

## Will Provide Funds, Outline Responsibilities for Caste Corporations



Hyderabad: Telangana Backward Classes Welfare Minister Ponnampet Prabhakar on Friday said the state government would provide funds to the caste corporations it has recently formed and also guidelines on how to spend it. He said the formation of state-controlled corporations for different backward classes by the Congress government is unprecedented. These corporations would work for the welfare of the concerned castes, he added. Also Read - Part Time Job Fraud Tops Cyberabad Crime in

2025 Prabhakar, who attended an event where Dongari Venkateswarlu assumed charge as the Chairman of Perika caste corporation, said the newly formed caste bodies would implement special welfare programmes, according to an official release. The state government would soon allocate the responsibilities of the corporations and instructions on how to spend the funds. He praised the Perika caste for running a hostel for students in Hyderabad since the last 50 years, among other welfare initiatives.

## Sridhar Babu Lays Foundation for KJS India Unit-2 in Sangareddy



Hyderabad: IT and Industries Minister D Sridhar Babu on Friday performed groundbreaking ceremony for the "KJS India Private Limited - Unit 2," which will be established with an investment of Rs.651 crore across 44 acres at Thogarpally village, Konda

mandal, Sangareddy district, using state-of-the-art technology. The company serves as a trusted co-manufacturing and co-packing partner for several leading global brands, including Nestlé, Hindustan Unilever, Mayora, and Dr. Reddy's Laboratories.

The new unit is expected to generate direct employment for 1,551 people and indirect employment opportunities for around 5,000 people. The project is set to strengthen the global presence of the "Made in Telangana" brand in the food processing and FMCG sectors.

## Victim Suffering From Fear, Mental Agony



Hyderabad: Union Minister Bandi Sanjay's son Bhagirath was booked under the POCSO Act. Soon after the case was registered, protests erupted across Telangana state demanding his immediate arrest. Police also issued notices summoning Bhagirath. Sanjay's son sought two days time. On Friday, the victim's mother released a letter in which she stated that they belong to middle-class community and that she was releasing the letter seeking justice but not for any publicity or vengeance. Also Read - Part Time Job Fraud Tops Cyberabad Crime in 2025 The victim knew of Bhagirath for the first time in 2025. The victim's mother accused Bhagirath of reducing her daughter's interest in academics and encouraging her

for physical relations. She listed all the incidents her daughter informed her between December 31, 2025 and January 1, 2026. She said that Bhagirath consumed alcohol and pressurized her daughter for physical relation, since which she suffered fear, insult and mental agony. She expressed hope that justice would be delivered in the case. She also said that her family has sufficient evidence regarding the incident, munication. She urged the police ward the same to forensic department. ur family moved the court and then we faced a lot of pressure. There were appeals not to register a police case and also seeking compromise in the case. On April 21, a case was registered against the victim's family alleging and extortion charges.

## People remind Revanth Reddy of past fuel price remarks, seek VAT reduction

Hyderabad: After facing the impact of the abnormal fuel price hike in Telangana, people are reminding Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy of his earlier comments on petrol and diesel prices and demanding that the State government reduce taxes on fuel. Soon after taking charge as the TPCC president, Revanth Reddy had addressed a rally in Nirmal in July 2021. During the meeting, he had criticised both the Central and State governments over the steep rise in fuel prices. He had alleged that high taxes on fuel were burdening poor and middle-class families. At that time, the Congress party had organised protests across the State against rising fuel prices. Referring to petrol prices,



Revanth Reddy had claimed that while the actual cost of petrol was Rs 40 per litre, the remaining Rs 65 comprised taxes imposed by the Centre and the State. He had alleged that Prime Minister

Narendra Modi was collecting Rs 33 per litre and former Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao Rs 32 per litre through taxes. He had accused both governments of burdening people and had criticised

the then State government for blaming the Centre whenever fuel prices increased. "If the Central government increased prices, why cannot the Telangana government reduce the price by Rs 30 per litre and offer petrol at Rs 70 per litre," Revanth Reddy had demanded at the time. Among all States, Telangana imposes nearly 35 per cent VAT on petrol and about 27 per cent on diesel. As a result, fuel prices in the State are among the highest in the country. Sharing videos of Revanth

Reddy's earlier speeches on social media, several people are now asking the Chief Minister to reduce fuel prices as he had demanded in the past. An X user, RK Telangana, reminded the Chief Minister that while serving as TPCC president, he had criticised the State government for collecting Rs 32 per litre as tax on fuel. The user demanded that Revanth Reddy fulfil his earlier promise to reduce fuel prices. Another X user, Lucifer, said Telangana had the highest petrol prices in the country and questioned whether AICC General Secretary KC Venugopal would ask the Telangana government to reduce VAT on fuel if he was concerned about the common man.

## Man Gets Death Penalty in Boy's Murder Case in Sanathnagar

Hyderabad: The Hyderabad Police Commissioner, VC Sajjanar, on Thursday commended and felicitated the police and prosecution team for their meticulous collection of evidence and robust prosecution, which successfully secured maximum punishment for the accused in the sensational kidnapping and brutal murder of a minor boy under the Sanathnagar police station limits three years ago. At a ceremony held at the Commissioner's office in Bashcator G.V. Rama Krishna Rao, Investigation Officer M. Muthu Yadav, Sanathnagar Inspector Ashok, Sub-Inspector of Police Abdul Hayyum,

and Court Duty Officer N. Shekhar were honored for their outstanding contribution. Also Read - Part Time Job Fraud Tops Cyberabad Crime in 2025 The Judge of the III Additional District and Sessions Court-cum-Principal Family Court of Medchal-Malkajgiri district, M. Venkateswara Rao, delivered a historic judgment, awarding the death penalty to the prime accused for the barbaric murder of the young boy. The second accused, who was involved in the destruction of evidence, was sentenced to seven years of rigorous imprisonment. Sharing the case details, the police said



driven by financial disputes and personal animosity, Imran Ali Khan alias Fiza, who is accused number one (A1) kidnapped an eight-year-old boy on April 20, 2023, and brutally strangled him to death. Also Read - Bandi Bhagirath POCSO Case: Victim Suffering From Fear, Mental Agony The prime accused, Imran Ali Khan, had lent a sum of

Rs.1 lakh to the boy's father, Wasim Khan. Out of anger over the non-repayment of the loan amount, the accused committed this heinous crime. The accused strangled the boy inside his own residence. Subsequently, with the assistance of Mohammed Rafiq, the body was stuffed into a bucket and dumped into a nearby nala. Mohammed Rafiq aided the prime accused in hiding the body and destroying vital evidence. Also Read - CA Student Found Dead In Miyapur,

Family Alleges Foul Play Following a complaint lodged by the boy's father with the Sanathnagar police stating that his son was missing, the police initiated an investigation. "This judgment serves as a stern warning to offenders who commit such barbaric acts that make society hang its head in shame. Our recently established 'Investigation Monitoring Cell', which aims to provide timely justice to victims, played a pivotal role in this case. Under the supervision of DCP Crimes S. Chaitanya Kumar and OSD Malla Reddy, the monitoring of special cases is being actively conducted."

## Rs.15,803 Cr Defence Project in Puttaparthi to Create 7,500 Jobs

Puttaparthi: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Friday said the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) project is a reflection of the state's "speed of doing business" as the government pushes to position Andhra Pradesh as a major defence manufacturing hub. Speaking at the foundation stone laying ceremony of the AMCA project in Puttaparthi on Friday, Chief Minister Naidu described "Operation Sindoor" as a proud example of India's growing technological strength and the success of the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative in the defence sector, as per a release from Andhra Pradesh CMO. Also Read - Private Bus Catches Fire in Andhra, None Injured Highlighting the significance of the AMCA project, Chandrababu Naidu stated that the initiative would showcase the capabilities of India's defence sector and strengthen indigenous combat aircraft



manufacturing using homegrown technology. The Chief Minister noted that the AMCA project, being established with an investment of Rs 15,803 crore across nearly 650 acres in Puttaparthi, would pave the way for the development of a dedicated township and generate employment opportunities for around 7,500 people, a release stated. Also Read - AP Govt Targets Rs.1.27 Lakh Cr Own Revenue for 2026-27 Earlier in the day, Chandrababu Naidu, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and state minister Nara Lokesh laid the foundation stone for the AMCA project in Puttaparthi. Along with the AMCA project, the leaders also laid foundation stones for several

defence-related projects under the Drone City initiative. They also inspected a defence exhibition showcasing missiles, firearms, and a fighter aircraft prototype, as per the CMO statement. The projects include a Flight Testing Centre and Flight Testing Centre will support integration, testing, validation and certification, accelerating the development of India's AMCA programme. The development of India's AMCA project. The Defence Minister will also lay the foundation stone for a Naval Systems Manufacturing Facility of Bharat Dynamics Limited in Andhra Pradesh, along with other defence and manufacturing projects across the state.

## KT Rama Rao demands immediate opening of TIMS hospital in Sanathnagar

Hyderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao inspected the Telangana Institute of Medical Sciences (TIMS) hospital at Sanathnagar on Friday and demanded that the Congress government make it fully operational without further delay. The TIMS hospital, which was conceived by the previous BRS government to provide world-class healthcare to the people of Telangana, is yet to be inaugurated. Built at a cost of Rs 1,200 crore on a 22-acre site, the TIMS complex comprises three blocks and includes 300 ICU beds, 16 operation theatres, full diagnostic infrastructure including MRI and CT scan facilities, dedicated research and academic blocks, a large auditorium, and a multi-level parking facility with a capacity of 1,000 vehicles. A choultry for patients' attendants and relatives has also been provided. Speaking to mediapersons after



the inspection, Rama Rao said the TIMS hospitals were designed on the lines of AIIMS standards to reduce dependence on overcrowded hospitals such as Osmania, Gandhi and NIMS. He stated that the Sanathnagar TIMS facility was constructed at a cost of around Rs 1,200 crore using advanced technology and international standards. The objective was to offer world-class treatment to the underprivileged and reduce dependence on private corporate hospitals. "Had the KCR government continued in power, this hospital would have been operational by now. But the Congress government has been unable to com-

plete pending works even after two years," he said. He added that TIMS hospitals were established in Sanathnagar, LB Nagar and Alwal, while a 2,000-bed government hospital was also under construction in Warangal. He said NIMS was also undergoing major expansion. During the inspection, Rama Rao asked officials to immediately address elevator functionality at the hospital. He also recalled the establishment of 350 Basti Dawakhana across the State under the previous BRS government and urged current administration to expedite the remaining works at TIMS and open it to the public.



## Karnataka Alert On SIR Process, Seeks To Avoid 'Bengal-Like' Controversies

**Bengaluru:** Karnataka Home Minister G. Parameshwara, speaking to the media on Saturday, said, "In our state as well, the SIR (Special Intensive Revision) process will begin. We also need to be careful. Anything that happened in West Bengal should not be allowed here." "This is our opinion, and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has already held a meeting regarding the matter. Mapping has already been completed in some places, while in others it is still pending," he said. He said, "Yesterday, I was invited to a meeting regarding the SIR, but I could not attend due to various reasons. In West Bengal, many people claim that the government lost power because of alleged SIR manipulation. Analysts say that due to such manipulation, the BJP won nearly 100 seats by margins of around 5,000 votes."



"This should not be allowed in Karnataka and we are careful," he added. "Probably, there will be more clarity after a few days. Once the process is completed fully, a clear picture will emerge," he added. "We have already given instructions to our party workers and Booth Level Agents (BLAs) regarding monitoring the

process and holding discussions with Booth Level Officers (BLOs). Additions and deletions in the voter list have to be monitored carefully. The party has conveyed all these directions to the BLAs, and they will carry out the work," he stated. Speaking about the preparations for the mega event in his native Tumakuru

city to ma, and lakhs of people have received land records in their names. This can be described as a major achievement of the Karnataka government." "In continuation of this initiative, property documents will be distributed to 1.40 lakh people under the programme that has been planned," he said. "We had not imagined that

the Congress government would soon be completing three years in office. However, after May 20 was suggested to the Chief Minister's Office, and everything fell into place. Since the swearing-in ceremony was held on May 20 and the government came into existence on that day, it has been decided to celebrate the occasion as the completion of three years of the government," he added. "More importantly, this is primarily a programme of the Revenue Department," he said. "More than 50 per cent of the assurances promised in the manifesto have already been fulfilled. There is also a need to review this achievement," he added. Responding to a question on a possible Cabinet reshuffle, Parameshwara said, "It is the decision of the party high command. I have been repeating this to the media time and again."

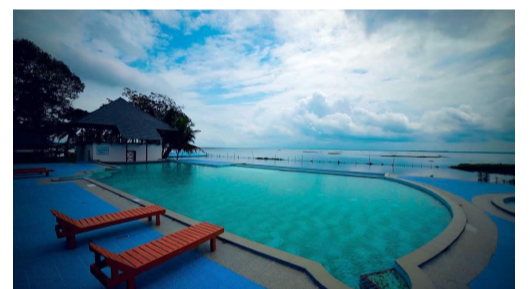
## AP Govt Targets Rs.1.27 Lakh Cr Own Revenue for 2026-27



**Amaravati:** Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has directed all revenue-generating departments to intensify efforts to increase the state's own revenues as the government set a target of Rs 1.2 lakh crore for 2026-27. During a review meeting at the Secretariat here, the chief minister directed all revenue-generating departments to strengthen collections and adopt technology-driven systems to boost revenues. Also Read - Private Bus Catches Fire in Andhra, None Injured "The government has set a target of Rs 1.27 lakh crore in own revenue for 2026-27, and the chief minister directed all revenue-generating departments to intensify efforts to improve collections and plug leakages," an official release said late on Thursday. Officials informed Naidu that the state's own revenue (SOR) increased from Rs 1,04,345 crore in 2024-25 to Rs 1,10,643 crore in 2025-26, registering a growth of around six per cent. Also Read - Woman Killed, Looted in Home in Vizag Major contributions included Rs 33,679 crore from Goods and Services Tax (GST), Rs 10,300 crore from the Mines Department and Rs 11,047 crore from the Stamps and Registration Department, the release said. Naidu observed that increasing investments in the state should proportionately enhance tax revenues and noted that Andhra Pradesh had already recorded nearly 38 per cent revenue growth during the first 42 days of the current financial year. Also Read - AP CS Gets Six-Month Extension Calling districts "growth centres", the chief minister stressed that district-level economic expansion would accelerate the state's overall revenue growth and help Andhra Pradesh achieve its fiscal targets faster. He directed departments to improve the speed of doing business, strengthen monitoring systems and eliminate tax evasion and irregularities through innovative mechanisms and technology. The chief minister also highlighted that resolving land disputes could substantially improve registration revenues. Also Read - IAS Officers Give Toss to PM's Call for Austerity Emphasising the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Naidu instructed officials to implement AI-driven GST scrutiny systems, strengthen analytics and use advanced technolo-

## Experts Anticipate Significant Boost In Inbound Tourism After PM Modi's Appeal To Avoid Foreign Travel

**New Delhi:** The Indian tourism industry is anticipating a boost in inbound tourism after Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged citizens to conserve foreign exchange reserves by cutting down on unnecessary foreign travel, overseas vacations and destination weddings abroad. Industry stakeholders believe the appeal could lead to a significant shift in travel preferences, encouraging Indians to explore domestic destinations instead of opting for international tours and weddings. Travel operators and hospitality players said the move may particularly benefit domestic tourism hotspots, heritage circuits and luxury wedding destinations across India. Experts noted that affluent travellers, who often choose foreign locations for trips and weddings, may now increasingly look at destinations that offer comparable experiences. Tourism and hospitality operators are now hopeful that the Prime Minister's appeal will translate into higher bookings, increased footfall at Indian destinations and renewed interest in destination weddings within the country. Sharing his views, Rajnish Kaishta, tourism expert and senior vice president of the Indian Association of Tour Operators, told ETV Bharat, "The industry is expecting this appeal will help reduce at least 10 per cent of outbound tourists who often choose foreign countries for destination weddings. This, in



turn, will help boost Indian hotels and the economy." He further said the government should now focus on increasing inbound tourist arrivals, as international visitors bring valuable foreign exchange that can strengthen the Indian economy. "Foreign tourists contribute significantly to the country's foreign exchange reserves, and increasing inbound tourism will help improve our economy further," he added. Expressing similar views, Ravi Gosain, president of the IATO, told ETV Bharat, "Outbound tourism has already been under pressure due to the ongoing West Asia conflict over the past several months. Many tourists are avoiding foreign travel as airfares have increased significantly, affecting middle-class travellers the most." He said the industry has been consistently urging the government to focus on boosting inbound tourism to strengthen the country's foreign exchange reserves. "For increasing inbound tourism, the government needs to undertake aggressive publicity and promotion of Indian tourist destinations and attractions at the international level," he stated. Another tourism expert, Garish Oberoi, honorary treasurer of the Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India, said, "This is positive news for Indian hotels as it is expected to generate more business for the domestic hospitality sector. If outbound tourism declines by 20 to 30 per cent, it will provide a significant boost to the dole resilience of India's outbound travel market, supported by rising consumer confidence, expanding aviation networks, and growing demand for international leisure and business travel. According to official data, outbound travel by Indian nationals in 2024 was largely driven by leisure and recreational purposes, which accounted for 42.52 per cent of total departures. Indian diaspora followed closely at 34.69 per cent. Business and professional travel contributed 14.92 per cent to the total outbound movement, while pilgrimage travel accounted for 3.99 per cent. Education-related travel made up 2.45 per cent, and the remaining 1.43 per cent was attributed to other purposes, the data showed.

## Narayana Inspects Anna Canteen In Vijayawada

**VIJAYAWADA:** Andhra Pradesh municipal administration minister Ponguru Narayana on Thursday paid a surprise visit to the Anna Canteen near the Sai Baba temple at Ranigiri Thota in Vijayawada, along with Vijayawada Municipal Corporation commissioner H.M. Dhyanchandra. The minister inspected food quality, sanitation, drinking water arrangements and other facilities at the canteen. He closely examined cleanliness standards in the dining and food serving sections and reviewed the process of cleaning plates and utensils.

Facilities including mineral water supply, water coolers, mosquito protection measures and parking arrangements were also inspected. Also Read - Private Bus Catches Fire in Andhra, None Injured To personally assess the quality of food, Narayana and the VMC commissioner purchased meal tokens for Rs 5 each and had lunch with the public at the canteen. The minister interacted with diners and



sought their feedback on the taste and quality of the meals being served. Addressing the media later, Narayana said Anna Canteens were providing

hygienic and tasty food to the poor in line with the vision of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu. He said nearly 3.5 lakh people across Andhra Pradesh were availing themselves of meals at Anna Canteens every day. The minister inspected food quality, sanitation, drinking water arrangements and other facilities at the canteen. He closely examined cleanliness standards in the dining and food serving sections and reviewed the process of cleaning plates and utensils.

## NEET exams to be computer-based from next year: Dharmendra Pradhan

**New Delhi:** Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Friday said that the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) will shift to a computer-based examination model from next year. Addressing a press conference in the capital, Pradhan said there was an urgent need to conduct the examinations online, indicating that the Centre has made up its mind to move from the paper-based format to the computer-based examination model. Pradhan's presser comes in the backdrop of NEET paper leaks and subsequent exam cancellation, leaving lakhs of students anxious, angry and disappointed over the state of affairs, in the way NTA is conducting competitive examinations. Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan announced that NEET-UG will transition to a computer-based model next year to prevent malpractice. Following recent paper leaks, a re-examination is set for June 21, with fee refunds provided and a choice of exam cities for affected aspirants. The Education Minister informed the press that the recommendations of the Radhakrishnan Committee



had been implemented, but admitted that a breakdown had happened somewhere in the chain of command. He also assured that corrective steps are Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan announced that NEET-UG will transition to a computer-based model next year to prevent malpractice. Following recent paper leaks, a re-examination is set for June 21, with fee refunds provided and a choice of exam cities for

affected aspirants being undertaken to strengthen the system. He also called it a "long and sustained fight" against the education mafia in the country. He said the Central Bureau of Investigation has already launched a detailed probe at multiple levels into the breach and will soon find out how the miscreants and mafia managed to break into the "fool-proof" system. Further assuring students and allaying their apprehensions, he said, "The entire government machinery will ensure no malpractices happen this time. He further informed has already launched a that the National Testing Agency (NTA) will hold the NEET re-examinations on June 21, nearly a month after the original exams. He said that all the candidates and NEET aspirants will receive their admit card by June. He has already launched a 4. "Aspirants will get an opportunity to choose

their choice of city for Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan announced that NEET-UG will transition to a computer-based model next year to prevent malpractice. Following recent paper leaks, a re-examination is set for June 21, with fee refunds provided and a choice of exam cities for affected aspirants and the fees of the examinations, and no extra fees will be charged for the re-examination.

their choice of city for Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan announced that NEET-UG will transition to a computer-based model next year to prevent malpractice. Following recent paper leaks, a re-examination is set for June 21, with fee refunds provided and a choice of exam cities for affected aspirants and the fees of the examinations, and no extra fees will be charged for the re-examination.

## DMK Begins Introspection After Poll Rout In Tamil Nadu; Stalin Signals Major Organisational Overhaul

**Chennai:** In the first major internal review after the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam's crushing defeat in the Tamil Nadu Assembly Elections 2026, party president and former Chief Minister MK Stalin took full responsibility for the setback and announced sweeping organisational reforms aimed at rebuilding the party. Chairing a crucial meeting of DMK district secretaries at Anna Arivalayam in Chennai on Thursday, Stalin described the electoral defeat as a "temporary setback" and urged party leaders to avoid blame game and internal factionalism. The consultative meeting, which lasted nearly three hours, witnessed emotional scenes as several senior leaders and district secretaries reportedly broke down in tears after Stalin publicly accepted responsibility for the defeat. The DMK, which headed the outgoing government, was reduced to 59 seats in the 234-member Assembly, while actor-politi-



cian C Joseph Vijay-led Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) swept the polls. Several senior leaders and ministers, including Stalin himself, suffered defeats in their constituencies. Addressing party functionaries, Stalin recalled the party's earlier electoral setbacks in 2001 and 2011 and said the DMK had historically recovered from difficult political phases. "Many are blaming one another for the defeat. As party president, I myself take full responsibility," Stalin said, according to leaders present at the meeting. His remarks triggered emotional reactions from several district sec-

retaries and former ministers. Some leaders reportedly told Stalin that they were prepared to resign from their organisational posts if the leadership desired. However, Stalin is learnt to have rejected such offers, asking leaders to remain united and focus on rebuilding the organisation. Former Finance Minister and DMK Secretary for the Virudhunagar North District, Thangam Thennarasu, became emotional while addressing the meeting, saying party workers would not have minded even if all others had lost as long as Stalin himself had won. Several district secretaries also stressed

that the defeat should not be attributed solely to the leadership. PEN Gave Flawed Survey Data The meeting also witnessed sharp criticism of the party's election management mechanisms. Some district secretaries reportedly blamed the DMK's campaign and strategy apparatus, including the 'PEN' (Populus Empowerment Network, the political strategist firm associated with the party) election management team and intelligence inputs, alleging that flawed survey assessments and inaccurate feedback had misled the leadership during the campaign. Questions were reportedly raised over how the party leadership was given optimistic assessments even in constituencies where the DMK eventually faced severe setbacks. Leaders also pointed to the growing influence of social media narratives and youth-driven political communication during the election. Former minister TM Anbarasan said that many tradition-

## MHA Grants Another Extension To Manipur Violence Inquiry Commission

**New Delhi:** Amid fresh incidents of violence in Manipur, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has granted another six-month extension to Justice Balbir Singh Chauhan-led Commission of Inquiry, probing the 2023 ethnic violence in the state. The Commission must now submit its report by November 20, 2026.

According to a notification issued by the Home Ministry on Thursday, the three-member panel headed by former Supreme Court Justice Balbir Singh Chauhan has been asked to submit its findings "as soon as possible but not later than 20th November, 2026." The Commission of Inquiry was constituted on June 4, 2023, days after large-scale violence erupted across Manipur following a "Tribal Solidarity March" organised in the hill districts on May 3 earlier that year. The march was held to oppose the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status.



This is the sixth time that the tenure of the three-member Commission has been extended. In February this year, three months before the Commission was due to submit its report, Justice Ajay Lamba, former Chief Justice of the Gauhati High Court and head of the Commission, resigned and the Centre announced the appointment of former Supreme Court judge Justice Balbir Singh Chauhan as the new chairman. Other members of the Commission are retired IAS officer Himanshu

Sekhar Das and retired IPS officer Aloka Prabhakar. The Commission is examining the sequence of events that led to the violence and whether there were lapses or dereliction of duty by authorities or individuals responsible for maintaining law and order. The Commission is also assessing the adequacy of administrative and security measures taken to prevent the clashes and control the situation once violence broke out. Complaints and representations submitted by individuals

and organisations are also being reviewed as part of the inquiry. The extension has granted against the backdrop of fresh incidents of violence in Manipur. On Wednesday, three senior church leaders were killed and five others seriously injured in an attack carried out by unidentified armed assailants in Manipur's Kangpokpi district. According to the report, the incident took place at around 11 am between Kotzim and Kotlen while the church leaders and others were returning to Kangpokpi after attending the United Baptist Church Conference held in Lamka. Subsequently on Thursday, more than 38 people belonging to Naga and Kuki communities were held hostage by various groups in the state. Security forces have rescued several hostages till now.

## Jaishankar Holds Talks With Iran Foreign Minister Araghchi

**New Delhi:** External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi on Friday held wide-ranging talks focusing on the West Asia crisis and its impact on energy supplies and maritime stability. The Iranian foreign minister is on a three-day visit to New Delhi to attend a BRICS conclave. "Had a detailed conversation with FM Abbas Araghchi of Iran this morning in Delhi," Jaishankar said on the social media platform 'X'. "Discussed the situation in West Asia and its implications. Also exchanged views on bilateral issues of mutual interest," he said. The external affairs minister also appreciated Araghchi's participation in the BRICS foreign ministers' meeting. Araghchi is on a three-day official visit to



India, marking the first high-level diplomatic engagement from Tehran since the outbreak of the US-Israeli conflict. Jaishankar assumed the BRICS Chairmanship on January 1 this year, taking over from Brazil. This marks the fourth time India has held the

BRICS Chairmanship on January 1 this year, taking over from Brazil. This marks the fourth time India has held the presidency of the influential bloc, having previously hosted summits in 2012, 2016, and 2021. India is hosting the BRICS Foreign Ministers Meeting from today (May 14). India

officially assumed the BRICS Chairmanship on January 1 this year, taking over from Brazil. This marks the fourth time India has held the presidency of the influential bloc, having previously hosted summits in 2012, 2016, and 2021. India

## Agree '100 Per Cent' With Xi That US Was On Decline, But Under Biden: Trump

**Washington:** US President Donald Trump said his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping was "100 per cent correct" in his assessment that the US was a nation in decline, but the remarks referred to the years of his predecessor Joe Biden. "When President Xi very elegantly referred to the United States as perhaps being a declining nation, he was referring to the tremendous damage we suffered during the four years of Sleepy Joe Biden and the Biden Administration, and on that score, he was 100 per cent correct," Trump said in a post on Truth Social. He said the US "suffered immeasurably with open borders, high

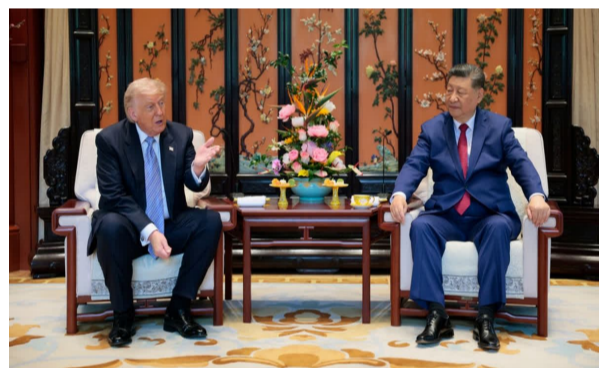


taxes, transgender for everybody, men in women's sports, Diversity-Equity-Inclusion (DEI), horrible trade deals, rampant crime, and so much more!" Trump asserted that the US has seen "an incredible rise" during the first 16 months of his administration and pointed to record stock markets and 401(k)s, military victories,

renewed economic strength and what he described as a booming job market. Trump also touted a military victory and thriving relationship in Venezuela, as well as the "military decimation" of Iran. "President Xi was not referring to the incredible rise that the United States has displayed to the world during the 16 spectacular months of the Trump

Administration," he said. "Two years ago, we were, in fact, a Nation in decline. On that, I fully agree with President Xi!" Trump said, adding that, "But now, the United States is the hottest Nation anywhere in the world, and hopefully our relationship with China will be stronger and better than ever before!" Trump also cited trillions of dollars in foreign investment flowing into the US, praised the administration's rollback of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programs and claimed that President Xi congratulated him on what he called the administration's "tremendous successes" in a short period of time.

**Beijing:** Presidents Donald Trump and Xi Jinping wrapped up critical talks on Friday, claiming important progress in stabilizing U.S.-China relations even as deep differences persist between the world's two biggest powers. Xi welcomed Trump at his official residence, Zhongnanhai, on Friday for the final talks of the summit before the U.S. leader's return to Washington. The leaders took a short walk through the grounds that feature ancient trees and Chinese roses, and strolled through a covered passageway with green columns and archways painted with birds and traditional Chinese mountain scenes. Over tea and lunch, Trump and Xi — with top aides and translators in tow — huddled for nearly three hours of talks before the U.S. leader completed his three-day visit to China. "It's been really a great couple of days," Trump told reporters as he sat with Xi before the start of their meeting with aides. Xi, for his part, called it a "milestone" visit. "We have established a new bilateral relationship, or rather a constructive, strategic, stable relationship," he said. But the optimistic outlook collides with some difficult truths about the thorniest issues between the two superpowers. Beijing has shown little public interest in U.S. entreaties to get more involved in solving the conflict in Iran, even though Trump said in an interview with Fox News' Sean Hannity that Xi had in their conversations offered to help. In recent weeks, the U.S. State Department has accused Chinese firms of providing satellite imagery to the Iranian government and the Treasury Department has moved to target Chinese oil refineries accused of buying oil from Tehran, as well as shippers of the oil.



And the White House believes China can still do more to stem the flow of Chinese-made precursor chemicals into Mexico used to make illicit fentanyl that has wreaked havoc on many U.S. communities. Xi, meanwhile, warned Trump during private talks that their differences on the self-ruled island of Taiwan, if handled poorly, could hurtle the world's dominant powers toward "clashes and even conflicts," according to Chinese government officials. Trump appeared impressed by the bucolic grounds, remarking the roses were the most beautiful he had ever seen. Xi promised to send him some rose seeds. The compound is wrapped around two manmade lakes that had been built for the pleasure of emperors. Zhongnanhai is often compared to the White House, the Kremlin or South Korea's Blue House. But unlike the other presidential residences, Zhongnanhai does not serve as the main venue for diplomatic visits. The invitation appeared to be an attempt by Xi to extend a personal touch to a U.S. leader who appreciates big gestures. "I think he's a warm person, actually. But he's all business," Trump said of Xi in the Fox News interview. "There's no games." Taiwan remains the most important issue for China. Xi's sharp language on Taiwan loomed large over the visit, with Chinese government officials amplifying that differences on the self-ruled island pose

the biggest risk to U.S.-Chinese relations. But Secretary of State Marco Rubio told NBC News that U.S. policy toward Taiwan was "unchanged" and cautioned that it would be "a terrible mistake" for China to try to take Taiwan by force. He also framed Xi's comments as standard practice. "They always raise it on their side. We always make clear our position, and we move on to the other topics," said Rubio, who was among senior aides to join Trump for the talks. China in recent weeks has sought to put more focus on its view that Taiwan sits at the "core" of its interests and is key to ensuring a stable relationship with the U.S. Trump at moments has shown ambivalence toward Taiwan, raising speculation that he could be open to loosening ties with Taipei. Trump has demanded Taiwan increase defense spending, and in December, the White House announced an \$11 billion weapons package for Taiwan, the largest ever to the island democracy. But the U.S. has yet to begin fulfilling the arms sales, and Trump had said he expected to discuss the matter with Xi in Beijing. He's also groused that Taiwan "stole" America's semiconductor business and called on Taiwan to pay the U.S. for protection. China wants the Strait of Hormuz opened. The leaders agreed that the Strait of Hormuz — effectively closed since the start of the Iran conflict — needs to be

reopened to support global energy demands. About 20% of the world's oil flowed through the strait before the war started on Feb. 28. "We feel very similar about (how) we want it to end," the president said with Xi at this side. "We don't want them to have a nuclear weapon." White House officials say Xi was also opposed to any implementation of tolls on vessels crossing the strait and expressed interest in China potentially purchasing U.S. oil to reduce Chinese dependence on Gulf oil in the future. Trump earlier this week had downplayed the importance of talks with Xi on the 11-week-old Iran war that has led to surging energy prices and threatens to plunge the global economy into recession if the conflict does not conclude soon. But before Air Force One could land in Beijing, Rubio said administration officials would make the case to the Chinese officials about the U.S. and Israeli bombardment of Iran, hold unique leverage as Iran's biggest trading partner. The Chinese government has managed to weather the economic damage the help of its strategic oil reserves, but that backstop is not limitless. Economists say the Iran conflict could still have a big impact on China's export-driven economy. Will Trump announce any major business deals? The White House, ahead of the visit, insisted that Trump wouldn't be making the trip without an eye toward securing results before he leaves, suggesting there could be announcements coming on trade. Trump says some "fantastic trade deals" had been struck during the visit, but did not offer further details. The U.S. side had been hoping to nail down Chinese commitments to buy U.S. soybeans and beef. Trump told Fox News that Xi had indicated

## Health Minister Wes Streeting's Resignation Piles Pressure On UK PM



London: UK Health Secretary Wes Streeting resigned from the Cabinet on Thursday, declaring that he had lost confidence in the leadership of Prime Minister Keir Starmer. As a frontrunner to replace Starmer at 10 Downing Street, Streeting is expected to launch his bid to be elected Labour leader if he can secure the backing of the party's requisite 81 members of Parliament. It piles further pressure on Starmer, who has been attempting to quell an internal rebellion over the devastating results for the governing party in last week's local elections. "It is now clear that you will not lead the Labour Party into the next general election and that Labour MPs and Labour unions want the debate about what comes next to be a battle of ideas, not of personalities or petty factionalism," Streeting said in his resignation letter addressed to Starmer. "It needs to be broad, and it needs to be the best possible field of candidates. I support

that approach and I hope you will facilitate it," he said. The former minister accused his boss of lacking any vision and over-seeing a power "vacuum" and also went on to highlight his own record of leading the Department for Health and Social Care and state-funded National Health Service (NHS). Streeting added: "The National Health Service is the embodiment of all that is best about Britain and our values. Thanks to our Labour government, it is on the road to recovery: lots done, but so much more to do. "These are all good reasons for me to remain in post, but as you know from our conversation earlier this week, having lost confidence in your leadership, I have concluded that it would be unprincipled to do so." His orders advice I received, and HMRC [His Majesty's Revenue and Customs] has accepted this," she said. This is seen as her declaring her intention to be ready to join the fray, should a Labour leadership election be launched. The latest tur-

moil at the top of the Brare being interpreted as paving the way for a Labour leadership contest, with former deputy prime minister Angela Rayner, Mayor of Greater Manchester Andy Burnham and Energy Secretary Ed Miliband among his other expected rivals. While some indications are that this process may not be triggered any time soon, Starmer's future as Labour leader is looking extremely tenuous if the party's National Executive Committee (NEC) gets involved in a formal election process. Meanwhile, Rayner issued a statement earlier to confirm that she had been cleared by the UK tax authorities of any wrongdoing over her financial affairs that had forced her to step down from the Cabinet last year. "I took reasonable care and acted in good faith, based on the expert advice I received, and HMRC [His Majesty's Revenue and Customs] has accepted this," she said. This is seen as her declaring her intention to be ready to join the fray, should a

Labour leadership election be launched. The latest turmoil advice I received, and HMRC [His Majesty's Revenue and Customs] has accepted this," she said. This is seen as her declaring her intention to be ready to join the fray, should a Labour leadership election be launched. The latest turmoil at the top of the Brare being interpreted as paving the way for a Labour leadership contest, with former deputy prime minister Angela Rayner, Mayor of Greater Manchester Andy Burnham and Energy Secretary Ed Miliband among his other expected rivals. While some indications are that this process may not be triggered any time soon, Starmer's future as Labour leader is looking extremely tenuous if the party's National Executive Committee (NEC) gets involved in a formal election process. Meanwhile, Rayner issued a statement earlier to confirm that she had been cleared by the UK tax authorities of any wrongdoing over her financial affairs that had forced her to step down from the Cabinet last year. "I took reasonable care and acted in good faith, based on the expert advice I received, and HMRC [His Majesty's Revenue and Customs] has accepted this," she said. This is seen as her declaring her intention to be ready to join the fray, should a

## Must Avoid Dependencies On Adversarial Nations In AI: US Official

Washington: India and the US must be guided by the principles of openness and avoid any dependencies on adversarial nations to fully realise the potential of areas such as artificial intelligence, a senior US official said here on Friday. Addressing the US-India AI and Emerging Technology Forum, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Bethany Morrison said the US wants to make sure that countries in the region have access to world-class technology and get that integrated into society to deliver the best value and results for their people. "But in order to fully realise the benefits of this incredible technology, we must be guided by the principles of openness, as well as focus on our security and our interoperability, and avoid any dependencies on adversarial nations," Morrison said at the event organised by the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum, ORF America and the Motwani Jadeja Foundation. She said the private sector has already invested more than USD 300 billion in the development of AI technologies in the first quarter of 2026 and more than half of these investments have come to US companies. "Indian companies are making



incredible strides in this space and making real investments," Morrison said, adding that Indian businesses announced investments of USD 1.1 billion at the SelectUSA Investment Summit here this week. She said the US was excited to see the investment and technology relationship with India because it shares the US vision on AI. "The Indian government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, sees clearly that AI technology must contribute to prosperity for our nations, while also being clear-eyed about the security threats that we both face," Morrison said. "I truly believe the United States and India are fantases and India are a fantastic match for this next phase of tech innovation, and I look forward to working with my counterparts in the Indian government, the private sector, the community of experts to help shape the future of AI in our American leadership and Indian leadership," Morrison said.

relationship with India because it shares the US vision on AI. "The Indian government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, sees clearly that AI technology must contribute to prosperity for our nations, while also being clear-eyed about the security threats that we both face," Morrison said. "I truly believe the United States and India are fantases and India are a fantastic match for this next phase of tech innovation, and I look forward to working with my counterparts in the Indian government, the private sector, the community of experts to help shape the future of AI in our American leadership and Indian leadership," Morrison said.

## US Energy Official Briefs Nuclear Industry Delegation Ahead Of India Visit

Washington: US Energy Secretary Chris Wright briefed a delegation of senior executives from the American nuclear industry scheduled to visit India next week to explore areas of cooperation after New Delhi opened up the tightly-controlled sector for private players. A 20-member US executive nuclear industry delegation will interact with government officials and private sector leaders keen to explore opportunities in the civil nuclear sector available since the enactment of the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) law in December last year. The SHANTI Act replaced the Atomic Energy Act of 1964 and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage (CNLD) Act of 2010. The CNLD Act had tougher liability provisions on nuclear suppliers, which global companies found to be an impediment to exploring the Indian market. The US nuclear industry delegation is travelling to India as part of an initiative by the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum and the Nuclear Energy Institute. "USISPF and the Nuclear Energy Institute



(@NEI) were honoured to welcome the US Secretary of Energy @SecretaryWright for a briefing with members of the US Executive Nuclear Industry Delegation ahead of their visit to India," the USISPF said in a post on X on Friday. The US industry delegation is expected to explore joint project opportunities with the Indian private sector in civil nuclear energy. After the India-US civil nuclear agreement was signed in 2008, two sites - Chhayamithi Virdi in Gujarat and Kovvada in Andhra Pradesh were allotted to establish 1000 MW nuclear power plants. The US are also exploring cooperation in

small modular reactors (SMRs), which are billed as the future of nuclear power due to ease of deployment, particularly by repurposing sites of coal-based power plants. "Legislations like the SHANTI Act and EO14299 have led to a revival of dialogue on nuclear energy in both India and the US. We can expect more opportunities for private companies from the two countries to collaborate in this sector," can expect more oppor said Abhik Sengupta, a programme officer with a Washington-based industry body. The US is also taking steps to fasten SMR deployment and explore recycling and reprocessing of spent fuel. The US has

not reprocessed or recycled nuclear fuel since 1970. In India, private sector players such as Tata Consulting Engineers, Adani Group, Larsen and Toubro, among others, have evinced interest in the civil nuclear sector. India's public sector undertaking, National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC), has established a joint venture with Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limcan expect more opporited (NPCIL) to build at least six power plants at Mahi Banswara in Rajasthan and Chutka in Madhya Pradesh. India has set a target of producing 100 GW of nuclear power by 2047, a significant rise from the present installed capacity of nearly 9 GW.

## Iran Is Finished, Should Make Deal To End War: Trump After Talks With Xi Jinping

Beijing: US President Donald Trump said Iran is "finished" and must either negotiate a deal to end the ongoing conflict or face destruction. "Deal or annihilation for Iran," Trump stated during an interview with Fox News on the final day of his three-day trip to China. He emphasised that the US cannot "let Iran have a nuclear weapon." "They're finished now; they can make a deal, or they will be annihilated," Trump said after in-depth discussions with Chinese President Xi Jinping on various issues, including Iran. Trump was scheduled for one more meeting with Xi on Friday, followed by lunch before returning home, concluding his visit to China. During the interview, Trump noted, "President Xi would like to see a deal between the US and Iran." He added that Xi offered assistance, saying, "If I could be of any help whatsoever, I would like to help." Trump expressed his belief that China also does not want Iran to possess nuclear weapons. Additionally, Trump mentioned that General Dan Caine, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, informed him that the US could decisively neutralise Kharg Island in Iran in just "four or five minutes." When pressed about China's support for Iran, Trump stated that the topic was discussed with Xi, who assured him that China



"is not going to give military equipment" to Iran. China currently purchases 90 per cent of Iranian oil and maintains a strategic partnership with Tehran, including close military ties. Trump described Xi as a "warm person" who is "all business." He expressed his appreciation for this, saying, "I like that - that's a good thing. No games." He defended his positive remarks about his relationship with Xi, stating that he often faces criticism for praising certain leaders, but he respects Xi as a leader for China, a nation with nearly 1.5 billion people. He called the military honour guard ceremony welcoming him "incredible," adding, "If you went to Hollywood, you wouldn't find that." Trump reiterated that his approach to relations with China has been successful, saying, "We do great with China," and noted the strength of his

friendship with Xi. "He's a tremendous leader. He's been here a long time, very powerful, very strong. There's no doubt about it. We just have a good relationship," he said. Defending the military operations against Iran once again, Trump said they are much shorter than previous US conflicts, such as those in Vietnam and Iraq. He stated that Iran's navy has been taken out and that they currently lack air force and anti-aircraft capabilities. "They built it up a little bit. We'll take it out in one day," he declared. Trump, who brought top CEOs of US firms, including Tesla Chief, Elon Musk and head of Apple Tim Cook, said the business leaders did fantastically well. He described the meeting with American executives as a "good idea" but noted it was different from the original schedule. Trump also mentioned that he

encouraged Xi to "buy oil" from the US, to which Xi responded that he "likes the idea." "They're going to go to Texas. We're going to start sending Chinese ships to Texas, to Louisiana and to Alaska. And I think that was another thing that was agreed to. That's a big thing," he said. He expressed a desire to see China open up its markets, stating, "It would be unbelievable for our companies if they open it, and I think it would be good for China too." Trump mentioned that Xi agreed to order 200 Boeing jets during their "very good meeting," stressing, "Big ones. That's a lot." Additionally, he requested that China use Visa for trade and indicated that China is set to purchase a substantial amount of American agricultural products, which he described as "great."

## Higher import duties on gold unlikely to curb demand



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on May 10 urged Indian citizens to reduce fuel consumption, defer gold purchases for one year, and avoid foreign vacations. Currently, many economists are deeply worried about the economy for three main reasons:

Rahul Gandhi targets Centre, says people now being told what to buy, where to go

Rewind: Gold isn't shining for farmers

First, India's foreign exchange reserves fell by \$7.794 billion to \$690.693 billion in the week ended May 1, 2026, according to data from the Reserve Bank of India. Since the outbreak of the war, the country's forex reserves have declined by nearly 5 per cent, reflecting rising external sector pressures. Second, disruptions in global supply chains and a sustained rise in crude oil prices are likely to widen India's current account deficit (CAD) — when imports and payments exceed exports and earnings — to around 2 per cent of GDP in FY27. The CAD had already expanded to \$13.2 billion, or 1.3 per cent of GDP, during the October–December quarter of 2025–26, signalling growing vulnerabilities in the external balance. Third, the rupee has depreciated to Rs 95.65 per US dollar, down by Rs 10.76 over the past year. These three issues highlight that the economy will face significant challenges in the coming days. The Prime Minister's announcement has heightened public anxiety, with many consumers expressing concerns about fuel availability, gold investments, and future economic uncertainty. Amid rising geopolitical tensions and volatile global markets, can gold continue to retain its status as the preferred safe-haven asset?

In India, the demand for physical gold has remained consistently high over the years. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, gold symbolises prosperity and affluence, and thus it is adorned at weddings and festivals. Secondly, gold serves as a safe haven during periods of economic uncertainty, and thirdly, it can be used as a hedge against inflation. This high demand for gold is met by importing when the domestic supply is limited. The Prime Minister has primarily urged consumers to reduce gold purchases, as gold accounts for nearly 9 per cent of

India's total imports. India's gold imports surged by over 24 per cent to an all-time high of \$71.98 billion in 2025–26, adding further pressure on the country's trade deficit and external balance. Rising gold prices and imports are expected to widen CAD.

In response, India has raised import tariffs on gold and silver to 15 per cent from 6 per cent, as part of efforts to curb overseas purchases of the precious metals and ease pressure on the country's foreign exchange reserves, effective May 13, 2026. Similarly, in 2022, the government increased the import duty on the yellow metal from 10.75 per cent to 15 per cent to check the widening CAD and rising imports. In May 2022, 107 tonnes of gold were imported. However, in the Budget 2024–25, the duty was reduced to 6 per cent to boost the domestic gems and jewellery industry, curb illegal smuggling, and bring down local prices. India's gold imports surged to a record \$72.4 billion in 2025–26 on account of soaring global gold prices, despite a decline in import volumes. Gold imports stood at \$57.9 billion in 2024–25 and \$45.6 billion in 2023–24. In volume terms, imports fell to 721 tonnes in 2025–26 from 757 tonnes in the previous year. The sharp rise in gold prices pushed India's overall gold import bill to an all-time high. Why is Gold Price Higher

The sharp rise in gold prices in India can be attributed to a combination of investment demand, inflationary pressures, cultural preferences, and central bank purchases. In recent years, many investors have increasingly viewed gold as a safe and reliable investment option, especially during periods of economic uncertainty and global financial volatility. When inflation remains high, investors often shift their savings into gold to preserve the value of their wealth and earn better returns than other assets. In addition, gold continues to hold strong cultural and traditional significance in India, leading to consistently high demand during festivals, weddings, and other auspicious occasions. Furthermore, increased gold purchases by the Reserve Bank of India as part of its foreign exchange reserve management strategy have also contributed to the upward movement in

gold prices. Together, these factors have played an important role in pushing gold prices to record levels in the Indian market.

Late Move Although the government has increased import duties on gold to curb rising imports and reduce pressure on the trade and CAD, the move is unlikely to immediately cool domestic prices amid persistent global uncertainty and strong investor demand for safe-haven assets. Higher duties may reduce official imports, but they could also encourage gold smuggling and increase dependence on recycled gold in the domestic market. Farmers in the rural economy are likely to be adversely affected by rising gold prices, as they primarily use gold for precautionary and speculative purposes. The policy response appears reactive rather than preventive, as stronger measures could have been implemented earlier, when global geopolitical tensions first began to escalate.

This is the right time for investors to look beyond physical gold and explore alternative investment avenues, including Digital Gold, Gold ETFs (Exchange Traded Funds), Sovereign Gold Bonds (SGBs), and Gold Mutual Funds. Digital Gold offers 24/7 buying and selling with no making charges and high liquidity, making it a simple entry point for investors. Gold ETFs invest in physical gold and are traded on stock exchanges like shares, offering lower costs, higher liquidity, and flexibility, making them suitable for long-term investment. Gold mutual funds invest in Gold ETFs and offer SIP or lump-sum investments, making them a convenient, beginner-friendly option. However, most farmers and rural populations may be unable to explore these alternatives due to limited financial literacy and education. As a result, rising gold prices are likely to have a negative impact on India's total imports. India's gold imports surged by over 24 per cent to an all-time high of \$71.98 billion in 2025–26, adding further pressure on the country's trade deficit and external balance. Rising gold prices and imports are expected to widen CAD.

In response, India has raised import tariffs on gold and silver to 15 per cent from 6 per cent, as

part of efforts to curb overseas purchases of the precious metals and ease pressure on the country's foreign exchange reserves, effective May 13, 2026. Similarly, in 2022, the government increased the import duty on the yellow metal from 10.75 per cent to 15 per cent to check the widening CAD and rising imports. In May 2022, 107 tonnes of gold were imported. However, in the Budget 2024–25, the duty was reduced to 6 per cent to boost the domestic gems and jewellery industry, curb illegal smuggling, and bring down local prices. India's gold imports surged to a record \$72.4 billion in 2025–26 on account of soaring global gold prices, despite a decline in import volumes. Gold imports stood at \$57.9 billion in 2024–25 and \$45.6 billion in 2023–24. In volume terms, imports fell to 721 tonnes in 2025–26 from 757 tonnes in the previous year. The sharp rise in gold prices pushed India's overall gold import bill to an all-time high. Why is Gold Price Higher

The sharp rise in gold prices in India can be attributed to a combination of investment demand, inflationary pressures, cultural preferences, and central bank purchases. In recent years, many investors have increasingly viewed gold as a safe and reliable investment option, especially during periods of economic uncertainty and global financial volatility. When inflation remains high, investors often shift their savings into gold to preserve the value of their wealth and earn better returns than other assets. In addition, gold continues to hold strong cultural and traditional significance in India, leading to consistently high demand during festivals, weddings, and other auspicious occasions. Furthermore, increased gold purchases by the Reserve Bank of India as part of its foreign exchange reserve management strategy have also contributed to the upward movement in gold prices. In response, India has raised import tariffs on gold and silver to 15 per cent from 6 per cent, as

## Arrested on a screen — Inside India's digital arrest fraud



In recent months, thousands of citizens have been 'arrested' without even stepping into a police station. A video call flashes a uniform and a forged warrant on screen, accompanied by a stern voice warning of immediate detention unless the victim cooperates. What unfolds is not law enforcement, but fraud, a sophisticated cybercrime now commonly known as 'digital arrest'. Editorial: New ideas to fight digital arrest The name itself is a misnomer. Indian law does not have any concept of arrest via video call or screen-shared warrant. Yet the success of this scam lies in how convincingly it imitates the rituals and language of the criminal justice administrative system. Cybercriminals have turned authorities under the law into a tool of deception, weaponising the fear of law itself.

The Illusion of Authority Digital arrest fraud generally entails the impersonation of law enforcement personnel or officials from agencies such as the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Enforcement Directorate (ED), or Customs authorities. Victims are informed of their association with money laundering, narcotics trafficking, or courier fraud schemes. The situation intensifies rapidly: separation from family, constant surveillance via video calls, and requests for "verification payments" to prevent arrest. The efficacy of this scam arises not merely from technological expertise, but from its psychological design. The threat of arrest carries stigma, uncertainty and panic. When presented with seemingly official attributes, it eclipses rational scepticism. That such tactics succeed highlights a deeper vulnerability — not merely digital illiteracy, but legal illiteracy. Why th Fraud Works

Digital arrest scams thrive at the intersection of fear and asymmetry. Most citizens encounter the criminal justice system at the moment of crisis. The laws relating to arrest, search, seizure, rights of the accused, requirement of physical custody or judicial oversight remain poorly understood. This knowledge gap gives criminals the opportunity to substitute procedure with performance. Further, the perceived imbalance of power between authorities and individuals discourages questioning. Victims fear that refusal to comply may itself be considered an offence. In such an environment, urgency replaces verification. The fraud succeeds, not in the absence

of law, but in the shadow of how law is commonly perceived: distant, punitive and beyond question. It does not exploit a legal vacuum; it exploits public fear of the law.

It's a scam — If it's on a screen and demands money The Video Call Arrest: Indian law enforcement will never arrest you, record a statement, or serve a warrant via WhatsApp, Skype, or Zoom

The 'Secret' Probe: Genuine officials will never ask you to stay on a video call for hours or prevent you from contacting a lawyer or family member.

Money demands: No government agency will ever ask for a "verification deposit" or "security payment" into a private bank account.

Is the Law Ineffective?

It would be incorrect to argue that India lacks legal tools to address the issue of digital arrest. India's legal framework sufficiently contains provisions such as Personating a public servant (Section 204 BNS), Cheating (Section 318 BNS), Cheating by personation (Section 319 BNS), Criminal Intimidation (Section 351 BNS), Extortion (Section 308 BNS), Cheating by personation using a computer resource (Section 66D, IT Act), and Identity theft (Section 66C, IT Act). Dedicated cyber-crime portals and helplines exist, with repeated advisories issued by enforcement agencies. The problem lies in the enforcement deficit and institutional lag. Cybercriminal networks operate across jurisdictions, often beyond Indian borders. Between 2020 and 2022, according to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report, only about 1.6% of registered cybercrime cases led to convictions across all States — ie, just 2,706 convictions of the roughly 1,67,000 cyber-crime cases. e in India' report, the number of cases registered under the cybercrimes category rose to 86,420 in 2023 from 65,893 cases in 2022. The crime rate under this category increased from 4.8% in 2022 to 6.2% in 2023. Conviction rates remain poor, investigation is slow, and recovery of funds continues to be the exception rather than the norm. The law on paper struggles against the speed and scale of digital crime in practice. When law exists only on paper and criminals act with impunity, deterrence collapses, and advisories ring hollow without enforcement.

State's Response and Its Limits A detailed reply by the Ministry of Home

Affairs in the Lok Sabha on December 2, 2025, illustrates that to strengthen enforcement, the government has established the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), launched the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (<https://cybercrime.gov.in>) for public reporting, and operationalised the Citizen Financial Cyber Fraud Reporting and Management System (CFCFRMS), which has helped save over Rs 7,130 crore through more than 23.02 lakh complaints. Through coordinated action, authorities reported blocking over 11.14 lakh SIM cards and 2.96 lakh IMEIs linked to cyber-crime, alongside multi-agency efforts including the Cyber Fraud Mitigation Centre and enhanced forensic support to state law enforcement. The government has also rolled out nationwide awareness campaigns through media, caller-tunes and outreach programmes to educate citizens about such scams. These are necessary steps. However, advisories function primarily as awareness tools. They do little for victims in the moment of crisis, when fear eclipses recall. They also do not impose systemic obligations on digital intermediaries whose platforms enable such scams at scale. Awareness without structural safeguards leaves citizens exposed.

Awareness is not protection. The response to digital arrest fraud must, therefore, move beyond alerts towards a comprehensive regulatory strategy. Prevention: Stop Before It Starts

Effer private numbers. Such communication protocols must be standardised nationally and publicly notified, with agencies restricted to verifiable channels — official landlines, registered email domains, and in-person procedures — leaving no ambiguity for citizens to exploit Telecom service providers should be assigned obligations that are technically feasible and within existing regulatory reach. Rather than behavioural surveillance, the focus must be on number integrity and misuse control. Telecom operators should strictly implement caller line identification verification to prevent the spoofing of law enforcement numbers, with flagged numbers subject to time-bound suspension and mandatory re-verification rather than discretionary blocking. Prevention: Minimising Har to Victims

Even the most robust preventive framework cannot eliminate fraud entirely. Protection, therefore, must be designed around speed, certainty and victim support, not post-facto sympathy. Financial harm in digital arrest scams escalates within minutes, making immediate fund freezing the single most effective protective measure. While complete recovery remains challenging due to rapid cross-border fund transfers, the UK's approach (see Lessons from the UK) offers instructive precedent. Under English law, financial institutions are required to implement verification protocols before processing transfers, particularly for large sums to new payees. Until verification is completed, transfers should be frozen. Similar mandatory verification mechanisms could significantly slow the movement of fraud proceeds, creating critical windows for intervention. Lessons from the UK

The United Kingdom's experience with Authorised Push Payment (APP) scams, where victims are tricked into authorising payments to fraudsters, offers valuable lessons for India. Recognising the scale of the problem, in 2024, the Payment Systems Regulator introduced mandatory reimbursement requirements for most APP scam victims, with banks required to reimburse victims up to 85,000 pounds within five business days unless the customer acted with gross negligence. This shift placed greater responsibility on financial institutions, incentivising stronger fraud prevention. Alongside deposit protection (up to 85,000 pounds) under the Financial Services Compensation Scheme, the approach demonstrates how regulation can both delay and intimidate his requires disrupting erify. The answer is not to abandon technology, but to ensure that legality travels with it. In a constitutional democracy, arrest is not a threat over a call, or a payment extracted through fear: it is a serious act carried out openly, through procedure and accountability. When citizens are made to believe otherwise, what is lost is not just money, but trust.

The state's task is therefore urgent: to make the law visible, understandable and impossible to fake. The legitimacy of law depends not only on its enforcement, but on its recognisability, and in an age of digital deception, that recognisability must be built, protected and constantly reinforced.

## ICC Test Rankings: Bumrah Retains Top Spot, Jaiswal And Gill Included In Top 10



Dubai: India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah maintained his pole position among Test bowlers in the latest ICC rankings published on Wednesday. Yashasvi Jaiswal and Shubman Gill were placed 8th and 9th among the batters, respectively, with former England Test skipper Joe Root leading the charts with 880 points. Jaiswal has 750 points, and Gill, who has climbed a spot, has accumulated 730 points. Harry Brook is second in the list, followed by Travis Head and Steve Smith, respectively. It must be noted that India

is yet to play any of their WTC matches in 2026 having last played against South Africa at home in the month of November. In the bowlers' list, Bumrah is still leading the charts with 879 points, while the next best Indian is Mohammed Siraj, placed 12th. Ravindra Jadeja and Kuldeep Yadav are currently placed 14th and 15th, respectively. Australia's Mitchell Starc and Test captain Pat Cummins have gained to spot to second and fourth place respectively, while New Zealand's Matt Henry also leapfrogged to third

spot. Notably, India are yet to play any of the matches in the World Test Championship 2026-28 as their last red-ball appearance came in the match against South Africa at home in November. Also, the teams haven't played Test cricket as they have been busy in the T20 World Cup, and now most of the international cricketers are playing in the Indian Premier League. The tournament will conclude on May 31, and India will next play their Test match against Afghanistan from June 6 to 10. It will be their first red-ball

appearance this year. et to play any of the matches in the World Test Championship 2026-28 as their last red-ball appearance came in the match against South Africa at home in November. Also, the teams haven't played Test cricket as they have been busy in the T20 World Cup, and now most of the international cricketers are playing in the Indian Premier League. The tournament will conclude on May 31, and India will next play their Test match against Afghanistan from June 6 to 10. It will be their first red-ball

## Sensex Jumps Nearly 790 Pts On Buying In Telecom, Banking Shares



Stock markets rose for the second consecutive day on Thursday with the benchmark Sensex jumping by nearly 790 points in a volatile session, driven by value buying in telecom, pharma and private banking shares. The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 789.74 points, or 1.06 per cent, to close at 75,398.72. The index opened higher but slipped into negative territory in late morning deals. However, value buying in telecom and banking shares helped the barometer pare losses and later jump more than 1,000 points to a high of 75,681.88.

Stock Market The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 789.74 points while the 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 277 points (ETV Bharat). Extending gains to the second day, the 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 277 points, or 1.18 per cent, to finish at 23,689.60. Among Sensex firms, Bharti Airtel emerged as the biggest gainer, rallying over 5 per cent after the telecom carrier's annual revenue crossed the Rs 2 lakh crore mark for the first time.

Eternal rose by 3.32 per cent while HDFC Bank advanced 2.67 per cent, emerging as the major contributor to the Sensex gains. Adani Ports, Sun Pharmaceuticals, Bajaj Finance, Mahindra & Mahindra, NTPC, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Titan, Trent, UltraTech Cement, ITC and State Bank of India were among the other gainers.

Stock Market Top Gainers of the day (ETV Bharat) On the other hand, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, HCL Technologies, Tata Consultancy Services, Hindustan Unilever, Axis Bank and Maruti Suzuki India ended lower. Stock Market Top Losers of the day (ETV Bharat) "Indian equities staged a counterintuitive recovery from intraday lows and ended higher despite the rupee hitting a record low and crude remaining elevated," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Ltd, said. Investor confidence was bolstered in anticipation of potential government measures to mitigate INR weakness, including consideration of bond tax relief for foreign investors and poten



tial tightening of the Liberalized Remittance Scheme to stem capital added. "Sentiment was further anchored by positive cues from the Trump-Xi summit, which raised hopes of expanding economic cooperation." Sectorally, while pharma and healthcare advanced owing to sectoral rotation, metals gained on higher metal prices and improving demand expectations from China. Conversely, the IT stocks extended their decline," Nair said. In Asian markets, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Japan's Nikkei 225 benchmark ended lower, while Hong Kong's Hang Seng settled flat. However, South Korea's Kospi closed higher.

European equity markets traded in positive territory. Wall Street ended mostly higher on Wednesday. Brent Crude, the global oil benchmark, rose nearly 1 per cent to USD 106.48 per barrel. The rupee fell to a low of 95.73 against the US dollar due to high crude oil prices and foreign fund outflows. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) sold equities worth Rs 4,703.15 crore on Wednesday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) purchased stocks for Rs 5,869.05 crore, according to exchange data. On Wednesday, the 30-share BSE Sensex rose 49.74 points to settle at 74,608.98. The 50-share NSE edged higher by

## Trained By Their Father, Odisha's Bag Brothers Script Inspiring Cricket Journey, Chase India Dream



For years, Sudarshan Bag carried the disappointment of not being able to pursue cricket because of circumstances, particularly poverty. Today, his sons Jogeshwar Bag and Siddheshwar Bag are living that dream. Though financial struggles continue to affect the family, it has not been able to touch the dreams of the brothers from Balangir who have already taken their cricketing flight, having already represented district and state-level teams. They are now aiming to play for India, and training them is none other than their father Sudarshan. Jogeshwar is all of 18 years, studying in Class 12 and Siddheshwar, 12, is in Class 10. The family lives in Rugudipada area of Balangir town. Trained By Their Father, Odisha's Bag Brothers Script Inspiring Cricket Journey, Chase India Dream Trained By Their Father, Odisha's Bag Brothers Script Inspiring Cricket Journey, Chase India Dream (ETV Bharat) By now Jogeshwar has already played several

district and state-level matches and is currently part of Odisha's Under-19 cricket team. Over the years, he has developed into an all-rounder. In the Vijay Merchant Trophy, Jogeshwar played against teams like Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Punjab and Puducherry. During the tournament, he took 18 wickets and scored three half-centuries. The family reveals the details of the matches the two brothers have played so far. Jogeshwar has played 192 matches in tournaments organised by the Odisha Cricket Association (OCA) and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). As a batter, he has scored 4,197 runs, including three centuries and 25 half-centuries. His highest individual score is 128. He has also remained unbeaten in 21 innings. As a bowler, he has taken 227 wickets. Trained By Their Father, Odisha's Bag Brothers Script Inspiring Cricket Journey, Chase India Dream Cricket practice started quite young for the siblings (ETV Bharat) Jogeshwar said

he has been playing cricket since the age of four or five and credits his father for training him. "My father coached me when I was a kid. I played for the Odisha Under-16 team in 2023 and later got opportunities in the Under-19 team. His guidance helped me reach this stage. I want to continue working hard and play for India one day," said the young cricketer who is equally good at academics. Younger brother Siddheshwar also started playing cricket at the age of four and has already participated in many district and state-level tournaments. He is now captain of the Balangir Under-16 team. So far, he has played 43 matches in OCA Under-16 tournaments and scored 836 runs while taking 66 wickets. He has also played 39 state-level matches. In many tournaments organised by the OCA, he received Player of the Match, Best Batter and Best Bowler awards. Trained By Their Father, Odisha's Bag Brothers Script Inspiring Cricket Journey, Chase India Dream Kid ricketers

Jogeshwar and Siddheshwar (ETV Bharat) Speaking about his ambition, Siddheshwar said he wants to become a batter like MS Dhoni and improve skills as an all-rounder. "I have been learning cricket seriously from a young age. My father trains both me and my brother. I want to become a successful cricketer and continue learning the best tricks," he said. Ask Sudarshan why does he train his children himself and pat comes the reply, "Because my cricket journey remains unfinished. I want to dedicate my life to training my sons." He adds that his love for cricket can never diminish. "I loved cricket since childhood, but I did not get support from my family. Financial problems stopped me from doing anything in the sport. After coming to Balangir, I decided my sons would get the opportunity I never had. But people criticized me for making them practice from such a young age, but I continued because I believed in them," he said.

## Worst Phase Of Inflation Yet To Come As Experts Warn Of More Price Pain Ahead

Inflation numbers are once again showing signs of a sharp rise. Wholesale inflation is moving rapidly towards double digits while retail inflation is inching closer to the Reserve Bank of India's comfort threshold. According to experts, the impact of the ongoing West Asia crisis is now beginning to reflect clearly in economic data with many warning that the worst phase may still be ahead. They believe the coming months could paint an even more worrying picture for consumers and businesses too. Analysts also say that the real impact may become visible around Diwali when there is greater clarity on this year's rabi crop and the outlook for the upcoming kharif season. Any disruption in food supply, fuel prices or imports could further push up inflationary pressure across sectors. There are also concerns that if inflation continues to rise, the Reserve Bank of India may be forced to increase interest rates again. That would make loans more expensive and could lead to higher EMIs for home, vehicle and personal loans. Global Crisis Impact Talking to ETV Bharat Chief Economist, Bank of Baroda, Madan Sabnavis said that the rise in prices that has already happened due to West Asia crisis will gradually start reflecting more sharply in infla-



tion data in the coming months. Even if prices do not rise further from here, which itself looks unlikely, inflation this financial year is still expected to remain higher than the last year because of the existing price pressure. According to him, earlier there were expectations that wholesale inflation (WPI) would remain around 5.5 percent but now there is a possibility that it could move even higher during the course of the year. Rising WPI inflation may eventually spill over into retail inflation (CPI) as well. The impact may not be immediate but higher fertilizer costs are likely to push up food prices. While rising input and manufacturing costs could make household goods

more expensive. Costlier Days Ahead Sabnavis also believes that this effect could become more visible over the next three to four months, leading to a further rise in retail inflation. There is also growing expectation that the Reserve Bank of India may go for another rate hike later this year, he stressed. He further said that while such a move may not happen in the June or August policy meetings, but the possibility could emerge around Diwali, possibly during the October or December monetary policy review. "By then there will be more clarity on the West Asia conflict, crude oil prices and the performance of the kharif crop," he said.

## Mouni Roy Confirms Divorce From Suraj Nambiar After 4 Years Of Marriage: 'We Have Mutually Chosen To Part Ways'



Actor Mouni Roy and businessman Suraj Nambiar have officially announced their separation after four years of marriage. The couple, who had been at the centre of divorce rumours for the past few days, finally broke their silence on Thursday through a joint Instagram statement. In their note, Mouni and Suraj requested people and media outlets to stop spreading "false stories" about their relationship and give them space dur-

ing this difficult phase. The couple also disabled comments on the post shortly after sharing it. "We note with dismay the unnecessary and intrusive attention into our personal lives by certain quarters of the media," the statement read. Confirming their split, they added, "We would like to state that we have decided to part ways and are taking the necessary time to address matters privately and amicably." The statement also

addressed the many rumours that had been circulating online in recent weeks. Without naming anyone, the couple criticised attempts to create dramatic stories around their marriage. "Attempts have been made to sensationalize our private lives by circulation of fictitious narratives and blatant falsehoods, which do not reflect the reality of our relationship," they wrote. Mouni and Suraj further explained that the decision was taken

mutually after giving it serious thought. "After thoughtful reflection on evolving personal priorities, we have mutually chosen to move forward on separate paths with respect and understanding," the note continued.

Even though they are ending their marriage, the two said they still value the bond they shared and hope to remain friends. "At this point, we are focused on navigating this phase thoughtfully and privately. We will endeavour to cherish our friendship in times to come," they said while thanking well-wishers for their support. Mouni Roy and Suraj Nambiar (Photo: IANS) Rumours about trouble in their marriage had been making headlines for several days. Fans noticed that the couple had unfollowed each other on social media, and Mouni had stopped sharing pictures with Suraj. Earlier on Thursday, reports also claimed that the actor was spotted wearing a huge diamond ring amid speculation about her personal life. However, by evening, the couple themselves confirmed the news. Mouni and Suraj reportedly met in Dubai in 2018 and later fell in love. They tied the knot in Goa on January 27, 2022, in a grand wedding ceremony that included both Bengali and Malayali traditions.

## Pati Patni Aur Woh Do: 5 Reasons Ayushmann Khurrana's Comedy Chaos Could Be A Fun Weekend Watch



Ayushmann Khurrana is back in familiar territory with *Pati Patni Aur Woh Do*, and that is exactly why audiences are curious about the film. Known for balancing humour with relatable middle-class chaos, the actor returns to the romantic comedy space with a film full of misunderstandings, confusion and relationship drama. Directed by Mudassar Aziz, the film releases on May 15, 2026, and stars Ayushmann alongside Wamiqa Gabbi, Sara Ali Khan and Rakul Preet Singh. Positioned as a spiritual successor to the 2019 hit *Pati Patni Aur Woh*, the new film brings a fresh cast and an even more chaotic setup. Set in Prayagraj, the story revolves around Prajapati Pandey, a simple forest officer whose life spirals out of control after one seemingly harmless decision creates a series of hilarious complications. With multiple women, endless lies, accidental encounters and growing suspicion, the film promises a full-blown comedy of errors. Here are five reasons why *Pati Patni Aur Woh Do* could turn into an entertaining theatre watch this weekend. Ayushmann Khurrana Back In His Comfort Zone Ayushmann Khurrana has built a strong fanbase with films that mix humour and everyday relationship drama. Whether it was *Dream Girl*, *Bareilly Ki Barfi* or *Bala*, audiences have always enjoyed watching him play the confused yet lovable com-

mon man. In *Pati Patni Aur Woh Do*, he once again slips into that zone effortlessly. His character, Prajapati Pandey, is not a larger-than-life hero but an ordinary man stuck in extraordinary chaos. The trailer and early reactions already suggest that Ayushmann's comic timing is one of the film's strongest points. His ability to balance awkward situations with emotional moments could become the biggest reason audiences connect with the story. Mudassar Aziz's Signature Comedy Style Director Mudassar Aziz is known for making light-hearted entertainers built around misunderstandings, fast-paced confusion and witty dialogues. Films like *Happy Bhag Jayegi* and *Khel Khel Mein* showed his strength in handling ensemble comedy. With *Pati Patni Aur Woh Do*, he seems to be leaning fully into situational humour again. The film reportedly focuses less

on loud slapstick and more on awkward encounters, mistaken intentions and escalating lies. The setup itself sounds chaotic enough as one good deed by Prajapati creates suspicion in his marriage and slowly pulls him into a complicated web involving multiple women. If executed well, that confusion-driven humour could work strongly with family audiences. A Fresh Star Cast Combination One of the biggest talking points around the film is its unusual but interesting cast combination. Ayushmann shares screen space with interesting cast combination. Ayushmann with Wamiqa Gabbi, Sara Ali Khan and Rakul Preet Singh, creating a mix audiences have not seen before. Wamiqa Gabbi plays Aparna, Prajapati's wife, while Sara Khan and Rakul Preet Ali Khan appears as Chanchal Kumari, the woman who changes the course of his life. Rakul

Preet Singh also plays an important role as At its core, *Pati Patni Aur Woh Do* thrives on confusion. One lie leads to another, misunderstandings keep piling up, and Prajapati finds himself trapped in situations that become harder to escape. This kind of storytelling has always worked well in Bollywood when backed by strong writing and performances. The film appears to follow that classic comedy formula where timing matters more than grand spectacle. Adding to the madness is a supporting cast featuring Vijay Raaz, Tigra Shu Dhulia, Ayesha Raza and Durgesh Kumar. Their presence hints at several side tracks and comic moments that could keep the pace lively throughout. The film also has a crisp runtime of one hour and fifty-seven minutes with a UA 16+ rating, which may help maintain a fast and engaging narrative without unnecessary stretches.

## Why Suriya-Trisha Starrer Karuppu's Early Morning Shows Were Cancelled Despite Tamil Nadu CM Vijay's Approval



Suriya and Trisha's much-awaited action drama *Karuppu* finally arrived in theatres on May 14, but the film's release morning turned chaotic after its special 9 AM shows were cancelled at the last minute. The cancellation came despite Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Vijay granting special permission for early morning screenings just days earlier. Directed by RJ Balaji, *Karuppu* stars Suriya and Trisha Krishnan in the lead roles and had generated massive buzz ahead of release. Fans were especially excited after the Tamil Nadu government approved special 9 AM shows for May 14 and 15, a rare move considering early morning screenings have become less common in the state

over the years. However, only hours before the first show, producer SR Prabhu announced that the special screenings would not happen. Sharing the update on X, he wrote, "Due to unavoidable reasons, 9 AM shows will be cancelled for *Karuppu*. Our sincere apologies to everyone!" The sudden announcement shocked fans, many of whom had already booked tickets for the first-day-first-show experience. Several theatres also paused online bookings overnight, creating confusion among audiences waiting for updates. Due to unavoidable reasons 9am shows will be cancelled for *Karuppu*. Our sincere apologies to everyone! — SR Prabhu (@prabhu\_sr) May 13,

2026 As speculation around the issue grew, director RJ Balaji addressed fans with an emotional message on social media. He admitted that even he did not have a clear answer to the situation but assured everyone that the producers were trying their best to solve the hurdles. "Dearest fans, I don't have a concrete answer to the current situation. Producers are doing their best to solve the hurdles. This film has always had hurdles, and somehow God has made us sail through all that and here we are after 32 months," he wrote. The director further added that he still had "complete faith" that things would work out. Industry reports later suggested that unresolved financial and dis-

tribution-related issues caused the disruption. According to media reports, pending dues delayed the film's theatrical clearance, which affected the delivery of KDMs, the digital keys required for screening films in theatres. Some reports also claimed that outstanding payments connected to studios and distributors created a last-minute bottleneck for the makers. Though the team never officially confirmed the exact reason, theatre chains began removing listings from booking platforms late Wednesday night, hinting at bigger trouble behind the scenes. Despite the setback, *Karuppu* had already shown strong advance booking momentum. Trade trackers reported that the film crossed

