



# 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 understatements. **P6**

**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. **P4**

**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. **P7**

**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. **P8**

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## WINDOWS

### Taxi operators to protest at Jantar Mantar on Feb 28

NEW DELHI: The Delhi Taxi and Tourist Transport Association on Monday flagged issues ranging from alleged regulatory gaps to rising compliance costs, and announced a peaceful protest at Jantar Mantar on February 28. According to a statement released by the association, they are seeking government intervention to address what they call long-pending problems of the transport sector. Association President Sanjay Samrat said, transporters and drivers across Delhi and its neighbouring states -- Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Punjab -- were facing increasing difficulties due to policy and enforcement-related issues.

### Four arrested for beating U'khand education director

DEHRADUN: Police on Monday arrested four people for allegedly assaulting Uttarakhand Director of Elementary Education Ajay Nautiyal and vandalising his office in Dehradun. The incident allegedly took place in the presence of BJP MLA Umesh Sharma Kau. According to the police, the arrests were made based on eyewitness accounts and video footage of the incident that occurred on Saturday. The arrested accused have been identified as Lakshman Navani, Rakesh Thapliyal, Akshay Rana and Arvind Pundir, alias Kalli, who is a history-sheeter.

### Andhra Police arrests Bihar IG

PATNA: An IG rank officer in Bihar was on Monday arrested by Andhra Pradesh Police in connection with a five-year-old case of alleged custodial torture of a senior Telugu Desam Party leader. Currently posted as the IG, Fire and Homeguards, Sunil Kumar Naik is a 2005 batch IPS officer, who had earlier been in Andhra Pradesh a few years ago on an inter-cadre deputation, was picked up from his official residence here.

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## 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, attenuat-

ing 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. "Notwithstanding this, India does not link terrorism to any specific religion, ethnic-

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

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

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



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.

"The case dates back to October 7 last year, when a team of the crime branch acted on specific intelligence and laid a trap in Sarita Vihar. Around 6.30 pm, the team apprehended Mohammad Abid (50) and recovered 54,000 Tramadol Hydrochloride tablets, weighing 14.472 kilograms," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime Branch) Vikram Singh said in a statement.

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.

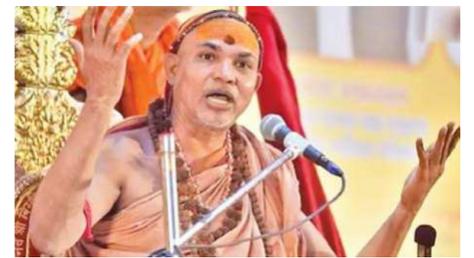
## Booked in POCSO case, Seer says won't resist arrest

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.

## SC expunges MP HC remarks against judge

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Monday expunged critical observations of the Madhya Pradesh high court against a special trial court judge, saying the "hasty conclusion" accusing the judge of "intellectual dishonesty" was "totally unwarranted".

The special court, dealing with Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act cases, had convicted an accused in a sexual assault case.

The Madhya Pradesh high court had reversed the decision and made critical observations against the special judge that he exhibited a "sign of intellectual dishonesty".

The high court had said that the special judge and the public prosecutor committed a "major lapse" in doing injustice to the accused and putting him behind bars for over three years by overlooking the fact that the victim was a consenting adult.

## Shajahanpur's mosques covered for Holi

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
SHAJAHANPUR

THE authorities have covered mosques and mazzars along the routes of the traditional 'Juta Maar Holi' procession in Shajahanpur with tarpaulin sheets and announced enhanced security for the annual event, officials said on Monday.

'Juta Mar Holi' is a unique, centuries-old tradition celebrated in Shajahanpur on the day of Holi, when people hurl shoes and sandals at a

person dressed as a British-era 'Laat Sahab' and riding on a buffalo cart as the centrepiece, while playing with colours.

Superintendent of Police Rajesh Dwivedi said, along with the deployment of over 200 magistrates, this year's procession will see around one-and-a-half times more security personnel than last year. Four Additional Superintendents of Police, 13 Circle Officers, 310 sub-inspectors, 1,200 constables and 500 home guards will be deployed, the SSP said.



## Security intensified at 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.

## 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.

## BAJRANG DAL ACTIVISTS ALLEGEDLY HARASSING MUSLIM SHOPKEEPER

## Will take gym membership: Rahul meets 'Mohammad' Deepak

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

CONGRESS leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday met a gym owner from Uttarakhand who shot into the limelight as "Mohammad Deepak" for taking on Bajrang Dal activists allegedly harassing a Muslim shopkeeper, and expressed support by telling him that he would come to Kotdwar to take membership in the gym.

Congress leader Vaibhav

Walia, the gym owner Deepak Kumar and his friend Vijay Rawat, along with several others, were present at the meeting, which took place at the 10, Janpanth residence of Congress Parliamentary Party chief Sonia Gandhi.

Deepak also met Sonia Gandhi. "Every human being is equal. This is Indianness, this is 'mohabbat ki dukaan'. Meeting with brother Mohammad Deepak from Uttarakhand - This same flame of unity and courage should burn in every Indian

youth," Rahul Gandhi, who also spoke with Deepak's wife over the phone, said in a Facebook post. After the meeting, Kumar told reporters, "Rahul ji invited me.

He introduced me to Sonia ji and also spoke with my wife over the phone. He told me that you have done a good job and I will come to Kotdwar and take a membership at your gym."

Congress leader Vaibhav Walia, who had walked with Rahul Gandhi during his Bharat Jodo Yatra, said, "Mo-

hammad Deepak has carried forward the message that Rahul Gandhi gave through the 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' -- which is of opening 'Mohabbat Ki Dukaan' across the country.

"We are grateful to Rahul ji for honouring a young man from Uttarakhand who stood up for humanity and love. We hope that love will prevail and hatred will lose in Uttarakhand and the entire country," Walia said.

On January 26, Bajrang Dal activists protested outside the 'Baba' clothing store

Congress leader Vaibhav Walia, who had walked with Rahul Gandhi during his Bharat Jodo Yatra, says, "Mohammad Deepak has carried forward the message that Rahul Gandhi gave through the 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' -- which is of opening 'Mohabbat Ki Dukaan' across the country

on Patel Marg in Kotdwar to pressure its 70-year-old owner, Vakil Ahmed, to change the name of the shop. During the protest, clashes broke out between the activists, shop owner Vakil Ahmed and his son's friend Deepak Kumar, after which Kumar, identifying himself as Mohammad

Deepak, forced the protesters to retreat.

On January 31, a larger group of activists again gathered outside Ahmed's shop and Kumar's gym, blocked the road and shouted slogans. However, police intervention prevented escalation.



## Saini slams AAP over 'unfulfilled' promises

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
LUDHIANA

ASSERTING that Punjab is suffering under the Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) "misrule", Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Sunday exuded confidence that the BJP will come to power in the state after the 2027 assembly polls.

Addressing the BJP's 'Purvanchal Samman' rally in Giaspur here, Saini said people see through the AAP's tactics. The rally was attended by several senior BJP leaders, including Ashwani Sharma and Anil Sareen.

Highlighting the strong bond between Punjab and Haryana, Saini likened it to "nail and flesh". He expressed concern over Punjab's condition under the AAP. He contrasted the Haryana government's welfare measures, including the Lado Lakshmi Yojana under which a monthly assistance of Rs 2,100 is provided to eligible women and procuring 24 crops at minimum support price (MSP), with the AAP's "unfulfilled" promises of giving Rs 1,000 to women and buying crops at MSP.

Saini further accused the AAP of corruption, alleging that the Arvind Kejriwal-led party has surpassed the Congress in graft. People see through the AAP's tactics, the CM said, adding that he is confident that the BJP will come to power after the 2027 polls in the state. Saini said the rally is not just an event, but a message of change.

## 'RSS DOES NOT PRACTICE HINDUTVA POLITICS'

•The Sangh's objective is individual development because only strong individuals can build a strong society and nation'  
•Some mistake the Sangh for a paramilitary organisation, others for a service sector body, but the RSS is a social force'

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
DEHRADUN

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat has said that the Sangh does not practice Hindutva politics, rather it believes in building a strong society and nation through individual

development.

"The Sangh's objective is individual development because only strong individuals can build a strong society and nation," Bhagwat said at a programme to mark the Sangh's 100 years on Sunday, emphasising that the reality of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) cannot be

understood from the outside.

Some people mistake the Sangh for a paramilitary organisation, others for a service sector body, but the RSS is a social force working beyond these boundaries, he said, speaking on the theme 'Sangh Yatra - New Horizons, New Dimensions'.

"The world now hopes to

see India in a leadership role once again," Bhagwat said, as he called upon the gathering to empower society and the nation by joining the Sangh's activities.

Stating that only those who work to unite are Hindus, he said, "Devotion to the motherland is essential. The world understands power more than truth; therefore, acquiring power is essential, but its use should be restrained. On the role of women, Bhagwat said they are completely independent and their participation in governance should be 50 per cent, and not limited to 33 per cent. He also emphasised the need for a coordinated policy and local participation to conserve Uttarakhand's rivers and the environment.

## Rs 1 cr ex-gratia each for two Pb cops found dead

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH

PUNJAB Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Monday announced an ex-gratia payment of Rs 1 crore each for the kin of two police personnel found dead with bullet wounds at a checkpoint near the India-Pakistan border in Gurdaspur district on Sunday.

The bodies of ASI Gurnam Singh and Home Guard Ashok Kumar, who were posted at Adhian, about 2 km from the international border, were found inside the checkpoint on Sunday.

In a post on X, Mann said, "Salute to the bravery and supreme sacrifice of martyrs ASI Gurnam Singh and PHG Ashok Kumar, who laid down their lives in the line of duty. "The Punjab government will provide an ex-gratia of Rs 1 crore each to their families, while the



HDFC Bank will provide an additional insurance amount of Rs 1 crore each."

"We stand strongly with our martyrs and their families. Their sacrifice inspires us all to perform our duties with honour and courage," the chief minister added. A forensic team visited the spot on Monday, a police officer said, adding that the case is being probed from all angles. The matter came to light when the sarpanch of Adhian village, Kamaljeet Singh, visited the checkpoint after being informed by the Dorangla SHO that both policemen were not answering their calls.



## Probe exclusion of displaced residents from voter list: SC

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

THE Supreme Court on Monday asked the Lucknow district election officer to examine and take remedial action on the grievances of 91 residents of Akbar Nagar in the state capital who were allegedly excluded from the Uttar Pradesh SIR of electoral rolls following demolition of their homes in September 2023. A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi was initially of the view that the matter, pertaining to the disputed facts relating to abode of the petitioners, cannot be looked into by it in a writ petition here. The bench, however, took note of the petition filed by one Sana Parveen and 90 others and asked the district election officer of Lucknow to enquire into the grievances and take remedial measures. It also granted liberty to the petitioners to approach the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court if they fail to get relief from the district election officer. The petitioners sought a direction to submit their enumeration forms to Booth Level Officers (BLOs) to ensure their right to vote is preserved despite their lack of a permanent address following the September 2023 demolition drive.

The petitioners said they were long-term residents of Akbar Nagar whose names had appeared in the voter lists as far back as 2002, with younger residents appearing in subsequent lists. However, following the demolition of "unauthorised" constructions in the area, a move previously upheld by the courts, they found themselves excluded from the UP Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process.

## Punjab govt to provide food kits to 40L families under 'Meri Rasoi'

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH

CHIEF Minister Bhagwant Mann on Monday announced the launch of the 'Meri Rasoi' scheme, under which the Punjab government will provide essential food kits to 40 lakh families registered under the National Food Security Act.

Speaking to the media after chairing a cabinet meeting here, Mann said the initiative aims to ensure that children from poor families receive adequate nutrition.

He mentioned that the state government already provides subsidised wheat to these beneficiaries, saying that it remains committed to keeping every person healthy in the state.

Under the new scheme, the government will prepare food kits containing two kilograms of pulses, two kilograms of sugar, one kilogram of iodised salt, 200 grams of turmeric powder and one litre mustard oil. Mann stated that it was found that several children belonging to poor families were not getting adequate nutrition.

The chief minister said the kits will be distributed on a quarterly basis, with the first round of distribution scheduled to start in April. The scheme will be run by Markfed and the Department of Food and Civil Supplies, he said, adding that the quality of the food items will be checked from time to time to maintain standards.

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
SINGAPORE/LUCKNOW

ON the first day of his visit to Singapore, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday secured three memoranda of understanding (MoUs) worth Rs 6,650 crore with Universal Success Group for investments in group housing, a logistics park and a hyperscale data centre in the state, officials said on Monday.

The proposed projects are expected to generate more than 20,000 jobs and further strengthen the state's industrial and urban infrastructure,

## Yogi secures Rs 6,650-crore investment pacts in Singapore



the government said in a statement.

The chief minister briefed investors on policy stability, improving connectivity and the rapidly expanding

industrial ecosystem in Uttar Pradesh.

He also invited the group to visit Lucknow to explore opportunities for setting up data centre facilities and assured investors of

full support at all levels. Officials described the agreements signed on the opening day of the visit as a significant step towards boosting the state's economy, accelerating urban development and generating large-scale employment.

Under the first MoU, an international theme-based township will be developed on 100 acres near the Jewar International Airport in the area of the Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority. The project entails an investment of Rs 3,500 crore and is expected to create around 12,000 jobs.

## Man stabbed to death in Ambala

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
AMBALA

A 22-year-old man was killed and two others seriously injured in a fight between two groups at a marriage palace in Ambala Cantonment, police said on Monday.

The police have registered a case regarding the incident that occurred late Sunday night and formed a team to nab the accused, they said. According to the police, Sonu, 22, a resident of

Ambala City, along with his friends Bhupinder, 20, and Jasraj, 19, had arrived to attend a wedding reception in Ambala Cantonment on Sunday night. An altercation broke out between two groups present there over some issue, which later turned violent, police said.

During this, some youngsters allegedly attacked Sonu and his two friends with knives, leaving them seriously injured. The injured were taken to the civil hospital, where doctors declared Sonu

dead, police said, adding that the accused fled the spot. Police arrived at the scene after receiving information.

The CCTV footage from the venue shows some men assaulting the three friends. Information about the attackers is being gathered, police said.

Based on statements from family members, police have registered a case, they said, adding that a special team formed to search for the accused, conducted raids at several locations on Monday.

## Cong walkouts of Assembly over minor's rape, murder

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
JAIPUR

THE Rajasthan Assembly witnessed heated exchanges between the treasury and opposition benches on Monday, leading to a walkout by Congress MLAs over the alleged rape and murder of a 12-year-old girl in Bikaner district. Raising the issue through an adjournment motion, opposition members sought details on the investigation and demanded the immediate arrest

of the accused.

Minister of State for Home Jawahar Singh Bedham, responding on behalf of the government, said the incident occurred on February 21. The minor had left home for school when she was allegedly attacked in a secluded area.

The Minister told the House that special teams are working to identify and trace the accused. "Special teams have been formed for immediate investigation. They are questioning suspects and

carrying out a thorough probe," Bedham said.

He added that the body is being kept in the mortuary and senior police officers are present at the spot. "Law and order is under control.

I assure the House that whoever the accused may be, Rajasthan Police will arrest them and put them behind bars," he said. Leader of Opposition Tika Ram Jolly questioned the government over the delay in making arrests.

## Himachal govt to launch scheme to tackle malnutrition

The scheme aims to provide high-quality protein, essential calories and vital micronutrients to children below six years of age as well as to pregnant women and lactating mothers

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA

THE Himachal Pradesh government has planned to launch the Indira Gandhi Matri Shishu Sankalp Yojna (IGMSSY) with an outlay of Rs 207.11 crore to strengthen women and child healthcare services and combat malnutrition in the state. The scheme

aims to provide high-quality protein, essential calories and vital micronutrients to children below six years of age as well as to pregnant women and lactating mothers.

It would benefit 2,99,488 eligible beneficiaries across the state, a statement issued here on Monday said. "Ensuring access to nutritious food for

vulnerable groups would significantly reduce the social and economic burden of malnutrition and contribute to building a healthier and more prosperous society," Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said. The initiative will focus on addressing intergenerational malnutrition, particularly during the critical



first 1,000 days of life, through coordinated nutrition, health and care interventions, the statement added. It also seeks to reduce child mortality and morbidity while improving overall nutritional outcomes.

Under the scheme, early identification, continuous monitoring and effective management of high-risk groups, including Severely

Acute Malnourished (SAM) and Moderately Acute Malnourished (MAM) children, as well as low birth weight infants, will be ensured through strengthened referral and follow-up mechanisms, the statement added.

Capacity-building initiatives will be undertaken for frontline workers to enhance their

ability to tackle prevalent health challenges such as anaemia, diarrhoea and pneumonia. The scheme will provide scientifically designed, nutrient-dense and fortified food premises aligned with revised Government of India nutrition norms, including the provision of milk and eggs to enhance protein and micronutrient intake.

# Unemployed wife not idle, unjust to disregard her labour: HC

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

DISPELLING the "myth" of an "idle wife", the Delhi High Court has said that a homemaker's labour enables the earning spouse to function effectively, and it was "unjust" to disregard her contributions while deciding maintenance.

Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma observed that a wife's non-employment cannot be equated with idleness or deliberate

dependence, and when determining maintenance, the law must recognise not only financial earnings but also the economic value of her contributions to the home and domestic relationship during the subsistence of marriage. "The assumption that a non-earning spouse is 'idle' reflects a misunderstanding of domestic contributions. To describe non-employment as idleness is easy; to recognise the labour involved in sustaining a household is far more

difficult," the court in its judgment passed on February 16. "A homemaker does not sit idle; she performs labour that enables the earning spouse to function effectively. To disregard this contribution while adjudicating claims of maintenance would be unrealistic and unjust.

"This court is, therefore, unable to agree with any view that equates non-employment of a wife with idleness or deliberate dependence on the husband,"

it said. The court made the observations while dealing with the grant of maintenance to an estranged wife under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act. A magisterial court had refused to grant interim maintenance to the woman on the grounds that she was able-bodied and well-educated but had chosen not to seek employment. No relief was granted to the wife by the appellate court. The parties married in 2012, and it was alleged

- The assumption that a non-earning spouse is 'idle' reflects a misunderstanding of domestic contributions. To describe non-employment as idleness is easy; to recognise the labour involved in sustaining a household is far more difficult
- The court made the observations while dealing with the grant of maintenance to an estranged wife under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act. A magisterial court had refused to grant interim maintenance to the woman

that the husband deserted the wife and their minor son in 2020. The husband claimed before the high court that the wife cannot

sit "idle" and claim maintenance when she was capable of earning, and that he was meeting the educational expenses of their minor child.



The court said the capacity to earn and actual earnings were distinct concepts, and as per settled law, mere capacity to earn was not a ground to deny maintenance.

"Women who can and are

willing to work should be encouraged, but the denial of maintenance on the sole ground that she is capable of earning and should not remain dependent upon her husband was a flawed approach," the court said.

## Factory owner stabbed to death in Narela; 3 held

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

A 28-year-old factory owner was stabbed to death by a group of men following a work-related dispute in Delhi's Narela Industrial Area, an official said on Monday. The incident took place around 8.30 pm on February 20 when Ravi, co-owner of a unit named Chaudhary Enterprises, was leaving his factory on a motorcycle.

Police said both were intercepted by a group of assailants who attacked Ravi with knives, inflicting multiple stab wounds on his neck, shoulder and back. He was rushed to a hospital in Narela, where doctors declared him dead.

"Following a complaint lodged by the brother of the deceased an FIR was registered and a team was formed. During investigation, police found that a day before the murder, Ravi had an altercation with a



labourer, identified as Rahid alias Rahil, over work-related instructions," the officer said. During the argument, Ravi had slapped Rahid, which is believed to have triggered the conspiracy, police said.

Nursing a grudge over the incident, Rahid allegedly conspired with his associates to eliminate the factory owner. "The team identified and tracked the suspects. On February 22, police apprehended three people -- Ritik (18), Abhay (19), and a 17-year-old juvenile," the officer said. Two knives allegedly used in the murder were recovered from the possession of the accused, along with two motorcycles. Police said efforts are underway to apprehend the remaining accused involved in the conspiracy.

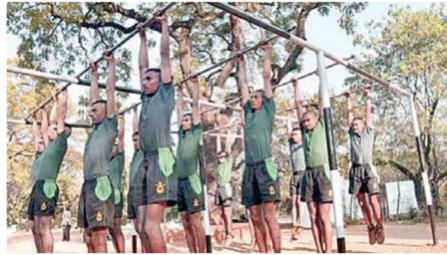
## 20% posts of male constables in police reserved for ex-Agniveers

At present, there are 42,451 sanctioned posts of male constables (Executive) in the Delhi Police. Constables are appointed through a direct recruitment process, and the age limit for the same is 18 to 25 years

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

LIEUTENANT Governor V K Saxena on Monday announced 20 per cent reservation for Ex-agniveers in Delhi Police male constable recruitment with exemption from the physical efficiency test and three years of relaxation in the prescribed upper age limit. The Agniveer scheme was launched in 2022 for the recruitment of Indian youths to serve in the Armed Forces.

"Delhi LG, VK Saxena has approved an amendment in Rule 9 of Delhi Police (Appointment & Recruitment) Rules, 1980, to incorporate



provisions for recruitment of ex-Agniveers as male constable (Executive)," an official statement said.

"Ex-Agniveers will get 20 per cent reservation in recruitment to the post of constables in Delhi Police. They will also get exemption from the Physical Efficiency Test and three years

of relaxation in the prescribed upper age limit," the statement said.

"Further, age relaxation of five years beyond the prescribed upper age limit of 25 years will be given to the candidates of the first batch of the Agniveer scheme," the statement added.

According to officials,

after this amendment, a large number of ex-Agniveers will be eligible for appointment as constables in the Delhi Police. At present, there are 42,451 sanctioned posts of male constables (Executive) in the Delhi Police. Constables are appointed through a direct recruitment process, and the age limit for the same is 18 to 25 years.

The new provisions will ensure that ex-Agniveers have a smoother transition into law enforcement roles, recognising their four-year service in the armed forces. They will get a better chance to serve the society due to their prior training and experience, the statement added.

## Bomb threats to Secretariat, Red Fort turn out to be hoax

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

MULTIPLE institutions, including the Delhi Secretariat, Delhi Assembly, Red Fort and two schools in the national capital, received bomb threats via email on Monday, which were later declared a "hoax", officials said.

An official of the Delhi Fire Services confirmed that Delhi Secretariat, Delhi Army Public School in Dhaura Kuan and Air Force Bal Bharti School on Lodhi Road received bomb threats. The threat emails were also received on the official ID of the Delhi Assembly and its Speaker at 8 am, reportedly from the Khalistan National Army, sources said.

The threatening emails mention "Delhi banega Khalistan" (Delhi will become Khalistan) and read that there will be blasts in Delhi Army School, Red Fort and Metros in the next three days. The emails claimed a blast at the Delhi Army



school at 1.11 pm, Vidhan Sabha at 3.11 pm and Red Fort at 9.11 am, they said. After receiving the threatening emails, the administrations of both schools informed authorities in the morning, a senior police officer said. "As a precautionary measure, the premises were evacuated, and thorough search operations are being carried out.

However, after nothing suspicious was found, it was declared a hoax," the officer said.

An Aam Aadmi Party leader and former MLA, Dilip K Pandey, in a post on X said, "Today, I received a bomb threat on my personal email ID, and since the matter was related to public safety, I have immediately forwarded the email to Delhi Police."

## Global meet on technical textiles



The PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI), in collaboration with The Technological Institute of Textile & Sciences (TITS), Bhiwani, is set to host the International Conference on Technical Textiles from February 28 to March 1, 2026. Conference will be graced by the Union Minister of Textiles Giriraj Singh

## Shirtless protest: Police nabs Youth Cong worker in Gwalior

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

DELHI Police has made the fifth arrest in connection with the shirtless protest by the Indian Youth Congress workers at the AI Impact Summit here last week, an official said on Monday. The accused, identified as Jitendra Yadav, was apprehended for Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh, taking the total number of arrests in the case to five, police said.

On Friday, a group of Indian Youth Congress (IYC) workers staged a dra-



matic shirtless protest at an exhibition hall during the AI Impact Summit at the Bharat Mandapam, walking around holding T-shirts with slogans against the government and the India-US trade deal printed on them, before being whisked away by security personnel present at the venue. Delhi Police arrested four IYC

workers on the day of the protest, with officials saying a wider conspiracy angle in the matter was under investigation.

The issue triggered a political slugfest with the BJP calling it a "shameful act to tarnish India's image on the global stage", and the IYC defending it as a "peaceful" demonstration aimed at safeguarding national interests. According to police, the IYC workers on Friday entered the lobby area of Hall No. 5 and raised slogans after removing the T-shirts worn under their shirts.

## RCF, Kapurthala champions



The league phase of the 83rd All India Railway Men's Hockey Championship, organized at Rail Coach Factory (RCF), Kapurthala, concluded successfully. A total of nine railway teams from across the country participated in the championship, and high-quality hockey was witnessed during the league matches. In this prestigious national-level hockey tournament, several Olympians and international-level players showcased their exceptional sporting talent. The final match of the league phase was played today between RCF, Kapurthala and Banaras Locomotive Works, Banaras, in which the RCF team registered a 7-0 victory. Ajay Nandan, General Manager, RCF, visited the venue and watched the match

## 22 hours on, firefighters continue Op to douse flames

NEW DELHI: A massive fire that broke out in a cloth shop in northeast Delhi's Old Seelampur area on Sunday evening is still raging after 22 hours, with multiple fire tenders deployed to douse the

flames, an official of the Delhi Fire Services said on Monday. No casualty has been reported, and the cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained. According to the DFS, a call regarding the blaze was re-

ceived at 4.22 pm on Sunday after the fire erupted around 4 pm. "The flames quickly spread to adjoining establishments in the congested market, prompting a large-scale firefighting operation,"

the officer said. The fire spread to multiple shops due to the proximity of structures and the presence of combustible materials, the officer added. "More than 50 fire tenders were deployed

during the peak of the operation. At present, around 15 fire tenders are still at the spot to completely extinguish the blaze. If needed be, more vehicles will be rushed to the spot," he said.

# Delhi plans system-driven auto-appeal mechanism under RTS Act

PURNA SINGH  
NEW DELHI

THE Delhi government on Monday has initiated steps to introduce a system-driven Auto-Appeal Mechanism under the Delhi Right of Citizens to Time-Bound Delivery of Services Act, 2011. A review meeting chaired by IT Minister Pankaj Kumar Singh was held at the Delhi Secretariat to examine statutory amendments and technical upgrades required for the reform.

The proposed initiative aligns with the Cabinet Secretary's Deregulation Exercise - Phase II, which encourages states to undertake regulatory and procedural reforms to strengthen ease of doing business and ensure efficient time-bound public

**Currently, 537 services are notified under the Act and monitored through the e-SLA portal. Under the present system, applicants must manually initiate an appeal if a service is delayed. Accountability is triggered only after prescribed timelines are breached and subsequent inquiries are conducted**

service delivery systems. During the meeting, the existing framework of the Delhi RTS Act was reviewed. Currently, 537 services are notified under the Act and monitored through the e-SLA portal. Under the present system, applicants must manually initiate an appeal if a service is delayed. Accountability is triggered only after prescribed timelines are breached and subsequent

inquiries are conducted. The proposed reform seeks to automate this process. Once the prescribed service timeline, or Service Level Agreement (SLA), expires, the system would automatically file an appeal without requiring any action from the applicant. The mechanism would also enable structured and time-bound escalation to higher authorities, supported by



real-time dashboards and transparent monitoring tools.

The Haryana Right to Service framework, particularly its Auto-Appeal System, was discussed as a reference model. Haryana's system provides automatic escalation, clearly defined penalty provisions and continuous digital oversight until resolution. Officials deliberated

on adapting similar features within Delhi's statutory and administrative structure.

The minister directed the department to conduct a comprehensive study of best practices adopted by other states before finalising the framework, with the aim of ensuring that Delhi's model is legally sound, technologically advanced and administratively effective.

## PROTEST AGAINST VC TURNS VIOLENT IN JNU

Student groups trade barbs, authorities vow crackdown; ABVP accuses Left groups of instigating violence after late-night clash at JNU

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

SEVERAL students were injured in a late-night clash between two student groups at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, with the Left groups and the ABVP accusing each other of unleashing the violence, and authorities vowing to crack down on any unruly behaviour on campus. Tensions flared on the campus of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) after a protest against the vice-chancellor turned violent around 1.30 am on Monday.

The Left-backed Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) had called for an equality march 'Samta Juloos' towards the East Gate on Sunday night, demanding the resignation of Vice Chancellor Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit and the revocation of a rustication order.

While the protesters alleged that the administration did not engage with them and instead allowed the ABVP members to confront them, the Right-wing student body blamed the Left groups for instigating the violence.

Pandit recently triggered a row after she said



in an interview that communities "cannot progress by being permanently a victim or playing the victim card", with the JNUSU terming the remarks "casteist" and "insensitive" to marginalised communities. Videos shared by the rival student bodies purportedly showed masked people hurling stones and roaming with sticks on the campus. Sharing a video showing a few people hurling stones on the campus, Left-affiliated student groups alleged that ABVP members started stone pelting when they gathered for a protest. The ABVP also shared videos showing masked people walking inside the campus before the violence broke out.

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# 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 Dissanayake, 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

thehansreader@gmail.com

## 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, presumes 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.

# 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.

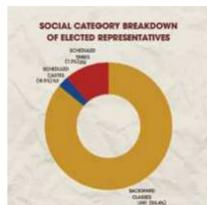
The Congress, which returned to power in the State promising "praja palana" (people-centric governance), has secured control in 90 municipalities. What distinguishes this verdict, however, is not merely the number of urban bodies won, but the social composition of those who now head them.

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.

## TIRUMALA LADDU GHEE ROW

# COUNCIL DEADLOCK ENDS, DEBATE SET FOR FEB 26

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, de-

manding 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 Ad-



visory 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 consen-

sus, 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.

## 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.

## 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 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 various 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.

## Govt positive on clemency for prisoners: Home Minister

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.

Highlighting the need for legislative chang-



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

es 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.

### KIND ATTENTION RAIL PASSENGERS!

#### MORE HOLI FESTIVAL SPECIAL TRAINS-2026

In order to clear extra rush of passengers during the upcoming Holi Festival, Railways have decided to run the following additional Holi Festival Special Trains as per details given below:-

09189/09190 Mumbai Central - Katihar - Mumbai Central Express Special Train on Special Fare (Weekly) 11 Trips

Train No. 09189	STATIONS	Train No. 09190
ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.
13:45	10:55	18:40
13:45	13:55	16:25
07:30	---	00:15

DAYS OF RUN: 09189 Ex. Mumbai Central on every Saturday from 28.02.2026 to 28.03.2026 and 09190 Ex. Katihar on every Tuesday from 24.02.2026 to 31.03.2026.

STOPPAGES: Borivali, Vapi, Valsad, Surat (For Train No. 09189 Only), Bharuch, Vadodara, Ratlam, Ujjain, Sant Hirdaram Nagar, Vidisha, Bina, Virangana Lakshmi Bai Jhansi, Kanpur Central, Lucknow, Gonda, Mankapur, Basti, Khallabadi, Gorakhpur, Deoria, Siwan, Chhapra, Hajipur, Barauni Jn., Begusarai, Khagaria & Naugachia Stations. ACCOMMODATION: AC 2 Tier, AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & General.

09183/09184 Mumbai Central - Banaras - Mumbai Central AC Express Special Train on Special Fare (Weekly) 08 Trips

Train No. 09183	STATIONS	Train No. 09184
ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.
04:15	04:25	21:15
10:30	---	14:30

DAYS OF RUN: 09183 Ex. Mumbai Central on every Wednesday from 04.03.2026 to 25.03.2026 and 09184 Ex. Banaras on every Friday from 06.03.2026 to 27.03.2026.

STOPPAGES: Borivali, Palghar, Vapi, Surat, Vadodara, Ratlam, Kota, Sawai Madhopur, Gangapur City, Bharatpur, Idgah, Tundla, Shikohabad, Mainpuri, Bhongoon, Farrukhabad, Kannauj, Kanpur Central, Lucknow, Rae Bareilly Jn. Amethi, Pratapgarh, Janghal Jn. & Bhadohi Stations. ACCOMMODATION: 1st AC, AC 2 Tier, AC 3 Tier & AC 3 Tier Economy.

09111 / 09112 Vadodara - Gorakhpur - Vadodara Express Special Train on Special Fare (Weekly) 09 Trips

Train No. 09111	STATIONS	Train No. 09112
ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.
18:15	18:30	10:30
23:30	---	05:00

DAYS OF RUN: 09111 Ex. Vadodara on every Monday from 02.03.2026 to 23.03.2026 and 09112 Ex. Gorakhpur on every Wednesday from 25.02.2026 to 25.03.2026.

STOPPAGES: Godhra Jn., Ratlam Jn., Kota, Sawai madhopur, Gangapur City, Bharatpur, Idgah, Tundla Jn., Shikohabad Jn. Mainpuri Jn., Farrukhabad Jn., Kanpur Central, Lucknow, Barabanki, Gonda & Basti Stations. ACCOMMODATION: 1st AC, AC 2 Tier, AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & General.

09195/09196 Vadodara - Mau - Vadodara Super Fast Express Special Train on Special Fare (Weekly) 10 Trips

Train No. 09195	STATIONS	Train No. 09196
ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.
13:15	19:00	00:45
13:15	13:20	05:30
20:45	---	23:15

DAYS OF RUN: 09195 Ex. Vadodara on every Saturday from 28.02.2026 to 28.03.2026 and 09196 Ex. Mau on every Sunday from 01.03.2026 to 29.03.2026.

STOPPAGES: Godhra Jn. (For Train No. 09195 Only), Dahod, Ratlam Jn., Kota Jn., Bayana Jn., Agra Fort, Tundla Jn., Kanpur Central, Lucknow, Sultanpur & Varanasi Stations. ACCOMMODATION: 1st AC, AC 2 Tier, AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & General.

09075/09076 Mumbai Central - Kathgodam - Mumbai Central Super Fast Express Special Train on Special Fare (Weekly) 10 Trips

Train No. 09075	STATIONS	Train No. 09076
ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.
10:45	10:50	21:00
14:30	---	20:47
14:30	---	17:30

DAYS OF RUN: 09075 Ex. Mumbai Central on every Wednesday from 25.02.2026 to 25.03.2026 and 09076 Ex. Kathgodam on every Thursday from 26.02.2026 to 26.03.2026.

STOPPAGES: Borivali, Vapi, Valsad, Surat, Vadodara, Ratlam, Kota, Gangapur City, Hindaun City, Bharatpur, Mathura, Hathras City, Kasganj, Badaun, Bareilly Jn., Bareilly City, Izzatnagar Jn., Baheri, Kichha, Lalkua Jn. & Haldwani Stations. ACCOMMODATION: AC 2 Tier, AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & General.

09309/09310 Indore - Hazrat Nizamuddin - Indore Super Fast Special Train on Special Fare (Bi-Weekly) 18 Trips

Train No. 09309	STATIONS	Train No. 09310
ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.
05:00	---	08:20
---	17:00	---
---	---	---

DAYS OF RUN: 09309 Ex. Indore on every Friday & Sunday from 27.02.2026 to 27.03.2026 and 09310 Ex. Hazrat Nizamuddin on every Saturday & Monday from 28.02.2026 to 28.03.2026.

STOPPAGES: Dewas, Ujjain Jn., Nagda Jn., Shamgarh, Ramganj Mandi, Kota Jn., Sawai Madhopur Jn., Gangapur City, Bharatpur Jn. & Mathura Jn. Stations. ACCOMMODATION: AC 2 Tier, AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & General.

09425/09426 Sabarmati - Haridwar - Sabarmati Express Special Train on Special Fare (Weekly) 09 Trips

Train No. 09425	STATIONS	Train No. 09426
ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.
14:00	14:10	04:30
20:30	---	21:45

DAYS OF RUN: 09425 Ex. Sabarmati on every Monday from 02.03.2026 to 23.03.2026 and 09426 Ex. Haridwar on every Tuesday from 24.02.2026 to 24.03.2026.

STOPPAGES: Mahesana Jn., Palanpur Jn., Abu Road, Pindwara, Jawai Bandh, Falna, Rani, Marwar Jn., Beawar, Ajmer Jn., Kishangarh, Jaipur Jn., Gandhinagar Jaipur, Bandikui Jn., Alwar Jn., Rewari Jn., Gurgaon, Delhi Cantt, Delhi Jn., Ghaziabad, Meerut City, Muzaffar Nagar & Roorkee Stations. ACCOMMODATION: AC 2 Tier, AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & General.

04414/04413 Hazrat Nizamuddin - Mathura Jn. - Hazrat Nizamuddin Unreserved Special Train 10 Trips

Train No. 04414	STATIONS	Train No. 04413
ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.
13:00	---	17:45
---	10:30	---
---	---	14:30

DAYS OF RUN: 04414 Ex. Hazrat Nizamuddin and 04413 Ex. Mathura Jn. from 27.02.2026 to 03.03.2026 (Daily).

STOPPAGES: Okhla, Tuglakabad, Faridabad, Faridabad New Town, Ballabgarh, Asaoti, Palwal, Sholaka, Kosi Kalan, Chhata, Vrindaban Road & Bhuteshwar Stations. ACCOMMODATION: General.

05575/05576 Saharsa Jn. - Anand Vihar (T) - Saharsa Jn. Express Special Train (Weekly) 03 Trips

Train No. 05575	STATIONS	Train No. 05576
ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.
18:32	18:34	10:38
01:05	---	05:15

DAYS OF RUN: 05575 Ex. Saharsa Jn. on 11.03.2026 (Wednesday) and 05576 Ex. Anand Vihar (T) on 10.03.2026 & 17.03.2026 (Tuesday).

STOPPAGES: Garh Baruari, Supaul, Saraygarh, Nirmali, Ghogardiha, Jhanjharpur Jn., Sakri Jn., Shisho, Janakpur Road, Sitamarhi, Bairgania, Raxaul Jn., Narkatiaganj Jn., Bagaha, Kaptanganj Jn., Gorakhpur, Basti, Gonda Jn., Sitapur Jn., Shahjahanpur, Bareilly Jn., Moradabad, Hapur & Ghaziabad Stations. ACCOMMODATION: AC 3 Tier Economy, Sleeper & General.

05579/05580 Purnia Court - Anand Vihar (T) - Purnia Court Express Special Train (4 Days a Week) 13 Trips

Train No. 05579	STATIONS	Train No. 05580
ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.
18:32	18:34	10:38
01:05	---	05:15

DAYS OF RUN: 05579 Ex. Purnia Court on Tuesday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday from 06.03.2026 to 15.03.2026 and 05580 Ex. Anand Vihar (T) on Thursday, Sunday, Monday, Friday from 08.03.2026 to 16.03.2026.

STOPPAGES: Banmankhi Jn., Murliganj, Dauram Madhepura, Saharsa Jn., Garh Baruari, Supaul, Saraygarh, Nirmali, Ghogardiha, Jhanjharpur Jn., Sakri Jn., Shisho, Janakpur Road, Sitamarhi, Bairgania, Raxaul Jn., Narkatiaganj Jn., Bagaha, Kaptanganj Jn., Gorakhpur, Basti, Gonda Jn., Sitapur Jn., Shahjahanpur, Bareilly Jn., Moradabad, Hapur & Ghaziabad Stations. ACCOMMODATION: AC 3 Tier Economy, Sleeper & General.

03293/03294 Patna Jn - New Delhi - Patna Jn. Express Special Train (Daily) 24 Trips

Train No. 03293	STATIONS	Train No. 03294
ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.
12:50	---	14:15
---	21:00	---
---	---	12:25

DAYS OF RUN: 03293 Ex. Patna Jn. from 05.03.2026 to 15.03.2026 (Daily) and 03294 Ex. New Delhi from 06.03.2026 to 16.03.2026 (Daily).

STOPPAGES: Danapur, Ara, Buxar, Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Subedarganj & Govindpuri Stations. ACCOMMODATION: AC 3 Tier, AC 3 Tier Economy, Sleeper & General.

02397/02398 Sheikhpura - New Delhi - Sheikhpura Express Special Train (Weekly) 02 Trips

Train No. 02397	STATIONS	Train No. 02398
ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.
11:40	---	13:30
---	11:30	---
---	---	14:45

DAYS OF RUN: 02397 Ex. Sheikhpura on Sunday 01.03.2026 and 02398 Ex. New Delhi on Monday 02.03.2026.

STOPPAGES: Warisaliganj, Nawadah, Tilaiya, Gaya Jn., Anugrah Narayan Road, Dehri On Son, Sasaram, Bhabua Road, Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Prayagraj Jn., Govindpuri & Tundla Jn. Stations. ACCOMMODATION: 1st AC, AC 2 Tier, AC 3 Tier, AC 3 Tier Economy, Sleeper & General.

03697/03698 Sheikhpura - New Delhi - Sheikhpura Express Special Train (4 Days a Week) 06 Trips

Train No. 03697	STATIONS	Train No. 03698
ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.
11:40	---	13:30
---	11:30	---
---	---	14:45

DAYS OF RUN: 03697 Ex. Sheikhpura on Monday, Tuesday, Friday, Saturday from 27.02.2026 to 02.03.2026 and 03698 Ex. New Delhi on Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday from 28.02.2026 to 03.03.2026.

STOPPAGES: Warisaliganj, Nawadah, Tilaiya, Gaya Jn., Anugrah Narayan Road, Dehri On Son, Sasaram, Bhabua Road, Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Prayagraj Jn., Govindpuri & Tundla Jn. Stations. ACCOMMODATION: AC 2 Tier cum AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & General.

Note: Terminal of Train No. 02397/02398/03697/03698 is New Delhi till 02.03.2026 and post that it will be Anand Vihar (T).

03639/03640 Dhanbad Jn. - Shakurbasti - Dhanbad Jn. Express Special Train (Bi-Weekly) 04 Trips

Train No. 03639	STATIONS	Train No. 03640
ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.
18:10	---	21:10
---	18:30	---
---	---	23:45

DAYS OF RUN: 03639 Ex. Dhanbad Jn. on Monday & Friday from 06.03.2026 to 09.03.2026 and 03640 Ex. Shakurbasti on Tuesday & Saturday from 07.03.2026 to 10.03.2026.

STOPPAGES: Gomti Jn., Parasnath, Hazaribagh Road, Koderma, Gaya Jn., Anugrah Narayan Road, Dehri On Son, Sasaram, Bhabua Road, Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Prayagraj Jn., Govindpuri & Delhi Jn. Stations. ACCOMMODATION: AC 2 Tier, AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & General.

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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 India 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 re-packaging 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 re-packaging 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'luuru

Amazon announced the opening of its second largest office in Asia 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 1,000<sup>th</sup> 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 by 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 for 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 Nannagar 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.