

‘Reminds us of the importance of family values’

Andhra Governor, CM greet people on Raksha Bandhan

Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh Governor S. Abdul Nazeer and Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu have greeted people on the occasion of Raksha Bandhan on Friday. Governor Abdul Nazeer conveyed his heartiest greetings and good wishes to the people. He said the festival of Raksha Bandhan celebrates the sacred bond of love, affection and mutual respect between brothers and sisters. “It reminds us of the importance of family values, care, protection and lifelong companionship,” he said and wished this auspicious occasion would



strengthen the bonds of love and unity among families and bring happiness, peace and prosperity to all. Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu also greeted people on Raksha

Bandhan. “May this Raksha Bandhan festival, a symbol of the bond between brothers and sisters, fill your life with joy, health, and happiness. On this Rakhi Pournami, I sincerely wish that it spreads light in your lives, fills them with bonds of love,” he said in a post on X. Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan also conveyed his wishes to women. “On the occasion of Raksha Bandhan (Rakhi Pournami), which stands as a symbol of the affection and bond between brothers and sisters, I extend my heartfelt

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AP receives another digital project, with cable landing station to set in Vizag



Andhra Pradesh has secured another major digital project. The state is set to emerge as the country's third-largest digital landing hub, following Mumbai and Chennai. Tech giants like Google and Microsoft will partner in the construction of undersea internet cables. A facility for AI and cloud services, alongside a Google cable landing station, will be established with Visakhapatnam as the hub.

An approximately 3,600-kilometer-long undersea cable system, named I-2SEA, will be set up through a partnership between Microsoft, Lightstorm, and Singtel. This cable will establish direct connectivity between Visakhapatnam and regions in Singapore and Southeast Asia. The Microsoft-Lightstorm undersea internet cable network is expected to become operational

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Naga Babu takes charge of AP Green, targets 50 pc green cover in Andhra Pradesh by 2047

Amaravati: Konidela Naga Babu on Friday took charge as Chairman of the AP Green Executive Committee and said that he would discharge his duties with the goal of expanding the state's green cover to 50 per cent of the geographical area by 2047. He emphasised the efforts to transform environmental conservation from a mere government programme into a mass movement with public participation. Naga Babu, who is the brother of Deputy Chief Minister and Forest Minister Pawan Kalyan, was speaking to the media after assuming office at

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Women leaders celebrate Raksha Bandhan with CM Chandrababu Naidu

Amaravati: Several women leaders and members of the Brahma Kumaris tied Rakhis to Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, N. Chandrababu Naidu, on Friday on the occasion of Raksha Bandhan. The women expressed their affection by tying Rakhis to the Chief Minister at his official residence. Chief Minister Naidu conveyed his Rakhi Purnima greetings to them. Minister for BC Welfare, Economically Weaker Sections Welfare, Handlooms and Textiles, S. Savitha, former minister Peethala Sujatha, NTR District TDP President Gadde Anura

dha, and TDP State Secretary Achanta Sunitha were among those who tied Rakhis to the Chief Minister. Minister Savitha and Guntur West MLA Galla Madhavi also tied Rakhi to Minister for Human Resources Development, Information Technology and Real Time Governance, Nara Lokesh at Undavalli residence. He conveyed special thanks to them for their affection. Earlier, Lokesh greeted people on the occasion of Raksha Bandhan. He said in his message that though he has no biological sister, God has

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Nepal floods: 28 Andhra pilgrims safely cross affected area after Kailash Mansarovar Yatra



Tirupati: At least 28 pilgrims from Andhra Pradesh who travelled to Nepal for the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra are expected to return to their respective destinations on Friday after completing the pilgrimage and safely crossing a flood-affected area. Venkatramana, proprietor of the Tirupati-based travel agency that organised the trip, said the group left for Nepal on August 21 and comprised 28 people, all from Andhra

Pradesh. “Twenty-eight pilgrims from Andhra Pradesh who travelled to Nepal for the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra have completed their pilgrimage and are expected to return to their respective destinations this evening after safely crossing the flood-affected area,” He said the pilgrims encountered the flood situation while travelling towards an immigration office, but their vehicle had crossed

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RTGS intensifies continuous monitoring of Telugu pilgrims stranded in Nepal floods

Amaravati: The State government has intensified efforts to trace, assist and facilitate the evacuation of Telugu pilgrims and residents stranded in flood-affected areas of Nepal, following the directions from Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu to closely monitor the situation and ensure their safety. Under the guidance of Minister for Real Time Governance and IT Nara Lokesh, the Real Time Governance Society (RTGS) has stepped up its round-the-

clock monitoring of developments in Nepal and is continuously tracking the safety and whereabouts of pilgrims and Andhra Pradesh residents affected by the floods. The Chief Minister has directed officials to maintain constant vigilance, coordinate closely with the agencies concerned and extend all possible assistance to Telugu people stranded in the affected areas. In line with these instructions, RTGS has strengthened its monitoring and information-



gathering mechanism. RTG Secretary Bhaskar Katamneni and RTGS CEO Prakhar Jain have directed RTGS teams to remain on continuous monitor-

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India among worst hit by Trump immigration policies

An anti-immigration wave is sweeping across Europe and the United States, especially, the MAGA base of the American President, Donald Trump that is fiercely opposed to all kinds of immigration to the US. This nativist political movement has been increasingly shaping the immigration policies of the Trump administration. The latest in the policy decision series is the abrupt halting of all visa applications and appointments across the globe. This move will particularly impact the movement of professionals from India. Given the deep collaboration in the technology world, professionals from IT services companies, GCCs (global capability centres) and companies from other sectors (like BFSI, manufacturing, healthcare and others) will not be able to travel to the US for work. It is unimaginable to think that CEOs of large Indian IT services companies cannot travel to the US for client-related work because all visa appointments stand cancelled. Notably, since returning to power last year, Trump has taken several measures to restrict movement of professionals under the H1B visa programme. After the decision to impose a \$100,000 entry fee for all new H1B visa applications was put on hold by the court, now a harsher measure is being contemplated by Washington.

The Department of Homeland Security has now proposed a new \$103,265 application fee for issuance of H-1B visa. Apart from such policy moves, several procedural delays have also crept in; such as delay in processing of visa, abrupt cancellation of visa appointments and others. Such procedural measures are deliberately aimed at discouraging professionals to come to the US. While the US government has every right to take sovereign measures for granting entry to the country, such moves have been creating difficulties and untold misery for businesses across the world. India, which draws a significant amount of revenue from servicing clients in the technology space, is in a bigger soup. Given the anti-immigration sentiment and tantrums against Indians living in the US, Indian IT firms and other companies have reduced their use of the H1B visa route for sending professionals to client locations in the US. They are instead hiring US locals apart from taking several measures to upskill native Americans in STEM talent.

Trump backs ban on Sharia law in US Despite these measures, the policy uncertainty has created a sense of distrust among stakeholders. The pain is bigger in relation to GCCs. Because companies like Google, Microsoft to Intel, AMD to CitiBank, & Morgan Stanley; all have technology centres in India. The teams in India and the US work in tandem for coming up with innovative tech products and services. To facilitate this, most of the H1B visa issuances are tapped by these very American companies for sending talented Indian professionals to the US. Now, with the MAGA base backlash, these companies are facing double whammy. They don't have adequate talent in the US to undertake top notch technology work and they are increasingly facing difficulty in sending tech professionals from India. Not only tech professionals, even healthcare workers, officials from other industries like pharma, chemical, and banking are also facing trouble due to the uncertain and wavering visa policies.

‘Reminds us of the importance of family values’

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wishes to all sisters,” he said. “Rakhi Pournami is an emotionally charged symbol of the ties, relationships, and responsibilities intertwined with the Indian family system. It is a festival that fosters a sense of brotherhood, honors women, and provides reassurance,” the Deputy CM said. “On this Rakhi Pournami, we reiterate the coalition government’s commitment to advancing women’s safety and empowerment in the state. The coalition government is already successfully implementing initiatives such as Deepam-2, which provides three free gas cylinders per year, Talli Ki Vandanam, and Stree Shakti schemes,” he added. The Jana Sena leader said the state was steadily progressing towards realising the dream of developing tribal villages. Already, 426 tribal hamlets have been connected by roads. Through Adavitalli Baata Phase-2, the government has initiated measures to further expand these roads. “To protect tribal women from the genetic disease Sickie Cell Anaemia, we are establishing a special blood bank in Araku. On this Rakhi Pournami, we affirm our resolve to move forward toward the upliftment and empowerment of girls and women,” Pawan Kalyan added. Former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy greeted women. “Your love and affection are my greatest strength and give me immense courage. I will always remain grateful for the warmth and affection you shower upon me as your brother,” he said. The YSR Congress Party chief wished that their lives are filled with happiness, love, strong bonds, and good health.

AP receives another digital project, with cable landing station to set in Vizag

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by the end of 2029. A new internal digital fiber network will be developed along the Machilipatnam–Hyderabad–Mumbai and Chennai–Hyderabad–Mumbai routes. This development positions Visakhapatnam to potentially become an international digital gateway. Google plans to establish its 'America–India Connect' subsea cable with Visakhapatnam as the hub. It is reported that the AI facility at the Visakhapatnam Google center will prioritize AI inferencing and cloud services over AI models that require massive amounts of electricity. As part of its environmental conservation efforts, Google is likely to utilize renewable energy and air-cooling technologies at its Visakhapatnam facility. Amidst the ongoing political unrest in West Asia, India's east coast is poised to emerge as a secure digital corridor.

RTGS intensifies continuous monitoring of Telugu pilgrims stranded in Nepal floods

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ing duty, track developments closely and gather information from multiple sources regarding the stranded pilgrims. Also Read Nepal floods: EAM Jaishankar discusses relief and rescue efforts with MEA officials, Indian missions in Kathmandu and Beijing Advertisement Discover more Regional News Updates Auto News Section News Subscription Service The RTGS team is verifying information received from the ground and sharing timely updates with Andhra Pradesh Bhavan in New Delhi, enabling authorities to initiate further action for assistance, rescue and evacuation. RTGS is particularly monitoring Telugu pilgrims travelling along the flood-affected Nepal–Tibet route used by Kailash Mansarovar pilgrims. Officials are collecting and cross-verifying available information while maintaining constant coordination with AP Bhavan and other concerned agencies. The information gathered by RTGS is being shared with AP Bhavan for further coordination with the Ministry of External Affairs, the Indian Embassy, Nepalese authorities, Chinese authorities and other agencies involved in rescue and evacuation operations.

The State government has also set up a dedicated control room at Andhra Pradesh Bhavan in New Delhi to coordinate assistance and facilitate communication regarding affected Andhra Pradesh residents. The floods have disrupted important transit and acclimatisation points used by Kailash Mansarovar pilgrims, including Syapru Besi, BC and Timure, making communication and movement difficult. Despite the challenging conditions, RTGS is continuing to track every available lead concerning Andhra Pradesh pilgrims. The immediate priority is to establish the safety and whereabouts of every affected pilgrim and ensure that verified information reaches AP Bhavan without delay. The coordinated response involving the Chief Minister’s Office, Minister Nara Lokesh, RTGS, AP Bhavan and Central and international agencies concerned is aimed at ensuring timely assistance to Telugu pilgrims and other Andhra Pradesh residents affected by the floods.

Nepal floods: 28 Andhra pilgrims safely cross affected area after Kailash Mansarovar Yatra

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the stretch shortly before floodwaters reached the area. The waters arrived approximately five minutes after the vehicle had crossed the location, he added. Venkatramana said all 28 pilgrims were safe and that none had suffered injuries or faced any other reported difficulty due to the floods. The group was travelling from Nepal to Delhi, following which the pilgrims would take separate flights to their destinations. Some were scheduled to travel from Delhi to Visakhapatnam, while others would fly from Delhi to Hyderabad and then proceed to their respective places in Andhra Pradesh. Venkatramana also said he would travel to Tirupati on August 29 from Kathmandu.

Women leaders celebrate Raksha Bandhan with CM Chandrababu Naidu

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blessed him with millions of sisters as companions. “I can never forget the love and affection shown to me by sisters wherever I go in the Telugu states. The warmth and bond shared by women have instilled in me a greater sense of responsibility. We are imparting lessons on moral values to children from their student days, teaching them to respect women. Ensuring women’s safety and empowerment is the responsibility of the people’s government. On the occasion of Rakhi festival, I extend my heartfelt greetings to Telugu sisters, who are dear to me like my life,” he said. State Congress president, Y.S. Sharmila Reddy also greeted people on Raksha Bandhan. She termed the festival a symbol of the bond between brothers and sisters, of boundless love, affection, and protection. “Heartfelt wishes for the Rakhi festival to every brother and younger sibling in the Telugu states. On this festive occasion, I sincerely wish that my brothers thrive in happiness and well-being, remain blessed with long life and good health, and attain prosperity,” she said.

Naga Babu takes charge of AP Green, targets 50 pc green cover in Andhra Pradesh by 2047

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Aranya Bhavan in Mangalagiri. Babu, whose real name is Konidela Nagendra Rao, was appointed Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the ‘Andhra Pradesh Society for Greening and Reforestation for Ecological Enrichment (AP Green)’ on August 17. According to the Government Order, he will enjoy a Cabinet rank. Terming the role of Chairman of the AP Green Executive Committee as a great honour and responsibility, he thanked Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan for placing their trust in him and entrusting him with key responsibilities. “I will work with utmost dedication to effectively achieve the goals set by the AP Green Society. Through AP Green, I will strive to increase greenery, expand forest cover, and achieve environmental conservation objectives in the state,” he said. Naga Babu, who is a member of the Legislative Council, said the state’s current forest cover stands at 22.96 per cent. “Our primary objective is to increase the total green cover –comprising both forest and tree cover — to 50 per cent of the state’s geographical area by 2047. This is not merely a target set for the sake of statistics; the government has undertaken this initiative with the resolve to provide future generations with clean air, a healthy environment, and a better quality of life,” he said. “At a time when climate change poses a global challenge, environmental conservation is a responsibility shared by us all. Therefore, we are implementing an action plan to expand greenery in every suitable area across the state, rather than limiting the AP Green initiative solely to forests. We aim to increase green cover wherever possible, including agricultural lands, villages, urban areas, roadsides, canal bunds, the premises of public and private institutions, industrial surroundings, and suitable wastelands.” He said the AP Green Executive Committee will actively promote large-scale tree planting and the development of plantations. Stating that achieving this ambitious goal is beyond the scope of any single department, he said they will move forward by coordinating with all relevant government departments, including Agriculture, Horticulture, Panchayat Raj, Education, Industries, Revenue, Water Resources, Transport, and Forest. “The ‘AP Green’ initiative should not remain merely a government programme; we aim to make farmers, voluntary organisations, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) entities, students, youth, entrepreneurs, and every citizen active participants in this endeavour. Our objective is to transform ‘AP Green’ from a mere government scheme into a magnificent people’s movement with widespread public participation,” he said. Naga Babu said planting saplings was not their sole objective. He believes that the true responsibility lies in ensuring the survival, protection, and healthy growth of the saplings planted. We will pay special attention to the survival of every single sapling and establish a dedicated monitoring system for their care and maintenance, he added.

Praja Darbar for redressal of public grievances



Gajapathinagaram, August 28:AMC Chairman PVV Gopala Raju said that Praja Darbar is being conducted for redressal of public problems. On Friday, Praja Darbar programme was conducted at Gajapathinagaram party office along with staff of Minister Kondapalli Srinivas

camp office. He said 21 complaints were received from people who came from all corners of constituency for redressal of various problems in this Praja Darbar. He said complaints were sent to concerned officials and suggested to resolve problems quickly.

Minister Kondapalli to attend TAM 70th anniversary celebrations in Malaysia as chief guest of AP Govt

Minister to participate in TAM celebrations, APTF festivities

Amaravati, August 28:State Minister for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Rural Poverty Alleviation and Pravasi Empowerment Relations Kondapalli Srinivas will tour Malaysia for two days.Minister will participate and deliver speech along with Chief Minister of that State Sri Chow Kon Yeow and Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia Dato Sri

DiRaja Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi in 70th Platinum Anniversary celebrations of Telugu Association of Malaysia (TAM) to be held in Penang, Malaysia on 29th of this month. He will participate in Asia Pacific Telugu Federation Conference-2026 (APTF) celebrations on 30th of this month. Government of Andhra Pradesh has officially granted permission for this tour.

District Collector extends Rakhi festival greetings to women

NTR District, August 28 :On the occasion of Rakhi Purnima festival, women officers tied Rakhi to Collector Dr Lakshmisha at District Collector camp office in city and presented sweets and extended greetings. On this occasion, Collector Dr Lakshmisha extended heart-felt Rakhi festival greetings to all women in district.He said Rakhi festival stands as symbol of love, affection and mutual respect between brothers and sisters. He said role being played by women in family as well as development of society is very crucial. He said Government is giving high priority to safety, empowerment, education and economic self-reliance of women. He wished that women should move forward in all fields and showcase



their talent. He said providing equal opportunities, respect and safety to women is responsibility of everyone. District Collector called for fostering positive atmosphere in society with mutual love, respect and brotherhood with spirit of Rakhi festival.District Collector Dr Lakshmisha wished that all women in district should flourish with happiness and good health and their families should be filled with joy, peace and prosperity.

Nepal floods: 28 Andhra pilgrims safely cross affected area after Kailash Mansarovar Yatra

Tirupati: At least 28 pilgrims from Andhra Pradesh who travelled to Nepal for the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra are expected to return to their respective destinations on Friday after completing the pilgrimage and safely crossing a flood-affected area.Venkatramana, proprietor of the Tirupati-based travel agency that organised the trip, said the group left for Nepal on August 21 and comprised 28 people, all from Andhra Pradesh. “Twenty-eight pilgrims from Andhra Pradesh who travelled to Nepal for the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra have completed their pilgrimage and are expected to return to their respective destinations this evening after safely crossing the flood-affected area,” Venkatramana told PTI.He said the pilgrims encountered the flood



situation while travelling towards an immigration office, but their vehicle had crossed the stretch shortly before floodwaters reached the area. The waters arrived approximately five minutes after the vehicle had crossed the location, he added.Venkatramana said all 28 pilgrims were safe and that none had suffered injuries or faced any other reported difficulty due to the floods.

Annual Credit Plan with Rs 1,00,648 crore

Unveiling of proposals for financial year 2026-27
Rs 17,148 crore additional compared to last financial year
Rs 38,173 crore loan proposals for priority sector
Banks should be driving force in Speed of Doing Business
District Collector Dr G Lakshmisha



Vijayawada, August 28: Role of bankers is crucial in making schemes and programmes being implemented by Central and State Governments with aim of public welfare, economic progress and comprehensive development successful and banks should work to achieve targets of Annual Credit Plan (ACP) of Rs 1,00,648 crore proposed for financial year 2026-27 in full, said District Collector Dr G Lakshmisha.District Consultative Committee (DCC) and District Level Review Committee (DLRC) meetings were held under auspices of Lead District Office at Sri Pingali Venkayya meeting hall in NTR District Collectorate on Friday. In meeting, Collector Lakshmisha along with banking and CFL officials unveiled Annual Credit Plan for 2026-27. LDM explained through PPT role of various banks in achievement of targets set for last financial year, progress in key indicators related to banking sector, bank linkage loans related to Government schemes, financial literacy programmes etc. Later Collector Lakshmisha said loan targets of Rs 14,736 crore for agriculture sector and Rs 20,614 crore for MSME sector have been proposed for financial year 2026-27. He explained that targets of Rs 38,173 crore for total priority sector and Rs 62,475 crore for non-priority sector have been included in credit plan. He said loans of Rs 2,823 crore have been proposed for other priority sector. He said banks have shown good progress in achievement of credit plan targets last year and banks should act more crucially in current finan-

cial year also and work to achieve targets. He said banking system along with Government machinery also needs to respond quickly for Government scheme benefits to reach beneficiaries. He said all should work in coordination to take score of all progress indicators in district to A plus category. He said feedback given by beneficiaries through IVRS reflects performance and therefore efforts should be made to provide better services to beneficiaries. He said banks should be driving force in Speed of Doing Business and should work to provide services within stipulated time. He said women entrepreneurs should be encouraged with aim of One Family-One Entrepreneur and banks should provide financial support to provide more market to products made by women through 'Swayam' brand. He suggested to sanction loans quickly for installation of solar power systems under PM Surya Ghar scheme.

Collector Lakshmisha suggested to conduct digital and financial awareness programmes on large scale in rural areas as per NABARD, RBI guidelines. Lead Bank Union Bank of India Regional Head MV Tilak, RBI LDO Rohit Agarwal, LDM P Venkata Subbaiah, RSETI Director V Amareswara Reddy, VMC Additional Commissioner Dr D Chandrasekhar, Centre for Financial Literacy State Head Babu Rao, officials of various banks, Industries, agriculture allied sectors, DRDA, MEPMA and other departments officials participated in meeting.

Every eligible person should be given right to vote - Gajapat

hinagaram Constituency Telugu Desam Party leadersTDP leaders of Gajapathinagaram constituency said they requested Electoral Roll Observer Ronanki Gopalakrishna to provide voting right to every eligible person.

District Electoral Observer Ronanki Gopalakrishna conducted review meeting with EROs, AEROs and representatives of political parties at Collectorate on SIR process at District Collector office on Friday. Gajapathinagaram Market Committee Chairman PVV Gopala Raju who



participated in this meeting said he submitted representation to officials. He said he mainly requested to provide voting right to everyone who has voting right and to take steps to ensure youth votes are in

voter list without fail. Party senior leaders Kondapalli Kondalarao, Mandal party presidents Kondapalli Bhaskara Naidu and others participated in this programme.



One-year extension to learn Marathi removes livelihood threat, say taxi, auto unions

Mumbai: Autorickshaw and taxi unions on Friday welcomed the Maharashtra government’s decision to grant them a year to acquire working knowledge of Marathi, saying the extension removes the immediate threat to their livelihoods. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis announced the timeline extension after a delegation met him at the Sahyadri Guest House on Thursday, halting immediate action against non-Marathi drivers and giving them more time to learn the language. Notably, the announcement came a day after Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde handed certificates to around 20,000 autorickshaw and taxi drivers who had completed a language course in Mumbai. The BJP-led state government had announced in April that non-Marathi drivers must learn basic Marathi, and set a deadline of August 15 while organising Marathi classes for them. Prem Singh, leader of the Mumbai Taximen’s Association, said the one-year extension would give taxi drivers sufficient time to acquire working knowledge of Marathi. He said many taxi drivers were over 60 years of age and found it difficult to learn the language within a short period, although several of them already understood Marathi well. “Now that they know it is mandatory, they will acquire the required skill within a year. As a union, we will also make arrangements to help drivers learn the language,” Singh said. Hailing the extended deadline, DM Gosavi, leader of the Seva Sarathi Taxi Rickshaw Transport Union, said drivers are happy that they will not lose their livelihood for now. “Our members are quite happy and satisfied with the decision. We have already started classrooms to teach Marathi, and the additional time will help more drivers learn the language,” he said. A retired transport department official said the issue appeared to have been taken up largely for political reasons without adequately considering the ground realities. “The biggest issue is that while amending the rules earlier this month, the Maharashtra government did not clearly define what constitutes working knowledge of Marathi. This leaves scope for drivers to be financially exploited,” he said. A senior RTO official said the flying squads had been fully engaged in the month-long enforcement drive launched in recent days, and their workload would have increased further after the deadline, as notices had already been issued to hundreds of drivers. “While deciding to postpone the decision to make Marathi mandatory for one year, the chief minister has said that no action will be taken against any rickshaw taxi driver. Otherwise, our officers would have spent the next four-five months handling these cases alone,” he said, requesting anonymity.

J&K: Two grenades recovered in Baramulla; Army foils drone intrusion in Rajouri

Srinagar/Jammu: The security forces said on Friday they have recovered two hand grenades in Jammu and Kashmir’s Baramulla district while the Army foiled a drone intrusion along the Line of Control (LoC) in Rajouri district. Police said two hand grenades were recovered from a man during a naka checking operation at Wussan Bangil in Kunzer area of north Kashmir’s Baramulla district. The checking was conducted by a joint party comprising personnel from Police Station Kunzer, SOG Kunzer, CRPF 176 Battalion and 2 Rashtriya Rifles. During the checking of vehicles and pedestrians, a man allegedly attempted to flee after noticing the security personnel. He, however, was apprehended on the spot. The man was identified as Shakir Nabi Lone, a resident of Hardu Aboora, Kunzer. Two hand grenades were recovered from his possession during a personal search. Following the recovery, FIR No. 115/2026 was registered at Police Station Kunzer under relevant provisions of law. Further investigation into the case is underway. In another operation, the Army



thwarted a Pakistani drone intrusion along the Line of Control (LoC) in Rajouri district. Officials said three drones crossed into Indian airspace near Rumlihdhara, Nowshera in Rajouri during the night intervening August 27-28. Troops detected the movement, following which counter-drone systems were immediately activated. “The swift action forced all three drones to retreat across the border, officials said, adding that a search operation has been launched in the area as a precautionary measure,” the officials said.

‘Hi5, smiles and more’: PM Modi celebrates Raksha Bandhan with schoolchildren

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday celebrated Raksha Bandhan with children at his residence at 7, Lok Kalyan Marg, sharing moments of smiles, high-fives and interaction with school children. PM Modi shared a reel on his Instagram account and said, “Hi5, smiles and more during today’s Raksha Bandhan celebrations at 7, LKM.” In the video, the Prime Minister can be seen interacting with school children and exchanging warm greetings with them. During the interaction, a child asked PM Modi about his childhood dream. Responding to the question, the Prime Minister said, “Aap logon se milne ka (to meet all of you)”. PM Modi was also seen shaking hands



and exchanging high-fives with the children, who could be heard laughing and giggling during the interaction. He also blessed the children and spent time engaging with them during the Raksha Bandhan celebrations. Earlier in the day, PM Modi also extended greetings to the people on the occasion of Raksha Bandhan and wished that the bond of love, affection and mutual trust would remain forever unbreakable. PM Modi took to social media ‘X’ and said, “Heartfelt wishes on the

occasion of Raksha Bandhan. May this sacred festival bring happiness, prosperity, and success into all your lives. May the bond of love, affection, and mutual trust remain forever unbreakable—that is my heartfelt wish.” Raksha Bandhan celebrates the bond of love, affection and protection between brothers and sisters. Traditionally, sisters tie colourful rakhis around their brothers’ wrists and pray for their health, happiness and prosperity. Brothers, in turn, express their affection by offering gifts and pledging to stand by their sisters through life’s challenges. The festival is observed on Purnima, the full moon day, of the Hindu month of Shrawana. This year, Raks

ha Bandhan is being celebrated on Friday. As part of the traditional celebrations, sisters apply a tilak on their brothers’ foreheads before tying the rakhi, while families exchange sweets and gifts. Raksha Bandhan is primarily celebrated in India and Nepal and is observed during the Hindu lunar calendar month of Shrawana, which generally falls in August according to the Gregorian calendar.

Trinamool Billboard row: Mamata Banerjee-led faction approaches Calcutta HC

Kolkata: The faction in the Trinamool Congress led by former West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday approached a special single-judge bench of the Calcutta High Court in connection with the row over the removal of an illegal billboard from the roof of the party’s MP Abhishek Banerjee’s office on Camac Street in Central Kolkata. Trinamool Congress’ counsel Kishore Dutta, the former advocate general of West Bengal, drew the court’s attention to the matter. The special single-judge bench of Justice Raja Basu Chowdhury gave permission to file a case in the matter. However, a decision on Trinamool’s plea for a hearing on an urgent basis on Friday is pending. The petitioner’s counsel informed Justice Basu Chowdhury’s bench that on Thursday at 4:45 p.m, Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) staff went to the said Camac Street office and started dismantling the billboard. Dutta also informed the court that the office of the Calcutta High Court’s Acting Chief Justice Tapabrata Chakrabarty was informed about the matter on Thursday and the latter asked the petitioner to draw the attention of Justice Basu Chowdhury’s

single-judge bench. After that, Trinamool Congress counsel requested the bench to hear the case as soon as possible on an urgent basis. However, Justice Chowdhury asked the Trinamool Congress counsel to first register the case and approach his bench with the case number.

The judge also observed that he would not be able to hear the matter until the case number was available. Justice Chowdhury also said that a hearing in the matter will be conducted on Friday but only after the case number was available. He also asked the petitioner to inform other parties in the case, namely KMC and Kolkata Police, about the matter. On Thursday, tension broke out on Camac Street after KMC officials, accompanied by Kolkata Police personnel, reached the office of Abhishek Banerjee, the party’s Diamond Harbour Lok Sabha member and also the nephew of Mamata Banerjee, to remove an illegal billboard. The billboard was removed ultimately after two rounds of scuffles between the cops and Trinamool Congress activists. On Thursday, Abhishek informed that he



would approach the Calcutta High Court in the matter.

Zeenat Aman expresses concern for Nepal flood victims, recalls Hare Rama Hare Krishna shoot

Mumbai: Veteran diva Zeenat Aman expressed concern for the people of Nepal and those affected by the devastating floods. She also spoke about the much-loved song Phoolon Ka Taron Ka from her film 1971 ‘Hare Rama Hare Krishna’, which she said was about the bond between a brother and sister.Zeenat took to Instagram, where she shared a scene from the 1971 film Hare Rama Hare Krishna featuring late star Dev Anand singing the track Phoolon Ka Taron Ka for his onscreen sister Zeenat Aman.The actress shared that if there’s one joy she has missed in her life, it’s that of having a sibling.“As a girl I always saw the sisters and brothers around me, and yearned for a sibling myself. I knew early on that I would have two children so that they would each have the other to turn to, wrote Zeenat.The actress added: “So, in celebration of all you siblings and the special bond that you share, a snippet of a much-loved song from Hare Rama Hare Krishna. A movie that ended tragically but at its core was about the bond between a brother and sister.”Haré Rama Haré Krishna is directed by Dev Anand under the banner of Navketan Films.It stars Anand himself, alongside Mumtaz, Zeenat Aman and Prem Chopra in the lead roles. The film deals with the decadence of the Hippie culture, and aimed to have an anti-drug message and also depicts some



problems associated with Westernization. It was influenced by the 1968 American psychedelic film Psych-Out. The idea for Haré Rama Haré Krishna struck Dev Anand, who was low in spirits due to protests against his previous film Prem Pujari, when he visited Kathmandu, Nepal and encountered hippies living there. Zeenat recalled how the film was shot in Nepal, which has been hit by devastating floods.“We shot this film almost entirely in Nepal, and I can not sign off today without expressing my concern for the citizens of Nepal, and all those who have been impacted by the devastating floods. Those of you who can, please consider supporting authorised relief efforts that are underway,” she wrote.

Rannvijay Singha to host Roadies REBIRTH, auditions set for September



Mumbai: Television star Rannvijay Singha is all set to host the 21st edition of “Roadies”, which is titled “Roadies REBIRTH”. He shared that the new chapter feels incredibly exciting because it brings the raw spirit back in a whole new way. Elated about the new season, Rannvijay says, “Roadies isn’t just a show for me; it’s an emotion. After all these years, the hunger, courage and dreams of every Roadie still hit differently.”He added: “Roadies REBIRTH is about that very essence, i.e., pushing your limits, fighting harder and refusing to back down. I’ve seen Roadies evolve over the years and this new chapter feels incredibly exciting because it brings that same raw spirit back in a whole new way.”The actor and host concluded by saying: “With a new generation ready to test themselves, I can’t wait to see who has what it takes to make their mark and how they navigate the twists and turns that await them. See you at the auditions!”Anticipation for the new season began building with the reveal of the Roadies REBIRTH logo. Featuring a striking Phoenix – a bird that represents rebirth – the new identity signals a powerful transformation.In a recent drop over the gram, the camera closes in on Rannvijay as three red and three yellow helmets appear through the reflection of his shades.MTV Roadies is an Indian reality television series. It premiered on 15 August 2003 on MTV India and is also digitally available on JioHotstar. Following the auditions, a group of contestants

travel to different destinations and participate in various tasks that challenge their physical, social and mental strength.Roadies REBIRTH auditions to be held in Delhi, Chandigarh, Kolkata and Pune this September.Talking about Rannvijay, he is known for his role in MTV Roadies. He was a part of the show from 2004 to 2020, earlier as a gang leader and then as a host.He was also a part of the auditions judging panel from season 8 to season 18 and a gang leader. He made his Bollywood debut in Toss: A Flip of Destiny. Rannvijay has also acted in London Dreams and Action Replayy. He made his Punjabi movie debut in 2011, starring in Jimmy Shergill’s Dharti.

Nagarjuna to be away from Hyderabad on birthday, urges fans not to visit

Hyderabad: Informing fans that popular Telugu star Nagarjuna will not be available at his residence on his birthday this year as he will be travelling out of Hyderabad, the actor’s production house has urged fans and admirers not to make the trip to meet him on August 29.In a statement shared on its social media handles, production house Annapurna Studios wrote, “Thank you for all the love, blessings and advance birthday wishes for our King Nagarjuna Garu ahead of August 29. This year, Nagarjuna garu will be unavailable at his residence as he

Riddhima Kapoor Sahni shares ’80s childhood memory with mom Neetu Kapoor and Ranbir on Raksha Bandhan

Mumbai: On the occasion of Raksha Bandhan, Riddhima Kapoor Sahni took a trip down memory lane and shared a nostalgic glimpse from her childhood with her mother, actress Neetu Kapoor, and brother, actor Ranbir Kapoor. Taking to Instagram stories, Riddhima shared an old family photograph that captured a precious moment from the siblings’ growing-up years. The picture, marked ’86, offered a glimpse of Riddhima and Ranbir as children alongside their mother Neetu Kapoor. She simply captioned the picture as, “Happy Rakhi Rans. Love you,” followed by red heart emojis. In the image, young Riddhima and Ranbir can be seen posing alongside their mother, Neetu Kapoor. The ‘Rockstar’ actor looked super cute in blue t-shirt paired with jeans. Neetu also reposted this throwback photo on her Instagram stories, writing, “My loves.”The throwback photo beautifully captured the warmth of their family bond and



took fans back to the Kapoor siblings’ childhood days. Riddhima’s post also highlighted the timeless relationship she shares with her younger brother.Riddhima and Ranbir Kapoor, children of late actor Rishi Kapoor and Neetu Kapoor, share a warm and close-knit sibling bond. Riddhima described her brother Ranbir Kapoor as the “pillar of the family” and said that the loss of their father, Rishi Kapoor, brought the siblings even closer and deepened their bond.Both Riddhima and Ranbir have publicly spoken about how the loss of their father, Rishi Kapoor, in 2020 brought them closer and strengthened their relationship. Since then, the siblings have continued to stand by each other and share a strong sense of love and support.Meanwhile, on the occasion of Raksha Bandhan, several celebrities took to social media to celebrate the special bond they share with their siblings and shared heartfelt wishes along with cherished memories.

Kangana Ranaut celebrates Raksha Bandhan with brother, shares heartfelt message

Mumbai: Actress and politician Kangana Ranaut celebrated the festival of Raksha Bandhan with her brother and shared glimpses of the special occasion on social media. Taking to Instagram, the ‘Queen’ actress shared a series of pictures from the Rakhi celebration, offering a glimpse into the family festivities. Along with the photos, she penned a heartfelt message for her brother, expressing her prayers for his health, prosperity, and happiness. In her note, Kangana wrote, “Mere payaare Bhai Main Ishwar se prarthna karti hoon ki yeh prem ka bandhan jo maine tumhare haath pe bandha hai yeh sada tumhari Raksha kare, tum hamare Mata Pita ki seva karo, kul ki garima badhao, patni ka sada kalyan karo, santan ki hamesha raksha karo, aur sada jeevan se santusht raho.” (I pray to God that the bond of love I have tied around your wrist always protects you. May you always serve and honour our parents, uphold the dignity of our family, care for and bring happiness to your wife, always protect your children, and remain content and fulfilled in life.)“Mere pyaare Bhai main sada tumhein swasth aur samridh dekh, mere liye tum mere mata pita ki he chavi ho tumhara prem aur sanrakshan mujhe sada mile. Sab bahen



bhaiyon ko iss ati Priye parv ki bahut shubhkamnaen. Rakshabandhan ki hardik shubhkamnaein.” (My dear brother, I always wish to see you healthy and prosperous. To me, you are a reflection of our parents, and I hope I always receive your love, care and protection.)In the pictures, Kangana Ranaut could be seen performing the Raksha Bandhan rituals with her brother. She tied a rakhi around his wrist and applied a tilak to his forehead. One of the pictures also captured her brother seeking her blessings by touching her feet. Kangana later posed happily for photographs with her brother and his wife, giving a glimpse of their intimate family celebration.Meanwhile, several celebrities marked Raksha Bandhan by sharing special moments with their siblings on social media.

Nagarjuna to be away from Hyderabad on birthday, urges fans not to visit



will be out of Hyderabad. We kindly request fans and well-wishers not to make the trip to meet him.” However, the production house said it had something special planned for

the actor’s birthday this year.It said, “Stay tuned to the official Annapurna Studios handle on August 29 for an exciting glimpse of #King100. Let’s celebrate the King together!”For the uninitiated, Nagarjuna is currently starring in his landmark 100th film, #King100. Backed by Annapurna Studios, the prestigious project is being directed by Ra Karthik, who is making his Telugu directorial debut.Shooting for the film, which is expected to be a memorable milestone in Nagarjuna’s career, is currently progressing at a brisk pace.

Dinusha’s heroic 133 set benchmark for Sri Lanka, says coach Kirsten

Colombo: Describing Sonal Dinusha’s match-saving century in Sri Lanka’s second innings in the second Test against India as one of the finest batting performances in the country’s cricketing history, head coach Gary Kirsten said on Friday that the young batter’s performance set a benchmark for the rest of the players on how to deliver under immense pressure. Dinusha hit a heroic undefeated 133 on day five at the SSC Ground and helped the hosts force a draw against a formidable Indian attack after being made to follow on. “This innings, what he was able to achieve on day four and day five, I would say (it) would go down in Sri Lankan Test cricket history as one of the great saves. “Forget the fact that he got a hundred in the first innings as well and was able to do this. I think it was a great example to a lot of cricketers in the country as to what you can do at Test match level against a really good bowling attack, following on in a tough situation,” Kirsten was quoted as saying by Cricinfo, at the conclusion of the series. The former South African also expressed admiration for Dinusha’s temperament after coming out to bat at number six. “I think it’s never easy batting at six in a team because often you come in under pressure. What I was encouraged me was when I watched him in the West Indies; I saw that he really thrives in tough situations. “I love the way he plays Test cricket. He thinks about it. He plays to his strengths, and he is a smart cricketer. He understands what the bowlers are trying to do to him and then he uses his skill sets to negate that,” he added. Moving away from the traditional practice of preparing rank turners at home, Kirsten advocated for balanced surfaces like the ones used in the India series, where fast bowlers and batters both remained in contention across all five days. “I’m a big fan of making



sure that we don’t prepare wickets just for spinners. “We want to prepare wickets where we can win games with our seamers as well. That’s how you develop a cricket team – playing in all conditions. I was very impressed with the two wickets that were prepared for the Test series. “They were hard-working Test wickets – not straightaway result wickets. We wanted our batters to be able to bat. Spinners have to work hard, and seamers are in the game. In the second innings at Galle, our seamers took seven of the ten wickets. I’m very encouraged that our seamers are in the game, and I certainly want to develop that more,” he added. While praising fast bowler Asitha Fernando for strongly leading the pace attack, Kirsten stressed the urgent need to build a stronger supporting unit around him. “He’s a world-class bowler, and he’s been bowling really well this series. “He’s been on top of his game. But we do need more assistance for him – we can’t just rely on him. That’s something we’re going to spend a lot of time working on: understanding how we can get 20 wickets and not just rely on spin.”

Padikkal credits first-class consistency for Test success in Sri Lanka

Colombo: India batter Devdutt Padikkal said he was deeply satisfied in terms of proving his calibre in the Test cricket arena, adding that his strong performances in the 1-0 series win over Sri Lanka reflected the consistency he has built over the years of playing domestic first-class cricket games. Padikkal was in sublime form by scoring 328 runs in the two-match series at an average of 109.33, including hitting two centuries as a number three batter in place of injured B Sai Sudharsan. “It feels great. Again, coming into this series, once I knew that I was going to get that opportunity, I was really looking forward to it. “I felt that this is my chance to really prove something and make sure that I show everyone that I’m capable of getting big runs, and I’ve done that throughout my career in first-class cricket as well, and I’m really happy that it showed in the Test arena as well. So I’m really happy with that, and hopefully I can take the confidence that I’ve got from this forward in my career,” Padikkal said in a video posted on BCCI’s social media accounts on Friday. Highlighting the physical grind experienced by the squad amidst hot and humid weather in the island nation, Padikkal commended the entire setup for pushing through the exhaustion. “A lot of good effort from everyone, the entire squad. I feel it was some challenging conditions out there; it wasn’t always easy. “I think they played some really good cricket. It was hot, and it took a lot out of the team, and I think everyone really put their 100 percent effort out there, and



it’s a really good sign that we are really pulling towards a common goal, and I’m really happy with that,” he added. Padikkal also revealed that tackling Sri Lankan spinners on their home turf was a core focus of his pre-series preparations, which paid off very well. “When you come to Sri Lanka, you always expect that challenge of playing spin, and I think personally, that was something that I was really looking forward to doing. “Also, I made sure that I prepared really well leading up to the series to make sure that I was ready for that challenge. I’m really happy that I was able to tackle spin well to the best of my ability, and hopefully I can continue to work on that and get better at it,” he stated. Generous in his assessment of the opposition’s fightback on day five to draw the series, Padikkal lauded their batters for their rearguard act that eventually denied India a victory in the final match. “Definitely, I think lots of credit goes to Sonal and Keshara. I think the way they batted was pretty unbelievable, and I think our bowlers pretty much gave it their all. They tried a lot of things. We gave it our best, but I think at the end of the day, they played some good cricket and they deserve to get that draw.”

Neeraj Chopra seals Diamond League Finals berth despite limited appearances

New Delhi: Indian javelin throw ace Neeraj Chopra has qualified for the Diamond League Finals to be held in Brussels on September 5 despite competing in just two events of the prestigious one-day meeting series. Chopra secured 12 points after finishing second in both the Doha and Lausanne DL events on June 19 and August 21 respectively to take the sixth spot in the standings and be eligible to compete in the winner-takes-all grand finale in Brussels. The standings were updated at the end of the 14th and the last leg of the series in Zurich on Thursday. Of the 14 Diamond League meetings of the year, five featured men’s javelin throw and Chopra competed in just two. The 28-year-old is on a comeback trail after recovering from a lower back injury that has troubled him since September last year. The injury delayed his return until the Doha Diamond League. He was not 100 per cent fit at the recent Glasgow Commonwealth Games but was able to win a silver with a season’s best throw of 85.83m. He later improved that to 88.05m in the Lausanne Diamond League. For jumps and throws, the top six in the standings will compete in the September 4-5 DL Finals in Brussels. One additional athlete per discipline may also compete via a national or global wildcard selection. The DL Finals will be held over two days in Brussels with 16 events to be organised on September 4 and the rest 16 the next day. The men’s javelin event will be held on September 5. The winner will get a trophy and pocket a minimum of USD 30,000. The eighth-place finisher will get USD 1000.

If men’s javelin is chosen as one of the Diamond+ disciplines, then the winner will pocket USD 60,000. Rising Sri Lankan star Rumesch Pathirage is at the top spot of the standings with 39 points, making him the favourite to walk away with the DL trophy in Brussels also. He competed in all the five DL javelin events, won in four and finished second in one, underlining his absolute dominance this season. On Thursday, Pathirage destroyed the 10-man field in Zurich with a stunning 92.07m throw to take the title. This was his second 90m plus throw of the season, following the 92.62m effort in Rome. Germany’s Julian Weber was the only other athlete to record a 90m plus throw this season so far with his 90.40m effort while winning gold at the European



Championships in Birmingham earlier this month. But dogged by injury, he did not compete in any DL event and he will not be there in the Finals also.

Two-time world champion Anderson Peters of Grenada is second in the standings with 35 points. He finished second in Zurich on Thursday behind Pathirage with 86.93m. Both Pathirage and Peters had already qualified for the DL Finals even before the Zurich meet. Reigning world champion Keshorn Walcott of Trinidad and Tobago will also compete in the DL Finals as he ended at third place in the standings with 23 points, followed by Curtis Thompson (20 points) of USA and Julius Yego (13) of Kenya at fourth and fifth spots. Chopra on course for World Athletics Ultimate Championships: Chopra is also on course to qualify for the inaugural World Athletics Ultimate Championships in Budapest from September 11-13. Eight throwers will compete in the men’s javelin event and Chopra is currently at the seventh spot. Another Indian, Sachin Yadav is at the eighth spot but the final list of eligible athletes will be published on September 6. Pathirage, Peters, Thompson and Weber are ahead of Chopra in the Road to Ultimate Championships. Arshad Nadeem of Pakistan and Keshorn Walcott of Trinidad and Tobago have qualified as reigning Olympic and world champion respectively. The winner of the Diamond League Finals in Brussels on September 5 will also be invited in the Ultimate Championships. The other five will be picked on the basis of world rankings with the qualification period from September 2, 2025 to September 1, 2026. The inaugural Ultimate Championship will pit Olympic champions, world champions and Diamond League winners against one another in an ambitious project of World Athletics. It will be a biennial event to provide a season-ending championship in years when there is no outdoor World Championships. The total prize purse this year will be USD 10 million, with gold medallists winning USD 150,000.

Shubman Gill praises Devdutt Padikkal, Manav Suthar after India’s 1-0 Sri Lanka series win

Colombo: India captain Shubman Gill reflected on the recently concluded 1-0 series win over Sri Lanka, saying that despite the drawn second Test, the short tour comprising two matches yielded numerous positives, particularly the standout performances of young players Devdutt Padikkal and Manav Suthar. Padikkal enjoyed a standout tour by amassing 328 runs, including hitting two centuries, at number three in the absence of B. Sai Sudharsan. “I think it’s been a great series for us. A lot of positives in the series, all the youngsters doing well, so that’s very pleasing to see. “Definitely, we speak about once a batter is set, they should make the most of it, and Devdutt showing that, very positive signs for us, and the way he batted in the series was a treat to watch. It truly tells the mindset of a player, and that’s a great positive sign for us,” Gill said in a video posted on BCCI’s social media accounts on Friday. Suthar, the left-arm spin bowling all-



rounder, took 16 scalps, including a ten-wicket match haul in the 165-run win in Galle. “He’s been magnificent for us and I think he’s going to be someone who’s going to be leading the spin attack for India for a very long time and the way he bowled in this match and even in the first match was a treat to watch, every time he comes on to bowl it feels like he’s going to create those chances and going to get us wickets and hopefully keeps doing well,” added Gill. Admitting that drawing the second Test was a tough pill to swallow after being in a commanding position to win early on, Gill graciously acknowledged Sri Lanka’s grit and tactical execution in the last two days of the game at the SSC Ground.

India's digital merchant payments rise 19.6% to Rs 11.73 lakh crore in July

New Delhi: Digital payments to merchants in India rose 19.6 per cent year-on-year to Rs 11.73 lakh crore in July 2026, driven by strong growth in UPI-based transactions and credit card spending, a report said on Friday. Merchant payments increased from Rs 9.80 lakh crore in July last year and were also up 5 per cent month-on-month from Rs 11.17 lakh crore in June 2026, according to data compiled by Equirus Securities. UPI-P2M and credit cards remained the key drivers of the digital payments ecosystem, with spending through these modes rising 23.5 per cent and 7.4 per cent, respectively, year-on-year. UPI-P2M transactions stood at Rs 9.066 lakh crore in July, accounting for 77.3 per cent of total digital merchant payments. Its share increased by 22 basis points from June and by 243 basis points from the year-ago period, the report said. Credit card spending stood at Rs 2.081 lakh crore during the month, rising 3.4 per cent from June and accounting for 17.7 per cent of total digital merchant payments.

Debit card spending, meanwhile, declined 0.8 per cent year-on-year, although it increased 7.4 per cent month-on-month to Rs 37,700 crore. Prepaid card transactions stood at around Rs 6,600 crore, while wallet spending was



approximately Rs 13,700 crore. Together, prepaid cards and wallets accounted for Rs 20,300 crore of spending in July, registering strong growth of 41.1 per cent year-on-year and 4.3 per cent month-on-month. The credit card market also continued to expand, with the number of cards in force rising by 1.267 million from the previous month to 122.9 million in July. E-commerce continued to dominate credit card usage, accounting for 63.6 per cent of total credit card spending in July, compared with 63.1 per cent in June. Average monthly e-commerce spending per credit card stood at Rs 10,772, while average point-of-sale spending was Rs 6,165. The average size of an e-commerce transaction was around Rs 4,301, compared with Rs 2,579 for point-of-sale transactions. The average number of monthly transactions per credit card also increased to 4.90 in July from 4.75 in June.

Gold prices fall for fourth straight session, down 3.25 pc in four days

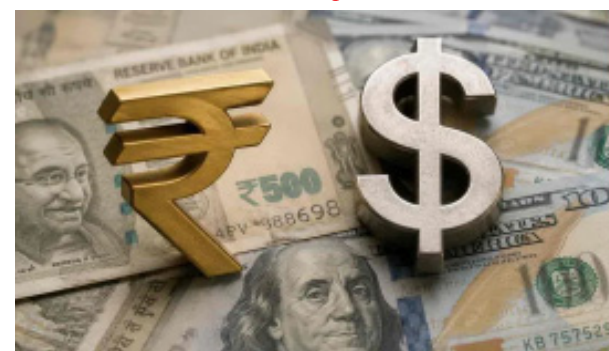
Mumbai: Gold prices in India continued their downward trend on Friday, extending losses for the fourth consecutive trading session amid sustained selling pressure in the precious metal. On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold futures for October delivery declined by Rs 896, or 0.56 per cent, to trade at Rs 1,58,100 per 10 grams. During the session, prices fell as much as 0.68 per cent, or Rs 1,085, to touch an intraday low of Rs 1,57,911 per 10 grams. With Friday's decline, gold prices have fallen by Rs 5,318, or 3.25 per cent, over the past four trading sessions on the MCX, reflecting continued pressure on the yellow metal. In the international market, gold prices also remained under pressure as investors awaited a speech by US Federal Reserve Chair Kevin Warsh at the Jackson Hole symposium. Market participants are closely watching signals from the US central bank on the future course of interest rates, which could influence demand for gold. Spot gold declined 0.5 per cent to \$4,576.30 an ounce after touching a more



than three-month high earlier this week. US gold futures were also down 0.8 per cent at \$4,629 an ounce. Experts said that the recent weakness in gold prices comes after a strong rally earlier in the week, with investors now assessing the outlook for US monetary policy and its potential impact on the dollar, bond yields and demand for the safe-haven asset. "Immediate resistance is at Rs 1,59,500 – Rs 1,60,000, followed by Rs 1,62,000 – Rs 1,62,500. Immediate support is at Rs 1,57,600 – Rs 1,57,000, followed by Rs 1,55,500 – Rs 1,55,000. RSI at 60.93 remains in positive territory but has declined sharply from the overbought region, signalling a cooling of momentum," an analyst said.

Rupee falls 10 paise to 95.55 against US dollar in early trade

Mumbai: The rupee fell 10 paise to 95.55 against the US dollar in early trade on Friday, weighed down by FII outflows and sustained disruptions to global crude oil supplies. However, a marginally weaker greenback and a decline in global crude oil prices to below USD 90 per barrel prevented a sharper fall in the local unit, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 95.54 against the greenback before slipping further to 95.55, down 10 paise from its previous close. The rupee pared its initial gains and settled 1 paise lower at 95.45 against the US dollar on Thursday. "The rupee is expected to trade in a narrow range of 95.40 to 95.60 on Friday, with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) protecting the upper end, while oil importers and month-end demand are expected to provide support at the lower end," said Anil Kumar Bhansali, Head of Treasury and Executive Director at Finrex Treasury Advisors LLP. Forex traders further said market participants would



closely monitor US Fed Chair Kevin Warsh's speech at the Jackson Hole Symposium. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.01 per cent lower at 99.14. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading 0.48 per cent lower at USD 89.27 per barrel in futures trade. On the domestic equity market front, the Sensex rose 245.56 points to 77,191.80 in early trade, while the Nifty was up 54.20 points at 24,147.50. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 298.26 crore on a net basis on Thursday, according to exchange data.

India and Canada to boost economic ties, target CEPA deal by 2026-end

Washington: In a bid to deepen bilateral economic and financial cooperation, India and Canada have said they are looking to conclude negotiations on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) by the end of 2026 and initiate talks on a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) at the earliest. At the inaugural Economic and Financial Dialogue in Toronto on Thursday, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Canada's Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Francois-Philippe Champagne, agreed to support engagement between relevant authorities and stakeholders to explore opportunities related to cross-border remittances and merchant payments. They also welcomed opportunities to broaden the use of UPI in Canada through partnerships with payment service providers, recognising that such efforts could contribute to faster and more cost-effective payments and support bilateral trade, tourism, education and the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises in both countries, according to a joint statement issued after the inaugural Economic and Financial Dialogue. The dialogue builds on the commitment made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney during their meeting in New Delhi in March 2026 to strengthen bilateral economic and financial cooperation. The two sides also reaffirmed their shared commitment to conclude negotiations on a Canada-India Comprehensive



Economic Partnership Agreement by the end of 2026. During the dialogue, the ministers exchanged views on global macro-economic developments and domestic policy priorities and discussed ways to strengthen economic and investment ties.

The discussions aimed to support financial and commercial linkages between the two countries and advance the leaders' shared goal of expanding bilateral trade to CAD 70 billion, or around Rs 4.65 lakh crore, by 2030. India also expressed its readiness to initiate negotiations on a Bilateral Investment Treaty at the earliest, the joint statement said. The ministers welcomed the growing investment relationship between the two countries and recognised the role of long-term institutional capital in strengthening bilateral economic ties. They noted the substantial presence of Canadian pension funds and other institutional investors in India and discussed ways to facilitate greater engagement between Indian and Canadian financial institutions and institutional investors.

Ola Electric launches S1Z with made-in-India Bharat Cell LFP technology

New Delhi: Ola Electric on Friday announced the launch of the all-new S1Z, the first scooter range in India to bring the company's indigenously developed Bharat Cell LFP technology to the mass market. The S1Z brings Ola's indigenous 46-series LFP cell platform technology, developed at its Battery Innovation Centre and manufactured at the Ola Gigafactory, to its most accessible scooter range, targeting the country's largest EV-buying segment, the company said in a statement. The S1Z has been designed around the belief that customers in the value segment should never have to compromise on technology, safety or performance, it added. With the introduction of indigenous LFP chemistry, Ola is redefining expectations of what an accessible electric scooter can offer while advancing its vision of building India's EV ecosystem from the cell upwards, the com-

pany said. Available in 3.1 kWh and 5.1 kWh variants at introductory prices of Rs 79,999 and Rs 99,999 (ex-showroom), respectively, the S1Z demonstrates how Ola's vertically integrated EV ecosystem is translating into tangible customer value. The 3.1 kWh and 5.1 kWh variants can deliver a range of up to 179 km and 301 km, respectively, under the Indian Driving Cycle (IDC), the statement said. By developing and manufacturing its Bharat Cell LFP technology in-house, Ola Electric has been able to significantly lower battery costs, the single-largest cost component of an electric vehicle, making next-generation battery technology accessible at mass-market price points, it added. The S1Z is the first proof of this strategy, bringing safer and longer-lasting LFP chemistry to millions of Indian riders without compromising on affordability, Ola Electric said. "The true



measure of innovation of our indigenous Bharat Cell LFP technology is how quickly it reaches everyday Indians. The S1Z delivers on that promise. It is the first scooter range to bring our made-in-India LFP technology to the heart of the market, where millions of customers make their mobility decisions," Ola Electric Chairman and Managing Director Bhavish Aggarwal said.

He further said, "We believe affordability shouldn't mean settling for less. As we continue building India's EV

ecosystem from cell to vehicle, products like the S1Z will play a critical role in our mission of bringing EVs to every Indian household." The S1Z stands for getting "more" or "Zyada" — more safety, more range, more technology and more value — starting with what is inside the scooter, Ola Electric said. The S1Z will be offered in four colours — White, Anthracite, Sky Splash Blue and Matcha Green — and will ride on 12-inch wheels across all variants. Deliveries of the 3.1 kWh variant are scheduled to begin in December 2026, while deliveries of the 5.1 kWh variant are set to commence in March 2027, it added. Powered by MoveOS 5, the S1Z brings Ola's latest software intelligence to the mass-market segment. The scooter comes equipped with features including cruise control, advanced regenerative braking, reverse mode, GPS, over-the-air (OTA) software updates.

Seven missing Andhra fisher- men return home after 25 days

Amaravati: Seven fishermen from Andhra Pradesh, who went missing at sea early this month, safely returned home on Friday, officials said. The fishermen from Dr BR Ambedkar Konaseema district, who had ventured into the sea for fishing on August 3 and subsequently went missing, reached Kakinada. The fishermen, who were found safe near Shankarpur fishing harbour off the West Bengal coast on Wednesday, had a happy reunion with their families after 25 days. Officials brought the fishermen back from West Bengal; MLA V. Kondababu, MLC Rajashekhar and district officials received the fishermen. The fishermen set sail on a mechanised boat from Odalrevu fish landing point on August 3 but lost contact with their families four days later after they went deep-sea fishing off the

Andhra coast in search of tuna. The fishermen were scheduled to return on August 12, and as they did not come back, families became anxious and approached the authorities. A massive search operation was launched in the Bay of Bengal for the missing fishermen. On Tuesday, the search operation was intensified with the deployment of 15 Coast Guard vessels and four helicopters. An extensive search operation was conducted in co-ordination with the Indian Coast Guard (ICG), the Navy, and other relevant departments, with support from the Central government. On Wednesday afternoon, local fishermen near the Shankarpur fishing harbour off the West Bengal coast found the boat with the missing fishermen on board. They gave a cellphone to the missing



fishermen, who spoke to their family members in Andhra Pradesh, confirming that they were safe. The fishermen said that they were stranded at sea after the boat engine developed a technical snag. The fishermen on board the missing boat were identified as Kopanathi

Ramakrishna, Kollati Yesudasu, Palepu Santa Rao, Kollati Srinubabu, Karri Rambabu, Sangani Tatarao and Kataadi Satish Kumar. The fishermen said they survived without food for more than three days in the sea before reaching the West Bengal coast.

Former MLA Shankar Yadav entrusted with TDP affairs in Thamballapalle

Tirupati: With the local body elections approaching, the TDP leadership has entrusted former MLA G Shankar Yadav with the responsibility of steering the party in Thamballapalle. His appointment as the constituency incharge brings an end to the uncertainty over the post, which had remained vacant since the suspension of former in-charge Dasaripalle Jayachandra Reddy. TDP president Palla Srinivasa Rao issued the appointment orders following directions from Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu. The decision is seen as part of the party's efforts to strengthen its organisation at the grassroots level and address the changing social and political equations in the constituency. The incharge post had attracted considerable competition after Jayachandra Reddy was suspended from the party in connection with the Mulakalacheruvu spurious liquor case. His wife Kalpana Reddy and Surendra Yadav of Angallu were among those who sought the responsibility. The party leadership held meetings at Horsley Hills and later in Tirupati to gather the views of local leaders and cadres on the appointment. Also Read Jagan doubts move to hold local polls with SIR, BC quota litigation Advertisement However, differences between the groups reportedly led to arguments and prevented a consensus. Meetings planned in Vijayawada were also postponed on more than one occasion. The prolonged process eventually ended with the leadership opting for Shankar Yadav. His seniority, association with grassroots party workers and the strength of the Backward Classes (BC) community in the constituency are understood to have influenced the decision. Shankar Yadav, a native of T Sadum village in PTM mandal, entered electoral politics in 2009 by contesting the Assembly election on a Congress ticket, but was defeated. He later joined the TDP and won the 2014 Assembly election. He was defeated in 2019. In the 2024 election, the TDP gave its ticket to Jayachandra Reddy, who had joined the party about six months before the polls. He contested against YSR Congress Party candidate Peddireddy Dwarakanath Reddy but lost. Jayachandra Reddy was subsequently named as an accused in the Mulakalacheruvu spurious liquor case, along with his brother-in-law M Giridhar Reddy. The TDP high command suspended him



from the party following the developments in October 2025. The party did not appoint a replacement immediately, leaving the constituency without a formal in-charge. His suspension also brought differences between the Shankar Yadav and Jayachandra Reddy groups into the open. The issue of appointing a new incharge subsequently became a matter of discussion within the party, with supporters of different contenders putting forward their claims. The party leadership has now asked Shankar Yadav to focus on bringing the different groups together and strengthening coordination within the organisation. During his recent meeting with Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu in Amaravati, he was reportedly advised to set aside differences and work with leaders and workers from all sections. The leadership also stressed the need to avoid the coordination gaps and factional disputes that had affected the party in the past. Shankar Yadav has been directed to strengthen the party machinery from the village level and prepare the cadre for the forthcoming local body elections.

Govt steps up vigil over Nepal floods; opens 24/7 helpline



Kurnool: The Andhra Pradesh government has stepped up continuous monitoring of the severe flood situation in Nepal to trace and evacuate stranded pilgrims and tourists from the state, according to an official release issued by the Kurnool Collector's Office on Thursday. Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu directed officials to utilize the Real-Time Governance (RTG) system for real-time tracking of affected AP residents and ensure their swift evacuation to safe locations. The State administration is actively coordinating with the Ministry of External Affairs and Nepalese authorities. A 24-hour control room has been activated at AP Bhavan in New Delhi to streamline relief measures. Preliminary reports indicate that an ice-rock avalanche in the Lhende River triggered flash floods, leaving areas like Syapru Besi and Timure severely hit. Authorities have re-

covered at least 95 bodies from the Trishuli River, while over 400 tourists—including approximately 130 Indian nationals—remain unaccounted for. The Collector's Office advised stranded individuals to move to higher ground, avoid floodwaters, and keep mobile devices charged. Families searching for missing relatives can share passport details and last-known locations with embassy officials. Emergency assistance is available through the AP Bhavan control room at 011-23384016 and 011-23387089, or via WhatsApp at 9059824101. Indian citizens requiring emergency support in Nepal can contact the 24-hour Indian Embassy helpline at +977-9851316807. Local emergency contacts include Nepal Police at 100 and Tourism Police at 1144. State authorities assured families that all steps are being taken to guarantee the safety of trapped travelers.

SP holds meet with Swarna Ward women police

Bapatla District SP B Umamaheshwar held a special meeting with Swarna Grama and Swarna Ward women police personnel set to be merged into the police department at the Bapatla District Police headquarters conference hall on Thursday. He gave them guidance on the duties they will perform in the department and the services they must provide to the public. Speaking at the meeting, the SP said women staff is performing their duties effectively in all departments. He observed that women in the police department are also playing a key role in Sakthi Teams, station reception, assistant writer, and computer operator positions. The SP said police duties differ from the duties they performed in



Swarna Grama and Swarna Ward. He said the Additional SP will conduct special training. He noted that all the incoming women police are highly educated.

He urged them to acquire the latest technology skills and to pay special attention to controlling crimes against women and children.