

EYE SECRETS

Spy in every blink

English Daily

Rangareddy Vol No. 1 Issue 49 Wednesday, 1-7-2026 Editor: Kasoju Shankara Chary Price:2/- Pages: 8

MISSION TELANGANA: BJP CHIEF NITIN NABIN SOUNDS POLL BUGLE, CALLS FOR 'CONGRESS-FREE TELANGANA'

Take BJP's Vision to Every Booth, Every Village; Next Government in Telangana Will Be BJP," Declares National President

Hyderabad, June 30: Launching an aggressive campaign to strengthen the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Telangana, BJP National President Nitin Nabin on Monday gave a clarion call to party workers to wage a determined democratic battle against the Congress government and work tirelessly to establish a BJP government in the state. Addressing the BJP State Executive Committee meeting at the Rock Convention Centre in Ghatkeshwar, Nabin declared that the BJP has emerged as the strongest alternative political force in Telangana and asserted that the party's growing grassroots strength would pave the way for the formation of the next government. In a blistering attack on the Congress regime, Nabin alleged that the government has failed to deliver on its promises and has prioritized "commission politics" over development and public welfare. He accused the ruling party of misleading the people and said it has betrayed the aspirations with which Telangana was formed. "The BJP will continue its fight until Telangana gets a transparent, development-oriented and people-centric government," he declared amid enthusiastic applause from party leaders and workers. Calling upon BJP cadres to reach every Gram Panchayat and every polling booth, the national president urged them to expose what he described as the failures of the Congress government and take the BJP's message of development and good governance directly to the people. Confident of the party's expanding influence, Nabin said the political mood in Telangana is steadily turning in favour of the BJP. "The people have already rejected the previous BRS government. They

are now looking towards the BJP with hope and confidence. The next government in Telangana will be a BJP government," he asserted. Highlighting the ideological difference between the BJP and its political rivals, Nabin said the Congress, BRS and AIMIM represent corruption, dynastic politics and appeasement, while the BJP stands firmly for nationalism, transparency, development and inclusive governance. Quoting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guiding mantra of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas," he said the BJP's commitment is to serve every citizen without discrimination and build a prosperous Telangana that fulfils the aspirations of all sections of society. The BJP chief also highlighted the Modi government's efforts to preserve India's cultural heritage and Sanatan traditions. Expressing concern over recent incidents involving Hindu temples in Telangana, including the attack on the Ayyappa Swamy Temple, he said the BJP would continue to raise its voice democratically to protect the state's rich cultural and spiritual heritage. Recalling the party's historic role in the formation of Telangana, Nabin paid rich tributes to former Union Minister Sushma Swaraj, whose passionate advocacy in Parliament played a key role in the creation of the state. He also remembered the sacrifices made by BJP workers and the people during the Telangana movement, stating that the BJP alone is committed to fulfilling the dreams behind statehood. Describing booth-level workers as the backbone of the party, Nabin stressed that organizational strength is the BJP's biggest asset. "Winning every booth will lay the foundation for forming a BJP

government in Telangana. Every worker must become an ambassador of the party's ideology and development agenda," he said. Drawing inspiration from the BJP's remarkable electoral expansion across the country, he remarked, "After the lotus bloomed across Anga, Banga and Kalinga, the time has now come for the lotus to bloom in the land of Trilinga." He urged party workers to dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to making Telangana the BJP's next major success story. Emphasizing that political transformation can only come through people's participation, Nabin said change in Telangana would not come from Delhi but through the hard work of lakhs of committed BJP workers standing shoulder to shoulder with the people. Sharing his experience of his three-day Telangana tour, the BJP national president said the unprecedented enthusiasm among party workers and the overwhelming public response had reinforced his confidence that the BJP's future in the state is exceptionally bright. The national leadership has taken Telangana as a special mission. Every worker has a historic responsibility to convert this mission into victory.



Together, we will build a developed, prosperous and Congress-free Telangana," he declared. The State Executive Committee meeting was chaired by Telangana BJP President N. Ramchander Rao and attended by Union Ministers G. Kishan Reddy and Bandi Sanjay Kumar, BJP OBC Morcha National President Dr. K. Laxman, National General Secretary Sunil Bansal, Telangana In-charge Abhay Patil, Members of Parliament, MLAs, MLCs, senior leaders and party office-bearers, reflecting the party's strong organizational resolve ahead of future electoral battles.

Honouring a Distinguished Architect of a Historic Mandate

It was a privilege to felicitate Adarniya Shri @sunilbansalbjp ji at the State Executive Council Meeting today. The occasion was not merely one of personal recognition, but a tribute to a leader whose organisational excellence, unwavering commitment, and strategic vision have contributed significantly to one of the most consequential political milestones in contemporary India. The historic mandate in Bengal extends beyond the realm of electoral politics. It reflects the triumph of conviction, perseverance, and the democratic aspirations of millions who envisioned a new direction for the state. While every electoral verdict represents the sovereign will of the people, certain mandates acquire greater historical significance by marking the beginning of a new chapter in public life. The Bengal mandate is one such defining moment. Bengal holds a unique and revered place in the civilisational consciousness of Bharat. It is the sacred land that nurtured towering personalities such as Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, and countless other luminaries whose thoughts, sacrifices, and ideals shaped the spiritual, cultural, intellectual, and national awakening of our civilisation. Their enduring legacy continues to illuminate the path of national service and inspire generations of Indians. This remarkable achievement stands as a testament to the visionary leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi ji, whose unwavering commitment to nation-building has transformed the aspirations of millions into a collective movement for a stronger and more prosperous Bharat. It also reflects the resolute guidance of Hon'ble Union Home Minister Shri @AmitShah ji, whose organisational acumen, tireless dedication, and steadfast leadership have strengthened the Bharatiya Janata Party across every part of the nation. Among the principal architects of this historic success is Shri Sunil Bansal ji.



His exceptional organisational capability, meticulous planning, disciplined execution, and deep understanding of grassroots mobilisation transformed a formidable challenge into a historic triumph. His leadership exemplifies the enduring truth that lasting political success is built not merely through campaigns, but through years of patient organisation, unwavering commitment, and the silent dedication of countless karyakartas united by a common purpose. As we felicitate Shri Sunil Bansal ji today, we honour not only an outstanding organiser but also the ideals of discipline, selfless service, and collective leadership that he embodies. This recognition is equally a tribute to every dedicated karyakarta whose tireless efforts, sacrifices, and unwavering faith strengthened the organisation at every level. May this historic milestone serve as renewed inspiration for all of us to dedicate ourselves with greater humility, resolve, and commitment to the service of our people and our nation. Guided by the timeless ideals of our civilisation and inspired by the leadership of our national leaders, let us continue our collective journey towards building a strong, united, self-reliant, and developed Bharat, founded upon the enduring values of service, good governance, and national unity.

Transparency in Voter Roll Revision Strengthens Democracy

Dr. Srirangam Sathyam Chairman, Srirangam Foundation Social Analyst



The right to vote is the cornerstone of every democracy. It gives every citizen an equal voice in shaping the nation's future. While elections attract public attention, the credibility of the electoral process begins much earlier—with an accurate, inclusive, and transparent voter list. The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls is an important exercise aimed at ensuring electoral integrity. However, its true success depends not only on correcting records but also on preserving public confidence in the process. Updating voter lists is both necessary and responsible. Removing duplicate entries, deceased voters, and ineligible names helps maintain the fairness of elections. At the same time, equal attention must be given to protecting the voting rights of every eligible citizen. Administrative efficiency should never result in genuine voters being excluded because of clerical mistakes, outdated addresses, or technical mismatches. In a democracy, every valid vote carries equal value, and every eligible voter deserves protection. Technology has made voter roll management faster and more efficient, but it should remain a tool rather than the final authority. Differences in spellings, surname changes, migration, and address updates are common realities in a diverse country like India. Such cases require careful field verification instead of relying solely on automated systems. Human judgment, supported by transparent procedures, remains essential to avoid unintended errors. Equally important is effective public communication. Many concerns arise not because of the revision itself but because citizens are uncertain about the process. Awareness campaigns, help desks, special verification camps, and accessible grievance mechanisms

can reduce confusion and build trust. Booth Level Officers, local officials, and political party representatives all have a shared responsibility to guide voters and ensure that genuine claims and objections are addressed fairly. The Election Commission's greatest strength lies in its neutrality and credibility. Every decision should be guided by constitutional principles rather than political pressures. Transparent procedures, timely explanations, and an effective appeal system reinforce public confidence and demonstrate institutional accountability. Citizens are more likely to trust outcomes when they understand how decisions are made and have an opportunity to seek corrections. Ultimately, the success of the Special Intensive Revision should not be measured merely by the number of additions or deletions in the voter list. Its real achievement lies in strengthening public faith in the electoral process. When electoral integrity and voter rights are protected with equal commitment, democracy becomes more resilient. Transparency, fairness, and accountability are not just administrative ideals—they are the foundations upon which free, fair, and credible elections continue to strengthen India's democratic spirit.

Telangana Releases Rs 125.83 Crore Rythu Bharosa Aid to 2.42 Lakh Farmers in Sangareddy



Sangareddy, July 1: The Telangana Government has released the first installment of Rythu Bharosa financial assistance for the Kharif 2026 season, reaffirming its commitment to farmers' welfare. Chief Minister Revanthy Reddy launched the programme in Hyderabad, while a district-level event was held at the Rythu Vedika in Pothireddypally, Sangareddy.

TGIIC Chairperson Nirmala Jaggareddy and District Collector Prateek Jain attended the programme as chief guests. Under the first phase, ₹125.83 crore has been sanctioned for 2,42,753 eligible small

and marginal farmers in Sangareddy district. The amount will be directly credited to the beneficiaries' bank accounts. Speaking on the occasion, Nirmala Jaggareddy said the timely financial support would help farmers meet cultivation expenses and reflects the government's strong focus on farmers' welfare.

District Collector Prateek Jain said the funds are being transferred directly to eligible farmers in a transparent manner and urged them to make effective use of the assistance for the ongoing cultivation season. The programme was attended by public representatives, Agriculture Department officials, and a large number of farmers.

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Editorial

Being an Indian citizen

As if public fears over the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) were not enough, a new wave of confusion has now been created over the scope of usefulness of the passport. Ever since the Ministry of External Affairs issued a statement that an Indian passport is not conclusive proof of citizenship, a new layer of uncertainty has been added to the public discourse on identity and citizenship. One wonders how a document issued by the government of India after thorough police verification becomes unworthy of recognition as proof of citizenship. While the Ministry's clarification that a passport serves only as a travel document may be technically correct, an overwhelming majority of Indians view the document as an official recognition of their citizenship. Although nationality and citizenship are legally distinct, this distinction has little practical relevance for the overwhelming majority of citizens. No doubt Section 20 of the Passports Act allows passports to be issued to non-citizens in exceptional cases and in the public interest; such instances are exceedingly rare. Since the Government of India does not issue any citizenship card or certificate, one wonders how one should prove one's citizenship. Since passports and voter ID cards can be issued only to citizens after thorough verification, they must carry the presumption of citizenship. Wittingly or unwittingly, the government has created confusion at a time when there are growing fears over the possible deletion of a large number of voters in the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise of the Election Commission. For anyone born in India, there must be a presumption of citizenship, and voter ID and a passport must be taken as conclusive proof of citizenship. The Supreme Court, in its Bihar SIR judgment, held that the passport is a "conclusive proof" of citizenship. The government cannot deny citizenship to those to whom it has issued a passport or voter ID card, unless the same were obtained fraudulently. The entire issue goes beyond legal technicalities. A passport is one of the most rigorously verified documents issued by the government. It requires extensive documentation, identity checks and police verification. Therefore, the assertion that it cannot conclusively establish citizenship appears bizarre. Indian law does not have any provision for a universally recognised citizenship certificate. Citizenship may be acquired through birth, descent, registration, naturalisation or incorporation of territory under the Citizenship Act, 1955. Consequently, citizenship is often established through a combination of records rather than a single document.

Telangana Launches 'Operation Muskaan-XII' to Rescue Missing Children and Eradicate Child Labour



“Hyderabad, June 30: In a major child protection initiative, the Telangana Police will launch Operation Muskaan-XII across the state from July 1 to July 31, aiming to trace missing children, rescue child labourers and child trafficking victims, and ensure their rehabilitation. The month-long special drive was formally launched with the unveiling of the campaign poster by the Women Safety Wing, followed by a state-level virtual coordination meeting involving senior officials from multiple government departments and partner agencies. Chairing the meeting, Director General of Women Safety, Charu Sinha, emphasized that the mission's primary objective is to locate every missing child, reunite them with their families wherever possible, eliminate child labour, and initiate stringent legal action against those involved in child exploitation, trafficking, forced labour, and bonded child labour. She directed Special Juvenile Police

Units (SJPU), Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTU), District Child Protection Officers (DCPO), Child Welfare Committees (CWC), and child care institutions to work in close coordination to ensure the success of the operation. As part of the statewide campaign, intensive inspections will be conducted throughout July at railway stations, bus terminals, hotels, dhabas, industries, construction sites, brick kilns, factories, and other vulnerable locations to identify and rescue children engaged in hazardous or illegal employment. Rescued children will be provided with comprehensive support, including medical care, counselling, education, vocational training, and rehabilitation, ensuring their safe reintegration into society. The coordination meeting witnessed participation from officials of the Women Development & Child Welfare Department, Labour Department, Health Department,

Education Department, Legal Services Authority, district child protection authorities, Child Welfare Committees, and representatives from various non-governmental organizations, all of whom pledged full support for the successful implementation of Operation Muskaan-XII. Senior officials present included DIG Parimala Hana Noothan, SP S. Malla Reddy, Women Development & Child Welfare Commissioner Shruti Oza, along with representatives from the Labour Department, Health Department, Legal Services Authority, child protection agencies, and civil society organizations. Operation Muskaan-XII reflects Telangana's continued commitment to safeguarding children's rights, combating child labour and human trafficking, and ensuring that every child receives protection, care, and the opportunity to lead a dignified life.

Tribal Youth Must Mentally Prepare For Change: Prez Murmu

Visakhapatnam, June 30

The first convocation ceremony of the Central Tribal University of Andhra Pradesh was held here on Tuesday with the President Droupadi Murmu gracing the event.

Addressing the gathering, Murmu urged tribal

livelihoods through productive work in forest produce, handicrafts, millets, medicinal plants, eco-tourism, and local entrepreneurship

Speaking about the significance of the convocation, she saw it as both a celebration and a moment of resolution for students. She advised them to



youth to prepare themselves to bring about social, economic and educational transformation by making full use of the opportunities created through government initiatives.

She said graduating students should contribute to the country's progress by ensuring inclusive development in which no one is left behind.

"The government is making every effort to bring tribal and Adivasi communities forward. But we must also ask ourselves what our responsibility is and how we can make the best use of this support. We should be mentally prepared not just to improve our own lives, but to transform society, education, culture, traditions and the economy," she said.

The President noted the institution's unique responsibilities, highlighting its role in fostering self-confidence, leadership, and policymaking capabilities among tribal communities. Universities established with the aim of social justice must also work at the grassroots level, focusing on education, health, skill development, livelihoods, and forest rights, she said.

The President expressed her confidence that the university would contribute meaningfully to the holistic development of youth from marginalised and tribal communities while also advancing the region's overall progress. She urged universities, particularly tribal universities, to adopt innovative systems that enhance

embrace emerging opportunities in skill development, to go beyond textbook learning, and to draw lessons from their surrounding ecosystem.

She stressed the importance of remaining connected to community, culture, and traditions while striving to improve society and the nation.

President Murmu underlined the need to balance heritage and modern science, citing the university's 'Science and Technology Hub' as an initiative to empower tribal communities in North Andhra Pradesh.

She noted that the institution has been working on academic and grassroots projects in tribal welfare, public health, climate change, food and nutrition security, and energy conservation. These efforts, she said, would be vital in building an equitable and developed India.

Looking ahead, she reiterated the national goal of achieving Viksit Bharat by 2047 and expressed confidence that the Central Tribal University of Andhra Pradesh would play a significant role in this mission.

By integrating tribal communities with modern education and focusing on environmental conservation, she said, the university would enable local youth to contribute meaningfully to the country's equitable development.



Telangana eyes big AI campus as Airtel chief meets Revanth Reddy

Hyderabad, June 30

Telangana is exploring the possibility of setting up a large, comprehensive data centre and artificial intelligence (AI) infrastructure campus in the state, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said on Tuesday, June 30, after meeting Airtel chairman Sunil Bharti Mittal.

Mittal met the Chief Minister at the MCRHRD Bodhi Pavilion, where Reddy pressed the his group to expand Airtel's digital, cloud, cybersecurity and AI operations in Hyderabad and suggested that the company move ahead soon with its proposed data centre project at Chandanvelli.

The Chief Minister also asked Mittal to designate a senior executive to liaise with the state government on future investment proposals so that issues could be resolved without delay.

Responding to the overtures, Mittal said the Bharti group was considering Hyderabad as a second headquarters for Airtel and assured the Chief Minister that the company would go ahead with plans to expand its data centre capacity and broaden its fibre connectivity network in the state.

During the meeting, Revanth Reddy also briefed Mittal on reforms underway in the state's education sector, including the establishment of the Young India Skill University to train unemployed youth, the upgrade of Industrial Training Institutes into Advanced Technology Centres (ATC) and ongoing improvements to polytechnic colleges across Telangana.

In response, Mittal announced that the Bharti Foundation would extend scholarships to students studying in government schools and ATCs in the state.

To ensure safe rides, 44 old flyovers across Delhi to be repaired over the next three years

Following directions issued by a city court, 44 flyovers that are more than 15 years old will now be put through structural audits to assess their health and fitness, officials said. "Structural audits of flyovers should be conducted every five years," said a senior official of the Public Works Department (PWD), the Delhi government body that will test the strength and safety of flyovers that crisscross the city along its most critical traffic arteries. "The PWD has identified 44 flyover corridors that require repair and rehabilitation," the official said. A consultant will be appointed to carry out structural audits. "Following that, repair and rehabilitation works will be undertaken to ensure the safety of both the flyovers and the commuters who use them. Regular repairs also ensure smooth, pothole-free and bump-free travel," the official said. Given the large number of flyovers, the repairs will be carried out in phases. "If all of them are repaired at the same time, the city and its traffic will come to a standstill," the official said. The oldest structures will be repaired first, in particular those that were constructed before 2000, as they require immediate attention, the official said. "The auditing and repairs process will be completed over the next three years. Seven to eight flyover stretches will be repaired and rehabilitated every year," the official said. Among the flyovers that will be taken up for repairs this year is the one at Shadipur in West Delhi, the first modern flyover in the city, which was opened to traffic back in February 1971.

Repairs of the Zakhira flyover, which too was built in the 1970s, and the Raja Garden, Seelampur, Peeragarhi, IIT, and Modi Mill flyovers, as well as the Barapullah Nullah culvert are also likely to begin in 2026, officials said. Given the large number of flyovers, the repairs will be carried out in phases. The periodic repair, rehabilitation, and maintenance of reinforced cement concrete (RCC) structures is critical to ensure the safety, functionality and longevity of essential transportation systems. These structures are subjected to continuous stress from heavy traffic, weather conditions and environmental factors, and inevitably experience wear and deterioration over time, officials said.



June monsoon stable across Greater Hyderabad even as 15 Telangana districts face deficit

Hyderabad: A month into the onset of southwest monsoon, Telangana has registered a normal but slightly deficit rainfall. While Hyderabad has received normal rainfall, there are a total of 15 districts that are in deficit criteria between June 1 and June 29.

Overall, according to the rainfall data from Telangana State Development Planning Society (TSDPS), the State actually received 113 mm (11.3 cm) of rainfall against the normal of 124.6 mm (12.46 cm), which comes under the normal category.

Hyderabad, in the last one month, received actual rainfall of 103.0 mm (10.3 cm) against the normal rainfall of 104.4 mm while Medchal-Malkajgiri district was not that lucky, as it actually received 63 mm of rainfall against the normal of 104 mm (10.4 cm).

However, the standout performer for the Greater Hyderabad region has been Rangareddy district, which has experienced excellent monsoon activity by receiving 141.3 mm (14.13 cm) of rainfall while its normal rainfall is 93.3 mm.

According to TSDPS data, the Rangareddy district holds the highest number of rainy days (14 days) in the entire Greater Hyderabad zone, which means it

rained every other day in the district.

Similarly, Vikarabad recorded 105.9 mm (10.59 cm) of rainfall against its normal of 110.1 mm (11.01 cm), while Sangareddy witnessed 124.5 mm (12.45 cm) against its normal average of 115.5 mm (11.55 cm), both within the normal category.

Despite a slow start to the monsoon in some areas, the cumulative statewide volume marks a substantial recovery, when compared to last year. The current June figure of 113 mm (11.3 cm) is a solid 21 percent improvement over the 93.7 mm (9.37 cm) registered during the exact same period in the 2025-26 financial year.

Mulugu, Sangareddy, Mahabubnagar, Hyderabad, Vikarabad, Bhadradi Kothagudem, Narayanpet, Peddapalli, Nirmal, Kumuram Bheem,



Mahabubabad, and Jayashankar

Kamareddy, Wanaparthy, Rajanna Sircilla, Medak, Jangaon, Jagtial, Mancherla, Yadadri Bhuvanagiri, Karimnagar, Jogulamba Gadwal, Adilabad, Nizamabad, Medchal-Malkajgiri, Siddipet, Warangal and Hanumakonda (large deficit).

KTR flays Revanth Reddy for defaulting on Rythu Bharosa, betraying farmers

Hyderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao targeted the Revanth Reddy government for betraying farmers and defaulting nearly Rs 30,000 crore in Rythu Bharosa payments during its 30 months in office.

He questioned Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy over holding public meetings to release Rythu Bharosa funds while over 70 lakh farmers continued to await pending assistance.

In a strongly worded statement, Rama Rao said the government failed to honour its promise of providing Rs 15,000 per acre annually and instead, made limited payments covering only one or two acres in several cases.

"Farmers are disgusted over your public meetings and publicity stunts. Aren't you ashamed to hold such meetings after defaulting Rs 30,000 crore?" he said, demanding the Chief Minister to apologise.

The BRS working president also accused the Congress government of failing to implement its promised Rs 2 lakh farm loan waiver in full, with only a fraction of the announced assistance of Rs 50,000 crore extended to farmers. He stated that repeated delays in releasing Rythu Bharosa assistance had left farmers struggling for cultivation expenses during the agricultural season.

Rama Rao also criticised the government over the reported shortage of urea and said it had abdicated its responsibility in crop procurement by limiting purchases to quantities procured by the Centre.



"Rather than making 72 trips to Delhi and holding public meetings repeatedly, those funds could have been used for helping more farmers," he said.

Drawing a comparison with the previous BRS regime, he said the K Chandrashekhar Rao government had directly transferred Rs 73,000 crore to farmers through the Rythu Bandhu scheme over 11 installments, ensuring timely investment support.

Stating that the Congress government had weakened Telangana's agricultural sector through broken promises and administrative failures, Rama Rao said farmers will not forgive it for betraying them. He asserted that while Chandrashekhar Rao would be remembered for strengthening agriculture in the State, Revanth Reddy would be judged by farmers for failing to deliver on his key commitments.

Surrogacy scam bust: Nearly a yr after rescue, two infants await adoption

Hyderabad: The IVF scam that recently came to light in Gurugram has revived attention to one of the country's largest inter-state surrogacy-linked child trafficking rackets, which was busted by Telangana police in 2025. Nearly a year later, the fallout continues, with two infants rescued in the operation still awaiting adoption into permanent homes. The infants are currently lodged at Sishu Vihar under the care of the state's women and child welfare department. In both cases, childless couples were allegedly deceived and handed over newborns who were not biologically theirs. The fraud came to light after the parents, similar to the Gurugram case, conducted DNA tests on the children. When police raided the Hyderabad-based Srishti Fertility Centre in July last year, they found that its owner, Dr Athaluri Namratha, had allegedly defrauded multiple childless couples in a similar manner.

In the name of surrogacy, she and her associates allegedly passed off unrelated babies as biological children of the couples in exchange for payments ranging between Rs 30 lakh and Rs 40 lakh. "The police operation found three children were born as part of the alleged racket. While one died shortly after birth, the other two are now almost a year old," said Shruti Ojha, director, women and child welfare department. "We have completed all official procedures for one child and have listed the baby for adoption.

In the case of the other child, we are awaiting approvals so that the infant can be declared legally free for adoption," she added. Ojha said that once adoptive parents are identified, the process may take anywhere between three months and a year. "It works on a first-come, first-served basis. After parents are selected, we carry out verification procedures, counselling sessions, home visits and other formalities before the adoption is finalised," she said. False claims Police investigation found that Dr Namratha targeted couples who had undergone multiple failed fertility treatments and allegedly lured them with claims of a "90% success rate". "While couples believed they were undergoing legitimate surrogacy procedures, babies born to women with unwanted pregnancies were allegedly handed over to them as their biological children. The fraud began unravelling after suspicions were raised by two families," said Chaitanya Kumar, DCP, Central Crime Station. In one case, a couple from Rajasthan grew suspicious as the child did not re-

semble them. "The baby had Mongoloid features that raised doubts. When they conducted DNA tests, they found the child was not biologically related to them," said Vijay Sardhi, the investigating officer. In another case, the mother, a biologist by profession, questioned how the child's blood group (B+) could differ from that of both parents (O+), prompting further inquiry and ultimately a complaint. Police said six more couples later approached them, alleging they too had signed up with the clinic for what they believed was a legitimate surrogacy procedure and had made partial payments of over Rs 10 lakh. The scam investigation, which led to the arrest of 25 people, found that couples were asked to provide sperm and eggs, creating the impression of a legitimate surrogacy process. They were then told that embryos had been successfully implanted in surrogate mothers and were provided with false pregnancy updates, radiology reports and other medical records. "The accused allegedly used agents to identify women with unwanted pregnancies, often from vulnerable backgrounds. After birth, the babies were handed over to waiting couples and passed off as children born through surrogacy arrangements," a police officer said. All the accused are currently in judicial custody, while the Enforcement Directorate continues to probe the alleged financial fraud linked to the case.

Three men arrested on charges of exploiting, harassing minor girls, women in Telangana

Hyderabad: Three men have been arrested and produced before a local court after being accused of trapping, exploiting and harassing minor girls and women. The accused — Rupesh Raj, EN Ravi Raj alias Rafi, a close aide of a senior leader in the Indian National Congress (INC), and Sohail (Shaik Chand) — allegedly used intimidation, blackmail and tracking devices fitted with audio-recording capability, hidden inside vehicles, to monitor their victims. "In the case, POCSO charges were initially not invoked despite the nature of the offence, allegedly due to political backing enjoyed by the accused," Malkajgiri police said

Family chased by bikers on Hyderabad-Warangal highway, dashcam footage sparks outrage

Hyderabad: A family recently travelling in a car on the Hyderabad-Warangal National Highway allegedly faced a terrifying ordeal after a group of six youths on three motorcycles chased and repeatedly attempted to stop their vehicle. Geographic Reference

The incident occurred on the night of June 21, when the family members were travelling from Ghatkesar towards Uppal. The youths allegedly followed the car from the Bibinagar area to the Ghatkesar Outer Ring Road stretch, repeatedly attacking the vehicle and trying to force it to stop, leaving the women and children inside frightened.

The car driver dialled the police emergency helpline while trying to escape. By the time the police could respond, the family had reached the Outer Ring Road.

The incident came to light after the victim's sister, Bhargavi, shared dashcam footage of the chase on Instagram, demanding strict action against the accused. The videos went viral on social media, prompting the police to initiate an investigation.

Bhargavi said people should not ignore such incidents and urged victims of road harassment to immediately approach the police and report the matter on social media.

She added that while her family was concerned about her posting the videos, she believed such offenders would continue to act with impunity unless they were exposed and punished.

Malkajgiri police have launched a search for the six youths involved and are examining the viral dashcam footage as part of the investigation.

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E20 fuel policy still an experiment, results by next year: Centre to SC

New Delhi, June 30

The government on Tuesday told the Supreme Court that the E20 fuel programme of blending 20 per cent ethanol with petrol is still an ongoing experiment and that the impact of the policy is expected to become clearer by next year.

The submission came during a hearing on a plea filed by Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL), which challenged the June 16 Karnataka High Court order relating to ethanol allocation for the 2025-26 ethanol supply year.

Appearing for BPCL, Attorney General R Venkataramani argued that any judicial intervention in the allocation process at this stage could unsettle the government's national ethanol blending policy.

The Supreme Court, meanwhile, directed the parties to maintain status quo on the Karnataka HC order while issuing notice on BPCL's appeal.

"Issue notice... List on reopening (after summer vacation)... Till the next date of hearing, there shall be status quo," a Bench of Justice MM Sundresh and Justice Sheel Nagu said.

It meant that the existing allocation process would remain undisturbed for the time being.

Venkataramani contended that the high court's direction to reconsider the representation of VINP Distilleries and Sugars Pvt Ltd seeking enhancement of its ethanol allocation could destabilise the Centre's ethanol blending policy and disrupt the ongoing procurement process. He argued that ethanol supply contracts for ESY 2025-26 were finalised in October last year and supplies under the contracts were already underway. He maintained that the E20 fuel programme, aimed at strengthening India's energy security, boosting farmers' incomes and reducing carbon emissions, was still evolving. He added that it was a policy matter to be decided by the government. No company could claim a legal entitlement to a higher ethanol quota and that judicial directions effectively altering the allocation methodology would amount to interference with the government's policy on ethanol blending, he said. In its June 16 order, the Karnataka High Court directed BPCL, the Indian Oil Corporation and the Hindustan Petroleum Corporation to consider VINP Distilleries' representation seeking enhancement of its ethanol allocation for ESY 2025-26 under the long-term off-take agreement executed with oil marketing companies.



Khammam contractor locks school over pending govt dues

Hyderabad: A couple of months after a former sarpanch and her husband locked a government school in Rajanna Sircilla district over pending bills, a similar incident has come to light in Khammam.

A contractor locked a government school and threatened to die by suicide alleging that the government had failed to clear her dues. Ch Nagamani, a former chairman of the School Management Committee of Mandal Parishad Primary School (MPPS), Danavagudem, in Khammam Rural, had taken up works under the Mana Ooru, Mana Badi programme and is said to have been waiting for payment for nearly four years. The school's former headmaster, B Nagendramma, under whose tenure the works were executed, said Nagamani and her husband Ayodhya, a differently-abled person from a marginalised background, is yet to receive about Rs11 lakh out of the total Rs21 lakh from the government. "He completed all the work. I even gave clearances, but the dues are not yet cleared," Nagendramma told TOI. She added that Nagamani, her husband and four children staged a protest in front of the school on Monday and even locked the premises. Not just to Nagamani, the govt owes about Rs500 crore to about 1,500 small contractors under the Mana Ooru, Mana Badi programme. Works at this particular school were taken up in the first phase of the said programme.

"I borrowed money at Rs3 interest for every Rs100 and completed all works assuming that govt will clear bills as soon as the work is completed," said Ayodhya. "It's been more than four years now. The borrowed amount has almost doubled, and I have no option except to sell our house and clear dues. But, doing so will bring my family onto the road.

"He said that left with no option he locked the school premises today. "Officials assured that they will get my dues cleared at the earliest.

Believing their words, I have unlocked the school," he said. As part of the programme, Nagamani built washrooms, raised the height of the compound wall, and carried out other repair works at the school by spending about Rs21 lakh. While Rs 10 lakh was paid during the KCR regime, the family is still waiting for the remaining amount.

Bengal sets the ball rolling for UCC, sets up panel under retd Supreme Court judge to look into draft Bill



Asserting that the newly elected BJP government is committed to implementing the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in West Bengal, Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari on Monday said that a draft Bill pertaining to it will be taken up by the Cabinet on July 2. Speaking in the Assembly during the ongoing Budget Session, the chief minister said that a committee, led by retired Supreme Court judge Ranjana Prakash Desai, will look into the draft UCC Bill and propose changes.

"The Uniform Civil Code will definitely be implemented in Bengal. There is a specific process for it... We will bring this (UCC) Bill after examining the examples of Uttarakhand, Gujarat, and Assam. Ancient tribal communities and indigenous people will remain outside the purview of the UCC Bill," Adhikari said after an uproar in the Assembly over the government's plan to implement UCC in the state. According to the chief minister, the committee led by the former Supreme Court judge will be asked to submit its report on the draft UCC Bill within four weeks.

The committee will function as a task force, with

an educationist, a social worker, and an IAS officer as its members," the CM said. "This committee will examine a total of nine issues, including marriage, divorce, inheritance of property, custody of children, and adoption," the chief minister said, adding it would seek people's views and proposals before submitting the report to the government. "In August, after accepting the recommendations of this committee, we will bring the UCC Bill. And this Bill will be implemented in West Bengal. If you have anything to say, you may present your views before the committee. But let me make it clear – we are determined to implement UCC in West Bengal," Adhikari reiterated, adding the Bill will be in accordance with the BJP's Sankalp Patra (manifesto). During the Assembly elections in the state earlier this year, the BJP had promised to implement the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) within six months of being voted to power. The UCC is a proposed framework to replace religion-based personal laws with one common set of secular laws governing marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption for all citizens. Rooted in Article 44 of the Constitution, it seeks to promote gender justice and national integration. Historically, personal laws, such as the Hindu Marriage Act or Muslim Personal Law, have governed private affairs. The BJP has already implemented UCC in Uttarakhand and Gujarat. Assam became the third BJP state to implement UCC and passed a Bill last month after returning to power in the state last month. The BJP in West Bengal has also promised strict laws against "love jihad", a term used by the party to refer to the marriage of a Muslim man with a Hindu woman, and "land jihad", stating that its objective is to protect the state's "social and territorial integrity" in its manifesto. Members of the Muslim outfits have opposed the move.

Maharashtra teachers protest holiday BLO duties amid SIR, plan legal challenge



According to the letter, some District Election Officers and Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) have issued orders to permanently acquire the services of teachers while appointing them as BLOs. (Express Photo by Sankhadeep Banerjee) According to the letter, some District Election Officers and Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) have issued orders to permanently acquire the services of teachers while appointing them as BLOs. Banerjee) With the door-to-door distribution of enumeration forms for the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) set to begin on June 30 in Maharashtra, the State Election Commission has clarified that teachers will be assigned Booth Level Officer (BLO) duties during non-school hours and on holidays. A June 27 letter issued by Manohar Parkar, Deputy Secretary and Joint Chief Electoral Officer of Maharashtra, asked District Level Officials to not assign full-time BLO work to teachers.

The letter states that as per instructions of the Election Commission of India, state government or local body employees belonging to Group C or above can be appointed as BLOs. In case of non-availability of such employees, anganwadi, contractual teachers, or central government employees can be assigned as BLOs. Accordingly, a large number of teachers, falling under state government or local bodies, have been appointed as BLOs, says the letter. It cites the

Right to Education Act 2009 and judgements from the Allahabad and Rajasthan High Courts to claim appointment of teachers as BLOs is legal. Further, the letter cites a Supreme Court judgement wherein the Election Commission had stated that teachers would be appointed for electoral roll revision works during off-duty hours and holidays as far as possible. "It has been observed that some District Election Officers and Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) have issued orders to permanently acquire the services of teachers while appointing them as BLOs and have directed the concerned establishments to release the said teachers for full-time work," the letter says, adding that teachers should not be appointed full-time BLO duties. Tanaji Mane, President of the Maharashtra State Secondary and Higher Secondary School Headmaster's Association, said, "Schools have just begun. There is a shortage of teachers in schools, no new recruitment is taking place. Thus releasing teachers for full-time BLO duty effectively amounts to shutting down Marathi-medium schools." Reacting to the letter by the election officer, Mane said, "Teachers work for eight-nine hours like other government employees. Now they are supposed to work after school? On holidays also? The question is how many employees from other fields have been selected as BLOs and how many teachers. I will ask our association to file RTI requests to get this information and after that we will file a petition in the High Court." Similarly Vijay Kombe, State President of Maharashtra State Primary Teacher's Committee, said, "Teachers are being given work in non-school hours which is of course correct. But the work is so vast that they need to work in the mornings and nights. Is there no personal life for teachers? We get one Sunday as a holiday in a week and even on that holiday we have to work?" Every teacher is assigned 1400-1500 voters.

Karnataka schools forum seeks clarity on new CBSE three-language policy rules



CBSE, CBSE three-language policy, CBSE language policy, Karnataka Kannada language rules, CBSE latest guidelines, KAMS Karnataka, Kannada Language Learning Rules 2017, Indian Express news, CBSE news KAMS, a private body which represents over 5,000 unaided English schools in Karnataka, has also written to the CBSE chairperson seeking clarity over its three-language policy rules. Hours after CBSE issued fresh guidelines on implementing its three-language policy, a Karnataka school forum said Monday that the clarification failed to resolve a key conflict between the Board's mandate and the state's law requiring Kannada to be taught as the first or second language.

The Associated Managements of Primary and Secondary Schools in Karnataka, also known as KAMS, noted that, under the Kannada Language Learning Rules, 2017, students already study Kannada as either their first or second language. KAMS said the CBSE guidelines do not clarify how such students are expected to comply with the third-language requirement. D Shashi Kumar, General Secretary,

Associated Managements of Primary and Secondary Schools in KAMS, said their apprehensions largely remained unaddressed. "The confusion still prevails. CBSE releases guidelines nationwide, but it needs to consider policies that states have adopted," he added. The CBSE issued guidelines over a month ago, stating that studying three languages, including at least two native Indian languages, has been made compulsory for Class 9 students beginning July 1. Since then, several students and parents have approached the court against the CBSE order. KAMS, a private body which represents over 5,000 unaided English schools in Karnataka, has written to the CBSE chairperson seeking clarity over its three-language policy rules. "Students and parents continue to seek clarification from schools, which schools themselves are unable to provide in the absence of an official clarification from CBSE," the letter said Saturday.

It said educational reforms cannot be implemented without adequate academic preparedness, adding that there is uncertainty over prescribed textbooks, their availability, language combinations, and examination methodology. The CBSE circular, it added, does not clarify how interstate migrant students are expected to comply in cases where Kannada is also being introduced as an additional compulsory language. "Students admitted for the present academic year have already opted for their language combinations. Parents have completed admissions relying upon the approved curriculum. Schools have prepared timetables. Teachers have already been appointed. Textbooks have already been purchased. Examinations have already been planned.

Haryana to supply 580 million cubic metres of water to Rajasthan every year

Haryana and Rajasthan signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on Monday to operationalise water-sharing as per the long-delayed 1994 Upper Yamuna River Board Agreement. Under the MoU, Haryana will supply 580 million cubic metres of water from the Yamuna canal to Rajasthan through three underground pipelines from July to October every year, officials said. Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini and his Rajasthan counterpart, Bhajan Lal Sharma, signed the MoU in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Union Jal Shakti Minister C R Patil. Shah said drinking water would now be supplied to the districts of Sikar, Churu, and Jhunjhunu in Rajasthan, as well as the Bhiwani and Fatehabad areas in Haryana. "The water that was earlier going to waste will now quench people's thirst and be stored in large ponds to recharge groundwater," he added.

Union government officials said the MoU would accelerate the construction of the Renuka, Kishau, and Lakhwar dams, envisaged by the 1994 agreement. "These projects will enhance water storage capacity in the Yamuna basin, improve drinking water supply, and increase the availability of water for irrigation," an official said in a statement. The 1994 agreement allocated Yamuna waters as follows: Haryana: 40.6 per cent, Uttar Pradesh: 35.1 per cent, Rajasthan: 10.4 per cent, Delhi: 6.3 per cent, and Himachal Pradesh: 1.7 per cent. Officials said the two states would construct approximately 300 km of underground pipelines from Hathinikund to Rajasthan to facilitate the transfer of water. "The project is estimated to cost around Rs 3,900 crore. The agreement provides that both states will jointly determine responsibilities related to land acquisition, pipeline construc-

tion, monitoring, operation, and maintenance," an official said. In a post on X, Patil said a consensus was reached to provide Rajasthan with its share of Yamuna water in accordance with the 1994 agreement and to establish the necessary arrangements. Saini said that ensuring water supply to those in need is a shared responsibility. "It is a matter of great satisfaction... Haryana will fully cooperate, and no obstacle will be allowed to hinder the project's implementation," he said. Shah said the framework of the MoU, prepared by Haryana, Rajasthan, and especially the Central Water Commission (CWC), would stand as a dispute-free agreement for many decades to come. "Groundwater recharge in six districts to be affected" However, retired irrigation department officials and experts associated with the Yamuna campaign have warned that diverting surplus water from the river to Rajasthan could reduce groundwater recharge in six Haryana districts—Yamunanagar, Karnal, Panipat, Sonapat, Faridabad, and Palwal. Excess river water that previously percolated into the ground in these areas during the monsoon is now expected to be diverted. They argue that Haryana is already facing water scarcity and that the surplus water could instead have been utilised in the state's southern districts. The MoU has also drawn criticism from sections of the Opposition, which contend that Haryana should first secure its full share of river water from Punjab before transferring water to Rajasthan. Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) national patron and former finance minister Sampat Singh said, "Haryana should first secure its rightful share of water, including through the long-pending Sutlej-Yamuna Link (SYL) canal project.

IPS officer Nangare Patil defends attending RSS event amid Congress backlash

Nagpur Police Commissioner Vishwas Nangare Patil Monday defended his participation in a recent cultural event associated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), denying allegations by the Maharashtra Congress and the Raj Thackeray-led Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) that he violated civil service code of conduct rules. "I do not believe I have violated any service rules by attending that function," the senior IPS officer said during a press conference in Nagpur, clarifying that his presence was intended as standard community outreach.

The political storm erupted after a video clip went viral showing Nangare-Patil speaking at an event organised by the Sakal Hindu Samaj, which marked the 150th anniversary of Vande Mataram and the centenary of the RSS. The Congress claimed he acted as a "spokesperson for the ruling dispensation," while Raj Thackeray publicly demanded that he resign from the IPS to formally join the BJP or the Sangh. No political association, clarifies Nangare Patil. Seeking to emphasise his secular credentials, Nangare Patil highlighted his 30-year track record in public service, noting that attending diverse cultural and religious functions is routine for top officers. He said the April 19 event featured localised administrative panels, including guidance seminars on Goods and Services Tax (GST) alongside spiritual discourses. Nangare Patil said he recited welfare verses from Sant

Dnyaneshwar's Dnyaneshwari, spoke extensively on anti-drug enforcement strategies for young demographics, and detailed career avenues within the state police force. "I regularly attend Ramzan Iftar parties, Jain spiritual conventions, and Sikh community programmes in the exact same spirit of maintaining inter-faith harmony," he added. "I have immense respect for all sections of society. I am a police officer whose complete commitment is toward the Constitution of India and its secular values. Nagpur is home to Deekshabhoomi, and the egalitarian ideals of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar remain my permanent guiding light," Nangare Patil said. Addressing his immediate objectives as the newly appointed chief of the 'Orange city' police network, Nangare Patil said, "The 'S' on our uniform stands for Service. My priority under the Chief Minister's mandate is strict law enforcement, core policing, and women's safety. Only criminals should fear my department; common citizens should feel completely secure." Congress, Raj Thackeray allegations Earlier, the Maharashtra Congress had invoked Rule 5(1) of the All India Services (Conduct) Rules, which explicitly bars civil servants from associating with political factions or organisations that actively participate in political movements. "The rule uses the term 'associated with' deliberately to prevent top administrators from endorsing ideological platforms.

Uddhav Thackeray backs Devendra Fadnavis for PM, then adds a BJP caveat



Uddhav Thackeray, Devendra Fadnavis, Uddhav Thackeray Devendra Fadnavis, Uddhav Thackeray on Devendra Fadnavis, Devendra Fadnavis Prime Minister, Shiv Sena UBT, BJP Maharashtra politics, Operation Tiger, Operation Devendra Fadnavis, Eknath Shinde, Amit Shah Maharashtra, Maharashtra political news, Indian express news Uddhav Thackeray was responding to a question if he would support Fadnavis if he were to express a desire to be the country's prime minister.

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray said Monday his party would support Devendra Fadnavis if he ever became a prime ministerial candidate, but added that such an ambition would amount to "political suicide" within the BJP because the party's central leadership would never permit it. Thackeray's latest remarks came a day after he said that "Operation Tiger", under which six Lok Sabha MPs from his party switched to Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena, was "Operation Devendra Fadnavis" to clip Fadnavis's wings.

"If a Marathi person were to sit in the Prime Minister's chair, why would the Shiv Sena not support it? A person from Maharashtra is not a traitor," Thackeray said while addressing a press conference in Shirdi, one of the Lok Sabha constituencies where the party's MP, Bhausaheb Wakchaure, rebelled. He was responding to a question about whether he would support Fadnavis if he were to express a desire to be

the country's prime minister. However, in the same breath, Thackeray reiterated that Fadnavis might be ousted from the Bharatiya Janata Party if he announced he was preparing to run for the Prime Minister's post. "If Devendra Fadnavis were to propose and announce that he is preparing for the Prime Minister's post, would he even remain in the party? Declaring that he is preparing for the PM post is political suicide for him. I will answer your question about 2029 when the time comes. I will respond when he actually makes such an announcement," he added. Thackeray said he had explained Sunday with examples why Fadnavis's position as the chief minister could be in danger. "I cited the examples of Nitin Gadkari and Shivraj Singh Chouhan. Just as Devendra Fadnavis is called 'Deva Bhau,' Shivraj Singh Chouhan used to be called 'Mama.' People thought Shivraj Mama could be a candidate for the prime minister's post, which is why they moved him up to Delhi. However, everyone knows what happened afterwards". Thackeray claimed Union Home Minister Amit Shah wants to hoist Eknath Shinde as the Chief Minister of Maharashtra. "In the past, whoever the RSS decided would be the BJP chief minister. Does the RSS still have that level of control? Does the RSS approve of the politics of poaching and betrayal?" Thackeray asked. While taking a jibe at Shah, Thackeray said, "The Shah Sena desires that their child should become the chief minister even though he has no merit. It is for Shah to worry about, for Devendra Fadnavis to worry about, and for the BJP to worry about," he said. Asked if he and Fadnavis might come together again, Thackeray said, "Because Devendra Fadnavis and I are on opposite sides, the people who are creating confusion in the middle do not realise things. Should we come together? That is his question. I am a well-wisher of his. I am speaking about what is in Devendra Fadnavis' mind. I have no initiative to take; it is up to the will of the "higher power."

Notices to 352 commercial establishments in Delhi over fire safety

NEW DELHI, June 30

Days after a fire at a Malviya Nagar hotel killed 23 people, including 14 foreign nationals, the Delhi Fire Services (DFS) has issued notices to 352 establishments across the capital over fire safety and building-related concerns, officials said.

The action follows inspections by joint committees constituted by the government and headed by district magistrates to examine hotels, guest houses, restaurants, banquet halls and other commercial establishments. The committees identified building violations and shared details with DFS, which subsequently served notices between June 8 and June 15.

"... 10 days' time has been given to them to submit their response," an officer said. After the deadline, authorities will review submissions and initiate action against violators, the officer said.

The committees will continue to regularly inspect establishments. Any establishment found operating without the required fire safety licence or



in violation of prescribed norms will be sealed immediately.

Home Minister Ashish Sood said all construction activities exceeding the approved G+4 limit in the capital would be reviewed immediately, and any illegal construction or violation of sanctioned building plans would result in the premises being sealed.

Bhubaneswar electric car crash: Death toll rises to 3, driver arrested

BHUBANESWAR, June 30

The shocking car crash claimed its third victim after a 65-year-old injured man succumbed during treatment at AIIMS-Bhubaneswar even as police arrested the EV driver.

The deceased was identified as Laxmidhar Toppo. Jeyrom Ekka (55), husband of an IAS officer, and Santosh Behera (55) of New Government Colony had died on the spot in the accident that occurred at 8 pm on Monday.

The other injured, Sankarlal Sharma (50) from Unit-III and Sulagna Dey (26) from Acharya Vihar, are undergoing treatment, while Subrat Mishra (35) from Shri Vihar in Patia was discharged after necessary medical care. Sharma's condition, however, is stated to be critical.

Meanwhile, police arrested driver of the car Anil Kumar Gouda and produced him before a court. Police said Gouda worked as a driver for a coal transport businessman. As per initial investigation, he was found driving recklessly near Press Square, leading to the deadly road accident.

Eyewitnesses had claimed that the electric car flew a few feet into air after hitting the speed breaker, following which the driver lost control. It then hit the pedestrians standing in front of a tea stall near the



New Government Colony.

The car also rammed into parked motorcycles and an autorickshaw and came to a halt only after hitting a tree. Four vehicles including the car Gouda was driving have been seized by police.

Lalu Prasad accuses Nitish Kumar of 'vendetta politics' over bungalow eviction, security downgrade

Bihar, June 30

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Prasad accused former Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar of orchestrating the eviction of Rabri Devi from the 10 Circular Road government bungalow and downgrading the family's security cover.

"Yes, our security has been removed. Nitish Kumar has orchestrated all of this," Lalu told reporters after notices were issued to vacate the bungalow and the family's security was reduced.

Earlier, on his return from Singapore, Lalu reacted to the develop-

ments, saying, "Everyone has gone mad. NDA government is indulging in hate and vendetta politics."

The 10 Circular Road bungalow had been allotted to Rabri Devi in her capacity as Leader of Opposition. Rabri, Lalu and other family members have lived there for over two decades. However, after the NDA government assumed office last year, eviction notices were served for the residence.

The deadline to vacate the bungalow expired on June 16. Rabri Devi subsequently requested the government

to provide a separate room and essential facilities at the alternative residence allotted to her at 39 Harding Road, citing Lalu's health condition.

The Bihar government has already allotted the 39 Harding Road bungalow to Rabri Devi, while the 10 Circular Road residence has been reassigned to state Dairy, Fisheries and Animal Resources Minister Nand Kishore Ram.

In a letter to the chief minister, Rabri Devi wrote that Lalu Prasad is vulnerable to infections and has been advised by doctors to stay separately from other family members. She noted that a

separate room had been specially constructed for him at the 10 Circular Road residence and requested similar arrangements at 39 Harding Road before the family shifts.

Advertisement

According to reports, some work at the 39 Harding Road residence, the official accommodation of the Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council, remains incomplete. Rabri Devi's letter stated that work in areas such as the kitchen and hall is still pending.

Meanwhile, the Lalu family is constructing a private residence in Patna's Kautilya Nagar

locality, where the RJD chief plans to live with his family. Construction work has reportedly been accelerated, and Rabri Devi, Lalu Prasad and Tejashwi Yadav are expected to move there instead of settling permanently in the government accommodation.

Sources said the bungalow is in its final phase of construction, with work on windows, doors and flooring currently underway.

With the conclusion of the "malmas" (adhik mas) period, considered inauspicious in the Hindu calendar, on June 15, the family may soon perform the griha pravesh (house-



warming ceremony) at the new residence. Rabri Devi recently visited the site to review the progress, and some belongings have already been shifted from the 10 Circular Road bungalow to the Kautilya Nagar house.

Mumbai left with 40 days of water as lake levels drop to 9.33% amid delayed monsoon

MUMBAI, June 30

The seven lakes that supply drinking water to Mumbai have reached critically low levels, with only enough water left to meet the city's needs for about 40 days.

According to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's (BMC) Hydraulic Department, the combined water stock in the major reservoirs currently stands at 9.33 per cent, compared to 12.27 per cent during the same period last year and 10.24 per cent in 2024.

The delay in the arrival of the monsoon and the steady depletion of reservoir levels have become a major concern for the city. Officials said the remaining water in the catchment areas is sufficient to meet Mumbai's demand for only the next 40 days.

Mumbai receives drinking water from seven lakes - Tansa, Vihar, Tulsi, Bhatsa, Upper Vaitarna, Modak Sagar and Middle Vaitarna. Four of these are owned by the BMC, while the remaining three are owned by the Maharashtra government, which releases water for the city.

The total water stock across the seven reservoirs has fallen to 1,44,918 million litres. The BMC currently supplies around 3,950 million litres of water per day (MLD) to Mumbai.

Despite the low storage levels, the civic body said it is monitoring the situation closely. On May 15, the BMC imposed a 10 per cent water cut, reducing daily supply from around 4,100 MLD to about 3,650 MLD.

According to the Hydraulic Department, Upper Vaitarna has already reached dead stock levels. Modak Sagar currently has 29 per cent storage, Tansa 4.71 per cent, Middle Vaitarna 10.34 per cent, Bhatsa 9.24 per cent, Vihar 42.11 per cent and Tulsi 23.06 per cent.



Wait period before marriage under Act can't be waived, says high court

New Delhi, June 30

Delhi High Court has rejected an interfaith couple's petition seeking relaxation in the 30-day notice period for solemnisation of their marriage under Special Marriage Act. Justice Purushendra Kumar Kaurav recently held that once the law had contemplated the solemnisation of marriage only after the expiry of a 30-day period, the court cannot direct the authorities to act to the contrary. HC was dealing with a plea that argued the couple posted notice of their intended marriage before the marriage officer, Kalkaji, on May 11 under Special Marriage Act, and the date of marriage was consequently scheduled for June 19, after the expiry of the statutory waiting period. The plea said that as the groom secured employment abroad and was required to join before June 10, the waiting period should be waived for them.

They urged the court to permit them to marry in the first week of June, otherwise they would suffer great hardship. The court noted that mere personal hardship or individual inconvenience, no matter how genuine, couldn't be grounds to dilute or bypass man-

datory statutory compliance. It stated that Section 16 of the Act expressly postulated that a marriage can only be solemnised after the lapse of 30 days from the publication of notice, and this waiting period was not merely procedural but formed part of a legislative framework consciously enacted by Parliament.

The order further said that it is presumed that the legislature was conscious of the practical implications and possible hardships that may arise in individual cases, and courts should not rewrite or dilute statutory requirements based on individual exigencies. "Once the statute itself contemplates solemnisation of marriage only after expiry of the prescribed period, this court, in exercise of writ jurisdiction, cannot direct the authorities to act contrary thereto, particularly when deviation from the statutory mandate itself entails penal consequences under the Act," the court said. "The court, thus, finds no justifiable ground to permit waiver or curtailment of the statutory period of 30 days prescribed under the Act. The relief sought by the petitioners, if granted, would amount to directing the statutory authorities to



act contrary to the express legislative mandate contemplated under the said enactment."

May liquor seizure on trains in Karnataka exceeds combined haul of last 3 years

Bengaluru: Authorities seized illegal liquor worth Rs 83 lakh from Karnataka's railway stations in May alone, a figure that surpassed the combined value of seizures made over the previous three financial years. Data from the Railway Protection Force (RPF) and the Karnataka excise dept show that liquor worth just Rs 13.8 lakh was seized across the state during the financial years 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26 combined. The highest annual seizure during that period was Rs 7.5 lakh in 2023-24 across the South Western Railway zone. The spike this May was driven by two major busts. In the first case, authorities intercepted a parcel train arriving from Delhi and recovered liquor worth nearly Rs 60 lakh.

A second seizure a week later pushed the total value of liquor seized during the month beyond Rs 83 lakh. Excise officials said most of the seized bottles belonged to premium and semi-premium categories. They suspect the sharp differences in excise duties between Karnataka and northern states such as Haryana and Punjab may be encouraging illegal transportation. "We have formed two teams to

investigate this smuggling pattern.

One team will probe the network operating within Bengaluru and Karnataka, while the other will trace links outside the state, including northern regions and transit routes used by the trains," said Basavaraj R Somannavar, additional excise commissioner. Officials described May's seizures as an exceptional case because of the scale and the use of parcel trains to transport liquor in bulk. In contrast, during the entire 2025-26 financial year, the Bengaluru division of the RPF seized foreign liquor worth only Rs 2.4 lakh. Typically, illegal liquor recovered at railway stations is found abandoned. During 2025-26, authorities seized 286.7 litres of liquor and registered 27 cases, but no arrests were made. "Most of the seized consignments are transported without tax invoices, primarily to evade taxes. When traffickers spot enforcement personnel, they often abandon the goods and flee," said Shreyans Chinchawade, senior divisional security commissioner, Bengaluru RPF.

CISF takes over security of Safdarjung airport

New Delhi: The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) was inducted at strategically vital Safdarjung Airport marking a key step in the home ministry's push to standardise civil aviation security under a specialised federal force. Officials said the 213-acre airport in south Delhi, near Aurobindo Marg and surrounded by govt and military installations, is the capital's main hub for VVIP helicopter movement, including flights of the President, Vice-President and Prime Minister. Citing the open, road-facing runway, nearby vegetation and dense neighbourhoods, agencies recommended replacing local policing with full CISF cover. Safdarjung becomes the 73rd airport under CISF. A 136-member unit will guard the facility, operating perimeter patrols, PIDS, X-BIS, UVSS and advanced CCTV systems.

Trump sanctions waiver on Russian crude expires: What it means for India amid US-Iran peace deal, Strait of Hormuz opening

In wake of the US-Iran understanding for a peace deal and the signing of an MoU, the Trump administration has quietly let the sanctions waiver for Russian crude oil to lapse. US President Donald Trump had earlier this week hinted that sanctions on Russian oil could be back once the Strait of Hormuz opens and normalises global oil supplies. Last year, the Trump

The US Treasury did not issue an extension on Wednesday for its sanctions waiver covering Russian seaborne oil, which expired at midnight, according to a Reuters report. However, neither President Donald Trump nor senior administration officials clarified whether the lapse would result in the sanctions being reinstated.

The waiver had been introduced during the conflict with Iran to help vulnerable economies manage the energy crisis by allowing access to Russian oil. With Washington and Tehran having now reached a memorandum of understanding aimed at ending the war and restoring Middle Eastern oil supplies to global markets, the policy could be reassessed.

Speaking to reporters at the G7 summit in France, Trump declined to provide a definitive answer on the possible return of sanctions against Russia.

He said the administration was monitoring the situation and watching how far oil prices decline, noting that crude prices had been falling sharply. A day earlier, Trump had suggested that ending the waiver and allowing sanctions to return could become feasible once oil supplies from the Middle East resumed normal flows. In the past, the US has occasionally allowed the waiver to lapse before renewing it a few days later.

What it means for India

Since the Russia-Ukraine war began in 2022, Moscow emerged as a key crude supplier for India, selling oil at discounted rates as Europe restricted imports. At one point Russia accounted for around 40% of India's crude oil imports. However, after the

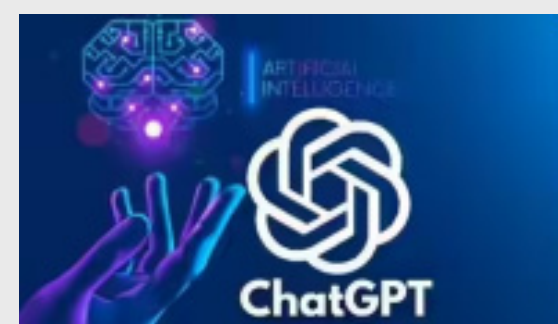
Trump administration's sanctions in late 2025, India's imports of Russian crude started declining, with lowest levels in several years seen in February.

However, before a clear trend could emerge, the Middle East conflict began and India stepped up procurement of Russian crude, with imports reaching near peaks seen in 2023. For India, a return of sanctions means a reorientation of its crude oil import strategy. Two things work in the country's favour at this point: the crude oil basket is diversified to include around 40 countries, and second and most importantly, once the trade flows through Strait of Hormuz return to normalcy, crude oil from the Middle East would be back to fill in the gap left by declining Russian supplies.

Yet another significant development is that according to the US, Iran would be able to begin selling oil immediately after the signing ceremony.

While restoring oil and gas flows to normal levels could take months, India will also get access to sanction-free Iranian crude. Venezuela has also emerged as an important crude oil supplier for India and imports from the UAE continue to be strong despite Hormuz disruptions.

Additionally, oil experts believe that Russian crude will continue to play an important role in India's crude oil imports. While oil from Lukoil and Rosneft is sanctioned, not all Russian crude comes under this ambit. Hence, some bit of non-sanctioned Russian crude will continue to flow. The sanctions waiver lapse is unlikely to negatively impact India's crude oil supply as long as oil flows through Strait of Hormuz comes back to pre-war levels and India continues to diversify its sources of energy.



ChatGPT's share slips globally, no. 1 in India

NEW DELHI: ChatGPT's grip on the fast-growing AI assistant market has weakened for the first time, with its global market share slipping below 50% as competition from rivals, such as Google's Gemini and Anthropic's Claude intensifies, according to a report by Sensor Tower. The report found ChatGPT's market share declined to 46.4% by May-end, down from more than 50% in Jan.

While the OpenAI chatbot remains the world's most widely used AI assistant, the data suggests users are increasingly diversifying their AI usage rather than relying on a single platform.

ChatGPT continues to command a substantial lead with more than 1.1 billion monthly users worldwide. Google's Gemini has emerged as its closest challenger, reaching 662 million users, while Anthropic's Claude has grown to 245 million users.

Sensor Tower attributed the shift to changing user behaviour as consumers and businesses become more comfortable experimenting with multiple AI assistants for different tasks. Gemini's rapid rise has been fuelled by its integration across Google's ecosystem, including Search, Android and Workspace products, giving it broad exposure to existing users. Claude, meanwhile, has carved out a niche among professionals and developers, benefiting from strong retention rates and growing adoption in productivity, research and coding workflows.

The report also highlighted India's increasingly important role in the global AI economy. India remained the world's largest generative AI web market, recording more than 13 billion visits during the period analysed, significantly ahead of the US, which logged more than 8 billion visits. The figures underline the country's growing appetite for AI-powered tools and services, driven by its large internet population and expanding digital ecosystem. Within India, ChatGPT remains the leading AI assistant with a market share of 45.6%, narrowly mirroring its global position. Gemini has established itself as a strong second player with 31.6% share, benefiting from Google's deep reach across devices and services. Claude accounts for 10% of the Indian market, while Elon Musk-backed Grok holds a 2.4% share. Chinese AI assistant DeepSeek has also gained a foothold, capturing 1.5% of the market. However, India's dominance in AI-related web traffic has not translated into sustained growth in app downloads. Sensor Tower noted that AI app downloads in the country have declined from earlier peaks, reflecting a broader slowdown across several markets as the sector matures.



Axis Bank digital shift cuts fraud by 70 per cent through in-app OTP security

Axis Bank on Wednesday said it has been able to cut internet banking fraud significantly using its mobile banking app after replacing SMS-based one-time passwords (OTPs) with a more secure in-app OTP authentication.

It has introduced a suite of security measures, including in-app OTPs, facial authentication and customer-controlled transaction safeguards, while embedding AI-driven risk monitoring systems to detect suspicious activity in real time.

"SMS OTP is probably the easiest to compromise because fraudsters can obtain it through social engineering or malware-enabled message forwarding," said Sameer Shetty, group head — digital business, transformation and strategic programs, Axis Bank. To address this vulnerability, the bank has introduced in-app OTPs, where transaction authentication codes are delivered directly through its mobile banking application. The bank has also introduced facial authentication as a biometric verification layer and plans to offer multiple authentication options to offer greater security.

India's oil reserves cover 10 days of imports versus 200-plus days for Japan, South Korea: Report

India's current strategic petroleum reserves are equivalent to just about 9-10 days of the country's net crude imports, far below other major import-dependent countries, a new report revealed on Wednesday.

The report released by Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) said other coun-

tries that rely heavily on crude imports — such as Japan and South Korea — maintain reserves sufficient for over 200 days.

The report, 'How Secure is India's Energy Future? Assessing Accessibility, Reliability, and Affordability, also noted that over 85 per cent of India's crude oil imports come from just six countries, including Russia and key West Asian suppliers, limiting flexibility supply shocks.

Hemant Mallya, fellow at the CEEW, said, "Disruptions in crude oil, LNG, LPG, coal, or key shipping routes can quickly affect cooking costs, transport fuel prices, fertiliser subsidies, industrial competitiveness, and inflation."

For gas, India imports nearly half its supply as LNG but has no dedicated strategic gas storage facilities, leaving fertiliser plants and city gas networks exposed, the report said.

It also highlighted that the country's coal security risks are in-

creasingly influenced by its continued dependence on imported coking coal — particularly from Australia — for steelmaking, and exposure to Indonesian export policies for non-coking coal imports.

On the domestic side, declining coal quality and rising production costs signal a narrowing cost advantage for coal power over firm renewable power, said the report.

It argued that clean energy can reduce India's exposure to continuously imported fossil fuels.

However, the report said that clean energy can create a different kind of strategic dependence: on critical minerals, technologies, and industrial inputs.

This dependence must be managed through domestic manufacturing, supply-chain diversification, recycling, and strategic international partnerships, according to the report.

Mallya said, "India's next phase of energy security must move beyond securing fossil fuels to a clear transition plan: optimising gas system utilisation, avoiding further refinery expansion, accelerating viable EV adoption, electrifying industry, reconfiguring refineries for lower gasoline demand, and building resilient green technology supply chains."



PNGRB asks oil, gas firms to strengthen compensation for accident victims

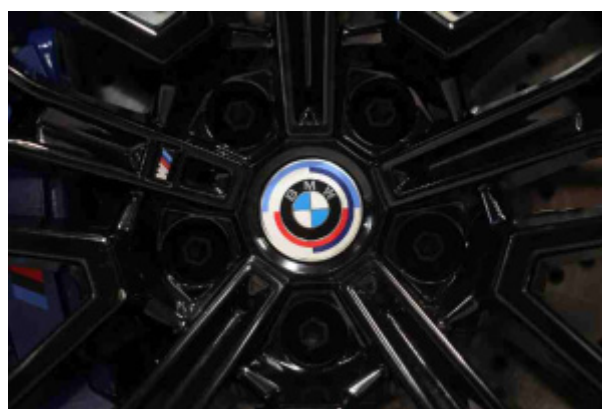
New Delhi: Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) has urged oil and gas companies to review and strengthen their compensation policies beyond statutory requirements to ensure adequate support for families of workers killed or permanently disabled in accidents. While several companies have already enhanced their voluntary compensation packages following its interventions and continued follow-up, the regulator said some were yet to adequately revise their compensation frameworks. PNGRB has also asked companies to take measures to strengthen safety culture, supervision, training and competency-building, with the aim of achieving zero incidents in the sector. The regulator is hosting details of voluntary compensation policies of major companies on its website, categorising them into five groups based on prevailing industry practices.

"... all entities are once again urged to review their compensation structure/policy over and above the statutory requirements, and adopt improved practices so as to ensure adequate compensation to contract workmen/labour in case of fatality or permanent disability," PNGRB said. While statutory compensation is assured, voluntary compensation also forms a significant support for aggrieved families. PNGRB, however, said these additional payouts in cases of fatality and permanent disability vary significantly across the sector despite many affected workers being the sole breadwinners of their families, making it a "serious welfare and social concern".

BMW launches locally assembled MINI Countryman C at Rs 47.5 lakh in India

BMW Group India has expanded its premium vehicle lineup with the launch of the locally assembled MINI Countryman C, priced at an introductory Rs 47.50 lakh (ex-showroom). The move marks a significant step in the brand's localisation strategy and positions the premium crossover as a more accessible offering in the luxury compact SUV segment.

Speaking at the launch event in Chennai, BMW



Group India President and CEO Hardeep Singh Brar said the petrol-powered MINI Countryman C has been introduced at an aggressive price point to strengthen the brand's presence in the market.

Thomas Dose, Managing Director, BMW Group Plant, Chennai, said the launch represents a key operational milestone for MINI in India as the new Countryman C will be assembled locally through the completely knocked down (CKD) route at the company's Chennai facility.

CKD vehicles are imported in parts and components before being assembled at a local manufac-

turing unit

According to Dose, local assembly has enabled MINI to position the Countryman C as a more competitive alternative to the performance-focused Countryman John Cooper Works (JCW) All4.

Bookings for the premium crossover have opened across authorised dealerships nationwide, while customer deliveries are set to commence immediately.

Florian Kuenstner, Vice-President, Mini, Region China, Asia-Pacific, Middle East, Eastern Europe and Africa, BMW Group, said the vehicle is based on the front-wheel-drive UKL2 platform, which it shares with the BMW X1.

The MINI Countryman C is powered by a 1.5-litre three-cylinder turbocharged petrol engine paired with a seven-speed dual-clutch automatic transmission (DCT). The powertrain produces 156 bhp and 240 Nm of torque, with power delivered to the front wheels.

The crossover has been designed with enhanced road presence and a larger cabin, featuring ICE-specific styling elements such as a redesigned octagonal grille, updated front and rear bumpers, adaptive LED headlamps and champagne-coloured exterior trim.

Feature highlights include a panoramic sunroof, head-up display (HUD), Level 1 Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS), a 12-speaker Harman Kardon audio system and Park Assistant Plus with a 360-degree camera.

The newly launched MINI Countryman C is expected to take on established rivals in the premium compact SUV segment, including the Audi Q3, Mercedes-Benz GLA and BMW X1.

Messi, Mbappe may be the superstars but Haaland is fast catching up



were rowing; Haaland was riding the wave. Erling Haaland (9) scoring his side's third goal during the match against Senegal. (AP Photo/Seth Wenig) Erling Haaland (9) scoring his side's third goal during the match against Senegal. The first goal was cathartic; the second invaluable. Senegal, cutting loose, which was the only way they could have forced a comeback into a game where they defended with stupendous sloppiness, halved the arrears through Ismaila Sarr's sliding finish. A sudden wave of energy seized them. But Haaland snuffed it with a sniper's deadeye finish. It seemed routine, him working out the angle with a neat shot off his instep that bounded off the crossbar. But the late contortion of his body was sublime, and what makes him an elite striker. He was gunning for a shot with his left foot, which is what he often does. But with a defender nudging behind, he would not be able to manufacture space and control the ball as he would have wished to. So he quickly cavorted, and wrapped his right-foot around the ball that came at hip level. His quick change of mind surprised Mendy. Even if not, his shot was so sweetly-timed that the Senegalese net-minder would have been incapable of defanging its venom. The celebrations rolled on a cold and damp night that he lit up. He pointed his ears at the crowd. He wanted more noise, they wanted more goals. After his brace, the golden boot race reads: Messi 5; Mbappe 4; Haaland 4. The Norwegian has shown he is a worthy competitor to them, and a potential inheritor to their throne. Mbappe-Haaland sprint could define football in impending years, but this edition, Messi's shadows loom over them. Haaland pressed and probed for a hat-trick goal that would have made him level with Messi. But it didn't arrive, like the rain that was forecast to dampen the New Jersey night. He has a showdown in the Mbappe in the next game, but there are bigger battles to be won. The 25-year-old has been the poster boy for Norway, which qualified for the tournament after 28 years. In the decades past, they possessed a functional, spirited team without a talisman. In Haaland, they have found one. His emergence is even more special than those of Messi and Mbappe. For, Norway had not a long lineage of elite players. In Haaland, they have discovered someone who can reliably influence games to decide the big moments. Win them trophies they had never dreamt of. His defensive contributions in the nervous end-game were equally noteworthy.

The moment the MetLife Arena, soaked in water and warned of a flash flood, waited breathlessly for arrived at the stroke of the fiftieth minute. When the man, the boisterous Norwegian sea of red wanted to score a goal, finally scored. The Erling Haaland moment; the Viking stamp on the game. He had to wait too, till he suffered the pangs of isolation through much of the first half, till he watched his colleague Martin Ødegaard fluff a delightful pass; till his grass-cutter crashed onto the base of the post. Then came two in the space of nine minutes, an adequate cushion to douse a belated comeback from Senegal (3-2), ensuring Norway's progress to the round of 32 in their long-awaited comeback to the World Cup. And how he and his teammates celebrated the monumental victory, performing the rowing celebration in the middle of the pitch, to cracking imitations and rippling applause from the stands.

But the Haaland moment was inevitable, even if he was passive in the first half. Lionel Messi had doled out a brace; as had Kylian Mbappe, portending a golden-boot race for the ages. Haaland could not slip out of the race, at least for the charm of a three-horse race, at least for breaking the duopoly. And so he did with bizarre calm. A well-weighted pass from Ødegaard, splitting the centre-half pairing of Moussa Niakhaté and Kalidou Koulibaly, found him in adequate space to drill the ball ferociously past Édouard Mendy.

Haaland, with a swaggering smile, ambled to the corner flag, where he and Ødegaard stuck the pose, either side of the flag. The stand beside broke into the symphonic row, chanting Haaland's name. They

Thomas Tuchel on hydration breaks at World Cup: 'Breaks the match in 4 quarters'

England manager Thomas Tuchel has voiced his discomfort with the hydration breaks being used at the ongoing World Cup, arguing that they are altering the natural rhythm and flow of matches more than he initially expected. Speaking ahead of England's second Group L fixture against Ghana in Boston on Tuesday night, Tuchel said the interruptions – introduced to help players cope with extreme heat in certain venues – were now being applied too uniformly across matches, regardless of actual conditions. Forecasts suggest rain and relatively mild temperatures for the upcoming game, yet the stoppages are still expected to be enforced. "I think that it interrupts and changes the identity of a football match much more than I thought," Tuchel said. "I had hydration breaks before when it was really, really hot and needed, but they were shorter. They were shorter, and they were just in a few matches. In the interests of fairness here, it is now done in every match for every team," he added. The 52-year-old argued that momentum is one of football's defining features and that the stoppages fundamentally alter the structure of matches, creating multiple pauses where pressure and rhythm would otherwise develop naturally. "It breaks the match almost in four quarters. And I think it changes the char-



acteristic of the match more than I thought," he said. "It's hard to build momentum, and it's hard to keep the momentum, when there are breaks."

Although Tuchel is unconvinced about the effect the breaks are having on the spectacle, he admitted there are benefits from a coaching perspective. The stoppages provide managers with an opportunity to relay instructions, make tactical adjustments and regroup players during the match. "I like it as a coach, of course, because it is good to have influence and have my team together," he said. Y

Ashwin on Sooryavanshi incident in India A tri-series: 'How can anyone hate him'

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi lost his cool and ended up shoving a Sri Lankan player during India A vs Sri Lanka A Tri-Nation Series match in Dambulla. (Screengrab/X) Vaibhav Sooryavanshi lost his cool and ended up shoving a Sri Lankan player during India A vs Sri Lanka A Tri-Nation Series match in Dambulla. Former India spinner R Ashwin has questioned the criticism directed at Vaibhav Sooryavanshi following the teenager's involvement in a physical altercation with Sri Lanka A players during the recently concluded tri-series in Dambulla. Ashwin argued that there was a difference between constructive criticism and hatred, while urging people not to rush to judge the 15-year-old. Sooryavanshi was involved in an altercation that turned physical following India A's Super Over defeat to Sri Lanka A last week. "All we can do is talk with hate. And what happens then? If the person we are hating eventually reads those things, it might affect them a little. But what do we achieve by talking like that? That is why I am saying this. How can you hate Vaibhav Sooryavanshi?" Ashwin said on Ash Ki Baat.

"Tell me, how can anyone hate him? And everyone is saying, 'This kid should have shown maturity. He should have spoken with more maturity.' Have we forgotten that we too were children once? Have we forgotten that there are children like that in our own families? This is a very dangerous trend," he added. Ashwin questioned the reaction to the incident, arguing that excessive criticism of a 15-year-old served little purpose and could affect a young player.

"What is criticism? If today you are hosting the show and I tell you, 'Vimal bhai, I didn't like the hosting so much today. Maybe we can pay attention here.



Maybe this question could have been asked differently. Maybe this point could have been handled differently. That is criticism. "Criticism means finding a path for someone to move forward and improve. But what is hatred? Hatred is when somebody has achieved something, and we keep attacking them with words. We keep trying to pull them down. That does not happen," he added. The 15-year-old could make his international debut in the upcoming two-match T20I series against Ireland, and Ashwin said he wanted the teenager to enjoy the game without carrying the burden of expectations. "Vaibhav Sooryavanshi is a cricketer. He performs for us. He is an entertainer with immense skill. Forget his family, his well-wishers, his fans and the team management for a moment. As a lover of the sport, I just want him to enjoy cricket and play without pressure. After playing cricket for so many years, I've realised that playing freely, without baggage, is one of the hardest things to do. As long as we can give him that freedom, let him enjoy himself.

Rishabh Pant returns to Delhi Capitals with Rs 12-crore payout, Kuldeep moves to LSG



India wicket-keeper Rishabh Pant and wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav have been involved in one of the most high-profile IPL trades, triggering major movement between Lucknow Super Giants and Delhi Capitals on Tuesday. Pant will rejoin his former franchise just two seasons after expressing a desire to leave. During the IPL 2025 Mega Auction, Pant was acquired by LSG for a record-breaking INR 27 crore – the highest winning bid in auction history. The switch back to Delhi will come with a substantial pay cut, trimming

his earnings from Rs 15 crore to Rs 12 crore. Pant endured two lean seasons as captain and batter at Lucknow, with the team failing to qualify for the Play-offs in the 2025 and 2026 seasons. Individually too, Pant suffered two of his least productive seasons in his IPL career with LSG. He managed to score just 269 runs in the 2025 season, his worst return since his debut year in 2016, at a strike rate of 133.16 and average of 24.45 in 13 innings. The returns remained stagnant this year, with 312 runs coming at 28.36. Shortly after Lucknow's elimination, the franchise announced on May 29 that Pant had stepped down from his role as captain. "Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) wish to formally announce that Rishabh Pant has requested to be relieved of his captaincy duties with the franchise, and the franchisee has accepted his request with immediate effect," said LSG in its statement. Having spent eight years since his IPL debut with Delhi, Pant has featured in 111 games and remains as the all-time highest run-getter for the team, amassing 3284 runs from his previous stint.

Suryansh Shedge replaces Nitish Reddy in India T20I squad for Ireland, England series

Suryansh Shedge received his maiden India call-up on Tuesday. (SLC) Suryansh Shedge received his maiden India call-up on Tuesday. (SLC) India have drafted in Mumbai all-rounder Suryansh Shedge as a replacement for Nitish Kumar Reddy in the squads for the upcoming T20I series against Ireland and England. The change comes after Nitish reported discomfort in his left quadriceps following the third ODI against Afghanistan in Chennai. Subsequent medical examinations conducted by the BCCI medical team recommended a rehabilitation period, thereby ruling him out of both the bilateral series. "Nitish reported left quadriceps discomfort after the third ODI against Afghanistan on June 20. Following a subsequent medical assessment, the BCCI Medical Team has recommended a period of rehabilitation, ruling him out of both T20I series," BCCI said in a statement. Nitish's absence left India short of seam-bowling all-round options, with Hardik Pandya also unavailable, prompting the selectors to turn to Shedge, who has impressed consistently over the past year in domestic and India A cricket.

The 23-year-old earned his maiden senior India



call-up after a productive outing for India A in the recently concluded tri-series in Sri Lanka. Batting primarily in the middle order, Shedge scored 147 runs in five matches and contributed with the ball as well, sending down 23 overs during the tournament. His performances helped India A reach the final and strengthened his case for a national berth. Shedge first came into prominence during Mumbai's triumphant Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy campaign in the 2024-25 season.

Rishabh Pant returns to Delhi Capitals in major IPL trade

Hyderabad: Former Lucknow Super Giants captain Rishabh Pant is set for a return to Delhi Capitals (DC), while Kuldeep Yadav will join Lucknow Super Giants (LSG), following one of the most significant player trades in recent IPL history. Pant returns to the franchise where he spent nine seasons between 2016 and 2024, making 111 appearances, the most by any player for DC. One of the defining faces of the franchise for nearly a decade, he also captained the side in 43 matches across four seasons from 2021 to 2024. At the TATA IPL 2025 Player Auction, Pant was acquired by LSG for a record-breaking Rs 27 crore, the highest winning bid in IPL history. Following the trade, he will rejoin DC at a revised fee of Rs 15 crore. Kuldeep joins LSG after a highly successful spell with Delhi Capitals lasting five seasons. Since arriv-



ing at the franchise in 2022, the left-arm wrist spinner has claimed 72 wickets in 65 matches and established himself as one of the most effective wicket-taking bowlers in the tournament.

The footballer killed for an own goal at the 1994 World Cup

Andrés Escobar once told a Colombian journalist named Gonzalo Medina why he loved football. "This sport illustrates the close relationship between life and the game," he said. "In football, unlike bullfighting, there is no death. In football no one dies; no one gets killed. It's more about the fun of it, about enjoying." He was killed for football. He was 27 years old. In the days after Colombia's elimination from the 1994 World Cup, Escobar sat down and wrote a column for El País. A journalist friend had suggested it. He had been offered broadcasting work in America for the rest of the tournament. He had been offered the chance to stay with his brother's family in Miami. He declined both. "I want to go to Colombia and show my face," he told his sister, María Ester. The column was titled "Life Doesn't End Here." He wrote the phrase four times. "Life doesn't end here. We have to go on. Life cannot end here. No matter how difficult, we must stand back up." He asked for respect. He sent a hug to everyone. He signed off: "See you soon, because life doesn't end here." The own goal itself was unremarkable in the way that accidents are. June 22. The Rose Bowl, Pasadena. A John Harkes cross flew into the Colombian box. Escobar stretched a leg to intercept. The ball rolled off his heel and into the net. He lay face down on the grass for a moment. In Medellín, watching on television, his nine-year-old nephew turned to his mother. "In that moment," María Ester would say later, "he said to me, 'Mommy, they're going to kill Andrés.'" She replied: "No sweetheart, people aren't killed for mistakes. Everyone in Colombia loves Andrés." Colombia had arrived at the 1994 World Cup as one of Pelé's tips to reach the semifinals. They had beaten Argentina 5-0 in Buenos Aires in qualifying. Valderrama in midfield, Asprilla up front, Escobar at the heart of the defence. What the country felt about other things in those years: Pablo Escobar — no relation — had been killed six months before the tournament. His death did not make Colombia safer. It created a power vacuum. Medellín's murder rate was



380 per 100,000 inhabitants. These were the conditions under which Andrés Escobar played football and believed it could show people a better way to live. He was known as El Caballero del Fútbol. He went to Mass every day with his mother until she died. His father had founded an organisation giving young men the chance to play football instead of being on the streets. Andrés had won the Copa Libertadores with Atlético Nacional in 1989, the first Colombian club to do so. The country produced cocaine and produced Andrés Escobar, and for a while in 1994 it looked as if one might outrun the other. Colombia beat Switzerland in their final group game and went home anyway. Escobar said afterwards: "It's a very trying moment. Not only because of the error I committed, but also because in these games, our team could not fulfil our expectations." He had not committed any crime by scoring the own goal. A cross came in. He stretched a leg. The ball deflected. Somewhere in the same city, men who had bet heavily on Colombia were counting what they had lost. July 2. Escobar went out with friends to El Indio nightclub. At another table sat Pedro David and Juan Santiago Gallón, brothers, known drug traffickers, men who had lost money on Colombia. They began shouting across the room. Own goal, Andrés. Own goal. In the parking lot, the Gallón brothers' driver, Humberto Muñoz Castro, followed him out.

Samantha: Doing action episodes in a saree is very difficult

Samantha's Maa Inti Bangaram is all set to hit the screens on June 19. Directed by Nandini Reddy, the film is produced by Samantha and her husband Raj Nidimoru along with Himank Duvvuru under their Tralala Moving Pictures banner. The pre-release event was held on Monday evening in Hyderabad, and on this occasion, Samantha spoke about the film and her future plans.

"From now onwards, I want to do at least two films a year. But I can say that Maa Inti Bangaram has come out very well and it is a very good film," said Samantha at the event. She added that taking up the producer's responsibility helped her understand the difficulties behind making a film.

"For this film, I worked as both a producer and an actor, so now I can understand the challenges faced by a producer," she said.

The actor thanked every technician who worked behind the film.

"Generally, when a film becomes successful, the director and actors get most of the credit. But I want to take this opportunity to thank the real people

who worked day and night behind the scenes for this film. The success of this film belongs to them," said Samantha.

Talking about the action sequences in the film, Samantha said doing them in a saree was a challenging task. "It is very difficult to do action scenes in a saree, but I should thank designer Pallavi for making it possible," she said.

She specially mentioned dialogue writer Vasanth and appreciated his contribution to the film. "He is actually the key person in our team. I gave a very natural performance in this film because of Vasanth and his dialogues. Half the magic comes from his writing, and he brought life to every frame," said Samantha.

She further added that the entire team worked tirelessly for the film.

"For the last one week, our team has hardly slept. Every department worked with complete dedication and put their heart into this film. Raj and DK, along with Nandini Reddy, have been great support to me.



Raj and DK always work with great passion and continue to give their best," said Samantha.

She also thanked her fans for their continued love and support. "I will always be grateful to my fans who continue to show the same love and support towards me. Maa Inti Bangaram, which is releasing on June 19, will definitely impress everyone," she said.

Director Nandini Reddy said that the entire team worked extremely hard for the film. "Many people have been working tirelessly for the last few days without even sleeping for Maa Inti Bangaram. This was possible only because of an amazing team that worked with complete dedication," said Nandini Reddy.

She added that the friends she made in the film industry are her biggest strength. "In this industry, I have earned many friends, and that is my biggest strength. Working with Raj was very easy, and we learned a lot by working together as a team. I believe I have kept my promise and made the best film possible," she said.

Nandini Reddy also appreciated producer Himank Duvvuru for his support. "Himank carried this film on his shoulders. I also feel that I have lived up to the trust Samantha placed in me. Audiences are going to see a Samantha who is ten times more impressive than what they have seen so far," she said.

Aishwarya Rajesh: Doing a female-centric film is not at all easy

After Sankranthiki Vasthunnam became a huge hit, actor Aishwarya Rajesh is coming up with a film titled Oh Sukumari, whose teaser was unveiled on Saturday. This film is directed by Bharath Darshan and produced by Maheshwara Reddy Mooli. "I took my own time to do a good subject and I signed Oh Sukumari after Sankranthiki Vasthunnam," said Aishwarya Rajesh. After delivering a huge hit, expectations are high because she acted in the film.



"It's not Sankranthiki Vasthunnam, but before that also people expected something from me, when I did my films," she said. She added that this kind of subject has not come to South India until now. "This is definitely an entertaining film, and whether I reach the expectations or not has been decided by the audience," she said.

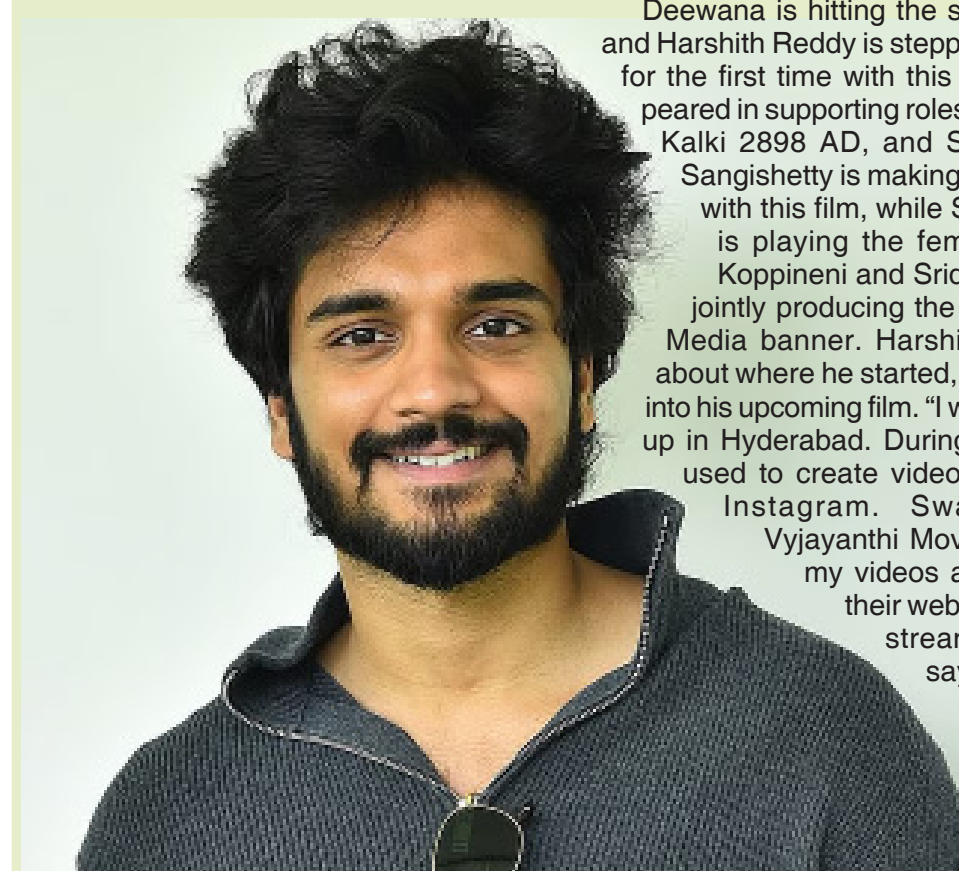
She added that she liked this subject and signed on to star in it. "In my earlier one Dear, I got a problem with snoring and in this one, if anyone touches the female lead, they will get shocked, which I felt is a different one," said Aishwarya Rajesh.

After Sankranthiki Vasthunnam, Aishwarya said that she waited for a good project. "After a huge success, I definitely got many offers and I waited for a good subject and I liked Oh Sukumari and signed it. This is my next film after Sankranthiki Vasthunnam," said the actor about the long break after that film.

When asked if she did most female-centric films, she said that it's been a long time since she acted in one such film. "My last female-centric film was Farhana, and in my career I did nearly eight female-centric films. When you do this kind of film, it is not easy, because there is a lot of burden and responsibility on me. I didn't stop doing those kind of films, I will do them in the coming days as I chose two subjects which will be finalised soon," she said.

When asked that many expected her to play a key role in the Anil Ravipudi and Venkatesh film, she said, many asked her the same. "Maybe Anil garu wanted to give me a good role, so that he may come up with Sankranthiki Vasthunnam 2 or in any other film. I am hoping that I want to work with Anil garu for another film and by God's grace it may work soon. But this Venkatesh, Kalyanram and Anil Ravipudi combination film is definitely a blockbuster subject, because Anil garu told the storyline to me," reveals Aishwarya.

Harshith Reddy: I take inspiration from Vijay anna



Deewana is hitting the screens on June 19, and Harshith Reddy is stepping into the lead role for the first time with this film. Earlier, he appeared in supporting roles in projects like Mail, Kalki 2898 AD, and Subham. Sreekanth Sangishetty is making his directorial debut with this film, while Smeha Manimegalai is playing the female lead. Vasudev Koppineni and Sridevi Karyampudi are jointly producing the film under the Arha Media banner. Harshith began speaking about where he started, before delving deep into his upcoming film. "I was born and brought up in Hyderabad. During my BTEch days, I used to create videos for YouTube and Instagram. Swapna garu from Vyjayanthi Movies watched one of my videos and selected me for their web film Mail, which was streamed on Aha OTT," says Harshith.

That opportunity came during the COVID period, and Harshith received appreciation for his role in Mail. Later, he became part of Nag Ashwin's Kalki 2898 AD, produced by Vyjayanthi Movies and Swapna Cinema.

"I was fortunate enough to jump the audition process to get cast in Kalki 2898 AD. The film's team directly selected me after watching my performance in Mail," he says.



Shalini Kondepudi: Sing Geetham is unlike anything Indian cinema has attempted before

Legendary filmmaker Singeetham Srinivasa Rao, known for directing acclaimed films across Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, Hindi, and English, is all set to return with his latest venture, Sing Geetham.

Regarded as one of the most versatile directors in Indian cinema, the 94-year-old filmmaker is now bringing audiences a unique musical comedy. Produced by Kalki 2898 AD director Nag Ashwin under the prestigious Vyjayanthi Movies and Swapna Cinema banners, Sing Geetham features newcomers Ayaan and Ahalya as the lead, and features actor-writer Shalini Kondepudi as the antagonist. The film is scheduled for released

atly agreed to audition, regardless of the role," says Shalini, adding, "A month after the audition, they finalised me for a strong villain character that has many shades."

Though relatively new as an actress, Shalini has already made a mark as a writer. She wrote the story for My Dear Donga, which premiered on Aha OTT, and also acted in the film.

She later appeared in films such as Subham and Jayamma Panchayati. "I have always been interested in writing. Along with acting, I want to continue writing and eventually direct films as well," says Shalini.