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Double Olympic medallist Manu Bhaker pays tribute to her coach Jaspal Rana at his residence in Dehradun. Rana breathed his last in Delhi on Friday | P11



INDIAN SHOOTING'S FATHER FIGURE JASPAL RANA PASSES AWAY

One of the shooters responsible for putting India on the global map in the sport, died following cardiac complications after a heart attack

CHAMP SHOOTER, COACH: MAN OF MANY HATS

From Uttarakhand, he burst into the limelight as a teen at the Asian Games in 1994. His rich medal hauls inspired his peers to achieve similar feats. Then, he donned the role of coach-cum-mentor to ready India's next generation of shooters. Manu Bhaker, who won two Olympic medals in 2024, was a protege of Rana's. He also oversaw India's junior programme

HE HELPED SHAPE INDIAN SHOOTING: BINDRA

- Abhinav Bindra, who was a former teammate of Rana's, said he was part of a generation that helped shape Indian shooting. He was gifted, and carried the pride of the country
- A teenager (Rana after his 1994 Asiad gold) had shown the whole country that an Indian could rule this sport: Gagan Narang | P11

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HE WON 13 GOLD ACROSS ASIAN (4) AND COMMONWEALTH GAMES (9)

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURGI



Retail inflation at 16-month high, touches 3.93% in May

PUSHPITA DEVY @ New Delhi

RETAIL inflation rose to a 16-month high of 3.93% in May, primarily due to the increase in fuel prices and cost of services such as restaurants and accommodation, data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) on Friday showed. Despite the uptick, inflation remained well within the Reserve Bank of India's target of 4%.

According to MoSPI, the rise in headline inflation was driven by higher prices in food and beverages, personal care, social protection, restaurants and accommodation services, as well as tobacco and intoxicants.

While rural inflation rose to 4.25% in May from 3.85% in April, urban inflation increased to 3.53%. Food inflation, measured by the All India Consumer Food Price Index, touched 4.78%.

Soumya Kanti Ghosh, group chief economic advisor at State Bank of India, attributed the increase to higher fuel prices and supply-side disruptions. "The impact of increased petrol and diesel prices was clearly visible, with transport inflation rising by 176 basis points to 1.8% in May, while a slight LPG shortage pushed inflation in restaurants and accommodation services up by 154 basis points to 5.7% from 4.2% in April." He said the impact of exchange-rate fluctuations and external shocks, such as supply-chain disruptions, is now beginning to reflect in India's CPI.

Debopam Chaudhuri, chief economist at Piramal Finance, said indications are that retail inflation could move above 5% in June.



US diplomat rapped again over killing of 3 seafarers

India shares concern over use of deadly force against civilian ships

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

INDIA on Friday escalated its diplomatic response to a series of attacks on commercial vessels off the coast of Oman by summoning United States Chargé d'Affaires Jason Meeks for the second time in two days and lodging a strong protest over incidents that have now claimed lives of three Indian seafarers.

The strong protest with the US was launched a day after all three Indian crew members who had been reported missing following the attack on the Palau-flagged tanker MT Settebello were confirmed dead.

"The Ministry once again conveyed its deep concern over the use of lethal and deadly force against civilian shipping. Such actions are unacceptable and undermine the safety, security and stability of international maritime commerce in a sensitive region at a difficult time," the MEA said.

It added that the Chargé d'Affaires had been requested to convey India's concerns to Washington and ensure that US forces operating in the region take all necessary measures to prevent further loss of civilian life.

The diplomatic protest follows a series of attacks on merchant vessels linked to the escalating US-Iran confrontation in the Gulf region. The most serious incident involved MT Set-



Jason Meeks, US Chargé d'Affaires | x

Sharif: Both sides OK with peace deal text

"Peace has never been this close," said Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif, adding that the text of the 'final' US-Iran peace deal has been agreed upon by all parties. This preceded Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi saying the MoU has "never been closer" | P9

tebello, a tanker carrying 24 Indian crew members that was struck earlier this week off the coast of Oman. While 21 crew members were rescued during a search-and-rescue operation involving Indian and Omani authorities, three sailors were later found dead.

India had already summoned the US Chargé d'Affaires on Wednesday following the attack on MT Settebello, but the second summoning marked a further hardening of New Delhi's position after confirmation of the fatalities.

The deaths came amid a troubling pattern of attacks on merchant shipping in the region. On June 8, MT Marivex, carrying 24 Indian nationals, was struck by US forces after allegedly attempting to proceed towards an Iranian port despite a naval blockade. All crew members were rescued by Omani authorities. A day later, MT Settebello came under attack, where three Indian sailors died. On Thursday, another vessel, MT Jalveer, came under attack off the Omani coast, with reports suggesting 20 Indian crew members were on board.

OVER 3,200 JOBS

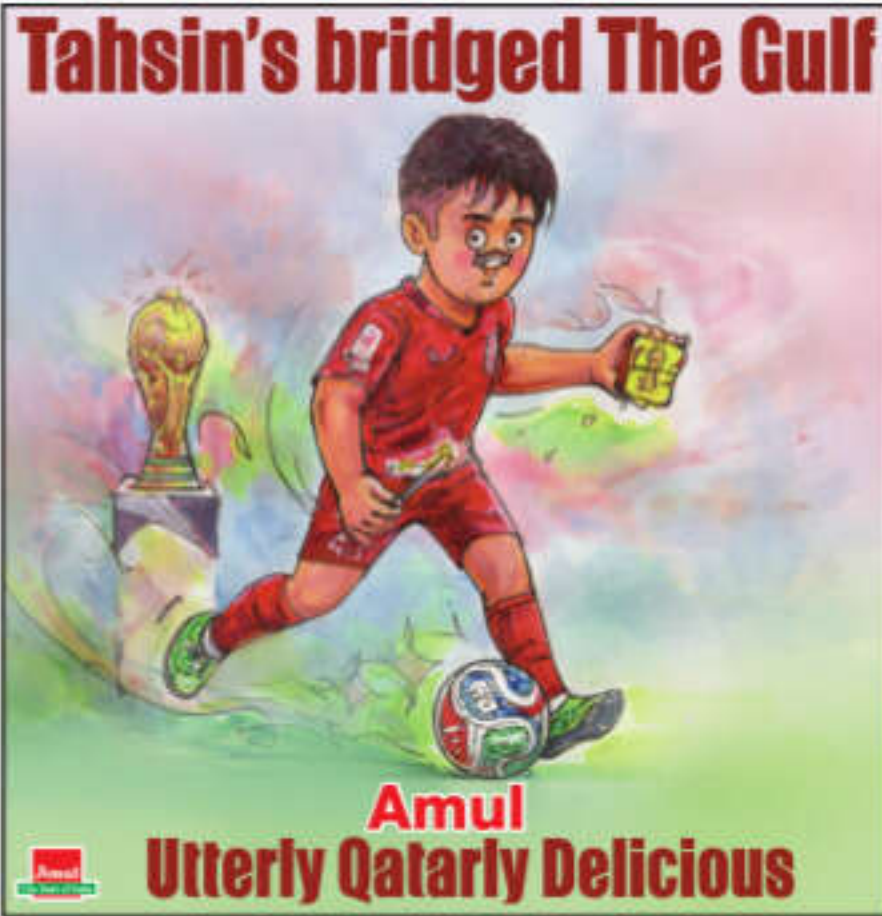
₹2,245-cr defence cluster to come up in Udayagiri

SURENDRA KUMAR DEVARAPATI @ Nellore

FIVE defence and aerospace companies are set to establish manufacturing facilities across 2,500 acres in Duttalur mandal of Udayagiri Assembly constituency, bringing investments worth ₹2,245 crore and generating over 3,200 jobs in one of Nellore district's most backward upland regions.

The State government has fast-tracked the ammunition and missile manufacturing corridor under GO 68, positioning the drought-prone constituency as a strategic node in India's defence production network.

Hyderabad-based Premier Explosives Limited (PEL), a supplier of solid propellants for India's Akash and Astra missile programmes, will anchor the cluster with a ₹500-crore integrated explosives facility spread across 450 acres. The phased project will begin with medium-calibre ammunition and pyrotechnic devices before progressing to bomb-filling operations, rocket motor assembly and eventually a 'TNT' manufacturing unit, creating around 2,050 jobs. P4



EXPRESS READ

Mega DSC: Lokesh demands Jagan's apology

Vijayawada: HRD Minister Nara Lokesh launched a sharp attack on YSRCP chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, demanding an unconditional apology to the youth of AP after what he described as the complete collapse of the opposition's allegations surrounding the DSC recruitment process. He asserted that the DSC recruitment process now stands fully vindicated and that the government remains focused on creating opportunities for thousands of aspiring teachers | P4

As ban ends, fishermen await a fresh start

Vijayawada: With the annual 61-day fishing ban set to end on June 15, a sense of anticipation is sweeping through Andhra Pradesh's coastal villages, where fishermen are busy preparing their boats and nets and invoking divine blessings ahead of the new season. During the ban period, the State government extended a financial assistance of ₹261.5 crore to 1.30 lakh fishermen families under the Matsyakara Sevala scheme | P4

Longer wait for final AI-171 crash report

S LALITHA @ New Delhi

EXACTLY a year after Air India flight 171 crashed during takeoff at Ahmedabad, killing 260 passengers and crew, there was no closure for the family members of the victims as the much-awaited final probe report remained elusive.

Instead, the Aircraft Accident Investigations Bureau put out an interim statement, saying "The Final Report will be released upon completion of all investigative activities and the requisite international review and consultation processes prescribed under ICAO (International Civil Aviation

Significant progress in probe, claims AAIB

AAIB's interim statement claimed significant progress in the examination and analysis of AI-171's systems, flight recorder data, engine-related components, maintenance and operational records, and other relevant evidence. "The evidence gathered and the results of various examinations are currently being analysed"

Organisation) Annex 13."

The final report will take two-three more months for wrap-up, said a source familiar with the developments. Asked about ICAO's recommendation on the final probe report into any major accident within 12 months of the incident, the source said, "It only encourages the submission of

the report. It is not binding on us. Interim reports also can be submitted or statement on the progress too can be furnished, which is what we have done."

When asked what part of the report was pending, the source said since there was massive condemnation after the preliminary report was released on July 12, 2025, which attrib-

uted the accident to human error, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) had decided to carry out an inspection of the Boeing's Fuel Control Switch (FCS) in the US to be doubly sure as multiple reports and experts repeatedly spoke of its malfunctioning. AI-171's fuel switch moved to OFF shortly after take-off, resulting in the crash.

Another Air India Boeing flight AIC 132 was grounded on Feb 2, 2026, after pilots reported that the FCS slipped from RUN to CUT OFF when pushed slightly as it did not lock securely. "The DGCA visit will happen soon," he added.

NEET-UG re-test preps reviewed

PARVEZ SULTAN & S LALITHA @ New Delhi

FOUR weeks after the NEET-UG paper leak scandal forced its cancellation, the government on Friday signalled it was leaving nothing to chance, with the Cabinet Secretary chairing yet another review and the NTA quietly rolling out a series of candidate-friendly changes for the June 21 NEET re-examination.

Cabinet Secretary T V Somanathan, who has now held three rounds of preparatory meetings since June 1, reviewed examination readiness

with NTA Director General Abhishek Singh and warned that wrongdoers would face the full force of law. "The full might and weight of law will fall on any person trying in any manner to distort, disrupt, or tamper with the integrity...of the re-examination," he said.

Central and state governments, district administrations and central armed forces are all being co-opted for the exercise, a note from the government said.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has specifically asked the

CRPF and CISF to guard question paper consignments in transit.

For its part, the NTA has made quiet but meaningful changes to the exam format. Rough sheets per booklet have been doubled from two to four; with the additional sheets now split between the front and back portion of the booklet.

Based on feedback from students, the exam will run 15 minutes longer, from 2 pm to 5.15 pm, with PwDs getting 4 hours and 20 minutes in total.



'It's govt's duty to provide public toilets to citizens'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Vijayawada

THE Andhra Pradesh High Court has made it clear that it is a constitutional responsibility of a government to provide public toilets for the convenience of citizens, and the reign which fails to provide such basic amenities cannot claim to be a welfare state.

The court observed that the right to a clean and healthy life forms an integral part of the right to life, and emphasised that governments are duty-



bound not only to construct adequate public toilets but also to ensure their proper upkeep.

Justice Gannamaneni Ramakrishna Prasad delivered the ruling while dismissing a petition filed by K Chinnaswamy Setty and two others seeking to

halt the construction of public toilets on the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) land near Madilapalem Bus Depot in Vizag.

Accepting the arguments of the GVMC, the court held that the toilets are being built solely for public convenience. The High Court noted that the availability of public toilets helps safeguard the privacy and dignity of women and transgender and alleviates their safety concerns. However, it stressed that mere construction of toilets is not enough, and that the

GVMC authorities have a responsibility to maintain them in a hygienic manner.

The court made it clear that both the GVMC and Lotus International would be responsible for maintaining the toilets being constructed near the bus depot, and residents are free to bring any lapses in upkeep to the notice of the authorities.

Rejecting the plea to stop the construction of toilets, the court said ensuring public sanitation facilities is crucial to protecting citizens' health, dignity and right to life.



CM Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan take part in the NDA victory celebrations in Tirupati on Friday | EXPRESS

Are you ready for an open debate on poll promises? Naidu asks YSRCP

NETHAJI KUMARAMANGALAM @ irupati

CHIEF Minister and TDP supreme N Chandrababu Naidu on Friday challenged the YSRCP to an open public debate on the implementation of election promises, asserting that the NDA government has fulfilled its commitments while the previous regime failed to deliver on several key assurances.

Addressing the "Two Years of Trust, Development and Welfare" victory celebrations of NDA in Tirupati, Naidu said not only he but also TDP cadre was prepared for the debate with YSRCP leaders on the implementation of poll promises made in the YSRCP's 2019 manifesto

and the NDA's 2024 manifesto. "Are you ready for an open discussion anytime and anywhere?" Naidu asked, taking a swipe at the YSRCP, which he repeatedly called the "axe party." Launching a sharp attack on the previous YSRCP regime, Naidu accused it of hurting the sentiments of millions of devotees through the alleged adulteration of Tirumala Laddu Prasadam. He alleged that the previous rulers disrespected Lord Venkateswara and compromised the sanctity of Tirumala.

The Chief Minister reiterated that the NDA comprising TDP, JSP and BJP, is committed to development, welfare and justice for all sections of society. P4

Focus on transparent governance

Reflecting on the NDA government's two-year rule, Naidu said he had neither become overconfident after electoral win nor discouraged by the State's financial challenges. The CM reiterated his commitment to transparent governance

