

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

Rahul Gandhi slams centre over Telegram ban, says 'Target Mafia, Not Students'

NEW DELHI, JUNE 17: Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi has strongly criticized the Centre's decision to temporarily block Telegram ahead of the NEET-UG 2026 re-examination, accusing the government of penalizing students instead of taking action against those responsible for exam-related fraud.

Reacting to the move, Gandhi urged the government to focus on dismantling cheating networks and alleged paper leak mafias rather than restricting access to a communication platform used by millions.



The government had imposed a temporary ban on Telegram until June 22, citing concerns that the platform was being used by rackets to spread fake ques-

tion process following the paper leak controversy.

Rahul Gandhi, however, questioned the effectiveness of the ban, arguing that students should not bear the consequences of administrative failures.

He claimed that repeated exam irregularities reflected deeper issues in the system and called for stronger action against those involved in organized cheating operations. The controversy has sparked a wider political debate over exam security and the government's handling of the NEET paper leak issue.

All Indian Cine Workers Association seeks SIT probe into TV actor Sanchita Ugale's death

MUMBAI, JUNE 17: The All Indian Cine Workers Association (AICWA) has urged Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis to order a Special Investigation Team (SIT) probe into the death of television actor Sanchita Ugale. The association has called for a thorough and transparent investigation, citing concerns surrounding the circumstances of her death.

In a letter addressed to the Chief Minister, AICWA demanded that all aspects of the case be examined to ensure justice and rule out any foul play.

The organization stated



that an independent SIT investigation would help establish the facts and address concerns raised by members of the entertainment industry. Sanchita Ugale was

known for her work in Marathi and Hindi television.

News of her death has shocked colleagues, fans, and members of the television industry, prompting calls for a detailed inquiry.

AICWA has emphasized that a fair investigation is essential to maintain confidence in the process and provide clarity to the actor's family and well-wishers.

The Maharashtra government and law enforcement agencies have yet to respond publicly to the association's demand. Further details are expected as the investigation progresses.

Twisha Sharma death case: Court extends judicial custody of husband, mother-in-law

BHOPAL, JUNE 17: A court in Bhopal on Tuesday extended by 14 days the judicial custody of late model Twisha Sharma's husband, Samarth Singh and mother-in-law and former judge Giribala Singh, both accused of dowry harassment.

Ankur Pandey, the lawyer representing Twisha's family, said that both accused joined the hearing, which was held in the court of Judge Shobhana Bhalave, virtually.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had sought an extension of judicial custody until June 30, which the court accepted. Both accused are currently lodged in the Bhopal Central Jail.

Twisha was found hanging in her marital home in Bhopal on May 12. Amid allegations of lapses in the probe, the investigation was referred to the CBI.

On June 2, the court remanded both accused to judicial custody for 14 days till June 16.

Twisha's first post-mortem report said her



death was caused by "antemortem hanging by ligature" and her body bore "multiple antemortem injuries (simple in nature, possible by blunt force over other parts of the body have been noted)".

After receiving the post-mortem report and recording the statement of family members of Twisha, a former actor-model, the police registered the FIR on May 15. In their statements,

Twisha's family members had alleged that she was tormented by her in-laws, who were not satisfied with the dowry paid at the time of marriage on December 9, 2025.

They had accused her in-laws of mental torture and domestic violence, and pushing the 33-year-old to take the extreme step.

In the statement given to the police at the time of filing

the FIR, Twisha's family said she had spoken to her mother at 9.41 pm.

During the call, her husband was heard shouting, and the call was abruptly disconnected, the FIR citing the statement alleged.

After repeated calls, Giribala Singh picked up the phone and told Twisha's sister-in-law that "she is no more" and cut the call, it is alleged.

TN CM announces full waiver of crop loans up to Rs 75,000

TAMIL NADU, JUNE 17: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay on Tuesday announced a full waiver of crop loans of up to Rs 75,000 availed by farmers through cooperative banks from May 1, 2025, to February 28, 2026.

The waiver would benefit 14.43 lakh farmers across the State and would entail the State Government Rs 5,932 crore and would ensure a big relief to the ryots, the Government said.

Following a review meeting with ministers and senior officials at the Secretariat here, the chief minister said that farmers who had availed loans exceeding Rs 75,000 will receive a waiver of Rs 35,000, a release from the Government said.



The announcement follows a representation from the farmers in the wake of the State Government announcing a waiver of loans of up to Rs 50,000 last

month for small and marginal farmers who availed cooperative bank loans. The new announcement is a revision. According to the release,

as per the Reserve Bank of India's Model Operating Procedures for Government Loan Waiver Schemes, the Government should fully disburse the entire amount of crop loan waiver within 45 to 60 days.

"Considering the current financial position and financial resources of the State Government, in this difficult situation, the chief minister has ordered a waiver of approximately Rs 6,000 crore to 14.43 lakh farmers who have availed crop loans from May 1, 2025, to February 28, 2026," the release added.

"This crop loan waiver will be of great benefit to farmers who wish to obtain loans for the upcoming cultivation season," the release said, quoting Vijay.

CID questions Abhishek Banerjee for over 6 hrs

KOLKATA, JUNE 17:

The West Bengal CID on Tuesday interrogated Trinamool Congress national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee in for over six hours in connection with his alleged inflammatory statements made during the Assembly election campaigning, an official said.

Banerjee, who reached the CID headquarters 'Bhavani Bhavan' here shortly before noon, came out of the State probe agency's office at around 6.25 pm, he said.

After coming out of the agency office, Banerjee avoided taking questions from journalists and went to TMC supreme Mamata Banerjee's Kalighat residence.

The CID also questioned the Diamond Harbour MP over another case in the alleged forgery of MLAs' signatures on June 11 and 14. The TMC leader was interrogated



on Monday by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in the primary school jobs scam. According to a top official of the State probe agency, a set of questions was prepared for the Diamond Harbour MP in the 'inflammatory' statement case.

"He was also asked what the intention behind the inflammatory remarks he made during the election rallies was," the official said.

The CID sleuths, it was learnt, showed Banerjee the

video grab of the meeting where he allegedly made the statement during the interrogation. The entire interrogation session is being documented and videographed.

The FIR against Banerjee over his alleged inflammatory statements was lodged a month ago, based on a complaint filed by social activist Rajib Sarkar at Baguati Police Station in North 24 Parganas district on May 5, a day after the assembly election results were declared.

It was alleged that the TMC national general secretary made provocative comments on post-poll violence and the vote counting process, a senior officer said.

The complainant also claimed that Banerjee's inflammatory comments were linked to Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

The case has been registered under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and the Representation of the People Act, he said.

The complainant accused Banerjee of delivering inflammatory speeches during several election-related programmes between April 27 and May 3. "He alleged that certain remarks made during public meetings were provocative in nature and had the potential to disturb public order and communal harmony," the police officer had said.

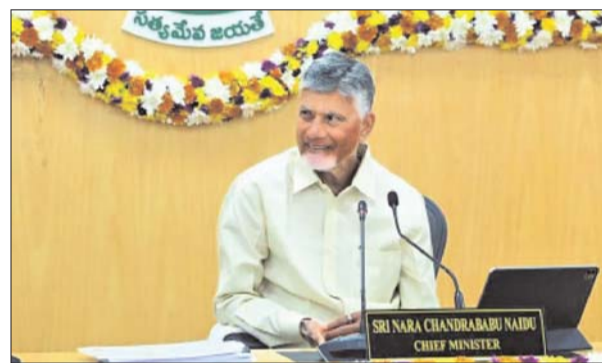
Andhra CM showcases Amaravati vision at World Cities Summit in Singapore

NEW DELHI, JULY 17:

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday showcased his vision for Amaravati at the World Cities Summit in Singapore, describing the greenfield capital city as a people-centric urban centre built on the principles of equity, sustainability, opportunity and livability.

Addressing the Leadership Plenary-2 session on the theme "Can Smart Cities Love Humans?", the chief minister said Amaravati is being developed as one of the finest cities in the world with world-class infrastructure, advanced digital capabilities and a strong focus on quality of life. "People first is our policy. Amaravati will be a city based on equity, nature, opportunity and livability," Naidu said.

Reflecting on his focus on technology-driven growth, the chief minister said he had spoken about information technology 25 years ago and



that the first-mover advantage had helped Telugu people emerge among the leaders in per capita income.

Naidu said the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh provided an opportunity to build another city and that Amaravati is being developed as a greenfield capital and a platform of opportunities.

The CM said the city is taking shape around the Krishna River with inner and outer ring roads and iconic bridges forming key elements of its infrastructure. He noted that Amaravati would be developed as a 21-

km waterfront city and would incorporate specialised zones such as Sports City, Financial City, Knowledge City, Justice City, Tourism City, Health City and Media City.

The CM said farmers had voluntarily contributed 35,000 acres of land under the land pooling model after a single call from the government and noted that a portion of the land is being developed and returned to them as developed plots.

Drawing a comparison with Cyberabad, Naidu said land that was valued at `2

lakh per acre when the project was launched had appreciated to around Rs 200 crore per acre.

He described Cyberabad as proof that development leads to wealth creation.

The chief minister said Amaravati is being developed as a Knowledge City and that efforts are underway to attract national and international educational institutions. He added that a Quantum Computing Hub and advanced digital infrastructure would be among the city's major attractions.

Naidu invited people to visit Amaravati and leverage the opportunities being created through the capital city's development with fresh and innovative ideas, the release added.

Earlier, the CM invited global semiconductor companies to explore investment opportunities in Andhra Pradesh, describing the state as one of India's most investment-friendly destinations.

HM Shah 'Wrecking' Indian Democracy, His Allurements Enticing Those Elected On Strong Anti-BJP Agenda: Cong

NEW DELHI, Jun 17: The Congress on Wednesday accused Home Minister Amit Shah of launching an "onslaught" on the Opposition and "wrecking" Indian democracy to compensate for his "humiliation" in the Lok Sabha on April 17 this year when he failed to get the Constitution amendment bill passed.

The opposition party said Shah's allurements are enticing a number of those who were elected just two years ago on a strong anti-BJP agenda to now join the BJP. The incentives reportedly being extended to them are mind-boggling," Ramesh charged on X.

The Home Minister is running a wholly cynical campaign that is well lubricated and, like in the mutual funds industry, offers various schemes and products suited to individual needs, the Congress general secretary in-charge communications alleged.

"There are absolutely no limits to his depravity. But he will not succeed in his ultimate objective," Ramesh asserted.

He remarks come after Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on late Tuesday night claimed that an "ad-

vance of Rs 15 crore" is being given to "buy MPs from Maharashtra", adding fuel to the intense buzz that a section of party's Lok Sabha members could switch sides.

The speculation about an imminent rebellion by MPs of Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT), tentatively on a Trinamool Congress (TMC) template, strengthened with ruling Shiv Sena leader Prapat Sarnaik hinting at welcoming dissidents and giving them priority should they jump ship.

Eyebrows were raised when Raut, Sena (UBT) MP and Uddhav's confidant, travelled to Delhi, sparking a buzz that he might meet Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to preempt any bid by nine MPs of the party to form a separate group.

In a late night post on X, Raut said, "Apna sapna

money...money! There is information that an advance of Rs 15 crore will be given tonight to buy MPs from Maharashtra. This is shocking and disgusting!" Also, on Sunday, 20 rebel TMC MPs met Birla and announced their merger with the NCPI, a Tripura-based registered unrecognised political party.

Rebel TMC MP Arup Chakraborty on Monday said the breakaway faction is trying to "rectify" the party and would fight for the control of its election symbol, even as the Mamata Banerjee-led outfit termed the move illegal under the anti-defection law.

The NCPI is a Tripura-based registered unrecognised party that does not enjoy any significant political presence. (AGENCIES)

Ram temple donation issue: SIT continues probe on second day

AYODHYA, JUN 16: The Special Investigation Team (SIT) continued its probe for the second day on Tuesday at the Ram Temple complex on the alleged embezzlement of donations received in the temple.

The three-member team arrived at the temple at 11 a.m. to investigate. Ayodhya DM Shashank Tripathi and SSP Dr. Gaurav Grover were also present. The team had questioned suspected Trust employees and the Trust members along with others.

The SIT includes Lucknow Commissioner Vijay Vishwas Pant, IG Range Kiran S. and Special Secretary Finance

Neelratan. Kiran S has previously served as a DIG in the CBI. On Monday, the team gathered information from Trust General Secretary Champat Rai regarding the theft of offerings. In addition, the SIT summoned Trust member Gopal Rao and questioned him. The team also questioned 42 other suspected employees.

On Monday, the SIT investigation at Ram Temple lasted 7 hours and 30 minutes. According to sources, the SIT team examined all possible aspects during the investigation and questioned people concerned about the points of suspicion. The team also inspected rele-

vant records and arrangements within the temple complex.

The SIT team completed the investigation and left at around 10:30 pm. The investigation team is expected to submit its complete report to the government within 15 days. During the first day's proceedings, the team gathered information on several important facts and points, based on which the further investigation will be finalized. Police had already recovered huge quantity of gold and cash of Rs 2 crore from the residence of one of the accused. Five accused have been detained in this connection.