RNI Reg NO.TGENG/26/A3255

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FALAKNUMA NEWS
ENGLISH DAILY

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VOL: 1 | Issue No: 36 | FRIDAY, 19 JUNE 2026 | PUBLISHED FROM HYDERABAD | PAGES: 4 | RS.1/-

India's tech solutions delivering prosperity at grassroots level: PM Modi

New Delhi, June 18 (GNS) Paris: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said India's technology-driven solutions are creating prosperity at the grassroots level, highlighting how innovations in agriculture, fisheries, healthcare, and digital services are transforming lives across the country.

Addressing the VivaTech 2026 conference here, PM Modi said India is leveraging technology not only to drive innovation but also to ensure that its benefits reach ordinary citizens.

He stressed that technology must be democratised and made accessible to all if it is to deliver meaningful progress. "An AI application called Sarlaben speaks to millions of women dairy farmers in their own language, giving expert guidance on livestock health and management," PM Modi said. "Indian women are being trained as drone pilots for spraying fertiliser and crop monitoring. Satellite data is guiding hundreds of thousands of fishermen to the most promising fishing zones, helping them save fuel, reduce time and improve catch," he added. "Our technology solutions are delivering prosperity at the grassroots level."

PM Modi also highlighted the role of Indian startups in driving innovation across sectors. With more than 200,000 startups, India has emerged as one of the world's most vibrant startup ecosystems, he said. "From space technologies to nuclear energy, we are expanding the frontiers of human capability," he stressed. "India became the first country to land near the Moon's south pole. And recently, India's prototype fast breeder reactor achieved criticality. It has brought us closer to realising our three-stage nuclear energy vision, including the use of our vast thorium reserves," he added.

Emphasising India's vision for artificial intelligence, PM Modi said AI should improve lives, widen access and support sustainable growth. "AI must improve lives, widen access, drive growth and also help us sustain a healthy planet. Our participation as the AI Country Partner at VivaTech 2026 reflects this very vision. For India, AI means all-inclusive," the Prime Minister quipped.

India restores 21.76 mn hectares of degraded land

New Delhi, June 18 (GNS) India has restored 21.76 million hectares of degraded and deforested land, bringing the country close to achieving 84% of its Bonn Challenge restoration target, according to government data. The achievement highlights India's continued efforts to combat land degradation, improve forest landscapes, and strengthen environmental sustainability.

The Bonn Challenge is a global initiative aimed at restoring degraded and deforested landscapes worldwide. India joined the Bonn Challenge in 2015 and initially pledged to restore 21 million hectares of degraded land by 2030. The country later expanded its land restoration ambition to 26 million hectares by 2030 as part of its broader commitments to climate action and sustainable land management. Officials said the progress has been driven through afforestation, watershed development, agroforestry, and ecosystem restoration programmes implemented across various states.

Restoring degraded land helps improve biodiversity, enhance water security, support rural livelihoods, and strengthen resilience against climate change.

The achievement also reinforces India's commitment to international environmental goals and its efforts to address challenges posed by deforestation and land degradation.

Jagan Demands CBI Probe Into Vijayawada Custodial Death

Vijayawada, June 18 (GNS): Former Chief Minister and YSR Congress Party president Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Thursday demanded a CBI inquiry into the alleged custodial death of Gade Sai Krishna at Krishna Lanka Police Station and sought strict action against all those responsible.

He alleged that the case involved not only the suspended Circle Inspector but also senior police officials, including the Vijayawada Police Commissioner and the State DGP. YS Jagan visited Sai Krishna's residence in Krishna Lanka and consoled his mother, Gade Vijayalakshmi, and other family members.

Speaking to the media later, the YSRCP chief said the incident had exposed the alarming state of law and order in Andhra Pradesh. Sai Krishna was taken into police custody on May 9, following which his mother repeatedly visited the police station seeking information about her son. YS Jagan said that instead of helping her, police officials allegedly mocked her and asked her to garland her son's photograph. Despite written complaints being submitted to senior police officials, no action was taken.

The former Chief Minister also criticised attempts to portray Sai Krishna as a mafia don or rowdy after his death. Referring to concerns raised by his relatives, he said Sai Krishna was working as a gig worker to earn a livelihood and questioned why a person allegedly involved in serious criminal activities would need to do such work.

YS Jagan said the family approached the High Court by filing a Habeas Corpus petition after suspecting foul play. Only after legal intervention and public pressure did the authorities acknowledge the custodial death and suspend the Krishna Lanka CI, he said. He added that suspension alone was not enough and demanded murder charges against all those involved.

Indian Women Peacekeepers Inspire Hope In Conflict Zones: UN

United Nations, June 18 (GNS) Women peacekeepers give hope to vulnerable women in conflict situations, serving as symbols of female empowerment, and the more than 160 women in UN missions exemplify this role, according to India's Permanent Representative to UN P. Harish. Indian Army Major Abhilasha Barak, who was awarded the UN Peacekeeper's Gender Advocate Award this month, and the two other Indian women awardees before her, are outstanding examples of this role, P. Harish told the Security Council on Wednesday.

The "deployment of uniformed women in UN peacekeeping operations represents one of the most tangible and impactful dimensions of the Women, Peace and Security agenda", the India's envoy to UN said during a debate on "Women Peace and Security" focusing on enhancing their participation as they emerge from conflicts.

"India was the first to deploy an all-female Unit to the United Nations Mission in Liberia, inspiring 1000s of Liberian women to join their national police," he added.

"Today, more than 160 Indian women peacekeepers serve in the field in various UN Missions."

On the importance on deploying women in peacekeeping operations, P. Harish said, "They build trust in communities. They give hope to vulnerable populations, particularly women and children. They serve as visible symbols of women's agency in maintaining peace and security." "Most critically, they help address gender-based violence and ensure that peace processes reflect the needs and perspectives of all segments of society," he added.

Dharmendra Pradhan chairs high-level review meeting on NEET-UG 2026 Re-Exam preparedness

New Delhi, June 18 (GNS) Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan chaired a high-level review meeting with senior officials from the Ministry of Education, the National Testing Agency (NTA), state governments and higher education institutions to assess preparedness for the NEET-UG 2026 re-examination scheduled for June 21.

According to official inputs, the meeting focused on ensuring the smooth and fair conduct of the examination, with strict emphasis on transparency, security and coordination across all levels of administration.

The Minister directed all concerned authorities to remain fully vigilant and ensure that necessary arrangements are in place for a stress-free examination environment for candidates. Officials were also asked to strengthen coordination between central and state agencies to prevent any disruptions. Senior officials, including representatives from NTA and nodal officers from various states, participated in the discussions. The review also covered logistical preparedness, security arrangements at examination centres and real-time monitoring mechanisms.

Pradhan reiterated the government's commitment to maintaining the integrity and credibility of national-level entrance examinations, stressing that every candidate must be provided a fair and secure opportunity.

Karnataka Legislative Council Polls: Congress Secures Victory Of All 5 Candidates, BJP Wins 2, JD-S Loses

Bengaluru, June 18 (GNS): All five Congress candidates in the fray for the Karnataka Legislative Council emerged victorious, the BJP secured two seats, but its NDA partner, the JD-S, lost as per the much-awaited results announced on Thursday.

The development is seen as a boost for Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar and a setback for the BJP and JD-S. It is also a setback for JD-S leader and Union Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy, who took the election as a matter of prestige and challenged CM Shivakumar. The Congress managed to secure 11 additional votes, including support from three BJP MLAs and six JD-S MLAs who reportedly cross-voted in favour of the Congress candidates.

Addressing a press conference, Congress General Secretary and Karnataka in-charge Randeep Singh Surjewala said: "Today is a great day in the history of Karnataka. It is not only a victory for the five Congress candidates but also a victory for the people of Karnataka. A new chapter has been written in the state's political history."

He said that state Congress unit President B.K. Hariprasad, senior leader B.S. Shivanna, senior leader Tippannappa Kamakanur, AICC Secretary P.V. Mohan, and Congress treasurer Vinay Karthik had all emerged victorious in the first round of counting itself.

"According to our calculations, Congress had the support of 138 legislators — 135 Congress MLAs, one SKP member, and two Independents. However, our candidates ultimately received the support of 151 legislators, giving us more votes than expected." "On the contrary, the BJP, which had the support of 64 legislators, including two Independents, secured only 56 first-preference votes, while one BJP vote was declared invalid. The JD-S, which has 18 members, secured only 14 votes," he added. "I thank the people of Karnataka, Congress workers, Congress MLAs, and others who chose to support the Congress candidates," Surjewala said.

Senior BJP leader and Leader of the Opposition R. Ashoka said: "BJP candidates Lingaraj Patil and Raghu Kautilya have emerged victorious in the Council elections, and we congratulate them. Through the voting pattern, we have come to know that three of our votes have crossed over."

"We will identify those who voted for the opposition, and the party will take an appropriate decision. While the victory has brought us happiness, we will also rectify our mistakes," he added.

"Har Ghar Shuddh Jal" Documentary Stirred the Conscience of Society

Documentary on Water Crisis and Humanity Leaves Audience Deeply Moved at Red Bulb Studio

Mumbai, June 18 (GNS): The 30-minute social documentary "Har Ghar Shuddh Jal" (Pure Water for Every Home), screened yesterday evening at Red Bulb Studio, left a profound impact on the audience. More than just a film, it served as a powerful portrayal of India's rural water crisis, contaminated drinking water, and the human suffering associated with it.

The documentary reflected years of dedication and social commitment by Surendra Sharma and Bunty Srivastava. It demonstrated that meaningful change is possible when determination is combined with a genuine concern for society. The film highlighted how millions of people in rural India continue to consume unsafe drinking water, leading to serious diseases, disabilities, and even premature deaths.

One of the most inspiring aspects of the documentary was its portrayal of how persistent efforts drew the government's attention to this critical issue, resulting in concrete initiatives to provide safe drinking water in several affected regions. These efforts have helped protect thousands of lives. This achievement belongs not only to Bunty Srivastava and his dedicated team but also to everyone who supported this public welfare campaign.

Both screenings of the documentary were houseful, reflecting society's growing awareness and concern about water conservation and public health. The event was attended by several distinguished personalities from the Indian film industry, journalism, and social sectors, including Gajendra Chauhan, Atul Srivastava, Ali Khan, Harsh Bhatnagar, Rajeev Nigam, Yogesh Bhardwaj, Shailendra Gaur, Irfan Jamiyawala, Ashfaq Koppikar, Vinod Vats, Sachindra Sharma, Ramesh Goyal, Balveer Chand (Sachin), Amit Ghanshyam, Sanjeev Pandey, Krishna Sharma, music composer Vishnu Narayan, along with many artists, technicians, and media professionals.

A special mention goes to actor and social worker Amit Ghanshyam, whose efforts brought together many eminent personalities from different fields to support the event. The evening concluded with a heart-touching cultural dance performance by young girls on popular film songs, adding warmth and emotion to the occasion.

The programme ended with a moving poem on water conservation:

"Irrigate your fields with your own tears;

The seasons are costly, the harvests are costly, and the fields now challenge us."

These lines were not merely poetry but a powerful warning about our present and future. Unless society and the government work together to conserve water, future generations may struggle for every single drop.

"Har Ghar Shuddh Jal" is not just a documentary—it is a social awakening, reminding us that Water is Life, and protecting it is the shared responsibility of every citizen.

BRSV GHMC Coordinator Mir Qurram Ali House Arrested, Shifted to Rein Bazar Police Station

Hyderabad, June 18 (GNS): BRS Students Wing (BRSV) GHMC Coordinator and Advocate Mir Qurram Ali was house arrested by Rein Bazar Police and later shifted to Rein Bazar Police Station in connection with the proposed protest demanding the release of 2 lakh job notifications.

The protest was aimed at demanding the Congress government fulfil its promise regarding employment opportunities for students and unemployed youth of Telangana. Mir Qurram Ali remained in police custody at Rein Bazar Police Station till 5 PM.

Condemning the action, Qurram Ali said, "This is an illegal restriction on our democratic rights. Peaceful protest is a fundamental right. We are activists and fighters of the Telangana movement. We will not stop and we are not afraid of cases. We will continue to fight for students and youth and raise their voice." BRSV leaders said they would continue their democratic struggle for employment opportunities and justice for students.

India's draft guidelines on biosimilar drugs can make treatments more accessible, affordable

Chetali Rao

Biologic drugs have become the cornerstone of medical treatment, offering therapies for a number of diseases. Unlike traditional medicines that offer a one-size-fits-all approach, many biologics have a very targeted approach to disease management and treatment. These transformative therapies have altered the treatment landscape for multiple diseases, including cancer and autoimmune disorders. Biosimilars are biological products that are highly similar to approved reference or innovator drugs, with no clinically meaningful differences in terms of safety, purity, and potency. Biosimilars present a vital opportunity to increase patients' access to biological therapies and reduce the burden on healthcare systems. Although biosimilar drugs are hailed as a pathway for providing better access to expensive and unaffordable drugs, their production is fraught with hurdles, including high cost and regulatory barriers. Unlike conventional generic medicines, bringing a biosimilar drug to the market requires substantial scientific expertise, advanced technological capabilities, and a robust regulatory apparatus. These challenges have hindered the pace of biosimilar development and limited their adoption and uptake globally.

In India, healthcare affordability is a critical issue, and biosimilars can play a pivotal role in making advanced therapies accessible to a broader population. India's dynamic pharmaceutical ecosystem positions the country to become a global leader in biosimilar production. The government has initiated multiple policy reforms and introduced capacity building initiatives in the form of National Biopharma Mission (NBM) and the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme to boost domestic biosimilar production. But significant obstacles remain concerning regulatory policies and market accessibility.

Dual citizenship concerns simmer below the surface

Nearly 7 million Americans have sworn allegiance to another country besides the US, data shows. Some might brush off the issue of dual citizenship because it only impacts about 3 percent of America's population. But compare that with the No. 1 concern of many Americans today: the 11.7 million foreigners who have entered the country and are living there illegally.

Why is the issue of illegal migration so much more of a concern for American political leaders than the issue of swearing an oath of loyalty to a foreign country?

Both were in the news last week, but they were addressed very differently by both politicians and by the mainstream news media.

Congress on Thursday passed President Donald Trump's "One Big Beautiful Bill," which sets aside more than $170 billion for immigration and border enforcement. However, the new law does not address the issue of dual citizenship. But this took center stage at the White House the same day, when the president greeted Edan Alexander, a dual American-Israeli citizen and soldier in the Israeli military who was held hostage by Hamas after being captured during the Oct. 7, 2023, terrorist attack. Born and raised in New Jersey, the 21-year-old moved to Israel in 2022, where he swore an oath of allegiance to Israel to gain citizenship. He then enlisted in the army and was serving as a staff sergeant when he was captured. He was freed by Hamas in May in an apparent goodwill gesture as part of negotiations to secure a ceasefire. During the White House meeting, no mention was made of the fact that he had never served in the US military to defend America. Pro-Israel propaganda has extensively used Alexander's US citizenship to fuel anti-Arab sentiments. It asserts that Hamas and Palestinians generally are not just anti-Israel, they are also anti-American. But the real question is, can someone who pledges loyalty and patriotism to a foreign country truly be an American?

As a Palestinian American who served during the Vietnam War, whose brother served in the US Marines and whose father and uncle served during the Second World War fighting the Nazis, why is our loyalty questioned but not Alexander's — a person who has never served America but has served a foreign country?

Ironically, the loyalty of Americans of Arab heritage like myself — and especially those who are Muslim — is often questioned, challenged and even used as a basis to confront our expressions of concern for Israel's war crimes and genocide in the Gaza Strip over the past two years.

Arab and Muslim students protesting Israel's Gaza war on college campuses have been viciously attacked and accused of antisemitism. The US Justice Department has launched efforts to expel them.

Most American politicians prefer to avoid the issue of dual citizenship, but they pounce on false accusations of anti-Americanism by pro-Palestine students.

While pro-Israel propaganda has suppressed public debate over the treachery of a person swearing dual national loyalties, the issue continues to force its way into public debates. In March, Republican Rep. Thomas Massie introduced legislation — the Dual Loyalty Disclosure Act — that, if it were to become law, would require Americans who run for federal office to declare if they have citizenship of a foreign country. "Dual citizens elected to the United States Congress should renounce citizenship in all other countries," said Rep. Massie. "At a minimum, they should disclose their citizenship in other countries and abstain from votes specifically benefiting those countries. If we are going to continue to allow members of Congress to acquire and retain citizenship in other countries, they should at least be required to disclose to voters all countries of which they consider themselves to be citizens."

The bill is co-sponsored by, among others, Reps. Andy Biggs, Marjorie Taylor Greene and Clay Higgins, all supporters of Trump who have been vocal about opposing excessive foreign aid to all countries, including Israel, and redirecting those funds to "American needs." Dual citizenship is an issue of patriotism for every nation. Why should people who enjoy citizenship and benefits in one country be able to pledge their loyalty to another country and serve in its military? It is an expression of that person's lack of faith in the country in which they live. It is like having a plan B: just in case things do not go well in one country, they can use their dual citizenship to flee to another country and to be loyal to it instead. Dual citizenship is a political contradiction that challenges the foundation of national loyalty. It should be banned, not just in America but in every country around the world.

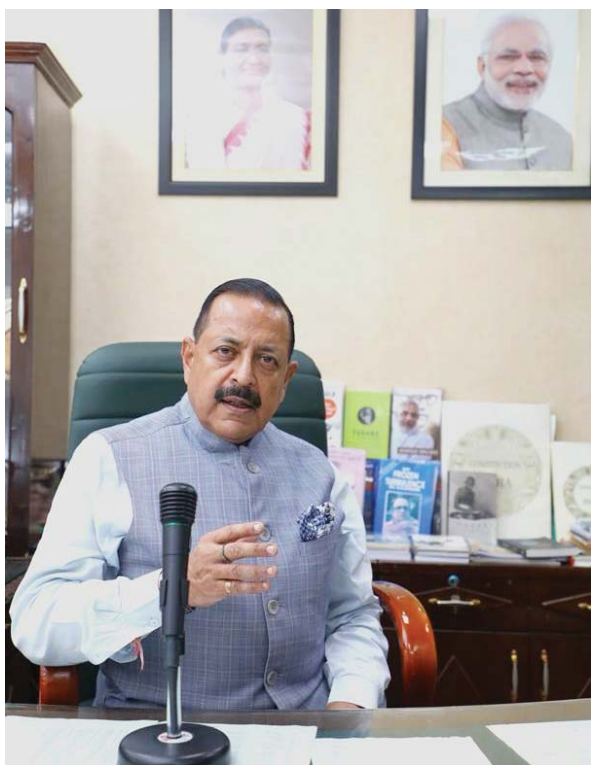
The issue of dual citizenship has resurfaced in political discussions in the United States, with critics questioning why it receives far less attention than illegal immigration. According to reports, nearly seven million Americans hold citizenship in another country alongside their US citizenship, sparking debates over national loyalty and patriotism. The discussion inensified after the White House hosted Edan Alexander, a dual American-Israeli citizen and Israeli soldier who was recently released by Hamas after being captured during the October 7, 2023 attack. Critics argued that while his American identity was highlighted publicly, little attention was paid to the fact that he served in a foreign military rather than the US armed forces.

The debate also comes amid growing political focus on immigration enforcement under President Donald Trump. While Congress recently passed Trump's "One Big Beautiful Bill" allocating billions of dollars toward border security and immigration control, the legislation did not address dual citizenship concerns. At the same time, pro-Palestine student protesters in American universities have faced accusations of anti-Americanism and antisemitism, prompting criticism from civil rights advocates.

Republican Congressman Thomas Massie recently introduced the "Dual Loyalty Disclosure Act," which would require federal candidates to disclose any foreign citizenships. Supporters of the bill argue that elected representatives should openly declare foreign allegiances, while opponents view dual citizenship as a personal and legal matter rather than a threat to national loyalty.

Additionally, supporters of dual citizenship argue that in an increasingly globalized world, individuals often maintain family, cultural, economic and professional ties across borders. They contend that holding citizenship in more than one country does not automatically diminish a person's commitment to the United States, particularly when millions of dual citizens contribute to the economy, public service and civic life. Legal experts note that US law currently recognizes dual citizenship, although it does not actively encourage it. The Supreme Court has repeatedly upheld the rights of Americans to retain citizenship even after acquiring another nationality, provided they do not voluntarily renounce their US citizenship. As a result, dual citizens remain subject to the same constitutional rights and responsibilities as any other American citizen. The debate has also raised broader questions about public office and national security. Some analysts argue that greater transparency regarding foreign citizenships among elected officials could strengthen public trust without necessarily restricting dual nationality. Others caution that imposing additional requirements may discourage qualified candidates from diverse backgrounds from seeking public office. As discussions continue, the issue remains deeply intertwined with questions of identity, immigration, patriotism and foreign policy. While critics view dual citizenship as a potential conflict of loyalty, advocates see it as a reflection of America's multicultural character, ensuring that the debate is likely to remain a significant topic in the country's political discourse.

"NISAR: India's Scientific Handshake with the World"



New Delhi, June 18 (GNS) Briefing the media, the Minister for Science and Technology disclosed that the much-anticipated launch of the NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) satellite mission is scheduled for July 30, 2025, at 17:40 hrs from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota. As the first joint Earth observation mission between the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the United States' National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the event marks a defining moment in the journey of Indo-US space cooperation aa also in ISRO's overall international collaborations, he said. The mission will be launched aboard India's GSLV-F16 rocket.

Dr. Jitendra Singh, who has been monitoring the mission closely, said the launch reflects the maturing of strategic scientific partnerships and India's emergence as a credible global player in advanced Earth observation systems. While expressing his wish to be physically present in Sriharikota to witness the historic event, the Minister acknowledged that the ongoing Parliament session may hold him back in Delhi. "This mission is not just about a satellite launch—it is a moment that symbolises what two democracies committed to science and global welfare can achieve together. NISAR will not only serve India and the United States but will also provide critical data for countries around the world, especially in areas like disaster management, agriculture, and climate monitoring," said Dr. Jitendra Singh.

Dr Jitendra Singh further noted that this mission lives up to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of India becoming a 'Vishwa Bandhu'—a global partner that contributes to the collective good of humanity.

The NISAR mission combines the technological expertise of both agencies. NASA has contributed the L-Band Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR), a high-rate telecommunication subsystem, GPS receivers, and a deployable 12-meter unfurlable antenna. ISRO, on its part, has provided the S-Band SAR payload, the spacecraft bus to accommodate both payloads, the GSLV-F16 launch vehicle, and all associated launch services. The satellite weighs 2,392 kg and will be placed in a sun-synchronous orbit, offering repeat imaging of the entire Earth's land and ice surfaces every 12 days.

CETA opens a world of opportunities for India's textiles, leather and footwear industry: Piyush Goyal

New Delhi, June 18 (GNS) The Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, today held an industry interaction with stakeholders from the textiles, leather and footwear sector in New Delhi to discuss the opportunities created by India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA).

In a message to the meeting, Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Shri Piyush Goyal, conveyed that the agreement is a transformative opportunity for India's textiles, leather, and footwear industries. He highlighted that the historic agreement opens a world of opportunities for these sectors. Shri Goyal noted that the landmark India–UK CETA has positioned India's textile sector for a significant surge in exports.

Secretary, Department of Commerce, Shri Sunil Barthwal, emphasised that eliminating tariffs and empowering MSMEs would promote inclusive growth and generate employment. He added that the agreement is also expected to enhance global recognition for Indian artisans and manufacturers.

As part of the stakeholder engagement, industry and institutional invitees to the meeting included the Council for Leather Exports (CLE), Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Confederation of Indian Footwear Industry (CIFI), Indian Footwear Components Manufacturers Association (IFCOMA), the Footwear Design and Development Institute (FDDI), Central Leather Research Institute (CLRI), Leather Sector Skill Council (LSSC), various Textile Export Promotion Councils, Industry Associations and textile exporters.Key government departments, including the Ministry of Textiles, Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), Department of Revenue, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), as well as senior officials from the Department of Commerce, also attended the meeting to deliberate on opportunities and sectoral preparedness arising from the agreement.

The agreement provides Indian textile & clothing products with duty free access to UK market and addresses the duty disadvantages (of upto 12%) that the Indian textiles sector faced in UK vis a vis some key competing countries like Bangladesh, Cambodia and Pakistan. The zero-duty market access will benefit segments such as Ready-Made Garments, Home Textiles, Carpets and Handicrafts and set the tone for a sharp surge in exports.

The agreement will help in increasing demand of Indian Textiles and benefit all major textile clusters such as Tirupur, Jaipur, Surat, Ludhiana, Panipat, Bhadohi, Moradabad. The CETA is expected to have a positive impact across the textiles value chain, benefiting various stakeholders and boosting employment generation in this labour intensive sector.

CETA eliminates UK's import duties for Indian products, which till now are ranging from 2% to 8% for leather goods, 4.5% for leather footwear, and 11.9% for non-leather footwear. This levels the playing field for Indian exporters against competitors such as Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Vietnam, who have enjoyed preferential access to the UK market.

The tariff elimination is expected to nearly double India's leather and footwear exports to the UK—from USD 494 million in 2024 to USD 1 billion within three years. Key manufacturing hubs across the country are set to benefit significantly, with a projected surge in demand expected to generate thousands of new jobs, particularly among MSMEs, artisans, women entrepreneurs, and youth-led enterprises.

Scindia Reviews BSNL's Performance, Emphasizes Customer Experience and Revenue Generation

New Delhi, June 18 (GNS) Union Minister of Communications, Shri Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, chaired a review meeting with Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL)'s Chief General Managers (CGMs) in New Delhi. This high-level meeting, convened, reviewed BSNL's operational progress, addressed regional challenges, and outlined the strategy ahead for the company's network and service delivery. Also in attendance were Minister of State for Communications Shri Pemmasani Chandra Sekhar, and other senior DoT officials. In a media briefing between the sessions, Shri Scindia noted that the discussions focused on strengthening BSNL's role in the telecom sector, accelerating infrastructure rollout, and enhancing citizen-centric service delivery.

Wide-ranging discussions during the review focused on BSNL's growth strategy, improving network performance, customer service delivery, and organizational modernization. This comprehensive dialogue reinforced BSNL's positioning as a consumer-centric telecom service provider with a clear mandate of "Revenue First" targets across all business units. The forum helped align BSNL's top management in driving these priorities at every level, emphasizing accountability for outcomes.

BSNL is undergoing a major service transformation across all its circles, business areas, and units. To underscore its "Customer First" ethos , BSNL is taking initiative emphasizes proactive customer engagement, improved service responsiveness, and prompt grievance redressal. During the CGM meeting, BSNL's Circle Heads were briefed and aligned on several priority areas for customer outreach and service quality improvement.. The special focus areas identified included: Reconnecting with customers across rural, urban, enterprise, and retail segments Enhancing Quality of Service (QoS) in mobile networks and fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) Addressing customer grievances in billing, provisioning, and network uptime Driving accountability with "revenue-first" targets at every operational level

Expanding enterprise services such as connectivity, VPN solutions, leased line services, and other new business opportunities. Shri Scindia appreciated BSNL's efforts and stressed the importance of achieving measurable improvements in customer experience and revenue generation. As part of the review, several new initiatives recently launched by BSNL were highlighted, aimed at enhancing service offerings and customer value.

Multimedia Exhibition on Best Practices being showcased

New Delhi, June 18 (GNS) The Ministry of Education is organizing the Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Samagam, 2025 on 29th July, 2025 to coincide with the 5th anniversary of NEP 2020 at the Bharat Mandapam premises. The day long deliberations will be inaugurated by Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. The Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Samagam (ABSS) 2025, marking the fifth anniversary of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, ABSS 2025 will serve as a platform for academicians, policymakers, educators, industry leaders, and government representatives to review the remarkable progress made under NEP 2020 and chart the way forward. The deliberations during ABSS 2025 will focus on making education more accessible, practical, skill-oriented, and seamlessly integrated with employment opportunities, ensuring students are equipped for a dynamic global economy. Special focus on the discussion will be placed on re-envisioning secondary education to achieve 100% GER by 2030, Bharatiya Bhasha, leveraging technology in classrooms, mainstreaming Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), and fostering inclusivity to make learning accessible to all.IV. ABSS 2025: 5th Anniversary of NEP 2020

In the last five years since its inception, NEP 2020 has revolutionized India's education landscape, in Higher Education, introducing transformative policies that foster flexibility, inclusivity, and innovation. The National Credit Framework (NCrF)—adopted by 170 universities—has enabled seamless credit accumulation across academic, skill-based, and experiential learning. The Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) has onboarded 2,469 institutions, issuing over 32 crore IDs, with 2.36 crore unique APAAR IDs already seeded with credits. The introduction of multiple entry and exit options across 153 universities, while biannual admissions, approved by the UGC, are driving India closer to its 50% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) target by 2035.

Technology-driven learning has expanded significantly, with 116 higher education institutions offering 1,149 Open and Distance Learning (ODL) programs, benefitting over 19 lakh students, alongside 107 institutions providing 544 online courses. The SWAYAM platform now facilitates credit transfers up to 40%, with 388 universities integrating its courses. Digital initiatives like SAMARTH Supports digital governance across more than 13,000 HEIs, across 32 states/UTs across 440 districts streamlining admissions, payments, and academic records, 518 universities and 10,465 institutions accredited and 6,517 institutions participating in the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF). The One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) initiative grants access to nearly 13,000 e-journals across 6,300 institutions, fostering a robust research environment.

WhatsApp bans over 98 lakh accounts in India in June

Mumbai, June 18 (GNS) WhatsApp banned more than 98 lakh accounts in India during June, as part of its efforts to curb abuse and harmful activity on the platform, according to WhatsApp's latest India Monthly Report. Of these, nearly 19.79 lakh accounts were banned proactively, before any user complaints were received, the report stated. In addition to banning accounts, WhatsApp also acted on grievances received from users in India. During the month, the platform received 23,596 complaints through its grievance mechanisms, out of which action was taken against 1,001 accounts.

These actions included banning accounts or restoring previously banned accounts after reviewing complaints. Most complaints were related to ban appeals, with 16,069 such cases reported, leading to action on 756 accounts. Other categories included account support, product support, and safety-related issues, as per the report. WhatsApp said its abuse detection works at three stages -- during account registration, while messaging, and in response to negative feedback such as user reports and blocks.

The company added that prevention is its primary focus, as stopping harmful activity before it happens is more effective than detecting it afterward. The platform emphasised its commitment to user safety, saying it uses end-to-end encryption, safety tools, and dedicated teams to fight abuse, misinformation, and security threats. It also works with experts to promote cybersecurity and protect election integrity, the messaging platform said in the report. Meanwhile, last month, the messaging platform has introduced two new tools – 'Status Ads' and 'Promoted Channels'. According to WABetaInfo, these features were available to select beta users on Android. Status Ads work like Instagram Story ads. Now, business accounts can post paid content that will show up in people's Status updates.

Inflation likely to stay below 4 pc for next 2 quarters

New Delhi, June 18 (GNS) Headline inflation in India is expected to stay below the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) 4 per cent target over the next two quarters, supported by a favourable base effect and muted food prices, a new report has said.

The data compiled by CareEdge Ratings said the recent moderation in inflation has been largely driven by easing food prices, with CPI inflation falling to 2.1 per cent in June 2025 -- the lowest level since January 2019. The report noted that while inflation is likely to remain low in the near term, it could start rising from the third quarter and cross the 4 per cent mark in the last quarter of the current financial year as the base effect fades. For FY26, the agency expects CPI inflation to average around 3.1 per cent, which is lower than the RBI's projection of 3.7 per cent. "However, due to the low base in FY26, inflation is projected to rise to about 4.5 per cent in FY27," the report said. The sharp fall in June inflation was led by deflation in food and beverages, including vegetables, pulses, spices, and meat.

However, prices of edible oils and fruits continued to show double-digit inflation.

While elevated edible oil prices remain a concern due to India's dependence on imports, the report said the recent cut in customs duty and healthy kharif sowing should help ease pressures in the coming months.

The report said the RBI, having already frontloaded rate cuts and ensured surplus liquidity, is likely to hold rates in the upcoming August monetary policy meeting. The central bank may adopt a wait-and-watch approach to assess the impact of earlier rate cuts, especially with the US Federal Reserve maintaining a hawkish stance and the dollar strengthening. Despite global headwinds, India's external position remains strong, with foreign exchange reserves at $695 billion and the current account deficit projected at just 0.9 per cent of GDP in FY26.

Revanth Reddy launches mission to make hyderabad eco-friendly city

Hyderabad, June 18 (GNS) Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy said on Thursday that his government is engaged in a mission to transform Hyderabad into an eco-friendly city. Ahead of "Vanamahotsavam" (tree plantation festival) to be launched at Gurramguda Eco Park near Hyderabad, the Chief Minister stated that his government is engaged in a mission to restore stormwater drains, secure legal victories to reclaim forest lands, and transform Hyderabad into an eco-friendly city.

He posted on 'X' that the event scheduled to be held on Thursday evening holds special significance. "It is not merely a token gesture; it is the outcome of a resolve born from the memories of past destruction -a resolve pursued with unwavering determination," he said. "Encroachment of lakes and the usurpation of forest lands - consequences that left Hyderabad in chaos at the slightest rainfall - characterized the past. In contrast, the current administration is engaged in a mission to restore storm-water drains, secure legal victories to reclaim forest lands, and transform Hyderabad into an eco-friendly city."

Revanth Reddy said that Vanamahotsavam taking place on the forest land at Gurramguda is the practical realisation of an idea born from the anguish he felt while visiting this very area as the Malkajgiri MP during the floods of 2021.

The Chief Minister posted pictures of his visit to the area as an MP.

"This event stands as a testament to our efforts - undertaken since the people's government assumed office - to wage legal battles against encroachers, protect forest lands, and transform the city into a place where people live amidst nature," he said. In December 2025, the Supreme Court declared 102 acres of land at Gurramguda as forest land. The apex court allowed a civil appeal filed by Telangana in the long-pending Sahebnagar Kalan (Gurramguda Reserve Forest) case, settling a decades-old dispute over the land by setting aside the orders of the forest settlement officer, the Rangareddy district court and the Telangana High Court. In March 2026, the state government issued orders through the Environment, Forests, Science and Technology Department, notifying 424 acres and 31 guntas of forest land in Gurramguda as Reserve Forest under Section 15 of the Telangana Forest Act, 1967.

The state government also decided to develop the area into a large Urban Forest Park. The Chief Minister will be launching Vanamahotsavam by planting a sapling at the Park on Thursday evening. He will inaugurate development works undertaken at the Gurranguda Reserve Forest for Rs 17.84 crore.

The CM will virtually inaugurate development works worth Rs 17.66 crore across the state -- covering urban parks, eco-parks, wildlife conservation, zoo modernisation, residential buildings, and environmental infrastructure -- in districts including Nizamabad, Kothagudem, Hanumakonda, Medak, Mahabubnagar, Mulugu, Narayanpet, Bhupalpally, Sangareddy, Ranga Reddy, and Warangal.

3,302 cr rythu bima aid given to 66,038 families: Tummala

Hyderabad, June 18 (GNS) Telangana Agriculture Minister Thummala Nageswara Rao on Thursday said the state government has disbursed Rs 3,301.90 crore under the Rythu Bima scheme to 66,038 farming families in the last two-and-a-half years, providing financial security to families that lost farmer members.

The Minister said the government has paid the entire annual premium of Rs 1,359.56 crore due to LIC for 2025-26, covering 42.16 lakh enrolled farmers across the state. He stated that insurance assistance of RS 1,004.35 crore has already been provided to 20,087 families during the current period.

Rejecting allegations by BRS leaders that the Rythu Bima scheme had been discontinued, Thummala termed the claims baseless and asserted that the Congress government remains firmly committed to farmer welfare. He said the government has not halted any farmer-centric scheme and, instead, has revived several programmes that were discontinued earlier.

The Minister alleged that the previous government had stopped schemes such as farm mechanisation, soil health testing and subsidised seed distribution, besides failing to release the state's share for Centrally Sponsored Schemes.

In contrast, he said, the present government has continued existing welfare measures and restored programmes beneficial to farmers. According to official figures, Rs 1,004.50 crore was disbursed to 20,090 families between December 2023 and the end of that year, while Rs 1,293.05 crore was provided to 25,861 families in 2024.

Thummala urged political parties not to spread misinformation or attempt to tarnish the image of a government working for farmers' welfare, reiterating that Rythu Bima remains a key initiative aimed at ensuring financial stability for bereaved farming families.

Highlighting the impact of the scheme, Thummala said Rythu Bima has emerged as a vital social security measure for the farming community by ensuring immediate financial assistance to bereaved families.

He noted that the prompt settlement of insurance claims has helped thousands of families cope with economic hardships following the loss of an earning member, reinforcing the government's commitment to safeguarding the welfare and dignity of farmers across Telangana.

Ministerial panel to review MGNREGS reforms in Telangana: Seethakka

Hyderabad, June 18 (GNS) Telangana Panchayat Raj Minister Danasari Anasuya Seethakka on Thursday alleged that the Centre's proposed changes to the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) would adversely affect rural workers and place an additional financial burden on states.

Speaking to the media after an informal Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy at the Secretariat, Seethakka said the BJP-led Central Government has been attempting to dilute the rural employment guarantee programme and is now seeking to implement a revised scheme, referred to as "VBG RAM G," from July 1.

She said the issue was discussed extensively during the Cabinet meeting, following which a four-member ministerial sub-committee was constituted to study the implications of the proposed changes.

The committee comprises Ministers N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, Thummala Nageswara Rao, Vivek Venkataswamy and Seethakka.

The Minister said the panel would examine the implementation of the proposed scheme in other states, assess its financial impact on Telangana and review concerns raised by labourers.

She alleged that new provisions, including mandatory photographs at the beginning and end of work shifts, were creating difficulties for workers and could discourage participation in the employment guarantee programme.

Seethakka said Telangana recorded 7.5 crore person-days under MGNREGS last year, while 2.5 crore person-days had already been generated during the past two-and-a-half months through coordinated efforts of officials and field staff. She said the state government would communicate its objections to the Centre and seek protection of the interests of rural labourers. The newly constituted sub-committee is expected to meet shortly and submit its recommendations to the government for further action.

7 killed in three separate road accidents

Hyderabad, June 18 (GNS) At least seven persons have been killed in three separate road accidents in Telangana on Thursday, police said.

In the first incident, three people were killed in Medchal Malkajgiri district near Hyderabad when a speeding car rammed into a divider before hitting a truck coming from the opposite direction. Three people belonging to the same family were killed in the accident that occurred between Turkapally and Muraharipally.

The car was coming to Hyderabad from Karimnagar. The driver apparently lost control and hit the divider. The car overturned and rolled onto the other side of the road, hitting a truck coming from the opposite direction.

In a separate incident, three people were killed in Jangaon district in Telangana. The accident occurred on the Hyderabad-Warangal national highway when a lorry rammed into a mini truck that had stopped due to a tyre puncture. According to police, the accident occurred when a Tata Ace mini-truck driver, a cleaner and another person were repairing the vehicle near Nellutla in Lingalaghanpur mandal.

While one person died on the spot, two others succumbed at a hospital later. The deceased youths have been identified as Rohith, Rajender and Madhu. Rohith, who runs a kirana shop in Devuruppala mandal in Jangaon mandal, along with Madhu of Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district, was bringing groceries for his shop in the mini-truck from Hyderabad.

When they reached near Nellutla, the mini-truck suffered a tyre puncture. All three got down to repair the puncture when a lorry coming from behind rammed into the vehicle. Rohith, the mini-truck driver, Madhu and cleaner Rajender died in the accident. In another accident, a man was killed when a lorry hit his bike in Vikarabad district. The accident occurred near Chiguralpalli in Parigi mandal. The deceased was identified as Javed Pasha (30) of Mominkalan in the same district.

Rythu Bharosa Funds From June 30; Bonus For 7 Fine Paddy Varieties

Hyderabad, June 18 (GNS) The Telangana government has decided to release Rythu Bharosa investment support funds to farmers for the upcoming Vanakalam (kharif) season from June 30, Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister Capt. N. Uttam Kumar Reddy announced on Thursday after an informal Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy at the Secretariat.

Addressing the media along with Agriculture Minister Thummala Nageswara Rao and Panchayat Raj Minister Seethakka, Uttam Kumar Reddy said a massive farmers' meeting would be held at Madhira in Khammam district on June 30, where the distribution of Rythu Bharosa funds would be formally launched. Thereafter, the funds will be credited directly into the bank accounts of farmers across the state.

The minister also announced a state bonus for seven fine-grain paddy varieties during the Vanakalam season. The varieties eligible for the bonus are BPT-5204, RNR-15048, HMT Sona, Jai Sriram, KNM-1638, WGL-44 and KNM-7715. The decision was taken in view of market demand and consumer preferences.

Uttam said Telangana had achieved a record paddy procurement of nearly 80 lakh metric tonnes during the Yasangi (Rabhi) season, describing it as an unprecedented achievement. The minister, however, expressed concern over what they termed lower procurement by the Centre from Telangana and demanded that the entire grain output of the state be procured.

The state government also urged the Centre to immediately release the fertiliser quota for the ongoing kharif season and allocate a larger share of urea produced by Ramagundam Fertilisers and Chemicals Limited (RFCL) to Telangana. The minister reiterated the state's demand for early approval of Hyderabad Metro Rail Phase-II and release of the pending IRFC loan, calling on union Ministers and BJP MPs from Telangana to support the project.

In another key decision, the government formally launched the Telangana Digital Cabinet initiative. Cabinet meetings will henceforth be conducted in a paperless mode, with ministers receiving agendas and official documents through specially provided tablets.

The government also announced free RTC bus travel for students appearing for the NEET examination on June 21. Students can avail themselves of the facility by showing their hall tickets.

Kavitha vows fight for singareni workers during baayibaata tour

Peddapalli, June 18 (GNS) Telangana Rakshana Sena (TRS) President Kalvakuntla Kavitha on Thursday visited Ramagundam OCP-3 and the Base Workshop as part of the "Singareni Baayibaata" programme and interacted with workers, assuring them that she would continue to fight for their rights and welfare. Addressing the workers, Kavitha alleged that a "British-style rule" still prevails in Singareni and claimed that workers are being harassed by officials through charge sheets, memos and administrative pressure. She said the workforce was facing anxiety due to management practices and demanded a more worker-friendly approach from both the authorities and the government.

Expressing regret over certain decisions taken during her earlier association with workers' unions, Kavitha apologised for policies that allegedly resulted in financial losses to employees and promised to rectify the issues. She raised concerns over delays in dependent employment, claiming that around 2,000 job applications remain pending, and demanded that the Singareni Medical Board meet twice every month to expedite appointments. She also called for a lenient approach in cases related to alias names and urged the management not to deny jobs on technical grounds.

Kavitha stressed that both open-cast and underground mining operations should coexist and demanded that future open-cast mines be operated directly by Singareni rather than private entities. She also highlighted issues faced by EP operators, including delayed promotions, poor-quality vehicles and workplace safety concerns. The TRS chief further sought improvements in workers' housing, education and healthcare facilities, and advocated conversion of vacant Singareni quarters into better residential units for employees.

Referring to her newly formed Telangana Rakshana Sena, Kavitha said the party was working with a five-point agenda focused on free education, healthcare, social justice, farmers' welfare and employment opportunities for youth. She urged workers to support the HMS union and the TRS in future elections, promising what she termed "genuine and beneficial change" for the people

Dial-112 team helps rescue woman in distress within 15 minutes in Jagtial

Hyderabad, June 18 (GNS) The Telangana Integrated Command and Control Centre (TGICCC) facilitated the timely rescue of a woman in distress in Jagtial district through swift coordination under the Dial-112 Emergency Response Support System (ERSS).

According to officials, a distress call was received at the Dial-112 Call Centre at 1223 hours on Thursday regarding a woman stranded at a canal under the limits of Metpalli Police Station in Jagtial district. Recognising the seriousness of the situation, Dial-112 personnel immediately alerted the Station House Officer (SHO) of Metpalli Police Station within a minute and continuously monitored the response. Acting promptly, the SHO deployed police personnel to the location. Due to the quick response of the local police and effective coordination by the Dial-112 team, the woman was traced and brought to safety within 15 minutes. She was later shifted to the police station, where officials provided counselling and necessary support.

Police officials appreciated the prompt communication, continuous monitoring and seamless coordination by the Dial-112 team, which played a crucial role in ensuring the woman's safety. The incident highlights the effectiveness of the Dial-112 Emergency Response Support System and the commitment of Telangana Police to providing timely assistance during emergencies and safeguarding citizens across the state.

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EDITOR, PRINTER, PUBLISHER & OWNER by MOHD ATHER RAHEEM PUBLISHED From FALAKNUMA NEWS English Daily 19-4-276/5/A, Flat No.502. 5th Floor, Lake view Residency, Baquar Nagar, BNK Colony, Miralam Tank, Hyderabad 500 064. Printed at RIYAZ PRINTING PRESS. #22-8-161 Behind Nayaab Hotel Chatta Bazar, Hyderabad - 500002 Telangana. Head Office Contact No.0404537318, www.falaknumanews.in