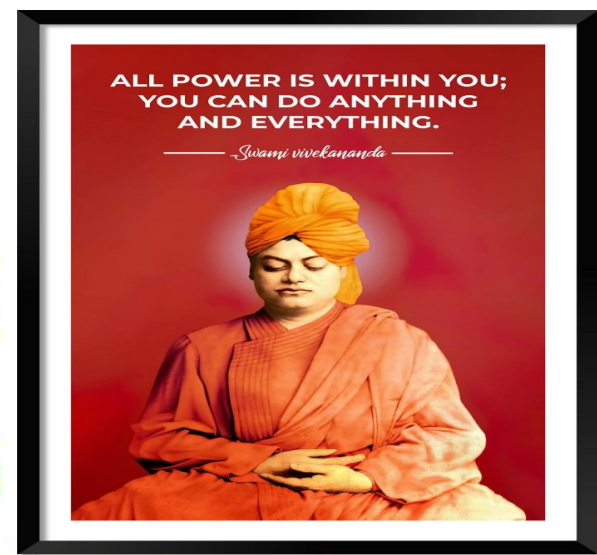


# YOUTH SPIRIT

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## TVK Govt Passes Floor Test in Assembly With 144 Votes

**Chennai:** Newly elected Chief Minister and Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) chief C Joseph Vijay on Wednesday sailed through the floor test in the Legislative Assembly with 144 votes in favour. With its allies, the TVK held a strength of 120 MLAs in the House. 22 MLAs voted against the TVK, and five MLAs abstained. However, the DMK staged a walkout, reducing the total strength of the House during the voting. The number of MLAs supporting Vijay shows that a block of AIADMK rebels disobeyed the party whip and voted against it. The TVK won the floor test as Congress, CPI, CPI(M), and VCK MLAs extended support to the party. Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), which has two MLAs, has also extended support to the TVK government. Expelled Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazagam (AMMK) MLA Kamaraj has also supported TVK in the Assembly. He said, "I supported the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam



government yesterday, I support it today, and I will continue to support it for the next five years. CM Vijay is protecting the entire state. I believe he will not leave me either. I am sure our Vijay will protect and save me too." Also Read - EPS Slams Shanmugam Faction for Defying Party Directives While AIADMK General Secretary Edappadi K - MLAs will vote against the TVK, the Assembly witnessed an ADMK versus ADMK showdown. Former minister and party MLA SP Velumani also spoke during the Assembly proceedings, and was objected to by supporters of Edappadi K. Palaniswami.

## AP Govt To Announce Measures To Counter West Asia War Impact

**Guntur:** Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday said the state government would unveil precautionary measures within two days to mitigate the impact of the West Asia conflict on the state. Addressing a meeting at Nidamaru village in Guntur district, the Chief Minister said the government would make an announcement in the next two days on the steps aimed at safeguarding the state from the effects of the ongoing US-Iran war. CM Assures Grant of Approvals For All Institutions In Autopilot Mode "Either tomorrow or the day after,



we will also make an announcement on what preventive measures we have to take due to the effects of the war on the state," said Naidu, on the sidelines of an event. Referring to the recent austerity appeal made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Naidu said people of the state must act responsibly and support efforts to strengthen the coun-

try's economy. Naidu also echoed the PM's call, urging people to avoid unnecessary gold buying and foreign travel, and instead focus on economic self-reliance. Andhra's gold production potential, he said the state plans to inaugurate a gold mine in Kurnool district in June, where up to "60 per cent of India's gold reserves are located." "When you import all the gold, foreign exchange will go out. If we can produce gold domestically, that problem can be reduced," he said, stressing the need for self-reliance public cooperation.

## KTR takes swipe at BJP, Congress over POCSO case and crime statistics



**Hyderabad:** BRS working president KT Rama Rao on Tuesday accused the BJP of adopting double standards in the handling of the POCSO case involving Union Minister of State for Home Bandi Sanjay's son Bhageerath. Referring to the BJP's "One Nation-One Tax" and "One Nation-One Election" slogans, Rama Rao said the ruling party sought uniformity in all matters except when protecting their kith and kin. He remarked that while there was one POCSO Act, the BJP appeared to have adopted two standards which is one for a

Union Minister's son and another for ordinary citizens. The BRS working president's barb at the BJP came alongside a broadside at the Congress government in Telangana. He said under Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy holds the distinction of being the sitting Chief Minister with facing the most criminal cases in the country, Telangana recorded the highest rate of crimes against women and cybercrime cases in the country. "Well done, Rahul Gandhi Ji. Telangana is indeed rising," he added.

## Telangana DGP Warns Of Strict Action Against Those Disturbing Peace During Bakrid

**Hyderabad:** Telangana State Director General of Police, C.V. Anand, stated that the police department is taking stringent measures to ensure peace, public order, and communal harmony during the forthcoming 'Id-UL- Azha' Bakrid festival across the state. C V Anand, along with senior officials from various departments, conducted a video conference with police commissioners and superintendents of police of all districts on Wednesday. Also Read - Part Time Job Fraud Tops Cyberabad Crime in 2025 Speaking on the occasion, Anand said that, "as per the decisions taken during the review meetings held at the level of the honourable chief minister and deputy chief minister, police officers have been instructed to strictly prevent illegal transportation and trafficking of cattle during the Bakrid festival scheduled later this



month." Anand informed that 52 inter-state check posts have been established along the borders of Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh, in addition to a total of 203 check posts across the State to curb illegal cattle smuggling. He instructed officials to intensify vehicle checks in suspicious areas and maintain special surveillance over cattle fairs likely to be held across the State during the next 15 days. DGP further directed that documents such as "Fit for Transport" and

"Fit for Slaughter" certificates related to cattle transportation should be thoroughly verified at all check posts and that the checking process should continue uninterrupted until the completion of the festival." Also Read - CM Revanth Suggests Uber To Establish Multi-Level Parking Facilities 'Bakrid' is a sensitive festival from a law and order perspective and stresses the need for heightened vigilance in view of the prevailing circumstances to prevent any communal tension or clashes between groups."

Anand said. Referring to recent incidents of illegal cattle transportation, he stated that the video conference was organized to ensure effective implementation of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Anand directed the officers to strictly enforce the provisions of the Cow Slaughter Act, 1977, the Transport of Animals Rules, 1978, and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960. He warned that stringent legal action would be taken against those violating the rules related to cattle transportation. Also Read - Medchal: Retired Prof Couple Drugged And Robbed By Nepali Gang In Kowkoo Emphasizing the importance of maintaining law and order, the DGP warned that no individual or group should take the law into their own hands. He advised members of Qureshi associations and cow protection

groups not to resort to road blockades or create confrontation situations based on mere suspicion regarding cattle transportation. He made it clear that criminal cases would be registered against violators and rowdy/suspect sheets would also be opened wherever necessary. DGP instructed police commissioners and district SPs to hold separate coordination meetings with representatives of both groups at the field level administration, animal husbandry, and information sharing. He directed officials to form special WhatsApp groups at the district and field level veterinary K. Ilambarthi stated that veterinary doctors are being made available to issue the necessary certificates for the transportation of cattle. He added that veterinary doctors would remain accessible round the clock in areas where their services are required.

## CM Revanth Suggests Uber To Establish Multi-Level Parking Facilities

**Hyderabad:** Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Wednesday urged Uber to focus on the growing parking challenges in major cities. The company was requested to come forward and take the initiative to establish multi-level parking facilities at identified areas. A delegation led by Uber Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dara Khosrowshahi met with CM Revanth Reddy at his residence in Jubilee Hills today. Also Read - Part

Time Job Fraud Tops Cyberabad Crime in 2025 During the meeting, Dara Khosrowshahi briefed the Chief Minister about Uber's business operations in Telangana and announced the expansion of its Center of Excellence in Hyderabad. He explained that this facility is the first of its kind established outside the United States and currently employs 600 engineers. The CEO also expressed the company's willingness to set up an Uber corporate



office in Bharat Future City. Dara Khosrowshahi highlighted that the company is keen on further expansion and sought the Telangana government's

support in this endeavor. Also Read - Telangana DGP Warns Of Strict Action Against Those Disturbing Peace During Bakrid The Chief Minister noted that vehicle parking has emerged as a major issue in the country's major cities, and the problem is likely to intensify further in the future.

CM Revanth Reddy advised the Uber representatives to focus on setting up multi-level parking facilities. The CM also pointed out inadequate parking infrastructure near Metro Rail stations was causing numerous problems. Responding to the CM's suggestion to establish parking facilities alongside EV charging centers, the Uber delegation assured that the company would conduct a study on this particular issue.

## AP CM Assures Grant of Approvals For All Institutions In Autopilot Mode

**Amaravati:** Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu assured the grant of approvals for all institutions in autopilot mode and at the same time asked entrepreneurs to take responsibility for completing projects as per schedule. Speaking after laying foundation for Bollini Institute of Skill, Education and Research (BISER) at Nidamaru village near Amaravati, the Chief Minister highlighted the state's ambition to transform the capital into a world-class knowledge and healthcare hub. Counter West Asia War Impact The Chief Minister said that foundation ceremonies should be followed by speedy project execution and inaugurations. He expressed hope that the proposed KIMS hospital in Amaravati should be operational by the same date in 2027. Praising KIMS Chairman Dr. Bhaskar Rao, he said the institution, which started on a small scale, had expanded



into a major healthcare network, emphasizing that entrepreneurship is essential for wealth creation in both the state and the country. Also Read - TDP MLC's Son Sai Srinivas Reddy Appointed Youngest Indiana State Attorney He said as part of Amaravati's growth, the BISER initiative and KIMS project are expected to create a large ecosystem in healthcare and skill development. The proposed ecosystem includes a 500-bed super-specialty hospital, 250 medical seats and 1,000 non-medical seats, training for 1,000 additional healthcare professionals and employment opportunities for around 5,000 people, including in den-

tal and physiotherapy sectors. Also Google and the ArcelorMittal plant, and directed that construction and operational timelines be strictly followed. According to him, Google's project should be completed before August 2028, while Phase-I of the ArcelorMittal plant should be completed by one home to India's first quantum computer that electricity tariffs through further land pooling and major infrastructure projects, including a 190-km Outer Ring Road, additional bridges and flyovers across the Krishna river, would both be developed into globally competitive cities, while Rayal aseema would emerge as a - and technology hub.

## Modi Reduces Convoy Size Amid Call to Cut Fuel Consumption

**New Delhi:** In an example of leading from the front, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has significantly reduced the size of his convoy during recent domestic visits while retaining all essential security arrangements mandated under the Special Protection Group (SPG) protocols, sources said. According to sources, the reduction in the number of vehicles in the Prime Minister's convoy was implemented during his recent visits to Gujarat and Assam, immediately after his speech in Hyderabad. Sources further said that while the convoy size was reduced, all critical security components continued to remain in place in accordance with SPG guidelines to ensure the Prime Minister's safety. In another significant step, PM Modi has also directed officials to include Electric Vehicles (EVs) in his convoy wherever feasible, without making any new purchases, sources added. Also Read - NIA Secures Extradition of



Hizb-Linked Narcoterror Accused Iqbal Singh The move comes in line with the Prime Minister's "seven appeals" to citizens to contribute towards economic resilience by reducing dependence on imported fuel and adopting environmentally sustainable Addressing a gathering in Secunderabad on Sunday, PM Modi stressed that patriotism in present times extends beyond defending the nation at the borders and includes responsible behaviour in everyday life. "Patriotism is not only about the willingness to sacrifice one's life on the border. In these times, it is about living responsibly and fulfilling our duties to the nation in our daily

lives," the Prime Minister had said. Highlighting the impact of global disruptions and rising costs, the Prime Minister urged people to reduce petrol and diesel consumption by increasingly relying on public transport, car-pooling and electric vehicles. To reduce dependence on imports, PM Modi also called upon citizens to cut down edible oil consumption and appealed to farmers to reduce the use of chemical fertilisers and move towards natural farming-amounts of foreign currency on importers and emphasised the need to protect both the economy and the environment through natural farming practices.

## Official Duty Shield Cannot Protect Police from Prosecution for Illegal Detention

**Hyderabad:** In a significant order, emphasizing police accountability and procedural safeguards, the Telangana High Court has made it clear that the police officers cannot escape criminal prosecution when their actions prima facie disclose offences such as wrongful confinement, illegal detention, and abuse of official authority. The Court observed that allegations of coercive police conduct and misuse of power warrant criminal scrutiny, making it clear that the shield of official duty under Section 197 CrPC, cannot be used to protect unlawful acts. Also Read - Part Time Job Fraud Tops Cyberabad Crime in 2025 Justice N. Tukaramji, made it clear, while dismissing the quash petitions filed by the police officers Rupavath Pavan and Namindla Shankar (SI and CI of Begum Bazar police station in 2024), who requested the High court to quash the criminal proceedings initiated



against them before the Trial court based on the private complaint over allegations of illegal detention, abuse of authority and registration of a frivolous criminal case against an Advocate Vijay Gopal for his social media comments against the prohibitory orders issued by the police under Section 144 CrPC imposed during public examinations. Based on his comment to one social media post on the prohibitory orders, the Begum Bazar SI Rupavath Pavan lodged had made a complaint and CI Namindla Shankar registered FIR against Vijay Gopal. Also Read - CM Revanth Suggests Uber To Establish Multi-

Level Parking Facilities However, the Telangana High Court had faulted the registration of FIR against Vijay Gopal and liberty was given to him to challenge the abuse of police power. The registration of FIR after, Vijay Gopal had filed private complaints before the XVII Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court at Nampally, against the police officers. In his private complaints before the magthe registration of FIR istrature court, Vijay Gopal further alleged that he was called to the police station at around 4.30 pm on April 26, 2023, on the pretext of enquiry and was illegally detained till about 11.30 pm without due process of law. He

claimed that despite repeated requests to leave, the police officers confined him in the station while his examinations were underway. Also Read - Telangana DGP Warns Of Strict Action Against Those Disturbing Peace During Bakrid He also alleged that no valid notice under Section 41-A CrPC was served upon him and that he was forced to sign acknowledgment papers without being furnished a copy of the notice. The complainant accused the police officers of violating the Supreme Court guidelines laid down in Arnesh Kumar v. State of Bihar regarding arrests and mandatory procedural safeguards. The complainant further alleged violation of the Supreme Court directions in Paramvir Singh Saini v. Baljit Singh concerning installation and preservation of CCTV footage ing the proceedings, the two police officers approached the High Court under 528could not be treated

## Retired Prof Couple Drugged And Robbed By Nepali Gang In Kowkooor

**Medchal Malkajgiri:** In a second major robbery involving a Nepali gang in a week, a retired professor couple was drugged and robbed of 75 tolas of gold, 20 kg of silver, Rs 30,000 cash, and 3,000 US dollars at their home in Jawahar Nagar on Tuesday. The victims, Retired Professor N Muralidhar Mohan, 68, and his wife Dr. Vijayalakshmi, 58, were reportedly tied up and confined at their residence in Kowkooor Golf Enclave by an eight-member gang. The incident comes days after Hyderabad City police launched a manhunt for a Nepali domestic help and her associates in the murder-cum-robbery of retired IPS officer Vinay Ranjan Ray's wife in Jubilee Hills. Also Read - Part Time Job Fraud Tops Cyberabad Crime in 2025 Police said a Nepali couple had joined the household as domestic workers around 20 days ago and gradually gained the elderly couple's trust. On Monday night (May 11), the workers sought permis-



sion to celebrate the birthday of a woman known to them at the residence to which the couple agreed. During the gathering, three more people arrived claiming to be relatives. While the couple was having dinner, the accused staged a cake-cutting and then suddenly overpowered them. The gang tied their hands and threatened them. Fearing for their lives, the victims told them to take their valu-

ables and not hurt them. Also Read - CM Revanth Suggests Uber To Establish Multi-Level Parking Facilities The accused allegedly forced them to consume drugs, locked the couple in a room, secured all gates, and fled. The victims remained unconscious until Tuesday afternoon. After gaining consciousness, Murali Mohan raised an alarm from a window and was rescued by locals res-

that the gang removed CCTV cameras and electrical connections and dumped them in water to destroy evidence. They hired an auto and fled after the robbery, and are believed to have escaped to Nepal from Delhi. Malkajgiri Police Commissioner Sumati visited the crime scene. A case has been registered, and special teams have been formed to trace the absconding suspects.

## Missing posters on Bandi Sanjay's son surface across Hyderabad

**Hyderabad:** Posters declaring Union Minister of State for Home Bandi Sanjay's son and POCSCO accused Bandi Sai Bageerath as "missing" surfaced across several parts of Hyderabad on Wednesday. However, the State government deployed municipal staff to remove them on a war footing basis. Videos showing posters being removed shortly after they were pasted also went viral on social media platforms. The posters were found pasted on Hyderabad Metro pillars, bus stops and major junctions in Serilingampally, Gachibowli and other areas. Citizens were requested to inform the nearest police station or dial '100' if they spotted Bageerath.



Simultaneously, a campaign highlighting the issue was carried out within the Hyderabad Metro network by a few social activists, who circulated appeals and sought information about his whereabouts

from commuters. The poster campaign gained significance amid the police claiming that Bageerath was absconding and issued him a notice to appear at Pet Basheerabad police station by 2 pm on

Wednesday. He approached the High Court seeking anticipatory bail, claiming that he was not absconding and dismissing allegations in the POCSCO case against him.

## Owaisi Counters BRS Over Questioning His Silence Till Now, By Pointing Out 2022 Case

**Hyderabad:** AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi on Tuesday said the law would take its own course in the case of Sai Bandi Bageerath, son of Union minister of state for home Bandi Sanjay Kumar, who has been booked in a case of the alleged rape of a minor. Owaisi said the police had already registered a case under the Pocso Act. "I hope the complainant gets justice. The law will take its own course. Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has made public assurance in this regard," he said. Also Read - Part Time Job Fraud Tops Cyberabad Crime in 2025 Over the criticism from BRS leaders questioning his silence in the



Bageerath case, Owaisi noted that former chief minister K. Chandrashekar Rao should once again take the reins into his own party, as those currently speaking on behalf of the party seemed to have

a weak memory. He recalled when the BRS was in power, the son of a board's chairman was allegedly involved in a similar case (involving a minor). He questioned what action the BRS government had

board's chairman was taken at that time. He was referring to the alleged involvement of the son of a Waqf Board official and others involved in gangrape near Peddamma Gudi in 2022.

## Call for Curbs on E-Pharmacies

**Vijayawada:** Chemists and druggists have appealed to the central government to disallow e-pharmacies, stop predatory pricing of medicines by corporate pharma giants and withdraw emergency notifications issued during Covid-19. These, they said in a statement on Tuesday, are posing a major threat to public health. A call has been issued by their association for a nation-wide shut down on May 20. They alleged that the e-pharmacy platforms are taking advantage of regulatory relaxations and selling medicines without prescription issued by a qualified doctor and based on AI generated fake prescriptions. Also Read - AP Govt To Announce Measures To Counter West Asia War Impact This, they said, is resulting in uncontrolled availability of antibiotics, habit forming drugs and even abortion pills. The usage of antibiotics and other medicines without the supervision of a qualified doctor for various health issues is causing antimicrobial resistance among the patients which in turn is posing a major threat to their life,



they claimed. Moreover, the deep discount on prices of certain medicines being offered by some corporate pharma giants has been a cause of concern as it causes unfair competition and threatens the very survival of small chemists in rural and semi-urban areas and this in turn will destroy the accessible medicine supply system. Also Read - TDP MLC's Son Sai Srinivas Reddy Appointed Youngest Indiana State Attorney The chemists and druggists are seeking withdrawal of some notifications issued by the Centre during the Covid-19 period. The first one is identified as GSR 220 (E) dated 26-03-2020 which relaxed the mandatory norms

mainly to have original prescription and stamping of prescription to get medicines across the counter in a pharmacy and this is getting misused. The second one is GSR 817 (E) dated August 28, 2018, enabling the functioning of e-pharmacies to sell medicines online. This, they said, is resulting in fake prescriptions issued in the name of non-existent doctors, spread of counterfeit medicines and even sale of habit forming drugs and Schedule H/H1 medicines posing health risk to the patients. Also Read - AP Shrimp Feed Price Hike Halted After A t c h a n n a i d u ' s Intervention The chemists and druggists feel sale of medicines

online through e-pharmacies without adequate regulatory control will badly affect the patients as they may resort to abuse of certain drugs and develop drug resistance. Association president P Venkata Ratnam said, "The central government is urged to intervene and resolve our issues." India has over 12.40 lakh chemists and distributors while nearly 4-5 crore people depend for their livelihood on this sector. Offering of heavy discount in price of medicines beyond margins prescribed under Drug Price Control Order and National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority, may be regulated as per norms.

## Rangasamy Sworn In As Puducherry CM For 5th Time, Amid Shock At Tamil Nationalist Song Getting Relegated To 3rd Place

**Puducherry:** All India NR Congress (AINRC) leader N Rangasamy was sworn in today as the Chief Minister of Puducherry for the fifth time. In a ceremony conducted with great simplicity, controversy blew up with the relegation of the song of Tamil nationalism, Tamil Thai Vazhthu (Invocation to Tamil Mother), to third place. Rangasamy first became Puducherry CM in 2001, representing the Congress. He assumed the office for a second time in 2006; returned as CM in 2011 after founding the AINRC; secured a fourth term in 2021; and has now become the CM for the fifth time. In the recently concluded Legislative Assembly elections in the Union Territory of Puducherry, voting for all 30 constituencies was held in a single phase on April 9, with a voter turnout of 89.87 per cent, the high-



est in history. The results were declared on May 4. Requiring 16 seats to form government, the AINRC-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) secured victory in 18 seats to retain power. While the AINRC won 12 seats, the BJP won 4, while the AIADMK and Jose Martin's Latchiya Jananayaka Katchi (LJK) secured one seat each. Following the elections, Rangasamy was elected as the leader of the AINRC legislative party, while Namasnivasayam was chosen to represent the BJP. After preliminary discussions

regarding the number of Cabinet berths to be allocated to the BJP, the alliance bid for power. To facilitate the formation of the new government, submitted his resignation letter to Lieutenant-Governor Kailashnathan. At a meeting of the NDA parties yesterday evening held in the presence of Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, Rangasamy led as the alliance leader, with the BJP, AIADMK and Jose Martin's Latchiya Jananayaka Katchi (LJK) unanimously electing Rangasamy to the President for approval, Rangasamy staked his claim to form government. Thereafter, earlier today (May 13),

Rangasamy was sworn in as the Chief Minister as the 16th Chief Minister of Puducherry at Raj Nivas. The ceremony was conducted with great simplicity, devoid of any pomp or gra. Krishna Rao were sworn in as ministers, with L-G Kailashnathan administering the oath of office. BJP National President Nitin Nabin was presworn unanimously electing at the event. Once again, like in Tamil Nadu, the singing of Tamil Thai Vazhthu (Invocation to Tamil Mother) — the state song of Tawas unanimously electing Nadu — during the swearing-in ceremony in Puducherry, sparked controversy, as it was sung third, after Vande Mataram and the National Anthem, Jana Gana Mana, with critics pointing out that the sequence relegated Tamil to third place.

## What Will The Next Paper Be Like? It May Turn Out To Be Much More Difficult'

**Ahmedabad/Bhavnagar:** The cancellation of NEET-UG (National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test-Undergraduate) 2026 has left students from Gujarat shocked and worried.

The exam was cancelled following paper leak. The case has now been handed over to the CBI. As many as 22,75,011 students had registered for this examination, which took place on May 3, 2026. Of these, 22,05,035 students appeared for the exam.

Bhavisha Parmar, a student from Ahmedabad, with her family Bhavisha Parmar, a student from Ahmedabad, with her family (ETV Bharat Gujarat) Behind Every Aspirant, Untold Story Of Sacrifice Bhavisha Parmar, a student from Ahmedabad who appeared for the NEET exam, secured 60 per cent marks in the science stream in Class XII. She attended coaching classes in Maninagar and studied for 12-13 hours every day. "I reside in Amraiwadi. My father runs a paan shop. Despite



being 90 per cent differently abled, he worked tirelessly to educate us. For our sake, he took a loan of Rs 1.5 lakh to fund our coaching. He used to pay a monthly instalment of Rs 15,000. My exam went well too," she told ETV Bharat over the phone. "However, now that I have to appear for the exam all over again, the big question is: Where will I find the money to pay for it or to undergo coaching once more?" Bhavisha's father Anandbhai claims his daughter put in immense effort for her board exams and achieved excellent results. She worked just as hard for NEET. "But how are we supposed to have her take the exam again

now? Where will we find the money? We have been weeping since morning upon hearing this news. Her spirits have been shattered. Yet, we will not lose hope. We will ensure she takes the NEET exam again, come what may."

Another student from Ahmedabad, Zeenat Parveen, also studied for 12-13 hours daily, practising at her coaching centre alongside attending school. "I had worked incredibly hard to prepare for NEET and had also spent a lot of money on coaching. This time around, the exam paper was relatively easy. What will the next paper be like? I fear the next paper might turn out to be more difficult. Nevertheless, I will take the exam again."

Ahmedabad student Parveen Ahmedabad (Gujarat) Zeenat's father, retired principal Ghulam Mohammad Ansari, believes there is no alternative to taking the exam,

and there is nothing else the students can do. "The government's decision is correct. The students are under stress, they will now resume their preparations. My daughter, too, remains positive regarding the exam." "Hard Work Has Not Gone Waste" However, Neels Rathod, a student at KPS School in Bhavnagar city, thinks differently. "My hard work has not gone waste. Rather, I have learned something valuable from the experience." Priyank Bhalgama, said, "We had prepared extensively for this. I performed well in the examination. However, a scam occurred. Once again, I have decided to move forward with a mindset of acceptance and to rectify any mistakes I may have made in the previous exam. Now we must overcome this next hurdle." Ruksana Sheikh said she had worked hard and appeared for the examination previously. However, the recent turn of events has plunged her into depression. Another student of KPS School who sat for the NEET exam,

said, "The NTA needs to seriously reflect on this matter. School examinations are far better than NEET; at least there, the question papers do not get leaked." Yet another student, Hasan Kagdi, said, "We can no longer simply voice our grievances; we must now retake the exam, and in doing so, we will rectify our mistakes. However, the NTA must consider the plight of those students who performed well in the original exam, and ensure that such an incident never recurs." He acknowledges that such a situation is bound to cause distress among students, emphasising that the government needs to pay serious attention to this matter. He noted that when two years of arduous effort yields such a result, it inevitably sparks anger and resentment among the student community. Yet, he said, "What has happened cannot be undone. We must accept that everything that has transpired so far has served a purpose, and now we must focus on giving our best."

## 5 Arrested So Far, DGP Assures Exemplary Action After Spot Investigation

**Bhubaneswar:**

Following directions from Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, a team of senior police officials led by Odisha DGP YB Khurania on Friday visited the Balia area on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar where a GRP constable was allegedly beaten to death by a mob yesterday following a road accident involving two young women. The deceased has been identified as Soumya Ranjan Swain (33), a railway constable from Maujpur village under Olatpur police limits in Cuttack district. This morning, the DGP, accompanied by Bhubaneswar DCP Jagmohan Meena and Balia police officials, inspected the crime spot near Ramachandrapur and reviewed the sequence of events surrounding the incident. After his visit, Khurania assured strict action against all those involved in the killing of the railway constable Soumya Ranjan Swain. "I have come here to find out about the accident that happened yesterday which led to the murder. Everything will be investigated thor-



oughly. I can say with certainty that exemplary action will be taken by the Commissionerate Police. Action will be taken against all those found guilty," the DGP told reporters. Two women were travelling on a scooter when Soumya and his nephew Om Prakash Raut, who were riding a bike towards Bhubaneswar, allegedly overtook them. During this, the bike reportedly hit the women, following which locals gathered at the spot and assaulted Soumya and Om Prakash Raut. DCP Jagmohan Meena said that preliminary investigation suggests three parties were involved in the incident. He said the villagers came to the rescue of the women and later beat up the two men. "Soumya sustained critical injuries in the assault and was admitted to Capital

Hospital in Bhubaneswar, where he later died. His nephew Om Prakash Raut was detained at the police station," Meena said. "The DCP further said one of the women filed a complaint alleging an attempt to rape. Police have registered a case based on the complaint and recorded the woman's statement. "The accused will be identified on the basis of video footage," Meena said. Two women injured in the incident were admitted to a local hospital. One of them ised thahad met with an accident. "Later we got the news that people had beaten them in presence of the police. My uncle and his nephew were Bhubaneswar when the accident took place. The locals were agitated and assaulted them. We demand strict punishment for those responsible," he said.

## Assam Cabinet Approves Implementation Of UCC, Bill In Assembly On May 26: Himanta Biswa Sarma

**Guwahati:** The Assam Cabinet on Wednesday approved the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in the state, but the tribal population will be kept outside its purview, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said. The UCC Bill will be laid before the new legislative assembly on May 26, the chief minister said at a press conference here after chairing the first cabinet meeting of his second term as the head of the government. "This is a major decision taken in the first cabinet meeting and aligns with the commitment we made during the elections," he said.



Sarma said Uttarakhand, Goa and Gujarat have already implemented the UCC, but his government has customised it for the requirements of Assam.

"We have completely exempted the tribal population from the purview of UCC. All rituals, traditions and customs practised by the people of Assam outside the scope of UCC," he said. The UCC will deal with succession, marriage, live-in relationships and compulsory registration of marriage and divorce, he added. Speaking to media later, Sarma said in BJP's election manifesto, the party had made a commit-

ment that it will implement UCC in Assam. "The first cabinet decided that we will implement UCC in Assam... In this way, we fulfilled a big promise of BJP's election manifesto." "Basically, the UCC will deal with marriage, live-in relationship and compulsory registration of marriage, including divorce. It will be almost in sync with Gujarat, Uttarakhand and Goa. However, we have completely exempted the tribal population and customs, rituals, and traditions of Assam. Because in Assam we have different communities, different customs," he said.

## CBSE 12th Results Declared, 85.20% Students Pass: Here Is How You Can Check Your Result

**New Delhi:** The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Wednesday declared the Class XII board examination results for the 2025-26 academic session, recording an overall pass percentage of 85.20 per cent. The result marks a decline of 3.19 percentage points from last year's 88.39 per cent. Students can check and download their scorecards from the official websites: results.cbse.nic.in, cbseresults.nic.in, cbse.gov.in and through DigiLocker using their roll number, school number and ails. This year, 18,57,517 students registered for the examination, 17,68,968 appeared, and 15,07,109 cleared the exams. CBSE conducted the Class XII board examinations between February 17 and April 10 across 7,573 centres in 120 sub centres. Girls outperformed Boys. Girls continued to outperform boys in the Class XII results this year. The pass percentage among girls stood at 88.86 per cent, compared to 82.13 per cent for boys: a difference of 6.73 percentage points. The result of transgender candidates was recorded at 100 per cent. This year also girls outperformed boys in the Class XII results. This year also girls outperformed boys in the Class XII results. (IANS) More than 94,000 students scored above 90 per cent marks,



while over 17,000 candidates secured above 95 per cent. At the same time, over 1.63 lakh students were placed in the compartment category. Among regions, Trivandrum emerged as the best-performing region with a pass percentage of 95.62 per cent. Chennai followed with 93.84 per cent, Bengaluru with 93.19 per cent, Vija 7 per cent and Delhi West with 92.34 per cent. Prayagraj recorded the lowest pass percentage among all regions at 72.43 per cent. In Delhi, the West region recorded a pass percentage of 92.34 per cent, while Delhi East stood at 91.73 per cent. The overall Delhi region pass percentage was recorded at 91.97 per cent. Among institutions, Kendriya Vidyalayas recorded the highest pass percentage at 98.55 per cent, closely followed by Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas at 98.47 per cent. Government schools recorded a pass percentage of 89.55 per cent, while government-aided schools recorded 86.07 per cent. Central Tibetan Schools achieved 89.55 per cent results,

## 'Pure' Inter-Faith Love Fine, Plot To Lure Hindu Girls Problematic: RSS On 'Love Jihad'

**New Delhi:** No one can question "sheer pure love" even if it's between individuals of different religions, but any planned conspiracy to take away Hindu girls is definitely problematic, top RSS functionary Dattatreya Hosabale has said. Speaking exclusively to PTI Videos, he said there are an umpteen number of cases among Swayamsevaks who have married across castes, religions and even nationalities for "pure love" and the Sangh has always accepted it as natural. "We have welcomed, celebrated and attended those weddings," the RSS General Secretary said in a rare and free-wheeling interview. "If it is sheer pure love, no question. When it is jihad, there is a question," he said. Asked how he defines "love jihad", a term often used by the Hindu right wing for companionship between a Muslim man and a Hindu woman, Hosabale said, "The thing is nobody has (defined it). Love jihad, the term, was first used by some high court judge. So it is not



our contribution." "The thing is that if two individuals are in love, then there is no religion, nationality, or cetera. So that love is pure." But, he added, when this becomes an agenda and there is a planned conspiracy to take away Hindu girls, then it raises a question and causes friction. "Then this DNA thing doesn't work. Because even with that (same) DNA, if somebody is hijacking a girl from some village, leave alone Muslims, it is not love," he said, referring to Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan

Bhagwat's comments about Hindus and Muslims of India having the same DNA. He stressed that he was not talking only about Hindu girls and it cannot be allowed even if a girl from any other community is kidnapped. "You cannot say that 'as we belong to one DNA, it's okay'. It is not. That is why it should be a socially acceptable thing. Love is not barred in a society," he said. Asked specifically whether he was saying that the Sangh was not against a love marriage between individuals of different faiths or commu-

nities, he said that there are many families of Swayamsevaks where people have married outside their caste, community or religion. "We do not publicise it as we accept it as a natural thing," he said. At the same time, he said, what is being referred to as "love jihad" cannot be ignored, as such cases are being reported in large numbers and heard in courts every month. "Many girls have come back and they have told their sad stories... There are around 20,000 cases that have been documented. All these things cannot happen," he said. He also wondered whether love happens only one way. "All cases of Hindu girls and Muslim boys? So that means this love has only one dimension. Then it is not love. There is a conspiracy," he said. On another question about Bhagwat's comments about the need for Hindus to have more children, Hosabale said it is important for family security

and several other reasons. "If there is only one child, one child norm, then if something happens to the child at some age, what will happen to the parents in their old age? "Secondly, if there is only one child who gets all the love and everything, there is a risk that the child develops an ego or loneliness. "Siblings help us learn love, sharing and compassion. But if a child grows without a sibling, there can be psychological problems or ego or loneliness," he said. He further said that having more children is also important for the community and the nation. "We are creating economy, we are creating wealth, we are growing everything. But in the future, if the nation becomes a nation of old people, there would be a problem," he said while referring to Japan. Hosabale said India is an ancient nation, but it is also a young nation even after thousands of years. "We should remain young as a nation," he said while advocating for people to have more children.

## SC Agrees To Examine Congress Leader's Plea Challenging His Ouster As Sringeri MLA After Vote Recount

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to examine a plea filed by Karnataka Congress leader TD Raje Gowda, seeking relief after a recent vote recount order passed by the Karnataka High Court led to his ouster as the MLA of Sringeri constituency in Karnataka. Gowda, in his petition, challenged the April 6 order of the Karnataka High Court directing reverification and recounting of postal ballots cast in the 2023 Assembly election. Senior advocate Deva dutt Kamat, appearing for Gowda, mentioned the matter before a bench led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and requested to list the matter urgently on May 11. Kamat submitted that the high court erred in ordering the recount exercise, which ultimately resulted in BJP



leader DN Jeevaraj being declared as elected MLA for Sringeri. The bench said it will consider the request for an expedited hearing. "Usually, we order stay in such matters...we will examine your matter though," Justice Kant observed. The dispute originates from the 2023 Karnataka Assembly election, where Raje Gowda had originally

defeated Jeevaraj by a slender margin of 201 votes. However, the high court, acting on an election petition filed by Jeevaraj, directed court, acting on an election verification and recounting of postal ballots on April 6. The recount exercise, conducted last week and continuing till midnight, dramatically altered the result. Jeevaraj's postal ballot tally reduced mar-

ginally from 692 to 690 votes and Gowda's tally fell sharply from 569 to 314 votes, resulting in a net reduction of 255 votes in his favour. The returning officer declared Jeevaraj elected under Section 66 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951. It led to the unseating of the sitting Congress MLA almost three years after he entered the assembly.

## In Bengal's 'Feed Campus', Girls Like Nandini and Shreya Are Returning To School And Dreaming Again

**Asansol (West Bengal):** Not long ago, Shreya Parik was all set to leave school and lend help to her family that survives with her father's daily wage earning. With an ailing mother, meeting needs of two square meals a day was so much for the family that her education was last in the list of priorities. A school had nothing to lure her back till Feed (Food Education and Economic Development Society) campus opened its doors. Now she walks into classrooms where textbooks, footballs, sewing kits and notebooks are plentifully available. She now feels the need to be educated and dreams to complete college degree. A few classrooms away sits Nandini Bauri, who, haunted by the memories of abandonment and migration, had never imagined to study. Her father left the



family in Jharkhand, forcing her mother to move to Asansol in search of work and survival. When school started fading from her memory, she stepped into the Feed Campus, where, for the first time, someone told her that poverty is not the criteria to make or break her future. Bengal's Feed Campus, Girls Like Nandini and Shreya Are Returning To School And Dreaming Again. In Bengal's Feed Campus, Girls Like Nandini and Shreya Are Returning To School And Dreaming Again

(ETV Bharat) With zero awareness about school education and its importance, most children in the entire area, remained at home and many dropped out. However, winds of change started blowing when social worker Chandrashekhara Kundu, popularly known in Asansol as the "Foodman" decided to bring back children into a classroom through FEED, a grassroots non-profit dedicated to keeping children in school, empowering girls and providing nutritional support to underserved communities. In the industrial outskirts of Asansol, stories like Shreya's or Nandini's are common. In villages across Palasdi and nearby tribal pockets,

families survive on daily wages they earn at brick kilns, construction sites, or stone crushers. For a labourer who works the entire day for barely Rs 150 to Rs 200, schooling of kids becomes secondary to survival. Children, especially girls, are frequently withdrawn from school midway and pushed into labour, either at homes or kilns to support their families. Because, battling hunger and debt made them see schooling as an unaffordable burden rather than a long-term investment. In Bengal's Feed Campus, Girls Like Nandini and Shreya Are Returning To School And Dreaming Again (ETV Bharat) Kundu started talking to the families where chil-

## Sword of Eviction Hangs Over 310 Families in Delhi's Yamuna Bazar; Notice Issued To Vacate Area Within 15 Days

**New Delhi:** Clouds of uncertainty loom over the homes of families who have been residing for years in the Yamuna Bazar area, adjacent to the capital's Nigambodh Ghat. Adopting a firm stance, the Delhi government has issued a final notice to 310 families in the Yamuna Bazar colony, directing them to vacate the area within the next 15 days. The notice has caused a stir in the locality, sparking widespread outrage among locals. The notice was issued by Shashipal Dabas, the Additional District Magistrate (ADM) of Old Delhi. It explicitly states that this colony falls under the 'O' Zone under the Master Plan for Delhi (MPD) 2021. Under the Master Plan, the Yamuna khadar (floodplain) area has been designated as the 'O' Zone, stretching 22 km from Wazirabad to Palla, and aimed at pro-

tecting the river's ecological balance, where any form of permanent construction or residence is strictly prohibited. Acting on strict directives from the National Green Tribunal (NGT), the government is taking this step to revitalise the Yamuna's ecology by removing encroachments from waterlogged areas. Over the past few days, administrative activity in this region has been intense. That included a detailed inspection of the Yamuna Bazar area jointly conducted by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta and Lieutenant-Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu a few days ago. The Yamuna Bazar area during floods. The Yamuna Bazar area during floods (ETV Bharat) During the visit, officials prepared a report on the status of waterlogging



and encroachments. According to sources, a decision was taken in a high-level review meeting that in light of environmental conservation, it is imperative to evacuate these sensitive zones before the onset. Regarding the notice, residents of the Yamuna Bazar colony argued that they have been living here for decades and possess valid identity cards. Highlighting that they have been granted a mere 15 days, local resident Rajpal said, "Where are these 310 families

supposed to go with all their belongings on such a short notice? The government should have made arrangements for our rehabilitation beforehand." Meanwhile, Delhi government sources indicate that once the notice period expires, an anti-encroachment drive will be launched, backed by a heavy police force and bulldozers. The administration has clarified that these structures are illegal, they fall within the 'O' zone, and that safeguarding the Yamuna's floodplains is a priority.

## Bihar To Establish AI Mission With Assistance From Singapore-Based GFTN

**Patna:** The Bihar government on Wednesday announced setting up of a mission to establish the state as one of the leading ones in the field of artificial intelligence (AI) and create a favourable environment for it. A cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary approved a proposal moved by the Information Technology department to create Bihar Artificial Intelligence Mission (BAIM) with the help of Singapore-based Global Finance and Technology Network (GFTN). The mission will conduct a five-month advance certification programme in AI with the help of GFTN. National University of Singapore - Asian Institute, and Linux Foundation. It will train 7,000 graduate and postgraduate students belonging to the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and non-STEM disciplines in five years. "AI and Quantum-enabled digital sandbox platform - Aryabhata Technology Observatory - would be created with the help of GFTN. It will benefit over 100 start-ups, and would provide AI, machine learning, application programme interface, data pipelines, large language model (LLM) gateways and cloud IDE or integrated development environment," cabinet secretary Arvind Kumar Choudhary said. GFTN will also present Bihar before global investors, tech companies and policy-makers through its 12 interna-



tional forums including Singapore FinTech Festival, Point Zero Forum Zurich, Black Swan Summit, Bangkok Digital Finance Forum, and the GFTN Forum Japan. The cabinet discussed and approved 19 agendas pertaining to various sectors, including allowing the state government to borrow over Rs 72,901 crore, including Rs 64,141 crore from the market. Two per cent DA hike in a major decision, the cabinet approved a finance department proposal to hike the dearness allowance for its employees and pensioners by two per cent, with effect from January 1, 2026. It will now be 60 per cent instead of 58 per cent, and will benefit around 9 lakh state government employees and 3 lakh pensioners. Thrust on e-vehicles The cabinet approved amendments to the Bihar Electric Vehicle Policy, 2023, to provide financial incentives to ensure that at least 30 per cent of total automobile sale

in the state is of electric vehicles, including two, three and four-wheelers. This will create enthusiasm among people about e-vehicles, help maintain air quality by reducing pollution, provide better commuting facilities in the rural areas, and create employment opportunities. Additional incentives on the basis of charging points would be given to encourage the establishment of charging stations for electric vehicles in the state. These would be over and above the subsidy given for this purpose by the Union government under the PM E-drive scheme. The cabinet also gave its nod to 'Mukhyamantri Bihar Paryavaran Anukul Parivahan Rojgar Yojana, under which incentives would be provided through DBT (direct benefit transfer) to the people opting to buy e-vehicles. Land for Food Technology Institute and CISF Training Centre at Kishanganj In another major decision, the cabi-

net approved the transfer of 100 acres of land in Vaishali district to the Union ministry of commerce and industry free of cost to establish NIFTEM (National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship and Management) campus. The cabinet gave its green signal to the transfer of 110 acres of land under Pothia circle in Kishanganj district free of cost to the Central Industrial Security Forces (CISF) to establish its training centre. Similarly, around 80 acres of land under Chanan circle in Lakhisarai would be transferred free of cost to the dairy, fisheries and animal resources department to establish a semen station. The cabinet also gave its nod for the creation of the post of rural superintendent of police (SP) for five crime and community sensitive districts - East Champaran, Samastipur, Madhubani, Vaishali and Siwan districts.

## Kejriwal Urges Gen Z To Demand Justice In NEET Paper Leak Cases, Slams Central Govt Probe

**New Delhi:** Launching a scathing attack on the central government, Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) National Convener Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday urged Gen Z to ensure that those behind the alleged NEET paper leak are brought to justice. Invo king the Gen Z-led uprising in Bangladesh and Nepal, he said that if the youth in the neighbouring countries could bring political change, Indian students could also force accountability. "If Gen Z in countries like Bangladesh and Nepal could change the government, then Indian youth could also ensure accountability in cases of paper leaks," the former Delhi chief minister. Addressing a press conference, Kejriwal said repeated incidents of paper leaks had disturbed the confidence of aspirants and that the past investigations by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) failed to bring the culprits to justice. Kejriwal alleged that following every NEET paper leak, the probe is invariably handed over to the CBI; a few arrests are made, and a few months later, the accused are out on bail. "Subsequently, these very same individuals set about orchestrating paper leaks once again the following year. The



incidents of paper leaks have surfaced continuously—in 2017, 2021, 2024, and now extending to 2026—yet no high-profile accused has ever faced severe punishment," he alleged. The AAP leader claimed that the country has witnessed 93 instances of paper leaks since 2014, impacting the futures of crores of young people. Kejriwal asserted that while the CBI possesses competent officers, the agency ultimately reports to the very individuals who stand accused of orchestrating these paper leaks. "Under such circumstances, the likelihood of the agency taking impartial action appears slim." The AAP supremo alleged that the highest number of paper leaks had taken place in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand,

and Gujarat, all of which are governed by the BJP. "The children of prominent leaders study abroad; they remain unconcerned about the country's education system. But the future of ordinary students and the children of middle-class families depends entirely on this very system," Kejriwal said. He stated, "You and I belong to the very soil of this land; we are destined to live in this country, and it is incumbent upon us to save it." Cornering the centre over oil purchases from Kejriwal also took aim at the Centre regarding its procurement of oil and gas from Russia, alleging that the government had turned away a ship carrying gas from Russia destined for India. "This is a glaring contradiction. On one hand, the government appeals

to the public to conserve petrol and diesel, utilise public transport, and adopt work-from-home arrangements; yet, on the other hand, it is backing away from purchasing oil and gas from Russia," he said. Kejriwal alleged that the central government was refraining from purchasing oil from Russia solely due to pressure from the United States. He asserted that a major nation like India should make decisions based on its own national interest. Called upon the Prime Minister to resume the purchase of oil and gas from Russia, Kejriwal said, "Several countries across the globe make decisions based on their own strategic advantages. India should also procure oil and gas from whichever source offers the most affordable rates."

## Iran Says US Must Accept Its Peace Plan Or Face 'Failure'

**Tehran:** Iran's chief negotiator said Tuesday that Washington must accept Tehran's latest peace plan or face failure, after US President Donald Trump warned the truce in the Middle East war was on the brink of collapse.

The war, which erupted more than two months ago with US-Israeli strikes on Iran, has spread throughout the Middle East and roiled the global economy despite the ceasefire, impacting hundreds of millions worldwide. Both sides have refused to make concessions and repeatedly threatened to resume fighting, but neither appears willing to return to all-out war.

"There is no alternative but to accept the rights of the Iranian people as laid out in the 14-point proposal. Any other approach will be completely inconclusive; nothing but one failure after another," Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said in a post on X.

"The longer they drag their feet, the more American taxpayers will pay for it." The Pentagon said on Tuesday that the cost of the war had climbed to nearly \$29 billion -- about \$4 billion higher than an estimate offered two weeks ago. Iran sent its latest proposal in response to an earlier US plan, details of which remain limited. Media reports have said the American plan involved a one-page memorandum of understanding aimed at ending the fighting and establishing a framework for negotiations on Iran's nuclear programme.

Iran's foreign ministry said its response called for ending the war on all fronts, including in Lebanon, halting the US naval blockade of Iranian ports

and securing the release of Iranian assets frozen abroad under longstanding sanctions. But Trump slammed Tehran's reply as "TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE", saying the United States would enjoy a "complete victory" over Iran and that the truce that has halted fighting for over a month was on its last legs. The US president subsequently said ahead of his Tuesday departure for a trip to China that he would have a "long talk" with counterpart Xi Jinping about Iran, but that he does not need Beijing's help to end the war.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they carried out drills in Tehran "to confront any movement of the American-Zionist enemy", state media reported Tuesday. Defence Ministry spokesman Reza Taleai-Nik said if the US declines a diplomatic path, "it should expect a repeat of its defeats on the military battlefield".

- 'Living day to day' - The war of words has unnerved people in Iran who face uncertainty.

"We are just trying to dig our nails into anything that could help us survive. The future is so uncertain and we are just living day to day," Maryam, a 43-year-old painter from the capital Tehran, told Paris-based journalists.

"We are trying to find a way to continue. Keeping hope is very difficult right now." Trump's angry reaction to Iran's counteroffer sparked a spike in oil prices and dashed hopes that a deal could be quickly negotiated to reopen the Strait of Hormuz to commercial shipping. Iran is restricting maritime traffic in the waterway and has



been setting up a payment mechanism to charge tolls for crossing ships, sparking a global energy crisis that the head of Saudi oil giant Aramco has described as the largest energy supply shock "the world has ever experienced". The New York Times reported Tuesday that classified US intelligence assessments say Iran still has substantial missile capabilities -- with about 70 percent of its mobile launchers and pre-war missile stockpile still in action -- and has restored access to 30 of 33 missile sites along the Strait of Hormuz.

US officials have stressed it would be "unacceptable" for Tehran to maintain control of the strait, which usually carries about a fifth of the world's oil and natural gas.

Qatari foreign minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani said Tuesday that "Iran should not use this strait as a weapon to pressure or to blackmail the Gulf countries". Sanam Vakil, director of the Middle East and North Africa Programme at think tank Chatham House, meanwhile said Iran's leaders "think they can outlast Trump." Tehran was "committed to negotiations", Vakil added, but wanted "to extract concessions because of their improved hand". Meanwhile, Defence

Minister Richard Marles said Australia will join a "strictly defensive" mission led by France and Britain to secure shipping through the strait, once it is established, and contribute a surveillance aircraft to protect the United Arab Emirates from Iran drone attacks.

- Battlefield 'hell' - On the war's Lebanon front, deadly Israeli strikes continued in the south Tuesday, according to the health ministry, where fighting wore on despite an April 17 ceasefire agreement. Israel has intensified its attacks as it trades fire with Iran-backed Hezbollah since the truce. Israeli strikes in south Lebanon killed 13 people including a soldier, a child and two rescue workers on Tuesday, the country's health ministry said.

Lebanon's health minister said earlier in the day that more than 2,880 people had been killed since the country was dragged into the wider war on March 2 -- including 380 since the truce took hold. Hezbollah chief Naim Qassem said on Tuesday his group's weapons were not part of a third round of upcoming negotiations between Lebanon and Israel this week, vowing not to surrender "however great the sacrifices". "We will not abandon the battle-

## Trump Says EU Has Until July 4 To Approve Last Year's Trade Deal Or It Will Face Higher Tariffs

**Washington:** President Donald Trump said in a Thursday social media post that goods from the European Union would face higher tariff rates if the 27-member bloc fails to approve last year's trade framework by July 4. The announcement appeared to be a deadline extension after the president said last Friday that EU autos would face a higher 25% tariff starting this week.

Trump made the updated announcement after what he described as a "great call" with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. Still, the U.S. president was displeased that the European Parliament had yet to finalize the trade arrangement reached last year, which was further complicated in February by the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that Trump lacked the legal authority to declare an economic emergency to impose the initial tariffs used to pressure the EU into talks. "A promise was



made that the EU would deliver their side of the Deal and, as per Agreement, cut their Tariffs to ZERO!" Trump posted. "I agreed to give her until our Country's 250th Birthday or, unfortunately, their Tariffs would immediately jump to much higher levels." It was unclear from the post whether Trump was

implying that the tariff rates would jump on all EU goods or the increase would only apply to autos. His latest statement indicates he might be backing away from his earlier threat on EU automotives. He might s by givniment indicates he might g the European Parliament several more weeks to approve the agreement.

Under the original terms of the framework, the U.S. would charge a 15% tax on most goods imported from the EU. But since the Supreme Court ruling, the administration has levied a 10% tariff while investigating trade imbalances and national security issues, aiming to put in new tariffs to make up for lost revenues.

## Don't Trust Pakistan As Mediator: Republican Senator Graham

**Washington:** Republican Senator Lindsey Graham on Tuesday called for dumping Pakistan as mediators in the US-Iran war, citing reports that Islamabad had allowed Iran to use their airbases to park military aircraft. Graham, the Senator from South Carolina, expressed his frustration at the stalemate in the peace talks with Iran during a hearing of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee on the Iran war and the defence budget. "I don't trust Pakistan as far as I can throw them. If they actually do have Iranian aircraft parked in Pakistan bases to protect Iranian military assets, that tells me we should be looking maybe for somebody else to mediate. No wonder this damn thing is going nowhere," Graham said.



Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Dan Caine avoided a response to Graham's questions on Pakistan's actions being inconsistent with its role as a mediator. "Sir, I wouldn't want to comment on that based on the ongoing negotiations in Pakist

an," Gen Caine said, responding to Graham's questions on the CBS News report on Islamabad offering airbases to park Iranian military aircraft to shield them from US strikes. "Again, I wouldn't want to get in the middle of these negotiations," Hegseth responded. In a state-

ment, Pakistan's Foreign Office said that the Iranian aircraft currently parked in the country arrived during the ceasefire period following the initial round of US-Iran peace talks and bears "no linkage" to any military contingency or pre-servation arrangement.

## Trump's Proposed 'Golden Dome' Estimated To Cost \$1.2 Trillion, Far More Than He Initially Said

**Washington:** President Donald Trump's plan to put weapons in space -- pitched as a "Golden Dome for America" missile defense program -- is estimated to cost \$1.2 trillion over a 20-year period, according to a new analysis from the Congressional Budget Office, a far heftier sum than the initial \$175 billion price tag he gave last year. The nonpartisan CBO report, published Tuesday, is described as an analysis that reflects "one illustrative approach rather than an estimate of a specific Administration proposal." The futuristic system was ordered by Trump in an executive order during his first week in office. He said then that he expected the system to be "fully operational before the end of my term," which wraps up in January 2029. "Over the past 40 years, rather than lessening, the threat from next-generation strategic weapons has become more intense and complex with the development by peer and near-peer adversaries of next-generation delivery systems," Trump said in his executive order, justifying the need for the missile defense system. The CBO's estimates are in part based on a lack of details from the Defense Department about what and how many systems will be deployed, "making it impossible to estimate the long term cost" of the Golden Dome system, the report says. The



concept for the missile system is at least partly inspired by Israel's multitiered defenses, often collectively referred to as the "Iron Dome," which played a key role in defending it from rocket and missile fire from Iran and allied militant groups as it prosecutes the war on Iran alongside the U.S. The U.S. Golden Dome is envisioned to include ground- and space-based capabilities able to detect, intercept and stop missiles at all major stages of a potential attack. Congress has already approved roughly \$24 billion for the missile defense initiative through Republicans' massive tax and spending measure signed into law last summer. Gen. Michael A. Guetlein, director of the Golden Dome project, testified last month about its costs. He told lawmakers that various groups estimating

costs "just take the cost of a legacy system and they multiply it out and they get these really large numbers and they say, well, that must be it." That is not what Golden Dome is doing," the U.S. Space Force general said. "We are laser focused on affordability." Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., who requested the estimate from the CBO, said in response to the report that the missile defense project is "nothing more than a massive giveaway to defense contractors paid for entirely by working Americans." Last May, the president said the Golden Dome would cost \$175 billion. The CBO last year estimated that just the space-based components of the Golden Dome could cost as much as \$542 billion over the next 20 years.

## India's Approach To Migration Grounded In Dignity, Respect For Rights: MoS Kirti

**United Nations:** India's approach to migration remains people-centric and grounded in dignity, Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh said, underlining that mobility will remain an integral feature of a dynamic global economy. "India's approach to migration governance is holistic and pragmatic. It is driven by coordinated institutional efforts and broad societal engagement," Singh said here Tuesday. He emphasised that "welfare and protection of our people" remains central to India's approach. "We have strengthened mechanisms to support migrants, particularly those in vulnerable situations, through initiatives such as the Indian Community Welfare Fund and the MADAD portal," he said. "Our responsive consular services also provide timely assis-



tance, legal, financial, and insurance coverage to our nationals overseas," he said. Singh, who arrived here Sunday, is leading the Indian delegation for the Second International Migration Review Forum (IMRF), being held under the auspices of the UN General Assembly from May 4-8. He addressed a round table at the UN headquarters on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. In a post on X, Singh said that at the round table, he outlined measures taken by India

to facilitate safe and regular migration through leveraging Digital Public Infrastructure, strengthening consular services, concluding migration and mobility agreements, while upskilling, training and providing pre-departure training of the country's skilled labour. "Highlighted that our approach to migration remains people-centric - grounded in dignity, inclusion, and respect for rights," he said. India's experience underscores the importance of leveraging technology, strengthening partnerships, and adopting a holistic lifecycle approach to migration governance, Singh said in his remarks. "We are also aware that challenges remain, especially when it comes to strengthening social protection, addressing vulnerabilities, and improving data systems," he said. Singh stressed that India recognises that mobility will be a core feature of an increasingly interconnected and dynamic global economy. India's policies remain closely aligned with the objectives and principles envisaged in the Global Compact, while evolving in response to emerging global dynamics. "With the objective that migration should be a choice, supported by opportunity and dignity, we have invested in inclusive growth, livelihood and financial inclusion," he said.

# Tamil Nadu floor test and Governor's powers



The recent Tamil Nadu Assembly election has triggered an important constitutional debate regarding the powers of the Governor in a hung Assembly. The controversy arose when Tamilaga Vетри Kazhagam (TVK), led by Vijay, became the single largest party with 108 seats in the 234-member Assembly but was not immediately invited to form the government. Opinion: Congress split with DMK and the rise of Third Front Editorial: Gubernatorial actions under scanner The Governor insisted that the party furnish proof of support from at least 118 MLAs, the majority mark, before the swearing-in of the Chief Minister. This development revived the long-standing debate over the Governor's discretionary powers, democratic mandate, and constitutional morality in India's parliamentary democracy.

A hung Assembly occurs when no single political party or pre-poll alliance secures an absolute majority in the legislature. In such circumstances, the Constitution entrusts the Governor with the responsibility of ensuring that a stable government is formed. However, the Constitution does not clearly define how the Governor should exercise this discretion, leading to repeated controversies across Indian States. Constitutional Position of the Governor The Governor's powers regarding the appointment of the Chief Minister are derived from Article 164(1) of the Constitution. It states that the Chief Minister shall be appointed by the Governor, and other ministers shall be appointed on the advice of the Chief Minister. Although ministers hold office during the "pleasure of the Governor," this phrase does not imply personal or arbitrary authority. In a parliamentary democracy, the Governor is expected to function according to constitutional conventions and democratic principles. Normally, the Governor acts on the advice of the Council of Ministers. However, in situations where no party secures a majority, the Governor exercises discretionary power in deciding whom to invite

to form the government. This discretion is expected to be neutral, constitutional, and guided by established conventions rather than political preferences. The primary aim of the Governor's role in a hung Assembly is administrative rather than political. The Governor's duty is to ensure that the State does not remain without an elected executive and that a stable government commanding the confidence of the House is formed at the earliest.

Sarkaria and Pnchhi Commissions To reduce ambiguity in such situations, the Sarkaria Commission (1983) and the Pnchhi Commission (2007) laid down guidelines regarding the order of preference the Governor should follow in inviting parties to form a government. The recommended order is: A pre-poll alliance commanding a majority, the single largest party with support of others, a post-election coalition where all partners join the government and a post-poll alliance with outside support. These commissions also emphasised that majority support should always be tested on the floor of the House and not decided privately by the Governor. The recommendations sought to minimise arbitrariness and preserve democratic legitimacy. In the Tamil Nadu case, many constitutional scholars argued that the TVK, as the single largest party, should have been invited first and allowed to prove its majority through a floor test within a short period. Importance of Floor Test The floor test has become the most accepted constitutional mechanism for determining majority support. It ensures transparency, legislative accountability, and democratic legitimacy. Instead of Union government or particular political parties, thereby weakening federal balance.

Third, delays in government assessments by Governors, the elected Assembly itself determines whether the government enjoys majority confidence. The Supreme Court has repeatedly reinforced the principle that majority should be tested only on the floor of the House.

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The recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission and Pnchhi Commission on non-partisan appointments and limited discretionary powers must be implemented in letter and spirit. Karnataka Crisis (2018) One of the most important precedents was the Karnataka political crisis of 2018. In that election, the BJP emerged as the single largest party but lacked a majority. The Congress and the JD(S) formed a post-poll alliance and claimed majority support.

Governor Vajubhai Vala invited BS Yediyurappa to form the government and granted 15 days to prove majority. The Congress-JD(S) alliance approached the Supreme Court, alleging that the long period would encourage horse-trading and defections. The Supreme Court, led by then Chief Justice Dipak Misra, refused to stay the swearing-in but drastically reduced the time for the floor test to 36 hours. Eventually, the BJP failed to prove majority and resigned, allowing the Congress-JD(S) alliance to form the government. The case established an important constitutional principle: delays in floor tests may encourage political manipulation, and quick floor tests are essential for preserving democratic integrity. Uttarakhand Crisis (2016) Another important precedent emerged during the Uttarakhand constitutional crisis of 2016. The Supreme Court declared that the floor test is the "ultimate constitutional mechanism" to determine majority support. The court ordered then Chief Minister Harish Rawat to prove majority on the Assembly floor. This judgment strengthened the constitutional convention that Governors should avoid subjective determination of majority and instead rely on legislative procedures. Constitutional Concerns The controversy also highlights the Union government or particular political parties, thereby weakening federal balance.

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interpretations. Second, Governors are frequently accused of acting in favour of the Union government or particular political parties, thereby weakening federal balance. Third, delays in government formation can create political instability, administrative paralysis, and encourage unethical political practices such as defections and inducements. Finally, repeated controversies involving Governors weaken the spirit of cooperative federalism and erode public trust in constitutional institutions.

Course Correction To prevent such controversies, several reforms have been suggested. There should be clearer constitutional conventions or even codified guidelines regarding the order of preference in inviting parties to form governments in hung Assemblies. Mandatory and time-bound floor tests should become standard practice. Governors must function as politically neutral constitutional heads and avoid any appearance of partisanship. The recommendations of the Sarkaria and Pnchhi Commissions regarding non-partisan appointments and limited discretionary powers should be seriously implemented. Judicial oversight must also continue to ensure that constitutional morality prevails over partisan politics. The Tamil Nadu controversy once again demonstrates the delicate balance between constitutional discretion and democratic legitimacy in India's parliamentary system. While the Governor possesses certain discretionary powers, these powers are not unlimited and must operate within constitutional morality, democratic conventions, and federal principles.

The consistent position of the Supreme Court has been clear: the true test of majority lies not in Lok Bhavan but on the floor of the legislature. In a democracy, elected representatives assembled in the House, and not constitutional speculation, determine who has the confidence to govern. The Tamil Nadu episode, therefore, serves as an important reminder that constitutional offices must

from artists and writers

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# India's Budget still undervalues orange economy



All Union Budgets speak the language of growth, innovation and jobs. The 2026 Union Budget has gone further by explicitly mentioning the so-called orange economy. This is a unique occasion when culture, creativity, and content creation are recognised as economic forces rather than ornamental accessories. However, more broadly, India's fiscal policy still underestimates the creative economy as a legitimate source of growth and job creation (Government of India, 2026). Previously regarded as soft power or leisure activity, creative industries are now being marketed, at least rhetorically, as engines of growth, jobs and global competitiveness. me Over — Safeguard or setback for India's gamers? Opinion: Hollywood bends to Beijing, K-dramas go global — How South Korea beat China at soft power

The orange economy broadly encompasses domains in which value is created through creativity and intellectual property: film, music, animation, gaming, design, fashion, publishing, advertising, and digital content (UNESCO, 2022; UNCTAD, 2024). Globally, these industries have proven to be resilient and fast-growing, especially in digital-networked economies. The promise is particularly high for India, given its demographic dividend and rich cultural capital. The cultural and creative industries, including arts and crafts, design, media, heritage, fashion, gaming, and digital content, employ millions silently, generate soft power, and sustain local economies. Yet, they continue to remain on the margins of fiscal policy and economic planning. As India emerges as a global cultural and digital powerhouse, there is a striking lack of a coherent vision for the creative economy in the Budget. The orange economy is no soft sector, but a serious economic force, which should be supported with hard policy.

Why it Matters Now Unemployment and automation-induced disruptions are putting pressure on India's growth (Government of India, 2025). In contrast, creative industries are labour-intensive and youth-driven. They offer employment across a wide range of skills — from artists and writers

to coders, editors, sound engineers, designers and platform managers. These industries rely on talent, ideas and networks, unlike capital-intensive manufacturing. The threat of over-concentration also exists: prioritising the most noticeable industries such as gaming and digital content over traditional arts, local crafts, publishing, and local cultural ecosystems that support livelihood beyond metropolitan centres. Budget Optics versus Structural Support Recent Union Budgets have acknowledged culture and creativity more through visibility-driven interventions than structural economic planning. For example, the 2024-25 Budget increased allocations for museum development, cultural digitisation and heritage tourism, while the 2025-26 Budget continued investments in tourism circuits and global cultural showcases. Quantifying innovative output

Broader initiatives, such as increased investment in digitisation, innovative output public infrastructure, the PM Vishwakarma scheme for traditional artisans, and MSME credit programmes, indirectly support the creative industries. However, a key gap remains: the lack of clear recognition of creative work as productive labour, situated at the intersection of culture, business, and technology. What is still missing: Dedicated credit lines for creative businesspersons and freelancers Social security and insurance for gig-based cultural workers Skill and upskilling programmes in line with new-age creative roles Export facilitation for creative goods and digital content Without these, the orange economy will remain an aesthetic supplement rather than a true growth engine. The Digital Turn: Opportunity Without a Safety Net India's digital expansion has created more room than ever for creators through OTT platforms, gaming, animation, podcasts, and influencer economies. However, monetisation remains uneven and unstable. Creators are subject to algorithmic dependence, lack formal contracts, and often have limited awareness of intellectual property rights. A forward-looking Budget should invest in: creator awareness and legal support to intellectual property; public digital infrastructure for content distribution, and incubation

centres focused on local language and local content.

A serious approach to the orange economy would involve: Recognising creative industries as a distinct economic sector Integrating culture with MSMEs, start-ups, and skilling missions Ensuring social protection for informal creative workers Promoting State- and city-level creative clusters Quantifying innovative output beyond tourism footfalls These would bring economic growth and cultural vitality into co-existence — an area where India is naturally comparatively advantaged. Investing in Imagination Budgets are moral documents. They reflect national priorities. India runs the risk of underestimating imagination, diversity, and cultural labour by not supporting and not realistically framing the orange economy. In a world where narrative, design, and creativity shape global influence as much as steel and silicon do, investing in the orange economy is not indulgence but a strategy. The 2026 Budget is a starting point, and not a soft economy also generates significant spillover effects. Tourism depends on film and music, manufacturing and export benefit from design, and platform economies and advertising revenues depend on digital content. Cities with thriving creative clusters often experience urban regeneration and enhanced global visibility. Creative industries thus can be seen as economic infrastructure, less visible than a road or a port, but equally catalytic. Besides, cultural exports promote India globally in ways traditional trade cannot. Creativity in the form of soft power, with real economic payoff, can be seen in the cinema and streaming content, and even gaming stories rooted in local mythology. The 2026 Budget is only a beginning. Without credit access, social protection, IP safeguards, and export support, India's creative workforce will remain economically insecure. However, this potential cannot be realised through budgetary recognition alone (UNCTAD, 2024; UNESCO, 2022). Much of India's creative workforce is informal, lacking contracts and social security as well as regular income. Access to funding remains limited, as creative projects do not conform to the standard lending procedures. Regulatory complexities, fragmented data and inadequate measurement systems imply that the real contribution of the orange economy has been underrated in national accounts.

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## Axar Patel Handed Rs 12 Lakh Fine For Slow Over Rate In PBKS vs DC Game

Delhi Capitals skipper Axar Patel has been fined INR 12 lakh after they marinated a slow over rate in the Indian Premier League (IPL) clash against Punjab Kings in Dharamshala. DC's win helped them keep themselves alive in the race to the playoffs. The IPL confirmed the sanction in an official release. "Delhi Capitals captain Axar Patel has been fined after his team maintained a slow over-rate during Match No. 55 of TATA Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 against Punjab Kings," the statement said. The league also clar-



fied in their statement that this was DC's first over-rate offence of the season, coming under Article 2.22 of the IPL Code of Conduct, which relates to the minimum over-rate violations. The left-arm spinner has been handed a financial penalty of INR 12 lakh. This hasn't been the first

instance where the captain was punished for a slow over-rate. Shreyas Iyer, Shubman Gill, Rituraj Gaikwad, Hardik Pandya and Ajinkya Rahane have also been fined for slow over rate in various matches. Axar and Miller help DC complete a successful chase. Chasing a target of

211 runs, DC were in trouble at one point after being reduced to 74/4 after Punjab Kings made early inroads. However, Axar Patel led from the front, scoring 56 and stabilising the innings. David Miller played a counter-attacking knock of 51 runs vs Delhi Capitals. Earlier in the match, PBKS posted 210/5 after fifties from Priyansh Arya and Shreyas Iyer. Priyansh provided the team with a flying start thanks to his knock of 33-ball 56. Captain Iyer smashed an unbeaten 59 off 36 deliveries. DC have kept them-

## Gold Industry Seeks Dialogue With PM Modi After His Appeal To Avoid Gold Buying

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal asking people to avoid buying gold could have a major impact on millions of people working in the gold and jewellery industry in the coming days. Early market trends show mixed reactions across the country. In some regions, especially where weddings are approaching, people have started 'revenge buying' out of fear that restrictions may increase later. At the same time, many consumers have decided to postpone or avoid jewellery purchases, and the impact on sales is already becoming visible in several markets. In an exclusive conversation with ETV Bharat, Rajesh Rokde, chairman of the All India Gem and Jewellery Domestic Council, said that the industry respects the Prime Minister's concerns and understands that the appeal has been made in the national interest. However, he believes the jewellery sector, which supports millions of jobs and contributes significantly to the economy, should not be hurt unintentionally. Rokde said he has requested time to meet the Prime Minister so that the appeal can be implemented more practically and positively without damaging the industry. He also shared that the industry has prepared several suggestions and alternatives, which they plan to discuss directly with the Prime Minister if the meeting takes



place. Industry wants alternatives. Gold in India is not only a cultural asset but also a major source of employment and economic activity. Industry representatives believe that instead of discouraging the sector entirely, the government should explore balanced alternatives. Suggestions include making better use of the large amount of gold lying idle in temples, encouraging gold recycling and creating policies that reduce dependence on imports without hurting the jewellery industry and the livelihoods connected to it. They also argue that if such measures are implemented carefully, the industry can continue contributing positively to the economy while also supporting the government's broader economic objectives. Millions of jobs at risk. According to Rokde, the jewellery sector supports millions of livelihoods directly and indirectly. Around 60 lakh artisans and karigars depend on this trade, while nearly 40 lakh women are employed as sales staff in jewellery businesses.

In addition, the sector supports several allied industries, including packaging, logistics, banking, finance, insurance, architecture and uniform manufacturing. Overall, any major disruption in the jewellery industry could impact nearly five crore people associated with it in some capacity, raising concerns about large-scale unemployment, he added. He also clarified that industry representatives are not opposing the Prime Minister's appeal made in the national interest. He also agreed that reducing unnecessary imports and protecting foreign exchange reserves is important for the country. However, he believed that policies should not unintentionally damage an industry that contributes nearly 7% to India's GDP. As India moves toward becoming the world's third-largest economy, they argue that all major industries, including jewellery, must grow together. Rokde further emphasised that jewellers primarily sell jewellery, not bullion for

investment purposes. Gold, he said, holds a deep cultural and traditional significance in India, especially in weddings and family ceremonies. The concern is not merely about investment demand but about preserving traditions linked to gold ownership and jewellery, he added. Sales start slipping in some areas. On the market reaction following the Prime Minister's appeal, Rajesh Rokde said the response has been mixed. In parts of South and East India, especially among wedding buyers, there has reportedly been increased buying due to fears that restrictions could tighten in the future. However, regions such as Mumbai, Nagpur, Maharashtra and Gujarat have witnessed around a 10 per cent decline in sales. Overall, the market response remains uncertain and varied across regions. Jewellers want dialogue. All India Gem and Jewellery Domestic Council has sought an appointment with the Prime Minister to discuss possible alternatives and solutions. While Rokde declined to share details of their communication, he confirmed that an official email has already been sent requesting a meeting. He stressed that the objective is not confrontation but constructive dialogue to protect both national interests and the livelihoods connected to this centuries-old industry.

## 2026 FIFA World Cup: Messi Included As Defending Champs Argentina Announce Preliminary Squad

Legendary footballer Lionel Messi has been included in Argentina's preliminary 55-member squad for the 2026 FIFA World Cup as head coach Lionel Scaloni begins preparations for the defending champions' campaign. Although Messi has not officially confirmed whether he will feature in the tournament, the 2022 World Cup-winning captain continues to remain central to Argentina's long-term plans. The 38-year-old currently holds the record for the most World Cup appearances, having played 26 matches across editions. Argentina are aiming to become the first men's team since Brazil national football team to successfully defend a World Cup title. However, recent history presents a challenge, with three of the last four defending champions failing to progress beyond the group stage. A defining role in Argentina's triumph at the 2022 World Cup in



Qatar, registering 10 goal contributions during the tournament and becoming the first Argentine player since Diego Maradona in 1986 to achieve that feat in a single World Cup campaign. The provisional squad features several Europe-based stars, including Cristian Romero, Alejandro Garnacho and emerging midfielder Nico Paz. Romero has been ruled out of the remainder of the Premier League season due to injury but has still been retained in the extended list. Among the

notable inclusions are forwards Julian Alvarez, Lautaro Martinez, Thiago Almada and teenage sensation Franco Mastantuono. Argentina have been drawn in Group J alongside Jordan national football team, Algeria national football team and Austria national football team for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, which will be jointly hosted by United States, Canada and Mexico from June 11 to July 19, 2026, will be the biggest edition in tournament history with

48 teams and 104 matches across 16 host cities. The expanded tournament format is expected to draw record global viewership, with major venues spread across cities including Miami, Atlanta, Mexico City and Toronto. FIFA has also confirmed separate opening ceremonies in all three host nations ahead of the month-long football spectacle. The opening and inaugural Group A game between Mexico and South Africa will be played on June 11 in Mexico City Stadium.

## Rahul Dravid Returns To Cricket In New Role, Will Be Part Of The European T20 Premier League

: After performing the roles of a batter, wicket-keeper, captain and coach, Rahul Dravid will be seen in a new role. The former Indian captain and the head coach have become the co-owners of Dublin franchise for the inaugural season of the European T20 Premier League (ETPL), which is scheduled to be played this year. The franchise has been named as Dublin Guardians, and it will see an association between two former Indian cricketers, as Rahul Dravid will be seen working with Ravichandran Ashwin. The former Indian off-spinner will captain the franchise in the inaugural season of the tournament, according to the BBC Sports. For the universe, Ashwin bid adieu to international cricket in December 2024 and the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025. However, he had stated that he wants to continue



playing sports in the overseas T20 league. He was all set to play the Big Bash League (BBL) season last year but missed out on it due to a knee injury. The 39-year-old will also feature in the Major League Cricket (MLC) 2026 for the San Francisco Unicorns. Rahul Dravid reacts. Reflecting on the decision to buy the team, Dravid said that the vision behind the tournament attracted him towards the league. "What attracted me to ETPL was the larger

vision behind it, the opportunity to help grow cricket in Europe by strengthening grassroots development and creating pathways for emerging talent across Ireland and Europe. Dublin already has a passionate cricketing community and an end decision to buy the team, enormous potential for growth. Nurturing the next generation has always been important to me, and I believe ETPL can play a meaningful role in that journey," said Dravid in a statement issued by the

league. It is expected to feature multiple global T20 stars like Mitchell Marsh, Tim David, Mitchell Santner, Liam Livingstone, Glenn Maxwell, Faf du Plessis and Heinrich Klaasen. Six-team structure for the tournament. With Dravid's inclusion as Dublin Guardians owner, the ETPL has now completed the six-team framework. The competition features from Dublin, Belfast, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Rotterdam and Amsterdam.

## Sensex, Nifty trade higher as hopes of US-Iran deal lift market sentiment



The Indian equity markets traded higher on Thursday in morning trade amid hopes of the US-Iran peace deal. Sensex climbed as much as 0.48 per cent, or 380 points, to hit an intraday high of 78,339.24 in early trade, while Nifty traded at 24,423.35, up 0.37 per cent or 92 points. Meanwhile, from the Nifty pack, Tata Consumer, Power Grid, Hindustan Unilever, TCS, HDFC Bank, Titan, NTPC, and Sun Pharma were among the top losers. Sectoral indices — Nifty Realty, Nifty FMCG, Nifty Consumer Durables, and Nifty Private Bank — declined up to 0.7 per cent. In contrast, Nifty

Auto and Nifty Metal gained up to 0.78 per cent. Market sentiment turned positive after Iran said it is examining a US peace proposal, which, according to sources, would formally end the conflict while leaving unresolved key US demands for Tehran to halt its nuclear programme and reopen the Strait of Hormuz. Market experts said that rising concentration risk in the AI segment, warning that valuations have reached elevated levels and a sharp correction cannot be ruled out. According to them, a reversal in FPI flows into India may depend on any cooling in the AI trade or a correction in

AI-related valuations. On geopolitical developments, they said the West Asia situation continues to be volatile, leading to a see-saw movement in crude oil prices. They further added that markets are currently swinging between hope and fear, and this trend may persist until there is greater clarity on the crisis. On earnings, market is rewarding strong Q4 results while punishing misses, with positive performance trends seen across market capitalisations, according to them. Reports suggested that an Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson said Tehran would communicate its response to the

proposal. Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump said he believes Iran is interested in reaching an agreement. In commodities, the international oil benchmark Brent crude was trading at \$102.50 per barrel, up 1.21 per cent, while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) was trading 1.47 per cent higher at \$96.48. In Asian markets, major indices — the Nikkei, Hang Seng, and KOSPI — were trading up to around 6 per cent higher. Similarly, in the US markets, Wall Street ended higher, with the S&P closing 1.46 per cent up and the Nasdaq settling 2 per cent higher.

## Rubina Dilaik Recalls Director Saying Her Face Looked 'Too Negative' For Lead Roles



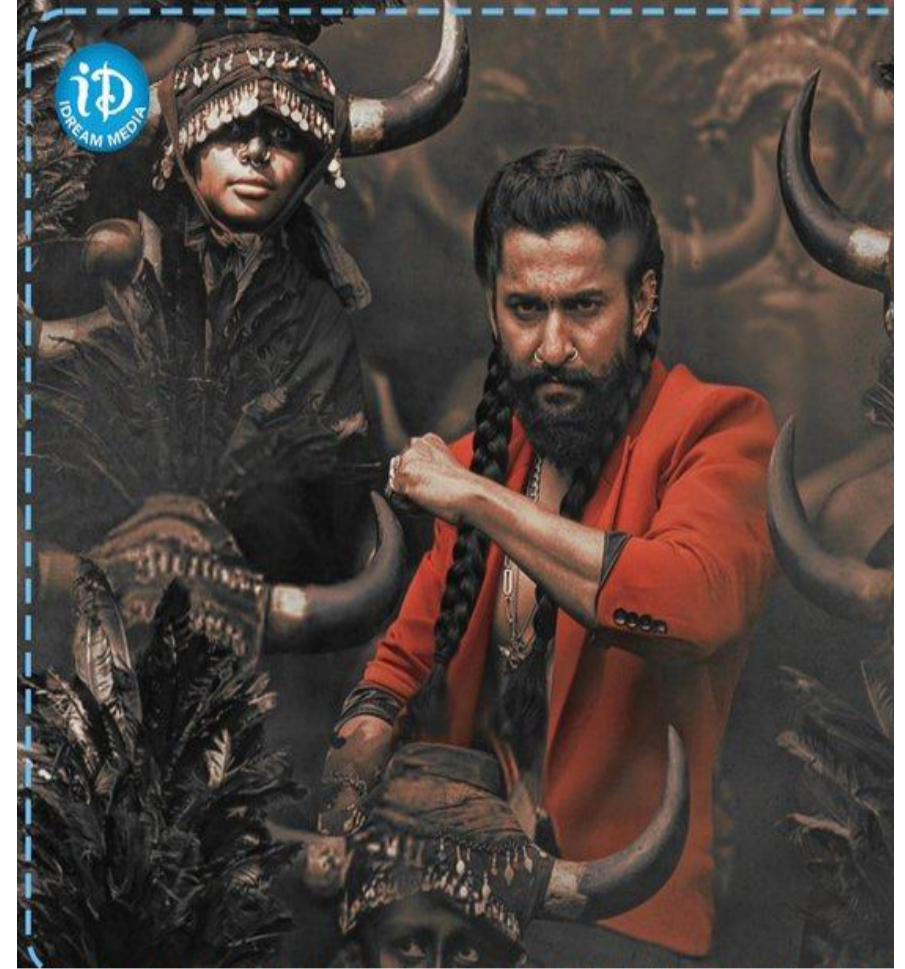
Television star Rubina Dilaik recently spoke about the harsh criticism she faced when she first entered the entertainment industry. Before making a successful place for herself on television, the actor says she was repeatedly judged for her appearance and even told that she did not look suitable for lead roles. Rubina, who is reportedly returning to Khatron Ke Khiladi, opened up about her dif-

icult journey during a conversation with a newswire. The actor shared that she spent years struggling with self-doubt because of comments people made about her face and body. Recalling those days, Rubina revealed that she never felt fully confident about the way she looked. According to her, there was constant pressure in the industry to fit into a certain beauty standard. She said

people often mocked her for having baby fat during the early phase of her career. "I never had that confidence in my looks; I have struggled a lot to embrace myself. We are given the pressure of looking a certain way," Rubina said. The actor shared that some people even nicknamed her "Himachali seb" because of her cheeks and appearance at the time. She admitted that those remarks deeply

affected her confidence. Rubina then remembered one particular incident that stayed with her for years. She revealed that a director once made a blunt comment about her face and suggested she was fit only for negative characters. "One of the directors once told me, 'Your face is so negative, you should do negative roles. I don't think anybody will cast you in a positive role or as a protagonist'," she recalled. Apart from facing criticism about her appearance, Rubina said she was also dealing with insecurities because she wore braces back then. The actor admitted there was a phase in her life when she constantly questioned whether she was good enough to succeed in the industry. "I had braces. I thought maybe I was not enough. There were a lot of maybes," she said. Over time, however, Rubina slowly learned to accept herself and stop comparing herself to others. The actor explained that understanding her individuality helped her become mentally stronger. "I felt that if I had to look like others, then I would not be Rubina Dilaik," she added, while speaking about her journey towards self-acceptance. Today, Rubina is counted among television's most recognised names. She started her acting career with Chotti Bahu and later became hugely popular with Shakti:

Rumours surrounding Nani's upcoming film The Paradise have finally been put to rest. Over the past few days, social media was flooded with reports claiming that the film was facing delays due to reshoots and could even miss its announced August release date. However, the makers have now officially reacted and called all such reports "baseless rumours." The team of The Paradise released a strong statement through the film's official X account and made it clear that the project is progressing exactly as planned. The makers also confirmed that the film will hit theatres worldwide on August 21, 2026, as announced earlier. The statement read, "Over the past few days, we've noticed several baseless rumours and irresponsible speculations being circulated about #TheParadise." Clarifying the situation further, the makers revealed that the film has already completed more than 100 shooting days successfully, and the remaining portions are being filmed without any issues or delays. The statement added, "#TheParadise was planned with absolute clarity from day one, and the film is progressing exactly as intended. Over 100 shooting days have already been completed successfully, and the remaining schedule is happening as planned - without delays." The production house also strongly denied reports suggesting that the film required



reshoots. According to the makers, not a single reshoot has taken place so far, and none are planned in the future either. "There has not been a single reshoot to date. There will be no reshoots planned for #TheParadise in future as well," the statement further read. The makers c key roles, while the music has been composed by Anirudh Ravichander. The film recently grabbed attention after including the note by asking fans and media portals to trust

only official updates related to the film. "Please be responsible with the news and narratives being carried forward. The Paradise is very much on track, and we're excited about what's coming next. Grand Worldwide release on August 21st, 2026." Directed on a massive scale, The Paradise stars Nani in a completely new avatar with long braided hair and a nose pin. The film also features Raghav Juyal and Mohan Babu in key roles, while the

music has been composed by Anirudh Ravichander. The film recently grabbed attention after its energetic song Aaya Sher went viral online. Fans were especially surprised to see Nani perform energetic dance moves, something he rarely does in his films. Set in Secunderabad, The Paradise is expected to release in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, and Hindi

## Rajinikanth's Silent Reaction To Vijay Becoming Tamil Nadu CM Goes Viral



Superstar Rajinikanth chose to stay silent when he was recently asked about actor-turned-politician Vijay becoming the new Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. A video of the moment is now going viral on social media and has sparked fresh discussions among fans online. On Tuesday, May 12, Rajinikanth was spotted at the Chennai airport. As soon as he arrived, several reporters gathered around him and started asking questions. One reporter asked the veteran actor about Vijay taking the oath as the new CM of Tamil Nadu after his party's historic election victory. However, Rajinikanth did not react verbally to the question. Instead, he simply smiled, folded

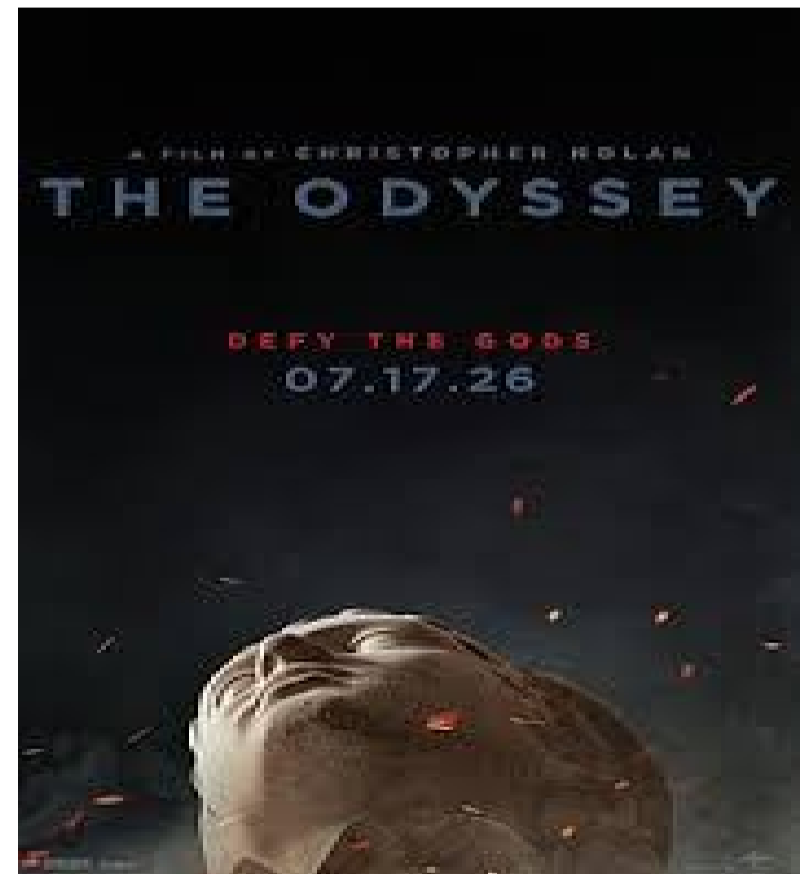
his hands politely towards the media and walked ahead without making any comment. The brief moment was captured on camera and quickly grabbed attention online, especially among fans of both stars. The incident comes just two days after Vijay officially took oath as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu on Sunday, May 10. Vijay met Tamil Nadu Governor RV Arlekar after his party crossed the majority mark to form the government. The swearing-in ceremony was held at the Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium in Chennai, where the Governor administered the oath of office. Even though Rajinikanth avoided commenting now, he had earlier con-

gratulated Vijay after the Tamil Nadu election results were announced on May 4. Sharing a public message, Rajinikanth had written, "My congratulations to Thiru Vijay, President of the victorious Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam, and to the members of his party, on their resounding victory in the recently concluded Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly elections." Vijay's party, Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), created a major political wave in Tamil Nadu by defeating both the DMK and AIADMK in the assembly elections. Contesting its first-ever assembly polls, TVK won 108 seats and later secured the support of 120 MLAs in the 234-member assembly,

crossing the majority mark of 118. With this victory, Vijay has now joined the list of iconic South Indian actors who successfully entered politics, including legendary leaders like N. T. Rama Rao, M. G. Ramachandran and J. Jayalalithaa. Several film celebrities also celebrated Vijay's big political achievement on social media. Director Sibi Sathyaraj tweeted, "Congratulations to our Chief Minister @TVK VijayHQ Anna for creating history." Filmmaker Sandeep Reddy Vanga also shared a strong message praising Vijay's rise in politics. He wrote, "This is what CINEMA can do, it can move people, shake systems, and turn presence into POWER."

## Who Plays What In Christopher Nolan's Epic And Key Moments From The New Trailer

Christopher Nolan is heading into mythological territory with his next big film, The Odyssey, and the newly released trailer has given audiences their first proper look at the director's ambitious take on Homer's ancient Greek epic. Known for films like Oppenheimer, Interstellar and Inception, Christopher Nolan is now tackling one of the oldest and most influential adventure stories ever written. The film follows Odysseus, the king of Ithaca, as he struggles to return home after the Trojan War. His journey, which lasts 10 years, is filled with monsters, storms, temptations and divine interferences. At its heart, though, the story is about family, survival and the need to reclaim home after years of loss. The trailer opens with dark ocean visuals and a tense atmosphere, immediately setting a serious tone. Unlike many fantasy epics that focus only on spectacle, Nolan appears to be building a more emotional and character-driven story. Matt Damon leads as Odysseus, the legendary warrior and strategist trying to return to Ithaca after victory at Troy. In the trailer, Damon appears rugged, battle-worn and physically transformed for the role. One of the trailer's standout moments features him declaring that nothing, "not even the Gods," will stop him from returning home. The "not even the Gods" line has already sparked major discussion online. Tom Holland plays Telemachus, the son of Odysseus and Penelope. He has grown up without knowing his father and is determined to believe that



Odysseus is still alive. The trailer hints at Telemachus having a bigger role than some earlier adaptations. He is shown confronting enemies inside the palace and defending his father's legacy. His emotional scenes suggest Nolan is placing strong focus on the father-son relationship. Anne Hathaway as Penelope reunites with Nolan as Penelope, the queen of Ithaca and Odysseus' wife. Penelope is shown as strong, patient and politically sharp. She

is trying that nothing, "not even the Gods," to hold her household together while fending off powerful suitors who believe Odysseus will never return. Robert Pattinson Takes Antagonist Role Robert Pattinson appears as Antinous, one of Penelope's most aggressive suitors. His brief scenes already suggest he could be one of the film's standout characters. Antinous is portrayed as arrogant, dangerous and eager to seize control of Ithaca.