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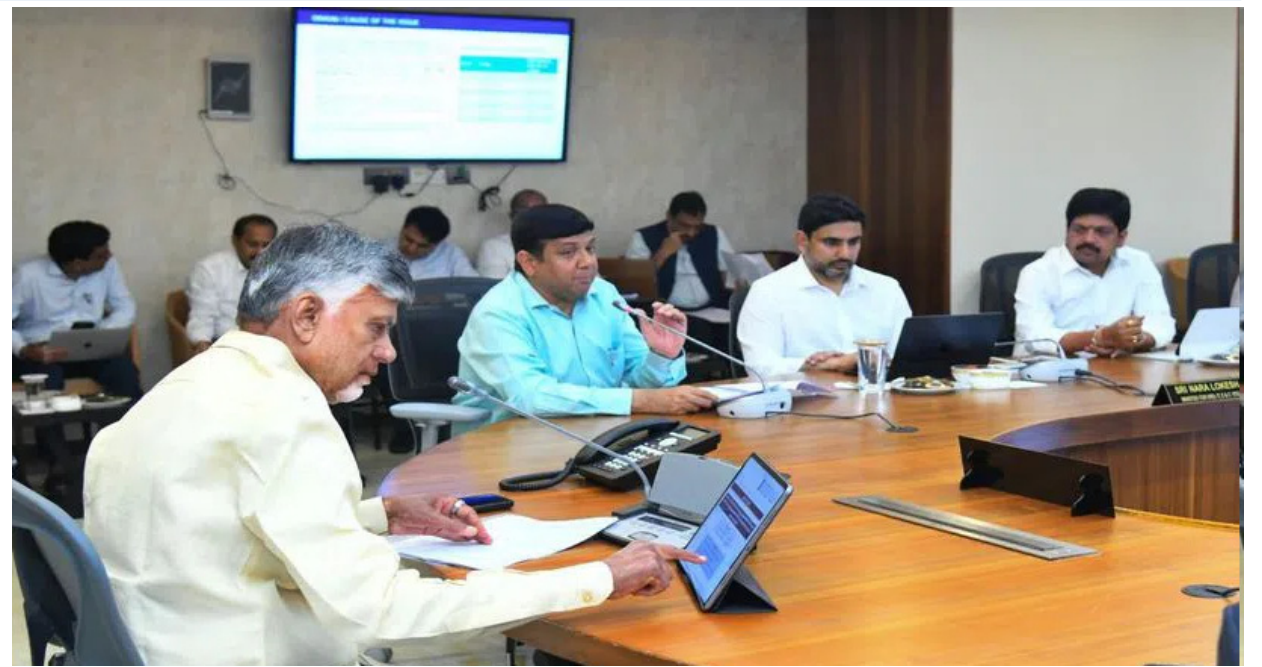


CM Naidu orders probe into Vijayawada youth's alleged custodial death

Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday ordered probe by a senior IPS officer into the disappearance of a youth and the allegations by his family that he was tortured to death in the police lockup in Vijayawada. Gade Sai Krishna disappeared more than a month ago after police picked up him in connection with a case and his mother suspect that he might have been killed in police custody. The Chief Minister directed Director General of Police Harish Gupta to conduct a high-level and thorough investigation. Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday held a review meeting with senior police officials at the Secretariat regarding the incident. Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan also attended the meeting. The Chief Minister met with the senior police officials immediately after returning to the Secretariat from his Singapore tour. Senior police officials, including DGP Harish Kumar Gupta, briefed CM

Chandrababu and Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan on the details of the incident. The Chief Minister ordered suspension of Krishnalanka Circle Inspector Nagaraju, who is facing allegations. He directed that the matter be investigated by a senior IPS officer and insisted on an impartial inquiry. Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan urged that strict action be taken against those responsible. Chief Secretary Sai Prasad, Intelligence Chief Mahesh Chandra Laddha, Vijayawada Police Commissioner Rajasekhar Babu, and others attended the meeting. The DGP informed Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister that Circle Inspector Nagaraju has already been transferred to the Vacant Reserve (VR).

Sai Krishna, who had prior criminal cases pending against him, was reportedly picked up by police on May 9 in connection with an ongoing investigation. The youth, aged around 25, did not return home. Sai Krishna's mother,



Vijayalakshmi, filed a habeas corpus petition before the Andhra Pradesh High Court seeking her son to be produced before the court. The High Court directed the police to trace Sai Krishna and produce him before the bench at the next hearing. Meanwhile, former minister and YSR Congress Party Krishna District President Perni Venkatramaiah (Nani) on Tuesday demanded a CBI probe or an inquiry by a sitting High Court judge into the death of Sai Krishna, stating that if the police can pick up a person, kill him and ensure even the body is unavailable, the very purpose of the rule of law and

the judicial system stands undermined. Addressing the media at the YSRCP central office in Tadepalli, he said the incident reflects the complete collapse of law and order under the coalition government. Perni Nani said branding Sai Krishna as a rowdy-sheeter or citing criminal cases cannot justify his death at the hands of the police. If a person commits an offence, courts are empowered to decide guilt and impose punishment, not the police, he asserted. He questioned why due legal procedure was bypassed and demanded an independent investigation to establish the truth.

Student JAC demands fee regulation committee in State

ANANTAPUR: Terming the unchecked fee hikes by private and corporate educational institutions a form of financial exploitation, the Andhra Pradesh Student Joint Action Committee (JAC) on Wednesday urged the State Government to immediately set up a Fee Regulation Committee to protect parents. Addressing reporters at a press



conference at the JAC district office in Ananta Nagar, Student JAC District President Amar Yadav expressed deep concern over the aggressive commercialization of education. He highlighted that several corporate schools are demanding an astronomical ?1 lakh to ?1.5 lakh annually for fresh first-grade admissions alone, hiding the hikes under specialized programs, multi-media classrooms, and advanced curriculum tags. "Education cannot be allowed to turn into a pure commercial business. The state must step in to ensure that schooling remains affordable and equitable across all socio-economic strata," Yadav said. He strongly advocated

for Andhra Pradesh to introduce a dedicated, high-power Fee Regulation Committee modeled after the strict regulatory framework currently running in neighboring Tamil Nadu to oversee private school fee structures and penalize institutional irregularities. The student leader warned that the absence of structured state oversight has given corporate managements a free hand to pressure families. He demanded an immediate audit of non-transparent fee collections across the district. District JAC Secretary Velugu Prashanth, along with committee members Ravi, Govind, and Yashwanth, were present at the briefing.

AP Intermediate supplementary exams results announced, check here

The results of the Andhra Pradesh Intermediate Advanced Supplementary and Improvement examinations were released today (June 18). The results of the Andhra Pradesh Intermediate Advanced Supplementary and Improvement examinations were released today (June 18). The Intermediate Board announced the supplementary results at 12:00 PM on Thursday. The results for both first-year and second-year students—covering both supplementary and improvement exams—have been made available simultaneously on the official website of the Andhra Pradesh Intermediate Board. Students can check their results directly on the official website resultsbie.ap.gov.in .



Alternatively, they can get their results instantly by sending a 'Hi' message to the WhatsApp number 9552300009. The Intermediate Board officials released the results for the Advanced Supplementary examinations, which were conducted from May 21 to June 4.

Kurnool techie among 12 killed in tragic US skydiving plane crash

Kurnool: News of a tragic plane crash that occurred in the United States on June 15 came to light on Wednesday, bringing grief to a family from Kurnool district in Andhra Pradesh. Sai Karthik Varma (26), son of Datla Subrahmanyam Raju and Padmavathi of Thumbiganur village in Kosigi mandal, was among those killed in the accident. The incident has cast a shadow of sorrow over the village, with local leaders and residents visiting the bereaved family to offer their condolences. According to family members, Datla Subrahmanyam Raju and Padmavathi are originally from Bhimavaram in coastal Andhra Pradesh. Nearly three decades ago, the family migrated to Thumbiganur village in Kosigi mandal and settled there. Their only son, Sai Karthik Varma, moved to the United States to pursue higher education. He completed his graduation at the University of Central Missouri and later secured a software engineering job, residing in the state of Kansas. On Sunday, June 15, Sai Karthik Varma reportedly joined a recreational skydiving activity. He was travelling in a small aircraft



carrying participants to the skydiving location when the plane allegedly developed a technical fault and crashed. The aircraft burst into flames after impact, killing all 12 people on board. The devastating news was conveyed to the family, confirming that Sai Karthik Varma was among the victims. The sudden demise of their only son has left the family shattered. Relatives said Sai Karthik Varma had been supporting his parents while building a promising career in the United States, making the loss even more heartbreaking. The tragic incident has sent shock waves through Thumbiganur village, where neighbours, well-wishers, and local leaders have been expressing their sympathies and extending support to the grieving family.

Fire breaks out at a shop in Gajuwaka of Visakhapatnam

A massive fire broke out at 'Shiva Fireworks,' a shop located on the busy New Gajuwaka Market Road in Visakhapatnam. Locals were gripped by panic as huge flames shot up from the shop. Firefighting personnel rushed to the scene upon receiving the information and extinguished the blaze. The incident caused a traffic jam on the market road. Visakhapatnam South ACP



Srinivas stated that 'Shiva Fireworks' did not have police permission to operate. He clarified that the sale of explosive materials in residential and commercial areas is prohibited and stated that action would be taken against the shop owner.

KING
DAILY NEWSPAPER

**Merit or birthright? Why
Telangana's 'local only'
judge demand threatens
impartial justice**

Should judicial appointments prioritize local origin? Explore the legal and constitutional implications of the Telangana High Court Bar Association's recent resolution and how the collegium can balance local expertise with merit-based selection. An extraordinary general body of the Telangana High Court Bar Association (THCBA) on Monday passed a resolution requesting that the High Court and the Supreme Court collegium prioritise practising advocates "belonging to Telangana origin only" when recommending names for elevation to the High Court. The resolution invokes themes that resonate across India — representation, social justice and the value of lawyers who have sustained practice in a particular High Court — and raises fundamental legal and constitutional questions about who may be considered for judicial office and how the collegium should weigh 'locality' against merit and other legitimate criteria. The resolution and the rationale: National News Coverage According to the association's extraordinary meeting and subsequent resolution, the request calls for the collegium to follow principles of social justice and ensure that elevation to the bench gives "proper representation to all the sections of people," by prioritising advocates of Telangana origin, who practise in the Telangana High Court. The association's stated concerns are familiar: local advocates are thought to have better knowledge of regional laws, languages, social contexts and institutional practices. Long standing practitioners claim an established relationship with the court and its litigational culture. And a perception exists that too many judicial vacancies are filled by outsiders or by candidates perceived as less connected to local bar and bench communities. These are legitimate policy concerns that speak to questions of trust, accountability and the bench's social composition. The Legal framework: The constitutional text sets the outer bounds of eligibility. Article 217 requires a person to have been an advocate of a High Court for at least 10 years to be qualified for appointment as a High Court judge. Article 124 sets similar eligibility for the Supreme Court. These articles impose nationality and experience thresholds but are silent on place of origin or state of enrolment beyond the requirement of practice at a High Court. The Collegium process and the Memorandum of Procedure (MoP) — the procedural matrix evolved by the Supreme Court and used by High Court collegia — stress merit, integrity, standing at the Bar, experience, published judgments and encourage regard for social diversity and representation. The MoP contemplates weight being given to professional standing and to consultative inputs from the local bar and judges. It does not, however, endorse categorical exclusion of candidates who are not of a particular state origin. Demands by bar associations and local bodies for prioritising local practitioners are not new. Reports show that bar bodies in different jurisdictions in India have protested proposals to elevate advocates, who do not practise regularly before a particular High Court, or asked that local counsel be given preference. Some associations have even threatened abstentions or abstaining from work when they believe consultative norms were ignored.

Karimnagar Task Force busts ganja gang, four arrested

Karimnagar: Taskforce police have busted a ganja distribution and consumption gang with the arrest of an alleged peddler and three others. The officials carried out vehicle checks near the Vavilalapally area on Wednesday. The alleged ganja peddler, Bejjenki Lokesh, was nabbed and 22 ganja packets, four ganja chocolates were seized from his possession. Authorities have also seized



a bike and six mobile phones from him. Three others who were sharing a room with Lokesh were also arrested.

Sangareddy BRS worker arrested for social media posts against Revanth

Sangareddy: Zaheerabad police arrested a BRS worker on charges of posting objectionable content against Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Wednesday. The BRS worker, Ashok Kumar (34) of Medikunda, was whisked away by plainclothes policemen in a private car while he was at a private hospital in Sangareddy town. Ashok, a staunch follower of the BRS, reportedly exposed the Congress government's failures on social media. Ashok recently posted about alleged encroachments into Singur FTL lands by Health Minister Damodara Rajanarasi mha's brother-in-law. Former Andole MLA Chanti Kranthi Kiran visited the Zaheerabad police station after learning about the arrest and met Ashok. Speaking on the occasion, Kranthi Kiran



said that Congress leaders, particularly Damodara Rajanarasimha, had become intolerant when BRS cadres raised issues pertaining to the public. He alleged that the arrest was made at the behest of the Health Minister. However, Zaheerabad police said they registered an FIR following a complaint from a Congress worker from Zaheerabad.

Secunderabad Cantonment Board renames 21 British-era roads after Indian heroes



Hyderabad: Shedding colonial legacies, 21 road stretches and four Bazar areas in Secunderabad Cantonment area will be named after prominent Indians and military officers and soldiers who fought in wars for the country and sacrificed their lives for the nation. Accordingly, Lytton Road will be known as Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Road, Burton Road as Santosh Babu Marg, Bolton Road renamed as Atal Bihari Vajpayee Marg and Noble Road as APJ Abdul Kalam Marg. The Secunderabad Cantonment Board (SCB) at its meeting, chaired by Board president, Brigadier S Rajeev, on Wednesday approved renaming of these 21 British-era roads. The SCB's Chief Executive Officer, Arvind Kumar Dwivedi, told 'Telangana Today' that the new names

were approved in the Board meeting today. "The process of removing the Colonial-era names from the existing roads and installing renamed names will be done within a month," he said. Apart from roads, the renaming of four Bazar areas in the Cantonment limits was also approved by the Board. While doing away with the old names, the road stretches and bazaars have been named after brave military officers and soldiers who sacrificed their lives for the nation and who fought in wars. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) had originally proposed renaming the roads across 62 Cantonment Boards in India in 2021. Many roads and buildings in these Cantonment Boards have been named after British officers and soldiers who were loyal to the British Crown.

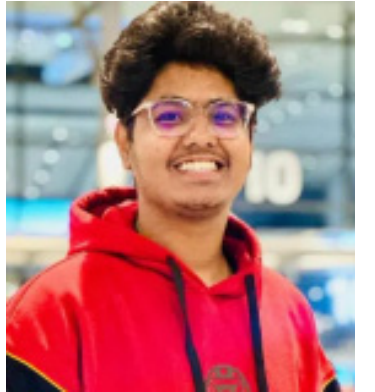
RGUKT student injured after fall from hostel building in Basar

Nirmal: A student of the Rajiv Gandhi University of Knowledge and Technologies (RGUKT) sustained injuries after falling from her hostel building on the campus on Wednesday. The cause of her fall is yet to be ascertained. Police said Asmitha Begum, from Sangareddy district and studying in the first year of the Pre-University Course at the institution, sustained injuries to her head and other parts of the body when she fell from the building. She was immediately admitted to a hospital in Nizamabad and was later shifted to a hospital in Hyderabad. Her condition is said to be stable. The police

said an inquiry had been initiated into the incident and the cause would be ascertained only after completion of the probe. Meanwhile, RGUKT officials drew flak for allegedly keeping the incident under wraps. They did not disclose the reason behind the incident till the reports reached here. They were criticised for not providing clarity on whether it was an accident or an alleged suicide attempt by the student. Students demanded that the authorities reveal the exact cause of the incident. On February 25, R Vasantha (18), a first-year engineering student, allegedly died by suicide on the Basar campus.

Telangana HC seeks Centre, State response on missing student in Finland

Hyderabad: Justice B. Vijaysen Reddy of the Telangana High Court on Wednesday directed the Central and State authorities to place before the Court the status of efforts being undertaken to trace a Hyderabad-born student who has been missing in Finland since May 5, 2026. The direction came in a writ petition filed by Gujja Marnatha, seeking urgent intervention to trace her son, Gujja Manideep Reddy, an Indian citizen pursuing a Master's degree in Finland, who has reportedly been untraceable since the first week of May. Alleging inaction on the part of the authorities, the petitioner sought directions to the Union Ministry of External Affairs, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Embassy of India in Finland, the Consular Wing of the Embassy, the Protector General of Emigrants and the Telangana authorities to take effective diplomatic, administrative and coordinated measures to trace her son and ensure his safety and well-being. The petitioner also sought directions for coordination with Finnish authorities to securing and examine relevant digital, electronic, financial, academic, transportation and surveillance records that may assist in locating him, besides seeking periodic updates on the progress of the investigation. After hearing the matter, Justice B. Vijaysen Reddy directed the respondent authorities to apprise the Court of the steps taken so far to trace the missing student and adjourned the matter for further hearing.



Three family members killed in car-lorry collision near Medchal

Hyderabad: Three members of a family were killed in an road accident after a car collided head-on with a lorry near Turkapally-Murahari pally in Medchal police on Thursday. According to the police, the victims were travelling from Karimnagar to Hyderabad when the driver reportedly lost control of the car. The vehicle first rammed into the road divider and then veered onto the opposite carriageway, where it collided with an oncoming lorry. All three occupants of the car died on the spot. On receiving information, Medchal police rushed to the accident site and launched rescue operations. The bodies were pulled from the mangled vehicle and shifted to a local government hospital for post-mortem examination. Police said efforts were underway to establish the identities of the victims. The accident caused a major traffic jam on the highway.

Jubilee Hills police book man for sexually harassing woman drawing rangoli

Hyderabad: The Jubilee Hills police registered a case against a man for allegedly sexually harassing a woman who was drawing rangoli in front of a house. According to reports, the 28-year-old woman works at a house in Jubilee Hills. On Thursday morning, the woman was drawing rangoli in front of the house when an unidentified man arrived on a motorcycle and parked it on the road. He then approached the woman and behaved inappropriately with her. When she raised an alarm, the man fled from the spot. On receiving information, the police reached the spot and began an investigation. The police are examining footage from surveillance cameras in the area to identify the suspect.

Govt to unveil Smart Warehousing System for foodgrain storage



New Delhi: The government is set to launch the Smart Warehousing System for foodgrain storage, reflecting its continued emphasis on strengthening India's food security architecture through modern, technology-enabled and efficient public storage infrastructure, it was announced on Wednesday. The Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD) will launch the Smart Warehousing System on June 18 at Bharat Mandapam here, in the presence of Union Minister of Consumer Affairs Pralhad Joshi. The Smart Warehousing System is being introduced as an integrated technology-led solution to strengthen warehouse management practices and enhance efficiency across foodgrain storage operations. The initiative is expected to contribute towards creation of a modern warehousing ecosystem capable of supporting efficient foodgrain management and strengthening long-term food security outcomes. The initiative aligns with the Government's vision under Digital India, IndiaAI Mission, PM GatiShakti and Atmanirbhar Bharat, said the Ministry of Consumer Affairs.

During the programme, the Department will felicitate the Best Performing Warehouses of Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC) and Food Corpo-

ration of India (FCI) identified under the Depot Darpan assessment framework.

The system will incorporate advanced technologies including Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), automation and analytics to improve warehouse operations and strengthen governance mechanisms. According to an official statement, the proposed system will support automation of gate and weighbridge operations, digital access management, intelligent monitoring of warehouse conditions, enhanced inventory visibility and real-time operational oversight through integrated dashboards. The initiative builds upon the Department's broader reform agenda focused on digital transformation and modernisation across the foodgrain supply chain. In recent years, multiple initiatives have been undertaken to improve transparency, operational efficiency and service delivery across procurement, storage and distribution systems. Notably, the programme will also recognise warehouses that have demonstrated excellence under Depot Darpan, a structured assessment and performance-monitoring framework introduced to encourage continuous improvement in infrastructure, operations, safety, hygiene and service readiness.

Iran deal will push oil prices lower: Trump



Evian: President Donald Trump on Wednesday said the agreement reached with Iran would help drive oil prices lower and strengthen the global economy by ensuring the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most important energy shipping routes. At a press conference after the G7 summit in France, Trump said energy markets had reacted positively to the agreement and the easing of tensions in the Gulf. "Oil prices are plummeting," Trump said. The President argued that fears of a prolonged conflict had faded after the agreement was announced, reducing concerns about disruptions to global oil supplies. "The oil never went to \$350 a barrel," Trump said. "It went to \$115, \$120." Trump said the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz would help stabilise global energy markets and prevent shortages. "If we keep bombing, those ships won't be going," he said, re-

ferring to commercial traffic through the strategic waterway. Trump said lower oil prices would eventually translate into lower costs for consumers and businesses.

"When oil prices come down, oil is the biggest thing," he said. The President predicted further declines in fuel costs in the United States. "We're hitting in the threes now for gasoline, and that'll come down a lot lower," Trump said. He also linked lower energy costs to broader economic gains, arguing that cheaper fuel would reduce operating expenses across industries and help bring down inflation. The comments come as major oil-importing countries, including India, closely monitor developments in the Gulf. India imports the bulk of its crude oil requirements, and sustained stability in the Strait of Hormuz is viewed as critical for energy security and inflation management.

Security forces conduct search operations in Manipur's Kangpokpi; arms seized, bunkers destroyed



Imphal: Security forces have launched extensive search operations in at least four villages, where incidents of violence were reported recently, in Manipur's Kangpokpi district and recovered a cache of arms and ammunition, police said on Thursday. At least thirty illegal bunkers were also destroyed during the operations on Wednesday at Leilon Vaiphei, Leilon Khunou, L Munlui and Konsakhul villages within the jurisdiction of the Leimakhong Police Station, a police statement said. Leilon Vaiphei is a Kuki-Zo village, where six Naga men were abducted on May 13, and their bodies were recovered near the village on June 10, an official said. Reports of firing were also reported from Leilon Munlui and Konsakhul in the last few months, he said. "During the operations, eleven 12-bore SBBLs (single-barreled breech-loading), 294 live rounds of ammunition for a 12-bore gun, two packages of gun powder, 34 empty cases of 12-bore ammunition, and six bullet-proof vests were recovered," the statement said. Thirty bunkers, outposts and strategic camp sites found in the vicinity of these villages were also dismantled during the operations, while four people were also detained for verification, it said. Security forces also destroyed an

unauthorised check post and a bunker at S Nabil and Loilamkoi villages under the Churachandpur Police Station limits in Churachandpur district on Wednesday. The police had earlier said that the DGP was "personally overseeing operations in areas where there has been a spurt of killings and armed activities between communities in recent weeks".

Former chief minister N Biren Singh, in a post on X, welcomed the proactive security measures launched by newly appointed Manipur DGP Mukesh Singh. The former CM said, "It is particularly encouraging to see that, after a long gap, the DGP himself is personally supervising the combing operations against anti-social elements today. I truly appreciate his hands-on approach and commitment." He also expressed confidence that with "the determined efforts of Mukesh Singh and the security forces, peace and normalcy will be restored in Manipur at the earliest". He urged all sections of society to stand united and extend full support to the security forces. More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023.

Forest officials on alert after Royal Bengal tiger spotted in HP forest

Shimla: A Royal Bengal tiger being spotted in Paonta Sahib in Himachal Pradesh has alerted forest authorities in the state and Uttarakhand, with officials not ruling out the possibility of



the big cat being the one that went missing from the Rajaji National Park nearly a year ago. The tiger's movement was captured by a trap camera installed on a tree in the Khara block of the Paonta Sahib forest range on Monday, forest officials said on Thursday. The clips provide evidence of a tiger's presence in the area, and the pugmarks and claw marks on trees near the camera trap suggest the animal has been frequenting the area for at least two to three days, they said. The possibility that this big cat is the same one undocumented in the nearby Rajaji National Park in Uttarakhand for nearly a year cannot be ruled out, they added. Khara is about 80 km from the Rajaji National Park, making the interstate movement of the tiger possible. Forest officials from both states are monitoring the tiger's movement. The number of camera traps in the

area to monitor the tiger's movement increased, the forest officials in Paonta Sahib said. The gender of the big cat is yet to be ascertained. Information regarding the tiger's presence has been shared with the Rajaji National Park authorities and their team is expected to visit the location in the coming days, the officials said.

Gaddi shepherd communities roaming in the area have been cautioned. Locals have claimed to have spotted a tiger in the region on multiple occasions. A tiger had been spotted in the area earlier, but there was no digital proof, said a resident, Jagat. Last week, after almost six years, a snow leopard was also captured on a camera trap installed in the Greater Himalayan National Park in Kullu district at a height of 3,000 to 3,500 metres above sea level, the forest officials said.

Kejriwal slams Telegram ban, says It won't stop paper leaks

New Delhi: Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday questioned the government's decision to temporarily ban Telegram as a measure to prevent examination paper leaks, alleging that such steps would not address the root cause of the problem. In a video message posted on X, Kejriwal asserted that banning the messaging platform was not the solution to the problem and claimed that the authorities were not serious about tackling the issue. "The business of paper leaks is worth billions of rupees," he alleged, claiming that large sums of money generated through such activities reach influential people.

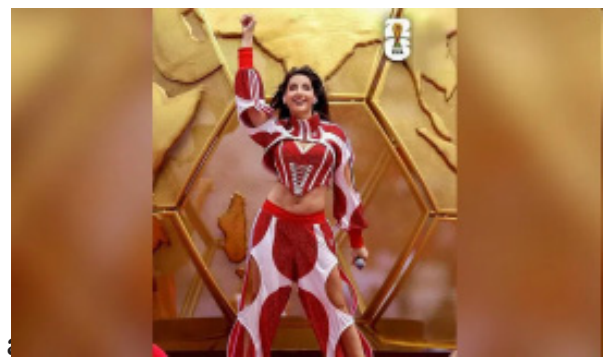
The former Delhi chief minister fur-



ther alleged that money from paper leak rackets was being used for political purposes, including the purchase of legislators. Kejriwal emphasised that paper leaks would continue unless systemic changes were introduced and called on people to come together to demand reforms. "The whole system will have to change," he said.

Nora Fatehi: India gave me wings to fly

Mumbai: Bollywood dancing diva Nora Fatehi, who performed at the opening ceremony of the FIFA World Cup in Toronto, has credited India, Morocco, and Canada for shaping her into the artist and person she is today. Brimming with gratitude, Nora, who made her debut in Hindi films in 2014 with the film Roar: Tigers of the Sundarbans, shared a string of images of herself performing on the song "SIIR SIIR" at the FIFA World Cup stage during the opening ceremony in Toronto. The track is crooned by her with DJ Sanjoy and French singer Vegeedream. Nora, who was raised in Toronto, described the milestone as a magical experience and thanked fans across the world for their unwavering support and encouragement. "What a Magical moment! I needed some time to take all of it in! This journey of mine has been an incredible roller coaster ride! I wanna thank India, Morocco and Canada for building me into the artist and human I am Today!" Nora wrote in the caption section. "Canada gave me the base, Morocco gave me the roots and India gave me the wings to fly!"



descent. The 34-year-old actress said performing twice at FIFA is such a privilege. "It's such a privilege to be able to say that I got the opportunity to perform at the FIFA World Cup twice! I am very grateful and thankful to everyone who posted, supported, and spoke positively about my journey and this moment!" Nora was seen headlining the second Opening ceremony in Toronto and performed the official World Cup song 'Siir Siir'. The other performers in the opening ceremony included names such as Vegeedream and Sanjoy. The celebration in Toronto also had performances from Jessie Reyez and Alessia Cara before the kick-off. Palestinian artist Elyanna also performed at the Opening Ceremony in Toronto.

MDMK likely to quit DMK alliance; Vijay-Vaiko meet triggers buzz



Chennai: The MDMK appears set to part ways with the DMK-led Secular Progressive Alliance (SPA) and move closer to Chief Minister C. J. Jayaram's TVK government, amid indications of growing political engagement between the two sides. Sources in the party said the MDMK is likely to formally announce its exit from the DMK alliance at its General Council meeting on June 27. The move would mark a major political realignment in Tamil Nadu, where several former DMK allies, including the VCK, IUML, CPI and CPI(M), have already extended support to the TVK-led dispensation. Unlike those parties, the MDMK could not openly back the new government as its two MLAs were elected on the DMK's 'Rising Sun' symbol. Party leaders reportedly believe the only viable option is for the legislators to resign, contest by-elections and then extend support to the ruling alliance if re-elected. Both Vaiko and his son, Tiruchirapalli MP Durai Vaiko, have publicly expressed regret over contesting on the DMK symbol. Durai Vaiko recently remarked that the party was unable to support the TVK government due to the "misfortune" of having been elected on DMK tickets.

Political activity over the past week has fuelled speculation about a possible shift. Public Works Minister Aadhav Arjuna met Vaiko at his Chennai residence on Tuesday, while the veteran leader met Chief Minister Vijay at the Secretariat on Wednesday. Though Vaiko dismissed reports of an impending alliance switch as speculation, sources said politics figured prominently during the 45-minute discussion with the Chief Minister. Adding to the political debate, Durai Vaiko also defended the TVK government against criticism over recent crimes against women in the state. Rejecting opposition attempts to link the incidents to a deterioration in law and order, he described such criticism as a "narrative" being built against the government. He argued that there had been no significant increase in crimes against women compared to the previous regime and noted that similar incidents had occurred during the DMK government as well. The MDMK had contested four seats on the DMK symbol in the April Assembly elections and won two. If its legislators resign, the number of vacancies in the Assembly would rise to eight, including the Tiruchirapalli (East) seat vacated by Chief Minister Vijay after assuming office.

Karnataka council polls: Expelled BJP MLAs confirm voting for Congress

Bengaluru: Polling for seven seats of the Karnataka Legislative Council continued on Thursday amid concerns over possible cross-voting, with expelled BJP MLAs ST Somashekar and Shivaram Hebbar confirming that they had voted for Congress candidates and alleging that BJP leaders had not even extended a courtesy call seeking their support. Speaking to reporters in Bengaluru, ST Somashekar said he voted for the Congress in the interest of his constituency's development. "I voted for the Congress with a view to ensuring the development of my constituency. I had not initially decided which party's candidate to support. What matters is who approaches you. Neither the BJP nor the JD(S) sought my support. Chief Minister DK Shivakumar called me yesterday and invited me to the resort meeting, which I attended. I requested funds and developmental assistance for my constituency, and he assured me of support," Somashekar said. "I have cast my vote according to my conscience in favour of the Congress. I have no other demands," he added. Responding to questions about cross-voting, Somashekar said the BJP had earlier come to power with the support of leaders like him who had joined the party. "The BJP came to power because we joined it. Otherwise, it would not have formed the government. They enjoyed power because of us, and we too were part of that government. I have confidence in DK Shivakumar's assurance that development will be carried out in a phased manner," he said. He expressed confidence that all five Congress candidates would emerge victorious.

Another expelled BJP MLA, Shivaram Hebbar, said development of his constituency was his primary concern. "Our intention is the development of our constituency. We discussed our concerns with Congress leaders and received a positive response. I have voted according to my conscience. It is alright that the BJP expelled us, but we expected the party to at least ask for our support during this election. We waited until last night, but not even a courtesy call came from BJP leaders," Hebbar said. He alleged that the BJP's primary objective in the election was to ensure the defeat of the JD(S) candidate. "That is probably why the BJP did not contact us. Both the current Chief Minister and former Chief Ministers from the Congress reached out to us and sought our support. We responded positively and voted accordingly," he added. Meanwhile, Minister for Large and Medium Industries, MB Patil, dismissed concerns over cross-voting within the Congress. "There is absolutely no fear in the Congress camp regarding cross-voting. We are united and have discussed all issues at the Congress Legislature Party meeting. If there is any possibility of cross-voting, it is on the BJP or JD(S) side. Wait and watch; we will emerge victorious," Patil said.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition and BJP MLA, Arvind Bellad, said the party was confident of victory. "We have full confidence that all our candidates will emerge victorious. The votes of the two expelled MLAs, ST Somashekar and Shivaram Hebbar, may go to the Congress, but apart from that, all BJP legislators will vote for our candidates," Bellad



said. He expressed confidence that BJP candidates Lingaraj Patil and Raghu Kautilya would win comfortably. Asked about the prospects of JD(S) candidate K. Govindaraju, who is contesting as the NDA nominee, Bellad said efforts were being made to secure his victory despite a shortage of votes. "There is a deficit of votes, but we are receiving a good response and are making every effort to ensure his victory," he said. Senior Congress MLA Konareddy also expressed confidence about the party's prospects. "By this evening, all five Congress candidates will emerge victorious. Around 28 to 29 votes have been allocated to each candidate. All Congress MLAs are prepared to cast their votes in a systematic manner. There is complete unity among our legislators. Candidates from other parties are also expected to support us," he said. BJP MLA SR Vishwanath predicted victory for all three NDA candidates. "All three NDA candidates will win. There will be no cross-voting by BJP MLAs. If there is any dissatisfaction, it is within the Congress. There

are issues relating to cabinet allocations and internal groupism. From that perspective, Congress may face difficulties," he said. Vishwanath said the NDA faced a shortage of three votes for its third candidate, while Congress required five additional votes to ensure the victory of its fifth candidate. "There is no question of even a single BJP MLA cross-voting," he asserted. Congress MLA and Congress Legislature Party Secretary Allamprabhu Patil said legislators would vote according to the strategy worked out by the party high command. "We will act according to the planning of the high command and cast our votes accordingly," he said. Former minister N. Cheluvarayana rejected allegations of horse-trading and maintained that Congress had sufficient numbers to secure all five seats. "If anyone is attempting horse-trading, it is the other parties. We have around 140 votes, which are sufficient to ensure the victory of all five candidates. We also have an adequate number of second preferential votes. There is no issue and there will be no cross-voting," he said.

Kriti Sanon says Ally's free-spirited character drew her to Cocktail 2

Mumbai: Bollywood star Kriti Sanon was seen talking her heart out about her character Ally from her upcoming movie Cocktail 2. She also spoke about how she had been longing to do a fresh and young movie like Cocktail 2.

Speaking at the song launch event of Cocktail 2, Kriti opened up about what instantly connected her to Ally and the film's refreshing narrative. She said, "When I heard the story of Cocktail 2, I just found it so different and so relevant and so fun. And all these three characters were so well written and they had their own graph and they were just fresh. And I think I was missing a film like this. I think I have seen so much of intensity and action and all of that. I wanted to see a fresh young film with just messy characters like we all are in life." She added, "I felt Ally was just so away from me as



a person and so refreshing and so un-hinged and liberated that I was just very drawn to her. I am just so glad that I could play her." Kriti has been stirring headlines for the look of her character in the movie. The actress will be seen donning bohemian outfits, giving much carefree and chill vibes. Cocktail 2 that also stars Shahid Kapoor and Rashmika Mandanna alongside Kriti Sanon, has been directed by Homi Adjanja. The movie releases on June 19 this year.

Janhvi Kapoor shares peaceful moments from her 'happy place'

Mumbai: Actress Janhvi Kapoor has shared a soothing glimpse of her "happy place." Taking to Instagram, the 'Dhadak' actress posted photos that capture a space that holds special meaning for her. In the clip, Janhvi is seen playing with her dog, posing with her sister Khushi Kapoor, and enjoying an adventurous ride with Shikhar Pahariya. One candid shot showed the actress relaxing in the hills and blowing her hair with her mouth. For the caption, Janhvi wrote, "#happyplace @jasleenoyal obsessed with your song." Indian Current Events She also added Jasleen Royal's song 'Inaam' as the background score for the video. On the professional front, Janhvi was last seen in Shashank Khaitan's "Sunny Sanskari Ki Tulsi Kumari," alongside Varun Dhawan, Sanya Malhotra, Rohit Saraf, Maniesh Paul, and Akshay Oberoi. She made her acting debut in 2018 with the romantic drama "Dhadak" and later went on to feature in films like "Gunjan Saxena: The Kargil Girl," "Mili," "Roohi," "Ulajh," "Mr. & Mrs. Mahi," "Good Luck Jerry," and "Devara: Part 1." Digest Most recently, Janhvi was seen in the film "Peddi" alongside Ram Charan. The sports action drama directed by Buchi Babu Sana featured Ram as a "crossover athlete" who transitions between the three difficult sports including cricket, wrestling and sprinting. Asked if she is a sports enthusiast, Janhvi, who is the daughter of the late superstar Sridevi and producer Boney Kapoor, said: "I actually, I wasn't very athletically inclined. I used to enjoy danc-



ing though, always." The film, which also starred Boman Irani, Shiva Rajkumar, Janhvi Kapoor, Jagapathi Babu and Divyenndu, was released on June 4. However, several parts of "Peddi," particularly those depicting the heroine, faced strong criticism from both audiences and reviewers. The romantic storyline, in particular, was criticized for allegedly normalizing harassment and non-consensual behavior. In light of the backlash, the film's director Buchi Babu Sana issued a clarification on social media. An excerpt from his post read, "As a filmmaker, I believe cinema should entertain, inspire, and connect with audiences. It should never make anyone feel uncomfortable or disrespected. We have heard the feedback regarding certain scenes in Peddi and have taken it seriously." "I have always had immense respect for women, both on and off screen, and it was never our intention to objectify or disrespect any female character. If any part of the film has been perceived that way, we respect those sentiments, understand the concerns being raised, and sincerely apologize."

Vikram Bhatt could sense the change in horizon of Hindi cinema with 'Kasoor'

Mumbai: Director Vikram Bhatt, who is receiving a lot of positive response to his recently released film 'Haunted 3D', has shared his fond memories of shooting his film 'Kasoor'. Vikram spoke with IANS during the promotions of 'Haunted 3D' in the city, and said that he sensed that the Hindi cinema is about to change with the influx of erotic-thrillers, and that's how he went about making 'Kasoor' immediately after 'Ghulam'. He said, "'Kasoor' is one of my favorite films. Shooting 'Kasoor' was a joy with Lisa, with Aftab. I have very fond memories". He told IANS, "It was also my first film after 'Ghulam' and people were wondering why I would not work with a very big star and make a very big film and why was I working with them and making 'Kasoor'. But I think we could see a change in the horizon in films. We could see that thrillers, and at that time let's be honest erotic thrillers and films with erotica and good music were going to be the recipe for the next decade". The di-



rector said that he was pretty sure about the changing undercurrents in the industry at the time. Hence, 'Kasoor' came into existence. He later followed it up with another erotic thriller with good music, 'Raaz'. "The music reflected that passion and that intensity. So I think that's why, I mean 'Kasoor' didn't do as well as 'Raaz' but people remember 'Kasoor' a lot", he added. Meanwhile, 'Haunted 3D' stars Mimoh Chakraborty, Chetna Pande, Shruti Prakash, Gaurav Bajpai, Praneet Bhatt and Hemant Pandey. The film promises an upgraded 3D experience using the newest technology to heighten every scare, making the horror more immersive. The film is currently playing in cinemas.

Adah Sharma to make Marathi debut with 'Gajra'

Mumbai: Bollywood actress Adah Sharma is all set to step into the world of Marathi cinema with the upcoming film titled Gajra, which is based on true events. Adah shared a poster of her upcoming film on the photo-sharing website Instagram. The poster featured a close up image of a woman in a bridal avatar. Her face is smeared with blood streaks and splatters, suggesting violence and trauma. Adah wrote in the caption section: "GAJRA - my debut in Marathi ... need all your love and blessings! Adah Sharma in and as Gajra The Film by : Shreyas Jadhav @shreyash_thekingjd. Produced by : Amol Borkar @amol.zigzagpro A Devdutta Manisha Baji Musical @devduttabajimusic Inspired by true events Coming soon...2027." The upcoming film is directed by Shreyas Jadhav will hit the screens next year in 2027. Her latest "Governor: The Silent Saviour," which stars the National Award-winning actor Manoj Bajpayee in the lead. The film is inspired by the events surrounding the 1990 Indian economic crisis featuring the institutional framework between the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Government of India (GoI). Produced by Vipul Amrutlal Shah under the banner Sunshine Pictures, "Governor" hit the screens on June 12. Adah is best known for her work in the Vidyut Jammwal-starrer "Commando" franchise. However, she shot to fame with her work in the blockbuster "The Kerala Story." "The Kerala Story" told the story of Shalini, a former nursing student from Kerala, who later becomes the wife of a terrorist, testifying to her life story and her journey from being a naive girl to another victim of terrorism. Adah had made her acting debut with the 2008 Hindi horror film, 1920. She was then seen in films such as Hasee Toh Phasee, Heart Attack, S/O Satyamurthy and Kshanam.



Ajay Devgn, Riteish Deshmukh, Jaaved Jaferi add 'Dhamaal' tadka to 'Laughter Chefs Unlimited Entertainment'

Mumbai: Bollywood stars Ajay Devgn, Riteish Deshmukh and Jaaved Jaferi are set to spice up the upcoming episode of 'Laughter Chefs Unlimited Entertainment' with a generous amount of 'Dhamaal' style fun. With Chef Harpal Singh Sokhi nowhere to be seen, the contestants will be in full celebration mode, with Arjun Bijlani joking that the culinary master has been exiled. But before the real dhamaal even begins, it's Bharti Singh who becomes the first casualty of the episode. The boys trick their beloved host into taking a seat, tie her to a chair with rope, and seal the deal with tape across her mouth. Then the doors open, and Dhamaal arrives as Ajay, Riteish, and Jaaved make their entry onto the kitchen and turning it instantly into a full-blown reunion. Director Indra Kumar and Anjali Anand also step in, carrying a cutout of Arshad Warsi. Chef Harpal's cutout is promptly placed right beside Arshad's, the two absentees keeping each other company on the sidelines. The artists waste no time flooding the guests with



complaints about the chefs, with even a tape-bound Bharti somehow managing to join the grievance parade. Adding to the fun is the dish of the day, Kesar Rasgulla, with the laughter chefs challenged to shape them into the letter's 'M' and 'O', a sweet tribute to the iconic Dhamaal universe. Ajay is paired with Krushna and Kashmera, Riteish with Ankita and Vicky, Jaaved with Nia and Sudesh, Anjali with Abhishek and Samarth, and Indra Kumar stepping in as Bharti's partner. Of all the combinations, it's Ajay and Krushna that deliver the most historic moment of the season, Ajay running such a tight ship that Krushna, for the first time in three seasons, actually and sincerely working in the kitchen.

Meant for something bigger: Samantha on Vijay's political journey

Mumbai: Actor Samantha Ruth Prabhu has lauded Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay for his transition from cinema to politics, saying his energy, presence and connect with people always indicated that he was destined for a larger role. Samantha, who featured alongside Vijay in hits such as "Theri", "Mersal" and "Kaththi", shared a photo from her meeting with the Tamil Nadu CM on Wednesday. The 39-year-old actor said she felt an "immense sense of happiness" on arriving in the city as she was going to meet the chief minister. "I've always felt that Vijay sir was never meant to be just a hero on screen. His energy, his presence, and the way people respond to him always felt like he was meant for something bigger," the actor wrote. Samantha said what inspires her most is Vijay's courage to step into a completely new arena after having already achieved success in another field. "To leave behind what you have already mastered and take on a challenge where the stakes are so much higher. Not because it is easy, but because you believe you can make a difference," she said. The actor said people are often called upon to do more in life and contribute to society, but only a few answer that call. "I have a feeling Vijay sir will surprise



even the people who already believe in him. Not because of the position he holds, but because of the intent with which he approaches it," she added. Samantha wished Vijay strength, wisdom and courage, and said his journey should serve as an inspiration for young people. "And for every young person watching, may this be a reminder that life can be so much bigger than the dream you started with," she wrote.

Vijay, one of Tamil cinema's biggest stars, entered politics by launching his party Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) in 2024. In the recently-held Tamil Nadu assembly elections, the TVK emerged as the single largest party with 108 seats. Vijay was sworn-in as the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister on May 10. Samantha is currently promoting her new film "Maa Inti Bangaaram", an action drama that is set to be released in theatres on Friday.

'Technically, the throw was not that good': Neeraj makes surprising admission about his 90m effort

Doha: Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra has revealed that he rarely revisits the video of the record-breaking 90m throw that made headlines at the Doha Diamond League last year, insisting it was far from his best effort technically. Speaking during the Wanda Diamond League media interaction in Doha on Thursday, the Indian javelin star said he prefers studying his qualification-round throws because they better reflect the rhythm and technique he strives to achieve, unlike the more aggressive approach he often adopts in finals. Although Chopra finally crossed the long-awaited 90-metre barrier in Doha last season, he believes the landmark throw still had room for improvement. The reigning world champion explained that while the release was explosive, his lower-body mechanics were not at their optimum, leaving him convinced that greater distances are possible if every aspect of the throw comes together. "Technically, the throw was not that good; it was really fast from the arm, but if I could do better with the lower body, maybe 2-3m more.... I haven't looked at that video many times. I really like my throws in the qualification rounds,

whether at the Olympics or the world championships, because I feel really relaxed and can throw really far. "But whenever I compete in finals or the main competitions, I always try very hard, really aggressively, and I forget my techniques. So I don't like to see my finals on repeat, and I prefer to see my qualification-round throws. They're technically better," Chopra expressed.

Rather than drawing confidence from his biggest throws, the 27-year-old analysed performances in which he feels relaxed and technically sound, believing they provide a more accurate blueprint for future success. Doha remains one of the most memorable venues of Chopra's career, not only because it marked his first throw beyond 90 metres but also because it produced a thrilling duel with Germany's Julian Weber. While Weber eventually out-threw him on the night, Chopra said he took genuine satisfaction from seeing his long-time rival achieve a breakthrough after years of perseverance. "That was really amazing that I broke the 90m barrier last year. Suddenly, after my throw, Julian (Weber) threw further than me. But I am happy for him because he also struggled.



He threw 88m in front of me in 2016, and it took a lot of time for him too. I was happy for him," Chopra added. As he prepares to begin another season in Doha, Chopra remains focused less on distances already achieved and more on refining the technical details he believes can unlock even bigger throws in the future.

Minakshi moves to quarters of Boxing World Cup

Guiyang (China): Indian boxer Minakshi advanced to the quarterfinals of World Cup (Stage 2) in the women's 51kg category here on Thursday. Minakshi, the reigning 48kg world champion and current World No. 1 in that division, is transitioning into the Olympic 51kg weight class in the ongoing event. She registered a convincing 5-0 unanimous decision victory over Poland's Natalia Kuczevska to move ahead in the competition. In the other contest on day four, Abhinash Jamwal (65kg) bowed out after suffering a 0-5 defeat to Kyrgyzstan's Mirzokhid Imamnazarov. So far in the tournament, five Indian boxers have advanced to the quarterfinals. Nikhil (55kg), Deepak (70kg), Minakshi (51kg), Prachi (57kg), and Saneh (65kg). Meanwhile, Jyoti (48kg) and Jugnoo (85kg) have already



assured medals for the country by progressing into the semi-finals. Four Indian boxers will take the ring in their quarterfinal bouts. In the women's section, Minakshi (51kg) will square off against Kazakhstan's Alua Balkibekova, Saneh (65kg) will face Poland's Kinga Krowka, and Prachi (57kg) will take on Chinese Taipei's Shih Yi Wu. In the men's section, Nikhil (55kg) clashes with Azerbaijan's Amin Mammadzada.

2026 FIFA WC: England 4-2 Croatia, Kane brace powers Three Lions to winning start

Arlington: A brace from Harry Kane and second-half goals by Jude Bellingham and substitute Marcus Rashford helped England kick off their FIFA World Cup 2026 campaign with a thrilling 4-2 win over Croatia in Group L here at the Dallas Stadium on Thursday (IST). A chaotic first half brought four goals, with England twice leading through two Kane strikes and Croatia responding through Martin Baturina and Petar Musa. The Three Lions prevailed thanks to a strong second-half display rewarded by goals at either end of it by Bellingham and Rashford. Kane has now scored the most penalties (excluding shootouts) in World Cup history, with five. Croatia started brightly with Declan Rice having to make an important intervention to block a dangerous low cross after Josip Sutalo had earlier found some space at a second-minute corner.

England's first real threat came when Noni Madueke made inroads down the right, and after the ball found its way to Kane in the box, he took advantage of an

inch of space to shoot on the turn, with his effort deflected wide. From the ensuing corner, Madueke reacted quickest to a bouncing ball, nipping in ahead of Luka Modric before the Croatian skipper brought him down while trying to clear. Kane stepped up and had his initial penalty effort saved by Dominik Livakovic, but an encroachment from Josko Gvardiol saw the spot-kick retaken. Given a second attempt, Kane fired low to the same corner, opening the scoring on 12 minutes. Petar Musa showed that Croatia could prove dangerous, when he almost found some space in the England box, but Bellingham did well to get back and force a goal kick. Croatia's equaliser came somewhat against the run of play, a brilliant right-footed finish from Martin Baturina that Jordan Pickford could only get a fingertip to after an acrobatic dive. England responded from a corner, with Kane left unmarked and making a late run before heading home. But just as it seemed England would go into half time



with a lead, Croatia equalised for the second time. Deep in stoppage time, Ivan Perisic found some space and knocked it to Musa, who slotted it home to make it 2-2 at the break. England came out in the second half as a team transformed, taking the lead for the third time within two minutes of the restart. Bellingham found space down the right and had no hesitation as he drove into box before shooting into the far corner past Livakovic.

From there, England piled forward in search of a fourth goal, Bellingham almost immediately forcing a good save out of the Croatian 'keeper before Nico O'Reilly headed wide after finding some space from the ensuing corner. Rice drove forward and tried to bend the ball

home, his shot a little too central to trouble the keeper, who then made a remarkable triple save, the pick of which was a strong hand to keep out an O'Reilly header. It was all England at this stage, with Kane next to threaten as Livakovic had to get down low to deny him. But while they had not pulled clear, Croatia remained dangerous, with Pickford forced into a vital save 15 minutes from time from Marco Pasalic's shot at goal. Djed Spence was introduced for Bellingham and almost matched the man he had replaced, making a brilliant run onto a ball on the right, with Livakovic again on hand to keep England out. But he had no answer when Rashford was found in space and cut inside the final defender before sliding the ball home to make the game safe.

Portugal held 1-1 by DR Congo as Ronaldo fails to score

Houston: While his archrival Lionel Messi started Argentina's defence with a fine performance, Cristiano Ronaldo failed to score as Portugal were held to a disappointing 1-1 draw by a fighting Congo DR in a Group K match in the FIFA World Cup 2026 at the Houston Stadium in Houston on Wednesday. Portugal took an early lead with Joao Neves scoring as early as the sixth minute. But Congo DR fought back to level the score in added time in the first half. Though Portugal dominated possession, they could not convert that into three points as they failed to create potent attacks — they had only one shot on target in the entire match — to build on their early goal. It was celebration time for Congo. After 52 years away from the World Cup finals, the Leopards of Congo DR earned their first-ever point, secured by the impressive Yoane Wissa's super header on the stroke of half-time. They defended in numbers and did not allow Ronaldo and Portugal many oppor-

tunities to take advantage of. With Colombia and Uzbekistan, the other teams in the Group, Portugal are expected to progress with ease from Group K, but Wednesday's draw adds to the pressure on Ronaldo's side. Ronaldo set a record as he became the oldest outfield player ever to start a World Cup match. It was Ronaldo's 23rd World Cup appearance, putting him fourth on the all-time list alongside Italian great Paolo Maldini. As well as being the oldest outfield player to start a World Cup match, at 41 years 132 days, Ronaldo became the second-oldest outfield player to make an appearance at the tournament — behind Roger Milla, who was 42 years 39 days when he played for Cameroon against Russia on 28 June 1994.

But it was the Les Leopards who went off the pitch smiling as they bagged their first-ever World Cup goal and point as they pegged back Portugal. But things did start on expected lines for former Euro winners Portugal as Joao Neves gave

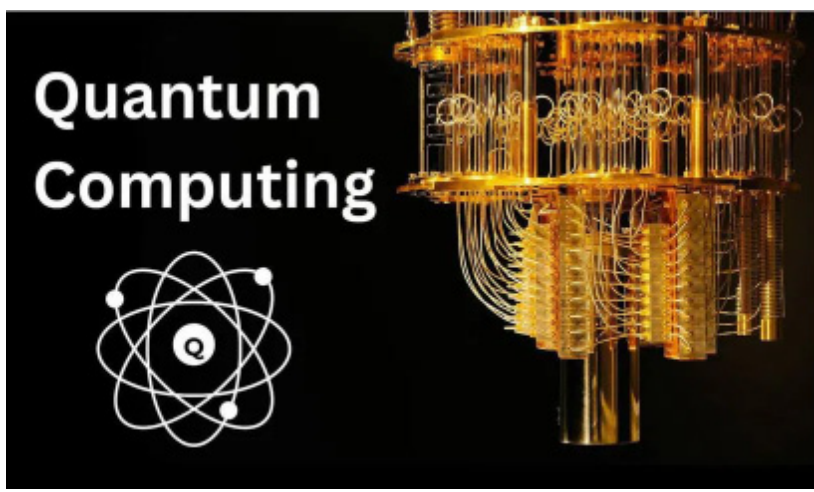


them the lead, rising highest to head Pedro Neto's inviting left-wing cross past Lionel Mpsi. Portugal dominated the early exchanges, though Congo DR fashioned their first chance after 10 minutes when Wissa curled a left-footed effort narrowly wide of Diogo Costa's goal. They continued to threaten the Portuguese backline and, moments before half-time, the African side snatched an equaliser. Arthur Masuaku floated a cross towards Wissa, who powered a header home. It was a historic moment: Congo DR's first-ever World Cup goal,

coming 52 years after the nation made their debut at the 1974 tournament. Joao Cancelo thought he had restored Portugal's advantage shortly after the restart. The full-back's spectacular overhead kick found the back of the net — but Cancelo had strayed offside. Congo DR, buoyed by their leveller, continued to probe themselves and centre-back Steve Kapuadi headed wide to fire a warning to Portugal. Ronaldo fired two half-chances wide but was unable to add a ninth World Cup goal to his name, and the game finished level.

Andhra govt to launch Amaravati Quantum & AI Innovation Center

Amaravati: The Amaravati Quantum & AI Innovation Center (AQAIIC), a flagship initiative of the Andhra Pradesh government in association with IBM, will be launched on Thursday. The launching of AQAIIC will serve as the foundation of "India's largest organised quantum problem-solving force," said an official



press release. "AQAIIC, a flagship initiative of Amaravati Quantum Valley, Government of Andhra Pradesh, in association with IBM, will be launched on June 18, marking a significant milestone in the state's efforts to build a world-class quantum innovation ecosystem," it said late on Wednesday. AQAIIC was conceived as a platform to bridge industry challenges with academic talent and global technology expertise.

The initiative is aimed at accelerating the development of practical quantum computing applications and algorithms that can address real-world challenges across industry and public services. Its operating model brings together three key stakeholders: industry, academia, and technology experts. As part of AQAIIC, industry partners will contribute high-value problem statements requiring advanced computational solutions while professors and students will work on developing quantum algorithms and use cases to solve them. IBM will provide technical guidance, access to its quantum ecosystem, including Qiskit, certification pathways, and expert mentorship to back research, learning, and innovation, said the release. "Powering this effort is a statewide network of 380 Quantum Innovation Cells established across engineering colleges in Andhra Pradesh, bringing together more than

3,000 professors and students in one of the country's largest coordinated quantum talent initiatives," it said. Through AQAIIC, this network will function as a unified innovation engine, channelling real-world challenges into quantum-powered solutions while creating a robust pipeline of skilled talent, intellectual property, and applied research. The center is expected to support the development of quantum applications across sectors such as manufacturing, logistics, healthcare, financial services, energy, agriculture, and public services, enabling organisations to explore and harness the transformative potential of quantum computing. By combining industry-driven challenges, academic capabilities, and IBM's expertise, AQAIIC aims to accelerate the transition of quantum technologies from research environments to practical deployment, it said. The launch of AQAIIC represents an important step in Andhra Pradesh's vision of establishing Amaravati Quantum Valley as a "leading destination for quantum computing, artificial intelligence, advanced research, and deep-tech innovation." By creating a statewide framework that unites industry, academia, and global technology leadership, the southern state is laying the foundation for a future-ready innovation ecosystem and strengthening its position at the forefront of India's quantum future, it added.

Gold imports drop 70 pc to 30 tonnes after duty hike: Official



New Delhi: India's gold imports have reduced about 70 per cent to 25-30 tonnes after customs duty on the yellow metal was more than doubled to 15 per cent, an official said on Thursday. Effective May 13, import duty on gold and silver has been increased to 15 per cent from 6 per cent. "Gold imports have been reduced to 25-30 tonnes after an import duty hike in a month, from 75-100 tonnes earlier," the official said. However, in value terms, India's gold imports rose by 34 per cent year-on-year to USD 3.41 billion in May, driven by higher prices of the precious metal. During April-May 2026-27, gold imports surged 60.14 per cent to USD 9.04 billion. In the last FY26, gold imports rose 24 per cent to hit an all-time high of USD 71.98 billion. In volume terms, however, imports dipped 4.76

per cent to 721.03 tonnes. Gold imports in India, the world's second-biggest gold consumer after China, are driven by the jewellery industry demand. Such imports involve substantial outflow of foreign exchange. The duty hike came after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's clarion call for curbing gold purchases and adopting austerity measures to reduce avoidable foreign exchange expenditure. The precious metal accounts for over 5 per cent of the country's total imports. The uncertainties in West Asia are expected to balloon India's import bill, and the government wants to prioritise forex expenditure towards essential imports like crude oil, fertilisers, industrial raw materials and capital goods that directly support economic activity and food security.

Apple may increase product prices amid soaring memory, storage costs: CEO Tim Cook



New Delhi: US-based tech giant Apple may raise prices across some of its products as surging memory and storage chip costs due to an increase in demand from artificial intelligence (AI) data centres continue to put pressure on the company's margins, according to a report. Speaking to The Wall Street Journal, Apple CEO Tim Cook said the company can no longer fully absorb the sharp increase in component costs and may eventually pass some of the burden on to consumers. "Unfortunately, price increases are unavoidable," Cook was quoted as saying. "We're doing our best to mitigate the huge increases that are being passed to us, and we've been trying to shield our customers from the increases, but the situation has become unsustainable." The comments come amid growing concerns over the impact of AI-driven demand on global semiconductor supply chains. Industry groups representing automakers, retailers and electronics manufacturers have warned that rising demand for memory chips could lead to higher consumer prices and supply disruptions. However, Cook did not specify when the price increases could take effect, how large they would be or which

Apple products would be affected. According to the report, memory and storage components have emerged as key concerns for the iPhone maker, particularly the dynamic random-access memory (DRAM) market, where supplies have tightened as chipmakers allocate more production capacity to high-bandwidth memory used in AI servers. Cook said increasing volumes of memory supply are being directed towards AI infrastructure, reducing availability for consumer electronics. "There's less supply at a time when consumers want devices and the memory guys are passing along huge price increases," he said. Cook said memory pricing and supply need to return to reasonable levels for consumer products. Earlier in April, the US-headquartered firm announced that John Ternus, Senior Vice President of Hardware Engineering, will succeed Tim Cook as Chief Executive Officer, effective September 1, 2026, concluding a long-running succession process that the board approved unanimously. However, he will transition to the newly created role of Executive Chairman, where he will engage with global policymakers and assist with select company matters.

Rupee falls 21 paise against US dollar as Fed's hawkish stance boosts greenback

Mumbai: The rupee depreciated 21 paise to 94.71 against the US dollar in early trade on Thursday on US Federal Reserve's hawkish stance and the broad strength of the American currency in the overseas market. Forex traders said the dollar index rose to 100.23 levels, a 4-month high, due to a hawkish FED. The FED Reserve held interest rates steady



as widely anticipated but implied that at least one quarter-point rate hike would come later this year. At the interbank foreign exchange market the rupee opened at 94.66, then touched 94.71, registering a fall of 21 paise from its previous close. On Wednesday, the rupee appreciated 10 paise to close at 94.50 against the US dollar. "Asian currencies had also weakened considerably, taking the rupee lower this morning. Most asset classes had fallen against the dollar keeping it well bid while the asset class was well offered," said Anil Kumar Bhansali, Head of Treasury and Executive Director, Finrex Treasury Advisors LLP. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading at 0.14 per cent up at 100.23. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading lower by 1.68 per cent at USD 78.21 per barrel in futures trade. On the domestic equity market front, Sensex declined 111.23 points to 77,044.39 in early trade, while the Nifty dipped 26.85 points to 24,058.85. Foreign institutional investors turned net buyers and purchased equities worth Rs 101.59 crore on a net basis on Wednesday, ac-

ording to exchange data. According to traders markets had other reasons to stay optimistic as reports indicated that the United States and Iran have electronically signed a memorandum of understanding aimed at ending hostilities and creating a framework for negotiations on Iran's nuclear programme. Negotiators are expected to meet in Geneva on Friday. "The agreement has improved market sentiment considerably, although President Trump simultaneously warned that military action could resume if Iran fails to comply with the framework," CR Forex Advisors MD Amit Pabari said. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump directed their officials to work towards a balanced, mutually beneficial and commercially meaningful trade agreement at the earliest. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said this on Thursday, a day after the two leaders held wide-ranging talks for the first time in 16 months on the margins of the G7 Summit in an attempt to rebuild the strained bilateral ties. US Trade Representative, Jamieson Greer, will be visiting India next week to take forward the talks on the proposed trade deal.

Action Fraterna conclave maps out climate-resilient blueprint for 500 farmers

Collector O Anand and RDT AF-EC Director Dr YV Malla Reddy, and officials inspect climate-resilient farming demonstrations, agricultural exhibits and natural farming stalls during a farmers' conference on World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought in Anantapur on Wednesday ANANTAPUR: Asserting that the district holds the unique potential to establish itself as a pioneering national benchmark for sustainable agriculture, District Collector O Anand on Wednesday announced a massive expansion drive

to scale natural farming across two lakh acres by next year. He was addressing a large congregation of nearly 500 farmers and agri-experts at a conference organized by the Action Fraterna-Ecology Centre (AF-EC) to mark the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought 2026. The Collector noted that eco-friendly farming is currently thriving on 85,000 acres in the district. To insulate the region from recurring drought, the administration has locked a target to execute the Pre-Monsoon Dry Sowing

(PMDS) program across two lakh acres during the ongoing Kharif cycle, alongside reclaiming 35,000 acres of unused fallow land. Also Read - Collector opens Aadhaar enrolment centre; warns against docs forgery Advertisement Discover more Politics political News Subscription Service AF-EC Director Dr YV Malla Reddy emphasized that rapidly shifting monsoon timelines necessitate a total transition to climate-resilient farming, which his center has successfully implemented across 12 pilot villages. Adding



an agro-forestry dimension to the drive, Conservator of Forests R Yashodabai announced that the department is ready with 10 lakh specialized saplings for distribution starting July 1.

At VivaTech, Modi says AI means 'all inclusive' for India

Paris: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday made a strong pitch for democratisation of technology, asserting that AI means "all inclusive" for India, days after the US imposed curbs on access to certain artificial intelligence models. Addressing technology forum VivaTech 2026 in Paris, Modi highlighted India's technological prowess and said half of the global digital transactions are happening in the country. "When it comes to technology, along with innovation, what matters is access. Technology can lead to progress, only when it is democratised. India believes that in this era of disruption, technology must deliver for all," the Prime Minister said. Citing the example of AI (artificial intelligence), Modi said it must improve lives, widen access, drive growth and also "help us sustain a healthy planet". "Our participation as the AI Country Partner at VivaTech 2026 reflects this very vision. For India, AI means 'All Inclusive'," he said. Last week, Anthropic took its latest AI models — Fable 5 and Mythos 5 — offline to comply with a directive from the US administration to prevent their use by foreign nationals. The unprecedented move has raised concerns about accessibility to AI solutions amid

a fast-changing economic landscape where such solutions are being increasingly used across sectors. In the last decade, India has been going through a rapid transformation powered by technology, Modi said. "From creating the world's largest digital identity system, to the world's largest digital payments platforms, we are using technology at a massive scale for financial inclusion, education, telemedicine, agriculture and more," he said.

Referring to his address at VivaTech in 2021, the Prime Minister said the world then was facing disruptions from Covid-19. "Today, the world is experiencing disruptions of other kinds. And I reiterate the message I shared then at VivaTech 2021. Where convention fails, innovation can help," he said. Modi also said with over 2 lakh startups, India is one of the most vibrant eco-systems in the world and urged attendees to visit the India pavilion. "...you will get a feel of India's immense energy. Be it the world's first single-piece 3D printed rocket engine, advanced genetic-engineering therapies, AI solutions that detect cancer and other critical diseases or improve cyber and network security, autonomous robots, smart cities, and mo-



bility solutions," he said. The Prime Minister further said India is an open society and has the world's largest talent pool. He said India is simplifying regulations and ensuring ease of doing business. From innovation to commercialisation, the country is sup-

porting private enterprise through targeted incentives of over USD 50 billion, he said, adding that India is also providing one of the world's most affordable data and low-cost green energy. "Our approach is clear. Our government will enable and industry will innovate. Startups will disrupt and global partners will scale with us. Together, we will move faster than ever," he said. Inviting investments, Modi said, "Work with India and deliver for all". VivaTech is Europe's foremost gathering of technology and innovation, and India has set up the largest national pavilion at this edition, symbolising the potential for partnership between Indian and European innovation ecosystems.

NIA files chargesheet against CPI (Maoist) leader Gade Innaiah

Hyderabad: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Thursday filed a chargesheet against a key CPI (Maoist) leader, Gade Innaiah alias Gade Inna Reddy, in the case registered against him for allegedly inciting a mob at the funeral of CPI (Maoist) Central Committee member Katha Ramachandra Reddy held in Siddipet district in October 2025. The NIA registered a case against Gade Innaiah and others after they allegedly attended the funeral and incited a mob that had gathered for the last rites of Ramachandra Reddy, who was killed in an encounter in Chhattisgarh. The NIA arrested Gade Innaiah in December 2025 in connection with the case. "Gade had incited a gathering of around 200 people at the funeral meeting by urging them to actively promote the ideology of CPI (Maoist) and never let the revolution die. The accused had also lambasted former CPI (Maoist) cadres who had surren-

dered their weapons before government agencies," the NIA said in a press release. The NIA investigation revealed that Gade was allegedly closely associated with several senior CPI (Maoist) cadres and used to meet them in the forest areas of Chhattisgarh. He was further found to be actively involved in propagating the terror outfit's ideology through a frontal organisation, 'Bharat Bachao', of which he was a co-founder, the NIA stated. In the chargesheet filed before the NIA Special Court at Nampally, Hyderabad, Gade Innaiah has been charged under various sections of the BNS and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.



Bengaluru court restrains circulation of alleged defamatory content against Pawan Kalyan

Bengaluru: A Bengaluru civil court has issued an interim injunction restraining the publication and circulation of alleged defamatory content against Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister and Jana Sena Party chief Konidela Pawan Kalyan on social media platforms. The order was passed by the 16th City Civil Court while hearing a petition filed through Ram Prasad Talluri, who represented the petitioner as his GPA holder. The court directed that the injunction would remain in force until the next hearing of the case. The court restrained X Corp, Google India, Meta Inc., their agents, representatives and any persons acting on their behalf from publishing, uploading, sharing or disseminating any allegedly defamatory statements, allegations, video clips or content concerning the petitioner. The court further directed that no material relating to allegations that the petitioner had encroached upon government land or water bodies should be publicly circulated until further orders. It also ordered the blocking of existing allegedly defamatory content already available on social media platforms. Also Read - CM orders suspension of Vijayawada CI Advertisement According to the petition, a coordinated campaign of misinformation and character assassination was allegedly carried out between May 29 and June 1 across various digital platforms, includ-



ing YouTube and X. The petitioner claimed that videos and reports containing false allegations of bribery, criminal conspiracy, fraud and moral misconduct were circulated with the intention of damaging his reputation. During the hearing, counsel for the petitioner argued that Pawan Kalyan is not only a prominent film actor with a career spanning nearly three decades but also serves as the Deputy Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, holding key portfolios such as Panchayat Raj, Rural Development, Environment and Forests. The petitioner's legal team contended that, given his large public following across social media platforms, false and defamatory content spreads rapidly and causes irreparable harm to his reputation and public image within a short period of time. Taking note of the submissions, the court granted interim relief and directed the concerned social media intermediaries and associated parties to ensure compliance with the order until the matter is heard further.

Kurnool gears up for June 28 national pulse polio drive

Kurnool: A training programme on the Pulse Polio vaccination campaign was held on Wednesday at the New Lecture Gallery Auditorium in the Kurnool Medical College premises. The session was organized for urban ward health workers of Kurnool town as part of the preparations for the upcoming National Pulse Polio Programme. Speaking on the occasion, Immunization Officer Dr Uma emphasized the importance of ensuring the success of the upcoming nationwide Pulse Polio drive scheduled for June 28. She stated that all eligible children must be administered polio drops without fail. She also highlighted that arrangements have been made to set up vaccination booths in Anganwadi centres, schools, as well as special mobile vaccination units at key public locations such as bus stands and railway stations to ensure wider coverage. Public Health Officer Dr Raghu also addressed the participants and appealed for full participation in the campaign. He urged that all children from newborns up to five years of age must be administered two drops of



polio vaccine during the programme scheduled on the 28th. He further stated that for children who miss vaccination on Sunday, health teams will conduct door-to-door visits on Monday and Tuesday to ensure complete coverage. He stressed that the initiative is crucial for safeguarding the bright future of children and achieving 100 percent immunization targets. The programme also included detailed instructions on the administration of polio drops and necessary precautions to be taken during the vaccination process. Medical officers from urban primary health centres, secretariat health workers, field supervisors Shiva, Paul, and Mohan, along with projectionist Khaleel, participated in the training session. Officials reiterated their commitment to making the Pulse Polio campaign a complete success in the district.