



THE Hans India



At least one out of form batter to be dropped
The Indian team management may drop at least one among three out-of-form batters and revisit its one dimensional template of playing too many left-handers in the top-order, indicated head coach Gautam Gambhir's understudies. **P10**

Life must be protected, not 'pactually' abandoned
Whether it is the Constitutional law or criminal law, suicide cannot be accepted under any circumstances. Life is for living. No one has the right to die, but rather a duty to live and let others live. The recent Supreme Court's dismissal of the appeal affirms a crucial. **P6**

Finance Minister asks banks to refocus on core business
Articulating the strategic vision of the Union Budget while sharply calling out mis-selling by banks, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday urged lenders to refocus on their core business and place customers at the centre of financial. **P11**

Saiyami Kher embraces vulnerability in Vikram Phadnis' upcoming social drama
Actress Saiyami Kher is set to surprise audiences with a softer and more emotionally driven performance in filmmaker Vikram Phadnis' upcoming yet-untitled social drama, where she will be seen exploring a more vulnerable side of her acting journey. **P12**

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WINDOWS
First-time Cong MLAs seek Cabinet berths ahead of reshuffle

BENGALURU: A group of first-time Congress MLAs in Karnataka has written to senior party leaders, including Rahul Gandhi and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, seeking representation in the state Cabinet during the proposed reshuffle.

In a joint representation addressed to the Congress high command and the state leadership, including Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, the legislators urged that at least five first-time MLAs be inducted as ministers.

"As you are aware, the people of Karnataka have elected 38 members to the legislative assembly from the Indian National Congress for the first time and thereby sent out a clear message that they want to see new young faces in the Legislature," the MLAs said in their letter.

The development came on the day Congress general secretary and Karnataka in charge Randeep Singh Surjewala is in Bengaluru to attend 'MGNREGA Bachao' event.

The MLAs pointed out that when the 34-member ministry was formed under Siddaramaiah's leadership, no first-time MLA was given an opportunity to serve in the Cabinet.

"That being the case, it is justified that the first time MLAs are also accommodated in the cabinet," the letter stated. Describing the move as the "need of the hour", the legislators said young and proactive representatives should be given administrative responsibility.

"It is the need of the hour that young dynamic and proactive first-time MLAs are provided an opportunity to serve as ministers in the cabinet," they said. The legislators urged the party leadership to ensure fair representation in the event of a reshuffle.

"We therefore request you to ensure that at least five first-time MLAs are accommodated as ministers in Karnataka, during the reshuffle," the letter added.

The signatories argued that inducting newcomers into ministerial positions was not unprecedented and noted that in several states, first-time MLAs had been appointed as Chief Ministers or ministers.

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We are protesting against their shameless protest

India unveils first counter-terrorism policy Prahaar

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

THE government on Monday unveiled the country's first counter-terrorism policy, "Prahaar", setting out a multi-layered strategy based on "zero tolerance", intelligence-led prevention and disruption of extremist violence that aims to deny terrorists, their financiers and supporters access to funds, weapons and safe havens.

The policy unveiled by the home ministry is based

India has since long been affected by sponsored terrorism from across the border, with Jihadi terror outfits as well as their frontal organisations continuing to plan, coordinate, facilitate and execute terror attacks in India. India has been on the target of global terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which have been trying to incite violence in the country through sleeper cells



on seven key pillars to counter the terror threats emanating from India or abroad -- prevention, responses, aggregating internal capacities, human rights and "Rule of Law"-based processes, attenuating the conditions enabling terrorism including radicalisation, aligning and shaping the international

efforts to counter terrorism and recovery and resilience through a whole-of-society approach.

"There has been a history of sporadic instability in the immediate neighbourhood of India, which has often given rise to ungoverned spaces. Besides, a few countries in the region have sometimes used terrorism as an instrument of State policy," the document said, without naming Pakistan.

ity, nationality or civilisation.

"India has since long been affected by sponsored terrorism from across the border, with Jihadi terror outfits as well as their frontal organisations continuing to plan, coordinate, facilitate and execute terror attacks in India. India has been on the target of global terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which have been trying to incite violence in the country through sleeper cells."

India has always denounced terrorism and its use by any actor for achieving any stated or unstated ends unambiguously and unequivocally," it added. Stating that India has consistently stood by the victims of terrorism and has been steadfast in its belief that there can be no justification whatsoever for violence in the world, the document said it is this principled approach that informs New Delhi's policy of "zero tolerance" against terrorism.

Police busts global drug racket, arrests 5

- 18 lakh psychotropic tablets worth Rs 9 crore in the illicit market seized; the case dates back to Oct 7 last year, when a team of the crime branch acted on specific intelligence and laid a trap in Sarita Vihar



- Abid disclosed that he procured the tablets from Javed, his relative and son-in-law. Khan was arrested on October 30 and during questioning, named Sunil Kumar, owner of Prahlad Logistics in Samalka

United Kingdom and seized over 18 lakh psychotropic tablets worth Rs 9 crore in the illicit market, an officer said on Monday.

Five people have been arrested in this connection with the case, which exposed an organised pharmaceutical drug network that operated through logistics firms, courier services and export consignments to smuggle prohibited medicines abroad.

An FIR was filed and further investigation was initiated, during which the police unravelled the supply chain of the syndicate. Abid disclosed that he procured the tablets from Javed Khan, his relative and son-in-law. Khan was arrested on October 30 and during questioning, named Sunil Kumar, owner of Prahlad Logistics in Samalka, as his source.

Sunil Kumar was arrested on November 2, last year and he, in turn, disclosed the name of Vishnu Dutt Sharma as the supplier. Sharma, who works as an exporter, was also arrested on November 2.

He revealed further links to Vikash Singh alias Ishwar Singh and TC Sedana. Vikash Singh was arrested on November 6. Proceedings are underway to declare another associate, Naushad alias Bablu, a proclaimed offender.

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

THE Delhi Police has dismantled an international drug trafficking syndicate with alleged links to the

Series of bomb threats

Security intensified at Delhi Metro stations, prominent sites

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

SECURITY has been tightened at all metro stations and prominent location across Delhi after a series of bomb threats were received via emails, an official said on Monday. Multiple institutions, including the Delhi Secretariat, Delhi Assembly, Red Fort and two schools, received bomb threats emails earlier in the day, which were later declared hoaxes following extensive searches by security agencies.

"Our cyber teams are trying to trace the IP addresses using



which some miscreants are issuing bomb threats. Such criminals are using Virtual Private Network (VPN) to send emails to mislead police investigation. But our experts will find out the culprits," a senior police officer said.

The officer further said that after receiving bomb threats, the police beefed up security arrangements at all the im-

portant installations, including Delhi Metro stations.

The emails stated "Delhi banega Khalistan" and warned of blasts at the Delhi Army School, Red Fort and metro stations within the next three days. The messages claimed that explosions would take place at the Army school at 1.11 pm, the Vidhan Sabha at 3.11 pm and the Red Fort at 9.11 am today, officials said. Following the threat specifically mentioning metro services, the Delhi Police stepped up security deployment across all stations of the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation network.

Delhi govt revamps edn website; adds fee review

NEW DELHI: The Delhi government has revamped its education department website and has added a new Fee Review section along with features such as daily attendance tracking, mock tests and question banks to improve transparency and student support. According to the website, the Fee Review tab allows parents to raise complaints related to school fees, track updates and directly email the chairman of the Fee Review Committee. The committee comprises Justice Anil Dev Singh, former Chief Justice of the Rajasthan High Court, as chairman, chartered accountant J S Kochar, and former additional director of education R K Sharma as members, it showed.

Booked in POCSO case, Seer says won't resist arrest

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VARANASI

DAYS after being booked under the POCSO Act over allegations of sexual abuse of two persons, including a minor, Swami Avimukteshwaranand Saraswati on Monday said he will not oppose his arrest even though "the public is watching everything".

Saraswati said there are three courts, the first is the public, which is following all the developments and will deliver its verdict; the second is his own conscience; and the third is the Supreme Court, which "knows who is right and who is wrong".

"I have received clean chits from all three," he claimed.

An FIR was lodged in



Prayagraj against Saraswati and his disciple Mukundanand Brahmachari on Saturday on charges of sexually abusing two persons, including a minor, over the past year. The action followed an order of the Special Judge (POCSO Act), Prayagraj, which directed that a case be registered against Saraswati on an application moved by Ashu-

tosh Brahmachari Maharaj and others. Responding to the allegations linked to his gurukul, he claimed that the boys in question never studied there nor did they take admission, and that their marksheets indicated they were students of a school in HarDOI. He also dismissed claims about an alleged CD, asking why it was not made public if it existed.

Super-specialty hospital coming to Karwar in next budget: CM

HANS NEWS SERVICE
KARWAR

CHIEF Minister Siddaramaiah gave an assurance to the people of Uttara Kannada on February 22 that a super-specialty hospital would be approved for Karwar in the next state budget.

He made the announcement after inaugurating several development projects, including the new 450-bed multi-specialty hospital block constructed at an estimated cost of Rs. 200 crore within the Karwar Institute of Medical Sciences premises, organised jointly by the district administration, Zilla Panchayat, and the Public Works Department.

Reflecting on the medical college's inception in 2016 during his earlier tenure as Chief Minister, he said the initiative aimed at establishing a medical college in every district. Previously, locals had to seek advanced care in distant cities like



Udupi, Mangaluru, and Hubballi. "The new hospital marks a major step forward," he said.

Siddaramaiah emphasised the government's commitment to providing super-specialty hospitals in every district for the benefit of the poor. He confirmed plans for a dedicated cancer unit in Karwar and said the priority remains ensuring all essential medical services are available at district headquarters. Karnataka already operates 22 government medical colleges, with upcoming institutions in Kolar, Puttur, and Vijayapura. Addressing opposi-

tion claims that guarantee schemes have left no funds for development, the Chief Minister countered that progress remains steady. He disclosed that Rs. 2,954 crore has been allocated to guarantee schemes in Uttara Kannada so far, with the total statewide spend reaching approximately Rs. 1,18,000 crore.

He accused the previous BJP regime of ignoring Karwar's needs, including leaving bridge projects incomplete. His government, he said, has given top priority to finishing the bridge linking Ulga and Keravadi villages.

Sarita Yolma makes history on India's oldest toy train

NEW JALPAIGURI

SARITA Yolma knew it was a big day for her as she wore her railway train ticket examiner's uniform.

On her way to New Jalpaiguri railway station from her home in Siliguri, West Bengal, a road distance of half an hour which takes an hour because of the traffic, she could feel the tension. Her husband was beside her to provide

As Sarita entered the railway carriage at 10 am, she became the first woman ticket collector to be posted on the 145-year-old toy train; started in 1881, the train connected the beautiful, small and quiet hill station and was an engineering marvel



support. Retired from the railways a year ago, he was dropping her to the New Jalpaiguri station as she was about to make her way into railway history.

At the station, the famous Darjeeling Toy Train was at the platform. Sarita Yolma was welcomed by the train staff. Her husband introduced them because the personnel had worked with him in the past on the same sector in the

engineering department.

As Sarita entered the railway carriage at 10 am, she became the first woman ticket collector to be posted on the 145-year-old toy train.

"I was nervous and excited. I was responsible for so many passengers on a historic route," says Sarita Yolma who joined the Indian Railways in the early 1990s. She waved from the train door as the train pulled out slowly and

then took out her tablet to check the passengers' tickets.

The Darjeeling Toy Train has UNESCO World Heritage status. The two-carriage train runs from New Jalpaiguri to Darjeeling and back, covering a distance of around 88 kms in about 6-and-a-half hours.

Started in 1881, the train connected the beautiful, small and quiet hill station and was an engineering marvel.

IN BRIEF

Bengaluru tops chart of APAC's office supply in 2026

NEW DELHI: India alone will contribute to about 40 per cent of Grade A office supply in Asia Pacific (APAC) in 2026, a report said on Monday. Bengaluru, Delhi-NCR, and Mumbai rank among the top five APAC markets for new office supply in 2026, with Bengaluru ranking first in the APAC region at 12.1 million sq. ft. The Grade-A office supply in APAC region is expected to reach a record 61.3 million sq. ft. in 2026, up 10.8 per cent from 55.3 million sq. ft. in 2025, the report from CBRE South Asia Pvt. Ltd said.

India and mainland China together will contribute more than 75 per cent of the total supply, it added. Shanghai will follow Bengaluru at 10 million sq. ft., Delhi NCR at 7.1 million sq. ft. and Mumbai will see its supply almost double to 5.1 million sq. ft., the report suggested.

In Bangalore, the supply will continue to be supported by GCCs. Further, office assets emerged as the most preferred investment sector in APAC, overtaking industrial & logistics for the first time in six years.

"India's growing dominance in the APAC office supply landscape reflects the structural depth of the demand drivers in the country," said Anshuman Magazine, Chairman & CEO - India, South East Asia, Middle East & Africa, CBRE.

"Even amid global macroeconomic recalibration, occupiers view India as a scalable, talent-rich destination for multi-functional growth," he added.

Despite record supply, most developed markets will remain supply-constrained, with premium offices in demand as corporates enforce stricter attendance mandates, the report said. "As we move into a cycle where income growth is at the centre of real estate decision-making, the ability for occupiers and investors to recalibrate and innovate will be critical," said Ada Choi, Head of Research, Asia Pacific for CBRE.

Choi said that occupiers are responding to softer economic growth by sharpening their space requirements and prioritising high-quality buildings in core locations, while investors are focusing on income resilience and portfolio optimisation.



'Great Sleep Store' opens in Vijayapura

VIJAYAPURA: Expanding its retail footprint in north Karnataka as part of its 20th anniversary celebrations, Peps Industries has opened a new 'Great Sleep Store' in Vijayapura. The showroom, located at Hanamashetti Complex on Gurukul Road, was inaugurated by former minister Appasaheb Patanashetti and Vijayapura Superintendent of Police Laxman Nimbargi. The outlet has been launched in association with Sangam Ventures.

Speaking on the occasion, Peps India Pvt Ltd Managing Director G Shankar Ram said the brand's expansion into Vijayapura was a significant milestone in its 20-year journey of providing trusted sleep solutions to Indian households. Karnataka remains a key growth market, he added.

Spanning 850 sq ft, the store is designed as a modern sleep studio showcasing spring, memory foam and coir mattresses, pillows and accessories. Karnataka and Goa RBM Ramesh T was also present. Peps currently operates over 5,000 multi-brand outlets and more than 110 exclusive 'Great Sleep Stores' nationwide.

Cong internal rift out in the open as SC/ST neglect allegation sparks row

HANS NEWS SERVICE
DHARWAD

ALLEGATIONS of neglecting SC/ST communities triggered a sharp verbal duel between two Congress leaders during the third quarterly KDP progress review meeting held in Dharwad on Monday, exposing internal differences within the ruling party at the district level.

The meeting, chaired by Minister Santosh Lad at the Zilla Panchayat conference

hall, was convened to assess the progress of various departments, including the Social Welfare Department. MLC F.H. Jakkappanavar took strong exception during the review, claiming that the interests of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were not being adequately safeguarded.

"I am speaking on behalf of the SC/ST community. Their issues are being sidelined," Jakkappanavar asserted. He further alleged that he was not being given



proper time to present his views during the discussion.

Minister Lad refuted the

charge, maintaining that the meeting was being conducted in a fair and inclusive manner. "All representatives

are being given equal opportunity to speak. There is no reason to create unnecessary arguments," he said, urging members to focus on constructive dialogue.

The situation escalated when Jakkappanavar announced that he would walk out of the meeting in protest. In response, Lad remarked, "I have not asked you to step out.

If you wish to leave, it is your choice." The verbal spat created a tense atmosphere in the hall before

senior officials and political leaders intervened to pacify both sides.

After the intervention, the meeting proceeded with detailed discussions on welfare schemes and departmental performance.

Meanwhile, Minister Lad expressed strong displeasure over inadequate water supply in certain areas and directed Deputy Commissioner Snehal to file a criminal case against L&T company for lapses.

He warned that there

should be no disruption in drinking water supply during the summer months.

"Officers must stay at their headquarters and ensure effective implementation. Failure to do so will result in suspension," he cautioned.

The episode has sparked political discussions in Dharwad, highlighting both governance concerns and simmering tensions within the Congress ranks over representation and welfare priorities.

Centre weakening pro-people laws, says Siddaramaiah

CALLS FOR NATIONWIDE SUPPORT TO RESTORE MGNREGA

HANS NEWS SERVICE
CHIKKABALLAPUR

KARNATAKA Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday alleged that the Union government is systematically weakening pro-people legislations enacted during the Congress regime and urged citizens to support the nationwide agitation to restore MGNREGA.

Addressing the 'NREGA Bachao' protest in Chikkaballapur, he appealed to the people of the state to back the Congress movement until the "Vikasit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar Aajeevika Mission (VBGRM) Act is withdrawn and MGNREGA is reinstated.

The Chief Minister said the Centre had scrapped the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) during the winter session of Parliament and replaced it with a new law. "There was no need to abolish MGNREGA. It provided livelihood security to labourers, Adivasis, small farmers and women," he said.



He recalled that MGNREGA was enacted in 2005 when Manmohan Singh was Prime Minister under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi. "Along with MGNREGA, landmark legislations such as the Right to Education, Right to Food and Right to Information were introduced. The present government led by Narendra Modi is weakening these pro-people laws," he alleged.

Siddaramaiah claimed that under MGNREGA, 12.16 crore people were provided employment, with around 53% beneficiaries being women. He further stated that 17% of Scheduled Caste and 11% of Sched-

uled Tribe beneficiaries had gained work opportunities under the scheme.

He criticised the Centre for introducing the new Act after only eight hours of discussion in Parliament, alleging that it undermines the rights of rural workers.

The Chief Minister said MGNREGA strengthened Mahatma Gandhi's vision of Gram Swaraj by guaranteeing 100 days of employment locally, with Gram Panchayats and Gram Sabhas empowered to decide the nature of works.

"Now, decisions will be centralised. Without Central approval and funding, work cannot proceed at the pan-

chayat level," he said. He also objected to the proposed funding pattern of 60% Central and 40% State contribution under the new Act, claiming it burdens states and fails to protect their interests.

Protest to continue until demands are met

Listing the Congress party's demands, Siddaramaiah said, the VBGRM Act must be fully withdrawn. MGNREGA must be reinstated. The right to employment must be restored. Panchayat autonomy must be protected. A nationwide minimum wage of ₹400 per day must be ensured.

"Our agitation will continue until these demands are fulfilled. Just as anti-farmer laws were repealed after protests, this movement too will not stop," he asserted, calling upon people across Karnataka to join the struggle.

He concluded by urging citizens to support what he termed the Congress party's "genuine effort" to restore a scheme that benefits rural India.

BJP's days are numbered, says Deputy CM

Save MGNREGA and save villages, labourers and Gandhiji: Shivakumar

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

DEPUTY Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Monday said that the BJP is nearing its final days. Speaking at the MGNREGA Bachao convention at Chikkaballapur, he said, "Like the lamp which burns bright before dying, the BJP is nearing its end as they are planning to finish the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi."

"We are organising this event to save the nation. The Congress party had given employment guarantee to the rural people through MGNREGA scheme. The Centre is trying to kill the scheme. We need to save MGNREGA and save Gandhiji's legacy," he said.

"Panchayats had the power to decide which works to take up. The scheme ensured works worth Rs 1-2 crore in each of the 5900 panchayats. We need to save MGNREGA," he added.

Panchayat offices to be named after Mahatma "MGNREGA is a scheme



which gives self-confidence to farmers and labourers and we need to protect it. Our party and the government have decided to name the panchayat offices after the Mahatma," he said.

"Under the new scheme, the states have to bear 40% of the costs. Even the BJP run states also will not be able to implement it. Chandrababu Naidu has also said he won't be able to implement the new scheme. This new scheme is

a deathknell for all the states," he noted.

"BJP and PM Modi used to criticise our guarantee schemes but they copies it later. No one can stop thime guarantee scheme. Congress party will not allow anyone to stop it," he said. "Like they are stealing the voters' rights, they are taking away employment rights too. We will fight till the MGNREGA is reinstated we need your support int his fight," he concluded.

Actor Ranveer Singh moves HC to quash FIR against him

BENGALURU

BOLLYWOOD actor Ranveer Singh has moved the Karnataka High Court challenging the FIR and quashing of a criminal case registered against him over alleged insult to a 'deity' while mimicking 'Kantara Chapter-1' film. The controversy relates to remarks allegedly made by the actor at the Filmfare Awards event in Goa while speaking about the film



'Kantara'. He is accused of imitating a Daiva and calling it 'devil'. Based on a complaint lodged by advocate Prashanth, an FIR was registered at the High Grounds police station. Police had earlier issued notices to Singh in connection with the case. As there was no response from the actor, the High Grounds police recently initiated steps to proceed with further legal action, police sources said.

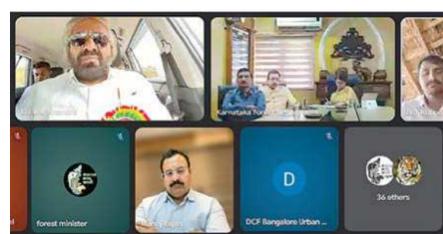
Inform locals immediately about wildlife movement, Minister instructs officials

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

FOREST, Ecology and Environment Minister Eshwar B. Khandre has directed officials to immediately alert local communities about wildlife movement near forest fringe areas to prevent further loss of human lives.

The Minister convened an emergency video conference with senior officials following the death of two plantation workers within a span of seven days near Hunasehalli in Chikkamagaluru taluk. He instructed the department to promptly share alerts received at the command centre with planters' associations, labour unions and local leaders.

He also ordered the creation of WhatsApp groups comprising village heads and landowners in wildlife conflict zones to ensure real-time dissemination



of information. "Human life is invaluable. Losing another life after an earlier fatality is extremely painful. Officials and staff must maintain 24x7 vigilance to prevent recurrence of such incidents," he said.

Section 144, thermal drones for capture operations

Khandre directed officials to impose Section 144 wherever necessary and carry out wildlife capture operations. He stressed the use of advanced equipment, including thermal drones, to track animals effectively.

Officials informed the Minister that after a person was killed in an elephant attack in Chikkamagaluru last week, steps were taken to capture the elephant and advisories were issued asking locals not to venture into plantations. However, the latest fatality occurred after workers entered the estate despite warnings.

The Minister warned that if plantation owners send labourers into fields despite official advisories, they must also be held accountable. "If there is negligence, file complaints. Landowners too have responsibility,"

he said. According to department data, around 35 elephants are currently moving outside forest areas in three groups in Chikkamagaluru district. While such movement is common during summer, he directed staff to ensure that human-wildlife conflict incidents do not increase and that fatalities decline year by year.

Senior officers to visit conflict zones

With the next two to three months expected to be critical due to summer conditions, Khandre instructed senior officers to personally visit conflict-prone regions and guide field staff on preventive measures.

Safari resumes, meetings in fringe villages

Referring to the resumption of safaris at Nagarahole National Park and Bandipur National Park,

the Minister said only a few individuals have opposed the move.

He stated that the state government has decided to allocate 35 per cent of safari revenue for the welfare of forest fringe villages. Officials were instructed to hold meetings in such villages and design programmes based on local needs. Skill training for youth, providing equipment to schools and colleges in fringe areas, and creating awareness on how to respond when wildlife enters human habitation were also emphasized.

The meeting was attended by Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Head of Forest Force Meenakshi Negi, Chief Wildlife Warden Kumar Pushkar, senior officers including Biswajit Mishra, Manoj Rajan, CF Prabhakaran and Koppa DCF Shivashankar, among others.

Alleged sexual harassment of Class VI student triggers protest in Ballari village

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BALLARI

A serious allegation of sexual harassment against a government school teacher has triggered widespread outrage in a village in Kampli taluk of Ballari on Monday with hundreds of villagers particularly women staging a protest demanding strict action against the accused.

According to preliminary information, a Class 6 girl

studying in a government school in Kampli taluk was allegedly subjected to sexual harassment by a teacher identified as Jadesh. The incident reportedly took place within the school premises, which parents described as a "temple of learning" that should have ensured children's safety.

Villagers alleged that the accused teacher behaved inappropriately with the minor student. As news of the alleged misconduct

spread, anger mounted rapidly across the village.

Hundreds of women gathered in front of the school, raising slogans and condemning the alleged act. "If teachers themselves behave like this, whom should parents trust with their children?" protesters questioned. The demonstrators demanded that the accused be immediately brought before the public and arrested without delay.

In a show of strong

resistance, protesters sat on the road for some time, partially disrupting vehicular movement in the area. They insisted that mere suspension would not suffice and called for stringent legal action, including dismissal from service and imprisonment if found guilty.

As tension escalated, police personnel from the Kampli Police Station rushed to the spot and attempted to pacify the

agitated crowd. Officers assured villagers that a thorough investigation would be conducted and that strict action would be taken against anyone found guilty.

Police sources said the process of registering a formal complaint was underway and that statements from the victim, her family members, and school authorities would be recorded.

Child protection pro-



ocols are expected to be followed as part of the investigation.

Village leaders expressed concern over repeated reports of misconduct in educational institutions in recent times.

"Such individuals are a threat to society. They

should not be allowed anywhere near children," one local leader said.

The incident has once again raised serious concerns about student safety in schools and the need for stricter monitoring mechanisms to prevent such alleged acts from recurring.

IN BRIEF



VTU signs pact with Dortmund University

BENGALURU: Visvesvaraya Technological University (VTU) has decided to enter into an academic agreement with Dortmund University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Germany, in the coming academic year. On Monday, a delegation from Dortmund University of Applied Sciences and Arts visited the VTU Regional Office at Nagarbhavi. Prof. Dr. Stephan Weyers - Vice-Rector for Teaching, Studies & International Affairs, Prof. Dr. Vinod Rajamani, Professor of Vehicle Dynamics and Vice Dean met VTU Vice-Chancellor Dr. S. Vidyashankar and discussed several matters.

Speaking on the occasion, VTU Vice-Chancellor Dr. S. Vidyashankar said, "Already, Dortmund University has signed academic agreements with two private colleges in Karnataka and is conducting certificate courses. In the same model, VTU will enter into an academic agreement in the upcoming academic year for research and development. This will give our students the opportunity to go to Germany and learn."

Vice Rector Prof. Stephan Weyers said, "We are eager to sign an agreement with VTU. This will allow us to introduce a twinning program. It will be very beneficial for students, as they will be able to come to Germany and study."

Present on the occasion were VTU Regional Office Director Dr. H. R. Sudarshan Reddy, VTU Executive Committee Member Prof. K. N. Subrahmanya, Special Officer Dr. Ajith Padyana, Director of Research and Development in Aerospace and Defense Dr. Commander Devendra Singh, Dr. C. M. Rakshitha, and from Dortmund University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Dr. Thilo Groll, Prof. Marcel Marbuger among others.

Plumbex India 2026 from April 16-18

BENGALURU: The Indian Plumbing Association (IPA) announced that Plumbex India 2026, the nation's premier exhibition for water, sanitation, and plumbing products and technologies, will be held from April 16-18 at the Bangalore International Exhibition Centre (BIEC), Bengaluru.

Plumbex India 2026 is supported by two key Ministries of the Government of India - the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) and the Ministry of Jal Shakti (MoJS) - reinforcing its alignment with national priorities on water security, sanitation, and sustainable urban development. The Plumbex India continues its legacy as a leading industry platform that brings together manufacturers, developers, architects, consultants, policymakers, contractors, and innovators under one roof to shape the future of India's building services ecosystem.

Minister launches Amazon's 10th corporate office in state

HANS NEWS SERVICE BENGALURU

MINISTER for Large and Medium Industries MB Patil on Monday inaugurated Amazon's newly constructed, fully equipped corporate main office spread across 11 lakh square feet (1.1 million sq.ft.) at Vinayaka Nagara near Yelahanka.

Speaking on the occasion, he said, "This is Amazon's 10th corporate office in the State. The company, which has shared a two-decade association with Karnataka, plans to invest 35 billion dollars in India over the next four years. This investment



An artist performs as employees look on during the inauguration of Amazon's new office campus by Minister for Large and Medium Industries MB Patil in Bengaluru on Monday

is expected to support 15 million small businesses and generate lakhs of employment opportunities. Karnataka will receive a significant

share of this investment." He pointed out that Karnataka has an annual per capita income of over ₹3.80 lakh, ranking highest in



the country. The State also stands second in annual GST contributions to the national exchequer, contributing ₹1.6 lakh crore. Bengaluru has

climbed to the 21st position globally in the Global Innovation Index and is the only Indian city to feature among the top 30 in the Tech-Cities

Index. Last year, the city recorded 14.6 million square feet of industrial leasing, the highest in the country, he noted.

Of the 900 Global Capability Centres (GCCs) in India, nearly 35 per cent are located in Karnataka. The State also leads in infrastructure required for e-commerce operations, with warehousing capacity of 42.48 lakh tonnes and 233 cold storage units. Correspondingly, e-commerce transactions in the State are growing at 11 per cent annually, he said.

To further promote industrial growth, projects such as dedicated freight rail

corridors, multimodal logistics parks, dry ports and truck terminals have been planned, Patil urged Amazon and other global companies to leverage Karnataka's industry-friendly ecosystem by enhancing their investments in the State, manufacturing here and exporting to global markets.

The event was attended by S. David Zapolsky, Senior Vice President, Global Public Policy, Amazon; Chetan Krishnaswamy, Vice President; Sameer Kumar, Vice President; and Sean Lee, Vice President, Global Real Estate, Amazon, among others.

Dalit CM decision rests with high command, says Parameshwara

HANS NEWS SERVICE BENGALURU

KARNATAKA Home Minister G Parameshwara on Monday dismissed the ongoing political debate over the "Dalit Chief Minister" slogan as opposition-driven speculation, asserting that any such decision would rest solely with the Congress high command.

Speaking to reporters near his Sadashivanagar residence, Parameshwara said, "Dalit CM must be made by the Congress party. Who else will do it? When the appropriate time comes, the high command will take a decision." He accused opposition parties of raising the issue to divert attention from their own shortcomings.

Reacting to the allegations that the slogan was being used amid internal power tussles, he said, "All this is the handiwork of the opposition. They are making baseless allegations to cover up



their own issues. Is the Chief Minister not governing? For the past 12 days, he has been holding extensive discussions with ministers and officials regarding the Budget."

Parameshwara strongly defended Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, stating that social justice has always been the foundation of his politics. "The Chief Minister's political base itself is social justice. There is nothing new in this. He has always been committed to social justice and continues to be so," he said.

On law and order during the upcoming Ramzan

and Holi festivals, the Home Minister issued a stern warning. "No one will be allowed to take the law into their hands. Festivals must be celebrated peacefully. Strict instructions have been given to officials to ensure that there are no disturbances," he said.

Addressing the issue of mobile phone usage in educational institutions, Parameshwara said the government is examining the possibility of banning mobile phones for students below 16 years. "There is concern that giving mobile phones to children under 16 is af-

fecting their studies. Several countries have imposed bans after conducting studies. The Chief Minister has also expressed concern. We will study the pros and cons before taking a decision," he added.

He also revealed that the Internal Security Division has been put on alert following the arrest of illegal Bangladeshi migrants allegedly involved in unlawful activities. "For the past month, operations have been underway in every district to identify illegal migrants. We have issued strict instructions to all district Superintendents of Police to act at the police station level," he said.

On the issue of student elections in universities and colleges, Parameshwara said there is growing pressure to reconsider the earlier ban imposed due to campus clashes. "We will have to review the matter. Ultimately, the Cabinet will decide," he stated.

Mobile ban for students under discussion; pressure from parents too: Shivakumar



HANS NEWS SERVICE BENGALURU

STATING that there was pressure from parents to ban mobile use for students, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar today said that the ban is still under discussion. Speaking to reporters at his Sadashivanagar residence, he said, "We have banned mobile phones in our schools too. We can't disclose how mobiles are being mis-

used. Mobiles in schools are banned in many other countries too. Hence a similar ban is being discussed here too."

Asked about Minister H C Mahadevappa's statement on Dalit CM, he said, "He is our national leader. I salute him." When his attention was drawn to a report on non-potability of water in Bengaluru lakes, he said, "The government has nowhere said that water of Bengaluru lakes are fit for bathing and

drinking. This water is meant to recharge the ground water. Thippagondanahalli water is being treated by BWSSB."

Asked about VBGRAMG, he said, "The Centre has not given any clarity on VBGRAMG. It has not even released wages for the past work. The scheme is defunct now and it is an assault on the poor. We are waging a fight to save this scheme. We are holding a protest in Chikaballapura today.

Congress targeting Banjara community, says Vijayendra

BENGALURU

BJP president B Y Vijayendra on Monday accused the ruling Congress of "indulging in politics of hatred" against the Banjara community following the arrest of party MLA Chandru Lamani by Lokayukta police for "taking a bribe" from a contractor.

Vijayendra said the party would face the Lokayukta case involving its MLA legally. Responding to questions from reporters here about Chandru Lamani's arrest, Vijayendra said he had followed the developments through the media but alleged that the issue was being viewed in a larger political context.

"But one thing is certain - this Congress government is doing politics of hatred against the Banjara community. There is no doubt about that," he said. Vijayendra claimed that since Siddaramaiah assumed office, the Banjara community had been unfairly targeted. Referring to an incident in Surgundankoppa during a programme attended by Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, he alleged that Banjara youth who raised demands were instead booked.

On the Chandru Lamani case, he said the matter was under investigation and before the court, and the party would not interfere. "I am not giving a caste colour to corruption. I have already said that in the Chandru Lamani case, the matter is in court and under Lokayukta investigation. The truth must come out. Let the investigation proceed, and a decision be taken. We are not interfering in that," he said.

At the same time, Vijayendra questioned the Congress' moral authority to speak on corruption, citing the alleged

Valmiki Development Corporation scam and demanding accountability. He said senior Congress leaders have no locus standi to lecture the BJP on probity.

On the state budget, Vijayendra made an appeal to the Chief Minister to allocate more funds to backward classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

"At least in this budget, allocate a minimum of Rs 2,500 crore to 3,000 crore to backward classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes," he said, noting that during the tenure of his father and former Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa, Rs 550 crore had been earmarked.

He also flagged pending compensation for shepherd families affected by the death of sheep and goats across the state, claiming that relief of Rs 45 crore was yet to be released despite repeated demands.

Valentine's Day horror

Two, including boyfriend, gang-rape classmate

BENGALURU

IN a sordid tale of betrayal and bestiality, a 19-year-old private college student in Bengaluru has alleged that she was drugged and gang-raped by her boyfriend and his friend earlier this month.

A case has been registered at the Amruthahalli Police Station, and an investigation is underway. Police have booked the accused under Sections 64 (repeat rape offence), 70(1) (gang rape), and 351(2) (criminal intimidation) read with Section 3(5) (common intention) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

According to the complaint, the victim, who hails from Tamil Nadu, is pursuing journalism and psychology at a reputed college in Bengaluru. She had been staying at a PG hostel with a female friend for the past five months.

The first accused, identified as Dickson Sandra, a resident



of Bengaluru, allegedly got in touch with the victim through Instagram in January 2026. The two began chatting daily. Later, Sandra reportedly expressed his love for her and asked to meet. She agreed and met him at a cafe in Koramangala. They met twice again at the same place, and during one of the meetings, he proposed to her, which she accepted.

The victim stated in the FIR that they continued to chat and speak over the phone every day. On February 14, Valentine's Day, she went to college at 10 a.m. as usual. Af-

ter classes ended at 12.50 pm, she returned to her PG hostel. Later that evening, at around 8.30 p.m., she went out for dinner to a restaurant in Banashankari.

In her complaint, she stated that Sandra called her and asked her to come to a villa in Jakkur. She went there with her friend at around 1.15 a.m. The second accused, Nikhil, also a resident of Bengaluru, was present there and was introduced to her.

They allegedly sat together for some time, had snacks and chatted. The victim has alleged that Sandra and Nikhil then

forcibly put a rose-coloured tablet into her mouth. Within 10 minutes, she said her body began to feel hot, she started sweating, her head began spinning, and her vision became blurred. She alleged that Sandra then took her to a room, made her lie down on a bed and left the room, saying he was going out for a smoke. She subsequently lost consciousness. When she regained consciousness, she found herself partially clothed. Nikhil was lying beside her with his hand on her chest. Shocked, she pushed him away, covered herself with a bedsheet and asked about Sandra. Nikhil allegedly went out and returned with him while she was still in a semi-conscious state.

The victim has alleged that Sandra then forcibly removed her clothes and sexually assaulted her. Police said further investigation is in progress, and appropriate action will be taken as per the law.

Australian Cricket Challenge initiative back for the third consecutive year

HANS NEWS SERVICE BENGALURU

Aim is to nurture emerging talent and create meaningful 'study and play' pathways that allow students to pursue sporting excellence alongside academic ambition

THE University of Canberra's (UC) Cricket Challenge is back for a hat-trick year, marking the tournament's third consecutive edition and reinforcing the University's long-term commitment to strengthening its India-Australia engagement through sport, education and youth development.

Delivered in partnership with Cricket ACT, the governing body for cricket in the Australian Capital Territory, the UC Cricket Challenge has steadily evolved into a distinctive international platform that integrates competitive school-level cricket with academic exposure, cultural exchange and future-ready education pathways.

Since the tournament's inception, promising young

cricketers from schools across India have enjoyed unique opportunities to engage with Australia's sport-led education ecosystem while competing at a high-performance level.

Talking about the unique initiative, Andrew Barr, MLA, Chief Minister, Australian Capital Territory, Australia, said, "The University of Canberra Cricket Challenge represents exactly what Canberra stands for - innovation, opportunity and partnership. This program strengthens our international education relationships, opens new pathways for young athletes, and showcases Canberra as a global destination where talent is nurtured both on the field and in the classroom. We are proud to support an



initiative that builds futures, deepens global connects and reflects the very best of our community."

The UC Cricket Challenge is the realisation of the shared vision between UC and Cricket ACT to nurture emerging talent and create meaningful 'study and play' pathways that allow students to pursue sporting excellence alongside academic

ambition. The initiative reflects UC's broader focus on employability, industry integration and real-world learning.

Building on the success of the previous two editions, the 2026 UC Cricket Challenge will feature inter-school T10 matches in Bengaluru, complemented by a range of engagement activities designed to expose

students to international education opportunities, high-performance sporting environments and cross-cultural learning experiences.

Further details regarding dates, venues, participating schools and programme elements will be announced in due course. Prof. The Hon. Bill Shorten, Vice-Chancellor and President, University of Canberra, said the UC

Cricket Challenge represents the values that define the University of Canberra - opportunity, aspiration and global connection.

"Sport has a unique ability to bring people together. Through this initiative we are creating pathways for young talent to thrive both on the field and in the classroom," he said.

"As we mark the third consecutive year of the Challenge in India, we will focus on building enduring partnerships, strengthening people-to-people ties between India and Australia, and positioning Canberra as a destination for students looking to combine education with sporting excellence."

Speaking about the legacy being created by this flag-

ship tournament, Olivia Thornton, Chief Executive Officer, Cricket ACT Australia, said, "The UC Cricket Challenge demonstrates how cricket can bring India and Australia closer while creating meaningful education and sport pathways for young people. Cricket ACT is proud to support an initiative that connects communities and opens global opportunities for emerging talent."

The tournament also reflects the growing role of sport as a bridge between education systems and international collaboration. Through its partnership with Cricket ACT, UC continues to strengthen links between schools, sporting bodies and higher education institutions, supporting talent development, coaching

excellence and future leadership in sport.

As part of UC's wider engagement with India, the UC Cricket Challenge complements the university's broader initiatives across student recruitment, school outreach, training and development programmes, and collaborative partnerships. Together, these efforts underscore UC's commitment to India as a key strategic market and partner in its global vision.

The hat-trick edition of the UC Cricket Challenge further reinforces UC's belief that sport-led education can play a powerful role in shaping globally minded, career-ready graduates while fostering deeper cultural and institutional ties between nations.

Rahul Gandhi as PM is only solution to India's problems, asserts Bhatti

Dy CM addressed the theme, 'Caste Issues and Reservations - The Role of Congress Workers in Combatting Caste Discrimination'

HANS NEWS SERVICE HYDERABAD

DEPUTY Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka asserted that if Rahul Gandhi assume the role of Prime Minister, the entrenched challenges confronting the nation will be resolved.

He urged the presidents of the district Congress Committees from both Andhra Pradesh and Telangana to engage tirelessly until Rahul Gandhi is appointed Prime Minister, emphasising the importance of striving to secure a maximum number of parliamentary seats across both states.

His remarks were delivered during a training camp for district Congress committee presidents convened in Vikarabad on Monday.

Bhatti Vikramarka addressed the theme, "Caste Issues and Reservations - The Role of Congress Workers in Combatting Caste Discrimination."

He noted that in instances of untouchability or discrimination throughout the country, Rahul Gandhi takes personal initiative to visit af-



affected areas. Citing the situation at Hyderabad Central University, he recalled that following the tragic suicide of Rohith Vemula, who reportedly experienced caste discrimination, Rahul Gandhi made a direct visit to the university, engaged with students, and played a pivotal role in shaping the ensuing movement.

Bhatti Vikramarka highlighted that during that period, Congress leaders prohibited party workers from accessing the campus, as

Rahul Gandhi maintained that untouchability should be addressed as a social concern rather than being politicized.

He elaborated that initiatives are currently in progress in Karnataka and Telangana to introduce legislation in memory of Rohith Vemula. Bhatti Vikramarka remarked that Rahul Gandhi had pledged to ensure fair distribution of resources and wealth prior to the elections, and since gaining power, the people's government has effectively implemented vari-

ous development and welfare programmes in alignment with this promise.

He indicated that, for the first time since India's Independence, a caste census was completed within 50 days and presented to the Legislative Assembly, where it garnered unanimous approval.

Bhatti Vikramarka accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of conspiring to dismantle the Congress Party, which not only played a crucial role in securing India's independence but also

enacted significant revolutionary laws aimed at achieving economic, social, and political equality.

He remarked that certain political entities aim to perpetuate social and economic divisions within society. Acknowledging the persistent reality of caste in India, the Deputy Chief Minister shared his personal experiences with caste discrimination, reaffirming his commitment to pursue his objectives resolutely, notwithstanding the obstacles posed by such discrimination.

NPDCL rolls out comprehensive plan to ensure seamless power supply during summer

Infrastructure upgraded with new substations, transformers and interlinking lines to handle rising peak demand without disruption

HANS NEWS SERVICE KARIMNAGAR

WITH electricity demand steadily rising ahead of the summer season, the Northern Power Distribution Company of Telangana Limited (NPDCL) has undertaken extensive measures to guarantee uninterrupted power supply across the Karimnagar Circle.

Superintendent Engineer V Gangadhar stated on Monday that the department had proactively strengthened infrastructure to meet the anticipated surge in demand. He noted that power consumption within the NPDCL jurisdiction had stood at 5,816 MW in March last year and had already risen to 5,904 MW as of 21 February this year. Adequate arrangements, he assured, had been put in place to handle peak summer loads without disruption.

To manage increasing demand, particularly in urban areas, the capacity of 141 overloaded



Superintendent Engineer Gangadhar

distribution transformers had been enhanced in line with projected growth. Additionally, 116 new distribution transformers had been installed, and nine power transformers had been set up at key locations to improve supply stability.

In a further boost to infrastructure, four new substations had been constructed and 32 new breakers installed wherever required. To strengthen connectivity and enhance reliability, 29 new 33/11 kV

interlinking lines had also been established.

The Superintendent Engineer emphasised that all precautionary measures at various operational levels had been completed to ensure improved quality and reliability of power supply during the summer months. He added that officials and field staff were working in close coordination to deliver seamless electricity supply to consumers without interruption.



MLA lays foundation stone for devpt works in Peddapalli

CC roads, underground drainage, and high-mast lights with MUDA funds

HANS NEWS SERVICE MAHABUBNAGAR

JADCHERLA MLA Janampalli Anirudh Reddy laid the foundation stone for development works worth Rs 50 lakh in Peddapalli (Sherigudem) Gram Panchayat of Balanagar mandal.

The works, being taken up with MUDA funds, include

construction of CC roads, underground drainage and installation of high-mast lights in the village.

Speaking on the occasion, the MLA said that development of basic infrastructure in villages is the government's top priority. He stated that CC roads and underground drainage would improve sanitation and make trans-

portation easier for villagers. The high-mast lights would enhance safety and convenience during night hours. He assured that more development works would be taken up in phases for the overall progress of the village.

Local public representatives, leaders, officials and villagers participated in the programme.

Rain alert in Telangana for next three days

HANS NEWS SERVICE HYDERABAD

THE Meteorological Department has issued a three-day weather alert for Telangana, forecasting light to moderate rainfall in several districts.

Officials said a trough has

formed from South Interior Karnataka to Marathwada at an altitude of 0.9 km above mean sea level. Another trough extends from Gangetic West Bengal to the Andhra coast over Odisha at the same altitude.

Meanwhile, the trough linked to the earlier low-

pressure area over the Southwest Bay of Bengal has weakened.

Light to moderate rains accompanied by thunder and lightning are likely at isolated places across the state on Monday and Tuesday, with similar conditions expected on Wednesday.



Paddy storage facility inspected in Nizamabad

HANS NEWS SERVICE NIZAMABAD/KHAMMAM

CHAIRMAN of the State Warehousing Corporation, Rayala Nageswara Rao, on Monday inspected the Corporation's warehouse at Lakora village in Nizamabad district and reviewed the storage of fine rice stocks.

During the inspection, the Chairman examined the quality of the fine rice stored at the facility and verified whether the stock quantities matched the entries recorded in official registers.

He also checked the stock registers and other relevant

documentation to ensure proper maintenance of records.

Rao warned that strict action would be taken against anyone found involved in irregularities related to the storage of fine rice. He stressed the need for transparency and adherence to established norms in maintaining warehouse stocks.

The Chairman also reviewed the methods adopted for the use of chemicals in preserving the stored grain and directed officials to follow all prescribed safety measures to prevent damage and ensure quality standards.

CPI slams Centre over Indo-US trade deal

HANS NEWS SERVICE NALGONDA

CPI National Secretary Palla Venkat Reddy strongly criticized Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his stance on the Indo-US interim trade agreement. Addressing a district executive meeting held in Nalgonda on Monday, Reddy alleged that the Prime Minister's approach was against national interests and that the Centre failed to adopt a firm stand against tariffs imposed by the United States, adversely affecting India's economy.

He warned that the agreement could harm domestic industries, particularly farm-



ers and small traders, as increased imports may shrink markets for local products.

The meeting was held at the CPI district office, Makhdoom Bhavan, in Nalgonda.

CPI District Secretary and MLC Nellikanti Satyam urged party cadres to prepare for the upcoming MP/MLA

ZPTC elections in Telangana, expressing confidence of winning more seats.

Leaders also criticized the state's urea distribution app, saying farmers face severe hardships due to lack of awareness, and demanded restoration of the old transparent supply system.

Rs 22L cash stolen from locked house

HANS NEWS SERVICE CHOUTUPPAL (YADADRI-BHONGIR)

A major theft was reported in the town center of Choutuppal in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district. Unidentified miscreants created havoc in a locked house and decamped with Rs 22 lakh in cash that had been stored in a cupboard.

The victim, Narasimha, said the money was arranged for a plot registration. He explained that the cash was raised by pledging his wife's gold ornaments at a bank, making the loss even more distressing for the family.

Upon receiving information, the police rushed to the scene along with the clues team and dog squad to collect evidence. Authorities are closely examining CCTV footage from nearby areas to identify the culprits. Police officials stated that locked houses are increasingly being targeted by burglars and advised residents to remain vigilant and take necessary precautions. The Choutuppal police have intensified the investigation under the supervision of CI Manmadh Kumar.



Victims protesting in front of the jewellery shop

Gold trade betrayal: Fake biscuits sold in Huzurnagar

The owner of Sri Sairam Jewellers allegedly colluded with a private gold mortgage dealer and sold rolled gold disguised as authentic to unsuspecting victims

HANS NEWS SERVICE HUZURNAGAR (SURYAPET)

A major fraud by the owner of Sri Sairam Jewellers in Huzurnagar of Suryapet district has come to light belatedly. Under the guise of selling gold biscuits, the jeweller allegedly supplied fake (rolled gold) biscuits, cheating victims of a significant amount.

According to local sources, the owner of Sri Sairam Jewellers colluded with a private gold mortgage dealer. The victims reportedly purchased gold biscuits worth around

Rs 10 lakh. However, when the biscuits were tested due to an urgent need, it was revealed that they were merely rolled gold pieces. The victims were shocked to discover that the very trader they trusted had deceived them.

Protesting the injustice, the victims staged a demonstration in front of the jewellery shop, demanding immediate repayment of their money and strict action against the owner responsible for the fraud. The protest led to brief tension in the town.

HANS NEWS SERVICE HYDERABAD

TENSION prevailed in the city as thousands of ASHA workers staged a massive dharna at the Koti Commissioner's Office under the banner of 'Chalo Hyderabad', demanding immediate payment of pending January salaries, a fixed monthly pay of Rs 18,000, and allocation of sufficient funds in the upcoming Assembly budget to resolve their problems.

Despite heavy restrictions and reported arrests across the state, large numbers of ASHA workers reached the protest venue. A scuffle broke out between the protesters



and police, leading to several workers sustaining injuries. Protesters alleged that police personnel dragged women

workers, resulting in torn clothes and some falling unconscious.

The dharna continued

from 12 noon to 3 pm. The Union leaders criticized the state government for not even being ready to listen to their

problems and for allegedly suppressing their democratic right to protest and warned of intensified agitation if their demands are not addressed.

The leaders criticized the government for not even being ready to listen to their problems. The leaders warned the government that if it does not resolve the problems faced by the ASHA workers soon, they would intensify the struggles in the future.

Prominent participants included ASHA Union CITU State President P. Jayalakshmi, General Secretary R. Neela Devi, Treasurer P. Gangamani, CITU State Secretary J. Venkatesh, and other union leaders.

TIRUMALA LADDU GHEE ROW

COUNCIL DEADLOCK ENDS, DEBATE SET FOR FEB 26

- Legislative Council proceedings stalled for five days amid YSRCP protests over alleged adulteration in Heritage Foods, Indapur Dairy, and Tirupati laddu
- Opposition members storm the podium, raise slogans and demand an immediate debate; TDP accused them of obstructing business
- Govt finally agrees to a detailed discussion on Feb 26, bringing relief after repeated disruptions

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

PROCEEDINGS of the Legislative Council were disrupted for the fifth consecutive day on Monday amid continuing protests by Opposition YSRCP members over the alleged adulteration controversy involving Heritage Foods, Indapur Dairy and the Tirupati laddu. The deadlock finally ended after the government agreed to hold a detailed discussion on the issue on February 26.

Soon after the House assembled at 10.03 am, members of the YSRCP, Dr Mondithoka Arun Kumar, Y Sivarami Reddy, and Suryanarayana Raju, submitted an adjournment motion seeking an immediate debate on the issue. However, Council

Chairman Koyye Moshen Raju rejected the notice and proceeded with Question Hour, triggering strong protests from the Opposition benches.

YSRCP members rushed into the well of the House, raised slogans, displayed placards and surrounded the Chairman's podium, demanding that the motion be admitted. Amid the uproar, health minister Y Satya Kumar Yadav completed his reply to a listed question before the Chairman adjourned the House briefly.

Before the adjournment, members of the TDP also rushed into the well of the House, alleging that the Opposition was deliberately obstructing Council proceedings. Some members attempted to display placards; however, civil supplies



minister Nadendla Manohar and finance minister Payyavula Keshav intervened and asked them to return to their seats. Amid the commotion, the Chairman adjourned the House briefly.

The Opposition later staged a protest in front of the Chairman's chamber, alleging that the government was avoiding a discussion on a matter of public concern. They also demanded the release of podium CCTV footage to counter certain media reports regarding their conduct inside the House.

In an effort to resolve the stalemate, the Chairman convened a Business Advisory Committee (BAC)

meeting. During the meeting, Leader of the Opposition Botsa Satyanarayana strongly pressed for a full-fledged debate on the issue.

After nearly two hours of deliberations, the government agreed to allocate time for a detailed discussion on the Tirupati Laddu adulteration controversy on February 26. Later, Leader of the Opposition Botsa Satyanarayana conveyed the government's assurance to the media at the media point. The decision brought relief to members across party lines, as repeated disruptions had stalled legislative business for several days. Following the consensus, the House reconvened

at 2.03 pm for Special Mentions before being adjourned for the day. The Chairman expressed hope that proceedings would continue smoothly in the coming days with the scheduled debate expected to address the concerns raised by the Opposition.

Meanwhile, BAC of the Council took several key issues and finalised the schedule for discussions. The Council will take up a debate on the home department on Tuesday (February 24) and the agriculture on Wednesday (February 25). A discussion on the alleged ghee adulteration in TTD laddus has been scheduled for February 26. The Council will remain on holiday on February 28 and resume its sittings on March 4. Leader of the Opposition Botsa Satyanarayana alleged that the ruling party was making contradictory statements in the BAC meeting and in the House.

Finance minister Keshav rejected the charge, stating that the government has consistently maintained its readiness for a debate on the issue and accused Opposition members of politicising it.

Govt positive on clemency for prisoners: Home Minister

- Says the state govt is taking a positive stand on granting clemency to prisoners and introduces amendments to the Prisons and Correctional Services Act during the Assembly Budget session
- The proposed reforms focus on rehabilitation over punishment, with improved educational opportunities for inmates and special Anganwadi centres inside prisons to support children of women prisoners

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE state government is taking a positive stand on granting clemency to prisoners, said home minister Vangalapati Anitha on Monday.

Speaking on the eighth day of the Assembly Budget session, the home minister introduced a Bill in the Assembly seeking amendments to the Prisons and Correctional Services Act. Addressing the House, she stated that the coalition government is committed to implementing meaningful reforms aimed at the transformation and rehabilitation of inmates.

Anitha said the government has already initiated several measures to reform prisoners and is implementing changes in line with the legislation introduced by the Centre. She emphasised that efforts are being made to improve educational opportunities for inmates, enabling them to pursue studies while serving their sentences.



Home Minister V Anitha introducing a Bill seeking amendments to the Prisons and Correctional Services Act in the Assembly on Monday

Highlighting the need for legislative changes to bring about behavioural transformation among prisoners, the minister said the proposed amendments would focus on rehabilitation rather than mere punishment.

She also announced that special Anganwadi centres are being set up inside prisons to cater to the children of women inmates, ensuring their welfare and early childhood care.

The home minister further explained that prisoners would be classified into categories based on their criminal history and conduct in jail. This classification would help in designing reform-oriented programmes tailored to individual needs.

To encourage psychological transformation and reintegration into society, the government is establishing open-air prisons. In these facilities, inmates will be allowed to engage in agriculture and other vocational activities, equipping them with skills for livelihood after their release.

Reiterating the government's reformatory approach, Anitha said the administration is focused on creating opportunities for change and rehabilitation, while maintaining law and order in the State.

Govt allocated Rs 51,00 cr for BC welfare, says Savitha

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

BC, EWS welfare, handlooms and textiles minister S Savitha announced that the new State Budget allocates a lion's share of funds for the welfare and empowerment of Backward Classes (BCs).

Speaking during the Assembly debate on the BC Welfare Department Budget, she said Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has accorded top priority to BC development.

Out of the total Budget exceeding Rs 3.32 lakh crore, Rs 51,020.56 crore has been

earmarked for backward classes. The Minister said Rs 250 crore has been allocated for the 'Nethanna Bharosa' scheme, under which weavers will receive Rs 25,000 annually. Another Rs 250 crore has been earmarked for the Nethanna Bharosa initiative, while Rs 150 crore has been set aside for power subsidy to weavers.

Savitha announced that 20 MJP BC residential schools will get permanent buildings at a cost of Rs 500 crore under the SASCI scheme. Six MJP schools are being upgraded into junior colleges, and IIT/NEET coaching centres will

be established at Simhachalam and Tekulodu schools. CCTV cameras, RO plants, UPS systems, mosquito-proofing, and improved food quality are being ensured in hostels and Gurukuls.

The minister said a dedicated commission under Rajiv Ranjan Mishra has been appointed to implement 34 per cent reservations for BCs in local bodies and nominated posts. The government is also finalising a BC Protection Act and has passed a resolution seeking 33 per cent reservations for BCs in legislatures.

She added that Rs 1,000



crore will be spent on Adarana 3.0, and sewing machines will soon be distributed to women trained under free tailoring programmes. Criticising the previous regime, Savitha alleged that BC welfare was neglected earlier. She asserted that BCs have received true political representation and empowerment only under Chandrababu Naidu's leadership.

TOUGH LAW ON THE CARDS TO CURB SOCIAL MEDIA MISINFORMATION

- HM informs House that Cabinet sub-committee has been formed to study measures against false propaganda and harmful online content
- 1,384 cases registered in 20 months; over 1,000 arrests made for objectionable posts

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE Assembly on Monday held a detailed discussion on regulating misinformation and harmful content on social media platforms.

Responding to a question raised by MLA Gouthu Sirisha, home minister Vangalapati Anitha said that the gov-

ernment has constituted a Cabinet sub-committee to examine measures to curb false propaganda and objectionable content online. The minister informed the House that the sub-committee has met twice so far and held extensive discussions on various aspects of social media regulation. She said the government has reviewed the measures being implemented in states such as Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, as well as in other countries, to understand best practices.

"We are carefully examining what kind of legal and administrative measures would be most effective in our State," the Minister said. She emphasised that strict action is being taken against posts that are hateful, abusive, or intended to spread misinformation.

Providing data on enforcement, Ani-

tha revealed that 1,384 cases have been registered in the State over the past 20 months in connection with objectionable social media posts. Of these, 1,067 individuals have been arrested and produced before the courts.

The home minister further stated that the government has initiated steps to bring in a new law aimed at effectively curbing the spread of false propaganda on social media platforms. She also said that the government is considering legislation to restrict school students from using social media, with the objective of safeguarding their well-being and academic focus. Reiterating the government's commitment, Anitha said that maintaining public order and preventing the misuse of digital platforms remain top priorities.

Over 88L unorganised workers register on e-Shram portal in AP

- Labour minister informs the Assembly that 88,16,453 unorganised workers have registered on the e-Shram portal, while 18,24,221 workers enrol with the AP Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Board
- Says the state govt is accelerating registrations to ensure full coverage and extending benefits including free medical care, maternity aid of Rs 20,000, marriage assistance of Rs 40,000, Rs 60,000 natural death compensation and Rs 20,000 funeral support
- Scholarships for kids of construction workers and special skill development programmes are being implemented, besides comprehensive data collection to strengthen worker welfare and social security

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

AS many as 88,16,453 unorganised sector workers in the state have registered on the e-Shram portal, while 18,24,221 workers have enrolled with the Andhra Pradesh Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Board, labour minister Vasamsetti Subhash informed the Assembly on Monday.

Responding to a question raised by MLA Dr Valmiki Partha Sarathi, the minister said the government under Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu is firmly committed to

the welfare of unorganised labourers and is accelerating the registration process across the State to ensure comprehensive coverage. He said several welfare schemes are being implemented to provide financial security and social protection to workers.

Registered beneficiaries are being provided free medical services and periodic health check-ups.

The government is extending maternity assistance of Rs 20,000, marriage assistance of Rs 40,000, and financial aid of Rs 60,000 in case of natural death. An immediate assistance of Rs 20,000 is also provided to-

wards funeral expenses.

Scholarships are being offered to children of construction workers studying from Classes I to XII.

The Welfare Board is also organising special skill development programmes to enhance the capabilities of building and construction workers and improve their employment prospects.

The minister added that the government is undertaking comprehensive data collection to ensure complete coverage and safeguard the well-being of workers and their families.



MILK SCARE: MINISTER ORDERS PROBE, ASSURES SAFETY

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

IN the wake of the suspected adulterated milk incident in Rajamahendravaram, medical and health minister Y Satya Kumar Yadav directed officials to submit a detailed report on the collection and testing of milk and edible oil samples in the city.

On Monday, the minister instructed the Institute of Preventive Medicine (IPM - food safety wing) to provide comprehensive details regarding the samples collected for monitoring and the status of their laboratory results. He specifically asked IPM director Neelakanta Reddy and other senior officials to assess the functioning of the Food Safety Department in light of the recent incident.

The minister also held telephonic discussions with health secretary Saurabh Gaur, commissioner of health and family welfare Veerapandian, IPM director Neelakanta Reddy,

and other senior officials. He directed them to ensure that the victims undergoing treatment in hospitals receive the best possible medical care without any lapses. He emphasised continuous monitoring at all levels in coordination with district medical and other departmental authorities until the affected families are fully reassured. Satya Kumar informed the Assembly that samples collected from the accused milk supplier have been sent to laboratories and that results are expected within 72 hours. As a precautionary measure, blood samples have been collected from members of the 106 families supplied by the accused dairy operators. Samples from victims have been sent to laboratories in Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, and Hyderabad for detailed analysis. He explained that the laboratory findings would help determine the nature of the chemicals mixed in the milk and the method of adulteration. Doctors are providing

appropriate treatment based on the victims' pre-existing health conditions, medications, and current symptoms.

Following the minister's directions, senior officials Veerapandian and Neelakanta Reddy rushed to Rajamahendravaram to oversee the situation. Making a special statement in the Assembly, Minister Satya Kumar said the situation in Rajamahendravaram is under control and that the government is prepared to take strict action based on laboratory findings.

He added that samples of cattle feed, water, and fodder have also been collected and sent to laboratories in Vijayawada. Post-mortem samples are being forwarded to the Regional Forensic Laboratory for further examination.

Officials from the health, animal husbandry, police and other departments are working in close coordination to address the situation and ensure public safety, the Minister affirmed.

Inter exams begin smoothly across state

- Over 5.24 lakh students appear for First Year exams
- Board secretary Ranjith Basha inspects centres, reviews arrangements

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE Intermediate Public Examinations (IPE) March 2026 for the academic year 2025-26 commenced smoothly across the state on Monday, with no untoward incidents reported on the first day.

First-year students appeared for Second Language Paper-I at examination centres across the State. Out of a total of 5,45,028 registered candidates, 5,24,771 students attended the examination, while 20,123 were absent, according to officials.

Secretary of the Board of Intermediate Education (BIE) Ranjith Basha monitored the conduct of examinations through cameras at the State Command



Students going in to examination hall at a college in Vijayawada on Monday as Intermediate First Year examinations commence

Photo: Ch Venkata Mastan

Control Room. He also personally inspected several centres in Mangalagiri, including Vijay Jyothi Junior College and Narayana Junior College.

During the visit, he reviewed facilities provided to students, CCTV surveillance systems and the secure handling of question papers and OMR sheets in strong rooms. Officials confirmed that all centres

were under continuous monitoring. Strict security arrangements and a malpractice-free policy were enforced. Adequate drinking water and ventilation facilities were ensured for students, he added.

Furthermore, he congratulated students and staff for the successful conduct of the first day. He advised candidates to reach their respective centres at least 30 minutes

before the start of subsequent examinations.

Meanwhile, some first-year students faced difficulties in locating their respective examination centres, leading to confusion on the opening day. Heavy traffic in parts of Vijayawada further delayed movement, causing several candidates to reach their centres at the last minute.

To prevent inconvenience to students, NTR district police personnel stepped in to regulate traffic near major junctions and examination centres.

Special arrangements were made to ensure smooth vehicular movement and safe passage for candidates.

Meanwhile, the second year examinations will commence on Tuesday, February 24, with as many as 5,26,141 students expected to appear for the Language Paper-II examination.

Based on the experience of the first day of first-year exams, Board officials have advised second-year students to reach their examination centres well in advance to avoid last-minute inconvenience and ensure smooth entry procedures.

Sri Lankan Parliament shows the way for India

As far as setting an illustrious example goes, it is a matchless move. With the salaries and perks of MPs and MLAs in India rising at regular intervals, with generous dollops of additional facilities to go along ending with a generous pension to enable them to subsist in their sunset years (base pension of Rs 31,000 per month), what has been undertaken by Sri Lanka deserves loud applause. On February 6, the Supreme Court had determined that the Parliamentary Pensions (Repeal) Bill can be passed in Parliament with a simple majority. Its main aim was to repeal the Parliamentary Pensions Law No 1 of 1977, which had established a

non-contributory lifetime pension to persons who have ceased to be members of parliament. The Sri Lankan government has gazetted the Parliamentary Pensions (Repeal) Act after it was passed by 154 votes in the 225-member House, with only two against. Ostensibly, this move is to fund other essential public services, given the not-so-secure financial status that the island-nation has been embroiled in for nearly five years now.

But beyond tokenism, this move has been highlighted as fulfilling a key campaign promise of President Anura Kumara Disanayake, who assured to do away with 'unjustified' political perks. In Sri Lanka, a

member of parliament was entitled to a pension after serving a five-year term. In contrast, just look at what is happening in our nation. As an additional service pension, for every year of service beyond the mandatory five-year term, an extra ₹2,500 per month is added to the base pension, including to all former members of either House of Parliament. The salary and pension structure is subject to revision every five years based on the Cost Inflation Index. The perks for former MPs include free train travel in first-class. The recent revision was announced in March 2025, with the changes effective retroactively from April 1, 2023. According to PRS India data,

historically, the average age of the Lok Sabha has risen from 46.5 years in the First Lok Sabha to over 55 in recent sessions, indicating a long-term shift toward older representatives.

The average age of Members of Parliament (MPs) in the 18th Lok Sabha (2024) is 56 years. This reflects an aging trend in Indian politics, with 52 per cent of MPs being over 55 years, while only 11 per cent are 40 years or younger. Even if an MP ceases to be one after a single five-year term, the individual is thus part of the gray train, irrespective of age. Interestingly, with a population share of 11 per cent, senior citizens in India are among the worst

treated ones. In an impassioned speech in Parliament, Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut had said that the government should kill all the senior citizens after 65 years because the government is not ready to pay attention to these nation builders and queried if it is a crime to be one. The other side of the picture is that senior citizens in politics are given all the benefits possible to MLAs, MPs or ministers and they also get pension. 'Senior citizens have the right to change the government, do not ignore them. They have a lifetime experience of changing the government. Do not consider them weak,' opined the mercurial MP. But will things change, is the moot question.

LETTERS

Engg education must move with the times

With reference to the article "The new blueprint for Engineering: Skills, speed and specialisation" by Prof Geeta Tripathi (THI Feb 23), I wish to emphasize the essential significance that engineering education must move with the times or risk being left behind in the fast lane of innovation. As Industry 5.0 builds upon AI, robotics, cloud computing and cyber-physical systems, the writing is on the wall: traditional degrees like engineering alone can no longer carry the whole weight of employability. Engineering education must balance theoretical depth with agility, speed and specialisation to build not just job seekers, but job creators.

Raju Kolluru, Kakinada

Galgotias episode is an eye-opener

With reference to the editorial "Upshots of the Galgotias robodog controversy" (Feb 23), the Galgotias University episode at the recent AI summit has rightly drawn attention to deeper issues in private higher education. While the robodog claim caused immediate embarrassment, the bigger concern lies in inflated patent numbers and misleading performance claims that many institutions use for rankings and advertisements. This erodes trust among students and parents, who invest heavily expecting genuine quality. To address this realistically, the UGC and NIRF should tighten verification of patent data—perhaps by giving more weight to granted patents over filed ones—and conduct random audits of self-reported metrics. Private universities must also face stricter oversight on marketing practices. This would strengthen the overall credibility of Indian higher education.

S M Jeeva, Chennai-32

Regulators must get tough post-Galgotias

Propos "Upshots of the Galgotias Robodog Controversy". The editorial makes a fair point that the real victims here are the students, who now carry the stigma of a degree from an institution caught in a fraud. That is deeply unfair to young people who had no say in their university's conduct. NIRF and NAAC rankings are taken seriously by students and parents when choosing institutions, yet as the article notes, neither body adequately captures the gap between private and public universities on critical metrics like patent quality. Regulators must also crack down on misleading advertisements. This incident should become a turning point, not just another forgotten controversy.

A. Myilsami, Coimbatore-641402

Onus on NIRF and NAAC

The Galgotias robodog controversy has raised uncomfortable questions about claims made by private universities and the systems meant to verify them. When exaggerated achievements go unchecked, it is students and parents who pay the price. Regulatory bodies such as NIRF and NAAC should refine their assessment methods, giving greater weight to verified research, patents granted, faculty quality and student outcomes. Periodic third-party audits and strict penalties for misleading advertisements would help restore credibility. Universities, too, must adopt transparent disclosure practices.

M Barathi, Bengaluru-560076

Govt must ensure strict verification

This letter refers to your editorial, "Upshots of the Galgotias robodog controversy," (Feb 23). While the incident itself is embarrassing, the systemic issues it exposes regarding our higher education landscape are a matter of serious concern. The disparity in patent approval rates between premier public institutions and certain private universities suggests that quantity is being prioritised over actual innovation. To address this, the NIRF and NAAC must refine their evaluation metrics to emphasize quality and peer-reviewed impact rather than just raw numbers, while the government should implement stricter verification of technological claims made by universities in their advertisements.

K Sakunthala, Coimbatore-16

Need for a balanced reform agenda

The Galgotias robodog controversy underlines how fragile credibility can be in higher education. While the ridicule faced by students is regrettable, the larger issue is the weak performance of many private universities in research and patent approvals. This gap must be addressed through stronger oversight and transparent evaluation. Ranking bodies should move beyond cosmetic indicators and place greater weight on measurable outcomes such as patents, publications, and employability. A balanced reform agenda—combining stricter regulation with incentives for quality research—can help restore trust and ensure students are not penalised for institutional lapses.

Abbhana Barathi, Chennai-23

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BENGALURU ONLINE

Minister launches Amazon's 10th corporate office in state

BENGALURU: Minister for Large and Medium Industries MB Patil on Monday inaugurated Amazon's newly constructed, fully equipped corporate main office spread across 11 lakh square feet (1.1 million sq.ft.) at Vinayaka Nagar near Yelahanka. Speaking on the occasion, he said, "This is Amazon's 10th corporate office in the State. The company, which has shared a two-decade association with Karnataka, plans to invest 35 billion dollars in India over the next four years. This investment is expected to support 15 million small businesses and generate lakhs of employment opportunities. Karnataka will receive a significant share of this investment." He pointed out that Karnataka has an annual per capita income of over ₹3.80 lakh, ranking highest in the country. The State also stands second in annual GST contributions to the national exchequer, contributing ₹1.6 lakh crore.

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

Life must be protected, not 'pactually' abandoned



PROF MADABHUSHI SRIDHAR ACHARYULU

WHETHER it is the Constitutional law or criminal law, suicide cannot be accepted under any circumstances. Life is for living. No one has the right to die, but rather a duty to live and let others live.

The recent Supreme Court's dismissal of the appeal affirms a crucial criminal law principle: surviving a suicide pact does not erase legal responsibility when one has facilitated the other's death. The judgment, delivered by a bench of Justice Rajesh Bindal and Justice Manmohan, not only resolves a long-pending criminal dispute but also clarifies the jurisprudential position on abetment to suicide and the criminality inherent in mutual suicide arrangements.

Right to live under Article 21 cannot be extended to include 'right to die'. This significant case presents a delicate intersection of criminal liability, medical evidence, and the State's constitutional obligation to protect life under Article 21. Life is beautiful, whether killing herself or joining a lover, may be a thrilling cinema, but not in reality. In a pact of dying together, if both die, there may be no criminal case, but all those who abetted will be a criminal offence and culpable.

A beautiful heroine, Pratyusha, ended her life following a mutual agreement (?), while the surviving lover became a criminal.

At a broader constitutional level, the decision reinforces that the State's duty is not merely to punish after death but to create legal and social conditions that discourage suicide, prevent emotional coercion, and protect the sanctity of life.

The tragedy of Pratyusha is therefore not only a criminal case but a societal warning: Love cannot justify self-destruction; despair cannot legalise death; and survival cannot absolve complicity. The law,

ultimately, speaks with a humane yet firm voice: life is inviolable, and any pact to extinguish it invites both moral sorrow and legal consequence.

Analysis of the Pratyusha case:

The recent dismissal of the appeal by the Supreme Court in the 23-year-old case concerning the tragic death of the south Indian actress raises profound questions about criminal abetment, evidentiary evaluation, suicide prevention, and the legal culpability of a surviving partner in a suicide pact.

The judgment also emphasises evidentiary discipline, rejecting sensational claims unsupported by medical proof while upholding culpability grounded in established facts.

Love, opposition and a fatal pact:

It is again a story of love, opposition, and a fatal pact. The prosecution's case, accepted by the courts, was that the actress and Gudipalli Siddhartha Reddy were in a relationship despite opposition by his parents. In this emotionally charged setting, both allegedly consumed poison together. While she succumbed, he survived. He was thereafter convicted for: 1. Abetment to suicide; 2. Attempt to commit suicide.

The trial court imposed five years' imprisonment, later reduced to two years by the Andhra Pradesh High Court in 2004. The surviving accused challenged the conviction, while the victim's mother alleged rape, murder by strangulation, and inadequate sentencing.

The Supreme Court, after examining ocular and medical evidence, rejected allegations of rape and strangulation, holding that death was due to poisoning and that purchase of poison (neurotone) constituted abetment.

Survival as a liability!

The crucial legal principle reaffirmed by the Court is that a surviving partner in a mutual suicide pact can be legally culpable for abetment to suicide. This doctrine flows from Sections 107 and 306 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalise instigation, conspiracy, or intentional aid to commit suicide. The law does not treat suicide pacts as romantic acts of shared despair but as legally culpable agreements that normalise self-destruction. Thus, survival does not imply innocence. It may instead



The crucial legal principle reaffirmed by the Court is that a surviving partner in a mutual suicide pact can be legally culpable for abetment to suicide. The law does not treat suicide pacts as romantic acts of shared despair but as legally culpable agreements that normalise self-destruction. Thus, survival does not imply innocence. It may instead expose a participant to enhanced criminal scrutiny.

A judicial reasoning:

The oral pronouncement of the bench outlines a layered evidentiary assessment:

- Murder by strangulation ruled out
- Overwhelming ocular and medical evidence proved poisoning
- Rape allegations not established
- Related claims of rape and strangulation rejected
- Accidental consumption defence disbelieved
- Purchase of poison established abetment
- Unprofessional post-mortem report criticised
- Premature publication of medical findings condemned

These findings reflect the Court's reliance on forensic consistency, contemporaneous evidence, and legal causation, rather than speculative allegations emerging decades later.

Distinction between attempted suicide and abetment:

Attempts to commit suicide historically attracted punishment under Section 309 IPC, though contemporary mental health jurisprudence treats survivors with compassion. However, when a survivor is shown to have actively enabled the other's death, the law shifts focus

from mental vulnerability to criminal complicity.

Thus:

Mere survival may invite therapeutic response, while survival with facilitation invites penal consequences

Romantic myth vs criminal reality:

Popular culture often portrays suicide pacts as tragic expressions of love. Criminal law rejects this romanticism for three reasons:

- Suicide is not a private contract:** A pact to die together cannot be legally validated because life is constitutionally protected, the State has an interest in preserving life, and consent cannot legalise self-destruction.
- Power imbalance and emotional coercion:** One partner may be more vulnerable. Emotional dependence can turn a "mutual pact" into subtle coercion.
- Survival distorts the pact:** If one dies and the other survives, the survivor's role must be scrutinised: Was it equal participation, passive presence, or active facilitation? The law, therefore, pre-emptively that survival coupled with preparatory acts (like procuring poison) may constitute abetment.

State's duty to prevent suicide:

The constitutional guarantee of life under Article 21 imposes a positive obligation on the State:

- To protect individuals from self-harm;
- To regulate circumstances enabling suicide;
- To penalise those who facilitate self-destruction

Suicide is not merely a private tragedy; it is a constitutional concern involving dignity, mental health, and social responsibility. Criminalising abetment ensures that despair is not converted into a shared criminal enterprise.

A doctrinal clarification:

This case reiterates a settled but often misunderstood principle—a suicide pact is not a shield against criminal liability. Participation in planning, procuring means, or encouraging the act can constitute abetment if one partner dies. Thus, the law treats suicide pacts not as mutual consent but as shared participation in a legally prohibited act, where survival triggers accountability.

While the decision affirms criminal liability for abetment, it also indirectly underscores the importance of suicide prevention. Punishment alone cannot address the root causes of emotional distress, familial opposition, and social pressures. Preventive measures must include: Mental health counselling for vulnerable individuals; Social awareness about emotional coercion; Early intervention in toxic or high-pressure relationships; Responsible media reporting in celebrity tragedies; Law punishes facilitation, but society must prevent desperation.

Media and medical evidence:

An important aspect of the case is the Court's criticism of an "unprofessional" post-mortem report and premature publication of medical findings. This highlights two systemic concerns: Forensic evidence must be scientifically consistent and professionally verified; Media leaks of medical opinions can prejudice trials and distort public perception. By rejecting unsupported strangulation claims and relying on consistent ocular and medical evidence, the court reaffirmed the primacy of credible forensic science over sensational allegations.

Balancing compassion and accountability:

Modern jurisprudence recognises that suicide survivors may themselves be victims of mental distress. However, when evidence shows (a) Purchase of lethal substance, (b) Active facilitation, and (c) Knowledge of consequences, the law must respond not merely with sympathy but with accountability. The Supreme Court's approach reflects a calibrated balance: Reject exaggerated allegations (rape, strangulation); Affirm proven criminal facilitation (purchase of poison); recognise the survivor's culpability within evidentiary limits.

Evidentiary integrity:

The Supreme Court's refusal to accept rape allegations demonstrates a commitment to evidentiary rigour. Criminal law cannot sustain convictions on delayed or unsupported claims. While sensitivity to victims is essential, judicial fairness requires proof beyond a reasonable doubt. The judgment thus balances compassion with legal certainty.

(The writer is Advisor, School of Law, Mahindra University, Hyderabad)

Inclusive governance gets an urban mandate in Telangana

AMARAVAJI NAGARAJU

THE outcome of the recent municipal elections in Telangana has done more than merely redrawing the political map of urban local bodies. It has reopened a substantive debate on representation, caste arithmetic and the evolving grammar of social justice in a rapidly urbanising State.

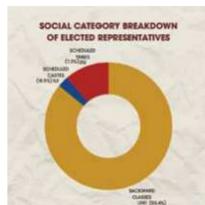
While local elections are often treated as peripheral contests, the scale and pattern of results across the State's 113 municipalities and corporations suggest a deeper political recalibration.

The Congress, which returned to power in the State promising "praja palana" (people-centric governance), has secured control in 90 municipalities. What distinguishes this verdict, however, is not merely the number of urban bodies won, but the social composition of those who now head them.

Approximately, 66 of the 113 municipal chairpersons are from Backward Class (BC) communities, which roughly translates to 61 per cent of the

total. In municipalities secured by the Congress, 51 chairperson posts have gone to BC leaders. Representation extends beyond titular leadership: BCs account for more than 60 per cent of key positions including chairpersons, vice-chairpersons, mayors and deputy mayors. At the ward level too, more than 55 per cent of elected councillors are from BC communities.

At the corporation level, the numbers are equally striking. Four of the seven mayoral positions are now held by BC representatives, marking a notable shift in the social profile of urban power centres. In a State where BC communities constitute a significant share of the population, and are deeply embedded in urban informal economies from small traders and artisans to service providers and lower-middle-class employees, this redistribution of political authority carries symbolic as well as practical weight. The Congress leadership has projected this outcome as validation of its commitment to institutionalising social justice. In the run-up to the Assembly



elections, the party had promised caste enumeration and 42 per cent reservations for BCs in local bodies. While legal and procedural complexities surround the full operationalization of such quotas, the party appears to have moved proactively in ticket distribution. Reports indicate that over 53 per cent of party nominations in municipal elections were given to BC candidates exceeding the stated reservation benchmark.

Critics may argue that candidate selection is ultimately a political calculation rather than a moral gesture. Yet electoral endorsement by voters suggests that the strategy has resonated. Urban constituencies, often perceived as less driven by caste considerations than rural ones, have demonstrated that social

Urban local bodies are not ornamental institutions. They oversee critical functions: water supply, waste management, road infrastructure, public health, urban planning and local taxation. The composition of leadership in these bodies shapes budget priorities and administrative focus. Enhanced BC representation may therefore influence policy choices, particularly in areas like slum upgrading, small enterprise facilitation; market infrastructure and welfare delivery for lower-income households.

Telangana's municipal structure also accommodates representation for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, minorities and other communities under constitutional mandates. The current distribution appears to reflect a layered inclusion rather than a zero-sum redistribution.

Broader implications merit closer scrutiny:

Urban local bodies are not ornamental institutions. They oversee critical functions: water supply, waste management, road infrastructure, public health, urban planning and local taxation. The composition of leadership in these bodies shapes budget priorities and administrative focus. Enhanced BC representation may therefore influence policy choices, particularly in areas like slum upgrading, small enterprise facilitation; market infrastructure and welfare delivery for lower-income households. At the same time, social justice in governance cannot be reduced to numerical dominance.

Whether this balance endures will depend on the government's administrative prudence. Politically, the municipal verdict strengthens the Congress's urban foothold at a time when local elections are increasingly interpreted as mid-term referendums. Consolidation among BC voters, a decisive social bloc in Telangana, could influence future Assembly and Parliamentary contests. Yet, as history repeatedly demonstrates, social coalitions are sustained less by symbolism and more by performance.

Liquor shops allotted through transparent lottery process

- Draw conducted in the presence of Excise Dept and task force officials

HANS NEWS SERVICE
ANANTAPUR

THE lottery process for the allotment of liquor shops in the district was completed successfully under the supervision of Joint Collector M. Maurya Bharadwaj at the District Collectorate on Monday.

The draw was conducted in the presence of Excise Department officials, Task Force personnel and applicants, ensuring adherence to established guidelines. Officials stated that the entire allotment process was carried out strictly in accordance with rules and in a transparent manner.



Joint Collector M Maurya Bharadwaj at liquor shop allotment process at Anantapur on Monday

In the case of the C.K. Palli liquor shop, only one application was received. As there were no competing applicants, the authorities officially confirmed the allotment in favour of Gangadhar Naidu.

District Excise Officer Govinda Naik, Assistant Excise Officer B. Narasim-

hulu, Task Force Inspectors, Puttapparthi Excise Officer Umamaheshwara Raju, and other staff members were present during the proceedings.

Officials reiterated that transparency and compliance with norms were given top priority throughout the selection process.

Inter exams begin smoothly in Anantapur

- Collector asks officials to ensure no malpractices take place

HANS NEWS SERVICE
ANANTAPUR

INTERMEDIATE examinations commenced smoothly across the district, with comprehensive arrangements in place at all centres, District Collector O Anand said on Monday. The Collector conducted a surprise inspection at Sri Sathya Sai Arts and Science College for Girls, located on Court Road



District Collector O Anand conducts a surprise inspection at the centre in Sri Sathya Sai Arts and Science College for Girls in Anantapur on Monday

in Anantapur city, where first-year Intermediate examinations were underway. Interacting with officials at the centre, he reviewed the facilities and overall conduct of the examination process.

Speaking on the occasion, Anand stated that the examinations were being held in a peaceful and orderly manner. He directed the Chief Superintendent to ensure strict vigilance and prevent any instances of malpractice at the centre.

Officials informed him that necessary arrangements, including medical camps, drinking

water facilities and other basic amenities, had been made at all examination centres in the district.

The examinations are also being monitored through CCTV surveillance to maintain transparency and discipline, the Regional Inspection Officer (RIO) said. The Collector expressed satisfaction over the arrangements and emphasized the importance of conducting the examinations in a fair and systematic manner.

Regional Inspection Officer Venkataramana Naik and other officials were present during the inspection.

3-day training programme on Census begins today

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NANDYAL

DISTRICT Collector G Rajakumari has announced that district-level training programmes will be conducted for three days on the 24th, 25th, and 26th of this month to ensure the effective implementation of the upcoming Census operations.

Reviewing the arrangements at a meeting held on Monday at the PGRS Hall in the Collectorate, the Collector instructed that all concerned officials must attend the training without fail and thoroughly understand the guidelines being imparted.

The training will be held at SVR Engineering College, Ayyaluru Metta, and officials have been directed to report by 9 am every day.

She made it clear that no leave or exemptions would be permitted. A total of 164 officials—including the District Collector (Principal Census Officer), Joint Collector, DRO, RDOs, Sub-Collectors, tahsildars, MPDOs, Municipal Commissioners, and Town Planning Officers—will undergo comprehensive online and hands-on training in three batches. Key components such as issuing orders to enumerators through the CMMS app, block demarcation, and data entry procedures will be taught directly by a state-level expert team.

The Collector further emphasised that officials must work with greater accountability and speed in implementing priority government programmes. She directed that the Electronic Processing of Taxes and Services (EPTS) document uploading process be expedited and announced that a special review on this issue would be conducted every Monday.

With the document submission target increased



Collector Rajakumari addressing a meeting in Nandyal on Monday

from 1.3 million to 1.5 million, officials were instructed to prepare a clear action plan and ensure close monitoring at the mandal level. She also stated that the deadline for completion of the Integrated Family Survey has been fixed as the 28th of this month and ordered that all pending targets be completed within the stipulated time and uploaded comprehensively.

With regard to the conduct of Intermediate examinations, the Collector instructed officials to enforce Section-144 around examination centers to ensure a peaceful atmosphere.

Adequate basic facilities such as drinking water, sanitation and transport arrangements for students must be ensured, she said, while strictly prohibiting the operation of Xerox centres near examination venues. Highlighting the importance of capacity building, she directed that every government employee must complete a minimum of 40 iGOT online courses.

Officials were also asked to widely publicize WhatsApp-based government services to improve public outreach. Noting that e-KYC is pending for 3,330 unclaimed deposit accounts, the Collector instructed officials to complete the process by the 27th of this month and called upon all departments to work in coordination to achieve government targets within timelines and deliver quality services to the public.

BJP demands action against alleged temple desecration incidents



BJP leaders submit a memorandum to Joint Collector Bharadwaj at Sri Sathya Sai District Collectorate

HANS NEWS SERVICE
PUTTAPARTHI

LEADERS of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) met the Joint Collector, Bharadwaj, at the District Collectorate as part of the party's 'Janata Varadhi' programme and submitted a memorandum seeking action on alleged incidents of temple desecration in the State.

Acting on the directions of State BJP president PVN Madhav, the delegation led by district president G.M. Shekhar and district Janata

Varadhi convener Talamarla Harikrishna Goud raised concerns over incidents that allegedly occurred between 2019 and 2024 during the previous Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy-led government.

They referred to the burning of a temple chariot at Ramateertham and reported cases of damage to temple idols at various locations, urging a comprehensive inquiry into the incidents and action against those found responsible.

The delegation also expressed objection to an al-

leged incident during the ongoing Assembly session in which images of Lord Venkateswara were reportedly displayed and mishandled in the Legislative Council. They demanded appropriate action against those responsible, terming it an insult to religious sentiments.

BJP leaders Balaganadhar Bhaskar, G. Kalayan Kumar, Ramu, Veeranjanyulu, Ganesh, Narayana, Lakshmi Naik, Mahananda and others were present during the submission of the memorandum.

TTD debunks snakebite rumour at Tirumala

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUPATI

TIRUMALA Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Devasthanams dismissed reports circulating in sections of the media that a woman devotee had suffered a snakebite while waiting in a darshan queue at Tirumala, stating that no such incident occurred.

In a press release on Monday, the TTD explained that the confusion arose late Sunday night when a couple from Warangal district, Telangana, Sarath Babu and his wife Mounika arrived for darshan. After reaching the RB Centre parking area near the museum by taxi,

Mounika reportedly moved into a dimly lit patch nearby to apply turmeric to her feet. She suddenly felt something brush against her foot, which startled her. When her husband checked the spot, he noticed a small snake in the area.

Temple security personnel responded immediately after being alerted and shifted her to Ashwini Hospital in Tirumala, where doctors found no signs of a snakebite. As an added precaution, she was later referred to Sri Venkateswara Institute of Medical Sciences in Tirupati, where medical examinations again confirmed she was safe and had no health complica-

tions.

In a video statement, Sarath Babu said his wife had panicked in the darkness after feeling the sudden touch. He praised the swift response of TTD staff, noting that they ensured immediate medical care, facilitated darshan for the family on Monday morning, and even helped arrange their return journey.

Following an internal inquiry, the temple administration stated that the snake spotted at the location was non-venomous. TTD also urged devotees to stick to designated pathways and avoid venturing into restricted or forested zones around Tirumala for their safety.

TTD scraps stalled museum gallery modernisation deal

PRADHEEP VENNELAKANTI
TIRUPATI

TIRUMALA Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has decided to scrap the ongoing modernisation arrangement for the Outer Gallery of Sri Venkateswara Museum at Tirumala after prolonged delays and will now invite fresh donors to complete the remaining works as part of Srivari Seva without cost to the temple body.

The project to upgrade the museum's outer gallery was earlier handed over on a donation basis to MAP Systems, which had proposed to develop four themed sections — Temple Experience Gallery, Seva Experience Gallery, Vahana Gallery and

Sapthagiri Multimedia Gallery. Work orders were issued in August 2019 with an initial completion target set for October that year, and the plan later received formal approval from the TTD Board.

While preliminary civil works, electrical installations, and air-conditioning ducting were partially executed, the project soon ran into repeated setbacks. Deadlines were extended multiple times, including during the pandemic period, with the last extension pushing completion to October 31, 2023. Despite several assurances from the firm — including a promise to restart work in December 2024 and finish by July 2025 — pro-

gress remained slow.

TTD officials noted that only about four-fifths of the work in the first of five designated zones was completed, while the remaining areas saw no development. Continuous follow-ups, meetings, and official communications failed to revive the pace of work. Even after a show-cause notice was issued in October 2025 and a response was received, the pending tasks were not resumed.

Citing persistent delays, missed commitments, and financial constraints raised by the contractor, the temple administration concluded that continuing with the existing arrangement was no longer viable.

Anganwadi workers demand minimum wages

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BANAGANAPALLE
(NANDYAL DISTRICT)

ANGANWADI workers, under the banner of the Anganwadi Teachers and Welfare Union affiliated to the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), staged relay hunger strikes in front of the MPDO Office at Banaganapalle town on Monday. The protest was organised following a call

given by the state committee, demanding implementation of minimum wages and fulfilment of long-pending demands, including the wage hike promised by the ruling coalition government.

Addressing the gathering, CITU district leaders M. Sudhakar and J.V. Subbaiah, along with Anganwadi project president and secretary Venkatalakshmi and Roja Ramani, recalled that An-

ganwadi workers had earlier resorted to a 42-day indefinite strike seeking resolution of wage-related and other issues. They pointed out that the previous government had failed to address their grievances, despite repeated representations and sustained agitation.

The leaders further stated that while in opposition, the coalition government had assured Anganwadi work-



ers that their just demands would be resolved immediately after coming to power. However, even after more than two years of assuming office, the government has failed to honour those as-

surances, they alleged. They demanded that the ongoing budget session be utilised to announce an immediate wage hike and address other pending demands of Anganwadi workers across the state.

'Save Punarvika' campaign draws public attention

- The 11-month-old girl depends on extremely expensive life-saving injection
- The girl is suffering from Spinal Muscular Atrophy
- A one-time injection Zolgensma priced at nearly Rs 16 crore is required to save her life



Photo of Punarvika and her father Suresh

#SavePunarvika, drawing widespread public attention and support. The campaign revolves around an 11-month-old baby girl, Punarvika Sri, whose life depends on an extremely

expensive, life-saving injection. From social media platforms to streets and villages, citizens have been coming together in an extraordinary display of compassion, proving that helping hands matter more than words of prayer.

Punarvika Sri was born on May 12, 2025, to Suresh Kumar and Pushpavathi, a humble couple from Veldurthi mandal in Kurnool district. When the child was six months old, her parents noticed that she was unable to move her body.

After initial consultations at hospitals in Kurnool, doctors referred the

family to a corporate hospital in Hyderabad. There, specialists diagnosed her with Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA), a rare genetic disorder that weakens muscles by damaging motor neurons in the spinal cord. Doctors advised a one-time injection—Zolgensma—priced at nearly Rs 16 crore, as the only treatment to save her life.

Punarvika's father Suresh earns a meagre livelihood as a barber running a small shop near the Veldurthi new bus stand, making the cost of treatment far beyond the family's means. In desperation, the parents approached

public representatives and government officials seeking help. They met Andhra Pradesh Minister TG Bharath, who reportedly wrote to the government seeking assistance. The family also travelled to Amaravati to appeal to senior officials, while simultaneously initiating fundraising efforts on their own, which brought in limited funds.

As news of the infant's condition spread rapidly online, social media influencers and youth organisations launched a large-scale fundraising and awareness campaign. Bicycle rallies were organised in several districts, while students,

auto drivers and common citizens contributed whatever they could, including schoolchildren donating their pocket money.

A youth named Sreenu undertook a 500-kilometre bicycle journey from Samarlakota as part of the campaign. Overwhelmed by the support, Suresh said the solidarity shown by people has given his family immense strength and hope, and appealed to the government and philanthropists to come forward to save his daughter's life. Those willing to extend support may contact Punarvika's father Suresh at 7799279441.

CPI demands social security for petrol pump workers

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUPATI

COMMUNIST Party of India (CPI) Central Control Commission chairman Dr K Narayana inspected petrol pumps near Bliss Circle here on Monday.

He interacted directly with workers, highlighting their severe hardships, and warned of State-wide struggles by CPI and AITUC if the government ignores their plight.

Dr Narayana stated that there are around 1.25 lakh petrol pumps across the State and 25 to 30 lakh workers working nationwide.

These laborers work 12-hour shifts standing amid chemical fumes, extreme weather, and hazards, yet lack shaded rest areas, clean water, protective gear, or social security.

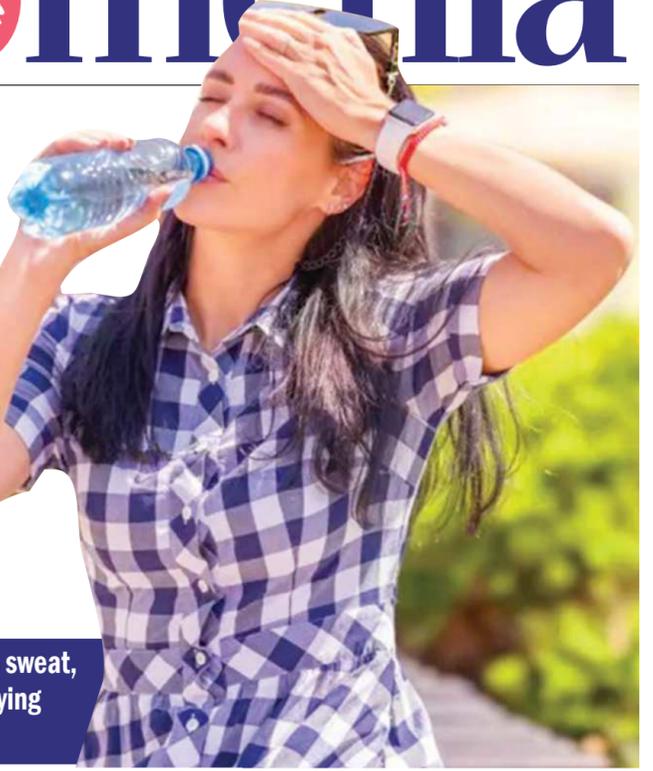
He said they earn Rs 9,000 to Rs 10,000 monthly far below living wages and they are deprived of ESI for healthcare, PF for retirement, or annual health checks.

He demanded immediate government action on implementing Rs 26,000 minimum wage per labour code reforms, 4-hourly rest breaks, midday meals, snacks, sanitation, and statutory benefits.

OF late, a deeply moving story has surfaced and gone viral on social media across the Telugu states under the hashtag



Dehydration, headaches and low energy: Why women are more vulnerable in summer



As temperatures rise, dehydration becomes a common yet overlooked health risk for women. Fluid loss through sweat, hormonal changes, and daily responsibilities can quietly drain energy levels. Recognising early signs and staying consistently hydrated is essential to prevent headaches, fatigue, and serious heat-related illness

DR ANURADHA H K

Summer heat can be harsh on the body, especially for women. Dehydration happens when the body loses more fluids than it takes in. During hot weather, we sweat more to cool down. Sweating leads to loss of water and important minerals like sodium and potassium. If these fluids are not replaced, the body cannot function properly. Many women do not realise they are dehydrated until symptoms become strong. Mild dehydration can start with dry mouth, tiredness, and reduced urination. If ignored, it can become serious and lead to heat exhaustion or even heat stroke.

Why Women Are More at Risk

Women are often more



vulnerable to dehydration because of biological and hormonal reasons. The female body usually has a slightly lower percentage of water compared to men.

This means women may feel the effects of fluid loss more quickly. Hormonal changes also play a major role. During menstruation, pregnancy, or menopause,

hormone levels fluctuate. These changes can affect how the body regulates fluids. Some women experience bloating during certain phases of

the menstrual cycle, but this does not mean the body is well hydrated. In fact, dehydration can still occur even when bloating is present.

Pregnant and breastfeeding women need extra fluids because their bodies are supporting another life. If they do not drink enough water, they may feel dizzy, weak, or develop headaches more easily.

The Link Between Dehydration and Headaches

Headaches are one of the most common signs of dehydration. When the body loses fluids, blood volume decreases slightly. This reduces the supply of oxygen and nutrients to the brain. As a result, a person may experience a dull or throbbing headache. Many

women already suffer from hormonal headaches or migraines. Dehydration can trigger these headaches or make them worse. Sometimes, a simple glass of water can reduce headache intensity if dehydration is the cause. Ignoring repeated summer headaches can affect daily productivity and mental focus. It is important to consider hydration as a possible reason before taking medication.

Low Energy and Fatigue

Low energy is another common problem during hot months. When the body lacks enough fluids, the heart works harder to circulate blood. This makes a person feel tired and weak. Even small daily tasks can feel exhausting. Women who balance work,

household duties, and childcare may overlook early warning signs. Feeling unusually sleepy, dizzy, or irritable during summer could be linked to poor hydration.

Iron deficiency, which is common among women, can make this fatigue worse. When dehydration combines with low iron levels, the body struggles even more to maintain energy.

Simple Steps to Stay Hydrated

Preventing dehydration is simple but requires regular attention. Women should drink water throughout the day, even if they do not feel thirsty. Keeping a water bottle nearby can act as a reminder. Including natural fluids like

coconut water, lemon water, and buttermilk can help maintain electrolyte balance. Eating water-rich fruits such as watermelon, cucumber, and oranges also supports hydration. Wearing loose cotton clothes and avoiding direct sun during peak afternoon hours can reduce fluid loss. Limiting caffeine and sugary drinks is also important, as they can increase dehydration. If symptoms like severe headache, fainting, very dark urine, or rapid heartbeat occur, medical help should be taken immediately. Staying hydrated is one of the simplest ways women can protect their health and energy during the summer season.

(The writer is a Lead Consultant - Neurology, Aster CMI Hospital, Bangalore)

Shilpa Shetty inspires fitness fans with high-intensity full-body workout video

Actress and fitness icon Shilpa Shetty continues to motivate fitness enthusiasts with her powerful workout routines, regularly sharing inspiring fitness content across her social media platforms. Known for her disciplined lifestyle and commitment to health, the actress once again caught attention with a new video showcasing an intense full-body compound workout designed to strengthen and stabilize the entire body.



In her latest post, Shilpa was seen performing a dynamic dumbbell-based compound exercise that engages major muscle groups including the core, legs, back, shoulders, and arms. The workout not only targets strength building but also focuses on stabilizing muscles that are essential for balance, posture, and joint control. Fitness experts often highlight such compound movements

as highly effective due to their ability to activate multiple muscle groups simultaneously. Sharing the clip, Shilpa captioned it, "Full body fired up, no muscle left behind," perfectly capturing the intensity of the session. She further elaborated on the long-term benefits of the exercise, noting that it is a high-intensity movement that combines

synchronized muscle engagement with explosive propulsion. According to her, the workout is ideal for short, time-efficient fitness routines and can be performed either in repetitions or timed intervals. With consistent practice, the exercise helps build overall endurance, strength, coordination, and power.

The Dhadkan actress has become a major source of motivation for fitness lovers, often pushing her limits and encouraging netizens to do the same. Her fitness journey is not just about aesthetics but also about building functional strength and long-term wellness.

Recently, Shilpa also shared another fitness video featuring the supine contralateral stability drill, an advanced exercise that improves core stability and neuromuscular coordination. Highlighting the importance of control in strength training, she wrote, "Strength

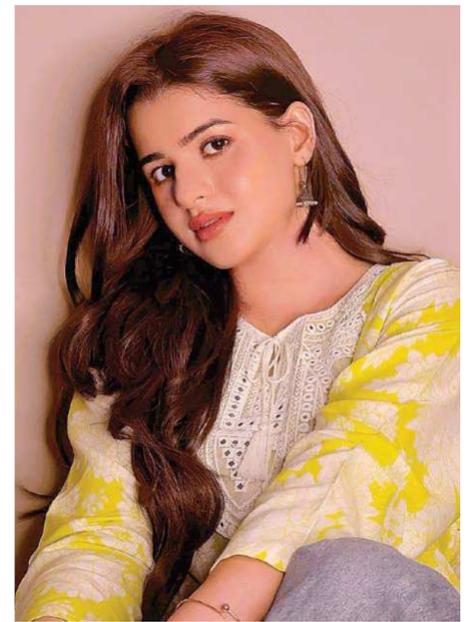
without control is incomplete." She explained that the drill challenges core stability, inner thigh engagement, pelvic control, and overall neuromuscular coordination, proving that even minimal equipment can deliver high-impact results when performed correctly.

The Sukhee actress continues to inspire people across age groups by promoting a balanced approach to fitness that focuses on strength, flexibility, control, and consistency. Through her videos, Shilpa Shetty not only showcases advanced workout techniques but also sends a strong message about discipline, self-care, and sustainable fitness.

With every post, she reinforces her status as one of the most influential fitness role models in the entertainment industry, motivating millions to prioritize health and embrace an active lifestyle.

Riya Munjal opens up about standing against eve-teasing

Actress Riya Munjal, who is currently earning praise for her performance in the popular television show Lakshmi Niwas, has spoken candidly about a powerful personal experience that reflects the strength of the character she portrays on screen. The actress recently opened up about standing up against eve-teasing during her college days, revealing how those real-life moments shaped her outlook and confidence.



The show is presently featuring an engaging storyline revolving around Bhoomika and Raj Bundela. Bhoomika, the youngest daughter of Srinivas and Lakshmi, is portrayed by Riya Munjal as a lively, affectionate, and emotionally expressive young woman. Her life takes an unexpected turn when millionaire Raj Bundela enters her world. Instantly drawn to Bhoomika, Raj approaches her family with a marriage proposal on the very first day they meet. His consistent support to the family during difficult times gradually earns their trust, prompting Srinivas and the rest of the family to seriously consider the alliance.

However, Bhoomika's journey is not just a romantic narrative. The character is shown navigating complex emotions and situations she is not fully prepared for. While she appears cheerful and carefree on the outside, Bhoomika's internal struggle reflects the pressure of family expectations, personal fears, and the process of finding her own voice. The ongoing track highlights her emotional maturity and

quiet resilience, making her character deeply relatable to many viewers.

Speaking about her real-life experiences, Riya shared that during her college days, she often encountered situations involving eve-teasing and inappropriate behaviour, either directed at her friends or herself. She revealed that she was never someone who could ignore such moments. Her instinct, she said, was always to speak up and confront the situation, even if she later reflected on the risks involved. According to her, in those moments, standing one's ground feels more important than fear.

Riya further explained that this instinctive courage is what connects her deeply to Bhoomika's character.

She described Bhoomika as someone who may seem bubbly and emotional but possesses a strong core of self-respect and inner strength. While the character takes time to process her emotions, she never compromises when it comes to dignity and standing up for what is right.

The actress believes that every girl carries this instinct within herself — the strength to resist, question, and stand firm — and that sometimes all it takes is the courage to act on it. With both her on-screen role and real-life voice, Riya Munjal is emerging not just as a promising performer, but also as a strong, relatable young woman audiences can connect with beyond the screen.

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ACROSS

4 A small, smooth stone (6) 24 Wild goat (4)
 7 Ultimate (8) 26 Colourful Japanese carp (3)
 8 Finally (2,4)
 10 Instruments of torture (5) 27 Painter Magritte (4)
 13 Rebuff (4) 29 Notion (4)
 14 Jet-set jet (4) 32 Microsoft's search engine (4)
 15 Kinds, types or sorts (4) 33 Affected grin (5)
 16 Genetic material (3) 34 Menace (6)
 17 Taj Mahal locale (4) 35 Dr ___ Prasad : First President of India (8)
 19 Self-satisfied (4) 36 Attractive (6)
 21 Language of Kerala (9)
 23 Prefix for one thousand (4)

DOWN

1 Found in an oyster (5)
 2 Birthplace of Mohammed (5)
 3 OE letters (4)
 4 Piece of wood (5)
 5 Incandescent lamp (4)
 6 Being bested? (6)
 9 Fight or wrestle (6)
 11 Roman bronze - "sea" change? (3)
 12 South African pen (5)
 13 Murdering (7)
 15 Lyricist Gerstwin (3)
 16 Strange or odd (3)
 18 "Oil rag" anagram for a girl (6)
 20 Principle of conduct (5)
 21 1002 in Roman numerals (3)
 22 Abraham's pet name (3)
 23 Legitimate (6)
 25 Always in verse (3)
 28 Way in (5)
 30 Electronic valve (5)
 31 Mogul emperor called the Great (5)
 32 Not straight (4)
 33 Procedure part (4)

Solution to February 23

SUDOKU

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Solution to February 23



JEE Main 2026 session 1: Toppers share preparation mantras

HIGHLIGHT HOW DISCIPLINED ROUTINES, MOCK-TEST ANALYSIS, AND STEADY FOCUS SHAPED THEIR PERFORMANCE

ARTI ADKE

The National Testing Agency (NTA) recently announced the results of JEE Main 2026 Session 1, with several candidates securing above the 99 percentile, underscoring the intense competition for admission to premier engineering institutions across the country. Among the high achievers, Shreyas Pai secured 99.23 percentile, Bharath Madhusudhan Gudi scored 99.87 percentile, and Sughosh Joshi achieved 99.776 percentile. The results mark a significant milestone for thousands of aspirants who appeared for the first session of one of India's most competitive entrance examinations.

Structured preparation key to success

For Shreyas Pai (99.23 percentile), disciplined daily study routines played a decisive role. Balancing college hours from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., he dedicated four to five hours each day to focused preparation. His strategy revolved around practising module questions and extensively solving Previous Year Questions (PYQs).

"I followed a question-wise analysis after every mock test," Shreyas said. He maintained an "error book" where he documented mistakes and revised incorrect answers to avoid repeating them. Addressing his biggest weakness — exam nervousness — he relied on repeated practice to build confidence. On exam day, his mantra was simple: remain calm and focus solely on attempting questions without worrying about the outcome.

To prevent burnout, Shreyas divided his workload into manageable daily targets, ensuring he did not leave large portions



Bharath Madhusudhan Gudi

for the last moment. He focused on rigorous practice during the initial months, reserving the final phase for revision and repetition. Leisure time, including playing cricket with friends, helped him maintain balance.

Learning from mistakes

Bharath Madhusudhan Gudi (99.87 percentile) attributed his success to consistency and discipline in his daily study plan. "I ensured that no backlog spilled over to the next day," he said. Conceptual clarity came from attentive classroom learning and thorough revision of notes, but he emphasised that practice was indispensable. Weekly tests served as checkpoints to track progress.



Shreyas Pai

Bharath described his error book as a powerful self-reflection tool. "Realising your mistakes gives the greatest confidence," he said, adding that poor performances in some tests did not deter him emotionally but instead became learning opportunities.

He identified agitation, overthinking, and exam-day anxiety as personal weaknesses. With conscious effort, guidance from parents and teachers, and cultivating contentment with his preparation, he overcame these challenges.

On the day of the exam, Bharath ensured sufficient sleep and mental relaxation. He followed a structured CPM order — allocating 45 minutes to Chemistry, one hour to Physics, and the remaining time



Sughosh Joshi

to Mathematics. Prioritising accuracy over speed, he maintained composure even when faced with difficult questions.

To manage stress, he maintained a balanced routine combining reading and problem-solving. Time spent with friends and supportive teachers further eased the pressure.

Discipline and patience pay off

Sughosh Joshi (99.776 percentile) followed a rigorous schedule stretching from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. In the initial phase, classroom sessions focused on building conceptual foundations, followed by self-study to bridge gaps and gradually increase the level of problem difficulty. In the final month, intensive mock tests boosted his

confidence.

Sughosh analysed every mock test on the same day, using an error log to identify weak areas. This systematic revision helped him avoid repeating mistakes in the final examination.

He acknowledged speed and patience as early weaknesses. Timed practice improved his speed, while tackling challenging, multi-directional questions strengthened his persistence and conceptual depth.

With his exam scheduled in the afternoon session, Sughosh consciously avoided last-minute revision on the day of the test. Treating the examination like any other mock test helped reduce anxiety. "Being in the present and focusing on the current question was crucial," he noted.

Stress management, he emphasised, was a continuous process supported by parents, teachers, healthy peer competition, sufficient sleep, and daily relaxation time.

Gateway to premier institutes

JEE Main serves as the qualifying examination for admission to National Institutes of Technology (NITs), Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs), and other centrally funded technical institutions, besides acting as a gateway to JEE Advanced.

With Session 1 results now declared, aspirants are gearing up for Session 2, determined to improve their scores and secure seats in leading engineering institutions. The journeys of these 99-percentilers underscore that structured preparation, self-analysis, and emotional resilience remain the cornerstones of success in one of India's toughest academic challenges.

Employer survey signals rise in skills-focused fresher hiring

Hiring sentiment for entry-level talent has strengthened for the first half of 2026, with 73 per cent of employers indicating plans to recruit freshers, according to the latest Career Outlook Report HY1 2026 released by TeamLease EdTech. The figure marks a three-percentage-point increase over the previous half-year, pointing to renewed employer confidence alongside a sharper focus on applied skills.

The report is based on responses from 1,051 employers surveyed across India between November 2025 and January 2026. It highlights sustained demand for early-career professionals while underscoring a gradual shift from degree-based screening to skills-driven hiring practices.

Retail, start-ups and manufacturing lead demand

Sector-wise, Retail recorded the highest hiring intent at 91 per cent, followed by E-commerce and Technology Start-ups at 90 per cent, and Manufacturing at 85 per cent. Retail employers are seeking roles such as dark store assistants and inventory management assistants. Start-ups are recruiting digital sales associates and junior web developers, while manufacturing firms are hiring inventory and logistics coordinators and battery assembly technicians.

The survey also points to a sharp surge



in select sectors compared to the same period last year. Retail hiring intent rose from 41 per cent in HY1 2025 to 91 per cent in HY1 2026, a 50-percentage-point increase. Travel recorded a 51-point rise to 77 per cent, while Power and Energy climbed 50 points to 72 per cent, indicating recovery momentum and expanding opportunities for young professionals.

Applied skills gain priority

Commenting on the findings, Shantanu Roop, Founder and CEO of TeamLease EdTech, described the trend as a "structural reset" in how early-career talent integrates into the workforce. He noted that while opportunities are in-

creasing, hiring is becoming more selective. The report identifies a widening gap between candidates who possess demonstrable skills and those who rely solely on academic qualifications. Employers are increasingly favouring applicants with internships, live projects and work portfolios. Freshers able to showcase hands-on experience are moving more quickly into career tracks, while degree-only candidates face longer job search cycles. Overall, the survey suggests that although the hiring landscape is expanding, success for first-time job seekers will depend significantly on their ability to demonstrate practical, job-ready competencies in a competitive market.

How to stay calm and focused during exam

Examinations can be stressful, often bringing anxiety and self-doubt even for students who have prepared thoroughly. However, success in an exam depends not only on knowledge but also on the ability to remain calm and focused under pressure. Managing emotions inside the examination hall plays a crucial role in clear thinking and effective time use. With simple strategies such as controlled breathing, structured planning, and positive self-talk, students can improve concentration and perform at their best.

Practise controlled breathing

One of the simplest and most effective techniques is controlled breathing. Before the question paper is distributed, take slow, deep breaths—inhale for four seconds, hold for four seconds, and exhale for four seconds. Repeating this process for a minute helps slow the heart rate and relax the mind, reducing immediate stress. If anxiety returns during the exam, pause briefly, place both feet firmly on the floor, and repeat the breathing cycle. Even a short reset can restore concentration.

Start with familiar questions

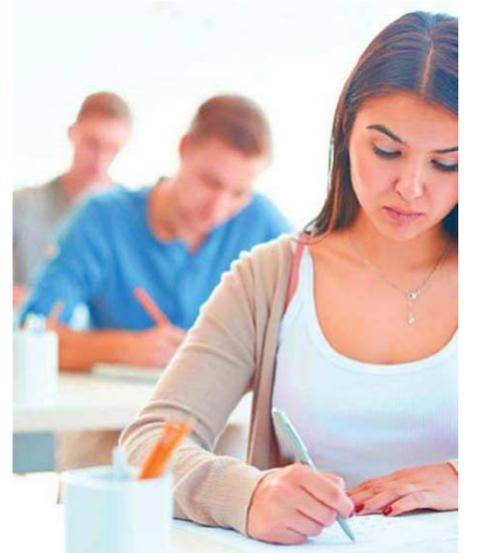
Confidence also plays a major role in maintaining calmness. Instead of worrying about difficult questions, remind yourself that you have prepared consistently and are capable of solving the paper step by step. Begin by answering questions you find familiar or easier. Early success builds momentum and boosts confidence, making it easier to approach more challenging sections later. Avoid comparing your progress with others in the hall; each student works at a different pace.

Plan your time wisely

Another important strategy is staying mentally organised. Spend the first few minutes reading the entire paper carefully and planning how much time to allocate to each section. A clear plan reduces panic and ensures that no question is left unanswered due to poor time distribution. If you encounter a question you cannot solve immediately, mark it and move forward instead of losing valuable minutes worrying about it.

Use positive self-talk

Positive self-talk is equally helpful. Replace thoughts such as "I may forget every-



thing" with "I will attempt each question calmly." This small shift in mindset improves emotional stability and prevents unnecessary stress. Keeping your posture relaxed, stretching your fingers occasionally, and sipping water when allowed can also help maintain physical comfort and focus.

Finally, remember that an examination is only one step

in a longer academic journey. Viewing it as an opportunity to demonstrate learning rather than a moment of fear helps reduce pressure. By practising breathing techniques, planning answers wisely, and maintaining steady confidence, students can remain calm, focused, and perform to the best of their abilities during the examination.

Youth innovation takes the lead, turning ideas into action

10th edition of SolveCon 2026 sees 1,700 youth changemakers collaborate, build, and commit to real-world solutions

The 10th edition of SolveCon '26 brought youth innovation to the forefront, with nearly 1,700 young changemakers gathering at PES University, Bengaluru, to collaborate on practical solutions to real-world challenges. Hosted by Reap Benefit, the event also saw participation from representatives of 88 organisations spanning civic engagement, education, climate action, mental wellbeing, and the arts.

Throughout the day-long event, participants worked in teams to map local climate risks, design mental health awareness campaigns, debate public policy issues, and initiate cross-city



collaborations. The format encouraged hands-on problem-solving and peer learning rather than passive participation.

Organisations such as Giving Tuesday India, Science Gallery Bengaluru, TinkerHub, Teach For India, Azim Premji Uni-



versity, NIMHANS and SELCO Foundation were among those that engaged with participants. The event was supported by

partners including Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies, Rainmatter Foundation, NetApp and the MacArthur Foundation. The

gathering featured interactive sessions with leaders from diverse fields. Among them were Kailash Nadh, Chief Technology Officer at Zerodha and board member at Rainmatter Foundation; Priyanka Francis, IAS, Director of the National Gallery of Modern Art; Ashwini Hiremath, Founder of Wild Wild Women; and Deepak Dhananjaya, Founder of the Prabhava Institute of Inclusive Mental Health. Instead of traditional keynote speeches, speakers engaged in open dialogue with students. Kailash Nadh highlighted the importance of human skills in a technology-driven world, noting that curiosity, clarity of thought, and articulation re-

main essential even as artificial intelligence tools become widely accessible.

Kuldeep Dantewadia, Co-founder and CEO of Reap Benefit, said the national edition reflects a broader shift in youth engagement. He emphasised that the platform enables young people to question, experiment, and translate ideas into action when given the space and trust to do so.

Organisers observed strong interest in continuing engagement through follow-up programmes, indicating that the event functioned not merely as a one-day gathering but as a catalyst for sustained, youth-led innovation and collaboration.

Having seen how Brevis and Miller built their partnership, that was the approach needed from the Indian batters. The Indian batters did not do that. They came out with overconfidence, threw their bat at everything and lost wickets. South Africa clearly outsmarted India and it was a well-deserved win for them - **Batting legend Sunil Gavaskar**

Overconfident Indian players must shed ego: Gavaskar

◆ 'You have to learn from the opposition. If they have scored well on a tricky surface like this, you have to get rid of your ego, observe and adjust.'

◆ Tilak Varma has been a very street-smart batter. But I was disappointed with his approach in this game'

AHMEDABAD

INDIA needed to take a cue from South Africa's innings, shed their ego and adapt to the conditions instead of walking out with overconfidence and throwing their bats at everything in their T20 World Cup clash, feels batting legend Sunil Gavaskar. South Africa snapped India's

12-match unbeaten streak at the T20 World Cup, handing the defending champions a heavy 76-run defeat.

"Having seen how Brevis and Miller built their partnership, that was the approach needed from the Indian batters," Gavaskar said on JioStar. "The Indian batters did not do that. They came out with overconfidence, threw their

bat at everything and lost wickets. South Africa clearly outsmarted India and it was a well-deserved win for them."

"You have to learn from the opposition. If they have scored well on a tricky surface like this, you have to get rid of your ego, observe and adjust." India lost their top three -- Ishan Kishan (0), Abhishek Sharma (15) and Tilak Varma



(1) -- inside the power play to slip to 26/3. "Tilak Varma

has been a very street-smart batter. But I was disappointed with his approach in this game. Ishan Kishan lost his wicket in the first over. The required rate was around 9.5 runs per over, not 15.

"So, Tilak could have given himself more time. At the other end, Abhishek Sharma had back-to-back ducks. So, the responsibility was on Tilak

to stick around, build a partnership, and get past the first six overs, but he failed to do that. "You don't always need to score 70 runs in the Powerplay. Even 55-60 runs would have been a good platform. But the reckless approach of the Indian batters led to their downfall in Ahmedabad." India next take on Zimbabwe and Gavaskar said he would

like to see Axar Patel return to the playing XI after missing the previous two games, with the team management opting for Washington Sundar. "I would look at bringing Axar Patel back into the playing XI, keeping in mind the lack of too many left-handed batters in Zimbabwe's line-up. You could possibly bring him in place of Arshdeep Singh.

At least one out of form batter to be dropped

◆ The team management might have to revisit the performances of Abhishek (15 runs in four games) and Tilak (107 runs in five games at strike rate of 118)

◆ Not to forget, the designated finisher Rinku Singh's aggregate of 24 runs in 29 balls at a disastrous strike rate of 82.75 is embarrassing to say the least

KUSHAN SARKAR

THE Indian team management may drop at least one among three out-of-form batters and revisit its one-dimensional template of playing too many left-handers in the top-order, indicated head coach Gautam Gambhir's understudies Ryan Ten Doeschate and Sitanshu Kotak.

With two must-win games left, the team management might have to revisit the performances of Abhishek Sharma (15 runs in four games) and Tilak Varma (107 runs in five games at Strike Rate of 118). Not to forget, the designated finisher Rinku Sin-



gh's aggregate of 24 runs in 29 balls at a disastrous strike rate of 82.75 is embarrassing to say the least.

"If head coach and team management feels we need to do something different we will do things differently. Definitely a thought now comes if we have to change, what do we change and how do we change," batting coach Sitanshu Kotak didn't make bones about the fact that the team is indeed in a spot. "Now we have reached a point where we need to think if we need to do something different or stick with same combination," Kotak said.

Ten Doeschate was a bit more forthcoming when he admitted that it is indeed a "concern" that there are no back-up specialist batters in

the squad and Sanju Samson, despite his wretched form, might be back in the mix.

The logic could be bringing in a right hander to break the monotony. "You stick with the guys who you feel have performed really well over the last 18 months and maybe shy of a few runs now? Or do we twist and bring Sanju, who's also a fantastic player and obviously helps tactically with having a right hander at the top of the order," Ten Doeschate also echoed Kotak's sentiments but with more definitive answer that changes could be on cards. "I'm sure that (Samson's inclusion) will be a talking point over the next few days going into these two very important games (Zimbabwe and West Indies)."

"And once we felt that, then we felt, OK, we've got to take him down, because he is a threat to every team that he does play against. So

Got to take him down: David on how they tackled Varun

KUSHAN SARKAR
AHMEDABAD

ALL it needed was a still mind, limited movement and strong intent, said South African big-hitter David Miller as he opened up about how his team successfully nullified Indian mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy in their T20 World Cup Super Eight clash here.

The in-form Chakravarthy was expected to be India's trump card but on a wicket that didn't offer much assistance, he went for 47 runs in his four overs with both Miller (63 off 35 balls) and Dewald Brevis (45 off 29 balls) taking him to cleaners. "I think it's just about really making sure that we were on it in terms of if he bowls a bad ball we got to put it away - so a little bit more intent and it wasn't spinning too much tonight, so you can kind of trust the line," Miller said.

"And once we felt that, then we felt, OK, we've got to take him down, because he is a threat to every team that he does play against. So



it was definitely something that we did speak about," he explained. This was the first big knock of the tournament for the 36-year-old and was dotted with seven fours and three maximums. Miller said it was all about sticking to basic preparations which have given him fair amount of success and the reputation of being a game-changer in all these years. "It's about making sure that you really stick to the simple things and the basics and do that really well. Like I said, my intent always has to be up, making sure that I have limited movements, when the ball is bowled, so I'm nice and still, my breathing, running hard, all those simple things. "It's cliché, but it really does, in the heat of battle, those are the things that I clutch to."

Match starts 7pm IST



Spinners in focus as England, Pak eye crucial Super 8 points

PALLEKELE: On a surface expected to assist slow bowlers, both England and Pakistan will lean heavily on their spin resources in their Super Eights clash in the T20 World Cup here on Tuesday. England may not have hit top gear yet, but the two-time champions have found ways to win.

They kicked off their Super Eights campaign with a commanding 51-run victory over Sri Lanka, a result that significantly boosted their net run rate and took them to the top of the standings. Defending a modest total against Sri Lanka, England played according to the conditions perfectly.

Their spinners did the bulk of the work along with pacer Jofra Archer to trigger a dramatic Sri Lankan batting collapse. The ever-reliable leg spinner Adil Rashid and left arm spinner Liam Dawson have combined well to get the wickets. Meanwhile, Will Jacks has emerged as an unlikely match-winner. His off-spin has been handy, but it is his contributions with the bat, 39 against Nepal, 16 against Scotland and 53 versus Italy, that have repeatedly bailed England out of trouble. Opener Phil Salt returned to form with a match-winning knock against Sri Lanka, as he batted beyond the powerplay for the first time in the tournament. However, Jos Buttler's form remains a concern. But the veteran batter has got the backing of his captain Harry Brook, who himself is yet to find runs.

Ranji Trophy final begins today Star-studded K'taka hold all aces against gritty J&K

G UNNIKRIISHNAN
HUBBALLI

JAMMU and Kashmir's entry into their maiden Ranji Trophy final is a heartwarming tale of grit and passion but to grab the title, the underdog side would need to pull off a giant-sized miracle against eight-time former champions Karnataka over the next five days, starting Tuesday.

The tag of favourites is attached to Karnataka not merely because of their rich legacy, but it is a well-earned one after a season in which they consistently rose above opponents, conditions and injuries to key players at various junctures. Karnataka have dominated teams both at home and away after a stuttering start against Saurashtra at Rajkot, where they conceded a narrow first innings lead to lose points.

However, eternal nemesis Mumbai and tricky newcomers Uttarakhand were dealt away with confidence and ease, indicating the growing belief within the side. Central to that dominance has been the form of their star batters - KL Rahul, Karun Nair, Devdutt Padik-



kal, and Ravichandran Sraman. Rahul (3 matches: 457 runs, Avg: 91.40), Karun (8 matches: 699 runs, Avg: 63.54), Devdutt (5 matches: 532 runs, Avg: 66.50), and Sraman (8 matches: 950 runs, Avg: 950) have fired on all cylinders through the season.

It has helped Karnataka overcome a middling season from Mayank Agarwal, who eventually stepped away from captaincy as Devdutt took over the team's reins. To his credit, the left-hander has led well both with the bat and his tactically sharp mind. This strong batting unit, however, will meet its match here at the KSCA Stadium in a capable Jammu and Kashmir bowling attack, led by pacer Aaquib Nabi. The team is at the biggest stage of India's domestic calendar for the first time since making its tournament debut 67 years ago.

Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas Sabka Vishwas Sabka Prayas ?

Ex-BJP MP takes back blanket from Muslim woman after asking her religion

Congress condemned his action, saying religious discrimination is a violation of constitutional rights. Several Congress leaders shared a video of the incident in which Jaunpuria is seen purportedly saying that those who abuse PM Narendra Modi have no right to take the blanket

JAIPUR

FORMER BJP MP Sukhbir Singh Jaunpuria kicked up a row during a blanket distribution event at Rajasthan's

Tonk, when he allegedly took back a blanket given to a Muslim woman after asking her religion.

The Congress condemned his action, saying religious discrimination is a violation

of constitutional rights. Several Congress leaders shared a video of the incident in which Jaunpuria is seen purportedly saying that those who abuse PM Narendra Modi have no right to take the blanket.

According to locals, blankets were initially handed out to women present at the event, but it was later taken back from a Muslim woman.

He also said that the programme was his personal ini-



tiative and not linked to any government scheme.

Meanwhile, a Youth Congress leader went to the vil-

lage and distributed blankets to Muslim women, and accused the BJP of doing politics of division. Villagers, along with Congress workers, also held a protest on Monday. Leader of Opposition in the Rajasthan Assembly, Tikaram Jolly, alleged discrimination and condemned the act.

"A former MP asking a poor woman her religion and then taking back the blanket is highly condemnable," Ju-

lly said. Congress MP from Tonk-Sawai Madhopur Harish Chandra Meena said that the treatment meted out to Muslim women by the former MP was the result of a "disruptive" mindset that destroys the social fabric of this country.

"Giving blankets to poor and helpless women, then asking their names and taking them back based on their religion, this is a deeply shameful and inhumane act,"

he said. "Politics is a medium of service, not of insult and discrimination. The public elects representatives so that they treat every class, every religion and every needy person equally, and not to mock anyone's poverty and helplessness," he added.

Meena asked whether the prime minister told the former MP that no one should help those who do not vote for Prime Minister Modi or his party.

Sisters died of poisoning ahead of wedding in Raj

According to the police, the two sisters worked at a private school and were believed to be unhappy with their alliances. Their bodies were found hours before the wedding processions were scheduled to arrive

JODHPUR

THE post-mortem report of two sisters who died at Manai village has confirmed poisoning as the cause of death, police said on Monday.

The victims, identified as Shobha (25) and Vimla (23), were set to be married on Saturday, and the preparations for their weddings were in full swing on Thursday night, when the incident occurred.

According to the police, the two sisters worked at a private school and were believed to be unhappy with their alliances. Their bodies were found hours before the wedding processions were scheduled to arrive.

Soorsagar Police Station House Officer (SHO) Harishchandra Solanki said that the medical board confirmed the death due to poisoning. No poisonous substance was recovered from the scene. "Viscera samples have been preserved and sent to the Forensic Science Laboratory to identify the



exact substance consumed," Solanki said, adding that there is also suspicion of a drug overdose. As part of the investigation, the police have seized the mobile phones of both sisters to examine chats, call records and social media activity.

Police also questioned their father, Deep Singh, to ascertain if the deaths were a case of suicide or involving other factors such as family disputes or external pressure. The sisters were earlier engaged to members of a family in Bhinmal through their maternal uncle.

Fake medicine factory unearthed in Bihar

Massive haul of spurious drugs

NEW DELHI

DELHI Police has unearthed a factory involved in manufacturing and repackaging spurious medicines and psychotropic substances near Patna, an official said on Monday. The action was taken during investigation of an FIR registered under the NDPS Act at the Crime Branch police station, he said. Po-

lice said the breakthrough came days after two similar illegal pharmaceutical units were exposed in Bihar.

Acting on information gathered from previous arrests and the interrogation of an accused identified as Arun, a team of the Crime Branch zeroed in on another suspect, Brijesh, who was allegedly running an illegal manufacturing and repackaging unit, a senior police officer said. The officer said Arun was earlier found coordinating the illegal manufacture and distribution of opioids

and operating a clandestine medicines unit. Based on his disclosure, the team with the local drug department raided the unit.

"It was found to be operating without a valid manufacturing licence and in the absence of mandatory technical staff, including manufacturing and analytical chemists. Legal proceedings have been initiated as per due process," he added. The team has seized a massive haul of spurious tablets, syrups, machinery and packaging material from the premises.



Probe launched into toddler's death

Kerala family alleges medical negligence

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

POLICE have launched a probe after a two-and-a-half-year-old child died and her family alleged medical negligence against a private hospital in Kattakada here, officials said on Monday. The deceased has been identified as Aisha Fathima, daughter of Sidique and Fasilath of Punal, Perumkulam here.

According to police, on February 18, the child developed physical discomfort, including breathing issues and swelling near her eyebrow. She was first taken to the government hospital in Aryanad. The next day, after similar symptoms recurred, her parents took her to a private hospital in Kattakada, where, after medication, her condition improved, and she returned home, police said.

On February 20, the parents took her to an ophthalmology centre as the swelling near her eyebrow persisted. Police officials said that on Sunday, however, the symptoms re-emerged and the child was again taken



to the private hospital in Kattakada. After being given nebulisation and injections, she was referred to another private hospital, officials said.

However, upon reaching the hospital, she was declared dead after preliminary treatment, police said. The family has alleged medical negligence against the private hospital and filed a complaint at Aryanad police station on Sunday. Police officials said a case of unnatural death has been registered, and the cause of death will be ascertained after the post-mortem examination scheduled for Monday.

The father of the deceased claimed on Monday that his daughter's condition worsened after injections were administered at the private hospital in Kattakada.



Army rescues 46 tourists stuck in snowy Sikkim

SIKKIM: Indian Army troops have rescued 46 tourists stranded due to heavy snowfall in high-altitude areas of Sikkim's East district, a defence statement said on Monday. Several tourist vehicles got stuck along vulnerable road stretches in East Sikkim district on Sunday during sudden and intense snowfall in sub-zero temperatures, exposing tourists and locals to harsh climatic conditions, it said.

On learning about the situation, Army troops moved promptly to the affected areas and initiated rescue and relief measures, the statement said. "A total of 46 tourists were safely rescued and shifted to the nearest Army camp, where they were medically examined and provided with warm shelter, hot meals, heating arrangements and essential relief materials to mitigate the effects of extreme cold and altitude-related stress," it said.

For decades, India has been recognised as the pharmacy of the world, and today, under the present government, the country is transitioning toward becoming the innovator of the world, with healthcare security, manufacturing resilience and scientific excellence at the centre of the national development, he said

- J P Nadda, Union Minister

BIZ BRIEFS

Amazon unveils office in B'uru

Amazon announced the opening of its second largest office in Bengaluru. The 1.1 million square feet, 12-storey campus will support over 7,000 employees across e-commerce, operations, payments, technology, and seller services in India. Built on a five-acre site approximately 15 kilometres from Kempegowda International Airport, the corporate building was officially inaugurated by Dr. M.B. Patil, Minister for Large & Medium Industries and Infrastructure Development, Government of Karnataka.

Apollo opens 1,000th store

Apollo Pharmacy, a pharmacy network, announced the opening of its 1,000th store in Andhra Pradesh in Visakhapatnam. With this launch the store now operates across 15 districts of Andhra Pradesh, employs over 7,000 people, and provides access to over 50,000 genuine medicines. P Jayakumar, added: "Reaching 1,000 stores in Andhra Pradesh is a significant milestone in our journey to build India's most trusted and accessible pharmacy network. We are strengthening our presence across the state."

ITC inaugurates hotel in Mohali

ITC Hotels announced the launch of its 30th Welcomhotel in Mohali, Chandigarh. The hotel with 113 keys, expands its portfolio and its presence in fast-growing Tricity region comprising of Chandigarh, Panchkula and Mohali. Anil Chadha, MD, ITC Hotels Limited, said: "The launch of Welcomhotel Mohali reflects our commitment to strengthening our presence in high-growth urban markets while delivering enriching experiences rooted in our renowned service excellence."

SBI Life's new branches

SBI Life Insurance, a private life insurer, has strengthened its presence in Telangana with the inauguration of three new branches in Bhupalapalli, Khammam, and Nagarkurnool districts. The branches were inaugurated by Abhishek Kar Majumdar, Regional Director - Telangana, SBI Life Insurance. This expansion underscores the company's continued commitment to enhancing insurance accessibility and delivering need-based financial solutions to individuals and families across the state.

Sankara Eye hospital's fete

Sankara Eye Hospital, Hyderabad, has successfully restored vision for two elderly patients through modern cataract surgery. Dr. Sriram Simakurthy, CMO, Sankara Eye Hospital, Hyderabad, said: "Cataract remains one of the leading causes of vision impairment among the elderly, but it is also one of the most treatable conditions today. With advanced technology and skilled surgical expertise, patients can undergo safe procedures with minimal discomfort."

Olectra secures order for 1,085 e-buses from TGSRTC

Hyd roads to go abuzz with e-buses making city more environment friendly

HANS BUSINESS
HYDERABAD

OLECTRA Greentech Ltd., electric commercial vehicle manufacturer and a pioneer in advanced urban mobility solutions, has secured a Letter of Intent (LOI) issued by the Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) through Evey Trans Pvt. Ltd. for 1,085 electric buses under the PM E-DRIVE initiative, led by Convergence Energy Services Limited (CESL), aimed at accelerating the adoption of electric public transport across Indian cities.

The electric buses will be deployed in Hyderabad, further strengthening the city's clean, efficient, and sustainable public transport ecosystem. The company has firmly established itself as India's leading electric commercial vehicle brand, consistently holding the No. 1 market share in electric buses both year-to-date and in the last financial year. Headquar-



tered in city, Olectra has been at the forefront of India's electric mobility transition, delivering not only electric buses but also electric tippers that support sustainable urban infrastructure development. With over 3,600 electric vehicles deployed across the country and an order book exceeding 10,000 vehicles, the company is building a comprehensive zero-emission mobility ecosystem. Having clocked more than 500 million green kilometres, the company combines scale, indigenous engineering, operational reliability, and continuous innovation to drive India's shift towards

clean and future-ready transportation.

Mahesh Babu, Managing Director of the company said, "This is a defining moment for the Olectra family and a significant milestone in our journey of powering India's electric mobility transformation. Our continued commitment to the Make in India vision and to building world-class electric buses has received strong reinforcement through this prestigious order under the PM E-DRIVE programme. We are proud to bring our advanced, reliable, and indigenously developed electric mobility solutions to Telangana."

Finance Minister asks banks to refocus on core business

Nirmala Sitharaman slams insurance push, mis-selling by banks

• RBI draft norms mandate refunds and compensation for mis-selling

• Public feedback on guidelines open till March 4; rules effective July 1

• FM flags regulatory gap between RBI and IRDAI

NEW DELHI: Articulating the strategic vision of the Union Budget while sharply calling out mis-selling by banks, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday urged lenders to refocus on their core business and place customers at the centre of financial intermediation.

Addressing the 621st meeting of the Central Board of Directors of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Sitharaman outlined the roadmap of the Union Budget 2026-27,



saying it was inspired by the three Kartavyas and aimed at advancing the goal of Viksit Bharat. She underlined the role of the financial sector in supporting sustainable growth amid global uncertainty and domestic challenges.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Sitharaman came down heavily on banks for mis-selling financial products, particularly insurance, to customers who often

do not need them. "Banks should concentrate on their core business... you're spending more time selling insurance when it is not required," she said, describing mis-selling as a long-standing concern.

She pointed to a regulatory grey area where mis-selling fell "between two stools", with the RBI earlier assuming such practices were overseen by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority

of India (IRDAI), while the insurance regulator viewed banks as outside its direct ambit. This gap, she said, left customers exposed.

Her remarks come close on the heels of the RBI's draft guidelines issued on February 11 to curb mis-selling. Under the proposed framework, banks would be required to refund the full amount paid for a mis-sold product and compensate customers for losses suffered. Public feedback has been invited until March 4, with the norms slated to take effect from July 1. "The message should go to banks that you cannot afford to mis-sell," Sitharaman said.

She cited instances of loan-seeking customers being compelled to purchase insurance despite already having adequate cover, stressing that banks must assess actual customer needs rather than push unnecessary products.

Prism plans to add 300 hotels

HANS BUSINESS
HYDERABAD

PRISM, the parent brand of OYO, has announced plans to add 300 company-serviced hotels across Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, with a strategic focus on Hyderabad, Warangal, Karimnagar and Khammam.

Prism said Telangana's improving infrastructure, strong air connectivity and growing domestic tourism make it a key expansion market. Ashish Saurabh, Regional Head, Prism, said: "Telangana is one of the most structurally strong hospitality markets in the country. Business hubs like Hyderabad continue to generate consistent corporate demand, while rising aspirations and improving connectivity are unlocking new leisure corridors. We are building a network that is not just larger, but stronger and more reliable for guests."

The announcement was made at a hotel partner summit in Hyderabad, outlining a 360-degree growth roadmap centred on supply expansion, improved quality standards and enhanced guest experience.

Sebi mulls relaxations in reporting requirements for stock brokers

Brokers who are banks or primary dealers will be required to report only those bank accounts that are used for stock broking activities

NEW DELHI: To boost ease of doing business, markets regulator Sebi on Friday proposed additional relaxations to reporting norms for stock brokers, including exempting certain demat accounts held by brokers who are also primary dealers from tagging requirements. Further, brokers that are banks or primary dealers will be required to report only those bank accounts that are used for stock broking activities, Sebi proposed.

"All demat accounts maintained by stock brokers should be appropriately tagged. Further, this shall not be applicable for the demat account which are used exclusively for activities other than stock broking activities by stock brokers, which are also primary dealers. "Stock broker which is also bank or primary dealer, shall be required to report to the stock exchanges only those bank accounts that are used for their stock broking activities," Sebi said in its draft circular.

Under the current rules,



brokers are required to maintain properly named and tagged bank and demat accounts and report the opening and closure of such accounts to stock exchanges. Certain exemptions were earlier provided to brokers that are banks.

In its draft circular inviting public comments on proposed relaxations, Sebi suggested that the earlier requirement regarding reporting of certain demat accounts by brokers has been deleted. Instead, depositories will share details of demat accounts opened or closed

by stock brokers directly with the concerned stock exchanges, as per a mechanism jointly decided by them.

Stock brokers should continue to ensure that all new bank and demat accounts are appropriately named as per the prescribed nomenclature. Details of newly opened bank accounts should be reported to stock exchanges within one week of opening, and closures must also be reported within one week.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has sought public comment till March 6 on the proposals.

Sudarshan Pharma stock slips 3% amid GST action

MUMBAI: Shares of Sudarshan Pharma Industries slipped over 3 per cent on Monday after the Goods and Services Tax (GST) department initiated an inspection and search operation at the company's registered office.

The stock fell 3.06 per cent on the BSE to hit an intraday low of Rs 25.62 per share. The shares were trading at the same level, down 3.06 per cent. Over the past one year, Sudarshan Pharma's stock has declined around 19 per cent, according to the official data.

The decline in the company's share price came after it informed exchanges that the GST department had initiated an inspection, search and seizure operation at its registered office on February 21, 2026. In its regulatory filing, the company said it is in the process of collating information and responding to the authorities.

It added that the final report related to the search and seizure will be concluded as per the prescribed procedures. Despite the recent development, the company had reported improved financial performance for the December quarter.



For Q3FY26, Sudarshan Pharma posted a net profit of Rs 4.15 crore, slightly higher than Rs 3.9 crore reported in the same quarter last year. Revenue from operations rose sharply to Rs 168 crore, compared to Rs 115.65 crore a year ago.

Earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) stood at Rs 23.4 crore, up from Rs 16.6 crore in the year-ago period. However, the EBITDA margin declined to 22.8 per cent from 39.9 per cent year-on-year.

In its filing, the company said it is focusing on increasing exports and expanding manufacturing sales. It also highlighted efforts to improve profit margins from the resale of active pharmaceutical ingredients (API) in domestic markets. According to the company, these initiatives helped it achieve substantial growth in profit after tax during FY25.

Bullion prices rise around 3%

NEW DELHI: Precious metal prices climbed 3 per cent in the national capital on Monday, with silver surging to Rs 2.7 lakh per kilogram and gold advancing to Rs 1.6 lakh per 10 grams, due to strong safe-haven demand amid growing global trade uncertainties after the US Supreme Court ruling against Trump's tariffs. According to the All India Sarafa Association, silver jumped Rs 8,000, or 3.03 per cent, to Rs 2,72,000 per kilogram from Friday's closing level of Rs 2,64,000 per kg. Gold of 99.9 per cent purity also increased by Rs 3,300, or 2.06 per cent, to Rs 1,62,800 per 10 grams. It had settled at Rs 1,59,500 per 10 grams in the previous market session.

Silver and gold extended bullish momentum on Monday, with both metals trading at a three-week high, supported by renewed safe-haven demand. The rally came following a landmark US Supreme Court ruling against Trump's tariffs, which triggered sharp cross-asset volatility and prompted investors to seek safe-haven assets, Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

Mkts extend gains driven by improving global cues

Investors favoured domestic themes, with banks, power, FMCG, and consumer discretionary stocks gaining traction

Improved Sentiment

• BSE-Sensex rose 479.95pts or (+0.58%) to 83,294.66

• NSE-Nifty advanced 141.75pts or (+0.55%) to 25,713

• Fills offloaded Rs934.61-cr; DIs purchased Rs2,637.15-cr



MUMBAI: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty closed higher on Monday, tracking gains in PSU bank, auto and financial stocks, as investors' sentiments improved after the US Supreme Court struck down the Trump administration's sweeping tariffs.

Extending its winning streak for a second consecutive session, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 479.95 points, or 0.58 per cent, to settle at 83,294.66. During the session, the benchmark jumped 671.44 points, or 0.81 per cent, to hit an intraday high of 83,486.15. A total of 2,435 stocks declined, while 1,894 advanced and 168 remained unchanged

on the BSE. The 50-share NSE Nifty advanced 141.75 points, or 0.55 per cent, to close at 25,713. In the intraday session, it appreciated 200.2 points, or 0.78 per cent, to hit a high of 25,771.45.

"The US Supreme Court's ruling against Trump's reciprocal tariff policy was welcomed by domestic markets. Investors are awaiting more clarity on Trump's revised strategy and the scope of renegotiations with other nations. A weaker US dollar and declining 10-year Treasury yields may add near-term caution in the global market," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Ltd, said.

Adani Ports was the biggest gainer from the Sensex pack, rising 2.98 per cent, followed by Kotak Mahindra Bank, UltraTech Cement, PowerGrid, Hindustan Unilever, HDFC Bank, Axis Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, Titan, Mahindra & Mahindra and Larsen & Toubro were the major gainers. On the other hand, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, Trent, HCL Technologies, Bajaj Finserv, Tata Consultancy Services, ITC, Bharat Electronics Ltd, Eternal, Tata Steel, and IndiGo ended in losses.

"Sentiment improved largely in reaction to the US Supreme Court striking

down earlier import tariffs, temporarily easing trade-related concerns and boosting risk appetite across global markets. "Overall, the ongoing tussle in the index reflects prevailing uncertainty on the global front, while domestic cues remain largely muted," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

The broader indices ended on a mixed note, with the BSE Smallcap Select Index gaining 0.41 per cent, while the Midcap Select Index declined 1.56 per cent.

"Sectorally, the IT index faced pressure from unresolved concerns over AI-driven disruption. Nonetheless, investors favoured domestic themes, with banks, power, FMCG, and consumer discretionary stocks gaining traction on expectations of resilient demand and economic recovery," Nair said.

Among the sectoral indices, PSU Bank increased the most by 1.4 per cent, followed by Services by 0.97 per cent, Hospitals by 0.89 per cent, Healthcare by 0.76 per cent, Power by 0.72 per cent, Auto by 0.71 per cent, Financial Services by 0.65 per cent, FMCG by 0.54 per cent, and Utilities by 0.52 per cent.

Small caps lead India Inc. earnings growth in Q3: Report

SMALL CAPS DELIVERED A ROBUST 22% YEAR-ON-YEAR EARNINGS, OUTPACING MID-CAPS AT 15% AND LARGE CAPS AT 14%

NEW DELHI: India Inc's earnings momentum remained resilient in Q3 FY26, with small-cap companies posting the strongest growth, a report said on Monday.

The report from Equirus Securities said small caps delivered a robust 22 per cent year-on-year earnings surge, outpacing mid-caps at 15 per cent and large caps at 14 per cent, signalling a broadening of the corporate earnings recovery. Revenue grew 10 per cent YoY, while EBITDA and PAT rose 14 per cent and 15 per cent respectively, ahead of market expectations, across companies under its coverage, the report said.

Around 36 per cent of companies saw earnings per share (EPS) upgrades, reflecting improving business fundamentals and demand resilience across multiple industries. The upgrades were led by auto, banks & NBFCs, consumer durables, FMCG, and IT, while downgrades were concentrated in building materials, cement, infrastructure, chemicals,



realty and retail, the report said. The trend indicates growing investor confidence and improving forward earnings visibility across market capitalisation segments, it added. Increasing number of firms from tier 2 and tier 3 towns have been tapping the capital markets, as founders look to grow and scale their businesses, said Ajay Garg, Managing Director, Equirus group.

"Looking into Q4FY26, key monitorable include the pace of NHA order awards for construction companies, the summer season demand cycle for consumer durables, US market dynamics and RBI rate decisions that

could influence BFSI NIM trajectories," said Maulik Patel, Director & Head of Research, Equirus Securities. Price hikes and demand momentum in cement offer near-term support, though new capacity additions may pressure utilisation rates, while logistics remains supported by EXIM recovery and Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) connectivity improvements, he added.

In the third quarter, financial services companies demonstrated steady asset quality trends and loan growth momentum, while consumption-linked sectors benefited from improving discretionary spending patterns.



'Aura of Ustaad' song launch turns into a grand celebration of PSPK's legacy



The launch of the song "Aura of Ustaad" from the upcoming film Ustaad Bhagat Singh turned into a spectacular celebration of star power, music, and fandom, as the team behind the project unveiled what many are already calling a defining anthem for fans of Pawan Kalyan. The powerful hook line — "Nenu Meda Muttukunte, Toda Kottinatte" — has instantly gone viral, symbolizing the actor's iconic screen presence and unmatched mass appeal.

Director Harish Shankar described the song as more than a tribute, calling it a musical festival crafted from deep understanding rather than admiration. He revealed that the line was inspired by Pawan Kalyan's signature body language, a mannerism he has carried over two decades. The lyrics were penned by Chandrabose, who completed the song in a single day, giving the track both literary depth and emotional power.

Music composer Devi Sri Prasad added that the song is a timeless tribute to Pawan Kalyan's personality, values, and aura. He credited the director's vision and the lyricist's writing for shaping a composition that feels both celebratory and iconic, stating that the track represents the true "Aura of Pawan Kalyan."

Chandrabose described the song as an expression of "Pawanism," reflecting the actor's principles, journey, and influence across generations. The event concluded on an emotional and festive note, with the team expressing confidence that the song and the film will strike a deep chord with audiences. Ustaad Bhagat Singh is being produced by Naveen Yerneni and Y. Ravi Shankar under Mythri Movie Makers and is scheduled for a grand theatrical release on March 26.

'Aaya Sher' promo from 'The Paradise' sets the internet ablaze

Ahead of Natural Star Nani's birthday celebrations tomorrow, excitement among fans has reached a fever pitch with the release of the promo for the first single "Aaya Sher" from his much-anticipated pan-world film 'The Paradise'. As promised by the makers, the full song will be unveiled on his birthday, making it a special gift for fans across the globe. The fiery promo features Rockstar Anirudh Ravichander delivering a high-octane, adrenaline-charged composition driven by thunderous beats and a powerful, roaring chorus. Visually, the promo plunges viewers into a gritty, intense world filled with sweat, smoke, chaos, and raw energy, perfectly capturing the massive scale and mood of the film.

Nani's transformation has emerged as the biggest talking point. Sporting a striking red jacket, blazing eyes, and an intimidating rugged look, the actor appears in a fierce, commanding avatar that has instantly electrified fans. Standing amid frenzied crowds, he embodies the image of a lion reclaiming his throne, with the promo's final



moments delivering a strong dose of mass elevation and cinematic high.

Director Srikanth Odela has been widely praised for his larger-than-life vision and the powerful way he translates it onto the screen. Choreographer Sudhan Master also hints at a full-scale mass spectacle, suggesting that the complete song will be a swagger-filled visual carnival.

Backed by producer Sudhakar Cherukuri's SLV Cinemas, 'The Paradise' is shaping up as a global-scale cinematic event. The film is scheduled for a grand worldwide theatrical release on August 21, further heightening anticipation for what promises to be one of Nani's most ambitious projects yet.

Wedding of VIROSH: Rashmika and Vijay Deverakonda make it official



Ending months of speculation and fan curiosity, star couple Rashmika Mandanna and Vijay Deverakonda have officially announced their wedding, putting an end to the long-running suspense around their relationship. The couple took to Instagram to share the happy news, confirming that they are entering wedlock and beautifully christening their union as the "Wedding of VIROSH" — a name lovingly given to them by fans.

Sharing a heartfelt message, both actors posted the same story on Instagram, expressing gratitude to their supporters for naming their bond long before they did. In their emotional note, they wrote that even before they made plans for themselves, fans had already given them the identity of "VIROSH," and they were now honouring that love by officially naming their wedding after it. The announcement instantly went viral, with fans and celebrities flooding social

media with congratulatory messages. Wedding festivities have already begun and are being kept strictly private. The families have reportedly departed for Udaipur, where the ceremonies are scheduled to take place. According to sources, the haldi ceremony will be held on February 24, followed by the sangeet on February 25, and the wedding on February 26. The venue is said to be a secluded hill resort on the outskirts of the city, most likely The Mementos by ITC Hotels, ensuring privacy and exclusivity for the intimate celebrations. While the wedding itself will be a private affair, the couple is planning a grand reception for the film fraternity and distinguished guests. The lavish reception is scheduled for March 4 from 7 PM onwards at Taj Krishna, where several prominent personalities from the film and political circles are expected to attend, making it one of the most anticipated celebrity events of the year.

Alia Bhatt shines at BAFTA 2026 Awards, debuts as presenter in London

Bollywood star Alia Bhatt made a stunning international statement by attending the BAFTA Awards 2026 ceremony in London, where she marked her debut as a presenter. Her appearance quickly became one of the most talked-about moments of the prestigious event, drawing attention from fans, fashion critics, and

global media alike.

For the red carpet, Alia chose a custom silver sequinned gown by Gucci, which reflected a soft, elegant shimmer under the lights. The outfit featured a subtle glow that enhanced her presence without being overpowering. She paired the gown with a light wrap to stay warm in the London weather and opted for minimal styling, keeping her hair neatly done and her makeup soft and refined. The understated elegance of her look was widely praised for its sophistication and international appeal.

Social media was abuzz soon after her appearance, with fans applauding her classy fashion choices and confident

presence on such a major global platform. Many admired how she avoided heavy jewellery and excessive styling, allowing the gown and her natural grace to take center stage. Her red-carpet look was hailed as a perfect blend of glamour and simplicity.

On the professional front, Alia Bhatt continues to stay busy with major film commitments. She is currently working on her upcoming projects Alpha and Love & War, keeping fans excited about what lies ahead. Balancing global appearances with big-ticket film projects, Alia continues to strengthen her position as one of India's most influential and globally recognised stars.



Saiyami Kher embraces vulnerability in Vikram Phadnis' upcoming social drama

Actress Saiyami Kher is set to surprise audiences with a softer and more emotionally driven performance in filmmaker Vikram Phadnis' upcoming yet-untitled social drama, where she will be seen exploring a more vulnerable side of her acting journey. The film, which also stars Tahir Raj Bhasin, marks a shift from the physically demanding roles she has been known for in recent years. Speaking about the project, Saiyami shared that the film attracted her because of its emotional depth and internal storytelling.

She described the role as "softer and more emotional," adding that it focuses more on inner journeys rather than external action. According to the actress, portraying vulnerability can often be more challenging than action-heavy performances, and that challenge motivated her to take on the project. On the work front, Saiyami recently wrapped up shooting for Haiwaan, directed by Priyadarshan and starring Akshay Kumar and Saif Ali Khan. The film, also featuring Sharib Hashmi, marks the reunion of Akshay and Saif after 18 years and was shot across Kochi, Ooty, and Mumbai. She was last seen in Jaat, directed by Gopichand Malineni, alongside Sunny Deol and Randeep Hooda. From her Telugu debut Rey to Hindi projects like Mirzya, Ghoomer, and series such as Special OPS, Saiyami continues to evolve with diverse and challenging roles across cinema and streaming platforms.



'Killer' teaser gets a grand launch

The teaser of the upcoming Telugu film Killer was officially launched at a grand event in Hyderabad, generating strong buzz among film circles and audiences. Starring Jyoti Poorvaj and Poorvaj in the lead roles, the film also features Manish Gilada, Chandrakant Kollu, Vishal Raj, Archana Ananth, and Gautham Chakradhar Koppishetty in key roles. The project is produced by Poorvaj and Padmanabha Reddy A under the banners Think Cinema and AU & I Studios, with the blessings of Dhyanam Nannagaru and presented by Urvish Poorvaj. Directed by Poorvaj, the film is gearing up for a grand theatrical release soon.



Speaking at the event, line producer Sitarama Rao said the entire team worked tirelessly on the project and expressed confidence that audiences would extend the same love to the film as they did to the teaser. Line producer Dasarath Madhav described Killer as a content-driven film blending emotional brother-sister

sentiment with strong storytelling, adding that despite being a small film, it has the potential for big success.

Actors Manish Gilada, Gautham Chakradhar, Vishal Raj and others praised the film's technical quality and Jyoti Poorvaj's surprising transformation and action performance. Jyoti Poor-

vaj revealed that the film marks her shift from routine television roles, calling it a dream opportunity where she plays multiple characters and performs intense action sequences inspired by iconic women-centric roles like those of Vijayashanti.

Director Poorvaj stated that the script was conceived years ago and blends artificial intelligence, emotional drama, revenge, subconscious identity, and brother-sister bonding into a multi-layered sci-fi thriller. He added that the teaser reveals only part of the story, with much more to be unveiled in the upcoming trailer. The teaser launch was supported by director Anil Ravipudi, marking a confident start for the ambitious project.