



# THE Hans India



**Copter carrying 7 crashes into sea, all rescued**  
A Pawan Hans helicopter carrying seven people, including two crew members, crashed into the sea just 300 metres away from its scheduled landing at Mayabunder helipad in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands on Tuesday. **P6**

**NMP 2.0 is a bold step; it can unlock resources for reinvestment**  
The government has done well to set a target of Rs 16.7 lakh crore for National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) 2.0. The objective is to monetise assets of more than 2,000 projects in 12 sectors till 2029-30. **P4**

**Markets in red as tariff fears rattle IT stocks**  
Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty tumbled more than 1 per cent on Tuesday, dragged down by heavy losses in IT stocks amid concerns over artificial intelligence-led disruption and renewed trade-related uncertainties. **P7**

**Mrunal Thakur grabs fashion lovers attention**  
Bollywood actress Mrunal Thakur's latest release Do Deewane Seher Me, produced by celebrated filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali and co-starring Siddhant Chaturvedi, has opened to a modest response at the box office. **P8**

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**RAMZAN TIMINGS**  
IFTAR (Wed) 06:27 PM  
SEHAR (Thu) 05:15 AM

**WINDOWS**  
**13 of family sentenced to life in UP**

**SAHARANPUR** : A local court has sentenced 13 people of the same family to life imprisonment for killing two brothers about 10 years ago in a land dispute, officials said. The court of Additional District and Sessions Judge Vikas Gupta also imposed a fine of Rs 10.73 lakh. Additional District Government Counsel (ADGC) Deepak Saini told PTL. Saini said that on November 12, 2016, the police registered an FIR based on a complaint from Israr stating that his father, Yasin and uncle Tasin were murdered by a group of people over a dispute regarding approximately 20 bighas of land. After the investigation, the police arrested the accused and collected evidence. Upon hearing the case, the court sentenced all 13 people to life imprisonment and imposed a fine of Rs 10.73 lakh.

**Bride dies two days after wedding in Gorakhpur**

**GORAKHPUR**: Celebrations turned into mourning after a 21-year-old woman died under alleged suspicious circumstances just two days after her wedding in P P Ganj area here, with her family accusing the in-laws of murder. The deceased, identified as Seema, was married on February 20 to Manoj, a resident of Badhni village under P P Ganj police station area, an official said on Tuesday. According to police, Seema, daughter of Kamal Prabha Devi of Ratanpur village in Pipraich area, reached her in-laws house on February 21. On February 22 evening, her family was informed that her health had suddenly deteriorated. She was taken to BRD Medical College, where she died during treatment. Seema's parents alleged by the time they reached the hospital, her in-laws had fled, leaving the body behind.

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**IRREGULAR by MANJUL**  
Not a 'naked protester'...  
A Dalal Street player

## Centre set to launch HPV vax against cancer for girls aged 14

HANS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

- The programme will use a single-shot Gardasil, a quadrivalent HPV vaccine, that provides protection against HPV types 16 and 18, which cause cervical cancer, as well as types 6 and 11
- The drive would be a special vaccination campaign and not under the government's Universal Immunisation Programme. It is in line with the World Health Organisation recommendations

IN a major step towards eliminating preventable cancers among women, the Union government will soon launch a nationwide human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination programme targeting girls aged 14 years, official sources said on Tuesday.

According to sources, the programme will use a single-shot Gardasil, a quadrivalent

HPV vaccine, that provides protection against HPV types 16 and 18, which cause cervical cancer, as well as types 6 and 11.

The drive would be a special vaccination campaign and not under the government's Universal Immunisation Programme. It is in line with the World Health Organisation recommendations, which identify HPV vaccination as a central pillar of the Global Strategy to Eliminate

Cervical Cancer. "Strong global and Indian scientific evidence confirms that a single dose provides robust and durable protection when administered to girls in the recommended age group," an official source said.

The nationwide programme will target girls aged 14 years, an age at which the HPV vaccine offers maximum preventive benefit, well before potential exposure to the virus. In the open market, quadrivalent

Gardasil-4 is a two-dose vaccine -- each costing Rs 3,927 -- for girls below 15 years. For those above 15 years, three doses of the vaccine are required. Gardasil-4 vaccine is manufactured by MSD India.

"Vaccination under the national programme will be voluntary and free of cost, ensuring equitable access across socio-economic groups. By prioritising prevention at the right



age, the programme is expected to provide lifelong protection and significantly reduce the future burden of cervical cancer in the country," the source said. The vaccine has an excellent safety record, supported by more than 500 million doses administered globally since its introduction in 2006. Widespread vaccination has

led to substantial reductions in HPV infection, precancerous lesions, and cervical cancer incidence in several countries. Once the vaccination programme is launched, India will join 160 countries that have introduced HPV vaccination in their national immunisation schedules.

## RENAMING POLITICS: KERALA TO KERALAM

BJP-CPM understanding helped Kerala get new name; Centre never considered Bengal's case: Mamata

HANS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

THE Union Cabinet on Tuesday approved a proposal to change the name of the state to Keralam, Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said. The decision, which comes ahead of the assembly elections in the state, was taken at a meeting of the Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at its first meeting held at Seva Teerth, the new PMO complex.

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday alleged that an "understanding" between the BJP and the CPI(M) helped Kerala get a new name, while accusing the Centre of repeatedly ignoring her government's proposals to name the state



'Bangla'. The Union Cabinet approved the proposal for altering the name of Kerala to Keralam, Vaishnaw said. Prime Minister Modi hailed the Cabinet decision, saying it reflects the will of the people of the state. "It is in line with our efforts to

strengthen the connect with our glorious culture," he said in a post on X.

The Kerala assembly elections are due in April this year, with the tenure of the 140-member current assembly ending on May 23. After the Union Cabinet's approval,

the president of India will refer a Bill, namely the Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2026, to the Kerala Assembly for expressing its views under the proviso to Article 3 of the Constitution of India. After receipt of the views of the Kerala Assembly, the government of India will obtain the recommendation of the president for the introduction of the Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2026 to alter the name of Kerala to Keralam in Parliament, an official release said.

Asked why a decision like this was coming just ahead of the assembly elections in Kerala, Vaishnaw said decisions are taken by the Union Cabinet under Prime Minister Modi without keeping elections in view.

## Rs 275 hike in MSP of jute

HANS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

THE Union Cabinet on Tuesday approved a hike in the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of raw jute by Rs 275 to Rs 5,925 per quintal for the marketing season 2026-27.

The decision was taken by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by PM Narendra Modi, in its first meeting at the PMO new office, Seva Teerth.

The new MSP will ensure a return of 61.8 per cent over the all-India weighted average cost of production.

"The announced MSP of raw jute for Marketing season 2026-27 is in line with the principle of fixing MSP at a level of at least 1.5 times the all-India weighted average cost of production as announced by the Government in the Budget 2018-19," Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said.

## 'The Kerala Story 2' depicts State in wrong light: HC

HANS NEWS SERVICE KOCHI

THE Kerala High Court on Tuesday observed that 'The Kerala Story 2 - Goes Beyond' depicts a state like Kerala where everyone lives in communal harmony in a wrong light. The court also observed that using the state's name and claiming the film is based on true facts can lead to communal tensions in the state.

The observations came from Justice Bechu Kurian Thomas while hearing arguments on three separate pleas seeking to quash the certificate for public viewing granted to 'The Kerala Story

2 - Goes Beyond'. When the matter came up again in the post lunch session, the court was told that the producers of the film were willing to withdraw the teasers of the film.

The court, thereafter, said it will hear the matter again on Wednesday when it is likely to decide whether to see the movie before its scheduled release on February 27. Earlier in the day, during the arguments, the court indicated it was inclined to watch the film before passing an order. It also asked the censor board whether the movie complies with all the mandatory guidelines.



## Sensex plunges 1,000 pts

Markets dive over 1 pc on IT stocks selloff, global trade worries

HANS NEWS SERVICE MUMBAI

EQUITY benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty tumbled more than 1 per cent on Tuesday, dragged down by heavy losses in IT stocks amid concerns over artificial intelligence-led disruption and renewed trade-related uncertainties. Rising global crude prices amid escalating US-Iran tensions and sluggish global cues also hit investor sentiment, traders said.

Snapping its two-session rally, the 30-share BSE Sensex plummeted 1,068.74 points, or 1.28 per cent, to settle at 82,225.92. During the day, the benchmark plunged 1,359.93 points,



or 1.63 per cent, to hit an intraday low of 81,934.73. A total of 2,802 stocks declined, while 1,422 advanced and 143 remained unchanged on the BSE. The 50-share NSE Nifty fell 288.35 points, or 1.12 per cent, to close at 25,424.65. In the intraday session, it depreciated by 385.4 points, or 1.49 per cent, to hit a low of 25,327.60. As many as 32 of its components ended in the red while 18 settled in the green territory.

## Rekha lays foundation for Rs 264 cr works in Mundka

NEW DELHI: Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Tuesday laid foundation stones of works worth Rs 264 crore in Mundka, saying her government is bringing the villages neglected so far in the mainstream of development.

The development works initiated in Mundka include 49 projects for bringing urban facilities to the rural pocket of the city, said a Delhi CMO statement. In the last year, the Delhi government has initiated development works worth Rs 1,600 crore in the rural areas of Delhi, Gupta said, addressing a gathering in Mundka. The chief minister



said that once these projects are completed, the Mundka Assembly constituency will witness smooth connectivity, access to clean drinking water, improved sewerage systems, and strengthened education and healthcare facilities. These initiatives are significant steps towards

bringing rural Delhi on par with urban standards, she said. North West Delhi MP Yogender Chandolia, Development Minister Kapil Mishra, local MLA Gahender Drall, and chairman of Delhi Gramin Vikas Board Raj Kumar Chauhan were present in the programme.

## INDIA-US TRADE DEAL SKM announces nationwide stir

HANS NEWS SERVICE KURUKSHETRA

THE Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) on Tuesday announced a nationwide agitation against the proposed India-US trade agreement and other key policy issues, stating that protests will continue until the Centre accepts farmers' demands. The decision was taken at the SKM National Council meeting held at Jat Dharamshala in Kurukshetra, according to a press release issued by its media cell. More than 150 representatives from nine states - Punjab, Haryana,

Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Delhi, Maharashtra and Kerala - attended the meeting. SKM said a joint Kisan Mazdoor Parliament will be organised at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on March 9, the opening day of the next Parliament session. From March 10 to April 13, the Morcha will hold Mahapanchayats across the country, beginning from Barnala in Punjab, to raise awareness about what it described as the "dangers" of the proposed trade pact and other "corporate-friendly" policies of the Centre.

## US customs rolls out new 10% tariff, lower than Trump's promised 15%

TEXAS

THE United States Customs and Border Protection has rolled out the 10 per cent tariff duties imposed on all imports which are not covered by exemptions.

After the US Supreme Court's ruling deemed earlier tariffs imposed by Trump using emergency powers as "illegal", the President had announced 10 per cent additional tariffs on imports from all countries on Friday. The next day, Trump decided to increase

**Modi should scrap 'anti-farmer' Indo-US deal approved under pressure: Rahul; 'the agreement an arrow in the heart of farmers; I challenge PM to scrap it if he has courage, but he won't be able to do so'**



this to 15 per cent. A US Customs notice, which is described as intended to "provide guidance regarding the February 20, 2026

Presidential Proclamation", said imports would be subject to "an additional ad valorem rate of 10%", Reuters reported. A White House official,

quoted by The Financial Times, has said the increase to 15 per cent will come later. This has, however, not been officially confirmed. The collection of the new

tariffs began at midnight, while the earlier tariffs were annulled.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said the Indo-US interim trade deal was sealed under pressure and dared Prime Minister Narendra Modi to scrap the "anti-farmer" agreement, following the US Supreme Court ruling. The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha described the agreement as "an arrow in the heart of farmers". "After the US Supreme Court ruling on the trade deal

(global tariffs), I challenge PM Modi to scrap it if he has courage...but he won't be able to do so," said the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha.

Gandhi alleged that the Prime Minister approved the agreement under external pressure linked to the threat of releasing "Epstein files" and an ongoing criminal case involving industrialist Gautam Adani in the US. "Narendra Modi is compromised. He has been trapped. He has signed

this agreement under pressure. This is not a deal, it is an arrow in the heart of the farmer," Gandhi said, claiming that the pact had been stalled for months before being cleared suddenly.

He questioned that the India-US trade agreement had been stalled for four months, but what happened that made Prime Minister Modi suddenly agree to it? "There are two reasons for this. The first reason is the lakhs of Epstein files lying in America.

# Infant twins, children among 6 of family killed in Meerut house fire

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
MEERUT

A devastating accident shook Meerut after a suspected short circuit triggered a massive blaze inside a house in the Lisadi Gate area, killing six members of an extended family, including two four-month-old twin sisters, and three children aged 4 and 12. According to officials, the blaze at Iqbal Ahmad's residence on Monday night spread rapidly when most male members of the family were out to offer Ramzan namaz, leaving

**Police say the family was into tailoring and online garment business, for which a large quantity of cloth was stored on the ground floor of the three-storey house, causing the fire to spread rapidly**

little time for the others to escape.

Police said the family was into tailoring and online garment business, for which a large quantity of cloth was stored on the ground floor of the three-storey house, causing the fire to spread rapidly. Mohammad Farooq, a family member, said he had

gone to offer namaz when he received a call about the fire. "By the time I came back, a huge crowd had gathered outside the house.

The blaze killed my daughter, my son, my younger brother's twin daughters and his son. My elderly mother survived the fire, though her blood pressure shot up due

to the shock," Farooq said. The deceased have been identified as Rukhsar (25), Mahbish (12), Hammad (4), Akdas (4), Nabia (4 months) and Inayat (4 months), all residents of Gali No. 3 near the Surahi Wali Masjid in Kidwai Nagar, police said.

One injured woman, Ameer Bano (55), is un-



dergoing treatment at a hospital, they said. The victims were laid to rest at the Bale Miyan cemetery at Nauchandi on Tuesday afternoon. Heart-wrenching

scenes were witnessed when the coffins were carried out of the house, where a large number of people gathered to mourn the family's loss. Officials said the family

members had given in writing that they didn't want a post-mortem of the bodies. The incident occurred at Kidwai Nagar around 8 pm on Monday. Seven people were admitted to the hospital with burn injuries, of which six died, Meerut SSP Avinash Pandey told reporters. Police confirmed the deaths after midnight.

A Dial 112 response vehicle was rushed to the spot within three minutes of receiving information about the blaze, followed by fire tenders, Pandey said. The narrow lanes in the locality

posed a major challenge for the firefighters, prompting them to deploy motorcycles and later access the house from the adjoining rooftops, officials said.

The firemen had to break a wall to gain entry into the building. A local also assisted in the rescue efforts by placing a ladder to help evacuate those trapped on the first floor of the house, the SSP said.

While five people were rescued from the first floor, those trapped on the second floor were engulfed by dense smoke and flames.

## UP receives Rs 1L cr investment proposals

**MoUs worth Rs 60,000 crore have already been signed; AISATS to invest Rs 4,458 cr in Jewar airport projects; MoU signed during Yogi's Singapore visit**

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
SINGAPORE/LUCKNOW

UTTAR Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday said the state has received investment proposals worth Rs 1 lakh crore during his ongoing visit to Singapore, adding that memoranda of understanding (MoUs) worth Rs 60,000 crore have already been signed. Speaking on the second day of his visit, Adityanath said he held "positive and productive" discussions with Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister, Home Minister and Energy Minister on expanding economic cooperation and investment opportunities in Uttar Pradesh.

"Since Monday, UP re-



ceived investment proposals worth Rs 1 lakh crore during the Singapore visit.

Till now MoUs worth Rs 60,000 crore have been signed," he said. The chief minister also met top executives and chairpersons of major global fintech and

investment firms, including GIC and Blackstone, and described the meetings as encouraging for future partnerships.

"People's perception about Uttar Pradesh has undergone a 360-degree transformation," Adityanath said, highlighting improvements in infrastructure, governance and investment climate in the state.

The agreement was signed during Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's ongoing visit to Singapore, marking a key investment outcome on the second day of the tour aimed at attracting global capital to Uttar Pradesh.

## All money lost in IDFC First Bank fraud recovered: CM

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH

HARYANA Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Tuesday informed the State Assembly that the state government had recovered nearly Rs 556 crore owed to it in the IDFC First Bank case. "Nearly Rs 556 crore, including nearly Rs 22 crore in interest, came back within 24 hours," Saini said in the House.

On Sunday, the bank disclosed a Rs 590-crore fraud committed by its employees and others in accounts held by the Haryana government. "I want to clarify before the House that the money concerning Haryana government departments, (the) entire amount has been deposited back into our accounts...The recovery has been made within 24 hours," Saini said.

He said the bank had apprised the government that the incident primarily



involved a particular branch of the bank in Chandigarh, involving four to five bank employees of middle and lower rung who colluded in the whole thing.

The government will ensure that anybody who is involved be it a bank employee, private individual or even a government employee -- will not be spared," he said.

On Monday, Saini said the state's Anti-Corruption

Bureau would conduct an in-depth probe into the fraud. "We have formed a committee headed by the Finance Secretary in this entire matter," Saini said on Monday. Taking a dig at Congress, Saini said during the party's time, scams used to be hushed up and no one used to be held accountable, whereas the BJP government is working with zero tolerance towards corruption.

## RSS chief advocates implementation of UCC

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
DEHRADUN

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat has advocated for the nationwide implementation of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), modelled after the one in Uttarakhand. At a former secretary's dialogue seminar held here to mark the RSS's 100th anniversary, Bhagwat said, "It would be a very good thing if the UCC is implemented...It would be good if it happens across the country, but I believe it should be implemented in this way (like Uttarakhand)."

Uttarakhand was the first state in the country to implement the UCC on January 27 last year. The RSS chief praised the UCC, saying it is essential for unifying society. He said that after drafting a proposal in Uttarakhand, it was put up for public discussion, and then suggestions from 3 lakh people were received, which were considered and accepted.

Refusing to comment on the University Grants Commission (UGC) issue, Bhagwat said the matter is currently before the Supreme Court.



## Father, daughter die after jumping before goods train

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
UNNAO

A 45-year-old man and his teenage daughter allegedly died by suicide after jumping in front of a goods train on the Kanpur-Lucknow rail route in Uttar Pradesh's Unnao district, police said on Tuesday. The incident occurred around 8:45 pm on Monday on the down track near Sahajani crossing in the Shuklaganj area, ahead of Gangaghat railway station, Inspector in-charge of Gangaghat police station said.

According to preliminary information, Yash Gupta (45) and his 14-year-old daughter jumped onto the track as a goods train approached, resulting in their death on the spot, he said. On receiving information,

Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel and local police rushed to the scene. For safety reasons, movement on the down track was halted for some time, briefly disrupting rail traffic.

The Lucknow-bound Tejas Express and Gomti Express were impacted for a short period due to the incident, officials said. Police said a white car bearing a Kanpur registration number was found parked about 200 metres from the spot towards Dewarakala village.

Documents and a mobile phone recovered from the vehicle confirmed that it belonged to Yash Gupta.

Based on the vehicle registration details, the family members were informed and an investigation was initiated, police said.

## BJP slams Omar's pitch for artificial snow in Gulmarg

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR

THE state unit of the BJP on Tuesday slammed Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah over his artificial snow pitch for Gulmarg, saying the government has "failed" to protect the environment.

BJP spokesperson Abhijeet Jasrotia attacked the government over what he termed "complete inaction" on environmental protection, and said Kashmir is witnessing warming at an alarming pace. "At a time when we need extensive greenery and forest protection, the chief minister talks about fake snow and artificial cooling. These are cosmetic measures and potentially dangerous for sports lovers and the fragile Himalayan ecosystem," Jasrotia said.

Abdullah on Monday advocated introducing artificial snow at Gulmarg

for a fillip to tourism and to promote the destination as a winter sports hub. However, the BJP alleged that during the past one-and-a-half years, the Omar Abdullah government has "failed" to safeguard the region's green cover. "Trees are being cut in the name of development, but there is no serious effort to restore what is being lost. We are gradually losing our natural cooling shield," he said. He accused the government of lacking a clear climate action strategy and prioritising "public relations exercises over environmental protection".

The BJP spokesperson said unregulated urban expansion, road widening projects and shrinking orchards were contributing to ecological imbalance. "Instead of taking decisive steps to protect Kashmir's forests and wetlands, the government appears content enjoying the hot seat," he added.

## 152 dead, nearly 21K structures damaged in 2025 J&K rain fury

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU

THE rain fury in Jammu and Kashmir last year claimed 152 lives, injured 179 people, damaged nearly 21,000 structures -- mostly residential houses -- while 1515 livestock perished, official data revealed. Of the total fatalities, 151 were reported from the worst-hit Jammu division and one from Kashmir valley, the data compiled by the Disaster Management, Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction

Department (DMRRRD) said.

Official sources said the dead included about 100 pilgrims who lost their lives in a cloudburst and a landslide enroute to Machail Mata shrine in Kishtwar district and Vaishno Devi shrine in Reasi district in August. A devastating cloudburst struck Chisoti village, the gateway to Machail Mata shrine in Kishtwar on August 14, killing 63 people and injuring scores of others, while 30 went missing. The incident was followed by

a landslide triggered by relentless rains on Vaishno Devi route on August 26 that left 32 dead and 20 others injured.

The government said compensation for loss of lives, injuries and house damages has been disbursed as per norms under the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF).

The DMRRRD said that Rs 289.39 crore has been released under SDRF during FY 2025-26, including Rs 200.39 crore for Jammu division and Rs 89 crore for Kashmir division to sup-

port relief and restoration measures.

The Jammu division bore the brunt, with 3,304 houses fully damaged, 1,818 severely damaged and 11,622 partially damaged, besides destruction of 3,531 huts and cattle sheds, death of 1,461 livestock and loss of 1,035 tin sheds. In Kashmir division, 12 houses were fully damaged, 44 severely and 597 partially damaged, besides damage to 71 huts and cattle sheds and loss of 54 livestock, the government said.

## Sambhal temple-mosque row: Court sets March 24 for hearing

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
SAMBHAL

A court in Chandausi on Tuesday fixed March 24 as the next date of hearing in the ongoing Shahi Jama Masjid-Harihar Temple dispute. The matter came up before Civil Judge (Senior Division) Aditya Singh. However, the hearing was deferred in view of a stay order issued by the Supreme Court. Speaking to reporters, Shahi

Jama Masjid counsel Shakeel Ahmed Warsi said the case was listed for hearing on Tuesday but was postponed due to the apex court's stay. "Now the hearing will be held on March 24," he said.

The Muslim side has challenged the maintainability of the case in the Allahabad High Court. On May 19, the high court upheld the trial court's order permitting a court-monitored survey of



the site and directed that proceedings continue. Hindu side counsel Shri Gopal Sharma told reporters that since there is a stay order from the Supreme Court in this matter, the trial court cannot issue any orders, due to which the next date was given.

The dispute dates back to November 19 last year, when Hindu petitioners, including advocates Hari Shankar Jain and Vishnu Shankar Jain, filed a suit in the Sambhal district court claiming the mosque was built over a pre-existing temple.

## Foreign forces aiding Pak to push drugs, arms into Punjab: Guv

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HOSHIARPUR

PUNJAB Governor Gulab Chand Kataria on Tuesday alleged that certain foreign forces were helping Pakistan to smuggle drugs and weapons into Punjab across the border via drones, to destabilise the state and harm the youth.

Talking to media persons here, Kataria claimed Pakistan alone did not have the capacity to continuously push large consignments of drugs and arms across the

border, indicating possible involvement of larger foreign forces. He said drones were being used to smuggle narcotics and weapons to disturb peace in the state. "Our security forces are intercepting and destroying such consignments.

Anti-drone systems and other strict measures are being strengthened," he said. Kataria led the "People's Walk Against Drugs" from DAV College of Education in Hoshiarpur on Tuesday, and said Punjab could be made drug-free only if the campaign

**Vice-chancellors, heads of institutions, NGOs, religious and social organisations, students and citizens took part in large numbers and pledged support for a drug-free Punjab. Students presented cultural programmes and street plays highlighting the ill effects of drug abuse**

against narcotics turned into a mass movement. The padyatra passed through city markets and ended at the college premises.

Vice-chancellors, heads of institutions, NGOs, religious

and social organisations, students and citizens took part in large numbers and pledged support for a drug-free Punjab. Students presented cultural programmes and street plays highlighting

the ill effects of drug abuse. Kataria said the anti-drug campaign was not political but a people's movement. He stressed that educational institutions must be made drug-free on priority as the



future of the state depended on its youth.

Referring to the Punjab government's campaign titled 'War Against Drugs', he said its success required collective efforts by educational institutions, religious and social bodies, panchayats and citizens. On the recent deaths of two police personnel at a checkpoint in Gurdaspur district, the governor said the matter was under investigation and it would be premature to draw conclusions, though drug trafficking could not be ruled out.

AI Summit protest

# Court sends IYC president Chib to 4-day police custody

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Tuesday sent Indian Youth Congress (IYC) president Uday Bhanu Chib to four days of police custody in connection with the shirtless protest at the India AI Impact Summit at Bharat Mandapam on February 20.

Judicial Magistrate Ravi allowed four days of custody to the police to question Chib, after the investigating officer

(IO) sought seven days of custodial interrogation. "The application of the IO is partly allowed.

The accused is remanded to police custody for four days commencing from today till February 28 (inclusive). On expiry of the said period, the IO shall produce the accused before the concerned court or the concerned duty magistrate, along with a detailed remand report," the court said. It underlined that during the

custody, the IO had to abide by all constitutional and statutory safeguards, including those relating to medical examination, maintenance of the case diary and production of the accused before the court within the stipulated time.

The court also "expressly" recorded Chib's right to meet his counsel during interrogation according to Section 38 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), but clarified that such a

meeting could not hamper the legitimate needs of investigation.

The provision says, "When any person is arrested and interrogated by the police, he shall be entitled to meet an advocate of his choice during interrogation, though not throughout interrogation."

The magistrate said that the advocate's presence would be permitted at such intervals as reasonably fixed by the IO, but not throughout the interrogation and

- Judicial Magistrate Ravi allowed four days of custody to the police to question Chib, after the investigating officer (IO) sought seven days of custodial interrogation
- The court also recorded Chib's right to meet his counsel during interrogation, but clarified that such a meeting could not hamper the legitimate needs of investigation

not in a manner that directly interfered with questioning. Besides, the presence and permission had to remain consistent with the statutory scheme and judicial pronouncements, he said. "Nothing stated in this or-

der shall be construed as an expression on the merits of the case or as a final determination of the applicability of any specific penal provision, including Section 197(1)(d) BNS (imputations, assertions prejudicial to national



integration) which shall be considered at the appropriate

stage on the basis of evidence collected," the court said.

# Man engages minor sons to lift valuables from foreigners

The case came to light after an e-FIR was registered at Jama Masjid police station on January 15 on the complaint of a citizen of Uzbekistan, who had come to India for his minor daughter's cancer surgery in Gurugram. According to the complainant, he was carrying USD 7,200 in a sling bag during a visit to the Jama Masjid market with his family for sightseeing and shopping. The cash was stolen amid the crowd

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

A man allegedly engaged his two sons, 13 and 15 years of age, to pick-pocket foreign tourist in the crowded Jama Masjid market, keeping the stolen goods in his possession to avoid suspicion, an official said on Tuesday. According to police, the accused would position his children in crowded marketplaces to identify and discreetly remove cash and valuables from bags of foreign tourists and shoppers.

The stolen property would then be handed over to the father, who retained



possession to protect the minors while distancing himself from the thefts, police said. "The case came to light after an e-FIR was registered at Jama Masjid police station on January 15 on the complaint of a citizen of Uzbekistan, who

had come to India for his minor daughter's cancer surgery in Gurugram," the officer said.

According to the complainant, he was carrying USD 7,200 in a sling bag during a visit to the Jama Masjid market with his

family for sightseeing and shopping. The cash was stolen amid the crowd. "A team was formed which analysed CCTV footage from multiple cameras installed in and around the market. Two juveniles -- siblings aged 13 and 15 years, residents of New Seelampur -- were identified and apprehended," the officer said. During investigation, police found that they were acting at the behest of their father, who was later arrested. Police said USD 2,500 and the complainant's ATM card were recovered from the accused father, while USD 4,000 was recovered from his residence.

## AAP MP alleges sand mining in Pb

# BJP demands time-bound CBI probe

PURNA SINGH  
NEW DELHI

THE Bharatiya Janata Party demanded a time-bound Central Bureau of Investigation probe into alleged irregularities in sand mining in Punjab, citing remarks made by Aam Aadmi Party Member of Parliament Kang Malvinder.

Addressing the media, BJP National Spokesperson R.P. Singh claimed that concerns raised by the ruling party's own MP had exposed what he described as a large-scale illegal sand mining racket operating under the Punjab government.

He said that when a sitting MP from the ruling party questions the functioning of the government, it can no longer be dismissed as an opposition allegation but must be treated as a serious internal charge.

Singh referred to official figures to highlight what he termed a major gap between promises and actual revenue



collections. According to him, Punjab's average annual revenue from sand mining is around ₹288 crore, whereas the AAP had, prior to the Assembly elections, projected that the state could generate ₹20,000 crore annually from the sector. He described the difference as "staggering" and said the numbers did not add up.

He further argued that

such projections had been presented to voters as concrete financial commitments rather than political slogans. Questioning the shortfall, Singh asked where the promised ₹20,000 crore had gone and whether the gap over four years—running into tens of thousands of crores—was linked to systemic corruption or illegal mining allegedly operating under political protection.



## Man shot dead at wedding function; cop among 3 held

NEW DELHI: A Delhi Police head constable and two others were arrested for allegedly shooting dead a 30-year-old man following a dispute at a wedding function in north Delhi's Wazirabad area, an official said on Monday. The accused head constable, identified as Parvesh, was posted with the Traffic Unit in the northeast Circle at Bhajanpura and had joined the force in 2008, he said.

Information was received at Wazirabad police station that a man with a gunshot injury had been admitted to the Trauma Centre in Timarpur, where he was declared dead. Upon reaching the hospital, the officer found that the injured, identified as Ashish, a resident of Uttar Pradesh's Baghat district, had been brought there by his younger brother, Anuj. The doctors declared Ashish dead, police said.

In his statement to police, Anuj said he, along with his brother and other acquaintances, had come to attend the wedding of a neighbour in Wazirabad. Ashish was working as a Multi-Tasking Staff (MTS) in the Enforcement Department, he said.

Anuj alleged that Parvesh, who is also from their native village, attended the function along with his brother Sandeep and brothers-in-law, Vipin and Vikash.



group of three. "We will get four gharials to our existing fleet of three to increase our gharial numbers for visitors," he added.

# Fight over cricket leaves teen dead

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

A cricket fight turned fatal in west Delhi's Tilak Nagar area with the death of a 15-year-old boy in a scuffle with three juveniles, police said on Tuesday. A verbal fight broke out on Monday between a 12-year-old boy and the 15-year-old victim over a game of cricket in a local park. "The argument soon escalated into a physical fight between the two.

After the scuffle, the 12-year-old returned home and narrated the incident



to his cousins, aged 17 and 13. The three juveniles then went out in search of the victim," an officer said. At around 7.22 pm, the three confronted the boy in the area. A fight broke out, and in that fight, the teenager sustained injuries to his neck and head and fell unconscious. He was rushed to Deen Dayal Upadhyay (DDU) Hospital by locals

and family members, where he was declared dead. "We have registered an FIR in connection with the incident at Tilak Nagar Police Station and all three juveniles have been apprehended. Further legal proceedings are underway in accordance with provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act," the officer said.

The victim had three brothers. His father works as a tea vendor in the locality. Later that day, the boy's family members went to the Tilak Nagar Police Station and demanded action against the accused.

# Over 1,000 doc posts vacant; 480 posts referred to JKPC

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU

MORE than 1,000 posts of doctors are currently vacant across Jammu and Kashmir, according to figures shared by the Health and Medical Education Department. Kashmir division accounts for 797 of these vacancies -- comprising 24 senior consultants, 253 consultants, 458 medical officers and 62 dental surgeons -- while Jammu division has 288 vacant consultant posts as on February 2026. "The districts of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir are not facing

an acute shortage of specialists. In order to overcome shortage of doctors in peripheral and remote areas, the government has recently referred 480 posts of medical officers to the J-K Public Service Commission for selection of suitable candidate," the medical and health department said.

It said the department is monitoring issues related to the referral of direct recruitment vacancies as well as the filling up of promotion-quota posts on a priority basis, and necessary steps for filling up these vacancies have been taken from time to time.

# Animal swap: Zoo to get tiger, send white tigress to Patna

SHRUTI BHARDWAJ  
NEW DELHI

THE National Zoological Park (NZP) will receive a tiger from Patna Zoo, and will send a white tigress along with several other species under an animal exchange scheme aimed at promoting breeding, an

official said. Delhi Zoo Director Sanjeet Kumar (IFS) told PTI that the exchange has been designed to address both breeding requirements and the need to diversify species within the zoo. He said the zoo will receive four gharials, four grey wolves two males and two females - and two

barn owls from Patna Zoo in March. In return, the zoo will send a group of animals that includes Sangai deer (also known as Manipur deer), a tigress, painted storks, white pelicans, and black bucks.

Explaining the rationale behind the exchange, Kumar said the zoo currently

has only one female wolf, which limits the scope for a sustainable breeding programme. "The main objective of this exchange is to develop a healthy breeding environment and also to add more species to our collection," he said. Kumar said that NZP currently houses 13 tigers

and cubs. Of these, seven are Royal Bengal tigers, and six are white tigers. He said the number of female tigers is higher, while most of the males are old, as at present, there are only four male tigers. On the aquatic side, Kumar said the zoo will receive four gharials, which will be added to its existing

## Completing one year in office

# Delhi Assembly showcases digital shift, green milestones

PURNA SINGH  
NEW DELHI

COMPLETING one year in office, Delhi Legislative Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta outlined a wide-ranging transformation agenda undertaken over the past twelve months, describing the period as one marked by institutional reform, technological advancement and a renewed focus on transparency and citizen engagement.

Addressing the media at the Assembly complex, Gupta said the anniversary was

**Having assumed office on February 24, 2025, the Speaker Vijender Gupta says the Assembly has undergone structural and functional changes aimed at aligning it with contemporary governance standards**

both a review of progress and a reaffirmation of commitment to building a modern, accountable and environmentally responsible legislature. Having assumed office

on February 24, 2025, the Speaker said the Assembly has undergone structural and functional changes aimed at aligning it with contemporary governance standards. Among



the most significant achievements was the transition to a completely paperless system through the adoption of the National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA). The fully digital session conducted on August 4, 2025, marked a historic shift in legislative operations, replacing traditional paperwork with secure digital processes and improving efficiency and record management.

On sustainability, the Assembly emerged as the country's first legislature to operate entirely on solar energy following the commissioning of

a 500-kilowatt rooftop solar power plant. The initiative has reduced the institution's carbon footprint and is projected to save nearly ₹1.75 crore annually in electricity expenses. Building on this success, Gupta announced plans to enhance solar capacity by an additional 300 kilowatts and expand the green area within the Assembly premises from 20 percent to 40 percent, reinforcing a long-term environmental commitment.

In the realm of governance oversight, the Assembly strengthened implementa-

tion of the APMS portal, enabling systematic and real-time tracking of audit observations and Action Taken Notes across departments. Gupta also highlighted a proposal for a National Legislative Index to evaluate lawmakers' performance, stating that the idea has received positive encouragement at the national level. To promote excellence in parliamentary conduct, the Assembly is set to introduce a "Best MLA Award," with detailed guidelines expected during the forthcoming Budget session.

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## NMP 2.0 is a bold step; it can unlock resources for reinvestment

THE government has done well to set a target of Rs 16.7 lakh crore for National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) 2.0. The objective is to monetise assets of more than 2,000 projects in 12 sectors till 2029-30. The Prime Minister-headed NITI Aayog, after consultation with infrastructure ministries, has developed NMP 2.0, which Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman launched on Monday. A NITI Aayog paper said in 2021, "Asset monetisation, based on the philosophy of 'Creation through Monetisation', will tap institutional investment and long-term patient capital into stable mature assets, in turn generating financial resources for new infrastructure asset creation. This will enable economic growth, generating employment opportunities and better prospects for the

country's growth." At the launch, the Finance Minister complimented all ministries and departments and NITI Aayog for meeting nearly 90 per cent of the target of Rs 6 lakh crore, which was set for four years in the implementation of NMP 1.0. On the face of it, praise for falling short of the target seems awkward. However, if the polarised political situation and the perverted public discourse (which equates processes like privatisation and asset monetisation as cheaply selling off national treasure) are considered, we find that her comments are not off the mark.

Highlighting the significance of asset monetisation, she rightly pointed out that NMP enables recycling of productive public assets, thereby unlocking resources for reinvestment in new projects and

capital expenditure. She noted that this approach facilitates efficient mobilisation of funds for capex in public assets while minimising the budgetary outgo of the government. While the Centre has the courage to go ahead with the programme, it must ensure that it doesn't result in corruption and monopolies. Six points need to be considered regarding this. First, the government must ensure transparency in valuation. Public assets must be priced realistically and competitively. Independent advisors, transparent bidding processes, and robust disclosure norms are essential. All contracts should be made public, barring commercially sensitive details, so that citizens and oversight bodies can scrutinise them. The credibility of NMP 2.0 will rest on the perception that assets are neither under-

valued nor selectively awarded. Second, competitive bidding must be genuine, not cosmetic. If a handful of large conglomerates dominate most sectors, the risk of concentration increases. This can lead to a situation where the state replaces a public monopoly with a private one. Third, the contract design must balance investor incentives with public interest safeguards. Concession agreements should include performance benchmarks, service quality standards, and penalty clauses for non-compliance. For instance, toll road operators must adhere to maintenance and safety norms; power transmission operators must ensure reliability; airport operators must maintain passenger service standards. Regulatory oversight cannot be lax once assets are monetised. The objec-

tive is efficiency, not abdication. Fourth, revenue-sharing and user charges need careful calibration. While private operators must earn a fair return, excessive user fees can generate public resentment and fuel political backlash. Transparent tariff-setting mechanisms, ideally overseen by independent regulators, can mitigate such risks. Fifth, strong audit and accountability mechanisms are indispensable. Institutions such as the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) and parliamentary committees should periodically review monetisation outcomes. And, finally, the government must effectively explain the difference between monetisation and privatisation, emphasising that ownership remains public and that funds raised are earmarked for new infrastructure.

## LETTERS

### 'Keralam' was long overdue

REchristening of Kerala as Keralam following an unanimous resolution to that extent by the State Assembly and Centre's approval is a cause for great rejoicing. It is only a matter of time before it gets parliamentary approval. It is an emphatic reaffirmation of the State's distinct cultural and linguistic identity. In fact, it restores the original name found in Malayalam and its literature. Literally, Keralam means the 'land of coconuts'. Etymologically, Keralam could have been a derivative of 'Chera-alam', meaning 'land of the Cheras'. According to Dr Herman Gundert, "keram" is the Canarese (Kannada) form of "cheram" and Cheram. Keralam extended from Gokarna to Kanyakumari. The move is unlikely to pay electoral dividends to any political party as the demand for a change of name has been made by all parties. It is hoped that north Indians will now stop referring to the state as "Keral" and start calling it "Keralam".

G David Milton, Maruthancode (TN)

### MPs, MLAs must work for people's welfare

THE Sri Lankan government presently in financial dol-drum has found a way out, by way of regulating the salaries and perks of its MPs and MLAs. This is a welcome move whereas Indian MPs and MLAs continue to seek enhanced pensions reflecting the purpose for which the individuals have entered the 'political arena' - not to serve, but to be served, to ensure that their lives are safeguarded by way of unhindered pensions and perks. The lawmakers must understand the responsibilities for which they are elected. It is imperative to bring legislation in this direction. The 'will' of the people, must not merely end after casting of the vote, but go in for course correction, when the lawmakers err in their duty.

Sakunthala KR, Hyderabad

### India should emulate the Lankan example

THIS has reference to your editorial 'Sri Lankan Parliament shows the way for India'. It is time India implements the Sri Lankan model about salaries and perks of MPs and MLAs. In fact, this is an issue dominating the minds of the people of the country for a long time. The lawmakers unabashedly and unilaterally attempt to enhance their perks and salaries, forgetting the purpose for which they have been elected. The situation assumes significance when these elected members have no compunctions to stall the proceedings in the Parliament for no reason at all - except to score brownie points. The Sri Lankan model can infuse a sense of responsibility and purpose in the minds of Indian lawmakers, once it is implemented.

K V Raghuram, Wayanad

### TSSPDCL's chatbot is a timely move

THE Southern Power Distribution Company of Telangana Limited (TSSPDCL) has done well by launching its own WhatsApp chatbot, which is aimed at providing faster, more convenient, and accessible power-related services to consumers. Through this platform, users can easily register complaints, check billing details, and obtain power supply information on 8712441912. This initiative reflects a thoughtful adoption of modern technology to enhance customer service. The chatbot reduces the need to make countless calls or office visits. Such forward-thinking measures highlight TSSPDCL's commitment to efficiency, transparency, and the digital transformation of public utility services in the state. This development is not only a practical improvement for everyday users but also a significant step toward building a more user-friendly, technology-driven public service ecosystem.

Dr Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, Hyderabad-45

### Adulterated milk is the new killer

It is quite ironic that incidents of adulterated milk have become a light even as there are unending debates over adulterated Tirumala laddu. It is reported that 106 families from Rajamahendravaram, who get milk from a private dairy located in Narasapuram, have developed 'anuria' (absence of urine). In an unfortunate development, four persons died and several others are undergoing treatment in various hospitals. It is a known fact that milk is wholesome food and so it is one of the staple items in the plate in various forms. Presently, private dairies are resorting to different ways to adulterate the milk to capitalise on the demand. At the same time, monitoring by agencies like FSSAI has been inactive and, as such, there is no quality check. The government must toughen its stand and ensure uncontaminated milk, which is ever in demand and by almost all households.

Pratapa Reddy Yaramala, Tiruvuru (AP)

thehansreader@gmail.com

## BENGALURU ONLINE

### K'taka CM blames BJP as Dharwad protests intensify

BENGALURU: As protests by government job aspirants intensified in Dharwad, with many taken into preventive custody, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday blamed the previous BJP regime for the large backlog of vacant posts. According to protesters, who staged a massive demonstration in Dharwad earlier in the day, around 2.8 lakh posts remain vacant across various government departments in Karnataka, while fewer than 5,000 recruitments have been made in the last three years. In a press statement, Siddaramaiah said that when the Congress assumed office in 2023, over 2.64 lakh government posts were vacant. He said the backlog was the result of "prolonged inaction under the previous BJP government, which failed to initiate timely recruitment or create a structured roadmap to fill vacancies." "It is deeply unfortunate that BJP leaders are choosing to mislead innocent students even now to serve their narrow political interests," the CM said. He alleged that, instead of encouraging aspirants to stay focused on their preparation and future, opposition leaders were "attempting to instigate unrest". The chief minister said the current situation was largely due to recruitment irregularities and alleged corruption during the BJP regime between 2019 and 2023, which eroded trust in the system and led to a significant backlog.

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

## Rich brats cause fatal accidents but go scot-free

DR HYMA MOORTY

A rich 'brat' in Pune, son of a construction tycoon, killed two young IT professionals snatching away their promising careers. Another rich 'brat' was arrested from Virar, Mumbai, after mercilessly and consciously murdering a mother of two young children, while a third killed two promising young boys. In the recent Lamborghini hit and run case in Kanpur, the spoilt brat at the wheel brought the car driver to the driving seat. It was the presence of mind of the socially conscious by-passers that ensured that the rich guy responsible for the accident was booked. In Delhi's Dwaraka locality, a juvenile boy was speeding a Scorpio without a license, and his sister was filming a social-media 'reel' and the vehicle killed a 23-year-old and severely injured a cab driver. His mother, a single parent, was devastated.

Looking back, one finds that such reckless incidents are happening too often, especially with young drivers hungry for social media fame. All these 'killers' brazenly wear up their sleeve tattooed inscriptions like 'Mera baap amir hai'. These are offspring of stinking rich parents, who drive high-end cars and question the law by flaunting the clout of their

father. The list is long and endless. Justice hinges on courts where cases are overly delayed. The system is in cahoots to help relieve the accused of any punishment.

It is a harsh reminder of how money and power can call the shots, leaving the victims powerless. It's a serious issue and needs more awareness and stricter enforcement.

But public outcry and media pressure often push authorities to act, compelling vigilance matters. It is not easy to cope with the sudden loss of a family member.

These recent cases of drunk driving involving youngsters and unlicensed juvenile drivers, often referred to as 'rich brats' by the media and society, have been alarming. It highlights the pressing issue of underage drinking and its fatal consequences. Drivers aged between 21 and 24 years, under the influence of alcohol, account for most fatal accidents.

This trend calls for strict enforcement of laws and public awareness campaigns on responsible drinking. It's a common concern that wealth and influence can lead to unequal treatment under the law, with ordinary citizens facing harsher consequences for similar of-

### PARENTS MUST BE HELD RESPONSIBLE



After all, money can 'fix' almost everything these days. Power always twists, and when money becomes absolute, it smothers conscience. Compassion, pity, help, fear and support get buried deep while ego, pride and wealth surface and dominate. No rules and regulations can resolve such problems.

fences. Cases like the Lamborghini one in Kanpur often spark public outcry and intense calls for justice highlighting the need for unbiased accountability in investigation.

Let us analyze the reasons why many of these rich 'brats' fall and flash their 'borrowed' riches. The most important reason is to have the privilege of growing up in affluent surroundings. This leads to reckless behaviour, including excessive drinking and reckless driving unmindful of the consequences.

The social circles they move around normalises excessive drinking and un-

heeding conduct, be it at home or on road, creating an environment where such actions are seen as acceptable or even as status symbols. They experience a high-stress environment despite external perceptions of luxury; the pressures and expectations placed on wealthy individuals can lead to stress and coping mechanisms that lead them to substance abuse. Lack of responsibility towards themselves, family and society and personal accountability add to the intoxication. Parents are to be held accountable and answerable to varying extents for accidents and killings caused by their juveniles

and addict children. If they fail to spend some time and educate their children about the damage of drinking and driving, they are morally and ethically responsible. They are supposed to supervise their children, especially when they are underage and not legally allowed to drink or drive. If they are aware of their child's brash and erratic behaviour but fail to take any timely action, they should be held liable for the consequences. Parents have a significant role in shaping their children's behaviour.

Most of the accidents in our country are caused by human error, carelessness and being casual at the wheel. It is necessary to be cautious and sincerely obey traffic rules, irrespective of who and what you are.

Meanwhile, some accidents are caused even if one is careful, especially at choked traffic interjections like Ameerpet junction in Hyderabad, where the bikers squeeze to cross and hit the waiting vehicle. While driving, distraction is the worst thing to happen and nowadays everyone is super pleased with their distracted driving, which has been on the rise for the last 15 years or so. The worst distractions include being under the influence of drugs or alcohol

and conversing on the mobile.

The rich have money to pay the penalties. They can afford highly specialized counsel and top-tier expert witnesses, independent crime scene investigators and many skilled attorneys. A few wealthy people have high influence, and it becomes difficult for individuals to come forward and testify against them. As a result, prosecution cannot build a strong case. Witnesses and victims of crimes can all be paid to not testify or change the narrative totally.

After all, money can 'fix' almost everything these days. Power always twists, and when money becomes absolute, it smothers conscience. Compassion, pity, help, fear and support get buried deep while ego, pride and wealth surface and dominate. No rules and regulations can resolve such problems. The mentality of the public needs to change. Better sense should prevail. We start acting human again when we notice this shift and choose humility over greed, restoring empathy before it's completely erased.

Drinking and driving doesn't just take your life; it shatters the lives of those who love you. It will be good if every youngster and the elders remember this and change their mindset accordingly.

## THE RISE AND FALL OF EL MENCHO

B V KUMAR

NEMESIO Oseguera Cervantes, known as "El Mencho", died on Sunday while being taken to the capital Mexico City, after being seriously injured in clashes between his supporters and the Mexican army. Four CJNG members were killed in the town of Tapalpa, the central-western Jalisco state. Three army personnel were also injured. The US had given Mexico tactical Intelligence that assisted the operation.

Over the past year, Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo, President of Mexico has come under intense pressure from US President Donald Trump, who threatened military intervention and higher import tariffs if Mexico fails to demonstrate concrete gains in curbing drug trafficking. However, Sheinbaum has rejected the notion of US strikes in Mexico, characterizing them as a violation of Mexico's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

According to its 2023 Annual Threat Assessment, the US intelligence community cited Mexico-based Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) as the dominant producers and suppliers of various illicit drugs destined for the domestic U.S. market. Mexican TCOs, particularly the Sinaloa Cartel and the Jalisco Nueva Generacion (CJNG) remain the most predominant and sophisticated groups overseeing the transportation and distribution routes from Mexico to the United States.

Both groups have consolidated control over drug corridors from Mexico and are heavily involved in trafficking of fentanyl, methamphetamine, cocaine, heroin, and marijuana. Both have a history of establishing drug trafficking hubs, strong criminal partnerships, and using violence and corruption to gain control over the territory where they operate.

The Sinaloa and Jalisco Cartels pose the greatest criminal drug threat the United States has ever faced. These ruthless, violent, criminal organizations have associates, facilitators, and brokers in all 50 states in the United States, as well as in more than 100 countries around the world. The Sinaloa Cartel, the Jalisco Cartel, and their affiliates

'EL MENCHO', THE LEADER OF ONE OF MEXICO'S MOST POWERFUL CARTELS, DEAD AFTER MILITARY OPERATION



control most of the fentanyl global supply chain, from manufacture to distribution.

The Jalisco Cartel maintains illicit drug distribution hubs in Los Angeles, Seattle, Charlotte, Chicago, and Atlanta. Internationally, the Jalisco Cartel has a presence and influence through associates, facilitators, and brokers on every continent, except Antarctica.

In Milenio Cartel, El Mencho started as a member of the assassin squad that protected the drug lord Armando Valencia Cornelio ("El Maradona"). On 12 August 2003, his boss was arrested by Mexican authorities. Around the same time, a rival criminal group known as Los Zetas, with the backing of the Gulf Cartel, carried out an armed offensive against the Milenio Cartel in Michoacán. The attack forced the Valencia family to exile in Jalisco.

El Mencho relocated to the state capital, Guadalajara, with his father-in-law José Luis González Valencia (alias "El Quini") and Román Caballero Valencia. In Jalisco, El Mencho and the Milenio Cartel formed an alliance with the Sinaloa Cartel subgroup headed by Ignacio "Nacho" Coronel, a high-ranking drug lord and ally of Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán. Under Coronel, El Mencho and his group managed the Sinaloa Cartel's drug operations, finances, and murder activities in the states of Colima and Jalisco.

The Milenio Cartel split into two. One

Part of El Mencho's success in the drug trade had to do with his ability to strategize market and consumer changes. Initially, the CJNG produced methamphetamine, but then he moved to heroin production when the consumer demand changed. In a series of highly coordinated tactics to prevent El Mencho's arrest, the CJNG blocked several highways and roads by setting at least 37 vehicles on fire. The purpose was to place them as blockades and give him ample time to escape

side was known as La Resistencia (The Resistance), the other was Los Mata Zetas (The Zeta Killers), headed by El Mencho. La Resistencia accused Los Mata Zetas of turning in Oscar Orlando to the authorities. A war ensued, and the two groups fought for the drug smuggling turf in Jalisco.

As leader of the CJNG, El Mencho consolidated his position and strengthened his organization through territorial expansion and established himself as one of Mexico's most-wanted criminals. His rise to fame was due to several factors, including the aggressive and sensationalist displays of public violence by CJNG. The direct attacks of the CJNG against Mexico's security forces earned El Mencho a reputation among authorities as "principal enemy" of the state and as a dangerous criminal. In addition, the fall of Mexico's former top crime bosses cleared the way for El Mencho to gain visibility and status.

He consolidated his operations in Jalisco and its adjacent states by fighting off incursions from criminal groups like Los Zetas and the Knights Templar Cartel. According

to government sources, he was responsible for overseeing the CJNG's entire drug trafficking operations in the states of Jalisco, Colima, and Guanajuato, where he created a bastion for methamphetamine production and trade.

Between 2014 and 2016, the only region in the country where the CJNG lost its territorial presence was in Mexico City. Internationally, the CJNG reportedly has ties with criminal groups in the U.S., the rest of Latin America, Europe, Asia, and Africa. On an international scale, CJNG is mainly focused on trafficking cocaine and methamphetamine.

The government estimated that El Mencho's group has about \$50 billion in total assets. Part of El Mencho's success in the drug trade had to do with his ability to strategize market and consumer changes. Initially, the CJNG produced methamphetamine, but then he moved to heroin production when the consumer demand changed.

In a series of highly coordinated tactics to prevent El Mencho's arrest, the CJNG blocked several highways and roads across the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area by setting at least 37 vehicles on fire. The purpose was to place them as blockades to impede the security forces from traveling across Jalisco's capital and giving El Mencho ample time to escape. The blockades were placed in strategic routes to prevent police reinforcements from coming in or leaving Guadalajara. After the attacks were over, the government confirmed that El Mencho was in the area and had evaded capture. The US government announced US\$ 10 million as reward to capture El Mencho, which was increased to US\$ 15 million.

Sheinbaum has pursued a direct approach to combating organized crime by increasing cooperation with the US security agencies. In a major operation launched by the Mexican Army the most wanted man and the leader of the feared Jalisco New Generation (CJNG) drug cartel have been killed during a security operation to arrest him, the Defence Ministry has said.

(The writer is a former DG of DRI and NCB)

## TIRUMALA GHEE ROW

# Pawan Kalyan targets Jagan, questions silence on TTD Board

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA

DEPUTY Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan on Tuesday sharpened the attack on former chief minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy during a short discussion in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly on the alleged use of adulterated ghee in the preparation of Tirumala laddu prasadam.

Pawan questioned why Jagan was "shielding" members of the then Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) board.

"It would have been enough if he had said an investigation should be conducted and action taken," Pawan said. "If you are holding them back, then are you not involved?"

He accused the YSRCP of misleading the public by claiming there were no chemicals in the ghee used for Srivari laddu prasadam.

- Cites SIT, NDDB reports; says contracts were relaxed
- 'If you shield them, are you not involved' he asks former CM

"That is why they are now forced to give explanations," he said.

The Deputy CM alleged that the Special Investigation Team (SIT) had concluded there was a conspiracy behind the supply of adulterated ghee. He claimed tender rules were relaxed to award contracts to favoured firms and said the then TTD governing body failed to discharge its responsibility. "We are not accusing blindly. The lapse occurred during the tenure of the board appointed then," he said.

Referring to investigation findings, Pawan said the NDDB report indicated the presence of animal-



related substances in the ghee. He also cited the CBI-monitored SIT probe, stating that the report concluded the product supplied was not genuine ghee.

He alleged that laddus were prepared using the adulterated ghee and claimed that about one

lakh such laddus were sent to Ayodhya. "Only Srivari knows what was mixed in that ghee," he said, adding that anyone found guilty must face strict punishment. "If something like this had happened to any other religion, the entire country would have reacted strongly," he said.

# Council witnesses clash over crime and women's safety

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA

A heated debate unfolded in the Legislative Council on Tuesday during a short discussion on law and order, with the treasury and opposition benches trading sharp charges over women's safety, crime statistics and the alleged spread of drugs.

Home minister V Anitha told the House that crimes against women have fallen by 4.4 per cent since the formation of the NDA coalition government. She asserted that the government has adopted a zero-tolerance policy towards crimes against girl children.

According to her, overall crime in the state has declined by 6.6 per cent in the past 20 months due to measures initiated by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu. She said POCSO cases dropped by 8 per cent, murders of women fell by 45 per cent and gang rape cases declined by 64 per cent.

- Home minister Anitha claims overall crime fell 6.6% in 20 months, citing sharp drops in POCSO, murders of women, and gang rape cases
- Accuses the previous YSRCP gov't of law-and-order failure, highlighting lost Central funds and pledging one lakh CCTV cameras plus anti-drug drives
- Opposition MLC Kalyani counters with data showing harassment cases and rising NDPS cases, linking violent crimes to drugs and illicit liquor



Anitha blamed the previous YSRCP government for what she described as a breakdown of law and order. She alleged that industries and investments retreated during that period and claimed there was a time when families feared for the safety of women stepping out of their homes.

The minister also alleged that Rs 180 crore in central

funds was lost earlier due to the absence of a proper action plan. She said the present government plans to install one lakh CCTV cameras across the state to strengthen surveillance. Under a special anti-drug drive, 96,940 kg of marijuana has been seized so far, she added.

Anitha further stated that SC and ST atrocity cases have come down by

25 per cent and accused the previous regime of politicising such cases. She also referred to the arrest of a village sarpanch belonging to YSRCP in a theft case at the residence of a TDP MLA.

However, YSRCP MLC Varudu Kalyani contested the government's claims. Citing official data, she said 16,288 women were reportedly subjected to harassment and alleged that crimes against women had increased in 10 districts, including Guntur, Nellore, Vizianagaram and Tirupati.

She linked violent crimes to ganja, drugs and illicit liquor, and pointed to a recent case in Madanapalle involving the rape and murder of a minor girl. Kalyani also claimed NDPS cases had risen sharply in districts such as Srikakulam and Nellore.

As the debate grew heated, the Chairman repeatedly urged members to maintain decorum and stick to the subject.

## KUMMERA TRAGEDY

# BC Commission Chairman visits Kummera

- A team inspected the temple premises where the incident took place
- They collected detailed information from officials
- A detailed Report to be submitted to the govt after receiving all inputs

## Terms infant's death 'deeply tragic'



BC Commission Chairman Niranjan termed the death of a two-month-old infant during the incident at the Shiva temple in Kummera village of Nagarkurnool mandal as extremely tragic. On Tuesday, he visited the village along with District Collector Badavath Santosh, Superintendent of Police Dr. Sangram Singh G.

Patil, and Commission members Rapolu Jayaprakash, T. Surender, and Balalakshmi.

The team inspected the Sri Mallikarjuna Swamy temple premises where the incident took place and collected detailed information from officials. DSP Buri Srinivasulu showed the Chairman a video recorded by a Home Guard during the incident. The Commission Chairman paid floral tributes at the infant's

grave, observed a two-minute silence, and later visited the residence of the child's parents, Ganesh and Mounika, to console them.

Officials informed that around 10,000 devotees had attended the Mallanna Jatra. Niranjan stated that the BC Commission has taken the matter with utmost priority and has sought comprehensive reports from the District Collector, SP, and the Endow-

ments Department. He said a detailed report will be submitted to the State Government after receiving all inputs.

He stressed that safeguarding the rights of backward and weaker sections is the Commission's responsibility and directed officials to take strict legal action against the accused, regardless of their status. He called for a transparent police investigation to uncover the truth and urged strong measures against caste discrimination to prevent recurrence of such incidents. He assured full support to the victim's family.

District Collector Badavath Santosh and SP Dr. Sangram Singh G. Patil briefed the Commission on the actions taken by the district administration over the past three days.

# Heavy rains, gales flatten maize crop

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
KETEPALLY (NALGONDA)

HEAVY rains accompanied by strong gusty winds wreaked havoc in Tungurthi village of Ketepalli mandal on Tuesday night, leaving vast stretches of maize crop completely flattened. The sudden spell of unseasonal rain lashed the region, causing severe damage to standing crops just weeks before harvest.

According to local farmers, the intense winds uprooted and bent the maize plants to the ground, result-



ing in heavy losses. "Within a few hours, our entire crop was destroyed. We invested heavily in seeds, fertilizers and labour, hoping for a good yield this season," lamented a

farmer from the village.

The unexpected weather has come as a major setback, as many farmers were depending on the maize harvest to repay loans and meet

household expenses. With the crop flattened and soaked in rainwater, prospects of recovery appear bleak.

Farmers have urged the state government to conduct an immediate field survey and assess the extent of the damage. They demanded adequate compensation and financial assistance to help them recover from the losses caused by the unseasonal rains.

Agriculture officials are expected to visit the affected fields soon to evaluate the damage and submit a report to higher authorities.

# BRS alleges corruption conspiracy in Peberu market land row

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
WANAPARTHY

FORMER Minister and BRS leader Singireddy Niranjan Reddy has alleged a large-scale corruption conspiracy in the name of land acquisition for the Peberu market (santha) land.

Addressing a press conference at Peberu on Tuesday, Niranjan Reddy said the dispute over Survey No. 392, pertaining to 30 acres and 19 guntas of land, has been pending for nearly three decades between private landowners and the Endowments Department. He stated that courts had delivered judgments in favour of the landowners in 2003, 2007 and again in 2022.

He alleged that during the election period, certain political leaders, ignoring the judicial process, claimed that the entire extent of land belonged to the government and accused him of attempting to encroach upon it. "They publicly declared that within a month the entire market land would be taken



over by the government and a compound wall constructed. Three years have passed, but they have neither fulfilled their promise nor respected the court's verdict," he said.

Niranjan Reddy maintained that in the interest of Peberu residents and traders, efforts were made to resolve the issue amicably by persuading landowners to allot 16 acres for the market in exchange for alternative agricultural land. He said a gift deed had been secured from the landowners in this regard, but political opponents allegedly spread

misinformation during elections, accusing him of land grabbing.

Criticising the present move to initiate land acquisition, he alleged that it was a pretext for large-scale corruption. Citing what he described as reliable information, he claimed that landowners were being offered highly valuable land near the Outer Ring Road outside the district as compensation and that influential persons were involved in the process. He further alleged that the arrangement could result in a scam worth thousands of crores.

Questioning the silence of leaders who had earlier made strong statements about taking over the land without compensation, he said the recent court verdict reaffirming ownership rights of landowners had exposed their claims.

Niranjan Reddy demanded a public apology from those who had accused him of encroachment. "If they have moral integrity, they should apologise to me and to the people of Peberu," he said, adding that he was ready for any transparent and lawful solution that safeguards public interest.

# AP pushes green investments with ₹408 cr energy projects

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA

APGENCO In-charge managing director (MD) and chief executive officer of the AP State Energy Conservation Mission (APSECM), P Pulla Reddy, emphasised that timely action is crucial for sustainable growth. He urged industries and financial institutions to actively mobilise public and private capital for energy-efficiency projects.

Addressing an Investment Bazar Workshop held at Hotel Murali Fortune in Vijayawada on Tuesday, he called upon stakeholders to convert the state's identified technical potential into bankable, time-bound investments that would enhance industrial competitiveness while advancing climate and energy-efficiency goals.

The workshop brought together senior officials, representatives from industries and MSMEs, financial institutions, and technology providers to accelerate green investments across the state. Among those present were NREDCAP vice-chairman and Managing Director M Kamalakar Babu and Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE),



AP State Energy Conservation Mission CEO P Pulla Reddy addressing the Investment Bazar Workshop on energy-efficiency projects in Vijayawada on Tuesday

Government of India, Director P Shyam Sunder. Around 50 industries and banking institutions participated in the workshop.

Pulla Reddy said the state has already identified over Rs 408 crore worth of viable energy-efficiency projects through five earlier Investment Bazar events and stressed the need for swift financial closure and implementation. Referring to the State Energy Efficiency Policy 2024-2028, he noted that compliance with the Energy Conservation Building Code (ECBC) 2017 has been mandated across 123 Urban Local Bodies, with more than 1,800 ECBC-compliant

buildings already approved.

He also encouraged industries to utilise the ADEETIE scheme, which offers interest subvention of 5% for micro and small enterprises and 3% for medium enterprises across 14 key sectors, including fisheries and glass and refractory clusters in East and West Godavari districts. Stating that this was the sixth Investment Bazar event under BEE's Energy Efficiency Financing Platform initiative, he said the State has achieved energy savings of 1.356 million tonnes of oil equivalent across 59 industries under the Perform, Achieve and Trade (PAT) mechanism up to Cycle VI.

He said that the APSECM has also formed a Financial Institutions Committee comprising 11 banks and two NBFCs to facilitate project financing. He added that Andhra Pradesh recently received the National Energy Conservation Award 2025 (First Prize) for the fourth consecutive time. He said Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, Energy minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar and chief secretary K Vijayanand are committed to maintaining the state's leadership in energy efficiency through coordinated and result-oriented efforts.

BEE Director P Shyam Sunder interacted with MSME representatives and explained the benefits of the ADEETIE scheme, including interest subvention, technical support from audit to implementation, and facilitation through a nodal bank and project management unit. NREDCAP VC & MD Kamalakar Babu highlighted the synergy between renewable energy and energy efficiency, outlining plans to develop green industrial clusters powered by clean energy and modern efficient systems.

# 14 arrested in Rs 547 cr cyber fraud case

SATHUPALLI: POLICE have arrested 14 persons, including a key accused allegedly involved in a Rs 547-crore cyber fraud case, and remanded them to judicial custody, a senior official said on Tuesday. Addressing a press conference, Vasundhara Yadav, ACP of Kallur, said the arrests were made in connection with Crime No. 86/2026 registered at Sathupalli Police Station under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)

and Section 66-D of the IT Act. The case is stated to be part of a larger cyber crime investigation earlier registered at Banjara Hills police station. According to police, the prime accused — Udathaneni Vikas Chowdary, Boppana Naga Priya and Adapa Rama Venkata Charan Chowdary alias Charan — allegedly induced the complainant to share his bank account details on the pretext of business opportunities.

## CPI criticises 'laddu' obsession in Assembly session

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA/NEW DELHI

CPI national secretary K Ramakrishna strongly criticised the Andhra Pradesh Assembly and Legislative Council budget session, stating that they have been reduced to endless debates over the 'laddu controversy' instead of meaningful discussions on the Rs 3 lakh crore state budget.

Addressing the media in the national capital on Tuesday, he expressed concern that both ruling and opposition parties — including TDP, Jana Sena, BJP and YSRCP members — spent hours debating the laddu issue.

## Pensions to be distributed on February 28

VIJAYAWADA

THE state government will distribute NTR Bharosa pensions on February 28, a day in advance, as March 1 falls on a Sunday, minister for MSMEs, SERP and NRI empowerment and relations Kondapalli Srinivas said in a statement on Tuesday.

The government will disburse Rs 2,725.79 crore to a total of 62,76,322 pensioners across various categories. The amount will be delivered at the doorsteps of beneficiaries by Swarna Gramam and Swarna Ward staff. Of the total beneficiaries, 8,977 are newly sanctioned widow (spouse) pensioners, for whom Rs 3.59 crore has been released. The minister

stated that pensions will be distributed on February 28, and any remaining payments will

be completed on March 2, 2026, with Secretariat staff ensuring doorstep delivery.

NORTHERN RAILWAY INVITATION OF TENDER THROUGH E-TENDERING (E-PROCUREMENT SYSTEMS)	
1	N.I.T.No. Project_DLI_SNT_04 dated 23.02.2026
2	Name of work with its location Balance Outdoor and Indoor Works of EI (M/s Medha Make) including part supply of materials i.e.w Replacement of signaling gears with Electronic Interlocking at Delhi Shahdara station of Delhi division on Northern Railway
2	Approx. Cost of work Rs. 2,61,25,377.41/-
3	Bid Security deposit Rs. 2,80,600,000/-
4	Completion period of work 06 Months
6	Date and time for submission of tender and opening of tender Upto 11:30 hrs on 17.03.2026. Opening of tender at 11:30 hrs on 17.03.2026.
7	Website particulars notice board location complete details of tender can be seen and address of the office from where the tender form can be purchased etc. Above tender available on IREPS site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in
No:- Project_DLI_SNT_04 Dated:- 23.02.2026	
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 607/26	

"Giving Sachin Tendulkar out leg before wicket, and it's a matter of knowing that it was a mistake, but until this day, every day, people talk about it. "Why did I give him out? Was he out and so on? But then in life, mistakes happen. I have accepted that it was a mistake, and life goes on,"

-Steve Bucknor, legendary umpire

# Bucknor regrets wrong LBW call against Tendulkar after 22 years

NEW DELHI

MORE than two decades after making what was then widely seen as a "dreadful" decision against Indian cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar, legendary umpire Steve Bucknor has finally expressed regrets and accepted that "it was a mistake."

2009, was one of the most respected umpires in world cricket for over two decades. However, he did a make a few contentious calls involving Tendulkar, the most shocking being an LBW dismissal during an India-Australia Test match at Brisbane's Gabba 22 years ago.

In an interview with the West Indies Cricket Umpires' Association, when Bucknor was asked about one of the



Association, when Bucknor was asked about one of the

most difficult decisions he had to live with as an umpire, he said, "Giving Sachin Tendulkar out leg before wicket, and it's a matter of knowing that it was a mistake, but until this day, every day, people talk about it. "Why did I give him out? Was he out and so on? But then in life, mistakes happen. I have accepted that it was a mistake, and life goes

on." In that match at Gabba in the 2003-04 series, Tendulkar was given out LBW by Bucknor following a loud appeal from Australian fast bowler Jason Gillespie and his teammates. Batting on 3, Tendulkar had attempted to leave the ball, which struck him high on the pads, but Bucknor was convinced by the Australian appeal. Television replays

later confirmed the ball was clearly going over the stumps. In the commentary box, the late Tony Greig had referred to it as "a dreadful" decision and he was not the only one who thought that way at the time. The match, the first of a four-match series and in which India skipper Sourav Ganguly struck a fluent 144, ended in a draw. That was

not the only instance when Bucknor gave Tendulkar out wrongly. In a match against Pakistan at Eden Gardens in 2005, the Jamaican adjudged Tendulkar caught behind off Abdul Razzaq despite a half-hearted appeal. Replays, however, showed a wide gap between the bat and the ball.

During an interactive session with fans in 2024, Tendulkar was asked about his relationship with Bucknor, and in lighter vein, he had said, "When I am batting, give him boxing gloves to wear (so he can't raise his finger)." Bucknor, 79, officiated in 128 Test matches between 1989 and 2009 and also holds the record for standing in five consecutive World Cup finals from 1992 to 2007.

## T20 WC Super 8s India pushed to brink after WI's win rock Group 1

NEW DELHI: India's Super 8 campaign at the T20 World Cup 2026 has hit turbulence early, leaving them with no room for missteps in the matches to come. A crushing 76-run loss to South Africa in Ahmedabad on Sunday has pushed them onto the back foot in Group 1, where they are competing alongside South Africa, the West Indies and Zimbabwe.



Sunday has pushed them onto the back foot in Group 1, where they are competing alongside South Africa, the West Indies and Zimbabwe.

While India were reeling from that setback, the West Indies tightened the screws further with a commanding 107-run victory over Zimbabwe. The result reshaped the standings: West Indies climbed to the top, South Africa slotted into second, and India slipped to third, with their net run rate taking a severe blow in the process.

Suryakumar Yadav and Co. found themselves outplayed across disciplines. South Africa's total of 187/7 was built on a measured 63 from David Miller and an enterprising 45 from De-

wald Brevis. Jasprit Bumrah delivered a standout spell of 3/15, but the remainder of the attack struggled to apply consistent brakes.

The chase never gathered traction. Wickets fell at regular intervals, partnerships failed to materialise, and scoreboard pressure mounted quickly. Marco Jansen's four-wicket burst dismantled the middle order, sealing India's collapse for 111.

Beyond the loss of two points, the damage to their Net Run Rate, now a troubling -3.800, could prove decisive.

With two fixtures left in the Super 8 stage, India's equation is starkly simple: they must win both to stay alive.

Two wins: Victories over the West Indies and Zimbabwe would take India to four points. If South Af-

T20 WC SUPER 8S TABLE					
TEAM	P	W	L	PT	NRR
<b>GROUP 1</b>					
WI	1	1	0	2	+5.350
RSA	1	1	0	2	+3.800
IND	1	0	1	0	-3.800
ZIM	1	0	1	0	-5.350
<b>GROUP B</b>					
ENG	1	1	0	2	+2.550
PAK	1	0	0	1	0.000
NZ	1	0	0	1	0.000
SL	1	0	1	0	-2.550

## Lanka eye turnaround in must-win clash vs NZ

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka will need to improve their batting against slower bowlers when they take on New Zealand in a must-win Super Eight game of the T20 World Cup here on Wednesday.



The home team batters failed to chase a below par 147 against England on a slow turner in Pallekele. The pitches in Sri Lanka have been tougher for batting compared to co-hosts India and the trend is likely to continue at the Premadasa where bigger boundaries make six-hitting difficult.

Some of the shot selection was questioned following the heavy loss in the Super Eight opener and Sri Lanka will need to learn from their mistakes.

"It's a T20 game, so obviously you come into a game, so you are looking to score as many runs as you can. So when the ball is not coming on to the bat, it's easier said than done," Sri Lanka's Indian batting coach Vikram Rathour reflected on the side's poor performance.

"Are there better options? Yes, definitely could have been taken. I thought on a wicket where the ball is stopping, so pushing is not a great idea. A couple of our wickets lost out on guys pushing for a single. I don't think that was a great option in these conditions," he added.

While batting has been led by Pathum Nissanka, left-arm spinner Dunith Wellalage has been impressive with the ball. To be fair, even the pacers have delivered thus far in the competition. New Zealand, who had to share a point with Pakistan following the wash-out at Premadasa, too have good spinners in their ranks including captain Mitchell Santner. With rain unlikely, both teams would be pushing for their first win of the Super Eight stage. New Zealand's opening duo of Finn Allen and Tim Seifert showed ominous form during the league stage and would be looking to extend that run. More runs are expected from the bat of Rachin Ravindra who got a much-needed fifty in his previous innings against Canada.

## Semis, final tickets to go live amid venue uncertainty

NEW DELHI: The tickets for the semi-finals and final of the T20 World Cup 2026 will go live at 7 pm IST on Tuesday, as announced by the International Cricket Council (ICC) in a release.

Cricket fans can book seats for the first semi-final on March 4, the second semi-final on March 5 and the highly anticipated final on March 8 through the official booking sites.

However, the venue for Semi-final 1 remains subject to a floating arrangement. The match will be held either at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo or at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata. While Semi-final 2 is confirmed to take place at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai.

As per tournament guidelines, if the Pakistan cricket team qualify for the semi-finals, they will play semi-final 1 in Colombo on March 4. If Pakistan fail to qualify but the Sri Lanka team reach the super 4 and are not drawn against India, then the match will be played in Colombo.

## Australia outplay India in opening Women's ODI

BRISBANE: Australia produced a clinical all-round performance to defeat India by six wickets in the opening ODI at Allan Border Field on Tuesday, chasing down a modest target of 215 with authority to take a 1-0 lead in the three-game ODI series and also level the overall multifarmat series' tally to 4-4.

After bowling India out for 214, the hosts made light work of the chase, riding on half-centuries from captain Alyssa Healy and the ever-reliable Beth Mooney. India had promised more at different stages, but ultimately fell short on a surface that offered seam movement early and grip for the spinners as the innings progressed.

## TG PECET-2026 notification to be released today

HYDERABAD: The Telangana Physical Education Common Entrance Test-2026 (TG PECET-2026) notification for admissions into Bachelor of Physical Education (B.P.Ed) and Diploma in Physical Education (D.P.Ed) courses will be released on February 25, 2026. The entrance test is being conducted by Satavahana University under the aegis of the Telangana Council of Higher Education for the academic year 2026-27.

TG PECET-2026 is meant for admission into B.P.Ed and D.P.Ed courses offered by State Universities in Telangana and their affiliated colleges. Eligible candidates can apply online through the official website <https://pecet.tgche.ac.in>

According to the schedule, online registration and submission of application forms will commence from March 2, 2026. The last date to submit applications without a late fee is May 5, 2026. The Physical Efficiency and Skill Tests, which form part of the entrance examination, will be conducted at Satavahana University, Karimnagar, from May 31 to June 3, 2026.

Candidates aspiring to pursue professional courses in physical education are advised to go through the detailed notification carefully and adhere to the timelines. Authorities have appealed to the media to give wide publicity to the TG PECET-2026 schedule to ensure maximum reach among eligible students across Telangana.

# Kanpur, Prayagraj at risk of severe damage if quake strikes: IIT study

Buildings can tilt or sink, roads and railway tracks may crack, and underground utilities can rupture. Riverbank and low-lying areas are particularly vulnerable: Dr Nihar Ranjan Patra

KANPUR

A 17-year study by the Indian Institute of Technology-Kanpur (IIT-K) has warned that parts of Kanpur and Prayagraj could face severe damage if an earthquake of magnitude 6.5 or higher strikes the region. The research led by Dr Nihar Ranjan Patra, a

professor at IIT-K's civil engineering department, highlights the high liquefaction potential of the alluvial soil along the Ganga river belt -- a factor that can sharply amplify ground shaking and destabilise buildings.

The IIT-K research team analysed soil samples collected over nearly two decades

from Gujarat, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Samples were taken from 43 locations, with boreholes drilled up to 30 to 40 metres and 80 metres deep at two locations in Kanpur and Prayagraj in select areas - far deeper than the usual 10-30 metres used elsewhere. In several parts of Kanpur and Prayagraj,

the top 8-10 metres of soil is loose, sandy and water-saturated - conditions highly prone to liquefaction during strong tremors.

The findings are concerning as in some pockets, the effect could extend as deep as 30-40 metres. Liquefaction occurs when intense shaking causes waterlogged soil

to temporarily lose strength and behave like a liquid, Patra told PTL. Buildings can tilt or sink, roads and railway tracks may crack, and underground utilities can rupture. Riverbank and low-lying areas are particularly vulnerable, he added.

Localities identified for detailed soil analysis include

Bithoor, Mandhana, Panki, Barra, Chakeri, Ratanlal Nagar, Naramao and areas around IIT-K, among others. Parts of Varanasi were also found to have similar soil behaviour. According to India's seismic zoning map, sections of Kanpur and Prayagraj fall under Zones III and IV - denoting moderate to high risk.



## Copter carrying 7 crashes into sea, all rescued

SRI VIJAYA PURAM

A Pawan Hans helicopter carrying seven people, including two crew members, crashed into the sea just 300 metres away from its scheduled landing at Mayabunder helipad in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands on Tuesday, and all of them were rescued, officials said. The crash occurred around 9.30 am, after the chopper took off from Rangat in the North and Middle Andaman district, they said.

All five passengers and the two crew members, rescued from mid-sea, have been admitted to a hospital, one of the officials said.

"The helicopter crashed into the sea around 9.30 am. A preliminary inquiry revealed that there was some technical snag, and the pilot made a crash-landing on the sea," a senior Civil Aviation official said. An inquiry has been initiated, he said. "On February 24, 2026, PHL Dauphin N3 helicopter (VT PHY) took off from Sri Vijaya Puram (Port Blair) at around 8.30 am for a passenger flight from Sri Vijaya Puram (Port Blair) to Rangat and fur-



Did plane carrying 7 pax crash due to bad weather?

RANCHI: Authorities are looking into the main factors, including weather conditions, that could have led to the fatal crash of an air ambulance that killed seven people in Jharkhand on Monday evening, according to officials. Redbird Airways Pvt Ltd's Beechcraft C90 aircraft VT-AJV enroute from Ranchi to Delhi crashed soon after takeoff. There were five people and two crew members onboard. One of the officials said a conclusion on what could have led to the crash is yet to be reached and from initial inputs, and the weather conditions at the time of the crash would also be looked into.

ther to Mayabunder. "The helicopter landed at Rangat helipad around 9.05 am. It further took off from Rangat to Mayabunder at around 9.10 am. The helicopter ditched about 300 metres short of

Mayabunder helipad in the sea (shallow water) at around 9.30 am," Pawan Hans Ltd, a central public sector undertaking based in Noida, said on X. Five passengers and two crew members were on board, it said.

## Meat shops near schools promote violence: Bihar Dy CM

PATNA: Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Kumar Sinha has vowed



to clamp down on shops selling meat, fish and poultry in the vicinity of religious and educational institutions, claiming that these offend "purity of sentiments" and promoted "violent tendencies" among children. The senior BJP leader, who holds the urban development portfolio in the Nitish Kumar government, made a statement to this effect a couple of days ago when his views were sought on a recent circular issued by the department. "We are making a new Bihar and this is being reflected in all the steps we take. I issued directions to strictly implement the rules in a recent departmental meeting, which have been framed to ensure proper hygiene and social harmony," he said. "We are not against people's right to have food of their choice. But, selling such items in the open, especially in the vicinity of religious institutions, adversely affects the purity of our sentiments. Similarly, these need to be kept away from educational institutions to prevent violent tendencies among children," Sinha said.

## U'KHAND EDN DIRECTOR ASSAULTED EMPLOYEES DEMAND BJP MLA'S ARREST

'Employees closed education department offices across the state, except for the Uttarakhand Board of School Education in Ramnagar'

DEHRADUN

EMPLOYEE organisations, insisting on the arrest of BJP MLA Umesh Sharma Kau in connection with the assault on Uttarakhand Director of Elementary Education Ajay Naudiyal, have issued an ultimatum to close all state offices from Wednesday if their demands are not met.

On Monday, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami directed the chief secretary to develop a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the safety of employees. Meanwhile, police arrested four accused, including a

history-sheeter, involved in the vandalism and assault incident at the Directorate of Elementary Education on Saturday.

Members of a joint front formed to protest the assault on Naudiyal met CM Dhami on Monday and demanded that SOPs be established for their safety and police deployment in the offices. Following this, Dhami directed Chief Secretary Anand Bardhan to prepare the SOP and DGP Deepam Seth to ensure adequate security arrangements in government offices.

Meanwhile, as per the Mocha's previously an-

nounced programme, employees closed education department offices across the state, except for the Uttarakhand Board of School Education in Ramnagar. "Like today, education department officials and employees will continue their work boycott on Tuesday, and if no solution is found to our demand by Tuesday, all offices across the state will be closed from Wednesday," said Sanjay Bhaskar, front's media in-charge. Bhaskar alleged that the MLA had brought a history-sheeter with him to the director's office.



## Seer moves All HC seeking anticipatory bail in POCSO case

PRAYAGRAJ: Swami Avimukteshwaranand Saraswati on Tuesday moved the Allahabad



High Court seeking anticipatory bail after being booked for alleged sexual harassment of minor children and other offences. A notice has been sent to the office of the government advocate in this regard, before filing the application in court, sources said. The FIR was lodged at the Jhansi police station in Prayagraj against Saraswati and his disciple Mukundanand Brahmachari over allegations of sexual abuse of two persons, including a minor, over the past year.

According to the FIR, the complainants included Ashutosh Brahmachari Maharaj and two other persons, one of them a minor, who alleged sexual abuse by the accused at a gurukul and during religious congregations, including the recently concluded Magh Mela in Prayagraj.

The action on Saturday followed an order passed by the special judge (POCSO Act), Prayagraj, directing that a case be registered on the application moved by Ashutosh Brahmachari and others.

ICRA has maintained a Stable outlook for the Indian aviation industry, supported by expectations of modest growth in domestic air passenger traffic and a gradually improving operating environment, despite near term challenges

-Kinjal Shah, Senior VP and Co Group Head, ICRA

## BIZ BRIEFS

## CSMVS' initiative

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS) unveiled 'Networks of the Past: A Study Gallery of India and the Ancient World' in Mumbai. Over 300 archaeological objects from more than 15 leading Indian and global museums will be showcased for three years until 2028. According to CSMVS: "These tell stories from the ancient cultures of India, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, Rome, Persia, and China, alongside treasures from undivided India."

## Nikon unveils new product

Nikon India Pvt. Ltd., has announced the release of the NIKKOR Z 70-200mm f/2.8 VR S II, a fast telephoto zoom lens compatible with full-frame/FX-format mirrorless cameras. The first NIKKOR lens to support the use of Arca-Swiss tripod heads, for smoother tripod mounting and dismounting. The tripod collar of this lens can be attached to Arca-Swiss screw-type quick-release clamps. However, please avoid using lever-type clamps, as they may not fix the lens firmly in place.

## Projects Today launches platform

Projects Today introduced AI-Driven business opportunity platform to strengthen India's project ecosystem. The new positioning brings project lifecycle context, tenders and L1/order updates, and stakeholder intelligence into one convenient workflow - helping organisations engage the right projects at the right time. The upgraded platform introduces an AI-enabled evolution focused on practical outcomes, including BOQ search, sub-project tracking, tender-to-order journey visibility, bidder and participation insights, opportunity estimation tools, credibility and analytics dashboards, and richer stakeholder relationship mapping.

## Harpic rolls out new product

Harpic, a home hygiene solutions provider has announced the launch of its latest product - New Harpic Bathroom Ultra Cleaner. The company also onboarded Bollywood Film-maker Rohit Shetty as brand ambassador. Rohit Shetty said, "I know what it's like when people associate you with a certain style, it means they trust you to deliver every single time. And that trust pushes you to do more, do better and to raise the bar."

## Policybazaar logs milestone

Since 2018, Policybazaar has facilitated over ₹2,069 crore in term insurance claims across 2,660 cases. This milestone strengthens consumer confidence in an underpenetrated market often hindered by claim concerns. By leveraging a digital-first model, the platform ensures speed and transparency, partnering with insurers to transform the stressful claims experience into a seamless, empathetic, and guided process for nominees during their most critical time of need.

## iQOO launches 15R; Co sees good demand in India

It has been six years for iQOO in India and the company has been launching flagship products

## Flagship Features

- Slimmest smartphone with a 7600 mAh battery
- Powered by the Snapdragon 8 Gen 5
- Has SuperComputing Chip Q2 with the 144 FPS gaming

HANS BUSINESS  
BENGALURU



Nipun Marya, CEO of iQOO



speed and efficiency. iQOO 15R is India's slimmest smartphone with a 7600 mAh battery. It also used the company's proprietary SuperComputing Chip Q2 with the 144 FPS gaming. It is also equipped with a Sony LYT-700V OIS camera, a 1.5K 144Hz AMOLED EyeCare Display, along with IP68 & IP69 dust and water resistance, the company said.

"The new launch is the second one in the iQOO 15 series. We already have the flagship product iQOO 15, which has received good response. Given the kind of features in the new phone and the pricing, we believe

that the new variant is also going to get a very good response," Nipun Marya, CEO of iQOO told the BizzBuzz on the sidelines of the launch event. "This is fastest smartphone in the market. It has a Snapdragon 8 Gen 5 processor. So, it is very fast and powerful. On the battery side, this is India's slimmest phone with 7600 mAh battery. It means, you can use your phone all day, do heavy tasks the whole day and there will be no issues with the phone at all. All of this, along with the camera, we believe that the price range of ₹40,000 to ₹45,000 for iQOO 15R is an amazing offer for our Indian users," Marya added.

## Markets in red as tariff fears rattle IT stocks

Infotech stocks plunge nearly 5% as renewed US tariff concerns dent risk appetite

MUMBAI

EQUITY benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty tumbled more than 1 per cent on Tuesday, dragged down by heavy losses in IT stocks amid concerns over artificial intelligence-led disruption and renewed trade-related uncertainties. Rising global crude prices amid escalating US-Iran tensions and sluggish global cues also hit investor sentiment, traders said. Snapping its two-session rally, the 30-share BSE Sensex plummeted 1,068.74 points, or 1.28 per cent, to settle at 82,225.92. During the day, the benchmark plunged 1,359.93 points, or 1.63 per cent, to hit an intraday low of 81,934.73. A total of 2,802 stocks declined, while 1,422 advanced and 143 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The 50-share NSE Nifty fell 288.35 points, or 1.12 per cent, to close at 25,424.65. In the intraday session, it



depreciated by 385.4 points, or 1.49 per cent, to hit a low of 25,327.60. As many as 32 of its components ended in the red while 18 settled in the green territory. "Investor sentiment weakened amid renewed concerns over global trade developments and rising geopolitical tensions, which kept crude oil prices elevated. Moreover, continued pressure on global technology stocks and fears of AI-led disruption further dragged domestic IT shares, amplifying the decline in the benchmark indices," Ajit

Mishra SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said. Tech Mahindra emerged as the biggest laggard, declining by 6.6 per cent, followed by HCL Technologies, Eternal, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services, Larsen & Toubro, Trent, Bharti Airtel, HDFC Bank, Bharat Electronics Ltd and ICICI Bank. On the other hand, NTPC, Hindustan Unilever, Tata Steel, PowerGrid, Titan, Reliance Industries, Axis Bank, and Sun Pharmaceuticals were among the gainers. "Domestic markets registered a sharp decline, led

by significant weakness in IT stocks amid renewed global concerns over AI-driven disruption and margin pressures for traditional service providers. Global trade and tariff worries resurfaced as well, with additional pressure arising from Trump's warnings on trade deals and reports of possible national security tariffs. "Meanwhile, escalating US-Iran tensions, marked by embassy staff evacuations and Iran's warnings of wider regional escalation, intensifying risk aversion. Overall, markets remain highly sensitive to geopolitical risks and sector-specific pressures, driving investors toward defensive, domestically focused segments," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said. Broader indices also ended in the negative territory, with the BSE Smallcap Select Index falling 0.68 per cent, while the Mid-cap Select Index slipped 0.54 per cent.

## Cabinet enhances equity investment limit of Powergrid to ₹7,500 cr per subsidiary

The approval will enable the Maharatna to expand its investment in its core business and support the evacuation of renewable energy capacity

NEW DELHI: The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Tuesday approved enhanced delegation to Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), enhancing the permissible equity investment limit of the company from the current threshold of Rs 5,000 crore per subsidiary to Rs 7,500 crore per subsidiary -- while retaining the existing cap of 15 per cent of the company's net worth.

The approval came under the extant guidelines dated February 4, 2010, of the Department of Public Enterprises (DPE) on the delegation of powers applicable to Maharatna CPSEs.

According to an official statement, the approval will enable POWERGRID, the largest and most experienced transmission service provider in the country, to expand its investment in its core business and support the evacuation of renewable energy capacity, helping achieve the target of 500 GW from non-fossil-based sources.

The statement further said that POWERGRID can now participate in the bids for capital-intensive transmission projects, such as Ultra High Voltage Alternating Current (UHVAC) and High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) transmission networks.

Additionally, it will broaden competition in the Tariff-Based Competitive Bidding (TBCB) for the selection of bidders for critical trans-



mission projects. "This ensures better price discovery, and ultimately leads to the availability of affordable and clean energy for consumers," the CCEA said.

The POWERGRID, the central transmission utility, recently announced its unaudited financial results for the third quarter of this fiscal. The public sector company reported robust growth in profitability.

Standalone profit after tax (PAT) stood at Rs 4,160.17 crore -- a 6.8 per cent increase from Rs 3,894.09 crore in Q3 FY25. Standalone revenue from operations was Rs 11,005.28 crore, up year-on-year from Rs 10,120.72 crore.

The Board of Directors approved several significant proposals, including a second interim dividend of Rs 3.25 per equity share (32.5 per cent on the face value of Rs 10) for FY 2025-26. The dividend will be paid on February 27, 2026.

## Clean Max's ₹3K-cr IPO subscribed 45% on day 2

NEW DELHI: The initial public offering (IPO) of Clean Max Enviro Energy Solutions, a commercial and industrial renewable energy provider, received 45 per cent subscription on the second day of share sale on Tuesday. The company's IPO got bids for more than 97 lakh (97,59,106) shares against over 218 lakh (2,18,23,329) shares on offer, according to the NSE data. The qualified institutional buyers' category was subscribed 1.21 times, while the quota for non-institutional investors was booked 41 per cent. Retail Individual Investors part fetched a 4 per cent subscription. Clean Max Enviro Energy Solutions raised Rs 921 crore from anchor investors on Friday. The public issue will close on February 25. The company has fixed a price band of Rs 1,000-1,053 per share, valuing it at Rs 12,325 crore at the upper end. The proposed issue comprises a fresh issue of shares worth up to Rs 1,200 crore and an offer-for-sale (OFS) of shares valued at Rs 1,900 crore by promoters and an investor shareholder.

## World shares trade mixed after heavy selling in AI scrips hit Wall Street

BANGKOK: World shares were mixed on Tuesday after US stocks slumped on heavy selling of shares in companies that could be losers in the artificial-intelligence boom. A report by Citirini Research, a New York-based financial services company, that outlined a future scenario in which AI's dominance caused the "human-centric consumer economy," to wither away with dire consequences for employment, was the latest hit to confidence for companies that might be displaced by fast expanding use of the technology. "Policy response has always lagged economic reality, but lack of a comprehensive plan is now threatening to accelerate a deflationary spiral," the report says. Still, Tuesday brought gains for computer-chip makers and other companies that profit from development of AI.

In early European trading, Germany's DAX edged 0.2 per cent lower to 24,952.11 and in Paris the CAC 40 was down less than 0.1 per cent at 8,491.94. Britain's FTSE 100 also lost less than 0.1 per cent, to 10,673.99. The



futures for the S&P 500 and Dow Jones Industrial Average were up less than 0.1 per cent.

In Asian trading, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index surged 0.9 per cent to 57,321.09. Chip testing equipment maker Advantest rose 4.5 per cent, while machinery maker Disco Corp. added 2.1 per cent. Markets in mainland China advanced as they reopened following a weeklong holiday, but Hong Kong's Hang Seng fell as traders locked in profits from recent gains, slipping 1.8 per cent to 26,590.32. The Shanghai Composite index rose 0.9 per cent to 4,117.41. In South Korea, the Kospi picked up 2.1 per cent to 5,969.64, setting fresh records on gains for memory chipmaker Samsung Electronics, which jumped 3.6 per cent. SK Hynix, another chipmaker, closed 5.7 per cent higher.

## India's CV industry clocks robust sales in Jan

NEW DELHI: THE Indian commercial vehicle (CV) wholesale volumes reported a robust 27 per cent year-on-year (YoY) growth to 99,544 units in January, along with a sequential growth of 1.9 per cent over 97,682 units recorded in December 2025, a report showed on Tuesday.

The year-on-year growth was primarily driven by the reduction in Goods and Services Tax (GST) rate to 18 per cent from 28 per cent, effective September 22, 2025 and was further supported by increased freight activity in the goods segment, according to ICRA.

Retail volumes in the medium and heavy commercial vehicle segment (M&HCV) witnessed a healthy growth of 15.4 per cent on a YoY basis in January while recording a sequential growth of 22.1 per cent.

The retail volume growth in the M&HCV segment during the 10 months of FY26 stood at 6.3 per cent, indicating improving volume momentum following the implementation of GST rate cuts.

Moreover, according to the report, retail volumes in the light commercial vehicle



(LCV) segment grew by 14.9 per cent YoY in January.

The YoY growth in retail volumes of the LCV segment during 10 months of FY26 stood at 11.1 per cent.

Overall, the domestic CV wholesale volumes grew by 11.3 per cent (on-year) "during 10M FY2026, while retail volumes registered an 8.5 per cent growth during the same period", said the report.

The domestic CV industry is expected to register a moderate YoY growth of 7-9 per cent in wholesale volumes in FY26. Domestic CV wholesale volumes are further projected to register a moderate YoY growth of 4-6 per cent in FY2027.

The M&HCV (trucks) and LCV (trucks) segments are expected to witness YoY volume growth of 7-9 per cent and 9-11 per cent, respectively.

The buses segment is likely to see an 8-10 per cent YoY growth during the fiscal, said the report.

## Gold rises ₹400; silver stays flat

NEW DELHI: Gold prices rose by Rs 400 to Rs 1,63,200 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday amid persistent buying by stockists and a weaker rupee, according to the local marketmen. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 1,62,800 per 10 grams on Monday. However, silver prices remained unchanged at Rs 2,72,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes). Traders said increased offtake by local jewellers and stockists supported gold prices in the domestic market, even as international precious metal rates declined. In the international markets, spot gold was trading 1.35 per cent lower at USD 5,157.16 per ounce, while silver traded flat at USD 88.19 per ounce. Analysts said weakness in the rupee made gold costlier for holders of other currencies, offsetting the impact of a decline in global prices.



## Cos should be cautious on AI usage claims: Sebi whole-time member

MUMBAI

SEBI'S whole-time member Amarjeet Singh cautioned against 'artificial washing', or the use of exaggerated claims as a marketing tactic, warning that such instances can erode the public's trust in the markets.

"We have seen instances of market participants making overstated claims about using AI to deliver exceptional returns," Singh said, addressing an event jointly organised by IIMK and NSE here.

Asking companies to be mindful of how they communicate claims on usage of AI, Singh warned, "exaggerated claims, or selective disclosures, the so-called AI washing can mislead markets and erode trust". He acknowledged that AI is a powerful tool for education, research and accessibility, but advised for certain care to be taken as adoption of AI grows because of its ability to generate "convincing misinformation at scale".

"Can we confidently say that today's true and fair reports truly reflect economic reality?" he asked, adding that such questions are more relevant in the current times.



Amarjeet Singh says such claims can erode the public's trust in the markets

There are newer forms of a shift to "narrative-led communication including purpose-washing and green-washing", Singh said, pointing out that the aspirational language used in such efforts can sometimes run ahead of "verifiable action and measurable outcomes".

There is a historic capital shift from "financial to intellectual capital" as seen in the explosive growth in the stock prices of seven tech giants in the US, he said, underlining that the intangibles are driving market value.

Singh rued that our reporting systems have not

kept pace and underlined the need for reviewing the ways in which the reporting captures the intangible aspects of value creation, including advantages of algorithm usage, human capital prowess and societal impact. "Until we do, we are navigating the future with yesterday's map," Singh said.

No one should be systematically disadvantaged by opacity, manipulation, hidden conflict or engineered confusion, Singh said, adding that there is a possibility for information acting as a bridge between households and capital markets, and savings and productive investments if we get it right. "At stake is not just market efficiency, but public trust in finance as a force for good," he concluded.

## ADB commits \$108 mn to Aavas Financiers

NEW DELHI: Asian Development Bank on Tuesday said it has signed a senior secured debt financing package of up to \$108 million (about Rs 983 crore) with NBFC Aavas Financiers to expand access to affordable housing loans for lower-income households and business loans for MSMEs in underserved states across India. The package includes concessional debt financing of \$8 million (in Indian rupee equivalent) through the Canadian Climate and Nature Fund for the Private Sector in Asia (CANPA), Asian Development Bank (ADB) said in a statement.

The financing will support housing loans for self-built and green-certified homes, promoting climate-resilient and energy-efficient housing solutions for lower-middle-income borrowers, it added. The transaction is also supported by up to \$1,50,000 in technical assistance to build institutional capacity and boost market awareness of green housing solutions, it said.



## Mahesh Babu heads to Georgia for next schedule of SS Rajamouli's 'Varanasi'

Superstar Mahesh Babu's next ambitious project Varanasi is shaping up as one of the biggest pan-world ventures in Indian cinema. Mounted on a monumental scale, the film is being directed by global blockbuster filmmaker S. S. Rajamouli, best known for Baahubali and RRR.

Mahesh Babu was spotted leaving Hyderabad from Rajiv Gandhi International Airport earlier today, heading to Georgia for the next major shooting schedule. This is a work trip, as the actor is set to join the upcoming international schedule of the film. Reports suggest that Priyanka Chopra and Prithviraj Sukumaran are

also expected to join the Georgia leg of the shoot, making this schedule one of the most crucial phases of production.

Music maestro M. M. Keeravani recently revealed that background score work will begin in September, after the entire shoot wraps up in June. The film also features Prakash Raj in key role. Produced by K. L. Narayana and S. S. Karthikeya, the massive pan-world action-adventure is being made on a grand budget and scale. Varanasi is officially slated for a worldwide theatrical release on April 7, 2027, and is already being positioned as one of the most ambitious Indian films ever made.

# What is your beef?

'Kerala Story' released in 2023 and claimed many things that were wrong with Kerala, including the theory of "Love Jihad." The state largely looked away. The film is back in the news as the makers release a trailer for Part 2; this time they have targeted beef curry. And now Kerala refuses to take the misrepresentation lying low, crying foul at what it sees as an attempt to fracture the secular fabric of society

RAJESHWARI KALYANAM

'Kerala Story 2' and the politics and propaganda around it, along with the hilarious reels mocking the beef scene in the trailer, take me back to my recent visit to Kochi. The port city—with its art, architecture, layered history, and melting pot of cultures—leaves an indelible mark. The sea, the fish, and most importantly the warmth of its people stay with you.

Our quest for authentic Kerala parota with some help from an auto driver led us to a simple but bustling hotel in Mattancherry. The owner sat



at the counter while we shared a table with two students waiting for their meal. First came pathimukham—the special Kerala root boiled water served hot. We were spoilt for choice: the menu included appam, stew, kadala curry, square parota, even Indian Chinese. The clientele was a mixed bag—foreign tourists, local businessmen, executives, college students, families. People of all classes and creeds sat together, united by love for food. And guess what was the most ordered dish—Beef Roast.

Beef is today in the news thanks to the recently released trailer of the film 'The Kerala Story 2'.

In the trailer, a jihadi is shown force-feeding a girl beef curry. The scene appears conceptualized with little understanding of local culture or culinary habits, seemingly

to shock and provoke. Instead, it led to widespread indignation, with Malayalees across religions proclaiming their love for beef curry. The internet is filled with memes and reels mocking what many see as a scene created in poor taste and poorer research.

The story of 'The Kerala Story' goes back to 2023 when Part 1 was released. It was widely accused of being propaganda, given its premise. The film tells the story of a Malayalee Hindu girl lured into conversion by her lover, married, and taken to a terrorist camp. It suggests that "Love Jihad" is widely prevalent in Kerala, quoting unverified numbers to substantiate the claim. In a technically weak film, several scenes present conspiracy theories and questionable information as fact.

Kerala did not agree with

'The Kerala Story.' A state that produces some of the finest films considered it too trivial to take seriously. "No one will watch it here," was the general consensus—and they were not wrong. The film failed to make an impact in Kerala, though it provided WhatsApp fodder elsewhere.

Now the team has released the trailer for Part 2. This time, among other things, they have targeted Kerala's most popular dish—beef curry. And that has clearly backfired.

"In Kerala, everyone has 'Left' blood regardless of religion or politics," shared Father Augustine Vattoly, whom I met during the Kerala visit. He was referring to a shared social conscience that reflects in how people respond to issues. You see it in small but telling incidents—like the recent viral video of

an elderly woman stopping a scooter rider from using the sidewalk. A responsible citizen taking a stand.

Augustine is a Catholic priest who supported Sister Ranit, who spoke against a Bishop and faced ostracism and legal battles. He convened "Save Our Sisters" (SOS) to stand by protesting nuns during the 2018 agitation. His experiences reflect Kerala's courage in expressing dissent. Sister Ranit and a few nuns now survive through tailoring and stitching cotton bags, sustained by community support. That solidarity, he says, is heartening.

The 'Me Too' movement from late 2017 and 2018 was an eye-opener across India. But perhaps only in Kerala did it trigger deep introspection in the film industry, leading to the dissolution of AMMA (Association of Malayalam Movie Artists) after the Hema Committee report. The Women in Cinema Collective (WCC), formed after the abduction case involving actor Dileep, continues to grow stronger.

Actor Rima Kallingal, an active WCC member, said at a National Women in Media conference in Thiruvananthapuram that directors and writers sometimes reach out to check if their scripts represent women appropriately. Even occasional instances like these signal a shift in perspective.

The industry and society in the state remain male dominated. But when power is pitted against the powerless, a strong section speaks up for

the wronged.

Popularly known as God's Own Country, Kerala is in many ways People's Own Country—fiercely protective of its collective identity. People are proud of their clean roads, greenery, heritage, culture, and cuisine—and yes, the beef roast and curry enjoyed with parota or puttu.

Today, the response is not just about a beef scene. It reflects awareness of attempts to fracture a secular fabric where shared history takes precedence over divisive narratives. Onam, for instance, is celebrated by all communities. King Mahabali is welcomed with fervour, followed by the Onam sadhya—vegetarian in tradition, though some homes add non-vegetarian variations.

A case has now been filed in a Kerala court against the release of the film. As we await judgment, one wonders if 'The Kerala Story 2' will succeed in polarizing Kerala.

The film is being strategically released ahead of elections. It is worth recalling that on more than one occasion BJP candidates in Kerala have promised better quality beef in their manifestos. Hilarious but true.

Looking back at municipal elections in Thiruvananthapuram, BJP did see some success. Whether beef had a role is debatable—but the irony is unmistakable.

After all, if anything could sway a Kerala voter, it might just be the promise of good quality beef.

## 'Emi Raa Balaraju' from 'Vishnu Vinyasam' strikes a chord as breakup anthem

Actor Sree Vishnu, known for his effortless comic timing and relatable performances, is gearing up to entertain audiences with his upcoming film Vishnu Vinyasam, an out-and-out entertainer directed by debutant Yadunaath Maruthi Rao. Starring Nayana Sarika as the female lead, the film has already built strong buzz with its first two singles, especially the Valentine's Day release, which became a chartbuster.

Adding to the momentum, the makers have now unveiled the third single, Emi Raa Balaraju, a quirky breakup number that blends heartbreak with humour. Designed as a tribute to love failures who choose laughter over pain, the song opens on a playful note with comedian Satya counting numbers, setting the tone for the protagonist's comic rant on love, heartbreak, and emotional chaos. The



narrative humorously reflects a man's frustration with romance, wrapped in satire and relatable sarcasm, making it instantly connect with younger audiences.

Producer Sumanth Naidu also makes a fun appearance, adding extra humour to the track. Composer Radhan delivers a groovy, punchy composition, while Sarath Santos's vocals bring a smooth flow to the song. Lyricist Ramajogayya Sastry

cleverly transforms the hero's misery into mischievous fun through witty lines. Sree Vishnu's energetic lungi dance steps, choreographed by Bhanu Master, add mass appeal and crowd-pleasing moments. With music creating strong pre-release buzz, Vishnu Vinyasam is set to hit theatres on the 27th of this month, promising a laughter-filled entertainer with fresh flavour and youthful energy.

## 'D/O Prasad Rao Kanabadutaledhu' holds grand preview event

The Telugu web series D/O Prasad Rao Kanabadutaledhu is all set to premiere on ZEE5 from February 27, creating strong buzz ahead of its digital release. The series stars Rajeev Kanakala, Udaya Bhanu, Vasanthika, and Sriram Venkat in prominent roles. Produced by K.V. Sriram under the South India Screens banner and directed by Krishna Poluru, the series recently held a special media preview, followed by a grand launch event attended by the cast and crew.

Rajeev Kanakala described his role as one of the most defining performances of his career, stating that the character demanded emotional depth, modulation, and transformation unlike anything he has done before. He credited director Krishna Poluru for presenting him in a refreshing and intense new space, adding that the narrative maintains gripping tension and emotional engagement till the very end. Director Krishna Poluru revealed that the story evolved over nearly two years, shaped carefully to balance emotional depth with thriller elements. He thanked ZEE5 for supporting the vision and trusting the project's long-form storytelling approach.

Udaya Bhanu shared that she connected deeply with her role, especially the emotional layers, calling the character both strong and vulnerable. Producer K.V. Sriram expressed confidence that the series would resonate strongly with families and fathers, praising Rajeev's immersive performance and the consistent intensity across episodes.

ZEE5 Telugu Senior Vice President Jayanth Raghavan said the series adds emotional depth to the platform's Telugu originals, while the team also highlighted the strong contribution of cinematography by Mahesh and dialogues by Shruti.

Positioned as an emotionally intense thriller, D/O Prasad Rao Kanabadutaledhu promises a layered, suspense-driven narrative that blends family emotions with gripping storytelling.



## 'Haiku' wraps first schedule, targets September release

Vision Cinema House has officially announced the successful completion of the first shooting schedule of its upcoming film Haiku, marking a confident start to the project's production journey. The opening schedule was wrapped up smoothly and on time, giving the team strong momentum as the film moves forward.

The first phase of filming featured key sequences involving lead actors Aegan and Sridevi, along with impactful performances by Adrichi Arun and Kalaivani Baskar. According to the makers, the cast delivered emotionally layered performances that added depth and authenticity to the narrative right from the opening schedule.



Haiku is written and directed by Yuvaraj Chinnasamy, with additional screenplay contributions from Hariharan Ram. The creative collaboration has resulted in a script that blends sensitivity, realism, and strong cinematic storytelling, raising expectations within industry circles.

The production team has also expressed satisfaction with the visuals

captured so far, particularly praising cinematographer Priyesh Guruswamy for establishing the film's emotional tone and visual mood. The footage from the first schedule is said to have exceeded expectations.

Produced by Dr. D. Arulanandhu and Mathewo Arulanandhu under the Vision Cinema House banner, the film is progressing as planned. The next shooting schedule will begin shortly in Chennai, where major portions of the story will be filmed.

With strong creative energy and steady production progress, Haiku is slated for a grand worldwide theatrical release in September 2026.

## Mrunal Thakur grabs fashion lovers attention

Bollywood actress Mrunal Thakur's latest release Do Deewane Seher Me, produced by celebrated filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali and co-starring Siddhant Chaturvedi, has opened to a modest response at the box office. The film reportedly collected around Rs 1 crore on its opening day, followed by a slight growth on day two with earnings of approximately Rs 1.60 crore. Despite the marginal improvement, overall collections remain below industry expectations.

Even as the film faces a slow theatrical run, Mrunal has remained upbeat and focused, choosing to stay positive about her journey rather than dwell on numbers. The actress continues to engage her fans through social media, where she recently shared a set of stunning new pictures that quickly caught attention online. In the latest photos, Mrunal is seen in a chic white one-shoulder top paired with grey wide-leg trousers, creating a modern yet elegant silhouette. The outfit's soft drapes added a graceful touch, while her styling—straight open hair, bold eye makeup, and nude lips—gave her a confident and contemporary look. Keeping her accessories minimal with a statement ring and a sleek bangle, the actress let her outfit take centre stage, earning praise from fans and fashion lovers alike. On the professional front, Mrunal has a promising lineup ahead. She will next be seen in the upcoming film Dacoit, which is scheduled for release on April 10. The film stars Adivi Sesh in the lead role and is already generating buzz among audiences. While Do Deewane Seher Me struggles at the box office, Mrunal Thakur's confidence, consistent screen presence, and upcoming projects continue to keep her firmly in the spotlight.

