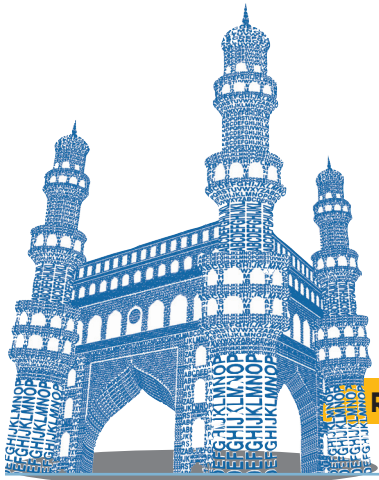




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**BJP NEVER
BLOCKED
METRO PHASE 2**

SPECIAL

02

**SHRIYA SARAN
DAZZLES IN HIGH
LOW RUFIFLE DRESS**



BOX-OFFICE

12

CM Revanth Orders Farm Reforms, AI-Based Monitoring for Procurement

Revanth orders comprehensive farm action plan for Kharif season.

High-level panel to monitor seeds, crops and procurement.

AI-driven agriculture and crop tracking to be expanded.

Rythu Vedikas to become integrated farmer service centres.

Subsidised fine-paddy seeds and app-based fertiliser distribution planned.

State to seek higher fertiliser allocation from the Centre.

Push to reduce MARKFED losses and strengthen dairy sector.



HYDERABAD, JUNE 16

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Tuesday directed officials to prepare a comprehensive action plan for seed distribution, crop monitoring and procurement operations, aiming to ensure a smooth and transparent farming season for Telangana's farmers.

Chairing a review meeting of the Agriculture Department, the Chief Minister ordered the formation of a high-level committee to oversee the entire agricultural cycle—from seed supply and farmer registration to crop estimation and procurement.

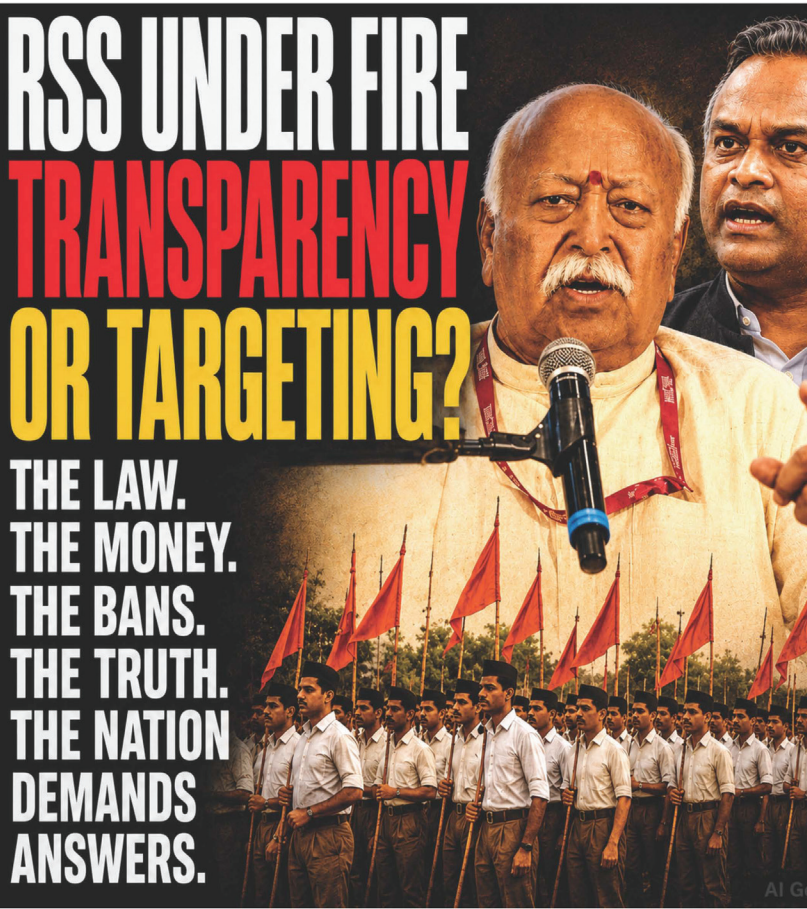
The committee, headed by the Agriculture Secretary, will include senior officials from the Agriculture, Civil Supplies and Planning departments.

Emphasising transparency and accountability, Revanth Reddy instructed officials to maintain accurate records of farmer registrations, cultivation patterns and crop yields through field-level verification. He said the government must be fully prepared to tackle procurement-related challenges, including unseasonal rains, transportation, storage, weighing and marketing. The Chief Minister directed officials to ensure procurement of agricul-

tural produce strictly in accordance with Minimum Support Price (MSP) norms and Central government quotas. He also called for continuous monitoring of cultivation and procurement activities to prevent inconvenience to farmers.

Following the State government's decision to provide a bonus on fine-variety paddy, Revanth Reddy ordered adequate stocking of seven identified paddy seed varieties and their supply to farmers at subsidised rates through Rythu Vedikas. He also sought regular collection of cultivation data on fine-variety paddy.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >



RSS, REGISTRATION AND THE QUESTIONS THAT REFUSE TO GO AWAY

BY C. SUBRAHMANYAM

The latest confrontation between RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat and Karnataka Minister Priyank Kharge has reopened a debate that India has postponed for decades. At the centre of the controversy lies a deceptively simple question. Can a century old organisation with enormous social influence continue to function without formal registration while remaining accountable to the public? The dispute has quickly expanded beyond politics into questions of law, funding, transparency, property ownership, tax treatment

and democratic scrutiny. As both sides harden their positions, the controversy has become a test of how India balances freedom of association with public accountability.

Few organisations in modern India have generated as much fascination, admiration, criticism and controversy as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Governments have changed, political parties have risen and fallen, ideological battles have come and gone, yet the RSS has remained a permanent feature of the national landscape.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >

PAWAN's WARANGAL VISIT DRAWS POLITICAL ATTENTION

Hyderabad, June 16: AP deputy chief minister and Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan is set to visit Warangal on Wednesday to fulfil the last wish of Niranjan, who is battling a life-threatening illness. The Jana Sena leader will meet the child and is also expected to offer special prayers at the Bhadrakali Temple. The visit has gained political significance amid the ongoing debate over Telangana nativity. Party leaders believe the tour could energise Jana Sena cadres in Telangana as the party moves to strengthen its organisation by

forming a special committee to attract leaders from other parties.

It is learnt that Pawan Kalyan is taking key steps to further strengthen the party in Telangana. His party has officially announced that it will soon appoint a special 'Joinings Committee' to invite leaders from other parties and encourage defections to the party. Through this committee, strategies are being devised to induct strong leaders from the grassroots level and establish a formidable presence for Jana Sena in Telangana.

"MAOISTS ARE ALSO IN MY PARTY"

KAVITHA'S REMARK SPARKS POLITICAL BUZZ



Mancherial, June 16: Telangana Rakshana Sena (TRS) chief Kalvakuntla Kavitha triggered political debate after claiming that Maoists are also present within her party during the party's 'Boggu Baayi' (Coal Mine) programme at the RK-7 underground mine in Srirampur. Tension prevailed when the police stopped Kavitha, party workers and trade union leaders from entering the mine premises. After a brief standoff, the group pushed past the gates and held a meeting near the mine.

Addressing the workers, Kavitha accused Singareni management of denying basic facilities, including drinking water and alleged harassment of workers. She rejected claims that Maoist influence had disappeared and remarked that Maoists were present in her party as well. Warning that her party would not tolerate injustice against workers, Kavitha said legal action would be pursued if necessary.

Her comments gained significance as they came weeks after she visited former senior Maoist leader Thippiri Thirupathi alias Devji, who recently surrendered and joined the mainstream after nearly four decades underground. Another former Maoist leader, Malla Raji Reddy alias Sangram, also surfaced recently, fueling speculation about their possible political roles.

MAKE AP YOUR SECOND HOME AP CM WOOS SINGAPORE INVESTORS



SINGAPORE, JUNE 16

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu invited Singaporean businesses to invest in Andhra Pradesh, pitching the state as India's fastest-growing investment destination.

Addressing the CII Partnership Summit Roadshow in Singapore ahead of the upcoming Partnership Summit in Visakhapatnam, the Chief Minister described Andhra Pradesh as a model state

for investment and economic growth. Andhra Pradesh enjoys a long-standing and productive relationship with Singapore, he claimed and recalled Singapore's contribution to the development of Hyderabad during the undivided Andhra Pradesh era and its pivotal role in preparing the master plan for Amaravati after state bifurcation. "Singapore has designed a remarkable blue-green capital city plan for Amaravati.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >

BY C. SUBRAHMANYAM

A rebellion inside the Trinamool Congress has burst into the open with dissident MPs preparing for a confrontation that stretches far beyond party headquarters and into the heart of Parliament and the Supreme Court. What began as a challenge to the growing influence of Abhishek Banerjee is now evolving into a constitutional battle over political legitimacy, anti defection laws, party ownership and democratic accountability. The coming months may determine not only the future of the Trinamool Congress but also the limits of rebellion within India's parliamentary system.

West Bengal is witnessing something far more consequential than routine factionalism. Political parties often experience internal disagreements, leadership struggles and ideological friction. What is unfolding within the Trinamool Congress is of an entirely different magnitude. This is a direct challenge to the existing power structure of one of India's most dominant regional political formations.

For years, murmurs of dissatisfaction remained confined to private conversations, closed door meetings and whispered complaints among senior leaders.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >



CEMENTING DREAMS WITH SUPERIOR STRENGTH.

**GERMAN TECHNOLOGY
ROBOTIC QUALITY CONTROL
TAMPER PROOF PACKING**

3 TIMES BETTER

ACB BUSTS
LANDS OFFICIAL:
Rs.1.54 CR CASH,
1 KG GOLD SEIZED
HYDERABAD, JUNE 16



In a major anti-corruption operation, the ACB unearthed disproportionate assets worth crores during raids on Deputy Director of Lands and Survey Sunkari Narahari. Officials seized Rs.1.54 crore cash, 1 kg gold, Rs.1 crore in fixed deposits, property documents, and identified two bank lockers. The searches were conducted at 11 locations, including Narahari's residence in Chatrinaka, office and relatives' homes. ACB officials said the cash was found hidden in a cupboard above a bedroom wardrobe. Narahari has been arrested and will be produced before a court on Wednesday.

BJP never blocked
Metro Phase-2: Kishan Reddy

NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy strongly refuted allegations by Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy that he had obstructed the Hyderabad Metro Rail Phase-2 project, asserting that both he and the Centre have consistently supported Telangana's development.

Addressing the media at his official residence in New Delhi on Tuesday, Kishan Reddy termed the Chief Minister's remarks as "baseless allegations" and clarified that the Central Government had already agreed in principle to a 50:50 cost-sharing model for Metro Phase-2. He noted that the Centre had earlier contributed Rs.1,250 crore towards Metro Phase-1 and reiterated that development projects cannot be stalled at the behest of any individual. "Neither Prime Minister Modi, the Central Government, nor I require certificates from the Congress party regarding our commitment to Telangana", he said, adding that the BJP-led government has extended full support to the state in various sectors, including highways, railways, urban infrastructure and industrial devel-



opment. The Union Minister accused Revanth Reddy of indulging in political rhetoric despite the Centre's continued assistance. He highlighted major initiatives such as

Rs.1.75 lakh crore worth of national highway projects, the Kakatiya Mega Textile Park, modernization of 42 railway stations, MMTS Phase-2, the Zaheerabad Industrial Corridor, and financial assistance for projects including the Musi River rejuvenation programme.

Kishan Reddy also stated that he had written multiple letters to the state government urging it to move forward with Metro Phase-2 and stressed that technical and financial issues related to the project should be resolved through discussions between the Centre and the state.

Referring to the funding arrangement involving the Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC), he said the Telangana government had entered into agreements for Metro financing and that the Centre had offered suggestions regarding repayment mechanisms, including the utilization of Metro revenues.

Reaffirming the BJP's stance, Kishan Reddy said, "We do not have a culture of stalling development projects. We will continue to cooperate fully with every initiative aimed at Telangana's growth and progress."

Revanth Orders
Farm Reforms..

>FROM PAGE 1

In a major push towards technology-driven agriculture, the Chief Minister advocated the use of Artificial Intelligence across the agricultural ecosystem. Officials reviewed the AI pilot project being implemented in Dammameta mandal of Bhadradri Kothagudem district and discussed its expansion based on outcomes. The Agriculture Department, Civil Supplies Department and Agricultural University were asked to work in close coordination, with the university serving as the nodal agency. Revanth Reddy said Rythu Vedikas should be transformed into integrated farmer service centres where cultivators can register their details and purchase seeds and fertilisers. Revenue, Police and Agriculture Department personnel will be deployed at every centre, while Additional Collectors will supervise their functioning.

To improve fertiliser distribution, the Chief Minister proposed an app-based booking system for all fertilisers, including urea, which will be distributed through Rythu Vedikas. Additional Dis-

trict Collectors will monitor the distribution process.

The Chief Minister also urged the Centre to ensure adequate fertiliser supplies for Telangana during the Kharif season and insisted that fertilisers produced at the Ramagundam plant should be allocated to the State. He asked Agriculture Minister Tummal Nageswara Rao to pursue the matter with the Union government and suggested that a delegation of Ministers and MPs visit New Delhi if necessary.

Reviewing cooperative sector performance, Revanth Reddy directed officials to reduce losses in MARKFED and strengthen OILFED. Citing the government's success in maize procurement, he noted that tender rates had increased from around ₹13,000 to over ₹21,000 per tonne. He also stressed the need to strengthen the State dairy sector and ensure timely payments to dairy farmers.

Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka, Ministers Tummal Nageswara Rao and D. Sridhar Babu, Rajya Sabha member Vem Narender Reddy and senior officials attended the meeting.

MAKE
AP YOUR
SECOND
HOME

>FROM PAGE 1

We continue to work closely with Singapore on urban development and infrastructure initiatives. Andhra Pradesh is one of the best destinations for investment, and I invite Singaporean entrepreneurs to make Amaravati and Andhra Pradesh their second home", he noted.

On this occasion, Naidu highlighted AP's "Speed of Doing Business" model, upcoming mega projects in AI, data centers, electronics, and quantum computing, and the state's Vision 2047 roadmap. He urged global investors to partner in Andhra Pradesh's growth story, calling it a "golden opportunity" backed by strong infrastructure, policy support, and political stability. Further, the Chief Minister outlined his vision for Amaravati as a leading education, innovation and knowledge hub. He said the city will be connected to major metropolitan centers such as Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Chennai through future high-speed rail networks.

Steps for separate
welfare board for
Hamali workers: Vivek

Hyderabad, June 16: Minister for Labour, Employment and Mines Dr. G. Vivek Venkatswamy said the State government would initiate steps towards the establishment of a dedicated Welfare Board for Hamali workers.

He said a special committee comprising experts, government officials and representatives of labour unions would be constituted shortly to examine the issues and welfare requirements of Hamali workers and recommend a comprehensive framework. The Minister was addressing the "Telangana Hamali Workers Welfare Board Achievement Meeting" organised by the Telangana Hamali Workers Union at the Press Club, Basheerbagh, on Monday.

Speaking on this occasion, Vivek Venkatswamy said Hamali workers play a vital role in the functioning of markets, warehouses and the transportation sector. "The economy moves on the strength of workers. Only when labourers are happy and secure can society progress," he

remarked. The Minister said the proposal for a separate Welfare Board for Hamali workers would be examined from all angles. Based on the recommendations of the proposed committee, the government would formulate an action plan covering workers' welfare, social security, insurance coverage and other benefits.

He urged Hamali workers to make full use of the insurance schemes being implemented by the government. Vivek Venkatswamy announced that eligible worker families would soon receive insurance coverage of up to ₹5 lakh under the Indira Jeevan Bima Scheme, providing financial security in times of distress.

The Minister also assured that the government is committed to extending the benefits of the Indiramma Housing Scheme to all eligible Hamali worker families. He said the State government is implementing several welfare initiatives for workers, the poor and those employed in the unorganised sector.

BENGAL'S GREAT SCHISM

>FROM PAGE 1

Those whispers have now become public declarations. Dissident Members of Parliament are no longer concealing their intentions. They have openly questioned the concentration of authority within a narrow circle and have signalled their readiness for a political confrontation that could reverberate across Bengal and New Delhi alike.

The rebellion is especially significant because it does not primarily target former Chief Minister and party supremo Mamata Banerjee. Instead, it focuses on the growing influence of Abhishek Banerjee, whose rise within the party has become a subject of debate among veterans who believe their role in building the organisation has been diminished.

THE MONSOON SESSION
MAY
BECOME A POLITICAL
BATTLEGROUND

The rebels are not speaking the language of compromise. They are speaking the language of institutional warfare.

Their stated objective extends beyond registering dissent. They intend to establish themselves as the authentic political voice of the Trinamool Congress. The implications are enormous. Recognition in Parliament, control over political identity, claims over organisational legitimacy and even a future battle concerning the party symbol are now being openly discussed.

The Monsoon Session is expected to become the first major theatre of confrontation. Every procedural decision, every seating arrangement and every parliamentary intervention could acquire significance far beyond ordinary legislative business.

What makes this struggle extraordinary is that it is unfolding simultaneously on political, legal and constitutional fronts. Winning public attention is one challenge. Winning constitutional legitimacy is another matter altogether.

THE CONSTITUTION
STANDS
BETWEEN REBELLION AND
SURVIVAL

At the centre of this conflict stands the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution, India's anti-defection framework. The law was enacted to prevent elected representatives from casually abandoning political parties after securing electoral mandates under a particular banner. It was designed to promote stability and discourage opportunistic political migration.

The rebel camp believes it possesses a numerical advantage large enough to invoke merger protections available under constitutional provisions. Their argument is straightforward. If two thirds of legislators support a merger, protection from disqualification becomes available.

However, constitutional law is rarely as simple as political arithmetic. Numbers matter. But numbers alone do not decide legality. The anti-defection framework demands much more than a headcount. It requires compliance with constitutional requirements that have been repeatedly interpreted by the Supreme Court through landmark judgments.

"In constitutional battles, numerical strength may create headlines. Legal validity creates history."

THE SUPREME COURT HAS
ALREADY DRAWN THE
BOUNDARIES

This is where the rebel strategy encounters its greatest challenge. Over several decades, the Supreme Court has consistently reinforced a critical principle. A legislature party cannot merely declare itself to be the original political party. A genuine merger must extend beyond elected representatives and involve the parent organisation itself.

The judiciary has repeatedly warned against attempts to disguise defections as mergers. In significant judgments such as Rajendra Singh Rana v. Swami Prasad Maurya, the Court emphasised that organisational realities matter as much as legislative numbers. Similar judicial reasoning has emerged in decisions involving Jagjit Singh v. State of Haryana and the more recent Subhash Desai case.

The message from these precedents is unmistakable. Constitutional protection is reserved for genuine mergers, not strategic rearrangements designed to avoid disqualification.

For the dissidents, this creates a formidable obstacle. If the parent Trinamool Congress remains intact under Mamata Banerjee's leadership and formally opposes the rebellion, proving the existence of a legitimate merger becomes significantly more difficult.

THE SPEAKER NOW
ENTERS THE STORM

Every constitutional crisis eventu-

ally arrives at an institutional checkpoint. In this case, that checkpoint is the office of the Lok Sabha Speaker.

Recognition requests, merger claims and disqualification petitions will inevitably demand careful examination. Every document submitted, every affidavit filed and every procedural step taken will face intense scrutiny.

Yet, modern constitutional jurisprudence provides another safeguard. Speaker decisions are no longer insulated from judicial review. Courts have repeatedly asserted their authority to examine whether constitutional procedures have been followed fairly and lawfully. Consequently, whatever decision emerges from Parliament may only represent the beginning of the legal journey rather than its conclusion.

WHO REALLY HAS
THE MOST TO LOSE?

The immediate assumption is that the rebels face the greatest danger. That assessment may be incomplete. If the rebellion collapses legally, dissident MPs could confront disqualification and political isolation. If the rebellion gathers momentum politically, the Trinamool leadership could face questions about internal democracy, succession planning and organisational cohesion.

Either outcome carries consequences. The battle, therefore, extends beyond parliamentary numbers. It concerns credibility, authority and future leadership within Bengal's most influential political organisation.

THE BIGGER QUESTION
BEYOND ABHISHEK AND
MAMATA

Political observers may be tempted to reduce this conflict to a family versus rebels narrative. That would be a mistake.

The larger issue concerns how regional parties manage generational transitions. Across India, parties built around charismatic founders are confronting similar challenges. Younger leadership seeks greater authority while veterans seek greater consultation. The resulting friction often determines whether organisations evolve smoothly or fracture dramatically. The Trinamool Congress now finds itself confronting that very test.

This confrontation raises uncomfortable questions about accountability, internal democracy, leadership concentration and organisational transparency. Those questions will not disappear even if the immediate rebellion loses momentum.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL
RECKONING AHEAD

The coming weeks may produce dramatic political theatre, but ultimately this battle will be decided by constitutional principles rather than political slogans.

The rebels must prove that their actions satisfy the stringent legal standards established by decades of judicial interpretation. The party leadership must demonstrate organisational cohesion while responding to accusations of excessive centralisation. The Speaker must act with neutrality. The judiciary must apply precedent with consistency.

West Bengal stands at a decisive moment where political ambition, organisational authority and constitutional law have collided head on. The rebellion may transform Bengal politics. It may fade under legal pressure. It may trigger a larger debate about internal democracy in regional parties across India. What is beyond dispute is this: the fault lines inside the Trinamool Congress are now visible to the entire nation.

THE FINAL VERDICT OF
POLITICAL REALITY

The most dangerous mistake in politics is to dismiss visible cracks as temporary disturbances. History repeatedly shows that major political earthquakes begin as seemingly manageable tremors.

The Trinamool Congress today faces its most serious internal challenge in years. The dissidents face a constitutional mountain that cannot be climbed through numerical strength alone. The leadership faces questions that cannot be answered through authority alone.

As Parliament prepares for confrontation and courts prepare for scrutiny, Bengal finds itself watching a contest that will determine far more than the fate of a handful of MPs. It will determine whether rebellion can become legitimacy, whether dissent can become transformation and whether constitutional law can withstand one of the most politically charged tests in recent memory.

The battle lines have been drawn. The institutions of democracy now take centre stage. The verdict, however, will be delivered not by rhetoric but by law, evidence and political reality

CONTINUATION FROM PAGE 1

RSS UNDER FIRE...

>FROM PAGE 1

Nearly one hundred years after its founding, it continues to command extraordinary influence across large sections of Indian society.

It is, therefore, hardly surprising that the organisation has once again become the centre of a fierce political storm. Karnataka Minister Priyank Kharge's demand for greater disclosure regarding the RSS's legal status, organisational structure, finances, assets and tax compliance has triggered a national debate that reaches far beyond Karnataka. The response from RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat was equally direct. He questioned why the organisation should register when the law itself does not require such registration.

That exchange may have begun as a political confrontation, but it has evolved into something far more significant. It has exposed unresolved questions about how India treats powerful voluntary organisations and how much transparency the public can reasonably expect from institutions that wield substantial influence without formally entering electoral politics.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

When an organisation influences millions of citizens and shapes public discourse across the country, does its size alone create a greater obligation to disclose information even when existing laws do not compel formal registration?

THE LEGAL POSITION IS
FAR MORE COMPLEX THAN
THE POLITICAL SLOGANS

Much of the public discussion has been driven by political rhetoric rather than legal reality. The RSS has consistently maintained that it functions as a voluntary association of individuals and that Indian law does not require every such association to register as a society, trust or company. The organisation argues that citizens have a constitutional right to organise themselves for social and cultural purposes without being compelled into a particular legal structure.

This position is not without legal sup-

port. For nearly a century, the RSS has operated under this model. No court has declared it illegal because it lacks formal registration. No government has succeeded in compelling its registration. The organisation therefore argues that it is exercising rights available to every citizen under Indian law.

Yet legality alone does not settle the matter. A structure that may be perfectly lawful can still become the subject of legitimate public debate, particularly when an organisation acquires the scale, reach and influence that the RSS enjoys today. This is where the political argument begins to intersect with broader questions of accountability.

THE TRANSPARENCY DEBATE
IS WHERE THE REAL BATTLE
BEGINS

The most important aspect of the current controversy is that it is no longer really about registration. Registration has become a symbol for a larger debate concerning transparency and public accountability. Supporters of the RSS argue that the organisation functions openly, conducts daily shakhas across the country and carries out social service activities that are visible to the public. They contend that no organisation should be subjected to additional scrutiny merely because its ideological opponents dislike its influence.

Critics respond that the issue is not ideology but scale. They point out that the RSS today is among the largest volunteer-based organisations in the world and exerts influence across educational, cultural, social and political spheres. In their view, institutions of such significance should voluntarily disclose more information regarding their finances, decision-making processes and organisational structure.

The debate therefore revolves around a fundamental democratic question. How much transparency should be expected from organisations that exercise enormous influence while remaining outside conventional regulatory frameworks?

"The controversy is no longer about

whether the RSS should register. The controversy is about whether influence and accountability must grow together."

THE MONEY QUESTION THAT
ALWAYS RETURNS

Every major institution eventually faces one unavoidable question: Where does the money come from and how is it spent?

The RSS maintains that its principal source of support is voluntary contributions from swayamsevakas and supporters through the traditional practice of Guru Dakshina. According to the organisation, its strength comes from ordinary citizens who willingly contribute to its activities and programmes. Supporters regard this model as evidence of grassroots legitimacy and public trust.

Critics, however, argue that an organisation operating on such a vast scale inevitably attracts questions about the total volume of funds moving through its wider network. They contend that while individual institutions associated with the broader Sangh ecosystem may maintain their own accounts, the absence of a consolidated public picture makes it difficult to assess the full financial scale of the movement.

The disagreement persists because both sides focus on different aspects of the same issue. One side emphasises legal compliance by individual entities. The other emphasises the absence of a comprehensive overview. Between these competing narratives lies the unresolved transparency debate that continues to fuel public curiosity.

FOREIGN FUNDING,
SPECULATION AND THE
FACTS

Few subjects attract more speculation than allegations concerning foreign funding. Over the years, political opponents have repeatedly raised questions regarding financial flows associated with organisations linked to the wider Sangh network. However, speculation must be separated from established fact. There is no judicial finding that the RSS as an organisation is sustained through unlawful foreign funding. Nor has

any court concluded that the RSS operates in violation of Indian laws governing foreign contributions. Where foreign contributions are received by legally registered entities, those organisations remain subject to the regulatory requirements applicable to them under Indian law.

The distinction between the RSS and numerous affiliated institutions is often blurred in political debate. Yet from a legal standpoint, that distinction remains important. Allegations may generate headlines, but conclusions ultimately depend on evidence, regulatory scrutiny and judicial findings rather than political accusation.

THE PROPERTY QUESTION
AND THE CHALLENGE OF
VISIBILITY

The issue of assets and property ownership introduces another layer of complexity. Because the RSS does not function as a single nationwide registered corporation, properties associated with its activities are often held through trusts, committees and legally recognised institutions operating at different levels.

Supporters argue that this arrangement is neither unusual nor unlawful and point out that many religious, charitable and social organisations across India function through similar structures. Critics counter that such arrangements make it difficult to obtain a consolidated estimate of assets associated with the wider organisational ecosystem.

Once again, the disagreement is not primarily about legality. It concerns visibility. The argument is not whether assets exist lawfully but whether the public can easily understand the full scale of those assets through a transparent and accessible framework.

THE TRANSPARENCY
CHALLENGE

The central issue is not whether assets are held legally. The central issue is whether citizens can easily obtain a complete picture of an organisation's financial and institutional footprint.

Biodiversity - Human Survival

- Dr. Kandepi Rani Prasad

There are many types of living beings in nature. All living beings have their own uniqueness, but all types of animals coexist together. They depend on each other. In nature, trees, animals, and minds all live together without losing their uniqueness. The diversity between living beings is called biodiversity. The current lifestyle is disrupting the balance in nature due to differences in life processes.

Due to the lack of balance in nature, some types of plants and some types of animals are disappearing from nature. Some types are on the verge of disappearing, that is, becoming extinct. Observing this situation, the United Nations decided to set a day for biodiversity. For this, it chose the twenty-second of May. Every year, the International Day for Biological Diversity is celebrated on the twenty-second of May.

Indian culture also adopts the principle of unity in diversity that follows nature. India is an agricultural country. There is cooperation of animals in agriculture too. Many organisms living in the soil also use them to grow plants. When insects that destroy any plant come, other organisms are introduced that eat those insects. As a result, agriculture used to proceed without the need for chemical pesticides. Festivals in India are also celebrated following nature. Trees and bushes are planted. Animals are worshipped.

The United Nations declared the year 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity. Conferences on biodiversity are being organized throughout the year to create awareness among the people. In 2013, the Biodiversity Conference was held in our country's city of Hyderabad. This conference was attended by a large number of environment ministers, forest ministers, and biologists from 194 countries. Nearly ten thousand people from each fund related to biodiversity and biosecurity participated. At that time, I also displayed biodiversity charts and created awareness.

There is as much diversity as there is uniformity among all the animals in creation. None of the living beings in nature is more or less. All live dependently on each other. All are equal. Observing these, Indian sages and philosophers formulated Indian Dhar-



mas so that human life does not cause any disturbance to animals or plants. By continuing them as they were in the beginning, all living beings were able to survive well in nature. Man depends on nature for every need. Without nature, there is no human life. Swami Vivekananda stated that diversity is also a feature of creation. The ancient sages saw to it that agricultural methods, lifestyles, and food habits all follow the cycle of creation without disturbing each other.

A frog lives by eating insects in a pond. A snake eats a frog. When a snake or a hawk dies, insects eat it and mix it with the soil. Any living being, any plant, must eventually meet in the earth. Plants are born from that earth again. Those plants are then eaten by animals and humans. This is a food chain. If there is a disruption or break in this chain anywhere, the consequences are severe. If any one living thing dies, the impact will be severe on all the others. When this happens, many consequences arise directly and indirectly.

Natural disasters such as floods and storms are occurring due to human beings destroying forests for their own selfish purposes and converting them into human settlements. If man continues to dominate nature in this way, ultimately human survival will be in question. All this may lead to the destruction of nature and may be the cause of the end of the age. Every living thing is important in creation.

Currently, there are forty-five thou-

sand species of plants and seventy-seven thousand species of animals living in India. There are a total of twelve major biodiversity hotspots in the world. India is one of them. Currently, ten thousand species of organisms are becoming extinct worldwide every year. Some other species are running towards extinction. It is estimated that ten percent of the biological wealth that existed in the past is currently in danger. Over the past few decades, due to the rapid increase in human population, more than fifty percent of forests and more than seventy percent of water resources have disappeared.

Due to changes in human lifestyle, we have destroyed vast grasslands and plains. We have crushed hills and mountains and turned them into areas. We are building structures in the seas and making them cross the seas. Rare species are disappearing due to hunting and eating wild animals in the forests. Due to this, despite some restrictions and prohibitions, trees are being cut down and wild animals are being hunted.

Forests and biological wealth are common where tribal people and hill people live. They protect them. Tribal people live mostly in Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh in our country. More than 80 percent of them live there. Biodiversity is preserved and protected wherever they live. More than 53 million tribals live in our country.

The increasing emphasis on chem-

ical fertilizers and pesticides in agriculture is causing many bad effects. Human greed and the greed of pharmaceutical companies are encouraging excessive use of drugs, which is causing problems for other living beings and humans. India is also rushing ahead in producing more chemicals. Due to such undesirable actions, we are not only losing countless species but also putting our lives at risk.

Man is the reason for the destruction of agriculture due to lack of rain at the right time and the failure of crops to grow properly. In the name of experiments, we are digging our own pit by discovering crops that yield more in a short time. We are creating varieties with genetic modification such as chemicals and Bt hybrid seeds and causing the loss of nature. In true natural agriculture that protects biodiversity, the crop grown without artificial environment will naturally survive. Even if we eat crops grown through genetic modification methods, humans also become fat and suffer from obesity even after eating a little. Children and youth who should be healthy are suffering from obesity and leading a life of tension. Due to the pollution of the land and water due to various chemical drugs, humans are facing a shortage of clean air and water. As a result, humans are becoming responsible for many disasters and natural disasters because they are not getting clean water and air in nature. They are cutting down the branch on which they are sitting.

“People’s Government” Supports Small Contractors: Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka

■ Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka says pending bills will be cleared in phases

■ Civil contractors announce postponement of the 'Chalo Hyderabad' program scheduled for the 18th of this month



HYDERABAD

Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka stated that the people's government is responding to the problems of small civil contractors in the state with great sensitivity and humanity, and that the government will always stand by them.

On Tuesday, representatives of the Builders Association of India and civil contractors met the Deputy Chief Minister at Praja Bhavan. During the meeting, they requested the release of their pending dues, and the Deputy Chief Minister responded positively.

Bhatti Vikramarka reminded them that the Finance Department has been continuously paying bills every month while keeping in mind the difficulties faced by small contractors. He explained that the government

is moving forward with a clear plan to clear the pending dues. The Deputy Chief Minister assured them that all pending bills owed to small contractors in the state would be paid in a phased manner, providing much-needed relief to them.

Earlier in the day, representatives of the contractors held discussions with Roads and Buildings Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy. Later, they arrived at Praja Bhavan and briefed Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka on the outcome of those discussions.

'Chalo Hyderabad' Postponed: Ravinder Reddy
Ravinder Reddy, State Chairman of the Builders Association of India, announced that they were very satisfied with the positive assurance given by Deputy

Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka regarding the payment of pending bills. As a result, they have decided to postpone the “Chalo Hyderabad” program that was planned for the 18th of this month.

On behalf of the association, he expressed special gratitude to Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka, and R&B Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy for their supportive and positive approach toward resolving the contractors' issues.

The meeting was also attended by Association National Vice President V. Satyamurthy, former National President S. N. Reddy, former Vice Presidents D. V. N. Reddy, Sugunakar Rao, Bhaskar Reddy, Santosh Reddy, Prabhakar, Shyam Reddy, and others.

Telangana Movement Activists Identification Committee Visits Amarajyothi Memorial



■ Consultations for identifying movement activists to begin in phases from June 23

■ Committee says suggestions and recommendations will be accepted through both online and offline modes

HYDERABAD

Members of the Telangana Movement Activists Identification Committee visited the Telangana Amaraveerula Smarakam Amarajyothi memorial in Hyderabad. During the visit, the committee members inspected various facilities and rooms built within the memorial premises, including the audio-visual room and its

arrangements. Later, a meeting of the Telangana Movement Activists Identification Committee was held at Amarajyothi under the chairmanship of K. Keshava Rao. The meeting was attended by State Minister Ponnampalath, Government Whip and MLC Addanki Dayakar, MLC Kodandaram, former MLC Ramulu Naik, Mothe Shobhan Reddy, and others.

As part of the process of identifying Telangana movement activists, the committee decided to begin consultations with various groups from June 23 at Amarajyothi. Meetings will be held with representatives of the Student JAC (Joint Action Committee), artists, writers, public organizations, advocates, doctors, and other sections of society to gather their views and suggestions.

The committee also decided to

conduct extensive consultations, beyond political affiliations, with activists from public organizations, welfare committees of movement activists, and other groups who participated in the Telangana statehood movement between 2001 and 2014. Suggestions and recommendations required for identifying genuine movement activists will be collected in a phased manner.

To ensure greater transparency in the process, the committee will accept suggestions through both online and offline methods. A dedicated website will be established for online submissions.

For offline submissions, special officers will be appointed to receive representations from activists and record the opinions, recommendations, and details submitted by them, committee members said.

PRIP launches AI-powered entrepreneurship & incubation initiative for pharmacy students



HYDERABAD

Pulla Reddy Institute of Pharmacy (PRIP), under the Gayathri Educational Society, has launched a new Entrepreneurship & Incubation Initiative aimed at equipping pharmacy students with skills in artificial intelligence, healthcare innovation, start-up development, and venture creation.

The programme, beginning in June 2026, will be open to B.Pharm, M.Pharm and Pharm.D. students and seeks to prepare them for emerging opportunities in healthcare technology, digital health, research-driven innovation, product development and entrepreneurship. “Our vision is to ensure students graduate not only with strong clinical knowledge but also with the confidence to build their own ventures”, said Aditya Chitumula, Director of PRIP. “We are creating an ecosystem that nurtures the next generation of healthcare innovators and founders.”

The initiative will provide mentorship from faculty members, pharmaceutical industry professionals, healthcare technology experts, patent consultants and startup

advisors. Students will receive guidance in transforming academic concepts into practical healthcare solutions and commercially viable innovations.

According to Dr. Varun Dasari, Principal of PRIP, the programme will combine AI workshops, startup mentoring, industry-linked projects and research-driven learning to complement traditional pharmacy education.

In its first year, the institute plans to conduct structured innovation workshops, support student-led healthcare projects, facilitate prototype development, provide patent guidance and strengthen industry collaborations.

The initiative comes as Hyderabad continues to strengthen its position as a global pharmaceutical and life sciences hub. Students are already exploring projects such as AI-based medicine inventory management systems, smart medication adherence platforms for elderly patients and affordable nutraceutical and wellness products. PRIP said the long-term goal is to foster a campus culture where entrepreneurship, research and social impact become integral components of pharmaceutical education.

Steps for separate welfare board for Hamali workers: Vivek

HYDERABAD

Minister for Labour, Employment and Mines Dr. G. Vivek Venkatswamy said the State government would initiate steps towards the establishment of a dedicated Welfare Board for Hamali workers. He said a special committee comprising experts, government officials and representatives of labour unions would be constituted shortly to examine the issues and welfare requirements of Hamali workers and recommend a comprehensive framework.

The Minister was addressing the “Telangana Hamali Workers Welfare Board Achievement Meeting” organised by the Telangana Hamali Workers Union at the Press Club, Basheerbagh, on Monday.

Speaking on this occasion, Vivek Venkatswamy said Hamali workers play a vital role in the functioning of markets, warehouses and the transportation sector. “The economy moves on the strength of workers. Only when labour-

ers are happy and secure can society progress,” he remarked.

The Minister said the proposal for a separate Welfare Board for Hamali workers would be examined from all angles. Based on the recommendations of the proposed committee, the government would formulate an action plan covering workers’ welfare, social security, insurance coverage and other benefits.

He urged Hamali workers to make full use of the insurance schemes being implemented by the government. Vivek Venkatswamy announced that eligible worker families would soon receive insurance coverage of up to ₹5 lakh under the Indira Jeevan Bima Scheme, providing financial security in times of distress. The Minister also assured that the government is committed to extending the benefits of the Indira Housing Scheme to all eligible Hamali worker families. He said the State government is implementing several welfare initiatives for workers, the poor and those employed.

CM Revanth to inaugurate first 'Telangana Public School' in Arutla today

HYDERABAD

The Telangana government is taking steps to steer public education in the state in a new direction. As part of the educational reforms it has undertaken, the government has launched the “Telangana Public Schools” initiative.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is scheduled to officially open the first Telangana Public School (TPS) in Arutla, Rangareddy district, on Wednesday. This new institution is equipped with cutting-edge facilities, designed to compete with those found in private educational establishments, and is poised to spark a significant transformation in Telangana's educational landscape.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's itinerary includes arriving at Arutla at 9:30 AM to inaugurate the Telangana Public School pylon. Following this, he will tour the school's modern amenities, including its digital classrooms, library, science laboratories, dining area, and sports facilities. A crucial part of his visit will involve a dedicated session with students, educators, and school committee members to gather their valuable feedback. He will also share a breakfast meal with the students. The Chief Minister will later address a large public gathering at the same location.



In pursuit of elevating public education to the same standard as the state's private institutions, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy established a unique Education Commission, a first of its kind in the nation, to solicit recommendations for enhancing the education sector.

The Arutla Telangana Public School was developed as part of this endeavor, under the direct oversight of Telangana Education Commission Chairman Dr. Akunuri Murali, alongside commission members P.L. Visweshwar Rao, Dr. Charakonda Venkatesh,

and Josha Shiva Reddy.

The Arutla facility offers an international standard of education, catering to students from nursery through the intermediate level. Beyond academic excellence, there is a strong emphasis on developing students through sports, cultural activities, and personality enhancement programs.

Students enrolled in Telangana Public Schools will benefit from complimentary bus transportation and receive free meals, including breakfast, lunch, and evening snacks. Instruction will be delivered in English. With



its contemporary teaching methodologies and advanced technological infrastructure, the Telangana Public School stands as a benchmark for education in the state, aimed at restoring and bolstering public trust in government-run schools.

Four schools have been initially selected for the Telangana Public School initiative. The first phase includes schools located in Arutla and Manchala, both in Ranga Reddy district, and Vangur and Polkampalli, which were formerly part of Mahabubnagar district. The government has outlined

a strategic plan to gradually extend the ‘Telangana Public School’ model across the state, with an ambitious goal of establishing 100 such schools in a phased rollout.

Currently, the Arutla Telangana Public School accommodates a total of 1,814 students.

This student population is distributed across various sections: 150 in the pre-primary section, 600 in primary grades, 800 in the two high school blocks, and 160 and 104 students in the first and second years of Intermediate, respectively.



No trace of missing girl in Andhra, dolls used in search operation

AMARAVATI, JUNE 16

With the two-year-old girl missing from a palm oil plantation in Andhra Pradesh's Kakinada district remaining untraced for more than 10 days, authorities engaged in search operations have planted two dolls attached to an iron trap to ascertain the presence of wild animals in the area. The police and forest department personnel have placed two dolls resembling the missing child near the plantation where she went missing on June 6. They also inserted meat into the dolls to attract wild animals. Officials supervising the search operation are keeping vigil around these dolls through camera traps. Authorities suspect that wild animals

may have killed the child, but no traces have been found to confirm this. More than 400 personnel continued the search to trace Sunkara Gnaneswari. The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel joined the operation on Sunday following directions from Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan and Home Minister V. Anitha. The State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) was already participating in the search operation. The mystery surrounding the girl's disappearance deepened on June 13 with the death of the pet dog that had accompanied her when she went missing. The dog was said to have been behaving strangely since it returned home on June 9 and had not eaten anything.

No Mumbai Local Train Block on June 21 Amid NEET Retest

MUMBAI: (Jun 16) There will be no mega block, suspension of train services on a long stretch due to maintenance work, on Mumbai's suburban network on Sunday (June 21) in view of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) re-examination. Central and Western Railway will not undertake their routine mega blocks on the suburban network on Sunday in view of the NEET retest, authorities announced on Tuesday.

IAS Trainees Tour Polavaram, Pattiseema Projects

POLAVARAM, JUNE 16:

A team of trainee IAS officers visited the Polavaram Irrigation Project, one of India's largest multipurpose irrigation projects, on Tuesday. As part of the AP Darshan Programme, the 2025 batch trainee IAS officers — CH Sravan Kumar Reddy, Hari Om Pandia, Kshitij Aditya Sharma, Namrat Agarwal, Pawan Teja A.R., Priya, Suyash Kumar, and Venkatesh Banna — visited the Polavaram irrigation Project, polavaram hydro electric peoject and the Pattiseema Lift Irrigation Scheme to gain firsthand knowledge of these major water infrastructure projects. On the occasion, Polavaram



Project Superintending Engineer (SE) Reddy Ramachandra Rao, Executive Engineer (EE) Balakrishna, Deputy Executive Engineer (DEE) Srinivas, MEIL Project General Manager A. Gangadhar, and Deputy General Manager (DGM) Murali Pammi provided a comprehensive briefing on the project.

They explained the objectives, design features, construction progress, engineering challenges, and the long-term benefits expected upon completion of the project. The officials highlighted the significance of the Polavaram Project in providing irrigation facilities, drinking water supply, hydro-



electric power generation, and flood management. They also briefed the officers on the ongoing construction activities, major project components, and the measures being undertaken to ensure the project's timely completion. Subsequently, the trainee IAS officers visited various pro-

ject locations and inspected the ongoing construction works. They interacted with project officials and engineers to gain a deeper understanding of the technical, administrative, and environmental aspects involved in executing such a large-scale infrastructure project. The trainee officers appreciated the scale and engineering complexity of the Polavaram Project and observed that it would play a crucial role in the socio-economic development of Andhra Pradesh. They also noted the importance of the Pattiseema Lift Irrigation Scheme in strengthening water resource management and supporting the state's irrigation needs.

Pawan Kalyan seeks Centre's assistance for Andhra's Great Green Wall initiative

AMARAVATI, JUNE 16

Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan on Tuesday sought Central assistance for Andhra Pradesh's Great Green Wall initiative and coastal conservation efforts along the state's 1,050 km coastline. Meeting Union Environment, Forest & Climate Change Minister Bhupender Yadav in Delhi, he also sought enhanced support under the Green India Mission and expeditious wildlife clearances for the Sontyam Road project in Visakhapatnam. Pawan Kalyan said they discussed several key environmental and wildlife conservation initiatives concerning Andhra Pradesh. The Deputy CM said he thanked the Central minister for the approval of the



Aranyaram Common Facility Centre (Training & Research), which covers the units of HANUMAN - Animal Conflict Mitigation Centre, Great Green Wall Monitoring Centre, Forest Fire Command & Control Centre, and State Tiger Monitoring Centre. He sought suggestions from the Central minister to keep the sacred Godavari free

from municipal and industrial pollution. Pawan Kalyan requested support for increasing the number of base camps in the NSTR region from the present 90 to 150. This initiative will significantly strengthen wildlife protection, particularly tiger conservation, while also generating nearly 300 employment opportunities for

local Chenchu youth as Forest Watchers, thereby combining conservation with sustainable livelihoods for indigenous communities. He also requested support for the provision of motorcycles and free ration facilities for these Forest Watchers to enhance their mobility, efficiency, and welfare while serving in remote forest areas. The Central minister responded positively. Pawan Kalyan also discussed the need for trained Kumki elephants from Odisha to mitigate human-animal conflict in Parvatipuram district and requested to put a word in for the induction of tigers from Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh states to strengthen genetic diversity in Andhra Pradesh's tiger population. During the discussions, Bhupender Yadav

also spoke to Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and extended his support for facilitating these conservation efforts. Pawan Kalyan said that the Central minister assured full cooperation from the government and expressed his willingness to personally visit Andhra Pradesh on August 12, the International Elephant Day. He also assured that the necessary approvals and sanctions pertaining to these proposals would be taken forward on priority before his visit. The Deputy CM stated that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, they remain committed to protecting forests, conserving wildlife, strengthening ecological security, and building a greener, more sustainable Andhra Pradesh for future generations.

Committed to making Andhra Pradesh safest state, says Home Minister Anitha

AMARAVATI, JUNE 16

Andhra Pradesh Minister for Home Affairs and Disaster Management, Vangalapudi Anitha, on Tuesday, affirmed the government's commitment to making Andhra Pradesh the safest state in the country through public participation, police-public coordination, the use of technology, transparent administration, rapid response, and strict law enforcement. She stated that the government's goal is to prevent crimes before they occur, rather than simply responding after a crime has been committed. The Minister affirmed that the government is working uncompromisingly towards public safety, the dignity of women, the future of the youth, and social harmony. Addressing a press conference, she claimed that under the lead-

ership of Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu, the coalition government has achieved remarkable results by implementing comprehensive reforms across various sectors—including law and order maintenance, women's safety, drug control, curbing cybercrime, disaster management, prison reforms, and police welfare—over the past two years. She said that the government has restructured systems—which were previously confined to serving political interests—into an administration dedicated to public service and accountability. She emphasised that the government views maintaining law and order not merely as a display of authority, but as a responsibility to earn the public's trust. The minister stated that since the government assumed office, the overall crime rate in the state has dropped by approx-



imately 14.1 per cent through the use of technology, efficient surveillance systems, scientific investigation methods, and improved inter-departmental coordination. She noted that the government has successfully moved towards proactive crime detection and prevention by implementing "invisible policing" through CCTV cameras, drones, AI-based analysis, and digital surveillance systems. Measures are being taken to increase con-

viction rates by monitoring the movements of criminals, rapidly gathering evidence, and expediting investigations. The minister emphasised that the government treats women's safety as a top priority, guided by the belief that true independence is achieved only when a woman can walk fearlessly on the streets even at midnight. To this end, the government has established dedicated women's protection wings and district-specific security systems, and implemented a technology-driven response mechanism, the 'Shakti' app for emergency assistance, and special monitoring for crimes against women. She mentioned that over 11.15 lakh emergency SOS calls have been received via the 'Shakti' app so far, and immediate action has been taken on them. The minister stated that 'Operation Mus-

kaan'—an initiative launched to identify missing children, women, and the elderly and reunite them with their families—has been immensely successful. Through this programme, 8,396 missing individuals were identified and returned to their families. She remarked that these achievements reflect the humane side of the police department. The minister noted that the government treats POCOS cases with the utmost sensitivity and takes stringent action against those who commit sexual crimes against children. Measures such as the formation of special investigation teams, expedited forensic testing, and a dedicated prosecution system are in place, alongside the provision of psychological and social support to victims. So far, 2,293 children have received counselling and rehabilitation services.

Lok Sabha Speaker to hear both TMC factions before taking call

NEW DELHI:

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla will hear the defected TMC MPs as also the faction led by Mamata Banerjee before deciding on giving recognition to the breakaway faction even as the NCPI, the party which the rebel faction will join, has named Jyotiprakash Chatterji as its new president. One of the leading faces of the TMC rebel faction, Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar, on Tuesday claimed that the Nationalist Citizens Party of India (NCPI) has agreed to accept the joining of all the dissident Lok Sabha members of her party, whose numbers are likely to go up to 22 from the present 20. The Lok Sabha Speaker will hear the defected TMC MPs as well as the faction led by Mamata Banerjee before deciding on giving recognition to the breakaway faction, sources privy to the development said.

Meanwhile, sources in the Mamata-led TMC said its leader Abhishek Banerjee was called for a meeting with Birla at a two-hour notice when he was still being questioned by the ED in connection with its probe into the alleged primary school recruitment scam. Banerjee got an email from the Speaker's office around 2 pm on Monday, asking him to meet Birla at 4 pm. Soon after, the Speaker's office called party MP Kirti Azad and told him about the email. Azad, in response, informed the Speaker's office that Banerjee was "committed to cooperating with all investigative agencies" and was cooperating with the probe at the ED office in Kolkata, sources said. Later in the day, Azad also met the speaker to inform him about the email. The sources added that Banerjee returned after questioning only around midnight. In a fast-paced development, the NCPI, which has been thrust into the spotlight after the TMC rebel Lok Sabha faction's announcement of merger with it, named Chatterji as its new president, according to Dastidar. Dastidar's statement came a day after NCPI founder Shewli Kundu said she had stepped down as the NCPI chief, triggering speculation that Dastidar herself

Southern Railway Augments Coaches in Himsagar, Navyug Express Trains

CHENNAI, JUNE 16:

Brake Van.

To meet rising passenger demand and improve travel convenience, Southern Railway has announced the permanent augmentation of coach composition in two long-distance express trains connecting Tamil Nadu with Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra. Train No. 16317/16318 Kanniyakumari-Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra-Kanniyakumari Himsagar Express will be augmented with one additional AC Three-Tier coach from Kanniyakumari from June 19, 2026, and from Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra from June 22, 2026.

Following the augmentation, the Himsagar Express will comprise 2 AC Two-Tier coaches, 5 AC Three-Tier coaches, 1 AC Three-Tier Economy coach, 6 Sleeper Class coaches, 4 General Second Class coaches, 1 Pantry Car, 1 Divyangjan-friendly Second Class coach, and 1 Luggage-cum-

Similarly, Train No. 16787/16788 Tirunelveli-Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra-Tirunelveli Navyug Express will be augmented with one additional AC Three-Tier coach from Tirunelveli from June 15, 2026, and from Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra from June 18, 2026.

With the revised composition, the Navyug Express will have 2 AC Two-Tier coaches, 4 AC Three-Tier coaches, 2 AC Three-Tier Economy coaches, 6 Sleeper Class coaches, 4 General Second Class coaches, 1 Pantry Car, 1 Divyangjan-friendly Second Class coach, and 1 Luggage-cum-Brake Van.

Southern Railway stated that the additional coaches have been introduced to accommodate the growing number of passengers and provide enhanced travel comfort on these important long-distance routes.

Elections now centred on nation-building, development and not caste, community: Mandaviya

MUMBAI: (Jun 16) Union minister and BJP leader Mansukh Mandaviya on Tuesday said the focus of Indian politics has shifted over the last 12 years and that elections were now centred on development and nation-building instead of caste, class and community-based considerations. Before 2014, the year when the Modi government assumed office for the first time, politics largely depended on

seeking votes on the basis of caste, class and community, the Minister of Labour and Employment, Youth Affairs and Sports told reporters here. Referring to the tenure of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Mandaviya pointed out that Tuesday marked 4,402 days of the PM holding the top office, coinciding with the completion of two years of the BJP-led NDA government in its third term.



had taken charge of the party. Responding to a query from PTI on Tuesday, Dastidar said Chatterji is the new president of NCPI. However, little is known about Chatterji, much like the party itself. Shantanu Dey, who calls himself the NCPI's national organisation general secretary, told PTI that he had no information about the new president. "I don't know who Jyotiprakash Chatterji is. I have no idea what's happening with the NCPI, a party for which I worked so hard. I am glad that big leaders are joining us, but we have not been contacted by them so far. I am disheartened by the fact that we are being kept in the dark," Dey, whose name also finds mention as the NCPI's general secretary in the party's old campaign posters, said. The NCPI registered as a political party in January 2023, with its address listed in Election Commission records as a building in Sankarail, in West Bengal's Howrah district. Asked about the next move of the rebel TMC MPs, Dastidar said first they want to settle down while trying to merge into another party. "Acceptance has already come to us. They (NCPI) are happy to take us. We will work together with the NDA under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah," the lawmaker from Bengal's Barasat told reporters at the Parliament House complex. Asked about her faction's strength, Dastidar said, "Currently we are 20 (MPs). The numbers may go up to 22." Altogether, 28 MPs got elected to Lok Sabha on TMC tickets in the 2024 general elections. On relations with the rebel TMC MLAs in Bengal, she said the dissident



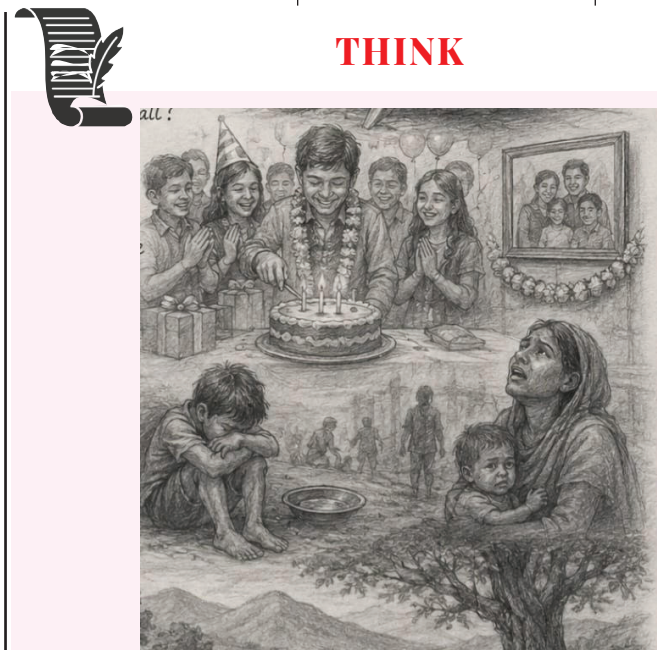
EDITORIAL.

Balancing the Scales of Innovation and Indigenisation

The conclusion of the three-day “Bharat Innovates 2026” summit in Nice, France, jointly inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron, marks a pivotal moment in India’s diplomatic and technological trajectory. By showcasing 120 of the nation’s most advanced deep-tech startups—spanning critical sectors like semiconductors, advanced computing, and space technology—New Delhi has made a resounding statement on the global stage. The pitch to international investors is clear: India is no longer merely a backend digital back-office but a primary engine of global innovation. Yet, as the curtain falls on this high-profile event, policy circles at home must grapple with a sobering reality. True technological sovereignty cannot be achieved in foreign exhibition halls alone; it must be built on the rugged terrain of domestic manufacturing, consistent research funding, and a deep-tech ecosystem that looks beyond immediate venture capital returns. The diplomatic optics in Nice were undoubtedly flawless, reinforcing a robust Indo-French tech alliance under the banner of the “Year of Innovation.” For an economy aiming for developed-nation status by 2047, pitching “Design in India, Develop in India, Solutions for the World” is the correct macroeconomic posture. Global venture capital firms and multinational corporations are looking for trusted geographical alternatives amidst shifting geopolitical fault lines, and India presents a highly attractive destination. However, the bottleneck for Indian deep-tech ventures remains the critical gap between conceptual innovation and commercial scalability within domestic borders. While our software capabilities remain undisputed, advanced hardware ecosystems—particularly semiconductor fabrication and precision healthcare manufacturing—still face heavy headwinds, including bureaucratic red tape, high input costs, and a reliance on imported raw components.

To bridge this divide, the Union Government must complement its aggressive global outreach with a radical overhaul of domestic R&D funding models. Currently, India’s gross expenditure on research and development hovers just below 0.7 per cent of GDP, a figure that pales in comparison to other global innovation hubs that routinely allocate 2 to 3 per cent. While the newly operationalised National Research Foundation is a step in the right direction, bureaucratic friction continues to slow the dispersal of grants to higher education institutions and private labs. If the breakthrough solutions showcased in France are to achieve true commercial viability, India needs to create a domestic landscape where high-risk, high-reward scientific research is insulated from immediate fiscal pressures and backed by substantial public-private partnerships. Moreover, the domestic economy is facing immediate macroeconomic variables that could test the resilience of this broader growth narrative. Oil marketing companies have kept retail fuel rates steady today, offering a momentary reprieve to consumers after a volatile month that pushed petrol and diesel prices to their highest levels in over two years. While global crude benchmarks dipped slightly following reports of a preliminary peace memorandum between the United States and Iran, the strategic maritime corridor of the Strait of Hormuz remains highly sensitive.

For an economy that imports over 85 per cent of its crude requirements, fuel price volatility remains a structural inflationary threat that can quickly sap consumer demand and drive up logistics costs for the very tech and manufacturing sectors India seeks to promote. The safe return of twenty Indian crew members from the attacked vessel MT Jalveer off Oman this week serves as a stark reminder of the geopolitical vulnerabilities flanking India’s trade routes. Economic security and technological ambition are two sides of the same coin. As policy makers look ahead, the success of global showcases must be measured by how effectively they translate into domestic industrial capability. The grand declarations in Nice are commendable, but the real work lies ahead in the labs of Bengaluru, the fabrication facilities of Gujarat, and the policy corridors of New Delhi. True innovation must not only be designed for the world; it must be structurally anchored at home.



THINK

You are born.
But what have you truly grown into?
The silver platter spins with comfort
yet the hands that forged it remain unseen.
Is life a feast,
or a whirlwind draped in celebration?

We cut cakes, light candles, wear garlands
but is that enough?
Is joy to be earned by the calendar?
Is love merely what’s framed on the wall?

Have you paused,
even for a breath,
to feel the weight of Aharnisha struggle
day and night,
someone fights
just to be heard,
just to be fed?

And what of the river?
What of the hill?
Do you remember
the path that nourished your roots?

If you kneel in a temple,
know this
God is not in sculpture or hymn,
but in the soul
that bears no hatred.

That is worship.
That is rebirth.
That is the finest of all human lives.

... Dr. Peruka Raju ...
National Poet
7810032847



OPINION

LIFE-SAVING MEDICINES, RISING COSTS, AND THE COMMON MAN’S STRUGGLE

Can a nation truly be called developed when illness pushes millions into debt? As India advances toward its vision of becoming a developed nation by 2047, rising healthcare costs and recent increases in the prices of life-saving medicines have reignited a critical debate. Beyond economics, the issue raises fundamental questions about social justice, public welfare, and whether access to healthcare should depend on a citizen’s ability to pay.

India is steadily moving forward with the dream of becoming a developed nation. The vision of a “Developed India” by 2047 is being reiterated time and again. Amid claims of massive infrastructure growth, digital transformation, remarkable space achievements, and economic progress, a fundamental question continues to arise: Can a nation truly be called developed if ordinary citizens are forced into debt because of illness? If the ever-increasing cost of medicines and medical treatment determines the thin line between life and death? If healthcare becomes a privilege of economic capacity rather than a basic right? At a time when inflation is already burdening common households, the decision of the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Author-

a serious illness can financially devastate an entire family. The treatment of cancer, heart disease, kidney ailments, and other complex medical conditions often demands lakhs of rupees. If the prices of life-saving medicines continue to rise, healthcare will become increasingly inaccessible for the poor and lower middle classes. The NPPA has justified these price revisions by citing rising production costs and the risk of shortages in the market. According to this argument, pharmaceutical companies may discontinue production if they cannot recover their costs, resulting in a lack of availability of essential medicines. While this reasoning may hold economic merit, an important question remains: Can life-saving medicines be treated like ordinary consumer goods? Should there not be a balance between



ity (NPPA) to permit significant price hikes in certain life-saving medicines and vaccines has become a matter of serious concern. The approval of price increases—reportedly reaching nearly fifty percent for some cancer drugs, anti-tetanus serum, and essential childhood vaccines—has created a new crisis for millions of families. This issue is not merely economic; it raises profound questions about social justice, human compassion, and the very concept of a welfare-oriented state. The reality of healthcare in India is well known. Government data indicate that a substantial proportion of citizens continue to bear medical expenses out of their own pockets. Illness no longer remains solely a health crisis; it often transforms into an economic catastrophe. There was a time when people commonly fell into debt because of wedding expenses. Today, however,

reasonable profit and social responsibility in the healthcare sector? Healthcare and education are the two most fundamental pillars of any civilized society. Unfortunately, both sectors in India have witnessed growing commercialization over the years. Escalating hospital charges, expensive diagnostic tests, unnecessary medical investigations, high equipment costs, and now rising medicine prices are collectively making healthcare unaffordable for ordinary citizens. Medical care increasingly appears to be transforming from a service into an industry. Hospitals often seem more like corporate enterprises than centers of healing. Patients are frequently viewed as customers rather than individuals seeking care. This trend not only widens economic inequality but also deepens social divisions. Even today, quality healthcare remains largely accessible to

those with stronger financial resources. Poor citizens are left dependent on overcrowded government hospitals with limited infrastructure and resources, while affluent individuals can afford advanced treatment in state-of-the-art private facilities. Is this the social justice envisioned by the nation’s founders? Is this the India that the freedom fighters dreamed of building? Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, several welfare-oriented initiatives have been introduced. Schemes such as Ayushman Bharat have provided relief to millions, while the establishment of Jan Aushadhi Kendras has improved access to affordable medicines. Nevertheless, significant structural challenges continue to persist in the healthcare system. If medicine prices continue to rise and private



healthcare remains largely unregulated, the benefits of these initiatives may be substantially diluted. The real challenge lies in placing healthcare at the center of public welfare rather than leaving it entirely to market forces. The government’s responsibility extends beyond announcing schemes; it must also ensure that every citizen has access to affordable and quality healthcare. Stronger price controls on life-saving medicines are essential. Government hospitals must be adequately supplied with essential drugs. Procurement systems should be transparent and accountable. The government can also provide targeted subsidies and support for the production of critical medicines so that the burden of rising costs does not fall entirely on patients. At the same time, health insurance coverage must be expanded significantly. Millions of poor and lower-middle-class families remain outside the

protection of any meaningful insurance framework. A major illness can wipe out their lifetime savings. Health insurance should not be limited to hospitalization expenses alone; it should also cover essential medicines and long-term treatments. Furthermore, the government should periodically conduct independent reviews of pharmaceutical pricing and cost structures. If production costs have genuinely increased, the evidence should be publicly disclosed. Greater transparency would strengthen public trust and help prevent unjustified price escalation. The primary objective of healthcare policy should be to strike a fair balance between corporate profitability and citizens’ rights. The vision of a developed India in 2047 cannot be measured solely through skyscrapers, expressways, digital networks, or GDP growth. Its true success will be judged by the well-being of its most vulnerable citizens. If a farmer, laborer, employee, or low-income worker cannot access dignified medical treatment during illness, claims of development will remain incomplete.

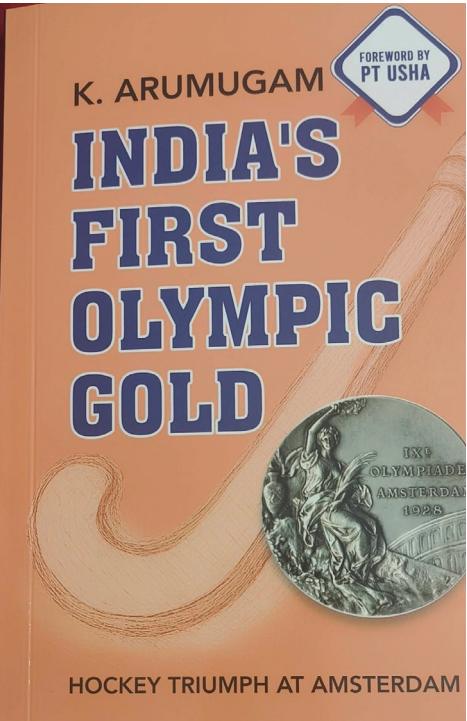
The need of the hour is not merely a debate on medicine prices but a comprehensive reassessment of the entire healthcare system. Healthcare is not a luxury; it is a fundamental human right. In a nation where citizens are denied the opportunity to live healthy lives, the glow of economic progress inevitably fades. It is time for governments, policymakers, medical professionals, pharmaceutical companies, and society at large to work together to ensure that healthcare remains an instrument of public service rather than merely a source of profit. Otherwise, the dream of a developed India may shine brightly in statistics while millions continue to struggle in the darkness of illness, debt, and helplessness. As India moves toward the centenary of its independence, this remains one of its greatest moral and humanitarian challenges—one that demands urgent and meaningful solutions today.



LALIT GARGG
Writer, Journalist, Columnist

Book Review

Dhyan Chand’s Magic and India’s First Olympic Gold



Arguably, 26 May 1928 was the golden day for Indian hockey. It was on that day, while still under British rule, that the Indian team won the hockey gold medal at the Amsterdam Olympics. Much of the credit for this victory goes to the legendary Dhyan Chand, whose breathtaking performance proved decisive. Exactly 98 years later, hockey players, including Dhyan Chand’s son, Ashok Kumar, along with writers, fans, and others gathered at a hotel just outside Delhi’s hockey nursery, Shivaji Stadium, for the launch of well-known hockey historian K. Arumugam’s new book, India’s First Olympic Gold. She also wrote the fore-

word. It tells the inspiring story of India’s first Olympic gold medal win in hockey at the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics. Launched by Indian Olympic Association president P.T. Usha, this book is a wonderful tribute to the players who brought glory to a nation still under British rule. The book takes readers back to 1928. India was not yet independent, but its hockey team showed the world what Indian talent could do. The journey was not easy. The team faced many problems before even reaching the Olympics. There were fights over player selection, money troubles, and disagreements inside the hockey groups in India. Many players had to pay their own way or depend on help from others. Despite these hurdles, a strong team came together. At the centre of the story is the legendary Dhyan Chand, known as the “Wiz-

ard” or “Magician” of hockey. His stick work was so magical that people said it was not hockey but pure magic. In one match, the Dutch even broke his stick to check if there was a magnet inside! Dhyan Chand scored 14 goals in just five matches and became India’s first big international sports hero. The book shows how his skill and determination helped the team shine. The final match on 26 May 1928 against the host nation, the Netherlands, was special. India won 3-0 and took home the gold. This was not just a win for India. It was the first Olympic gold for all of Asia. The victory gave colonised India a new sense of pride and identity. For the first time, Indians stood tall on the world stage through sports.

Arumugam fills the book with rare old pictures, newspaper cuttings from that time, and useful facts. Readers learn about the full team, including captain Jai-pal Singh and other heroes like Richard Allen, who did not let in a single goal. The book also talks about smaller details like players playing with fever, injuries, and a reduced squad in the final. These stories show the real courage of the team. One of the best things about the book is how it connects the 1928 win to India’s bigger hockey story. India went on to win gold in the next few Olympics too, building a golden era. Arumugam explains how this success helped build national pride and inspired future generations. The writing is clear and easy to follow. Arumugam writes like a storyteller, not just a historian. He mixes facts with exciting moments from matches. Readers

feel the tension of selection fights, the joy of victories, and the pride of the final win. Even people who do not know much about hockey will enjoy it. The book is perfect for sports lovers, students, and anyone interested in Indian history. At a time when Indian sports is growing fast, this book reminds us of our roots. It shows that success comes from hard work, unity, and belief, even when resources are low. The players of 1928 did not have modern facilities or big sponsors, but they had heart and skill. Their story can motivate today’s athletes. K. Arumugam collected stories that were scattered in old records and brought them together in one place. This book will help new generations understand and respect India’s hockey legacy. Finally, India’s First Olympic Gold is an important and enjoyable read. It celebrates not only a sports victory but also the spirit of a young nation finding its voice. Anyone who loves India and its sports should pick up this book. It leaves you feeling proud and inspired.



VIVEK SHUKLA



Maha Cabinet approves cyclotron project in Nagpur to boost cancer care

MUMBAI, JUNE 16



In a major boon for cancer patients across Central India, the Maharashtra cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, on Tuesday approved the setting up of a High-Energy Medical Cyclotron Project (HEMCP) in Nagpur with an estimated budget of Rs 300 crore. The project will develop Nagpur into a Radiopharmaceutical Innovation Hub, reducing the region's reliance on major medical hubs like Mumbai and Hyderabad. It will ensure the local availability of crucial radioisotopes required for PET-CT and Nuclear Medicine services. The project will be funded on a 50:50 cost-sharing basis between the Medical Education Department and the Industry Department. The Medical Education Department will immediately allocate Rs 150 crore. A 30-hectare land parcel at Bhansoli (Kinhi) in Hingna taluka has been approved for the project.

Nagpur's central geographical location makes it an ideal hub. It will cater to patients within a 500-kilometre radius spanning Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, leveraging the existing network of AIIMS, National Cancer Institute (NCI) and the Government Medical College (GMC), said the government release. The project will be executed through the 'Mahacare' company via a dedicated Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) under the Companies Act, 2013. Until the SPV is fi-

nalised, a steering committee, chaired by Shrikar Pardeshi (Principal Secretary to the CM), will oversee operations. Further, the State cabinet approved the Maharashtra Rural Drinking Water Policy 2026 to ensure a sustainable, clean, and permanent drinking water supply to rural households, in alignment with the Viksit Maharashtra 2047 vision. The policy creates a comprehensive master plan for the operations and maintenance (O&M) of water schemes under Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0. A central corpus fund will be created at the Gram Panchayat, Zilla Parishad and Maharashtra Jeevan Pradhikaran (MJP) levels. The State will deploy SCADA systems for multi-village water schemes, expand digital platforms for real-time tracking of water assets and set up a GIS-based dashboard for grievance redressal. It also heavily emphasises rainwater harvesting, greywater recycling, and preventing water theft. To make the schemes self-sustaining, monthly water tariff rates per household have been capped at a minimum of Rs 150 and a maximum of Rs 400. If water tax collections fall short, Gram Panchayats are authorised to utilise funds from the 15th and 16th Finance Commissions to bridge the gap.

Gujarat Police Make Fresh Arrest in ₹226-Crore Crypto-Drug Probe

GANDHINAGAR, JUNE 16

The Gujarat CID Crime's Cyber Centre of Excellence has arrested a 13th accused in an ongoing investigation into an alleged international network involving cryptocurrency-based terror financing, dark web-linked drug trafficking and cross-border financial transactions exceeding Rs 226 crore, officials said on Tuesday.

Superintendent of Police (SP) Rajdeepsinh Jhala said the unit had earlier exposed a syndicate involved in crypto transactions linked to terror-financing channels, a United Kingdom-based drug network, and dark web operations. "Further investigation led to the arrest of Shabbarhusen Padele, aged 35, a resident of Sarkhej in Ahmedabad," he said. SP Jhala noted that the accused was part of a broader network in which "dirty crypto" linked to terror financing channels was being routed through multiple operators and converted into USDT and cash. He stated that Mohammad Zubair Poptiya, currently based in Dubai, was identified as a key figure in the network, with funds allegedly flowing through cryptocurrency wallets operated in coordination with other accused persons. According to him, Shabbar played a role in converting such crypto assets into cash, and investigators traced transactions through wallets linked



to earlier-arrested accused Zeeshan Siraj Motiwala, a relative of Zubair and arrested from Mumbai. Officials said these wallets were used to facilitate the conversion of crypto assets suspected of being linked to the wider network. "The investigation also revealed the use of Monero and Binance-linked wallets within the syndicate," officials said. SP Jhala stated that these wallets were part of a structured system involving Mohsin Molani, Salman Ansari and others, who were allegedly engaged in facilitating drug-related transactions linked to the United Kingdom. Officials said Mohsin Molani was responsible for receiving drug orders from UK-based customers through dark web platforms and Telegram channels, which were then routed to UK-based handlers. "Salman Ansari and associates were allegedly involved in distributing narcotics within the United Kingdom using postal services, including Royal Mail, as part of the network's logistics chain," officials told

lani and Salman Ansari. Investigators said this indicated a compartmentalised structure in which different individuals handled ordering, coordination and delivery separately. Officials further confirmed to IANS that Shabbar is the owner of a courier company in Ahmedabad and that his international consignment activities are under examination. However, they clarified that there is no conclusive evidence at this stage directly linking the courier business to drug shipments, and that the investigation is focused on digital evidence, including Instagram communications and cryptocurrency transaction trails. "The accused was traced during the investigation after allegedly attempting to evade arrest, moving between Hyderabad and Goa before being apprehended in Goa. Records indicate that the accused had briefly travelled to Dubai after the offence was registered and later returned," officials told IANS. Officials said the financial scope of the case remains under review and may increase beyond Rs 226 crore as additional cryptocurrency wallets and transactions are analysed.

A mobile phone was seized from the arrested accused. The case has been registered under Sections 111(2) (B), 153 and 61 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, along with Sections 66(C) and 66(D) of the Information Technology Act, 2008.



NFR to Make Comprehensive Arrangements for Ambubachi Mela 2026

MALIGAON, 16 JUNE, 2026:

Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) is making extensive arrangements to ensure a smooth, safe and comfortable travel experience for the thousands of devotees expected to attend the annual Ambubachi Mela at the revered Kamakhya Temple, Guwahati, from 22nd to 25th June 2026. Anticipating a significant surge in passenger traffic during the mela period, NFR is undertaking a comprehensive range of passenger centric measures, including the operation of special trains, round-the-clock ticketing facilities, deployment of additional railway and security personnel, establishment of help desks and enquiry counters and distribution of food packets and drinking water for pilgrims. These arrangements are aimed at facilitating seamless movement of devotees, effective crowd management and enhanced passenger convenience during one of the region's most significant spiritual gatherings. To cater to the anticipated rush of pilgrims, NFR is operating three special unreserved train services comprising nearly 50 General Second Class (GS) coaches, connecting Kamakhya with important destinations in Assam and North Bengal. In addition, various regular passenger trains are being augmented with 11 additional GS coaches on a temporary basis to enhance carrying capacity during the mela period. As part of these arrangements, Train No. 05661 Kamakhya - Alipurduar Junction one-way special train will depart from Kamakhya on 19th June 2026 and reach Alipurduar on the following day. Additionally, Train Nos. 05444/05445 Alipurduar

-Kamakhya - Alipurduar special trains will operate daily from 20th to 22nd June and from 24th to 27th June 2026, providing enhanced connectivity between Assam and North Bengal during the mela period. Further, Train No. 05780 New Jalpaiguri - Kamakhya special train will operate on 20th and 27th June 2026, while train No. 05779 Kamakhya - New Jalpaiguri special train will operate on 21st and 28th June 2026, offering additional travel options for devotees visiting the holy shrine.

To facilitate hassle-free ticketing, additional ticket counters are being kept operational round the clock at Kamakhya and Guwahati railway stations. Special help desks and enquiry counters are also being set up at key locations to provide guidance, information and assistance to pilgrims throughout the mela period.

To ensure effective crowd management and enhanced passenger convenience, additional personnel from the Railway Protection Force (RPF), Government Railway Police (GRP), commercial and technical departments are being deployed at Kamakhya, Guwahati and other key stations. In addition, around 200 volunteers from the NFR Bharat Scouts & Guides are being engaged to assist pilgrims with guidance, information and other support services, thereby facilitating a smooth and hassle-free pilgrimage experience during the Ambubachi Mela. With these comprehensive arrangements in place, Northeast Frontier Railway is geared up to facilitate a safe, convenient and seamless pilgrimage experience for devotees attending the Ambubachi Mela and ensure smooth passenger movement throughout the festival period.

Western Railway cancels jumbo block on June 21 to facilitate NEET exam travel

MUMBAI, JUNE 17

In a move aimed at ensuring smooth travel for thousands of students appearing for the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET), Western Railway has announced that no jumbo block will be imposed on its suburban network on June 21, 2026.

According to an official communication issued by the Divisional Office, Mumbai Central, suburban services will run as per the weekday schedule on Sunday, June 21, while AC suburban services will follow the Sunday schedule. The decision was taken after the Chief Passenger Traffic Manager (CPTM) sought adjustments to accommodate the heavy student movement expected on the day of the examination. Jumbo blocks, which involve large-scale maintenance work on railway tracks and overhead equipment, are usually scheduled on Sundays to minimise disruption to weekday commuters.

Madhya Pradesh was the first to become Naxal free

Prime Minister Shri Modi praised it - Chief Minister Dr. Yadav
Chief Minister informed then ministers about the achievements of the government before the Council of Ministers meeting.

DR BHUPENDRA VIKALP

Bhopal: Chief Minister DrMohan Yadav has said that Madhya Pradesh was the first to end Naxalism in the entire country. Madhya Pradesh has won in giving the last salute to Lal Salaam. While presiding over the 11th meeting of the Governing Council of NITI Aayog held in New Delhi on June 11, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi praised the Madhya Pradesh government for always being at the forefront in every matter of development. The theme of this year's meeting was "Inclusive Human Development for a Developed India @2047". For the first time, Chief Ministers of all 28 states participated in the Governing Council meeting of NITI Aayog. He said that in the Governing Council meeting, there was a wide and meaningful discussion on joint participation, coordinated efforts of the Center and States and various dimensions of development to realize the resolve of a developed India. There was discussion on accelerating the pace of development in the areas of the country which were affected by Naxalism. In future, the government will have special emphasis on the development of youth. Prime Minister Shri Modi was also informed about Madhya Pradesh Ayushman Yojana, implementation of river linking projects, construction of PM Mitra Park and other important topics. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav was having informal discussion with the



ministers before the meeting of the Council of Ministers at Mantralaya on Tuesday. The Chief Minister informed the ministers about the special achievements made by the Madhya Pradesh government in various fields last week. He said that Prime Minister Shri Modi has also praised the high quality work being done in Madhya Pradesh under the National River Linking Project.

uniform civil code
Chief Minister DrYadav told the ministers that suggestions are being sought from the general public for policy making regarding the implementation of Uniform Civil Code in the state. Better public participation is necessary for good policy making. Awareness campaigns should be run in all the districts to invite maximum number of suggestions from the people of the state. He said that suggestions regarding Uniform Civil Code have been invited till June 22. The process of giving suggestions on the Uniform Civil Code website (ucc.mp.gov.in) is also very simple. The Chief Minister asked the ministers to do maximum publicity regarding the Uniform Civil Code and to give suggestions in the districts under their charge.

International Yoga Day – Yoga for a Healthy Age
Chief Minister DrYadav told the ministers that on the occasion of International Yoga Day, mass yoga programs will be organized in the state on June 21. In the year 2014, due to the efforts of Prime Minister

Shri Modi, the United Nations recognized International Yoga Day. Crores of people have adopted yoga in more than 190 countries of the world. He said that this year the theme of Yoga Day has been kept as 'Yoga for a healthy age'. The activities scheduled by the Union Ministry of AYUSH for the International Yoga Day of the year 2026 will be followed in letter and spirit in the state.

MP Tourism receives “Excellence Award in Conference Management”
Chief Minister DrYadav informed that Madhya Pradesh Tourism Department has received the "Excellence Award in Conference Management" at the prestigious '10th Decennial Exhibition Excellence Awards (EEA) 2026' held in Mumbai. MP Tourism getting the national award is a big achievement for the state. It is considered one of the most prestigious honors in the events, exhibitions and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Con.

Naresh Kumar Sharma became the national president of Indian Federation of Working Journalists, elected unopposed

DR.BHUPENDRA VIKAL

New Delhi: Sunday was a very important day for journalists, when the election process for the post of National President of the Indian Federation of Working Journalists (IFWJ) was completed. Naresh Kumar Sharma was declared the unopposed national president of the organization after all other candidates withdrew their nominations by the election day.

According to the information, Naresh Kumar Sharma received support from about 11 states of the country, while officials and journalists of journalist organizations from about eight states participated in the election process held in Delhi. After being elected president unopposed, Naresh Kumar

Sharma said that the organization will remain committed to the interests of journalists, their welfare, journalist protection law, government facilities and strengthening the economic condition of journalists. He said that the organization will continuously work to convey the problems of journalists to the government and protect their rights. On this occasion, National Election Incharge Shankar Dutt Sharma said that in the year 1950, during the tenure of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, the Indian Federation of Working Journalists was formed at Jantar Mantar in Delhi. Since then this organization has been voicing the interests of journalists. He said that the organization is being reorganized and strengthened so that all processes can be



conducted as per the rules.

The program was presided over by Delhi State President Akash Sharma. He said that the Delhi unit was formed in a very short time, but a large number of journalists have joined the organization. Soon an important meeting will be organized regarding the expansion and expansion of the organization, in which senior journalists and members

will participate. Satish Singh Sikarwar, who came from Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, advised the journalists to work unitedly and said that the values of journalism will have to be protected by forgetting mutual differences. He said that only impartial and selfless journalism will prove to be a lifeline for both society and journalism. Senior journalist of Madhya Pradesh, Dr. Bhupendra Vikal

said in his address that our organization IFWJ is the largest organization in the country, many organizations across the country are affiliated with our federation, all of us journalist friends will have to work unitedly in the interest of the journalists associated with us. National General Secretary of the organization Jaga Reddy said that the organization is currently actively working in 22 states of the country and rapid efforts are being made to expand to the remaining states. Congratulating the entire team including National President Naresh Kumar Sharma, he reiterated his resolve to further strengthen the organization. Sindhu Venkatesh, who came from Karnataka, announced that the upcoming meeting of the federation will be held in

Karnataka. The program was conducted by Delhi Unit General Secretary Imran Raja. He said that this is the first big step of the organization and in the coming times the entire team will work day and night to solve the problems of journalists. On this occasion, a large number of journalists from reputed print media, national newspapers, national level news portals and local media institutions from across the country including C. Prakash from Karnataka, Saad Ahmed from Madhya Pradesh, Dr. Bhupendra Sharma "Vikal", Prathamesh Kotwadekar from Maharashtra were present. In the program, there was a wide discussion about journalist unity, organization expansion and protection of journalist interests.

Regional Plan 2041 to be Prepared for the Development

CHANDIGARH, JUNE 16:

The 42nd meeting of the National Capital Region Planning Board (NCRPB) was held on Tuesday at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, under the chairmanship of Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs Sh. Manohar Lal. Haryana Chief Minister Sh. Nayab Singh Saini, Delhi Chief Minister Smt. Rekha Gupta, Uttar Pradesh Cabinet Minister A.K. Sharma, and Rajasthan Urban Local Bodies Minister Sh. Jhabar Singh Kharra attended the meeting. Speaking to media persons after the meeting, Haryana Chief Minister Sh. Nayab Singh Saini said that detailed discussions were held on several important issues related to the development of the National Capital Region (NCR). He informed that it was decided that there would be no change in the existing geographical limits of the NCR and that the current boundaries would remain intact. The Chief Minister said that the meeting deliberated on the Regional Plan-2041 for the National Capital Region. Various aspects relating to the future development of NCR, including urban planning, environmental conservation, infrastructure development and sustainable growth, were discussed in detail. To finalize the Regional Plan-2041, a sub-committee comprising senior officials from the Central Government and the concerned State Governments of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Del-



hi has been constituted. The sub-committee will submit its final report to the Board by August 15, 2026.

The Chief Minister further informed that the next meeting of the National Capital Region Planning Board will be held in Gurugram, Haryana, in December 2026.

A significant decision was also taken during the meeting to develop four new Greenfield cities along the Rapid Rail Transit System (RRTS) corridors. Each member state of the Board will submit a development proposal for one new Greenfield city. These cities, to be developed under the name "Namo City," will be planned as modern, environmentally sustainable, and self-reliant urban centres. Sh. Nayab Singh Saini said that these decisions of the National Capital Region Planning Board would ensure balanced and robust development of the Delhi-NCR region. He reiterated that the Haryana Government is giving the highest priority to the development of NCR and will expedite the implementation of Greenfield city projects and RRTS initiatives.



Trying for Canada visit this year, let's conclude FTA before that: PM Modi to Carney

EVIAN (FRANCE)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday signalled that he may visit Canada this year and hoped that the long-pending Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between both countries will be signed before his visit. PM Modi made the comment during a meeting with Canadian counterpart Mark Carney on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Evian, France.

"It's a pleasure to meet you. We met for the first time at the G7. And today, we're meeting after a year. And as you said, we've met four times. And we've been in touch over the phone. We've been discussing bilateral relations and international issues. And we're making good progress as a friendly country. I'm very grateful to you for your concern for the Indian diaspora... You have always had a positive contribution towards the Indian diaspora," PM Modi said in his remarks during a bilateral meeting with Carney.



"You're right that we're very excited about the Free Trade Agreement. And, as you've invited me to come to Canada, I'm also trying to come this year. And, before I come, let's complete this agreement. We want to make a lot of progress in technology. In energy security, Canada can be a very big partner. So these are all the areas that will be discussed a lot today. And I'm very grateful to you that I'm getting a

chance to meet all of you," added PM Modi. According to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), both leaders reviewed the "excellent progress" made in bilateral engagement and discussed ways to build a stronger partnership driven by trade, energy, innovation, education and people-to-people exchanges.

Carney said that both countries continue to make "very good progress" on concluding

the FTA. "Four continents, four meetings, one year. And right from the start, at the G7 in Kananaskis in Canada, and thank you for honouring us with that visit. Right from the start, you've set a high bar for the relationship and what we can do together. I'm very pleased and very honoured by your reception of me a few months ago. Of course, I'd be honoured to reciprocate a visit to Canada. We are making

very good progress," Carney said as he met Prime Minister Modi. India and Canada have signalled a rapid reset in bilateral ties, with leaders from both countries expressing optimism about concluding the FTA soon.

"His Excellency likes a deadline. I like one as well. And our deadline is to complete by the G20. Our teams are aware of that and what we're discovering in the negotiations, but also with the exchanges of our universities, cultural exchanges of our businesses, including the largest trade delegation from India, and a big reciprocal one coming from Canada to India, is that there's so much more to do together. And it's just one objective, which you've set, is to double our trade by the end of this decade. We think we can do more and with this partnership," he added.

Last month, Carney had said that negotiations on the FTA with India would be a "game changer" for Canadian workers and businesses.

PM Modi's talks with Starmer focus on adding more momentum to India-UK ties

EVIAN (FRANCE)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his UK counterpart Keir Starmer's talks on Tuesday focused on how to add more momentum to India-UK ties. PM Modi and his UK counterpart Starmer held a bilateral meeting on sidelines of the ongoing G7 Summit at Evian, France.

"Had a wonderful meeting with PM Keir Starmer in Evian. The last year has been outstanding as far as India-UK relations are concerned. The trade deal has opened many avenues of economic cooperation. Today's talks focused on how to add even more momentum to India-UK ties," Prime Minister Modi wrote on X. "We discussed ways to work closely in areas like innovation, AI, skill development, sports and more. We also discussed how to increase investment linkages for the benefit of the people of our nations," he added.

According to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), the two leaders reviewed the strong momentum in India-UK relations since the reciprocal visits of the Prime Ministers last year.

Trump hails UAE ties amid Iran deal

EVIAN (FRANCE)

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) took centre stage in President Donald Trump's Middle East diplomacy at the G7 Summit, with Trump praising UAE President Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan and expressing confidence that a newly signed agreement with Iran would ease regional tensions and help stabilise global energy markets.

Trump met the UAE leader on the sidelines of the summit in France, describing the relationship between the two countries as "outstanding" during a bilateral meeting that lasted less than 15 minutes.

The meeting came hours after Trump held discussions with the Emir of Qatar and participated in meetings involving G7 and Middle Eastern leaders, with the newly announced Iran agreement dominating conversations throughout the day.

Speaking alongside Mohammed Bin Zayed, Trump said the agreement was already producing tangible results. "We just signed a deal with Iran. Ships are starting to move now... oil is starting to

go and prices are coming down rapidly," Trump said.

"Most importantly Iran will not have a nuclear weapon." The US President said he would wait until later in the week before publicly releasing the text of the agreement.

"I would like to get a formal setting first," Trump said. "I will go over the document with the media." The discussion also touched on the future of the Abraham Accords and prospects for broader Arab participation. Asked whether additional Arab countries could join the framework, Trump praised the UAE President, whose country was among the first signatories.

"This is a man who is very advanced," Trump said. He added that he believed more countries would eventually join. "I think they will all start coming in." Trump also suggested he would be willing to submit the agreement to Congress for review, while dismissing criticism from some lawmakers. "What I would like to do is send it to congress and say you shouldn't approve it. And they will approve it," he said, drawing laughter from those present.

PM Modi meets Kenya's Prez, vows stronger Global South partnership

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said India and Kenya will continue to strengthen their longstanding partnership, anchored in the aspirations of the Global South, following his meeting with Kenyan President William Ruto. The two leaders interacted on the sidelines of the Group of Seven (G7) Summit, where India was invited as a partner country.

PM Modi described the meeting as "glad to have met President William Ruto of Kenya," and emphasised that both nations remain committed to working together for the well-being of their people.

India and Kenya share deep historical and cultural ties, with relations dating back to the pre-independence era. The Indian diaspora in Kenya, numbering over 80,000, has played a significant role in shaping bilateral relations.

Over the years, the two countries have collaborated in areas such as trade, agriculture, education, defence, and healthcare. Kenya is one of India's key partners in Africa, with bilateral trade crossing USD 3 billion annually. India exports pharmaceuticals, machinery, and automobiles to Kenya, while importing tea, coffee.

US naval blockade lifted, says Iran Deputy Foreign Minister

TEHRAN

The US has reportedly lifted the naval blockade imposed on Iranian ports, according to Tehran's Deputy Foreign Minister, Majid Takht-Ravanchi.

The naval blockade imposed on Iranian ports for nearly two months was lifted by the US ahead of the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) scheduled for Friday in Switzerland, according to the Minister Takht-Ravanchi as quoted on the government website, Adnkronos news agency reported.

"The lifting of the blockade was something we had emphasised from the beginning. Now it has begun, and the blockade has been lifted before the formal signing" of the agreement, The Minister said.

On Monday evening, the Iranian media had reported that "three oil tankers and two



ships carrying essential goods for Iran" had breached the naval blockade.

US President Donald Trump and French President Emmanuel Macron on Monday hailed a newly signed agreement with Iran as a major step towards easing tensions in the Middle

East, reopening the Strait of Hormuz, and preventing Tehran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

Meeting on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in the French resort town of Evian, the two leaders said the agreement could help stabilise global

energy markets and build momentum to address other regional conflicts. "I think yesterday was a very important agreement, a peace deal with Iran," Macron said at the start of the bilateral meeting.

"It will fix the nuclear issue first, it will fix the nuclear issue, and it's a very important matter for peace, for the whole world."

Macron described the agreement as an important development for regional stability and said it could also contribute to peace efforts in Lebanon.

"It will provide peace in Lebanon, and so we are ready to take our fair share of the burden and be part of the commitment of the international community in order to support this deal," he said.

Trump said the agreement was already producing results, with commercial shipping beginning to move again through the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most critical oil transit routes.

"The deal is all signed, and the Strait is already partially opened," he added. "Ships are starting to go out now. On Friday, it'll be completely opened."

Trump says Iran deal is done, issues warning

EVIAN

US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday that a deal with Iran had been completed and warned that Tehran would face severe consequences if it sought to develop or acquire a nuclear weapon, while praising Qatar's role in helping secure the agreement and signalling confidence that the next phase of negotiations would be easier.

Speaking during a bilateral meeting with the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Ha-

mad Al Thani, Trump said the agreement represented a major breakthrough after weeks of tensions in the Middle East.

"We have our deal done with Iran, and it should be successful. It goes to a second stage, which I think will be actually easier. I didn't want to attack them last week, but we had no choice, and we did it twice, actually, we were doing it a third time, and we were able to not have to do that," Trump said.

The US President dismissed reports that Washington would



provide financial assistance to Iran as part of the arrangement. "We are not investing any money in Iran, by the way. That rumour that got out there yesterday, it was ridiculous. We have the right to go in someday

and do something... or if somebody wants to do something. But we have no obligation to invest money in Iran," he said.

Trump said the central objective of the agreement was ensuring that Iran never acquires a nuclear weapon.

"The one thing that is happening that is of note, frankly, the only thing that only matters to me is that Iran will never have a nuclear weapon," he said. "They are not going to develop it, they are not going to buy it, they are not going to

do anything with it. If they do, they will suffer unbelievable consequences. Not just a little bit, like, I won't even tell you the consequences, but they are the ultimate consequences."

He said he personally insisted that the agreement explicitly bar Iran from purchasing a nuclear weapon in addition to developing one. "Marco was with me, and they originally wrote that we will not develop a nuclear weapon. I said, no no, you are not going to develop it, you are not going to buy it either.

ISIS shared concern for Afghanistan, Central Asian countries: Taliban FM

KABUL

Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttuqi on Tuesday said that the threats posed by the regional affiliates of ISIS remain a shared concern for Afghan administration and the countries of Central Asia, local media reported.

"The threat of Daesh is a shared concern," Muttuqi said, speaking at a meeting of strategic studies centres and think tanks from Central Asia and Azerbaijan in Kabul, Amu TV reported. He noted that the Taliban and regional government face common concerns in terms of security, including the threat from ISIS.

Muttuqi also highlighted that the Taliban remains ready to cooperate with the regional governments on security concerns, and measures had already been taken to counter the group.

"Concerns about ISIS-Khorasan, the Islamic State affiliate operating in Afghanistan, have remained a recurring issue in relations between the Taliban and regional govern-



ments. Central Asian countries have repeatedly warned about the potential threat posed by extremist groups based in Afghanistan, while seeking greater security cooperation with Kabul," Amu TV reported.

The continued presence of ISIS-Khorasan has been reported by the United Nations (UN). According to recent assessments of UN monitors, the group retains the capacity to recruit fighters. It warned that they can conduct attacks and maintain networks across the region and inside Afghanistan.

Alexander Bortnikov, head of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB), recently echoed

the same concerns by saying ISIS was actively recruiting in Afghanistan and poses a threat to regional security.

The Foreign Minister of the Taliban regime also emphasised the importance of regional cooperation beyond security matters at the Kabul forum.

He argued that trade, transportation, food supplies and energy markets were disrupted by the ongoing conflicts in the broader region. He said that a great role could be played by the research institutions and policy centres by promoting regional convergence and providing practical solutions to shared challenges.

G7 Summit: PM Modi interacts with world leaders, thanks Macron for welcome

EVIAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday thanked French President Emmanuel Macron for welcoming him to Evian G7 Summit. The two leaders hugged and greeted each other as they met ahead of the outreach session.

"Thank you for the welcome in Evian my friend, President Macron!" PM Modi posted on X. According to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), both leaders built on their productive bilateral discussions in Nice a few days ago. "The two leaders now carry forward their conversations in multilateral format," it stated. During the official G7 Summit family photo op, PM Modi was also seen interacting with several world leaders.

"Before the start of the proceedings at the G7 Summit in Evian this afternoon. Always insightful to exchange perspectives with G7 leaders," PM Modi wrote on X, sharing a glimpse of his interactions with other world leaders.

"Leaders, including Prime



Minister Narendra Modi, gather for the family photo at the 52nd G7 Summit in Evian, France. A step further in collective commitment to address global challenges and advance inclusive growth," said the MEA. PM Modi and US President Donald Trump also briefly met and exchanged

greetings on the sidelines of an outreach session of the G7 Summit. Both leaders shook hands and held a short conversation ahead of the G7 working session on 'Forging New Partnerships and Rebuilding International Solidarity', which is being attended by the G7 countries, partner nations, the

World Bank, and the African Development Bank.

PM Modi and Trump are scheduled to hold a bilateral meeting on Wednesday and hold discussions on economic growth, supply chains, Artificial Intelligence (AI), investment partnerships and a range of global security challenges.

This would be the first bilateral meeting between President Trump and Prime Minister Modi after last year's successful 'Operation Sindoor' against Pakistan.

The White House said Saturday that the meeting will be held before both leaders join a working lunch attended by the G7 leaders, outreach partners and technology executives.

Upon arrival in Evian, PM Modi stated that he looked forward to meeting world leaders and exchanging views on key global issues. "Reached Evian, France for the G7 Summit. Looking forward to engaging with world leaders and exchanging views on key global issues. India remains committed to advancing collective efforts for a more sustainable and prosperous planet", he wrote on X.

PM Modi travelled to Evian at the invitation of President Macron. This year marks India's 13th participation in the G7 and PM Modi's seventh consecutive attendance at the summit.





Akasa Air begins operations from Noida Airport, launches flights to Navi Mumbai

NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

Akasa Air on Tuesday commenced commercial operations from Noida International Airport (NIA), becoming one of the first airlines to launch services from the greenfield airport. The carrier started direct flights between Noida and Navi Mumbai, marking a key step in its network expansion strategy and strengthening its presence in the National Capital Region (NCR).

The inaugural flight departed from Navi Mumbai International Airport at 7:25 am and arrived at Noida International Airport at 9:35 am. The return service took off from Noida at 10:15 am and landed in Navi Mumbai at 12:30 pm.

The launch marks a significant milestone in Akasa Air's expansion plans as it seeks to capitalise on emerging airport infrastructure and growing demand for air travel across northern India.

The airline said its early entry into Noida International Airport aligns with its strategy of building a strong presence in key growth markets.

Anand Srinivasan, co-founder and chief commercial officer of Akasa Air, described the commencement of operations from Noida as an important milestone in the airline's growth journey.

"Our early presence at Noida aligns with our long-term strategy of building a strong network across key growth markets while supporting the development of modern aviation infrastructure. We look forward to deepening our partnership with Noida International Airport and delivering seamless, dependable travel experience to our customers in the Akasa Way," he added.

Christoph Schnellmann, Vice Chairman of Noida International Airport, said Akasa Air's arrival represents an important step in expanding travel options for passengers and enhancing regional connectivity.

MONEY MATTERS

Sensex ends 544 points higher, Nifty nears 24,000; HUL up 2%

Stock markets extended their winning streak for the third straight session on Tuesday, as easing tensions between the United States and Iran and a sharp decline in crude oil prices lifted investor sentiment. The continued fall in oil prices, along with signs of returning foreign investor interest, helped Sensex and Nifty close higher.



The S&P BSE Sensex climbed 544.15 points, or 0.71%, to settle at 76,808.48, while the NSE Nifty50 gained 135.25 points, or 0.57%, to close at 23,989.15, just shy of the crucial 24,000 mark. Over the last three trading sessions, the Sensex has surged 4%, while the Nifty has gained 3.6%. The latest rally on Dalal Street came after a preliminary peace agreement between the US and Iran reduced concerns over a prolonged conflict in West Asia and potential disruptions to global oil supplies. Brent crude prices fell below the \$82 mark, declining 2.57% to

\$81.03 per barrel, while WTI crude slipped 2.71% to \$78.56 per barrel. Lower crude prices are considered a major positive for India, which imports nearly 85% of its oil needs, as they ease inflationary pressure, support the rupee and improve the country's current account outlook. Global sentiment was also supportive, with Asian markets gaining around 0.8% during the day. The rally was broad-based, with 11 out of 16 major sectoral indices ending in the green. Nifty Realty emerged as the top sectoral performer, jumping 2.26%, followed by Nifty IT, which gained 1.78%, Nifty Media, up 1.40%, Nifty

Consumer Durables, which rose 1.28%, and Nifty FMCG, which advanced 1.22%. Oil & gas stocks also participated in the rally, with the Nifty Oil & Gas index gaining 1.02%. On the other hand, metal stocks were the biggest laggards, with the Nifty Metal index declining 1.55% due to a pullback in global metal prices. Among Sensex stocks, HCLTech was the top gainer, rising 3.59%, followed by Bajaj Finserv, which climbed 2.13%, NTPC, up 2.10%, Hindustan Unilever, which gained 2.10%, TCS, up 1.72%, and Bajaj Finance, which rose 1.70%. Other major gainers included Reliance Industries, up 1.59%, Tech

Mahindra, which advanced 1.45%, ITC, which climbed 1.32%, and Titan, up 1.20%. Among the laggards, IndiGo fell 0.86%, UltraTech Cement declined 0.82%, Maruti slipped 0.81%, Tata Steel lost 0.71%, BEL fell 0.51%, and SBI declined 0.49%. The positive sentiment was visible across the broader market as well. The Nifty Midcap 50 index rose 0.60%, while Nifty Midcap 100 gained 0.41%. The Nifty Smallcap 100 climbed 0.42%, indicating continued participation from mid- and small-cap stocks. Meanwhile, India VIX, the market's fear gauge, dropped 6.89% to 13.36, signalling easing volatility and improving investor confidence. In another positive development, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) turned net buyers on Monday after 13 consecutive sessions of selling, with net inflows of \$21.2 million. This has raised hopes that sustained selling pressure from overseas investors may begin to ease. Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Investments Limited, said domestic markets contin-

ued their recovery momentum due to easing geopolitical tensions and softer crude prices.

"The rally was broad-based, with notable gains in IT, realty, FMCG, and oil & gas sectors. Metal stocks, however, lagged behind, weighed down by a sharp pullback in global metal prices as supply-side concerns began to subside," he said. He added that investors will now closely monitor the upcoming US Federal Reserve policy meeting, where interest rates are expected to remain unchanged. However, the central bank's commentary on future rate decisions will be a key trigger for global markets.

While the sharp recovery suggests that the panic caused by the West Asia conflict has eased, investors will continue to track developments around the US-Iran peace process, movement in crude oil prices, FPI flows and the US Fed's policy guidance.

The sustainability of lower oil prices and a return of foreign inflows will play a crucial role in deciding whether the current market rally has more room to run.

US-Iran deal eases oil, but India's petrol relief may take longer

The US-Iran deal has reopened the Strait of Hormuz and cooled crude prices. But India may not see immediate fuel relief as supply chains and inventories recover.



A US-Iran agreement has raised hopes that the Strait of Hormuz, the world's most critical oil shipping route, could reopen after June 19, bringing relief to global energy markets. Brent crude has already fallen sharply from its peak of \$118 per barrel during the conflict to around \$83 on expectations of smoother oil flows. But for Indian consumers waiting for cheaper petrol and diesel, the road to relief may be much longer. The reason is that the three-and-a-half-month conflict did not just push up oil prices. It disrupted one of the biggest energy supply chains in modern history, removing around 1 billion barrels of crude and refined products from the market and leaving nearly 20% of global LNG supplies affected. Restoring

normal trade flows, rebuilding inventories and increasing production could take time.

THE OIL WAR MAY BE OVER, BUT THE CLEAN-UP HAS JUST BEGUN

The closure of the Strait of Hormuz was Iran's most powerful tool during the conflict.

The narrow waterway between Iran and Oman carries nearly one-fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas supplies. Its closure effectively removed around 1 billion barrels of crude oil and refined products from producers such as Iraq, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Iran itself.

At the same time, nearly

20% of global LNG supplies were trapped in the route, creating fears of a severe energy shortage. The market managed to avoid a bigger crisis because countries released strategic and commercial oil inventories. China, the world's biggest crude importer, also sharply reduced its purchases, which helped balance demand and supply. Now, even after the reopening of the Strait, the next challenge begins. Oil producers have to restart normal exports, shipping companies need to clear the backlog of vessels, and countries will have to rebuild depleted inventories. This process could

keep crude oil and natural gas prices higher for longer. How quickly prices stabilise will depend on how fast Middle Eastern producers increase supplies and whether OPEC+ members can actually deliver the higher production levels they have promised.

WHY PETROL AND DIESEL PRICES MAY NOT FALL IMMEDIATELY

A fall in international crude oil prices does not automatically translate into cheaper fuel at Indian petrol pumps. Dr Manoranjan Sharma, Chief Economist at Infometrics Ratings, said meaningful cuts in petrol and diesel prices would require crude oil prices to remain sustainably below around \$80 per barrel. He said oil marketing companies (OMCs) are still recovering earlier under-recoveries and are focused on strengthening their balance sheets. "Prolonged low crude prices, rather than temporary corrections, are needed for substantial retail price cuts," Sharma said. According to him, any near-

term reduction is likely to be limited to around Rs 2-4 per litre and will be carefully calibrated rather than taking prices back to levels seen before the Middle East conflict.

WHAT ABOUT LPG CYLINDER PRICES?

The outlook for LPG prices also points towards selective relief rather than a broad reduction. Sharma said the government has already provided support through LPG subsidies, including a Rs 200-per-cylinder subsidy for Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) beneficiaries. Eligible households can receive support for up to 12 subsidised domestic cylinders annually. If global LPG and crude oil prices continue to soften, the government's subsidy burden may come down, giving it more flexibility. However, Sharma said any additional benefit will depend on international energy prices, government finances and fiscal priorities, which means relief is likely to be targeted rather than available to all consumers.

Why India's wealthy are quietly buying second residencies abroad

They are not leaving India. But they want the option to, just in case. From Dubai to Portugal to Greece, promoters and business families are spending crores on second residencies abroad. It is not about emigration. It is about insurance.

India's wealthy built their fortunes around businesses, real estate and investments within the country for years. However, a new asset is quietly entering the portfolios of promoters, family offices and ultra-high-net-worth individuals (UHNIs): a second residency abroad.

The idea is not necessarily to leave India. Instead, wealthy families are increasingly buying a "Plan B" — a backup option that provides global mobility, better educational opportunities for their children, access to international business hubs and protection against an increasingly uncertain world. According to Andri Boiko, Founder and Global CEO of Garant In, this shift has accelerated significantly over the last five years. It does not make the news. It does not

come up at business conferences. But quietly, in the offices of wealth managers and family office advisors across Mumbai, Delhi and Bangalore, a conversation is happening with increasing frequency. India's richest families want a second door. "Demand from Indian HNIs, promoters and family offices for second residencies has moved from a niche idea to a very common strategy over the last five years. Most market indicators suggest that serious interest and actual applications have at least doubled in this period," Boiko said.

FROM HOLIDAY HOMES TO GLOBAL BACKUP PLANS

A decade ago, an overseas property in London, Dubai or Singapore meant one thing: you had made it. It was a lifestyle purchase, a status symbol. That thinking has shifted sharply. "Wealthy Indians bought homes abroad largely as vacation pads or status symbols. It was a lifestyle choice, not a risk-management decision," Boiko said. The last few years changed that. Wars, sanctions, sudden tax changes and tighter visa regimes made global mobility feel fragile in ways it had not before. "If a



crisis breaks out or policies flip overnight, you do not want to be scrambling for options. You want a residency card already in hand," Boiko said. "The geopolitical map can change faster than you think. Better to plan early than be sorry later." The concept is straightforward. An Indian citizen cannot hold dual citizenship but can hold multiple foreign residencies. That means a family keeps its Indian passport while gaining the legal right to live, study or do business in another country when needed. "Until they make a choice on citizenship, they remain Indian citizens with global movement, diversified business options and a built-in backup plan," Boiko said.

WHERE ARE INDIA'S WEALTHY GOING AND

HOW MUCH ARE THEY SPENDING?

The destinations attracting Indian wealth have evolved. While earlier generations often looked at the US through routes like EB-5, today families are spreading their bets across the UAE, Portugal, Greece, Italy, Malta and select Caribbean nations. The UAE remains the most preferred destination for its business ecosystem, proximity to India and favourable tax environment. Portugal attracts investors seeking European access, with many putting in between Rs 2.5 crore and Rs 5 crore through regulated investment funds. Greece has emerged as a strong European option, with investment thresholds ranging from Rs 2.5 crore to roughly Rs

8 crore. Italy is drawing interest through a startup investment pathway at a lower entry point.

"Today's Indian HNIs are not buying a residency. They are investing in optionality," Boiko said. "These programmes are increasingly viewed as a hedge against geopolitical and economic uncertainty, while providing global mobility, educational opportunities and long-term security for their families."

NOT JUST BUYING A FOREIGN FLAT ANYMORE

The old model was simple. Buy an apartment abroad, get a residency permit, done. That model is largely gone. Many countries have tightened or shut their real-estate-based golden visa routes, pushing investors towards regulated funds, government bonds, startup investments and business-linked pathways. Wealthy Indian families are increasingly treating second residency as part of a larger family office strategy. A common approach is to secure one anchor residency, typically the UAE, for banking and business needs, while adding a European residency through a fund investment as a

longer-term hedge for the next generation's education and mobility. Boiko described one such case: a second-generation promoter of a Pune-based auto components company who built a two-layer plan after Covid and a round of global tax rule changes. The family secured UAE residency for regional banking and business travel and added European residency through a regulated fund as an education and mobility option for the children. Their concern, Boiko said, was never about leaving India. It was about having choices if circumstances changed in ways they could not predict.

IS THIS ABOUT DODGING TAXES?

The most common assumption is that wealthy Indians buy foreign residencies to avoid taxes back home. Boiko is direct about why that assumption is wrong. "Second residency is a mobility and structuring tool, not a tax-evasion shortcut," he said. "Without proper planning, a Plan B residency can accidentally create a Plan A tax problem." Holding a residency card in Portugal or Dubai does not, by itself, change a person's tax status in India.

Yum! Brands to sell Pizza Hut for \$2.7 billion in strategic overhaul

NEW DELHI, JUNE 16



Yum! Brands on Tuesday announced that it has agreed to sell its Pizza Hut business for a total of \$2.7 billion, splitting the iconic pizza chain between private equity firm LongRange Capital and Yum China Holdings. The move follows a strategic review aimed at unlocking shareholder value and sharpening Yum!'s focus on its remaining global restaurant brands. Under the agreements, Pizza Hut operations outside Mainland China will be acquired by private equity firm LongRange Capital for approximately \$1.5 billion, while Pizza Hut China will be acquired by Yum China Holdings for about \$1.2 billion.

Yum! said the transactions follow a comprehensive review of strategic options for the pizza chain that began in November 2025.

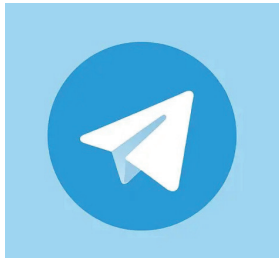
The company said its leadership team and Board of Directors concluded that separate ownership structures would provide the best opportunity for Pizza Hut's long-term growth while maximising value for shareholders. The new owners bring significant experience in the quick-service restaurant industry and are expected to tailor strategies to the unique needs of their respective markets. Chris Turner, Chief Executive Officer of Yum! Brands, said the transactions would allow the company to become

more focused while continuing to leverage its scale, technology and talent to drive growth across its remaining businesses.

He described Pizza Hut as one of the world's most iconic restaurant brands and credited its employees, franchisees and team members for building its global presence. Yum! expects to receive approximately \$2.3 billion in net proceeds after taxes, transaction-related fees and closing adjustments, excluding a potential earn-out payment. The company could receive an additional \$75 million by 2030 under the agreement with LongRange Capital if certain performance targets are achieved. The company also expects to incur one-time expenses of around \$85 million during the remainder of 2026 to complete the separation process. Despite the divestment, Yum! will continue to provide its proprietary Byte by Yum! technology platform to Pizza Hut operations outside China. It will also offer certain corporate services under a transition agreement to support an orderly handover of the business.

Telegram removed from Google Play Store after Govt restrictions, still available on Apple App Store

NEW DELHI, JUNE 16



Telegram has been removed from the Google Play Store in India following the Centre's decision to temporarily restrict access to the messaging platform ahead of the NEET (UG) 2026 re-examination. As a result, new users are currently unable to download the app through Google's official Android marketplace.

The move follows government action aimed at curbing alleged examination-related fraud, misinformation and cheating networks operating through the platform.

However, it is still available on Apple App Store. The development comes days after the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), acting on recommendations from the National Testing Agency (NTA), imposed a temporary restriction on Telegram until June 22. The government said the measure was necessary to prevent the spread of examination-related fraud, misinformation campaigns and cheating networks ahead of the NEET (UG) re-examination scheduled for June 21. According to the NTA, the restriction was issued under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, and covers the examination period as well as its immediate aftermath.

The agency had stated that several Telegram channels and groups were allegedly being used to circulate misleading claims regarding examination paper leaks and to lure students with fraudulent offers promising access to question papers.

In addition to the temporary access restriction, Telegram was directed to disable its message-editing feature in India until June 30. Authorities argued that the feature had previously been misused to create fabricated evidence of paper leaks by allowing users to edit old messages and replace attached files while retaining original timestamps. The NTA had maintained that despite widespread claims circulating online, no NEET examination paper had been leaked. It said the restrictions were imposed only after targeted actions, including the removal of specific channels, groups and bots, were found insufficient to tackle the scale of the problem. The agency also credited the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), operating under the Ministry of Home Affairs, along with state police forces and other central agencies, for identifying and acting against Telegram-based fraud networks. Law enforcement agencies across multiple states have launched investigations into examination-related scams allegedly conducted through social media and messaging platforms.

Nykaa partners with OpenAI to integrate shopping experiences on ChatGPT

NEW DELHI: (JUN 16)

Beauty and lifestyle retailer Nykaa on Tuesday announced a collaboration with OpenAI to introduce artificial intelligence-driven shopping experiences and make its catalogue directly accessible to users through ChatGPT. As part of the multi-year agreement, Nykaa Beauty and Nykaa Fashion have been integrated as connected apps within

the ChatGPT platform. This will allow users to seek conversational recommendations for skincare, apparel and fragrances, with Nykaa serving as the destination to fulfil these queries, the company said in a statement. Beyond consumer-facing features, the partnership will see the deployment of OpenAI's technologies, including ChatGPT Enterprise and coding agent Codex, across Nykaa's internal operations.



Soil Biological Health

The Invisible Blind-Spot Triggering a Crisis in Indian Agriculture

The Centre for Science and Environment organized had recently held an extensive national webinar on 'Improving Soil Biological Health' to unpack and debate the unsettling conclusions of its latest landmark report. The virtual assembly served as a critical nexus for the country's agricultural scientific community, bringing together a distinguished panel of leading agrarian scientists, national policy experts, and pioneering agritech industry innovators to dissect the report's real-world implications. The expert panel featured prominent figures at the absolute forefront of Indian agricultural research and advocacy, including Alok Kumar Srivastava, Director of the ICAR-National Bureau of Agriculturally Important Microorganisms, and Debashish Mandal, Head and Principal Scientist of the Soil Science and Agricultural Chemistry Division at the ICAR-Indian Agricultural Research Institute. They were joined by Ramanjaneyulu GV, Executive Director of the Centre for Sustainable Agriculture, Prafull Gadge, Founder and CEO of Biome Technologies Pvt Ltd, alongside Amit Khurana, Director, and Rajeshwari Sinha, Senior Programme Manager, both representing the Sustainable Food Systems Programme at the Centre for Science and Environment.

The key findings of the newly minted publication, *Improving Soil Biological Health: The Role of Biological Components and Monitoring Approaches*, were systematically detailed during the session. The core thesis of the report is unambiguous: India must urgently pivot its agricultural paradigm to focus squarely on the biological health of its soil if it hopes to rescue overall soil vitality and avert a systemic collapse in agricultural productivity. Crucially, the authors argued that biological metrics must be permanently integrated into routine, national-level soil monitoring frameworks. The presentation gave way to a dense, data-rich panel discussion where speakers shared alarming insights into this critical, yet routinely ignored, living dimension of the soil—the true biological engine that underpins all terrestrial agricultural productivity.

The expert panel unanimously recognized that the accelerating degradation of Indian soil has quietly snowballed into a major national crisis. They emphasized that living biological components, such as diverse microbial communities, play an absolutely non-negotiable role in reversing the status of rapidly declining soil health. For decades, Indian agricultural policy has treated soil like an inert, mechanical sponge designed merely to hold synthetic inputs, completely overlooking the complex living ecosystem thriving just beneath the surface.

The report identifies a toxic combination of unsustainable agricultural practices driving this deterioration, prominent among which is the indiscriminate and unscientific application of chemical pesticides and synthetic agrichemicals. This is further compounded by widespread crop-residue burning that incinerates surface-level organic matter and beneficial life, as well as persistent monocropping and an over-dependence on high-yielding,

input-heavy crop varieties. Additionally, poor organic matter recycling and severe topsoil compaction caused by heavy farm mechanization continue to crush the earth's natural structures.

The Efficiency Gap: Without a robust and thriving soil biology, fertilizer uptake efficiency across Indian farms remains abysmally low. Currently, nitrogen use efficiency hovers at a meager 30–40 per cent, while phosphorus efficiency is even worse, languishing at just 15–20 per cent.

The remaining unabsorbed chemical percentages do not disappear; they wash away to pollute local water bodies or gas off into the atmosphere. The panel clearly demonstrated that robust soil biological health is directly linked to superior soil physical health—including optimal water retention, structural aggregate stability, and porosity—which ultimately dictates overall soil function and long-term climate resilience.

A central consensus emerged from the webinar: you cannot effectively manage what you do not actively measure. The panel strongly advocated for the immediate national standardization of testing protocols for soil biological parameters, provided the state can back these initiatives with the correct laboratory infrastructure and technical expertise. At present, India's extensive network of Soil Testing Laboratories operates with a major blind spot, focusing almost entirely on chemical macronutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, while remaining completely unequipped to measure or interpret soil biological functions.

There was broad agreement that soil biological health monitoring could be seamlessly integrated into existing national-level agricultural

monitoring schemes, such as the Soil Health Card program. Utilizing cost-effective enzyme assays like dehydrogenase and urease—which cost as little as ₹100 to ₹200 per test—presents a highly feasible, economically viable pathway for nationwide scaling. While other biological indicators like phosphatases, glucosidases, microbial biomass carbon, and total viable microbial counts offer immense diagnostic value, their widespread adoption will depend on the multi-

tine, large-scale, on-the-ground field testing, arguing these should remain confined to high-level academic research.

Beyond expanding centralized laboratories, the scientific panel highlighted an urgent need to design and distribute decentralized testing tools directly at the farmer level. These field tests must be simple, highly visual, inexpensive, and easily adoptable to help smallholders

and daily agronomic practices. To create a hospitable habitat for these microscopic allies, farmers must be supported in adopting conservation agriculture practices. This includes minimizing disruptive tillage, putting an end to the intensive puddled flooding of rice fields which creates suffocating anaerobic conditions, significantly scaling back synthetic fertilizer volumes, introducing diverse crop rotations, and aggressively building up soil organic matter using compost and green manures.

Implementing agro-ecological practices like cultivating cover crops, utilizing organic mulch, and practicing intercropping ensures that living roots remain in the ground year-round.

This constant root presence is vital, as root exudates—the sugars and compounds secreted by plants—serve as the primary food source keeping the soil biological community alive and functioning. However, farmers cannot make this massive transition in isolation; they require a structured ecosystem backed by localized agronomic knowledge, consistent extension services, and robust financial safety nets.

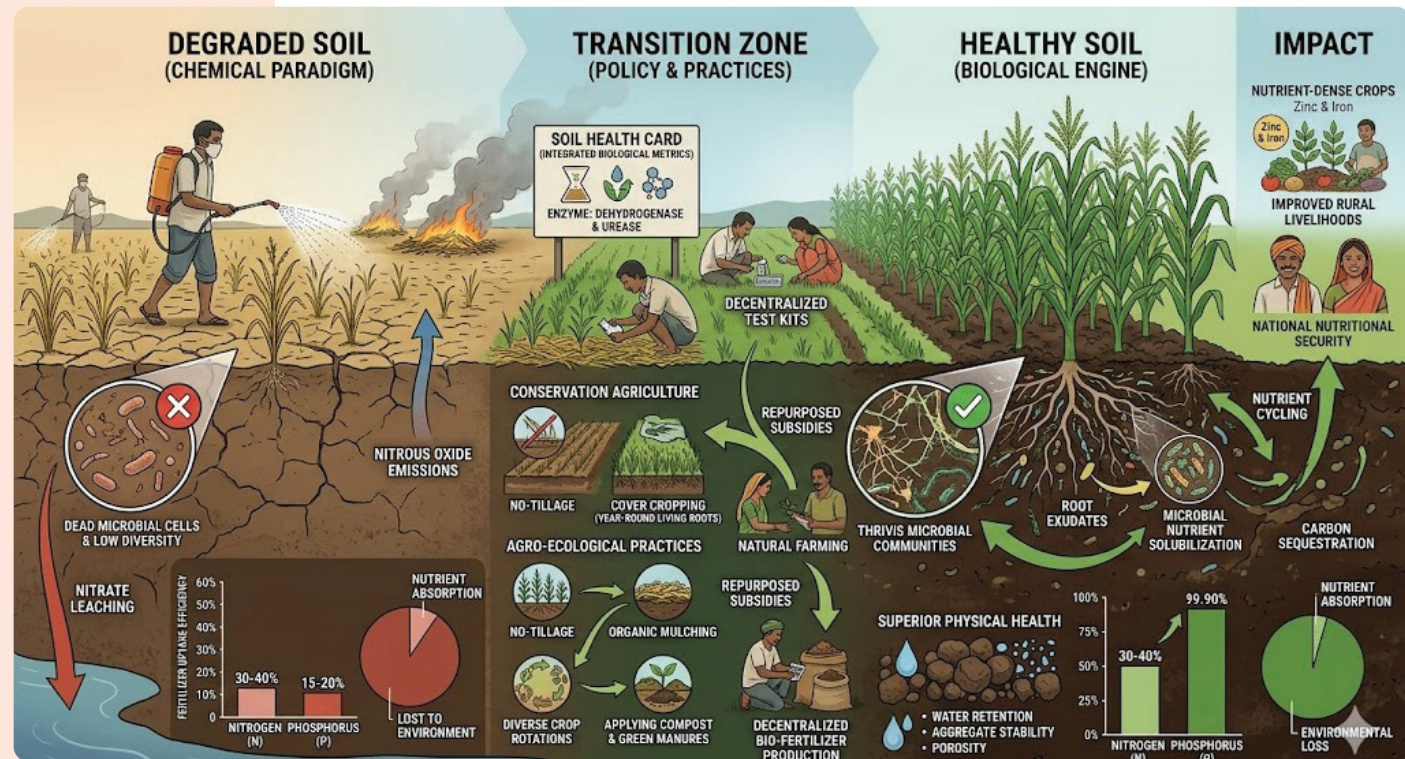
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make re-

al-time, data-driven management decisions on their own land. In response to this need, point-of-care diagnostics have emerged as a highly promising solution for real-time, on-farm monitoring of soil biological health. Much like a rapid medical test, these tools could give farmers immediate feedback on the biological activity of their fields. However, substantial bottlenecks still block this grassroots transition. Major challenges persist around the scientific validation and field accuracy of these quick-test kits, which are further compounded by low baseline awareness and slow adoption rates among traditional farming communities who are unaccustomed to viewing their soil as a living entity. The direction of change is undisputed: the scientific community agrees that monitoring soil biological health is imperative. The urgent challenge now is accelerating the speed and scale of deploying these measurement tools across India's millions of hectares. To truly revive soil biological health, India requires a comprehensive, holistic approach. Microorganisms cannot be viewed as a standalone magic bullet; they are entirely dependent on the surrounding soil environment, prevailing cropping systems,

This multi-pronged assault has resulted in a severe, highly destructive imbalance in the natural soil community. This living network is supposed to regulate the microclimate of the soil and drive essential nutrient cycling. Instead, decades of chemical saturation have exerted a selective, highly negative evolutionary pressure on both the soil and plant microbiome, systematically killing off beneficial native species. Furthermore, excessive chemical fertilizer use has triggered severe environmental externalities, including widespread nitrate pollution of groundwater reserves and massive atmospheric emissions of nitrous oxide, which remains a potent greenhouse gas.

From a functional standpoint, soil microorganisms like bacteria and fungi act as the primary biological vehicles that actively solubilize chemically bound nutrients in the earth, breaking them down into plant-available forms suitable for root uptake. When fields are treated exclusively with synthetic inputs, these chemical compounds frequently lock up in the soil matrix, rendering them completely inaccessible to crops without microbial intervention.



Mbappe's historic brace helps France start on winning note

NEW JERSEY

After missing a few chances, Kylian Mbappe scored a brilliant brace to become France's all-time leading scorer with 58 goals as the Les Bleus got their campaign up and running with a thrilling 3-1 victory over Senegal in the FIFA World Cup 2026 at the New York/New Jersey Stadium.

France, the two-time champions, had come into the match with a score to settle, having lost to the African nation in their opening match as defending champions in 2002 -- Les Bleus' only opening-game defeat in their previous eight global tournaments.

But the France captain's double ensured there would be no repeat of that night as the 1998 and 2018 winners capped a much-improved second half. Bradley Barcola struck the other goal for the two-time winner, while Ibrahim Mbaye got the



lone consolation for Senegal in second-half added time.

Pape Thiaw's team had carried the initial threat at New York/New Jersey Stadium,

playing well in the first period and so nearly opening the scoring when Nicolas Jackson shot against the post after his shot beat Mike Maignan, de-

flecting unfavourably off both the post and the goalkeeper. The ball did go in for them, but Jackson was ruled offside. Ismaila Sarr also sent a good

chance over in the first period.

However, Desire Doue's warning shot after half-time heralded the French charge. Michael Olise and the 27-year-old Mbappe forced excellent saves from Edouard Mendy. Then Olise's clever pass set up Mbappe to fire past Mendy and equal Olivier Giroud's record 57 strikes for France.

Mbappe, who was part of the French team that won the World Cup in 2018 in Russia, then entered the history books with a brilliant shot from outside the box after substitute Bradley Barcola and Ibrahim Mbaye had traded impressive late goals of their own. The next target for Mbappe is Miroslav Klose's record 16 World Cup finals goals. The Frenchman currently has 14 in the global showpiece. France now lead Group I with three points, with Iraq and Norway yet to complete their first match.

ACCRA

Ghana's government has challenged Canada's decision to deny midfielder Thomas Partey a visa, with a court hearing scheduled in Ottawa as the West African nation seeks to secure the player's participation in the FIFA World Cup.

Partey is set to miss Ghana's World Cup opener against Panama in Toronto on Thursday (IST) after Canadian authorities refused him entry because of ongoing criminal proceedings in the United Kingdom.

According to a report in the BBC, the hearing is due to take place at 6:30 PM (IST) in Ottawa. Ghana is seeking permission for the 33-year-old midfielder to enter Canada temporarily for the Group L fixture and has also asked the court to direct Canadian immigration authorities to allow him to submit a fresh visa application.

Ghana's Foreign Minister Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa said the government is also pursuing diplomatic avenues to obtain a Canadian visa for Partey. It remains unclear how long the court proceedings will take. Earlier, Ghana's Foreign Ministry described Canada's decision as "high-handed and extremely unfair" and confirmed it had lodged a formal



protest with Canadian authorities while requesting a review of the ruling.

According to the Ministry, Canadian officials based their decision on ongoing criminal proceedings involving Partey in the United Kingdom. The 32-year-old footballer, who currently plays for Spanish club Villarreal and previously represented Arsenal, has denied allegations of rape and sexual assault brought against him in Britain.

While acknowledging Canada's right to enforce its immigration laws, Ghana argued that denying entry on the basis of charges that have not been adjudicated raises concerns about fairness and proportionality. FIFA earlier confirmed that Partey would be unable to

travel from Ghana's team base in Boston to Canada for the opening match against Panama following the visa refusal.

Despite the setback, Partey remains with the Ghana squad in the United States and is available for the team's remaining group-stage fixtures. Ghana are scheduled to face England in the Boston area before taking on Croatia in Philadelphia. The visa setback adds to a growing list of entry-related issues affecting participants at the ongoing FIFA WC. Earlier, Somali referee Omar Artan, Iraq internationals Aymen Hussein and Talal Salah, Haiti's Woodensky Pierre, and Switzerland forward Breel Embolo have encountered visa complications linked to World Cup travel arrangements.

Women's T20 WC: Listening to experienced players helped me, says Richa Ghosh

MUMBAI

Indian women's team player Richa Ghosh has credited the advice of her experienced teammates for regaining her form in time for the ongoing ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026, in which the Indian women's team made a rousing start with a win over archrivals Pakistan.

The 22-year-old wicket-keeper-batter blasted a crucial 17-ball 34 during India's 64-run win over Pakistan on Sunday, having hit an equally explosive 68 during her side's warm-up match against England in Cardiff. Before those two knocks, Ghosh was suffering from a lean spell in which she only scored 18 runs across four innings.

But now back fully firing for India's latest attempt at claiming a maiden T20 global crown, Ghosh, who is part of

the side that will take on the Netherlands at Headingley on Wednesday, was always confident that she could turn things around. "At that time, I just stayed focused on my game because, although I was not getting the runs at the time, I knew what I could do," said Ghosh. "I was thinking that I could work more on my drills and just remain focused. And that it was okay if I'm not getting it, as I was in good touch at that time, but not getting runs. This happens. I spoke to Hari [Harmanpreet Kaur] and all the seniors, Smriti [Mandhana] too, about what to do. And they said, 'Don't worry, just play your game and just focus. That's it. And that helped me also,'" Richa was quoted as saying on Tuesday.

Despite the Netherlands making their ICC Women's T20 World Cup debut, the Dutch outfit fitted in on the big



stage during their first match of the tournament against Bangladesh, as they only narrowly missed out on a maiden World Cup win.

Ghosh insists she and her teammates will not be taking the Netherlands for granted when the two meet in Leeds on Wednesday and praised them for the strides they have made in international cricket.

She added, "I saw them before the World Cup. They have good bowlers, and for them it's the first time. They're doing really well, and every team is like, 'They can do well. I think

they've done really well. That's why they're here, and we are not taking any team easily, and we're just looking forward.'" The Netherlands head coach, Neil MacRae, was full of admiration for Wednesday's opponents and the work they had done in promoting the women's game, adding that the positive effects of India's franchise tournament, the Women's Premier League, can be felt around the world.

"The rise of Indian women's cricket has been an inspiration for everybody, particularly in the last few years," he said. "With four years of the WPL and winning their first World Cup last year in the 50-over format, you can see that progression has really come through the WPL experience and the team has gone to a different level." MacRae was also proud of the way his players handled themselves at

Edgbaston in their World Cup opener and said his charges are viewing the tournament as a chance to expand the country's cricketing horizons.

He added: "It's a privilege for us to be at a World Cup taking on a team of the might of India, a country steeped in so much history and passion for cricket. It's an unbelievable opportunity to take on one of the world's best teams.

"I thought in the first game against Bangladesh we played some good cricket, but the occasion of our first-ever T20 World Cup match weighed quite heavily on the players.

"I wouldn't say it overwhelmed [the players]. I actually think they dealt with the situation brilliantly, but it was still an overwhelming experience because nothing prepares you for your first T20 World Cup game other than going through it.

Women's T20 World Cup: England survive Ireland test to maintain winning start

SOUTHAMPTON

Hosts England were made to work hard for their second successive win in the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026 as they defeated Ireland by four wickets in a Group 2 encounter, here on Wednesday. After producing a disciplined bowling performance to restrict Ireland to 118/9 in their allotted 20 overs, England chased down the target with 15 balls to spare despite losing wickets at regular intervals.

Ireland struggled to build partnerships after being put under pressure by England's attack. Regular breakthroughs prevented them from gaining momentum, with the innings never really taking off. Sophie Ecclestone led the bowling effort with a three-wicket haul, while England's seamers and spinners combined effectively to keep the scoring rate in check.

A late contribution from the lower middle order helped Ireland push past the 100-run mark and finish on 118/9,



giving their bowlers something to defend. England's chase, however, was far from straightforward.

Ireland struck early to leave the hosts under pressure and ensure the contest remained alive for most of the evening. The home side lost wickets at crucial moments and were unable to

dominate proceedings against a disciplined Irish bowling attack. England captain Nat Sciver-Brunt anchored the innings with a valuable knock of 48, providing stability after the early setbacks. Her innings ensured England remained on course despite Ireland's persistent challenge.

Nilakshika Silva's unbeaten fifty sinks defending champions NZ

SOUTHAMPTON

Nilakshika Silva produced a match-winning unbeaten half-century, after Sri Lanka's bowlers delivered a superb collective effort, to script a five-wicket victory over defending champions New Zealand in a thrilling seventh match in Group 2 of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026, at The Rose Bowl in Southampton on Tuesday.

Chasing 151, Sri Lanka stayed calm in a tense finish. Silva was not out on 54 and teamed up with Kaushani Nuthyangana, who scored 24, in a partnership worth 48 runs that brought the Asian side home with one ball left.

This was Sri Lanka's first win in the tournament and dealt another serious blow to New Zealand, whose title defense is falling apart.

Sri Lanka's chase started well with captain Chamari Athapaththu leading the attack. After getting a second chance on seven, she punished New Zealand by hitting 27 off just 19 balls before getting bowled in the final over of the Powerplay.

Her wicket sparked a sudden collapse as New Zealand fought back into the game. Vishmi Gunaratne scored 17, Harshitha Samarawickrama made 5, and Hasini Perera was out for 2, causing Sri Lanka to drop from a strong position of 45/1 to 55/4.

With the innings in jeopardy, Kavisha Dilhari and Nilakshi de Silva calmly built a critical 50-run partnership. Dilhari added 17 before being run out in the 15th over, leaving Sri Lanka needing a steady hand to finish the job.

De Silva took on that role, leading the chase effectively. Needing 16 runs from the last two overs, she and



Nuthyangana picked up the pace just right, scoring 11 runs in the 19th over and leaving only five needed from the final six balls. The duo showed great composure under pressure and helped Sri Lanka cross the finish line with one delivery to spare, securing a memorable win. Earlier, New

Zealand scored 150/6 after deciding to bat first. Their innings faced an early blow when Isabella Gaze was out for 4 in the opening over. Georgia Plimmer (18) and captain Amelia Kerr then worked together to rebuild through a 49-run partnership before Plimmer got out.

'It was a must-win game for us': Athapaththu

SOUTHAMPTON

Sri Lanka captain Chamari Athapaththu described her side's five-wicket win over defending champions New Zealand as a "must-win" result but insisted there is no room for complacency despite defeating one of the favourites for the Women's T20 World Cup title.

Nilakshi de Silva scored an unbeaten 54, and Kaushani Nuthyangana made a steady 24 not out as Sri Lanka chased down New Zealand's 150/6 with one ball left. This marked their first victory of the tournament. Athapaththu emphasised the importance of this result for Sri Lanka's chances in the competition. She commended her batting team for sticking to their plans under pressure. "I think it's a good win. It was a must-win game for us, or we would not have had a chance.



UP Brij Stars crowned champions as Big Cricket League season 2 ends on a high

GREATER NOIDA

The second season of the Big Cricket League (BCL) concluded on a high note with UP Brij Stars emerging champions after a tournament that featured 18 matches, more than 60 amateur cricketers, and several innovative elements aimed at promoting grassroots talent.

Positioning itself as a bridge between amateur and professional cricket, the league brought together aspiring players from across the country and provided them an opportunity to share the field with former international stars, including Shikhar Dhawan, Chris Gayle, Harbhajan Singh, Ross Taylor, S. Sreesanth and Upul Tharanga.

One of the major highlights of the season was the league's Amateur Buzzer Reward System, which added an extra layer of competition and strategy to matches. Season 2 witnessed more than 60 Bronze Buzzers, over 10 Silver Buzzers, three Golden Buzzers, and two Platinum Buzzers, producing several match-defining moments throughout the tournament. The season

also saw a unique reward initiative, with Batting Boss Amaan Patel of MP Tigers and Bowling Boss Jatin Mavi of UP Brij being awarded equity in the Big Cricket League and announced as co-owners of the league. More than 60 amateur cricketers featured in the competition, producing notable performances with bat and ball while showcasing their abilities on a national platform.

Speaking on the successful completion of Season 2, RP Singh, Founder and President, Big Cricket League, said, "Season 2 has been transformational for the Big Cricket League. The response we have received from players, fans, franchise owners, partners, and stakeholders has exceeded expectations. The success of innovations such as the Buzzer System, combined with the introduction of equity ownership for our Batting Boss and Bowling Boss winners, reflects our vision of creating a cricket ecosystem that is exciting, rewarding, and deeply empowering for players. Most importantly, this season proved that amateur cricketers, when given the right platform,



Shriya Saran Dazzles In High Low Ruffle Dress

Samantha Slays Promotion Look In Mustard Drape

Samantha Ruth Prabhu is making headlines as her upcoming Telugu film Maa Inti Bangaram has already recovered its entire investment through non-theatrical deals, including digital, satellite, and audio rights, even before hitting theatres. This puts the project in a profitable position well ahead of its June 19 release, making it one of the most anticipated Telugu films of the season.

Produced under Samantha's own banner and directed by Nandini Reddy, the family action drama has generated

strong business backed by the actress' massive popularity, positive audience buzz, and an impressive trailer response. The film marks Samantha's much-awaited return to the big screen after a gap, and all theatrical earnings will now be pure profit.

Ahead of the release, Samantha was spotted promoting the film in a radiant mustard yellow saree featuring delicate embroidery and a gold border, paired with a dainty choker and silver bangles, keeping true to her on-screen character's traditional look even off camera.



Pooja Hegde Looks Breathtaking Sage Green Look

Pooja Hegde is riding high on happiness as her latest Bollywood film Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai hits the big screen. The film, directed by David Dhawan, stars Varun Dhawan, Mrunal Thakur, and Pooja Hegde, and was released on June 5th. The lighthearted rom-com is winning hearts and keeping fans excited about Pooja's Bollywood comeback. And while the film celebrates on screen, Pooja is equally stunning off screen! In her

latest night photos, she looks breathtaking in a soft sage-green corset dress with delicate lace-trimmed layered hems. Her long jet-black hair flows and flips dramatically in the breeze, while sparkling drop earrings and stacked rings complete the gorgeous look. The actress truly glows with confidence and charm, proving she is one of the most stylish stars in Indian cinema right now.



Kalki 2 Is Getting Bigger & Better!

The buzz around Kalki 2 continues to grow, and the sequel is shaping up to be even bigger and more ambitious than the first installment. Following the massive success of Kalki 2898 AD, fans are eagerly waiting to see what director Nag Ashwin has planned next. One of the biggest talking points is the reported casting changes. According to ongoing industry speculation, Sai Pallavi is expected to replace Deepika Padukone. While there has been no official confirmation yet, the rumor has already sparked discussions among fans across social media. Adding to the excitement, Alia Bhatt is reportedly being considered for a special role in the film. If the reports turn out to be true, her inclusion could bring another layer of star power to the highly anticipated sequel. Disha Patani, who appeared in the first film, is also expected to

return and continue her journey in the futuristic universe. On the male front, the lineup remains incredibly strong. Prabhas will once again lead the story, while Kamal Haasan and Amitabh Bachchan are expected to play crucial roles. There is also speculation that Vijay Deverakonda could return, especially the sequel explores flashback sequences connected to the events of the first film. With such exciting possibilities, Kalki 2 is already generating enormous anticipation among movie lov-

Telugu actor Sunil plays Sampath Rao in Arya's 'Ananthan Kaadu'



The makers of director Jiyeen Krishnakumar's eagerly awaited political action thriller 'Ananthan Kaadu', featuring actor Arya in the lead, have now disclosed that Telugu star Sunil plays a character called Sampath Rao in the film. Production house Sree Gokulam Movies took to its X timeline to share the first look poster of Sunil in the film and wrote, "Ananthan Kaadu" Character Poster 8: Sunil as Sampath Rao in #AnanthanKaadu. A film by @JiyeenKrishna. Written by #MuraliGopy. Produced by @vinod_off." The makers have already disclosed that actor Indrans plays a character called Krishnankutty in the film and that actress Nikhila Vimal plays a character called Deepa. While actor Vijayaraghavan plays a character called K K Menon, Santhi Balachandran plays a character called Karthi in the film. For the unaware, the film is slated to hit screens worldwide on June 25 this year. The story of the multilingual film, which is being produced by Mini Studio's S Vinod Kumar, has been written by Murali Gopy, best known for his work in Lucifer and Empuraan. The film has been garnering attention ever since the makers released a title teaser some months ago. The title teaser has a poem being recited in the background even as a series of gripping and intense scenes that are full of action catch your attention. The poem that is recited in Tamil, when translated loosely, reads, "I swallowed all light to show up as a lightning in the sky! I was born in dry lands to make a revolution bloom. I was showered on blood-stained earth to make it smile. I turned into roots and then trees to grow and stand tall. I don't fall, fearing fate or deceit."

Kajal's The India House FL: Fight For Justice

Kajal Aggarwal's next outing The India House co-starring Shreyas Talpade, with Chetnan DK directing, will be hitting the screens on July 24th. Written and produced by Sagar B Shinde, the film has its first look unveiled today.

A young cancer-stricken child in the arms of a helpless father played by Shreyas Talpade, reflects the human cost behind a larger issue. Standing opposite is Kajal Aggarwal as a lawyer prepared to fight for justice, while the courthouse in the background symbolizes an impending legal battle.

The pesticide sprayer positioned like an accused person in a courtroom subtly points toward the film's central conflict. The poster effectively balances emotional depth with suspense, setting the stage for a hard-hitting story inspired by disturbing realities. The film delves into the sensitive and timely issue of chemical misuse in Indian agriculture, exploring its devastating impact on both land and lives.

