

# Aryan Age

PRGI No. - MHENG/25/A0943 | VOL - 1 | ISSUE 347 | 8 PAGES | ₹ 3.00



Salman Khan sends legal notice to makers of Kala Hiran

PG.3



Bhumi Pednekar: "social media followers don't convert into ticket sales"

PG.6



In my phone notes, I mentioned that I wanted to score 700 runs: Vaibhav Sooryavanshi

PG.7



Stock Markets end in green amid easing crude prices

PG.8



## 6,429 Crore Boost for Rural Roads

### Maharashtra Approves 3,500 km Road Network Under CM Gram Sadak Yojana

**Mumbai:** The Maharashtra Cabinet has approved a massive ₹6,429 crore investment for road and bridge projects under Phase-3 of the Chief Minister Gram Sadak Yojana to strengthen rural connectivity across the state. The decision was taken in a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis.

The project will be implemented with financial assistance from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Around 3,500 kilometres of roads and bridges will be developed and upgraded under the scheme. AIIB will provide a loan of approximately 500 million US dollars, equivalent to nearly ₹4,500 crore, while the Maharashtra

Government will contribute about 215 million US dollars, or nearly ₹1,929 crore, as its 30 percent share.

The project includes the upgradation of rural roads and other district roads. The final expenditure will be determined through detailed project reports, after which road and bridge works covering about 3,500 kilometres will be undertaken.

The repayment of the AIIB loan, including interest, will be made through state budget provisions. The loan will be repaid over a period of 25 years, including a five-year grace period. The Cabinet has also approved separate accounting heads for managing the 70 percent external funding and 30 percent state

contribution. Until the AIIB funds are received, ongoing works will be financed through state funds.

Apart from the AIIB-supported project, the Cabinet has also approved an additional 2,500 kilometres of road works under Phase-3 of the Chief Minister Gram Sadak Yojana using state funds.

The government believes the decision will significantly improve connectivity in rural Maharashtra, making transportation of agricultural produce easier and improving access to education, healthcare facilities, markets and economic opportunities. The project is also expected to strengthen the rural economy across the state.

### Maharashtra Launches Mega Road Upgrade Plan; Global Banks to Fund Key Highway Projects

In a major push to modernise Maharashtra's road infrastructure and accelerate its goal of becoming a one-trillion-dollar economy, the state Cabinet has approved the Maharashtra State Road Improvement Project. The decision was taken at a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis.

Under the project, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the New Development Bank (NDB) will each provide financial assistance of 1 billion US dollars in two phases. The

project aims to upgrade roads across the state according to Indian Roads Congress standards over the next three years. During the first phase, each institution will provide 500 million US dollars in external funding. Combined with the Maharashtra Government's contribution of 215 million US dollars, the total investment for each phase is expected to be around 715 million US dollars, equivalent to approximately ₹6,221 crore. The overall cost of both phases is estimated at around ₹12,442 crore each. Priority will be given to

roads located in major growth corridors where traffic volumes are high and commercial vehicles account for more than 40 percent of total movement. The project is expected to improve transport efficiency across important industrial, agricultural, commercial and economic routes.

Under AIIB funding, around 750 kilometres of roads will be upgraded in the first phase through competitive EPC-based contracts executed by the Public Works Department. Similarly, under NDB funding, another 750

kilometres of roads will be taken up during the first phase.

The structure, repayment mechanism and implementation process for both loans will remain largely similar. The funds will be used for the modernisation of key road corridors across Maharashtra.

The state government said the project will improve road quality, increase safety, reduce travel time and lower transportation costs. It is also expected to boost trade, industry and economic growth by creating a faster and more efficient road network across Maharashtra.

### DRDO & IAF conduct successful flight tests of RudraM-II Air-to-Surface Missile



**New Delhi:** Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Indian Air Force (IAF) have conducted the successful flight tests of RudraM-II Air-to-Surface Missile under extreme release conditions with critical trajectory, establishing the capability of all subsystems. The missiles, after release, were guided to a predefined target with pinpoint accuracy. All the test objectives were fully met as confirmed by the flight data captured by various range instruments deployed by Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur. RudraM-II has been indigenously developed by Research Centre Imarat, Hyderabad, as the nodal DRDO laboratory in collaboration with other sister labs such as Defence Research and Development Laboratory, High Energy Materials Research Laboratory, Armament Research and Development Establishment & ITR. Along with the Development cum Production Partners (DcPPs), agencies like Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, Regional Centre for Military Airworthiness, Missile System Quality Assurance Agency and many other industries have contributed significantly towards achieving this goal. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has lauded the efforts of DRDO, IAF, DPSUs, DcPPs and the industry for the successful flight-tests. He stated that the tests have demonstrated the growing maturity of indigenous defence technologies, contributing significantly to Aatmanirbharta in advanced weapon systems. Secretary, Department of Defence R&D and Chairman DRDO has congratulated all the teams associated with the test for the commendable achievement.

## Cabinet clears farm loan waiver, grants relief to 56 lakh farmers

**Mumbai:** In a significant move aimed at providing relief to the agrarian sector, the Maharashtra Cabinet today officially approved the 'Punyashlok Ahilyadevi Holkar Shetkari Karjimafi Yojana', a comprehensive farm loan waiver scheme for benefit of approximately 56 lakh farmers across the state at an estimated cost of nearly Rs 25,000 crore.

The decision, which comes as a major relief to the state's farming community, will provide a waiver of up to Rs 2 lakh on crop loans that were outstanding as of September 30, 2025.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who had previously announced the scheme during the 2026-27 state budget session in March, had maintained that the government was committed to fulfilling the promise made in the Mahayuti manifesto. The formal cabinet approval clears the decks for the rollout of the initiative.

Under the provisions of the scheme, eligible farmers with outstanding crop loans up to Rs 2 lakh will receive a complete waiver. Additionally, the government has introduced an incentive grant of Rs 50,000 for farmers who have maintained a consistent record of regular loan repayments.

According to preliminary estimates, the scheme is expected to benefit approximately 56 lakh farmers across the state. The implementation of this

ambitious programme is projected to place a financial burden of nearly Rs 25,000 crore on the state exchequer.

The proposal for the cabinet approval had earlier received a green signal from the Election Commission of India (ECI), which reviewed the state's request in the context of the Model Code of Conduct currently in force for the upcoming



Legislative Council elections.

CM Fadnavis had earlier set a deadline to launch the scheme before June 30, 2026. The government had previously constituted a committee under the chairmanship of Praveen Pardeshi, CEO of the MITRA institution, to formulate the criteria for the waiver and assess the agrarian distress.

The cabinet's decision marks the third major farm loan waiver in Maharashtra, reflecting the administration's focus on addressing agricultural instability amid recurring climate-related challenges and natural calamities.

### Fadnavis Waives Off Farmers' Loans But EC Bars Official Announcement

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis approved the politically sensitive loan waiver for farmers at a cabinet meeting here on Tuesday, due to which outstanding loans of farmers in Maharashtra of upto Rs 2 lakh will be written off.

He also stated that an official announcement will take place later, due to the Model Code of Conduct in force for the Legislative Council (MLC) elections.

The waiver will apply to farmers who have outstanding crop loans till September 30, 2025. As per the Punyashlok Ahilyadevi Holkar Farmers Loan Waiver Scheme, all eligible farmers will get a loan waiver of up to Rs 2 lakh.

The loan waiver scheme will be implemented only after the election code of conduct is lifted. There are 65 lakh bank accounts belonging to farmers who have availed crop loans amounting to Rs 36,585 crore. Of these, 56 lakh farmers are eligible under the loan waiver scheme.

Fadnavis had also announced that an incentive grant of up to Rs 50,000 will be provided to farmers who repay their loans regularly.

The waiver approved by Fadnavis is likely to benefit a total of 56 lakh farmers in Maharashtra, though it will burden the state exchequer with Rs 25,000 crore, at a time when the Fadnavis government is

engaged in fulfilling its vote-catching Mukhyamantri Laadki Bahin Yojana, which involves paying Rs 1,500 to women.

Elaborating about the farmers' loan waiver, Fadnavis said, "An official announcement of the farmers' loan waiver is pending due to the Election Commission's directive. Therefore, it will be announced after the Legislative Council elections".

However, a couple of days ago, Agriculture Minister Dattatray Bharme had already announced farmers' loan waiver at an event at Chaudhi, Ahilyanagar on the occasion of the 301st birth anniversary of Punyashlok Rajmata Ahilyadevi Holkar.

Fadnavis also stated here on Tuesday that as many as 80 lakh women have been disqualified from the Mukhyamantri Laadki Bahin Yojana Scheme mostly because of non-completion of the e-KYC process, and errors in applications. Accordingly, the Rs 1,500 payment to 80 lakh women who have been disqualified has been stopped.

"When the Laadki Bahin Yojana was started, there were some criteria. Of course, when government money is spent, there is a Comptroller Auditor General (CAG) audit. After the scheme was started, we started KYC. We got information that government employees had received payments under the scheme. We got information from the four-wheeler

database that some owners of four-wheelers had received payments. Due to such measures, the number of people who are not eligible for the scheme has increased to 80 lakh," Fadnavis said.

"The 1 crore 70 lakh women who meet the criteria and are eligible for the scheme will continue to get the money. Those who have not done KYC will not be given money. The 14,000 men who took money fraudulently are no longer part of the scheme. We will recover all the money taken by 14,000 men who fraudulently registered for the scheme and took the money illegally," Fadnavis said.

In another development, the Maharashtra state government has decided that the heirs of protesters who died during the Maratha reservation movement will get jobs in the Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) and a circular to this effect has been issued by the General Administration Department.

All the District Collectors have been ordered to take action on a war footing and issue certificates to enable eligible heirs to be given jobs in MIDC on compassionate grounds.

Earlier, Manoj Jarange Patil, who was on a hunger strike for Maratha reservation, had demanded that heirs of those who died in the Maratha reservation agitation must be given government service.

### Supreme Court nears full strength as five judges take oath

**New Delhi:** Five newly appointed judges of the Supreme Court were sworn in on Tuesday, bringing the apex court closer to its sanctioned strength of 38 judges.

Chief Justice of India Justice Surya Kant administered the oath of office to Justices Sheel Nagu, Shree Chandrashekar, Sanjeev Sachdeva, and Arun Palli, along with Senior Advocate V Mohana, at a ceremony held in the Supreme Court. Their appointments were notified by the Centre a day earlier, following recommendations made by the Supreme Court Collegium during its meetings on May 22 and May 27. The newly appointed judges include four serving Chief Justices of High Courts. Justice Sheel Nagu was the Chief

Justice of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, having been elevated from the Madhya Pradesh High Court. Justice Shree Chandrashekar served as Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court and hailed from the Jharkhand High Court. Justice Sanjeev Sachdeva was the Chief Justice of the Madhya Pradesh High Court, with the Delhi High Court as his parent court, while Justice Arun Palli was serving as Chief Justice of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, having been elevated from the Punjab and Haryana High Court. The fifth appointee, Senior Advocate V Mohana, was practising before the Supreme Court and is among the few members of the Bar to be directly elevated to the apex court bench.

### CBSE OSM row: Centre transfers board chairman and secretary

**New Delhi:** In the wake of alleged irregularities in the digital evaluation system for the Class 12 examination process, the Centre on Tuesday transferred Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) chairman Rahul Singh and Secretary Himanshu Gupta and formed a one-member Committee to inquire into the "procurement" of the newly introduced On-Screen Marking (OSM) System by the national board.

In an official circular dated June 2, the Additional Cabinet Secretary, Satendra Singh, stated that a one-member Committee chaired by S. Radha Chauhan, Chairperson, Capacity Building Commission, has been constituted. "The Committee will submit its

report within a month to the Department of Personnel & Training," added the official order.



Earlier this month, a social media user claimed that the CBSE OSM portal had been breached on February 25, 2026, a claim that subsequently formed the basis of several media reports. In a statement issued on May 26, the Board initially dismissed claims circulating on social media that its On Screen Marking (OSM) portal used for evaluation of answer books was compromised, asserting that no

security breach has occurred in the system used for actual assessment work.

Meanwhile, on Sunday, the board accepted that the system was compromised, stating that it has contained vulnerabilities identified in the online marking portal of its service provider and is working with cybersecurity experts to further strengthen the system. The Ministry of Education has sought a detailed report from CBSE and the contract awarded to Hyderabad-based Coempt EduTeck amid the ongoing row regarding the board's OSM portal. Earlier on Tuesday, a parliamentary panel also heard the issues regarding the on-screen marking portal as well as the implementation of the three-language policy for Classes 9 and 10.

### Delhi govt's heat wave response efforts reach 4.70 lakh people

**New Delhi:** Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Tuesday said that the Mobile Heat Relief Units, cooling zones and temporary shelters, as well as distribution of clean drinking water, ORS, gamchas and caps are reaching out to thousands of citizens of the national capital amid the extreme weather and heat wave conditions.

She said that her government is running an extensive relief campaign across all 13 districts of the national capital to protect citizens.

According to the CM, since the launch of the mobile heat relief clinics on May 6, a total of 470,089 people have been provided assistance and relief amid extreme weather.

During this period, 184,021 litres of drinking water have been distributed, along with 243,945 ORS packets, 37,431 gamchas and 49,434 caps, she added.

Gupta said the highest number of beneficiaries through the Mobile Heat Relief Units was recorded in the North-East district, where 83,703 people received assistance.

Relief was also provided to 66,964 people in East district, around 41,667 people in the New Delhi district, 41,600 in Central North, 39,875 in West district, 37,870 in South district, 30,915 in South-West district, 26,695 in South-East district, 24,890 in Central district, 21,900 in Outer North district, 19,405 in Old Delhi, 18,385 in

North-West district and 16,220 in North district.

The mobile units have carried out significant work



across various districts, with New Delhi district recording highest distribution of drinking water at 32,974.3 litres, while Central North district distributed the highest number of ORS packets at 71,625.

The south district distributed the largest number of gamchas and caps, with 7,860 gamchas and 5,240 caps provided to people. Gupta said temporary shelters are being set up at metro stations such as Nangloi, Rohini and Peeragarhi, as well as at bus terminals and major markets, to protect people from the harsh sun.

The Chief Minister said that the cooling zones and temporary shelters are now fully operational at some locations, while installation and expansion work is underway at others. "The government is continuously reviewing the situation and will further expand relief measures wherever required," CM assured.

Gupta has appealed to citizens to avoid unnecessary outdoor movement during periods of extreme heat, stay adequately hydrated, use ORS and follow all precautions related to heat wave safety.

## Jairam Ramesh questions PM Modi's silence on Israel's Lebanon offensive amid US-Iran talks

**New Delhi:** Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Tuesday criticized Prime Minister Narendra Modi for maintaining silence on Israel's ongoing military operations in Lebanon, alleging that New Delhi's stance could undermine India's interests at a time when crucial negotiations between the United States and Iran are underway to ease tensions in West Asia.

In a post on social media platform X, Ramesh said that continued talks between Washington and Tehran hold significant implications for India, particularly in relation to energy security and global

trade routes. "Negotiations continue between the US and Iran to bring a halt to the war in West Asia. The immediate impact of such an agreement would mean the re-opening of the Strait of Hormuz and a downward pressure in oil prices—both of which India has a tremendous stake in," the Congress leader said.

The Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most strategically important maritime passages, is a critical route for global oil shipments. Any easing of regional tensions is expected to stabilize energy markets and benefit major oil-importing nations such

as India. However, Ramesh argued that the negotiations have yet to reach a



successful conclusion, blaming the situation in part on Israel's military campaign in Lebanon. He claimed that Israeli operations had intensified with "unprecedented

incursions" and were complicating diplomatic efforts aimed at achieving a broader regional settlement.



According to Ramesh, concerns over the offensive have drawn criticism from several countries. Referring to reports of differences between the United States and Israel over the conflict,

he said, "President Trump himself has expressed extreme frustration and anger with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in expletive-filled language."

The Congress leader further accused Prime Minister Modi of remaining silent despite the escalating situation. "Many other countries have been condemning Israel's offensive in Lebanon. Not surprisingly the one head of government who has kept completely silent while Israel goes ahead with devastating Lebanon and sabotaging the US-Iran agreement is Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he said.

In a sharp political attack, Ramesh questioned the Prime Minister's priorities, asking, "Does the so-called fatherland mean much more to him than his actual motherland?"

The remarks come amid continuing political debate in India over the government's approach to developments in West Asia. India has traditionally maintained diplomatic relations with both Israel and key Arab nations, while also emphasizing dialogue, regional stability and the protection of its economic and strategic interests, particularly in the energy sector.

# Congress misled people with false promises, says KTR

**Hyderabad:** Bharat Rashtra Samiti (BRS) Working President K T Rama Rao (KTR) on Tuesday launched a sharp attack on the Congress government, alleging that it came to power in Telangana through "false propaganda" and "deceptive promises."

Addressing Telangana Formation Day celebrations at Telangana Bhavan, KTR claimed the Congress party had polluted Telangana politics with lies and malicious campaigns against former Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao and the previous BRS government.

He alleged that despite completing half of its tenure, the Congress government had failed to deliver on its promises and pushed Telangana "back by 25 years." KTR accused the government of neglecting farmers, unemployment issues, irrigation projects, and law and order.



Stating that farmers were facing severe hardship, he alleged that the government failed to provide timely Rythu Bandhu assistance, fertilisers, and procurement support. He also accused the Congress government of attempting to damage KCR's image by targeting irrigation projects.

KTR further alleged that unemployed youth and students were cheated with false assurances and challenged Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy to directly face unemployed youth without police protection. Claiming that protests were erupting across the state, he said farmers, unemployed youth, employees, and pensioners were unhappy with the government's functioning. He also alleged deterioration in law and order and accused the government of increasing debt without benefiting the people. KTR asserted that the BRS has always fought elections independently and said the party's struggle was not for power but for the protection of Telangana and its interests. He called upon party leaders and cadres to prepare for another people's movement to safeguard Telangana.

# Siddaramaiah remains key player as DK Shivakumar's cabinet takes shape

**Bengaluru:** Even as DK Shivakumar prepares to take oath as Karnataka Chief Minister on Wednesday, outgoing Chief Minister Siddaramaiah remained at the centre of power negotiations in New Delhi, underscoring his continuing influence over the formation of the new Congress government.

With the swearing-in ceremony barely a day away, the national capital emerged as the nerve centre of Karnataka politics, as senior Congress leaders, cabinet hopefuls and party strategists gathered for a final round of consultations with the high command.

Siddaramaiah's scheduled meeting with Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge assumed particular significance amid intense discussions over ministerial berths, the Deputy Chief Minister's post and key organisational appointments. The outgoing Chief Minister's presence at the heart of the exercise highlighted the delicate nature of the transition from the Siddaramaiah era to the Shivakumar administration.

Adding intrigue to the unfolding political drama, Siddaramaiah was seen interacting with S. Jaishankar at a hotel in the national capital before meeting the Congress leadership. When asked about his discussions with Kharge, however, he remained guarded, saying he was unaware of the meeting's agenda.

The cabinet formation



process received another twist after Yathindra Siddaramaiah claimed that Rahul Gandhi had earlier assured him of a berth in the ministry. The statement immediately fuelled speculation over the composition of the new cabinet and the possibility of several new entrants finding space in the government.

Congress MLA Priyank Kharge also met Kharge in Delhi, intensifying speculation about his role in the incoming dispensation as the race for key portfolios gathered momentum.

Behind closed doors, the Congress leadership is understood to be engaged in a balancing act involving regional representation, caste equations and factional interests.

Party insiders indicated that ministerial appointments could be staggered in phases to accommodate competing aspirations within the ruling party.

The exercise extends beyond the cabinet. With Shivakumar relinquishing the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee presidency upon assuming office,

the party is also searching for a successor capable of maintaining coordination between the government and the organisation. An OBC leader is said to be under consideration for the role.

Amid the political manoeuvring, Shivakumar struck a note of gratitude, crediting the Gandhi family for playing a defining role in his political journey and expressing appreciation for the trust reposed in him over the years.

The BJP, meanwhile, sought to puncture the celebratory mood. Leader of Opposition R. Ashoka dismissed the transition as merely a "change of driver", arguing that the incoming administration would inherit the same governance and financial challenges confronting the state.

As Karnataka awaits the formal transfer of power, the spotlight remains firmly on Delhi, where the final contours of the Shivakumar government are being drawn, with Siddaramaiah continuing to play a pivotal role in shaping the Congress' next chapter.

# Srinagar Airport likely to suspend flight operations for 15 days from Oct 1 for runway repairs

**Srinagar:** Flight operations at Srinagar International Airport are likely to face significant disruptions later this year as authorities have proposed a temporary suspension of services to facilitate extensive runway maintenance and repair work. According to airport officials, all flight operations may be suspended for 15 days beginning October 1 as part of a major infrastructure upgrade programme.

The proposed closure is

aimed at carrying out critical runway maintenance work planned by the Indian Air Force, which manages the airfield infrastructure at the airport. The repairs are considered essential for maintaining operational safety, improving runway conditions and supporting future aviation requirements at the strategically important airport.

In an advisory issued on Tuesday, Srinagar Airport informed airlines, passen-

gers and other stakeholders that flight schedules could be affected due to the planned maintenance activities. The advisory outlines a phased maintenance schedule extending over several months before the proposed complete closure in October.

As part of the preliminary maintenance programme, the airport runway is proposed to remain unavailable every Monday and Tuesday between July 1 and September 30. During this

period, flight operations are expected to be adjusted in accordance with the availability of the runway and the progress of repair works.

Airport authorities indicated that these periodic closures are intended to allow maintenance teams sufficient time to undertake necessary repair and strengthening works without causing a prolonged shutdown of airport operations during the peak travel season.

The advisory further

stated that a complete closure of runway operations has been proposed from October 1 to October 16. If approved, the closure would result in the temporary suspension of all commercial flight operations at Srinagar Airport for more than two weeks. Officials emphasized, however, that the proposed maintenance schedule remains at the planning stage and has not yet received formal approval from the relevant authorities.

# Kavitha calls for massive land protest on July 2 at Uppal Bhagayath

**Hyderabad:** Telangana Rakshana Sena (TRS) chief Kalvakuntla Kavitha on Tuesday called for a massive land protest at Uppal Bhagayath on July 2, urging people from all sections of society to participate in the movement irrespective of political affiliations.

Speaking after hoisting the National Flag at the Telangana Rakshana Sena office in Banjara Hills on the occasion of Telangana State Formation Day, Kavitha said the proposed agitation would be conducted in a manner reminiscent of the historic "Million March" during the Telangana movement.

Extending greetings to the people on Telangana Formation Day, she paid tributes to the martyrs and activists who sacrificed their lives and livelihoods for the realization of Telangana. She described the Telangana movement as a "second freedom struggle" and stressed the need for the younger generation to understand the history and sacrifices behind the formation of the state.

Kavitha alleged that Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy failed to make any announcement regarding

promises made to Telangana movement activists. She also criticised the government for not revealing the terms of reference of the "KK Committee."

Demanding the installation of Professor Jayashankar's statue on Tank Bund before his birth anniversary on August 6, Kavitha said it was unfortunate that even after 12 years of statehood, a statue of the ideologue of the Telangana movement had not been installed in Hyderabad.

She said Telangana Jagruthi had already installed his statues in four districts and added that her organisation was ready to bear the entire cost and maintenance of the proposed statue if the government granted permission.

She called upon intellectuals, employees, students, lawyers, journalists, and people from every village to participate in the July 2 agitation. Kavitha also said that once Telangana Rakshana Sena comes to power, it would provide Rs 1 crore compensation to the families of Telangana martyrs and ensure activists become partners in the development of the state.

# Mamata to lead protest amid growing defection fears and dissent within TMC

**Kolkata:** Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee is set to take to the streets on Tuesday to lead a protest against alleged post-poll violence, eviction of hawkers and what her party describes as the BJP government's attempts to curb democratic opposition.

The rally comes amid growing concerns over unrest within the TMC, with several party legislators beginning to voice dissent and speculation mounting over possible defections in the wake of the Assembly election setback.

The programme, however, has run into a dispute over its venue.

Kolkata Police had denied permission for a dharna at Rani Rashmoni Road and instead offered the Y-Channel area for a two-hour event.

Banerjee has rejected the restriction, declaring that she will hold the protest wherever the police stop her.



"If they want to arrest me, let them. If they beat me, I will endure it," Banerjee had said on Monday. She alleged that plans were being made to prevent TMC leaders and workers from reaching the protest site. "Even if no one comes with me, I will go alone. Wherever I am stopped, I will sit there in protest. That will become the protest venue," she said.

# Congress misleading people on six guarantees, paddy procurement: Bandi Sanjay

**Hyderabad:** union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar on Tuesday accused the Congress government in Telangana of misleading people on the implementation of the "Six Guarantees" and paddy procurement.

Addressing Telangana State Formation Day cele-

brations at the BJP state office, Bandi Sanjay alleged that Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy was attempting to create rifts and gain political mileage by making statements against the Maharashtra government over appointment and irrigation-related issues.

He said Telangana had

slipped into "confusion, corruption and commissions" under Congress rule and claimed the state government had failed to fulfil its election promises.

He alleged that farmers were facing difficulties due to lack of proper procurement planning and accused the state government of try-

ing to blame the Centre for paddy procurement issues.

The union Minister asserted that the BJP had played a key role in the formation of Telangana and paid tributes to those who sacrificed their lives for the separate state movement. He alleged that both the previous BRS government

# Telangana High Court dismisses Jana Sena plea seeking permission for public meeting

**Hyderabad:** The Telangana High Court has dismissed a House Motion petition filed by the Telangana unit of the Jana Sena Party seeking permission to conduct a public meeting in Hyderabad on the occasion of Telangana State Formation Day. The development comes as a setback for the party, which had planned to organise the event as part of its activities marking the state's formation anniversary.

The controversy began after the Jana Sena Party approached the police authorities seeking permission to hold a public gathering in Hyderabad. The proposed meeting was intended to bring together party leaders, workers and supporters to commemorate Telangana State Formation Day and discuss various public issues. The party submitted its application to the Cyberabad Police Commissionerate, requesting approval for the event. However, the police reportedly declined to grant permission, citing administrative and other reasons. Details regarding the grounds for rejection were not immediately available. Following the denial of permission, the party decided to challenge the police decision before the

Telangana High Court. It filed a House Motion petition seeking urgent intervention from the court and requesting permission to proceed with the proposed public meeting.

A House Motion petition is generally filed when a matter requires immediate judicial consideration due to urgency. Such petitions are usually mentioned before the court seeking an expedited hearing outside the regular listing process.

When the matter came up before the High Court registry, the petition faced a procedural hurdle. The registry reportedly declined to entertain the House Motion request, observing that the issue did not meet the criteria required for urgent consideration under the House Motion mechanism. According to the registry's assessment, the matter lacked the level of urgency necessary to justify an immediate hearing. As a result, the petition was rejected at the registry stage itself without being taken up as a House Motion matter. The decision effectively prevented the Jana Sena Party from obtaining urgent judicial relief ahead of the proposed event. With the House Motion petition being dismissed.

# Mehbooba urges united J&K outreach to PM, HM for dialogue

**Srinagar:** Peoples Democratic Party President Mehbooba Mufti has reached out to Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and leaders across the political spectrum in Jammu and Kashmir, calling for a united outreach to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and union Home Minister Amit Shah to push for peace and renewed dialogue in the region.

In separate letters addressed on June 1 to Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, BJP leader and Leader of Opposition Sunil Sharma, J&K Congress President Tariq Hameed Karra, and several other political and civil society leaders, Mehbooba said Jammu and Kashmir finds itself "yet again at a crossroads in its history where the pervasive feeling of despair & disillusionment has gripped the state."

She advocated a joint delegation to Prime Minister



Narendra Modi and union Home Minister Amit Shah to seek the resumption of sustained dialogue on Jammu and Kashmir.

The PDP chief said a collective and coordinated voice was essential to represent the aspirations, grievances, and concerns of the people of the union territory at the national level.

The former Chief Minister Mehbooba said the recent "breakthroughs" achieved by

unification in the largest interest of people we all claim to represent," Mehbooba said in the letter to Omar Abdullah.

"I therefore urge you as head of state to initiate the much-needed process of bringing all parties together through an official meeting. This will set the ball rolling for us to formally reach out to the central government. Given the fact that disagreements & squabbling between regional parties have been detrimental to the collective interests of J&K, a reasonable consensus, especially post-2019, is the only solution. If Ladakh could do it, so can we," she said. "However, your support is a prerequisite for the success of this political platform. Genuine unity in these difficult, unprecedented times can lead us towards restoring our rights and dignity of our people guaranteed by the Indian Constitution," she said.

the Leh Apex Body & Kargil Democratic Alliance with the Centre offer an important lesson that only dialogue can deliver meaningful outcomes. "We have to keep our disagreements & contrarian views on the back burner to unite for the common good & collective welfare. This cannot become a matter of appropriating political credit or point scoring. Rather, it must become a moment of

# Telangana State Formation symbol of martyrs sacrifices and democratic struggles: Governor

**Hyderabad:** Telangana Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla on Tuesday said that the formation of Telangana State stands as a powerful symbol of the sacrifices made by countless martyrs and the democratic struggles carried out over several decades. He made these remarks while addressing the State Formation Day celebrations held at Lok Bhavan in Hyderabad.

Marking the occasion of Telangana State Formation Day, the Governor unfurled the National Flag at Lok Bhavan and received the Guard of Honour presented by the police forces. The ceremony was attended by senior officials, staff members and dignitaries who gathered to commemorate the state's formation and celebrate its achievements over the years.

Paying rich tributes to the martyrs of the Telangana movement, Shukla remembered those who laid down their lives in the struggle for a separate state. He said their sacrifices would always remain a source of inspiration for future generations and should be remembered with gratitude and respect.

The Governor also extended his warm greetings to the people of Telangana and to Telangana natives living across different parts of the world. He noted that the state's progress and

achievements have become a matter of pride not only for its residents but also for the global Telugu community.

Addressing the gathering, Shukla emphasized the importance of remembering all those who contributed to the creation of Telangana and laid the foundation for the construction of modern Telangana. He said the state's journey was shaped by the vision, determination and sacrifices of many leaders, activists and ordinary citizens. Quoting the Sanskrit saying "Janani Janmabhumi-shcha Swargadapi Gariyasi," which translates to "Mother and Motherland are greater than Heaven," the Governor highlighted the deep emotional and cultural bond that individuals share with their homeland. He said that love for one's motherland remains one of the strongest forces that inspires service and dedication. The Governor observed that Telangana possesses a rich and vibrant heritage that has evolved over centuries. He said the state's unique culture, traditions, language and social values form the true spirit of Telangana and continue to guide its development journey.

Referring to Telangana's agrarian roots, Shukla noted that agriculture has long been the backbone of the state's economy and society. He praised the farming community for its hard work

and contribution to ensuring food security and sustaining rural livelihoods.

The Governor also highlighted the state's historic irrigation legacy, pointing out that the chain of tanks constructed during the Kakatiya era demonstrated remarkable engineering vision. He said these traditional water conservation systems laid the foundation for Telangana's agricultural prosperity. He further remarked that modern irrigation projects implemented over the years have strengthened water availability and enhanced agricultural productivity. According to him, these efforts have helped transform Telangana into a fertile and prosperous region capable of supporting sustained economic growth. Shukla said Telangana's achievements extend far beyond agriculture. He observed that the state has earned international recognition in sectors such as Information Technology, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology and startups, emerging as one of India's leading centres for innovation and investment. Highlighting the rapid development of Hyderabad as a global technology hub, the Governor said the state's progress in attracting investments, generating employment and promoting entrepreneurship has contributed significantly to India's economic growth.

## Salman Khan sends legal notice to makers of Kala Hiran

**Mumbai** : Bollywood superstar Salman Khan has sent a legal notice to the makers of 'Kala Hiran,' a film reportedly inspired by the 1998 black-buck poaching case, alleging a "gross violation of personality rights" and seeking a halt to the film's release and promotional activities.

The notice, issued through Khan's legal representatives to the film's casting director Akshay Pandey, contends that the project could adversely affect ongoing judicial proceed-



ings related to the blackbuck case and cause irreparable damage to the actor's reputation.

According to the notice, the blackbuck case remains pending before the Rajasthan High Court, and any dramatized or sensationalised portrayal of the matter could create prejudice against Khan and undermine his right to a fair trial. The legal team has argued that the film's content may interfere with the judicial process by influencing public perception of a sub justice matter.

The notice further states that Khan's representatives

became aware of the project after reports that the filmmakers were approaching actors and circulating promotional material, including the film's synopsis and character sketches allegedly referring to the actor and the blackbuck case. Khan's legal team has maintained that he has neither authorised nor consented to the use of his name, persona, likeness, or any events allegedly associated with him for the purposes of the film. Meanwhile, producer Amit

Jani has termed the legal notice "premature" and rejected claims that Kala Hiran: The Battle for Legacy is a biographical film about

Salman Khan.

Speaking to media persons, Jani said the project is not centred on the actor but is a broader narrative based on

events available in the public domain and the Bishnoi community's longstanding commitment to wildlife conservation.

## ED Raids 20 Locations Across Mumbai, Gujarat in Money Laundering Probe Linked to Salim Dola

**Mumbai** : The Enforcement Directorate (ED) today conducted searches at 20 locations across Mumbai in Maharashtra, Surat, Ankleshwar and Rajkot in Gujarat as part of a money laundering investigation linked to alleged drug trafficker Salim Ismail Dola and his associates under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

According to the ED, the investigation centres on an alleged syndicate involved in the supply of precursor chemicals, the manufacture of mephedrone (MD), large-scale narcotics trafficking and the laundering of illegal proceeds through hawala channels. Officials said investigators are examining financial transactions, properties and assets allegedly connected to the network in an effort to establish the full scope of



its operations.

The searches come shortly after Dola, an accused in multiple narcotics-related cases, was arrested by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) and subsequently handed over to the Mumbai Crime Branch for further investigation. Sources said several Crime Branch units have questioned him in connection with separate drug manufacturing and trafficking cases. Crime

Branch Unit 7 reportedly interrogated Dola in relation to the Satara drug factory case, while Unit 2 examined his alleged involvement in the Mysuru drug factory case until May 30. Dola is presently lodged in judicial custody, and Crime Branch Unit 6 is expected to seek his custody for further questioning.

Investigators are also scrutinising the financial activities of the alleged syndicate.

Police sources claimed that nearly 30 per cent of the illicit money generated through narcotics sales and trafficking was routed to Dola. A portion of these funds was allegedly used to acquire properties in Dubai, while the remaining amount was purportedly reinvested to expand the network's operations.

Dola, who investigators believe has links with the network of fugitive gangster Dawood

Ibrahim, was deported from Turkey to Delhi before being brought to Mumbai and formally arrested by the NCB in connection with a major drug trafficking case registered in 2023.

The probe gathered further momentum following the arrest of alleged drug trafficker Faisal Javed Sheikh from a prison in Chennai in May 2025. During questioning, Sheikh allegedly told investigators that he had sourced narcotics from Dola. Authorities claim that his involvement in multiple drug trafficking operations has already been established. Sheikh is facing several cases under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. These include seizures of 68 grams of mephedrone in 2017, 20 kilograms of mephedrone in 2023 and 940 grams of cocaine in 2024.

## Kirit Somaiya Writes to Civic, Police Chiefs Seeking Action Against Roadside Namaz

**Mumbai** : BJP leader and former member of Parliament Dr Kirit Somaiya has written to the BrihanMumbai Municipal Commissioner and the Mumbai Police Commissioner, urging them to stop the practice of offering Namaz on city roads, claiming that it causes inconvenience to the public and raises law-and-order concerns.

In a letter dated June 2, Somaiya described the offering of Namaz on public roads in Mumbai as a "serious problem".

He alleged that the practice obstructs traffic movement and forces nearby shopkeepers to shut their establishments during prayer time. According to him, such instances occur every week in several parts of the city and amount to a misuse of public space.

The former MP further stated that religious activities should not be permitted on busy roads, near railway stations, bus depots and other key transport hubs.

He argued that such gatherings create difficulties for commuters, contribute to traffic congestion and inconvenience to pedestrians using public thoroughfares.

Somaiya also cautioned that continued permission for offering Namaz on roads could

lead to tensions and disputes in the name of religion.

While acknowledging the constitutional right of citizens to practise their faith, he maintained that public roads cannot be used on a permanent basis for religious activities.

Suggesting alternative arrangements, Somaiya said prayers should be conducted in mosques, grounds, open spaces or other designated locations.

He alleged that some individuals were deliberately encouraging roadside Namaz and described the trend as "unacceptable".

The BJP leader urged both the Municipal and the Police Commissioners to take immediate steps to halt the practice and issue clear instructions to ensure that roads remain accessible to motorists and pedestrians.

Copies of the letter have also reportedly been forwarded to other senior civic and police officials, including the Traffic department, for necessary action.

In an official administrative petition submitted on June 2, 2026, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and former Member of Parliament Dr. Kirit Somaiya formally communicated with the BrihanMumbai Municipal Commissioner and the

Mumbai Police Commissioner.

The communication explicitly urges senior law enforcement and civic administrators to enforce a definitive ban on the practice of conducting religious prayers, specifically Namaz, on public roads across the metropolitan area.

Somaiya argues that these recurrent structural gatherings jeopardize public order, impede economic activity, and create unnecessary systemic friction within the city's complex transit infrastructure. According to the official correspondence, the utilization of public thoroughfares for weekly religious assemblies has transformed into a critical operational challenge for local municipal authorities.

The petition alleges that these open-air prayer sessions directly obstruct the seamless movement of vehicular traffic and generate severe bottlenecks along highly congested arterials. Furthermore, the former lawmaker highlighted that local retail merchants and shopkeepers operating near these prayer sites are frequently compelled to temporarily suspend their commercial activities and close their establishments during congregation times, leading to recurring financial disruptions.

## FIR registered against three for abusive online comments targeting city BJP President Amit Satam

**Mumbai** : Juhu Police in Mumbai have registered an FIR against three individuals for allegedly posting abusive and objectionable comments about Mumbai BJP President and MLA Amit Satam on social media, officials said on Tuesday.

The case was registered under relevant provisions of the Information Technology Act and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) following a complaint filed by local corporator Anish Makwani on May 30.

According to the police, Satam had posted videos on his official Instagram account highlighting development works undertaken across Mumbai. Two social media users allegedly posted highly offensive, abusive, and derogatory comments on the videos.

Police said the matter extended beyond social media, as an unidentified individual also allegedly sent objectionable and threatening messages directly to Satam via WhatsApp.



## The Massive Purge of Voter Lists and a New Democratic Dilemma!

The voter list serves as the lifeline of any democracy. Consequently, any effort to enhance the transparency and credibility of the electoral process by removing fraudulent, deceased, or ineligible names from these lists is undoubtedly a welcome step. However, when such a purification drive results in the simultaneous deletion of millions of names, it raises fears that, alongside the intended strengthening of democracy, the voting rights of eligible citizens may also be jeopardized. The 'Special Intensive Revision' (SIR) campaign, currently being implemented by the Election Commission of India, has stirred up a storm of controversy across the country's political landscape since its very inception. The primary objective of this nationwide exercise is the comprehensive purification of voter lists through the removal of names belonging to deceased, migrated, fraudulent, or ineligible voters. Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar officially announced this historic initiative on October 27, 2025, from Vigyan Bhavan in New Delhi. Subsequently, two major phases of this highly ambitious process have been completed. The first phase of the SIR was primarily conducted in the state of Bihar between June and September of last year; following a rigorous verification process, approximately 4.7 million bogus or ineligible voters were directly removed from the state's electoral rolls. In the second phase that followed, the verification machinery swung into rapid action across nine states: Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Goa as well as three Union Territories. During this second phase, a staggering 51.8 million voter names were struck off the lists, resulting in a significant decline estimated at approximately 10 percent in the total number of voters across all these states. As a result of this massive purge, the total electorate has dropped from roughly 510 million to approximately 460 million. In terms of absolute numbers, Uttar Pradesh witnessed the largest decline in voters approximately two crore while West Bengal saw a reduction of 84 lakh voters. From a percentage standpoint, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands recorded the highest number of names being struck off, whereas Lakshadweep observed the lowest decline. The Election Commission has now announced the third phase of this campaign, which is set to be implemented in Maharashtra and Karnataka, along with Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Haryana, Jharkhand, Punjab, and the northeastern states. This phase will also encompass the Union Territories of Delhi, Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Daman and Diu. Over the past decade of the Central Government's tenure, various administrative institutions including the Election Commission, the vote-counting machinery, the CBI, and the offices of Governors as well as the Supreme Court (for its perceived support of certain government policy decisions), had become targets of intense anger and criticism from opposition parties. There had already been widespread complaints regarding erroneous details, bogus entries, and other serious discrepancies within the country's electoral rolls. Against this backdrop, although the stated objective of the SIR campaign launched by the Election Commission appeared ostensibly valid, the Commission's exercise of special constitutional powers for this process coupled with the hasty manner in which the campaign was implemented and the shocking results that ensued led to an increasingly intense backlash within political circles. Ultimately, a batch of petitions directly challenging the constitutional validity of this entire process was filed in the Supreme Court. Recognizing the broad scope of the matter, the Court subsequently impleaded all political parties across the country as respondents in the case. After conducting marathon hearings over seven consecutive months commencing last July on the petitions challenging the special intensive review process, a Supreme Court bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi delivered its extensive and significant 124-page verdict on the matter. In delivering this judgment, the Court strongly upheld the autonomy of the Election Commission. The Justices completely rejected the petitioners' primary contention that the government was making an unlawful attempt to verify citizenship through the "back door" under the pretext of expelling illegal infiltrators. Furthermore, the Court dismissed the objection that the Election Commission was arbitrarily arrogating to itself the authority to determine citizenship, and was improperly violating laws enacted by Parliament, established rules, and the very limits prescribed within its own official handbooks. The Bench also rejected the argument that this process imposed an undue burden of proving citizenship upon the ordinary voter. The Court ruled that while this process aimed at ensuring the integrity, accuracy, and absolute purity of the electoral roll, which serves as the bedrock of democracy is indeed distinct from and more rigorous than the standard electoral roll review, it is neither illegal nor unconstitutional in any manner, as the Commission has executed this task strictly within the ambit of its constitutional powers. The Court affirmed that if, during the verification process, an individual's documents appear suspicious, the Election Commission may directly refuse to include that individual's name in the electoral roll or decline to maintain their registration. However, the Court clarified that this does not imply the Commission renders the final legal determination regarding citizenship status. It further explained that if an individual's eligibility as a voter cannot be substantiated through documentary evidence, the Commission may refer such suspicious cases to the competent authority under the Central Government in accordance with the Citizenship Act for a final adjudication. With this green signal from the Supreme Court, the Election Commission's SIR campaign has now received a legal impetus; consequently, in the coming times through the third and subsequent phases this campaign is set to become even more active across Maharashtra and other states. So far, approximately 60 million people across the country have been excluded from the voter lists, and it is strongly anticipated that during the third phase, this figure could soar past the 100 to 120 million mark. However, while welcoming the national significance of this campaign, one cannot afford to overlook the ground realities. India remains a developing nation, and amidst its colossal population, factors such as widespread poverty, illiteracy, social apathy, internal migration for employment, and bureaucratic inefficiency persist to this day. Under such circumstances, ordinary and uneducated citizens may encounter numerous inherent obstacles when attempting to produce the requisite, error-free documents on short notice. Consequently, while this process aims to weed out only illegal infiltrators or fraudulent voters, there looms a significant risk that the nation's genuine, legitimate albeit impoverished eligible voters could also be deprived of their sacred right to vote. Therefore, in a country with such a massive population, there is an urgent need to expand, modernize, enhance the transparency of, and streamline the network of fundamental government agencies responsible for issuing birth, death, and residency certificates. A deeply sensitive question remains unanswered even after this court verdict: will the millions of people who have already been and will subsequently be excluded from the voter lists under this campaign merely lose their constitutional right to vote, or will they also be deprived of the benefits derived from various government welfare schemes and food grain distribution programs?

## Government Strengthening Preventive Healthcare Through Yoga and Naturopathy



Shri Prataprao Jadhav, Union Minister of State (IC), Ministry of Ayush and Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, chaired the fourth meeting of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee of the Ministry of Ayush in New Delhi. The meeting focused on "Yoga and Naturopathy in India" and deliberated on the Government's initiatives to strengthen preventive healthcare, wellness promotion and the global outreach of India's traditional systems of healthcare.

Welcoming the members of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee, Union Minister Shri Prataprao Jadhav said that Yoga and Naturopathy are India's timeless contributions to holistic and preventive healthcare and are now emerging as important pillars of the global wellness movement. He

noted that under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the Ministry of Ayush has prioritised these systems as effective approaches for preventive, promotive, and lifestyle-based healthcare across the country.

Referring to the declaration of 21 June as the International Day of Yoga by the United Nations General Assembly in 2014, the Minister described it as a historic achievement for India's cultural diplomacy and global leadership. He noted that the International Day of Yoga is now celebrated in more than 190 countries, connecting millions of people worldwide with Yoga and strengthening awareness about holistic health and well-being.

Shri Jadhav stated that Yoga and Naturopathy are increasingly being recognised as effective complementary approaches for man-

aging non-communicable diseases, stress, and mental health disorders, thereby supporting preventive and integrative healthcare. Highlight-



ing the sector's growth, he informed the Committee that more

than 70 BNYS colleges and over 5,000 Yoga training institutes are currently functioning across the country.

The Minister further highlighted that the Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga has trained over six lakh Yoga volunteers, while more than seven lakh Yoga professionals and volunteers have been certified under the Yoga Certification Board framework. Reaffirming the Government's commitment, he said that Yoga and Naturopathy are contributing significantly to India's wellness economy, employment generation, wellness tourism, and global cultural outreach.

Members of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee actively participated in the deliberations and shared valuable suggestions and insights during the meeting. Among the members present were

Gupta, Shri Parshottambhai Rupala, Shri Nilesh D. Lanke, Smt Renuka Chowdhury, and Shri Ashitkar Patil N. Bapurao.

Ms Monalisa Dash, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Ayush, delivered a detailed presentation on the current status, institutional framework, educational infrastructure, research initiatives, global outreach and emerging opportunities in the Yoga and Naturopathy sectors in India.

Joint Secretary, Ministry of Ayush, Ms Alarmelmangai D., Joint Secretary, Ministry of Ayush, Smt Kavita Jain, along with Members of Parliament and other senior officials of the Ministry of Ayush, were also present during the meeting.

The meeting concluded with members reaffirming their support for further strengthening Yoga and Naturopathy as globally recognised

## ISM, MeitY Launches "Investors Support" Portal

Government of India has been undertaking concerted efforts towards the development of a resilient, trusted, and sustainable semiconductor ecosystem in the country through various strategic initiatives and policy interventions. Under the Semicon India Programme, so far, 12 Fab/Packaging projects have been approved along with 24 semiconductor design projects.

With a vision to boost investors' confidence and to address their concerns, India Semiconductor Mission has launched an online portal on 26.05.2026 titled "Investors Support", accessible at <https://www.ism.gov.in/investment>.

The portal has been developed to provide informa-



tion relating to Government schemes, policies, approved

projects under Semicon India Programme, regulatory

requirements, etc. to those investors who are consider-

ing investment in India.

Portal will also enable investors to register their grievances/concerns which will be resolved by the officials of India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) with the support of Nodal Officers of concerned Ministries, Departments, Organisations, State Governments, approved Project Companies and international and national Trade bodies/associations.

During the launch event, Shri Amitesh Kumar Sinha, CEO, ISM emphasised the importance of handholding and facilitation of foreign investors and urged upon representatives of all concerned stakeholders to proactively discharge their respective roles in addressing concerns of the in-

vestors for further strengthening the semiconductor manufacturing and design ecosystem in the country.

Relevant stakeholders will get a secure, role-based, single-window digital interface for streamlined coordination and time-bound resolution of concerns.

The launch event also included an overview and walkthrough of the portal's framework, functionalities, onboarding process, coordination mechanisms, and the role and responsibilities of participating Ministries, Departments, Organisations, State Governments, approved Project Companies.

International and National Trade Bodies/Associations.

## No Blanket Extension of ALMM List-II Beyond 1st June 2026

The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) has announced that it will not provide a blanket extension to the deadline for the implementation of the Approved List of Models and Manufacturers (ALMM) List-II for solar photovoltaic (PV) cells beyond June 1, 2026. The decision follows an extensive review of representations submitted by industry stakeholders and consultations held across the renewable energy sector.

According to the existing ALMM List-II framework, Net-Metering Projects and Open Access Projects commissioned before June 1, 2026, are exempt from the requirement to use solar PV cells listed under ALMM List-II. However, projects commissioned on or after this date will be required to comply with the provisions of the approved list, which is aimed at promoting the use of domestically approved solar PV cells.

The Ministry stated that it had received a wide range of representations from stakeholders concerning the June 1 deadline. While some industry participants requested an extension due to challenges in project implementation, others argued that the deadline should remain unchanged to maintain policy certainty and encourage domestic manufacturing

growth.

During the review process, the Ministry also took into account the Office Memorandum issued on April 29, 2026, by the Department of Expenditure under the Ministry of Finance. The memorandum, issued in the context of the ongoing West Asia situation, advised that the circumstances may be treated as war-related disruptions and suggested that any extension of timelines should be granted only on a case-specific basis rather than through a blanket policy.

Following a detailed examination of all submissions and consultations with industry representatives, the Ministry concluded that there was no justification for a general extension of the ALMM List-II implementation deadline. It emphasized that maintaining the existing timeline would support policy consistency and provide clarity to manufacturers and developers operating in the solar sector.

At the same time, the government acknowledged that several renewable energy projects had already made substantial progress toward completion and could face difficulties due to circumstances beyond the control of developers. To safeguard investments already made and protect the larger public interest, the Ministry has decided to allow certain projects to seek

individual time extensions.

These projects include Net-Metering, Open Access and Renewable Energy power projects where the installation of solar modules has already been completed but commissioning remains pending.

The relief is also available to projects where developers have undertaken significant implementation activities and can demonstrate meaningful progress toward project completion.

The Ministry has defined "effective steps" toward implementation to include key project milestones such as land acquisition, achievement of financial closure, establishment of connectivity arrangements, approval of electrical drawings, and the arrival or installation of solar modules at project sites.

1 Developers meeting these criteria may become eligible for consideration of a deadline extension.

Any request for an extension will not be granted automatically. Instead, each case will undergo an objective assessment based on documentary evidence and supporting information submitted by the concerned project developer. The Ministry stressed that extensions would be considered strictly on merit and only where justified by the facts of the case.

To facilitate the process, the National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE) has developed a dedicated online portal through which developers can submit their claims for time extension. Renewable energy project developers seeking relief beyond June 1, 2026, must file their applications along with all required documentation on or before June 30, 2026.

The applications received through the portal will be examined by an Expert Committee that will be constituted by the Ministry.

The committee will evaluate project-specific circumstances, verify the evidence submitted by developers and make recommendations regarding the grant of extensions on a case-by-case basis.

The Ministry has also issued a clarification regarding residential consumers participating in the PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana. Residential net-metering consumers who voluntarily forego government subsidy under the scheme's "Give It Up" campaign will continue to be governed by the existing scheme guidelines until the programme concludes on March 31, 2027. However, the Ministry clarified that such consumers must mandatorily apply through the National Portal of the PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana. This requirement is intended

to ensure transparency, proper monitoring and seamless implementation of rooftop solar installations under the flagship scheme.

Officials said the decision demonstrates the government's commitment to ensuring long-term policy stability in the solar manufacturing ecosystem. By maintaining the ALMM implementation schedule, the government aims to strengthen domestic solar PV manufacturing capacity and reduce dependence on imported components, thereby supporting India's goal of becoming self-reliant in the renewable energy sector.

At the same time, the Ministry emphasized that the case-by-case extension mechanism has been designed to balance policy objectives with the need to protect investor confidence. By providing relief to genuinely affected projects that have already undertaken substantial implementation efforts, the government hopes to safeguard investments, prevent project disruptions and sustain momentum in India's rapidly expanding renewable energy industry. Further details regarding the decision have been outlined in the Ministry's Office Memorandum No. 283/63/2025-GRID SOLAR dated May 25, 2026, which has been made available on the Ministry's official website.

## Mumbai Youth Congress Holds Massive Protest March Against Alleged NEET and CBSE Exam Paper Leaks and Scams

**Mumbai:** The Mumbai Youth Congress organised a massive "Yuva Aakrosh Morcha" in Dadar, Central Mumbai, on Tuesday in protest against the scams in the NEET and CBSE examinations and demanded that union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan resign taking moral responsibility.

The march, organised by Mumbai Youth Congress President Zeenat Shabrin, was led by Youth Congress National President Uday Bhanu Chib.

The march commenced from the Chaityabhoimi, Babasaheb Ambedkar memorial, and proceeded towards the statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj at Shivaji Park. However, the police stopped the march and detained the participants.

Hundreds of students, youth, and Congress workers participated in the protest, along with Congress Working Committee mem-



ber and former minister Naseem Khan, MLA Bhai Jagtap, and All India Congress Committee Secretary Sachin Sawant.

Addressing the gathering, Uday Bhanu Chib launched a sharp attack on the Central Government. He said that the future of millions of students across the country is at risk and public faith in the examination

system has been severely eroded. Repeated incidents of paper leaks are undermining students' hard work and shattering the expectations of their parents.

He alleged that the Central Government has failed to address this serious issue and claimed that paper leak rackets are flourishing across the country "because of the Prime Minister's

weak leadership."

He demanded that Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan accept moral responsibility for the failures in the education system and resign immediately.

Naseem Khan also criticised the Central Government, stating that incidents of paper leaks, which jeopardise students' futures, are not merely cases of admin-

istrative negligence but a result of corruption within the education sector. He said there is widespread anger among the country's youth and urged the government to treat the issue with the seriousness it deserves.

MLA Bhai Jagtap, while criticising the government, said that "on one hand, it is showing grand dreams to the youth, while on the other hand, it has failed to act against scams that are destroying their future". He alleged that "gangs involved in paper leaks are receiving political protection" and demanded an impartial investigation into the entire matter.

AICC Secretary Sachin Sawant said while the country's examination system should be based on merit, certain individuals are depriving deserving students of their future through money and malpractice. He said the government has become insensitive to students' concerns.

## Public Anger Erupts as Toxic Liquor Case Accused Brought to Phugewadi

**Pune:** Anger among residents of Phugewadi over the tragic hooch tragedy resurfaced today when the accused in the case were brought to the locality by a CID team for investigation and spot verification.

The accused were taken to the crime scene as part of the ongoing probe and panchanama proceedings.

As news of their arrival spread, a large number of local residents gathered at the site. While the investigation was carried out without any disturbance, tension escalated after the procedures were completed.

As the CID team attempted to escort the accused away from the area, several residents expressed strong resentment and outrage. Some individuals reportedly tried to rush toward the accused, creating a brief commotion and a tense atmosphere in the locality. Police and CID officials managed to control the situation and ensured the accused were safely removed from the scene.

The incident highlighted the deep-seated anger and emotional trauma the toxic liquor tragedy continues to have on the Phugewadi community.

## VHP objects to proposed Temple Inam Land Rights Abolition Law in Maharashtra

**Pune:** The Temple Inam Land Rights Abolition Law proposed by the Maharashtra government has drawn strong opposition from various temple trusts and the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), who alleged that the proposed legislation would undermine the religious autonomy of temples and cause injustice to thousands of ancient shrines across the state.

According to VHP representatives, inam lands were historically granted to temples to support religious activities such as worship, community welfare, food distribution, maintenance of dharamshalas, and other social and spiritual services.

These lands, they said, form an important foundation of the faith and traditions of the Hindu community. The VHP has expressed

concern that the proposed law could jeopardize the financial resources of temples, making it difficult for them to sustain religious, charitable and social initiatives.

The organization warned that several long-standing temple-based welfare activities may be forced to shut down if the legislation is implemented in its current form.

## Class 10 student drowns while bathing with friends in Chandrapur district

**Chandrapur :** A tragic incident unfolded in Maharashtra's Chandrapur district on Tuesday morning when a 16-year-old student drowned while bathing with his friends at Donge Ghat on Chandgaon Road near Brahmapuri. The incident has left the local community in shock and mourning, particularly as the victim was a young student with a promising future ahead of him.

The deceased was identified as Naitik Ashok Shende, a resident of Jani Ward in Brahmapuri. Naitik was a Class 10 student at Khristanand School and was known among his family, friends and teachers as an active and enthusiastic youngster.

According to police officials and local sources, Naitik began his day by visiting the sports complex in Brahmapuri early in the morning. He reportedly

arrived at the facility at around 6 a.m. to play basketball, a routine activity that he regularly enjoyed with his friends.

After spending some time playing the sport, Naitik and two of his friends, identified as Soumya Dhok and Jay Raut, decided to visit Donge Ghat. The trio reportedly reached the location at around 7:30 a.m. with the intention of taking a bath in the waterbody situated near the ghat. Police said that after reaching the spot, Naitik entered the water first while his friends remained on the bank. According to preliminary information gathered during the investigation, he asked his friends to join him later while he moved ahead into the water.

Officials stated that Naitik allegedly jumped into a section of the waterbody without fully assessing its depth.

Unaware of the danger posed by the deep waters, he soon found himself struggling to stay afloat.

Witness accounts suggest that within moments, the teenager began drowning. Despite his efforts to save himself, he reportedly disappeared beneath the water before his friends could react effectively or provide assistance.

Realising that something had gone wrong and after losing sight of Naitik, one of his friends rushed back to inform his family members about the incident. The information reportedly reached the family at around 8 a.m., prompting immediate concern and panic. Upon receiving the distressing news, Naitik's father, Ashok Shende, hurried to Donge Ghat. Family members and local residents also rushed to the site as word of the incident spread through the area.

## Farmers leader warns govt on farm loan waiver

**Kolhapur:** Swabhimani Shetkari Sanghatana (SSS) national president and former MP, Raju Shetty, today cautioned the Maharashtra government regarding its proposed farm loan waiver scheme, warning that loan waiver scheme for farmers should not be a scheme full of oppressive conditions and extremely deceptive like the populist 'Ladki Bahin Scheme'.

In a press statement issued here, Shetty referred to a statement made by state Chief Minister Devendra

Fadnavis while expressing his inability to announce loan waiver scheme for distressed farmers of the state due to the Election Commission's model code of conduct for local bodies elections.

The SSS chief said, "Mr Fadnavis' statement is kind of throwing dust in the eyes of farmers."

We are going to take a very aggressive stand against the Mahayuti government, which is once again keeping the farmers in suspense by citing the tech-

nical reason of the code of conduct.

He accused the BJP-led government of resorting to old tactic of luring voters by making big promises at the time of elections and then failing to deliver on its electoral promises.

Shetty said, "If it is really a charity, why the loan waiver amount is not being deposited directly into the farmers' bank accounts without any announcement? Whether the government's plan is to bring the same chaos to farmers loan

waiver as the government's so-called populist 'Ladki Bahin' scheme, where thousands of men submitted bogus applications, he questioned.

"If the loan of every needy farmer in the state is not completely cleared before June 30, then this government will not be able to survive even by hiding behind the model code of conduct. We will take to the streets and fight fiercely for the rights of farmers and against this fraudulent administration," he warned.

## Contractors launch protest against Maha govt over unpaid bills; Nashik division has ₹216 Crore in arrears

**Nashik:** The plight of contractors undertaking government development works in Maharashtra has become extremely dire. Due to the State Government withholding funds for various development projects, bills amounting to approximately ₹10,000 crore remain pending across the entire state.

The situation is most critical in the Nashik Division, where arrears totaling approximately ₹216 crore are pending for road and bridge construction works under the Tribal Sub-Plan (Account Head 50545117),

falling under the jurisdiction of the Public Works Department (PWD).

The 'Maharashtra State Contractors' Federation' has leveled serious allegations against the government, citing gross favoritism and irregularities—such as corruption—in the distribution of funds.

A comprehensive overview of this crisis has been presented in a letter sent by the Federation's State President (Engineer Milind Bhosale), Working President (Engineer Sanjay Mainid), and State General Secretary (Sunil Nagrale) to the Sec-

retary of the Tribal Development Department, Chief Engineer Prashant Auti, and Superintending Engineer Devendra Pawar.

The Federation asserts that since March 2024, funds released under this specific account head have been extremely meager and merely nominal in nature. Furthermore, the budget for the financial year 2026-27 allocates a grossly inadequate sum of just ₹800 crore for this critical account head—an amount that.

When weighed against the total outstanding dues,

is akin to a drop in the ocean.

Contractors had completed government projects by utilizing their personal savings, borrowing from friends and relatives, and by mortgaging or selling the Stridhan (jewelry) belonging to the women of their households.

Now, due to the non-receipt of payments, many contractors are suffering from mental depression, and some have even resorted to the drastic step of committing suicide.

The Federation has issued a stern warning that

if the government does not immediately revoke this order regarding the unequal distribution of funds—and instead allocate funds proportionately.

And equitably across all departments—contractors throughout the entire state will commence a 'sit-in protest' (Thiyya Andolan) inside the offices of PWD Divisional Superintendent Devendra Pawar.

This emphatic warning has also been formally conveyed to the Chief Minister, the Finance Minister, and the Minister for Tribal Development.

## Nagpur Police bust drug network, seize Mephedrone worth Rs 2.25 Crore; One arrested

**Nagpur:** A major anti-narcotics operation by the Nagpur Police has led to the seizure of 7.5 kilograms of mephedrone (MD), a synthetic drug valued at approximately Rs 2.25 crore, from a rented apartment in the city. Officials described the action as a significant breakthrough in efforts to dismantle drug trafficking networks operating in the region and prevent narcotics from reaching local consumers.

The operation was carried out on Sunday by teams from Jaripatka and Kapil Nagar police stations following the development of specific intelligence regarding

suspected drug-related activities in the Uppalwadi area of Nagpur. Acting on the information, police launched a coordinated raid on a rented flat believed to be used for storing and distributing narcotic substances.

During the search of the apartment, officers recovered a substantial quantity of mephedrone, commonly known as MD. The seized contraband weighed approximately 7.5 kilograms and is estimated to have a market value of around Rs 2.25 crore, making it one of the significant drug seizures reported in the city in recent months.

Police also arrested a suspect identified as Majhar Ali Akbar Ali, 35, in connection with the case. Investigators believe he was actively involved in the handling and movement of the narcotic consignment and may have played a key role in the distribution network.

According to officials, the mephedrone was found packed in 14 separate parcels inside the apartment. Preliminary inquiries suggest that the drugs had been stored there temporarily before being supplied to various destinations as part of an organized trafficking operation.

## AirTrunk Inks Rs 2 Lakh Crore Deal With Maharashtra To Set Up 3 GW Data Hub

**Mumbai :** Australian data centre company AirTrunk has received a Letter of Intent (LoI) from the Maharashtra government for the allotment of land at the Raigad Pen Growth Centre for a proposed hyperscale data centre project involving an estimated investment of Rs 2 lakh crore. The development marks one of the largest proposed investments in India's rapidly expanding digital infrastructure sector and underscores Maharashtra's growing prominence as a technology and data centre hub.

The announcement was made by Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who shared details of the development on his official account on the social media platform X. The Chief Minister described the project as a major milestone in the state's efforts to attract large-scale investments in emerging technology sectors.

"Delighted to welcome AirTrunk CEO Robin Khuda to Maharashtra. We exchanged a Letter of Intent for land allotment at the Raigad Pen Growth Centre (Orange City) for their upcoming data centre—a massive Rs 2 lakh crore investment with 3 GW capacity," Fadnavis stated in his post.

The proposed facility is expected to have a planned capacity of 3 gigawatts, making it one of the largest



data centre developments proposed in India. Industry experts note that such capacity would significantly enhance India's ability to meet growing demand for cloud computing, artificial intelligence, digital services and data storage.

The project highlights the increasing attractiveness of Maharashtra as a destination for technology investments. The state's strategic location, robust infrastructure, strong connectivity and access to major financial and technology ecosystems have made it a preferred destination for global data centre operators.

AirTrunk has already established a foothold in India through its acquisition of Lumina CloudInfra, an Indian data centre developer with operations across Mumbai, Chennai and Hyderabad. The acquisition provided the company with immediate access to the Indian market and an existing operational platform. Industry analysts

view the acquisition as a strategic move that allowed AirTrunk to bypass the challenges associated with building a completely new presence from scratch. Instead of pursuing a purely greenfield development strategy, the company entered the market through an established local operator with existing assets and expertise. The move also reflects a broader trend within the global data centre industry, where hyperscale operators are increasingly seeking to secure capacity and market access through acquisitions. As demand for digital infrastructure continues to grow, major players are looking to establish an early presence in high-growth markets such as India. AirTrunk is backed by global investment giants Blackstone Inc. and Canada Pension Plan Investment Board. The company operates large-scale data centre campuses across several countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

## District Congress and Yuvak Congress workers take out candle march protest against NEET paper leakage

**Kolhapur:** District Congress workers and DisDistrict Youth Congress workers organized a large candlelight march to protest against the alleged NEET-UG 2026 examination paper leak controversy, expressing concern over its impact on students and demanding accountability from the authorities. The demonstration drew a significant number of party workers and leaders who gathered in Kolhapur to voice their opposition to the alleged irregularities.

The protest was organized by the District Congress and Youth Congress units, which claimed that the alleged examination paper leak had created uncertainty and anxiety

among thousands of aspiring medical students. The participants said that any compromise in the integrity of competitive examinations undermines the trust of students and their families.

The candle march was led by Uday Bhan Chib and Satej Patil, who were joined by a large number of Congress and Youth Congress workers. The gathering took place at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Chowk before the march proceeded through major roads of the city.

Holding candles and placards, the protesters raised slogans against the Union Government and criticized the handling of the examination con-

troversy. They alleged that repeated incidents involving recruitment and entrance examinations have eroded public confidence in the examination system. The demonstrators expressed solidarity with students who had spent months preparing for the highly competitive medical entrance examination. Many participants argued that students should not have to bear the consequences of administrative lapses or security failures in examination processes. Addressing the gathering, Uday Bhan Chib said that students across the country deserve a fair and transparent examination system. He alleged that recurring controversies surrounding major ex-

aminations have created frustration among young people who aspire to secure admissions and employment through merit-based processes.

Chib demanded accountability from the authorities responsible for conducting examinations and maintaining security protocols. He also called for a thorough investigation into the alleged paper leak and strict action against those found responsible. During his speech, the Youth Congress leader sought the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, arguing that responsibility should be fixed at the highest level if irregularities are established.

## Cross-examination of Satyaki Savarkar reveals key admissions in Rahul Gandhi defamation case

**Pune:** Significant developments emerged on Monday during the hearing in the alleged defamation case filed against Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, at the Special MP-MLA Court in Pune.

The proceedings were held before Judge Amol Shirram Shinde, where the complainant Satyaki Savarkar - the grandnephew of Vinayak Damodar (Veer) Savarkar -- underwent an extensive cross-examination conducted by Rahul Gandhi's counsel, Advocate Milind Dattatray Pawar.

During the cross-examination, several important points regarding the title "Swatantryaveer" (Freedom Hero) came to light.

Adv Pawar said that Satyaki Savarkar acknowledged that "Swatantryaveer" is neither an official government designation nor a legally recognized title, but rather an honorific used by a poet and playwright.

He further admitted that such honorific titles can be used by any individual and that there is no legal restriction on their usage. Pawar also agreed that individuals



may use such titles to enhance their public stature.

Satyaki Savarkar additionally conceded that no government authority or statutory body exists to determine whether such honor-



ific titles are appropriate or inappropriate.

He also acknowledged that there is no official evidence proving that the title "Swatantryaveer" was conferred upon Vinayak Damo-

dar Savarkar by the public, said Pawar.

However, he rejected the defence's contention that Vinayak Damodar Savarkar had himself adopted the title "Swatantryaveer."

Responding to questions regarding the expenses incurred in pursuing the case, Satyaki Savarkar stated that he was personally bearing the litigation costs. He also informed the court that books, literature, T-shirts, lanterns and other merchandise related to Savarkar are sold through the "Har Ghar Savarkar" initiative.

## Adivi Sesh says, "I choose compassion with every meal"

**Mumbai** : Actor Adivi Sesh has joined hands with PETA India for a new campaign released ahead of World Environment Day on June 5. The campaign features the actor alongside two chicks and carries the message, "Chicks Love a Vegetarian," encouraging people to consider meat-free food choices. Known for films such as G2 and Dacoit: A Love Story, Adivi Sesh appears in the campaign to raise awareness about animal welfare and the impact of dietary choices on animals and the environment. The campaign was photographed by Shiva SS, with makeup by Tulasi Krishna Chintla, styling by Rekha Boggarapu, and hair by Sandeep Kumar Chenna.

fering to this world. That's why I choose compassion with every meal by leaving animals off my plate." As part of the campaign,



PETA India highlighted concerns regarding the treatment of chickens in the meat industry. The organization stated that chickens are capable of forming social bonds and displaying complex behaviours, but are often subjected to intensive farming practices before being slaughtered for meat production.

The campaign also draws attention to the environmental and health-related arguments often associated with vegetarian diets. According to PETA India, reducing or eliminating meat consumption can help lower an individual's food-related carbon footprint while also contributing to improved health outcomes.

Adivi Sesh joins a list of celebrities who have previously collaborated with PETA India to promote vegetarian and vegan lifestyles. Actors including Kartik Aaryan, Anushka Sharma, Shahid Kapoor, Hema Malini and R. Madhavan have participated in similar campaigns for the organization over the years. PETA India, whose motto states that "animals are not ours to eat or abuse in any way," advocates for animal rights and campaigns against what it describes as speciesism, the belief that human interests are inherently more important than those of other animals.

## Jr NTR; says, "I really trust him with drama"

**Mumbai** : The anticipation surrounding Dragon continues to soar as the ambitious collaboration between Jr NTR and filmmaker Prashanth Neel gears up to hit the big screen. Touted as one of the most awaited films in Indian cinema, the project has already generated massive buzz following the release of its first glimpse, which set social media abuzz and heightened excitement among fans across the country. Mounted on a grand scale, Dragon promises a mix of high-octane action, powerful drama and spectacular visuals. Interestingly, the film has been in development for nearly five years, and according to Prashanth Neel, Jr NTR played a significant role in shaping its dramatic core through extensive creative discussions. Speaking about the film's development process, Prashanth Neel said, "5 years. I didn't have writers in the first 3 years that came in only after that. The hero and I used to have chatters about this. I trust him with drama, when I go and talk to



him I really trust him. It's not because I have to go to my hero to get his approval, I really trust him." The filmmaker went on to praise the actor's creative instincts and the valuable inputs he brought to the project over the

years. "I usually go to an audience I trust and luckily for me NTR was absolutely phenomenal, the kind of inputs he's put into this has been brilliant and I'm very happy to be in an environment around him where we

can have conversation about drama." The comments have further fuelled excitement around the film, especially among fans eager to witness the creative synergy between the KGF and Salaar director and the RRR star. With both names carrying immense box-office pull and a reputation for delivering larger-than-life cinematic experiences, Dragon is already being viewed as one of the biggest releases on the horizon. The recently unveiled glimpse offered audiences a taste of the film's scale and visual grandeur, sparking widespread discussion online. While the makers are keeping plot details tightly under wraps, the combination of Prashanth Neel's signature storytelling style and NTR's screen presence has only amplified expectations. Directed by Prashanth Neel, Dragon stars Jr NTR in the lead role and is being produced under the banners of Mythri Movie Makers and NTR Arts. The pan-India entertainer is set to release in five languages.

## Randeep Hooda melts hearts as he reads bedtime stories to baby Nyomica in adorable family moment

**Mumbai** : Actor Randeep Hooda shared a personal glimpse into his home life through a social media post, showing him reading a bedtime story to his infant daughter, Nyomica, while his wife, actress Lin Laishram, sat alongside them. The post,

shared on Instagram, features the family in a quiet domestic setting, with Hooda engaged in storytelling as Nyomica rests in Laishram's arms.

Accompanying the post, Hooda wrote: "Every storyteller dreams of finding a new audience. Nothing prepares

you for the joy of telling stories to the one who looks at you like you're the whole world."

Hooda and Laishram welcomed their daughter on March 10, 2026. The couple married in November 2023 in a traditional Meitei ceremony in Imphal, Manipur.

Hooda is known for his work in films including Jaat, Swatantrya Veer Savarkar, Once Upon a Time in Mumbai, and Highway. Laishram has appeared in films including Mary Kom, Rangoon, and Jaane Jaan.

## Medha Shankr ; says she's giving equal importance to her personal life this year

**Mumbai** : Medha Shankr may have earned widespread acclaim for her

understated and grounded performance in 12th Fail, but the actress says romance remains her favourite genre, both on screen and in real life. Having recently showcased a different side of herself in the romantic comedy Ginny Weds Sunny 2, Medha revealed that she naturally gravitates towards love stories and is also making space for her personal life alongside her professional ambitions. "I am a very romantic person. I love romance. So, apart from the good work that I am looking forward to doing, I must say that I am also giving equal importance to my

personal life this year. Of course, there's nothing happening in my personal life and so I want to focus on it," she said.

The actress also spoke about the kind of romantic films she enjoys watching, admitting that she prefers stories that blend romance with a touch of emotional depth. "I really like The Holiday. It's such a comfort film. I also like Love & Other Drugs. I like a little melancholy in my romantic comedy films," she shares.

While audiences know her primarily as an actor, Medha recently explored a different avenue when she turned showstopper for designer Suneet Varma at the Bombay Times Fashion Week earlier this year. Reflecting on the experience, she admitted that walking the runway alongside professional models was both exciting and challenging. "To walk alongside models who have done this for a very long time is not easy. So, there was pressure, but it was fun,

too and I loved the experience," she admitted.

Medha was last seen in Ginny Weds Sunny 2, the romantic comedy directed by Prashant Jha and produced by Soundrya Production and Zee Studios.

The film, which serves as a spiritual sequel to the 2020 release Ginny Weds Sunny, stars Avinash Tiwary alongside Medha Shankr.

The story follows a solitary wrestler who begins to reassess his life when an independent young woman unexpectedly enters his world and challenges his long-held beliefs. Released theatrically on April 24, 2026, the film marked a notable shift in Medha's filmography, allowing her to move from the realism of 12th Fail to a lighter, more romantic space.

With a growing body of work and a willingness to explore different genres, Medha Shankr appears to be embracing both personal and professional growth as she looks ahead to the next phase of her career.

## Bhumi Pednekar: "social media followers don't convert into ticket sales"

**Mumbai** : Actor Bhumi Pednekar has weighed in on the growing trend of follower-driven casting in the entertainment industry, arguing that while social media influence can create visibility, it cannot replace acting talent or guarantee box-office success. Speaking during an NDTV panel discussion, the actress shared her perspective on how the industry has evolved in the age of digital popularity and why talent remains the most important factor for long-term survival in cinema.

Reflecting on her own journey in the film industry, Bhumi said she considers herself fortunate to have made her debut before social media metrics became a major factor in casting decisions. She suggested that actors who do not fit conventional popularity benchmarks might find it harder to break into the industry today if follower counts become a dominant consideration.

"I feel I am very lucky that I did not debut in that era, otherwise I don't feel an actor like me would have reached this far," she said, highlighting the challenges that aspiring performers may face in an increasingly digital-first entertainment ecosystem.

The actress observed that social media has significantly altered traditional notions of stardom. According to her, online popularity can help create a dedicated audience base, but there is a difference between having followers and persuading people to buy tickets and support a film in theatres. "Because now, it's all dependent on social media followers. An increased number of social media followers gives you a niche, but a niche does not convert to ticket sales," she remarked. Her comments reflect an ongoing debate within the film industry about the relationship between online influence and commercial success. At the same time, Bhumi was careful to clarify that her remarks were not intended as criticism of digital creators or influencers who have built large audiences through their own efforts and creativity. She acknowledged the hard work required to establish a substantial online pres-

ence. "This is not to discredit anybody. People have built their followers on sheer efforts. I'm not trying to discredit anybody," she said, emphasizing that her concerns relate to casting decisions rather than the legitimacy of content creation as a profession.

The actress maintained that acting remains a specialized craft that demands dedication, skill and continuous growth. While popularity may open doors, she argued that only genuine acting ability can sustain a long-term career in the highly competitive entertainment industry.

"All I'm trying to say is that acting is a serious profession, and you need to be an actor to survive it," she stated, underscoring her belief that performance skills should remain central to casting and filmmaking decisions. Discussing recent industry trends, Bhumi suggested that the period during which follower-based casting gained momentum may now be giving way to a more balanced approach. According to her, there is a growing realization among filmmakers and producers that digital popularity does not necessarily translate into acting credibility or audience acceptance on screen.



## Raj Kapoor: The Showman who turned dreams into cinema and cinema into immortality

**Mumbai** : Thirty-eight years after his passing, the legacy of Raj Kapoor continues to shine brightly across the landscape of Indian cinema. Revered as one of the most influential figures in the history of filmmaking, Raj Kapoor remains an enduring symbol of creativity, humanism and cinematic excellence.

Though he passed away on June 2, 1988, his films, songs and storytelling continue to resonate with audiences across generations, ensuring that his presence remains very much alive in the cultural consciousness of India and beyond.

Born on December

14, 1924, Raj Kapoor emerged during a transformative period in Indian history and went on to become one of the defining voices of post-Independence Indian cinema.

More than just an actor or director, he was a visionary who understood the power of cinema as a medium for social reflection, emotional connection and national identity. His work captured the aspirations, struggles and dreams of ordinary Indians, making him one of the most beloved cultural icons of the twentieth century.

Raj Kapoor earned the title of the "Greatest Showman" of Indian cinema through his unique ability to combine

entertainment with meaningful storytelling.

His films were rich in emotion, social commentary and visual grandeur, appealing to both the masses and critics.

He possessed a rare talent for creating stories that were deeply rooted in Indian realities while carrying universal themes that connected with audiences around the world.

One of Kapoor's most memorable contributions to cinema was the creation of his iconic tramp-like character, inspired in part by the screen persona of Charlie Chaplin. Dressed in oversized shoes, a worn-out coat and a tattered hat, the character represented the common man facing poverty, inequality and hardship with optimism and dignity.

Through films such as Awaara and Shree 420, Kapoor transformed this figure into a symbol of resilience and hope.

As an actor, Raj Kapoor brought warmth, innocence and emotional depth to his performances. His screen presence was magnetic, allowing audiences to connect instantly with his characters. Whether portraying a dreamer, a lover, a struggler or a social rebel, he infused every role with sincerity and authenticity that made his performances timeless.

His achievements as a filmmaker were equally extraordinary. Through

the banner of RK Films, he created some of the most celebrated works in Indian cinematic history. His directorial ventures demonstrated a remarkable understanding of storytelling, visual composition and emotional impact, setting new standards for filmmaking in the country.

Raj Kapoor's directorial journey began with Aag, a bold and experimental film that showcased his creative ambitions.

He followed it with the immensely successful Barsaat, which established him as a major force in the industry and laid the foundation for a remarkable filmmaking career spanning four decades.

Over the years, he delivered a series of classics that left an indelible mark on Indian cinema. Films such as Awaara, Shree 420, Sangam, Mera Naam Joker, Bobby, Satyam Shivam Sundaram and Ram Teri Ganga Maili explored themes of love, morality, social justice, identity and human relationships while entertaining millions of viewers.

Music played a central role in Raj Kapoor's cinematic universe. He possessed an extraordinary ability to integrate songs into storytelling, ensuring that music became an emotional extension of the narrative. His collaborations with legendary composers Shankar and Jaikishan, collectively known as Shankar-Jaikis-

han, produced some of the most memorable soundtracks in Indian film history.

Equally important were his associations with celebrated lyricists such as Shailendra and Hasrat Jaipuri. Together, they created songs that transcended generations and became deeply embedded in the cultural fabric of India. Even decades later, melodies from Raj Kapoor's films continue to be cherished and sung across the country.

Raj Kapoor's influence extended far beyond India's borders. At a time when international exposure for Indian cinema was limited, his films found immense popularity in countries such as Russia, China and several nations across the Middle East.

His portrayal of universal human emotions enabled audiences from different cultures and backgrounds to connect with his stories.

Perhaps the defining quality of Raj Kapoor's cinema was its compassion. His films consistently highlighted the struggles of ordinary people while celebrating their resilience and humanity. He addressed social inequalities, challenged prejudices and explored complex moral dilemmas, all while maintaining an optimistic belief in the goodness of people and the possibility of a better future.

Recognition for his immense

contribution to Indian cinema came in the form of numerous honours and accolades. In 1971, he was awarded the Padma Bhushan, one of India's highest civilian honours, in recognition of his outstanding service to the arts. The award acknowledged his profound influence on Indian culture and cinema.

In 1987, a year before his death, Raj Kapoor received the prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke Award, the highest recognition in Indian cinema. The emotional ceremony remains one of the most memorable moments in the history of Indian film awards, as the veteran filmmaker was honoured for a lifetime dedicated to enriching the cinematic arts.

Today, on his death anniversary, Raj Kapoor's legacy continues to inspire filmmakers, actors, writers and audiences across the world. His films remain relevant, his songs continue to evoke nostalgia and his storytelling serves as a benchmark for cinematic excellence. More than three decades after his passing, Raj Kapoor endures not merely as a legendary filmmaker but as a timeless symbol of Indian cinema's heart, soul and imagination.

His message of hope, humanity and perseverance continues to resonate, ensuring that the showman of Indian cinema will never be forgotten.



# SPORTS

# Aryan Age | 07

## In my phone notes, I mentioned that I wanted to score 700 runs: Vaibhav Sooryavanshi

**New Delhi:** Rajasthan Royals youngster Vaibhav Sooryavanshi revealed that scoring 700 runs in IPL 2026 was a goal he had set for himself even before the tournament began.

The 15-year-old, who enjoyed a record-breaking season, said he had written the target down in his phone notes and tracked his progress after every match.

Although Royal Challengers Bengaluru successfully defended their title with a five-wicket win over Gujarat Titans in the final, Sooryavanshi emerged as one of the biggest stories of the season after dominating the individual awards.

The teenager finished as the tournament's highest run-scorer with 776 runs and won the Orange Cap.

He was also named the Most Valuable Player and Emerging Player of the Season. In addition, he picked up the Super Striker award for his strike rate of 237.31 and the Super Sixes award after smashing a record 72 sixes during the campaign.

Speaking in a video shared by the IPL on social media, the 15-year-old Bihar lad explained how



he had planned his season in advance.

"Actually, in my phone notes, I mentioned that I wanted to score 700 runs in the IPL. I still have it in my phone. After every match, I was mentioning the score below and the team I was playing against. That was my personal goal, and I achieved it," he said. The young batter said winning the Orange Cap was something

he had often imagined while watching IPL matches on television.

"It feels good when I watch matches on TV. I used to see that a player got an Orange Cap. Even I used to think that at least I should touch it and see how it is. But God has done all this for me.

He has given me a lot of blessings, and I am very grateful for this. It is a proud moment for me personally and for my family," Sooryavanshi said.

Despite his success, the Royals batter said his focus remains on helping the franchise go one step further next season.

"This year we made a very good comeback. Hopefully, next year we will play the final and win it. Personally, I am very happy that I achieved a lot and learned a lot. I will try to carry this forward next year," he added.

Sooryavanshi also praised the IPL for giving young and domestic players a platform to showcase their abilities.

"I would like to thank the entire BCCI. The IPL is the number one league in the world of cricket without any doubt. It is a very good platform for youngsters and domestic players to show their talent," he said.

Sharing his long-term ambitions in the game, the teenager said, "I want to play in the IPL for as long as possible. I want to represent India for a long time. I want to achieve a lot for myself and my family. Whether it is domestic cricket, IPL or India, I want to contribute to every team that I play for."

## Lakshya Sen suffers first-round exit in Indonesia Open

**Jakarta:** Lakshya Sen

crashed out of the Indonesia Open 2026 men's singles badminton event after losing his first-round match here on Tuesday, while PV Sindhu progressed after winning a tricky opener. Lakshya Sen, 10th in the badminton rankings and reigning Commonwealth Games champion, struggled to match the pace of his younger opponent Alwi Farhan of Indonesia, losing 21-19, 21-16 in 48 minutes. The 24-year-old Indian badminton player recovered from a 7-3 deficit in the opening game to edge ahead 19-18 before the 21-year-old Indonesian reeled off three straight points to take the opener. The second game also remained closely contested at 17-16 until Farhan closed out the match with four consecutive points. This was Lakshya Sen's second defeat against Farhan in as many meetings. The two shuttlers also met in the semi-finals of the Macau Open last year, which Sen

lost in straight games.

Meanwhile, Sindhu, who returned to the top 10 for the first time since October 2023 this week, beat Thailand's world No. 19 Busanan Ongbamrunphan 25-23,

and won the Singapore Open last week, where she beat world No. 6 Putri Kusuma Wardani of Indonesia in the first round. However, her campaign in Singapore ended after she lost to Paris 2024



21-16 in the first round of the BWF Super 1000 tournament, according to olympics.com. With the win, Sindhu extended her dominant head-to-head record over Busanan to 21-1 but was pushed hard throughout the opening game before pulling away in the second to seal victory in 51 minutes. The Indian ace arrived in Jakarta on the back of an encouraging quarter-fi-

nal run at the Singapore Open last week, where she beat world No. 6 Putri Kusuma Wardani of Indonesia in the first round. However, her campaign in Singapore ended after she lost to Paris 2024

## Ujjain Falcons hand captaincy to Chanchal Rathore for MPL T20 Scindia Cup

**Ujjain (Madhya Pradesh):** New franchise Ujjain Falcons have announced experienced batter Chanchal Rathore as their captain for the upcoming edition of the Madhya Pradesh League (MPL) T20 Scindia Cup. The franchise has also appointed promising all-rounder Madhav Tiwari as vice-captain as it prepares for its debut season in the tournament.

The leadership announcement comes ahead of what promises to be an exciting season of the Madhya Pradesh League, which has undergone significant expansion with the inclusion of new teams. Ujjain Falcons will be looking to make an immediate impact and establish themselves as a competitive force in the state-level T20 competition.

Expressing his delight at being entrusted with the captaincy, Chanchal Rathore described the appointment as a proud moment in his cricketing career. He thanked the franchise management for showing faith in his leader-

ship abilities and expressed confidence in the squad assembled for the tournament.

"It is a proud moment for me to lead Ujjain Falcons. We have a strong and well-balanced squad with a good mix of experience and young talent," Chanchal said while sharing his thoughts on the responsibility.

The newly appointed captain also highlighted the growing importance of the Madhya Pradesh League as a platform for emerging cricketers. According to him, the competition has evolved into an excellent stage for players to showcase their talent and attract attention from higher levels of cricket.

"The MPL has become a great platform for players to showcase their skills and for young cricketers to make a name for themselves. We are looking forward to the challenge and hope to have a successful season," he added.

Vice-captain Madhav Tiwari also expressed his enthusiasm about representing the Falcons in their inaugural campaign. The young crick-

eter said the team has been preparing diligently and is eager to perform strongly in the tournament.

"I am very happy to be part of Ujjain Falcons. We have a talented squad and the team has been preparing well for the tournament," Madhav said, emphasizing the positive atmosphere within the camp.

He further stated that the team's primary objective would be to play quality cricket and provide supporters with memorable performances throughout the competition. The Falcons management is banking on a blend of youthful energy and experienced leadership to deliver results.

"Our aim is to play good cricket and give our fans plenty of reasons to cheer. We will do our best to make a strong impact in our first season," the vice-captain added.

Ujjain Falcons are among the newest entrants in the Madhya Pradesh League and will begin their campaign against Gwalior Cheetahs on June 3.

## Dutch legend Taekema joins Indian women's hockey team for specialised dragflick camp

**New Delhi:** Legendary Dutch dragflicker Taekema has joined the senior Indian women's hockey team for a specialised training camp focused on dragflicking and penalty-corner execution during the squad's tour of Australia and New Zealand from May 26 to June 21.

Taekema has been brought in to sharpen the skills of India's dragflickers ahead of the FIH Women's Nations Cup in New Zealand, scheduled from June 15 to 21. The camp is being conducted under the guidance of chief coach Sjoerd Marijne. India's leading dragflickers, including Deepika, Lalthantluangi and Annu, are undergoing focused sessions aimed at improving penalty-corner conversion rates and strengthening the team's attacking threat ahead of a crucial international season.

Widely regarded as one of the greatest dragflickers in the history of the sport, Taekema enjoyed a

distinguished international career with the Netherlands. He represented his country at major events including the Olympic Games and Hockey World Cups, earning more than 200 caps and scoring 221 international goals.

As part of their preparations for the Nations Cup, India played a four-match friendly series against Australia at Perth Hockey Stadium from May 26 to 30. Both teams won two matches each, with the series ending 2-2.

The Indian squad will arrive in New Zealand on June 3, where it will continue preparations and play practice matches before the start of the Nations Cup.

"We know that penalty corners are crucial in modern hockey and having a coach with Taekema's experience will be extremely valuable for us. Besides dragflicking, his role will also be much broader in helping improve our defensive structures. He has developed himself wider and we



are looking to utilise his full potential with the team," Marijne said.

"I have coached him, so I know him very well and we are on the same page in terms of our approach. His experience as a former top-level player will also be very important for the team. We already have good dragflickers in the squad and also a strong striking option in Navneet Kaur. It is crucial for us to get more out of our penalty-corner opportunities, and this camp will definitely help us

improve in that area," Marijne added. Salima to lead team in Nation's Cup

Seasoned midfielder Salima Tete will continue to lead the side for the Nation's Cup. Savita and Bichu Devi Kharibam will provide the team with reliable and experienced options for goalkeeping. In defence, Sushila Chaudhary, Nikki Pradhan and Jyoti bring considerable international experience to the backline. They will be joined by Lalthantluangi and

Shilpi Dabas, both of whom earned their maiden senior call-ups during the recently concluded tour of Australia and will be eager to continue their development at this level.

The midfield will be marshalled by Salima, who will draw on the expertise of Neha, Sunelita Topo and Sakshi Rana around her. They will be joined by Deepika Soreng, who also impressed during the friendly series in Australia.

Navneet Kaur will spearhead the attack and is expected to continue the fine goalscoring form she has shown in recent international outings. She will be supported up front by Deepika, Rutuja Dadaso Pisal, Annu and Ishika besides experienced attacking midfielders Lalremsiam and Sonam.

India has been placed in Pool A of the tournament alongside Japan, United States and Uruguay, with Pool B comprising host New Zealand, Chile, Korea and France.

## Riquelme names Raul as sporting director if elected Real Madrid president

**Madrid:** The presidential election at Real Madrid took another turn Tuesday after challenger Enrique Riquelme announced former club great Raul Gonzalez would become director of sport if he wins Sunday's vote.

Raul, 48, is regarded as one of Real Madrid's greatest players after scoring 323 goals in 741 appearances for the club.

He also coached reserve side Real Madrid Castilla before leaving in the summer of 2025 after being

overlooked for the first-team job, which went to Xabi Alonso.

"If I win the election, Raul Gonzalez Blanco will be Real Madrid's director of sport," Riquelme said in an interview with Spanish radio station Cadena COPE early Tuesday.

Current president Florentino Perez, who is seeking another term in Sunday's election, has not appointed a sporting director since returning to power in 2009, according to Xinhua.



"There has to be a professional culture that will never harm Real Madrid,"

Riquelme said, adding he had "explained the project" to Raul and that "the more I

know him, the more certain I am that he will always look out for Real Madrid."

Perez has yet to announce any names linked to his campaign, although reports in Spain have heavily linked Jose Mourinho with a return as coach if Perez retains the presidency. Mourinho was also the coach who brought Raul's playing career at the club to an end in 2010. Riquelme has promised to reveal future transfer targets and the identity of his preferred coach in the coming days.

## England great Andrew Flintoff returns to Big Bash as new Thunder coach

**Sydney:** Legendary England all-rounder and Big Bash icon Andrew Flintoff has been unveiled as Sydney Thunder's new men's head coach.

Having last represented Brisbane Heat more than a decade ago in BBL04, the 48-year-old has signed a two-year contract with the Thunder to return to the Australian competition for his first coaching role outside the UK.

Flintoff replaces Trevor Bayliss, whom the club parted ways with in February after five seasons at the helm. The Thunder managed just two wins in BBL15 and finished last for the second time in three seasons.

The former England captain edged out the likes of past Thunder players Shane Watson and Dan Christian, who had previously been linked with the vacant coaching position prior to the club announcing Flintoff as the successful candidate on Tuesday evening.

In his first interview following his appointment, Flintoff said he had big shoes to fill but was confident he could make a significant contribution to the Thunder.

"When the opportunity to coach Sydney Thunder arose, obviously I was excited," he said. "You grow up seeing Sydney on the TV ... not thinking I'd ever get the opportunity to go there, never mind the opportunity to head coach Sydney Thunder in the Big Bash." One of my aims over the time with Sydney Thunder is that every player looks back thinking, 'that's the best part of the year, that's a team that I want to play for'.

"I'm excited to come



over, get involved and coach this team. I'm here to do the best job I possibly can for the team and everybody that comes out and supports us."

Since finishing a 20-year professional playing career at Brisbane in 2015, Flintoff coached in England's franchise competition The Hundred, leading Northern Superchargers for two seasons across 2024 and 2025, which included a playoffs appearance last year.

Flintoff is currently in charge of the nation's A team, England Lions, coaching the side during two tours of Australia since starting in the role in October 2024.

He's also worked with the country's senior white-ball squads in 2023, when Australian Matthew Mott was at the helm of their limited-overs teams.

Thunder General Manager Trent Copeland said he was thrilled to have a "global icon" joining the BBL05 champions. "This is a huge day in the history of Sydney Thunder, and the BBL more broadly," Copeland said. "Fred (Flintoff) brings something truly unique to Sydney Thunder; he is a modern leader who under-

stands how to build high-performance environments, connect with players as people, and

set standards that last. His passion for the game, coaching itself and knowledge of Australian cricket and our Thunder program stood out during the process.

"The goal here isn't just about the now, it's about a step-change to establishing a culture and identity that will set us up for sustained success for years to come."

First selected as a 20-year-old in 1998, Flintoff represented England in 227 international matches across the three formats, captaining the country in both Test and one-day international cricket.

Named as the player of the series in the famous 2005 Ashes, 'Freddie' scored 3,845 runs and took 226 wickets in the Test format to go down as one of England's greatest all-rounders. Plagued by injury in the latter stages of his career, Flintoff left Test cricket in 2009 and retired from all forms of the game in 2010, before making a brief comeback for his English county side Lancashire in the domestic T20 Blast competition during 2014.

## India's Vijay Shankar set for LPL debut; Avishka Fernando goes No. 1 in season 6 draft

**Colombo:** India all-rounder Vijay Shankar is set to become the lone Indian player in the Lanka Premier League (LPL) 2026 after being signed by Kandy Royals, while Sri Lanka international Avishka Fernando emerged as the No. 1 overall pick in the Season 6 Draft as franchises completed their squads for the highly anticipated sixth edition of the tournament.

The draft, held ahead of the July 17-August 8 competition, saw all five franchises strengthen their squads with a mix of established international stars, emerging overseas talent and leading Sri Lankan cricketers, setting the stage for one of the most competitive seasons in the league's history.

Holding the first overall selection in the LPL 2026 Draft, defending champions SC Jaffna Kings opened proceedings by selecting Sri Lanka international Avishka Fernando as the No. 1 pick.

The Kings further strengthened

their squad with the additions of experienced all-rounder David Wiese, Afghanistan opener Ibrahim Zadran and Nepal leg-spinner Sandeep Lamichhane, who join marquee signings Dunit Wellalage and Bhanuka Rajapaksa as the franchise looks to defend its title and extend its successful run in the competition.

One of the biggest talking points for Indian cricket fans will be the participation of Vijay Shankar, who represented India at the 2019 ICC Cricket World Cup. The experienced all-rounder joins a formidable Kandy Royals squad featuring Moeen Ali, Wanindu Hasaranga and Angelo Mathews.

The Royals further bolstered their line-up through the draft with the additions of Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Daniel Sams, Kusal Perera and Nuwan Thushara.

Elsewhere, Colombo Kaps bolstered their line-up with the international recruit Mujeeb Ur Rahman to complement icon players Jimmy

Neesham and Kusal Mendis. and Kamindu Mendis.

Dambulla Sixers added proven match-winners Maheesh Theekshana and Fazalhaq Farooqi to their ranks alongside marquee signings Dinesh Chandimal and Dushmantha Chameera, while Galle Gallants strengthened their squad with Sri Lanka captain Charith Asalanka and South African batter Rassie van der Dussen, who join marquee signings Dasun Shanaka and Eshan Malinga ahead of the new season.

The player draft generated significant international interest, with more than 650 overseas cricketers from 21 countries registering for selection, underlining the growing global appeal of the Lanka Premier League and its emergence as one of the region's leading T20 competitions.

Samantha Dodanwela, Tournament Director of the Lanka Premier League, said, "The quality of players secured by franchises through the

draft reflects the continued growth and competitiveness of the Lanka Premier League. The squads feature an exciting blend of international experience, emerging overseas talent and some of Sri Lanka's finest cricketers. The balance across all five teams promises a highly competitive tournament and an exciting experience for fans."

Anil Mohan Sankhdhar, Founder and CEO of IPG Group, the official rights holder of the LPL, said, "The response to this year's player draft has been outstanding and highlights the growing reputation of the Lanka Premier League among players around the world."

"With registrations from 21 countries and the addition of several accomplished international cricketers alongside Sri Lanka's leading players, we are seeing the league continue to strengthen

its position as one of the premier T20 competitions in the region," Sankhdhar said.

BSE Sensex		Nifty 50		Nifty 500		Nifty Next 50		Nifty 100		Nifty Bank		Nifty Midcap 100	
Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change
74,649.84	0.52%	23,483.55	0.43%	22,521.10	0.37%	70,115.80	0.28%	24,491.30	0.4%	53,714.65	0.13%	60,942.00	0.19%
Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open
74,267.34	73,945.20	23,382.60	23,229.15	22,437.95	22,302.05	69,921.85	69,481.20	24,393.05	24,234.15	53,643.10	53,265.10	60,827.95	60,479.35
High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
74,862.19	73,815.12	23,556.95	23,229.15	22,563.25	22,563.25	70,175.50	69,158.80	24,555.60	24,217.40	53,933.55	53,121.85	61,018.55	60,170.35

## Top Gainers

Company	Current	% Gain
TCS	2,446.90	6.51
Infosys	1,270.80	5.68
HCL Tech	1,243.50	4.05
Adani Enterpris	2,968.10	2.02
Tech Mahindra	1,571.40	1.83

## Top Losers

Company	Current	% Loss
NTPC	367.40	-2.98
Axis Bank	1,251.10	-1.94
Power Grid Corp	282.15	-1.40
Dr Reddys Labs	1,274.00	-1.27
HDFC Life	579.90	-1.13

## Commodities

Commodity	Price	Change (%)
Gold Jun 05	155,850.00	1,598.00 1.04
Silver Jul 03	270,250.00	4,087.00 1.54
Crudeoil Jun 18	8,692.00	-44.00 -0.50
Naturalgas Jun 25	304.40	1.70 0.56

## Essar-backed Mesabi Metallics sells half of royalty interest in \$265 mn deal to support expansion of Minnesota Iron Ore Project

**Mumbai:** Mesabi Metallics Company LLC, backed by the Essar Group, has agreed to monetise 50 per cent of its royalty interest through a transaction with The Metals Royalty Company Inc (TMCR) valued at \$265 million.

The deal implies a valuation of more than \$500 million for Mesabi Metallics' royalty platform and marks another significant milestone for the Minnesota-based iron ore development project. Under the agreement, TMCR will acquire a 50 per cent royalty interest in two equal tranches worth \$132.5 million each. The first tranche was completed on June 1, 2026, while the second is expected to close within the next 60 days. Company officials said that the majority of the proceeds will be utilised to support the future growth and development of Mesabi Metallics. The transaction highlights the scale and strategic significance of Mesabi Metallics' Direct Reduction (DR)-grade iron ore operation in Minnesota, which includes a mine, beneficiation plant and pellet facility. The project is expected to com-

mence production in the third quarter of 2026 and is positioned to play an important role in strengthening North America's domestic supply of high-grade iron ore pellets. Upon commencement of operations, Mesabi Metallics is expected to become one of the few major domestic producers of merchant DR-grade iron ore pellets in North America. These pellets serve as a critical raw material for electric arc furnace steelmaking. At present, the United States depends heavily on imports from Brazil and other countries to meet demand for such products. The company's output is expected to enhance domestic manufacturing competitiveness while supporting key sectors including infrastructure, automotive production, shipbuilding, defence and energy. Mesabi Metallics is also expected to rank among the world's lowest-cost iron ore producers at start-up. The anticipated cost advantage stems from the quality and scale of its ore reserves, modern processing facilities and its strategic location in the American Midwest.

## Stock Markets end in green amid easing crude prices

**Mumbai:** The Indian Stock Markets on Tuesday pared early losses and staged a sharp recovery. The markets were in green due to various reasons, including value buying and easing crude prices.

At close, Sensex was 382.50 points or 0.52 per cent higher at 74,649.84, while Nifty ended 100.95 points or 0.43 per cent higher at 23,483.55. About 2,222 shares advanced, 1,803 shares declined, and 165 shares were unchanged.

Benchmark Sensex surged 800 points from the day's low, and Nifty reclaimed the 23,450-mark.

The volatility index, India VIX, eased 7 per cent to 15.36, which indicates buyers are finding comfort to buy at these levels.

Brent crude prices fell marginally by 1.6 per cent to trade at USD 93.47.



The top contributors were Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), HDFC Bank, and HCL Technologies.

On Nifty, TCS, Infosys, HCL Technologies, Adani Enterprises, and Wipro were among the top gainers, while

NTPC led the losers with a 3 per cent decline, and Axis Bank, Power Grid, HDFC Life, Dr Reddy's Labs, and Bajaj Auto were among other stocks that closed 1-1.7 per cent lower. Investor focus has shifted to key macro factors, including monsoon

progress, inflation trends, RBI policy, and liquidity conditions. Shares of ICICI Bank, Reliance Industries, and Bharti Airtel came off lows. Rupee traded weaker near 95.26, down around 0.35 per cent, due to the sharp rise in crude oil prices.

## Fuel price hikes could add up to 48 bps to inflation, raise costs across economy: Report

**New Delhi:** Rising petrol and diesel prices are likely to exert significant inflationary pressure on the Indian economy, with higher transportation and manufacturing costs expected to push up both food and core inflation in the coming months, according to a report by CRISIL.

The report noted that retail petrol and diesel prices have increased by around Rs 7.5 per litre since May 15, and further hikes remain possible if global crude oil prices stay elevated. With oil marketing companies gradually reducing their under-recoveries, cumulative fuel price increases could approach Rs 10 per litre in the near term.

According to CRISIL's estimates, a Rs 7.5-per-litre increase in fuel prices could directly add around 36 basis points (bps) to Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation, while a Rs 10-per-litre increase could push the impact to nearly 48 bps.

The report highlighted that transport costs are a key transmission channel through which fuel inflation spreads across the economy. Freight transport accounts for 54 per cent of India's logistics costs, while road transport carries nearly 71 per cent of the country's freight movement. Fuel constitutes about 42 per cent of road transportation costs,



making the sector particularly vulnerable to rising fuel prices.

Food inflation is expected to face upward pressure as higher transportation costs coincide with a low base effect. Products such as dairy items, tea, coffee, fruits, pulses, spices, eggs, meat, and fish are likely to witness stronger price pass-through due to their higher transport intensity.

Core inflation could also accelerate as transport-intensive sectors such as clothing, electronics, wood products, and housing-related construction materials, including cement and ceramics, face rising logistics expenses. Manufacturing industries reliant on mining products and chemicals may experience additional input cost pressures, the report said.

CRISIL observed that manufacturers may increasingly pass on higher costs to consumers to safeguard profit margins. In some cases, companies could resort to

"shrinkflation" by reducing product quantities while maintaining existing prices.

The report, however, noted that the GST rationalisation announced in September 2025, which reduced tax rates on several mass-consumption products including electronics, automobiles, clothing, fast-moving consumer goods, and processed foods, could provide a partial offset to inflationary pressures stemming from higher energy costs. Despite the emerging risks, CRISIL expects CPI inflation to remain below the Reserve Bank of India's upper tolerance limit of 6 per cent, although it may move higher from current levels. The report said the Reserve Bank of India is likely to look through the immediate supply-side impact of fuel prices while closely monitoring the possibility of broader inflation spillovers and the effects of a potentially below-normal monsoon and evolving El Niño conditions on food prices.

## South Korea's stock market overtakes India as world's sixth-largest

**New Delhi:** After Taiwan, South Korea's stock market has now overtaken India's to become the world's sixth-largest. The surge was driven by a relentless surge in chip heavyweights powering the global artificial intelligence build-out.

According to the data, the total market capitalisation of Korea-listed companies has soared 86 per cent this year to \$5 trillion. In contrast, India's market capitalisation has declined to \$4.8 trillion.

In the South Korean Market, Samsung Electronics Co. and SK Hynix Inc., newly minted members

of the \$1 trillion valuation club, have led the surge in Korean equities. Apart from AI-related gains, the Korean stock market has also benefited from President Lee Jae Myung's push for corporate reforms. Earlier, Taiwan's stock market overtook India's in terms of valuation to become the fifth-largest in the world.

The rally was primarily driven by the world's largest chipmaker, Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC).

Taiwan's market capitalisation climbed to \$4.95 trillion while India's value has dropped to \$4.92

trillion. Taiwan's stock market is now behind only the US, mainland China, Japan, and Hong Kong.

The surge reflects strong investor confidence in Taiwan's semiconductor ecosystem.

TSMC now accounts for about 42 per cent of the benchmark index, representing intense market concentration. TSMC's shares have rallied 49 per cent this year as it has benefited from the Artificial Intelligence (AI) trade, in which its semiconductor companies have a dominant market position. The surge in the market value highlights intense optimism in AI. This is triggering a global

rally in tech shares, disproportionately benefiting manufacturing hubs such as Taiwan and South Korea.

Taiwan has also recently come up with new regulations which are favouring TSMC. Taiwan's financial regulator has increased the limit that domestic funds can invest in a single stock. Funds that invest solely in Taiwanese stocks can hold up to 25 per cent of their net assets in any listed company whose weighting exceeds 10 per cent in the Taiwan Stock Exchange, up from a previous limit of 10 per cent, the new regulation said.

## Mother Dairy unveils India's first naturally degradable milk pouch

**New Delhi:** Mother Dairy on Tuesday introduced an innovative milk pouch that is naturally degradable in soil as part of its commitment towards environment and sustainability.

Mother Dairy, one of the leading fresh milk suppliers in India, sells around 55 lakh litre of milk per day across many states.

At a press conference here, Mother Dairy "unveiled India's FIRST natu-

rally degradable milk pouch in soil" that would leave no trace of plastics in the environment.

To begin with, the company will use this new degradable milk pouch in its cow milk variant sold across Delhi-NCR from June 5, the World Environment Day.

Mother Dairy is a wholly-owned subsidiary of National Dairy Development Board (NDDB). Mother Dairy said its new milk



pouch uses a first-of-its-kind degradable packaging inno-

vation that enables the material to transform into bio-

available wax, which is naturally broken down by microbes present in the soil to turn it into natural elements.

"The newly introduced packaging is designed to naturally degrade in soil within a few years rather than centuries, and importantly, this transition is being undertaken without any impact on consumer milk prices," Meenesh Shah, Chairman of NDDB, said.

## Vizhinjam Port creates history, crosses 1.30 lakh TEUs in single month

**Thiruvananthapuram:** The deep-water transshipment hub at Vizhinjam International Seaport has continued its impressive growth journey by achieving its highest-ever monthly container throughput since the commencement of operations. The latest milestone highlights the port's rapidly expanding role in India's maritime sector and reinforces its emergence as a key gateway for international shipping and trade.

In May 2026, the port handled an unprecedented 1,30,863 Twenty-foot Equivalent Units (TEUs), marking the first time that monthly throughput crossed the 1.30 lakh TEU threshold. The achievement reflects a sustained increase in cargo volumes and growing acceptance of the port among major global shipping operators.

The latest performance surpassed the previous monthly record of 1.23 lakh

TEUs achieved in January 2026. The steady rise in container traffic over the past several months indicates strong momentum in port operations and growing confidence among international shipping lines in Vizhinjam's capabilities.

Officials said the achievement is a significant indicator of the port's increasing importance in regional and global maritime trade. Located strategically along one of the world's busiest east-west shipping corridors, Vizhinjam offers a natural advantage for transshipment activities and cargo movement.

The port handled a total of 55 vessels during May 2026, demonstrating its ability to efficiently manage a high volume of maritime traffic. Despite the increase in vessel arrivals and cargo movement, operational efficiency remained strong throughout the month.

A notable highlight of

the port's performance was the Gross Crane Ratio, which exceeded 30 moves per hour. This productivity



benchmark reflects the efficiency of cargo-handling operations and the capability of the port's advanced equipment to ensure quick loading and unloading of containers.

Industry experts regard crane productivity as a critical indicator of port performance because it directly influences vessel turnaround times. Faster turnaround allows shipping lines to reduce operational costs and maintain schedules, making a port

more attractive for global maritime operators.

The latest achievement further strengthens Vizhin-

jam's reputation as one of India's most modern and technologically advanced ports.

The facility has been equipped with state-of-the-art infrastructure and cargo-handling systems designed to meet the demands of the world's largest container vessels.

Since the start of commercial operations, the port has witnessed remarkable growth in both vessel calls

and container throughput. Between July 11, 2024, and May 31, 2026, Vizhinjam handled a cumulative 961 vessels, demonstrating its increasing significance in international shipping networks.

During the same period, the port processed a total of 20,18,205 TEUs, crossing the two-million-container milestone in less than two years of commercial operations. This achievement underscores the rapid pace at which the port has established itself as a major transshipment hub.

The growth in cargo volumes has been driven by rising vessel calls from leading international shipping companies, many of which are increasingly preferring Vizhinjam as a preferred transshipment destination. The port's strategic location enables ships to access the facility with minimal deviation from major global shipping routes.

## Govt announces 6 per cent offer for sale in NHPC, sets floor price Rs 71 per share

**New Delhi:** The Government of India on Monday announced an Offer for Sale (OFS) in hydropower major NHPC Ltd as part of its ongoing disinvestment and public asset monetisation programme. The offer includes a base sale of 3 per cent of the government's equity holding in the company, with an additional 3 per cent Green Shoe Option that may be exercised in the event of strong investor demand.

The announcement was made by the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM), which oversees the government's disinvestment initiatives. The details were shared through a post on the social media platform X by the department's secretary.

According to the announcement, the government has fixed the floor price for the OFS at Rs 71 per share. Investors will be able to bid for shares at or above this price during the offer period. The floor price is generally set after considering prevailing market conditions

and the stock's trading performance.

The offer will open for non-retail investors on June 2, 2026, while retail investors will be able to participate on June 3, 2026. This staggered approach is in line with the standard OFS mechanism followed in Indian capital markets, allowing institutional investors and retail participants to place their bids separately.

The government currently holds a majority stake in NHPC, and the proposed share sale is expected to help generate significant revenue for the exchequer. The disinvestment exercise is also aimed at improving public participation in the company while maintaining government control.

The inclusion of a Green Shoe Option provides flexibility to the government to sell an additional 3 per cent stake if investor demand exceeds expectations. Such options are commonly used in large share sales to accommodate excess subscriptions without requiring a separate

offering process.

Market analysts believe the OFS could attract considerable interest from institutional investors, mutual funds, insurance companies and retail investors, given NHPC's position as one of India's leading hydropower generation companies and its strategic role in the country's renewable energy sector.

NHPC has established itself as a key player in India's power sector since its incorporation in 1975. The company was created with the objective of promoting and organising the integrated and efficient development of hydroelectric power resources across the country.

Over the decades, NHPC has expanded its operations beyond conventional hydropower generation and has diversified into solar and other renewable energy projects. The company plays an important role in supporting India's clean energy transition and meeting the country's growing electricity demand through sustainable sources.