



VIKRAMA VAHINI

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From Dubai romance to a Goa wedding, Mouni Roy and Suraj Nambiar's love story—once celebrated by fans—has now sparked speculation after reports of the couple unfollowing each other on Instagram, though no official confirmation of separation has been made.

R. Ashok on Tuesday accused the Congress of "selective outrage" over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent appeal regarding gold purchases, saying similar appeals had been made by Congress leaders in the past.



Good morning

Life is not about the past. Life is not about the future. Life is about the present. Life is about today. So have a nice day.

BRIEFS

Madras HC Bars TVK MLA Ahead of Trust Vote

> Vikrama Vahini | Chennai
The Madras High Court on Tuesday restrained ruling TVK MLA Seenivasa Sethupathy from participating in the no-confidence vote scheduled in the Tamil Nadu Assembly on Wednesday, where Chief Minister Joseph Vijay is set to prove his majority. The interim order was passed by a vacation bench while hearing a petition filed by former DMK minister K. R. Periya Karuppan, who lost the Tirupattur Assembly election by a single vote. He alleged irregularities in postal ballot handling and sought a recount of votes. The High Court order came a day before the crucial trust vote in the Assembly. Meanwhile, Seenivasa Sethupathy has moved the Supreme Court of India challenging the High Court's interim stay, with the matter likely to be heard urgently.

BRICS Foreign Ministers Meet in Delhi

> Vikrama Vahini | Delhi
India will host a two-day meeting of BRICS foreign ministers starting Thursday, with the escalating West Asia crisis and its impact on global energy supply chains expected to dominate discussions. According to officials, the meeting comes at a time of heightened geopolitical tensions, making energy security a key priority on the agenda alongside broader regional stability concerns. Iran has confirmed the participation of its Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi for the conclave. However, sources indicated that his attendance could change depending on developments in the ongoing regional conflict.

Monsoon Likely to Hit Andaman Seas Soon

> Vikrama Vahini | Delhi
The India Meteorological Department on Tuesday said conditions are becoming favourable for the onset of the southwest monsoon over parts of the south Bay of Bengal, the Andaman Sea and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands by the end of this week. In its daily weather update, the IMD stated that a low-pressure area persists over the southwest Bay of Bengal, with an associated cyclonic circulation extending up to 4.5 km above mean sea level. It added that the system is likely to become more marked in the next 48 hours. The weather office noted that the monsoon typically reaches the Andaman and Nicobar Islands around May 20, before advancing towards mainland India in the following weeks.

War Sparks Price Surge

PAUSE GOLD BUYING; SAVE FUEL, CONSERVE FOREX

Modi's Call Demands Public Support

Crude Oil Soars; Fuel Price Hike Looms

> Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi
Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to hold a virtual meeting with Chief Secretaries of states to discuss austerity measures, increased use of online meetings and possible work-from-home mechanisms amid rising concerns over fuel consumption and global economic uncertainty.

Focus on Fuel Conservation

According to reports, the Centre is

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

* PM Modi likely to hold virtual meeting with state Chief Secretaries on fuel-saving measures
* Focus on austerity, online meetings, and possible work-from-home mechanisms

* Move aims to reduce non-essential fuel use amid global economic uncertainty
* No official work-from-home directive issued yet by the Centre
* States reportedly begin internal

discussions following PM's appeal
* Possible steps include reduced travel, virtual governance, and better fuel management
* Government exploring selective and practical work-from-home options if fuel pressure continues

exploring ways to reduce non-essential fuel usage as global crude oil prices remain volatile due to the ongoing West Asia crisis.

The proposed discussions are expected to focus on virtual governance,

limiting official travel and cutting avoidable expenditure.

Work-From-Home Under Discussion

The possible return of selective work-from-home arrangements has become a major topic of discussion. Sources said the government may encourage online meetings and flexible work systems where feasible, though no formal work-from-home advisory has been issued so far. **PG2**

India's Oil Security Robust

> Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

Hardeep Singh Puri on Tuesday assured that India has sufficient fuel reserves to meet domestic demand despite volatility in global oil markets. Speaking at the CII Annual Business Summit 2026, the Union Petroleum Minister said the country currently holds around 60 days of crude oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) reserves along with 45 days of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) stock.

Adequate Fuel Stocks Available

Puri stated that India's energy preparedness remains strong even amid rising international crude oil prices and supply pressures caused by ongoing global tensions.

He said the existing reserves are adequate to maintain stability in fuel supplies across the country.

The minister acknowledged that oil marketing companies are under severe financial stress, revealing that they are incurring losses of nearly ₹1,000 crore per day. He added that under-recoveries have reached ₹1.98 lakh crore, while cumulative losses for the current quarter are estimated at around ₹1 lakh crore.

Puri said the government had increased domestic LPG production from 36,000 metric tonnes per day to 54,000 metric tonnes per day to manage supply challenges effectively.

He also noted that LPG demand has moderated from 90,000 metric tonnes to around 75,000 metric tonnes due to seasonal factors and improved supply management.

The Centre reiterated Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal for fuel conservation and urged citizens to use public transport, carpooling, electric vehicles and railways wherever possible.

Officials from the Petroleum Ministry said fuel supplies remain stable with no reports of shortages at petrol pumps or LPG distributorships. Meanwhile, global crude oil prices continued to rise amid geopolitical uncertainty.

Officials added that monitoring of global oil prices is being done round the clock to ensure timely intervention and uninterrupted fuel supply across all sectors.

MODI'S APPEAL TO SHUN GOLD: HOW MUCH YELLOW METAL DO INDIANS BUY EVERY YEAR?



Gold means a lot of things to a lot of Indians — an item to deck up to most, a store of value for many, a hedge against inflation and uncertainty for some. But India needs to import a lot of the yellow metal every year since the demand is far higher than the domestic production.



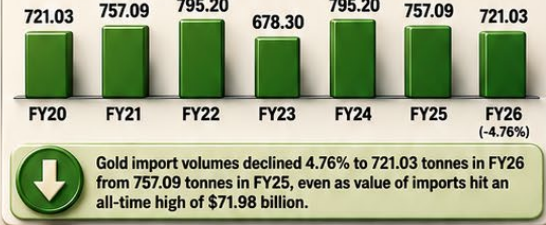
Prime Minister Narendra Modi has urged people not to buy gold for a year in view of the rising strain on the Indian currency amid the US-Iran conflict. Gold is the second most expensive item on India's import bill. More gold imports mean more demand for dollars, putting downward pressure on the value of the Indian rupee.

GOLD IMPORTS DATA IN INDIA

India is the world's second-biggest gold consumer after China. Gold import in India is largely driven by the jewellery industry. However, there is a rising demand from the investment community too.



VOLUME OF GOLD IMPORTS (IN TONNES)



Gold import volumes declined 4.76% to 721.03 tonnes in FY26 from 757.09 tonnes in FY25, even as value of imports hit an all-time high of ₹71.98 billion.

INVESTMENT PEAKS IN GOLD ETFs

There has been record investments in Gold ETFs in FY26. ETFs are dematerialised investments in gold which have attracted the attention of investors after the surge in gold prices.



When investment in Gold ETFs goes up, it requires more metallic gold since ETFs are designed to track gold prices and authorised participants have to purchase gold to back the new ETF units created.

Investment strategists now advise people to allocate 10-15% of their portfolio to gold.

EGRs AND DIGITAL GOLD

DIGITAL GOLD

Digital gold is backed by 24K gold, which is stored in audited and insured vaults. In January 2025, Digital Gold investments stood at Rs 800 crore. This rose to Rs 2,100 crore by the end of December 2025.

HIGH DEMAND. HIGH IMPORTS. HIGHER PRESSURE ON THE RUPEE.

EGRs (ELECTRONIC GOLD RECEIPTS)

Only a few days ago, NSE has launched EGRs or Electronic Gold Receipts. EGRs are another dematerialised investment in gold. All these create new demands for gold that adds to the pressure of imports.

Responsible choices today can strengthen India's economic tomorrow.

HIMANTA BEGINS SECOND INNINGS AS ASSAM CM

> Vikrama Vahini | Guwahati

Himanta Biswa Sarma was sworn in as the Chief Minister of Assam for a second consecutive term on Tuesday, marking the return of the BJP-led NDA government with a massive mandate in the state Assembly elections. The NDA alliance secured 102 seats in the 126-member Assembly, including 82 won by the BJP alone.



The oath of office and secrecy was administered by Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya at a grand ceremony held at the Veterinary Ground in Khanapara, Guwahati. **PG2**

Congress Nears Final Call on Kerala CM

> Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi/Thiruvananthapuram

The Congress high command is expected to take a final decision on Kerala's next Chief Minister on Tuesday following intense consultations in New Delhi after the UDF Assembly election victory. Senior party leaders are engaged

in crucial discussions to end the prolonged uncertainty surrounding the leadership issue. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge is scheduled to hold key talks with Rahul Gandhi, while consultations with senior leader Sonia Gandhi are also expected before the final announcement. **PG2**

NEET UG 2026 Cancelled; Re-exam Soon

> Vikrama Vahini | Delhi

The Government of India has decided to cancel the NEET (UG) 2026 examination and will conduct a re-exam on a revised date, which will be announced

shortly. The NEET UG 2026 examination was held on May 3, 2026. However, allegations of a question paper leak surfaced from Rajasthan. **PG2**

Rupee Hits Record Low, Import Costs Surge

> Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

The Indian rupee fell to a record low of 95.63 against the US dollar on Tuesday, amid rising global uncertainty caused by the ongoing US-Israel-Iran conflict and surging crude oil prices. The rupee slipped 35 paise in early trade after already falling 79 paise on Monday to close at 95.28.

Rising Global Tensions Trigger Fall

The decline came after US

President Donald Trump stated that the Iran ceasefire was "on life support," raising fears of prolonged conflict in the Middle East. The continuing war has tightened global oil supplies and created volatility in international currency and stock markets.

Foreign Investors Pull Out Funds

Foreign investors have reportedly withdrawn over \$20 billion from Indian equity markets since the conflict began. **PG2**

Editorial

Oil Shock Discipline

The widening conflict across the Middle East has once again reminded the world that wars fought far away can still disrupt the daily lives of ordinary citizens everywhere. Though India has no direct role in the ongoing tensions involving Israel, Iran and the United States, the economic consequences are already visible through rising crude oil prices. Petroleum today is not limited to transport alone. From road construction using tar to the manufacturing of plastics, fertilizers, packaging materials and industrial products, oil influences almost every sector of modern life. As global uncertainty deepens and there is no immediate sign of peace, several countries have begun struggling under inflationary pressure and energy insecurity. India too faces the burden of rising import costs and increasing pressure on foreign exchange reserves, even though the country continues to receive fuel supplies and maintains strategic reserves for emergencies.

History shows that India has overcome such crises only when governments and citizens acted together with discipline and sacrifice. During a difficult wartime period, former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri appealed to citizens to voluntarily skip one meal a week to conserve national resources. Later, during periods of foreign exchange stress, leaders including Indira Gandhi and Manmohan Singh urged people to avoid unnecessary imports, reduce fuel consumption and act responsibly in the national interest. Such moments underline a simple truth: economic resilience is not built by governments alone but by collective public participation and restraint.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has once again appealed to citizens to avoid unnecessary gold purchases and adopt fuel-saving habits. The message deserves serious attention. Conserving fuel through public transport, carpooling and responsible consumption may appear small at an individual level, but collectively such measures can significantly reduce national pressure during uncertain times. Responsible citizenship is not tested only during elections or celebrations; it is equally measured during global crises. At a time when international instability threatens economic stability, every Indian must recognise that saving energy is not merely a personal choice but a patriotic responsibility.

-Editor

NEET Row: Karnataka Minister Slams Centre

► Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

Karnataka Medical Education Minister Dr. Sharanaprakash R. Patil has strongly criticised the Central Government over the cancellation of the NEET examination, calling it a "major scandal" and alleging gross negligence in conducting the national-level test.

Reacting to the decision to cancel NEET following reports of a question paper leak in the May 3 examination, the Minister said the move has "played with the lives of lakhs of students" who aspire to become doctors.

He alleged that irregularities and controversies in NEET have been recurring over the past four to five years, blaming the

Central Government and the Ministry of Education for repeated failures.

Demand for Accountability and Resignation

Dr. Patil demanded that the Union Education Minister take responsibility and resign, stating that those responsible must be brought under the ambit of law. He alleged that the incident reflects administrative failure at the Centre.

He further claimed that paper leaks indicate large-scale financial irregularities and corruption linked to coaching centres and questioned functioning of the examination system.

Criticism of Prime Minister and Centre

The Minister also targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi, stating that delivering speeches alone is not enough and that the government must focus on resolving such crises. He said the Prime Minister should ensure immediate solutions instead of public outreach programmes like "Pariksha Pe Charcha."



Impact on Students

Dr. Patil said the cancellation of the exam has caused mental stress and uncertainty among students who had prepared extensively. He urged students not to panic and to continue focusing on their future

academic goals.

Praise for Karnataka Examination System

He added that Karnataka's Common Entrance Test (CET) system has been conducted without such irregularities and described it as a model for the rest of the country.

Call for Action Against Coaching Centres

The Minister also alleged involvement of coaching centres in paper leaks and demanded strict action against such institutions, particularly in states like Rajasthan and Haryana. He urged the Centre to take immediate steps to prevent further irregularities and ensure fairness in national-level examinations.

Modi Pushes Fuel-Saving Measures

► From PGI

States Begin Internal Discussions

Following the Prime Minister's appeal for responsible energy use, states including Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh have reportedly begun internal consultations with senior officials regarding fuel-saving measures and administrative reforms.

Other Measures Being Considered

The government is also considering temporary online classes

for schools, better transport planning and increased use of public transport and electric vehicles.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has urged citizens to avoid unnecessary travel and reduce non-essential spending during the ongoing global uncertainty.

Officials said the focus remains on practical and flexible measures rather than strict restrictions, ensuring minimal disruption to daily governance and public services.

Hormuz Crisis Enters 71 Days; Oil, Shipping at Risk

► From PGI

Reports indicate that 42 vessels, nearly 79 per cent, remain stuck even after two months of disruption. Two vessels operated by MSC were also reportedly seized by Iranian authorities during the crisis.

The prolonged blockade of the Strait of Hormuz has now evolved into a multi-sector global crisis, impacting energy markets, maritime trade, food supply chains, and economic stability across multiple regions, including India.

HIMANTA BEGINS SECOND INNINGS AS ASSAM CM

► From PGI

The event was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari and several BJP leaders and chief ministers from across the country.

Along with Sarma, BJP leaders Rameswar Teli and Ajanta Neog, AGP president Atul Bora and BPP leader Charan Boro also took

oath as ministers in the new cabinet.

After taking oath, Sarma said the government would continue working towards fulfilling the aspirations of the people of Assam and accelerating development across the state.

He described his first tenure as "just a trailer," signalling a stronger focus on governance and infrastructure in his second term.

Congress Nears Final Call on Kerala CM

► From PGI

Party sources said the discussions are mainly centred around three contenders - V. D. Satheesan, K. C. Venugopal and Ramesh Chennithala.

The leadership is reportedly assessing factors such as legislative support, organisational strength, alliance considerations and regional balance before making the final decision. Congress leaders also discussed concerns over public lobbying, demonstrations and social media campaigns by supporters of different camps during the Chief Ministerial race.

Senior Congress leaders said Cabinet formation discussions would begin immediately after the Chief Minister is announced. Meanwhile, coalition partners in the UDF, including the Indian Union Muslim League, have reportedly urged the Congress leadership to resolve the issue quickly and maintain unity within the alliance.

NEET UG 2026 Cancelled; Re-exam Soon

► From PGI

prompting a detailed investigation by the Rajasthan Special Operation Group (SOG).

Following the initial probe, the National Testing Agency (NTA) referred the matter to central agencies on May 8 for further verification and necessary action. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has since initiated a formal inquiry into the alleged paper leak.

The NTA has advised candidates, parents, and other stakeholders to await further official notifications regarding the revised examination schedule.

More than 22 lakh candidates appeared for the NEET UG 2026 examination. The decision to cancel the exam has been taken to restore confidence in the national examination system, after investigators found that nearly 140 questions matched the actual question paper.

According to officials, the paper leak is

believed to have originated in Sikar district of Rajasthan. The leaked questions were reportedly handwritten, and investigators also found that the sequence of options matched the original paper.

Preliminary findings suggest that between 120 to 150 questions were identical to the actual exam paper, including around 30 questions from Chemistry and 90 from Biology.

Authorities have confirmed that the investigation is ongoing, and strict action will be taken based on the findings.

Authorities further stated that additional technical analysis is being carried out to trace the digital and human network behind the leak, with agencies also examining possible interstate links connected to the incident. Officials added that strengthened security protocols will be implemented in future examinations to prevent such breaches.

Rupee Hits Record Low, Import Costs Surge

► From PGI

Analysts said heavy capital outflows and rising crude oil prices are increasing pressure on the Indian currency and widening the country's current account deficit.

A weaker rupee is expected to increase the cost of imports such as crude oil, electronics and gold. Economists warned that fuel prices, overseas travel, foreign education and imported goods could become more expensive, adding to inflationary pressure.

RBI Monitoring Situation

The Reserve Bank of India has intervened in the forex market to reduce volatility by selling dollars from its reserves. However, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said the central bank does not defend any fixed exchange rate and allows market forces to determine the rupee's value.

Shivakumar Slams BJP Over NEET Leak, Seeks Accountability

► Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Tuesday strongly criticised the cancellation of the NEET examination following the question paper leak, calling it a "great shame" and demanding accountability from BJP MPs and Union Ministers.

Speaking to reporters near the BDA office, Shivakumar said students across the country were deeply affected by the leak, which has "destroyed trust in the examination system." He

said leaders who usually speak on national issues must also respond on this matter and questioned the silence of those who previously held the education portfolio.

He also referred to earlier scams, including the PSI recruitment case, stating that such incidents reflect systemic failure and require clear answers from those in power.

Remarks on NEET cancellation

Reacting to the NEET cancellation,



Shivakumar said lakhs of students who prepared with high hopes have suffered due to administrative lapses. He stressed that such recurring incidents damage the credibility of national-level examinations.

Bidadi township compensation issue

On protests against the Bidadi township project, Shivakumar said the government has offered "unprecedented compensation" to landowners, including

benefits such as double compensation, TDR rights, and commercial land allocations.

He claimed that no other state in the country has offered such terms and added that nearly 78% of affected landowners have already accepted the compensation package.

Shivakumar also indicated that major announcements aimed at improving Bengaluru's infrastructure and civic facilities will be made on Wednesday after a review meeting with BDA officials.

NEWS

PUBLIC WANTS ACTION ON INFILTRATION: VHP

► Vikrama Vahini | Dharwad

Vishva Hindu Parishad General Secretary Milind Parande on Tuesday said there is a "strong public expectation" for strict action against illegal infiltration and stronger border security measures, particularly in border states.

Parande alleged that illegal entrants from Bangladesh and Myanmar should be identified and deported, while Hindu refugees from Bangladesh should be granted Indian citizenship. He linked the issue



to national security concerns and called for tighter border management along the Bangladesh border.

He also criticised the West Bengal government led by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, alleging incidents of violence against Hindus and accusing sections of the administration of following a "policy of appeasement." His remarks have triggered fresh political debate over infiltration, citizenship and border security issues.

PM Modi to Inaugurate Hassan Mega Dairy: H. D. Devegowda

► Vikrama Vahini | Hassan

The mega dairy project being developed by the Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) on the outskirts of Hassan city is in its final stage of completion and is expected to be inaugurated

by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the first or second week of July, according to former Prime Minister and JD(S) supremo H.D. Deve Gowda.

Project Near Completion

The dairy facility, being built at an estimated cost of ₹850 crore, is located in the industrial area on the outskirts of Hassan. Deve Gowda, along with former minister H.D. Revanna, visited the project site on Tuesday and reviewed the progress of the construction work.

PM Modi to Inaugurate Project

Speaking to the media after the inspection, Deve Gowda said the mega dairy will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and expressed confidence that the facility will serve as a model project for the entire country.

He stated that the inauguration is likely to



take place in early or mid-July once the remaining works are completed.

Funding and Support

Deve Gowda also noted that the state government has not provided financial assistance for the project, while the central government has extended support of approximately ₹280 crore.

A Model Dairy for India

He emphasized that the Hassan mega dairy should become a benchmark in India's dairy sector in terms of scale, efficiency, and modern infrastructure, benefiting milk producers across the region. The project is expected to significantly boost milk processing capacity in Karnataka and strengthen the state's dairy industry. The project is expected to create new employment opportunities for local youth in the region. It will also help strengthen the dairy supply chain and improve value addition for milk producers. Officials said the facility will feature modern processing and packaging infrastructure to meet national standards.

SCIENCE & Technology

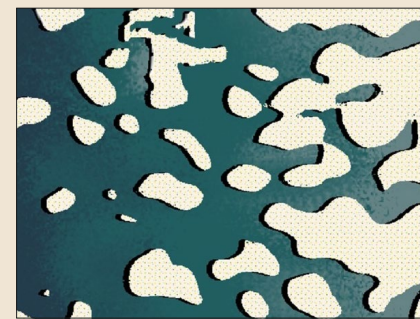
Bengaluru Scientists Discover Clay Flow Patterns

► Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

Scientists from the Raman Research Institute (RRI), Bengaluru, have uncovered unusual flow patterns in clay solutions that could have significant applications in oil recovery and material transport.

The study revealed novel patterns such as "skewing" and "zigzagging" when water displaces specially prepared clay suspensions with varying levels of elasticity.

Clay suspensions are non-Newtonian fluids, similar to substances like toothpaste and mayonnaise, which can hold shape under static conditions. In contrast, Newtonian fluids such as water spread



evenly without structure.

In the experiments, water was used to displace clay mixtures inside a Hele-Shaw cell—two glass plates separated by a

narrow gap—allowing researchers to observe flow behaviour in controlled conditions.

Researchers modified clay properties using additives such as dimethylformamide (DMF), tetrasodium pyrophosphate (TSPP), common salt, and potassium chloride. These additives altered the elasticity of the clay suspension, resulting in different flow patterns.

In pure water, the clay network showed tip-splitting growth. With DMF and TSPP, the flow became uneven, producing distinct new patterns. Salt-based mixtures increased elasticity further, turning the clay into a brittle sheet-like structure.

OpenAI Launches \$4B AI Unit

► Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

OpenAI has announced the launch of a new enterprise-focused unit called the "OpenAI Deployment Company," with an initial investment of over \$4 billion. The initiative is aimed at helping organisations build, deploy, and manage artificial intelligence systems at large scale.

As part of the program, OpenAI will deploy "Forward Deployed Engineers" who will work directly inside client companies. These engineers will assist in redesigning workflows, integrating AI tools, and developing production-ready applications tailored to business needs.

The company said the new unit will focus on deeper enterprise integration by working with global partners and consulting firms. OpenAI already serves over one million businesses, and this move is expected to accelerate AI adoption in real-world operations and business transformation.

GOOGLE SEARCH FACES BRIEF OUTAGE IN INDIA

► Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

Google Search appeared to face a brief outage for several users across India on Tuesday morning, causing widespread access issues and "server error" messages.

According to outage tracking platform Downdetector, over 3,300 complaints were recorded around 10:23 am IST. The number of reports later declined sharply, indicating that services were gradually restored for many users.

Users reported difficulties in accessing Google Search, with many stating that pages failed to load or displayed error messages. Some users also reported that search results were not appearing properly.

The error message seen by users read: "Server Error. We're sorry but it

appears that there has been an internal server error while processing your request. Our engineers have been notified and are working to resolve the issue. Please try again later."

Data from Downdetector indicated that around 57 per cent of complaints were related to search functionality, 28 per cent involved content not loading, and 11 per cent were linked to website access issues.

The brief disruption quickly drew attention on social media, with users expressing surprise over issues affecting one of the world's most widely used internet services.

Highlights the heavy dependence on Google Search for everyday digital activities in India, from education to professional use.



HANTAVIRUS RISK IN INDIA VERY LOW

Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

The Union Health Ministry has stated that the risk of a hantavirus outbreak in India remains very low, even as it closely monitors a reported situation involving infections on board the cruise ship MV Hondius in coordination with national and international health agencies, including the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The ministry, along with the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP), has activated precautionary surveillance measures. Two Indian nationals are on board the vessel and are currently asymptomatic, officials confirmed. They are being monitored as per international health protocols.

A high-level review meeting has also been convened by the NCDC to assess preparedness and review the evolving situation.

No Major Outbreaks Reported in India

Health authorities have clarified that hantavirus is a well-known virus and has been studied for decades. However, no large outbreaks have been reported in India so far. Experts have reiterated that the risk to the general public in the country



is considered very low.

Transmission and Precautions

Hantavirus is primarily transmitted from rodents to humans, most commonly through inhalation of airborne particles from infected rodent urine, droppings, or nesting materials. Human-to-human transmission is extremely rare.

Experts emphasize that simple preventive measures such as maintaining cleanliness, avoiding rodent infestation, and practicing good hygiene are effective in reducing risk. Apollo Hospitals, in its advisory, noted that while hantavirus strains exist in rodent populations in India, human infections remain rare and controlled through basic preventive practices.

The Health Ministry has assured that it is in continuous coordination with global health agencies and is taking all necessary steps to safeguard public health.

KRS Reservoir Shrinks Amid Heat, Rain Deficit

Vikrama Vahini | Mandya

Severe heat conditions coupled with poor rainfall across Karnataka have led to a sharp decline in water levels at the Krishnaraja Sagar (KRS) reservoir, raising concerns over drinking water availability in the coming months.

The backwaters of the reservoir, located in Srirangapatna taluk of Mandya district, are visibly receding as the state continues to face a prolonged dry spell and intense summer heat.

The KRS dam, which has a full reservoir level of 124.80 feet and a total storage capacity of 49 TMC, currently holds only about 16 TMC of water. Of this, just around 9 TMC is usable for consumption and irrigation purposes, officials said.

With the monsoon yet to set in, authorities have expressed concern that any further delay or deficit in rainfall could lead to a serious drinking water crisis in the region. Monitoring of water usage and supply management measures are expected to be tightened in the coming weeks.

K'taka Gets 1,243 EV Chargers Under PM E-DRIVE

Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

Karnataka has received a major boost in electric mobility infrastructure with the approval of 1,243 new EV charging stations under the PM E-DRIVE Scheme, Union Minister for Heavy Industries H.D. Kumaraswamy announced on Monday.

The initiative involves an investment of ₹123.26 crore and is aimed at strengthening the state's role in India's clean mobility transition. The announcement was made during a national conference on enabling nationwide EV charging infrastructure held in Bengaluru.

Speaking at the event, Kumaraswamy said Bengaluru has emerged as one of India's leading EV charging hubs and urged other states to accelerate adoption of clean mobility solutions. He highlighted Karnataka's growing importance in the national electric vehicle ecosystem.

The Minister informed that proposals worth ₹503.86 crore have been approved for installing 4,874 EV



chargers across various states and central public sector enterprises. These include HPCL, IOCL, BPCL, and states such as Rajasthan, Gujarat, Kerala, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka.

Under the earlier FAME-II scheme, oil marketing companies have already installed 8,932 EV chargers across the country, including 721 in Karnataka.

Kumaraswamy said India is advancing towards the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 while targeting Net Zero emissions by 2070. He noted that the automobile sector plays a crucial role in the economy,

contributing over 7% to GDP and supporting nearly 30 million jobs. He also highlighted key government initiatives, including the ₹18,100 crore PLI ACC battery scheme, ₹25,938 crore PLI Auto scheme, and the ₹7,280 crore rare earth magnet (REPM) scheme aimed at boosting domestic manufacturing.

The Ministry of Heavy Industries is developing the "Unified Bharat e-Charge" platform to allow users to access multiple charging networks through a single application. The system is expected to simplify EV charging access across the country, similar to the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) model.

Kuwait Accuses Iran of Island Infiltration Near China Port

Vikrama Vahini | Kuwait City

Kuwait on Tuesday accused Iran of attempting to infiltrate Bubiyan Island, a strategically important island near Iraq and Iran that hosts the China-funded Mubarak Al Kabeer Port project. Kuwaiti authorities alleged that a six-member armed paramilitary team tried to enter the island to carry out "hostile acts" amid rising

tensions in the Middle East. According to Kuwait, security forces detained four suspects while two others managed to escape during the operation.

One Kuwaiti security official was reportedly injured in the attack. Iran has not officially responded to the allegations so far.

The incident comes amid growing

regional tensions and concerns over security around key infrastructure projects linked to China's Belt and Road Initiative.

Reports also suggest that the issue may feature in discussions during the upcoming summit between US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping, as global attention remains focused on Middle East stability and energy security.

Bengaluru-Tirupati Vande Bharat Soon

Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

The Railways is set to introduce a new Vande Bharat Express service connecting Bengaluru and Vijayawada via Tirupati, offering a major boost to inter-state connectivity and pilgrimage travel. The proposed train, numbered 20711/20712, is expected to significantly reduce travel time and benefit commuters, students, and devotees.

Improved Connectivity via Tirupati

The new semi-high-speed train will operate six days a week, excluding Tuesdays, and will pass through key stations including Tirupati, a major pilgrimage hub. Officials said the service is aimed at improving connectivity between Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka while easing passenger load on existing routes.

Route and Timings Finalised

As per the proposed schedule, Train No. 20711 will depart Vijayawada at 5:15 AM and reach SMVT Bengaluru at 2:15 PM, covering major stops such as Ongole, Nellore, Tirupati, Chittoor, and KSR Bengaluru.

The return service, Train No. 20712, will leave Bengaluru at 2:45 PM and reach Vijayawada by 11:45 PM, covering the same route in reverse.

Faster Travel and Modern Coaches

The train is expected to reduce travel time between Bengaluru and Tirupati significantly, with officials estimating faster journey times and improved efficiency. The service will comprise 8 coaches, including 7 AC Chair Cars and 1 Executive Chair Car.

Demand and Operational Plans



Currently, Vande Bharat services such as the one between Kacheguda and Bengaluru have witnessed strong passenger demand. Railways had earlier considered reallocating existing rakes due to rising requests from passengers.

Officials said initial delays in launching the new service were due to coach availability constraints, which have now been resolved.

Passenger Benefits

The new service is expected to benefit not only Bengaluru-Vijayawada travellers but also thousands of pilgrims travelling to Tirupati daily. It will also ease congestion on existing train routes and provide a faster, more comfortable travel option.

Political and Public Demand

Local MPs, including Narasaraopet MP Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu, have urged the Railway Ministry to expedite the launch, citing heavy daily movement of students, IT professionals, and traders between Vijayawada and Bengaluru and limited existing transport options.

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav has reportedly received representations regarding early commencement of the service.

INDIA SLAMS CHINA OVER PAKISTAN SUPPORT

Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

India on Tuesday reacted sharply to reports claiming that China provided technical support to Pakistan during Operation Sindoor, stating that the reports only confirmed what was already widely known. The operation was launched by India last year following the deadly Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 people were killed.

MEA Responds to China Reports

Speaking at a media briefing, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said Operation Sindoor was a "precise, targeted and calibrated response" aimed at dismantling terrorist infrastructure operating from Pakistan.



He added that responsible nations should reflect on whether supporting attempts to shield terrorist networks affects their international reputation.

China Media Claims Technical Support: The remarks came after Chinese state media reported that Beijing had provided technical support to Pakistan during the four-day conflict with India.

According to reports, an engineer associated with China's Aviation Industry Corporation reportedly acknowledged assistance linked to Pakistan's Chinese-made J-10CE fighter aircraft fleet.

Earlier Allegations Recalled: India had earlier accused China of assisting Pakistan during Operation Sindoor by

allegedly sharing sensitive military-related information. Senior Indian military officials had also described Pakistan as a "live lab" for Chinese military technologies.

A recent US Department of Defense report reportedly stated that China supported Pakistan through cyber operations, intelligence assistance and diplomatic backing during the conflict.

The developments have further heightened strategic tensions in the region, with security analysts closely monitoring the growing military cooperation between China and Pakistan.

Officials indicated that India continues to assess the implications of foreign assistance to Pakistan during cross-border security operations.

ENTERTAINMENT

Alia Stuns at Cannes in Riviera Gown

Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

Alia Bhatt made a striking appearance at the ongoing Cannes Film Festival, turning heads with her elegant first look at the prestigious international film event. The actress attended the festival in a hand-painted French Riviera-inspired ball gown, earning widespread praise from fashion enthusiasts and fans online.

Fairytale-Inspired Cannes Appearance

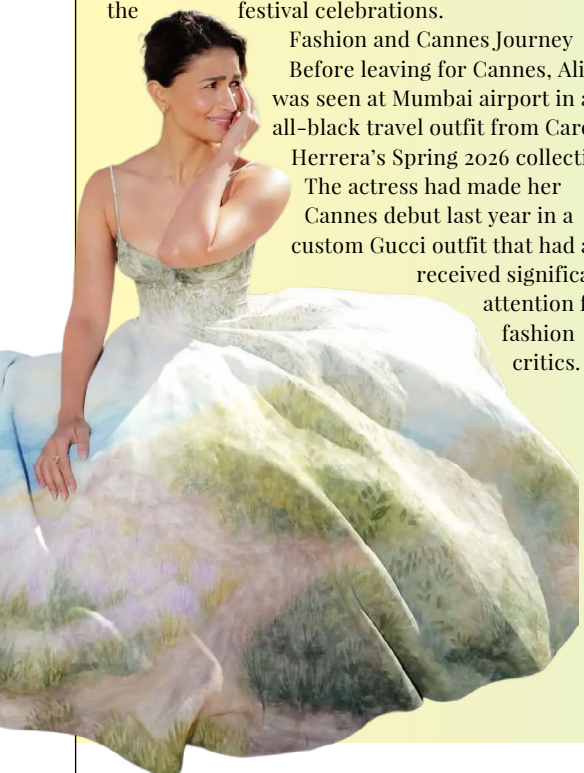
Alia was spotted at Hotel Martinez during her first public appearance at Cannes 2026. She wore a sea foam green printed ball gown featuring scenic artwork inspired by the French Riviera. The outfit included a corseted bodice and a flowing skirt, creating a fairytale-inspired look that quickly gained attention on social media.

She completed her appearance with minimal accessories, soft dewy makeup and a loose bun hairstyle. Sharing the pictures on Instagram, Alia captioned the post, "CANNES 2026 @lorealparis." L'Oréal Paris Shares Actress's Look

The official Instagram page of L'Oréal Paris also shared pictures of the actress and welcomed her to the festival celebrations.

Fashion and Cannes Journey Before leaving for Cannes, Alia was seen at Mumbai airport in an all-black travel outfit from Carolina Herrera's Spring 2026 collection.

The actress had made her Cannes debut last year in a custom Gucci outfit that had also received significant attention from fashion critics.



OTT Buzz This Week

Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

OTT platforms are set to offer a wide range of fresh content this week, with several new films, web series, crime thrillers, documentaries and fantasy dramas releasing across platforms including Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and JioHotstar between May 12 and May 17.



Crime Thrillers Dominate Releases

One of the major releases this week is Kartavya, starring Saif Ali Khan, which premieres on Netflix on May 15. The film follows SHO Pawan Malik as his personal and professional life spirals into chaos.



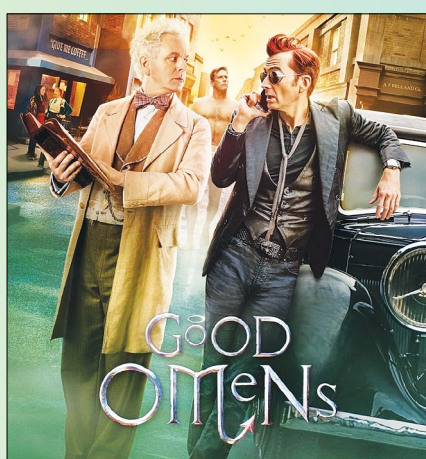
Another highly anticipated release is Inspector Avinash Season 2 on JioHotstar, featuring Randeep Hooda as super cop Avinash Mishra navigating political conspiracies and personal struggles.

Big-Scale Action and Fantasy Shows

Action fans can look forward to Good Omens Season 3 on Prime Video, which continues the story of angel Aziraphale and demon Crowley as they attempt to stop the Second Coming.

Meanwhile, Netflix will stream Devil May Cry Season 2, where Dante faces a new battle

after the return of demon king Mundus.



Popular Spin-Offs and International Content

Netflix is also releasing Berlin and the Lady With an Ermine on May 15, the latest installment from the Money Heist universe.

The series follows Berlin and his team during another high-risk heist involving a priceless Da Vinci masterpiece.

The Korean superhero action film The WONDERfools and psychological drama Nemesis are also among the major international releases this week.



Documentaries and Emotional Dramas

True-crime documentary The Crash explores the controversial 2022 Ohio car crash case involving 17-year-old Mackenzie Shirilla. Netflix will also release Soul Mate, a Boys' Love drama focusing on the emotional bond between two young men.

Another emotional drama, Between Father and Son, follows a lawyer whose life changes dramatically during a visit to his fiancée's family home.



Tamil Thriller and Revenge Drama

Prime Video's Tamil thriller Exam centres on a young woman who impersonates a police officer to uncover corruption in a public service examination scam. JioHotstar's Dhurandhar: The Revenge, starring Ranveer Singh, is another major release this week. The action drama follows Hamza Mazari's mission to dismantle a terror and crime network operating across borders. With genres ranging from crime and action to fantasy, romance and documentaries, OTT audiences are expected to have a packed entertainment lineup throughout the week.

Apart from mainstream releases, several OTT platforms are also focusing on regional and international content to attract a wider audience base. Industry analysts say the growing competition among streaming platforms has led to a surge in high-budget web series, multilingual productions and experimental storytelling formats, making OTT entertainment one of the fastest-growing segments in the global media industry.

BUSINESS

Uday Kotak Warns of Major Economic Shock

Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

Uday Kotak, founder of Kotak Mahindra Bank, has warned that India could face a major economic shock due to escalating tensions in West Asia and rising global crude oil prices.

Speaking at the CII Annual Summit 2026 in New Delhi, Kotak said the real impact of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East is yet to hit India fully and cautioned that the coming months could bring significant economic challenges.

Warning Over Oil Prices and Inflation

Kotak said crude oil prices could rise to nearly \$100 per barrel, sharply increasing India's import bill and putting pressure on inflation. He noted that when oil prices were around \$60 per barrel, India's current account deficit remained manageable, but a prolonged surge in prices could affect the economy and increase the cost of daily essentials for citizens. He stressed that both the government and businesses should prepare in advance instead of reacting after the crisis deepens.

Call for Economic Discipline

Supporting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent appeal for fuel conservation, Kotak urged citizens and industries to adopt economic discipline, reduce unnecessary spending and conserve energy resources.

He also observed that the global order is shifting towards a more "tribal" and competitive environment, with countries prioritising their own interests and competing over trade routes and resources. According to him, such global instability poses serious risks for import-dependent economies like India.

Kotak's remarks come amid growing concerns over the impact of geopolitical tensions and rising energy prices on India's economic stability and growth outlook. Economic experts say sustained volatility in global oil markets could also impact investor confidence, weaken the rupee and increase pressure on India's fiscal management in the coming months.

SPORTS

Krunal Pandya Sets Sights on National Comeback

► Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) all-rounder Krunal Pandya has expressed a strong desire to return to the Indian national team, stating that representing the country at the 2027 ODI World Cup remains his "ultimate goal."

The seasoned all-rounder, who has been in impressive form in IPL 2026, said that his dream of playing for India has remained unchanged since childhood and he is determined to earn a place in the squad for the global tournament scheduled in South Africa.

Speaking about his ambitions, Krunal said he has dreamed of wearing the national jersey since the age of six or seven. He emphasized that nothing has changed over the years and representing India continues to be his sole focus.

He expressed confidence that consistent performances in the IPL would strengthen his chances of making a comeback to the Indian team.

Krunal Pandya has been in excellent form for RCB this season, playing a key role in the team's performances.

With the bat, he played a match-winning knock of 73 runs off 46 balls against Mumbai Indians in a pressure situation, helping RCB secure a crucial victory.

With the ball, he has taken 10 wickets so far, providing balance and stability to RCB's spin attack.

He also holds the distinction of being the only player in IPL history to win the 'Player of the Match' award in two different finals (2017 and 2025).

By the time the 2027 World Cup arrives, Krunal will be in his mid-30s and is expected to face strong competition from established all-rounders such as Ravindra Jadeja and Axar Patel.

However, his ability to perform under pressure, especially in high-stakes matches, keeps him in contention.

Bhuvneshwar Downplays Comeback Talk

► Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar has dismissed speculation over a possible return to the Indian national team, saying he is not focused on long-term goals despite his impressive form in IPL 2026.

The experienced fast bowler, who last played for India in a T20I against New Zealand in November 2022, has been in excellent rhythm this season and is currently among the leading wicket-takers.

Speaking in a video shared by RCB, Bhuvneshwar said he no longer sets long-term targets as they have not worked out in the past. "I am not thinking about India's comeback. I stopped making long-term goals because whenever I did that, it never worked for me," he said.

He added that he is satisfied with his career achievements, including playing over 200 matches for India and contributing significantly in both powerplay and death overs.

Bhuvneshwar has been instrumental in RCB's strong run this season, picking up 21 wickets in 11 matches and leading the pace attack with consistency and control. His ability to swing the ball early and improve his death-over bowling has strengthened RCB's campaign as they aim for back-to-back IPL titles.

Despite growing calls from former players for his national comeback, including support from R Ashwin, the veteran pacer said he is not distracted by selection discussions.

CM Vijay Names Personal Astrologer as OSD

► Vikrama Vahini | Chennai

Joseph Vijay on Tuesday appointed his personal astrologer Rickey Radhan Pandit Vetrivel as Officer on Special Duty (Political), triggering criticism from allies of the ruling government and widespread reactions on social media.

A Government Order issued by Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister Reeta Harish Thakkar confirmed the appointment, which takes immediate effect. Vetrivel, considered a close aide of the Chief Minister, had reportedly predicted the electoral victory of Vijay's party and his rise as Chief Minister.

The appointment drew sharp criticism from alliance partners including the Viduthala Chiruthaigal Katchi and the Communist Party of India (Marxist). VCK general secretary D Ravikumar termed the move "against



constitutional values" and questioned the role of astrology in governance, while CPI(M) state secretary P Shanmugam described the appointment as "regressive" and contrary to rationalist ideals. The Congress party is also reportedly unhappy with the decision. Critics on social media questioned the government's commitment to the rationalist principles associated with reformer Periyar E. V. Ramasamy, who remains an ideological influence in Tamil Nadu politics.

TN to Shut Liquor Shops Near Schools, Temples

► Vikrama Vahini | Chennai

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay has issued his first major order after assuming office, directing the closure of 717 state-run liquor shops located within 500 metres of schools, temples, and bus stands.

According to the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), all identified outlets under the Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation (TASMAC) must be shut within two weeks.

The decision is part of the government's stated objective of promoting a socially responsible and "addiction-free" state.

TASMAC Revenue and Shop Network

TASMAC, which operates liquor retail outlets across Tamil Nadu, is a major source of state revenue. In 2025, the corporation reportedly generated over ₹48,000 crore through liquor sales.

The state currently operates 4,765

TASMAC shops, of which 276 are located near places of worship, 186 near educational institutions, and 255 near bus stands.

Part of Election Promise

The decision is being seen as the first step towards implementing Chief Minister Vijay's election promise of an "addiction-free Tamil Nadu." His party, Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), recently formed the government after securing a historic electoral victory last month.

Political Developments in Tamil Nadu Vijay, who won from Perambur and Tiruchirappalli East constituencies, has retained the Perambur seat while resigning from Tiruchirappalli East.

Following post-election negotiations, TVK reportedly received external support from Congress, CPI, CPI(M), VCK, and other smaller parties. The party currently holds 107 seats, falling short of a simple majority by 11



Pakistan Faces Scrutiny Over Iran Aircraft Claim

► Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

Pakistan has come under scrutiny following reports that it allegedly allowed Iranian military aircraft to be stationed at its airbases during the ongoing US-Iran tensions, even while acting as a mediator between the two sides.

According to a CBS News report, Iranian aircraft were reportedly parked at Pakistan's Nur Khan Air Base shortly after the announcement of a ceasefire by US President Donald Trump, raising questions over Islamabad's neutrality in the conflict.

The report also claimed that an Iranian RC-130 reconnaissance aircraft was among those positioned at the facility, allegedly to shield them from possible US airstrikes.

The development has triggered strong reactions in Washington. US Senator Lindsey Graham called for a reassessment of Pakistan's role as a mediator if



the allegations are proven true, questioning its diplomatic neutrality in the conflict involving Iran and the United States.

A senior Pakistani official has rejected the claims, calling them implausible. The official stated that Nur Khan Air Base is located in a densely populated area and that the presence of a large number of military aircraft would not go unnoticed by the public.

The report further stated that during the conflict, Iran also shifted some civilian aircraft to Afghanistan. An Afghan civil aviation official was quoted as saying that an aircraft belonging to Mahan Air landed in Kabul shortly before the escalation and remained there after Iranian airspace was closed.

TRUMP LEADS MUSK, COOK TO CHINA SUMMIT

► Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

US President Donald Trump is set to travel to China for a high-stakes summit with President Xi Jinping, accompanied by a powerful delegation of leading American business figures, according to reports.

Tech industry leaders Elon Musk of Tesla and Tim Cook of Apple have been invited to join the official delegation, alongside top Wall Street executives, signalling a strong focus on trade and economic engagement.

The delegation also includes prominent financial leaders such as David Solomon of Goldman Sachs, Larry Fink of BlackRock, and Jane Fraser of Citigroup. In total, more than a dozen senior executives are expected to accompany the President.

Washington's emphasis on strengthening commercial ties and exploring new business opportunities with China.

According to reports, the three-day visit from May 13 to 15 is expected to go beyond diplomatic discussions, with a focus on securing business agreements, market access, and purchase deals between the two countries.

The direct involvement of corporate leaders is seen as an effort to boost economic cooperation and address issues related to trade restrictions and global market stability.

Analysts say the inclusion of major technology and finance executives reflects a broader US strategy to strengthen innovation, expand market opportunities, and reshape global trade relations with China.

The summit is being closely watched as a key moment in US-China economic engagement. The summit is expected to play a crucial role in reshaping global trade dynamics and strengthening US-China economic cooperation.



AI SHIELD AGAINST CYBER FRAUD: I4C, RBIH JOIN HANDS

► Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), Ministry of Home Affairs, and Reserve Bank Innovation Hub (RBIH) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen collaboration in combating cyber-enabled financial frauds and curtailing mule accounts across the banking and digital payments ecosystem.

The MoU aims to facilitate cooperation in the areas of fraud-risk intelligence sharing, analytical support, and operational coordination for strengthening proactive fraud detection and prevention mechanisms.

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, Shri Amit Shah, posted on X, "Modi govt is tirelessly working for cyber secure Bharat. Mule accounts are big hurdles in curbing cyber crimes."

Today, the I4C under MHA signed an MoU with Reserve Bank



Innovation Hub (RBIH) unleashing the power of Artificial Intelligence to combat cyber fraud.

The move will swiftly detect and cull hidden mule accounts by feeding the data from the I4C's Suspect Registry to the AI-driven fraud detection system and serve the citizens as their next gen shield against cyber crime."

The MoU was signed by Smt Roopa M, IG (Admin), I4C and Shri Sahil Kinni, CEO, RBIH in the presence of Shri Rohit Jain, Deputy Governor, RBI; Shri Anand Swaroop, Special Secretary (IS), MHA; Shri Rakesh Rathii, JS (CIS), MHA; Shri Rajesh Kumar,

CEO, I4C; and other senior officers from RBI, RBIH and I4C.

Under the MoU, I4C and RBIH will collaborate for sharing of mule account related intelligence and suspect identifiers from I4C-MHA's Suspect Registry to strengthen AI-driven fraud detection systems such as MuleHunter.ai™ implemented across banks. RBIH will utilise the datasets for training and enhancement of AI-driven fraud-risk assessment models, including MuleHunter.ai™.

The I4C has been actively working towards strengthening and collaborating for India's

cybercrime response ecosystem through platforms such as the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP), Suspect Registry and other intelligence-sharing mechanisms.

RBIH, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Reserve Bank of India, has been promoting innovation in the financial sector through technology-led initiatives and development of AI-enabled fraud detection frameworks aimed at strengthening the safety and resilience of the digital payments ecosystem and thereby increasing the trust of the citizen in the digital banking ecosystem.

GRAHAM SLAMS PAKISTAN AS MEDIATOR

► Vikrama Vahini | Washington

Republican Senator Lindsey Graham has strongly criticised Pakistan's role in diplomatic efforts related to the ongoing US-Iran conflict, suggesting that Washington should reconsider Islamabad's involvement as a mediator.

Speaking during a Senate Appropriations subcommittee hearing on the Iran war and defence budget, the South Carolina senator expressed frustration over the lack of progress in peace talks and questioned Pakistan's neutrality in the crisis.

Graham cited reports alleging that Pakistan had allowed Iran to use its airbases to station military aircraft, calling such claims deeply concerning.

"I don't trust Pakistan as far

as I can throw them. If they actually do have Iranian aircraft parked in Pakistan bases to protect Iranian military assets, that tells me we should be looking maybe for somebody else to mediate. No wonder this damn thing is going nowhere," Graham said during the hearing.

His remarks came amid continued deadlock in diplomatic efforts aimed at easing tensions between the United States and Iran, with lawmakers in Washington debating alternative channels for negotiation and conflict resolution. The statement is expected to further strain political discussions around Pakistan's role in regional mediation efforts, particularly in sensitive geopolitical conflicts involving Iran and the US.



CPI Demands Removal of Dharmendra Pradhan

► Vikrama Vahini | Thiruvananthapuram

Communist Party of India Kerala State Secretary Binoy Viswam on Tuesday demanded the removal of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, alleging large-scale irregularities and "mafia influence" in India's education system.

Referring to the recent NEET controversy, Viswam claimed that around 22 lakh students across the country, including nearly 1.25 lakh students from Kerala, had been affected by examination-related fraud and mismanagement. He accused the Centre of promoting commercial interests in education at the cost of transparency and merit.

The CPI leader also alleged corruption and irregularities in several national institutions and criticised the Centre for remaining silent on the issue. He urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to remove the Education Minister and ensure accountability in the education sector.

Ashok Hits Congress Over Gold Row

► Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

R. Ashok on Tuesday accused the Congress of "selective outrage" over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent appeal regarding gold purchases, saying similar appeals had been made by Congress leaders in the past.

Ashok referred to former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's 1967 appeal asking citizens to avoid buying gold and former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram's 2013 statement urging restraint in gold purchases. He said such remarks were earlier described as "economic responsibility," but are now being criticised when made by the current Prime Minister.

The BJP leader alleged that the Congress criticism was politically motivated and claimed the opposition was uncomfortable with the Centre's economic management. He also urged Congress leaders to remember their own past statements before criticising the government.

Meanwhile, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and other opposition leaders continued attacking the Centre over the Prime Minister's remarks, turning the issue into a wider political debate on economic policy and public messaging.

Kerala CM Decision Soon: Rahul Meets Leaders

► Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday held one-on-one consultations with several former Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) chiefs as the party moved closer to finalising the next Chief Minister of Kerala.

The discussions, held at Sonia Gandhi's residence at 10, Janpath, marked the concluding phase of internal deliberations aimed at resolving the leadership uncertainty in the state following the recent electoral developments.

Senior leaders, including former KPCC presidents, working presidents and other key functionaries from Kerala, participated in the meetings as the high command sought to build consensus on the top post.

Former KPCC chief K. Muraliedharan, after the meeting, told reporters that he was satisfied with the discussions and indicated that a final decision on the Kerala Chief Minister is expected by Wednesday.

With the consultations reaching their final stage, the Congress leadership is likely to announce its decision after further internal coordination at the highest level.

