



THE Hans India



WOMENIA **Love after 40: Not just romance, a practical support system for child's life's pressures**
Love after 40 isn't about chasing sparks—it's about building stability, understanding, and shared strength. For single parents and those starting over. **P8**

EDIT **Can CBI contain cybercrime effectively?**
Investigating cybercrimes is very difficult. Even though the SC has directed the CBI to take a direct role in probing these offences, the agency is bogged down with many different investigations, especially politically sensitive cases. **P6**

NAMIMA K'TAKA **Congress will certainly return to power in 2028: Sidda**
Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday asserted that the Congress will return to power in Karnataka in 2028 with the people's mandate, just as it did in 2023, and said the BJP would continue to remain in the Opposition. **P5**

Integrated township by TTD for devotees to come up near Alipiri
Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Trust Board has taken an important decision to improve facilities for devotees by approving the construction of an integrated township near Alipiri in Tirupati. **P4**

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WINDOWS



Re hits fresh record low of Rs 91.14 against dollar

MUMBAI: The rupee slumped to a fresh record low of 91.14 against the US dollar on Tuesday, after weakening by 36 paise in afternoon trade. Pressured by sustained foreign institutional investor outflows and lingering uncertainty over a potential India-US trade deal, this marked the fourth consecutive session in which the rupee has touched a new all-time low. The currency has now depreciated about 1% over the past five trading sessions alone. In afternoon dealings, the rupee was quoted at 91.14 per dollar, extending its losses from the previous close amid continued pressure from global and domestic factors.

FOG-LINKED ACCIDENTS 25 killed in road crashes across UP



LUCKNOW: At least 25 people were killed and 59 injured in a series of fog-linked road accidents across Uttar Pradesh, with the worst tragedy unfolding on the Yamuna Expressway in Mathura, where a multi-vehicle pile-up turned into an inferno, police said on Tuesday. The maximum number of 13 fatalities was reported from Mathura, while four people each were killed in Basti and Unnao and two each in Meerut and Barabanki. According to officials, all the incidents were linked to poor visibility. The Mathura accident occurred around 4:30 am on the Agra-to-Noida carriageway within the Baldev police station limits. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Shlok Kumar said eight buses and three smaller vehicles were involved in the pile-up due to poor visibility.



58 lakh names deleted in West Bengal draft SIR

REPORT: P7



IRREGULAR by MANJUL
Ours is a democratic party, and he is a powerful president. No, not elected, but selected by the supreme leader

YCP misleading Centre on PPP medical colleges: CM

- ▶ Says PPP model is a globally accepted mechanism
- ▶ Welcomes HC's suggestion on AI use in TTD's Parakamani
- ▶ List of TDP district chiefs will be announced in 2 days

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday accused the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) of attempting to mislead the Union government over the establishment of medical colleges under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model amid the Opposition party's intensified protests against the policy.

Speaking informally to media persons at the NTR Bhavan, the Chief Minister said YSRCP Members of Parliament had taken their objections to Parliament and had even sought to project the PPP model in 'distorted manner' before Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. According to Naidu, the Union Minister firmly rejected what he described as an attempt to misrepresent the policy framework.

Continued on Page 7



Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu reviewing the implementation of healthcare initiatives in the Secretariat on Tuesday

Statewide rollout of digital health records in a year: Naidu

- ▶ The rollout will be done under Sanjeevani project
- ▶ Gates Foundation takes up pilot project in Kuppam
- ▶ Govt committed to 'healthy, wealthy and happy AP'

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday announced that digital health records being developed under the Sanjeevani project in Kuppam, Chittoor district, will be extended across Andhra Pradesh within a year, marking

a major push towards technology-driven preventive healthcare. Reviewing the implementation of healthcare initiatives at the state Secretariat, the Chief Minister said the pilot project, being executed with the cooperation of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, would soon cover the entire population.

Continued on Page 7



Trump sues BBC for \$10bn

Accuses it of defamation over Jan 6 edited speech

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump filed a lawsuit pm Monday seeking USD 10 billion in damages from the BBC, accusing the British broadcaster of defamation as well as deceptive and unfair trade practices.

The 33-page lawsuit accuses the BBC of broadcasting a "false, defamatory, deceptive, disparaging, inflammatory, and malicious depiction of President Trump," calling it "a brazen attempt to interfere in and influence" the 2024 US presidential election.

It accused the BBC of "splicing together two entirely separate parts of President Trump's speech on January 6, 2021" in order to "intentionally misrepresent the meaning of what President Trump said." The lawsuit, filed in a Florida court, seeks USD 5 billion in damages for defamation and USD 5 billion for unfair trade practices. The BBC did not immediately respond to a request for comment from The Associated Press. The broadcaster apologised last month to Trump over the edit of the Jan. 6 speech. **Continued on Page 7**

G RAM G Bill introduced in LS amid Oppn uproar

- DMK ACCUSES NDA GOVT OF RIDICULING 'FATHER OF THE NATION'
- MAHATMA GANDHI IS FROM EVERY FAMILY IN COUNTRY: PRIYANKA

NEW DELHI

A Bill that seeks to guarantee rural jobs for 125 days every year and replace the 20-year-old MNREGA was introduced in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday amid strong objections by the Opposition to the "removal" of Mahatma Gandhi's name from it.

Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, while introducing the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill, 2025, said the government not only believes in Mahatma Gandhi but also follows his principles.



"The (Narendra) Modi govt has done more for rural development than previous governments," he said.

Continued on Page 7

A 'north-south divide' over Hindi names for new laws



Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Samajwadi Party MP Akhilesh Yadav, DMK MP TR Baalu and other Opposition MPs stage a protest near the statue of Mahatma Gandhi against the G RAM G Bill in New Delhi on Tuesday

Cong plans nationwide protest today

NEW DELHI: The Congress will hold protests across the country on Wednesday against the Centre's rural employment bill VB-G RAM G that seeks to replace MGNREGA, claiming it was a "BJP-RSS conspiracy" to dismantle a rights-based welfare scheme and attack Mahatma Gandhi's legacy, workers' rights and federal responsibility. **Continued on Page 7**

Dekho o deewano ye kaam na karo, Ram ka naam badnaam na karo



Global aviation workforce should have 25% Telugus: Lokesh

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

IT & HRD Minister Nara Lokesh emphasised that Andhra Pradesh's vision was to ensure that the global civil aviation workforce should have at least 25 per cent Telugu people.

Speaking at the launch of the country's first integrated GMR-MANSAS Aviation EduCity here on Tuesday, the Minister termed the integrated Aviation, Aerospace and Defence (AAD) EduCity as a historic achievement aligned in tune with India's ever-emerging civil aviation and aerospace ecosystem. Lokesh said that the AAD

Launches country's maiden Aviation, Aerospace, Defence EduCity in Vizag



MoU documents exchanged by Governor of Goa and MANSAS Trust Chairman P Ashok Gajapathi Raju with GMR Group representatives in the presence of HRD and IT Minister Nara Lokesh for the AAD EduCity in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday.

EduCity which would be developed by GMR Group in 130-acre of site provided by the MANSAS Trust, would serve as a national capability platform to address the acute global and domestic shortage of aviation professionals, place India as a leading supplier of aviation talent and build the country's next-generation aviation workforce.

Presiding over the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the GMR Group and the MANSAS Trust in Visakhapatnam, Lokesh asserted that the initiative addresses the most pressing constraint of 'human capital' faced by the aviation sector now. **Continued on Page 7**

Modi's Jordan visit strengthens bilateral ties, 5 MoUs signed

AMMAN/NEW DELHI

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Jordan has paved the way for deepening bilateral ties between India and the West Asian country with the signing of five MoUs in the areas of renewable energy, water resource management, cultural exchange, digital solution and twinning between Petra and Ellora.

PM Modi held extensive discussions with King Abdullah II of Jordan on ways to



PM Narendra Modi being driven by Jordan's Crown Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II to the Jordan Museum in Amman

further deepen bilateral engagement in the fields of trade and investment; defense and security; renewable energy.

Continued on Page 7

MODI ARRIVES IN ETHIOPIA

ADDIS ABABA: Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Ethiopia on Tuesday on the second leg of his three-nation tour, aimed at strengthening ties between the two countries. Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed Ali received PM Modi at the Addis Ababa International Airport.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



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IPL AUCTION Uncapped players strike gold!

ABU DHABI

KOLKATA Knight Riders (KKR) splurged a record-breaking Rs 25.20 crore to land top Australian all-rounder Cameron Green and Rs 18 crore to acquire the services of Sri Lankan pacer Matheesha Pathirana in the Indian Premier League players' auction here on Tuesday.

Uncapped Indian players were also a big hit with Uttar Pradesh's 20-year-old left-arm spinner Prashant Veer going to Chennai Super Kings for Rs 14.20 crore. He became the highest paid uncapped player in the history of IPL auction after coming in at a base price of Rs 30 lakh. Jammu and

CSK splurge Rs 14.2cr each on Prashant & Kartik

Kashmir pacer Auqib Nabi Dar also attracted a hefty sum of Rs 8.40 crore from Delhi Capitals to be among the top gainers in the mini auction. Dar's base price was also Rs 30 lakh. Indian stars Prithvi Shaw and Sarfaraz Khan, however, went unsold in the auction despite their good run of form with the bat.

Green surpassed compatriot Mitchell Starc (Rs 24.75 crore) to become the most expensive overseas player at an IPL auction. This was after Kolkata Knight Riders and Chennai Super Kings were involved in an intense bidding



war for him before the latter emerged winner.

KKR also went after Venkatesh Iyer before pulling out of the race against Royal Challengers Bengaluru, who

got the India all-rounder for Rs 7 crore. The three-time champions then entered the fray to buy Pathirana after Delhi Capitals and Lucknow Super Giants withdrew fol-

lowing an intense bidding war between the two franchises.

Entering the auction at a base price of Rs 2 crore, Pathirana became the most expensive Sri Lankan sold in an IPL auction. As far as Green is concerned, his salary for the season would still be Rs 18 crore (USD 1.9 million) as the rest of the amount will go towards the BCCI's player development programme as per the rules of the auction for foreign players.

Pathirana will get the full amount as it falls within the salary cap. Green, who previously turned up for

Mumbai Indians and Royal Challengers Bengaluru, has so far played 29 matches in the IPL to aggregate 707 runs and take 16 wickets. Shaw, however, went unsold despite his fine run of form in the domestic circuit lately, and so was the case with Sarfaraz, who smashed a 22-ball 73 in a Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy match for Mumbai on Tuesday. Big-hitting South African batter David Miller was bought by Delhi Capitals for his base price of Rs 2 crore, but New Zealand swashbuckler Devon Conway, whose base price was also Rs 2 crore, went unsold in the auction. **Continued on Page 7**

INDIA@DAVOS

Four Union ministers, Revanth, Naidu to attend WEF annual meet

NEW DELHI: India is set for a power-packed presence at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Swiss ski resort town of Davos next month with four Union ministers, including Ashwini Vaishnaw and Shivraj Singh Chouhan, set to join five CMs and over 100 CEOs from the country. Minister for Civil Aviation K Ram Mohan Naidu and Minister for New & Renewable Energy, Consumer Affairs, and Food & Public Distribution Pralhad Joshi will also be part of the Indian delegation at the 5-day annual meeting from January 18. The Chief Ministers include Devendra Fadnavis of Maharashtra, N Chandrababu Naidu of Andhra Pradesh, Assam's Himanta Biswa Sarma, Madhya Pradesh's Mohan Yadav and Telangana's A Revanth Reddy. While Reddy is from Congress and Naidu is from Telugu Desam Party (an ally of BJP), the other three CMs are from BJP. Among the Union ministers, Ram Mohan Naidu is from TDP while other four are from BJP.

केन्द्रीय कर आयुक्त का कार्यालय
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GST BHAVAN, KANNAVARI THOTA, GUNTUR - 522004
Email: caohq-cgstguntur@gov.in

पेंशन अदालत के लिए सार्वजनिक सूचना /
PUBLIC NOTICE FOR PENSION ADALAT

Pension Adalat will be held by the Commissioner of Central Tax, Guntur CGST Commissionerate on **22.12.2025 at 11:15 AM** at the Office of the Commissioner of Central Tax, 1st Floor, Conference Hall, C.R.Buildings, Kannavarithota, Guntur to redress grievances of all Pensioners retired from Guntur CGST Commissionerate. Pensioners may submit their grievances to the Nodal Officer as detailed below:-

Joint Commissioner of Central Tax, Hqrs. Office,
Guntur CGST Commissionerate, C.R.Buildings, Kannavarithota,
Guntur-522004. Email: caohq-cgstguntur@gov.in

The last date for submission of grievances by the pensioners is 17.12.2025. Issues like compassionate appointment, pay anomaly, legal cases, and policy issues will not come under purview of **PENSION ADALAT**. For any difficulty, you may visit our office personally/email us at the above-mentioned address.

-SD-
संयुक्त आयुक्त / JOINT COMMISSIONER

SHRIRAM FINANCE LIMITED

REGISTERED OFFICE: Sri Towers, Plot No.144, South Phase, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600032 website : www.shriramfinance.me. Branch Office : D.NO.42/107-1, OBUL REDDY COMPLEX, APSARA CIRCLE, JAYANAGAR COLONEY, KADAPA.

RULE-8(3) POSSESSION NOTICE

Note: "It is informed that "SHRIRAM CITY UNION FINANCE LIMITED" has been amalgamated with "SHRIRAM TRANSPORT FINANCE LIMITED" as per order of NCLT, Chennai. Subsequently the name of "SHRIRAM TRANSPORT FINANCE LIMITED" was changed as "SHRIRAM FINANCE LIMITED" with effect from 30.11.2022 vide Certificate of Incorporation pursuant to change of name dated 30-11-2022."

Where as, the undersigned being the authorised officer of Shriram Finance Limited (SFL) under the provisions of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (said Act) and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) of the said Act read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 (said Rules) issued demand notices to the Borrowers details of which are mentioned in the table below to repay the amount mentioned in the said demand notices.

The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower and the public in general that the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of SFL has been handed over the physical possession of the mortgaged Properties described herein below in pursuance of the order passed by the **Hon'ble Principal Senior Civil Judge, kadapa under Section 14 of the said Act and Rules, on this 16.12.2025**

Name and Addresses of Borrowers, CO-Borrowers & Guarantors
1.Thatha Nagendra Prasad , S/O T.Satya Narayana, D.No:1/281-A, Main Bazar, Yerraguntla(M), Kadapa(Dist)-516309.
2.T.Suvarna Kumari , W/O T.Satya Narayana, D.No. 1/260, Main Bazar, Yerraguntla, Thummalapalli, Kadapa(Dist).
3.C.Srinivasulu , S/O C.Thiruvengalaiah, D.No:4/979, Nehru Nagar, Jammalamadugu, Kadapa(Dist).

Amount due as per Demand Notice : **To pay Rs. 32,33,933/-** (Rupees Thirty Two Lakhs Thirty Three Thousand Nine Hundred and Thirty Three only) with further interest and other contractual charges and penalties till date with further interest and other costs, charges and expenses **under reference of Loan A/c No:- CUDP4TF2210310013 Demand Notice Dated : 16.07.2025**

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

YS R Kadapa District, proddatur registration District, kamalapuram sub district, yerraguntla mandal, yerraguntla nagar panchayat, yerraguntla village accounts, ward no.1, proddatur road area, near d.no.1/292, syr 370/3, a total extent of Ac.1.09 cents and in it an extent of Ac.0.20 cents and in it an extent of Ac.0.05 cents or 242 sq.yards of vacant site, bounded on: East: site of T.Sangeetha Lakshmi; West: site of Sanepalli Sura Reddy; North : site of sanepalli Chennamma; South : Road; Within these site admeasuring east to west: 31.1 ft. or 9.5 mts, and north to south 70 ft. or 21.3 mt comprising a total extent o Ac.0.05 cents or 242 sq.yards of vacant site along with right of way and all easementary rights

This notice is also hereby to caution the general public at large that the authorized officer of SFL is in the lawful Physical Possession of the immovable properties mentioned herein above and the Borrowers or any person shall not after receipt of this notice transfer by way of sale, lease or otherwise deal with/ alienate any of the above mentioned secured assets referred to in this notice, without prior written consent of SFL.

Place : Yerraguntla Dated: 16.12.2025

Sd/- Authorised Officer
Shriram Finance Limited

SHRIRAM FINANCE LIMITED

REGISTERED OFFICE: Sri Towers, Plot No.144, South Phase, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600032 website : www.shriramfinance.me. Branch Office : D.NO.42/107-1, OBUL REDDY COMPLEX, APSARA CIRCLE, JAYANAGAR COLONEY, KADAPA.

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The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower and the public in general that the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of SFL has been handed over the physical possession of the mortgaged Properties described herein below in pursuance of the order passed by the **Hon'ble Principal Senior Civil Judge, kadapa under Section 14 of the said Act and Rules, on this 16.12.2025**

Name and Addresses of Borrowers, CO-Borrowers & Guarantors
1. Mudumalasarith Babu , S/O M.Subbarayudu , D.No:10-92-33, Seelam Veedhi, Mydukur, Kadapa(Dist).
2.Mudumala Sravani , W/O Mudumalasarith Babu, D.No:10-92-33, Seelam Veedhi, Mydukur, Kadapa(Dist).
3.Jelli Chennaiah , S/O J.Chennaiah, D.No:26/438-1(UP), Proddatur, Kadapa (DIST).

Amount due as per Demand Notice : **To pay Rs. 58,14,926/-** (Rupees Fifty Eight Lakhs Fourteen Thousand Nine Hundred and Twenty Six only) with further interest and other contractual charges and penalties till date with further interest and other costs, charges and expenses **under reference of Loan A/c No:- CUDP4TF2311240007 Demand Notice Dated : 16.07.2025**

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

YSR Kadapa district, kadapa registration district, kamalapuram sub district, yerraguntla mandal, valasapalli gram panchayat and village accounts, cirar sy.no.181 an extent of Ac.0.78 cents and in it an extent of Ac.0.50 cents or 2420 square yards, bounded on: East: Land of J.Kullaiy Reddy, C.Malla Reddy and others; West: Road; North : Land of M.Sarith Babu(applicant) in the same survey number; South : Vanka; Within these an extent of Ac.0.50 cents of land along with right way irrigation and right of way and also

This notice is also hereby to caution the general public at large that the authorized officer of SFL is in the lawful Physical Possession of the immovable properties mentioned herein above and the Borrowers or any person shall not after receipt of this notice transfer by way of sale, lease or otherwise deal with/ alienate any of the above mentioned secured assets referred to in this notice, without prior written consent of SFL.

Place : Yerraguntla Dated: 16.12.2025

Sd/- Authorised Officer
Shriram Finance Limited

- Court stresses need to minimise human intervention, adopt AI-based systems in Parakamani counting
- Observes theft of offerings hurts faith of millions; manual methods no longer acceptable
- Volunteers must not face humiliating checks; outsourcing staff barred from sensitive treasury tasks

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE Andhra Pradesh High Court on Tuesday underscored the need to modernise the process of counting offerings at the Tirumala Sri Vari Parakamani (treasury), suggesting that the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) substantially reduce human intervention and

adopt machine-based and artificial intelligence-driven systems.

Hearing the Parakamani theft case, the High Court observed that incidents involving the alleged theft of offerings at Tirumala cannot be treated as ordinary offences. The court noted that the funds deposited in the Parakamani represent the faith and devotion of millions of devotees across the world, and any misappropriation of such offerings directly hurts religious sentiments.

During the course of arguments advanced by counsel from both sides, the court remarked that continuing



with traditional, manual methods of counting offerings despite repeated theft allegations was neither prudent nor acceptable.

It emphasised that modern technology must be

leveraged to ensure transparency, accountability and security in the handling of temple funds.

The High Court also expressed concern over the practice of subjecting volun-

teers and personnel involved in the counting process to searches that resemble criminal scrutiny. It observed that individuals who come forward with a spirit of service should not be treated with suspicion or humiliation.

Such measures, the court said, undermine the dignity of devotees and erode trust in temple administration.

Further, the court made it clear that outsourcing employees should not be entrusted with the sensitive task of counting offerings. It advised the TTD to reconsider its existing procedures and evolve a foolproof mechanism that minimises

human handling and the scope for irregularities.

The bench directed the counsel appearing for the TTD and other parties to place before the court concrete proposals and expert-backed suggestions on modernising the Parakamani counting system. The court indicated that it expects a comprehensive approach that balances technological efficiency with the sanctity of religious practices.

The matter was posted for further hearing, with the High Court signalling that systemic reforms, rather than ad hoc measures, were necessary to safeguard the integrity of Tirumala's treasury.

VAJPAYEE'S ROLE IN INFRA DEVELOPMENT DRAWS PRAISE

- Energy minister Ravi Kumar says Atal Bihari Vajpayee was respected across party lines and upheld democratic values with dignity, even in defeat
- Ministers and BJP leaders unveil former PM's bronze statue as the Atal Sandesh-Modi Suparipalana Yatra reaches Bapatla
- Ravi Kumar recalls Vajpayee's role in nation-building through projects like the Golden Quadrilateral; notes that PM Modi is carrying forward his vision of development



Energy minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar speaking at Atal Sandesh-Modi Suparipalana Yatra in Bapatla on Tuesday

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BAPATLA

ENERGY minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar said that former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee earned the rare distinction of being an 'Ajata Shatru' (Man without enemies) in Indian politics, respected across party lines. He was speaking on Tuesday when the Atal Sandesh-Modi Suparipalana Yatra reached Bapatla.

The minister, along with ministers Anagani Sathya Prasad and Kolusu Parthasarathy and BJP state president P V N Madhav, unveiled the bronze statue of Vajpayee.

Addressing the gathering, Ravi Kumar described Vajpayee as a beloved son of Bharat Mata who rendered unparalleled service to the nation. He recalled that Vajpayee was elected nine times to the Lok Sabha and twice to the Rajya Sabha and served as Prime Minister on three occasions.

Even after losing the Prime Minister's post by a single vote, Vajpayee stepped down with dignity, setting a high benchmark for democratic values and winning the hearts of millions of Indians.

Ravi Kumar said Vajpayee firmly believed strong infrastructure was the key to rapid national development. With this vision, he launched the Golden Quadrilateral Project, transforming road connectivity across the country from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. He noted that nearly eight lakh km of rural roads and about 5,000 km of

national highways were developed during that period, laying a strong foundation for India's growth. Vajpayee, he said, always placed national interest above political considerations and also united 23 political parties, besides playing a key role in making Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam the President of India.

The minister said Prime Minister Narendra Modi, inspired by Vajpayee's ideals and vision, is carrying forward the journey of national development with renewed momentum.

He pointed out that initiatives such as Vande Bharat trains reflect this commitment, especially in modernising the railway sector.

Ravi Kumar expressed happiness that participating in the unveiling of Vajpayee's bronze statue was a proud and unforgettable moment in his life. Leaders of alliance parties and other dignitaries attended the programme.

Road repairs to be fast-tracked in state

- ▶ R&B minister Janardhan Reddy says his department has stepped up measures to fast-track road repairs and development
- ▶ Single bids to be accepted in road tenders to avoid delays
- ▶ Explains move is aimed at speedy execution of road projects without procedural hurdles

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

STATE roads and buildings, investments and infrastructure minister B C Janardhan Reddy on Tuesday said that the coalition government is undertaking road repair works across the state on a war footing to provide better infrastructure to the public.

In a statement on Tuesday, the minister said that under the leadership of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, the government's primary objective is to complete road development works expeditiously and ensure smooth vehicular movement.

As part of this effort, the roads and buildings (R&B) department has taken a key policy decision to accelerate the execution of road works and eliminate avoidable procedural delays. The minister explained that during the tendering process for road development contracts, it is common for only a single bid to be received. Until now, such tenders were routinely recalled, leading to repeated invitations, submission of fresh bids, evaluation, finalisation and execution of agreements—a process that often consumed more than 45 days.

Due to these delays, road works failed to commence on time, forcing people to endure damaged and unsafe



roads for extended periods. To address this issue and prioritise public convenience, the R&B department has decided to accept and process tenders even if only a single bid is received at the first instance, without recalling the tender.

The minister said this is the first such decision taken by the department with the clear aim of speeding up road repairs and development works. By finalising tenders without unnecessary repetition, works can begin immediately, preventing avoidable delays and ensuring timely completion of projects.

He added that the decision would help deliver better-quality roads to the public within a shorter time frame, improve road safety and facilitate smoother travel across the state. The coalition government, he reiterated, is committed to providing pothole-free roads and strengthening infrastructure to support overall development.

Re-survey and mutation process via video conference reviewed

HANS NEWS SERVICE
KURNOOL

JOINT Collector Noorul Qamar has directed the revenue machinery to complete the ongoing re-survey process in the district within the stipulated timeframe without any errors, while also ensuring that land mutation applications are disposed of promptly without pendency.

Emphasising the importance of accuracy and timeliness, he instructed officials to treat the re-survey as a priority task, given its direct impact on citizens' land rights.

The Joint Collector conducted a comprehensive review of the re-survey, mutation and related issues through a video conference from the Collectorate's Video Conference Hall, interacting with Revenue Divisional Officers (RDOs) and Tahsildars.

During the review, he assessed the progress made at various stages and issued clear directions to strengthen monitoring at the field level to avoid delays and discrepancies.

Referring to the first phase of the re-survey pilot project, Joint Collector Noorul Qamar stated that clerical corrections in the 25 selected villages must be completed within the prescribed period, ensuring there is no scope for mistakes.



JC Noorul Qamar reviewing of the re-survey, mutation and related issues through a video conference from the Collectorate's Video Conference Hall on Tuesday

In the second phase, covering 24 villages identified under the pilot project, he instructed officials to complete the mutation process in all cases and take steps to issue the final notification.

He stressed that every mutation application should be examined thoroughly and final orders issued without leaving any cases pending.

In the third phase, covering 32 villages where the re-survey has commenced, the Joint Collector directed officials to complete ground truthing (GT) and other related processes within the government-

mandated deadline.

He cautioned that negligence, undue delay or errors at any stage would invite strict action. Highlighting that the re-survey process is crucial for safeguarding land ownership rights, he urged all concerned officers to work in close coordination and ensure successful completion of the exercise.

District Revenue Officer C Venkata Narayanamma, Adoni Sub-Collector (In-charge) Ajay Kumar, Special Deputy Collector Naga Prasanna Lakshmi and other officials participated in the review meeting.

TUDA plans to develop Tirupati as city of lakes and tanks

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUPATI

TIRUPATI Urban Development Authority is preparing a detailed project report in coordination with irrigation officials and international agencies. This aims to rejuvenate tanks and develop Tirupati as a city of lakes and tanks, as desired by Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu.

At the request of TUDA Chairman C Divakar Reddy during his recent visit to New Delhi, ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability-South Asia Secretariat Director Sowmya Chaturvedula and Deputy Secretary General Eemani Kumar visited TUDA on Tuesday. They visited Perumallapalli village along with TUDA officials. They interacted with



A team from ICLEI during an inspection under TUDA limits

local panchayat officials and villagers to study the potential for a climate-smart village. The team observed existing drainage systems, LED lights, solid

waste processing centre, and inflow/outflow of sewage water. The ICLEI team assured a concept note based on the village population.

TUDA can use this to develop more climate-resilient villages in the future. Later, they visited Peruru tank and Avilala

tank. They discussed supply channels with Irrigation Executive Engineer Venkateswara Prasad to prepare project reports.

TUDA Secretary Dr N V Sreekanth Babu stated that District Collector has sent proposals to government for rejuvenation of 20 tanks in the first phase. TUDA is seeking expert suggestions to proceed. TUDA will coordinate with ICLEI to leverage their expertise in urban flood management, watershed studies, groundwater monitoring, early warning systems, air quality management, solar energy, and biodiversity index.

These efforts will support climate and urban sustainability actions, he added. TUDA engineers Krishna Reddy, Ravindraiah and Basha were present.

New industries to come up in Nellore district

They will be set up in dry land areas on the western side of the district

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NELLORE

NELLORE is steadily transforming into an industrial hub with the establishment of several

major industries as multinational companies are coming forward to set up their units at several parts of the district.

On the occasion, District Collector Himanshu Shukla here on Tuesday explained to mediapersons about establishing new industries in the district. He said that following directions of the government, it was proposed to establish the industries in the dry land areas like Atmakur, Udayagiri, Vinjamur, Duthalur, and Jaladanki mandals, situated on the western side of the district in the interest of providing employment to the youth of those areas.

The Collector said that already the government has



District Collector Himanshu Shukla addressing mediapersons in Nellore on Tuesday.

entered into Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with several 11 multinational companies, while consultations are under progress with another 6 big units.

He narrated that the administration has already acquired as many as 3,200 acres of land against 6,000 acres related to Bharat Petroleum Company Limited (BPCL) while remaining 2,800 acres are underway in several stages. "If land acquisition is completed in time, founda-

tion stone for BPCL will be laid in February 2027," he said. While saying that all hurdles related to establishment of of Indosol at Kavali were cleared in the recent State cabinet meeting, the government has decided to allocate 2,777 acres of land to Indian Farmers Fertilizers Corporation's Kisan Special Economic Zone (IFFCO SEZ) at Racharlapadu village as the Kavali constituency is going to be an industrial township.

'AP implemented PMFBY from 2016 to '19'

- Later the State govt introduced its own free crop insurance scheme
- This was disclosed to MP Vemireddy Prabhakar Reddy by Union Minister of State for Agriculture Ramnath Thakur

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NELLORE

MP Vemireddy Prabhakar Reddy, sought details in the Lok Sabha regarding the implementation and status of the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) and the restructured weather-based crop insurance scheme (RWBCIS) in Andhra Pradesh over the last five years.

He asked whether it is true that approximately Rs 2,600 crore in claims was pending under PMFBY and RWBCIS in Andhra Pradesh as of June



2025, and whether it is true that applications from 35,000 farmers from Nellore district, with pending claims of Rs. 101 crore, have been pending since the 2022-23 Rabi crop season.

Responding to MP Vemireddy's questions, the Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Ramnath Thakur, stated that the Andhra Pradesh government initially implemented the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana

(PMFBY) from the 2016 kharif season to the 2019 kharif season. Subsequently, the state government discontinued the implementation of PMFBY and introduced its own free crop insurance scheme with its own funds.

He explained that after efforts by the Central government, the State government rejoined PMFBY based on e-crop data from the Kharif 2022 season. He further stated that a portion of the claims, including those of farmers from Nellore district, remain unpaid due to the non-receipt of the state government's share of the premium subsidy for the period from Rabi 2022-23 to Rabi 2024-25.

However, the Central government's share of the premium subsidy has been released. They explained that the claims have also been released to eligible farmers in the state from previous seasons.

TWO RS SMUGGLERS SENTENCED FOR 5 YEARS



HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUPATI

RSS ADJ court on Tuesday sent 2 smugglers to undergo 5 years imprisonment for smuggling red sanders logs. The court also ordered a penalty of Rs 6 lakh by the smugglers for illegal smuggling of red sanders.

According to prosecution, the smugglers were caught by the RSASTF (Red Sanders Anti-Smuggling Task force) when they were smuggling red sanders logs in the forest area of Nagapatla forest beat of T N Palem Section, Tirupati division and was arrested under Cr No 06/2017.

The smugglers were prosecuted in the ADJ court. They include Vijay Kumar and Mani from Thiruvananthapuram.

The judge Narasimha Murthy upheld the prosecution and sentenced the smugglers to 5 years imprisonment and imposed a penalty Rs 6 lakh on each of them. Following the conviction, the smugglers were handed over to the authorities of Nellore Central prison. Taskforce SP Srinivas appreciated the taskforce team who effectively persuaded the case with strong evidence resulting in the conviction of smugglers.

Cong leader demands Microsoft investments in Seema

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUPATI

SENIOR Congress leader Chinta Mohan asked for Microsoft investments in Rayalaseema districts like Tirupati, Anantapur, and Kadapa. He wants to change dry Rayalaseema into a rich area

Congress workers held a protest near Rajiv Gandhi statue here on Tuesday. They opposed BJP's plan to rename the Mahatma Gandhi Employment Guarantee Act

Speaking to medi persons, Chinta Mohan urged Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu to talk to Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella. Nadella, is from Rayalaseema, born in Rajampet.

Mohan blamed PM Modi for trying to send projects to Gujarat instead. He said local youth have no jobs and are suffering. "Microsoft can bring development here."

He also criticized Tirumala Tirupati Dev-



Congress leaders taking out a rally in Tirupati on Tuesday

asthanams (TTD) for giving VIP darshan tickets to TDP and BJP leaders. They ignore Congress and local people. For Vaikunta Ekadasi, he wants free special entry for Tirupati residents, not a lottery system.

Yarlappalli Gopi Gowd, Ravi, Tejovathi, Samiulla and Ravan were present.

'Bima Sankalp' drive in Tirupati postal division tomorrow

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUPATI

TIRUPATI Division Senior Superintendent of Post Offices, Major Syeda Tanveer, said that Postal Life Insurance (PLI) and Rural Postal Life Insurance (RPLI) schemes offered by India Post provide long-term financial security at low premium rates. The main objective of these schemes is to offer reliable life insurance protection to families across the country.

To strengthen awareness, a special drive titled 'Bima Sankalp 2.0' is being conducted in the Tirupati Division from December 18 to December 20. Speaking to the media in Tirupati on Tuesday, she explained that PLI policies are not limited to select groups and can be taken by people with a degree, diploma or ITI qualification, as well as by state and central government employees.

For rural residents, RPLI schemes provide insurance cover-



Senior Superintendent of Post Offices Major Syeda Tanveer speaking to the media in Tirupati on Tuesday

age to farmers, small traders and workers at affordable premium rates.

She said several digital options have been introduced to make premium payments easy for policyholders. Premiums can be paid through a mobile app, the official website, by visiting the nearest post office, or through standing instructions from a bank account. Door-step services are being provided in villages for premium collection and policy servicing.

No helmet-No petrol rule yielding results: SP

VANI MALLELA
TIRUPATI

IN a determined bid to see everyone wears helmet for safety, the Tirupati district police imposed 'No Helmet - No Petrol' rule in the district. Keeping in view more deaths in accidents involving two-wheelers due to the failure of wearing helmet, Tirupati police made wearing helmet for availing petrol compulsory which they hope will make the people invariably wear helmet for safety. District SP L Subba Rayudu observed that most of those who died in two-wheeler accidents were in the age group of 18-35 and in that fatal mishap, sizeable number were not wearing helmet.

Against the backdrop, SP Subba Rayudu said the rule 'No Helmet - No Petrol' was imposed to ensure safety to save life. While district Collector Dr S Venkateswar appreciated the SP for his efforts to enhance safety to save lives, he felt that wear-



Bikers wearing helmets in Tirupati

ing helmet will help save lives in accidents involving two-wheelers. Speaking to The Hans India, the SP said that after 'No Helmet - No Petrol' rule was imposed, there was visible improvement in two-wheeler riders wearing helmet and vowed that police would continue their efforts to see everyone

wears helmet for safety and not out of fear. Thus they display love for their families and responsibility.

He further said an aggressive campaign was also taken up through banners, flexis and awareness rallies to promote helmet wearing.

Naveen Kumar, a middle-aged man, said it was the

youth who are the main victims in the accidents as they are prone to speed driving and not following safety norms like wearing helmet. He welcomed 'No Helmet No Petrol' rule as it would see the youth also make it a point to wear helmet.

Harika, a working woman commended the Tirupati



SP L Subba Rayudu riding a bike wearing helmet

police's decision to enforce the 'No Helmet, No Petrol' rule. She stated that this strict measure is currently instilling the helmet-wearing habit among youth, ensuring they will definitely use helmets in the future. She emphasised that helmets will serve as a protective shield in their lives.

Hans India Classifieds	
CHANGE OF NAME I, KATIKA MOHAMMAD HANEEF (Old Name) S/o SHAIK MOHAMMED GHOUSE, R/o 14/622-7, Nakash Street, Kadapa, YSR Dist., A.P. I, Changed my name to KATIKA MOHAMMED HANEEF (New Name). Henceforth, I will be known as KATIKA MOHAMMAD HANEEF. (TH_RJP) I, PATAN GHOUSE BEE KHANAM (Old Name) W/o KATIKA MOHAMMED HANEEF, R/o 14/622-7, Nakash Street, Kadapa, YSR Dist., A.P. I, Changed my name to KATIKA MOHAMMED HANEEF (New Name). Henceforth, I will be known as KATIKA MOHAMMAD HANEEF. (TH_RJP) I, SHAIK MAHAMMADA SHAFIULLAH (Old Name) R/o D.No. 11/175-1, Kagalthalapenta, Ravindra Nagar, Kadapa City, YSR Kadapa Dist., A.P.-516003, India, have changed my name as SHAIK MOHAMMED SHAFIULLAH (New Name). (TH_33800) I, SHAIK DARBAR SHAVALLI S/o Shaik Khader Basha, R/o 3/173-4-185, R K Nagar, Chinnu Chowk, Cuddapah, YSR District, Andhra Pradesh, do hereby declare that my correct Date of Birth is 21-01-2006 as per my SSC records and Aadhaar Card. The Date of Birth 21-01-2003 mentioned in my Passport is incorrect. (TH_33800) CHANGE OF SURNAME & NAME I, KASTURJI VINOD (Old Name), Resident of Flat No.403, Mahaveer Heights, Sri Nagar Colony, Magunta Layout, Nellore, SPNR Nellore District, A.P hereby declare that I have changed my name as VINOD RAO (New Name) S/o KISHANSHINGH BABULSHINGH RAO. Henceforth, I will be known as VINOD RAO (TH_MADAN) I, VINOD SANDHYA W/o KASTURJI VINOD (Old Name), Resident of Flat No.403, Mahaveer Heights, Sri Nagar Colony, Magunta Layout, Nellore, SPNR Nellore District, A.P hereby declare that I have changed my name as SANDHYA VINOD RAO (New Name) W/o VINOD RAO. Henceforth, I will be known as SANDHYA VINOD RAO (TH_MADAN) CHANGE OF SURNAME I, PONNURU MASTAN RAO S/o PONNURU HAZARATHAJAH (Old Name) resident of D.No.10-2-64, Sundaragiri Vani Street, Santhapet, Nellore, SPNR Nellore Dt., (A.P) hereby declare that I have changed my surname as PONNURU MASTAN RAO S/o PONNURU HAZARATHAJAH (New Name). Henceforth, I will be known as PONNURU MASTAN RAO (TH_MADAN) I, INUGURU SUMAN KUMAR S/o INUGURU SESHAGIRIRAO (Old Name) resident of D.No.16-13-216/403, Jasswin Heights, 5th line, Haranathapuram, Nellore, SPNR Nellore Dt. (A.P) hereby declare that I have changed my Surname as INUGURU SUMAN KUMAR S/o INUGURU SESHAGIRIRAO (New Name). Henceforth, I will be known as INUGURU SUMAN KUMAR (TH_MADAN) BOOK YOUR COPY THE HANS INDIA Call Center: 9705555551	LOST OF CERTIFICATES I, MALLIKARJUNA S/o Late G. Sankararajah Chetty, Age 62, D.No. 13-6-619/A, P.K.Layout, Tirupati Town and District. Was missing of 74 shares of Apollo Hospital Enterprises Ltd, Vide Polio No. 4477, Certificate No.354478, Distinctive No. 5714161 to 5714234 No shares: 74 on 16-07-2025 at about 12.00NN. While I was shifting house hold articles to another house of shifting my House. Immediately made searches about we 74 shares at surrounding areas of his house at P.K.Layout, Tirupati, but got no clues. If somebody finds it, please contact 98491 50352. (TH_33800) CHANGE OF NAME I, VENKATA SUMAN M Resident of Flat No.401, Eswar Avenue, Nethaji Nagar, 2nd Street, Padmavathi Centre, Podalakur Road, Nellore-524004. have changed my name from VENKATA SUMAN M to VENKAT MALEPATI vide affidavit dated 15/12/2025 at Nellore. (TH_MADAN) CHANGE OF NAME I, PATAN SHAFI (OLDNAME) D. No :25-81/3, Ashok nagar Mbt Road, Punganur Town and mandal chittoor dist Pin: 517247A. P i have changed my name As SHAIK SHAFI (Newname) (TH_1429) CHANGE OF NAME I, SHAIK AAREEF, S/o RASOOL R/at Kottalpalali (V), Ganugapenta Panchayat, Porumamilla (M) YSR Kadapa Dist, AP- 516228, India, have changed my name from SHAIK ARIF to SHAIK AAREEF. Henceforth, I shall be known as SHAIK AAREEF for all purposes. (TH_RJP) NOTICE Readers are advised to make appropriate enquiries while responding to advertise ments in these columns. THE HANS INDIA (Hyderabad Media House PVT Ltd) does not vouch for anyclaims made by the advertisers. Hyderabad Media House PVT Ltd. shall not be held responsible/liable for any consequences in case such claims are found to be false.
CHANGE OF NAME I, YARABOLU SREE HARSHA REDDY, in my Passport my Father's name was mentioned is YARABOLU VIJAY SANKAR REDDY (Old Name), Residing at 16-16-496/3-F2, 2nd Floor, Sahasra Pride homes, Ward No.16-1V, Near Simhapuri hospital, Yalama Vari dinne, Nellore, SPNR Nellore Dt., AP. Here by declare that my father name Spelling changed as YARABOLU VIJAYA SANKAR REDDY (New Name). Here by declare that my father both names are one and the same person. (TH_MADAN) CHANGE OF NAME I, KONDETI SREENIVASULU (OLD NAME), S/O KONDETI CHINNA-GANGAIAH, R/O D. NO. 9/380-4, SREE RAM NAGAR, RLY KODUR TOWN AND MANDAL, ANNAMAYYA DIST, A. P- 516101, INDIA. I CHANGED MY NAME TO KONDETI SRINIVASULU. HENCEFORTH, I WILL BE KNOWN AS KONDETI SRINIVASULU (NEW NAME). (TH_33800) CHANGE OF NAME I, RAJANI RATHORE (Old name) has changed my name to RATHORE RAJANI PRAVEEN KUMAR (New name) W/o. PRAVEEN KUMAR RATHORE, Resident of 16-4-1839, 1st Floor, Rohini Nagar, Haranathapuram, Nellore, SPNR Nellore Dt, AP- 524003 (TH_MADAN) CHANGE OF NAME I, PATAN RESHMA (OLDNAME) D. No :25-81/3, Ashok nagar Mbt Road, Punganur Town and mandal chittoor dist Pin: 517247A. P i have changed my name as SHAIK RESHMA (Newname) (TH_1428) CHANGE OF NAME I, MITTAMALLA ARUNA alias YEDDU ARUNA, W/o YEDDU SUDHAKAR RAJU, R/at Thottigaripalle (V), Badvel (M), YSR Kadapa Dist, AP, hereby declare that MITTAMALLA ARUNA (before marriage) and YEDDU ARUNA (after marriage) refer to one and the same person. Henceforth, I shall be known as YEDDU ARUNA for all purposes. (TH_RJP)	

Integrated township by TTD for devotees to come up near Alipiri



TTD chairman B R Naidu speaking to the media in Tirumala on Tuesday. EO Anil Kumar Singhal and Additional EO Ch Venkaiah Chowdary are seen.



TTD chairman B R Naidu and EO Anil Kumar Singhal at the trust board meeting in Tirumala on Tuesday

PRADEEP VENNELAKANTI
TIRUPATI

TIRUMALA Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Trust Board has taken an important decision to improve facilities for devotees by approving the construction of an integrated township near Alipiri in Tirupati. The project will come up on 20 acres and will serve as a base camp to meet the growing accommodation needs of devotees.

The decision was taken at the TTD Board meeting held in Tirumala on Tuesday under the chairmanship of B R Naidu. The board approved town planning proposals and the appointment of an architect. Executive Officer AK Singhal, Additional EO Ch Venkaiah Chowdary, JEO V Veerabrahmam and other members attended the meeting.

The township will be developed at the TTD-run SV

- TTD trust board approves the new facility in 20 acre to meet growing accommodation needs
- Sri Venkateswara temple to be constructed at Bandra in Mumbai with Rs 14.4 cr
- TTD junior colleges will have midday meal for day scholars
- Sri Padmavathi children's heart centre to get state-of-the-art facilities with Rs 48 cr granta

Institute of Traditional Sculpture and Architecture, which has about 35 acre land. As part of the plan, transport facilities will be arranged from the township using RTC buses and other modes. Since the site is very close to the Alipiri footpath, it will be convenient for devotees who wish to trek to Tirumala. However, the Institute of Sculpture may be shifted to another location.

TTD chairman B R Naidu said the board approved the construction of a Sri Venkateswara temple at Bandra in Mumbai at an estimated cost of Rs 14.40 crore. It was also decided to rename roads and

major junctions in Tirumala after figures associated with Lord Venkateswara, Vaishnava traditions, the Alwars and Annamacharya.

An expert committee has been formed to finalise the names. A separate wing will be created for the protection and conservation of ancient and heritage structures in Tirumala and along the footpaths, with experienced officers to oversee the work.

The board cleared a plan to grow sacred and divine trees over 100 acres at Palamaner to supply wood for temple chariots and flagpoles. An additional Rs 48 crore was

sanctioned to strengthen advanced medical facilities at the Sri Padmavathi Children's Heart Centre in Tirupati.

Based on recommendations of the Education Sub-Committee, the board approved the introduction of digital classrooms, CCTV cameras, computers, software and staff in 31 TTD-run educational institutions. A new comprehensive policy for the construction and management of donor cottages will also be introduced.

For Sri Siddheswara Swamy temple at Talakona, Rs 14.10 crore was sanctioned for the second phase of renovation works, in addition to Rs 4 crore approved earlier. Hostel accommodation at Sri Padmavathi Women's Degree College in Tirupati will be expanded by adding 270 seats to the existing strength of 2,100.

The board decided to continue TTD's responsibility for road maintenance,

repairs and street lighting in Tirupati. It also resolved to seek government approval to create 18 new Potu Supervisor posts at Srivari Potu. As a welfare measure, the board approved providing midday meals to day scholars of SV Junior College and SPW Junior College, on the lines of the state government's scheme. It also cleared the construction of a pilgrim accommodation complex at the Sri Veer-anjaneya Swamy temple in Kondagattu, Jagtial district.

In another major decision, the board approved salary hikes for 62 archakas, parisharakas, potu workers and prasadam distributors working in TTD-associated temples. Archakas' salaries will be increased from Rs 25,000 to Rs 45,000, parisharakas from Rs 23,140 to Rs 30,000, potu workers from Rs 24,279 to Rs 30,000, and prasadam distributors from Rs 23,640 to Rs 30,000.

Minister vows support to beleaguered aquaculture

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

STATING that the aquaculture sector has become a key pillar of Andhra Pradesh's economy, minister for agriculture and fisheries K Atchannaidu said the coalition government is extending full support for the development of aquaculture with the prime objective of increasing farmers' income.

The minister was the chief guest at the oath-taking ceremony of the governing body members of the Andhra Pradesh State Aquaculture Development Authority, held at the fisheries department office at Penamaluru near here on Tuesday.

Addressing the gathering, Atchannaidu said the prevailing conditions in the global market and the tariffs imposed by US President Donald Trump have impacted aquaculture farmers. He added that the state government is taking measures in coordination with the Central government to overcome these challenges.

He stressed the need for extensive promotion of the quality and credibility of Andhra Pradesh shrimp across the country and globally. Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, he said, is continuously striving to explore new markets, boost exports and ensure remunerative prices for farmers. Emphasising quality consciousness, the Minister said farmers would receive better prices only by maintaining high standards.

Atchannaidu noted that Andhra Pradesh contributes 29 per cent to the country's



Minister for agriculture and fisheries K Atchannaidu attends swearing-in ceremony of governing body members of the AP State Aquaculture Development Authority at the fisheries department office at Penamaluru in Vijayawada on Tuesday

- Noting that US tariffs and international conditions have hit the sector, Atchannaidu says CM Chandrababu Naidu is focusing on new markets, exports and mandatory registration with geo-tagging of ponds; 48% already registered
- Electricity subsidy for aquaculture farmers raised from Rs 800 cr to Rs 1,200 cr, applicable only to registered farmers

fisheries sector. He said the Chief Minister has directed that registration of fish and shrimp ponds based on survey numbers be made mandatory, and so far, 48 per cent of ponds across the state have been registered. The government has removed difficulties earlier faced by farmers in pond registration and has also introduced geo-tagging of ponds.

The minister further stated that aquaculture farmers have been provided with electricity subsidy worth Rs 800 crore so far, which will be increased to Rs 1,200 crore. He clarified that the subsidy will be applicable only to registered farmers.

Atchannaidu asserted that the development of backward and weaker sections is possible only under the coa-

lition government. He was speaking after participating as chief guest, along with BC welfare minister S Savitha, at the oath-taking ceremony of the chairman and directors of the Andhra Pradesh State Kalinga Vaishya Development Corporation in Vijayawada. The oath was administered to corporation chairman Boyina Govindarajulu and other directors.

He recalled that during the previous TDP government, BCs had received the highest number of jobs and medical seats. On the issue of including Vaishyas in the OBC category, he said discussions are underway with the Central government, adding that Union minister K Ram Mohan Naidu had also taken up the matter with the Prime Minister.

AGE LIMIT FOR CHILD CARE LEAVE FOR GOVT EMPLOYEES REMOVED

- State govt issues orders doing away with upper age limit for children, allowing eligible employees to use CCL at any stage of service up to retirement
- Benefit extended to women employees and single male employees, including unmarried, widower and divorcee staff and covers children with disabilities
- Total eligible CCL of 180 days can now be availed in up to 10 spells during entire service, subject to existing conditions

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE state government on Tuesday issued orders removing the upper age limit for children for availing Child Care Leave (CCL) by government employees, permitting eligible employees to utilise the leave facility at any time during their service up to retirement.

The finance department issued the orders with immediate effect, extending the benefit to women employees as well as single male employees, including unmarried, widower and divorcee employees, subject to existing eligibility conditions. The revised policy also covers children with disabilities.

As per the orders, Child Care Leave may be availed for child rearing, attending

to children's health needs, or caring for them during school or college examinations, illness and other related requirements.

The government recalled that it had initially permitted women employees to avail Child Care Leave for a maximum period of 60 days during their entire service. This entitlement was later enhanced to 180 days, to be availed in a maximum of three spells. Subsequently, the facility was extended to single male employees on similar terms.

In a further revision, the government increased the permissible number of spells for availing the eligible 180 days of Child Care Leave from three to 10 spells during the entire service period.

Employees who had already availed 60 days or part thereof were allowed to

AP JAC welcomes the decision

VIJAYAWADA

THE Andhra Pradesh Joint Action Committee (AP JAC) Amaravati has welcomed the state government's decision to remove the 18-year age ceiling on Child Care Leave (CCL) and thanked Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu for fulfilling his promise to women employees.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, AP JAC leaders said the new Government Order allows women employees to avail CCL at any time during their service, regardless of their

children's age, as per rules. They noted that over 60 per cent of the state's workforce would benefit, enhancing the dignity and welfare of working mothers.

Welcoming the decision, AP JAC Amaravati women's wing chairperson Pare Lakshmi, general secretary Ponnuru Vijayalakshmi, associate chairperson Saikam Siva Kumar Reddy and treasurer Dr Sailakshmi said AP has become the first state in the country to remove the age restriction on Child Care Leave.

operational guidelines.

The government has now formally extended the removal of the upper age limit to both women employees and single male employees, including in cases involving differently-abled children. All other conditions stipulated in the earlier government orders will continue to apply.

utilise the extended period within the revised limit of 10 spells, excluding the spells already availed.

Earlier, the government had removed the upper age limit for women employees and permitted them to avail Child Care Leave at any stage of service before retirement, while directing the finance department to issue detailed

- Collector calls for micro plan for the event focusing on programmes, tourism facilities and logistics
- It has become a major attraction for bird lovers and nature enthusiasts as over 10000 migratory birds visit the area every winter

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUPATI

GOOD news for bird lovers and tourists. The much-anticipated Flamingo Festival will be held at Pulicat Lake in the Sullurpet constituency of Tirupati district for two days on January 10 and 11, 2026, the district administration has announced.

District collector Dr S Venkateswar has directed officials to begin preparations immediately to ensure the smooth and successful conduct of the festival. A review meeting in this regard was held on Tuesday at the local Collectorate with conservator of forests and zoo curator C Selvam and regional director of tourism Dr R Ramana Prasad.

Addressing the meeting, the collector said thousands of flamingos migrate to the Pulicat Lake region every year, making it essential to organise the festival in a scientific and well-planned manner. He instructed officials to prepare a detailed

Flamingo Fest to light up Pulicat on Jan 10-11



District collector Dr S Venkateswar speaking at a review meeting on the Flamingo Festival in Tirupati on Tuesday. Conservator of forests C Selvam, tourism RD R Ramana Prasad and others are also seen.

micro plan covering event programmes, tourism facilities, stage arrangements and overall logistics.

Special attention will be given to arrangements at key locations including Pulicat-Nellapattu, BV Palem, Atakanithippa, Irakkam Island, Ubbalamadugu and Periyapalayam. The Collector stressed that the Flamingo Festival should be developed into one of the major tourism events of the state, with all departments working in close coordination.

He also called for wide publicity at the state and national levels to attract more tourists. Plans are to be drawn up for extensive promotion through posters, logos, banners, publicity material and digital display boards. All departments were asked to submit their action plans at the earliest.

District tourism and culture officer M Janardhan Reddy, APTDC EE Subramanyam, tourism officials and event organisers attended the meeting.

It may be recalled that Nelapattu Bird Sanctuary, one of the largest pelicanries in the region, serves as an important breeding and roosting site for both long-distance and local migratory birds. The Flamingo Festival, which began in 2001 as a tourism revenue initiative, has grown into a major attraction. Each winter, around 10,000 to 12,000 migratory birds from nearly 80 species visit Pulicat, making it a haven for birdwatchers and nature lovers.

VB-GRAMIN Bill raises fears among rural workers

NARESH NANDAM
ONGOLE

THE Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (VK-GRAMIN) VB-G RAM G Bill which was introduced in Parliament on Monday to replace the two-decade-old Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), promises increase in workdays from 100 to 125, but masks fundamental changes that could leave rural workers worse off. Experts estimate that states like Andhra Pradesh could lose up to Rs 5,000 crore in Central funding, likely forcing

- Bill promises 125 workdays but replaces the legal right to employment with budget-based allocations, risking funding cuts of up to Rs 5,000 crore for states like Andhra Pradesh
- Cost burden shifts to states, which must fund 40% of expenses and bear any excess spending, while a clause allows suspension of work for 60 days during peak farm seasons.
- Mandatory tech-heavy systems and Centrally approved plans may exclude vulnerable workers and weaken scheme's role as a flexible safety net during rural distress

them to cap work even when villagers need it.

The most significant shift transforms employment from a legal right into a budget-controlled programme. Un-

der MGNREGA, households could demand work and the government was legally bound to provide it within 15 days or pay unemployment allowance.



The new law replaces this with 'normative allocation' based on fixed budgets decided by the Central government for each state. Work will now depend on budget ceilings rather than worker demand.

Financial burden shifts dramatically to states, which must now contribute 40 per cent of costs (10 per cent for northeastern states).

Any spending beyond the allocated ceiling is borne en-

tirely by state budgets. A controversial provision allows states to suspend all scheme work for 60 days during peak agricultural seasons.

For landless labourers who depend on the programme when farm work is scarce or exploitative, this legally closes a crucial safety net precisely when income is most needed.

Technology requirements compound access barriers. Mandatory biometric attendance, GPS tracking and app-based systems may exclude elderly workers, those with poor connectivity or worn fingerprints, and people lacking proper documentation.

All work must now come

from pre-approved Viksit Gram Panchayat Plans integrated with national infrastructure systems. This removes MGNREGA's flexibility for urgent, simple employment during distress, favouring large infrastructure projects requiring multi-scheme coordination.

Chakradhar Buddha, coordinator for LibTech India, an NGO, observed that many provisions of the VB-GRAMIN Act are unfair. He said that the employment system shifts from a demand-driven legal entitlement with relatively simple ground-level processes to a Centrally-controlled, technology-heavy

scheme, where budget constraints and digital compliance may override workers' survival needs. He said that Andhra Pradesh used to receive feedback and suggestions on best practices for the MGNREGA through APNA (Andhra Pradesh NGOs Alliance).

He advised the state, which played a key role in the design and implementation of the MGNREGA, to retake the lead and restart consultations with stakeholders and the NGOs network to propose actionable changes that help workers from all regions receive work when they really need it and wages on time.

IN BRIEF



Cong MLA raises 'Vote Chori' issue in Assembly, Oppn opposes debate

BELAGAVI: Congress MLA B R Patil on Tuesday tried to raise the issue of alleged "vote theft" in the Karnataka Assembly, claiming that attempts were made to prevent his election as the legislator. The MLA from Aland assembly constituency in Kalaburagi wanted a discussion, but the opposition objected to it, saying that until the Special Investigation Team submits its report on 'Vote Chori', a discussion cannot take place.

"There were attempts to stop me from entering the Assembly. The Special Investigation Team has identified the accused in the 'vote chori' scam," the Aland MLA said in the House. Minister Priyank Kharge supported Patil, saying the MLA should be given a chance. "He should be given a chance to speak. There were attempts to steal votes for Rs 70 per vote."

BJP MLA V Sunil Kumar objected to the demand, saying, "Let the Home Minister table the SIT report on 'Vote Chori' as well as Dharmasthala. Then only the discussion on this topic can happen." The issue of vote theft was raised by Leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, who alleged that attempts were made to delete over 5,000 votes in the Aland assembly segment.

The SIT has so far arrested one person from West Bengal for trying to delete votes using an application 'OTP Bazaar'. The SIT has also filed a charge sheet in this case, naming the BJP candidate Subhash Guttadar, his son Harshanand Guttadar, Adya and four others in this case.

Separate nodal officer in all dists to prevent female foeticides

BELAGAVI : Accepting that the female foeticide has not stopped in the state, Karnataka Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao on Tuesday said that the government is taking strict measures to prevent it. The minister said the government is appointing separate nodal officers in all districts and tightening measures to prevent foeticide, which he called a "social evil". He also assured that the government will consider strengthening legislation to control such activities. The minister was responding to a question by BJP MLC C T Ravi in the Legislative Council. "Female foeticides have certainly not stopped. If you look at the sex ratio, there is a lot of difference. I accept that this is happening," Rao said. "Foeticides are not happening under pressure; voluntarily, it is happening, for not wanting a girl child."

These things are happening based on the sex determination of the foetus at some hospitals. Sex determination is illegal, but with the advancement in technology, portable ultrasound machines have been developed, which can be easily carried anywhere, and scans and tests can be done.

This needs to be controlled. We will bring it to the notice of the central government," he said.

In some districts and in a few hospitals, a higher number of male child births is happening.

It is found with the help of intelligence input, the minister said.

Man arrested for attempt to grab 532 acres of govt, forest land: Khandre

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BELAGAVI

FOREST, Ecology and Environment Minister Eshwar B. Khandre said that police have taken into custody MB Nemanna Gowda alias MB Manmatha for allegedly attempting to illegally acquire large tracts of forest and government land at Kengeri B.M. Kaval using forged documents.

Addressing the media,

Khandre said the accused had submitted fake documents and obtained court orders in an attempt to grab 532 acres of forest and government land, of which 482 acres fall under forest land. He added that Manmatha had previously made a similar attempt to claim ownership over 512 acres and 26 guntas of forest and government land by producing false records.

Khandre said that follow-

ing these attempts, the Assistant Conservator of Forests had lodged a complaint at the Mudigere Circle Police Station on November 28, after which the local Tahsildar also filed a complaint. Based on these complaints, police registered an FIR and have now taken the accused into custody.

He expressed confidence that the investigation would reveal the full conspiracy behind the attempted land

grab, including identifying all individuals involved in facilitating the illegal claim over valuable forest and government land.

The Minister said he had observed that some officials and government advocates were directly or indirectly assisting land grabbers attempting to illegally acquire forest land worth thousands of crores of rupees.

In this regard, he has written to the Chief Min-

ister, seeking a CID probe or a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to thoroughly investigate the matter.

Khandre issued a stern warning, stating that any attempt to encroach upon forest land through forged documents will not be tolerated.

"As Forest Minister, I will not allow anyone to grab forest land. This should serve as a warning to all," he said.



Congress will certainly return to power in 2028: Sidda

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BELAGAVI

CHIEF Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday asserted that the Congress will return to power in Karnataka in 2028 with the people's mandate, just as it did in 2023, and said the BJP would continue to remain in the Opposition.

Speaking in the Legislative Assembly at Suvarna Soudha while responding to questions raised by the Opposition, the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said the Congress government enjoys the support of 140 MLAs and that there was no need for the Opposition to create unnecessary speculation.

Referring to a popular proverb, Siddaramaiah remarked that the role of the Opposition seemed to be adding salt to a burning wound. He said that despite repeated provocations, none of the ruling party legislators would be swayed. "The people have blessed me to serve as Chief Minister for five years. We have the strength of 140 MLAs, and the Opposition need not indulge in sour commentary," he said.

The Chief Minister said the Congress government clearly understands the pulse of the people. "Just



as the people blessed us in 2023, they will do so again in 2028. The people of Karnataka will never bring the BJP to power," he asserted.

Siddaramaiah alleged that although the BJP has ruled the state twice, it never came to power with a clear popular mandate. He claimed that in 2008 and 2018, the BJP formed the government through defections under 'Operation Kamala' and entered power through the back door rather than through people's blessings. He said this clearly showed that the people of the state do not favour the BJP.

Recalling the post-2018 political developments, Siddaramaiah said the Congress had formed a coalition government with the JD(S) in 2019 with the intention of preventing the BJP from coming to power, but the BJP questioned even that alliance. The Chief Minister said that while the Congress follows the final word of its high command, the BJP has failed to arrive at a consensus even in the selection of its party president. He alleged that frustration and jealousy were evident within the BJP ranks.

"We will provide a stable government for five years

and face the next election confidently. In 2013 and again in 2023, the people gave Congress a mandate. The BJP has never received such a mandate and will not receive it in the future either," Siddaramaiah said, adding that the BJP would continue to sit in the Opposition.

Quoting poet Kanakadasa, he said leadership was not about individuals but collective responsibility. "This is not my government, it is our government. I am the Chief Minister now and will remain so until the high command decides otherwise," he concluded.

Four key bills on urban governance, transport and public trusts tabled in Assembly

BELAGAVI

THE Karnataka government on Tuesday tabled four bills in the state Assembly, aiming to modify administrative structures and enhance various authorities across the state.

The Bombay Public Trust (Karnataka Amendment) Bill was introduced to appoint the regional commissioner of the Belagavi region as its Charity Commissioner, the Deputy Commissioner of the district concerned as the Joint Charity Commissioner and the

jurisdictional Assistant Commissioners and Tehsildars as the Deputy Charity Commissioner and Assistant Charity Commissioner.

The Karnataka State Road Safety Authority (Amendment) Bill was presented in the House to omit the upper limit in levy and collection of one-time cess at the time of vehicle registration.

Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Heritage Area Development Authority (second amendment) Bill was introduced to include the Director of the

Town and Country Planning Department and the Chief Town Planner of Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) as members of the Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Heritage Area Development Authority.

The Bengaluru Metropolitan Land Transport Authority (BMLTA) (Amendment) Bill was introduced to make provisions to include the mayors and the commissioners of the newly formed five municipal corporations in Bengaluru.

Assembly clears second amendment to Greater Bengaluru Governance Bill

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BELAGAVI

THE Karnataka Legislative Assembly on Tuesday passed the Greater Bengaluru Governance Bill (Second Amendment), 2024, paving the way for key changes in the composition of the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA).

Presenting the amendment in the Assembly, Deputy Chief Minister and Bengaluru Development Minister DK Shivakumar said the revision was necessary to correct omissions and ensure proper representation of elected representatives residing within the Bruhat

Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) limits.

Shivakumar explained that certain areas falling under the constituencies of Rajya Sabha MP Sudha Murty and Chikkaballapur MP Dr K Sudhakar have now been brought under the BBMP jurisdiction. However, several public representatives residing within the civic body's limits were not included in the GBA member list. The amendment seeks to include local body representatives and Members of the Legislative Council in the authority.

He further said that since the Chief Minister serves as the head of the Greater Bengaluru Authority, the Chief Secretary and the

Additional Chief Secretary of the Urban Development Department have been included as members.

In addition, the Finance Department Secretary will also be part of the authority.

These gaps were noticed during the first GBA meeting, which opposition members had not attended due to political reasons, prompting the government to introduce the amendment, he said.

During the debate, BJP MLA Suresh Kumar raised concerns over the provision of nominated members,

pointing out that with 369 elected BBMP councillors already in place, adding nominated members— at the ratio of one per

20,000 residents—could create confusion and raise questions about the structure's appropriateness.

Responding to the concern, Shivakumar clarified that the Greater Bengaluru Authority is not an elected body but a state-level administrative institution. He said elections would be held within six months whenever new areas are merged into the BBMP.

Until then, nominated representation was proposed to ensure transitional governance. However, accepting the opposition's suggestion, he announced that the government would drop the provision for nominated members.

Request made to BCCI to hold IPL's opening match in Bengaluru: Venkatesh Prasad

MYSURU

BENGALURU is likely to host the opening match of this year's Indian Premier League (IPL), with the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) formally requesting the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to conduct the marquee fixture in the city.

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on December 12 had announced that cricket matches will be allowed at Bengaluru's Chinnaswamy Stadium with safety measures.

"We've allowed cricket matches to be held at the stadium, taking necessary precautions to ensure safety and maintain Bengaluru's reputation," Shivakumar said.

Speaking to reporters in Mysuru on Tuesday, KSCA

President and former Indian pacer Venkatesh Prasad said discussions have already been held with the BCCI on hosting the IPL opener in Bengaluru.

The BCCI was also actively considering the proposal, Prasad added. Traditionally, the IPL opening match is held at the home ground of the team that won the trophy in the previous season.

However, Prasad said certain issues that arose during the Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) victory celebrations had led to confusion earlier. Following the KSCA elections, he said the cricket association had held discussions with the state government to ensure smooth conduct of the matches.

"The Chief Minister (Siddaramaiah) and the Deputy Chief Minister (D.K. Shiva-



kumar) have already given a green signal for hosting the tournament. I have also spoken to the Home Minister over the phone. The date for this year's IPL opening

match will be finalised soon," Prasad said.

He added that Bengaluru would continue to host IPL, international matches and games across all formats.

Prasad also said star cricketer Virat Kohli would be visiting Bengaluru for the Vijay Hazare Trophy matches.

He noted that Bengaluru has three stadiums, includ-

ing the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium, and a decision on the venue for the matches is yet to be taken. He also said discussions are underway to develop an international standard cricket stadium in Mysuru. Referring to the past three years, Prasad acknowledged that the cricket association had faced internal issues, but assured that his team would resolve all pending matters and prioritise the promotion of quality cricket.

Deputy Chief Minister Shivakumar had said, "Home Minister G. Parameshwara has been tasked with overseeing the arrangements, and the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) President Venkatesh Prasad and police officials will discuss the details." Shivakumar emphasised that the decision was made to uphold Bengal-

uru's reputation and prevent any untoward incidents. The decision follows suspension of cricket matches at the stadium after 11 people died in a stampede during an RCB victory celebration in July this year.

The Chinnaswamy Stadium had also lost the opportunity to hold a Women's World Cup match due to security concerns. The stadium has not hosted any matches since the stampede on June 4, in which 11 people were killed.

The announcement came after KSCA President Venkatesh Prasad and other office-bearers met Deputy CM Shivakumar in Belagavi. They had also met the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and had submitted a request for the resumption of cricket matches.

Employment guarantee scheme must be free from political interferences

Revamping welfare schemes is a good idea, so changes in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, per se, are not objectionable. However, the way it is being done smacks of a desire to score political points. It begins with the name. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is proposed to be replaced with the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Grameen), or VB G RAM Priyanka Gandhi Vadra reacted with “Why are they removing Mahatma Gandhi’s name? He is considered the biggest Indian leader. Whenever such a name changes, a lot of expenditure happens in stationery and

paperwork.” More than that it makes the government a target for its detractors, which is increasingly coming under the influence of Gandhi haters. This does no good to the government under the Sangh Parivar, many of whose members have expressed admiration for Nathuram Godse. Enacted by the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government in 2005, the MGNREGA guarantees 100 days of work in villages. The Act has a provision for an unemployment allowance. “MGNREGA is bottom-up, people-centred, demand-driven, self-selecting and rights-based programme. It provides a legal guarantee for wage employment by providing allowances and compensation both in

cases of failure to provide work on demand and delays in payment of wages for work undertaken,” an official document says. The new Bill proposes several changes. It raises the 100-day guarantee to 125. Also, the scheme will no longer be demand-driven. Further, states will bear the financial burden partially. At present, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is entirely a Centrally-sponsored scheme—that is, the Centre provides 100 per cent of wages, while states take care of a small part of the expenses in hiring skilled labour and arranging materials. Under G Ram G, the Centre’s contribution will be limited to 60 per cent, whereas most states will have to spend 40 per cent. For

Northeastern and Himalayan states, this ratio will be 90:10. The new legislation proposes that work under the revamped scheme will not be available during the peak agricultural season. The government will rely on biometrics and geo-tagging for transparency. Non-availability of work during the peak agricultural season will be vehemently protested by the Left and civil society organisations. Communist leaders are no longer as powerful or influential as they were when the MNREGA came into being but Left-leaning NGOs and public intellectuals are still a force to reckon with.

The government will have a tough time tackling their resistance. At any rate, this provision privileges the interests of farmers over labour-

ers; it will be interesting to see how the BJP will face the criticism of being anti-poor. Besides, states, especially those under non-BJP parties, will be loath to share the burden of the rural employment guarantee scheme.

There are also states like Kerala, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, and Punjab, which face tremendous fiscal challenges, and it will be extremely difficult for them to finance the revamped scheme. Therefore, all stakeholders must try to sort out the matter in a spirit of cooperative federalism. The Centre should be willing to accept reasonable amendments to the proposed legislation, and states should rise above party and parochial interests to make the scheme better.

LETTERS

Use AI for maintaining peace

THIS has reference to your editorial ‘AI and militancy make a potent combination’ (Dec 16). It has aptly described about AI having become what it is today, which is comparable to the prevailing gun culture in the US and bullets fired by terrorists. People remain clueless about impending strikes at them. This free for all ready to use technology is fast becoming a peril to the peace-loving society due to phishing and cyberattacks. AI must be used in places where human involvement and vigil against the enemy are needed 24x7 throughout the year.

S Lakshmi, Hyderabad

Manekshaw was one of a kind

The opinion piece on Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw ‘Surrender or get wiped out’, Manekshaw’s ultimatum to Pak is a standout battle cry’ (THI Dec 16) rightly evokes a military mind where wit reinforced, rather than diluted, authority. Manekshaw’s genius lay in combining strategic patience with an unshakeable moral confidence. His famous ‘I’m always ready, sweetie’ was not banter but a declaration rooted in preparedness. Equally prescient was his warning that premature political orders, if issued, “may never be received,” a rare assertion of professional integrity in civil and military relations. His humour, often quoted, was forged in far harsher circumstances. The surrender of 93,000 Pakistani soldiers was not merely a battlefield triumph but an unprecedented strategic leverage. That such leverage failed to deliver a final settlement on Kashmir remains one of India’s costliest diplomatic omissions. Against this legacy, Pakistan’s present attempts to elevate General Munir to Manekshaw’s stature appear aspirational at best. After all, history, not rank or rhetoric, confers stature.

Harsh Pawaria, Rohtak

Name change or a game changer?

THE decision of the Union Government to increase the guaranteed work to 125 days per rural household and focus on four areas like increasing rural connectivity, climate resilience, rural livelihood infrastructure and water security under the newly named rural employment guaranteed Act is a welcome move. But changing the name of the scheme introduced in 2005 by the UPA regime should have been avoided. The NDA government has been gradually reducing its budgetary allocation stating that the scheme had some loopholes. Although an increase to 125 days per household is good, it still falls short of the demand for 200 days work a year. The government should increase the wages and make the ratio of Union and States’ contribution to 9:1 instead of 6:4 as the financial status of most of the States are not good.

A G Rajmohan, Anantapur-515004

‘G RAM G’ brings no cheer

The proposed revised form of MGNREGA, which will be renamed as VB G RAM G Bill, has come up with unlimited promise, but limited guarantee. The nature of supply driven job provision instead of the erstwhile demand will result in cutting the size of resources to the needy people. The proposed ban on the works under the scheme during peak agricultural season would put job seekers at a disadvantageous position regarding their negotiations of daily wages. The minimising of central share from ninety percent to sixty percent for the scheme would burden cash strapped states further. Instead of strengthening the scheme, the Centre has come up with a weakened version when it is aiming for Viksit Bharath.

Dr D V G Sankara Rao, Srikulam

Name spree continues with G RAM G

THE Narendra Modi-led Union Government has decided to replace the world’s largest rural jobs programme MGNAREGA with Viksit Bharat Gurantee Rojgar Ajeevika Machine Gramin (VB- G RAM G) after earlier renaming Raj Bhavan and the PMO, among others. Though the renamed rural jobs programme is aimed at increasing the number days to 125 from 100, it has a paused provision for 60 days in a year. Further it changed the Centre and state ratio of financial commit from 90:10 to 60:40 and capped budget support. This implies that some States must shell from their coffers if they spend more than what is allotted to them. However, app-based attendance, Aadhar linked payments and geotagging workites are welcome as these become part of the law and can enhance transparency and accountability.

Pratapa Reddy Yaramala, Tiruvuru (AP)

thehansreader@gmail.com

BENGALURU ONLINE

Congress will return to power in 2028 as well: CM

BELAGAVI: Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday asserted that the Congress will return to power in Karnataka in 2028 with the people’s mandate, just as it did in 2023, and said the BJP would continue to remain in the Opposition.

Speaking in the Legislative Assembly at Suvarna Soukha while responding to questions raised by the Opposition, the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said the Congress government enjoys the support of 140 MLAs and that there was no need for the Opposition to create unnecessary speculation.

Referring to a popular proverb, Siddaramaiah remarked that the role of the Opposition seemed to be adding salt to a burning wound. He said that despite repeated provocations, none of the ruling party legislators would be swayed. “The people have blessed me to serve as Chief Minister for five years. We have the strength of 140 MLAs, and the Opposition need not indulge in sour commentary,” he said. The Chief Minister said the Congress government clearly understands the pulse of the people. “Just as the people blessed us in 2023, they will do so again in 2028. The people of Karnataka will never bring the BJP to power,” he asserted.

Siddaramaiah alleged that although the BJP has ruled the state twice, it never came to power with a clear popular mandate.

Read more at
<https://epaper.thehansindia.com>



RAVULAPATI SEETARAMARAO

THE Supreme Court’s decision comes as a whiff of fresh air to the countless victims of cyber frauds. It is heartening that courts, when necessary, take responsible and appropriate decisions on key public issues — decisions that governments and police should be making — and even provide guidelines for their implementation. This is a wake-up call for those who uphold democracy and the separation of powers of their duty.

With “digital arrest scams” proliferating across the country, the Supreme Court’s directions to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for carrying out a comprehensive probe into such crimes and criminals — including seeking Interpol’s cooperation and tracing the origins — should be seen as a positive development in criminal justice prudence. The

Court also issued notices to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), directing it to use artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning to investigate deep-rooted patterns of funds being moved through various banks in these crimes, so that proper inquiries can be conducted and perpetrators cannot escape. Referring to the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, the Supreme Court ordered online intermediaries to cooperate with the CBI and asked them to collect and hand over data and information related to digital arrests to investigative agencies.

The court suggested that states and Union Territories not only set up coordination centers to thoroughly investigate cybercrime but also adopt plans to proactively prevent such offenses. The apex court also directed that the cyber-crime coordination centres be linked with law enforcement agencies so that cybercrimes can be taken up for investigation.

A few days ago, under the leadership of Chief Justice Suryakant, the Supreme Court gave the CBI detailed guidelines on cybercrime—particularly digital arrests—sending a strong signal that tackling



these crimes is being treated as a high priority. The court identified three types of cyber scams. One involves online “digital arrests” where perpetrators, often targeting retired officers, pose as investigative agencies and extort their hard earned money and cause severe psychological distress. Although media reports show these offences are occurring across the country, they have not stopped and gullible people continue to fall prey. The Supreme Court specifically entrusted the CBI with the responsibility of apprehending those who run such scams and carrying out investigations.

Scammers are running another kind of cybercrime: luring victims with attractive-sounding investments, getting

them to deposit large sums, and defrauding them under the guise of “advance tax” or other pretexts. Another widespread cyber-scam involves flooding WhatsApp with ads for supposed part-time jobs, using YouTube to offer “free tasks” for small payments to gain trust, then convincing victims to pay large amounts for “premium” tasks. Many people have encountered these scams. Victims often suffer in silence, not reporting to the police, and some become so distressed that they end their lives. The central government informed the Supreme Court in a note that cybercriminals have already swindled nearly Rs 30 billion. These fraudsters, posing as digital authorities, are extorting hard-earned

Saluting VNVK Sastry, a selfless supporter of adivasis



DR MADABHUSHI SRIDHAR

LITTLE boys and girls of a primary school in Nalgonda district once cried inconsolably when their beloved teacher, V N V K Sastry, was transferred. Refusing to accept the loss quietly, they walked nearly ten kilometres to the national highway and staged a protest until their voices were heard. Blessed indeed is the teacher who wins such young hearts.

That instinctive affection followed Dr Sastry wherever he went. A retired senior officer, social anthropologist, and lifelong fieldworker, he habitually won hearts through devotion to duty and an unshakeable concern for the people he served. Recalling their nearly five-decade-long association around 2020, senior journalist and former editor of The Hindu (Hyderabad), Dasu Keshav Rao, summed him up in simple terms: a man who never worked for files alone, but for people.

A full moon night in Srisaalam:

One incident narrated by Keshav Rao captures the essence of Dr Sastry’s life. On a full-moon night in December 1988, when he was heading the Chenchu Project, they were in the core area of the Srisaalam Tiger Sanctuary, where they were treated to welcome festivities that were organised by the Chenchu community. Earlier that day, they had visited

an ashram school where conditions were appalling. The warden was absent, as usual; children were being served rotten rice and tamarind water in the name of sambar. The fine rice meant for the children never reached the school.

Dr Sastry suspended the absentee warden on the spot and immediately arranged a proper meal—rice, curries, sambar and milk—something the children rarely got to toast. The following morning, as they were driving away, a group of men suddenly intercepted their vehicle, running and panting from a distant hamlet located beyond a hill.

Alarmed, they asked if something was wrong.

“Pani emi ledu saar. Meeru maa penta vachaaru. Memu adiviki poyaamu. Choodaadaniki vachaamu. Anthe saar.”

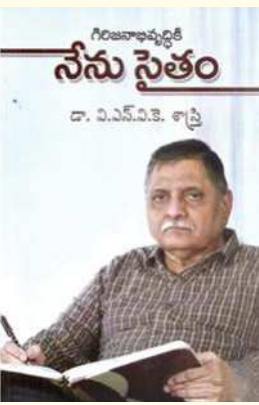
Nothing was wrong, they explained. They had only come to see and thank the officer who had visited their village.

A life dedicated to adivasi communities:

The humble friend of adivasis he passed away in the early hours of December 8, at the age of 78. His demise marks the end of a remarkable five-decade journey that was dedicated to understanding, documenting, and empowering adivasi communities in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

A Ph.D. in Social Anthropology from Andhra University (1980), he spent 52 years in research, fieldwork, institutional building, and training. He emerged as one of South India’s most respected scholars of tribal societies. He authored ten major books and over a hundred research papers and articles in English and Telugu, covering tribal women, forest rights, cultural change, development models, and the everyday lives of remote communi-

Friends and former colleagues remember him as a gentle intellectual, a disciplined researcher, and an unwavering advocate of Adivasi dignity. He combined rigorous empirical fieldwork with rare human warmth, ensuring that tribal voices found space in policy, scholarship, and public discourse.



A Adilabad specialist:

Reverentially hailed as an Adilabad specialist, the district’s history, culture, and struggles were etched deeply into his scholarship and memory. It is now 44 years since the police firing at Indrevelli, where several Gond tribals were martyred. His work stands as a tribute not only to the Gonds, but also to the people of the district and their rich cultural diversity.

The mighty Godavari, Pranahitha, Penganga, Kaddem, and numerous rivulets flow through dense forests that account for nearly half of the district’s geographical area.

Adilabad also houses a significant tribal population. Here, diversity is strikingly evident: Gonds, Kolams, Nairkods, Lambadas, Pardhans, and Thotis live in a complex and symbiotic relationship with nature.

Images from those years flicker vividly: the Indrevelli firing on the Gonds; police-Naxal encounters in the Aalampally forests; the Tamil Nadu Express accident near Sirpur; the Dakshin Express derailment at Mancherla; and the tireless efforts of committed officers such as VPC. Sastry, CVSK Sarma, KR Kishore, Subrahmanyam, Manohar Prasad, GN Phani Kumar, and VNVK Sastry to improve the

lives of tribal communities. Equally vivid are memories of Prof Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf’s visit to Marlawai to perform the last rites of his wife, Betty, and the vibrant Kelsapur Jatra.

Indrevelli killings:

Three officers from Hyderabad were among the first to reach Indrevelli, where police had opened fire on protesting Gonds the previous evening, killing many and injuring several others. The administration was dazed and uncertain about the actual casualty figures. The three officers trekked through forests and hill-top habitations, braving scorching summer heat and humidity, to meet the injured and the families of the deceased.

Later, when the Collector, AK Goel, informed forest officials at Mancherla that the Indrevelli toll was far higher than the officially stated figure—he did mention the actual number to Keshav Rao—it became clear how deeply the truth had been suppressed.

A pioneering anthropologist

Dr Sastry’s scholarliness traversed anthropology, ecology, tribal history, and literature. His works, published in academic journals and government reports, and available on public platforms, remain foundational texts for students, administrators, and young researchers.

His notable publications are: Andhra Pradesh Tribal Women and Children – An Overview, Changing Patterns in Tribal Societies, Komaram Bheem (Telugu), Sanchara Sravanthi (Telugu), Reports for the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, and Training manuals and textbooks, including contributions to undergraduate curricula

Mentor, adviser and advocate:

Even after retirement, Dr Sastry remained intellectually active and socially committed. For nearly two decades, he served as a freelance consultant and guest faculty, Institute of Tribal Development Studies, Hyderabad; contributed to NALSA Tribal Rights training modules for legal services authorities; expert investigator, Centre for Good Governance (World Bank land governance project); Course editor, PG Diploma in Tribal Development Management, NIRD; Member, National Expert Committees on Bauxite Mining (A.P) and Kolleru Lake Sanctuary; senior consultant, APARD and adviser for Andhra Pradesh Community Forest Management Project (World Bank).

His deep understanding of forest rights, land governance, and community institutions made him a sought-after expert across government agencies and academic institutions.

Friends and former colleagues remember him as a gentle intellectual, a disciplined researcher, and an unwavering advocate of Adivasi dignity. He combined rigorous empirical fieldwork with rare human warmth, ensuring that tribal voices found space in policy, scholarship, and public discourse.

His passing away leaves a profound void in anthropology, tribal welfare administration, and development studies. Yet his writings, training programmes, institutions, students, and the countless tribal families, whose lives he touched, stand as his enduring legacy.

(The writer is an ormer Central Information Commissioner, and presently Professor, School of Law, Mahindra University, Hyderabad)

POLITICAL ROWDIES HAVE NO PLACE IN AP: NAIDU

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

CHIEF Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday issued a stern warning against what he described as the rise of “political rowdysim” in the state, declaring that those who commit crimes under the guise of politics have no right to remain in the state. He asserted that his government would show no leniency towards criminal elements, regardless of political affiliation.

Addressing a gathering at the appointment letter distribution ceremony for newly selected 5,757 police constables at the Andhra Pradesh Special Police (APSP) Battalion parade ground in Mangalagiri, the Chief Minister reiterated his resolve to maintain strict law and order. “Those who indulge in rowdysim in this State have no right to be here. I still stand by that statement,” he said. At the outset, Naidu announced a significant hike in the stipend for constables undergoing training, increasing it from Rs 4,500 to Rs 12,500



Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan distributing appointment orders to a police constable at APSP 6th Battalion Mangalagiri on Tuesday. Home minister V Anitha and DGP Harish Kumar Gupta are also seen.

in a single step. He described the decision as part of the government’s commitment to strengthening the police force and boosting morale among new recruits. Reflecting on past incidents, the Chief Minister referred to the murder of former minister Y S Vivekananda Reddy during the 2019 elections, stating that the crime had initially been projected as a natural death. He alleged that crucial

evidence was tampered with and that political opponents sought to shift blame onto him. “If that crime had been detected properly at the time, history would have been different,” he remarked, adding that he had since become more vigilant and determined. Naidu said crime rates had come down significantly after the formation of the NDA coalition government and warned of uncompromising action against offences in-

volving women and drugs. He described the ganja menace as a blot on the state’s image and said a special task force had been constituted to suppress it “with an iron hand”. The Chief Minister also noted that the nature of crime was changing and called upon the police to adopt proactive methods, including extensive use of CCTV surveillance and swift investigation. Stressing the principle of “visible policing and invisible

police,” Naidu said technology-driven and professional policing was the need of the hour. He cautioned that some criminals were becoming emboldened due to political patronage and made it clear that the government would not hesitate to act even against its own party members if required. Highlighting employment generation, the Chief Minister said his government had fulfilled its promise of providing jobs by conducting the Mega DSC and police recruitments with transparency. He said a total of 23,676 police jobs had been provided during his tenure, including 5,757 constable appointments in the current phase, and asserted that examinations were conducted without corruption, using digital technology. Naidu said peace and order were prerequisites for attracting investments and development. Deputy chief minister Pawan Kalyan, home minister Vangalapudi Anitha and director general of police Harish Kumar Gupta were present at the event.

A ‘north-south divide’ over Hindi names for new laws

NEW DELHI

THE row over the renaming of MNREGA has highlighted the Centre’s new practice of naming Bills in Hindi, deviating from the tradition of providing a Hindi and an English name for each Bill. A slew of Bills in recent months have come with just Hindi names -- packing in an acronym -- which many have claimed is another attempt at homogenization through language. The practice has resonated especially in the south, where leaders have equated it with another attempt at Hindi imposition. The Congress is already seeing red over naming MNREGA -- a homage to Mahatma Gandhi -- after Lord Ram. While the BJP is jeering that it is another evidence of the party’s aversion to Hindu religion and ethos, the use of Hindi names appears to be about to widen the north-south divide. Many MPs and political leaders, meanwhile, have contended that the names in Hindi are difficult to understand. On Monday, as Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan presented

Hindi names so far

THE G Ram G -- which could replace the MNREGA, stands for Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Employment and Livelihood Mission (Rural) Bill. A Bill for reforms in higher education is called Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill. There is also Sabka Bima, Sabki Raksha Bill to amend insurance laws. A Bill for allowing the entry of private sector into the field of atomic energy flips the system -- an English name that produces a Hindi acronym. The "Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India" has the short name of SHANTI, meaning peace. Earlier, the laws that replaced the Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act were called Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, and Bharatiya Sakshya Bill. The Bhartiya Vayuyan Vidheyak law has replaced the Aircraft Act of 1934.

the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill in the Lok Sabha, RSP(A) leader NK Premachandran said it was difficult for him to pronounce the name. He contended that this practice of using Hindi names violates Article 348(B) of the Constitution, which says new laws should have names in English. Congress member Jothimani and DMK member T M Selvaganapathi also made their reservations clear. “I see this as an imposition of

Hindi. Already, Tamil Nadu has been deprived of SSA funds just because we have opposed the three-language policy in the National Education Policy-2020,” Jothimani said. DMK leader T R Baalu also spoke against “imposition” of Hindi on southern states. Congress’s P Chidambaram said the change “is an affront to non-Hindi speaking people and states that have an official language other than Hindi”.

Sonia lauds Revanth’s efforts to develop TG

Continued from P1

Sonia Gandhi extended her best wishes to Revanth Reddy, expressing her hope that the state will be taken forward on the path of development in line with the Telangana Rising-2047 Vision document. She made these comments when Revanth Reddy met her in Delhi on Tuesday and handed over the Telangana Rising-2047 Vision document. The Chief Minister briefed Sonia Gandhi on the details of the Telangana Rising Global Summit-2025, which was held for two days on December 8, 9 in Telangana. The CM also explained to Sonia Gandhi the welfare schemes being implemented by the state government for the past two years, the measures being taken for the state’s development, and future plans.

G RAM G Bill introduced in LS amid Oppn uproar

Continued from P1

Opposition members strongly opposed the proposed legislation at the introduction stage and pressed for sending the Bill to a Parliamentary panel for greater scrutiny. The MPs, including Priyanka Gandhi of the Congress, strongly objected to the “removal” of Mahatma Gandhi’s name. Opposing the Bill at the introduction stage, T R Baalu of DMK said Mahatma Gandhi lived in villages and worked for the welfare of the poor there. He said then prime minister Manmohan Singh brought the “noble bill” (MNREGA),

which helped the poorest of the poor get 100 days of employment. The Father of the Nation is being “ridiculed” by the present government, he charged. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra registered her “strong objection” to the draft law, saying MNREGA was a revolutionary Act which was supported by all members of the House when it was passed. “Under this, the poorest of the poor get 100 days of employment. This (present) Bill is weakening the employment rights of the poor. It is against the Constitution,” she claimed. The MP from Kerala’s Wayanad said the MGNREG Act

has ensured the Centre provides 90 per cent of the funds for the works undertaken under the law. “It will be reduced to 60 per cent now. This will hit the finances of the state governments, especially those waiting for GST compensation, she pointed out. “Under this bill, the Centre’s control over the scheme will increase, but its responsibility will come down.” Responding to certain remarks by some ruling party MPs, Priyanka said Mahatma Gandhi was not from her family, but he was from every family in the country. She proposed sending the Bill to a Parliamentary panel.

TRUMP SUES BBC FOR \$10BN

Continued from P1

But the publicly funded BBC rejected claims it had defamed him, after Trump threatened legal action. BBC chairman Samir Shah had called it an “error of judgment,” which triggered the resignations of the BBC’s top executive and its head of news. The speech took place before some of Trump’s supporters stormed the US Capitol as Congress was poised to certify President-elect Joe Biden’s victory in the 2020 election that Trump falsely alleged was stolen from him. The BBC had broadcast the hourlong documentary — titled “Trump: A Second Chance?” — days before the 2024 US presidential election.

Modi’s Jordan visit strengthens bilateral ties, 5 MoUs signed

Continued from P1

He also discussed the issues of fertilizer and agriculture; innovation, IT and digital technologies; critical minerals; infrastructure; health and pharma; education and capacity; tourism and heritage; and culture and people-to-people ties. The Prime Minister proposed that the two countries should aim to enhance bilateral trade to \$5 billion over the next 5 years. He also called for collaboration between Jordan’s digital payment system and India’s United Payments Interface (UPI). Jordan is an important supplier of fertiliser to India, and companies on both sides are in discussions for further substantive invest-

ment in Jordan to meet growing demand for phosphatic fertilizer in India. PM Modi’s first full-fledged visit to Jordan marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. India is Jordan’s third largest trading partner. Jordan is also a leading supplier of phosphates and potash fertilizers for India. Around 17,500 Indian nationals currently live in Jordan, mostly working in textiles, construction, manufacturing and healthcare. While India exports cereals, frozen meat, petroleum products, animal fodder etc. to Jordan, fertilisers, especially phosphates and potash are imported.

CONG PLANS COUNTRYWIDE PROTEST TODAY

Continued from P1

Congress general secretary K C Venugopal, in a letter to all state Congress presidents, urged them to organise protests at all district headquarters. These protests must be held with portraits of Mahatma Gandhi, symbolising resistance to the erasure of his name and values, and highlight how the proposed law will impact the crores of beneficiaries of MGNREGA, he said in the letter. “The combined attack on Gandhi’s legacy, workers’ rights and federal responsibility exposes a larger BJP-RSS conspiracy to dismantle rights-based welfare and replace it with charity controlled from the Centre,” Venugopal said.

58 lakh names deleted in West Bengal draft SIR 24 LAKH DEAD, 12 LAKH MISSING

NEW DELHI

IN a development likely to raise a political storm in poll-bound West Bengal, a total of 58 lakh names has been deleted from the state’s draft voter list after the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) to weed out duplication and errors. Out of these 58 lakh names, 24 lakh have been marked as “dead”, 19 lakh as “relocated”, 12 lakh as “missing”, and 1.3 lakh as “duplicate”. The publication of the draft list marks the end of the first phase of the Special Intensive Revision. Those whose names

have been incorrectly excluded from the draft list can now raise objections and request corrections. After addressing these objections, the final list will be published in February next year. The announcement of the Assembly polls in Bengal is expected after the publication of the final list. SIR was last conducted in Bengal in 2002. Trinamool MP Saugata Roy termed the deletion of 58 lakh names “injustice”. “This is the BJP’s conspiracy to remove legitimate voters

from Bengal’s list. We have set up voter assistance booths and we will help them submit forms to include their names in the voter list,” he said. The publication of the draft list is likely to intensify the political uproar in Bengal over SIR. Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee has opposed the exercise and accused the Centre and the Election Commission of using SIR to delete the names of lakhs of eligible voters ahead of the election.

Sydney attacker had Hyd roots: TG police

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

SAJID Akram, one of the two terrorists who killed 15 people in a gruesome mass shooting at Bondi Beach in Sydney, Australia, recently, hailed from Hyderabad, the Telangana police said on Tuesday. Director General of Police (DGP) B Shivadhar Reddy said in a statement that the attackers were identified as Sajid Akram (50) and his son Naveed Akram (24). Further investigation in this regard

▶▶ SAJID AKRAM MIGRATED TO AUSTRALIA 27 YEARS AGO
▶▶ HE WAS SHOT DEAD BY OZ POLICE DURING THE BEACH ATTACK



is being carried out by Australian investigators who described the attack as a terrorist act inspired by the Islamic State group. Sajid Akram was

The DGP said that Sajid Akram is originally from Hyderabad. He completed his B Com degree in Hyderabad and migrated to Australia in search of employment, approximately 27 years ago, in November 1998. He subsequently married Venera Grosso, a European origin woman before settling permanently in Australia. They have one son, Naveed (one of the two attackers) and one daughter. Akram carries an Indian passport as on date and his son Naveed and

daughter were born in Australia and are Australian citizens. As per information available from his relatives in India, Sajid Akram had limited contact with his family in Hyderabad over the past 27 years. He visited India on six occasions after migrating to Australia, primarily for family-related reasons such as property matters and visits to his elderly parents. It is understood that he did not travel to India even at the time of his father’s demise.

Global aviation workforce should have 25% Telugus: Lokesh

Continued from P1

“The real bottleneck for the rapid growth of the aviation sector is inadequate skilled manpower. The EduCity is our response to that challenge as it creates a world-class ecosystem that integrates education, research, industry, and on-the-job training,” he explained. Elaborating on the AAD EduCity further, Lokesh said: “This is not about creating another university. It is about building an ecosystem that supplies job-ready professionals, cutting-edge research and globally benchmarked skills.” The Andhra Pradesh government has committed to developing the core EduCity infrastructure within 12 months with phased onboarding of global academic and industry partners thereafter. “With aviation demand exploding globally, countries that invest early in talent ecosystems will lead the next phase of growth. Through the EduCity, AP

positions India not just as a large aviation market, but as a global supplier of aviation talent and innovation,” the Minister stressed. In alignment with its massive philanthropic support for public education infrastructure, the MANSAS Trust provided the land for EduCity. Acknowledging the significant contribution of Governor of Goa and MANSAS Trust Chairman P Ashok Gajapathi Raju and Vizianagaram MLA Aditi Gajapathi Raju, Lokesh emphasised that it would serve as a major endeavour that shapes India’s aviation future for decades. The AAD EduCity project draws inspiration from global benchmarks such as Aéro Montréal (Canada), Washington–Seattle Aerospace Cluster (USA) and Aerospace Valley (France), where integrated ecosystems have translated talent and research into global competitiveness, according to a release.

IPL auction : Uncapped players strike gold!

Continued from P1

Seasoned South African opener Quinton de Kock returned to his old base Mumbai Indians for a base price of Rs 1 crore. Spencer Johnson remained unsold, while Anrich Nortje, who came with a base price of Rs 2 crore,

was enlisted by LSG, who opened the bidding for the South Africa pacer. A total of 359 players -- 246 Indians and 113 overseas players -- are part of the mini auction pool with the 10 franchises bidding to fill up a maximum of 77 slots, including 31 reserved for foreign players.

YCP misleading Centre on PPP medical colleges: CM

Continued from P1

The Chief Minister asserted that the PPP model is a globally accepted mechanism that is being implemented across sectors, including healthcare, to expand capacity and improve service delivery. He said the model would help increase the number of medical seats while ensuring access to corporate-level healthcare for economically weaker sections. Naidu also launched a sharp personal attack on former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, alleging the latter’s disregard for judicial processes. He said Jagan Mohan Reddy frequently skipped court appearances in cases related to alleged illegal assets and raised objections even when Supreme Court directions were being implemented. Such conduct, he remarked, reflected a lack of respect for constitutional institutions. Referring to the TTD Parakamani theft case, the Chief Minister recalled that the High Court had expressed concern over attempts to treat it as an ordinary offence. He said offerings made by devotees carry deep religious sentiment and welcomed the court’s suggestion to adopt artificial intelligence-based systems for the counting and management of temple donations. On governance and administration, Naidu said the government’s practice

of issuing appointment letters to newly selected candidates in the presence of their family members was intended to instill a sense of pride and responsibility. He noted that this approach, earlier followed during DSC recruitments, is now being adopted for police constable appointments under the ‘Yuvagalam’ programme. Turning to party affairs, the Chief Minister said he had held discussions with three-member committees on district-level organisational matters. He indicated that objections related to district party president appointments would be reviewed and resolved shortly. He also underlined the need to strengthen women’s representation in party leadership, stating that the current 28.4 per cent representation should be increased to 30 per cent in view of possible future reservations. Naidu said the list of district party presidents would be announced within two days, followed by the declaration of the state committee before the end of the month. He added that organisational performance would be reviewed every three months and warned that non-performing office-bearers would be replaced, stressing the need for strict adherence to the party calendar from January onwards.

Continued from P1

A 10-member national and international expert advisory team on public health participated in the meeting virtually. Naidu said the government would focus on preventive healthcare by leveraging digital tools and artificial intelligence, rather than merely treating diseases after they occur. He said digitalisation of health records would help identify and analyse the top ten diseases affecting the population and significantly reduce medical expenses. The Chief Minister asked the expert panel to help showcase Andhra Pradesh’s digital healthcare initiatives at the upcoming Global AI Convention in Mumbai. Referring to the success of the Mustabu programme aimed at improving personal hygiene among tribal students, the Chief Minister said the NDA government was committed to building a “healthy, wealthy and happy Andhra Pradesh”. He stressed that effective implementation

at the grassroots level was critical to the success of any policy. Interacting with the expert panel, former WHO chief scientist Dr Soumya Swaminathan underlined the importance of nutrition, availability of doctors and nurses, and the impact of pollution on public health. UNAIDS founding Executive Director Peter Piot said public health should not be viewed purely as a medical issue, as it was influenced by multiple social and environmental factors. Former Union secretary Aarti Ahuja highlighted the need for root-cause analysis of diseases and expressed concern over the rising number of dialysis cases among youth due to pollution. Prof Yik-Ying Teo of the National University of Singapore said AI and digital health records could help deliver more efficient healthcare services. Harvard T H Chan School of Public Health’s Margaret Elizabeth Kruk noted Andhra Pradesh’s effective utilisation

of the Hepatitis vaccine. Khosla Labs founder Srikanth Nadhamuni said AI-enabled health services were becoming central to public healthcare delivery, while NABH Chairperson Dr Rizwan Koita observed that Andhra Pradesh was emerging as a hub for digital healthcare. AIIMS Delhi’s Dr Nikhil Tandon stressed early diagnosis and risk assessment, and AIG Hospitals Chairman Dr D Nageweswara Reddy said health education from a young age was essential. Gates Foundation India Country Director Archana Vyas said an action plan would be prepared based on expert recommendations, including the formation of a health secretariat to monitor public health outcomes. Health Minister Satyakumar Yadav said the expert inputs would guide the state’s healthcare reforms. The Chief Minister directed officials to hold such expert consultations every six months.

PARENTING

Love after 40: Not just romance, a practical support system for child's life pressures



Love after 40 isn't about chasing sparks—it's about building stability, understanding, and shared strength. For single parents and those starting over, companionship becomes a support system, not just a romance. In this phase of life, love means choosing a partner who stands with you through real-world pressures, every day

In the last few years, love has taken on a whole new meaning for divorced, separated, and widowed singles with kids. It is not only about romance; it has become a real source of support. When life is a full

ing all that burden alone is not easy; the right partner is not just a date or a romantic presence. They are the team-mate who understands and shares that weight.

The dating journey after 40, one that is often seeking a second chance, brings a different kind of magic.

What was once viewed with suspicion is now beginning to be socially accepted, to the extent that specific apps have been built for people seeking love at a more mature age.

Standard dating apps fall short for people over 40. At this stage, especially for single parents, dating can be very different. It is not just swiping for fun and sparks; the checklist is rewritten, priorities shift, and what truly matters is finding a person who understands that life can throw a curve-ball at any point; they want maturity, reliability, and compatibility.

look for emotional stability over the thrill alone; someone who will patiently listen without rushing to "fix" things, because sometimes you just need to be heard. A partner who doesn't judge their past or understands that, on most days, their child will come before everything. By the time you're 40, romance isn't about big declarations anymore; it's found in small, steady efforts.

Rebound's Founder and CEO, Ravi Mittal, added, "Love for single parents, or daters above 40, is definitely more than just romance. It's an ecosystem of support. Surveys show single parents are often looking for a match who understands that their plans depend on their kids' school schedule and even mood, and they might be extremely thorough during interactions because introducing someone new to a child's life comes with a lot of hope and fear." 3 in 5 daters with kids claim that finding a suitable partner who values maturity and respects their responsibilities is much easier through dating apps for second chances because these platforms tackle the realities of taking a second attempt at love, instead of brushing them under the rug.

plate, with kids to care for, aging parents, financial responsibilities, and society's prying eyes, having a companion who is there by your side through the thick and thin brings more than just joy; it brings the kind of strength everyone deserves. Carry-



Tamannaah Bhatia shares her desi-style of enjoying tea in private

Actress Tamannaah Bhatia, on Tuesday, gave a glimpse into her personal moments by sharing how she enjoys her tea in true desi style.

Taking to her Instagram handle, the 'Baahubali' actress posted a candid video of herself, where she is seen enjoying tea in desi style—served in a plate. The post highlights how the actress takes a mindful pause at the start of her week, savouring her tea and embracing a calm, unhurried start to the day. The text on the clip read, "I didn't rush my Monday. I eased into it. These minutes are private until now. Just me and tea. And time." The clip features Tamannaah at her candid best, wearing a white night suit and eating soaked nuts before enjoying her tea. She added the trending track "Tame Impala" from Dracula as the background score.

Tamannaah Bhatia often shares updates about both her personal life and professional projects on social media. Recently, she opened up about portraying yesteryear actress Jayashree in V Shantaram's upcoming biopic.

In her latest Instagram

post, Tamannaah reflected on how the experience taught her far more than she had anticipated. She described stepping into the shoes of the iconic star as a deeply enriching journey.

Sharing a series of behind-the-scenes videos of her transformation into Jayashree, the 'Lust Stories 2' actress wrote, "Every bit of love that we have received on the poster of Jayashree ji for V Shantaram, is an ode to her. Ode to her grace, and her legacy. Thank you."

"Stepping into this world has already been intimate and deeply meaningful, even on the early days. V Shantaram's vision reshaped cinema long before its time. Becoming Jayashree has taught me more than I had imagined, and I look forward to everything this journey will continue to bring."

Tamannaah Bhatia will be seen alongside actor Siddhant Chaturvedi in the upcoming biopic. Directed by Abhijeet Shirish Deshpande, the film titled V Shantaram is a historical biographical drama that celebrates the life, legacy, and cinematic revolution sparked by one of India's most visionary storytellers.

Here's how Alia Bhatt brings weekend vibes to a weekday

Actress Alia Bhatt showed how to keep things effortlessly stylish by bringing weekend vibes to an otherwise ordinary weekday.

Taking to her Instagram handle, the 'Raazi' actress, on Tuesday, posted a series of her stylish photos and videos from a recent award function. She simply captioned the post, "weekend wali vibe weekday pe." In the images, Alia, dressed in a black dress, can be seen striking different poses for the camera. The first close-up shot gives a glimpse of the actress's subtle makeup, while in the others she is seen posing sensuously for the lens.

December 15, Alia Bhatt made a

glamorous appearance at the star-studded Filmfare OTT Awards 2025, held in Mumbai. The 'Student of the Year' actress turned heads in a striking all-black Hervé Léger dress from 1993. Alia's black gown stands out with a plunging sweetheart neckline and wide halter-style straps.

Alia's stunning appearance at the Filmfare OTT Awards 2025 followed another major milestone in her career. The actress was recently honoured with the Golden Globes Horizon Award at the fifth edition of the Red Sea International Film Festival in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

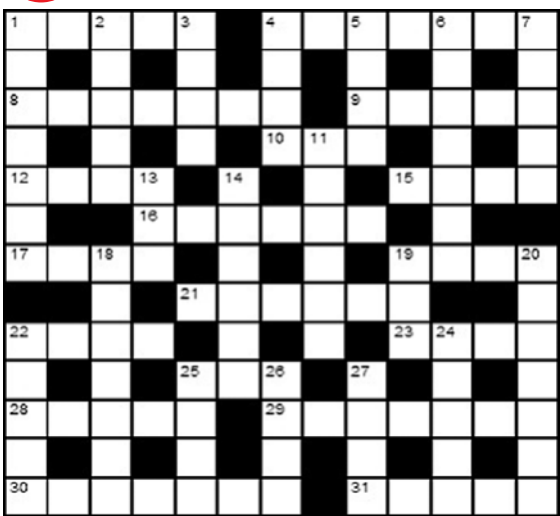
Speaking about receiving the

honour, she said, "The Golden Globes are an iconic part of the global awards universe and I am delighted to be part of it and look forward to continuing my career in telling more stories of powerful and deserving women."

On the professional front, Alia Bhatt is set to star in the upcoming film "Alpha," the seventh installment in the Yash Raj Films Universe. Helmed by director Shiv Rawail, the movie also features Sharvari and Bobby Deol. Produced under the Yash Raj Films banner, "Alpha" is scheduled for release on April 17, 2026, and is anticipated to be a landmark in India's female-led action cinema.



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- Damp (5)
- Ennui (7)
- Splash a liquid (7)
- Surpass (5)
- Sarovar : bird sanctuary in Gujarat ? (3)
- Sporting side (4)
- Very small (4)
- Tear away forcibly (6)
- One pound sterling (4)
- Vice president, in short (4)
- One of the Fates (6)
- Polish (4)
- Ex-India all-rounder Ali (4)
- Fifty two in Roman numerals (3)
- Location of ancient Samos (5)
- Ex-P.M. Lal Bahadur (7)
- Scott's famous novel (7)
- It may develop when things don't seem to be going smoothly (1,4)

DOWN

- Saqlain : Former Pakistan off-spinner (7)
- Ex-Mrs. Trump (5)
- Ballet skirt (4)
- Farm building (4)
- Monetary unit of Cambodia (4)
- Deterioration (7)
- Lactate (5)
- Possessions and resources (6)
- Insane (3)
- Centres of atoms (6)
- Spanish princess (7)
- Voice of America, in short (3)
- It's proof is in the eating (7)
- Small yeast-raised pancake (5)
- The conductor's wand (5)
- Plaster base (4)
- Words of comprehension (1,3)
- Japan's first capital (4)



Solution to December 16

SUDOKU



Solution to December 16

Sameera Reddy shares her go-to nature's real electrolyte drink for gut detoxification

Actress Sameera Reddy shared her go-to natural electrolyte drink, praising its detoxifying and gut-friendly properties.

Describing it as "refreshing, detoxifying, and gut-friendly," she highlighted how banana stem water can help flush out toxins, reduce bloating, and support healthy digestion—all without any complicated steps. Sameera explained that packed with high fiber, this natural drink not only aids digestion and weight management but also helps maintain blood sugar balance, healthy cholesterol levels, and kidney health. The 'De Dana Dan' actress also shared a method to prepare this gut-friendly detox drink. She recommends starting with fresh banana stem and cumin seeds. Reddy then advises blending the chopped stem and seeds together, then straining the mixture to extract the juice. She revealed that the drink is best consumed fresh in the morning on an empty stomach, allowing its cleansing and digestive benefits to kick in naturally. Sharing the video on Instagram, she wrote, "Refreshing, detoxifying, and gut-friendly! This simple banana stem water helps flush toxins, reduce bloating, and keep digestion happy—without any fuss. Comment 'DETOX' for more mindful recipes from our inner circle wellness community Benefits: High-fiber detox drink that aids digestion & weight management Supports blood sugar balance & healthy cholesterol Natural diuretic—great for kidney health & BP control. Drink fresh, preferably in the morning on an empty stomach. Light, cleansing,



and naturally healing—perfect for daily gut reset." Sameera Reddy often shares recipes for natural and wholesome treats on social media. Earlier, she had revealed the recipe for her healthy, chocolatey, and guilt-free cookies. She has also been sharing recipes using coconut. In terms of work, Sameera is gearing up for the release of her upcoming horror-thriller 'Chimni,' where she plays in the role of Kali. The film follows a grieving mother living in the haunted Chanderi palace, where a malevolent spirit has taken hold of her daughter.



Govt neglecting farmers amid political instability: BJP MP in RS

NEW DELHI: BJP MP Irranna Kadadi on Tuesday accused the Karnataka government of neglecting farmers and failing to set up procurement centres, leading to economic distress and suicides in the agrarian community. Raising the issue during Zero Hour in the Rajya Sabha, the Karnataka MP said while the Centre has fixed a minimum support price for 23 crops, it is the responsibility of state governments to establish procurement centres when prices fall below MSP.

"During the kharif season in Karnataka, maize, and different pulses were sown in 48.7 lakh hectare. However, due to extreme drought and floods, 10 lakh hectares of crops were damaged. This has led to severe economic hardship for farmers," Kadadi said. He said the state has failed to help farmers by setting up the required procurement centres. "In just two years, 2,809 farmers have committed suicide. This is a very sad situation," the MP said. Kadadi alleged that instead of helping farmers, the government has been discussing change of chief minister every day. In the absence of the state government's initiative, farmers have sold their crops at lesser rates and incurred economic losses, he said.

The BJP MP urged the central government to help farmers through procurement by the National Agricultural Co-operative Marketing Federation of India (Nafed). He noted that the Centre implements the price support scheme and price deficiency scheme for the benefit of farmers. "Considering it as a very special situation for the farmers of Karnataka, I urge the central government to help the farmers," Kadadi said.

Paragon footwear redefines in-store experience

BENGALURU: Paragon Footwear, one of India's leading footwear brands, today announced the launch of its next-generation retail store format with the opening of its first outlet at Ramamurthy Nagar, Bangalore. This marks a strategic step to strengthen its direct-to-consumer presence, enhance the in-store shopping experience, and capture the fast-growing Gen Z and young urban consumer segment. The rollout, starting mid-December 2025, aligns with Paragon's broader premiumisation and market expansion strategy, aimed at driving higher per-store revenue, enhancing brand equity, and deepening engagement with younger audiences. The new stores are designed as lifestyle experience hubs, blending comfort, style, and community. This reflects Paragon's shift from a legacy retail presence to a brand-led experiential ecosystem.

Sona Valliappa Group launches India's first integrated campus

BENGALURU: 105-year old Sona Valliappa Group, South India's leading name in education and business, today unveiled the logo for Sona Centre for Advanced Learning & Entrepreneurship (SCALE). It will be a first-of-its-kind integrated campus housing companies and colleges to promote skilling, innovation, and entrepreneurship. SCALE will develop future-ready talent for emerging industries, and evolving requirements of Global Capability Centres (GCCs). Thyagu Valliappa, Founder of SCALE, and a 4th generation entrepreneur, made the announcement at Sona Towers which hosted India's first GCC by Texas Instruments in the 1980s. Senior industry leaders and policy stakeholders were also present during the event.

Hotel balcony fall case

Action to be taken if evidence is found against police, says DCP

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

WHITEFIELD Division Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) K. Parashurama on Tuesday said that strict action would be initiated if credible evidence emerges against police personnel in connection with the incident in which a young woman suffered serious injuries after falling from a hotel balcony during a party.

Addressing the media, the DCP said a case has already been registered against the hotel management based on a complaint filed by the injured woman's father, and a detailed investigation is under way. "If there is any proof that police personnel acted improperly, including allegations of demanding money or intimidation, the department will not hesitate to take action," he said. According to police, Hoysala patrol per-



sonnel received a call from a hotel located in AECS Layout in the early hours of Sunday. Acting on the information, the police reached the hotel around 5.30 am. At the time,

eight people—four men and four women—were partying in a room on the fourth floor, reportedly consuming alcohol and playing loud music.

The DCP said police personnel, with body-worn cameras switched on, questioned the group, verified their identity cards and addresses, and issued appropriate instructions. While two youths were being taken to the reception as part of routine procedure to close the

complaint, a young woman reportedly went towards the balcony for reasons that are still unclear and fell onto the compound below.

The woman sustained serious injuries after landing on sharp iron grills installed along the compound wall. She was immediately shifted to a nearby private hospital by her friends with assistance from the police. Her condition remains critical, and she is undergoing treatment.

The DCP also stated that action has been initiated against the hotel for operating without proper permission from the civic authorities. He added that although allegations surfaced in the media claiming police demanded money, a review of body-worn camera footage found no such evidence. "If anyone provides documentary or video proof supporting these allegations, we will examine it thoroughly," he said.

Rising concern over teenage pregnancies in state

The Women and Child Welfare department has informed that 2,320 cases related to pregnancy among minor girls have been registered with Child Welfare Committees in the last three years

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

CASES of underage girls becoming pregnant are steadily increasing in Karnataka, raising serious concern among authorities, child rights activists and health experts. Whether due to emotional vulnerability, lack of legal awareness, or social pressures, teenage pregnancies are emerging as a worrying trend across the state.

According to official data, 2,320 minor girls have become pregnant over the past three years. By the end of October this year alone, 749 cases of teenage pregnancy had already been reported. Officials point out that exposure to sexually explicit content through films, web series and social media reels is influencing adolescents at an impressionable age. Easy access to such content on mobile phones, combined with limited supervision and awareness, is reportedly drawing minors into premature relationships, often



with serious consequences.

Authorities note that some young men exploit this vulnerability, leading to pregnancies among underage girls. Although cases are registered under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, a growing number of families opt for informal settlements at an early stage. Fear of social stigma, concerns about family reputation, and difficulties in securing strong evidence have resulted in compromises, allowing several accused persons to escape punishment.

The Women and Child Welfare Department has informed that 2,320 cases

related to pregnancy among minor girls have been registered with Child Welfare Committees in the last three years. Of these, 729 cases were reported from districts including Bengaluru, Mysuru, Chitradurga, Gadag and Kolar. In response to the rising numbers, the state government amended the Child Marriage Prohibition Act, 2006, during the last monsoon session of the legislature. The amendment empowers authorities to initiate action not only against child marriages but also against engagements involving minors. The department has also begun capacity-building training

programmes for officials at district and taluk levels to prevent such cases.

For immediate intervention, the Child Helpline 1098 continues to function round the clock. Officials say that whenever a distress call is received, concerned agencies act promptly to rescue and protect the child. Each district has functional Child Welfare Committees, Child Welfare Institutions, Child Special Police Units and District Child Protection Units to ensure safety, care and rehabilitation.

Victims are allowed to stay in care homes until they attain the age of 18 and are provided support up to 23 years, the department said. Financial assistance includes a one-time medical aid of Rs 6,000, monthly educational support of Rs 4,000 under the sponsorship scheme until 18 years of age, and health insurance coverage of up to Rs 5 lakh per year for both the victim and the newborn under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana.

LoP to head a meeting on Jalahalli underpass project: Shivakumar

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

DEPUTY Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Tuesday said that a meeting would be convened under the chairmanship of the Leader of the Opposition to review the progress of the Jalahalli underpass project, with the participation of concerned legislators and officials.

Replying to a question raised by BJP MLA Muniraj during the Question Hour in the Leg-islative Assembly, Shivakumar provided details of the project and the issues surround-ing compensation and land acquisition.

The Deputy Chief Minister said the underpass project had been awarded to PGB, a contracting firm, in 2021 at an estimated cost of Rs 57 crore. Compensation had already been paid to 48 property owners, amounting to Rs 85 crore. He said the total estimated cost for land acquisition stood at Rs 139 crore.

He added that 26 property owners were yet to hand over their land, for which compensation of Rs 53 crore was pending.

The compensation could be provided either in the form of Transferable Development Rights (TDR) or monetary payment. Shiva-



kumar said that if MLA Muniraj held discussions with the remaining landowners, the issue could be resolved and work could commence. He noted that Jalahalli was a major traffic congestion zone and said the demands of the affected property owners were reasonable.

During the discussion, BJP MLA Munirathna raised concerns about several flyover projects being stalled in his constituency and urged the Deputy Chief Minister to convene a meeting of all MLAs to address their grievances. Responding to this, Shivakumar said he was answering the specific question raised by Muniraj and advised Munirathna to raise his concerns separately on the floor of the House, assuring that he would respond accordingly.

Responding to a question by MLA ST Somashekar re-

garding delays in white-topping work on Holiday Village Road, Shivakumar said constituencies such as Bommanahalli, Bengaluru South and Yeshwanthpur were large and complex. He said he had personally visited the work site in Somashekar's constituency and that the project had been awarded to Ocean Construction.

The Deputy Chief Minister said the delay was due to utility-related issues, including the shifting of BWSSB infrastructure and power lines. While stating that blacklisting contractors was not difficult, he emphasised that completing the work was the priority.

He as-sured the House that special attention was being given to Somashekar's constituency and that he would personally speak to the contractor to expedite the work.

Disproportionate assets case: Lokayukta raids several places in five districts

BENGALURU

KARNATAKA Lokayukta conducted raids at multiple locations across Karnataka on Tuesday, targeting several government officials in connection with allegations of possessing assets disproportionate to their known sources of income. Sources confirmed that an officer flushed down Rs 50,000 cash during the raids.

The raids were carried out simultaneously in Dharwad, Shivamogga, Mandya, Chikkamagaluru and Bengaluru. Lokayukta personnel searched residences, offices and other premises linked to the officials and reportedly seized important documents from some locations.

In Dharwad, the Lokayukta raided the residence of a Joint Director of the Belagavi Agriculture Department, located in the Silver Arcade locality. Searches were conducted at three places associated with him,



including his private office in Rani Chennamma Nagar and a farmhouse near Yerikoppa village.

According to sources, the officer allegedly panicked on seeing the Lokayukta officials and flushed around Rs 50,000 in cash down the toilet. He reportedly kept the Lokayukta police waiting outside his house for nearly half an hour before opening the door.

In another case, the Lokayukta carried out raids at multiple premises belonging to an Executive Engineer in the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Department, following allegations of disproportionate assets.

Simultaneous searches were conducted at his houses in Basavanagudi and Kengeri in Bengaluru, his office in Shivamogga, and his residence in Sakharayapatna in Chikkamagaluru district. Officials reportedly found documents indicating assets exceeding his known sources of income during the operation.

In Mandya, the Lokayukta also conducted raids against the Panchayat Raj Engineering Department (PREDD) Superintendent. Searches were carried out simultaneously at his residence in Mandya, his in-laws' house in Maddur, and his office. The action was reportedly initiated following multiple complaints from the public against him.

Further investigation is underway,

and the Lokayukta is expected to assess the seized documents and materials before proceeding with the next course of action.

It can be recalled that on November 7, Karnataka Lokayukta raided six Bengaluru RTOs and uncovered large-scale irregularities. The Karnataka Lokayukta conducted surprise raids across six Regional Transport Offices (RTOs) in Bengaluru following several complaints from the public. The raided locations included Yeshwanthpur, Rajajinagar, Jayanagar, Yelahanka, Kasturinagar and K.R. Puram.

Karnataka Lokayukta sleuths conducted raids at 10 locations across the state on November 25, targeting government officers accused of amassing Disproportionate Assets beyond their known sources of income. The raids are being carried out in Mandya, Bidar, Mysuru, Dharwad, Haveri, Bengaluru, Shivamogga and Davanagere districts.

Drivers' Union stages protest against BIAL over pick-up zones, parking fees

BENGALURU

MEMBERS of the Karnataka Drivers' Union on Tuesday staged a protest condemning the recent change in pick-up locations at Kempegowda International Airport here. The protest was held near the Sadahalli Gate toll plaza near the airport under the leadership of G Narayanaswamy, founder and state president of the union.

Police resorted to mild lathi charge as protesters attempted to block other taxis from entering the airport premises. The protesters alleged that the revised pick-up arrangements at the airport have caused inconvenience to drivers as well as passengers, leading to congestion and operational difficulties.

THE REVISED PICK-UP ARRANGEMENTS AT THE AIRPORT HAVE CAUSED INCONVENIENCE TO DRIVERS AS WELL AS PASSENGERS IT IS ALLEGED, LEADING TO CONGESTION AND OPERATIONAL DIFFICULTIES

They also criticised the parking fee structure, claiming it places an unfair financial burden on drivers who depend on airport trips for their livelihood. However, the Kempegowda International Airport, which is operated by Bengaluru International Airport Limited (BIAL) said in a statement on Tuesday that the new pick-up measures are designed to create a safer, smoother, and more predictable experience for passengers.

"At BLR Airport, passenger safety and convenience are our top priorities. With daily passenger and vehicle volumes continuing to rise,



it became necessary to bring greater discipline and clarity to arrival pick-up areas to

prevent congestion, unsafe halts, and confusion at the kerbside," it said in a state-

ment.

According to the BIAL statement, private vehicles

have a dedicated pick-up lane with a generous free time window, while commercial vehicles operate from designated parking and supervised pick-up zones to ensure orderly movement. "These systems are standard practice at leading global airports. This is not about enforcement or revenue generation. Our focus is on behaviour change, safety, and ensuring that pick-up zones remain available for genuine, quick boarding. We have rolled this out with extensive on-ground guidance, signage, and coordination with cab operators," the statement added.

According to BIAL officials, as per the new lane segregation system, entry to the designated arrival pick-up zone in T1 and T2 will be free for all private cars (white board), however, there will be a charge for misusing or overstaying inside the zone beyond the prescribed time limits.

"The airport will give eight minutes (much higher than international standards) of free use of the zone for all the users, beyond which there will be Rs 150 charges for overstay from 8-13 minutes and Rs 300 charges for 13-18 minutes. Any vehicle overstaying beyond 18 minutes will be towed to the nearest police station, and applicable fines and towing charges will be levied, it had stated.

U-19 Asia Cup

India maul Malaysia by 315 runs

Abhigyan Kundo's historic unbeaten double ton and Deepesh Devendran's 5/22 set up massive win

DUBAI

ABHIGYAN Kundo's record 209 not out and an excellent return of 5/22 from Deepesh Devendran set up a massive 315-run victory for India against Malaysia in their U-19 Asia Cup match here on Tuesday.

India's margin of win is now their second biggest in terms of runs in Youth ODIs, after a 326-run triumph over Uganda in 2022.

Kundo etched his name in record books with a first-ever double century for any Indian in Youth ODIs, scoring his runs off 125 balls with 17 fours and nine sixes to fire India to a mammoth 408 for seven.

In reply, right-arm medium pacer Devendran ran through the Malaysian middle-order after Kishan Singh and Udhav Mohan struck once each to rock the opposition, and despite a late resistance from Hamzah Panggi (35), Malaysia were bowled out for 93 in 32.1 overs.

It was a perfect outing for the Indian colts who put together a robust batting show, in which the tone was set by Vaibhav Sooryavanshi who notched up a quickfire 50 off 26 balls (5 fours and 3 sixes). While Sooryavanshi could not convert his start into another big score, having scored 171 a few days ago against UAE, India were unperturbed even as they lost Vihaan Malhotra (7) and Ayush Mhatre (14) cheaply.

No 4. Vedant Trivedi teamed up with Kundo as the two added 209 runs for the fourth wicket to consolidate, in which the latter was the dominant of the two with his aggressive stroke play particularly on the leg side.

The 17-year-old Kundo's rotation of the strike was top notch as he collected 55 singles during his innings while hitting 17 fours and nine sixes in his superlative knock.

Kundo's double ton is also only the second instance of a batter at U-19 level crossing the 200-run mark, with South Africa's Jorich Van Schalkwyk's 215 against Zimbabwe earlier this year being the first.

The 18-year-old Trivedi looked set for a triple-figure score but ended up giving a return catch to Jaashwin Krishnamurthy, walking back for 90 of 106 balls (7 fours). Kundo was the aggressor in his 87-run stand for the fifth wicket with Kanishk Chouhan while he brought up his double hundred.

BRIEF SCORES:

India U-19 408/7 in 50 overs (Vaibhav Sooryavanshi 50, Vedant Trivedi 90, Abhigyan Kundo 209 not out; Muhammad Akram 5/89) beat Malaysia 93 in 32.1 overs (Hamzah Panggi 35; Deepesh Devendran 5/22, Udhav Mohan 2/24) by 315 runs.

Asian Youth Para Games: Indian shuttlers win 8 gold

NEW DELHI

INDIAN youngsters delivered a remarkable performance at the Dubai 2025 Asian Youth Para Games, winning 8 gold medals in the Para badminton events. The Indian team proved to be a formidable force, securing an impressive 17 medals – 8 gold, 3 silver, and 6 bronze.

At the core of India's success was Jatin Azad, whose composed and confident performances defined the team's spirit. Azad achieved double gold in the SU5 category; first capturing the men's singles title before returning to the court with Shivam Yadav to win gold in men's doubles. Their partnership, founded on trust and communication, remained strong under the pressure of finals day.

Speaking after his victories, Azad looked beyond Dubai with quiet determination, as he said, "I want to play in all championships, gain more experience and exposure. With more exposure, I will achieve more – and I know I will be selected for the LA28 Paralympics," he said.

India's successful streak was also driven by mental toughness. Harshit Choudhary, another gold medallist, emphasised the mindset that helped the team navigate the most challenging moments of the

IPL 2026 to be held from March 26 to May 31

MUMBAI: The 19th Indian Premier League will be held from March 26 to May 31 but it remains to be seen if defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru's home base gets a game after a deadly stampede halted all big-ticket cricket at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium. As per established norms, the Chinnaswamy should host the tournament opener given the home side, RCB, won the IPL 2025 title but that is unlikely to be clear till the time BCCI comes out with the full-scale schedule.

The venue was witness to chaos and a stampede, which left 11 dead, after RCB's trophy celebrations drew lakhs on the streets, that was well over the state machinery's capacity to handle at a short notice in June this year.

While the venue has received conditional clearance from the Karnataka government, it also needs to meet the necessary safety and security standards following the deaths.

Hyderabad Open Golf to be held in Feb 2026

Tournament poster unveiled at Boulder Hills Golf & Country Club

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD



THE Hyderabad Open Golf Tournament, an initiative of the TGolf Foundation, was officially announced with a poster launch at the Boulder Hills Golf & Country Club here on Monday. Regarded as India's premier amateur golf championship, the tournament will be held from February 18 to 21, 2026, and is expected to bring together top amateur golfers from across the country.

The poster was unveiled in the presence of Madhusudhan Rao, Head of Business – Emaar India; NRN Reddy, Founder of TGolf Foundation; Papi Reddy, General Manager, Boulder Hills Golf & Country Club; and Prashanth Reddy, along with

other dignitaries and golf enthusiasts.

Speaking on the occasion, the organisers said the Hyderabad Open has been envisioned as a flagship amateur golf event in India. The tournament aims to offer participants a professional-level tournament experience, world-class playing conditions, and a highly competitive platform for both emerging and established amateur golfers.

Registrations for the championship are now open, and interested players can register by scanning the QR code available on the official tournament poster.

Hosted at the iconic Boulder Hills Golf & Country Club, known for its challenging layout and scenic beauty, the Hyderabad Open is expected to further strengthen Hyderabad's reputation as a major golfing destination in the country.

Telangana's Shivani bags 3rd medal at SGFi Nationals

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

TELANGANA swimmer Shivani Karra continued her impressive run at the 69th SGFi National Swimming Championship for Girls 2025–26, winning a silver medal in the U-14 girls' 100m backstroke on Day 5 at the Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Swimming Stadium here on Tuesday.

Shivani clocked 1:09.97 to finish second, narrowly behind CISCE's Shreya Binil, who took gold with a timing of 1:09.14. This silver marked Shivani's third medal of the championship, adding to her earlier gold in the 200m backstroke and silver in the 50m backstroke, underlining her dominance in backstroke events.

In another notable performance for Telangana, Sudhiksha Krishna secured the bronze



medal in the U-19 girls' 50m freestyle, clocking 28.24 seconds. Karnataka's Shalini R. Dixit won the gold with a timing of 27.75 seconds, while

Shubhnoor Kaur of Chandigarh claimed silver in 28.01 seconds.

The championship is being held from December 12 to 17 in New Delhi.

Spotlight on SKY as India eye series win over SA

LUCKNOW: Shubman Gill's lean patch has been the talking point but an equally "out of runs" skipper Suryakumar Yadav is also under intense scrutiny as India look to find the right balance and seal the five-match series against South Africa in the fourth T20I here on Wednesday.

The third game was an ideal opportunity for Suryakumar to rediscover his touch while India chased a modest 118-run target, but the ease that once made him the top ranked batter in the world was noticeably missing.

Shots that defined his dominance have been producing erratic results and the match in Dharamsala was no different as he fell to his trademark pick-up stroke, highlighting a continued struggle.

But he was defiant when it



came to self-assessment. "The thing is, I've been batting beautifully in the nets. I'm trying everything that's in my control. When the runs have to come, they'll definitely come. I'm not out of form, but definitely out of runs," Suryakumar confidently said at the post-match presentation ceremony after India's win in Dharamsala on Sunday.

However, the numbers tell a worrying story. The Indian captain has been searching for fluency for over a year, averaging under 15 in the format this season. Additionally, he's still without a half-century in 2025, the longest such phase of his career.

Only twice during this period has he managed to bat beyond 20 balls.

Modi govt's illegality exposed: Cong on relief to Gandhis

NEW DELHI

THE Congress on Tuesday claimed the "illegality" of the Narendra Modi government and its "politically motivated prosecution stands fully exposed" after a court here refused to take cognisance of the Enforcement Directorate's National Herald money laundering case against Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi and others.

In a statement, Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinate said the ED's proceedings against Congress leadership -- Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi -- in the case have been found to be "completely illegal and mala fide" by the court.

"The mala fide and illegality of the Modi government stands fully exposed. The court has ruled that the ED case is without jurisdiction;



it has no FIR, without which there is no case. This politically motivated prosecution by the Modi government over the last decade of the principal opposition party stands exposed before the people of India," she said.

"No case of money laundering, no proceeds of crime and no movement of property; all baseless charges that have been a part of a political witch hunt, propaganda, reputation assassination and campaign which stands defeated today," Shrinate said.

She said the Congress party and its leadership are committed to fighting for the truth and for the rights of every Indian. "We cannot, and will not ever be intimidated, because we fight for the truth," she added.

Party general secretary K

C Venugopal said, "Through this judgment, the court has exposed the illegal and mala fide political targeting by the Narendra Modi government."

"From day one, the opposition, especially Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, has been targeted without any legal basis or wrongdoing. This judgment clearly vindicates our stand," he added.

Refusing to take cognisance of the federal probe agency's money laundering charge against Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi, and five others in the National Herald case, the court noted that the chargesheet filed is based on a probe into a complaint by a private person and not on an FIR of a predicate offence.

Its cognisance is impermissible in law, the judge said. (PTI)

Goa nightclub fire case Luthra brothers deported, taken into police custody

NEW DELHI

GAURAV Luthra and Saurabh Luthra, co-owners of the Birch by Romeo Lane nightclub in Goa where a massive fire killed 25 people, were deported from Thailand on Tuesday and taken into custody by Delhi and Goa police as soon as they landed in Delhi. The brothers arrived in the Indian capital in an Indigo flight and were immediately handed over to authorities for further legal proceedings, 10 days after a blaze tore through the Birch by Romeo Lane nightclub in Arpora in North Goa.

Gaurav, 44 and Saurabh, 40, will be produced before a Delhi court where the Goa police will seek their transit remand.

A TV reporter tracking the brothers from Bangkok attempted to shoot inside the aircraft, prompting the airlines and accompanying security officials to summon additional force to whisk away the two



men.

The Luthra brothers are facing a case of culpable homicide and negligence following the December 6 tragedy, which investigators allege was compounded by the nightclub operating in violation of mandatory fire safety norms. The incident raised serious questions over alleged fire safety violations and lapses by the management. Gaurav and Saurabh fled to Phuket in the early hours of December 7, hours after the fire at their nightclub, prompting the authorities to issue an Interpol

Blue Corner Notice and cancel their passports.

The duo was detained by Thai authorities at Phuket on December 11 following a request from the Indian government which later coordinated with officials in Thailand to deport them under legal treaties between the two nations.

On December 11, a Delhi court rejected the transit anticipatory bail pleas. Additional Sessions Judge Vandana termed the allegations against the brothers "prima facie grave and serious" and severely criticised their "conduct."

The court took note of the police investigation that the brothers had booked tickets to Phuket one hour after the fire, a fact their counsel had initially "concealed" while seeking protection from immediate arrest.

The judge said that leaving immediately after the tragedy was a clear attempt to "evade the legal process".



Security forces hunt for terrorists holed up in Udhampur village

JAMMU: Security forces searched for terrorists in Udhampur on Tuesday, a day after a policeman was killed in a gunfight there, a police officer said.

During the encounter on Monday, one terrorist was believed to have been injured, while two policemen suffered minor bullet wounds.

"The operation has been resumed in the area to track down the holed-up terrorists. The cordon has been further strengthened," the officer told PTI.

A joint team of the Special Operations Group (SOG) of police, along with the army and the CRPF, is on the job with sniffer dogs, the officer said.

On Monday, forces got locked in a gunfight with terrorists in Soan village of the Majalta area in Udhampur. The village was raided by the police on a tip-off about the presence of three terrorists, believed to be affiliated with the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) outfit.

The encounter took place in the besieged village around 6 pm and continued for some time, resulting in injuries to one SOG jawan, Amjad Pathan, son of Bashrat Khan. Pathan, a resident of Salva, Mendhar in Poonch district, later succumbed.

"A very small SOG team engaged the terrorists. Combing of the forest has been impeded due to darkness and treacherous terrain," IGP Jammu Bhim Sen Tutti said in a social media post.

34 Maoist cadres surrender in Bijapur

RAIPUR/BIJAPUR (CHHATTISGARH)

IN a significant victory for anti-Naxal operations, 34 Maoist cadres, including 7 women, surrendered before senior police and CRPF officials in Bijapur district on Tuesday, carrying a combined bounty of Rs 84 lakh.

The surrendered cadres, primarily from the South Sub-Zonal Bureau, also include members linked to the Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee (DKSZC), Telangana State Committee, and Andhra-Odisha Border (AOB) Division.

Key figures include a Divisional Committee Member (DVCM) from the Keralapal

Area Committee with a Rs 8 lakh bounty, several PLGA (People's Liberation Guerrilla Army) members, Area Committee Members (ACMs), platoon leaders, militia commanders, and frontal organisation office-bearers like DAKMS and CNM presidents.

Disillusioned with Maoist ideology, they pledged allegiance to the Indian Constitution, vowing a peaceful life. Each received Rs 50,000 immediate incentive under the state's rehabilitation policy, Police officials said.

The surrender occurred amid joint efforts by District Reserve Guard (DRG), Bastar Fighters, Special Task Force (STF), CoBRA, and CRPF battalions, influenced by the



Chhattisgarh government's "Puna Margam: Rehabilitation to Rejuvenation" campaign—a reintegration drive—and the "Niyad Nellanar" scheme delivering development to remote villages.

Police Superintendent of Bijapur Jitendra Kumar Yadav appealed to the remaining Maoists, "abandon violence without fear. The government's policies ensure a secure, respectable future."

He highlighted family de-

sires for normal lives.

Since January 2024, Bijapur has seen over 824 surrenders (per local claims, aligning with reports of 790+ by late 2025), alongside arrests and encounters, reflecting intensified operations.

Statewide, thousands have surrendered in 2025, weakening Maoist structures in Bastar. Officials credit proactive security, trust-building, and welfare initiatives for transforming fear into dialogue and development in South Bastar.

Rehabilitation processes, including legal formalities and reintegration support, are underway. This marks another step toward Chhattisgarh's goal of lasting peace in Naxal-affected regions.



In line with the national vision of 'Sahakar se Samridhhi' to deepen and expand the cooperative movement, Ladakh has adopted the Model Bye-Laws for PACS, enabling them to undertake over 25 diversified business activities while enhancing transparency, accountability, and governance -**Amit Shah**, Union Cooperation Minister

BIZ BRIEFS

Film event in Hyderabad

The Niri9 International Film Festival is set to return with its third edition in Hyderabad on January 10 and 11, a moment of cultural convergence between the North Eastern region and Telangana. This year, the festival received 176 film entries across categories, including 40 feature films, 65 short films, 56 shorter films, and 15 documentaries. Dr Junmoni Devi Khaund, Festival Director, said: "This event is not just a festival; it's a movement of stories, cultures, and connections."

Volvo Car's initiative

Volvo Car India announced an expansion of its sustainability-driven Reverse Project with the launch of a new plantation initiative at Matri Van along the Gurugram - Faridabad Highway. Under its CSR initiative for, the company will support the plantation of over 20,000 native trees over 20 acres of Aravalli land, as part of the Community Barren Land Transformation Project, led by SankalpTaru Foundation in partnership with the Haryana Forest Department.

ETS hosts event in Hyd

ETS, the global leader in educational assessment and creator of the TOEFL iBT test, hosted a TOEFL Experience Days event in Hyderabad on December 16. The event offered a look at the enhanced TOEFL iBT launching on January 21. Sidnei Rodrigues de Souza, Executive Director, said: "TOEFL is evolving to better reflect how students communicate in real academic settings. We are updating the test content and structure, introducing AI-powered scoring for greater precision."

Ujjivan SFB's Ivory program

Ujjivan Small Finance Bank launched Ivory, a program designed for India's mass affluent segment. The offering integrates digital banking with curated experiences, including, entertainment, and dining benefits. Hitendra Jha, Head-Retail Liabilities, Ujjivan SFB, said: "Today's emerging mass affluent segment continues to face barriers in accessing quality banking services. Many encounter high balance requirements, inconsistent service delivery, and generic reward programs that do not align with their lifestyles."

NSE partners with HCLTech

NSE Academy Ltd., (NAL), a subsidiary of the National Stock Exchange of India Ltd., has partnered with HCLTech, to deliver a series of joint certificate programs in technology and finance, aimed at equipping students and professionals with future-ready skills in BFSI and fintech across India and the Middle East and South Asia (MESA) region. This partnership will enable organizations and universities to nurture a future-ready workforce by providing access to industry-leading, ready-to-deploy programs.

Rupee falls 23 paise to settle at fresh record low of 91.01/\$

The rupee has fallen from 90 a dollar to 91 in the last 10 trading sessions

MUMBAI

THE rupee fell 23 paise against the greenback to settle at a new all-time low of 91.01 (provisional) on Tuesday, as the government in the Rajya Sabha attributed the sliding value of domestic currency to widening trade deficit and the ongoing developments related to the India-US trade agreement.

During the session, the local unit lost 36 paise from its previous close against the greenback to hit its lowest-ever level of 91.14, but regained some ground later in the day. Even a weaker greenback and a sharp decline in global crude oil prices could not prevent the slide in the local unit, forex traders said.

The rupee has fallen from 90 a dollar to 91 in the last 10 trading sessions. The unit has slipped 1 per cent against the greenback in the past five sessions alone.

The issue was brought up in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday, and Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said, "During the current



financial year, the depreciation of the Rupee has been influenced by the increase in trade deficit and likely prospects arising from the ongoing developments in India's trade agreement with the US, amid relatively weak support from the capital account."

"The depreciation of currency is likely to enhance export competitiveness, which in turn impacts the economy positively. On the other hand, depreciation may raise the prices of imported goods. However, the overall impact of exchange rate depreciation on domestic prices depends on the extent of the pass-through of international

commodity prices to the domestic market," he said.

Citing data, Chaudhary said that this year the rupee opened at 90.87 against the greenback and traded in the range of 90.76 to 91.14 before settling at 91.01 (provisional), down 23 paise from its previous close.

On Monday, the local unit settled at 90.78 against the US dollar, registering a loss of 29 paise from its previous close. "Rupee made a new lifetime low as dollar buying continued with news that (US President) Donald Trump has not agreed to the new trade proposals from India.

"The value of the INR is market-determined, with no target or specific level or band. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) regularly monitors the foreign exchange market and intervenes in situations of excess volatility. Further, the RBI monitors key developments across the globe which may have an impact on USD-rupee exchange rate," the minister said.

According to forex traders, the rupee might even cross the 92 per dollar-mark this month. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 90.87 against the greenback and traded in the range of 90.76 to 91.14 before settling at 91.01 (provisional), down 23 paise from its previous close.

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Gold snaps 4-day record rally, drops ₹1,700

NEW DELHI: Snapping the four-day record rally, gold prices declined by Rs 1,700 to Rs 1,35,900 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday as investors booked profits amid weak global cues, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had surged by Rs 4,000 to touch an all-time high of Rs 1,37,600 per 10 grams on Monday. The metal rose by Rs 6,000 over the previous four days, trading at record highs. "Gold prices witnessed profit booking and remained volatile, with the yellow metal slipping towards the \$ 4,275 level in global markets and staying under pressure," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities, said. Echoing sentiments, Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities, said, "Domestic gold prices also softened, curtailing a four-day advance. These losses were, however, notably mitigated by the persistent weakness in the Indian Rupee which quoted at a record low level".

In the local bullion markets, silver prices also depreciated by Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,98,500 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes).

Better regulatory oversight, ease of compliance via reforms: FM

Says FDI limit in insurance sector was increased from 26% to 49% in 2015, 74% in 2021 and now to 100%

NEW DELHI: FINANCE Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said the insurance reforms brought in through a bill in Parliament will grant greater access to insurance for the people, have better regulatory oversight and ensure ease of compliance. Moving the "The Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha (Amendment of Insurance Laws) Bill, 2025" for consideration of the Lok Sabha, Sitharaman said the draft legislation was aimed at bringing transparency, ease of compliance mandates and increasing foreign direct investment (FDI) in the sector.

The minister said that the FDI limit in the insurance sector was increased from 26 per cent to 49 per cent in 2015, 74 per cent in 2021 and now proposed to 100 per cent.

"These have brought in a greater push for the insurance sector. The number of insurers has risen from 53 in 2014 to 74 now," Sitharaman said. She said insurance penetration has improved from 3.3 per cent in 2014-15 to 3.8 per cent now and insurance density or the average insurance premium paid per



person in a year has jumped from \$55 in 2014 to \$97 now.

The minister said the total insurance premium paid has risen from Rs 4.15 lakh crore in 2014-15 to Rs 11.93 lakh crore and assets under management increased from Rs 24.2 lakh crore to Rs 74.4 lakh crore. "We are now looking for greater penetration, better regulatory oversight, easier compliance and more FDI," Sitharaman said. The minister said over the year, an ecosystem has developed in the country for providing greater access for people to insurance.

Sitharaman said that various government schemes such as the PM Fasal Bima Yojana and the Jana Arogya Yojana have brought poor people under the insurance umbrella, a move that has helped immensely during the Covid pandemic.

Vivo's unveils Switch-off campaign

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

VIVO India has launched the seventh edition of its #SwitchOff campaign, it also unveiled a Digital Video Commercial which aims to bring the message to the emotional centre of every Indian home- the dining table. According to the 2025 Switch Off Study, dinner is the strongest daily bonding moment, with 72 per cent of children spending the most time with parents at dinner and 91 per cent saying conversations improve when phones are set aside.

GeetajChannana, Head-Corporate Strategy, Vivo India, said: "Every family remembers a time when dinner was the happiest pause in the day, a moment where conversations flowed without interruption and everyone felt heard. Today, those moments disappear quietly, not because we don't care, but because our attention is constantly pulled away."

Channanaadded: "The Switch Off campaign was created to remind people that meaningful relationships deserve undivided attention."

GDP growth set to accelerate to 7.5% in FY27: Report

MUMBAI

INDIA'S economic growth is expected to pick up pace and remain strong in the coming years, with GDP likely to expand at 7.5 per cent in FY27, even as inflation stays under control, according to Axis Bank's Economic Outlook 2026 on Tuesday.

The report, authored by Neelkanth Mishra, Chief Economist at Axis Bank and Head of Global Research at Axis Capital, says India can grow faster than its long-term trend without triggering inflationary pressures.

This is because the economy still has enough unused capacity, or slack, which allows growth to rise smoothly. Axis Bank expects India to grow faster than most global peers and even above market expectations, making it the world's fastest-growing large economy.

The strong outlook is supported by easing pressure from government finances, lower borrowing costs, and supportive monetary policy.

The report also highlights that ongoing structural reforms and regulatory easing will help sustain growth over



the medium term.

A key driver of this growth will be a fresh rise in investment activity. With company balance sheets in better shape, the cost of capital remaining low, and factories running at high capacity, businesses are likely to increase capital expenditure in FY27. This new investment cycle is expected to further strengthen economic momentum.

The bank's economists also see steady gains in productivity and a revival in capital formation, which together support a long-term trend growth rate of around 7 per cent.

Even with growth moving above this trend, inflation is expected to remain well behaved.

Axis Bank forecasts headline inflation at around 4 per cent in FY27. While food prices may see some rebound, underlying price pressures remain muted.

Quintrans garners \$750K in pre-seed funding round

NEW DELHI

CAPITAL-A, a specialist venture capital fund for manufacturing and deep tech, has led a \$750,000 'pre-seed' round in a deep tech engineering startup, Quintrans. The round also saw participation from Sumeet Kabra of RR Global, SanchiConnect, AIC-Pinnacle and other strategic partners, alongside ecosystem support from existing partner IIMA Ventures. "Capital-A, India's specialist venture capital fund for manufacturing and deep tech, has led a \$750,000 pre-seed round in Quintrans, a deep tech engineering startup developing India-built direct-drive linear motion systems for industrial automation, robotics and equipment manufacturing," according to a release. An industry terminology used by founders, investors and venture capitalists (VCs), pre-seed typically refers to funding stage before the seed round, when a company is focused on the prototype, and Proof of Concept (PoC).

SkyWalker ortho robotic system launched at Arete Hospitals

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

ARETE Hospitals, Hyderabad, has become the first medical institution in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana to introduce the SkyWalker Orthopedic Robotic System in collaboration with US headquartered MicroPort Orthopedics Inc., for knee replacement surgery, marking a significant milestone in the region's healthcare landscape.

"Arete Hospitals has always been committed to integrating innovations that make a real difference for our patients," said Dr Pavan Kumar Reddy, Medical Director & HOD- Critical Care, Arete Hospitals. "The launch of this system is another milestone in our pursuit of clinical excellence at Arete Hospitals, and we are proud to be the first to bring this technology to the twin states. Arete Hospitals is built on the premise of positivity, efficiency & proficiency and advanced medical technology adoption is at our core" added Dr Reddy.

Dr Prabhat Reddy Lakireddi, Director - Orthopaedics Arthroscopy, Sports

Injuries, Robotic & Joint Replacement Surgery, Arete Hospitals, Hyderabad, said, "The system gives us real-time data for joint line reconstruction and ligament balancing, while the NitrX Evolution implant provides remarkable stability and function. We've seen smoother recoveries, better range of motion, and excellent functional outcomes in our initial cases with SkyWalker".

The system is designed to work with the NitrX Evolution implant, enabling accuracy and sub-millimeter precision in knee joint alignment. This combination provides personalised outcomes, faster recovery, and longevity. Dr Mukesh Parmar, Senior Director and General Manager, South Asia, MicroPort Orthopedics, said, "The choice of implant is as critical as the robotic platform itself, because it stays with the patient for life. The new implant has shown excellent clinical outcomes, and when paired with the system, it creates a powerful combination that empowers surgeons and delivers customised and consistently favourable patient outcomes."

ITC gets nod to acquire Birla's Century pulp paper biz

NEW DELHI: Fair trade regulator CCI on Tuesday cleared conglomerate ITC Ltd's proposal to acquire the pulp and paper business of Aditya Birla Real Estate Ltd (ABREL) for Rs 3,498 crore. The development came after ABREL in March this year announced that its board has approved the execution of the business transfer agreement for the divestment of the pulp and paper undertaking situated in Lalkuan, Uttarakhand, by way of a slump sale to ITC. The Competition Commission of India (CCI) said it has approved the proposed deal. "Commission approves acquisition of paper and pulp manufacturing business of Aditya Birla Real Estate Limited by ITC Limited," the regulator said in a post on X.

Established in 1984 at Lalkuan (Nainital, Uttarakhand), pulp and paper undertaking Century Pulp and Paper (CPP) of ABREL is a well-established player in the Indian paper industry with an installed capacity of 4.8 lakh metric tonnes per annum. In March, ABREL said, "The transfer of the business will be for a lump-sum cash consideration of Rs 3,498 crore, to be paid by ITC to ABREL."

India's long-term outlook remains positive, indices to remain near all-time high in 2025

Valuations are stretched across large parts of the market, smaller stocks are under pressure, and investors are becoming increasingly selective about where they deploy capital

NEW DELHI: India's long-term outlook remains firmly positive, underpinned by favourable demographics, policy continuity, rapid urbanisation and sustained productivity gains, a report said on Tuesday. As 2025 draws to a close, Indian equity markets are sending mixed signals. Benchmark indices remain close to record highs, but beneath the surface, the picture is far more nuanced.

Smallcase Managers, in its report, said that valuations are stretched across large parts of the market, smaller stocks are under pressure, and investors are becoming increasingly selective about where they deploy capital. The managers noted that as US growth moderates and the Federal Reserve eventually pivots, interest-rate differentials should increasingly favour Emerging Markets, with India standing out as the most attractive destination.

Dhiren Shah, smallcase manager, Co-Founder, Kamayakya, said: "We re-



main bullish on Indian equities in 2026, with a clear focus on stock selection rather than index levels. While public capex has driven growth so far, the next phase will come from a revival in private capex as corporate balance sheets strengthen and capacity utilisation rises, setting up the next leg of India's structural growth."

India's macro backdrop remains constructive, aided by moderating inflation, the beginning of a rate-cut cycle and continued policy focus on manufacturing, infrastructure and exports. The report expects the economy to

grow at a steady 6-7 per cent in real terms, with inflation anchored closer to 4 per cent, implying a phase of more stable, though slightly lower, nominal growth compared to the previous decade.

"Tariff-related noise from the US, particularly around a potential Trump return, is more of a sentiment and liquidity risk for India than a structural one. It can tighten global liquidity, lift volatility and lead to temporary FII outflows, but it does not change India's core growth story," said Vivek Sharma, smallcase manager, Investment Head, Estee Advisors.

Markets remain in red amid weak cues

Persistent foreign fund outflows, a weak rupee and sluggish global market trends dented investor sentiment

NEGATIVE MOMENTUM

- BSE Sensex fell 533.50pts (-0.63%) to 84,679.86
- NSE Nifty dropped 167.20pts (-0.64%) to 25,860.10
- FII's offloaded ₹1,468.32 cr; DII's bought ₹1,792.25 cr



MUMBAI: Benchmark Sensex tumbled 533.50 points and the broader Nifty declined to the 25,860 level on Tuesday as persistent foreign fund outflows, a weak rupee and sluggish global market trends dented investor sentiment.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 533.50 points or 0.63 per cent to settle at 84,679.86. During the day, it dived 592.75 points or 0.69 per cent to 84,620.61. The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 167.20 points or 0.64 per cent to a week's low of 25,860.10.

Among Sensex firms, Axis Bank tanked the most by 5.03 per cent. Eternal, HCL Tech, Bajaj Finserv, Tata Steel, UltraTech Cement and Bajaj Finance were also among the laggards. However, Titan, Bharti Airtel, Mahindra & Mahindra and Asian Paints were among the gainers.

"Continued INR weakness to fresh record lows, driven by persistent FII outflows and subdued global sentiments, dragged domestic markets into negative territory," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments

Limited, said.

The rupee breached the record low level of 91 against the US dollar and hit 91.14 in intra-day trade due to foreign fund outflows on Tuesday. The BSE midcap gauge dropped 0.78 per cent, and the smallcap index dipped 0.69 per cent. Among sectoral indices, realty tanked 1.36 per cent, followed by bankex (1.03 per cent), commodities (0.91 per cent), IT (0.90 per cent), BSE Focused IT (0.86 per cent), financial services (0.83 per cent) and metal (0.82 per cent). Telecommu-

nication and consumer durables were the only gainers. A total of 2,519 stocks declined while 1,651 advanced and 158 remained unchanged on the BSE.

"A risk-averse mood dominated trading as the rupee's breach of the 91 level against the US dollar raised macro concerns, while weakness across Asian markets added to global uncertainty. This combination prompted investors to reduce risk, triggering broad-based profit-booking, particularly across realty, financial services, metal and IT names," Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 1,468.32 crore on Monday, while domestic institutional investors (DII's) bought stocks worth Rs 1,792.25 crore, according to exchange data. On Monday, the Sensex dipped 54.30 points or 0.06 per cent to settle at 85,213.36. The Nifty edged lower by 19.65 points or 0.08 per cent to 26,027.30.



'Chikiri Chikiri' sets the internet ablaze, crosses a century in Telugu alone

150 million+ views across 5 languages

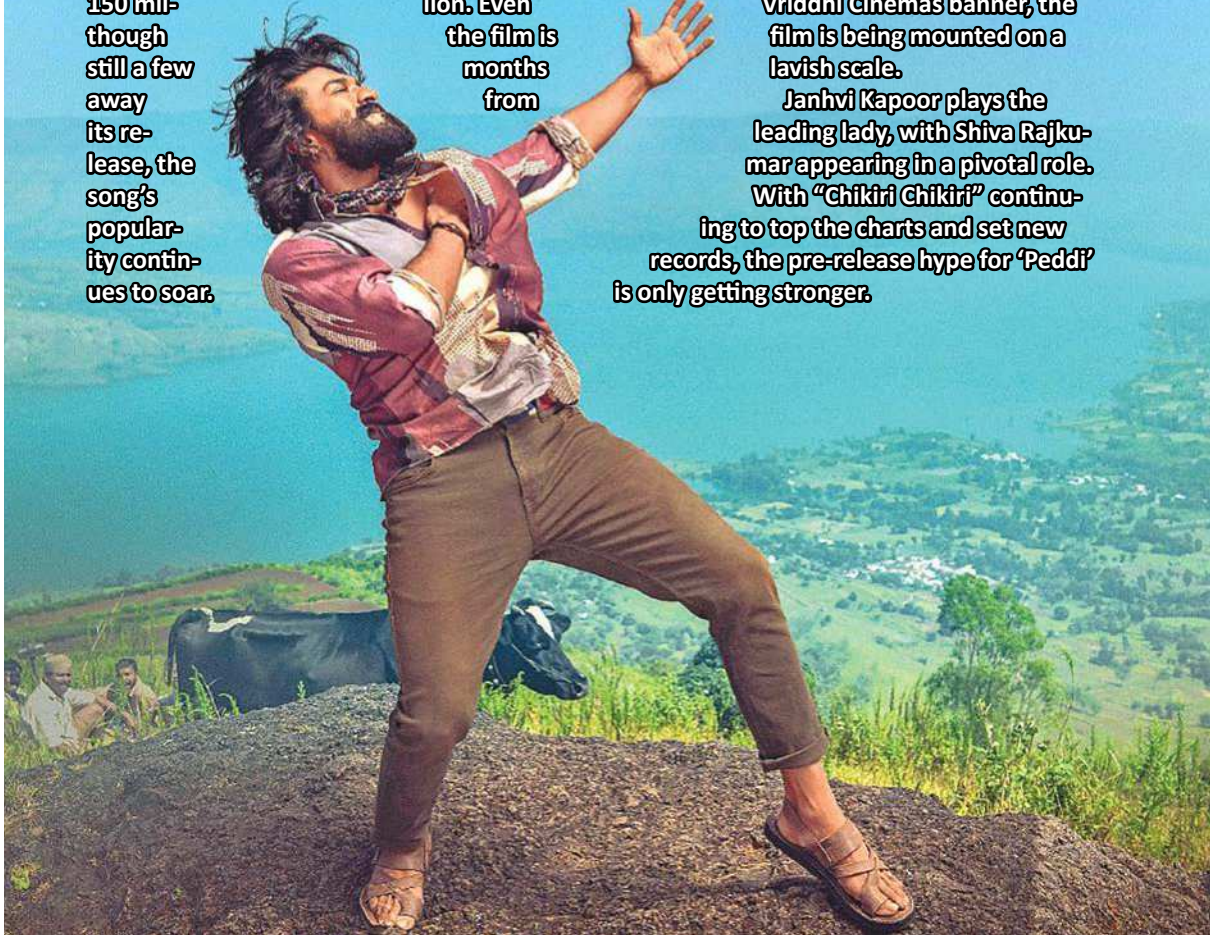
Mega Power Star Ram Charan has once again showcased his immense star power. The first song from his upcoming film, 'Peddi', titled "Chikiri Chikiri", is creating waves online. What began as a high-energy launch has now turned into a massive worldwide sensation.

Within just a month of its release, the Telugu version alone has crossed 100 million views, while the combined views across five languages have surpassed 150 million. Even though still a few months away from its release, the song's popularity continues to soar.

Composed by A.R. Rahman, the song's powerful beats and catchy rhythm have impressed audiences everywhere. Ram Charan's energetic dance moves and commanding screen presence have become a hot topic on social media, inspiring countless reels and fan edits.

Director Buchi Babu Sana's stylish visuals and keen attention to detail make the song look grand and exciting, further amplifying the buzz around 'Peddi'. Produced by Venkata Satish Kilari under the Vridhhi Cinemas banner, the film is being mounted on a lavish scale.

Janhvi Kapoor plays the leading lady, with Shiva Rajkumar appearing in a pivotal role. With "Chikiri Chikiri" continuing to top the charts and set new records, the pre-release hype for 'Peddi' is only getting stronger.



Producer Raj Kandukuri wishes for success of 'Jinn', releasing on Dec 19

Produced by Nikhil M. Gowda under the banners of Sadalamma Film Productions and Bilva Studios, 'Jinn' is directed by Chinmay Ram. The film features Amit Rao, Parvez Simba, Prakash Tuminad, Ravi Bhat, and Sangeetha in key roles. The movie is set for a grand release on December 19. Ahead of its release, a trailer launch event was held on Monday, attended by chief guests Raj Kandukuri, Veerabhadra Chowdary, and Soheli.

The trailer raises intriguing questions: What is the mystery behind the haunted lake? What is the secret hidden inside the college? It depicts four youngsters trapped by spirits, unable to escape from a college building, with the entry of a Jinn adding to the suspense. The makers manage to scare the audience right from the trailer itself. The visuals and background score are highly engaging and captivating. After the trailer launch, the speakers shared their thoughts:

Raj Kandukuri said:

"Jinn" is a very interesting title. There are two kinds of Jinn—good Jinn and bad Jinn. I feel horror films carry comparatively less risk. If fear is presented effectively, audiences always support horror films."

Veerabhadram Chowdary said:

"I really liked the trailer of 'Jinn'. Horror films are tasting

success these days. Director Chinmay Ram has made this film very well. 'Jinn' will surely achieve good success."

Soheli said:

"Telugu audiences encourage films from all languages and technicians from all regions. I really liked the trailer of 'Jinn'. The tagline 'Spooky World' is impressive. I wish the director and producer great success."

Director Chinmay Ram said:

"Thank you to everyone who attended our film 'Jinn'. Special thanks to producer Nikhil garu for investing in and supporting us."

Amit Rao said:

"Thanks to everyone who came to the 'Jinn' trailer launch event. Many people don't know what 'Jinn' means. In Islam, spirits and supernatural beings are referred to as Jinn."

Parvez Simba said:

"We took an idea that struck us and brought it this far. We did extensive research on Jinns. With this movie, we are presenting a completely new world."

Marella Manikantha said:

"Thanks to everyone who attended our 'Jinn' event. This is a film audience have never seen before. Producer Nikhil garu made it on a grand scale, and director Chinmay Ram has executed it brilliantly."



'Dhandoraa' Is a Wonderful Film That Combines All Kinds of Commercial Elements - Actor Sivaji

The film 'Dhandoraa' stars the iconic actor Sivaji in the lead role. Ravindra Banerjee Muppaneni, head of Loukya Entertainment—who has garnered attention for producing acclaimed films like 'Color Photo' and 'Bedurilanka 2012'—has produced 'Dhandoraa'. Along with Sivaji, actors Navadeep, Nandu, Ravi Krishna, Manika Chikkala, Mounika Reddy, Bindu Madhavi, Radhya, Aditi Bhavaraju, and others play important roles in the film. Directed by Muralikanth, the movie is set for a grand release on December 25. As part of the promotions, actor Sivaji interacted with the media. Here are some key excerpts from his interaction:

Have you heard the story of 'Dhandoraa' before 'Court'?

I first heard the story of 'Dhandoraa'. My role in it is very new. The makers of 'Dhandoraa' had given an advance earlier, but there was a delay in production. So 'Court' was released first.

What is your role going to be like in 'Dhandoraa'?

My role in 'Dhandoraa' will be different. Whether it is good or bad is something the audience will decide. They may not fully understand it immediately; after watching the film, the audience will have to tell me about my role.

Can 'Dhandoraa' be considered a completely message-based film?

'Dhandoraa' is not a completely message-oriented film. It is a film made by combining all kinds of commercial elements.

Since it comes after 'Court', there are expectations on 'Dhandoraa'. Will your role



live up to them?

The response to my role as Mangapati in 'Court' is similar to the response I expect for my role in 'Dhandoraa'. Such roles come only if you are very lucky as an actor. I got a character with many different shades in this film.

Prostitutes were portrayed in films like 'Vedam' and 'Kancheepuramlo'. How are they portrayed in this film?

Bindu Madhavi's character in 'Dhandoraa' has been portrayed in a very classy manner. Everyone will connect with the film and its characters.

Do you feel new directors are using you more?

I mostly work with new directors. Our filmmakers are very calculative. Even though we have a lot of potential actors, they often bring actors from other languages.

Did you enjoy films like 'Missamma'? Do you enjoy films like 'Court' and 'Dhandoraa'?

I enjoyed all kinds of films such as 'Missamma', 'Shailaja Krishnamurthy', and 'Adirindayya Chandram'. I have always had confidence in myself as an actor. I can play all kinds of roles, from comedy to negative shades. Now, I feel the time has come for me.

TRAILER OF '45: THE MOVIE' UNVEILED

Popular music director Arjun Janya takes the director's chair for the first time with the much-awaited flick '45: The Movie', a project that promises scale, substance, and star power in equal measure. The film unites three formidable forces of Kannada cinema—Karunada Chakravarthy Shiva Rajkumar, Real Star Upendra, and the versatile Raj B Shetty—setting the stage for a cinematic collision unlike any other. Produced by Uma Ramesh Reddy and M. Ramesh Reddy under the Suraj Productions banner, '45: The Movie' has been crafted with a clear ambition to stand apart. From its striking promotional material to the intriguing snippets unveiled so far, the film has steadily built an air of mystery that has kept audiences talking. With anticipation peaking, the makers have now unveiled the theatrical trailer.

The opening frames introduce a powerful visual idea—a date of birth, a date of death, and the fleeting stretch between them. This stark imagery becomes the film's thematic backbone, suggesting that existence is not just about living, but about being accountable for every choice made within that narrow window of time. The trailer hints at a belief



system where moral reckoning does not stop with death, giving the film an almost metaphysical undertone.

Bringing together Shiva Rajkumar, Upendra, and Raj B Shetty, '45: The Movie' blends contrasting personas into this moral framework. Upendra's resonant voiceover lends philosophical gravity, framing the narrative as a reflection on cause and consequence. Raj B Shetty appears rooted

and vulnerable, representing the ordinary individual caught in forces larger than himself. Shiva Rajkumar's presence, particularly his unexpected appearance in a red Bharatanatyam costume, introduces a striking sense of duality and transformation.

The cinematography by Satya Hegde stands out, while Arjun Janya's pulsating score amplifies the experience. The production values are exceptional, and the

film features high-intensity action sequences choreographed by leading stunt masters Dr K Ravi Verma, Jolly Bastian, and Differnet Danny Chetan D'Souza. Dialogues are written by Anil Kumar, and editing is handled by K M Prakash.

With the trailer setting the bar high, '45: The Movie' is gearing up for a grand release in five languages on January 1, ushering in the New Year with a bang.

Geetha distributors to release Mohanlal's 'Vrusshabha' in Telugu on Dec 25

The prestigious Geetha Film Distributors, known for releasing blockbuster films like 'Kantara', 'Viduthalai', 'Chaava', and 'Mahavatar Narasimha', along with many other Telugu super hits, is now bringing the highly anticipated film 'Vrusshabha', starring the complete actor Mohanlal, to Telugu audiences. With the involvement of this leading distribution house, anticipation around the film has reached new heights. This period film promises audiences a cinematic spectacle like never before.

Written and directed by Nanda Kishore, 'Vrusshabha' is a sweeping saga of love, destiny, and vengeance, exploring the unbreakable bond between a father and son. Announcing this exciting development, the makers unveiled a powerful poster featuring Mohanlal in two different looks. Geetha Film Distributors is planning a grand release for the film. Shot simultaneously in Malayalam and Telugu, with releases planned in Hindi and Kannada as well, 'Vrusshabha' is set to be one of the most memorable cinematic events of 2025. Worldwide Release: December 25, 2025. The previously unveiled teaser introduced audiences to Mohanlal in a commanding avatar as a warrior king,

carrying the powerful message, "When Destiny Calls, Blood Must Answer." With the evocative tagline "Reborn Love – A Love So Strong, It Defies Death," the teaser impressed cinema lovers nationwide, ending with a dramatic transition between the past and present that left audiences intrigued by the story's dual worlds.

Starring Mohanlal alongside Samarjit Lankesh, Ragini Dwivedi, and Nayan Sarika, 'Vrusshabha' also features a strong ensemble cast, with more names to be announced. The film features music by Sam CS, sound design by Resul Pookutty, dialogues by SRK, Janardhan Maharshi, and Karthik, and high-octane action sequences choreographed by Peter Hein, Stunt Silva, and Nikhil.

Presented by Connekt Media and Balaji Telefilms Ltd in association with Abishek S. Vyas Studios, and produced by Shobha Kapoor, Ektaa R. Kapoor, C.K. Padma Kumar, Varun Mathur, Saurabh Mishra, Abishek S. Vyas, Praveer Singh, Vishal Gurnani, and Juhi Parekh Mehta, 'Vrusshabha' is an epic action cinematic journey that explores the emotional bond between a father and son. The film blends action, drama, and visual spectacle with deeply moving storytelling.



'Missterious' climax will be memorable - Director Mahi Komati Reddy

The movie 'Missterious' stars Rohit as the hero and Abid Bhushan in a police role, alongside actresses Riya Kapoor and Meghna Rajputh. Directed by Mahi Komati Reddy and produced by Jay Vallandas under the Ashlee Creations banner, the film is gearing up for a grand worldwide theatrical release on the 19th of this month. On this occasion, director Mahi Komati Reddy shared several key highlights of the movie in an interview today.

Director Mahi Komati Reddy said in the interview:

"Our film, 'Missterious', is not a regular-format movie like others; we have crafted it around a distinct point. The film includes elements of crime, love, and crush, along with strong thrilling aspects. The audience will definitely be entertained, as such thrilling elements have not been shown in any film so far. The suspense surrounding who the killer is will continue until the very end of the film. The climax episode will be a blend of suspense and thrill, featuring an unexpected twist that no one can predict. After the movie ends, everyone will surely be talking about that climax."

When it comes to thriller movies, songs are not usually highly expected. However, we have included three songs based on the story's requirements, and all of them fit perfectly. They add a good kick and ensure the audience does not feel like they are only watching a crime film. Our music director, M.L. Raja, has provided chartbuster music for these songs.

Overall, 'Missterious' is a mix of crime, crush, love, thrill, suspense, songs, and fight scenes. The audience will come to the theatre, enjoy all these elements, and leave entertained. Especially, the climax episode will be unforgettable.

So far, the promotional content for 'Missterious' has received very good feedback. We produced the film wonderfully with the support of our friend and producer, Jay Vallandas. Initially, we planned to release the movie on the 12th of this month, but due to the release of Akhanda 2, we decided to bring it to audiences a week later, on the 19th."