

Mamata Banerjee Leads Protest Against Attack On TMC Leaders In 1st Public Rally After Poll Defeat



Kolkata: Trinamool Congress chief and former West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday led a protest in Kolkata against the BJP government over attacks on party leaders, particularly her nephew and MP Abhishek Banerjee, in Sonarpur despite not receiving permission from the police. While addressing the crowd in her first public rally after TMC's major poll debacle, Banerjee said that in her tenure, she stood by people irrespective of their political colours and affiliations. Referring to the attack on Abhishek Banerjee, Mamata said that the people who once sought help from her did not extend any support when the Diamond Harbour MP went

through a life-threatening attack. Banerjee led the protest march on Rashmoni Avenue near Esplanade. Abhishek Banerjee and the party's chief whip in the Lok Sabha, Kalyan Banerjee, were also present. High

drama ensued at the protest site as scuffles broke out between the police and protesters, according to a News18 report. Ahead of the protest, Mamata and other party leaders, including Dola Sen, offered floral

tributes at the statue of Dr B.R. Ambedkar. She was also seen holding a book on the Constitution of India before heading for the protest. Earlier on Sunday, Kalyan Banerjee claimed he suffered head injuries after being mobbed by BJP supporters outside a police station in West Bengal's Hooghly district. A day before, MP Abhishek Banerjee was assaulted, pelted with eggs, and had his shirt torn at Sonarpur in South 24 Parganas by an agitated crowd. Five people have been arrested in the matter. Several of those arrested were found to have links with former Sonarpur TMC MLA Lovely Maitra, according to a News18 report.



NSA Doval calls on Myanmar President on his maiden visit

New Delhi: National Security Advisor Ajit Doval called on Myanmar President U Min Aung Hlaing. Official Spokesperson for the Ministry of External Affairs, Randhir Jaiswal said in a post on X, "NSA Shri Ajit Doval called on President U Min Aung Hlaing of Myanmar today." Earlier, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Saturday called on Myanmar President and

appreciated his positive approach towards strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries. Jaishankar also said he looked forward to Hlaing's meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi to further advance cooperation between India and Myanmar. In a post on X, Jaishankar said, "Pleased to call on President U Min Aung Hlaing of Myanmar in New Delhi today.

Appreciate his positive sentiment towards deepening our longstanding bilateral cooperation. Look forward to his meeting with PM Narendra Modi to advance our partnership for peace, progress and prosperity." Min Aung Hlaing arrived in New Delhi after completing engagements in Both Gaya. Official Spokesperson for the Ministry of External Affairs, Randhir Jaiswal, an-

nounced that Minister of State Kirti Vardhan Singh received him at the airport. In a post on X, Jaiswal said, "A warm welcome to President U Min Aung Hlaing of Myanmar on his arrival in New Delhi from Both Gaya. He was received by Minister of State Shri Kirti Vardhan Singh at the airport. The visit provides an opportunity to further strengthen our bilateral

partnership." Earlier in the day, Hlaing offered prayers in the Mahabodhi Temple. Jaiswal said that Hlaing's visit underlines the Buddhist heritage between both nations. In a post on X, Jaiswal said, "President U Min Aung Hlaing of Myanmar visited Both Gaya today and offered prayers at the sacred Mahabodhi temple.



Rahul Gandhi alleges CBSE answer sheets scanned using mobile phones, calls it "fraud"

New Delhi: Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi accused the Centre and the CBSE of compromising the evaluation process of answer sheets, alleging that changes in tender specifications led to answer sheets being scanned using mobile phones. In a post on X, Gandhi referred to a CBSE tender issued in May 2025 and alleged that technical requirements related to scanning answer sheets were diluted in a revised tender released later. "CBSE's May 2025 tender required answer sheets to be scanned with automatic robotic scanners, spines preserved, at a minimum of 300 DPI. The tender reissued in August quietly removed all of it. 'Scanners' became generic. Resolution dropped to 200 DPI," Gandhi said. He further alleged that answer sheets were scanned using mobile phones. "Now we know what that meant in practice. It has been exposed that COEMPT scanned the answer sheets using mobile phones. The blurred copies, the missing pages, the unscanned books -- they are not 'errors.' They are the predictable outcome of a contract written to fit a vendor," Gandhi alleged. Calling the matter "fraud," Gandhi said, "This is fraud. And every child whose marks were wrongly evaluated is a victim of it." Targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Gandhi questioned the Centre's silence over the matter. "This morning, the Prime Minister had time to speak about mangoes. He has not had time to speak about 18.5 lakh children whose answer sheets were scanned with phones. Dharmendra Pradhan still sits in office. Modi's silence is no longer indifference. It is complicity," Gandhi said. His remarks come at a time when the CBSE is facing mounting pressure following reports of technical failures in its post-result portal and discrepancies in evaluated answer sheets.

Jana Sena Will Contest in Telangana: Pawan Kalyan



From Our Staff Reporter Hyderabad, June 2: Jana Sena Party chief and Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan announced that the party will contest elections in Telangana. Speaking at the Jana Sena Party office in Jubilee Hills on Tuesday, he made it clear that the party would actively participate in Telangana politics. He emphasized that Telangana is an integral part of the country and noted that even those who had opposed the formation of Telangana are now holding positions of power and serving as MLAs.

Pawan Kalyan stated that Jana Sena respects Telangana, which is why the party had donated crores of rupees to the Kondagattu temple. He asserted that Jana Sena would not be intimidated by threats or criticism. "If I were someone who gets frightened, would I have started a political party?" he asked. He further declared that if any injustice were done to Telangana, Jana Sena would be the first party to raise its voice. He said his actions were not motivated by votes but by his affection and concern for Telangana. Recalling the past, he said that when the TRS opened an office in Guntur, it was welcomed.

"Even If My Throat Is Slit..."

Pawan Kalyan questioned whether he would

become Chief Minister merely by undertaking activities in Telangana. He asked local leaders when exactly he had ever insulted Telangana. Declaring that he would not be afraid even if his throat were slit, he said he had no interest in provoking anyone and that he would not be bothered by criticism directed at him. He challenged political leaders by asking whether he was responsible for unemployment in Telangana. Referring to the film industry, he questioned how the industry that was once based in Madras had eventually shifted to Hyderabad. He said that if people from Andhra Pradesh were constantly criticized, it would become difficult for them to live in Telangana. Addressing Telangana leaders directly, he asked how long they would continue to spend time criticizing Andhra people. He also questioned how anyone could suddenly tell people not to come to Telangana, adding that Andhra Pradesh contractors were doing well in the state. Pawan Kalyan said he had great respect for Revanth Reddy, the Chief Minister of Telangana. Referring to allegations that he had encroached upon a lake, he asked whether he would be allowed to remain in the state if such accusations were true. He declared that if it was proven that his farmhouse was built on encroached land, he would transfer it to the state gov-

ernment. He also recalled his close association with Gaddar, saying that he had known him even before entering politics. Pawan Kalyan questioned political leaders about why they had remained silent when Gaddar was shot and bullets had entered his body. He recalled that Gaddar used to visit the Jana Sena Party office. Taking a swipe at those questioning him now, the Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister asked where they had been when Gaddar was alive.

From Our Staff Reporter Amaravati, June 2: Minister Mandipalli Ramprasad Reddy expressed strong displeasure over the stance adopted by YSRCP president and former Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy regarding the state capital, Amaravati.

Speaking in Amaravati on Tuesday, Minister Ramprasad Reddy said that Jagan's comments about Amaravati were completely irresponsible. He recalled that it was the previous YSRCP government that disrupted the development of a world-class capital during its five-year tenure. The minister criticized Jagan for now lecturing on development after having halted the capital construction project midway during his administration.

He further alleged that the previous government had

plunged the state into confusion under the slogan of "three capitals" and was now attempting to mislead the public with what he described as deceptive statements. Ramprasad Reddy accused the YSRCP government of failing to honor the promises made to Amaravati farmers and claimed that development works in the capital region had been halted, causing hardships to thousands of families.

The minister said that the trust of farmers who had contributed their lands for the construction of Amaravati had been damaged by the actions of the previous government. He stated that despite being in power for five years, the YSRCP administration failed to take even a single significant step toward the development of the capital.

He alleged that the party was now spreading misinformation about Amaravati in an attempt to mislead the people.

Ramprasad Reddy noted that both the Central and State Governments were now taking swift measures to accelerate the construction of Amaravati. He remarked that it was ironic for those who had obstructed the capital's development to speak about corruption.

The minister stated that the coalition government had resumed projects that had remained stalled during the YSRCP regime. He reiterated that the government's objective is to transform Amaravati into a world-class capital city. He added that the capital's development would continue in line with the aspirations of farmers and the people of Andhra Pradesh.



Emphasizing that no one could stop Amaravati's development, he described it as an issue closely tied to the future of the state. The minister said the government was working to rectify what he termed the "destruction" caused during Jagan's tenure and to put Amaravati back on track.

He advised Jagan to focus on the development of the state rather than engaging in politics over the capital issue. Concluding his remarks, Ramprasad Reddy stated that Amaravati is a symbol of the state's pride and that completing its construction is the government's responsibility.

Probe Sunil Kumar's Remarks: Deputy Speaker Raghurama Krishnam Raju

From Our Staff Reporter West Godavari District, June 2: Andhra Pradesh Assembly Deputy Speaker Raghurama Krishnam Raju expressed strong displeasure over the remarks made by former CID Chief and senior IPS officer P. V. Sunil Kumar.

Speaking at a meeting in Bhimavaram, Raghurama Krishnam Raju criticized Sunil Kumar for making what he described as unnecessary comments. He urged the police to conduct an inquiry into Sunil Kumar's statements. Questioning the former CID chief's remarks, Raghurama Krishnam Raju asked how Sunil Kumar could claim that he had ensured the fil-

ing of charge sheets in 4,000 SC/ST atrocity cases. He clarified that the CID or CBCID has no direct role in handling SC/ST atrocity cases and stated that such agencies generally take up only exceptional or sensational cases. He added that it would not be feasible for them to handle more than around 200 cases.

The Deputy Speaker described Sunil Kumar's claim of facilitating charge sheets in 4,000 cases as astonishing and inappropriate. He further alleged that Sunil Kumar's comments reinforced suspicions regarding his involvement in the custodial torture case previously raised by him. Raghurama Krishnam



Raju called for an investigation into the extent of Sunil Kumar's role in the filing of those charge sheets. He also referred to a meeting held in Bhimavaram where an individual identified as John Mark had reportedly

come from Delhi and addressed the gathering. According to the Deputy Speaker, John Mark made inflammatory remarks during the meeting, allegedly calling for action against certain individuals in an irresponsible manner. Raghurama Krishnam Raju criticized such statements, saying that while speakers praised the government, they were simultaneously provoking violence through reckless comments. He concluded by stating that it was up to the government to decide whether action should be taken against individuals who make such provocative and irresponsible remarks.

Lightning Likely in Several Districts of Andhra Pradesh

Visakhapatnam, June 2: With the summer season at its peak and the ongoing Rohini Karthe period, temperatures continue to soar across Andhra Pradesh. The Meteorological Department has already indicated that the onset of the southwest monsoon in the state will take some more time. As a result, people are experiencing intense heat, high humidity, and uncomfortable weather conditions.

Amid these conditions, the Meteorological Department has forecast thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and rainfall in several districts of the state on Tuesday.

According to the forecast, rainfall is likely in the districts of Visakhapatnam, Palnadu, Prakasam, Nandyal, Parvathipuram Manyam, Chittoor, Tirupati, Annamayya, Eluru, NTR District, and Krishna District. Gusty winds are also expected to accompany the rainfall.

Meanwhile, the State Disaster Management Authority has issued an Orange Alert for Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, Alluri Sitharama Raju District, Anakapalli, Eluru, NTR District, and the twin Godavari districts, warning of possible lightning strikes and adverse weather conditions. Authorities have advised residents in the affected districts to remain alert and take necessary precautions during thunderstorms and lightning activity.

EDITORIAL

Disruption in the
administration of exams

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has been creating a stir across the country after several errors and discrepancies were revealed in the evaluation of answer sheets of Class 12 exams. Even before the NEET question paper leak incident, the CBSE Class 12 results have been leading to a controversial discussion. This confusion has arisen due to the newly introduced On-Screen Marking (OSM) by CBSE. The national-level exams, CUTEUG (Common University Entrance Test), allow students to get seats in the best universities of the country through a single exam without having to write separate entrance exams for different universities. However, the technical glitches encountered in CUTE are repeatedly happening in the National Testing Agency and CBSE, putting the future of students in question.

If we look at the results of the CBSE Class 12 exams, the pass percentage has come down to 85.29 percent this year, while last year it was 88.39 percent. The number of students scoring more than 90 percent has also come down significantly. As a result, many students have resorted to evaluation as they did not get the results they expected. More than 4 lakh students have requested scanned copies of their answer sheets, which shows how many people are expressing doubts about these results. It is strange that the teachers were informed about the implementation of online screen marking just ten days before the exams, as these Class 12 exams were held on February 17. How much awareness do teachers have about this new method? Can they edit the scanned answer sheets in the digital process? Are the scanned copies clear? Hasty implementation without checking any of these has become a test for both teachers and students, leading to many errors. In a circular issued by CBSE on February 9, it explained that the online screen marking process will have several benefits. It has been said that errors can be completely eliminated, human intervention will be reduced to a large extent, evaluation i.e. papers will be marked very quickly, and there will be no need for re-marking after the results are out. But the results are different in practice. 17 lakh students wrote this exam. That means they were given 98 lakh answer books. That is, 40 crore pages were given. All this has to be scanned manually in record time. Those who have requested evaluation have to check all this. The minimum basic requirements for this, computers, locking system etc. are not in place, and there is confusion and heaps of mistakes are seen. That is, it is clear how flawed the management of CBSE exams is. It is not understood why CBSE introduced the on-screen marking process without the scanning system being fully available. This is inexcusable. Although CBSE says this is a temporary adjustment, it is like destroying the system that was in place until then. Who is responsible for this? Who will investigate these errors? Lok Sabha Opposition Leader Rahul Gandhi has alleged that the online screen marking system has made evaluation a hotbed of errors and irregularities.

Be careful of pickpockets in CBSE! He warned the students. If the marks are wrong due to CBSE's mistake, you will be billed for it. To get a digital scan copy, Rs. 100 per subject, Rs. 100 for retotaling a paper, Rs. 25 per question for re-evaluation, and in total, a student may have to pay about Rs. 2000 to correct his answer sheet correctly. He advised the students to note how much money CBSE is earning when a total of 4 lakh students apply for evaluation. He said that all this is being punished by the students and the revenue is for the government. Meanwhile, he objected to CBSE's selection of a company called Edutech to conduct these exams. Does CBSE not know that this company, named Globberena, committed a scam in Telangana in 2019 and 2023, and has such a record? He asked. They alleged that there was some ulterior motive in choosing this company despite knowing its track record. However, CBSE revealed that this company was selected as per the government's procurement policy. However, after users revealed the flaws in the answer sheet evaluation portal, CBSE seems to have not only accepted them but also prepared to impose a fine on this company. The board, which destroys the students' self-confidence, is forcing them to sacrifice a good phase of their childhood for entrance exams. Due to the pressure and competition of these entrance exams, which the youth write for their career and higher studies, they are losing their freedom and are confined to exams. This is a painful and disappointing betrayal of trust by the student generation.

There Is A 'Shadow' Route Keeping
Iran Alive, And America Can't Touch It

On February 28, the US and Israel struck Iran, targeting its political and military power centres, eliminating the Grand Ayatollah on the first day of the war. Washington and Tel Aviv assumed that the decapitation of the Islamic regime by killing Ayatollah Ali Khamenei would lead to political paralysis and mass uprising, like what the world saw at the start of the year - which, in turn, would result in a regime change - one of the implicit goals of the joint US-Israel operation. However, the Islamic regime and its armed forces remain intact. As Mehdi Hasan told, "Iran is winning by not losing the war." Daniel Byman, one of the leading experts on irregular warfare and terrorism, wrote that the current standoff is no longer a match of "military capabilities, but rather a struggle for political endurance and gaining bargaining leverage". Donald Trump claimed that Iran's military is nearly finished. However, just like all of Trump's claims, a Pentagon Intelligence input claims that Iran has managed to retain key military capabilities to fight. This begs the question: how is that possible? If the Strait of Hormuz is Iran's Trump card, then the Caspian Sea in its north is the 'war machine' helping Iran play its cards well.

Caspian Sea - A Brief Introduction

The Caspian Sea is the world's largest inland body of water and is called the world's largest lake, sometimes referred to as a sea. Five countries have territorial control over the waters of the Caspian Sea: Azerbaijan, Russia, Iran, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. The sea is strategically located in Central Asia, connecting Europe and Asia, and it is rich in natural resources, with 48 billion barrels of oil and 292 trillion cubic feet of natural gas in proven and probable reserves.



The discussions over the significance of the Caspian Sea are not new, and Israel and the US are aware of the arms trade between Russia and Iran via the sea. Israel struck Iran's Bandar Anzali port on the Caspian Sea to disrupt arms shipping between the two countries. Iran maintains four major ports on the Caspian: Bandar Anzali, Amirabad, Neka, and Nowshahr, while Russia operates the Astrakhan, Makhachkala, and Olya ports.

How Russia and Iran Ship Arms

Trade between Iran and Russia in the Caspian region is shrouded in secrecy and often referred to as the dark web of sea trade due to irregularities. The sea route came to prominence a few months after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. A maritime trade analysis from Bloomberg found that Russia and Iran are investing \$20 billion to expand rail, sea and river routes connecting the countries via the Caspian Sea. The logic was simple. Evade global sanctions and ship weapons to and from Iran via the Caspian Sea, which is connected to the

Black Sea via the Sea of Azov and the Volga-Don Canal on the Volga and Don rivers in Russia. The ships from Russia and Iran conduct dark port calls - a process in which vessels turn off their Automatic Identification System (AIS), which transmits signals to satellites that help determine the location of ships at sea. While turning off AIS is one method, AIS spoofing, ships operating under a different country's flag, and vessel-to-vessel transfers in international waters are other techniques used to make it virtually impossible to track the ship. Russian and Iranian ships make fake port calls to cover sanctioned maritime routes. Many companies steal IMO numbers of scrapped tankers or invent their own numbers. Mostly, the shipping trade is handled by shell companies registered in countries such as Panama, Gambia, Singapore, China and Fiji. Weapons and oil are not the only commodities being shipped from the Caspian Sea. Iran imports grain from Russia, and the total trade volume in 2024 stood at 3.4 million tons, underpinning the sig-

nificance of the north-south trade corridor.

According to data from Windward, an open-source platform, the number of cargo and tanker vessels increased significantly after Russia invaded Ukraine, from 23 a month in March 2022 to over 70 by the end of the year. The trend was visible in the Volga and Don rivers, which saw an increase in the number of ships sailing to the Sea of Azov and then to the Black Sea. Most likely, the vessels carried weapons and oil to fund and support Russia's war machinery. Ships with the Russian flag make it difficult for other countries to contest the trade due to a fear of inviting a military response if they take action. Moscow operates a fleet of over 20 naval ships, including minesweepers, landing craft and anti-saboteur boats, forming the Caspian Flotilla of the Russian Navy, the oldest Russian flotilla. The absence of the US to counterbalance Russian naval influence makes it nearly impossible for Caspian littoral states to stop sanctioned shipping.

Russia-Iran Arms Trade, In

Numbers

From the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has been the main supplier of arms to Iran. In 1991, Moscow lifted the barrier on the sale of conventional weapons to Iran, and in the last 35 years, Russia has supplied tanks, naval ships, surface-to-air missile defence systems such as S-300 and artillery to Iran. According to an estimate from Bloomberg, since 2021, Iran has sold \$4 billion worth of weapons, including \$2.7 billion worth of missiles. This includes several Fath-360 short-range ballistic missiles, 500 other types of munitions and over 200 air defence missiles. In another contract worth \$1.75 billion, signed in early 2023, Iran also supplied Russia with Shahed-136 kamikaze drones and helped set up production of its domestic variant, known as the Geran-2. In 2022 and 2023, Iran also signed contracts with Moscow to purchase Russian Su-35 fighter jets and Mi-28 attack helicopters, significantly upgrading its air fleet, which still uses early Cold War-era jets.

Why Pete Hegseth's Unusual 'Shangri-La' Speech Should Worry India

If anyone has doubts about US intentions in the region, a recent speech by Pete Hegseth, heading the Department of War - the aptly renamed Defence Department - was illuminating. Time for considerable Indo-Pacific musing, and suitable action. US policy changes are already having a domino effect on the Indo-Pacific. Defence budgets are rapidly rising as neighbours confront a highly belligerent China, and greyzone warfare has come to stay. The Defence Secretary, however, went according to a script that might have been very well written for his European allies. The same phrasing, the same expectations, and possibly, therefore, the same results.

The 'Pay More' Debate

Hegseth made his intervention at the Shangri-la Dialogue, hosted annually in Singapore, which brought together some 40-plus Chiefs of Defence, among other officials. Usually, the forum, while offering some interesting insights, is not the stuff of headlines. This year, though, almost every country seemed uneasy, and much of that could be attributed to the 'new' US posture, well in evidence as the US President visited Beijing just a short while ago. Now add to that the provocative speech of his Defence secretary, and you have a real pot-boiler. Hegseth, who is no stranger to controversy given his resignation from the Army and accusations of 'white nationalism', began his speech in the first few seconds by rejecting "wishful thinking or utopian idealism" for a "future that will be defined by our collective efforts to safeguard and

secure our most vital national interests". The rest of the speech stressed 'collective' entirely. He declared, "The era of the United States subsidising the defence of wealthy nations is over. We need partners, not protectorates. We seek alliances built on shared responsibility, not dependency." That's hard talking. In other words, you want defence, you pay for it yourself. Add to that this quote, "Allies who refuse to step up and carry their own weight for our collective defence will face a clear shift in how we do business." That's primarily aimed at Japan and South Korea, but expect pressure on India as well to raise its defence budget.

The Main Threat

That main threat was sitting in the room, though in the form of a markedly lower rank. China didn't send its defence minister to the forum - for the second time in a row - but Major General Meng Xiangqing, from the People's Liberation Army National Defence University, who is more of a strategic scholar than anyone with political weight. Nonetheless, the impact of Hegseth mentioning "rightful alarm regarding China's historic military buildup and the expansion of its military activities in the region and beyond" would have resonated with an audience that is now one in recognising the multifaceted Chinese threat. Hegseth's promise to preserve the "equilibrium" would have raised eyebrows, since, ironically, what is evident, by and large, is its complete absence. Nothing much to 'preserve' here unless it's an attempt to

soothe nervousness in Beijing. The Chinese use not just their navy, air force, or coast guard but even massive fishing fleets to threaten neighbours. Japanese sources note how thousands of Chinese fishing vessels have repeatedly formed lengthy "walls" in the East China Sea close to Japan's EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zone). These "maritime militia" obstruct shipping routes, forcing international shipping as well to zigzag around them. These "greyzone operations" have been used on at least four occasions since October 2024, with the last in January here at all.

The Big Bite

Then came the bite. While observing that Asian allies "do not seek constant escalation, rhetorical theatrics, or a region defined by public confrontation" - he is right there - he promised a "strong denial defence". That is a core concept in America's defence strategy, focused on resisting aggression by making an adversary's objectives difficult to achieve. It relies on a defensive posture rather than an offensive one. Hegseth's comment in the current context, thus, essentially indicates that the US will not really initiate any change in the present situation and would offer its support just as a 'quiet power'. Ironically, though, that is an aspect entirely missing in the war against Iran, in which America has become as noisy as it gets. Then is the core of this 'strategy', which is that America could not be expected to carry the burden alone, but required "capable allies with real military strength and in-



dustrial capacity, and political resolve". Why? Because it is a bad deal for the American taxpayer. To keep that section happy must naturally be the first aim of political leaders in the region, now struggling under massive energy costs and petroleum prices in the wake of an entirely senseless war.

With China In The Room

Meanwhile, anxiety is apparent among major Pacific countries. Australia's defence minister baldly stated that his country faced its "most complex and threatening strategic landscape since the end of the Second World War", pointing to increased cutting of undersea cables, and again, a clear security threat from the 'systematic plunder' by illegal fishing vessels. Australia has increased its defence budget to 3% of GDP by 2033, with a major part of it

earmarked for the maritime domain. Japan's Koizumi was even more resolute, given that his country is the most affected by the escalating threats along its shores and has now virtually turned its pacifist constitution around to allow defence cooperation across the board. It has set aside a record defence budget of some \$58 billion - the twelfth year that this has increased. As the minister noted, Japan faces troubling realities. Participants across the board backed an increase in defence spending, with all acknowledging the threat, but, equally, all calling for dialogue and transparency in Chinese actions. China's national defence ministry spokesman Jiang Bin had warned just days ago that "the grey rhino of a remilitarised Japan is gathering speed". Nobody is buying that.

Five-Day Faculty Development Programme Begins at Aditya University



Gandepalli, June 2: A five-day online Faculty Development Programme on "Next-Gen Teaching: Blending Pedagogy with AI for Student Success" began at the Department of Computer Applications. The programme will be conducted from June 2 to June 6. Deputy Pro-Chancellor said the initiative aims to help faculty integrate Artificial Intelligence (AI) with modern teaching methods to improve student learning outcomes. Senior university officials inaugurated the programme and highlighted the growing role of AI in education and the importance of technology-driven teaching practices.

The programme will provide faculty members with insights into AI-powered teaching tools, smart classroom strategies, student engagement techniques, and next-generation educational practices. Organisers said the training will enhance professional development, improve academic quality, and equip educators with skills required for future-ready classrooms.

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CM Chandrababu Reviews Godavari Pushkaralu-2027 Preparations

Kakinada, June 2: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister reviewed preparations for Godavari Pushkaralu-2027 through a video conference with district collectors on Tuesday. Discussions focused on the development, renovation, and expansion of bathing ghats and the creation of essential infrastructure for pilgrims. Following the review, District Collector held a meeting with officials to discuss development plans for Pushkar ghats at Govalanka, Gopulanka, Pillanka, and Pedalanka in Tallarevu and Kajuluru mandals. He directed departments to prepare advance action plans for ghat expansion, sanitation, drinking water supply, transport facilities, approach roads, and parking areas.

The Collector emphasized coordinated efforts by all departments to ensure smooth arrangements and timely completion of works, enabling devotees to participate in



the festival without inconvenience. Senior district officials from various departments attended the review meeting.

Youth Time Bank Sets New Benchmark in Community Service: Collector



Vijayawada, June 2: District Collector Dr. G. Lakshmisha praised the Youth Time Bank initiative being implemented at the Government General Hospital

(GGH), saying it is giving a new direction to youth-led community service. Reviewing the programme on its 73rd day, he appreciated the efforts of students from Dhankula Institute of Engineering and Technology, SRR & CVR Government Degree College, and volunteers from Vasavya Mahila Mandali. The volunteers have been assisting patients and attendants by providing guidance, information, and support within the hospital premises. The Collector said such initiatives promote social responsibility and encourage youth to contribute their time and skills for the benefit of society.

He also noted that the programme has been extended to the Public Grievance Redressal System (PGRS) at the Collectorate and directed officials to expand the service to the Indrakeeladri temple area as well. Senior hospital and youth welfare officials were present during the visit.

Kakinada Municipal Corporation Receives Prestigious ISO Certifications

Kakinada, June 2: has been awarded the prestigious ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 14001:2015 certifications in recognition of its excellence in quality governance, public service delivery, and environmental management. The certificates were presented to Municipal Commissioner by District Collector during a ceremony on Tuesday. Officials said the recognition reflects the corporation's efforts in efficient civic services, urban planning, public health management, regulatory compliance, and eco-friendly initiatives.

The Collector congratulated the corporation's officers and staff for achieving the milestone, while the Commissioner stated that the certifications highlight the commitment of municipal employees, engineers, sanitation workers, and health personnel towards delivering transparent



and high-quality services to citizens.

Collector Reviews Parking and Traffic Plans for Godavari Pushkaralu-2027

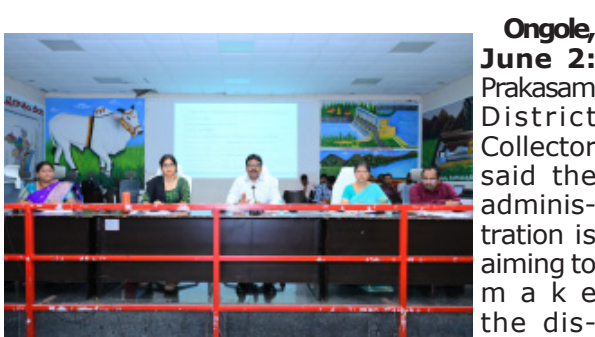
Rajahmendravaram, June 2: District Collector participated in a video conference chaired by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister on preparations for Godavari Pushkaralu-2027. The district administration presented its preparedness plans through a PowerPoint presentation. The Chief Minister directed officials to ensure seamless arrangements for pilgrims, with a focus on traffic management, sanitation, drinking water, medical services, power supply, and security. He emphasized that infrastructure developed for the Pushkaralu should become permanent assets for the region.

Following the review, the Collector instructed officials to identify vacant lands for vehicle parking and temporary accommodation facilities. Plans are being prepared for 16 proposed Pushkar Nagars, traffic diversions, shuttle



bus services, and improved connectivity between ghats and pilgrim facilities. Superintendent of Police said comprehensive security and traffic management plans are being developed in anticipation of large pilgrim turnout during the festival.

Revenue-Issue Free Prakasam District by March 2027: Collector



of major revenue-related issues by March 2027. Reviewing the progress of revenue grievance redressal at a divisional-level con-

ference, the Collector directed officials to resolve public complaints promptly and ensure courteous behavior towards citizens. He warned that negligence in addressing land encroachments and delays in processing applications would not be tolerated.

The Collector instructed officials to expedite mutations, caste, income, and death certificates, as well as resurvey work and distribution of pattadar passbooks. Joint Collector emphasized regular review meetings at RDO and Tahsildar levels to ensure speedy resolution of revenue issues and improve public confidence in government services.

Natural Farming Best Way to Tackle El Niño Challenges: Collector

Rajahmendravaram, June 2: District Collector Kirthi Chekuri said natural farming is an effective solution to help farmers overcome challenges posed by climate change and El Niño conditions. She released a handbook on El Niño preparedness and natural farming practices for 2026-27. The Collector advised farmers to adopt natural farming methods that improve soil moisture retention, promote crop diversity, and reduce cultivation costs. She noted that delayed monsoons, dry spells, and rising temperatures associated with El Niño require better planning and climate-resilient farming practices.

She highlighted techniques such as pre-monsoon dry sowing, seed balls, drought-proof models, and semi-circular cultivation methods as useful strategies. Technical guidance will be provided to farmers through village-level support systems coordinated by the Rythu Sadhikara



Samstha and Rythu Seva Kendras. Officials from the agriculture and revenue departments attended the programme.

Yoga Andhra-2026 Events to Begin from June 7 in Vijayawada District



Vijayawada, June 2: District Collector Dr. G. Lakshmisha announced that special Yoga Andhra-2026 programmes will be conducted across the district from June 7 for 14 days as part of the International Day of Yoga celebrations on June 21. Reviewing arrangements with officials at the Collectorate on Tuesday, the Collector directed various departments to work in coordination for the successful conduct of the events. Vijayawada district will host a special Police Theme Yoga programme, while tourism-themed yoga sessions will be organized at Pavitra Sangamam and

Haritha Beram Park in Ibrahimpatnam. Yoga programmes will also be held in schools, hospitals, parks, playgrounds, and public spaces across the district. The Collector emphasized public participation and highlighted the importance of yoga for a healthy lifestyle. Posters related to the 45-minute Common Yoga Protocol were unveiled during the meeting. Officials from the AYUSH Department and Ayurveda institutions attended the review meeting.

Economic Self-Reliance of Rural Women is the Goal: SERP CEO Karuna



Rajahmendravaram, June 2: SERP CEO stressed that government welfare and livelihood programmes should focus on improving the economic independence of rural women and poor families. Speaking at a review meeting of

DRDA officials from East Godavari and Kakinada districts, she said women should be guided to convert loans into sustainable income-generating activities rather than treating credit as an end in itself. Karuna directed officials to promote women entrepreneurship, strengthen livelihood opportunities in agriculture, livestock, food processing, micro-enterprises, and the service sector, and provide training, technology, and marketing support. She also emphasized the role of Community Hire Centres in reducing farming costs and called for wider adoption of natural farming practices.

The CEO urged effective utilization of government-backed credit schemes, livelihood projects, and self-employment programmes to improve family incomes and living standards. Officials from DRDA, women's groups, and various departments attended the meeting.

Collector Calls for 100% Enrollment in Government Schools

Rampachodavaram, June 2: Polavaram District Collector K. Dinesh Kumar directed education officials and teachers to achieve 100 percent enrollment in government schools by identifying and admitting all school-age children. During a review meeting at the ITDA office, he instructed teachers to conduct door-to-door surveys and bring out-of-school children into the education system. The Collector asked officials to create awareness among parents about the facilities available in government schools, including free textbooks, uniforms, mid-day meals, and digital learning. He also emphasized increasing admissions from private to government schools through effective outreach.

Dinesh Kumar announced that the "Green Channel" programme will be launched on June 5 to promote environmental awareness, tree plantation, waste management,



and school gardening activities in educational institutions across the district. Officials from the Education, Tribal Welfare, and Social Welfare departments attended the meeting.

Collector Reviews Arrangements for CM's Siddhantam Visit

Bhimavaram, June 2: District Collector Chadalavada Nagarani on Tuesday reviewed preparations at Siddhantam village in Penugonda mandal ahead of Chief Minister's visit on June 9 for the distribution of Pattadar Passbooks. Accompanied by SP Adnan Nayeem Asmi, Joint Collector T. Rahul Kumar Reddy, and other officials, the Collector inspected the helipad area, public meeting venue, and parking facilities. She directed officials to ensure adequate arrangements for security, traffic management, drinking water, sanitation, medical services, and other public amenities. Later, a review meeting was held to discuss security measures, crowd management, vehicle parking, and traffic diversions to ensure the smooth conduct of the Chief Minister's programme. Officials from various departments participated in the meeting.



Two-Day Faculty Development Programme on Google AI Tools Begins at Aditya University



Gandepalli, June 2: A two-day Faculty Development Programme on "Google Artificial Intelligence Tools" commenced at the Department of

Information Technology, Surampalem. Deputy Pro-Chancellor said the programme aims to equip faculty members with practical knowledge of AI ap-

plications in teaching, research, content creation, coding, and data analysis. The training focuses on integrating modern AI technologies into classroom instruction and academic research. The sessions are being conducted by and , who are providing hands-on training to participants.

University officials expressed confidence that the programme would help faculty effectively use Google AI tools in student mentoring, project development, innovation activities, and research publications. Senior academic and administrative officials, along with faculty members, attended the programme.

Young Professionals Key to Improving Public Service Delivery: Collector

Visakhapatnam, June 2: District Collector M. Abhishikt Kishore said Young Professionals have a crucial role in improving the quality of government services, enhancing public satisfaction, and achieving the district's 2026-27 development goals. Speaking at a review meeting of Vision Action Plan Unit members and officials, the Collector stressed the need to regularly gather public feedback and use it to improve service delivery. He directed officials to focus on employment generation, effective implementation of development programmes, and better coordination among departments.

The Collector also emphasized prompt disposal of pub-



lic grievances, strengthening community development initiatives under the P-4 programme, and ensuring transparent and accountable governance through close co-

ordination with the village and ward secretariat system. Senior officials and Vision Action Plan Unit members from seven constituencies attended the meeting.

Rs. 2 Crore Allocated for Sports Development in Polavaram District



Rampachodavaram, June 2: Polavaram District Collector K. Dinesh Kumar announced that Rs. 2 crore has been allocated for sports development in the

district. Reviewing sports infrastructure with physical directors and sports officials, he said four sports grounds would be developed in each of the

district's 12 mandals, with Rs. 4 lakh earmarked for each ground. The Collector said the "Maa Oori Kreedha Maidanam" initiative aims to encourage students and youth to excel in sports alongside academics. He directed officials to promote sports at the village level, identify talented players, and provide opportunities for them to progress from mandal and district levels to state and national competitions. Special focus will be given to encouraging tribal youth to participate and succeed in various sports disciplines.

Vaibhav Suryavanshi eyes Test cricket after record IPL 2026 season



Hyderabad: 'Fearless Prodigy' Vaibhav Suryavanshi, the Orange Cap winner, finished the TATA IPL 2026 season as the leading run-scorer and was also adjudged the Most Valuable Player, among several other accolades. Speaking on JioHotstar's Google Search AI Mode Match Centre Live, the Rajasthan Royals opener opened up about the lessons he learnt during the season, setting his goal of scoring 700 runs in the campaign, and his ambitions of playing Test cricket. Speaking on JioHotstar's 'Google Search AI Mode Match Centre Live', Vaibhav Suryavanshi reflected

on winning multiple awards in the TATA IPL 2026 season. "It's a great feeling to win all these awards. I got to learn a lot from this season. There has been a lot to take in, both on and off the field, and I know that if I want to play for a long time, I have to work on a few things. So, that will be my focus going forward, and I'll look to do well in the upcoming matches. Before the season, I had written down in the Notes app on my phone that I wanted to score 700 runs in this IPL season. After every match, I used to check where I stood, so that was one goal I managed to achieve," Vaibhav explained.

On his red-ball ambitions, Vaibhav said:

"I have practised a lot with the red ball, though not many people have seen me play that format. Hopefully, they will in the future. Everyone thinks, looking at my game, that I try to hit every ball. It's T20 cricket, and the coaches have given me a free hand to go on the attack. So, if the ball is there to be hit, I will go for my shots. "I don't unnecessarily try to go after every ball. Of course, I want to play Test cricket. My father has taught me from day one to prepare for the longer format. He always told me that Test cricket is the purest form of cricket."

Twelve batters to watch at ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026



trophy for the first time.

Ireland – Gaby Lewis
No player at this year's World Cup has scored more runs since the previous edition ended than Ireland's Gaby Lewis. Across 21 innings, Lewis has scored 825 runs at an average of 43.42. She is comfortably her nation's leading run-scorer in the format, having become the first Irish woman to pass both 2,000 and 3,000 T20I runs, and she top-scored at the 2026 Qualifier with 276 runs in seven innings.

The Netherlands – Sterre Kalis

A player deserving of a place on the big stage, Sterre Kalis top-scored for the Netherlands in the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026 Qualifier to earn her country a debut appearance in the tournament proper. She is also her country's leading run-scorer in the format, with 1,893 T20I runs, while she is well accustomed to playing in England, having represented various county and regional teams since 2016. Currently with Yorkshire, Kalis will feel at home when her side takes on India at Headingley on June 17.

New Zealand – Suzie Bates

Make the most of watching Suzie Bates in the coming weeks as it will be the last chance to do so on the international stage. Bates and her long-time teammate Sophie Devine will both retire after the 2026 World Cup, with Bates set to finish as the leading run-scorer in women's T20I cricket, having scored 4,717 runs across a 19-year career. A World Cup winner in 2024, Bates will hope to deliver a memorable performance in her swansong.

Pakistan – Ayesha Zafar

Ayesha Zafar is making up for lost time in the international set-up. The 31-year-old made her T20I debut back in 2015 before spending three years out of the side. Her return in 2024 showed signs of promise and she has gone from strength to strength, scoring her first international century with an unbeaten 102 against Zimbabwe earlier this year, the

Hyderabad: In a game of fine margins like T20 cricket, batters who can take the game away from their opponents are worth their weight in gold, ICC Media reports. With the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026 now expanded to 12 teams, there are even more opportunities for big hitters to make a major impact. Here are 12 batters (one from each team) to keep an eye on when the tournament begins on June 12.

Australia – Georgia Voll

Georgia Voll is the next talent off the Australian production line and is set to make her T20 World Cup debut in England and Wales. The 22-year-old already boasts centuries in both white-ball formats of the game, with her score of 101 against the West Indies earlier this year being the highest score made by an Australian batter since the last edition of the World Cup. As well as making big scores, Voll scores quickly. She has a T20I strike rate of 156.43 and is currently at the top of the women's T20I batting rankings.

Bangladesh – Sobhana Mostary

Sobhana Mostary has been Bangladesh's most consistent performer with the bat in recent years. She was their highest run-scorer at the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2024, making 134 runs at an average of 33.50.

Since that tournament, she has scored 413 runs across 15 innings, including hitting 15 sixes, eight more than any other Bangladesh player. Sobhana was named Player of the Tournament at the ICC Women's T20 World Cup Qualifier at the start of 2026, scoring 262 runs at an average of 52.40.

England – Heather Knight

Heather Knight has entered a new stage in her career, with the T20 World Cup in 2024 being the last tournament she captained England in. Injuries have hampered her since stepping down as captain, but she showed her class with a century against India at last year's ICC Women's Cricket World Cup. The 35-year-old's experience will be invaluable as one of only three players in the hosts' 2026 squad who were part of England's last World Cup-winning team in 2017.

India – Shafali Verma

A player reborn at just 22, Shafali Verma has reached the heights many believed she was destined for. After making her debut at 15, Verma became a regular member of India's team before spending time away from the national set-up. Brought back for the knockout stages of the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup on home soil, the opener was named Player of the Match in the final as her 87 helped India lift the

joint-highest score ever made by a Pakistan women's player.

Scotland – Darcy Carter

Darcy Carter's crucial 52 against the USA sealed Scotland's place at their second consecutive ICC Women's T20 World Cup. Her side needed a win to confirm qualification, and she delivered her best performance of the Qualifier to set up the victory. At just 20 years of age and within three years of her international debut, Carter is already third on Scotland's all-time list of women's T20I run-scorers.

South Africa – Laura Wolvaardt

Laura Wolvaardt enters this competition in excellent form after winning April's ICC Women's Player of the Month award, her third in seven months. She scored 330 runs in five innings in a recent T20I series against India, recording one century and three fifties while striking at 168.35. A player for the big occasion, Wolvaardt reached three figures in both the semi-final and final at last year's ICC Women's Cricket World Cup and will be crucial in setting the tone for the Proteas.

Sri Lanka – Hasini Perera

After featuring only twice at the last ICC Women's T20 World Cup, Hasini Perera has become a key part of Sri Lanka's batting line-up. Having been moved to the top of the order in December last year, Perera found consistency and recorded a career-best 65 against India. She has become a valuable partner for Sri Lanka captain Chamari Athapaththu.

The West Indies – Hayley Matthews

Hayley Matthews is arguably the player who can make the biggest difference for her team. The West Indies skipper can do it all and has scored 2,710 runs during her T20I career. She was part of the side that won the tournament in 2016, top-scoring with 66 in the final and earning the Player of the Match award. Since the last World Cup, she has scored her third T20I century, blasting an unbeaten 100 off 67 balls against England in May 2025.

Nilkonda Mani shines on opening day of Monsoon Regatta

Hyderabad: The 17th Monsoon Regatta National Ranking Sailing Championship got off to a slow start on Tuesday as light winds and intense heat prevailed at Hussain Sagar Lake here. Organised by the Telangana Sailing Association and hosted by The Yacht Club of Hyderabad, the Monsoon Regatta features four national junior classes of boats. These include the Under-15 Optimist Class, the Under-18 Laser, International 420 and the 29er Skiffs, apart from the beginners' fleets of Half Rig sails and the Optimist Green Fleet. Principal Race Officer Chandrashekhar Dalai struggled with the conditions to start the first race but capitalised on the early gusts of wind and managed to conduct only one race out of the three scheduled for the day. The first race saw reigning national champion from Telangana and The Yacht Club of Hyderabad, Ravi Banneulu, bungle the start by crossing the line early and being disqualified alongside Rameeza Bhanu



and Lokesh, both also from The Yacht Club of Hyderabad. The highlight of the day was the spectacular performance of Nilkonda Mani, a 13-year-old sailor under the jurisdiction of the Telangana Child Welfare Committee and being trained at The Yacht Club of Hyderabad. Nilkonda Mani, 13, of The Yacht Club of Hyderabad, finished first in the opening race by a huge margin of almost two minutes in a 30-minute contest held in the tricky and unpredictable winds of Hussain Sagar, conditions that test a sailor's tactical awareness to the fullest. Mani is currently ranked No. 5 in India and is rapidly moving towards the top spot after finishing fifth overall at the recently concluded National Championship in Bombay. If this race is any indication, he could emerge as the winner of the Monsoon Regatta. At the age of five, Nilakonda Mani suffered a serious accident after falling from a building. The incident resulted in a severe ear injury,

leaving him with a scar on his head and a partially severed ear. The accident had a significant impact on his early childhood and overall wellbeing. Not one to give up on his son, Mani's father, Nilkaona Madhu, a scrap collector living in Malkajigiri, is keen that Mani participates in all national championships while also focusing on his studies. Nilakonda Mani belongs to a financially marginalised family originally from Bidar, Karnataka, which later settled in Hyderabad in search of livelihood opportunities. In the girls' category, Shrishti Singh of Secunderabad Club finished an impressive third overall and first among girls, ahead of both top seeds, compatriot Shringari Roy, the reigning girls national champion, and Telangana's Rameeza Bhanu, ranked No. 2 in the country. The afternoon races in the Under-18 classes were postponed, and the organisers are hoping that stronger monsoon winds will return on Wednesday after the disappointing lull.

Hockey India names 20-member squad for Women's Nations Cup

Hyderabad: Hockey India on Tuesday announced the Indian women's team for the upcoming FIH Hockey Women's Nations Cup New Zealand 2025-26, scheduled to be held from June 15 to 21 in Auckland, New Zealand. Salima Tete will continue to lead the side in the tournament. Savita and Bichu Devi Kharibam will provide

the team with reliable and experienced options in goal. In defence, Sushila Chanu Pukhrabam, Ishika Chaudhary, Nikki Pradhan and Jyoti bring considerable international experience to the backline. They will be joined by Lalthantluangi and Shilpi Dabas, both of whom earned their maiden senior call-ups during the recently

concluded tour of Australia and will be eager to continue their development at this level. The midfield will be marshalled by Salima, who will draw on the experience of Neha, Sunelita Toppo and Sakshi Rana around her. They will be joined by Deepika Soreng, who also impressed during the friendly series in Australia.

Navneet Kaur will spearhead the attack and is expected to continue the fine goalscoring form she has shown in recent international outings. She will be supported up front by Deepika, Rutuja Dadaso Pisal, Annu and Ishika, besides experienced attacking midfielders Lalremsiami and Sonam.