



## Talks with TGSRTC JAC successful

# Govt agrees to key demands



Hyderabad: The talks between the TGSRTC JAC and the State government were successful after the government agreed to 10 percent PRC implementation, merger of RTC with the government and conduct of elections for unions. The talks, which commenced on Friday morning, continued till late in the night. Notably, the TGSRTC JAC had launched an indefinite strike on April 22 in support of

their 32 demands. Accordingly, the State government commenced talks with the representatives of TGSRTC JAC at the Secretariat. Initially, a team of senior IAS officers held a meeting with the employees in the morning. This was followed by another meeting with Ministers led by Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka. Transport Minister Ponnam Prabhakar, Industries Minister D Sridhar Babu,

Labour Minister G Vivek Venkat Swamy and SC and ST Welfare Minister Adluri Laxman participated in the talks. Since there was a budget session, delimitation of constituencies, the Women's Reservation Bill and elections in other States, the cabinet Ministers were busy, the Deputy Chief Minister said. "At this juncture, due to the TGSRTC JAC's sudden decision, an RTC employee lost his life. This is an unfortunate and irreparable loss to his family," Bhatti Vikramarka said. Of the 32 demands being pressed by the employees, 29 demands were agreed to by the government. The talks continued till late on Friday night on three key demands, including merger of RTC, PRC implementation and union elections, sources said.



## Registration Cost May Increase by May 1 Week

Hyderabad: The state government has decided to revise the market value of land, residential and commercial buildings — the official government value used for property registrations — with the enhanced rates, which are likely to come into force from the first week of May. The decision was taken at a meeting of the Cabinet sub-committee on revenue mobilisation held at the Secretariat on Friday. This marks the first revision of land market values since the Congress government assumed office in December 2023, while the previous revision was carried out during the BRS regime in 2021. While the quantum of the hike is yet to be officially announced, it is learnt that the government has decided to slightly increase the market value of apartments while marginally reducing the value of commercial buildings. Official sources indicated that the market value of agricultural land will be increased by two to three times, depending on location. In many cases, land currently valued at Rs 6 lakh per acre could rise to between Rs 12 lakh and Rs 18 lakh.



## Centre to ramp up drug-free India drive with NMBA App 2.0

New Delhi: The Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is set to launch the upgraded Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan (NMBA) App 2.0 to strengthen monitoring and coordination under the National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR). The enhanced application has been designed as a centralised digital platform to facilitate real-time reporting, monitoring and coordination among stakeholders at the national, state, district and institutional levels, the ministry said in a statement on Friday. The Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan (NMBA), launched on August 15, 2020 in 272 vulnerable districts, has since been expanded to cover all districts across the country, with the aim of spreading awareness on substance abuse.

## HC upholds retrospective policy on compassionate appointment

The Telangana High Court division bench of Chief Justice Aparesh Kumar Singh and Justice Ghouse Meera Mohiuddin on Friday allowed a writ filed by Canara Bank against a lower court's judgment concerning a compassionate appointment claim. The litigation arose following the death of a senior manager at the appellant bank on April 15, 2017, and a subsequent application for appointment on compassionate grounds submitted by his daughter on July 12, 2017. While a circular-dated April 8, 2015--was in effect at the time of the employee's death, the bank introduced a new scheme on January 31, 2018, which was applied retrospectively from August 5, 2014.



## Uttam orders mission mode for paddy procurement

Minister for Irrigation and Civil Supplies N Uttam Kumar Reddy has directed officials to accelerate Minimum Support Price (MSP) operations and streamline logistics to ensure hassle-free procurement of paddy from farmers across the state. Addressing a high-level review meeting on paddy procurement for the Rabi marketing season at his Secretariat chambers on

Friday, the minister emphasised the need to shift into "mission mode" to avoid delays and ensure farmer-friendly operations during the peak arrival period. He said paddy arrivals have begun picking up in 20 districts, while procurement is yet to commence in 13 districts where transplantation was delayed. Officials were asked to gear up in advance to handle the expected surge in arrivals.

## Telangana govt to undertake drug awareness programs from April 27

Hyderabad: Under the 99-day special Praja Palana-Pragathi Pranalika (people's governance progress plan) program, the Telangana government will be undertaking a slew of initiatives aimed at creating awareness about social issues and ensuring the effective implementation of welfare programs. Till now, the programs focusing on sanitation, file clearance, health and road safety have been conducted. Activities centred on welfare will be taken up till April 26, following which the programs focusing on child safety and anti-drugs will be held across the state between April 27 and May 2. The child safety and anti-drugs program will focus on raising awareness among students, youth and parents regarding government measures to curb drug use. Agriculture and infrastructure initiatives focusing on farmer welfare, agricultural development, revenue, electricity and irrigation will be undertaken between May 4 and May 10. Education-based programs from May 11 to May 16 will highlight the importance of standard education and government schemes to empower students and parents.

## Maoism a closed chapter: DGP



Rajanna-Sircilla: Emphasising a paradigm shift in policing, Director General of Police (DGP) Shivar Reddy on Friday said the State is shifting towards a "citizen-centric policing" model, placing people at the core of

law enforcement. The DGP was speaking after laying the foundation stone for a new police station at Rudrangi mandal headquarters, in the presence of Government Whip Adi Srinivas, District Collector Garima Agrawal and

Superintendent of Police Mahesh B. Geetha. Addressing the gathering, Shivadhar Reddy recalled that the region was once a stronghold of Maoist activity, where policing largely revolved around security and counter-insurgency.

## City gears up for voter roll update under SIR drive

Hyderabad: Extensive measures are being undertaken to update the electoral rolls as part of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) programme. In line with the directions of Commissioner and District Election Officer R.V. Karnan, help desks are being established across all stakeholder locations to ensure smooth implementation. On the occasion, Additional Commissioner (Elections) K. Chandrakala and CVO Abdul Vakeel held meetings with representatives of Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) and Colony Associations across all Assembly constituencies in Hyderabad district. During the meetings, participants were briefed on the voter mapping exercise for the 2002-2025 period. Around 200 attendees took part and assured officials that the mapping process would be completed with the support of Booth Level Officers (BLOs). A separate meeting was also conducted with the GHMC Employees' Association, urging members to actively participate in the voter mapping exercise, along with their family members. Additional Commissioner (administration) Satyanarayana attended the meeting.



## Big blow to AAP as 7 RS MPs quit party to merge with BJP

New Delhi: The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) suffered a jolt on Friday as seven of its Rajya Sabha MPs, including Raghav Chadha, Ashok Mittal and Sandeep Pathak, quit the party, with Chadha saying all of them had merged with the BJP, asserting that the Arvind Kejriwal-led party had strayed from its principles, values and core morals. Harbhajan Singh, Rajendra Gupta, Vikram Sahni and Swati Maliwal were the other four parliamentarians in the group of seven.

Monday, April 27, 2026

## Can't We Build a Malaria-free India...!

(On the occasion of "World Malaria Day" on 25 April)

The bite of a female *Anopheles* mosquito causes a parasitic microorganism called *Plasmodium* to enter into the human blood and cause malaria. Neglecting treatment can be fatal. Malaria is one of the deadly diseases that has shaken the world. Even today, malaria continues to plague the poor and vulnerable in developing countries, even taking their lives. According to studies, 229 million new malaria cases are reported worldwide every year. Today, about 45 countries like Japan, UAE, and Sri Lanka proudly appear on the list of malaria-free countries recognised by the UN. It is sad that even in today's digital age, 3.3 billion people in more than a hundred countries are on the verge of malaria. It is estimated that 93 percent of malaria cases and 94 percent of malaria deaths are recorded in African countries. "World Malaria Day 2026 Theme: Under the leadership of the United Nations, it has become a tradition to observe "World Malaria Day" on 25 April every year since 2007. The theme of 2026 World Malaria Day is "Drive to End Malaria; Now We Can, Now We Must" and awareness is being created. Since 2000, with revolutionary positive changes in malaria diagnosis, better treatment, precautions to be taken, and other aspects such as disease eradication, it has become easier to protect people from malaria. In the last two decades, 7 million malaria cases have been saved and one billion people have been successfully prevented from contracting the disease. The efforts to declare the countries of the world as "Zero Malaria" countries are ongoing. "Malaria control precautions, symptoms of the disease: With the aim of eradicating malaria, countries around the world are gradually taking steps in the right direction, controlling malaria, and preventing deaths in a planned and scientific manner. It should be noted that malaria control will only be beneficial if civil society as well as governments join hands. We are experiencing that malaria control is possible with measures such as mosquito eradication, environmental cleanliness, disease diagnosis, proper treatment, allocation of funds, and awareness among the common people. Symptoms of malaria include fever, chills, sweating, headache, fatigue, muscle and joint pain, vomiting, anemia, cough, and stomach pain. In the digital and AI-ML era, it is unfortunate that the modern human being, who is rapidly advancing, is caught in the clutches of malaria caused by mosquito bites. It is our minimum duty to avoid mosquito bites, keep the surroundings clean, and seek medical treatment immediately if infected. Let us know that only if citizens, medical staff, and government actions are taken in parallel in this regard, India will join the list of malaria-free countries.

Dr Burra Madhusudhan Reddy

## Telangana police issues notice to X seeking info on news handle TeluguScribe

Hyderabad: The Telangana Police's Intelligence Wing has requested the X Corp (formerly known as Twitter) to furnish information regarding popular social media news handle @TeluguScribe, including information on its account registration, usage logs and activity details. TeluguScribe describes itself as the most popular social media news platform covering Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. A notice was issued to X Corp's Safety-Legal Policy wing in Bastrop, Texas, under Section 94 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) and Section 43 (F) of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act, 2008, on April 18. In the notice, R Bhaaskaran, Deputy Director General of Police, CI Cell, Intelligence Department, informed X that Telugu Scribe has been frequently making tweets containing highly objectionable and filthy language, along with morphed photos and videos. "This behaviour not only undermines the dignity of a public figure but also has the potential to incite hatred and violence.

It is imperative that you intervene to address this matter and ensure that such abusive behaviour is not tolerated on your platform," the notice read. The police stated that it was essential to identify the suspect behind "these unlawful activities" to prevent further harm and ensure that proper legal action can be taken. Meanwhile, the social media news platform accused the Telangana Police of "blatant abuse of power" after the state police sought information about its handle under the stringent UAPA, a law, it said, that "primarily aimed at countering terrorism and threats to national sovereignty." In a strongly worded statement, TeluguScribe dismissed the police notice as a "sinister attempt" to silence dissent, saying none of the allegations levelled by the police department are true. The platform asserted that all its content is in the public domain and completely legal. "We are not terrorists, Revanth Reddy Garu!" the platform said, addressing Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy directly.

# Singareni signs pact with SBI for Rs 10 lakh life cover to employees

Hyderabad: The Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) has agreed with the State Bank of India (SBI) to provide Rs 10 lakh insurance coverage to employees in case of natural death under a group term life insurance scheme. The agreement was signed on Thursday, April 23, at Singareni Bhavan in Hyderabad as part of the company's employee welfare initiatives. The scheme will benefit around 40,000 employees who hold salary accounts with SBI. Under the new arrangement, employees will now be eligible for Rs 10 lakh insurance payout even in cases of natural death, expanding the existing benefits that earlier covered only accidental deaths. SBI has already been implementing an accident insurance scheme for Singareni employees since 2021-22, which was later enhanced to Rs 1 crore. Officials said the latest initiative was introduced following directions from SCCL Chairman and Managing Director N. Balam, with



special efforts from Director (Personnel & Finance) Gautam Potru. Apart from the life cover, SBI is also offering a health insurance scheme for employees' families at a premium of Rs 8,906, covering up to Rs 50 lakh for a family of four. Additional benefits include Rs 1 crore insurance for accidental death and compensation for partial or permanent disability as per norms. Retired employees will also be covered under an accident insurance scheme of Rs 30 lakh up to the age of 70. Further, financial support will be extended to the families of deceased employees.

Children aged between 18 and 25 pursuing education will receive Rs 8 lakh (for boys) and Rs 10 lakh (for girls), while marriage assistance of up to Rs 10 lakh will be provided for eligible dependents. SBI officials said the bank has been strengthening its presence in remote mining areas by setting up branches and ATMs for the convenience of workers. SCCL said the initiative aims to provide financial security to employees' families in case of unforeseen events, while continuing to prioritise worker welfare through expanded insurance coverage.



## Nizamabad tops in paddy procurement, Nalgonda, Suryapet follow

Paddy procurement for the Rabi 2025-26 season is progressing briskly across Telangana, with authorities reporting steady operations and timely support to farmers. As of April 22, a total of 4,543 Paddy Procurement Centres (PPCs) have been opened across the state. Officials confirmed that 4.26 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) of paddy have been procured so far, benefiting 47,623 farmers. According to the Civil Supplies Department, the government has released Rs.102.42 crore towards payments, ensuring liquidity for cultivators during the ongoing season. Among districts, Nizamabad has emerged as the top performer, recording procurement of 2,04,010 metric tonnes. Nalgonda stands second with 1,15,652 metric tonnes, while Suryapet has secured the third position with 51,207 metric tonnes. Officials from the Consumer Affairs, Food and Civil Supplies Department stated that procurement operations are being conducted smoothly, with necessary infrastructure and support systems in place to facilitate farmers. Farmers requiring assistance or information regarding procurement can contact the department's helpline at 1967.

## RTC driver's death: Bandh observed in Narsampet, tension at drivers' native place



Warangal: The RTC JAC has called for Narsampet bandh on Friday following the death of a driver, Kola Shanker Goud after his self-immolation bid at Narsampet RTC bus stand on Thursday. During the mid-night hours of Thursday his body was taken to his native village Muthojipet in Narsampet mandal in the district from Hyderabad, where died undergoing treatment. Heavy police deployment was made at Muthojipet and Narsampet to prevent any untoward incidents. Tension gripped Muthojipet as a large number of striking RTC workers reached Muthojipet located

four kilometres from Narsampet. They staged a dharna on the main road demanding to allow them to take the drivers' body to Narsampet to pay tributes to at the depot where he worked. But the police denied permission to do so. Former Narsampet MLA Peddi Sudarshan Reddy also spoke with police officials, requesting that Shanker Goud's mortal remains be placed at the RTC depot to allow RTC workers the opportunity to pay their tributes. The ex-MLA demanded the State government to offer an ex-gratia Rs 1 crore to the family of Shanker Goud and a government job to any one of his family.

# Telangana Cabinet Decides To Clear Pending Bills of Staff, Retired Staff in 100-Days

Hyderabad: The Cabinet on Thursday decided to clear pending bills of serving employees and retirement benefits of retired staff within 100 days, with a detailed action plan to be finalised at the next Cabinet meeting scheduled for May 4. The Cabinet also proposed to contribute 50 per cent of their salaries towards clearing the dues. Briefing mediapersons at the Secretariat, Information and Public Relations Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy said the Cabinet expressed serious concern over the accumulation of thousands of crores of pending bills during the previous BRS government's 10-year tenure. He noted that at the time of Telangana's formation in 2014, there were no such dues, but delays in releasing retirement benefits, coupled with an increase in the retirement age from 58 to 61 years by the BRS regime, had caused hardships to retired employees, pensioners and their families. The Cabinet decided to take immediate steps



to ensure that retired employees are not forced to run around government offices and the Secretariat for their dues. It was noted that pending bills amount to about Rs 6,200 crore for regular employees and around Rs 8,000 crore for retired staff. While acknowledging the state's financial constraints, the Cabinet resolved to explore all alternative avenues to mobilise resources and arrange the required funds at the earliest. Ministers collectively came forward, offering to contribute 50 per cent of their own salaries as well as those of public representatives, if necessary, to facilitate immediate payments to retired employees. The Cabinet directed the resource mobilisation sub-committee to hold discussions with employee unions, teachers' associations, retired employees' bodies and other stakeholders to resolve the issue at the earliest. It reiterated its commitment to put in place necessary arrangements to clear dues of retired employees within the

100-day timeframe. The Cabinet also approved the appointment of governing bodies on a nomination basis for primary agricultural cooperative societies (PACS) whose tenure has expired. In another key decision, the Cabinet approved completion of land acquisition for the Chinna Kaleshwaram Project, a long-pending demand of people in the Manthani Assembly constituency. The project is expected to benefit nearly 45,000 acres and residents of 63 villages across Mahadevpur, Kataram, Malhar Rao and Mahamutharam mandals. The project had been delayed due to land acquisition issues. Of the total 2,427 acres required, 1,020 acres have already been acquired. The Cabinet approved proposals amounting to Rs 166.67 crore for acquiring the remaining land. Further, the Cabinet gave its nod for setting up an integrated aqua park in the revenue limits of Hajipur in Mancherial district, near the Sripada Yellampalli Project.



# Hyderabad Voice

Monday, April 27, 2026

## Metro, MMTS Fail To Gain on RTC Union Strike

Hyderabad: Despite buses going off roads due to the TGSRTC staff strike, Hyderabad Metro and MMTS have not witnessed a significant increase in ridership. App-based transport services, including bike taxis, cabs and autorickshaws, imposed surge pricing during the strike period. The MMTS suburban network in Secunderabad and Hyderabad divisions reported an additional 6,365 passengers on April 22, taking total ridership to 42,470, a rise of 10.1 per cent. Earnings stood at ₹2.55 lakh, compared to ₹2.2 lakh earlier.

## TGIC e-auction draws Rs 51.25 cr bid at Osman Nagar

Hyderabad: The TGIC e-auction at Osman Nagar evoked strong response from bidders. Plot No 1, admeasuring 10.09 acres, achieved Rs 51.25 crore per acre, while Plot No 6, admeasuring 5.72 acres also bid for Rs 44 crore per acre. The bids were 30 percent higher than the reserve price of Rs 39 crore per acre set for each plot by TGIC. The auction achieved an average realisation of Rs 48.6 crore per acre, officials said. The auction witnessed aggressive competition driven by Osman Nagar's strategic location near the Outer Ring Road (ORR), Neopolis, Financial District, and key IT hubs. The multi-use zoning of the land parcels further enhanced their appeal, enabling a diverse mix of residential.

## Revanth Reddy Grieves Shankar Goud's Death, Assures Support to Family



Hyderabad: Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy expressed shock over the death by suicide of RTC bus driver K Shankar Goud. He assured that the government would stand by Shankar Goud's family and extend all possible support. The Chief Minister prayed for peace to the departed soul and strength and courage to the bereaved family members. He expressed deep sorrow, stating that a decision taken in a moment of distress had plunged the family into grief. He reiterated that the government is holding discussions with RTC employees and is sincerely working to resolve their issues.



## Sagara welfare, education take centre stage at Bhagiratha Jayanti

Hyderabad: The Backward Classes Welfare Department on Thursday, April 23, organised the Sri Sagara Bhagiratha Maharshi Jayanti Celebrations-2026, with ministers and community leaders participating in the event. Ministers Ponnam Prabhakar and Vakiti Srihari paid floral tributes to Maharshi Bhagiratha and inaugurated the programme by lighting the ceremonial lamp. Among those present were MP Eatala Rajender, BC Association leader Jajula Srinivas Goud, BC Welfare Department Secretary Balamayadevi, and BC Corporation Managing Director Mallayya Battu, along with members of the Sagara community. Addressing the gathering, Ponnam Prabhakar extended greetings to the community and called for a shift from demands to measurable progress. He said sustained "Bhagiratha efforts" were essential for achieving long-term success and development. The minister said the government is working towards implementing 42 per cent reservations for weaker sections, adding that a caste survey has already been conducted and key data on population and economic conditions has been made publicly available. He also stressed the importance of higher education, urging youth from the Sagara community to pursue advanced studies to achieve economic growth and social mobility. Prabhakar directed officials to convene a meeting to address issues concerning the community and assured continued political and administrative support. He added that elected representatives from the community, including sarpanchs and municipal chairpersons, would be backed in resolving local concerns.

## Mahila Agraha Yatra hits out at Cong, INDIA Bloc on women's quota



The BJP Mahila Agraha Yatra meeting accused the Congress, India alliance partners, Revanth Reddy, and BRS of stalling the women's reservation bill in the Lok Sabha. Leaders alleged that besides betraying seventy crore women, they also betrayed southern states. After a procession, the meeting at Indira Park on Thursday became a platform for sharp criticism. Radha Dhiraj declared the BJP as the only party committed to empowerment, praising

Narendra Modi for initiatives like Mudra Yojana. She urged women to mobilise against the Congress in Telangana. Padma Veerap aneni accused the Congress of betraying women by pushing implementation to 2029, calling for leaders to be questioned in every election. Kirthi Reddy added that reforms were blocked for sixty years, urging resistance against Congress influence. MLA Aleti Maheshwar Reddy reminded the gathering that the

bill was defeated seven times due to the Congress, BRS, and Samaj wadi Party, despite the Congress once holding a two-thirds majority. He assured that the Prime Minister would ensure its implementation. MP Eatala Rajender emphasised women's contributions across fields and recalled their courage during the pandemic. He noted that the bill, pending since 1996, was finally passed under the leadership of Modi despite decades of obstruction. RK Laxman criticised the Congress for procrastination and divisive politics, accusing it of using delimitation as an excuse. He stated that the Prime Minister and Amit Shah overcame opposition to secure the passage of the bill. He also condemned the stance of the Telangana Chief Minister, calling it unconstitutional. Speakers highlighted that women are the backbone of society and stressed the importance of welfare schemes. The BJP vowed to ensure thirty-three per cent reservation by 2029, marking a significant step towards economic and political parity for women across India.

## DCA Flags Irregularities in 75 Medical Shops Selling Weight-Loss Drugs

Hyderabad: The Drugs Control Administration Telangana (DCA) has identified violations in 75 medical shops during a statewide special enforcement drive targeting the sale of popular weight-loss drugs. The raids, conducted on Thursday, focused on medicines such as Mounjaro, Ozempic, Wegovy and Rybelsus, along with their generic equivalents and other anti-obesity formulations. Officials carried out inspections across multiple districts to check for the presence of spurious or counterfeit batches, and to verify compliance

with regulations governing the sale of such drugs, which are typically prescribed for diabetes and weight management. During the drive, officials found discrepancies in 75 medical shops, primarily related to violations of sale norms and regulatory guidelines. Following this, show-cause notices have been issued to the establishments, initiating departmental action against them. 17 Illegal Water Motors Seized in Early Morning Drive in Hyderabad The water board on Thursday seized 17 motors being used to illegally draw water.

## HYDRAA Protects Parkland in J.Hills and Govt Land in Dundigal

Hyderabad: HYDRAA said it had taken action to protect a 1,600 square-yard parkland in Jubilee Hills and 4.15 acres of government land parcel in Dommara Pochampally. HYDRAA said that the parkland was designated in a layout of 11,700 sq-yd land developed by Pradeep Kumar Lahoti and Subhash Kumar Lahoti. Some locals created fake documents claiming the parkland as theirs and encroached on it.

## BRS social media leader Krishank and others arrested in Hyderabad

Hyderabad: The Kukatpally police on Thursday night arrested Bharat Rashtra Samiti (BRS) social media convener Manne Krishank in connection with alleged circulation of objectionable and misleading content targeting State Panchayat Raj Minister Seethakka on social media. According to information available, Krishank was taken into custody from his residence in Marredpally following a complaint lodged by Congress social media coordinator Rajender. The complaint accused him of sharing content deemed defamatory and misleading on digital platforms. Apart from it, he alleged that Krishank along with his supporters had trespassed into his house in Kukatpally and abused and assaulted him. The issue is said to have escalated after a purported image of a



Telugu newspaper clipping began circulating online. The image carried allegations linking Krishank and his wife to a job scam. While Krishank denied any involvement and termed the clipping fabricated, the posts triggered a political and online row. Krishank, in turn, filed a counter complaint alleging that Rajender had made abusive and derogatory remarks against his family.



## TGSRTC driver, who set himself ablaze, dies; buses off roads for third day

Hyderabad: The Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) employee who set himself ablaze at the Narsampet depot in Warangal district after demands to resolve the agency staff's grievances fell on deaf ears, died on Thursday, April 23, after battling for his life. The driver, identified as 50-year-old Shankar Goud, attempted suicide by dousing himself in petrol and setting himself on fire. Surrounding RTC workers immediately rushed to his rescue and extinguished the flames engulfing the bus driver. However, Goud had sustained

nearly 85 per cent burn injuries. He was immediately shifted to MGM Hospital in Warangal, where his condition was declared critical. Doctors advised his transfer to DRDO Apollo Hospital at Kanchanbagh, but he succumbed to his injuries on the way, near Karmanghat, before reaching the hospital at around 1:30 am on Friday, April 24. An autopsy was conducted at the Osmania General Hospital, after which Goud's body was handed over to the family and shifted to Muthojipeta village in Nasampet mandal, the police said.

## High Court seeks clarity on urea supply, farmer access across state

HYDERABAD: The Telangana High Court has directed the state government to clarify whether farmers are receiving adequate urea supplies amid concerns over availability and access. A bench of Chief Justice Aparesh Kumar Singh and Justice GM Mohiuddin issued the direction while hearing a PIL filed by farmers from Nalgonda district. The Chief Justice asked the Government Pleader for Agriculture to furnish details within four weeks on availability, steps taken to publicise stock positions and whether farmers are able to access the government app for booking urea. The bench also raised concerns about supply disruptions in the backdrop of the ongoing war in East Asia. The government submitted that facilitation centres have been set up in every district to assist farmers in booking urea through the app, with additional help available from family members.

## Revanth, Uttam To Meet CBI Director in Delhi Seeking Probe Into Kaleshwaram Irregularities

Hyderabad: Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy and irrigation minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy will soon visit Delhi to personally meet the Director of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and request the initiation of a probe into alleged irregularities in the Kaleshwaram lift irrigation scheme (KLIS), as previously sought by the state government. The decision was taken during the Cabinet meeting held on Thursday. The Cabinet also decided to constitute a sub-committee of ministers on the Kaleshwaram issue. This panel will consult legal experts and recommend the future course of action to the government in light of the latest orders of the Telangana High Court on the report submitted by the Justice P.C. Ghose commission. Advocate-General A Sudarshan Reddy briefed the Cabinet about the details of High Court's verdict. Deliberating on the verdict, the Cabinet noted that the court had neither faulted the appointment of the judicial commission nor its findings. The court observed that the constitution of the commission was legal and constitutional. It raised objections only on technical grounds, stating that notices were not issued to certain individuals in the prescribed format. The court ruled that no action should be taken against those indi-



viduals solely based on the commission's report, and that the findings mentioned against them would not be enforceable. The Cabinet pointed out that the state government had already written seeking a CBI inquiry into the alleged irregularities, lapses and violations in the Kaleshwaram project. Even after nine months, the CBI probe has not commenced. Legal experts have informed the government that the High Court's judgment did not pose any obstacle to initiating a CBI investigation. In this context, the Cabinet decided to once again approach the CBI to expedite the inquiry. It was further decided that after examining the High Court's judgment, the government would consult legal experts in Delhi to determine whether to approach the Supreme Court against the orders. The final decision will be taken based on the advice and suggestions of legal experts. Briefing mediapersons at the Secretariat after the Cabinet meeting, irrigation

minister Uttam Kumar Reddy said that the High Court had not given a clean chit to anyone in its verdict on the Justice Ghose Commission report. He criticised leaders of the BRS for claiming victory and celebrating the judgment. Uttam Kumar Reddy said the petitioners had approached the High Court seeking to quash the GO constituting the Ghose commission. The court did not find fault with the formation of the judicial commission or its findings. He reiterated that the court had clearly stated that the commission's appointment was neither arbitrary, illegal nor ultra vires. The objections raised by the court were limited to certain determinations against individuals, as notices had not been served to them in the prescribed manner. While granting relief to the petitioners, the court directed that no action be taken against them solely based on the commission's report. Uttam Kumar Reddy maintained that the state government had written to the Centre seeking a CBI inquiry into the irregularities and failures in the Kaleshwaram project. "The High Court's verdict is not an obstacle to a CBI probe, and it has not given a clean chit to anyone," he asserted, adding that the government would take further steps after examining the full judgment.

## Out-of-state distance education degrees invalid for govt jobs: HC



Hyderabad: The Telangana High Court has ruled that degrees obtained through distance education study centres operating outside a university's home state are not valid qualifications for government jobs, dealing a blow to candidates who had enrolled with an Andhra Pradesh university through its centres located in Telangana. The court held that if a university is set up under the laws of one state, it cannot run classes or study centres in another state, and any degree obtained through such centres cannot be used to apply for government posts. A Division Bench of Chief Justice Apresh Kumar Singh and Justice GM Mohiuddin upheld the rejection of several candidates who had applied for the post of librarian under a 2022 Telangana Public Service Commission (TGPSC) notification, but had obtained their Masters in Library Science (MLiSc) through distance mode from Acharya Nagarjuna University, whose jurisdiction is limited to Guntur and Prakasam districts of Andhra Pradesh, via study centres located in Telangana. The court relied on a 2013 public notice issued by the University Grants Commission (UGC), which clearly states that a university set up under a state law can function only within that state's boundaries and cannot extend its operations beyond it. The candidates had cleared the selection process and were included in the provisional selection list in September 2024, but their degrees were rejected upon certificate verification. The TGPSC had turned them away in August 2024, finding that their degrees were obtained through study centres situated outside the university's permitted territory. The candidates had then approached a single judge of the High Court, arguing that similar degrees had been accepted in earlier recruitments in 2017 and that some employees had even received promotions on that basis.

## Harish Rao blames Congress govt for RTC driver's death



Hyderabad: BRS deputy floor leader T Harish Rao held Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy directly responsible for the death of RTC driver Shankar Goud who succumbed to injuries after attempting suicide during the ongoing strike. He said the Congress government's apathy and failure to fulfil promises, led to the tragic incident. Paying tributes to Shankar Goud, Harish Rao said the incident had deeply shaken the State

and called it a result of the government's neglect of workers' issues. "Revanth Reddy should bear full responsibility for this tragedy," he said. The BRS leader accused the Congress government of going back on its election promise to merge RTC employees into government service and resolve their demands. He questioned the delay in implementation of promises made to RTC staff and warned that continued inaction could lead to more such incidents. Harish Rao demanded that the government immediately address the grievances of RTC workers and restore confidence among them. He also urged the government to honour Shankar Goud's sacrifice by declaring the day as the "Appointed Day" for the RTC merger. Appealing to RTC employees, he asked them not to resort to extreme steps and instead continue their struggle through lawful means. He reiterated full support from the BRS for the strike.

## Two sub-inspectors suspended in Warangal over misconduct, corruption charges

WARANGAL: Warangal Commissioner of Police Sunpreeth Singh has suspended two sub-inspectors in separate cases of alleged misconduct and corruption. Elkathurthy SI Praveen Kumar, earlier attached to the Reserve (VR) office following corruption allegations, was suspended after disciplinary action was escalated post preliminary review. In another case, Narsampet SI Ravi was suspended after an internal inquiry substantiated allegations against him. Orders formalising the suspensions were issued on Thursday.

## RTC strike exposes 'broken promises', says Eatala



BJP National Executive Member and MP Eatala Rajender has strongly criticised the Congress government over the ongoing RTC strike, stating that the agitation exposes the betrayal of promises made to workers. Speaking to the media on Thursday, he recalled that RTC employees have fought many courageous battles and played a pivotal role in the Telangana movement, a contribution that society will never forget. Rajender pointed out that despite a Government Order issued in 2023 recognising RTC workers as government employees, the current administration has failed to implement it. He said the strike, led by Venkanna and supported by employees at all levels, has revealed the fraud of the government. People believed RTC workers were recognised as government employees, but this strike shows the truth, he remarked. He warned that RTC, which once had 60,000 employees serving crores of people and lakhs of students, has now shrunk to 38,000 staff. If this trend continues, he cautioned, all employees could be terminated

and the corporation privatised within five years. Rajender criticised the government for tying electric bus operations to private companies despite central subsidies, arguing that RTC should run them directly to avoid debt and exploitation. Highlighting the sacrifices of workers, including those who gave their lives during past struggles, Rajender accused the Congress of diluting hard-won rights. - He demanded the immediate release of pending PRC dues and pensions, and warned that neglecting RTC would harm both employees and the public. RTC workers may be only 40,000, but they are deeply connected to crores of people. The government must respond, hold talks, and resolve this crisis without delay, Rajender declared. He emphasised that the welfare of the transport workforce is intrinsically linked to the mobility of the common man and the educational access of the student community across the state.

## No gov's nod yet, Azhar may resign as minister from Telangana cabinet

HYDERABAD: Uncertainty continues over the continuation of Md Azharuddin as a minister in the Congress government led by Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy. The speculation mill is working overtime that the cricketer-turned-politician may have to resign as he is yet to become a member of the legislature within the stipulated time. According to sources, the six-month deadline for Azharuddin to get elected or nominated as an MLC will expire on April 30. Government circles, however, indicate that his nomination to the Legislative Council by the Governor may take more time. This could make it difficult to complete the process before the deadline. This has triggered discussions within the ruling Congress on the next course of action. Azharuddin may have to resign as a minister and be re-inducted into

the Cabinet within a couple of days. This would give him another lease of life for six months before which he could be accommodated in the Legislative Council. Another option is to wait until the Cabinet reshuffle, which may take place in May. Two Cabinet berths have been lying vacant for quite some time. Sources in the ruling party say at least two or three ministers are likely to be dropped and they may be given roles in the party at the national or state level. On the other hand, there is an interesting buzz that TPCC chief and MLC B Mahesh Kumar Goud may be accommodated in the Cabinet. The possibility appears strong, as Nizamabad district currently has no representation in the Cabinet. He also belongs to the BC community, a key constituency the Congress has been focusing on. Meanwhile, ST (Lambada) leaders, including Balu



Naik and Ramchandra Naik, are also expecting a berth. At the same time, MLA Komatireddy Rajgopal Reddy is making efforts for his inclusion in the Cabinet. He says it is payback time for the Congress, as he was promised a ministerial berth when he joined the party from the BJP ahead of the 2023 Assembly elections.

## Cyberabad traffic police book 383 cases in special drive

Hyderabad: To check violations related to vehicles plying without number plates and with irregular or defective number plates, a special drive was conducted in the limits of all police stations of Traffic-II, Cyberabad. The drive was carried out at Patancheru bus stand, BHEL Road, Miyapur X Road, Allwyn X Road, JNTU Junction, Khaithlapur Road, Thulasivanam Road, under Balanagar Metro station, IDL Lake Road, Narsapur X Road, Erragadalu and Jagadgirigutta Road, apart from Ambedkar statue, Suchitra and Quthbullapur Road. During the drive, enforcement action was taken against violators to ensure compliance with Motor Vehicle regulations and to enhance road safety and security. A total of 383 cases were booked and a fine of Rs 80,600 was imposed. The Dy Commissioner of Police, Traffic-II, Cyberabad, advised vehicle drivers to strictly adhere to the prescribed norms regarding proper display of number plates as per Motor Vehicle Rules. Such enforcement drives will continue in the future, and strict action will be taken against violators.



## Media Coverage @ Polling Booth: EVMs Caught On Camera!

The kind of sensationalism and the desperation to break news is a key hallmark of the Indian media system. This was an humiliating display with the media coverage that was given for the Tamil Nadu assembly election yesterday. In a series of videos that are now going viral on social media, we get to see the kind of pathetic Media coverage that the Tamil Nadu elections had witnessed yesterday. The over enthusiastic media channels and live coverage, reporters carried the media equipment and cameras into the polling booths and captured live footage. The degree of media coverage was so severe that people could even see celebrities and common folk alike operating the EVM.

Media cameras captured the footage of common public and also celebrities casting their vote in the election booths. This happened even for superstar Rajinikanth, who was casting his vote in Chennai while the media cameras tried their best to capture which party he was voting for in the EVM. Generally, the election commission is very strict about usage of electronics and gadgets at the polling stations. But this was not the case yesterday, as Media cameras themselves, happened to be inside the polling stations. A person casting his vote must be a highly secretive affair and should be known only to him or her, and no one else. But thanks to the sensationalism that is nurtured by certain media channels, even the EVM operations became public yesterday.

## No Permission, No Protocol: Pujaris In Trouble Due To Jagan!

When a Pujari or a person of worship is under the central contract of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam Board, he is expected to follow certain principles and protocols. This includes prior permissions before attending private events at a personal capacity. However, this simple regulation was put to rest when YS Jagan arrived in Pulivendula this week. Incidentally, multiple Pujaris had gone from the famous Ontimitta Temple to bless Jagan at this his residence. The concerned pujaris Shraavan Kumar, Manoj Kumar, K Parthasarathy and others who had gone from the

Ontimitta temple didn't take prior permission from the TTD authorities. This is against the protocol that is to be followed by the Pujaris who are under the TTD wing. Subsequently, the TTD has called for reciprocal action against these individuals and had asked for their explanation in 2 days. YCP has been spreading the narrative that the ruling administration and the TTD authorities are making a meal of this issue by troubling Pujaris who blessed Jagan. But in reality, a very simple protocol and regulation was also not followed in the process, which has naturally invited reciprocal action from the board.

# 'Death knell for jungle raj': PM Modi claims TMC shaken by record phase 1 turnout

Asserting that the massive turnout in the first phase of polling has sounded the "death knell" for the Trinamool Congress (TMC) regime, Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared on Friday that the ruling party has "lost its nerve" in the face of an undeniable wave of change. Addressing a high-decibel election rally in Panihati, the Prime Minister stated that the public's overwhelming participation has already ensured an end to what he described as the TMC's "maha jungle raj," alleging the period as a time marked by "systemic corruption, misrule, and the influence of infiltrators." "The wave of change that had been visible in Bengal for a long time - yesterday's first phase of voting has put its seal on it. The support shown yesterday in favour of the BJP has sounded the conch shell of its victory," he said. He issued a stern warning to those allegedly engaging in political intimidation, stating that after the results are declared on May 4, TMC "goons" will find no place to hide and no one to protect them from the law. "The first phase of polling had marked the end of the TMC's 'maha jungle raj'," he claimed. The Prime Minister placed women's dignity and security at the center of his address, labeling the TMC an "anti-women party" while pitching the BJP's model of "women-led development." He highlighted that the BJP has empowered victims of state atrocities by fielding them as candidates. Re-



fering to women candidates fielded by the BJP, Modi said the party had given representation to those who had suffered injustice. "This mother helped her daughter become a doctor. But that daughter was taken away from her by the TMC. We have made that mother a candidate," Modi said while referring to the party's Panihati candidate, the mother of the RG Kar rape-murder victim. "The BJP has also given an opportunity to the victim of Sandeshkhali to lead. When the women of Bengal ask for justice, the TMC tells them not to step out of their homes," Modi alleged.



## No 'WA varsity' inputs on Sabarimala: SC

NEW DELHI: On Day 8 of the Sabarimala reference hearings held on Thursday, the nine-judge Constitution bench of the Supreme Court underlined that constitutional principles must prevail over external public commentary and opinions expressed outside the legal framework. During the proceedings, advocate Neeraj Kishan Kaul, representing the head of the Dawoodi Bohra community, referred to a newspaper article written by Shashi Tharoor on the subject of judicial restraint. His submission led to a broader discussion among the bench about the reliability and appropriateness of the different sources of information cited in court. Justice B V Nagarathna observed that while the court respects the opinions of eminent authors and intellectuals, it cannot rely on unverifiable or informal sources, such as what she described as "WhatsApp University". She made it clear that although diverse viewpoints are welcome in public discourse, information derived from forwarded messages or informal channels cannot be treated as credible in judicial proceedings. She cautioned lawyers against presenting non-legal materials, including newspaper articles, as authoritative legal sources. The bench explicitly rejected reliance on such material, emphasizing the importance of maintaining judicial discipline and grounding arguments strictly within established legal principles. Kaul argued that the right of religious denominations to manage their own affairs under Article 26(b) should not be subordinated to Article 25.

## ED Raids On Sai Reddy: Twitter Bhajana Did Not Work?

Enforcement Directorate's Hyderabad unit conducted large-scale searches on all key aides of former Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy at 12 premises in Hyderabad and Tirupati, Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh in connection with the multi-crore Andhra Pradesh liquor scam. Searches were conducted at premises linked to former MP V. Vijayasai Reddy, former YSRC MLA Chevireddy Bhaskar Reddy, Kesireddy Raj Reddy, Chanakya, Krishnamohan Reddy, Dhananjaya Reddy, Avinash Gowd, Avinash Muppidi, Sajjala Sridhar Reddy and others. The searches are related to an already registered ECIR and this is the second round of searches in the case. ED officials found several property documents and transaction records during the searches. APCID appeared to



have slowed down a bit in this case in recent times and most of the accused have got bail. So, this sudden action of the ED came as a surprise. Raid on Vijayasai Reddy has come a surprise because the former MP was reportedly trying to be in the good books of the BJP. We have seen him doing complete BJP Bhajana on his X Account ever since he stepped down as the MP. Back then, when he resigned it was rumored that he will join the Safron Party and will get the seat for himself for the

leftover term. But then, Chandrababu Naidu reportedly prevailed over the BJP Top Leadership and blocked his entry. If we see his messages on X since then, we can clearly sense he is anti-TDP but is in all praise for Narendra Modi's leadership. According to sources, Vijayasai Reddy is identified in ED documents as having influence over supply orders, with allegations that distilleries were required to comply with conditions to receive business. He is also linked to initial funding arrangements for Adan Distilleries.

## West Bengal Records 92% Turnout in Phase 1, Tamil Nadu Sees Over 84% in Assembly Polls



Chennai: West Bengal registered a record voter turnout of nearly 92 per cent in the first phase of assembly polls on Thursday amid sporadic incidents of violence, while Tamil Nadu recorded unprecedented voting of over 84 per cent as the BJP pushed to unseat Mamata Banerjee in Bengal and expand in the South. In the first phase, 152 constituencies in West Bengal went to polls, while voting for the 234-member

Tamil Nadu assembly was held in one go. The elections are taking place against the backdrop of a massive political row over the SIR of the electoral rolls, a major flashpoint between the BJP and opposition parties, including the Trinamool Congress (TMC). In West Bengal, the BJP is eyeing to wrest power from Banerjee-led TMC, which seeks a fourth straight term in a state the saffron party has never gov-


erned, and in Tamil Nadu, key contenders are the ruling DMK and main opposition AIADMK, while actor-politician Vijay-led TVK and Tamil nationalist Seeman-led NTK are putting up a determined fight. Terming the massive voter turnout in Bengal "an overwhelming mandate for change," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that May 4, when votes will be counted, would mark the "expiry" of the "TMC's 15-year-old syndicate system and maha jungle raj" in West Bengal, while Banerjee asserted that polling held so far in the first phase indicates "the TMC is already in a position to win," and her party predicts a win in 125-134 seats out of 152 constituencies. The second phase for the remaining 142 of 294 seats in West Bengal will be held on April 29. The counting for all four states and one Union Territory-Kerala, Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry-will be on May 4. Over 90 per cent in the first phase of the West Bengal Assembly elections set the tone for a fiercely contested battle, even as allegations over electoral roll revisions, sporadic violence and duelling political narratives underscored a high-stakes opening round between the ruling TMC and the BJP.

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### VOICE OF WORDS

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## Education

# VOICE OF WORDS

Monday, April 27, 2026



## Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla Says Education Must Go Beyond Jobs; Calls Youth To Strengthen Democracy For Viksit Bharat 2047

New Delhi: Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Wednesday said education should not be limited to helping students secure employment, but must also shape responsible citizens who can contribute to society and the nation. Addressing students at annual day functions in Delhi, he urged the youth to play an active role in democracy and work towards the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. Speaking at Kirori Mal College, University of Delhi, Birla said the real purpose of education is to build character, promote inclusivity and develop a sense of social responsibility. He added that progress becomes meaningful only when opportunities reach every section of society. Birla said knowledge and professional skills are important, but they must be supported by honesty, discipline, perseverance and moral values. According to him, these qualities are necessary for long-term success in life. He also highlighted the role of teachers, describing them as the true builders of society. Teachers, he said, do more than share knowledge, they help shape aware and responsible citizens. During his address, Birla appreciated Kirori Mal College for supporting students with visual disabilities through modern technology and skill development initiatives. He said such efforts show a strong commitment to equal access to education. He added that principles like social justice and equality should remain central to the education system. Earlier, while speaking at Maharaja Agrasen College, Birla said India's youth are confident, ambitious and capable of leading the country into a new era. He noted that young Indians are already making progress in innovation, entrepreneurship, research and global leadership. He urged students to dream big, work hard and actively participate in governance and policymaking. Greater youth involvement, he said, would strengthen democratic institutions and create future-ready leadership. At Delhi Public School, Mathura Road, Birla said Viksit Bharat 2047 is not just a government programme, but a collective national mission to build a developed, inclusive and self-reliant India by the centenary year of Independence.



## Go Back to Classrooms and Take a Direct Role in Teaching: Telagana Governor Tells V-Cs

Hyderabad: Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla, the Chancellor of state universities, said Vice Chancellors must to step back into classrooms and take a more direct role in teaching. "Universities must go beyond being mere degree-awarding centres," the Governor said. The Governor cited Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan as an example of academic leadership rooted in the classroom. He called for stronger attention to skill development and research-led growth during a meeting with Vice Chancellors at Lok Bhavan. He pointed to Telangana's gross enrolment ratio of around 40 per cent, higher than the national average, was a sign of expanded access to higher education. Discussions moved to coordination with the government on funding, curriculum and national programmes such as Skill India, Start-up India and Digital India. The need for specialised research centres in agriculture,

horticulture and organic seeds also came up, alongside concerns over global competitiveness and talent migration. TGCHC Chairman Prof V Balakista Reddy spoke about recent initiatives, including multidisciplinary programmes, skill-based certifications and digital platforms for students. Vice Chancellors presented updates from their universities, and the Governor released a report on higher education reforms before the meeting concluded. Those present included Vice Chancellors from the Osmania, Kakatiya, Telangana, Mahatma Gandhi, Palamuru and Satavahana universities, along with heads of specialised institutions including JNTU, JNAFAU, Dr B.R. Ambedkar Open University, agricultural, horticultural, veterinary and health universities. Vice Chancellor (in-charge) of Veera Nari Chakali Ilamma Women's University and a representative from RGUKT Basar also attended the meeting.

SR Educational Academy student is JEE Main national topper

Students of SR Educational Academy have delivered an outstanding performance in the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) Main 2026, with several candidates securing top ranks at the national level, according to the institution. Pendum Sricharan emerged as the national topper by securing All India Rank (AIR) 1, while D Thrishal (AIR 42), N. Mythreyee (45), L. Divija Jyothirmal (142), M. Sridhar (162), and K. Pranay Kumar (178) were among other high achievers. Several more students secured ranks within the top 500, reflecting the institution's strong academic training. The academy also reported that over 3,560 of its students have qualified for JEE Advanced 2026, scheduled to be held in May. Congratulating the students, Chairman.

## Registration Deadline for Second Attempt Extended for PCM and PCB

Mumbai: The Higher and Technical Education Department has extended the registration deadline for the second attempt for PCM and PCB students to 23 April 2026. Announcing the decision, Higher and Technical Education Minister Shri Chandrakant Dada Patil said the extension has been granted after considering repeated requests received from students. The State Common Entrance Test Cell, Mumbai, is conducting the MHT CET PCM and PCB examination for Engineering, Pharmacy and Agriculture courses for the academic year 2026 to 2027. The registration portal will be reopened for one day on 23 April 2026 for candidates who wish to complete registration for the second attempt. "Several students had requested additional time to complete their registration. Considering their difficulties, this special extension has been granted. Students should use this opportunity responsibly and complete the process within the given time," said Shri Chandrakant Dada Patil. The extension has been given after several candidates reported incomplete applications due to non payment of fees. Candidates will be able to complete the registration and application process for the second attempt by paying an additional late fee of Rs 500 for all categories. Candidates already registered for both attempts are not required to register again. Candidates who have not yet generated an APAAR ID must create one through DigiLocker before completing the process. No edit facility will be avail-



able for candidates registering during this extension period. Students are therefore advised to check all details carefully before submitting the application. "This is the final opportunity for students who could not complete the process earlier. I appeal to all eligible students to avoid waiting till the last moment and complete registration without delay," said Shri Chandrakant Dada Patil. Students are advised to visit the official website [www.mahacet.org](http://www.mahacet.org) for updates, detailed schedules and examination instructions.

## AI-First, Beyond Computer Science: Every Engineer Starts with AI

If we talk about higher education in India, it is almost the same: the same curriculum, the same old style of teaching, and a standard approach to learning with no in-depth exposure from the very beginning. If we look at what is often tagged as a "new curriculum," it usually revolves around new coding tools while reframing the same old topics. But do we really need this in 2026, when what we truly need is to learn how to use technology to make our lives easier? Computer Hardware AI is not arriving it has already taken hold of the market. Today, we must train young minds to work with intelligent machines, where AI is not a subject but a necessity. It should become a habit to keep up with the corporate world. It shapes thought and mindset, much like mathematics once did. Yet, most institutions still treat AI like an elective subject. Such an approach actually harms a student's mindset. Observe how we already learned mathematics with code using smart editors. But when it comes to AI, we wait three years. These tools make our lives easier, they help write code, check errors, test logic, and guide problem-solving approaches. If we continue to delay AI learning until the third or fourth year, there will be a clear disconnect between real-world competition and classroom learning. We have the opportunity to change the narrative. Students should begin their AI education on their first day of college. The data from India makes this necessity crystal clear. The India edtech market was valued at USD 3.63 billion in 2025 and is projected to reach USD 33.31 billion by 2034. The IT training sector alone reached USD 4.40 billion in 2025. The government is also taking steps: MeitY's FutureSkills Prime targets 4.12 lakh learners annually. CBSE has partnered with Intel to integrate AI modules into classes 9-12, and NCERT has launched DIKSHA 2.0 with AI-enabled adaptive learning in 12 Indian languages. At the higher education level, AICTE has mandated AI and ML courses in engineering curricula, but implementation remains uneven across institutions. Despite these efforts, a massive talent gap persists. Reports indicate that enterprises are willing to pay up to 760 lakh per annum for senior roles in AI, GenAI, cloud, and data engineering, yet there is a 40% to 53% talent gap across these do-



mains. For every 10 open GenAI roles, only one qualified engineer is available. The gap is expected to widen even further by 2026, with cloud computing experiencing a 55-60% mismatch. The shortage of skilled talent is holding back the projected growth of the Indian AI market to \$28.8 billion. Machine Learning & Artificial Intelligence There is also a fear that no one is openly talking about. There is an extraordinary student in every engineering classroom today. Students read the headlines. Hiring trends are shifting. Entry-level hiring has dropped significantly, and organizations are restructuring around AI-driven models. Inside top companies, a quiet fear exists. Mid-level engineers worry that they are the last group to learn coding without AI. Junior hires fear that AI will handle all the difficult tasks, leaving them without the opportunity to work on real projects. Employers now value certifications and problem-solving skills far more than degrees. Only 5% consider a college degree a top hiring criterion. That number alone should make every engineering educator pause. Employers are no longer looking for a four-year degree in its current form. But fear alone is not the answer. AI does not replace engineers who can think it replaces those who only follow commands. Talk to students who have used AI even briefly. They quickly begin to identify its weak points, gaps in understanding, and flawed reasoning. The output may appear correct, but they must learn how to question it and improve it. This is the shift. The era is no longer

about writing code from scratch. Students will excel by using AI to obtain results faster and more effectively. The real problem lies with those who never learn to question AI output. A confident engineer starts questioning from day one. Many professionals have already received AI training. The real question is, will colleges fix their outdated systems in time, or will students graduate without the skills they actually need? If Indian engineering colleges truly want to prepare future engineers, minor changes will not work. A rebuilt approach is needed. Programming First, blend AI throughout the curriculum. Do not treat it as a separate subject; integrate it into programming, databases, and web development. Second, make building a daily habit. Learning is most effective when students create real-world projects early, not after semesters of theory. Even first-year students can now build prototypes using tools that did not exist two years ago. Third, teach critical evaluation. Students must learn how to challenge AI outputs. Knowing when not to trust AI is just as important as knowing how to use it. Fourth, mirror real-world workflows. Academic tasks should reflect actual job environments so that the transition from college to work feels natural. Finally, address fear directly in the classroom. Automation will handle routine work, but it will enhance creativity, evaluation, and thinking. That is what defines an AI-first engineer. Students who only memorize syntax will struggle. Those who learn to direct, debug, and build alongside AI will thrive. Machine Learning & Artificial Intelligence The bottom line is simple. It is no longer acceptable to treat AI as optional. You do not have to choose between computer science and AI anymore. Engineering without AI is like designing circuits without understanding voltage it misses the basic structure. Students need to start engaging with AI from the very first lecture. To become leaders in technology, they must begin early. Starting late will make it almost impossible to catch up. This shift is no longer a choice it is necessary. And for those worried about losing their jobs, the answer is clear. In 2026, the only way to stay relevant is to know how to build with AI not just work alongside it.



International News

**VOICE OF WORDS**

Monday, April 27, 2026

## US Democrats Slam Trump Over 'Hellholes' Remark on India, Other Countries



Washington: Democrat leaders slammed US President Donald Trump for referring to India and some other countries as "hellholes" and accused him of turning the presidency into a reality TV gig by amplifying "racist trash" on social media. "Americans are struggling, and he's busy amplifying racist trash on social media, treating the presidency like a reality TV gig. This is a serious moment. Our country deserves leadership that acts like it," the House Foreign Affairs Committee-Democrats said in a post on X. The remarks came after Trump on Thursday kicked off a row by reposting comments by American radio show host Michael Savage that contained derogatory references to India. Savage had made the comments in the context of a case in the US Supreme Court challenging birth-right citizenship. Addressing Vice President JD Vance, Congressman Ro Khanna, in a social media post, asked, "Any comment on the President insulting immigrants from 'China or India or some other hellhole on the planet'. Do you also think that India is a hellhole and Chinese or Indian immigrants denigrate America?" Congressman Ami Bera said that as the son of immigrants from India, he takes great pride in both his heritage and in the country that gave his family the opportunity to build a better life. "The comments shared by President Trump

are offensive, ignorant, and beneath the dignity of the office he holds. They reflect a fundamental misunderstanding of who we are as a nation. America has always been strengthened by generations of immigrants who come here, work hard, and contribute to our country. They do not weaken America - they strengthen it," he said. Trump Claims Bera said America was built by people from all over the world who believed in its promise and worked tirelessly to make it better for the next generation. "We are a nation of immigrants, and we are stronger because of it," he said. Bera said Trump was born into wealth and privilege and has never had to struggle the way so many immigrant families have. "He (Trump) does not understand the grit, sacrifice, and determination it takes to build a life from the ground up. He does not understand public service, and he does not understand the values that make America the greatest nation in the world," he said. Congressman Raja Krishnamoorti said Trump's decision to amplify a racist rant attacking India and immigrants is disgraceful and beneath the office he holds. "His rhetoric doesn't just insult millions of Indian Americans and one of our most important global partners-it undermines the values that have made America a nation of opportunity and innovation. We should be strengthening that partnership and honouring our diversity, not stoking division for political gain.

## 'One Nation, One Leader': Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian Emphasises Absolute Unity & Loyalty To Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, on April 23, shared a post on the social media platform X, strongly hitting out at US and Israeli leaders over divisions within Iran. "In Iran, there are no radicals or moderates; we are all 'Iranian' and 'revolutionary', and with the iron unity of the nation and government, with complete obedience to the Supreme Leader of the Revolution, we will make the aggressor criminal regret his actions," President Pezeshkian wrote. "One God, one nation, one leader, and one path, the path to the victory of our dear Iran, more precious than life," he added. This follows Israel's Defense Minister Israel Katz stating during a security assessment meeting that Jerusalem is prepared to resume mili-

tary operations against Iran and is awaiting a "green light" from the United States to carry out strikes on Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei and Iranian energy infrastructure. He also said Israel aims to end the influence of the Khamenei leadership. "Israel is prepared to renew the war against Iran. The IDF is ready for both defense and offense, and the targets are marked," The Times of Israel reported Katz as saying. "Israel is awaiting a green light from the United States, first and foremost to complete the elimination of the Khamenei dynasty, the initiator of the extermination plan against Israel, and the successors of the successors of the leadership of the Iranian terror regime, and also to return Iran to the age of darkness and stone by blowing up central energy and electricity facilities and crushing national economic infrastructure," Katz said. "This time, the attack will be different and more deadly, and will add devastating blows in the most painful places, following the enormous blows the Iranian terror regime has already suffered so far, which will shake and collapse its foundations," the defense minister added.

## US envoy Charles Harder visit signals fresh push in India-US economic ties

A recent visit to India by United States Special Envoy Charles Harder has underscored renewed momentum in strengthening strategic and developmental ties between Washington and New Delhi, with a clear emphasis on long-term economic stability and human capital development. Highlighting the significance of the visit, US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor pointed to the growing role of innovative financing tools and cross-sector collaboration in advancing bilateral priorities. In a post on X, Gor noted that partnerships driven by US-led public-private initiatives and co-investment models are being leveraged to deliver practical, scalable solutions aimed at strengthening workforce capabilities and sustaining long-term growth. The visit comes amid a broader convergence of US and Indian economic and geopolitical interests, particularly in areas such as workforce development, education, and sustainable growth. Harder's engagement reflects an evolving approach that integrates private sector expertise with public policy objectives. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) are emerging as a central pillar of this collaboration. By combining government support with private investment, these frameworks aim to tackle structural challenges such as skills shortages and job creation. Co-investment models, in particular, are expected to direct capital toward high-impact initiatives capable of delivering measurable economic and social outcomes. With India's large and youthful workforce, investments in education, vocational training, and innovation ecosystems are increasingly seen as essential to maintaining growth momentum. US-backed efforts could play a catalytic role by providing both funding and technical expertise to accelerate progress in these areas. While specific agreements have yet to be detailed, the focus on "practical solutions" signals a shift



toward implementation-driven cooperation rather than purely strategic dialogue. This approach aligns with wider bilateral priorities, including strengthening supply chains and promoting inclusive economic development. The visit also highlights the growing importance of multi-stakeholder engagement in modern diplomacy. Further announcements are expected as discussions advance, potentially outlining concrete initiatives that emerge from this collaboration. For now, the engagement reflects a shared commitment to deepening ties in ways that move beyond traditional diplomacy and deliver tangible, long-term outcomes.

## France Operationalises Visa-Free Transit for Indians Transiting Through Its Airports, Says MEA

New Delhi: Indians transiting through France exclusively by air will no longer require a transit visa, as the French government has operationalised an agreement to remove such a requirement, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said. MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal made the announcement at his weekly media briefing here, saying India welcomes the move. Later in a statement, the MEA said the visa-free transit for Indian nationals transiting through the European territory of France has now been operationalised by the French government. The decision showcases deep commitment by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Emmanuel Macron to strengthen bilateral relations, the MEA said. At the media briefing, Jaiswal said the decision reflects the enduring partnership between India and France, elevated to the level of a 'Special Global Strategic Partnership' during the recent visit of President Macron to India, as also further facilitation of smoother movement of people,



and enhancing of people-to-people ties. "The government of France has now operationalised this agreement, and Indian nationals transiting through mainland France exclusively by air will no longer need a transit visa, with effect from 10th April, 2026," Jaiswal said. "We welcome the announcement on the operationalisation of visa-free transit for Indian nationals transiting through French airports. As you may recall, the removal of the requirement of transit visas for Indian passport holders was agreed between the prime minister and President Macron during their meeting in Mumbai in February this year," he said. In response to a query on the number of Indians ships which are still to pass the Strait of Hormuz, Jaiswal said, "We have ten Indian ships which have exited Strait of Hormuz safely in the last few weeks. We have 14 Indian ships which are still in the Persian Gulf." On reported incidents of some vessels being fired on, he

said, the two ships which were fired on, they are "foreign owned". "There are some Indian nationals on them, on board these ships. They are safe. As far as our ships are concerned in the Persian Gulf, we continue to remain in close conversation with Iranian authorities so that they can safely exit Persian Gulf and reach India," he added. On a query on whether during the visit of MEA's Secretary (West) to the US, the issue of designating TRF outfit was raised, the MEA spokesperson said Secretary (West) travelled to New York, and he made several statements there including, in the ECO SOC. He also met the Secretary General and several issues that are part of our agenda at the UN were discussed. "In regard to TRF, I can say that the monitoring team is considering this, and we continue to push hard because we want to strengthen global fight against terrorism and in that regard it's important that UN member states are on board with how we take, how we approach fighting terrorism globally speaking," he added.

## South Korea prosecutors seek 30 years for ex-president Yoon over drone flights into North

SEOUL: South Korean special prosecutors requested a further 30-year term on Friday for jailed ex-president Yoon Suk Yeol for allegedly sending military drones into North Korea in 2024. Yoon is accused of ordering the incursion to help create the pretext for his failed declaration of martial law that year, which resulted in his impeachment, removal from office and life imprisonment for insurrection. Special prosecutors said in a statement that they were seeking the new sentence on charges of aiding the enemy, adding that Yoon's effort to "fabricate wartime conditions" had undermined state security. They also argue that the operation heightened tensions with North Korea and led to the leak of classified information -- including details on force capabilities -- after the drones crashed, the Yonhap news agency reported. Yoon was sentenced to life in jail in February for leading an insurrection to "paralyse" South Korea's National Assembly. He has appealed the conviction tied to his martial law declaration, insisting he took the measure "solely for the sake of the nation". Drone flights have continued to be a flashpoint in recent tensions between North and South Korea, which



remain technically at war. This month, South Korean President Lee Jae Myung expressed regret to Pyongyang after an investigation found that government officials had sent drones into the nuclear-armed North in January. The powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un later called Lee's statement "wise behaviour", but hopes for a rapprochement faded after the diplomatically isolated nation returned to calling the South its "most hostile" enemy. Lee has vowed to mend ties with North Korea by halting the kind of provocations carried out under his predecessor, and has suggested a rare apology may be warranted for Yoon's actions involving the drones.

# VOICE OF WORDS

## BUSINESS

# FM Nirmala Sitharaman calls for proactive cybersecurity push amid rising AI threats

At a post-inauguration press briefing following the launch of a new State Bank of India office in Pune, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman called on Indian banks to adopt a more agile and forward-looking approach to counter emerging cyber threats driven by artificial intelligence. Her remarks came after a high-level review meeting held on Thursday with Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw, along with representatives from the RBI, NPCI, CERT-In, and heads of scheduled commercial banks. The meeting focused on assessing risks posed by advanced AI systems that could potentially be misused to exploit software vulnerabilities. Sitharaman noted that Indian banks have, over the years, largely avoided major cybersecurity breaches, crediting sustained digitisation, regular system upgrades, firewalls, and strong customer protection protocols. "This has been an ongoing exercise, and Indian banks have done very well for themselves in that there has not been a major in-



cident over decades," she said. However, she cautioned that the evolving nature of AI-driven threats presents a new and less predictable challenge. "What we've had, and what has proven our ability to be careful and protective of customers, may not be sufficient going forward. Those measures must continue and improve, but we also need something new—far more versatile—to counter emerging threats," she added. The minister said the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology is engaging with global governments and technology firms to better understand the evolving cybersecurity landscape and assess India's preparedness. Following the meeting, which was also attended by DFS Secretary M. Nagaraju and CERT-In Director General Dr. Sanjay Bahl, banks have been asked to collaborate under an institutional mechanism led by the Indian Banks' Association, headed by the State Bank of India Chairman. In the coming weeks, banks will evaluate investment requirements, explore new technologies, and examine ways to deploy AI tools to defend against AI-enabled cyber risks. Sitharaman clarified that this is not the creation of a new committee, but an IBA-led coordination process aimed at identifying vulnerabilities and reviewing dependencies on technology vendors. She also urged banks to strengthen their cybersecurity talent pool, engage specialised agencies, and ensure prompt reporting of

suspicious activity to CERT-In and other authorities. A real-time threat intelligence sharing framework among banks and agencies was also emphasised. On the broader economic front, Sitharaman acknowledged the impact of geopolitical tensions in West Asia, particularly disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, which have contributed to rising crude oil prices. "These are constantly evolving challenges. They cannot all be addressed in a single framework; each requires a contextual response," she said. She further clarified that issues such as LPG supply monitoring, overseen by a ministerial group led by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, and support measures for exporters affected by US tariffs, are being handled through separate policy mechanisms. Reiterating the government's long-term vision, Sitharaman said the terms of reference for the banking sector's roadmap to 2047 have been intentionally kept broad, allowing the committee to recommend the future structure and scale of India's banking system.



## India home to 20K ultra rich individuals, ranks sixth in global UHNWI population list

MUMBAI: India has seen a sharp surge in ultra-high-net-worth individual (UHNWI), whose net worth is estimated at over \$30 million) population over the last five years and their numbers are expected to grow at a brisk pace in the coming years. According to Knight Frank's 'The Wealth Report', between 2021 and 2026, India's \$30 million+ population surged by 63%, rising from just over 12,000 to 19,877, a reflection of extraordinary wealth creation across technology, industrials and capital markets. The country now has the sixth largest UHNWI population in the world. Knight Frank estimates India's UHNWI population to rise by 27% from 19,877 in early 2026 to 25,217 by 2031, underscoring its growing role in the global wealth landscape. The world's UHNWI population increased by 162,191 between 2021 and 2026, equivalent to 89 new UHNWIs every day, bringing the global total to 713,626. Mumbai, the country's financial capital, continues to dominate with its constituency of 35.4% UHNW or ultra-rich population. Delhi and Chennai have gained in their contribution of ultra-rich population by 3% over the last 10 years. Hyderabad has also expanded its contribution by 1.3% since 2015. India's billionaire (net worth \$1 billion+) count rose 58% over the past five years to 207 in 2026, placing the country 3rd globally after the United States (914) and China (485). According to Knight Frank's Wealth Sizing Model, India's billionaire population is forecast to rise by 51% from 207 in early 2026 to 313 by 2031. India's current home base of 6.7% of the global billionaires will expand to 8% over the next 5 years. "The expansion of India's wealth club mirrors its economic evolution: an entrepreneurial economy maturing into one with deeper capital pools, more sophisticated financial markets and a growing cohort of globally connected founders and investors. Digitalisation, listed equities, private capital and family-owned businesses all play a role. The result is a widening, increasingly durable base of ultra-wealth, anchored in long-term structural growth," said Shishir Bajjal, International Partner, Chairman & Managing Director, Knight Frank India. The Wealth Report reveals the findings of Knight Frank's Prime International Residential Index (PIRI 100) which covers price performance across 100 global luxury housing markets. Bengaluru climbed 32 places from 40th in 2024 to 8th in 2025, supported by 9.4% year-on-year increase in luxury residential prices. Mumbai's residential prices surged by 8.7% in 2025 and the city's ranking on PIRI jumped from 21st in 2024 to 10th in 2025. Delhi recorded a price appreciation 6.9% last year, improving its ranking from 18th in 2024 to 17th in 2025.

## India's Composite PMI Jumps to 58.3 in April From 57 in March



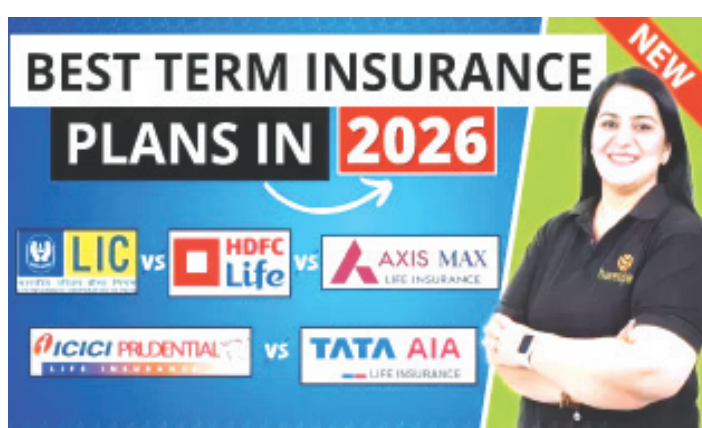
New Delhi: Signalling a strong momentum in the country's economy, India's growth in the private sector accelerated in April as both manufacturing and services activity rebounded after cooling last month despite elevated price pressures. The reason for the bounce-back is primarily because of recovery in domestic demand at the beginning of the new fiscal year, but uncertainty still remains due to the Middle East war, a private survey said on Thursday. As per the survey, the overall growth improved significantly as the HSBC India composite purchasing managers' index or PMI jumped to 58.3 in April from 57 in March, underscor-

ing the broad-based expansion across the economy. "The manufacturing PMI rose to 55.9 in April, up from 53.9 in March, while the services activity climbed to 57.9 from 57.5 month-on-month," the survey said. Commenting on the survey, Pranjul Bhandari, chief India economist at HSBC, said that private sector activity accelerated after easing in March amid disruptions linked to the Middle East conflict. "Manufacturing sector, however, led the upturn with faster growth than services in output and new orders," Bhandari said. The survey indicated that firms are building buffer stocks to manage the uncertainties around the longevity of the supply-side shock. Finished goods and input inventories increased alongside a pick-up in purchasing volumes. Input cost pressures remained elevated, and

firms passed through part of the increase via higher selling prices," he added. The survey also showed that export trends were mixed. "Manufacturers posted the fastest growth in export business in nine months, while services firms recorded the weakest increase in over a year, which respondents in the survey linked to the Middle East war. At the composite level, new export business rose at a softer pace than in March," it noted. As far as price pressure is concerned, the survey also noted that input cost inflation eased from March but was the second steepest in nearly three years, with firms citing higher prices for fuel and raw materials. "Companies continued to raise selling prices, though output price inflation remained below the pace of input cost increases," the survey added.

## Best Term Insurance Plan in 2026: 5 Things to Check

Discover the best term insurance plan in 2026 with this simple guide. Learn the 5 key factors to check, including coverage, premiums, claim settlement ratio, and policy benefits. As life insurance purchasing becomes more deliberate in 2026, the definition of the "best" term insurance plan has quietly evolved. It is no longer just about low premiums or high cover. Serious buyers are asking deeper questions about reliability, payout certainty, insurer strength, and whether their policy will stay relevant decades from now. If you are evaluating for best term insurance plan this year, these five factors matter more than ever.



**1. Financial strength of the insurer, not just the premium**  
Term insurance plans can run for 25 to 40 years. As long as the policyholder's financial strength remains as necessary as the insurance. This is where metrics such as solvency ratios, capital adequacy and balance sheet flexibility come into play. A first-class term coverage plan is, as a practical matter, issued through an insurance company that has every chance of being financially stable for decades. Industry analysts increasingly recommend choosing insurers that always maintain solvency well above regulatory requirements, as this demonstrates their ability to honor large claims even under monetary

stress. Players including Kotak Life (with a solvency ratio of 2.56 in 2025) are often cited for their business-critical approach. References discuss, buyers who see term coverage as a long-term safety net as opposed to a short-term purchase.

### 2. Coverage adequacy over the long term

In 2026, underinsurance remains a common issue. Many buyers still pick sums assured based on premium comfort instead of real future needs. A good term insurance plan should allow you to:

Why Every Entrepreneur Needs a Contingency Framework, Not Just a Growth Plan

Industry guidance increasingly suggests reviewing cover adequacy every few years, especially after life events such as parenthood or major loans. Insurers that design flexible term structures rather than rigid, one-size-fits-all covers tend to serve long-term policyholders better.

### 3. Payout structure that supports families, not just lump sums

Earlier, term insurance payouts were largely limited to lump-sum benefits. In recent years, buying behaviour has shifted. Families now prefer payouts that mirror income replacement more closely.

Modern term plans allow combinations such as: Lump sum for liabilities like loans. Monthly income to support recurring expenses. Hybrid structures that balance both

needs. This shift reflects a deeper understanding of household cash flows. Insurers that offer flexible payout options, rather than standardised benefits, are better aligned with real-world family requirements. Many industry-recommended plans now prioritise payout design as much as cover amount.

### 4. Clear separation between protection and investment

In 2026, one of the most important evaluation filters is clarity of purpose. Term insurance is a protection tool, not an investment vehicle. Mixing goals often results in compromised coverage. This distinction becomes clearer when you compare term insurance with products like a ULIP, where premiums are split between life cover and market-linked investments. ULIPs play a different role in financial planning, primarily long-term wealth accumulation with embedded insurance.

Experienced planners increasingly advise buyers to:

Secure adequate term insurance first. Add ULIPs or other investment products separately for growth.

Insurers such as Kotak Life, which maintain distinct product philosophies across protection and investment offerings, tend to make this choice clearer for consumers rather than bundling conflicting objectives into a single product.



## Tata Elxsi, JSW Motors Forge Strategic Partnership To Build EV Tech Hub In Pune

Pune: India's push toward connected and electric mobility is getting a fresh boost as JSW Motors teams up with Tata Elxsi to build a dedicated technology hub aimed at next-generation vehicles. The two companies will jointly set up the JNEXT - JSW NextGen Technology Center in Pune as a strategic engineering base. According to the press release, the facility will focus on software-defined and AI-powered mobility solutions. The move signals a clear shift toward integrating digital intelligence into vehicle development while strengthening India's role in advanced automotive engineering. Tata Elxsi will take charge of delivering a connected vehicle platform along with a unified customer experience app for JSW Motors' upcoming models. Its role spans the entire lifecycle—from concept and integration to production and after-sales support. The partnership also brings capabilities in cloud systems, over-the-air updates, cybersecurity, and digital twin technologies, reflecting the increasing complexity of modern vehicles. Ranjan Nayak, CEO of JSW Motors, indicated the collaboration is central to building a technology-led mobility ecosystem rooted in India but globally competitive. He emphasized that Tata Elxsi's expertise in software-defined vehicles, electrification, and advanced driver assistance systems will help accelerate timelines while improving quality and safety standards. The alliance also extends into intelligent diagnostics, predictive maintenance, and performance optimization systems aligned with global automotive standards.

# VOICE OF WORDS

## HEALTH

### Iron deficiency in kids is rising: What every parent should know



Iron plays a crucial role in a child's growth, energy and brain development, yet it is often overlooked. Many children face iron deficiency, leading to fatigue and poor concentration. Experts highlight the importance of iron-rich foods and proper meal combinations to improve absorption. Iron deficiency is a common occurrence in children. Iron supports growth, energy levels and brain development. Even simple food choices can make a significant difference in preventing fatigue and deficiency. "Iron is one of those nutrients parents often overlook, but it is essential for a child's overall well-being," says Dr Amit P Ghawade, Consultant Paediatrician and Neonatologist, Kharghar, Navi Mumbai. "It plays a key role in haemoglobin, which carries oxygen from the lungs to the rest of the body." Without enough iron, children may feel tired, irritable, grow slowly, and struggle with concentration at school. Many children between the ages of 3 and 14 experience iron deficiency, especially toddlers, picky eaters and teenagers. However, the level of awareness is still very low, and medical advice is frequently missed. The good news is that iron deficiency can be managed and prevented with the help of diet.

#### Why iron is essential for children

Children are in the growing stage, and iron is very important to build new cells, muscles, and brains.

"When iron intake is low, the body starts using its stored reserves, which can eventually lead to iron-deficiency anaemia," explains Dr Ghawade. This condition means there are not enough healthy red blood cells to carry oxygen efficiently. Common signs include fatigue, pale skin, poor concentration and delayed growth.

#### Foods that can help improve iron levels

Parents can support their child's iron intake through simple dietary choices: Fish is a good source of iron and can be included regularly. Fortified breakfast cereals and oats provide added iron. Pairing these with fruits like strawberries or oranges helps improve absorption due to vitamin C. Beans and lentils are versatile and can be added to soups, stews or wraps. Leafy greens such as spinach, kale and broccoli offer iron along with fibre and vitamins. Eggs provide both iron and protein. Dry fruits like raisins and apricots can be included as healthy snacks. "Combining iron-rich foods with vitamin C sources can significantly improve absorption," adds Dr Ghawade. What parents should keep in mind: Iron absorption depends not just on what children eat, but also on how foods are combined. Pair iron-rich foods with vitamin C sources like oranges, tomatoes or bell peppers. Avoid combining iron-rich meals with high-calcium foods like milk or yoghurt, as calcium can block absorption.



## Smoking before a blood test?

### Here's what it does to your results

Smoking leaves measurable changes in the body that show up in blood tests, including high cotinine levels, altered cholesterol and increased inflammation markers. These changes can affect diagnosis, making it important for patients to disclose smoking habits to doctors. You wake up, reach for a cigarette and go about your day. Maybe you even head for a routine health check-up right after. It feels like just another habit. But inside your body, that cigarette has already started changing things in ways most people do not realise.

"A simple blood test can reveal far more than people expect," says Dr Kunal Sharma, Vice President and Head of Integrated Onco-Pathology at Agilus Diagnostics. "Smoking leaves measurable traces in the body, and those traces can significantly alter test results." When nicotine enters the body, it converts into a chemical called cotinine. This marker is easily detectable in blood tests and is one of the clearest indicators of tobacco exposure. In non-smokers, cotinine levels remain below 10 ng/mL. In smokers, they can rise dramatically, sometimes crossing 500 ng/mL. What is more surprising is that cotinine can stay in your system for up to ten days after your last cigarette. Smoking triggers a chain reaction almost instantly. Nicotine stimulates adrenaline, which can increase blood sugar levels. Carbon monoxide present in the smoke combines with haemoglobin to produce carboxyhaemoglobin while white blood cells increase as a result of an immune response to toxins. These physiological changes will be evident in



laboratory tests but not necessarily felt by the individual. The long-term physiological effects are more than just immediate physiological effects. Long-term smokers usually exhibit high levels of LDL (low-density lipoproteins), low HDL (high-density lipoproteins), high HbA1c levels, high C-reactive protein, and high erythrocyte sedimentation rate. Increased levels of liver enzymes such as GGT can also be observed in the body's effort to metabolize toxins. The physiological findings could suggest early indications of diseases such as diabetes mellitus, hepatitis, or renal problems. And here comes the tricky part. When your physician doesn't know that you are a smoker, they might misinterpret the modified findings as a new medical condition, which will lead to further examinations and false conclusions. Disclosing your tobacco use to your physician will help them interpret the information in your report more accurately.

## Autism in adults: 6 subtle signs you may have ignored for years

Autism in adults is often overlooked, as many individuals learn to mask their symptoms over time. Subtle signs such as difficulty in social communication, need for routine, sensory sensitivity and mental exhaustion can go unnoticed for years. Autism is typically linked to children, but many adults live with the condition without ever being diagnosed. They have learned over the years to adapt and adjust to the condition, and in many cases, mask the symptoms. In everyday life, these signs are not always obvious. Instead, they show up in small patterns, preferences and responses that may have been misunderstood for years. "Many adults with autism develop coping mechanisms that help them blend in, which is why the condition often goes unnoticed," explains Dr Megha Agarwal, Consultant Psychiatrist, Kailash Deepak Hospital. Difficulty with social communication Perhaps one of the most overlooked signs is the subtle difficulty an individual experiences with social interactions. This can range from problems with small talk to problems with understanding social cues or interpreting facial and body language. Individuals may have a preference for written communication over verbal communication. They may also come across as blunt or overly direct, not out of intent, but because social nuances are harder to interpret.

For many adults with autism, predictability can feel safe. Discomfort can be seen when there are changes in routines, whether it is a change in a travel route or even a change in daily habits. "A rigid



schedule is not just a preference; it can be a way to manage overwhelming uncertainty," notes Dr Agarwal. Sensitivity to sounds, light, textures, or smells is yet another significant indicator. What other people might dismiss as a minor annoyance or discomfort might actually be overwhelming. For instance, noise, textures, or light might cause irritability or tiredness, which might be misconstrued as stress.

#### Masking or 'fitting in' socially

Many adults with autism learn to "mask" their natural responses. This can involve forcing eye contact, rehearsing conversations or copying others' behaviour in social situations. While it may help them navigate interactions, it often comes at the cost of mental exhaustion. "Masking can make someone appear socially comfortable, but internally it can be very draining," explains Dr Agarwal. Deep focus on specific interests A subtle indicator is to have highly focused interests. Adults with

autism may acquire special knowledge in certain areas. They may invest considerable time in exploring and understanding the areas. This may be both an asset and a trait.

#### Difficulty with planning and switching tasks

Another difficulty may be challenges in executing functions. This may include difficulties in organising, managing time, and switching from one task to another. Social interactions, such as large groups, can also be draining, with a subsequent need for solitude to recover from such interactions. Recognising these behaviours is not about self-labelling, but rather self-awareness. For most adults, being able to understand these behaviours can be an initial step towards seeking guidance to develop better coping skills. Sometimes, what feels like "just the way you are" may have a deeper explanation, one that deserves both understanding and compassion.

# VOICE OF WORDS

## WOMEN

### The 'If you can't eat it, don't apply it' rule: Why clean beauty is gaining



In a fast-paced world of quick beauty fixes, clean beauty calls for conscious self-care, safe ingredients and a mindful approach that nourishes the skin, body and mind. Clean beauty encourages mindful skincare using safe, natural ingredients and intentional self-care rituals. Clean beauty encourages mindful skincare using safe, natural ingredients and intentional self-care rituals. Self-care is often spoken about today, but rarely practised in its truest sense. In a world that moves relentlessly fast, beauty has quietly been reduced to a quick fix: opening a jar, applying a product, and moving on. Somewhere along the way, we forgot that caring for ourselves is not about convenience alone, about consciousness. We are extremely careful about what we eat. We read labels, question ingredients, and think twice before putting something harmful into our bodies. Yet, when it comes to skincare, we often lower our guard. What many people forget is that our skin is the body's largest organ. It breathes, absorbs, and responds to everything we put on it. Whatever we apply doesn't simply sit on the surface; it enters our system. Dr Blossom Kochhar said, "This belief is what led me to one simple philosophy I have stood by for decades: 'What you put on your face, you should be able to eat.' It may sound radical in a world dominated by chemical formulations and instant results, but it is deeply rooted in common sense and ancient wisdom. Long before beauty became commercial, it was personal. Our grandmothers turned to their kitchens for skincare and haircare, using fresh, natural ingredients that were safe, nourishing, and effective. That wisdom has always inspired me.

"I've consistently encouraged people to look at their kitchen shelves not just as a place for food, but as a treasure trove for beauty and wellness," she added.

My answer is simple: self-care deserves time. You don't need hours every day. Even setting aside a little time once or twice a week to prepare a simple face pack or hair mask can make a meaningful difference. That time is not wasted; it is invested in yourself. It is a pause, a ritual, a moment of connection with your body and mind. When you prepare your own beauty recipes, something shifts. You become aware of what you are using. You slow down. You nurture yourself rather than rush through routines. The process itself becomes healing. Over the years, I have shared countless DIY recipes for skin, hair, and body care; each one rooted in simplicity and safety. These recipes are not about perfection; they are about intention. I invite everyone to try them, not just for the visible results, but for the joy of creating something wholesome for yourself.

True beauty, however, goes beyond the skin. It is holistic. It is influenced by our balance, physically, emotionally, and mentally. When we care for our bodies with kindness and awareness, it reflects in our skin, our energy, and our confidence. Even ancient wisdom reminds us that the body is sacred, a space where the divine resides. In redefining beauty today, perhaps the most powerful step we can take is to return to simplicity. To choose ingredients we trust. To treat self-care as an act of self-love. Because when beauty is clean, conscious, and intentional, it doesn't just make us look better, it makes us feel whole.

## 5 everyday products dermatologists say no to

Dermatologist avoids more products than they recommend. From loofahs and makeup wipes to nose strips and anti hair-fall shampoos, here's why skin experts steer clear of these everyday items and what actually protects your skin barrier. Why dermatologists skip loofahs, nose strips, and "anti hair-fall" shampoos. Why dermatologists skip loofahs, nose strips, and "anti hair-fall" shampoos. Skincare trends come and go, but dermatologists are famously consistent about one thing: protecting the skin barrier at all costs. That's why a Instagram post by Dr Sridevi Raichur struck a chord. It quietly calls out everyday products many of us still swear by, but skin experts actively avoid. The message is blunt, science-backed, and refreshingly free of product pushing. Here's what's on that "never at home" list, and the skin logic behind it.

#### 1. Loofahs

They look harmless, even spa-like. In reality, loofahs are a perfect breeding ground for bacteria and fungus, especially in damp bathrooms. Add aggressive exfoliation to the mix, and you're looking at micro-tears, irritation, and a compromised skin barrier. Dermatologists prefer gentle cleansing with hands or a soft cloth, used sparingly. Exfoliation is a treatment, not a daily sport.

#### 2. Plastic combs

Your plastic comb is secretly ruining your hair. Plastic hair combs cause static electricity in your hair, resulting in frizzy hair, hair breakage, and irritation to the scalp, especially for people with dry or sensitive scalps. Dermatologists and trichologists usually recommend using wooden hair combs or wide-tooth combs.

#### 3. Nose strips

Yes, they deliver instant gratification. No, they don't solve blackheads. Nose strips rip out oil plugs along with part of your skin barrier, leaving pores irritated and primed to clog again. As Dr Raichur points out, they are a temporary fix with long-term consequences. Consistent cleansing, exfoliation with the right acids,



and barrier repair work far better.

#### 4. Makeup wipes

Convenient? Absolutely. Skin-friendly? Not really. Makeup wipes often disrupt skin pH, leave residue behind, and are loaded with alcohols and fragrances that dry and irritate. They also score poorly on sustainability. Dermatologists typically favour gentle cleansers or micellar water followed by a proper rinse. Boring, yes, but effective.

#### 5. "Anti hair-fall" shampoos

Here's the hard truth: no shampoo can cure hair fall. Period. Hair fall usually starts internally through hormones, nutrition, stress, or scalp health, not at the surface. Shampoos can support scalp health, but bold "anti hair-fall" claims are often more marketing than medicine. Dermatologists focus instead on diet, habits, scalp care, and medical evaluation when needed. What unites all five items isn't trendiness. It's overdoing things. Over-exfoliation, over-cleansing, over-promising. Dermatologists tend to keep their routines minimal, evidence-based, and barrier-first.

Good skin isn't built through harsh fixes or viral hacks. It's built quietly, patiently, and with far fewer products than your bathroom shelf suggests. Sometimes, the best skincare upgrade is knowing what not to use.

## How to control acne and pigmentation naturally: Dermatologist-backed advice



Struggling with acne and pigmentation? Discover expert-recommended tips, skincare habits, and treatments to reduce dark spots and achieve clear, glowing skin naturally. Know how to control acne and pigmentation naturally. A glowing, clear complexion is a goal for everyone, but for many people, acne and pigmentation hinder it. A recent skin health report mentions that 68% of Indian women list acne as a top concern, with 94% of those aged 20-25 battling breakouts. The reason lies in our biology: larger pores, higher sebum production, and greater melanin content make Indian skin more susceptible to acne and post-inflammatory pigmentation.

#### Understanding the Acne-Pigmentation Cycle

Even after acne heals, dark spots often remain. This is due to the overreaction of melanin-rich Indian skin to inflammation, which results in the production of excess pig-

ment. Dr Aparna Santhanam explains that to break this cycle, we require a two-pronged approach, which includes the reduction of breakouts and controlling the over-production of pigment.

Gentle exfoliants like glycolic acid help in keeping the pores clear and regulating oil. Using niacinamide not only minimises inflammation but also inhibits melanin transfer, helping post-acne marks to fade. Zinc PCA helps in the regulation of sebum, while azelaic acid targets both acne-causing bacteria as well as hyperpigmentation. Given the higher sensitivity and barrier weakness of Indian skin, as the report highlights, Dr Santhanam advises against over-exfoliation. Instead, she recommends skin cycling, alternating exfoliation with repair days using ceramides and panthenol to maintain a balance.

#### The Post-Holiday Routine

The focus of post-holiday skincare should be on consistency, not

intensity. Use a mild cleanser to wash your face twice daily, follow it with a serum infused with niacinamide, and apply a light moisturiser that is enriched with hyaluronic acid in order to keep your skin hydrated while ensuring your pores are not clogged. To deal with pigmentation, use Vitamin C and liquorice extract, which will help brighten your skin while protecting it against oxidative damage. Pairing these ingredients with niacinamide will enhance the evenness of tone with time. As Dr Santhanam concludes, "Indian skin demands balance - between cleansing and nourishment, brightening and protection. The report reiterates that our skin's unique melanin profile and pore structure make customised, ingredient-driven care essential. With the right actives and patience, even stubborn acne and pigmentation can be managed effectively - just in time for the glow."

# VOICE OF WORDS

## SPORTS

# India begin Thomas and Uber Cup 2026 campaign in Denmark

Hyderabad: India's men's and women's teams are set to begin their campaigns at the Thomas Cup and Uber Cup Finals 2026, with the spotlight firmly on the opening day in Horsens, Denmark. The men's team, historic champions in 2022, will kick off their campaign against Canada on April 24 at 12 pm IST, before the women's team takes on hosts Denmark later in the day, with all the ties played at the Forum Horsens. With the group stage offering little room for error, India faces a demanding schedule early on. The men's team will next meet Australia on April 27 (12 pm IST), followed by a high-stakes clash against China on April 29 (1:30 pm IST). The women's side, meanwhile, continues its campaign against Ukraine on April 25 and China on April 27, with both ties slated for 10 pm IST. Only the top two teams from each group progress to the knock-outs, placing immediate emphasis on strong starts. All matches will be streamed live on JioHotstar and broadcast on the JioStar Network. "We've been putting in the work as a group over the last few weeks, focusing on getting our combinations right and building rhythm across departments. The Thomas Cup is always demanding, and with three tough group ties ahead, the focus is on staying sharp and taking it one match at a time," said men's team stalwart H S Prannoy. The women's team arrives with a refreshed mix, blending emerging talent with established names as they look to build on their semi-final finishes in 2014 and 2016. The squad sees a change in the doubles lineup, with Shruti Mishra and Priya Konjengbam stepping in for Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand, who miss out due



to the former's injury. "It's a huge stage to be part of, and you can feel how important the Thomas and Uber Cup is the moment you step into the setup. We have a young group this time, and everyone is putting in the work, pushing each other every day in training. There's a lot of energy in the team, and we're focused on making the most of this opportunity," said women's team member Unnati Hooda. A total of 16 teams compete in both the Thomas Cup and Uber Cup Finals, featuring the top badminton nations from across the globe. The Indian men's team secured qualification as one of the three highest-ranked sides at the cut-off date, while the women's team also earned their place through the same route, underlining India's consistent presence at the elite level of the sport. With the men's team coming in as 2022 champions and the women's side carrying a mix of youth and experience, India will look to settle in quickly and take their campaign forward step by step.



## Prachi Gaikwad wins junior women's 50m 3P gold at ISSF Junior World Cup

Hyderabad: Prachi Gaikwad struck gold, winning the junior women's 50m rifle 3 positions (3P) event at the ongoing International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) Junior World Cup Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun in Cairo, Egypt, firing 354.6 in the final to overcome Individual Neutral Athlete (AIN) Darya Chuprys, who shot 354.4. Another AIN shooter, Elena Kretinina, won bronze with a score of 343.3, exiting the 35-shot final after the 34th shot. Naraen Pranav also won bronze in the junior men's 10m air rifle with a score of 229.5 in the final. This was India's second gold of the competition after Shiva Narwal had won the men's 10m air pistol event on the opening day of competitions on Tuesday (Apr 21, 2026) and, with four silvers and three bronzes also in their kitty, takes them back to the top of the medal tally. Prachi was the only Indian to qualify for the junior women's 3P final at the Olympic International City Shooting range. She took sixth spot with a score of 578 and then began the final, placing fifth after the first 10 shots in the kneeling position.

## Samson, Hosein Power CSK To MI's Biggest IPL Defeat

Mumbai: India's recent T20 World Cup-winning hero Sanju Samson was back at his best with an unbeaten 101 before spinners tightened the noose as Chennai Super Kings crushed Mumbai Indians by 103 runs in an IPL clash between two five-time champions, here on Thursday. Samson smashed his fifth IPL century, second for CSK in four innings, to power Chennai Super Kings to 207/6 after Mumbai Indians opted to bowl. In reply, MI collapsed to 104 all out in 19 overs to succumb to their biggest defeat in the IPL. For CSK, Windies left-arm spinner Akeal Hossain grabbed 4/17 in his third match this season, while Afghanistan left-



arm wrist spinner Noor Ahmed showed perfect chemistry returning with 2/23 as CSK returned to winning ways after losing their last match against Sunrisers Hyderabad. Tilak Varma (37) and Suryakumar Yadav (35) only managed double-digit scores as MI endured a shocking collapse in front of their home fans at the Wankhede. Early Wickets: Hardik

Pandya After 103-Run Loss to Chennai Super Kings Earlier, CSK opener and keeper-batter Samson held the innings together with wickets falling at regular intervals at the other end to stay till the end. Samson hit 10 fours and six sixes in his 54-ball unbeaten knock. For MI, AM Ghazanfar and Ashwani Kumar bagged two wickets each, while Jasprit Bumrah was tidy with 1/31. Brief Scores: Chennai Super Kings: 207/6; 20 overs (Sanju Samson 101 not out, Ruturaj Gaikwad 22, Dewald Brevis 21; Ashwani Kumar 2/37, AM Ghazanfar 2/25, Jasprit Bumrah 1/31). Mumbai Indians 104; 19 overs (Akeal Hossain 4/17, Noor Ahmed 2/23). CSK won by 103 runs.



## India targets glory with Sindhu, Sen, Satwik-Chirag

New Delhi: The Sports Authority of India (SAI) has provided extensive logistical and financial support exceeding Rs. 1.45 crore to assist the Indian badminton team at the upcoming BWF Thomas and Uber Cup Finals in Horsens, Denmark, from April 24 to May 3. A 34-member Indian team, including 20 players, five coaches, and nine support staff, is scheduled to go to Denmark for the prestigious team championships. Prominent athletes such as PV Sindhu, Lakshya Sen, Kidambi Srikanth, and the doubles duo of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will compete, alongside rising stars in both men's and women's categories. The lineup also features several athletes from the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) Core and Development groups. The Indian men are grouped with Canada, Australia, and China in the Thomas Cup, while our women are paired with Denmark, Ukraine, and China in the Uber Cup. India made history by winning the Thomas Cup title in 2022, defeating Indonesia in the final to secure its first title. This remarkable achievement marked India's rise as a global power in men's team badminton. The Rs. 1.45 crore support package approved under TOPS includes coverage for airfare, accommodation, visa fees, accreditation, daily and food allowances, insurance, and out-of-pocket expenses for all team members. Additionally, SAI has established a comprehensive support system, comprising specialised coaches, physiotherapists, trainers, and masseurs who travel with the team. The Thomas and Uber Cup Finals 2026 hold increased importance within the larger context of Indian badminton, particularly because the sport will be absent from the 2026 Commonwealth Games. As India prepares to host the Commonwealth Games in 2030, badminton is anticipated to be a major event in the centenary edition of the Games.

## Gachibowli Stadium to Become Rs 700 Cr World-Class Facility



Hyderabad: The Cabinet at its meeting chaired by Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Thursday, approved a proposal to develop the Gachibowli Stadium into a world-class sports facility with 50,000 seats under the public-private partnership (PPP) mode at a cost of ₹700 crore. The decision also covers plans to significantly upgrade infrastructure, expand capacity and promote multi-sport development. Information and public relations minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, briefing mediapersons on the Cabinet decision, said the project would be taken up across the existing 76-acre stadium premises, of which 64 acres would be developed to create facilities for 21 different sports disciplines. As part of the expansion, the seating capacity of the outdoor stadium will be increased from 20,000 to 50,000, transforming it into a major venue capable of hosting large-scale national and international events with international standards to compete for hosting the Olympics in 2034. Srinivas Reddy said the Tata Group had expressed interest to contribute CSR funds for the development of the stadium, and the government will consider naming it after the late Ratan Tata. The Cabinet also approved enhancement of the swimming pool capacity and the establishment of a sports university within the stadium premises. The proposed university will focus on providing advanced training, academic programmes and research opportunities in sports sciences. In addition, the project will include residential and training facilities for athletes to ensure comprehensive support for their development. The remaining 12 acres will be allocated to private developers for commercial activities under the PPP model. The revenue generated from these commercial ventures will be utilised for the maintenance and operation of the sports university.



## India lead medal tally as Prachi lifts 3P rifle gold

Cairo: India's Prachi Gaikwad struck gold in the women's 50m rifle 3-positions, while Naraen Pranav chipped in with a bronze in the men's 10m air rifle, as the country continued to dominate the medal standings at the ISSF Junior World Cup (Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun) here on Thursday. This was India's second gold of the competition, following Shiva Narwal's triumph in the men's 10m air pistol on the opening day, taking the country's overall tally to nine medals -- including four silvers and three bronzes. Prachi fired 354.6 in the final to edge past Individual Neutral Athlete (AIN) Darya Chuprys, who shot 354.4, while another AIN shooter, Elena Kretinina, claimed bronze with a score of 343.3. Naraen, meanwhile, secured the bronze in his event with a final score of 229.5. Prachi was the lone Indian to make the 3P final, qualifying sixth with a score of 578, and began the medal round in fifth place after the first 10 shots in the 'kneeling' position. She surged to second after a strong 'prone' round, closing to within 0.6 points of leader Darya at that stage. The Indian then moved into the lead for the first time with a 50-plus effort in the opening five shots of the 'standing' position, but Darya responded with a 51.0 in the next series. Prachi, meanwhile, slipped momentarily to third after missing the 10-ring four times, setting up a tense finish with five shots remaining. The minor setback did little to shake Prachi, who rose to the occasion when it mattered most, striking the 10-ring four times -- including two high 10s -- to snatch gold from Darya by a slender margin of 0.2 points. In the junior men's 10m air rifle, three Indians made the cut with Naraen best placed at third scoring 630.9. Abhinav Shaw was fourth with 630.0 while Divyanshu Dewangan took the seventh qualifying spot with on a score of 626.8. Naraen then fired a 10.7 followed by a perfect 10.9, to challenge Sophocleous for silver as Abhinav faded away. Sokhibov seemed out of reach. Abhinav had 0.6 to make up on Naraen going into the 20th shot, but a 9.9 put paid to his hopes, as Naraen clinched bronze, falling short of the Greek by 0.4 after the 22nd shot.

## Arsenal eye return to top spot, Spurs fight for survival

LONDON: Arsenal can reclaim the Premier League summit this weekend as in-form Manchester City focus on the FA Cup, while Tottenham and West Ham battle to avoid the final relegation spot. Mikel Arteta's Gunners have watched their imposing nine-point lead vanish quickly, with City currently top on goals scored. One relegation spot remains to be decided after Wolves and Burnley dropped into the second tier this week while the battle for European football is tight. AFP Sport looks at three talking points ahead of the action: Manchester City and Arsenal are locked together on 70 points, with five games left. Both teams have a plus-37 goal difference.



## Nayanthara Replaced by Kajal in NBK 111?



Nayanthara was initially announced as the female lead in Nandamuri Balakrishna's upcoming film, directed by Gopichand Malineni. The project had generated solid buzz, with fans eager to see the successful combination reunite on screen. However, recent developments suggest that things may not be as straightforward as initially planned. According to ongoing reports, the film has undergone significant changes in its storyline, along with alterations in budget and delays in production. Amid these shifts, speculation has emerged that Nayanthara might have stepped away from the project. Adding to all this, the actress has signed a new Bollywood film starring Salman Khan, to be directed by Vamshi Paidipally. This development could have influenced her decision regarding the Balakrishna starrer along with the script change of Gopichand's film. However, it is important to note that there has been no official confirmation from either the actress or the makers of the film. News about Kajal Aggarwal also joining the Balayya film has also made headlines. At this stage, these updates remain speculative and based purely on industry buzz. Given Nayanthara's busy lineup and the evolving nature of big-budget productions, such changes are not uncommon. Fans will have to wait for an official statement to get clarity on whether she continues to be part of the Balakrishna-Gopichand Malineni project or has indeed moved on to new commitments. For NBK 111, the shoot is progressing well, targeting a Dasara release. Reportedly, it is set against a gangster backdrop, with Vriddhi Cinemas bankrolling the project.

## Citadel 2 Trailer: Can It Revive Priyanka's Hollywood Career?



After moving to Hollywood, Priyanka Chopra Jonas worked on a few notable projects with major studios. One of them is Citadel, a high-budget action drama web series backed by Amazon Prime Video. The Russo Brothers of Avengers fame are the executive producers of this series. Despite being released with huge anticipation, the first season ended up as an average venture with mixed reviews. Later, the series had a spinoff in India, titled "Citadel India: Honey Bunny", featuring Varun Dhawan and Samantha in lead roles. Even that series ended up as a failure. Now, Prime Video is back with Citadel Season 2. Ahead of its premiere on May 6, the trailer of Citadel 2 was unveiled recently. Lead spy charac-

ters Mason Kane (Richard Madden), Nadia Sinh (Priyanka Chopra), and Bernard Orlick (Stanley Tucci) reunite in this new season for a new mission. The trailer showcases them joining hands once again for a deadly mission that spans across the world. The series looks rich in action and twists. But the main question is whether it will gain a good response and revive PC's Hollywood career. Netizens felt the trailer was impressive and looked better than its predecessor. So, it remains to be seen if Citadel 2 manages to gain a positive response once it premieres on Prime Video. Otherwise, there are high chances of it not being renewed for another season. If Citadel 2 garners a good response, it would also help in generating good buzz for Priyanka's next global project, Varanasi, on an international level. As most of her recent Hollywood projects have been box office flops, Priyanka definitely needs a success with Citadel 2. Citadel Season 2 features a total of seven episodes. Lesley Manville, Ashleigh Cummings, Jack Reynor, Matt Berry, Lina El Arabi, Merle Dandridge, Gabriel Leone, and Rayna Vallandingham play other key roles in the series.

## Iswarya Menon Balances Glamour and Performance with Ease

Iswarya Menon is one of the noted actors in South film industry who has done movies in all languages. The actress debuted with the Tamil film Kadhalil Sodhappuvadhu Yeppadi and later went on to be seen in other South languages. She is active on Instagram, where she constantly share new photos on social media. Iswarya looks beautiful in every dress but she pulls off the casual looks perfectly. Her notable performances include Tamizh Padam 2 (2018), Naan Sirithaal (2020), Vezham (2022), the multi-lingual action thriller Spy (2023) as NIA agent Vaishnavi, and Bhaje Vaayu Vegam (2024). She recently appeared in the Malayalam action film Bazooka (2025) as Jovita / Pocket Dynamite. Iswarya is currently generating buzz with her upcoming pan-India mystical thriller Nagabandham (Summer 2026 release), where she plays a key role alongside Virat Karnna and Nabha Natesh. At 30, this multi-lingual talent continues to impress with her natural screen presence and diverse roles across South Indian cinema.

## Sreeleela's Hindi Debut Not Going Well?

Sreeleela, who made a name for herself in South cinema, is all set to make her grand debut in Bollywood soon. The actress is currently a part of Anurag Basu's next, which marks her debut. Kartik Aaryan plays the lead role. Contrary to the rumors that the majority of the film's shoot is wrapped up, that only some portions of the movie is completed. It means that things are not going fine for the movie. Director Anurag recently confirmed that the team shot more than 45 days and indicated the shoot just started. Earlier, when the film was announced last year, the team confirmed that it will hit the screens in December 2025. However, it got delayed due to multiple reasons. The director himself has confirmed now that it is a myth to consider the majority of the shoot is done. Being a love story, it won't take this much longer usually for the completion of a film. The latest statement from the director leaves room for the speculations on the creative differences between the team. On the other



side, Sreeleela is busy in shooting her upcoming south films. The untitled musical drama is bankrolled by T-Series, while the album is composed by Pritam. More details of the film will be out soon.

## South's Star Hero to Turn Villain in SRK's Jawan 2?



Shah Rukh Khan is once again at the center of major buzz, with fresh reports suggesting that the superstar is already planning his next big move after wrapping up King. According to recent updates, Jawan 2 is being actively considered, with sources indicating that the script work is underway and the project could take shape after his current commitments. The sequel to Jawan has naturally generated massive excitement, given the original film's record-breaking success and pan-India appeal. Directed by Atlee, the first installment featured Vijay Sethupathi as the primary antagonist, whose performance played a crucial role in elevating the film's intensity. Now, the big question doing the rounds is about the villain in Jawan 2. Industry chatter suggests that Atlee is aiming to rope in a Tier-1 South Indian star for the antagonist's role, potentially taking the scale even higher than the first part. This has sparked speculation, will the choice come from Kollywood or Tollywood? While there is no official confirmation yet, the idea of a top South star locking horns with Shah Rukh Khan has already created significant buzz across markets, especially in the South.

