

## Kishan Reddy Chairs Meeting on Mining, Geological Survey



**Hyderabad:** Union Coal Minister G. Kishan Reddy on Sunday chaired a meeting with officials from the Geological Survey of India, National Institute of Rock Mechanics (NIRM), Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM), and Bharat Gold Mines Limited (BGM) in Bengaluru. He reviewed the progress of ongoing projects and held detailed discussions on

addressing operational bottlenecks being faced by the agencies in exploration and other activities being undertaken across various states. He asked the organisations to fast-track critical projects, strengthen on-ground execution, and work in a mission-driven manner towards the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, in line with the guidance and vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

# Indiramma Bheema Scheme Will Be Launched on June 2: Bhatti

**Hyderabad:** Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka stated that the people's government in Telangana is fulfilling every promise made during the elections and delivering welfare benefits directly to the doorstep of the poor. He announced that the historic "Indiramma Bheema" scheme will be launched across the state on June 2 as a State Formation Day gift. He assured that this insurance scheme would act as a protective shield for 1.15 crore families in the state, irrespective of caste, religion, or economic status. Also Read - Part Time Job Fraud Tops Cyberabad Crime in 2025

struggle even for minimal financial assistance. To ensure such situations are never repeated, the government has decided to provide Rs.5 lakh insurance coverage to every family that loses its head due to an accident. Officials will soon visit every household to collect details related to the scheme, he said. Also Read - Narayanakhed: Woman Kills Husband With Paramour's Help



lance in Errupalem mandal of Madhira constituency. The Deputy Chief Minister said the government is providing interest-free loans worth Rs.20,000 crore annually to women's groups and promised to increase it up to Rs.1 lakh crore if needed. Also Read - Youngster Held for Car Racing, Injuring Cop in Cyberabad

state. Soon, 550 special RTC buses will be allocated exclusively for women entrepreneurs. The government aims to make one crore women millionaires, he added. Bhatti Vikramarka proudly stated that the people's government is the only government providing premium fine rice, which costs Rs.50 to Rs.55 per kg in the market, free of cost to 1.06 crore families in the state. Each person will receive 6 kg of fine rice delivered directly to poor households. Also Read - Two Die as Bike Rams into Tree in Sangareddy

electricity up to 200 units is being provided across the state, reducing the electricity bill burden for 53 lakh families. In many villages, nearly 95 per cent of people are receiving "zero" electricity bills. Dream of Owning a House Fulfilled: Bhatti alleged that the BRS government deceived people for ten years in the name of double-bedroom houses. He said the present government is providing Rs.5 lakh financial assistance to every poor family to build their own house. So far, 4.5 lakh houses have already been sanctioned statewide. He also announced that the Cabinet recently approved an additional 2 lakh houses. Making Telangana a hut-free state is the government's top priority, he added.

## Telangana Reels under Blistering Heat as 4 Districts Cross 45°C



**Hyderabad:** Four districts - Adilabad, Hanamkonda, Khammam and Ramagundam registered a highest temperature hovering between 45 and 45.4 degrees Celsius on Saturday keeping the people on the edge. However, the sudden rain in the midnight brought much needed relief for them. Khammam registered 45.4 degrees Celsius while Adilabad 45.3 degrees Celsius and Ramagundam 45.1

degrees Celsius and Hanamkonda 45 degrees Celsius. This followed by 43.5 degrees Celsius in Nizamabad, according to the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD). Time Job Fraud Tops Cyberabad Crime in 2025

temperatures hovered between 39.7 and 39 degrees Celsius in Hakimpet, Dundigal, Hyderabad and Mahabubnagar, the IMD said. Meanwhile, in an yellow warning, the IMD said light rain five mm/hr and light thunderstorms with maximum surface wind speed less than 40 kmph are likely to occur in Nalgonda, Narnool, Mahabubnagar, Wanaparthy, Jogulamba Gadwal Narayanpet districts.

# Naidu to Launch 38 Industrial Parks at MSME Growth Summit in Vijayawada

**Amaravati:** Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu will virtually launch 38 MSME parks across the state on Monday as part of the government's push to strengthen the industrial ecosystem and promote entrepreneurship. According to the CM, the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) parks initiative is part of the state government's larger vision to establish industrial parks in all 175 Assembly constituencies through plug-and-play infrastructure and cluster-based development. Also Read - NETA'S NATTER | YSRC Makes Ass of



Protest Against Fuel Hike "The state government will launch 38 MSME parks virtually at the MSME Growth Summit 2026 in Vijayawada on May 25... The summit will mark another major step towards positioning Andhra Pradesh on the

global industrial map and accelerating MSME-led growth across the state," said an official press release issued late on Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan and other ministers, industrialists and stakeholders are expected to participate in the event, which is likely to witness over 1,500 attendees, including MSME entrepreneurs, PM Vishwakarma beneficiaries, policymakers, financial institutions and technology experts, it said.

AP Govt Accelerates Electric Bus Infra PM e-Bus Sewa Scheme This launch will be the third phase of the programme, and the foundation stones were laid for 100 industrial parks in the first two phases, and several of them have already become operational, the release said. The government will also inaugurate phases, and several of Rural Technology Action Group (RuTAG) Smart Village Centre extension hubs at Kuppam, Mangalagiri and Pithapuram under the guidance of the Ratan Tata Innovation Hub to encourage rural entrepreneurship and technology-enabled

livelihoods. Also Read - 12 Hours in Darkness: Gale Havoc Disrupts Power Supply in Kurnool, Nandyal Further, funds will be released for setting up Common Facility Centres in 45 industrial clusters across the state at a cost of Rs 200 crore, while the summit will offer opportunities for youth and women entrepreneurs. Further, funds will be released for setting up Common Facility Centres in 45 industrial clusters across the state at a cost of Rs 200 crore, while the summit will focus on generating opportunities for youth and women entrepreneurs.

## How Cockroach Janta Party became India's viral political talking point

**New Delhi:** Few creatures invite as much dislike as cockroaches do, which is why it is weird that the same insect has suddenly become the centre of fascination for a section of people who otherwise would never hesitate to eliminate it. The cockroach has managed to create such a buzz that it is now trending across social media, gathering followers in massive numbers. In a democracy, divergent views and satire have always had space. They often reflect the vibrancy of public discourse. So, when an Indian student studying at a foreign university decided to channel his mischievous creativity into a satirical political idea built around a cockroach, the reaction that followed was far larger than anyone might have anticipated. Even the student himself, Abhijeet Dipke from Maharashtra's Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar district, may not have expected the scale at which his so-called 'Cockroach Janta Party' (CJP) would resonate online. There is nothing inherently wrong with satire. India has a long tradition of using humour and mockery to question authority. Long before the digital age, newspaper cartoons served as some of the sharpest political commentaries. Satirical 'mushairas' ridiculed govern-



ments through poetry, while in recent years, stand-up comedy and online content have emerged as powerful tools of political expression. In that sense, the rise of something like the CJP is not extraordinary in itself. But questions inevitably arise. Can a single student, operating independently, generate such a widespread digital storm? That seems unlikely. Given how political narratives are increasingly shaped online, and considering similar developments witnessed in countries such as Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, suspicions about larger backing naturally emerge.

## Congress plotting to end free power scheme through prepaid meters: KTR

**Hyderabad:** BRS working president KT Rama Rao accused the Congress government of attempting to phase out free electricity for farmers by introducing prepaid power meters and eventually privatise the power sector. He strongly condemned the Congress government's plans to install prepaid electricity meters for domestic purposes and urged people to oppose the move. Addressing the party meeting in Amberpet on Sunday, Rama Rao said the State Cabinet had decided to replace existing electricity meters with prepaid meters across rural and urban areas, including agricultural connections. He stated that the Congress government was implementing the proposal to facilitate private participation in the power sector and eventually hand over operations to corporate entities. "The Congress is conspiring to remove free power for farm-



ers by installing meters for agricultural motors. Prepaid meters are being introduced only to privatise the electricity sector," he alleged. The BRS working president recalled that the BRS had warned during the Assembly elections that the free electricity scheme for farmers would be under threat if the Congress came to power. He said BRS chief and former Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao had resisted pressure from the Centre to introduce prepaid alleged restrictions on loans worth Rs crore. However, he said that the Congress government was now

planning to roll out prepaid electricity meters within the next three months and urged people to oppose the move. "Before prepaid meters reach every household and agricultural motor, people should politically disconnect the Congress," he said. The former Minister also accused the Congress government of administrative failures, corruption and failing to fulfil election promises even after completing nearly half of its term. He said the public was increasingly dissatisfied with the government's policies and governance.

**NEW DELHI:** India voiced concern on Sunday over a US visa crackdown, striking a rare critical note even as it expressed broad alignment with Secretary of State Marco Rubio on other fractious issues. Paying his first visit to India, Rubio said the two democracies were on the same page on all major issues, brushing aside recent unease in New Delhi over trade, China and the Iran war. Foreign minister S. Jaishankar agreed that the two countries had a "convergence of national interests in many areas" but publicly took Rubio to task over President Donald Trump's assault on visas. Also Read - Overseas Travel Spending by Indians Falls to USD 1.09 Billion in March



ty, our expectation is that legal mobility should not be adversely impacted as a consequence," he said, noting that visas were key for US-India tech cooperation. Trump, who has made curbing non-Western immigration a key political priority, has ramped up restrictions and fees for H-1B visas used largely by Indian tech workers, sending applications tumbling. Also Read - LNG Tanker Exits Hormuz for India for First Time Since War Began

The Trump administration followed up Friday by saying that applicants for permanent residency, even when in the United States legally, must leave for processing, likely splitting up many families for extended periods. Trump has been influenced by nativist critics who say Indian workers take away skilled jobs from Americans who about racist remarks in the United States about Indians, Rubio said, "every country in the world has stupid people". "Our nation has been enriched by people who come to our country," said Rubio, the son of Cuban immigrants. He said the immigration reforms were "not India-specific" but in response to a "migratory crisis" in the United States. Aligned on 'all' issues Rubio, who is paying an unusually long four-day, four-city trip to India, called the country "one of our most important strategic partners in the world".

## Telangana government to procure additional maize, jowar and sunflower stocks

**Hyderabad:** Heeding to the pressure exerted by farming community and opposition parties campaign over the inordinate delay in procurement, the State government has decided to procure the additional maize, jowar and sunflower stocks from farmers. The Congress government initially wanted the BJP-led Union government to procure the additional stocks. However, with the Union government failing to respond to the State government's appeals, it has now decided to procure the stocks on its own, Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao said. Due to the delay in procurement, maize and jowar farmers faced lot of hardships. Compounding their woes, the unseasonal rains that have been lashing differ-



ent parts of the State, left the stocks soaked and damaged, resulting in additional losses to the farmers. The farming community staged protests and demanded the State government to procure the stocks immediately without any further delay. Accordingly, the government has now allocated Rs.1,800 crore

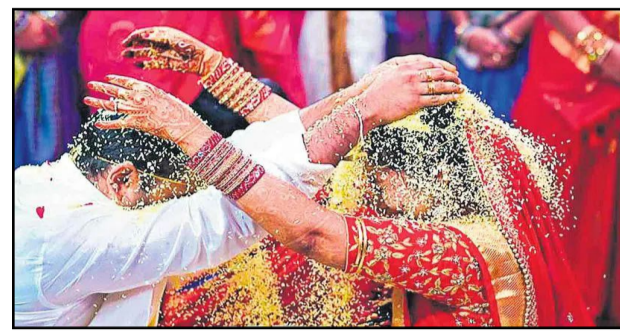
in addition to the Rs.4,000 crore sanctioned for maize procurement. In view of bumper maize yield this season, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has taken this decision, the Minister said. Further said the State government was prepared for procuring the jowar stocks with Rs.1,100

crore. Likewise, the sunflower stocks would also be procured 25 percent in excess, he announced. Instructions were issued to officials to complete district-wise jowar procurement exercise. All measures should be taken to ensure there was no inconvenience to farmers, the Minister directed officials.

## Telangana: Delay in Kalyana Lakshmi, Shaadi Mubarak benefits leaves poor families struggling

**Hyderabad:** The Kalyana Lakshmi or Shaadi Mubarak scheme was introduced a decade back with a sole intention of extending financial assistance to poor families to perform the marriage of their daughters. However, since the last two years, many poor families from SC, ST and Minorities are unable to reap benefits under the scheme. This is mainly due to the delay in processing the applications and allocation of funds. The scheme was launched by the BRS government in April 2016. Generally, the SC, ST and BC community beneficiaries' applications are processed under the Kalyana Lakshmi name, those

from minorities' are processed under Shaadi Mubarak name. The government extends a one-time grant of Rs.1,00,116 into the bank account of minority girls (bride) or mother towards expenses of the marriage. For the 2026-27 financial year, the Minorities Welfare department allocated Rs.650 crore in the budget, which is expected to benefit 64,900 beneficiaries. However, the expenditure under the scheme has steadily decreased during the last two financial years. In the 2024-25 financial year, Rs.650 crore budget was allocated but the expenditure incurred



was Rs.403.90 crore. Similarly, in the 2025-26 financial year, Rs.650 crore was allocated but the expenditure declined to Rs.278.40 crore. This reflects the State government's commitment in implementation of the scheme. Same is the case with SC and ST beneficiaries. In the 2024-25 financial year, the Tribal Welfare department had allocated Rs.260 crore

but the expenditure incurred was Rs.164.71 crore. In the 2025-26 financial year Rs.260 crore was allocated but only Rs.143.17 crore was spent. Rs.500 crore towards the scheme budget but the expenditure incurred was Rs.240 crore. In 2025-26 year also, Rs.600 crore was allocated but only Rs.200 crore expenditure was incurred.

## Hyderabad Gig Workers Struggle Amid Severe Heatwave

**Hyderabad:** As the heatwave crisis intensifies, Telangana has confirmed 16 heatstroke deaths, while the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has placed seven districts under red alert. The extreme temperatures and dry winds are disproportionately affecting daily wage labourers, gig workers and app-based delivery personnel. On May 21, Hyderabad recorded a maximum temperature of 43.4°C, but that has not slowed down quick-commerce workers racing against time and weather conditions to fulfil customer orders and earn their daily wages. Also Read - Part Time Job Fraud Tops Cyberabad Crime in 2025 "Whether it's heat, rain or cold, we still have to deliver," said Dawood Ali, a delivery worker for Swiggy in the Charminar area. "Petrol prices are increasing, payouts are decreasing, and we barely earn enough to survive." The rise of quick-commerce and ten-minute delivery culture has significantly worsened working conditions. Riders say algorithms, customer ratings



and delivery timers force them to keep working even when physically exhausted, because logging off the app means losing income. Also Read - Narayanakhed: Woman Kills Husband With Paramour's Help Several workers said their schedules leave them exposed to dangerous heat for long hours, especially between 12 pm and 4 pm when temperatures peak. Even night shifts between 7 pm and 11 pm offer little relief as the city continues to radiate heat long after sunset. A 2024 survey by HeatWatch and the Telangana Gig and Platform Workers Union

(TGPWU) highlighted the scale of the crisis. Among surveyed workers in Hyderabad, 52% reported heat exhaustion, while nearly 30% said they had experienced heatstroke while working. Also Read - Indiramma Bheema Scheme Will Be Launched on June 2: Bhatti The report also documented gender-specific impacts. Among 19 women workers surveyed, 13 said extreme heat worsened menstrual cramps and related symptoms, while four reported recurring urinary tract infections (UTIs). Despite spending long hours outdoors,

workers say access to basic facilities remains severely limited. The TGPWU survey found that 65% of workers demanded access to clean drinking water and toilets, while 55% sought such as Zomato and Swiggy have claimed they provide affiliated rest spaces where riders can access drinking water and washrooms. However, workers say the ground reality is very different. "You rarely get clean water at these places. Sometimes they outright deny access," said Ali. "We end up finding our own places to sit or buying water ourselves."

## Telangana's growth story loses steam as GSDP expansion slows under Congress rule

**Hyderabad:** Telangana's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) growth, long projected as the strongest indicator of the State's economic momentum, has witnessed a visible slowdown after the Congress government assumed office, according to official budget estimates and Socio Economic Outlook report for the period between 2015-16 and 2026-27. If the trend continues, economists fear that the State might not even score a double digit growth rate in 2026-27 against projected 10 per cent growth over last year. During the initial years after State formation and under the previous BRS regime, Telangana consistently recorded double-digit nominal GSDP growth (at current prices), often touching or crossing the 14 per cent mark. Between 2015-16 and 2018-19, the State posted growth rates of 14.2 per cent, 13.9 per cent, 13.9 per cent and 14.3 per cent respectively — a phase economists describe as Telangana's high-growth cycle. Even after the economic disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Telangana rebounded sharply. As per the RBI

data, Telangana's economy made a rapid recovery than others during the period. The State clocked a massive 19.4 per cent growth in 2021-22 and 16.4 per cent in 2022-23, reflecting rapid recovery in sectors such as agriculture and allied, IT, real estate, infrastructure, construction and services. However, the trend began weakening thereafter. In 2023-24, the growth rate slipped to 11.9 per cent. More significantly, projections for the years following the Congress government taking charge indicate further moderation, with growth recorded at 10 per cent in 2024-25, 10.7 per cent in 2025-26 and again a projected 10 per cent growth in 2026-27. Analysts stated that while Telangana's overall GSDP size continues to rise from Rs 14.60 lakh crore in 2023-24 to a projected Rs 19.61 lakh crore by 2026-27, the growth momentum has clearly slowed compared to the earlier high-growth phase. Experts pointed out that GSDP growth is a critical measure because it directly impacts employment generation, tax revenues, industrial investment, infrastructure spending and the



State's fiscal strength. They argued that a continued decline in growth rates, could eventually affect Telangana's ability to maintain aggressive welfare spending and capital expenditure simultaneously. However, the Congress government has been maintaining that its focus was on balancing welfare commitments with long-term sustainable growth. Officials argued that economic expansion cannot be judged purely through headline GSDP numbers and that social sector investments would strengthen con-

sumption and rural demand over time. Nonetheless, the official projections themselves indicated that Telangana's economy is now growing at a no faster pace than during its earlier expansionary years, raising fresh concerns over the State's growth trajectory in the coming decade.

## Hyderabad Police Impose Traffic Diversions at Mehdiapatnam

**Hyderabad:** In view of skywalk construction work on Sunday and Monday at Mehdiapatnam Rythu Bazar and CCTV camera pole installation on PVNR Expressway, the Hyderabad traffic police enforced the following diversions and alternate routes to avoid traffic congestion from 4 pm to 6 am. Traffic coming from Masab Tank, NM DC, SD Eye Hospital towards Rethibowli-Nanal Nagar will be diverted at PVNR Expressway Pillar No.2 and 3 (Azizia Mosque) via., Meraj Cafe-Right-Mehdiapatnam (at Pillar No.15) and will be merged in the regular route. Also Read - Part Time Job Fraud Tops Cyberabad Crime in 2025 Vehicles coming from Tolichowki, Langer Houz and Attapur via., Nanal Nagar-Rethibowli towards Masab Tank



will be diverted at PVNR Expressway Pillar No.23 'U' turn to the opposite direction and will be allowed to merge in the same direction at Pillar No.4 and 5 in the regular route. Motorists coming from Masab tank towards RGIA will be diverted at S.D Eye Hospital

towards Laxminagar Ramp (Pillar No.77). Traffic coming from RGIA towards Mehdiapatnam will take the exit at Laxmi Nagar Ramp (Pillar No.88). Vehicles will take exit at respective down ramps according to the work progress on PVNR Express Way. The police

urged motorists to follow traffic updates on social media platform @ Hyderabad Traffic Police facebook page (facebook.com/HYDTP) and @ HYDTP (Twitter handle). In case of any emergency in travel, kindly call our traffic help line 9010203626 for travel assistance.

## State Aims to Conduct Pollution-Free Godavari Pushkaralu

**Kakinada:** Tourism and Cinematography minister Kandula Durgesh on Saturday said the state government's priority was to conduct the upcoming Godavari Pushkaralu in a pollution-free manner. Along with East Godavari district collector Keerthi Chekuri, joint collector Y. Megha Swaroop, SP D. Nageswara Rao and Rajamahendravaram Municipal Commissioner Rahul Meena, the minister inspected arrangements for Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan's visit to Pushkar Ghat on May 25. Also Read - Naidu to Launch 38 Industrial Parks at MSME Growth Summit in Vijayawada Durgesh said Pawan Kalyan would focus on pollution control measures in the Godavari river basin and



review preparations for the Pushkaralu. He said the Deputy Chief Minister would inspect the river stretch from Pushkar Ghat to Kotilingalu by boat and also review the condition of Nalla Channel and measures required to

make the area pollution-free. Durgesh expressed concern over increasing pollution intaken now would help conduct the Pushkaralu in a clean and hygienic manner despite its religious significance and said systematic measures taken now

would help conduct the Pushkaralu in a clean and hygienic environment. He urged officials to coordinate with public representatives and prepare an action plan for successful conduct of pollution-free Pushkaralu.

# Further Hike In Petrol And Diesel Prices 'Inevitable', Green Energy Remains Key: Ex BPCL Director

**New Delhi:** A further hike in petrol and diesel prices is "inevitable" if current global energy disruptions continue, a top official at Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd has said, outlining three options before policymakers as crude markets face sustained volatility. Raj Kumar Dubey, who recently retired as Director HR at BPCL, said, according to an ANI report on Sunday, that global price hikes of 20% to 50% had initially been seen as temporary, but "the way things are panning out, I think this is going to continue." Dubey listed three options to tackle the situation for now: one, a price hike at petrol pumps; two, petroleum companies absorb the losses; and three, government funds through deficit financing.



Further Hike In Petrol Diesel Prices Inevitable Says Top BPCL Official A scene at a petrol pump after recent fuel price hike. (ANI)

Pertinently, petrol and diesel prices were raised by 87-91 paise per litre on Saturday, taking the cumulative increase in retail fuel rates to nearly Rs 5 a litre in under 10 days as state-owned firms passed on soaring international oil prices. Alongside, compressed natural gas (CNG) prices were raised by Re 1 per kg, marking

the third increase in recent days and taking the cumulative hike to Rs 4 per kg. The back-to-back increases follow a prolonged freeze in retail fuel prices and come amid elevated crude oil prices in global markets, tighter refining margins, and a weaker rupee, which have sharply raised the cost of imports. Petrol price was increased by 87 paise in Delhi to Rs 99.51 per litre from Rs

98.64 earlier. Similarly, diesel price was hiked by 91 paise to Rs 92.49 a litre from Rs 91.58 previously. Further Hike In Petrol Diesel Prices Inevitable Says Top BPCL Official Latest Fuel Prices (ETV Bharat) With the latest hike, petrol and diesel prices have risen to nearly Rs 5 a litre since the state-owned oil marketing companies on May 15 ended the hiatus in rate revision, stoking concerns over inflationary pressures and higher transportation costs across the economy. Petrol and diesel prices were increased by Rs 3 per litre each on May 15 and 90 paise a litre on May 19. Further speaking on the hike in fuel prices, Dubey pointed out the destruction of energy infrastructure in the Middle East and said rebuilding the same is going to take "a lot of time". "So with this current scenario, I think another price hike should be

## Can Dimethyl Ether Replace LPG? India's First DME Facility Begins Production, Sees Scope To Cut Fuel Imports

**New Delhi:** Amid a global energy crisis triggered by the West Asia conflict, India has taken a significant step towards alternative fuel adoption and energy self-reliance with the commissioning of the country's first Dimethyl Ether (DME) manufacturing plant by Balaji Amines Limited in Solapur district.



The company has started commercial production at its 100,000 metric tonnes per annum (MTPA) DME facility at Chincholi, Corporation area, from May 20, positioning the project as a potential game changer in India's efforts to reduce dependence on imported LPG amid continuing global geopolitical uncertainties and volatile energy markets. DME is considered a clean-burning fuel that can either replace LPG entirely or be blended with it. Several countries in Europe and Asia already blend DME with LPG at ratios of up to 20%. In India, the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has recently allowed blending of DME with LPG up to 8%, opening the door for gradual adoption in the domestic fuel ecosystem. DME

A view of the DME manufacturing plant by Balaji Amines Limited (ETV Bharat) The development comes at a time when India imports nearly one-fourth of its LPG requirements, exposing the country to global supply disruptions and price shocks linked to tensions in the Middle East and other energy-producing regions. V K Saraswat, veteran Scientist and ex-member of NITI Aayog told ETV Bharat, "DME is emerging as an important alternative fuel that can either replace LPG completely or be blended with it to reduce India's heavy dependence on imported LPG." He explained that the long-term objective is to manufacture DME domestically using indigenous technology. "While a pilot plant is already operational, some private companies have also started large-scale production using imported methanol," he said. However, industry experts point out that India's domestic methanol production capacity remains limited. Saraso reduce India's heavy dependence on imported LPG. "He ewat noted that several Indian methanol manufacturers currently depend heavily on natural gas supplies, creating another layer of import dependence.

key raw material used in DME production, can be produced through multiple routes, including coal-based processes. Saraswat highlighted that indigenous DME technology has already been developed by the National Chemical Laboratory (NCL), Pune, along with catalyst technology. "While a pilot plant is already operational, some private companies have also started large-scale production using imported methanol," he said. However, industry experts point out that India's domestic methanol production capacity remains limited. Saraso reduce India's heavy dependence on imported LPG. "He ewat noted that several Indian methanol manufacturers currently depend heavily on natural gas supplies, creating another layer of import dependence.

## Centre Notifies Draft Rules For VB-G Ram G Rollout, Reviews States' Preparedness For July 1 Transition

**New Delhi:** The Union Ministry of Rural Development on Saturday notified draft rules under the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Act, 2025, laying down the institutional and administrative framework for the rollout of the new rural-employment programme that will replace the MGNREGA from July 1. A meeting chaired by Rohit Kansal, Secretary, Department of Rural Development (DoRD), Ministry of Rural Development, was also convened on Saturday to review preparedness for the rollout and operationalisation of the programme. Senior officers of the Ministry and representatives from States/UTs participated in the meeting, according to a press release by the Ministry. Framed under section 33 and other relevant provisions of the Act, the draft



rules have been placed in the public domain to facilitate wider consultation with states, institutions, experts, worker groups, civil society organisations and the public. The proposed rules cover transitional provisions, the National Level Steering Committee, the Central Gramin Rozgar Guarantee Council, administrative expenses, grievance redressal, payment of wages and unemployment allowance, expenditure beyond normative allocations and new rules on objective parameters for

normative allocation. Officials in the Ministry of Rural Development said the rules are aimed at establishing the institutional, financial and governance framework for the implementation of the Act across the country, while ensuring participatory consultation before finalisation. The draft Transitional Provisions Rules spell out the framework for shifting from the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) to VB-G RAM G, which was notified on

May 11 and is scheduled to come into force across states and Union territories from July 1. The rules provide for the continuation of ongoing works, settlement of liabilities, transfer of records and continuation of worker rights during the transition period. Existing e-KYC-verified MGNREGA job cards will remain temporarily valid until new Gramin Rozgar Guarantee cards are issued, while fresh works may also be opened if ongoing projects are insufficient to meet the labour demand. The VB-G RAM G Act replaces the MGNREGA with what the government describes as a "next-generation rural development framework" aligned with the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision. The new law raises the annual employment guarantee from 100 to 125 days and seeks to link rural employment more closely with infrastructure creation, climate resilience and vil-

lage-level planning through Viksit Gram Panchayat plans. According to the ministry, the states were asked to complete critical preparatory measures in a time-bound manner to ensure seamless operationalisation of the Act after July 1. These include notification of state VB-G RAM G schemes, formulation of state-specific rules, technical integration for DBT-SPARSH and SNA-SPARSH systems, and the preparation of an adequate shelf of works through the Yuktadhara portal approved by gram sabhas. Kansal emphasised the need for close coordination between states, Union territories and technical teams, saying the transition to VB-G RAM G represents a major reform in the rural-employment-and-livelihood framework, requiring coordinated efforts at both central and state levels.

## Students Facing Technical Glitches, Payment Issues; Pradhan Seeks Report From CBSE



**New Delhi:** Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has sought a detailed report from the CBSE over complaints of technical glitches faced by students and parents during the re-evaluation process, a source said on Saturday. The minister took serious cognisance of issues related to server downtime, payment gateway glitches and operational lapses reported during the process, they sa. "Taking serious cognisance of complaints raised by students and parents over technical disruptions during the CBSE re-evaluation process, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has sought a detailed report on server downtime, payment gateway glitches and operational lapses," the source said. Officials have been directed to explain the reasons behind the technical failures, preparedness measures and accountability of agencies involved in managing the process, they added. Earlier in the

day, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) said it committed to protecting the academic interests of students amid concerns over technical disruptions during the post-result verification and re-evaluation process. In a statement, the board said more than 98.6 lakh answer sheets were evaluated under the On-Screen Marking (OSM) system this year and students were provided the opportunity to obtain scanned copies of their evaluated answer books, followed by verification and re-evaluation as per the framework. The board said the response to the facility has been "extremely large", with a very high number of students applying within a short span of time. "At the same time, the Board has received feedback from some students regarding difficulties in accessing the portal during peak demand, delays in payment confirmation, and concerns after viewing scanned copies, such as

blurred or missing pages, as well as doubts relating to evaluation, including unmarked or incorrectly marked responses," it said. CBSE said it is continuously monitoring all reported issues and taking corrective measures, including extension of timelines and technical interventions. "Parents and students are requested not to feel anxious if they have encountered such issues. The very purpose of the verification and re-evaluation mechanism is to address genuine concerns in a structured and fair manner," the statement said. The board said due to exceptionally high traffic on the portal, some technical disruptions were experienced during peak periods and necessary corrective steps have been taken to ensure students are not inconvenienced. CBSE further said the last date for making applications has been extended by one day till May 24 and the portal for receiving re-evaluation requests will remain

## SC Takes Suo Motu Cognisance Of Twisha Sharma Case; Hearing On May 25

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court has taken suo motu cognisance of the Twisha Sharma case. The apex court has scheduled the hearing on Monday, May 25, 2026. A bench led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and comprising Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi will hear the matter. 33-year-old model-actor Twisha was found hanging at her matrimonial home in Bhopal's Katara Hills area on May 12, following which an FIR was registered against her husband, Samarth Singh, who is a lawyer, and her mother-in-law and former district judge Giribala Singh for alleged harassment for dowry. The case has been listed as 'Alleged Institutional Bias And Procedural Discrepancies In The Unnatural Death Of A Young Girl At Her Matrimonial Home'. The Madhya Pradesh government had

on Friday recommended transferring the investigation into the death of Twisha Sharma to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). A local court on Saturday remanded Samarth in police custody for seven days. Giribala Singh who is the co-accused said the police were yet to contact her for recording her statement. Samarth, who had been absconding for ten days after an FIR was registered against him and his mother following Twisha's death, was arrested on Friday evening after he reached the Jabalpur district court premises to surrender. He had withdrawn his pre-arrest bail petition filed in the Madhya Pradesh High Court earlier. Meanwhile, a team of four senior doctors from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi arrived in Bhopal on Saturday night to conduct a second post-



mortem examination of Twisha. The second autopsy will be conducted at AIIMS Bhopal on Sunday following directions issued by the Madhya Pradesh High Court. The High Court had accepted a

petition filed by Twisha's post-mortem examination by an independent medical board from AIIMS Delhi. On May 22, the Bar Council of India suspended Samarth Singh from legal practice with immediate effect following the alleged dowry death of Twisha. In the interim order, the apex bar body said the accusations against him were "grave" and impacted the dignity of public image of the legal

petition filed by Twisha's post-mortem examination by an independent medical board from AIIMS Delhi. On May 22, the Bar Council of India suspended Samarth Singh from legal practice with immediate effect following the alleged dowry death of Twisha. In the interim order, the apex bar body said the accusations against him were "grave" and impacted the dignity of public image of the legal

## 'Positive Stride' Taking Place Towards Peace Deal Between Iran And The Us: Iran's Envoy To Pakistan

**Islamabad:** Iran's Ambassador to Pakistan Reza Amiri Moghadam said on Sunday that a "positive stride" was taking place, apparently towards a peace deal between his country and the US, following the latest mediatory efforts by Pakistan.

He said in a social media statement that Pakistan's interior minister, Mohsin Naqvi, after returning from Tehran, "congratulated me on the achievements of the negotiations with the officials of my country". "With conservative optimism, we can hope that, if the other side is adequately committed, a positive stride is taking shape, which is the result of the positions of the Islamic Republic of Iran based on dignity, the steadfastness of the courageous armed forces and the resistance of the brave Iranian nation, as well as the initiative and dedi-



cated endeavours of the Pakistani mediator," he said on X. He also expressed his hope that the "sincere efforts of the Pakistan expressed his hope that the government and Army", including Prime Minister Shehbaz Shalead to lasting peace in the region". He also expressed gratitude for Pakistan and its leadership by saying: "On my behalf, I extend my sincere and whole-

hearted gratitude to all of them for their sincere endeavours". The statement came after the Pakistan Army announced that it had successfully completed its visit to Iran, which aimed at bringing an end to the conflict.

expressed gratitude to Pakistan and its leadership by saying: "On my behalf, I extend my sincere and wholehearted gratitude and Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi to all of them for their sincere endeavours". The statement came after the Pakistan Army announced that the army chief successfully completed his visit to Iran, which aimed at bringing an end to the conflict.

## CBSE Extends Class 12 Scanned Answer Book Application Date To May 23

**New Delhi:** The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has extended the last date for obtaining scanned copies of evaluated answer books for Class 12 board examinations by a day following technical issues on its website. According to a CBSE circular issued on Tuesday, the deadline has been extended from May 22 to May 23. "It is hereby informed to all stakeholders that due to a technical problem encountered on the CBSE website for Post-Verification Facilities and to ensure sufficient time to the students, the last date for obtaining scanned copies of evaluated answer books has



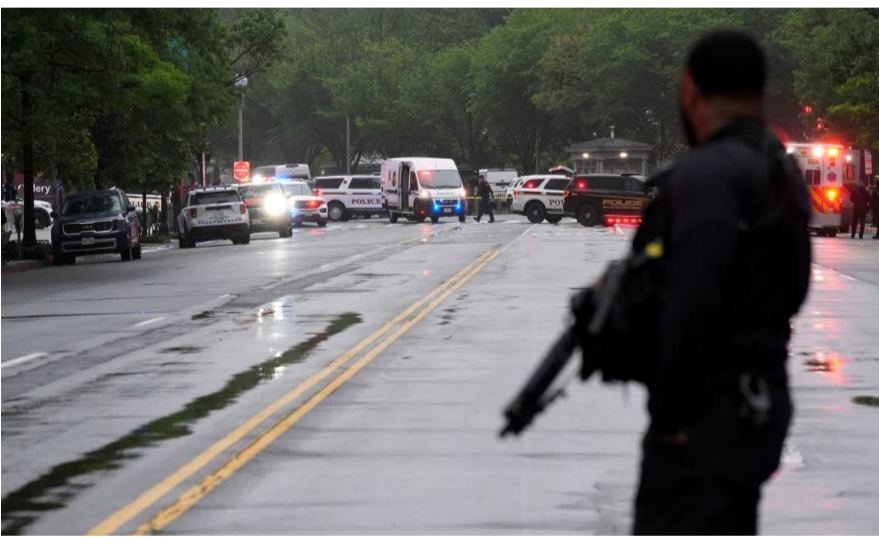
been extended," the circular said. Candidates have been advised to utilise the extended timeline and apply accordingly, while all other terms and conditions remain unchanged. The extension comes amid complaints from students over technical glitches on the CBSE

website for post-verification facilities. Several students had flagged issues related to login, payment and non-functional application links on social media after the process began. The CBSE had opened the window for evaluated Class 12 answer books from May

19 to May 22. The Board had earlier begun the process for re-evaluation and verification of answer sheets following concerns raised by some students and parents over the On-Screen Marking system. Students who apply for scanned copies will be able to access them between May 26 and May 29. The CBSE has also revised the fee structure this year. Students can obtain scanned copies of answer books by paying Rs 100 instead of Rs 700 earlier. The fee for verification of the answer sheet has been reduced to Rs 100 from Rs 500, while re-evaluation will cost Rs 25 per question.

## US Secret Service Kills Gunman After Shooting Near White House; Trump Unharmed

**New Delhi:** A gunman who opened fire near the White House was shot dead by Secret Service officers on Saturday evening (local time) after an exchange of gunfire close to the executive complex in which a bystander was also injured, officials said. Anthony Guglielmi, Chief of Communications of the US Secret Service, said that President Donald Trump was inside the White House and was not injured. The shooting happened shortly after 6 pm local time near 17th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue NW, close to the White House grounds and the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, when a man "pulled a weapon from his bag and began firing." "Secret Service Police returned fire, striking the suspect, who was transported to an area hospital where he was pronounced deceased. During the shooting, one bystander was also struck by gunfire. No injuries were sustained by officers," Guglielmi said in a statement. "The President was in the White House during the incident, however no protectees or operations were impacted," the statement



added. The officials, however, did not reveal the identity of the suspect or the motive behind the incident. "The agency said Trump was inside the White House at the time of the shooting," Guglielmi said. The condition of the bystander was not immediately released by the Secret Service, though CNN reported the person was in critical condition. Police and security forces swarmed the scene, cordoning off access. "We heard probably 20 to 25 what sounded like fireworks, but they're gunshots, and then everyone started running," Canadian tourist Reid Adrian was quoted as saying by

AFP. Journalists who were on the White House North Lawn at the time said they were ordered to run and shelter in the press briefing room. ABC News correspondent Selina Wang had been recording a video for social media when the gunfire broke out, capturing the sounds of the shots as she dove to the ground. "It sounded like dozens of gunshots," she said on X. The shooting comes less than a month after what law enforcement authorities described as an attempted assassination of Trump on April 25, when a suspect was arrested at the Washington hotel hosting the annual White

House Correspondents' Association Dinner, a gathering of journalists and public figures. The man never got close to Trump or the other guests attending the event. In July 2024, Trump was targeted during a campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania. A gunman killed an audience member and lightly wounded the then-candidate in the ear. A few months later, another armed man was arrested on a West Palm Beach golf course where Trump was playing a round. "Thank God President Trump is safe," House Republicans said on X after the Saturday evening shooting.

## US Green Card Rule Change: American Lawmakers, Immigration Advocates Slam New Policy, Seek Reversal

**New Delhi:** The US administration's recent announcement of a new policy that requires green card seekers to make their applications from their home country has been criticised as "reckless and wrong" by several lawmakers and immigration advocates in America. In a statement late on Friday, US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) spokesperson Zach Kahler said from now on, "an alien who is in the US temporarily and wants a Green Card must return to their home country to apply, except in extraordinary circumstances". Kahler said that people who provide an economic benefit or otherwise are in the national interest will likely be able to continue on their current path. It was not immediately clear whether these exceptions would extend to skilled foreign workers on H-1B visas. Slamming the move, Democratic lawmakers said they will pursue every avenue to fight against the "reprehensible decision" and push for its reversal. The USCIS did not spell out which groups would be exempted, only suggesting that the policy may not apply to persons seeking asylum. "This puts 1.2 million



Indian Americans and their families in limbo after they followed every law, paid taxes and waited legally for decades," Ajay Bhutoria, former White House Advisor to President Biden and Immigration Advocate on the Trump administration's new Green Card processing policy, told PTI Videos. Bhutoria said different groups will be filing lawsuits challenging this new policy. The earlier policy allowed foreign workers to change from non-immigrant to immigrant by applying for "adjustment of status" from within the US. "Indian origin immigrants and their families

constitute 1.5 per cent of the US population but pay six per cent of the taxes. Sixty per cent of US hotels are owned by Indian immigrants, creating four million jobs. "Indian origin scientists are instrumental in obtaining 10 per cent of all American patents, and our community's doctors serve 30 per cent of America's patients," said Sanjeev Joshupura, Executive Director, Indiaspora, a non-profit organisation. He said the new rules will result in increased expenses, temporary family separations and myriad other problems and lead to fewer highly skilled, foreign-born guest workers

and their families applying for green cards and embarking on a path to US citizenship. "We understand, respect and support America's prerogative to create or modify its own immigration rules, but we urge our governmental leaders to do so without impairing our nation's growth prospects and her standing in the world," Joshupura said. US lawmakers also slammed the move and asserted that they would seek the reversal of the decision.

"This reckless policy shows a stunning disregard for the human cost it will impose on hun-

## Trump Says A Deal With Iran And Opening Of Strait Of Hormuz Are 'Largely Negotiated'

**Islamabad:** President Donald Trump said Saturday that a deal with Iran on the war, including opening the Strait of Hormuz, has been "largely negotiated" after calls with Israel and other allies in the "Final aspects and details of the Deal are currently being discussed, and will be announced shortly," Trump said on social media, with no details. He said he had spoken with leaders from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan and Bahrain, and separately with Israel. He described it as a "Memorandum of Understanding pertaining to PEACE" that still must be finalized by the United States, Iran and the other countries that participated in the calls. It capped a week in which the U.S. weighed a new round of attacks on the Islamic Republic that would break a fragile ceasefire. There was no mention of Iran's nuclear program and highly enriched uranium, which Iran has sought to discuss later. There was no immediate comment from Iran or Israel. Trump said speaking with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who had pressed the U.S. to go to war, went "very well." There had been growing optimism Earlier on Saturday, a regional official with direct knowledge of the Pakistan-led mediation efforts said the U.S. and Iran were closing in on a deal to end the war. The official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss closed-door deliberations, cautioned that "last-minute dis-



putes" could blow up the efforts. This is not the first time in recent weeks that a deal has been described as close. The official said the deal would include an official declaration of the war's end, with two-month negotiations on Iran's nuclear program. The Strait of Hormuz would be reopened and the U.S. would end its blockade of Iran's ports. Iran, meanwhile, had signaled "narrowing differences" in negotiations after Pakistani army chief Asim Munir held more talks in Tehran. Twelve weeks have passed since the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran on Feb. 28, killing top Iranian officials including its supreme leader and interrupting nuclear talks between the U.S. and Iran for the second time in less than a year. Iran fired at Israel and at neighbors hosting U.S. forces, shaking Gulf nations that had considered themselves safe havens in a tough region. A ceasefire has held since April 7. But Iran's decision to effectively close the Strait of Hormuz for ships carrying regional oil, natural gas and other critical supplies has been a focal

point of global concern and economic pain. Iran described it as a "framework agreement" for more talks. Iran state TV earlier quoted Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei as describing the draft as a "framework agreement" and adding: "We want this to include the main issues required for ending the imposed war and other issues of essential importance to us. Then, over a reasonable time span, between 30 to 60 days, details are discussed and ultimately a final agreement is reached." He said the Strait of Hormuz is among the topics discussed. But Baghaei told Iran's official IRNA news agency that nuclear issues are not part of current negotiations. "Our focus at this stage is on ending the war on all fronts, including Lebanon," he said, adding that lifting sanctions on Tehran "has explicitly been included in the text and remains our fixed position." The Iranian-backed Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV reported that the Lebanese militant group's leader received a letter from Iranian

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi saying Tehran will not abandon its allies. There is a fragile, U.S.-brokered ceasefire in the Israel-Hezbollah war in Lebanon, a conflict that began two days after the Iran war started. Trump had said "serious negotiations" were underway, and at the request of allies in the Middle East. Trump has repeatedly set deadlines for Tehran and then backed off. Iran's parliament speaker, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, the lead negotiator in historic face-to-face talks with the U.S. last month in Islamabad, said Saturday that Iran has rebuilt its military assets and if Trump resumed attacks, the result would be "more crushing and more bitter" than at the start of State TV said he spoke after meeting with Pakistan's army chief Asim Munir, who also met with Araghchi, President Masoud Pezeshkian and other senior officials. Qatar sent a senior official to Tehran to support Pakistan's efforts.

## Britain's Navy Prepares To Clear Mines In The Strait Of Hormuz While Waiting For A Peace Deal

Aboard the RFA Lyme Bay: Aboard the RFA Lyme Bay, docked off the coast of Gibraltar, hundreds of British sailors are waiting to be deployed for a mine-clearing mission to the Strait of Hormuz that is still in doubt. U.S. President Donald Trump has lashed out at allies for not doing more to support the United States' war effort in Iran, whose chokehold on the strait has crippled international shipping and sent energy prices soaring. In March, Trump told NATO allies to "go get your own oil" and secure the strait themselves. On the southern tip of the Iberian Peninsula, in the British Overseas Territory of Gibraltar, the U.K.'s Royal Navy is preparing to do that — but only once a peace agreement is reached. Trump said Saturday that a deal with Iran has been "largely negotiated" after calls with Israel and other allies in the region, but it still needs finalizing. Britain's Armed Forces Minister Al Carns took a small group of reporters to visit the RFA Lyme Bay as it prepares for a possible international operation, led by the U.K. and France, to secure the strait. As Carns spoke, the amphibious landing vessel, docked at the gateway to the Mediterranean, was being loaded with ammunition and mine-hunting sea drones equipped with sonar. With a crew of several hundred sailors, the RFA Lyme Bay will soon depart Gibraltar to



link up with the U.K. destroyer HMS Dragon and allied ships for air support before sailing through the Suez Canal to the Persian Gulf. "Which other country can pull together 40 nations and come up with a solution to deal with a complex problem that we couldn't predict because we weren't involved?" asked Carns, responding to a question from The Associated Press about what Trump wants from his British ally. After the U.S. and Israel launched the war on Feb. 28, Tehran retaliated by effectively closing the strait, a key waterway for the region's oil, natural gas and fertilizer, causing global economic pain. The U.K. in particular has drawn the ire of Trump, who has described Britain's navy as "toys" and Prime Minister Keir Starmer as "not Winston Churchill." At least 6,000 ships have been blocked from passing through the strait since the conflict began, Carns said. There

could be a range of threats from Iran's mines. Iran could have a "huge" variety of mines throughout the strait, said Cmdr. Gemma Britton, who is in charge of the Royal Navy's Mine and Threat Exploitation Group. Mines could be rocket-propelled, cabled or sit on the seabed and be triggered by sound, movement or light. AP was shown autonomous systems that can scan the seabed and the water with sonar in about half the time it takes for a crewed vessel to enter and map potential dangers. The sea drones equipped with sonar produce a picture of objects under the water, from fishing traps to pipelines. The picture is used to identify mines that can be explored with advanced acoustic systems and cameras, Britton said. Some of the systems on the RFA Lyme Bay can be loaded onto a smaller vessel that can be launched and piloted autonomously from the ship, which acts as a mother ship, waiting

outside any potential minefield, Britton said. That reduces the number of people needed to enter, she said. Once a mine has been located, a diver with explosives normally places a charge on the mine before swimming away to detonate it. But RFA Lyme Bay is trialing a remotely operated vehicle that dives and drops a charge by a mine before setting it off, Britton said. The priority, she said, will be to clear a transit lane in the strait to allow around 700 ships to leave. A lane flowing in the opposite direction will then be cleared, allowing ships to enter, she said, but added that clearing the entire strait could take months or years. It's still not clear if the UK and its allies will be deployed. It's still not clear if any mines are in the strait — or if the U.K. and its allies will be deploying to remove them. When asked by AP if the British effort was partly for show, to curry favor with the U.S., Carns said

## Iran Could Trigger 'Nuclear Arms Race' In Gulf: Vance

Washington: US Vice President J D Vance has said Iran having an atomic weapon would trigger a "nuclear arms race" worldwide and asserted that the US was "locked and loaded" to restart military operations if Tehran failed to reach a peace deal. Vance's remarks at a press conference at the White House on Tuesday came a day after President Donald Trump put off the decision to resume strikes on Iran at the request of Arab nations, including Qatar and the UAE, who said that Tehran was being "reasonable" in peace talks. "We think the Iranians want to make a deal. The president of the United States has asked us to negotiate in good faith. And that's exactly what we've done," the vice president said. But Vance warned that diplomacy will not come at the cost of Trump's key demand that Iran never obtain a nuclear weapon. "So as the president just told me, we're locked and loaded," Vance said, adding that he had a meeting with Trump before coming to the press briefing. "We don't want to go down that pathway. But the presi-



dent is willing and able to go down that pathway if we have to," the vice president said. Vance said the US has a "simple proposition" and there are "two paths to go down". "Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon," he said, adding that if Tehran acquired one, it would send other nations "scrambling" to get their own, setting off a "nuclear arms race". "Iran would really be the first domino in what would set off a nuclear arms race all over the world," he said. "If the Iranians did get a nuclear weapon, we know that a lot of nations all across the Gulf would then want

their own nuclear weapon, and then a lot of nations all across the world," Vance said. "As the father of three young kids, I don't want them to inherit a world where 20 additional regimes—half of them very dangerous and very sympathetic to terrorists—have nuclear weapons," Vance said. "We want to keep the number of countries that have nuclear weapons small, and that's why Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon. On top of all the other things that we might be worried about, that they themselves could use it, that they could use it as

leverage in economic control or economic negotiations. We just don't want them to have a nuclear weapon," Vance said. "There's an option B, and the option B is that we could restart the military campaign to continue to prosecute the case, to continue to try to achieve America's objectives," Vance said. "But that's not what the president wants. And I don't think it's what the Iranians want either," he said. He says there's an opportunity to reset the Washington-Tehran relationship, "but it takes two to tango".

## Pakistan's Manufactured Global Importance And The Deepening Military Grip

Pakistan: global diplomatic projection masks a deepening economic crisis and tightening military control over state institutions. Behind this narrative of rising importance, democratic space and civil liberties continue to erode rapidly. Pakistan's internal situation is deteriorating rapidly, with the country on the verge of economic collapse. Inflation is rising, fuel prices are soaring, and ordinary people are struggling to survive. Instead of addressing these real challenges, the state is busy projecting a different image abroad, that of Pakistan as an important player at the centre of global diplomacy. This narrative is being pushed hard, especially through claims of mediation between the United

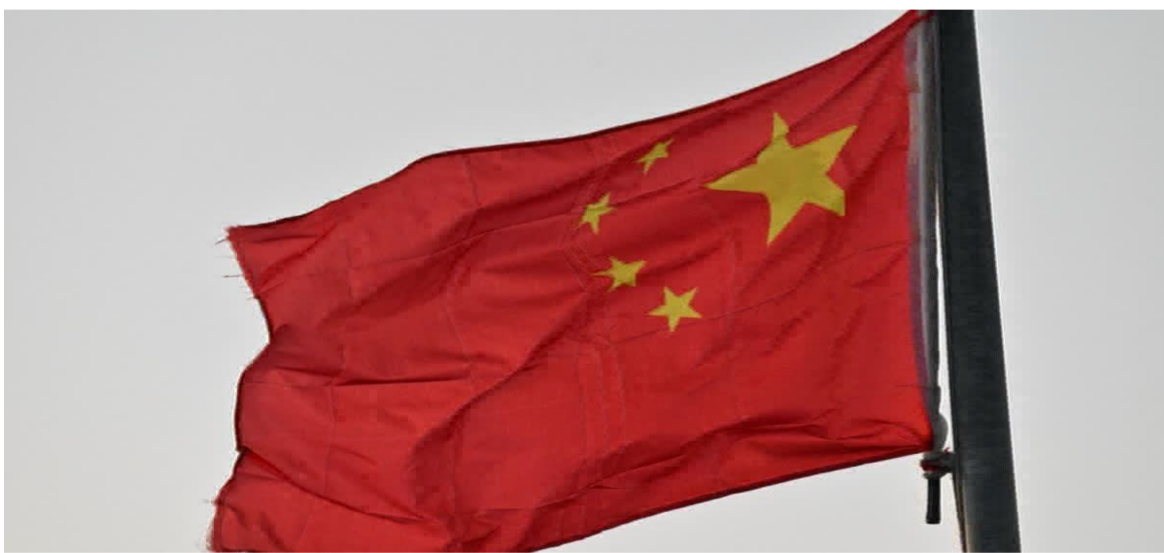


States and Iran. But this projection is profoundly misleading. It creates the impression that Pakistan's economic and political crises will somehow disappear simply because it's engaging in high-level diplomacy. The truth is, this so-called global importance is being used as a cover. Power Centralisation Under Asif Munir. At the core of this strategy is the military leadership under Asif

Munir, which is using this narrative to further tighten its grip on Pakistan. What little democracy existed in the country has now been systematically dismantled. Almost all the key institutions — the judiciary, the media, the political structures — are now effectively under military control. Judges are being shifted, and the Judicial Commission's recommendations to transfer Justice Mohsin

Akhtar Kayani, Justice Babar Sattar and Justice Saman Rafat Imtiaz of the Islamabad High Court, which were approved in April 2026, have been widely criticised for lack of transparency. Broader constitutional changes have altered the structure of the judiciary itself. Military courts are overriding civilian authority, and changes such as the 27th Amendment have further power.

## China To Send First Astronaut From Hong Kong On Space Mission



Beijing: China plans to launch its next manned mission to the Tiangong space station on Sunday — the country's first space mission to have a Hong Kong astronaut onboard. Chinese astronauts Zhu Yangzhu and Zhang Zhiyuan, and Hong Kong's Li Jiaying will be part of the Shenzhou-23 crewed spaceflight mission, said China Manned Space Agency on Saturday. Li Jiaying is the first orbital traveller from Hong Kong. This development comes years after Hong Kong was handed back to China by the UK on July 1, 1997, with certain rights supposed to be guaranteed for at least 50 years under the "one country, two systems" agreement. The Shenzhou-23 crewed space-ship is scheduled to be launched at 11:08 pm on Sunday (Beijing Time) from the Jiuquan Satellite

Launch Centre in northwest China, said Zhang Jingbo, CMSA. China replaces the crew of its station in low orbit every six months, but this time, one of the new crew members may stay for a year to study the long-term effects on the astronaut's health and to improve in-orbit medical support, the spokesperson said. The crew of the astronaut's health and to the current Shenzhou spaceship has so far been aloft for more than 200 days and is on track to break the record held by the preon the astronaut's health and to vious crew, which returned to Earth after 204 days. During their time on the space station, the Shenzhou-23 crew will conduct more than 100 new scientific studies, including research on zebrafish, mice and artificial embryos to study reproduction in

space. After the Hong Kong astronaut, China plans to send a Pakistani national to the station. Two selected candidates from Pakistan are currently undergoing training. Earlier this month, Chinese space officials said plans are afoot to expand the low-earth orbiting space station, potentially more than doubling in size as the rival International Space Station (ISS) is set to be phased out by 2031. China operationalised its space station in 2022. Currently, China's Tiangong space station and the ISS, a collaborative project involving NASA along with the space agencies of Russia, Europe, Japan and Canada, are in orbit. After the ISS, which is a collaborative project of several countries, phases out, China's space station may become the only one of its kind in orbit.

## India's Approach To Migration Grounded In Dignity, Respect For Rights: MoS Kirti

United Nations: India's approach to migration remains people-centric and grounded in dignity, Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh said, underlining that mobility will remain an integral feature of a dynamic global economy. "India's approach to migration governance is holistic and pragmatic. It is driven by coordinated institutional efforts and broad societal engagement," Singh said here Tuesday. He emphasised that "welfare and protection of our people" remains central to India's approach. "We have strengthened mechanisms to support migrants, particularly those in vulnerable situations, through initiatives such as the Indian Community Welfare Fund and the MADAD portal," he said. "Our responsive consular services also provide timely assis-

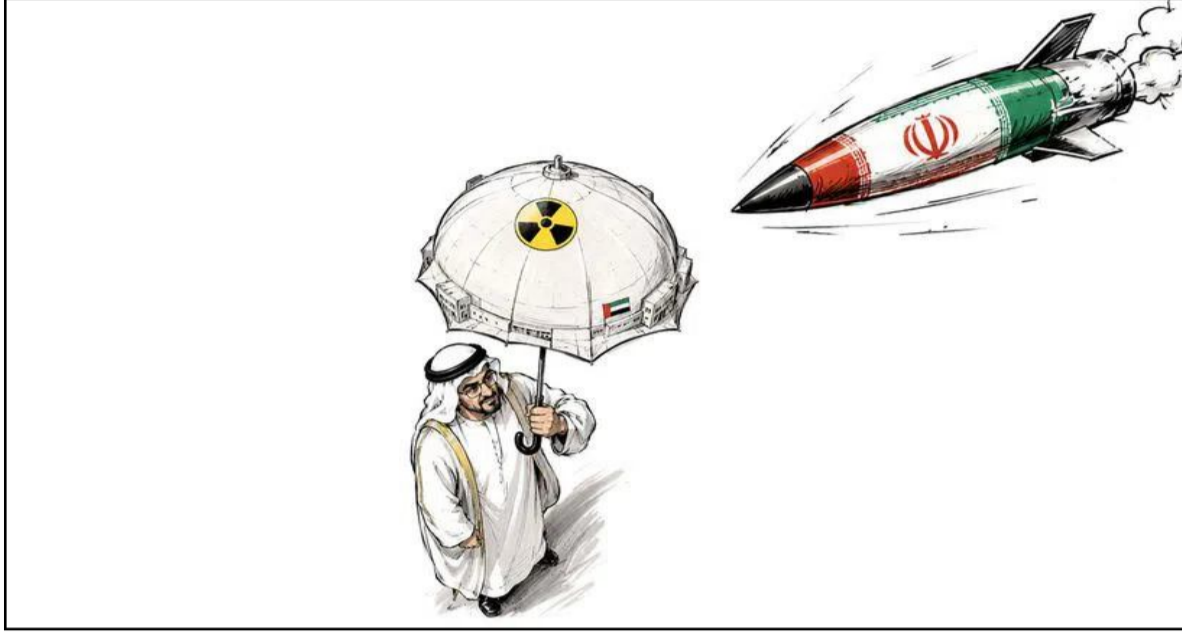


tance, legal, financial, and insurance coverage to our nationals overseas," he said. Singh, who arrived here Sunday, is leading the Indian delegation for the Second International Migration Review Forum (IMRF), being held under the auspices of the UN General Assembly from May 4-8. He addressed a round table at the UN headquarters on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. In a post on X, Singh said that at the round table, he outlined measures taken by India

to facilitate safe and regular migration through leveraging Digital Public Infrastructure, strengthening consular services, concluding migration and mobility agreements, while upskilling, training and providing pre-departure training of the country's skilled labour. "Highlighted that our approach to migration remains people-centric - grounded in dignity, inclusion, and respect for rights," he said. India's experience underscores the importance of leveraging technology, strengthening

partnerships, and adopting a holistic lifecycle approach to migration governance, Singh said in his remarks. "We are also aware that challenges remain, especially when it comes to strengthening social protection, addressing vulnerabilities, and improving data systems," he said. Singh stressed that India recognises that mobility will be a part of an increasingly interconnected and dynamic global economy. India's policies remain closely aligned with the objectives and principles envisaged in the Global Compact, while evolving in response to emerging global dynamics. "With the objective that migration should be a choice, supported by opportunity and dignity, we have invested in inclusive growth, livelihood and financial inclusion," he said.

# Barakah drone strike — UAE in Iran's strategic crosshairs



The recent drone strike near the Barakah Nuclear Power Plant in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has once again exposed the fragile security architecture of West Asia. Although the drone reportedly struck an electrical generator outside the inner perimeter of the plant and did not damage the reactor itself, the incident has revived concerns over the growing shadow conflict between Iran and the UAE. More importantly, it underlines how critical infrastructure, ports and energy facilities are increasingly becoming instruments of geopolitical signalling in the Gulf.

Reading Iran-US-Israel escalation through India's lens Opinion: Forty days of war — Iran endures, US limits exposed Within the context of recent regional tensions, Iran's increasingly confrontational posture towards the UAE is difficult to ignore. Tehran appears to view pressure on Abu Dhabi as a way of indirectly challenging both the United States and Israel without inviting a direct conventional conflict. Iran's Regional Posture In recent months, Iran has repeatedly demonstrated that it prefers calibrated retaliation to outright escalation. The objective appears to be to impose strategic costs while avoiding a war that could destabilise the Iranian regime itself. The tensions also reveal the limited success of recent American pressure tactics against Iran. Washington's attempts to weaken Tehran economically through sanctions and maritime restrictions have undoubtedly strained the Iranian economy, forcing reductions in oil production and increasing dependence on floating storage tankers. However, these measures have not fundamentally altered Iran's regional posture or nuclear ambitions. Instead, Tehran has adapted while simultaneously expanding its strategy of asymmetric retaliation through missiles, drones and proxy networks spread across the region.

The missile and drone strikes on Fujairah earlier this month were particularly significant. Fujairah is strategically important because it serves as the UAE's

principal oil export outlet outside the Strait of Hormuz. Any disruption there carries implications not merely for the UAE but also for global energy markets. By demonstrating its ability to threaten such infrastructure, Iran seeks to convey that instability in the Gulf can carry economic costs far beyond the region itself. Tehran understands that energy insecurity instantly attracts international attention and places pressure on Western governments dependent on stable oil supplies.

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Growing Vulnerability A major reason for the UAE's growing vulnerability lies in its steadily deepening relationship with Israel. Since signing the Abraham Accords in 2020, Abu Dhabi has expanded security, diplomatic and economic cooperation with Tel Aviv far more openly than most Arab states. While several Gulf countries maintain discreet engagement with Israel, the UAE has chosen visible strategic alignment. Reports of advanced Israeli defence systems, intelligence cooperation and cybersecurity partnerships have only reinforced Iranian perceptions that the UAE has become part of a broader anti-Iran security framework. From Tehran's perspective, therefore, the UAE represents more than a neighbouring Gulf monarchy. It is increasingly viewed as a regional platform through which Israeli influence can project itself deeper into the Gulf. This perception has acquired greater significance after the Gaza conflict, which sharply polarised public opinion across the Arab world. While many Arab governments maintained caution in public, the UAE's continued engagement with Israel drew criticism from sections of the region that viewed normalisation as politically premature.

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their strategic priorities are no longer identical. Divergences over Yemen, Sudan and oil production policy have become more visible in recent years. Abu Dhabi's desire to maximise oil production and pursue a principal oil export outlet outside the Strait of Hormuz. Any disruption there carries implications not merely for the UAE but also for global energy markets. By demonstrating its ability to threaten such infrastructure, Iran seeks to convey that instability in the Gulf can carry economic costs far beyond the region itself. Tehran understands that energy insecurity instantly attracts international attention and places pressure on Western governments dependent on stable oil supplies.

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viewed normalisation as politically premature. GCC At the same time, important differences are emerging within the Gulf Cooperation Council. Saudi Arabia and the UAE continue to cooperate closely, but their strategic priorities are no longer identical. Divergences over Yemen, Sudan and oil production policy have become more visible in recent years. Abu Dhabi's desire to maximise oil production and pursue a principal oil export outlet outside the Strait of Hormuz. Any disruption there carries implications not merely for the UAE but also for global energy markets. By demonstrating its ability to threaten such infrastructure, Iran seeks to convey that instability in the Gulf can carry economic costs far beyond the region itself. Tehran understands that energy insecurity instantly attracts international attention and places pressure on Western governments dependent on stable oil supplies.

# The reluctant giant — the listing Tata Sons never wanted



It was one of those heavy, sweat-soaked Mumbai mornings, early 2024, when an invisible tremor passed through the hushed corridors of Bombay House, the Tata Group's venerable headquarters. Not the kind that cracks plaster, but the sort that quietly rattles the bones of an institution. A single decision by the Reserve Bank of India in 2022 had lit the fuse on something the group had side-stepped for generations: the very real prospect of going public. A year after Ratan Tata's death, Tata Group faces internal disputes. Shapoorji Pallonji Mistry pushes for Tata Sons listing, cites public interest.

The trigger seemed innocuous at first. The RBI had classified Tata Sons had classified Tata Sons as an 'upper-layer NBFC', a tag reserved for large non-bank financial companies that are simply too big to stay in the shadows. The RBI deadline for mandated listing had unsettled the group. The rule came with no room for nostalgia: list on the stock exchange within three years, no extensions, no exceptions. Under RBI rules, Upper Layer NBFCs are required to list on stock exchanges within three years. For almost any other company, that's a straightforward strategic move. For Tata Sons, it felt less like a milestone and more like a challenge to its very soul.

To grasp why, you have to travel back to where the story began. Ever since Jamsetji Tata set the first stone in 1868, Tata Sons has been more than a holding company; it has been a custodian-ship. Two charitable trusts, the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust and the Sir Ratan Tata Trust, together own roughly 66% of the equity. This was never about building personal fortunes. The design was deliberate: funnel profits into philanthropy, national advancement, and impossibly patient industrial dreams. The Taj Mahal Palace Hotel, Tata Steel, Tata Motors. These weren't born from quarter-by-quarter targets. They were sown with a kind of capital that wouldn't survive the ritual of endless earnings calls. Inside Bombay House, the real anxiety has never been about

public shareholders as people. It's the quiet dread that listing would swap a legacy measured in decades for a scorecard judged every 90 days. Tussle Over Identity

So the internal debate was never just about ticking a regulatory box. It was, and still is, a tussle over identity. On one side stand the keepers of that legacy. Noel Tata and the leadership of the Tata Trusts, who together command a majority voice, have been openly uneasy. Their logic is rooted in memory: the group's greatest bets would never have flourished under the relentless glare of short-termism. They point to Tata Consultancy Services, today a technology bellwether, but once a fragile idea that survived only because it was allowed to grow unseen, nourished by years of invisible investment.

ON THE TABLE

• Venu Srinivasan, a powerful board member, sees listing as arithmetic, not betrayal

• Shapoorji Pallonji Group, a significant minority stakeholder, supports listing for liquidity and valuation clarity. For them, a public listing isn't primarily a financial event. It's a shift in the institution's gravity—a slow erosion of the freedom to think beyond the next analyst call. Ratan Tata himself long insisted the group's purpose stretched far wider than shareholder returns. The Trusts echo that: listing risks turning a calling into a ticker.

Across the table sits a very different conviction. Voices like Venu Srinivasan, a powerful board member, don't see betrayal; they see arithmetic. The Tata empire is not just a collection of mature, self-sustaining legacy businesses. It's a sprawling ambition, hungry for capital: a Rs 91,000-crore semiconductor plant in Dholera, a starkly expensive overhaul of Air India's fleet, an electric pivot at Tata Motors, and deepening bets on digital infrastructure. Even the Trusts' formidable reserves and internal accruals can't stretch indefinitely. Listing these, proponents argue, isn't giving up; it's unlocking a public reservoir of funds precisely to preserve the group's long-term vision, only now with transparent

governance and far deeper pockets. In their view, disciplined public scrutiny could even strengthen, not weaken, the group's backbone.

Unresolved Wound: Shapoorji Pallonji Group

Then there's the unresolved wound: the Shapoorji Pallonji Group. Under Shapoorji Mistry, they hold a significant minority stake, and this debate cuts closer to the bone. Years after the devastating boardroom rupture — Cyrus Mistry's abrupt unseating as chairman in 2016, the scorched-earth legal battles, the financial strains that followed — their shares remain locked inside a private structure that offers no obvious exit.

The Mistry family's attempts to raise funds against those shares have repeatedly stalled; a private company's valuation is stubbornly opaque, making lenders nervous. For them, a listing tastes like liberation, a chance to finally crystallise value, or walk away cleanly. It would turn a bitter, illiquid inheritance into something transparent and tradable, perhaps closing one of India Inc's most painful chapters.

ACROSS THE TABLE

• Noel Tata and Tata Trusts resist listing to protect long-term legacy control.

• Ratan Tata upheld purpose over shareholder returns; trusts echo this philosophy: listing risks turning a calling into a ticker. N Chandrasekaran, Caught in the Middle

Caught in the middle, as always, is Natarajan Chandrasekaran, the group's chairman. He's less an ideologue and more a pragmatist. He reads the regulator's intent, the Trusts' anxieties, the minority's pleas—all with the calm of a man who once steered TCS, one of the country's most watched and widely held listed companies. He knows public markets intimately, but he also knows the Tata DNA. Those close to him whisper that his instinct has been to prepare for a listing if it becomes inescapable, while fighting fiercely to avoid being cornered into one under somebody else's terms.

That tightrope has only grown more precarious with time. By September 2025, the RBI's deadline slipped past with no

IPO. As of May 2026, Tata Sons remains an NBFC; the regulator's pressure is still present, but no immediate crack-down is visible. Behind the boardroom doors, a quiet ingenuity has been at work: trimming debt, reshaping assets, exploring every financial re-engineering possible to wriggle out of the "upper-layer" net altogether. The whole upper-layer framework was conceived after 2021 to force systemically important shadow banks into the same sunlight as traditional banks. If you pose a risk to the system, the logic goes, you answer to the public. Most large NBFCs had grudgingly complied. But none carried the intricate, trust-woven architecture of Tata Sons. Churn in Board

Meanwhile, the board itself has been shifting. Quietly, new independent directors with sharp regulatory and restructuring expertise have been brought in. It's not a white flag. It's more like storing sandbags before a flood, prudent preparation for a world where opacity is no longer an option.

What makes this moment so potent isn't the RBI alone. It's the way multiple forces are now bending inwards simultaneously. Capital appetites are ballooning just as patience from minority voices runs thin, and regulators show vanishing tolerance for legacy exceptions.

IN THE MIDDLE • Natarajan Chandrasekaran, the group's chairman, balances regulation, legacy, and market reality

• He understands both public markets and the Tata DNA. The real question humming through Bombay House now isn't simply "Will they list?" It's far more unsettling: can a trust-led, mission-first industrial house — built to nurture projects across generations — survive inside a global financial system that worships quarterly transparency? Elsewhere, family-controlled giants like IKEA or Bosch have crafted ingenious structures to balance purpose and markets. Tata Sons is now being asked to design its own answer, and the clock is ticking.

What was once whispered in closed rooms has become a stark, pub-

## WWE SmackDown May 22 Results: Sami Zayn Refuses To Help Cody Rhodes Against Gunther's Attack

The Friday night episode of WWE SmackDown was concluded on May 22. Fans witnessed several high-impact matches and segments during the show. Veteran stars won the hearts of the audience. The main event featured a fiercely contested match. This was the Blue Brand's final episode leading up to "Saturday Night's Main Event," and the stage for that event was set right here. Triple H went all out to make this show a spectacular success. Shinsuke Nakamura vs Talla Tonga Shinsuke Nakamura faced off



against Talla Tonga. The match was excellent, ultimately ending in a victory for Tama. After the match, the MFT attacked Nakamura. Talla Tonga stopped Siko from delivering a Samoan Spike and then executed his own finishing move on Nakamura. Damian Priest rushed out to Nakamura's

aid. Trick Williams segment. Trick Williams faced off against Carmelo Hayes. A verbal altercation ensued between the two. Ricky Saint's intervened, giving Williams an advantage in the ring. He executed a trick shot on Hayes to secure the victory. Damian Priest vs Solo Siko Tag Team Champion. Damian Priest faced Solo Siko. Talla Tonga and Tama Tonga heavily interfered in the match, which ultimately led to Priest's defeat. After the match,

MFT attacked Priest, and Royce Keys rushed to his aid. In the main event, Cody Rhodes faced Sami Zayn. However, Gunther interfered in the match, which worked to Cody's advantage. He executed the Cross Rhodes on Sami, pinned him, and secured the victory. After the match, Gunther attacked Cody. Roman Reigns' ally, Sami, entered the ring to save Cody, but he turned out to be a traitor; he did not save his friend. Gunther locked Cody in a sleeper hold and rendered him unconscious.

## SEBI Reviewing PMS Framework; Consultations On MF Gifting, Donations Underway

SEBI whole-time member Amarjeet Singh on Saturday said the regulator is undertaking a comprehensive review of the Portfolio Management Services (PMS) framework in consultation with industry body Association of Portfolio Managers in India (APMI) to "re-ignite growth" in the segment. Addressing the Wealth and Capital Market Summit organised by the Indian Chamber of Commerce, Singh said SEBI would soon float a consultation paper on the proposed reforms. "We are undertaking a comprehensive review of PMS and are engaged with APMI for consultations to re-ignite growth in this space. A consultation paper will be floated soon," Singh said. He also said the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) is currently in the consultation stage on issues related to donation, gifting and third-party payments in mutual funds, as the regulator seeks to balance investor convenience with anti-money laundering safeguards. SEBI's consultation paper issued on May 20 proposed a calibrated relaxation of the existing restrictions on third-



party payments in mutual funds, which were originally framed under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) norms. Under the proposed framework, third-party payments may be permitted through "clean and auditable routes" in select cases, including salary deductions by employers for systematic investments by employees and payment of distributor commissions in the form of mutual fund units instead of cash. The proposed system would allow listed companies, EPFO-registered firms and asset manage-

ment companies to deduct a fixed amount from an employee's salary for investment in mutual fund schemes chosen by the employee. In another proposal, AMC's may be allowed to pay trail commissions to empanelled distributors through mutual fund units. However, SEBI has proposed safeguards under which redemption proceeds and dividends would flow only into the verified bank account of the beneficiary investor or distributor, ensuring that no third-party cash exits are permitted. Public comments on the consultation paper have

been invited till June 10. Singh said the regulator is also examining a framework to facilitate charitable donations through mutual funds. Under the proposal, investors may be allowed to route part of their subscription amount, dividends or redemption proceeds directly to not-for-profit organisations or instruments listed on the Social Stock Exchange. The consultation paper has proposed either dedicated schemes focused on social causes or embedded donation features within existing mutual fund schemes.

## India Squad For Afghanistan Series: Jasprit Bumrah Rested, Four Players Earn Maiden Call-Up

India have announced their squad for one Test and three ODIs against Afghanistan for the series starting from June 6. Shubman Gill to continue leading the side while the team include a few notable changes. The squad include four maiden call-ups, while a few senior players are being rested. Four maiden call-ups



Manav Suthar has earned a maiden call-up in Test cricket, while Prince Yadav has been handed his maiden call-up in ODIs, thanks to a remarkable performance in the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL) season. The team includes four maiden call-ups. Apart from Suthar and Prince, Gurnoor Brar and Harsh Dubey have also received maiden call-ups in Test cricket. Notably, Rishabh Pant's vice-captaincy has been changed to KL Rahul. Rohit Sharma and Hardik Pandya's participation is subject to fitness. Manav Suthar, from Rajasthan, is a left-arm

spinner who made his first-class debut in 2022. He has taken 129 wickets from 52 first-class innings and has played four matches for the Gujarat Titans. Gurnoor Brar is a pacer from Punjab who made his first-class debut in 2022 and made his IPL debut for Punjab Kings in 2023. 2024-25 domestic season turned out to be decisive in his career, where he finished as the leading wicket-taker in the Ranji Trophy, picking 26 wickets in seven matches. Prince Yadav, who hails from Delhi, currently plays for Lucknow Super Giants

in the IPL. The right-arm pacer has taken 16 wickets from 12 IPL matches with an economy of 8.70 and a strike rate of 16.87. Harsh Dubey comes from Vidarbha, and the left-arm spinner is playing for Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL, taking 13 wickets for the team so far. He has also taken 133 first-class wickets and 31 List A wickets. Jasprit Bumrah and Ravindra Jadeja rested. Two senior players in the Indian team - Jasprit Bumrah and Ravindra Jadeja have been rested for the series. The decision is taken as the selectors

want to manage the workload of both players. Also, they want to explore new options in the team combination. Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli return for ODIs. The audience will see two senior players, Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, back in action in the 50-over format. Kohli has been scoring consistently in the ongoing season of the Indian Premier League (IPL). However, Rohit's participation is subject to fitness and he will be included depending on his fitness status. Aquib Nabi not included in the squad. Aquib Nabi, who had a breakthrough season for the last two years, has not been included in the squad. Nabi took 60 wickets from 17 innings in the 2025/26 season and was the leading wicket-taker in the season. He played a key role in Jammu and Kashmir winning their first-ever title. Also, he was talked about by many senior players but has not been included in the squad.

## India's First DME Facility Begins Production, Sees Scope To Cut LPG Imports And Cleaner Fuel Shift



New Delhi: India has taken a significant step towards alternative fuel adoption and energy self-reliance with the commissioning of the country's first commercial-scale Dimethyl Ether (DME) manufacturing plant by Balaji Amines Limited in Maharashtra's Solapur district. The company has started commercial production at its 100,000 metric tonnes per annum (MTPA) DME facility at Chincholi Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation area from May 20, positioning the project as a potential game changer in India's efforts to reduce dependence on imported LPG amid continuing global geopolitical uncertainties and volatile energy markets. DME is considered a clean-burning fuel that can either replace LPG entirely or be blended with it. Several countries in Europe and Asia already blend DME with LPG at ratios of up to 20%. In India, the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has recently allowed blending of DME with LPG up to 8%, opening the door for gradual adoption in the domestic fuel

ecosystem. The development comes at a time when India imports nearly one-fourth of its LPG requirements, exposing the country to global supply disruptions and price shocks linked to tensions in the Middle East and other energy-producing regions. V K Saraswat, veteran Scientist and ex-member of NITI Aayog told ETV Bharat, "DME is emerging as an important alternative fuel that can either replace LPG completely or be blended with it to reduce India's heavy dependence on imported LPG." He added that the long-term objective is to manufacture DME domestically using indigenous technologies and local feedstock resources. According to him, methanol, the key raw material used in DME production, can be produced through multiple routes, including non-DME technology has already been developed by the National Chemical Laboratory (NCL), Pune, along with catalyst technology. "While a pilot plant is already operational, some private companies

have also started large-scale production using imported methanol," he said. The Balaji Amines plant itself will consume around 100,000 tonnes of methanol annually if operated at full capacity. Industry assessments indicate methanol prices continue to remain volatile globally due to ongoing market uncertainties. Balaji Amines Managing Director Ram Reddy described the project as a strategic milestone for India's energy security goals. "This is a very significant step towards strengthening India's energy security," Reddy told ETV Bharat. "At present, India imports a huge quantity of LPG from foreign countries, and due to ongoing geopolitical complexities across the world, we have seen how global situations can directly impact India's energy supply chain. This is the right time for the country to move towards self-reliance in the energy sector." The company believes DME holds major commercial potential across sectors like hotels, restaurants, bakeries, biscuit manu-

facturing, aerosol applications, ceramics, bulb manufacturing and other industries that rely heavily on bulk LPG consumption. "Since DME can be blended with LPG and utilised through the existing infrastructure, it can become an economical and practical alternative fuel for India in the coming years," Reddy said. However, he cautioned that direct price comparisons between LPG and DME remain difficult at present because raw material prices are fluctuating sharply due to the ongoing Middle East crisis and broader global market instability. However, industry experts point out that India's domestic methanol production capacity remains limited. Saraswat noted that several Indian methanol manufacturers currently depend heavily on natural gas supplies, creating another layer of import dependence. "To reduce dependence on imports in the future, India should focus on coal gasification for methanol production," Saraswat said, adding that the Centre has already launched a

## FIFA World Cup 2026: Congo Football Team Asked To Undergo 21-Day Isolation Period Due To Ebola Outbreak

Congo's preparations for the FIFA World Cup 2026 have taken a hit as the United States have asked them to undergo a 21-day isolation period due to an Ebola outbreak. The USA have imposed strict health protocols on the national team considering the Ebola outbreak in the African nation and to take necessary precautions. According to ESPN, Andrew Giuliani, executive director of the White House Task Force for the World Cup, confirmed that the African nation has been asked to remain in a strict isolation bubble for a 21-day period. "We've been very clear to Congo that they should maintain the integrity of their bubble for 21 days before they can then come to Houston on June 11," Giuliani told ESPN. "We've made it very clear to the Congo government as well, that they need to maintain that bubble or they risk



not being able to travel to the United States. We cannot be any clearer." The decision comes after Congo confirmed an outbreak of the rare Bundibugyo strain of Ebola in their country a few days back. The media reports suggest that 130 people have died, while around 600 cases have been suspected. Congo are drawn in Group F at the FIFA World Cup 2026 and will start their campaign

with a fixture against Portugal on June 17 in Houston. They will then face Colombia in Guadalajara, Mexico, on June 23 and will play their last group match against Uzbekistan in Atlanta on June 27. Due to the outbreak, Congo have already shifted their preparations away from home soil. The team then cancelled a training camp in Kinshasa and relocated to Belgium. They will

play Denmark on June 3, and another warm-up fixture against Chile will be played in Southern Spain on June 9. bly, the Congo squad includes Premier League Bissaka and Newcastle United forward Yoane Wissa. Captain Chancel Mbemba also plays Lille in France. French coach Sebastien Desabre is with the team to help them with the preparations.

## Rukmini Vasanth Slams Morphed AI Photos, Warns Of Legal Action Over 'Serious Privacy Violation'

Actor Rukmini Vasanth has spoken out after AI-generated images falsely claiming to feature her started circulating online. Calling the incident a "serious violation of privacy", the Kantara Chapter I actor said she is planning to take legal and cybercrime action against the people responsible for creating and spreading the morphed content. On Saturday, Rukmini shared a strongly worded note on her X account, asking people not to engage with the fake images. The actor made it clear that the pictures being shared online were completely fabricated and had nothing to do with her. "My team and I have come across certain AI-generated images being circulated online claiming to be me. I want to state clearly that these images are entirely fake and fabricated," she wrote. Calling the misuse of AI disturbing and irresponsible, Rukmini added, "The creation and circulation of such manipulated content is deeply irresponsible and a serious violation of privacy." The actor also revealed that she and her team are taking the matter very seriously and are preparing to take strict action against those involved. "We are taking this matter seriously and initiating the necessary legal and cybercrime action against those involved in creating and spreading these images," she stated. Rukmini further urged social media users not to share the morphed pictures or interact with such content online. Her statement quickly



received support from fans, many of whom praised her for speaking up against the growing misuse of artificial intelligence and online harassment targeting celebrities. This is not the first time the actor has dealt with online fraud and identity mis-

use. Last year, too, Rukmini had warned her followers about a person allegedly impersonating her using a fake phone number. She had clarified that the number did not belong to her and had called it a case of cybercrime. The actor had then also confirmed

that legal action was being taken against those involved in the scam. On the work front, Rukmini has been having a busy phase in her career. She was recently seen in the Tamil films Ace and Madharaasi. The actor also featured in the Kannada block-

## Cannes 2026: From 'Queen Aishwarya' To 'Best Is Alia' - Fans Fight Over Bollywood Divas' Red Carpet Looks



At the 79th edition of the Cannes Film Festival 2026, two Bollywood beauties, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and Alia Bhatt, have become the biggest topic of discussion on social media. As soon as their pictures from the film festival surfaced online, fans started debating over whose Cannes look was better. While some internet users called Aishwarya the "ultimate Cannes queen," many others praised Alia's modern and elegant appearance. Social media comment sections quickly turned into a battleground between fans of both actors. One user wrote, "Don't even dare compare her with Aishwarya." Another commented, "When Aishwarya was Alia's age, she was on a

completely different level." Defending Alia, a fan wrote, "Alia Bhatt is better in every way." Meanwhile, an admirer of Aishwarya said, "Aishwarya looks absolutely stunning in this look." Some users even requested fans to stop fighting online. One comment read, "Why compare them on the very first day? This is Aishwarya's moment. Let us enjoy it." Another wrote, "Fans of Alia and Aishwarya should not fight with each other in the comments." Aishwarya and Alia's looks were also compared to the 'fallopian tube pose' online. One viral comment compared the journeys of both stars and read, "On one side, Aishwarya Rai, who made her name on her own steam by win-

ning the Miss World title, and then delivered powerhouse performances in films like Devdas and Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam. On the other side, Alia Bhatt, whom Karan Johar nurtured and groomed into a heroine and helped propel her into a big star with the muscle of PR." Talking about their looks, Alia Bhatt attended the opening ceremony on May 12 in a light pink body-hugging gown, keeping her style classy and minimal. Alia Bhatt (Photo: Getty) Aishwarya, on the other hand, impressed fans with not one but multiple glamorous appearances. She first walked the red carpet in a shimmering royal blue bodycon couture gown with dramatic shoulder detailing. Later, for the

Light on Women's Worth Gala, she stunned in a dreamy powder pink Sophie Couture outfit featuring floral embellishments and flowing cape sleeves. Aishwarya: IANS) Styled by Mohit Rai, Aishwarya completed her look with soft curls, glossy makeup, diamond danglers, and statement rings. The gown reportedly costs around Rs 3.54 lakh. Aishwarya Rai Bachchan with her daughter Aaradhya Aishwarya Rai Bachchan with her daughter Aaradhya (Photo: IANS) What made the moment even more special was the presence of her daughter, Aaradhya Bachchan, who joined her at Cannes 2026. Aaradhya looked beauti-

## Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai Trailer: Fans Excited To See The 'Real Dhurandhar' In Varun Dhawan's Comedy Film



The trailer of Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai is finally out, and it promises a complete dose of comedy, confusion, romance, and family drama. Starring Varun Dhawan, Mrunal Thakur, and Pooja Hegde, the film has already caught fans' attention for its entertaining storyline and hilarious moments. However, one person who has become the biggest talking point after the trailer release is veteran actor Rakesh Bedi, with fans calling him the "Real Dhurandhar." Directed by David Dhawan, the film marks his fourth collaboration with son Varun Dhawan. Known for making loud and entertaining family

comedies, David once again brings his signature style to the big screen with a chaotic comedy packed with confusion and funny twists. The trailer begins with Varun Dhawan sharing romantic moments with his wife, played by Mrunal Thakur. But their happy marriage soon turns messy as the couple lands in court. Mrunal's character appears frustrated with Varun's over-the-top love and constant attention. Varun, on the other hand, explains that his behaviour comes from his strong wish to become a father. Things take a hilarious turn when Varun's character meets Pooja Hegde and falls in love with her

too. Soon, he finds himself trapped between two women and eventually becomes the father of both Mrunal and Pooja's children. The confusion only gets bigger from there, turning the film into a complete laugh riot. The trailer also shows Jimmy Shergill playing Pooja's strict and threatening brother, while Maniesh Paul appears as Varun's close friend who helps him hide the truth from both women. Mouni Roy also grabs attention with her quirky role as Varun's fake mother. But despite the star-studded cast and comic moments, fans online seem most excited about seeing Rakesh Bedi in the film. The actor has gained fresh

popularity after the blockbuster success of the Dhurandhar franchise, where his character Jameel Jamali became a fan favourite. His appearance in the trailer instantly sparked excitement among viewers. Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai Trailer Fans Call Rakesh Bedi The 'Real Dhurandhar' In Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai Trailer (Photo: Trailer screenshot) Fans quickly flooded the comment section with references to his iconic character and dialogue. One fan wrote, "Jameel Jamali's hilarious dialogue 'bahar ake mill'." Another fan mixed his Dhurandhar character with Varun's situation in the film and commented,

## 'Drishyam' Actress Ansiba Hassan Accuses Tiny Tom Of 'Character Assassination'



Malayalam actress Ansiba Hassan on Saturday accused fellow actor Tiny Tom and some members of the artists' body AMMA of subjecting her to "character assassination and communal abuse," and forcing her to resign from the organisation. The 'Drishyam' actress claimed that another member of the organisation had informed her that Tom had branded her a "jihadi", accused her of attempting religious conversion and spread rumours about her personal life. She also questioned whether she was being targeted because of her Muslim identity. The actress raised the allegations while talking to various television channels. Hassan said she had submitted her resignation to the Association of Malayalam Movie Artists (AMMA) on February 21, citing personal reasons and work

pressure, but had privately informed the organisation's secretary about the actual issues behind her decision. She further claimed that a woman executive committee member of AMMA had lodged a false police complaint against her and alleged that neither the organisation's president nor other responsible office bearers stood by her during the controversy. "I have been going through severe mental stress. There has been a limit-crossing character assassination campaign against me," the actress claimed, adding that she did not wish to pursue legal action. Meanwhile, actor Priyanka came out in support of Tom, saying a person who had done no wrong should not be punished. "Whatever issues Hassan had should have been discussed within AMMA. There are elected rep-

resentatives in the organisation to resolve such matters," she said in Kochi. Rejecting the allegations, Tom, however, said Hassan's claims were based on hearsay. "Someone else has said that I made such remarks against her...that's what she said.. I am a person who works sincerely and speaks openly," he told the media. The actor added that AMMA's executive committee would take an appropriate decision on the matter. Hassan recently resigned from the executive committee of Malayalam film artists' body AMMA, where she served as a joint secretary. AMMA president Shweta Menon had informed the media that the actress had cited personal and professional commitments as the reason for stepping down and the organisation has accepted it. Meanwhile, when