



# THE Hans India



**'People from RSS' behind attack on me: Dipke**  
Cockroach Janta Party founder Abhijeet Dipke on Tuesday alleged that "some people from RSS" were behind the attack on him a day earlier, claiming it was an attempt to shift focus away from the real issue and stifle the voice of students. **P6**

**Even hardened criminals are sure to get caught!**  
Our ancestors used to talk about the ages. They said that in the Treta Yuga dharma stood on four legs, in Dwapara Yuga the number of legs decreased, and in Kali Yuga dharma almost lost its footing — elders would say this and people used to laugh. **P4**

**Oil prices set to ease after US-Iran deal**  
Crude oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) prices are expected to moderate following signs of a potential US-Iran peace agreement and the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, although analysts cautioned that supply disruptions, damaged infrastructure and tight inventories. **P7**

**Pooja Hegde showcases fashion-forward style**  
Actress Pooja Hegde is enjoying a successful phase in her career as her latest Bollywood entertainer Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai continues to attract audiences in theatres. The romantic comedy, directed by David Dhawan, features Varun Dhawan. **P8**

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## WINDOWS Smriti only Indian in TIME's 100 influential sportspersons

NEW DELHI: Cricketer Smriti Mandhana has been named by TIME magazine among this year's 100 most influential people in sports, the only Indian to be featured on the list. TIME's list of the 100 Most Influential People in Sports 2026 features athletes, coaches, advocates and investors who are "people shaping sports." The list, headlined by American basketball legend LeBron James, includes superstars from the world of sports such as football icon Lionel Messi, Chinese-American skier Eileen Gu, tennis star Carlos Alcaraz, basketball player Victor Wembanyama, legendary golfer Rory McIlroy among others.

## 8 dead after US Air Force B-52 bomber crashes

CALIFORNIA: Eight crew members were killed after a US Air Force B-52 Stratofortress bomber plane crashed shortly after takeoff from Edwards Air Force Base in California's Mojave Desert. According to CNN, the aircraft, which was on a routine test mission, took off at approximately 11:20 am (local time) before crashing near the remote military installation northeast of Los Angeles. Edwards Air Force Base said all eight crew members on board are presumed dead, and the incident has now shifted from a rescue effort to a recovery operation, CNN reported. "It was tragic and unsurvivable," Colonel James Hayes said during a press conference, according to CNN.

## Lion kills restaurant worker in Guj

AMRELI: A lion mauled to death a 25-year-old man who worked at a restaurant in Gujarat's Amreli district and ate several body parts of the victim, officials said on Tuesday. Locals found a few body parts of the victim and his severed head close to an approach road near Kovaya village of Amreli district under Rajula forest range early Tuesday morning. Assistant Conservator of Forests Viralsinh Chavda said a pride of four lions was moving in the area and efforts were underway to cage them all based on suspicion that one of them killed the man, who hailed from Uttarakhand.

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# NEET-UG re-test: Centre blocks Telegram app till June 22

HANS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

THE government on Tuesday temporarily restricted access to the Telegram messaging app ahead of the NEET-UG 2026 re-examination, with the National Testing Agency (NTA) saying the measure was aimed at tackling cheating rackets and misinformation. NTA Director General Abhishek Singh said the restriction on Telegram till June 22 was part of efforts to ensure that the June 21 re-test is conducted without malpractice. "We will not let anything

**We will not let anything go wrong. We will take all possible actions to ensure that the examination is conducted without any malpractice: NTA Director General Abhishek Singh**



go wrong. We will take all possible actions to ensure that the examination is conducted without any malpractice," Singh told

PTI when asked about the move. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), acting on recommendations made

by the NTA, has issued a direction under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, restricting access to the

## APPS EXIT FROM PLAY STORE

Google has removed messaging app Telegram from the Play Store and Apple is likely to follow suit in compliance with a government order, sources aware of the development said.

"The government has asked Google and Apple to delist the app temporarily. Google has done it. Apple will be doing it," a source said. When checked, Google Play Store displayed the

message that the app is not available. Queries sent to Google, Apple and The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) did not elicit any immediate reply.

Telegram platform in India for a defined and limited period ending June 22, 2026 covering the day of the NEET-UG 2026 re-examination and its immediate aftermath. A separate direction requires Telegram to disable in India the

message-editing feature for already-posted messages till June 30, addressing the specific structural feature through which the platform has been used to fabricate after-the-event "paper leak" evidence in respect of national examinations, the NTA said in a statement.

"Both measures have been taken in the interest of public order, in response to the organised use of the platform by cheating rackets to defraud candidates appearing for the NEET (UG) 2026 re-examination scheduled on 21 June, 2026," it said.

# Cough syrups can be bought only with doc's prescription

HANS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

AMID drug quality and patient safety concerns, the Union Health ministry has amended rules to prohibit sale of syrups, including cough syrups, without a doctor's prescription across the country. The move is aimed at bringing syrup-based formulations, including cough syrups, under stricter regulatory oversight, officials said. Earlier, prior to this amendment, entry No. 13 of Schedule K permitted the sale of cough syrups in villages with a population of less than 1,000 without requiring compliance with certain retail sale licensing provisions, the ministry said in a statement. With the omission of the word

**The decision comes against the backdrop of increased regulatory scrutiny of cough syrups and other liquid oral formulations in recent years following reports of contamination-linked deaths of children in several countries**



"syrup" from the said entry, this exemption will no longer be available for cough syrups.

"Consequently, the sale and dispensing of cough syrups in smaller villages will now be required to

take place only through duly licensed pharmacies in accordance with the provisions of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and the Rules framed thereunder," the statement said.

The decision comes against the backdrop of increased regulatory scrutiny of cough syrups and other liquid oral formulations in recent years following reports of contamination-linked deaths of children in several countries. According to sources, the latest amendment is expected to enhance traceability and regulatory supervision of syrup-based medicines by ensuring that manufacturers and sellers comply with stricter licensing and quality-control requirements.

# Hug missing during Modi, Trump meet

EVIAN-LES-BAINS

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump exchanged pleasantries and held a brief conversation on Tuesday at a gathering of G7 leaders, marking their first in-person encounter in 16 months amid continuing strain in bilateral ties.

In Evian-les-Bains, the site of this year's G7 summit of the powerful grouping, Modi and Trump shared a warm handshake followed by a short conversation. A full bilateral sit-down is slated for Wednesday on the sidelines of the gathering.

While details of their brief exchange were not known, the encounter sets the stage for their high-stakes talks. Following US Secretary of State Marco Rubio's visit to India last month, the two



sides are now looking at rebuilding the bilateral ties. The relations witnessed a major downturn after Washington imposed punitive tariffs on India and President Trump made controversial assertions regarding his role in de-escalating the India-Pakistan military clashes last May. Over the next few months, the US president repeat-

edly and publicly claimed that he had resolved the military conflict between the two neighbours and saved millions of lives as it was heading toward a full-scale war. New Delhi stoutly maintained that the cessation of the hostilities was a result of talks between India and Pakistan, and the US involvement had nothing to do with it.

## Should Aadhaar use be restricted to ID proof?

HANS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

THE Supreme Court on Tuesday sought response of the Centre and States on a plea alleging misuse of the Unique Identification Authority of India-issued Aadhaar cards as proof of citizenship, domicile and residential address, and seeking directions to restrict its use strictly for identity verification. A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice V Mohana issued notices to the Centre and all the states and UTs on a plea filed by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay and tagged it with the pending similar matters.

The plea has sought directions to the Centre, states and the Election Commission to ensure that Aadhaar



is used as a proof of identity and not as a proof of citizenship, domicile, address and date of birth. The plea, filed through advocate Ashwani Dubey, also sought directions that the use of Aadhaar as a proof of date of birth and residence in the application form for new voter registration be considered against Section 9 of the Aadhaar Act, 2016, Section 23(4) of the RPA, 1950 and Article 14 of the Constitution. "Section 9 of the Aadhaar Act, 2016 expressly states that 'Aadhaar is not the evidence of citizenship or domicile'.

# Attack on Lebanon would mean truce violation: Iran

HANS NEWS SERVICE DUBAI

IRAN'S top diplomat said Tuesday that the deal ending the war with the United States would also require Israel to withdraw from Lebanon. But with Israel insisting it will force forces in Lebanon, questions are growing about the still-unpublished agreement and whether disagreement over its terms could prolong the conflict.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Israel's continued occupation of southern Lebanon would violate the memorandum of understanding reached between the United States and Iran. "The end of the war in Lebanon is an inseparable part of the complete end of the war," Araghchi said in statements made to foreign diplomats in Tehran that were aired on Iranian state TV.

"Without the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territories they occupied during this war, the war has not fully come to an end," Araghchi said further Israeli attacks on



Lebanon "will be considered by us a violation of the memorandum of understanding." The United States has not said whether Lebanon was part of the final agreement. But Araghchi's description clashes with statements made by Israeli officials about the deal to end the war that started with joint US-Israeli airstrikes on Feb. 28. Israel is not a party to the agreement. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu described it as President Donald Trump's decision, noting Israel had its own priorities and would remain in a buffer zone in Lebanon "as long as necessary."

## 20 TMC rebels accepted into NCPI, to work with NDA

KOLKATA: Rebel Trinamool Congress MP Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar on June 16 said the Nationalist Citizens Party of India (NCPI) has agreed to accept the joining of all the dissident Lok Sabha members of her party, whose numbers are likely to go up to 22 from the present 20.

Dastidar also said that the rebel MPs have no connection with the dissident TMC MLAs, who have formed a separate group in the West Bengal assembly, recognised by Speaker Rathindra Bose.

Asked about the next move of the rebel TMC MPs, the lawmaker from Bengal's Barasat said first they want to settle down while trying to merge into another party. "Acceptance has already come to us. They (NCPI)



are happy to take us. We will work together with the NDA under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah," Dastidar told reporters at the Parliament House complex, New Delhi. Asked about her faction's strength, she said, "Currently we are 20 (MPs). The numbers may go up to 22." Altogether, 28 MPs got elected to the Lok Sabha on TMC tickets in the 2024 general elections.

# 3.3 kg 'Noorjahan' mango fetches Rs 3,800 in Alirajpur

HANS NEWS SERVICE ALIRAJPUR

THE 'Noorjahan' mango variety, hailed as the Queen of Mangoes, is drawing attention in Madhya Pradesh's Katthiwada region after growers reported a fruit weighing 3.3 kilograms was sold for Rs 3,800 this season.

According to mango growers, the largest fruit of this rare variety in the current season so far weighed 3.3 kg. Some of the larger fruits on 'Noorjahan' trees could weigh

up to four kg by the end of this month, they told PTI on Tuesday. Katthiwada region in Alirajpur district, located 250 km from Indore, is especially known for the cultivation of 'Noorjahan' and other varieties of mangoes.

Bharatraj Singh Jadav, a mango grower from Katthiwada, said his orchard has two old and 11 new grafted 'Noorjahan' mango trees. The new trees have also begun to bear fruit, and production is expected to increase in the future, he said.

"The Noorjahan mango harvest this season has been satisfactory.

He said that the 'Noorjahan' mango trees in his orchard still bear many fruits, and their final weight will be known only after they are harvested. According to Jadav, demand for the 'Noorjahan' mango is currently coming not only from Madhya Pradesh but also from Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Gujarat. The grower said he recently also received inquiries about the fruit from Tamil Nadu.

This season, 'Noorjahan' mangoes from his orchard have reached the United Arab Emirates, the US, and Spain, although these were not exported directly and people took them abroad through their acquaintances, he said. Jadav said that his orchard has approximately 2,500 trees of different mango varieties. Ten guards have been deployed to protect the orchard because the 'Noorjahan' mango requires special monitoring due to its high price, he informed.

**The largest fruit of this rare variety in the current season so far weighed 3.3 kg; Alirajpur district is especially known for the cultivation of 'Noorjahan' and other varieties of mangoes**





# Young Hans

**NARAYANA, A PLACE WHERE ASPIRATIONS TURN INTO AIRS**

## From Olympiad gold to JEE Advanced AIR 5: The remarkable rise of Kuchi

HARI NARAYANAN  
HYDERABAD

At 18, Kuchi Sandeep from Visakhapatnam has emerged as one of India's most promising young minds.

Kuchi secured an outstanding AIR 5 in JEE Advanced 2026 after earlier achieving AIR 37 in JEE Main 2026. A student of Narayana, Hyderabad, his achievement places him among the country's top engineering aspirants.

But Kuchi's success story extends far beyond competitive examinations. He had already earned international recognition by winning a gold medal at the International Chemistry Olympiad held in the UAE. He is now preparing to represent India once again at the upcoming International Chemistry Olympiad in Uzbekistan.

Aspiring to study Computer Science at IIT Bombay and build a career in technology, Kuchi believes the future belongs to innovation, while retaining a healthy perspective on the opportunities and challenges posed by artificial intelligence.

**Q. Congratulations on securing AIR 5 in JEE Advanced. Before we talk about preparation and strategy, take us back to those crucial moments—the day before the results were announced, the day the results were declared, and the day after.**

**Kuchi:** Those 3 days were a rollercoaster of emotions. My exam had gone well, I was expecting a decent result but every second was filled with mixed emotions—fear, excitement and anticipation. The moment results were announced I was overjoyed. It was a proud moment for my family and to be honest, I was very very proud of myself.

**Q. The moment students open their JEE Advanced results is something they remember forever. What happened when you finally saw AIR 5 on the screen? What was your immediate reaction, and how did your family respond?**

**Kuchi:** The moment I opened the results I was on cloud 9. It was a dream come true. A single digit all India rank was in itself a very proud moment for me, but top 5 was a cherry on the cake.

**Q. When did you first begin to believe that securing a top rank in one of the toughest exams in the country was possible? Was there a particular moment when you felt, "Yes, I can do this"?**

**Kuchi:** In the days before JEE Advanced I did really well on my mock tests. Combined with my previous Chemistry Olympiad selection it gave me the confidence that I could secure a top rank

**Q. Narayana is often described as a place where aspirations turn into AIRs. How did you choose Narayana?**

**Kuchi:** I visited the campus and I really liked the teachers there. I also felt the regular Narayana testing did help my JEE preparations.

**Q. Many people assume that top rankers have their careers planned from childhood. Tell us about your journey. When did your serious JEE preparation actually begin, and how different was your experience from what people generally imagine?**

**Kuchi:** I studied in a CBSE school before

Narayana. In Class 9th, I joined Narayana for the Junior Science Olympiad and I have been with them since. I began my journey by Olympiad preparation and started serious JEE prep in 11th grade. My journey was quite similar to what people imagine but a less intense version of it.

**Q. JEE preparation is often described as a two-year marathon rather than a sprint. What did your daily routine look like during the most intense phase of preparation, and how did you maintain consistency over such a long period?**

**Kuchi:** I made sure that I spent a considerable chunk of my day trying to solve

different kinds of problems from different sources. I also made sure I revised previous topics while reading new ones. I maintained consistency over a long period by treating each mock test I gave as the final exam which always made me give my best.

**Q. There is a popular belief that students who secure top ranks study 14 to 16 hours a day. Was that your reality, or do you believe success is more about the quality of study rather than the quantity of hours?**

**Kuchi:** I believe both are important. Quantity is important until one can ensure at least 8-10 hours of study but after that further increase in quantity will just worsen the quality. After reaching a minimum it is much more important to focus on quality of study.

**Q. A journey as demanding as JEE preparation inevitably comes with moments of pressure, self-doubt, and frustration. Were there times when you felt overwhelmed, and how did you navigate those difficult phases?**

**Kuchi:** Bad tests always made me feel down. I overcame it by looking back at my good test results and talking to my parents and teachers.

**Q. Apart from the guidance of Narayana's teachers and mentors, family support often plays a crucial role behind the scenes. How important were your parents, family members, and friends during these two years of preparation?**

**Kuchi:** My parents stayed with me throughout my JEE prep so I was able to come back home instead of a hostel which was helpful. Also, my parents gave me motivation whenever I did badly in tests.

**Q. Many IIT graduates eventually choose careers in technology, entrepreneurship, research, or even the Civil Services. Have you thought about the path you would like to pursue in the long run, and what attracts you to that field?**

**Kuchi:** I would like to pursue a career in technology. Modern technology is fascinating to me, I would like to be a part in discovering it.

**Q. If engineering had not been your chosen path, what other career options would have interested you? Were there any subjects or professions outside engineering that genuinely appealed to you?**

**Kuchi:** If I hadn't chosen engineering, I would have chosen research in chemistry.

**Q. Now that you have secured a rank that gives you access to the country's finest institutes, which IIT and branch are you aiming for, and what makes that choice special for you?**

**Kuchi:** IIT Bombay Computer Science. The field is rapidly growing and changing and therefore seems exciting.

**Q. As someone preparing to enter the technology world at a time when Artificial Intelligence is rapidly transforming industries, what are your thoughts on AI? Do you see it primarily as an opportunity, or are there concerns that students should be mindful of?**

**Kuchi:** It is both an opportunity and a concern. It will take over a lot of jobs which can easily be automated and don't require deep thinking but it will also make jobs easier.

**Q. India will celebrate 100 years of Independence in 2047. Looking ahead to that milestone, what kind of technological future do you envision for the country? Do you think innovations such as flying cars and advanced urban mobility could become a reality in everyday life?**

**Kuchi:** I think flying cars and all are still science fiction in the near future but I envision a future where most repetitive and boring tasks are automated.

**Q. Finally, lakhs of students across India are currently preparing for JEE while dealing with pressure, uncertainty, and fear of failure. Having successfully completed this journey, what message would you like to share with them?**

**Kuchi:** Work hard and stay focused so that you can achieve your dreams.



Kuchi Sandeep



## IIT Madras celebrates international graduates

The Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras) celebrated the achievements of its international students during a special Degree Distribution Programme, where graduating scholars from across the world received degrees across postgraduate and doctoral programmes.

The event marked the successful completion of studies for international students enrolled in programmes including MTEch, MS, PhD, joint degrees and other international academic collaborations. Graduates representing several countries participated in the ceremony, highlighting the institute's growing global academic presence.

Addressing the gathering as chief guest, Vikram Misri, Foreign Secretary of India, congratulated the graduating students and encouraged them to apply the knowledge, skills and research experience gained at IIT Madras to address global challenges, particularly those affecting developing nations.

He urged students to use innovation and technology to contribute to sustainable development and problem-solving in an era of rapid technological transformation. Emphasising the importance of global cooperation, he noted that highly skilled graduates have an important role to play in addressing issues related to economic development, infrastructure, healthcare, education and climate resilience.

The ceremony also reflected India's growing role as an international higher education destination. Over the years, IIT Madras has expanded opportunities for students from different countries through scholarships, academic partnerships and dedicated international outreach initiatives.

The institute offers several support mechanisms for overseas students, including scholarships under the IIT Madras Global Engagement initiatives, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) programme, the Study in

India initiative and other international collaborations. These efforts have helped attract talented students from Asia, Africa and other regions.

Officials noted that international enrolment at IIT Madras has steadily increased in recent years, with strong participation from countries across the Global South. The institute has also strengthened global academic engagement through research collaborations, exchange programmes and international partnerships.

For many graduating students, the ceremony marked not only the completion of their academic journey but also the beginning of careers in research, industry, entrepreneurship and public service. The event underscored the growing importance of international education and the role of institutions such as IIT Madras in preparing graduates to contribute to global development through science, technology and innovation.

**TODAY IS NATIONAL EAT YOUR VEGETABLES DAY**

## Honing healthy habits early

Vegetables are an important part of a balanced diet and play a key role in helping children grow strong and stay healthy. Packed with essential vitamins, minerals, fiber and antioxidants, vegetables provide the nutrients needed for healthy bones, muscles and overall development.

Eating a variety of vegetables every day can help improve immunity and protect children from common illnesses. Leafy greens, carrots, tomatoes, beans, peas and other colorful vegetables contain nutrients that support healthy eyesight, brain development and energy levels. They also aid digestion and help maintain

a healthy weight. Health experts recommend including vegetables in every meal to ensure children receive a wide range of nutrients. Different colors of vegetables provide different benefits. For example, orange vegetables such as carrots and pumpkins are rich in vitamin A, while green vegetables like spinach and broccoli contain iron and calcium that are important for growth and strong bones.

Developing healthy eating habits at an early age can have long-term benefits. Parents and teachers can encourage children to eat vegetables by offering colorful salads, soups and healthy snacks. Involving children

in gardening or helping with simple meal preparation can also make them more interested in trying different vegetables.

Eating vegetables regularly not only helps children stay active and energetic but also supports concentration and learning. A nutritious diet, combined with regular physical activity and adequate sleep, contributes to overall health and well-being. By making vegetables a regular part of their meals, children can build healthy habits that will benefit them throughout their lives. Small changes in daily eating patterns can make a big difference in helping children grow into healthy and happy adults.



# AAP alleges political vendetta, accuses Centre of misusing ED, CBI

**ED conducted searches not only at premises linked to Deepak Singla but also at locations connected to his brother Raman Singla, other family members and individuals associated with the party. He questioned the timing and extent of the operation, alleging it was intended to exert pressure on people linked to AAP**

PURNA SINGH  
NEW DELHI

THE Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Tuesday intensified its attack on the Centre, alleging that investigative agencies are being used to

target opposition leaders, party workers and even their family members as part of a broader campaign of political persecution.

Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh cited the recent action involving AAP's Goa co-

incharge Deepak Singla and his relatives as an example of what he termed political vendetta. Singh claimed the case dates back to 2014 and that investigations had already been completed, with a chargesheet filed. Despite



this, he alleged that enforcement action, including raids and arrests, was continuing even as the legal process neared completion.

According to Singh, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducted searches not only at premises linked to Deepak Singla but also

at locations connected to his brother Raman Singla, other family members and individuals associated with the party.

He questioned the timing and extent of the operation, alleging it was intended to exert pressure on people linked to AAP.

The AAP leader accused the BJP-led government of repeatedly deploying agencies such as the ED and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against political opponents. He alleged that investigative mechanisms were being used to intimidate opposition leaders and

weaken parties challenging the ruling establishment.

Singh referred to previous cases involving senior AAP leaders, including Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain, claiming they too had faced agency action under similar circumstances. He further alleged that the government appeared more focused on confronting political rivals than addressing several national and international concerns.

Despite what he described as sustained pressure, Singh asserted that AAP would continue its political activi-

ties and would not be intimidated by investigations or enforcement measures. He said the party would keep raising public issues and politically challenge the government.

The Rajya Sabha MP also expressed concern over political defections, alleging that pressure from investigative agencies was contributing to opposition leaders switching sides and joining the BJP. Such developments, he argued, raised serious questions about democratic institutions and the role of investigative agencies in political contests.

## Road rage case

# Court convicts auto driver of attempt to kill Delhi cop

The prosecution said the accused abused the complainant during the argument. When Mohan Lal began photographing the auto-rickshaw, the accused allegedly retaliated by driving the vehicle over him and dragging him for about 20-25 metres

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court has convicted an auto-rickshaw driver of attempted murder for allegedly running over a police officer and dragging him for 20-25 metres following a road rage altercation in south Delhi last year.

Additional Sessions Judge Purshotam Pathak was hearing the case against Prem Pal, who was accused in a case registered under IPC Section 307 (attempt to murder) and said that the CCTV footage clearly showed him deliberately driving his auto into the victim after a heated

exchange.

In an order dated June 8, the court said, "The incident which had taken place was not instantaneous and sudden but deliberate with a defined motive. Accused/Driver's intents to kill the complainant is established from his conduct of running over the victim with Auto after arguments."

According to the prosecution, the incident took place on June 10, 2024, near a school in Dakshinpuri when complainant Mohan Lal, a Delhi Police sub-inspector, objected to the accused reversing his auto-rickshaw negligently.



The prosecution said the accused abused the complainant during the argument. When Mohan Lal began photographing the auto-rickshaw, the accu-

sed allegedly retaliated by driving the vehicle towards him, running over him and dragging him for about 20-25 metres.

The complainant suffered

injuries to his leg and back and was taken to AIIMS Trauma Centre. Medical records showed abrasions and a facial fracture, with the injuries opined to be grievous.

The defence claimed the complainant was intoxicated and had blocked the auto-rickshaw's path. It argued that the victim was injured after suddenly coming in front of the vehicle and that there was no intention to kill.

Rejecting the contention, the court said the CCTV footage was the most crucial piece of evidence and corroborated the complainant's version.

# Double-decker tourist bus crosses 1,500 riders mark

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

DELHI'S electric double-decker tourist bus has carried over 1,500 passengers since its launch, with the tourism department reducing ticket prices for the summer season to attract more visitors.

Within the first month of operations, the service had drawn around 800 passengers, crossing the mark of 1,200 passengers within three months of its launch.

According to the latest data, a total of 1,540 passengers had travelled on the bus till June 12, indicating growing interest among tourists, an official said.

Encouraging more visitors during the summer season, the tourism department has reduced ticket prices from Rs 500 to Rs 300 for adults and from Rs 300 to Rs 200 for children. Officials said the response to the offer has been encouraging, particularly on



weekends, which continue to account for a significant share of the ridership, he told PTI.

According to official data, passenger numbers have increased steadily since the launch. The service recorded 12 passengers in February after commencing operations on February 28, followed by 432 in March, 372 in April, 424 in May and 300 till June 12. Officials said the initiative is currently being run as a pilot project and additional routes may be explored in the future based on public re-

sponse. The official said that the department currently operates the service on two routes. Weekday tours begin from Vijay Chowk, covering key landmarks in the Central Vista area before proceeding to museums and the Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya. Weekend tours start from Dilli Haat, INA, and include the Change of Guard ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhavan, which officials said remains one of the most popular attractions among visitors.

## LG inspects Khan Market, Satya Marg projects

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

DELHI Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu on Tuesday reviewed two projects in the Lutyens' area and stressed the need for strengthened water conservation infrastructure and sustainable urban development.

The LG office in a post on X on Tuesday said the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) chairperson and engineering officials gave a briefing on the Khan Market project's progress and implementation as LG Sandhu visited the popular market to inspect the ongoing work.

"Upgrading such iconic public and commercial spaces is essential to enhancing civic amenities, improving traffic and pedestrian management, and providing a seamless experience for visitors, tourists, and local businesses alike," the post said.

The NDMC is currently upgrading the middle lane of the



Khan Market, which includes improved drainage, pavement strengthening and flooring upgrades. Estimated to cost about Rs 1.21 crore, the project is aimed at replacing worn-out interlocking tiles and improving pedestrian movement in the busy commercial street.

Departments concerned are instructed to expedite the remaining development works while ensuring strict respect for quality and safety benchmarks, the post read.

Further, the LG reviewed the implementation of the Modular rainwater harvesting system at Satya Marg and interacted with the NDMC officers overseeing on-ground execution.

## MCD to begin restoration of grade-I heritage structures

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

THE Municipal Corporation of Delhi will begin a phased restoration and preservation exercise for eight Grade-I heritage structures under its jurisdiction, with conservation work expected to begin next month, officials said on Tuesday. The Grade-I category denotes monuments classified as being of the highest historical importance. The initiative follows directions from the Supreme Court to restore heritage monuments under the civic body's ownership and will be carried out in consultation with academic institutions and conservation experts, they said.

"The first phase will cover eight heritage structures, including four tombs in Zamrudpur village in south Delhi, the Mahavir Library in Greater Kailash-I, a gumti (small tomb) in Humayunpur village, a tomb in the LSR village area and Maharaja Agrasen Park on Boule-



vard Road," an MCD official told PTI.

He added that the other identified sites include the historic Town Hall building in Chandni Chowk and Company Bagh. However, officials said these two properties are presently being looked after by the Delhi Tourism and Transportation Development Corporation.

Officials said a meeting was held on Monday between Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) officials and experts from the School of Planning and Architecture (SPA), Jamia Millia Islamia, Indira Gandhi

Delhi Technical University for Women (Architecture School) and the Aga Khan Foundation to discuss the restoration roadmap. "The MCD does not have an in-house conservation team. Since Grade-I monuments require specialised treatment and cannot be altered, we are taking support from institutions and conservation experts to ensure the structures are restored to their original shape," an official said. The Aga Khan Foundation has already submitted a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for participation in the project, he added.



## City records 162 dengue, 42 malaria, 9 chikungunya cases

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

DELHI has reported 162 dengue cases, 42 malaria cases and nine chikungunya cases so far this year, according to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi's weekly vector-borne disease report for the week.

According to the data, 10 new dengue cases were recorded in a fortnight, bringing the total to 20 by June 15. Meanwhile, three malaria cases and one chikungunya case were recorded during the latest week. Dengue remained the most prevalent vector-borne disease in the city, though the cumulative tally till June 13 was lower than the 196 cases reported during the corresponding period last year.

Malaria cases also stood at

42, lower than the 70 recorded during the same period in 2025, while chikungunya cases declined from 14 to 9. Among Delhi's civic zones, the West Zone reported the highest number of dengue cases so far this year at 29, followed by the Central Zone with 21 and Civil Lines with 20. For malaria, the West Zone recorded the highest tally at 14 cases.

The report also showed that a significant number of cases were either acquired outside Delhi or involved incomplete addresses, making tracing efforts difficult. As part of anti-mosquito measures, MCD officials conducted over 8.3 lakh house visits during the week to check mosquito breeding and found 4,028 houses positive for mosquito larvae, officials said.

## Cop persuades man to abandon suicide attempt on Delhi flyover

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

A sub-inspector of the Delhi Police's PCR unit prevented a man from taking his own life on the Mahipalpur flyover, an officer said on Tuesday. Responding to an emergency call, the PCR team rushed to the spot and found the man standing dangerously close to the edge of the flyover.

Sub-Inspector Anil Sharma engaged him in conversation in an effort to calm him down and gain his trust. He also offered him water and continued speaking to him to ease his distress.

During the interaction, Sharma reassured the man while urging him to reconsider his decision, the officer said. As the conversation continued, the PCR staff distracted the man by handing him his mobile phone. Seizing the opportunity, they swiftly pulled him away from the edge and brought him to safety. Police credited Sharma's presence of mind, sensitivity and quick action for saving the young man's life.

# Delhi targets 70 lakh saplings under Mega Green Drive

PURNA SINGH  
NEW DELHI

THE Delhi government has announced an ambitious plan to plant 70 lakh saplings under the Delhi Mega Tree Plantation Campaign 2026, a citywide initiative aimed at expanding green cover, improving air quality and encouraging mass public participation through a technology-enabled platform.

Launched under the leadership of Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, the campaign draws inspiration from

**Launched under the leadership of Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, the campaign draws inspiration from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" initiative and seeks to transform tree plantation into a citizen-led environmental movement**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" initiative and seeks to transform tree plantation into a citizen-led environmental movement.

Residents will be able to register online and collect saplings free of cost from designated nurseries during

the monsoon season. Reviewing preparations at the Delhi Secretariat, Gupta said the campaign would not be a routine government exercise but a people-centric mission driven by community participation.

She emphasized that the success of the programme

would depend on citizens taking ownership of environmental conservation.

A major feature of the initiative is the e-Forest Green Drive Portal, which will function as the central platform for registration and monitoring.

Citizens can register using



their mobile number, name and address, book plantation slots, obtain free saplings and

geo-tag plantation sites. Participants will also be able to upload photographs of plant-

ed trees and receive a digital "Paryavaran Rakshak" certificate signed by the Chief Minister.

The campaign has been divided into three phases. The first phase will begin on June 22 with the online launch, release of a promotional video and awareness drives involving educational institutions, religious organisations and social groups until July 4.

The second phase, scheduled for the first week of July, will focus on Delhi's ridge areas. Around 2.5 lakh saplings will be planted across

key ecological zones including PBG Ground, Central Ridge, South Central Ridge and Nanakpura Ridge to strengthen biodiversity and urban green lungs.

The flagship third phase will be held in the second half of July at Swarna Jayanti Park, Rohini, linked live with 51 locations across Delhi. Nearly 11,000 people are expected to plant saplings simultaneously across all 70 Assembly constituencies and 13 districts. Union Home Minister Amit Shah has been invited to participate.

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## India must diversify fuel supply chains despite US-Iran MoU

THE memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the United States and Iran to mark the end of the war in West Asia has been greeted with more than a sigh of relief, all over. Stock markets have welcomed it including, in India whose half of crude imports pass through Strait of Hormuz. The Strait will be "completely open" from Friday, US President Donald Trump declared. It is "partially opened, already. However, there was 'hunting' in the area to ensure it was de-mined, he said. This is good news but demining the Strait is easier said than done. The US knows it. On June 2, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio told a Senate Foreign Relations Committee that

Iran had "mined large segments of Hormuz—international waters." Shipping and maritime security experts told a prominent Israeli newspaper that ensuring the Strait of Hormuz is safe from mines could delay a return to normal shipping traffic by weeks.

Conventional minesweepers could be deployed along with state-of-the-art underwater drones, but it may take 40 to 50 days before many insurance, shipping, or oil companies are confident enough to sail through, according to experts. Further, there is still a great deal of uncertainty with the MoU, which is just the beginning of real negotiations. Given the recalcitrant attitude of the clerical regime and

hardliner jihadists in Iran, the talks getting derailed at any moment is a distinct possibility. For these people are fired by revolutionary fervour; in their scheme of things, getting nuclear weapons is not a strategic requirement but a doctrinaire imperative. It is to be seen if these people could be reined in by saner elements in Tehran. Then there is Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is sulking because of Trump's insistence to have a deal as quickly as possible. While he has not criticised the MoU, he is certainly not happy; he and his nation will like a regime change in Iran—or, at least, substantive degradation of its military might. To be sure, the degradation

of Iran's armed forces is quite substantive, but Tel Aviv wants more.

In other words, peace will prevail for some time in the Middle East, but it will be fragile. The success of the proposed negotiations will depend on whether Iran's leadership is willing to make meaningful concessions on its nuclear programme and regional activities. Hardliners within the Iranian establishment may view any compromise as a sign of weakness and seek to obstruct the process. At the same time, domestic political pressures in both the United States and Israel could limit the room for diplomatic manoeuvre. Any perceived violation of commitments, however minor, may

trigger renewed tensions. Israel, as we mentioned, remains unconvinced that diplomacy alone can neutralise what it sees as the Iranian threat. Worse, the problem is not just the divergence in objectives between Washington and Tel Aviv; it is also Trump's temperament and temper, which he loses very often. He even uses four-letter words in public—something no head of state or government has done in recent memory. Therefore, countries like India should not celebrate the MoU too much. It is a good start, but a start, nonetheless. To reduce our dependence on the Strait, we must earnestly start diversifying our fuel supply chains.

## LETTERS

### RTI: System must deliver

PROPOS "21 years of RTI: Miles to go" (June 16). The Right to Information Act (RTI) completed 21 years as a pillar of Indian democracy. It has exposed corruption, tracked funds, and forced answers from public bodies. RTI helped citizens challenge opaque political funding and projects like electoral bonds. Yet the law is strained. Over 4.1 lakh appeals choke Information Commissions, and 2.4 lakh new cases came in a single year. States like Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh face the most delays. When authorities deny data, trust erodes. The Supreme Court recently called some RTI activism a business, dismissing an activist's bail plea in a road work case. Abuse must be curbed, but courts questioning motives risk chilling genuine queries. We need faster disposal, penalties for needless denial, and training for officials. Protecting whistleblowers and streamlining commissions will keep RTI strong. Transparency is not optional for governance. After two decades, the promise remains, but the system must deliver.

K Chidanand Kumar, Kollam

### RTI and judicial interference

PROPOS of "21 years of RTI: Miles to go" (THI June 16). It's been 21 years since the promulgation of the Right to Information Act (RTI). It was a milestone ordinance meant to instil accountability and transparency in functioning of governments, service sectors, and availability of fundamental rights to citizens. However, judicial interference and governmental foot-dragging have undermined RTI. This is exemplified by 4.1 lakh appeals pending and 2.4 lakh cases registered for review before Information Commissions. The incident of the Supreme Court denying anticipatory bail to a 'RTI activist', for monitoring road construction in Punjab, exemplifies the beating RTI has received. If that person who was denied bail had paid the gargantuan road tax and vehicle registration fees, it is his prerogative to ascertain the progress of the road meant for his use.

Dr George Jacob, Kochi

### Hail Indian army's move to end colonial-era customs

THE Indian army's recent introduction of new uniform regulations is commendable. These changes successfully shed vestigial colonial-era customs and embrace indigenous cultural aesthetics, while enhancing overall practicality and operational comfort for personnel across the board. Through these combined measures, the Indian army cultivates a distinct institutional identity rooted in India's own cultural fabric. Such measures reflect the army's continued commitment to ensuring that the institutions, traditions and spaces where soldiers live, train and serve increasingly embody India's own heroes, values and national legacy while preserving the professionalism and heritage of the force. These changes align the military's visual and ceremonial identity with contemporary sovereign Indian values, without compromising the dignity and discipline of the force. It is a proud moment for India that the visual landscape of the world's second-largest standing army is being fundamentally rewritten to project a modern and self-reliant nation.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, Chennai-210

### Not a typical peace framework

This refers to "Peace on paper, war on the ground — The fatal flaw in the Iran deal" (THI, June 16). The article identifies the central weakness of the US-Iran agreement with precision. A MoU that defers every substantive issue — nuclear sequencing, sanctions relief, regional security — to a sixty-day negotiation window is not a peace framework. It is a postponement dressed as diplomacy. The Israeli variable alone makes durability doubtful. Israel was not a party to the negotiations, does not consider itself bound by the terms, and has demonstrated repeatedly that it will act independently when it perceives existential threats. For countries like India that have genuine economic stakes in West Asia's stability, this uncertainty will prove a costly affair. Cautious optimism is warranted but structural confidence is not.

K Sakunthala, Coimbatore-641671

### A fine line between true morality and hypocrisy

IN an act of moral prudery, the NCERT 'appareled' the 'Dancing Girl' of Mohenjodaro (and disfigured her in the process) to spare Class 9 students the 'embarrassment' of having to look at her bare torso. NCERT officials have restored the palm-sized figurine to her original looks in the face of the flak from historians and educationalists. The modification misrepresenting the original artefact, if not reversed, would have denied the students the benefit of looking at the metallurgical marvel as it was conjured up about 4500 years ago. It is a must-see for students of the Indus Valley Civilization. Deriving aesthetic pleasure from human anatomy is not immoral or sinful to be so puritanical about it or take offence at it. For instance, Michelangelo's statue of David and sculptural works at the Khajuraho temple appeal to us as sentient beings. Desmond Morris' book 'The Naked Woman' is a study of the female body worth reading by everyone. It will disabuse us of outdated attitudes to nudity and sex. After all, there is a fine line between true morality and hypocrisy.

G David Milton, Maruthancode (TN)

thehansreader@gmail.com

## BENGALURU ONLINE

### MLA adopts three girls after Bidar family tragedy

BIDAR: In a heartwarming gesture following a tragic incident that claimed the lives of two sisters, Aurad MLA Prabhu Chavan has announced that he will take responsibility for the future of the three surviving daughters of the affected family in Shembelli village of Bidar district. The decision came after the legislator visited the family, which has been struggling emotionally and financially since the tragedy. The incident occurred on June 7 when six members of the family allegedly fell seriously ill after consuming mangoes. The victims, including mother Indumati and her five daughters, suffered severe vomiting and diarrhoea and were rushed for treatment.

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

## Even hardened criminals are sure to get caught!



RAVULAPATI SEETARAMA RAO

OUR ancestors used to talk about the ages. They said that in the Treta Yuga dharma stood on four legs, in Dwapara Yuga the number of legs decreased, and in Kali Yuga dharma almost lost its footing — elders would say this and people used to laugh. But looking at the crime-filled times that are spreading now, it feels as if our ancestors, with uncanny insight, were foretelling the future: "dharma will wither in the Kali Yuga." How true is that?

A reader going through newspapers would be left with no doubt that dharma has largely gone astray — it is a sickening, nauseating feeling. In one village, people who had regarded a poor man as a benevolent trustee were stunned when a police investigation revealed that he was a criminal who had been stealing the trust's assets; they were speechless and later felt they had no option but to cut him off completely. But an old man in that village, who was in the twilight of his life, did not show surprise—he muttered to himself, "It is the age of Kali," and accepted it.

In a small village of Uttar Pradesh, one Vikas Singh Thagor, known to be a modern Robin Hood, spent many years helping the poor as if it were a gift from God. He lovingly gave schoolbags to children who couldn't afford them. He helped the most disadvantaged in the village with money when they were in trouble. He even paid for luxury trips for his friends. Wherever he traveled, he flew and stayed in big hotels. For a man like that, how devastating it must have been to be caught in Manikanta Nagar colony in Vikarabad, and then after a police investigation that exposed him as Raju—Peda Double Roll—be forced to account for every penny? The poor villagers in UP and his friends must have been crushed by disappointment, while the police were elated at having caught a major thief.

Fate plays strange games. When a person's life is portrayed on film in a sensational way that makes theatre audiences gasp, and then people in real life encounter such a figure, the police warning that "this could be a fraud" becomes terrifying. When someone with a criminal past is finally caught, the old guard comforts that justice still moves forward.

In Telangana he posed as a labourer. Going from colony to colony pretending to be a worker, he noted which houses were locked. At night he looted many of those locked homes, and with the money he stole he



It always seems that police failures make the headlines — their successful work rarely does. In times like these, elders say, righteousness — whether small or great — inevitably endures. Scientific investigation is making tremendous inroads into the methods of hardened criminals.

returned to his village in UP and, without asking anyone, provided financial help to his friends, the poor and to children, living a life of luxury. That was Vikas Singh Thakur — who lost his freedom after he was trapped by the police. He confessed that he had stolen about 1.57 kg of gold, 2.56 kg of silver and cash totaling Rs 8.22 lakh. He began stealing at the age of 16 and built a notorious record: 34 cases in police books, which makes for a remarkable criminal history. Now, after Vikarabad police investigations, his number of thefts has risen to 61. In Sultanpur district,

four gold traders aided him, taking the stolen jewellery, giving him a share and even lending money when he needed it. He gave the gold to them through his mother. If a mother does not stop her son from stealing vegetables, she must bear some responsibility for the history that follows. This episode almost feels like a moral drama playing out in real life. The Vikarabad police and higher authorities must be commended for bringing Vikas Thakur's career to account.

In another incident, white-collared criminals who had expanded the marijuana trade all the way to Thailand

were arrested by the newly formed "Eagle Force" (a police unit), writing new pages in history! They used 300 vehicles, made 405 flight bookings, and spent lakhs on flights alone. They landed in Thailand with wine and water facilities, spent nearly Rs three crore, and were trying to set up a "Pattaya-style" nightclub in Kokapet area of Hyderabad when the police caught them during a sting! Forty people operate in this network. Many have been arrested. Hemang Pramod Kelsukar and Sudhanshu Pramod Kelsukar (both from Mumbai) were running the gang. Operating since around 2023, they had established links across Telangana, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh, among other states, running this drug operation in a highly organized manner — until police surveillance exposed it. People are very pleased that Eagle Force and senior officers, through hard, painstaking work, successfully caught such big time criminals.

On the same page is the news that Dilshuknagar police caught international cannabis smugglers from Odisha while they were selling the drug. Ramesh Bandam and Nirmal Chhatrya were arrested. These are brazen, clever thefts — frauds carried out to deceive officials and cover their tracks — and this criminal experiment to trick authorities also makes the headlines in newspapers!

Cyberabad police warned people to be careful of such

criminals and revealed their tactics. Posing as employees of the Metropolitan Water Works, they were sending WhatsApp messages to residents in some areas saying that their water bill was unpaid and the connection would be disconnected — a ploy to extort money. Although the identities of those involved haven't been reported in the news, this warning makes it clear that Hyderabad residents must stay on guard. Any reader who goes through this page of varied crime reports can't help but exclaim, "Good heavens!" But learning that the police are making proper efforts to catch and control crime makes it worth sharing these details. It always seems that police failures make the headlines — their successful work rarely does. In times like these, elders say, righteousness — whether small or great — inevitably endures.

Scientific investigation is making tremendous inroads into the methods of hardened criminals. CC cameras, WhatsApp messages, telephonic conversations, and a watch on hardened criminals outside and inside jail see them as sitting ducks. Let people encourage not only Telangana police but the firmament in our country to continue similar efforts to ensure people lead happy lives, safe, and secure.

(The writer is a retired IPS officer, who has served as an Additional DGP of Andhra Pradesh)

## Man made tragedies-Lifetime trauma for victims' kin; protection for perpetrators

DR HYMA MOORTY

MAJOR man-made fire disasters—ranging from industrial accidents and city-wide bombings to catastrophic infrastructure failures have claimed several precious lives.

The Uphaar cinema tragedy was one of the worst fire disasters in recent Indian history. The fire started in the parking lot during the matinee screening of the movie 'Border' on June 13, 1977. Approximately, 59 people died of asphyxiation and 103 were seriously injured in the subsequent stampede. There is no record of how many succumbed eventually. The result was that one of the Ansal brothers (The hall's promoters) was sentenced to two years in jail. Justice delivered for so many deaths? This is the result of a 24-year legal battle fought by two grieving parents.

Seven newborns died and 12 were rescued following a fire at the baby care wing in New Born Hospital in East Delhi's Vivek Vihar. A massive fire broke out at the TRP Game Zone in Rajkot, claiming 33 lives, including nine under-16 children. Foreign nationals were among the 21 people who died in a blaze that ripped through a hotel in South Delhi's Malviya Nagar on June 3. At least 47 people were pulled out of the inferno and taken to nearby hospitals but how many of them will walk out of the hospitals remains uncertain.

Tragically, most fire tragedies in the country happen either when greed takes over safety or the build-

By the time the CBI or ED book a case, he emerges as a popular real estate developer in Hyderabad. These guys roam in circles where 'getting away with it is a flex'. Shame does not work and conscience is something they don't have. You must hit at the things that they value most—money, freedom + status and the ability to do business, all over again. Seize assets before trial. Not after 10 years. Freeze bank accounts; attach properties, auction them to pay victims within 90 days can be good deterrents.



vent theft. Overcrowding beyond permitted capacity. Flammable material stored because "What are the odds"? The calculation is always: "Will I get caught?" and not "Will someone die?"

A person who has done something illegal is a criminal. One who is morally and ethically wrong is also a criminal. Thieves outwit systems. What is the punishment 'if caught'? A fine that is one per cent of a day's profit and the case drags for any number of years. The risk reward is broken again. Unethical behaviour pays. Safety doesn't. Officers personally should be made liable if structures cleared by them burn. Make owners criminally liable for deaths, not just fines. Charge them with culpable homicide not amounting to murder and straight away jail them for 10 years, if not

more. Property should be seized. These are hardened criminals; public shaming does not embarrass them at all. Jail is a "business risk". A twitter trend is just blabber. They are budgeted for it. Shut down in Rajkot and move to Surat is the modus operandi—a new name, new company but the same old illegal activities.

While anguished families of victims are in courts awaiting justice, the owner-perpetrator is inaugurating a new gaming zone, around the same time. No dearth of money results in getting a new identity, shifting base to a new city and enjoying new political protection. If there is a fire safety case against a person in Gujarat or Delhi, the 'viable' option for street-smart individuals is to set up a new establishment in the neighbouring state

## AKAL TAKHT EDICT AGAINST PUNJAB CM

## False propaganda, person in video not me: Mann

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH

A day after the Sikh clergy declared him 'Guru Dokhi' (anti-Guru) and 'Khalsa Panth virodhi' (anti-Khalsa Panth) over an "objectionable" video, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Tuesday rejected it, saying the person in the video was not him.

In a video message, the chief minister expressed surprise over the people occupying the highest positions of religious bodies "indulging in false propa-

ganda at the behest of their political bosses" to defame him.

In a post on X, Mann said, "The president of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee has openly become a propagandist for the Akali Dal.

"The only thing left now is to get a directive issued through the Jathedar Sahib saying, 'Vote for Sukhbir Badal, otherwise the 'Panth' is in danger.' Such a decision could be taken at any time," he said. The matter stems from the summoning of Mann by the Akal Takht,

the highest temporal seat of Sikhs, in January this year for allegedly making comments on 'Guru ki Golak' (gurdwara donation box) and indulging in "objectionable activities" with the pictures of the Sikh Gurus and slain militant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale in a purported video clip.

In his video message on Tuesday, Mann said a 'hukamnama' (edict) had been issued against him over the video, claiming that it featured him and that it was not AI-generated. "I completely reject this

video," he said.

Mann said when he was summoned to the Akal Takht earlier, he had said that it was not him in the purported video. "The person seen in the video does not match my height and physique," he said.

"But I am surprised at how the people sitting at the highest positions of religious bodies are indulging in such false propaganda at the behest of their political bosses," Mann said, alluding to Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Kuldeep Singh Gargaji, who pronounced the edict

**'The president of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee has openly become a propagandist for the Akali Dal. The only thing left now is to get a directive issued through the Jathedar Sahib saying, vote for Sukhbir Badal, otherwise the 'Panth' is in danger'**

against the CM on Monday.

"They are indulging in mudslinging to defame me. Because I am taking decisions for safeguarding Punjab's waters, youths,

farmers and teachings of the Guru Sahiban," he said.

He said religion was being used to defame him. "I have always considered Sri Akal Takht Sahib as the



supreme temporal authority and bow before it with utmost humility and devotion. The very thought of challenging its authority is beyond imagination and I

have never deviated from this belief. Neither I nor generations of my family can ever imagine challenging Sri Akal Takht Sahib," he added.

## Twisha Sharma death case

## Court extends judicial custody of husband, mother-in-law

**Twisha's first post-mortem report says her death was caused due to antemortem hanging by ligature and her body bore multiple antemortem injuries (simple in nature possible by blunt force over other parts of the body have been noted)**

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHOPAL

A court in Bhopal on Tuesday extended by 14 days the judicial custody of late model Twisha Sharma's husband, Samarth Singh and mother-in-law and former judge Giribala Singh, both accused of dowry harassment. Ankur Pandey, the lawyer representing Twisha's family, told PTI that both accused joined the hearing, which was held in the court of Judge Shobhana Bhalave, virtually.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had sought an extension of judicial custody until June 30, which the court accepted. Both accused are currently lodged in the Bhopal Central Jail. Twisha was found hanging in her



marital home in Bhopal on May 12. Amid allegations of lapses in the probe, the investigation was referred to the CBI. On June 2, the court remanded both accused to judicial custody for 14 days till June 16.

Twisha's first post-mortem report said her death was caused due to "antemortem hanging by ligature" and her

body bore "multiple antemortem injuries (simple in nature possible by blunt force over other parts of the body have been noted)".

After receiving the post-mortem report and recording the statement of family members of Twisha, a former actor-model, the police registered the FIR on May 15. In their statements,

Twisha's family members had alleged that she was tormented by her in-laws, who were not satisfied with the dowry paid at the time of marriage on December 9, 2025.

They had accused her in-laws of mental torture and domestic violence, and pushing the 33-year-old to take the extreme step. In the statement given to the police at the time of filing the FIR, Twisha's family said she had spoken to her mother at 9.41 pm. During the call, her husband was heard shouting, and the call was abruptly disconnected, the FIR citing the statement alleged. After repeated calls, Giribala Singh picked up the phone and told Twisha's sister-in-law that "she is no more" and cut the call, it is alleged.

## Clash between Sikh pilgrims, locals over parking dispute leaves 5 injured

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
CHAMOLI

A clash between a group of Sikh pilgrims and locals over a parking dispute near Panch Puliya in Karnprayag here left five people, including a pilgrim, injured, police said on Tuesday. The incident prompted angry locals to block the Badrinath National Highway (NH-07) for four hours before senior police and administrative officials intervened to restore order.

According to eyewitnesses, the dispute began in the morning when a group of pilgrims on their way to Hemkund Sahib parked their vehicle in front of a local hotel. The argument escalated, and the pilgrims allegedly attacked the residents with swords and kirpans.

The injured people were taken to a government hospital in Karnprayag, the police said, adding that one



of the injured was said to be in critical condition and referred to another hospital. The injured have been identified as Prakash Rawat (26), Sudarshan Kandari (55), Gajpal Singh (50), Harendra Singh (42), all residents of Karnprayag, and Manpreet Singh (21), a resident of Punjab's Mohali.

Following the incident, locals gathered near the Karnprayag police post and blocked the national highway, causing a massive traffic jam and leaving hundreds of vehicles carrying pilgrims

to Badrinath and Hemkund Sahib, as well as local commuters, stranded.

To control the traffic flow, the police temporarily stopped vehicles at a designated holding area in Gauchar.

The protest was called off after Chamoli District Magistrate Gaurav Kumar and Superintendent of Police Surjit Singh Panwar reached the spot and held discussions with the protesters, assuring them of strict action against those responsible for the violence.

## Modi must take up with Trump killing of seafarers: Priyanka

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

CONGRESS leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Tuesday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to take up with US President Donald Trump the issue of the killing of three Indian seafarers in American attacks on ships when the two leaders meet on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in France.

Prime Minister Modi and Trump are set to meet on the sidelines of the G-7 meeting in France on Wednesday. This will be the first meeting between the two leaders since February last year in Washington and comes against the backdrop of concerns over the death of Indian mariners on commercial ships targeted by the US navy in the Strait of Hormuz. Speaking with reporters, the Congress leader said, "Yes, I definitely think he should take it (the issue of three Indian sailors killed in US strikes) up."

## N.E. RAILWAY

## OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE

Opened E-tender based on Single Packet system & works are tender (Tender notice No. M/C&W/02/2026-27 dt. 11.06.2026) invited by Divisional Rail Manager/Mech./C&W/Varanasi/ N.E. Railway for and on behalf of President of India for following work:- **Description of works:-** Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Mechanized Laundry Machines at Mechanized Laundry Chhapra and MAU Jn. **Approx. Value (Rs.)-** ₹1,56,51,626.74 (Rs. one crore fifty six lacs fifty one thousand six hundred twenty six and seventy four paise only). **Bid Security Money-** ₹3,13,000.00 (Rs. Three lacs thirteen thousand only). **Cost of Tender Paper:-** Nil (Authority SGCC, Works, April 2022 issued by Railway Board vide letter no. 2022/CE-I/CT/GC-C-2022/Policy New Delhi, dated 27.04.2022). **For Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning as per scope of work:-** 06 months from date of issue of L.O.A. **WARRANTY/GUARANTEE:-** 02 years or OEM specified whichever is more. **Date and time of closing of E-Tender:-** 10.07.2026 at 14.30 Hrs. **Date and time of opening of E-Tender:-** 10.07.2026 at 15.00 Hrs. **Tenderers** may submit their offers online up to 10.07.2026 at 14.30 Hrs. **PI** go to the website [www.irops.gov.in](http://www.irops.gov.in) to see the complete details and upload the tender. **Sr.DME/C&W/CPRO/Mech-44 Varanasi**  
Do Not Smoke Bidi/Cigarette in train



## Failing to get seat in train man cries, 'bomb, bomb'

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
LUCKNOW

A passenger allegedly spread a false bomb alert on a train at the Aishbagh station here after he failed to get a seat, triggering panic among commuters and a security check by multiple agencies, police said on Tuesday.

The accused, identified as Saini Jackie (26), a resident of Telangana, did so after he could not find a place to sit in the train, according to the Lucknow Police. Following the alert, local police, Government Railway Police (GRP) and other security agencies rushed to the spot and carried out a

detailed search of the train and all its coaches. "No suspicious object or explosive material was found during the checking. The information about the bomb was found to be completely false," police said. The train was later declared safe and allowed to continue its journey. The accused has been taken into custody by the GRP and legal proceedings are underway, officials said. The incident comes days after a hoax bomb threat on an IndiGo flight from Lucknow to Delhi, which delayed the flight by around six hours and caused panic among passengers while security agencies were put on high alert.

## BJP lost composure, says Ashok Gehlot

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
KOTA

AHEAD of Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi's scheduled visit to Kota, senior Congress leader and former Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has accused the BJP and the Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla of intimidating coaching centre operators and local accommodation owners to suppress student participation.

In an X post, Gehlot claimed that the ruling party has "lost its composure" following "tremendous enthusiasm among students" for protest against the Centre over the NEET-UG paper leak controversy.



"On June 17, in Kota, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Shri @RahulGandhi, is coming to engage in dialogue with the students in protest against the NEET paper leak. There is tremendous enthusiasm among students and activists regarding this program, and a large number of students want to participate in it," he said. Condemning the alleged interference, Gehlot emphasised that such actions compromise the integrity of high constitutional offices and stifle democratic

engagement.

"Seeing the enthusiasm of the youth for this program, the BJP has completely lost its composure, and calls are being made from the office of the Kota MP and the Lok Sabha Speaker to intimidate coaching institute operators, PG owners, and guest house managers, warning them that no students should attend this program from their premises. A person holding the dignified position of Speaker should not harbour such thinking. Such an attempt to obstruct the democratic process of dialogue between the Leader of the Opposition and the students in the Lok Sabha is highly condemnable," Gehlot added.

## Woman on vacation with hubby found dead in Mussoorie homestay

DEHRADUN: A 27-year-old woman working with an information technology firm in Gurugram was found dead under mysterious circumstances at a homestay on the Mussoorie-Dhanolti road, police said on Tuesday.

The deceased was identified as P Radha Gayatri, a resident of Kidwai Nagar East in Delhi. According to the police, Gayatri had arrived at the Kiana Homestay Tripidhar late Sunday night with her husband, Soumya Sricharan, also an IT

worker in Pune. On Monday morning, the Mussoorie police received information about an unresponsive woman at the homestay. An ambulance was rushed, and a pharmacist attached to the ambulance service declared the woman dead.

## Rs 3L/kg Miyazaki mango offered to Lord Ram in Ayodhya

The rare mango, cultivated by a local farmer in Ayodhya, is valued between Rs 2.5 lakh and Rs 3 lakh per kilogram in the international market. A single fruit is estimated to cost around Rs 1 lakh, making it one of the most expensive mango varieties in the world

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
AYODHYA

THE world's costliest mango, the Japanese Miyazaki variety, popularly known as the "Egg of the Sun", was offered to Lord Ram at the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya for the first time.

The rare mango, cultivated by a local farmer in Ayodhya, is valued between Rs 2.5 lakh and Rs 3 lakh per kilogram in the international market. A single fruit is estimated to cost around Rs 1 lakh, making it one of the most expensive

mango varieties in the world.

The offering was made on Monday to the deity in keeping with local traditions, with the fruit presented along with a Tulsi (holy basil) leaf. The Miyazaki mango was cultivated by farmer Omprakash Singh, who planted the tree around two years ago to assess its suitability to Ayodhya's climatic conditions. According to Singh, the tree successfully adapted to the local environment and produced nearly a dozen fruits this season. Speaking to ANI, Singh said



the Miyazaki mango is known for its exceptional sweetness, high fibre content and nutritional value. "This is a very famous mango from Japan known as Miyazaki, which is the world's most expensive mango. It is much sweeter

than other varieties, rich in fibre, and packed with vitamins. I planted the tree about two years ago to test its viability in Ayodhya's climate, and it has yielded about a dozen fruits, each weighing between 150g and 300g. As per tradition,

the first ripe mango was offered to the deity. Besides the Miyazaki, I am also growing various other varieties, including Thailand's 'Banana Mango', Australia's 'R2E2', and Indian staples like 'Chauns' and 'Dasher', Singh said.

NORTHERN RAILWAY E-AUCTION NOTICE			
No.: 7PUB/e-Auction/NIT-2026		Dated: 15.06.2026	
The Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/ G, Northern Railway, Delhi Division, New Delhi invites e-Auction through IREPS ( <a href="https://irops.gov.in">https://irops.gov.in</a> ) for allotment of Misc contracts of NFR at following railway stations:			
E-Catalogue No.	Type of Asset	Station	Date & Time for e-auction
AdvT-Jun-03-26	Digital Lockers at Stations.	Hazrat Nizamuddin, Anand Vihar Terminal, New Delhi	Start: 29.06.2026 at 11:00 hrs.
AdvT-Jun-04-26	Digital Lockers at Stations.	Delhi	Start: 01.07.2026 at 11:00 hrs.
Website particulars where complete details of E-Auction can be seen		<a href="https://irops.gov.in/">https://irops.gov.in/</a> (E-Auction-Leasing)	
Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/ G, Northern Railway, Delhi Division, New Delhi			
2053/26 <b>SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE</b>			

## EXTENSION OF PERIODICITY EXAM SPECIAL TRAINS

it is notified for the information of rail passengers that Northern Railway has decided to extend the periodicity of the run of exam special trains as per details given below:-

Train No. & Name	existing Notified period	Extended Period
04427 Shakurbasti-Saharanpur unreserved Exam Special	13.06.2026, 14.06.2026 15.06.2026 & 16.06.2026	17.06.2026, 18.06.2026 19.06.2026 & 20.06.2026
04428 Saharanpur-Shakurbasti unreserved Exam Special	14.06.2026, 15.06.2026 16.06.2026 & 17.06.2026	18.06.2026, 19.06.2026 20.06.2026 & 21.06.2026
04429 Shakurbasti-Saharanpur unreserved Exam Special	13.06.2026, 14.06.2026 15.06.2026 & 16.06.2026	17.06.2026, 18.06.2026 19.06.2026 & 20.06.2026
04430 Saharanpur-New Delhi unreserved Exam Special	13.06.2026, 14.06.2026 15.06.2026 & 16.06.2026	17.06.2026, 18.06.2026 19.06.2026 & 20.06.2026

For detailed information, please call RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit enquiry website: [www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in](http://www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in)

RailMadad Helpline No. 139 Visit RailMadad website: [www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in) Download RailMadad app. **NORTHERN RAILWAY** Always at your service Visit us at: [www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in) 2065/2026 **SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE**

After the game (against New Zealand) they said to us, 'you have to leave immediately. We've been asked to get on a plane and return to our camp in Tijuana, and we are really troubled by that. They are forcing us to go back early. They are making the situation more and more difficult, more hurdles, but we're not going to let that stop us from doing our best' - Amir Ghalenoi, Iran football team head coach



## Cape Verde's veteran wall stands tall on WC debut

Vozinha, 40, makes seven saves to hold Spain's star-studded lineup to shocking 0-0 draw

R J RICO  
ATLANTA

IT took Cape Verde goalkeeper Vozinha all of his 40 years on Earth to make his World Cup debut. The long, long wait was worth every fleeting second. Vozinha recorded seven saves on Monday, holding Spain's star-studded lineup to a shocking 0-0 draw.

The veteran keeper was everywhere as the Spanish team and its fans became increasingly frustrated, despite dominating possession and unleashing 27 shots. Not even the second-half entrance of young superstar Lamine Yamal could crack the code to get past Vozinha and the Cape Verde defense.

As the final whistle blew, Vozinha hunched over near his net and cried before being embraced by his teammates. Cape Verde, in its first-ever World Cup match, had gotten a point against Spain, the 2010 champion and one of the tournament favorites this year.

Vozinha said he was overcome by emotions thinking about his loved ones who were unable to see his finest performance: his grandparents who had raised him, and his mother. His grandparents died a few years ago.

And his mother had been unable to gather the money in time to secure a visa to enter the US, Vozinha said. Cape Verde is among 50 countries



Cape Verde goalkeeper Vozinha makes a save during the World Cup match against Spain

whose citizens face bonds of up to \$15,000 to secure a US visa, part of President Donald Trump's broader crackdown on travelers from countries that officials said had high rates of visa overstays.

The Trump administration last month suspended the requirement for ticket-holders from Cape Verde and four other World Cup nations, but critics said it was too late for many fans. Vozinha's performance was a culmination of a career that didn't even start at the professional level until Vozinha made his debut at the age of 25 for Angolan club Progresso. Since then, he's had stops in Moldova, Cyprus, Slovakia and Portugal, where he currently plays for Chaves in the Portuguese second division. He joined the national team in 2012 and at times, Vozinha said, he thought about retiring from the national team, but he "continued

because of this dream."

"I work all my life for this, for this moment, for this dream," Vozinha said. "A lot of generations in the past (dreamed of) this day but they did not achieve. And now the dream comes true." The word "vozinha" is Portuguese for "little grandmother," and the goalkeeper said he was given the nickname by older kids who would beat him on the soccer field and then laugh, saying he was going home to complain to his grandparents.

Years later, he took on the nickname after someone else on his club also had the same first name, Josimar. These days, Cape Verde defender Steven Moreira said he and his teammates like to tease Vozinha about his age. He said he was proud of the keeper, calling him a "big legend" who had a "crazy game" and showed that age doesn't matter.



Belgium's Romelu Lukaku celebrates with teammates after a self goal from Egypt earn a draw for the latter

## Belgium settles for 1-1 draw with Egypt

SEATTLE: Romelu Lukaku's mere presence sparked an attack that led to Belgium's lone goal only seconds after he entered as a second-half substitute, helping his team earn a 1-1 draw with Egypt on Monday at the World Cup.

Lukaku came on in the 66th minute with Belgium trailing 1-0. He ran down the middle of the field and lurched to tap a cross from the right into the net, but Egypt defender Mohamed Hany did that instead, scoring an own-goal. The equalising goal came only 23 seconds after Lukaku came on the field. Emam Ashour had put the Egyptians ahead in the 19th minute with his first international goal. Ashour, a midfielder who was playing in his 30th game for his country, took advantage of a defensive breakdown to give Egypt only its second lead in World Cup match. The Egyptians, who are playing in their fourth World Cup, still have never won a game at the tournament. Belgium failed to advance past the group stage at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar and has not won any of its last three matches in the tournament. Egypt had numerous chances to increase its lead but could not put the Red Devils away. Lukaku and teammate Kevin De Bruyne also had an abundance of opportunities to take the lead. (AP)

## RESULTS

- Spain 0 Cape Verde 0
- Belgium 1 Egypt 1
- Saudi Arabia 1 Uruguay 1
- Iran 2 New Zealand 2

## Fixtures (in IST)

### ON WEDNESDAY

- France vs Senegal 12:30 am at MetLife Stadium, East Rutherford, New Jersey
- Iraq vs Norway 3:30 am at Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts
- Argentina vs Algeria 6:30 am at GEHA Field at Arrowhead Stadium, Kansas City, Missouri
- Austria vs Jordan 9:30 am at Levi's Stadium, Santa Clara, California
- Portugal vs Congo DR 10:30 pm at NRG Stadium, Houston, Texas

### ON THURSDAY

- England vs Croatia 1:30 am at AT&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas
- Ghana vs Panama 4:30 am at BMO Field, Toronto, Canada
- Uzbekistan vs Colombia 7:30 am at Estadio Banorte, Mexico City, Mexico
- Czechia vs South Africa 9:30 pm at Mercedes-Benz Stadium, Atlanta, Georgia

## Gurucharan bags Brilliant Trophy Jrs online chess title

HYDERABAD: Gurucharan Bhole of Raviteja High School, Narayanpet, emerged champion of the Brilliant Trophy Juniors Online Chess Tournament, scoring an impressive 11 points from 12 rounds. The tournament, conducted online, witnessed participation from young chess talents across the country.

Ayaan Arora of New Delhi and Saw Jinson Samuel of Andaman & Nicobar Islands secured second and third places respectively, both finishing with 10.5 points from 12 rounds. Leeladitya Vardhan, Shammukha Vasudeva, Anjan Goud Panasa, P Jillin Jeffin, Lopamudra Srivalli Aadya, Advitiya A G., and Laxmi Rishaank completed the top ten standings.

The event also featured age-category prizes for boys and girls in Under-15, Under-13, Under-11, Under-9 and Under-7 sections. Several promising young players showcased their skills, making the tournament a highly competitive and successful event.

The age category prize



winners are: Boys: Under-15: 1. Mohammed Shabbir Ahmed, 2. Preran Under-13: 1. M Adithya, 2. VSai Anirudh. Under-11: 1. Sacit Bara, 2. Arhant Reddy Swarna. Under-9: 1. Mohammed Sahir Ahmed, 2. T Easanth Under-7: 1. Vaidik Tanwar, 2. B Nithwik.

Girls: Under-15: 1. Sri Lasya Tummupudi, 2. Kandeputu Manasa. Under-13: 1. Saanvika Akarapu, 2. Parnita Under-11: 1.S K Sony, 2. Kandeputu Karthika. Under-9: 1. Anshitha, 2. B Aira. Under-7: 1. B Nithwika, 2. Ishika Garlapati.

## Gymkhana FC enter semis, beat Bolarum Sporting 2-0

HYDERABAD: Gymkhana FC secured a place in the semi-finals of the Bolarum Challenge Cup 2026 with a convincing 2-0 victory over hosts Bolarum Sporting in the tournament's second quarter-final match.

Bolarum Sporting made an energetic start and nearly opened the scoring in the 10th minute. Piyush delivered a precise cross to Sai Satya, but a timely intervention by a Gymkhana defender prevented the hosts from taking the lead.

Gymkhana FC gradually settled into the contest and broke the deadlock in the 20th minute of the first half. Jobin finished off a well-constructed attacking move to put his side ahead 1-0.

The visitors maintained control after the break and doubled their advantage in the 75th minute. Majid reacted quickest to a rebound after goalkeeper Likith made an initial save, calmly slotting the ball home to make it 2-0.

Bolarum Sporting continued to battle hard and created a late chance through Abhishek, but he was unable to find the target.

## TCA THREATENS LEGAL ACTION OVER PROPOSED TG-20 LEAGUE



HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

THE Telangana Cricket Association (TCA) has announced that it will issue legal notices to several film personalities, cricketers and Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA) officials over their alleged association with the proposed

TG-20 League, which it claims lacks mandatory approval from the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). TCA General Secretary Dharam Guruvu Reddy said notices would be sent to actors Venkatesh Daggubati and Vijay Deverakonda, former India cricketer Ambati Rayudu, and international players Tilak Varma

and Mohammed Siraj, among others. The association alleged that their endorsements could create a misleading impression that the tournament is officially recognized. The TCA also raised concerns over the role of the Court-appointed Single Member Committee headed by retired Justice P. Naveen Rao and questioned the legality of the league's governing structure and financial transactions.

Further, the association alleged political interference in cricket administration, irregularities in franchise ownership and marginalization of district-level players. It claimed that cricket was being used to advance commercial and political interests.

# 'People from RSS' behind attack on me: Dipke

JAIPUR

COCKROACH Janta Party founder Abhijeet Dipke on Tuesday alleged that "some people from RSS" were behind the attack on him a day earlier, claiming it was an attempt to shift focus away from the real issue and stifle the voice of students.

Dipke landed at the Nagpur airport on Tuesday morning, ahead of the BJP's protest scheduled at Samvidhan Square here later in the day to demand the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over last month's NEET (UG) paper leak issue.

The BJP founder was allegedly slapped multiple times by two men while supporters carried him on their shoulders during a protest in Jaipur on Monday. Two youths have been detained in connection with the incident.



Asked who he thinks was behind the attack on him, Dipke alleged, "There were some people belonging to RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh), and there is nothing new in it."

Whenever someone speaks against the government or their ideology, they do like this; there is nothing new in it, he claimed.

On claims that he has ties

with RSS and had met Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Dipke said, "Is that why they attacked me yesterday?"

He claimed the attack on him was an attempt to divert attention from the real issue and to suppress the students' voices.

"We will not deviate from our issues; you attack us as much as you want. We will do our protest peacefully

and democratically and not deviate from our main issue, which is about more than one crore students suffering injustice, and Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has to take responsibility for it," he said.

"These kind of attacks will keep happening, but I am not afraid. We walk on the path of (Mahatma) Gandhi ji and Ambedkar, and it is our satyagraha, we will keep going on peacefully," he asserted.

Dipke has appealed to Nagpur residents, including students and the youth, to gather at Samvidhan Square at 4 pm on Tuesday for a peaceful demonstration.

The BJP has been demanding Pradhan's resignation over the NEET (UG) paper leak scandal.

Elaborate security arrangements have been made ahead of the protest in Nagpur, officials said. PTI

## 'BJP failed' accountability test by not seeking Pradhan's exit'

NEW DELHI

CONGRESS president Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday accused the BJP government of having completely failed the test of accountability by not asking Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan to resign following several exam irregularities.

He also criticised the government for putting curbs on the Telegram messaging app ahead of the NEET-UG 2026 re-exam on June 21, "The Modi government has temporarily blocked Telegram for the NEET exam re-test."

Modi ji should first demand the resignation of his Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, who has blocked the futures of millions of youth," Kharge said in a post on X.

"Whether it's deploying the Indian Air Force, blocking Telegram, or catching small fish to protect the paper leak mafia - this is all something the Modi government has to do because in the last



10 years, 90 paper leaks have occurred, and 9 crore youth are suffering due to this fraud and corruption. How long will this government keep covering up its failures?" the Congress chief asked.

The Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha claimed that nearly half a dozen young people have been forced to take their own lives due to the exam irregularities.

"Modi ji doesn't utter a single word. There are countless candidates whose parents took loans to prepare them for recruitment exams over

years. And then, one after another, NEET, SSC, UGC-NET, CUET, and other exam papers get leaked," he said.

The situation, Kharge said, has reached such a point that so much fraud was carried out in the CBSE results that talented students had to expose this government.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi will also be addressing a few student conventions across the country starting June 17 in Kota while seeking to unite the student community against the Modi government over the paper leaks.

## Jharkhand: NDA MLAs moved to hotel ahead of RS polls

RANCHI: Legislators of the opposition NDA in Jharkhand were being moved to a hotel here days ahead of polls to two Rajya Sabha seats in Jharkhand, a source in the alliance said. Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly Babul Marandi said they will hold meetings to chalk out a strategy for the elections on June 18. Asking if the MLAs would stay at the hotel for two days, he said, "We will hold meetings." The BJP leader exuded confidence in the victory of the BJP-backed Independent candidate Parimal Nathwani in one of the two Rajya Sabha seats in the state.

A candidate is required to secure a minimum of 28 first-preference votes to emerge victorious. The BJP-led NDA does not have the numbers in the state assembly to make Nathwani a winner in the polls, unless there is cross-voting, a ruling party legislator said. In the Jharkhand Assembly, the INDIA bloc has 56 members, comprising 34 from the JMM, 16 from the Congress, four from the RJD and two from CPI(M) Liberation.

## NCPI names new chief; party gen secy 'has no idea'

KOLKATA: The Nationalist Citizens Party of India, which has been thrust into the spotlight after the Trinamool Congress rebel Lok Sabha faction's merger with it, has named Jyotiprakash Chatterji as its new president, according to Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar, a key face of the dissident camp.

Ghosh Dastidar's statement came a day after NCPI founder Shewli Kundu told reporters that she had stepped down as the NCPI chief, triggering speculation that Ghosh Dastidar herself had taken charge of the party.

## Amid TMC split, LS speaker gave Abhishek 2-hr notice

NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla will hear the defected TMC MPs as well as the faction led by Mamata Banerjee before deciding on giving recognition to the breakaway faction, sources said. Meanwhile, sources from the Mamata-led TMC said that on Monday, its leader Abhishek Banerjee was called for a meeting with Birla at a two-hour notice when he was still being questioned by the ED. TMC sources said Banerjee got an email from the speaker's office at around

2 pm on Monday, asking him to meet Birla at 4 pm. Soon after, the speaker's office called party MP Kirti Azad and told him about the email. Azad, in response, informed the speaker's office that Banerjee was "committed to cooperating with all investigative agencies" and was cooperating with the investigation at the ED office in CGO complex in Kolkata, sources said. Later in the day, Azad also met the speaker to inform him about the email.

The sources added that Banerjee returned after questioning only around mid-



night. The communication came as around 20 TMC MPs announced they were merging with the little-known Nationalist Citizens Party of India (NCPI) and said they would later stake claim to be recognised as the "real TMC".

Earlier, sources from Parliament said Birla is likely to seek legal opinion on the defected leaders' demand to be recognised as a separate group after a proposed merger with the little-known Nationalist Citizens Party of India (NCPI).

## Two held for throwing eggs at TMC MLA Kunal

KOLKATA: Two persons were arrested on Tuesday morning, allegedly for throwing eggs at Trinamool Congress MLA Kunal Ghosh outside party supreme Mamata Banerjee's residence here, a senior police officer said. Chandan Singh and Ravi Koyal were arrested following a complaint lodged by Ghosh late on Monday evening. "An FIR was registered immediately. One accused was detained in the night, and based on information gathered during his interrogation, the second accused was arrested on Tuesday morning," a senior police officer said.

## Raut rejects Sena (UBT) MP defection buzz

MUMBAI

A day after Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Deshmukh met Shiv Sena minister Prataprao Jadhav, sparking speculation of a possible switch, Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut said a "wrong picture was being painted" and asserted all parliamentarians remain firmly with the party.

Talking to reporters in New Delhi, Raut targeted the ruling BJP, accusing it of splitting parties and saying this was bad for the country's political health. "All Shiv Sena (UBT) MPs are together and will remain together," the



Rajya Sabha member said. The Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT) has downplayed the speculation of an "Operation Tiger" being afoot (by ruling Shiv Sena led by Eknath Shinde) to poach party MPs.

Notably, the mascot of the undivided Shiv Sena was a tiger drawn by party founder Bal Thackeray. Thackeray on Sunday called a meeting of

party MPs. Of the nine Lok Sabha members, only four --- Arvind Sawant, Anil Desai, Rajabhu Waze and Sanjay Patil --- attended the meeting in person, while Omprakash Rajee Nimbalkar, Bhausaheb Wakchaur, Nagesh Bapurao Patil Ashtikar and Sanjay Deshmukh attended online.

Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Jadhav spoke to Thackeray over the phone, Raut said on Monday. The five MPs had cited different reasons to attend the meeting virtually.

Deshmukh, MP from Yavatmal-Washim, had said he skipped the meeting for family reasons.



## BIZ BRIEFS

## Beautyverse by Amazon

Amazon India has announced the third edition of Beautyverse, its flagship beauty discovery event, scheduled for June 20 in Mumbai. Siddharth Bhagat, Director, Amazon India, said: "Last year, Beautyverse brought together over 1,400 attendees and brands who witnessed 1.6X growth in their business post the event. This year, we're bringing together over 2,000 attendees, 70 brands, India's biggest celebrities, more than 600 creators and Prime members."

## GHR Infra's project in Hyd

GHR Infra has commenced Phase 1 handovers at GHR Callisto, its premium residential community in Kollur, marking a key milestone for the 1,190-apartment project in West Hyderabad. Spread across 8.3 acres, the IGBC pre-certified Gold-rated development comprises four towers and offers 2, 2.5, 3 and 4 BHK homes. The project features a 50,000 sq ft clubhouse, nearly 70 per cent open space, smart-home automation and sustainability-focused amenities, including EV charging stations and rainwater harvesting systems.

## Isuzu unveils service camp

Isuzu Motors India has announced a nationwide 'ISUZU I-Care Pre-Monsoon Service Camp' for its D-MAX pick-up and SUV range from June 18-24. The initiative will offer customers a free 37-point vehicle check-up along with discounts on labour, parts, lubricants, roadside assistance, extended warranty and select service packages. The camp will be conducted across all authorised ISUZU service outlets nationwide, aiming to ensure preventive maintenance and a hassle-free driving experience during the monsoon season.

## Hero, Salesforce collaborates

Salesforce, an agentic SCRM, announced its collaboration with Hero FinCorp, an NBFC, to revolutionise loan processing with Agentforce. Abhimanyu Munjal, MD, Hero FinCorp, said: "At Hero FinCorp, we are leveraging AI, data and digital innovation to transform the way customers access credit. As we continue to scale our business and expand financial inclusion across India, enhancing speed, efficiency and customer experience through technology remains a strategic priority."

## JCB logs milestone

JCB India has produced and sold its 600,000th machine in the country, marking a significant milestone in its over four decades of operations in India. The milestone machine is a Backhoe Loader, one of the country's most widely used construction equipment models. Deepak Shetty, CEO, JCB India, said: "This milestone is much more than a number. It reflects the trust that customers have placed in JCB over several decades."

## Telangana, AP among revenue deficit states: CAG

NEW DELHI

UTTAR Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Manipur, and 9 other states recorded surplus revenues in 2024-25, while the remaining 15 states had a deficit.

Eighteen states targeted revenue surplus, 3 states targeted revenue deficit, and 7 targeted zero revenue deficit in FY 2024-25, according to a report on 'State Finances 2024-25' released by Comptroller and Auditor General of India K Sanjay Murthy on Tuesday.

"In FY 2024-25, 15 states were revenue-deficient while the rest 13 states were revenue surplus," the report said.

Of the 18 states that targeted revenue surplus, 9 achieved the target, while Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh,

## UP, Gujarat, Jharkhand, 10 other states recorded revenue surplus in FY25

Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Mizoram, and Telangana ended up being revenue deficit in 2024-25.

Seven states -- Goa, Jharkhand, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, and Uttar Pradesh -- targeted a zero-revenue deficit.

Among them, 4 states -- Goa, Jharkhand, Tripura, and Uttar Pradesh -- achieved a revenue surplus, whereas Punjab, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu ended the year with a revenue deficit.

Of the 15 states that were revenue-deficient in 2024-25, Himachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Punjab and West Bengal received Finance Commission revenue deficit grants.

The report further said that if the indicative fiscal deficit target of 3 per cent of the GSDP, fixed by the Fifteenth Finance Commission for 2024-25, for states' fiscal consolidation path is considered, then 18 states were above the target.

The aggregate revenue deficit of 15 revenue-deficit states, without netting revenue surplus of 13 states, stood at Rs3,46,385 crore, which was 1.5 per cent of their combined GSDP. The net revenue deficit, after adjusting the revenue surplus in 13 states, stood at Rs2,19,041 crore, 0.68 per cent of the combined GSDP of all 28 states.

"I hope that the publica-

tion on State Finances 2024-25 will serve as a useful evidence-based resource for governments, researchers, policymakers and citizens, enabling a deeper understanding of state finances and supporting informed fiscal decision-making," CAG Murthy said.

The publication highlights the growing importance of states' own tax revenues, which accounted for 50 per cent of the combined total revenue receipts of Rs40.52 lakh crore across the 28 states in 2024-25.

State GST constituted more than 43 per cent of the combined states' own tax revenues. The combined budgetary expenditure of all

states stood at Rs 51.20 lakh crore in 2024-25, equivalent to 15.78 per cent of their combined GSDP.

The decadal trend shows that salaries, pensions and interest payments continue to constitute a major share of revenue expenditure.

In 2024-25, such committed expenditure exceeded 43 per cent of the combined revenue expenditure of the 28 states, with significant inter-state variation -- from 74 per cent in Nagaland to 29 per cent in Maharashtra.

As of March 31, 2025, the total liabilities of the states stood at Rs 90.51 lakh crore. All 28 states recorded a fiscal deficit.

A decadal analysis of defi-



COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL OF INDIA

cit parameters shows that states as a whole, during the period 2015-16 to 2024-25, remained in revenue and fiscal deficit. A substantial increase in revenue deficit took place in 2020-21, a year impacted by the Covid pandemic.

There has been a substantial increase in the fiscal defi-

cit in 2020-21 and 2024-25.

The states which witnessed a substantial increase in fiscal deficit in 2024-25 as compared to 2023-24 were Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Tripura and Uttarakhand.

## OIL PRICES SET TO EASE AFTER US-IRAN DEAL

However, prices unlikely return to previous levels immediately: Analysts

NEW DELHI

CRUDE oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) prices are expected to moderate following signs of a potential US-Iran peace agreement and the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, although analysts cautioned that supply disruptions, damaged infrastructure and tight inventories could keep energy markets volatile for months.

The prospect of normalised shipping through the strategically important Strait of Hormuz has already triggered a sharp decline in geopolitical risk premiums, helping Brent crude retreat about 20 per cent from recent highs, while LNG benchmark prices have also softened.

"The potential reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, amid signs of de-escalation



in the West Asia conflict, has triggered a sharp decline in geopolitical risk premiums in energy markets," said Sehul Bhatt, Director, Crisil Intelligence. Bhatt said the decline in crude prices, coupled with recent increases in domestic fuel prices and reductions in excise duties, had largely offset under-recoveries on automobile fuels, easing pressure on petrol and diesel market-

ing margins.

"The cumulative under-recovery on petrol, diesel and liquefied petroleum gas during March-May 2026 is estimated at approximately Rs1 lakh crore. If the Indian crude basket remains below \$90 per barrel, under-recoveries are unlikely to increase materially from current levels," he said.

Lower crude prices would

also help reduce inflationary pressures, and India's energy import bill, Bhatt added, though he cautioned that it could take weeks or months for global oil and gas markets to fully normalise.

"While the risk of prolonged supply disruption has eased, it may take several weeks or months for crude oil and LNG markets to fully normalise," Bhatt said. "In the near term, uncertainties around the implementation of the peace deal could continue to drive volatility in energy markets."

Prashant Vasisht, Senior Vice President and Co-Group Head, Corporate Ratings at ICRA Ltd, said a successful US-Iran agreement would ease crude and gas prices, but a return to pre-conflict levels could take significantly longer.

## PSU banks see sharp jump in green deposits FY26

Deploy funds for clean transport, renewable energy

MUMBAI

STATE-owned lenders witnessed a sharp surge in green deposit mobilisation in FY26 amid increased depositor awareness and the maturation of the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Green Deposit Framework, introduced in 2023. According to PTI's analysis of banks' Annual reports for 2025-26, eight state-owned lenders raised Rs 3,733.11 crore in FY26 through green deposits, compared to Rs 1,831.79 crore in the year-ago period.

The rise in green deposits reflects a growing focus among banks and depositors towards sustainable finance, with lenders increasingly linking their fundraising efforts with environmentally responsible lending, analysts said.

State Bank of India (SBI), the country's largest lend-



er, raised Rs 317.39 crore through its green deposit products till March 2026, with outstanding green deposits recorded at Rs 218 crore as on March 31, 2026.

SBI garnered Rs 189.08 crore through green deposits in FY26, with the entire amount being deployed in clean transportation, particularly in green cars or electric vehicles, as per the Bank's Annual Report for 2025-26.

"The amount of green deposit raised has been utilised for financing the Green Car (EV) Loan portfolio," SBI said in its annual report.

The bank said its green car loan portfolio stood at Rs 3,587 crore as of March 31, 2026. Green deposit proceeds have been channelled into this portfolio to align the bank's liability mobilisation and asset deployment strategies.

## Agentic AI summer camp at Meru Intl School

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

AI Ready School has concluded three batches of its flagship Agentic AI summer camp, a four-week immersive programme designed for students from Grades 7-9. Conducted in collaboration with Meru International School, the initiative introduced participants to the emerging field of Agentic Artificial Intelligence through structured, project-based learning. Students built AI-powered systems, created intelligent workflows, and developed real-world applications under expert mentorship, culminating in a showcase where they presented their projects to mentors, teachers, parents, and peers.

As Artificial Intelligence continues to reshape industries and workplaces, the need to equip students with future-ready skills is becoming increasingly important. While digital literacy is now a part of mainstream education, understanding how intelligent systems think, make decisions, and solve problems is emerging as a critical capability for the next generation. The Agentic AI Summer Camp was designed to help students move beyond using technology and begin creating AI-driven solutions.

Speaking on the successful completion of the programme, Chiranjeevi Maddala, Co-founder & CEO, AI Ready School, said, "The successful completion of three batches of the Agentic AI Summer Camp reinforces our belief that students are far more capable of understanding and applying advanced technologies than we often assume.

## Primary markets lose steam in 2026

NEW DELHI: After a strong run in 2025, India's primary market witnessed a slowdown with 23 companies tapping the Initial Public Offering (IPO) route to mobilise over Rs 27,000 crore in 2026 so far, amid heightened volatility and macro uncertainty, according to a report released by Equirus Capital on Tuesday.

This came following a launch of 103 maiden public issues in 2025, together raising Rs 1.76 lakh crore. This fundraising figure far exceeded the Rs 1.6 lakh crore raised by 90 firms in



2024 and the Rs 49,436 crore garnered by 57 companies in 2023.

However, the IPO activity is showing signs of a major pickup as geopolitical tension eased with insurtech firm Turtlemint Fintech Solutions and Advit Jewels are scheduled to launch their public issues this month. Further, Waterways Leisure Tourism

Ltd, the operator of Cordelia Cruises, is also expected to come out with its maiden public offering this month. The public issues of insurtech firm Turtlemint Fintech Solutions and Advit Jewels are scheduled to open on June 19 and June 23, respectively.

Additionally, the country's largest stock exchange NSE is expected to file its preliminary papers with Sebi this week. Further, quick commerce unicorn Zepto and the largest fund house SBI Mutual Funds plan to launch their public issues next month, people aware of the matter

said. In June, CMR Green Technologies and Hexagon Nutrition have already floated their IPOs.

Moreover, the pipeline remains robust and as of May 2026, with 236 mainboard IPO draft papers were in the pipeline, including 163 with valid Sebi's observations and 73 awaiting regulatory observations, according to Equirus Capital report.

Going by the report, IPO activity peaked sharply on September 25 with 25 issues, capitalising on buoyant markets and strong domestic inflows during that period.

## Atria Renewable expands solar footprint

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

ATRIA Renewable Private Limited, a Bengaluru-based solar energy company, has announced the launch of its regional operations across Andhra Pradesh, starting with Mangalagiri and Vijayawada. This expansion reinforces the company's commitment to accelerating clean energy adoption across South India's fast-growing urban centres.

Atria Renewable specialises in bringing high-quality,

hassle-free rooftop solar to residential and commercial customers, completing most installations within a matter of hours, and providing customers with 24/7 real-time performance monitoring through its proprietary Namma Atria App. With every system backed by a 30-year warranty and five years of complimentary quarterly maintenance, the company has built its proposition around making the switch to solar as seamless and reliable as possible for Indian homes and businesses.

## SpaceX nears Microsoft's valuation

NEW DELHI: Shares of Elon Musk-backed space and satellite company SpaceX continued their remarkable post-listing rally, with the stock trading above \$220 in overnight trading and pushing the company's market capitalisation close to tech giant Microsoft, a market commentary platform said on Tuesday.

In a post on X, The Kobeski Letter said SpaceX is now valued at less than \$100 billion below Microsoft, while the stock has gained about 63 per cent from its IPO price of \$135 per share since its market debut on June 12.

The rally has propelled the combined market capitalisation of SpaceX and Tesla to a record \$4.4 trillion, exceeding Apple's market value and approaching that of Google, according to the platform. It described the surge as un-

precedented, saying no initial public offering in history had witnessed a rally of such magnitude in such a short period. SpaceX raised a record \$85.7 billion after underwriters exercised the greenshoe overallotment option, making it one of the largest IPO fundraising exercises ever. In addition, the rally has significantly boosted Elon Musk's personal fortune, with Musk's net worth surpassing \$1.3 trillion, a level never before reached by an individual.

At that valuation, Musk's wealth exceeds the market capitalisation of all but 12 publicly listed companies worldwide, the platform noted. It further said that the combined value of SpaceX and Tesla now surpasses that of Apple, underscoring the scale of investor enthusiasm surrounding Musk's business empire.

## Mkts rally for 3rd day on positive trends

The rally was broad-based, with notable gains in IT, realty, FMCG, and oil &amp; gas sectors

MUMBAI: Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty rose for the third consecutive day on Tuesday, propelled by a positive trend in global markets and softening crude oil prices following a peace deal between the US and Iran.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 544.15 points, or 0.71 per cent, to settle at 76,808.48 following gains in IT, select energy and banking stocks. Intraday, it surged 582.41 points, or 0.76 per cent, to 76,846.74. The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 135.25 points, or 0.57 per cent, to end at 23,989.15.

During the day, it jumped 148.7 points, or 0.62 per cent, to 24,002.60. In three straight sessions, Sensex jumped 2,975.93 points, or 4 per cent, and the Nifty climbed 827.55 points, or 3.57 per cent. Foreign investors turning net buyers in Indian equities also



boosted the sentiment, according to experts.

Among the 30 Sensex firms, HCL Tech rose the most by 3.59 per cent a day after the IT major announced a Rs 1,427 crore investment in government-backed sovereign AI model developer Sarvam AI for a 10.46 per cent stake. Bajaj Finserv, NTPC, Hindustan Unilever, Tata Consultancy Services

and Bajaj Finance were also among the winners. Inter-Globe Aviation, UltraTech Cement, Maruti and Tata Steel were among the laggards.

"Domestic equity markets continued their recovery momentum, buoyed by growing optimism around a de-escalation in US-Iran tensions and softening crude oil prices. The rally was broad-

based, with notable gains in IT, realty, FMCG, and oil & gas sectors," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

Broader markets also ended higher. The BSE MidCap Select index climbed 0.64 per cent and SmallCap Select index went up by 0.59 per cent. Sectorally, Realty jumped 2.27 per cent, Focused IT (1.72 per cent), IT (1.66 per cent), FMCG (1.12 per cent), Energy (1 per cent) and Oil & Gas (0.85 per cent). Metal, Commodities and Auto were among the laggards. A total of 2,368 stocks advanced, while 1,886 declined and 153 remained unchanged on the BSE.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) turned buyers on Monday, purchasing equities worth Rs 200.05 crore on net basis, according to exchange data.



# OTT deals crisis puts big-budget films under financial pressure

SUHAS SISTU

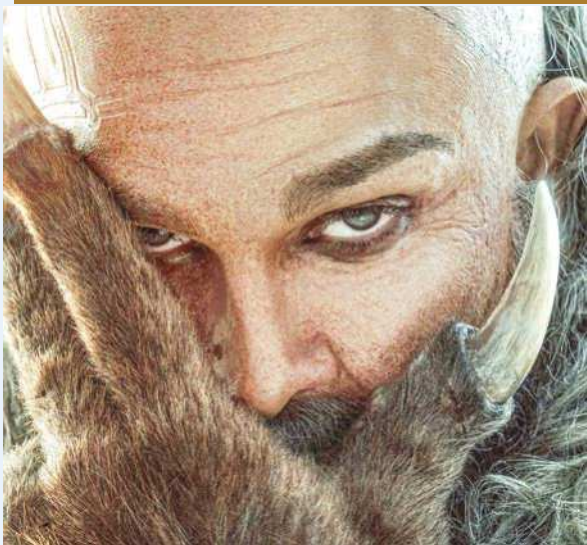
The Indian film industry is facing a new financial challenge as OTT deals, once considered a major source of revenue recovery, have witnessed a significant decline. Streaming platforms are reportedly reducing acquisition budgets, leaving producers of several big-budget films under mounting pressure.

Industry sources indicate that major upcoming projects, including Varanasi, Raaka, and Toxic, are finding it difficult to secure digital deals at their expected valuations. While producers have quoted premium prices for streaming rights, OTT platforms are reportedly offering less than one-third of those amounts, creating a substantial gap between expectations and market realities.

The slowdown has become a major concern because digital rights have played a crucial role in helping producers recover a significant portion of production investments in recent years. With production costs and star remunerations continuing to rise, filmmakers are now relying more heavily on theatrical collections to achieve profitability.

Several Telugu and Hindi films are reportedly yet to finalize their digital agreements due to pricing dis-

The sharp decline in OTT acquisition prices has created fresh challenges for film producers across India. With digital platforms significantly reducing their spending, several high-profile projects are struggling to close streaming deals, increasing dependence on theatrical performance for financial recovery.



agreements. Even some of the country's most anticipated projects are facing uncertainty in this area. Reports suggest that Shah Rukh Khan's King is yet to conclude its OTT deal, while films such as Vishwambara starring Chiranjeevi and Prabhas' Fauzi are also awaiting digital partners before key release-related decisions can be finalized. Industry insiders claim that many

streaming platforms have informed producers that their annual content acquisition budgets have already been allocated, making fresh negotiations increasingly difficult. This has led to growing anxiety among producers who have invested heavily in large-scale productions.

As the OTT market undergoes a correction phase, filmmakers are being forced to rethink recovery strate-



gies. For now, the success of many big-ticket films may depend largely on their theatrical performance, mark-

ing a significant shift from the OTT-driven business model that dominated the industry in recent years.

## 'Nagabandham' promises a grand visual spectacle: DOP Soundararajan

With its worldwide release scheduled for July 3, Nagabandham - The Secret Treasure is shaping up to be one of the most ambitious Telugu films of the year. Starring Virat Karni in the lead role and directed by Abhishek Nama, the epic adventure thriller has already created significant buzz through its promotional content. Now, cinematographer S. Soundararajan has shared fascinating insights into the making of the film, revealing the scale, research, and technical efforts that went into bringing the story to life.

According to Soundararajan, the film's biggest highlights are the visually stunning Anantha Padmanabha Swamy temple sequences and a grand climax designed to leave audiences mesmerized. He explained that extensive research was carried out before production began, with the director, art director, and cinematography team visiting several temples, including the famous Anantha Padmanabha Swamy Temple in Thiruvananthapuram, to study intricate architectural and cultural details.

The production team then recreated a fictional temple setting called "Srirangapuram," blending influences from iconic South Indian temples. Massive sets were constructed on a scale rarely seen in Telugu cinema, presenting one of the biggest challenges for the cinematography department. Soundararajan revealed that advanced drone technology and specialized camera equipment were used to capture the enormous sets in immersive single-shot sequences.

The cinematographer also praised director Abhishek Nama's vision, describing him as a filmmaker with exceptional clarity and storytelling ambition. He noted that the makers never compromised on quality, with certain sequences reportedly mounted on a massive budget to achieve the desired grandeur and realism.



Produced by Kishore Annapureddy and Nishita Nagireddy under the Nick Studios banner, Nagabandham also stars Nabha Natesh, Aishwarya Menon, Jagapathi Babu, Mahesh Manjrekar, and Rishabh Sawhney in pivotal roles.

Soundararajan further lauded lead actor Virat Karni's dedication, revealing that he performed demanding scenes in extreme weather conditions and remained committed despite health challenges during filming.

Blending mythology, fiction, adventure, and drama, Nagabandham aims to offer audiences a visually rich and spiritually immersive cinematic experience. With grand visuals, extensive VFX work, and a divine musical backdrop, the film is expected to deliver a unique theatrical spectacle when it arrives in cinemas on July 3.

## 'Odiyan' marks Dharma Productions' Malayalam debut; Prithviraj in lead

Dharma Productions is expanding its footprint into Malayalam cinema with the announcement of Odiyan - The Age of Illusion, an ambitious folklore horror thriller starring Prithviraj Sukumaran in the lead role. The project marks the first Malayalam production venture for the renowned Bollywood banner and brings together Dharma Productions and Prithviraj Productions for a prestigious collaboration. The film will be directed by acclaimed filmmaker Rahul Sadasivan, who earned widespread praise for his atmospheric horror dramas Bhoothakaalam and Bramayugam. Joining Prith-

viraj in a pivotal role is actress Manju Warrier, further elevating expectations surrounding the project.

The makers unveiled a striking announcement poster that immediately captured attention. Featuring a skeletal figure curled inside an ornate antique mirror, the artwork hints at a dark and mysterious narrative rooted in supernatural themes. The imagery reflects elements of black magic, ancient rituals, and shapeshifting folklore that form the foundation of the story.

Set in the 19th century, Odiyan - The Age of Illusion draws inspiration from Kerala's legendary Odiyan folklore. According to popular myths, Odiyans were feared shapeshifters believed to possess mysti-



cal powers, allowing them to transform into animals and move unseen under the cover of darkness. Known for his unique storytelling style, Rahul Sadasivan is expected to present the folklore through a gripping and immersive horror lens. The film is being produced by Karan Johar, Adar Poonawalla, Apoorva Mehta, and Supriya Menon. Mounted on a grand scale, the project

is planned as a multilingual release in Malayalam, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Hindi, enabling it to reach audiences across India. With a celebrated director, a strong cast, and a fascinating mythological backdrop, Odiyan - The Age of Illusion has already emerged as one of the most anticipated horror films in development.

Production is expected to begin shortly, with the makers targeting a theatrical release next year.

## 'GUNDE PELIPOTHONDHE' FROM 'SRINIVASA MANGAPURAM' HIGHLIGHTS FRESH ROMANCE

The makers of Srinivasa Mangapuram have unveiled the film's third single, Gunde Pelipothondhe, offering audiences a delightful glimpse into the romantic world crafted by director Ajay Bhupathi. The song, which celebrates the innocence and excitement of first love, has quickly caught the attention of music lovers with its melodious composition and vibrant visuals. Featuring debutant Jaya Krishna Ghattamaneni and actress Rasha Thadani, who is making her Telugu cinema debut, the track showcases the blossoming emotions of a young man enchanted by a girl who changes his world. Set against a picturesque temple backdrop, the song captures youthful affection, admiration, and the magical feeling of falling in love for the first time. Music composer GV Prakash Kumar delivers a soothing and enchanting melody that blends classical



influences with contemporary sounds. Complemented by Oscar-winning lyricist Chandrabose's heartfelt lyrics and Anurag Kulkarni's soulful vocals, the song creates an emotional and memorable listening experience. The elegant

flute passages, rich orchestration, and violin arrangements further elevate its appeal.

Visually, Gunde Pelipothondhe stands out with colorful frames and graceful choreography by Bhanu Master. Jaya Krishna Ghat-

tamaneni impresses with his natural screen presence, while Rasha Thadani brings charm and elegance to the screen. Their refreshing chemistry has emerged as one of the song's major highlights.

Directed by Ajay Bhupathi, who earned acclaim with Mangalavaaram, Srinivasa Mangapuram also features veteran actor Mohan Babu in a powerful antagonist role. Produced by P. Kiran and presented by Ashwini Dutt, the film is generating strong curiosity with each promotional release.

Backed by a talented technical team including cinematographer Jayakrishna ISC, editor Madhav Kumar Gulapati, production designer Sahi Suresh, and action choreographer Real Sathish, the film promises a blend of romance, emotion, and engaging storytelling. The makers are expected to announce the release date soon.



## Pooja Hegde showcases fashion-forward style

Actress Pooja Hegde is enjoying a successful phase in her career as her latest Bollywood entertainer Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai continues to attract audiences in theatres. The romantic comedy, directed by David Dhawan, features Varun Dhawan, Mrunal Thakur, and Pooja Hegde in lead roles and has been generating positive buzz since its release on June 5. Amid the film's encouraging response, Pooja has also caught the attention of fans with her latest stunning photoshoot. The actress showcased her fashion-forward style in a graceful sage-green corset dress that perfectly blended elegance and contemporary glamour. The outfit featured delicate lace-trimmed layered hems, adding a soft and sophisticated touch to her overall appearance.

The photographs, captured during a night-time shoot, highlight Pooja's effortless charm and confidence. Her flowing jet-black hair, caught dramatically in the breeze, added a striking visual appeal to the images. Sparkling drop earrings and stylish stacked rings completed the look, enhancing the actress's refined fashion statement. Known for her versatility both on-screen and off-screen, Pooja continues to maintain a strong presence in the entertainment industry. Her latest appearance has received appreciation from fans on social media, with many praising her elegant styling and radiant look. With a successful film currently running in theatres and several anticipated ventures in the pipeline, Pooja Hegde appears to be enjoying one of the most promising phases of her career. Her combination of screen presence, fashion appeal, and consistent performances continues to make her one of the most sought-after actresses in Indian cinema.

## 'Save The Tigers Season 3' premiere creates buzz

The much-anticipated Save The Tigers Season 3 is all set to stream on JioHotstar from June 19, and the excitement surrounding the popular Telugu web series reached new heights with a grand premiere event held at AMB Cinemas in Hyderabad on Monday evening. The star-studded screening witnessed an overwhelming response from celebrities, media representatives, and special guests, turning the evening into a celebration of one of the most successful regional OTT franchises. The red-carpet event featured glamorous appearances, exclusive interactions, and a special screening that left attendees entertained and laughing throughout.

Several prominent personalities from the entertainment industry attended the premiere, including Sundeep Kishan, Kamakshi Bhaskarla, Rag Mayur, VJ Sunny, Kalyan Padala, Chaitanya Rao, Ven-



katesh Kakumanu, Karthik Ratnam, Aditya Mandala, Srinath Maganti, Mukku Avinash, Nirupam, and Kireeti Damaraju. The screening received an enthusiastic response, particularly for the performances of Priyadarshi, Vennela Kishore, Jordaa Sujatha, Krishna Chaitanya, Deviyani Sharma, Abhinav Gomatam, and Pavana Gangireddy. The new season revolves around the lives of three couples while introducing a fantasy element through a divine character portrayed by Vennela Kishore, adding a

fresh dimension to the narrative. Having emerged as one of the most-watched Telugu web series on OTT platforms, Save The Tigers earned widespread popularity through its relatable humor, quirky characters, and family-friendly entertainment. With Season 3 introducing a unique fantasy twist, expectations are soaring among fans eager to witness the next chapter of the beloved franchise.

The countdown has officially begun for what promises to be another entertaining and laughter-filled season.

## Is Dhanush quietly preparing son Yatra for a grand debut?

The buzz around star kids entering the film industry never seems to fade, and the latest name creating excitement is Yatra, the son of Tamil superstar Dhanush. While the actor has repeatedly maintained that his son is still young and that there is no immediate plan to launch him, fresh industry gossip suggests that things might be moving faster than expected behind the scenes. According to reports doing the rounds in film circles, Yatra could be gearing up for his acting debut sooner than anyone imagined. Interestingly, the project is said to be backed by Dhanush himself, making it a special launch vehicle for his son. Though there has been no official confirmation, the speculation has gained momentum after reports claimed that pre-production work is already underway.

Adding more fuel to the rumours, sources suggest that filmmaker Rajkumar Periasamy is likely to direct the project, while popular composer GV Prakash could be on board to score the music. There is



also chatter that Yatra has already undergone a look test and that the makers are considering a formal launch event in the near future. What makes the gossip even more believable is Dhanush's recent decision to introduce his nephew Pavish to cinema through Nilavukku Enmel Ennadi Kobam. With the actor already encouraging young talent within his family, many believe Yatra's debut may only be a matter of time.

For now, fans are eagerly waiting for an official announcement. Until then, the question remains—will Yatra be the next star from the Dhanush family to step into the spotlight?