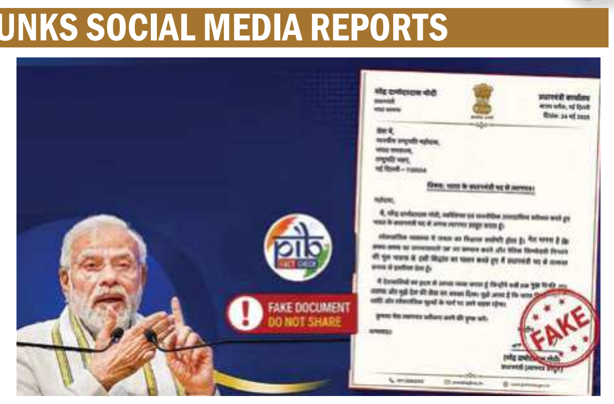
'PM Modi has not resigned'

PIB DEBUNKS SOCIAL MEDIA REPORTS

New Delhi

THE Centre on Thursday rubbished social media reports claiming that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has resigned from his post. The viral posts on the internet had a copy of a letter, bearing the Ashok Chakra emblem and what appeared to be PM Modi's signature, stated that he was resigning as the prime minister citing "personal and political responsibility". Debunking the claim, the Fact Check unit of the Press Information Bureau (PIB) said "no such letter has been issued by the Prime Minister". The fake resignation letter was shared by several users on social media sites, including Facebook, claiming that the prime minister has resigned. "A letter purportedly signed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is being circulated on social media. No such letter has been issued by the Prime Minister, nor has it been signed by him," the PIB said in a social media post. It also warned internet users to verify any claims through official sources before sharing.



The fake letter comes days after the PIB debunked doctored videos circulating on social media that showed PM Modi making threatening remarks against the protestors at Jantar Mantar over the paper leaks.

Discoms get 1,380.70 cr for advance tariff subsidy

APSPDCL gets the highest allocation of Rs 603.13 cr; CPDCL Rs 445.17 cr and EPDCL Rs 332.39 cr

Hans News Service
Vijayawada

THE state government accorded administrative sanction for the release of Rs 1,380.70 crore as advance tariff subsidy to the state's three power distribution companies (discoms) for the financial year 2026-27. The sanction was issued through GO Rt No 53 by the energy department on Thursday.

Energy special chief secretary K Vijayanand issued the order approving the subsidy under the provisions of Section 65 of the Electricity Act, 2003, aimed at providing timely financial support to the state-owned power utilities.

As per the GO, the Andhra Pradesh Southern Power Distribution Company Limited (APSPDCL) has been allocated Rs 603.13 crore, the highest among the three discoms. The Andhra Pradesh Central Power Distribution Corporation Limited (APCPDCL) has been sanctioned Rs 445.17 crore, while the Eastern Power Distribution Company Limited has been allocated Rs 332.39 crore as advance tariff subsidy for the current financial year.

The government stated that the subsidy has been released under the quarterly budget relaxation up to the third quarter of the 2026-27 financial year. The total budget available for the third quarter of the current financial year is Rs 2,744.40 crore. Of this, the government has sanctioned Rs.1,380.70 crore towards the subsidy for the three discoms, leaving a remaining available budget of Rs 1,363.70 crore for the rest of the quarter.

The assistant secretary to the government and drawing and disbursing officer (DDO), energy department, has been directed to remit the sanctioned amount to the respective bank accounts of the three discoms.

The order further directed the chairman and managing directors of discoms, along with the member convener of the AP Power Coordination Committee (APPCC), to take necessary action for implementing the government's decision.

Parl nod for anti-paper leak Bill

NEW DELHI: The Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026, which proposes stricter punishment for exam-related malpractices, has been passed by both Houses of Parliament. The Bill, which provides for a maximum punishment of up to 10 years in jail and a fine of Rs 50 lakh for those involved in unfair means during public examinations, was passed by the Lok Sabha earlier and later cleared by the Rajya Sabha. Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge accused the government of bringing the amendment to the anti-paper-leak law only to pacify the agitating youth, not to address the issue. Speaking on the anti-paper leak bill, Kharge said the government has not explained how it would conduct examinations that could prevent paper leaks.

US launches 'heavy' strikes on Iran

DUBAI: The US military says it has completed a "heavy wave" of strikes against Iran in retaliation for Tuesday's attempted ballistic missile attacks on American forces.

Centcom said it hit "dozens" of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) targets in response to Iran's firing on US bases in Jordan and at ships in the Strait of Hormuz.

Iranian state media said the latest strikes had killed three people, including a two-year-old child, on Qeshm island, while other locations were also hit in the south and west of the country.

The latest hostilities come on a week that has seen the conflict expand, with the first publicly announced joint US-Saudi strikes targeting Iranian proxies in Iraq.

Iran and the US have engaged in escalating strikes and counter-strikes since a ceasefire in April, aimed at pausing the months-long war, fell apart in June.

The US has blockaded Iranian ports and bombed Iranian sites, while Iran has fired missiles and drones at US assets in countries across the Middle East and targeted shipping in the economically important Strait of Hormuz, connecting the Gulf and Arabian Sea.

On Wednesday, news outlet Axios cited an unnamed US official as saying that Trump had met Saudi defence minister Prince Khalid bin Salman, who had conveyed that Saudi Arabia wants to de-escalate tensions. The BBC has contacted the White House for comment.

Meanwhile, the Egyptian government said a fire at a port on Wednesday had been caused by a drone attack. Egypt, a US ally, has not previously been directly attacked during the war.

Parliament clears Vande Mataram Bill

Insulting national song is now a criminal offence

New Delhi

PARLIAMENT on Wednesday cleared a bill to make insult to the national song Vande Mataram a criminal offence, with the Lok Sabha passing the legislation amid din following a brief debate. The bill — The Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026 — had already been passed by the Rajya Sabha a day earlier. With its passage in the Lower House, the proposed amendment now moves closer to becoming law.

In the Lok Sabha, the bill was taken up and passed through a voice vote amid protests by Opposition members, who have been demanding a discussion on police action against students protesting the NEET paper leak. The noisy scenes continued even as the House proceeded with legislative business. The legislation seeks to amend the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971, to include the national song Vande Mataram under its ambit. At present, the law provides penal provisions for disrespecting national symbols such as the Constitution, the national flag and the national anthem, with punishment of up to three years' imprisonment. Once it comes into force, insulting, obstructing or causing disturbances during the singing of Vande Mataram will attract the same punishment — up to three years in jail, a fine, or both.

The bill is part of the Centre's push to mark the 150th anniversary of Vande Mataram, written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay in 1875 and first published in his novel Anandmath in 1882. Over the past few months, the Union government has issued directions to states on the rendition of the national song at official functions.

MOCKERY NO SUBSTITUTE

Academicians slam Priyanka over Kamakoti remarks

NEW DELHI: Academicians, in an open letter, have criticised Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's reported remark about IIT Madras director V Kamakoti in the Lok Sabha. They said the comment undermined academic discourse and could deter scholars from participating in public debate. More than 215 vice chancellors, former vice chancellors and academicians have come out in support of IIT Madras Director Prof V Kamakoti after Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra allegedly referred to him as a "cow urine expert" during a Lok Sabha debate, saying the remark undermines academic discourse and the dignity of India's scientific institutions.

Oppn protests in Parl over police action on students

RS erupts as Kharge demands Shah's resignation

New Delhi

THE Opposition on Thursday stepped up its attack over the alleged police action against students protesting the NEET paper leak issue, staging a noisy demonstration inside the Parliament House complex and disrupting proceedings in the Lok Sabha, which was adjourned till 2 pm amid persistent sloganeering.

Leaders of the Congress and several opposition parties gathered at the steps of the Makar Dwar in the Parliament complex, raising slogans of "Who gave the orders?" as they accused the government of unleashing "police brutality" on students who had assembled at Jantar Mantar to demand accountability over alleged irregularities in the NEET examination.

TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee stages a protest as Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, MP Pappu Yadav and others look on during the monsoon session of Parliament in New Delhi on Thursday

The demonstration was led by Congress general secretary and MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, who was joined by several MPs, including Congress Rajya Sabha MP Imran Pratapgarhi and Congress Lok Sabha MP Sanjana Jatav, along with lawmakers from other Opposition parties.

The MPs carried large banners and placards demanding accountability for the police action and sought an official apology from union Home Minister Amit Shah.

In the Rajya Sabha, Congress president and Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge demanded the resignation of Amit Shah over the alleged police crackdown.

He launched a sharp attack on the Centre during the debate on the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026, calling the proposed amendments "hogwash" for failing to address systemic issues behind examination malpractices.

Holding Amit Shah directly responsible for the police action at Delhi's Jantar Mantar, Kharge condemned the use of tear gas, lathi-charge, and other coercive measures against students demanding justice.

Centre defends ethanol blends

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Gadkari, however, said studies by government agencies and automobile manufacturers indicate that the reduction in fuel efficiency in certain E10-designed vehicles is limited to about 2-6%. "However, the same is influenced by several factors, including driving conditions, driving habits and vehicle maintenance," he said, stating that E20 petrol can reduce fuel economy by 2 to 6% depending on the vehicle category and vintage.

The clarification comes amid growing debate about the government's Ethanol Blending Programme. The Delhi Taxi and Tourist Transporters and Tour Operators Association has announced a protest march to Parliament on August 4. Amid concerns over possible vehicle damage and reduced mileage from ethanol-blended fuel, reports suggest sales of 100-octane premium petrol—the only grade exempt from ethanol blending—have more than doubled in recent months amid concerns over possible vehicle damage and reduced mileage from ethanol-blended fuel.

Critics also argue that consumers will have to bear recurring annual costs due to lower fuel efficiency, a burden that could rise if the ethanol content in petrol is increased further.

The minister said the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas introduced the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme through a phased, scientifically validated and consultative process involving NITI Aayog, automobile manufacturers, Oil Marketing Companies, the Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI), the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), the Indian Institute of Petroleum (IIP) and other technical institutions.

"E20 offers a higher-octane rating, superior anti-knock characteristics, cleaner combustion and smoother engine performance. E20 improves acceleration and ride quality while reducing carbon emissions. These studies also established that legacy vehicles do not exhibit variation in performance or abnormal wear and tear due to E20," he said Officials ruled out any immediate move to increase ethanol blending in petrol beyond the current 20%, saying any decision on higher blends would be taken only after detailed scientific and technical studies and consultations with all relevant stakeholders.

I don't believe he authorised the use of the pellet guns. They're for too mild for him

AP preferred destination for global investors: Lokesh

Continued from page 1

The Minister said the previous government had severely damaged investor confidence by cancelling power purchase agreements and failing to attract major renewable energy investments. He stated that after the new government assumed office in June 2024, it introduced the Integrated Clean Energy Policy-2024 with an ambitious target of developing 160 GW of clean energy capacity.

The policy, he said, aims to build a complete clean energy ecosystem in Andhra Pradesh covering solar modules, battery manufacturing, green hydrogen, green ammonia, transmission infrastructure, storage systems, and world-class manufacturing facilities, positioning the state as a global producer and exporter of clean energy technologies.

Highlighting the significance of the Tata Renewable Energy project, Lokesh said it comprises a 400 MW solar power plant at Pattikonda in Kurnool district and a 400 MW wind power project at Kanekal in Anantapur district, creating an integrated 800 MW hybrid renewable energy facility. He said the project would generate around 4,000 jobs during construction and provide stable lease income to more than 1,100 farming families for nearly three decades. He also recalled the longstanding association between the Tata Group and the Telugu States, adding that the government's commitment to "Simple, Speed and Stability" has helped attract leading global investors and industrial houses to Andhra Pradesh.

Lokesh said Andhra Pradesh, with its long coastline, abundant renewable resources, and modern ports, is well positioned to become India's gateway for exports of green hydrogen, green ammonia, and other clean energy products. He invited Tata Power to collaborate with the proposed Centre of Excellence being established jointly by the state government, IIT Tirupati, and the University of New South Wales, Australia, for advanced research and skill development in renewable energy technologies. He appreciated Suzlon for its contribution to the wind energy sector and for establishing manufacturing and skill development facilities in Anantapur to strengthen the State's industrial ecosystem.

Recalling the support he had received during his Padayatra in the erstwhile Kurnool district, Lokesh said the government is committed to bringing more industries to the region while preparing local youth with industry-relevant skills through closer collaboration between ITIs and industries. He said employment opportunities would increase only when skilled manpower is readily available and urged young people to combine hard work with talent to benefit from the state's industrial growth.

Ministers T.G. Bharath, Tata Power CEO and MD Praveer Sinha, Tata Power Renewable Energy CEO and MD Sanjay Banga, Suzlon Vice-Chairman Girish Tanti, legislators, district officials, and company representatives attended the programme.

Puri holds talks with Team Bharat

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On Wednesday, Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri reportedly met representatives of Team Bharat, the group led by activist Tehseen Poonawalla protesting the hurried E20 rollout, ahead of its planned protest on Friday. However, the protesting team's joy was short-lived as Poonawalla was detained by Delhi Police personnel the very next day (Thursday) and his Instagram account got suspended. The activist, who appreciated the minister earlier, was furious with the action and said he was not scared of any minister and would continue to expose the "ethanol scam".

Security beefed up at Bhogapuram for PM's visit

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Drones, paragliders, microlight aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles are prohibited from flying in the region. On August 1, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will arrive at Bhogapuram on a special flight from Delhi.

200 classical dancers will welcome the Prime Minister by performing Kuchipudi soon after he reaches the terminal building. Subsequently, the Prime Minister will inspect the facility for about 15 minutes along with Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Governor S Abdul Nazeer and other dignitaries.

The Prime Minister will then proceed to the public meeting venue in an open-top vehicle, where more than 13,000 tribal women and students will welcome him with Dhimsa dance. Rehearsals are in full swing in Bhogapuram for the mega event which is expected to gain a place in the Guinness World Records for the highest participation. The inauguration is slated for 11:30 am, followed by the public meeting. Apart from inaugurating the new airport, the Prime Minister is scheduled to inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for various other development projects worth Rs.17,912 crore. Besides the Bhogapuram Airport, the Prime Minister will inaugurate an aviation hub, a skill development centre and an educity, among others. A fleet of buses will ferry people from various parts of North Andhra for the public meeting.

PM discusses West Asia crisis in key Cabinet meet

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Adequate crude oil availability has enabled public sector refineries to operate at utilisation levels above 100 per cent, ensuring continued production of petrol, diesel and other fuels.

The government also reviewed efforts to expand Piped Natural Gas (PNG) connections and strengthen gas infrastructure through the National Gas Grid, LNG import and regasification facilities, city gas distribution networks and time-bound pipeline connectivity approvals.

A major focus of the meeting was fertiliser availability for the forthcoming Rabi season. The CCS assessed domestic requirements and discussed alternative import sources.

The Prime Minister directed that all necessary measures be taken to ensure uninterrupted fertiliser supplies. Officials indicated that sufficient stocks are available for the upcoming Rabi sowing season as well as for next year's Kharif crop.

The safety of Indian seafarers serving on domestic and foreign-flagged vessels in conflict zones was also discussed. Prime Minister Modi asked officials to establish a mechanism for providing timely information, emergency assistance and counselling to seafarers and their families.

He also stressed that all efforts must be made to protect Indian citizens and the Indian community from the impact of the ongoing conflict. The meeting took place against the backdrop of heightened tensions in West Asia following the recent US-Israel conflict involving Iran. Attacks on oil and cargo vessels in the Strait of Hormuz and threats issued by Yemen's Houthi militia against shipping near the Bab al-Mandab have raised concerns over energy and trade flows.

Ship traffic through the Bab al-Mandab has reportedly declined in recent days, while shipping activity in the Black Sea has also faced disruptions due to the intensifying Russia-Ukraine conflict.

India remains heavily dependent on imports for its energy needs, with a significant share of supplies traditionally passing through these sensitive maritime corridors. The disruptions have therefore prompted a whole-of-government response aimed at reducing vulnerabilities.

PM Modi also emphasised the need to accelerate the use of renewable energy sources, including solar power and other non-fossil-fuel options, to strengthen India's long-term energy independence.

He called for a unified and coordinated mechanism for regular monitoring of developments so that appropriate measures can be implemented quickly to protect citizens and national economic interests as the global situation evolves.