



THE Hans India



Air conditioning: How does it affect the skin?
Air conditioners have seen a significant surge in use in recent years, particularly in hot-climate countries like India. In today's increasingly climate-controlled world, air conditioning has evolved from a luxury into a near necessity. **P8**

Hashtags, hate and half-truths: The dark side of India's digital politics
The rise of social media in India was once hailed as a democratic revolution. It promised to dismantle the monopoly of traditional media, amplify unheard voices, deepen citizen participation, and establish a direct connection between political leaders and the public. **P6**

Govt urges NCERT to introduce dedicated chapter on groundwater
The government has called on the Centre and the NCERT to include a dedicated chapter on groundwater conservation and management in the national school curriculum. **P5**

Expand PNG infra fast, Nadendra to companies
Food and civil supplies minister Nadendra Manohar directed officials and PNG companies to accelerate efforts to shift people from LPG usage to Piped Natural Gas (PNG) across the state. **P4**

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2 Indian climbers die during Mount Everest descent

KATHMANDU: Two Indian mountaineers who summited Everest have died while descending, an official said on Friday. The climbers, identified as Arun Kumar Tiwari and Sandeep Are, were exhausted while they were coming down from the peak and could not be saved despite the best efforts of their guides, said Rishi Bhandari, secretary general of the Expedition Operators Association of Nepal. It appears that Are summited on Wednesday and Tiwari on Thursday around 5.30 pm, Bhandari said. The guides 'worked really hard' but were not able to save them, he said. Tiwari died near the Hillary Step, just below the summit, after falling ill during his descent on Thursday evening while being assisted by four Sherpa climbers, said Nivesh Karki, Director at Pioneer Adventures, which organised the expedition. Are summited on Wednesday but became unwell during the descent. He was rescued by Sherpa guides from the South Summit and died shortly after arriving at Camp II early Friday, Karki said. Efforts are underway to bring back the bodies of the deceased climbers to Kathmandu, Karki said. With this, the death toll on Everest has reached five in this season. Earlier, three Nepali climbers died on Mt Everest. On Wednesday, three Indians, including Are, were part of 274 climbers who summited the 8,848.86-metre peak. It was a new record for the highest number of ascents ever recorded in a day. The other two were Tulasi Reddi Palpunoori and Ajay Pal Singh Dhaliwal. The following day, on Thursday, India's Lakshmi Kant Mandal also reached the world's highest peak.

India blocks China's request for dispute panel at world body

NEW DELHI: India has blocked China's request to set up a dispute panel at the WTO in a case that Beijing has filed against New Delhi's support measures for the solar cells, modules, and information technology sectors, an official said. Earlier this month, China made this request to the WTO's (World Trade Organization) dispute settlement body. The request follows the failure of bilateral consultations on reaching a mutually-agreed solution on the dispute filed by China in December last year. The Geneva-based official said that India has blocked the first request of China for the establishment of a panel. China has alleged that India's tariff or import duty on certain technology products, and measures like the use of domestic products over imported goods, discriminate against Chinese goods. Beijing, which is a major exporter of goods under these sectors, had claimed that these support measures and incentives infringe rules pertaining to the WTO's General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994.

SC questions quota benefits for BC creamy layer

If both parents are IAS officers, why should they have reservations?, asks the top court

NEW DELHI
OBSERVING that with educational and economic empowerment there is social mobility, the Supreme Court on Friday questioned the continued grant of reservation benefits to children of economically and educationally advanced families within backward classes. A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan was hearing a plea challenging a Karnataka High Court judgment which upheld the exclusion of the

The Supreme Court remarked that if the parents of students are in good jobs with handsome incomes, then the children should get out of reservation



petitioner, whose parents are both state government employees, from reservation. "If both parents are IAS officers, why should they have reservations? With educational and economic empowerment, there is social mobility. So then again, to seek reservation for the children, we will never get out of it," the bench observed while

should get out of reservation. The apex court said several orders passed by the government already provide for the exclusion of such affluent sections from reservation benefits, but they are being challenged now. "For the Economically Weaker Section and Disadvantaged Group, there is no social backwardness but only economic backwardness. There has to be some balance. Socially and educationally backward, yes, but once the parents have attained a level

because of taking advantage of reservation," the bench said. The petitioner was selected for appointment as an assistant engineer (electrical) in the Karnataka Power Transmission Corporation Limited under the reserved category. The District Caste and Income Verification Committee, however, denied him a caste validity certificate after concluding that he fell within the creamy layer. The authorities noted that both parents were govern-

ment employees and that their combined income exceeded the prescribed creamy layer threshold. The classification of the petitioner as belonging to the creamy layer was based on the income of his parents, who are salaried employees and whose combined income allegedly exceeded Rs 8,00,000. Consequently, the caste certificate issued to the petitioner, certifying him as belonging to the Kuruba community, was revoked. **Continued on Page 7**

2015 EL NINO PATTERN REPEATING?

CM orders state-wide steps to tackle heat emergency

- Directs local holiday in extreme heat zones
- Govt activates shelters, water kiosks, and emergency response network
- AP records temperatures touching 48 degree centigrade amid severe El Nino conditions



Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu holds an emergency review on the heatwave at the Secretariat on Friday

HANS NEWS SERVICE AMARAVATI
CHIEF Minister N Chandrababu Naidu conducted an emergency review on heatwave conditions across Andhra Pradesh and directed officials to intensify public safety measures as temperatures continue to surge across the state raising fears of a repeat of the 2015 El Nino pattern. Amid severe heatwave conditions and rising health risks, the Chief Minister instructed officials to remain

constantly on alert and identify regions recording very high temperatures for continuous public warnings and emergency interventions. Naidu directed district authorities to consider declaring holidays in areas facing extreme weather conditions depending on local heat intensity and ground-level conditions. Officials informed the Chief Minister that the current heatwave severity had intensified due to a strong El Nino effect, with temperatures touching

nearly 48 degree centigrade in several regions over the past three days. The Chief Minister ordered immediate expansion of public relief measures, including the supply of cold drinking water, buttermilk, and ORS packets in crowded public spaces, markets and transport hubs. He instructed collectors to hold press briefings to raise awareness on heatstroke prevention and directed departments to continuously circulate advisories through television, print media, and social media platforms. Stressing that "public safety is the government's top priority," Naidu appealed to people to avoid outdoor movement between 11 am and 4 pm, particularly elderly persons, pregnant women, children and those with existing health conditions. The Chief Minister directed district and mandal-level officials to remain fully prepared for emergency response operations during the ongoing heatwave period. Officials informed the CM that 1,349 heat shelters and drinking water kiosks had already been established across urban areas, while shade arrangements had been provided at 446 major traffic junctions for motorists and traffic personnel. Naidu ordered officials to also place water troughs and earthen pots in public spaces to protect birds and animals affected by the extreme heat. **Continued on Page 7**

Centre will make NEET re-test 100 pc error-free, says Pradhan

NEW DELHI
UNION Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Friday said the government had to take "tough decisions" after irregularities were detected in the conduct of the NEET-UG, asserting that authorities did not want even a single deserving student to lose their rightful seat because of the "examination mafia". He also asserted that the government is committed to ensuring that the re-test scheduled to be held on June 21 remains "100



per cent error-free". Addressing the Jagran Bharat Education Conclave 2026, Pradhan said around 22 lakh students have suffered "mental anguish" due to the controversy surrounding the medical entrance exam and the government is committed to fixing the system. **Continued on Page 7**

CJP swings into action, demands Pradhan's scalp



NEW DELHI: Back with the tagline "Cockroaches Never Die" after its original X handle was withheld in India, the "Cockroach Janata Party" (CJP), a satirical social-media account, launched a campaign on Friday demanding the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. The campaign, spearheaded through CJP's new X handle -- "Cockroaches Is Back" -- and its Instagram platform, centres on alleged systemic failures in the education sector, particularly concerns surrounding the NEET-UG 2026 "paper-leak" controversy. **Continued on Page 7**

NEETGATE: More skeletons tumble out of closet

Pune lecturer arrested in NEET-UG 2026 paper leak episode
PUNE: The CBI has arrested a Pune-based lecturer for allegedly leaking the physics paper of NEET UG 2026 to a select group of aspirants, officials said on Friday. The CBI has arrested Manisha Sanjay Havaladar, presently employed with the Seth Hiralal Saraf Prashala in Pune, terming her another "source" for the paper leak. "The CBI has identified another key accused who was the source for the leak of NEET-UG 2026 physics questions," a CBI spokesperson said in a statement. **Continued on Page 7**

EC announces polls for 26 RS seats on June 18

NEW DELHI: The NDA is likely to lose one Rajya Sabha seat in the biennial elections for 26 seats in 12 states across the country, while the Congress-led opposition is set to gain three. The Election Commission on Friday announced elections for 26 Rajya Sabha seats on June 18 following the retirement of incumbents, including former prime minister HD Deve Gowda, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and party leader Digvijaya Singh, besides two Union ministers

Ravneet Singh and George Kurian. In a statement, the EC said the elections for the Rajya Sabha seats will be held in 10 states where 24 incumbents are retiring on different dates beginning June 21 to July 19. Of the total 26 seats where elections are being held, the NDA currently has 18 and the Congress four while one seat is with the JMM and three are with the YSRCP. The NDA is likely to get 17 seats in these elections, while the Congress will get five, the JMM two

TDP-led NDA set to sweep RS polls in AP

AMARAVATI
THE TDP-led NDA in Andhra Pradesh is poised to win all the four Rajya Sabha seats falling vacant in June-July 2026, with the Election Commission announcing the poll schedule on Friday. According to the notification, the Rajya Sabha election is scheduled to be held on June 18. The retiring members from the state include A Ayodhya Rami Reddy, Nathwani Parimal, P Subhaschandra Bose and S Satish Babu. While Reddy, Nathwani Parimal and Bose belong to YSRCP, Babu is from the ruling TDP.

India, Cyprus boost ties to a strategic partnership

NEW DELHI: India and Cyprus on Friday elevated their ties to a strategic partnership and set up a joint task force to facilitate deeper cooperation in sectors such as infrastructure and shipping as Prime Minister Narendra Modi hosted Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides for wide-ranging talks. **Continued on Page 7**

RBI to pay record dividend of ₹2.87L cr to Centre for FY26

MUMBAI: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday announced a record Rs 2.87 lakh crore dividend to the government for the 2025-26 financial year, providing financial leeway amid geopolitical challenges. The dividend or surplus transfer for 2024-25 was Rs 2.69 lakh crore, 27.4 per cent more than the payout in 2023-24. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had transferred Rs 2.1 lakh crore in dividends to the government for 2023-24 and Rs 87,416 crore for 2022-23. The decision on the dividend payout was taken at the 623rd meeting of the Central Board of Directors of RBI under the Chairmanship of Governor Sanjay Malhotra. "The net income, before risk provision and transfer to statutory funds, aggregated Rs 3,95,972.10 crore in FY 2025-26 as against Rs 3,13,455.77 crore in FY 2024-25," RBI said in a statement. The Balance Sheet of the central bank expanded by 20.61 per cent to Rs 91,97,121.08 crore as on March 31, 2026.

AP will export clean energy in future: Lokesh

HANS NEWS SERVICE JAMMALAMADUGU
MINISTER for Education, IT and Electronics Nara Lokesh has observed that the inauguration of the SAEL solar power project here goes beyond the launch of a renewable energy facility. For, it is a celebration of vision, trust, speed, and execution coming together successfully. The Minister inaugurated 600 MW solar power projects established by SAEL

- Inaugurates SAEL's 600-MW solar plant in Kadapa district
- Rs 3,000-cr plant was constructed in 11 months
- Says AP will sell clean energy to other states besides using it



MINISTER for Education, IT and Electronics Nara Lokesh speaking after inaugurating solar power projects of SAEL Industries Limited at T Konduru village in Kondapuram mandal of the Jammalamadugu constituency on Friday

ency with an investment of nearly Rs.3,000 crore. The inauguration comes as Andhra Pradesh accelerates the implementation of its Integrated Clean Energy Policy 2024, under which the state aims to attract investments worth Rs 10 lakh crore across renewable energy, storage, green hydrogen, transmission, and manufacturing. The company is also exploring further opportunities in Andhra Pradesh in renewable energy and

agricultural waste-to-energy initiatives. Addressing the gathering, Lokesh said Andhra Pradesh is rapidly emerging as a major clean energy hub so much so that the state will not only consume green energy but also export it to the rest of the country in future. The development model of the coalition government is focused on job creation, industrial growth, and attracting investments, he remarked. **Continued on Page 7**

IRREGULAR by MANJUL

We are working on the heat-wave problem. Just wait a little, there will be a cold-wave