

THE SOUTH INDIA TIMES

NATIONAL DAILY NEWSPAPER

Essence of the South

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

CM VIJAY

URGES CENTRE TO RECONSIDER
NLC DISINVESTMENT PLAN

NATION PAGE

RESCUERS SEARCHING
RUBBLE AFTER
VENEZUELA'S STRONGEST
EARTHQUAKE SINCE 1900

WORLD | NEWS

SREELEELA

Turns Heads With
Chic New Look

CINEMA | PAGE

SCAN FOR
E-PAPEROM NAMO
VENKATESAYA

24-06-2026

Total pilgrims : 70139
Tonsures : 34,940
Hundi kankada : 4,63 CR
Laddu sale : 3.44 Lac
Annaspradams : 2.05 Lac
Medical treatment : 2561
Waiting Compartments : 31Approx. Darshan Time for Sarvadarshanam
(with out SSD Tokens) : 12 HGovt lifts curbs on
commercial LPG as
supply improves

New Delhi (TSIT) : In a major relief to industrial and commercial LPG consumers, the government on Thursday removed all sectoral restrictions on the supply of non-domestic packed LPG and restored supplies to the levels prevailing prior to the West Asia crisis. The restrictions have been lifted due to improved indigenous LPG production and the projected availability of imported LPG cargoes following the US-Iran peace agreement and the opening of the



Strait of Hormuz, according to a statement issued by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas. Further, the supply of bulk LPG, which had been suspended at the onset of the crisis, has been relaxed by 50 per cent of the pre-crisis consumption levels, providing significant relief to commercial and industrial consumers. The restoration follows the recent improvement in the LPG supply situation, the statement said.

10 newly elected RS MPs sworn-in,
V-P Radhakrishnan administers oath

New Delhi (TSIT):

Vice-President and Rajya Sabha Chairman C.P. Radhakrishnan administered the oath and secrecy to ten newly elected members of the Upper House on Thursday.

The newly elected MPs, who took the oath as Rajya Sabha members, included four from Andhra Pradesh - three of whom came from the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and one from Jana Sena Party (JSP), both constituents of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). From Andhra Pradesh, Sana Satish Babu, Vijay Chintakayala and Bhashyam Rama Krishna were elected unopposed from the TDP while JSP's Lingamaneni Ramesh was elected opposed during the recent Rajya Sabha elections for 24 seats, spared across 10 states.

Among the other lawmakers who took oath in the Upper House included Tai Tagak (Bharatiya Janata Party) from Arunachal Pradesh, Rajesh Parmanad Shukla (Bharatiya Janata Party) from Gujarat, Baidyanath Ram (Jharkhand Mukti Morcha) from



Jharkhand, Debashish Samantaray (Bharatiya Janata Party) from Odisha and Praveen Chakravarty (Congress) from Tamil Nadu. Parimal Nathwani, who won as Independent from Jharkhand, was also administered oath of office by Vice-President Radhakrishnan.

With the completion of swearing-in, these members formally assume their Rajya Sabha membership and are now eligible to participate in the proceedings of the House. A notable feature of the oath ceremony was the country's linguistic diversity at display - five of the ten members took the oath in Hindi, one in English, one in Tamil, and three in Telugu. Union Minister of State for Law and Justice Arjun Ram Meghwal, Rajya Sabha Secretary-General P.C. Mody, several members of the House, and senior officials of Rajya Sabha Secretariat attended the ceremony.

Addressing a press conference at the Institute of Agricultural Technology on Queens Road in Bengaluru, Gaikwad said



Hyderabad (TSIT):

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy called upon government employees to play a key role in transforming Telangana into a \$1 trillion economy by 2034 and announced accident insurance coverage for all State employees.

Speaking at a programme held at Ravindra Bharathi, where the government signed agreements with banks for the insurance scheme, the Chief Minister said the initiative was inspired by the successful accident insurance model implemented for Singareni workers. He said the scheme would provide financial secu-

rity to employees' families in times of need and reaffirmed the government's commitment to employee welfare. Revanth Reddy urged employees to contribute an extra hour of work daily to strengthen governance, increase revenue, and accelerate development. He credited government staff for the successful implementation of welfare schemes and assured them of the government's continued support.

CM Revanth urges employees
to drive Telangana's growth

United States Trade Representative Jamieson Greer.

Following the meeting, the commerce ministry said both sides remained committed to expanding bilateral trade and advancing negotiations under the proposed bilateral trade agreement, though it did not indicate any breakthrough on the unresolved issues.

The latest round marked the third set of negotiations since India and the

India won't sign US trade deal without
competitive edge: Piyush Goyal

US announced plans for an interim trade pact earlier this year. The agreement was initially negotiated at a time when the US had imposed steep tariffs on Indian goods under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA).

According to Goyal, India had negotiated the deal on the assumption that the effective tariff burden on Indian exports would be reduced from around 50 per cent to 18 per cent, giving Indian products a significant edge over competing economies.

"There were IEEPA tariffs when we finalised the deal. We had about 50 per cent tariff on India, so we had negotiated the deal based on bringing down the 50 per cent tariff to 18 per cent," Goyal said. He added that the proposed reduction was attractive because it would have provided India with a comparative advantage over neighbouring countries and other competitors.

After Lucknow fire tragedy, Chhattisgarh CM Sai
orders statewide safety audit of buildings

The directive comes in the wake of some recent fire incidents in different parts of the country, including the deadly blaze in Uttar Pradesh's Lucknow on June 22

RAIPUR (TSIT):

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai has ordered a comprehensive review and special safety audit of multi-storey residential complexes, commercial establishments, coaching institutes, hotels and other public buildings across the state, officials said on Thursday.

The directive comes in the wake of some recent fire incidents in different parts of the country, including the deadly blaze in Uttar Pradesh's Lucknow on June 22 that claimed 15 lives, they



said. The building, which caught on fire in Lucknow's Aliganj area, housed an animation centre, among other establishments, and most of the victims who lost their lives were students. Taking serious note of such incidents, the CM said strict

compliance with safety norms must be ensured to prevent similar tragedies, an official statement said. "Any issue related to the safety of citizens, students and the general public is the government's top priority," Sai said in the statement.

India, Iran discuss energy
ties as sanctions relief
revives oil trade prospects

New Delhi (TSIT)

India and Iran on Thursday explored ways to deepen cooperation in the energy sector as Iranian Petroleum Minister Mohsen Paknejad held separate talks with Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri and Union Power Minister Manohar Lal on the sidelines of the 11th BRICS Energy Ministers' Meeting.

Cong launches 40-day nationwide campaign against
alleged exam paper leaks, irregularities

Bengaluru (TSIT) :

Congress MP Varsha Gaikwad on Thursday announced a nationwide 40-day campaign against alleged examination paper leaks and irregularities in the country's education system, accusing the NDA government of failing to protect the interests of students.

Addressing a press conference at the Institute of Agricultural Technology on Queens Road in Bengaluru, Gaikwad said



the campaign would run from June 25 to August 9 across 28 states and 28 major cities. The initiative follows Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's recent public outreach on education issues and concerns



New Delhi (TSIT):

India's military modernisation is increasingly focused on developing long-range capabilities that can reach targets across China, while continuing to account for security challenges posed by Pakistan, a report has said.

Citing the latest assessment by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI),

Nikkei Asia reported that defence planning is placing greater emphasis on longer-range weapon systems amid China's military rise and its deepening strategic ties with Pakistan.

The report further estimated that India's military expenditure rose 7.5 per cent to \$92 billion in 2025, making it the world's fifth-largest military spender.

It is also estimated that India possessed around 190

nuclear warheads as of January 2026. According to the report, India's strategic planning has increasingly shifted towards capabilities aimed at deterring China.

While India previously deployed nuclear-capable systems with ranges of up to 2,000 km, it has gradually inducted missiles capable of striking targets 3,000 km away and beyond.

According to the report,

CM Naidu calls for interlinking
Godavari, Cauvery rivers

Amaravati (TSIT):

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday called for interlinking Godavari and Cauvery rivers.

He said the interlinking of the two rivers will benefit Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana. He added that the Centre should take up interlinking of Godavari and Cauvery rivers as a national project.

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu was addressing a public meeting following the inauguration of 33 new crest gates at the Tungbhadra dam at Hospete in Karnataka along with his Karnataka counterpart D.K. Shivakumar and Telangana counterpart A. Revanth Reddy.

He claimed that India is achieving rapid development under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "India has achieved success through initiatives like 'One Nation, One Grid', as well as robust telecom and road networks. If the Ganga and Cauvery rivers are interlinked, India will become unstoppable."

He said that rivers in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have already been interlinked through the Ken-Betwa project. He praised the Union Jal Shakti Minister C.R. Paatil for

passport is not a proof of citizenship. It was not even decided in the last 12 years under the Narendra Modi government. The passport has never been a proof of citizenship," a government source said. The sources also cited Section 20 of the Passports Act, 1967, which says that passports and travel documents can be issued to persons who are not citizens of India.

"Notwithstanding anything contained in the foregoing provisions relating to issue of a passport or travel document, the central government may issue, or cause to be issued, a passport or travel document to a person who is not a citizen of India if that government is of the opinion that it is necessary so to do in the public interest." However, the Section 6(2)(a) of the same Passports Act, 1967 provides that the passport authority shall refuse to issue a passport "if the applicant is not a citizen of India".



Passport-citizenship row:

Govt asserts no new decision
taken in past 12 years

Oppn says panic being created

NEW DELHI (TSIT):

A raging controversy erupted Thursday on the passport-citizenship issue with the government asserting that no new decision has been taken on the travel document in the past 12 years and the opposition alleging that groundwork is being done to "arbitrarily deny" citizenship rights to those who "disagree" with the ruling dispensation. Citing the Passport Act 1967, government sources said passports can be given to even non-citizens "in the public interest" while Election Commission officials said passport continues to be among the 12 valid supporting documents required by voters to prove their eligibility to be on the voters' list.

Amid the row, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on



playing a key role in bringing together the Chief Ministers of three states - Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Telangana. He said that the meeting of the Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Telangana under the leadership of Union Minister C.R. Paatil is a historic event. "While we may be separate states, we are united as one nation. Today, under the leadership of Union Jal Shakti Minister C.R. Paatil, the Chief Ministers of three states met to discuss the interests of farmers in this region. This meeting will go down in history for the Southern states; let us work together to safeguard the interests of our farmers."

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu noted that the Tungbhadra Dam is vital, as it supplies water to farmers across three states and provides drinking water to the local population. "When the 19th gate was washed away in 2024, we installed a stop-log gate; now, we have successfully replaced all 33 crest gates.



OIL PRICE FALLS BACK TO PRE-IRAN WAR LEVELS

The price of oil has fallen to levels not seen since before the Iran war as traffic through the key Strait of Hormuz shipping route gradually resumes. Global benchmark Brent crude briefly fell below \$72.48 (£55) a barrel, the price it was at the day before the US and Israel launched attacks on Iran on 28 February, before edging up to \$73.23. Energy prices have been on a wild ride since Iran responded to the strikes by effectively closing the strait, a critical waterway for oil and gas shipments. The cost of crude has been moving sharply lower since the US and Iran signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on 17 June which set out a 60-day period for negotiations on Tehran's nuclear programme and other measures to end the war. However, Pratibha Thaker, regional director of Middle East and Africa at the Economist Intelligence Unit, said though oil prices have fallen back to pre-conflict levels, risks still remain. "Markets are still watching the region closely, and any renewed tensions could quickly send oil higher again," she said. More ships crossing the strait Representatives from the



two sides met in Switzerland last weekend for talks to end the war, which resulted in the US partially lifting sanctions on Iranian oil exports. The number of vessels crossing the Strait of Hormuz has risen significantly since the MOU was signed, according to maritime intelligence firm Kpler. Its latest data suggests 284 vessels have made the transit from 18 June, the day after the deal was signed, although that is still well below the pre-conflict average of some 138 crossings each day. The ships passing through the waterway in recent days include those carrying crude oil, liquefied

natural gas (LNG), fertiliser and other goods, Kpler told the BBC. The US and Iran had also formed a "communication line" to prevent misunderstandings "with the aim of safe passage for commercial vessels through the Strait of Hormuz", mediators Qatar and Pakistan said in a joint statement on Monday. There has been a "tremendous shift" with far more ships using the strait in recent days, said Dimitris Maniatis, the chief executive of Marisks, a maritime risk advisory firm working with ships stuck in the region. A limited number of ships can cross a northern passageway

with the permission of Iranian authorities, he said. The US navy has also provided guidance for vessels to travel through a southern route that is safe from mines and other obstacles that has been laid out since the war, Maniatis said. But the number of ships crossing the strait is still below levels seen before the war, when it was used by more than 100 ships a day. Fuel prices at the pump rose sharply when the Iran war began, and now the focus is on how quickly they will fall. "On the back of the lowest oil price since before the Iran war started, drivers should see the average price

of petrol fall below 150p [a litre] in the next week or so," said Simon Williams, head of policy at UK motoring group the RAC. He added the price of diesel "ought to go back under 160p. Petrol peaked at 159.53p a litre on 28 May, according to the RAC, while diesel has fallen from a high of 191.54p on 15 April. The average price of regular gasoline in the US has dropped to around \$3.93 a gallon after reaching \$4 a gallon in April, its highest since 2022, but is still well above pre-war levels. US President Donald Trump on Wednesday ordered an investigation into major energy companies, accusing Shell, ExxonMobil and other firms of "gouging" drivers by not reducing fuel prices even as oil costs fell. "Oil prices have come down so much and we are not seeing anything at the pump by comparison the way they should be," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office. The American Petroleum Institute, which represents the oil and gas industry in the US, said fuel prices "don't move in lock-step with crude oil". British energy firms have faced similar accusations of unfairly hiking petrol prices since the Iran war.

Waste-tech firm Recykal closes \$23 million bridge round

Recykal, the Hyderabad-headquartered waste management company, has raised \$23 million to strengthen its technology platform and fund international expansion. Recykal has emerged as one of India's leading technology platforms for waste management and the circular economy. The company announced on Wednesday the successful closure of a \$23 million bridge round, comprising a combination of primary and secondary capital from existing investors and a select group of new family offices. According to the company's management, the fresh capital will be deployed to strengthen Recykal's technology platform, accelerate its Deposit Return System (DRS) deployments, expand its behavioural-change solutions in waste management, and support international growth initiatives. The investment is expected to help the company enter its next phase of growth. In FY26, Recykal reported gross revenue of 1,498 crore, a 53.2 per cent increase over 978 crore in FY25, while narrowing losses from 6 per cent to 4 per cent — demonstrating improved operating leverage and disciplined execution. Investment details As part of the transaction, early cli-



mate-focused investor Circulate Capital completed a full exit, realising approximately 5x returns on its original investment. A core focus of the new capital is the acceleration of Recykal's DRS business — a technology-led model in which consumers pay a small refundable deposit on packaging that is returned upon recycling, increasing collection and recovery rates. Recykal provides the digital clearinghouse, reverse-logistics, consumer-engagement and verification infrastructure that enables such schemes to operate efficiently and at scale. The company has established a leading DRS track record across Indian states and neighbouring markets, with deployments and pilots spanning Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Bhutan.

Recykal is expanding internationally, taking its waste-management technology and DRS capabilities into global markets. The company is actively pursuing opportunities in Europe through organic expansion, strategic partnerships and potential acquisitions, with the ambition of becoming the technology backbone for circular economy infrastructure worldwide. Alongside DRS, Recykal is also expanding its Open Marketplace, which enables domestic and global sourcing of recyclable materials and circular commodities by connecting aggregators, recyclers and industrial buyers. The fresh capital will also support strategic investments aligned with Recykal's long-term vision of building a fully digitised, globally connected circular economy.

Amazon CEO meets PM Modi, announces USD 48 billion investment

New Delhi: US e-commerce giant Amazon on Thursday, June 25, announced to invest a total of US Dollar 48 billion to expand and support its businesses in India from 2026-2030, as its CEO Andy Jassy met Prime Minister Narendra Modi here. Jassy reiterated Amazon's long-term commitment to India and announced plans to invest an additional \$13 billion to expand AI and cloud infrastructure in the country by 2030. This takes Amazon's total planned investment in expanding and supporting AI and cloud infrastructure to over \$21 billion between 2026 and 2030 (part of the \$48 billion total investment), establishing it as one of the largest global AI and cloud infrastructure investors in the country. The investment will expand AWS data centre capacity in Mumbai and Hyderabad, giving startups, enterprises and government organizations access to custom AI chips, managed AI services, secure and reliable cloud



technologies and developer tools to innovate faster, scale rapidly, and serve customers globally. Amazon's cumulative investments in India from 2010-2030 stand at over \$88 billion. "We came to India over a decade ago and have since been serving customers, sellers, developers, start-ups and enterprises through our different businesses. The response has been tremendous, with strong growth especially

across our ecommerce, AI, and cloud businesses," said Jassy. "We are investing over \$48 billion in the coming five years to meet the strong demand across our business in India and to help the country achieve these priorities. We are inspired by Prime Minister Modi's vision of a Viksit and Atmanirbhar Bharat, and we are committed to being a long-term partner in India's growth story," he mentioned. Jassy thanked

Prime Minister Modi for his leadership and highlighted the growing importance of India, where Amazon operates several businesses including ecommerce, AI and cloud, and entertainment among others. He noted that the company's India business is on a strong growth trajectory with strong customer demand especially in its ecommerce and AWS business. Since its launch in India, Amazon has digitised 12 million small businesses, enabled over \$20 billion in cumulative ecommerce exports, and supported 2.8 million jobs. Amazon has also trained over 10 million Indians on cloud skills. In line with the government's priorities, the company will continue its strong focus on AI-led digitization, export growth, and job creation. The company has pledged to support 3.8 million jobs, \$80 billion in cumulative exports, enabling AI benefits for 15 million small businesses, and AI education for 4 million government school students.

Philippines bans video game played by alleged high school shooter

The Philippines has temporarily blocked gaming app Gorebox after an initial investigation found that a teenage suspect in a rare school shooting had been playing the game. Three students were killed and 20 others wounded after two suspects - aged 15 and 14 - allegedly fired handguns inside a classroom in Tacloban, south-east of Manila, on Monday. Police said the 14-year-old was a player of Gorebox, a game where players can "obliterate anything [they] desire" and "engage in brutal combat with an extensive arsenal of weapons and explosives", according to its Google Play listing. "We cannot ignore possible online influences that may have contributed to this tragic incident," the country's cyber-security agency said. "Temporarily blocking the game will allow authorities to conduct a thorough assessment into whether the platform played any role in the actions of the suspects," said Aboy Paraiso, an undersecretary at the



Cybercrime Investigation and Co-ordinating Centre. BBC News has contacted Gorebox's maker, Germany's F2Games, for comment. Scientific studies have not found a direct link between video games and violent behaviour. Gorebox is a first-person shooter video game that can be played as solo or online multiplayer. The International Age Rating Coalition gave it an R18 rating due to extremely violent, explicit, and unrestricted gameplay. Mass shootings are rare in the Philippines, though gun-

related crimes are not uncommon and the most sensational cases are staples of early evening newscasts. What was unusual this time round was that the suspects were minors. Akbayan party-list congressman Chel Diokno called for stiffer penalties for those who allow minors access to firearms. The worst mass shooting in recent Philippine history happened in November 2009, when a town mayor in the southern province of Maguindanao shot dead 58 people, mostly journalists, who were travelling with

the convoy of a political rival. "Influenced by online content" Late on Tuesday, police filed murder charges against the 15-year-old suspect. The 14-year-old suspect who allegedly played Gorebox is too young to be charged under Philippine law. He appeared to have been "heavily influenced" by online content, said Allan Rae Co, spokesman of the Philippine National Police. The boy had also been posting violent content online, he added. Police said the 9mm pistol the 14-year-old is alleged to have fired belonged to his aunt, a policewoman who was suspended from duty after the shooting. The 15-year-old's .38 was registered to his grandfather's security agency. According to the preliminary investigation, the suspects claimed they were bullied in school. Before Monday's shooting at the San Jose National High School, Co said the two boys had holed themselves up in the bathroom. "All indications point to the fact that it was planned.

AI+ SMARTPHONE BEGINS SALES OF NOVA 2 PRO AND NOVA 2 NEO STARTING 26TH JUNE

Mumbai, June 2026: Ai+ Smartphone today announced the commencement of sales of its latest devices, Nova 2 Pro and Nova 2 Neo, as part of the newly launched Nova Series. Designed to cater to a broad spectrum of users, from first-time smartphone owners to performance-focused upgraders, the Nova 2 Neo and Nova 2 Pro will be available exclusively on Flipkart and select retail outlets starting June 26 at 12 noon. The launch of Nova 2 Neo and Nova 2 Pro builds on the strong momentum of the Nova Series, which has witnessed exceptional consumer demand and growing affinity among Indian smartphone buyers since its inception.

The units will be available at the following pricing (Day 1 of Sales):

Nova 2 Neo 5G
4GB + 128GB | 12,999
6GB + 128GB | 13,999

Nova 2 Pro 5G



6GB + 128GB | 14,999 onwards
8GB + 128GB | 16,999 onwards

Including 1,000 Bank Offer on all Banks (Debit/Credit)
Commenting on the commencement of sales, Madhav Sheth, CEO, Ai+ Smartphone and Founder, NxtQuantum Shift Technologies said "The Nova 2 Neo and Nova 2 Pro reflect our effort to make capable, well-designed and dependable smartphone experiences accessible to a wider set of

consumers. We have focused on the things that matter most in daily use - performance, battery life, imaging, software quality and privacy so that users do not have to compromise based on budget. With sales beginning today, we are excited to bring the next chapter of the Nova Series to more users across India."

Nova 2 Neo: Built for Everyday Reliability
The Nova 2 Neo is powered by

the MediaTek Dimensity 6300 5G chipset and features a 6.745-inch HD+ display with a 120Hz refresh rate for smooth everyday use. It runs on Android 16-based NxtQuantum OS, offering a clean software experience backed by the NxtPrivacy Dashboard and AI Key support. The device houses a 48MP Sony IMX582 AI camera and an 8MP front camera for everyday photography and video calls. A 6000mAh bat-

tory with 18W charging support ensures all-day usage, while a side-mounted fingerprint scanner, IP65 dust and water resistance, dual SIM 5G, expandable storage of up to 2TB, and a slim 8.5mm profile round out a highly practical package.

Nova 2 Pro: Built for Performance and Creativity
The Nova 2 Pro is powered by the MediaTek Dimensity 7100 chipset and features a 6.9-inch FHD+ punch-hole display with a 144Hz refresh rate, up to 800 nits HBM brightness, and a multi-layer cooling system for sustained performance. It runs on Android 16-based NxtQuantum OS with the NxtPrivacy Dashboard and advanced AI Key customisation. Its camera setup includes a 48MP Sony IMX582 AI main camera, an 8MP ultra-wide camera, and a 13MP front camera built for content creation and video communication. The device features customisable lights in the back panel

Stock markets rally in early trade tracking drop in oil prices

Mumbai: Market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty rallied in early trade on Thursday, June 25, tracking a decline in crude oil prices and a positive trend in Asian equities. The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 440.23 points to 77,435.76 in early deals. The 50-share NSE Nifty went up by 137.80 points to 24,147.60. From the 30-Sensex firms, InterGlobe Aviation, Maruti, Mahindra & Mahindra, UltraTech Cement, State Bank of India and Hindustan Unilever were among the major winners. Power Grid, Titan, Infosys and Bharat Electronics were among the laggards. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, traded 1.70 per cent lower at USD 72.49 per barrel. "The biggest positive for India is Brent crude falling to below USD 73 level," VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments



Limited, said. In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi jumped over 5 per cent, Japan's Nikkei 225 index traded nearly 4 per cent higher and Shanghai's SSE Composite index quoted marginally in the green. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index quoted lower. US markets ended on a subdued note in the previous trade. "Crude oil prices have extended their recent decline. Oil has now erased most of the gains recorded during the recent Middle East conflict as concerns over supply disruptions have eased, geopolitical risk

premiums have unwound and global supply conditions have continued to improve," Ponnudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth-tech firm, said. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 1,843.40 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data. On Wednesday, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 790.54 points, or 1.04 per cent, to settle at 76,991.22. The Nifty climbed 197.55 points, or 0.83 per cent, to end at 24,021.65. The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 440.23 points to 77,435.76 in early deals

Rescuers searching rubble after Venezuela's STRONGEST EARTHQUAKE SINCE 1900

President Trump and other administration officials have vowed to help Venezuela - a process helped along by warmer relations between the two countries following the US capture of Nicolas Maduro in early January. Since then, Trump has repeatedly signalled a willingness to work with interim president Delcy Rodríguez, on whom he frequently lavishes praise. So far, we have very little information on what that US assistance will look like. Secretary of State Marco Rubio earlier said that US-based search and rescue teams are being deployed. He added that aid flights will be handled by the defence department, due to damage to Caracas' main airport. The Pentagon, however, tells me they have no information to provide at this time. Similarly, the White House and State Department has yet to provide any information on what assistance might be coming, and how



much. Representatives of Venezuela-focused organisations in South Florida - the heart of the country's diaspora in the US - tell me they're working on ramping up assistance from their communities, but so far have no further details. Maduro, for his part, is currently in a federal detention facility in New York awaiting trial. In a statement posted on X - presumably by members of his

team - Maduro called for "maximum solidarity" and "maximum action" in response to the earthquake. I've been speaking to Leander Pérez, who lives in the Santa Rosalía parish in central Caracas. His home was badly damaged in the earthquake so he slept on the street last night. During the earthquakes he and his mother and his neighbours were trapped in the building

for a while, as one of the security gates was bent and it wouldn't open, but they eventually kicked it open, he says. "We spent the night in a public square. On the pavement. Most of the neighbours slept in the streets. We are in deep shock," he says, "I have friends with missing relatives". He says his apartment block is "uninhabitable". "All the walls cracked during the earthquake and

we had to evacuate the building," he tells me. "You cannot live there. It is not safe." It is now mid-morning in Venezuela, which last night was hit by two powerful earthquakes. What happened The 7.2-magnitude and 7.5-magnitude quakes hit less than a minute apart at around 18:00 local time (23:00 BST) - the second was the strongest to hit the country since 1900. Both were very shallow at less than 30km below ground, potentially adding to the damage. Footage shows the moment the earthquake shook a BBC journalist's home in Caracas. The damage At least 164 people have been killed and 971 injured, according to acting president Delcy Rodríguez. These tolls could increase significantly as rescue efforts continue, with the US Geological Survey putting the potential loss of life at more than 10,000 - here's a closer look at its estimates

and how they are calculated. The most affected state is La Guaira, north of Caracas, where "dozens" of buildings have collapsed, according to Rodríguez. Before-and-after pictures show a 10-storey hotel reduced to rubble. The rescue effort Footage shows rescuers searching devastated buildings in the capital Caracas, and people have been heard calling for help, BBC News Mundo reports. Several countries have offered support, with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio saying the US response would be "big", "fast" and "effective". More than 100 buildings have collapsed in La Guaira, the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has said. The update adds that acting President Delcy Rodríguez has given permission for all UN urban search and rescue teams to be deployed to offer logistics and other support to other incoming teams.

KEY FIGURE IN SOUTH AFRICA POLICE CORRUPTION SCANDAL PLEADS GUILTY



Vusumusi "Cat" Matlala, a central figure in a major ongoing police graft inquiry in South Africa, has pleaded guilty to corruption, fraud and money-laundering charges as part of a deal with state prosecutors. He was accused of bribing top police officials to win a 360m rand (\$22m; £16.5m) tender for his health company Medicare24 in 2024. The plea deal, which has not yet been accepted by the magistrate, would result in Matlala giving evidence against "high-ranking officials", state advocate Santhos Manilall said. Police chief Gen Fannie Masemola is one of those facing charges in relation to this case. He has denied the charges. Manilall told the court in

the capital, Pretoria, that it had taken almost two months of negotiations to put the deal together. If accepted, it would result in Matlala, 49, serving eight years in prison. The state's lawyer said that the "sacrifice" of a more lenient sentence would be worth it, as "for the first time we have an accused who has... given us detail that we would not have been made aware of". As part of the deal, Matlala is required to give honest and frank testimony at future trials. But in a blistering attack, the Democratic Alliance (DA), the junior partner in South Africa's governing coalition, called the arrangement a "sweetheart deal" and "a betrayal of accountability" that may not result in a successful prosecution. DA justice spokesperson Glynnis Breytenbach said it was evidence of a two-tier justice system, as "one of the country's most prominent corruption accused is allowed to negotiate what amounts to a discounted sentence".

Trump asks Congress for billions for Iran war, after tension with Republicans

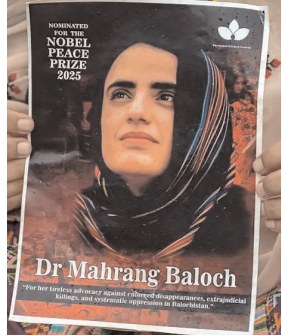


The White House has asked lawmakers to approve \$87.6bn (\$66.5bn), mostly for "urgent needs" connected with the US war on Iran, a day after Congress passed a resolution rebuking the military action. The bulk of the funding - \$67bn - is for the US Department of Defence, the White House said. But the proposal faces an uphill battle in Congress. The Iran conflict is unpopular with voters ahead of the US midterm elections in November, though a ceasefire is currently in effect. US President Donald Trump has also found himself at odds with some members of his Republican Party over the issue of Iran, and is alleged to have ended up in an angry exchange with one senator on Wednesday. That senator, Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, was one of a handful of Republicans who defied the president on Tuesday by voting to pass a measure demanding that he halt the war or seek congressional approval before continuing military action. Cassidy fell back in line after his alleged sparring

with the president, and after receiving assurances from members of Trump's administration. He and others went on to vote down another similar measure in the Senate late on Wednesday. "Most of this request will address urgent needs related to Operation Epic Fury (OEF)," says the letter, referring to the Iran war. The request includes \$21bn for munitions, \$17.3bn for operational costs and \$12.1bn for classified programmes. It also asks for about \$300m to bolster security at US embassies and diplomatic outposts in the Middle East and South Asia after some of them came under attack earlier in the war. The other requested money would be for unrelated measures, including \$11bn for US farmers and \$1.4bn to tackle the Ebola outbreak in Central Africa. Washington and Tehran are currently observing a ceasefire in the war, but the White House budget office letter notes that the Pentagon needs to "rebuild stocks" after its military strikes.

The woman who fought for Pakistan's disappeared men now faces life in jail

When Dr Mahrang Baloch was a teenager, she joined hundreds of families across Pakistan's south-western province of Balochistan to search for her father, who was allegedly arrested by security forces and later killed. Years on, the doctor-turned-activist became one of the most recognisable faces of a movement demanding answers about enforced disappearances in the province. Now, she faces life behind bars. A Pakistani anti-terrorism court sentenced Mahrang and fellow activist Sibghatullah Shah to life imprisonment on Monday after convicting them of terrorism, sedition and murder in connection with the death of a paramilitary soldier during a protest in the town of Gwadar in



2024. The pair deny the charges and are expected to appeal. Speaking to the BBC after the ruling, Mahrang's sister Nadia Baloch said the family remained defiant. "We will challenge this decision in the higher courts," said Nadia, who is also part of her sister's legal team. Asked whether she had visited her sister in prison, Nadia paused.

Europe's heatwave shifts east as France raises health alert to highest level

Heatwave conditions that have left Spain, France and the UK sweltering for days are set to shift to the east, with forecasters in Germany and the Czech Republic warning of extreme conditions. Temperatures in Germany could hit 40C in some western and south-western areas on Thursday, and across the country on Friday. An extreme weather warning is now in place in much of the Czech Republic. In France, Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu announced the health alert level is being raised to its highest, to boost hospital staffing and protect the vulnerable. Health Minister Stéphanie Rist said they were now seeing deaths linked to the extreme temperatures among "young

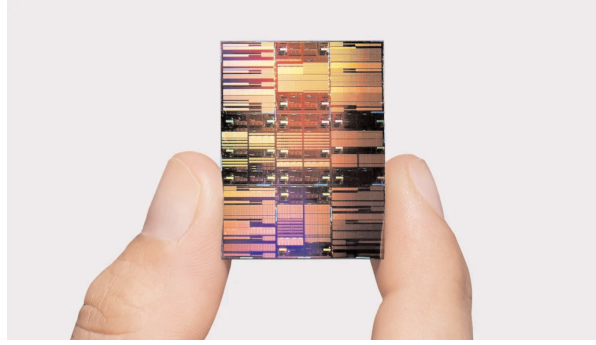


people who suffer cardiac arrests", as well as the elderly. United Nations climate change chief Simon Stiell has said "Europe's savage heatwave has the fingerprints of the climate crisis all over it", and he has called for "a faster shift to renewables, protecting forests and boosting climate resilience". After France recorded its hottest day on Wednesday

over a 24-hour period, although she stressed there were no confirmed figures for the number of deaths linked to the heatwave. Paris mayor Emmanuel Grégoire said the mortality rate was on the rise in the capital. "We must not believe ourselves to be invulnerable," he told French TV. "I am thinking especially about the youth... At about 19:30 last night... I saw 100 or so joggers on the street. Frankly, that's irresponsible." "It's fine to take a couple of days off from exercising," he added. Meanwhile, a three-year-old child has been found dead in a car in the Paris region, days after two young children were found dead in the family's car in the southern town of Carpentras.

IBM HAILS NEW 'BLOCK OF FLATS' DESIGN BREAKTHROUGH FOR ULTRA TINY CHIPS

IBM has unveiled a new chip design which it says could enable manufacturers to cram 100 billion transistors on a silicon chip the size of a fingernail. The current industry-standard size for chips, measured in the unit of nanometres - a billionth of a metre and the size of a few atoms - is around two nanometres (nm). But IBM claims its new chip tech is the equivalent of around 0.7nm, which may make it the world's first known chip technology below 1nm. However, it will be several years before the chip tech could be ready to go into production. The firm claims in tests, its prototype performed 50% better than its own 2nm



chip and was 70% more energy efficient. It claimed similar boosts in performance when it debuted its 2nm chip tech back in 2021 - saying at the time its tests of those, slightly larger, chips produced similar leaps in performance and energy efficiency. Jay Gambetta, direc-

tor of IBM Research and IBM Fellow, described the NanoStack tech as a "landmark moment" for the future of chips. "With our new NanoStack architecture, we're not just making smaller transistors, we're reinventing how chips are built to deliver dramatically more

power and energy efficiency," he said. Transistors are the building blocks of silicon chips - which provide computing power for the world's electronics, including smartphones, games consoles and laptops. They have also become crucial to the powerful computers housed in data centres, processing a range of everyday digital activities from streaming to online banking, and powering the generative AI boom. The more transistors manufacturers can squeeze onto a chip, the more powerful the chip becomes, and therefore the more devices can do. At the same time, designers strive to make the chips themselves ever smaller.



Families lay flowers on barbed wire barricade on anniversary of deadly Kenya protests

THE ICE RAIDS ARE OVER, BUT SOME MINNESOTANS SAY THEY STILL LIVE IN FEAR



Aliah, a 20-year-old student in Minnesota, expected her new American life to be all about studying and work after fleeing Afghanistan in 2021 and being granted asylum in the US. But earlier this year, when federal immigration enforcement agents flooded the Minneapolis area during Operation Metro Surge, she faced a much different reality. Months after the operation's official end,

its effects still linger. "We're still a little scared," Aliah, who has a green card, told the BBC. Like several people in this report, she is not sharing her real or full name over safety concerns, but her identity has been verified. Her family is praying the immigration operation in Minnesota doesn't ramp up again. "We don't have anywhere to go if we go back to my country."

Ryanair says it will reluctantly not charge parents to sit next to children



=Ryanair has changed its family seating policy to allow parents to sit next to their young children without paying a seat reservation fee, after an investigation was opened. Adults travelling with children who do not wish to pay for a reserved seat will now be told of their free seat allocation after check-in, which Ryanair said was in line with most other European airlines. Ryanair boss Michael O'Leary said it would "reluctantly adjust to this industry standard", but insisted its long-standing policy fully complied with laws and had given families "certainty". It comes after the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) said it was looking into whether the policy was unfair under consumer law. The CMA said it would test whether the airline's new seating policy complies with the law, and that its investigation continues. 'Minor policy tweak' Under the old policy, Ryanair said adults travelling with children paid one reserved seat fee, and could select seats beside them for up to four children for free. This typically led to a fee of £8 each way, the CMA said when it

launched its investigation earlier this month. It said at the time it was looking at whether the airline's "approach to seat reservations may mean parents are being charged for the airline to meet its child safety and disability-related obligations as set out under aviation rules - and will investigate to determine whether or not this practice is in line with consumer law". Other airlines offered to seat children next to a parent or guardian without a fee, or allocate seats together automatically during booking for free, it added. Ryanair said its policy had given families certainty of where they would be sitting at the time of booking, which they had valued. It said the "free parent seats" will now be available at the back of the aircraft, as front rows tend to be reserved. The "minor policy tweak" came into effect on Thursday, it said. It does not expect the change to have an effect on Ryanair's revenue. O'Leary hit out at the CMA for targeting its family seating policy, which he said had been "universally embraced by consumers as the most progressive and transparent in Europe".

GRAND LAUNCH OF 'VENKATRAMAYYA GARI TALUKA' TEASER AND AUDIO

Star-Studded Event Held at Prasad Labs

Worldwide Theatrical Release on July 18

ETV Prabhakar's Daughter Divija Prabhakar Makes Her Debut as Heroine

The teaser and songs of the upcoming family entertainer 'Venkatramayya Gari Taluka', starring Dinesh Kumar as the lead hero and introducing Divija Prabhakar, daughter of renowned actor ETV Prabhakar, as the heroine, were unveiled at a grand event held at Prasad Labs, Hyderabad, in the presence of several prominent personalities from the Telugu film industry.

Directed by Satish Awala and jointly produced by Komali Mahender Thotte and Somesh Saripalli under the Komali Creations banner, the film has completed all production formalities and is all set for a worldwide theatrical release on July 18. The teaser and songs



received an overwhelming response from the audience as well as members of the film fraternity. According to the makers, the film revolves around human relationships, family values, parental love, emotional bonding, and father sentiment, promising a deeply emotional cinematic experience.

The film also features Muralidhar Goud and Sudha

Speaking at the event, ETV Prabhakar said: "I am delighted to be part of the teaser and audio launch of this beautiful film. The story reminded me of the emotionally rich family dramas directed by Muthyala Subbaiah garu. It has been a long time since I heard such a touching script, and that is why I encouraged my daughter Divija to be a part of this project. Producer Komali has worked tirelessly to bring this film to life, while director Satish Awala has shouldered the responsibility with great dedication. The film beautifully portrays the greatness of a father and the importance of parents. Every song in this film has the power to touch the audience's hearts. We always thought our daughter would become a doctor, but today she is making her debut as an actress through this wonderful film. I request everyone to bless her and wish the film grand success."

Sukumar Writings, Bunny Vas Works, and Priyadarshi's Film "Idupu Kayitham" Grandly Launched by Acclaimed Star Director Lokesh Kanagaraj

The film Idupu Kayitham, starring Priyadarshi and produced under the banners of Sukumar Writings and Bunny Vas Works, was launched grandly today with traditional pooja ceremonies. The film is being produced by Bunny Vas and acclaimed filmmaker Sukumar. Telangana folk Dancer Nagadurga plays the female lead. Directed by young filmmaker Vamsi Reddy Dondapati, Idupu Kayitham is an entertaining family drama

set against a Telangana backdrop. Renowned Kollywood director Lokesh Kanagaraj attended the launch event as the chief guest and unveiled the film's first-look poster. Prominent personalities including Allu Aravind, Dil Raju, Naveen Yerneni, KL Damodar Prasad, SKN, Bapineedu, Sai Rajesh, Venu Udugula, and Sai Marthand were also present. Allu Aravind gave the ceremonial clap for the muhurtham shot.



The Bhaukaal Gets Bigger Than Ever! The Teaser of the Year's Most Awaited Film, Mirzapur: The Movie out now

The wait is finally over, and the bhaukaal is bigger than ever. The teaser of Mirzapur: The Movie has arrived, offering the first glimpse into one of the most anticipated cinematic events of the year. For the first time, the iconic world of Mirzapur is making the leap from OTT to theatres, bringing its trademark intensity, gripping storytelling, and larger-than-life scale to cinemas. Staying rooted in the timeline that began with Season 1 in 2018, the film expands the saga with an epic untold story crafted for the big screen. Set to release on 4th September 2026, it promises to present the beloved franchise in an all-new theatrical avatar. The teaser welcomes audiences back to the world of Mirzapur with Ali Fazal, Pankaj Tripathi, and Divyenndu, while Jitendra Kumar steps into the role of Bablu Pandit, bringing the fan-favourite character back to the screen. Joining the saga is Ravi Kishan, whose powerful new presence adds another intriguing dimension to the Mirzapur universe. From the streets of Purvanchal to the deserts of Rajasthan, the saga grows bigger than ever, bringing its gripping world and larger-than-life storytelling to cinema halls across regions. Further expanding the ensemble, the film features Abhishek Banerjee, Rasika Dugal, Mohitt Maalik, Sheeba Chadha, Rajesh Tailang, Pramod Pathak, Shriya Pilgaonkar, Harshita Shekhar Gaur, Shweta Tripathi,



and Sonal S Chauhan, coming together to bring to life an epic untold chapter from the world of Mirzapur.

ARUNACHALA CREATIONS, HARSH ROSHAN NEXT THELLA KAAGITHAM FIRST SINGLE "CHILAKA" SONG OUT NOW



Young and talented actor Harsh Roshan is all set to begin an exciting new chapter in his career with his next film Thella Kaagitham under the Arunachala Creations banner. Backed by producer Krishna Kommalapati, the project comes after the actor's impressive success

with acclaimed films like Court and Band Melam. With a strong focus on emotions, romance, and relatable storytelling, the makers are promising a refreshing cinematic experience for audiences. The film has been

generating considerable buzz among movie lovers. Thella Kaagitham is described as a heartwarming musical love story that revolves around youthful emotions and memorable relationships. For this musical love story, music director Vijai Bulganin brings the narrative to life with his soulful tunes. As part of the film's musical promotions, the first single, "Chilaka," was released today in the form of a lyrical video. This beautiful melody, composed by Vijai, carries vibrant energy and heartwarming notes that are sure to make listeners fall in love with it. Renowned singer Anurag Kulkarni has sung the track with great emotion, allowing listeners to feel every bit of love through his vocals.

Promising Hero Nithin Unveils First Look of "It's Life Bro"



he first look of the upcoming emotional love story "It's Life Bro" was unveiled by promising hero Nithin. Starring KM (Krishna Mohan) and Pooja Sundar Shetty in the lead roles, the film is being produced by Krishna Mohan Sallagundla under the KM Entertainments banner and directed by Somasekhar Reddy. Speaking about the film, director Somasekhar Reddy said, "It's Life Bro is being crafted as an emotion-

al love story with a unique storyline and engaging narrative. The film is designed to touch the hearts of audiences and leave a lasting emotional impact. Based on true-life incidents, this heartfelt romantic drama is sure to resonate with viewers and win their appreciation." The first-look poster has already generated curiosity among movie lovers with its appealing visuals and emotional undertones, hinting at a moving and realistic love story.

Sreeleela Turns Heads With Chic New Look

Sreeleela may have faced a tough year at the box office with two of her recent releases failing to meet expectations, but the actress continues to stay firmly in the spotlight. Her latest social media pictures have once again grabbed attention, with fans praising her effortless style and confidence. Dressed in a chic black outfit paired with trendy boots, Sreeleela looked every bit the modern fashion icon.

The actress struck a series of glamorous poses amid luxury travel trunks and designer accessories, creating a stylish photoshoot that quickly went viral online. Her charming expressions and elegant presence added to the appeal of the pictures.

On the career front, Sreeleela still has promising projects lined up. She is currently filming an untitled Hindi film directed by Anurag

Basu and the Tamil fantasy-action entertainer OM Chapter 1: Udhiram – The Blood Wood, giving fans plenty to look forward to. Sreeleela has been making headlines ever since a video from a Yoga Day event in Mumbai went viral on social media.

The actress found herself at the center of online discussions after an awkward moment during a group photo session sparked mixed reactions from netizens. While the debate continues online, Sreeleela seems to have chosen silence over statements. Sreeleela has been making headlines ever since a video from a Yoga Day event in Mumbai went viral on social media. The actress found herself at the center of online discussions after an awkward moment during a group photo session sparked mixed reactions from netizens. While the debate continues online, Sreeleela

seems to have chosen silence over statements. A seemingly ordinary public appearance has turned into a social media talking point after a video featuring actress Sreeleela and Amruta Fadnavis, wife of Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis went viral online.

The clip, which surfaced from a recent yoga event, has led to widespread speculation among netizens, with many trying to decode the interaction between the two. In the video, Sreeleela can be seen standing alongside other attendees when Amruta Fadnavis appears to gesture in her direction. This led some viewers to believe that Sreeleela was being asked to move out of the frame for photographs.

Within hours, the clip spread across social media platforms, triggering a flood of reactions and differing interpretations. While a section of users felt the gesture suggest-

ed Sreeleela was being repositioned, others argued that the moment was being blown out of proportion. Many pointed out that crowded public events often involve organizers and attendees adjusting positions for photographs, making it difficult to draw conclusions from a short video clip alone.

Interestingly, neither Sreeleela nor Amruta Fadnavis has commented on the viral discussion. The incident once again highlights how brief moments captured on camera can quickly become major online talking points.

