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Rs.35,000 Cr Kharkhoda Plant Inaugurated by Modi, Japan PM

MARUTI SUZUKI

MARUTI SUZUKI VEHICLE MANUFACTURING FACILITY
IMT KHARKHODA, HARYANA

INAUGURATED BY

SHRI NARENDRA MODI H.E. MS. SANAE TAKAICHI
PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN

2026



New Delhi, July 2: Maruti Suzuki India on Thursday inaugurated its most advanced vehicle manufacturing facility at IMT Kharkhoda in Haryana, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi jointly dedicating the plant through video conferencing during the India-Japan Joint Economic Forum in New Delhi.

The plant, spread across 800 acres, the integrated manufacturing complex has been developed with an adjoining supplier park and is designed to become one of the world's largest vehicle manufacturing facilities when fully operational. The plant has started operations with an annual

production capacity of 5 lakh vehicles, which will be doubled to 10 lakh units in the next phase. The company plans to invest a total of Rs 35,000 crore in the facility, which is expected to generate more than 21,000 jobs upon completion.

The Kharkhoda facility has been built on Suzuki's 'Smart Factory' concept incorporating Industry 5.0 technologies to improve safety, quality and productivity. The plant also integrates sustainable solutions such as solar power, biogas, battery energy storage systems and green energy procurement, with its entire electricity requirement to be met through renewable energy sources.

The inauguration marks another milestone in Maruti Suzuki's more than four-decade journey in India and further reinforces the strategic economic partnership between India and Japan. At full capacity, the Kharkhoda plant will play a crucial role in Maruti Suzuki's ambition to achieve an annual production capacity of four million vehicles. Calling the

project a landmark for the Suzuki Group, Toshihiro Suzuki said it was an honour that the company's most advanced manufacturing facility had been inaugurated by Prime Minister Modi and Prime Minister Takaichi. He said expanding the plant from its current capacity of 5 lakh vehicles to 10 lakh vehicles annually would make it one of the largest automobile manufacturing facilities globally. He described the project as a reflection of the success of the India-Japan partnership and the 'Make in India' initiative, adding that Suzuki is accelerating investments, employment generation, exports and technology development in India under the favourable policy environment created by the PM Modi government. Highlighting India's growing importance within the Suzuki Group, Toshihiro Suzuki said the company's first battery electric vehicle, the e VITARA, is being manufactured exclusively at Maruti Suzuki's Gujarat plant for exports to 100 countries.

Chinese Presence Growing In Indo-Pacific, India-Japan Ties Closer: Experts

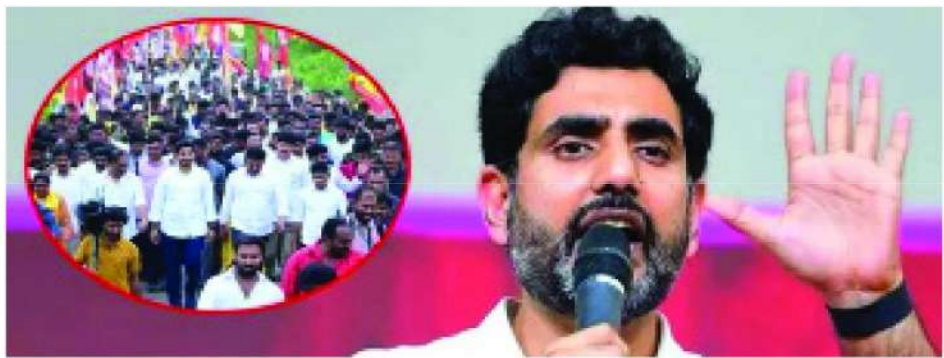


New Delhi: Partnership in the Indo-Pacific region is becoming a cornerstone of the India-Japan collaboration, especially in the context of China's growth as an economic powerhouse. The Chinese Navy -- which docked its ships in Colombo, the Maldives, Pakistan and off the Persian Gulf -- has now got its first overseas base in Djibouti. It is also mapping parts of the Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean. In a discussion, India's former Ambassador to Japan Suhan R Chinoy said while China is a global power in terms of economy, it is not quite there yet in terms of military power.

"China's growing military might is still focused on ensuring the limit of US power on its periphery, and it operates in two ways. It is deterrence vis-a-vis the United States, including in the Taiwan Strait, but it is also partly dominance against lesser powers in the region," he said. The Chinese were last in the Indian Ocean in the 15th Century when Admiral Zheng He's ships sailed into the Indian Ocean. "In the subsequent centuries, China has not been a natural power in the Indian Ocean. But today it goes without saying that the Indian Ocean, (is) like all the other sea lines of communication... the waters on the high seas are

available for all," he added. In this backdrop, China's presence in the Indian Ocean is a "function of its growing economic power, its interest in protecting its sea lines of communication, its Belt and Road projects, and also its strategic requirements of dealing with regional and global issues," he said. Calling it an alien presence, he said "like-minded countries obviously must come together to look at ways and means to ensure that this presence is not inimical to their interests". Regarding the way forward for Japan, Japan's former Ambassador to India Kenji Hiramatsu said Tokyo is increasing focus on defence.

"I Will Never Forget Those Who Walked Alongside Me": Minister Lokesh



From Our Staff Reporter Amaravati, July, 2 : Andhra Pradesh Minister for Education and Information Technology, Nara Lokesh, stated that he would never forget the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) workers who walked with him during his Yuva Galam padayatra (foot march). On Thursday, Lokesh attended the wedding ceremony of Nadendla Brahman Chowdary, Chairman of the

Kamma Welfare and Development Corporation, in Tirupati and blessed the newlywed couple. During the event, he warmly interacted with members of the Yuva Galam team and recalled memories from the padayatra. Lokesh spent around 15 minutes speaking with party workers and praised the TDP cadre for playing a crucial role in the success of the Yuva Galam initiative. He expressed grati-

tude to every party worker who courageously faced the challenges and alleged suppression during the tenure of YSRCP chief Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and helped make the padayatra a success. He emphasized that the TDP is continuously working towards the empowerment of its cadre with the principle that "the party worker is the leader."

Lokesh also stated that the government remains committed to implementing the promises made during the elections. He said that steps have been initiated to create 2 million jobs in Andhra Pradesh. As part of the recruitment process, the government has moved forward with measures such as releasing a job calendar, filling teaching positions, and recruiting police constables. He noted that creating employment opportunities for youth is one of the primary objectives of the government. On the occasion, Lokesh reiterated that the bond formed through the Yuva Galam padayatra is permanent and that his association with party workers will continue forever. His remarks generated enthusiasm among TDP supporters, who fondly recalled the connections built during the Yuva Galam march.

"Jagan Cannot Tolerate Seeing Others Prosper" – Minister Kollu Ravindra

From Our Staff Reporter Krishna District: Andhra Pradesh Minister Kollu Ravindra launched a sharp attack on YSRCP president and former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy. He alleged that while Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu is focused on taking Andhra Pradesh forward, Jagan is trying to obstruct the state's development. The minister said that Chandrababu is working in line with the aspirations of the people for the development of the state, whereas Jagan is making statements with political motives. He remarked that Jagan's comments made on Wednesday were an example of what he described as a "psychological mindset." Ravindra mocked Jagan for allegedly taking contradictory positions, saying that at one moment he claims Amaravati is the capital and

at another says, "No, our stand is Mavigan." Kollu Ravindra urged people to observe what he described as the changing positions of the YSRCP leader. He said that the party had earlier maintained that Amaravati was its stand, but before and after the elections it played politics in the name of the three-capital proposal. He noted that the party went to the elections advocating three capitals and was limited to 11 seats by the voters.



The minister criticized Jagan for now speaking about "Mavigan" and claimed that a person who cannot tolerate others flourishing displays such a mindset. He further mocked Jagan, saying that it is difficult to predict what he will say or do next. Ravindra alleged that Jagan recently sent his supporters to organize programs in the capital region under the banner of a CRDA Protection Committee. He claimed that local farmers and residents strongly opposed and chased them away.

Questioning Jagan's intentions, the minister asked whether he intended to continue what he described as political dramas and create divisions between regions. He accused the YSRCP leader of attempting to create differences among people, castes, and religious communities. Appealing to the people of Andhra Pradesh to closely observe the situation, Ravindra said that Jagan had earlier gone to elections on the promise of three capitals and was reduced to 11 seats. He added that if the YSRCP contests elections with the "Mavigan" agenda, voters would reduce the party to zero seats.

AP Government's Key Decision: Retirement Age of Employees Increased

From Our Staff Reporter Amaravati, July, 2 : The Andhra Pradesh government has taken a significant decision regarding the retirement age of employees working in Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), corporations, and societies. The government has issued an order increasing the retirement age from the existing 60 years to 62 years.



In line with a resolution previously approved by the State Cabinet, the government issued the orders on Thursday. According to the Government Order (GO), the decision will be implemented retrospectively from January 1, 2022. The government has also provided an opportunity for eligible employees who re-

tired at the age of 60 to be reappointed. However, it clarified that no salary will be paid for the gap period until they rejoin service. The gap period will also not be counted for seniority or promotion purposes. As per court directives, employees who continued to work up to the age of 62 will be granted full service ben-

efits. The order further states that employees who retired at 60 years of age and are not interested in rejoining service will continue to be governed by the earlier retirement rules. The government has directed all concerned organizations to make the necessary amendments to their service rules to implement this decision. However, each organization has been advised to take decisions based on its own financial position. The state government has also instructed all departments to immediately communicate these orders to the PSUs, corporations, and societies under their jurisdiction.

"If They Go to Elections with 'Mavigan', They Will Be Reduced to Zero" : Minister Gottipati's Remarks on Jagan

From Our Staff Reporter Amaravati, July, 2 : Andhra Pradesh Minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar expressed strong criticism of YSRCP chief Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy. He remarked that the YSRCP had won only 11 seats after going to elections with the promise of three capitals, and if they now go to elections with what he called the "Mavigan" agenda, they would be reduced to zero seats. The minis-

ter participated in a grievance redressal program held at the TDP central office on Thursday. Speaking on the occasion, he alleged that Jagan was making statements with the intention of ruining the state. He accused Jagan of not laying even a single brick for the proposed three-capital plan while spending Rs. 450 crore to build a palace for himself. Gottipati Ravi Kumar further stated that Jagan was unable

to tolerate the rapid progress of Amaravati's development works and



was therefore making

provocative remarks. He recalled that it was Jagan himself who had once demanded 33,000 acres for Amaravati and had assured people by saying that he had built a house there. The minister said that the people had taught YSRCP a lesson and limited the party to just 11 seats. He also noted that Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu is working tirelessly to attract investments to Andhra Pradesh.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is facing strong protests from parents of students over the introduction of a third language of instruction from class six. On the one hand, it admits that English is a must in the modern world for the study of fields like science and technology, on the other hand, it is imposing the trilingual principle by forcibly ignoring English and learning two Indian languages. The controversy arises because these two opposing ideas of recognizing English as an international language and forcibly studying two Indian languages as part of the trilingual principle are present in the same policy. There are conflicting feelings that implementing these two policies simultaneously will turn the future of students into a paradise for three. According to the current education system, if a student wants to study a foreign language like French or German along with English, they will have to give it up. The National Education Policy states that students should definitely learn another Indian language (even if it is completely new to them). As a result, the educational burden on children is increasing. Many students prefer to learn their favorite subjects (such as computer coding). But this three-language principle creates a situation where they are forced to learn languages like Hindi or Sanskrit. Some students and parents are of the opinion that it is better to allocate the time and energy of learning an additional language to important subjects like mathematics or science. In implementing the three-language principle from class 6, the National Education Policy states that students in classes 7, 8, and 9 should also learn three languages, two of which should be Indian languages. Therefore, if a student takes French as a second language along with English, he will have to give up French and choose an Indian language. Even if the language is completely new, it has to be learned. This will have an adverse effect on the ability of students to pass the Class 10 board exams. As a result, schools will not need teachers and resources that were previously allocated for certain languages. In this context, following strong opposition from parents and student groups, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has taken a new decision. According to this, students in classes 7, 8 and 9 can continue with the two foreign languages they are already studying (e.g. French, German), and will have to take only one Indian language as an additional subject. This means that students can continue with the combination of old languages of their choice until the completion of Class 10. There will be no board exams for the newly added third language.

Internal marks will be given at the school level itself. In these temporary arrangements, CBSE is moving forward with the three-language principle, that is, with the teaching of two Indian languages from class 6 onwards. While taking decisions in line with the goals of the National Education Policy, the central government should ensure that language learning is done in a way that is beneficial to the future of the students. It should be made possible to get good jobs in accordance with the current most modern technological fields. If it is necessary to learn English or any other language, education should be done in a way that they can easily understand that language. According to this policy, science and mathematics textbooks should be prepared in such a way that both Telugu and English languages are in the same book (English on one page and Telugu on the other page). Not only books, digital videos and pictures should be created to make learning easy.

In 1968, the three-language principle was formulated in the country with the aim of ensuring that students learn different languages at the school level. To this end, a meeting was held with the Chief Ministers of all the states and their opinions were collected and it was implemented through the National Policy Resolution 1968. According to this, all the states of the country should implement the three-language policy. It was decided that Hindi, English, and a modern Indian language (mainly a South Indian language) should be the language of choice in Hindi-speaking states, and Hindi, English, and any regional language in non-Hindi-speaking states. As a result of protests by the people of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and especially Tamil Nadu, the three-language principle was revised in its current form. However, this principle is not currently being implemented in Tamil Nadu. After the three-language principle was introduced in the first National Education Policy in 1968, it was also mentioned in the National Education Policy 1986. The central government has made it clear that this framework is not binding on the law and will serve as a guideline for the states. It has been stated that no language will be forced on anyone. It has been revealed that its aim is to promote multilingualism while balancing national integration.

India's Free Trade Agreement push

India's trade policy has seen a significant shift over the last five years. The government has signed free trade agreements (FTAs) with the UAE, Australia, the United Kingdom, the four EFTA nations, Oman, New Zealand, and the European Union. The EU agreement is a major milestone signed after about two decades of negotiations. The nine recently signed FTAs will be fully operational within the next ten months, while three to four agreements are under negotiation. India has 15 FTAs in operation covering 27 countries, accounting for more than 75% of its total trade. Since economic liberalisation, the country has never witnessed such extensive trade integration, and now enjoys preferential market access for its goods in major economies. The India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) came into force in May 2022 and eliminated duties on Indian goods such as textiles, gems and jewellery, engineering goods, and pharmaceuticals. Indian merchandise exports to the UAE grew by more than 20%, from \$28.4 billion in 2021-22 to \$37.36 billion in 2024-25 (Trade Intelligence and Analytics Portal, Ministry of Commerce).

Similarly, the India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA), which came into force in December 2022, granted duty-free access across 100% of tariff lines for Indian exporters. India's exports to Australia increased by more than 80%, from

\$4 billion in 2021-22 to \$7.3 billion in 2025-26 (Trade Intelligence and Analytics Portal, Ministry of Commerce). Sectors such as textiles, leather, machinery, and processed food—where India has a comparative export advantage—are expected to benefit from the agreement. The FTA with EU, once ratified, will be the largest trade agreement India has ever entered. The EU is India's second-largest trading partner. Preferential access to 27 European markets for Indian pharmaceuticals, IT services, textiles, chemicals, and agri-processed goods will strengthen India's export competitiveness over the long term.

Trade Deficits in Context
Critics argue that trade agreements have not delivered as they have contributed to widening trade deficits with partner countries. However, the data require a more careful reading. India has recorded an average annual trade deficit of about \$62 billion with ASEAN, Japan, and South Korea over the past three years. But, a significant proportion of these imports comprises industrial inputs such as semiconductors, electronic components, capital equipment, and specialty chemicals, all of which are essential for domestic manufacturing. India's merchandise exports increased 40.6% from 2021-22 to 2025-26, from \$314 billion to \$441.7 billion, respectively. The total merchandise and service exports together touched \$860 billion in 2025-26 (Department of Commerce). The government is well on track



to meet its Foreign Trade Policy 2023 target of \$ trillion in merchandise exports by 2030 through the signing of these FTAs.

Utilisation and Structural Gaps

FTA utilisation among Indian exporters remains below its potential. To address this, the Trade Connect ePlatform has been established to help exporters identify FTA benefits. Further, MSME outreach programmes should reach smaller exporters to enable them to take advantage of preferential trade arrangements. While challenges such as trade deficits, low utilisation and inverted duty structures remain, effective implementation could help India achieve its long-term export growth and global trade objectives India also faces challenges arising from an inverted

duty structure (when imported duties on raw materials are higher than on finished products, making it costlier to manufacture locally) in several sectors. Raw materials such as steel and aluminium attract Most Favoured Nation duties of 7.5–10% when imported. But finished goods manufactured using these inputs — machinery, industrial equipment, engineering products — can enter India at zero or low duty under FTAs with ASEAN, Japan, South Korea, the UAE, and Australia.

The focus should be on sectors where raw material import costs are higher than those on finished products. Addressing these anomalies is essential to ensure that FTAs benefit domestic manufacturers, not just importers. Beyond the economics,

India's FTAs are helping deepen strategic partnerships with the EU, UK, UAE, and Australia in defence, technology, and geopolitics. The India-EU FTA, in particular, marks India's arrival as an equal negotiating partner within the world's most complex and standards-intensive trade framework. The FTA push has transformed India's position in global trade negotiations. Trade deficits with some partners remain significant, utilisation rates need improvement, and structural issues such as inverted duties are yet to be resolved. Nevertheless, the overall direction is positive, and the pace has been unprecedented. How India leverages these agreements will matter as much as the agreements themselves.

India's Free Trade Agreement push

The debate surrounding the United States' decision to revert from "Indo-Pacific Command" to "Pacific Command" has generated considerable speculation. Some view it as signalling a diminished American commitment to the Indo-Pacific, while others dismiss it as little more than a bureaucratic adjustment. Both interpretations miss the larger point. The decision is perhaps best understood within the broader context of the United States' own search for strategic and national identity. President Donald Trump and the Make America Great Again movement have consistently sought to reconnect America with what they regard as the country's post-Second World War golden age—a period when the United States projected unparalleled military strength, economic confidence and global leadership. Other symbolic initiatives, including proposals to revive the title "Department of War" and restore historical military base names, reflect a wider effort to recover an earlier understanding of America's purpose in the world.

Whether one agrees with this project or not is secondary. Great powers periodically revisit their history in order to shape their future. America is doing so today. Rather than becoming absorbed in debating the title of an American military command, India and Japan should draw a different conclusion. If Washington is redefining its strategic narrative, the time has come for the original architects of the Indo-Pacific idea to reaffirm and refresh their own. The modern Indo-Pacific concept did not originate in Washington. It was articulated most powerfully by the late Japanese Prime Minister

Shinzo Abe, whose vision of the "confluence of the two seas" brought together the Indian and Pacific Oceans into a single strategic and civilizational space. Prime Minister Narendra Modi embraced and developed that vision, giving it practical expression through initiatives ranging from maritime cooperation to the Quad. As the Indo-Pacific gained international prominence, however, its meaning gradually narrowed. Increasingly, it came to be understood primarily through the prism of military alliances, strategic competition and the challenge posed by China's rise. These issues remain important, but they were never intended to define the Indo-Pacific in its entirety. The original vision was broader and deeper.

The Indo-Pacific is not simply a geopolitical theatre. It is one of the world's oldest interconnected civilizational spaces. For over two millennia, the seas linking India, Southeast Asia, China and Japan carried not only goods but also ideas, religions, technologies, artistic traditions and systems of knowledge. Buddhism travelled from India across Asia. Hindu cultural influences shaped kingdoms throughout Southeast Asia. Chinese civilisation enriched the region through commerce, scholarship, innovation and maritime exchange. Together, these interactions created an enduring Asian community long before the emergence of modern nation states. This shared heritage remains one of Asia's greatest strategic assets. No meaningful civilizational conception of the Indo-Pacific can overlook China. Contemporary strategic differences are real and, in some cases, profound. They must be managed with clarity and realism. Yet



China has also been an integral participant in the historical exchanges that shaped Asia for centuries. Recognising this heritage does not require overlooking present-day disagreements. Rather, it acknowledges that a durable regional order cannot be built solely around rivalry. Strategic competition may persist, but it need not become the organising principle of the Indo-Pacific.

Today, both America and Europe are engaged in searching debates about their own civilizational identity. Questions of history, culture, national purpose and strategic direction increasingly shape both domestic politics and foreign policy. Such introspection is neither unusual nor undesirable. Great powers periodically redefine themselves.

India and Japan should undertake a similar exercise-but in a characteristically Asian way. Rather than constructing a civilizational narrative based on exclusion, they should build one based on connection. The Indo-Pacific should be understood as a region linked by centuries of interaction and capable of accommodating diversity while respecting national

sovereignty. Such an approach would restore Southeast Asia to its rightful place at the heart of the Indo-Pacific conversation—not as an arena of great-power competition, but as the historic bridge between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. A renewed Indo-Pacific vision should therefore rest on multiple pillars. Security cooperation will remain indispensable. Economic integration must continue. Technological collaboration will become increasingly important. But these should be reinforced by deeper cooperation in education, maritime heritage, cultural exchanges, Buddhist and historical networks, scientific research, digital connectivity and sustainable development. Civilization should not replace strategy; it should enrich it.

The ongoing visit of Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi to New Delhi offers an ideal opportunity to begin this conversation. While defence, technology and economic cooperation have rightly dominated the bilateral agenda, the two leaders should also consider how India and Japan can jointly restore the broader intellectual and

civilizational foundations of the Indo-Pacific concept they did so much to shape. The subsequent G20 Summit in Florida could provide an international platform for advancing this complementary vision. India and Japan need not distance themselves from the United States. On the contrary, they should continue working closely with Washington in promoting regional stability. But they should also ensure that the Indo-Pacific is not defined solely by American strategic vocabulary or by the changing priorities of successive administrations. America will continue to redefine its place in the world according to its own history and political choices. That is both natural and inevitable. India and Japan should do the same. Their task, however, is not to recreate an earlier age but to shape a new one—an Indo-Pacific that is strategically secure, economically dynamic and civilizationally confident. The debate over Pacific Command will eventually fade. The opportunity to renew the Indo-Pacific idea should not. The concept was born in Asia. Its next chapter should also be written in Asia.

People should take advantage of the Praja Darbar, which is aimed at public welfare

Madanapalle: The Praja Darbar organized at the Madanapalle MLA office received a special response as usual. People from all over the constituency came in large numbers and made requests to solve various problems, and MLA Shahjahan Basha instructed the officials over the phone to work to solve everyone's problems. Later, MLA M Shahjahan Basha, along with local coalition leaders, launched the supply channel development work through the VB-G RAM G department near the Kankara Mission in CTM-1 Panchayat, Madanapalle Mandal. Speaking on this occasion, he said that everyone should take advantage of this 125-day work and that the government has taken it as a responsibility to provide work to everyone. Also, the relevant department was instructed to distribute job cards to everyone and expedite the work. As the drinking water problem is increasing in Madanapalle town, the MLA has instructed the officials to inspect the old boreholes in the vicinity of Bahuda Kalava along with the municipal officials and take steps to restart those boreholes and prepare a plan to end the drinking water problem.

CMRF cheques distributed by the MLA...

In Madanapalle Mandal, CTM Gram Panchayat, MLA Shahjahan Basha personally went to their homes and, along with his party leaders, handed over Chief Minister's



Relief Fund cheques worth one lakh 40 thousand rupees to the beneficiaries. In the review of local alliance leaders, they expressed their joy on this occasion that they will be indebted to Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and Madanapalle MLA M Shahjahan Basha for the rest of their lives. Alliance leaders and local people participated in the respective programs in large numbers.

Minister Nara Lokesh Offers Prayers at Sri Kalahasteeswara Temple



Srikalahasti : Andhra Pradesh Minister for Education, IT and Electronics, Sri Nara Lokesh, visited the Sri Kalahasteeswara Swamy Temple on Wednesday and offered special prayers to Lord Sri Kalahasteeswara Swamy and Goddess Gnana Prasunamba, seeking divine blessings. Accompanying him on the occasion were Tirupati Urban Development Authority (TUDA) Chairman Sri Dollar Divakar, Venkatagiri MLA Sri K. Ramakrishna, Gangadhara Nellore MLA Dr. V.M. Thomas, and Darsi MLA Sri



Damacharla Satya. Local MLA Sri Bojjala Venkata Sudheer Reddy, Temple Executive Officer Sri B.K. Venkatesulu, Temple Chairman Sri K. Sai Prasad, Board Members Sri Gopinath and Sri Gurrappa Shetty, and Market Committee Chairman Sri Rangineni Chenchayya Naidu welcomed the minister with traditional temple honours and supervised the darshan arrangements. Temple officials, staff members, TDP leaders, party workers, and a large number of devotees participated in the programme.

BJP National and State Leaders Offer Prayers at Sri Kalahasteeswara Temple



Srikalahasti : BJP National Co-Organisation General Secretary Sri Shiv Prakash Ji, Andhra Pradesh BJP State President Sri P.V.N. Madhav, and BJP State Organisation Secretary Sri Madhukar Ji visited the Sri Kalahasteeswara Swamy Temple in Srikalahasti on Wednesday. During the visit, Sri Shiv Prakash Ji participated in the sacred Rahu-Ketu Pooja and later offered prayers to Lord Sri Kalahasteeswara Swamy and Goddess Gnana Prasunamba, seeking divine blessings. Temple Executive Officer Sri B.K. Venkatesulu,



BJP State Vice-President Sri K. Anand Kumar, Special Invitee Smt. Shailaja, BJP leaders Chandrappa and Kandriga Uma, and Protocol AEO Sri Lokesh Babu welcomed the dignitaries with traditional temple honours and supervised the darshan arrangements. The programme was attended by Temple AEO Sri Vidyasagar Reddy, Temple Supervisor Sri C. Nagabhushanam, Temple Inspector Sri M. Hari Yadav, APRO Sri Ravi, other temple officials, BJP leaders, party workers, and devotees.

Kadapa Clinch South Zone U-16 Title in Thrilling Contest

- Centuries by Sarik and Taneeswar Go in Vain as Chittoor Finish Runners-up

Vayalpad: Kadapa district emerged as champions of the Andhra Cricket Association (ACA) South Zone Under-16 Multi-Day Tournament after defeating Chittoor in a thrilling final-like encounter held at the CDCA-GVSCS Ground-1 in Vayalpad. The match remained evenly poised until the final innings, with Chittoor putting up a spirited fight before falling just short and settling for the runners-up trophy. After winning the toss, Kadapa elected to bat first and were bowled out for 279 runs in 71.5 overs. K. Lokesh scored 67, S.K. Umar Siddiq made 59, while P. Hitesh Sai remained unbeaten on 65. For Chittoor, right-arm pacer Jayaprakash produced an outstanding spell, claiming 5 wickets for 93 runs, while Tejesh and Dinesh picked up two wickets each. In reply, Chittoor were dismissed for 107 runs in 35 overs in their first innings. V.J. Noel was the lone bright spot with 45 runs. Kadapa bowlers M. Varshith Kumar and P. Hitesh Sai starred with four wickets apiece, giving their team a commanding 172-run first-innings lead. Batting again, Kadapa were bowled out for 222 runs in 64.3 overs in their second innings. K. Lokesh scored 50, P. Askan Khan contributed 46, Y.V. Shiva Charan added 37, and A. Sai Abhinav made 31. Chittoor bowlers Dinesh (4/48) and Jayaprakash (3/58) once again impressed with the ball. Set a daunting target of 394 runs, Chittoor produced a remarkable fightback through magnificent centuries by Mohammed Sarik Akhtar (131) and



Taneeswar Tendulkar (111). Their crucial partnership brought Chittoor within touching distance of victory, but the lower order failed to provide the required support, and the team eventually fell short in a nail-biting finish. For Kadapa, P. Hitesh Sai claimed three wickets, M. Varshith Kumar took two, while B. Muni Gnaneswar and B. Sai Krishna Chaitanya picked up one wicket each to seal the championship. The prize distribution ceremony was attended by CDCA President Srinivasa Murthy, Vice-President Sridhar Kumar, Secretary Satish Yadav, Chittoor District Head Coach Sunil Kumar, Kadapa Joint Secretary Srikanth Reddy, coaches Siddiq, Shoaib, and Anjaneyulu, selectors Reddy Girish, Jawahar Basha, Harish, and Vijay Kumar, and senior cricketers Bharath and Vishnu, who presented the trophies and congratulated the players on their outstanding performances.

Work-Study Dual Model: A Bridge to Fill Academics & Industry Gap

Sri City, Tirupati - Sricity International University (SIU) was formally launched today at its Interim Campus by the Hon'ble Minister Shri Lokesh Nara - Minister for HRD, IT E&C and RTG, Government of Andhra Pradesh, in the presence of SIU's Global Advisory Council, Governing Board, and Industry Partners.

SIU is pioneering a new education system of Work-Study Dual Model in India - designed from the ground up to ensure that every graduating student is employable with industry relevant skills.

The launch comes at a defining moment for Indian higher education. India produces more than nine million graduates every year, yet only about 42.6% are assessed as employable; more than half of those who do find work are in roles below their qualification, and over 80% of employers report serious skill gaps. SIU calls this the Bharat Employability and Jobs Challenge - and has been established to solve it.

In the Work-Study Dual Model, students spend roughly a third of their time learning on campus and the remainder working as interns with industry partners. While interning at Industry Partners, students are paid a minimum stipend of ₹10,000 monthly from the very first year. The Industry Partners are expected to increase the stipend amount as the student productivity improves with experience. At SIU, a four-year degree student graduates with about 2+ years of real work experience.

The curriculum is co-designed with industry partners and updated annually to keep pace with the rapidly evolving AI-driven industrial landscape, ensuring that students acquire the knowledge, skills, and competencies demanded by the future of work.

To promote Entrepreneurship, SIU has already set up an Incubation Center (Station-S) at its campus. Around 10 startups have commenced operations with the support of Station-S & Gnan Circle Ventures, a Cat-I Venture Capital Fund.

Andhra Pradesh leading the way on Employability Skills "Our young people have the ability and the ambition; what they need is an education that connects directly to work... Andhra Pradesh is proud to lead the nation in solving this challenge." - Shri Nara Lokesh

Hon'ble Minister for HRD, IT, E&C, and RTG, Government of Andhra Pradesh

An ecosystem that makes the model possible What makes this model possible is the extraordinary ecosystem of Sri City, where more than 200+ companies from over 30 countries operate across a wide range of industries. Few places in the country - or the world - bring industry and education together so closely. Students at SIU will learn and work alongside leading global companies right where they study, and Andhra Pradesh is proud to be home to an institution that turns this advantage into real opportunity for our young people.



- Shri Nara Lokesh

Hon'ble Minister for HRD, IT, E&C, and RTG, Government of Andhra Pradesh

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- Srini Raju

Chairman, Sricity Education Foundation & SIU Governing Board

Programmes and admissions

SIU is offering four undergraduate programmes for the 2026-27 academic year:

- B.Tech in Computer Science & Engineering - School of Technology & AI

- B.Tech in Advanced Manufacturing - School of Advanced Manufacturing

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Email: admissions@thesiu.org

About Sricity International University

Sricity International University (SIU) is a philanthropic initiative, established by a distinguished group of technocrats, entrepreneurs, and philanthropists with a shared mission to create a new academic system in higher education. SIU is established under AP State Private Universities Act by Sricity Education Foundation, a not-for-profit Section 8 company.

Media contact: Ms. Priyanka Sarangi, Sr. Manager - Marketing & Communications, Sricity International University priyanka@thesiu.org | 8977763338

MLA Amaranath Reddy's birthday celebrations

- Banners and cut-outs displayed in villages



Palamaneru: The Telugu Desam Party leaders and activists of Palamaneru constituency celebrated the birthday of MLA Amaranath Reddy on Thursday. On this occasion, a festive atmosphere prevailed in all the mandals of the constituency. Leaders and activists displayed their affection by setting up banners and cut-

outs in every village. Similarly, huge cakes were cut and firecrackers were burst in the villages and celebrated. Later, food distribution Programme was organized for the poor and milk and fruits were distributed to pregnant women at the government hospital. Sapling planting programme was organized in Madanapalle Road under the auspices of Palamaneru town leaders. Market Committee Chairman Rajanna participated in the birthday celebrations along with the laborers. Speaking on the occasion, the leaders praised the development of Palamaneru constituency in all sectors under the leadership of MLA Amarnath Reddy. He said that he has been recognized as a leader who is accessible to the people

and continues his service programmes continuously. Wishing him the opportunity to rise to higher positions in the future and serve the people more. TDP leaders, activists and a large number of people participated in this programme.

Former Cricketer Srikanth Offers Prayers at Srikalahasteeswara Temple



Srikalahasti : Former Indian cricketer Krishnamachari Srikanth visited the famous Sri Kalahasteeswara Swamy Temple along with his family members on Wednesday and offered special prayers to the presiding deities. Temple officials extended a warm welcome to Srikanth and arranged a special darshan for the family. Later, Vedic scholars blessed them near the Mrityunjaya Swamy Temple and presented them with portraits of Lord Srikalahasteeswara and Goddess Gnana Prasunambika. Devotees at the temple enthusiastically took selfies with the former cricketer, who cheerfully interacted with everyone and posed for photographs with a smile. Former YSRCP board member

Munna Royal, Jaishyam, Manoj, YSRCP Town Youth President Mallembakam Muni Krishna Reddy, Deva Surya, Satish, and others participated in the visit.

PUBLIC NOTICE

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Kamineni Sai Kumar, S/o Mohan Rao, residing at Door No. 11-2-27, Kota Katta Street, Kandukur - 523105, hereby declare that my wife's name has been inadvertently printed in my Passport as "JYOSNA KAMINENI". The correct and actual name is "KAMINENI JYOTHSNA".

Hence, it is requested that the name appearing as "JYOSNA KAMINENI" in my Passport records be read, treated, and corrected as "KAMINENI JYOTHSNA" for all purposes.

Sd/-
Kamineni Sai Kumar,
S/o Mohan Rao,
11-2-27, Kota Katta Street,
Kandukur,
Prakasamdist - 523105.

Ketan Agarwal Murder: Pune Police Probe 'Cross-Marriage' Plan — Siya's Brother Was To Marry Ketan's Sister?

Pune: A new angle has emerged in the investigation into the alleged murder of businessman Ketan Agarwal, with Pune Rural Police examining the close relationship between the Agarwal and Goyal families, including plans for two marriages between them. According to police sources, Ketan Agarwal was engaged to Siya Goyal, while discussions had also been finalised for the marriage of Ketan's sister to Siya's brother, Sahil Goyal. Investigators said both weddings were expected to take place later this year, with Ketan and Siya's ceremony planned first, followed by the second marriage. Police are also looking into a planned pre-wedding shoot in Bali, which was scheduled for June 6. Sources said Ketan, Siya, Sahil and Ketan's sister were expected to travel for the shoot before the wedding celebrations. As part of the probe, investigators have questioned Sahil Goyal to determine whether



he knew about the alleged relationship between Siya Goyal and co-accused Chetan Chaudhary before Ketan's death. Police are examining whether any information was withheld from either family. Sahil, however, has denied knowing about any alleged affair. According to sources, he told investigators that he believed Chetan was only Siya's old friend and that she appeared happy about

her upcoming marriage to Ketan. Police are verifying his statement as part of the ongoing investigation. Meanwhile, investigators continue to reconstruct the events surrounding Ketan's death. On Wednesday, Pune Rural Police revisited Lohagad Fort and used a fibre dummy matching the victim's weight to recreate the alleged fall into the gorge. The exercise was conducted to better understand the sequence of events and compare it with the evidence collected during the investigation. Police have alleged that Siya Goyal and Chetan Chaudhary pushed Ketan into the gorge at Lohagad Fort on June 18. Investigators claim Siya initially told authorities that Ketan had accidentally slipped, but the case later took a different direction during the investigation. Both accused remain in police custody as the probe continues.

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Bengaluru Quarry Collapse: 7 Dead, Karnataka Chief Minister DK Shivakumar Visits Victims At Hospital

Karnataka: Karnataka Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Thursday visited Rajarajeshwari Hospital, where the bodies of seven labourers who died in the stone quarry collapse at the Madapattana area in Bengaluru South district have been kept. The Chief Minister met the injured workers undergoing treatment and consoled the bereaved families. He assured them of all necessary support from the government. Minister Krishna Byre Gowda, MLAs ST Somashekhar and AC Srinivas accompanied the Chief Minister during the visit. The quarry accident at Madapattana occurred on Thursday morning when boulders collapsed, killing seven workers and injuring several others. The bodies have been kept at RR Hospital for post-mortem, while the injured are receiving treatment at the same facility. Officials said further action would be taken after receiving the detailed report on the incident. According to initial information, seven daily-wage labourers from Bihar lost their lives on Thursday morning when a massive rock fell at a stone quarry site in Bengaluru's Madapattana. The workers were engaged in routine quarrying operations when a huge rock, reportedly falling from a height of about 40 feet, trapped them beneath the debris. The victims were all daily-wage



labourers who were trapped under the fallen boulder and died on the spot at the stone crusher site. Karnataka Home Minister Priyank Kharge on Thursday said that around eight people appeared to have lost their lives in the stone quarry collapse at Madapattana in Bengaluru South Taluk, adding that officials from the Mines and Geology Department and the Home Department were at the spot assessing the situation. "The Mines and Geology Department and the Department of Home Personnel are at the spot. A total of around eight people appear to have lost their lives in this accident, most of whom are from other states, while one person is from our state. We are awaiting the detailed reports. The Mines and Geology Department is evaluating the situation as we speak," Priyank Kharge said.

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Delhi Police Trains 1,500 Teachers, 3,500 People Under Child Safety Awareness Month



New Delhi: The Delhi Police on Thursday said as part of the Child Safety Awareness Month observed across the national capital, more than 1,500 teachers were trained as master trainers and over 3,500 people received self-defence training. Delhi: Under Child Safety Awareness Month, police on Thursday organised a special self-defence programme at TSR

Point, Mansingh Road, India Gate. The aim of the programme was to make children and youth aware of self-defence and to empower them with essential skills to protect. A police officer said the two-day Training of Trainers (ToT) programme, which concluded on Thursday, trained 1,509 teachers from about 1,000 government schools through physical sessions,

while teachers from other schools participated online. The trained teachers will now act as master trainers and impart child safety awareness to other teachers and students in their respective schools, the officer said. As part of the initiative, the Special Police Unit for Women and Children (SPUWAC) has prepared weekly digital resource material for weekend activities involving parents.

Teachers were also briefed on recent guidelines issued by the Delhi Education Department and informed that district-level committees comprising officials from the education department, police and other agencies will begin physical inspections of schools next week. The officer said more than 3,500 participants attended self-defence training camps organised at multiple locations across Delhi.

Mumbai Monsoon Tragedy: CCTV Video Shows 55-Yr-Old Man Falling Into Open Manhole In Sakinaka Amid Heavy Rains, Dies

Mumbai: A 55-year-old man died after falling into an open manhole in Mumbai's Sakinaka area amid heavy rainfall on Thursday, marking another tragic rain-related incident in the city during the ongoing monsoon spell. A CCTV footage of the incident shows the exact moment when the elderly man fell into the open manhole and got swept away. The deceased has been identified as Aslam Isak Shaikh (55), a resident of Yadav Nagar in Sakinaka, as reported by ANI. Police said repair work on the water drainage grill was being carried out in the area when the accident occurred. The incident took place on Khairani Road near Sanman Hotel in Sakinaka, where drainage repair work was underway by a private contractor. According to officials, the man reportedly fell into the open manhole while talking on his mobile phone.



According to preliminary

information, the man accidentally stepped into the open manhole and was swept away by the strong flow of rainwater. During the search operation, rescue teams recovered his umbrella and slippers near the spot, raising fears that he had been carried away through the drainage channel due to the heavy water flow. Soon after the incident was reported, teams from the Mumbai Fire Brigade

(MFB), police, 108 ambulance services and civic authorities rushed to the spot and launched a massive search and rescue operation. Authorities later confirmed that the man had died in the incident. His body was eventually recovered from the drainage line after an extensive search operation. The incident occurred amid continuous heavy rainfall across Mumbai, which has

caused severe waterlogging and dangerous conditions in several low-lying areas of the city. Earlier in the day, Dahisar Police rescued another man who had accidentally fallen into a drain and got trapped near a fast-flowing water channel. Mumbai Police had shared visuals of the rescue operation showing police personnel and locals pulling the man to safety.

Siya Goyal Flashes Middle Finger At Media While Being Escorted By Pune Police In Ketan Agarwal Murder Probe

Pune: Siya Goyal, the prime accused in the Ketan Agarwal murder case, flashed her middle finger at members of the media while being escorted by Pune Rural Police to her residence in Lulla Nagar as part of the ongoing investigation. From her residence, police reportedly recovered the clothes she is suspected to have worn on June 18, when she and her lover, Chetan Chaudhary, allegedly pushed Agarwal to his death from Lohagad Fort. Meanwhile, police also took her to a hillock in Lulla Nagar, where the duo had allegedly rehearsed the crime weeks before executing the plan at Lohagad Fort. "Investigation has revealed that Goyal and Chaudhary had rehearsed at a hillock-like space near a club in Lulla Nagar how to push Agarwal off the cliff at Lohagad Fort. Today, Goyal was taken to the spot, where she identified



the place where they had allegedly carried out the rehearsal," a Pune Rural Police official said. "We have also collected a substantial amount of technical and digital data, which is currently being analysed and cross-verified," he added. Earlier, police had already recreated the crime scene twice at Lohagad Fort. Goyal was taken to the fort on Sunday, while

Chaudhary was brought there on Wednesday. On both occasions, investigators used a dummy matching Agarwal's weight to reconstruct the alleged sequence of events and verify the accused persons' statements. Meanwhile, Pune Rural Police have approached the Vadgaon Maval court seeking permission to conduct polygraph examinations on both

Goyal and Chaudhary. Officials said the court will first issue notices to the accused and record their consent before deciding on the request. A polygraph test, also called a "lie detector test", measures physiological responses such as blood pressure, pulse, respiration and perspiration while a person answers questions related to an incident.

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Kerala's Operation Toofan Sees 5,700 Arrests, Drugs Worth Rs.30 Crore Seized In 1 Month

Thiruvananthapuram: The Kerala Police have registered 5,353 cases, arrested 5,736 people and seized drugs worth over Rs 30 crore during the first month of 'Operation Toofan: The Narco Hunt', a statewide anti-drug campaign launched by the state government to curb narcotics abuse and trafficking, officials said. According to a police statement, the campaign was launched by Chief Minister V D Satheesan on June 2 and has since been carried out across the state, leading to the seizure of large quantities of narcotic substances and the arrest of hundreds of suspected drug peddlers. Police said the initiative aims to dismantle drug trafficking networks, prevent the use and distribution of narcotic substances among school and college students, create public awareness about drug abuse and help addicts return to normal life through counselling and rehabilitation.



Between June 2 and July 1, intensive inspections were carried out across the state targeting suspected drug peddlers, users and supply networks, police said. During the operation, police registered 5,353 cases and arrested 5,736 people. The seizures included 3,706.743 grams of MDMA, 392.100 kg of ganja, 3,776.039 grams of

hashish oil, 4.85 grams of hashish, 657.219 grams of brown sugar, 12.6709 grams of methamphetamine, 31.23 grams of heroin, 428 cannabis plants, 11 LSD stamps, 56 grams of nitrazepam, 25.23 grams of opium, 1.6 grams of charas and 3,294 ganja beedis, the statement said. Police said the seized contraband was worth over Rs 30 crore. One of the major seizures during the campaign was the recovery of 18 kg of hybrid ganja worth around Rs 18 crore in Emakulam on June 24. The statement said the operation has received active support from various government departments and the public. A meeting of central agencies was also convened under the chairmanship of state Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala to strengthen efforts to identify

the source of narcotics entering the state. Following the meeting, it was decided to constitute a special unit named "T-INT" and strengthen drone-based and cyber surveillance against drug trafficking, police said. As part of the campaign, Kerala Police conducted 6,005 awareness classes across the state, provided counselling to 279 people and shifted 15 individuals to rehabilitation centres, it added. Meanwhile, as the operation completed one month, Minister Ramesh Chennithala will launch "Toofan Jagaran", a statewide public awareness campaign, at Perumbavoor in Emakulam district on Friday. Chennithala will lead an anti-drug rally from Perumbavoor Boys High School at 2.30 pm before hoisting the "Toofan"

flag in the town. According to police, the minister's visit comes amid complaints that drug trafficking is rampant in Perumbavoor using migrant workers as a cover. The campaign is aimed at supporting local anti-drug initiatives and strengthening public participation in the fight against narcotics. The minister will also interact with traders, industrialists, representatives of community and social organisations, anti-drug activists and students during a public interaction programme. Later in the evening, Chennithala will visit Kandanthara, popularly known as Bhai Colony, where he will interact with local residents and migrant workers. Migrant workers will also take an anti-drug pledge during the programme, police said.

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

New Delhi: India and Japan on Thursday unveiled a raft of initiatives, including an economic partnership framework and a defence pact to co-develop military hardware following talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Japanese counterpart Sanae Takaichi. The two sides also rolled out measures to solidify their cooperation in key sectors such as energy and critical technology. "The economies of India and Japan are complementary. From cultural values to modern technology, there is similarity in our thinking and approach as well," PM Modi said in his media statement. "And above all, the foundation of our rela-



tions rests on unbreakable mutual trust," he said, reflecting the growing con-

pared a joint roadmap for economic security. "Through this, we will strengthen supply chain resilience in strategic areas such as semiconductors, quantum, and advanced materials," he said. The prime minister said India and Japan have also taken several important decisions in the field of energy security. "Through the India-Japan bio-gas initiative, we will set up one thousand bio-gas and organic fertiliser plants in India. This will give new strength to sustainability, prosperity, and rural livelihoods in India's villages," he said. The Japanese prime minister is on a three-day visit to India. There has been an upswing in India-Japan ties. The re-

lationship was elevated to a Special Strategic and Global Partnership in 2014. As the two countries approach the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 2027, cooperation continues to deepen across a wide range of sectors, including trade and investment, economic security, defence and security, science and technology, culture, and people-to-people ties. The bilateral framework now comprises over 70 dialogue mechanisms. PM Modi visited Japan for the 15th Annual Summit in Tokyo in August last year. The annual summit remains the flagship platform driving the strategic agenda of the partnership.

Rupee erases early gains, ends 18 paise lower against dollar



Mumbai: The rupee pared initial gains and settled for the day on a negative note, lower by 18 paise at 95.34 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, as the support from easing crude oil prices was negated by robust dollar demand from importers and corporate hedgers. Forex traders said the Indian rupee opened higher on an overnight decline in the US dollar following less hawkish comments from Fed Chair Kevin Warsh and a fall in crude oil prices. However, the rupee lost its initial gains on FII outflows and dollar demand from hedgers. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 94.95 against the American currency and traded in

a range of 94.90-95.40 during the session. The rupee finally closed at 95.34 (provisional), registering a decline of 18 paise from its previous close. On Wednesday, the rupee depreciated 60 paise to close at 95.16 against the US dollar.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias on uncertainty over the US and Iran deal despite positive comments from US President Donald Trump. However, any softening of the US dollar on less hawkish comments from the Fed may support the rupee at lower levels. "Declining crude oil prices may also support the rupee at lower levels. Traders may take cues from weekly employment claims and the non-

farm payrolls report from the US. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of 95.00 to 95.60," said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Mirae Asset ShareKhan.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading at 101.00, lower by 0.38 per cent. Meanwhile, Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading lower by 1.43 per cent at USD 70.55 per barrel in futures trade. While a decline in global crude oil prices and RBI interventions propped up the local unit, the rupee is likely to stay under pressure amid continued geopolitical uncertainty and significant foreign fund outflows.

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



Mumbai: The rupee appreciated 26 paise to 94.90 against US dollar in early trade, supported by easing crude oil prices. Forex traders said the rupee opened on a positive note as crude oil prices have fallen back to levels seen before the West Asia conflict. Even global risk sentiment has stabilised compared to the panic witnessed a few weeks ago. Foreign investors poured nearly USD 5.3 billion into Indian bond markets during June, marking the first month of positive inflows after

three consecutive months of outflows, they said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 94.95, then touched 94.90 against the US dollar, registering a gain of 26 paise from its previous close. On Wednesday, the rupee depreciated 60 paise to close at 95.16 against the US dollar. "... As fresh foreign capital starts entering India, markets believe the RBI may continue absorbing a significant portion of these inflows rather than allowing them to fully strengthen the rupee,"

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

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



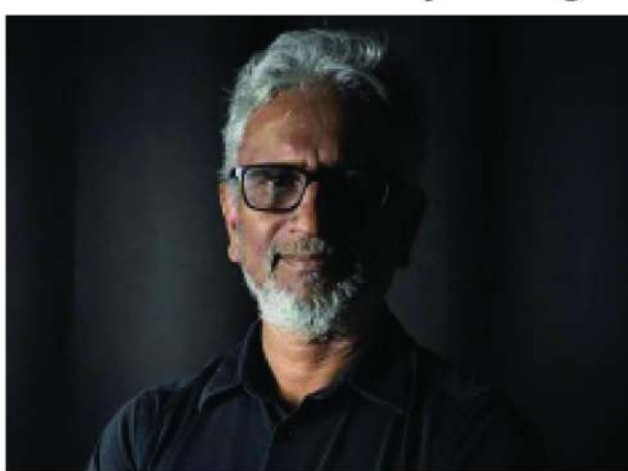
New Delhi: Oil marketing companies suffered Rs 74,781-crore losses for selling petrol, diesel and LPG below cost for the period up to June 30 when global crude oil prices spiked in the wake of the West Asia conflict, Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Thursday.

International crude oil prices have come down but companies are still processing crude they bought at the height of the West Asia crisis, Puri told reporters.

Oil companies typically buy crude oil — the raw

material for producing fuel — at least two months in advance. So, crude oil that is being processed now is essentially what was bought in April or early May when international prices were very high. On whether there would be a cut in prices of petrol and diesel, Puri said this would be a legitimate question if oil prices stayed low for the next few weeks. Crude oil prices started coming down only in the second half of June after the US and Iran reached an agreement to end the conflict.

OXMIQ Labs raises 35 million dollars in Series A funding



Hyderabad: OXMIQ Labs Inc., a unified GPU and AI architecture company founded by Raja Koduri, closed its 35 million dollar Series A financing, bringing the company's total capital raised to 60 million dollars. The funding will help scale OxCore, OXMIQ's licensable GPU architecture that allows semiconductor companies and AI system builders to build custom AI silicon without a full chip programme. The round was co-led by Fundom and Samsung Catalyst Fund, with participation from MediaTek, AM Intelligence Labs, Pegatron Venture Capital, CDIB-TEN, Darwin Ventures and Morgan Creek Digital, among other financial and strategic investors. Token demand is outpacing the world's ability to build infrastructure to support it. OXMIQ was founded to re-

architect the GPU stack from Atoms to Agents by building the silicon IP, configurable systems and software platform that enable semiconductor companies and AI infrastructure builders to reduce the cost of intelligence at every layer of the stack. At the centre of the architecture is OxCore, a scalable, licensable GPU core that integrates three distinct compute engines: a CUDA-compatible GPU engine, a tensor processing engine (CPU) responsible for coordinating workloads and agents across the system. OxCore tightly integrates compute functions that are typically split across three chips and was purpose-built for near-memory computing, minimising data movement to improve the compute and energy efficiency of AI workloads.

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



Mumbai: Gold and silver traded mixed in session, with gold edging lower on profit booking and silver extending gains for a third straight session amid expectations that the US Federal Reserve may not rush to raise interest rates. On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold futures (August) opened at Rs 1,43,882 per 10 grams, down Rs 548 or 0.37 per cent from the previous close of Rs 1,44,430. At around 10:40 am, the yellow metal was trading at Rs 1,43,797, down Rs 633 or 0.44 per cent. During the session so far, gold touched an intraday low of Rs 1,43,771, down 0.45 per cent or Rs 659, and a high

of Rs 1,44,448. Meanwhile, silver futures (September) outperformed gold, jumping as much as 0.84 per cent or nearly Rs 2,000 to Rs 2,32,339 per kg, its intraday high so far. The white metal was trading at Rs 2,30,790, up Rs 406 or 0.18 per cent. It touched an intraday low of Rs 2,30,513. Earlier in the day, silver opened at Rs 2,31,196, up Rs 812 or 0.35 per cent from the previous close of Rs 2,30,384. In the international market, gold was down 0.14 per cent at \$4,076 per ounce, while silver edged up 0.14 per cent to \$60.59 per ounce. According to market experts, gold witnessed profit booking after COMEX gold cor-

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

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



Mumbai: Market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty rallied in early deals on Thursday amid softening crude oil prices following positive development on the geopolitical front and buying in blue-chip IT stocks. The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 377.40 points to 77,269.54 early trade. The 50-share NSE Nifty rallied 106.70 points to 24,113.25. "Qatar has stated that the latest round of indirect US-Iran talks has made 'positive progress', keeping hopes of a broader diplomatic resolution alive," Ponnudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth-tech firm, said.

From the Sensex pack, Infosys, HCL Tech, Tata Consultancy Services, Tech Mahindra, Eternal and InterGlobe Aviation were among the major winners. NTPC, Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro and Bharat Electronics were among

the laggards. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, traded 1 per cent lower at USD 70.79 per barrel. "There are some positive trends that are providing near-term support and strength to the market. One, crude continues to fall with Brent below USD 71 now. This will further strengthen India's macros and help in achieving higher growth while keeping inflation in check. "Two, the auto sales numbers in June was strong. This indicates that the demand momentum in the economy continues to be strong," VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

He further said that the AI trade in South Korea is weakening as indicated by the 11.5 per cent correction in Kospi last month. This is positive for non-AI markets like India, Vijayakumar noted. "Fourth, the FII selling

is tapering off giving an upper hand to the DIIs (Domestic Institutional Investors)," he added. Passenger vehicle sales in the country are estimated to have grown nearly 25 per cent in June to about 4 lakh units, led by the likes of Maruti Suzuki, Tata Motors PV and Mahindra & Mahindra. In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi traded over 4 per cent lower, Japan's Nikkei 225 index declined more than 1 per cent and Shanghai's SSE Composite index quoted 0.90 per cent down. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index quoted more than 1 per cent higher. US markets ended lower on Wednesday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 1,140.50 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data. On Wednesday, the Sensex climbed 443.97 points, or 0.58 per cent, to settle at 76,922.64. The Nifty rallied 140.10 points, or 0.59 per cent, to end at 24,005.85.

Goyal highlights growing India-Japan investment and trade ties

New Delhi: Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said that investments have been a big driver of India's partnership with Japan, and these are set to strengthen. In a conversation at 'The Indo-Japan Strategic Dialogue', Goyal said Japan's engagement with India has largely focused on investments. The discussion came against the backdrop of Japanese Prime Minis-

ter Sanae Takaichi's arrival in Delhi for the 16th India-Japan Summit. "Maruti Suzuki came to India nearly 40 years ago and brought modern, affordable, technology-driven automobiles, which ultimately set India on track to become a global power in the auto sector," Goyal said. "In May, Maruti Suzuki accounted for 1.47 lakh cars out of 4 lakh passenger vehicles sold in India,"

he noted. Elaborating on Japan's role in specific sectors, Goyal said the first dedicated freight corridor in India was built in partnership with Japan in Odisha, and helped evacuate iron ore. Describing the trade engagement as multi-dimensional, the minister said India imports technology-driven products from Japan while exporting value-added goods. "We are not selling raw

materials or intermediates. We're selling Japan high-quality, precision-engineered material, auto components, and electronic components. So, this relationship has both trade and investment dimensions," he said. About the next chapter in the India-Japan partnership, the minister said India values its trade partnership with Japan and looks forward to taking it to the next level.



BHASHINI Showcases Multilingual AI Innovations at NCeG 2026; Launches Rajasthan Language Model Training Hackathon



New Delhi, July, 2 (PIB): The Digital India BHASHINI Division (DIBD) marked a strong presence at the National Conference on e-Governance (NCeG) 2026, organised by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), Government of India, in collaboration with the Government of Rajasthan. Through live demonstrations, multilingual AI solutions, and in-

teractive experiences, BHASHINI showcased how Language AI is making digital governance more inclusive, accessible, and citizen-centric. At the BHASHINI exhibition stall, delegates explored the platform's core AI capabilities through live demonstrations of speech and text translation, voice-based AI services, Shrutlekh, BhashaDaan, and Suno Sutra, India's first handheld

multilingual edge AI device. Visitors also experienced real-world governance use cases powered by BHASHINI, including CPGRAMS, Nyaya Setu, Arogya Vani, SabhaSaar, and Yuva Saarthi, demonstrating how multilingual AI is enabling seamless access to public services across languages. The stall also witnessed enthusiastic participation in BhashaDaan, BHASHINI's

national crowdsourcing initiative for language data. Visitors contributed and validated language datasets across Indian languages and received Digital Participation Certificates in recognition of their contributions towards strengthening India's multilingual AI ecosystem. During the conference, BHASHINI also launched the Rajasthan Language Model Training Hackathon, an initiative aimed at strengthening AI models for Rajasthan's regional languages through the creation of high quality language datasets for Marwari, Mewari, Dhundhari, Hadoti, Mewati, and Bagri.

Another key highlight was the deployment of ShrutLekh, BHASHINI's AI-powered real-time speech-to-text solution, across multiple plenary and breakout sessions throughout the conference. Shrutlekh enabled live transcription and translation during several technical sessions showcasing how AI-powered language technologies can enhance accessibility at large public events. The BHASHINI stall was visited by the Chief Minister of Rajasthan, Shri Bhajan Lal Sharma, Shri Rajyavardhan Rathore, Minister for Information Technology and Communication (DoIT&C),

Government of Rajasthan, along with senior government officials and distinguished delegates from across the country, who experienced BHASHINI's multilingual AI solutions and appreciated their potential to transform citizen service delivery.

On the sidelines of the conference, Shri Amitabh Nag, CEO, Digital India BHASHINI Division (DIBD), also participated in the Investors' Meet and held discussions with the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Rajasthan on advancing multilingual AI and language technologies for the state, with a focus on strengthening inclusive digital governance through language-first innovation. Amitabh Nag, Chief Executive Officer, Digital India BHASHINI Division said: "For AI to truly serve every citizen, it must understand the languages people speak in their daily lives. Every language contribution, every validated dataset, and every new use case brings us closer to building AI that is more inclusive, more representative, and more accessible for all." BHASHINI's participation at NCeG 2026 reinforced its commitment to advancing multilingual Digital Public Infrastructure by enabling governments and institutions to deliver services in

citizens' preferred languages. Through innovative AI solutions, community driven dataset creation, and scalable language technologies, BHASHINI continues to strengthen the vision of a Digital India where language is never a barrier to governance.

About Digital India BHASHINI Division (DIBD):

The Digital India BHASHINI Division (DIBD), under Digital India Corporation (DIC), Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), is India's national initiative for AI-driven multilingual digital inclusion and language technology. Through the National Hub for Language Technology (NHLT), BHASHINI enables scalable speech and text-based AI services across Indian languages for governance, public digital platforms, and institutions. Today, BHASHINI powers over 800 government websites, processes more than 20 million AI inferences every day, and has enabled over 8 billion cumulative AI inferences. The platform supports 36 Indian text languages, 23 Indian voice languages, and 35 international languages, while offering more than 20 specialised NLP services, driving multilingual AI innovation and strengthening India's Digital Public Infrastructure.

NRAA-Funded Wild Rice Conservation Project Secures Major Milestone in Assam

- Borjuli Site in Sonitpur Notified as Biodiversity Heritage Site

New Delhi, July, 2 (PIB): The National Rainfed Area Authority (NRAA), under the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, has achieved a significant milestone in the conservation of India's wild rice genetic resources through its funded project titled "In-situ Conservation and Management of Wild Rice (*Oryza rufipogon*) in Sonitpur District of Assam." The project has been implemented since 2022 by the ICAR-National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (ICAR-NBPGR), New Delhi, in collaboration with the Assam State Biodiversity Board. A team of scientists from ICAR-NBPGR called on Dr. Chandra Shekhar Kumar, IAS, Chief Executive Officer, NRAA, and briefed him on the project's achievements in the exploration, conservation and characterization of wild rice germplasm. The team informed that the Borjuli site in Sonitpur district of Assam, identified under the project, has been notified as a Biodiversity Heritage Site by the National Biodiversity Authority. The recognition marks a major step towards conserving India's rich wild rice diversity and strengthening climate-resilient agriculture. Commending the efforts of the research team, Dr. Chandra Shekhar Kumar said that wild rice species are an invaluable source of genes for developing climate-resilient, high-yielding and nutritionally superior rice varieties. He emphasized the need to replicate similar conservation initiatives for other crop wild relatives across the country to enhance the resilience, sustainability and long-term food security of Indian agriculture. The meeting was facilitated by Dr. Pankaj Kumar Shah, Director (Agriculture & Horticulture), NRAA, and Dr. Anil Kumar Mishra, Technical Expert (Watershed Management), NRAA.

Coal Imports Decline by Nearly 13% in April 2026, Reflecting Steady Progress Towards Import Substitution

New Delhi, July, 2 (PIB): India's coal import basket has registered a significant decline in April 2026, with total coal imports falling to 21.13 Million Tonnes (MT) from 24.27 MT in April 2025 - a reduction of 3.14 MT (about 12.95%). The decline reflects the sustained impact of the Ministry of Coal's continuing push for import substitution and enhanced domestic coal availability, particularly for the power sector.

Key Highlights

Power Sector Imports Down Sharply: Coal imports by power plants fell by 24.89%, from 4.67 MT in April 2025 to 3.51 MT in April 2026, driven by improved domestic linkage supplies and reduced dependence on imported coal for blending Imported Coal-Based (ICB) Plants: Imports for plants designed to run on imported coal declined by 27.45%, from 3.97 MT to 2.88 MT, the steepest reduction among all categories tracked. Domestic Coal-Based (DCB) Plants for Blending Imported Coal: Coal imported for blending purposes by domestic plants fell by 11.26%, from 0.71 MT to 0.63 MT, underscoring the success of efforts to ramp up assured domestic supply and reduce reliance on the blending mandate. Overall Import Dependence Narrows: Coal imports as a share of total coal consumption fell from 21.69% in April 2025 to 19.68% in April 2026, a decline of over 2 percentage points. Coking Coal Imports Remain Steady: Coking coal imports, which cater primarily to the steel sector where domestic coking coal reserves remain limited, rose marginally by 1.34% (5.93 MT to 6.01 MT), consistent with continued growth in domestic steel production and reflecting that this category is driven by resource-specific requirements rather than availability gaps. The consistent decline across ICB, DCB and overall import categories reflects the Ministry of Coal's sustained focus on ramping up domestic coal production and offtake, strengthening First Mile Connectivity, close monitoring of thermal power plant stock positions, and coordinated efforts with Ministry of Railways, Coal India Limited (CIL) and its subsidiaries to ensure assured supply to power utilities. These measures have progressively reduced the need for imported coal, including for blending purposes, while maintaining healthy stock levels at thermal power plants across the country. The Ministry of Coal remains committed to further strengthening domestic coal production, evacuation infrastructure and quality-based grading to sustain this trend of reduced import dependence in the coming months.

TRAI Assesses Mobile Network Quality Across Karimnagar City and Highway under AP LSA

New Delhi (PIB): The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has released findings of Independent Drive Test (IDT) conducted across Karimnagar City and Highway under AP LSA, during the month of May 2026, for information of general telecom consumers. The purpose of this drive test is to assess and verify real time quality of mobile network services (both voice & data) provided by Telecom Service Providers (TSPs). During the IDT, TRAI captures performance of TSPs for key Quality of Service (QoS) parameters like Coverage, Call Drop Rate (CDR), Call Setup Success Rate (CSSR), data Download (DL) and Upload (UL) throughput etc., which are then published to inform Consumers and encourage TSPs to improve their services. These IDTs have been designed to capture on ground mobile network performance of all TSPs across diverse usage environment like cities, hotspots, public transport hubs, etc. In this type of drive testing, live data and voice sessions are established using SIM cards from all TSPs over 2G, 3G, 4G, and 5G networks. Multiple advanced test handsets are used, and the sessions are monitored and analysed in real-time using advanced Software Systems. TRAI, through its appointed agency, conducted drive tests across City drive - 136.3 Kms, Hotspot locations - 3, Highway - 217.2 Kms in Karimnagar and surrounding towns and Karimnagar-Vemulawada-Siricilla and Karimnagar-Bejjanki-Husnabad- Mulkanoor-Elkaturthy-Huzurabad-Karimnagar - Highway during 11th May 2026 to 12th May 2026 in Andhra Pradesh LSA. These tests were conducted under the supervision of the TRAI Regional Office Hyderabad. The observations presented in drive test reports represent the performance of the TSPs on the area/route under test on the day/ time of conducting the drive test.

Department of Commerce, Ministry of AYUSH and AYUSHEXCIL Convene Government-Industry Brainstorming Session

- Stakeholders Deliberate on Strategies to Enhance Global Competitiveness of AYUSH Sector

New Delhi (PIB): The Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, in collaboration with the Ministry of AYUSH and the AYUSH Export Promotion Council (AYUSHEXCIL), organised a Government-Industry Brainstorming Session on the AYUSH sector at Vanijya Bhawan, New Delhi on 1st July 2026.

Held under the theme "Strengthening India's Global Leadership in Traditional Wellness: Innovation, Quality, Exports and International Collaboration in the AYUSH Sector", the session brought together over 150 participants, including senior Government officials, exporters, manufacturers, MSMEs, startups, researchers, representatives of industry associations, State Licensing Authorities and other stakeholders, to deliberate on the roadmap for strengthening India's global leadership in

the AYUSH sector. The brainstorming session featured extensive deliberations on opportunities arising from India's Free Trade Agreements, global branding of AYUSH, export facilitation measures, quality standards and WHO-GMP compliance, Ayush Quality Mark, scientific validation, innovation, medical value travel, wellness services, and strategies for addressing regulatory and market access challenges. Representatives from the Government, industry, research institutions and the private sector exchanged views and shared practical recommendations to strengthen the global competitiveness of Indian AYUSH products and services. Delivering the special address, Member of Parliament and Chairman, AYUSHEXCIL, Dr. Anurag Sharma, highlighted the growing global acceptance of traditional medicine and

emphasised that India is well positioned to emerge as a trusted global hub for holistic healthcare. He called for closer collaboration among the Government, industry and research institutions to strengthen scientific validation, quality assurance, innovation and global branding, while highlighting AYUSHEXCIL's role in supporting exporters through market development, capacity building and international outreach programmes.

Delivering the keynote address, Secretary, Department of Commerce, Shri Rajesh Agrawal, reaffirmed the Department's commitment to supporting the AYUSH sector as a high-potential sunrise export sector. He observed that the objective is not merely to increase exports but to build globally competitive Indian AYUSH brands. Highlighting the opportunities arising from India's ex-



panding network of Free Trade Agreements, he encouraged industry to focus on innovation, branding, value addition and quality. He underlined the important role of intermediaries, trade facilitators and other ecosystem partners in connecting Indian AYUSH products with global markets and encouraged entrepreneurs and exporters to share their success stories more widely to inspire greater participation and accelerate the sector's growth. He reiterated that

the Department would continue stakeholder outreach, awareness programmes and capacity-building initiatives in collaboration with AYUSHEXCIL to support the sector's global expansion.

Addressing the session, Secretary, Ministry of AYUSH, Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, emphasised the need to accelerate the implementation of flagship initiatives such as Ayush Mark and Ayurveda Aahar to strengthen quality assurance, branding and the glo-

bal competitiveness of Indian AYUSH products and services. He called upon industry stakeholders to capitalise on the growing global interest in Ayurveda and other traditional systems of medicine by enhancing product quality, packaging, branding and international market readiness. Stressing the importance of continuous dialogue between the Government and industry, he urged stakeholders to actively leverage Government initiatives and highlighted the need for greater capacity building, particularly for exporters and MSMEs. He also highlighted ongoing efforts to align Indian standards with international benchmarks through collaboration with national and international standard-setting bodies to facilitate wider global acceptance of AYUSH products. The session concluded with an interactive open-house discussion during which exporters, manufacturers, MSMEs, startups and other stakeholders shared suggestions on improving market access, regulatory facilitation, ease of doing business, innovation, branding and international collaboration. The recommendations emerging from the brainstorming session will provide valuable inputs for future policy interventions, export promotion initiatives and collaborative efforts of the Department of Commerce, the Ministry of AYUSH and AYUSHEXCIL to strengthen Brand India AYUSH and further enhance India's leadership in the global traditional wellness ecosystem

MPEDA Concludes Second National Skill Olympiad on Seafood Value Addition at Seafood Expo Bharat 2026

MPEDA Trains Over 2,500 Seafood Processing Professionals Through 50 Value Addition Programmes

New Delhi (PIB): The grand finale of the second edition of the National Skill Olympiad on Seafood Value Addition was held during Seafood Expo Bharat 2026 in Kochi on Wednesday. An initiative of the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA), the Olympiad brought together ten trained seafood processing professionals, who demonstrated their culinary skills and technical expertise in preparing value-added seafood products. In a closely contested finale, P. Surya Bhaskar of Devi Fisheries Ltd., Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh, emerged as the winner. Muthu Kumaran of Theva & Co., Tuticorin, Tamil Nadu, secured the second position, while Ms Sagarika Sardar of SS Seafoods Pvt. Ltd., Kolkata, West Bengal, and Ms Barasrani Jena of Sabri Food Products Pvt. Ltd.,

Bhubaneswar, Odisha, secured the third and fourth positions, respectively. The winner received a cash prize of Rs 1,00,000, while the second and third prize winners received Rs 75,000 and Rs 50,000, respectively. A consolation prize of Rs 25,000 was awarded to the fourth-position holder. In the run-up to the event, MPEDA conducted 50 Seafood Value Addition Training Programmes across the east and west coasts of India, through which more than 2,500 seafood processing workers and professionals were trained in preparing value-added seafood products with high demand in international markets.

The regional rounds of the Olympiad were held in Mumbai for the West Coast Zone and Visakhapatnam for the East Coast Zone. The ten finalists were selected from among the participants in the regional rounds held on June 30. During the grand finale, the finalists were tasked with preparing six value-added seafood products that are in demand in international markets—Nobashi Shrimp, Breaded Butterfly Shrimp, Cooked Peeled Deveined Tail-On (PDTO) Shrimp, Marinated Shrimp Skewers, Breaded Squid Rings and Fish Fillets. Chairman, MPEDA, Shri P. Jawahar, Director, Dr Ram Mohan M.K.; Secretary, Dr Gibin Kumar; Joint Director, Shri Anilkumar; and Chief Guest and CEO, Seafood Exporters Association of India (SEAI), Dr K. N. Raghavan, distributed cash prizes, medals and certificates to the winners. The competition was evaluated by a jury comprising Senior Scientist, ICAR-CIFT, Kochi, Dr Sarika K.; Pro-

cessing and Quality Assurance Supervisor, NIFPHATT, Kochi, Dr Nithin C.T.; Production Manager, Parayil Seafood Pvt. Ltd., Shri Francis Assisi; General Manager, Sandhya Aqua Exports Pvt. Ltd., Shri Jayan Jacob; and General Manager, VKM Foods, Shri Vijayakrishna. The participants were assessed on the basis of technical skill, hygiene, precision, presentation and the quality of the finished products. Chairman, MPEDA, Shri P. Jawahar, said the Olympiad represents an important milestone in building a resilient and globally competitive seafood sector capable of meeting the evolving expectations of international markets. He said MPEDA is making sustained efforts to strengthen quality assurance, food safety, processing excellence, workforce skilling,

sustainable seafood production and reliable supply chains. He added that the Olympiad serves as an important platform for strengthening India's seafood export ecosystem. The event was attended by senior officials from the Central and State Governments, seafood exporters, international buyers, industry leaders, technical experts and delegates participating in Seafood Expo Bharat 2026. The award-winning value-added seafood products prepared by the finalists were showcased at the Skill Olympiad Pavilion, along with live demonstrations and tasting sessions featuring export-oriented seafood value-added products developed through MPEDA's training programmes. A tasting session of the products was also organised at the MPEDA Skill Olympiad Pavilion.

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

New Delhi: Former India batter Cheteshwar Pujara addressed the discussion surrounding India’s top order ahead of the second T20I against England, making it clear that he does not believe Sanju Samson should lose his place to accommodate Vaibhav Sooryavanshi despite growing calls for the teenage batter to be included in the playing XI. The veteran batter added that constant speculation over Samson’s place in the side was unnecessary, insisting the wicketkeeper-batter deserves a longer run. “I think India should persist with Sanju Samson. I don’t think he should be feeling any pressure. He has proved himself in the T20 World Cup and, with the kind of talent he possesses, he should be there in the playing XI,” Pujara said on JioStar. “There shouldn’t be a lot of noise about dropping Sanju Samson. He is a quality player and should get a longer run. Sanju just needs to bat naturally and not think too much,” he added. While Pujara acknowledged that Sooryavanshi has earned an opportunity, he argued that the youngster’s inclusion should not come at the cost of disrupting India’s established top order. “If Vaibhav needs to play, he should play, but not at the expense of dropping someone, rather by resting someone.



If you want to give him an opportunity, that is fine. But you shouldn’t be dropping any of India’s top three players, whether it’s Sanju, Abhishek or Ishan Kishan. Having said that, Vaibhav does deserve an opportunity, and his opportunity will come,” he mentioned. Pujara also praised captain Shreyas Iyer’s composed innings after India recovered from an early setback to post a competitive total in the rain-hit opening T20I against England in Durham. With India losing early wickets after electing to bat first, Pujara said Iyer’s ability to steady the innings before accelerating played a decisive

role in putting the visitors in a strong position. Pujara felt Iyer delivered exactly what was expected of a captain after India found themselves under pressure in the powerplay, balancing caution with aggression as the innings progressed. “It was an important knock from Shreyas Iyer and, when you are leading the team, you always look to lead from the front. He showed a lot of maturity because India were in trouble after losing a couple of early wickets,” Pujara told JioStar. He also credited Iyer for pacing his innings according to the match situation before shifting gears once he was well

established at the crease. “Abhishek played a good knock, but it was important for Shreyas to hold one end up and take his time. Once he was set, he played some quality shots,” he added. According to Pujara, the India captain’s innings reflected both responsibility and leadership, leaving the side in an excellent position by the end of its 20 overs. “If you look at his innings at the end of the 20 overs, you know that, as a captain, you have done your job. You have put your team in a very commanding position. This was a perfect knock from Shreyas, both as a leader and as a batter,” he said.

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

New Delhi: Former India wicketkeeper Parthiv Patel backed India’s batting display after the rain-hit opening T20I against England in Durham ended without a result. India, who opted to bat first after winning the toss, posted 190 before persistent rain prevented the second innings from getting underway. Assessing the visitors’ performance after play was called off, Patel said the innings showed India’s willingness to adapt to English conditions and highlighted Abhishek Sharma’s impact at the top of the order.



added. The former India cricketer also reserved special praise for Abhishek Sharma, crediting the left-hander for quickly reading the nature of the surface and making the most of scoring opportunities. “I thought he batted really well. He understood the conditions well. There was a slightly spongier bounce in Durham, but he made sure that whenever the opportunity presented itself, he capitalised on it,” he stated. Patel pointed to Abhishek’s aggressive intent against both pace

and spin as one of the defining features of the innings, as he said, “That over from Saqib Mahmood was an important one, where he stepped out and hit three boundaries, two over point and one over mid-off. Then, when the spinners came on, he chose the right areas to hit those sixes.” Looking beyond the knock itself, Patel said performances in overseas conditions continue to reinforce Abhishek’s credentials as one of the leading batters in the shortest format. “Scoring runs

in the SENA countries, South Africa, England, New Zealand and Australia, puts a stamp on your authority and your skill set. Usually, that’s how you get judged. He did well in South Africa, then in Australia, and now he has scored runs in English conditions as well. That is the reason why he has been either the No. 1 or No. 2 T20I batter for almost a year,” Patel mentioned. The two sides will next face off in the second T20I on Saturday at Old Trafford in Manchester.

World Sports Journalists Day: Sports Minister Mandaviya, ICC chief Jay Shah laud media’s invaluable contribution



New Delhi: Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports Mansukh Mandaviya and International Cricket Council (ICC) chairman Jay Shah on Thursday extended their wishes to the sports media fraternity on the occasion of World Sports Journalists Day, recognising the invaluable

contribution of journalists in promoting sport, celebrating athletes’ achievements and connecting millions of fans with sporting action across the globe. Observed annually on July 2, World Sports Journalists Day honours the efforts of sports journalists, photographers, broadcasters and digi-

tal content creators who chronicle sporting events and bring stories from the field to audiences worldwide. The day was instituted by the International Sports Press Association (AIPS) in 1994 to mark the 70th anniversary of the organisation, which was founded on July 2, 1924, during the Paris Olympic Games in France.

Mandaviya highlighted the importance of sports journalists in India’s rapidly evolving sporting landscape. He described the media as vital partners in the country’s sporting journey, crediting journalists for celebrating achievements, identifying and highlighting emerging talent, and inspiring young athletes to pursue excellence. The Sports Minister further said the hard work, dedication and professional integrity displayed by members of the sports media fraternity continue to strengthen India’s

sporting ecosystem. “Sports journalists are vital partners in India’s sporting journey, celebrating achievements, highlighting talent, and inspiring the next generation of athletes. On World Sports Journalists Day, I extend my heartfelt wishes to the entire sports media fraternity. Your hard work, dedication, and professional integrity continue to strengthen India’s sporting ecosystem. Happy World Sports Journalists Day!” he posted on X.

In a message posted on X, Jay Shah praised the dedication and passion of sports journalists, saying their work goes beyond reporting results and scores. He acknowledged that sports journalists play a key role in informing fans, inspiring future generations and strengthening the global sporting ecosystem by bringing compelling stories of athletes, teams and competitions to life.

Grand Chess Tour Croatia: Praggnanandhaa joint second, Gukesh tied sixth after Day 1



Zagreb: The two Indian stars had contrasting starts to the Super Rapid & Blitz Croatia, the third event of the Grand Chess Tour, as Praggnanandhaa placed joint second, while world champion D. Gukesh was tied for sixth place at the end of the third round of the rapid section. Praggnanandhaa began with an impressive victory over Vincent Keymer before drawing against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave. Gukesh, meanwhile, suffered an opening-round defeat to Maxime Vachier-Lagrave but responded immediately with a win over Ivan Saric.

The two then faced each other in the final round of the day, where they split the point. As a result, Praggnanandhaa

finishes Day 1 tied for 2nd place with 4/6, while Gukesh is tied for 6th on 3/6, with six rapid rounds still to play. Round 3 wrapped up an exciting opening day of the Super Rapid & Blitz Croatia, with Alireza Firouzja remaining the man to catch, with a sole lead with five points. Just a few weeks ago, Firouzja was forced to withdraw from the Grand Chess Tour event in Romania after suffering an ankle injury, even playing two of his games from a separate room before making the difficult decision to withdraw from the event.

In the Croatia leg, the clash between tournament leader Firouzja and Anish Giri ended peacefully, allowing Firouzja to keep the sole lead. Keymer con-

tinued his comeback after an opening-round loss by defeating Nodirbek Abdusattorov, while Bogdan-Daniel Deac scored his first victory of the event against Ivan Sari, while Maxime Vachier-Lagrave split the point with Jorden van Foreest. The tournament combines two fast-paced disciplines: a 9-round single round-robin rapid tournament (played at a time control of 25 minutes plus a 10-second increment from move one) and an 18-round double round-robin blitz tournament (played at 5 minutes plus a 2-second increment from move one). Rapid wins count for 2 points and draws for 1 point, while Blitz wins count for 1 point and draws for half point.

Grand Chess Tour Zagreb: R Praggnanandhaa beats top seed Vincent Keymer to take joint second on day 1



Zagreb (Croatia): Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa began his campaign in the Zagreb leg of the Grand Chess Tour with a victory over top seed Vincent Keymer of Germany before drawing his next two games to finish the opening day of the rapid section in joint second place. Praggnanandhaa held France’s Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and compatriot and world champion D. Gukesh in hard-fought draws to end the day on four points, here on Wednesday. Alireza Firouzja of France emerged sole leader on five points after winning his first two games and drawing with Anish Giri of the Netherlands in the third round. With each rapid win worth two points, Firouzja moved ahead of Praggnanandhaa, Giri, Vachier-Lagrave and Keymer,

who recovered from his opening-round defeat with two victories. After winning the Norway chess classic ahead of Magnus Carlsen, Praggnanandhaa went on an attacking spree against Keymer in what will be hailed as a masterclass in the future. The fury of white pieces was there for everyone to see as Praggnanandhaa launched his forces right at the opponent king and cashed in on the full two points in a mere 26 moves. In the second round of the day, the Indian ace drew with Vachier-Lagrave who had started off with a finely crafted victory over World champion Gukesh. For Gukesh the rhythm came back immediately after losing to his French counterpart as he made light work of Ivan Saric of Croatia in the second round. The youngest ever world champion is set

to defend his title in the forthcoming match against Javokhir Sindarov of Uzbekistan.

While he was outplayed in the opener, Gukesh showcased his skills as the master craftsman while defending an attack against his king in the second round. Gukesh is next in line along with Deac Bogdan-Daniel of Romania on three points and these two are a full point ahead of Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan. Jorden Van Foreest of the Netherlands is on one point, while Saric is yet to open his account. The nine rounds of rapid will be followed by an 18-round blitz marathon and the winner will be decided with cumulative points in both sections. After this there are two more events left to be held at Saint Louis, USA in the Grand Chess Tour.

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

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

