

KING

DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume:01 Issue No.19 Saturday 27-06-2026 Published From : Vijayawada, Hyderabad Pages : 8 | Rs.3/-

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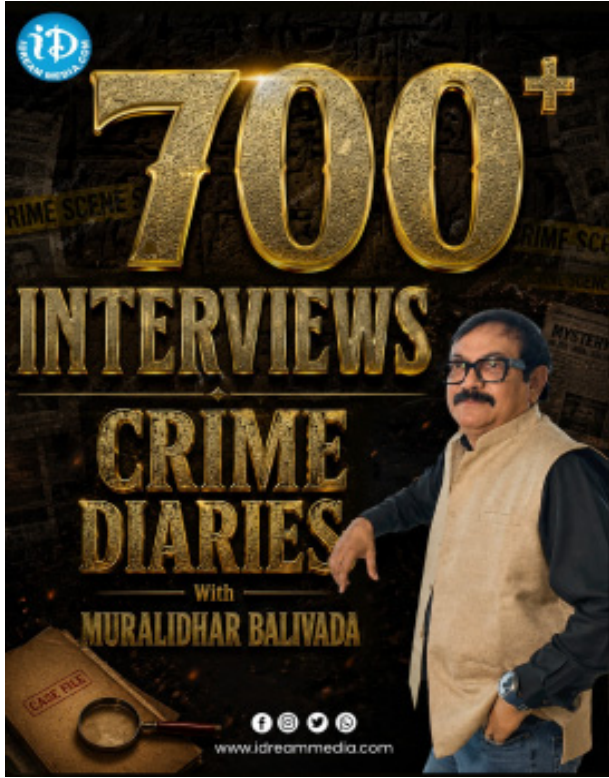
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The Master of Interviews: Muralidhar Balivada's Historic 9-Year Journey Reaches a Stellar 700-Episode Milestone!



In an era dominated by sensationalism and fleeting news cycles, veteran journalist Muralidhar Balivada has successfully carved out a unique niche, transforming the art of one-on-one interviews into a powerful instrument of social documentation. Over the past nine years, his relentless and deeply insightful journey hosted on the digital platform iDream Media has achieved an extraordinary milestone of 700 comprehensive interviews, setting an unprecedented benchmark in Telugu broadcast history. By delving into the inner minds of elite law enforcement officers, eminent advocates, distinguished jurists, former Naxalites who once chose the path of armed rebellion, top-tier civil servants, and financial experts, his conversations have captivated millions of viewers globally. Crucially, his work transcends regional boundaries as Muralidhar has brought the inspiring life stories and

complex professional challenges of Telugu-origin IPS officers serving across various Indian states onto the global stage. Capturing the authentic insights of high-ranking administrators at this scale is an achievement distinct to his run on iDream. "This remarkable journey commenced in 2017 with a thought-provoking debut interview featuring the former Director General of Police (DGP) of undivided Andhra Pradesh, H.J. Dora. Since then, Muralidhar has consistently pushed boundaries, tracking an uninterrupted series titled "From Sub-Inspector to DGP," which highlights the unique institutional and personal hurdles faced by police personnel across all ranks. The progression of this series has marked significant landmarks in the digital broadcast landscape, where the 100th episode featured former Andhra Pradesh DGP, Dr. M. Malakondaiah, IPS, the 200th

episode hosted Chandra Ladda, IPS, Chief of AP Intelligence, and the 300th episode featured Prakasam District Superintendent of Police, Malika Garg, IPS. Moving forward, the 500th episode hosted Shikha Goel, IPS, a prominent senior police official in Telangana, and the 600th episode featured Kerala State DGP, A. Chandrasekhar, IPS. By continually documenting the strategic insights of such seasoned administrators, Muralidhar Balivada has proudly crossed the rare 700-episode mark. "Muralidhar's approach fundamentally shifts the focus away from routine crime reporting to a deeper exploration of institutional machinery. His interviews cover the inner workings of the police department, forensic science laboratories, prison administration, prosecution wings, and the judiciary. By balancing the raw, transformative narratives of reformed activists with the legal acumen of top defense lawyers and judges, he treats sensitive socio-legal matters with utmost dignity. Consequently, these archival interactions have garnered billions of views online, establishing a permanent reference library for future generations. "Muralidhar's influence extends far beyond the screen as he commands a massive, highly engaged

following across major social media platforms, where each new episode trends within minutes of its release. Beyond his professional identity as a journalist, Muralidhar is widely recognized for his humanitarian efforts. He actively leverages his reach to assist individuals facing severe hardships or legal distress, stepping forward to provide timely, personal support. This blend of professional integrity and quiet philanthropy has earned him widespread respect from both the general public and top-tier bureaucrats alike. "Reflecting on this monumental 700-interview milestone, Muralidhar Balivada shared that his primary objective has always been to document authentic reality and preserve the life stories of eminent personalities as historical archives for posterity. He expressed deep gratitude to CH. Vasudev Reddy, the head of iDream Media, for his unwavering institutional support. He also extended his heartfelt thanks to the distinguished dignitaries who placed their trust in his platform, and to the global Telugu audience whose enduring viewership remains his greatest strength. Moving forward, this legally grounded and socially conscious endeavor continues to inspire the next generation of broadcast journalists.

AP has zero tolerance for drug trafficking: Naidu

(king Reporter)Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Friday said that the fight against drugs is ultimately a fight for our young people, their dreams, their health and their future. In Andhra Pradesh, the chief minister said we are committed to relentlessly cracking down on drug trafficking and bringing those responsible to justice. "On this International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, we are reminded that the fight against drugs is ultimately a fight for our young people, their dreams, their health, and their future," Naidu said in a post on 'X'. At the same time, we will extend every possible support to those battling addiction, helping them recover and re-



build their lives, he said. The days when "drugs were allowed" to gain a foothold in our state are behind us, he asserted. Today, Andhra Pradesh stands for zero tolerance for drug trafficking, the CM said.

AP minister Ramprasad Reddy express shock over Pileru accident

(king Reporter)Andhra Pradesh State Transport Minister Mandipalli Ramprasad Reddy Transport Minister Mandipalli Ramprasad Reddy expresses condolences following a fatal road accident near Pileru, Annamayya district, that left three dead. Andhra Pradesh State Transport Minister Mandipalli Ramprasad Reddy expressed shock over the accident that occurred near Pileru in Annamayya district. He described the death of three people in the accident as deeply distressing and conveyed his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. He directed district officials to ensure the injured receive quality medical care. He instructed officials to provide all necessary assistance to the victims. The Minister



spoke with senior officials over the phone to gather details about the incident and wished the injured a speedy recovery. A car and an auto-rickshaw collided near Pileru in Annamayya district. Three people died on the spot, and seven others traveling in the auto-rickshaw sustained severe injuries. Acting on information from locals, the police arrived at the scene and shifted the injured to the hospital in Pileru.

Ram Temple Trust leaders quit amid donation scam probe; more officials under lens

Lucknow/Ayodhya: The alleged multi-crore embezzlement of devotees' donations at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya took a major turn on Friday, with Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust General Secretary Champat Rai and Trust member Anil Mishra stepping down from their posts. Their resignations came amid growing scrutiny over the handling of temple donations and the ongoing inves-

tigation into the alleged misappropriation of offerings. All eight accused who had been arrested earlier were remanded to judicial custody. The investigators turned focus to possible involvement of banking officials. Police, in fact, suspect the alleged embezzlement was part of an organised racket that siphoned off temple funds over several years. According to sources, Rai and Mishra resigned on



moral grounds days after a Special Investigation Team (SIT) submitted preliminary findings highlighting serious lapses in the management of donations and cash

offerings made by devotees at the Ram Temple. Their exit is being viewed as the first major accountability measure after the controversy triggered widespread outrage and demands for action against those responsible for supervising the temple's day-to-day administration and the handling of offerings. The resignations followed the registration of an FIR against eight persons, including temple attendants, cash-counting staff and a retired bank employee, who are accused of working in collusion to divert cash and valuables donated by devotees.



Influential Businesses: The Unseen Forces Redefining Your 2026 World

Most influential businesses to watch in 2026

Innovation, adaptability, and customer-centric growth are defining the next generation of industry leaders. Across sectors ranging from artificial intelligence and legal services to digital marketing and wealth management, a new wave of businesses is reshaping markets with forward-thinking solutions and measurable impact. These organizations are not only responding to evolving consumer needs but are also setting new standards through technology, transparency, and innovation. Here are some of the most influential businesses to watch in 2026 that are driving change and creating lasting value across their respective industries. MyInvestBuddy is redefining wealth management by making professional financial planning simple, transparent, and accessible for everyone. Led by partners Pramukh Somisetty Sureshkumar and Himanshu Agarwal, the firm combines IIM-level expertise with a strong commitment to helping individuals and families achieve long-term financial security. Backed by the experience of Registered Investment Adviser and IIM alumnus Pramukh Somisetty Sureshkumar, along with Himanshu Agarwal, the team brings over five years of expertise in financial products and has earned the trust of more than 100 clients. Their personalized approach focuses on goal-based investing, smart portfolio tracking, and practical financial solutions tailored to each client's needs. What makes MyInvest Buddy one of the businesses to watch in 2026 is its emphasis on transparency, technology-driven investment management, and client-first philosophy. By simplifying complex financial concepts and prioritizing long-term wealth creation over short-term trends, the firm is empowering everyday investors to make informed decisions and build a secure financial future with confidence.

ESIGN WEB SERVICES

Founded in 2007 by Ashwani Kumar Sharma, ESIGN WEB SERVICES has grown from a boutique SEO firm into a full-service digital marketing agency serving clients across diverse industries and international markets. Over the years, the company has helped businesses strengthen their online presence, generate qualified leads, and adapt to evolving consumer behavior in an increasingly competitive digital landscape. What distinguishes ESIGN WEB SERVICES is its forward-looking approach to search and digital visibility. As artificial intelligence transforms the way people discover information, the company has expanded beyond traditional SEO to embrace emerging disciplines such as Generative Engine Optimization (GEO), Answer Engine Optimization (AEO), and AI-driven search visibility strategies. Under the leadership of Ashwani Kumar Sharma, the agency combines technology, data-driven insights, and human expertise to deliver sustainable growth for businesses. Reflecting the industry's shift from ranking-focused tactics to building digital authority and long-term brand visibility, ESIGN WEB SERVICES is helping organizations navigate the future of AI-powered search and digital transformation.

Defected MLAs asked to file counter affidavits in High Court

Hyderabad: Chief Justice Aparesh Kumar Singh and Justice G.M. Mohiuddin of the Telangana High Court on Thursday directed MLAs Danam Nagender and Bandla Krishna Mohan Reddy to file their counters in the batch of petitions challenging the Assembly Speaker's decision rejecting disqualification proceedings against MLAs accused of defecting from the BRS to the ruling Congress party. The Division Bench was hearing a batch of writ petitions filed by BRS legislators questioning the orders of Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar, who had held that there was insufficient material to conclude that the ten legislators had incurred disqualification under the Tenth Schedule to the Constitution. The petitioners contended that despite ample material being placed before the Speaker to establish defection, no action had been taken against the legislators who had allegedly switched allegiance after being elected on BRS tick-



ets in the 2023 Assembly elections. The present batch of petitions also includes a plea filed by BJP Legislature Party leader Aleti Maheshwar Reddy seeking disqualification of Khairatabad MLA Danam Nagender on the grounds of defection. During the hearing, the Bench took note of the submissions and directed respondents Danam Nagender and Bandla Krishna Mohan Reddy to place their stand on record by filing counters. The matter was adjourned to July 22 for further hearing.

Tribals stop Forest officials from digging trenches near farmlands in Kumram Bheem Asifabad



Kumram Bheem Asifabad: Mild tension prevailed after residents prevented Forest officials from digging trenches around agriculture lands situated on the fringes of forests at Polasa village in Jainoor mandal on Friday. The residents, mostly tribals, claimed that they were cultivating crops in the lands for quite a long time. They wondered as to why the officials were now suddenly digging trenches around the lands. They regretted that they would lose livelihood if the lands were retrieved. They declared that they would not leave the lands even if they were killed. They wonder how they would take care of their children, if they were not allowed to till the lands. They stopped earth movers from digging trenches by staging a sit-in in the fields. They picked up an argument with the officials leading to ten-

sion. They withdrew their protest when police advised them to approach officials for justice instead of preventing the digging. Forest officials reasoned that they were only trying to conserve wildlife. They stated that the forests were seeing movement of tigers at regular intervals. They said that the tigers were being disturbed by the farming activities in the lands. They added that the lands originally belonged to the Forest department, but were used by the residents for agriculture.

It may be recalled that the district is witnessing similar clashes between farmers and the Forest officials over boundaries of lands located near forests at different parts at regular intervals. Proposed joint surveys by both revenue and Forest officials remain a distant dream.

Revanth Reddy seeks permanent solution to Tungabhadra water dispute

Hyderabad: Questions are being raised over the outcome of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's meeting with his counterparts from Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh on River Tungabhadra water-sharing issues as details of the discussions have not been shared in the public domain. The Chief Minister visited Hospet and attended a meeting with Union Jal Shakti Minister CR Patil, Karnataka Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on the issue. Officials from all three States also participated in the meeting. However, addressing a public meeting later, Revanth Reddy appealed to the Union Minister to find a permanent solution to the inter-State River Tungabhadra water-sharing issue at the

earliest. "Today is a Red Letter Day as the Chief Ministers of three States attended a meeting chaired by Union Minister CR Patil on the Tungabhadra water-sharing issue," the Chief Minister said.

He described the first meeting involving the Chief Ministers and the Union Minister as a step towards resolving the water-sharing issue amicably. The inauguration of 33 new gates at the Tungabhadra dam was a major initiative towards resolving a dispute that has continued for three generations, he said. He also called upon all political forces to rise above politics and work for the interests of farmers in the three States. The Chief Minister pointed out that farmers were able to utilise only 5 to 6 TMC out of the 17.9 TMC allocated to the Rajolibanda Diversion Scheme

Warangal teen booked under POCSO for sexually assaulting minor boy

Warangal: A 16-year-old youth was booked under the provisions of POCSO Act for allegedly sexually assaulting an eight-year-old boy under the limits of Mattewada police station in Warangal city. The victim's mother, who was living with her two sons at her mother's house in Ramannapet area, said that on June 18, 2026, while she was away at work, her two sons attended school and returned home in the evening. During the night hours on the same day, the teenager from the neighbourhood took her eight-year-old son, who was playing outside, into his own home forcibly when no one else was home, closed the doors and sexually assaulted him, she said. The victim's mother further said she came to know about the incident from a female relative who went looking for her son as he had not returned home after a long time; found him in the house of the accused. The mother reportedly said she observed the accused putting on his dress while her son was adjusting his own clothes. Later the victim was taken to the hospital for treatment.



Major Shiva Kiran, 61 founder of Sukuki Exnora passes away

Hyderabad: Major Shiva Kiran, 61, a retired army officer, who was known for his active efforts in improvement of civic conditions in the city, died due to illness on Thursday at around 10.10 pm in a private hospital in Kondapur. He was undergoing treatment following a complaint of a pancreas-linked tumour operation. Maj Shiva Kiran was receiving treatment after the operation was done twice on the same pancreas. Suddenly, his health deteriorated, and he passed away in the hospital. He is survived by his family with two daughters at Kundan Bagh (Begumpet). He was the founder of Sukuki Exnora, which is an NGO run by him to lift garbage since the erstwhile MCH. He was also the founder of the Geo Map Society. He focused on the welfare of ragpickers and successfully established 50 decentralised Zero Waste Projects across Hyderabad city. He created a Swachh Auto Trolley network consisting of 4,500 trolleys serving across the GHMC. The funeral will be held at Mahaprasthanam Jubilee Hills on Friday at 3 pm.



(RDS) in Gadwal, Alampur and Palamuru regions. He admitted that nearly 10 TMC of the allocated water was not being utilised due to various reasons. The Telangana government had already brought to the Union Minister's notice issues relating to silt accumulation in River Tungabhadra and disputes over water allocation, he said. "We resolved to find a permanent solution to the water crisis in the meeting," the Chief Minister stated.

Telangana Integrated Command and Control Centre serves as model for Meghalaya: CM Conrad Sangma



Shillong: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma said the Telangana Integrated Command and Control Centre serves as an excellent model for the northeastern state amid efforts to leverage technology to improve governance and citizen service delivery. Sangma, who visited the facility in Hyderabad on Thursday, said he was impressed by the systems in place and the seamless coordination among various departments. "Impressed by the systems and seamless coordination at the Telangana Integrated Command & Control Centre in

Hyderabad. Among the country's leading IC&CCs, it demonstrates how technology, data, and inter-departmental collaboration can come together to deliver more efficient and responsive public services," he said in a social media post.

"The Centre serves as an excellent model for states across India, including Meghalaya, as we work towards leveraging technology to improve governance and citizen service delivery. Glad to have witnessed its functioning firsthand and to learn from its best practices," Sangma added.

Telangana Governor, CM Revanth Reddy urge people to join fight against drug abuse



Hyderabad: Telangana Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla and Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Friday called upon people to join hands in preventing drug abuse and to promote a healthy society. In a message on the occasion of International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, Shukla said drug abuse is extremely harmful to individuals, families and society, and urged people, especially youth, to adopt a healthy lifestyle. He said all citizens should join the endeavour to realise 'Drug-free Telangana - Drug-free India'. Observing that nar-

cotics not only destroy individuals and families but also cause law and order problems, the chief minister stressed on social responsibility and alertness of citizens to check drug abuse and illicit trafficking. He called upon people to make efforts to promote positive thoughts among youth and to join the mission to make Telangana drug-free. Telangana Legislative Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar flagged off a 2k run in the district headquarters town of Vikarabad to mark the occasion.

Royal Enfield to launch India's first immersive adventure intersection in Ladakh this September

Hyderabad: This September, Royal Enfield is presenting India's first immersive adventure intersection for those who seek altitude, distance and the unknown. The inaugural Himalayan Basecamp (HBC) - Ladakh Edition is set at 11,480 feet, in the heart of Ladakh, and brings together riders, climbers, overlanders, kayakers and explorers. Curated as a sanctuary for the adventure mindset, participants can dive into guided explorations, competitive challenges, expert-led masterclasses and immersive cultural experiences, all against one of the world's most dramatic landscapes. The HBC is scheduled from September 4 to 6 and tickets are now live on royalenfield.com/himalayan-basecamp. Adventure seekers can test themselves in a series of challenges designed to push skill, endurance and decision-making to the limit. The navigation challenge includes Ladakh's most punishing terrain, one road book and nothing but instinct. The Time-Speed-Distance format is open to all bike categories. Across the three days, HBC will host masterclasses led by experienced adventurers, overlanders and outdoor specialists. The sessions include Field-ready know-how for breakdowns and getting unstuck where help isn't coming and long-distance journey planning on two wheels, from gear selection to riding unpaved terrain. Participants can also sign up for experiences across multiple disciplines, including Rafting and Kayaking, Rock Climbing and Scrambling, Hiking and Mountain Biking and Paragliding.



Explore Ladakh Through Curated Expeditions:

One of the biggest highlights is the lineup of seven specially designed rides that go beyond conventional tourist routes. It has Art, Culture and Photography with pottery villages, ancient petroglyphs, monastery courtyards, and above the clouds at Khardung La. The Sacred Rides and Himalayan Coffee Trails cover Monastery circuits and blessings at altitude paired with riverside roads, hot springs, and wild brews. The Triple Pass Expedition: Khardung La at 17,582 ft, Wari La, and Tanglang La at 17,480 ft. Three passes, three days, one Basecamp.

Industrialists will have a dedicated day every week, assures Bhatti

Hyderabad: Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka announced that he would dedicate every Friday to meeting MSME associations and representatives of the industrial sector to discuss their issues and suggestions. He said industrial growth was about improving people's livelihoods rather than just attracting investments. The State government's vision was to ensure that Ease of Doing Business benefits not only large companies but also small industries, women entrepreneurs and rural entrepreneurs. "To achieve this, meetings will be conducted every Friday with industry representatives," he said. The Deputy Chief Minister made these remarks after inaugurating the Industrial Innovation & Technology Expo 2026 at HITEX on Friday. He stated that Telangana had earned the confidence of investors and witnessed robust industrial growth since the formation of the State. Hyderabad has gained global recognition in the IT, pharmaceuticals and life sciences sec-



tors. However, he emphasised that the State's growth should not remain confined to the services sector. "There is a need to increase the contribution of industry, particularly MSMEs, to the State's GDP. Manufacturing plays a vital role in employment generation and strengthening the rural economy," Bhatti Vikramarka said. The Deputy Chief Minister announced that the government has set a target of generating 34 GW of solar power by 2035. Despite the State's peak power demand rising from 15,000 MW to 18,500 MW over the past two and a half years, Telangana has ensured uninterrupted, quality power supply without any power cuts, he added.

Farmers question support for vegetable cultivation amid El Nino concerns

Hyderabad: With concerns mounting over the impact of El Nino on the ongoing agricultural season, particularly vegetable cultivation, farmers and experts are questioning whether the Telangana government is extending adequate support to encourage large-scale vegetable farming and reduce the state's dependence on imports. Telangana continues to rely heavily on neighbouring states to meet its demand for several vegetables, including lady's finger, green chillies, gourds, beans, capsicum, potatoes, colocasia, yam, onions and leafy vegetables. The state imports vegetables worth nearly Rs 4,000 crore annually from Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and a few northern states. Farmers fear that if El Nino affects vegetable production in these supplying states as well, Telangana could face shortages, triggering a sharp increase in prices for consumers. While acknowledging the need for crop diversification, farmers and agricultural experts argue that vegetable cultivation remains financially risky without stronger government support. According to the Agriculture and Farmers Commission, the area under vegetable cultivation in Telangana has declined from 5.5 lakh acres to just 1.02



lakh acres. Government policies apart, this was mainly due to rapid urbanisation, conversion of farmland for real estate, high cultivation costs, labour shortages, low productivity and inadequate market linkages. Pointing to successful policy interventions elsewhere, a senior Horticulture department official cited Punjab's example. Despite being one of the country's largest paddy producers, Punjab introduced additional incentives and input subsidies for farmers who shifted away from paddy cultivation to reduce groundwater depletion. "Can Telangana adopt a similar policy to promote vegetable cultivation?" the official asked. Farmers maintain that merely supplying quality seeds is insufficient. "The input cost for paddy cultivation is around Rs 30,000 per acre, whereas vegetable cultivation requires Rs 45,000 to Rs 50,000 per acre, depending on the crop. Many farmers simply cannot afford such investments," a member of the Telangana Farmers Federation said. Unlike paddy, vegetable cultivation is labour-intensive and involves greater risks due to perishability, uncertain markets and volatile prices. Crop losses caused by monkeys, deer and wild boars further discourage farmers from taking up horticulture. Many farmers have suggested that the government provide financial assistance for solar fencing to protect crops from wild animals. "Installing solar fencing costs around Rs 35,000 per acre. How can a farmer bear both the cultivation cost of nearly Rs 50,000 per acre and an additional Rs 35,000 for fencing without substantial government support?" the Telangana Farmers Federation member asked.

Challenges flagged by farmers

- * Low productivity.

- * High cultivation costs due to labour-intensive operations such as weeding, harvesting, sorting and grading.

- * Heavy post-harvest losses because vegetables are highly perishable.

- * Inadequate market linkages.

- * Frequent price fluctuations.

- * Lack of cold storage and transportation infrastructure to move produce from farms to markets.

- * Crop damage caused by monkeys, deer and wild boars.

Responsible AI adoption key to Viksit Bharat journey: PM Modi

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said responsible and inclusive adoption of artificial intelligence will play a vital role in accelerating India's journey to become a developed nation. Artificial Intelligence is reshaping industries and creating new avenues for productivity as well as innovation, he said. In a message to the AI Innovation Summit organised by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), Modi said the accounting and financial professions are also witnessing rapid changes driven by technological advancements.

"When used responsibly and allied with human judgement, AI-powered tools can improve efficiency, strengthen compliance, enable better decision-making and help professionals deliver greater value," he said. The prime minister's message was read out at the inaugural ceremony of the two-day summit that commenced on Friday in the national capital. As India advances towards becoming a developed nation, he said responsible and inclusive



adoption of AI will play a vital role in accelerating the journey. The government is taking various initiatives as part of larger efforts to make India a developed nation by 2047. Modi also appreciated the invaluable contribution of the chartered accountants' fraternity to the country's progress. "As India embraces the opportunities of the AI era, I am confident that the CA fraternity will continue to uphold the highest standards of integrity, while leading innovation and excellence in the financial sector, contributing to the building of Viksit Bharat," he said. ICAI, set up under an Act of Parliament, has more than five lakh members.

Four killed, seven injured as MUV rams parked lorry in AP's Palnadu

Palnadu (Andhra Pradesh): Four people died and seven others were injured after a heavy-duty multi-utility vehicle (MUV) rammed into a stationary lorry in Palnadu district on Friday, a police official said. According to police, the victims were travelling from Hyderabad to Pamuru in Markapuram district to attend the funeral of an acquaintance when the accident occurred on the Srisailam Road. "Four people — two men and two women — were killed after the vehicle crashed into a stationary lorry near Nagaram area at Macherla in Palnadu district," the official told PTI. Police said

the lorry had been parked on the roadside following a tyre burst. The MUV carrying 11 occupants within its permitted seating capacity, reportedly failed to notice the stationary vehicle on a curved stretch of the road and rammed into its rear. Seven other occupants sustained injuries, some of them fractures, though none are believed to be life-threatening, police said. Meanwhile, police registered a case under Sections 106(1) and 125(a) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Section 106(1) deals with death due to negligence and 125(a) — endangering the life or personal safety of others.

Ram Mandir trust General Secretary Champat Rai steps down, Anil Mishra also quits

Ayodhya: Days after alleged misappropriation of funds at the Ram Temple stirred a national controversy, Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust chief Champat Rai and Trust member Anil Mishra stepped down from their positions, credible sources said. According to information shared by UP government sources, both the key Trust members have resigned from their positions. Both are understood to have stepped down on moral grounds. The development comes as a major fallout of the donation controversy at the Ram Temple, which came as a shock to crores of devotees. According to reports, offerings and valuables worth hundreds of crores were misappropriated by the temple staff in connivance with bank officials. As the temple trust is entrusted with the task of monitoring day-to-day operations and overseeing the management of chadhava (offerings) to Lord Ram, this comes as fixing accountability for the grave wrongdoings that went unchecked at the temple. The resignations come on the back of mounting scrutiny and demand for the sacking of officials after the preliminary findings submitted by SIT, which flagged lapses in the handling of donations offered by devotees at the Ram Temple.

Last night, an FIR was also lodged against eight individuals, including the temple attendants, counting staff and former bank officials who allegedly acted in collusion to siphon off the temple funds. All the accused named in the FIR were arrested and put behind bars. The

arrested accused include Avinash Shukla, Anukalp Mishra, Lavkush Mishra, Manish Kumar Yadav, Karunesh Pandey, Ramashankar Mishra, Subhash Srivastava, and Ram Shankar Yadav alias Tinnu. The filing of an FIR, however, failed to placate those demanding accountability in the alleged theft. After the FIR was filed, many also questioned why only the lower-level individuals were made 'scapegoats' while senior figures escaped accountability.



India releases fifth tranche of Rs 250 Crore to Bhutan under economic stimulus programme

Thimphu: India on Thursday handed over the fifth tranche of INR 250 crore to Bhutan for its Economic Stimulus Programme (ESP), the Indian Embassy said. This brought the total disbursed amount so far to INR 1,250 crore out of India's committed support of INR 1,500 crore for the ESP. India routinely funds projects in the neighbouring Himalayan nation. Over 30 per cent of the capital expenditure in Bhutan's budget for 2026-27 will be supported through grants by the Indian government. On Thursday, New Delhi's Ambassador in Thimphu, Sandeep Arya, handed over an INR 250-crore cheque to Bhutan's Foreign Minister Lyonpo DN Dhunyel, according to

Bengal to implement UCC by following legal procedures, says Suwendu

Kolkata: West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari on Friday said his government would implement the Uniform Civil Code in the state by following due legal procedures, similar to the process adopted by Gujarat and Assam. Speaking on the sidelines of a government programme to celebrate the 189th birth anniversary of literary icon Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay at College Street in north Kolkata, Adhikari said the state would adhere to the prescribed process for implementing the UCC. "There is a procedure for UCC implementation, and we will adhere to that. This will be similar to Gujarat and Assam," he said, referring to the two states that have initiated legislative and administrative steps towards adopting a Uniform Civil Code governing issues such as marriage, divorce and inheritance. The BJP government in West Bengal is likely to introduce the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill in the Assembly on Monday during its ongoing Budget session, much ahead of the party-stated six-month deadline, a source in the Suwendu Adhikari-led cabinet said. The matter was discussed and finalised in a Business Advisory Committee meeting held in the Assembly on Thursday evening, he added. The development could mark one of the most con-

sequential legal and social policy shifts in Bengal in recent times, with the BJP holding the UCC as representing both a



major governance promise and a politically significant reform. Ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections, the BJP had pledged in its manifesto that the UCC would be implemented within six months of coming to power in the state. The promise was prominently highlighted by Union Home Minister Amit Shah while unveiling the party's election manifesto, or 'Sankalp Patra', in April. "Several states, including Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Assam, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, have already implemented the UCC proposals. Bengal will now also implement it in line with other BJP-ruled states as we had promised ahead of the elections," a minister in the Adhikari cabinet said. During the programme, Adhikari paid floral tributes to Chattopadhyay, the composer of the national song 'Vande Mataram'. The chief minister announced that the state government would build a national-level 'Vande Mataram' museum as part of the celebrations marking 150 years of the song.

Strait of Hormuz vessel traffic recovers to 57 per cent of pre-war levels

New Delhi: A new daily record of 78 vessel transits after the US-Iran war has been recorded through the Strait of Hormuz, representing a recovery to about 57 per cent of pre-war daily volumes, a report said on Friday. The recovery in transits comes after Oman and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) announced a new safe corridor for vessels transiting close to the Omani coast, the report from S&P Global said. More than 40 per cent of the day's transits — 33 vessels — used this route, with 25 of them outbound, while other ships continued to transit closer to Iran's territorial waters. Eight vessels were also detected operating dark during the passage. "While most outbound vessels had been trapped inside the Gulf since the onset of hostilities, a subset of these movements involved ships that entered more recently and are now exiting, pointing to early signs of normalisation and a gradual re-establishment of freedom of navigation patterns," the report added. Total ship movements included 22 oil and chemical tankers, 21 bulk carriers, 12 cargo ships, seven container ships, four LPG tankers and two LNG tankers. Overall, inbound movements accounted for 37 per cent of traffic, with 41 per cent of these ships linked to Iran. Additionally, 10 crude tankers transited on June 24, comprising five



VLCCs and three Suezmax vessels moving outbound, and two VLCCs crossing inbound into the Gulf. Only one vessel — the VLCC AMAK — sanctioned by the US is linked to Iran. Further, 12 product tankers moved through the strait, evenly split between inbound and outbound movements. Only one bitumen tanker — the VIRAJ — is linked to Iran, the report said. Global crude oil prices fell sharply on Friday and were on track to post steep weekly losses as easing supply concerns in the Strait of Hormuz outweighed fresh geopolitical tensions following an attack on a cargo vessel near Oman. International oil benchmark Brent crude futures fell \$1.51 or 2 per cent to \$73.75 a barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude decreased \$1.50, or about 2 per cent, to \$70.42 a barrel.



INR 250 crore for the 'National Fuel Price Smoothing Framework', which has helped mitigate the impact of rising fuel prices on Bhutan's economy, it said. During the meeting, the Ambassador also handed over cheques totalling INR 46.4 crore for three separate projects concerning education and digital development.

Ajay Devgn announces new action film 'Chauhaan', set for 2027 release

Mumbai: Actor Ajay Devgn is set to headline "Chauhaan", an action entertainer which will be released in theatres on October 1, 2027, the makers announced on Thursday. The project was announced on the birth anniversary of Devgn's father Veeru Devgan, who was one of Hindi cinema's most celebrated stunt choreographers. Presented by Jio Studios and Colour Yellow Productions, the film will be directed by Neeraj Yadav, known for his work as a writer on movies such as "An Action Hero" and "Tere Ishk Mein". The makers also released an announcement video, offering a glimpse into the film's gritty action-packed world. Set against a volatile backdrop in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama, the film will see

Devgn step into the role of an army officer. "Chauhaan" is being produced by Jyoti Deshpande, Aanand L Rai and Himanshu Sharma. Devgn will next be seen in the comedy franchise film "Dhamaal 4", slated for release on July 3. It will be followed by the third instalment of the "Drishyam" franchise, in which he reprises his popular role as Vijay Salgaonkar. He also has "Ranger", an action-adventure co-starring Sanjay Dutt and Tamannaah Bhatia, in the pipeline.



Khushbu Sundar's daughter Avantika marries Shravan Sreenivasan; Chiranjeevi, Nagarjuna, Trisha attend Goa wedding



Mumbai: It was a starry night in the Pearl of the Orient as stars from Tamil, Hindi, and Telugu gathered to give their blessings to Avantika Sundar, the elder daughter of actor-politician Khushbu Sundar and filmmaker Sundar C, on her wedding. Avantika tied the knot with Shravan Sreenivasan in Goa on Thursday. Telugu actors Chiranjeevi, Nagarjuna, Venkatesh, Tamil and Telugu actress Trisha Krishnan, Hindi cinema actors Anil Kapoor and Jackie Shroff attended the event at a resort in Goa. The theme of the wedding ceremony appeared to be beige with textures of gold as majority of the guests donned the shade in traditional wear. However, Anil Kapoor opted for a white outfit, and Nagarjuna donned a teal coloured ethnic wear. Dressed in traditional South Indian attire, including vesti and mundu, the actors caught the attention of fans, with their elegant looks quickly becoming a talking point on social media. One of the viral videos showed Trisha sitting in the front row and talking to Chiranjeevi and his wife. It looked like CM Vijay skipped the celebrations. Incidentally, Kushboo Sundar, along with her family, paid a visit to the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Vijay at

his residence earlier this month.

Kushboo Sundar met Vijay, who is rumoured to be dating Trisha Krishnan, to invite him to her daughter Avantika's wedding on June 3. She wrote on her social media, "A truly special and memorable day for our family as we met my dearest brother, our Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Shri @actorvijay avl, at his residence and extended the invitation for our daughter's wedding with Shri Shravan Sreenivasan. Seeing him always fills our hearts with pride and happiness". "The children were absolutely thrilled and couldn't take their eyes off him. Despite his demanding schedule, he welcomed us with the same warmth, affection, and beautiful smile that we have always cherished. Thank you, my brother, for your precious time, love, and blessings. It means more than words can express. Love you always", she added. Earlier, Khushbu and Sundar C had travelled to New Delhi last month to personally invite Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the wedding, sharing photos of the meeting on social media and thanking him for his blessings for the couple.

Nora Fatehi celebrates Morocco's FIFA World Cup Round of 32 qualification after thrilling win over Haiti

Mumbai: Bollywood dancing diva Nora Fatehi revealed she was on the edge of her seat during the FIFA World Cup match between Morocco and Haiti. Nora shared a string of images from the match in which Morocco sealed an exciting 4-2 victory over Haiti. Sharing her excitement, Nora said that the nail-biting encounter "almost got a heart attack". She wrote on Instagram: "See you in Mexico Morocco 4 vs 2 Haiti. Almost got a heart Attack during this game! Congratulations to Morocco for advancing to the round of 32 for the World Cup!" Morocco defeated a dogged Haiti team in their final match of

group play at the FIFA World Cup 2026 at the Atlanta Stadium. The Atlas Lions suffered a huge scare with Les Grenadiers twice taking the lead, but they finished with a flourish to secure the victory. With the win, Morocco finished second in Group C and qualified for the Round of 32 as runners-up and will play the winner of Group F: Either the Netherlands, Japan or Sweden, while Haiti head home with plenty of admirers. Their bright finish caps off an exciting first appearance at the World Cup in over 50 years. On June 25, the 34-year-old actress stepped down memory lane with the release of her latest track, "Ya Baba", a song

Disha Patani shares fun BTS moments with Jacqueline Fernandez, Raveena Tandon and Lara Dutta

Mumbai: Actress Disha Patani, on Friday, gave fans a glimpse of the fun she had while shooting for her recently released movie. She shared a series of behind-the-scenes pictures featuring her good friend Jacqueline Fernandez and senior actresses Raveena Tandon, Lara Dutta. Soon after the post went live, Disha's best friend Mouni Roy couldn't help but shower love on her best friend. Taking to her social media account, Disha shared a carousel of candid moments from the film's sets and captioned the post as, "Hope you guys have as much fun watching it as much as we enjoyed making it." Reacting to the post, Mouni Roy commented, "Congratulations on your release." The pictures captured the girls in high spirits on the sets. Some photos showed Disha and Jacqueline clicking cheerful selfies, while others featured them striking playful poses alongside Raveena and Lara. Dressed in military-inspired outfits and costume looks for the film, the actresses appeared to be thoroughly enjoying them-



selves between takes. They were seen laughing, making funny faces and posing together for memorable behind-the-scenes moments. Talking about Disha and Mouni's friendship, they share one of Bollywood's closest friendships. They are often seen vacationing together, attending parties, celebrating festivals, etc. A few months ago, Disha and Mouni had shared pictures of them flaunting their bikinis as they enjoyed at their vacation by the beachside. Recently, the friendship had unexpectedly found itself at the centre of online chatter after Mouni Roy and her husband Suraj Nambiar announced separation. Following the announcement, many netizens flooded Disha Patani's social media posts with comments, unfairly blaming her for the couple's reported split. Mouni and Suraj announced their divorce, a few weeks in a joint post on their social media accounts.

Samantha announces pregnancy, plans maternity break

Chennai: Actor Samantha Ruth Prabhu has confirmed that she is expecting her first child with husband Raj Nidimoru, saying she will soon take a break from acting. Samantha on Wednesday celebrated the success of her new movie "Maa Inti Bangaaram", an action drama from filmmaker Nandini Reddy. The movie, which released last week, has received unanimous praise from the critics and earned over Rs 50 crores at the global box office. "After 'Maa Inti Bangaaram', I will have to take a small break, given my condition. I'll have to take maternity leave. After that, I'll be back with another film for my fans," Samantha told reporters. Her announcement put an end to days of speculation about her pregnancy after some social media users claimed she appeared to have a baby bump during the film's promotional events. The actor married filmmaker Raj Nidimoru in December 2025 in an intimate ceremony at Sadhguru's Isha Foundation in Coimbatore. Samantha was earlier married to actor Naga Chaitanya from 2017 to 2021, while Raj was previously married to Shyamali De. At the event,



Samantha also reflected on relationships, saying they require equal effort from both partners. "Sometimes relationships are complicated and it is not always in your control. It takes two people to make a relationship work. The first most important thing for a woman to do is to have confidence in herself, to be complete as a person. Then you will find the right person. If you look for someone else to complete you and feel incomplete while waiting for that person, mistakes will happen because there will be more expectations from the other person."

inspired by the iconic Tunisian folk classic "Sidi Mansour", which she says she heard at weddings and events when she was younger. She captioned the clip: "I'm taking a trip down memory lane and revisiting an iconic song that was a part of my childhood and years later, it's still finding its way back to me in the most special ways. What are some songs that make you nostalgic?" In the video, the dancing diva was heard saying: "Just dropped the track called Ya baba. It's sung by me and Shilpa Rao produced by Sunjoy and Ya baba is originally a Tunisian folk song called Sidi Mansour." She added: "So this song has

a beautiful history and cultural background and what's really cool about this song is I used to hear this song in so many weddings and events when I was younger. And yeah, like let's do this, drop this track."



Rohit's unbeaten fifty anchors Palamuru Strikers' 5-wicket victory over Medak Falcons

Hyderabad: Palamuru Strikers registered their first win of the season, producing a disciplined all-round performance to seal a five-wicket victory over Medak Falcons in the Sreenidhi University TG20 at the Rajiv Gandhi Stadium here on Thursday. Rishab Baslas (2/33) and Ravi Kiran (2/34) were the pick of the bowlers for the Strikers as they restricted their opponents to 164/9. Vignesh Reddy's quickfire 39 off 22 balls set the platform, while Rohit Rayudu's unbeaten 54 off 42 balls anchored the chase, guiding the Strikers home with 13 balls to spare. After Ahwinan Ram (12 off 10) retired out, captain Ravi Teja and Shrunjith Reddy (19 off 19) looked to rebuild. However, the Strikers continued to tighten their grip, with Rathan Teja clean-bowling Shrunjith before Rohit Rayudu had Ravi Teja edge behind to wicketkeeper Pragnay Reddy after a brisk 13 off seven deliveries. Reduced to 77/5, the Falcons turned to Varun Yerram (36 off 23) and Vikram Naik (36 off 33), who stitched together a vital partnership to steady the innings. While the pair rotated the strike effectively, the Strikers' disciplined bowling made boundaries difficult to come by, with the Falcons reaching the 100-run mark only in the 13th over.

Varun and Vikram gradually found their rhythm, adding a valuable 64-run stand to revive the innings. Baslas' double strike all but ended the Falcons' resistance. Vikram Naik, who had battled hard throughout the innings, was dismissed in the final over as the Falcons were restricted to 164/9 in their 20 overs. In response, the Falcons made the perfect



start with the ball as Varun Yerram struck in the opening over, inducing Karan Yadav (0 off 1) to hole out to Naman Agarwal. Yerram struck again soon after, dismissing Pragnay Reddy (15 off 10), to leave the Palamuru Strikers under early pressure. Vignesh then joined Rohit at the crease, and the duo added 59 runs off just 36 balls to wrest back the momentum. Just as the partnership began to flourish, Syed Ghazi Abbas provided the Falcons with a crucial breakthrough by dismissing the dangerous Vignesh. Shrunjith Reddy further raised the Falcons' hopes by clean-bowling Shadab Ahmed (3 off 3), but Rohit continued to anchor the chase with a measured knock. He found able support from Rathan Teja (23 off 20), who chipped in before being bowled by Ravi Teja.

Rohit brought up his maiden half-century of the season in style, launching Shrunjith Reddy for a six in the 18th over. With victory within touching distance, Pratheek Pawar finished the chase emphatically with a couple of boundaries as the Strikers sealed the win with 13 balls to spare. The scores: Medak Falcons 164/9 in 20 overs (Vikram Naik 36, Varun Yerram 36, Rishab Baslas 2/33, Ravi Kiran 2/34) lost to Palamuru Strikers 165/5 in 17.5 overs (Rohit Rayudu 54 not out, Vignesh Reddy 39, Varun Yerram 2/20).

Chennai Bulls reach semifinals as Delhi Redz, Hyderabad Heroes win



Hyderabad: Chennai Bulls qualified for the semifinals with a 14-14 draw against Bengaluru Bravehearts, while Delhi Redz and hosts Hyderabad Heroes secured victories in the HSBC Rugby Premier League at the GMC Balayogi Stadium here on Thursday. The Redz made a commanding start, patiently building their attacks before Nygel Amaita broke through to open the scoring. Samuel Asati and Josep Serres quickly added further tries, while Hitesh Dagar extended the advantage as the Redz dominated possession and territory. With their semifinal hopes hanging in the balance, Kolkata Banga Tigers finally found a response through Vuiviwa Naduvalo before half-time. Serres struck again after the break, but Naduvalo almost single-handedly dragged the Tigers back into the contest with two brilliant individual tries late in the third quarter. Jon Okeyo restored Delhi's breathing space in the final period, while Naduvalo produced another moment of magic. However, the Redz

maintained their composure and controlled the closing stages to secure an important win. The Heroes dictated proceedings through swift ball movement and aggressive defensive pressure, stretching the Dreamers across the width of the field. Manuel Moreno opened the scoring after a well-worked move before Taitaifono Tavita exploited space out wide to add another try.

The Heroes continued to dominate territory in the second quarter, with Tavita crossing over again from the left wing and Francisco Coscolluela capitalising on sustained pressure as Mumbai struggled to retain possession and build phases. Although the Dreamers tightened their defence in the third quarter and limited scoring opportunities, Hyderabad maintained control through possession and field position. Ravuama Seruvakula eventually broke through in the final quarter, while the Heroes' organised defence and superior pace prevented Mumbai from finding a way onto the scoresheet.

FIFA WC 2026 becomes highest-scoring World Cup in history, breaks attendance record



California: The FIFA World Cup 2026 etched its name into the record books on Friday after becoming the highest-scoring edition in the tournament's history, with the landmark being reached during the United States' thrilling Group D clash against Turkey. United States defender Auston Trusty scored the historic 173rd goal of the tournament with an early opener. This surpassed the previous World Cup record of 172 goals set during all 64 matches at Qatar 2022. This milestone occurred in just the 59th match of the expanded tournament. The goal count kept increasing as Turkiye fought back to secure a dramatic 3-2 win over co-hosts USA, bringing the tournament total to 177 goals.

FIFA president Gianni Infantino praised this achievement as another sign of the tournament's success. "Surpassing the previous highest of 172 goals from Qatar shows the excitement and attacking talent that have already made the 2026 World Cup so unforgettable," Infantino wrote on Instagram.

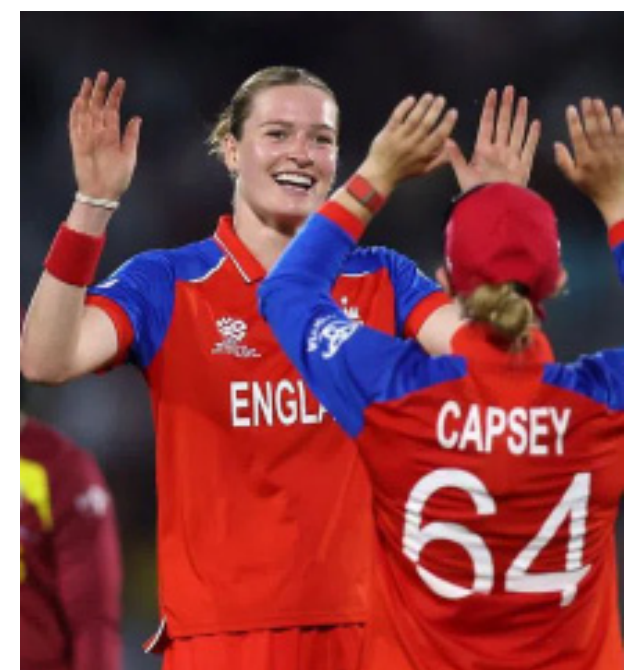
This scoring record has been reached with five matches still left before the knockout stages finish. Unlike past editions, the 2026 World Cup includes 104 matches due to FIFA's expansion from 32 to 48 teams, allowing for more chances for goals and excitement. The previous record of 172 goals had stood since the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, where the total was reached over the

tournament's full schedule of 64 matches. Moreover, the FIFA World Cup 2026 has also broken the all-time attendance record. A total of 3,605,357 fans have attended the tournament so far, the highest attendance in the history of the competition. The tournament's previous all-time cumulative attendance record was 3.5 million, established at the 1994 edition, by the end of the group stage. "This is a true reflection of our fans' love for the beautiful game and football's ability to bring people together to celebrate, feel joy, and share emotions that unite. The scenes inside the stadiums and across our 16 fantastic host cities have been incredible and I thank you for coming from all corners of the globe to light up this @fifaworldcup," Infantino said. "The best is still to come and we will set more records, but what is most important is that people continue to have fun and create memories for life," he added. The 2026 edition of FIFA World Cup got off to an epic start and just six days after the thrilling curtain-raiser at Mexico City Stadium, the tournament's all-time daily attendance record has been broken on June 17 (IST). In total, 281,223 fans took their places in the stands across four group-stage encounters – France v. Senegal, Iraq v. Norway, Argentina v. Algeria and Austria v. Jordan – with the combined attendance figure surpassing the previous daily record of 277,070, set on 28 June 1994, which also featured four matches.

Women's T20 WC: England eye perfect group stage as New Zealand chase last-four lifeline (Preview)

London: Already assured of a place in the semifinals, hosts England will look to finish the group stage with a flawless record when they take on defending champions New Zealand in their final Group B fixture of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026 at The Oval in London on Saturday. England have been the team to beat in the tournament, winning all four of their matches in style to become the first team to make it to the knockout stage. Saturday's clash is no less important with another win cementing their status as Group B winners and possibly helping them avoid a meeting with six-time champions Australia in the semifinals. The hosts have hardly missed injured skipper Nat Sciver-Brunt, who will miss the match as she continues to recover from a calf injury. England's batting has been a team effort throughout the tournament, led by Danni Wyatt-Hodge who has scored 193 runs including a century and a half-century to top the team's scoring charts.

Amy Jones, Sophia Dunkley and Heather Knight have all contributed, while Alice Capsey has provided firepower in the middle order. England's attack with the ball has been just as impressive. Charlie



Dean and Sophie Ecclestone have always been a thorn in the side of opposition batters and Lauren Bell has given early breakthroughs with the new ball. They have underlined their overall dominance with an unbeaten campaign and a commanding net run rate. For New Zealand the equation is far more complex. The defending champions have won just two of their four matches and must beat England and hope that Ireland can upset West Indies earlier in the day to sneak into the semifinals.

Crude oil prices fall up to 2 pc amid easing supply concerns

New Delhi: Global crude oil prices fell sharply on Friday and were on track to post steep weekly losses as easing supply concerns in the Strait of Hormuz outweighed fresh geopolitical tensions following an attack on a cargo vessel near Oman. International oil benchmark Brent crude futures fell \$1.51, or 2 per cent, to \$73.75 a barrel in early trade. Similarly, US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude declined \$1.50, or about 2 per cent, to \$70.42 a barrel. Both benchmark contracts had gained more than 2 per cent in the previous session after a cargo vessel was struck by an unidentified projectile near Oman, prompting the United Nations' shipping agency to suspend its voluntary evacuation programme. According to media reports, two US officials said Iran had fired on the cargo vessel as it attempted to transit the Strait of Hormuz. Iranian authorities, however, said the security of ships sailing outside designated Hormuz routes could not be guaranteed.

Despite the latest security concerns, Brent and WTI were both headed for weekly losses of nearly 7 per cent as fears of supply disruptions eased following an improvement in tanker traffic through the Strait of Hormuz. Crude shipments through the strategic waterway rose this week to their highest level since the US-Israel conflict with Iran began in February after a ceasefire helped reopen the route. However, overall vessel traffic remained well below the pre-conflict average of around 125 ships per day. The Indian basket of crude oil, a weighted average of Brent Dated, Oman and Dubai crude grades imported by domestic refiners, averaged \$86.31 per



barrel in June so far after surging during the West Asia conflict. The basket had averaged \$106.23 per barrel in May and \$114.48 per barrel in April. Global benchmark Brent crude, which had touched around \$120 per barrel at the peak of the conflict, is now hovering near \$74 per barrel.

India attracts over USD 90 billion in fresh global investment commitments

New Delhi: Global corporations and institutional investors have announced more than USD 90 billion in fresh investment commitments to India in recent months, betting on the country's long-term economic growth despite rising geopolitical tensions, trade disruptions and an uncertain global outlook. The planned investments span artificial intelligence, cloud computing, digital infrastructure, manufacturing and industrial technology, reinforcing India's position as a key destination for global capital as companies diversify their supply chains and expand in high-growth markets, sources said. Among the biggest commitments, Amazon on Thursday said it would raise its total investment commitment in India to USD 48 billion by 2030, following a meeting between Chief Executive Andy Jassy and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The investment will support the company's expansion in cloud infrastructure, artificial intelligence and digital services. Earlier this month, Australian data centre operator AirTrunk announced plans to invest USD 30 billion to build 5 gigawatts of data centre capacity in India by 2030, one of the country's largest digital infrastructure investments to date. French building materials company Saint-Gobain said on June 18 it would invest an additional 1 billion euros (USD 1.15 billion) in India over the next five years, citing the country as one of its fastest-growing global markets.

The Canada Pension Plan Investment Board (CPPIB) also committed up to Rs 7,000 crore alongside CtrlS Datacenters to expand hyperscale data centre capacity, while industrial technology company ABB announced a USD 75 million investment in March to expand



its manufacturing and research footprint in India. Google, in February, unveiled a five-year USD 15 billion plan to expand AI infrastructure in India, including data centres, subsea connectivity, cloud capacity and workforce skilling initiatives. The announcements come as multinational companies navigate heightened geopolitical risks, including conflict in West Asia, shifting trade policies and slowing growth in several major economies, while increasingly viewing India as a strategic market for manufacturing, technology and digital infrastructure. Sources said the latest investment commitments underscore growing confidence among global boardrooms in India's long-term growth prospects, supported by its large domestic market, expanding digital economy, improving infrastructure and policy measures to attract foreign investment. The wave of investment announcements highlights India's growing appeal as a destination for global capital, with multinational corporations increasingly viewing the country as a key driver of future growth, digital transformation and manufacturing expansion. Taken together, the commitments signal that global boardrooms are doubling down on India even as economic and geopolitical uncertainty clouds the outlook elsewhere, the sources added.

Lupin gets USFDA tentative approval for generic prostate cancer drug

New Delhi: Homegrown pharma major Lupin Ltd on Friday said it has received tentative approval from the US health regulator for its generic version of enzalutamide tablets indicated for the treatment of castration-resistant prostate cancer. The tentative approval from the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) is for the abbreviated new drug application for enzalutamide tablets in strengths of 40 mg, 80 mg, 120 mg and 160 mg, Lupin said in a regulatory filing. The USFDA has tentatively approved Lupin's enzalutamide tablets in

40 mg and 80 mg strengths as bioequivalent to the Reference Listed Drug (RLD), Xtandi tablets, of Astellas. While Xtandi tablets are traditionally available in 40 mg and 80 mg strengths, Lupin's tentatively approved 120 mg and 160 mg strengths will offer healthcare providers and patients alternative dosing options, the company said.



Apple raises MacBook and iPad prices by up to 42 per cent



New Delhi: Apple has increased the starting prices of MacBook and iPad models by 20-42 per cent compared to their launch prices across the globe, including India, mainly due to higher memory chip costs. The new price list on Apple India's website shows that the company has increased the price of the MacBook Pro built on the M5 series chip by about 20 per cent. The price of the 14-inch MacBook Pro with the M5 Pro chip has been increased to Rs 2,99,900 per unit from the launch price of Rs 2,49,900. There has been a sharp rise in the price of the iPad Air. The price of the base 13-inch iPad Air model has been increased by 41.22 per cent to Rs 1,19,900 per unit from Rs 84,900. Counterpoint Research Co-founder and VP for Research Neil Shah said Apple's price hikes for the MacBook Neo, MacBook Air, MacBook Pro, iPad Air and iPad Pro Wi-Fi follow the biggest change in the cost structure of the consumer and enterprise PC and tablet market, driven by rising semiconductor chip prices, from memory to processors. Apple, in a statement, said the consumer electronics industry is facing an unprecedented challenge.

"The rapid expansion of AI data centres has created an extraordinary surge in demand for memory and storage. We have never seen a component price increase this much, this quickly. We have shielded our customers from these increases so far, but we have now reached a point where we need to begin raising prices on a number of products, including today's increases for iPad and Mac. We know this is not welcome news, and we are working tirelessly to find solutions," the statement said.

Price increases for consumer electronics are already widespread across the industry, with many products becoming 40 per cent or more expensive. Memory companies have been allocating an increasing share of their production to AI data cen-

tres, leaving the consumer electronics segment with constrained availability and rising costs. Memory suppliers are reporting margins at historic highs.

Memory chip leader Micron reported gross margins of 86 per cent, up from 15 per cent a year ago. "Apple, long regarded as the industry's benchmark for supply chain resilience, has begun passing higher component costs on to consumers. That is a strong signal that pricing pressures have reached a level that even the most sophisticated absorption strategies cannot fully offset," CyberMedia Research VP – Industry Research Group Prabhu Ram said.

Shah said Apple held back the price increase for at least two quarters, protecting its user base from price inflation, but it has reached a point beyond which it could no longer absorb the higher costs. "The unprecedented AI infrastructure growth has changed the semiconductor supply chain, driving insatiable demand for DRAM, NAND and compute chips, which does not match the industry's production and supply capacity for other markets as AI infrastructure is being prioritised. We believe the situation is unlikely to improve for at least the next two years," he said.

Shah said the timing of the price increase is not ideal as Apple looks to roll out its revamped on-device Apple Intelligence later this year across devices requiring considerable improvements in memory and computing capabilities. "This could affect overall demand for Apple products in the coming months. However, it could also benefit Apple, especially among customers who are due for an upgrade and want to buy a new Mac or iPad immediately. Instead of paying extra for a lower configuration, they may choose a more premium version of Apple's portfolio. As a result, the market could shift further towards premium products as users look to get maximum value for the money spent," Shah said.



Motorised wheelchairs distributed to disabled persons

Puttaparthi (Sri Sathya Said district): Joint Collector M Maurya Bharadwaj distributed 48 'Neo Bolt' battery-powered wheelchairs to persons with disabilities in Puttaparthi on Thursday. The initiative was supported by Timbaktu Collective, funded by Hyundai Mobis and implemented by Neomotion. The Joint Collector said the advanced mobility devices would significantly enhance the independence and mobility of persons with disabilities, adding that Neo Bolt wheelchair can be used as a conventional wheelchair and can also be converted into a scooter when required. Wheelchairs He appreciated Hyundai Mobis, Timbaktu Collective and Neomotion for undertaking the social responsibility initiative and providing modern assistive devices to beneficiaries in the district. Nearly 100 persons with disabilities from across the district attended the selection camp. Assistant Director of Department for the Welfare of Persons with Disabilities Archana, Neomotion Co-founder Siddharth, Hyundai Mobis representative Sindhuja, Timbaktu Collective Programme Managers Sreekanth and Jayashree and others were present.

Four killed, seven injured as MUV rams parked lorry in AP's Palnadu

Palnadu (Andhra Pradesh): Four people died and seven others were injured after a heavy-duty multi-utility vehicle (MUV) rammed into a stationary lorry in Palnadu district on Friday, a police official said. According to police, the victims were travelling from Hyderabad to Pamuru in Markapuram district to attend the funeral of an acquaintance when the accident occurred on the Srisailam Road. "Four people — two men and two women — were killed after the vehicle crashed into a stationary lorry near Nagaram area at Macherla in Palnadu district," the official told PTI. Police said the lorry had been parked on the roadside following a tyre burst. The MUV carrying 11 occupants within its permitted seating capacity, reportedly failed to notice the stationary vehicle on a curved stretch of the road and rammed into its rear. Seven other occupants sustained injuries, some of them fractures, though none are believed to be life-threatening, police said. Meanwhile, police registered a case under Sections 106(1) and 125(a) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Section 106(1) deals with death due to negligence and 125(a) — endangering the life or personal safety of others.

Pulse Polio drive on June 28: Municipal Corporation appeals for full coverage

Kurnool: The Municipal Corporation has ramped up preparations for pulse polio immunisation programme scheduled for June 28. Public Health Officer Dr M Raghu urged parents to bring all children aged below five years to nearby booths to receive polio drops, stressing that immunisation is the only effective protection against polio. An awareness programme held on Thursday at Kothapeta Urban Primary Health Centre saw doctors, health workers, ASHA

staff, and medical teams review arrangements and strategies for 100% coverage. A total of 82,964 children under five will be targeted through 229 Pulse Polio booths across the city. Trained medical teams will be stationed at all centres to ensure smooth implementation. Special door-to-door vaccination teams will visit households on June 29 and 30 to cover children who miss the campaign day. Special focus will be given to high-risk and mobile populations at bus stations,



railway stations, brick kilns, nomadic settlements, construction sites, and quarry areas. Dr Raghu called upon all health workers to ensure no child is left unvaccinated.

PDSU demands resignation of Nara Lokesh

Nandyal: State unit of Progressive Democratic Students Union (PDSU) has demanded immediate resignation of Education Minister Nara Lokesh, alleging that he has failed to tackle the worsening crisis in the State's education sector and has put the future of lakhs of students at risk. Educational Resources PDSU State president SMD Rafi and State general secretary Kiran Kumar raised the demand during a protest at Padmavathi Nagar Arch in Nandyal on Thursday. The student leaders strongly criticised the coalition government for failing to honour its election promises to students and youth. They highlighted non-release of Rs 6,450 crore in pending fee reimbursements and scholarships, which has caused severe financial distress to students. They also accused the government of not checking exorbitant fees charged by private institutions, indirectly promoting the commercialization of education. They pointed out poor living conditions in welfare hostels due to government neglect. PDSU leaders further alleged that key promises made during Yuva Galam padayatra — including Rs 3,000 monthly unem-



ployment allowance and filling 2.5 lakh government vacancies — remain unfulfilled. They warned of launching statewide student agitations if immediate action is not taken on pending dues, hostel issues, and election assurances.

Cong organises 'Chhatron ki goonj' to address students' problems

Kurnool: The District Congress Committee held 'Chhatron Ki Goonj', student consultation meeting at Zilla Parishad Hall in Kurnool on Thursday, in response to a call from All India Congress Committee. Hundreds of students, youth leaders, academicians, and Congress functionaries participated and highlighted pressing issues including intense pressure from NEET and JEE exams, heavy dependence on costly coaching centres, rising education expenses, frequent paper leaks, and poor job prospects after graduation. Educational Resources DCC president Kranti Naidu Boya assured that the party is committed to comprehensive education reforms. Suggestions and demands from the meet will be forwarded to national leadership to strengthen public education and secure a better future for the youth, he added.



Former MLA reviews SIR process



Kurnool: Former Kurnool MLA and YSRCP leader Hafeez Khan, along with local ward leaders, visited 8th Ward Secretariat and interacted with officials and residents, listening to their grievances and concerns regarding various civic and administrative issues on Thursday. Campaigns & Elections During the visit, he took note of public's representations and assured that the issues raised would be brought to the attention of the authorities concerned for necessary action. Later, Hafeez Khan held a detailed interaction with Booth Level Agents (BLAs) and reviewed the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process of voters' list. The BLAs informed him that at present only self-mapping and progeny mapping activities are being carried out, while the work related to Forms 6, 7, and 8 is scheduled to commence after July 15 as part of the electoral roll updating exercise. Hafeez Khan directed BLAs to ensure that every genuine, living, and eligible voter is included in the electoral rolls without any omission, emphasising that no eligible voter should be deleted or excluded under any pressure or influence.

APGB conducts loan outreach programme in Anantapur



Anantapur: Andhra Pradesh Grameena Bank (APGB) successfully organised loan outreach programme covering Tadipatri and Anantapur clusters to expand credit access and create awareness about its various loan products. P Sridevi, General Manager, Head Office, Guntur, the chief guest, highlighted the bank's commitment to providing timely and hassle-free credit to genuine customers and noted that APGB operates through 1,359 branches, serving nearly 1.30 crore customers across the State. She added that APGB is among the top-performing Regional Rural Banks in the country. Regional Manager M Ravi Mohan announced a target of Rs 4,600 crore in advances by March 2027 and informed that similar outreach programmes will be held across other clusters. Mega cheques worth Rs 27.5 crore were distributed to beneficiaries under MSME, Retail, and SHG segments.