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CM Chandrababu launches 'Viksit Bharat Rozgar' scheme, says will help poor people

Andhra Pradesh CM N. Chandrababu Naidu and Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan launch the 'Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin)' in Tirupati, boosting rural employment guarantees to 125 days. GeographicReference Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu stated that the 'Viksit Bharat Rozgar' scheme would bring light into the lives of the poor. He noted that this scheme would transform the face of villages and improve the living standards of the underprivileged. CM Chandrababu toured Tirupati district today (Thursday) and launched the 'Viksit Bharat Rozgar' scheme at Mukkuvaripalli. Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan accompanied him at the event. Addressing the gathering, CM Chandrababu remarked that Andhra Pradesh is developing in all aspects under the alliance government. CM Chandrababu announced that a Google data center is coming to North Andhra and a fighter jet manufacturing facility is set to be established in Puttaparthi. He reiterated his commitment to transforming Rayalaseema into 'Ratnala Seema' (a land of prosperity). He also mentioned that the foundation stone for a steel plant in Jammalamadugu would be laid soon and clarified that the Polavaram project would be completed before the Godavari Pushkaram festival. He explained that the scheme would provide employment to the poor for 185 days a year and noted that a digital system has been implemented to prevent the manipulation of records. He highlighted that the state's share in the 'Viksit Bharat Rozgar' scheme has in-



creased from 10% to 40%. He stated that the Central Government is moving forward with innovative ideas and policies and expressed confidence that India would emerge as a leading global power under Modi's leadership. CM Chandrababu also noted that the face of villages is changing under the leadership of Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan.

MLA Jayasurya inaugurates Dronacharya urban forest

Dhone: In a major boost to urban greenery, the 115-acre Dronacharya Urban Forest, located opposite the new Government Hospital in Dhone, was inaugurated by MLA Kotla Jayasurya Prakash Reddy on Wednesday. GeographicReference Developed by the Forest Department at a cost of Rs 2 crore, the massive park is designed to serve as a vital "green lung" for the town, promoting environmental conservation while offering a peaceful retreat amid rapid urbanization. Speaking at the launch, MLA Jayasurya Prakash Reddy

Guv Nazeer visits Prasanthi Nilayam, pays homage to Sri Sathya Sai Baba



Puttaparthi: Andhra Pradesh Governor S Abdul Nazeer paid a reverential visit to Prasanthi Nilayam on Wednesday, offering prayers at the Maha Samadhi of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba during his visit to the spiritual centre. The Governor was received by RJ Rathnakar, Man-

aging Trustee of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, who welcomed him on behalf of the Trust. Upon his arrival, the Governor proceeded to Sai Kulwant Hall, where he paid floral tributes and offered prayers at the Maha Samadhi of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. He later visited the Bhajan Hall, spending a few quiet moments in silent contemplation amid the serene atmosphere of the ashram. The visit was marked by traditional courtesies and reflected the Governor's reverence for the spiritual legacy of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

AP Minister Gottipati Ravikumar orders measures to resolve power issues

Andhra Pradesh Minister Gottipati Ravikumar has directed officials to accelerate measures to resolve power outages and low-voltage issues across the state. Andhra Pradesh Minister Gottipati Ravikumar has directed officials to accelerate measures to resolve power outages and low-voltage issues across the state. The Minister reviewed the status of power supply, project progress, and thermal power generation. He ordered the completion of TRANSCO projects within the stipulated deadlines and instructed officials to review project delays with contractors to expedite the work. He emphasised the need for coordination with District Collectors to resolve field-level issues promptly. The Minister noted that the Plant Load Factor (PLF) of thermal plants exceeded 80 per cent between January and June, whereas it had remained between 45% and 50% during the previous government's tenure. The Minister instructed officials to ensure that thermal power stations maintain coal reserves sufficient for at least 15 days. He called for strengthening APGENCO and increasing captive power generation, while also directing officials to formulate a strategy to reduce power purchases. He further instructed that an action plan regarding BESS (Battery Energy Storage Systems)



be prepared to meet future power requirements. Minister Gottipati Ravikumar directed officials to work towards enhancing public satisfaction with power sector services.



emphasized that expanding green cover is essential for improving public health and quality of life. He stated that the project aligns with the government's core vision of "Health for Every Home and Greenery for Every Region," ensuring residents have seamless access to clean air and sustainable public spaces. The newly opened urban forest is equipped with modern recreational amenities, including a well-laid walking track, trekking trails, dedicated children's play areas, comfortable visitor seating, and extensive plantations. The MLA expressed confidence that the serene environment would quickly become a popular destination for morning walks, family outings, and leisure activities. Looking ahead, the MLA announced that future developments would be shaped by public feedback. He also revealed major plans to establish a Mini Deer Park and introduce additional recreational features to transform the facility into a prominent eco-tourism hub for the district. The inauguration ceremony was well-attended by public representatives, Forest Department officials, alliance leaders, and a large number of enthusiastic local residents.

Call to JSP workers to participate in party committee formation



Nellore: Jana Sena Party leader Gunukula Kishore has highlighted the party's transparent mechanism that identifies and nurtures ordinary grassroots workers, transforming them into capable leaders. Speaking at the party committee formation meeting held in Nellore on Wednesday, chaired by Narsapuram MLA and Government Whip Bommidi Narayana Nayakar, Kishore praised Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan for opening a new chapter in politics by empowering common people committed to public causes. He noted that his decade-long service as district general secretary helped him earn wider recognition and strengthen the party. He lauded Pawan Kalyan's integrity, saying the leader stands out for fulfilling his promises. Kishore cited Bommidi Nayakar's inspiring journey from an ordinary worker to MLA, Government Whip, and Chairman of Fishermen Development Corporation as a shining example for all activists.

MLA briefs CM over Sarvepalli development

Nellore: Sarvepalli MLA Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy briefed Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on development activities in his Sarvepalli constituency at Undavalli on Tuesday and presented a specially prepared booklet with details of various development and welfare schemes undertaken in Sarvepalli, including 'P4' initiatives, to the CM. The MLA explained Naidu about upcoming development projects worth crores of rupees planned for the

current financial year under P4 initiative, including distribution of another 2,000 bicycles, installation of water plants and solar streetlights, establishment of skill development centers, upgrading high schools into model schools, hospital construction and adoption of Muthukuru and Krishnapatnam panchayats. After the formation of the alliance government, Somireddy focused specifically on the effective utilisation of CSR funds and insisted that 75 per cent of these funds be



spent for the benefit of locals, who bear the brunt of industrial pollution after giving up their lands for setting up these industries.



Keeping every vote alive is paramount

As the Election Commission of India conducts the Special Intensive Revision (SIR), examine the debates over electoral roll integrity, transparency, and rights. Elections are the lifeblood of our democracy. The right to vote, guaranteed by the Constitution to every eligible citizen, is not merely a statutory entitlement but the very foundation upon which democratic governance rests. That is why accuracy, transparency and credibility of electoral rolls are indispensable to free and fair elections. While it is essential to remove the names of deceased persons, duplicate entries and ineligible voters from the rolls, it is equally important to ensure that not a single eligible voter is wrongfully excluded. Maintaining this delicate balance is a constitutional obligation of the Election Commission of India (ECI). Public confidence in the electoral process can survive only when both objectives are pursued with equal commitment. Unfortunately, concerns are increasingly being raised that ECI's autonomy is being undermined by political pressures from the Union government, thereby weakening the integrity of the electoral process. Against this backdrop, Telangana's ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls warrants close public scrutiny. The poll panel has maintained that SIR intends to prepare accurate and updated electoral rolls. However, the exercise has generated widespread debate across the country. The first two phases, conducted in 12 States and one Union Territory, reportedly resulted in the deletion of nearly 72 million voter records, making the exercise highly contentious. Telangana has now entered the third phase of this process. Although electoral roll purification is a legitimate administrative exercise, the credibility of such an exercise depends not only on its legal validity but also on the confidence it inspires among citizens. If public trust in the electoral process erodes, the consequences extend far beyond elections and strike at the very foundations of constitutional democracy. The Congress party has alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led Union government has exerted undue influence over ECI and manipulated electoral processes to facilitate what it describes as "vote theft" and "seat theft". Guided by Rahul Gandhi's campaign to defend democratic institutions, the Congress has launched nationwide protests. In Telangana too, party workers now shoulder the responsibility of ensuring that irregularities in the SIR process do not disenfranchise genuine voters. It is particularly unfortunate that a process intended to strengthen electoral integrity has itself become the subject of widespread suspicion. Similar Special Intensive Revisions were carried out in 1951-52, 1960, 1980, 1993, 1995 and between 2002 and 2004 without attracting any major controversy. The current exercise, however, has generated unprecedented concern. According to available figures, the first two phases reportedly saw the deletion of approximately 6.5 million voters (8.3%) in Bihar, 25 million (13%) in Uttar Pradesh, 9.73 million (14%) in Tamil Nadu, nine million (11%) in West Bengal, seven million (14.5%) in Gujarat, 3.425 million (6%) in Madhya Pradesh, 3.1 million (5.7%) in Rajasthan and 2.5 million (11%) in Chhattisgarh. Political and legal disputes have surfaced in several States, particularly Bihar, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Assam.

Tensions escalate as police arrest Harish Rao, other BRS leaders amid Congress-BRS debate challenge

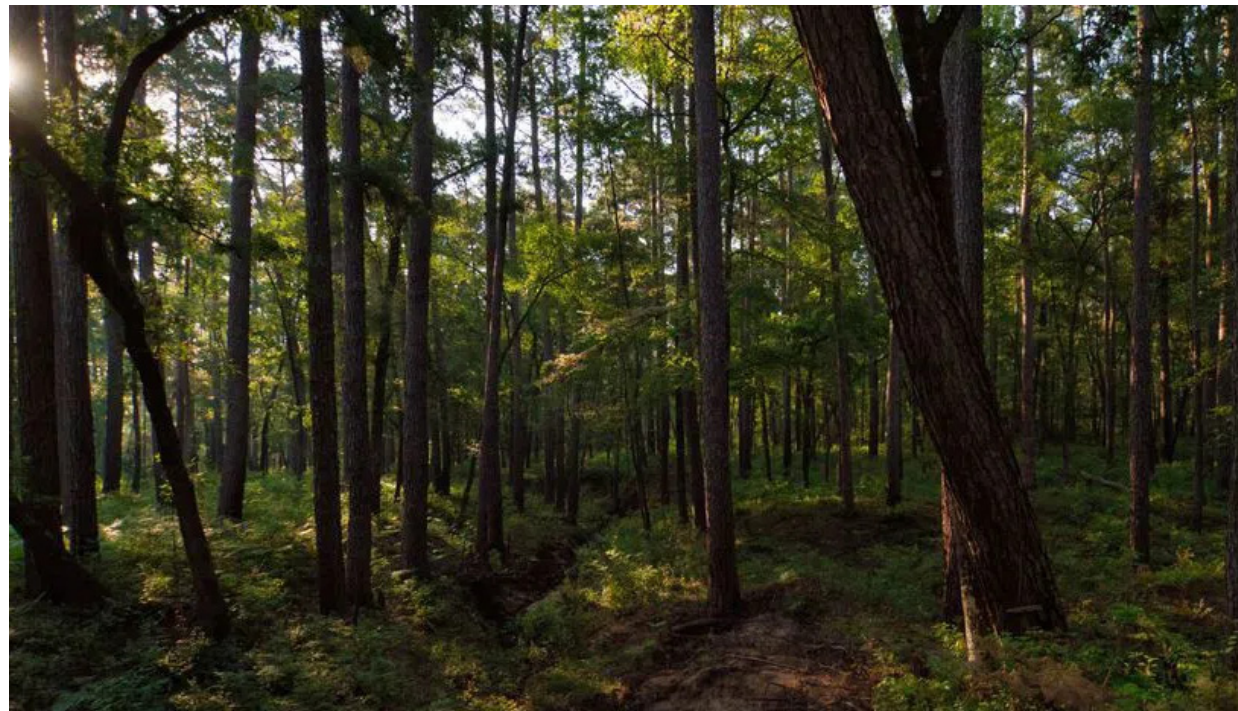
Hyderabad: High political drama unfolded in Hyderabad on Thursday as the face-off between the ruling Congress and the opposition BRS over Telangana's debt burden and alleged irregularities in Gurukul residential school tenders culminated in the arrest of several BRS leaders, even as the leaders from both parties traded fresh challenges for an open debate. Former Ministers T Harish Rao and V Srinivas Goud, BRS general secretary RS Praveen Kumar and several party leaders were arrested by the police outside Telangana Bhavan while attempting to proceed to the Telangana Martyrs' Memorial (Gun Park), where Congress ministers had challenged them to a public debate. The arrests came amid heavy police deployment around Telangana Bhavan, Gun Park and other key locations, as hundreds of Congress and BRS workers gathered, raising fears of a confrontation. Addressing the media before being taken into custody, Harish Rao accused the Congress government of using the police to prevent the BRS from participating in the very debate that its Ministers had proposed. He said they were carrying documentary evidence to substantiate its allegations of irregularities in Gurukul school tenders.

"We were going only for a debate, not for a fight. We are ready to present all the evidence even now. If the Ministers had challenged us, why are the police stopping and arresting us?" he asked. He also alleged that the police prevented him from speaking to Minister Ponnam Prabhakar. The confrontation stemmed from a series of public challenges and counter-challenges between the Congress ministers and BRS working president KT Rama Rao and senior leader T Harish Rao over Telangana's debt burden and allegations relating to residential school tenders. On Thursday morning, Rama Rao and Harish Rao reached Telangana Bhavan along with other BRS leaders. While Rama Rao remained at Telangana Bhavan awaiting the debate with Minister Jupally Krishna Rao who challenged for



debate on the State debts, Harish Rao, accompanied by senior BRS leaders including RS Praveen Kumar, proceeded towards the Telangana Martyrs' Memorial but were arrested outside the Telangana Bhavan. However, Jupally Krishna Rao did not arrive either at Telangana Bhavan or Gun Park initially. Instead, he attended the Congress' weekly interaction programme at Gandhi Bhavan with party cadre and elected representatives. Responding to media queries, the Minister took a U-turn from his previous claim of a debate at Telangana Bhavan and said he had accepted the challenge for a debate at Gun Park and would head there shortly. He dared both Rama Rao and Harish Rao to appear together at the Martyrs' Memorial. "Let both of them come together and I will answer them at once," he said. Meanwhile, Ministers Ponnam Prabhakar, Adhuri Laxman Kumar and Mohammed Azharuddin reached Gun Park for debate with the BRS leaders over allegations of irregularities in residential school tenders. While the police arresting the BRS leaders, the Ministers claimed that the BRS leaders did not turn up as they feared defeat and left after speaking to the media.

Telangana government notifies 280 acres as Sardarnagar Forest Block in Shamshabad



Hyderabad: The State Government on Wednesday issued orders, notifying the proposal for declaration of Sardarnagar Proposed Reserve Forest covering 280 acres in Mankhal village, Shamshabad division, Rangareddy. The notified area measures 280.09 acres, comprising Survey Nos. 103 to 120. The land was originally assigned in 1977 by the then District Collector, Rangareddy to the Social Forestry Department for raising plantations and undertaking forestry activities. Following the merger of the Social Forestry and Territorial Wings, proposals were initiated to declare the area as a Reserve Forest. However, due to various administrative reasons and prolonged litigations, the proposal remained pending for nearly 25 years. Recognising the ecological significance of securing the area and the need to complete the long-pending statutory process, PCCF C Suvarna had directed that the proposal be revived and processed on priority. Accordingly, the Forest Department undertook a comprehensive review of the proposal. A fresh DGPS survey was conducted, updated maps were prepared, historical records were compiled and verified, and the proposal was processed afresh. Necessary examinations and statutory clearances were obtained from the Revenue, Law and Forest Departments. With the completion of all statutory procedures, the Government on Wednesday issued GOMs. No 21 addressing the unresolved issue for over two

decades. The issuance of the Section 4 Notification marks a significant milestone in the process of constituting the area as a Reserve Forest. It initiates the statutory procedure for declaration of the land as a Reserve Forest and provides legal protection to the notified area pending its final notification under Section 15. This is a major step towards safeguarding valuable government forest land from encroachment and ensuring its conservation for future generations, forest official said.

NOTTO applauds Osmania doctors for historic five-organ transplant

Hyderabad: The National Organ and Tissue Transplantation Organisation (NOTTO) has applauded the team of doctors at Osmania General Hospital for making history by performing a simultaneous transplant of five organs on a single patient, a first in the country. Geographic Reference The national body shared the historic news on its X page, stating that the medical team at Government Osmania General Hospital and Osmania Medical College successfully performed a rare five-organ multivisceral transplant involving the stomach, duodenum, pancreas, small intestine, and right colon on a 30-year-old patient after a remarkable 36-hour long surgery. The national organisation noted that this was the first multi-visceral transplant involving five organs performed in an Indian government hospital and the first in India for a patient with Familial Adenomatous Polyposis.

Beef allegedly mixed with goat meat, sold as mutton; Hyderabad police seizes 50 kg

Hyderabad: The H-FAST team of the Hyderabad police raided a meat shop at Habeebnagar and seized around 50 kg of adulterated meat during a surprise inspection conducted along with local police on Wednesday. The raid was carried out at Osman Meat Shop, located near Badi Masjid in Mallepally following specific information that adulterated meat was being sold to customers. During the inspection, officials found that meat being sold as goat meat was allegedly mixed with beef. The entire stock was seized, and samples were collected and sent for laboratory analysis to confirm the nature of the meat. Based on the preliminary findings, the Habeebnagar police registered a



case against the shop owner, Osman Qureshi. The police are probing how long the alleged adulteration had been taking place and whether others were involved in the operation.

MISSION K-100 launched for Kharif procurement

In a bid to ensure smooth procurement operations for the upcoming Kharif 2026-27 season, the Telangana Civil Supplies Department on Wednesday launched Mission K-100, a time-bound 100-day action plan, aimed at streamlining grain procurement, storage, logistics and financial management ahead of the new harvest. The initiative was formally launched by Commissioner of Civil Supplies M Stephen Raveendra, who chaired a high-level strategic coordination meeting with Food Corporation of India (FCI) General Manager GN Raju at Civil Supplies Bhavan in Hyderabad. The meeting focused on resolving key logistical and financial bottlenecks before the commencement of the Kharif procurement season. Geographic Reference The Commissioner urged the FCI to allocate adequate storage space on priority to facilitate the swift evacuation of pending



grain stocks. State officials also sought the early release of long-pending financial dues from the Centre to strengthen the department's working capital. Effective from July 1, Mission K-100 will serve as a focused 100-day roadmap to accelerate stock clearance and improve coordination among all stakeholders. The initiative is designed to strengthen the state's grain storage, logistics and financial systems before fresh arrivals reach procurement centres.

Venezuela earthquake death toll rises to 2,295, over 11,000 injured

Caracas: The death toll from the two powerful earthquakes that struck Venezuela on June 24 has risen to 2,295, while the number of injured has climbed to 11,267, Venezuelan National Assembly President Jorge Rodriguez has said. "As of today, there are 2,295 fatalities and 11,267 injuries. We are currently counting 12,841 affected people," Rodriguez said during a daily update on the country's situation on Wednesday (local time) after the earthquakes that rocked the country last week. He said 6,461 people had been rescued by more than 4,000 international and domestic res-



cue workers and volunteers, reports Xinhua news agency. Rodriguez, who also heads the command centre for the creation of temporary camps, called on health workers, security personnel and firefighters to register on the Patria platform in order to address housing problems caused by the earthquakes.

Maharashtra TET paper leak case escalates as STF detains three during raid in Bihar

Patna: The investigation into the Maharashtra Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) paper leak has expanded to Bihar, with the Maharashtra Special Task Force (STF), assisted by Vaishali Police, conducting a late-night raid at a cyber cafe in Hajipur. Three individuals, including the cafe operator, were detained for questioning. According to the police, a team from

the Maharashtra STF and the Thane Police, with support from the Vaishali Police, raided a cyber cafe located on Kachhari Road in Hajipur on Wednesday night. The search operation continued until around 1:00 A.M. on Thursday, during which investigators examined documents and digital devices inside the premises. Police said three individuals, including

Telangana Congress issues notice to Katti Venkat Swamy over remarks on Revanth Reddy

Hyderabad: Of late, quite a few Congress leaders have been admitting the growing dissent among people against the State government. The latest to join the list is TPCC General Secretary Katti Venkat Swamy. Participating in a TV debate recently, he said there was strong opposition among people against Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy under the current circumstances. "Revanth Reddy is taking personal and unilateral decisions. Many party leaders lack confidence that the Congress will come to power again in the State," Venkat Swamy said. He also stressed that Congress MP Rahul Gandhi had promised positions to leaders as per the caste population. But the high command was not ensuring that staunch Congress leaders, especially from the BC community, were getting

seats, he charged. However, his observations and comments have not gone down well with the Telangana Congress. The TPCC Disciplinary Committee has issued a show-cause notice to Katti Venkat Swamy, who is also AICC OBC Convener, for his comments against the Chief Minister. The Committee sought a written reply from him within three days. It also warned that if he failed to respond and give a satisfactory explanation, the Committee would be constrained to proceed further as per the party rules, without any further notice. The Committee Chairman and Nagarkurnool MP Mallu Ravi claimed that it had received several representations against Katti Venkat Swamy alleging that he had made derogatory comments against the Chief Minister while participating in a TV debate.

Swetha Reddy takes charge as Warangal Police Commissioner

Hanumakonda: Newly appointed Warangal Police Commissioner N. Swetha Reddy, IPS, assumed charge on Wednesday and said maintaining peace and public safety across the Commissionerate would be her foremost priority. She was accorded a ceremonial guard of honour on her arrival at the Commissionerate office and formally took charge from outgoing Commissioner Sun Preet Singh. Senior police officers and staff welcomed her and extended their congratulations. Speaking after assuming office, Swetha Reddy said the Police Department would focus on maintaining law and order, pre-



venting crime and providing efficient, people-friendly policing. She emphasised the need for public cooperation and assured that the department would work to strengthen public confidence through transparent and professional policing while ensuring the safety and security of citizens.

cafe operator Sonu Kumar, were detained following the raid. The detained individuals are currently being questioned by the Maharashtra STF. No formal announcement of their arrest has been made in the information provided, and the investigation is ongoing.

According to police sources, investigators recovered several digital items and documents during the operation. These materials will undergo forensic examination as part of the investigation. A Maharashtra Police official said, "This

case is linked to the Maharashtra TET paper leak. We came here to investigate in connection with this matter; we have recovered some suspicious documents, and further action is underway." Sonu Kumar's elder brother, Jitendra Kumar, said Sonu had left for Hajipur on Wednesday evening but did not return home. According to him, Sonu's wife informed the family that he was not answering his phone, prompting them to search for him throughout the night before learning about the police action on Thursday.

NTPC's 176MW Solar Power Project at Ramagundam achieves full commercial operation



NTPC's 176 MW solar power project at the Ramagundam reservoir has reached full-scale commercial operation. Discover how this mix of floating and surface-mounted solar technology contributes to NTPC's growing renewable energy portfolio and enhances South India's clean energy infrastructure. The 176 MW solar power project at the Ramagundam NTPC balancing reservoir has reached the stage of full-scale commercial production. The final unit of 41.6 MW commenced commercial operations on Tuesday. This project comprises a 56 MW floating solar plant and a 120 MW surface-mounted solar plant. A 100 MW floating solar project had previously been constructed at the NTPC reservoir

and has been operating at full capacity for three years; subsequently, the NTPC management undertook this expansion project. Regarding the 176 MW combined solar project, the first phase (100 MW) began commercial production on May 2, followed by the second phase (34.4 MW) on May 29. The remaining 41.6 MW became operational on Tuesday. With this, NTPC's total installed power generation capacity across the country has risen to 90,899 MW, and its commercial power generation capacity has increased to 89,819 MW. The 156 MW floating solar power plant established at the Ramagundam NTPC balancing reservoir holds the distinction of being the largest in South India.

SC orders zero tolerance for AI-hallucinated legal precedents

New Delhi: Red flagging the use of "non-existent, fake, and hallucinated" judgements generated by artificial intelligence (AI), the Supreme Court on Thursday set aside a verdict of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), saying that courts must adopt zero tolerance against citing or using AI-generated precedents. The bench comprising Justices PS Narasimha and Alok Aradhe said, "The production of fake, non-existent, and hallucinated material and its utilisation as precedents in law, is like the release of methyl Isocyanate in the province of law and justice: invisible, insidious, and catastrophic by the time anyone notices. It not only contaminates but takes away the very lifeblood of judicial determination." It set aside an NCLT judgement on Essel Infraprojects insolvency after finding that the tribunal had relied on non-existent, fake and hallucinated judgement precedents generated through AI tools. "It is necessary for Courts to adopt a zero-tolerance mode for producing, citing or using AI-generated precedents without verification. It is a misconduct on the part of an advocate to cite such judgments without verification," the verdict said. The bench said it was equally a "serious lapse" if a judge relies on such a fake or hallucinated AI-generated material as precedents



in support of the determination. "We have no hesitation in declaring that such a decision is no decision in the eyes of the law, irrespective of whether such material had a direct or indirect bearing on the decision-making. Such decisions are to be set aside even if an iota of fake or hallucinated material enters the decision-making process, as it would violate the sanctity of adjudication," it said. The bench said it is absolutely necessary to maintain integrity in decision-making. "And we reiterate and declare zero tolerance for the Bar as well as the Bench to cite, refer to, or rely on such material. It is also clarified that our judgment shall have no bearing on the rightful use of AI, but on the presentation or reliance on fake or hallucinated material as if it were a court precedent," it said. The bench said mere declaration of prohibitory action is not sufficient and there must be a consequential action following accountability.

Sonam Wangchuk's health deteriorates as hunger strike enters fifth day

New Delhi: Activist Sonam Wangchuk's blood sugar level dropped to 60, and his blood pressure remained low on the fifth day of his hunger strike at Delhi Jantar Mantar on Thursday, while Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke announced a "Chai Pe Charcha with Cockroaches" initiative to gather feedback from protesters on expanding the ongoing agitation, which entered its thirteenth day. Sharing Wangchuk's health update on X, Dipke said Wangchuk's condition was worsening and warned that the government would be responsible if anything happened to him. "Sonam Wangchuk's health is continuously deteriorating. His sugar level has dropped to 60 and blood pressure is also very low. If anything happens to Sonam sir, the con-

cerns. government will be responsible for it," Dipke said in a post on X. He also reiterated his demand for Pradhan's resignation. Dipke held an interaction with protesters titled "Chai Pe Charcha with Cockroaches", saying it was aimed at taking feedback on "how we can make this movement better and bigger".

Six students associated with the All India Students' Association (AISA) also continued their indefinite hunger strike from a separate stage at the protest site. A day earlier, AISA had said the health of the fasting students was deteriorating, claiming JNUSU Joint Secretary Danish's blood sugar level had fallen to 61 mg/dL, while Aameen and Deepak Kumar Verma had also been advised by doctors not to continue their fast because of health

cerns. CPI(ML) Liberation General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya is scheduled to visit the protest site later in the day to extend solidarity with the agitation.

The protest has drawn support from several political leaders and civil society members over the past few days. Among those who have visited the site are CPI(M) General Secretary M A Baby, senior CPI(M) leader Brinda Karat, CPI General Secretary D Raja, social activist Yogendra Yadav, Supreme Court lawyer Prashant Bhushan, CPI leader Annie Raja, transparency activist Anjali



Bhardwaj and TMC MP Sagarika Ghose. The CJP protest began on June 20 over alleged irregularities in the examination system, including NEET. Dipke has said the agitation will also raise other accountability-related issues, including electoral matters such as the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

Fuel retailers lost Rs 74,781 Crore selling petrol, diesel below cost: Puri

New Delhi: Oil marketing companies suffered Rs 74,781-crore losses for selling petrol, diesel and LPG below cost for the period up to June 30 when global crude oil prices spiked in the wake of the West Asia conflict, Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Thursday. International crude oil prices have come down but companies are still processing crude they bought at the height of the West Asia crisis, Puri told reporters. Oil companies typically buy crude oil — the raw material for producing fuel — at least two months in advance. So, crude oil that is being processed now is essentially what was bought in April or early May when international prices were very high. On whether there would be a cut in prices



of petrol and diesel, Puri said this would be a legitimate question if oil prices stayed low for the next few weeks. Crude oil prices started coming down only in the second half of June after the US and Iran reached an agreement to end the conflict.

Centre mulls 50 per cent weightage for board marks in NEET, JEE-based admissions



New Delhi: Board exams may have 50 per cent weightage in crucial admissions presently based on scores of entrance exams like NEET and JEE, according to sources. The possibility is being contemplated with an idea of reducing the high-stakes nature of any exam, be it entrance tests for medical and engineering admissions or board exams. The move comes after a series of anomalies in the examination system, including evaluation errors and paper leaks, have kick-started a debate on the credibility of the system. "The changes being contemplated are 50 per cent weightage for board marks in admission/merit, closer alignment of entrance tests with school syllabi to reduce dependence on coaching centres, mul-

tiples attempts and a gradual shift towards adaptive on-demand computer-based tests," a source said. At present, medical and engineering admissions are based on entrance test scores and candidates are required to score a qualifying percentage in board exams to be eligible for the entrance exams. The reforms are being considered by the Ministry of Education's nine-member committee set up last year to examine students' dependence on coaching, the spread of "dummy schools" and fairness in high-stakes entrance tests. The panel's final report is likely to be submitted to the government in the coming weeks. The committee has also recommended closer alignment of entrance tests with school syllabi.

Venugopal urges PM Modi to order SC-monitored probe into Ram Temple donation case

New Delhi: Congress general secretary K C Venugopal on Thursday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, demanding an immediate Supreme Court-monitored probe into the alleged embezzlement of Ram Temple donations, describing it as the "Chanda Chori mega scandal". In his letter, Venugopal said a "fraud of this magnitude" involving allegations stretching into hundreds of crores of rupees is a "monumental betrayal" of the Hindu faith, religion, and way of life. "Lord Ram is revered as the embodiment of justice and righteousness. Allowing allegations of this nature to be buried, rather than impartially investigated, would be a profound injustice to his devotees and to the values he embodies," the Congress general secretary in-charge organisation said. "I am writing to you to express the deep anguish and outrage of millions of Indians regarding the shocking revelations of massive financial fraud, theft, and embezzlement of donations at the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya," he said. The senior Congress leader said the offerings made by ordinary citizens — who contributed their hard-earned life savings out of profound faith and reverence for Lord Ram — have been shamelessly looted, striking at the very sanctity of a place held sacred by millions. Venugopal, who heads the key Public Accounts Committee of Parliament, said the ongoing preliminary investigations have exposed a highly organised racket operating right under the nose of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust. The systemic lapses at every level make it clear that this loot was enabled by institutional support, he said. "On one hand, the counting staff bypassed regular surveillance to siphon off bundles of cash and valuable jewellery on a daily basis; on the other, 7 to 8 months of crucial CCTV footage was deliberately destroyed to cover the tracks of this criminal enterprise," he said. This clearly indicates that this loot goes beyond the work of a few rogue employees, and is a scam orchestrated with the complicity of the higher-ups, instead, Venugopal said in the letter. "Simultaneously, we are learning that complaints of embezzlement and theft were either ignored or actively suppressed. The Trust's former Chief Accounts Officer, who flagged these systematic irregularities as early as 2020-21 and warned that unaccounted gold and silver ornaments were being spirited away, was unceremoniously removed from his duties instead of being heard," he said.

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) constituted by the Uttar Pradesh government on June 13, followed by the



FIR registered on June 25, appears to be little more than an "eyewash", Venugopal alleged in his letter to Modi.

"So far, only the 'small fish' — drivers, clerks, and outsourced cashiers — have been arrested, while the institutional support and chain of command that enabled the brazen loot remain untouched. "A state-appointed SIT is neither equipped nor institutionally independent to investigate individuals wielding immense political and institutional influence," he asserted. There is a growing apprehension that the investigation is being used to erase the remaining evidence while shielding the "big fish" who allegedly orchestrated this multi-crore embezzlement, he said. Venugopal said the "scandal" warrants the highest level of accountability because the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust is a public trust constituted by the Union government in 2020. He highlighted that its very creation took place under the direct supervision of the government, and the land was vested in the trust pursuant to the Supreme Court's judgment. "It is, therefore, the moral responsibility of the government — and of you, as its head — to restore the faith of over 1.4 billion Indians in the government's intent and ability to safeguard donations and preserve the sanctity of an institution established in the name of Lord Ram," Venugopal said. "Therefore, I strongly demand your immediate intervention in this matter to order a free and fair investigation by a high-level independent agency under the strict supervision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India," he said in his letter. Sharing the letter on X, Venugopal said the "massive Chanda Chori" at the Ayodhya Ram Temple has shaken the nation. "This is way beyond an ordinary loot, it strikes at the heart of how faith is corrupted — first for political gain, and then for financial enrichment. I have written to the PM demanding an immediate Supreme Court-monitored investigation into this Chanda Chori mega scandal," Venugopal said. The alleged embezzlement came to light after an SIT constituted by the Uttar Pradesh government submitted its preliminary findings, following which an FIR was registered on June 25. Eight accused were subsequently arrested, and police said nearly Rs 80 lakh in cash, besides some foreign currency, has been recovered so far from six of them. The investigation is continuing.

Sadie Sink calls 'Stranger Things' ending 'bittersweet', says 'all good things must end'



Los Angeles: Hollywood actress Sadie Sink has shared that she has "bittersweet" feelings about the end of her hit streaming show 'Stranger Things'. The 24-year-old actress had her big career breakthrough portraying Max Mayfield in Stranger Things, the hit Netflix show, between 2017 and 2025, and Sadie has now admitted to having mixed feelings while watching the finale, reports 'Female First UK'. She told Nylon magazine, "I was watching it with my brother and he started crying and then I started crying. He was looking at us like, 'Are you guys crying?'. It was just completely bittersweet". She further mentioned, "It's been 10 years. It's seen us through so many different phases of our lives. All good things must end". As per 'Female First UK', Sadie, starred alongside Winona Ryder, David Harbour, Finn Wolfhard, Millie Bobby Brown, Natalia Dyer, and Noah Schnapp on the TV show. Since leaving the show, Sadie has starred in a West End production of Romeo and Juliet. The actress admits that she's loved her time in London, but

she'll return to New York once the production wraps.

Sadie said, "It's felt like such a chapter, being in London and really feeling like I've made a home for myself here. So to leave it and go back to my actual home, I'm like, 'Wait, I don't know'. But it'll be good. I miss my home. The cats are ready to go back. They're telling me all the time". Meanwhile, Sadie previously claimed she felt protected from the pressures of fame and success during her teenage years. The actress told Glamour, "Looking back on my teenage years, growing up on the show, I was really protected by the people around me. And by myself too. I think I was super protective of who I was". Sadie shared that she struggled to reconcile her frustrations with recognising that she's in a fortunate position in life. "When things were hard, when there would be certain pressures, or I'd be overwhelmed, I felt like I couldn't talk about it because it was such an amazing thing that was happening. Sometimes you don't feel like you can have any complaints or struggles", she added.

Mira Kapoor shares glimpse of home 'Health Bar', says kids enjoy superfood drinks

Mumbai: Entrepreneur and Shahid Kapoor's wife Mira Kapoor gave her followers a glimpse into her wellness-focused lifestyle by sharing a sneak peek at her home pantry, which she fondly called her "Health Bar." Mira, posting a picture of shelves lined with jars of nuts, seeds, superfoods and healthy snacks, Mira revealed that her children were already developing interest in nutritious and healthy eating habits. Sharing the picture of the same on her social media account, she wrote, "The best part is that my kids are mixing spirulina & moringa in their nariyal pani because it's fun." Mira always is seen sharing glimpses from her spice of life. From her businesses to her life with her kids and husband, Mira always gives a sneak peek into it all. The young lady also takes to her social media account to speak upon topics that she feels need to be addressed. A few weeks ago, she had opened up about how women often need to be 'unburdened' from the constant need for decision-making, to truly unwind and reconnect with themselves. Mira had shared a heartfelt video on her social media account, where she reflected on the joy and comfort of spending time at her parents' home.

"It's been a while since I have done a 'Mira Mira on the wall'. I just got back from my mom's house and I shared with you guys how I was feeling while I was there. Nothing really feels quite like it," Mira said in the video. Talking further about the emotional release she experienced, she added, "I think sometimes women just need to be unburdened from making decisions. No one's asking you what's on the menu, which car is going



where, what are you doing, what time is the meeting, or can you approve this? I think sometimes you just need to be relieved of making decisions. That is such an unclogging of the mind." She added, "We have to make so many decisions every single day. More than decisions, we need to make choices. And when you're freed from making a choice, that is when you feel a sense of release and ease. That is why somewhere you feel so rejuvenated, relaxed and strangely powered to take on whatever else is coming your way." Mira had further urged women to at times disconnect from constant responsibilities and simply live in the moment. "If you need to take that break, switch off your phone, don't check emails and don't pander to that desire to see what is going on and what you need to do. You will see that there is a sense of letting go and actually experiencing everything," she shared. "Just experiencing your kids playing in the park, lying down beside your parents doing nothing at all, going for a walk with your parents or laughing about something ridiculous, it helps you feel every moment so viscerally and deeply. So this is your reminder to find a place, a situation or a person who relieves you of making decisions and choices. Check in with yourself. And don't ask yourself any questions. Just be," Mira concluded.

Malayalam superhero blockbuster Lokah Chapter 1 Chandra selected for BIFAN and Stuttgart Film Festival 2026

Chennai: Director Dominic Arun's blockbuster Malayalam film 'Lokah - Chapter 1 - Chandra', featuring actress Kalyani Priyadarshan in the lead, has now been selected for the prestigious BIFAN (Bucheon International Fantastic Film Festival) 2026. The film has also been selected for the 23rd Indian Film Festival Stuttgart 2026, its makers announced on Wednesday. Taking to its X timeline, Wayfarer Films, which is owned by actor Dulquer Salmaan, wrote, "We are thrilled to announce that our film has been selected for: BIFAN (Bucheon International Fantastic Film Festival) 2026, 23rd Indian Film Festival Stuttgart 2026." For



the unaware, the film, which was billed as Malayalam cinema's first female superhero film, went on to set the cash registers ringing, raking in over a whopping Rs 300 crore globally. The film, which came in for much critical acclaim, also received a lot of love from audiences.

Vijay Deverakonda calls for making sports lucrative to secure athletes' future

Hyderabad: Stating that it was time that we gave a push to sports and got our youngsters in the country to play more, actor Vijay Deverakonda, who has been backing young and upcoming talents in the sport of volleyball, has now opined that it was also our responsibility to make sports lucrative for all players in order to secure them a future. While speaking about his association with volleyball, Vijay Deverakonda recently said, "This is my big reason for being a part of Volleyball and it is time and our responsibility to push sports and get our youngsters in the country to play more and make it lucrative for all players in order to get them a future and recognition because they are extremely talented." The actor's observation is significant as it comes at a time when the Indian men's volleyball team created history by winning a bronze medal at the Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC) Men's Cup. Significantly, this was the country's first-ever medal at the tournament. The landmark achievement has sparked conversations around the steady rise of volleyball in India, with many acknowledging the importance of stronger professional ecosystems in helping athletes compete at the highest level.

Over the years, Vijay Deverakonda has been known to support several meaningful initiatives, including Annadanam drives, scholarships for deserving students, and financial assistance to families through the Middle-Class Fund. Extending

Ali Fazal calls himself 'imperfect', admits he misses social gatherings in cinema world

Mumbai: Actor Ali Fazal described himself as "imperfect" while speaking about the challenges of balancing work and social life in the film industry. In his latest post on Instagram, the 'Fukrey' actor revealed that his immersion in cinema and creative pursuits often causes him to miss social gatherings, birthdays, and other personal occasions. Ali also mentioned that he is not very expressive when it comes to showing love to the people close to him. However, he added that he always finds his own quiet ways to make them feel seen, valued, and cared for in his life. GeographicReference The actor also reflected on his journey with "Raakh," calling it "an amazing ride." He shared that working with the team and being part of the project turned into a meaningful experience for him. Sharing his photos, Ali wrote, "Can i just say its been an amazing ride with these beautiful people and the entire team of Raakh. Ironically i am not very expressive with the people i love... but in my own way i find ways to let them know that they are witnessed and loved in my world. I often forget.. i miss birthdays, celebrations, invites.... I get lost in dreams and fantasies and cinema.. i am not perfect.. but what i



the same philosophy beyond philanthropy, Vijay Deverakonda has also been actively supporting the growth of Indian sports. As the co-owner of a volleyball franchise, Vijay Deverakonda has quietly contributed to that journey by backing the sport and encouraging volleyball talent over the years. Beyond merely supporting a team, Vijay Deverakonda's involvement has always been rooted in his belief that Indian players have the potential to achieve global success when provided with the right platform and ecosystem. Apart from supporting volleyball, Vijay is also the brand ambassador of the TG20 League, where he continues to encourage emerging cricketing talent. On the work front, Vijay has an exciting lineup ahead and will next be seen in Ranabaali, VDXShoryuv, and Rowdy Janardhana, further building anticipation for his upcoming releases.



am is - strong. I am there and i can listen." (sic) "And when it comes to stories.. i want to tell them so i can listen to them.. inteospection and self awareness isn't something we are born with - sometimes it takes people around you to do that for you or enable . Raakh was that kind of a journey for me. If i tag , i'll miss someone out i know. For those of you who know me a little , bless me a little and scroll up... i love you. Big shout out to @vikashrathod for making me this beautiful suit . Am gonna be shameless and keep wearing it. Also i love this song from Balan the movie. Watch it." (sic) "Raakh," the crime thriller inspired by real-life events, follows a gripping narrative based on the tragic kidnapping case of Geeta and Sanjay Chopra. The crime drama series also features Sonali Bendre and Aamir Bashir.

FIFA World Cup 2026: Portugal are definitely contenders despite slow start, says Bhaichung Bhutia

New Delhi: Former India captain Bhaichung Bhutia believes Portugal remain genuine contenders for the FIFA World Cup 2026 title despite an inconsistent group-stage campaign and backed Roberto Martinez's side to overcome Croatia in their blockbuster Round of 32 clash. Portugal and Croatia will meet in Toronto in a heavyweight knockout fixture that could mark the final FIFA World Cup appearance for two of football's greatest modern icons, Cristiano Ronaldo and Luka Modric. Both are featuring in their sixth FIFA World Cup, a feat achieved only by four players in tournament history alongside Lionel Messi and Guillermo Ochoa. Portugal reached the knockout stage after a mixed group campaign. A surprise draw against DR Congo was followed by a 5-0 win over Uzbekistan, where Ronaldo scored twice to move past Eusebio's tally of nine FIFA World Cup goals, before a defeat to Colombia left Portugal second in the group. Despite their uneven start, Bhutia believes Portugal can raise their level in the knockout rounds. "I don't see Croatia knocking them out. Portugal are definitely contenders, though we haven't seen them play like one so far. But knockout stages are different; they possess the quality to turn up with a completely different level of performance. I think we will see a different side to them in the knockouts," said Bhutia, who is part of the expert panel for ZEE5's FIFA World Cup 2026 coverage.

While Ronaldo continues to rewrite records, Bhutia feels Portugal's strength lies in the quality spread across the squad rather than depending solely on their captain. "Portugal has the overall quality to get the job done. They have players who can make a massive difference on their own, whereas the big question is whether their creative midfield can consistently carve out chances for Ronaldo," he added. Croatia bounced back from an



opening defeat to England with wins over Ghana and Panama to seal their place in the Round of 32. After finishing runners-up in 2018 and third in 2022, they once again enter the knockout stage with a reputation for resilience. However, Bhutia believes this Croatian side lacks the quality of previous generations. "Over the years, Croatia has been a resilient team that always finds a way to get results. However, I don't think they have that same quality this time around. They have brilliant players like Modric, but age is not on their side. They've lost a lot of pace, and the game has slowed down for them," he said. "If Croatia is to get anything out of this match, Luka Modric absolutely has to have the bigger impact. Portugal don't solely rely on Ronaldo, but Croatia will absolutely have to look towards Modric today," he said. Bhutia also backed Portugal's attacking strength to prove decisive, although he identified a weakness in midfield. "Portugal's attacking style will prevail, especially if they can transition and attack faster. One weakness, however, is the lack of a true defensive midfielder who can consistently win balls and transition play from defence to attack," he said. "They already have immense strength going forward; great attacking midfielders, an excellent frontline, and two full-backs who love to attack. They just need someone in the centre of the pitch to win those physical battles and stabilise the midfield," he added.

Parthiv Patel praises Abhishek Sharma, backs India's batting intent in washed-out T20I against England

New Delhi: Former India wicketkeeper Parthiv Patel backed India's batting display after the rain-hit opening T20I against England in Durham ended without a result on Wednesday. India, who opted to bat first after winning the toss, posted 190 before persistent rain prevented the second innings from getting underway. Assessing the visitors' performance after play was called off, Patel said the innings showed India's willingness to adapt to English conditions and highlighted Abhishek Sharma's impact at the top of the order. According to Patel, India embraced the challenge of batting in unfamiliar conditions instead of taking a cautious approach. "From India's point of view, they needed this kind of batting performance, especially after what had happened in Ireland. They wanted to challenge themselves; they wanted to adapt to the conditions early, and India did that really well in this game," Patel told JioStar. "190 runs on this pitch, with three spinners bowling through the middle overs, I thought India had enough runs to defend. Nevertheless, they will definitely be more confident going into the second T20I," he added. The former India cricketer also reserved special praise for Abhishek Sharma, crediting the left-hander for quickly reading the nature of the surface and making the most of scoring opportunities. "I thought he batted really well. He understood the conditions well. There was a slightly spongier bounce in Durham, but he made sure that whenever the opportunity presented itself, he



capitalised on it," he stated. Patel pointed to Abhishek's aggressive intent against both pace and spin as one of the defining features of the innings, as he said, "That over from Saqib Mahmood was an important one, where he stepped out and hit three boundaries, two over point and one over mid-off. Then, when the spinners came on, he chose the right areas to hit those sixes." Looking beyond the knock itself, Patel said performances in overseas conditions continue to reinforce Abhishek's credentials as one of the leading batters in the shortest format. "Scoring runs in the SENA countries, South Africa, England, New Zealand and Australia, puts a stamp on your authority and your skill set. Usually, that's how you get judged. He did well in South Africa, then in Australia, and now he has scored runs in English conditions as well. That is the reason why he has been either the No. 1 or No. 2 T20I batter for almost a year," Patel mentioned. The two sides will next face off in the second T20I on Saturday at Old Trafford in Manchester.

Cheteshwar Pujara backs Sanju Samson to retain T20I spot, praises skipper Shreyas Iyer's maturity against England

New Delhi: Former India batter Cheteshwar Pujara addressed the discussion surrounding India's top order ahead of the second T20I against England, making it clear that he does not believe Sanju Samson should lose his place to accommodate Vaibhav Sooryavanshi despite growing calls for the teenage batter to be included



in the playing XI. The veteran batter added that constant speculation over Samson's place in the side was unnecessary, insisting the wicketkeeper-batter deserves a longer run. "I think India should persist with Sanju Samson. I don't think he should be feeling any pressure. He has proved himself in the T20 World Cup and, with the kind of talent he possesses, he should be there in the playing XI," Pujara said on JioStar. "There shouldn't be a lot of noise about dropping Sanju Samson. He is a quality player and should get a longer run. Sanju just needs to bat naturally and not think too much," he added. While Pujara acknowledged that Sooryavanshi has earned an opportunity, he argued that the youngster's inclusion should not come at the cost of disrupting India's established top order. "If Vaibhav needs to play, he should play, but not at the expense of dropping someone, rather by resting someone. If you want to give him an opportunity, that is fine. But you shouldn't be dropping any of India's top three players, whether it's Sanju, Abhishek or Ishan Kishan. Having said that, Vaibhav does deserve an opportunity, and his opportunity will come," he mentioned. Pujara also praised captain Shreyas Iyer's composed innings after India recovered from an early setback to post a competitive total in the rain-hit

opening T20I against England in Durham. With India losing early wickets after electing to bat first, Pujara said Iyer's ability to steady the innings before accelerating played a decisive role in putting the visitors in a strong position. Pujara felt Iyer delivered exactly what was expected of a captain after India found themselves under pressure in the powerplay, balancing caution with aggression as the innings progressed. "It was an important knock from Shreyas Iyer and, when you are leading the team, you always look to lead from the front. He showed a lot of maturity because India were in trouble after losing a couple of early wickets," Pujara told JioStar.

He also credited Iyer for pacing his innings according to the match situation before shifting gears once he was well established at the crease. "Abhishek played a good knock, but it was important for Shreyas to hold one end up and take his time. Once he was set, he played some quality shots," he added. According to Pujara, the India captain's innings reflected both responsibility and leadership, leaving the side in an excellent position by the end of its 20 overs. "If you look at his innings at the end of the 20 overs, you know that, as a captain, you have done your job. You have put your team in a very commanding position.

New Zealand quick Ben Sears ruled out of West Indies ODI series due to ankle injury

Auckland: New Zealand fast bowler Ben Sears has been ruled out of the upcoming ODI series against the West Indies with an ankle injury, with Ben Lister being named as a replacement in the 16-man squad. NZC said Sears had experienced some ongoing pain in his ankle since the four-day Test against Ireland in May, which flared up during the final day of the third Test against England at Trent Bridge, "so a precautionary decision has been made to send him home to New Zealand for further treatment." Lister will assemble with the squad in Guyana over the coming days. The 30-year-old medium pacer, who made his ODI debut in 2023 against Pakistan in Karachi, has featured 17 times for New Zealand (4 ODIs and 13 T20Is), taking 17 wickets and was part of the team's last ODI series, against Bangladesh in April.



Injuries to key fast bowlers have been a major concern for New Zealand, as Blair Tickner will return home for scheduled surgery on his ankle and was unavailable for selection for Windies ODIs. Duffy, who missed the recent Test series in England to welcome the birth of his first child, is set to return to international cricket for the first time since the

ICC Men's T20 World Cup final in March. Kyle Jamieson, Matt Henry, and Will O'Rourke will miss the series to rest after a heavy workload during the first half of 2026. The five-game series gets underway in Guyana with the first three matches on July 11, 13 and 16, before the series moves to Bridgetown in Barbados for the final two fixtures on July 19 and 21. New Zealand created history on their previous ODI tour to the West Indies in 2022, when they won their first-ever ODI series in the Caribbean.

New Zealand squad for ODI series against West Indies:

Mitchell Santner (capt), Michael Bracewell, Mark Chapman, Kristian Clarke, Jacob Duffy, Matthew Fisher, Dean Foxcroft, Mitchell Hay (wk), Nick Kelly, Tom Latham (wk), Jayden Lennox, Ben Lister, Daryl Mitchell, Henry Nicholls, Nathan Smith, Will Young

Gold slips on profit booking; silver extends rally for third straight session

Mumbai: Gold and silver traded mixed in Thursday morning's session, with gold edging lower on profit booking and silver extending gains for a third straight session amid expectations that the US Federal Reserve may not rush to raise interest rates. On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold futures (August) opened at Rs 1,43,882 per 10 grams, down Rs 548 or 0.37 per cent from the previous close of Rs 1,44,430. At around 10:40 am, the yellow metal was trading at Rs 1,43,797, down Rs 633 or 0.44 per cent. During the session so far, gold touched an intraday low of Rs 1,43,771, down 0.45 per cent or Rs 659, and a high of Rs 1,44,448. Meanwhile, silver futures (September) outperformed gold, jumping as much as 0.84 per cent or nearly Rs 2,000 to Rs 2,32,339 per kg, its intraday high so far. The white metal was trading at Rs 2,30,790, up Rs 406 or 0.18 per cent. It touched an intraday low of Rs 2,30,513. Earlier in the day, silver opened



at Rs 2,31,196, up Rs 812 or 0.35 per cent from the previous close of Rs 2,30,384. In the international market, gold was down 0.14 per cent at \$4,076 per ounce,

while silver edged up 0.14 per cent to \$60.59 per ounce. According to market experts, gold witnessed profit booking after COMEX gold corrected from the previous session's peak of \$4,115 per ounce, with investors awaiting the US non-farm payrolls report for fresh cues on the Federal Reserve's interest rate trajectory. However, softer-than-expected US jobs data and lower crude oil prices helped limit losses in the yellow metal. Silver, meanwhile, is likely to maintain its positive momentum after rising for a third consecutive session, supported by easing US inflation expectations. Experts said comments from the US Federal Reserve Chairman suggesting there is no urgency to raise interest rates have boosted sentiment for the white metal.

Rupee rises 26 paise to 94.90 against US dollar in early trade

Mumbai: The rupee appreciated 26 paise to 94.90 against US dollar in early trade on Thursday, supported by easing crude oil prices. Forex traders said the rupee opened on a positive note as crude oil prices have fallen back to levels seen before the West Asia conflict. Even global risk sentiment has stabilised compared to the panic witnessed a few weeks ago. Foreign investors poured nearly USD 5.3 billion into Indian bond markets during June, marking the first month of positive inflows after three consecutive months of outflows, they said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 94.95, then touched 94.90 against the US dollar, registering a gain of 26 paise from its previous close. On Wednesday, the rupee depreciated 60 paise to close at 95.16 against the US dollar. "... As fresh foreign capital starts entering India, markets believe the RBI may continue absorbing a significant por-

tion of these inflows rather than allowing them to fully strengthen the rupee," CR Forex Advisors MD Amit Pabari said. Pabari further said that despite positive FII inflows and lower crude oil prices the rupee weakened sharply. If the rupee cannot strengthen on good news, any negative development could easily push USDINR towards the 95.80-96.00 zone. "For now, the bias remains on the upside, while 94.80 is likely to act as an important support level," he said. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading at 101.38, lower by 0.01 per cent. Meanwhile, Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading lower by 1.13 per cent at USD 70.76 per barrel in futures trade. On the domestic equity market front, Sensex climbed 377.40 points to 77,269.54 early trade, while the Nifty rallied 106.70 points to 24,113.25.

India, Japan launch defence co-development pact and economic roadmap

New Delhi: India and Japan on Thursday unveiled a raft of initiatives, including an economic partnership framework and a defence pact to co-develop military hardware following talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Japanese counterpart Sanae Takaichi. The two sides also rolled out measures to solidify their cooperation in key sectors such as energy and critical technology. "The economies of India and Japan are complementary. From cultural values to modern technology, there is similarity in our thinking and approach as well," PM Modi said in his media statement. "And above all, the foundation of our relations rests on unbreakable mutual trust," he said, reflecting the growing congruence in ties between the two countries. Modi said the two sides have prepared a joint roadmap for economic security. "Through this, we will strengthen supply chain resilience in strategic areas such as semiconductors, quantum, and advanced materials," he said.

The prime minister said India and Japan have also taken several important decisions in the field of energy security. "Through the India-Japan bio-gas initiative, we will set up one thousand bio-gas



and organic fertiliser plants in India. This will give new strength to sustainability, prosperity, and rural livelihoods in India's villages," he said. The Japanese prime minister is on a three-day visit to India. There has been an upswing in India-Japan ties. The relationship was elevated to a Special Strategic and Global Partnership in 2014. As the two countries approach the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 2027, cooperation continues to deepen across a wide range of sectors, including trade and investment, economic security, defence and security, science and technology, culture, and people-to-people ties. The bilateral framework now comprises over 70 dialogue mechanisms. PM Modi visited Japan for the 15th Annual Summit in Tokyo in August last year. The annual summit remains the flagship platform driving the strategic agenda of the partnership.

EU top court upholds 4.1-billion euro antitrust fine against Google

New Delhi: US-based technology giant Google on Thursday lost its long-running legal challenge against a 4.1-billion euro (about \$4.7 billion) European Union antitrust fine after the bloc's highest court upheld the penalty over the company's Android business practices. The European Court of Justice (ECJ) has dismissed the appeal filed by Google and its parent company, Alphabet, against an earlier ruling by the EU's General Court, effectively confirming the reduced antitrust fine imposed by the European Commission. "The appeal brought by Google and its parent company Alphabet against the judgement of the General Court is dismissed, thereby confirming the penalty imposed for Google Search's abuse of a dominant position in the context of the Android operating system," the ECJ said in a statement. Also Read - IIT-Delhi selected for EU-India student ambassadors network Advertisement The case dates back to 2018, when the European Commission imposed what was then a record antitrust fine on Google, accusing the company of using Android to strengthen the dominance of its search engine. According to the Commission, Google required smartphone manufacturers to pre-install Google Search and the Chrome browser as a condition for licensing its Play Store. In addition, it alleged that the



company made payments to certain manufacturers and mobile operators on the condition that they exclusively pre-installed Google Search and prevented device makers from selling phones running alternative versions of Android that had not been approved by Google. History In 2022, the EU's General Court largely upheld the Commission's findings but reduced the fine from 4.3 billion euros to 4.1 billion euros after ruling that regulators had not sufficiently established one aspect of the alleged abuse. Responding to Thursday's verdict, Google said the ruling fails to recognise our significant investment to ensure Android remains open, interoperable and free, according to reports. The company added that it had already modified its agreements in 2018 to comply with the Commission's original decision and would continue to focus on innovation and openness for users, partners and developers.

Sensex rises over 375 points, Nifty tops 24,100 in early trade as crude oil prices ease



Mumbai: Market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty rallied in early deals on Thursday amid softening crude oil prices following positive development on the geopolitical front and buying in blue-chip IT stocks. The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 377.40 points to 77,269.54 early trade. The 50-share NSE Nifty rallied 106.70 points to 24,113.25. "Qatar has stated that the latest round of indirect US-India talks has made 'positive progress', keeping hopes of a broader diplomatic resolution alive," Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth-tech firm, said. From the Sensex pack, Infosys, HCL Tech, Tata Consultancy Services, Tech Mahindra, Eternal and InterGlobe Aviation were among the major winners. NTPC, Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro and Bharat Electronics were among the laggards. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, traded 1 per cent lower at USD 70.79 per barrel. "There are some positive trends that are providing near-term support and strength to the market. One, crude continues to fall with Brent below USD 71 now. This will further strengthen India's macros and help in achieving higher growth while keeping inflation in check. Two, the auto sales numbers in June was strong. This indicates that the demand momentum in the economy continues to

be strong," VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Limited, said. History He further said that the AI trade in South Korea is weakening as indicated by the 11.5 per cent correction in Kospi last month. This is positive for non-AI markets like India, Vijayakumar noted. "Fourth, the FII selling is tapering off giving an upper hand to the DIIs (Domestic Institutional Investors)," he added. Passenger vehicle sales in the country are estimated to have grown nearly 25 per cent in June to about 4 lakh units, led by the likes of Maruti Suzuki, Tata Motors PV and Mahindra & Mahindra. In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi traded over 4 per cent lower, Japan's Nikkei 225 index declined more than 1 per cent and Shanghai's SSE Composite index quoted 0.90 per cent down. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index quoted more than 1 per cent higher. **US markets ended lower on Wednesday.**

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 1,140.50 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data. On Wednesday, the Sensex climbed 443.97 points, or 0.58 per cent, to settle at 76,922.64. The Nifty rallied 140.10 points, or 0.59 per cent, to end at 24,005.85.

15 MBA students grab placements in PRR Institute recruitment drive



Gooty: A campus recruitment drive was successfully conducted at PRR Institute of Management Sciences on Wednesday, resulting in the placement of 15 MBA students. Organized under the guidance of Sri Balaji Education Society Chairman Dr Palle Venkata Krishna Kishore Reddy, the drive drew 72 participants. Top companies, including Grass Roots, Dhanvi

Tata Motors, and US-based IMR Soft (LLC), evaluated the candidates. Principal Dr M Prasanna Kumar congratulated the selected students, while placement officer Baba Fakruddin urged them to continuously refine their communication and professional skills to excel in a competitive market. Staff and corporate HRs coordinated the successful event.

Rs 100.69-cr AMRUT 2.0 water project launched in Penukonda



The project aims to meet rising needs of town and Kia industrial hub Penukonda: A major drinking water infrastructure project under the AMRUT 2.0 scheme, estimated at Rs 100.69 crore, was launched in Penukonda Municipality on Wednesday. The foundation stone was laid by Revenue Minister Anagani Satya Prasad, Minister Savithamma, Hindupur MP BK Parthasarathi, and Sri Sathya Sai District Collector A Shyam Prasad. The massive project aims to overhaul and strengthen the drinking water supply system across Penukonda and surrounding areas. Speaking at the gathering, Minister Savitha stated that the project was sanctioned keeping in mind the town's rising population and the escalating water requirements driven by industrial growth, particularly around the nearby Kia manufacturing ecosystem. She recalled the region's historical water scarcity that once forced mass migrations, affirming

that this project will deliver a permanent solution to ensure safe drinking water reaches every household. The Ministers also distributed land ownership documents to local beneficiaries. Minister Savitha highlighted the smooth rollout of welfare schemes like Talliki Vandanam and Deepam 2.0, while Revenue Minister Anagani Satya Prasad reiterated the government's commitment to timely monthly pension distribution and balanced regional development. Hindupur MP BK Parthasarathi noted that the project would bring permanent relief to peripheral villages like Venk atreddypalli, Konapuram, Seefaram, and Venkatapuram. District Collector A Shyam Prasad urged residents to eliminate water wastage and maintain urban cleanliness to help transform Penukonda into a model municipality. The mega launch was attended by public representatives, local officials, and executives from Jindal Industries.

MITS Deemed to be University opens admissions for 2026-27



Madanapalle: MITS Deemed to be University has announced admissions for 2026-27 academic year for various undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, including B Tech, M Tech, BBA, BCA, MBA, MCA and Ph D. Registrar Dr D Pradeep Kumar said University offers merit-based scholarships of up to 100% and has achieved 5,895 placement offers over the last three years, with students securing positions

in leading companies, including an Amazon package of Rs 29.53 lakh. The University highlighted its industry-focused curriculum, international collaborations, modern infrastructure, advanced research facilities and strong placement support. The Vice-Chancellor stated that MITS continues to strengthen its reputation through recognitions such as NAAC 'A+' Grade, NBA Accreditation.

Reliance sets up major plant at Orvakal; EV unit to start ops soon



Kurnool: Andhra Pradesh Minister for Industries, Commerce and Food Processing, TG Bharath Gupta, has said the State Government is committed to accelerating Kurnool's industrial development with the twin objectives of generating large-scale employment and curbing migration from the district. The Minister made these remarks while participating in a pension distribution programme at Erraburuju in Kurnool city on Wednesday. During the programme, he visited beneficiaries at their residences, personally handed over pensions and interacted with families to understand their grievances. He said the public response during his visits to various wards reflected growing confidence in the coalition government's governance and welfare initiatives over the past two years. The Minister said the government, under the leadership of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Minister Nara Lokesh, is making sustained efforts to attract investments to Kurnool district. According to him,

investment proposals worth nearly Rs.10,000 crore have already been secured for the Orvakal Industrial Park, while an electric vehicle manufacturing unit with a proposed investment of Rs 300 crore is expected to begin operations shortly. He also pointed out that the industrial park had long suffered due to inadequate water infrastructure, but the coalition government prioritised and expedited the pending works after assuming office, paving the way for rapid industrial expansion. Emphasising Orvakal's emergence as a key industrial destination, TG Bharath said several major companies are establishing manufacturing facilities in the region. He noted that Reliance has set up what he described as the world's second-largest beverages manufacturing plant at Orvakal, further strengthening the district's industrial profile. Reiterating the government's commitment to balanced regional development, the Minister also affirmed that efforts are continuing to establish a High Court Bench in Kurnool.

Dy CM Pawan virtually inaugurates Kailasagiri Eco park



Tirupati: Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan virtually inaugurated newly developed Kailasagiri Eco Park near Ramapuram reservoir in Srikalahasti forest range. It marks the launch of a pilot eco-tourism project aimed at promoting environmental conservation and sustainable tourism. Spread across 50 acres, the park has been developed by Forest department under Nagar Van Yojana with an investment of Rs 2 crore. The project was executed under the joint supervision of the Central and State governments. Speaking on the occasion, Pawan said that urban forests play a key role in providing people with clean air and a healthy environment. He expressed happiness at participating in the inauguration of the Kailasagiri Eco Park, developed amid lush greenery and also appealed to the public to protect urban forests and actively take part in planta-

tion drives. to offer visitors a blend of nature, recreation and environmental awareness. It includes landscaped gardens, herbal plantations and a wide variety of native plant species to encourage conservation and attract tourists. Another big attraction of the park is a dedicated plantation of red sanders, a tree species native to Seshachalam forests. It also features a Red Garden showcasing endangered plant species, besides gardens developed based on Nakshatras (birth stars) and zodiac signs. It incorporates several eco-friendly features such as solar power generation, nature trails, attractive entrance structures and environmentally sustainable infrastructure to minimise its ecological footprint. Visitors can also enjoy a range of recreational facilities, including trekking trails, a lotus pond, boating, kayaking and pedal boats.