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SCAN FOR E-PAPER

## India dreaming big, youth aspires to lead in AI, semiconductors: PM Modi

New Delhi (TSIT):

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said India is dreaming big and the country's youth now aspire to propel the nation forward in emerging sectors such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and semiconductors. Addressing the Indian diaspora at an event in The Hague, PM Modi said today's India is going through a phase of unprecedented transformation and has emerged as a global leader in technology, innovation and digitalisation.

He said India recently hosted the world's largest and most successful AI Summit, following the successful hosting of the G20 Summit, adding that such achievements are no longer isolated events but have become the defining character of modern India.

The Prime Minister highlighted that India has carried out the world's largest unique identification programme and also implemented the world's biggest financial inclusion initiative. "The scale and speed of



digitalisation in the country are unprecedented, while India is also operating the world's largest government-funded health insurance scheme," the Prime Minister stated. Referring to India's achievements in science and technology, PM Modi said the country has reached parts of the Moon where no nation had gone before, underlining India's growing

capabilities in space exploration and innovation.

He noted that India is now home to nearly 125 active unicorns and said Indian startups are doing remarkable work in sectors such as AI, defence and space technology. According to the Prime Minister, the country's startup ecosystem has become the third-largest in

Today, India is dreaming big. India's youth aspires to propel the country forward in the fields of AI and semiconductors," the Prime Minister stated. "India is home to the world's third-largest startup ecosystem. Our startups are doing remarkable work in AI, defence and space sector," PM Modi

the world, driven largely by the aspirations and innovation of young Indians.

"Aspirations in India are unlimited, so efforts are also becoming limitless," PM Modi said, stressing that the country's youth are playing a central role in shaping India's future growth story. "India's progress is being powered by a combination of innovation, entrepreneurship, digital infrastructure and inclusive development initiatives, which are transforming the country at an unprecedented pace," the Prime Minister added.

## CM Revanth slams Centre over fuel price hike, calls it betrayal of public trust

Hyderabad (TSIT):

Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy on Saturday strongly criticised the Narendra Modi-led Central Government over the recent increase in petrol and diesel prices, terming the decision "unjustifiable" and a "betrayal of public trust." In a post on X, Revanth said the hike in fuel prices would adversely affect multiple sectors and lead to an increase in the prices of essential commodities, placing a severe burden on common people.

He alleged that the country's economy had weakened significantly due to what he described as the Modi government's ineffective governance and flawed economic policies. "Atmanirbhar Bharat" has remained merely an election slogan rather than a policy that delivered real results," he said, adding that small and medium-scale industries had suffered badly and youth were facing uncertainty over employment opportunities.

He further claimed that the promise of doubling farmers' incomes had remained unfulfilled and alleged that the value



of the rupee had continued to decline over the past decade.

Referring to the Iran-Israel conflict, Revanth accused the Centre of using the war as a pretext for increasing fuel prices, saying the move amounted to "breaking the backs of common people."

Questioning the government's economic claims, he asked how the Centre could justify the price hike while simultaneously asserting that India had become the world's third-largest economy.

The Chief Minister also accused the BJP-led government of reneging on its assurances made ahead of elections in four states and one union Territory that petroleum prices would not be increased.

## Rahul extends Sikkim Statehood Day greetings, praises state's harmony and heritage

New Delhi: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday extended greetings to the people of Sikkim on the occasion of the state's Statehood Day, praising its natural beauty, cultural richness and spirit of harmony. In a post on social media platform X, Gandhi said, "Best wishes to the people of Sikkim on their Statehood Day." Highlighting the state's unique identity and traditions, the Congress leader said, "Blessed with abundant natural



beauty, a rich cultural heritage, and vibrant traditions, Sikkim stands as a shining example of harmony and resilience." He also expressed hope for the state's continued progress and prosperity, adding, "May the state continue to flourish and thrive." The greetings came as Sikkim celebrated the 50th anniversary of its statehood with official ceremonies, cultural programmes and public events across the Himalayan state. Sikkim formally became the 22nd state of India on May 16, 1975, following a historic referendum that led to the abolition of the monarchy and its integration into the Indian Union. Known for its scenic mountain landscapes, biodiversity and multicultural traditions, Sikkim has emerged over the decades as a prominent destination for ecotourism and organic farming. The state also holds strategic importance for India because of its borders with China, Nepal and Bhutan. Political leaders from across the spectrum have extended greetings to the people of the state during the golden jubilee celebrations, highlighting Sikkim's development achievements and its contribution to the country's cultural and environmental heritage.

## Attempts at coercion will not undermine principled positions: UAE rejects Iran's allegations

New Delhi (TSIT):

The United Arab Emirates categorically rejected allegations made by Iran accusing it of "direct involvement in aggression against Tehran" during the period of US strikes on Iran, and strongly condemned what it described as attempts to justify attacks on the UAE and other regional countries, calling them a "flagrant violation of the UN Charter, international law, and the principles of good neighbourliness."

At the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi, UAE Minister of State Khalifa Shaheen Al Marar reaffirmed that such accusations, along with efforts at coercion or misinformation, would have no impact on the country's principled foreign policy. He stressed that the UAE remains firmly committed to safeguarding its sovereignty, national security, and independent decision-making, and retains all rights under international law to respond to any hostile act.

The United Arab Emirates categorically rejected any allegations or threats targeting its



sovereignty, national security, or independent decision-making, asserting that it "reserves its full sovereign, legal, diplomatic, and military rights to respond to any threat, allegation, or hostile act."

He stressed that "attempts at coercion, levelling accusations, or promoting malicious claims will not undermine the UAE's principled positions," reaffirming that the country will continue to safeguard its supreme national interests.

Al Marar noted that since 28 February 2026, the UAE has been subjected to repeated attacks that it attributes to Iran. He said UAE air defences have intercepted "around 3,000 attacks involving ballistic mis-

siles, cruise missiles, and drones" targeting civilian and critical infrastructure, including airports, ports, oil facilities, desalination plants, energy networks, service facilities, and residential areas.

He further stated that despite multiple international and regional condemnations, Iran has continued its actions, referring to United Nations Security Council Resolution 2817 (2026) and a resolution adopted by the United Nations Human Rights Council, which he said reflected a "clear international consensus rejecting these attacks."

The UAE also cited resolutions from the International Maritime Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the International Telecommunication Union, and the Food and Agriculture Organization, stating they collectively condemn attacks on civilian infrastructure and threats to global stability.

On maritime security, the UAE accused Iran of obstructing key sea routes, warning that interference in the Strait of Hormuz constitutes "an act of piracy" and a serious threat to global energy security.

## Gadchiroli declared Naxal-free as police arrest eight Naxals, five surrender

Gadchiroli (TSIT):

In a major breakthrough against Left Wing Extremism, police have declared Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district "Naxal-free" following the arrest of eight Naxals, including all six armed cadres active in the district as per official records, and the surrender of five others from neighbouring Chhattisgarh. The operation, codenamed 'Antim Prahar' (Final Strike), was led by Gadchiroli Superintendent of Police M Ramesh and jointly executed by the district police's Special Campaign Squad and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in the border areas adjoining Telangana and Chhattisgarh.

Police said four armed Naxals were arrested from Telangana, while four others were apprehended from Kumnaar and Naitala villages near the Chhattisgarh border, taking the total number of arrests to eight. The arrested cadres have been identified as Raju alias Mangdu Weko, Jani alias Nagi Yemla, Jayaram Gawde, Mukesh alias Lachhu Awalam, Vijay alias Mangdu Tamo, Rajita alias Shambatti Madavi, Jyoti alias Samita Potavi and Aamti alias



Aayti Idma Podiyam.

Of them, Jayaram Gawde, a resident of Etapalli in Gadchiroli, is the only local resident, while the remaining accused belong to Chhattisgarh. Addressing a press conference, SP Ramesh said that after March 31, only six armed members of Company No. 10 remained active in Gadchiroli district.

One cadre, Moni Madavi, had surrendered in Chhattisgarh, while the remaining five were arrested during the latest operation. "With this, no armed Naxal is currently active in Gadchiroli district," he said, adding that the arrested Naxals carried a combined reward of Rs 64 lakh. Meanwhile, five Naxals also surrendered before the police during the operation. They were identified as Madhu alias Rakesh Welada, Jeevan alias Jaggu Madkam, Rajni alias Durga Dhurwa, Mangli Kursam and Laxmi Punem.

## India's jaggery exports value surge over 106 pc in 10 years

New Delhi (TSIT):

India accounts for more than 70 per cent of global jaggery production and has seen jaggery exports rise 106.5 per cent in value between 2015-16 and 2024-25, the government said



on Saturday. Exports during April-January 2025-26 reached 450.1 metric tonnes, valued at \$384.4 million, up about 16.5 per cent in volume and 15.9 per cent in value on a year-on-year basis, an official statement said. Complementing this growth, government initiatives such as Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana, PM Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme, and One District One Product, along with GI tagging, contributed significantly to promote value addition, strengthen rural enterprises, and enhance export potential.

## Vijay retains home, administration as TN govt finalises portfolio allocation

Chennai (TSIT):

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay has retained key departments including Home, Public Administration and Police, as the newly formed government formally completed the allocation of portfolios among ministers sworn in on May 10, marking an important administrative step in the functioning of the state's new government.

The portfolio allocation was approved by Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar following recommendations made by the Chief Minister. The announcement comes less than a week after Vijay and his Council of Ministers assumed office, with the new administration now moving towards establishing its governance structure and policy priorities. The allocation reflects



the government's emphasis on maintaining direct control over core administrative and law-and-order matters while distributing development and sector-specific responsibilities among cabinet colleagues. As Chief Minister, Vijay will oversee a broad range of departments, including Public Administration, Police, Home

Affairs, Special Programme Implementation, Women Welfare, Youth Welfare, Children's Welfare, welfare of senior citizens and differently abled persons, as well as Municipal Administration and Urban Water Supply. The decision places some of the state's most influential departments

directly under his supervision. N. Anand has been entrusted with Rural Development and Water Resources, including irrigation projects and poverty alleviation programmes.

Aadhav Arjuna will head Public Works and Sports Development, while Dr K.G. Arunraj has been assigned Health, Medical Education and Family Welfare. Senior leader K.A. Sengottaiyan has taken charge of Finance, along with pensions and pension allowances. P. Venkataramanan has been given Food and Civil Supplies, while R. Nirmalkumar will handle Energy Resources and Law, including electricity, courts, prisons and legislative affairs. Rajmohan has been assigned School Education, Tamil Development and Information and Publicity, while Dr T.K. Prabhu will oversee Natural Resources and mining-related sectors.

## NEET CASE: CBI arrests NTA-appointed teacher from Pune for Biology paper leak

New Delhi (TSIT):

In the NEET UG 2026 exam scandal, the CBI has arrested an NTA-appointed senior Botany teacher from Pune, as she is suspected to be the co-mastermind behind the leak of the Biology question paper, an official said on Saturday.

Botany teacher Manisha Gurnath Mandhare is the second Pune teacher - after Chemistry professor P.V. Kulkarni - to be identified and arrested after interrogation, the CBI said in a statement.

She was involved in the NEET-UG 2026 Examination process and appointed by the National Testing Agency (NTA) as an expert and had complete access to the Biology question paper, the CBI said. In



April 2026, she had mobilised prospective NEET examination candidates through Pune consultant Manisha Wagnmare, arrested on May 14, and conducted special coaching classes for these students at her Pune residence, the statement said. During these classes, she explained and disclosed various questions from Biology and made the students note down the same in their notebooks and also mark these in their textbooks, the statement

said. A majority of these questions tallied with the actual question paper of the NEET-UG 2026 examination held on May 3 and cancelled later, the probe agency said.

In the last 24 hours, the CBI conducted searches at six locations across the country and seized several incriminating documents, laptops, bank statements and mobile phones. Detailed analysis of the seized items is going on, an official said. It may be recalled that CBI registered this case on May 12 based on the written complaint given by the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India, pertaining to the alleged paper leak of NEET-UG 2026 Examination.

## India makes first-ever Captagon seizure worth Rs 182 crore under 'Operation RAGEPILL': HM Shah

New Delhi, May 16 : Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday said enforcement agencies have made India's first-ever seizure of Captagon, a banned synthetic stimulant, commonly referred to as the "Jihadi Drug", valued at Rs 182 crore.

In a post on X, Shah said the seizure was made under "Operation Ragepill" and described it as a major step in the Centre's anti-narcotics campaign. He said the consignment was destined for the Middle East and confirmed that a foreign national had been arrested in connection with the case.

"Modi govt is resolved for a 'Drug-Free India'. Glad to share that through 'Operation RAGEPILL', our agencies have achieved the first-ever seizure of Captagon, the so-called 'Jihadi Drug', worth Rs 182 crore," he said in a post. He noted that the operation reflected the government's "zero tolerance against drugs" policy and reiterated that authorities would act against narcotics trafficking through or into India. "I repeat we will clamp down on



every gram of drugs entering India or leaving the country using our territory as the transit route," Shah said while congratulating officers of the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB).

Captagon is a banned stimulant that has been

linked internationally to organised crime and conflict zones in parts of West Asia.

Indian authorities have in recent years intensified monitoring of synthetic drugs and transnational narcotics networks operating through maritime and

air cargo routes.

The latest seizure comes amid a series of major anti-drug operations highlighted by Shah over the past year. Earlier this month, the NCB seized 349 kg of high-grade cocaine worth Rs 1,745 crore in Mumbai after

uncovering what Shah described as a major international narcotics ring.

The agency said the operation followed a "bottom-to-top" investigation strategy tracing a smaller consignment to a larger network.

In another operation announced previously by Shah, the NCB recovered high-grade cocaine, ganja and cannabis gummies in Mumbai in a seizure estimated to be worth around Rs 200 crore.

Investigators said the syndicate involved overseas operators and international courier routes.

According to reports, the NCB seized more than 1.33 lakh kg of narcotic substances worth nearly Rs 1,980 crore in 2025 and arrested 994 traffickers, including 25 foreign nationals, in 447 cases across the country. Speaking at an anti-narcotics event on Friday, Shah said, "The government had prepared a roadmap to make India drug-free by 2047, and no narcotics consignment should be allowed to enter or transit through Indian territory."

### SRM University-AP to Establish Quantum Secure Communications Test Bed with C-DOT

Amaravati, May 16 (TSIT): SRM University-AP, Amaravati, in collaboration with the Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT) and Amaravati Quantum Valley, will establish a state-of-the-art Quantum Security Test Bed for communications and cyberspace. The initiative, launched ahead of World Telecommunication and Information Society Day on May 17, aims to strengthen India's quantum-secure communication systems, cyber resilience, and next-generation digital infrastructure.

As the first university in India with a dedicated quantum laboratory, SRM University-AP is emerging as a national hub for quantum science and deep-tech innovation. The test bed will leverage C-DOT's expertise in Quantum Key Distribution (QKD), Post-Quantum Cryptography (PQC), AI, and next-generation telecom networks, offering a platform for research, testing, and innovation in quantum cryptography, distributed quantum computing, and secure communication networks. The initiative aligns with the National Quantum Mission and reinforces Andhra Pradesh's position as a centre for frontier technologies. SRM University-AP and Amaravati Quantum Valley aim to advance India's technological sovereignty and global leadership in quantum security.

### HEAVY MENSTRUAL BLEEDING 'NOT NORMAL', SAY EXPERTS AT FIBROIDS SUMMIT IN HYDERABAD



Hyderabad, May 16: Experts at the Asian Leadership Summit on Fibroids, which began in the city on Saturday, stressed that heavy menstrual bleeding should not be considered normal and often signals underlying conditions such as uterine fibroids.

The two-day scientific meet, attended by over 350 national and international gynaecologists, is being hosted by Dr Rooma Sinha of Apollo Hospitals. The summit focuses on innovation, early diagnosis and advanced treatment strategies in fibroid care. Inaugurating the event, Dr Saugata Reddy highlighted that many women silently endure prolonged bleeding, fatigue and anaemia without seeking medical help. Citing NFHS-5 data,

she noted that nearly 57 per cent of Indian women are anaemic, with heavy menstrual bleeding a key contributor.

A fireside discussion featuring journalist Uma Sudhir and entrepreneur Upasana Kamineni Konidela emphasised informed choice in treatment, noting that fibroid diagnosis does not always require hysterectomy and that uterus-preserving options are available.

Sessions covered robotic surgery, minimally invasive procedures, AI-assisted imaging and fertility-preserving techniques. As part of the summit, a 'Red Strength Walk' will be held on May 17 to raise awareness on fibroids, anaemia and the need for timely medical intervention.

## Vishaka City Police Crack Woman Murder Case Within Two Hours

The South India Times, Visakhapatnam : City Police successfully cracked the sensational murder and robbery case reported at Akkayyapalem within just two hours and arrested the accused. The details were disclosed by Visakhapatnam Crime DCP K. Latha Madhuri during a media conference held at the Police Commissioner's Office on Friday evening. According to the police, the victim, Pilla Parvathi (53), a resident of PRK Naga Anand Apartments in Srinivasa Nagar, was brutally murdered on Thursday evening. The accused was identi-



fied as Gannavarapu Ramu (53), who had rented a shop belonging to the victim's husband and was running a salon business there. The DCP stated that immediately after receiving information about the incident, police teams led by ACP

Crimes Bhavya Reddy, along with East Zone Crime staff and the Clues Team, rushed to the spot and launched an investigation. Based on CCTV footage from the apartment premises, the accused was identified and special teams were formed to

trace him. Police apprehended the accused at Visakhapatnam Railway Station while he was allegedly attempting to flee to Hyderabad with the stolen gold ornaments. During interrogation, the accused reportedly confessed that he was facing severe financial problems. As he had pending shop rent dues for the past three months, frequent demands for payment by the victim led to growing anger. Taking advantage of the woman being alone at home, he allegedly entered the house, argued with her over the rent issue, and strangled her to death.

## Central Bank of India Holds Mega MSME Credit Outreach Programme in Hyderabad

Hyderabad, May 16 (TSIT): Central Bank of India organised a Mega MSME Credit Outreach Programme in Hyderabad to promote entrepreneurship, support MSMEs, and create awareness about financial assistance schemes.

Shri M. V. Murali Krishna, Executive Director of the bank, assured entrepreneurs of timely, simplified, and customer-friendly credit support for startups, women entrepreneurs, and self-employed youth. International badminton champion Saina Nehwal, participating as Guest of Honour, inspired attendees to pursue their business goals with dedication and confidence.



Entrepreneurs engaged directly with senior bank officials on collateral-free loans, GST-linked financing, Mudra schemes, working capi-

tal, and business expansion finance. Officials highlighted special provisions for women-led businesses and the hospitality sector, emphasizing flexible repayment options and faster loan processing. The programme also showcased digital banking services and CGTMSE-backed schemes. Senior bank officials and representatives from MSME Development Institute and TGIC were present to guide participants on leveraging institutional finance for sustainable growth and employment generation.

## Hypertension, a silent killer among youth in India: Experts

Hyderabad, May 16, 2026: Hypertension, once considered a health condition largely associated with old age, is now increasingly being detected among individuals in the 20-30 age group, emerging as a major public health concern worldwide. According to global estimates, nearly 1.4 billion people are living with high blood pressure, but only one in four has the condition under control. In India, nearly 220 million people are estimated to suffer from hypertension, while only about 12 per cent have their blood pressure adequately managed. Recent studies have revealed alarming trends, indicating that one in every ten individuals in the 18-25 age group is already affected by hypertension. Cases are rising rapidly, particularly among urban youth exposed to prolonged work stress and unhealthy lifestyles. Medical experts also noted a growing prevalence of blood pressure-related disorders among children and teenagers globally.

Marking "World Hypertension Day", Kamineni Hospitals, LB Nagar, organised a special awareness programme on Saturday under this year's theme, "Controlling Hypertension Together". Doctors highlighted the growing burden of hypertension among young adults due to modern lifestyle patterns, stress, sleep deprivation, and unhealthy dietary habits. They stressed that early detection, regular health check-ups, and lifestyle mod-



ifications can help prevent serious complications such as heart attacks and strokes. Speaking on the occasion, Kamineni Hospitals Senior Consultant Cardiologist and HOD Dr. A. Ravikanth said that hypertension has become one of the fastest-growing health concerns among the younger population. "Excessive screen time, inadequate sleep, junk food consumption, high salt intake, chronic stress, work pressure, lack of physical activity, smoking, and alcohol consumption are contributing to increased blood pressure levels even before the age of 30. This, in turn, is raising the risk of heart attacks at a much younger age. Hypertension is often referred to as a 'silent killer' because it may not show symptoms in the early stages. It is also a major risk factor for heart disease, stroke, and kidney complications. Regular blood pressure monitoring and adoption of a healthy lifestyle are therefore essential," he said.

Consultant interventional cardiologist Dr. G. Shiva Prasad said negligence towards hypertension could

lead to severe cardiac complications at a young age. "Mental stress and anxiety are significantly affecting the health of today's youth. Individuals with a family history of hypertension should remain particularly cautious. If detected early, hypertension can be effectively controlled through lifestyle changes and appropriate treatment. Greater awareness through collective efforts by families, doctors, and society is essential to tackle the condition effectively," he noted.

Consultant cardiologist Dr. Shashidhar Madaka observed that despite millions of people suffering from hypertension globally, many remain unaware of their condition. "The increasing prevalence of hypertension among young people is a matter of serious concern. Engaging in at least 30-45 minutes of physical activity daily, reducing salt intake, ensuring adequate sleep, and managing stress can significantly lower the risk of hypertension. A healthy lifestyle remains the best defence against high blood pressure," he said.

## Yashoda Hospitals Hosts Successful Deccan Arthroplasty Summit 2026 on Robotic Joint Replacement

Hyderabad, May 16, 2026: Yashoda Hospitals - Secunderabad successfully inaugurated the prestigious two-day national scientific conference and live workshop, "Deccan Arthroplasty Summit 2026," at Hotel Marigold, Hyderabad today. The summit focuses on the latest advancements in Robotic-Assisted Joint Replacement Surgery, Complex Trauma Management, Sports Medicine, and Arthroplasty. The conference aims to provide awareness and knowledge on cutting-edge technological innovations, advanced surgical techniques, and best practices in patient care in the field of orthopedics. The summit was inaugurated by Dr. Pavan Gorukanti, Director, Yashoda Hospitals, who attended the event as the Chief Guest.

The two-day national-level conference, being held on May 16 and 17, is bringing together more than 500 renowned orthopaedic surgeons and joint replacement specialists from across the country. Along with postgraduate medical students, healthcare

professionals, and delegates also participating in the summit and discussing the latest developments and emerging trends in arthroplasty.

Speaking on the occasion Yashoda Hospitals Director Dr. Pavan Gorukanti said, "Through Deccan Arthroplasty Summit 2026, Yashoda Hospitals aims to further advance orthopedic education, surgical excellence, and academic collaboration. This summit provides an excellent platform for experienced surgeons, young orthopedic specialists, and healthcare professionals to come together and exchange knowledge on the most advanced techniques in joint replacement surgery.

He further added that the live surgeries, expert discussions, and interactive sessions conducted during the summit would greatly benefit young doctors by offering valuable insights into modern surgical procedures, precision-based treatments, and advanced technologies that improve patient outcomes."



## Lifestyle Stress Driving Early Hypertension, Say Doctors at CARE Hospitals

Hyderabad, May 16, 2026: India's cardiovascular risk profile is undergoing a worrying shift, hypertension, once largely associated with older adults, is now increasingly being detected among people in their 30s and early 40s. Doctors warn that this silent progression is becoming one of the most under-recognised public health challenges in urban India.

On the occasion of World Hypertension Day, specialists at CARE Hospitals highlighted that hypertension affects nearly one in four adults in urban India, with a significant proportion remaining undiagnosed until complications arise. Health experts caution that this gap in early detection is contributing to a growing burden of preventable heart attacks, strokes and kidney disease. Often termed the "silent killer," hypertension typically progresses without symptoms. Nearly half of those living with high blood pressure are unaware of their condition, as routine screening is still not widely adopted among asymptomatic adults below 40 years of age.

Doctors attribute the rising trend to prolonged stress, sedentary work culture, irregular sleep cycles, high-salt processed diets and declining physical activity, a combination increasingly seen among young professionals and urban populations. In many cases, individuals misinterpret early



physiological changes as fatigue or stress, delaying diagnosis and treatment. Dr. Lalukota Krishna Mohan, Director and Senior Interventional Cardiologist at CARE Hospitals, Hitech City, said, "Hypertension is no longer a condition of later life. We are now diagnosing it much earlier, often in individuals who are in the most active phase of their careers. The concern is not just prevalence, but the silent nature of damage it causes to the heart, brain and kidneys over time." He added, "Most patients do not experience warning symptoms. By the time blood pressure-related complications appear, organ damage may already be underway. Regular screening, especially for those with diabetes, obesity, family history, smoking habits or high stress, is essential. A simple BP check can significantly change long-term outcomes." Experts further noted that uncontrolled hypertension gradually

damages blood vessels, increasing the risk of life-threatening complications such as stroke, heart failure, kidney failure and vascular disease. It remains one of the leading preventable causes of cardiovascular mortality in India. Health specialists emphasised that lifestyle correction remains the first and most effective line of defence. Regular physical activity, reduced salt intake, balanced nutrition, weight management, adequate sleep, stress control and avoidance of tobacco and alcohol can significantly reduce risk.

Dr. Krishna Mohan also stressed the need for preventive health behaviour, stating, "Hypertension prevention begins with awareness and consistency. People should not wait for symptoms to appear. Annual blood pressure screening after the age of 30 should become a routine health habit, not an exception." Reinforcing its commitment to preventive cardiac care, CARE Hospitals called for greater public awareness and early screening adoption as part of long-term strategies to reduce India's growing cardiovascular disease burden. On World Hypertension Day, clinicians reiterated a simple message: detect early, act early — because hypertension rarely announces itself, but its consequences often arrive without warning.

## Intertech & James Durrans Announces Phased Manufacturing of Original Marconite in India at ELASIA 2026



Bangalore : In a significant development for India's electrical infrastructure and industrial manufacturing sector, Intertech and UK-based James Durrans & Sons have announced plans for phased manufacturing of original Marconite in India. The announcement was made during ELASIA 2026, South Asia's premier trade fair dedicated to the power, electrical, controls, automation and lighting industries.

The proposed localisation initiative is aimed at supporting India's rapidly expanding infrastructure ecosystem while aligning with the Government of India's "Make in India" vision for advanced industrial technologies.

James Durrans & Sons, a 163-year-old British company and global manufacturer of Marconite technology, has been associated with Intertech since 2011 to expand the product's reach in India. David Wilson of James Durrans & Sons said the company had identified India as a key strategic growth market nearly two decades ago before partnering with Intertech to establish Marconite across the country. Since then, the partnership has steadily expanded, with the product now being supplied across sectors including solar energy, power utilities, oil and gas, railways and metro infrastructure projects.

The companies confirmed that work is currently underway to establish manufacturing pathways, raw material

sourcing and technical processes required for local production. The first phase is expected to involve the establishment of a pilot manufacturing facility within the next 12 to 18 months, after which operations could be scaled further for the wider Indian market. Intertech CEO Gurumohit Singh said the company has consistently focused on technically engineered earthing solutions designed specifically for Indian operating conditions. He noted that Intertech follows a scientific approach involving soil resistivity analysis, fault current calculations and site-specific engineering before implementing any grounding system.

Marconite, originally developed for military and radar applications, is globally recognised as a carbon-based conductive material used in earthing and lightning protection systems. Unlike conventional grounding compounds, the product is designed to be waterless and maintenance-free, ensuring long-term operational reliability without recurring servicing requirements.

Over the years, Marconite technology supplied by James Durrans has been deployed globally across several critical infrastructure and defence-linked sectors, including organisations such as British Telecom, the UK Ministry of Defence, the Royal Air Force and Saudi Aramco. In India, Intertech has established a strong presence across indus-

## Ashoka Slams Congress Over Pending Pensions, Questions 'Sadana' Convention

Bengaluru : In the state, the Congress government has stopped providing subsidies and pensions to various exploited and helpless sections, including orphans, senior citizens, and transgender minorities. Opposition Leader R. Ashoka questioned what qualification Congress leaders have to hold a 'Sadana Samaveshha' (achievement convention) even though the state treasury is empty.

Speaking at a press conference, he said that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's Congress government is celebrating and holding a convention to cover up the sins it has committed. Financial assistance to beggars and subsidy beneficiaries has been stopped, and for the past three years, the government has been exploiting these people.

He alleged:  
- 5,000 crore under Gruha Lakshmi and 700 crore under Annabhagya have not yet reached the beneficiaries.  
- 73 crore grant for orphan children has not been released.  
- 45,000 crore meant for Scheduled Castes has been looted.  
- Farmers have not received compensation despite surveys.  
- 12 types of pensions under the Revenue Department

have not been paid for the last three months. There are 81.88 lakh beneficiaries under these pension schemes, requiring 894 crore per month. Although 10,736 crore is allocated every year in the budget, this money has not reached the beneficiaries, he charged.

Old-age pensions, widow pensions, Sandhya Suraksha, and assistance to transgender minorities have not been paid. When he was a minister, he had taken steps to provide 10,000 per month to acid attack victims, but this government is not releasing it regularly. Devadasis are not getting 2,000, freedom fight-

### PENSIONS PENDING FOR ORPHANS, SENIOR CITIZENS, ACID ATTACK VICTIMS, AND TRANSGENDER MINORITIES



ers are not getting 10,000 — nothing is being paid. Asha workers were promised 10,000 honorarium by Siddaramaiah, but he has failed to keep his word. He has forgotten the promises he made, Ashoka said.

He criticised the government for repeatedly creating conditions for strikes by not fulfilling the demands of transport employees.

Ashoka said that while Chief Minister Siddaramaiah asks ministers to conduct 'Janaspandana' (public outreach) programmes in their districts, the district in-charge ministers are only responding to commissions

(bribes). Siddaramaiah, who promised to do a Bengaluru city tour every 15 days, has also fallen behind commissions. Deputy CM D.K. Shivakumar's announcement of an 'E-Khata' drive and converting B-Khata to A-Khata is like closing the fort gates after the city has been looted. Officials and staff are looting money from people under this scheme and accepting bribes via PhonePe. Even though this was raised with evidence in the Assembly, no action has been taken, he alleged.

"The land of the people has become the property of Congress. BJP will put an end to all this," he declared.

He also criticised the 14% tax hike on garbage tenders in BBMP. A 1 crore tender will now cost 1.40 crore, putting an additional burden of 600 crore on the people. Along with this, the garbage cess will also increase.

Why the opposition to SIR?

There are more than 10 lakh Bangladeshi citizens in Karnataka. If anyone challenges this, I will personally take them and show the proof, Ashoka said. Recently, the Police Commissioner spent 65 lakh to deport 250 Bangladeshis by air. Thousands of Bangladeshis are living in Mahadevapura, Chikkamagaluru, and

Kodagu coffee estates. The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls will put an end to this. Those with genuine identity cards need not fear. With Congress, BJP, and JD(S) agents present at every booth, there is no chance of genuine voters' names being deleted, he said.

Congress had dreamt of winning with the votes of Bangladeshi Muslims. They are scared because SIR will stop this. In West Bengal, more Hindus were among those whose names were deleted, but Hindu organisations and BJP did not protest. In Karnataka, Congress has issued identity cards to 10 lakh Bangladeshi residents and does not want them sent back, he claimed.

Modi is a protective shield  
For the last 49 months, Prime Minister Modi has not increased fuel prices. Due to the war-like situation, petrol and diesel prices have risen. According to Congress, only India has seen a fuel price rise in the entire world. In reality, prices have increased by 71% in Malaysia, 44% in Pakistan, 86% in UAE, 48% in the US, 41% in Sri Lanka, and 51% in Nepal. In India, the increase is just 3% — the lowest. Despite this, Modi is criticised as incompetent with a "56-inch chest." CM Siddaramaiah's chest and stomach combined might be 96 inches, he quipped.

The Congress government itself increased petrol prices by 3 in 2024 and 2 in 2025. They also hiked Nandini milk by 9, alcohol by 250%, electricity by 56 paise, water by 3%, bus fares by 15%, and guideline values arbitrarily. When the country faced crisis, Jawaharlar Nehru asked people to donate gold. But Prime Minister Modi has never made such a demand — instead, he has appealed for austerity, Ashoka said.

## Karnataka's CET Model Superior to NEET

MINISTER DEMANDS COURT-MONITORED PROBE INTO NEET QUESTION PAPER LEAK

Bengaluru : The recent NEET question paper leak is a grave injustice to the entire student community, and the Central Government has sabotaged the futures of thousands of students who dream of becoming doctors, criticized Dr. Sharanprakash R. Patil, Minister for Medical Education, Skill Development, Livelihood, and In-charge Minister of Raichur District.

Speaking at a press conference held at Vikasa Soudha on Saturday, the Minister said Karnataka's Common Entrance Test (CET) is a far superior model to NEET and should be adopted nationally. The state has urged the Central Government on multiple occasions to consider this, but those appeals have gone unheeded, he said. Chaos surrounds NEET every single year. The Minister demanded that the Union Minister concerned must resign over this latest debacle, and that the investigation must be conducted under the direction of a court of law. The Central Government's haphazard conduct of NEET has completely eroded public trust. The Minister also expressed his lack of confidence in the CBI, which is currently probing the scandal, stating that a transparent investigation under its watch is unlikely.

This scandal appears to have been orchestrated to enable the sale of MBBS seats, and there are strong suspicions that powerful individuals are behind the entire affair, he added. Seeing state BJP leaders defend the NEET question paper leak scandal makes it abundantly clear



that they have no shame or sense of decency, the Minister said sharply. Paper leaks are something the BJP has become notorious for. Under the previous BJP government, there was the PSI recruitment scandal — and now comes the NEET scandal. Misleading and exploiting the youth seems to be the BJP's defining pursuit, said Dr. Sharanprakash Patil.

## Success Stops Where Your Mindset Stops



Bengaluru : Success is built more by inner strength, transformational coach, educator, and speaker Sharani Ponguru said that success cannot be measured through money, luxury, big offices, and an impressive lifestyle alone.

Success is not an overnight journey. It's a process. For entrepreneurs, this fact is even more prominent. Actually, entrepreneurship is not only about launching a business or creating a smart idea. It is also about staying strong in bad times. This journey tests your patience, emotional strength, and consistency.

She said that An entrepreneur's life may look exciting and glamorous. But truth behind is not that simple. Journey of success can feel exhausting and uncertain. There are moments when the road feels extremely lonely.

Sometimes people work day and night, but in vain. Everything feels scattered and directionless. Support disappears. Confidence starts shaking. And it feels like life has stopped moving forward. During such times, degrees alone are not enough. Knowledge alone is not enough either. Even business plans stop giving comfort after a point. What matters most is your mindset.

Sharani said, 'Almost every entrepreneur faces the stage of self-doubt. The mind starts creating fear and uncertainty. 'Maybe I am not capable enough,' 'What if this never works?', 'Should I stop trying now?' it's not true that successful people never feel fear. But they simply refuse to let fear control their decisions. Even during confusion and uncertainty, they continue moving ahead. Here comes the role of mindset. It decides whether a person keeps growing or slowly gives up from within.'

On the question of positive mindset, she clarifies, 'Positive mindset does not mean pretending to be happy all the time. It is not about fake motivation or forced positivity. It is the ability to stay mentally stable during difficult phases. It means telling yourself after failure, 'I still have more left in me.' Sometimes true strength is simply getting back up again after life knocks you down.'

GEETANJALI CREDIT AND CAPITAL LIMITED					
(CIN- L21012KA1990PLC143422)					
2, "Shreedhar Krupa", Shreedhar Tutorials of Question Paper Leak, Main, II Cross, Vidyagiri, Dharwad, Karnataka-580004. • Email id: geetanjalicreditandcapital@gmail.com					
Website: www.geetanjalicreditandcapital.in • Phone: +91-9314711545					
AUDITED STANDALONE FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER AND YEAR ENDED 31.03.2026					
(Rs. in Lakhs)					
Sr. No.	Particulars	For Quarter Ended		For Year Ended	
		31/03/2026	31/12/2025	31/03/2025	31/03/2026
		(Audited)	(Unaudited)	(Audited)	(Audited)
01	Total Income from Operations (net)	9.00	0.00	0.00	9.00
02	Profit/(Loss) for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items)	5.81	(1.59)	(1.72)	1.50
03	Profit/(Loss) for the period (before Tax after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items)	5.81	(1.59)	(1.72)	1.50
04	Profit/(Loss) for the period (after Tax, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items)	5.81	(1.59)	(1.72)	1.50
05	Total Comprehensive Income for the Period (Comprising Profit/(Loss) for the period (after Tax) and other Comprehensive Income (after Tax))	5.81	(1.59)	(1.72)	1.50
06	Paid Up equity share capital (Face Value of Rs. 10/- each)	441.92	441.92	441.92	441.92
07	Basic and Diluted EPS (Not Annualized) (Rs.)				
	Basic	0.13	(0.04)	(0.04)	0.03
	Diluted	0.13	(0.04)	(0.04)	0.03

Notes: (1) Based on the recommendations of the Audit Committee and the Board of Directors at their respective Meetings held on 16th May, 2026 approved the stand-alone Audited financial results for the quarter and Year ended 31st March, 2026 along with Auditor's report as required under Regulation 33 of SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. (2) The result is also available on the websites of the Stock Exchange(s) at www.bseindia.com and the listed entity at www.geetanjalicreditandcapital.in

Place : Dharwad  
Date : 16/05/2026

For, Geetanjali Credit and Capital Ltd.  
Sd/- Dharmendra Vyas  
Managing Director - DIN: 11668470

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of ICICI Home Finance Company Ltd., will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is", as per the brief particulars given hereunder:

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Legal Heirs/ Loan Account No.	Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price/ Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of Auction	One Day Before Auction Date	SARFAESI Stage
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)	(H)	(I)
1.	Synthia Veena Victor (Borrower) Victor (Co-Borrower) Brindhanvan Vidhya Mandir Trust (Co-Borrower) Loan No. LHBWQ0001577827 & LHBWQ0001577829	Site No.5, Old Khata No. 128, Assessment No. 128 Present Katha No. 1819 Chikkabanavara Village Yeswanthpur Bangalore Karnataka- 560090	Rs. 32,80,550/- May 14, 2026	Rs. 1,01,45,250/- May 14, 2026	May 26, 2026 11:00 AM To 03:00 PM	June 03, 2026 02:00 PM To 03:00 PM	June 02, 2026 Before 05:00 PM	Physical Possession
2.	Ajay RP (Borrower) Vijay R P (Co-Borrower) Loan No. LHBNG00001285684	Site No.43, Survey No. 249, Khata No. 490, Somanahalli Village, Uttarahalli Hobli, Bangalore Karnataka- 560500	Rs. 16,63,461/- May 14, 2026	Rs. 29,40,300/- May 14, 2026	May 26, 2026 11:00 AM To 03:00 PM	June 03, 2026 02:00 PM To 03:00 PM	June 02, 2026 Before 05:00 PM	Symbolic Possession
3.	S J Lakshmesh (Borrower) Vijayalaxmi (Co-Borrower) Loan No. LHBWQ00001573289 & LHBWQ00001573290	Site No.92, Sy No. 165/3C Thavarekere Village Thavarekere Hobli Bangalore Karnataka- 562106	Rs. 8,15,157/- May 14, 2026	Rs. 9,62,280/- May 14, 2026	May 26, 2026 11:00 AM To 03:00 PM	June 03, 2026 02:00 PM To 03:00 PM	June 02, 2026 Before 05:00 PM	Physical Possession
4.	R P Vijay (Borrower) Shalini C N (Co-Borrower) Loan No. NHCNN00000812226	Site No 56 Rajarajeshwari Enclave Archakarahalli Village Kasaba Hobli Bangalore- 560103	Rs. 37,64,357/- May 14, 2026	Rs. 37,64,880/- May 14, 2026	May 26, 2026 11:00 AM To 03:00 PM	June 03, 2026 02:00 PM To 03:00 PM	June 02, 2026 Before 05:00 PM	Physical Possession
5.	Shiva Kumar C (Borrower) Dhanabagayam D (Co-Borrower) Loan No. LHBNG00001292025	Property Bearing Site No. 19, Katha No. 594/19, Pid No. 150200101300820062, Sy No.139/2 And 139/3, Akshaya Meadows Layout, Thattanahalli Village, Kasaba Hobli, Anekal Taluk, Bangalore, Karnataka	Rs. 10,61,802/- May 14, 2026	Rs. 12,04,632/- May 14, 2026	May 26, 2026 11:00 AM To 03:00 PM	June 03, 2026 02:00 PM To 03:00 PM	June 02, 2026 Before 05:00 PM	Physical Possession
6.	Sumanth M (Borrower) Akshitha K (Co-Borrower) Loan No. LHMYS00001501943 & LHMYS00001502395	Katha No 113/116, Survey No 33/3A, Kethiganahalli Village Bidadi Hobli, Bangalore, Karnataka- 560001	Rs. 32,41,422/- May 14, 2026	Rs. 59,04,900/- May 14, 2026	May 26, 2026 11:00 AM To 03:00 PM	June 03, 2026 02:00 PM To 03:00 PM	June 02, 2026 Before 05:00 PM	Symbolic Possession

The online auction will be conducted on website (URL: Link-https://BidDeal.in) of our auction agency ValueTrust Capital Services Private Limited. The Mortgages/notice are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till June 02, 2026 before 05:00 PM else these secured assets will be sold as per above schedule. The Prospective Bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) RTGS/ Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) at ICICI Home Finance Company Limited Branch Office Address mentioned on top of the article on or before June 02, 2026 before 04:00 PM. The Prospective Bidder(s) must also submit signed copy of Registration Form & Bid Terms and Conditions form at ICICI Home Finance Company Limited Branch Office Address mentioned on top of the article on or before June 02, 2026 before 05:00 PM. Earnest Money Deposit Demand Draft (DD) should be from a Nationalized/Scheduled Bank in favor of "ICICI Home Finance Company Ltd. - Auction" payable at the branch office address mentioned on top of the article. For any further clarifications with regards to inspection, terms and conditions of the auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact ICICI Home Finance Company Limited on 9920807300. The Authorized Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit https://www.icicifin.com/ Date: May 17, 2026 Place: Bangalore Authorized Officer, "ICICI Home Finance Company Limited", CIN Number- U65922MH1999PLC120106

### INVENT ASSETS SECURITISATION & RECONSTRUCTION PRIVATE LIMITED

Regd Office: Sakinaka Suburb, Backbay Reclamation Scheme Block III, 229, Nariman Point, Mumbai - 400021.

#### POSSESSION NOTICE [RULE 8(1)] (FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTY)

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Invent Assets Securitisation & Reconstruction Private Limited under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, had issued a Demand Notice to the Borrower(s) Co-Borrower(s) as mentioned in the table below, calling upon them to repay the amount within the stipulated period. The Borrower(s)/Co-Borrower(s) having failed to repay the dues within the prescribed time, notice is hereby given to the Borrower(s) and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic Possession of the secured asset(s) under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules, on the date mentioned in the table below.

Sr No	Borrower Details	NPA Date & Outstanding Amount	13(2) Date & Possession Date
1.	Anjenappa N Megalgere Chowdappa (Borrower), Ujamma M Siddappa (Co-Applicant), A/c No. S11920200031	29-Dec-25 Rs. 664864/- As On 30-Dec-25	31-Dec-25 15-May-26

Property Description:- All that piece and parcel of Property No 43/45, E Swathu No 151200400600200503, measuring 7.4980 X 7.8028 Mts i.e 58.51 Sq Mts, Situated at Chantnahalli Village, Chantnahalli Gram Panchayath Harapanahalli Taluk Vijayanagar Dist. Boundaries: East: House of Kenchamma, West: Temple of Bharamappa, North: House of Nagarajappa, South: Road

2. Sakamma P (Borrower), Hanumantappa G (Co-Applicant), A/c No. S11920800011

Property Description:- All that piece and parcel of the property bearing Property No. 87, E Swathu No. 151200400270120107, measuring 65 x 19 metres, i.e. 1235.00 sq. metres, situated at Punsabagatta Village, Punsabagatta Grama Panchayath, Harapanahalli Taluk, Vijayanagara District, together with all easementary and appurtenant rights attached thereto, and being bounded as under: Boundaries : East : Road, West : House of M Basappa, North : House of Sarathi Jayappa South : House of G. Halappa.

Date: 16.05.2026 Sd/-, Authorized Officer Place: Vijayanagar Invent Assets Securitisation & Reconstruction Private Limited

### ALTM CREDO HOME FINANCE PRIVATE LIMITED

REGD. OFFICE : Floor No 7, Kalpataru Infinita, Plot No 22, sub Plot No 3, CTS No. 15/1, Village Bhamurda, Wakdevwadi, Shivaji Nagar, Pune City, Maharashtra 411005

#### POSSESSION NOTICE [RULE 8(1)] (FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTY)

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Altum Credo Home Finance Private Limited (hereinafter referred to as "ACHFL") under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, had issued a Demand Notice to the Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s) as mentioned in the table below, calling upon them to repay the amount within the stipulated period.

Sr No	Borrower Details	NPA Date & Outstanding Amount	13(2) Date & Possession Date
1.	S Ramesha (Borrower), S Manjappa (Co-Applicant), S Renukamma (Co-Applicant), A/c No. S119202010291	29/1/2026 Rs. 725800/- As On 03-02-2026	09-Feb-26 15-May-26

Property Description:- All that piece and parcel of Property No 141, E Swathu No 1512004001020564, measuring 7.20 X 8.40 Mts i.e 60.48 Sq Mts, Situated at Huchhangidurga Village, Huchhangidurga Gram Panchayath, Harapanahalli Taluk, Vijayanagar District. Boundaries : East : House of Yallava, West : House of Chandrappa, North : Road South : Conservancy

2. Pavan H (Borrower), N Lakshmi Bai N (Co-Applicant), A/c No. S11920200173

Property Description:- The property addressing an extent of 139.81 Sq.Mtrs., comprised in Property Number 23, bearing PID No. 151200601200600023, situated in Venkatesha Pura Village, Gurusiddapura Gram Panchayat, Jagalur Taluk, Davanagere District, within the Sub-Registration Office of Jagalur. Boundaries : East : House of Lakshminbai, West : House of Hanumanthnaik, North : Lane Road, South : Lane Road

Date: 16.05.2026 Sd/-, Authorized Officer Place: Vijayanagar / Davanagere Altum Credo Home Finance Private Limited

EDITORIAL

What Next for the INDIA alliance?

In a rare moment of unity, the opposition parties came together to defeat The Constitution (One Hundred and Thirty-First Amendment) Bill in a Special Parliamentary Session on April 17, 2026. Soon after, the four state assembly elections in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal threw up expected results in three, but not in the fourth. In Assam, communal and political gerrymandering by the Himanta Biswa Sarma administration and the Election Commission India (ECI) led to a massive victory for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP); in West Bengal, an even more massive BJP victory was engineered by the ECI's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls and the Opposition parties' failure to jointly combat it on the ground through seat-sharing agreements. Kerala's results were no surprise for a different reason: they returned to the old pattern of alternating Left Democratic Front (LDF) and United Democratic Front (UDF) administrations. Unlike Assam and West Bengal, Kerala appears to have had a reasonably free and fair election. Tamil Nadu's results were a surprise. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) ran a well-performing administration and was expected to win a second term until the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) came along. In the runup to the election, it became clear that the TVK was a serious contender. The outcome was a hung house in which the governor intervened to manipulate government formation by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) but was thwarted by smaller parties offering the TVK support. The Congress was the first and its speed was ill-taken by the DMK, with whom the Congress had jointly contested. The impact of the DMK's bitterness, supported by Akhilesh Yadav of the Samajwadi Party (SP), on the INDIA alliance could be considerable. DMK chief Stalin was a pillar of the alliance, while other parties wavered and some – the Trinamool Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party – walked out. Truth to tell, the alliance has been mainly dysfunctional, absent more often than present. This is why its unity against the Constitutional amendment was so notable. It showed what the Opposition could do when it came together and raised hope of further joint action at a time when we are rapidly losing each vestige of democracy. The threat that the Constitutional amendment embodied – an arbitrary expansion of Parliament that would make deliberation virtually impossible given weight of numbers, wholesale communal and political gerrymandering through delimitation – might have been averted for now but is bound to recur when the ongoing Census' results are published, given that the Atal Bihari Vajpayee administration's freeze on seat expansion ends this year. It may even recur earlier. "

MODI'S 'OPPOSITION-MUKT' BHARAT:

HOW DELHI DURBAR ENGINEERED BENGAL REGIME CHANGE

Adi Shankara's sarpa-sutra nyaya (snake-rope analogy) propounds two levels of truth: what the common man perceives and the absolute truth known only to those who have realised the Brahma (ultimate reality). Big media under prime minister Narendra Modi depicts only what the prime minister's office (PMO) wants them to portray. Nothing more or less. Consider the voluminous election analysis churned out by the pro-government big media ever since the election results were declared on May 4. People, they said, voted for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) because under the Trinamool Congress (TMC) they were suffering due to unemployment, price rise and lack of minimum facilities. Some narrated how young voters, Gen Z, restive youth and the aspiring women saw better opportunities under the new double engine government. But the loyal media has obligingly avoided mentioning newly-crowned chief minister Suwendu Adhikari's dubious background. He has the distinction of having been neck deep in two of most vicious scams in Bengal: Saradha Ponzi scheme and Narada cash-for-favours scam. The BJP had officially labelled him a 'chor' (thief). In 2020, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee had alleged that he 'jumped into' Modi's washing machine' to escape the probe by central agencies. Look at some of brilliant explanations in godi media for the state voting for BJP: Government employees expected better deal under Modi; people hoped to get liberated from the entrenched goonda groups under TMC in villages and towns; how Mo-Shah's rallies helped expose Banerjee and other opposition leaders; how many rallies they



addressed and how the suffering poor and women waited hours for their leaders and so on. Also, how the BJP's top two identified themselves with the common people by eating fish and Jhalmuri. Then there were stories of how Shah strenuously scripted the BJP victory with meticulous planning at different levels and how the BJP had worked to save people from TMC's 'goondaraj'. Also, there were plenty of stories on the Opposition's governance failures, extortion by the 'mafia syndicates', Banerjee's selection of unpopular candidates under duress – all of which led to vitiate the atmosphere, according to these reports. After the results came out, sections of the media wrote long stories about outgoing chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan's 'centralised' model for his failure to win in Kerala. But the same media, understandably, carefully avoided mentioning the much more brutally con-

centrated power system under the Modi-Shah duo. Shah, no doubt, has performed an admirable feat in West Bengal. For this, he had deployed a mind-boggling number of 2.4 lakh to 2.5 lakh personnel from various central forces in the state. The troops covered all the 61,636 polling stations in West Bengal. In some districts, it worked out to an armed police officer per every 140 listed voters. The troops held frequent field marches in villages and towns to warn the 'trouble makers'. This was in addition to the 38,297 state police personnel, 142 general observers, 95 police observers, 100 expenditure observers, and several teams of the National Investigative Agency (NIA). They all roamed the streets and selectively picked Opposition workers. They stopped the opposition vehicles and pedestrians at will and searched for funds and incriminating documents.

The Election Commission of India's (ECI's) observers and armed personnel reportedly openly coordinated with the BJP's local workers who were seen giving them directions which they seemingly obligingly obeyed, the TMC has alleged. As additional precaution, on crucial days, the troops banned all two-wheelers on roads. Those returning from Bengal say the troops and observers acted in a patently partisan manner.

**■ AN UNPRECEDENTED MEETING OF CENTRAL FORCES**  
Kolkata was also witness to an unprecedented meeting of all units of central armed police forces (CAPFs) at the iconic Science City. According to a media reports, the optics were hard to miss – the chiefs of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Border Security Force (BSF), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Indo Tibetan Border

Police (ITBP) and Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) under one roof, with hundreds of personnel in a crowded conference hall in a poll-bound state. The sheer scale and extent of the gathering had only sharpened the standoff between the Union government and state government Bengal. The Trinamool Congress was quick to allege that the CRPF gathering resembled plans for a 'military-style takeover' rather than a routine meeting. Such happenings had prompted Mamata Banerjee to accuse the central observers of indulging in 'electoral terrorism.' Thus, paradoxically, the ECI, its special observers and central forces who should have acted in a non-partisan manner and thus earned the trust and cooperation of all parties in the fray, had themselves become the opposition's direct adversary. Even chief minister Banerjee repeatedly alleged that she was beaten up at the counting centre where the forces and EC officials alone were allowed. Now that the BJP's West Bengal conquest is complete, it is necessary to emphasise a few significant outcomes it has brought about. The first is the rise of Shah in the hierarchy of the ruling party. Modi cannot any more push any political initiative without Shah. He had begun impulsively following his home minister's advice. This is because Shah has established himself as a leader in his own right. The second is the BJP's expanding footprint. As a large state, the BJP can muster a formidable 30+ MPs in Parliament from West Bengal. This is something that deserves a deeper review which we will do later. Third, traditionally, Bengal was an exception with a strong secular credential. But in recent years the BJP has been able to force a considerable extent of Hindu consolidation.

An Invisible Subset of Private Schools Is Keeping Education Within Reach for India's Poor

People often ask how some private school-owners are so wealthy if schools are supposed to be not-for-profit. Others talk about how private schools exploit parents with high fees and extra charges. But there is an entire subset of private schools that has escaped notice. These private schools – who do not engage in profiteering – is where the average Indian turns to in the hope of a promising future for their children. These are small neighbourhood schools, commonly called budget schools, that educate the children of shopkeepers, daily-wage earners, drivers, domestic workers and many low-income families who dream of giving their children "something better" than what they had. These schools charge fees so low that most of us would not believe it if we heard the number ourselves. Often, parents fail to pay the fees on time. Nevertheless, these schools keep their engines running. They cannot afford to shut down – doing so would disenfranchise an entire community from its fundamental right to school education. This segment of private schools occupies the space between private schools and government schools – marginally better than the latter, far below the former. For many low-income families, they offer greater institutional accountability and access to English-medium education than government schools, without the prohibitive costs of elite institutions. They are present all across the country, quietly serving as the backbone of local education and significantly reducing transportation costs for many low-income families. A study from the 'Journal of Development Studies (2020)' also shows that 70-85% of children in private unaided elementary schools pay less



than Rs 500 a month, with only 15-30% paying higher fees. Further, UDISE+ 2024-25 data shows that private schools enroll nearly 95.9 million students, with about 41.5% at the primary level and 10.6% in pre-primary, reflecting their considerable role in foundational schooling. Much of this is driven by low-fee neighbourhood schools that are accessible to local communities. Staff salaries at budget schools are extremely low compared to their government school or elite-private school counterparts. According to a 2023 report by TISS, private school teachers at the ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education) level earn almost 33% less than government school teachers. While primary school teachers earn more than ECCE teachers, they still earn 64.5% less than their government school counterparts at the same level; and similarly, secondary teachers earn 65% less than their government school teacher counterparts. In many such neighbourhood schools, primary school teachers often earn as little as Rs 5,000 – Rs 8,000 a month; a reality that is rarely acknowledged in mainstream policy conversations. Heads of budget schools that we interacted with expressed spoke of the correlation between low fees and

low salaries, but not because the budget schools want it this way – it is the only way they can survive. For many teachers and staff, this salary is often their first step towards financial independence and dignity. These schools are not just educating vulnerable communities; they are also supporting families that depend on this income. Conversations with such small private school owners reveals that these schools function in humane and collaborative ecosystem. One of the school heads described it as "a beautiful system built on humanitarian grounds and mutual collaboration". During the pandemic, when many parents lost their incomes, families tried to borrow small amounts to pay fees out of gratitude for the affordable education that their children receive here. "We too borrowed to pay salaries," he said, "because our teachers are also from underprivileged backgrounds. They cannot get into corporate schools, a government job is hard to secure, and they are not accustomed to farming to fall back on." Teachers, he noted, did not protest even when salaries were delayed or halved during the pandemic. Another head of a budget school told us, "If we were running for profits, we would not have survived

this long. We run mostly on service orientation." He further mentioned that they struggle with regulations, paperwork, and compliance just as much as the materially abundant elite schools. Their vulnerability stems largely from long-standing structural constraints – policy frameworks view schooling through a simple public-versus-private lens – failing to distinguish between elite private institutions and low-fee neighbourhood schools with vastly different capacities. For decades, public debates have circled around a familiar question: should private-school teachers be paid more? These discussions often frame the issue as one of underpayment. However, the foundational issue is that of a fragile financial ecosystem which remains unaddressed. A school principal from coastal Andhra added that during cyclones and floods, schools often waive fees because most parents depend on agriculture and are the first to be affected. She further expressed that sustained support, especially during periods of distress, could significantly strengthen the quality of education these schools provide. "The government knows our contribution very well," a senior teacher from the same school said, "and with some support, we can deliver even better quality."

THE REAL HEROES OF OUR CITIES: SANITATION WORKERS



A city isn't defined by its tall buildings, wide roads, or dazzling lights, but by its cleanliness and orderliness. When a person enters a city, the first thing they notice is its cleanliness, environment, and civic discipline. Clean cities not only look beautiful, but also symbolize better health, a safe life, and a civilized society. But the people who contribute most to this cleanliness often remain outside of society's attention and respect. These are our sanitation workers – the unseen, unheard, and neglected heroes, on whose labor the entire city's order depends. The recent strike by sanitation workers in various cities forced people to reflect on how quickly urban life can be disrupted if these workers stop working. Within days, streets were piled with garbage, drains clogged, stench spread, and the risk of disease increased. For the first time, people realized that the sanitation workers, whom they considered ordinary employees, were actually the heartbeat of the city. The irony is that while we make tall claims about modernity and development, we still lag far behind in civic responsibility. A large number of people in our cities consider it normal to throw garbage in public places, leave plastic on the streets, and litter. Even those who maintain cleanliness within their homes consider their responsibility over by dumping their garbage on the streets. This is why, in the absence of sanitation workers, cities quickly turn into garbage heaps. This situation is not only a testament to administrative weakness, but also to our weak civic sense. In developed countries, citizens are self-conscious about cleanliness. They consider throwing garbage on the streets a social crime. However, in our country, cleanliness is still considered the sole responsibility of sanitation workers and municipal corpora-

tions. Unless society itself embraces cleanliness as a part of its culture and habits, the success of any government campaign will remain incomplete. The lives of sanitation workers are full of struggles. They start work early in the morning when most people are still asleep. They clean roads, streets, and drains in all conditions – scorching heat, harsh cold, rain, or epidemics. Often, they have to work in extremely unhygienic conditions without adequate safety equipment. Every year, many workers die from inhaling toxic gases while cleaning sewers. Yet, society does not give them the respect they truly deserve. During the COVID-19 pandemic, when the entire country was confined to their homes, doctors, police officers, and sanitation workers risked their lives to keep society safe. People honored them with applause and thali banging, but over time, we have forgotten them again. Even today, many sanitation workers are forced to work in temporary jobs, with low wages and unsafe working conditions. A large segment of society still looks down upon sanitation work. This mindset is not only wrong but also inhumane. No job is small or large. If sanitation workers stop working for a day, the entire city's system could come to a standstill. Therefore, their work is not just a job, but a duty to protect public health and social life. The most painful scene in this entire situation is when cows are seen searching for food in the garbage scattered on the streets. In Indian society, cows are given the status of mother, but the reality is that these same cows are forced to eat plastic, rotten food, and toxic waste. This scene exposes our social insensitivity. Devotion is not just demonstrated by words and slogans, but by action. If we truly consider the cow sacred, we must ensure that it is not forced to search for food in the garbage. Today, the growing plastic problem in cities has exacerbated the situation. People use plastic thoughtlessly and then throw it away in the open. This plastic clogs drains, pollutes the environment, and poses a life-threatening threat to animals. Sanitation workers grapple with this filth daily, but the root of the problem lies in the negligence of citizens. Governments periodically launch cleanliness campaigns. The "Clean India Mission" attempted to raise public awareness, but campaigns alone

don't bring about lasting change. Unless citizens take responsibility themselves, cleanliness will remain limited to government posters and slogans. We must understand that cleanliness isn't just the responsibility of the municipal corporation. It's every citizen's duty to maintain cleanliness around them. Segregating waste into different categories, using less plastic, avoiding littering in public places, and raising awareness among others – these small habits can bring about big changes. Protecting the rights and dignity of sanitation workers is equally important. Providing them with fair wages, stable employment, healthcare, and safety equipment should be the government's primary responsibility. Machines should be used more extensively in hazardous processes like sewer cleaning to avoid putting human lives at risk. The education system also needs to incorporate practical aspects of cleanliness and civic responsibility. Teaching children about cleanliness in books alone won't suffice; they must be inspired to practice it in practice. Only when the new generation makes cleanliness a habit will real change in society be possible. The media and society should also highlight the problems and contributions of sanitation workers. People typically remember them only when there's a strike or the city is filthy. However, their daily struggles, hard work, and contributions are rarely discussed. If society honors them, it will not only boost their self-confidence but also strengthen the collective consciousness about cleanliness. We must also understand that cleanliness is not just a matter of aesthetics, but a question of health and civilization. Dirt breeds mosquitoes, flies, and many diseases. Unsanitary environments pose the greatest dangers to children, the elderly, and the poor. Therefore, the work of sanitation workers is directly linked to the health of society. The need today is not just to end the sanitation workers' strike, but to change our mindset. We must recognize that the responsibility for keeping cities clean cannot be placed solely on a few employees. Until citizens themselves become responsible, the problem of filth and disorder will persist. Sanitation workers are truly the true heroes of our cities. They work every day to improve our lives without expecting any special recognition or fame.

# Trump, Boeing say China will buy 200 jets, reopening key market for US plane maker

US: Aircraft manufacturer Boeing will make its first major sale to China in nearly a decade under an agreement for 200 planes announced Friday, May 15, after President Donald Trump's summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping. The deal represents a breakthrough in the US aerospace company's



efforts to reenter a market once central to its long-term growth. Speaking to reporters aboard Air Force One as he returned from Beijing, Trump said China also reserved the right to buy as many as 750 Boeing aircraft as part of the deal. Boeing confirmed the 200-plane order later Friday but did not specify the types of planes or provide any other details. "We had a very successful trip to China and accomplished our major goal of reopening the China market to orders for Boeing aircraft," the company said in a statement, adding that looked forward to "continually addressing China's aircraft

demand." Boeing CEO Kelly Ortberg was among a large group of American CEOs who joined Trump during the president's trip to Beijing, seeking to sell products and services to China. Trump said the potential aircraft deal also would benefit General Electric, which he said would supply 400 to 450 engines to China. GE Aerospace Chairman and CEO H. Lawrence Culp also joined the president on his trip. The company did not immediately comment on the agreement. Last month, Ortberg expressed confidence that any broad US-China trade agreement to emerge when Trump and Xi met would be a "meaningful opportunity" for Boeing. "President Trump has been very focused on supporting us in international campaigns, and he's been very successful in doing that," Ortberg told investors. Since Trump began serving his second term, his administration has made Boeing a focus of its plans to revive US manufacturing. A visit to the Middle East a year ago culminated in major aircraft agreements, including a Qatar Airways order for up to 210 Boeing jets in what the planemaker described at the time as its largest-ever widebody aircraft

order. Saudi Arabia also placed commercial jetliner orders during the trip. Other major Boeing agreements have followed meetings between Trump and foreign leaders. In August, Korean Air formalised a roughly USD 50 billion deal to buy more than 100 Boeing aircraft, spare engines and long-term maintenance services during South Korean President Lee Jae Myung's visit to Washington. The following month, a day after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan met with Trump in Washington, Turkish Airlines said it planned to add 225 Boeing aircraft to its fleet. In another win for Boeing, the biennial Dubai Air Show opened in November with hometown airline Emirates ordering 65 of Boeing's upcoming 777-9 aircraft. Days later, FlyDubai, the lower-cost sister carrier of Emirates, announced it had ordered 75 additional Boeing 737 MAX aircraft. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, roughly a third of the narrowbody airliners Boeing delivered went to China. But the company's business there plummeted as US-China relations soured. China also was the first country to ground the 737 Max in 2019 after two of the then-new models crashed

less than five months apart in Indonesia and Ethiopia, killing 346 people. Chinese airlines did not resume Max flights until January 2023, much later than carriers in many other countries. Ortberg took over as Boeing's CEO in 2024, a calamitous year for the company. In January of that year, a panel known as a door plug blew off a 737 Max shortly after takeoff from Portland, Oregon. Boeing faced mounting financial pressure as it came under intensifying scrutiny over alleged production and quality failures. While there were some hopes this week's US-China summit would result in concrete trade deal announcements, the president's trip ended with a lot of uncertainty about what the two sides agreed on, said Bonnie Glaser, managing director of the Indo-Pacific program at the German Marshall Fund. Glaser told a media briefing Friday that there had been little concrete information about trade agreements from the summit, including on Chinese purchases of US exports such as soybeans, liquefied natural gas and beef. "All that we have is really what the president has told the world that China has agreed to," Glaser said.

# Hormuz Flashpoint: Iran Plans New Shipping Mechanism, Signals Specialised Maritime Service Fees



Iran has announced plans to introduce a new traffic management mechanism for the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most strategically vital maritime chokepoints amid the ongoing US naval blockade. The announcement was made by the head of national security commission of the Iranian parliament Ebrahim Azizi, who said the mechanism had been prepared under the framework of national sovereignty and international trade security. "Iran, within the framework of its national sovereignty and the guarantee of international trade security, has prepared a professional mechanism to manage

traffic in the Strait of Hormuz along a designated route, which will be unveiled soon," he wrote. The statement makes clear that access to the route will not be universal. "In this process, only commercial vessels and parties cooperating with Iran will benefit from it," Azizi said, adding that "the necessary fees will be collected for the specialized services provided under this mechanism." Most strikingly, he declared that "this route will remain closed to the operators of the so-called 'freedom project' — a pointed reference widely understood to be aimed at US-led naval operations in the region, which

Washington has framed as ensuring freedom of navigation. The Strait of Hormuz, the narrow waterway between Iran and Oman, is the single most important oil transit chokepoint in the world. Approximately 20 percent of global petroleum liquids pass through it daily, making any threat to navigation there a matter of acute international concern. The announcement comes amid an already volatile regional environment, with the US-Israel military campaign against Iran having dramatically escalated tensions in recent months. The mechanism is expected to be formally unveiled in the coming days.

## BIKE TAXI CRACKDOWN:

# MAHARASHTRA ASKS APPLE AND GOOGLE TO REMOVE UBER, OLA, RAPIDO APPS

In a fresh regulatory push, Maharashtra's cyber authorities have asked Apple and Google to remove Uber, Ola and Rapido from their app stores over alleged violations involving bike taxi services. The step underscores an expanding crackdown on two-wheeler ride-hailing aggregators. The Office of the Additional Director General of Police, Maharashtra Cyber, issued the notices on May 15, invoking provisions under Section 79(3)(b) of the Information Technology Act, 2000. The order requires the companies to remove the applications and disable access via the Apple App Store and Google Play Store. The step was taken after Maharashtra Transport Minister Pratap Sarnaik, in a letter dated May 12, requested the Cyber Department to act against bike taxi platforms operating in the state. The notices issued to Apple and Google stated that bike taxi services operating through the apps were "unlawful and in violation of the existing legal and regula-



tory framework". They further alleged that these passenger transport services were being provided without the requisite approvals, licences or adherence to Transport Department regulations and the Motor Vehicles Act. "These unauthorised bike taxi operations pose a serious threat to passenger safety. It has been reported that driver verification mechanisms, insurance protections, women's safety measures, and emergency response systems are highly

inadequate. Further, the rash and negligent driving commonly associated with such bike taxi operations creates a substantial risk to public safety," the notice read. "Recently, a serious incident came to light where in a bike taxi service operated through one of these applications allegedly resulted in the tragic death of a woman," it added. In the notices, the companies were alerted that failure to follow directives from Indian law enforcement could lead to legal consequences under provisions of

the Information Technology Act and associated intermediary liability rules. "Since your organisation has a physical presence and conducts business in India, it is subject to the jurisdiction of Indian laws. Failure to comply with directives from Indian law enforcement agencies may result in serious legal action against you. You are hereby warned that if any unlawful or disruptive incident occurs due to your failure to take timely action, you will be held liable," the notice said.

# Govt Imposes Import Curbs On Silver, Days After Hiking Duty On Precious Metals

The government on Saturday tightened its grip on silver imports, imposing fresh restrictions that will require traders to obtain a government licence to bring the precious metal into the country. The significant policy shift comes just days after it sharply raised customs duties on precious metals. The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) issued a notification changing the import policy for specified silver bars from 'free' to 'restricted' with immediate effect. The move covers silver bars containing 99.9% or more silver by weight, along with other specified silver bar categories, including silver plated with gold and platinum. Earlier, imports were freely allowed subject to Reserve Bank of India regulations. Under the new framework, goods under the restricted category require a government licence for imports — a procedural hurdle that effectively gives authorities control over the volume and pace of silver entering the



country. The timing is significant. Just days earlier, on May 13, the government had hiked import duty on precious metals from 6% to 15% — a steep nine percentage point jump that sent an immediate signal of intent to the market. Saturday's import restriction doubles down on that move, suggesting a coordinated policy effort to clamp

down on silver inflows rather than merely make them costlier. The dual policy action — higher duties followed by outright import curbs — is likely to tighten domestic supply, potentially pushing silver prices higher in the short term. Jewellers, industrial buyers and bullion traders are expected to feel the pinch

most immediately. The move follows the government's decision earlier this week to raise import duty on gold and silver to 15% from 6%, significantly increasing the cost of importing precious metals into India. At the same time, the government has tightened rules for duty-free gold imports by gems and jewellery exporters under the Advance Authorisation (AA) scheme. Under the revised norms, gold imports through the scheme will now be capped at 100 kg per licence. The DGFT has also introduced stricter compliance checks for first-time applicants under the AA scheme. New applicants will now undergo mandatory physical inspection of manufacturing facilities before approvals are granted. The latest measures signal the government's intent to strengthen oversight of precious metals trade while curbing excessive imports and improving regulatory monitoring across the bullion sector.

# Chick-fil-A franchisee sued by US government for religious discrimination

The US government is suing a Chick-fil-A franchisee for allegedly denying an employee's request to take Saturdays off work for religious reasons. The lawsuit claims that Hatch Trick Inc, the franchisee, violated federal law by denying an employee's request to refrain from work on Saturdays for religious reasons. The employee was a member of the United Church of God, which observes the Sabbath on that day. The US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) said in a press release. The federal agency is a workplace watchdog set up to fight workplace discrimination. According to the EEOC, the employee requested not to be scheduled for Saturday work during her initial August 2023 job interview. Hatch Trick honoured this request for a few months before eventually requiring her to work on Saturdays in February 2024, despite the employee requesting religious accommodation, the EEOC claims. The employee was responsible for



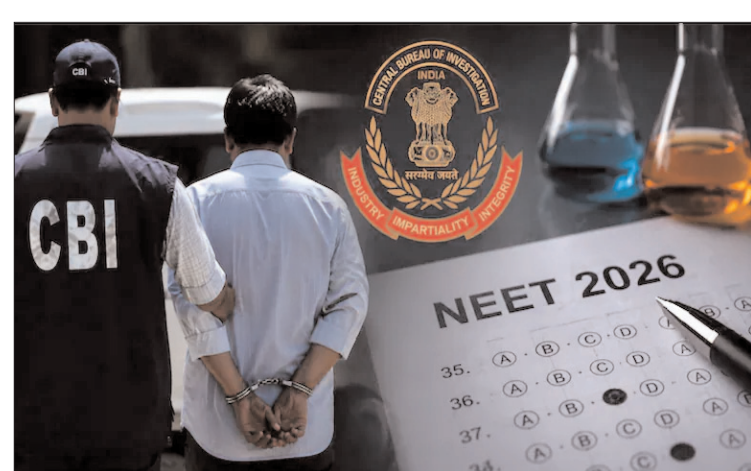
managing the delivery drivers at one of Hatch Trick's Chick-fil-A locations in Austin, Texas. According to court documents filed by the EEOC, the woman was paid hourly and worked 45 to 50 hours per week, Monday through Friday, as well as some additional Sunday hours. When she appealed to management, Hatch Trick allegedly told the employee that it was not possible for her to maintain her managerial role if she did not work on Saturdays. Instead, they told her that she had to accept a delivery driver position, which entailed lower pay,

reduced benefits and hours, the EEOC said. She proposed a number of accommodations that would have allowed her to keep her role, including having a driver work in the dispatch role on her day off and working only after sundown on Saturdays, according to the EEOC complaint. The watchdog agency said the company fired the employee when she refused to accept the driver position. "Religious discrimination in the workplace is unlawful, and employers must make reasonable accommodations for employees' sincerely held beliefs.

## WHO IS P V KULKARNI?

# CBI Arrests NEET Paper Leak 2026 Mastermind, A Chemistry Professor From Pune

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Saturday arrested P.V. Kulkarni, described as the alleged mastermind behind the NEET UG 2026 paper leak, and his associate Manisha Waghmare from Pune. Subsequently, CBI produced them before the Rouse Avenue Court in New Delhi. The arrests mark a significant breakthrough in what is shaping up to be one of the most serious examination fraud cases in India's recent history. The examination was held on May 3 but was cancelled on May 12 due to the leak, and will now be held again on June 21. Around 22 lakh candidates had appeared for the exam. The case first came to light in Rajasthan on May 7. According to the Latur police, some parents had lodged complaints alleging that 42 questions from a mock test conducted by a coaching institute completely matched the questions in the NEET UG exam held on May 3. The CBI subsequently took over and traced the chain of the leak back to its source.



**Who Is P.V. Kulkarni?** Identified as PV Kulkarni, the accused was linked to the exam process on behalf of the National Testing Agency, which conducted the cancelled test. Officials told PTI that Kulkarni had served on the panel that prepared the NEET question paper for years. The chemistry teacher from Pune retired around four

years ago from a reputed college in Maharashtra's Latur district. Exploiting his privileged access to confidential material, Kulkarni hosted special coaching classes at his house in the last week of April and dictated to his students questions, options and answers which appeared in the NEET UG paper on May 3. The CBI said that during these special classes, the chemistry lec-

turer "dictated the questions with options and correct answers, which students wrote down in their notebooks. These handwritten notes matched exactly with the actual NEET-UG 2026 question paper." The CBI found that co-accused Dhananjay Lokhande had received the paper from Manisha Waghmare and passed it on to Nashik-based Shubham Khairnar, who in turn passed it on to Yash Yadav, who circulated it further. The agency had earlier arrested seven accused persons, including Ms. Waghmare. The others were identified as Dhananjay Lokhande from Ahilyanagar and Shubham Khairnar from Nashik in Maharashtra; Mangilal Biwal, Vikas Biwal, and Dinesh Biwal from Jaipur, Rajasthan; and Yash Yadav from Gurugram, Haryana. Of them, five accused are currently in CBI custody for interrogation. The remaining two are being produced before a court in Pune to secure transit remand for their transfer to Delhi for further proceedings.

# Trump warns Taiwan against declaring independence, hours after summit

US President Donald Trump has cautioned Taiwan against formally declaring independence from China. "I'm not looking to have somebody go independent," the US president told Fox News on Friday, at the end of his two-day summit with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping in Beijing. Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te has previously stated that Taiwan does not need to declare formal independence because it already sees itself as a sovereign nation. The US has long supported Taiwan, including being bound by law to provide it with a means of self-defence, but has frequently had to square this alliance with maintaining a diplomatic relationship with China. Trump earlier said he had "made no commitment either way" about the self-governing island - which China claims as part of its territory and has not



ruled out taking by force. Washington's established position is that it does not support Taiwanese independence, with continued ties with Beijing being contingent on its acceptance that there is only one Chinese government. Beijing has been vocal in its dislike of Taiwan's president, who it has previously

described as a "troublemaker" and a "destroyer of cross-strait peace". Many Taiwanese consider themselves to be part of a separate nation - though most are in favour of maintaining the status quo in which Taiwan neither declares independence from China nor unites with it. In his interview with Fox News,

Trump reiterated that US policy on the matter had not changed. "You know, we're supposed to travel 9,500 miles (15,289km) to fight a war. I'm not looking for that. I want them to cool down. I want China to cool down." On the flight back to Washington, the US president had told reporters that he and Xi had spoken "a lot"

about the island, but said he had declined to discuss whether the US would defend it. Xi "feels very strongly" about the island and "doesn't want to see a movement for independence", Trump said. "The Taiwan question is the most important issue in China-US relations," Xi warned during the talks, according to Chinese state media, adding: "If mishandled, the two nations could collide or even come into conflict." Asked if he foresaw a conflict with China over Taiwan, Trump had said: "No, I don't think so. I think we'll be fine. [Xi] doesn't want to see a war." China has ramped up military drills around the island in recent years, raising tensions in the region and testing the balance that Washington has struck. Late last year, the Trump administration announced an \$11bn (\$8bn) package of weapons to be sold to

Taiwan, including advanced rocket launchers and a variety of missiles, which Beijing condemned. Trump said he would soon decide whether that sale could go ahead, adding that he and Xi had discussed it "in great detail". He added: "I'm going to say I have to speak to the person that right now is, you know, you know who he is, that's running Taiwan." The US does not have formal relations with Taiwan, though it maintains substantial unofficial relations. US presidents do not traditionally speak directly to Taiwan's leader, and to do so would be likely to cause significant tensions with Beijing, which considers Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te a separatist. Taiwan Deputy Foreign Minister Chen Ming-chi said on Saturday that Taiwan would need to clarify the exact meaning of Trump's remarks.

## Rescue diver dies during search for bodies of Italians who drowned in Maldives caves



A rescue diver has died while searching for the bodies of four Italians who died in a scuba-diving accident in the Maldives. Staff Sgt Mohamed Mahdhee was taken to hospital in critical condition and later succumbed to his injuries, a government spokesman told the BBC on Saturday. The five Italians died while attempting to explore caves at a depth of around 50m (164ft). So far, just one of their bodies is thought to have been recovered, in a cave at a depth of around 60m (197ft). The incident is believed to be the worst single diving accident in the tiny Indian Ocean nation, a popular tourist destination because of its

string of coral islands. Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu travelled to Vaavu Atoll on Saturday to observe the search operations. "Eight rescue divers went into the water today. When they surfaced, they realised Mr Mahdhee didn't come up," Mohamed Hossain Shareef, a Maldivian government spokesman told the BBC. The other divers immediately went into the water again and they found Mahdhee had blacked out. The Maldives military has described the operation as very high risk, with unfavourable weather conditions. Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani sent condolences: "These days of grief for Italy are compounded by the news that one of your brave soldiers... died while attempting to dive to reach the bodies of our fellow Italians." "This tragedy unites Italy and the Maldives in grief and respect for the victims," he added.

## NEW OUTBREAK OF EBOLA KILLS 80 IN EASTERN DR CONGO



Africa's top health agency has declared an Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo's eastern Ituri province. Around 246 cases and 80 deaths have been reported, mainly in the gold-mining towns of Mongwalu and Rwampara, said the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC). Ugandan officials confirmed one case of imported Ebola from DR Congo on Friday, with the country's health ministry stating that a 59-year-old male who died on Thursday had tested positive. Ebola was first discovered in 1976 in what is now DR Congo, and is thought to have spread from bats. This is the 17th outbreak of the deadly viral disease in the country. It is spread through direct contact with bodily fluids and through broken skin, causing severe bleeding and organ failure. Early symptoms include fever, muscle pain, fatigue, headache and sore throat, and are followed by vomiting, diarrhoea, a rash and bleeding. There is no proven cure for Ebola. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the average fatality rate is around 50%. Preliminary

tests conducted at the Institut National de Recherche Biomédicale (INRB) in the capital, Kinshasa, have detected the virus in 13 of 20 samples analysed, following consultations with DR Congo's Ministry of Health and National Public Institute. Tests are also being carried out to identify the strain of the virus. Of the 80 deaths, four were reported among lab-confirmed cases, Africa CDC said. Additional suspected cases have also been reported in Ituri's provincial capital, Bunia, with laboratory confirmation pending. Africa CDC said it was concerned by the high risk of further spread due to the urban settings of Rwampara and Bunia, and mining activities in Mongwalu. The health agency's executive director Dr Jean Kaseya added that "significant population movement" between the affected areas and neighbouring countries also meant regional co-ordination was essential. All affected communities and at-risk areas have been advised to follow guidelines from the national health authorities. The Congolese government has not yet officially declared an outbreak.

## Man killed by 13ft great white shark in Western Australia



A 38-year-old man has been killed by a 13ft (4m) great white shark in Western Australia. On Saturday, the man was bitten just before 10:00 (03:00 BST) at Horseshoe Reef - north-west of the popular Rottnest Island near the city of Perth, local police said. Aerial footage showed the man being rushed to shore by boat where paramedics and police performed CPR at the Geordie Bay jetty, local media ABC reported. "Sadly

the man was unable to be revived," a police spokesperson said. The state's Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development told AFP news agency it received a report the man was bitten by the great white. The department urged the public to take "additional caution" in waters around the area. The attack is the first fatal incident in Western Australia since March last year.

## SENIOR IS LEADER KILLED IN JOINT OPERATION, US AND NIGERIA SAY

Nigeria and the United States say they have killed a senior Islamic State (IS) leader in a joint-operation. Abu-Bilal al-Minuki was described by US President Donald Trump as the "second in command of ISIS globally" and "the most active terrorist in the world". IS has radically shifted in recent years, with around 90% of its attacks now taking place in sub-Saharan Africa. Its Nigeria-based branch is by far the most active. Nigerian President Bola Tinubu said the two countries had carried out a "daring joint operation that dealt a heavy blow" to IS. Al-Minuki was declared a Specially Designated Global Terrorist by Washington in 2023. He was killed along with "several of his lieutenants" during a strike on his compound in the Lake Chad



Basin, a huge region of waterways and swampland shared by Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon. A military spokesman said intelligence had established Minuki had established a fortified base in the area - in Metele, Borno state. The Lake Chad basin has long been a stronghold for Boko Haram and its rival faction, Islamic State West Africa Province (ISwap). The Nigerian military said the

operation began shortly after midnight on Saturday, after months of intelligence gathering and reconnaissance. It said the operation "zero casualties or loss of assets" were recorded, describing the operation as evidence of growing cooperation between Nigerian and US forces. It said that al-Minuki had been promoted to "Head of General Directorate of States", making him one of the most senior fig-

ures within the global IS hierarchy. He previously oversaw IS-linked operations across the Sahel and West Africa, including attacks targeting civilians and minority communities. The military also linked al-Minuki to the 2018 Dapchi schoolgirls kidnapping when more than 100 girls from a boarding school in north-eastern Nigeria were taken by militant group Boko Haram. Before pledging allegiance to IS in 2015, he was described as a senior Boko Haram commander. Boko Haram began its military campaign to impose Islamic rule in northern Nigeria in 2009. The group pledged its allegiance to IS after what was believed to be the then-leader Abubakar Shekau posted an audio statement on Boko Haram's X account in 2015.

## US PLANNING TO CHARGE EX-CUBAN LEADER RAÚL CASTRO

The US justice department is reportedly preparing to indict aging Cuban leader Raúl Castro in the coming days over the shooting down of two aircraft three decades ago. The reported charges, which would need to be approved by a US grand jury, emerged as the director of the CIA travelled to Cuba to meet officials in Havana. Castro, 94, stepped down as Cuban Communist Party leader in 2021, ending his family's more than half a century in power. He led the country for 15 years, stepping in after his brother, Fidel, resigned. The potential indictment is the latest move in a US pressure campaign that has included an oil blockade and widespread sanctions.



The charges are said to centre on the 1996 downing of two planes operated by the US activist-humanitarian group Brothers to the Rescue. Unnamed US Department of Justice (DoJ) officials told US media the indictment could come as soon as next Wednesday. Asked on Friday

about the reported indictment plan, President Donald Trump told reporters on Air Force One: "I'll let DoJ comment on it." He added: "But [Cubans] need help, as you know. And you talk about a declining country. They are really a nation, a country in decline." Trump has issued an

oil blockade against Cuba, which has exacerbated fuel shortages. This week the island's energy minister acknowledged that Cuba has, in essence, run out of fuel oil. Potential charges against Raúl Castro were unclear, but officials said the investigation centred on an attack on two small planes, which happened on 24 February 1996 while Fidel was president and Raúl was armed forces minister. Four people aboard were killed in the incident. Brothers to the Rescue, a Cuban exile group that searched for rafts carrying migrants from Cuba to the US, had previously dropped anti-Castro leaflets near the Cuban coast.

## FREIGHT TRAIN AND BUS CRASH KILLS AT LEAST EIGHT IN BANGKOK



A crash between a freight train and a public bus has killed at least eight people and injured dozens of others in Bangkok. Police and rescue officials said the collision triggered a fire that engulfed the public bus on Saturday. Several nearby vehicles were also hit during the incident, prompting firefighters and rescue crews to be dispatched. Teams worked to pull injured victims from the wreckage as fire crews contained the blaze. The fire has been brought under control, with crews now working

to cool the area, vent gas and continue to search for victims. The incident took place near Makkasan train station in the city centre on Saturday afternoon. Deputy Transport Minister Siripong Angkasakulkiat said initial reports suggested the bus had stopped on the tracks amid heavy traffic, preventing crossing barriers from closing. The train carrying containers was not able to stop in time, he added. The full cause of the crash is still under investigation, authorities say.



Toddlers among more than 50 schoolchildren kidnapped in Nigeria

## Switzerland to open secret files on Auschwitz 'Angel of Death' Mengele



The Swiss Federal Intelligence Service has said it will finally open long-sealed files on the notorious Nazi war criminal Josef Mengele, but without saying when. Mengele fled Europe after World War Two, but for years there have been rumours that he spent time in Switzerland, even though an international warrant was out for his arrest. Historians have

repeatedly requested access to the files, but until now the Swiss authorities have refused. Mengele was a doctor who served in Germany's Waffen SS. He was posted to the Auschwitz extermination camp in Nazi-occupied Poland, where he selected those to be sent to the gas chambers - an estimated 1.1 million people died, including about a million Jews.



## IPL 2026: KKR SETS A TARGET OF 247/7 FOR GUJARAT TITANS



## "Zero Sense": Rituraj Gaikwad Blasted For Big Tactical Blunder, Made Even Before LSG Match Started

Chennai Super Kings' 3-game winning run came to an end against bottom-table Lucknow Super Giants in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 campaign on Friday, putting their playoff qualification at risk. Punjab Kings' slip-up had opened the door for CSK to go fourth in the points table, but they couldn't capitalise on the opportunity. After the game, former Chennai batter Subramaniam Badrinath tore into skipper Rituraj Gaikwad for his 'tactical blunder' that played a role in the team's defeat against Lucknow. Rituraj himself blamed the bowling unit for the below-par show against LSG, after the batters took them to a challenging total of 187/5 on a tricky wicket. Lucknow chased down the total in just 16.4 overs. "CSK losing because of team selection errors is becoming a pattern this season. Leaving out Akeal Hosen on this track made zero sense. Another game, another missed opportunity," Badrinath said on X



(formerly Twitter). CSK losing because of team selection errors is becoming a pattern this season. Leaving out Akeal Hosen on this track made zero sense. Another game, another missed opportunity. Rituraj refused to press the panic button after the defeat and urged his teammates to focus on the next two games, and get the two wins that take the team to the next round. "I felt there was a bit of something for the fast bowlers. You know, when we batted, we found it difficult to hit it off the hard lengths probably, their bowlers executed it

really well. But I think we were looking at 160 or 170 and we ended up getting 180. So I thought, probably nothing much better we could have done from a batting point of view, but I think credit to them. They batted really well and never know if the pitch got better or not, but I think they played some extraordinary shots," he said. "Just make sure we come back and improve what are the areas we need to improve and yes, try and adapt and assess the conditions as quickly as possible and it is a simple calculation for us.

### PGA CHAMPIONSHIP SHOCKERS:

## Bryson DeChambeau, Tommy Fleetwood Crash Out While Rory McIlroy Keeps Major Dream Alive

The noise around Ryder Cup form, LIV Golf expectations and fading major hopes only grew louder at Aronimink Golf Club after a brutal Friday left several elite names packing early. What began as another high-profile PGA Championship turned into a survival test, with the Pennsylvania layout punishing even some of the sport's biggest stars as the cut line tightened heading into the weekend. Bryson DeChambeau's exit drew the sharpest clubhouse reaction after the two-time US Open champion failed to recover from a disastrous opening round. Tommy Fleetwood, Viktor Hovland and Robert MacIntyre also slipped out of



contention, adding fresh pressure to players already battling form concerns, golf rankings movement and looming Ryder Cup scrutiny during a packed major season. PGA Championship cut line leaves LIV Golf and Ryder Cup stars stunned

DeChambeau arrived carrying strong major expectations after recent LIV Golf performances, but Aronimink never allowed him to settle. His opening six-over-par round immediately left him chasing the field and the response many

expected never materialised. The Crushers GC captain eventually signed off at seven over par in a tie for 114th, one of the tournament's biggest surprises after entering the week among the betting favorites. Fleetwood's wait for a first major title also rolls on after another frustrating finish under tournament pressure. The Englishman closed at five over par before heading home early, while MacIntyre's challenge collapsed during a difficult second-round 75 that matched Fleetwood's total. Ryder Cup team-mates Hovland and Sepp Straka were also unable to survive the cut after both finished six over.

## Chase Daniel Calls The Dianna Russini-Mike Vrabel Controversy 'Unfortunate': "I'm Sure She'll Land On Her Feet"

NFL locker rooms are used to dealing with distractions, but few offseason storylines have crossed into mainstream attention quite like the ongoing speculation involving Dianna Russini and New England Patriots head coach Mike Vrabel. What began as online chatter around viral photographs has steadily turned into one of the league's most uncomfortable media conversations, pulling in reporters, former players and fans across social media. Now, former NFL quarterback Chase Daniel has become one of the first people closely connected to Russini to publicly react. Daniel addressed the situation during an appearance on the Jim Rome Show, where he



was asked directly about Russini, his former Scoop City podcast co-host at The Athletic. Rather than offer detailed insight or take sides publicly, the former quarterback made it clear he was intentionally keeping his distance from the growing NFL media storm. Chase Daniel reacts to Dianna Russini and Mike

Vrabel controversy. As speculation around Russini and Vrabel continued dominating NFL news cycles, Daniel sounded cautious about saying anything that could further inflame the conversation. Without criticising either side, he acknowledged how messy the situation had become while drawing a clear line

around private matters. "Look, that's something that's unfortunate in many different ways," Daniel said during Thursday's episode of the Jim Rome Show, when asked about the drama. "We haven't really chatted about it. We haven't done any of that, so I'm going to leave that there. That's their business." Daniel, who spent years around NFL locker rooms and media circles, appeared to understand how quickly narratives can spiral once personal situations become public talking points during the offseason. Even while avoiding specifics, he hinted that he expects Russini to recover professionally from the backlash surrounding the story.

## Ricky Saints' Big WWE SmackDown Moment Overshadowed By Major Live TV Production Glitch

At a time when WWE is trying to keep SmackDown's momentum strong, Friday night became more about a live production mistake than the actual wrestling. Fans expecting another big step in Ricky Saints' WWE rise instead saw an awkward broadcast issue interrupt one of the night's featured matches. The former AEW champion has been building momentum since joining WWE, which made the timing of the mistake even more unfortunate as the company continues trying to establish him as an important part of the

SmackDown roster. What was supposed to be a strong outing against Carmelo Hayes suddenly turned confusing once the broadcast audio stopped matching the action in the ring. Within minutes, clips of the mistake spread across social media, with many fans questioning how such an obvious error happened during a live WWE show. Ricky Saints match

on WWE SmackDown disrupted by major production glitch. The problem reportedly started during an important moment in the match as the atmosphere inside the arena shifted and commentary began building excitement for the closing sequence. Instead of hearing commentary connected to the match, viewers at home suddenly heard unrelated promotional audio for another WWE event while the action inside the ring continued normally. The mismatch created a strange viewing experience, with fans hearing one thing while watching something completely different happen on screen. Even some people inside the arena appeared confused as the segment briefly lost its rhythm.

## Paige Suffers Awkward Wardrobe Malfunction During WWE SmackDown As Cameras Suddenly Cut Away

A surprising moment during this week's WWE SmackDown quickly grabbed fans' attention after Paige appeared to suffer a wardrobe issue in the middle of a live match. The incident happened during a Women's Tag Team bout where Paige teamed up with Brie Bella against Giulia and Kiana James. While the match itself was already intense, viewers online were more focused on what happened to Paige's ring gear during the action. Fans watching closely noticed the former WWE star repeatedly trying to adjust part of her top throughout the match.

Paige and Brie Bella faced Giulia and Kiana James on SmackDown. The match started with Paige and Brie Bella looking like the stronger team on paper. Giulia and Kiana James had shown signs of tension in recent weeks, with several moments of miscommunication causing problems between them before this match even happened. Still, once the bell rang, things did not go as easily as expected for the champions. Giulia and James surprisingly managed to work together for most of the match and kept the pressure on Paige and Brie for long stretches.



## Has MrBeast Really Lost 50% Of Views? YouTuber Responds To Stunning Claims



MrBeast is once again trending online after claims started spreading that his YouTube viewership had fallen by 50%. The discussion picked up after a clip from the PBD Podcast went viral on X on May 15, 2026. During the conversation, podcast host Patrick Bet-David talked about YouTube's algorithm and questioned whether the platform may be changing how large creators get recommended to viewers. While discussing the topic, Patrick pointed to reports claiming that MrBeast's videos were no longer pulling the massive numbers they once did. He compared older uploads that reportedly reached hundreds of millions of views to newer uploads that are now landing somewhere around 60 to 100 million views. The clip quickly spread online, with people debating whether YouTube's algorithm had changed or if viewer habits were simply different now. MrBeast, whose real name is Jimmy Donaldson, later reacted to the claims himself. The YouTuber pushed back on

the "50% down" number and explained that comparing old videos to newer uploads does not really tell the full story. His response started another wave of discussion across social media. Why people started saying MrBeast's YouTube views are falling. The conversation mainly came from a viral segment of the PBD Podcast. Patrick Bet-David said many big creators seem to be seeing lower numbers recently, including podcasts and entertainment channels that once pulled much bigger audiences. While talking about MrBeast specifically, Patrick mentioned that older videos on the channel had accumulated extremely high numbers over time. According to him, newer uploads now appear much lower in comparison, leading some people to believe viewership had dropped heavily. The clip gained attention fast because MrBeast is still the most subscribed creator on YouTube, so any conversation about his channel performance instantly becomes a huge topic online.

## Virat Kohli's ODI World Cup Ultimatum Leaves BCCI In A Tight Spot

When a sporting icon like Virat Kohli has to justify his worth, we know that everything isn't right when it comes to his relationship with the coaches, the management or the board. Kohli has never been one to speak in half-measures, but his remarks regarding his future in One Day

Internationals are bound to force even the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to think about the road forward for the 2027 ODI World Cup. Speaking candidly on the Royal Challengers Bengaluru podcast, Kohli addressed the relentless speculation surrounding his participation in the 2027 ICC ODI World Cup. In doing so, he sent a clear message straight to the BCCI bosses, the management and selectors. "Either tell me on day one I am not good enough or I am not needed. But if I am made to feel like I need to constantly prove my worth and my value, then I am not in that space," were Kohli's comments in the podcast, as he made it clear that he is in no mood to prove himself again,

especially at this stage of his career. If pushed, he hinted at moving on from "this space". For a player who has redefined modern cricket's fitness and run-scoring benchmarks, the statement is a fierce defence of his legacy. For the BCCI and the national selection committee, however, it complicates an already intricate relationship. The Complexities Of One-Format Following his T20 International retirement after India's 2024 World Cup triumph and his subsequent departure from Test cricket, Kohli's international career is now exclusively reserved for the 50-over format. With ODIs increasingly squeezed out of the global calendar, the lack of consistent game time naturally demands a debate about Kohli's continuity in interna-

tional cricket, especially at the age of 37. Yet, Kohli's counter-argument shifts the burden of proof entirely onto the management. By stressing that his year-round, elite lifestyle ensures he can "run boundary to boundary for 40 overs without complaint," Kohli is making it clear that any attempt to drop or phase him out cannot be masked as a "fitness" or "workload" decision. Last year, Kohli scored 651 runs in the ODI format at an average of 65.1, while also recording three centuries. This year, he already has a hundred to his name in one-day cricket. The BCCI's selection policy in recent times heavily favoured flexibility, often assessing senior players series-by-series as major tournaments approach.



## Teja Sajja, Prasanth Varma, K Niranjan Reddy, PrimeShow Entertainment's Pan India Blockbuster HanuMan Releasing In 3D In Telugu, Hindi On June 25



Superhero Teja Sajja and creative filmmaker Prasanth Varma's sensational blockbuster HanuMan is gearing up for a grand return to the big screen with a spectacular 3D makeover. The National Award-winning film, which originally took the nation by storm with its blend of mythology, emotion, and contemporary storytelling, is now set for a global 3D release on 25 June 2026. Produced by K Niranjan Reddy under PrimeShow Entertainment, the film earned historic

acclaim during its initial run for its imaginative world-building, impactful narrative, and strong technical execution. With its enhanced 3D presentation, the makers aim to offer audiences an even more immersive experience of the divine world of Anjanadri. Amritha Aiyer stars as the leading lady, while cinematographer Dasaradhi Sivendra originally crafted the film's striking visuals. The music by Gowra Hari and Anudeep Dev added emotional depth and played a significant role in the film's massive appeal.

## "That was a memorable moment during the shooting of 'Thimmarajupalli TV'" – Actor Pradeep Kotte

The film 'Thimmarajupalli TV', produced by hero Kiran Abbavaram under his KA Productions banner in association with Sumaira Studios while encouraging new talent, became a successful village-based period drama. Teja Velpucharla worked as co-producer, and V. Muniraju made his debut as director with this movie. The film is set to stream on the OTT platform Aha from the 15th of this month. On this occasion, actor Pradeep Kotte shared details about his cinematic journey.

### BACKGROUND...

- I am from Palamaneru in Chittoor district. I worked in Chennai and later shifted to Hyderabad. After coming here, I entered acting through short films. I performed in stage plays under Bashir Master at B Studio. Our director V. Muniraju watched those plays and auditioned me for the role of Rajappa. Later, when I learned that Kiran Abbavaram was producing the film, I became very confident.

### FIRST OPPORTUNITY...

- The character Rajappa in 'Thimmarajupalli TV' received great appreciation. It had many variations, and I got a very good response through that role. I can truly call this my first real opportunity in cinema. Though I acted in short films and independent movies before, this was my first feature film and my first appearance on the big screen.

### BALANCING TWO CAREERS...

- I continued my job while trying for film opportunities. Through work-from-home and leaves, I managed this movie too. I feel the delay in my career happened because I couldn't dedicate myself fully. For the last ten years, I've been balancing both careers. My family supported me a lot, especially my wife. Since she took care of family responsibilities, I was able to focus on both my job and films.

### KIRAN ABBAVARAM WAS POPULAR EVEN THEN...

- I've loved cinema since childhood, though I didn't realize it was my passion. During engineering, I acted in a short film and understood my interest in acting. Back when we were making short films, I already knew Kiran



Abbavaram. He also knew me as an artist. Even at that time, he had a fan following. He mastered every craft and reached this stage through hard work.

### NO FEAR ANYMORE...

- In these ten years of experience, I lost my fear of the camera. I learned how to perform in front of it. Theatre drama taught me dialogue delivery and diction. In one play, I performed five different roles continuously for one and a half hours. Director Muniraju used to explain every scene in great detail. The workshop helped us immensely.

### EVERY CHARACTER CREATES AN IMPACT...

- I liked many performances in the movie, including those by Sai Tej and Latheesh. Most of the actors performed in single takes. Every character in the film creates an impact.

### A MEMORABLE MOMENT...

- No one in my family knew that I was involved in acting. Only my sister knew a little about it. Without informing my parents, my sister brought them to the shooting location. Seeing my parents there, and them seeing me acting like that, was truly a memorable moment.

## Chilaka Productions next Mareechika Trailer Promises A Haunting Tale Of Love, Betrayal And Revenge; Hitting Big Screens in May 29th



National Award-winning filmmaker Satish Kasetty is all set to captivate Telugu audiences once again with his upcoming thriller Mareechika. Known for presenting unique and thought-provoking concepts on screen, the director appears to have crafted another intriguing cinematic experience. Featuring Regina Cassandra, Anupama Parameswaran and Viraj Ashwin in lead roles, the film is gearing up for a grand theatrical release on May 29. Backed by passionate producers Rajiv Chilaka and Meghhaa Chilakka under the Chilaka Productions banner, the film has already started creating strong curiosity with its intense theatrical trailer. The trailer opens on an emotional and mysterious note with Anupama Parameswaran ( Venkata Laxmi ) playing a village girl who claims that someone has killed Sanju ( Viraj Ashwin ). The initial portions beautiful

ly showcase the innocent romance and cheerful moments shared between Viraj Ashwin and Anupama. Their chemistry brings warmth and emotional depth before the story suddenly shifts gears. Regina Cassandra then makes a striking entry as Mareechika, a US-returned woman introduced into Viraj's life by Anupama herself, setting the stage for a dramatic emotional conflict. As the narrative progresses, relationships begin to change and emotions spiral into heartbreak and suspicion. Anupama's character undergoes a drastic transformation after witnessing the growing closeness between Viraj and Regina. What begins as a tender love story soon evolves into a gripping thriller packed with tension, emotional trauma and unexpected twists. The trailer cleverly avoids revealing major plot points while maintaining a sense of mystery around every character. The second

half of the trailer intensifies with suspenseful visuals and a murder investigation that raises several intriguing questions. Who exactly killed Sanju? Who is Mareechika? Is betrayal driving the events unfolding around them? The police investigation, layered with emotional confrontations and dark undertones, hints at a story filled with psychological depth and revenge-driven drama. The makers seem determined to deliver a thriller that keeps audiences guessing till the very end. Adding immense weight to the film's atmosphere is the music composed by legendary maestro Ilaiyaraaja. His powerful background score significantly elevates the tension and emotional impact throughout the trailer. With visually engaging storytelling, emotionally layered performances and a suspense-filled narrative, Mareechika promises to offer Telugu audiences a fresh and thrilling cinematic experience on the big screen.

## Grand Curtain Raiser Event Held for Cross-State Reality Show "Jungle Boogie"

The curtain raiser event of the cross-state reality show Jungle Boogie was held grandly in Hyderabad on Friday. Five teams — Telugu Lions, Hindi Hawks, Tamil Tigers, Mavericks, and Kannada Panthers — are set to participate in this reality show. Auditions will be conducted on the 17th and 18th of this month at Prasad Labs in Hyderabad. Contestants will be selected after multiple rounds of screening. Around 200 participants are expected to attend the auditions. Those selected will stay in a forest for 90 days and perform adventurous tasks assigned by the organizers. Contestants who survive the eliminations will eventually emerge as winners. Speaking at the Jungle Boogie curtain raiser event held on Saturday: Senior film journalist Prabhu said, "Designing a reality show like Jungle



Boogie on the scale of a pan-India movie is a great achievement. Five teams are participating in this reality show. Auditions are being conducted on the 17th and 18th of this month, and selected contestants will enter the show. Staying in the forest for 90 days and performing adventurous tasks will be a challenge not only for the participants but also for the organizers. I hope Jungle Boogie, which comes

with an exciting concept, becomes a great success in all languages." Senior film journalist YJ Rambabu said, "Reality shows engage audiences with innovative concepts. Jungle Boogie is also arriving with a unique idea. This pan-India reality show deserves great appreciation. We convey our best wishes to the entire team. The media fraternity will definitely support this show." Director

Yashodhara Vikram said, "As a director and writer, I have worked on several films in the Kannada film industry. This concept was given by my friend Vinod, who has previously worked on some reality shows. When I approached him for a movie project, he suggested we first make this reality show and then proceed with the film. After hearing the concept, I felt it would be a highly challenging reality show. We approached leading television channels, and they requested a pilot episode. We expect approval from them soon. I have taken directing Jungle Boogie as a challenge and hope for everyone's support." Epic Productions head Parthasarathi said, "India is a blend of diverse cultures. Though the show is presented as a competition among contestants from different states, our intention is to convey that our culture is ultimately one.

## DHURANDHAR 2'S OTT RELEASE PUSHED TO JUNE



## KIARA'S BOLD RELATIONSHIP ADVICE SPARKS CULTURAL DEBATE



When Kiara Advani and Siddharth Malhotra got married, there was a huge appreciation and admiration from the public on social media. No one expected that the couple was going to settle down in life, and until that happened, they remained silent despite the rumors and speculations that tried to irk them. Now, they have a daughter named Saraayah about whom Kiara spoke in a recent podcast interview. Kiara Advani said that she wouldn't want her daughter to feel like she can only date one person and has to marry that same person. "I

would want her to see a very full life. I don't want her to feel like she has to only date one person or she has to... Like, there's no restriction of if you want to get married, get married, and if you don't want to get married, don't get married..." Kiara said. Kiara Advani was in other relationships before eventually marrying Siddharth. She thinks that it helped her to get to know more about herself and what she wants. "I'll tell her (Saraayah) that it's okay to experience life in totality, to decide what you want and what you don't want, and you will make mistakes along the way.

## Purushaha has all kinds of elements, It's a film you can enjoy with your entire family: Director Veeru Vulavala

Under the presentation of Bathula Saraswathi and the banner of Kalyan Productions, Bathula Koteswara Rao is producing the upcoming film Purushaha. With this movie, Pavan Kalyan Bathula is making his debut as a hero, while it is directed by Veeru Vulavala. The cast includes Pavan Kalyan, Sapthagiri, Kasireddy Raj Kumar, Rayancha Kokkura, Vishika, and Hasini Sudheer in key roles. The movie is scheduled for release on May 22nd. So far, the posters, songs, glimpses, and teaser have successfully created strong curiosity among the audience. As part of the promotions, director Veeru Vulavala shared several interesting details with the media.

### TELL US ABOUT YOUR BACK-

### GROUND:

I've always been fond of painting. As a kid, I used to paint pictures of heroes on cloth, and those paintings would be displayed in front of the atres. Later, I pursued Bachelor of Fine Arts. No matter what I did, I always wanted to be part of the film industry. During that time, I wrote and designed the title for Kotha Bangaru Lokam. Since then, I have written and designed over 350 film titles for stars including Chiranjeevi garu and Pavan Kalyan garu.

### HOW DID THE PRODUCER GET CONVINCED? WHAT WAS HIS REACTION AFTER HEARING THE STORY?

While I was going around narrating this story, I got the opportunity to work in the direction team of Masooda, which became a successful

film. I worked very seriously for about three months and narrated the story to many people. Eventually, it reached Koteswara Rao garu. I told him clearly that although the main plot revolves around Govind (Pavan Kalyan) and Kamala (Rayancha)'s love story, the film also has many strong supporting characters. He really liked the story. He felt that only with a subject like this his son could reach family audiences, and immediately gave his approval.

### TELL US ABOUT THE PRODUCER'S SUPPORT:

Producer Koteswara Rao garu never questioned us even once about anything during the making. At every stage, he encouraged us wholeheartedly. His daughter Saraswathi garu took great care of the entire team on set every single day. With their sup-

port, I was able to make the film so well. After watching the final cut, Koteswara Rao garu held me and cried. He said, "This is my 26-year dream," and became emotional.

### WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERS IN PURUSHAHA LIKE?

Pavan Kalyan will be seen as a good-hearted man who can go to any extent for love. The roles played by Sapthagiri and Kasireddy offer solid entertainment. Especially the dialogues written for Kasireddy's character will leave the audience in splits. There are many interesting roles played by VTV Ganesh, Anantha Sriram, and Vennela Kishore. Every character has something memorable. There's an episode involving Vennela Kishore near a window- audiences will laugh uncontrollably in theatres.

