



'NATION FIRST'
guiding India's rise as credible
global power, says PM Modi at
Republic Summit

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SCAN FOR
E-PAPEROM NAMO
VENKATESAYA

21-06-2026

Total pilgrims - 90,072

Yonuses - 33,459

Handi kamalalu - 4,08 CR

Laddu sale - 4.34 Lac

Annaprasadam - 2,80 Lac

Medical treatment - 3,295

Waiting Compartments -

Out side line at Silathoranam.

Approx. Darsan Time for Sarvadarshanam

(with out SSD Token) - 15 H

Indians among 13 killed in Qatar gas plant explosion

DOHA (TSIT): Indians were among 13 workers killed and 66 others injured in an explosion at a gas facility in Qatar's Ras Laffan Industrial City, authorities said on Monday. Qatar's Energy Minister Saad Sherida al-Kaabi announced the casualties at a press conference in Doha, describing the incident as an accident. Al-Kaabi said the explosion and subsequent fire occurred at around 10:30 pm on Sunday at the Barzan local gas supply facility. He said there was no indication that the incident was the result of sabotage or any hostile activity.

(NEW DELHI (TSIT))

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Monday accused the Narendra Modi government of manipulating official data to create an impression of robust rural wage growth, alleging that changes in the methodology used for wage calculations had artificially inflated the figures while masking continued stagnation in real incomes.

In a statement, Ramesh claimed that the government was repeating a pattern that the Congress had earlier alleged in the case of employment statistics.

"In 2024, we had flagged that the Modi Government - through the RBI - had changed the definition of employment to show a boom in job creation, claiming the addition of 168 million jobs since FY18. The leadership of the RBI was later rewarded for its efforts with plum postings in the Modi Government," he said.

The Congress leader argued that the government was now attempting a similar exercise with rural wage data at a time



when weak consumption demand and sluggish private investment continued to weigh on economic growth. "We have consistently flagged that the root cause of India's economic slowdown is the stagnation in real wages, which has weakened consumption growth and deterred private investment.

Unable to fix this original sin, the Modi Government is now 'doctoring' a rural wages boom," Ramesh alleged.

According to him, official data showed annual rural wage growth rising sharply from around six per cent to between 17 and 18 per cent during the period from June 2025 to

March 2026, while average daily wages reportedly increased by 12.7 per cent in a single month.

Ramesh contended that the apparent surge was the result of an undisclosed methodological revision by the Labour Bureau rather than a genuine improvement in earnings.

"This 'boom' in wages has been manufactured by a methodological change. The Labour Bureau - without a press release or website disclosure - adopted a new sampling framework, which brought in workers from many northeastern states, NCT Delhi, and Goa into the sample pool," he said. He further claimed that the newly added regions, despite representing only a small fraction of the national workforce, had a disproportionately large influence on the survey results.

"Despite accounting for only around 1.2 per cent of India's workforce, these new data collection points account for around 11 per cent of the total sample. Most importantly, their average wages run around 50-55 per cent above the old

sample because newly added regions have far less agricultural employment and more higher-skilled workforces," Ramesh said.

The Congress leader maintained that a closer examination of the data suggested that actual wage growth remained weak.

"In reality, an analysis of wages data shows that the genuine wage growth would have been around 4.3 per cent per annum - which is the weakest growth in four years," he claimed.

Ramesh accused the government of manipulating statistics to project a more favourable picture of the economy, saying, "This is the entire political science of data doctoring at play." The remarks came amid an ongoing political debate over employment, wage growth and consumption trends in the Indian economy, with the opposition repeatedly questioning the government's economic data and the Centre maintaining that its policies have strengthened growth, job creation and incomes across sectors.

18 killed in Lucknow fire

**PM Modi, CM Yogi announce
ex gratia for victims**



LUCKNOW (TSIT):

At least 18 people, mostly aged between 20 and 24 years, were killed in a devastating fire that broke out in a three-storey commercial building in Aliganj's Purania area of Lucknow on Monday. The building housed a coaching centre, gaming zone and other establishments.

The fire erupted in the afternoon at the coaching centre and quickly spread through the structure, filling it with thick smoke and triggering panic among students and visitors. With exits blocked, several people rushed to windows and rooftops, while some jumped from upper floors to escape, suffering serious injuries. Fire brigade personnel, police and district administration teams rushed to the spot and launched

rescue operations. Rescue workers even drilled through a wall to create an emergency escape route for those trapped inside. Senior officials, including the District Magistrate and Police Commissioner, supervised relief efforts.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath cut short his visit to Aligarh and returned to Lucknow to review the situation and meet the injured. He announced Rs.5 lakh compensation for the families of the deceased and Rs.50,000 for the injured. Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief and announced Rs.2 lakh ex gratia from the PMNRF for the families of the deceased and Rs.50,000 for the injured. Authorities have launched an investigation into the cause of the fire.

US Trade Deal Delayed Over 50% Tariff: Goyal



NEW DELHI (TSIT)

The trade deal with the United States (US) is taking a little longer to sign due to the 50 per cent tariff imposed on goods from the country, said union Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal on Monday. While speaking at a media conclave, Goyal said,

"India aims to gain preferential access through the trade pact with the US." US Trade Representative Jameson Greer and Piyush Goyal are set to hold two-day talks on the first phase of the bilateral trade agreement. The US delegation visited India from June 1 to 4 to finalize the details of the interim trade agreement and take forward negotiations under the broader Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA). The visit was aimed at finalizing the details of the interim agreement and advancing negotiations under the broader BTA across multiple areas such as market access, non-tariff measures, customs and trade facilitation.

UK PM Keir Starmer announces resignation

LONDON (TSIT):

Keir Starmer on Monday announced that he is stepping down as the British Prime Minister and leader of the governing Labour Party. Making a statement outside 10 Downing Street, Starmer said that he will

however remain in post as Prime Minister until a new Labour leader is chosen in the coming weeks. "The question my party is asking now is whether I am best placed to lead us into the next general election.



OPERATION TIGER COMPLETE As six Uddhav Sena MPs join Shinde camp

MUMBAI (TSIT):

In a major political upheaval in Maharashtra, the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena on Monday executed "Operation Tiger," engineering a split within Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena (UBT). Six Lok Sabha Members of Parliament (MPs) from the UBT faction have formally joined the Shinde camp.

The six rebel MPs include Omprakash Bhupalsinh alias Omraje Nimbalkar (Dharashiv/Osmanabad), Nagesh Bapurao Patil Ashtikar (Hingoli), Sanjay Haribhau Jadhav (Parbhani), Sanjay Uttamrao Deshmukh (Yavatmal-Washim), Bhausaheb Rajaram Wakchaure (Shirdi) and Sanjay Dina Patil (Mumbai North East). This development reduces Shiv Sena UBT's strength in the Lok Sabha from nine to three,



while the Shinde faction's tally rises from seven to thirteen. The remaining loyalists with Uddhav Thackeray are Arvind Sawant (Mumbai South), Anil Desai (Mumbai South Central) and Rajabhau Waje (Nashik).

The cracks became evident when six of the nine UBT MPs skipped a crucial parliamentary party meeting in Delhi. Speculation turned into reality as the rebel MPs sent a formal letter to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, requesting recog-

nition as a separate group. By banding together as six, they bypassed the anti-defection law, which requires a minimum two-thirds majority to split without disqualification. Nagesh Ashtikar and Omraje Nimbalkar admitted that sitting in the Opposition for two years deprived their constituencies of development funds. They noted that the Rs 5 crore MPLAD scheme was restrictive and surviving without state-backed funding was crippling their

grassroots influence.

Ashtikar said via Facebook Live that he held no personal malice toward Uddhav Thackeray but criticised the "harsh, abusive language" and lack of trust displayed by senior leaders like Sanjay Raut after they skipped the Delhi meeting.

Omraje Nimbalkar's defection followed a sessions court acquitting the accused in the murder of his father, Pawanraje Nimbalkar. He said Deputy Chief Minister Eknath

Shinde and Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis facilitated a conversation with Union Home Minister Amit Shah, assuring him that the CBI would appeal the verdict on merit. Uddhav Thackeray has launched a statewide outreach campaign to contain the damage, starting from the rebels' constituencies in Yavatmal, Washim and Hingoli. He accused the defectors of "selling themselves after increasing their value post-election."

Resolve PGRS petitions with a human-centric approach: CM Naidu

THE SOUTH INDIA TIMES,
VISAKHAPATNAM:

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu directed officials to address all public grievances, including PGRS petitions, with a humane and citizen-centric approach. He issued the instructions while reviewing the performance of various departments from the RTGS Centre at the State Secretariat on Monday.

The Chief Minister emphasized that employees and officials should develop soft skills and focus on resolving complaints by placing themselves in the position of the petitioners. Courteous interaction with citizens would help build public confidence in governance, he said.

He also stressed the importance of field visits to understand ground realities and make informed decisions. Mr.



Naidu urged officials to remain vigilant against misinformation campaigns and attempts to create social divisions. He noted that several old criminal cases were being successfully traced and solved, sending a strong message that offenders cannot escape punishment indefinitely. The Chief Minister further directed departments to expedite the establishment of a Quantum Park and a

Semiconductor Park in the state. He called for greater focus on environmental sustainability, including increasing green cover, ensuring water security, conserving groundwater resources, and preventing river pollution. The review meeting was attended by Chief Secretary Sai Prasad, Director General of Police Harish Kumar Gupta, and senior officials from various departments.

CM Shivakumar accepts Kumaraswamy challenge on Bidadi project debate

BENGALURU (TSIT):

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D. K. Shivakumar has invited Union Minister H. D. Kumaraswamy for a detailed discussion on the controversial Bidadi Township Project near Bengaluru. In a letter sent on Monday, Shivakumar asked Kumaraswamy and five members of his team to attend a meeting at Vidhana Soudha on June 26 at 11 a.m.

The invitation comes in response to Kumaraswamy's challenge for a public debate on



the township project, which has triggered political controversy over the acquisition of agricultural land and alleged opposition from local farmers.

Earlier, Kumaraswamy claimed that farmers were against the project and challenged Shivakumar to publicly discuss the issue.

He pointed out that women and senior citizens had been protesting against the project for more than 450 days. The Union Minister also alleged that the project would not benefit the public and announced plans to challenge it legally, stating that a legal team would soon move court with relevant documents.

While acknowledging that the township proposal originated during his tenure as Chief Minister, Kumaraswamy maintained that it never moved beyond the preliminary stage.

Vance says Iran agrees to IAEA inspections



BURGENSTOCK (TSIT):

US Vice President JD Vance said on Monday that Iran has agreed to allow inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) back into the country, describing the move as a major breakthrough in negotiations aimed at permanently ending Tehran's nuclear

weapons programme and reducing tensions across the Middle East. After a fresh round of talks in Burgenstock, Vance told reporters that the development was among the most significant achievements of negotiations involving the United States, Iran and regional partners.

"The Iranians have agreed to invite IAEA inspectors back into their country," Vance asserted. "That is a major milestone for the American people, and the first step in permanently denuclearising or permanently ending a nuclear weapons programme in Iran."

People suffered under past rule



Khammam (TSIT): People faced hardships during the previous regime, while the present Congress government is ensuring that welfare benefits reach every household, Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka said on Monday.

Addressing a review meeting of Mahila Congress leaders in Khammam, Bhatti said the government was

committed to the welfare of the poor and the empowerment of women. He highlighted the implementation of the Indiramma Housing Scheme, enhanced health-care coverage under Rajiv Aarogyasri and interest-free loans for women self-help groups.

The Deputy Chief Minister said the government had sanctioned 4.5 lakh houses under the Indiramma

Housing Scheme and was providing financial assistance of Rs 5 lakh to eligible beneficiaries. He added that the Aarogyasri health insurance limit had been increased to Rs 10 lakh and that Rs 67,000 crore in interest-free loans had been disbursed to women's groups over the past 30 months.

Referring to Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy's proposed visit to Chinthakani on June 30, Bhatti called upon Congress workers to make the public meeting a historic success. He said the Chief Minister would release Rythu Bharosa assistance to farmers across the state during the programme, which is expected to draw around two lakh people.

Congress failed to fulfil promises: BRS leaders

Madhira, June 22: Former minister Puvvada Ajay Kumar, Rajya Sabha MP Vaddiraju Ravichandra and MLC Tata Madhusudhan alleged that the Congress government in Telangana has failed to fulfil its election guarantees and neglected farmers and common people. Addressing a BRS workers' meeting in Madhira on



Monday, they claimed that schemes such as Rythu Bandhu and Rythu Bima had been weakened under the present government.

The leaders alleged delays in investment support, insurance benefits, fertiliser supply and paddy procurement. They also said key welfare promises, including assistance for women, enhanced pensions and unemployment allowance, remain unfulfilled, and urged party workers to strengthen the BRS at the grassroots level.

Students urged to stay away from drugs



Mancherla, June 22: Deputy Commissioner of Police A. Bhaskar urged students to stay away from narcotic substances and develop the courage to say "No" to harmful influences. He was speaking at an anti-drug awareness programme held at Vishwa Shanthi Kerala School in Srirampur on Monday.

The programme was organised as part of Anti-Drug Awareness Week. Bhaskar warned that drug addiction can affect mental health, family life and society. He advised students to avoid experimenting with cigarettes and other intoxicants and encouraged them to report suspicious drug-related activities to the police through Dial 100. Police officials, teachers and students attended the programme.

Kalvakuntla Kavitha Invited to WETA India Launch Event



Hyderabad, TSIT :Telangana Jagruthi founder-president has been invited to the inaugural ceremony of Women Empowerment Telugu Association (WETA) India, a platform dedicated to women's empowerment, leadership development and social advancement. WETA Founder and Chairperson met Kavitha and formally handed over the invitation for the launch event scheduled to be held in Hyderabad.

Speaking on the occasion, Jhansi Rajender Reddy said WETA, which has been successfully promoting women's empowerment initiatives in the United States, is now expanding its activities to India. She emphasized that the organisation's programmes are non-political and aimed at bringing together women from all walks of life to encourage leadership,

self-confidence and community development.

Kavitha welcomed the initiative and said that programmes focused on women's empowerment play a vital role in the progress of society. She appreciated WETA's efforts to nurture leadership qualities among women and create platforms that inspire confidence and participation in public life.

Expressing her best wishes for the organisation's future activities, Kavitha hoped that WETA India would make a meaningful contribution to the advancement of women across different sectors. WETA India inaugural programme will be held on June 24 at 10 a.m. at in Hyderabad. Prominent women leaders, social activists and representatives of various women's organisations are expected to participate in the event.

Villagers demand closure of polluting industry



Sangareddy, June 22: Villagers of Nandikandi in Sadasivpet mandal staged a protest in front of the Bluecraft industry on Monday, alleging that pollution from the factory is causing serious health and environmental problems. They claimed that smoke, dust and foul odours from the unit are affecting residents, particularly children.

Village leader Rajender Reddy alleged that industrial effluents are contaminating borewells, ponds and nearby water bodies, impacting agriculture and fishermen's livelihoods. He also claimed that wastewater is being discharged into a canal connected to the Manjeera River. The protesters accused Pollution Control Board officials of ignoring repeated complaints and favouring the industry. They demanded immediate closure of the factory and action against officials allegedly responsible for failing to address the issue. Villagers also sought intervention from TGICC Chairperson Nirmala Jaggareddy to resolve the matter.

HMDA holds pre-bid meeting for Mokila layout



Hyderabad, June 22: The Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA) conducted a pre-bid meeting for the proposed Mokila Layout at the project site on Monday, attracting an enthusiastic response from prospective bidders ahead of the upcoming e-auction.

More than 200 participants attended the interactive session, with over 150 prospective bidders taking part in discussions on various aspects of the project. The meeting was organized to provide detailed

information about the layout and clarify queries related to planning, development works and the e-auction process.

Deputy Collector Y. Sudarshan briefed participants on the key features of the Mokila Layout and addressed questions raised by bidders. Chief Planning Officer A. Ravinder Reddy explained the planning aspects and development proposals associated with the project.

Representing MSTC, Siddarth provided details on the e-auction process

and participation guidelines. HMDA Superintending Engineer Appa Rao elaborated on the infrastructure and development works undertaken at the site and responded to technical queries.

A detailed presentation on the layout's unique features and investment potential was delivered by Kalyan, representative of KPMG, through a PowerPoint presentation.

The meeting concluded successfully with participants expressing strong interest in the project and the forthcoming e-auction scheduled for June 29 and 30, 2026. HMDA officials said the overwhelming response reflects growing public interest in the Mokila Layout and confidence in the authority's planned urban development initiatives.

R&B department ready for monsoon

Hyderabad (TSIT): Roads & Buildings Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy said the department is fully prepared to tackle monsoon-related challenges and ensure uninterrupted road connectivity across Telangana.

Reviewing monsoon preparedness, the Minister directed officials to remain on high alert and implement a comprehensive Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to manage flood-related situations. Engineers and field staff have been instructed to stay available round-the-clock from June to October.

The department has arranged emergency equipment, including JCBs, de-watering pumps, sandbags and construction materials, while vulnerable roads, bridges and flood-prone areas will be continuously monitored. Officials have also been asked to identify alterna-



tive traffic routes and coordinate with other departments.

A colour-coded alert system has been introduced, with special measures during Yellow, Orange and Red alerts. The R&B Headquarters Control Room in Hyderabad will function throughout the monsoon season with daily monitoring reports from field officers.

The Minister said the department's priority is to minimise flood damage, restore connectivity quickly and provide timely assistance to the public during emergencies.

Rare disorder surgery restores child's growth hopes



Hyderabad, June 22: Doctors at Medicover Woman & Child Hospitals successfully performed a complex laparoscopic splenectomy on a seven-year-old boy suffering from a rare medical condition that had severely affected his growth and overall health.

Master Yashwanth from Kothur was diagnosed with Extra Hepatic Portal Vein Obstruction (EHPVO), severe portal hypertension, massive splenomegaly, hypersplenism and severe anaemia. Due to the prolonged illness, the child's physical development was significantly delayed, making him appear much younger than his actual age.

Medical examinations revealed that Yashwanth had an enlarged spleen measuring 17 cm, a critically low hemoglobin level of 6 g/dL and a markedly reduced white blood cell count. Doctors said these

complications were affecting his immunity, nutrition and growth. The surgery was particularly challenging because the enlarged spleen occupied most of the abdominal cavity and was surrounded by extensive collateral blood vessels, increasing the risk of bleeding. Despite these difficulties, the surgical team successfully completed the procedure using minimally invasive laparoscopic techniques without converting to open surgery.

Dr. Kishore Reddy, Liver Transplant Surgeon,

described the operation as one of the most technically demanding pediatric splenectomy cases. Senior Paediatric Surgeon Dr. Madhumohan Reddy said the child's growth retardation was a major concern and expressed confidence that his growth and overall development would improve significantly after surgery.

The child is recovering well under medical supervision, and doctors expect substantial improvement in his health, immunity and physical growth in the coming months.

Vijay Kumar Reddy elected PCFI Vice-President

Hyderabad, June 22: Senior journalist and Hyderabad Press Club President Srigiri Vijay Kumar Reddy has been elected as the National Vice-President of the newly formed Press Clubs Federation of India (PCFI), representing South India as a founding member.

The federation brings together leading press clubs from across the country, including those from New Delhi, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chandigarh, Indore, Guwahati and Agartala, with the objective of strengthening the journalism fraternity and promoting the welfare of media professionals.



Vijay Kumar Reddy's election to the prestigious post has been widely welcomed by journalists and media organizations. With nearly three decades of experience in Telugu journalism, he has served in various

capacities and earned recognition for his contributions to the profession. Known for his active role in journalist welfare and media-related initiatives, Vijay Kumar Reddy has been associated with several efforts aimed

at strengthening press institutions and safeguarding the interests of journalists. His appointment as National Vice-President is expected to enhance the representation of South Indian journalists at the national level and contribute to the growth and development of the newly established federation.

Members of the Hyderabad Press Club and journalists from various media organizations congratulated Vijay Kumar Reddy on his election and expressed confidence that his experience and leadership would help strengthen the Press Clubs Federation of India and further the cause of the journalism community across the country.

Rs.12.53 crore sports works launched in Mahabubnagar



Mahabubnagar, June 22: State Animal Husbandry, Dairy Development, Fisheries, Sports and Youth Services Minister Vakiti Srihari laid the foundation stone for sports infrastructure projects worth Rs.12.53 crore at the Indoor Stadium grounds in Mahabubnagar on Monday and urged youth to stay away from drugs and embrace sports.

The Minister, along with Government Whip and Mahabubnagar MLA Yennam Srinivas Reddy, launched the works being undertaken through the

Telangana State Sports Authority.

Speaking on the occasion, Srihari said Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy is giving top priori-

ty to sports development and creating world-class facilities for athletes. The projects include a 400-metre eight-lane synthetic athletics track of interna-

tional standards at a cost of Rs.10.70 crore, four open gyms costing Rs.1 crore, an indoor gym worth Rs.51 lakh and additional facilities including a women's athletics hostel.

The Minister said sports are a powerful tool for transforming lives and called upon youngsters to develop discipline through sports. He noted that nearly Rs.80 crore has already been allocated for sports development in the combined Palamuru district and assured that additional funds would be provided if required.

SCR reviews monsoon safety measures

Secunderabad, June 22: South Central Railway (SCR) General Manager Sanjay Kumar Srivastava reviewed the zone's preparedness for safe train operations during the upcoming monsoon season at a safety review meeting held at Rail Nilayam, Secunderabad, on Sunday.

The meeting was attended by Additional General Manager Satya Prakash, Principal Heads of Departments and Divisional Railway Managers of Secunderabad, Hyderabad and Nanded divisions through video conferencing. During the review, the General Manager directed officials to take preventive measures to ensure uninter-



rupted railway operations during heavy rains. He instructed field staff to undertake trimming of trees and branches near railway tracks to prevent accidents and disruptions. Officials were also asked to ensure the availability of GPS trackers for better monitoring and coordination of field activities.

Emphasizing electrical safety, Srivastava called for maintaining reliable power supply arrangements and preventing incidents such as electrical tripping and short circuits that could affect train services. He urged supervisors to remain vigilant and address operational issues promptly.

The General Manager also directed officials to conduct joint inspections of points and crossings, especially at vulnerable locations, and complete all pending maintenance and repair works without delay. He stressed the need for refresher training programmes to keep employees updated on safety procedures and operational practices.

Housing MD inspects Chityala double-bedroom colony



Wanaparthi, June 22: Telangana State Housing Corporation Managing Director V.P. Gautam, along with District Collector Adarsh Surabhi, inspected the Chityala double-bedroom housing colony on Monday and reviewed the facilities available to residents. The officials examined infrastructure and directed

municipal and public health authorities to improve basic amenities. Residents complained about illegal occupation of government land within the colony, prompting the MD to order immediate action. Villagers also requested an Anganwadi Centre and a Primary Health Centre, and officials assured necessary steps.

117 petitions received at Prajavani



Mahabubnagar, June 22 : Revenue Additional Collector J.L.B. Haripriya directed district officials to resolve complaints and petitions received during the Prajavani programme without delay.

During the Prajavani programme held at the Collectorate conference hall on Monday, she personally received applications from the public. She listened attentively to the problems raised by the petitioners and assured them that each issue would be examined through the concerned departments and appropriate action would be taken.

A total of 117 petitions were received by officials,

covering departments including Municipal, District Civil Supplies, Land Survey Records, Housing, Education, Medical & Health, Revenue, Backward Classes Welfare, Rural Development, Tribal Development, and others.

The Additional Collector advised officials to pay special attention to resolving public grievances and take action within the stipulated

deadlines. She stated that the Prajavani programme plays a key role in delivering better governance to the people. The programme was attended by Land Acquisition Special Deputy Collector Ramreddy, Assistant Collector (Under Trainee) Sai Shivani, DRO A. Nirmala, ZPCEO, In-charge DPO Venkat Reddy, and various district department heads.

RUSSIAN TROOP BUILD-UP THREATENS CITY SEEN AS KEY TO SEIZING UKRAINE'S DONBAS

Russian troops have infiltrated the strategic city of Kostyantynivka in eastern Ukraine and are now trying to surround it. The entire city is now effectively in a "grey zone", no longer controlled by anyone, Ukrainian soldiers have told the BBC. "They get into areas behind our backs and in urban conditions it's extremely difficult to push them out," says a Ukrainian drone pilot who operates in that area and prefers to remain anonymous. Kostyantynivka is a gateway to the rest of the Donbas region. If it falls, Russian forces would be able push towards Ukraine's last remaining strongholds in the east, the cities of Kramatorsk and Sloviansk, and move closer to seizing Donbas completely, one of the Kremlin's key objectives in this war. For months Russia's full-scale war in Ukraine has stalled along the front line, and Ukrainian commanders say they have recaptured more territory this year than they have lost, disrupting



Moscow's crucial supply lines between the Russian border and occupied Crimea. On Sunday, Russian-appointed authorities in Crimea suspended fuel sales to the public because of the shortages. And Kyiv's repeated strikes on oil refineries in Moscow, St Petersburg and other cities have also sought to bring the conflict to the attention of Russians far from the front line. But in Kostyantynivka,

Russian soldiers have advanced from the south and have even been spotted at the other end of the city, on the city's northern outskirts. Moscow says its forces are rapidly advancing in the south-western part of Kostyantynivka and that they have encircled Ukrainian military units. That is denied by Kyiv and Brig Gen Oleksandr Bakulin, commander of Ukraine's 19th

Corp which is in charge of units defending the city and surrounding areas, insists "the situation remains under control" and "the enemy has no success". However, he does acknowledge there are about 130 Russian soldiers still inside the city. The situation on the ground may not be as critical as Moscow says, but it does appear far more serious than Ukrainian officials are ready to publicly

admit, a Ukrainian officer from a unit that operates inside Kostyantynivka told the BBC. He too has preferred to stay anonymous, but told the BBC: "We still have clean-up and assault groups inside the city, but the Russians manage to accumulate more and more soldiers there." Every building in Kostyantynivka acts as a potential shelter for soldiers to hide, and in the summer months the trees provide extra cover. So Russian forces have found a way to advance inside the "kill zone" where Ukrainian drones can detect any movement and instantly attack. Russian drone pilots have also focused on destroying Ukrainian drone launch sites. To give their infantry troops assaulting Ukrainian positions a breathing space, Russian pilots had made Ukrainian crews their priority target. The Ukrainian drone pilot told the BBC that while his colleagues were targeting Russia's infantry, enemy crews were not: "For such

tasks, they use artillery, multiple rocket launchers, military aviation." He and his comrades have limited numbers and resources, so they are often exhausted and have struggled to expand their operations. "Since we devote little time to [searching and targeting] enemy pilots, they can freely operate, detect our positions and we are forced to roll back. This is how the frontline moves," he explains. The Ukrainian officer whose unit is operating in the city maintains the pace of the Russian advance is very slow: "Sometimes they move 100m [109yds] a day. Sometimes they even crawl to reach the next building." The Ukrainian drone pilot told the BBC that while his colleagues were targeting Russia's infantry, enemy crews were not: "For such tasks, they use artillery, multiple rocket launchers, military aviation." He and his comrades have limited numbers and resources, so they are often exhausted and have struggled to expand their operations.

Alan Greenspan, architect of the modern American economy, dies aged 100

Former US Federal Reserve chair Alan Greenspan has died aged 100, his wife has said. NBC News correspondent Andrea Mitchell said in a statement reported by her employer that her husband had died from complications of Parkinson's Disease. Mitchell's statement said Greenspan was "a giant of a man who helped shape the US economy for decades under presidents of both parties, but was always honest in acknowledging his mistakes". For nearly 20 years, Alan Greenspan was charged with safeguarding the US economy and keeping the dollar sound. As chairman of the Federal Reserve from 1987-2006, a post described as the second most important after the presidency, he presided over the longest sustained period of US economic growth in a generation. Described as the "God in the machine" of American finance, Greenspan declined all requests for interviews during his time at the Fed. But the media and the money markets hung on his few pub-



lic statements, and a sign in his office said simply, "the buck starts here". But critics argue that an over-reliance on easy credit fuelled the dot-com bubble of the late 1990s and caused the sub-prime mortgage crisis of 2008. The Fed said Greenspan's policies and economic thinking "left a lasting mark on this institution, on the broader field of economics, and on the country". In a statement on Monday, the central bank said: "He brought rigorous analytical discipline to monetary policymaking and helped establish the credibility that remains one of the Federal Reserve's most important assets."

GUINEA BANS EXPORTS OF RAW GOLD TO BOOST LOCAL REFINING



Guinea has banned the export of unrefined gold in an effort to promote domestic processing of the precious metal. The policy - effective immediately - comes after Guinea's President Mamadi Doumbouya met industrial and artisanal gold producers and buyers, and aims to boost the economy and create more jobs. "Guinea will now require its gold to be processed within its own borders. Raw gold will no longer leave Guinea," he said, adding that other countries have been reaping the economic benefits of processing and trading their raw materials. Guinea is Africa's sixth largest gold producer, according to the World Gold Council. Other African nations have taken similar steps to increase domestic processing and value addition in the mining sector in recent years. In Tanzania and Uganda, the export of unprocessed minerals and metals such

as gold and copper is already banned, while Ghana is set to ban raw gold exports by 2030. Africa's top lithium producer, Zimbabwe, has banned concentrate exports of the metal used to make batteries from 2027. Gold is one of Guinea's main exports, shipping more than 22 tonnes of the metal in the first quarter of this year, according to the authorities. A new refinery is near completion in the capital, Conakry, where the country's gold will be sent before processing and export. It has a reported capacity of 250 tonnes a year so should be able to handle the country's current production. Foreign companies operating in the country have been warned that they risk losing their licenses and having their mining contracts terminated if they violate the directive. Guinea is also the world's largest producer of bauxite, used to make aluminium.

Former Kenyan justice minister blocked from entering Uganda, lawyers' body says

Leading Kenyan lawyer and former Justice Minister Martha Karua has been blocked from entering Uganda and ordered to return home, according to the Uganda Law Society. Karua had just arrived at the Entebbe airport to join a team defending her Ugandan lawyer colleague Erias Lukwago, with whom they have been representing detained opposition leader Kizza Besigye, who is on trial for treason. Lukwago was himself charged with a treason-related offence last week, and his bail hearing had been due on Monday. A statement from Karua's office said she had been detained at the airport, adding that she was expected to return to the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, on Monday



but "remains incommunicado". "Her senior team reports that she is unreachable, with her mobile phones switched off and they continue to await direct communication regarding her status and expected return," it said. Ugandan authorities did not give a reason for blocking Karua, although Kenya's Law Society President Charles Kanjama.

First round of US-Iran talks ends with encouraging progress, mediators say

The first round of negotiations between the US and Iran to reach a final deal to end the war has ended with "encouraging progress", mediators Qatar and Pakistan say. In a joint statement early on Monday, Qatar and Pakistan said that the parties had agreed to "a roadmap towards reaching a final deal within 60 days". Iran's foreign minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi said there had been "major progress" towards ending the conflict in Lebanon. The memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed last week includes a commitment to ending the fighting on "all fronts" - including Lebanon - and the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz. "Pakistani and Qatari mediation has delivered major progress to end



Lebanon War," Araghchi posted on social media. "Oil and petrochem exports are waived, blockade lifted, some frozen assets released, and major reconstruction & development plan launched for Iran." The Iranian lead negotiators left the talks in Switzerland on Monday, Iranian media said, with technical discussions between the parties due to

continue. The mediators' joint statement said that a "communication line" had been formed "to avoid incidents and miscommunication with the aim of safe passage for commercial vessels through the Strait of Hormuz." Both sides also agreed to the creation of a "de-confliction cell" between the US, Iran and Lebanon, facilitated by the mediating

countries, to end military operations in Lebanon, their statement said. Araghchi said the first "real test" would be the Lebanon de-confliction cell. Lebanese President Joseph Aoun spoke to senior officials from the US and Qatar on Monday about the issue, and more broadly about consolidating a ceasefire in Lebanon, his office said. Since the MoU was signed, there has been an upsurge in fighting between Lebanese armed group Hezbollah and Israeli forces in southern Lebanon, and Israeli air strikes that the health ministry says have killed dozens of Lebanese including women and children. A new ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah was declared on Friday.

TRUMP-BACKED POLITICAL OUTSIDER WINS COLOMBIA ELECTION, INITIAL COUNT SHOWS

Right-wing candidate Abelardo de la Espriella has narrowly won Colombia's presidential election, an initial vote count shows, marking a dramatic shift in how the government will tackle the country's internal armed conflict and violence. De la Espriella, who was endorsed by Donald Trump, has pledged a military crack-down on illegal armed groups, drug trafficking and crime. He appeared to defeat left-wing Iván Cepeda, a close ally of the president, Gustavo Petro. De la Espriella said "today begins a new stage for our country, a stage built on the free and democratic will of millions of citizens who chose to



believe in a great, safe, prosperous Colombia full of opportunities". With over 99% of votes counted, de la Espriella had won nearly 49.7% of the vote, while Cepeda won 48.7%, according to an initial count of the runoff election. Cepeda has not conceded, saying the pre-

liminary count was "not yet official or binding". "Once the official canvass takes place and its final result is produced, and the corresponding verifications have been carried out, we will recognize the official result that emerges from that structure." The verification

process showed little difference to initial counting in the first round of voting on 31 May, Reuters news agency reported. De la Espriella, who was raised in the Caribbean coastal region, enjoyed significant regional support there. After the initial vote count came through, de la Espriella addressed a huge crowd of supporters who had gathered to celebrate in Barranquilla, a city on the coast. "Tonight marks the beginning of a new story for the nation, tonight a new era begins, a change of order," said De la Espriella, who has nicknamed himself "El Tigre" (The Tiger.) "I'm going to govern for all Colombians."

SCHOOLS CLOSE AS MORE THAN HALF OF FRANCE UNDER RED HEAT ALERTS



More than half of France's regions are under a red heat alert, as the country braces for sweltering temperatures in an intensifying heatwave. Highs of more than 40C (104F) are expected across parts of western France on Monday, with temperatures expected to hit 42C in Bordeaux, forecaster Météo-France said. Some 845 schools have been shut, while a further 1,800 are allowing pupils to finish classes early, the education ministry said. But more than a million high school students are due to take their oral final exams for the baccalaureate. The French government has warned people not to try to cool off in unsupervised areas such as lakes and rivers, after 13 drowning deaths at the weekend. A red heat alert is the highest of four warnings issued by Météo-France, and advises people to exercise extreme caution in conditions that are potentially life-threatening. Dozens of other regions in France are under an orange alert - the second-highest warning - with an estimated 63 million people in total affected across the country. The national

railway operator SNCF urged "vulnerable" people to avoid or postpone train travel this week, while in Paris, several train lines reduced their services on Monday due to the heat. Belgium's train operator also announced some peak hour trains would be cancelled for Monday and Tuesday. Temperatures in Belgium are expected to reach record levels in the coming week, the IRM meteorological institute said. Madrid is forecast to hit 39C on Monday and in Italy, temperatures are predicted to reach 37C in Rome. Red warnings are also in force across other parts of western and central Europe - taking effect in Germany and Switzerland on Monday and in Luxembourg on Tuesday. The rising temperatures are being driven by hot air moving north from the Sahara desert, which is in turn trapping hot air over western and central Europe with forecasters suggesting the conditions could result in one of the longest heatwaves in recent years. Temperatures are expected to peak in many areas on Wednesday.



Largest ever cocaine bust in Australia after police raid underground bunker

Japan quintuples visa fees in first price hike since 1978



Japan has implemented a five-fold increase to visa fees for all foreigners, marking the first price hike in nearly 50 years. From 1 July, single-entry visa fees will be raised from the current 3,000 yen (\$18.69; £14) to 15,000 yen, while multi-entry visas will now cost 30,000 yen, up from 6,000 yen. The visa fee revisions - the first since 1978 - were made to "reflect inflation and exchange rate fluctua-

tions", Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi told reporters on Friday. "We do not anticipate that it will have an immediate impact on inbound tourism," he added. The Japanese yen has been weakening continually since 2021, and is now hovering near historic 40-year lows. This, along with a post-pandemic travel rebound, has led to a surge in tourists to Japan.

The Unreal Story Of Iran Goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand

TWO GUINNESS RECORDS, 90 MINUTES OF DEFIANCE

Who said the 48-team FIFA World Cup was going to be boring, with too many one-sided matches? As the group stage of the tournament nears its conclusion, some heroic performances have been witnessed, especially from the goalkeepers of smaller nations like Cape Verde, Curacao, and Iran. After some brilliant performances in goal by Vozinha and Eloy Room, it was time for Iran's goalkeeper, Alireza Beiranvand, to shine. Beiranvand put in a heroic show between the sticks to help Iran earn a goalless draw against Belgium, a team ranked No. 9 in the world by FIFA. While the ongoing World Cup in the US, Canada, and Mexico has seen some phenomenal goalkeeping performances, Beiranvand's story sets him apart from the rest. As Belgium took on Iran in search of three



points, they came across a 6'4" man named Alireza Beiranvand. He made seven saves, collected the Player of the Match trophy, and held together a clean sheet that, by all sporting laws, should never have existed. Long before he was frustrating Europe's elite,

Beiranvand was a kid running away from home. Born into a nomadic Kurdish Lak family in the rugged hills of Lorestan, his childhood was defined by extreme poverty and a father who fiercely opposed his dream of playing football. To his family, football was an unafford-

able luxury; a pair of gloves was equivalent to throwing money away. So, as a teenager, Beiranvand took a gamble that would break most adults. He borrowed pocket money, ran away, and boarded a bus heading toward the chaos of Tehran.

When Beiranvand arrived in the Iranian capital, he didn't have a bed, a room, or an acquaintance. For months, he slept on the streets outside local football clubs, figuring that if he was going to freeze, he might as well do it close to the grass. To buy basic meals, he had to sweep streets, scrub down tyres at a car wash, work assembly lines in a dressmaking factory, and even prepare dough in a late-night pizza shop. It was during those punishing early years that coaches noticed something bizarre about Beiranvand's physiology. Growing up in the hills, he had spent his childhood playing a local game called Dalparan, which involved throwing heavy rocks over massive distances to protect sheep. That repetitive chore had forged an upper body unlike anything ever seen in modern football.

Women's T20 World Cup 2026 Semifinals Scenarios: What Loss Against South Africa Means For India

India's chances of reaching the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026 semifinals suffered a big blow after they were beaten by South Africa at the Old Trafford Cricket Ground in Manchester on Sunday. Marizanne Kapp slammed 81 off just 45 deliveries to guide South Africa to a six-wicket win with five balls to spare. The result meant that South Africa kept their qualification hopes alive despite losing against Australia in their first match. Meanwhile, this was the first loss for India after wins over Pakistan and Netherlands. Despite the loss, India retained their second spot behind Australia in Group 1. How Can India Qualify? If India win both of their remaining matches, they can qualify provided their Net Run Rate (NRR) is better than either South Africa or Australia. A loss for South Africa or Australia in their remaining matches will also work for India. If India



lose one of their remaining matches, they will need South Africa to lose one of their two remaining matches. In that case, they will need to have their Net Run Rate (NRR) better than Bangladesh and South Africa. However, if India lose their game against Bangladesh, they will be eliminated. If India lose both of their games, they will be eliminated irrespective of the other results. What Happened In India vs South Africa Game Marizanne Kapp made the most of a couple of dropped catches to hit an

unbeaten 81 and power South Africa's crucial six-wicket win over India in their Group A contest of the Women's T20 World Cup on Sunday. Kapp, who had earlier returned 2/27 with the ball, struck seven fours and four sixes to make her runs off just 45 balls. She was dropped twice by substitute fielder Radha Yadav, which proved catastrophic for India. In reply to India's laborious 158 for seven earlier in the innings, South Africa won with five balls to spare, making 161 for four in 19.1 overs.

Kevin Pina: The Man Who Scripted History For Cape Verde With A Long-Range Free-Kick

Cape Verde's maiden FIFA World Cup campaign continues to grab headlines with each passing day. After holding mighty Spain to a goalless draw in their Group H opener, the African island nation stunned everyone with a 2-2 draw against Uruguay on Monday (IST). It was a memorable sight for football fans worldwide as the debutants matched the two-time world champions with confidence and flair. One player who emerged as an overnight hero was Kevin Pina. He scored Cape Verde's first-ever goal in a World Cup, giving his side an early lead against Uruguay. In the 21st minute, Pina fired in a long-range free-kick that slipped past a poorly organised Uruguay wall and goalkeeper Fernando Muslera,



putting Cape Verde 1-0 ahead. As the ball hit the back of the net, the Miami Stadium erupted in celebration. The joy on the faces of Pina, his teammates, and the fans in attendance was priceless. A nation with a population of less than 530,000 now finds itself on the verge of reaching the Round of 32 at

the FIFA World Cup. Who is Kevin Pina? Pina currently plays for Russian club FC Krasnodar. He featured in 27 matches for the team in the Russian Premier League last season, starting 11 of them, as the side finished runners-up. Born in Praia, Cape Verde, Pina began his professional

career in Portugal's second division, making his debut for Oliveirense in a 2-3 defeat against Benfica B in 2018. Pina signed a three-year deal with Krasnodar and later extended the contract until 2027. He earned his first national team call-up in late 2021 for the 2022 FIFA World Cup qualifiers. He made his debut in early 2022, featuring in a friendly match where his side registered a commanding 6-0 victory over Liechtenstein. Draw vs Uruguay Cape Verde took a surprise 21st-minute lead as Pina scored their first World Cup goal from a free-kick, only for Uruguay to strike twice shortly before half-time through Maximiliano Araujo and Agustin Canobbio.

MI In Talks With RR For Hardik Pandya Trade Deal But Want This Superstar In Return

Mumbai Indians all-rounder Hardik Pandya looks to be on his way out of the franchise after yet another poor Indian Premier League (IPL) campaign. Hardik, who was named as MI skipper following his arrival from the Gujarat Titans, is said to have told the franchise that he wants to move on amid rumours of dressing-room discord within the squad. According to a report, the Rajasthan Royals are the front-runners to sign Hardik in a trade deal with MI, with their opening batter Yashasvi Jaiswal going the other way. Jaiswal has also been at the centre of speculation over the last year or two. Sanju Samson's departure from RR seemed to have opened the door for Jaiswal to become the



biggest star in the Rajasthan team. He was also seen as the top captaincy candidate, but the management preferred to give the leadership role to Riyan Parag. In the batting unit, Jaiswal has now seen the 15-year-old Vaibhav Sooryavanshi surpassing him as the most exciting talent. A move away from the franchise,

hence, could be the perfect solution for Jaiswal to revive his career. For Jaiswal, who also plays for the Mumbai Ranji Trophy team, Mumbai Indians move looks like a match made in heaven. According to a report in RevSportz, Hardik's team is in advanced talks with the Rajasthan Royals over a

trade deal with the Mumbai Indians, who want the explosive opener Jaiswal in return. Mumbai Indians' Suryakumar Yadav is also on the lookout for a new team, with the franchise looking to offload multiple ageing stars. Suryakumar is said to have sparked interest from franchises in the North, with both reportedly willing to offer him the captaincy. With Rohit Sharma nearing the end of his career, and both Hardik and Suryakumar potentially leaving the franchise, Mumbai Indians need new superstars to build the next phase of their team around. Jaiswal, a man in contention across all three formats for the Indian team, does seem like a lucrative solution.

SERENA WILLIAMS SET FOR GRAND SLAM RETURN WITH WIMBLEDON SINGLES WILDCARD

Tennis great Serena Williams, who retired in 2022, has been awarded a wildcard for the Wimbledon grass court championships starting in a week. Organisers released their initial list of wildcards on Sunday, with Williams, a seven-time champion at the All England Club, one of eight players awarded a place in the ladies singles event. A social media post by the official Wimbledon Championships said: "This is not a drill" with a picture of Williams standing on a grass court captioned "Serena returns". "@serenawilliams will compete in the 2026 ladies' singles at #Wimbledon as a wildcard," read the post. The 44-year-old former world number one and 23-time Grand



Slam singles champion has not played a singles match since the 2022 US Open. However, she did make one appearance at Queen's last week alongside Canadian teenager Victoria Mboko. They knocked out the third seeds Nicole Melichar-Martinez and Erin Routliffe before an injury to Mboko ended their participation without playing another

match. Williams and Czech doubles partner Karolina Muchova then lost in their first match at the Berlin Open this week, hours after the American great and her sister Venus Williams were awarded a wildcard to play in the Wimbledon doubles event. They are six-time doubles winners at Wimbledon, last triumphing there a decade ago.

"Having Baby Doesn't Need To Be End Of Career": ICC Unveils Post-Pregnancy Return-To-Play Guidelines



To ensure a safe and sustainable return to cricket for women players post-pregnancy, the ICC on Monday announced guidelines to cover their early recovery after birth, structured training, and conditioning during a 16-week window before the comeback. The 'Return to Play Post-Pregnancy Guidelines' for female cricketers, out-

line a six 'R's framework: Ready, Review, Restore, Recondition, Return and Refine. "The approach covers early recovery after birth, medical and wellbeing reviews, gradual return to structured training, cricket-specific conditioning, return to

play and ongoing monitoring once a player is back in the cricket environment," the ICC stated in a press release. The document speaks about having a dedicated 'Case Manager' for the players returning to competitive cricket post pregnancy. The Case Officer should be either a doctor or a physiotherapist. The early review would include comprise focus on psychological support in the players' adjustment to life as a mother, followed by graded reintroduction of strength-based training. After eight weeks of these assessments, the player will return to running in collaboration with a doctor and physio.

EX-WIMBLEDON CHAMPION VONDROUSOVA GIVEN FOUR-YEAR BAN



Former Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova has been banned for four years for refusing an anti-doping test last year. Vondrousova, 26, was charged by the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) after denying a doping control officer entry to her home to conduct the test in December 2025. The Czech player said in April she feared for her safety when the officer called and said they failed to follow "protocol". But a tribunal determined Vondrousova, who became the first unseeded player to win the Wimbledon women's singles title in 2023, provided "no compelling justification" for refusing a test. Vondrousova's suspension will end on 21 June 2030, but she has a right to appeal against the decision to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (Cas). Under anti-doping rules, the starting point for a sanction when a player refuses a test is the same as if

they had tested positive. During the hearing, Vondrousova explained stress and poor mental health had affected her decision-making, in addition to her safety concerns. ITIA chief executive officer Karen Moorhouse said while the officer understands the testing process is "uncomfortable" and also acknowledges the additional burden it can carry for players competing, "it is essential to protect fair competition". Moorhouse added: "Safety and welfare of players and our testers is really important to us. Our testers are well-trained, professional, and the gender of our testing witness always matches the player. "They carry ID at all times, and players are able to verify their identity in other ways if they are ever unsure." Vondrousova, who is ranked 122 in the world, said she felt scared when the officer approached her door late at night without properly identifying themselves or following protocol, adding: "In that moment it was about feeling safe.

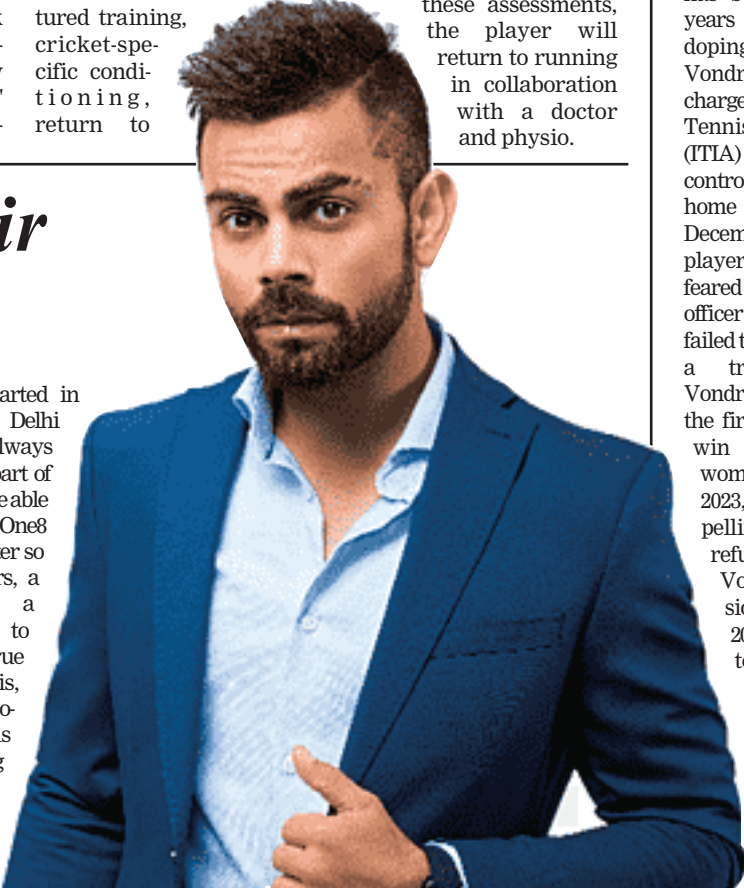
"I Am Done": Virat Kohli Clears Air On Big Question About His Future

Indian batting icon Virat Kohli ruled out any possibility of returning to Test cricket, saying that he is "done with it". Virat was speaking at the launch event of the sportswear brand One8, a brand where he is a co-founder, in the national capital on Sunday. Famous host and comedian Danish Sait, observing that one of the shoes of the brand cost 9,230 rupees, the same number as his Test runs, asked the 37-year-old if he would like to return to Test cricket in order to score more runs and boost the item's profitability, to which Virat humorously replied, "I would rather undersell, I'm done with it (Test cricket), thank you." Kohli announced his retirement

from Test cricket in May last year, marking an end to an illustrious 14-year-old career which saw him dominate a variety of conditions, regions, and opponents in whites, both as a batter and captain. In his Test career, the 36-year-old made 123 appearances in white clothing, scoring 9,230 runs at an average of 46.85, with 30 centuries and 31 fifties in 210 innings and the best score of 254*. He is India's fourth-highest run-getter in the format, behind Sachin Tendulkar (15,921 runs), Rahul Dravid (13,265 runs) and Sunil Gavaskar (10,122 runs). Between 2016 and 2019, Virat had one of the strongest batting primes ever for a Test cricketer, piling up 4,208 runs

in 43 Tests at an average of 66.79, with 16 centuries and 10 fifties in 69 innings and the best score of 254*. This also included seven double centuries, most by a captain in Test cricket history. He was India's most successful Test captain, with 40 wins in 68 matches, since he first took over the reins in 2014 during the tour of Australia in the absence of an injured MS Dhoni. Later, while speaking in front of a packed crowd at Dwarka, Virat reflected on how his journey began as a cricketer in Delhi, and expressed happiness at being able to launch the brand where it all started for him. "Delhi is the place where everything started for me. I was born in Delhi, my cricket

journey started in Delhi, and Delhi will always remain a part of me. So, to be able to launch One8 in Delhi after so many years, a vision, a dream to come true like this, being the co-founder, is something that I always dreamt of.



When Faith Becomes Fear, the Search for Truth Begins: Telugu ZEE5 Original 'Veerabhadruni Rahasyam – From the World of Marmadesam' Premieres on June 26

A cult mystery phenomenon that created a sensation among television audiences in the 1990s and remains one of the highest-rated Telugu series on IMDb is returning for a new generation of viewers. Renowned for its unique blend of mystery, folklore, suspense, and supernatural intrigue, Marmadesam returns with a compelling new chapter, 'Veerabhadruni Rahasyam – From the World of Marmadesam', premiering on June 26, 2026 as a Telugu ZEE5 Original. Carrying forward the franchise's signature atmosphere of fear, faith, and hidden truths, the series invites audiences into a mystery where every belief has a consequence and every secret comes at a cost. Some villages protect their secrets. Others are built on them. Set in the mysterious village of Veerabhadrapuram, the thriller unfolds in a world where faith commands obedience and fear shapes everyday life. For generations, the villagers have lived under the unquestioned authority of Veerabhadra Swamy, a fierce deity believed to punish those who commit wrongdoing. Whenever the sacred temple bell rings, another body is discovered near the temple, and the deaths are accepted as acts of divine justice. Tradition demands silence, obedience, and adherence to rituals that have governed the village for decades, including the terrifying practice of disposing of bodies on the cursed hill known as Gaddhala Gutta. Into this closed and deeply superstitious world arrives Vennela, played by Annie, a rational and fearless young woman from the city. When a young villager is brutally murdered and the crime is once again attributed to divine intervention, Vennela refuses to accept blind



faith as an explanation. Her determination to uncover the truth unsettles the village, challenges generations of unquestioned belief, and places her at odds with powerful individuals determined to keep the past buried. As Vennela digs deeper, layers of deception begin to unravel, exposing organized crime, exploitation disguised as devotion, and a dark

legacy hidden beneath decades of fear. Through parallel timelines that trace the origins of these events back to the 1970s, the series gradually reveals how power, greed, and manipulation shaped the myths that continue to govern the village. What follows is a gripping battle between belief and reason, where every answer raises new questions and every revelation

threatens to expose uncomfortable truths. Directed by Bheemagani Sri Vardhan Reddy, Veerabhadruni Rahasyam – From the World of Marmadesam features Annie as Vennela, Raghu Kunchhe as Yoganandam, Raghu as Karthikeya, SI Ravi as Abhinav, Kamal Thumu as Dr. Nanda, Sireesha as Simhavalli, Anuradha as Nanchari, Balachandra as Gurunadhan, Kalki as Brahmam, and Harvin Reddy as Young Karthikeya. The creative team includes Subhash as Director of Photography, Sudha Srinivas as Music Director, Ragam Satya Nitish as Editor, Rudarraju Chanakya Varma as Screenplay Writer, and Anjan Megoti as Dialogue Writer. Spanning a total of 60 episodes, the show is designed as a long-form mystery that steadily unfolds its secrets, conspiracies, and hidden connections. The series premieres with two episodes on June 26, followed by new episodes every week, allowing viewers to immerse themselves in an ever-expanding mystery where each revelation uncovers a deeper layer of the truth. With Veerabhadruni Rahasyam – From the World of Marmadesam, Telugu ZEE5 continues to expand its library of original Telugu storytelling while bringing back one of the most beloved mystery worlds to captivate audiences once again. Blending folklore, suspense, emotional drama, and investigative intrigue, the series promises a richly atmospheric viewing experience where the line between myth and reality becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish. 'Veerabhadruni Rahasyam – From the World of Marmadesam' premieres on June 26, 2026, exclusively on Telugu ZEE5.

The Red Bag Teaser Is Outstanding, I Hope It Creates A Strong Buzz Nationwide Like Our Red Book: Minister TG Bharath at the Teaser Launch Event



The Red Bag, produced by Harikrishna Somisetty under the Memory Makers banner and directed by Ravi Kumar Seerapu, stars Kabir Singh, Prasad Behara, Raadya, Monika, Sneha Singh, Akanksha, Eshan Shankar, Avinash Badal, Bhargavi, Rashi, and others in key roles. Every promotional asset released so far has generated considerable curiosity around the film. On Sunday, the film's teaser was unveiled by Andhra Pradesh Minister for Industries, Commerce, and Food Processing, TG Bharath. Speaking at the teaser launch event, the guests and team members shared their excitement about the project. Minister TG Bharath said, "The teaser of The Red Bag is outstanding. I sincerely hope this film, produced by our own Hari from Kurnool, becomes a massive success. Our 'Red Book' is known across India, and I hope The Red

Bag also creates a strong buzz nationwide. Most of the film was shot in Kurnool, yet it looks as though it was filmed abroad. My best wishes to the entire team. I hope the film becomes a huge success and brings great rewards to Hari." Director Nageshwar Reddy said, "I thank TG Bharath garu for attending the teaser launch of 'The Red Bag'. Innovative films like this deserve to succeed. If this film becomes a hit, Hari garu will be encouraged to produce many more unique projects. I was genuinely shocked after watching the teaser, it gave me the feeling that the film is going to be on another level altogether. I am confident it will emerge as a success and hope it becomes a trendsetter." Director Ravi Kumar Seerapu said, "The Red Bag will leave a lifelong impact on audiences. After watching this movie, whenever you see a red bag

anywhere, you will instantly remember our film. This opportunity came to me after a wait of sixteen years, and I am grateful to Hari garu for believing in me and making it possible. I also thank Bharath garu for attending the event and the media for their constant support. Hari garu immediately approved the project the moment he heard the story. In our film, the story itself is the hero. We conducted extensive location scouting in Kurnool and completed most of the shoot there. Audiences always support good content, and we are confident that The Red Bag will offer complete value for the money they spend on a movie ticket." Producer Harikrishna Somisetty said, "I thank everyone who has supported 'The Red Bag'. The film has shaped up very well, and I believe audiences will love the teaser. The movie will be released soon, and I request everyone to support it."

NBK112 GRAND LAUNCH ON JUNE 25 IN AMARAVATI

Highlights

■ God Of Masses Nandamuri Blakrishna, Sensational Maker Koratala Siva, Sudhakar Cherukuri, Sudhakar Mikkilineni, SLV Cinemas, Yuvasudha Arts' #NBK112 Spectacular Launch On June 25 In Amaravati, Nara Lokesh, Kandula Durgesh As Chief Guests



God Of Masses Nandamuri Blakrishna, Sensational Maker Koratala Siva, Sudhakar Cherukuri, Sudhakar Mikkilineni, SLV Cinemas, Yuvasudha Arts' #NBK112 Spectacular Launch On June 25 In Amaravati, Nara Lokesh, Kandula Durgesh As Chief Guests

ringing the powerful tagline "Power Meets Purpose, Mass Becomes A Movement," hinted at a film that blends larger-than-life heroism with a strong underlying message. Two successful producers Sudhakar Cherukuri of SLV Cinemas and Sudhakar Mikkilineni of Yuvasudha Arts come together to bankroll this exciting project. Taking the buzz several notches higher, the makers have officially announced a spectacular launch ceremony for the project on June 25 at the 'TTD Temple in Venkatayapalem near Amaravati. The event is set

to become a high-profile affair with Andhra Pradesh Ministers Nara Lokesh and Kandula Durgesh attending as chief guests. Koratala Siva prepared the script, tailoring a powerful narrative that complements Balakrishna's towering screen image. With two proven forces of mass cinema joining hands for the first time, expectations are already soaring.

TFCC Short Film Festival Awards 2026 Grand Finale Held Successfully



There is immense talent among the participants who submitted entries. We will strive to create opportunities for them in the film industry." – TFCC Chairman Dr. Prathani Ramakrishna Goud The grand finale of the "TFCC Short Film Festival Awards 2026" was held on Sunday in Hyderabad. Organized under the leadership of Telangana Film Chamber of Commerce (TFCC) Chairman Dr. Prathani Ramakrishna Goud, the event witnessed

the presence of Jury Chairperson Indrāja, who was a special attraction of the evening. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Ramakrishna Goud said that the quality and talent displayed by the new filmmakers amazed the jury. He assured that efforts would be made to provide opportunities for these talented youngsters in the film industry. He also announced that the awards festival would be conducted annually and that from next year, the first prize would be increased to 1 lakh.

Dr. Prathani Ramakrishna Goud's Speaking "We initiated the TFCC Short Film Festival Awards 2026 as part of the celebrations marking 12 years of Telangana Statehood. Within just 15 days of announcing the awards, we successfully organized this event. We received over 60 entries. Jury Chairperson Indrāja carefully watched every short film and selected the winners. Watching her dedication made us realize how a jury chairperson should truly perform the role.

ChiruBobby2 Wraps Pollachi Schedule, Hyderabad Shoot Begins



Megastar Chiranjeevi, Most Successful Director Bobby Kolli, Leading Production House KVN Productions' #ChiruBobby2 / #Chiru158 Pollachi Schedule Completed, Hyderabad Schedule Commences, BTS Video Unveiled Megastar Chiranjeevi and director Bobby Kolli have reunited for the second time after the blockbuster success of Waltair Veerayya, with the film-#ChiruBobby2 / #Chiru158 being mounted on a massive scale by Venkat K Narayana under the KVN Productions banner. The production works are happening at brisk pace, with the team already wrapping up its first schedule in Pollachi, and commencing a new and lengthy schedule in Hyderabad today. The Pollachi schedule was packed with important sequences, including a high-voltage action episode and several key sequences featuring the principal cast. To celebrate the completion of the schedule, the makers

released an engaging BTS video that offers a sneak peek into the film's making. The video showcases the energetic atmosphere on the sets, the extensive planning behind every sequence, and the grand scale at which the film is being crafted. Chiranjeevi is seen in an elegant, yet intense avatar, while Anaswara Rajan and Nivetha Pethuraj are also spotted participating in the shoot. However, the biggest highlight from the BTS footage is a candid moment involving director Bobby Kolli. Watching Chiranjeevi immerse himself completely in a scene, the filmmaker was visibly overwhelmed and exclaimed, "Jeevinchesaaru Annayya," expressing his admiration for the Megastar's powerful performance. The heartfelt reaction has further heightened expectations around the film, especially with Bobby promising a character and narrative that will present Chiranjeevi in a never-seen-before manner.

“LGBT – A Legal Battle” Movie Success Meet Held Grandly

Movie Team and Guests Applaud Director P. Sunil Kumar Reddy's Effort

Director P. Sunil Kumar Reddy, known for making films on social issues, produced the courtroom drama "LGBT – A Legal Battle" under the Shravya Films banner, with Subhash Chakravarthi Ravada serving as co-producer. The film focuses on the lives and struggles of gay and transgender individuals. The movie stars L.B. Sriram, Ester Noronha, Raju Kher, Anand Chakrapani, Preeti Nigam, and several real transgender actors in key roles. Hima Rathod plays the female lead, while noted activists Chandramukhi, Laila, and gay activist Vishnu Teja deliver mature performances.

Released nationwide on the 19th of this month, LGBT – A Legal Battle has achieved notable success. To celebrate this achievement, a grand success meet was organized in Hyderabad. During the event, representatives of various organizations supporting the gay and transgender communities were honored.

Anand Chakrapani "Many kinds of films are made, but it takes courage to make a film with a subject like this. Often, we ignore social issues instead of questioning them. Through the powerful medium of cinema, Sunil Kumar Reddy has encouraged society to think about this discrimination. Several scenes



in the film moved me to tears. Audiences should support such meaningful efforts even more."

Gay Activist Vishnu "It is heartening to see House Full boards at theaters

screening our film. It feels like Sunil Kumar Reddy's intention of conveying an important message to society has been fulfilled. College students, teachers, and various organizations are watching the film. After seeing it,

many people seem to have developed a new perspective toward people like us. Bringing about such change was the purpose behind making LGBT – A Legal Battle."

Telangana State Transgender Association President Laila "We thank the audience for supporting LGBT – A Legal Battle. I am happy to be a part of this film and grateful to Sunil Kumar Reddy for giving me this opportunity. More films that highlight our issues should be made. Only then can real change begin in society. Those who haven't watched the film should definitely see it."

Actor Vamsi Krishna "I have attended many film events as a guest, but today I feel proud to stand on this stage at our own film's success event. Before release, some people doubted whether audiences would watch this film. However, audiences have once again proved that they support every sincere and meaningful effort."

Actor L.B. Sriram "With this film, Sunil Kumar Reddy has created history. This is the first film to directly address the issues faced by gay and transgender communities. Any films on this subject that come later will follow its path.