

# THE SOUTH INDIA TIMES

Essence of the South

NATIONAL DAILY NEWSPAPER

For Website Visit [epaper.thesouthindiatimes.com](http://epaper.thesouthindiatimes.com) [www.thesouthindiatimes.com](http://www.thesouthindiatimes.com) [/thesouthindiatimes.yahoo.in](https://www.facebook.com/thesouthindiatimes)



**Mamata Banerjee to meet party MLAs today to outline Oppn strategy**

INSIDE | PAGE

**TRUMP SAYS HE CALLED OFF NEW IRAN ATTACK AT REQUEST OF GULF STATES**

WORLD | NEWS



**Peddi Trailer Raises Hype Sky-High With Epic Rural Action Spectacle**

CINEMA | PAGE

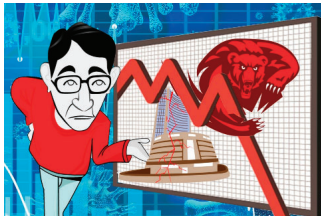


SCAN FOR E-PAPER

**OM NAMO VENKATESAYA**



**Sensex, Nifty end lower amid global tensions**



Mumbai, May 19 : Indian benchmark equity indices erased their intra-day gains and closed lower on Tuesday as weakness in banking, financial and metal stocks weighed on investor sentiment. The Sensex declined 114.19 points, or 0.15 per cent, to close at 75,200.85. The Nifty settled 31.95 points, or 0.14 per cent, lower at 23,618. Commenting on Nifty technical outlook, experts said that a sustained move above the 23,700-23,800 region will be essential to strengthen recovery momentum toward the psychological 24,000 mark, where stronger selling pressure is likely to emerge. "On the downside, the 23,600-23,500 zone continues to remain a crucial immediate support area, and a decisive breakdown below this region could extend weakness toward the broader 23,300 zone," a market expert mentioned. Among the major laggards in the Nifty index were Titan Company, UltraTech Cement and Tata Consumer Products. Kotak Mahindra Bank were the top loser on Sensex. Other top laggards were Titan Bharti Airtel, Sun Pharma and Indigo. On the other hand, Infosys led the gainers pack. HCL Tech, Tech Mahindra, Eternal and TCS were among top gainers on the same index. The Indian rupee weakened sharply during the session, falling 25 paise to touch a fresh low of 96.61 against the US dollar. The currency eventually settled at 95.53 per dollar, compared to its previous close of 95.36. Sectorally, banking and financial shares remained under pressure throughout the session. The Nifty Private Bank index emerged as the worst-performing sectoral index, while the Nifty Bank and Nifty Financial Services indices also underperformed the broader market.

**K'taka Dy CM Shivakumar visits Tirumala temple; says prayed for country to overcome economic crisis**



Bengaluru/Tirumala, May 19 : Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister and state Congress President D.K. Shivakumar on Tuesday said that he prayed to Lord Venkateshwara at the Hindu pilgrimage centre of Tirumala for the country to overcome the economic crisis and for the state to receive good rainfall.

His visit to Tirumala has assumed significance amid the ongoing leadership tussle in the state. Shivakumar, along with his wife Usha, offered prayers and had darshan of Lord Sri Venkateshwara Swamy at around 3 a.m. He arrived in Tirumala on Monday evening and stayed there overnight. Later, he travelled to Tumakuru to attend the mega event organised by the Karnataka government to mark the completion of three

years in office. Shivakumar is considered a strong contender for the post of Chief Minister and had recently stated that both he and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah would be called to Delhi. Speaking to mediapersons after offering prayers at the Tirumala Tirupati temple, Shivakumar said he sought blessings for peace, prosperity and good health for people across the country. "I have prayed to Lord Venkateshwara that the country should not suffer from an economic crisis, that everyone be blessed with strength and good health, and that the state receives good rainfall," he said. The Deputy Chief Minister said he also prayed for peace and stability in the country and for the nation to effectively face its challenges.

**India must convert global uncertainties & geopolitical challenges into opportunities: Goyal**

■ HE SAID INDIAN PRODUCTS SHOULD REACH GLOBAL SHELVES AS FINISHED PRODUCTS RATHER THAN MERELY AS RAW MATERIALS

New Delhi (TSIT)

Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal on Tuesday said the present global situation and geopolitical uncertainties should be viewed as an opportunity for India to strengthen business processes, undertake faster reforms, build greater resilience and strengthen supply chains. Addressing the ASSOCHAM India Business Reform Summit 2026 in New Delhi, Goyal called for deeper collaboration between industry and government to advance ease of doing business, enhance India's competitiveness and accelerate the country's journey towards Viksit Bharat 2047.

He said businesses should remain alert to both opportunities and risks without panicking. He said India had successfully overcome unpredictable challenges such as COVID-19 and emphasised the need for smarter and more efficient business practices, including reducing waste, improving productivity and adopting energy efficiency



measures. Goyal noted that the lessons learnt during the COVID period had demonstrated the effectiveness of digital engagement and remote working models. Referring to the rapid growth of Global Capability Centres (GCCs) in India, Goyal said around 1,800 GCCs are operating in the country and generating nearly 2 million direct jobs and around 10 million indirect jobs. He highlighted that India is engaging with the world from a position of strength and noted that the country is a competitive manufacturer of goods and provider of services.

Referring to the Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) covering 38 countries, he said these agreements open doors for greater engagement and stressed that Indian businesses must leverage them for attracting investments and increasing exports rather than allowing imports alone to rise. Furthermore, Goyal said the government would continue to act as an enabler and referred to the Bhavya initiative and stakeholder consultations regarding the location of 100 new industrial parks. He informed that 20 parks are already at various stages of development.

**Petrol, Diesel prices hiked again; fuel rates up by 90 paise per litre**

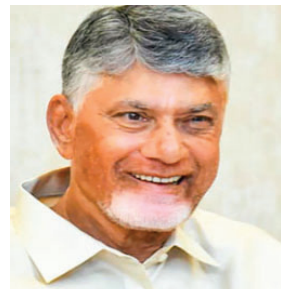
New Delhi (TSIT)

Petrol and diesel prices were hiked again on Tuesday, with fuel rates rising by around 90 paise per litre across the country. This marks the second increase in less than a week as soaring global crude oil prices continue to put pressure on state-run oil companies.



With the latest revision, petrol price in Delhi increased to Rs 98.64 per litre from Rs 97.77, while diesel rose to Rs 91.58 per litre from Rs 90.67. Similar increases were recorded in Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai, pushing fuel prices higher across major cities. The latest hike comes just four days after oil marketing companies had raised petrol and diesel prices by Rs 3 per litre on May 15, which was the first major increase in fuel prices in nearly four years.

**No compromise on safeguarding rights of fishermen, says CM Naidu**



Amaravati (TSIT) :

Amid reports of alleged trespassing and illegal fishing by mechanised fishing boats of Tamil Nadu in the territorial waters of Andhra Pradesh, Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday made it clear that Andhra Pradesh will not tolerate anyone from neighbouring states encroaching upon its coastal waters. "This coastline belongs to us; the boats are ours, and the fishing rights are ours - there will be no compromise on this matter," he declared while addressing fishermen at Thummalapenta Village in SPSR Nellore district. "We

will not tolerate anyone from neighbouring states encroaching upon our coastal waters. We will safeguard the rights of our fishermen," he said. The Chief Minister assured farm-

ers that the government will maintain strict surveillance along the coastline and take measures to prevent boats from neighbouring states from entering our waters.



**Fishermen in 100 boats reach CM Naidu's house to thank him**

Amaravati (TSIT) N. Chandrababu Naidu received a grand show of gratitude from Andhra Pradesh fishermen, who arrived in 100 boats at his Undavalli residence after the government released financial aid for the second consecutive year under the "In the Service of Fishermen" scheme. The state provided Rs

20,000 each to fishermen families during the fishing ban period. This year, Rs 262 crore was distributed to 1.3 lakh families. During a visit to Nellore, the Chief Minister assured fishermen of continued support and warned against illegal fishing by neighbouring states in Andhra Pradesh waters.

**India Must Build Smart Power Architecture Rooted in Self-Reliance, Strategic Autonomy: COAS**

New Delhi (TSIT):

Stressing that security has become the foundation of national prosperity in an increasingly fractured global order, Chief of Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi on Tuesday called for the creation of a robust "smart power" architecture anchored in self-reliance, strategic autonomy, innovation, and resilience. Delivering the opening address at the seminar "Security to Prosperity - Smart Power for Sustained National Growth", the Army Chief said the changing geopolitical environment demanded that India move with urgency and coherence across military, industrial, technological, and diplomatic domains.

"History does not wait for those who are ready. It rewards those who are already moving. Bharat is moving. The question is - are we moving faster?" he said. Describing the pillars that must anchor India's strategic framework, General Dwivedi said, "It rests on four pillars of conviction: Atma 'nirbharta', capability built from within, leverage earned, no strategic dependency accepted; Atma 'raksha', security as a whole-of-nation, whole-of-domain enterprise; Atma 'sahyog', the troika of academia, industry and military moving in rhythm; and Atma 'nishchay', strategic autonomy as a living practice, decisions taken on a national barricade, free from alliance compulsion, anchored in Vasudeva Kutumbakam, engaging all with equal ease and captured by none."

The Army Chief underlined that the world was witnessing increasing disorder, distrust, and weap-



onisation of economic and technological interdependence. "We were promised a world where prosperity would make power politics obsolete. Instead, we have a world where power politics is being used to reorganise prosperity," he remarked.

Referring to global strategic competition, he said, "Semiconductors and their selective availability have become tools for hedging. The Strait of Hormuz has become a zone of active contestation. Global defence spending has crossed 2.7 trillion dollars, exceeding the entire UN budget for Sustainable Development Goals." He asserted that the distinction between security and prosperity had effectively disappeared. "Security is no longer a cost that prosperity must bear. It is the precondition for prosperity to commence its progressive journey," he said. Explaining his vision of "SMART" power as a strategic framework, General Dwivedi elaborated on five pillars: Statecraft, Manufacturing depth, Accelerated innovation, Resilience, and Technology primacy.

On statecraft, he said, "The demand is for whole-of-nation statecraft towards a single national purpose. Strategic autonomy is not isolation or exclusion but mutual

inclusion and freedom to engage with all." Highlighting the need for a strong defence industrial ecosystem, he warned, "A nation that cannot produce what it needs will eventually lose the ability to decide what it wants."

The Army Chief said the Indian Army was strongly pursuing self-reliance. "Eighty-three per cent of capital expenditure, 91 per cent ammunition, and 97 per cent special clothing are now aligned towards Atmanirbharta," he noted, adding that the effort was helping create an ecosystem ranging from components to high-technology finished products, including exports. Calling for rapid innovation in emerging technologies, he said, "The cycle from lab to battlefield has compressed from decades to months. Innovation that cannot scale is innovation that arrives too soon." He stressed the need for enterprise-scale impact in artificial intelligence, cyber, quantum systems, autonomous platforms, space, and advanced materials.

On resilience, General Dwivedi cautioned that the greatest strategic vulnerability today was dependence on foreign supply chains, critical minerals, and digital infrastructure.

"Resilience means systematically eliminating those dependencies not as an economic preference but as a security imperative," he said.

Speaking on technology leadership, he observed, "Whoever commands the technology stack in the next decade will tend to command the conflict outcomes. The follower pays the price, the leader sets the terms." The Army Chief also linked India's military transformation with the broader national vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. He said the Indian Army's "Decade of Transformation" was focused on technology absorption, digital networking, data-centric operations, and physical networking.

Referring to Operation Sindoor conducted on the intervening night of May 6 and 7, 2025, General Dwivedi described it as an example of smart power in action.

"In a precisely defined 22-minute operation window, Operation Sindoor delivered military precision, information control, diplomatic signalling, and economic resolve as one coherent national act," he said. "It struck deep, dismantled terrorist structures, punctured a long-standing strategic assumption, and then stopped deliberately and purposefully. The deliberate thought after 88 hours was smart power in its most complete expression - knowing exactly which instrument to apply, at what intensity, and precisely when to convert a military movement into a strategy," he added. Quoting former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir, the Army Chief concluded, "Peace is not the absence of strength. Peace is the presence of capability, confidence, and resolve."

**PM Modi, Icelandic counterpart Kristrun Frostadottir hold talks in Oslo**

Oslo (TSIT)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a bilateral meeting with his Icelandic counterpart Kristrun Frostadottir in Oslo on Tuesday. External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and other officials attended the meeting. PM Modi is on a two-day visit to Norway, where he is scheduled to attend the third India-Nordic Summit and hold bilateral engagements.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) stated, "The Summit will build upon the two previous Summits held in Stockholm in April 2018 and in Copenhagen in May 2022, and will impart a more strategic dimension to India's



relationship with the Nordic countries, especially in technology and innovation; green transition and renewable energy; sustainability; blue economy; defence; space and the Arctic." On Monday, PM Modi attended the India-Norway Business and Research Summit in Oslo,

highlighting the growing momentum in bilateral economic cooperation after the implementation of the India-EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement.

The event brought together CEOs of over 50 companies and more than 250 participants from the Indian and Norwegian

business and research communities. Several business agreements between Indian and Norwegian entities were also signed during the summit. Prime Minister Modi arrived in Norway on Monday as part of the fourth leg of his five-nation visit. In a special gesture, Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store personally received him at the airport. Norway's Ambassador to India, May-Elin Stener, India's Ambassador to Norway, Gloria Gangte, and senior officials were also present to welcome him. During his visit, PM Modi also met King Harald V at the Royal Palace in Oslo. The two leaders discussed the growing cooperation between Indian and Norwegian companies across sectors, particularly in emerging technologies.

# Kharge attacks Centre over fresh fuel price hike



New Delhi, May 19: Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the latest increase in petrol and diesel prices, accusing the Centre of burdening citizens while allegedly protecting corporate interests.

The remarks came after fuel prices were increased by nearly 90 paise per litre on Tuesday, marking the second hike within a week after state-run oil companies resumed fuel price revisions following a gap of nearly four years. In a post on X, Kharge alleged that the government was shifting the burden of its failures onto the public despite repeatedly speaking about savings and economic management.

"Robbing the common people and

giving Adani a free pass from America — this is Modi's Compromised Model," the Congress leader said.

Kharge's comments referred to reports that the US Department of Justice had permanently dropped criminal charges against Gautam Adani and Sagar Adani in a securities and wire fraud case in New York.

The Congress chief also targeted the government over India's continued purchase of Russian oil.

He claimed that Modi had sought a one-month extension from the United States for permission to buy Russian crude oil and alleged that such actions hurt the pride of Indians.

Questioning the fuel price hike, Kharge asked why the common public was being burdened if the government had received permission to continue oil purchases.

"I repeat once again, there is a lack of foresight and leadership in the BJP," he said.

A temporary US sanctions waiver for the sale and delivery of Russian seaborne crude reportedly expired on May 16. However, a senior petroleum ministry official stated on Monday that India continued purchasing Russian oil based on commercial viability and energy security considerations irrespective of sanctions waivers.

Kharge further accused the Bharatiya Janata Party of prioritising politics over governance during the crisis.

"You don't become a 'vishwaguru' just by doing sponsored PR abroad. Modi ji, you have to ensure accountability to the people," he said.

The Congress president also took a swipe at the prime minister, saying the public was more concerned about government action on economic issues than personal anecdotes.

"If you respond by saying what you're actually doing about the crisis, only then will you be called the people's true 'Pradhan Sevak'; otherwise, you'll remain nothing more than a mere 'pracharak'," Kharge added.



PRIME MINISTER SHRI NARENDRA MODI IN A GROUP PHOTO DURING THE 3RD INDO-NORDIC SUMMIT IN OSLO, NORWAY ON MAY 19, 2026.

## Former Uttarakhand CM Bhuwan Chandra Khanduri passes away in Dehradun



Dehradun, May 19 : Former Uttarakhand Chief Minister and senior BJP leader, Major General (Retd.) Bhuwan Chandra Khanduri passed away on Tuesday at Max Hospital in Dehradun after a prolonged illness.

A former Army officer who transitioned into politics, General Khanduri served two terms as the Chief Minister of Uttarakhand (first from 2007 to 2009 and second from 2011 to 2012), steering the state's administration.

During his tenure, he took stringent measures against corruption and laid the foundation for a transparent and disciplined administration within the state.

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami expressed grief over the passing of General Khanduri and called his death an irreparable loss in the landscape of nation-

al politics.

In a statement, CM Dhami said, "I have received the tragic news of the passing of the Honourable Major General Bhuwan Chandra Khanduri (Retd.), former Chief Minister of Uttarakhand."

Recalling Gen Khanduri's tenure in the Indian Army, the Chief Minister said, "During his tenure in the Indian Army, Shri Khanduri set an unparalleled example of national service, discipline, and dedication. From his military career to his public life, his persona remained steadfastly devoted to the national interest and public service." In the realm of politics, CM Dhami said that Gen Khanduri established a "strong legacy defined by the development of Uttarakhand, good governance, transparency, and an honest work ethic".

## Mamata Banerjee to meet party MLAs today to outline Oppn strategy

Kolkata, May 19 : Trinamool Congress supremo and former West Bengal Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee, has on Tuesday convened a meeting with the 80 elected party legislators in the recently concluded Assembly polls to discuss and adopt a strategy as the principal opposition party in the state now.

Trinamool Congress general secretary and the party's Lok Sabha member, Abhishek Banerjee, is also supposed to be present at the meeting in the afternoon.

A party member in the current Assembly, on strict condition of anonymity, said one of the major issues on the agenda is how to tackle the situation when the political administration of the different civic bodies in the state, which are still Trinamool Congress-controlled, are facing bureaucratic insubordination in the changed political situation.

The meeting has been convened amid the development with Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) authorities, which still has the current and four-time Trinamool Congress and former member in the previous Mamata Banerjee-led cabinet, Firhad Hakim, as its Mayor, issuing



notices under Section 400(1) of the KMC Act 1980, which allows owners of allegedly illegal constructions an opportunity to appear before civic authorities and present their case.

Notices have been served to 17 properties owned by Abhishek Banerjee in areas within the KMC jurisdiction, and copies have been pasted on the walls of these properties.

Incidentally, the KMC authorities served these notices a couple of days after the current Chief Minister, Suwendu Adhikari, while addressing a gathering at Falat in South 24 Parganas district last week, hinted at enquiries about such properties linked to one corporate entity

reportedly owned by Abhishek Banerjee.

However, while hinting at this, the Chief Minister felt short of directly naming Banerjee and instead addressed him as "Mr Nephew".

In the meeting, Adhikari also said that he had brought a list of 24 properties owned by a company of "Mr Nephew" from the KMC.

Even on Monday, the Chief Minister reminded that the new cabinet led by him is determined to take strong legal action against every person who was involved in corruption and looting public money during the previous Trinamool Congress regime.

Monday, the Chief Minister announced the formation of two separate probe commissions, both headed by retired judges of the Calcutta High Court, to investigate cases of "institutional corruption" and "crime against women".

"Both the probe commissions will start functioning from June. Justice Biswajit Basu (retired) of the Calcutta High Court will head the committee probing cases of 'institutional corruption'. On the other hand, the committee probing cases of 'crime against women' will be headed by Justice S a m a p t i Chattopadhyay," the Chief Minister told media persons on Monday afternoon.

## Adani case closure a booster for India-US economic ties: USISPF



Washington, May 19 : The resolution of the legal matter involving Adani Enterprises Ltd removes a major distraction from the growing India-US economic partnership, and could pave the way for fresh Indian investments in the United States, the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) said on Monday.

"The US Department of Justice's resolution in the case involving Adani Enterprise brings closure to the ongoing legal matter, which has been a distraction to the otherwise strong US-India economic partnership," said Dr Mukesh Agni, President and CEO of USISPF.

His remarks came after the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control announced a \$275 million settlement with Adani Enterprises Limited over alleged violations related to Iran sanctions. Agni said the Adani Group's planned investments in the United States reflected a broader trend of growing Indian corporate interest in the American market.

"Adani Enterprise's commitment to invest \$10 billion builds on US Ambassador Sergio Goro's recent announcement that Indian companies plan to invest more than \$20.5 billion across various sectors in the United States," he said.

The USISPF chief said Indian companies increasingly view the United States as a long-term strategic and economic partner. "At USISPF, we firmly believe these investments underpin Indian companies' desire to be strong partners in the United States," Agni said.

He added that Indian investments would contribute to economic growth and employment generation in both countries. "They will build on existing collaboration, further advance job creation, strengthen infrastructure, and boost long-term bilateral economic growth," he said. India and the United States have significantly expanded economic and strategic cooperation over the past decade, with trade, defence, energy and technology emerging as major pillars of the relationship.

## SVIS hosts 'Lab of the Future' experiential learning programme

Tirupati, May 19: Sriee Vidyanikethan International School (SVIS) organised its flagship experiential learning programme, "Lab of the Future," providing students hands-on exposure to emerging technologies and innovation-driven learning.



The week-long on-campus initiative featured interactive workshops and demonstrations on Artificial Intelligence (AI), Robotics, Internet of Things (IoT), and Augmented and Virtual Reality (AR/VR). Students

participated in prototype building, live demonstrations and application-based learning activities to understand real-world technology use cases.

The programme also included rocket launches, drone assembly, aircraft exploration and science

experiments aimed at improving problem-solving abilities, analytical thinking and creativity among students.

Aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the initiative focused on multidisciplinary and experiential learning while introducing students to future technologies. Speaking on the occasion, SVIS Executive Director and Trustee Vinay Maheshwari said the programme was designed to help students experience technology beyond classrooms and inspire future-focused learning.

## Goli Navya Reddy Appointed as President of 'SIMA' NRI Cell

Atlanta (USA): Goli Navya Reddy—a prominent NRI based in Atlanta and a native of Nalgonda district, Telangana—has been appointed as the President of the International NRI Cell of the South India Media Association (SIMA). During a grand special event held on Sunday in Atlanta, USA, SIMA Founder President Nakirekanti Swami officially presented her with the letter of appointment.

Speaking on the occasion, Founder President Nakirekanti Swami revealed that the NRI Cell was established with the primary objective of



expanding SIMA's activities across the globe. He expressed confidence that, under Navya Reddy's leadership, this division would be strengthened at an international level and that she would effectively discharge her responsibilities, leveraging her professional experience.

Goli Navya Reddy expressed her gratitude to the SIMA management for entrusting her with these pivotal responsibilities. She affirmed that she would work with great vigor to achieve the association's objectives by bringing together South Indian media representatives and the NRI community from around the world onto a common platform. Several prominent NRIs, dignitaries, and media representatives from across the USA participated in the event and extended their best wishes to Navya Reddy.

## AP: 500 stolen/lost mobile phones recovered

Tirupati : The police have recovered over 500 lost/stolen mobile phones, worth more than Rs 1 crore and handed over some of them to the owners in Tirupati district of Andhra Pradesh. Addressing a press conference on Tuesday, Superintendent of police L Subba Rayudu said that the district police had so far recovered 4,785 lost/stolen mobile phones worth Rs 10.52 crore. He said the police during the 14th phase, recovered over 500 lost or stolen mobile phones, worth more than Rs 1 crore and handed over some of them to the victims at a mobile recovery mela held here on Tuesday.

The police received complaints on losing mobile phones through the CEIR portal, the SP stated.

The police during the last 13 phases of mobile phones recovery, had recovered 4,785 lost/stolen mobile phones worth Rs 10,52,70,000 and most of the recovered phones were handed over to the victims, the SP informed. The police teams recovered the mobile phones not only in AP but also in Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Kerala states. The victims do not need to go to the police station to lodge a complaint about the lost/stolen mobile phone and they can lodge a complaint using CEIR portal service, the SP said.

## Congress will return to power in 2028: D K Shivakumar



Tumkur: Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D. K. Shivakumar asserted that the Congress party would return to power in 2028, stating that the government's guarantee schemes had brought social change and become a model across the country.

Addressing the "Sarthaka Seva Samarpane" convention in Tumkur marking three years of the Congress government, Shivakumar claimed even BJP-ruled states were adopting the Congress guaran-

tee model. He said the schemes were introduced to support poor and middle-class families amid rising prices and economic challenges.

The KPCC president also criticised H.D. Kumaraswamy and BJP leaders, accusing them of failing to address people's issues while in power. He highlighted the government's welfare initiatives, including the Shakti scheme and land guarantee programme, and said Tumkur would be developed as a "second Bengaluru."

## Karnataka HC halts transport trade unions from launching indefinite strike on May 20

Bengaluru, May 19: The Karnataka High Court on Tuesday temporarily restrained transport employees' unions from proceeding with their proposed indefinite strike from May 20 and directed the state government to hold discussions with the unions to resolve the issue.

A vacation bench comprising Justices Suraj Govindaraj and K Manmatha Rao issued the interim order while hearing a Public Interest Litigation (PIL). The indefinite strike had been called by the joint action committee (JAC), which includes unions representing employees of the Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC), Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC), North Western Karnataka Road Transport Corporation (NWKRTC), and Kalyana Karnataka Road Transport Corporation (KKRTC). The court stated in its order that "Respondent No. 7 (JAC) and its affiliated unions shall not proceed with the strike pursuant to the strike notice dated 29.04.2026." It also directed the state government to fix a date for discussions with the unions that had announced the strike.

During the hearing, the additional advocate general informed the court that the government required two additional days to obtain instructions regarding a possible meeting between union representatives, the transport minister, and the chief minister. The submission was recorded by the court. The matter has been posted for further hearing on May 21. The PIL seeking to prevent the strike was filed by a domestic worker and a construction labourer, who argued that a bus strike would seriously affect their livelihood and daily travel needs. The transport unions had warned that services operated by the four state-run transport corporations would be suspended from May 20 if their demands, including payment of pending salaries and wage revision, were not met.

## Telangana Junior Basketball League Launched to Transform Basketball; Creates History with Rs.1.48 Crore Franchise Auctions



Bengaluru : The Telangana Basketball Association (TBA) has taken a landmark step toward transforming basketball in India with the successful launch of the Telangana Junior Basketball League (TJBL), a first-of-its-kind grassroots basketball initiative aimed at identifying, nurturing, and developing young talent across Telangana.

Inspired by the success of the Telangana Professional Basketball League (TPBL), the TJBL was launched to provide young basketball players with professional exposure, structured competition, and long-term development opportunities. The league has already created history in Indian basketball with an overwhelming response from across the state. More than 3,000 players registered for the league across four categories — Under-15 Boys, Under-15 Girls, Under-18 Boys, and Under-18 Girls — reflecting the rapidly growing basketball culture in Telangana. A significant number of registrations also came from rural districts and small

towns, highlighting the league's growing reach beyond urban centers and its role in creating opportunities for talented athletes from underserved regions. To identify the finest talent, the Telangana Basketball Association conducted week-long trials for all registered athletes. Following a rigorous selection process, the top 100 players from each category were shortlisted, taking the total number of selected players to 400 elite junior athletes. The selected players were officially announced and

felicitated at Shilpakala Vedika in the presence of players, parents, coaches, supporters, and members of the basketball community. The event marked a major milestone for grassroots basketball development in the state. The league's owners' Retreat, witnessed extraordinary enthusiasm as 10 bidders participated in a highly competitive auction process. Six franchises — Hyderabad Hurricanes, Vikarabad Predators, Nalgonda Ninjas, Rangareddy Rulers, Warangal Wildfires, and Medak Monsters — were auctioned successfully.

The six franchises together were sold for a combined value of Rs.1.48 crore, making TJBL the first youth basketball league in India to conduct franchise auctions on such a large scale. The strong investor response and record-breaking franchise sales demonstrate the growing commercial and sporting potential of basketball in Telangana.

The upcoming player auction for TJBL is scheduled for May 22 and is expected to further strengthen the

league's professional structure, visibility, and player development ecosystem.

Leading this basketball revolution is Ambati Prudhviswar Reddy, Indian National Basketball Team player and General Secretary of the Telangana Basketball Association. Prudhviswar Reddy is the only player from Telangana to represent India in international basketball and has represented the country in six international tournaments. He has also played professional basketball in Spain, the USA, and Thailand and has captained the Telangana state basketball team since 2009. After being elected as the General Secretary of the Telangana Basketball Association in 2025, Prudhviswar Reddy introduced several key initiatives aimed at transforming basketball across Telangana at both rural and urban levels. Under his leadership, the association conducted Coaches Clinics and Referee Clinics to develop qualified coaches and referees across the state and improve the overall standard of the sport.

## HCG inaugurates cancer hospital in North Bengaluru, unveils Karnataka's first 'MR-Linac' technology



Bengaluru: Healthcare Global Enterprises Limited (HCG), India's largest hospital group dedicated to cancer treatment, has inaugurated its new comprehensive cancer hospital in Batarayanapura (Hebbal). With this, it has further strengthened the availability of advanced oncology (cancer treatment) services in North Bengaluru. Bringing state-of-the-art technology, expert medical team and compassionate care under one roof, this hospital will be a major milestone in providing world-class treatment to the people of Karnataka.

A significant milestone in the field of precision oncology, this new hospital with a capacity of up to 132 beds has introduced Karnataka's first 'Elekta Unity MR-Linac' technology. It is one of the most advanced precision radiation therapy systems in the world. This revolutionary technology combines high-quality MRI imaging with a linear accelerator, enabling highly accurate and instantly adaptable life-saving cancer treatment. Designed as a com-

prehensive center for the treatment of all types of cancer, the hospital will provide diagnosis, advanced treatment, palliative care and patient-centered care under one roof. This will bring world-class cancer care closer to the patients of North Bengaluru.

Speaking at the inauguration of the new facility, Sandalwood's renowned actor and director, 'Abhinaya Chakravarthy' Badshah Kichu Sudeep said, "Cancer is a difficult journey that not only affects the patient but also the entire family. In this regard, timely diagnosis, widespread awareness and access to appropriate treatment at the right time can make a real difference in the life of the patient. HCG's new hospital in Hebbal (Batarayanapura) has taken a powerful step in this direction by bringing cutting-edge technology and expert medical care to the people. It is indeed a matter of pride and happiness that such world-class cancer treatment is now easily accessible to families across Bengaluru and Karnataka." Speaking on the inaugu-

ration of the hospital, Dr. B. S. Founder and Chairman, Healthcare Global Enterprises Limited, Ajay Kumar said: "Today's cancer treatment is data-driven and technologically advanced, with a focus on improving long-term treatment outcomes. Our goal is not just to prevent cancer recurrence; it is to successfully manage even the most advanced and metastatic (spread to other organs) cancers to a curable level through personalized and multidisciplinary care. We are very happy to launch our new center in Hebbal (Batarayanapura), North Bengaluru. It will provide this facility with state-of-the-art infrastructure and Karnataka's first 'MR-Linac' technology to the people of this region. This is a major step in precision-based cancer treatment and reaffirms HCG's commitment to making advanced oncology care accessible to everyone. As the founder, I firmly believe in giving the right treatment to the patient the first time; because only then can we achieve the best results." The inauguration of our Hebbal (Batarayanapura) centre is another historic milestone in HCG's quest for excellence in cancer care," he said proudly. The main attraction of this new hospital is the 'Elekta Unity MR-Linac'. It is a revolutionary radiation oncology (radiation therapy) system being introduced for the first time in Karnataka. This cutting-edge technology combines the highest quality MRI imaging with a linear accelerator. This enables the cancer tumor to be clearly visualized in real time during treatment. As a result, it is possible to deliver highly precise radiation therapy, which will help doctors to destroy only the cancerous cells with utmost precision.

## Puravankara Records highest-ever annual sales of Rs.7,407 Crore in FY26

Bengaluru: Puravankara Limited, one of India's most trusted and admired real estate developers, today announced its results for the quarter ended March 31, 2026, and the annual results for FY26.

In Q4FY26, the company reported an impressive PAT of Rs.111 crore, up 226% year-on-year. Sales stood at Rs.3,547 crore - the highest-ever in any quarter, up from Rs.1,225 crore in the corresponding quarter last year, reflecting a strong growth of 190%. Sales volume for the quarter was 3.01 msft, while customer collections stood at Rs.1,213 crore, up 36% from Rs.892 crore in Q4FY25. Total revenue for the quarter stood at Rs.1,541 crore, up 173% from Rs.564 crore in Q4FY25. The company also recorded a 37% year-on-year increase in average realisation to Rs.11,787 per sq. ft.

Commenting on the company's performance, Ashish Puravankara, Managing Director, Puravankara Limited, said, "Q4FY26 was a staggering quarter for Puravankara as we recorded our highest-ever sales; a 37% increase in average realisation and PAT of Rs.111 crore. The company also strengthened its expansion in Mumbai through redevelopment projects in Malabar Hill and Chembur. With a potential projected surplus of Rs.19,290 crore over the next 3-5 years and a 21.02 msft launch pipeline over 12-15 months, the foundation for sustained growth is in place. Sales guidance for FY 2026-27 is projected at Rs.11,200 crore across the Southern and Western regions. Our focus now is on accelerating execution, improving collections, and converting today's sales into tomorrow's reported profitability." For FY26, Puravankara reported the highest-ever annual sales of Rs.7,407 crore, a 55% increase year-on-year from Rs.4,783 crore. Sales volume for the year stood at 7.25 msft, compared to 5.67 msft in FY25.

## Decision to continue the health camp, which was limited to ten days: AAP's S.R. Ramachandra (Puttanna)

Bengaluru: It has been decided to continue the health camp, which was limited to ten days, and the pulse therapy is so powerful that the elderly who came to the camp with sticks and were exhausted from pain can walk without any help, said S.R. Ramachandra (Puttanna), president of the Aam Aadmi Party for the Malleshwaram

assembly constituency. Speaking after participating in the ten-day free health check-up camp organized by the Aam Aadmi Party at Vaikalakavali in Kodandarampuri in the Malleshwaram assembly constituency from May 4 to 14, he said that more than 2000 people have benefited, and the public has come in thousands

and taken advantage of it. On this occasion, the E-Khatha campaign, which will be beneficial for the public, was also launched by the party to obtain all the documents and create an E-Khatha. He said that he wanted to hold free camps everywhere in the Malleshwaram constituency and that if the public arranges for a place.

**Protium** (Formerly known as Growth Source Financial Technologies Ltd.)  
Registered & Corporate Office Address: 7th Floor, Block B2, Phase - 1 Nirlon Knowledge Park, Pahadi Village, Off. Western Express Highway, Cama Industrial Estate, Goregaon(E), Mumbai-400063, Maharashtra.

**SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES**

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 / Co-Borrower / Mortgagee (s) that the below described immovable properties mortgaged to the Secured Creditor, the Symbolic possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Protium Finance Ltd the same shall be referred herein after as Protium Finance Ltd. The Secured Assets will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" basis through E-Auction.

It is hereby informed to General public that we are going to conduct public E-Auction through website <http://bankauctions.in/>

Sr. No.	Account Number	Date of Demand Notice	Amount as per Demand Notice U/s 13(2)	Date of Symbolic Possession	Amount as on	Descriptions of the property/ Properties	Reserve Price / Earnest Money Deposit	12. E-Auction Date and Time
1	GS076EEL2315535	10th Mar 2025	Rs. 22,71,234.27/- (Rupees Twenty Two Lakh Seventy One Thousand Two Hundred Thirty Four and Two Paise) as on 06th March 2025 13(2)	23rd-May-25	Rs. 22,30,909.83/- (Twenty-two lakh thirty thousand nine hundred nine and eighty-three paise only) as on date 09th May 2026	Item No 1 All that piece and parcel of the property including RCC residential house property bearing Agasavalli Grama Panchayath Property No.359/2, PID No. 152400502700120283, measuring East to West: 15.8496 meters and North to South: 12.192 meters, in all total measuring 193.31 Sq. Meters, built up area 148.70 Square Meters, situated at Agasavalli Hosuru Village, Shivamogga Taluk & District, Karnaataka 577202, presently comes under the limits of Gollaballi Grama Panchayath, and bounded by: East by: Road, West by: Survey No.167, North by: Survey No.167, South by: Survey No.167, Item No.2 All that piece and parcel of the property including RCC residential house property bearing Agasavalli Grama Panchayathi Property No.25/2, PID No. 152400502700120282, measuring East to West: 28.96 meters and North to South: (43.59+51.52)/2 meters, in all total measuring 1377.19 Sq. Meters, built up area is 228.81 Square Meters, situated at Agasavalli Hosuru Village, Shivamogga Taluk & District, within the limits of Agasavalli Grama Panchayath, and bounded by: East by: Property of Puttannaiah West by: Property of Puttannaiah North by: Remaining property of Puttannaiah. South by: Haj Hole Main Road.	9. Rs. 70,26,300/- (Rupees Seventy lakh twenty-six thousand three hundred thirty only) 10. Rs. 1,14,41,600/- (Rupees One crore fourteen lakh forty-one thousand six hundred thirty only) 11. 50000 (Rupees Fifty thousand only)	12. 25th-June-2026 at 11:00 am to 2:00 PM (with unlimited extension of 5 min each) 13. 24th-June-2026 at 11:00 am to 5:00 PM. 14. 15th-June-2026 BETWEEN 11:00 am TO 5:00 PM
2	GS041EEL2323847	19th April 2025	Rs. 23,35,971.44/- (Rupees Twenty Three Lakh Thirty Five Thousand Nine Hundred Seventy One and Forty Four Paise Only) as on 19th April 2025	22nd Nov 2025	Rs. 25,15,148.26/- (Rupees Twenty-five lakh fifteen thousand one hundred forty-eight and paise twenty-six only)	All that piece and parcel of the property bearing Kshaneshumari No.7/54 E-Katha Property No. 1520070070020031, (As per Form No.9 and 11A), situated at Byrashedhalli Village, Kasaba Hobli, Nelamangala Taluk & District, Bangalore, measuring East to West: 45.189/2 meters, in all measuring 666.06 Square Meter, along with building constructed there and bounded on the East by: Property of Hanumanthegowda. H North by: Property of Byappa South by: Road together with all other rights, buildings, improvements and easements appurtenant thereto	9. Rs. 7,02,630/- (Rupees Seven lakh two thousand six hundred thirty only) 10. Rs. 6,44,050 (Rupees Six lakh forty-four thousand five hundred only) 11. 50000 (Rupees Fifty thousand only)	12. 25th-June-2026 at 11:00 am to 2:00 PM (with unlimited extension of 5 min each) 13. 24th-June-2026 BETWEEN 11:00 am TO 5:00 PM

1. All interested participants / bidders are requested to visit the website <https://bankauctions.in/> & <https://protium.co.in/> For details, help, procedure and online training on e-auction, prospective bidders may Contact Mr. Nitesh D Pawar Contact number: 8142000725/ 8142000666. email id: nitesh@bankauctions.in & info@bankauctions.in

For further details on terms and conditions please visit <https://bankauctions.in/> & <https://protium.co.in/> to take part in e-auction.

**THIS IS ALSO A STATUTORY 30 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER RULE 8(6)/ Rule 9 (1) OF SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002**

Date: 20.05.2026  
Place: KARNATAKA  
Sd/-, For Protium Finance Limited  
Authorised Officer

## State Congress Government Deliberately Suppressed Farmer Suicide Cases: H.D.Kumaraswamy



Bengaluru : Union Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy has levelled serious allegations that the State Congress Government has deliberately suppressed the ongoing cases of farmer suicides in Karnataka. Addressing the media at the party's state office, JP Bhavan, the Union Minister said, "Recently, I read a report in a newspaper titled 'Rise in Farmer Suicides.' I was deeply shocked after reading it. I had hoped that after such a report appeared on the front page of a newspaper twelve days ago, this government would wake up. But this government, which is busy holding conventions, has no concern for the welfare of farmers," he lashed out. Citing the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report, the Union Minister stated that 2,423 farmers and agricultural labourers died by suicide in 2023 and 2,971 in 2024 in Karnataka. "In just two years, a total of 5,394 farmers have lost

their lives. Karnataka stands second in the country in farmer suicide cases. Is the State Government unaware of these figures? Or is it knowingly suppressing them?" he questioned. The Minister further alleged that the government had deliberately concealed such a massive number of farmer suicides. "Have they organised a convention in Tumakuru to celebrate these suicides?" he criticised. "If it rains for just ten minutes, waterlogging can be seen everywhere in the city. Yet this government has spent crores of rupees extravagantly for this convention. The government itself has to bring people to attend. Officials have been given targets to mobilise crowds. Since people do not voluntarily attend Congress programmes, the government is misusing officials for political purposes," Kumaraswamy criticised.

**Protium** (Formerly known as Growth Source Financial Technologies Ltd.)  
Registered & Corporate Office Address: 7th Floor, Block B2, Phase - 1 Nirlon Knowledge Park, Pahadi Village, Off. Western Express Highway, Cama Industrial Estate, Goregaon(E), Mumbai-400063, Maharashtra.

**SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES**

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 / Co-Borrower / Mortgagee (s) that the below described immovable properties mortgaged to the Secured Creditor, the Symbolic possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Protium Finance Ltd the same shall be referred herein after as Protium Finance Ltd. The Secured Assets will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" basis through E-Auction.

It is hereby informed to General public that we are going to conduct public E-Auction through website <http://bankauctions.in/>

Sr. No.	Account Number	Date of Demand Notice	Amount as per Demand Notice U/s 13(2)	Date of Symbolic Possession	Amount as on	Descriptions of the property/ Properties	Reserve Price / Earnest Money Deposit	12. E-Auction Date and Time
1	GS132EEL2462343	22nd Jan 2026	Rs. 1,07,36,269.10/- (One Crore Seven Lakh Thirty Six Thousand Two Hundred Sixty Nine Rupees and Ten Paise Only) as on 22.01.2026	7th April 2026	Rs. 1,08,83,007.85/- (Rupees One crore eight lakh eighty-three thousand seven and paise eighty-five only)	Item No 1 All that piece and parcel of the property including RCC residential house property bearing Agasavalli Grama Panchayath Property No.359/2, PID No. 152400502700120283, measuring East to West: 15.8496 meters and North to South: 12.192 meters, in all total measuring 193.31 Sq. Meters, built up area 148.70 Square Meters, situated at Agasavalli Hosuru Village, Shivamogga Taluk & District, Karnaataka 577202, presently comes under the limits of Gollaballi Grama Panchayath, and bounded by: East by: Road, West by: Survey No.167, North by: Survey No.167, South by: Survey No.167, Item No.2 All that piece and parcel of the property including RCC residential house property bearing Agasavalli Grama Panchayathi Property No.25/2, PID No. 152400502700120282, measuring East to West: 28.96 meters and North to South: (43.59+51.52)/2 meters, in all total measuring 1377.19 Sq. Meters, built up area is 228.81 Square Meters, situated at Agasavalli Hosuru Village, Shivamogga Taluk & District, within the limits of Agasavalli Grama Panchayath, and bounded by: East by: Property of Puttannaiah West by: Property of Puttannaiah North by: Remaining property of Puttannaiah. South by: Haj Hole Main Road.	9. Rs. 70,26,300/- (Rupees Seventy lakh twenty-six thousand three hundred thirty only) 10. Rs. 1,14,41,600/- (Rupees One crore fourteen lakh forty-one thousand six hundred thirty only) 11. 50000 (Rupees Fifty thousand only)	12. 25th-June-2026 at 11:00 am to 2:00 PM (with unlimited extension of 5 min each) 13. 24th-June-2026 at 11:00 am to 5:00 PM. 14. 15th-June-2026 BETWEEN 11:00 am TO 5:00 PM
2	GS041EEL2323847	19th April 2025	Rs. 23,35,971.44/- (Rupees Twenty Three Lakh Thirty Five Thousand Nine Hundred Seventy One and Forty Four Paise Only) as on 19th April 2025	22nd Nov 2025	Rs. 25,15,148.26/- (Rupees Twenty-five lakh fifteen thousand one hundred forty-eight and paise twenty-six only)	All that piece and parcel of the property bearing Kshaneshumari No.7/54 E-Katha Property No. 1520070070020031, (As per Form No.9 and 11A), situated at Byrashedhalli Village, Kasaba Hobli, Nelamangala Taluk & District, Bangalore, measuring East to West: 45.189/2 meters, in all measuring 666.06 Square Meter, along with building constructed there and bounded on the East by: Property of Hanumanthegowda. H North by: Property of Byappa South by: Road together with all other rights, buildings, improvements and easements appurtenant thereto	9. Rs. 7,02,630/- (Rupees Seven lakh two thousand six hundred thirty only) 10. Rs. 6,44,050 (Rupees Six lakh forty-four thousand five hundred only) 11. 50000 (Rupees Fifty thousand only)	12. 25th-June-2026 at 11:00 am to 2:00 PM (with unlimited extension of 5 min each) 13. 24th-June-2026 BETWEEN 11:00 am TO 5:00 PM

1. All interested participants / bidders are requested to visit the website <https://bankauctions.in/> & <https://protium.co.in/> For details, help, procedure and online training on e-auction, prospective bidders may Contact Mr. Nitesh D Pawar Contact number: 8142000725/ 8142000666. email id: nitesh@bankauctions.in & info@bankauctions.in

For further details on terms and conditions please visit <https://bankauctions.in/> & <https://protium.co.in/> to take part in e-auction.

**THIS IS ALSO A STATUTORY 30 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER RULE 8(6)/ Rule 9 (1) OF SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002**

Date: 20.05.2026  
Place: KARNATAKA  
Sd/-, For Protium Finance Limited  
Authorised Officer

EDITORIAL

'As Long As Shesha Sustains The Earth': The Story Of The Chola Leiden Plates

In a major cultural restitution move, the Netherlands formally returned a set of 11th-century Chola-era copper plates to India on Saturday during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the European country. The handover marked the culmination of years of diplomatic efforts by New Delhi. The Aanamangalam - or Leiden - plates consist of 21 copper plates held together by a massive bronze ring bearing the seal of Rajendra Chola I. This charter and another one (Or. 1688) were taken from India by Mr Florentius Camper (1675-1748), Minister of Faith in Batavia from 1703-1712. Both charters (Or. 1687, Or. 1688) came into the possession of his great-granddaughter Johanna Camper (1797-1835), who was married to Professor Hendrik Arent Hamaker (1789-1835), and were donated in 1862 by the successors to Hamaker's estate. The plates were probably excavated or acquired by the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in Nagapattinam between 1687 and 1700, and taken away. The Colonial Collections Committee concluded that the removal amounted to 'involuntary loss of possession' and recommended their unconditional return to India. Leiden University accepted the recommendation. The Leiden Copper Plates feature royal charters from the Chola dynasty written in both Sanskrit and Tamil in the Grantha script. The Sanskrit inscription (5 plates) traces the mythical genealogy of the Chola dynasty, from Lord Vishnu, through the Sun, to legendary kings like Sibi and the Sun dynasty. The Tamil inscription (16 plates) lays out legal and administrative details. The massive bronze ring binding the plates features the Chola emblem of a tiger, the Pandya emblem of two fish, the Chera emblem of a bow, and an umbrella above them all, flanked by two lamps indicating auspiciousness and two chamas indicating royalty. A Sanskrit line in Grantha script states: "This is the order of Rajendra Chola Parakesari, whose command shines among the rows of jewels on the crowns of kings and princes". The Cholas were the rulers of the Bay of Bengal and South India, and actively supported maritime mercantile activities. In the large plates, it is mentioned that Rajendra Chola's father maintained friendly relations with the kings of the Sailendra dynasty, who ruled over Malaya and Java (Srivijaya). During the period of Rajaraja I (985-1014 CE) and Rajendra Chola (1014-1044 CE), Kadaram and Srivijaya were held by the Sailendras, who were in regular communication with China and India. At Srivijaya, there was a remarkable seat of Buddhist learning which I-Tsing, who travelled from Canton to Srivijaya, recommended to Chinese priests for training before proceeding to India for learning. Kedah, the ancient seat of Kadaram or Kataha, was an important naval base and commercial centre under the Sailendras, and from here they exercised control over their empire. The Sailendra kings mentioned in the larger Leiden plates are Sri Chulamanivarmadeva and his son Sri Maravijayottungavarmam. They were on friendly terms with Rajaraja Chola and obtained permission to build a vihara at Nagapattinam, a renowned Buddhist centre, from Rajaraja, who made land endowments to a palli (a place of education) in the 21st year of his reign (1006 CE). The Sanskrit portion of the larger Leiden plates mentions that King Rajaraja gave, in the 21st year of his reign, the entire village of Aanamangalam (about 13 kilometres from Nagapattinam) and its land to build a shrine of the Buddha in the Chulamanivarman vihara.

# Xi Is Truly Done Falling For The Great American Bluff

Trump's visit to China has been less successful than what he might have hoped for. This is surprising, but not altogether so. Surprising because the visit was long in preparation, and there was ample time, therefore, for the two sides to agree in advance on some concrete outcomes to project success. This is normal in diplomacy. Trump has been giving a boost to his planned visit by talking about his admiration for Xi Jinping as a leader, his close personal relationship with him, and how the two could together help solve the problems of the globe. That Trump took along with him America's most powerful corporate heads suggested that he expected some important business-level understandings to emerge on issues of investment, trade and technology. There would normally be little sense in organising such a high-powered accompanying business delegation without expectation of some deliverables. China, too, could have been expected to use the opportunity of Trump's visit to reset ties that were sliding into a progressively confrontational phase.

As Was Expected

If the visit has produced much less than might have been expected, it is not surprising. The Chinese and others have long sized up Trump. As a person, he does not inspire trust and confidence. His transactional approach means that he pursues short-term goals. His erratic behaviour, inconsistency, ego-driven approach, use of brutal pressure tactics, and so on, make him an unreliable interlocutor. In his first term, Trump targeted China on the trade front, accusing it of unfair trade practices and subsidies, intellectual property theft, forced technology transfer, currency manipulation, and used tariffs as a weapon to reduce the massive bilateral trade deficit, and bring manufacturing jobs back home. China imposed retaliatory tariffs in return. In his second term, Trump imposed "emergency" tariffs and has targeted China's steel, aluminium, and other manufactures. He tied several of his trade and other restrictions to the flow of Fentanyl



precursors from China to the US. He has also targeted China's maritime and logistics dominance. China's access to US technology and natural resources was restricted, and its ties with academia and research were sought to be blocked because of a suspected PLA connection.

Tit For Tat Sanctions

In the lead-up to Trump's visit, the US and China have engaged in tit-for-tat sanctions triggered by US restrictions on companies facilitating Iranian oil shipments to Chinese "teapot" refineries, and China enforcing its anti-foreign sanctions laws to block US actions. The US has targeted Chinese firms and suppliers in the defence and aerospace sectors. In return, China has sanctioned US defence firms for arms supplies to Taiwan.

China also imposed in April and October 2025 sweeping export restrictions and strict licensing requirements on seven critical rare earth elements and related magnet products in response to US tariffs and technology curbs, impacting

the global defence and electronics supply chains, including American defence companies. This led later to a bilateral agreement between the US and China to suspend further expansions of these export controls. The atmosphere in US-China relations had steadily deteriorated before Trump's visit, with China, both in official statements and actions, responding strongly to US pressures, signalling China's growing confidence in its own capacity to stand up to America's bullying actions. Trump's hand was weakened before the visit by his failure to decisively win his war on Iran. Not only that, the US could not even protect its military bases or its allies in West Asia. This has raised a question about the future security architecture of the region and the US role in it. The inability of the US to force open the Strait of Hormuz with either diplomacy or military force would have weighed in the scales of diplomacy in Beijing.

China's Upper Hand

China kept the upper hand during Trump's visit by, amongst other things, Xi Jinping retaining his

poise and distance while Trump tried to ingratiate himself with flattery and body language. At the opening of the formal delegation-level talks, the lining up of the top-most American corporate leaders behind Trump suggested a homage being paid to Xi's China, reminiscent of the kowtowing to the Chinese emperor in the past, with a solicitation for market openings. After the discourse of decoupling, de-risking supply chains, onshoring, forcing US corporations to invest in America and creating jobs at home, Trump was messaging a willingness to explore possibilities of renewed economic interdependence with China.

Addressing Trump at the formal talks, Xi was sententious and demanding. He called on the US to be "partners, not rivals" with China. He asked if China and the US could overcome the so-called "Thucydides Trap" and create a new paradigm of "major-country" relations. Xi's reference to the "Thucydides Trap" was very pointed this time. He has referred to it on occasions in the past (2013, 2015, 2023), saying that the world was big

enough to fully accommodate China and the US's "respective development and common prosperity". In the past, Xi may have wanted to blunt growing concerns about China's rise to keep open the international economic and political space for it. This time, the motivation may have been different, as China feels that it has already become a formidable economic, technological and military power and can challenge the US.

A G-2 Paradigm

Xi may want recognition of this by the US in shaping its future policies towards China. The concept of a 'China-US Constructive Strategic Stable Relationship' that emerged during Trump's visit is another way of discarding the notion of a Thucydides Trap. China wants to steadily move towards its goal of becoming the pre-eminent power by 2049. It is facing many domestic challenges and would want to avoid a confrontation with the US, but it also feels sufficiently strong because of its control over critical raw materials and technologies, which it is weaponising, coupled with the relative decline in US power, to shape the terms of their bilateral engagement. Xi believes that China and the US are the principal powers today and therefore bear a shared responsibility for maintaining global peace and prosperity. This is a G-2 paradigm. The summit ended without a joint statement, which means that differences over many issues were too wide to attempt agreed formulations and no binding agreements were reached on trade matters. Both sides issued their own readouts of the discussions.

The US readout is unusually subdued, given the superlatives that Trump usually uses to announce his success in negotiations. The readout merely says that Trump "had a good meeting" with Xi. The two sides discussed ways to enhance bilateral economic cooperation, including expanding market access for American businesses to China and increasing Chinese investment in US industries, but without mentioning any specific agreements.

## WHY IS INTEREST ON CAR CHEAP AND INTEREST ON EDUCATION HIGH?



In a developing country like India, education has always been considered the most important tool for nation-building. We often say that youth are the future of the country, that education is the backbone of society, and that knowledge is the foundation of development. But when we examine the practical situation, the picture is different. Ironically, while buying a car in India is becoming easier, obtaining higher education is becoming increasingly difficult and expensive. Banks will readily offer you instant loans at attractive interest rates to purchase a new car, but when these same banks offer education loans to students, interest rates rise, regulations become stricter, and the future is considered risky. This situation is not just a technical problem of the banking system, but also raises serious questions about our social and economic priorities. Today, the cost of higher education in India is rapidly becoming unaffordable for ordinary families. Whether it's medicine, engineering, management, law, private university education, or even foreign education—fees in every field have reached lakhs. Middle-class families invest years of savings, selling jewelry, and

exhausting their provident funds, yet still find themselves needing education loans. The sad reality is that the education that is supposed to shape a young person's future is often burdened with the highest interest rates. Car loan interest rates are often lower than education loans, meaning purchasing a consumer item is cheaper than pursuing an education. This is not just an economic imbalance, but also a tragedy of social thinking. The banking system argues that a car loan is secured because the vehicle serves as collateral for the bank. If the borrower defaults on payments, the car can be seized. However, with an education loan, the bank holds no physical assets. It only has the student's abilities, their degree, and their future. Therefore, banks consider it a risky investment. This argument may seem correct from a banking perspective, but it is extremely narrow from a national perspective. The greatest investment for any nation is its young generation. When a student becomes a doctor, engineer, scientist, teacher, researcher, or administrator, the benefit is not just personal; it's the entire society benefits. In such a situation, it would not be farsighted to view education loans solely as a commercial product. Nowadays, education loans are becoming not just financial assistance but also a source of mental stress. Millions of students are preoccupied with EMIs and interest even before completing their studies. The fear of debt begins to haunt them even before they

find a job. Instead of choosing careers based on their interests and talents, many students pursue high-paying jobs simply to repay the loans. As a result, the number of talented young people in fields like research, teaching, literature, social service, and the arts is dwindling. Society is gradually becoming a proponent of salary-based success. This problem impacts the Indian middle class the most. Financially well-off families can easily afford expensive education. Some government schemes and scholarships are available for the poor. However, the biggest struggles are faced by those who, while not categorized as "poor," are still unable to afford fees of lakhs of rupees. For such families, education loans become a necessity. A father invests his entire life's savings in his son's or daughter's education, hoping that education will secure their future. But when the education itself incurs heavy interest, that dream gradually turns into a financial burden. Today, the privatization of education in India is rapidly increasing. Limited seats in government institutions force millions of students to turn to private colleges. The fees are so high that education is impossible for ordinary families without loans. Many students often leave their dream institutions simply because of the fees and interest. Talent loses out to financial capability. This situation is worrying for any democratic and progressive society. It's also worth considering that today, education is no longer merely a means of personal advancement,

but rather a necessity for economic and social survival. Without higher education, it's becoming increasingly difficult to obtain a good job. If education itself becomes expensive and burdensome with debt, social inequality will only increase. Financially strong families will advance, while talented students with limited resources will be left behind. This will not only be a loss to the individual, but the nation will also lose its potential talent. The Indian government needs to take serious, long-term steps in this direction. First, interest rates on education loans should be regulated. If the government can create special economic policies to promote the automobile industry, real estate, and other sectors, why not create a separate financial policy for a fundamental sector like education? Interest on education loans should be minimal, and interest moratoriums should be implemented widely until the completion of studies. Additionally, there should be flexibility in loan repayment until employment is secured. Under the current system, many students begin facing the pressure of EMIs as soon as they complete their degree, even though finding a job can take time. This mental stress impacts both the energy and confidence of young people. If the government and banks gave students a few years of practical time, they would be able to begin their careers with greater stability. Career-based support models should also be developed alongside education loans.

## PM Modi's Austerity Appeal And The Bitter Economics Of 'Sacrifice'

The term 'austerity' has a brutal etymology. The Greek root, *austeros*, did not begin life as a word for budgets or state discipline; it described a harsh, drying, astringent sensation on the tongue, the bitterness left by unripe fruit or rough wine. In modern terms, the closest equivalent might be "yuck." That the word should travel through Latin and Old French to dominate the modern vocabulary of crisis governance illuminates how governments have worked to find a word that shields them and leaves the people with the bitter dose. The deepest roots of austerity are not fiscal but spiritual - it's a thought that ran parallel to penance in sermons by those quoting scriptures. Austerity draws strength from religious beliefs - how Islam honours Zuhd and encourages Wasaf, the Jews know of the era of the Tzena. Christian monasticism valorises renunciation, whereas in Hinduism, tapas burns impurity with the inner fire of self-discipline, of denial.

Not A Pretty Picture

Earlier this month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stepped into this hazy world of faith and fiscal foment with his own version of passive austerity, asking folks not to buy gold, eschew foreign travel, and adopt work from home and virtual learning. The key driver, of course, is the state of the rupee, now careening past Rs 96 per dollar, pushing India from fourth-largest to sixth-largest and knocking at the next rung. All this as Brent yo-yos around \$110/barrel. As high-



er costs are estimated to add over \$90 billion, the economy finds itself over a barrel. The costs of war and an eroding currency are showing up. The April GST collections, for instance, hit a record Rs 2.43 lakh crore. But it was a record the government could not celebrate. The composition spelt out a troubling story. Domestic sales GST (that is, levies collected from local sales) grew only 4.3%, while import-related GST sales grew by 25.8%. The rupee is the cause and consequence of its state - every fall in its value triggers outflows, which worsen its slide. Data is mocking those who argue that a weaker rupee helps exports and draws investment. The costs and the pain are not just in the spreadsheets. It is a double and triple whammy. The molecular contagion has left thousands of units without gas to fuel their production - from ceramic kilns of Morbi to textile hubs of Panipat-Sonipat, footwear

units are facing an existential challenge. India is a far bigger and far more complex economy than it was in the 1990s. It is far more integrated in the global economy of goods and services than ever before. It is estimated that nearly 30% of India's exports depend on imported intermediates. The top five exports - refined petroleum, electrical and electronic equipment, machinery, jewellery and pharmaceuticals - all require imported ingredients.

But It's Not Policy - Yet

A plea is not a policy. PM Modi's plea is more a sermon on austerity, and a sermon is not a policy - not yet. Now you could argue that the appeal for austerity stems from the fears that things may get worse in West Asia. You could also argue that the Prime Minister is pushing his Atmanirbhar Bharat campaign. It could be this or that or both and more. Fact is, PM Modi prides himself on his fluency with the masses

and is not merely asking them to consume less but also seeking their participation in the defence of the national currency, and this is a call to dollar austerity. The appeal encounters social and economic realities. Take the plea not to buy gold. The yellow metal is not what the chatterati class of analysts see it as. Gold is an investment, a hedge, a liquid pool of cash and an instrument of crisis management in an economy where access to credit still requires businesses to jump through hoops. It is not surprising, therefore, that gold mortgage companies have extended over Rs 15 lakh crore in loans. The gold economy supports thousands of artisans and small enterprises. It is estimated that there are between 8 and 10 million marriages in India. Families bequeath gold as an instrument of wealth transfer, as seed capital for a new home or business, as a tranche for future requirements and more.

# Rupee sinks to record closing low of 96.52 against US dollar

**AGENCY**  
**Mumbai:** The rupee slipped to a record low of 96.60 against the US dollar before settling at 96.52 (provisional) on Tuesday, May 19, weighed down by soaring crude oil prices, persistent foreign capital outflows, and a resilient dollar buoyed by global risk-aversion. The rupee is Asia's worst-performing currency in 2026, having tumbled to a historic intraday low of 96.60 against the US dollar. The currency has depreciated 1.5 per cent this month and more than 7 per cent this year. Forex traders said the rupee remains vulnerable to rising crude oil prices and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 96.38 against the US dollar, then lost further ground and touched a record low of 96.60, before settling at 96.52 (provisional), registering a fall of 32 paise over its previous close. On Monday, the Indian rupee settled at a record low of 96.20 against the US dollar. "We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias amid a strong dollar and rising US treasury yields. Ongoing geopolitical tensions and FII outflows may also put pressure on the



rupee. "However, any intervention by the RBI and certain restrictions on the import of gold and silver may support the rupee at lower levels. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of 96 to 96.60," said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Commodities Research, Mirae Asset Sharekhan. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading at 99.24, higher by 0.05 per cent due to

simmering Iran tensions. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading down 1.92 per cent at USD 109.95 per barrel in futures trade. Moreover, emerging market economies, including India, continue to feel the pressure of rising crude oil prices, as elevated rates accelerate the outflows of US dollars, along with the withdrawals of funds by foreign portfolio investors, traders said. Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump has said he halted fresh strikes

on Iran at the request of Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, asserting that serious discussions were underway with Tehran that could lead to an acceptable deal. Trump said he was asked by Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE and some others if the US could put it off for 2 or 3 days, a short period of time, because they think that they are getting very close to making a deal. On the domestic equity market front, Sensex declined 114.19 points to settle at 75,200.85, while Nifty

dipped 31.95 points to 23,618. Foreign Institutional Investors remained net buyers for the third straight session, purchasing equities worth Rs 2,813.69 crore on Monday, according to exchange data. The rupee is Asia's worst-performing currency in 2026, having tumbled to a historic intraday low of 96.60 against the US dollar. India's edible oil imports rose 3 per cent to 166.51 lakh tonnes in the 2025-26 fiscal year, driven largely by a sharp jump in duty-free imports from Nepal, industry body Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA) said on Tuesday, May 19. Imports had stood at 161.82 lakh tonnes in the prior fiscal year. Nepal, which enjoys zero-duty access to Indian markets under the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) agreement, exported 7.36 lakh tonnes of edible oils to India during the year, more than double the 3.45 lakh tonnes shipped in the previous fiscal, a rise of 113 per cent. Refined soybean oil made up the bulk of Nepal's exports to India, with smaller volumes of sunflower oil, RBD Palmolein and rapeseed oil also traded.

## HISTORIC HEALTHCARE LEAP FOR BASTAR -

### NMDC's 25 Crore Powers Jagdalpur Super Speciality Hospital



**TSIT DESK**  
**Hyderabad, 19 May 2026:** In a landmark step towards transforming healthcare access across Bastar, a Super Speciality Hospital in Jagdalpur was virtually inaugurated by the Honourable Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah in the presence of Honourable Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh Shri Vishnu Deo Sai, on Monday. A key driver of industrial and social development in Chhattisgarh, NMDC emerged as an enabling force in the commissioning of the hospital. Investing 25 crore in the operationalisation, the company has committed sustained financial support of a similar scale over the next five years, helping the institution evolve into a self-sufficient

healthcare ecosystem. Developed by the Government of Chhattisgarh under the aegis of the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY), the hospital meets a critical regional healthcare need for the tribal communities of Bastar, who have historically had to travel long distances for specialised treatment. In response to the pressing need for accessible tertiary healthcare in the region, NMDC ensured the operational readiness of the facility by bringing on board a reputed private healthcare partner and extending financial support. The Government of Chhattisgarh has entrusted the private corporate hospital with managing operations and NMDC with fund-

ing the initial operational expenditure. Located in Dimrapal, Jagdalpur, the hospital is expected to reduce dependence on metropolitan centres for critical healthcare needs and ensure timely access to quality medical treatment for thousands of families across South Chhattisgarh. For decades, NMDC has invested in building social infrastructure in Bastar, particularly in healthcare and education. Honouring its commitment to the local tribals, the Super Speciality Hospital, supported by NMDC, stands as a defining moment in the region's development journey. A major advancement in healthcare accessibility for the people of Bastar, the hospital will provide free treatment to underserved communities.

## STARBUCKS KOREA SACKS CEO OVER CONTROVERSIAL 'TANK DAY' PROMOTION

**AGENCY**  
**Washington:** Starbucks Korea's chief executive has been sacked over a campaign perceived as referring to a bloody historical incident. Launched on Monday, the anniversary of the Gwangju Uprising crackdown, the "Tank Day" coffee tumbler promotion sparked calls to boycott Starbucks Korea and prompted a harsh rebuke from President Lee Jae Myung. Many felt the "tank" motif referenced vehicles deployed by the military government in May 1980 to crush pro-democracy protesters. Starbucks Korea rolled back the promotion hours after it launched. Shinsegae, the conglomerate that owns the majority stake in the coffee chain, apologised for "inappropriate marketing" and fired the chain's chief executive Sohn Jeong-hyun. The promotion, which used the English words "Tank Day", was for their Tank Series drink tumblers touted to have "spacious volume" for a large amount of coffee. According to local reports, Starbucks Korea initially clarified that the Tank



Series was one of several series of tumblers it was rolling out in a campaign running from 15 to 26 May. "We sincerely apologise for causing inconvenience and concern to our customers due to this," the company said. "We have immediately suspended the event and will review and improve our internal processes to prevent similar incidents from recurring in the future." Starbucks' headquarters in the US also issued an apology, acknowledging that "while unintentional, [the incident] should never have happened". "We recognise the deep pain and offense this has caused, particularly to those who honor the victims, their families, and all

who contributed to Korea's democratisation," it said. "I can't believe they thought they could pull off something like this and people would just let it slide... it's utterly absurd and infuriating," an X user wrote early on Tuesday. Several also put out calls on social media to boycott both Starbucks Korea and Shinsegae. South Korea's president was among those who criticised the campaign, saying it "insults the victims and the bloody struggle" of the residents of the southern city of Gwangju. "What on earth were they thinking, knowing how many lives were taken that day and how seriously that set back our country's justice and history?" I

am outraged by such a low-class merchant's inhumane behaviour, which denies our country's values of basic human rights and democracy," Lee wrote on an X post. Reports estimate that hundreds of demonstrators were killed in the southern city of Gwangju on 18 May 1980. Further investigations into the massacre later confirmed that troops deployed by the military regime of Chun Doo-hwan committed rape and sexual assault. Since then, 18 May has frequently been depicted in films and television shows as a day of national trauma for South Korea while also commemorated annually as a sacred day of democracy. The Gwangju Uprising set South Korea on its path toward democracy. It became a rallying cry for activists over the following seven years, culminating in a movement in June 1987 which toppled Chun's regime. Some in South Korea claim the Starbucks Korea campaign also references the 1987 movement. Promotional material for the tumbler used the phrase "take on the table!"

## JACKSON POLLOCK PAINTING SELLS FOR RECORD \$181M AT AUCTION

**AGENCY**  
**Europe:** A Jackson Pollock artwork, described as one of history's "first truly abstract paintings", has sold at auction for \$181m (£135m) in New York. Number 7A, 1948, which went under the hammer at the renowned Christie's auction house on Monday, smashed the previous record for the most a work by the late American artist has taken at auction. The painting, which came from the private collection of media magnate SI Newhouse, is also now the fourth most expensive artwork ever sold at auction, according to ARTnews. Also in the collection was a bronze sculpture by Romanian artist Constantin Brancusi, which sold for \$107.6m - the second highest amount a sculpture has ever gone for at auction. Pollock, who died in 1956, was a major figure in the abstract expressionist art movement. His drip painting technique is one of the art world's most recognisable and often imitated.



The previous auction record for one of Pollock's artworks was \$61.2m for his Number 17, 1951 painting, which was sold in 2021. Other pieces have sold for higher prices in private sales. Christie's called Number 7A, 1948, which depicts black drips of paint with touches of red on a huge canvas spanning more than three metres, a key piece of art history. "It is with this work that Pollock finally frees himself from the shackles of conventional easel painting

and produces one of the first truly abstract paintings in the history of art," it wrote in its description of the piece online. Other artworks sold at the Christie's auction included pieces by Mark Rothko and Joan Miró, which also both broke previous records for works by the artists at auction. Monday's eye-watering auction follows a string of records set at Sotheby's in November last year. Austrian master Gustav Klimt's "Portrait of Elisabeth Lederer", which he painted between 1914

and 1916, sold for USD 236.4 million, becoming the second most expensive work ever sold at auction. "The Dream (The Bed)" (1940), a self-portrait by Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, sold for USD 54.7 million, setting a record for the price of a painting by a woman. The most expensive painting ever sold at auction remains the "Salvator Mundi" (Savior of the World), a Renaissance work attributed to Leonardo da Vinci, which was bought for USD 450 million in 2017.

## Mulugu announces influencer reels competition with cash prizes

**TSIT DESK**  
**Mulugu, May 19:** An Influencer Reels Competition will be organised to showcase the tourism potential of Mulugu district, said District Collector Borkhade Hemant Sahadeva Rao. In a statement, he said that a special meeting with influencers and media representatives would be held on Thursday (May 21) at the Collectorate Conference Hall. The competition is being organised as part of the 99-day Praja Palana programme during Tourism Week. Influencers, media representatives and social media handlers from across the State are eligible to participate. Participants are required to submit 4K video reels highlighting tourist attractions, culture and heritage of Mulugu district between May 21 and May 30. Entries can be submitted in person at the



District Public Relations Office using a pen drive, or sent via WhatsApp to DPRO Rafiq (99483 92976) or APRO Venu (9494970535). Attractive cash prizes will be awarded to the top three entries. The first prize carries Rs 21,000, the second Rs 15,000 and the third Rs10,000. The winners will be announced on June 2. The Collector said that

even entries that do not win prizes may be published on the district's official social media handles, with due credit to the creators, if found suitable. He noted that the initiative aims at promoting tourist destinations while offering visibility to content creators, and urged influencers in Mulugu and nearby areas to participate.

## Petrol hits highest price since start of Iran war

**AGENCY**  
**Mumbai:** The average price of unleaded petrol has risen to 158.52p a litre, its highest level since the start of the Iran war, according to the RAC. Petrol and diesel prices surged when the conflict began on 28 February, with the production and transportation of energy across the Middle East slowing or stopping entirely due to missile strikes and drone attacks. The price of petrol last peaked at 158.31p on 15 April, falling by more than a penny until the start of May when it began rising again, the RAC said. The motoring organisation also said unleaded was likely to increase to at least 160p a litre in the coming weeks unless there was a "dramatic and sustained drop" in the price of oil. Brent crude - the global benchmark for wholesale oil prices - is currently trading at about \$111 a barrel. Before the conflict, Brent was trading at about \$73 a barrel. That in turn has pushed up prices at the pump. The price of unleaded petrol was 132.83p a litre on average at the start of the conflict. The average price of diesel was 142.38p a litre. It is now 185.92p a litre. "The news that petrol has climbed to a new wartime high comes in a week when the chancellor is thought to be on the point of



scrapping plans to increase fuel duty by a penny in September," said Simon Williams, RAC head of policy. "This would have been the first step in reversing the 5p fuel duty cut that's been in place since the Ukraine war. If she decides to keep fuel duty at the current rate of 52.95p per litre, it will be a relief for drivers as our research shows they have been struggling with the higher cost of filling up." The Treasury has said it does not comment on tax speculation. Williams said that the outlook for diesel was "more positive" as the wholesale price has reduced significantly since it peaked in early April. But while the price of diesel at the pump had

fallen to its lowest since the start of last month, he added: "it should really be much lower than it is". "We urge retailers to reflect the savings they're benefiting from when buying new supply on the forecourt," he said. According to AAA, prices for gas or petrol went up by 27 cents over the past week amid the deepening impasse, with Iran blocking the strait and the US imposing a naval siege on Iranian ports. "The national average is \$1.12 higher than it was this time last year, as oil prices surge above \$100/barrel with no indication of when the Strait of Hormuz will reopen," AAA said in a brief report on

Thursday. "Gas prices are the highest they've been in four years, since late July 2022." California, home to nearly 40 million people, saw petrol prices hit more than \$6 per gallon on Thursday. The spike in energy prices has been fuelling inflation and economic uncertainty, adding to Trump's political woes. The US president's approval rating is hitting record lows amid growing discontent with the conflict with Iran, recent public opinion polls show. Since the start of the war, Trump and his allies have been trying to frame the hike in petrol prices as a temporary price worth paying to achieve the aims of the military campaign. The US president reiterated that argument on Thursday when asked about the latest price increase. "The gas will go down. As soon as the war is over, it'll drop like a rock." However, oil prices do not drop automatically after hostilities stop. Despite the ceasefire reached on April 8, the cost of gas in the US has continued to climb. Iran denies seeking a nuclear weapon. Although the US is one of the largest oil producers and is not heavily reliant on energy products from the Middle East, global prices affect what Americans pay at the pump.

# TRUMP SAYS HE CALLED OFF NEW IRAN ATTACK AT REQUEST OF GULF STATES

**AGENCY**  
**Washington:** US President Donald Trump has said he is holding off a military attack on Iran planned for Tuesday at the request of Gulf states as "serious negotiations are now taking place". In a post on Truth Social, he said he had been asked to do so by the leaders of Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. He said he had been informed a deal would be made that is "very acceptable" to the US, adding there would be "NO NUCLEAR WEAPONS FOR IRAN!" But he warned the US would be ready to "go forward with a full, large scale assault on Iran, on a moment's notice" if there was no acceptable deal. A senior Iranian military commander told the US not to make "strategic mistakes and miscalculations again". Trump's latest announcement on Iran comes amid a drop in his approval rating and as polls show the war is increasingly unpopular at home. Some 64% of voters

believe it was the wrong decision to go to war with Iran, according to a New York Times/Siena poll published on Monday. The survey also found that just 37% of voters approve of Trump's job performance as president. The polling underscores the challenge Republicans face in the midterm elections, in a moment of growing public frustration with the war and Trump's handling of the economy and immigration, among other issues. Israeli and US forces began massive air strikes on Iran on 28 February, while Tehran retaliated by firing drones and missiles at Israel and US targets in countries across the Gulf. A major factor at play here is the fear Gulf Arab states have over how Iran is likely to retaliate after any further attacks by the US. Iran is known to retain a significant number of drones and missiles with which it could resume its full-scale attacks on neighbouring



states, their airports, petrochemical facilities and even the crucial desalination plants that provide drinking water as summer temperatures in the Gulf build up. Talking to reporters later, Trump called it "a very positive development, but we'll see whether or not it amounts to anything". He said: "We've had periods of time where we had, we thought, pretty much getting

close to making a deal, and it didn't work out. But this is a little bit different." Trump said there seemed to be "a very good chance" of an agreement with Iran, adding: "If we can do that without bombing the hell out of them, I would be very happy." A ceasefire agreed in April meant to facilitate talks has largely been observed despite occasional exchanges of fire. Iran has also continued to control the Strait of Hormuz, effectively closing the vital waterway through which around 20% of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas travels. The move, which Iran has said is in retaliation for US and Israeli attacks, has sent oil prices soaring globally. The US, for its part, has been enforcing a blockade of Iranian ports to exert pressure on Tehran to agree to its terms. Late on Monday, Iran's Tasnim news agency published what it said were comments by Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei, warning that new fronts

would be opened where the enemy had little experience and would be highly vulnerable. Tasnim appeared to have reposted Khamenei's quotes from 12 March. Some Iranian news outlets have taken to republishing his previous written messages. Earlier on Monday, Iran said it had responded to the latest US proposal and that exchanges with Washington were continuing through Pakistani mediators. Iranian media earlier reported the US had failed to make any concrete concessions to Tehran. On Sunday, Trump had warned that "for Iran, Clock is Ticking, and they better get moving, FAST, or there won't be anything left of them". Several days ago, the US president had said the truce was on "massive life support" after rejecting Tehran's demands, labelling them "totally unacceptable". Esmail Baghaei, an Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson, insisted they were "responsible" and "generous".

## Father-of-eight killed in San Diego mosque shooting hailed as a hero



**AGENCY**  
**San Diego:** The bravery of a security guard who was shot dead along with two other worshippers at a San Diego mosque on Monday prevented the attack from being much worse, say police. The guard was Amin Abdullah, a father of eight, a spokesman for the Council on American-Islamic Relations-San Diego (CAIR-SD), Tazheen Nizam, told the BBC. "It's fair to say his actions were heroic," San Diego Police Chief Scott Wahl told a news conference. "Undoubtedly, he saved lives today." Abdullah and two others - whom CAIR-SD named as Mansour Kazih and Nader Awad - were killed

by two yet-to-be-identified teenage attackers who then took their own lives, say police. People who knew Abdullah told US media he looked after the community. Others have taken to social media to describe him as "the nicest man you'll ever meet". The mosque called him "a courageous man who put himself on the line of the safety of others, who even in his last moments did not stop protecting our community". Nizam, the CAIR spokeswoman, told the BBC: "Amin was loved by everybody, he stood there day after day, always smiling, welcoming everybody, welcoming the kids who came to the school.

## Tasmanian government apologises over stolen body parts scandal



**AGENCY**  
**Tasmania:** The Tasmanian government has apologised for a decades-old scandal in which body parts taken from autopsies were secretly kept - and in some cases put on display - without the consent of families. The wrongdoing was uncovered last year after an investigation found that between 1966 and 1991 pathologists may have "actively sourced" 177 human specimens collected during autopsies before handing them to a university museum. The samples were given to the museum without approval of family members or the coroners who were responsible for the bodies. On Tuesday, several family members were in parliament as the state's health minister apologised for the "enduring distress, anger, pain, grief and trauma". "Although these historical practices ended 35 years ago, the deep impact this has had on the families and loved ones of the deceased continues to this day," Bridget Archer told parliament. "It's important to remember that these were not just body parts or specimens or human remains. They were people." For

Cheryl Springfield, the apology was a welcome development but more was needed. "It's in the right direction, but it's not going to fix it all," she told local media before the apology. Her brother David Maher died in 1976, aged 14, in a car accident and when she found out that his body parts were part of the investigation, she was devastated. "It's been absolutely a nightmare from that moment we were told." That disbelief has also been felt by John Santi, who was 13 in 1976 when his older brother Tony died, aged 19, in a motorcycle accident. "We buried him 50 years ago, only to find out 50 years later that these people had stolen his brain," Santi told Australian Associated Press (AAP). Concerns about specimens displayed at the University of Tasmania RA Rodda Museum in Hobart were first raised in 2016 after three bone samples were suspected of having been obtained without the consent of family members. This led to the state coroner ordering an investigation into the museum's collection in April 2023, and after months of inquiries.

## TWO DEAD IN SPAIN SHOOTING, WITH BABIES REPORTEDLY AMONG INJURED



**AGENCY**  
**Spain:** A 25-year-old man has been arrested on suspicion of killing his parents and injuring four others in a mass shooting in southern Spain, police have said. Authorities said the shooting was reported at 23:00 local time (22:00 BST) on Monday in the small town of El Ejido, near Almeria. Four others, including two children, were seriously injured

and have been taken to hospital. One is believed to be the suspect's seven-month-old son, according to local media reports. The identities of the suspect and the victims have not been formally released by Spanish authorities. Local media say the other child injured is an 18-month-old baby, while a 60-year-old man is also believed to be among those injured in the attack.

## Ebola outbreak may be spreading faster than first thought, WHO doctor warns

**AGENCY**  
**Washington:** People living close to the epicentre of a deadly Ebola outbreak have told the BBC of their fear, as the World Health Organization (WHO) warned cases may be spreading faster than originally thought. One man in the Democratic Republic of Congo's north-eastern Ituri province, the epicentre of the outbreak, said infected people were dying "very fast", and added: "Ebola has tortured us." The virus has killed 131 people in the DR Congo, and officials say more than 513 cases are now suspected in the country. One person has died in neighbouring Uganda. The WHO's Dr Anne Anicia told the BBC that the more the UN agency investigates the outbreak, the clearer it



becomes cases have spread to other areas. Modelling by the London-based MRC Centre for Global Infectious Disease Analysis released on Monday suggested there had been "substantial" under-detection, and that it could not rule out there had already been more than 1,000 cases. The study suggested that the current outbreak is "larger than currently ascertained" and that

its "true magnitude remains uncertain". A man who spoke to BBC News and identified himself as Bigboy said people are "really scared" and doing what they can to protect themselves. He said locals are taking precautions such as washing hands with clean water, but added that he wished they could get access to other protective supplies such as face masks. Another Ituri local,

Alfred Giza, said people in the community are aware of the threat and waiting to receive face masks to protect themselves, but that he would not know what to do if a family member or friend contracted the disease. The Red Cross warned that Ebola can escalate quickly if cases are not identified early, communities lack information and health systems are overwhelmed, adding "we are seeing all those conditions" in the current outbreak. On Tuesday, DR Congo President Félix Tshisekedi called for "calm" and urged Congolese citizens to remain vigilant, after holding a crisis meeting on Monday evening. WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, who declared the outbreak an international emergency last week.

## Victim or enabler? Epstein girlfriend who could face questions despite plea deal

**AGENCY**  
**Washington:** During Jeffrey Epstein's first spell in jail, a 13-month sentence for soliciting sex from an under-age girl, prison records show one woman visited him at least 67 times. That woman was Nadia Marcinko. Marcinko was Epstein's main girlfriend for seven years - his most significant partner after Ghislaine Maxwell - and in later years, an assistant pilot of his private plane. She is comparatively unknown to the public, but she may soon find herself in the spotlight. Marcinko is one of four women who were named as Epstein's "potential co-conspirators" in a 2008 plea deal that granted them immunity



from prosecution. Now, two of those women - Epstein assistants Sarah Kellen and Lesley Groff - are about to be questioned by US legislators. One congressman wants all four, including Adriana Ross, another Epstein assis-

tant, and Marcinko, to be investigated, despite the plea deal. Marcinko has never been accused of, or charged with, any crime. Her lawyers say she is one of Epstein's victims. But girls in Palm Beach, Florida, whose testimony about their abuse when they were under age led to Epstein's conviction in 2008, told police that Marcinko participated in that abuse. The BBC has spent months interviewing those who have met Marcinko, and scrutinising every email we could find between her and Epstein in the files, to try and build a detailed picture of her role in the disgraced financier's life. The emails reveal Epstein and Marcinko wanted to start a family together, we have discovered. The Agency has also found evidence suggesting that over many years, he asked her to recruit other women to help satisfy his sexual desires and she complied.

## SON OF MANGO BOSS ARRESTED OVER FATHER'S FATAL FALL FROM CLIFF



**AGENCY**  
**Mexico:** The son of Mango founder Isak Andic has been arrested in connection with his father's death. Jonathan Andic, 43, was detained by Catalan police on Tuesday as part of a renewed investigation into the death of the fashion tycoon, which was initially treated as an accident but was later reopened. Isak, 71, died in December 2024 after falling from a ravine while walking in the Montserrat mountains near Barcelona with his son. There have been conflicting media reports about whether they were alone or if other family members were present. Jonathan has previously denied responsibility for his father's death. A family spokesperson told Reuters that Jonathan was being questioned and that the family was confident of his innocence. He joined Mango in 2005 and later oversaw the company's Mango Man line. He became vice-chairman of the board after his father's death. Investigators in Catalonia initially closed the case in early 2025 after finding no evidence of

criminal wrongdoing but reopened it later that year, claiming there were inconsistencies in Jonathan's testimony, the La Vanguardia newspaper reported. Jonathan was taken from his home shortly after 11:00 local time (09:00 GMT) where he was questioned by police again. He was expected to be taken to a court to testify before a judge later on Tuesday, the paper added. Born in Turkey, Isak founded Mango with the help of his brother, Nahman, in Barcelona in 1984 and the chain now operates almost 3,000 outlets in 120 countries. At the time of his death, Forbes estimated the businessman's net worth to be \$4.5bn (£3.6bn). Mango CEO Toni Ruiz previously said Isak's death would "leave a huge void" and added: "All of us are, in some way, his legacy and the testimony of his achievements". "It is up to us, and this is the best tribute we can make to Isak and which we will fulfil, to ensure that Mango continues to be the project that Isak aspired to and of which he would feel proud."



California wildfires in Simi Valley and Santa Rosa Island seen from space

## TWO BODIES OF MISSING ITALIANS RECOVERED FROM INSIDE MALDIVES CAVE



**AGENCY**  
**Italy:** The bodies of two Italians who drowned in a scuba diving accident in the Maldives last week have been brought to the surface, local officials have told the BBC. "They were retrieved from the third chamber of the underwater cave by the specialist divers from Finland after a two-hour operation," Mohamed Hossain

Shareef, a Maldivian government spokesperson told the BBC. The two bodies were being brought to the capital Male for identification. They were among five people who died in the accident. Two bodies remain inside. The first body of an Italian diver, who was a member of the group, was recovered shortly after Thursday's accident near Vaavu atoll.



## IPL 2026: LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS SETS A TARGET OF 220/5 FOR RAJASTHAN ROYALS



## Why Is Mohammed Shami Not Playing For LSG Against RR?

**AGENCY**  
**Mumbai:** Mohammed Shami was not part of the Lucknow Super Giants playing XI for their IPL 2026 encounter against Rajasthan Royals on Tuesday. The fast bowler, who was not included in India's squad for the one-off Test and ODI series against Afghanistan, was present on the field but was not even part of the Impact Substitutions list. LSG captain Rishabh Pant was asked about Shami's absence but his answer left West Indies legend Ian Bishop puzzled at toss. Bishop tried asking Pant about Shami's absence but the LSG captain did not provide any clear reply. He just pointed out the changes in the playing XI and ultimately, Bishop decided to move on from the subject. Here's how the conversation between Rishabh Pant and Ian Bishop went - Pant: Shami is not playing, Mohsin is playing Bishop: What's the issue with Shami? Pant: Yeah Bishop: What's the issue with Shami? Pant: Mohsin Bishop: No, what's the issue with Shami? Bishop: Who is out?



Pant: Shami is out, Mohsin is playing Bishop: Ya, I'm asking... Pant: Aiden is out, Badoni is in Bishop: Okay, we can leave it there Rajasthan Royals' stand-in skipper Yashasvi Jaiswal won the toss and elected to bowl against Lucknow Super Giants. RR regular skipper Riyan Parag missed out due to hamstring injury that he sustained in their previous match, while Ravindra Jadeja is also out as he is recovering from "some niggles". RR made three changes with Sandeep Sharma, Sushant Mishra and Lhuan-dre Pretorius coming in the playing XI. LSG also made a couple of changes with Mohammed Shami making way for Mohsin Khan and Ayush Badoni replaced Aiden Markram. RR are placed fifth in the points table, while LSG are already out of the playoff race. Teams: Rajasthan Royals: Yashasvi Jaiswal(c), Lhuan-dre Pretorius, Dhruv Jurel(w), Donovan Ferreira, Shubham Dubey, Dasun Shanaka, Jofra Archer, Sushant Mishra, Sandeep Sharma, Brijesh Sharma, Yash Raj Punja. Lucknow Super Giants: Mitchell Marsh, Josh Inglis, Nicholas Pooran, Rishabh Pant(w/c), Ayush Badoni, Abdul Samad, Shahbaz Ahmed, Mohsin Khan, Mayank Yadav, Akash Maharaj Singh, Prince Yadav.

## WHY DON'T DRIVERS ENTER OTHER SERIES LIKE VERSTAPPEN?

**AGENCY**  
**Canada:** Formula 1 is back in North America this weekend for the Canadian Grand Prix, the fifth round of the 2026 season. Mercedes' George Russell, who won the race last year, will be aiming to narrow the 20-point gap to his team-mate Kimi Antonelli at the top of the drivers' championship. Before the race in Montreal, BBC F1 correspondent Andrew Benson answers your latest questions. Why don't other F1 drivers enter different forms of motor racing like Max Verstappen is currently doing with the endurance racing? - Paul Max Verstappen's outing at the Nurburgring 24 Hours last weekend generated a lot of



interest, but it is no accident that he is only the third grand prix driver in more than 20 years - and probably doing with the endurance racing? - Paul Max Verstappen's outing at the Nurburgring 24 Hours last weekend generated a lot of

his first career in F1, when he took part in the Indianapolis 500, Daytona 24 Hours and then joined Toyota for the World Endurance Championship while he was still under contract to McLaren. Nico Hulkenberg also raced at Le Mans when

he was at Force India in 2015. The main reason drivers do not generally do this is that their contracts forbid it. Why? Well, risk is the first obvious reason. Then there are potential contractual clashes, and the lack of time available to devote to doing something like this properly. In Verstappen's case, it is a question of the balance of power between driver and team. He has massive leverage with Red Bull that most other drivers do not have. He is a four-time world champion, and the team are desperate to keep him happy. On a general level, but also because right now they know he is not exactly enamoured with F1. Alonso's situation was not dissimilar.

## Chiefs Heiress Gracie Hunt Shares Special Wedding Update After Lavish Dallas Celebration

**AGENCY**  
**Spain:** Gracie Hunt is embracing wedding season with family and close friends by her side. The daughter of Kansas City Chiefs owner Clark Hunt recently shared moments from a lavish bridesmaids proposal and engagement celebration hosted by her mother, Tavia Hunt, in Dallas. The event came shortly after Gracie's engagement to Derek Green, son of former Chiefs quarterback Trent Green, and offered fans a closer look at a major wedding update. Gracie Hunt reveals 14 bridesmaids during lavish Dallas celebration hosted by Tavia Hunt As wedding preparations continue, Gracie revealed



an important detail about the people who will stand beside her on the big day. During the Dallas gathering, she shared that 14 bridesmaids will be part of her wedding, including her sister Ava Hunt, who will serve as maid of honor. Derek Green's sister, Janelle Green, a volleyball

player at the University of Toledo, is also included in the bridal party. The celebration also featured a sports connection through Kayla Sharples, a center back for the Kansas City Current, the NWSL team co-owned by Patrick Mahomes and Brittany Mahomes. Derek's mother,

Julie Green, attended the event as family and friends gathered for a champagne-filled evening organized by Tavia Hunt. Gracie later reflected on the moment with an emotional message on Instagram, sharing how much the women in her life mean to her. "Looking around this room [Friday], I couldn't help but thank God for the way He so intentionally placed each one of these amazing women (& @mr.austinyrde) into my life," she wrote. "Through every season, they've loved me, prayed for me, encouraged me, challenged me, and helped shape me into who I am today. I truly would not be the same without them."

Two-time winner  
Alcaraz out of  
Wimbledon with injury



## Nashville's Super Bowl 2030 Bid Gains Steam As NFL Owners Consider Unprecedented Vote On Titans Stadium

**AGENCY**  
**Nashville:** Nashville may just have scored its biggest win yet. The NFL plans to vote on the hosting rights of Super Bowl LXIV, which could see the prestigious championship game played for the very first time in Tennessee at the new Tennessee Titans stadium. The game would be hosted in February 2030, in the recently announced \$2.1 billion enclosed stadium now under construction in Nashville's east end. The vote to consider Nashville as the site of the championship event precedes the opening of the stadium, underscoring an increasing belief in Nashville's capabilities to play host to major events. But the bid is already meeting with political controversy, with proponents praising tourism earnings and opponents raising concerns about



taxpayer dollars going into billionaire-sponsored stadiums. NFL Owners Will Vote On Super Bowl LXIV At New Tennessee Titans Stadium Reports indicate that Nashville is the likely winner of hosting Super Bowl LXIV. The construction of the proposed stadium is seen by supporters as central to the development of Nashville into an ideal sports and entertainment destination in the

future. Supporters see a lot of benefits from the event. It is believed that tourism, hotel rooms, restaurant visits, and sales tax revenues during the

Super Bowl week could justify Tennessee's commitment to the project. NFL Super Bowl Host Debate Heats Up Amidst Critics Questioning Public Investment While the news is exciting, the project itself remains highly controversial. Lawmakers, who had earlier opposed public spending of almost \$500 million on the stadium, are now seeing how the Super Bowl can benefit Nashville and Davidson County. Nonetheless, there are continued criticisms regarding the use of public funds in the building of the stadium. The critics contend that taxpayer dollars could be used in other places rather than financing stadiums for rich organizations such as those owning teams.

## "It's Actually Embarrassing": Draymond Green Slams NBA Over Shai Gilgeous-Alexander MVP Title Leak



**AGENCY**  
**Texas:** The NBA's biggest individual award should have been a major television moment for fans waiting to see Shai Gilgeous-Alexander officially crowned MVP on NBA on Prime. Instead, much of the conversation shifted toward frustration over how the result leaked hours before the scheduled announcement. Veteran NBA reporter Shams Charania revealed the winner nearly half a day early, triggering backlash across social media and sparking criticism from players, including Draymond Green of the Golden State Warriors. While many fans already expected Gilgeous-Alexander to secure his second straight MVP award after another dominant season, critics argued that the leak removed suspense from one of the league's biggest postseason events. It also raised larger questions about the NBA's relationship with insiders, television partners and media control at a time when the league continues pushing for bigger broad-

cast audiences and stronger global engagement. Draymond Green calls NBA MVP leak "pathetic" Green did not hide his frustration when discussing the situation on his show. The Warriors forward argued that the NBA allowed one of its most important announcements to lose impact by letting the result become public before the official reveal. "I think the NBA has to do something about that. Like, ultimately, you're the NBA. You control the media. Like, yeah, Shams is an NBA reporter with ESPN, who is a partner of the NBA. To tweet at 6:00 in the morning when the NBA MVP is, it's actually embarrassing," the Golden State Warriors veteran said. For Green, the issue was not about one leaked award. He believes it reflects poorly on the league's organization and damages the value of moments the NBA spends heavily promoting. "It makes our league look like we have no organization. It makes our league look like it's child's play," he continued.

## DID BROCK LESNAR CHANGE HIS NAME?

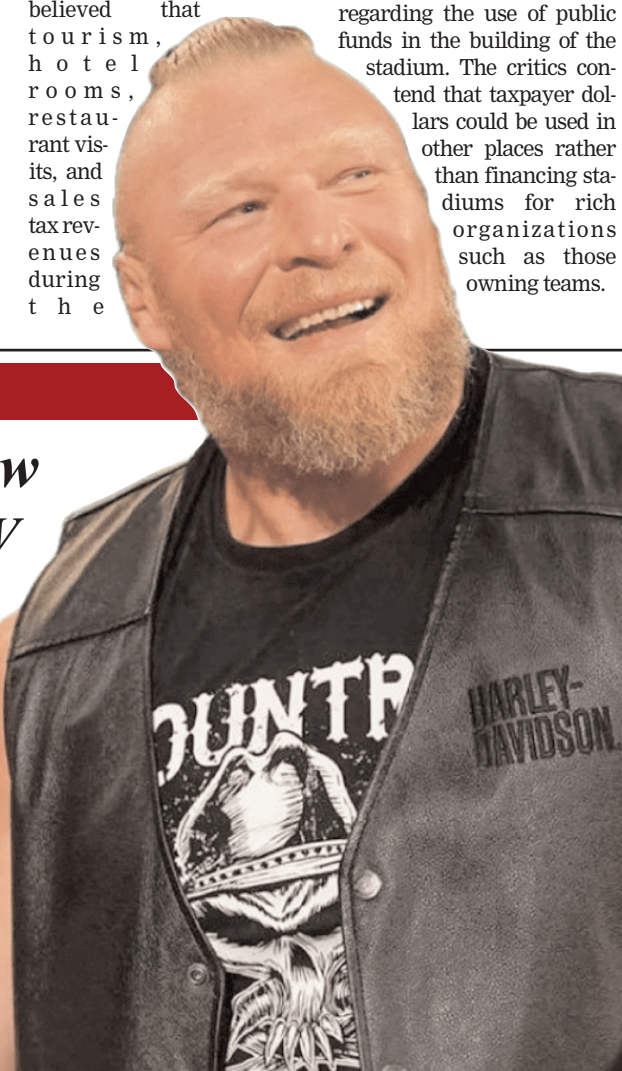
## 12-Time World Champion Seemingly Gets A New WWE Name After Surprising Comeback On RAW

**AGENCY**  
**Cranberra:** For weeks, WWE fans believed Brock Lesnar was fully done with wrestling. After losing to Oba Femi at WrestleMania 42 and leaving his boots and gloves inside the ring, it looked like the end of an era for The Beast Incarnate. WWE even treated the moment like an official retirement, and many people thought Lesnar had wrestled his final match. But that feeling completely changed during the May 18 episode of WWE RAW. Out of nowhere, Brock Lesnar stormed back

into the picture and instantly went after Oba Femi. The return itself already had fans going crazy online, but another detail during a backstage segment later in the show confused the WWE Universe even more. Some viewers are now wondering if Brock Lesnar quietly got a brand-new last name in WWE. Brock Lesnar destroys Oba Femi after surprising WWE RAW comeback Oba Femi walked out on RAW expecting another big moment for himself. The former rookie, who previously defeated Brock Lesnar at

WrestleMania 42, appeared ready to continue building momentum inside the ring. Instead, things went completely sideways. Before Femi could really say much, Brock Lesnar returned and attacked him out of nowhere. The Beast looked brutal during the assault and hit Oba with four straight F5s. The attack left the former champion laid out as fans inside the arena erupted loudly for Lesnar's comeback. The segment instantly became one of the biggest talking points from RAW because many viewers genuinely

believed Lesnar had retired after WrestleMania. Why fans think WWE may have changed Brock Lesnar's name Later during the show, RAW General Manager Adam Pearce was shown backstage trying to understand what exactly was happening. Pearce mentioned that Brock Lesnar's retirement paperwork had already been processed.



## Peddi Trailer Raises Hype Sky-High With Epic Rural Action Spectacle

**E**xperience Larger-Than-Life Spectacle-Epic Trailer Of Mega Power Star Ram Charan, Buchi Babu Sana, Venkata Satish Kilaru, Vriddhi Cinemas, Mythri Movie Makers, Sukumar Writings' Peddi Unveiled Mega Power Star Ram Charan's highly anticipated Pan-India flick Peddi is already roaring ahead even before its release, with every promo becoming a nationwide talking point. Director Buchi Babu Sana brings a raw, rooted energy to this rural action-sports saga, while the striking first-look posters, impactful character glimpses, and stirring songs have only amplified the hype. Produced ambitiously by Venkata Satish Kilaru under Vriddhi Cinemas, in collaboration with Mythri Movie Makers and Sukumar Writings, the film's theatrical trailer was unveiled just a while ago at an event in Mumbai. Rather than opting for a typical hero introduction, Peddi trailer unfolds a sweeping rural tapestry dominated by sweat, struggle, and an undying love for sport. The protagonist, Peddi, is a multi-talented athlete who earns his livelihood through sheer physical might. Whether it's cricket, wrestling, or sprinting, his life is defined by the grit and passion he pours into every discipline. Adored by the children and respected by the villagers, his rapid rise draws envy, especially from a domineer-



ing landlord whose pride refuses to share the spotlight. Director Buchi Babu Sana shapes this larger-than-life universe with remarkable clarity. The trailer pulses like a heartbeat- gentle in its silences, thunderous in its bursts of action. Every frame is crafted with precision, immersing viewers in a world that feels authentic, expansive, and rich with atmosphere. Instead of relying on familiar sports-drama patterns, Peddi injects its sporting sequences with raw intensity and life-or-death stakes. Massive clashes on railway platforms, gravity-defying

stunts, and adrenaline-fueled fights hint at a world where sport and survival are inseparable. One stand-out stretch is the seamless fusion of cricket and wrestling, an audacious, high-impact sequence that instantly grabs attention. Ram Charan appears in a fiercely athletic avatar, showcasing exceptional physical conditioning that grounds the film's demanding sports segments. The trailer fluidly shifts between sporting worlds- from Charan swinging a rugged cricket bat under blazing floodlights to engaging in visceral mud-wrestling bouts. His transformation

into Peddi is both chiseled and emotionally layered. Janhvi Kapoor brings elegant warmth to her role, blending traditional charm with expressive nuance. The trailer further teases a powerful supporting cast- Shiva Rajkumar, Jagapathi Babu, Divyendu, and Boman Irani, each adding weight and intrigue to the drama. Technically, Peddi looks poised to redefine Indian cinematic spectacle. Production designer Avinash Kolla creates rustic landscapes filled with texture and authenticity. The visuals, captured by celebrated cinematographer R Rathnavelu, throb with

intensity- rich tones, sweeping frames, and dynamic movement in every shot. Elevating the narrative further is a stirring score by AR Rahman, amplifying both emotional depth and action-packed moments. The film's production values are of international standards. Every frame feels sculpted for the big screen, promising a truly immersive theatrical experience. This is a trailer cut like no other in recent times, and it sets the bar sky-high. The excitement is now through the roof as we count down the final couple of weeks before the film's release.

## GRAND PRE-RELEASE EVENT AND SONG LAUNCH OF THE MOVIE "FIRST TIME"



**T**he pre-release event and the launch of the song "Ee Pilla Nenu Anukoneledu" for the upcoming movie "First Time" were celebrated grandly. Written, directed, edited, and produced by Hemant Ippalappalli, the film is made on a low budget but boasts high technical values. It is being promoted as one of India's most prestigious VFX-heavy films, uniquely created entirely with Human Intelligence (HI) rather than using AI for its high-end graphics. The movie is scheduled to hit theaters on the 22nd of this month. Thammareddy Bharadwaj, Ex MLC Duvvada Srinivas, Big Boss Fame Divvela Madhuri and Gorgeous Heroine Payal Rajput attended as Chief Guests for the event. Senior Producer Thammareddy Bharadwaj : "He praised director Hemant for taking on multiple responsibilities (like director S.S. Rajamouli) and applauded the fresh concept brought by the young team.

He urged the audience to watch the film on the 22nd and make it a success". Music Director Sri Venkat : "Saying Hemant the pillar of the movie, he thanked the director for his trust on his musical work. He expressed confidence that the audience would love the film and requested media support". Artist Gayatri Gupta : "She appreciated the efforts of the director and praised strong personalities like Duvvada Srinivas, Madhuri, and Payal. She requested the audience to support this new kind of cinema". Actress Anicka Vikraman : "She thanked Payal Rajput for her constant support from the very beginning and asked for the audience's blessings". Zee Chief Editor Bharat Kumar : "He noted that in an era of hero-centric films, 'First Time' is a true director's film. He highlighted the VFX as a major strength and stated that encouraging such films will lead to more good cinema". Director Producer Hemant Ippalappalli : "He

credited Payal Rajput as the backbone who gave the team courage. He thanked everyone for their support and requested audiences to experience the film in theaters". Big Boss Fame Divvela Madhuri : "She mentioned that the film perfectly reflects a blend of Sanatana Dharma and modernity. She wished the entire team a great success". Former MLC Duvvada Srinivas, "He appreciated the director's massive effort in handling multiple crafts single-handedly. He noted that the film beautifully portrays Lord Brahma and the functioning of the universe, making it a must-watch in theaters". Actor Saurabh Dhinra : "He thanked Spandana for taking the film to the market and praised the director for sacrificing family time to work on the film. He expressed a heartfelt thanks to Payal Rajput for her constant encouragement, saying, "Till now I was proud of you; now I will make you proud of me".

## Grand "RK Deeksha" Songs & Teaser Launch Event Held – Movie Releasing on June 12th

**R**K Deeksha," produced and directed by Dr. Prathani Ramakrishna Goud under the banners of RK Films and Sigdha Creations, is gearing up for a grand theatrical release on June 12th. Presented by D.S. Reddy, the film stars Dhee and Jodi fame Aksha Khan and Alekhya Reddy as the female leads, while Kiran plays the hero. Tulasi, Anusha, Keerthana, Pravalika, Rohit Sharma and others appear in key roles. On the occasion of director-producer Dr. Prathani Ramakrishna Goud's birthday, the film's songs and teaser launch event was organized grandly on Monday evening in Hyderabad. Speaking at the event, producer A. Gururaj said, "Birthday wishes to Dr. Prathani Ramakrishna Goud garu. The quality of 'RK Deeksha' is clearly visible through the songs and teaser. I wish the film great success." Political leader Gyadari Balamallu said, "Dr. Prathani Ramakrishna Goud garu, who hails from the Siddipet region, has been active in both politics and cinema for a long time. He has directed and produced many films and also proved himself as an actor. I hope 'RK Deeksha' becomes a big success for him." Canada-based Tarun Sahi said, "Along with entertainment, this film carries a strong message. My best wishes to the



entire team." Music director Raj Kiran said, "Thanks to Dr. Prathani Ramakrishna Goud garu for giving me the opportunity to compose music for this film. Hero Kiran and heroine Aksha Khan lived in their roles. We have delivered very good music for the movie." BC Association leader Anjali said, "Dr. Prathani Ramakrishna Goud has earlier made good films. 'Deeksha' too is going to inspire everyone. The songs and teaser are very impressive." Retired judge Madhusudan Reddy said, "Films should not only entertain but also

make audiences think and contribute positively to society. 'RK Deeksha' is such a meaningful attempt." Hero Kiran said, "Dr. Prathani Ramakrishna Goud garu is giving opportunities to many newcomers. This film conveys that with determination and dedication, one can achieve anything in life. Raj Kiran's music will be a special attraction for the movie." Heroine Aksha Khan said, "We believe everyone liked the song and teaser released today. This film is coming with strong content. I have also done a special song in the movie."

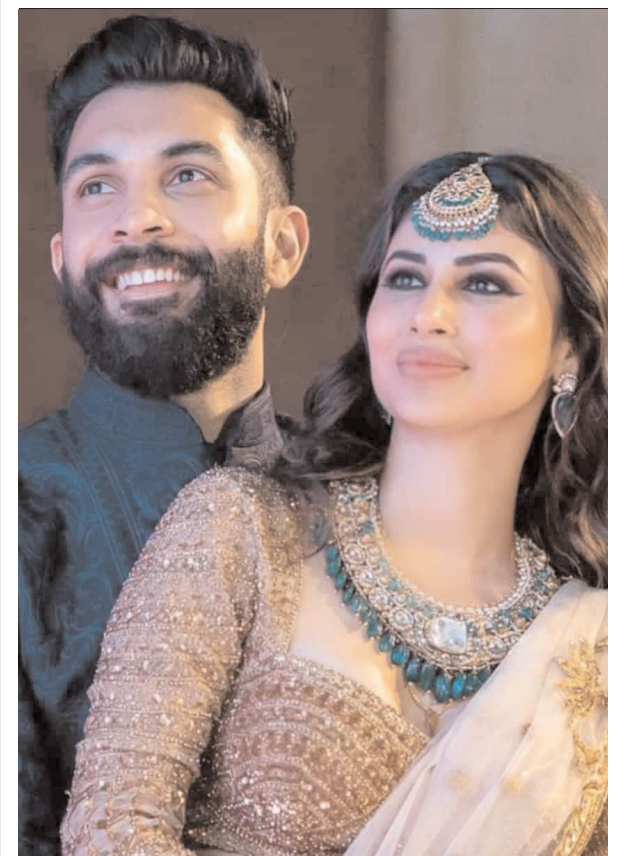
## Manoj Manchu Says AIKYA Will Be Voice for the Voiceless



**A**IKYA DHAIRYA SENA SAMITHI Shall Become a Voice for the Voiceless" - 'RawKing' Manoj Manchu Opens Up on Social Responsibility, Freedom of Speech, Films, Politics and Purpose During Extensive Media Interaction 'RawKing' Manoj Manchu held a heartfelt and extensive press meet where he spoke about AIKYA DHAIRYA SENA SAMITHI, social responsibility, freedom of speech, films, politics, women

empowerment, upcoming projects and more. Starting the interaction, Manoj spoke about the organization and the thought behind its formation. "So we thought to go statewide and started with blood camps. On the first day, we launched it at Kukatpally in Hyderabad. Then we did it at Kurnool, and I thank everyone who came forward. It was also conducted in Kakinada. Then it was conducted at Tirupati, Vizag and some other places. This will not stop. It shall continue, and I really wish to continue it. It will be a platform for the people who want to give back and serve society. And it shall become a voice for the people who are voiceless in society. And the reason we named it AIKYA DHAIRYA SENA SAMITHI is because I strongly believe that if we keep getting divided, it is going to end badly.

## NO THIRD-PARTY INVOLVEMENT IN MOUNI ROY'S DIVORCE



**A**ctress Mouni Roy announced her separation from businessman Suraj Nambiar. The couple issued a joint statement saying that the decision is mutual and they are completely aligned on certain things. However, there have been reports about infidelity, alimony, and other things going around Suraj Nambiar. Deeply hurt by the same, Suraj broke his silence, confirming that there is no alimony involved. At the same time, several people online also linked Disha Patani to the entire issue, claiming that she has been the reason for the couple's separation. Disha is close to Mouni Roy and hence, these rumors surfaced. In the latest note from Suraj, the claims of third-party involvement have also been ruled out. "Recent

baseless reports surrounding our separation have been made in bad taste and are absolutely malicious. Let me set the record straight once and for all. There is no alimony. There are no disputes. There is no third party involved. Mouni and I chose to part ways together, with mutual respect and with full consideration for each other's well-being. That is the truth. Everything else being reported is fiction, and in some cases, a deliberate attempt to vilify two people who have done nothing but ask to be left alone," he wrote. Mouni Roy and Suraj Nambiar first met in 2018 during a New Year's celebration in Dubai. The couple tied the knot in January 2022. The couple released a joint statement about separation on May 14th.

## Purushaha will appeal to everyone. Audiences will be thoroughly entertained: Hero Pavan Kalyan at the pre-release event

**B**attula Saraswathi is presenting, while Battula Koteswar Rao is producing the wholesome family entertainer Purushaha under the Kalyan Productions banner. The film marks the debut of Pavan Kalyan Battula as a lead actor, with direction by Veeru Vulavala. The cast includes Pavan Kalyan, Saptagiri, Kasireddy Rajkumar, Raayanacha Kokkura, Vishika, and Hasini Sudheer in key roles. The film is set for release on May 22. As part of the promotions, a grand pre-release event was held on Monday. While speaking at the event, Pavan Kalyan Battula said: "Thanks to producer Koteswar Rao garu and



Saraswathi garu for bringing Purushaha to this stage. Our director Veeru garu took great care of me throughout this journey and supported me immensely. Satish garu made all of us look fantastic

on screen. He helped me overcome my camera fear. Shraavan garu gave us wonderful songs. Ravi garu created excellent sets. Saptagiri anna and Kasireddy anna treated me

like their own younger brother. They helped me shed my shyness, fear, and hesitation. Working with Vennela Kishore garu, Rajeev Kanakala garu, and VTV Ganesh garu taught me

a lot. Raayanacha, Hasini, and Vishika supported me throughout. A big thanks to Teju garu for coming for us. My heartfelt thanks to everyone who worked on this film. And above all, thanks to my father, who shaped me into who I am today. I grew up watching his struggles. My sister too works very hard for me. Let's meet in theatres on May 22. Purushaha will definitely impress everyone. Since everyone stays indoors during this summer, this will be a perfect family film to enjoy together in theatres. I'm sure you will all be fully entertained." Saptagiri said: "When Veeru garu narrated the story, I tried giving some inputs, but he stuck to his own path and made the

film exactly as he envisioned. Koteswara Rao garu spoke so highly about our film industry and produced the movie wonderfully. Satish Muthyala garu gave us beautiful visuals. Shraavan's songs are winning everyone's hearts and the BGM is fantastic. Vishika, Hasini, and Raayanacha bring so much fun to the sets. I hope all our heroines get great opportunities. I enjoyed working with Kasireddy. I don't know what good deeds Pavan Kalyan did in his previous life, but he is blessed with a father like Koteswara Rao garu and a sister like Saraswathi garu. I request everyone to watch our film on May 22 and make it a success."