



THE Hans India



Payal Rajput: I may fail, but I won't give up!
It may be recalled that last year, the actress had penned a post, expressing concerns about favoritism and nepotism overshadowing talent in the film industry.

P8 EDIT Prioritise rejuvenation of 'Buckingham Canal'

This historic canal, which used to be bustling with activity, is now ravaged with multiple problems like emitting untreated wastes by the industries and urban populations, encroachment of the canal land, siltation, and damage caused by natural disasters like floods.

P6 CITY/REGION

Every rupee should reach people: APAEC chief
APAEC Chairman and Mandapeta Constituency MLA Vedula Jogiawara Rao on Tuesday said that every rupee spent by the government should reach the grass-roots level in the interest of state welfare and development.

US tariff cut brings cheer to aqua sector: Atchchanna
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.

P4

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WINDOWS



NASA Artemis II launch put off to March

WASHINGTON: NASA has pushed back the Artemis II mission launch from February to March following technical hurdles during a critical wet dress rehearsal (WDR) of its Space Launch System (SLS) rocket, Administrator Jared Isaacman announced on Tuesday. "With the conclusion of the wet dress rehearsal on Tuesday, we are moving off the February launch window and targeting March for the earliest possible launch of Artemis II," he posted on X. With the conclusion of the wet dress rehearsal today, we are moving off the February launch window and targeting March for the earliest possible launch of Artemis II. The test, conducted at Kennedy Space Center in Florida, successfully filled the core stage and interim cryogenic propulsion stage tanks with liquid hydrogen and oxygen. However, teams paused operations multiple times to address a liquid hydrogen leak at a core stage interface, requiring hardware warming and propellant flow adjustments.

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

UNION Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal on Tuesday hailed the India-US trade agreement as a "tremendous opportunity" for the country, calling it "the best deal" New Delhi has secured compared to its neighbours.

Addressing a press conference a day after the agreement was announced, Goyal said, "This is the best deal India has received. It is a deal for all of us, bringing positive signals for the bright future of our citizens."

Goyal credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership and his rapport with US President Donald Trump saying, "We all know that the Prime Minister, leveraging his friendly relationship and close ties with President Trump, has finalised a trade deal with the United States of America that is the best deal India has received compared to all our neighbours, all the surrounding countries, and all the countries that compete with us."

The minister criticised LoP Rahul Gandhi over claims that PM Modi had accepted the India-US trade deal under pressure. "Rahul Gandhi wants to mislead the public, he does not care about India's progress," the minister said.

Continued on Page 7

- Goyal hails trade pact with US
- Credits Modi for landmark deal
- Blasts Rahul for baseless talk



Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal addressing the media on the progress of the India-US trade deal in New Delhi on Tuesday

...in final stages: Goyal Sheds few details on India-US pact amid unanswered questions

NEW DELHI: Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal appeared on TV on Tuesday evening, purportedly to share some details and clear the air around the India-US trade deal but mainly heaped praises on the agreement. And then he said the final bits are still being worked out. The

deal will be formally inked thereafter. "Today, 140 crore Indians are celebrating a trade deal which is under final stages of detailing between the negotiating teams of both countries," Goyal said, hailing the "friendship" between PM Modi and US President Trump. **Continued on Page 7**



India-US trade deal is a big decision: PM

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. 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.

Naidu calls US trade pact historic

HAILS PM MODI FOR VISIONARY APPROACH

HANS NEWS SERVICE

AMARAVATI: Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday described the trade agreement between India and the United States as a historic milestone for global economic stability and growth.

In a post on X, the Chief Minister congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi on signing the landmark agreement with the United States. He said the deal reflected India's growing stature in the global economic arena under Modi's leadership.

Naidu stated that the decision to reduce tariffs to 18 percent would further strengthen ties between the world's two largest democracies. He noted that the move would deepen economic cooperation and promote long-term mutual prosperity.

Calling the agreement a visionary step, the Chief Minister said it was aimed at ensuring sustained global growth and enhancing India's competitiveness in international markets.

Continued on Page 7

Markets rally on US trade deal

Sensex up 2,073, rupee soars

MUMBAI: Indian equity markets ended sharply higher on Tuesday as investors welcomed the finalisation of the long-awaited India-US trade deal, triggering broad-based buying across sectors and lifting the rupee to its strongest single-day gain in more than six years. The benchmark BSE Sensex surged 2,072.67 points, or 2.54 per cent, to close at 83,739.13, while the Nifty 50 climbed 639.15 points, or 2.55 per cent, to settle at 25,727.55.

► Ministers express concern over investigation's failure to fix responsibility

while the SIT had named some individuals, several serious omissions were found in its final findings. Ministers expressed concern that the investigation failed to clearly fix responsibility and bring the main culprits to justice.

Continued on Page 7

Cabinet nod for panel to probe TTD laddu issue

Inquiry aims to bring out truth, ensure strict action against guilty: CM

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

THE state Cabinet on Tuesday decided to entrust the alleged chemical and animal fat adulteration in the ghee used for Tirumala Srivari Laddu Prasadam to a Commission of Inquiry to rectify lapses in the Special Investigation Team (SIT) report and identify the real masterminds behind the scam.

The Cabinet noted that

New baggage rules come into effect

Duty-free limit hiked

NEW DELHI



returning residents is 40 grams for female passengers and 20 grams for others. Jewellery, for the purpose of this rule, means articles of adornment ordinarily worn by a person, made of gold, silver, platinum or such other precious metals, whether studded or not.

Continued on Page 7

Oppn stages walkout demanding debate on deal

NEW DELHI: Members of several Opposition parties on Tuesday staged a walkout from the Rajya Sabha while raising the issue of the Indo-US trade deal and demanding a discussion on it.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh raised the issue of the Indo-US trade deal soon after the zero-hour ended and alleged that the information about the deal was being received from Washington instead.

Continued on Page 7

PM buckled under pressure to sell out farmers' blood: Rahul

NEW DELHI: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi buckled under US pressure to finalise a trade deal and "sold out" the hard work of the Indian farmers through the agreement. **Continued on Page 7**

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Turkey ready to host high-stakes US-Iran talks

ISTANBUL: Turkey is preparing to host high-level talks between the United States and Iran in Istanbul this Friday, marking a significant diplomatic effort to ease escalating tensions between the two powers. The discussions are expected to be led by US special envoy Steve Witkoff and Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, with Turkey playing a central mediating role Bloomberg reported. According to Turkish officials, the priority of the planned Istanbul meetings is to de-escalate tensions and avoid conflict, as relations between Washington and Tehran have deteriorated in recent months. Several nations, including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates, have been invited to participate, possibly at the foreign minister level, underlining the broader regional effort to stabilise the situation.

Continued on Page 7

'FATHER OF ALL DEALS'

P7

You can't play with right to privacy of this country: SC

Tells WhatsApp, Meta to 'exit India if you can't abide by the rule of the land'

NEW DELHI

THE Supreme Court on Tuesday told WhatsApp's parent company Meta that it should leave India if it cannot follow the Constitution and protect users' data privacy.

The court was hearing Meta's plea against a Competition Commission of India (CCI) order that imposed a penalty of Rs 213.14 crore over WhatsApp's privacy policy. A Bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya



Bagchi and Vipul Pancholi made it clear that "not a single digit" of user data should be shared if it goes against the public interest.

According to a report by Bar and Bench, the top court also questioned the lack of a clear option for users to opt out of WhatsApp's privacy policy. "Where is the question of opting out? Show me on your mobile. This is a decent way of committing theft of private information! You know your commercial interest, and you also know how you have made



consumers addicted to the app," it said.

"Everybody uses it. If the user has a right to opt-out, how will the users know this right exists? Let us see

Meta representative, CJI Kant said, "You can't play with the right of privacy of this country, in the name of data sharing. You are making a mockery of the constitutionalism of this country. How can you play with the right to privacy of people like this? People pay you for this. Consumer has no choice you have created a monopoly!"

The Bench suggested that WhatsApp file an affidavit explaining its privacy policy and how data sharing works under it. The court

adjourned the hearing till February 9 and added the Central government as a party to the case.

"For the purpose of issuing interim directions, post the matter for next Monday. On the joint request made by senior counsel, the Union of India is impleaded as a respondent. Union may also file its counter affidavit," the court said. In January 2021, WhatsApp announced updates to its terms of service and privacy policy, to be effective from February 8, 2021. Users were told they

must accept the new terms to continue using the app.

Earlier, WhatsApp's 2016 privacy policy allowed users to opt out of data sharing with Facebook. The 2021 update made data sharing with Meta mandatory.

The CCI investigated the matter and in November 2024 ruled that WhatsApp had abused its dominant position under the Competition Act, 2002. It ordered WhatsApp to stop sharing user data with Meta and its products for five years and imposed the fine.



I know for sure
nobody can quote from a
book in Parliament.
I read it on WhatsApp

IRREGULAR by MANJUL

REPORT

P7

NEW DELHI

THE Supreme Court on Tuesday told WhatsApp's parent company Meta that it should leave India if it cannot follow the Constitution and protect users' data privacy.

The court was hearing

THEIR PLEA AGAINST A CCI ORDER THAT IMPOSED A PENALTY OF RS 213.14 CRORE OVER WHATSAPP'S PRIVACY POLICY.

THE COURT ADVISED THE COMPANY TO FILE AN AFFIDAVIT EXPLAINING ITS PRIVACY POLICY AND HOW DATA SHARING WORKS UNDER IT.

THE BENCH ADVISED WHATSAPP TO STOP SHARING USER DATA WITH META AND ITS PRODUCTS FOR FIVE YEARS AND IMPOSED THE FINE.

'TTD HIGH SCHOOLS SHOULD ACHIEVE OUTSTANDING RESULTS'

TTD JEO (Health & Education) Dr A Sarat charing a review meeting in Tirupati on Tuesday



HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUPATI

with a clear objective of securing top ranks at the State and District levels.

He directed that students who are lagging behind in various subjects should be identified and given special coaching through simple and effective methods to improve their understanding.

He noted that quality facilities are available in TTD educational institutions and asked teachers to deliver instruction with dedication and the highest standards.

He further instructed that daily and weekly tests be conducted to enhance students' performance and that their academic progress be continuously monitored.

TTD DEO Venkata Sunil, SGS

High School Headmaster

Chandrayya, SE Manoharam, Additional Health Officer Dr Sunil, teachers, and other officials were present.

Jagan to console Ambati's family today

HANS NEWS SERVICE
GUNTUR

YSRCP chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy will visit Guntur city on Wednesday to console the family members of former minister Ambati Ramababu, who is in judicial custody in Rajahmundry Central Jail in connection with a case for his derogatory remarks against Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu. TDP activists attacked his house and office at Navabharat Nagar and damaged his office furniture. YSRCP leaders condemned his arrest. Jagan will console his family members and extend his support. He already enquired about Ramababu's arrest. YSRCP state general secretary Sajala Rama Krishna Reddy, former MP Modugula Venugopal Reddy visited Ramababu's house and consoled his family members.

Meanwhile, the police registered the case against the TDP activists who attacked Ramababu's house and party office and burnt his car. Responding to the complaint lodged by Ramababu, the police registered the case.

Decision on Nandi awards, theatre fest soon

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

CINEMATOGRAPHY minister Kandula Durgesh on Tuesday said that the coalition government is fully committed to the development of the Telugu film industry in Andhra Pradesh and would begin a structured action plan from April. He also announced that discussions are underway with Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, and a formal announcement on the revival of the prestigious Nandi Awards and Nandi Theatre Festival would be made soon.

The minister was speaking after felicitating the winners of the Andhra Pradesh Short Film Festival-2026, organised under the banner of Maa-AP, at his chamber in the Secretariat's second block at Velagapudi. He presented mementos and cash awards to the awardees and congratulated young directors, technicians and artists who created socially conscious short films.

Durgesh appreciated the efforts of the festival organiser, Maa-AP founder and film director Dilip Raja, for successfully conducting the state-level festival on January 11 at Tenali without charging any entry fee. He said such initiatives play a key role in nurturing grassroots talent and strengthening the film ecosystem in the State.

Addressing the gathering, the minister stated that the government aims to develop Amaravati into a major hub for the film industry on par with Hyderabad. He reiterated that the state government would extend all necessary support for the growth of cinema and creative industries in Andhra Pradesh.

As many as 203 short films were received from across the state for the festival, with nearly 2,000 actors participating.

The first prize was won by 'Mahavriksham'

directed by Chandrasekhar

Sakunalas from Visakhapatnam, while 'Simhadri Ap

panna' by Srinivasa Rao from Srikakulam secured second place and 'Abaddam

vs Nijam' by Naveen Kumar

from Palakollu bagged the



Cinematography minister Kandula Durgesh with the award winners of short films in Vijayawada on Tuesday

- Cinematography minister Durgesh says a formal decision on reviving the Nandi Awards and Nandi Theatre Festival will be taken soon
- Reiterates the govt's goal to develop Amaravati as a major film hub on par with Hyderabad, with full support to cinema and creative industries
- At the AP Short Film Festival-2026 felicitation, 'Mahavriksham' won first prize among 203 entries, highlighting strong grassroots talent across the state

third prize. Cash awards of Rs 1 lakh were presented to the top three winners.

Special awards were also presented to Sujitha (Best Actress-Manam), Sai Prakarsh (Best Character Actress-Abaddam vs Nijam), Pawan Sarma (Mannu-Minnu), child artist Harshathunisa, young talent Rithvik Reddy (Astra), debut director Trivikram, villain Meesala Bhaskar and Telugu script reviewers Manjuluri Lakshmpathi Master and Jagadish, among others.

Speaking on the occasion, director Dilip Raja said government encouragement would enable Andhra Pradesh youth to achieve remarkable success and noted that the Short Film Festival had infused new confidence and determination among aspiring filmmakers.

CPM demands immediate increase in RTC buses

Party's two-day state committee meet flags overcrowding, commuter hardships after Stree Shakti scheme implementation

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE CPM state committee, which met on February 2 and 3 at MB Vignana Kendram in Vijayawada, demanded an immediate increase in RTC buses in view of the sharp rise in passenger traffic following the implementation of the Stree Shakti free bus travel scheme for women.

The meeting was held under the chairmanship of party central committee member K Lokanatham and was attended by politburo members B Raghavulu and U Vasuki, along with state secretary V Srinivasa Rao. The committee unanimously adopted a resolution highlighting the severe inconvenience being faced by passengers due to overcrowding.

Party state secretary Srinivasa Rao released the resolution to the media on Tuesday. He said that RTC occupancy has increased dramatically from 67 per cent to 98 per cent after the launch of the Stree Shakti scheme. However, the government failed to deploy additional buses to meet the growing demand, he said. As a result, buses are running beyond capacity, skipping stops, and frequently breaking down due to poor maintenance and ageing fleets, he commented.

Further, he said the two-day state committee meeting expressed its concern over harassment faced by women passengers and the difficulties encountered by students who are unable to reach schools and colleges on time.

The party also pointed out that RTC



Picture for representational purpose only

staff are under heavy pressure, with workload rising by over 30 per cent, leading to an increase in in-service deaths, he said. Despite the corporation seeking permission to recruit 11,000 staff, the government has not responded, he noted.

Meanwhile, he said his party urged the government to ensure RTC services in villages still lacking bus connectivity, strictly regulate private buses, allow digital Aadhaar verification for women passengers, and immediately strengthen the public transport system to safeguard the Stree Shakti scheme and commuter safety.

Speed up CC camera installation for CCC: commissioner

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUPATI

SMART City MD and Municipal Corporation Commissioner N Mourya directed officials to complete the installation of CC cameras fast.

This is a part of setting up the Integrated Command and Control Centre with modern technology in the city.

Commissioner Mourya held a review



Municipal Corporation Commissioner N Mourya holding a meeting with officials in Tirupati on Tuesday

Indian Bank | NELLORE BRANCH

NEAR GANDHI STATUE, TRUNK ROAD, NELLORE.

APPENDIX- IV-A'[See provision to rule 8 (6)]

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Indian Bank, Nellore Branch, Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" on 25-02-2026 for recovery The amount due as on 31-01-2026 is Rs. 56,73,118/- (Rupees Five Crores Forty Six Lakhs Seventy Three Thousand One Hundred and Eighteen Only) with further interest, cost, other charges and expenses thereon from 01.02.2026.

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DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY: Property-1: All that piece and parcel of open site bearing Plot No.191

having sizes from East to West on North and South sides 60' or 18.289 Meters, North to South on East and West Sides 40 feet or 12.198 meters, total admeasuring 2400 sq ft or 266.67 sq yards, as per D.T. & C.P.L.P. No. 39/2005/N of "SAHAJA ENCLAVE" in Survey No 292/486, of Gundlapalem Village, Nellore Rural Mandal, Nellore District registration, Nellore Sub-Registration, Nellore District belonging to Mr Nellore Malikarjuna.

Boundaries: East: Plot no 178, South: 33 Feet wide road, West: 33 Feet wide road, North: Plot No 192

Reserve Price: Rs.13,90,00/-, EMD: Rs.13,90,00/-, Bid Incremental amount: Rs.20,00/-, Property ID No.DIB6014701350A

Property 2: All that piece and parcel of residential site bearing Plot No.345 having sizes from East to West on North and South Sides 60 feet or 18.289 meters, North to South on East and West Sides 40 feet or 12.198 meters, total admeasuring 2400 sq.ft or 266.67 sq.yards as per D.T. & C.P.L.P. No. 39/2005/N of "SAHAJA ENCLAVE" in Survey No 292/486, of Gundlapalem Village, Nellore Rural Mandal, Nellore District registration, Nellore Sub-Registration, Nellore District belonging to Ms.Duttapati Darshani Bharathi

Boundaries: East: Plot bearing no 346, West: plot bearing no 347, North: plot bearing no 344

Reserve Price: Rs.13,30,00/-, EMD: Rs.13,30,00/-, Bid Incremental amount: Rs.20,00/-, Property ID No.DIB6014701350B

Embursements on above properties : NIL

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Bidders are advised to visit the website (<https://baanknet.com>) of our e-auction service provider PSB Alliance Pvt. Ltd to participate in online bid. For Technical Assistance Please call PSB Alliance Pvt. Ltd Helpdesk No. 8291220220, email ID - support.ebkray@psballiance.com and other help line numbers available in service providers help desk. For Registration status with PSB Alliance Pvt. Ltd. and EMD status, please contact support.ebkray@psballiance.com. NOTE : This Notice is without prejudice to any other remedy available to the Secured Creditor and without prejudice to rights of the Secured Creditor to proceed with the proceedings presently pending before DRT/RO of DRT/ DRAT/ High Court and proceed with the execution of order/decrees obtained to be obtained in SA 572/2023 before DRT, Visakhapatnam. For property details and photograph of the property and auction terms and conditions please visit: <https://baanknet.com> and for clarifications related to this portal, please contact Helpdesk No.8291220220

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Date : 02-02-2026, Place : Nellore Sd/- Authorised Officer, Indian Bank, Nellore Branch

Sd/- Commissioner, APCRDA.

Every rupee should reach people: APAEC chief

Chairs a review meeting with Collector and other officials

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NELLORE

ANDHRA Pradesh Assembly Estimates Committee (APAEC) Chairman and Mandapeta Constituency MLA Vegulla Jogewswara Rao on Tuesday said that every rupee spent by the government should reach the grass-roots level in the interest of state welfare and development.

After conducting meeting with Collector and other departments officials the APAEC Chairman along with the members addressed press conference here on Tuesday.

Speaking the occasion, APAEC Chairman has said that during the meeting headed by Collector has discussed several issues over allocation of budget and spending funds related to Social Welfare, BC Welfare, Minority Welfare DRDA, MPPMA, Agriculture and its related departments for years 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22 in the district.



APAEC Chairman Vegulla Jogewswara Rao addressing media persons in Nellore on Tuesday

He disclosed that the condition of school buildings were not upto mark as some among them were under dilapidated condition.

Appreciates Collector Himanshu Shukla for his initiative in designing a comprehensive booklet regarding the allocation and spending funds in the district.

Committee member and Gopalapuram MLA Maddipati Venkata Raju suggested that it should be mandatory

for the officials not only concentrate over spending of funds but also do keen study in the interest of people get benefited.

Gudur MLA Pasem Sunil has said that it should be compulsory for the officials to maintain the accounts properly.

DRO Vijayakumar, Project Directors of DRDA, DWMA Nagarajakumari, Gangabavani, DAO P Satyavani and others were present.

PRADEEP VENNELAKANTI
TIRUPATI

ROAD accidents have become a daily occurrence on the national highways passing through the erstwhile Chittoor district, yet not a single trauma care centre is available to handle emergency cases.

The absence of such critical facilities, despite clear directions from the Central government, is resulting in delays in treatment and avoidable loss of lives, triggering serious concern among officials and the public alike.

Medical experts say the first hour after an accident is crucial and that timely shifting of victims to a trauma care centre can significantly improve survival chances. However, with no such centres along the highways, victims are forced to depend on nearby hospitals that can offer only preliminary treatment.

This gap in emergency

- Not even a single trauma care centre is there despite having 12 national highways across erstwhile Chittoor district
- Centre offers partial funding for infrastructure and equipment, yet proposals to set up centres are not getting approvals
- Medical experts say the first hour after an accident is crucial and that timely shifting of victims to a trauma care centre can significantly improve survival chances

care is being viewed as a major lapse in the health-care system.

A significant number of those injured in highway accidents are pilgrims travelling to prominent temples



A highway in Chittoor

like Tirumala, Kanipakam and Srikalahasti. Many pilgrims come from neighbouring Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

Accidents often occur due to driver fatigue, vehicles crossing dividers, or rash overtaking at high speeds.

The Central government had earlier instructed that trauma care centres be established in or near hospitals located along national highways and had also assured partial financial support for infrastructure and

medical equipment.

These centres are meant to be equipped with specialists such as orthopaedic surgeons, anaesthetists, general surgeons, neurosurgeons, plastic surgeons and radiologists, along with facilities like CT scans, ultrasound and blood banks.

Doctors posted at these centres are trained specifically to handle emergency trauma cases.

In their absence, treatment delays are proving fatal in several instances, critics point out.

The erstwhile Chittoor district has a total of 12 national highways, with seven passing through Tirupati district and five through Chittoor district. On average, around 55 pedestrians and motorists lose their lives every month in road accidents in these two districts.

This amounts to nearly 660 deaths annually. About 1,480 people are injured every year, and 8 to 10 percent of them are left with permanent disabilities.

Though proposals were sent to establish trauma care centres at the Chittoor district hospital and area hospitals in Nagari, Palamaner and Kuppam, approvals are still pending. Tirupati district is facing a similar situation.

Officials feel that public representatives from both districts must intervene urgently to ensure sanctioning of trauma care centres and prevent further loss of precious lives.

Focus on taxes, sanitation, P3 model: Collector to PR staff

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUPATI

DISTRICT Collector Dr S Venkateswar said that strong financial resources are essential for the overall development of villages and directed Panchayat Raj officials to complete tax collection as per targets. A district-level review meeting was held on Tuesday at Srinivasa Auditorium, Sri Venkateswara University, under the Panchayat Raj Department.

The meeting focused on tax collection in village panchayats, sanitation management, and implementation of the P3 (Public-Private Partnership) model.



Collector Dr S Venkateswar presenting an award to a staffer of PR department in Tirupati on Tuesday

Panchayat Raj Additional Commissioner Sudhakar Rao, DPO Susila Devi, Assistant Director Sri Lahari, Panchayat Development Officers, Mandal Parishad Development Officers, and other officials attended the meeting. Addressing the officials, the Collector said that negligence in tax collection

would directly affect village development works.

He asked officials to give special attention to collecting house tax, shop tax, and water tax in every village.

The Collector said sanitation and cleanliness are key responsibilities of the Panchayat Raj Department.

Officials were directed to

ensure door-to-door garbage collection, segregation of wet and dry waste, and proper solid waste management without any lapses.

On the P3 model, the Collector said people's participation is important for village development. He said the Government-Public-Private Partnership model would help speed up infrastructure, sanitation, and other developmental works.

Panchayats should take steps to increase public participation and to hold regular reviews on tax collection.

After the meeting, awards were presented to Panchayat Raj staff who showed good performance in the district.

Both TDP and YCP betrayed BCs, says BCY president

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUPATI



(BCY) Party national president Bode Ramachandra Yadav addressing the media in Tirupati on Tuesday

He urged madhupathis and peetadhipathis to meet to protect Hindu dharma.

He slammed Punganur MLA Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy for focusing on land grabs instead of development. Even under the coalition government, Punganur sees no growth.

Rs 100 cr devpt works underway in Chittoor district: Collector



Collector Sumit Kumar speaking at a review meeting in Chittoor on Tuesday

HANS NEWS SERVICE
CHITTOOR

CHITTOOR District Collector Sumit Kumar said that development works worth Rs 100 crore are being taken up across the district. He was speaking at a review meeting on GST implementation held with concerned officials on Tuesday.

The Collector directed officials to ensure that all works taken up by the Housing Department under the PM-AJAY scheme are compulsorily entered on the web portal and that GST registration related to these works is completed fully without delay. He said that delays in GST payment approvals are affecting payments and

World Cancer Day observed



HANS NEWS SERVICE
NELLORE

AN awareness programme on cancer was conducted at Medicover Hospitals, Nellore, to commemorate World Cancer Day. Doctors stated that over 1.4 million new cancer cases are registered in the country every year, and a large percentage of cancer deaths occur due to late detection. They mentioned that many cancers can be prevented through screening and lifestyle changes.

Speaking on the occasion, a surgical oncologist said, "If cancer is detected in the early stages, there is a higher chance of complete cure through surgery. Regular screening is crucial for breast, oral, and cervical cancers."

Medical oncologists Dr G Rangaraman, Dr Shravan Kumar Reddy, and Dr Y Mounika Reddy said, "With the results of modern chemotherapy, along with treatments like targeted therapy and immunotherapy, the results of cancer treatment have improved." Radiation oncologist Dr Lokeshwari explained, "With state-of-the-art radiation therapy, cancer cells can be precisely targeted, thereby reducing side effects."

Surgical oncologists Dr M Ramesh Babu and Dr S Avinash also participated in the programme.

Bridge course training launched at GDC for Women



HANS NEWS SERVICE
SRIKALAHASTHI

A month-long bridge course training programme for degree students was launched under the PM-USHA scheme at the Government Degree & PG College for Women, Srikalahasti. The programme is being conducted by Kautilya Institution, Tirupati, to prepare students for various competitive examinations.

The training covers Mental Ability, Reasoning, English, and Communication Skills, with free study material provided to participants.

College Principal Dr B Rajashankar said the programme would help students prepare for Banking, SSC, Railways, Police, APPSC, and UPSC examinations, besides supporting campus placement readiness.

Kautilya Institution Senior Manager N S Reddy and faculty members Mastan, Jyothi, and Alli Likith are leading the sessions. Dr T Malathi Gabriel is the programme coordinator.

ensure that devotees do not face any inconvenience during the Brahmotsavams.

He further directed that the temple pushkarini should be kept clean and spruced up with attractive painting, rangoli decorations besides illumination and floral arrangements.

He instructed the concerned officials to carry out repairs to the temple vahanams, strengthen the queue lines, and erect arches at major junctions in Tirupati city.

The JEO emphasized that all arrangements such as temporary shelters (choultries), drinking water and Annaprasadam should be completed in advance to

Sri Kapileswara Swamy annual fete from Feb 8-17: TTD

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUPATI

THE annual Brahmotsavams of Sri Kapileswara Swamy at Tirupati will be conducted in a grand manner from February 08 to 17, said TTD Joint Executive Officer Veerabrahman.

The JEO reviewed the arrangements for the Brahmotsavams along with officials concerned at Sri Kapileswara Swamy Temple on Tuesdays.

Speaking on the occasion, the JEO said that Koil Alwar Tirumananjanam will be performed on February 04 ahead of the annual Brahmotsavams, and instructed the officials to make necessary arrangements accordingly.



TTD JEO Veerabrahman along with other officials during a review meeting in Tirupati on Tuesday

- JEO says that Koil Alwar Tirumananjanam will be performed on wednesday ahead of the annual Brahmotsavams
- Directs officials to provide Annaprasadam and badam milk to the devotees on February 15
- Instructs officials to organize devotional and spiritual music programmes

He also directed that Annaprasadam and Badam Milk should be supplied

uninterruptedly to the large number of devotees expected on the occasion of Maha Sivaratri on February 15.

The JEO instructed the of-

ficials to organize devotional and spiritual music programmes to attract devotees.

He further directed that the temple pushkarini should be kept clean and spruced up with attractive painting, rangoli decorations besides illumination and floral arrangements.

He instructed the concerned officials to carry out repairs to the temple vahanams, strengthen the queue lines, and erect arches at major junctions in Tirupati city.

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LOST OF PASSPORT

I, Teluri Samba Siva Reddy S/o. Ayyavar Reddy, R/o. D.No. 7/115, C. Kottappalli, Valur(M), YSR Kadapa Dist., A.P. have lost my Passport Bearing No. X0627033, issued on 20.06.2023 at Doha. while I was taking Xerox at Vallur Bus stand. If anybody found please contact above address.

(TH_44949)

CHANGE OF SURNAME

I, ARIGALA REVATHI (old Name) w/o ARIGALA BHASKAR SAI, R/o flat No:401-A-Block, Ashok Enclave, Korlagunta, Tirupati Dt. A.P. I Have Changed My Sur Name To ARIGALA REVATHI. W/O ARIGALA BHASKAR SAI, Henceforth, I Will Be Known As ARIGALA REVATHI

(TH_44949)

CHANGE OF SURNAME

I, MOOREY SUBBA REDDY (old Name) S/o MOOREY SIDDHA REDDY, R/o Bodireddigari Palli, Motumallu, Rompicherla, Chittoor Dt. A.P. I Have Changed My Surname To MOOREY SUBBA REDDY, S/o MOOREY SIDDHA REDDY, Henceforth, I Will Be Known As MOOREY SUBBA REDDY

(TH_44949)

DOCUMENT MISSING

Missing House Link Document Link Document No: 2864/2009, 2011/2008 And 345/1996, Survey No: 380. New Door No: 13/349-C-22 in the Name of Pagidipalle Ameer, s/o imamulu, T. Velama Vari pali village, Vempalli Mandal, Kadapa District. Please Contact me phone number 812533 7492

(TH_44949)

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THE HEERALA

US tariff cut brings cheer to aqua sector: Atchchanna

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

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

While the US market

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

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

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

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

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

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

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

Opposition YSRCP has been targeting the coalition



- 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

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

The Cabinet also decided to increase the retailer margin by approximately 1 per cent of the MRP on IMFL and FL, including 180 ml IMFL bottles, beer, wine and RTDs. The price hike is expected to generate approximately Rs 1,391 crore in additional annual revenue for the state. At the same time, the withdrawal of additional retail excise tax will reduce the financial burden on bars by about Rs 340 crore a year.

Home minister slams Jagan, stresses TDP's discipline

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

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA



HOME minister Vangalapudi Anitha on Tuesday said there was no comparison between the governance of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and that of former chief minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, asserting that people were closely watching recent developments in the state.

Speaking to the media during an informal interaction at the Secretariat, Anitha said the government had taken steps to ensure that party cadres exercised restraint and did not allow anger to spill over, keeping the state's development as the top priority. She said leaders were briefed on facts and reminded of development goals to prevent them from falling into what she termed the "YSRCP trap".

The home minister claimed that TDP cadres had been kept under control for the past 20 months, which helped maintain a positive atmosphere in the state. While acknowledging the frustration among party workers, she said Chief Minister Naidu had consistently

counselled them against unlawful actions and guided them at the right time.

Recalling past incidents, Anitha alleged that Jagan had provoked attacks on the TDP office by giving obscene meaning to 'bosadik', and later justified the outrage among his supporters by citing their anger. She said that despite continued use of offensive language by YSRCP leaders, the TDP leadership was still advising restraint.

Accusing Jagan of promoting violence and vandalism to intimidate people, Anitha questioned whether he had ever reprimanded his leaders for abusive language or violent acts. She said people had understood the difference between what she described as "criminal thinking" and "visionary thinking".

Warning of strict action, the home minister said any attempt by the YSRCP to create unrest in the state would be dealt with firmly under the law.

She cautioned that the police would adopt a tough approach against political rowdies, adding that such deterrent action would ensure that even the thought of wrongdoing instilled fear.

Police acted swiftly and rescued the two SFI leaders

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

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

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

Police acted swiftly and rescued the two SFI leaders

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

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

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

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

Student organisations have been raising concerns for the past several months over alleged irregularities at Mohan Babu University, particularly regarding fee collections. They had submitted several representations to the state government seeking an inquiry and justice for students.

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

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



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

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

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

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

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

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

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

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

JSP's Bolisetty quits party role over environmental PIL

VASU POTNURU
VIJAKHAPATNAM

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

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

In a letter addressed to the JSP high command,

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

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

Satyanarayana wrote to

JSP chief Pawan Kalyan that the PIL, filed in 2020, concerns critical pollution issues, including untreated sewage, pharmaceutical effluents and industrial contamination in north coastal Andhra Pradesh.

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



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

government and Jana Sena as a key alliance partner.

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

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

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

vert attention from the core objective of environmental protection.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

No licence renewal for businesses violating zonal classification

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

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

'Experience the Magic of Bollywood' event in city

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

Paperless property registration through Kaveri 2.0 now...

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

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

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



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

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

SERVICES AVAILABLE ON KAVERI 2.0

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

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

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

Excise dept involved in bribery, transfer racket, alleges Ashoka

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

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

Speaking in the Legislative Assembly, he said that in the state government, the Excise Department is the No. 1 department in corruption. Irregularities are taking place in forms such as bribes for licenses and fixed amounts for transfers. Congress leaders who are opposing the VBG Ramji scheme are talking about Mahatma Gandhi's ideals. However, the Congress party is not following Gandhi's ideals.

In a WhatsApp message from government officials, it has been officially instructed that since the CM and Dy CM are participating in a housing department program in Hubballi, more people will come, so liquor

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

The minister is silent because monthly fees come from officials in the scandal happening in the Excise Department. The president of the liquor sellers' association, Guruswamy, has issued a press statement saying he will complain to Rahul Gandhi about the irregularities. "In the department, targets are given every year to collect money, from licenses to

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

An audio related to the Excise Department scandal has come out. In it, allegations have been made against Excise Minister R.B. Thimmappa and his son. Yet, the minister says it's not him. Until June 2025, there are 3,267 hotel restaurants under CL-7, 4,342 MRP's under CL-2, 3,667 bars under CL-9, 1,088 under CL-11C, 316 clubs under CL-4, and 86 star hotels under CL-6. In total, there are 14,229 institutions supplying liquor. Bribes of Rs 15-20,000 are collected from each shop every month. That means, on average, 21 crore rupees per month and 252 crore rupees per year.

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

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

BENGALURU

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

The action was taken based on a complaint

filed by the boy's father, police said. According to police, the complainant claimed that at around 9.40 pm on January 31, his 15-year-old minor son, fell from the seventh floor of the apartment, where he was residing, and died.

In this regard, a case has been registered at Rajarajeshwari Nagar police station. "During the course of investigation, the police examined the matter from various angles and

found that on January 31, the deceased minor, along with his friends, had consumed alcohol and smoked at the establishment (pub)," a senior police officer said.

Therefore, for allowing a minor to consume alcohol, a case has been registered against the owners and staff of the concerned company under the provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act and the Karnataka Excise Act. The investigation is on, police added.

CM directs officials to grant tax exemption to 'Landlord' movie

BENGALURU

CHIEF Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday instructed the authorities concerned to grant tax exemption to the recently released Kannada film 'Landlord', which he said is based on the themes of social inequality and caste-based exploitation.

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

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

The chief minister said it is his belief



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

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

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

Govt moves resolution to repeal VB-G RAM G Act, reinstate MGNREGA

BENGALURU

The Congress government in Karnataka on Tuesday moved a resolution in the Legislative Assembly urging the Centre to immediately repeal the new rural employment legislation VB-G RAM G Act and reinstate the UPA-era MGNREGA in its original form, amid strong objections from opposition JDS.

The resolution moved by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said the 'VB-G RAM G Act, "unilaterally" enacted by the Centre, is "detrimental to the basic ideals of



federalism and the right to livelihood of the rural people".

"With a view to protecting the right to life of the rural people of Karnataka, this House urges the central government to immediately repeal the VIKSIT Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeekika Mission (Gramin) (VB-GRAM-G) Act, which is against the federal principle, is a severe burden on the state exchequer and is against the principle of decentralization, and has taken away the powers and rights of the Gram Panchayats; and to reinstate the Mahatma

which are the bedrock of Indian democracy, it said, "This House takes serious view of the repeal of the MGNREGA, which was a Sanjeevini (something that gives life) for the rural poor and an integral part of rural life."

"This House strongly opposes this move of the Centre (of bringing in the VB-G RAM G act repealing MGNREGA)," it added. BJP members led by Leader of Opposition R. Ashoka immediately took strong objection to it and said, "Don't say the House opposes, say the Congress government opposes.

Don't make us party to

this."

However, the chief minister, repeatedly asserting "this House", continued reading the resolution, asking the opposition members to raise their objections during the discussion. This angered the opposition members, who shouted slogans against the government, some even accused the Congress of "loot" under MGNREGA.

The constant sloganering by the BJP members disturbed Siddaramaiah, who initiated the debate in favour of the resolution. Enraged CM asked the

ruling Congress members to react, leading to chaos. Speaker U T Khader then adjourned the House for lunch.

The resolution reads the VIKSIT Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeekika Mission (Gramin) Act's abbreviation as "VB-GRAM-G" Act, instead of the actual VB-G RAM G Act. BJP criticising this has said, the ruling party has an "allergy" to name 'Ram'.

The Karnataka cabinet had earlier decided not to accept the VB-G RAM G Act, replacing the MGNREGA, and to take up a legal battle against it.

Reduction in US tariffs is big relief for Indian economy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Prioritise rejuvenation of 'Buckingham Canal'



DR D SREENIVASULU

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

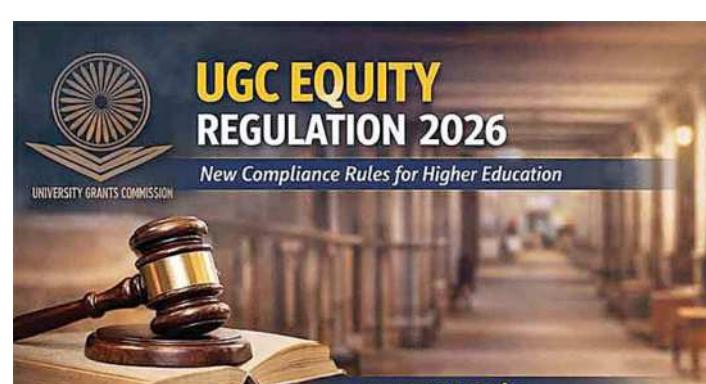
(The writer is a retired IAS Officer)

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

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

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

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



LETTERS

Let us join hands to tackle cancer

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

Jubel D'Cruz, Mumbai

Quality health ensures longevity

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

K V Raghuram, Wayanad

Need to focus on preventive health

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

S M Jeeva, Chennai-32

Protect all vulnerable groups

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

M Barathi, Bengaluru-560076

Healthy longevity: Onus on govt

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

A Myilsami, Coimbatore-402

Old-age homes and eroding humane values

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

K Parvathy, Mysuru

thehansreader@gmail.com



BENGALURU ONLINE

Paperless property registration through Kaveri 2.0 now..

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

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

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

DR BHASKAR NATH BISWAL

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

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

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

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

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

However, the very stringency that makes the regulation promising has also exposed significant demerits that threaten to undermine its legitimacy. The most contentious issue is the 'uni-directional' definition of victimhood. Regulation 3(c) defines caste-based discrimination exclusively as acts committed against members of SC, ST, and OBC categories. Critics argue that this phrasing creates a legal vacuum where students from the 'General Category' are effectively deemed incapable of being victims of bias. This

perceived 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.

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

CM targets natural farming expansion in state by 2031

- Aims to bring 40 lakh farmers under natural farming
- Launches Digi Rythu Bazaar, APAIMS, Kisan Drone apps
- Directs officials to counter El Niño impact

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VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu launches apps related to agriculture and allied sectors at the Secretariat on Tuesday

CHIEF Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday directed officials to launch a comprehensive programme to make Andhra Pradesh the country's largest natural farming State. He said 1.8 million farmers were currently practicing natural farming on two million acres and set a target of covering four million farmers and five million acres by 2030-31.

Reviewing agriculture and allied sectors at the Secretariat, Naidu stressed the need to reduce the use of chemical fertilisers to cut cultivation costs and improve farmers' incomes. He called for certi-

cation and traceability systems to ensure product quality and market credibility.

He directed officials to implement these facilities by April and complete them statewide by June. He also suggested encouraging agriculture students to take up natural farming and said training programmes would be conducted with Subhash Palekar.

The Chief Minister emphasised that Andhra Pradesh's farm products must secure a strong presence in national and international markets. He instruct-

ed officials to take proactive steps to prevent losses due to the impact of El Niño and prepare alternative crop plans in drought-prone areas. He also directed the use of AI-based advisory services such as 'Bharat Vistar'.

Naidu said water scarcity in Rayalaseema had been addressed through efficient management and that major reservoirs were full, ensuring sufficient irrigation. Officials informed him that trade agreements with the US and EU had opened new export opportunities for shrimp, dried chillies, mangoes, rice,

and processed foods. He stressed strict adherence to quality standards.

The Chief Minister directed the establishment of a Cocoa City over 500 acres in Eluru district with international standards. He encouraged intercropping in mango, cocoa, cashew, and coconut plantations and called for increased focus on banana exports. He also approved saffron cultivation in Lumbasingi under the PPP model with tribal participation.

He made registration of aquaculture farming mandatory and directed that egg

supply contracts for schools and Anganwadis be given to farmers. He said State policies should align with those of the Centre.

Naidu proposed organising crop-based festivals in different regions to promote tourism and stressed the need to reduce logistics costs. He suggested discussions with the Centre for special railway wagons to transport farm produce.

He directed the establishment and modernisation of Rythu Bazaars and approved a flower market in Vijayawada under the PPP model.

During the review, he launched the Digi Rythu Bazaar, APAIMS, and Kisan Drone apps, enabling farmers to book machinery and drones. About 9,512 machines have been made available. He instructed officials to educate farmers on crop registration and promptly resolve their doubts. Agriculture minister K Atchanna Naidu and senior officials attended.

CM happy over turnaround of Vizag steel plant



Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu holds a review on Visakhapatnam steel plant at the Secretariat on Tuesday

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VIJAYAWADA

achieved unprecedented progress in the last one-and-a-half years, moving from heavy losses to a profitable path. Hot metal production has risen sharply to 19,401 tonnes per day, compared to just 9,215 tonnes per day during the second quarter of 2024-25. The significant increase in output was attributed to the operation of all three blast furnaces.

The capacity utilisation of the plant has reached a record 94 percent, a sharp rise from about 45 percent during the second quarter of 2024-25.

Financially, RINL has staged a strong recovery, turning around from a loss of Rs 486 crore in September 2024 to a profit of Rs 54 crore in January 2026. Officials also noted that the Rs 11,000 crore

assistance extended by the Central government played a crucial role in stabilising the plant, and that RINL's credit rating has improved.

The Chief Minister advised the management to introduce new policies across all departments to further strengthen the plant. He emphasised the efficient utilisation of workers and employees to achieve better results and said that management, workforce and governments must work together to take Visakhapatnam Steel to greater heights. Recalling the reforms implemented in Singareni during the United State, he expressed confidence that similar cooperation would ensure sustained success. He assured full support from the State government to Visakhapatnam Steel.

Cabinet nod for panel to probe TTD laddu issue

Continued from P1

Hence, the government ordered an independent inquiry and would direct the Commission to submit its report at the earliest.

Ministers discussed changes in tender norms for the procurement of ghee and questioned why former TTD Executive Officer Anil Kumar Singh did not object to these relaxations. The Cabinet reviewed the 2022 Central Food Technological Research Institute (CFTRI) report indicating adulteration, which was allegedly ignored by officials Balaji and Subrahmanyam. It was also noted that the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) report confirmed the presence of animal fat in the ghee.

Several ministers questioned the alleged use of fake documents to secure tenders and the sidelining of cooperative dairies in favour of private and bogus suppliers. The Cabinet directed the Commission to examine these aspects in detail.

Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan sought clarification on whether former chairman YV Subba Reddy's role was mentioned in the SIT report and whether animal fat was cited in the charge sheet.

Officials said Page 35 of the charge sheet clearly referred to it. Ministers stressed that identifying the main conspirators was essential and said the SIT failed to expose the real masterminds. Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu said the inquiry was ordered to bring the truth before the public and ensure strict action. He assured that further action would be taken immediately after receiving the commission's report.

Addressing the media, Finance Minister Payyavula Keshav said the SIT had submitted a charge-sheet and a confidential 11-page report recommending action against erring committee members and senior TTD officials. He said the charge-sheet was filed in court and formal cognizance was awaited.

Keshav said the Cabinet found serious irregularities in tender relaxations, quality control failures, and dilution of safeguards. He said tender conditions were relaxed without proper technical evaluation or field assessment. Citing the SIT, he said action was recommended against Balaji, Dharma Reddy, and Singh for deliberate omissions. Ministers Kolu Parthasarathi, Nadendla Manohar, and Y Satyakumar Yadav also spoke.

He further said that the government decided to constitute a short-term administrative committee to examine procedural lapses and ensure natural justice. Officials facing allegations will be given an opportunity to explain before disciplinary action.

Keshav said the government was following due process and not acting out of political vendetta.

He said the SIT probe was nearing completion and that only extracts had been received so far. Conclusions could be drawn only after examining the full charge sheet. He clarified that the inquiry was not targeted at individuals but aimed at restoring the integrity of the TTD system. He also warned against politicizing Tirumala.

On whether the government still believed animal fat was present in the ghee, he said decisions were based solely on evidence, particularly the NDDB CALF report, and not on assumptions. Ministers Kolu Parthasarathi, Nadendla Manohar, and Y Satyakumar Yadav also spoke.

NAIDU CALLS US TRADE PACT HISTORIC

Continued from P1

He observed that the pact would significantly boost Indian exports and open new avenues for trade and investment. "Under the leadership of PM Modi, India is steadily consolidating its position as a global economic powerhouse," Naidu said in his tweet.

He also highlighted that the agreement would generate immense opportunities for the country's youth and farmers, including those in Andhra Pradesh. According to him, improved market access and stronger trade relations would help create jobs, encourage entrepreneurship, and strengthen the agricultural sector.

The Chief Minister expressed confidence that the India-US trade partnership would play a key role in driving economic development and strengthening bilateral relations in the coming years.

CII-Yi dialogue spotlights AP-Oz ties, youth and women-led innovation

- CII-AP and Yi Amaravati hold an interactive session with Australian Consul General Silai Zaki, following Minister Nara Lokesh's Australia visit that boosted bilateral engagement
- Talks focus on creating pathways for women entrepreneurs and young leaders in sectors like healthcare, green energy, clean tech, education, tourism, and sustainability
- Emphasis was laid on promoting AP's artisans, arts, crafts, and handlooms through cultural showcases, diaspora platforms in Australia, and global partnerships

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VIJAYAWADA

An interactive session of Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)-Andhra Pradesh, in association with the Young Indians (Yi) Amaravati Chapter, with Silai Zaki, Consul General of Australia, Chennai in Vijayawada on Tuesday

Discussions focused on building pathways for women entrepreneurs and young leaders from AP to engage with Australian institutions and innovation ecosystems. Key sectors such as healthcare, green energy, clean technologies, education, tourism, and sustainability were deliberated upon. In the tourism and cultural space, participants examined ways to empower local artisans of AP by enabling their participation in national and international platforms, particularly within Indian Diaspora communities in Australia. Cultural showcases, curated ex-

hibitions, and tourism-linked events were highlighted as avenues to enhance global visibility for the State's arts, crafts, handlooms, and creative industries.

Welcoming the gathering, Yi-Amaravati Chapter chairman Balakrishna Chittineni said the interaction encouraged youth and women leaders to think globally and explore international entrepreneurial opportunities. Addressing the session, Silai Zaki emphasised Australia's strong interest in deepening people-to-people and business connections with AP, noting immense scope for collaboration in Andhra Pradesh.

...in final stages: Goyal

Continued from P1

"We will be shortly issuing a joint statement by both countries along with the details, which we will be shortly inking between the United States of America and India. And as soon as the final understanding of the deal is inked, and the joint statement is finalised, technical processes are completed, full details will be shared" he added. "But I can assure every Indian that the details of this deal will make every Indian proud," he further said. He did not share a timeline, but a government source said the joint statement is expected within this week.

NEW BAGGAGE RULES COME INTO EFFECT

Continued from P1

Also, the government has raised the limit for passengers bringing duty-free imported goods into India from Rs 50,000 to Rs 75,000. Under the new rules, a resident or a tourist of Indian origin arriving in India other than by land, shall be allowed clearance free of duty articles, up to Rs 75,000, if such articles are carried on the person or in the bona fide accompanied baggage of the passenger. A tourist of foreign origin, not being an infant, arriving in India, shall be allowed duty-free clearance of articles up to the value of Rs 25,000.

INDIA PLEDGED ZERO-TARIFF BARRIERS IN US DEAL: TRUMP

Continued from P1

A lot remains unclear about the terms of the deal, but Trump said New Delhi has agreed to several measures, including stopping Russian oil trade, reducing tariffs and non-tariff barriers to "zero", and buying over \$500 billion of US goods, including energy, technology, agricultural products, and coal. Tariff barriers are taxes levied on imported goods, making them more expensive to protect local industries. Non-tariff barriers, meanwhile, are indirect restrictions like quotas, subsidies, licensing, standards, and labelling rules that limit trade without direct taxes, often through complex regulations, costs, or delays, affecting quantity, price, or market access.

Both aim to support domestic economies, but tariffs are explicit taxes, whereas non-tariff barriers use policy and procedures, making them more subtle and complex. Trump's claim that India has agreed to "reduce tariffs and non-tariff barriers against the United States, to ZERO", has not been confirmed by New Delhi. Moreover, both parties have not explained on which lines the barriers would be reduced, if at all, to zero. Largely, Trump's language signifies an in-principle commitment to lower or phase out duties on selected US products rather than an immediate elimination of all import duties.

'India got best deal'

Continued from P1

"Rahul Gandhi ko kya mirchi lagti hai? (What is Rahul Gandhi's problem?)" The Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha "will have to answer to the people about what he wants to achieve with his negative mentality," Goyal said. "I saw some Opposition leaders asking, 'Why did Donald Trump announce the deal?' The US imposed reciprocal tariffs on India, so it should have announced the removal," he added.

"Friends, we all know, and the entire country knows, how the Prime Minister consistently cares for the welfare of our farmers, our brothers and sisters involved in animal husbandry, and the dairy sector. He protects their interests at every step," he told the media. Describing the broader impact of the agreement, Goyal said the agreement unlocks unprecedented opportunities for farmers, MSMEs, entrepreneurs, and skilled workers to make in India for the world. Design in India for the world, and Innovate in India for the world," he said, adding that it would also help India access advanced technology from the US.

"It is not just a trade deal – it is a historic turning point that will reshape India-US relations and accelerate our journey towards Vitsit Bharat 2047," he added. The minister also took a swipe at the Congress, recalling

Oppn stages walkout demanding debate on deal

Continued from P1

As Opposition members started protesting in the House, Leader of the House J P Nadda said the US President was informed about the reduction in tariffs on Indian goods through a post on social media and also spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Nadda alleged that the Opposition's frustration was coming out, and it had started seeing bad even in good things. "I want to assure the house that the government is ready to discuss the Indo-US trade deal and provide all minute details of the deal. The government will come

PM buckled under pressure to sell out farmers' blood: Rahul

Continued from P1

out with a suo motu statement on the trade deal.

As the Opposition members continued raising slogans alleging that the interests of the country were being bartered, Chairman C P Radhakrishnan said, when the government is making a statement, and they should listen. He said the government is ready to discuss, but the opposition members are creating an uproar. Opposition members were on their feet, raising slogans against the government, as they moved towards the front row. Nadda said the government will come out with a suo motu statement today itself.

'Father of all deals'

NEW DELHI

FORMER Ambassador of India to Poland Dr Deepak Vohra on Tuesday 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 negotiations and termed it the "father of all deals".

Explaining India's diplomatic approach, Dr Vohra referred to what he described as "duck diplomacy". He said the concept reflects calmness on the surface while intense efforts continue behind the scenes. "If you look at a duck on the surface, everything appears calm and quiet, but beneath the surface its feet are paddling furiously. That is how India has handled

the negotiations," he said.

Drawing a historical comparison, Dr Vohra likened US President Donald Trump's leadership style to that of Roman Emperor Caligula, quoting the Latin phrase "Oderint dum metuunt (Let them hate, so long as they fear)." According to him, President Trump prioritises respect and popularity over being loved. He said India responded to this leadership style with restraint and strategic engagement.

Dr Vohra added that India has largely achieved its core objectives in the trade agreement without compromising sensitive sectors.

ing India's decision to stay out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). "We also remember the large-scale trade deal, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which Congress had pushed India into in 2011.

The Congress committed a grave mistake in negotiating an FTA with China, but PM Modi protected the country by refusing to join the RCEP. That decision brought relief across the nation," he said.

Goyal said the government had intended to make a statement in Parliament on the deal but was unable to do so due to disruptions. "Normally, we would have wanted to speak about this in Parliament, but we all witnessed that disgraceful scene," he said, strongly criticising the Opposition's conduct and adding that it forced the government to brief the media instead.

The India-US agreement comes a week after New Delhi signed a landmark trade pact with the European Union. PM Modi on Monday confirmed the breakthrough after speaking with Trump.

"Wonderful to speak with my dear friend President Trump. Delighted that Made in India products will now have a reduced tariff of 18%," Modi said in a post on X, thanking Trump "on behalf of the 1.4 billion people of India."



Today is World Cancer Day 2026

A simple vaccine, lifesaving impact

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

D VAISHNAVI

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

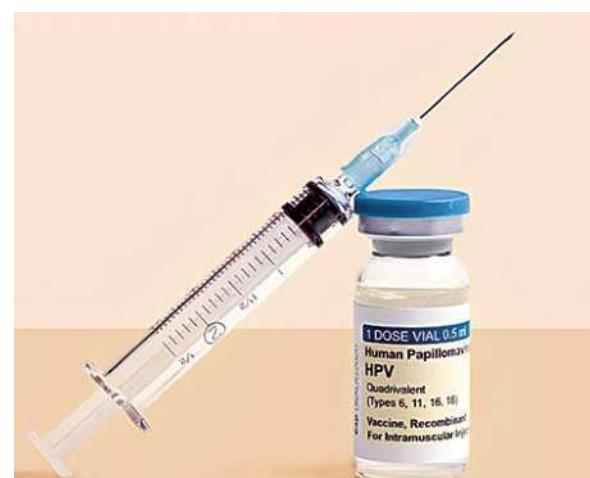
Drawing from over four years of frontline cancer care, Dr. Tula says the biggest danger with HPV is how quietly it spreads. "People think of it as just another infection, but HPV is actually responsible for multiple cancers. High-risk strains like 16 and 18 alone cause nearly 70% of cervical cancers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

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

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



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



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

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

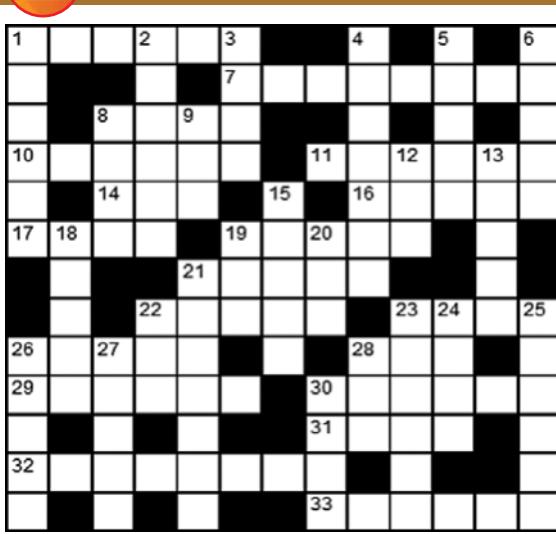
Explaining the options available in India, he says, "Gardasil protects against four strains and costs around Rs 3,800 per dose, while Gardasil 9 covers more strains at about Rs 10,300 per dose. Government programs are increasingly offering it free, though availability differs by region."

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

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

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

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

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

DOWN

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



Solution to February 3

SUDOKU



Solution to February 3

Mental well-being tips for people living with breast cancer

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

ASKARI JAFFER



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

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

Meera, a 47-year-old woman

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

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

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

Dr. M Vamshi Krishna, Director and Head of Department

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

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

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

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

CELEBRATING STRENGTH, INSPIRING SURVIVORS



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



being directed by well known director R S Durai Senthilkumar.

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

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

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

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

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



KSDL produce record 4,894.77 MT soaps in Jan

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

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

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

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

Charmadi Ghat forest fire rages amid strong winds

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

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

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

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

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

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

Owner of Rottweiler booked after it mauled woman during morning walk

BENGALURU

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

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

and biting her repeatedly on the face and neck.

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

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



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

the incident has left her deeply traumatised, Dubey

added. Recalling the incident,

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

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

"My wife is in deep trauma and has suffered severe mental shock. As per doctors, the scars on her face and body will remain for life," he added. Following a complaint, a case was registered against the pet owner Amareesh Reddy under Sections 117 (3) (voluntarily causing grievous hurt), 125 (act endangering life or personal safety of others) and 291 (negligent conduct with respect to animal) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and subsequently, he was held in connection with the incident, police added.

Corruption charges

Action initiated against all 25 gram panchayats of Srinivasapura

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

With the taluk panchayat currently under Congress control, the action has assumed additional significance.

Observers believe the intervention of the Upa Lokayukta could pave the way for long-awaited reforms and greater accountability in rural administration.

Kerala lottery tickets worth Rs 72,000 seized near state border



HANS NEWS SERVICE
MANGALURU

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Awareness march organised for World Cancer Day

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Seven held after dispute over alleged illicit relationship leads to murder

HANS NEWS SERVICE
SIDDAPURA

SEVEN people, including a self-styled astrologer, were arrested following a violent incident over an alleged extramarital relationship that left one person dead and two others critically injured in Averaguppa village of Siddapur taluk in Uttara Kannada district, police said on Tuesday. The incident occurred on Monday when a group including Suchitra, her father Lokanath Choulappa, astrologer Kamalakar Bhat, and others allegedly attacked Mahesh Naik, his brother Vasantha Naik (43) and a neighbour identified as Kumar after an argument erupted over allegations involving an illicit relationship between Suchitra and Bhat, officials said.

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

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

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

HANS NEWS SERVICE
DAVANGERE

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

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

officials are hopeful that by the end of February this year, more panchayats will join this list, said District Health Officer Dr. Shanmukhappa S.

Lifestyle-related illnesses such as diabetes, poor dietary habits, and stressful living conditions have increased vulnerability to TB. People with weakened immunity are more prone to contracting the disease. However, government hospitals across the district are ensuring uninterrupted treatment and monitoring for all diagnosed TB patients.

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

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



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

Speaking to media, DHO Shanmukhappa said that under the Nikshay Mitra initiative, 1,035 TB patients are provided monthly food kits and financial assistance of Rs. 1,000 each. So far, Channagiri has 17 TB-free panchayats, Davangere 22, Harihar 7, Honnali 7, Nyamati 5 and Jagalur 3. By 2025, the district had

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

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

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

-Benedicte Westre Skog, COO of Norway Chess.

T20 WC BOYCOTT ROW

Broadcasters may move court against PCB

KARACHI/NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

"Secondly, while the In-



ICC, PCB open 'back-channel talks'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

T20 WC: Ticket sales of third stage begin

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

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

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

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

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

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

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-

ICC Under-19 World Cup

India favourites against Afghanistan in semis clash

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



Match starts at 1 pm IST

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 Vihann 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 Shaheen.

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

TEAMS

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

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

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

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

PRAYAGRAJ

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"The obvious primary

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

Aafan Khan, was booked under various sections of the BNS, POCSO Act, IT Act and the UP Prohibition of Unlawful Religious Conversion Act. The petitioners claimed that though they were not co-accused in the FIR, they were targeted by a mob allegedly in collusion with the police.

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



MP cough syrup deaths

4-yr-old dies months after being in coma

BETUL



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

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

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

US-India trade deal

BJP attacking farmers again, govt must answer: Akhilesh

LUCKNOW

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

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

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

Yadav said such policies would not only harm farm-

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

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

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

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

Yadav called for organised

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

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

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

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

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

Sabarimala gold case

Uproar in Kerala Assembly as UDF alleges CMO interference

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

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

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

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

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

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

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

-Ashwini Vaishnaw, Union Electronics and IT Minister



BIZ BRIEFS

Skoda clocks sales milestone

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

Amazon's RD sales grew 2.5X

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

EPAM at Agentathon

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

CareEdge's new report

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

KMAMC's new scheme

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

Rupee skyrockets 122ps to close at 90.27/\$

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

STT hike effect on markets to subside soon

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Ravi Teja cheers Team 'Sumathi Sathakam'

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

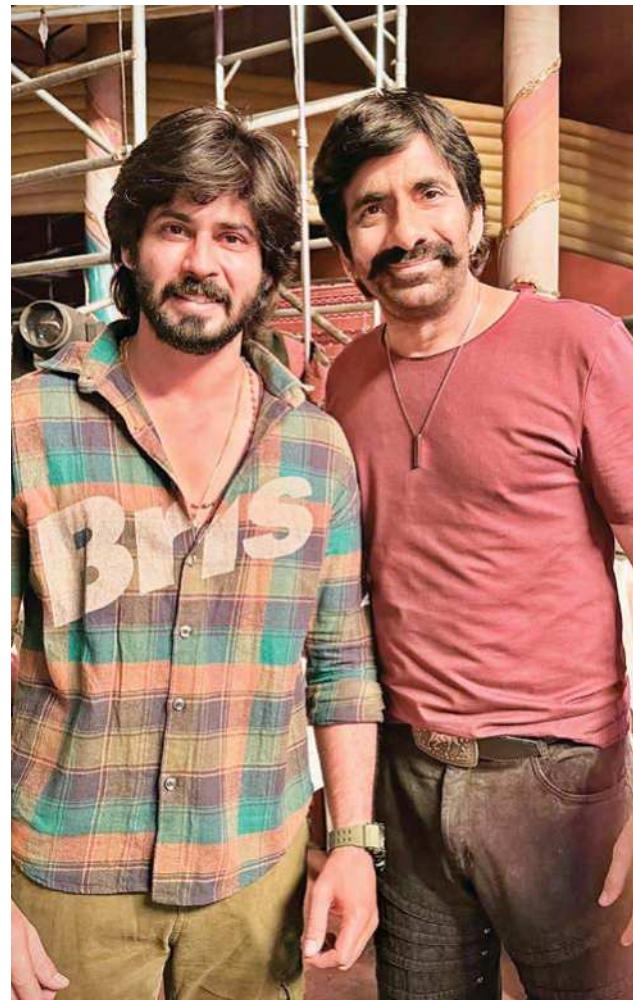
The first look, teaser, songs, and promotional content of 'Sumathi Sathakam' have already received an encouraging response from audiences. Amardeep Chowdary's energetic dance moves in the songs have been widely appreciated, while Subhash Anand's music adds strong emotional and entertainment value to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

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

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

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

During the college

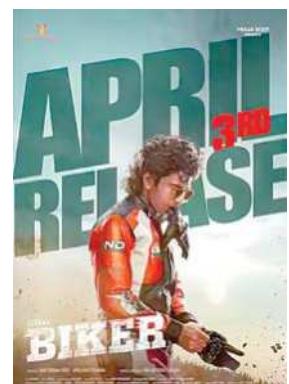


Sharwanand's 'Biker' to hit screens worldwide on April 3

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

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

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



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

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

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

showed, and it is bigger than what Telugu Cinema has seen until now! To this kind of an experience, to this kind of a scale," it said, and further added, "We want to give you a product that races in your hearts, pumps up your adrenaline, and makes you breathless! Biker stands postponed, not just to give you a film but an experience like never before. BIKER is coming to theatres in 3D, 4DX and many more formats. Tighten your helmets. You are in for a ride of a lifetime."

For the unaware, actor Sharwanand plays a bike racer in this upcoming film, which was initially being referred to as 'Sharwa36'. Sources close to the unit of the film say that Sharwanand will be seen as a skilled motorcycle racer in the film.

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

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.

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'.

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'.

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



Sai Abhyankar responded to the post of the production house, saying, "Super excited and pumped working with @dhanushkraja 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', had already welcomed actress Sreeela on board the unit on January 30 this year. The production house had welcomed Sreeela, saying, "You didn't see this coming. Welcoming the dazzling damsel @sreeela14 on board 'D55'."

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

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

#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 Srikant, Mohamad 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."

AGS

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

WISHING actor Simalbarasan 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 poruthukong'. 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 Simalbarasan would be, Ashwath had replied, "What all you liked in my films 'Dragon' and 'Oh My Kaduvul', 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 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

#STR52.

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