



THE Hans India



Nationwide shutdown looms over VB-G RAM G
Demanding the repeal of the proposed Viskit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission - Gramin (VB-G RAM G), activists and workers' organisations on Wednesday announced protests against the new scheme from July 1. **P106**

Fasting across religious faiths
In the Vedas 'vrata's or 'nomu's are religious rituals, vows, or observances aimed at fulfilling a desire, seeking blessings, ensuring family welfare, to attain specific goals such as health, wealth, prosperity or overcoming adversity. **P6**

Resilient India posts all-time high \$863 bn exports in FY26
India's exports reached a record \$863 billion in FY2025-26, demonstrating resilience despite disruptions caused by the West Asia conflict and US tariffs, a senior Commerce Ministry official said on Wednesday. **P11**

Pragma Jaiswal's photoshoot gains traction
Actress Pragma Jaiswal continues to command attention on social media despite not having a film release scheduled this year. The actress, known for her elegant fashion choices and strong online presence, has once again become the center of discussion. **P12**

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KEEP HORMUZ OPEN: MODI

Raises safety of seafarers with Trump at G7 Summit

EVIAN-LES-BAINS

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday urged US President Donald Trump to ensure the safety of seafarers and maintain freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, highlighting India's dependence on the strategically vital maritime route amid efforts to secure a peace agreement with Iran.

During a bilateral meeting with Trump on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in France, Modi said the reopening and protection of the Strait of Hormuz was crucial not only for regional stability but also for the global economy. "You and I agree that keeping the Strait of Hormuz open is vital for the global economy," Modi said, stressing that India has consistently advocated unrestricted maritime movement.

Modi and Trump held wide-ranging talks focusing on the proposed bilateral trade deal, bilateral defence and security ties and the West Asia crisis.

"Lakhs of Indian seafarers operate in maritime sector; I believe that their security is equally important," PM Modi told President Trump. India lost 3 Indian seafarers in an



US President Donald Trump with PM Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the G7 summit in Evian-les-Bains, France, on Wednesday

attack by US Navy last well at MT Settebello. Two more vessels with Indian crew on board were also attacked in the same week. Modi thanked President Trump for his efforts to restore peace in West Asia and expressed hope for a lasting resolution to the conflict. "We have always said that there should

be freedom of navigation... Lakhs of Indian seafarers operate in the maritime trade sector. I believe that their security is equally important. I am confident that the deal (with Iran) will have provisions for the security of the seafarers," Modi said in his media comments.

DON'S BIG PROMISE

'IF INDIA IS ATTACKED, WE WILL BE THERE FOR MODI'

Says Trump on defence ties with India

EVIAN-LES-BAINS: While commenting on the defence relationship between the United States and India, US President Donald Trump said even though the countries do not have a formal defence agreement, Washington would be there for New Delhi. Answering a question about defence ties, Trump said, "I think it's a great relationship.

'A TOTAL KILLER, A TOUGH TRADER'

Trump all praise for PM at G7 bilateral

EVIAN-LES-BAINS: US President Donald Trump on Wednesday showered praise on Prime Minister Narendra Modi in France's Evian on the sidelines of the G7 Summit 2026. Assigning adjectives like "a killer and a tough trader" to PM Modi, Trump said he has immense respect for the leader. "He's a very tough



negotiator... You look at this man. I'll give you a lesson. He's the most beautiful-looking man. He looks so nice, like an angel. But actually, he's as tough as a killer... But he looks so good. So he gets you by surprise. There are a few people like this," Trump said as the two leaders held a bilateral meeting in France.



'We're the most famous couple'

MELONI TELLS PM MODI AT G7 SUMMIT

EVIAN-LES-BAINS

LEADERS of the Group of Seven (G7) gathered in France's Evian-les-Bains on Tuesday to discuss key global challenges, reaffirm their support for Ukraine, and welcome

the breakthrough deal between the US and Iran. Amid this serious event, a brief interaction between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Italian counterpart Giorgia Meloni has caught all the attention on social media,

with the 'Melodi' buzz making a return. A viral video shows PM Modi and Meloni greeting each other and shaking hands moments before lining up for a group photo with other leaders, including US President Donald Trump. While the

audio isn't very clear, PM Modi appeared to refer to their popularity on social media to Meloni. To this, the Italian Prime Minister said, "Yes, we are the most famous couple on Instagram".

This came nearly a month after PM Modi, during his trip to Rome, gifted Meloni a packet of Parle's Melody toffee - in reference to the viral 'Melodi' term.

Council polls: Cross-voting fears mark CM's first test

BENGALURU: The election to seven Karnataka Legislative Council seats on Thursday (June 18) has turned into a high-stakes political battle, with the contest emerging as a matter of prestige for both the ruling Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-Janata Dal (Secular) (JD-S) alliance.



ing sessions and mock voting exercises are being conducted to ensure that every vote is cast correctly.

What was initially expected to be a straightforward numbers game has evolved into a closely watched showdown between Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar and Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel H.D. Kumaraswamy, also State JD-S President, who are determined to secure victory for their respective candidates.

Eight candidates are in the fray for seven seats. While four Congress candidates and two BJP candidates are expected to win comfortably, the contest for the seventh and final seat has become intensely competitive.

The battle is primarily between Congress's fifth candidate, Vinay Karthik, and the NDA's K. Govindaraju, backed by the JD (S)-BJP alliance. The outcome is expected to hinge on surplus votes and cross-voting.

With fears of cross-voting looming large, both camps have taken extraordinary measures to keep their legislators together. The Congress has shifted all its MLAs to a resort in Bidadi, where train-

Sources said CM Shivakumar expressed confidence that the party would secure all five seats, while cautioning MLAs against attempts by JD-S to contact them. The JD-S has directed its MLAs to report to the party office in Bengaluru before being shifted to a resort in Devanahalli. The party has issued a whip and plans to escort legislators directly to the Vidhana Soudha on polling day.

The BJP has also tightened its ranks. A meeting of the BJP Legislature Party was held at a private hotel in Bengaluru under the leadership of the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, R. Ashoka, the Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council, Chavaladi Narayanaswamy, and the BJP state president, B.Y. Vijayendra.

The presence of expelled BJP legislators S.T. Somashekar and Shivaram Hebbar in the Congress camp has added a fresh dimension to the contest, raising speculation over possible cross-voting.

WINDOWS

India, EU agree to sign FTA by year-end

EVIAN-LES-BAINS: India and the European Union will sign the ambitious free trade agreement

by the end of this year, top EU leader Ursula von der Leyen said on Wednesday after holding talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi that largely focused on boosting two-way economic engagement against the backdrop of a fragile geopolitical environment. In the meeting, held on the sidelines of the G7 summit in this French commune, the two sides also resolved to step up security and defence cooperation. Besides Von der Leyen, the President of the EU Commission, the meeting was joined by European Council President Antonio Costa.

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CJP seeks Delhi Police nod for June 20 protest

NEW DELHI: The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) on Wednesday said it sought the Delhi Police's permission for a protest at Jantar Mantar on June 20, 2026, and expressed confidence that its request would be approved.

In a statement, the party said it had completed all formalities required by the police and submitted details of the proposed protest, including the number of volunteers and other logistical arrangements.

Earlier, CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke had announced that they would start an indefinite sit-in at Jantar Mantar from June 20 until Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan resigns. "We have formally intimated

the Delhi Police of a peaceful demonstration and dharna at Jantar Mantar on June 20, 2026. Delhi Police has said they will get back to us tomorrow morning. We are confident that the police will grant permission," CJP spokesperson Saurav Das said in the statement.

In a video statement after meeting police officers, Das said he spent the day at the Parliament Street police station completing procedural requirements related to the proposed protest.

"I have submitted the entire plan, the number of volunteers required and every other formality as required by the police. We hope that the Delhi Police will cooperate with us," he said.



Telegram moves Delhi HC against govt curbs

Centre claims 'shocking' activities on platform

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court on Wednesday asked the Centre to file its reply on Telegram's plea against its order temporarily restricting access to the messaging app ahead of the June 21 NEET-UG 2026 re-examination. As the matter came up before a vacation bench of Justice Tejas Karia, Telegram's counsel claimed the curbs were illegal, but Solicitor General (SG) Tushar Mehta defended the government action, saying the platform was being misused and he would reveal "something shocking" on Thursday. The court adjourned the hearing to Thursday and issued notice to the Centre. During the hearing, Telegram's counsel questioned the legality of the government order blocking the platform.

Uddhav Sena stares at split

6 MPs set to join Shinde camp ■ NDA to get boost in Lok Sabha

MUMBAI

SIX Shiv Sena (UBT) MPs reportedly formed a separate group in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday and submitted a letter to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla. The six MPs are expected to join the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena on Friday, the party's foundation day. Sena functionaries said the process of forming the separate group was completed smoothly.

The Shiv Sena (UBT) has nine MPs in the Lok Sabha.



Barring Arvind Sawant, Anil Desai and Rajabhu Waze, all the remaining MPs are understood to have joined the new group. Sena (UBT) MPs Sanjay Raut, Sawant and Desai also met Birla and

urged him not to recognise any separate group formed by defecting Sena (UBT) MPs. However, Sena functionaries claimed that Birla had recognised the group of six MPs as a separate bloc.

SAMAJWADI SPLIT NEXT?

► Claims UP minister
► Akhilesh responds

NEW DELHI: Amid turmoil in TMC and buzz of a brewing split in Shiv Sena (UBT), speculation of a possible split in former Akhilesh Yadav's Samajwadi Party (SP) surfaced after state minister OP Rajbhar claimed that the Opposition party could face a major exodus.

DEAL NOT FINAL: TRUMP

Changes tune on Tehran ■ Threatens to drop bombs on Iran

EVIAN-LES-BAINS

JUST as things were looking up for the peace efforts in the Middle East, US President Donald Trump on Wednesday crushed hopes again, with fresh warnings to Iran.

During his remarks at the G7 Summit in France, Trump said that no deal had been finalised with Iran and warned he would resume



"dropping bombs" and go back to shooting if Tehran did not abide by its obligations. Trump clarified that

only a memorandum of understanding was in the works, and that no deal had been finalised. "If I don't like it, we will go back to shooting at them," Trump said, adding: "If they don't behave, we'll go right back to dropping bombs right smack in the middle of their head." He made the remarks sitting alongside Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.



India's defence production surges to Rs 1.78 lakh cr in 2025-26

NEW DELHI: India's annual defence production touched an all-time high of Rs 1.78 lakh crore in the financial year 2025-26, the defence ministry said on Wednesday. The milestone represents a 15.6 per cent growth over the previous fiscal year's output of Rs 1.54 lakh crore and a staggering 110 per cent increase since 2020-21 when the figure was Rs 84,643 crore, it said. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said the "remarkable rise" in India's defence production in recent years is the result of the collective efforts of the Department of Defence Production and all other stakeholders. "This upward trajectory is a clear indicator of the country's expanding defence industrial base," he said. "With sustained policy support, several new initiatives, increased private sector participation, and growing export capabilities, the defence production sector is poised for continued acceleration in the years ahead," he said.

Meta starts charging for Insta, FB & WhatsApp

NEW DELHI

Launches a new 'Meta One' subscription brand

META has officially started charging for Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp. Not for the apps themselves, which remain free, but for a new layer of "Plus" features that the company is rolling out globally under a fresh subscription brand called Meta One.

Meta's bet is that enough power users and creators will pay for the extras to make subscriptions a meaningful new revenue line. While that is reasonable maths for a company with three billion users, it is also a signal that the free, ad-supported,

algorithm-driven social feed of the last 15 years is winding down.

Analysts believe that it's an urgent attempt to offset soaring AI costs as Mark Zuckerberg tries to play catch up in the AI space where it is lagging behind. Meta increased its 2026 capital expenditure forecast to an unprecedented \$125 billion - \$145 billion, primarily to fund AI compute infrastructure, data centres, and higher component costs.

Instagram Plus costs \$3.99 a month. Subscribers get story insights showing how many



people rewatched a story, unlimited custom audience lists beyond Close Friends, the ability to spotlight a story for a week, the option to extend a story past 24 hours, a preview mode that lets one to watch

other people's stories without showing up as a viewer, and Super Heart animated reactions. One can also post straight to the profile without it appearing in followers' feeds. While Facebook Plus

is also \$3.99 a month and gives you a similar bundle, focused on profile customisation, reactions and analytics, WhatsApp Plus is cheaper at \$2.99. "It is not about social expression. It is about personalising the messaging app: custom themes, ring-tones, more pinned chats, list customisation and premium stickers," say the experts.

Then there is the AI tier. Meta is testing Meta One Plus at \$7.99 and Meta One Premium at \$19.99 for heavier Meta AI users. The Premium plan unlocks deeper reasoning

on complex tasks and more image and video generation across Meta's apps. Free Meta AI access remains but with usage limits. These plans start testing next month in Singapore, Guatemala and Bolivia.

For creators and businesses, Meta One Essential at \$14.99 bundles the Verified badge, impersonation protection and an enhanced linksheet. The top tier, Meta One Advanced at \$49.99, promises higher placement in Facebook and Instagram search, a bolder Follow button on Reels, automatic follow invitations, deeper competitive analytics and team access controls.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL

Competitive exams may soon come with a nationwide lockdown