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## HIMANTA TAKES OATH AS ASSAM CM FOR SECOND SUCCESSIVE TERM

The BJP-led NDA assumed the mantle of power for the third term on Tuesday when Himanta Biswa Sarma was sworn as in CM of Assam

## 25-MINUTE CEREMONY SAW TOP BJP LEADERS

Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya administered the oath of office to Sarma and the four legislators at a 25-minute ceremony held at the Veterinary Ground in Khanapara area in Guwahati. Besides PM Modi and Amit Shah, Union ministers Rajnath Singh, Nitin Gadkari, Sarbananda Sonowal, Pabitra Margherita, and other top leaders were present | P12

## GREAT DAY FOR ASSAM, SAYS PM MODI

The PM said NDA assuming office for the third consecutive term was a "great day for Assam" and congratulated Sarma  
■ BJP's Rameshwar Teli and Ajanta Neog, AGP's Atul Bora, and Charan Boro of BPF also took oath as ministers, representing the tea community, women, the regional community and the Bodo tribe

102

SEATS OF 126 SEATS IN ASSAM WERE WON BY THE BJP-LED NDA COALITION

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# NEET-UG cancelled, CBI begins paper leak probe

Re-exam notice in 7-10 days; one accused arrested from Nashik

LALITHA S, SUDHIR SURYAWANSHI & RAJESH ASNANI @ New Delhi/Nashik/Jaipur

THE NEET (UG) 2026 exam held on May 3 was cancelled on Tuesday amid allegations of paper leak, with the CBI registering an FIR after the government asked it to probe the "irregularities".

The National Testing Agency (NTA), which conducts the exam for admission to undergraduate courses in medical colleges, said fresh dates will be notified in the "next seven to 10 days" for the re-exam.

The cancellation triggered nationwide outrage among medical aspirants, with students raising questions on NTA's competence and demanding that the exam be conducted by AIIMS-Delhi. The Opposition attacked the Centre, alleging administrative failure, insensitivity toward students and "repeated lapses" in the conduct of national-level competitive examinations.

The Rajasthan Special Operations Group (SOG), which probed the leak first, found that before the exam, a 150-page "guess paper" was circulated among students in Jaipur, Sikar, Jhunjhunu and Churu districts. The document contained 410 questions of which 135 figured in the actual exam paper.

As per Rajasthan Police, the match was not limited to the questions alone. Investigators found similarities in sequence of options, language and punctuation marks. The SOG has so far detained 15 people, including

### Similarities in sequence of options, language

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### BAMS graduate arrested in Nashik, probe on

A 30-year-old BAMS graduate from Nashik was arrested Tuesday. Police said he bought the leaked paper for ₹10L and resold 10 sets at ₹15L each in Rajasthan and Maharashtra



SFI members and supporters stage a protest against the cancellation of NEET 2026, after NTA cancelled the exam held on May 3, in New Delhi on Tuesday | PRAVEEN NEGI

Manish Yadav from Jaipur and Rakesh Mandawaria from Sikar. Manish Yadav is said to be the 'mastermind' of the paper leak operation in Rajasthan. Investigators also found that all 90 Biology questions and all 45 Chemistry questions in NEET exam matched the circulated material.

Preliminary investigations suggest that a student from Churu, currently pursuing MBBS in Kerala, allegedly sent the question bank to a person in Sikar, who passed it to a PG accommodation operator in Sikar, who further shared it among students there.

After the examination on May 3, a PG operator in Sikar filed a complaint with the Udyog Nagar police station and the NTA, alleging that a large number of students had received the suspected question bank before the exam. Following this, police sprang into action, sources said.

The CBI registered cases of criminal conspiracy, cheating, criminal breach of trust, theft and destruction of evidence under BNS, besides offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act and Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024. P11

## Rahul dissent note to panel tasked to pick new CBI boss

SUMIT KUMAR SINGH @ New Delhi

THE selection of the next CBI chief on Tuesday was marred by controversy as Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi issued a dissent note on the selection process.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi and Chief Justice of India Justice Surya Kant are part of the selection committee.

They met on Tuesday but there was no official announcement on the panel's decision at the time of going to press.

However, Rahul presented a two-page dissent note to the PM alleging that despite repeated written requests, he was not provided with self-appraisal reports or 360-degree reports of the eligible candidates. "Instead, I was expected to examine the appraisal records of 69 candidates for the first time during the meeting. The 360-degree reports were denied to me," he alleged.

"This deliberate denial of information, without any legal basis, makes a mockery of the selection process and ensures that only your pre-decided candidate is selected," he alleged.

Rahul accused the government of reducing the selection process to a mere formality, adding the LoP cannot be a rubber stamp.

While several IPS officers were on the short list, discussions at the meet centred on three: Parag Jain, Shatrughan Kapoor, Yogesh Gupta and G P Singh. Incumbent CBI Director Praveen Sood is scheduled to retire on May 24.

### EXPRESS READ

## CM's astrologer made Officer on Special Duty

Chennai: Rickey Radhan Pandit Vetrivel, astrologer and TVK spokesperson, was on Tuesday appointed as Officer on Special Duty (Political) to the chief minister. A GO issued in this regard stated that terms and conditions of his appointment would be issued separately | P6

## Rahul meets former KPCC heads, CM call likely today

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

THE deadlock over the selection of Kerala's next Chief Minister appears headed for a breakthrough, with senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday holding a last round of consultations with former KPCC presidents, working presidents and key leaders at Sonia Gandhi's house.

The leadership opted for wider consultations to ensure that the decision to be seen as a collective one rather than a unilateral choice imposed by the high command.

While AICC general secretary K C Venugopal appears to be way ahead in the race, riding on the support of newly elected MLAs, sources said the name of the new CM is likely to be announced on Wednesday. The other two contenders are Ramesh Chennithala and V D Satheesan.

Of the senior leaders who met Rahul on Tuesday, a majority except former KPCC presidents V M Sud-

heeran and K Muraliedharan, were understood to have backed Venugopal's candidature.

Sources said Muraliedharan and Sudheeran conveyed to Rahul that public sentiment should be taken into consideration before deciding the new chief minister. However, opposing this view, some leaders told Rahul that the protests were not spontaneous but were orchestrated by certain leaders as a pressure tactic.

Sources also said UDF ally Muslim League's adamant support to Satheesan further complicated matters. Speaking to reporters, Muraliedharan said since it is the UDF CM, views of allies will also have to be considered.

The Chennithala camp says he is the senior most leader who has always stood by the party and the Nehru-Gandhi family. The leadership had come under pressure after failing to finalise the CM face nine days after election results were declared.

## TN orders 717 Tasmac outlets shut, 50 closed already

S GURUVANMIKANATHAN @ Chennai

CHIEF Minister C Joseph Vijay on Tuesday ordered the closure of 717 Tasmac retail liquor shops located within 500 metres of educational institutions, places of worship and bus depots across Tamil Nadu. As part of the first phase, 50 liquor shops in Chennai, Tiruchy, Madurai, Salem and Coimbatore regions were closed on Tuesday.

According to the Government Order (GO) dated May 12, 2026, accessed by TNIE, the Tamil



PIC: P RAVIKUMAR

Nadu State Marketing Corporation (Tasmac) currently operates 4,765 retail liquor outlets across the state. Of the 717 outlets identified for closure, 276

shops are located near places of worship, 186 near educational institutions and 255 near bus depots. The GO said the identified outlets would be shut within a couple of weeks in the interest of public welfare.

The decision is being seen as a major policy move of the party which had strongly criticised previous regimes during the election campaign for allegedly promoting liquor sales at the cost of public health and social harmony.

Speaking to TNIE, a Tasmac

official said, "The government has also instructed authorities to ensure that no alternative liquor outlets are opened in the restricted zones. With the closure of 717 outlets, the number of functioning liquor shops across the state will come down to 4,048."

The move is expected to lead to a revenue loss of ₹7.27 crore per month to Tasmac with the shutting down of the 466 bars operating in these outlets. In addition, these shops generate an average revenue of ₹23 crore to ₹25 crore per day. P9



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Vijay with AIADMK leaders C Ve Shanmugam, S P Velumani and others during a meeting in Chennai on Tuesday | ASHWIN PRASATH

## Trust vote today, all eyes on AIADMK

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Chennai

ON the eve of the TVK government's trust vote in the Tamil Nadu Assembly, the internal rift within the AIADMK became official with one group of its legislature party on Tuesday announcing its support for the new government, likely ensuring the sailing is smooth for Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay.

With the other AIADMK faction, led by general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami, set to vote against the new dispensation, all eyes will be on Dravidian major as the divide is manifested on the House floor on Wednesday.

The Secretariat was witness to high drama on Tuesday as the group led by former ministers C Ve Shanmugam and S P Velumani said they would back the TVK in the House, despite the whip issued by party general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami to vote against the TVK in the floor test.

Shanmugam also urged Palaniswami to convene a general council meeting at the earliest to discuss the party's continued electoral defeats and the corrective measures that need to be taken.

Later speaking to reporters, the former minister accused Palaniswami of proposing to form a government led by him with the support of the party's arch-rival, the DMK. "Most of the MLAs were appalled at this proposal, as for the past 55 years the AIADMK and DMK have been arch-enemies. The MLAs were not ready to accept this proposal," Shanmugam said. P9

Most of the MLAs were appalled at the proposal of a DMK-AIADMK front, as for the past 55 years the AIADMK and DMK have been arch-enemies

AMMK's lone MLA expelled  
NDA ally AMMK's lone MLA, S Kamaraj, while felicitating the newly-elected Speaker J C D Prabhakar, announced his support for the TVK. Following this, the party's general secretary, T T V Dhinakaran, expelled Kamaraj from the party

## West Asia crisis is a stress test for India: CEA

DIPAK MONDAL @ New Delhi

THE West Asia crisis has become a live balance-of-payments stress test for India, with direct implications for inflation, the current account deficit (CAD) and the rupee, Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran said on Tuesday. "Managing the current account credibly, financing it sustainably, and preventing further currency depreciation are the central macroeconomic imperatives of FY27," he said at the CII's Annual Business Summit.

CAD is expected to rise to 2.2% of GDP in FY27 from an estimated 0.8% in FY26. CAD is a situation when a country's imports exceed exports. A higher CAD weakens the currency, increases inflation risks and reduces economic stability. Rupee on Tuesday fell to another low of 95.63 against the dollar.

Nageswaran said 87% of crude oil is imported, with a major share transiting through or near the Hormuz. Around 60% of LPG comes from the Gulf, while 38% of annual remittances originate from Gulf nations.

"These are not the readings of a temporary shock that will self-correct when the situation stabilises." The CEA warned that the global economic architecture is undergoing a structural challenge rather than a temporary disruption.

Puri worry on losses  
"How long the oil companies will continue to take losses, frankly, worries me," petroleum minister Hardeep Singh Puri said | P16

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