



THE Hans India



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.

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

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

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.

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WINDOWS

BJP elects new leader in Manipur, new govt soon

IMPHAL: Y Khemchand Singh was elected as the leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party legislature party in Manipur on Tuesday, paving the way for the formation of a popular government in the northeastern state with him as its head. A meeting of legislators of all constituents of the National Democratic Alliance will be held later on Tuesday night, where Singh's name is expected to be endorsed as the NDA legislature party leader. Sources said Singh was elected to the post at a meeting of the Manipur BJP legislature party. Apart from BJP MLAs, the meeting was also attended by the party's central observer Tarun Chugh and its north-east in-charge Sambit Patra, among others.

The 60-member Assembly was put on suspended animation after President's rule was imposed. Currently, there are 37 BJP MLAs in Manipur. Initially, 32 BJP candidates had won the 2022 assembly elections.

Woman farmer union activist killed with heavy object

BARABANKI : The dead body of a 40-year-old woman, associated with a farmers' union, was found in a vacant plot along a canal in the Kotwali Nagar area here, police said on Tuesday. Preliminary investigation suggests that the woman was killed by crushing her head with a brick or a heavy object before the body was dumped at the spot, they said. The body was discovered on Monday in the plot near the Gadiya canal, following which locals informed the authorities. Circle Officer Sangam Kumar said the deceased had sustained severe head injuries. "During inspection, it was found that her head had been crushed using a heavy object," he said.

Woman killed after resisting rape bid in MP

RAISEN : A man allegedly killed a 20-year-old woman in Madhya Pradesh's Raisen district after she resisted his rape attempt and was later found dead under suspicious circumstances, police said on Tuesday. The incident occurred on Monday in Bharatpur village under Sultanpur police station limits, located 40 km from the district headquarters.

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In-law's info on salary, property cannot be provided to son-in-law: RTI

NEW DELHI

THE Uttar Pradesh State Information Commission has ruled that a son-in-law is not entitled to access his father-in-law's personal information -- like salary, loans and movable and immovable properties -- under the RTI Act.

State Information Commissioner Mohammed Na-deem in an order dated January 7, said, "The objective of the RTI Act is not to gather evidence for private lawsuits,

► 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 Na-deem 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.

gotiations 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.



Compromised, says Rahul

NEW DELHI: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday alleged that PM Narendra Modi has buckled under US pressure to finalise a trade deal and has "sold out" the hard work of Indian farmers through the agreement. "We need to understand why a trade deal stuck for about four months was suddenly finalised last evening," Gandhi said adding that "there was huge pressure on Prime Minister Modi". Asked what kind of pressure he was referring to, Gandhi alleged there is a case against industrialist Gautam Adani in the US and a lot more is to come in the Epstein files. He alleged that Prime Minister Modi "has been compromised" and that Indian farmers must understand their hard work "as well as their blood and sweat" has been "sold out" through the India-US trade deal.

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

Amid sloganeering 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 INDI alliance is wrong. Their way is threatening to democracy. This is Congress's irresponsible behaviour. It is their frustration which is speaking," he said.

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'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 reprimanded the US company, "You can't play with privacy... we will not allow you to share a single digit of our data", and said it would not stand for exploitation of Indians.

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."

'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-

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 Karnataka, 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.

COUGH SYRUP DEATHS

Taken 'without medical advice': Rajasthan Govt in Assembly

- If medicines are given on the prescription of doctors and deaths occur, then the responsibility lies with the doctor and the govt
- But if someone brings medicines from outside and deaths occur, neither the doctor nor the government is responsible: Minister

HANS NEWS SERVICE
JAIPUR

THE Rajasthan government on Tuesday said the cough syrup-linked deaths in the state were caused due to "overdosing and comorbidity", as the medicine was taken in the absence

of medical advice. It was responding to the query raised by the opposition in the Rajasthan Assembly during the Question Hour.

The issue of deaths in man-animal conflicts was also raised, after which the state government announced a proposal to



double the compensation for deaths caused by wild animal attacks.

Replying to a question by BJP MLA Jaswant Gurjar from Bari (Dholpur), Forest

Minister Sanjay Sharma said the government has decided to increase the compensation for deaths caused by wild animal attacks from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 10 lakh. He informed the House that the process of amending the relevant rules to implement the enhanced compensation is currently underway.

Meanwhile, the Congress sought to corner the government over lower expenditure under the free medicine scheme, despite an increase in OPD footfall,

and over reports of deaths of children allegedly linked to the consumption of a government-supplied cough syrup in October 2025.

Congress MLA Harimohan Sharma and Leader of Opposition Tikaram Jyoti raised questions on these issues. Responding to them, Health Minister Gajendra Singh Khimsar said the syrup in question was not taken on the advice of government doctors.

"If medicines are given on the prescription of doctors and deaths occur, then

the responsibility lies with the doctor and the government. But if someone brings medicines from outside and deaths occur, neither the doctor nor the government is responsible," the minister said. Khimsar said that not many deaths had occurred in the cough syrup case, adding that "two to four or five deaths were reported". He said parents had administered cough syrup doses to children on their own, without medical advice.

The health minister

said cough syrup contains chemicals such as codeine, and the deaths occurred due to "overdosing and comorbidity". He also said the same cough syrup has been in use since 2014, including during the previous Congress government's tenure. Reacting to the reply, Jyoti said the company manufacturing the syrup had been blacklisted in several places and questioned whether the quality of the medicine may have deteriorated over time. The House later continued with its scheduled business.

Yogi: UP transformed into investment destination with zero-tolerance policy

- 'You can imagine UP between 2012 and 2017. There were more than 900 riots during that period. There was hardly any city that did not witness curfews'
- Leaving the land where one has spent childhood is extremely painful, but they were left with no option as personal security was also at stake

HANS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW

CHIEF Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday said Uttar Pradesh has shed its image as a hub of riots, extortion and lawlessness to become a safe and attractive destination for investment. The chief minister attributed this shift to the state government's zero-tolerance policy towards crime.

"Today, Uttar Pradesh has established itself as one of the best destinations for investment. UP is no longer a 'Bimar' state, it is a break-

through state now," Adityanath said, adding that there is "zero political interference". Recalling the situation before 2017, Adityanath said, "You can imagine Uttar Pradesh between 2012 and 2017. There were more than 900 riots during that period. There was hardly any city that did not witness curfews."

He alleged that during those years, traders, doctors and entrepreneurs were forced to pay "goonda tax" and the youth had no future to plan for due to the absence of a clear government policy.



The chief minister was addressing a gathering at the first Pharma Conclave in the state capital. "The result was that even those who were already running businesses started migrating out of the state," the chief minister said. "Leaving the land where one has spent childhood is extremely painful, but they were left with no option as personal security was also at stake." Adityanath noted that restoring public

confidence after 2017 was as big a challenge as tackling crime.

He defended the police's use of force against criminals, stating, "Many people ask why the police fire bullets. If the police do not fire, should they take bullets instead? Both cannot happen simultaneously."

"If a criminal has the freedom to fire, the police have been given pistols for the same reason to confront him.

The police are trained to make criminals understand the law in the language they understand," he added. Highlighting the state's industrial potential, Adityanath said Uttar Pradesh is the largest consumer market for the pharmaceutical sector. He said the Uttar Pradesh's growth is built on three key "S" -- safety, stability and speed -- along with trust, transformation and timely delivery. Addressing the conclave, Adityanath said the state has vast resources and immense potential, including four national-level laboratories and several centres already in place to support the pharma ecosystem. "Uttar Pradesh is not only the biggest consumer market for the pharma sector, but the largest workforce for the industry can also be sourced from within the state," he said.

2 cops suspended for taking Rs 30,000 bribe from farmer

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BAHRAICH

TWO police personnel, including a sub-inspector, were suspended for allegedly taking a bribe of Rs 30,000 from a farmer here, officials said on Tuesday. The action was taken on the directions of Devipatan Range Inspector General of Police Amit Pathak.

The complainant, Nizamuddin, a resident of Matehi Kala village, approached the anti-corruption cell at the IG office. According to a police statement, Nizamuddin was transporting soil in a handcart on January 7 to fill a pit at his home for his daughter's upcoming wedding. Sub-inspector Amresh Giri and head constable Shailendra Yadav, both posted at the Motipur police station, allegedly intercepted the farmer.



Nizamuddin claimed that the policemen threatened to frame him in an illegal mining case and demanded money to let him go. The policemen allegedly took Rs 30,000 from him, the statement said. An inquiry conducted by the anti-corruption unit and the local circle officer found the allegations to be true, following which both the policemen were suspended, it added.

The police statement noted that confidential inquiries into corruption complaints have led to action against 26 police personnel in the Devipatan Range in the past 18 days. This includes 18 in Bahraich, three in Shravasti and two in Gonda. Three sub-inspectors have also been transferred out of the range and further action has been initiated against them, it said.

Man promises to marry minor girl; abducts, rapes her

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BALLIA

POLICE in Ballia district of Uttar Pradesh arrested a 42-year-old man for allegedly abducting and raping a minor girl for approximately six months, officials said on Tuesday. According to the police, the Class 9 student from Ballia came into contact with the man from Patna district in Bihar through a mobile phone. Later, the man allegedly abducted the girl and took her to Valsad in Gujarat, where he raped her repeatedly.

The accused, identified as Rakesh Verma, was arrested on Monday and sent to judicial custody, a police official said. On the morning of July 30, 2025, the student had an argument with her mother, who scolded and slapped her after discovering that she had been communicating with the man on her mobile phone. Following the incident, the girl left home without informing her family, who later conducted an extensive search but could not locate her, the police said.

Subsequently, based on a complaint filed by



the girl's mother, a case was registered against an unknown person under Section 137(2) of the BNS (kidnapping). Baira police station SHO Vipin Singh said that the police, during their investigation, rescued the minor girl from Valsad on Sunday.

Referring to the information gathered during the girl's preliminary questioning, the SHO said that she had stated she met Rakesh through her mobile phone. After being scolded by her mother, Rakesh allegedly lured her into a relationship and then abducted her with a promise of marriage. He subsequently took her to Valsad, where he repeatedly raped her. Based on the girl's statement, Section 65(1) (punishment for rape) of the BNS and the provision of the POCSO Act have been added to the case, the SHO informed.

PROHIBITORY ORDERS IMPOSED IN BAREILLY AMID FESTIVAL SEASON

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BAREILLY

THE Bareilly district administration has imposed prohibitory orders under Section 163 of the BNSS with immediate effect in view of upcoming festivals, board examinations and intelligence inputs warning of possible attempts to disturb law and order, officials said on Tuesday.

District Magistrate (DM) Avinash Singh said the decision was taken keeping in mind the violence that erupted in Bareilly on September 26 last year and tensions following a recent controversy over



new University Grants Commission (UGC) guidelines. He said intelligence agencies have cautioned that "some anti-social elements may try to disrupt communal harmony

in the sensitive district. Bareilly is set to witness major religious occasions such as Mahashivratri, Holi and Shab-e-Barat in the coming days, besides the conduct of

board examinations, the DM said, adding that maintaining peace and public order is the administration's top priority. Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), earlier Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), prohibits the assembly of five or more persons at any public place.

Any organisation or group wishing to hold a protest, demonstration or procession will have to obtain prior written permission from the competent authority.

Government officials on duty have been exempted from the restrictions.

India has established itself as global healthcare hub: Nadda

HANS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW

UNION Health and Family Welfare Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda on Tuesday said India has established itself as a global healthcare hub, supplying nearly 30 per cent of the world's generic medicines and around 60 per cent of global vaccine demand. Addressing the Uttar Pradesh Pharma Conclave-1 online, in the presence of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak and several investors, Nadda said Indian pharmaceutical products are exported to more than 200 countries. "India has

established itself as a global healthcare hub, and it is supplying 30 per cent of the world's generic medicines and 60 per cent of global vaccine demand. "Indian pharma products are exported to more than 200 countries across the world.

This event is being held at a time when India is standing at a crucial and decisive phase of its development journey," the minister said. He said that over the past decade, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has moved beyond a consumption-based economy towards a production- and innovation-driven economy. Nadda said that due to a strong digital infrastructure



and wide-ranging governance reforms, India has emerged as a reliable and responsible global partner.

Initiatives such as Make in India, Aatmanirbhar Bharat, Digital India and Viksit Bharat have given a new direction to manufacturing, innovation and human development, he added. Referring to India's G20 presidency and vaccine diplomacy, the minister said these have clearly demonstrated the country's global responsibility and capabilities, with the most visible impact seen in the healthcare and pharmaceutical sectors.



'Ind-Pak ties covered like war': Omar slams politicisation of sports

HANS NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU

JAMMU and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday said that Pakistan's decision to withdraw from the high-profile T20 World Cup match against India was the result of the problematic intersection of sports and politics. Abdullah, a cricket enthusiast, emphasised that merging sports with political issues often leads to adverse outcomes. "We have now completely stopped differentiating between sports and politics.

Time and again, through the media, whenever there is a match between India and Pakistan, it is presented as a war. You never cover it like a normal match," the chief minister told reporters from the Assembly lawns here. Asserting that India's matches with Pakistan are always blown out of proportion, Abdullah said

it was one of the reasons for such controversies to arise.

"When we play against other countries, it does not receive as much attention, but when it's against Pakistan, it is blown out of proportion. That is when such situations arise. It should not happen. Yes, they are participating in this World Cup, but they will not play against us," the chief minister said.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has warned Pakistan of severe repercussions for its selective pullout from the high-profile T20 World Cup contest against India in Colombo on February 15. Pakistan's decision, conveyed through an official government statement, is being seen as a political protest linked to Bangladesh's removal from the tournament after the world body declined its request to shift matches from India to Sri Lanka on security grounds.

Har police says preventive strategy saved 121 youth from organised crime

- One of the biggest challenges today is to guide youths at the crucial juncture where they can either become partners in nation-building or fall into the trap of crime: DGP Ajay Singhal
- 'Timely identification of 121 youths by STF and keeping them away from organised crime through counselling is not merely police action, but a visionary step towards safeguarding society'

HANS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH

THE Haryana Police on Tuesday said 121 youths, who were found to be in contact with major criminal gangs in

the state, were saved from the clutches of organised crime due to an effective preventive strategy. Haryana Police's Special Task Force (STF), while launching a decisive offensive against the spread



of organised crime and gangster networks, successfully identified 121 youths across the state and steered them

towards the right path under the comprehensive strategy, they said.

"These youths were found

to be in contact with major criminal gangs of Haryana through various means. This initiative reflects the far-sighted policy of Haryana Police aimed not only at law enforcement but also at ensuring social security," an official statement said.

DGP Ajay Singhal said, "One of the biggest challenges today is to guide youths at the crucial juncture where they can either become partners in nation-building or fall into the trap of crime". He said the timely identification of 121 youths by STF

Haryana and keeping them away from organised crime through counselling is not merely police action, but a visionary step towards safeguarding society. According to Singhal, the fight against gangster culture, violence and glorification of crime is a responsibility shared by police, families and society.

Along with this, the Cyber Police and district-level police units are also actively playing a significant role in similar preventive and corrective activities, he said. Singhal clarified that Haryana

Police's objective is not only to punish criminals but also to save those youths who are on the verge of going astray. During in-depth technical and field-level monitoring by STF, it came to light that these youths were active on social media platforms linked to gangster networks and were showing attraction towards gang activities, the statement said. "The Haryana Police operates a multi-layered, technology-based surveillance system to identify youths who come into contact with or under the in-

fluence of gangsters through social media," it said. It further said the information about youths who could be at risk emerges during interrogation of arrested accused in criminal cases and routine analysis of available digital evidence. Active criminal profiles on social media and the patterns of activities associated with them are also monitored simultaneously to assess which youths are likely to be negatively influenced. "Gangsters and their associates lured youths through greed and temptation.

2020 NORTHEAST DELHI RIOTS CASE

Court acquits 6, orders police to take action over ‘tampered’ probe

- ‘I find that the prosecution has miserably failed to prove its case against the accused and all the accused are acquitted of all the charges framed against them’
- The case was built on manipulated statements and unreliable testimony, and directed Delhi Police Commissioner for initiating action against those responsible

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court acquitted six accused in a 2020 Northeast Delhi riots case saying that the prosecution had “mis-

erably failed” to prove the charges and criticised police for tampering with records and filing a “fabricated” chargesheet. Additional Sessions Judge Parveen Singh, who was hearing the case



against Prem Prakash alias Kake, Ishu Gupta, Rajkumar alias Siwainya, Amit alias Annu, Rahul alias Golu and Hariom Sharma accused of being part of a violent mob

during the 2020 Delhi riots, ordered their acquittal.

In an order dated January 31, the court said, “I find that the prosecution has miserably failed to prove its case against the accused and all the accused are acquitted of all the charges framed against them.” All six were accused in a case related to the incidents of arson, vandalism and looting near Azizia Masjid in Sudamapuri during the Delhi riots on February 25, 2020. The accused were charged under multiple sections of the

IPC, including rioting, arson, attempt to murder, theft and conspiracy.

The court said the case was built on manipulated statements and unreliable testimony, and directed that a copy of the order be placed before the Delhi Police Commissioner for initiating action against those responsible. “I must observe that the audacity and impunity with which the record was tampered with reflects a complete breakdown of the supervisory mechanism be-

cause the fabricated charge sheet was forwarded by the supervisory officers,” the judge said.

The court noted that several witnesses initially said they had not seen any rioters but later claimed to have identified specific accused by name. “The case of the prosecution is found to be a built-up case on the basis of the witnesses who according to their initial statements had not seen any of the rioters but who as per their subsequent tampered,

manipulated and fabricated statements,” the judge said.

The court also said that the video evidence relied upon by the prosecution was not proved in accordance with the law, lacking the mandatory certification under the Evidence Act. “Had that mechanism worked as it is expected to work, the rights of the accused and the expectation of the society at large that criminal cases are investigated fairly would not have been bulldozed and pulverised,” the court said.

Maha chef arrested for Rs 17 lakh cyber fraud

The accused, identified as Pathan Uzeif Khalil Khan, a resident of Maharashtra’s Jalna district, was apprehended and brought to Delhi on transit remand. According to the police, the case came to light after Rahul Saini, a resident of Keshav Puram, lodged an online complaint alleging that he had been cheated of Rs 17,16,777 by cyber criminals who promised lucrative earnings through work-from-home assignments

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

A 25-year-old chef has been arrested for allegedly helping cyber fraudsters in siphoning off more than Rs 17 lakh from a Delhi resident. The victim was lured with fake work-from-home opportunities involving paid online tasks, police said on Tuesday.

The accused, identified as Pathan Uzeif Khalil Khan, a resident of Maharashtra’s Jalna district, was apprehended and brought to Delhi on transit remand.

According to the police, the case came to light after Rahul Saini, a resident of Keshav Puram, lodged an online complaint alleging that he had been cheated of Rs 17,16,777 by cyber criminals who promised lucrative

earnings through work-from-home assignments.

A case was registered on January 1 under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Investigators tracked the money trail by analysing digital footprints, social media links and banking transactions.

Police said the cheated amount was received in a bank account allegedly used by the accused and later withdrawn through self-cheques. Technical surveillance and location analysis of the mobile number linked to the account helped the team zero in on the suspect’s location at Ambad in Jalna district.

“Khan was one of the operatives involved in liquidating the crime proceeds,” a senior police officer said, adding that a mobile phone used in the



offence has been seized. During interrogation, the accused told police he joined the fraud network to meet financial needs and sustain an extravagant lifestyle.

He allegedly facilitated the withdrawal and rotation of cheated funds through mule accounts to create layers and

avoid detection. He frequently changed mobile numbers to evade law enforcement, police said. Khan, who studied up to Class 12 and works as a chef in a private hotel, is being further questioned to ascertain his involvement in other similar cases and to identify his associates.

DG Prisons post vacant after SBK Singh’s retirement

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

THE post of Director General (DG) of Prisons in Delhi has fallen vacant following the retirement of SBK Singh. The DG (Prisons) post is considered one of the most sensitive assignments in the national capital, given the scale and complexity of Delhi’s prison system, which includes Tihar Jail, Rohini Jail and Mandoli Jail.

The prisons house over 19,000 undertrial and convicted inmates, including high-profile prisoners, making leadership continuity critical for security and administrative efficiency. Senior IPS officer Shashi Bhushan Kumar Singh of the 1988 batch, who was heading Tihar Prisons, retired from service on January 31.

He had briefly served as



SBK Singh

the Delhi Police Commissioner on additional charge for 21 days since July 31, following which he had been appointed Director General (Prisons), Delhi, overseeing Tihar Jail.

No official notification announcing his successor has been issued so far. The sources maintained that the delay

HC refuses bail to gig worker accused of stealing cable

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

THE Delhi High Court has refused to grant bail to a gig worker accused of stealing a 32 metre copper cable from a metro line, observing that he played with the lives of the public and caused immense loss to the exchequer.

Justice Saurabh Banerjee said the accused did not merely indulge in “some foolhardy antics” but his actions put the life and limb of the public in utter danger. Dismissing the bail plea, the judge noted that the accused was a habitual offender. “While granting bail this court must take into cognisance the public good versus the private good involved herein. The applicant herein has been guilty of playing with the lives of the general public,” the court said in the order passed on January 31.

Online investment scam

2 held from Raj for duping Delhi man of Rs 5 lakh



HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

TWO cyber fraudsters have been apprehended from Rajasthan for allegedly cheating a Delhi resident of Rs 5.63 lakh in an online investment scam, police said on Tuesday. The arrests were made in connection with an e-FIR registered on January 25, they said.

The complainant, Jitender (32), a resident of Gokalpuri, reported that he was duped of Rs 5.63 lakh by fraudsters who lured him into investing money on the pretext of earning substantial profits in a short duration.

During the investigation, the police analysed digital evidence, transaction details and other technical inputs

to trace the money trail and identify the suspects. Acting on specific leads, the team conducted raids in Rajasthan and apprehended Dhanpal Meena (28) from the Bundi area.

During interrogation, Meena allegedly confessed to his role in the fraud and disclosed the involvement of his associate, Sita Ram (23), a resident of Tonk.

Following his disclosure, Ram was also apprehended, the police said. Four mobile phones and other electronic devices allegedly used in the commission of the crime have been recovered from their possession, they added.

The police said that the accused used to create fake online investment profiles showcasing inflated returns to gain the trust of victims. After convincing them to invest, they allegedly extracted more money in the name of GST, processing fees and other charges before cutting off contact. Further investigation is underway to ascertain the involvement of the accused in other similar cases and to identify additional members of the network, they said.

RCF KAPURTALA GM MEETS UP GUV



P. K. Mishra, General Manager, Rail Coach Factory, Kapurthala, paid a courtesy call on the Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Anandiben Patel, at Raj Bhavan, on Tuesday. During the meeting, Mishra apprised the Governor in detail about the railway production units. Mishra presented a copy of his acclaimed book “Rails Through Raj”, based on the history of Indian Railways, to the Governor

New bridge over Yamuna to ease traffic congestion

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

THE Delhi government is considering a proposal to construct a new bridge over the Yamuna River near the Signature Bridge or replace the old iron bridge to ease traffic congestion and improve connectivity in the city’s eastern parts, officials said. The proposal was put forth by the Trans-Yamuna Board during a recent meeting with officials of the Public Works Department. A senior govern-

ment official said the plan is still at a preliminary stage and is under discussion. “The proposal is at an initial stage. The government is considering it to improve connectivity in the Trans-Yamuna area and enhance links between North East, North and Central Delhi,” an official said. According to officials, with RRTS stations and the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway getting ready, traffic congestion on the Ring Road, especially near Sarai Kale Khan, is expected to increase.

Turkman Gate violence

Court hears bail pleas of 3 accused in stone-pelting case

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Tuesday heard bail arguments of three accused in the stone-pelting incident during a demolition exercise near Faiz-e-Elahi mosque in Turkman Gate in early January. Additional Sessions Judge Bhupinder Singh was hearing the arguments pertaining to the bail applications filed by three accused -- Mohammed Areeb, Mohammad Naved and Mohammad Athar. Appearing for the Delhi Police, Additional Public Prosecutor (APP) Atul Shrivastava argued that Section 163 (prohibiting unlawful assemblies) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) was imposed at the site of the incident on



the intervening night of January 6 and 7, yet the accused joined the unlawful gathering of more than a 100 people at the site having full knowledge of the restrictions and the demolition being carried out.

They attacked the police personnel on duty with stones targeting their heads and vital parts of their body, which consequently attracted the offence of Section 109 (attempt to murder) under

the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Shrivastava said. The defence counsel for one of the accused, Areeb, said he was at his workplace around 1.15 am, according to the CCTV footage.

The next captured footage showed him outside his house at 3 am. Due to the proximity of both these sites to the scene of crime, they said it was natural for him to be present in the area.

Delivery agent stabbed to death in east Delhi

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

A 22-year-old delivery executive was stabbed to death by three minors in east Delhi’s Pandav Nagar on Monday following an altercation, police said. The juveniles have been apprehended. The incident took place around 8.15 pm, when the accused minors arrived on a motorcycle and, after a brief altercation, attacked the victim with a sharp-edged weapon before fleeing the spot, police said.

The victim has been identified as Arun Raj, a resident of Patparganj. When police reached the spot after a PCR call, they found Raj lying injured at the spot and took him to Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital, where doctors declared him dead. Preliminary examination revealed that the victim had sustained multiple stab injuries on the neck and chest, the officer said.

Stop victimisation of Kashmir students, traders outside J&K: Omar

HANS NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU

CHIEF Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday called for an immediate halt to alleged harassment of Kashmir natives, whether students or traders, reported from across the country, asserting that continued victimisation of people from the Valley was unacceptable.

The issue of the alleged harassment of Kashmir natives in different parts of the country was also raised in

the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly ahead of the Question Hour during the Budget Session, with Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather rejecting an adjournment motion moved by PDP MLA Waheed-ur-Rehman Para seeking a discussion on the matter. “This is not a good thing. I spoke on this issue at the North Zone Chief Ministers’ Conference.

At that time, I requested all the chief ministers and the Union home minister to ensure the ongoing

- ‘I am grateful to the chief minister of Uttarakhand for taking timely action, with cases registered and arrests made’
- Himachal is our neighboring state, and despite the fact that the Cong is in power, Kashmiris are stopped, and beaten

harassment of Kashmiris -- whether students or traders -- stops. I am grateful to the chief minister of Uttarakhand for taking timely action, with cases registered and arrests made,” Abdullah told reporters after the

first sitting. He expressed concern that harassment of Kashmir-natives was being reported from neighbouring Himachal Pradesh despite the Congress being in power there. “Himachal is our neigh-



boring state, and despite the fact that the Congress is in power there, people (Kash-

miris) are being stopped, harassed, and beaten. I request the Himachal Pradesh

chief minister to take immediate action on this and put a stop to this victimisation and harassment of Kashmiris,” Abdullah said.

Responding to a query on the row in the Lok Sabha on Monday over Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi’s attempt to quote from what he claimed was the memoir of former Army chief M M Naravane, the Abdullah said “what happens in Parliament is Parliament’s matter”. “It is the privilege of Parliament and the speaker to

decide. Similarly, whatever we do in our assembly is our own matter.

It would not be appropriate for our assembly to be discussed in Parliament, and likewise, I should not comment on what happened in Parliament,” he said. On Jammu and Kashmir Congress’s suggestion to set up a coordination committee to strengthen the coalition, Abdullah said the question should be put to National Conference president Farooq Abdullah.

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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 populates, 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.

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 populates, 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. The advent of faster modes of transportation contributed to the deterioration of the canal. 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,

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

Your 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

Apropos “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 Feb3). 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 R 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>

The two faces of equity: Navigating the UGC Regulation 2026

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 Tadi, 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

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 ‘unidirectional’ 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 exclusion has turned a tool for social harmony into a lightning rod for division.

Additionally, the broad and somewhat vague definition of ‘indirect discrimination’ has raised concerns among faculty that routine academic evaluations or disciplinary actions could be misconstrued as bias, potentially leading to a ‘race to the bottom’ where merit is sacrificed to avoid litigation. The removal of a previous draft’s clause that penalised ‘false or malicious complaints’ is another glaring demerit, as it leaves the system vulnerable to weaponization for settling personal scores or campus politics.

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. Reintroducing 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 redressal 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)

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 Atchannaaidu 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.

Atchannaaidu said seafood exports to the US are expected to grow by 10–15 per cent in the coming months, with export volumes likely to

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.

Dy CM warns liquor shops against overcharging

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

- Orders strict surveillance and action against liquor outlets selling above MRP, citing complaints from Kakinada and elsewhere
- Says overpricing violates rules and tarnishes the government's image; directs shopkeepers to strictly follow excise norms
- Directions come amid YSRCP allegations of rampant illegal liquor sales, even as the Cabinet's recent Rs 10 per bottle hike aims to boost state revenue



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

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

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 Kandarpu 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 wrong-doings.

Police acted swiftly and rescued the two SFI leaders



CPM leaders protesting before Tiruchanoor police station on Tuesday



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, Tiruchanuru 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 Sanhita (BNS) at Tiruchanoor police station.

The accused named in the case include A1 Satheesh, A2 Mohan Babu and A3 Manchu Vishnu Babu. In addition to them, cases have also been registered against around 20 other persons in connection with the incident.

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.

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.

Congress Tirupati city president Gowdaperu Chitibabu condemned the abduction and said intimidating students to protect vested interests was unacceptable. 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.

CPM seeks fast-track court for constable Soumya death case

CPM State secretary John Wesley demands strict action against drug mafia

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

THE Communist Party of India (Marxist) State Committee has strongly condemned the brutal murder of Excise Department woman constable Soumya, a resident of Mopal village in Nizamabad district, allegedly carried out by the drug mafia by staging a car accident.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, CPM State Secretary John Wesley demanded that the state government immediately constitute a fast-track court to ensure swift and severe punishment for those responsible for the crime.

The CPM alleged that the influence of the drug mafia

has been growing unchecked in Hyderabad and several major district headquarters and towns across Telangana. Referring to frequent drug seizures during police raids in Rangareddy district, the party described the situation as alarming and indicative of the deep-rooted nature of the narcotics network.

While Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has stated that drugs will be eradicated from the state, the CPM said the ground reality tells a different story. According to the party, the supply and circulation of narcotics continue unabated in every district, exposing the government's failure to effectively curb the menace. The statement



warned that drug abuse is pushing the youth onto a dangerous path, contributing to social unrest and an increase in crimes, including sexual violence and atrocities against women. The CPM further alleged that the drug mafia's influence is expanding across the Telugu states, leading to a series of violent incidents and murders.

Citing previous cases, the party pointed to the murder of CPM activist Penchalaiah in Nellore and now the killing of Constable Soumya

as evidence of the growing audacity of criminal networks. "If those entrusted with protecting the public are being targeted, one can imagine the plight of ordinary citizens," the statement said. The CPM demanded stringent action to ensure exemplary punishment in the Constable Soumya murder case and called for the complete dismantling of the drug network, rather than limiting action to arrests alone. The party urged senior police officials, including former DGP M. Mahender Reddy and IPS officer V.C. Sajjanar, to go beyond praising the bravery of victims and take decisive steps to eliminate the drug mafia from the state.

Revanth to launch civic poll campaign in Nalgonda today

Ruling party launches campaign with Miryalaguda public meeting while opposition gears up for intense rallies and door to door canvassing across the State ahead of the February 11 municipal elections

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

AMID a looming rebel threat to all major parties, the ruling Congress, BRS, and BJP have geared up to intensify their poll campaigns for the upcoming municipal elections from Wednesday. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy will formally launch the Congress campaign with a major public meeting in Miryalaguda. Meanwhile, BRS leaders have organised a series of rallies across towns for a seven-day stretch, and the BJP is focusing on establishing dominance in the northern districts. The Chief Minister has instructed District Congress Committee presidents to finalise arrangements for public meetings scheduled until



9 February. Leaders were also told to coordinate daily rallies and door-to-door visits in every ward. TPCC President Mahesh Kumar Goud

finalised a rigorous schedule for all districts. He and Harish Rao are expected to personally lead rallies in selected municipalities during the final three days of the campaign, particularly in areas where Congress is posing a significant challenge.

The BJP aims to leverage its recent Lok Sabha successes by fielding strong candidates in Nizamabad, Adilabad, Karmannagar, and Mahbubnagar. Union ministers, MPs, and MLAs will camp in these municipalities for the week to bolster the saffron party's presence. With nominations now finalised, all three parties are deploying their full political might to sway urban voters before the state goes to the polls.

SC clears decks for appointment of Azhar, Kodandaram as MLCs

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD/NEW DELHI

THE Supreme Court on Tuesday once again clarified that its orders do not pose any obstacle to the appointment of Members of the Legislative Council (MLCs) under the Governor's quota in Telangana. The clarification is expected to pave the way for the Governor to take a decision on the names—Prof M Kodandaram and Mohd Azharuddin, recommended by the state cabinet.

The apex court observed that it had already made its position clear in its interim order dated August 13 last year, stating that the Governor is free to act in accordance with the recommendations of the state cabinet.

The observation was made by a bench headed by Justice Vikram Nath while hearing a vacate petition filed by former MLC Amir Ali Khan, seeking to lift the orders issued in connection with his election. The court directed that Amir Ali Khan's petition be tagged with the main petition filed by Dasoju Shraavan and adjourned the matter to March 19 for further hearing.

The controversy dates back to 2023, when the Telangana cabinet, chaired



by then Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao, recommended the names of Dasoju Shraavan and Kurra Satyanarayana for nomination as MLCs under the Governor's quota. However, the then Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan rejected the nominations, citing their political affiliations and stating that they did not fulfil the criteria laid down under Article 171(5) of the Constitution.

After the Congress government assumed office in 2024, the state cabinet recommended the names of Prof. M. Kodandaram and journalist Amir Ali Khan for the two Governor's quota MLC seats, which were subsequently approved by the Governor.

Challenging these appointments, Dasoju Shraavan and Kurra Satyanarayana first approached the Telangana

High Court and later the Supreme Court. On August 13, 2025, the apex court set aside the appointments of Kodandaram and Amir Ali Khan, clarifying that the two MLC positions would be filled subject to further orders.

While hearing Amir Ali Khan's plea on Tuesday, the Supreme Court reiterated that its earlier directions were not intended to hinder or stall the selection of Governor's quota MLCs in Telangana.

NORTHERN RAILWAY	
TENDER NOTICE (Through e-tendering)	
Tender No. 558-Sig-16-Tele-OT-1031	Dated: 02/02/2026
Name of work with its location	Provision of balanced Coach Guidance System at NNO, SSB, NUR, BVH, & Passenger Amenities (Telecom) at newly constructed platform at Anand Vihar Railway Stations and balanced IPIS auto announcement, TIDB etc at stations where train handling facility is to be started due to Station Redevelopment of NDLS station.
App. Cost of the work (₹)	₹ 1,79,60,613.08/-only
Earnest Money Deposit (₹)	₹ 2,39,800.00/-only.
Address of the office	Senior Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer-C, Northern Railway, 3rd Floor, Annexe-1, DRM office, New Delhi-110055.
Date & Time for upload the tender/closing of tender	Tender uploading / closing date & time- 25/02/2026 up to 15.00 hrs.
Website particular & notice board location where complete details of the tender can be seen etc.	See the Northern Railway website www.irps.gov.in & Notice board at S&T branch, 3rd Floor, DRM office, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055.
368/2026	
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE	

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 broadcaster 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

HARARE: Unbeaten so far in the tournament, a confident and all-round India will be overwhelming favourites against Afghanistan in the semifinal of the ICC Under-19 World Cup here on Wednesday. India are the most successful team in the history of the event, having annexed the title five times (2000, 2008, 2012, 2018, 2022), followed by Australia, who have won the trophy four times. Come Wednesday, India will look to take one step forward towards a record sixth title.

India have had a great run in the tournament, having won all their five matches quite comfortably, including a 58-run win over arch-rivals Pakistan in the Super Six stage.

Afghanistan too has had a fairly good tournament, winning four out of their five games, their only loss coming against Sri Lanka by four wickets.

Going by form and overall composition, India will hold an edge over the Afghans in the knock-out game. Wicket-



Match starts at 1 pm IST

keeper batter Abhigyan Kundu has been the star performer for India with the bat as the left-hander has so far amassed 199 runs from five games with two half centuries to his name.

Big-hitting opener Vaibhav Suryavanshi (196 runs in 5 matches with 2 fifties) too has been in good form but the team management would want him to convert his half-centuries into three-figure scores.

All-rounder Vihaan Malhotra (172 runs from 5 games) is the other Indian batter to look out for. He struck the lone century (109 not out) against Zimbabwe in group stages. Skipper Ayush Mhatre has been consistent with the ball in hand, picking up six wickets with his off-break

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 Geroge'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), Vihaan 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 Shinozada, Khalid Ahmadzai, Osman Sadat, Uzairullah Niazi, Abdul Aziz, Aqil Khan, Khatir Stanikzai, Nazifullah Amiri, Nooristani Omarzai, Roohullah Arab, Salam Khan, Wahidullah Zadran, Zaitullah Shaheen.

India to host next year's Asian Rifle/Pistol C'ship

NEW DELHI: India will host next year's Asian Rifle/Pistol Championship in Delhi where eight quota places for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics will be up for grabs, marking a historic first for the country's shooting calendar which already features an Olympic qualifier in the World Cup. The eight slots in the Asian competition will be in addition to the 12 quota places that will be on offer in the World Cup (Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun) from April 21 to 30 next year, also to be held in Delhi. The allotment of the Asian event was confirmed by the Asian Shooting Confederation in a letter to the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) president Kalikesh Singh Deo. The NRAI stated that the dates for the Asian qualifier will be finalised in due course. "We congratulate National Rifle Association of India for winning the hosting rights of Asian Rifle/Pistol Championship 2027 where eight Quota Places will be distributed for the LA 2028 Olympics.

"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

Vasavi College of Engineering emerged champions at the OU Inter-College Chess Championships, organised by Vivekananda Government Degree College, Vidyanaagar, here on Tuesday. The two-day tournament was conducted in a Round Robin League format and witnessed keen competition among leading city colleges.

Vasavi College topped the standings with 15.5 points, with Varshith, Sainath, Shar-



ath, Shyam and Sai Vardhan delivering consistent performances.

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

14.5 points, led by strong outings from Akshay Kumar, Nelson, Nikhil, Manish Kumar and Kumar Raj Thota. C.B.I.T. secured third

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 Jagan 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 Tikabbari 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.



Yadav said his nephew was undergoing treatment under Dr S S Thakur in Parasia, Chhindwara, and the child's condition deteriorated after consuming the cough syrup prescribed by him.

Harsh remained admitted at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) for months, his uncle said. In October 2025, children in Parasia town of Chhindwara district began falling ill after consuming Coldrif cough syrup, with complaints of vomiting, inability to urinate and fever. Investigations revealed that the syrup contained diethylene glycol, a toxic chemical that causes kidney failure.

Around two dozen children from Chhindwara and Betul districts had died in the incident, following which the Drug Controller General of India also conducted a probe.

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 the 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 resistance against such policies, asserting that farmers already troubled by issues such as stray cattle would no longer tolerate the government's actions. He alleged that the BJP had been, and would remain anti-farmer, and said it was time to "remove BJP, save fields, farming and farmers."

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, V D Satheesan, 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 Sadath 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. Satheesan 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.



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

THE trailer of 'Couple Friendly', starring Santosh Soban and Manasa 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 film 'Dragon'.

In 'Pallichattambi', Tovino Thomas will be seen in a never-seen-before look. The film is produced by Noufal and Brijeeesh 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 Amballur the finance controller, and Rajesh Menon the production controller. Renith Raj and Kiran 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 Rishlal 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 Chowdhary 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 Chowdhary'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 Chowdhary'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

promotions, the film's catchy hook steps strongly connected with students, and both the teaser and trailer received a positive response from the youth across Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The title 'Sumathi Sathakam' has also created strong recall among audiences.

Adding to its high-lights, 'Sumathi Sathakam' received a U/A certificate with zero cuts, which is considered rare. The Censor Board members appreciated the film, stating that it is a feel-good entertainer that audiences will enjoy after a long time.

The film will be released in the Telugu states by Mythri Movie Makers, while overseas distribution in North America will be handled by Vibrant Cinemas, with releases in Dallas managed by Ravi Kollipara and Jai Pakala.



Ashwath Marimuthu: Title of my film with Simbu will start with 'I'

WISHING actor Silambarasan a happy birthday on Tuesday, director Ashwath Marimuthu has now disclosed that the title of his film with Simbu will begin with the letter 'I'.

Ashwath Marimuthu, who will be directing Simbu's next film after the actor completes director Vetrimaran's 'Arasan', took to his X timeline to pen a birthday wish to the actor. He wrote, "Happy birthday ST(A)R. This year is going to be magnificent for you sir. Cannot wait to start our film post 'Arasan'. To all his fans, 'konjam poruthukonga'. An entertaining film specially for the fans is loading! Title will start with 'I'."

It may be recalled that Ashwath Marimuthu, who delivered a blockbuster called 'Dragon' last year, had said last year that his next film, featuring actor Simbu in the lead, would definitely release next year (in 2026), irrespective of when they began shooting.

Ashwath, had in March last

year, disclosed that the script for the film had already been completed. "It is a script that has already been finished. Only screenplay and dialogues have to be written. Overall treatment is all over," he had said then.

When asked what kind of film his film with Silambarasan would be, Ashwath had replied, "What all you liked in my films 'Dragon' and 'Oh My Kaduvule', you will find in this film. At the same time, this film will also have all that you admired in him. Basically, it will be a vintage STR in my kind of films."

The film is being produced by AGS, the same production house that produced 'Dragon'.

It may be recalled that director Ashwath Marimuthu has already picked a team of assistant directors for his directorial team for his upcoming films #STR51 and



#AGS27. The director had made it clear that all nine members he had picked in his team didn't have any personal connection with him or with anyone he knew and that he had kept the process very clean.

The director, last year, had taken to his X timeline to list all those who had been picked to be his assistant directors. Putting out a poster on his timeline that read, "Team Ashwath Marimuthu. Welcome onboard assistant directors!" he named Srikanth, Mohammed Asif, Arun Kumar, Nithish S. Dhina, Nithish B. Krish, Srinath, Aniruth as his team members. Along with the poster, he wrote, "To all the talented people who applied but couldn't make it, wish you a great future and am sure you will find a better place to work."

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, UV Creations, 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. #BIKERMov #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

going to be the highlight of the film," the source had said then. "He (Sharwanand) is going to impress audiences with stunts that will give viewers an adrenaline rush like never before."

Malavika Nair plays the female lead in this film, which will also feature well-known character artistes Brahmaji and Atul Kulkarni in pivotal roles. Produced by Vamsi and Pramod, this high-energy film is set against the backdrop of motocross racing. Sources say it is a thrilling story of a family that is spread over three generations and set against the exciting motocross backdrop of the 90s and early 2000s. Cinematography for the film is by well-known cameraman J Yuvraj. Music for the film has been scored by famed Tamil music director Ghibran. Anil Kumar P is the editor of the film, which has N Sandeep as its executive producer. Rajeevan is the production designer, and A Panneerselvam is the art director.

Sai Pallavi thanks #D55 director Rajkumar Periasamy for his welcome; discloses she is 'nervously excited'

A day after the makers of director Rajkumar Periasamy's upcoming film, featuring actor Dhanush in the lead, welcomed her on board the unit of the film, actress Sai Pallavi on Tuesday thanked the film's director Rajkumar Periasamy and disclosed that she was "nervously excited."

Taking to her Instagram stories to thank Rajkumar Periasamy, the director of Dhanush's upcoming film 'D55', for his post in which he had accorded her a warm welcome to the unit, Sai Pallavi wrote, "Thank you so much sir. Nervous excitement!"

It may be recalled that Wunderbar Films, the production house of actor Dhanush and one of the production houses producing the film, had taken to its X timeline to welcome actress Sai Pallavi on Monday. It wrote, "She's about grace and strength - all at once. Welcoming everybody's favourite @Sai_Pallavi92 on board 'D55'. The hit combo returns to the big screen."

This will be the second time that Sai Pallavi will be working with Dhanush. She had earlier worked with him in director Balaji Mohan's 'Maari 2'.



It may also be recalled that the makers of the film, being tentatively referred to as 'D55', had already welcomed actress Sreeleela on board the unit on January 30 this year. The production house had welcomed Sreeleela, saying, "You didn't see this coming. Welcoming the dazzling damsel @sreeleela14 on board 'D55'."

The makers had also welcomed young music sensation Sai Abhyankkar on board the unit.

Taking to its X timeline to make the announcement, Wunderbar Films had said, "Time's up. The SA1-lence breaks. Excited to have the sensational @SaiAbhyankkar as the music composer for 'D55'. 'D55' - A #SaiAbhyankkar Musical. A brand new collaboration loading."

Sai Abhyankkar responded to the post of the production house, saying, "Super excited and pumped working with @dhanushkraj sir on 'D55'! My dream collaboration @Rajkumar_KP, dear sir thank you so much!! This is gonna be a very special cooking and thank you dear @theSreyas anna. @wunderbarfilms @RTakeStudios GIG"

Director Rajkumar Periasamy also welcomed the young music sensation on board the unit of the film, tentatively referred to as 'D55'. Taking to his X timeline, he wrote, "You are a Wonder-kid Sai! Excited to have you on board for 'D55' as the music composer my brother. God bless you dear @SaiAbhyankkar. Thank you dear @DhanushKRaja sir. 'D55' - A #SaiAbhyankkar Musical. @theSreyas @wunderbarfilms @RTakeStudios @Shra2309 @azy905 @sandy_sashr @vishurams." The film has triggered huge excitement, as the makers have already disclosed that this film will be a magnum opus. It may be recalled that only a week ago, another production house called R Take Studios had announced that it was joining hands with Wunderbar Films to produce this film.