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CIC U-TURN: BCCI NOT A PUBLIC AUTHORITY UNDER RTI ACT

Central Information Commission says body not liable to answer queries under transparency law as it isn't public authority under the RTI Act

NO GOVERNMENT CONTROL: COMMISSION

The CIC, whose 2018 order was appealed, said BCCI is independent. "There exists no control of the government over the functions, finance, administration, management and affairs of BCCI," it said. While the BCCI does select national teams and organise tournaments, the Commission held that cannot be grounds for giving it public authority character

SYSTEMS OF OTHER CRICKET BOARDS

- Most other frontline cricket boards are categorised as autonomous boards who don't take government funding. But many voluntarily disclose information. Almost all international cricket boards are private bodies for the purpose of legalese
- The original RTI application was from a citizen in 2017

2018

WAS WHEN CIC SAID BCCI IS A PUBLIC AUTHORITY. BCCI WENT ON APPEAL

Team Satheesan takes charge

Announces free travel for women in state-run buses from June 15, dedicated govt department for senior citizens

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ T Puram

AMID thunderous cheers from a teeming crowd and in the presence of a galaxy of VIPs, V D Satheesan was sworn in as Kerala's 13th chief minister along with 20 cabinet colleagues at a glittering ceremony at Central Stadium, Thiruvananthapuram on Monday.

True to his word, Satheesan wasted no time in rolling out two major poll promises: free travel for women on KSRTC buses from June 15 and the launch of India's first dedicated government department for senior citizens. In a major relief for striking ASHA workers, he also announced a ₹3,000 hike in their honorarium.

Addressing a packed press conference after his cabinet's first meeting, a composed Satheesan said he was fully aware of the enormity of the task ahead and made it clear his administration would break from rigid precedents.

Satheesan said the new elderly welfare department would, within two months, prepare a comprehensive road map inspired by global models such as

White paper on state's financial health

The new government would publish a white paper to give people a clear picture of the state's financial health. The administration will also chart its next course after receiving a detailed report on the economic impact of the fuel price hike

SIT to probe police action against Cong workers

Satheesan also announced the formation of an SIT to probe the alleged police excesses against Congress workers during the Nava Kerala Sadas in 2023. Declaring, "We will not forget anything," he insisted the move was not driven by political vendetta

Japan's to ensure senior citizens can live with dignity. The CM said the government's goal was to build a system that would make Kerala stand out as a truly civilised society.

Signalling immediate relief for grassroots health and welfare workers, the cabinet approved a first-phase ₹3,000 hike in the honorarium of ASHA workers, raising their monthly



Kerala Chief Minister V D Satheesan flanked by Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress leaders KC Venugopal, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi, and ministers Sunny Joseph and Ramesh Chennithala after the swearing-in ceremony | B P DEEPU

pay from ₹9,000 to ₹12,000. The government also announced a ₹1,000 salary hike for anganwadi workers, helpers, cooks, and pre-primary teachers.

Earlier, Governor Rajendra Arlekar administered the oath of office and secrecy to Satheesan and his cabinet colleagues at a ceremony that lasted over an hour.

In accordance with a recent

Union home ministry directive, the programme began and ended with the recital of the full version of the national song 'Vande Mataram' followed by the national anthem.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy

CM D K Shivakumar, Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, Leader of the Opposition-designate Pinarayi Vijayan, AICC leaders K C Venugopal and Deepa Dasmuni, CPI state secretary Binoy Viswam, and BJP state president and MLA Rajeev Chandrasekhar were also present.

India will continue to buy Russian oil: Govt

RAKESH KUMAR @ New Delhi

AMID uncertainty over the status of the US sanctions waiver on Russian crude imports, India on Monday said it will continue to buy Russian oil.

"Enough crude has been tied up... waiver or no waiver, it will not affect," Sujata Sharma, joint secretary in the petroleum ministry, told reporters during a media briefing.

The clarification came after the temporary US sanctions waiver expired on May 16. She said India had been sourcing crude from Russia even before the sanctions and would continue to do so depending on commercial viability. "These are commercial decisions taken by oil marketing companies based on national requirements and economic considerations."

The US first announced the waiver for a month in March and later extended it till May 16 amid concerns over global oil supply disruptions due to the

Iran-US/Israel war.

India, which imports 88% of its crude oil requirement from over 40 countries, has sharply raised purchases of discounted Russian crude since the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine War in February 2022.

Despite criticism from the US and Western nations, India has maintained that crude purchases are based on affordability and national energy security needs.

Notably, the joint secretary's comments came on a day when reports said Pakistan has deployed over 8,000 troops, a full squadron of JF-17 fighter jets, and an air defence system to Saudi Arabia under a mutual defence pact signed last year, which requires both countries to come to each other's defence if either country comes under attack.

Riyadh has been facing the brunt of the Iran-US war with Tehran targeting the kingdom's infrastructure assets as retaliation to attacks by the US.

S GURU SRIKANTH @ Vijayawada

CHIEF Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has directed irrigation officials to strictly adhere to the Irrigation Calendar, ensuring that construction, foundation works, and commissioning of projects are completed on schedule.

Reviewing irrigation projects at the Secretariat, he emphasised that beyond the 25 projects already announced, 11 additional priority schemes must also be integrated into the calendar.

He instructed the Finance Department to ensure uninterrupted funding for land acquisition and civil works, stressing that irrigation progress is central to agricultural stability and water security.

Regarding the Polavaram Project, Officials reported that civil works are 88% complete, land acquisition has reached 93%, and R&R is 45% complete.

The diaphragm wall was finished in April 2026, while Earth-



CM Nara Chandrababu Naidu addressing a review meeting on Polavaram and other irrigation projects, at the Secretariat in Velagapudi on Monday | EXPRESS



Show urgency in completing Veligonda Phase - 1 by July 2026, requiring ₹2,019 crore for head works, canals, distributaries, R&R, and land acquisition

N Chandrababu Naidu, Chief Minister

cum-Rock Fill Dam Gap-1 and Gap-2 are scheduled for completion by March 2027. Twin tunnels linking the right canal are 85% complete, and works on the left canal approach channel, head regulator, and irrigation tunnel are ongoing.

The Chief Minister insisted on monthly reviews, directing water release from Purushottapatnam Lift to the left canal by July 2026. He also ordered a feasibility study for the Meghadri-

gadda-Champavathi link, and instructed that R&R be completed by April 2027. Plans for an iconic bridge downstream of the spillway were announced to position Polavaram as a tourism landmark.

The Chief Minister underscored urgency in completing Veligonda Phase - 1 by July 2026, requiring ₹2,019 crore for head works, canals, distributaries, R&R, and land acquisition. P4

EXPRESS READ

PHCs show sharp improvement in AP

Vijayawada: PHCs in AP have shown marked improvement, with 'A' category centres rising from 107 in October 2025 to 312 in March 2026. 'B' category PHCs increased from 354 to 455. Director of Public Health Dr Padmavati informed Health Minister Y Satya Kumar Yadav that 306 PHCs improved performance, while lower-category centres declined | P3

CM to disburse ₹262 cr aid to fishermen today

Vijayawada: The stage is set for the disbursement of financial aid to fishermen under the "Matsyakaarula Sevalo" scheme for the second consecutive year. CM N Chandrababu Naidu will release ₹262 crore to 1,30,796 families at a programme in Tummalapenta in Nellore district on Tuesday | P4

SIXTH ARREST

CBI arrests Latur coaching centre founder in NEET-UG leak case

SUDHIR SURYAWANSHI @ Mumbai

THE CBI has arrested the founder of a coaching centre based in Maharashtra's Latur over his alleged involvement in the NEET-UG paper leak, officials said on Monday.

Shivraj Raghunath Motegaonkar, who runs Renukai Chemistry Classes (RCC), was arrested on Sunday evening after CBI recovered a leaked question paper of the examination held on May 3 from his mobile phone during searches at his premises, officials said. Motegaonkar was allegedly an "active member of the organised gang" involved in the leakage and circulation of NEET UG 2026 exam.

Retired chemistry professor

Maharashtra is focal point of NEET probe

Motegaonkar's arrest is the sixth in Maharashtra in the NEET UG paper leak case. Earlier, the CBI had arrested PV Kulkarni, Manisha Mandhare, Subham Kharinar, Dhananjay Lokhande, and Manisha Waghmare for their complicity in the case

PV Kulkarni, who was earlier arrested by the CBI for leaking the NEET exam paper, is suspected of having provided the paper to Motegaonkar. Kulkarni was part of the NEET exam paper selection committee.

Motegaonkar's coaching centre has nine branches, includ-

ing the main branch in Latur. As part of a conspiracy with other accused, Motegaonkar received the question paper and answers on April 23, nearly 10 days before the examination was held across the country and abroad, the CBI said.

The CBI said Motegaonkar provided copies of the leaked question papers and answer sheets to several people in the form of handwritten notes that were destroyed after the examination, for huge sums ranging between ₹5-10 lakh.

Motegaonkar's son was in Class 12 and a NEET aspirant. For his son's benefit, Motegaonkar tried to help him.

The court has granted nine days' custody of Motegaonkar to the CBI.

₹10,000 BOUNTY ON HUSBAND OF DEAD ACTOR TWISHA

With a Bhopal court rejecting the anticipatory bail plea of lawyer Samarth Singh following the suspicious death of his wife and actor Twisha Sharma, the police announced a ₹10,000 bounty for any information leading to his arrest. Samarth is the son of retired judge Giribala Singh, who managed to get advance bail | P8

Cyber cops arrest man for ₹5.28 crore bank loan fraud with mule accounts

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Vijayawada

VIJAYAWADA cybercrime police arrested a man for allegedly cheating banks by obtaining loans worth ₹5.28 crore through fake and mule accounts and defaulted loan repayment on Monday.

From the accused, police seized 34 property documents worth about ₹7 crore, a car, a motorcycle, 122 grams of gold, 927 grams of silver, nine ATM cards, and ₹11,500 cash.

Addressing a press conference, Cybercrime DCP Krishna Prasanna said the accused Neelam Pawan Kumar, a native of Guduru village in Krishna district, residing in Vijayawada and had opened 26 savings bank accounts in various Axis Bank branches in Vijayawada since



2019. Using these accounts, the accused allegedly availed loans and credit card facilities from the bank and later defaulted on repayments before absconding.

Following a complaint, a case was registered under Sections 340(2) and 318(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and Section 66-D of the Information Technology Act, 2000-2008. P4



