

IN BRIEF

Issues faced by
Gruha Lakshmi
beneficiaries will be
taken up: Minister

BENGALURU: Women and Child Development Minister Lakshmi Hebbalkar has said that steps are being taken to resolve issues faced by beneficiaries of the Gruha Lakshmi scheme, under which nearly 52,000 women are currently not receiving financial assistance due to discrepancies related to GST and Income Tax records.

Replies to a question raised by Legislative Council member P.H. Pujar during the special session of the Legislative Council, the Minister explained that as per records of the GST and Income Tax Departments, these beneficiaries are shown as taxpayers, which has resulted in the withholding of scheme benefits. She stated that out of the 52,000 affected beneficiaries, issues faced by around 20,000 women have already been resolved, and efforts are ongoing to address the remaining cases.

Lakshmi Hebbalkar clarified that there is no fault on the part of the State Government or the Women and Child Development Department. She noted that the same details are reflected in the databases of the GST and Income Tax departments, making it a complex issue to rectify immediately.

The Minister further informed that the state has approximately 1.26 crore beneficiaries under the Gruha Lakshmi scheme.

Towing to resume in Bengaluru

BENGALURU: With the number of vehicles in Bengaluru far exceeding its population, traffic congestion has become a major concern across the city. Unauthorized and indiscriminate parking in several areas has further worsened the situation, severely affecting smooth traffic movement. In response, the BBMP and Bengaluru Traffic Police have decided to reintroduce the towing system across the city.

The illegal parking has exposed the scale of the problem. In Shivajinagar, Rajajinagar West of Chord Road, several streets have virtually turned into permanent parking zones. Vehicles abandoned years ago remain parked without owners checking on them, many now covered in dust and rust.

Similarly, residential areas such as 8th Main Road in Malleshwaram have become parking spots for unidentified vehicles. One vehicle reportedly parked in 2019 has not moved since, while even scrapped vehicles have been left occupying public space. Local residents say that despite repeatedly bringing the issue to the attention of police and civic authorities, no effective action has been taken.

I stand by Siddaramaiah and he stands by me: Shivakumar

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BENGALURU

SAYING that politics was the art of the possible, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Monday said that one man with courage could achieve the impossible. "Politics is the art of the possible. Everything is possible here. I believe that one man with courage makes a majority. With conviction and determination, one can have 140 people and even more.

Let's see what happens in 2028," the DCM said replying to Leader of the Opposition R Ashok during Motion of Thanks to Governor's address in the Assembly.

During the discussion, R Ashok said that everyone was confused as the comments of DCM D K Shivakumar have a hundred meanings to them. Replying to R Ashok, the DCM said, "I have come up as a student leader and I have my own values. I entered politics at an early age as

the party gave me ticket. Highs and lows are common in politics. I have seen and survived many highs and lows in politics including time in jail. I will complete six years as KPCC President next month."

"All 149 MLAs including Siddaramaiah are my strength. Siddaramaiah is with me 100%, there is no question about it. We are working together and we will continue to do so in the future.

We have given our word to the people of Karnataka and we are working towards fulfilling them. I have stood by him in his tough times and will continue to do so.

He will stand by me during my tough times. Let there not be any doubt about it," he said.

When Ashok intervened and asked what his tweet meant, the DCM said, "It is left to you how you understand the tweet."

Asked in what context he spoke about patience, the DCM said, "I am not answerable to everyone.



In both our parties, the party decides more than the strength of the support. Many CMs and Cab-

nets were changed in your party (BJP), hence I won't bother responding to your question."

State to host international Big Cat Summit at Bandipur and Nagarhole

The concept of the Global Big Cat Alliance was first announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2023 during the release of the national tiger census report in Mysuru

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BENGALURU

SOON after Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the Global Big Cat Alliance in her ninth Union Budget, India has stepped up preparations to host the prestigious International Big Cat Summit later this year. In a major recognition for Karnataka's wildlife heritage, the state's famed Bandipur and Nagarhole Tiger Reserves have been chosen as venues for the global event.

The five-day international workshop and training programme will be held from February 9 to 13. The programme is being jointly organised by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and the International Big Cat Alliance. This is the first major summit of the alliance being conducted in India and is expected to place a global spotlight on South India's conservation initiatives.

Representatives from 18 countries will take part in the event along with senior forest

officials from across India. The first two days of deliberations will be held at Bandipur Tiger Reserve, while the programme will shift to Nagarhole on February 11 and 12. The summit will conclude on February 13 after field visits and interactive sessions.

The concept of the Global Big Cat Alliance was first announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2023 during the release of the national tiger census report in Mysuru. The alliance aims to bring together tiger range countries and other nations to strengthen efforts for the protection of big cats across the world.

India is home to the largest population of tigers globally and also plays a key role in the conservation of leopards, snow leopards and other big cat species. The summit will focus on sharing global experience, modern technology use in wildlife monitoring, habitat management and strategies to curb wildlife crimes. Experts are also expected to discuss issues such as human-wildlife conflict, rehabilitation of forest-dependent communities, and regulation of development projects in ecologically sensitive tiger habitats. Strengthening cooperation among countries for better protection of migratory wildlife corridors will also be a major subject of discussion.

State forest department officials said hosting such a major global event in Karnataka is a matter of pride. Both Bandipur and Nagarhole are internationally known for their rich biodiversity and successful tiger conservation models. The summit is expected to bring global experts, researchers and policymakers onto a common platform to frame better strategies for the long-term survival of big cats. Karnataka's role as a leader in wildlife conservation is likely to gain further prominence through this event.

Congress govt sensitive, BJP insensitive: Siddaramaiah

BENGALURU



Replies to the opposition's allegations in Assembly, Siddaramaiah made a comparison between the policies of the present government and those of the previous BJP regimes, accusing the latter of being insensitive and anti-farmer.

"Our government is sensitive. The earlier BJP government was insensitive. Yediyurappa reduced the rice given under the Anna Bhagya scheme and even resorted to firing when farmers demanded fertilisers," Siddaramaiah said.

"Even though this decision imposed an additional burden of Rs 300 crore on the State, the government responded to the farmers' demands," he said. On support to maize growers, Siddaramaiah said the Centre had fixed the Minimum Support Price (MSP) at Rs 2,400. "After discussions with farmers and factory owners, the State government made arrangements to purchase 40 lakh metric tonnes of maize and fixed an

died. Was that your sensitivity?" he asked.

Referring to sugarcane farmers, the chief minister said that while the Centre had fixed the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP), the State government held negotiations with protesting farmers and fixed a price of Rs 3,300 per tonne, Siddaramaiah said.

Comparing Union budget sizes, Siddaramaiah told the House, "During the UPA government's ten-year tenure from 2003-04 to 2013-14, the total Union Budget size was Rs 95,21,493 crore. Under the NDA government, from 2014-15 till now, it has risen to Rs 3,80,95,527 crore."

Responding to criticism that his government had burdened people through price hikes, the chief minister said the allegation was misleading. "Even though there have been price revisions in the budget over the last three years, compared to other states, the increase is significantly lower. The allegation of excessive taxation is far from the truth," he said.

GOVT CHANGES TIMING OF URDU SCHOOLS DURING RAMZAN

BENGALURU

THE Karnataka government has decided to change the school working hours for Urdu-medium primary, upper primary and high schools in the state during the month of Ramzan in the academic year 2025-26. State Home Minister G Parameshwara on Monday said calling the government's move as appeasement of minorities was not right.

The decision applies to all government, aided and unaided Urdu-medium schools and follows a review of existing orders and a representation submitted by the Karnataka State Primary School Education Association (R), Bengaluru, a government circular said.

In its January 30 circular, which became public on

Monday, the government noted, "Earlier, through a Standing Order issued on October 31, 2002, Urdu-medium lower primary, higher primary and high schools in the state were permitted to conduct classes only from 8 am to 12.45 pm, and the said Standing Order has been directed to be examined as per rules and necessary action taken."

The government referred to its March 8, 2023, under which an Activity Action Plan for the academic year 2023-24 was implemented for schools following the state syllabus.

As per this circular, an advisory timetable had fixed regular school working hours from 10 am to 4.20 pm for daily academic activities.

However, taking into ac-

count the observance of Ramzan and the long-standing special provisions for Urdu-medium institutions, the government examined the matter afresh following a representation dated January 17, 2026, submitted by the association's president.

Accordingly, the order stated, "In the academic year 2025-26, for all government, aided and unaided Urdu-medium lower primary, higher primary and high schools in the state, the change in school working hours shall be applicable from the date of commencement of the month of Ramzan up to March 20, 2026."

The detailed schedule of the revised school working hours during this period will be followed by all concerned institutions, the

order added. Justifying the move, Parameshwara said these were aimed at bringing Urdu-medium children equal to others. "If somebody is not equal to you in all terms, like SC/ST why do you think a reservation was given to SC/STs in the Constitution from the beginning? Why do you think backward classes are considered in the Constitution itself? These are the people neglected for thousands of years. Don't you want them to become equal to others and build an equal society?"

He said the change in timing was a little encouragement given by the government in terms of programmes.

"If that is not tolerated, it means you are against people being treated equally," the minister said.

Minister slams Centre, calls Budget 'weakest' one

BENGALURU

HOME Minister G Parameshwara on Monday termed the Union Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman as the "weakest" one among the nine budgets presented by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

He also accused the Centre of failing to address the expectations of the common people, particularly Karnataka.

Speaking to reporters here, Parameshwara said that the people had placed

several hopes on the Budget for the country's development, but all of them had been belied. He alleged that the Union government had completely ignored critical sectors such as agriculture, industry, education and basic infrastructure.

"This is the weakest budget among the nine budgets presented by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman," Parameshwara said. Earlier budgets had given importance to agriculture and the industrial sector and had introduced

several programmes aimed at poverty alleviation, he added.

Recalling landmark welfare initiatives of previous Congress governments, the home minister said former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had introduced the National Employment Guarantee Scheme, a programme that had no parallel anywhere in the world. "All that has been thrown to the winds, and the entire country has been disappointed," he remarked.

Pinarayi Vijayan seeks independent inquiry into businessman's suicide

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troubling questions about the functioning of tax enforcement agencies, he noted. The Chief Minister highlighted that it is extremely unusual for a person to end his life while officials are carrying out a search operation. During such raids, the premises are expected to remain under the strict supervision of authorities, and necessary security protocols must be followed. As per established norms, the individual concerned should remain in the presence of officials throughout the search, and independent witnesses must be present.

However, reports suggest that Roy was able to enter another room and shoot himself with a licensed pistol. If these reports are accurate, it amounts to a major procedural failure, Vijayan pointed out.

He also referred to allegations made by Roy's relatives that the businessman had been facing severe pressure from investigative agencies. While the Income Tax Department may provide its explanation, Vijayan stressed that an objective and neutral investigation

is required to determine the real facts. According to the Chief Minister, the tragedy has raised serious doubts in the minds of the public regarding the methods adopted by enforcement authorities. He said that unless a credible and independent inquiry is conducted, such incidents could

repeat in the future. Vijayan urged the Union government to consider ordering a judicial probe without any delay. He emphasized that a time-bound investigation conducted by a judicial authority would help uncover the truth and ensure accountability. The Kerala Chief Minister concluded his letter by stating that protecting citizens' rights and ensuring fair administrative practices is the responsibility of the government. He expressed hope that the central government would take immediate steps to order an independent inquiry into the incident.

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clarified that the diary cannot be treated as a suicide note. "There is no specific reference to any reason for his death in the diary, nor is there any final message. It appears to be a routine personal journal," an official said.

Police have also recovered the pistol used by Roy. Preliminary investigation has revealed that it was a Belgium-made mini soundless pistol and that it was likely a licensed weapon. The firearm and bullets have been sent to the Forensic Science Laboratory for further examination. The SIT has been formed under the leadership of Joint Commissioner of Police (West) C. Vamshikrishna. DCP Lokesh Jagalas has been appointed as the investigating officer. The case registered at Ashoknagar Police Station has now been officially transferred to the SIT for detailed probe.

SIT probe underway in Roy suicide case: HM

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BENGALURU

HOME Minister Dr. G. Parameshwara on Monday said that the government would wait for the findings of the Special Investigation Team (SIT) before drawing any conclusions in the suicide case of noted businessman C.J. Roy.

Responding to allegations made by Roy's close associates that he was under pressure and harassment from the Income Tax Department and the Enforcement Directorate, the Home Minister said unnecessary speculation should be avoided. "To ensure that there are no rumours or doubts, we immediately constituted an SIT. We will wait for its report to understand what exactly happened and who was responsible," he said while speaking to reporters near Vidhana Soudha. Meanwhile, the SIT investigation into Roy's death has gathered pace. Officers have begun recording statements from his family members and close associates. Investigators have also seized a personal diary maintained by Roy, in which he reportedly recorded details about his daily activities, meetings and business decisions. However, SIT officials

clarified that the diary cannot be treated as a suicide note. "There is no specific reference to any reason for his death in the diary, nor is there any final message. It appears to be a routine personal journal," an official said.

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