



Mouni Roy turns heads at the Cannes Film Festival in a striking black-and-white ensemble, marking a glamorous public appearance amid recent personal life changes, as she continues to focus on her professional journey.

The West Bengal government has rolled out a series of stringent measures aimed at improving administrative efficiency and reducing unnecessary expenditure across departments.



INSIDE

### Good morning

Your energy in the morning is a clean slate, and you get a chance each day to build it up the way you want.

### BRIEFS

#### Sitharaman Slams Congress Over 'Fear-Mongering'

**Vikrama Vahini | Delhi**  
Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday criticised the Congress party, urging it to stop what she called "obstructionist politics" and the spread of fear among the public.

She said the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been working since 2014 to serve all sections of society through various policies and initiatives. "Since 2014 we continue to serve every sector and every section of our society through our policies and initiatives," Sitharaman said, highlighting the government's development agenda. The Finance Minister's remarks came amid ongoing political exchanges between the ruling party and the opposition over key policy issues.

#### IFAD, India Launch 8-Year Rural Development Plan

**Vikrama Vahini | Delhi**  
The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Government of India have entered a new phase of cooperation on sustainable rural development with an eight-year roadmap focusing on finance, value chains, climate resilience, and rural enterprise, according to an official statement.

A senior IFAD delegation is currently on a five-day visit to India to advance discussions on strengthening rural livelihoods and scaling up investment and innovation in rural economies.

#### US Drops Charges Against Gautam Adani

**Vikrama Vahini | Washington**  
In a significant relief for industrialist Gautam Adani, the US Department of Justice has dropped all criminal charges against him and his nephew Sagar Adani in connection with the alleged bribery and solar contract case.

The case, filed in 2024, had accused the Adani Group of involvement in a \$265 million bribery scheme related to solar power projects in India.

However, court filings now confirm that the indictment has been dismissed "with prejudice," permanently closing the matter.

Earlier, the US Securities and Exchange Commission had also settled related allegations, with Gautam Adani agreeing to pay \$6 million and Sagar Adani \$12 million without admitting or denying wrongdoing.

US authorities also reviewed related sanctions allegations and found no further grounds for prosecution. Officials said the decision was taken at the discretion of prosecutors after assessing available evidence.

# HC Halts KSRTC Strike

## COURT RESTRAINS STRIKE, URGES TALKS TO RESOLVE WAGE DISPUTE

**Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru**  
The Karnataka High Court on Tuesday restrained transport unions from going

ahead with their proposed indefinite strike over wage revision and pending dues, citing public inconvenience.

### Court Issues Interim Order

A vacation bench comprising Justices Suraj Govindaraj and K Manmadha Rao passed the interim order while hearing a petition filed by two citizens who argued that the strike would severely disrupt public transport services across the state.

The court directed the Joint Action Committee (JAC) and its affiliated unions not to act on the strike notice issued on April 20, 2026.



*The Karnataka High Court has restrained transport unions from proceeding with an indefinite strike over wage revision and pending dues, while directing the state government and unions to hold talks to resolve the dispute and ensure uninterrupted public transport services.*

### Govt Asked to Initiate Dialogue

The bench granted the state government two days to indicate when a meeting could be convened with union representatives, along with the Transport Minister or Chief Minister, to resolve the dispute.

### Concerns Over Public Hardship

Petitioners' counsel argued that lakhs of daily commuters depend on state-run transport services and would

face serious hardship if the strike proceeded.

### Unions Defend Demands

Representing the unions, counsel stated that the demand for a 25 per cent wage hike and payment of pending dues was reasonable and urged the government to resolve the issue through dialogue.

### Government Cites Wage Hike

The state government informed the

court that a 12.5 per cent salary hike had already been granted and arrears cleared.

The bench observed that employees should avoid striking in view of the increase.

### ESMA Invoked

Meanwhile, the Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) has invoked the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA) to prevent disruption of services, warning of strict action against violations.

### Next Hearing on Thursday

The matter has been posted for further hearing on Thursday, with the court emphasising the need for an amicable resolution through discussions.

## YOUTH CONGRESS CLASH: NOTICES ISSUED

**Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru**  
The Indian Youth Congress has issued show-cause notices to several office-bearers, including suspended Karnataka Youth Congress vice-president Deepika Reddy, following a clash between rival groups at the KPCC office in Bengaluru.

The incident occurred on Sunday during a meeting linked to protests over the alleged NEET question paper leak, where supporters of Karnataka Youth Congress president Manjunath Gowda and Deepika Reddy allegedly engaged in a heated exchange that escalated into a physical scuffle.

According to party sources, notices have been issued to Deepika Reddy, Sandeep, Manjunath Shetty, Nikhil Kondaji and others, directing them to submit their replies within a week.

The internal conflict comes after the recent removal of 15 Youth Congress office-bearers,

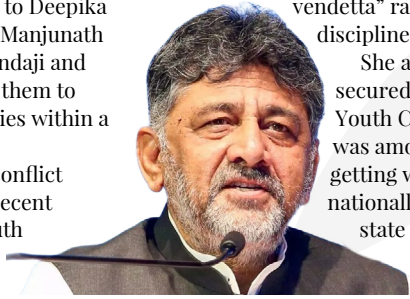
including Deepika Reddy, which reportedly led to resentment among a section of party workers.

Meanwhile, KPCC President and Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar has taken serious note of the incident and directed KPCC Working President G.C. Chandrashekhara to conduct a fact-finding inquiry into the matter.

Party sources said Chandrashekhara has begun consultations with office-bearers and convened meetings at the KPCC office to gather details of the clash.

Reacting to the disciplinary action, Deepika Reddy alleged that the move against her was driven by "personal vendetta" rather than party discipline.

She also claimed she had secured 2.95 lakh votes in the Youth Congress elections and was among the highest-vote-getting women candidates nationally, further accusing the state leadership of acting out of "insecurity and jealousy." **PG2**



## Centre Denies Temple Gold Monetisation Claims



**Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi**

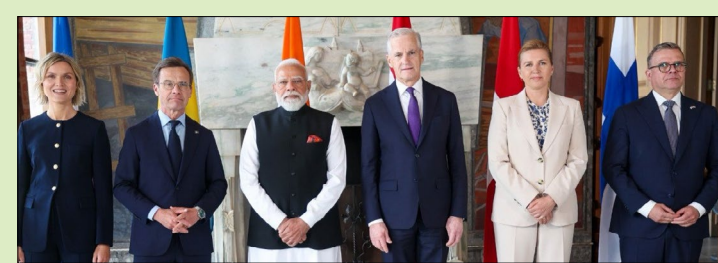
The Ministry of Finance on Tuesday dismissed reports and social media claims suggesting that the government plans to monetise gold held by temples and religious institutions, terming them "completely false and misleading."

In an official statement, the ministry clarified that there is no proposal to introduce any scheme for monetising gold belonging to temple trusts or other religious bodies across the country.

It also rejected claims that gold used in temple structures, such as plates on towers or doors, would be classified as "Strategic Gold Reserves of India," calling such assertions baseless.

The ministry urged citizens not to believe or circulate unverified information, warning that such rumours create unnecessary confusion and mislead the public.

## India, Nordics Natural Partners in Democracy Push



**Vikrama Vahini | Oslo**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said that India and the Nordic countries are "natural partners" due to their shared commitment to democracy, the rule of law, and multilateralism, while addressing a joint press conference after the India-Nordic Summit.

The Prime Minister said that India and the Nordic nations also share common priorities in technology and sustainability, opening up significant opportunities for cooperation. He noted that relations between India and the region have made "special progress" in recent years.

Leaders present at the summit included Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo, Icelandic Prime Minister Kristrún Frostadóttir, and Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson.

"Our mutual commitment to democracy, the rule of law, and multilateralism makes us natural partners," PM Modi said, adding that the India-Nordic dialogue platform, established eight years ago, has helped deepen ties.

He highlighted that bilateral trade between India and Nordic countries has grown nearly fourfold in the past decade. **PG2**

## Banda Sizzles at 48.2°C Amid Heatwave Red Alert

**Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi**  
Uttar Pradesh is reeling under intense heatwave conditions, with Banda recording a scorching 48.2°C, making it the hottest city in the country. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued red and orange alerts across several districts, warning of severe to extremely severe heat conditions.



These regions are expected to face extreme heatwave conditions along with strong hot winds during peak afternoon hours for the next two days.

### Orange Alert Issued for Several Regions

An orange alert has been sounded for

Kaushambi, Pratapgarh, Mirzapur, Chandauli, Varanasi, Jaunpur, Ghazipur, Ballia, Kanpur Nagar, Kanpur Dehat, Lalitpur and Raebareilly, where temperatures are expected to remain dangerously high.

### Warm Nights Add to Distress

The IMD has also warned of unusually warm nights in western Uttar Pradesh over the next two days, increasing discomfort for residents already battling extreme daytime heat.

### Public Advisory and Precautions

Authorities have urged residents to avoid

outdoor activities during peak afternoon hours, stay hydrated, and take necessary precautions. Special advisories have been issued for children, elderly citizens, and people with pre-existing health conditions to remain indoors as much as possible.

### Heatwave Likely to Continue

Officials said the heatwave conditions are expected to persist over the coming days, with several districts across central and western Uttar Pradesh remaining under continuous weather alerts.

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SPIRITUAL

Adhika Jyeshtha Masa 2026 Explained

The Hindu calendar will observe a rare and spiritually significant period in 2026 with the arrival of "Adhika Jyeshtha Masa," an extra lunar month that occurs once every three years. Also known as "Purushottama Masa," this sacred period is dedicated to Lord Vishnu and is considered highly auspicious for spiritual practices, charity, and religious observances.

According to traditional Hindu Panchang calculations, the lunar year consists of 354 days, while the solar year has 365 days. The resulting difference of about 11 days each year accumulates over time, leading to the addition of an extra month approximately every 32 months to align the lunar and solar calendars. This adjustment is known as "Adhika Masa."

In 2026, this additional month falls within Jyeshtha, making it Adhika Jyeshtha Masa. The period will be followed by the regular Jyeshtha month, resulting in an extended cycle of nearly 60 days.

The Adhika Jyeshtha Masa will begin on May 17, 2026, and continue until June 15, 2026. The subsequent regular Jyeshtha month will be observed from June 16 to July 13, 2026.

Mythologically, Adhika Masa holds a special place in Hindu scriptures. It is believed that the month initially felt neglected as it was not assigned any presiding deity and was referred to as an "inauspicious" or "extra" month. According to legend, the month sought refuge with Lord Vishnu, who blessed it and declared it dear to him. Devotees are encouraged to engage in acts of donation, including food offerings to the needy, lamp donations, and recitation of Vishnu Sahasranama. Chanting of the mantra "Om Namoh Bhagavate Vasudevaya," reading sacred texts such as the Bhagavata Purana, and observing fasting or simple sattvic diets are considered highly meritorious.

However, Hindu traditions advise against conducting major auspicious ceremonies during this month. Weddings, housewarming ceremonies, thread ceremonies (Upanayana), naming rituals, and the inauguration of new businesses are generally avoided, as the period is not considered suitable for new beginnings in the material sense.

HDK SLAMS GOVT OVER 'HIDDEN' FARMER SUICIDES

**> Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru**  
Union Minister H. D. Kumaraswamy on Tuesday levelled serious allegations against the State Congress Government, accusing it of deliberately suppressing farmer suicide cases in Karnataka.

Addressing the media at the party's state office, JP Bhavan, Kumaraswamy said he was shocked after reading a recent newspaper report highlighting a rise in farmer suicides. "Even after such a report appeared, the government has failed to respond. It is busy organising conventions instead of addressing farmers' issues," he said.

Citing data from the National Crime Records Bureau, the Union Minister stated that 2,423 farmers and agricultural labourers died by suicide in 2023 and 2,971 in 2024. "In



Union Minister H. D. Kumaraswamy paid a courtesy visit to the residence of former MLA Akhanda Srinivas Murthy in Bengaluru on Tuesday.

just two years, 5,394 farmers have lost their lives. Karnataka stands second in the country. Is the government unaware, or is it intentionally suppressing these figures?" he questioned.

Kumaraswamy further criticised the government for allegedly spending crores on events

while farmers continue to face distress. "On one side, farmers are dying every day; on the other, the government is celebrating in the name of guarantees.

If these schemes were truly effective, why are suicides continuing?" he asked.

He also accused the government

of misusing officials to mobilise crowds for its programmes and claimed that issues in the Revenue Department remain unresolved despite repeated complaints from farmers across the state.

Ready for Debate on Bidadi Township

Responding to the challenge by the Deputy Chief Minister over the Bidadi Township project,

Kumaraswamy said he was ready for a debate anywhere.

Akhanda Srinivas Murthy Likely to Join JD(S)

The Union Minister also revealed that former MLA Akhanda Srinivas Murthy is likely to join the Janata Dal (Secular) soon. Describing his visit to Murthy's residence as a courtesy call, Kumaraswamy said the party would finalise a date for his formal induction.

Lokayukta Raids Slum Board Over ₹23 Cr Scam

> Vikrama Vahini | Belagavi

The Karnataka Lokayukta conducted raids at multiple locations linked to the Slum Clearance Board across Bengaluru, Belagavi, Dharwad, Vijayapura, Ramdurg and Hubballi over alleged misappropriation of government funds.

Officials said the action was taken following complaints of misuse of ₹33 crore allocated for housing 600 families, with allegations that nearly ₹23 crore was misused. During the searches, documents and bills worth crores were seized. The probe is underway.

In a separate case in Bengaluru, Lokayukta officials caught BESCOM Assistant Executive Engineer (AEE) Manoj Kumar and a contractor red-handed while allegedly accepting a ₹50,000 bribe for providing temporary electricity supply of 25 kW. Both have been arrested.

Officials said further investigation is in progress to identify the full extent of the alleged irregularities and to determine the involvement of other officials and contractors in both cases.

Dasa Lahari Jugalbandi in Mysuru

> Vikrama Vahini | Mysuru

As part of the ongoing Adhika Masa cultural celebrations organised by Uttaradi Mutt, a special musical programme will be held on May 20 at 5:30 pm at the Kashi Vishwanath Sannidhi premises on Agrahara Main Road.

Young talents Kousalya Raghuram and A.R. Aprameya will present a "Dasa Lahari" jugalbandi (duet vocal concert) on the occasion. The programme will be held in the divine presence of Sri Satyatma Tirtha Swamiji.

Kousalya, a disciple of renowned vocalist Vidwan H.S. Nagaraj of Sringeri, is currently pursuing her final semester B.E. at the University of Mysore's School of Engineering. She is also undergoing advanced training in Carnatic classical music under Vidushi Rajani Ramadhyani. She has performed at

several prestigious platforms and has been associated with the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Dasa Sahitya Project, presenting multiple devotional concerts in Tirupati.

Aprameya, a passionate young vocalist, is undergoing senior-level training in classical at Guru Guha Sangeetha Mahavidyalaya. He has won several prizes at district and state-level competitions and has twice represented South India at the national-level 'Kala Utsav' organised by the Union Ministry of Human Resource Development and Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan. He recently secured distinction with 95% marks in II PUC (Science) from Sadvidya College, Mysuru. The organisers have invited music lovers to attend the event and witness an enriching devotional musical experience.



Ravi Kumar Slams Congress Rule

> Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

Chief Whip of the Opposition in the Legislative Council N. Ravi Kumar on Monday said the Congress government in Karnataka has no moral right to celebrate its three-year tenure, calling it a period of "misrule" and "abysmal performance."

In a statement, he alleged that the Siddaramaiah-led government has pushed the state into a debt trap, followed policies of minority

appeasement, and failed to maintain law and order. He further criticised the condition of Bengaluru's infrastructure, especially roads, stating that the situation in rural areas could be even worse.

Ravi Kumar also targeted the ongoing political dynamics between the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister, saying it has affected governance and led to administrative chaos.



India, Nordics Natural Partners in Democracy Push

> From PG1

while Nordic investments in India have increased significantly, including a 200 per cent rise in the last ten years.

The Prime Minister also pointed to recent trade developments, including the implementation of the India-EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement and the finalisation of the India-European Union Free Trade Agreement, with Nordic countries playing a key role.

He said these agreements mark the beginning of a "new golden era" in India's relations with the Nordic region.

He further said that expanding cooperation in clean energy, digital innovation and green technologies will be central to the future India-Nordic partnership, as both sides work together to address global challenges and promote sustainable growth.

VIJAYENDRA ACCUSES SIDDU OF 'POWER PLAY' POLITICS

> Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

Accusing Chief Minister Siddaramaiah of using guarantee schemes and Sadhaneya Samavesha to blackmail his party high command protect his chair, State BJP President B. Y. Vijayendra on Tuesday predicted that the ruling party will not be able to sustain the victory run beyond 2028.

Speaking to reporters here, Vijayendra said while the guarantee schemes have drained out the state exchequer completely thus pushing the state to bankruptcy, the chief minister, however, is holding sadhaneya samavesha at Tumkur as a 'show of his strength' to safeguard his chair. "Tumkur jamboree is Of Siddaramaiah; By Siddaramaiah and For Siddaramaiah. For the chief minister, this Sadhaneya Samavesha is a tool to cock a snook at his party's high command," the BJP President added.

According to Vijayendra, the three years of misrule of the Congress is a sordid tale of betrayal, abysmally dismal performance, collapse of law and order, rank minority appeasement and rampant corruption not to mention of all round chaos in the entire state. "The infrastructure in Bengaluru does not deserve any mention at all. It is disastrous," Vijayendra said.

"Never before in the political history of Karnataka was there an as wretched a government as the present one headed by Siddaramaiah. Not a single section of society is happy and satisfied with the performance of the present dispensation. Anger and resentment against this government are intense and widespread," the BJP President explained.



Mounting a blistering attack on the Congress for "opposing Narendra Modi for the sake of opposing" Vijayendra said, "Siddaramaiah does not leave a single chance to pick on Modi unnecessarily and needlessly without any convincing and credible reason, Vijayendra mocked at the Congress leaders whose children and grand-children are studying ICSE and CBSE syllabus in Central schools.

In response to questions, Vijayendra accused the Congress government of not responding to the farmers' problems and infrastructural needs of the people of Bengaluru.

NEWS

RPF SEIZES LIQUOR IN SATARK DRIVE

> Vikrama vahini | Arsikere

As part of its ongoing "Operation Satark" drive to curb illegal transportation of contraband through railway premises and trains, the Railway Protection Force (RPF) conducted a joint checking operation under the Arsikere jurisdiction on Sunday.

Acting on credible information, the operation was carried out under the leadership of Sri Rakesh Kumar, PC/ASK, with a joint team comprising officials from the RPF, Arsikere, and the Excise Department. The surprise inspection was conducted on board Train No. 17310 Vasco Da Gama-Yesvantpur Express.

The team included Sri G. Shivamurthy, ASI/RPF/ Arsikere, along with RPF personnel, and Sri Nanjundaswamy, SI/Excise/Arsikere, along with excise staff. The checking was carried out between Ajjampura and Arsikere railway stations, focusing on illegal transportation of contraband items.

During the inspection at around 9:10 am between Banavara and Arsikere stations, officials noticed an unclaimed plastic bag placed near the front general coach. Upon enquiry, no passenger came forward to claim ownership of the bag. Suspecting foul play, the team secured the bag following safety protocols and



conducted a thorough check.

Upon examination, the bag was found to contain 12 bottles of liquor of various brands, valued at approximately ₹5,123. The seized items were properly documented and photographed before being handed over to the Inspector of Excise, Arsikere, for further legal action. In connection with the seizure, the Excise Department has registered a case under the provisions of the Karnataka Excise Act, 1965, and further investigation is underway.

YOUTH CONGRESS CLASH: NOTICES ISSUED

> From PG1

Party leaders said the inquiry will focus on identifying those responsible for escalating the clash and assessing whether organisational rules were violated during the meeting at the KPCC office. Sources added that the leadership is keen to prevent further factionalism within the Youth Congress unit, especially at a time when the party is trying to strengthen its organisational base in Karnataka.

Meanwhile, senior Congress functionaries have urged all groups to maintain discipline and resolve internal differences through party platforms instead of public confrontations that could damage the party's image.

Police officials said they are also reviewing CCTV footage from the KPCC premises as part of the inquiry, though no separate criminal complaint has been officially registered so far in connection with the incident.

Meanwhile, party insiders indicated that a final decision on further disciplinary action will be taken only after receiving responses from all those issued notices and completion of the fact-finding report. Party observers noted that the incident highlights growing internal tensions within the Youth Congress in Karnataka, with competing factions increasingly asserting influence ahead of organisational restructuring and future political activities.

HEALTH & Lifestyle

WHO Flags Ebola Surge

> Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

The World Health Organization has raised serious concerns over a fast-moving Ebola outbreak in parts of Central and East Africa, with reported deaths crossing 130 and infections rising steadily.

Outbreak Spreads Across Congo and Uganda

According to health authorities, at least 516 suspected Ebola cases and 131 suspected deaths have been reported in the eastern regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Officials have confirmed 33 cases in Congo and two infections in neighbouring Uganda.

The outbreak is linked to the Bundibugyo strain of the Ebola virus, which spreads through direct contact with infected bodily fluids or contaminated surfaces.

WHO Chief Voices Serious Concern

Speaking at the World Health Assembly in Geneva, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus described the situation as alarming.

"I'm deeply concerned about the scale and speed of the epidemic," he said, adding that case numbers may rise further as surveillance and testing expand.

What is Ebola and How It Spreads

Ebola is a severe and often fatal illness that causes symptoms such as fever, weakness, vomiting, diarrhoea, and in severe cases, internal and external bleeding. The virus spreads through direct contact with infected individuals or contaminated objects.

Why the Situation is Critical

Health experts are particularly worried as cases have emerged in densely populated urban areas such as Goma in Congo and Kampala in Uganda, raising fears of faster transmission. The outbreak has also affected conflict-hit regions, making containment efforts more difficult.

Infections among healthcare workers have further heightened concerns, indicating possible transmission within medical facilities.

Emergency Funding and Response Measures

The WHO has approved \$3.9 million in emergency funding to support affected countries. Efforts are being intensified to improve testing, contact tracing, and isolation facilities.

Authorities have been urged to strengthen infection control practices, train healthcare workers, and promote safe burial practices, as traditional ceremonies can increase transmission risks.

Travel Advisory and Public Awareness

The WHO has advised confirmed patients and their contacts to avoid international travel until medically cleared. However, it has cautioned against imposing blanket travel bans or border closures.

Health officials continue to emphasise awareness campaigns to educate communities on prevention and early detection, aiming to contain the outbreak before it spreads further.

SCIENCE & Technology

Chandrayaan-3 Hop Reveals Lunar Surface Secrets

> Vikrama Vahini | Chennai

India's Chandrayaan-3 mission has revealed key scientific insights into the Moon's South Pole through the Vikram lander's unique "hop" experiment, uncovering the heterogeneous nature of lunar regolith, according to ISRO.

The lander, which soft-landed on August 23, 2023, briefly reignited its engines on September 2 using residual fuel to perform a controlled hop after completing surface and subsurface studies. ISRO said the maneuver demonstrated a crucial capability for future lunar missions involving mobility and sample return.

The experiment also helped scientists study how rocket exhaust affects the lunar surface, showing that the upper few centimetres of regolith were disturbed and partially removed, exposing underlying layers.

Data from the Chandra's Surface Thermophysical Experiment (ChaSTE) revealed that the top layer of lunar soil is highly porous and cohesive, acting like a thermal blanket influencing heat absorption and radiation.

ISRO noted that the regolith's thermophysical properties are vital for understanding lunar heat dynamics and selecting future landing and habitat sites. Simulations using Chandrayaan-2 data further confirmed significant variation in the upper 2-6 cm of the surface, which may also influence subsurface ice retention.

The findings provide crucial inputs for future lunar missions, especially for planning safe landing sites and long-term habitation in the Moon's south polar region.



# Siddu Slams 'Hollow' Gujarat Model

**Vikrama Vahini | Tumakuru**  
Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday launched a sharp attack on the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, asserting that the "Karnataka model" of development is superior while describing the much-publicised "Gujarat model" as

"hollow." Addressing the "Three Years of Achievement Dedication Convention" in Tumakuru, Siddaramaiah said the Congress government in Karnataka has delivered inclusive and welfare-oriented governance, in contrast to what he termed divisive politics by the BJP. He alleged that despite the BJP ruling Gujarat for over three decades, inequality and hardships persist, citing recent incidents involving economically weaker sections as evidence. Highlighting his government's performance,

Siddaramaiah said over 290 out of 580 manifesto promises have already been fulfilled and assured that the remaining commitments would be implemented within the next two years. He emphasised that the five guarantee schemes were rolled out immediately after coming to power and claimed that Karnataka has made significant economic progress, including high GST contributions and per capita income growth. The Chief Minister also criticised the Centre over rising inflation, unemployment, and increasing fuel and gold prices, alleging that economic benefits have largely

favoured corporate entities while common citizens continue to struggle. He further took aim at the NEET system, stating that Karnataka's suggestion for a CET-style model was ignored, leading to increased stress among students. Expressing confidence ahead of the 2028 Assembly elections, Siddaramaiah said the Congress would retain power in the state due to its commitment to fulfilling promises. Deputy Chief Minister D. K. Shivakumar, Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda, and several ministers and legislators were present at the event.

## Shettar Flags Off New Belagavi-Secunderabad Express

**Vikrama Vahini | Belagavi**  
Member of Parliament Jagadish Shettar on Tuesday flagged off Train No. 17074 Belagavi-Secunderabad Weekly Express at the Belagavi Railway Station, marking a significant boost to rail connectivity between Karnataka and Telangana. Speaking on the occasion, Shettar said the introduction of the new train service would strengthen inter-state connectivity, support economic growth, and offer greater convenience to passengers travelling between the two regions. The newly inaugurated weekly express will depart from Belagavi at 1:00 pm every Tuesday and reach Secunderabad at 7:15 am the following day. In the return



direction, Train No. 17073 Secunderabad-Belagavi Weekly Express will leave Secunderabad at 4:30 pm every Monday and arrive in Belagavi at 10:30 am the next day. MLA Abhay Patil, former MLA Anil Benake, Additional Divisional Railway Manager Premchandra, and other senior railway officials were present during the inauguration ceremony.

## SC Upholds Stray Dog Removal Order

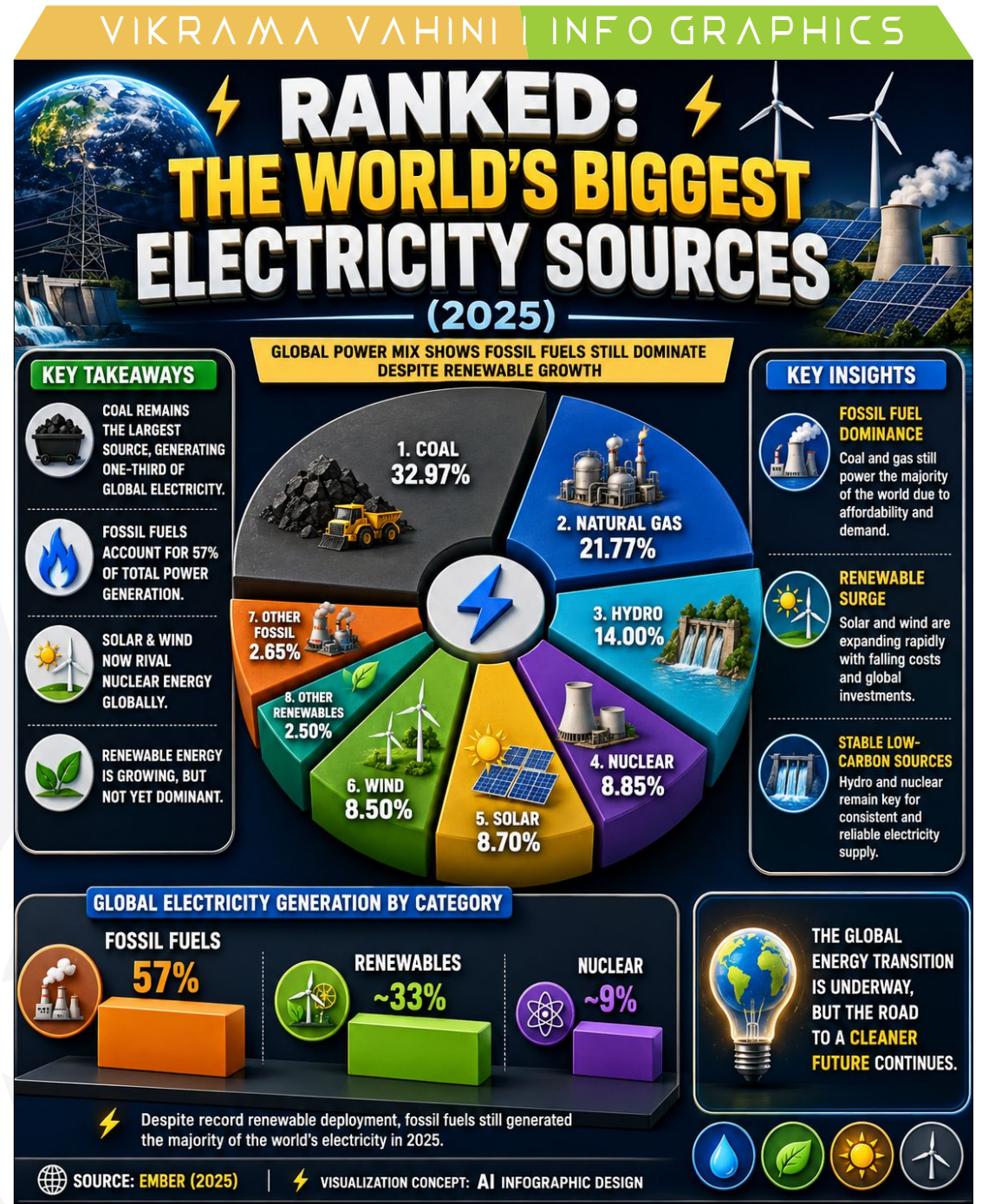
**Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi**  
The Supreme Court of India has upheld its earlier directive mandating the removal of stray dogs from crowded public institutions, including schools, hospitals, bus depots, railway stations, and sports complexes, warning of contempt proceedings for non-compliance. A bench comprising Justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta, and N V Anjaria dismissed multiple petitions seeking modifications to its November 7, 2025 order. The Court reiterated that stray dogs picked up from public places must be shifted to shelters and should not be released back into the same locations, even after sterilisation. It also rejected challenges to the Standard Operating Procedure issued by the Animal Welfare Board of India. Referring to several "deeply disturbing incidents" of dog attacks,



the bench noted cases involving children, elderly persons, and even international travellers. The Court held state authorities accountable for failing to protect citizens from such threats. In a significant observation, the apex court permitted euthanasia of "rabid and dangerous dogs" where necessary to safeguard human life. The earlier order had also restricted feeding of stray dogs on streets, allowing it only at designated spots. Several animal rights groups and activists had sought a review of these directions, which the Court has now declined.

## Bengal Restores OBC Quota, Drops Religion Tag

**Vikrama Vahini | Kolkata**  
The West Bengal government on Tuesday restored a 7 per cent OBC reservation for 66 communities and discontinued religion-based categorisation in the state's reservation list. The decision comes after the state cabinet moved to comply with a Calcutta High Court judgment delivered in May 2024, which struck down OBC status and certificates issued to 77 communities added between 2010 and 2012, declaring them illegal and unconstitutional. Officials said the government has now regularised communities that were part of the OBC list prior to 2010, reinstating their eligibility under the reservation framework. The development is expected to have significant political and socio-economic implications, especially ahead of the proposed census exercise in the state, which may further reshape caste and community-based data mapping.



ENTERTAINMENT

## Salman-Ram Charan 'Peddi' Link Revealed

**Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi**  
A surprising connection between Bollywood superstar Salman Khan and actor Ram Charan's upcoming film Peddi has come to light, revealed by celebrity fitness trainer Rakesh Udiyar. According to Udiyar, it was Salman Khan who first introduced him to Ram Charan years ago, setting the foundation for a long-standing professional collaboration. The trainer said Salman recommended him when Ram Charan was preparing for his fitness transformation in Hyderabad. "I was training Bhai when he told me that my friend's son needs training. He asked me to come to Hyderabad. I was surprised to know it was Chiranjeevi's son Ram Charan," Udiyar recalled. That introduction eventually led to Udiyar training Ram Charan for several major films, including the globally acclaimed RRR (2022) and now Peddi. Speaking about Peddi, the trainer said the physical brief for the film was significantly different from RRR. "For Peddi, he was told to look like a pehalwan, not like a Greek god," he said, indicating a rugged and earthy character transformation. He added that Ram Charan's role reportedly includes multiple phases, ranging from a village character to a cricketer and later a wrestler, requiring varied physical preparation. In contrast, for RRR, the actor's physique and appearance were tailored to suit a different historical setting, including a leaner, more disciplined look aligned with his role as a police officer. Udiyar also shared details of Ram Charan's intense fitness routine during Peddi, noting that his mornings often began with ash gourd juice followed by structured workouts and protein supplementation. He added that chef Ketan managed the diet plan, while Upasana Kamineni, Ram Charan's wife, closely monitored his overall health regimen. The trainer praised the actor's dedication, recalling that Ram would often wake up as early as 4 a.m. for training sessions. He also mentioned that the actor maintains strong spiritual practices, including regular visits to Sabarimala and a disciplined vegetarian lifestyle. Udiyar further recounted an on-set injury during a wrestling sequence for Peddi, where Ram Charan suffered an eye injury requiring stitches but resumed shooting the next day. "He believed the show must go on," he said. Interestingly, Udiyar also trained Salman Khan for Sultan (2016), where the actor underwent a major physical transformation from a bulky wrestler to a lean MMA fighter. Reflecting on Salman Khan's long fitness journey, Udiyar said the actor has maintained a disciplined workout regime for over four decades. He also recalled a difficult period during the shooting of Bodyguard (2011), when Salman was diagnosed with an aneurysm. "I have seen him in severe pain. It was very distressing," he said, adding that such experiences highlight the physical challenges actors often endure behind the scenes.



## ANUPAM KHER SUPPORTS FUEL-SAVING APPEAL

**Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi**  
Veteran actor Anupam Kher has supported Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to conserve fuel and adopt more sustainable travel habits, highlighting his own recent journey from Jaipur to New Delhi aboard the Vande Bharat Express. In a video message shared from the train, the actor urged citizens to make small but meaningful changes in their daily routines to reduce fuel consumption and support the country's sustainability goals. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi has appealed to all of us to save petrol and diesel wherever possible. We should use public transport, carpool, and avoid taking out vehicles for short distances," Kher said in the video. He added that his decision to travel by train was a practical step in line with this message, emphasizing that collective small efforts can create a significant impact over time. "This is not a big sacrifice. But if we all make small efforts, it can bring a big change," he said, stressing the importance of responsible citizenship. Kher also encouraged carpooling and mindful use of private vehicles, noting that everyday habits play a key role in national fuel conservation efforts. He further stated that service to the nation is not limited to borders or large actions but is also reflected in simple lifestyle choices made by citizens. "Sometimes, national service is seen in small changes in our daily lives. We should contribute in whatever way we can," he added. The actor concluded his message with "Jai Hind," calling for collective responsibility in supporting

sustainable practices. On the professional front, Anupam Kher is currently engaged in the promotion of his theatrical production Jaane Pehchaane Anjaane. The actor's gesture has drawn attention on social media, with many users appreciating his effort to promote public transport and eco-friendly travel habits in line with the government's sustainability push.



BUSINESS

## U.S. Debt Market Sees Investor Exit Amid Bond Rout

**Vikrama Vahini | Washington**  
Global financial markets are witnessing a sharp "bond bloodbath" as investors increasingly pull out of debt markets, including U.S. government securities, traditionally considered safe-haven investments. Rising bond yields, persistent inflation concerns, high interest rates and expanding government debt levels are driving the sell-off, triggering volatility across global markets. Yields on U.S. Treasury bonds have surged to multi-year highs, with the 10-year yield climbing to around 4.16 per cent and the 30-year yield touching 5.14 per cent, reflecting increased market pressure. Analysts say higher yields reduce the value of existing bonds, prompting investors to offload holdings. Inflation worries have further intensified concerns, with expectations that central banks, including the U.S. Federal Reserve, may delay interest rate cuts. This has eroded the real returns on long-term fixed-income investments. At the same time, heavy government borrowing and rising fiscal deficits have led to a surge in bond supply, weakening demand for existing securities and adding to downward pressure on prices. Investors are also shifting capital towards equities and alternative assets in search of higher returns, despite increased risk. The stronger U.S. dollar, supported by higher yields, is also impacting emerging markets by triggering potential capital outflows. Overall, analysts say global bond markets are undergoing one of their most challenging phases in decades, with safe-haven debt instruments increasingly turning into loss-making assets for investors. Experts caution that if the trend of rising yields and capital outflows continues, it could tighten global liquidity conditions further, increase borrowing costs for governments and companies, and heighten volatility across both developed and emerging financial markets. Market observers also note that prolonged weakness in bond markets could force central banks to recalibrate their monetary policies, as sustained high yields may slow economic growth and complicate efforts to achieve inflation stability without triggering a broader financial slowdown.

SPORTS

## India Squad: 9 Big Names Dropped

► **Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi**

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has announced a 14-member squad for the upcoming series against Afghanistan starting June 6, with several key players missing from the lineup.

Shubman Gill will lead the side, while KL Rahul (Test) and Shreyas Iyer (ODI) have been named vice-captains for their respective formats.

Among the notable omissions are Axar Patel, Rishabh Pant (ODI), Varun Chakravarty, Sanju Samson, Mohammed Shami, Harshit Rana, Akash Deep, Ravindra Jadeja (rested), and Jasprit Bumrah (rested for workload management). Selectors said some players were rested while others were left out due to form and team combination.

Chief selector Ajit Agarkar confirmed that Jadeja and Bumrah have been given rest as part of workload management, with both expected to return in upcoming series, including the England tour.

Rishabh Pant continues to feature in the Test squad but has been excluded from the ODI side due to form concerns, with Ishan Kishan included as a wicketkeeping option.

The selection also saw the inclusion of young talents such as Prince Yadav, Gurjapneet Singh, Harsh Dubey, and Manav Suthar, indicating a focus on bench strength and future planning.

The ODI squad includes Shubman Gill, Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer (vice-captain), Ishan Kishan, Hardik Pandya, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Arshdeep Singh, Prasidh Krishna, Prince Yadav, Gurjapneet Singh, and Harsh Dubey.

The Test squad features Shubman Gill (captain), Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul (vice-captain), Sai Sudharsan, Rishabh Pant, Devdutt Padikkal, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohammed Siraj, Prasidh Krishna, Manav Suthar, Gurjapneet Singh, and Dhruv Jurel.

## India Announce ODI & Test Squads

► **Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi**

India have announced their ODI and Test squads for the upcoming series against Afghanistan, which includes a three-match ODI series and a one-off Test match starting June 6. Shubman Gill will continue to lead the side in both formats, while KL Rahul has been named vice-captain for the Test team and Shreyas Iyer will serve as vice-captain for the ODI squad.

The selections also saw the inclusion of several new faces. In Tests, Manav Suthar and Gurjapneet Singh have earned maiden call-ups, while the ODI squad features debutants Prince Yadav, Gurjapneet Singh, and Harsh Dubey.

The ODI squad includes Shubman Gill, Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer (vice-captain), Ishan Kishan, Hardik Pandya, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Arshdeep Singh, Prasidh Krishna, Prince Yadav, Gurjapneet Singh, and Harsh Dubey.

The Test squad comprises Shubman Gill (captain), Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul (vice-captain), Sai Sudharsan, Rishabh Pant, Devdutt Padikkal, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohammed Siraj, Prasidh Krishna, Manav Suthar, Gurjapneet Singh, and Dhruv Jurel.

## MODI PUSHES GREEN TECH TIES WITH NORDIC LEADERS

► **Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a series of high-level bilateral meetings with leaders from Nordic countries on the sidelines of the 3rd India-Nordic Summit in Oslo, focusing on green growth, emerging technologies, and economic cooperation.

During his meeting with Iceland Prime Minister Kristrún Frostadóttir, Modi emphasised strengthening ties in clean energy, fisheries, geothermal energy, and the Blue Economy. He highlighted the potential of the India-EFTA Trade and



Economic Partnership Agreement to boost bilateral trade and investment.

In talks with Denmark Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, the leaders reviewed progress under

the India-Denmark Green Strategic Partnership and discussed cooperation in water management, clean energy, shipping, and food processing, along with future collaboration

in fintech, defence, and innovation.

Modi also met Finland Prime Minister Petteri Orpo, with discussions focusing on advanced technologies such as 6G, artificial intelligence, nuclear energy, and education, as well as climate action and sustainable development.

The meetings underscored India's growing engagement with the Nordic region in areas such as renewable energy, digital innovation, and sustainable industrial growth, while also strengthening broader economic ties with Europe.

## Fuel Prices Rise Again by 90 Paise

► **Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi**

Petrol and diesel prices were hiked again on Tuesday, with rates increasing by around 90 paise per litre across the country, marking the second revision within a week amid rising global crude oil prices.

With the latest increase, petrol in Delhi rose to ₹98.64 per litre from ₹97.77, while diesel climbed to ₹91.58 from ₹90.67. Similar hikes were recorded in major metros including Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai.

This comes just four days after oil marketing companies had raised fuel prices by ₹3 per litre on May 15—the first major hike in nearly four years. Following that revision, petrol prices in Delhi had jumped from ₹94.77 to ₹97.77, while diesel increased from ₹87.67 to ₹90.67 per litre.

The earlier hike was attributed



to a sharp surge in international crude oil prices due to geopolitical tensions in West Asia and disruptions in global supply routes. Despite the increase, state-run oil companies are reportedly still facing losses due to the gap between global crude prices and domestic retail rates.

India, which relies heavily on crude oil imports, continues to feel the impact of global market fluctuations. The back-to-back fuel price hikes are expected to put additional pressure on household budgets and drive up transportation and logistics costs, raising concerns over inflation.

## ₹238 Cr Rail Safety Boost for Jammu-Katra Line

► **Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi**

Indian Railways has approved a major infrastructure project worth ₹238 crore for slope stabilisation, tunnel rehabilitation, and bridge protection works on the Jammu-Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra rail section under Northern Railway.

The sanctioned works include slope stabilisation, treatment of tunnel seepage, bridge protection, and other safety measures at vulnerable points along the route, which passes through challenging mountainous terrain.

Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the project reflects the government's commitment to ensuring safe and reliable connectivity in difficult geographical conditions.

He noted that the decision followed a detailed assessment of

tunnels, bridges, and cuttings along the section.

The Jammu-Katra rail line has historically faced engineering challenges due to adverse geology, extreme weather, and difficult terrain.

Despite this, operations have been maintained through continuous upgrades and resilient engineering efforts.

Officials stated that the newly approved works will significantly enhance the durability and safety of the infrastructure, ensuring smoother and more dependable rail services for passengers.

The route serves as a crucial link to the revered Vaishno Devi shrine and plays a vital role in regional connectivity and passenger movement in Jammu and Kashmir.

## Parameshwara Defers CM Change Call to High Command

► **Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru**

Karnataka Home Minister G. Parameshwara on Tuesday said that any decision regarding a possible change in the Chief Minister's post will be taken solely by the Congress high command, amid renewed speculation over leadership changes within the ruling party.

His remarks came after senior Congress MLA K.N. Rajanna publicly expressed support for Parameshwara as a preferred choice for Chief Minister if a leadership change takes place in Karnataka.

Responding to the comments, Parameshwara

said, "Thank you Rajanna, he is my classmate. He speaks on my behalf. But you all know very well what the matter is. Everything will be decided by the high command."

Earlier, speaking in Tumakuru, Rajanna said he would back Parameshwara if the party leadership decides to replace Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. He added that while he continues to support Siddaramaiah, he would prefer Parameshwara if a change is made. Rajanna also noted that Parameshwara, a former Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee

president, could have become Chief Minister in 2013 had he won the Assembly election at that time. He further said that political power does not belong to any individual and reiterated that the final decision rests with the Congress central leadership.

The statements have reignited discussions within the Karnataka Congress over leadership dynamics and possible power-sharing arrangements as the Siddaramaiah-led government approaches its third year in office.



## INDIA-VIETNAM BOOST DEFENCE PARTNERSHIP

► **Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi**

India and Vietnam further strengthened their Comprehensive Strategic Partnership during Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's visit to Hanoi, where he held bilateral talks with Vietnam's Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister General Phan Van Giang.

Both sides reviewed ongoing defence cooperation and agreed to expand collaboration in maritime security, defence industry, military training,



capacity building, and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and quantum technology.

During the visit, the two countries virtually inaugurated a

language lab at Vietnam's Air Force Officers' College and signed an MoU on cooperation in AI and quantum technology. India also announced the establishment of an AI lab at the Telecommunications University in Nha Trang.

The leaders reaffirmed their commitment to peace, stability, and freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific region, a key strategic area for both nations.

Defence ties between India and Vietnam, elevated to a

Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2016, have steadily expanded through training exchanges, naval cooperation, joint exercises, and defence industry collaboration.

Officials noted that discussions on advanced defence systems, including the potential supply of BrahMos missiles, reflect growing strategic convergence. The visit is seen as further reinforcing India's Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific vision.

## WB Rolls Out Cost-Cutting Reforms

► **Vikrama Vahini | Kolkata**

The West Bengal government has rolled out a series of stringent measures aimed at improving administrative efficiency and reducing unnecessary expenditure across departments.

In an urgent directive, the Chief Secretary's office instructed all government departments and district administrations to prepare detailed action plans for the 2026-27 financial year, focusing on cost control and governance reforms.

The move follows Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari's emphasis on fuel conservation, digital governance, and efficient resource utilisation.

**Focus on Digital Governance and Cost Reduction**

Departments have been asked to prioritise virtual meetings through video conferencing instead of physical gatherings, while also exploring work-from-home options where feasible. The directive also calls for reducing official travel and promoting the use of public transport, carpooling, and electric vehicles.

**Energy Conservation Measures**

Government offices have been directed to minimise electricity consumption by avoiding unnecessary use of lights and appliances and adopting energy-efficient systems.

**Push for Paperless Offices**

In a major push towards digitalisation, the government has accelerated the implementation

of e-office systems. Departments have been instructed to increase digital file movement and reduce paper usage and related costs.

**Promoting Indigenous Products**

The directive emphasises giving preference to locally manufactured and indigenous products in government procurement to support local industries and supply chains.

**Sustainable Practices Encouraged**

Departments have also been asked to improve waste management, promote recycling, and ensure efficient utilisation of natural resources. Awareness campaigns on sustainable lifestyles and the use of eco-friendly and locally produced agricultural products have also been recommended.

**Strict Timeline for Implementation**

All departments and district administrations have been directed to submit their action plans by May 22, 2026. Monthly progress reports will be required from July 1 onwards.

Senior officials, including Additional Chief Secretaries, Principal Secretaries, and District Magistrates, have been instructed to ensure strict compliance with the new guidelines.

Officials said the measures aim to enhance transparency, improve efficiency, and reduce pressure on the state exchequer by eliminating wasteful expenditure.



Inaugural celebrations of the 54-day Vishnusahasranama chanting programme were held at Vinayaka Venkateshwara Temple, Health Layout, Nagarabharvi on May 18. Aralumalige Guruji, founder of the Global Vishnusahasranama Movement, was honoured by the temple and the Sharada Sheshappa team. Caption Mani, Mangala Bhaskar, Bhanuprakash, Prasad and Rajalakshmi Parthasarathy participated. Hundreds of devotees took part in the chanting with devotion as the programme continues for 54 days.

## Railways Clears ₹1,950 Cr Infra Boost

► **Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi**

Indian Railways has approved two major infrastructure projects worth over ₹1,950 crore to enhance network capacity and improve passenger and freight movement in Bihar and Tamil Nadu.

The projects include the 54-km Kiul-Jhajha third line in Bihar, sanctioned at ₹62 crore, and the 68-km Arakkonam-Chengalpattu doubling project in Tamil Nadu, approved at ₹993 crore.

Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the Kiul-Jhajha project will strengthen the heavily used Howrah-Delhi corridor by reducing congestion and improving punctuality and operational flexibility. The additional line is expected to facilitate smoother movement of trains and support industrial growth and trade connectivity in the region.

The corridor is a key link connecting major hubs, including Kolkata and Haldia ports and the Raxaul-Nepal route, handling significant freight traffic from industrial units. In Tamil Nadu, the Arakkonam-Chengalpattu doubling project under Southern Railway aims to ease congestion on the busy Chennai suburban network. The project is expected



to improve service frequency, reduce delays, and enhance operational efficiency.

The route serves major industrial clusters such as Sriperumbudur, Oragadam, and Mahindra World City, along with key manufacturing sectors including automobiles, cement, and steel. It also gains strategic importance due to its proximity to the proposed Parandur airport project. Officials said both projects will play a crucial role in strengthening rail infrastructure, supporting economic activity, and ensuring more reliable train services across key corridors.

The Ministry of Railways said the projects are part of a broader push to modernise India's rail network through capacity augmentation, with a focus on improving logistics efficiency, reducing travel time, and meeting the rising demand for both passenger and freight services across high-density corridors.