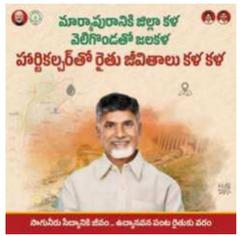
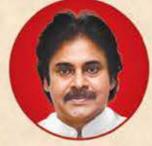


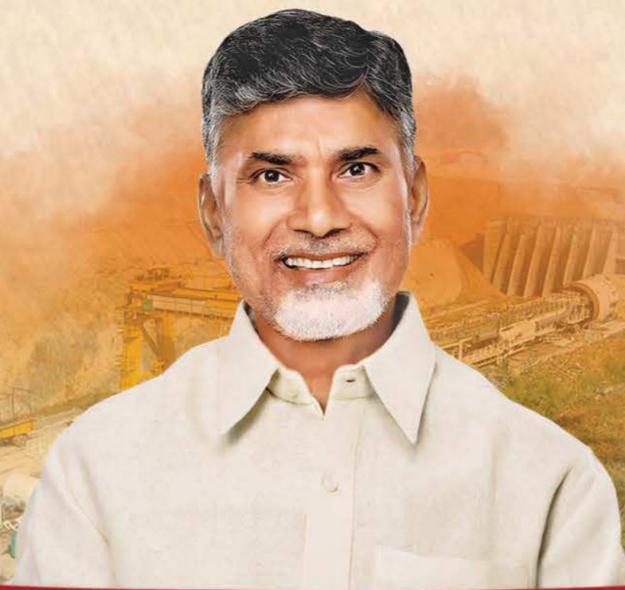
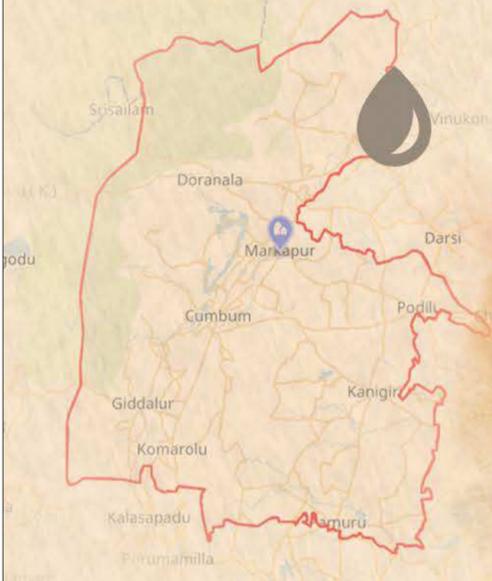
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## మార్కాపురానికి జిల్లా కళ - వెలిగొండతో జలకళ హార్టికల్చర్తో రైతు జీవితాలు కళకళ



ఎన్నికల్లో మాటిచ్చినట్లు మార్కాపురం జిల్లా ఏర్పాటు చేసి... ప్రజల 5 దశాబ్దాల కలను నెరవేర్చాం. ఈ ఏడాదే వెలిగొండ మొదటి ఫేజ్ పూర్తి చేసి కరువు ప్రాంతంలో జలకళ తెస్తాం. హార్టికల్చర్ సాగుతో రైతుల జీవితాల్లో వెలుగులు నింపి జీవన ప్రమాణాలు పెంచుతాం.

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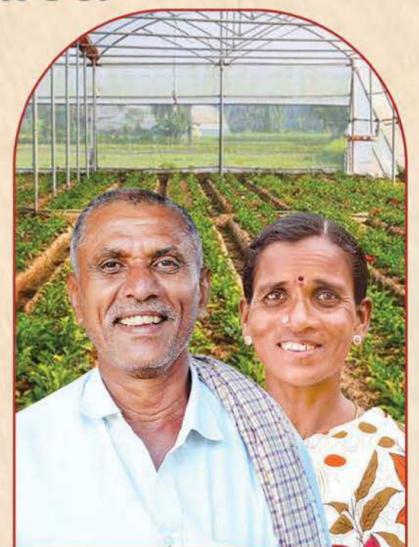
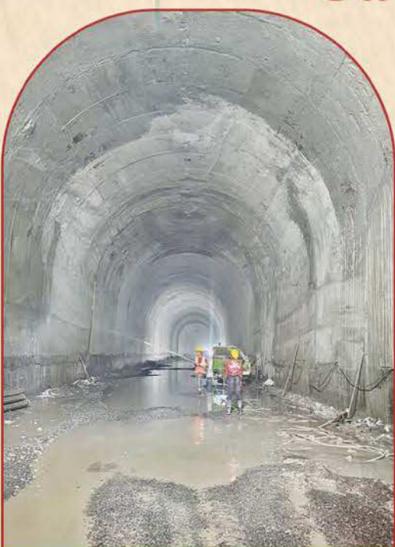
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భారీ బహిరంగ సభ

స్థలం : మార్కాపురంలోని శ్రీ సాయి బాలాజీ మోడల్ స్కూల్ ఎదురుగా  
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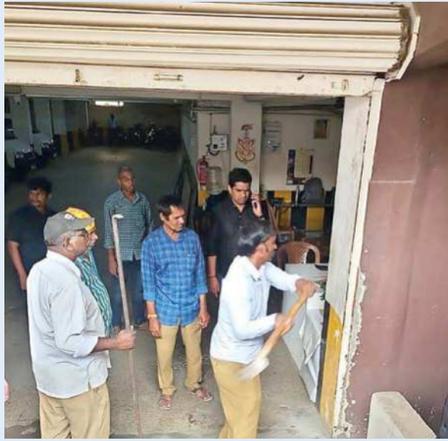
సాగునీరు సేద్యానికి జీవం... ఉద్యానవన పంట రైతుకు వరం

జారీచేసిన తార: సంచాలకశులు, సమాచార, శివ సంచారశాల శాఖ, ఆంధ్రప్రదేశ్ ప్రభుత్వం

## Operation Lungs 3.0

# Campaign targets clearing cellar parking, ease parking flow

- The civic body officials have decided to shed the spotlight on illegal cellar encroachments in commercial units and buildings
- The civic authorities largely focused on clearing footpath encroachments and regulating small traders operating along busy roads
- GVMC Commissioner Ketan Garg orders a special enforcement drive under the banner of 'Operation Lungs 3.0'



GVMC officials clearing an encroached cellar as part of Operation LUNGS 3.0 in Visakhapatnam

VASU POTNURU  
VISAKHAPATNAM

AS traffic congestion continues to swell across the city, the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) decided to step up its encroachment-free drive through 'Operation LUNGS 3.0'. After clearing footpaths and roadside vendors encroaching most part of the roads, the civic body officials have decided to shed the spotlight on illegal cellar encroachments in commercial units and buildings.

Until now, the civic authorities largely focused on clearing footpath encroachments and regulating small traders operating along the busy roads.

However, recognising that the misuse of cellars

has emerged as a major contributor to parking chaos, GVMC Commissioner Ketan Garg has ordered a special enforcement drive under the banner of 'Operation Lungs 3.0'.

Acting swiftly on public complaints that cellar encroachments were worsening traffic bottlenecks, town planning officials launched the drive. As part of it, unauthorised structures from cellars, meant exclusively for vehicle parking, are being removed.

The civic chief made it clear that cellars are officially designated zones meant for parking purposes and using them commercially would not be tolerated.

"As people continue to

face severe parking challenges for a long time, commercial building owners should volunteer to clear the encroachments in the cellars by themselves," opined the GVMC Commissioner.

As part of the operation, shutters and walls were dismantled from cellar portions of commercial buildings in key locations, including Dabagardens, MVP Colony Sector-1, Butchirajapalem Main Road, and shopping complexes along Gajuwaka Main Road.

The operation was carried out under the leadership of City Central Police (CCP) A Prabhakar Rao, who confirmed that the drive to reclaim cellar parking spaces

will continue in the coming days. Even as officials acknowledge that similar attempts were made in the past by previous municipal and police commissioners, sustained political pressure often forced such initiatives to be discontinued midway.

With over 90 per cent of commercial buildings in Visakhapatnam lacking adequate parking facilities, cellar spaces have increasingly been converted into shops and rented out for hefty profits which directly impacts road safety and restricts traffic movement.

Even now, sources in the administration wing admit that resistance is expected, particularly from influential business owners and politi-

cal intermediaries.

However, GVMC officials emphasise that a fair and uniform approach is essential to deal with the challenge. Meanwhile, selective enforcement targeting smaller establishments while sparing large commercial units is likely to attract strong public criticism. To ensure a lasting solution to the city's parking woes, GVMC and the city police have resolved to continue 'Operation Lungs 3.0' as a joint, sustained effort.

Officials stress that restoring order on the city's roads and improving the overall urban environment.

## Incentive-linked regulatory facilitation is set to accelerate GreenCo adoption



Chairman of Swachh Andhra Corporation Pattabhi Ram addressing the gathering at the APPCB-CII Andhra Pradesh conference organised in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday

- In addition to 11 categories suggested by the Centre, the processing of animal waste has been added as the 12th category for AP

- The APPCB introduced a structured incentive framework to encourage industry participation in the GreenCo Rating System

- Under the APPCB-IGBC facilitation framework, building projects in AP pursuing or achieving IGBC certification were made eligible for a range of incentives

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VISAKHAPATNAM

ABOUT 1300-1400 tonnes of poultry waste are generated in the state every day and there is an opportunity to create valuable by-products by scientifically managing it, said Swachh Andhra Corporation chairman Kommareddy Pattabhiram.

Emphasising the importance of industrial participation in resource circularity at the Andhra Pradesh Pollution Control Board (APPCB)-Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Andhra Pradesh conference that focused on 'circular economy and green industry: strategies for sustainable growth and resource efficiency' held in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday, the chairman of Swachh Andhra Corporation said, "In addition to 11 categories suggested by the Centre, the processing of animal waste has been added as the 12th category for AP. It was announced that animal waste processing plants with a capacity of 100 tonnes per day will be set up in Visakhapatnam and Guntur. Pattabhiram informed that a special real-time dash-

board is being created in the next few months to ensure that there is no shortage of raw materials for recycling industries."

Further, he stated that the circular economy cannot be achieved without active industry participation and recognition-linked facilitation sends a strong signal that sustainability leadership will be institutionally supported.

As part of the conference, the APPCB introduced a structured incentive framework to encourage industry participation in the GreenCo Rating System. Under this, units holding valid GreenCo ratings become eligible for a one-year extension of consent to operate (CTO), subject to the absence of reported non-compliance during the consent period.

In addition, rated companies were provided enhanced visibility through exclusive mentions on the official websites of APPCB and CII GreenCo, highlighting their sustainability achievements and environmental performance.

Under the APPCB-IGBC facilitation framework, building projects in AP pursuing or achieving IGBC certification were made eligible for a range of incentives, including streamlined and fast-tracked processing of consent to establish (CTE) and consent to operate (CTO), prioritised regulatory clearances to minimise procedural delays, and a one-year extension of CTO for eligible IGBC-certified hotels, hospitals (red category), and large township/area development projects.

Addressing the gathering, P Krishnaiah, chairman of APPCB, outlined the board's intent to differentiate and incentivise environmen-

tally responsible industries. "Industries that achieve GreenCo ratings and demonstrate measurable excellence in energy efficiency, water stewardship, waste reduction and circular practices will receive recognition-based incentives and regulatory facilitation from the board."

Highlighting the technical robustness of the framework, N Muthusezhiyan, Deputy Executive Director, CII Green Business Centre, noted that the GreenCo rating system provided a comprehensive metrics-based pathway for industries to improve across critical sustainability parameters.

"GreenCo enables industries to benchmark and enhance performance across energy productivity, renewable energy adoption, water efficiency, waste management, material conservation and green supply chains. APPCB's incentive-linked approach creates a powerful multiplier effect by aligning regulatory facilitation with measurable sustainability outcomes," he stressed.

The incentive framework announced by the APPCB included regulatory facilitation for higher-rated GreenCo industries, enhanced visibility and formal recognition and structured engagement mechanisms to promote best practice replication across industrial clusters.

The measures were designed to reduce procedural uncertainties, reward transparent environmental performance, and foster healthy competition among industries.

The initiative marked a strategic shift toward performance-driven environmental governance, aimed at rewarding industries that demonstrate measurable improvements in resource efficiency and sustainability.

## Civil Aviation Minister inaugurates new SBI branch

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VISAKHAPATNAM:

UNION Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu opined that the SBI Nimmada branch will come in handy for farmers and industries in the region.

Inaugurating a new SBI branch in Nimmada, he expressed hope that the schemes will benefit the farmers as the bank officials will create awareness about them.

"SBI will play a key role in farmers' financial transactions. The banks will play a crucial role in achieving the goals of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Finance Minister

Nirmala Sitharaman," the Union Minister said. The Union Minister presented the relevant acknowledgement documents to the locals who made transactions during the inaugural.

The Union Minister opined that he must also have a bank account in his hometown and hence filled up a new account form and handed it over to the bank officials.

SBI Amaravati Circle chief general manager Rajesh Kumar Patil, circle general manager Hemant Kumar, deputy general manager Rahul Sakaria, regional manager Uday Kumar, and branch manager Nagaraju were present.



Union Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu along with SBI officials inaugurating the new SBI branch at Nimmada

## Arrangements in place for smooth conduct of 'Chandanotsavam'

- Special plans for the annual 'Chandanotsavam' festival, scheduled on April 20, firm up

- Separate darshan queues for Rs.300, Rs.1,000 and Rs.1,500 tickets will be facilitated

- Like every year, this time too, more than 1.20 lakh devotees are expected for 'Chandanotsavam'



District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad during the inspection at Simhachalam Devasthanam in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VISAKHAPATNAM:

DISTRICT Collector MN Harendhira Prasad directed the temple authorities to complete all civil and construction works that are pending, including barricading, on a war-footing by March 31.

In view of the ensuing 'Chandanotsavam' festival celebrated on April 20 this year, the Collector inspected a slew of ongoing development works, construction of queue lines at Simhachalam Devasthanam on Tuesday.

After the inspection, the Collector, along with the Devasthanam Executive Officer J Venkata Rao, stressed the need to accord top priority to ensuring smooth and hassle-free darshan for the common devotees.

Given the difficulties faced in previous editions due to strong winds and rain, the Collector suggested installation of permanent shelters along the queue lines wherever feasible and directed the officials to conduct mandatory electrical and fire safety inspections.

Soon, a detailed plan to facilitate darshan for common devotees from 3 am to 11 pm during Chandanotsavam will be prepared. Special time slots for VIP and VVIP darshans will be scheduled between 3 am and 5 am.

A tentative decision has been made to allow darshan at sanctum sanctorum till 5 am. Further, the Collector instructed officials to facilitate separate darshan queues for Rs.300, Rs.1,000 and Rs.1,500 tickets from different locations and con-



A view of Simhachalam Devasthanam in Visakhapatnam

sider stringent measures to regulate crowd movement. With over 1.20 lakh devotees expected this year, Harendhira Prasad made it clear that necessary arrangements should be made accordingly. After holding

discussions with the public representatives, the Collector informed that the final darshan schedule would be announced.

Temple Deputy Executive Officer S Radha, Assistant Executive Officer

K Tirumaleswara Rao, executive engineers CHV Ramana, B Rambabu and deputy executive engineer DVS Ramaraju officials from the tourism department were present during the inspection.

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Hence, the general public is hereby informed to submit any objections/suggestions in this regard 7 days from the date of publication to VMRDA pertaining to the above approval of layout application failing which it will be construed that there are no objections/suggestions etc., and the above approval of layout application will be processed as per rules.  
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# THE Hans India



**Aishwarya Sakhua on meeting herself without 'filters or performance'**  
Aishwarya was a Miss India finalist in 2006. From 2010 to 2012, she starred in the TV show 'Saas Bina Sasural'.

**The rise and fall of El Mencho**  
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.

**Fire rips through market complex**  
Upon being informed, Fire Services personnel reached the spot and rescued two mall staff members who were trapped inside. Subsequently, they doused the blaze with water and later with foam.

**Pawan Kalyan targets Jagan, questions silence on TTD Board**  
The Dy CM alleged that the 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, said the then TTD governing body failed to discharge its responsibility.

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SEHAR (Thu) 5.15 AM

## Well-organised 'syndicate' behind ghee scam: Naidu



### PM Modi's 2nd visit to Israel set to upgrade strategic ties

**NEW DELHI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi will undertake a two-day visit to Israel beginning Wednesday to shore up bilateral defence and trade cooperation amid the ongoing tensions in the Middle-east including deteriorating ties between the US and Iran. Modi's engagements will include his address to Israel's parliament, wide-ranging talks with his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu and a meeting with President Isaac Herzog. "This visit will reaffirm the deep and long-standing strategic partnership between the two countries and will present an opportunity to review the common challenges as well as realign efforts towards achieving their shared vision for a robust partnership between two resilient democracies," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said. It is learnt that boosting overall defence and security cooperation will be a major area of discussions during delegation level talks between the two prime ministers on Thursday.

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### Cabinet raises raw jute MSP to ₹5,925

**NEW DELHI:** The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by Narendra Modi, has approved a Rs 275 per quintal increase in the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of raw jute for the 2026-27 marketing season, reinforcing income support for jute farmers. The MSP for raw jute (TD-3 grade) has been fixed at Rs 5,925 per quintal, ensuring a margin of 61.8 per cent over the all-India weighted average cost of production. The pricing decision remains aligned with the government's policy of fixing MSP at a minimum of 1.5 times the cost of production, as outlined in Budget 2018-19.

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

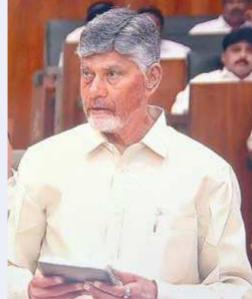
HANS NEWS SERVICE AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday launched a blistering attack in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly, alleging that a well-organised "syndicate" operated during the previous government's tenure to supply adulterated ghee to the Tirumala-Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD).

Making a detailed PowerPoint presentation during a short discussion on the Tirumala laddu controversy, Naidu claimed that 59.71 lakh kgs of adulterated ghee was procured at a cost of Rs 234 crore. He alleged that the ghee was used to prepare nearly 20.01 crore Tirumala laddus offered as Srivari prasadam.

He accused those involved of manipulating tender rules, ignoring lab standards and submitting fake quality cer-

- ▶▶ Former PA to the then TTD chairman took Rs 4.5 cr bribe to facilitate contracts
- ▶▶ SIT seized chemicals and documents detailing alleged kickbacks
- ▶▶ Complaints surfaced in 2022; CFTRI report allegedly suppressed by previous board
- ▶▶ CM rejects attempts to link controversy with Heritage Dairy
- ▶▶ This is not just about ghee. It is about faith and sanctity of Tirumala, says CM



tificates. "Sacred Prasadam meant for devotees was compromised," he said. "This is not just corruption. It is an assault on faith," he added.

Naidu alleged that a former personal assistant to the then TTD chairman accepted a Rs 4.5 crore bribe to facilitate contracts. He claimed the Special Investigation Team (SIT) seized chemicals such as monoglycerides and acetic acid, along with documents

detailing alleged kickbacks.

According to the Chief Minister, complaints about ghee quality surfaced as early as 2022. He said a report by the Central Food Technological Research Institute (CFTRI) that flagged adulteration was suppressed at the time. After his government assumed office, fresh samples were tested. A July 23, 2024, report from the National Dairy Development Board

(NDDB), he said, detected the presence of animal fat.

Naidu told the House that the matter reached the Supreme Court. The court directed that there should be no political interference and allowed a probe under central supervision. The SIT has since filed cases against those allegedly involved, he added.

The Chief Minister also rejected attempts to link the

controversy with Heritage Dairy, a company promoted by his family. "No government department has purchased ghee from Heritage," he asserted. He clarified that Indapur Dairy in Pune, which does co-manufacturing for multiple brands, has no connection with the alleged supply to TTD.

Expanding the attack, Naidu accused the previous regime of weakening temple governance, altering tender norms between 2020 and 2022, and failing to act on repeated complaints. He alleged that over 2,000 temples faced attacks between 2019 and 2024 and claimed that several incidents went uninvestigated.

He also defended Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan's remarks on protecting Hindu traditions and said places of worship must respect established customs.

Continued on Page 7

## 40% TARIFF DROP Indian exporters set to gain as US customs rolls out 10% global tariff

It's lower than Trump's threatened 15% levy

WASHINGTON/NEW DELHI

INDIA products clearing US customs from Tuesday onwards will be subject to 10% duties instead of 50% when the contracts were negotiated, opening doors for some kind of a relief even for cargoes on seas.

While immediate windfall will be for the importer who would have to pay 40% less tariffs, some of it may be passed on to Indian sellers. "Many exporters had an understanding with the buyers



while negotiating contracts at very thin margin or even loss that benefit from change in duties would be shared with them too," CEO and Director General of Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) Ajay Sahai said.

Continued on Page 7

## STOCK MARKET CRASH Investors lose ₹3L cr as Sensex plunges 1,069 points



**MUMBAI:** Frontline indices, the Sensex and the Nifty 50, suffered strong losses on Tuesday as investors booked profits across sectors, tracking weak global cues. The Sensex crashed 1,069 points, or 1.28%, to end at 82,225.92, while the NSE counterpart Nifty 50 fell 1.12% to close at 25,424.65. The mid-and small-cap indices also ended in the negative territory, but they still outperformed the benchmarks.

## AP Cabinet clears ₹2,387-cr chip project Nod for AP Sick and Stressed MSME Revival Policy (4.0) 2026-31



Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu holding a Cabinet meeting in the Secretariat on Tuesday

HANS NEWS SERVICE AMARAVATI

IN a sweeping set of decisions aimed at repositioning Andhra Pradesh as an investment-led growth hub, the state Cabinet chaired by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday approved a broad package of industrial, energy and governance reforms spanning semiconductor, renewable power, tourism infrastructure and MSME revival.

At its meeting held at the Secretariat, the Cabinet cleared proposals spanning semiconductor manufacturing, renewable energy, AI-driven data centres, tourism infrastructure and MSME revival, while ratifying decisions taken by the State Investment Promotion Board (SIPB).

A key decision was the approval of a Rs 2,387.81-crore

outsourced semiconductor assembly and test (OSAT) facility in Visakhapatnam district. The project, expected to generate around 1,000 direct jobs, was cleared under the AP Semiconductor & Display Fab Policy 4.0 (2024-29), marking the state's first semiconductor manufacturing initiative under India's semiconductor mission framework. The Cabinet also approved proposals related to a 1,000 MW AI-focused data centre project by the Adani Group in Visakhapatnam and Anakapalli districts.

Under the AP Integrated Clean Energy Policy 2024, multiple renewable energy projects received the green signal, including 160 MW wind projects in Anantapur district and wind-solar hybrid projects in Kurnool.

Continued on Page 7

## Kerala is now Keralam Union Cabinet okays renaming the state

NEW DELHI

THE Union Cabinet on Tuesday approved a proposal to alter the name of the state of Kerala to 'Keralam' and initiated the constitutional process required to amend the First Schedule of the Constitution for renaming the state.

The decision was taken at a Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Following the



approval, the President of India will now refer the proposed Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2026 to the Kerala Legislative Assembly to seek its views under Article 3 of the Constitution.

The change has its origins in a unanimous resolution passed by the Kerala Legislative Assembly on June 24, 2024, requesting the Union government to modify the State's name from 'Kerala' to 'Keralam', the matter being the name used in the State's native language, Malayalam.

Under Article 3 of the Constitution, parliament has the power to alter the name of an existing State by law. Continued on Page 7

## MAKING WATER FROM AIR

# A Nobel laureate makes Modi's vision a reality

NEW DELHI

IN October 2020, during a virtual interaction with Danish wind energy giant Vestas, Prime Minister Narendra Modi suggested that wind turbines could suck moisture from the air to generate clean drinking water.

Fast-forward to February 2026, and science has achieved that very goal through the work of a Nobel laureate.

As first reported by The Guardian, the Nobel laureate has unveiled an industrial machine that harvests

water from the driest air on Earth.

Professor Omar Yaghi, the 2025 Nobel Prize winner in Chemistry, has turned the tide with his company Atoco, a California-based deep-tech firm specialising in atmospheric water harvesting and carbon capture using atomic-scale precision.

Put simply, Yaghi has built a company that creates molecular traps to grab water and carbon directly from the sky with extreme accuracy. By using a breakthrough called reticular



Nobel laureate Prof Omar Yaghi, the pioneer of reticular chemistry, whose invention harvests clean water from the world's driest air

chemistry, the Nobel laureate is transforming what was once a subject of political mockery into a vital

line for a thirsty planet. The heart of this breakthrough lies in reticular chemistry, a discipline that involves

stitching together molecular building blocks into expansive, crystalline structures known as Metal Organic Frameworks (MOFs).

Think of these as the world's most advanced molecular sponges, but instead of cleaning a kitchen counter, they are designed to soak up invisible gases and moisture from the air.

Their internal architecture is so intricate that a single gram of the material, which is hardly the weight of a paperclip, possesses an internal surface area large enough to cover several

football fields.

These are nano-engineered materials, which means scientists have designed them at a scale 1,00,000 times smaller than the width of human hair. At this microscopic level, they can build custom-made chemical pockets that act like tiny rooms specifically sized to fit water molecules.

Unlike traditional atmospheric water generators (AWGs) that rely on energy-intensive cooling to reach the dew point, Yaghi's materials use adsorption.

Continued on Page 7

## Data of Andhra University students, staff on dark web

Over 46,000 records have allegedly been breached and leaked online



NARESH NANDAM VIJAYAWADA

IN a major cybersecurity concern, the personal data of 46,160 individuals associated with Andhra University has allegedly been compromised and leaked online. The breach reportedly came to light after a user on a dark web cybercrime forum claimed to have posted a database containing sensitive information belonging to students and staff of the university.

According to details shared on the forum, the leaked dataset includes a wide range of personal and academic information.

The exposed records allegedly contain full names, dates of birth, phone numbers, email addresses, enrollment

numbers, programme names, father's names, residential addresses, batch details, and academic validity periods. In addition, links to student photographs and digital signatures were also reportedly part of the data dump, raising serious concerns about identity theft and misuse.

Cybersecurity observers noted that the breach was publicly exposed online on Tuesday, although preliminary indications suggest that the actual compromise may have occurred last month. The delay between the suspected breach and its public disclosure has heightened concerns about the potential misuse of the data during the intervening period. Continued on Page 7



Screen shot of the post on a cybercrime forum

## SHIRTLESS PROTEST IYC chief arrested

**NEW DELHI:** Youth Congress president Uday Bhanu Chib was arrested on Tuesday after questioning in connection with T-shirt protest at the 'India AI Impact Summit', immediately inviting criticism from the Congress with Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi calling the police action "proof of dictatorial tendencies and cowardice". The Youth Congress leader, who the police claimed was the 'main conspirator and mastermind', was picked up for questioning on Monday af-



ternoon for the second time in connection with the protest at Bharat Mandapam on the last day of the AI summit. Police have already arrested seven Youth Congress activists, including three from Gwalior on Monday in the case.

Continued on Page 7



## Iran set to buy Chinese anti-ship cruise missiles

Iran is close to a deal with China to purchase anti-ship cruise missiles, according to six people with knowledge of the negotiations, just as the United States deploys a vast naval force near the Iranian coast ahead of possible strikes on the Islamic Republic.

## 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.

## ₹6,000-cr scam alleged in 'Housing for All' under YSRCP rule

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA

REVENUE minister Anagani Satya Prasad on Tuesday alleged in the Assembly that massive irregularities amounting to nearly Rs 6,000 crore took place during the previous YSRCP government under the 'Housing for All' scheme.

Responding to a question raised by TDP MLA Maddipati Venkata Raju, the minister said that although the previous government claimed to have distributed 22 lakh house site pattas, nearly seven lakh beneficiaries did not even take conveyance deeds. He alleged that lands unfit for habitation — including low-lying areas, burial grounds, remote locations far from villages, and flood-prone lands — were acquired at two to three times the market price for distribution under the scheme.

Due to the non-habitable nature of these lands, nearly 2.5 lakh beneficiaries reportedly refused to accept house site pattas, he said. The minister further stated that upon inquiry by the present coalition government, 43,948



Revenue minister Anagani Satya Prasad speaking on housing in the Assembly on Tuesday

- Revenue minister Satya Prasad says nearly Rs 6,000 cr irregularities took place under the previous YSRCP regime with unfit lands being acquired at inflated prices and seven lakh beneficiaries did not take conveyance deeds

ineligible beneficiaries were identified in the distribution process. Additionally, another 1,11,037 beneficiaries are still under verification.

After assuming office, the coalition government decided to allot three cents of land in rural areas and two cents in urban areas under the housing scheme, he said, pointing out that the previous government had allotted only 1.5 cents or even one cent in some cases.

Satya Prasad revealed that

a total of 4,08,876 fresh applications have been received for house site pattas. Of these, 1,03,494 applications have been approved, 1,41,928 rejected, and 1,56,454 are currently under scrutiny.

He asserted that the present government is committed to ensuring transparency and providing genuinely eligible poor families with proper, habitable land for housing, unlike the alleged irregularities during the previous regime.

## SYNTHETIC MILK THREAT PROMPTS TIGHT CHECKS

PRADEEP VENNELAKANTI  
TIRUPATI

THE suspected link between adulterated milk and the recent deaths of four persons in Rajamahendravaram has triggered a wave of caution across AP's dairy-rich Rayalaseema region, with officials tightening checks in Tirupati and Chittoor districts.

Authorities say the tragedy has raised fresh concerns about synthetic milk entering regular supply chains, particularly through informal and cross-border routes. Tirupati and Chittoor, known for their strong dairy base after agriculture, witness heavy milk procurement for both domestic consumption and bulk supply to chilling centres and private dairies. The steady movement of milk across the Andhra Pradesh-Karnataka border has further heightened vigilance.

The alert follows recent enforcement action near Ballagiri in Karnataka, close to the Kuppam border, where officials reportedly uncovered a synthetic milk preparation unit. Three in-

- Inspections are underway in key dairy producing districts with large-scale milk movement in Tirupati and Chittoor districts



dividuals — two from Santhipuram mandal and one from Ramakuppam mandal in Chittoor district — were allegedly found producing artificial milk by blending expired milk powder with palm oil, urea and water. Investigators said the mixture was designed to imitate the thickness and fat content of genuine milk before being circulated in local markets.

Food safety officials explained that adulteration often involves adding substances such as urea, starch, detergents, maltodextrin and vegetable fats to enhance whiteness and density.

Preservatives and neutralisers may also be used to prolong shelf life. In extreme cases, officers said, a single litre of pure milk can be stretched into two litres of synthetic product, significantly boosting illegal profits. Authorities also flagged the

sumers to be alert to basic warning signs. Nearly 90 percent of locally produced milk in the region is cow milk, which typically carries a slight yellowish tinge, whereas buffalo milk appears whiter.

If milk sold as cow milk looks unusually white or excessively thick, adulteration should be suspected. Changes in taste, smell or fat consistency are also considered red flags. Simple household tests, such as adding iodine drops to check for maltodextrin or observing the texture of heated milk when rubbed between fingers, may provide preliminary indications of tampering.

Testing facilities are available at the College of Dairy Technology in Tirupati, where milk samples can be examined scientifically. Officials have advised dairies, bulk purchasers and consumers to utilise these services and promptly report suspicious supplies, stressing that public cooperation will be vital to safeguarding the integrity of the dairy sector in the wake of the Rajamahendravaram incident.

Officials have urged con-

## Pensions to be distributed on February 28

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
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.

He further said that since the coalition government assumed office, a total of Rs 57,808.68 crore has been spent on pensions, reflecting the State government's commitment to social security and welfare.

## 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 while ignoring pressing matters such as welfare schemes, development projects, and public grievances. Ramakrishna noted that allegations of adulteration and corruption in laddu distribution are widely known. He insisted that if corruption is proven, those responsible must face strict legal action and imprisonment. "Only then will people appreciate the government's seriousness," he said.

## 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.

## Illegal dairy unit sealed after fatal milk adulteration incident

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM

THE adulterated milk tragedy in Rajamahendravaram has escalated, with police registering murder charges against trader Addala Ganeswara Rao after five deaths and 16 cases of severe kidney complications. Investigations linked the crisis in Chowdeswari Nagar and Swaroop Nagar to contaminated milk supplied by his Varalakshmi Dairy, which was sealed for operating without mandatory permissions.

DSP Devakumar said preliminary findings revealed adulteration with urea, detergent powder, and oil to thicken milk, compounded

by coolant oil leakage from a refrigerator. Officials believe financial distress and profit motives drove the practice.

Health authorities reported a surge in acute renal failure cases among residents consuming milk from the Korukonda dairy chain. A contaminated batch is suspected to have caused widespread toxicity. Three victims — Radhakrishnamurthy, N. Seshagiri Rao, and Tadi Ramani — died on Monday, raising the toll to five. Controversy surrounds the exclusion of B Kanakaratham, whose family insists her death was linked to the incident.

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu ordered a comprehensive inquiry, directing district collec-

tor Kirthi Cherkuri and SP Narasimha Kishore to probe thoroughly. Eluru range IGP Ashok Kumar confirmed severe charges, elevating the case from food safety violation to criminal act.

Health commissioner Veerapandian announced government coverage of treatment expenses and urged residents with symptoms to seek immediate care. Forensic analysis of seized samples is underway, while citizens demand stricter monitoring of dairy operations to safeguard public health.

Meanwhile, district collector Kirthi Cherkuri along with MLA Adireddy Srinivas handed over cheques of Rs 10 lakh each to the bereaved families.



District collector Kirthi Cherkuri along with MLA A Srinivas distributes cheques to bereaved families in Rajamahendravaram on Tuesday

# Fire rips through market complex

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR

A major fire broke out at a supermarket in Lingipur area of Bhubaneswar. The blaze, which started late Monday evening at around 10 pm, quickly engulfed multiple floors of the four-storey building, which contained large quantities of highly flammable goods, including plastic and rubber items.

Upon being informed, Fire Services personnel reached the spot and rescued two mall staff members who were trapped inside. Subsequently, they doused the blaze with water and later with foam. However, the fire was so severe that the firefighters struggled to douse it completely. The Fire Services department officials told mediapersons that the building reportedly has no staircases, and only a single entry and exit point.

Over 45 personnel, 12 fire tenders, robot firefighters, and other advanced firefighting equipment were



deployed to extinguish the blaze. The firemen used foam and water to douse the severe blaze that engulfed the building. Meanwhile, due to the blaze and extreme heat, parts of

the building have begun to develop cracks on multiple sides, raising concerns that the entire structure may collapse. Residents staying in nearby buildings have been evacuated to

avoid any eventualities. The fire had been raging for over 18 hours.

"The mall has four floors (Ground + 3), and we have successfully doused the fire on the ground, first, second, and third floors using foam. However, while attempting to control the blaze on the fourth floor, we noticed cracks developing in the building's roof. For safety reasons, we avoided entering the floor and withdrew our personnel from the building. We are now trying to douse the fire externally through holes created in the building wall on the front and other sides," informed Central Range Fire Officer Trilokya Kumar Babu.

The owner of the mall, Subash Chandra Jagati, claimed that around Rs 4 crore to Rs 5 crore of goods were destroyed in the building inferno. A large quantity of goods stored in the supermarket, especially plastic materials, was reduced to ashes. The building houses a wholesale market dealing in plastic products and supplies goods across the State.

# Naveen targets State govt's 'anti-farmer policies'



HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR

THE Opposition Biju Janata (BJD) on Tuesday held a massive demonstration of farmers at Lower PMG in Bhubaneswar over the State government's alleged anti-farmer policies and the deteriorating law-and-order situation. Thousands of BJD workers and leaders gathered at the Master Canteen Square and later in a rally reached the Lower PMG, where a huge meeting was held.

Addressing the gathering, BJD president and Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik slammed the BJP-led State government, raising serious concerns over alleged irregularities in mandis and the deteriorating law and order situation in the State. Patnaik alleged that while the present government is raising the slogan of "Jai Kisan" (hail the farmers), its actions reflect "Bhago Kisan" (run away, farmers). The BJD su-

premo said a government cannot function on stories and speeches; it must deliver through concrete action.

"This government will soon complete its two years in office. However, it has failed both in decision-making and implementation. During elections, they used to make tall promises, but none have been fulfilled," alleged Patnaik. Highlighting the pro-farmer policies of the previous BJD government, he noted that a separate agriculture budget was introduced, the farmer welfare KALIA (Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation) scheme was implemented, credit support was ensured, and irrigation facilities were expanded for farmers.

The BJD chief further alleged that farmers are not getting fertilisers on time, the paddy procurement is not being carried out properly, and the illegal practices of "katni-chhatni" (deduc-

tions in paddy weight) are on the rise. He said farmers are not receiving payments on time, and when they raise complaints, the government dismisses their concerns as false. Patnaik stated that he had written to the government urging it to sincerely fulfil its electoral promises and resolve farmers' issues.

Raising concerns over the law-and-order situation, Patnaik said no one in the State feels safe. He alleged that women are not secure, and youth are not getting employment opportunities. He also criticised the repeated examination paper leaks, stating that the government has failed to conduct even a single examination properly.

"People need service, not speeches from politicians. A government cannot run on narratives; it must deliver results," said Patnaik, affirming that the BJD will continue its fight for farmers' rights till the government awakes from its deep slumber.

# Steps to curb accidents remain ineffective

JEEBAN MOHANTY  
JHARSUGUDA

THE administration's efforts to reduce accidents in the district have yet to yield significant results. Despite frequent meetings on road safety, the implementation of accident-reduction measures remains delayed.

On January 10, the District Regional Transport Office wrote to the National Highways Authority of India to take steps to curb speeding between Prashant Panda chowk and Gandhi chowk, but to no avail. Five police personnel died in a road accident on Sunday after their vehicle was hit by a speeding truck on NH 49.



Located 200 metres from the Regional Transport Office, more than 500 students study in Odisha Adarsh

Vidyalaya. It is situated adjacent to Katapali School, which has an enrolment of more than 600 students, and

PKSS College. The district hockey stadium is located near it. Every day, over 2,000 students commute to schools and college from Brajrajnagar, Belpahar and Jharsuguda. A formal request has been submitted to the district administration for the installation of barricades, street lighting and a flyover.

Meanwhile, former BJD MLA Dipali Das, Municipality chairperson Rani Hati and BJD district president Harish Ganatra met District Collector Kunal Motiram Chavan and urged him to initiate the process to provide jobs to the kin of five police personnel who tragically lost their lives in the accident.

# Over 800 animals poached in Odisha

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR

OVER 800 animals were poached in the last five years in Odisha, Forest Minister Ganesh Ram Singkhuntia said in the Assembly on Tuesday. In a written reply to a query by BJP legislator Sanjali Murmu, the minister said 2,836 elephants, tigers and other wild animals died in Odisha from 2020-21 to 2024-25, of which 808 were poached. As per data provided by Singkhuntia, the Forest, Environment and Climate Change Minister, 586 wild animals died in the State in 2020-21 due to various reasons, including poaching and accidents. Altogether 532 animal deaths were reported in various forests of Odisha in 2021-22.

The State registered the animal deaths of 585, 541 and 592 in the three subsequent years, respectively. The minister informed the House that 164 wild animals were electrocuted to death between 2020-21 and 2024-25 in Odisha, while

diseases claimed the lives of 347 during the period. Thirty-six wild animals perished after being hit by speeding trains, 89 in road accidents, one due to poisoning and 263 in various other accidents, he said. Singkhuntia said 17 animals were killed in infighting among themselves during the period.

The Forest and Environment department did not know the reasons behind the death of 671 wild animals reported in the past five years, as per the statement. In his reply, the minister also informed the House that a total of 15,731.41 hectares of forest land have been diverted for non-forestry works during the last five years.

In return, a total of 22,194.49 hectares of land have been identified and handed over to the Forest department to carry out compensatory afforestation, he said. So far, compensatory afforestation has been carried out over 11,044.86 hectares of land with a cost of Rs 141.61 crore, Singkhuntia said.

# Devotee gifts home to Lord Jagannath

SUNIL MOHAN PATNAIK  
BERHAMPUR

IN a rare blend of faith, sacrifice and spiritual surrender, a devout woman of Paralakhemundi in Gajapati district has dedicated her residence to Lord Jagannath, turning a personal dwelling into an offering of devotion. Kanak Prabha Patra, a resident of Sunari Sahi in Gajapati district headquarters, donated her house to the New Jagannath Temple Construction Committee.

Following what she described as a divine message received in a dream. Her late husband, Satya Narayan Patra, was an ardent devotee of Lord Jagannath and an active member of the temple construction committee. Having no children, he had for long cherished a desire to donate his house for the sacred cause and spent much of his time serving the temple during his lifetime.

After his demise last year, Kanak Prabha was living



alone. According to sources, she repeatedly dreamt of Lord Jagannath, who, in a recent vision, conveyed that her husband's cherished wish should be fulfilled and the house be dedicated for the temple's construction.

Moved by what she believed to be the divine command and her husband's unfulfilled spiritual resolve, Kanak Prabha visited the Jagannath temple at Paralakhemundi on Sunday and formally handed over the ownership of her residence to the deity, accepting Lord

Jagannath as her eternal son. The noble act drew deep appreciation from devotees and members of the construction committee. Committee member Durga Madhav Panigrahi and others present expressed gratitude, describing the donation as a shining example of faith, sacrifice and devotion that would inspire many.

The offering, born out of a dream and fulfilled through devotion, has added a new chapter of spiritual grace to the sacred journey of the temple's construction.

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR

THE Odisha government on Tuesday said that the next three-tier panchayat elections in the State will be held at its scheduled time in February 2027. This was stated by Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water Minister Rabi Narayan Naik while replying to a question by BJD member Ganeswar Behera in the Assembly. "There has been no decision at the government level to hold panchayat

# Rural polls as per schedule

polls ahead of its schedule in February 2027," the minister said. Naik said that the panchayat elections will be held as per the stipulated schedule. He said no guideline has so far been prepared for the reconstitution of blocks and gram panchayats.

The minister's reply in the House has put a halt to speculations about early rural polls

in the State following a statement of Odisha BJP president Manmohan Samal. While addressing party workers' meeting last month, Samal had told the party rank and file to be prepared for an early panchayat polls in the State this time.

"There is a possibility of holding the rural polls two to three months ahead of the

scheduled time," the BJP State president had stated. He had cited the 2027 census as a possible reason for advancing the timeline of panchayat polls.

However, State Election Commissioner Madhusudan Padhi later stated that the polls will be conducted only after the existing rural bodies complete their five-year term. The last rural polls were held in the State in five phases starting from February 16, 2022, and the next elections are due in 2027.

# ODISHA SIGNS MOUs TO BOOST ADVENTURE TOURISM

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR

THE Odisha government on Tuesday signed MoUs with Indian Mountaineering Foundation (IMF) and Aero Club of India (ACI) with an aim to develop the State as a premier adventure tourism hub in Eastern India. The MoUs were signed here in the presence of Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida, who holds the Tourism department portfolio. The Deputy Chief Minister also launched the Go-Adventure portal.

Addressing the gathering, Parida said safety is the cornerstone of the State's adventure tourism expansion. Through international

partnerships and a new focus on spiritual and experience-based travel, the State plans to modernise the sector and attract fresh investment from young entrepreneurs, she said. Parida appreciated the joint efforts of the Tourism, Sports and Home departments in opening a new chapter in Odisha's tourism landscape and called upon all departments to work collectively to make Odisha a world-class tourism destination.

Chief Secretary Anu Garg, who was present at the event, said the State government is prioritising tourism development with the vision of achieving Utkarsh Odisha by 2036



and Viksit Bharat by 2047. She stressed that all departments should explore ways

to contribute to tourism growth alongside their core responsibilities and

emphasised the importance of collective efforts. Garg expressed hope that adven-

ture tourism would boost local economies and create large-scale employment

opportunities, and called upon stakeholders to adopt the mantra "Think India, Think Odisha".

Officials said the Go-Adventure portal will simplify registration, verification and licensing procedures for adventure tourism projects. The MoU with the IMF is expected to strengthen safety audits and training programmes for land-based adventure activities such as trekking and rock climbing.

The partnership with the Aero Club of India will regulate aerial adventure sports like paragliding and paramotoring in line with national aviation safety norms, officials said. To improve ease of doing busi-

ness, 'Licence to Operate' (LTO) and 'Recognition to Set Up' (RTS) certificates were issued to domestic operators, and several adventure tourism operators were formally handed licences during the programme.

Among distinguished guests, former Union minister and ACI president Rajiv Pratap Rudy and Pawan Gupta from the National Institute of Water Sports (NIWS), Goa, joined the programme virtually. The initiative is expected to enhance safety standards, encourage investment, generate employment and promote Odisha as a leading adventure tourism destination in India, said a tourism officer.

## 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 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.

Pratap 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, collective 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

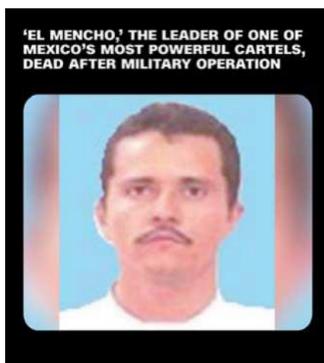
NEMESIO Oseguera Cervantes, known as "El Mencho", died on Sunday while being taken to the capital Mexico City, after being seriously injured in clashes between his supporters and the Mexican army. Four CJNG members were killed in the town of Tapalpa, the central-western Jalisco state. Three army personnel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

### ECI holds first nat'l roundtable in 27 years

NEW DELHI: The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Tuesday convened a National Roundtable Conference with State Election Commissioners at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi, marking the first such meeting in 27 years.

The previous conference of this kind was held in 1999. The day-long conference is being chaired by Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar in the presence of Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi.

State Election Commissioners (SECs) from all States and Union Territories are participating in the deliberations along with their legal and technical experts. Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs) from all 36 States and Union Territories are also in attendance.

According to the ECI, the primary objective of the conference is to foster greater synergy between the Commission and State Election Commissions in managing electoral processes and logistics within their respective legal frameworks.

# Enthusiasm marks legislators' sports meet

HANS NEWS SERVICE VIJAYAWADA

THE Andhra Pradesh Legislators' Sports and Games 2026, titled 'Aatavidupu', commenced on a grand note on Tuesday at the Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation (IGMC) Stadium in Vijayawada.

A total of 156 legislators, including MLAs and MLCs — among them several women representatives — are participating in athletics, indoor games and team sports. The competitions are designed to foster fitness, camaraderie and unity among elected members. Residents of Vijayawada turned up in good numbers to witness their representatives showcase sporting talent beyond the legislative arena.

The games will continue until February 26 at the IGMC Stadium and the Dandamudi Rajagopal Rao Municipal Corporation Indoor Stadium.



Assembly Speaker Ch Ayyanna Patrudu, Deputy Speaker K Raghurama Krishna Raju, Council Chairman Koyye Moshen Raju and others inaugurating the AP State Legislature Sports Meet-2026 at IGMC stadium in Vijayawada on Tuesday

Photo: Ch Venkata Mastan

The inaugural ceremony was attended by Assembly Speaker Chintakayala Ayyanna Patrudu, Legislative Council Chairman Koyye Moshen Raju, Deputy Speaker K Raghurama Krishna Raju, chief whips G V Anjaneyulu and Panchumarthi Anuradha, Saap chairman A Ravi Naidu, vice-chair-

man and managing director S Bharani, and Legislative Secretary Prasanna Kumar, among others.

Vijayawada East MLA Gadde Rammoan Rao and MLC Kavali Greeshma carried the sports torch into the stadium. The dignitaries unveiled the 'Kreedha Jyoti' and declared the games

open, while senior legislator Gorantla Butchaiah Chowdary administered the sports pledge.

The opening tug-of-war contest set an energetic tone. Ayyanna Patrudu said the event helps legislators relieve stress, recalling it was first introduced by former Chief Minister NT Rama Rao.

# Atchanna flays YSRCP, vows veterinary revival

- Minister alleges YSRCP left animal husbandry in collapse, with hospitals lacking medicines, equipment, and staff
- Says 3,176 centres became ineffective; 485 new buildings built under coalition, but 826 institutions still in poor condition
- Govt plans phased Rs 302.5 cr programme (2026-29) to rebuild veterinary infrastructure for farmers and livestock-rearers

HANS NEWS SERVICE VIJAYAWADA

AGRICULTURE and animal husbandry minister K Atchannaidu on Tuesday launched a sharp attack on the previous YSRCP government, alleging that all departments were virtually "locked up" during its five-year rule, pushing the state into administrative disorder.

Replying to questions raised by MLAs in the Assembly regarding the lack of facilities and appointments in veterinary hospitals, the minister said the animal husbandry department was systematically weakened under the previous regime.

He stated that essential infrastructure for farmers and

livestock rearers was neglected, with veterinary hospitals reduced to mere namesake institutions. "There were no medicines, no modern equipment, buildings were in dilapidated condition, and staff shortages were rampant," he said.

Although 3,176 centres function under the animal husbandry department across the state, many became ineffective due to alleged negligence. Even buildings constructed through farmers' contributions were not maintained, he added.

The minister asserted that revival efforts began only after the coalition government assumed office. He revealed that 485 new buildings have been constructed so far with



Agriculture minister K Atchannaidu answering a question in the Assembly in Amaravati on Tuesday

assistance from RIDF-NABARD and ESVD funds. However, 826 institutions still remain in poor condition. Of these, 400 require new buildings at an estimated cost of ₹265.10 crore, while 426 need urgent repairs costing Rs 37.40 crore.

He said the government has prepared a phased plan under the RIDF-NABARD budget from 2026-27 to 2028-29 to strengthen veterinary infrastructure. The coalition government's goal, he emphasised, is to rebuild the department to genuinely serve farmers and livestock rearers.

# Kerala is now Keralam

Continued from front page

However, any such Bill can be introduced in parliament only after it is referred by the President to the concerned State legislature for its views. Once the Assembly's views are received, the Union government may proceed to obtain the President's recommendation and introduce the Bill in parliament.

The Cabinet approval marks the first formal step toward the proposed constitutional amendment.

In its 2024 resolution, the Kerala Assembly noted that the State was formed on linguistic lines on November 1, 1956, and that the name "Keralam" has long been used in Malayalam and during the independence movement to refer to a unified Malayalam-speaking region.

The Assembly unanimously urged the Central government to take steps to modify the First Schedule to the Con-

stitution to reflect the name "Keralam". Following the resolution, the Kerala government formally requested the Union government to initiate the constitutional process. The Ministry of Home Affairs examined the proposal after which the draft cabinet note was circulated to the Department of Legal Affairs and the Legislative Department of the Ministry of Law and Justice. Both departments concurred with the proposal.

# Indian exporters set to gain as US customs rolls out 10% global tariff

Continued from front page

The transit time for the US ports ranges from 45-60 days. So, at any given point of time one-eighth of annual exports to the US of \$10-12 billion are on seas so the benefit could be considerable if importers share the benefit of lower duties, he added.

Tariffs on India remained at 50% from last week of August 2025 to February 6 this year. Both sides issued a joint statement that removed 25% tariffs related to Russian oil purchases and agreed to bring down

reciprocal tariffs to 18% from 25%. Before the order of Indian reciprocal tariffs came, the US Supreme Court struck down all country-specific tariffs.

The US Customs and Border Protection notified 10% additional duties on imported articles from all countries for a period of 150 days under the Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974 just hours before the news came into force at 12:01 am eastern standard time on Tuesday (February 24).

# IYC chief arrested

Continued from front page

Police also claimed that Chib's associates raised "anti-national slogans" and "tried to incite riot-like situations" at the venue. They also claimed Chib did not cooperate with the probe and did not disclose names of other co-accused and the source of printing T-shirts used in the protest.

Chib, who was not present at the venue during the protest last Friday, was produced before a court here, which sent him to four days police custody after rejecting his counsel's argument that he had cooperated with the probe and was not on the run. Police argued that the conspiracy went beyond printing the T-shirts with slogans against Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

# Well-organised 'syndicate' behind ghee scam: Naidu

Continued from front page

Naidu also referred to past controversies, including allegations about a "pink diamond" and claims of religious propaganda on RTC bus tickets to Tirumala. He said these were part of attempts to defame both TTD and his government. "This is not just about adulterated ghee," he said. "It is about faith, governance, and the sanctity of Tirumala."

## AMID US STRIKE FEARS...

# Iran set to buy Chinese anti-ship cruise missiles

TEHRAN

IRAN is close to a deal with China to purchase anti-ship cruise missiles, according to six people with knowledge of the negotiations, just as the United States deploys a vast naval force near the Iranian coast ahead of possible strikes on the Islamic Republic.

The deal for the Chinese-made CM302 missiles is near completion, though no delivery date has been agreed, the people said. The super-sonic missiles have a range of about 290 kilometres and are

designed to evade shipborne defenses by flying low and fast. Their deployment would significantly enhance Iran's strike capabilities and pose a threat to US naval forces in the region, two weapons experts said.

Negotiations with China to buy the missile weapons systems, which began at least two years ago, accelerated sharply after the 12-day war between Israel and Iran in June, according to the six people with knowledge of the talks, including three officials who were briefed by the Iranian government as

well as three security officials. As talks entered their final stages last summer, senior Iranian military and government officials travelled to China, including Massoud Oraei, Iran's deputy defence minister, according to two of the security officials. Oraei's visit has not been previously reported.

"It's a complete game-changer if Iran has super-sonic capability to attack ships in the area," said Danny Citrinowicz, a former Israeli intelligence officer and now senior Iran researcher at National

Security Studies think tank. "These missiles are very difficult to intercept."

Reuters could not determine how many missiles were involved in the potential deal, how much Iran had agreed to pay, or whether China would go through with the agreement now given heightened tensions in the region. "Iran has military and security agreements with its allies and now is an appropriate time to make use of these agreements," an Iranian foreign ministry official told Reuters.

The Chinese delegation to

the United Nations directed Reuters to seek comment from the Foreign Ministry in Beijing. The foreign and defense ministries did not respond to requests for comment.

The White House did not directly address the negotiations between Iran and China over the missile system when asked by Reuters. US President Donald Trump has been clear that "either we will make a deal or we will have to do something very tough like last time," a White House official said, referring to the current standoff with Iran.

# Data of Andhra University students, staff on dark web

Continued from front page

The leaked information is believed to have originated from the Edusphere Platform, which is understood to be a technology partner providing digital services to Andhra University. Investigators and cybersecurity analysts pointed to the alleged vulnerability of the platform's website, edusphere.in, whose SSL certificate had reportedly expired some time ago. An expired SSL certificate can make a website more susceptible to cyberattacks, data interception, and

unauthorised access if not promptly renewed.

If confirmed, the breach could have serious implications for thousands of students, alumni, and staff members. Experts warn that exposed personal and academic data can be exploited for phishing scams, financial fraud, impersonation, and other forms of cybercrime.

As of now, there has been no detailed official statement confirming the extent of the breach or clarifying the immediate steps being taken to secure affected systems.

Cybersecurity professionals emphasise the need for a thorough forensic audit, immediate containment measures, password resets, and enhanced data protection protocols.

The incident underscores the growing vulnerability of educational institutions to cyber threats and highlights the urgent need for robust digital infrastructure, regular security audits, and strict compliance with data protection standards to safeguard sensitive academic records.

# A Nobel laureate makes Modi's vision a reality

Continued from front page

Most machines use the dew point, which is the exact temperature where air gets so cold that it can no longer hold moisture, forcing it to turn into liquid droplets, much like the fog we see on a cold window or a chilled soda can. This takes a massive amount of electricity.

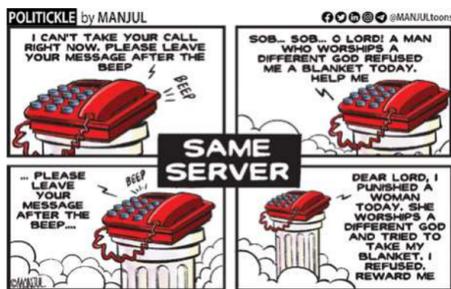
Adsorption, however, is a much more natural and elegant process. Instead of forcing the air to get cold, the water molecules are simply glued to the surface of a material because they are chemically attracted to it.

This shift in approach is the secret to the efficiency of Yaghi's technology. By removing the need to refrigerate massive amounts of air, the system avoids the huge energy bills and heavy, noisy machinery that make old-

school water harvesters impractical.

Instead, these molecular sponges do the work for free, using their natural hunger to pull in water even when the air feels bone dry. It turns a forced, high-energy mechanical struggle into a quiet, natural chemical process.

The true struggle of previous atmospheric water generators has been their dependence on high humidity. Most fail when relative humidity drops below 45 per cent, leaving desert communities stranded. However, Atoco has designed its technology to be resilient, functioning efficiently even in environments with less than 20 per cent humidity. This means it can produce water in places where it almost never rains and where the air feels like a furnace.



# Offsite mock drill to enhance industry safety standards



HANS NEWS SERVICE VISAKHAPATNAM

WITH an aim to further strengthen the safety standards of industries and enhance the ability to respond in a coordinated manner in emergency situations, a level-3 Emergency Response and Disaster Management Plan offsite mock drill was carried out at Narava village.

Jointly conducted by HPCL-Visakh Refinery, Visakhapatnam Dispatch Station, the mock drill included real-time situations. As part of it, response measures were demonstrated by simulating situations like fire and product leakage technically. Immediate identification of incident information and implementation of alert system, control of the affected area, fire control measures, evacuation of personnel and local people to safe areas were coordinated. Fire services, district administration, police



An Emergency Response and Disaster Management Plan offsite mock drill carried out at Narava village in Visakhapatnam

department, medical department, industrial safety teams and other emergency services departments coordinated in the drill, showcasing their response capacity. Providing first aid to the injured, testing the effectiveness of communication systems and further improving coordination between various departments were demonstrated at the site. Speaking on the occasion,

officials said that level-3 offsite mock drills will enhance the preparedness of organisations to effectively deal with emergencies and strengthen coordination between departments. HPCL chief general manager L.V. Nageswara Rao, HPCL deputy general manager Vikram Singh, Joint Chief Inspector of Factories J. Shiva Shankar, deputy chief inspector of factories B Suresh and other staff participated.



# Ramadan cooking made effortless

Freeze everyday cooking essentials in ice cube trays to save time, reduce stress, and simplify Ramadan meal preparation

ASKARI JAFFER

The holy month of Ramadan is a time of reflection, prayer, and togetherness. However, for many families, it also brings the added responsibility of preparing elaborate suhoor and iftar meals daily. Balancing work, household chores, children, and fasting can quickly become exhausting, especially when hours are spent chopping, grinding, and sautéing in the kitchen. To make daily cooking more manageable, a simple yet highly effective kitchen hack is gaining popularity — using ice cube trays to store pre-prepared essentials. This practical approach helps cut down cooking time significantly and ensures that meals can be prepared quickly without compromising on flavour.



### Why Ice Cube Trays Work So Well

Ice cube trays are not just for freezing water. They are perfectly portioned, compact, and ideal for storing small quantities of frequently used

ingredients. By preparing and freezing basic cooking components in advance, you can avoid repetitive prep work every day.

The best part? These frozen cubes can be added directly

to hot pans without thawing, making the cooking process seamless and stress-free.

**Lemon Juice Cubes For Instant Freshness**  
Lemon juice is a staple



in many households during Ramadan, whether for refreshing drinks, salads, marinades, or curries. Instead of squeezing lemons every day, you can extract juice from 10 to 12 fresh lemons at once and pour it into ice cube trays.

Once frozen, these cubes can be stored in airtight containers in the freezer. Whenever needed, simply drop a cube into your lemonade, curry, or dressing. It saves time and ensures you always have fresh lemon flavour ready to use.

### Ginger-Garlic Paste Ready In Seconds

Ginger and garlic form the base of countless Indian and Middle Eastern dishes. Peeling, chopping, and grinding them daily can be time-consuming, particularly during fasting hours.

A convenient solution is to blend ginger and garlic into

a smooth paste with a small amount of olive oil. The oil helps preserve the paste and maintain its texture. Pour the mixture into an ice cube tray and freeze. These ready-to-use cubes can instantly enhance curries, gravies, stir-fries, and marinades.

### Flavour Boosters For Curries And Kebabs

To elevate everyday dishes, you can prepare a flavour-packed mixture using Thai chillies, mint, and cilantro. Blend them into a smooth paste and freeze in small portions. This vibrant mix works beautifully in curries, kebabs, chutneys, and even as a quick marinade base.

Having these flavour cubes prepared in advance eliminates the need to wash and grind herbs daily, making meal prep far more efficient.

### Tomato Base Without The Hassle

Tomatoes are another essential ingredient used in gravies and masalas. Instead of cooking them from scratch each day, you can prepare a thick tomato paste in advance by cooking fresh tomatoes over medium heat until they break down.

Once cooled, pour the paste into ice cube trays and freeze. These cubes can be added straight to hot oil while preparing curries or rice dishes, cutting down preparation time significantly.

### Golden Fried Onions For Instant Biryani

Sautéing onions until perfectly golden brown requires patience and constant attention. During Ramadan, when energy levels may dip, this task can feel especially demanding.

By frying a large batch of sliced onions in advance and freezing them in cubes, you can save valuable time. These cubes are ideal for biryani, gravies, and festive dishes often prepared during Ramadan gatherings.

### More Time For What Truly Matters

This simple freezer hack transforms daily cooking into a quicker, more organised process. Instead of spending long hours in the kitchen, you can focus on prayers, family time, and rest.

While this method is especially helpful during Ramadan, it can be adopted throughout the year for efficient meal planning. A few hours of preparation can save countless minutes every day — making cooking less stressful and far more enjoyable.

# Deepti Naval enjoys tour of Punjab fields, shares pictures



Veteran actress Deepti Naval is currently soaking in the rustic charm of Punjab and was seen spending some good time in the fields, while also attending a literary festival in Chandigarh.

Sharing glimpses from her visit, Deepti captioned one of her posts, "In the fields of Punjab." The actress in the pictures shared, seems to be enjoying a quiet and scenic getaway amid her professional commitments.

The actress recently was in Chandigarh to attend a literary festival, where she participated

in a book session. In the first picture shared on her social media, Deepti is seen standing in the fields, amidst blooming crops and is seen surrounded by rows of trees. Dressed in a long, earthy-toned coat paired with a scarf and sunglasses, the veteran actress looks stylish and chic.

In another post shared by Deepti features a photograph with singer Sunaini Guleri and wrote, "With singer Sunaini Guleri in Chandigarh during my book session."

Known for her meaningful cinema and

literary pursuits, Deepti Naval has been a part of the Bollywood industry for almost four decades.

The actress despite being a popular face in the industry, believes in living a grounded and simple life. A few months ago, Deepti had treated netizens with her selfie picture and revealed that she was riding in an auto rickshaw.

Sharing the simplicity of the ride, Deepti mentioned that she was headed to a plush luxury hotel in Mumbai for lunch. She wrote, "No car, no driver, sitting in an auto going to the Marriott for lunch!"

# Aishwarya Sakhuja on meeting herself without 'filters or performance'

Actress Aishwarya Sakhuja shared a profound reflection on self-growth, saying she is learning to meet herself without "filters or performance."

Taking to Instagram, the actress opened up about healing, restraint and quiet strength. She also spoke about the intimacy of embracing one's truth without rushing the process or shrinking her thoughts, adding that sometimes, simply being honest with oneself is enough.

"Becoming someone who doesn't rush her healing. Becoming someone who doesn't shrink her thoughts. Becoming someone who knows that strength doesn't always look like fire,

sometimes it looks like restraint," she wrote as the caption.

The 41-year-old actress spoke about the intimacy of meeting oneself without any filters or performance.

"There's a certain intimacy in meeting yourself like this. No filters. No performance. Just truth, staring back. And maybe that's enough," she added.

Aishwarya was a Miss India finalist in 2006. From 2010 to 2012, she starred in the TV show 'Saas Bina Sasural'. She was also seen in other fictional shows, including 'Main Naa Bhoollungi', 'Trideviyaan', and 'Rishta.com'.

The actress is primarily known for her role as Ahaana Khurana in 'Yeh

Hai Chahatein' and as air hostess Shilpa Shrivastava in 'Zyada Mat Udd'. She was also a contestant on reality shows 'Nach Baliye 7' and 'Fear Factor: Khatron Ke Khiladi 7'.

On the film front, she was last seen in 'Ujda Chaman' (2019), directed by Abhishek Pathak. The film stars Sunny Singh, Maanvi Gargro, Saurabh Shukla, Karishma Sharma and Aishwarya Sakhuja. It is an official remake of the 2017 Kannada dramedy 'Ondu Motteya Kathe'. The film revolves around a balding 30-year-old bachelor searching for a wife under a strict deadline.

On the personal front, Aishwarya married her longtime beau in December 2014.



### CROSSWORD

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**ACROSS**

- Medicinal amount (6)
- Vigour, energy (3)
- Against (4)
- "Return of the Jedi" creature (4)
- Uproar (6)
- Gujarat city (9)
- Coup d' - : change of Govt. (4)
- Greek letter (3)
- Mineral used as a gem (5)
- Firefighter Red (5)
- Bashful (3)
- First three alphabets (3)
- Final authority (3-2)
- Follower of major Indian religion (5)
- A can (3)
- Fret and fume (4)
- Bride and groom, you'll agree? (9)
- Swelling of big toe (6)
- Middy (4)
- Foretell, predict (4)
- Intestine (3)
- Be dazed; not fully conscious (6)

**DOWN**

- Tizzy (6)
- Compassion (8)
- Festive occasion (4)
- Spellbind (7)
- "V" in VCR (5)
- Big, as prefix (4)
- Wandering (7)
- Frequency unit (3)
- Playthings (4)
- Fathers (4)
- Bordering on? (8)
- Seasoned pork sausage (7)
- Pretentious talker (7)
- Hasten (3)
- Stylish (6)
- Surprise ending (5)
- Extended (4)
- One who prefers charges (4)

**Solution to February 24**

### SUDOKU

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**Solution to February 24**

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

# Business

**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's it 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



iQOO 15R smartphone

iQOO, the specialised mobile brand from Vivo stable, on Tuesday launched iQOO 15R in India as it eyes more young professionals' user base in the country.

The iQOO 15R has several innovative features that enable young professionals to seamlessly switch between work, gaming, and entertainment, the company said at the launch event in Bengaluru.

The new variant of the brand is powered by the Snapdragon 8 Gen 5, ensuring higher processing power,

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 Rs40,000 to Rs45,000 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-



POWERGRID logo

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.

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



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.



Gold and silver bars

## 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 MS-MEs 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.

"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, Ten-

dulkar 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.



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-

rica also win their remaining games, both sides would progress. However, if South Africa drop one match, three teams could be locked on four points, pushing qualification down to Net Run Rate.

Should South Africa lose both, India and the West Indies would advance.

One win or fewer: Anything short of back-to-back wins will end India's campaign, regardless of other outcomes in the group. The margin for error has vanished. India's semi-final hopes now hinge not only on results but also on improving a Net Run Rate that has already taken a substantial hit.

T20 WC SUPER 8S TABLE					
TEAM	P	W	L	PT	NR
<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.PED) and Diploma in Physical Education (D.PED) 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.

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.

TG PECET-2026 is meant for admission into B.PED and D.PED 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>

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.



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

announced 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.



## What recruiters will truly seek from 2026 data science graduates

RECRUITERS NOW PRIORITISE STRATEGIC THINKING, ETHICAL AI AWARENESS, AND PRODUCTION-READY SKILLS OVER TECHNICAL BASICS ALONE

DR. ABHIJIT DASGUPTA

The data science landscape is not merely evolving; it is undergoing a profound transformation. The graduate of 2021, equipped with Python, SQL, and regression models, no longer represents the ideal profile for 2026. As artificial intelligence becomes deeply embedded across industries, regulations tighten, and business challenges grow more complex, recruiters are redefining expectations. For the class of 2026, securing a leading role will depend not only on technical expertise but on adaptability, ethical judgment, and strategic business understanding.

### The foundational bedrock: Mastery of the modern stack

Core technical skills remain essential, but expectations have advanced. Python and SQL are baseline requirements rather than differentiators. Recruiters increasingly expect familiarity with orchestration tools such as Dagster and Prefect, MLOps platforms like MLflow and Kubeflow, and cloud ecosystems including AWS SageMaker, Google Vertex AI, and Azure ML. The ability to transition a model from experimentation to a scalable, monitored production environment is now fundamental.

Large Language Models



(LLMs) are reshaping the field. While pre-training massive models is not mandatory, graduates must understand transformer architecture, retrieval-augmented generation (RAG), and fine-tuning methods such as LoRA. Beyond simple API usage, recruiters value candidates who can customise LLMs for business workflows while understanding cost, limitations, and bias implications.

### The strategic shift: Problem discovery and translation

The role of a data scientist has expanded beyond technical execution. Recruiters now prioritise "problem discovery." Graduates must demonstrate the ability to navigate ambiguity in business contexts, identify high-impact opportunities, and collaborate with domain experts across functions.

Equally important is "executive fluency"—the ability to translate model performance into business value. Communicating improvements in terms of revenue growth, risk reduction, or customer experience distinguishes strong candidates. While tools like Tableau and Power BI support visualisation, the core capability lies in articulating measurable business outcomes.

### Ethics and governance as core competencies

As AI systems influence high-stakes decisions, ethical awareness has become integral. Recruiters increasingly assess knowledge of regulatory frameworks such as the EU AI Act and practical approaches to fairness, accountability, and transparency. Graduates should be



prepared to explain how they evaluate bias, ensure reproducibility, and maintain data lineage. Familiarity with explainability tools like SHAP and LIME, along with human-in-the-loop design principles, demonstrates readiness to build trustworthy systems rather than isolated algorithms.

### Systems thinking and collaboration

The era of standalone models has passed. Data scientists must adopt a systems mindset, recognising that models operate within broader ecosystems involving pipelines, deployment frameworks, user interfaces, and feedback loops. Awareness of data quality, retraining cycles, and performance monitoring is critical.

Cross-functional collaboration is equally essential. Successful candidates show experience working with engineers on CI/CD processes, product managers on defining KPIs, and designers on user-centric solutions. Evidence of multidisciplinary teamwork strengthens

employability.

### Learning agility in a rapidly changing field

With the rapid pace of technological advancement, learning agility has become one of the most valued traits. Recruiters seek individuals who continuously update their knowledge, experiment with new tools, and critically assess emerging trends.

A dynamic portfolio often speaks louder than a resume. GitHub repositories showcasing evolving projects, engagement with new research, or contributions to open-source initiatives reflect adaptability and initiative.

### The graduate portfolio: A blueprint

- Portfolio Over Resume: A dynamic GitHub with well-documented projects, including a production-like end-to-end pipeline, an LLM application addressing a real problem, and a clear analysis of ethical considerations.
- The "T-Shaped" Depth: Deep,

hands-on expertise in one or two advanced areas complemented by broad business and communication skills.

- Narrative-Driven Interviews: Prepared not just to solve a coding test, but to articulate the "why" behind past projects, the trade-offs made, the business impact achieved, and the lessons learned from failure.

The ideal 2026 graduate presents a holistic profile: a well-documented project portfolio, deep expertise in selected areas, and strong communication skills. Beyond solving technical problems, they articulate the reasoning behind decisions, the trade-offs considered, the measurable impact delivered, and lessons drawn from challenges. In this transformed landscape, success belongs to those who combine technical excellence with strategic insight, ethical responsibility, and continuous learning.

*(The author is Director – Bachelor of Data Science, SP Jain School of Global Management)*



CBSE Class 12 Accountancy Exam Analysis

Accountancy exam rated moderate, balanced

The CBSE Class 12 Accountancy board examination was rated moderate in difficulty and largely aligned with the prescribed syllabus, according to feedback from teachers and students.

Rajan Dutta, PGT Accountancy at Silverline Prestige School, said the question paper reflected a balanced mix of theory and practical components. Most questions were drawn from the NCERT textbook and topics emphasised during classroom teaching. The paper included case-based and application-oriented questions designed to assess conceptual clarity rather than rote learning. Numerical questions were generally straightforward, though a few required careful calculations and step-by-step presentation.

"The Accountancy paper was fair and tested students' understanding of core concepts. Those who practised consistently and revised class materials found it manageable," Dutta said.

Students described the examination as moderate overall. While many found the structure familiar and manageable, some noted that certain case-study questions were slightly time-consuming. Overall, the paper was viewed as a well-balanced assessment that effectively evaluated students' conceptual understanding, analytical ability, and application skills in Accountancy.

## CIM 2026 highlights AI, research ethics and industry-ready methodologies

The International Conference on Contemporary Issues in Management (CIM) 2026, hosted by the International School of Management Excellence in Bengaluru, brought together academicians, researchers and industry professionals to deliberate on artificial intelligence, research ethics and evolving industry expectations. The conference was the confering of the Lifetime Achievement Award on T. V. Rao, a pioneer in human resource development and co-founder of the National HRD Network. In his address, Dr. Rao emphasised the need to balance technological advancement with human judgment. He noted that while AI can perform tasks efficiently, creativity and contextual decision-making remain uniquely human strengths.

Panel discussions throughout the conference examined how AI is reshaping research practices in management education. Speakers observed that AI tools are increasingly being used for literature reviews, data organisation and drafting support. However, concerns were raised about unverified outputs, fabricated references and plagiarism risks. Participants stressed that AI should serve as an aid rather than a substitute for independent analysis and



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critical thinking.

Ethical considerations emerged as a central theme. Faculty members highlighted the importance of transparency in AI-assisted research and the responsibility of academic supervisors in ensuring originality and integrity.

The conference also reflected changing research trends among students. Session chairs noted a shift from traditional statistical tools such as ANOVA and

regression towards advanced techniques including structural equation modelling (SEM), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and machine learning models like Random Forest and XGBoost.

Another recurring discussion focused on bridging the gap between academia and industry. Panelists underscored the need to align research methodologies with practical business applications to enhance employability and relevance.



## IIT Roorkee to develop AI-driven BMS for energy storage

Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with MaxVolt Energy to collaborate on the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven Battery Management Systems (BMS) for energy storage and electric mobility applications.

The partnership will focus on integrating AI and Machine Learning (ML) algorithms into next-generation BMS platforms. The proposed systems aim to enable real-time monitoring, predictive diagnostics, adaptive charging protocols, and improved thermal management for lithium-based batteries.

According to officials, the research initiative will also work on enhancing the accuracy of State-of-Charge (SoC) and State-of-Health (SoH) estimations. The objective is to improve battery lifecycle management, reduce degradation, and support performance under varying operational and climatic conditions.

A key component of

the collaboration includes incorporating predictive maintenance features. By analysing battery performance data and estimating remaining life cycles, the system is expected to assist in decisions related to battery reuse, refurbishment, or recycling. The research will be aligned with Indian grid and environmental conditions.

The joint programme will involve faculty members, research scholars, and engineering teams from both institutions. The teams will work on designing, prototyping, and validating AI-enabled BMS solutions. Vishal Gupta, Co-Founder and Technical Director at MaxVolt Energy and MaxVolt ReEarth, stated that the collaboration aims to strengthen research and development efforts in advanced battery technologies. He also indicated that a Centre of Excellence is proposed to be set up at the IIT Roorkee campus to support research on second-life battery reusability detection using BMS technologies.

## HOW TO MASTER MOCK TEST ANALYSIS

How structured analysis can sharpen accuracy, speed, and exam strategy

Taking mock tests is an essential part of exam preparation, but their true value lies in how effectively they are analysed. Many students focus only on the final score, overlooking the deeper insights that mock tests provide. A structured analysis can transform mistakes into learning opportunities and significantly improve overall performance.

The first step in analysing a mock test is to go beyond marks and examine accuracy. Identify how many questions were attempted correctly, incorrectly, and left unanswered. This helps in understanding whether the issue lies in conceptual clarity, careless errors, or poor time management. A high number of incorrect answers may indicate guesswork or gaps in understanding, while too many unattempted questions may suggest slow problem-solving speed.

Next, conduct a topic-wise analysis. Break down performance according to subjects and chapters. This will reveal strengths and weak areas clearly. For instance, you may perform well in theory-based questions but struggle with numerical or application-based ones. Recognising such patterns allows you to plan targeted revision rather than revisiting the entire syllabus. Time analysis is equally



important. Review how much time was spent on each section or question. Did you spend too long on difficult problems? Did you rush through easier ones and make careless mistakes? Effective time allocation is crucial in competitive exams, and mock tests provide the perfect opportunity to refine this strategy.

Another critical aspect is reviewing mistakes carefully. Do not just note the correct answer — understand why your response was wrong. Was it due to a conceptual gap, misinterpretation of the question, calculation error, or overconfidence? Maintaining an error log can help track recurring mistakes and ensure they are not repeated in future tests.

Comparative performance tracking also plays a role. Instead of focusing on one test score, observe trends over multiple mocks. Consistent improvement in accu-

racy and percentile ranking indicates progress, while stagnation signals the need for strategy adjustments.

### Practical tips for effective mock test analysis

- Analyse the test within 24 hours while the paper is still fresh in your mind.
  - Categorise mistakes into conceptual, calculation, and time-management errors.
  - Revise weak topics immediately after identifying them.
  - Reattempt incorrectly answered questions without time pressure.
  - Track progress through a performance journal or spreadsheet.
- When approached systematically, mock test analysis becomes a powerful tool for improvement. It shifts preparation from random practice to strategic learning, helping students steadily convert effort into measurable success.



## 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.

