



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.

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.

Six die as bus rams into auto
In a heart-rending road accident near Ladakapalli chowk under Purushottampur police station limits in Ganjam district on Friday, six members of an extended family, including two children.

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

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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.

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

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

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 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 issuing notice in the matter. The top court remarked that if the parents of students are in good jobs with handsome incomes, then the children 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 government 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
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.

CJP swings into action, demands Pradhan's scalp

COCKROACH JANTA PARTY
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 -- "Cockroach 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

Continued on Page 7

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 Yodhya 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.



Currently, YSRCP holds seven Rajya Sabha seats, followed by TDP with 2. These numbers are expected to change after June 18 election. According to sources, TDP may contest two Rajya Sabha seats while its partners BJP and Jana Sena could get one each. In the Assembly, the TDP has 135 MLAs, followed by Janasena (21) and BJP (8), while YSRCP has 11 legislators.

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 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 SAEI 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 SAEI

- Inaugurates SAEI'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 SAEI 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

ANDHRA PRADESH STATE WAQF BOARD, VIJAYAWADA
(4th Floor, Imdad Ghar Waqf Complex, Adjacent to Head Post Office, Vijayawada - 01)
File No.06/APSWB/TEH/REF/2026 Date:20-05-2026

:: EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) ::
The Andhra Pradesh State Waqf Board (APSWB) invites Expression of Interest (EOI) from reputed and experienced Educational institutions / Corporate residential Junior Colleges & Coaching institutions in A.P.State for providing Intermediate education integrated with NEET / JEE / EAMCET. For details please scan the QR Code or contact Shaik Naseer Ahmed: 9490044933. Sd/-
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Government of India
Ministry of Ayush

Government of India, Ministry of Ayush Applications/nominations are invited from Ayurveda experts for the National Dhanwantari Ayurveda Award 2026. The award has been instituted by the Ministry of Ayush, Government of India, to be conferred on Ayurveda experts possessing recognized qualifications as per the provisions of the National Commission for Indian Systems of Medicine Act, 2020, or the Indian Medicine Central Council Act, 1970, and having a profound contribution in the field of Ayurveda. The awardees shall be felicitated with the award on the occasion of 11th Ayurveda Day to be celebrated on 23rd September 2026. The details may be accessed on the National Awards Portal, <http://awards.gov.in>, Ministry of Home Affairs. Accordingly, applications/nominations may be submitted by 30th June 2026.

cbc 17201/11/0003/2627

यूनियन बैंक ऑफ इंडिया
Union Bank of India
एशिया का सर्वोच्च बैंक

UNION BANK OF INDIA
ASSET RECOVERY BRANCH VISAKHAPATNAM

Door No. 26-15-150, Union Bank of India Building, Changelraopeta, Visakhapatnam-530001, A.P.
Ph: 0891-2537782, Mobile: 9324517291. E-mail: ubin0817295@unionbankofindia.bank.in
APPENDIX-II-A [See Proviso to Rule 6 (2)]

SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF MOVABLE PROPERTIES
E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Movable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 6(2) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.
Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described movable properties mortgaged/charged to **Union Bank of India** (Secured Creditor), **will be sold through e-auction** on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" basis on **12-06-2026**, for recovery of below mentioned amount plus further interest, costs and charges due to the Union Bank of India from below mentioned Borrower/Guarantor. **The details of the Reserve price of the secured assets and earnest money deposit are mentioned below:**
DATE & TIME OF E-AUCTION: 12-06-2026 at 12.00 Noon to 5.00 PM
(With unlimited extension of 10 minutes duration each till the conclusion of the sale)
The Online E-auction will be held through web portal/website: <https://baanknet.com>
Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s): 1) M/s. R G Water Industries, Proprietor: Smt. Korada Deepamani, Office: Shop No. 311 & 305, 3rd Floor, Sai Shopping Centre, RTC Cross Roads, Dwarakanagar, Visakhapatnam-530016. 2) M/s. R G Water Industries, Proprietor: Smt. Korada Deepamani, Unit: No.17/1, Cherukupalli Village, Backside of Avanti Engg College, Bhogapuram Mandal, Vizianagaram District-535216. 3) Smt. Korada Deepamani, W/o Sri Korada Rama Gopal (Proprietor: M/s RG Water Industries), Door No: 8-52-2, Old CBI Down, China Waltair, Visakhapatnam-530017. **Guarantor: 4) Sri Korada Rama Gopal (alias KVVSS Rama Gopal), S/o Korada Rama Rao, Door No: 8-52-2, Old CBI Down, China Waltair, Visakhapatnam-530017. Outstanding Amount: Rs.84,71,618.24/- (Rupees Eighty Four Lakhs Seventy One Thousand Six Hundred Eighteen and Twenty Four Paise Only) together with contractual rate of interest as of 31-03-2026 plus further interest, costs and other charges.
DESCRIPTION OF MOVABLE SECURED ASSETS TO BE SOLD
Details of auction items under physical possession of bank @ Address: M/s. R G Water Industries, Proprietor: Smt. Korada Deepamani, Unit: No.17/1, Cherukupalli Village, Backside of Avanti Engg College, Bhogapuram Mandal, Vizianagaram District-535216.**

S.No	Description of the plant, machinery etc. In the physical possession	Make / Supplier	Qty	Year
1	Blow Moulding Machine	-	1 Set	2014
2	Water Treatment Plant (with accessories)	Yercaud Electronics	1 Set	2014
3	Automatic Bottle Equipment – EVATS-1000 with Shrink Tunnel	Canada Pure Fillets Pvt. Ltd	1 Set	2014
4	Sachet Filling Machine – CR-L-500	Crown Industries	2 Nos	2010
5	Bag Closer	Revo Make	1 No	2014
6	Deep Freezer	-	2 Nos	2014
7	Bottle Shape Pouch Packing Machine	Shree Ashapura Tech	2 Nos	2014
8	Manual Cup Sealing Machine	Topchances	1 No	2014
9	Computer with Printer & CCTV cameras	-	1set	2014
10	Air Compressor with 11 kW Motor	-	1 Set	2014
11	Bore Well Pump with Accessories	-	1 No	2014
12	Sump Pump with Accessories	-	2 Nos	2014
13	Computer table	-	1 No	2014
14	Office Tables	-	4 Nos	2014
15	Cushion Chairs	-	5 Nos	2014
16	Executive Office Table	-	1 No	2014
17	Executive Chair	-	1 No	2014
18	Wooden Cupboard	-	1 No	2014
19	Air Conditioners	-	2 Nos	2014
20	Ceiling Fans	-	2 Nos	2014
21	Revolving Chairs	-	2 Nos	2014
22	Digital Spectrophotometer	-	1 No	2014
23	Centrifuge	-	1 No	2014
24	Digital pH Meter	-	1 No	2014
25	Digital Turbidity Meter	-	1 No	2014
26	Heating Mantle	SISCO	1 No	2014
27	Water Bath	SISCO	1 No	2014
28	Magnetic Stirrer (without hot plate)	SISCO	1 No	2014
29	Laminar Flow	--	1 No	2014
30	BOD Incubator	SISCO	1 No	2014
31	Fridge	Electrolux	1 No	2014

Reserve Price: Rs. 5,15,000/- EMD: Rs. 51,500/- Bid Increment: Rs. 5,200/-
Bidders are advised to go through the service provider website: <https://baanknet.com> and Union Bank of India website: <https://www.unionbankofindia.bank.in/auction-property/viewauction-property.aspx> for detailed terms and conditions of Auction Sale before submitting their bids and taking part in the E-Auction sale proceedings. There are no encumbrances known to the Bank on the property. The interested bidder may contact the Authorised Officer ascertaining the details of auction and inspection of property. Mail id: ubin0817295@unionbankofindia.bank.in, Contact No. 93245 17291.
Date: 18-05-2026, Place: Visakhapatnam Sd/- Authorised Officer, Union Bank of India

CHOLAMANDALAM INVESTMENT AND FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED
Corporate Office : Chola Crest, C54 & 55, Super B-4, Thiru Vi Ka Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai- 600 032, T. N.
SALE NOTICE OF IMMOVABLE SECURED ASSETS ISSUED UNDER RULE 8(6) AND 9(1) OF THE SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES 2002.
Notice is hereby given to the PUBLIC IN GENERAL, and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) indicated in COLUMN (A) that the below described immovable property(ies) described in COLUMN (C) Mortgaged / Charged to the secured creditor the POSSESSION of which has been taken as described in COLUMN (D) by the Authorized Officer of Housing CHOLAMANDALAM INVESTMENT AND FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is Where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" as per details mentioned below :- Notice is hereby given to Borrower / Mortgagor(s) / legal heir, legal representatives (Whether Known or unknown), executor(s), administrator(s), successor(s) & assign(s) of the respective Borrower(s) / Mortgagor(s) (Since deceased) as the case may be indicated in COLUMN (A) U/s. 9(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002. For detailed terms & conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in CHOLAMANDALAM INVESTMENT AND FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED secured Creditor's website i.e. <https://www.cholamandalam.com & www.auctionfocus.in>

Sr. No.	[A] Loan Account No. / Names Of Borrower(s) / Mortgagor(s) / Guarantor(s)	[B] O/S. Dues to be recovered (Secured Debts)	[C] Description of the Immovable Property / Secured Asset	[D] Type of Possession	[E & F] Reserve Price (In Rs.) Earnest Money Deposit (In Rs.)	[G] Date of Auction & Time
1	Loan A/c. No(s) : HL01VIS000017628 1. Mr/Ms. Mounika Dantuluri 2. Mr/Ms. Sivajagannadha Varma Kucheralapati Add For Sr. No. 1 & 2 : Mig-I House No 102, Phase 2,Vuda Colony, Vizianagaram,Near Vuda Colony, Bondapalli, Andhra Pradesh - 535003 Add For Sr. No. 1 & 2 : Flat No: 501, Fourth Floor Rajesh Residency Sy. No: 86/5, Vuda Rk. No: 6315/2016/L7, Thallavalasa Village & Gram Panchayat, Beemunipatnam Beemunipatnam Bhemuniapatnam 531163	Rs. 28,56,045/- (Rupees Twenty Eight Lakh Fifty Six Thousand Forty Five Only) as on 17-11-2025	the Flat No.501 on the Fourth Floor of "Rajesh Residency" with an undivided share of land admeasuring 85.92 sqyds out of 1619.4 sqyds and Plinth area measuring 1630 sft covered by Survey No.86/5 situated at Tallavalasa Village, Bhemuniapatnam Mandal, Anandapuram SRO, Visakhapatnam District and bounded as: North: Open to sky; South: Common Corridor and Open to sky; East: Open to sky; West: Open to sky.	CONSTRUCTIVE POSSESSION	Rs. 41,07,600/- (Rupees Forty One Lakh Seven Thousand Six Hundred Only) Rs. 4,10,760/- (Rupees Four Lakh Ten Thousand Seven Hundred Sixty Only)	16-06-2026 from 02.00 P.M. to 04.00 P.M. (with automated extensions of 5 minutes each in terms of the Tender Document),
2	Loan A/c. No(s) : HL04JUW000028462 1. Mr/Ms. Lahari Chidi 2. Mr/Ms. Ravi Kumar Chidi Add For Sr. No. 1 & 2 : 1-372/1, Ramapuram Colony, Near Nikulamma Temple, Anakapalle, Andhra Pradesh - 531001 Add For Sr. No. 1 & 2 : Survey No.74-4 D No 3-55 Rambilli Mandalam Gorapudi, Village Appanna Palem Visakha Dairy Milk Centre Visakhapatnam 535250	Rs. 21,24,392/- (Rupees Twenty One Lakh Twenty Four Thousand Three Hundred Ninety Two Only) as on 17-11-2025	The title property of the house bearing D.No.3-55 with plinth area of 790 sft, land admeasuring 484 sqyds South Part out of 22 cents, covered by Survey No.74/4 situated at Appannapalem Village, Gorapudi Sivaru Appannapalem Panchayat, Rambilli Mandal, Yellamanchili SRO, Visakhapatnam District and bounded as: North: Vendor's land and road; South: Site belongs to L. Narayanaamma and Srinamulu; East: Site of E.Jayalakshmi; West: Land belongs to P.Venkayala.	CONSTRUCTIVE POSSESSION	Rs. 32,26,500/- (Rupees Thirty Two Lakh Twenty Six Thousand Five Hundred Only) Rs. 3,22,650/- (Rupees Three Lakh Twenty Two Thousand Six Hundred Fifty Only)	16-06-2026 from 02.00 P.M. to 04.00 P.M. (with automated extensions of 5 minutes each in terms of the Tender Document),
INSPECTION DATE & TIME : 13.06.2026 BETWEEN 11.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. MINIMUM BID INCREMENT AMOUNT : Rs. 10,000/-						
LAST DT. OF SUBMISSION OF BID / EMD / REQUEST LETTER FOR PARTICIPATION : 15.06.2026 before 05.00 p.m.						

* Together with further interest as applicable in terms of loan agreement with, incidental expenses, costs, charges etc. Incurred up to the date of payment and / or realisation thereof. For any assistance related to inspection of the property, or for obtaining the Bid document and for any other queries, please get in touch with 1. Muralidhar Kasireddy, Mobile No. 9494912799 & Email id: muralidharkas@chola.murugappa.com / 2. P Samba Murthy, Mobile No. 9966323483 & E mail : sambam@chola.murugappa.com official of CHOLAMANDALAM INVESTMENT & FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED to the best of Knowledge and information of the Authorized Officer of CHOLAMANDALAM INVESTMENT & FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED there are no encumbrances in respect of the above immovable properties / secured Assets. Sd/-
Date : 22.05.2026
Place : Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh

AUTHORIZED OFFICER,
For CHOLAMANDALAM INVESTMENT AND FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED



Polavaram must be completed by February: Shashibhushan



Water resources department special chief secretary Shashibhushan Kumar at Polavaram project on Friday

HANS NEWS SERVICE
POLAVARAM

WATER resources department special chief secretary Shashibhushan Kumar directed officials and contractors to maintain momentum in the Polavaram irrigation and hydel power projects while ensuring uncompromised quality standards. He stressed that the prestigious national project must be completed by February 2027, in line with Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's commitment to dedicate it by March next year. Kumar instructed the wa-

ter resources department, Polavaram Project Authority, and contracting agency Megha Engineering & Infrastructures Limited (MEIL) to work in close coordination with a clear action plan. He assured that any issue affecting construction would be resolved promptly if brought

to the government's notice. During his first inspection after assuming charge, Kumar stayed overnight at the project guest house and began his field visit at 8 am Friday, continuing until 1.30 pm. He reviewed progress on key components including

the spillway, cofferdams, diaphragm wall, fish ladder, depletion sluice, and the earth-cum-rock fill (ECRF) dam. He also examined the Polavaram hydel power project and sought detailed reports from officials. The review meeting resumed after lunch and con-

tinued until 6 PM, covering each division and project component. Officials informed him that shortages of diesel and construction materials due to the West Asia conflict had temporarily slowed works, but the situation has stabilised. MEIL representatives assured that construction would be accelerated to meet deadlines. Kumar directed officials to implement advance action plans to ensure uninterrupted works during the monsoon season. Officials confirmed contingency measures are ready. Senior engineers and advisors including Sanjeev Vohra, K Ramesh Babu, M Venkateswara Rao, K Narasimha Murthy, R Ramachandra Rao, and MEIL representatives participated in the inspection and review.

GST staffer, wife arrested under POCSO Act in Tirupati

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUPATI

A shocking case involving the alleged sexual exploitation of a minor girl has led to the arrest of a GST Department employee and his wife in Tirupati. Police said the accused, Rama Murthy (51), who works as a senior assistant, repeatedly assaulted a 16-year-old girl and threatened her with dire consequences to keep her silent. Investigators revealed that the victim was allegedly abused on several occasions at the accused's residence in Tirupati and at other places. Rama Murthy, who is related to the girl as the husband of her aunt, reportedly stored personal photographs and chat conversations exchanged with the minor through mobile phone and ShareChat. Police said he allegedly used the material to blackmail the victim and threatened to upload it on social media if she failed to meet him whenever he called. He also allegedly warned the girl that her parents would be killed if she disclosed the incidents. The case surfaced after the victim's parents learnt about the harassment and approached the Jagadgiri-

gutta police station in Telangana. Police there registered a Zero FIR and later transferred the case to Tirupati East police station for further action. Based on the complaint, a case was booked under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. Tirupati Superintendent of Police L Subba Rayudu directed officials to conduct a detailed investigation, which was led by DSP M Bhaktavatsalam. During the investigation, police allegedly found that the victim's aunt, Manasa, a Deputy Tahsildar working at Railway Koduru, had attempted to shield her husband from legal action. Following the collection of evidence, both Rama Murthy and Manasa were arrested on Thursday and later produced before a court, which remanded them to judicial custody. SP Rayudu appealed to the public to immediately report incidents of sexual abuse, harassment and blackmail involving children. He assured that the identity of victims would be kept confidential and said strict legal action would be taken against those involved in crimes against minors.

CM Naidu to launch Sanjeevani health project at Yadamari today

HANS NEWS SERVICE
CHITTOOR

CHIEF Minister N Chandrababu Naidu will participate in several programmes at Yadamari in Chittoor district on Saturday, including the launch of the 'Sanjeevani Health Project' at the Primary Health Centre (PHC). He will also address a public meeting during the visit. Preparations for the Chief Minister's tour were reviewed on Friday by Chittoor MP D Prasada Rao, CM Programmes Coordinator Pengudurthi Venkatesh, Joint Collector Adarsh Rajendran and other officials. They inspected arrangements at the helipad, public meeting venue and Yadamari PHC. District SP Tushar Dudi briefed police officers and staff involved in convoy and security duties for the visit.



Chittoor SP Tushar Dudi reviewing security arrangements for CM's visit in Yadamari on Friday

A trial run was conducted from the helipad set up near Chinnareddypalli bus stop to the meeting venue and healthcare centre. Officials reviewed convoy responsibilities, security measures and traffic management during the exercise. The SP directed officials to maintain continuous surveillance at the public meeting venue, helipad, important junctions, parking areas and along the route using CCTV cameras. Police personnel were instructed to immediately report any suspicious persons or objects to

senior officers and the control room. ASP Dr Tarun Pahwa, Additional SP SR Rajasekhara Raju, AR Additional SP Devadas, Chittoor SDPO J Venkatanarayana and other officials participated in the security review. Meanwhile, the Chief Minister will leave his Undavalli residence in Tadepalli mandal of Guntur district by helicopter at 9 am on Saturday and reach the helipad near 14 Kandriga village in Yadamari mandal at 11 am. After meeting public representatives and officials, he will participate in a public meeting.

Two CIs suspended for lapses in investigation

TIRUPATI: Tirupati police department has suspended two former circle inspectors after a departmental inquiry reportedly found lapses in investigation procedures and misuse of authority in separate cases. The suspended officers were identified as Srinivasulu, who earlier served as Tirupati East Circle Inspector, and Ramaiah, former Circle Inspector of SVU Police Station. Both officers had earlier been shifted to the Vacancy Reserve at Anantapur following complaints regarding their conduct. The disciplinary action was taken based on the findings of an internal inquiry initiated by Tirupati Superintendent of Police L Subba Rayudu. The probe examined allegations linked to the handling of criminal investigations and alleged misconduct while discharging official duties. According to officials, Srinivasulu was found negligent in investigating a POCSO case. The inquiry reportedly observed that proper investigation procedures were not followed against an accused in the case. He was also accused of interfering in civil disputes and attempting informal settlements.

APSPDCL CMD orders fast-tracking of APSRTC EV charging stations

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUPATI

APSPDCL Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) Siva Shankar Lotheti has directed executing agencies to fast-track the installation of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations for APSRTC buses across five districts: Nellore, Kadapa, Anantapur, Kurnool, and Tirupati. Addressing a review meeting on Friday, the CMD empha-



APSPDCL CMD Siva Shankar Lotheti

sized that contractors must maintain high quality standards and complete all infrastructure works by June 20 this year. The high-capacity charging points are being set up under APSPDCL's close

supervision at strategically identified transit hubs, including Mangalam. To prevent project delays, Lotheti instructed field teams to bypass bureaucratic red tape by reporting on-ground difficulties directly to their circle Superintending Engineers. This protocol ensures immediate, on-the-spot resolution of technical issues to keep the green mobility project firmly on schedule. Senior discom officials, including Directors Ayub Khan and Guravaiah, attended the session

Over 5k candidates to appear for Civil Services prelims exam tomorrow



Collector S Venkateswar along with UPSC observer Jitender Sharma and DRO G Narasimhulu reviewing Civil Service exam arrangements in Tirupati on Friday

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUPATI

DISTRICT Collector Dr S Venkateswar said that all arrangements have been completed for the smooth and peaceful conduct of the UPSC Civil Services Preliminary Examination 2026, which will be held. The Collector conducted a review meeting on Friday with Assistant Coordinating Officers, liaison officers and officials of various departments regarding the arrangements for the examination. Speaking on the occasion, he said that a total of 5,096 candidates will appear for the examination at 10 centres across the district.

Paper-1 will be conducted from 9.30 am to 11.30 am and Paper-2 from 2.30 pm to 4.30 pm. Candidates will be allowed into the examination halls only up to 30 minutes before the commencement of the exam. The Collector said jammers will be used during the examination and warned that strict action will be taken against malpractice and copying. He directed officials to ensure that photocopy centres near the examination centres remain closed during the examination hours. Candidates have been instructed to carry a valid identity card, failing which they will not be allowed into the examination centres.

Health insurance scheme for home guards launched in Vizag, first in AP

- Home Minister V Anitha distributes insurance documents to 975 Home Guards under Visakhapatnam city police, with Rs 33 lakh coverage
- A special helpline number, 7995093606, has been set up for related assistance and support

VASU POTNURU
VISAKHAPATNAM

IN a first-of-its-kind endeavour in the country, Visakhapatnam city police introduced a holistic health insurance scheme for the welfare of Home Guards and their families.

Striking a balance between effective policing and staff welfare, City Police Commissioner Shankhabrata Bagchi introduced the ambitious scheme to provide financial and medical security to Home Guards serving in the Commissionerate's purview.

Ever since assuming office in Visakhapatnam, the City Police Commissioner has been launching and implementing several welfare-oriented



Home Minister V Anitha distributing insurance scheme documents for Home Guards in the presence of City Commissioner of Police Shankhabrata Bagchi in Visakhapatnam

programmes aimed at improving the well-being of police personnel and supporting them.

Empathising with Home Guards, who face immense pressure, stress and risks while discharging their duties, Shankhabrata Bagchi observed that many personnel and their families suffer severe financial hardships during medical emergencies, often forcing them to borrow large amounts for treatment. Deeply moved by such real-life incidents, the CP

initiated a comprehensive insurance programme to ensure that no Home Guard family is left helpless during times of crisis.

Under the newly introduced scheme, every Home Guard family will receive top-up coverage of Rs 30 lakh and an additional complimentary coverage of Rs 3 lakh, totaling Rs 33 lakh in health insurance coverage. The scheme covers Home Guards working in Visakhapatnam City Police Commissionerate along with their spouse and

two children.

"The annual premium for each family amounts to Rs 10,264 and the premium for the first year has been completely borne by the Police Welfare Fund. This is the first-of-its-kind initiative taken by the police department in the country," Shankhabrata Bagchi told The Hans India.

A total of 975 Home Guards and their families have enrolled under the scheme, benefiting nearly 3,144 family members. An amount of Rs 87,97,809 has

been spent from the Welfare Fund toward implementing the programme. Besides providing financial protection, the initiative is expected to significantly reduce mental stress among Home Guards, boosting their morale and dedication to serving the public.

To ensure smooth implementation and easy access to healthcare services, several special facilities have been arranged under the scheme, including a 24-hour helpline, cashless treatment services, health-card database management and a dedicated coordination with insurance companies and hospitals. A special helpline number, 7995093606, has been set up for related assistance and support.

Appreciating the one-of-its-kind endeavour, Home Minister Vangalapudi Anitha handed over the health insurance policy certificates to Home Guards and their family members.

She appreciated the Visakhapatnam City Police leadership for introducing pioneering welfare initiatives, being empathetic towards the personnel and setting an example for others.

Vizag MP urges people to stay away from 'divisive politics'

- MP Sribharat highlights the alliance government's goals that focus on AP's development and people's welfare

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

VISAKHAPATNAM Member of Parliament M Sribharat stated that the coalition government's primary agenda is the development of the State and the welfare of the people.

Inaugurating Kapu Community Hall at Padmanabha Nagar in Visakhapatnam on Friday in the presence of MLC Vepada Chiranjeevi Rao and MLA PGVR Naidu (Ganababu), among others, he urged the public to remain vigilant against attempts to create divisions for political gain and emphasised the need to safeguard the alliance's unity.

The MP said that Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan, and the BJP leadership are working in tandem for the progress of Andhra Pradesh and any attempts to weaken the alliance will not be entertained.

The community hall was built with GVMC funds at a cost of Rs 1.9 crore. Following the inauguration, floral



Visakhapatnam MP M Sribharat, MLA PGVR Naidu and others at the inauguration of Kapu Community Hall in Visakhapatnam on Friday

tributes were paid to the statues of Sri Krishnadevaraya and Vangaveeti Mohana Ranga installed at the premises.

Emphasising that development and public welfare are his core principles, Sribharat said that in politics, delivering meaningful work for the people is more important than seeking personal credit. He reiterated that he respects all sections of society equally and steers away from caste-based politics.

Appreciating MLA Ganababu for his commitment towards development and resolve to sort out several long-pending public issues in the constituency, the MP expressed delight that the people of the Visakhapatnam West constituency under-

stand the value of development and encourage good leadership.

Also, Sribharat highlighted MLC Vepada Chiranjeevi Rao's efforts in playing a key role in providing political awareness and training the party cadre.

Sribharat appealed to community elders and financially well-settled members to extend support for the further development of the community hall. He suggested that the facility should serve not only a section of society, but also be made available to poor and needy families based on their requirements.

Leaders of Kapu community, alliance party representatives and local residents participated in the programme.

'One month-one constituency-four visits programme will offer a quick resolution'

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

THE State government has launched 'one month - one constituency - four visits' programme to provide a permanent solution to revenue problems at rural level, underlined Bheemunipatnam MLA Ganta Srinivasa Rao.

Commencing the programme from Anandapuram mandal in his constituency here on Friday, the MLA said, "Villages are the prime contributors to development. The main objective of this programme is to ensure that revenue problems are sorted out effectively at village-level so that people need not keep revisiting the offices," he explained, adding that the government is more focused on developing problem-free and conflict-free hamlets.

Even as the PGRS (Public Grievance Redressal Sys-



People submitting their grievances to MLA Ganta Srinivasa Rao during 'one month - one constituency - four visits' programme in Bheemunipatnam on Friday

tem) continues, the special programme will bring people much closer to the public representatives, Srinivasa Rao opined, appealing to people to avail the platform facilitated.

Stressing that the newly launched programme will be quite useful for the people of Bheemunipatnam constituency, the MLA said, "The government's goal is to provide a permanent solution to

revenue, land disputes and other administrative problems." The one month - one constituency - four visits' programme was held in the presence of district Collector Abhishikth Kishore.

GVMC plans e-RT system to clear BRTS road

RANI DEVALLA
VISAKHAPATNAM

A complete revamping exercise of Bus Rapid Transit System (BRTS) is planned in Visakhapatnam with an agenda to convert it into an Electric Rapid Transit (e-RT) system.

With Switzerland-based Hess Green Mobility Limited evincing interest in the project, the proposed Electric Rapid Transit system aims to ease urban bottlenecks substantially and strengthen public transportation system along the city's BRTS corridors.

Representatives of Switzerland-based HESS Green Mobility India Private Limited inspected the BRTS stretches.

Accompanied by GVMC Commissioner Ketan Garg, chief engineer PV Satyanarayana Raju, chief city planner A Prabhakar Rao, traffic Additional Commissioner of Police K Praveen Kumar, Pendurthi mandal revenue officer Venkataramana, HESS project



Pendurthi BRTS corridor in Visakhapatnam (Photo: Vasu Potnuru)

representatives Praveen Kumar and Pranesh N Nayak highlighted the exclusive features of e-RT system. They informed that the high-capacity electric buses can ferry more than 240 passengers per trip and are capable of operating for nearly 23 hours a day. They further informed that HESS possesses over 140 years of engineering expertise and that the e-RT system already operates successfully in several European countries and Australia.

Minimising traffic woes and introducing modern public transportation facilities in the city, the concerned officials elaborated

on the measures to be implemented as part of the e-RT system.

For commuters travelling between Pendurthi and Convent Junctions, passing through them is a horrendous task as traffic congestion swells during peak hours. Commuters find it extremely tough to wade through the ever-increasing vehicle volume and traffic bottlenecks in these junctions. Given the traffic congestion, especially between Pendurthi and Convent Junctions, measures are being considered to reduce traffic issues and commuter inconvenience by introducing modern public transport-

tation facilities. Civic chief Ketan Garg informed that the objective of the ensuing project is to provide citizens with an advanced public transportation system equal to metro-like facilities. He mentioned that the e-RT system would enable electric buses to operate in dedicated corridors in a fast, safe and environmentally-friendly manner.

The proposed e-RT system would play a key role in reducing traffic congestion, decreasing the usage of private vehicles, controlling pollution, and providing faster public transportation services.

Establishment of bus stations, development of dedicated corridors and provision of infrastructure required for the electric buses operation were examined by the officials.

To advance the project, officials from APSRTC, APEPDCL, traffic police, GVMC, the revenue department and other departments concerned to meet next.

Renovated IOB Rampuram branch inaugurated



IOB Senior Regional Manager Ravi Kumar Gupta and staff paying tributes to Bank's founder chairman M Ct M Chidambaram Chettiyar at Rampuram Branch on Thursday

HANS NEWS SERVICE
RAMPURAM
(VISAKHAPATNAM DISTRICT)

THE Rampuram branch of Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) in Pendurthi mandal of Visakhapatnam district has been renovated and upgraded with a fully air-conditioned facility, marking a significant milestone in the branch's long-standing service to rural communities.

The renovated branch was formally inaugurated on Thursday by Ravi Kumar Gupta, IOB Senior Regional Manager (SRM), Visakhapatnam Region, in the presence of Branch Manager Allu Santhiswaroop, Regional Office Chief Manager Dogiparthi Srinivasa Rao, AIOBEU AGS D Unamaheswara Rao, staff members, customers, and retired IOB employee B Mutya-

lu. Speaking on the occasion, SRM Ravi Kumar said that the Rampuram branch was originally opened on March 29, 1982, and has remained committed to supporting rural communities, particularly farmers and women associated with Self Help Groups (SHGs).

He also informed that IOB Visakhapatnam Region currently operates 78 branches. He further announced that new IOB branches at Narsipatnam in Anakapalli District and Ranasthalam in Srikakulam District will be opened shortly.

Branch Manager Allu Santhiswaroop expressed heartfelt gratitude to customers for their continued patronage over the past 44 years and sought their sustained support for the future growth of the branch.

19th Rozgar Mela to be held at Gambheeram

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi will distribute over 51,000 appointment letters to the newly-appointed youth in various government departments and organisations at the 19th Rozgar Mela scheduled on Saturday (May 23) at 11 am via video conferencing.

In keeping with the Prime Minister's commitment to prioritising employment generation, the Rozgar Mela is a major initiative aimed at translating this vision into reality. Since its inception, around 12 lakh recruitment letters have been issued through 18 Rozgar Melas organised across the country.

The 19th Rozgar Mela will be held at 47 locations across the country. The newly recruited candidates, selected from all parts of India, will join various ministries and departments of the Government of India, including the Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Department of Financial Services and Department of Higher Education, among others.

In Visakhapatnam, the Rozgar Mela will be held at the Auditorium, Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Gambheeram from 1 am.



Union Civil Aviation Minister K. Ram Mohan Naidu playing cricket at Kargil Park in Srikakulam on Friday

Civil Aviation Minister exhorts people to stay fit

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

DRAWING inspiration from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for 'Fit India', Union Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu exhorted people of the district to gear up for 'Fit Srikakulam'.

The MP Cup 2026, Box Cricket Tournament will be held till 30th of this month. "In today's digital era, the programme was initiated with an aim of getting the youth to give up their screen time and focus on physical fitness, mental strength and social bonding," the Civil Aviation Minister underlined.

Further, he suggested that the youth should get into the habit of playing some kind of sport. He encouraged people to inculcate healthy practices and work on their fitness level by playing sports of their choice.

Union Minister Rammo-

han Naidu, Srikakulam in-charge Collector Farman Ahmed Khan and SP Maheshwar Reddy played a friendly cricket match on the occasion of the tournament's inauguration.

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Further, he suggested that the youth should get into the habit of playing some kind of sport. He encouraged people to inculcate healthy practices and work on their fitness level by playing sports of their choice.

From today, 'Swarnapushparchana seva' will be performed on weekends

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

THE most popular 'Swarnapushparchana seva' at the sacred Sri Varaha Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple is set to be performed every Saturday and Sunday, starting May 23.

Announcing this on Friday, Devasthanam Executive Officer Jallepalli Venkata Rao said the decision was taken due to the increasing number of devotees seeking participation in the highly revered ritual.

To ensure convenience for pilgrims, temple authorities have arranged the seva in three batches on Saturdays and Sundays. The first batch will commence at 7.30 am, followed by the second at 9 am and the third at 10.30 am. Earlier, the seva was conducted only on Thursdays.

The 'Swarnapushparchana seva', which used to be held in Bhoga Mandapam opposite the sanctum sanctorum, was shifted to Kalyana Mandapam following the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

However, devotees participating in the seva will now receive the



Golden flowers for 'Swarnapushparchana seva' at Sri Varaha Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple in Visakhapatnam

rare privilege of darshan inside the sanctum sanctorum. This gains larger significance as regular sanctum darshan for devotees on weekends remained suspended for a while. Temple officials stated that the seva offers devotees a unique spiritual experience, allowing them to personally perform pujas by touching the golden flowers offered to the presiding deity.

Conducted with traditional grandeur in the sanctum sanctorum and Bhoga Mandapam, the

ritual will accommodate only 30 to 50 couples in each batch to effectively manage the rush.

In a move aimed at enhancing convenience and transparency, the temple administration has also introduced modern technological facilities for ticket booking.

Devotees can obtain tickets seamlessly by scanning the QR codes installed across the temple premises and availing 'Mana Mitra' WhatsApp service through the official AP Temples platform.

Expand PNG infra fast, Nadendla to companies

- Civil supplies minister directs PNG firms to speed up infrastructure expansion and public outreach to shift households from LPG to Piped Natural Gas across the state
- Announces large-scale skill training for youth through ITIs and polytechnics, with free accommodation, food and stipends, to meet manpower needs in the growing PNG sector and boost employment
- PNG connections will be mandatory for major temples conducting Annadanam

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

FOOD and civil supplies minister Nadendla Manohar directed officials and PNG companies to accelerate efforts to shift people from LPG usage to Piped Natural Gas (PNG) across the state.

He assured that the government machinery would fully support PNG companies in expanding infrastructure and creating public awareness about the benefits of PNG usage.

The minister conducted a special review meeting at the Secretariat here on Friday with representatives of PNG companies and senior officials from various departments. Transport minister B C Janardhan Reddy participated in the meeting through video conference.

Speaking on the occasion, Manohar said the coalition

government is committed to providing alternative gas solutions to the public quickly and efficiently. He stated that the government aims to ensure uninterrupted cooking gas supply to households and urged the five PNG companies operating in the state to be fully prepared for rapid expansion. He noted that people are increasingly turning towards PNG gas in line with changing times and asked companies to strengthen infrastructure and intensify promotional campaigns.

The minister assured that the government is granting approvals for gas expansion works in cities and towns at a faster pace and promised immediate resolution of any issues faced by companies. He also said the government would facilitate land allotment on lease basis for setting up PNG filling stations. Highlighting the need



Civil supplies minister Nadendla Manohar holds a review with officials and representatives PNG companies at the Secretariat in Amaravati on Friday

for skilled manpower, the Minister said youth should be trained in PNG technical skills through ITIs, polytechnic colleges and other skill institutions.

Under the supervision of AP Skill Development and district collectors, batches of 100 youth from each district would be trained every 15 days with free accommodation, food and stipend support. He said linking trained youth with PNG companies would create employment opportunities while addressing manpower shortages in the sector.

Manohar also stressed the need for extensive awareness campaigns through women self-help groups, SERP and MEPMA net-

works to educate people about the convenience, cost savings and safety benefits of PNG usage. He instructed gas companies to coordinate with women's groups and offer incentives for their participation in expansion activities.

The minister announced that PNG connections would be made mandatory for major temples where Annadanam is conducted. He said the government would resolve pending issues in temples like Kanaka Durga temple and Sri Kalahasteeswara temple to speed up PNG implementation, following directions from Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu. He also stated that simplified guidelines

would soon be introduced for tenants using PNG connections and availing LPG subsidy benefits.

He said the government is preparing regulations to ensure PNG users also receive the Rs 2,400 Deepam-2 scheme subsidy annually, as directed by the Chief Minister.

Special focus would be given to expanding PNG connections in apartments, group housing complexes and villas in urban areas.

He warned that another review on the performance of PNG companies would be conducted within 15 days and made it clear that visible progress in expansion activities must be achieved by then.

AP plans gold mining expansion to boost jobs, economy

- Mines minister Ravindra reviews operations at the Jonnagiri gold mine in Kurnool district, where nearly one kilogram of gold is being produced daily using advanced underground mining technology
- Says AP is focusing on expanding mining activity, identifying new gold zones in Ramagiri and speeding up mineral block tenders near Visakhapatnam to drive industrial growth
- Pattikonda MLA Shyam Babu states that the Jonnagiri project has generated jobs for 300-400 local youth, reduced migration from drought-prone villages and strengthened economic activity in the region

HANS NEWS SERVICE
KURNOOL

MINISTER for mines and geology and excise Kollu Ravindra on Friday said the state government is focusing on expanding the mining sector to generate employment, increase industrial growth and strengthen the economy.

The minister, accompanied by Pattikonda MLA K E Shyam Babu visited the Jonnagiri gold mine operated by Geo Mysore Services India Private Limited near Jonnagiri village in Tuggali mandal and reviewed mining and mineral processing operations.

During the inspection, the minister examined underground mining activities, ore extraction systems, and gold refining processes being carried out with advanced technology.

He said mining operations are currently being conducted at a depth of nearly 300 metres and may be expanded further in the coming years. According to officials, the mine is producing around one kilogram of gold every



Mines and geology minister Kollu Ravindra visits Jonnagiri gold mine in Kurnool district on Friday

day, while the monthly production has reached nearly 30 kilograms.

Ravindra said geological assessments indicate the presence of nearly 13,000 tonnes of mineral reserves in and around the Jonnagiri belt, making it one of the most significant private gold mining projects in the country.

Highlighting the state government's mining policy, the minister said Andhra Pradesh possesses vast mineral resources with strong industrial potential. He noted that efforts are underway to identify and develop additional gold mining zones in the Ramagiri region of Anantapur district.

He also pointed out that rare earth minerals available along the state's coastline

have immense international demand and said the government is accelerating the tendering process for mineral blocks near Visakhapatnam.

The minister added that value-added industries based on quartz and granite resources are also being promoted to encourage manufacturing activity and create large-scale employment opportunities.

Speaking on the occasion, MLA Shyam Babu said the Jonnagiri gold mine has brought fresh economic activity to the region by providing direct and indirect employment to local youth. He said nearly 300 to 400 people from nearby villages have already secured jobs through the project, reducing seasonal migration in drought-prone areas.

State welcomes ECLGS 5.0 for MSME relief

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

MINISTER for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) Kondapalli Srinivas welcomed the Centre's launch of the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) 5.0, describing it as a crucial relief measure for industries affected by the ongoing political and economic instability in West Asia.

The minister said the scheme would help businesses secure additional working capital through government-backed credit guarantees at a time of rising global uncertainty and supply-chain disruptions. He stated that the Central government would provide guarantee coverage on additional loans extended by scheduled banks and financial institutions under the scheme.

Explaining the framework of ECLGS 5.0, the minister said MSMEs would receive 100 per cent credit guarantee coverage in the event of loan default, while non-MSME sectors would be eligible for guarantee protection of up to



Picture for representational purpose only

90 per cent.

Eligible businesses can avail additional credit of up to 20 per cent of the highest outstanding working capital utilised during the fourth quarter of the 2025-26 financial year, he said. The scheme allows each eligible borrower to access additional credit support of up to Rs 100 crore.

According to the minister, the facility will apply only to loans sanctioned before March 31, 2027, and disbursed by June 30, 2027. He clarified that only borrowers maintaining regular repayment records with banks and financial institutions would qualify for the scheme. The scheme will be adminis-

tered and monitored by the National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited (NCGTC).

Highlighting Andhra Pradesh's MSME ecosystem, Srinivas said the state currently has nearly 20.77 lakh MSME units, including 4.98 lakh manufacturing enterprises, around 10 lakh service-sector units and 5.74 lakh trading establishments.

The minister urged MSMEs impacted by the West Asia crisis to utilise the scheme to strengthen liquidity and sustain operations. He also thanked the Central Government for introducing ECLGS 5.0 at a critical time for domestic industries.

Atchanna hits back at Jagan's charges on deaths

VIJAYAWADA

AGRICULTURE minister K Atchannaidu on Friday strongly criticised YSRCP chief Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy for linking family deaths to the TDP and Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu.

Speaking in Amaravati, Atchannaidu said people were well aware of the circumstances surrounding the murder of Jagan's grandfather, Y S Raja Reddy. He alleged that victims of that era had spoken of a "reign of oppression and anarchy" under the Y S family. While most accused in the Raja Reddy case had since died, he claimed one accused remained in the YSRCP, exposing the party's "double standards." Rejecting Jagan's claims about former CM Y S Rajasekhara Reddy's helicopter crash, Atchannaidu said Chandrababu's Assembly remarks only referred to faith in Lord Venkateswara and had no link to YSR's death. He accused Jagan of twisting the statement for political gain.

On the murder of Y S Vivekananda Reddy, Atchannaidu alleged the YSRCP initially portrayed it as a heart attack before evidence proved otherwise.

Smart drug tracking soon in state hosps

- AP plans major reforms to the e-Aushadhi platform with QR code access, real-time stock monitoring and automated alerts to improve transparency and efficiency in medicine supply.
- Patients will soon be able to check medicine availability in state hospitals directly, while officials will receive advance alerts on medicines nearing expiry to reduce wastage
- The state is developing a live dashboard covering medicine stocks from Ayushman Arogya Mandirs to teaching hospitals

HANS NEWS SERVICE
MANGALAGIRI

THE state government is set to introduce sweeping reforms in the medicine supply and utilisation system in government hospitals by strengthening the existing 'e-Aushadhi' software platform with advanced technology-driven features aimed at ensuring transparency, efficiency and public accessibility.

As part of the proposed reforms, people will soon be able to directly check the availability of medicines in government hospitals through QR code-based access. The government is also planning to introduce an automated alert system to monitor medicine utilisation, expiry timelines and

supply chain management in real time.

A high-level review meeting on the proposed reforms was held on Friday at the headquarters of the Andhra Pradesh State Medical Infrastructure Development Corporation (APSMIDC) in Mangalagiri.

Senior officials from the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), who arrived from Delhi at the request of Health Minister Satya Kumar Yadav, participated in the discussions.

At present, medicine procurement and supply to government hospitals in Andhra Pradesh are being managed through the e-Aushadhi application. The government spends nearly Rs 800 crore annually on medicines and



C-DAC officials from New Delhi participate in the high-level review meeting at APSMIDC headquarters in Mangalagiri Friday.

surgical supplies, of which around Rs.600 crore worth of medicines are supplied free of cost to poor patients through primary health centres, community health centres, district hospitals, teaching hospitals and specialty institutions.

Based on indents raised by pharmacists, medical officers and hospital superintendents, proposals are generated through the e-Aushadhi system and medicines are procured through tenders before being distributed to Central Drug Stores and subsequently to hospitals across districts.

However, officials observed several operational challenges in areas such as stock monitoring, expiry tracking and supply management.

To address these issues,

the Health Department has proposed several key changes. A public-facing QR code system will allow citizens to directly verify medicine availability at hospitals. A special alert mechanism will notify officials in advance about medicines nearing expiry, especially within six months of the expiry date to minimise wastage.

The government also plans to introduce a state-wide dashboard displaying real-time medicine stock positions from Ayushman Arogya Mandirs to teaching hospitals.

Officials are considering bringing AYUSH medicine supply systems under the e-Aushadhi network as well. In addition, the "Mana Mitra" app will soon provide information on medicine stocks to the public.

AP powers through record summer demand

- State recorded its highest-ever power consumption at 288.9 MU on May 21, with peak demand touching 15,016 MW amid intense heatwave conditions
- APTransco, APGenco and discoms ensure uninterrupted electricity supply through advance planning, continuous grid monitoring and effective load management

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

AMID severe summer conditions and intense heatwave temperatures across the state, the Andhra Pradesh State power utilities successfully ensured uninterrupted and quality power supply while handling the highest-ever electricity demand in the State's history.

The Andhra Pradesh State Grid recorded an all-time high energy consumption of 288.9 million units (MU) on May 21, along with a record day peak demand of 15,016 MW and an evening peak demand of 12,474 mw.

According to officials,

the unprecedented surge in electricity demand was mainly due to soaring temperatures, high humidity levels and increased usage of air-conditioners, cooling appliances, drinking water systems and agricultural pump sets across the State. Temperatures in several districts reportedly touched nearly 46 degrees Celsius.

Despite the extraordinary demand, APTransco, in coordination with APGenco and the discoms, maintained continuous and stable power supply without any disruption.

Officials attributed the achievement to advance planning, round-the-clock grid monitoring, effective load management and opti-



mum utilisation of available power resources.

Special chief secretary

to the Chief Minister K Vijayanand said that the milestone was achieved in

line with the vision of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and energy minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar to provide reliable and uninterrupted power supply to consumers across the State.

He said additional power was procured through short-term market purchases whenever necessary to maintain grid stability and ensure uninterrupted supply to domestic consumers, farmers, industries, commercial establishments and essential services during peak demand periods.

Vijayanand appreciated the dedicated services of APTransco, APGenco and discom personnel, including engineers, field staff, system operators and maintenance teams, for successfully managing the historic demand. He reiterated that the State government remains committed to strengthening power infrastructure and ensuring quality electricity services to all consumers.

TTD records highest Thursday darshan figures

- More than 79,000 devotees had darshan on May 21
- TTD ensured darshan to 5,850 pilgrims under Sarva Darshan during Abhisheka Seva on Friday

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUMALA

TTD managed to provide darshan to over 79,000 devotees on May 21, Thursday, and also allowed over 5,850 common devotees during Abhisheka Seva on Friday, according to TTD additional executive officer Ch Venkaiah Chowdary.

Speaking to media outside the Srivari temple on Friday morning, the additional EO said through the Integrated AI Command Control Centre, with a proper time, queue and darshan management schedule besides collective efforts of various departments, the sharp rise in pilgrim traffic during the summer holidays is being handled in



TTD additional EO Ch Venkaiah Chowdary speaking to the media at Tirumala on Friday

a smooth manner ensuring comfortable darshan for common devotees. Through this effective pilgrim influx forecasting and continuous monitoring, there is a substantial increase in daily darshans, facilitating darshan for over 15,000 additional devotees every day, he said.

Despite Thursdays traditionally having reduced darshan hours due to weekly rituals, TTD facilitated darshan to a record number of 79, 603 devotees for the first time, demonstrating the institution's operational efficiency, he said. Senior officials are reviewing queue-line conditions hourly and implementing necessary measures

immediately to expedite the darshan process. The coordinated efforts among TTD departments, vigilance and police wings helped manage the summer rush and all departments are working round-the-clock to ensure uninterrupted supply of drinking water, Annaprasadam, medical services and amenities in queue lines for devotees, he maintained.

Reiterating that providing comfortable and speedy darshan to common devotees is the primary objective of TTD, the additional EO said that the entire administrative machinery is committed to working with dedication to this end.

Six die as bus rams into auto

SUNIL MOHAN PATNAIK
BERHAMPUR

IN a heart-rending road accident near Ladakapalli chowk under Purushottampur police station limits in Ganjam district on Friday, six members of an extended family, including two children, were killed and four others seriously injured after a passenger bus rammed into an auto-rickshaw carrying pilgrims on their way to Maa Singhasani Peetha.

The accident occurred between 7.30 am and 8 am when the bus travelling towards Berhampur allegedly lost control and collided with the auto-rickshaw carrying 10 family members. The impact was so severe that the auto-rickshaw was dragged for some distance before crashing into a roadside tree, eyewitnesses said.

Five persons died on the spot, while another succumbed during treatment at Kodala Community Health Centre. The injured were later shifted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital for treatment.



The deceased were identified as Mali Behera (75), Narasingha Behera (43), Ratani Behera, Lilabati Behera (45), Sneha Behera (10) and Kiran Behera (8).

Police and Fire Service personnel rushed to the spot after being alerted by local residents and launched rescue operations. The bodies were recovered from the mangled

auto-rickshaw.

According to eyewitnesses, the bus was moving at around 50 kmph on a comparatively deserted stretch of the road when the mishap took place. After the accident, the driver reportedly drove the bus to Purushottampur police station and surrendered. An investigation into the incident has been initiated.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Mukesh Mahaling and Commerce and Transport Minister Bibhuti Bhushan Jena went to MKCG and met the injured persons.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and Leader of Opposition in the Odisha Assembly, Naveen Patnaik, expressed grief over the death of people in the accident and

wished a speedy recovery of the injured. Majhi announced Rs 4 lakh financial assistance from the CM's Relief Fund for the next of kin of each deceased.

He also directed officials to ensure proper treatment of the injured and wished them speedy recovery. The tragic incident has cast a pall of gloom over the locality.

ODISHA MANDATES EVs FOR OFFICIAL USE



HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

THE Odisha government has issued an eight-point directive mandating virtual official meetings wherever possible, compulsory use of electric vehicles (EVs), and a 10 per cent reduction in fuel consumption across departments. The directives were issued on Thursday on the instructions of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, who had earlier reduced the size of his official convoy following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to spend wisely.

The Chief Minister also directed the Chief Secretary to take appropriate steps to ensure at least a 10 per cent reduction in fuel consumption by government departments. According to instructions issued by the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), government-level meetings, reviews, training programmes and workshops will henceforth be conducted in virtual mode unless physical presence is absolutely necessary.

"In cases where physical presence is required, only essential officers and employees will attend in person, while others will participate virtually," the CMO said. The government has also made it mandatory from June 1 to purchase only electric two-wheelers and four-wheelers for official use.

Hiring of EVs for government work will also become compulsory from the same date.

However, the guidelines stated that the purchase of petrol or diesel vehicles may still be permitted under special circumstances. The CMO said senior officials who have been allotted government vehicles for official use will now be required to carpool and commute using a single vehicle. The allocation for the use of official vehicles will also be reduced accordingly.

The Finance department has been asked to issue detailed guidelines within 15 days specifying which categories of senior officers will be entitled

to government vehicles. The State government also directed officials and employees travelling to distant locations for official work to prefer buses or trains.

The Finance department has additionally been asked to frame guidelines enabling officers who own electric vehicles to use them for official purposes. The government also plans to introduce electric bus and minibus services for employees commuting to offices, particularly in areas with a high concentration of government staff.

The CMO said all offices must take concrete steps to reduce monthly petrol and diesel consumption for the movement of government vehicles by at least 10 per cent. The Chief Minister directed that the new measures be implemented strictly across all government and government-aided institutions, public sector undertakings, universities and societies in the State, beginning with the State secretariat.

Black tiger skin seized

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BARIPADA

FOREST officials of Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) arrested three persons and seized the skin of a rare melanistic tiger, officials said on Thursday. Officials said this was the third reported case of black tiger poaching in Similipal, the only place in the world where melanistic tigers are found in the wild.

Two similar poaching cases had earlier surfaced in 2025 and March this year. The skin, seized during a raid on Wednesday, is suspected to be that of a two-year-old tiger cub, STR Deputy Director Sumit Kar said. He said the raid was conducted on Basipitha-Bhupat road based on intelligence inputs about a deal involving wildlife body parts. The accused were caught while allegedly

negotiating the deal, he said.

The arrested persons were identified as Gangadhar Murmu (62), Ramdas Hembram (40) and Bhima Baskey (40), all residents of Mayurbhanj district. Officials also seized three motorcycles and two mobile phones from them. Kar said further investigation was underway to trace the wider poaching network and identify others involved in the case.



KIIT, UN agencies sign MoUs to foster youth leadership

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

THE KIIT-DU has signed two MoUs with the United Nations Volunteers and the United Nations System Staff College in Bonn, Germany, aimed at creating special global volunteering opportunities for KIIT and KISS students. The MoUs were signed during a visit of KIIT and KISS Founder Achyuta Samanta to Germany.

The MoUs seeks to enable KIIT students gain international exposure and contribute meaningfully to society through volunteerism.

According to Samanta, KIIT has become the first university in South Asia to establish such a path with UNV for youth volunteering. During the visit, fruitful discussions were also held with the leadership of the UNV Programme regarding future areas of cooperation focused on service, learning and youth engagement at the global level.

In another major development, KIIT signed an MoU with the United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC) through the Nelson Mandela Global Academy for Social Change. The collaboration is expected to create new opportunities for young leaders to learn about social transforma-



tion, leadership, dialogue, peace-building and service to humanity.

Samanta said education should not remain limited to academic knowledge alone, but must also nurture compassion, responsibility and a spirit of service towards humanity.

He thanked UNV and UNSSC for reposing faith in KIIT and expressed hope that the partnerships would open new avenues for KIIT and KISS students to learn from global platforms and contribute positively to society.

The MoU signing and discussions were attended by Louise Chamberlain, Deputy Executive Coordinator, UN Volunteers; Sukhrob Khoshmukhamedov, Chief, External Relations and Communications Section, UN Volunteers; and Silke Weinlich, Deputy Director, Learning & Knowledge Services, United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC).

Stakeholders seek Sewa Paper Mill revival

C B SINGH
JEYPORE

THE prolonged closure of the Sewa Paper Mill has once again triggered widespread public concern, with employees, labour unions, contractors, transporters and local representatives jointly urging Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi to take immediate steps for the reopening of the industrial unit. In a memorandum submitted through the district administration of Jeypore, the stakeholders highlighted the severe socio-economic distress caused by the prolonged shutdown of the mill, which was once regarded as one of the largest industrial establishments in the undivided Koraput region.

The memorandum recalled that during his visit to Jeypore on September 9 last year, the Chief Minister had reportedly assured the public that necessary measures would be taken to restart the mill at the



earliest. However, despite repeated assurances at different forums, the signatories alleged that no visible progress has yet been achieved.

The appeal further stated that on March 11, 2026, Congress MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati, along with representatives of two labour unions, had submitted a demand letter requesting government intervention for reopening the factory. According to the memorandum, several former ministers, political leaders cutting across party lines, trade unions and members of the Chamber of Commerce have repeatedly approached the State government seeking

urgent action for revival of the paper mill. The issue was also reportedly raised during the previous Assembly session, where assurances were said to have been given regarding steps for restarting operations.

The workers further claimed that in April 2025, a prospective investor, identified as Mark AB Capital, had visited the factory premises and expressed willingness to resume operations after obtaining the required No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Odisha government. Despite this development, the unit continues to remain defunct. Established during the early 1980s with the objective of promoting industrialisation and generating employment in the economically backward and tribal-dominated belt of southern Odisha, the Sewa Paper Mill had emerged as a major economic backbone for the region. During its operational years, the mill reportedly provided direct employment to nearly 1,500 regular and contractual workers.

NEP 2020 internships engage over 1.18 lakh students

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

MORE than 1.18 lakh students from various higher educational institutions in Odisha have been provided internship and community service opportunities as per NEP-2020 during the academic year 2025-26, an official statement said on Friday. As per the provisions of the National Education Policy (NEP)-2020 and the guidelines of the University Grants Commission (UGC), undergraduate students are required to undertake internships and community service during the fourth semester.

In this context, the Higher

Education department of Odisha has engaged over 1.18 lakh undergraduate students in internships and community service programmes during the academic session 2025-26. The internship programme duration was six weeks, during which students received mentorship and practical training.

Internship opportunities have been provided in government offices, educational institutions, Anganwadi centres, Panchayat Samiti offices, health centres, financial institutions, private organisations and NGOs functioning under various government departments. As per the guidelines issued for the internship programme,

the students will be awarded academic credits based on their attendance, presentations, weekly reports and overall performance during the internship. These credits will also be reflected in their Academic Bank of Credits (ABC). Certificates will be awarded to students upon successful completion of the internship programme, the statement said. This year, the highest participation in internships has been recorded from the districts of Ganjam, Sundargarh, Mayurbhanj, Cuttack and Bolangir.

The students have been placed in offices functioning under departments such as Panchayati Raj and Drinking



Water, Women and Child Development, Health and Family Welfare, Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment, Higher Education, and School and Mass Education.

Higher Education Minister Suryabanshi Suraj said that priority is being given to quality and research-oriented education in higher educational institutions. Through internships and community service, the students will gain practical exposure and understand grassroots-level functioning and administrative processes, he said.

Pujari inspects hockey stadium



HANS NEWS SERVICE
JHARSUGUDA

STATE Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari conducted a site visit at the H Katapali hockey stadium to review the progress of the astroturf work. He met Hockey Association of Odisha vice-president Jeeban Mohanty to discuss upgrading the stadium. Pujari asked Mohanty to write to the contractor regarding the delay in completing the hockey stadium's astroturf work. It is worth noting that the turf work was scheduled to be completed before March. Pujari had announced that a review meeting

will be held with the departments overseeing the hockey stadium construction.

He congratulated Shahid Naik, a 14-year-old student of Hang-Katapali School, and Vivek Naik, a 16-year-old student of the same school, who represented Odisha in the Inter-State School Competition from Jharsuguda district this year.

Pujari wished them the best of luck as they prepare to play for the Odisha Sub-Junior team.

Subhadra Pradhan, former captain of the Indian women's hockey team, welcomed the minister.

Odisha Police to focus on crowd control during Rath Yatra

HANS NEWS SERVICE
CUTTACK

THE Odisha Police are focusing on crowd management, traffic regulation and deployment of a specialised force during the annual Rath Yatra in Puri to prevent a repeat of last year's stampede in which three devotees were killed, officials said on Friday. DGP Y B Khurania held a high-level meeting at the State police headquarters in Cuttack on Thursday to finalise a special standard operating procedure (SOP) for the

nine-day festival beginning July 16.

"All aspects - beginning from crowd management, vehicle parking, smooth movement of devotees, health facilities in the wake of the hot and humid weather conditions, to security arrangements - are part of the SOP, which would be strictly followed," said a senior official who is in charge of the Rath Yatra festival this year.

During the discussion, the DGP stressed proper deployment of security vehicles near the temple, engage-



ment of K-9 (canine) squad, NSG-trained Special Operation Group (SOG) personnel, and Special Tactical Units (STUs) to avoid stampede-like situations, he said.

In a bid to ensure smooth rolling of chariots, the issuance of cordon passes will be regulated to manage the

surging crowd, he said. "Last year, there was a delay in pulling chariots as a huge crowd had entered the inner cordon. This time, the Puri

district administration and the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) have been requested to regulate the issuance of cordon passes," the official said.

The DGP said special arrangements will be made for the orderly darshan of devotees, who come from across the country and abroad to witness the annual Rath Yatra of Lord Jagannath.

"Dealing with emergencies, accident management and ensuring quick coordination between various departments were discussed

during the meeting," he said. As per the tradition of the temple, various rituals will be observed on specific dates. The 'Snan Purnima' (Lord's birth day) will be held on June 29, 'Navayuvan Darshan' (eye-opening) on July 14, and the Rath Yatra on July 16.

Several other rituals will also be performed after the pulling of chariots, such as 'Hera Panchami' on July 20, 'Sandhya Darshan' on July 23, 'Bahuda Yatra' on July 24, 'Suna Besha' on July 25 and 'Niladri Bijje' on July 27. "Since lakhs of devotees

from all over the country and abroad are likely to assemble in Puri on all these occasions, it was decided in the meeting to make the security arrangements more extensive and effective," Khurania said. He said eight more parking spots have been identified to strengthen traffic management.

A special team will be deployed in front of the chariots to ensure the smooth movement of the vehicles of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra on Grand Road on the Rath Yatra day.

Cockroach Janta Party: When satire becomes a threat

IT began as a joke but got taken seriously—so seriously that the government acted against it. That is the story of the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), which is merely a week old. On May 16, an activist, who reportedly was earlier associated with the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Abhijeet Dipke, launched CJP, a satirical take on Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant's comment on the unemployable youth with fake degrees who eventually become “parasites” and “cockroaches,” attacking the system. The CJI's remarks were not very elegant; these were especially hurtful as the young have been the victims rather than tormentors of the system. Among other things, they suffer because of a dearth of quality jobs and

a conducive environment in which they can become wealth creators. And now, they are also hit by the incompetence and corruption in the bodies that carry out exams for coveted seats in higher education and jobs. The remarks were deeply resented by not just youth but also others. This was the reason that the CJI later issued a clarification, stating he was misquoted and his remarks were directed specifically at individuals entering the legal profession through “fake and bogus degrees.” This, however, didn't stop the usage of the term ‘cockroaches’ online and the party espousing their cause; in fact, the party received wide support from various politicians, activists, artists, and millions of other users across

social media platforms. It is said that the CJP was able to get more followers than the ruling BJP and Congress, though the figures have not been verified. The government overreacted by reportedly directing X to withhold the account following inputs from the Intelligence Bureau (IB), which flagged “national security concerns.” Apparently, the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) invoked Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, to demand action against the CJP account. Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor pointed out that the episode “confirms to us the extent to which there is frustration and dissatisfaction that the public can express through being able to tap into

an initiative like this.” In the meanwhile, Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra accused the government of stifling dissent. The government should have avoided action against the CJP, because it was quite clearly a joke. Which serious political party would claim to be the “voice of the lazy”? Or claim that the “eligibility criteria” to join the CJP was to be “unemployed, lazy, and chronically online” with the “ability to rant professionally”? More than anyone else, the government took the joke seriously. By moving to block the account, the government ended up validating the very criticism the satire sought to make. A parody page that may otherwise have remained a passing internet joke suddenly acquired

political significance because of official intervention. In trying to suppress ridicule, the authorities amplified it. The episode also raises troubling questions about the increasing tendency to invoke sweeping powers such as Section 69A against online expression that is inconvenient or embarrassing rather than genuinely dangerous. Democracies are expected to tolerate mockery, even harsh mockery, because satire is often a barometer of public sentiment. What makes the CJP episode particularly revealing is that the government appeared more offended by the language of protest than by the underlying anger that produced it. A confident government would have laughed away the joke.

Prajesh Paramasivan, Neelambur-641048

Students must focus on GCC space

With reference to the article “Bright story of growth in GCC space awaits us beyond layoffs” (THI May 22), the increasing wave of layoffs in global technology companies has become a major concern for employees, students and parents across the country. In recent months, leading multinational firms have laid off thousands of workers worldwide. However, the changing situation should not alarm our IT professionals given that India is the preferred destination for GCCs because of its skilled workforce and growing digital ecosystem. More global firms are setting up technology centres in the country, which is expected to open fresh employment opportunities. Employees must adapt themselves to this transformation. Those who fail to keep pace with emerging technologies may find it difficult to survive in the changing market. Workers should also branch out into communication skills, teamwork and problem-solving abilities. Educational institutions should step in and update their syllabus according to industry requirements. Youngsters must understand that the IT industry now opens opportunities not only in coding but also in analytics, robotics, AI systems and digital transformation. Companies should invest in reskilling and upskilling programmes rather than simply laying off workers. Internal training sessions and mentorship initiatives can help employees move into new domains. Governments and industry bodies can bolster employees through skill development schemes. Skilled professionals who adapt themselves to the changing demands are likely to secure rewarding careers in the future. India's GCC ecosystem is expected to create large-scale employment opportunities in the long run. Employees, students and educational institutions must work together to prepare for the changing technological landscape instead of getting discouraged by temporary setbacks.

Raju Kolluru, Kakinada

Engineers should eye GCC positions.

THIS refers to “Bright story of growth in GCC Space awaits us beyond layoffs”. Rather than worry over layoffs, professionals must take comfort from the fact India's growing GCC ecosystem offers real hope. Many mid-level professionals are still anxious about job security and the rapid shift towards AI-driven roles. Rather than relying solely on market forces, we need practical steps: targeted government-industry partnerships for short-term AI and data science certification programmes, easier credit for tech startups, and clearer pathways for experienced engineers to move into GCC positions. Companies too must invest more in internal reskilling instead of sudden headcount cuts.

M Barathi, Bengaluru - 560076

Reskilling is the need of the hour

As propos “Bright story of growth in GCC space awaits us beyond layoffs”, (THI, May 22). The anxiety around layoffs is understandable, but the bigger concern is whether India's IT workforce is preparing itself for what comes next. GCCs are expanding, and that is genuinely good news. But expansion does not automatically translate into opportunity if skills remain static. Many mid-level professionals are still anchored to roles that AI is steadily absorbing. Reskilling cannot remain a talking point in corporate presentations. Universities, employers, and industry bodies must together create credible, accessible pathways for professionals to transition into AI-adjacent roles. India has the scale and the talent base to lead this shift. The question is whether we move with enough urgency before the window narrows.

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Flight services from Bengaluru to Bidar and Kalaburagi to resume: MB Patil

BENGALURU: Infrastructure Development Minister M B Patil on Friday announced that flight services from Bengaluru to Bidar and Kalaburagi, the district headquarters of the Kalyana Karnataka region, will resume from June 1 and June 10 respectively.

Speaking on the occasion, he said that Star Air (Ghodawat Enterprises Limited) will operate flights on the Bengaluru–Bidar–Bengaluru and Bengaluru–Kalaburagi–Bengaluru sectors. The Government is extending viability gap funding of ₹28.47 crore to support the operations. Advance booking for flights on both routes has already commenced, he added.

Patil said the flight service to Kalaburagi had earlier been suspended due to financial losses. In the case of Bidar, services were being operated with special support from the Kalyana Karnataka Regional Development Board. Taking into account the growth of industries, education, tourism, agriculture and commercial activities in the Kalyana Karnataka region, the Government has decided to revive the services under the regional air connectivity initiative, he said.

The Minister said the Government is committed to enhancing air connectivity to Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities across the State. Such initiatives will not only accelerate regional economic growth but also contribute to infrastructure development, he noted.

Read more at <https://epaper.thehansindia.com>

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. In many ways, it succeeded. Political communication became immediate, interactive, and accessible on an unprecedented scale.

But now the same platforms have steadily polluted the country's political ecosystem. What began as an instrument of participation has, in many instances, degenerated into an unregulated arena of misinformation, abuse, manufactured outrage, and character assassination. The consequences extend far beyond politics; they strike at the very culture of democracy.

Indian politics has always been intensely competitive and emotionally charged. But social media transformed both the speed and scale of political confrontation. Earlier, allegations against political rivals passed through editorial scrutiny, legal checks, and institutional filters before reaching the public domain. Newspapers and television channels, despite their flaws and biases, still functioned within identifiable structures of accountability. Social media erased those barriers overnight.

Today, anonymous handles with no credibility or accountability can circulate fabricated claims, morphed videos, edited speeches, fake documents, and defamatory accusations to millions within minutes. Once amplified through coordinated digital networks, repetition itself

When outrage becomes currency and truth becomes irrelevant, democracy pays the price

creates the illusion of truth.

The political ecosystem has consequently shifted from ideological contestation to perpetual digital warfare. Truth is no longer merely the first casualty of political conflict; it is increasingly treated as irrelevant.

Perhaps the gravest danger posed by social media is the near-total absence of accountability.

Traditional journalism, at least in principle, carried institutional responsibility. Publications could face defamation suits, public scrutiny, legal consequences, and professional censure for unethical reporting. Editors and publishers were answerable for what they printed. Of course, it is a different matter that these days even journalists seem to be getting increasingly influenced by social media and are vying to belittle the views expressed by fellow journalists acting more like activists.

Political operatives, ideological influencers, troll networks, and anonymous accounts routinely spread allegations without evidence. Many posts are cleverly framed as “questions,” “sources suggest,” or “reports indicate,” enabling users to evade direct liability while successfully planting suspicion in the public mind. The damage, however, is immediate and often irreversible.

A false allegation may trend nationally for a day, dominate television debates, influence public perception, and quietly disappear later without apology, correction, or consequence. By the time fact-checkers intervene, the political narrative has already hardened.

This has created a dangerous incentive structure where outrage is rewarded, restraint ignored, and sensationalism travels faster than truth.

In a healthy democracy, political rivalry should revolve around governance, policy, ide-



The digital public square has become a theatre of political hostility, where anonymous allegations, viral half-truths and manufactured narratives often overpower evidence. This article examines how social media polluted India's political ecosystem and asks whether democratic discourse can still recover civility, accountability and respect for truth

ology, and public performance. Increasingly, however, Indian political discourse online revolves around the destruction of individuals rather than debate over ideas.

Political opponents are routinely portrayed not merely as rivals but as enemies, traitors, criminals, dictators, communal agents, or anti-national conspirators — often without substantiated evidence.

Families are dragged into political battles. Private lives are scrutinized. Old videos are selectively edited. Rumours are packaged as “exposés.” The objective is not persuasion but delegitimation.

Almost every major political formation now possesses an aggressive digital ecosystem dedicated less to defending its own ideas and more to attacking opponents relentlessly. The tragedy is that civil disagreement — the cornerstone of parliamentary democracy — is steadily disappearing.

Social media algorithms are designed not to promote truth or balance, but engagement.

Anger, outrage, fear, and polarization generate more clicks than reasoned analysis. Consequently, users increasingly inhabit ideological echo chambers where they consume only information that reinforces pre-existing beliefs.

Supporters of one political camp accept every allegation against rivals unquestioningly while dismissing all criticism of their preferred leaders as propaganda. Facts themselves become partisan.

A democracy cannot function effectively when citizens no longer agree even on basic facts. Nuance disappears. Complexity is reduced to hashtags. Serious policy discussions are drowned out by viral abuse and performative outrage.

Another disturbing feature of India's social media is that political messaging today is systematically engineered through coordinated hashtag campaigns, bot amplification, influencer networks, edited clips, selective leaks, meme factories, and targeted disinformation operations. Public percep-

tion itself can now be artificially manufactured. Visibility is mistaken for legitimacy.

The loudest voices online are often not the most credible — merely the most aggressively amplified.

The pollution generated by social media extends beyond political parties and leaders. Institutions themselves have become targets of sustained digital delegitimation.

The judiciary, Election Commission, investigative agencies, armed forces, universities, journalists, economists, and even constitutional authorities are routinely attacked whenever their actions conflict with partisan expectations.

Social media toxicity is not accidental; it is deeply tied to the economics of digital platforms which interests most of those who own these digital channels. These platforms profit from engagement, not civility. Outrage sustains attention. Polarisation increases interaction. Conflict keeps users online longer. As a result, inflammatory political content is often algorithmically rewarded.

Political actors exploit this structure ruthlessly because digital aggression delivers immediate visibility. Falsehood spreads not only because it is politically useful, but because it is commercially incentivised. The ultimate casualty is informed citizenship.

The answer, however, cannot lie in censorship alone. Excessive state control over digital speech carries dangers of its own and can easily become an instrument of political suppression. What India urgently needs is a culture of balanced accountability.

Political parties must discourage anonymous abuse and misinformation instead of covertly benefiting from it. Social media platforms must evolve

transparent and politically neutral mechanisms to identify coordinated disinformation campaigns. Fact-checking institutions must remain independent and credible. Most importantly, citizens themselves must cultivate digital literacy and scepticism. But no such signs are visible, at least not now. Democracy depends not merely on the freedom to speak, but also on the responsibility to verify. Political disagreement is healthy. Deliberate misinformation designed to destroy reputations and poison public discourse is not.

Social media, if responsibly used, can still strengthen those democratic instincts by enabling wider engagement between governments and citizens.

But the present trajectory is deeply troubling. When abuse replaces debate, rumours overpower evidence, anonymous propaganda shapes perception, and political victory becomes more important than truth itself, democracy suffers lasting damage.

The pollution of India's political ecosystem is not caused by technology alone. Technology merely amplifies human impulses — ambition, anger, tribalism, prejudice, and the relentless pursuit of power.

The real challenge before India is therefore moral, political, and institutional: whether democratic culture can rediscover restraint, credibility, civility, and accountability in the digital age.

If that correction does not happen, India risks drifting toward a political culture where propaganda triumphs over truth, noise overwhelms reason, and permanent outrage replaces constructive governance.

(The author is former Chief Editor of The Hans India)

Therefore, any caste enumeration exercise must be conducted with transparency, scientific rigor, and strong legal safeguards. Data protection mechanisms should ensure that information is used exclusively for policy and welfare purposes, not for partisan political gains.

The debate now demands clarity and political maturity from the Union government. Caste enumeration should not be viewed merely through an electoral lens, but as an administrative and constitutional necessity. A credible framework must emerge through consultations with states, sociologists, statisticians, and policy experts. Public expectations today are increasingly shaped by a demand for evidence-based governance rather than broad political assurances.

Dr B R Ambedkar envisioned an India where equality would not remain a constitutional promise alone but become a lived social reality. Achieving that vision requires more than slogans or symbolic commitments. It requires institutions willing to confront uncomfortable truths with honesty and policy courage.

A comprehensive caste census is not merely a bureaucratic exercise. Properly designed and responsibly implemented, it can become a transformative democratic reform, one that strengthens representation, improves welfare delivery, and deepens the Republic's commitment to social justice. For a nation still grappling with entrenched inequalities, understanding the true contours of deprivation may well be the first step toward correcting them.

A historic step towards social justice

AMARAVAJI NAGARAJU

THE national debate on caste enumeration has once again moved to the centre of India's political and social discourse. Recent observations by the Supreme Court emphasizing the importance of caste data in the Census have added renewed urgency to a long-pending issue. For communities that have consistently demanded equitable representation, welfare, and social justice, the development carries both symbolic and policy significance.

Our Constitution guarantees equality to every citizen. Yet, the realities of social and economic inequality continue to shape access to education, employment, political representation, and public resources. Despite decades of affirmative action and welfare policies, the absence of comprehensive and updated caste-based data has remained a major policy gap. Governments continue to frame reservation policies and welfare interventions largely on estimates and outdated assumptions rather than contemporary evidence.

The last comprehensive caste census in India was conducted in 1931. After Independence, official Census exercises have largely restricted caste enumeration to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Consequently, there is no reliable nationwide data on the population, educational status, economic conditions, or



representation of Other Backward Classes and several marginalized communities. These paradoxical policies meant to advance social justice are being implemented without a precise understanding of the social realities they seek to address.

Caste enumeration:

In this context, the Supreme Court's observations assume considerable importance. The underlying principle is simple, yet profound: meaningful equality cannot be achieved without understanding the actual structure of inequality. In a democracy committed to inclusive governance, representation and opportunity must be informed by evidence, not speculation. Policymakers across the world increasingly recognise that data-driven governance is indispensable for effective welfare planning and equitable distribution of resources.

The demand for caste enu-

mation has been consistently raised by several political and social movements over the years. Their argument is rooted in a fundamental democratic question: who has access to the nation's wealth, institutions, education, and decision-making structures, and in what proportion? Without credible data, these debates remain confined to rhetoric. The Court's intervention has now provided institutional legitimacy to a conversation that many believe was delayed for far too long.

The Telangana caste survey:

Telangana's recent caste survey has emerged as an important example in this regard. Conducted with administrative coordination and public participation, the exercise attempted to systematically gather socio-economic and educational data across communities. While debates on methodology and implementation may continue, the broader sig-

nificance of the initiative lies in its attempt to shift governance toward evidence-based policymaking. In an era where governments worldwide rely on data to frame targeted welfare measures, India too must strengthen its statistical foundations.

Globally, countries routinely collect demographic and social indicators to address disparities in healthcare, education, employment, and income distribution. In diverse societies, such exercises are not viewed as instruments of division but as tools for inclusion. India, with its layered social realities, arguably has an even greater need for accurate and transparent data systems.

Critics of caste enumeration, however, raise concerns that such exercises could deepen social divisions or intensify caste-based politics. These concerns cannot be dismissed lightly. Yet, acknowledging inequality is not the same as perpetuating it. Democracies cannot correct structural disadvantages without first identifying them. Just as a physician cannot prescribe treatment without diagnosis, governments cannot meaningfully address social inequities without reliable evidence.

Data privacy and public trust:

Another critical dimension is data privacy and public trust. In the digital age, the collection of personal information naturally raises concerns about misuse and surveillance.

Lokesh accuses Jagan of divisive politics

- Minister alleges that YSRCP chief was attempting to create communal divisions and mislead the public for political gain
- Urges party workers to stay alert against political provocations and claimed those behind unlawful acts would face action

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JAMMALAMADUGU
YSR KADAPA



TDP working president and minister Nara Lokesh addressing the party cadre at Jammalamadugu in YSR Kadapa district on Friday

MINISTER for education and IT Nara Lokesh on Friday launched a sharp attack on former Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, accusing him of attempting to create divisions among communities and misleading the public for political gain.

Addressing a coordination meeting with TDP leaders and cadre at Dattaluru village in Kondapuram mandal of Jammalamadugu constituency, Lokesh alleged

that conspiracies were being hatched to create tension between religious groups. He asserted that those responsible for unlawful activities would not be spared.

Before the meeting, the minister paid floral tributes to the statue of N T Rama Rao.

During his speech, Lokesh praised local TDP leaders

and party workers for standing by the party during difficult political periods and credited them for the party's strong performance in the recent elections.

The minister criticised the previous YSRCP government over governance and political issues, alleging that false narratives and political "dramas" had been used to

gain public sympathy. Referring to recent incidents in Kadapa district, he claimed attempts were being made to disturb communal harmony and urged party workers to remain alert against political provocations.

Highlighting the coalition government's welfare measures, Lokesh said the administration was continu-

ing development and welfare programmes despite financial constraints.

He stated that pensions for senior citizens had been increased to Rs 4,000, while differently-abled persons were receiving Rs 6,000 and bedridden beneficiaries Rs 15,000. He also referred to schemes such as free bus travel for women, free LPG cylinders under the Deepam scheme and financial assistance for students under the Talliki Vandanam programme.

Lokesh said the government had filled 16,000 teacher posts and 6,000 constable vacancies and had released a job calendar for 10,000 additional positions. He emphasised that the TDP believed in recognising dedicated party workers and cited the introduction of the 'My TDP' application for that purpose.

District In-charge Minister S Savitha, TDP constituency in-charge Ch Bhupesh Reddy and other party leaders attended the meeting.

Traffic cops to get heatwave shield

- DGP sanctions Rs 48 lakh for protective gear and welfare materials for traffic police working in extreme summer temperatures ranging from 42 °C to 46 °C
- As many as 3,192 traffic personnel across the state will receive UV protection goggles, white caps, ORS packets, water bottles and face masks to safeguard them from heat, dehydration, dust and pollution

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VIJAYAWADA



risks faced by traffic personnel managing roads and junctions in scorching temperatures, the DGP has sanctioned nearly Rs.48 lakh for the immediate procurement of protective equipment and welfare materials for traffic police staff across the state.

The funds are being released from the police department budget, and instructions have already been issued to the finance wing for immediate allocation. Harish Kumar Gupta stated that the health and safety of police personnel on duty are of utmost importance and assured that there would be no compromise in ensuring their welfare and protection.

Under this initiative, traffic personnel will be provided with UV protection goggles to shield their eyes from harmful ultraviolet rays, white caps

to reduce direct heat exposure on the head, ORS packets to replenish salts and fluids lost due to excessive sweating, water bottles to prevent dehydration, and face masks to protect them from dust and pollution emitted by vehicles.

A total of 3,192 traffic personnel across Andhra Pradesh are expected to benefit from the programme. The beneficiaries include traffic constables, head constables and sub-inspectors deployed at busy traffic junctions, national highways, bus stands, railway stations and major urban centres.

The DGP directed all police commissionerates and district SPs to immediately utilise the sanctioned funds, complete the procurement process on priority and ensure quick distribution of the materials to all units. Senior officers have been entrusted with monitoring the implementation of the programme.

Traffic police personnel have welcomed the initiative and expressed gratitude towards the DGP for recognising the difficulties faced by field staff during the intense summer season.

Major schemes likely to be launched on TG Formation Day

Today's Cabinet meet to take call on insurance for every family, enhanced pensions, housing for more sections

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HYDERABAD

THE state government is likely to announce the launch of major schemes on June 2, the State Formation Day, for which crucial decisions would be taken at the Cabinet meeting convened by Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Saturday. The items topping the agenda of the Cabinet meeting include two lakh new pensions, Indiramma family insurance scheme for all families in the state, and housing for more sections.

Considering that the Chief Minister has already decided to hand over Indiramma houses in Adilabad district on June 2, officials said the Cabinet would review the implementation of the housing scheme and take some

decisions to expedite the construction of the houses and the release of funds to the beneficiaries on a fast track. The applications received for pensions have been scrutinised and their approval is under progress in the districts. The Cabinet will ratify a proposal to sanction two lakh pensions on the State Formation Day. The enhancement of the pension amount would also be discussed.

The Chief Minister will take a call on the specifics of the foregoing key schemes in view of the financial challenges in the current financial year. The Cabinet sub-committee on Rs 5 lakh family insurance scheme for every Telangana family, headed by Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka, would submit its report, following which the Cabinet will



work out the modalities of launching the scheme. The state government is keen on launching the scheme on June 2.

In the wake of the opposition Bharat Rashtira Samithi party's strong criticism on the slow pace of paddy procurement, the Chief Minister and Ministers will review the status of

the procurement and take some corrective measures. The situation with regard to maize procurement would also be reviewed at the Cabinet meeting. The construction of irrigation projects, integrated residential educational institutions as well as road development projects would also be reviewed.

Sankara Eye Foundation gets Asia Book of Records honour

GUNTUR

The Asia Book of Records has recognised Sankara Eye Foundation India for conducting the maximum number of free eye surgeries under a single vision programme by an organisation. Between March 2004 and March 31, 2026, the foundation provided free eye care to over 30 lakh patients across India, restoring sight to underserved communities. Founder and managing trustee Dr R V Ramani said the recognition reflects the trust of millions and the foundation's commitment to eliminating curable blindness. The organisation currently performs nearly 1,000 surgeries daily through 14 centres spread across 10 states.



CM orders state-wide steps to tackle heat emergency

Continued from P1

Reviewing drinking water availability, the Chief Minister instructed departments to ensure there is no shortage in either rural or urban regions and directed immediate tanker supply to water-stressed habitations. The government is also setting up emergency response centres across multiple districts to strengthen heatwave preparedness and medical response systems. During the

review, officials recalled that Andhra Pradesh had recorded a peak temperature of 50.1 degree centigrade during the 2015 El Nino year and warned that current weather conditions were again showing severe El Nino-linked patterns.

Naidu directed officials to intensify plantation and groundwater recharge efforts, stating that improved green cover could help reduce long-term heat intensity.

SC questions quota benefits for BC creamy layer

Continued from P1

Earlier in January 2025, the top court in a separate case had refused to entertain a plea seeking the exclusion of children of Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and Indian Police Service (IPS) officers from Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) reservation benefits in

Madhya Pradesh.

It said the reference to the exclusion of the creamy layer from SC and ST quotas in a seven-judge Constitution bench's August 2024 ruling in the State of Punjab versus the Davinder Singh case was only a view and the legislature has to decide in this regard.

CJP swings into action, demands Pradhan's scalp

Continued from P1

CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke urged followers to support an online petition demanding Pradhan's resignation.

"How are you cockroaches? Everyone is saying you are doing great on the internet, but I think now it is time to do some real work. Today, we are starting a petition demanding the resignation of the education minister," Dipke said in a video message.

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

Continued from P1

"Twenty-two lakh children have gone through immense mental anguish. Understanding that anguish and taking responsibility, I am saying this today, we had to take some tough decisions," he said.

The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (Undergraduate) for admissions in medical courses held on May 3 was cancelled by the National Testing Agency (NTA) recently amid allegations of paper leak. The matter is being probed by

the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and a re-test is scheduled to be held on June 21. Pradhan said the government decided to cancel the examination after finding that "some assessments had been compromised." "We did not want even a single student to be deprived of their rightful seat because of the conspiracy of those involved in irregularities in the education system and the examination mafia," he said. The minister acknowledged the criticism over the handling of the issue but said the gov-

ernment is prepared to face the challenge. "We are facing criticism and challenges, and I accept that. But it is our responsibility to set the system right. It is not our duty to shut our eyes and turn away from the problem," he said.

The education minister further said the government is committed to ensuring a smoother conduct of the re-examination scheduled on June 21. "For the examination scheduled on June 21, it is our responsibility to ensure that it is 100 per cent error-free," he said.

NEETGATE: More skeletons more tumble out of closet

Continued from P1

The agency alleged that Havaladar was involved in the NEET UG process after being appointed an expert by the National Testing Agency (NTA). "She had complete access to the physics question paper. In April, she shared some of the questions with co-accused Manisha Mandhare," the statement said.

The CBI arrested Mandhare, a botany teacher from Pune, in connection with the NEET paper leak on May 16.

The agency found that the questions Havaladar shared with the aspirants tallied with the physics paper of NEET UG 2026.

"The CBI conducted searches at various locations across the country and seized several incriminating documents, laptops, bank statements and mobile phones. A detailed analysis of the seized items is underway," the agency said.

EC announces polls for 26 RS seats on June 18

Continued from P1

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

While the NDA is set to bag Pawar's seat, going by its strength in the state assembly, the TVK is likely to get the lone Rajya Sabha seat from Tamil Nadu going for a bypoll.

The tenure of Pawar's seat will be till July 4, 2028 while that for the Tamil Nadu seat will be till June 29, 2028. In

Andhra Pradesh, the TDP will win all the four seats for the Council of States and the BJP will bag all four seats in Gujarat.

In Jharkhand, the JMM-Congress alliance is likely to win both the seats, but the BJP which has 21 seats of its own may try to bag one seat with the help of cross-voting by four opposition members.

In Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, the Congress will get one seat each while the BJP will win two seats in each of the states, going by their current numbers. In Karnataka, the Congress will win three seats and the BJP will get only one seat.

Among those who are retiring from the Rajya Sabha are Gowda, Congress president Kharge (both from Karnataka), Union ministers Ravneet Singh (Ra-

jasthan) and George Kurian (Madhya Pradesh), former chief minister Digvijay Singh, and Congress leader Shaktisinh Gohil. Besides Ravneet Singh, the members whose tenure is ending in Rajasthan are Neeraj Dangi of the Congress and Rajendra Gehlot of the BJP. Rajasthan has a total of 10 Rajya Sabha seats.

The BJP and the Congress currently have five members each. Given the present strength of parties in the 200-member Rajasthan Assembly, the BJP is expected to win two of the three seats, while the Congress is likely to secure one. The BJP has 118 MLAs in the Assembly, while the Congress has 67 members. The BSP has two MLAs, the Bharat Adivasi Party four, the Rashtriya Lok Dal one, and Independents eight.

India, Cyprus boost ties to a strategic partnership

Continued from P1

The two leaders also deliberated on the West Asia crisis as well as the Ukraine conflict, with PM Modi saying New Delhi supports all efforts for an early end to the hostilities. "Over the past decade, investment from Cyprus to India has nearly doubled. Trust between the two countries has increased, and with the India-European Union Free Trade Agreement, nu-

merous new possibilities have emerged," Modi said in his media statement. Taking advantage of this, we are targeting to double this investment again in the next five years, he said. "And to realise this resolve, today we are elevating our trusted relationship to a strategic partnership," he added.

The prime minister also noted that the friendship between India and Cyprus is

both "strong and futuristic" as he elaborated on various aspects of his talks with Christodoulides. "We also discussed global issues. Whether it is Ukraine or West Asia, we will continue to support efforts for the early end of the conflict and for peace," Modi said. "We are also unanimous on the view that reform of global institutions is urgent and important for resolving the growing global challeng-

es," he said. The prime minister said the two countries also decided to expand cooperation in areas of maritime security and counter-terrorism. In his remarks, Christodoulides said India and Cyprus decided to set up a joint task force for cooperation in key sectors such as infrastructure and shipping. Christodoulides kick-started his three-day visit to India on Wednesday.

Air conditioning: How does it affect the skin?



SHAHNAZ HUSAIN

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. During scorching summers and relentless heatwaves that can break even the strongest admirers of the season, air conditioning feels like a blessing. When temperatures become unbearable, often exceeding 40°C, the easiest solution is to switch on the AC and relax in cool air. High temperatures combined with humidity can be dangerous, leading to dehydration, heat exhaustion, and even heatstroke. As a re-

sult, people now spend much of their lives indoors under controlled cooling, moving from air-conditioned homes to cars, offices, malls, shopping centres, and gyms.

Across cities, from Delhi to Dubai, air conditioners have become less of a luxury and more of a survival tool. While AC systems provide comfort and safety, constant exposure to artificial cooling can also lead to dry skin, fine lines, dull complexion, brittle hair, and fatigue. The very machines protecting us from the heat may quietly be reshaping our wellness in ways we rarely question.

Prolonged reliance on artificial cooling can cause fatigue, lethargy, and chronic headaches, often linked to poor air circulation and low indoor humidity. Unlike sunburn or direct heat exposure, AC-related dehy-

dration develops gradually. Many people spend extended hours in offices, cars, shopping malls, and air-conditioned bedrooms without noticing the slow loss of moisture. Symptoms usually become noticeable only after persistent dryness, itching, or changes in skin and hair texture begin to appear over time.

1. Immunity Reduction Due to Artificial Cooling

Constant dependence on air conditioning can weaken the body's natural ability to adapt to temperature changes. Drastic shifts between cold indoor environments and hot outdoor temperatures may cause "summer chills," muscle stiffness, and reduced immunity.

AC systems reduce humidity and create cold environments that draw moisture from the body, resulting in significant dryness, irritation, and brittleness. This damages the skin barrier, leading to flaking, itching, and cracked skin, while also causing dull hair and brittle nails.

Air conditioners do not simply cool the air — they strip it of moisture, and this

has biological consequences. When the skin loses water, it becomes rough, tight, and flaky. Constant exposure to dry indoor air accelerates trans-epidermal water loss, a process in which moisture escapes directly from the skin and hair. This leaves the skin looking dull, tired, and dehydrated, especially after cleansing.

Dry air also causes the skin to contract, making fine lines and wrinkles appear more prominent.

2. AC Acne

Air conditioning can contribute to acne by dehydrating the skin and triggering sebaceous glands to produce excess oil. This overproduction of sebum can clog pores, leading to inflammation, breakouts, blackheads, and whiteheads, particularly in people with combination skin.

This imbalance often creates a frustrating cycle in which the skin feels dry and oily at the same time, making skincare difficult to manage. Dermatologists commonly refer to this condition as "AC acne."

3. Accelerated Ageing

Spending nearly 10 to 12 hours daily in air-conditioned environments can accelerate premature skin ageing. Cold, dry air reduces skin elasticity and may cause the skin to shrink, sag, and develop fine lines. Over time, continuous moisture loss reduces the skin's natural plumpness and

elasticity, making wrinkles and signs of ageing more noticeable. Premature sagging and dullness often become visible much earlier in people who spend most of their day in heavily air-conditioned spaces.

4. Chapped Lips

Air conditioners are a major cause of dry and chapped lips because they lower indoor humidity and strip moisture from the air. The skin on the lips is thinner and more delicate than facial skin and lacks oil glands, making it especially vulnerable to dryness.

Unlike the rest of the skin, lips cannot produce natural oils to lock in moisture. As a result, prolonged exposure to dry AC environments often leads to cracking, peeling, and irritation. Moisture escapes from the lips much faster than from other areas of the face in climate-controlled spaces.

How to Protect Your Skin in Air-Conditioned Environments

By understanding how AC affects the skin, hair, and body, and by making small but consistent lifestyle changes, it is possible to maintain healthy, glowing skin despite extreme summer conditions.

One of the most important steps is staying hydrated. Drink plenty of water, soups, fresh juices, and other fluids throughout the day. Adding a pinch of salt to a litre of water may help improve cellular absorption, while occasional electrolyte supplements can



support hydration further.

A diet rich in water-based foods such as cucumber, lettuce, celery, watermelon, strawberries, and oranges also helps maintain moisture levels in the body. Foods high in antioxidants — including berries, green tea, dark chocolate, and leafy greens — can protect the skin from environmental stress caused by prolonged AC exposure.

Maintaining indoor temperatures between 23°C and 25°C is considered ideal for balancing comfort and skin health. This range supports the body's natural thermoregulation while reducing excessive dryness.

Using a humidifier is another effective solution. Humidifiers release moisture back into the air-conditioned

room, helping maintain healthy humidity levels and counteracting the drying effects of AC. Using a humidifier at night can significantly improve skin texture over time.

Regular application of moisturiser, lip balm, and hand cream is equally important. Reapplying these products every few hours helps restore the skin barrier and prevent moisture loss.

Keeping AC systems clean also plays a vital role in maintaining indoor air quality. Clean air filters trap dust, pollen, and other pollutants more effectively. Filters should ideally be cleaned every three months.

Older air-conditioning units may also release chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), refriger-

erants that are harmful to the ozone layer and contribute to environmental warming.

In addition, taking regular breaks from air-conditioned environments allows the body to adjust naturally to outdoor temperatures. This helps improve thermoregulation and reduces dependence on artificial cooling.

The key lies in maintaining hydration, protecting the skin barrier, balancing indoor humidity, and practising mindful indoor living. When these factors are addressed, comfort and healthy, youthful skin can coexist — even in a world dominated by air conditioning.

(The author is international fame beauty expert and is called the herbal queen of India.)



In today's heat-driven lifestyle, air conditioners have become an essential part of daily living, offering comfort and protection from extreme temperatures. However, while ACs help us escape the harsh summer heat, prolonged exposure to artificial cooling can silently affect skin health, leading to dryness, premature ageing, acne, and dehydration

Asha Attaluri's purposeful pageant journey

Representing the Telugu states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, Asha Deepika Attaluri is all set to compete at the prestigious Cosmos Queen India 2026 grand finale in Bengaluru on May 26, 2026. If crowned, she will earn the coveted Mrs India title under the Cosmos platform and go on to represent the country at the internationally acclaimed Mrs Unity World.

An entrepreneur, technologist, philanthropist, and visionary leader, Asha's journey into pageantry is deeply rooted in purpose and service. For her, the platform extends far beyond glamour and recognition — it is an opportunity to create meaningful social impact and inspire positive transformation.

Through initiatives such as Mission Shantivan, undertaken in collaboration with the Government of Himachal Pradesh, Asha is committed to showcasing India's hidden destinations, local talent, rich culture, and heritage on the global stage. Her vision also focuses on creating sustainable opportunities in employment, healthcare, and education for underserved communities.

Having spent years working quietly behind the scenes to support social causes, Asha believes that a crown carries the responsibility to uplift lives and strengthen communities. She hopes to inspire individuals and families to embrace compassion, service, and purposeful living while proving that true beauty lies in the ability to create lasting change.



Neena Gupta says 'buddhi ho toh kya' as she enjoys vacation in hot pants

Veteran actress Neena Gupta has questioned her choices of living with her free will and what her age has to do with it.

The actress in a video on her social media account, was seen unapologetically asking 'buddhi ho toh kya' (so what if I am old)

The actress shared a fun-filled video from her vacation where she was seen jumping around with childlike excitement on an empty road.

In the clip, Neena Gupta looked stylish in a casual white shirt paired with hot shorts and sneakers and sunglasses.

She used Dia Mirza's iconic track "Zara Zara" from the cult romantic film 'Rehnaa Hai Terre Dil Mein' as the background score for the video.

Sharing the video on social media, Neena took a jibe at the trolls and haters always trolling her for being free spirited despite senior age. She captioned it as, "Bol do Bol do Sharmao Mat... buddhi ho toh kya?" (Say it, say it Don't be shy. I am old so what!?)

Actress Sunita Rajwar commented, "Dil toh baccha hai ji" (The heart is still childlike) while many other fans flooded the comments section with love and admiration.

For the uninitiated, Neena Gupta has often spoken openly about embracing life on her own terms.

From discussing her single motherhood, relationships or openly asking filmmakers for work on social media,



Neena Gupta has never shied away.

A few years ago, the 'Badhaai Ho' actress had made headlines when she openly asked for work on social media, stating that she was out of work and shared her work profile too.

In her widely discussed

post on her social media account, she had written, "I live in Mumbai and am working. I am a good actor looking for good parts to play." The post had struck a chord across the industry and among audiences, who lauded her honesty and fearlessness.

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ACROSS

1 Car protector (6)

7 Enlarged (8)

8 Qatar's capital (4)

10 Set in layers (6)

11 Prolonged shrill sound or cry (6)

14 160 in Roman numerals (3)

16 Common (5)

17 Small and cramped (4)

19 Corsican mob group (5)

21 King with the touch

of gold ? (5)

22 Three ____ (or 36 months) ? (5)

23 Drunkards (4)

26 Mature (5)

28 Large Australian bird (3)

29 Experts (6)

30 Provision merchant (6)

31 Egyptian symbol of life (4)

32 Mortification (8)

33 Barely (6)

SOLUTION TO MAY 22

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SOLUTION TO MAY 22

India’s residential market matures; Hyd joins growth surge in Q1 2026

ALONG WITH BENGALURU AND DELHI-NCR, HYDERABAD POSTED ROBUST DOUBLE-DIGIT SALES GROWTH IN Q1 2026 AMID RISING PREMIUM HOUSING DEMAND AND STEADY PRICE APPRECIATION

NEW DELHI

INDIA'S residential real estate market has transitioned into a "structurally mature, demand-anchored growth phase", with Q1 2026 recording 93,065 new unit launches and 95,973 unit sales across the top eight cities, a report said on Saturday. The report from PropTiger said the supply rose 1.1 per cent sequentially and sales improved 1 per cent quarter-on-quarter. The weighted average price reached a record high of Rs 10,050 per sq ft -- crossing the five-digit benchmark for the first time -- "signalling that value creation now drives market health rather than transaction volume."

"The Indian residential market has transitioned into a structurally more disciplined phase. Growth today is increasingly being driven by demand quality, inventory discipline, and



- India’s housing market entered a more mature, demand-driven growth phase in Q1 2026
- New launches stood at 93,065 units while sales reached 95,973 units across top eight cities
- Average housing prices crossed `10,000 per sq ft for the first time
- Bengaluru led growth with 33% YoY rise in sales
- Hyderabad posted strong double-digit sales growth alongside Delhi-NCR and Chennai
- Premium and upper mid-income housing drove most new launches
- Q2 outlook remains positive with steady sales and price growth expected.

buyer confidence rather than speculative expansion," said Prakash Tejwani, CEO, PropTiger.

The supply remained flat at -0.1 per cent on a YoY basis, while sales moderated to -2.2 per cent, reflecting healthy normalisation rather than structural weakness, the report noted.

Bengaluru emerged as the standout performer, recording sales of 15,603 units, up 33 per cent year-on-year and 12 per cent sequentially. The city also maintained near-parity between new supply and sales absorption, indicating a well-balanced market. The GCC and startup employment engine continues to prove more durable than conventional IT hiring cycles, providing Bengaluru with a structurally differentiated demand base.

Mumbai Metropolitan Region remained the largest market by volume and value with 26,116 sales units in Q1

2026. Though the performance moderated on YoY basis, it reflected base-effect normalisation against an exceptional 2025, rather than a loss of demand momentum, the report noted.

Chennai, Hyderabad and Delhi-NCR also posted robust gains in sales from 11 per cent to 43 per cent, while Pune, Kolkata and Ahmedabad showed mixed trends.

A disproportionate share of new launches in Q1 2026 -- particularly in Mumbai MMR, Bengaluru, and Delhi NCR -- remained concentrated in the premium and upper mid-income segments, driving the average property prices higher. The outlook for Q2 2026 is constructive, the firm said, predicting a steady sequential growth of 2-4 per cent and sustained year-on-year price appreciation of 4-8 per cent across major metros driven by limited mid-segment supply.

India emerges as Asia Pacific’s top real estate yield market

Office, logistics, retail and student housing assets in India outperformed regional peers on returns, while Q1 investment inflows crossed \$2.29 billion

NEW DELHI

INDIA offers the highest real estate yields across every major asset class in the Asia Pacific region and recorded an 189 per cent year-on-year jump in investment volumes in the Q1 CY 2026, a report said on Thursday.

The report from CBRE said that cap rates in India consistently outpace every other market in the region across office, retail, logistics, hotels, and student housing sectors, in some cases by as much as 320 basis points. India's Q1 2026 investment volume rose to \$2,295.19 million from \$839.85 million a year earlier, second to only Singapore that led the region in investment volumes with a 364 per cent year-on-year increase. "We are seeing genuine, broad-based demand across sectors driven by India's economic fundamentals, its growing corporate base, and a young, consumption-led population," said Anshuman Magazine, Chairman & CEO, India, South-East Asia, Middle East & Africa, CBRE.



"Global investors who have been cautious till now are actively looking to deploy capital here, and we expect this momentum to strengthen further as more institutional-grade products come to market," he added. The report highlighted sustained interest from domestic institutions, family offices, and global capital markets players as they increasingly allocate to Indian real estate through direct acquisitions, REITs, and structured debt instruments. India is one of the top markets for real estate debt interest in Asia Pacific, signalling maturing capital markets, the report noted.

The report noted India's Grade A office cap rates range from 7.50 per cent to

8.40 per cent in core central business district locations, compared to 3.25 per cent to 3.80 per cent in Singapore and 2 per cent to 3 per cent in Tokyo.

India is named among the top three preferred markets for Grade A office investment enquiries in Asia Pacific, alongside Singapore and Japan. Student housing yields in India stood at 8.50 per cent-9 per cent, around 320 basis points higher than the next-highest market, Australia. The institutional-grade logistics cap rates in India stand at 7.15 per cent-7.75 per cent, around 115 basis points more than the second-ranked market, Vietnam with the rates of 6 per cent-7 per cent.

UPRERA bars builders from using homebuyers’ money for assured return schemes

LUCKNOW: Uttar Pradesh Real Estate Regulatory Authority has barred builders from using homebuyers' money for "assured return" schemes and made it mandatory for all registered projects to operate through three separate bank accounts, officials said on Thursday. The new framework, aimed at tightening financial discipline



and preventing diversion of project funds, was discussed at a meeting convened by

UP RERA with bankers and financial institutions. Uttar Pradesh Real Estate Regulatory Authority (UP RERA) Chairman Sanjay Bhoosredy chaired the meeting, which was attended by senior officials of nationalised banks, financial institutions and the State Level Bankers' Committee.

Experts bullish on long-term real estate prospects in South India

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD



INDUSTRY experts believe that South India's long-term real estate growth trajectory continues to remain fundamentally strong.

The three large states of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Telangana contribute almost 25 per cent of India's GDP. Tamil Nadu is the second largest

contributor to India's GDP with share of 9 per cent while Karnataka is close behind with share of 8 per cent. Karnataka is largely driven by IT/ITES, Tamil Nadu has diversified economic base including

real estate, IT/ITES, automobiles and manufacturing clusters. Industry participants also point out that professionally managed real estate investment platforms, AIFs and REITs continue to witness growing investor interest as the sector becomes increasingly organized and transparent. Investors today are evaluating opportunities through a long-term lens, focusing more

on structural demand drivers. Sharad Mittal, Founder & CEO, Arnava Real Estate Fund Advisors, said: "Real estate investments are fundamentally linked to long-term economic indicators such as urbanization, infrastructure growth, employment generation, and end-user demand. Markets backed by strong industrial ecosystems and economic activity continue to remain

attractive for long-term real estate capital." Sharad, further added: "South India has consistently demonstrated resilience across market cycles. The region continues to benefit from manufacturing-led growth, infrastructure development, and sustained residential demand, which continue to support long-term investor confidence."

BIZ BRIEFS Amazon expands beauty store

Amazon.in, an e-commerce platform, announced the expansion of its premium beauty selection, with over 100 new brands set to go live. Amazon will include renowned international brands such as, Dolce & Gabbana, Laura Mercier, Elemis, Urban Decay and more. Siddharth Bhagat, Director, Amazon India, said: "India's beauty industry is seeing a clear shift from availability-led shopping to more intentional, discovery-led consumption, driven by growing awareness of global beauty trends."

Paisabazaar’s new campaign

Paisabazaar, a financial marketplace, announced the launch of a new integrated brand campaign for the Credit Premier League (CPL) featuring former Indian cricketer and commentator Irfan Pathan. CPL is Paisabazaar's initiative aimed at recognising and rewarding consumers with strong credit health.

FRAI organises seminar in Hyd

The Federation of Retailers Association of India Telangana chapter held a seminar in Hyderabad on tackling illicit trade and unfair market practices. Retailers, traders and policymakers raised concerns over counterfeit goods, illegal distribution, predatory pricing and deep discounting by quick commerce and e-commerce players. Participants said these practices harm genuine businesses, consumer trust, government revenues and livelihoods of small traders.

Domestic demand cushions India against global uncertainty: RBI

Financial conditions, crude oil prices challenges for external sector outlook

NEW DELHI

INDIA'S economic activity exhibited resilience in April, with industrial and services sectors maintaining strength across several segments even as the global economy continued to be shadowed by uncertainties in West Asia, according to the RBI's monthly bulletin released on Friday. Industrial and services activity stayed strong in many segments. Early results of listed private non-financial companies for Q4:2025-26 also showed an improvement in business performance over the previous quarter, with aggregate sales and operating profit recording a double-digit growth, the bulletin stated.

It highlighted that in the agriculture sector, rapid progress of summer sowing was



supported by above normal pre-monsoon rainfall and sufficient reservoir storage levels. However, a higher probability of above-normal minimum temperatures and unseasonal rains in some parts of the country could pose risks to the harvesting of remaining rabi crops. The current public foodgrain

stocks remain well above the buffer norms ensuring domestic food security.

The financial conditions, crude oil prices and capital flows continue to pose challenges to the external sector outlook. Nevertheless, robust services exports, positive net FDI flows, foreign exchange reserve buffers and a number

of proactive policy measures undertaken by the Government and the Reserve Bank are likely to cushion the Indian economy against external headwinds.

In March, net foreign direct investment remained positive for the second consecutive month. Foreign portfolio investors continued to remain net sellers in April and May, though the pace of outflows moderated, the bulletin observed.

CPI inflation rose to 3.5 per cent in April, driven mainly by food inflation, while core inflation remained steady indicating limited pass-through of higher input cost conditions. Although headline inflation remains firmly within the tolerance band, the pass through to domestic prices needs to be monitored, it pointed out.

FLIPKART PARTNERS WITH INDIA POST TO BOOST LAST MILE PARCEL DELIVERY

NEW DELHI: E-commerce major Flipkart has signed an agreement with the Department of Posts for efficient last mile parcel delivery, an official statement said on Friday. The partnership aims to leverage the delivery network of the Department of Posts along with Flipkart's strong presence in India's e-commerce sector to provide efficient, reliable and customer-centric parcel delivery solutions across the country, the statement said. "The Department of Posts (DoP), Ministry of Communications, and Flipkart India Private Limited have signed an agreement for last mile parcel delivery services.

Oben Electric bets big on Telangana after strong Rorr Evo response

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

OBen Electric, an electric motorcycle manufacturer, showcased Oben Rorr Evo, its newly launched electric motorcycle in Hyderabad. The company said it is witnessing strong demand for the new model, with Hyderabad emerging as highest booking market nationwide since its launch on April 30.

The vehicle is equipped with a 3.4 kWh LFP battery offering an IDC range of 180 km, acceleration from 0-40 km/h in 3 seconds and a top speed of 110 km/h. The motorcycle also supports fast charging from 0-80 per cent in 90 minutes and comes with an 8-year battery warranty.



The bike features a 5-inch colour TFT display, OTA updates, turn-by-turn navigation, geo-fencing, remote immobilisation and fall detection with emergency SOS through Oben Electric's proprietary ARXUS connected technology platform. It has 10 litres storage and integrates SmartIQOben Electric's AI-powered

ride optimisation technology, which enhances range by up to 15 per cent. Madhumita Agrawal, CEO, Oben Electric, said: "Hyderabad emerging as our highest booking market nationwide for the Rorr Evo reflects the city's strong shift towards electric motorcycles that deliver both performance and practicality."

Higher gold import duty could cut demand by 50-60 tonnes this year, says WGC

MUMBAI

INDIA'S gold demand is expected to contract by 50-60 tonnes this calendar year, around 10 per cent lower than the previous year, following the import duty hike, according to the World Gold Council (WGC). "Looking at 2026 as a whole, we estimate that combined jewellery and bar and coin demand could decline by around 50-60 tonnes, around 10 per cent lower than the previous year, due to the impact of the import duty hike," WGC said in its India gold market update. The gold import duty was raised sharply from 6 per cent to 15 per cent, making it the single-largest increase on record and fully reversing the duty cut of July 2024. The Prime Minister has also appealed to consumers to avoid



buying gold for a year.

Other factors, such as the gold price, changes to income levels, inflation, or effects from the monsoon, would further influence annual demand, it added. "Our econometric models suggest that changes in import duties tend to impact gold demand in both the short and long term, although the impact differs across jewellery and investment products such as bars and coins. Investment demand appears more sensitive to duty changes, while jewellery demand has shown greater resilience," said WGC.

Dalmia Bharat to acquire JAL Cement assets in ₹2,850 cr deal

NEW DELHI: Dalmia Bharat on Friday said it will acquire the cement assets of debt-ridden Jaiprakash Associates, which has been acquired by billionaire Gautam Adani-led Adani Enterprises through insolvency proceedings. Dalmia Cement (Bharat) Ltd (DCBL), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Dalmia Bharat, has already executed a Business Transfer Agreement (BTA) with Jaiprakash Associates Ltd for the transaction, which is expected to complete within two weeks, a statement said.

Following the takeover, Dalmia Bharat's cement capacity will increase to 54.7 million tonnes per annum (MTPA). The BTA has been signed for acquisition of cement plants at Rewa (Madhya Pradesh), Churk, Chunar and Sadwa (Uttar Pradesh), with 5.2 MTPA cement capacity and 3.3 MTPA clinker capacity, at an enterprise value of Rs 2,850 crore, Dalmia Bharat said.

HC pulls up WFI over decision to declare Vinesh Phogat ineligible

NEW DELHI

THE Delhi High Court on Friday pulled up the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) for its decision to declare celebrated grappler Vinesh Phogat "ineligible" from participation in domestic events and asked the Centre to constitute an expert panel to evaluate her.

A bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia observed that the WFI's departure from the earlier practice of permitting the participation of reputed athletes "speaks volumes," and asked the Centre to ensure that Phogat, who is seeking her return from a maternity break, is allowed to participate in the upcoming Asian Games selection trials.

The bench emphasised that motherhood is celebrated in the country, and the federation should not act with "vengeance." It asked the Centre to constitute an expert panel to evaluate Phogat after the government counsel submitted that the framework provided by the Sports Authority of India permits relaxation of eligibility criteria in certain cases. "Ask the experts to evaluate her chances. Ensure that she participates," the court orally said, as it clarified it would take up the matter at 2:30 pm again to enable the government counsel to come back with further details with respect to the constitution of the team of expert. The court was hearing Phogat's appeal against a single-judge's order of May 18 refusing her immediate relief on the issue of her participation in the selection trials on May 30-31 for this year's Asian Games despite being declared "ineligible" by the WFI. Phogat's senior counsel urged the bench to grant her the opportunity to participate in the trials, contending that the show-cause notice issued to her on May 9, a day before her participation in a domestic event in Gonda, showed that "somebody is clutching at straws" to oust her.



J&K's Aaquib Nabi ignored Scrap Ranji if it doesn't matter: Vengsarkar blasts selectors

Nabi was the primary catalyst in Jammu and Kashmir's Ranji Trophy triumph in the 2025-2026 season with 60 wickets to his name

MUMBAI

CRICKET legend Dilip Vengsarkar has slammed the Ajit Agarkar-led selection committee for ignoring the Ranji Trophy star Aaquib Nabi for the Afghanistan Test, calling the decision 'absurd' and questioning the value of domestic cricket performances.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India selection committee, led by Ajit Agarkar, has come under scathing attack for the shocking selection calls for the one-off Test against Afghanistan.

Gurnoor Brar, who has done well for India A and in the Vijay Hazare Trophy, was picked ahead of the Ranji Trophy's top wicket-taker, Aaquib Nabi, in the Test squad. Nabi was the primary catalyst in Jammu and Kashmir's Ranji Trophy triumph in the 2025-2026 season with 60 wickets to his name. A consistent performer in red-ball cricket, he also took 44 wickets at an average of 13.27 in the 2024-2025 Ranji season. Cricket legend Dilip Vengsarkar has slammed Agarkar for ignoring a proven performer, asking the BCCI to do away with the Ranji Trophy



PBKS seek dramatic turnaround to keep playoff hopes alive

LUCKNOW: Punjab Kings will need something spectacular to arrest a disastrous slide and keep their fading playoff hopes alive when they take on already-eliminated Lucknow Super Giants, in their IPL clash, here on Saturday. Punjab's campaign has unravelled dramatically since their record 265-run chase against Delhi Capitals on April 25. From remaining unbeaten till the midway stage and looking like genuine title contenders with six wins in seven matches, the last season's runners-up have crashed to six successive defeats, leaving their playoff hopes hanging by a thread. Now placed fifth, Punjab not only need to beat LSG in their final league game here on Saturday but also depend on Sunday's double headers (MI vs RR and KKR vs DC) to earn a place in the playoff. The Shreyas Iyer-led side would hope both Mumbai Indians and Kolkata Knight Riders lose their respective matches. A Rajasthan Royals win over Mumbai would officially end Punjab's hopes, while a KKR victory over Delhi Capitals could bring net run rate into play. At present, PBKS hold a slight edge in NRR over KKR. But before permutations come into the picture, Punjab first need to rediscover their form after a prolonged slump that has exposed flaws across departments. Their aggressive top order of Priyansh Arya, Prabhsimran Singh and Cooper Connolly has failed to provide the explosive starts that defined the first half of their season. Priyansh has managed just one fifty in his last seven innings and was dismissed for a duck in the previous game, while Prabhsimran too has struggled for consistency with only one fifty in his last five innings. Connolly has shown glimpses but has not converted starts into substantial scores.



Chaliha's impressive run ends in quarters

KUALA LUMPUR: India's Ashmita Chaliha produced a spirited performance before going down narrowly to world No. 23 Line Hojmark Kjaersfeldt of Denmark in the women's singles quarterfinals of the Malaysia Masters Super 500 badminton tournament here on Friday.

Returning after an eight-month rehabilitation following a medial meniscus tear in her right knee, the 71st-ranked Indian squandered a hard-fought opening game advantage to lose 23-21 18-21 11-21 to the eighth seed in a contest lasting a little over an hour at the Axiata Arena.

Chaliha started brightly, opening up an 11-6 lead at the interval in the opening game. Line clawed her way back after the break to narrow the gap to 13-12 and later moved ahead 19-18, but the Indian held her nerve in a gruelling battle to pocket the game. The second game followed a similar pattern as Chaliha again surged ahead 10-5 before the Dane restored parity at 13-13. Line then broke away from 15-15 to force the match into a decider.

The final game, however, was largely one-way traffic as Line stamped her authority early with an 8-4 lead and never allowed Chaliha a route back, comfortably sealing the contest to enter the semifinals.

Pak hockey players complain about pending dues, daily allowance

KARACHI: Pakistani hockey players' financial woes continued as they are yet to receive pending dues from the national federation (PHF) and their daily training camp allowance has also been reduced ahead of the FIH World Cup to be held in the Netherlands and Belgium in August this year. The Pakistan Hockey Federation's (PHF) interim set-up announced that players and officials of the national team will now receive a daily allowance of USD 110 on foreign tours. But the players have complained that their training camp allowance has been reduced from USD 11 (3000 rupees) to USD 3.5 (1000 rupees).

According to a reliable source close to the PHF, the senior players had asked the PHF to confirm about how much allowance they would get for the training camp duration. Pakistan on Thursday named their 20-member squad for next month's FIH Pro League matches in Belgium and England but didn't name the captain, a move that didn't go down well with the players.

Shakeel Ammad Butt has been leading Pakistan since early last year. "They have announced we will get USD 110 daily allowance for foreign tours, including the World Cup qualifying event we had played in Egypt but we will only believe it unless we are paid that amount," one player said on condition of anonymity. He said in the past also the PHF officials had made similar promises but never fulfilled that. "Right now we just want to know whether it is true they will pay us just 1000 rupees daily for the camp duration."



Maaya to mix Junior, Pro events for smooth transition

NEW DELHI: India's bright teenage tennis prospect Maaya Rajeshwaran Revathy is carefully balancing junior and professional tournaments this season as she prepares for a gradual transition to the senior circuit.

The 16-year-old, who will soon compete at the junior French Open, has largely featured on the junior circuit this year, a move her coaching team says is aimed at building confidence, gaining match experience and securing a strong junior ranking before taking a bigger leap into professional events. Maaya, who trains full-time in Spain at Rafa Nadal Academy, said the exposure to a more competitive environment in Europe has accelerated her development. "At a certain level, it's more about how you compete. In Europe, you are competing every day with equal players and that gives you a lot of experience," Maaya said during a virtual media interaction facilitated by SAI. She won a J3000 event in France on clay in April apart from finishing semifinalist at a couple of events in Spain and Egypt. "For us every week is an opportunity for improvement. That's been the objective since the start of the year, to just keep getting better, get more matches and feel more comfortable on the tour." Maaya is supported through Target Asian Games Group (TAGG) scheme of the government and has received a sum of Rs 51 lakh

Ebola surveillance stepped up at Kochi airport after emergency meet

Thermal screening, 21-day travel history verification, and self-declaration forms have been made mandatory for international passengers

KOCHI

AUTHORITIES stepped up Ebola surveillance and precautionary measures at Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL) on Friday following an emergency preparedness meeting between management and the Airport Health Organisation.

A CIAL spokesperson said a 24-hour monitoring system has now been activated at the airport as part of efforts to detect possible symptoms early and strengthen coordinated public health response measures.

"Thermal screening, 21-day travel history verification, and self-declaration forms have been made mandatory for international passengers," he said in a statement after the meeting.

Passengers arriving from countries including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, and South Sudan will be placed under special health surveillance in view of global alerts over Ebola outbreaks, authorities said. The meeting was attended by Airport Director Manu G, Airport Health Officer Dr Raphael Teddy, Senior Medical Officer Dr Aysha Manika K A, and representatives from CISE, Immigration, airlines, the Airports Authority, and CIAL.

APHO Public Health Specialist Dr Anna presented the preparedness and response plan covering Ebola prevention, case identification, and infection control measures.

Officials noted that there is currently no widely approved vaccine or specific treatment for the Bundibugyo Ebola virus (BDBV), one of the five known Ebola virus species.

"The disease can spread from animals to humans and also through direct contact with bodily fluids of infected persons," officials said.

Authorities said the incubation period ranges from 2 to 21 days, while fever, sore throat, headache, and flu-like symptoms are among the early signs of infection.

"Mortality rates can range between 30 and 50 per cent," officials added.

Isolation wards have been arranged at Ernakulam General Hospital, Government Hospital Kalamassery, and District Hospital Aluva as part of the preparedness plan.



Doctor rapes patient after sedation; hospital 'sealed'

The doctor allegedly called the patient alone into the operation theatre during treatment and asked the female staff and the victim's father to step outside; victim alleges that the doctor administered an intoxicating injection and sexually assaulted her

LUCKNOW

A doctor at a private hospital here was accused of raping a female student after administering her a sedative injection during treatment, police said on Friday. In the wake of the allegation, the state health minister directed that the hospital be sealed and the doctor's degree be confiscated. The student had been admitted to Tejas Hospital on May 18 after suffering a health episode, officials said.

"According to the complaint, the doctor allegedly called the patient alone into the operation theatre during



Bengal govt notifies free bus travel for women from June 1

KOLKATA: The West Bengal government has notified free bus travel for women in all state government-run buses from June 1 as part of a scheme aimed at enhancing women's empowerment and improving access to public transport.

According to a notification issued by the state Transport Department on May 21, women commuters will be eligible for free travel in both short-route and long-route state-run buses operating in West Bengal.

The Transport department notification said a smart card with QR code, photograph and beneficiary details will be issued to all eligible women upon application through the BDO or SDO offices concerned.

It said that the smart card shall be issued to women of the state on the basis of supporting documents like Aadhaar card, elector's photo identity card (EPIC), VB-G RAMG job card, Ayushman Bharat health card, driving license, Pan card, passport, pension document with photograph, identity card of central/state government/psus, identity cards issues by schools/colleges/universities.

Till issuance of the smart cards, women passengers will be allowed to avail the facility on production of valid photo identity documents such as Aadhaar card, voter identity card, driving licence, PAN card, passport and government-issued service identity cards, among others, the notification said.

Conductors will issue 'zero value tickets' to women passengers after verification of identity documents, it said.

The scheme will come into effect from June 1, 2026, the notification added. -- PTI



Lecturer held for leaking NEET UG physics paper

NEW DELHI: 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, 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.

The agency alleged that Havaladar was involved in the NEET UG process after being appointed an expert by the National Testing Agency (NTA). "She had complete access to the physics question paper. In April, she shared some of the questions with co-accused Manisha Mandhare," the statement said. The CBI arrested Mandhare, a botany teacher from Pune, in connection with the NEET paper leak on May 16. The agency found that the questions Havaladar shared with the aspirants tallied with the physics paper of NEET UG 2026. "The CBI conducted searches at various locations across the country and seized several incriminating documents, laptops, bank statements and mobile phones. A detailed analysis of the seized items is underway," the agency said.

On May 12, the NTA cancelled the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (Undergraduate), or NEET, held on May 3 for medical admissions amid allegations of paper leak. A re-examination has been scheduled for June 21.



DMK's 'bent coconut tree' jibe draws retort from VCK

CHENNAI: The DMK on Friday made a sarcastic "coconut tree bending towards a neighbour" remark targeting the VCK and IUML after they joined the TVK government, prompting the VCK to retort that it "did not grow at the mercy of other parties". Aiming to assuage the feelings, DMK chief M K Stalin appealed to party members not to use harsh words as to hurt anyone.

Both Viduthala Chiruthai-gal Katchi and IUML, allies of the DMK till the 2026 Assembly election, announced support to the TVK government which fell short of a simple majority of 118 in the Assembly. VCK leader Vanni Arasu, who emerged victorious from Tindivanam Assembly constituency and A M Shahjahan who was elected from Papanasam were sworn in as ministers by Governor Rajendra Viswanath

Arlekar at the Lok Bhavan here today in the presence of Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay. Shahjahan was made Minister for Minorities Welfare while Vanni Arasu was made Minister for Social Justice. DMK deputy general secretary A Raja, with a penchant for making controversial remarks, alluded the two parties joining the TVK Cabinet as a "coconut tree bending towards a neighbour".



Why self-discipline and motivation matter more than ever for students

Educators believe that beyond intelligence and talent, qualities such as consistency, time management, focus, resilience, and healthy routines help students stay confident and goal-oriented. Experts also emphasise that motivation and discipline work together to encourage curiosity, improve decision-making, reduce stress, and build independence. Schools and mentors, they say, play a key role in helping students develop positive habits, emotional balance, and the ability to remain focused in an increasingly distracted world

PRANEET MUNGALI

As rightly penned by Jim Rohn, Discipline turns ordinary things into extraordinary accomplishments and motivation is the energizing force behind it. In today's fast-paced world filled with distractions, smartphones, social media, and constant digital stimulation, self-discipline has become one of the most valuable life skills a student can develop. While intelligence and talent matter, discipline often determines long-term success. For students, especially during school years, learning self-discipline lays the foundation for academic achievement, personal growth, and future career success.

It is all about getting invested in the process of learning and mo-

tivation provides both direction and persistence. Students who are self-motivated invest more time and effort in activities that align with their values and interests, which in turn leads to stronger academic results whereas there is always a set of students who to be motivated. For students, discipline includes punctuality, focus during study time, respect for authority, and consistency in work habits. It goes beyond mere obedience to rules — it represents self-control, organization, and value-based behaviour. It is the act of going forward in life without losing hope. One needs to put in a lot of effort to develop a positive outlook on life, and adopt never-say-no attitude in order to acquire and accomplish goals faster, be it in academics, self-health or any other path of



life. Motivation does not just fuel effort – it directs it. A motivated student makes promising choices that will also yield positive results. They choose to attempt challenging tasks, ask questions rather than staying quiet, and come back to try again after a setback.

One of the most powerful things a motivated student has is Curiosity. Both self-discipline and motivation go hand in hand and nourish this curiosity and to encourage this there needs to be certain life style approaches that will create a sea amount of difference. It builds feeling of being in control of one's decision-making capabilities, helps accomplish goals and most importantly builds a Never to Give up Attitude.

Milestones towards creating a perfect balance between self-discipline and remaining motivated-

1. Know your strength and weaknesses

Time management is one of the biggest challenges students face. Between school, homework, extracurricular activities, and social life, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. A wisely planned schedule is the key to success and works wonders.

It will help students to limit procrastination and stress and be optimistic towards achieving desired goals. Time management also is required to limit screen time and be in control of that.

2. Tap and identify motivation Factor

Motivation plays an important role and one should always believe in the mantra "I am working on it, I can do it and I have done it".

3. Recognize and work on the downfalls

Accepting short comings as well as challenges and chalking out a doable plan with gradual accomplishments. Last-minute studying and unfinished assignments often lead to stress. Self-discipline helps students stay ahead of their tasks, reducing unnecessary pressure.

4. Self- Appreciation

Students feel motivated to do better when they are being encouraged and appreciated for all the small achievements and accomplishments that they achieve. As mentors and teachers, we should encourage them. When students achieve their goals through con-

sistent effort, it boosts their confidence. They begin to trust their abilities and become more independent.

5. Most importantly Stay focussed and motivated

One needs to encourage Healthy Habits

Self-discipline is not limited to academics; it also impacts physical and mental well-being.

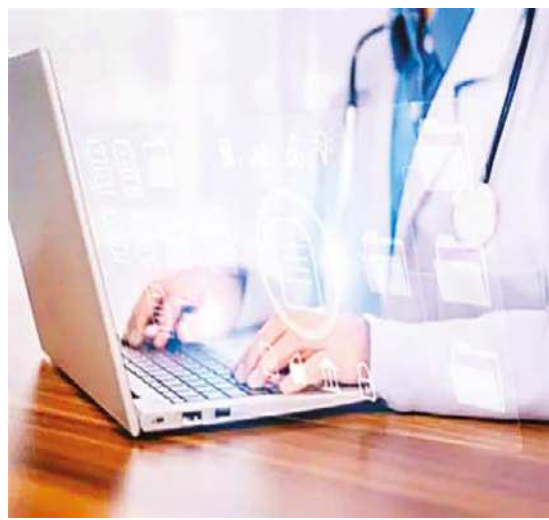
Disciplined students are more likely to:

- Maintain a proper sleep schedule (7–8 hours daily)
 - Eat balanced meals
 - Participate in physical activities
- According to health experts, students who follow a routine are 30% more likely to maintain better concentration and energy levels throughout the day.

Role of Schools in Building Self-Discipline

Schools are critical to the development of disciplined individuals. Structured routines, clear rules, and consistent expectations help students understand the importance of responsibility. It also provides in creating a Supportive environment. We as mentors need to appreciate consistent efforts and encourage positive habit.

Self-discipline is one of the influential tools a student can develop during his/her school life. It shapes not just academic graph but also hones their character, confidence, and future readiness. In a world full of distractions, the ability to stay focused and consistent sets students apart. Self-discipline and motivation help students to make better choices every day. These small, consistent choices taken every day will lead to big achievements over time. The author is educationist at the Sanskriti Group of Schools.



Today is Medical Coder Day

The importance of medical coding

Medical coders play a crucial role in modern healthcare systems by converting complex medical information into standardised codes used across hospitals, clinics, insurance systems, and research organisations. These professionals analyse patient records, diagnoses, treatments, laboratory reports, and procedures to ensure healthcare data is accurately documented and universally understood.

The work of medical coders supports several important functions within the healthcare sector.

Accurate coding helps hospitals maintain organised patient records, process insurance claims efficiently, and reduce documentation errors. It also assists healthcare providers in tracking treatments, monitoring disease trends, and improving overall healthcare management.

Medical coding has become increasingly important with the rapid

digitisation of healthcare services and electronic medical records. Standardised coding systems help ensure consistency in healthcare documentation across different institutions and regions.

The data generated through coding is also widely used in public health studies, medical research, and policy planning.

Professionals in this field require strong attention to detail, knowledge of medical terminology, anatomy, and healthcare procedures, along with familiarity with international coding systems. As healthcare systems continue to expand and rely more heavily on digital records, the demand for trained medical coders is steadily increasing.

Experts believe medical coding is emerging as an important career option for students interested in healthcare administration, medical documentation, and health information management.

SURVEY

School study highlights growth in student self-management and collaboration skills

Experiment conducted among students from Grades 1 to 9 reveals increasing focus on behavioural learning beyond academics

- 84% of students demonstrated independent self-management skills
- 80% showed initiative and proactive behaviour
- 80% prioritised collaboration and teamwork
- 79% managed tasks without reminders
- 65% demonstrated empathetic listening abilities



A recent school-based social experiment has highlighted the growing importance of behavioural and life skills among students, suggesting that qualities such as self-management, collaboration, initiative, and emotional awareness are becoming increasingly visible within school environments.

The study, conducted among students from Grades 1 to 9 at Glendale International School, examined how students perceive their own learning experiences beyond textbooks, examinations, and academic scores. According

to observations and behavioural assessments carried out as part of the initiative, 84% of students demonstrated independent self-management skills, indicating an ability to organise and regulate their work without constant supervision.

The findings further showed that 80% of students displayed proactive behaviour and initiative in classroom and school-related activities. Another 80% prioritised teamwork and collaborative thinking over individual participation, while

79% were able to manage and complete tasks without repeated reminders from teachers or parents.

In addition, 65% of students demonstrated empathetic listening skills during classroom interactions and group activities. The study also found that 52% of students showed the ability to independently plan tasks and schedules ahead of time, reflecting the development of organisational and leadership habits at an early stage.

As part of the experiment, both parents and students

were independently asked the same question: "What is your child learning well in school?" While most parents focused primarily on academic performance and subject knowledge, students highlighted behavioural and personal development areas such as responsibility, listening, collaboration, initiative, and self-management.

Education experts say the findings reflect a broader shift in school education, where behavioural learning and social-emotional development are increasingly

being viewed as important alongside academic achievement.

The assessments were conducted using structured behavioural rubrics integrated into the school's learning framework. The initiative aimed to better understand how habits related to accountability, communication, teamwork, and leadership are developing among students in day-to-day school environments.

School officials noted that behavioural competencies are gradually becoming part of classroom learning and student engagement processes rather than being treated separately as extracurricular skills. Educators also believe that qualities such as adaptability, emotional intelligence, collaboration, and self-discipline are becoming increasingly important for long-term academic and professional success.

The findings contribute to a wider conversation in education about measuring student growth beyond marks and examinations, particularly as schools explore more holistic approaches to learning and development.

UoH & IIIT-H sign MoU, focuses on advanced technology and research innovation



Two leading Hyderabad-based academic institutions — University of Hyderabad and International Institute of Information Technology Hyderabad — have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at strengthening collaboration in higher education, advanced research, and deep-tech innovation.

The agreement was formally signed in the presence of senior academic and administrative officials from both institutions, including Prof. J. Anuradha, Vice-Chancellor In-Charge of UoH, and Prof. Sandeep K. Shukla, Director of IIIT-H.

According to officials, the partnership is expected to encourage greater cooperation between the academic departments and specialised research groups of the two institutions. The collaboration will allow reciprocal access to laboratories, high-performance computing (HPC) facilities, and library

resources, enabling students and researchers to work across institutional boundaries. The MoU focuses on promoting interdisciplinary research, joint academic activities, and collaborative innovation in emerging technology sectors. Experts believe such partnerships are becoming increasingly important as universities attempt to strengthen research ecosystems and build industry-relevant skills among students.

Under the agreement, faculty members from both institutions will be able to participate in co-teaching, collaborative research projects, and joint supervision of postgraduate and PhD scholars within the framework of AICTE and UGC regulations.

The collaboration is also expected to support joint publications, intellectual property development, research events, and competitive extramural funding proposals in advanced tech-

nology areas. One of the major focus areas of the partnership will be semiconductor science and technology, including research in VLSI and embedded systems. Officials stated that the MoU also envisions the possibility of future collaborative or joint degree programmes in specialised technology domains.

Academic representatives from both institutions noted that the initiative aims to create stronger institutional synergy while supporting the development of highly trained and industry-ready professionals in areas of national importance.

To coordinate the implementation of the partnership, faculty members from the Centre for Advanced Studies in Electronics Science and Technology (CASEST) at UoH and the Centre for VLSI and Embedded Systems Technology (CVEST) at IIIT-H have been designated as official coordinators for the programme.



Indian OTT platforms ignoring NRIs

Becomes a serious problem for Telugu cinema



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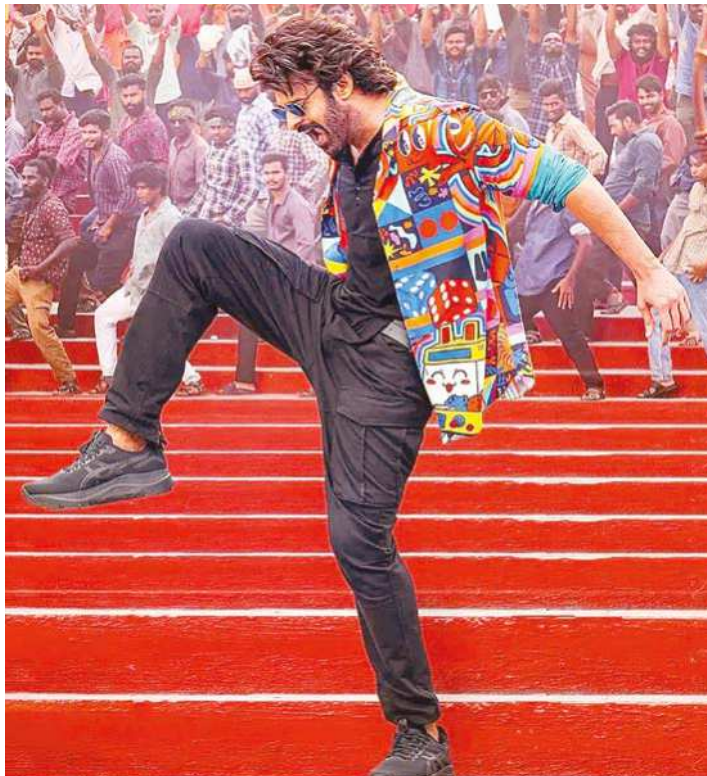
The growing frustration among overseas Telugu audiences is exposing a major flaw in the Indian OTT streaming ecosystem. While Indian viewers are enjoying instant digital premieres of new Telugu films, Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), especially in the United States, are increasingly being left without legal access to the same content. This repeated issue is now turning into a serious concern for the future of Indian OTT platforms and their global credibility.

Recent Telugu OTT releases like *Bad Boy Karthik*, *Sathi Leelavathi*, and *The Raja Saab* have highlighted the problem once again. Though these films premiered on major streaming giants like

Amazon Prime Video and JioHotstar in India, many subscribers in the United States discovered that the movies were either unavailable or significantly delayed on the same platforms overseas.

For Telugu cinema, the overseas market — particularly the U.S. — has played a crucial role in building global recognition. From theatrical collections to social media promotions, NRIs have consistently supported Telugu films and helped expand their international reach. Yet, despite paying premium subscription charges across multiple OTT services, many overseas audiences are unable to legally stream newly released Indian films on release day.

The larger issue lies in how Indian OTT platforms continue marketing films with aggressive “streaming now



worldwide” campaigns while quietly restricting access in international territories. This lack of transparency is slowly damaging audience trust. Many viewers abroad now feel sidelined, even though they represent one of the most loyal and financially strong consumer bases for Indian entertainment.

Industry experts believe poor international OTT planning can have long-term consequences. When legal viewing options disappear, piracy naturally becomes the easiest alterna-

tive for frustrated audiences. This not only affects the streaming platforms but also impacts producers, distributors, and actors who depend heavily on overseas popularity and engagement. If Indian OTT services continue ignoring the overseas audience, they risk weakening one of the strongest global markets that has supported Telugu cinema for years. The demand clearly exists — what is missing is proper global streaming planning and equal access for audiences everywhere.

‘Nagabandham’ poster raises expectations; slated for July 3 release

The makers of *Nagabandham* have unveiled a powerful new poster featuring young actor Virat Karina, further increasing anticipation for the film's grand theatrical release on July 3. Directed by Abhishek Nama, the ambitious project has already created strong buzz through its promotional campaign, including striking posters, an intriguing glimpse, and chartbuster singles.

The latest poster presents Virat Karina in an intense avatar, standing fearlessly in heavy rain with a giant cobra wrapped around his arm. Holding a massive blade and surrounded by fiery battle visuals and stormy seas, the actor's rugged transformation and fierce expression have become major talking points on social media.

According to the production team, post-production work is progressing rapidly as the film approaches release. The makers revealed that some of India's leading VFX studios are handling the CGI work to ensure a visually rich cinematic experience. The quality showcased in the promotional material has already impressed audiences and raised expectations among movie lovers.



Produced under the NIK Studios banner, “Nagabandham” is being mounted on a large scale by blending mythology with historical fiction elements. The film aims to offer audiences a visually grand theatrical spectacle.

For the Hindi market, Zee Studios is presenting

the movie and planning a wide release across North India and Hindi-speaking territories.

With aggressive promotions, high-end visuals, and a unique mythological backdrop, “Nagabandham” is steadily emerging as one of the most awaited Telugu releases of the season.



Satyadev's 'Samavarthi' FL promises an ecological action thriller

Satyadev Kancharana is gearing up to impress audiences once again with a powerful new avatar in *Samavarthi*. The makers recently unveiled the film's title and first-look poster, which has already created strong curiosity among cinema lovers and fans of intense action dramas.

Directed by Ajay Nag V, the film is being produced under the Rudra Pictures and Panchabhuta Productions banners. Touted as an ecological action thriller, “*Samavarthi*” is expected to combine action, survival elements, and emotional storytelling against a unique backdrop.

The newly released

first-look poster showcases Satyadev in a calm yet deadly avatar. Wearing headphones and maintaining a composed expression, the actor appears completely fearless even as multiple attackers armed with knives and axes surround him. His stylish appearance and intense body language have become the major highlights of the poster.

Interestingly, the title “*Samavarthi*” is associated with Yama Dharma Raja and symbolizes equal treatment toward everyone. The makers hint that Satyadev's character will be portrayed as a ruthless force who eliminates enemies without

fear or discrimination, adding a mythological depth to the action-driven narrative.

The film also features a strong supporting cast including Dileesh Pothan, Rajeev Kanakala, Ganavi Laxman, Ravindra Vijay, and Mohan Bhagath in important roles.

Known for choosing unconventional scripts and performance-oriented characters, Satyadev appears to be continuing the same trend with “*Samavarthi*.” With its intriguing concept, powerful visuals, and intense character design, the film is already emerging as one of the most anticipated projects in the actor's upcoming lineup.

‘Memu Coplam’ creates buzz with grand preview event

The upcoming Telugu web series *Memu Coplam* is gearing up for its digital premiere on May 22, and the makers recently hosted a grand preview event in Hyderabad that turned into a star-studded celebration. Streaming on ZEE5, the rural comedy-drama has already generated strong curiosity among OTT audiences with its unique blend of village humor, satire, mystery, and Telugu nativity.

The event witnessed the presence of several notable personalities from the Telugu film industry including Ajay Bhupathi, Kona Venkat, S. Thaman, and Bandla Ganesh. Many speak-



ers praised the series for bringing back rooted Telugu entertainment at a time when OTT platforms are largely dominated by crime thrillers and dark dramas.

Produced by B. V. S. Ravi under the RAW Entertainment banner and directed by Pradeep Maddali, *Memu Coplam* stars Getup Srinu, Raviteja Nannimalla, Nagababu, and Reethu

Chowdary in pivotal roles.

One of the biggest talking points at the event was the revelation that the entire series was completed in just 17 days. Despite the tight schedule, several guests appreciated the impressive production quality and technical standards. Music director Thaman praised composer Saket Komanduri for delivering energetic mu-

sic and emotionally engaging background scores.

Director Ajay Bhupathi highlighted the show's entertaining rural backdrop and comedy-driven storytelling, while Kona Venkat appreciated the cultural authenticity embedded in the narrative. Emotional moments also unfolded during the event when actor Raviteja Nannimalla became overwhelmed while speaking about his journey in the industry.

Blending cockfight culture, village chaos, humor, and emotional storytelling, *Memu Coplam* promises to be a refreshing family entertainer for Telugu OTT viewers this summer.



Raja Ravinder's first look from 'CASTE' is intense

The makers of *CASTE* have unveiled the powerful first look of Raja Ravindra from the movie, where he appears in the role of Minister Narayana. The intense poster has quickly grabbed attention among movie lovers and raised curiosity about the political backdrop of the film.

Directed and written by A. K. Jampanna, the film is being produced by Thota Lakshmi Koteswara Rao under the Golden Productions banner. Earlier, the film's first look and glimpse received a positive response from audiences, creating decent buzz around the project.

In the newly released poster, Raja Ravindra is seen dressed in white attire with a political party scarf draped over his shoulder. His serious expression and commanding screen presence have made the character look intense and powerful. The makers introduced him as “Minister Narayana,” hinting at a strong and impactful role in the narrative.



The film stars Varun Sandesh, Gagan, Satyam Rajesh, and Ravi in lead roles, while actresses Kashika Kapoor and Divi Vadthya play the female leads. The supporting cast also includes Nagababu and Prithvi Raj in important roles. Music for the film is being composed by Anup Rubens.

The makers are expected to announce the official release date of the movie soon. With a strong cast, political drama elements, and intriguing character reveals, “*CASTE*” is steadily building anticipation among Telugu cinema audiences.



‘Ramayana’ deal leaves Bollywood buyers stunned!

The buzz around *Ramayana* is getting louder by the day, but now the film is making headlines for a completely different reason. While the recently released glimpse left audiences spellbound and raised expectations sky-high, the real drama seems to be unfolding behind the scenes in Bollywood's distribution circles.

Producer Namit Malhotra is reportedly demanding a massive ₹450 crores for the Hindi theatrical rights of the epic saga, and the figure has apparently sent top distributors into panic mode. Industry biggies like Anil Thadani, Jayantilal Gada, and Karan Johar are said to be keen on grabbing the rights, but insiders reveal that the jaw-dropping price has made them take a step back.

Trade circles are already comparing the deal with Shah Rukh Khan's upcoming film *King*, whose theatrical rights were reportedly acquired by Pen Marudhar for ₹250 crores. Against that backdrop, *Ramayana*'s quote is being called “too risky” even for Bollywood's biggest players.

Sources say distributors are now urging Namit Malhotra to reconsider the price and bring it down to a more realistic number. However, no deal has been finalized yet.

Directed by Nitesh Tiwari, *Ramayana* stars Ranbir Kapoor, Sai Pallavi, Yash, and Sunny Deol in key roles.



Preethi Pagadala's elegant look speaks beyond fashion

Preethi Pagadala once again proves that simplicity and confidence can create the most striking visual impact. In this stunning photograph, the young actress appears effortlessly graceful as she poses in a flowing white outfit against a warm natural backdrop. The image has quickly caught the attention of social media users and fashion enthusiasts for its

classy and serene appeal. Dressed in an elegant layered white dress, Preethi carries a look that perfectly balances glamour with sophistication. The soft sunlight enhances the earthy tones surrounding her, while also highlighting her expressive features and natural charm. Her flowing hair and relaxed pose add a cinematic feel to the frame, making

the photograph look straight out of a fashion editorial. What makes the image particularly appealing is its minimalistic beauty. Instead of relying on extravagant styling or dramatic settings, the photograph focuses on raw elegance and emotion. Preethi's confident expression and calm presence give the frame a powerful identity. The simplicity of the styling allows her

personality to shine through naturally. Over the years, Preethi Pagadala has been gaining attention for her fashionable appearances and graceful screen presence. This latest picture further showcases her ability to carry modern fashion with effortless poise. Fans have especially appreciated the earthy aesthetic and the refreshing natural vibe of the shoot.