build-up**

Kerala's climate is characterised by high temperatures and humidity all year round. Heat builds up rapidly in enclosed areas, and the availability of moisture makes the situation even worse. However,

there are certain features of Kaavi flooring that distinguish it from modern tiles and concrete. One such feature is the thermal effect of lime-coated surfaces compared to cement and marble. The former cannot absorb and hold heat like the latter. Instead, they seem to regulate temperature better. Another feature is coconut oil. It forms a thin oily layer that reflects the heat of the sun. At least some sources claim that it maintains the temperature on the surface consistently throughout the day. While science may not confirm it yet, experience proves otherwise. People can immediately feel the difference when stepping on Kaavi flooring barefoot.

**The decline: Why traditional kaavi flooring is being replaced by modern materials**

Despite its benefits, Kaavi flooring is slowly disappearing. Very few artisans still practice it in its original form. Most new constructions now rely on tiles, marble, or polished concrete because they are faster, cheaper, and easier to maintain. Traditional knowledge is not being passed down as widely as before. Younger generations often choose modern construction methods that fit today's fast-paced building culture. What is being lost is not just a flooring technique. It is also a climate-responsive way of building homes. Kaavi flooring was designed for heat, humidity, and local conditions long before modern cooling systems existed. It also lasted for decades, sometimes reportedly up to 100 years, becoming more polished with age instead of wearing out quickly.

## Kaavi Flooring Brings Back Natural Cooling



# Can NRIs buy land in India?

All they need to know about laws & taxes



Owning a piece of the homeland can be an emotional milestone for Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and also a strategic wealth-generation move. The Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) rules allow NRIs to invest in residential and commercial properties, but prohibit them from buying agricultural or plantation land. They may also buy high-end luxury flats in urban areas, vacant plots and land parcels to construct residential buildings. Types of properties NRIs can invest in

**Residential houses/apartments:** This includes standard high-rise apartments, studios, flats, and penthouses for self-use or rental income. NRIs can purchase any number of residential units.

**Commercial property:** This includes individual office spaces, shops, and warehouses that can be used for business purposes. For industrial and logistic purposes, warehouses and factory land can also be purchased.

**Residential land for construction:** NRIs can purchase vacant plots and land parcels to construct residential buildings like villas, farmhouses, etc. NRIs can also inherit agricultural land or accept it as a gift

from a resident Indian. However, under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), enforced by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), NRIs are not allowed to invest in agricultural land, plantation property, or farmhouses directly. Documents required prior to property purchase, NRIs are required to submit certain crucial documents, including:

- Passport and a valid work permit/visa of the country of residence as address proof.
- Recent income tax returns and six months' pay slips as identity and income proof.
- Special Power of Attorney (PoA) is granted to a relative or agent in India to execute the property deal. The PoA needs to be notarised.
- No Objection Certificate from the society if the NRI is buying an apartment.
- Title deed papers, sale deed, and property registration documents from the seller.

Taxation For an NRI investor, tax obligations are similar to those for residential buyers except for a few layers of additional compliance norms. They have to pay all applicable taxes, duties, and registration charges during the property purchase as mentioned under the Income Tax Act and FEMA:

- **Stamp duty:** Varies between 5 to 7% depending on the state
- **Registration fee:** Between 1-4% of property value
- **Service tax:** 18% GST on an under-construction property if bought off-plan.
- **Tax deducted at source:** A TDS of 20% (if the seller doesn't have a PAN and it's a long-term capital gain asset) or 30% shall be applicable on the entire sale proceeds

NRIs also enjoy certain tax benefits. Under Section 24B of the Income Tax Act, a deduction of up to Rs 2 lakh on interest paid toward a self-occupied property can be claimed. Also, under Section 80C, they can claim up to ₹1.5 lakh toward the principal repayment, stamp duty, and registration fees. Mode of payment for the acquisition of property by an NRI-Payment can be made by funds received in India through normal banking channels by way of inward remittance from any place in India. It can also be funded via money held in any non-resident account maintained in accordance with the provisions of the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 and the regulations made by the Reserve Bank of India from time to time.



## SRH crush RCB by 55 runs in Hyd run-fest, seal statement win



### HYDERABAD

Former champions Sunrisers Hyderabad finished their league campaign with an impressive 55-run win against defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru but ended up third in the IPL points table at the Rajiv Gandhi Stadium here on Friday night.

Chasing a daunting target of 256, RCB got off to a rollicking start thanks to southpaw Venkatesh Iyer (44, 19b, 4x4, 4x6) but lost two quick wickets in the powerplay. First, Iyer pulled pacer Eshan Malinga straight to a fielder in the fifth over. Then, Virat Kohli (15) drove at a wide delivery from pacer Sakib Hussain straight to cover, much to the delight of the bowler, as RCB slipped to 75/2 in six overs.

Soon, Malinga struck again for his 19th wicket of the season as Devdutt Padikkal (21) whipped a leg-stump delivery into the hands of the deep mid-wicket fielder, making it 94/3 in 8.5 overs.

Then, the focus for RCB shifted to crossing the 166-run mark to seal a

top-two spot or 178 to top the points table. SRH, meanwhile, needed a victory margin of more than 90 runs to finish at the top.

RCB captain Rajat Patidar (56, 39b, 6x4, 1x6) and Krunal Pandya (41 n.o., 31b, 5x4) played cautiously to achieve the target required for topping the points table. Gujarat Titans finished second and SRH third by virtue of net run rate.

Earlier, the brilliance of the in-form batting trio of Abhishek Sharma (56, 22b, 4x4, 5x6), Ishan Kishan (79, 46b, 8x4, 3x6) and Heinrich Klaasen (51, 24b, 2x4, 5x6) helped the home team pile up 255/4 in 20 overs.

That two of the best fast bowlers of the season, Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Josh Hazlewood, went wicketless while conceding 106 runs between them in eight overs reflected the dominance of the SRH batting lineup. This was despite Bhuvneshwar and Rasikh Dar conceding just 17 runs in the last two overs. RCB also paid dearly for shoddy fielding and dropped catches.

With an eye on net run rate, captain

Pat Cummins opted to bat first and watched opener Abhishek Sharma and Travis Head put on 45 runs in 24 balls before Head (26, 16b, 5x4), after striking three fours off pacer Rasikh Dar in his opening over, was yorked in the fourth over.

Abhishek enjoyed a slice of luck as he was dropped on 25 and 39 before his innings ended when Suyash Sharma, whom he had hit for two sixes earlier, induced a lofted stroke that was caught at long-off, making it 97/2 in 8.2 overs.

Soon, Heinrich Klaasen, SRH's most dangerous and consistent batter, singled out Hazlewood for special treatment in the 13th over, smashing him for three sixes and a four as 27 runs came off the over.

Klaasen went on to complete his sixth half-century of the season before left-arm spinner Krunal Pandya dismissed him in the 17th over. He added 113 runs in 48 balls for the third wicket with Ishan Kishan. In the final overs, Nitish Kumar Reddy struck some lusty blows (29 n.o., 12b, 1x4, 3x6).



## SM Krishna Open: Adil Kalyanpur/Mukund Sasikumar storm into men's doubles final

### BENGALURU

Indian doubles pair Adil Kalyanpur and Mukund Sasikumar stormed into the men's doubles final, stunning the second-seeded pair of Charles Barry of Ireland and Joshua Charlton of Australia 6-4, 6-3 in the SM Krishna Memorial Open in Bengaluru on Friday.

With their fine performance, Adil Kalyanpur and Mukund Sasikumar kept the Indian interest alive in the doubles event as they continued their impressive run with a storming win.

The other Indian pair of Niki Kaliyanda Poonacha and Saketh Myneni, who had won the Karnataka Open Doubles title last week, went down tamely to the team of Petr Bar Biryukov and Grigoriy Lomakin of Kazakhstan in straight sets 3-6, 4-6.

Meanwhile, former top-50 player Ilya Ivashka produced a composed display under pressure to overcome Britain's third seed Hamish Stewart 6-3, 3-6, 6-2 in a gripping semifinal. In the final, he will meet fourth-seed Petr Bar Biryukov, who outlasted sec-

ond-seed Alastair Gray 3-6, 6-4, 7-6(5) in another marathon semifinal encounter.

The day's singles semifinals stretched beyond two hours each, testing endurance as much as shot-making, before setting up a final between Ivashka and Biryukov.

Ivashka, known for his aggressive baseline game and experience on the ATP Tour, struck first against Stewart by breaking serve in the second game of the opening set. The Belarusian protected the advantage with assured serving and clean hitting to pocket the set 6-3. Stewart responded impressively in the second. The Brit found greater depth on his returns and secured breaks in the second and eighth games, while Ivashka managed only one break back in the seventh. Stewart levelled the match 6-3 and appeared to seize momentum.

But the decisive set belonged entirely to Ivashka. Showing composure in longer rallies, he forced errors from Stewart and earned crucial breaks in the sixth and eighth games to close out the contest 6-2 after two hours and five

minutes. Stewart edged the ace count with eight against Ivashka's five, but the latter proved more clinical at key moments.

If the first semifinal was a tactical battle, the second was an exhibition of power tennis.

Biryukov rode on a booming serve and heavy forehand to wear down Alastair Gray in a dramatic three-setter lasting two hours and one minute. His low, cross-court forehands repeatedly pulled Gray out of position. Gray started sharply, breaking in the opening game and again in the ninth to claim the first set 6-3. The British player looked in control, thanks to his consistency from the back court.

However, Biryukov found another gear in the second set. The fourth seed increased the intensity on return and earned the decisive break in the fifth game before holding firm to take the set 6-4.

The final set swung repeatedly. Biryukov earned an early break in the fifth game and looked set for victory, only for Gray to break back in the tenth and force the contest into a tie-break.

### CRICKET

## Vijay Shankar announces retirement from all forms of Indian cricket



**CHENNAI:** All-rounder Vijay Shankar on Friday announced his retirement from all forms of Indian cricket, bringing the curtains down on a career that saw him represent India in both white-ball formats and feature in the 2019 Men's ODI World Cup. Shankar, a mainstay for Tamil Nadu in domestic cricket, played 12 ODIs and nine T20Is for India, amassing 324 runs in all and picking nine scalps. He was surprisingly preferred ahead of Ambati Rayudu in the main squad and played three matches before a toe injury ended his tournament early, with Mayank Agarwal replacing him. In his retirement note, Shankar said he now aims to "pursue new opportunities and play more cricket." "A HEARTFELT THANK YOU. Cricket is my life. I started playing when I was 10, and 25 years later, I am grateful and blessed to have played at every level and to the highest level.

## Premier League: Day of goodbyes as final European spots and relegation set to be decided

### LONDON

The last round of games in the Premier League will bring some real tension as Tottenham and West Ham decide who will be the final team to be relegated to the Championship, while there are some interesting conundrums to resolve in the race to decide the last European places.

Arsenal, who have already secured their first championship since 2004, visit Crystal Palace who are preparing for next week's Conference League final in Oliver Glasner's penultimate game at the club, while Manchester City's game at home to Aston Villa will be a homage to Pep Guardiola, who seems to be on the verge of leaving the club after 10 seasons, with Enzo Maresca



lined up for the difficult job of replacing him.

Aston Villa travel to Manchester after winning the Europa League on Wednesday night with a 3-0 win over Freiburg, and also celebrate a win that has a set of circumstances that could give the Premier League a sixth Champions League place next season, reports Xinhua.

If Villa finish fourth in the

table, the Premier League will have five places, but if they finish fifth, there will be six English side in next season's Champions League.

For that to happen, Aston Villa need to lose on Sunday while Liverpool win at home to Brentford in left back Andy Robertson and Mohamed Salah's last game for the club to move up to fourth due to their better goal difference. That means Bournemouth and Brighton will be crossing their fingers for Aston Villa to lose and Liverpool to win at home to Brentford, with Bournemouth in line for sixth if it can stretch their Premier League unbeaten run to 18 games away to Nottingham Forest. Brighton could move sixth if they win at home to Manchester United and Bournemouth loses.

## Golf: Pranavi Urs makes strong start, shares second spot in Morocco

### RABAT (MOROCCO)

India's rising star Pranavi Urs produced a composed and confident opening round of 3-under 70 to move into tied second place after the first day in Morocco. The 23-year-old stayed firmly in contention in a tightly packed leaderboard, just two shots behind Australia's Kelsey Bennett, who carded a superb 5-under 68 to take the outright lead.

Pranavi, who has shown consistent form in recent months, once again demonstrated her growing maturity on the Ladies European Tour. Starting from the back nine, she settled in quickly with an early birdie on the 11th hole and then played steady golf with seven successive pars to make the turn at 1-under. Her momentum gathered



pace on the front nine as she reeled off three consecutive birdies on the first, second, and third holes to briefly challenge for the lead. A bogey on the fourth halted the charge, but Pranavi responded calmly with pars on each of the remaining five holes to close a fine opening round and earn

a share of second place alongside nine other players.

The Indian golfer has been knocking on the door of a breakthrough title. Last season, she finished inside the top 10 at the Hero Women's Indian Open, and she also made headlines by winning the IGPL Invitational Mumbai in a mixed

professional field, becoming the first Indian woman professional to achieve that feat against male professionals.

Leader Bennett mixed seven birdies with two bogeys during an impressive round. The Australian picked up shots on the first, second, seventh, eighth, 12th, 13th, and 16th holes, with her only blemishes coming on the 14th and 15th.

Among the other Indians in the field, Avani Prashanth and Diksha Dagar endured difficult starts as both returned rounds of 2-over 75 to be tied 61st. Hitaasheek Bakshi carded a 5-over 78 and was placed tied 99th. Avani's round was highlighted by a costly quadruple bogey on the second hole of her front nine, though she fought back with birdies on the same hole and the eighth later in the round.

## IFL 2025-26: Dempo, Sreenidi end season with a 1-1 draw

### MARGAO (GOA)

Hadi Idrissou struck the equaliser as Sreenidi Deccan FC came from behind to hold Dempo Sports Club to a hard-fought 1-1 draw in an entertaining encounter in the Indian Football League (IFL) 2025-26 at the PJN Stadium in Margao, Goa, on Friday.

Marcus Joseph gave Dempo Sports Club the lead early in the sixth minute, which was eventually cancelled out by a second-half strike from Hadi Idrissou in the 71st minute as the points were shared.

With this result, Sreenidi Deccan FC, with 26 points from 14 matches, have moved into second position after the penultimate game of the season. Meanwhile, Dempo Sports Club finished fifth in the table, securing 15 points from the season. Dempo custodian Ashish Sibi was adjudged the Player of the Match.

The match began with the hosts striking early to catch the visitors completely off

guard. In just the sixth minute, Arnold Antonio Oliveira delivered a precise corner kick, and Marcus Joseph rose highest to plant a perfect header into the back of the net.

The clinical finish gave Dempo a crucial 1-0 advantage. The striker found his target once more, netting his ninth goal of the season and inching closer to the Golden Boot award.

Apart from the goal from the corner, there was not much goalmouth action in the opening stages. The visitors gradually got hold of the midfield after numerous aerial duels but initially lacked precision in the final third.

Following the early setback, Sreenidi Deccan dominated proceedings, monopolising possession and dictating the tempo. The visitors controlled an overwhelming 63 per cent of the ball and relentlessly pushed forward, creating numerous chances to test the Golden Eagles' goalkeeper Ashish Sibi.

## IFL 2025-26: Champions Diamond Harbour face Shillong Lajong in the final match

### KALYANI

Champions Diamond Harbour FC will face Shillong Lajong FC in the final fixture of the Indian Football League (IFL) 2025-26 at the Kalyani Stadium in Kalyani on Saturday.

Diamond Harbour head into the contest as the newly-crowned champions of the Indian Football League (IFL) 2025-26, having secured the title following a dramatic 1-1 draw against Dempo SC in Goa last Sunday. Shillong Lajong, meanwhile, arrive in Kalyani aiming to finish in second place after a high-scoring 4-2 victory over Rajasthan United.

As per the current standings, Diamond Harbour FC lead the pack with an unassailable 29 points from 13 matches. Shillong Lajong sit in second place with 25 points from the same number of games, level on points with Sreenidi Deccan but ahead on the table.

The previous meeting between the two sides in the league stage on March 14 ended in a tight 2-1 victory for Diamond Harbour. However, Shillong have proven themselves to



be formidable opponents, currently boasting an impressive unbeaten run in their last six matches.

Despite having already secured the title, Diamond Harbour head coach Kibu Vicuña will demand his side maintain their high standards in front of their home fans, particularly to finish the season strongly and extend their unbeaten run to 12 matches. Reflecting on the club's re-

markable journey, Vicuña expressed immense pride.

"Fantastic feeling to be a part of this unit. So proud, happy, and very satisfied for the whole DHFC family and enjoying the way especially," said Vicuña. "Not only because at the end we got our objective, which was, you know, a dream at the beginning. And the dream came true, and we are in the ISL." The Spanish tactician also

highlighted the underlying philosophy that drove their success. "The vision that they had from the beginning was not only to participate. The vision was to win any tournament that we were playing. This sporting ambition and the vision that DHFC had from the beginning are one of the keys to their success."

Regarding their approach for Saturday's finale, Vicuña was unequivocal. "The same approach as all the games. Try to play our game, be better than the opponent, and create more chances than the opponent. Try to be an offensive team, fight for every single ball, every single challenge."

The home side will look to their potent attacking trio to break down the Shillong defence. Antonio Moyano and Hugo Diaz, both with four goals to their names this campaign, remain central to Diamond Harbour's creative play. Moyano also leads the team with four assists. Up front, Luka Majcen (four goals) and Jobby Justin (three assists) will be tasked with converting chances against a Shillong backline that has conceded 12 goals this season.

## Animesh Kujur sets national 100m record, wins ticket to Glasgow CWG

### RANCHI

Odisha's ace sprinter Animesh Kujur set the national men's 100m record in the semifinal round of the 29th National Senior Athletics Federation Competitions in Ranchi on Friday, to win a ticket to the Glasgow Commonwealth Games. Seema also achieved CWG qualification mark in women's discus throw.

Kujur, 22, bettered the national record to 10.15 seconds in the second semifinal round on day one of the 29th National Senior Athletics Federation Competition here at Ranchi's Birsu Munda Stadium. The Commonwealth Games qualification time in men's 100m was 10.16 seconds.

The spotlight was on men's 100m sprinters on Friday. The national record was shattered twice within a short span of time. Gurindervir Singh, dominating the first semis, clocked 10.17 seconds to better the previous national record of 10.18 seconds set by Kujur last year.



## Rashmi Thakur Brings Telangana's Handloom Glory to Cannes Red Carpet

At the prestigious 79th Festival de Cannes, Indian cultural ambassador Rashmi Thakur made a striking debut by showcasing the timeless beauty of Telangana's handloom heritage on the global stage. Her appearance at the world-famous film festival turned into a proud moment for Indian craftsmanship, especially for the weavers of Pochampally.

Rashmi walked the Cannes red carpet in a couture outfit created from 200-year-old Pochampally Ikat, a Geographical Indication (GI)-tagged textile known for its intricate patterns and rich weaving tradition. The ensemble highlighted the theme "Pochampally to Cannes," symbolising the journey of Telangana's iconic handloom from local weaving clusters to one of the biggest international fashion and cinema platforms.

Adding royal elegance to the look were classic Hyderabad pearls, famously associated with the Nizams of Hyderabad. The pearls perfectly complemented the geometric Ikat patterns, blending India's textile artistry with its regal jewellery heritage.

Speaking at Cannes, Rashmi Thakur said her appearance was not merely a personal achievement but a tribute to Telangana and its artisans. "This is Telangana's debut. This is for every weaver in Pochampally whose threads hold 200 years of history," she said, dedicating the moment to India's traditional craftsmen.

The 79th Festival de Cannes is being held from May 13 to May 24, 2026. Rashmi's appearance has drawn attention to Indian handlooms and Hyderabad pearls, placing them firmly in the international spotlight of luxury fashion and culture.

## Just Broke-Up Beauty Finds Trivikram's Film Again

After calling it quits with her boyfriend, whom she got engaged to, it has already come out that Dubai-based Tamil beauty Nivetha Pethuraj will be hunting for opportunities here in Tollywood. It has already come out that she's getting in touch with her previous directors and co-stars, so she will be referred to big time. However, an expected opportunity has landed in her lap because of the camaraderie she has with one of the leading directors of Telugu cinema.

Apparently, Nivetha has earlier sizzled in a small part as Sushanth's girlfriend in the film Ala Vaikuntapurramlo. At that time, she was actually playing the role of heroine in many small-budgeted films, but suddenly, with a chance in Trivikram's movie and with some scenes involving Allu Arjun, she didn't say no. For joining that film earlier, it looks like Trivikram has now called her for another meaty role. She will now be appearing in yet another crucial role in the movie Adarsha Kutumbam, being directed by Trivikram and has Sreenidhi Shetty playing the role of heroine.



## Music director changed for Vijay's Rowdy Janardhana

Vijay Deverakonda is currently busy with two films, "Ranabaali" and "Rowdy Janardhana." The latter stars Keerthy Suresh as the female lead and is being produced by Dil Raju and Shirish under the Sri Venkateswara Creations banner. Interestingly, the film has undergone a major change in its music department after completing a schedule. Initially, the makers had roped in Christo Xavier, the rising Malayalam composer, for the project. He had also composed the background score for the film's title glimpse released in December 2025. However, director Ravi Kiran Kola has now moved ahead with a different composer. According to our exclusive update, popular singer and composer Vishal Mishra is making his Telugu debut as a music director with "Rowdy Janardhana." Vishal Mishra rose to fame with the hit song "Kaise Hua" from Kabir Singh and later delivered several chartbusters, including "Pehle Bhi Main" from Animal and "Amma" from Guntur Kaaram. He will now compose both the songs and background score for "Rowdy Janardhana." The reason behind the change in music directors is currently unknown. Interestingly, filmmaker Trivikram Srinivas had also recently changed the music director midway for "Adarsha Kutumbam," replacing Harshavardhan Rameswar with S. Thaman.



## RGV recalls Michael Jackson's impact on his life

Veteran filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma has always been vocal about the Western influences that shaped his cinematic taste, ranging from "The Godfather" and Hollywood films to English novels and Bruce Lee's martial arts movies. Among the many global icons he admires, Michael Jackson holds a special place. After recently watching the biopic "Michael," RGV took to social media to share an emotional note about the legendary pop star and the impact he had on him since his engineering college days in Vijayawada in 1984. Varma recalled how watching "Thriller" for the first time in a small video parlour completely changed his perception of music and visual storytelling. He described the experience as "an invasion" that opened his eyes to a level of spectacle and creativity he had never imagined before.

Calling Michael Jackson "more than human," RGV said the singer's aura, screen presence, choreography, and music videos became an inspiration for generations of filmmakers and creators. He mentioned iconic songs like "Beat It," "Billie Jean," "Smooth Criminal," and "Black or White," stating that Jackson's work remained an "unreachable benchmark." Condensing his emotional tribute, RGV wrote that he "hated" Michael Jackson for dying because it shattered the fantasy that such a larger-than-life figure could ever be mortal. He added that despite the controversies surrounding the singer, nothing diminished the joy and inspiration Jackson gave him. RGV concluded the post by saying he would carry the unforgettable "daze" Michael Jackson gave him in that Vijayawada video parlour for the rest of his life.



## Satya Dev's next film titled 'Samavarthi'

Director Ajay Nag V's upcoming action thriller, featuring actor Satyadev Kancharana in the lead, has been titled 'Samavarthi', its makers announced on Friday. Sharing the title poster of the film on his X timeline, Satya Dev Kancharana, known for choosing diverse roles and carving a unique identity for himself as a hero, wrote, "This time the promise will be DELIVERED!! #Samavarthi @AjayNagV Love you for everything. Watching him direct is poetry in motion. A tiger hug to my beloved producers @JakkidishivaIYC." Samavarthi marks the 16th film in Satya Dev's career as a lead actor. The film is being produced under the banners of Rudra Pictures & Panchabhuta Productions by Shivacharan Reddy Jakkidi and Shashidhar Reddy Padamati, while Ajay Nag V is directing the project. Sources close to the unit say that 'Samavarthi' is being made as an ecological action thriller and is gearing up for a grand theatrical release in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam.

The first-look poster of 'Samavarthi' features Satyadev in an intense avatar, calmly listening to music on his headphones while several men armed with axes and knives charge towards him. The First Look poster emphasises subtle references to nature with the tiger in the background creating intrigue. The title and poster have already created expectations that this could be one of the most intense action films in Satyadev's career. Interestingly, the film's makers have classified the film under a new genre called 'Ecological Action Thriller'. Satyadev steps into an all-new zone with this film, consciously shifting gears into a full-fledged action space that amplifies both his physicality and intensity. Set against the backdrop of nature's raw and untamed forces, the film explores what can be termed an Ecological Action Thriller—a genre where high-stakes action is deeply intertwined with environmental conflict.

Apart from Satya Dev, the film will also feature Dileesh Pothan, Rajeev Kanakala, Ganavi Laxman, Ravindra Vijay, and Mohan Bhagath among others. On the technical front, the film will have music by Sinjith Yerramilli and cinematography by Harsha Mallikarjun and Dev Deep Gandikundu. Editing is by Aditya Tiwari and art direction by Mondru Ravikumara.

## Sai Pallavi Set to Shut Down Trolls in Style

Bollywood launch and is expected to actively promote both the film and herself on a larger scale across North India. The project is especially crucial for her because she has already faced criticism and trolling over her casting as Sita. Critics on social media have questioned whether she possesses the glamour and screen presence associated with such a revered character.

she plays Goddess Sita opposite Ranbir Kapoor's Lord Ram. The film is easily one of the biggest projects of her career and could redefine her image in Bollywood. The makers are yet to finalize the timeline for the film's promotional campaign. Interestingly, Sai Pallavi is reportedly planning to treat "Ramayana" as her real

Sai Pallavi made her Bollywood debut with "Ek Din", produced by Aamir Khan, earlier this month. However, the film turned out to be a major box-office disappointment, with collections reportedly failing to cross Rs 3 crore. The poor response also sparked discussions about her market and popularity in North India. Now, all eyes are on her next Hindi project, "Ramayana", where