

# EYE SECRETS

English Daily

Spy in every blink

RANGAREDDY Vol:01 Issue : 22 Thursday, 28-05-2026 EDITOR : Kasoju Shankara Chary Price : 2/- Pages :08

## CM Chandrababu Highlights TDP's Legacy and Women's Empowerment at Mahanadu

TDP Chief and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu emphasised the party's historic achievements and ongoing commitment to social welfare during the inaugural ceremony of the two-day Mahanadu event.

Naidu stated that while the national flag signifies the country's honour, the yellow TDP flag embodies the self-confidence of the Telugu people. He observed that although fewer vehicles were seen heading to Mahanadu, the enthusiasm among party cadres remained strong, with lakhs participating across 1,875 clusters, creating a powerful impact on the first day. He credited the TDP with pioneering reforms and "vision politics," calling it a guiding force in national politics and the only regional party to have played a significant role at the centre. Naidu recounted the party's journey from inception, electoral victories, and widespread support, describing it as



"nothing short of sensational."

Naidu stressed that upholding the trust of the people and preserving the party's legacy is a collective responsibility. He expressed confidence that the TDP would make history by securing reservations for women, reaffirming the party's foundation of welfare policies aimed at providing food, shelter, and basic necessities.

He highlighted that over the

past 45 years, the TDP has consistently fought for public issues, even amidst attacks, violence, legal cases, and harassment. Naidu recalled that party activists remained steadfast, even amid threats to their lives. The Chief Minister announced that the party, having formed alliances with BJP and Jana Sena, is now working towards the reconstruction of the state. He dedicated this Mahanadu to women,

citing initiatives such as free travel on RTC buses, free gas connections, and the provision of three gas cylinders per year to ensure their dignity. Naidu also recalled the era of NTR when property rights were granted to women, transforming their status. Naidu celebrated technological progress, highlighting advancements in AI, Quantum Computing, and Data Centres. He projected that within 23 months, the state aims to attract ₹23 lakh crore in investments and create 23 lakh jobs. He reaffirmed the party's commitment to employment, stating that the goal of providing jobs to 20 lakh people remains achievable once all MoUs are finalised. He concluded by emphasising the shift from "Ease of Doing Business" to "Speed of Doing Business," asserting that the government's actions would speak louder than words, with 288 projects scheduled for launch.

## AP Grameena Bank emerges as nation's highest profit-making RRB



Kurnool: Andhra Pradesh Grameena Bank (APGB) successfully hosted its Branch Managers' Meeting for FY 2025-26, marking World MSME Day by distributing vehicle loans and handing over a mega cheque worth ₹5.00 crore to local MSME borrowers. The event was attended by Vigilance Incharge Harish Betha, General Managers K Janardana Rao and P Sridevi, and Regional Head M Ravimohan.

Addressing the gathering, the dignitaries announced that APGB registered the highest profits among all Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) in the country, emerging as India's best-performing RRB. India news analysis

Management highlighted that the bank offers diverse deposit and advance products highly competitive with public sector giants. Notably, under its special deposit scheme "SIRI 444", the bank provides an impressive interest rate of up to 7.95%, which stands among the highest in the market.

## Srisailam temple hundi collections cross Rs 5.28 cr in just 33 days



Srisailam: The hundi collections of the temple were counted on Tuesday under tight security arrangements, with the shrine registering a total revenue of Rs.5,28,37,281 in cash offerings. Temple authorities stated that the amount was contributed by devotees over a period of 33 days, from April 23, 2026 to May 25, 2026. Apart from the cash collections, the temple also received 96.5 grams of gold and 3.780 kilograms of silver through the hundis. Foreign currency offerings from devotees across various countries were also found during the counting process. These included 321 US dollars, 20 UAE dirhams, 2 Singapore dollars, 25 British pounds, 14 Malaysian ringgits, 35 Australian dollars, 1 Kuwaiti dinar, 105 Canadian dollars, 200 Omani baisas and 5 Qatari riyals, among others. The hundi counting process was conducted under strict vigilance with comprehensive security arrangements and continuous monitoring through CCTV cameras to ensure transparency and accountability throughout the exercise. Temple Executive Officer M Srinivasa Rao supervised the counting process. Trustee Board member K Kanthivardhini also participated in the proceedings. Several unit officers, supervisors, temple staff and Shiva Sevaks took part in the hundi counting programme.

## Rahul Gandhi Demands Judicial Probe, SIT Investigation Over Alleged CBSE 'Scam'

Rahul Gandhi has called for an independent judicial inquiry and SIT probe into alleged irregularities in CBSE's On-Screen Marking system, accusing the Centre of ignoring students' concerns. Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday demanded an independent judicial inquiry and a Special Investigation Team (SIT) probe into alleged irregularities linked to the CBSE examination process and the On-Screen Marking (OSM) system. In a sharp attack on the Centre, Gandhi alleged that the CBSE result process had been affected by "massive irregularities," leaving lakhs of students and parents distressed. He questioned the awarding of contracts to COEMPT, a company he claimed was previously asso-

ciated with controversies under the name Globarena.

The Congress leader raised several questions regarding the selection process for the company and asked whether proper background verification had been carried out before awarding the contract. He also alleged that the issue reflected a broader pattern of negligence and lack of accountability in the education system. The controversy erupted after several Class 12 students claimed discrepancies in scanned copies of answer sheets uploaded under the OSM system, with some alleging the handwriting in the uploaded sheets did not match their own. Complaints regarding incorrect evaluation and technical glitches have circulated wide-



ly on social media over the past two weeks. Gandhi assured students that their concerns would continue to be raised publicly and said the truth behind the alleged "scam" must be uncovered through a transparent investigation. The issue has also triggered widespread reactions online, with many students on social media and forums expressing frustration over the evaluation process and demanding corrective action from the Central Board of Secondary Education.

## YS Jagan holds meeting with party leaders, gives directions to cadre on various issues

A high-level meeting of the YSR Congress Party was convened at its central office in Tadepalli, chaired by former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy. The gathering was attended by regional coordinators, district presidents, MPs, MLAs, MLCs, and parliamentary and assembly coordinators. During the meeting, Jagan undertook a comprehensive review of the party's strengthening strategies, future plans, preparations for local body elections, and the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of voter lists. He provided guidance on recent political developments in the state and outlined the struggles required to serve the people effectively. Political commentary blog YS Jagan criticised the ruling coalition, claiming that the two years in power have been marked by disappointment for



the people. He accused government of not implementing election promises and pointed out that despite presenting three state budgets, there has been no mention of implementing the promises. He also criticised heavy taxation, asserting, "Despite promises to reduce petrol and diesel

prices, taxes have increased, causing severe hardships for the common man

The former chief minister announced statewide protests scheduled from June 4 to June 12 demanding implementation of promises. The protests will include demonstrations at Mandal headquarters on June 4, constituency-level meetings on June 8, and large rallies on June 12. Jagan emphasised that local body elections should be regarded as a matter of prestige for the party. "The party must stand by every worker and encourage those who contested, whether they won or lost," he stated. He warned that any election held unanimously in an area would face serious consequences. He also issued a warning regarding the SIR of voter lists, urging vigilance by the party cadre.

## Govt working towards empowering women, asserts Seethakka

Telangana Minister for Panchayat Raj, Rural Development, and Women & Child Welfare, Seethakka, remarked that the government is empowering women to become wealth creators. She stated that an increase in women's income strengthens the family unit. She spoke on the occasion of inaugurating the 'Sakhi Nivas' Working Women's Hostel in Banjara Hills. She announced that on June 5th, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy would launch the RTC bus services for women. She further mentioned that Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka would inaugurate solar power plants established by women's self-help groups in Madhira tomorrow (Wednesday). Minister



Seethakka asserted that the upliftment of women is synonymous with the progress of Telangana. She affirmed that ensuring the safety of working women is a primary responsibility of their government. She highlighted that they are providing safe accommodation in Hyderabad for women hailing from rural areas. She explained that Sakhi Nivas offers accommodation facilities for 150 women. She also revealed that special amenities are being provided for mothers arriving with young children. She emphasized that their government prioritizes the safety and dignity of women. Minister Seethakka further stated that the limit for interest-free loans extended to women's self-help groups is being increased.

ities for 150 women. She also revealed that special amenities are being provided for mothers arriving with young children. She emphasized that their government prioritizes the safety and dignity of women. Minister Seethakka further stated that the limit for interest-free loans extended to women's self-help groups is being increased.

## Hyd is emerging as global hub for life sciences, says Min Sridhar Babu

### Regeneron to launch Global Capability Centre in Hyd

US-based Regeneron Pharmaceuticals on Tuesday announced plans to establish its GCC here which will be operational in the second half of 2026.

The Regeneron Global Capability Centre (GCC) will support the company's mission of bringing new medicines to patients and expand its footprint in India, a leading global life sciences hub, a release said.

The Regeneron GCC is expected to create hundreds of new roles in the coming years, it said.

The Regeneron GCC in Hyderabad will complement



the company's operations in the United States and around the world and will include teams across data management, statistical programming, digital technology, artificial intelligence,

clinical trial operations, insights and analytics, commercial operations and other key areas.

Telangana Minister for IT and Industries Sridhar Babu said Hyderabad has a

growing stature as a global hub for life sciences, biotechnology and advanced digital innovation.

"Telangana continues to attract significant investments across pharmaceuticals, biotechnology and advanced manufacturing, with strong momentum around the upcoming Green Pharma City further strengthening the state's life sciences ecosystem. We are delighted to welcome Regeneron Pharmaceuticals to Hyderabad and are confident this investment will create significant opportunities for talent, innovation and the larger life sciences ecosystem in the

state," he said.

The Regeneron GCC is expected to further strengthen Hyderabad's position as a leading life sciences and GCC destination, he said.

"Regeneron has spent nearly four decades building a global biotechnology company grounded in science and driven by a commitment to patients. As we continue to scale our global operations, the Regeneron Global Capability Centre represents an important investment in our future," said Bari Kowal, Senior Vice President, Development Operations, Portfolio Management & Biostatistics Data Management at Regeneron.

## Prisoner escapes from Gandhi Hospital



A remand prisoner lodged in Chanchalguda Prison escaped from Gandhi Hospital while undergoing treatment on Tuesday. According to reports, the inmate was arrested by the Trimulgherry Police a few days ago in connection with a theft case. Following his arrest, he was remanded to judicial custody and shifted

to Chanchalguda prison. Police said the prisoner later consumed iron nails inside the prison premises. After his health condition worsened, prison officials shifted him to Gandhi Hospital for medical treatment.

While undergoing treatment at the hospital, the inmate reportedly managed to escape.

Further investigation into the incident is underway.

## SC Bar Association condemns advocate's 'brutal murder' in Hyd

The Supreme Court Bar Association on Tuesday condemned the "planned, brutal, and shocking murder" of senior advocate Khaja Moizuddin in Hyderabad and sought a "fair, expeditious and thorough investigation" for bringing perpetrators to justice. Senior lawyer Khaza Moizuddin, 63, died after being allegedly run over by unidentified assailants in an SUV on May 23.

The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), headed by senior advocate Vikas Singh, issued a statement, saying, "The attack resulting in the death of a member of the Bar is not merely a crime against an individual but an assault on the institution of justice itself."

The resolution, signed by SCBA Secretary Pragya Baghel,



said the death "clearly looks like a planned, brutal and shocking murder of the senior advocate." "The incident has deeply disturbed the legal fraternity and raises serious concerns regarding the safety and security of

advocates discharging their professional duties...The legal profession forms an essential pillar of the justice delivery system, and any act of violence against advocates strikes at the very foundation of the rule of law," the state-

ment said. The association urged the concerned authorities to conduct a "fair, expeditious and thorough investigation and ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice at the earliest in accordance with law."



## HYDRAA saves 22 acre of Kota Cheruvu in Kokapet worth Rs 2,200 crore

Hyderabad Disaster Response and Asset Protection Agency (HYDRAA) on Tuesday removed encroachments from nearly 22 acre of Kota Cheruvu located in Kokapet village of Gandipet mandal. The land is worth approximately Rs 2,200 crore, the agency said. Approximately 1.20

acres had been occupied by Goldfish Villas, who had built play areas and parks within the FTL, while several construction companies had encroached on another 20 acres, HYDRAA stated in a release.

Kota Cheruvu's Full Tank Level spans 72 acres and HYDRAA has now set up a fence defining its boundaries.

## TGSRTC gives Rs 1 crore relief to families of drivers who died in accidents

The Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) provided financial assistance of Rs 1 crore to each family of the employees who died in road accidents. With help from the Union Bank, TGSRTC assisted the families of two drivers who met with fatal accidents in separate incidents. The transactions were facilitated through Union Bank of India's Super Saving Account scheme.

The victims were drivers Sudhakar and Srinivasa Reddy from Picket and Parigi depots, respectively. Their families were handed over cheques worth Rs 1 crore



each by Union Bank of India Chief General Manager M Ravindra Babu and Regional Head D Venkateshwarlu, along with TGSRTC Managing Director Y Nagi Reddy at the Bus Bhavan on Monday, May 25.

"It is unfortunate that drivers die prematurely in

road accidents even though they are not at fault," MD Reddy said, highlighting that TGSRTC prioritises the welfare of employees.

The company stands with the family members, he said, reminding them not to lose their self-confidence and courage.

## Thieves steal cash box after damaging SBI ATM

Unidentified thieves allegedly broke into a State Bank of India (SBI) ATM at Telangana Chowrasta, Mahabubnagar town, during the early hours of Tuesday, May 26, and escaped with the cash box from the machine.

According to reports, the ATM machine was completely damaged in the incident. The exact amount of cash stolen is yet to be determined.

Before carrying out the theft, the offenders reportedly damaged CCTV cameras and other equipment inside the ATM centre to avoid identification. Locals who noticed the incident immediately informed the police and bank officials.



Police officials said a clues team visited the spot and collected fingerprints and other evidence from the ATM centre.

The fingerprints will be compared with the records of suspects involved in similar ATM theft cases in the past

## Woman files missing complaint, held for husband's murder with lover

A nurse from Gangapur village who filed a missing persons complaint about her husband was arrested as the prime accused in his murder after police traced his body to an agricultural field in Elgoyi village in Manoor mandal.

Narayankhed police arrested three persons in the murder of Shambanolla Muthyam Reddy, 35, of Gangapur.

His wife, Kalpana, 30, allegedly had a relationship with Gaini Pandari, 24, for the past four years.

Kalpana and Muthyam Reddy, who were married in 2012, had two daughters, both under 10 years



old. While Kalpana worked as a nurse in a private hospital in Narayankhed, Muthyam Reddy worked as a borewell mechanic in the village.

Pandari, who was working as an outsourcing mechanic in TGSRTC,

befriended Kalpana.

Muthyam Reddy reportedly warned Kalpana over her relationship. Since he had been getting in the way of their relationship, Kalpana and Pandari decided to eliminate him.

## Hyderabad to get 60 more Olectra electric buses

- TGSRTC Completes 500-Bus Project
- Daily ridership expected to rise to 1.2 lakh
- Major boost for green mobility in Hyderabad



fleet. The move marks another major milestone in the city's efforts to promote sustainable urban transport and green mobility.

As part of the prestigious TGSRTC 500-bus electric mobility project, being implemented in partnership with EVEY Trans Pvt. Ltd., 60 new Olectra-manufactured 12-meter low-floor electric buses will be introduced into city operations on

Wednesday. The buses will be formally flagged off at the Kukatpally Depot by Transport Minister Ponnamp Prabhakar, in the presence of TGSRTC Vice Chairman and Managing Director Nagi Reddy, senior officials, and public representatives. With the induction of these new buses, the TGSRTC 500-bus electric project has now been successfully completed, marking an important

milestone in Hyderabad's transition toward a cleaner and more sustainable public transportation network.

Under the project, TGSRTC has introduced a total of 500 low-floor electric city buses, comprising 450 non-AC buses and 50 AC buses, to enhance urban public transport services across Hyderabad.

Of these, 440 electric buses have already been operating successfully from depots

including Cantonment (CNT), HCU, Miyapur, Hayathnagar, and Ranigunj. With the addition of the final set of buses from the Kukatpally Depot, the complete fleet of 500 electric buses will now become fully operational.

The electric buses have received an encouraging response from commuters due to their comfortable travel experience, reliability, and eco-friendly features. At present, approximately one lakh passengers use these electric buses daily across Hyderabad. With the introduction of the additional 60 buses, daily ridership is expected to increase to nearly 1.2 lakh passengers.

The joint initiative between TGSRTC and EVEY Trans Pvt. Ltd. represents a significant advancement in Hyderabad's green mobility ambitions and is expected to contribute toward the development of world-class public transportation services in the city.

The project is also expected to generate substantial

benefits, including reduced urban pollution, improved access to public transport services, and greater adoption of electric mobility at scale, further reinforcing Hyderabad's commitment to sustainable and future-ready urban development.

### The Olectra electric buses feature:

- 12-meter low-floor design for easy boarding and deboarding
- Spacious and comfortable seating arrangements
- Zero-emission technology, contributing to a cleaner environment
- Advanced systems for reducing noise pollution
- Modern safety features and passenger amenities
- Smooth and comfortable ride quality suited for city travel

## Tahsildar in ACB net for 'taking Rs 2 lakh bribe'

A Tahsildar was arrested by the ACB in Medchal-Malkajgiri District of Telangana on Tuesday for allegedly taking Rs 2 lakh bribe, officials said.

The Tahsildar, who is also the Joint Sub-Registrar in Shamirpet mandal, was caught red-handed by the ACB, when she "demanded a bribe of Rs 30 lakhs and accepted Rs 2 lakhs" as part payment from the complainant through her private car driver, a release from Anti-Corruption Bureau said.

The bribe amount was sought for "processing and approval of applications for Nala conversion of agricultural land of 30 acres", the ACB said.

The bribe amount was recovered from the possession of the driver, who has been named as second



accused. The accused officer, who performed her duty "improperly and dishonestly" to obtain undue advantage, was arrested along with the driver, the ACB added. The case is under investigation.

# Speculation over Odisha ministry expansion intensifies

The speculation over the possible expansion of the council of ministers in Odisha gained momentum after Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi's meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP president Nitin Nabin in the national capital on Monday and Tuesday, respectively. The speculation over filling six vacant berths in the Odisha council of ministers further intensified on Tuesday after two senior ministers - Suresh Pujari and Prithviraj Harichandan - hinted that a move to fill up vacant posts in the ministry and political appointments in corporations and boards was in process within the party. Though Majhi took the



oath of office as the chief minister along with 15 other ministers, including two deputy chief ministers, on June 12, 2024, as many as six berths remain vacant since then. According to the norms, the total number of ministers, including the chief minister in the state, should

remain within 15 per cent of the total number of MLAs in the state. Since Odisha has a strength of 147 MLAs, the number of ministers should be within 22, including the chief minister. Therefore, Majhi can add another six members to his council of ministers. In the backdrop of

an intense speculation that Majhi may go for expansion of his ministry on the occasion of celebrating the second year of the government on June 12, Revenue minister Suresh Pujari said, "That (ministry expansion) may take place at any moment. The process of appointments to corporations and boards has also started. The party and the government have already started the selection process. It will be completed very soon." "The expansion or reshuffle of the ministry is the prerogative of the chief minister. If he wants to go for it (expansion or reshuffle), keeping in view the vacancy, the CM may do it anytime. It has nothing to do with the second anniversary of the

government," Harichandan said, not rejecting the possibility of the ministry expansion. However, after meeting BJP president Nitin Nabin in Delhi earlier on the day, Majhi in a post on X said, "Called on Shri @NitinNabin ji, Hon'ble National President of the Bharatiya Janata Party, in New Delhi today. We discussed organisational matters and the holistic development of Odisha. Grateful for his continuous support and guidance."

After meeting the Prime Minister on Monday, Majhi had also said that he had discussion on the strategic acceleration of Odisha's infrastructure development, enhancement of investment opportunities, and implementation of key public welfare initiatives.

## Centre initiatives to strengthen Mizoram's cooperative dairy sector

Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh has announced a series of initiatives to strengthen Mizoram's cooperative dairy sector.

During his visit to the Mizoram Milk Producers' Cooperative Union Limited (MULCO) dairy at Thuampui in Aizawl on Monday, Singh, the Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying and Panchayati Raj, said that milk production in Mizoram remains insufficient to meet local demand and urged local farmers and officials to work with renewed commitment. He said that Mizoram should not lag behind other northeastern states in dairy development.

Singh announced that the Centre has revised the Central funding pattern for dairy development projects from 75:25 to 90:10, significantly reducing the financial burden on the state government and helping accelerate developmental works. He said that milk processing plants and village-level milk procurement systems would continue to be upgraded.

In collaboration with the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), quality cattle breeds through Artificial Insemination and improved



cattle feed (fodder) would be made more accessible to farmers, he said. MULCO products manufactured within Mizoram, including paneer, rasmalai, and ghee, would also be marketed more extensively in Aizawl and nearby markets, he said.

During the visit, the Union Minister inaugurated the Mizo café and the FPO office-cum-sales outlet at the MULCO dairy premises.

He also inspected the dairy processing plant, where NDDB officials briefed him on plans to upgrade the existing 20 TLPD milk processing facility, according to officials.

Singh emphasised that the Central Government is committed to providing maximum support for the development of the Northeast, but said that the real success of these initiatives depends on the dedication of the state gov-

ernments and farmers.

During the visit, he also launched several initiatives and products, including MULCO cow ghee, baled silage, type-II cattle feed, dewormers and mineral mixture products, officials said. The programme was attended by Union Minister of State for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, and Minority Affairs George Kurian, Union Minister of State for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, and Panchayati Raj S. P. Singh Baghel.

Mizoram's Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Minister C. Lalsawivunga, Cooperation Minister P. C. Vanlalruata, Fisheries Minister Lalhansanga, alongside senior state government officials, representatives of NDDB, MULCO officials, cooperative members and farmers also attended the programme.

## Will release white paper on state's financial situation soon, says Kerala CM

Kerala Chief Minister V D Sathesnan on Tuesday said the government will come out with a white paper about the state's financial situation in the first week of June. Addressing his press meet in the national capital after becoming the Chief Minister, Sathesnan said the state is facing a financial crisis. The chief minister on Tuesday met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and various issues, including Centre-state relations and financial issues, were discussed. The efforts will be to get the maximum help from



the Centre for projects and development activities, the chief minister said. Sathesnan was sworn in as the chief minister on May 18 after a thumping victory for the Congress-led UDF in the Assembly elections wherein the now ruling front had won 102 seats. The results of the polls, held on April 9, were declared on May 4.

In the elections, LDF and BJP secured 35 and 3 seats, respectively.

## Rajasthan govt official arrested in 2021 SI paper leak case

A depot manager of the Rajasthan State Beverages Corporation Limited has been arrested in connection with the Sub-Inspector (SI) recruitment exam-2021 paper leak case, officials said on Tuesday.

Lokendra Pandya (58), a resident of Dungarpur district, was arrested from his residence by the Rajasthan Police's Special Operations Group. Pandya was later produced before a court, which remanded him to police custody for two days for questioning. Additional Director General (SOG) Vishal Bansal said further interrogation of Pandya is underway to uncover more



links in the case. According to the SOG officials, the case is linked to the alleged paper leak racket involving former Rajasthan Public Service Commission member Babulal Katara. Investigations revealed that Lokendra's brother, Kundan Kumar Pandya, had

allegedly purchased the question papers for Rs 50 lakh. Officials said Kundan had obtained the papers from Katara and shared them within the family.

Lokendra is accused of teaching the leaked papers to his son, daughter and niece ahead of the examination.

## Positive solution on onion issue likely after meeting with Shah: Eknath Shinde



Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Tuesday expressed confidence that a positive solution on issues faced by onion growers would emerge from a meeting convened by Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Onion cultivators have demanded a Minimum Support Price (MSP) of Rs 3,000 for the bulb, Rs 1,500 per quintal subsidy for produce which has been sold, rollback of the export ban, and a detailed and impartial inquiry into the corruption in the onion procurement by the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED).

Shinde said onion growers would not be abandoned. "The Centre and the Maharashtra governments

are working in coordination to provide relief to growers. Onion procurement centres had already been started, and onions were currently being procured at Rs 15.80 per kg," Shinde told reporters in Mumbai. He said appropriate decisions will be taken in the meeting with Shah on Wednesday, and farmers will get relief. Shinde said the demonstrations staged by the Opposition on the onion issue are mainly intended to attract publicity and media attention. He alleged that the erstwhile Congress-led UPA government had failed to provide any relief when prices skyrocketed. "The Centre and Maharashtra governments stand firmly with farmers. All possible efforts are being made to prevent losses to onion growers," the Deputy Chief Minister added.

## Karnataka eyes AI-enabled governance, not just innovation: CS Rajneesh

Chief Secretary Shalini Rajneesh on Tuesday said Karnataka's ambition goes beyond becoming an innovation hub, adding that the state is working to emerge as an AI-enabled governance model by integrating the technology into public administration systems.

She said civil servants, public institutions and citizens must be empowered with AI awareness and digital competencies so that technology adoption remains inclusive and meaningful.

Rajneesh was speaking at a workshop on the Artificial Intelligence Centre of Excellence, held in collaboration with the IndiaAI Mission, where policymakers, researchers, industry experts and government officials gathered to deliberate on one of the most transformative technologies of our time.



Stating that Karnataka has always believed technology must serve a larger public purpose, she said the government recognises AI as a strategic priority.

In recent years, the state has taken significant steps to institutionalise AI within its governance systems, she added. The Karnataka AI Cell, established under the Centre for e-Governance, is playing a critical role in guiding AI adoption, ensuring standardisation, avoiding duplication and promoting safe and responsible implementation across departments, she said.

"Our vision is clear—Karnataka must become a leader in trusted, inclusive and governance-oriented AI innovation," she said.

Rajneesh said this vision aligns closely with the national vision articulated under the IndiaAI Mission, approved by the Government of India, which seeks to democratise compute access, strengthen datasets, develop indigenous AI capabilities and promote ethical and socially impactful AI systems.

## 73.19 percent turnout in HP panchayat polls

### Women voters outnumber men

Over 73 per cent polling was recorded in the first phase of the Himachal Pradesh panchayat elections on Tuesday, with women voters surpassing men in all districts, officials said. Voting for the 1,293 panchayats began at 7 am and concluded peacefully at 3 pm, amid a yellow alert issued for heatwave conditions in Una, Bilaspur, Hamirpur, Kangra, Solan and Sirmour districts.



The highest turnout of 82.44 per cent was recorded in Kullu district, followed by 78.59 per cent in Solan, 77.25 per cent in Una, 76.56 per cent in Sirmour, 75.14 per cent in Shimla, 73.78 per cent in Mandi, 71.22 per cent in Bilaspur, 70.28 per cent in Kangra, 69.93 per cent in Hamirpur, 69.40 per cent in Lahaul and Spiti, 68.12 per

cent in Chamba and 66.12 per cent in Kinnaur.

In a ward in Mandi district, the voting for a panchayat samiti was cancelled as the name of one of the candidates was missing from the ballot paper. "The polling was peaceful across the state. The polling for a panchayat samiti would be held again in one ward in Mandi district as the name

of one of the six candidates was missing from the list," State Chief Election Commissioner Anil Khachi told PTI. Among the women who cast their votes was 113-year-old Manglu Devi. Accompanied by her family members, Manglu Devi of Bhadrog village cast her vote at a Pink Booth set up in Seu gram panchayat in Bilaspur district. She was one of the oldest women to vote in these elections. District Election Officer (Panchayat) and Deputy Commissioner, Bilaspur, Rahul Kumar, lauded Manglu Devi's spirit, saying her participation in this "festival of democracy" will inspire other voters.

More than 16.5 lakh voters are eligible to exercise their franchise in the first phase. Over 9,000 candidates are in the fray for positions of gram panchay-

at members, pradhans, up-pradhans, panchayat samiti members and zila parishad members. The elections are being held using colour-coded ballot papers - white for ward members, yellow for up-pradhans, green for pradhans, pink for panchayat samiti members and blue for zila parishad members.

The State Election Commission said the results for gram panchayat members, pradhans and up-pradhans will be declared later in the day, while those for panchayat samiti and zila parishad seats will be announced on May 31. Around 50.89 lakh voters are eligible to vote in the three-phase polls. They will elect 31,182 public representatives - 3,754 pradhans, 3,754 up-pradhans, 21,654 ward members, 1,769 panchayat samiti members and 251 zila parishad members.

## Special incentives for five mega projects of Rs 89,731 cr in Maharashtra

The Maharashtra government on Tuesday approved special incentives for five mega and ultra-mega industrial projects involving investments worth Rs 89,731 crore, expected to generate around 20,000 direct and indirect jobs across the state.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Industry Department's cabinet sub-committee chaired by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, according to an official statement.

The projects relate to high-technology and future-oriented sectors such as coal gasification and downstream derivatives, solar cell modules, ingots, wafers and panels, electric steel, PET tyre cord and synthetic graphite anode material, it stated.



The projects are expected to accelerate industrial growth in regions including Vidarbha, Marathwada and Nashik, while strengthening Maharashtra's manufacturing ecosystem. The approvals were granted under the state's industrial policy and package scheme of incentives aimed at attracting

large-scale investments, promoting employment generation and creating industrial infrastructure.

"The projects will help expand the state's high-technology manufacturing sector and create opportunities for ancillary industries and supply chains," Fadnavis said.

According to the govern-

ment, the investments would also encourage innovation, research and development, while creating new opportunities for small and medium enterprises. Additionally, local youth would benefit from training and skilling initiatives linked to the projects, improving employability in emerging technology sectors.

## Gadkari reviews quality, maintenance of NH projects in Delhi, Punjab, Haryana

Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari on Tuesday reviewed the quality and maintenance progress of National Highway projects covering 4,335 km in Punjab and 3,332 km in Delhi and Haryana, following inputs received through media and social media platforms.

According to an official statement, during the review, Gadkari emphasised the need to accelerate on-ground execution of highway projects and ensure the timely completion of works. He directed officials and contractors to strengthen coordination and maintain strict adherence to project timelines. The minister stressed the importance of continuous monitoring of project quality and instructed agencies to adopt modern construction technologies and best engineering practices to



enhance asset durability and long-term performance of National Highways. Gadkari underlined the need to improve riding quality and ensure seamless connectivity across key highway corridors in Punjab, Delhi and Haryana. He directed officials to prioritise high standards in construction and maintenance to provide a safer, smoother and more efficient travel experience for commuters. He also called for greater accountability in maintenance oper-

ations and emphasised regular inspections to identify and address deficiencies in a timely manner. The minister further directed officials to undertake advance measures across all highway stretches. He also stressed the importance of effective drainage management, slope protection measures and swift response mechanisms to minimise disruptions during the monsoon season and ensure commuter safety.

## GAMEPLAN FOR AP

Andhra Pradesh is credited with a strange political experimentation. Chandrababu Naidu, who had worked hard to unseat Prime Minister Narendra Modi from power when the latter was chief minister during the 2024-19 term and thereafter too, has crafted an alliance with the BJP and won the polls in 2024. That alliance was the product of a meeting by leaders of two sidelined political establishments – the Jana Sena of actor Pawan Kalyan and the BJP – first, followed by talks Kalyan had with a besieged Telugu Desam leader Naidu. That discussion took place in a jail where the TD chief was hauled in a corruption case by then chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. For the TD, JS and BJP, ouster of Jagan Reddy from power was a matter of first priority for their own survival in politics. Jagan Reddy had carried the ordinary masses with him through a string of social welfare initiatives of the YSRC government. To oust him from power was no easy task. Yet, through a collective, the newly formed three-party combine accomplished that in the 2024 assembly polls. They laughed their way into government.

While these three parties are putting up a façade of unity, indications are that the BJP and the Jana Sena are not comfortable with the manner in which Naidu, carrying his son Nara Lokesh on his back, is seeking to occupy the state's full political stage. A scenario has been created wherein even deputy chief minister Pawan Kalyan has no voice other than for the relatively less-important departments like forests that he handles, while the father-son duo is omnipresent. The Jana Sena rank and file is obviously not comfortable with this. It would now look like, the BJP is biding its time. An advice, reportedly credited to Amit Shah in his recent conversations with Jana Sena leaders, has become sensational – that they should not go hammer and tongs against the YSRC, as “the BJP's alliance with the Telugu Desam is temporary.” This, however, is obvious. The BJP knows pretty well that allying with Naidu would give it little space to grow in Andhra Pradesh. Pawan Kalyan knows as much about the fate of his party.

The JS and the BJP are scary about the way things progress in AP. By the time the next assembly polls are held, the Telugu Desam would seek to script the JS's obituary if only to make the way clear for Nara Lokesh to be the next chief minister. Naidu might like to move to Delhi and have a finger in the pie there too, handling a few major central ministries himself. Such was the game plan for K Chandrashekar Rao when he converted his TRS into the BRS. The electorate was however not willing to play flute. Naidu now keeps praising Prime Minister Narendra Modi every second day. But, the BJP having achieved its objective of neutralizing Modi-baiter Mamata Banejee in West Bengal is bound to review the scenario in Andhra Pradesh sooner or later. Politics is a survival game. No ideology guides it. Friends can turn foes overnight; and vice versa. Naidu, at the height of his glory, has been put on notice. The rest is anybody's guess. Naidu has seen seasons change. The future is unpredictable for all politicians.

## Climate change could significantly worsen summer air quality in future decades

Across the world, air pollution is associated with more early deaths than any other environmental exposure, raising risks of dying from lung cancer, respiratory infection, heart and lung disease and other causes.

Even in Canada, where air pollution is generally considered a low risk, more than 17,000 early deaths and over USD 140 billion in economic damages each year are linked to it.

Pollution from heavy industry or wildfires, for example, can make outdoor air so polluted that it poses immediate health risks. Climate change can worsen air quality as changes to temperature, winds and rainfall enhance emissions, accelerate their transformation and allow them to build up to unhealthy levels.

In our recently published research, my colleagues and I estimated that, by 2100, 100 million Americans could breathe unhealthy air in the summer, seven times more than in 2000. Without action to keep the air clean, these people would face a regular choice of taking steps to protect themselves, like staying inside, or face higher risks of illness and death.

### Growing health risks

Our findings are based on models of the global economy, climate, atmosphere and health. Our approach can leave out factors that could make the situation better or worse. We modelled how climate change could affect air quality alerts and health risks, finding they could double for sensitive groups. Alerts are rare for most people living in Canada or the United States.

However, alert thresholds are lower for sensitive groups, reflecting their higher risks in relatively clean air. Many groups are considered “at risk” from air pollution, including infants and young children, seniors, pregnant people and those with underlying health conditions such as heart and lung disease, cancer, diabetes and mental illness. People who work or exercise outdoors are also at higher risk.

If people follow alert guidance, they reduce exposure to outdoor air pollution. We find that the health benefits of staying inside during an alert are similar regardless of which pollutant causes it.

Seniors above age 65 receive higher benefits each day they adapt, as do young adults aged 18–35 – more than 45 times higher on average.

Everyone, especially sensitive groups, can protect themselves by tracking the air quality in their area and following associated guidance. That guid-



HOWEVER, ALERT THRESHOLDS ARE LOWER FOR SENSITIVE GROUPS, REFLECTING THEIR HIGHER RISKS IN RELATIVELY CLEAN AIR. MANY GROUPS ARE CONSIDERED “AT RISK” FROM AIR POLLUTION, INCLUDING INFANTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN, SENIORS, PREGNANT PEOPLE AND THOSE WITH UNDERLYING HEALTH CONDITIONS SUCH AS HEART AND LUNG DISEASE, CANCER, DIABETES AND MENTAL ILLNESS. PEOPLE WHO WORK OR EXERCISE OUTDOORS ARE ALSO AT HIGHER RISK. IF PEOPLE FOLLOW ALERT GUIDANCE, THEY REDUCE EXPOSURE TO OUTDOOR AIR POLLUTION

ance usually involves limiting strenuous activity outdoors, keeping indoor air clean and, potentially, wearing a well-fitting N95 or P99 mask for high levels of particles or smoke.

Currently, relatively few people are aware of air quality alerts, and fewer comply. Around 15 to 20 per cent of Americans take some steps to reduce their exposure at least once per year.

Compliance is difficult for many who lack the resources to adapt their behaviour, even when they're aware of alerts. For example, outdoor workers and people experiencing homelessness may have limited access to clean indoor spaces.

### Climate change and deregulation

The effect of climate change on air

quality could be more serious than we show because we did not simulate changes to wildfires. In Canada, wildfire smoke is the largest contributor of the most harmful pollutant, fine particulate matter.

Climate change contributes to increased wildfires, like the 2023 season that made Canadian cities some of the most polluted in North America and led to multiple record-breaking particulate pollution in the US.

Our work did not assume anything about future environmental policy or deregulation that could move emissions up or down.

Climate change could erode the air quality gains of the past 50 years of regulation, cutting them in half. So could recent deregulation of the American

fossil-fuel industry, which releases pollutants like nitrogen oxides, sulphur oxides and particulate matter.

We found, instead, that policies to keep climate change from reaching dangerous levels could halt the rise in alerts at mid-century and avoid most of the rise in health risks.

Regardless, equitably protecting health from poor air quality will require action to reduce the emissions that cause air pollution and climate change, as well as boosting people's ability to protect themselves through adaptation.

If poor air and alerts become common, then improving the air tightness, ventilation and filtration of buildings and access to clean indoor spaces becomes more important as a long-term adaptation measure.

## PayPal's online checkout empire is under siege as rivals squeeze its core business

PayPal helped invent online checkout. Nearly three decades later, it's struggling to defend its turf. The iconic online payments company is facing its biggest challenge in nearly three decades of existence. Its core business of customers using the app to check out when shopping online is barely growing and new management has bluntly warned investors that “significant changes” will be needed to fix the company's problems.

One of the biggest success stories of the original dot-com era, PayPal has seen its territory steadily conquered by new and existing competitors, particularly Apple, Shopify, the buy now, pay later companies like Affirm and Klarna, and peer-to-peer money transfer services like Cash App and Zelle, particularly in the past five years.

As a result, PayPal's stock has fallen nearly 40 per cent in the past 12 months. The stock, which soared during the pandemic as millions of Americans started shopping online for groceries and other necessities, has plunged roughly 80 per cent in the past five years as investors worried that PayPal missed an opportunity to leverage its name recognition and dominance in online payments and allowed its competitors to take market share that will be hard to recover.

Investors' concerns are not about profitability, although PayPal did warn investors that 2026 profits would be down from the previous year. The concerns lie more with how PayPal will grow and maintain its market with increasing competition.

PayPal said in its first-quarter earnings report that branded checkout – the company's most profitable business by margin – grew just 2 per cent. While the company noted there had been a slowdown in its European division and other discretionary purchases, a growth of only 2 per cent in one of the fastest growing industries alarmed investors



AS A RESULT, PAYPAL'S STOCK HAS FALLEN NEARLY 40 PER CENT IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS. THE STOCK, WHICH SOARED DURING THE PANDEMIC AS MILLIONS OF AMERICANS STARTED SHOPPING ONLINE FOR GROCERIES AND OTHER NECESSITIES, HAS PLUNGED ROUGHLY 80 PER CENT IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS AS INVESTORS WORRIED THAT PAYPAL MISSED AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEVERAGE ITS NAME RECOGNITION AND DOMINANCE IN ONLINE PAYMENTS AND ALLOWED ITS COMPETITORS TO TAKE MARKET SHARE THAT WILL BE HARD TO RECOVER

and shares dropped nearly 8 per cent.

The pressures on PayPal's business have led to some dramatic changes at the top of the company. The board ousted CEO Alex Chriss in February and replaced him with Enrique Lores, the former president and CEO of HP Inc., and a member of PayPal's board. Lores announced a cost-cutting plan that includes reorganising the company into three divisions and relying more on artificial intelligence. He told investors at May's shareholder meeting he expects to update them on the company's turnaround plan “in a few months.”

The biggest threat to PayPal's dominance has been Apple and its Apple Pay service. Apple rolled out Apple Pay in 2014, which allowed Apple customers to store virtual credit and debit cards on their devices to pay online. The company also integrated tap-to-pay technologies into iPhones and the Apple Watch to allow Apple users to pay

for items at stores in person.

So, while PayPal has embedded itself as a checkout button on countless merchant websites, that checkout button has become less useful when a customer can store their payment information on their phone and pay using a fingerprint or a glance of their face, analysts said.

This has caused customers to drift away from PayPal as a default payment method. PayPal in 2019 controlled roughly 9 per cent of e-commerce in the US and globally, with Apple Pay having a 3 per cent market share, according to analysts at UBS. Six years later, Apple overtook PayPal as the dominant checkout option, and its market share is expected to continue to grow as Apple rolls out Apple Pay to non-iOS users.

There is also the growing popularity of buy now, pay later companies such as Klarna and Affirm. While PayPal now offers buy now, pay later services like its pay-in-four plan and

longer-term monthly payment plans, it lags its major competitors, including Affirm, which was founded by one of PayPal's founders, Max Levchin.

“PayPal has had a lot of trouble evolving from being just a way to pay on your desktop computer,” said Sanjay Sakhrani, an analyst who covers credit cards and payment methods at investment bank Keefe Bruyette & Woods.

Going forward, investors worry that if the branded checkout business continues to lag behind its competitors, it could spell future trouble for PayPal. Wall Street analysts have questioned whether Venmo or Braintree may be spun off from the company, noting that Lores was previously responsible for splitting HP into two separate companies.

Earlier this year, PayPal's stock jumped briefly on unconfirmed reports that the payments company Stripe was interested in acquiring all or parts of PayPal.

## Syrians living in tent settlements struggle to return home after Assad's fall

Sobhih al-Saleh thought she would finally leave her tent and return home the moment a rebel offensive in late 2024 ousted then-President Bashar Assad, and brought an end to more than a decade of conflict.

But she still lives in the al-Karama camp, a tent settlement in the northwest town of Atme in Idlib province near the Turkish border, with her husband, seven sons and four daughters.

“I went and saw my house, and it was completely razed to the ground,” she told The Associated Press about her home in al-Lataminah on the other side of Idlib province that she left at the height of the conflict. Though more than half the camps' residents have left, like many other Syrians living in poverty, she can't afford to rebuild her home and return.

So in the meantime, she continues to live in misery. Every year, the rain leaks through the tent, and every summer she and the estimated 40,000 others still in that sprawling camp have to deal with the sweltering heat and flies.

Syria's uprising-turned-civil war from 2011 until late 2024 battered the country and plunged more than 90 per cent of its population of around 26 million into poverty. Rebuilding it will cost hundreds of billions of dollars, according to UN figures.

The war killed 500,000 people, wounded more than 1 million and displaced more than half of Syria's prewar population of 23 million.

The government under interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa has made strides in restoring ties between Syria and the international community, waiving crippling sanctions and promising sweeping reforms.

More than a year after the war had ended, more than 7 million Syrians displaced within the country couldn't return home. A million of them still live in tents, like al-Saleh, according to the United Nations.

Al-Sharaa has vowed that displaced Syrians will no longer live in tents and will have alternative housing by the end of 2027. Saudi Arabia has pledged to support this initiative with USD 1.5 billion.

But despite major investor commitments and partnerships being signed to bring jobs and money into the country, the



scale of the devastation means that alleviating poverty and bringing people back home will take time.

The World Bank estimates that postwar reconstruction would cost around USD 216 billion. Almost 18 months after the fall of the five-decade Assad family rule, large parts of Syria's main cities like Aleppo and Raqqa in the north, and Homs in the centre, as well as parts of Damascus, remain in ruins.

At the same time, time isn't on the government's side. Humanitarian agencies, which for years have experienced major budget cuts, continue to reduce the size of their programs that millions of Syrians still rely on.

“Where are we going to get money to rebuild? We're barely able to provide ourselves with bread and water,” al-Saleh said. “No aid has come to the camp since the liberation.”

Most recently, the World Food Program announced on May 13 that it reduced by half its food assistance program to the most vulnerable, which once supported 1.3 million people. It also cut a bread subsidy program that millions relied on.

At the same time, inflation has surged in Syria, making it difficult for people to save adequately to rebuild.

“The cost of building materials has surged beyond comprehension. I can barely afford to take my medications,” said Abdulhamid Abu Alaa, who lives with his family in the same camp as al-Saleh.

He said that he and many others are still paying off debts from loans they took to help cover their basic expenses.

## Google Separates Search History and Personalisation Controls Amid AI Push

Google is introducing a fresh set of privacy and activity management controls that aim to give users clearer authority over how their data is stored and used across its services. According to a report by a famous publication, the tech giant is rolling out two independent settings — “Search Services History” and “Personalised Recommendations” — replacing parts of the older Web & App Activity and Search Personalisation system. The rollout has reportedly started through email alerts and in-app notifications, with broader availability expected in the coming weeks. Under the updated structure, Google is separating activity tracking from recommendation-based personalisation. Until now, both functions were closely tied to existing controls like Web & App Activity and Search Personalisation. The new system is designed to make it easier for users to decide exactly what information Google can save and how that information can influence recommendations. As per the report, the new “Search Services History” setting will determine whether Google is allowed



to store user activity across services such as Search, Maps, Shopping, Flights, Hotels, Translate, and News. This may include search queries, browsing activity linked to Google Search services, and interactions involving AI-generated responses. Breaking news alerts Meanwhile, the “Personalised Recommendations” option is expected to control whether Google can use a person’s activity and preferences to tailor search results and recommendations across platforms. The update also introduces a separate “Saved Media” section under Search Services History. According to the report, this feature will allow Google to save media

files including images, videos, audio recordings, and other files used during Google Lens searches, voice searches, and Search Live interactions.

Users are expected to get the flexibility to disable Saved Media independently without switching off the broader Search Services History setting. Google will also reportedly provide an option to delete specific saved files from activity history manually. Google says the addition is intended to improve interactive AI and visual search experiences. For instance, the feature could help users revisit previous Google Lens searches or continue earlier Search Live conversations

without starting over. The report further states that existing user preferences will automatically transfer to the new settings framework. Users who previously enabled Web & App Activity or Search Personalisation will continue to have the equivalent new settings activated. Likewise, those who had disabled the earlier options will remain opted out under the updated system. In addition, any existing auto-delete settings for activity history will reportedly carry over automatically, ensuring users do not need to manually reconfigure their privacy preferences. Google’s latest move comes as the company continues integrating AI-powered experiences more deeply into Search and related services. By separating history storage from recommendation personalisation, Google appears to be responding to growing user demand for more transparent and granular privacy controls. India news analysis According to the report, the updated settings may begin appearing a few days after users receive notification emails, while the full rollout is expected to continue gradually over the next several weeks.

## Revanth to review Palamuru irrigation projects next week

Wanaparthy: As part of preparations for Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy’s visit to the integrated Palamuru district in the first week of June, Excise Minister Jupally Krishna Rao inspected the Edula reservoir, here, on Tuesday. Revanth is scheduled to review the completion of the Palamuru-Rangareddy Project and drinking water supply plans for the integrated Palamuru and Rangareddy districts. Ahead of the CM’s review, Jupally visited the Edula reservoir pump house and enquired with irrigation officials about the present status and completed works in the presence of MLAs Thudi Megha Reddy, Dr K Rajesh Reddy, and Vamsi Krishna. Explaining the reservoir

project, Irrigation SE Parthasarathi said the project was designed in five stages. “Water from the Srisailem Dam is being lifted and filled into the Narlapur (Anjanagiri) reservoir, from where it is again lifted to fill the Edula reservoir, which has a storage capacity of 6.55 TMC ft,” he said. From the Edula reservoir, irrigation and drinking water will be supplied to the integrated Palamuru, Ranga Reddy, and Vikarabad districts through the Vattem, Udandapur and, KP Lakshmidivipalli reservoirs. Officials explained that 10 motors have been installed to lift water to the reservoir located 134 m above the Edula surge pool. Each pump has a capacity of 1.45 MW, enabling lifting of two



TMC ft a day. The project has been designed to lift 90 TMC ft over 45 days each year. The minister enquired about the efficiency, cost, and durability of the motor pumps. District collectors of

Wanaparthy and Nagarkurnool Adarsh Surabhi and Hemanth Keshav Patil, respectively, accompanied the minister.

**‘Your vote is your strength in democracy’: Kejriwal urges Punjab voters to participate in municipal elections**



New Delhi: As Punjab voted in crucial municipal elections on Tuesday, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) National Convener Arvind Kejriwal appealed to people across the state to exercise their franchise, calling voting a powerful democratic tool that determines the future and welfare of families. Polling began amid tight security arrangements across Punjab for the election of councillors in 1,896 wards spread across eight municipal corporations, 75 municipal councils and 20 nagar panchayats. The elections are being seen as politically significant ahead of the Punjab Assembly elections scheduled in early 2027. In a post on X, Kejriwal said, “I request all voters to definitely exercise their right to vote in the ongoing municipal elections in Punjab. Your vote is your strength in democracy... It resolves your small and big problems and determines the well-being of your entire family.

A total of 35.45 lakh voters are eligible to cast their votes till 5 P.M. Electors were seen arriving at polling stations early in the morning, even before the voting process officially commenced at 8 A.M. “There has been no report of any delay in starting the poll process,” a state electoral officer told IANS. To ensure peaceful and fair polling, the State Election Commission deployed around 32,000 police personnel along with nearly 35,000 election staff across the state. The eight municipal corporations where polling is underway are Abohar, Mohali, Moga, Bathinda, Barnala, Batala, Kapurthala and Pathankot. According to official figures, 7,555 candidates are in the fray. Of these, 1,801 candidates belong to the AAP, 1,550 to the Congress, 1,316 to the BJP, 1,251 to the Shiromani Akali Dal, and 96 to the Bahujan Samaj Party. Apart from them, 1,528 Independent candidates and 13 others are also contesting. The electorate includes 18,33,712 male voters, 17,11,635 women voters and 220 voters registered under the “other” category. Ahead of the elections, the Punjab and Haryana High Court dismissed a Public Interest Litigation challenging the Election Commission’s decision to conduct polling through ballot papers instead of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs). A Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Sheel Nagu and Justice Sanjiv Berry rejected the plea, observing that the shift from EVM-VVPAT to ballot papers could not be termed illegal merely because it was carried out through an administrative communication.

## Irrigation Projects’ Works: Officials told to complete land acquisition in a week

Minister Jupally Krishna Rao directed officials to speed up the ongoing irrigation project works in Nagarkurnool and Wanaparthy districts and complete the pending land acquisition process within the next one week. A comprehensive review meeting was held on Tuesday in Nagarkurnool constituency. The Minister reviewed the progress of major irrigation projects including the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme, Mahatma Gandhi Kalwakurthy Lift Irrigation Scheme, Dindi Project,

Umamaheswaram Balancing Reservoir, Achampet Lift Irrigation Scheme, Markandeya Reservoir, and Karnetandra Balancing Reservoir. Officials explained the status of canal construction works, reservoir-related activities, pump house installations, electricity connections, and land acquisition progress in both districts. Pending compensation payments to farmers and unresolved land acquisition cases were also discussed during the meeting. Jupally directed officials to maintain transparency in

the land acquisition process and ensure that farmers do not face difficulties. He also instructed authorities to clear compensation payments without delay.

Officials informed the Minister that construction works in certain areas had slowed down due to pending land acquisition issues. The Minister directed district collectors to immediately resolve such problems.



### AC conducts surprise inspection of rice mills



As part of efforts to speed up paddy procurement process, Additional collector (revenue) Vinod Kumar conducted surprise inspections on Tuesday at rice mills in Pebbair and Srirangapur mandals. He visited rice mills in Kambalapur, Srirangapur, Rangapur and nearby areas of Pebbair to review the ground-level situation. The AC instructed mill operators to ensure that paddy lorries coming from procurement centres are unloaded immediately. He advised them to prepare additional storage space in advance to avoid any problems in storing paddy in the coming days. Kumar directed the mills to increase hamalis and complete unloading quickly so that lorries don't have to wait for long. He inspected warehouses and vacant spaces within the mill premises and instructed officials to arrange for storing additional paddy stocks. He warned that strict action would be taken against millers if any irregularities are found in paddy cutting or weighing.

### Govt to transfer money to card holders for ration purchase



In a major relief measure for low and middle-income households, the Delhi government has significantly expanded eligibility for ration cards by raising the annual income limit under the Public Distribution System (PDS) from Rs 1.2 lakh to Rs 2.5 lakh. The Cabinet decision is expected to bring lakhs of additional families within the ambit of subsidised food support across the national capital. India news analysis

The move, approved by the Delhi Cabinet under Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, was announced by Food and Supplies Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa, who said the revised income ceiling reflects current economic realities and rising living costs. According to the minister, the earlier income threshold had become outdated and excluded many genuinely deserving families from accessing subsidised ration benefits. The government will credit money to Aadhaar-linked bank accounts of ration card holders to enable them to purchase essential commodities, Sirsa said

Officials said the latest hike follows a phased revision of the eligibility criteria. The income limit was first increased from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 1.2 lakh before now being expanded further to Rs 2.5 lakh. The government said the decision forms part of its broader welfare agenda focused on strengthening food security and improving access to essential services for economically weaker sections. Alongside the revised eligibility norms, the Delhi government also announced plans to modernise the ration distribution system through a Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)-enabled mechanism aimed at increasing transparency and reducing leakages. Officials explained that all transactions under the proposed system would be digitally recorded and reconciled, creating stronger audit trails and real-time monitoring of subsidy utilisation. The government said the CBDC-enabled ration system would gradually be rolled out across ration shops and integrated with banking networks, including private banks in the future

## Transportation in Villages Eased, Economic Activity Boosted

\* Over 3.61 lakh rural connectivity projects completed in five years under MNREGA. \* Roads, culverts, and footpaths were built to improve transport and reduce monsoon disruptions. \* Better connectivity has boosted farmers' incomes, and local employment opportunities are created as access to education and health services improves. Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya has directed officials of the Rural Development Department to prioritise improving internal lanes and connectivity in villages. The initiative, undertaken under MNREGA, is transforming rural infrastructure by constructing roads, culverts, and footpaths, thereby easing transportation and boosting economic activity. According to the Rural Development Department, more than 3.61 lakh rural connectivity projects have been completed across the state in the last five years, from 2021-22 to the present. These projects include CC roads, interlocking roads, and check roads, which have enhanced transportation and improved cleanliness in gram panchayats. Culverts have been constructed to minimise inconvenience from rivers and streams, ensuring all-weather connectivity, particularly during the monsoon season.

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya has directed officials of the Rural Development Department to prioritise improving internal lanes and connectivity in villages. The



initiative, undertaken under MNREGA, is transforming rural infrastructure by constructing roads, culverts, and footpaths, thereby easing transportation and boosting economic activity. According to the Rural Development Department, more than 3.61 lakh rural connectivity projects have been completed across the state in the last five years, from 2021-22 to the present. These projects include CC roads, interlocking roads, and check roads, which have enhanced transportation and improved cleanliness in gram panchayats. Culverts have been constructed to minimise inconvenience from rivers and streams, ensuring all-weather connectivity, particularly during the monsoon season.

In villages where major vehicular roads are not fea-

sible, pedestrian paths and small connecting roads have been built. These routes are especially beneficial for women and children, enabling them to reach schools, health centres, and other essential facilities safely. Drainage systems have also been constructed alongside roads to prevent damage during rain, ensuring the sustainability of rural infrastructure. India news analysis Improved road networks have facilitated the transport of agricultural produce such as vegetables, grains, and milk to nearby markets. This has increased farmers' incomes and boosted local trade, while simultaneously creating employment opportunities for rural construction workers. Instruction. The enhanced connectivity has also allowed marginalised communities, including women and Scheduled

Castes/Tribes, to access education, healthcare, and government services more easily. Commissioner of Rural Development, G.S. Priyadarshi, emphasised that rural connectivity projects are empowering villages both economically and socially. He noted that infrastructure development is being undertaken alongside employment generation, strengthening the rural economy and improving the socio-economic status of communities by linking them to urban centres and markets. The initiative was meant to address longstanding challenges of rural transport and infrastructure. By combining employment generation with connectivity improvements, the state is ensuring that rural communities are better integrated into the mainstream economy, paving the way for sustainable development.

## Yogendra Yadav, Prashant Bhushan Raise Concerns Over Voter Deletions After Supreme Court's SIR Verdict

After the Supreme Court of India upheld the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise, activists Yogendra Yadav and Prashant Bhushan voiced strong objections, alleging that the process resulted in large-scale voter deletions and weakened constitutional safeguards. India news analysis Yogendra Yadav, who was among the litigants in the case, said he chose not to attend the court proceedings because, in his view, the outcome had effectively been decided long before the final judgment. He argued that the Election Commission continued implementing successive phases of the SIR exercise while hearings were still underway, turning the process into what he described as a "fait accompli." He further claimed that the court shifted its focus away from examining the constitutional validity of the exercise and instead concentrated on grievance redressal mechanisms. According to Yadav, this allowed the electoral revision process to continue without addressing broader concerns over alleged voter disenfranchisement.

Senior advocate Prashant Bhushan also criticised the timing of the verdict, arguing that elections in several states



had already been conducted using revised electoral rolls. He alleged that a significant number of voters were removed during the process and described the judgment as a setback for electoral transparency and judicial oversight. The Supreme Court, however, ruled that the SIR exercise was

constitutionally valid and consistent with the Representation of the People Act. The court observed that periodic revision of voter rolls helps maintain the integrity of the electoral process and does not amount to a citizenship determination exercise.

## Jasbir Jassi opposes BJP over Yo Yo Honey Singh's Anti-Drug Campaign: Saving Punjab or provoke it?

Mumbai: Punjabi singer Jasbir Jassi condemned BJP for appointing rapper Honey Singh as the brand ambassador for Punjab's anti-drug campaign.

Honey Singh met senior BJP leader Tarun Chugh on Tuesday to discuss the growing drug crisis in Punjab and its impact on the families.

Through his latest social media post, Jasbir questioned BJP's decision given Honey Singh's well-known struggles with drug addiction.

Jasbir said that while he usually refrains from commenting on political matters, he decided to speak on the issue since it concerns his beloved Punjab.

He shared that he felt disappointed after seeing BJP National General



Secretary Tarun Chugh's post for Honey Singh.

"The person who pushed the Punjab youth towards drug use is now being made the ambassador for the campaign to save the same youth," the singer was heard saying.

He said that he felt either Tarun Chugh does not understand Punjab or is deliberately trying to provoke the people. According to him, these are the only two explana-

tions for choosing Honey Singh for such a campaign.

Jasbir added that people from cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Lucknow, and Bengaluru are not capable of fully understanding Punjab's culture. He called Punjab a "khajana", which people are only trying to exploit.

The singer further recalled meeting Tarun Chugh and even discussing Punjab-related issues with him.

While he did not name anyone, Jasbir shared that he told Tarun Chugh that several leaders in the state are disliked by the people of Punjab.

On Tuesday, Tarun Chugh shared a couple of pictures with Honey Singh on X (Earlier called Twitter) and wrote in Hindi: "Today, I met Punjab's pride, the youth icon, and renowned singer Yo Yo Honey Singh, and we had a meaningful discussion on the shared resolve to make Punjab drug-free. The campaign to free Punjab from the grip of drugs is continuously moving forward by bringing together every section of society. 'If Honey Singh can make a comeback, then the youth of Punjab can also make a fresh start.' Let us all come together and pledge to make Punjab drug-free.

## Drishyam 3 Worldwide Box Office Day 3: Becomes the Third Malayalam Film of 2026 to Enter the ₹100 Crore Club Globally



The present movie starring Mohanlal, Drishyam 3 is leading at the worldwide box office and performing brilliantly. After registering the second-biggest opening for a Malayalam film, the momentum is kept over the next two days. Fascinatingly, the overseas market has contributed a larger share than the Indian market. Drishyam 3 box office collection day 3 assists the film in quickly scoring a global century in just 3 days. Mohanlal's Drishyam 3 received different reactions on various social media platforms. The level of popularity is high in Kerala. It has performed really well so far in the domestic market. By the end of day 3, the domestic collection of the Malayalam movie box office 2026 stands at 47.9 crore gross. Overseas, it has grossed 65 crore, with the biggest chunk coming from the Middle East region, which is about 36 crore approx. It merges with the Indian and Drishyam 3 worldwide collection, the 3-day worldwide box office collection stands at 112.9 crore gross. By entering the ₹100 crore clubs within just three days, Drishyam 3 has turned the third Malayalam film of 2026 to get the milestone at the worldwide box office. The film joined the best list alongside Aadu 3, which earned ₹121.31 crore globally. Vaazha 2 has collected a massive amount of ₹238.46 crore. Going by its strong box office drive, Drishyam 3 now looks well on course to turn into the second Mollywood film of 2026 to cross the ₹200 crore marks universal after Vaazha 2. The movie is directed by Jeethu Joseph and was released in theatres on May 21. It also stars Meena, Ansiba Hassan, Esther Anil, Asha Sharath and Siddique.

## Vishal thanks CM Vijay for permitting TN theatres to have five shows for first seven days of a film's release



Chennai: Actor, producer and director Vishal has now thanked Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Vijay for permitting all theatres in Tamil Nadu to screen five shows a day for the first seven days of a Tamil film's release. Taking to his X timeline to express his gratitude, Vishal wrote, "Thank you dear @CMOTamilnadu #Vijay avargale, darling of the masses and the most prolific actor turned politician for understanding the current situation in the film industry and implementing five shows a day for all films for the first seven days of the film's theatrical release." He went on to add, "Looking forward to more GOs passed for the general public in all sectors bringing about relief and progressive growth. A big whistle from all of us. @TVKVijayHQ." Vishal was not the only one to welcome the Tamil Nadu government's decision to grant permission to theatres to have five shows a day. Actor Sibi, the son of actor Sathyaraj, too welcomed the government's decision. Taking to his X timeline, Sibi Sathyaraj wrote, "This is great news for Tamil Cinema!..Thanks to our honourable CM @TVKVijayHQ anna! @CMOTamilnadu." For the unaware, the Tamil Nadu government has now permitted all theatres in the state to have five shows for new Tamil releases for the first seven days. government has also permitted theatres to have five shows on festival days, public holidays and on Saturdays and Sundays. The Chief Minister's decision comes in the wake of a meeting he had with a delegation from the film industry that met him on May 16 and placed before him a list of requests. Meanwhile, Vishal is currently shooting for director Sundar C's upcoming action entertainer 'Purushan', which features him and actress Tamannaah Bhatia in the lead, in Kolkata. Sources close to the unit say that once the unit completes its 15 day schedule in Kolkata, it is expected to next head to Goa for its next schedule.

## 'Nagabandham' creates buzz ahead of grand worldwide release

The upcoming mythological action-adventure film Nagabandham: The Secret Treasure is rapidly emerging as one of the most anticipated Indian movies of 2026. With grand visuals, ancient mysteries, divine powers, and high-octane action sequences, the film is generating strong excitement across the country ahead of its worldwide theatrical release on July 3.

Directed by Abhishek Nama and starring Virat Karna in the lead role, the pan-India project is being mounted on a massive scale under the NIK Studios banner by produc-



ers Kishore Annapureddy and Nishita Nagireddy, while Abhishek Pictures presents the film.

Recently, the makers organized a grand 3D standee curtain raiser

event at AMB Cinemas in Hyderabad. Lead actors Nabha Natesh and Virat Karna attended the launch, which witnessed an enthusiastic response from fans.

The film features a strong ensemble cast including Jagapathi Babu, Mahesh Manjrekar, Aishwarya Menon, and Rishab Sawhney in pivotal roles. Industry insiders are already calling the movie one of the biggest visual spectacles in recent Indian cinema.

Adding to the hype, Zee Studios has acquired the North India theatrical rights, while Amazon Prime Video is expected to stream the film digitally after its theatrical run. Telugu satellite rights have reportedly been bagged by Star Maa.

## 'Trikaal' gears up for release with mythological thriller backdrop

The upcoming mythological fictional thriller Trikaal is creating strong buzz ahead of its worldwide theatrical release on May 28. Inspired by the spiritual mysteries rooted in Sanatana Dharma, the film promises a unique cinematic experience blending mythology, suspense, supernatural powers, and intense thrills.

Directed by Mani Tellaguti, the film stars Shraddha Das in the lead role, alongside Master Mahendran, Ajay, and senior actress Aamani in key roles. The project is produced by Radhika and Srinivas, while Chaganti Production LLP is presenting and distributing the film worldwide.

The recently released trailer, songs, and promotional content have significantly raised expectations among movie lovers. Audiences have especially appreciated the forest-based visuals, gripping narrative, haunting background score, and high-quality VFX work. The emotional track "Amma" has also emerged as one of the major highlights, striking an emotional chord with listeners.



Speaking about the film, director Mani Tellaguti said that Trikaal revolves around a powerful force that emerges during dark times and combines spiritual elements of Sanatana Dharma with thrilling cinematic moments.

The film's music is composed by Harshavardhan Rameshwar, known for his work in films like Arjun Reddy and Animal. Industry reports also suggest that the film has generated impressive business in North India, with Hindi satellite and dubbing rights sold for a fancy price.

# Royal Carnage Brigade storm into IPL final

Dharamsala: Skipper Rajat Patidar played a stunning knock of unbeaten 93 off just 33 balls as defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru made short work of Gujarat Titans by 92 runs to enter their second successive final. Batting first, RCB took advantage of a questionable selection call made by GT management to post 254 for 5 in 20 overs. Patidar hit nine sixes apart from five fours and also took 28 runs off one over from surprise selection Kulwant Khejroliya, who replaced the talented Arshad Khan, recently selected for India A. India news analysis Veterans Virat Kohli and Krunal Pandya contributed 43 each while Jason Holder had figures of 2 for 39. In reply, GT lost half its side within the powerplay, including Sai Sudharsan, Shubman Gill and Jos

Buttler before they were all out for 162 in 19.3 overs. Rahul Tewatia scored 68 off 43 balls. Patidar turned the game on its head with a sensational 33-ball 93, smashing nine sixes and five fours after surviving two dropped chances, as RCB plundered 86 runs in the last five overs to seize complete control of the contest. In fact, they got 114 runs off last six overs.

The innings began at a furious pace with Venkatesh Iyer (19) taking on Mohammed Siraj with audacious strokeplay, including three early boundaries, before Kagiso Rabada dismissed him for 19 soon after being hit for a six. During his lively spell, Rabada also tested Virat Kohli with sharp bounce and pace in an engaging duel, but the RCB talisman weathered the challenge to score a brisk 43. Alongside

Devdutt Padikkal (30), Kohli ensured RCB maintained momentum, helping the side to a commanding 76 for one in the powerplay. GT clawed their way back through disciplined middle-overs bowling. Rashid Khan delivered tight overs while Jason Holder struck twice in three deliveries to remove Kohli and Padikkal, slowing RCB's charge signifi-



cantly. Kulwant Khejroliya too kept things tidy initially as the Titans appeared to have regained control. Brief Scores RCB 254 for 5 in 20 overs (Rajat Patidar 93 no, Virat Kohli 43, Krunal Pandya 43, Jason Holder 2/39). GT 162 for 19.3 overs (Rahul Tewatia 68, Jacob Duffy 3/39, Bhuvneshwar Kumar 2/28, Josh Hazlewood 1/39, Raskh Salam).

cantly. Kulwant Khejroliya too kept things tidy initially as the Titans appeared to have regained control. Brief Scores RCB 254 for 5 in 20 overs (Rajat Patidar 93 no, Virat Kohli 43, Krunal Pandya 43, Jason Holder 2/39). GT 162 for 19.3 overs (Rahul Tewatia 68, Jacob Duffy 3/39, Bhuvneshwar Kumar 2/28, Josh Hazlewood 1/39, Raskh Salam).

## Iniyar wins double gold at Commonwealth Chess Championship

Grandmaster Iniyar Panneerselvam clinched double gold after winning both the Rapid and Blitz titles at the Commonwealth Chess Championship in Sri Lanka. The Tamil Nadu player scored 6.5 points from seven rounds in each format to emerge champion in both sections. In the Rapid event, Grandmaster Srihari took the silver medal, while GM Mitrabha secured bronze. India news analysis In the Blitz competition, Grandmaster Rohith Krishna finished with the silver medal, while



Srihari added another podium finish

with bronze. The Classical title was won by Mitrabha, while Sri Lankan player Ranindu Liyanage claimed silver and Srihari settled for bronze.

The tournament, held from May 16 to 26, featured players from India, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Mauritius, Maldives, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Kenya, Malaysia, Singapore, Scotland and Canada. Conducted across Blitz, Rapid and Classical formats, the event had 96 players competing in the Open section.

## 76th Jr National Basketball C'ship: Women's division all set for last 8 clash Puducherry



The 76th Junior National Basketball Championship, underway at the Rajiv Gandhi Indoor Stadium in Puducherry, enters into the knockout stage mathes with the completion of the pairing for the women's division. In the quarter-finals, Chhattisgarh will take on Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu will meet Rajasthan, Kerala will face the winners of Puducherry and Haryana, and Karnataka will clash with the winners of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. India news analysis The men's pairings will be finalised after two more critical matches in league Group A: Kerala vs Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh vs Delhi. Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, and Uttar Pradesh have all confirmed their knockout stage berths and will go into their final matches later today. In Group B, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Karnataka confirmed their quarter-final berths, while Chandigarh moved into the pre-quarter finals. From Level 2 men, Mizoram and Telangana have successfully advanced to the pre-quarter finals. Final League match results MEN: Haryana 108 (Sachin 28, Rahul 27, Ajay 23, Mayank Khanchi 19) beat Punjab 87 (Divjot Singh 27, Jobandeep Singh 20, Suhaan Mash 12); Rajasthan 85 (Bupendra Singh Rathore 33, Muhammed Raza Khan 17, Divyansh Shekhawat 15, Arpit Meena 14) beat Chandigarh 84 (Ajay 21, Tushar 20, Nikhil 19, Abhishek Yadav 14); Uttar Pradesh 86 (Ansh Tomar 16, Sanjay Mahakunda 13, Anuj Divakar 10) beat Tamil Nadu 59 (Vishal V 15, Yadesh Kumar 10) (Monday late match). WOMEN: Group A: Karnataka 77 (Nilaaya Reddy 26, Nidhi Umesh 20, Nireesksha B C 15, Shravani Shivanna 10) beat Punjab 54 (Priya 25, Tishmeet Kaur 13); Group A: Tamil Nadu 82 (M Kaviya 29, Rithika Rajasekharan 17, Sumithra Devi 12) beat Haryana 42 (Kanika 13); Group B: Maharashtra 65 (Anvee Kulkarni 21, Ruchi Sawant 19, Vedika Singh 12) beat Rajasthan 40 (Ankita 9, Tanisha Sharma 9); Group B: Kerala 67 (Cloudia Onden 18, Arthika K 16, Subhadra Jayakumar 15) beat Uttar Pradesh 49 (Harshitha Chouhan 16); Punjab 70 (Priya 22, Pawanpreet Kaur 15, Tushmeet Kaur 11) beat Chhattisgarh 69 (Rumi Konwar 22, Anjani 14, Adit Kodape 11, Anjali Kodape 10) (Monday late match).

## Failing to qualify for ODI WC hit us hard, don't want to go through that feeling in T20 WC: Hayley Matthews

New Delhi: Ten years after the West Indies marked one of the most memorable nights in women's cricket history, captain Hayley Matthews acknowledged that failing to qualify for the 2025 Women's ODI World Cup 'hit them hard', stating the team wants to avoid experiencing such a setback again as the current squad possesses both the quality and confidence to deliver another outstanding Women's T20 World Cup performance. As the Caribbean side prepares for the upcoming tournament in England, Matthews says the disappointment of recent setbacks has helped shape a more resilient and determined group. The West Indies endured a difficult stretch in ICC competitions over the past two years. They narrowly missed a place in the final of the 2024 Women's T20 World Cup after a heartbreaking semi-final defeat to New Zealand, before suffering the bigger blow of failing to qualify for the 2025 Women's Cricket World Cup.



Failing to qualify for the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup last year hit us hard. Everyone who was there certainly felt it, and we

don't want to go through a feeling like that again," Matthews wrote in her ICC column. "Now we are back at a competition we reached the semi-finals in two years ago, and we have belief. We have matured from the experience of missing out and while we still retain the sting of that recent disappointment, it is matched by the excitement of attending an international showcase and the glow of a decade-old triumph," she said. The all-rounder, who was part of the

West Indies side that stunned Australia in the unforgettable 2016 final at Eden Gardens, feels the present squad possesses greater depth and versatility than the title-winning unit from a decade ago. "I definitely think that when you look at our team and how players have grown, like Chinelle Henry and some of the other youngsters that we have within the group that are able to make an impact in certain points of the game, I definitely feel that we have a

stronger team than we did then. It's about us showing up, having our plans in order and being really prepared. Once we do that, we have a good chance of progressing well," she added.

Matthews also reflected on the rapidly evolving nature of T20 cricket, admitting she has worked consciously on expanding her batting range to keep pace with the demands of the modern game. "We are always looking for ways to adapt and keep up with the improving standards around the world. Being able to adapt a lot quicker is something that I've been trying to work on recently, as well as adding more shots to my game that hopefully I have enough confidence to bring out when the World Cup comes around," she wrote. Preparation for the tournament will include a tri-series in Ireland involving Pakistan and Ireland, as well as a training camp in England. Matthews believes the exposure to local conditions could prove crucial during the World Cup. "As a squad, we feel we are familiar with English conditions. The crowds are always really good in those competitions, which leads

to a great atmosphere, and we are looking forward to more of the same this summer. In the lead-up to the World Cup, we have a training camp in England, while we are also travelling to Ireland to play in similar conditions in a tri-series, also including Pakistan," she mentioned. Despite entering the tournament outside the list of favourites, Matthews believes that could work in the West Indies' favour, much like it did in 2016. "It is hard to believe it is 10 years since we lifted this trophy on that famous night at Eden Gardens. I was only a teenager, but that night defines what this team can achieve at its very best. Winning a World Cup is the pinnacle of a cricketer's journey, so we certainly take a lot of pride from that experience. Ten years on, it would be great if we could redo a feat like that. It might mean even a bit more in a time like this, where we probably aren't one of the top three or four teams people have pinned to win it. Hopefully, we can prove those people wrong," the all-rounder said. The West Indies begin their campaign on June 13 against defending champions New Zealand in Southampton.