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**OM NAMO
VENKATESAYA**

25-06-2026
Total pilgrims: 62,925
Tonsures: 36,297
Hundi kankalav: 3,77 CR
Laddu sale: 423 Lac
Annasradams: 2,40 Lac
Medical treatment: 2,910
Waiting Compartments: Out side line
at Bala Gangamma Temple
Approx. Dasso Time for Saravardashanam
(with out SSD Tokens): 24 H.

**Heavy rain triggers
landslides, flash floods;
3 missing in
Arunachal Pradesh**

ITANAGAR (TSIT): Incessant rain triggered flash floods in Keyi Panyor district of Arunachal Pradesh on Wednesday morning, inundating low-lying areas and damaging 18 residential units, while landslides on a national highway disrupted vehicular movement and left several people stranded, an official said. Three

India-UK trade pact sparks business optimism ahead of July 15 rollout

LONDON (TSIT):

Addressing a gathering of more than 300 policymakers and industry leaders, Goyal said that the best innings of the India-UK partnership are yet to come, highlighting the growing strategic, economic and technological ties between the two countries as the India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) is set to take effect from July 15. "Truly honoured to have received the Special Award for Exceptional Leadership in Elevating UK-India Relations at the Annual UK-India Awards 2026 in London," Goyal added. This recognition belongs to the many bridge-builders across governments, businesses, academia, culture, and our vibrant diaspora who continue to strengthen India-UK ties, he added.



"The best innings of the India-UK partnership are yet to come," Goyal said, while emphasising the vast opportunities for collaboration between the two countries.

The minister also said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India's growth story is creating unprecedented opportunities for deeper engagement between India and the United Kingdom across several sectors.

He also congratulated the other award recipients for

their contributions towards further enriching the India-UK partnership. The minister noted that the evolving partnership between the two countries is being supported by stronger economic engagement, expanding business ties and growing people-to-people connections, setting the stage for a new chapter in bilateral relations. "Under the decisive leadership of PM Narendra Modi, India's growth story offers unprecedented opportunities for collaboration across trade, innovation, technology, education, and emerging sectors," he stated.

**Strait of Hormuz
attack: Iran strikes
vessel, UN evacuation
mission suspended**

Washington (TSIT):

The UN's International Maritime Organization (IMO) has paused "immediate evacuation operations" for more than 11,000 sailors stranded in the Strait of Hormuz after Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) attacked a Singapore-flagged cargo vessel Ever Lovely, in an incident that tests the durability of a newly signed US-Iran agreement aimed at reopening the critical shipping lane and ensuring stabilizing maritime traffic and seafarers in the Gulf. The vessel was reportedly struck by a "one-way attack drone" that maneuvered to the western side of the ship before impact, damaging its bridge on the starboard side, CNN reported. There were "no casualties" and no reported environmental damage, but maritime monitoring agencies confirmed the attack disrupted operations in one of the world's most strategically sensitive waterways. The incident came just hours after Iran warned that vessels would only be granted safe passage if they followed "specific routes sanctioned by Tehran," directly challenging Washington's assertion that the Strait has been reopened under the recent ceasefire framework.

Sanjay Jaju appointed Telangana CS; 13 IAS officers transferred

Hyderabad (TSIT):

The Telangana Government on Friday appointed senior IAS officer Sanjay Jaju as the new Chief Secretary and announced a major bureaucratic reshuffle involving 13 IAS officers across key departments and government institutions. According to G.O. Rt. No. 911, Sanjay Jaju, a 1992-batch IAS officer, will succeed K. Ramakrishna Rao, who is retiring on June 30. Jaju will assume charge as the state's Chief Secretary from July 1, 2026.

The reshuffle, issued through G.O. Rt. No. 914, includes several important appointments. N. Sridhar has been posted as Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister, while Shailaja Ramaiyer has been appointed Principal Secretary of the Environment, Forests, Science and Technology Department. Ahmed Nadeem will serve as Principal Secretary, Political Administration Department, and Rahul Bojja has been posted as Principal Secretary,



Disaster Management. Ajit Reddy has been appointed Chief Executive Officer of Invest Telangana, while Musharraf Ali Faruqi has been given additional charge as Vice Chairman and Managing Director of TGREDCO. P. Katayani Devi has been



appointed Special Chief Secretary, Handlooms and Textiles. K. Gangadhar has been transferred to the Roads and Buildings Department, T. Venkanna has been named Commissioner of the Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation, K. Vidyasagar has been appointed Director of Tourism, and K. Chandrakala has been given Full Additional Charge as Joint Metropolitan Commissioner of HMDA. Sanjay Jaju returns to Telangana after nearly 13 years on Central deputation, during which he served in several key positions, including Secretary in the Ministries of Information and Broadcasting and Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER). His extensive administrative experience at the Centre is expected to strengthen Telangana's coordination with the Union Government and support the state's infrastructure, investment and governance initiatives.

Ram temple donation case: All 8 accused sent to police custody till June 29

AYODHYA (TSIT):

A court has granted police custody of all eight accused arrested in connection with the alleged embezzlement of donations at the Ram temple in Ayodhya till June 29, during which investigators will continue questioning them, an official said on Friday. Prosecution Officer K C Verma told reporters that they have been remanded in police custody till Monday and will be produced before the special court thereafter.

The eight arrested are Avinash Shukla, Anukalp Mishra, Lav Kush Mishra, Manish Kumar Yadav, Karunesh Pandey, Ram Shankar Mishra, Subhash Srivastava and Ramashankar alias Tinnu Yadav.

Verma said investigators have so far recovered Rs 79.85 lakh during the probe. He said appropriate provisions relating to criminal breach of trust by public servants and the Prevention of

Corruption Act had been invoked as the accused were allegedly involved in embezzlement.

The prosecution officer said five to six of the arrested persons were bank employees who were deployed for counting cash donations received at the temple and were drawing salaries from the bank. He, however, declined to identify the individual bank employees at this stage of the investigation.

He said Tinnu Yadav was not a bank employee but worked as a driver, while Subhash Srivastava was in charge of the donation counting process. The case relates to the alleged embezzlement of cash and valuables offered by devotees at the Ram temple. An FIR was registered after a preliminary report by a Special Investigation Team (SIT), and the investigation is being carried out by both the SIT and Ayodhya police.



Cockroach Janta Party steps up protest, launches nationwide 'Pradhan Go Back' campaign

New Delhi (TSIT)

Stepping up attack against Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, the Cockroach Janta Party founder Abhijeet Dipke on Friday announced the launch of a nationwide campaign to demand his resignation and exhorted students, farmers and civil society groups to join him at Jantar Mantar on June 28. Addressing a press conference here, Dipke said activist Sonam Wangchuk would also join the campaign at Jantar Mantar on Sunday and begin an indefinite fast. He, however, did not elaborate on what the campaign would entail.

The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) founder urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to ensure that Pradhan resigns, saying that he would be seen as an "incompetent prime minister" if he failed to do so.

The CJP, which started as a digital satirical outfit, has been holding a sit-in at Jantar Mantar since June 20



to demand Pradhan's resignation over alleged irregularities in exams and the NEET paper-leak controversy. "It has been a week, and Dharmendra Pradhan has not taken any responsibility for the paper leaks," Dipke said.

"Sonam Wangchuk will join the protest from Sunday. It is unfortunate that no one is being held accountable for student suicides, and an educator and a scientist like Wangchuk has to go on a hunger strike when 20 students have already died."

"It is not too late. Pradhan should resign because the blood of those students is on his hands. He was calling us terrorists, but he is the real terrorist because he is the reason for the death of these students," Dipke added.

India's credit card spends surge 6.6 pc in May, 1 million new cards added

New Delhi, June 26 : Credit card spending in India surged to Rs 2,023 billion in the month of May, up 6.6 per cent year-on-year and 2.6 per cent month-on-month, a report said on Friday.

The sequential increase comes after a 10.1 per cent on-month decline in April, indicating that the recovery is not yet strong or structural, the report from Asit C. Mehta Investment Intermediates Limited said.

The industry added 1 million new cards during May, marking the second-highest monthly card issuance in the past 27 months. Total cards in force increased to 120.5 million, while YoY growth accelerated to 8.7 per cent, the highest recorded in the past 15 months.



Transaction volumes stood at 587 million, increasing 5.7 per cent sequentially and 25.8 per cent on an annual basis. The sequential recovery was largely attributable to the sharp decline witnessed in April.

Average spend per card eased 1.8 per cent YoY and increased by 1.7 per cent sequentially. SBI was the

clear exception, with per-card spend up 12 per cent YoY, lifted by higher corporate spending.

Average spend per transaction declined on both measures, down 3 per cent MoM and 15 per cent YoY, continuing its downward trajectory due to increase in low value transactions.

The top four banks

accounted for only 63.7 per cent of the incremental spending during the month despite holding an industry market share of roughly 76 per cent in spends, the report noted.

Among the top four banks, all broadly matched the industry's sequential growth except HDFC Bank, which grew by 4.2 per cent.

Another report has said that credit sourcing of new loans in Q3 FY26 grew 36 per cent YoY compared to 7 per cent a year earlier, driven by sustained demand from consumers and businesses. The report highlighted strong growth in lending activity, led by accelerated sourcing growth, rising secured lending, and improving asset quality.

6 soldiers martyred during 'Operation Sindoor' to be immortalised at National War Memorial

New Delhi, June 26 : Six bravehearts of the Indian armed forces, who laid down their lives during 'Operation Sindoor' – India's military response to the Pahalgam massacre, against Pakistan in May last year, are set to be immortalised at the National War Memorial.

The names of these martyred soldiers will be inscribed at the National War Memorial in the national Capital. Their names will be engraved on the granite bricks at the memorial.

The identities of the six fallen soldiers who made their supreme sacrifice for the nation have been made public for the first time. They include five soldiers from the Indian Army and one sergeant from the Indian Air Force. Two of the martyrs have also been honoured by the



government for their bravery. They are Rifleman Sunil Kumar, who was awarded Vir Chakra posthumously while Sergeant Surendra Kumar was awarded the Vayu Sena Medal posthumously.

The six brave soldiers martyred in 'Operation Sindoor' include Subedar Major Pawan Kumar, Rifleman Sunil Kumar, Lance Naik Dinesh

Kumar, Agniveer Murali Naik, Havildar Sunil Kumar Singh, and Indian Air Force Sergeant Surendra Kumar.

Five of these personnel belonged to the Indian Army, while one belonged to the Indian Air Force. Their names are being inscribed at the National War Memorial to ensure that their supreme sacrifice remains alive in the nation's memory forever.

8 killed in three road accidents in Andhra Pradesh

Amaravati, June 26 : Eight persons were killed and 15 others injured in three separate road accidents in Andhra Pradesh since Thursday night, police said. Four persons were killed and nine others injured when a Multi-Utility Vehicle rammed into a stationary lorry in Palnadu district early Friday. The accident occurred near Macherla Nagaravanam when the vehicle hit the lorry parked by the roadside. Four people died on the spot, while nine others were injured. Police rushed to the spot and shifted the injured to the Government Hospital at Macherla. Rescue workers had a tough time extricating the bodies from the mangled remains of the vehicle.

CM Shivakumar holds review meeting with commercial taxes department

Bengaluru (TSIT) :

Expressing happiness over Karnataka achieving the second highest GST growth in the country, Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said he was confident that the state would exceed tax collection targets for the current financial year.

Holding a review meeting of the Commercial Taxes department at Vidhana Soudha, the CM said, "Officials of the Finance department, Finance Adviser L K Atheeq, and Additional Chief Secretary of the Finance department Ritesh Kumar have offered several suggestions to improve the department's

"No goods-carrying vehicles should cross a check-post at our state borders without the necessary documents. There must be no scope for tax evasion. There is no room for any kind of compromise or negligence in this,"



performance. The responsibility of implementing them strictly now rests on all of you. I have full faith in the officials. I am also confident that all of you will strive to fulfil my expectations."

"No goods-carrying vehicles should cross a check-post at our state borders without the necessary documents. There must be no scope for tax evasion. There is no room for any kind of compromise or negli-

and your performance reports must match one another," he said.

"Achieve good coordination with the Commercial Tax departments and enforcement agencies of neighbouring states. Tax evasion must be effectively prevented through information-sharing and joint operations," he noted.

"Today we have information on about 12 lakh taxpayers. You have the capacity to analyse them from a 360-degree perspective using technology and data analytics. If you use this opportunity properly, you are capable not only of achieving the target set for you but of exceeding it," he said.

End citizenship confusion, amend law, says Shashi Tharoor amid MEA passport statement row

Thiruvananthapuram, June 26 : Congress MP Shashi Tharoor on Friday called for a legislative overhaul to end the controversy over the legal status of Indian passports, arguing that both passports and Aadhaar cards should be recognised as conclusive proof of Indian citizenship unless they are cancelled or withdrawn by the state.

Reacting to the Ministry of External Affairs' clarification on Passport Seva Divas that an Indian passport is primarily a travel document and not conclusive proof of citizenship, Tharoor said the government's explanation, though based on the Passports Act, 1967, has created widespread public confusion.



He noted that while Section 20 of the Act permits passports to be issued to non-citizens under exceptional circumstances in the public interest, the distinction was meaningless to the

average citizen because passports are issued only after rigorous police verification and extensive scrutiny of documents. "For decades, the passport has been regarded as the gold standard of identity," Tharoor said, ques-

tioning how a document issued after such stringent verification could then be declared inadequate as proof of citizenship. "If a passport does not establish domestic citizenship, then what does?" he asked. he Thiruvananthapuram MP also pointed out that the Supreme Court had earlier held that the Aadhaar card serves only as proof of identity and residence, not citizenship. Together, he argued, the two positions leave millions of Indians possessing government-issued identity documents that are still not legally considered conclusive proof of nationality. To resolve what he described as an absurd legal paradox, Tharoor proposed amendments to

the legal framework recognising both passports and Aadhaar as valid proof of citizenship. Acknowledging that Aadhaar is currently issued on the basis of residence rather than nationality, he suggested that the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) introduce a visually distinct Aadhaar card for non-citizen residents. Such a system, he argued, would clearly distinguish citizens from non-citizens, simplify domestic verification procedures, reduce bureaucratic disputes during exercises such as electoral roll revisions and provide every Indian with legal certainty over his or her citizenship status.

Indira Shobhan Hits Back at BRS Over Anganwadi Recruitment Allegations



Shobhan said the interviews are conducted by a special committee headed by the District Collector, ensuring fairness and eliminating the possibility of arbitrary evaluation. She added that similar recruitment practices are already in place in several other states. Launching a sharp attack on BRS leaders, particularly former minister Satyavathi Rathod, she alleged that the opposition was deliberately spreading misinformation to stall the Anganwadi recruitment

process. She accused the BRS of being unable to accept the growing public support for Women and Child Welfare Minister Seethakka and warned against making what she called false allegations against the minister. She said Anganwadi workers play a vital role in child care, nutrition, and maternal welfare, making it essential to assess candidates' aptitude and attitude in addition to their academic qualifications. Claiming that the previous BRS government had delayed recruitments by creating technical hurdles, Indira Shobhan said the Congress government is committed to completing the appointments transparently and providing equal opportunities to all eligible candidates.

MLA who laid foundation stone for development and construction works



WARANGAL, June 26, TSIT : In addition to the park development works to be undertaken at an estimated cost of Rs 80 lakh in Keerthi Nagar, 16th division of Baldia range, and the construction of a drinking water pipe line to be undertaken at an estimated cost of Rs 11 lakh in Garib Nagar, Dharmaram, for the construction works of CC roads and

drains to be undertaken in the Mogilich area at an estimated cost of Rs 80 lakhs, P a r a k a l a Legislator Revuri Prakash Reddy along with District Collector/Baldia Special Officer Chahat Bajpai laid the foundation stone for CC road construction works to be undertaken in Reddypalem at an estimated cost of Rs 10 lakh. Former city mayor Gundu Sudharani, former corporator Manisha Shiva Kumar, EE Santhosh Babu, HO Lakshmareddy, DE Suresh and others participated in this programme.

Ensure Error-Free Voter List: ITDA PO B. Rahul

Bhadradi kothagudem (TSIT): Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) for Pinapaka (ST) Assembly Constituency and ITDA Project Officer B. Rahul appealed to all eligible voters to actively participate in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of Electoral Rolls being undertaken by the Election Commission of India. During a door-to-door awareness and verification programme held on Friday in Burgampahad, Veeravendi and Mothe polling station areas, he distributed Enumeration Forms and urged voters to furnish complete details of all eligible family members and submit the forms to the concerned Booth Level Officers (BLOs). He advised voters to obtain an acknowledgement receipt after submission. Rahul clarified that the Special Intensive Revision aims to



prepare a transparent and error-free electoral roll by enrolling all eligible voters, correcting discrepancies, and removing duplicate, deceased and shifted voter entries. He assured that genuine voters need not have any apprehensions, as no eligible voter's name would be deleted without following the prescribed procedure. He further instructed BLOs and Supervisors to ensure door-to-door verification, collect accurate information from every household and complete the revision process in a transparent and time-bound manner.

SBI signs MoU with Telangana Government to offer exclusive salary package for employees

Hyderabad: In a major initiative to strengthen banking services for State Government employees, the State Bank of India (SBI) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Telangana to provide a comprehensive Salary Package Scheme with a range of exclusive banking benefits. The agreement, signed on June 25, is aimed at offering a customised banking solution that provides financial flexibility, enhanced convenience and value-added services to Telangana Government employees. The specially designed salary package includes lifestyle benefits linked to SBI debit and



credit cards, exclusive benefits for family members, a comprehensive pension package, complimentary personal accident and air accident insurance, discounts on locker rentals, and concessional

personal loans, among other features. Speaking on the occasion, Neelash Dwivedi, Chief General Manager, SBI Hyderabad Circle, thanked the Telangana Government for its contin-

ued trust and support. He said the partnership reflects SBI's commitment to serving State Government employees more effectively while contributing to the State's financial inclusion and employee welfare initiatives. The MoU marks another milestone in SBI's long-standing collaboration with government institutions and reinforces the bank's focus on delivering technology-driven, customer-centric banking solutions. The initiative is expected to enhance the overall banking experience for thousands of Telangana Government employees through a comprehensive suite of financial services and benefits.

ICFAI Law School Concludes Faculty Development Programme

RANGAREDDY ICFAI Law School, a constituent of the ICFAI Foundation for Higher Education (IFHE), concluded its Faculty Development Programme (FDP) titled "The Modern Law Schools: Navigating Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and Innovative Legal Pedagogy" with a valedictory session at the IFHE Auditorium on Friday. Prof. (Dr.) Bindu S. Ronald, Vice Chancellor of Maharashtra National Law University, Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, attended as the Chief Guest and stressed the impor-



importance of Outcome-Based Education, technological adaptation and innovative teaching methods in preparing competent and ethical legal professionals. She also appreciated ICFAI Law School for organising the programme. Prof. (Dr.) Pujari

Ravisekhararaju, Director of ICFAI Law School, lauded the participation of faculty members from across the country and reaffirmed the institution's commitment to academic excellence, research, innovation and capacity building. Prof. (Dr.) Md. Akbar Khan, Associate Dean, presented the programme report, highlighting sessions on Outcome-Based Education, legal pedagogy, curriculum development, assessment strategies, experiential learning, research methodologies, digital technologies and implementation of the National Education Policy in law schools.

Largest Indian Butterfly Species Spotted in Telangana for the First Time

The South India Times Nagar Kurnool : In a significant development for biodiversity conservation, the Southern Birdwing, one of the largest butterfly species found in India, has been recorded for the first time in Telangana State at the Kollapur Range of the Amrabad Tiger Reserve in Nagarkurnool district. The Southern Birdwing is primarily distributed across the Western Ghats and is only rarely reported from a few locations in the Eastern Ghats. Its presence in Amrabad Tiger Reserve



marks an important milestone in documenting and understanding the region's ecological richness. The rare butterfly was recorded by Nilesh, FSO, and Dr. Ravikanth, Wildlife Biologist. The discovery was appreciated by Dr. Sunil Hiremath, IFS, Field

Director of Amrabad Tiger Reserve, Revanth Chandra, IFS, DFO Nagarkurnool, Chandrashekhara, FDO Achampet, and Vanikumari, FRO Kollapur. The finding further highlights the rich biodiversity of Amrabad Tiger Reserve and reinforces its importance as a key conservation landscape. The first-ever record of the Southern Birdwing in Telangana is expected to support future scientific research and strengthen biodiversity conservation efforts in the region.

Warangal Police organise anti-drug run; youth urged to build drug-free society



Warangal : Warangal Police Commissioner Sunpreet Singh called upon youth to play an active role in building a drug-free society while launching a 2K anti-drug awareness run organised by the Central Zone Police to mark the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. The run, flagged off in the presence of MLAs, District Collectors and KUDA Chairman, commenced from the Warangal Police Commissionerate and concluded at the Arts and Science College Grounds in Subedari. Hundreds of students and youth from the tri-city region participated in the event, and medals and certificates were presented to outstanding participants. Addressing the gather-

ing, Commissioner Sunpreet Singh said drug abuse has become a serious social menace and urged students and young people to stay away from narcotics and focus on education and career goals. He warned against involvement in drug consumption or trafficking and stressed the need for collective efforts to eradicate the menace. West Warangal MLA Naini Rajender Reddy appealed to youth to avoid bad habits and spread awareness about the harmful effects of drugs. Wardhannapet MLA K.R. Nagaraju said an Eagle Force unit would be strengthened to curb narcotics and urged the public to report drug-related activities by calling the police helpline.

Anti-drug rally held in Husnabad to mark International Day Against Drug Abuse



Husnabad, June 26: The International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking was observed in Husnabad with an anti-drug awareness rally and pledge-taking programme organised by the local police to promote a drug-free society. Led by ACP Sadanandam, the rally was conducted at Ambedkar Crossroads, where participants pledged to support the government's vision of a drug-free Telangana. Addressing the gath-

ering, the ACP called upon citizens to cooperate with the police in eliminating drug abuse in the Husnabad division. He stressed the need to create awareness about the harmful effects of narcotics and urged parents, teachers and the public to work together to prevent children and youth from falling victim to drug addiction. He appealed to young people to stay away from drugs and focus on building a healthy and productive future.

Karnataka's Dr Radhika Balakrishnan Becomes First Carnatic Vocalist to Receive Honorary Fellowship from Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, UK

Bringing international recognition to Karnataka's rich classical music heritage, renowned Carnatic vocalist, academic and educator Dr Radhika Balakrishnan has been awarded an Honorary Fellowship by the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire (RBC), one of the United Kingdom's most prestigious performing arts institutions. She is the first Carnatic vocalist to receive an Honorary Fellowship from the Conservatoire. The award was formally presented at a ceremony held at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. The honour recognises Dr Balakrishnan's significant contributions to arts, culture and education, as well as her work in introducing the depth and sophistication of Carnatic music to students, artists and audiences in the United Kingdom. The recognition marks a significant moment for Karnataka's classical arts community. The state has



long been one of the principal centres of Carnatic music, with its deep-rooted guru-shishya traditions, influential composers, vibrant performance ecosystem and institutions that have nurtured generations of musicians and teachers. Dr Balakrishnan's Fellowship further highlights the continuing global relevance of the Carnatic tradition and the role of Karnataka's artists and educators in preserving its foundations while enabling it to engage meaningfully with con-

temporary musical and academic environments. Dating back almost a century, the Honorary Fellowship places Dr Balakrishnan among an esteemed cohort of recipients who have demonstrated exceptional excellence and made meaningful contributions to their respective fields. Among previous recipients was the late John Mayer (1930-2004) who served as Composer, Professor of Composition at RBC from 1990 to 2004, and a pioneer of Indo-jazz fusion and received the award in 1999.

Over more than 15 years, Dr Balakrishnan has brought traditional Carnatic music, infused with contemporary influences, to audiences across India, the United Kingdom and internationally. Her work demonstrates how ancient Indian musical systems can enrich modern conservatoire training and prepare students for careers in an increasingly interconnected creative world. As the inaugural ICCR Chair in Indian Studies at Birmingham City University in 2023, and through her continuing contribution to RBC as a visiting artist and professor, she has also positioned Indian classical music within a broader scholarly and diplomatic framework, strengthening institutional ties between UK higher education and India's rich cultural heritage. Dr Balakrishnan learned Carnatic music under the tutelage of celebrated vocalist and educator Vidushi Dr. R.N. Sreelatha of the distin-

guished Rudrapatnam music tradition. Speaking on her achievement, Stephen Maddock, Principal of Royal Birmingham Conservatoire said, "It gives me great pleasure to honour Radhika with this award. Her achievements as a distinguished Carnatic vocalist and teacher, combined with her unwavering commitment to supporting our students and bringing Indian music into the core of RBC's work, have been transformative. Radhika embodies the kind of excellence and cultural generosity that we deeply value at the Conservatoire, and we are delighted to recognize her contributions with this prestigious honour." Adding to this, Professor Shirley Thompson, Vice Principal (Music), Royal Birmingham Conservatoire stated, "Radhika's time with us has been nothing short of remarkable. When she joined us as our first Visiting Chair in Indian

Music, I could never have predicted the profound impact she would have on both our students and staff. Her passion for sharing the depth and sophistication of Carnatic music, combined with her pedagogical skill and warmth, exemplifies what it means to bridge musical traditions. We are thrilled that she has continued her involvement with RBC, and this honour is thoroughly deserved." In her own words Dr Radhika Balakrishnan says that "Receiving the Honorary Fellowship of Royal Birmingham Conservatoire is an honour that extends far beyond me. It represents recognition for the transformative power of Indian classical music in global artistic discourse. For centuries, Carnatic music has embodied a philosophy of learning, growth, and human connection. My work here at RBC has been about demonstrating that these ancient Indian music traditions as living.

EDITORIAL

The Invisible Import In Every Indian Thali

In 2025-26, India spent over US\$ 19 billion on edible oil imports to meet 60% of its demand, making it vulnerable to global price shocks and supply disruption while straining the nation's exchequer of its forex reserves for what it could grow at home.

Austerity reached Indian kitchens, when Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged its citizens to reduce edible oil consumption. The per capita consumption of edible oil stood over glaring 17 kg/year in 2024-25 (marketing year). With a large share of this demand unmet domestically, India's dependence on edible oil imports is nothing less than alarming. The domestic production is mainly concentrated in rapeseed, mustard, and soybean, while the consumption is majorly dominated by palm oil, followed by soybean oil. Since, highly water-intensive palm oil production is not feasible in the short-run, soybean, already produced by Indian farmers across the country should be the focus to bridge this demand-supply gap.India remains the fifth largest producer of soybean oil and the largest importer of soybean oil across the globe. The production of soybean has increased from 85.7 Lakh Tonnes (LT) in 2015-16 to 152.7 LT in 2024-25. While this growth is encouraging, it is not enough for the rapidly expanding consumption demand. India currently imports soybean oil more than 2.5 times of its production, as the existing production only meets around 30% of the domestic consumption. In 2025-26, India witnessed a marked surge in soybean oil imports alongside a decline in domestic production. India primarily imports crude soybean oil from Argentina and Brazil and in just 2025-26 itself, imports increased by 8% and 32%, respectively. Additionally, enabled by duty-free access to Nepal under the SAFTA, India's soybean oil imports from Nepal increased by staggering 147% alone in 2025-26. Further, the domestic outlook is concerning, the second advance estimates released by Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (DA&FW) estimated soybean production to have moderated by 16% to 127.2 LT in 2025-26. Profitability is the primary driver of declining soybean production in India. The Government guarantees minimum prices for soybean, and the Cabinet has approved Minimum Support Price (MSP) for soybean for 2026-27 well in advance, in May, with an increase of ₹380 over the previous year and 123% over 2013-14 levels. Thus, pricing per se is not the issue. Rather, the concern lies in the relative uncertainty surrounding the procurement process. The domestic market is frequently flooded with duty-free imports of soybean oil, leading to a decline in market prices below the MSP, thereby preventing farmers from realising an effective price for their produce. Further, the intrinsic characteristic of soybean crop is a cause for concern. Its low productivity due lack of quality seeds remains a persistent challenge. According to ICAR's National Soybean Research Institute, India's average yields is stagnant at around 1,100-1,200 kg per hectare, significantly below the global average of over 2,700 kg per hectare, with considerable regional disparities. Additionally, the crop offers limited resilience, as its photoperiod sensitivity makes it vulnerable to unseasonal weather conditions, which are becoming more frequent due to climate change.

-Dr. Satyawan Saurabh

In India, the monsoon is not just a season, but the fulcrum of the country's economy, agriculture, water resources, and livelihoods. For centuries, the monsoon has been considered life-giving because its rains nourish fields, fill rivers and reservoirs, and provide relief from the scorching heat. However, in recent years, the nature of the monsoon has been rapidly changing. Now, it brings not only relief but also numerous risks. In some places, sudden cloudbursts occur, strong winds and thunderstorms disrupt life, and in others, lightning strikes claim lives. In an era of changing weather and climate change, the risks associated with the monsoon have become more serious and widespread than ever before. This is why weather-related risks have become not only a subject of scientific study but also a matter of social, economic, and humanitarian concern. Currently, it is clearly visible that the traditional nature of weather is changing. While rainfall used to be relatively regular and balanced, now prolonged droughts are followed by sudden bursts of excessive rainfall. Similarly, the incidence of thunderstorms and lightning is also increasing. Meteorologists believe that the Earth's rising temperatures have affected the structure and behavior of the atmosphere. With more energy and moisture available in the atmosphere, weather events are becoming more intense and unpredictable. This is directly impacting human life, agriculture, infrastructure, and natural resources. Lightning is one of the natural phenomena that affects thousands of people every year. In India, the number of deaths due to lightning strikes is higher than that of many other natu-



ral disasters. Of particular concern is that most of the victims are from rural areas, where a large number of people work in the open. Farmers, agricultural laborers, livestock herders, and construction workers are more vulnerable to these weather hazards. When clouds suddenly gather and thunderstorms begin, many people do not understand the severity of the danger and remain in open spaces. As a result, many people lose their lives due to lightning strikes. Scientifically, lightning is the result of complex processes occurring in the atmosphere. When the surface becomes extremely hot and the air above it is relatively cold, the warm, moist air begins to rise rapidly. This process is called convection. The rising air cools, condenses, and

forms clouds. If the atmosphere is sufficiently humid and energetic, these clouds form large cumulonimbus clouds. Collisions between water droplets, ice particles, and hailstones within these clouds generate electrical charges. When the imbalance of charges becomes too great, lightning strikes, resulting in an electrical discharge between the ground and the clouds. During the monsoon, moist winds from the oceans reach much of the Indian subcontinent. These winds carry large amounts of water vapor, essential for cloud formation and rainfall. But this moisture, when combined with an extremely warm atmosphere, can also create powerful storms. This combination of moisture and temperature increases weather instability. This is why thun-

derstorms and lightning are more frequent during the monsoon months. Weather experts believe that as global temperatures rise, the atmosphere will hold more moisture, increasing the likelihood of such events. Climate change is the most important aspect of this entire scenario. Industrialization, excessive use of fossil fuels, deforestation, and uncontrolled urbanization have increased the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. As a result, the Earth's average temperature is continuously increasing. This increase in temperature is not limited to increasing heat, but is affecting the entire weather system. A warmer atmosphere holds more moisture, which increases the likelihood of intense rainfall and thunderstorms. This is why today's

weather appears more unpredictable and extreme than before. Urbanization is also playing a significant role in increasing weather risks. The abundance of concrete, asphalt, and buildings in large cities creates a heat island effect. This causes temperatures in cities to be higher than surrounding rural areas. Hotter surfaces cause air to rise faster, which can increase the likelihood of local cloud formation and storms. Additionally, inadequate drainage systems in urban areas can lead to waterlogging and flooding during heavy rainfall. India's geographical diversity also influences weather events. In the Himalayan region, mountains cause air to rise rapidly, leading to increased cloud formation. In Northeast

India, high humidity and mountainous terrain combine to create conditions for intense rainfall. In Central India and the Gangetic Plain, the combination of heat and humidity gives rise to thunderstorms. In coastal areas, the interaction between sea breezes and land heat influences weather patterns. Thus, each region of India faces different risks due to its geographical and climatic factors. Weather hazards have the greatest impact on vulnerable sections of society. People living in rural areas often lack safe shelter and timely information. Even when warnings are issued for lightning or severe storms, the information doesn't reach the last person. Furthermore, economic limitations also force people to take risks. Farmers and laborers often continue working despite bad weather because their livelihoods depend on it. In such circumstances, natural hazards transform into social and economic risks. Technical solutions alone are not enough to reduce the damage caused by weather-related disasters. Increasing public awareness and weather literacy is also essential. People need to be made aware of the importance of moving away from open spaces when they hear thunder, the dangers of standing under tall trees, and the precautions to take during lightning. Schools, municipal councils, NGOs, and the media all have a crucial role to play in this regard. If society understands weather risks, many lives can be saved. Meteorology has made remarkable progress today. Satellites, Doppler radar, automated weather stations, and advanced computer models are making weather forecasts more accurate. In many cases, the likelihood of thunderstorms and lightning can now be predicted in advance.

Which Document is Ultimately Valid for Proving Citizenship?

Saurabh Varshney

The national debate regarding citizenship in India has intensified once again. After the Ministry of External Affairs clarified that a passport is not, in itself, the final and conclusive proof of citizenship, the opposition has questioned the government; meanwhile, the government maintains that citizenship is determined not by a single document alone, but through a comprehensive examination of the law and available evidence. This dispute is not merely legal; it is also linked to democratic rights and the trust of citizens. The common citizen's primary question is this: if Aadhaar, Voter ID, PAN card, and even the passport are not conclusive proof, then how exactly is Indian citizenship to be established? In a democracy, the greatest strength lies in the trust of the citizens. If citizens remain in a state of uncertainty regarding the proof of their own rights, the situation cannot be considered appropriate for any democratic system. Therefore, the need of the hour is to make the citizenship certification process clear, easily accessible, and free from controversy, ensuring that no Indian has to face uncertainty regarding the question of proving their citizenship. First, it is essential to understand that identity and citizenship are not the

same thing. An Aadhaar card serves as proof of identity and residence. A Voter ID is proof of the right to vote. A PAN card establishes identity for income tax purposes. A driving license grants permission to drive a vehicle. A passport is a document for foreign travel and international identification. However, none of these documents, in isolation, is considered the final legal proof of citizenship. How, then, is citizenship determined? In India, citizenship is governed by the Citizenship Act, 1955. According to this law, the primary grounds for acquiring citizenship are: by birth, by descent, by registration, by naturalization, and by the incorporation of territory into India. If a person's citizenship is called into question, the relevant authority conducts a comprehensive assessment of available documents—such as birth records, parental citizenship details, government records, and other legal evidence. No single document is considered conclusive in every situation. In recent years, the birth certificate has emerged as a crucial foundational document, as it provides a record of both the date and place of birth. However, for individuals born decades ago who lack birth certificates, documents such as school certificates, land records, family

records, government service records, and other official papers can serve as vital evidence depending on the circumstances. Following a clarification from the Ministry of External Affairs, the opposition raised a question: if a passport is not definitive proof of citizenship, then which document should an ordinary citizen rely upon? Conversely, the ruling dispensation argues that in many countries worldwide, a passport is not the sole legal basis for determining citizenship; in cases of dispute, original citizenship records are the deciding factor. This debate has extended beyond Parliament to political parties and social organizations. The primary reason for this entire controversy is the absence of a single national citizenship certificate in India that is accepted as conclusive in all situations. Consequently, people often mistake documents like Aadhaar, Voter ID, ration cards, and passports for proof of citizenship, even though each serves a distinct legal purpose. In a democracy, the mere existence of a law is insufficient; clear and simple communication regarding it is equally essential. If confusion persists among citizens regarding which documents are valid and which are not, it can lead to unnecessary fear and the spread of rumors. The government should

issue clear guidelines on citizenship verification, specifying which documents will be accepted under various circumstances. This would reduce administrative disputes and bolster public confidence. Every citizen should safeguard original government documents related to their birth, education, family, and property. Digitizing these documents and keeping them updated is also crucial, as these records could prove invaluable during any future legal proceedings. Citizenship is not merely a legal status but the foundation of the rights and duties conferred by the Constitution. Therefore, this issue requires clarity and transparency rather than politics. Instead of confusing citizens, the government should develop a simple, unified, and transparent system for citizenship certification. The central government now needs to determine exactly which documents are valid for proving citizenship—documents that citizens can present to establish their status. The only solution to this entire matter is for the central government to first hold a press conference to provide clarity on the issue of citizenship, ensuring there is no confusion in the minds of the people across the country. The author is a senior journalist, thinker, and political analyst.

Arithmetic, Alliances And The Quest For Constitutional Power

The resignation of Union Minister of State for Minority Affairs George Kurien after the end of his Rajya Sabha tenure has revived speculation over a long-awaited reshuffle in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government. While cabinet changes are routine in any administration, the circumstances surrounding this exercise suggest that political arithmetic rather than administrative performance may dominate the calculations. The BJP enters the second half of Modi's third term facing a different reality from 2014 or 2019. Unlike the years of an outright majority, the party today operates in a coalition environment. Yet it also faces an ambitious legislative agenda involving constitutional amendments and electoral reforms that require numbers far beyond a simple majority. This makes the impending reshuffle – any time before the start of the monsoon session slated for the second half of July – a parliamentary strategy as well as an imperative governance exercise. The forthcoming reshuffle also appears less about individual ministers and more about the BJP's larger political project. Rewarding new allies The NDA today is broader and more dependent on allies than during Modi's first two terms. Regional partners expect adequate representation and influence. Cabinet berths remain the most visible mechanism for maintaining coalition harmony. Managing these allies while accommodating



defectors and retaining party veterans creates a complicated equation. Too much emphasis on one category risks upsetting another. One factor likely to influence the cabinet reshuffle is the accommodation of recent entrants and breakaway groups from opposition parties. Indian politics has traditionally rewarded defectors with positions of influence. The BJP itself has done so in states ranging from Maharashtra to Assam and Madhya Pradesh. The emergence of splinter groups from the parties like AAP, Trinamool Congress and Shiv Sena (UBT) has naturally generated expectations of representation. Cabinet berths have often served two purposes- rewarding loyalty and signalling to others that political migration carries incentives. However, there is a delicate balance. Excessive accommodation of newcomers risks alienating long-serving BJP leaders who have spent decades building the party. The experience of

Maharashtra after the induction of leaders from rival camps showed that cadres sometimes resent the prominence accorded to recent converts. Thus, any induction of defectors will probably be calibrated rather than overwhelming. The two-thirds majority imperative Perhaps the most important consideration is numbers in Parliament. Constitutional amendments require a special majority. The BJP-led NDA recently improved its position in the Rajya Sabha through strong performances in upper-house elections, bringing the alliance closer to the two-thirds mark. Earlier this year, the government's attempt to push legislation connected with delimitation and accelerated implementation of women's reservation fell short of the required strength in the Lok Sabha. The proposed constitutional amendment failed to secure the necessary 352 votes among members present and voting. Consequently, the accompa-

nying bills had to be withdrawn. This setback underlined an uncomfortable reality - electoral dominance does not automatically translate into constitutional dominance. Hence, expanding support through new allies and defectors assumes importance. Each MP matters when pursuing measures that require extraordinary majorities. The BJP has invested considerable political capital in projecting itself as the champion of women's political representation. The 106th Constitutional Amendment Act was passed in 2023, but its implementation is legally tied to the completion of both a future census and a subsequent delimitation exercise. The government attempted to expedite the process through additional legislation in 2026, but opposition resistance prevented success. For the BJP, delivering women's reservation before the 2029 election would carry immense symbolic and electoral significance.

Venezuelans try to reach missing relatives as earthquakes death toll doubles to 589

The outer layer of the Earth is divided into different sections called tectonic plates - a bit like the Earth's puzzle pieces. These plates move very slowly - perhaps only a few centimetres a year, which is roughly the same rate as your fingernails grow. Northern Venezuela sits on the boundary of the Caribbean and South American plates. As they move relative to one another, parts of the plates can get "stuck", and stress builds up over a long period of time. Eventually, this stress becomes too much and the plates jolt or slip back into place. That releases the huge amounts of energy experienced as an earthquake. It's been just over 40 hours since Venezuela was rocked by twin earthquakes. The death toll has continued to climb, as international teams head to the country to help with recovery efforts. Here's a timeline of how events unfolded. Wednesday, 18:04 local time (23:04 BST): An



earthquake of magnitude 7.2 strikes in the north of Venezuela. About 39 seconds later: A second earthquake of magnitude 7.5 strikes, 28km (17.4 miles) south-east of Yumare, a town in Yaracuy state. This was the strongest to hit the country since 1900. Thursday, about 00:50: Venezuela's acting president Delcy Rodríguez reports at least 32 deaths and more than 700 injured. She

says this doesn't include any figures from the state most affected by the earthquakes, La Guaira. Throughout the day: As rescuers and the army mobilise to clear debris, aid groups around the world scramble to deliver help to Venezuela, with the US pledging \$150m (£113.4m) in assistance. Friday morning: Support teams from countries including Mexico, El Salvador,

Switzerland and Spain land in Venezuela, with personnel from more countries and organisations expected. Around 08:30 local time (13:30 BST): Rodríguez says the death toll has risen to 589 people and the number of injured stands at 2,980. She adds that the hard-hit state of La Guaira will be "militarised". I'm Venezuelan and have been living abroad for six years. I see among my

family and friends in the diaspora how difficult it is to face - once again - a situation of national upheaval in Venezuela. Many tell me how they've organised and are gathering aid to send home. And although we've lived through difficult times on several occasions, this one feels particularly hard. Those abroad find themselves in a state of dissociation between a tragedy striking their country and the normality of their own routines far away from Venezuela. And there's an additional element, too. This is the biggest natural disaster of 1999 - when that deadly landslide killed and left missing thousands of La Guaira's residents - we heard the stories through TV, radio or newspapers. It wasn't immediate - we had to wait for the information. After the earthquakes, it is the victims themselves who

are using their own mobile phones and social media posts to show straight to us the horrific reality in which the country is plunged. For those abroad, this brings you home in a more personal way, but also more bleak, more dismal. Police in Venezuela have released the video below showing children being rescued from a damaged building. Dozens of people have been rescued alive since the earthquake, acting President Delcy Rodríguez said earlier. Marianella Cremi is sitting on the pavement next to her mother, just a few blocks from the Petunia building in Caracas, where her brother Juan Diego was watching the Brazil-Scotland football match when the roof collapsed as the quakes hit the city. "My heart tells me my brother is alive," Marianella, 25, says in a WhatsApp call from a street in Los Palos Grandes, one of the hardest-hit areas in northern Caracas.

SENIOR UKRAINIAN INTELLIGENCE OFFICIAL JAILED FOR LIFE FOR SPYING FOR RUSSIA



A former high-ranking Ukrainian intelligence official has been sentenced to life in prison for spying for Russia's FSB security service. Col Dmytro Kozmyura was found guilty of high treason under martial law, Ukraine's prosecutor general said. He was previously chief of staff of the Security Service of Ukraine's (SBU) anti-terrorism centre. An operation codenamed "rat" found he had used a safehouse in Kyiv to communicate with Russian handlers seeking classified information about Ukraine's military and leadership, the SBU said. The prosecutor gener-

al said Kozmyura had agreed to share information "constituting state secrets" for financial reward and deserved the harshest punishment. Kyiv has announced numerous operations to expose Russian agents on its soil since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion in February 2022. After his arrest in February 2025, the SBU released an image of the former official with Ukraine's intelligence chief Vasyl Malyuk, who led the investigation. In a statement after his sentencing, the agency said he had been recruited by Russia's FSB in Vienna in 2018.

Christmas market attacker jailed for life for murdering six in Germany



A court in Germany has sentenced a man to life in prison for an attack on the Christmas market in Magdeburg in 2024, in which six people were killed. The court imposed the maximum sentence on the defendant, Taleb Al-Abdulmohsen, who is from Saudi Arabia. The 51-year-old was found guilty of murder. Prosecutors say he drove a rented BMW car at speeds of up to 48km/h (30mph) through the Christmas market in the centre of Magdeburg on 20 December 2024. They say the attack took place at 19:02 local time when the market was very crowded with Christmas revellers celebrating at the gingerbread and mulled wine stalls. It lasted just a minute and four seconds. A nine-year-old boy and five women between the ages of 45 and 75 were killed. Around 300 others were injured. Taleb Al-Abdulmohsen was arrested immediately after the incident. Prosecutors said he planned the attack well in advance and had acted alone. They said he was not pursuing any serious ideological goals, but acted primarily out of personal motives. "The defen-

dant's sole concern was, and remains, himself," the Chief Public Prosecutor Matthias Böttcher said. A psychiatric expert said the man had narcissistic personality disorder and an overwhelming need for attention. Taleb Al-Abdulmohsen told the court he had been motivated to carry out the attack because of conflicts with the German authorities. He said he was angry that the rights of Saudi women were being ignored. He said very little about the attack itself. Taleb Al-Abdulmohsen was granted asylum in Germany in 2016. It is understood that he has been described as critical of Islam and the ruling family. The German Press Agency DPA said he came from Hofuf in Saudi Arabia, and is from the Shiite minority there. Officials say he had a history of anti-Islamic rhetoric and far-right sympathies. He has been described as critical of Islam and he also voiced support on social media for the far-right Alternative for Germany party, hailing the party for fighting the same enemy as him "to protect Germany".

Reflecting Pool liner cut with sharp knife or razor, National Park Service says

A liner along the bottom of the Reflecting Pool in Washington DC was cut with a sharp knife or razor earlier this month, an official at the National Park Service has said. Frank Lands, deputy director of operations for the park service, said in a court filing on Thursday that US Park Police had responded to a report of an incident on 9 June regarding the pool's liner, which caused damage to the foam sealant that had been installed as part of a recent multi-million dollar rehabilitation project. Earlier this week, US President Donald Trump blamed vandals for "a 300-foot-long gash" and accused someone of putting fertiliser in the water. The president was pressed by CBS

News during an interview for evidence of the slit, which Trump said would be provided in court. In the recent court filing, Lands said a US Park Police report indicated damage "including a caulk over the foam sealant that was cut with a sharp knife or razor and destruction of delaminating surface material." It also detailed that "approximately 70 fence post tops were thrown into the pool". However, it does not say when exactly the damage occurred and does not identify anyone who might have been involved. The statement in the court filing is part of a lawsuit filed by a nonprofit organisation seeking to stop the Trump administration's work on the site.

UN pauses Strait of Hormuz evacuation plan after cargo ship attacked

The UN's International Maritime Organization (IMO) has paused the planned evacuation of more than 11,000 sailors stranded in the Strait of Hormuz after a cargo ship passing through the waterway was attacked. IMO chief Arsenio Dominguez said several boats had already been evacuated, but the agency wanted to ensure that "necessary safety guarantees" would continue to be in place. The British maritime security agency UKMTO reported on Thursday that a ship had been struck 7.5 nautical miles southeast of Oman's port of Dahit by "an unknown projectile". No casualties were reported. The ship's owner said limited damage had been caused and that it had since safely



transited the strait. US officials said Iran had fired on the ship, according to US media reports. The attack came after Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) had warned that attempts to cross the strait along a route designated by the IMO would be "unacceptable and completely dangerous" and vessels should coordinate with

Iran. The Ever Lovely, a Singapore-flagged ship, had been following the UKMTO's recommended route through the strait when it was struck, the ship's owner, Evergreen, said. "All crew members remain safe as does the vessel itself and all cargo," it added. "The vessel followed a southern route identified by the IMO on Thursday

morning, data from the ship-tracking website MarineTraffic reviewed by BBC Verify shows. IMO chief Dominguez said in a statement on Thursday the ship "did not transit under IMO's evacuation framework", without going into further detail. Announcing the suspension of the evacuation plan, he said: "I have always reiterated that the safety of the seafarers remains paramount. Therefore, to ensure a coordinated approach and navigational safety, the evacuation plan will be paused until further clarity is obtained." Hundreds of ships and thousands of sailors have been stranded in the Gulf since February because of the US-Israel war against Iran.

US sanctions Rwanda gold refinery accused of smuggling DR Congo's minerals

The US has sanctioned a major gold refinery in Rwanda and two of its executives, accusing them of smuggling minerals from rebel-controlled areas of neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo. Washington alleged what it described as a "network" was collaborating with the M23 rebel group, which commands tracts of DR Congo that are home to vast reserves of gold and coltan, a metallic ore key to making electronics. Despite overwhelming evidence from the likes of UN experts, Rwanda has long denied supporting the M23. The government there has not responded to the US' recent sanctions, but have previously described



similar measures against Rwanda as unfair and one-sided. The sanctions, announced on Thursday, target the Gasabo Gold Refinery, its chairman Jean Malic Kalima and its general manager Bosco Kayobotsi. In a statement, the US alleged at least 60kg of gold, valued at

millions of US dollars, were smuggled from eastern DR Congo to Gasabo Gold in early 2026. The statement accuses Rwandan government officials and soldiers of overseeing the system. Last year, Gasabo Gold Refinery was sanctioned by the European Union for "exploit-

ing the armed conflict" in DR Congo. Three separate mining companies controlled by Kalima - Bugambira Mines, Wolfram Mining and Processing and Rwinkwavu Mining Corporation - were also sanctioned by the US on Thursday. The sanctioned parties have not responded to the BBC's requests for comment. Any assets they have under US jurisdiction will be frozen. The sanctions also bar American citizens and companies from dealing with the designated parties. "The United States will not allow rogue groups to profit from the illicit mineral trade and destabilise the region," Treasury secretary Scott Bessent said.

CANADA ELIGIBLE TO JOIN EUROVISION COMPETITION



When countries from around the world take to the stage to participate in Eurovision next year, they could see a new competitor. Canada is now eligible to take part in the song contest after CBC/Radio-Canada became a full member of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), a requirement to compete. Prime Minister Mark Carney, who has been seeking closer political and economic ties with Europe since taking office last year, raised the idea of Canada joining the song contest in his 2025 budget. Canada would not be the first non-European country to join the contest; Israel and Australia regularly compete, and Morocco competed in 1980. The Carney government said in November that it was working with the CBC, Canada's public broadcaster, "to explore participation in Eurovision". His government's budget included C\$150m (£80m) in funding for the broadcaster. Eurovision's rules state that participation in the contest is open to countries with broadcasting organisations that are members of the EBU. Before Thursday,

the CBC had been an "associate member". "Canada's voice in this community makes us stronger," Noel Curran, director general of the EBU, said. When countries from around the world take to the stage to participate in Eurovision next year, they could see a new competitor. Canada is now eligible to take part in the song contest after CBC/Radio-Canada became a full member of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), a requirement to compete. Prime Minister Mark Carney, who has been seeking closer political and economic ties with Europe since taking office last year, raised the idea of Canada joining the song contest in his 2025 budget. Canada would not be the first non-European country to join the contest; Israel and Australia regularly compete, and Morocco competed in 1980. The Carney government said in November that it was working with the CBC, Canada's public broadcaster, "to explore participation in Eurovision". His government's budget included C\$150m (£80m) in funding for the broadcaster.



Four men held over child-marriage in Sierra Leone set to appear in landmark court case



For the first time since child marriage was banned in Sierra Leone two years ago, people accused of committing the crime are being brought to trial. Four men are to appear in court charged with the forcible marriage of a 17-year-old girl. Among the accused are the girl's father and her so-called husband. The BBC is not naming them so as to

protect the child's identity. If convicted, the defendants will be jailed for at least 15 years or fined around \$4,000 (£3,200), or both. Under the law, even those who attend the wedding of a child can be arrested and jailed. Sierra Leone is a patriarchal society and it has long been common for a father to give his daughter's hand in marriage forcibly.



Court' Fame Sridevi, Aegan & 'Minnal Murali' Fame Femina George Wrap Shoot for Vision Cinema House's 'Haiku'

Actress Sridevi Apalla, who earned widespread appreciation from Telugu audiences with her performance in Court, has completed shooting for her next multi-lingual venture, Haiku. She stars alongside Aegan and 'Minnal Murali' fame Femina George in the upcoming film, produced by Dr. D. Arulanandhu and Mathewo Arulanandhu under the Vision Cinema House banner. Written and directed by Yuvaraj Chinnasamy, Haiku has officially wrapped principal photography and entered post-production after nearly 90 call sheets spread across four schedules. Sharing his thoughts on completing the film, director Yuvaraj Chinnasamy said, "Completing Haiku is an emotional and deeply satisfying moment for our entire team. I sincerely thank our producers, Dr. D. Arulanandhu and Mathewo Arulanandhu, for believing in this story from the very



beginning and for giving me complete creative freedom throughout the journey. Their trust allowed us to bring the film to life exactly as we had envisioned it. Working with

Aegan, Sridevi, Femina George and every member of our cast and crew has been an enriching experience. We are shaping Haiku into a soothing, breezy and emotionally fulfilling the-

atrical experience, and we are excited to share it with audiences. Every director needs producers who stand firmly behind the vision, and I was fortunate to receive that unwavering support. I truly believe Vision Cinema House will become a platform that encourages many talented young filmmakers in the future." Producers Dr. D. Arulanandhu and Mathewo Arulanandhu said reaching this milestone has been immensely gratifying. They praised director Yuvaraj Chinnasamy for his clarity, sincerity and disciplined approach throughout production, adding that the film has taken shape exactly as they had hoped. They also expressed confidence that audiences will connect with the film's emotional core when it reaches theatres after post-production completes. Apart from Aegan and Sridevi, the ensemble cast includes Femina George, Adrichi

Arun, Mime Gopi, 'Sathyam Sundaram' fame Indhumathi, 'Lubber Pandhu' fame Jenson, 'Sirai' fame Ismatha Banu, Doctor Shiva and several other notable performers. The technical team comprises Hari Haran Ram (Additional Screenplay), Priyesh Guruswamy (Cinematography), Sakthi Pranesh (Editing), Siddhu Kumar (Music) and Prem (Art Direction). Even before completing production, Haiku achieved a significant milestone by securing its post-theatrical digital streaming rights with Netflix. At a time when digital acquisitions have become increasingly selective, the early OTT deal reflects the confidence in the film's storytelling and universal emotional appeal. With principal photography now complete, the makers have shifted their focus to post-production; more updates on the film are expected in the coming months.

Prime Video Drops an Explosive New Trailer for Isakapatnam, as a Father-Daughter Feud Sparks a Deadly Battle for Power and Threatens to Tear the Town Apart

Prime Video, India's most loved entertainment destination, today unveiled the explosive new trailer for its upcoming Telugu Original series, Isakapatnam—a gripping crime drama set in a fictional port town defined by power struggles, family feuds, gangster warfare, and political rivalries. At the heart of this riveting saga lies a fractured father-daughter relationship that threatens the town's fragile balance of power and reshapes the lives of everyone caught in its crossfire.

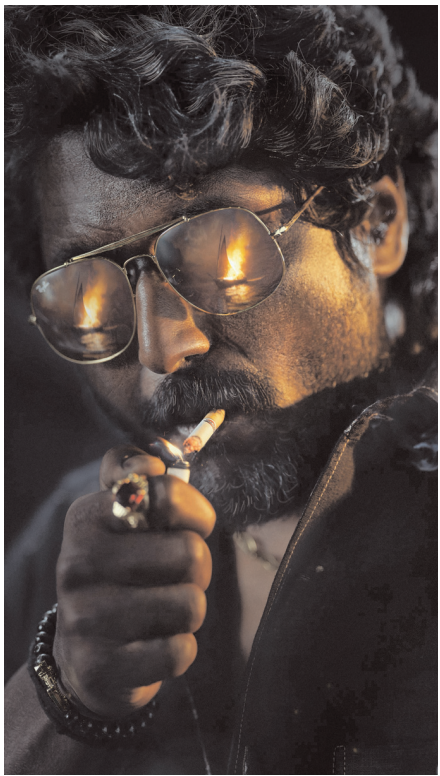
Naidu (Samuthirakani), the most formidable force in town, commands an empire that spans politics, crime, and commerce. Always one step ahead of his enemies and acutely aware of every plot against him, he believes he has everything under control—until the greatest challenge to his power emerges from within his own family. As Bharati (Aishwarya Rajesh), a resilient and fiercely independent woman, decides to take matters into her own hands and refuses to be defined by

the world shaped by power and conflict around her. With tensions escalating between father and daughter and loyalties beginning to shift, personal vendettas collide with larger ambitions, setting the stage for an explosive battle for power. Directed by Garry BH, written by Prashant Ragathi, and dialogues byTajuddin Syed, the seven-episode crime thriller is produced by Rahul Tamada and Saideep Reddy Borra under the banner of Tamada Media Productions.



MANDAADI BTS: Suhas's Unbelievable Makeover & Intense Performance

RS Infotainment's ambitious action drama MANDAADI is all set to arrive in cinemas worldwide in September. Produced by Elred Kumar and directed by Mathimaran Pugazhendhi, the film has already wrapped up its entire shoot, with post-production progressing rapidly toward release. Soori plays the lead in the film in what is expected to be one of the most physically and emotionally demanding roles of his career. Joining him is Telugu actor Suhas, who makes a striking Tamil cinema debut in a menacing negative-shaded role. The talented actor reportedly dedicated nearly 100 days to the film and underwent a remarkable physical transformation to bring the character to life. A newly released BTS glimpse offers a fascinating look at his intense makeover and the effort behind crafting the role. Known for his versatility as a leading actor in Telugu cinema, Suhas has previously impressed audiences with his sinister performances in HIT 2 and Family Drama. However, his character in MANDAADI is said to be his most intense and ferocious yet. The BTS video teases his chilling screen presence, raw aggression, and complete transformation, hinting at an outstanding performance that promises to leave a lasting impact. Mahima Nambiar plays the leading lady, while Sathyaraj, Ravindra Vijay, Mithun, and Balasaravanan complete the impressive supporting cast.



Coming to the technical crew, GV Prakash Kumar composes the music, SR Kathir handles cinematography, DRK Kiran serves as the production designer, and Pradeep E Ragav is in charge of editing.

Intriguing Murder Mystery Investigation Thriller 'Tatvam' Trailer Unveiled



The trailer of the upcoming murder mystery investigation thriller 'Tatvam', starring Dinesh Tej and Dashvika K., was unveiled at a grand event held in Hyderabad on Thursday. Directed by Arjun Kola, the film is produced by Vamsi Seemakurthi and Swetha

Pashupulate under the banners of Trayati Ishani Creations and S.K. Productions. Packed with suspense, mystery, and unexpected twists, Tatvam promises to offer audiences a gripping cinematic experience. The trailer has already generat-

ed positive buzz for its intriguing narrative and intense investigative elements. Speaking at the trailer launch, editor Viplav Naishadam described the film as a special project. "Everyone involved has worked tirelessly on Tatvam. Though Arjun Kola comes from a software background, he has handled the film like an experienced filmmaker. The screenplay keeps the audience engaged throughout, and I'm happy to have been part of this exciting journey," he said. Music director Chetan Bharadwaj expressed confidence in the film, saying that audiences today are encouraging content-driven cinema. "Tatvam is one such film with a strong emotional core and a compelling thriller narrative. It also offered me great scope to compose an engaging background score. Arjun is an exceptionally talented director," he remarked.

Aha Partners with WPP Media to Launch Telugu Entertainment's First-Ever Influencer Reality Show Featuring Top Digital Creators



Aha, in collaboration with WPP Media, is set to redefine reality entertainment with the launch of Telugu's first-ever influencer reality show, bringing together some of the biggest and most loved digital creators from across social media platforms. The show marks a unique collaboration between entertainment, creators, and brands, powered by WPP Media's expertise in building impactful brand-led content experiences. Marking a fresh chapter in reality programming, the show blends the excitement of competition with the creativity of digital storytelling. Spread across eight high-energy episodes, each episode will feature a unique theme and challenge designed to push influencers beyond their comfort zones while testing their creativity, personali-

ty, adaptability, and audience appeal. Designed for today's digital-first audience, the show introduces a fresh visual identity, innovative production style, and a contemporary content format that seamlessly bridges social media culture with mainstream entertainment. Conceptualized by WPP Media's WPP Motion Entertainment in partnership with Aha, the show represents a new-age entertainment ecosystem that seamlessly brings together creators, audiences, and brands. By combining the power of influencer culture with premium content and strategic brand integrations, the property demonstrates WPP Media's ability to create innovative, culture-led entertainment experiences that drive engagement and meaningful connections for brands.

'LGBT: A Legal Battle' Set for Multi-Language Release Across India

Gradiante Infotainment Limited joins hands with Sravya Films to take the acclaimed Telugu film to audiences across India and the world

LGBT: A Legal Battle, the socially relevant courtroom drama directed by National Award-winning and critically acclaimed filmmaker P. Suneel Kumar Reddy, is all set to begin a new chapter in its journey. Following its theatrical release on June 19 across India with English subtitles, the Telugu film has been receiving encouraging appreciation from audiences, critics and members of the LGBTQ+ community for its honest storytelling and thought-provoking narrative. Now successfully entering its second week in theatres, the film is gearing up for a wider reach. Gradiante Infotainment Limited has partnered with

Sravya Films to dub and release LGBT: A Legal Battle in multiple Indian languages, recognising the film's universal appeal and its potential to connect with audiences across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Expressing his delight over the collaboration, Mr. Vimal Raj Mathur, Managing Director of Gradiante Infotainment Limited, said, "We are delighted to associate with Sravya Films for LGBT: A Legal Battle. It is a powerful story with universal emotions and an important social message. We see tremendous potential in taking this film to audiences across India while simultaneously exploring opportu-



nities in the international market." The collaboration was significantly strengthened by the efforts of Rajesh Agarwal, celebrated entre-

preneur and Chairman of TPL, who played a key role in bringing the two companies together. Speaking about the association, he

said, "Meaningful cinema deserves meaningful partnerships. P. Suneel Kumar Reddy has consistently demonstrated his commitment to socially relevant storytelling, and Gradiante Infotainment has the vision and market reach to take such stories to wider audiences. I am delighted that this collaboration has materialised and believe it will create opportunities for many more content-driven films in the future." Media consultant Sandeep Jain also welcomed the collaboration and expressed confidence in the film's larger journey. "LGBT: A Legal Battle is a story that goes beyond regional boundaries. It is rooted in the real-

ities of the Indian subcontinent, yet its emotional core is universal. Films like these have the power to create awareness, encourage dialogue and connect with audiences across cultures. I am confident this film will find appreciation in many languages." Sharing his happiness over the association, P. Suneel Kumar Reddy, Managing Director of Sravya Films, said, "I am extremely happy to collaborate with a reputed media company like Gradiante Infotainment Limited. Their experience and market reach will certainly help elevate LGBT: A Legal Battle to the next level and introduce the film to a much larger audience."