

AP to launch 38 MSME parks, Rs 200 cr cluster programme

- CM Naidu to inaugurate MSME Summit 2026 in Vijayawada tomorrow
- Govt to unveil digital, export and startup initiatives targeting 1 lakh MSMEs
- Summit to bring together 1,000 entrepreneurs, industrial bodies and PM Vishwakarma beneficiaries

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MINISTER for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Kondapalli Srinivas on Saturday said the state government is aligning the MSME sector with Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's vision of creating "an entrepreneur in every household," ahead of the MSME

Growth Summit 2026 scheduled to be held in Vijayawada on May 25.

Reviewing arrangements at Dr B R Ambedkar Kalavetika, where the summit will be inaugurated, the Minister directed officials to ensure seamless coordination for what the government considers a flagship MSME event.

The summit is expected to bring together nearly 1,000



Kondapalli Srinivas

participants, including new allottees from 175 MSME parks, entrepreneurs, PM Vishwakarma beneficiaries and industrial associations from across Andhra Pradesh.

A major announcement at the summit will be the launch of 38 MSME parks under the state's larger MSME industrial infrastructure programme.

The event will also feature the rollout of several technol-

ogy, financing and startup initiatives, including a Rs 20-crore SIDBI-backed seed fund for deep-tech startups, digital transformation assessments for one lakh MSMEs, energy and water audits for industrial clusters, and a Rs 200-crore AP Cluster Development Programme aimed at supporting around 750 MSMEs and generating more than 3,000 jobs.

Strategic partnerships are expected to be formalised with the India SME Forum, Vodafone Idea, Zoho, Amazon, Meta and the Quality Council of India to strengthen MSME digitalisation, exports, logistics support and quality certification across Andhra Pradesh.

Officials said the summit will focus heavily on export readiness, digital commerce, technology transfer and industrial sustainability, with dedicated sessions planned on global e-commerce access, digital invoice financing and MSME banking solutions.

The Chief Minister is also scheduled to inaugurate the newly developed Dr Ambedkar Kala Vedika convention centre before participating in the MSME summit proceedings. Dr Yuvaraj, secretary for industries department, Dinesh Kumar, vice-chairman and managing director of APIIC, and Viswa, CEO of AP MSME Development Corporation, attended the review meeting.

Jana Sena MLA Sridhar resigns as Assembly whip

- Railway Kodur MLA cites 'personal reasons' for stepping down
- Pawan reviews allegations involving two party MLAs

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File photo

JANA Sena Railway Kodur MLA Arava Sridhar on Saturday resigned from the post of Legislative Assembly whip and submitted his resignation letter to Pawan Kalyan.

According to party sources, Sridhar informed the Jana Sena chief that he was stepping down due to personal reasons.

During the meeting, the MLA also reportedly explained his position regarding recent allegations and

controversies linked to him. Sridhar has recently faced allegations from a woman, which have generated political attention.

Pawan Kalyan held a meeting with Jana Sena MLAs at the Secretariat. Chirri Balaraju also met the Deputy Chief Minister on Saturday. During the meeting, Pawan Kalyan reportedly reviewed the MLAs' per-

formance in the Polavaram constituency and sought clarification over certain issues and complaints that had reached the party leadership. Sources said Balaraju requested time to resolve some personal matters with his family members, following which Pawan Kalyan reportedly advised him to settle the issues within four weeks.

3 Army officers survive Leh chopper crash; post-accident selfie goes viral

NEW DELHI: Three Indian Army officers, including a Major General, survived after a Cheetah light helicopter crashed in the Ladakh sector near Leh on May 20, officials said.

The helicopter, a newer variant of the Cheetah equipped with a TM333B engine, met with an accident during an afternoon sortie. Army officials said the aircraft was carrying two pilots and Division Commander Major General Sachin Mehta at the time of the crash.

All three sustained injuries but are safe and stable, officials added. The two pilots were admitted to hospital with minor injuries.

Meanwhile, a selfie of Major General Mehta taken after the crash surfaced on social media and quickly went viral. The Army has ordered a Court of Inquiry to ascertain the cause of the helicopter crash. The helicopter involved in the accident was a Cheetah, a version of the ageing

Cheetah fleet that has served the Indian armed forces for decades. Derived from the French-origin Aerospatiale Alouette III design, the Cheetah helicopters became a backbone of military operations in high-altitude regions such as Ladakh, Siachen and Arunachal Pradesh because of their ability to operate in thin air and extreme weather conditions.

For years, the light helicopters have been used for reconnaissance missions, casualty evacuation, troop movement and ferrying supplies to remote forward posts inaccessible by road. However, much of the Cheetah and Chetak fleet is now decades old and has increasingly come under scrutiny over maintenance challenges and safety concerns. The armed forces have been gradually moving towards replacing them with newer indigenous platforms.

Lokesh calls for statewide push for Mahanadu success

Continued from P1

The national working president of TDP instructed cluster in-charges to ensure participation of booth in-charges, village presidents, committee members, affiliate wings, and "Kutumba Sadhikara Sarathis" in the programme.

Lokesh said attendance would be monitored through the "My TDP" app and directed organisers to ensure technical arrangements, including LED screens, audio systems, and connectivity at every cluster venue.

He urged party leaders to utilise Mahanadu as a platform to strengthen grassroots networks ahead of the upcoming elections to local bodies.

Stressing internal organisational discipline, Lokesh said the party was giving priority to active workers while allocating nominated posts and identifying committed cadre through digital monitoring systems.

MPs, MLAs, MLCs, constituency in-charges, zonal coordinators, and district-level party leaders participated in the review.

'America First' visa tool for India announced

NEW DELHI: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has introduced an 'America First' visa scheduling tool as a broader push to upgrade how American consulates operate. While on his high-profile four-day diplomatic tour to India, Rubio spoke about the visa tool that gives priority to business professionals and people whose travel directly strengthens economic and strategic links with the United States. Rubio pointed to the foundation of the US-India relationship and how it has been growing in ways that don't always make headlines. He said that the US and India have expanded commercial ties now with more than 20 billion in invest-

ments. "20 billion in investments from Indian companies in the United States," he said and also highlighted a security partnership through military exercises in the Indo-Pacific.

A slow or unpredictable consular process can get in the way of the very exchanges, such as business visits, investment trips, and partnership meetings, that are building those ties. To remove the friction, a smarter scheduling system is needed. "An orderly and a secure consular system is vital to solidifying this important relationship," Rubio said. The tool is built around a single prioritisation principle: applicants who strengthen ties with the United States get

earlier access to scheduling. In practice, that means business professionals, the people flying into close deals, sign agreements, expand operations, or represent Indian companies investing in American markets. However, Rubio also mentioned that the new facility isn't only about visa applicants.

He addressed the American men and women working at the mission directly, the consular officers, the support staff and everyone on what he called "the front lines" of advancing US national interests every day. "This facility saved Americans money because it's going to make us more efficient."

PM gets WH invite as he talks trade & security with Rubio

Continued from P1

It comes amid mounting concerns for India, which imports 80% of its crude oil needs, as the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz continues to affect energy flows.

"The US will not let Iran hold the global energy market hostage," Rubio told PM Modi. The energy pitch comes as the US, which took control of Venezuela's oil industry following the capture of former President Nicolas Maduro, appears eager to push Venezuelan crude back onto the global market. PM Modi, in his post on X, added that issues related to regional and global peace and security were also discussed, indicating that the Iran conflict was among the topics that came up.

The timing is crucial amid reports that Trump was considering relaunching strikes on Iran after talks for a peace deal, which is being mediated by Pakistan, failed to bear any fruit. "We discussed sustained progress in the India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership and issues related to regional and global peace and security," PM Modi tweeted. "India and the United States will continue to work closely for the global good," he further said.

CBSE's diktat on 3-language study sparks debate

Continued from P1

Others conceded opting for Sanskrit because it is perceived as easier. At the same time, Hindi's compulsory status in later years created what one described as a *voilà* moment — suddenly finding the course effortless due to prior exposure.

This shifting landscape reflects deeper anxieties. In Tamil Nadu, the state government made Tamil compulsory in all schools in 2015-16, but CBSE institutions still offered limited options. By 2017-18, Hindi was made compulsory across all classes, forcing students to abandon their third-language choices. Such reversals leave students questioning the value of learning any particular language and highlight the ongoing power struggle over linguistic education.

The practical argument for Hindi is clear: it eases mobility across states and is widely spoken. Yet, the cultural cost is steep. One student who moved from Chennai to Hyderabad admitted that while Hindi literacy helps in daily life, "the inability to read Telugu" — his mother tongue — "creates painful gaps in my cultural identity".

With globalisation, urban migration, and the domi-

nance of programming languages and AI skills and pan-English language learning dominating the education landscape across the southern state, S Prabhakar, a Kannada teacher from Devanahalli in Bengaluru, said, "This is not an isolated case. Students increasingly view mother tongues as irrelevant to their career prospects. The danger is stark: earlier, there was a common thread that connected people across the southern states, though each has its own language, rich in heritage and literature; now, there is the risk of being "pushed into the back seat by the policymakers in education who fail to see the eventual disaster within a few generations if current trends continue."

C Vatsala, a Telugu pundit from Hyderabad, pointed out that the CBSE's three-language formula was designed to preserve diversity while promoting national unity. However, unless schools, parents, and policymakers actively incentivise learning state languages, south India's vibrant linguistic spectrum could fade into a monochrome dominated by Hindi and English. The challenge is not just educational — it is civilizational, she adds.

Naidu targets YSRCP

Continued from P1

The TDP supremo also criticised incidents involving public celebrations with animal blood and warned against attempts to create disturbances. Strict action would be taken against anyone trying to threaten public peace or provoke unrest. He further

launched a personal attack on leaders of the previous dispensation, alleging that they had failed even in maintaining family relationships and had harassed their own relatives over property disputes.

Claiming that people were now living without fear after the NDA alliance came to

power in the State, Naidu said his government had restored security for people's lives and properties. Describing himself as a servant of the people rather than a ruler, Naidu promised to continue working for the welfare of the poor.

He also touched upon economic and climatic challenges facing the State. He said changing weather pat-

terns and the impact of El Nino were expected to reduce rainfall this year. Despite the challenges, he said the government was determined to transform Rayalaseema into a horticulture hub with investments worth Rs 1 lakh crore, including Rs 40,000 crore from the government and Rs 60,000 crore in private investments.

90 killed in China coal mine blast

BEIJING: Ninety miners were killed in a gas explosion in a coal mine in north China, official media in Beijing reported on Saturday, adding that 201 miners have so far been rescued. The gas explosion occurred at the Liushenyu coal mine on Friday May 22, 2026.

US & Iran close to extending ceasefire by 60 days

Continued from P1

Earlier Asim Munir in Iran met with the top leadership, including President Masoud Pezeshkian, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and top Iranian negotiator and parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf. Pakistan army in a statement on Saturday said that Field Marshal Asim Munir concluded a short but highly productive tour of Iran, Reuters reported. Meanwhile, US secretary of State Marco Rubio on Saturday hinted that Iran could agree to a peace deal as soon as today. His remarks indicating progress in diplomatic efforts to end the war come at a time when Pakistan army chief Asim Munir met top Iranian leadership in Tehran as Pakistan has positioned itself as a mediator in the peace talks between Iran and US.

Cockroach party website taken down

Continued from P1

CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke said on Saturday that both his personal Instagram account and the party's Instagram account had also been "hacked".

The platform surfaced last week after a row over remarks linked to Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant during a court hearing on granting "senior" status to lawyers, referring to "youngsters" as "cockroaches" and "parasites". Later, the CJI said his remarks had been misquoted and that they were aimed at people entering the legal field with "fake and bogus degrees".

What started as an online satire campaign later became a broader discussion of digital dissent and growing frustration among young people. Through memes and political commentary, the platform

has raised issues such as unemployment, examination paper leaks and education.

On Saturday, Dipke said the party's "iconic website", cockroachjantaparty.org, had been taken down as part of the latest action against the movement. The founder said 10 lakh cockroaches had registered as members through the website, while 6 lakh cockroaches had signed a petition seeking the resignation of Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan over alleged failures in the education system, particularly due to the NEET-UG 2026 'paper leak' controversy.

"Why is the government so scared of cockroaches? But this dictatorial behaviour is opening the eyes of India's youth."

Our only crime is we were demanding a better future for ourselves. But you can't

get rid of us that easily. We're working on a new home right now. Cockroaches never die," he wrote in a post on X.

As of Saturday afternoon, CJP crossed 22 million followers on Instagram. This put it well ahead of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which has around 9.2 million followers on the Meta-owned platform, and the main opposition Congress party, which has around 13.4 million followers.

The party appeared after controversy broke out over CJI Surya Kant using the terms "parasites" and "cockroaches" while reprimanding a lawyer over his plea seeking senior designation.

"There are youngsters like cockroaches, who don't get any employment or have any place in profession. Some of them become media, some of them become social media,

RTI activists and other activists and they start attacking everyone," the CJI said.

The CJI later said he had been misquoted and clarified that the remarks were aimed only at people entering the legal profession using "fake and bogus degrees". The Cockroach Janta Party was formed a day after the CJI's remarks on May 15. It rapidly went viral and drew support from politicians, activists, artists and a large number of social media users across age groups.

Political leaders such as Trinamool Congress (TMC) leaders Mahua Moitra and Kirti Azad, along with Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav, have either interacted with or shown interest in the movement. Activists, including Prashant Bhusan and Anjali Bharadwaj, have also engaged with it.

Petro prices hiked again

Continued from P1

The latest hike follows a Rs 2 per kg increase announced on May 15 and another Re 1 per kg hike on May 17. With the latest revision, CNG prices in Delhi climbed to Rs 80.09 per kg, breaching the Rs 80-mark for the first time.

The latest hikes come as India faces mounting pressure from soaring global crude oil prices triggered by the West Asia conflict and disruptions to shipping routes through the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most critical oil transit chokepoints.

Expressing concerns over the issue, citizens, as well as the taxi drivers, raised concerns over the hike. The taxi drivers said that the increase in prices does not mean an increase in fares for them.

Delhi residents raised con-

cerns over the increase in fuel prices, with no effective increase in income. Some held the government responsible for the hike and for dismissing the public concerns.

A local said, "It's affecting the middle class. Petrol prices are increasing. It's a loss. But what can we do? People who have work will have to use a car. People are carpooling as asked. But petrol is expensive. There is no alternative. Electric cars are so expensive. People are not able to buy them."

"Our government is useless. What will you do? I drive a car. How will it affect the common man? The common man has become a beggar. The common man does not have money. Expenses are increasing. The government is responsible for this," another resident said.

US TIGHTENS GREEN CARD RULES

Continued from P1

Until now, many immigrants legally staying in the US could apply for a green card without leaving the country through a process known as "adjustment of status". Under the revised policy, USCIS officers have been instructed to decide on applications on a case-by-case basis and grant exceptions only in extraordinary circumstances.

DHS said the new approach was intended to prevent misuse of immigration loopholes. "An alien who is in the US temporarily and wants a Green Card must return to their home country to apply," the department said in a statement. The administration argues that the immigration system should function "as the law intended" rather than encouraging temporary visa holders to remain in the coun-

try while pursuing permanent residency.

According to analysts at the Cato Institute, more than one million immigrants in the US are currently waiting for green cards.

The new rules could force many applicants to leave behind jobs, homes and families while their applications are processed overseas. Immigration experts say the change could particularly hurt mixed-status families, where some members are US citizens or permanent residents while others are on temporary visas. There is also uncertainty over how pending green card applications already filed inside the US will be treated.

Immigrant aid organisations strongly criticised the move. HIAS said the policy could endanger vulnerable people, including survivors

of trafficking and abused children, by compelling them to return to countries they had fled.

Critics also warned that the policy could worsen delays, as the US immigration system is already struggling with a large backlog of visa and residency applications.

The latest measure is part of a wider tightening of immigration rules under the Trump administration. Over the past year, the administration has shortened visa durations for foreign students, media personnel and cultural exchange visitors. In January, the US State Department said it had revoked more than 1,00,000 visas during Trump's second term. The administration has also taken steps affecting refugees and immigrants with protected legal status in the United States.

PM distributes over 51K appointment letters

Continued from P1

Since its inception, around 12 lakh recruitment letters have been issued through 18 Rozgar Melas across the country. The 19th Rozgar Mela was held at 47 locations, with recruits joining various ministries including Railways, Home Affairs, Health, Financial Services and Higher Education. Addressing the gathering, PM Modi said, "I just returned from a trip to five countries two days ago. It was only a five-nation trip, but during this time, I spoke, had detailed discussions, and met with leaders of major companies from dozens of countries, and I felt one thing in common everywhere: The world is very excited about India's youth and India's technological progress."

Sanjeevani rollout across state by Aug 15: CM Naidu

Continued from P1

Promoting healthy living, he referred to the concept of 'Food as medicine, Kitchen as Pharmacy'. Naidu also spoke about developmental initiatives in Rayalaseema. He said the government is prioritising water resource projects such as Handri-Neeva, Galeru-Nagari and the Somasila-Swarnamukhi link canal to improve irrigation facilities in the region. The Chief Minister said the state government is also focusing on industries, data centres, drone cities, aerospace hubs, and food processing sectors in Rayalaseema. The region, he added, would be developed into a global horticulture hub. District Collector Sumit Kumar said the Sanjee-

vani Digital Nerve Centre call centre has so far conducted health follow-up services for around 73,000 people. The programme would be implemented more effectively with coordination among various departments to ensure continuous medical monitoring for every family.

Puthalapattu MLA K Murali Mohan and MP Daggumalla Prasad Rao said the programme would improve access to modern healthcare services in rural areas and help identify health problems at an early stage through digital records and AI-based systems. Tata Group CEO Girish Krishnamurthy said the Tata Digital Nerve Centre would help extend healthcare services even to remote areas.