



NATION SPORTS

Broadcasters may move court against PCB

The ICC has warned the Pakistan Cricket Board that it faces the prospect of legal action from T20 World Cup's official broadcasters JioStar for boycotting its February 15 game against India, a PCB source said on Tuesday.

P10

Prioritise rejuvenation of 'Buckingham Canal'

The rapidity of transformation of human civilization increased anifold ever since inventions were made in transportation modes. Even in India, beginning with the colonial period and after independence, continuous efforts are made to improve the transportation networks

P6

India-US trade deal to boost country's manufacturing: FM

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday welcomed the reduction in United States' tariffs on Indian goods, describing the development as a major boost for the 'Made in India' initiative. Taking to social media platform X, the finance minister said

P11

Kayadu Lohar returns to Malayalam; New Poster of 'Pallichattamb' released A new poster of 'Pallichattamb', directed by Dijo Jose Antony and starring Tovino Thomas in the lead role, has been released. The latest reveal is a single-character poster featuring the film's heroine, Kayadu Lohar.

P12

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WINDOWS

BJP-JD(S) go for overnight agitation inside Assembly

NEW DELHI

BENGALURU: The BJP and its ally JD(S) on Tuesday jump in an overnight agitation in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly demanding state Excise Minister R B Timmapur's resignation over allegations of corruption in his department.

The BJP alleged widespread corruption in the Excise Department, and bribe is demanded to issue liquor licences. Opposition leader R Ashoka charged that the alleged scam is to the tune of Rs 6,000 crore.

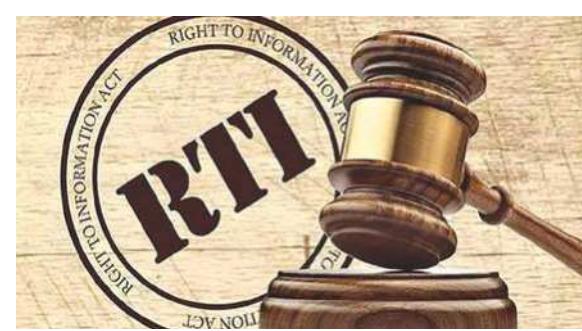
He also alleged that the money was being used by the ruling Congress to fund the party in the poll-bound states. The opposition had been alleging corruption in the department. The recent trigger was the arrest of Excise Deputy Commissioner of the Bengaluru Urban District Jagadeesh Naik and two other officials by the Lokayukta sleuths, while allegedly accepting a bribe of Rs 25 lakh on January 16.

According to Lokayukta officials, they were accused of demanding Rs 80 lakh to issue CL-7 (Hotels & Boarding Houses) and micro brewery licence. The Minister had declined the BJP's demand for his resignation, saying no ministers during the BJP government had ever stepped down. "Corruption is not a new phenomenon, especially in my department," the minister said in the Assembly while replying to the opposition's charge. Timmapur said he was instrumental in reducing the corruption at every level and simplified the process of issuing licences after holding discussions with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. There have been allegations against all the ministers by the Federation of Wine Merchants' Association, right from J H Patel, Remukaswamy and Katta Subramanya Naidu. Now the federation has been nonexistent for the past 20 years, the Minister said. He said he knows that there are people having 20 to 100 benami licences. "Shouldn't the people from the weaker section get the licences? That's why I brought E-Auction," the minister said. As the BJP alleged that the officer caught by Lokayukta had mentioned the name of the minister in a purported audio, Timmapur said there were clear audios of a former chief minister involved in horse trading, but in his case, the officer in question was only misusing his name.

► The objective of the RTI Act is not to gather evidence for private lawsuits, nor does this law permit unwarranted interference in a person's privacy

► Kulwant was accused by his wife of demanding a dowry of Rs 26 lakh, following which he filed an RTI application seeking details of his father-in-law

nor does this law permit unwarranted interference in a



person's privacy." The matter pertains to Kulwant Singh, who sought details of the financial status of his father-in-law, Rishipal Singh, who

had retired as a revenue inspector, as he wanted to use the information in a dowry case filed by his wife.

Kulwant Singh had filed

the application under the RTI Act on July 27, 2025, with the Tehsildar of Najibabad in Bijnor district, seeking information related to his father-in-law till his retirement on January 1, 2015. Upon not receiving the information, the applicant filed an appeal with the State Information Commission, requesting that the Public Information Officer be directed to provide the requested information.

According to sources, Kulwant was accused by his wife of demanding a dowry of

Rs 26 lakh, following which he filed an RTI application seeking details of his father-in-law's financial status, including his salary, GPF (general provident fund), loans, advances, and details of his movable and immovable property.

He argued that the person whose details were being sought was not an outsider but his father-in-law, and secondly, this information was crucial for him in the dowry-related case to determine whether the person

who allegedly gave Rs 26 lakh as dowry actually had the financial capacity to do so.

Hearing the case, the bench of Information Commissioner Mohammad Nadeem said that the Supreme Court has clarified in several important judgments that salary details, income tax records, provident fund, loans, family details and property-related information clearly fall under the category of personal information, which cannot generally be provided under the RTI Act.

'After mother now Father of all deals'; Russia rebuts

► India has got a very good trade deal with the US, better than competitors, without compromising interest of the agriculture and dairy sectors: Piyush Goyal

► Member of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Economic Advisory Council, Sanjeev Sanyal, in a post on X stated that "Duniya jhukti hai, jhukaney wala chahiye"

► Russia has not heard any statements from India about stopping Russian oil purchases, Kremlin spokesman Peskov: 'We haven't heard any statements'

► 'Modi govt should take Parliament into confidence and the text of both the EU and US trade deals must be laid on the table of both Houses and debated'

NEW DELHI

COMMERCE Minister Piyush Goyal on Tuesday said India has got a very good trade deal with the US, better than competitors, without compromising interest of the agriculture and dairy sectors. Without giving details of what has been agreed with Washington, Goyal said the trade deal is in the final stages, and an Indo-US joint statement will be issued shortly detailing the contours of the agreement. He also lashed out at the Congress party and its allies for trying to mislead the nation on the deal. In particular, he hit out at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, saying that he has a negative mindset and is opposed to the progress of India. Goyal said that he wanted to speak in Parliament about the deal, but could not do so because of the ugly scenes created by Congress and other opposition parties.

Russia has not heard

any statements from India about stopping Russian oil purchases, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. His comments came a day after US President Donald Trump claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has "agreed to stop buying Russian Oil, and to buy much more from the United States and, potentially, Venezuela." "We haven't heard any statements from New Delhi on this matter yet," Peskov said.

Government sources have said that farmers' interests remain protected under the landmark India-US trade agreement, even as strategic energy purchases, including crude oil from Venezuela, could feature under the new pact.

Former Ambassador of India to Poland, Dr Deepak Vohra described the India-US trade deal as a significant diplomatic achievement, highlighting India's patience, strategic restraint and firm protection of key domestic sectors during ne-



BIG DECISION: MODI

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said the India-US trade deal is a "big decision" that will benefit everyone in the country, and asserted that his government always works in favour of the nation. The prime minister made these remarks at the meeting of the NDA Parliamentary Party, coalition MPs present at the meeting said. NDA coalition members congratulated Modi for the trade deals with the EU and the US, saying it would strengthen Indian manufacturers, exporters and entrepreneurs. The prime minister said the India-US trade deal is a "big decision" and will benefit everyone in the country, an MP who attended the meeting said. India and the US have agreed to a trade deal under which Washington will bring down the reciprocal tariff on Indian goods to 18 per cent from a total 50 per cent.

negotiations and termed it the "father of all deals".

Dr Vohra said there were a few key takeaways from the development. He claimed that the American

establishment had been strongly critical of India in recent years, but New Delhi maintained restraint.

If the European Union agreement was the 'mother of all deals', the US agreement with India can be described as the 'father of all deals,' he said.

Member of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Economic Advisory Council, Sanjeev Sanyal, in a post on X on Monday, stated that "Duniya jhukti hai, jhukaney wala chahiye" following the announcement of the India-US trade deal, where Washington reduced the tariffs on India to 18 per cent. Union Home Minister Amit Shah has called the India-US trade deal "historic", saying it will elevate the strategic partnership between the two countries and pave the way for stronger trade ties and mutual growth.

In a series of posts

Sensex zooms 2,072 pts



MUMBAI: Benchmark stock index Sensex zoomed 2,072 points while the broader Nifty closed above the 25,700 level on Tuesday after India and the US agreed to a trade deal under which Washington will bring down the reciprocal tariff on Indian goods to 18 per cent. The 30-share BSE barometer closed at 83,739.13, up 2,072.67 points or 2.54 per cent, logging its best single-day gain in the past eight months. The index started the trade on a buoyant note, and later jumped 4,205.27 points or 5.14 per cent to hit the day's high of 85,871.73.

on 'X', Shah said the deal opens "the gateway to endless opportunities for our youth, entrepreneurs, and techies".

"A big day for India-US relations as the trade deal has been locked with a significantly reduced tariff of 18 per cent, paving the way for stronger trade ties and mutual growth," he said.

The Congress on Tuesday demanded that the Modi government should take Parliament into confidence and the text of both the EU and US trade deals must be laid on the table of both Houses and debated.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said that from the information President Donald Trump has

provided, it is abundantly clear that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has "completely surrendered".

Amid sloganising from the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha over the India-US deal, Union Minister JP Nadda on Tuesday assured that the central government will issue a suo motu statement, sharing the details of the deal and is also ready to hold a discussion in the house.

"When the government is ready to give a detailed statement, this attitude of Congress and the INDIA alliance is wrong. Their way is threatening to democracy. This is Congress's irresponsible behaviour. It is their frustration which is speaking," he said.

'Exit India if you can't: CJI warns Meta over WhatsApp Policy

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

TECH giant and WhatsApp owners Meta received a dressing down from the Supreme Court Tuesday over the instant messaging platform's privacy policy. A bench led by Chief Justice Surya Kant said that the company had violated privacy policy, causing constitutional violation.

The court was hearing a plea regarding WhatsApp's 2021 privacy policy, specifically the company law tribunal upholding the Competition Commission of India's Rs 213 crore fine.

There was also a cross-appeal by the CCI about sharing of user data for advertising purposes, which the tribunal allowed after ruling there was no 'abuse of power' by the company.

Appearing for the government, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta criticised the "exploitative" policy for sharing user data for commercial purpose, and the Chief Justice responded, "If you can't follow our Constitution, leave India. We won't allow citizens' privacy to be compromised."

The court made pointed observations about the policy, including asking if it could be understood by the millions of poor and uneducated people in the country. "... a poor woman or a roadside vendor or someone who only speaks Tamil... will they be able to understand?"

"Sometimes even we have difficulty understanding your policies..." the court ripped into Meta and WhatsApp after being told of an 'opt out' clause, "... so how will people living in rural Bihar understand them? This is a way of committing theft of private information. We won't allow it."

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



The workers demanded recognition as employees and alleging arbitrary blocking of accounts, low earnings, and lack of basic labour protection on digital platforms; Sunita, who works with a home services platform in Punjabi Bagh, says she already lost nearly Rs 900 in daily income by joining the protest

led body, which said similar protests were being staged in Jantar Mantar, Maharashtra and Rajasthan as well.

By early afternoon, Sunita, who works with a home

services platform in Punjabi Bagh, said she already lost nearly Rs 900 in daily income by joining the protest. Sunita said she was drawn to gig work after being promised flexible

hours and stable earnings, but she now lives with the constant fear of her account being blocked. "In the beginning, there were many bookings. They said I could manage my

family. Now my ID is blocked without any explanation," she alleged. Another protester said she worked with the same company for almost four years before her account was suspended in 2022. Her husband died a few months later, leaving her struggling to find steady work.

After briefly working as a cook for Rs 15,000 a month, she lost that job too when the employer's family moved out of Delhi. Several women

at the site covered their faces, saying they feared retaliation if they were identified by the platforms. Many alleged that despite long working hours, deductions and mandatory charges left them with little take-home pay. Sunita said she recently received a booking worth Rs 2,295, from which Rs 431 was deducted as commission and Rs 970 as "compulsory credit recharge". "If we don't pay the credit amount, bookings stop coming."

'Promised flexibility, living with fear now': Women gig workers protest

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

More than 100 gig workers, mostly women, staged a protest at Jantar Mantar on Tuesday, demanding recognition as employees and alleging arbitrary blocking of accounts, low earnings, and lack of basic labour protection on digital platforms. The demonstration was organised by the Gig and Platform Services Workers Union (GPSWU), a women-



family. Now my ID is blocked without any explanation," she alleged. Another protester said she worked with the same company for almost four years before her account was suspended in 2022. Her husband died a few months later, leaving her struggling to find steady work.

After briefly working as a cook for Rs 15,000 a month, she lost that job too when the employer's family moved out of Delhi. Several women

IN BRIEF



KSDL produce record 4,894.77 MT soaps in Jan

BENGALURU: State-owned KSDL, producers of the famous Mysore sandal soaps has set an all-time production record by manufacturing a total of 4,894.77 metric tonnes of products in January this year. Minister for Large and Medium Industries M B Patil said on Tuesday. In a statement, he stated that January production comprised 3,798 tonnes in the soap segment, 941 tonnes in the detergents segment, and 155 tonnes in the cosmetics segment. He recalled that Karnataka Soaps and Detergents Limited (KSDL) had earlier achieved record production of 4,735 tonnes in December 2025.

He said extensive measures have been taken to expand markets and strengthen branding in North India and overseas. In addition, a system of continuous, quality-driven production operating across three shifts has been put in place.

The state-owned enterprise currently offers over 45 products, with more to be introduced in the coming days. The company's turnover is targeted to be scaled up to Rs 5,000 crore by 2030, Patil said.

Prashanth, MD, KSDL, stated that the new record production has been achieved using the existing facilities, without recruiting additional staff or procuring any new equipment, and thanked the employees for their efforts in accomplishing this milestone.

Charmadi Ghat forest fire rages amid strong winds

CHIKKAMAGALURU: A ferocious wildfire has swept through large areas of Charmadi forest since February 2, completely destroying vast stretches of sensitive grasslands and leaving behind scorched earth.

The fire broke out close to the Charmadi Ghat road, a key route linking Dakshina Kannada and Chikmagalur districts. Its location near the heavily trafficked highway has heightened anxiety among residents and motorists, with thick plumes of smoke enveloping the surroundings and making driving conditions hazardous along the ghat stretch.

Powerful winds have relentlessly driven the flames forward, causing the fire to expand at an alarming pace and complicating every attempt to bring it under control. Initial reports point toward the possibility of deliberate ignition by unknown individuals, prompting the forest department to begin a formal inquiry into the origin of the blaze. Teams from the fire and emergency services, forest department personnel, and community volunteers have been working nonstop to contain the inferno.

The steep, uneven landscape combined with persistent high winds continues to hinder progress and prevent effective encirclement of the fire.

Environmental specialists warn that the ongoing destruction poses a grave risk to the region's rich wildlife and plant diversity. Repeated incidents of this scale inflict lasting harm on the Western Ghats ecosystem, threatening long-term impacts on species habitats, soil integrity, and overall ecological stability. Local authorities and travellers have been advised to exercise extreme caution while passing through the Charmadi Ghat area until the situation is fully stabilised.

Efforts to douse the flames and investigate the cause remain the top priority for all involved agencies.

Owner of Rottweiler booked after it mauled woman during morning walk

BENGALURU

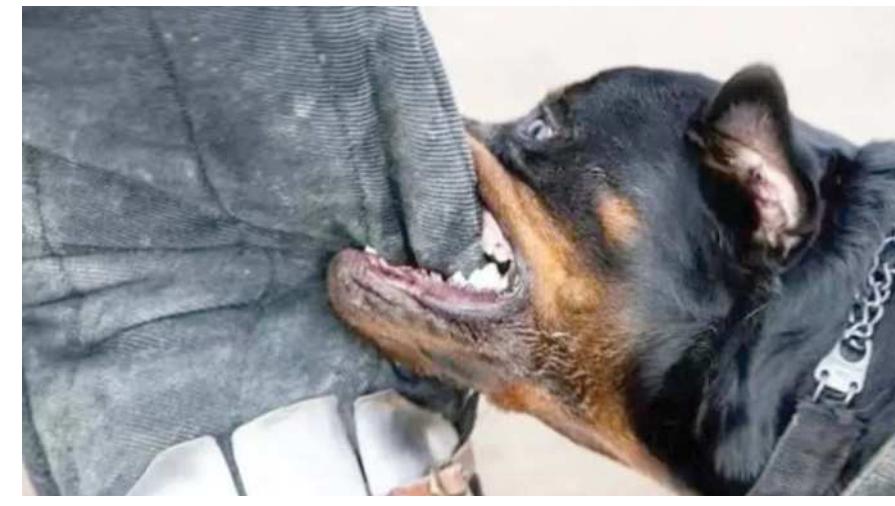
THE owner of a Rottweiler was booked after his pet allegedly mauled a woman during her morning walk here, leaving her with severe facial and neck injuries that required an eight-hour surgery, police said on Tuesday.

The incident happened when Shalini Dubey, (31), a teacher at Teachers Colony in HSR layout stepped out for a morning walk near her home on January 26, they said. CCTV footage of the attack shows the dog running towards her on the road, knocking her down

and biting her repeatedly on the face and neck.

The dog was allegedly released onto the road by its owner without a leash or muzzle and attacked her, her family alleged. Following the attack, she sustained severe injuries to her face and neck and received more than 80 stitches across her face, throat and scalp, her husband Satya Prakash Dubey said.

She underwent a nearly eight-hour-long surgery. One deep wound, measuring about seven centimetres, was dangerously close to her airway and she is currently hospitalised,



he said. The couple has a 17-month-old toddler, and

the incident has left her deeply traumatised, Dubey

added. Recalling the incident,

her husband said on January 26, around 6.50 am, his wife was returning from her morning walk when the neighbour's dog suddenly ran towards her, she fell down, and the dog brutally attacked her.

She suffered severe injuries to her neck, the right side of her face, and her scalp, Dubey said. "If the pet owner could not control such a large dog, it should never have been allowed to roam freely. Pet owners are responsible for following safety norms, including using a leash and muzzle, especially in public areas," he told PTI Videos recently.

"My wife is in deep trauma and has suffered severe mental shock. As per doctors, the scars on her face and body will remain for life," he added.

Following a complaint, a case was registered against the pet owner Amareesh Reddy under Sections 117 (3) (voluntarily causing grievous hurt), 125 (act endangering life or personal safety of others) and 291 (negligent conduct with respect to animal) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and subsequently, he was held in connection with the incident, police added.

Corruption charges

Action initiated against all 25 gram panchayats of Srinivasapura

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU



IN a major crackdown on alleged misgovernance and corruption at the grassroots level, Upa Lokayukta Justice B. Veerappa has registered a suo moto complaint against all 25 gram panchayats of Srinivasapura taluk in Kolar district. The unprecedented action follows serious irregularities observed during surprise inspections conducted by the Lokayukta team in the region.

Acting on the directions of the Upa Lokayukta, the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Commissioner has now constituted a three-member committee to examine the detailed reports that have been sought from each of the gram panchayats. The committee has been instructed to scrutinize the submissions and present a comprehensive report within 15 days.

Justice Veerappa has reportedly raised more than 30 specific questions to every gram panchayat regarding financial management, execution of development works, conduct of meetings and overall administrative transparency.

The action was initiated after the Upa Lokayukta personally visited several panchayats in Srinivasapura and discovered instances of misuse of public funds, procedural violations and poor governance.

Following these findings, the Panchayat Raj Commissioner on January 23 formed the special committee comprising senior officials to evaluate the responses of the local bodies. The panel will assess whether the panchayats have followed legal

procedures and adhered to norms in carrying out public works and purchases.

Speaking about the initiative, Srinivasapura Taluk Panchayat Executive Officer Sarvesh stated that the primary aim of Justice Veerappa is to transform Srinivasapura into a model taluk in Karnataka by strengthening the concept of "Gram Swaraj". He added that the reforms being introduced here could later be implemented across other talukas of the state.

"We are working seriously to rectify the issues pointed out by the Upa Lokayukta. Steps are being taken to ensure that gram sabhas

and general body meetings are conducted as per law. Transparency in procurement and implementation of projects will be ensured through proper tendering processes," Sarvesh said.

He further informed that all gram panchayats will be provided with internet dongles to improve digital connectivity.

Reverse Osmosis (RO) water purification plants will be set up under panchayat limits. To curb illegal activities and ensure discipline, biometric attendance systems and CCTV cameras will be installed in panchayats at offices.

The developments have created political and administrative ripples in the district.

With the taluk panchayat currently under Congress control, the action has assumed additional significance. Observers believe the intervention of the Upa Lokayukta could pave the way for long-awaited reforms and greater accountability in rural administration.

KARNATAKA Police have confiscated 1,220 Kerala State lottery tickets with an estimated face value of Rs 72,000 during a routine check in the Mangaluru region, officials said on Tuesday.

According to police, the seizure was made after officers intercepted a vehicle travelling from Bandadka in Kerala towards interior parts of Karnataka. The tickets were allegedly being transported for unauthorised resale in violation of state law, they said.

Preliminary inquiries revealed that the accused had procured the lottery tickets in Kerala and was attempting to transport them to Sampaje, where they were to be sold at prices higher than the

official rate. Sale and distribution of lottery tickets from other states, including Kerala, is prohibited in Karnataka under existing legislation.

The individual found in possession of the tickets was taken into custody during routine surveillance conducted in border areas. The lottery tickets were seized as material evidence, and a case has been registered at the concerned police station, officials said. Police sources said smuggling of Kerala lottery tickets into Karnataka continues despite a statewide ban on lottery operations.

According to police, the seizure was made after officers intercepted a vehicle travelling from Bandadka in Kerala towards interior parts of Karnataka. The tickets were allegedly being transported for unauthorised resale in violation of state law, they said. Preliminary inquiries revealed that the accused had procured the lottery tickets in Kerala and was attempting to transport them to Sampaje, where they were to be sold at prices higher than the

out along key transit routes connecting Kerala and Karnataka to prevent illegal transportation and resale of lottery tickets. Special teams have been deployed to monitor vehicles and conduct surprise inspections, particularly during early morning and late evening hours.

The accused is expected to be booked under relevant provisions of the Karnataka Lottery and Prize Competitions Control and Tax Act. Further investigation is underway to determine whether the incident is linked to a larger network involved in the illegal lottery trade, police added. Officials reiterated that strict action would be taken against those involved in the unlawful sale or movement of lottery tickets across state borders.

Seven held after dispute over alleged illicit relationship leads to murder

HANS NEWS SERVICE
SIDDAPUR

at the Siddapur police station, the dispute began after Naik's elder daughter raised concerns about her mother's alleged relationship with Bhat. Mahesh Naik, who resides in Bengaluru for work and had returned on leave, reportedly filed a complaint with the police and later went with his brother to confront those involved.

A confrontation ensued during which the accused allegedly assaulted the trio. Vasanth Naik sustained serious injuries and died while being taken to a hospital, police said. Mahesh Naik and Kumar were admitted to a local facility and are receiving treatment for serious wounds. After the attack, four suspects including Bhat and Suchitra were initially detained by Siddapur police, while three others were arrested in Shivamogga district, authorities added.

HOLI, SUMMER RUSH: SW RAILWAY EXTENDS MYSURU-AJMER EXPRESS SPECIAL

BENGALURU: South Western Railway on Tuesday announced the continuation of the Mysuru-Ajmer Express Special to clear additional passenger rush during the forthcoming Holi and summer season. In a press release, the Mysuru Division of South Western Railway, headquartered in Hubballi, said the Railway Board had decided to continue Train number 06281/06282 for 17 additional trips with the existing path, stoppages, fare structure and coach composition, with revised timings on Western Railway and extension of the service from Ajmer to Madar Junction over North Western Railway.

"The Railway Board has decided to continue the running of Train number 06281/06282 Mysuru-Ajmer Express Special in order to clear the extra rush during the ensuing Holi and Summer season," the release said.

The special train will halt at Vasai Road, Surat, Vadodara Junction, Ratlam Junction, Mandsaur, Niymach, Chittaurgarh Junction, Bilwara, Bijainagar, Nasirabad, Ajmer Junction and Madar Junction.

According to the FIR registered

Awareness march organised for World Cancer Day

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

SRV Agadi Hospital organised a community awareness march on Tuesday to observe World Cancer Day 2026 and to highlight the importance of early detection, prevention and timely treatment of cancer. The initiative aimed to create greater public understanding about various types of cancers and the lifestyle changes required to prevent them.

The march was flagged off from Al-Ameen Institute of Management Studies on Hosur Road and concluded

at SRV Agadi Hospital in Wilson Garden. It was inaugurated by Dr. Niti Raizada, Senior Director – Medical Oncology and Haematology, Dr. S. Krishnamurthy, Senior Consultant – Surgical Oncology, Dr. Anju Agadi, and Shri Umar Ismail Khan, Chairman of Al-Ameen College of Management Studies.

Students, healthcare professionals and local residents participated actively in the event, carrying placards and spreading messages on cancer awareness. Doctors from the hospital interacted with the public and explained the importance of regular screening, vaccination for preventable cancers and adopting healthy lifestyles.

Addressing the gathering, Dr. Abhay Vispute, Founder-Director of SRV Hospitals, said early diagnosis plays a key role in improving survival rates. He added that community outreach programmes like this march help bridge the gap between awareness and timely medical action.

The hospital announced that similar programmes and screening camps will be organised in the future to strengthen cancer awareness efforts.

Davanagere makes big strides towards becoming TB-free dist

Earlier in 2024, 40 gram panchayats in the district were officially declared free from tuberculosis. Health officials are hopeful that by the end of this month, more panchayats will join the list

HANS NEWS SERVICE
DAVANGERE

THE district has achieved a major milestone in the fight against tuberculosis with 61 gram panchayats being declared TB-free under the innovative campaign titled "Defeat TB – Empower Gram Panchayats." The district health department has been working relentlessly to eliminate the disease and transform Davangere into a completely TB-free district. Encouragingly, the number of TB cases in the district has been steadily declining year after year.

Earlier in 2024, 40 gram panchayats in the district were officially declared free from tuberculosis. Health

officials are hopeful that by the end of February this year, more panchayats will join this list, said District Health Officer Dr. Shanmukhappa S. Lifestyle-related illnesses such as diabetes, poor dietary habits, and stressful living conditions have increased vulnerability to TB. People with weakened immunity are more prone to contracting the disease. However, government hospitals across the district are ensuring uninterrupted treatment and monitoring for all diagnosed TB patients.

Under the National TB Elimination Programme, suspected cases are identified through rigorous screening. In Davangere, 30 suspected individuals per 1,000 popu-

lation are tested. Diagnosis is done through sputum tests, modern molecular tests, X-rays, and drug-resistance examinations like CBAAT and DST. Specialized treatment is provided for drug-resistant TB cases under expert medical supervision.



ASHA workers and treatment supervisors regularly visit patients' homes to ensure proper medication adherence. Counseling is provided to both patients and their family members. TB patients undergo a treatment course of six to nine months, which includes a combination of four antibiotics during the initial phase.

Speaking to media, DHO Shanmukhappa said that under the Nikshay Mitra initiative, 1,035 TB patients are provided monthly food kits and financial assistance of Rs. 1,000 each. So far, Channagiri has 17 TB-free panchayats, Davangere 22, Harihar 7, Honnali 7, Nyamati 5 and Jagalur 3.

By 2025, the district had

recorded 2,154 TB patients, of which 1,882 have been successfully cured. At present, 922 patients are undergoing treatment. Health workers are actively identifying new cases at the village level to ensure early intervention.

Medical officer Dr. Ganesh said that panchayats are declared TB-free only after ensuring zero cases for three consecutive years. Regular testing of suspected patients and tracking of those taking private treatment are part of the strategy. "Our goal is to eradicate TB completely from Davangere district. With early detection and preventive treatment, especially among children, we are moving steadily towards that dream," he added.

IN BRIEF
7,020 properties to be auctioned over tax dues

BENGALURU: The Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) has decided to auction 7,020 properties belonging to owners who have failed to pay property tax for several years across five city municipal zones. The move is aimed at cracking down on long-pending tax defaulters. Despite issuing multiple demand notices, property owners have not cleared dues amounting to Rs 437.55 crore. Along with the pending property tax, penalties and interest have also been levied on the defaulters. After repeated notices failed to yield results, the GBA issued property attachment orders. As tax payments were still not made even after attachment, authorities have decided to take final action by auctioning the properties.

The auction of the 7,020 properties will be held on February 17 at the offices of the respective zonal Joint Commissioners, officials said. Notices related to the auction have been published on the official website.

No licence renewal for businesses violating zonal classification

BENGALURU: The Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) has issued a circular allowing penalty-free renewal of trade licences for the financial year 2026-27 from February 1 to February 28 across its five municipal corporations. GBA Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao has directed officials to facilitate licence renewal for a period ranging from one to five years, based on the preference of the business owners. Renewal fees must be collected only for the selected financial year. Payments can be made online or through bank challans at Canara Bank.

From March 1 to March 31, licence renewal will attract a 25% penalty, while renewals sought after April 1 will incur a 100% penalty, the circular stated. The authority has ordered that licences of businesses started after 2015 on roads less than 40 feet wide in residential areas must be withheld and rejected with reasons recorded. However, businesses operating on roads wider than 40 feet in residential zones and notified categories of businesses that commenced after 2015 will be eligible for renewal. All other such businesses will have their licence renewals rejected. Further, licences must be denied for businesses operating in buildings constructed in violation of approved plans, including those running partially or fully in unauthorised structures, parking areas, or rooftops, if complaints are received. Businesses generating more than 100 kg of waste per day must submit documents proving on-site waste processing and disposal. Those handing over waste to unauthorised vendors must submit copies of their agreements. Establishments must maintain separate waste bins—green for wet waste and blue for dry waste—and ensure scientific disposal. Officials warned that licence renewals will be strictly denied if these norms are not followed.

'Experience the Magic of Bollywood' event in city

BENGALURU: Main Hoon Bollywood, presented by Golden Orange Entertainment and founded by Maithili Kotnis, is excited to announce its inaugural event in Bangalore, reinforcing its commitment to celebrating the rich tapestry of Bollywood culture. After a successful launch in Mumbai, this talent-driven platform is making its mark in Bengaluru with a vibrant blend of singing, dance, and fashion. Now in its second season, Main Hoon Bollywood aims to encapsulate the spirit of Bollywood while engaging with the city's thriving creative community. With future editions set to take place in Dubai, Hyderabad, Goa, and Pune, this initiative is constantly evolving into a national and global movement.

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HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

PROPERTY buyers in Karnataka will no longer need to stand in long queues at sub-registrar offices for registration work. The Department of Registration and Stamps has launched a major reform by introducing a fully paperless property registration system. With the upgraded Kaveri 2.0 software platform, all registration procedures will now be carried out digitally, eliminating the need for physical documents.

While digital e-stamping was already in use, the entire registration process has now been converted into a digital format. After successful registration, citizens will no longer receive physical documents. Instead, they will be provided with a login ID and password through which all property-related records can be accessed securely online.



Citizens must first log in to the Kaveri 2.0 portal and enter details of the property, buyer, seller and witnesses. All required documents are uploaded in digital format.

Sub-registrars verify the information online and approve payment of fees. Registration charges can be paid through net banking or UPI. Both parties sign digitally

SERVICES AVAILABLE ON KAVERI 2.0

- Online property registration: Citizens can book appointments online and avoid waiting at sub-registrar offices.
- Encumbrance certificate: Users can download certificates to verify whether a property has any legal or financial liabilities.
- Digital document verification: Land records can be checked online to confirm authenticity before purchasing property.
- Fee calculator: The portal provides an option to calculate stamp duty and registration charges in advance.
- Marriage registration: Marriages can be registered online with prior appointment scheduling.
- E-stamping services: Stamp duty payments can be made digitally to prevent fraud.
- Property valuation: Guideline values of properties can be verified online before buying or selling.

using Aadhaar-based e-sign. Finally, the applicant only needs to visit the office once for biometric verification and photograph, after which the registration is completed.

The time required for registration has been reduced to just 10 minutes. The new process minimizes corruption, prevents document loss and ensures safe digital storage. Every user will receive a unique document number to download records anytime. For further details, citizens can contact the helpline at 080-68265316.

Excise dept involved in bribery, transfer racket, alleges Ashoka

MINISTER THIMMAPUR SHOULD RESIGN: LOP

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU



IN the Excise Department, bribes are being taken for granting licenses and for facilitating transfers. Related audio recordings have been released, and complaints have been filed with the Lokayukta. Therefore, Excise Minister R.B. Thimmapur should resign immediately, demanded Opposition Leader R. Ashoka.

Speaking in the Legislative Assembly, he said that in the state government, the Excise Department is the No. 1 department in corruption.

Irregularities are taking place in forms such as bribes for

licenses and fixed amounts for transfers. Congress leaders who are opposing the

VBG Ramji scheme are talk-

ing about Mahatma Gandhi's

ideals. However, the Con-

gress party is not following

Gandhi's ideals.

In a WhatsApp message

from government officials,

it has been officially in-

structed that since the CM

and Dy CM are participat-

ing in a housing department

program in Hubballi, more

people will come, so liquor

shops should stock sufficient quantities of liquor and sell it. This is a program that ruins homes. CM Siddaramaiah talks about lessons in sensitivity. Telling people to drink liquor is their idea of sensitivity, he said.

The minister is silent be-

cause monthly fees come

from officials in the scan-

dal happening in the Excise

Department. The president

of the liquor sellers' associa-

tion, Guruswamy, has issued

a press statement saying he

will complain to Rahul Gan-

dhiji about the irregularities.

"In the department, targets

are given every year to col-

lect money, from licenses to

all stages, one has to grease

palm," it has been detected

that the Excise DC takes

bribes when issuing licenses.

Bribes have to be given from

senior officials to juniors. A

complaint has been given to

the Chief Minister about

this," Guruswamy has said.

Permit has been given

to two thousand liquor

shops, bribes of 50 lakh ru-

pees for one and one crore

rupees for another have been

taken, if bribes are not given

by the 10th of every month,

shop owners are harassed.

Guruswamy is from CM

Siddaramaiah's Varuna con-

stituency itself. Even though

Guruswamy has complained,

Siddaramaiah has not helped. He has said that Siddaramaiah is no longer a strong CM, he added.

An audio related to the Excise Department scandal has come out. In it, allegations have been made against Excise Minister R.B. Thimmapur and his son. Yet, the minister says it's not him.

Until June 2025, there are 3,267 hotel restaurants under CL-7, 4,342 MRP under CL-2, 3,667 bars under CL-9, 1,088 under CL-11C, 316 clubs under CL-4, and 86 star hotels under CL-6. In total, there are 14,229 institutions supplying liquor. Bribes of Rs 15-20,000 are collected from each shop every month. That means, on average, 21 crore rupees per month and 252 crore rupees per year.

Money is fixed for transfers in the Excise Department. For Deputy Commissioners, 2.5 to 3.5 crore rupees, for Superintendents 25-30 lakh rupees, for Deputy Superintendents 30-40 lakh rupees, for Excise Inspectors 40-50 lakh rupees, for constables 5-8 lakh rupees have to be paid. Among these, the constables themselves run four to five bars, he said.

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HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

THE Karnataka Housing Board (KHB) has announced plans to develop a large-scale township spread across 500 acres in villages near Kengeri, offering fresh hope to thousands of middle-class families aspiring to own homes in Bengaluru.

As part of the initiative, the KHB has invited tenders for land acquisition and appointment of an architectural and engineering firm (AEF) to develop an international standard township and housing project. The tender has been floated through the Karnataka Public Procurement Portal (KPPP).

The proposed township will be developed in B.M. Kaval and surrounding villages of Kengeri Hobli in Bengaluru South taluk, falling within the Bengaluru Urban district.

The last date for submission of bids is February 3, by 4 pm.

Officials said the project aims to provide houses and residential plots to people without property ownership, with a focus on economically weaker sections (EWS), low-income groups (LIG), and middle-income groups (MIG).



the project covers three identified blocks in B.M. Kaval village. Of the total land, 41 acres of government-owned 'kharab' land have already been identified, while the remaining private land is in the process of acquisition.

"The township will particularly benefit economically weaker, low-income and middle-income groups. It will help many families realize their dream of owning a home in Bengaluru," a senior KHB official said. The state government has set a target of providing 10,000 houses to the landless in urban areas, and the KHB plans to construct several housing complexes as part of this broader objective.

Urban development experts have termed the project a significant step towards addressing Bengaluru's housing shortage and promoting planned urban expansion.

According to KHB officials,

Fatal fall of minor: Pub owner, staff booked for serving him alcohol

BENGALURU

THE owner and staff of a pub here have been booked for allegedly serving alcohol to a 15-year-old boy who fell from the seventh floor of an apartment building and died, police said on Tuesday. The incident occurred at an apartment located on Dr Vishnudevadas Road on the night of January 31, they said.

The action was taken

found that on January 31, the deceased minor, along with his friends, had consumed alcohol and smoked at the establishment (pub)," a senior police officer said. Therefore, for allowing a minor to consume alcohol, a case has been registered against the owners and staff of the concerned company under the provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act and the Karnataka Excise Act. The investigation is on, police added.

filed by the boy's father, police said. According to

the complainant claimed that at around

9.40 pm on January 31, his 15-year-old minor son, fell from the seventh

floor of the apartment, where he was residing,

and died.

In this regard, a case

has been registered at Rajarajeshwari

Nagar police station.

"During the course of

investigation, the police

examined the matter

from various angles and

Taking to social media platform 'X', the chief minister expressed hope that this decision will inspire the making of more films like 'Landlord' that shed light on social issues in the days to come.

"I have instructed the concerned authorities to grant tax exemption to the film 'Landlord', starring Duniya Vijay, which is based on the themes of social inequality and caste-based exploitation," he said.

The chief minister said it is his belief

that cinema is a highly effective medium to convey meaningful messages to the public, shape public opinion, and bring about social transformation.

"When films address social concerns, it is our moral responsibility as a go-

vernment to stand by and support such efforts," he added. The Kannada action-drama movie 'Landlord', starring Duniya Vijay and directed by Jadesha K Hampi, was released in theaters on January 23.

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ALL INDIA BREAKDOWN

App-based transport workers to go off roads on February 7

AGGREGATOR COMPANIES CONTINUE TO ARBITRARILY DETERMINE FARES, WHICH PUSHES DRIVERS INTO INCOME INSECURITY, DEBT, AND UNSUSTAINABLE WORKING CONDITIONS

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

APP-based transport workers across India, associated with platforms - Ola, Uber, Rapido, Porter, UNCL, Mover, and other aggregator companies, have announced an All India breakdown on February 7 to protest continued government inaction and rampant fare exploitation by app-based aggregator platforms.

According to the Workers union, despite the notification of the Motor Vehicle Aggregator Guidelines, 2025, aggregator companies continue to arbitrarily determine fares, openly violating the spirit of the guidelines. "This unchecked practice has pushed drivers into severe income insecurity, mounting debt, and unsustainable working conditions. Additionally, the commuters are also adversely affected due to unpredictable pricing, surge manipulation, and lack of effective regulatory oversight," said Shaik Sa-



lauddin, Founder President, Telangana Gig and Platform Workers' Union (TGPWU).

App-based transport workers' unions have repeatedly highlighted that the failure of Central and State Governments to notify minimum base fares has allowed platforms to unilaterally slash driver earnings while

increasing commissions. Rising fuel prices, vehicle maintenance costs, insurance, and operational risks are being entirely shifted onto drivers, making dignified livelihoods impossible.

The workers' union demands - immediate notification of minimum base fares for all app-based transport services—including autos, cabs, and

bike taxis—by Central and State Governments, finalised in consultation with recognised driver unions.

Strict prohibition on the use of private (non-commercial) vehicles for commercial app-based rides or mandatory conversion of such vehicles into the commercial category in line with existing Motor Vehicles laws and regulations.

The unions have urged both the Central and State Governments to initiate immediate dialogue with elected worker representatives to ensure fair, lawful, and sustainable regulation of the app-based transport sector. "Continued delay will only deepen the economic crisis faced by millions of app-based transport workers and their families across the country," said Salauddin.

Other members - Nagesh Kumar, Abdul Rawoof, Ali Baqri, Satish Kumar, R K Reddy, Venkatesh and other app-based transport workers' unions were present.



AIIMS Bibinagar to be completed by year-end: Kishan Reddy

HYDERABAD

UNION Minister G. Kishan Reddy on Tuesday reviewed the progress of construction works at AIIMS Bibinagar and announced that the hospital would be completed by end of this year.

Addressing a press conference after inspecting the site, the Minister said the 750-bed AIIMS, spread over 202 acres and built at a cost of Rs.1,110 crore, was progressing rap-

idly with 86 percent of works completed. So far, Rs.811 crore has been spent on the project. He noted that Bibinagar is the country's only "Brownfield AIIMS", making it unique.

Emergency services have been operational since January 1, with 220 beds currently available. Around 1,800 patients are availing OP services daily. The institute presently has 880 students across MBBS, nursing, and specialty

Kagaznagar civic polls see 130 contestants across 30 wards

- Nominations initially filed by 170 candidates across 30 wards
- Contestants include from major parties and independents

HANS NEWS SERVICE
KAGAZNAGAR



A total of 130 candidates are set to contest the upcoming municipal elections in Kagaznagar, following the withdrawal of nominations by 40 candidates, election officials announced on Tuesday.

Initially, 170 nominations were filed across the 30 wards of Kagaznagar Municipality.

The contestants include

representatives from major political parties such as the Indian National Congress, Bharat Rashtra Samithi, Bharatiya Janata Party, All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen, along with candidates from other par-

ties and independents. After the completion of the nomination withdrawal process, 40 candidates withdrew, leaving 130 candidates in the fray across all wards of the municipality, officials added.

Preparations in full swing for CM's public meeting in Bhupalpally

- Collector and SP inspect venue and facilities ahead of CM Revanth Reddy's visit
- Emphasis on security, traffic management and public convenience

HANS NEWS SERVICE
JAYASHANKAR BHUPALPALLY

DISTRICT Collector Rahul Sharma and District SP Sankeerth on Tuesday inspected the venue opposite Ramappa Colony in Chelpur gram panchayat ahead of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's public meeting scheduled in Bhupalpally district on 8 February.

During the inspection, the officials reviewed the meeting grounds, VIP and public



District Collector Rahul Sharma and District SP Sankeerth inspect the venue ahead of CM's public meeting on Tuesday

galleries, parking, road facilities, drinking water, septic arrangements, power supply, medical facilities, and fire fighting measures. Collector Rahul Sharma directed all departmental officers to coordinate and complete preparations in a timely and orderly manner to ensure the visit proceeds smoothly without causing inconvenience to the public.

District SP Sankeerth stated that stringent security measures would be implemented, with special focus on traffic control and deployment arrangements. RDO Harikrishna, R&B Engineer Ramesh and other officials were also present, urging all departments to finish preparations on schedule for a successful and trouble free public meeting.

Cong releases B Forms in Alampur constituency

HANS NEWS SERVICE
GADWAL

THE Congress has officially finalised its candidates for three municipalities in the Alampur Assembly constituency of Jogulama Gadwal district. The 'B' Forms pertaining to Municipalities of Aiza, Waddepally, and Alampur were released at the camp office in Shantinagar.

The Forms were handed over to the party's candidates by former Alampur MLA and AICC Secretary Dr SA Sampath Kumar.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Sampath emphasised the party's commitment to strengthening grassroots de-



mocracy and assured that the selected candidates would work for the development of their respective municipalities. He expressed confidence that the Congress Party candidates would secure the trust and support of the people by addressing local civic issues and implementing welfare-oriented policies.

Party leaders, local Congress functionaries, and supporters from the three municipalities were present at the event.

Ponguleti targets BRS: Earlier oppression, now desperation

HANS NEWS SERVICE
EDULAPURAM (KHAMMAM)

REVENUE Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy launched an attack on the BRS, alleging that the party neglected the housing needs of the poor during its decade-long rule and is now "desperate for votes" with elections approaching.

Addressing election roadshows in Wards 7, 8, 9, 12 and 13 of Edulapuram Municipality on Tuesday, the Minister said previous rulers acted irresponsibly by ignoring the long-standing demand for house sites for the poor. "Those who ruled for ten years without caring for the housing needs of

the underprivileged are now making tall promises out of desperation," he said.

Assuring people of the Congress government's commitment, Reddy said providing house sites to eligible poor families and constructing 'Indiramma Houses' for them was his personal responsibility. He stated that once the election code comes to an end, house sites would be allotted to all eligible beneficiaries, followed by construction of permanent houses.

The Minister said that in the first phase itself, the government has sanctioned 4.5 lakh Indiramma houses across the State and added that from April onwards,

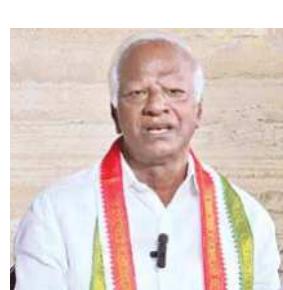


houses would be constructed in phases until every poor family owns a permanent home.

Appealing to voters, the Minister urged people to extend the same support given to him in the Assembly elections to Congress candidates contesting the municipal polls, stating that their victory would ensure accelerated development and welfare in the town.

Defection case: Kadiyam Srihari to appear before Speaker

HYDERABAD



ANOTHER significant development has occurred in the MLA defection case. Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar issued notices to Station Ghanpur MLA Kadiyam Srihari on Tuesday. The Speaker ordered him to appear for a hearing at 11 AM on Wednesday, February 4.

It is already known that BRS MLA Vivekananda has filed a complaint with the Speaker, alleging that Kadiyam Srihari, who won on the BRS party symbol, has defected to the Congress party.

In this context, the Speak-

er has also issued notices to Vivekananda, directing him to appear for the hearing scheduled for 11 AM on Wednesday. Speaker Prasad Kumar will hear the arguments of both Kadiyam Srihari and Vivekananda.

Meanwhile, as part of the party defection case, when the defection petitions of 10 MLAs came before him, Speaker Prasad Kumar has already given a clean chit to seven of them. He ruled that they remained in the BRS party and had not joined the Congress party.

However, MLA Danam Nagender's petition is under investigation. The Speaker has not yet taken any decision on the case of another MLA Sanjay. There is considerable interest within political circles regarding the decision that the Speaker will render following the investigation of Kadiyam Srihari.

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Speaking on the occasion, Dr Sampath emphasised the party's commitment to strengthening grassroots de-

velopment and welfare schemes to every household, making Nalgonda a model of development. He urged voters not

to believe false promises by opposition parties and appealed for full support to Congress candidates, assuring peace, harmony, and inclusive development for all sections of society.

Several Congress leaders, candidates, former councilors, and party workers participated in the program in large numbers.

Municipal polls: Komatireddy's campaign brings cheer to Cong

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NALGONDA

welcomed the minister, expressing their support for Venkat Reddy and the Congress Party. His campaign infused fresh enthusiasm among Congress cadres.

The minister began his campaign at Bodra Chowrasta in Charlapalli in support of Division 15 candidate Perika Nagaraju and Marriguda Division 14 candidate Bojja Shankarayya. Later, he conducted wide-ranging campaigns for Mamidi Karthik (12th Division), Sattu Nagamani Shankar (27th Division), Gundaboyina Pushpalatha Venkanna (28th Division), Gulab Mohammed Shafiq (29th Division), Aseema Sultan (Basheer) from the

26th Division, and Maragoni Naveen Goud from the 30th Division.

He explained to the public the benefits of upgrading the municipality to a corporation and the development and welfare initiatives possible with elected corporators and a new mayor.

Addressing the people, Venkat Reddy recalled his bond with Nalgonda, stating that the debt he owes to the people who elected him

international standards, and plans to transform 18 government schools into model institutions.

He assured higher funds if Congress achieves a clean sweep in all 48 divisions and vowed to deliver welfare schemes to every household, making Nalgonda a model of development.

He urged voters not

Jagadish confident of BRS victory in Suryapet

HANS NEWS SERVICE
SURYAPET

FORMER minister and Suryapet MLA Guntakandla Jagadish Reddy addressed the media and expressed confidence in the party's prospects after the release of the BRS candidates' list for the Suryapet municipal elections on Tuesday.

He stated that BRS tickets were given only to "winning candidates" and assured that fairness was maintained in selection. He thanked former municipal chairpersons, senior leaders, and all those who cooperated in the process.

Criticising the Congress party, Jagadish Reddy said the people of Suryapet are waiting to teach Congress a fitting lesson. He claimed that BRS had developed Suryapet on par

with major cities, but in the last two years, Congress had damaged a once clean and well-planned town. Highlighting development after 2014, he said Suryapet was made a district as promised.

He listed major achievements such as the medical college, collectorate, SP office, Mahaprahanam, improved roads, central lighting, tank bund, boating facilities, and parks, which transformed Suryapet into a model town.

Meanwhile, former Municipal Chairperson Ganduri Pravali and her husband Ganduri Prakash have withdrawn their nominations, creating political discussion. Ganduri Prakash had filed his nomination from Ward No. 34, while Ganduri Pravali filed her nomination from Ward No. 36.



Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy's Nalgonda Municipal Corporation election campaign



US tariff cut brings cheer to aqua sector: Atchchanna

- Minister says tariff on Indian seafood exports to US reduced from 25% to 18%, easing burden on aquaculture sector.
- Export volumes expected to rebound by 10-15% with profit margins recovering to 7-8%
- Andhra Pradesh set to benefit with higher farmer incomes, employment and sectoral growth

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE reduction of the United States tariff on Indian seafood exports from 25 per cent to 18 per cent has come as a major relief to exporters and the aquaculture sector in Andhra Pradesh, said minister for agriculture, cooperation, marketing, animal husbandry, dairy development and fisheries K Atchannaidu said on Monday.

Welcoming the decision, taken under the India-US trade agreement, the minister said the tariff cut would significantly ease the burden on seafood exporters,



particularly those engaged in aquaculture. He recalled that earlier, Indian seafood exports to the US were subjected not only to a 25 per cent tariff but also additional punitive duties, pushing the total tariff burden to 50-58 per cent.

As a result, between April and November 2025, India's seafood exports to the US fell by about 15 per cent in volume to 2.01 lakh metric tonnes, while export value declined by 6.3 per cent to 1.72 billion dollars.

Frozen shrimp, India's principal seafood export to the US, was the worst hit during this period, the minister noted. With the

tariff now reduced to 18 per cent, the competitiveness of Indian seafood products in the US market has improved considerably. Stalled export orders are being revived, and favourable conditions have emerged for releasing consignments held up in bonded warehouses.

Atchannaidu said seafood exports to the US are expected to grow by 10-15 per cent in the coming months, with export volumes likely to return to pre-tariff levels by the second half of 2025-26.

Profit margins in the seafood processing sector, which had shrunk to 5-5.5 per cent during the high-tariff phase, are also expected to recover to 7-8 per cent following the tariff reduction. Duty concessions on key inputs announced in the Union Budget 2026 would provide additional support to the sector, he added.

While the US market

shows signs of revival, exports to non-US markets such as the European Union, China, Vietnam, Russia and the United Kingdom have remained stable. In early 2025-26, non-US markets accounted for around 57 per cent of shrimp exports, reflecting effective market diversification.

For Andhra Pradesh, the country's leading seafood-producing state, the tariff cut is a boon, the minister said. The recovery in exports will enhance income stability for farmers and fishermen, create more employment opportunities, and improve gross value addition (GVA) in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. Citing MPEDA estimates, he said India's total seafood exports are likely to reach 14-15 lakh metric tonnes in 2025-26, underlining the significance of the US tariff reduction for the sustainable growth of the sector.

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

DEPUTY Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan on Tuesday directed the excise officials to maintain continuous surveillance on liquor shops and take action against those selling booze at inflated prices.

The Deputy Chief Minister received complaints that liquor is being sold at prices higher than the Maximum Retail Price (MRP) across the state. He asked liquor shops not to bring a bad name to the government by selling liquor at higher prices.

According to a statement from the Deputy Chief Minister, complaints are coming in from Kakinada district and other parts of the state. After examining the complaints, he stated that selling liquor at inflated prices is against the rules. It also brings a bad name to the government.

The Jana Sena leader said shopkeepers must strictly adhere to the regulations regarding liquor sales.

Opposition YSRCP has been targeting the coalition



cheaper liquor (180 ml bottle costing Rs 99), beer, wine and ready-to-drink (RTD) varieties.

The Cabinet also decided to increase the retailer margin by approximately 1 per cent of the MRP on IMFL and FL, including 180 ml IMFL bottles, beer, wine and RTDs. The price hike is expected to generate approximately Rs 1,391 crore in additional annual revenue for the state. At the same time, the withdrawal of additional retail excise tax imposed on bars

government over illegal liquor sales. Its leaders alleged that the government is allowing rampant violations.

According to YSRCP leaders, the shopkeepers are selling liquor at inflated prices.

The state Cabinet in January decided to increase the maximum retail price of all sizes of India-Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) brands and foreign liquor by Rs 10 per bottle, while withdrawing additional retail excise tax imposed on bars.

It was announced that the increase of Rs 10 per bottle will not be applicable to

Home minister slams Jagan, stresses TDP's discipline

- Anitha says Naidu's governance is incomparable to Jagan's, highlighting restraint among TDP cadres
- Accuses YSRCP chief of inciting violence and abusive language, contrasting it with TDP's focus on development
- Warns of strict police action against YSRCP attempts to create unrest, promising a tough stance on political rowdies

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA



Mohan Babu, Vishnu booked for SFI leaders abduction

- Tension prevails after SFI leaders Akbar and Vinod were attacked and abducted while heading for a protest against Mohan Babu University
- Police rescue the two student leaders within an hour and take the accused and vehicles used into custody

PRADEEP VENNELAKANTI
TIRUPATI



CPM leaders protesting before Tiruchanoor police station on Tuesday

TIRUPATI witnessed tension on Tuesday after two student leaders were allegedly attacked and abducted while they were on their way to the Collectorate to stage a protest against alleged irregularities at Mohan Babu University (MBU). About 30 persons reportedly attacked SFI district general secretary Akbar and SFI SV University leader Vinod and took them away in vehicles. The incident led to the filing of cases against Cine action Manchu Mohan Babu and Manchu Vishnu along with others.

The sudden incident shocked SFI students. CITU state vice president Kandarpa Murali immediately brought the matter to the notice of district SP L Subba Rayudu and ASP Ravi Manoharachari.

Murali warned that any threat to student leaders would lead to serious consequences and demanded strict action from the police and the state government. He questioned whether violence was the answer when students were only seeking correction of alleged wrongdoings.

Police acted swiftly and rescued the two SFI leaders

within an hour of the incident. The accused were taken into custody and the vehicles used for the abduction were seized. SP Subba Rayudu said criminal cases would be registered not only against those who carried out the abduction but also against those who planned it. He assured a comprehensive investigation and stated that no one would be spared for taking the law into their own hands.

Meanwhile, Tiruchanoor police have registered a case against those involved in the abduction of SFI student leaders Akbar and Vinod. The case has been booked as Crime No 23/2026 under Sections 191(2), 115(2), 140(1), 126(2), 351(2) R/w 190 and 61(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sahita (BNS) at Tiruchanoor police station.

CPM state secretary V Srinivasa Rao demanded stringent punishment for those involved in the attack and abduction. He recalled that the higher education de-

partment had issued notices to the university earlier, but no effective action was taken. He condemned the alleged use of criminal elements to intimidate students and demanded that the university be blacklisted.

Student organisations have been raising concerns for the past several months over alleged irregularities at Mohan Babu University, particularly regarding fee collections. They had submitted several representations to the state government seeking an inquiry and justice for students. Citing no response, SFI had called for a protest at the collectorate demanding immediate government action and criminal cases

against the university management. CPM leaders alleged that the protest was deliberately foiled by a group of assailants allegedly employed by the university.

CPI Tirupati city secretary J Viswanath also demanded immediate action and warned that protests against the alleged irregularities would continue.

AP Parents Association state president S Narahari condemned the attack and urged the Chief Minister to intervene. He demanded implementation of APHERMC inquiry committee recommendations, cancellation of university permissions, refund of Rs 26,17 crore allegedly collected illegally from students, enforcement of the Rs 15 lakh penalty, and withdrawal of false cases against parents and students.



NTRUHS to launch India's first AI-based medical edu system

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

- AI-enabled platform to strengthen competency-based medical training

NTR University of Health Sciences (NTRUHS) will soon introduce India's first Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based Competency-Based Medical Education (CBME) system, marking a major step towards modernising medical education in Andhra Pradesh, vice-chancellor Dr P Chandrasekhar said on Tuesday.

Addressing a WebEx meeting with principals, vice-principals, professors and students from 38 medical colleges across the state, Chandrasekhar said the initiative would provide world-class, technology-enabled learning infrastructure for medical students.

Speaking during the webinar, Dr Chandrasekhar Bondugula, creator of EdMedAI and Chairman of the Graduate Medical Education Committee in the United States, said he was committed to contributing to India's medical education system. He said the AI-powered application was designed to prepare future-ready and highly competent doctors capable of meeting global healthcare standards.

Principal secretary for health department Saurabh Gaur said the State government was keen on promoting Artificial Intelligence in healthcare and education. He stated that AI-based services could significantly improve knowledge acquisition and precision in medical training and added that the government would soon frame comprehensive policies and guidelines in this regard.

NTRUHS registrar Dr Sri Sudheer, director (R&D) Dr Srilakshmi Suryapraba, director (publications) Dr K Sudha, medical education advisor Dr Lokesh Idara and AI team members from SHC Technologies Private Limited.

JSP's Bolisetty quits party role over environmental PIL

VASU POTNURU
VISAKHAPATNAM

IN a move to ensure that political commitments should not come in the way of fighting for the people and society, general secretary (environment) of the Jana Sena Party (JSP) and national convenor of Jal Bidarai, Bolisetty Satyanarayana decided to step down from all party-affiliated responsibilities with immediate effect.

Citing ethical and legal considerations linked to ongoing environmental public interest litigation, the announcement was made in this regard.

In a letter addressed to the JSP high command,

- Steps down from all party responsibilities citing conflict of interest with ongoing pollution-related PIL in AP High Court
- Notes that Pawan Kalyan, now holding the environment portfolio, is a prime respondent in the case
- Says the move ensures impartiality in judicial proceedings and keeps the environmental cause free from political complexity

Satyanarayana said his decision was made following a meeting with key leaders of the party and thoughtful deliberation regarding his dual responsibilities as a senior party functionary and the petitioner in WP (PIL) No. 248/2020, which is currently before the Andhra Pradesh High Court.

He noted that while the petition was initiated during the previous YSRCP's regime, the present political context has changed with the formation of the NDA



Jana Sena Party senior leader and national convenor of Jal Bidarai Bolisetty Satyanarayana

government and Jana Sena as a key alliance partner.

Satyanarayana pointed out that the state government and the ministry of environment are prime respondents in the case, and that the party president, Pawan Kalyan, now holds the environment portfolio.

Further, Satyanarayana stated that continuing in a high-ranking party position while pursuing litigation against the state government could lead to a perceived conflict of interest, potentially compromise the impartiality of judicial proceedings.

Being associated with the political party, he added that such circumstances could di-

vert attention from the core objective of environmental protection.

Emphasising his commitment towards political ethics, Satyanarayana said he had chosen to step aside from the political responsibilities to ensure that the 'cause of the environment' remained free from political complexity. However, he clarified that the move was temporarily intended to remain in force until the final judicial purpose of the PIL.

While extending his support to the ideology of JSP, Satyanarayana said that his responsibilities as a petitioner and as national convenor of Jal Bidarai required him to maintain a distance

from formal party roles to ensure that justice was served without prejudice. He expressed confidence in the present government and in Pawan Kalyan's leadership that it would deliver positive environmental outcomes.

Satyanarayana expressed gratitude to the party leadership's continued support for environmental causes and confirmed that the non-political initiative 'Manu Nudi Mana Nadi' would continue.

He added that his decision would enable him to engage with the public and the media on constitutional issues freely, including environmental degradation and human rights without political constraints.

Reduction in US tariffs is big relief for Indian economy

Finally, the saga of Trump tariffs has ended on a happy note—at least from India's perspective. With US President Donald Trump announcing an agreement with India that reduces tariffs on Indian goods from 50 per cent to 18 per cent, the long-standing bilateral trade tensions are likely to subside. He had imposed two tariffs on India: a 25 per cent reciprocal tariff, and later a 25 per cent import duty on account of India's purchase of Russian crude oil. Trade had spilled over into the political and strategic arena, much to the detriment of the best interests of the world's biggest democracies. Trump and his officials made remarks about India that they should not have. They got closer to Paki-

stan, which said last month that it had inked a pact with a firm connected to World Liberty Financial, the main crypto business of Trump's family. The objective is to explore the use of World Liberty's USD1 stable coin for cross-border payments. The Trump administration also pampered the de-facto ruler of Pakistan-Army chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir. He was allowed to indulge in loose talk from American soil, which was very hurtful to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Trump repeatedly claimed that he had brokered peace between India and Pakistan during the four-day skirmish last May.

Trump should not have said and done the things he did vis-à-vis In-

dia in his second term as President. But, they say, all is well that ends well. With Indian goods to pay an 18 per cent tariff, they suddenly become much more competitive in comparison with the merchandise from other countries. China faces a 37 per cent tariff, Brazil 50 per cent, South Africa 30 per cent, Myanmar 40 per cent, and Laos 40 per cent. We also fare slightly better compared to our neighbours, with Bangladesh and Vietnam facing 20 per cent tariff, and Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand, and Pakistan paying 19 per cent. There is also a serendipitous result: India gave up its reluctance to augment trade with the world and went into overdrive to finalise free trade agreements, the

recent one being with the European Union. The India-EU agreement is not just another trade deal; it is a statement of intent. It signals that India is willing to engage seriously with large, demanding markets, accept high standards, and open its economy in a calibrated manner. The EU, with its vast consumer base and technological prowess, offers India access to high-value markets, advanced manufacturing ecosystems, and cutting-edge green technologies.

In return, Europe gains a reliable partner in Asia at a time when geopolitical uncertainties are reshaping global supply chains. More importantly, the push towards FTAs reflects a growing realisation in New

Delhi that economic growth, job creation, and strategic influence are deeply intertwined. Trade is no longer viewed merely as an economic activity but as a tool of statecraft. By embedding itself in a dense network of trade agreements, India reduces its exposure to unilateral coercion, enhances its bargaining power, and anchors itself more firmly in the global economic order. If Delhi sustains this momentum—by concluding more FTAs, improving domestic competitiveness, and aligning regulations with global standards, the country could emerge stronger and more resilient from an episode that initially appeared deeply damaging. In India, it takes a crisis to force overdue reform.

Prioritise rejuvenation of 'Buckingham Canal'



DR D SREENIVASULU

THE rapidity of transformation of human civilization increased manifold ever since inventions were made in transportation modes. Even in India, beginning with the colonial period and after independence, continuous efforts are made to improve the transportation networks in the country connecting the length and breadth of the subcontinent.

Presently, governments are developing road networks, highways, bullet trains, national and international flights. Because of their ease and swiftness, the preceding modes of transport overpowered waterways, which used to play a key role in the economy by providing transportation to goods and services, and people across regions. An outcome of this transformation, coupled with rapid urbanisation, encroachment of water bodies and pollution is the neglect of the several water canals in India which became victims of modernisation. It is the responsibility of the government to promote the waterways through the revival of the canals. One such canal whose plight calls for immediate attention and action by the government is 'Buckingham Canal'.

Designed by Western engineers, this 19th-century navigation canal passes parallel through the Coromandel coast and connects Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Its construction was taken up in several phases. This is a private

waterway that was planned and executed based on the 'design-build-operate' project delivery system. This was the predecessor of the present day much-acclaimed Build-Own-Operate-Transfer Model).

The construction of the canal began in 1806. Initially, the 16.5 km stretch of the canal from Madras Port to Ennore was built by the Basil Cochrane company. In remembrance of this contribution, this canal was called the 'Cochrane Canal' in 1806. Later, the British government took interest in extending this canal by stretching it northwards to Madras.

By connecting Kakinada Port via Vijayawada, the canal enabled continuous activity between Madras and Kakinada port. For a while, it was also called Lord Clive's canal. When the Great Famine hit this region during 1876-78, the British government provided relief for the people through the extension works of this canal. This canal was renamed as Buckingham Canal, after the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, who was governor of Madras presidency at that time.

The 796-km long water navigation canal extending parallel to the Coromandel Coast, one kilometre from the coast, is extended till Villupuram in Tamil Nadu. It also connects with Pulicat Lake and at Chennai, it intersects through the city's three major rivers- Kosasthalaiyar, Cooum and Adyar. All these aspects make this canal a marvellous engineering creation and multipurpose project.

This canal was initially used for transportation of commodities, people and later, for fishing. Settlements cropped up on the banks for this canal. Many communities formed their livelihood by depending on this canal.

In his work 'History of the Buckingham Canal Project' (1898), A S Russell writes that the construction of the canal



This historic canal, which used to be bustling with activity, is now ravaged with multiple problems like emitting untreated wastes by the industries and urban populations, encroachment of the canal land, siltation, and damage caused by natural disasters like floods. The mega prawn farms situated at the banks of this waterway dump their diseased and dead stock directly into the canal. Cyclones, against which this canal acted as a buffer zone, have damaged the canal and only a few attempts have been made towards the reconstruction and maintenance of the canal

has placed erstwhile Madras Presidency "in cheap and easy communication with no less than five districts, and with the large and important towns of Cocanada, Bezwada, Masulipatam, Ongole and Nellore".

This canal earlier was "a dreary waste of sand, but much of this barren and arid country has been greatly developed and improved owing to the remarkably cheap means of communication afforded by the canal; cultivation has been brought into existence or extended, owing to the facilities given by the canal for the drainage of low-lying land; numerous casuarina and other plantations have been formed along its entire length; a great increase in the wealth and prosperity of the population has taken place".

Beyond bringing prosperity for the people in the region, this canal has the potential to protect people against natural disasters like floods and tsunamis. The canal has mitigated the effects of the 2004 Tsunami by acting as a buffer zone for 310-km long coastal regions

from Pedaganjam in Prakasam district to Chennai, saving the lives of hundreds of fishermen and coastal villages.

Scientists believe the canal has the potential to act as a barrier to allow tidal waves to merge into the ocean in ten minutes.

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In some areas, the canal is filled with filth and debris, while at

some places, it completely disappears and will be visible after some distance. The need of the hour is the immediate restoration of this age-old canal. Whenever a huge hurricane or flood hits any region, the government releases millions of rupees in the form of relief. But if steps were taken to develop infrastructure to mitigate these disasters, loss of people and property could be easily mitigated. This canal offers an opportunity in that direction, and to provide for the livelihoods of many communities living across the canal. The restoration of the canal with medium- and long-term plans should be the priority of the governments of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, along with the Union government.

It is a matter of great relief and hope that the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) has announced its intention for the revival of the Buckingham canal by declaring it as National Waterways 4 (NW-4). Established in 1986, IWAI aims at the development,

(The writer is a retired IAS Officer)

maintenance and restoration of Inland Water transportation on national waterways. Rejuvenation of Buckingham canal is placed under NW-4, which covers waterways from Kakinada to Kalapet in Pondicherry in three phases. But the rejuvenation plans under NW-4 are jeopardized due to the shifting of survey works in Phase-1 to Phase-2 and Phase-3. Despite the ambitious plan, the implementation works are going at a snail's pace. Governments have a responsibility to change the order of priority and expedite the work on this national canal waterway in the first place. The role of the State Water Resources Department is crucial for this.

Reviving Buckingham canal requires a concrete and swift plan of action, which involves dredging, removal of numerous bridges that were built on the route of the canal, recovering the encroached lands, and reconstruction of the walls wherever required. It is also necessary to check on the pollutants and untreated wastes that are being released into the canal throughout its stretch. Rejuvenation of the multipurpose canal would ease the environment-friendly transportation of commodities and people between states, reduce traffic woes, irrigation, provide for the livelihood for millions of people, fishing, and boating. It can also open the opportunity for developing more cordial relationships between Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, which can share the benefits of this project by recognising dual responsibility for the states to protect this national heritage. A relentless resolve by the governments can ensure that the otherwise 'forlorn' Buckingham canal will start bustling with activity, like in the good old days.

(The writer is a retired IAS Officer)

LETTERS

Let us join hands to tackle cancer

World Cancer Day is observed every year on February 4 to raise awareness about the devastating impact of cancer and to encourage collective action against this deadly disease. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), it accounts for nearly 10 million deaths annually. In many regions, including in India, lack of modern medical facilities, limited access to early detection and low public awareness worsen the situation. The World Cancer Day urges governments, health organisations and individuals to promote preventive measures, support patients and invest in healthcare infrastructure and research. This year's theme, "United by Unique," reminds us that while every patient's cancer journey is different, our collective action—supporting patients, funding research, and advocating for affordable treatment—is essential. Early detection is our strongest tool. Let us stand united to ensure that no one faces the burden of cancer alone.

Jubel D'Cruz, Mumbai

Quality health ensures longevity

Our editorial 'Interesting insights emerge on human lifespan' aptly calls for adding life to years and not the way round. Undoubtedly, life expectancy has risen due to advances in medical science and breakthroughs in disease management. Today's challenge lies elsewhere—sedentary lifestyles, excessive junk food consumption, rising obesity, and lifestyle-related ailments affecting the heart and other vital organs. Emerging trends like cancer, dementia and Parkinsonism are perturbing trends. Longevity, therefore, must now be matched with quality health and responsible living.

K V Raghuram, Wayanad

Need to focus on preventive health

THE "Interesting insights emerge on human lifespan" editorial (THI, Feb 3) rightly highlights how public health improvements have extended life expectancy in India. But as we cross 70 years on average, the focus must shift to quality of life in older age. Longevity without adequate geriatric care, social support, and financial security can strain families and systems. We need more investment in preventive health, age-friendly infrastructure, and pension coverage, especially in rural areas. Genetic research is valuable, but practical steps—clean water, nutrition, and accessible clinics—still make the biggest difference.

S M Jeeva, Chennai-32

Protect all vulnerable groups

THIS refers to the editorial "Interesting insights emerge on human lifespan". It reminds us that longevity is shaped not just by genes but by living conditions that often hide genetic potential. For India, this has practical implications. While genetic research deserves support, policy attention must stay firmly on basics that still vary widely across regions. Clean air, safe roads, infection control, and early-life nutrition can reduce avoidable deaths that distort lifespan outcomes. Adding years to life is meaningful only if public systems ensure those years are healthier and more productive, especially for vulnerable groups.

M Barathi, Bengaluru-560076

Healthy longevity: Onus on govt

APPROPOS "Interesting insights emerge on human lifespan" (THI, February 3). The editorial highlights an important global study showing that genetics may account for over 50 per cent of human lifespan once extrinsic factors like accidents and infections are properly accounted for. The findings underscore the need to focus on controllable extrinsic risks. While genes play a larger role than thought, public health measures—improved sanitation, vaccination drives, road safety, and access to timely medical care—can still add meaningful years, especially in rural and lower-income groups. Policymakers should continue investing in these areas alongside emerging genetic research to maximise healthy longevity.

A Myilsami, Coimbatore-402

Old-age homes and eroding humane values

THIS pertains to "Interesting insights emerge on human lifespan" (THI Feb 3). Paradoxically, even as human longevity improves, new and unfamiliar diseases continue to haunt and claim lives. Added years of life carry meaning only if accompanied by empathy, compassion, and a fellow feeling. Mushrooming of old-age homes and neglected parents is a sobering reminder that longevity without humane values reduces life to self-centred existence, marked by unfulfilled desires rather than shared fulfilment.

K Parvathy, Mysuru

thehansreader@gmail.com

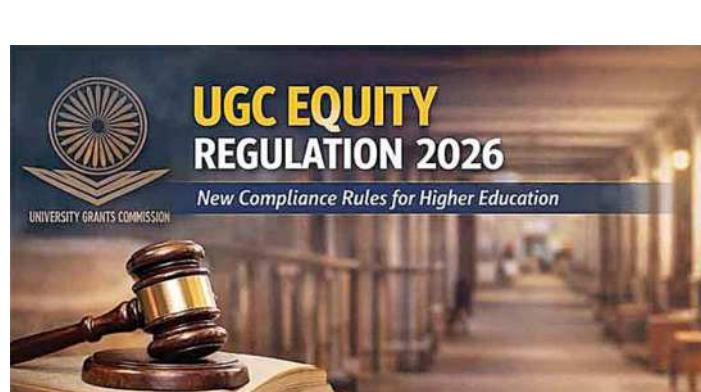
BENGALURU ONLINE

Paperless property registration through Kaveri 2.0 now..

BENGALURU: Property buyers in Karnataka will no longer need to stand in long queues at sub-registrar offices for registration work. The Department of Registration and Stamps has launched a major reform by introducing a fully paperless property registration system. With the upgraded Kaveri 2.0 software platform, all registration procedures will now be carried out digitally, eliminating the need for physical documents.

Kaveri 2.0 is an advanced online property registration platform developed by the Karnataka government. It is an improved version of the earlier Kaveri software and is integrated with multiple government portals such as Bhoomi, E-Swathu, Khajane-2 and Sakala. The system enables citizens to complete the entire registration process within 10 minutes in a transparent and hassle-free manner without the involvement of middlemen. While digital e-stamping was already in use, the entire registration process has now been converted into a digital format. After successful registration, citizens will no longer receive physical documents. Instead, they will be provided with a login ID and password through which all property-related records can be accessed securely online.

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



mandating the establishment of Equal Opportunity Centres (EOCs) in every university and college, the UGC is attempting to create a 'standard operating procedure' for social justice. These centres are not merely symbolic; they are backed by Equity Committees and 'equity squads' proactive units tasked with monitoring 'vulnerable spots' on campus to prevent discrimination in real-time. Furthermore, the regulation introduces a revolutionary time-bound grievance redressal system.

The requirement for an Equity Committee to meet within 24 hours of a complaint and submit a full report within 15 days is a direct attempt to combat the 'delay and deny' tactics that have historically silenced victims. For the first time, institutional heads are liable and non-compliance carries the heavy threat of losing UGC funding or even derecognition.

However, the very stringency that makes the regulation promising has also exposed significant demerits that threaten to undermine its legitimacy. The most contentious issue is the 'uni-directional' definition of victimhood. Regulation 3(c) defines caste-based discrimination exclusively as acts committed against members of SC, ST, and OBC categories. Critics argue that this phrasing creates a legal vacuum where students from the 'General Category' are effectively deemed incapable of being victims of bias. This perceived lack of balance has sparked widespread resistance, particularly among student groups from unreserved categories. The pushback, often coalescing under digital movements like #UGCRollback, is rooted in the fear of 'reverse discrimination'. Students argue that the current structure of Equity Committees, which mandates representation from reserved categories but remains silent on the inclusion of general category members, lacks the appearance of neutrality required for natural justice.

There is a palpable anxiety that campuses are being transformed into zones of surveillance. The deployment of 'equity squads' is seen by many as an intrusive overreach that could chill everyday social interactions, replacing organic peer bonding with a culture of suspicion. Resistance is not necessarily against the principle of equity but against a design that many

feel presumes guilt based on identity rather than evidence.

As we look toward the future of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), it is clear that the UGC Regulation 2026 is a necessary but imperfect instrument. The intent to purge campuses of the ancient poison of casteism is noble and constitutionally mandated.

However, for any regulation to be effective, it must be perceived as fair by all stakeholders it governs. To ensure the long-term success of these guidelines, the UGC should consider critical amendments. Reinroducing a safeguard against demonstrably false and malicious complaints would go a long way in building trust. Furthermore, the definition of discrimination should be made 'caste-neutral' in its language, ensuring that any student, regardless of their background, has a pathway to redress if they face identity-based harassment. Equity should be a bridge that connects the campus community, not a wall that segregates it into silos of permanent grievance and fortified privilege. Only by balancing accountability with due process can we create a truly inclusive academic environment that honors both social justice and individual merit.

(The writer is a former college principal and founder of Supporting Shoulders)

DR BHASKAR NATH BISWAL

THE Indian higher education landscape is currently witnessing a tectonic shift with the notification of the University Grants Commission (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026. This landmark framework, notified last month, replaces the 2012 guidelines, marking a transition from advisory norms to a strictly enforceable legal mandate. The genesis of these regulations lies in a painful history of systemic failure and tragedy.

Following the heart-wrenching suicides of scholars like Rohith Vemula and Payal Tadvi, their mothers petitioned the Supreme Court, seeking a robust mechanism to end the pervasive culture of caste-based exclusion. In response and under judicial pressure to address a staggering 118 per cent rise in discrimination complaints over the last five years, the UGC has introduced a framework designed to hold institutional leadership directly accountable for the social climate of their campuses.

At its core, the 2026 Regulation aims to institutionalise empathy through structural reform. One of its most significant merits is the expansion of the protective umbrella to explicitly include Other Backward Classes (OBCs), alongside Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). By

RLIP not unfair to any region: YSRCP

- Prakash Reddy accuses Chief Minister of deliberately halting RLIP works, causing severe hardship to farmers
- Calls upon farmers from across district to participate in a public meeting scheduled for February 5
- Condemns attempts to divert public attention through controversies and criticises attacks on opposition leaders

HANS NEWS SERVICE
ANANTAPUR



Former MLA Prakash Reddy during a press conference in Anantapur on Tuesday

FORMER Raptadu MLA and YSRCP constituency coordinator Thopudurthi Prakash Reddy alleged that the Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation Project (RLIP) was not unjust to any region and accused Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu of deliberately halting its works, causing severe hardship to farmers.

Addressing a press conference at the YSRCP district office on Tuesday Prakash Reddy called upon farmers from across Anantapur district to

participate in a public meeting scheduled on February 5 near the Pothireddy padu Regulator, urging them to fight for their rightful irrigation water.

He said that during the tenure of former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, welfare schemes were implemented every month with clearly announced schedules, benefiting people across the State.

In contrast, he alleged that the present government had failed to honour its promises and stalled key welfare and housing schemes.

Accusing Naidu of turning Amaravati into a hub of large-scale land profiteering, Prakash Reddy claimed that only a select few, including the Chief Minister, his ministers, and close associates, benefited, while no real wealth

was created for the State. He further alleged that the State government had failed to deposit its mandatory share for schemes such as MGNREGS, AMRUT, Jal Jeevan Mission, and housing projects, risking the discontinuation of central assistance.

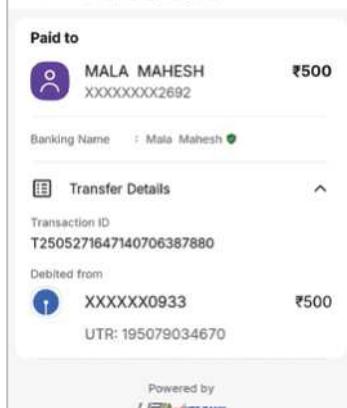
He said that several irrigation projects, including Handri-Neeva and Galeru-Nagari link works, which were partially completed during the previous government, had been stopped, causing major losses to drought-prone Rayalaseema districts.

Prakash Reddy also condemned attempts to divert public attention through controversies and criticised attacks on opposition leaders, asserting that criticism should be met democratically and not through intimidation.

Speaking to The Hans India on Tuesday, local residents Talaru Dastagiri and Ramesh alleged that the Secretariat, meant to provide hassle-free governance at the grassroots level, has turned into a centre of illegal collections, causing hardship to the common people.

According to them, the computer operator, identified as Mala Mahesh, is allegedly collecting the money from applicants, while fixed rates are said to have been decided

AMOUNT SENT THROUGH PHONEPE TO COMPUTER OPERATOR MAHESH



Talaru Dastagiri and Ramesh.

for different services.

The villagers further alleged that similar payments are being demanded for corrections in certificates, Aadhaar-related services for children, and other administrative works.

They also claimed that an organised system involving intermediaries is operating in and around the Secretariat, facilitating the collection of money and assuring applicants that their work would be completed swiftly after payment.

Residents expressed concern that the lack of effective supervision has allowed such practices to continue unchecked. When The Hans India contacted Devanakonda MPDO Jyothi for her response, she stated that she was unaware of the allegations. However, she assured that the matter would be looked into and that she would pursue the issue.

The Hans India also tried to speak to the computer operator Mala Mahesh over phone to get his version but there was no response.

Sevala Maharaj Jayanti held

HANS NEWS SERVICE
PUTTAPARTHI

The birth anniversary celebrations of Sevala Maharaj were held with great fervour and traditional splendour at the spiritual town of Puttapparthi in Sri Sathya Sai district, under the aegis of the All India Banjara Bhakta Seva Sangh (ABBSS).

The event stood as a vibrant symbol of devotion, cultural heritage, and social unity. District Collector A Shyam Prasad attended the celebrations as the chief guest.

He paid floral tributes to the portraits of Sevala Maharaj and Sathya Sai Baba, and ceremonially inaugurated the Sevala Jayanti Rath Yatra by breaking a concomit, in keeping with tradition. The colourful procession, reflecting the customs, culture, and spiritual beliefs of the Banjara community, added a festive aura to Puttapparthi.

A key highlight of the programme was the Collector's participation in traditional tribal dances alongside Banjara women, drawing appreciation from



Collector A Shyam Prasad flagging off the Sevala Maharaj Jayanti Rath Yatra during the ABBSS-organised celebrations at Puttapparthi in Sri Sathya Sai district on Tuesday

the public for his gesture of respect towards tribal art and culture. Later, the Collector joined the Rath Yatra, walking alongside devotees. The procession commenced from Sathyamma Circle and proceeded up to Ganesh Circle, accompanied by traditional drums, folk songs, tribal dances, and devotional chants. The streets resonated with enthusiasm and cultural vibrancy as devotees celebrated the ideals and teachings of Sevala Maharaj. The celebrations transformed the town into a hub of devotion and festi-

tivity, leaving a lasting impression on participants and onlookers alike, while reaffirming the cultural richness and unity of the Banjara community.

Farmers express happiness over quick solutions at revenue clinic



HANS NEWS SERVICE
DHARMAVARAM

FARMERS are expressing their happiness as the Revenue Clinics, conducted under the auspices of the Revenue Department, are providing quick solutions to their land-related problems.

A piece of land in Survey Number 369-B, measuring 4.60 acres in Pulletipalli village of Chennekothapalli mandal, had been under a notional account for some time due to a partition dispute among four brothers.

After an inquiry into the matter, the Joint Collector sent a report, based on which Lakshminarayana, Akkulaappa, Satyanarayana and Ramanjaneyulu

were issued 1-B certificates according to their respective shares.

In this context, the brothers mutually resolved the partition dispute, submitted an application at the Revenue Clinic, and requested that the said patta land be registered as a regular account and that 1-B certificates be issued in their respective names.

He added that similar counselling centres have already been established at Kadiri, Penkonda, and Dharmavaram, with staff available for two days a week and round-the-clock services if required.

The SP specially congratulated Vijay Kumar and his team for their efforts in establishing the fully equipped counselling centre.

DSP Vijay Kumar, Circle Inspectors, Sub-Inspectors, and police personnel were present at the programme.

The SP stressed that adequate parking facilities have been identified to manage the expected influx of pilgrims visiting the Sri Bhramaramba Mallikarjuna Swamy temple.

Police personnel have been instructed to regulate traffic efficiently so that

devotees can have a hassle-free darshan without inconvenience.

Special attention is being paid to avoid bottlenecks on approach roads and within the temple town during the peak festival days.

Appealing directly to devotees, SP Suneel Sheoran urged them to strictly follow police instructions and park their vehicles only in designated parking areas without causing inconvenience to others.

He cautioned that parking vehicles on either side of the roads would

not be permitted under any circumstances, as it could lead to severe traffic obstruction.

The SP expressed confidence that with public cooperation and inter-departamental

coordination, the Maha Shivaratri Brahmotsavams would be conducted peacefully and successfully.

Family counselling centre opened to address women's issues

HANS NEWS SERVICE
PUTTAPARTHI

A Family Counselling Centre has been inaugurated at Puttapparthi to provide effective support and resolution for women facing domestic and social issues, said Satish Kumar, Superintendent of Police, Sri Sathya Sai district.

The centre was inaugurated on Tuesday morning at the DSP office premises in Puttapparthi.

Speaking on the occasion, the SP said the police department would extend all possible support to women approaching the centre and work towards resolving their grievances through counselling. He noted that after revenue-related issues, family disputes account for a significant number of complaints received through grievance platforms. To address this, a dedicated counselling team comprising



Police officials interact with women during a counselling session at the newly inaugurated Family Counselling Centre at Puttapparthi in Sri Sathya Sai district on Tuesday

a lawyer, a representative from a voluntary organisation, a police officer, and a women's representative has been constituted. He said counselling would help couples resolve differences amicably and lead a peaceful life. The SP stated that the Family Counselling Centre at the district headquarters would serve as a model for the entire district by instilling confidence among women and homemakers.

He expressed gratitude to donors who extended support for setting up the centre and said special focus was being placed on preventing crimes against women.

He added that similar counselling centres have already been established at Kadiri, Penkonda, and Dharmavaram, with staff available for two days a week and round-the-clock services if required.

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SP stresses on smooth traffic management during Maha Shivaratri Brahmotsavams

IN view of the upcoming Maha Shivaratri Brahmotsavams at Srisailam, Nandyal District Superintendent of Police Suneel Sheoran, has directed police

officials to take stringent measures to ensure the safety of devotees and prevent traffic disruptions or any untoward incidents. Emphasizing the importance of coordinated efforts, the SP instructed that the festival arrangements be

implemented effectively through close coordination among all concerned government departments.

As part of the preparations, the District SP convened a review meeting with senior police officers on Tuesday to discuss security and traffic management plans. Subsequently, he personally inspected key parking locations and traffic-prone areas in and around Srisailam, including the ring road parking areas, RTC bus stand, Sakshi Ganapati area, Hatakeshwaram, Lingalagattu in Sundipeta

village, and other designated zones.

He also reviewed arrangements at the Lingalagattu bathing ghats and issued specific directions to officials to prevent congestion and ensure smooth movement of devotees.

The SP stressed that adequate parking facilities have been identified to manage the expected influx of pilgrims visiting the Sri Bhramaramba Mallikarjuna Swamy temple.

Police personnel have been instructed to regulate traffic efficiently so that

devotees can have a hassle-free darshan without inconvenience.

Special attention is being paid to avoid bottlenecks on approach roads and within the temple town during the peak festival days.

Appealing directly to devotees, SP Suneel Sheoran urged them to strictly follow police instructions and park their vehicles only in designated parking areas without causing inconvenience to others.

He cautioned that parking vehicles on either side of the roads would

not be permitted under any circumstances, as it could lead to severe traffic obstruction.

The SP expressed confidence that with public cooperation and inter-departamental

coordination, the Maha Shivaratri Brahmotsavams would be conducted peacefully and successfully.

Devanakonda secretariat faces corruption charges by villagers

AMOUNT SENT THROUGH PHONEPE TO COMPUTER OPERATOR MAHESH

AP



Talaru Dastagiri and Ramesh.

for different services.

The villagers further alleged that similar payments are being demanded for corrections in certificates, Aadhaar-related services for children, and other administrative works.

They also claimed that an organised system involving intermediaries is operating in and around the Secretariat, facilitating the collection of money and assuring applicants that their work would be completed swiftly after payment.

Residents expressed concern that the lack of effective supervision has allowed such practices to continue unchecked. When The Hans India contacted Devanakonda MPDO Jyothi for her response, she stated that she was unaware of the allegations. However, she assured that the matter would be looked into and that she would pursue the issue.

The Hans India also tried to speak to the computer operator Mala Mahesh over phone to get his version but there was no response.

Govt committed to protect farmers' land rights: Collector

HANS NEWS SERVICE
GORANTLA

THE State government is firmly committed to providing complete security to farmers' land rights, District Collector A Shyam Prasad said on Tuesday.

The Collector participated in a programme organised at Javakuladinne village in Gorantla mandal, where he distributed newly issued Pattadar Passbooks bearing the official government emblem to farmers.

Addressing the gathering, the Collector said the government is distributing authenticated Pattadar Passbooks across all villages in the district to strengthen land ownership security and improve transparency in land records.

He explained that discrepancies often emerge between land records and ground realities when surveys are ignored, a problem prevalent not only in the State



Collector A Shyam Prasad distributing a newly issued pattadar passbook to a farmer during a land records distribution programme held at Javakuladinne village in Gorantla mandal on Tuesday

but across the country. The Collector noted that surveyors are available in every village and that surveys will be completed within a week if applicants attend on the notified date. Sub-division surveys are mandated to be completed within 15 days, while new Pattadar Passbooks must be issued within 30 days.

Revenue issues reviewed in state-level video conference

ANANTAPUR

A State-level review meeting on key revenue-related services was held on Tuesday through video conference from the CCLA office, Vijayawada, covering issues related to the Public Grievance Redressal System (PGRS), IVRS, mutations, revenue survey, and distribution of Pattadar Passbooks scheduled for February.

The review was chaired by Sai Prasad, Principal Secretary (Revenue), along with Jayalakshmi, CCLA & Special Chief Secretary, with participation from District Collectors, Joint Collectors,



Today is World Cancer Day 2026

A simple vaccine, lifesaving impact

World Cancer Day highlights the urgent need for prevention as much as treatment, especially against cancers caused by the Human Papillomavirus (HPV). Often silent and symptomless, HPV is linked to cervical, throat, and anal cancers that can turn deadly if detected late. Health experts say timely vaccination and regular screening could prevent up to 90% of these cases, making awareness the first line of defense

D VAISHNAVI

World Cancer Day serves as a powerful reminder that many life-threatening diseases can be prevented with timely awareness and action. Among them is Human Papillomavirus (HPV), a silent but widespread infection linked to several cancers that often go unnoticed until it is too late. On February 4, radiologist-oncologist Dr. Sandeep Kumar Tula is urging families to take prevention seriously, calling vaccination and early screening the strongest weapons against HPV-related cancers.

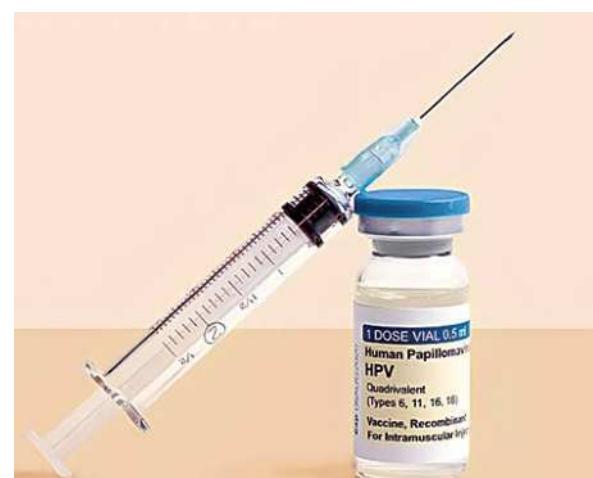
Drawing from over four years of frontline cancer care, Dr. Tula says the biggest danger with HPV is how quietly it spreads. "People think of it as just another infection, but HPV is actually responsible for multiple cancers. High-risk strains like 16 and 18 alone cause nearly 70% of cervical cancers worldwide. These viruses silently integrate into cells and trigger mutations that lead to cervical, vaginal, vulvar, penile, anal, and throat cancers."

He explains that transmission is easier than most people assume. "Sexual contact is the primary route, and even a single exposure can transmit the virus. Smoking, weak immunity, poor diet, alcohol use, and obesity further increase the risk because the body struggles to fight the infection."

What makes the disease especially dangerous, he adds, is the absence of early warning signs. "Most HPV infections don't show symptoms initially. That's why it's so deceptive. By the time patients notice abnormal bleeding, unusual discharge, throat hoarseness, difficulty swallowing, or anal discomfort, the disease may already be advancing."



Dr. Tula highlights the dramatic difference early detection can make. "If we catch cancer at Stage 1, survival can be close to 90%. But by Stage 4, it drops sharply to around 15-20%. That's why screening is critical."



He recommends regular Pap smears and HPV DNA tests for women, especially after the age of 30, along with routine health check-ups for everyone. "Follow the screening guidelines every three to five years. Detect it early, and we can treat it effectively with surgery, radiation, or chemotherapy before it spreads."

For him, however, the most powerful tool remains prevention through vaccination. "The HPV vaccine is essentially a shield. It produces antibodies that neutralize the virus before it can infect you."

Explaining the options available in India, he says, "Gardasil protects against four strains and costs around Rs 3,800 per dose, while Gardasil 9 covers more strains at about Rs 10,300 per dose. Government programs are increasingly offering it free, though availability differs by region."

Vaccination at the right age, he stresses, offers maximum protection. "Children between 9 and 14 need just two doses. After 14, three doses are required. And it's not just for girls — boys must take it too because it prevents anal and throat cancers and reduces transmission. There's no strict upper age limit, but earlier vaccination works best."

Beyond medical advice, Dr. Tula has also been leading community outreach efforts to spread awareness. Since Republic Day this year, he and his volunteers have conducted campaigns

at public spaces, traffic signals, villages, and colleges to educate families and students about HPV risks. "We want awareness to reach people who may never walk into a hospital for preventive care. Education at the grassroots level can save thousands of lives," he says. As World Cancer Day spotlights prevention, Dr. Tula leaves people with a straightforward message: "Quit smoking, practice safe habits, eat healthy, screen regularly, and vaccinate early. HPV-related cancers are up to 90% preventable. We have the tools — we just need to use them."

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 Point a finger at? (6)
- 22 Wishful words (1,4)
- 7 Leaves high and dry (8)
- 23 Place of cultivation (4)
- 8 Horned goddess (4)
- 26 Harry Potter's professor (5)
- 10 Most sensible (6)
- 28 To free (3)
- 11 Three-fold (6)
- 29 The glasses in spectacles (6)
- 14 Some forensic evidence (3)
- 30 Female foxes (6)
- 16 Absolute (5)
- 31 Poker declaration (2,2)
- 17 Plant part (4)
- 32 Chewed the fat (8)
- 19 Spells (5)
- 33 Locomotive (6)
- 21 Value (5)

DOWN

- 1 Is he trying his best to keep you entertained? (6)
- 2 Dispatched (6)
- 3 The orient (4)
- 4 Lie or fib (7)
- 5 Uncertainty or misgiving (5)
- 6 Escort courteously (5)
- 8 Our country, as a prefix (4)
- 9 International Standard Atmosphere (3)
- 12 Aliens? (3)
- 13 Crowbar (5)
- 15 Body of troops (5)
- 18 Or like sheep (5)
- 19 Jeering cry (3)
- 20 Red Indian tribe (3)
- 21 Like a car or a bus? (7)
- 22 Internet addresses (3)
- 23 Mending or repairing (6)
- 24 South Yemen port (4)
- 25 Royal city in Karnataka (6)
- 26 Injured-arm support (5)
- 27 "In at a" change for a girl's name? (5)
- 28 Outer edge (3)
- 30 Footnote word (4)



Solution to February 3

SUDOKU



Solution to February 3

Mental well-being tips for people living with breast cancer

World Cancer Day reminds us that healing from cancer isn't only physical — it's deeply emotional too. For women facing early breast cancer, fear, uncertainty, and stress often accompany treatment decisions. Prioritising mental well-being can be just as important as medical care in navigating the journey

ASKARI JAFFER



homemaker, remembers feeling overwhelmed after her diagnosis. Balancing family responsibilities with frequent hospital visits left her exhausted and anxious about the future. Gradually, she began prioritising her mental health along with medical care.

She joined a patient support group, practiced simple mindfulness exercises daily, and spoke openly with her doctors about her concerns and treatment choices. These steps helped her feel more grounded and better equipped to cope with uncertainty, restoring a sense of

Meera, a 47-year-old woman

calm during a difficult phase of life. Studies show that nearly four in ten people living with breast cancer experience significant anxiety or depressive symptoms at some point.

Emotional strain is often compounded by treatment side effects, lifestyle disruptions, and fear of recurrence.

More than half of patients report some level of anxiety by the end of chemotherapy, highlighting the need for holistic care that addresses both physical and emotional health.

Dr. M Vamshi Krishna, Director and Head of Department

ment, Medical Oncology and Hematology at AIG Hospitals, Hyderabad, says, "Breast cancer treatments can take a heavy physical and emotional toll. Visible changes, frequent hospital visits, and uncertainty often intensify anxiety. Advanced therapies, along with counseling, support groups, and mindfulness practices, can ease these burdens and help patients focus on their overall well-being."

Five ways to support mental well-being during early breast cancer:

- **Choose the right treatment:** Discuss options and side effects with your doctor to reduce emotional stress and improve quality of life.
- **Address fear of recurrence:** Stay informed and proactive about therapies that may lower risk.
- **Seek professional help:** Therapists can provide coping tools and emotional guidance.
- **Join support groups:** Sharing experiences reduces isolation and builds strength.
- **Practice mindfulness:** Meditation, yoga, or breathing exercises can calm anxiety and restore focus.

Living with early breast cancer is challenging, but caring for your mental health can make the journey more manageable and empower you to move forward with hope.

CELEBRATING STRENGTH, INSPIRING SURVIVORS



Manisha Koirala with Dr Vijay Anand Reddy, Founder, Cure Foundation, Hyderabad; with young cancer survivors, at the World Cancer Day Celebration - Light the Night & the 23rd Anniversary Celebrations of CURE Foundation; hosted by Cure Foundation; at Boulder Hills Golf & Country Club, Gachibowli

Payal Rajput: I may fail, but I won't give up!

Well known actress Payal Rajput, who has made a name for herself with her impressive performances in films like 'RX100',

'RDX Love' and 'Mangalavaram', has now revealed that there were people who wanted her to quit but that she was not going to give up.

Taking to her X timeline to pen a post, Payal Rajput said, "They want me to quit, and I find myself questioning whether I should. But then I think about the hard work I've put in over the last 12 years. So I tell myself no. I may fail, but I won't give up. #justthinking."

It may be recalled that last year, the actress had penned a post, expressing concerns about favoritism and nepotism overshadowing talent in the film industry.

Taking to her timeline on the social media platform X, Payal Rajput had then said, "Being an actor is one of the toughest careers out there. Each day starts with the weight of uncertainty, as I step into a world where nepotism and favoritism often overshadow talent."

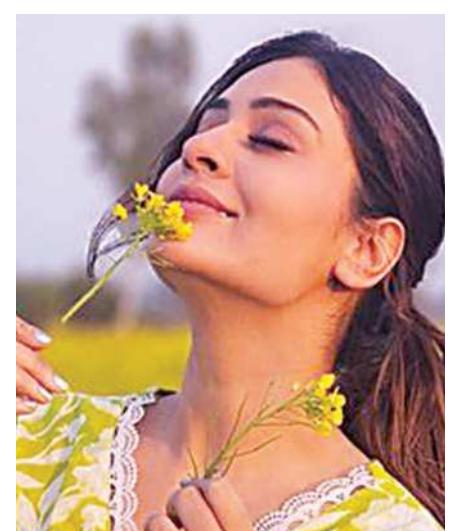
The actress went on to admit that there were times when she wondered if her hard work and dedication would even get noticed in a world that was dominated by those with privilege.

She wrote, "There are moments of doubt when I question whether my hard work and dedication can truly shine through in a landscape dominated by privilege. I watch as opportunities slip away to those with famous last names or a powerful agent, wondering if my talent is enough to break through."

The actress had also added the hashtag #Struggleisreal to make it clear that the problem indeed existed in the film industry.

Currently, Payal is working on a number of films including the Telugu film titled 'VenkataLachimi', which is being directed by Muni and which the makers intend to release in three languages — Telugu, Tamil and Hindi.

Payal also plays the lead opposite Legend Saravanan in his second Tamil film that is



being directed by well known director R S Durai Senthilkumar.

While Payal Rajput stars opposite Legend Saravanan, the Tamil film will also feature actors Shaam and Andrea in pivotal roles.

The yet-to-be-titled film is a grand-budget venture directed by R S Durai Senthilkumar, known for his blockbusters like 'Kakkai Sattai', 'Kodi', and the recent success 'Garudan'.

The first phase of shooting was completed in Chennai, while the second phase was in and around Panikka Nadar Kudiyiruppu in Thoothukudi, which happens to be Legend Saravanan's hometown.

Sources say the new film promises to deliver a thrilling action-packed experience based on real events, set against the backdrop of Thoothukudi.

Music for the film will be composed by Giribran, with cinematography by S. Venkatesh and editing by Pradeep. The art direction is managed by Durairaj, while Ambikapathi is the executive producer.

YOU CAN'T BUILD VIKSIT BHARAT WITHOUT INNOVATION: IIT HYD DIRECTOR

ARTI ADKE

At a time when AI is rapidly reshaping careers and Indian students remain caught in a relentless cycle of grades, rankings, Prof. B. S. Murty, Director of IIT Hyderabad, is quietly steering one of the country's boldest experiments in higher education. From fractal academics and artists-in-residence to deep-tech startups and AI-powered engineering programmes, his vision challenges long-held assumptions about how engineers should be trained—and what success truly means.

"If somebody comes to me and tells me they have never failed in life," Prof. Murty says, "I tell them they have probably never learned anything—or never experimented enough."

That belief underpins the transformation unfolding at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Hyderabad. In an education system often criticised for rigidity, exam obsession and placement-centric thinking, the institute has emerged as a striking outlier—prioritising freedom, creativity and skills over conformity and fear. Here, students are encouraged to explore across disciplines, build products, create enterprises and think beyond conventional career paths.

In a wide-ranging conversation, Prof. Murty tells *The Hans India* about the future of jobs in the age of AI, why India must evolve from a service economy into a product nation, and how nurturing skills, innovation and purpose is central to building a truly Viksит Bharat.

EXCERPTS:

Q: You have often described Indian education as rigid. What do you believe is fundamentally wrong with it?

Education in India has been quite straitjacketed for decades. Students are told what to study, how to study and often what they should become in life. But the current generation does not want to fit into such a structure. They want freedom. They want flexibility.

If you look at older IITs and engineering colleges, the curriculum is very straight. Even electives are often not real electives. Many times, only one elective runs. That means the student is forced to take it—it becomes a core course in disguise. There is no real choice.

When I studied B.Tech, we faced the same issue. That experience stayed with me. We felt it was time to break away from this model and create an environment where students can genuinely explore different interests.

Q: You repeatedly stress the need for deep-tech innovation. Why is this so critical for India?

India is currently known more as a service economy. We provide services to the world. But no country has ever become developed by being only a service economy.



Every developed nation—big or small—is known for its products. India must also be known for its products. Software and apps are important, I do not deny that, but deep-tech innovation is essential.

For me, Viksит Bharat is the day I go to a place like Tokyo or Melbourne and buy a product labelled "Made in India"—because it is high quality, globally competitive and reasonably priced.

Q: Will degrees lose relevance in the coming years?

I am sure that in the years to come, people will not care much about your degree. They will care about your skills. What matters is what you can do, what problems you can solve. Institutions must create environments where skills and ideas are nurtured. The success of our startups already shows that this shift has begun.

Q: You frequently speak about Viksит Bharat. What does that term mean to you personally?

For me, Viksит Bharat is not a slogan—it is a practical vision. A developed nation is one that is known for its products, technology and innovation. Today, India is largely known as a service economy. We provide services to the world, which is good—but it is not enough.

No country in the world has become developed by being only a service provider. Every developed nation—whether it is Germany, Japan, South Korea or the United States—is known for what it makes. For India to become Viksит Bharat, we must become a product nation.

Q: How do student startups fit into the Viksит Bharat narrative?

Startups are not just about valuation—they are about value creation. When a 19-year-old student tells me he has paid salaries to five employees, that is nation-building in action. That is economic activity, confidence and leadership. In six years, IIT Hyderabad students have created 330 startups with ₹1,500 crore in revenue. These are not just numbers—they represent ideas

becoming reality. If every IIT produces job creators instead of only job seekers, India's transformation will accelerate.

We introduced something called Fractal Academics, which is a very unique system in India. Typically, a full semester course is a three-credit course—about 42 hours of teaching spread over 14 weeks. We divided the semester into six segments. This allows us to offer courses worth 0.5 credits, one credit, 1.5 credits, two credits and, of course, three credits. A 0.5-credit course is about seven hours of teaching. A one-credit course is around 14 hours.

In the first year especially, we encourage students to explore many such short courses. I compare it to tasting food at a restaurant—you sample different dishes before deciding what you like. Once students discover a subject they enjoy, they can take full three-credit courses and go deeper. This kind of academic freedom—we are the first in the country to offer it at this scale.

Q: IIT Hyderabad has made liberal arts and creative courses mandatory for engineers. Why was that mandatory?

If India has to become Viksит Bharat, innovation is essential. And for innovation, intuition is just as important as intelligence. Engineers are trained to calculate everything. Out-of-the-box thinking does not come easily. Artists, on the other hand, think intuitively. That is why we decided that about 10% of a B.Tech student's total credits—out of roughly 130—must come from liberal arts and creative arts. These include anthropology, psychology, philosophy, music, dance, painting and even martial arts. We are now introducing sports as credit-based courses—cricket, tennis, hockey—where students study, practise and are evaluated. When students balance left-brain logic with right-brain creativity, you get far better innovation.

Q: You strongly advocate student choice. Why does this matter?

At 17 years of age, we allow citizens to decide who becomes the Prime Minister of India. Then why can't they decide what they want to become?



I want IIT Hyderabad to be remembered as a place where innovation flourished

“
Prof B S Murty,
Director, IIT
Hyderabad

Why should someone be told, "You must become a mechanical engineer"? Many students later realise this is not what they wanted in life. Education should expand freedom, not curtail it.

When parents ask me, "What kind of job will my child get?", I ask them—why should every B.Tech graduate get a job? Let them create jobs. India needs job creators, not just

job seekers. We need leaders.

Parents often measure success only through salary packages. How do you respond to that mindset?

I understand parental anxiety. It comes from concern for their children's future. But salary should not be the sole measure of success.

A student who builds a startup, creates employment, files patents or works on deep-tech innovation may

not earn the highest salary in the first year—but they contribute far more to the nation in the long run. At IIT Hyderabad, we have students who chose not to sit for placements because they are building companies, pursuing research or working on socially relevant technologies. That is also success.

We must broaden our definition of achievement beyond the first job or first salary slip.

Recent and upcoming academic and institutional launches

New academic programmes with AI integration

This year, the institute is set to launch a new M.Tech programme in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning in Chemical Engineering. IIT Hyderabad already offers an M.Tech in Integrated Computational Materials Engineering (ICME), where AI and ML are applied to the design of advanced materials such as new-generation steels, alloys, and functional materials with enhanced properties. These programmes reflect the institute's academic approach of integrating AI across core engineering disciplines, rather than limiting it to computer science alone.

Digital transformation initiatives

As part of its move towards deeper digital integration, IIT Hyderabad has created the position of Dean of Digital Transformation. In the coming months, the institute plans to roll out a ChatGPT-based digital system designed to provide quick access to information related to research activities, faculty expertise, patents, startups, and technology transfers. The system is expected to help students, faculty, and industry

stakeholders gain a clearer understanding of the institute's work in areas such as quantum technologies, materials science, artificial intelligence, and clean energy within a short time.

Integration of arts and humanities

The institute is also preparing to announce the association of Padma Vibhushan and Padma Bhushan award-winning performing artists as distinguished professors. In addition, an Artists-in-Residence programme is being introduced, under which eminent artists will spend one to two weeks on campus interacting with students. The initiative aims to expose students to creative disciplines alongside technical education, encouraging broader perspectives and sensitivity beyond conventional engineering training.

Student-led innovation through BUILD projects

IIT Hyderabad has implemented BUILD projects—Bold and Unique Ideas Leading to Development—to encourage student innovation. Under this initiative, students submit brief proposals, sometimes as short

as half a page, which are evaluated by a committee for support. Over the past six years, students have launched around 330 startups, collectively generating approximately Rs 1,500 crore in revenue. A significant number of these ventures were founded while the students were still enrolled at the institute.

BHARATI programme for engineering excellence

The institute has also introduced the BHARATI programme—Bold-Hearted Aspirants Raising to Transform India. The programme seeks to reinforce the importance of engineering excellence and product development, encouraging students to focus on building and creating solutions rather than viewing education solely through the lens of placement outcomes.

The initiative aligns with broader national goals of strengthening India's technological and manufacturing capabilities.

Together, these initiatives highlight IIT Hyderabad's focus on interdisciplinary learning, innovation, digital access, and the development of well-rounded professionals.

Today is Global School Play Day

Encouraging creativity with screen-free childhood experiences



knowledge in later life.

Promoting screen-free play is especially important in early childhood. Excessive screen exposure can limit physical activity, imagination, and attention span. In contrast, play-based learning supports movement, sensory exploration, and hands-on experiences that contribute to healthy physical and emotional development.

Ensuring access to pre-school education through play for every child is vital for inclusive growth. Play-based learn-

ing environments create equal opportunities for children from all backgrounds to explore, express themselves, and build foundational skills. They also help children develop a positive relationship with learning, making the transition to formal schooling smoother and more meaningful.

By encouraging unstructured, screen-free play, we nurture confident, creative, and socially aware individuals—laying the foundation for lifelong learning and well-rounded development.

How startups are adapting to GenZ workforce trends

A conclave Neev 2026 Chapter 2 examined how startups are responding to changing expectations of Gen Z and Gen Alpha, focusing on talent, workplace culture, and the future of work



The Indian Institute of Management Kashipur hosted Neev 2026 | Chapter 2 – The Startup Conclave, a discussion-driven event that examined how startups and emerging organisations are adapting to changes in workforce expectations, particularly among Gen Z and Gen Alpha. The conclave focused on themes of startup talent, workplace evolution, and the future of work in fast-growing environments.

Industry leaders, startup founders, and human resource professionals discussed how younger professionals are reshaping organisational cultures. Speakers noted that today's

youth place greater emphasis on purpose-driven work, flexibility, continuous learning, and meaningful engagement, rather than viewing compensation as the sole measure of career success.

Harsh Kumar Sarohi, Senior Vice President – Technology at TradeIndia, highlighted the growing demand among young professionals for clarity of purpose and structured mentorship. He spoke about the role of organisational values and leadership in career development, while underlining the importance of soft skills

such as communication, negotiation, and conflict management in professional growth. Startup founder Mukil Vannan, Founder of Kplor, observed that while Gen Z professionals are comfortable with artificial intelligence and emerging technologies, foundational skills remain essential. He stressed the importance of communication, creativity, and problem-solving, advising students to focus on building core capabilities rather than being driven by job titles. Shilpa Arora, Co-founder and COO of

Insurance Samadhan, spoke about changing attitudes toward work-life balance and flexibility. She noted that younger professionals tend to be more intentional in career planning and place value on meaningful work, customer engagement, and long-term relevance.

From an HR perspective, Sumedh Singh, AVP and Head of Human Resources at EPack Durable Limited, highlighted the analytical strengths of the new generation while pointing to the need for flexible work models, transparent communication, recognition, and continuous skill development.

The session was moderated by Gokul Ramanan, Manager – Business Strategy at Medinou. Faculty members and students attended the conclave, which reflected ongoing discussions around preparing youth for evolving workplace realities.

"Having Gukesh D return to Norway Chess as reigning World Champion is something we truly value. India has become one of the strongest chess nations in the world today, and we know many fans will be following Gukesh D closely. We hope chess audiences across India will tune in as he competes in Oslo in 2026,"

-Benedicte Westre Skog, COO of Norway Chess.

T20 WC BOYCOTT ROW

Broadcasters may move court against PCB

KARACHI/NEW DELHI

THE ICC has warned the Pakistan Cricket Board that it faces the prospect of legal action from T20 World Cup's official broadcasters JioStar for boycotting its February 15 game against India, a PCB source said on Tuesday.

Pakistan decided to boycott the match in Colombo on February 15 on instructions of their government but haven't yet officially specified the reasons to ICC. As reported by PTI, there is a possibility that the ICC will withhold the entire annual revenue share of Pakistan, which is around USD 35 million and pay the broadcasters from that purse.

A PCB source informed that although chairman Mohsin Naqvi had taken advice from the board's legal experts before briefing PM Shehbaz Sharif on the issue last week, the board is bracing for some serious consequences.

"If Pakistan doesn't relent and play against India, not only will they face financial penalties, perhaps a lawsuit from broadcasters but also any efforts to go to the ICC Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) are likely to fail," a PCB source told PTI.

ICC's DRC is an internal committee which doesn't hear appeals against the decisions made by its own board. "The PCB might face problems regardless of their government directive to not play India as they are playing all their matches at a neutral venue (Sri Lanka) as per their wishes and not in India," another PCB source said.

"Secondly, while the In-



ICC, PCB open 'back-channel talks'

NEW DELHI: Pakistan's decision to boycott their T20 World Cup group match against India has reportedly prompted "back-channel talks" between the International Cricket Council (ICC) and the Pakistan Cricket Board amid concerns over potential financial fallout.

Pakistan's boycott decision could reportedly cost world cricket more than 250 million dollars.

As per The Dawn report, a few other cricket boards have also extended support to the ICC in its attempt to reach an understanding with PCB.

It is currently unclear whether Pakistan will be sanctioned for the move, with the ICC urging the PCB to consider the significant and long-term implications if the boycott were to go ahead.

"While the ICC awaits official communication from the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), this position of selective participation is difficult to reconcile with the fundamental premise of a global sporting event where all qualified teams are expected to compete on equal terms per the event schedule," the ICC said.

dian government has not given permission to its team to play in Pakistan, it has not stopped them from playing against Pakistan at neutral venues in Asia Cup or ICC events even after the May conflict," the board source, who tracks Naqvi closely, added.

"When the ICC signed its four year deal with the broadcasters for all ICC events, the contract included Pakistan and India matches based on

which the broadcaster made the payments to the ICC," the source explained.

"So the broadcaster will be within its rights to take the PCB and ICC to court over a major breach of the contract." It is reliably learnt that the PCB approached other members boards for support on the matter but failed to find any backers.

There is a school of thought that Naqvi, who is also the interior minister of his coun-

T20 WC: Ticket sales of third stage begin

NEW DELHI: The BCCI announced the commencement of the third stage of ticket sales for the upcoming T20 World Cup following the two successful ticketing windows, with Phase 1 launched on December 11, 2025, and Phase 2 on January 14, 2026.

This latest phase provides fans with a further opportunity to secure seats for matches across the tournament, which will bring together the world's leading teams, the BCCI said in a release.

The T20 World Cup, starting on Saturday, will be staged at some of India's most recognised cricketing venues, creating an environment where fans can witness elite international players and the intensity that defines the T20 format throughout the competition.

As preparations across host cities move into final stages, the BCCI, in close coordination with the stakeholders, continues to focus on venue readiness, operational planning, and match-day experience.

try, might just make a U-turn once the general elections are held in Bangladesh on February 12 and a democratic government takes charge instead of the present one headed by Mohammed Yunus.

"There would still be two days before the India game and things could just change. Else he knows that Pakistan could be ostracised," another source tracking Pakistan cricket said.

ICC Under-19 World Cup

India favourites against Afghanistan in semis clash

Unbeaten Men in Blue in pursuit of record 6th U-19 WC title



Match starts at 1 pm IST

from five games but there is room for improvement on the batting front. He managed just 99 runs from five games with 53 being his highest. Opener Aaron George's form, however, is a cause of concern for India as the right-handed batter could manage only 46 runs from three outings.

TEAMS

India U-19: Aaron George, Abhigyan Kundu, Harvansh Pangalia, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Vedant Trivedi, Ayush Mhatre (c), Vihaa Malhotra, RS Ambrish, Kanishk Chouhan, Khilan Patel, Deepesh Devendran, Henil Patel, Mohamed Enaan, Udhav Mohan, Kishan Singh.

Afghanistan U-19: Mahboob Khan (c), Azizullah Miakhil, Faisal Shinwazai, Khalid Ahmadzai, Osman Sadat, Uzairullah Niazai, Abdul Aziz, Aqil Khan, Khatir Stanikzai, Nazifullah Amiri, Nooristani Omarzai, Roolullah Arab, Salam Khan, Wahidullah Zadran, Zaitullah Shaheen.

"We are confident that, under your leadership, the championship will be organised to the highest standards and will be a great success," the letter, which is in PTI's possession, stated.

Vasavi College of Engg wins OU inter-college chess title

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD



ath, Shyam and Sai Vardhan delivering consistent performances.

Dr B.R. Ambedkar College finished runners-up with

place with 14 points, while Bhavans Vivekananda finished fourth with 13.5 points.

Prof Bala Bhaskar, Joint Director of Collegiate Education, attended as chief guest and distributed prizes to the winners. Dr K Prabhu, Principal, Vivekananda Government Degree College, Prof Rajesh Kumar, Dean, Faculty of Education, Prof K Deepa, Director, DPE, and Prof S Jagann Mohan, Organising Secretary, were present. The tournament was inaugurated by philanthropist Nakka Srinivas Yadav.

Punitive demolitions persist in UP despite SC ban on bulldozer action: Allahabad HC

PRAYAGRAJ

TAKING a stern note of alleged demolition drives in Uttar Pradesh, the Allahabad High Court has observed that punitive demolition of structures continues to take place in the state despite the Supreme Court's November 2024 ruling that "bulldozer justice" is simply unacceptable under the rule of law.

A two-judge bench of Justices Atul Sreedharan and Siddhartha Nandan

also asked the state government whether demolishing a structure immediately after the commission of an offence was a colourable exercise of executive discretion.

The bench observed that it came across various cases in which the notice for demolition was issued to the occupants immediately after the commission of an offence.

Thereafter, the dwelling places were demolished after the ostensible fulfilment of statutory requirements, it said.

Therefore, bearing in mind the "overarching" nature of the case, spanning the right of the state to demolish a structure and the rights of its occupants under Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution of India, the court fixed February 9 as the next date for hearing.

In the order passed on January 21, the court observed, "Preliminary submissions have been made by both sides. The case of the petitioners appears to be that

though the petitioners are not co-accused in the FIR, the respondents issued a notice to Petitioner No. 2, who owns the residential house in which they dwell, immediately after the commission of the offence and registration of the FIR."

The court said the respondents have sealed a commercial property registered in the name of Petitioner No. 3 as 'Indian Lodge', and a saw mill, the licence of which was renewed in the name of Petitioner No.

2 on February 11, 2025, and its renewal is pending. The petitioners have expressed an apprehension that their properties have been marked for "destruction by mechanical means" (a euphemism for bulldozer action).

"The

obvious primary prayer is judicial intervention to prevent the anticipated destruction of the properties," the court said. The bench was hearing a petition filed by Faimuddeen and others, who claimed that their relative,

Aafan Khan, was booked under various sections of the BNS, POCSO Act, IT Act and the UP Prohibition of Unlawful Religious Conversion Act.

The petitioners claimed that though they were not co-accused in the FIR, they were targeted by a mob allegedly in collusion with the police.

The Uttar Pradesh government, however, termed the petition "premature" and said the petitioners must respond to the notices issued to them.



MP cough syrup deaths

4-yr-old dies months after being in coma

BETUL



A four-year-old boy died at AIIMS-Nagpur, months after he fell critically ill and slipped into a coma after allegedly consuming Coldrif cough syrup in Madhya Pradesh's Chhindwara district, an official said on Monday.

According to the official, Harsh, from Tikabari village of Betul district bordering Chhindwara district, had been in a coma for more than four months and was admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU), but died during treatment on Sunday night. Betul Chief Medical and Health Officer (CMHO) Dr Manoj Hurmade confirmed the child's death and said the post-mortem examination was conducted in Nagpur on Monday, and the body was handed over to the family.

The cause of death would be ascertained after the post-mortem report, Dr Hurmade said. Harsh's uncle, Shyam Yadav, said over the phone that the child's last rites were performed on Monday evening.

US-India trade deal

BJP attacking farmers again, govt must answer: Akhilesh

LUCKNOW

SAMAJWADI Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Tuesday slammed the government over the India-US trade deal, saying opening Indian markets to American agricultural produce amounted to "betrayal" of nearly 70 per cent of the country's population dependent on farming. His remarks came after India and the US agreed to a trade deal under which Washington will bring down the reciprocal tariff on Indian goods to 18 per cent from a total 50 per cent.

Yadav claimed that the BJP and its associates were "agents of foreign interests" even before Independence and continued to be so today.

Targeting the ruling party, the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said BJP leaders should explain to the public how much "commission" they had earned by compromising the country's economy.

Yadav said such policies would not only harm farm-

ers but also adversely impact the lower middle class and middle class by encouraging profiteering in foodgrains and agricultural products and creating a new class of middlemen, leading to a rise in prices. He alleged that the BJP would also collect donations from corporate entities, making food items even costlier.

These steps would gradually reduce farmers' income, forcing them to sell their land to wealthy individuals and corporates, Yadav said. "Capturing land is the ultimate objective of the BJP and its associates," he alleged.

Referring to the proposed Seed Bill, Yadav described it as "fatal for Indian agriculture" and alleged that it was

the product of an anti-farmer mindset of the BJP government. He accused the ruling party of bringing land acquisition laws, humiliating people by forcing them to stand in fertiliser queues every year, and promoting corporate interests linked to seeds, pesticides, storage silos, crop insurance and agricultural trade.

Yadav called for organised

Relief for our exporters': Abdullah welcomes US' tariff cut

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday welcomed the US government's decision to bring down reciprocal tariffs on Indian goods, saying this would bring relief to many exporters in the country who were facing difficulties in view of the increased tariff.

US President Donald Trump on Monday announced that India and the US have agreed on a trade deal under which Washington will reduce the reciprocal tariff on Indian goods to 18 per cent from the current 25 per cent.

The announcement is crucial for India as the US imposed a steep 50 per cent tariff on Indian goods entering American markets from August 27, 2025. "These tariffs were proving to be quite burdensome for us, and we also know very well why these tariffs were imposed. The United States was not happy with the

fact that we buy oil from Russia. Trump announced that the Indian government has now stopped purchasing oil from Russia, and because of that, the tariffs will no longer be imposed on us," the chief minister told reporters in the Assembly lawns here.

Sabarimala gold case

Uproar in Kerala Assembly as UDF alleges CMO interference

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

DRAMATIC scenes unfolded in the Kerala Assembly on Tuesday over the Sabarimala gold loss issue after a Congress MLA tried to climb onto the Speaker's Chair that forced an adjournment, the opposition declaring non-cooperation in the House and the government calling it "unfortunate" and "deplorable".

Alleging interference by the Chief Minister's office in the SIT probe into the Sabarimala gold loss cases, the Congress-led UDF opposition boycotted Assembly proceedings, declaring that it would no longer cooperate with the House.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan termed the opposition conduct as "unfortunate" and "deplorable". Leader of Opposition in the Assembly, VD Satheshan, informed Speaker A N Shamseer about the UDF's boycott decision as the House proceedings commenced. As the opposition protest continued in the House amidst the question hour, Congress MLA Anwar Sadat sud-

denly attempted to climb onto the Speaker's dais, leading to Shamseer stopping the proceedings for around 30 minutes and leaving for his chamber. Satheshan alleged that there was government interference in the probe and that even the Kerala High Court observed there was delay in filing of charge sheet in the Sabarimala gold cases by the Special Investigation Team (SIT). He said that the High Court also observed that there was a "laxity" in the SIT probe.

The LoP claimed that conditions were being created so that the accused in the two cases can come out on statutory bail and thus, "stone-wall" the investigation. He said that if the accused are released from jail, there was every possibility that the evidence in the cases would be destroyed.

The government is in discussions with mobile phone makers, IT firms and other electronics manufacturing companies for the next version of the production linked incentive scheme before getting approval from the Cabinet

-Ashwini Vaishnaw, Union Electronics and IT Minister



BIZ BRIEFS

Skoda clocks sales milestone

Skoda Auto India, has announced that the Kylaq has emerged as a strong pillar of Skoda Auto's growth story in India. The Kylaq has been a major contributor to Skoda Auto India's best-ever sales performance, in the brand's 25th year in the country. Ashish Gupta, Brand Director, Skoda Auto India, said: "The Kylaq is a strong testament to our long-term commitment to India and saw us enter the market's most competitive segment."

Amazon's RD sales grew 2.5X

Amazon India reported strong customer participation and robust demand for the company's first big shopping event - the Great Republic Day Sale 2026. Same-day delivery orders by Prime customers increased 2.5x compared to last year. Saurabh Srivastava, VP, Amazon India, said: "The Amazon Great Republic Day Sale reinforced several key trends, including strong participation from first-time customers - particularly those from tier 2 and 3 cities. We also continue to see a clear shift towards premiumization."

EPAM at Agentathon

EPAM Systems, Inc., a leading global digital and AI transformation company, played a pivotal role in enabling Agentathon, the world's largest annual AI hackathon, hosted by Google Developer Groups (GDG) Hyderabad. As a strategic technology sponsor and enabler, EPAM supported the developer community with engineering rigor and enterprise-grade AI product thinking, helping teams strengthen their architectures and consider the scalability, reliability and real-world applicability of agentic AI systems.

CareEdge's new report

According to CareEdge Ratings, the Union Budget 2026-27 reflects a steady policy hand at a time when India's economy is transitioning from recovery-led growth to a phase of consolidation and medium-term planning. Meenal Pandya, MD, CareEdge, said: "The Union Budget for 2026-27 comes at a time when India's economy is undergoing a period of consolidation and planning. What stands out this year is not just the scale of announcements but the steady hand guiding them."

KMAMC's new scheme

Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company Ltd. (KMAMC) announced the launch of the Kotak Services Fund, an open-ended equity scheme designed to tap into India's fast-expanding services sector, which contributes about 55 per cent to the country's Gross Value Added (GVA) and employs nearly one-third of the workforce. The New Fund Offer (NFO) is open for subscription through February 4 and 18, it follows a services-led investment theme and seeks to benefit from structural growth.

Rupee skyrockets 122ps to close at 90.27/\$

The local unit rose to the highest levels in two and a half weeks and rallied by around 1.5% on the trade deal between India and the US

MUMBAI: The Indian rupee emerged as the best-performing Asian currency on Tuesday, registering a gain of 122 paise or 1.33 per cent in a single trading session to settle at 90.27 (provisional) against the US dollar, after India and the US agreed to a trade deal. Forex traders said the Indian rupee rose to the highest levels in two and a half weeks and rallied by around 1.5 pc on the trade deal between India and the US. Domestic indices also surged by around 2.75 per cent, boosting domestic market sentiments. Further, weakness in crude oil prices and expected foreign inflows also favoured investor sentiment.

India and the US agreed on a trade deal under which Washington will bring down the reciprocal tariff on Indian

goods to 18 per cent, lower than that for countries like China, Bangladesh and Vietnam. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 90.30 against the US dollar, then gained some ground to touch an intraday high of 90.05 and a low of 90.52 against the greenback. At the end of the trading session on Tuesday, the rupee was quoted at 90.27 (provisional) against the greenback, registering a gain of 122 paise from its previous close. The rupee gained 44 paise to close at 91.49 against the US dollar on Monday, a day after the Union Budget 2026-27 was presented. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said the India-US trade deal is a "big decision" that will benefit everyone in the country and asserted

"With the 'reciprocal' tariffs on India's exports to the US now lowered, we estimate the current account deficit to narrow by around 0.25 per cent of GDP in CY26 to 0.8 per cent of GDP. In addition, if capital flows recover in CY26 on the conclusion of the India-US trade deal, which would ease some pressure on the INR, and result in downside risk to our current USD/INR 12-month forecast of 94," Goldman Sachs said in a research note.

However, things may not be completely smooth sailing for the INR, some experts believe. "There could be hiccups along the way with this trade agreement" for example, it may not be easy for India to divert its Russian oil purchases quickly.

A smiling rupee symbol with two thumbs up, representing the strong performance of the Indian rupee.

STT hike effect on markets to subside soon

MUMBAI: Markets are used to tweak in taxation and the adverse impact of the steep hike in securities transaction tax (STT) will not last long, leading bourses said. NSE, the largest stock exchange, feels that the move to curb volumes will not have any impact on its upcoming initial public offering (IPO) plans, its Managing Director and Chief Executive Ashish Kumar Chauhan said.

"What has been raised is the STT has been increased in a minor way. Broadly, markets are used to having STT on options and this time it has also been increased on futures but broadly, I do not see any large impact on the IPO of NSE or otherwise asset valuations in the stock market going forward," Chauhan told.

Rival BSE's Managing Director and Chief Executive S Ramamurthy said markets react in a "bit adverse" way whenever any such changes are proposed by the government and exuded confidence that gradually things will settle down. "This is not the first time that STT is increased. When any such move is an-

nounced, the market reaction is a bit adverse to start with and then it stabilises," he said. The proposal to increase the STT on futures and options will also encourage long-term equity investments, he said, adding that it may also lead to a shift of money from the arbitrage funds to banks' fixed deposits as the returns one stands to make get on par.

The moves to hike the STT on the F&O segment was attributed as one of the key reasons that led to a sharp correction in the equity markets after the Budget speech by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

It can be noted that as per studies by Sebi, over 90% of retail investors' trades in the F&O segment lead to losses, and the capital markets regulator has also taken steps to reduce the volumes in the past.

The government is required to offload another 6.5 per cent stake in the public sector life insurer to meet the mandated 10 per cent public shareholding requirement by May 2027.

In a post on Truth Social, Trump, who spoke with PM Modi on Monday, announced that India and the US agreed to a trade deal un-

der which Washington will charge a reduced reciprocal tariff on Delhi, lowering it from 25 per cent to 18 per cent.

Trump last year imposed 50 per cent tariffs on India, among the highest in the world, including 25 per cent levies for its purchases of Russian energy. India buys about 88 per cent of its crude oil, which is converted into fuels like petrol and diesel, from overseas.

Russian oil made up hardly 0.2 per cent of all crude oil that India imported till 2021. India, the world's third-largest oil importer, became the largest buyer of discounted Russian crude after Western countries shunned Moscow

following its February 2022 invasion of Ukraine. India's import of Russian crude oil dropped to around 1.1 million barrels per day in the first three weeks of January, from an average of 1.21 million bpd in the previous month and over 2 million bpd imports in mid-2025, according to data from real-time analytics company Kpler. Iraq is now supplying almost the same volumes as Russia, up from an average of 9,04,000 bpd in December 2025, according to Kpler. Volumes from Saudi Arabia too have risen to 9,24,000 bpd in January, from 7,10,000 bpd in December and lows of 5,39,000 bpd in April 2025.

Textile, leather scrips soar around 20%

After the US reduced tariffs significantly, which will benefit sectors like textiles, seafood, chemicals, auto ancillaries, and new energy businesses like solar

NEW DELHI: Textile and leather stocks surged as much as 20 per cent after India and the US agreed to a trade deal under which Washington will bring down reciprocal tariff on Indian goods to 18 per cent from the current 25 per cent. Shares of Gokaldas Exports skyrocketed 20 per cent, Welspun Living jumped 19.85 per cent, Garware Technical Fibres zoomed 17.07 per cent and K P R Mill surged 15.31 per cent on the BSE. The stock of S P Apparels jumped 14.19 per cent, Vardhman Textiles advanced 12.12 per cent, Trident edged higher by 11.27 per cent, Arvind Ltd shot up 10.23 per cent. Page Industries went up 3.79 per cent and Raymond Lifestyle climbed 3.39 per cent.

Gokaldas Exports, S P Apparels, Welspun Living, Garware Technical Fibres and K P R Mill hit their upper circuit limits during the day. India and the US have agreed to a trade deal under which Washington will bring down reciprocal tariff on Indian goods to 18 per cent from the current 25 per cent, US President Donald Trump said on Monday after a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Narendra

Modi. Among leather and footwear stocks, Bhartiya International jumped 6.37 per cent, Mayur Uniquoters surged 7.73 per cent, Metro Brands (0.41 per cent) and Bata India (0.23 per cent). "Overall, this deal is a major positive for Indian equity markets," Sunny Agrawal -- Head of Fundamental Research at SBI Securities, said. We are seeing tariffs reduced significantly, which is excellent news for sectors like textiles, seafood, chemicals, auto ancillaries, and new energy businesses like solar, Agrawal said.

The announcement assumes significance as several labour-intensive sectors like textiles, apparel, leather and marine were facing challenges to export goods to the US due to the 50 per cent tariffs. India's

merchandise exports to the US declined 1.83 per cent to \$6.88 billion in December 2025 due to high tariffs imposed by America, according to commerce ministry data.

"Indian equities witnessed one of the biggest single-day gains on Tuesday after India and the US announced a long-awaited trade deal, easing tariff-related concerns that have weighed on Indian markets since April 2025. Key beneficiaries include auto ancillaries, defence, textiles, EMS, consumer durables, IT services, and utilities, while financials could see second-order gains through improved growth visibility," Siddhartha Khemka - Head of Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.

About 80 per cent of recruiters reported that AI makes gaining insight into a candidate's skills easier. More than three-quarters (76 per cent) believe AI is already speeding up hiring.

The report by professional networking website LinkedIn, based on a survey of 6,554 global HR professionals, noted that recruiters are using AI to spot the right skills and hire faster.

About 80 per cent of recruiters reported that AI

Business

India and the US have agreed to a trade deal under which Washington will bring down the reciprocal tariff

NEW DELHI



President Donald Trump. In a reciprocal move, India has committed to reducing trade barriers for American goods and significantly increasing imports across sectors, including energy, technology, and agriculture.

Meanwhile, top finance ministry officials stated that the announcement of the Indo-US bilateral trade pact has ended the atmosphere of uncertainty and will have positive implications for the Indian economy amid global problems.

"Today Indian Economy continues to demonstrate strong macroeconomic resilience. Despite a global

environment which has uncertainties, a great deal of uncertainty dropped today morning..." Economic Affairs Secretary Anuradha Thakur said in her address to the industry chamber FICCI here. She further said India stands out as a macroeconomically strong country in the world today. The government is further awaiting the details of the trade deal to gauge if India's economic growth will exceed the estimate of 6.8-7.2 per cent in 2026-27, she said. The government prepared its Budget for the next financial year based on the then India-US dynamic that entailed steep tariffs on Indian goods to 18 per cent, lower than that for countries like China, Bangladesh and Vietnam. US President Donald Trump made an announcement regarding the trade deal on Monday after a phone conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

TO BOOST FDI, FII INFLOWS: EAC-PM CHIEF

NEW DELHI: The Indo-US trade deal will boost FDI as well as portfolio investments in the country, having a positive impact on the value of rupee, Chairman of Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) S Mahendra Dev said on Tuesday. India and the US agreed on a trade deal under which Washington will bring down the reciprocal tariff on Indian goods to 18 per cent, lower than that for countries like China, Bangladesh and Vietnam. US President Donald Trump made an announcement regarding the trade deal on Monday after a phone conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

India hasn't said it will stop oil imports: Russia

Moscow



Russia has not heard any statements from India about stopping Russian oil purchases, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Tuesday. His comments came a day after US President Donald Trump claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has "agreed to stop buying Russian Oil, and to buy much more from the United States and, potentially, Venezuela." "We haven't heard any statements from New Delhi on this matter yet," Peskov said.

The Kremlin spokesman also said that Russia intends to continue to develop its relations with India in every possible way, according to Russian media reports. Sources in Russia's energy ministry said they have not received any notice from Indian refiners to cancel contracts.

In a post on Truth Social, Trump, who spoke with PM Modi on Monday, announced that India and the US agreed to a trade deal un-

der which Washington will charge a reduced reciprocal tariff on Delhi, lowering it from 25 per cent to 18 per cent.

Trump last year imposed 50 per cent tariffs on India, among the highest in the world, including 25 per cent levies for its purchases of Russian energy. India buys about 88 per cent of its crude oil, which is converted into fuels like petrol and diesel, from overseas.

Russian oil made up hardly 0.2 per cent of all crude oil that India imported till 2021.

India, the world's third-largest oil importer, became the largest buyer of discounted Russian crude after Western countries shunned Moscow

following its February 2022 invasion of Ukraine. India's import of Russian crude oil dropped to around 1.1 million barrels per day in the first three weeks of January, from an average of 1.21 million bpd in the previous month and over 2 million bpd imports in mid-2025, according to data from real-time analytics company Kpler. Iraq is now supplying almost the same volumes as Russia, up from an average of 9,04,000 bpd in December 2025, according to Kpler. Volumes from Saudi Arabia too have risen to 9,24,000 bpd in January, from 7,10,000 bpd in December and lows of 5,39,000 bpd in April 2025.

Over 70% recruiters turning to AI to tap hidden talent: Report

About 80 per cent of recruiters reported that AI makes gaining insight into a candidate's skills easier

Finding Talent via AI

- AI use for pre-screening interviews
- Scope for better recruiter-candidate conversations
- Now struggle to find qualified candidates

NEW DELHI



makes gaining insight into a candidate's skills easier. More than three-quarters (76 per cent) believe AI is already speeding up hiring.

Around eight in 10 Indian recruiters said they plan to expand their use of AI to support hiring goals, evaluate applicants, and source top talent.

A majority also plan to increase AI use for pre-screening interviews in 2026, believing it will lead to more valuable recruiter-candidate conversations (83 per cent), faster hiring experience (83 per cent), and better candidate insights (82 per cent).

"We're seeing a structural

shift in hiring from pedigree and past titles to demonstrate skills and capability. This shift is hard to execute at scale without AI. Used responsibly, AI helps recruiters detect the right skills earlier, reduce screening friction, and create a more consistent and fair evaluation process," said Ruchee Anand, APAC VP, LinkedIn Talent Solutions.

The research showed that 74 per cent of recruiters now struggle to find qualified candidates, even as hiring activity runs 40 per cent above pre-pandemic levels in India. This is because recruiters are facing a volume-quality mismatch. Among recruiters

who say hiring has become more difficult, over half point to a surge in AI-generated applications (53 per cent), while many cite continued shortages in in-demand skills (47 per cent). Further, as AI becomes more embedded in hiring, expectations from candidates are rising, too. Professionals increasingly want visibility into how hiring decisions are made, signalling a clear demand for transparency.

Half of recruiters (50 per cent) in India now say they are under pressure to explain how AI is being used in their processes and hiring flow, particularly when it comes to screening and shortlisting candidates.

"Our priority at LinkedIn is to build AI tools like Hiring Assistant that serve as a decision-support layer in hiring, so recruiters can find the right talent more quickly and confidently without compromising on quality or candidate experience," Anand said.



Rebel Star Prabhas praises the 'Couple Friendly' trailer, shares it on Instagram

THE trailer of 'Couple Friendly', starring Santosh Soban and Manasi Varanasi in the lead roles, was released recently. Rebel Star Prabhas appreciated the trailer, calling it well-made, and shared it on his Instagram account. He described it as a love story told straight from the heart.

The 'Couple Friendly' team has expressed their happiness over receiving praise from Prabhas for the trailer. This recognition is a huge boost for the entire team and has raised the buzz surrounding the film.

Presented by the renowned production house UV Creations, the film is being grandly produced by UV Concepts in both Telugu and Tamil. Ajay Kumar Raju P. serves as the co-producer, and the film is directed by Ashwin Chandrasekhar. Made as a musical romantic love



story, 'Couple Friendly' is set to release on February 14, on the occasion of Valentine's Day, in both languages. The

film will be distributed in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana by passionate producer and distributor Dheeraj Mogilineni.

Kayadu Lohar returns to Malayalam; New poster of 'Pallichattambi' released

A new poster of 'Pallichattambi', directed by Dijo Jose Antony and starring Tovino Thomas in the lead role, has been released. The latest reveal is a single-character poster featuring the film's heroine, Kayadu Lohar. The poster also confirms the film's release date. Posters have been unveiled in five languages, including Malayalam. 'Pallichattambi' is set for a worldwide theatrical release on April 9. Kayadu Lohar's announcement video as the female lead in 'Pallichattambi' had earlier drawn significant attention. She became a favorite among South Indian cinema audiences following her performance as the heroine in the Tamil superhit 'Dragon'.

In 'Pallichattambi', Tovino Thomas will be seen in a never-seen-before look. The film is produced by Noulal and Brijesh under the banner of Worldwide Films, along with Chanukya, Chaitanya, and Charan under C Qube Bros Entertainments. It will be released in five languages, including Malayalam. The screenplay has been written by S. Suresh Babu.

Apart from Kayadu Lohar in the female lead, 'Pallichattambi' also features an ensemble cast that includes Vijay Raghavan, Sudheer

Karamana, Baburaj, Vinod Kedamangalam, Prashanth Alex, and several other prominent actors. The film is set in the 1950s-60s period.

The cinematography is handled by Tijo Tomy, while the music is composed by Mollywood's music sensation Jakes Bejoy. Megha Shyam and Thanseer serve as co-producers. Costumes are designed by Manjusha Radhakrishnan, and makeup is by Rasheed Ahmed. Alex E. Kurien is the line producer, Anil Ambalur the finance controller, and Rajesh Menon the production controller. Renith Raj and Kirash Raphael are the chief associate directors. Sound design is by Sync Cinema, and art direction is by Rajesh Menon. Casting is handled by Binoy Nambala. Digital marketing is managed by Akhil Vishnu V.S., with PR by Akshay Prakash. Stills photography is by Rishabh Unnikrishnan, and the poster design is by Yellow-tooths.



Ravi Teja cheers Team 'Sumathi Sathakam'

PRODUCED under the Vision Movie Makers banner by Sai Sudhakar Kommalapati and directed by M.M. Naidu, 'Sumathi Sathakam' is a wholesome family entertainer gearing up for a worldwide theatrical release on February 6. The film stars Amardeep Chowdary and Sayli Chaudhary in the lead roles. Renowned production house Mythri Movie Makers will release the film across the Telugu states.

The first look, teaser, songs, and promotional content of 'Sumathi Sathakam' have already received an encouraging response from audiences. Amardeep Chowdary's energetic dance moves in the songs have been widely appreciated, while Subhash Anand's music adds strong emotional and entertainment value to the film.

As part of the promotions, the film's team conducted an extensive tour across the Rayalaseema region, receiving an overwhelming response. The trailer launch event held at a college in Tirupati turned out to be a grand success, with students enthusiastically responding to the film's hook steps and youthful content.

Popular actor and Mass Maharaja Ravi Teja, who is widely known as Amardeep Chowdary's inspiration, watched the teaser, trailer, and other promotional content and shared his appreciation. He said,

"I have watched the teaser, trailer, and content of Amardeep's film 'Sumathi Sathakam'. I really liked it. I wish the film great success and hope Amardeep has a bright future ahead."

During the college

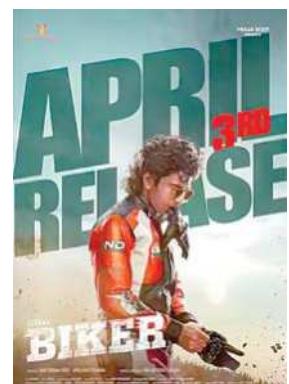


Sharwanand's 'Biker' to hit screens worldwide on April 3

THE makers of director Abhilash Kankara's eagerly awaited sports action film, 'Biker', featuring actor Sharwanand in the lead, on Tuesday announced that their film would now hit screens worldwide on April 3 this year.

Taking to its X timeline, the production house producing the film, said, "The engine's revved up. The track is ready. Now, THERE IS NO STOPPING HIM. #BIKER grand release worldwide on April 3rd, 2026. #BIKERMovie #GoAllTheWay #BikerOnApril3rd." It may be recalled that the film was originally scheduled to hit screens on December 6 last year. However, in November, the makers issued a statement saying they were postponing the release of the film as they wanted to give audiences not just a film but an "experience like never before."

Taking to its X timeline, UV Creations had, in November last year, said, "#Biker stands postponed! A new release date



will be announced soon. A bigger, better experience is being crafted with care and being assembled with passion. #Biker will be releasing in 3D, 4DX, and many more formats."

In its statement, the production house called the film "An experience beyond the screens!" and said that to ready this "beast," the cast and crew had worked hard and were continuing to work hard on countless nights.

"Trust us, this film is much more than the little laps we

showed, and it is bigger than what Telugu Cinema has seen until now! To this kind of an experience, to this kind of a scale," it said, and further added, "We want to give you a product that races in your hearts, pumps up your adrenaline, and makes you breathless! Biker stands postponed, not just to give you a film but an experience like never before. BIKER is coming to theatres in 3D, 4DX and many more formats. Tighten your helmets. You are in for a ride of a lifetime." For the unaware, actor Sharwanand plays a bike racer in this upcoming film, which was initially being referred to as 'Sharwa36'. Sources close to the unit of the film say that Sharwanand will be seen as a skilled motorcycle racer in the film.

A source had, in September last year, said that the shooting of the film was going on in Hyderabad and that key scenes related to the race on Sharwanand and the team had been shot. "These scenes are

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