

## Speaker Birla invites Abhishek Banerjee to present TMC's case amid split recognition row

New Delhi, June 17

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla invited Trinamool Congress leader Abhishek Banerjee to appear before him on June 19 to present the official party's position on the ongoing dispute over a claimed split in the Mamata Banerjee-led party, according to a communication from the Lok Sabha Secretariat, sources said Wednesday. The move comes as the Speaker weighs competing claims arising from a rebellion within the TMC's Lok Sabha ranks, with a group of 20 MPs seeking recognition as a separate parliamentary formation after announcing their merger with the Nationalist Citizens Party of India (NCPI). According to the sources, the June 19 meeting is scheduled so the official TMC leadership can present its arguments to the Speaker before any decision is made on the recognition sought by the rebel faction. The development follows a recent meeting between the dissident MPs and Speaker Om Birla, during which they sub-



mitted a letter informing him of their merger with the NCPI and requested separate seating arrangements in the Lok Sabha along with recognition as an independent parliamentary group. Ahead of the proposed interaction, Abhishek Banerjee wrote to the Speaker on June 10, urging him not to recognise any faction claiming to represent a separate group within the All India Trinamool Congress. In his letter, Banerjee argued that constitutional provisions and the anti-defection frame-

work do not permit creating parallel groups within a recognised political party. Banerjee is understood to have cited provisions of the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution as well as Supreme Court Constitution Bench judgments dealing with defections and mergers. He maintained that for a merger to be legally valid under anti-defection laws, two conditions must be fulfilled simultaneously: the merger of the original political party itself and support from at least two-thirds of the leg-

islators belonging to that party. Meeting only one of these requirements, he argued, would not satisfy the constitutional test for a valid merger. "The law does not envisage recognition of a separate faction within a recognised political party merely on the basis of a claim by a group of legislators," Banerjee is understood to have argued in his representation to the Speaker. The controversy has triggered a significant political and legal battle within the TMC, with the rebel camp contending that its merger with the NCPI entitles it to separate recognition in Parliament. The dissident MPs have maintained that their move reflects a political realignment and have sought corresponding parliamentary status. he Mamata Banerjee-led faction, however, has strongly opposed any such recognition, arguing that it would legitimize a split not supported by constitutional provisions governing defections and mergers. Party leaders have insisted that the breakaway MPs continue.

## Forced to continue PM SHRI scheme: Kerala CM Satheesan

New Delhi, June 17

Kerala Chief Minister VD Satheesan said the Kerala government is forced to continue with the PM SHRI (Pradhan Mantri Schools for Rising India) scheme as the previous LDF government signed the agreement and accepted initial funds from the Centre. Addressing a press conference here on Wednesday, Satheesan said the current United Democratic Front (UDF) administration is "forced to" proceed with the scheme because the previous Left Democratic Front (LDF) government had already signed the agreement and accepted funds. However, he emphasized that the Central government must not encroach upon the state's freedom regarding the educational curriculum. "It is the previous LDF government which signed the agreement with the Centre to



implement the scheme. It also accepted funds in connection with it. "So, we are forced to go ahead with the scheme," the CM said. He added that the state received Rs 99 crore for the Pradhan Mantri Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI) scheme, and the Centre sanctioned Rs 106 crore under it. He stated that the Centre cannot interfere with a state's freedom to decide its curriculum and argued that states must have the freedom to select which schools implement the scheme.

## Soldier succumbs at high altitude in Leh, got married just months ago

New Delhi, June 17

A young Army soldier from Punjab's Rupnagar district, Naik Sarabjit Singh, died while posted in the high-altitude region of Leh in Ladakh after his health reportedly deteriorated due to oxygen deficiency, officials and family members said. The soldier's mortal remains were brought to his native village, where he was laid to rest with full military honours. Sarabjit Singh, aged 31, was serving in the Punjab Armed Regiment and was deployed in an extremely challenging terrain where low oxygen levels are common. According to official inputs, his condition worsened suddenly on June 16, following which



he passed away during duty in the mountainous region. The tragic incident has left his family in deep shock, especially as his personal life had only recently begun a new chapter. His father, Darshan Singh, said Sarabjit got married on January 25 this year and was preparing to come home on leave for the first time after his wedding. He

added that the bridal bangles of his daughter-in-law had barely faded when the family was struck by the news of his death. Family members recalled that Sarabjit had last visited home during his wedding and had remained in regular contact with them since his posting. His mother said she had spoken to him just two days before his death, when he assured her that he was doing fine. In one of his final conversations, Sarabjit had spoken to his wife a day before the tragedy, mentioning that he was suffering from a headache and would take medicine before calling back. However, no further communication followed,

## SIT probe continues into Ram Temple donation theft case

New Delhi, June 17

The probe into the alleged donation embezzlement case at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya continued for the third consecutive day on Wednesday. The Special Investigation Team (SIT) arrived at the temple at 10 am on Wednesday and was reportedly questioning bank employees responsible for counting the offerings. Earlier on Tuesday, the SIT conducted an 11-hour investigation inside the temple premises, questioning more than 100 people, including trust officials. The team gathered details about where the offerings are counted, who conducts the counting, and who deposits the amount in the bank. It also collected information about the entire process and the people involved.

The SIT is scheduled to submit its report to the government by next week. Five individuals have so far been identified in the alleged



donation theft case — Lavkush, Avneesh, Anukalp, Karune, and Ramshankar. Their information has reportedly led to the recovery of ₹2 crore and gold. All of them were involved in the donation-counting process. Meanwhile, the issue has taken a political turn, with BJP and SP leaders attacking each other over the matter. SP chief Akhilesh Yadav, at a press conference in Lucknow on Wednesday, said, "For the BJP,

religion means money. CCTV footage was not found at places where dishonesty took place during elections. CCTV footage is missing because it would reveal the secret behind the theft of offerings and donations." He further said, "We respect all saints and sages. The path of our religion is based on truth and respect for others. That is why the PDA also stands for love, compassion, and a sense of belonging. We will follow

the path shown by Lord Ram." On Wednesday, SP leader Pawan Pandey also held a press conference in Ayodhya and demanded the dissolution of the Ram Temple trust over the alleged offering theft case. He also demanded that an FIR be registered in the matter. He asked, "How is the SIT investigating without registering a case?" The SP leader demanded that the Supreme Court conduct an investigation into the entire matter. He also demanded that the accused officials be kept away until the investigation is completed and that their entry into the Ram Temple be completely banned. Meanwhile, Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak countered the SP leaders, saying, "I want to tell Akhilesh Yadav and all those who are raising questions that an SIT has been constituted. The trust members are responsible and serious people. Action will be taken after the SIT report."

## DMK's 'son-atan' Udhayanidhi, a lotus eater, oblivious of dynastic politics, receiving fatal blow in TN polls: TN Minister

New Delhi, June 17

Stung by the Leader of the Opposition, Udhayanidhi Stalin's persistent debunking of the Joseph Vijay administration as a 'sofa model government' which would not last long, Tamil Nadu Health Minister and Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) leader KG Arun Raj on Wednesday slammed the DMK scion as a lotus eater, oblivious of the dynastic throne, he was hoping for, getting abolished by the electoral verdict. Making a pun on the word 'sanatan', which Udhayanidhi claims to eradicate, the Minister said the DMK's dynastic politics itself is 'son-atan'. "Dynastic leader @Udhaystalin, slumping on the 'son-atan' throne of the DMK, reserved for one family with father succeeding grandfather and grandson succeeding father, the throne of dynasts has been abolished on May 4 itself," he wrote on his 'X'



handle. He alleged that the DMK's first family used Dravidian icons, social reformer 'Periyar' EV Ramasamy, and DMK founder CN Annadurai as a shield to perpetuate dynastic succession, keeping the party in their grip. He alleged that the DMK's first family used Dravidian icons, social reformer 'Periyar' EV Ramasamy, and DMK founder CN Annadurai as a

shield to perpetuate dynastic succession, keeping the party in their grip. Udhayanidhi and DMK leaders continue to taunt Vijay's TVK government as a 'sofa model government' ever since sofas were sent in advance to the party offices where Vijay had gone seeking support ahead of government formation, drawing a parallel with a scene in the blockbuster 'Pushpa'.

Udhayanidhi, who first used this term to describe the government, reiterated it earlier in the day at a family wedding of veteran DMK leader Arcot N Veerasamy, regarding encouraging defections. "Under the sofa model government, we are witnessing people switching over to the party in power. Whether or not this government purchases anything, it is on a purchasing spree of leaders and legislators from other parties," he said, referring to the exodus from the AIADMK to the TVK. Responding, Arun Raj said, "How can you be aware of a democratic sofa which decentralises power and accommodates all? It is a sofa, in which not only four or even five, but all the council of ministers, under the leadership of the Chief Minister, are seated," adding, "Santan thrones have neither the locus nor the legitimacy to talk about democratic sofas."

## To fight BJP, a team must be brave; those who are afraid cannot work together: Akhilesh Yadav

Lucknow, June 17

Samajwadi Party (SP) National President Akhilesh Yadav said on Wednesday that to fight the BJP, a team must be brave, and those who are afraid cannot work together. "Those who get scared will leave, but the SP will not back down from the fight," he asserted. Addressing a press conference at the party office here on Wednesday, Akhilesh strongly targeted the BJP. Responding to OP Rajbhar's claims, Akhilesh Yadav said that many new faces would emerge at the right time. He said that many people would reveal their cards in Uttar Pradesh politics in due course. He also dropped



political hints regarding claims of BJP MLAs switching sides. He announced that a major SP conference would be held in Gorakhpur soon. Party functionaries from Gorakhpur are busy with the preparations, and the date of the conference will be announced shortly. The SP has made Gorakhpur the centre of its Mission 2027 and is preparing to corner the

BJP. The SP president attacked the Gorakhpur model of the Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh and raised questions about the state's education and healthcare systems. He claimed that 487 primary schools had been closed in the Chief Minister's home district. According to him, Gorakhpur had 2,163 schools in 2017, a number that fell to 1,676 in 2026

## Indian Railways approves rebuilding of Shastriya ROB in Indore yard at cost of Rs 139 crore



New Delhi, June 17 Indian Railways has approved the rebuilding of Road Over Bridge (ROB) No. 103-C, popularly known as Shastriya Bridge, in Indore Yard at an estimated cost of Rs 139 crore. The project has been sanctioned under Indian Railways' ongoing programme for the construction and modernisa-

tion of road over bridges, road under bridges, and related infrastructure aimed at improving mobility and safety at railway crossings. "The approved project involves the construction of a four-lane Road Over Bridge featuring a 72-metre camel-back superstructure with PSC girders and a full viaduct arrangement," the Ministry of

Railways said on Wednesday. The new bridge is designed to accommodate increasing traffic demand while providing smoother and safer movement for commuters. To facilitate local traffic circulation and maintenance access, six-metre-wide service roads will be provided on both sides beneath the bridge. Apart from the reconstruction of the bridge structure, the project includes extensive utility-shifting and modernisation works. Existing sewer infrastructure will be relocated and upgraded through the construction of new sewer lines to ensure uninterrupted drainage services. The project also includes the shifting and renewal of electrical infrastructure, including the installation of new poles, lighting systems.

## Congress alleges Shah orchestrating defections to undermine opposition

New Delhi, June 17

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Wednesday intensified his attack on Union Home Minister Amit Shah, accusing him of spearheading a systematic campaign to weaken Opposition parties by encouraging elected representatives to defect to the Bharatiya Janata Party. Ramesh alleged that the exercise was aimed at offsetting what he termed Shah's "humiliation" in the Lok Sabha following the failure to secure passage of the Delimitation Bills earlier this year. "In a post on social media platform X, the Congress general secretary claimed that the Home Minister had escalated efforts to attract Opposition leaders into the BJP, including those who



were elected just two years ago on platforms strongly opposed to the ruling party. "The Union Home Minister is continuing his onslaught on the Opposition and his wreck-

ing of Indian democracy to compensate for his humiliation in the Lok Sabha on April 17, 2026 when he failed to have the Delimitation Bills passed," Ramesh said. He further alleged that

substantial inducements were being offered to Opposition legislators and political leaders to switch allegiance, although he did not cite specific instances or provide evidence to support the charge. "His allurement 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," he said. "Sharpening his criticism, Ramesh accused Shah of running what he described as a carefully calibrated political operation aimed at eroding the strength of rival parties across the country. Drawing a comparison with the mutual funds industry, he claimed that different incentives

were being tailored to suit individual political requirements. "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," Ramesh said, adding, "There are absolutely no limits to his depravity." "Despite the allegations, the senior Congress leader expressed confidence that the BJP would ultimately fail in its broader objective of weakening Opposition forces. "But he will not succeed in his ultimate objective," he asserted. Ramesh's remarks come amid continuing political realignments in several states, where defections and shifting party.