



# THE Hans India



**BJP MP's remarks on namaz in Aligarh draw flak from Oppn**  
The remarks of a BJP MP that he does not know what Eid or Ramzan is while opposing namaz in this Uttar Pradesh district have gone viral on social media, drawing criticism from opposition politicians. **P6**

**TG Speaker's order on anti-defection petitions is a tricky constitutional test**  
It seems like the Anti-Defection Law is a defective law or a totally defective conclusion on the judgment of the Speaker of Telangana, Gaddam Prasad Kumar, on March 11. This has intensified a debate on whether the Speaker's decision was based on a strictly. **P4**

**Markets rebound over 1% on bargain buying after 3-day fall**  
Stock market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded by over 1 per cent on Monday after facing a massive drubbing in the past three trading days, driven by value-buying in blue-chip banking counters. **P7**

**Raashii Khanna promises vintage Pawan Kalyan magick**  
The excitement around 'Ustaad Bhagat Singh' has been steadily building ever since the project brought together Power Star Pawan Kalyan and director Harish Shankar, the blockbuster duo behind 'Gabbar Singh'. **P8**

Simultaneously published from Hyderabad | Warangal | Tirupati | Vijayawada | Visakhapatnam | Khammam | Kurnool | Delhi: RNI No: DELENG/2017/74095  
Follow @ /thehansindia /thehansindiaweb /thehansindia /TheHansIndiaWeb /thehansindia

**RAMZAN TIMINGS**  
IFTAR (Tue) 06:32 PM  
SEHAR (Wed) 05:00 AM

**WINDOWS**  
**Epstein files: Puri's daughter moves Delhi HC**

NEW DELHI: Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri's daughter has moved the Delhi High Court for the removal of "false" and "defamatory" social media content linking her to convicted American sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. The lawsuit by Himayani Puri is likely to be heard in the high court this week. In her lawsuit seeking Rs 10 crore as damages and an order to restrain several entities from disseminating defamatory content, Himayani Puri said there was a "coordinated and malicious online campaign" to link her to Epstein and his crimes. She also sought an unconditional apology and retraction from the defendant entities. "Commencing on or around 22.02.2026, a series of false, misleading and defamatory posts, articles, videos and digital material were published, disseminated and amplified across social media and intermediary platforms including inter alia X, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, digital news portals and other web-based publications," the plea said.

**Red Fort blast: 2 sent to 15-day judicial custody**

NEW DELHI: A Delhi court on Monday sent two Red Fort blast conspiracy accused to 15 days of judicial custody. Special Judge Pitambar Dutt sent Zameer Ahmad Ahangar and Tufail Ahmad Bhat to jail after the completion of their five days in NIA custody. Ahangar and Bhat, both from Jammu and Kashmir, were formally arrested by the NIA in February for their active involvement in the conspiracy related to the Delhi blast.

**Widow raped in UP's Hathras, accused flees**

HATHRAS: A 25-year-old man has allegedly raped a 24-year-old widow in this Uttar Pradesh district, police said on Monday. The incident took place in a village located within the Sikandarao police station limits. The accused fled the scene after committing the crime when the victim raised an alarm, police said.

Trust, Reliability & Service  
Synonymous with Kapil Chits  
KAPIL GROUP  
46 Years  
Visit Us: www.kapilchits.com  
KAPIL CHITS  
SMALL SAVINGS GROW BIG WITH KAPIL

IRREGULAR by MANJUL  
If there was no shortage of LPG, as you claimed, why do you want credit for restoring the supply?

**TRUMP'S CALL TO HELP PROTECT STRAIT OF HORMUZ**

## Stop military Ops immediately: China

**Trump may delay his China trip due to the Iran war, but Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent says it's not to pressure Beijing on the Strait of Hormuz; upset at Iran war coverage, FCC chair warns TV networks with license revocation; faces backlash, Trump applauds**

K J M VARMA  
BEIJING

CHINA on Monday called on all sides to immediately stop military operations in West Asia in response to US President Donald Trump's call to join other countries, including Beijing, to help keep the Strait of Hormuz open for international transport. The effective closure of the vital waterway by Iran in retaliation for airstrikes by the US and Israel has proved catastrophic for global energy and trade flows, causing the largest oil supply disruption and soaring global oil prices. China also said it is in talks with the US about Trump's planned visit to Beijing later this month. About Trump's call to China and other countries to deploy warships to keep the strait "open and safe," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian told a media briefing here that the recent tensions in Strait of Hormuz and adjacent waters impacted the flow of the

**LPG supply crisis hits JNU canteens**

NEW DELHI: The JNUSU on Monday said a march to the office of the dean of students will demand preemptive measures ensuring smooth and uninterrupted functioning of mess and dhabas on the campus, amid the LPG supply crisis. The call for the march by the student union -- planned for Tuesday -- comes as the food menus in the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) canteens continue to be hit. According to the two separate letters sent from the Indraprastha Gas Limited to the mess heads of Sabarmati and Lohit hostels, "...supplies to all industrial and commercial customers are being restricted to 80 per cent of their average consumption for last six months with effect from 6 am on 11th March 2026".

goods and international energy and has damaged regional peace and global stability. Again China calls on all sides to immediately stop military operations to avoid further escalation of tensions and prevent regional turbulence having a larger impact on the world economic growth, Lin said.

India said it hasn't engaged in bilateral talks with the US to ensure safe transit of merchant vessels through the Strait of Hormuz. An Indian official said adding

that around 2,20,000 Indians have returned to the country since February 28, when the war first began. Indian carriers have cancelled a total of over 4335 flights, while the foreign carriers cancelled upto 1187 flights. India maintained that there is adequate crude oil inventory in the country, but LPG supply continues to remain a bit concern.

Keir Starmer, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, said Monday that Britain is



working with international partners on a plan to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, while emphasizing that the country does not want to become involved in a broader war.

US Federal Communications Commission chairman Brendan Carr has warned American news television networks of revocation of broadcast licenses over their coverage of the Iran war, remarks that drew sharp political backlash. After US President Donald Trump lashed out at the media coverage of the Iran war, Carr asked news broadcasters to "correct course" and "operate in public interest", failing which they risk losing their licenses. "I am so thrilled to see Carr looking at the licenses of some of these Corrupt and Highly Un-

**Gujarat hikes LPG supply by 20 pc**

GANDHINAGAR: The Gujarat government on Monday said it has ramped up LPG supplies by 20 per cent over normal weekly distribution to ensure an uninterrupted supply, while prioritising Piped Natural Gas (PNG) connections in areas with availability of network. The state has an adequate stock of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), and the supply chain remains uninterrupted, said Mona Khandhar, Additional Chief Secretary of the Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department. The senior official stated that the government has not imposed any restrictions on domestic or commercial use and is taking steps to ensure smooth availability of fuel across sectors.

patriotic "News" Organizations. They get Billions of Dollars of FREE American Airwaves, and use it to perpetuate LIES, both in News and almost all of their Shows, including the Late Night Morons, who get gigantic Salaries for horrible Ratings, and never get, as I used to say

in 'The Apprentice, "FIRED", "Trump said. The Israeli Air Force has destroyed the aircraft used by the Iranian leadership at Mehrabad International Airport in Tehran, marking a significant blow to the regime's strategic mobility.

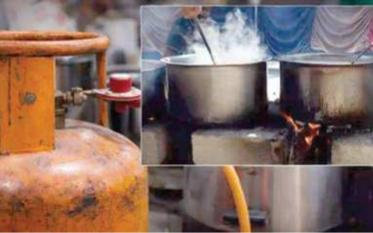
## 'LPG scarcity forcing workers to leave for native places'

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

AUTO component manufacturers are staring at workforce migration to their native places due to LPG cylinder shortage, which could impact production, a situation not as difficult as the COVID pandemic, but could escalate if not resolved, ACMA said on Monday.

The Automotive Component Manufacturers Association of India (ACMA) represents over 1,064 manufacturers, contributing more than 90 per cent of the auto component industry's turnover in the organised sector. "Workers shifted to small gas-enabled burners for cooking purposes as usage of wood was discouraged due to air pollution. Now, with LPG cylinder

**The Automotive Component Manufacturers Association of India represents over 1,064 manufacturers, contributing more than 90 per cent of the auto component industry's turnover in the organised sector; 'workers shifted to small gas-enabled burners for cooking purposes as usage of wood was discouraged due to air pollution'**



shortage, they are finding it difficult to cook at home, and also some of the factory canteens are shut, forcing them to leave for their native places," ACMA Director General Vinnie

at USD 80.2 billion, with USD 22.9 billion in exports and a trade surplus of USD 500 million.

With industry flagging non-availability of commercial LPG as the government focuses on domestic consumers amid supply disruptions caused by the US-Israeli war on Iran, the petroleum and natural gas ministry on March 9 formed a panel to consider their representations.

In a letter to the Ministry of Heavy Industries last week, ACMA had stated that the industry remains deeply integrated with global automotive value chains, and timely support during the present period of geopolitical disruption will help ensure continuity of exports and preserve India's competitiveness in international markets.

**Fire at Cuttack hospital ICU: 10 patients dead**

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR

AT least 10 patients were killed after a major fire broke out in an ICU in Odisha government-run SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack early on Monday, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said. He said that around 11 hospital staff members suffered burn injuries while rescuing patients to safety. The chief minister, who visited the hospital, has formed a six-member fact-finding team, which will investigate the reason behind the fire incident and submit its report by this evening. The fact-finding team headed by Development Commissioner D K Singh will visit SCB Medical College and Hospital and submit a report to the chief secretary by this evening, as per a statement issued by the CMO. Majhi said that the fire probably originated from a short circuit. The fire broke out between 2.30 am and 3 am.

**Assembly to hold Budget Session from March 23**

PURNA SINGH  
NEW DELHI

THE Delhi Legislative Assembly will convene its budget session from March 23 to March 25, during which the government will present its financial roadmap and policy priorities for the 2026-27 financial year. Chief Minister and Finance Minister Rekha Gupta is scheduled to present the annual budget on March 24, outlining the government's spending plans and development agenda for the capital.

The proceedings will begin with an address by the Lieutenant Governor on the opening day, followed by the presentation of the Delhi Economic Survey. The survey will provide a detailed assessment of the city's economic performance, government initiatives and growth trends over the past year.

Officials indicated that the upcoming budget could match or exceed the previous



year's allocation of around ₹1 lakh crore. The government is expected to prioritise sectors such as education and healthcare, with potential measures aimed at strengthening school infrastructure and improving the capacity and services of government hospitals.

Environmental concerns are also expected to be an important part of the financial plan. The government is preparing a budget framework that emphasises sustainability, which may include initiatives to reduce pollution levels, improve the condition of the Yamuna River and expand green spaces across the city. Expanding the electric bus fleet in Delhi's public transport system is also expected to be a key component of the environmental agenda.

**AFTER SC ALLOWS PASSIVE EUTHANASIA FOR FIRST TIME**

## Ranas prepares to say adieu to '12-yr dead' Harish

GHAZIABAD

MEDITATIVE chants in the background, a loving hand on his forehead and the calm of words telling him 'theek hai'... with that, the family of Harish Rana, in a coma for more than 12 years, prepared for his final journey from their home in Ghaziabad to a Delhi hospital where he will breathe his last. The 31-year-old is the first person in India to be allowed passive euthanasia.

**The Supreme Court directed AIIMS-Delhi to ensure that life support is withdrawn with a tailored plan so that dignity is maintained. Though the exact details of when and how the process will pan out are still unclear**

In its landmark judgment last week, the Supreme Court also directed AIIMS-Delhi to ensure that life support is withdrawn



with a tailored plan so that dignity is maintained. Though the exact details of when and how the process will pan out are still unclear, Rana's family is getting ready to say adieu to the young man who fell from a fourth floor balcony in 2013 and suffered severe

head injuries. He has been in a coma since. A video from the Rana home in Ghaziabad shows relatives offering prayers as a member of the Brahma Kumaris puts a 'tilak' on Harish's forehead and says softly, "Sabko maaf karte hue, sabse maafi mangte hue, so jao theek hai..." (Forgiving everyone and asking forgiveness from everyone). Now sleep. It's ok." The Brahma Kumari in the heartbreaking video is Sister Lovely from the

Mohan Nagar Seva Kendra in Ghaziabad, Komal, a member of the Brahma Kumaris based at Mount Abu, told PTI over phone. "She is following a ritual with the words that mean he (Harish) leaves the world in a happy state, seeking and giving forgiveness... it is part of a meditative chant that comforts the soul and eases the entire process of the soul merging with the sublime," Komal said. She added that the family has been deeply

spiritually inclined, which helped them endure the difficult 13-year period of caring for Harish. "Although the couple has another son, advancing age had begun to worry them about who would look after Harish in the future once they were no longer able to," he said, adding that members of the organisation counselled the family during this phase. The family is reluctant to talk. Harish's father Ashok Rana could not be reached for comment.

# Voting for two Rajya Sabha seats in Haryana ends

**BJP candidate Sanjay Bhatia, Cong's Karamvir Singh Boudh and Independent candidate Satish Nandal are in the fray. The BJP is backing Nandal, who had unsuccessfully contested the 2019 Assembly polls as its nominee**

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH

POLLING for the two Rajya Sabha seats in Haryana ended at 4 pm on Monday. While the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD), which has two legislators, abstained from voting, the Congress MLAs, who were shifted to Himachal Pradesh returned shortly after the polling began at 9 am and cast their votes.

In the fray are BJP candidate Sanjay Bhatia, Congress's Karamvir Singh Boudh and Independent candidate Satish Nandal. The BJP is backing Nandal, who had unsuccessfully contested the 2019 assembly polls as its nominee. Meanwhile, Minister Krishan Kumar Bedi told reporters that the BJP has complained to the Election Commission pertaining to "violation of vote secrecy" of

two Congress MLAs. "Two Congress MLAs did not have their ballot folded as it should have been, thus violating the secrecy of their vote. We have complained to the Election Commission," Bedi said. The results are expected to be declared later in the evening. INLD abstained from voting, with party leaders Abhay Singh Chautala and Aditya Devi Lal saying that the decision was taken

keeping in view the people's sentiments. "People are fed up with both the BJP and the Congress," INLD MLA Aditya Devi Lal told reporters. In the 90-member Haryana assembly, the BJP has 48 MLAs, the Congress has 37, the INLD has two MLAs and three legislators are Independents. Two candidates would require 31 votes each to make it to the Rajya Sabha.

Gujarat Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi, who is an observer for the Rajya Sabha polls in Haryana, told reporters it was sad the way the Congress moved its MLAs to Himachal Pradesh and kept a close watch on their movements. "Seeing the condition of Congress MLAs as reported in the media, as a public representative, I feel very sad. The way they were restricted

in closed rooms shows Congress's mistrust towards its own MLAs," Sanghavi said. Haryana Minister Anil Vij, who recently fractured both his legs after a fall, arrived on a wheelchair to cast his vote. Before the polling ended, Vij and some other ministers, including Vipul Goel, expressed confidence that the BJP and the Independent candidate backed by it, will win. On the shifting of Con-



gress MLAs, Vij said, "Congress does not trust its MLAs, which is why they were taken here and there."

The Haryana Congress had on Friday moved 31 of its MLAs to two resorts in Kurri near Shimla. The MLAs,

who were shifted to Kasauli in Solan district on Sunday, returned on Monday morning. They arrived at former chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda's Chandigarh residence, from where they proceeded to cast their votes.

## Fresh snowfall in higher reaches of Kashmir

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR

MOST higher reaches of Kashmir received moderate to heavy snowfall, while the plains were lashed by rains, disrupting vehicular movement in some stretches, officials said on Monday. Several vehicles got stuck following heavy snowfall along the Sinthan Top following which police and army carried out a rescue operation on Sunday night to evacuate 214 stranded tourists and locals, they said.

Officials said the tourist resorts of Gulmarg in north Kashmir's Baramulla district, Doodhpathri in central Kashmir's Budgam district, and Sonamarg in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district, received moderate snowfall. They said the higher reaches, including Pir Ki Gali along the Mughal Road in Shopian district of south Kashmir, Zojilla axis, Gurez in north Kashmir's Baniptora, Sadhna Top in north Kashmir's Kupwara, and Sinthan Top, connecting Anantnag in south Kashmir to Kishtwar in Jammu region, received heavy snowfall. Sadhna Top has received over 12 inches of fresh snowfall, while Sinthan Top around six inches, they added.

# All pre-poll promises fulfilled in 4 yrs: Mann

**300 units of free electricity given to domestic consumers, electricity to farmers during the daytime, opening of 'Aam Aadmi Clinics' and providing up to Rs 10 lakh of cashless medical treatment under Mukh Mantri Sehat Yojna**

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH

PUNJAB Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Monday said his government has fulfilled all the pre-poll "guarantees" within four years of his term and the state is moving forward on the path of progress. Mann was addressing mediapersons here on the completion of four years of the AAP government in the state. He also released a booklet on his government's achievements so far.

Lashing out at the previous governments, Mann said they could not fulfil their poll promises made in their manifestoes within the five years of their respective terms. But the AAP government has fulfilled all guarantees within four years, he claimed.



"Punjab is moving on the path of progress," Mann added. Sharing details of his government's achievements, the chief minister spoke about providing 300 units of free electricity to domestic consumers, providing electricity to farmers during the daytime, opening of 'Aam Aadmi Clinics' and

providing up to Rs 10 lakh of cashless medical treatment under Mukh Mantri Sehat Yojna. He said that after his government came to power in 2022, the opposition parties raised questions over the free electricity promised to the households. "We fulfilled our first poll promise in July," he said, referring to the 300

units of free electricity for households. There was no condition on providing electricity to the people, he said, adding that almost 90 per cent of the households are getting free electricity, which translates into the monthly relief of Rs 5,000 to Rs 7,000 per household. He also spoke about resumption of coal supply from Pachwara coal mine and buying a 540 MW private power plant at an outlay of Rs 1,080 crore.

Mann further said his government set up 881 Aam Aadmi Clinics in the state and over 200 more such clinics would come up. He informed reporters that the number of OPD visits in these clinics crossed 5 crore, indicating people's trust in their services.

## Omar opens Asia's largest tulip garden for visitors



HANS NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR

JAMMU and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday threw open Asia's largest tulip garden on the banks of Dal Lake here for visitors, and hoped that the tourism sector bounces back from the setbacks of last year. Abdullah was accompanied by his Cabinet colleagues and National Conference MLAs to the Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden on Cheshma Shahi Road, officials said. "This will be a new start

for those associated with the tourism industry. They had to go through a very tough phase. However, the situation keeps changing, and we hope that it improves to enable people from outside to come and enjoy the beauty of Jammu and Kashmir," Abdullah told reporters. The tulip garden was among 44 destinations closed for tourists last year following the Pahalgam terror attack in April that killed 26 people. It reopened this year after a security audit. Abdullah said various stakeholders are

working on making floriculture a commercial venture whereby flowers grown here are exported to other parts of the country.

"Most things are in place. A reliable cold chain is the issue right now. Once we get that, be it through rail or air, this sector can bloom," he said. Abdullah also said that efforts are underway to develop tulip bulbs locally to save the expenditure on importing them from the Netherlands. "This will save foreign exchange as well," he said.

## 1.60L additions in annual voter roll revision in Jammu

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU

MORE than 1.60 lakh voters were added to the electoral rolls in Jammu and Kashmir during the recent special summary revision (SSR), while 67,690 names were deleted and 2.29 lakh corrections carried out, according to official data. Jammu district recorded the highest number of deletions, which included "duplicate" and "shifted" entries, in the annual voter list revision.

The special summary revision is separate from the special intensive revision (SIR) carried out in some states. According to the district-wise breakup of the current voter enrolment, Jammu district has the



highest number of electors at 11,89,555, followed by Srinagar with 7,53,222 and Baramulla with 7,20,500 voters.

Among the districts, Srinagar registered the highest number of additions with 30,077, followed by Jammu with 16,855 and Baramulla with 11,854. Jammu

recorded the most deletions at 10,430, followed by Budgam with 7,762 and Anantnag with 5,241, it said.

The data reveals that a total of 1,60,974 additions, 67,690 deletions, and 2,29,920 corrections were recorded across the Union Territory during the revision exercise.

## 'Excessive use of smartphones can harm children's mental health'

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
JAIPUR

UTTAR Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday highlighted the ill effects of smartphones on young children and warned that excessive use could harm their physical and mental health, adding that drugs and smartphones are equally harmful. He urged parents not to give smartphones to children and encouraged them to guide kids towards studies, yoga, and physical exercise instead.

Adityanath said prolonged screen time can affect eyesight, disrupt daily routines and contribute to depression. "The future of the country lies with its youth. Efforts must be made to fight drugs. Drugs are dangerous, and smartphones are equally harmful,



so children should be protected from both," he said. He said that children spending hours on smartphones are missing opportunities for self-development and depression. "The UP CM also said that depression and suicides are the consequences of excessive use of smartphones. "I would tell mothers and sisters not

to give children phones. If a child is crying, let the child cry. If a child spends the whole day on a smartphone, it affects their eyesight. The time they spend on the phone could instead be used on their textbooks, yoga, or exercise, which would help them progress in life." The chief minister advised the youth to limit smartphone usage, spend more time with family, and avoid phones during meals and worship.

## Woman, minor son found murdered at UP home

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
PRATAPGARH

THE blood-soaked bodies of a woman and her minor son were found at their home in a village here on Monday, triggering panic among locals, police said. Superintendent of Police Deepak Bhukar said the bodies, lying in a pool of blood, were discovered by villagers around 10 am.

Police rushed to the spot after receiving information, and launched an investigation.

The deceased were identified as 40-year-old Shivpatti Maurya and her 12-year-old son Ayan. Police said both sustained severe head injuries inflicted with a sharp weapon, indicating they were murdered during the night. According to police,

Shivpatti's husband Dinesh works outside the village and was not present at the time of the incident.

The bodies were first noticed by a mason who alerted local residents, who then informed the police. A police team reached the spot, took the bodies into custody and collected evidence from the house.

Senior officers also inspected the crime scene and spoke to family members and villagers.

"All possible angles are being examined and evidence is being collected.

Police teams have been formed to crack the case at the earliest," the SP said. The bodies have been sent for post-mortem as police continue their investigation into the double murder, officials said.

## Caste system meant to organise society, 'casteism' divides nation: Yogi

**The previous governments believed in dividing people in the name of caste, region and language, which weakened the country and led to challenges such as the unrest in Kashmir, Naxalism, linguistic disputes and caste conflicts'**

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
JAIPUR

UTTAR Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday said while the caste system is meant to organise society, 'casteism' weakens the social structure and divides the nation. Addressing a programme at the Sire



temple in Jalore, Adityanath also said that religion should act as a unifying force in society. "Caste should be the means of running the society systematically, but casteism weakens that system," Adityanath said. "The previous governments believed in di-

viding people in the name of caste, region and language, which weakened the country and led to challenges such as the unrest in Kashmir, Naxalism, linguistic disputes and caste conflicts. The benefits of governance often failed to reach the Dalits, the poor

and other marginalised sections," he said.

"But today, India is moving ahead to become a major global force under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The country has been brought together under his leadership," Adityanath said, adding that steps have been taken to address the issues of Kashmir and Naxalism, while ensuring that welfare schemes reached people without any discrimination. The chief minister also said that the government is focused on expanding infrastructure and public facilities across the country.

"Good roads have been built in areas where there were none earlier, railway connectivity has been ex-

panded, while airports, Metro, medical institutions and engineering colleges have been built in areas that lacked them," Adityanath said. Targeting the previous UPA regime at the Centre, Adityanath claimed it treated India's spiritual traditions as regressive.

"In contrast, the present leadership recognised that our faith is deeply connected to Sanatan Dharma and that society cannot move forward without faith," he said. Referring to the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, Adityanath said it could have been built decades earlier, but the previous governments did not act on it and even questioned the existence of Lord Ram.

## Action recommended against 2 cops in house demolition case

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
DEHRADUN

THE State Police Complaints Authority has recommended disciplinary action against two police officers, including an IPS officer, for failing to take immediate action in the alleged robbery and demolition of the house of a former Navy officer's widow in Uttarakhand. The authority, headed by retired judge N S Dhanik, said in an order that gross negligence was committed by the then SSP Janmejay Khanduri and the then Clementtown SHO Narendra Gehlawat, in the case of the robbery and demolition of the former Navy officer's house in the Clementtown area of Dehradun in January 2022.

According to the authority, this negligence caused



serious economic, physical, mental, and social harm to the complainant, Kusum Kapoor, and violated her human rights. The authority stated in its order that both officers were found guilty of failing to prevent the looting and demolition of the house and also failed to register an FIR in this regard.

The authority directed the Uttarakhand government's Home Department to recommend disciplinary action against the two officers and

inform the authority of the same. A copy of the order has also been sent to the director general of police. Khanduri, a 2007 batch IPS officer, is currently on deputation with the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).

Kusum Kapoor, widow of former naval officer Commodore Vinod Kumar Kapoor, had alleged that she had been living in the house with her unmarried and mentally challenged daughter, Tina, for the past 25 years.

# Interstate bus services expanded with 50 new AC buses

PURNA SINGH  
NEW DELHI

THE Delhi government is planning to strengthen interstate transport connectivity by deploying 50 environment-friendly air-conditioned buses on 17 interstate routes. The initiative, announced by Transport Minister Pankaj Kumar Singh, aims to improve travel options for commuters and enhance connectivity between the national

• Delhi gov't approves free bus travel for transgender passengers, says CM Rekha Gupta

• 'Pink tickets in DTC buses to continue for 3 months; no need to rush for smart cards'

capital and neighbouring regions.

According to the plan, the Delhi Transport Corporation will operate 12-meter



AC buses on these routes based on benchmark rates prescribed by the Association of State Road Transport Undertakings. The move is part of the government's

broader effort to expand regional mobility and provide more comfortable and reliable transport services for passengers travelling between Delhi and nearby states.

As part of the ongoing expansion of interstate services, the Delhi Transport Corporation has already introduced electric bus operations on several key routes. These include Delhi-Baraut in Uttar Pradesh and Delhi-Sonapat, Delhi-Dharuhera

and Delhi-Panipat in Haryana. The services are expected to improve connectivity for daily commuters as well as passengers travelling between the capital and surrounding cities.

Officials said additional interstate routes are also being planned to further expand the network. Proposed routes include Nanakar Delhi-Ghaziabad Bus Terminal, Delhi-Rewari, Delhi-Karnal, Delhi-Rohtak, Delhi-Alwar and

Delhi-Jewar. These routes are expected to ease travel for thousands of passengers who regularly commute between Delhi and neighbouring towns and districts.

The Delhi government has approved the proposal to include transgender passengers in its free bus travel scheme, a statement from the chief minister's office said on Monday. The decision was taken at a Cabinet meeting headed by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, of-

icials said. "This important initiative reflects the Rekha Gupta government's commitment to social inclusion, dignity, and equal access to public services for all sections of society," the statement said.

Rekha Gupta on Monday said free travel for women in public transport buses through the pink ticket will continue for three months and urged them not to worry or rush for having 'Pink Saheli' cards.

# Police bust illegal LPG refilling racket

More than 600 gas cylinders were seized during a raid; the raid was conducted at a warehouse linked to Guruji Indane Gas Service in Mundka

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

DELHI Police have uncovered a major illegal LPG storage operation in outer Delhi's Mundka area, seizing more than 600 gas cylinders during a raid conducted by the Crime Branch. The action was carried out by the Anti-Extortion and Kidnapping Cell following a tip-off about large-scale illegal stockpiling of LPG cylinders at a warehouse.

Police officials said the raid was conducted at a warehouse linked to Guruji Indane Gas Service in Mundka. The agency is authorised to distribute only Indane cylinders, but investigators found cylinders belonging to multiple companies stored at the premises.



During the operation, the team recovered a total of 610 cylinders, including 423 Indane cylinders, 92 Bharat Gas cylinders and 95 HP Gas cylinders. Among them were 197 filled cylinders and 392 empty ones, along with 21 smaller cylinders.

Preliminary investigation indicated irregularities in stock records. Officials found 133 filled commercial

Indane cylinders stored at the warehouse, even though records from Indian Oil Corporation showed that the distributor should have had no such stock as of March 10. Authorities believe this points to possible illegal hoarding and manipulation of LPG supplies.

Officials from the Department of Food Supply and Consumer Affairs also

participated in the raid and confirmed that keeping cylinders from other companies within the premises of an authorised Indane distributor violates LPG control regulations. Following the operation, police registered a case under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, and relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

Deputy Commissioner of Police Sanjeev Kumar Yadav said illegal hoarding of LPG cylinders is often done to create artificial shortages in the market so that the cylinders can later be sold at inflated prices.

He added that such practices not only exploit consumers but also pose serious safety hazards due to improper storage of highly flammable materials.

# HC grants time to Kejriwal to respond to CBI's plea

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

THE Delhi High Court on Monday granted time to former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, his deputy Manish Sisodia and 21 others to respond to the CBI's petition challenging their discharge in the liquor policy case.

Justice Swarna Kanta Sharma listed the CBI's petition assailing the trial court's decision for hearing on April 6. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the agency, said the trial court's "perverse" order "cannot remain on record even for a second more than necessary" and that Kejriwal and others should not be given more than a week's time to file their response.

Reply is not necessary when the entire record of the trial court was available, he said. Senior counsel ap-



pearing for the AAP leader informed that they have already approached the Supreme Court challenging the matter.

"I have not received any stay yet.. till the court gets an order staying the proceedings, the case has to proceed," the court observed. The senior lawyers appearing for the accused

persons said there was no urgency and they should be given a reasonable time to file their replies.

On February 27, the trial court discharged Kejriwal, Sisodia and 21 others, pulling up the CBI by saying its case was wholly unable to survive judicial scrutiny and stood discredited in its entirety.

# Speaker slams ill-conceived attempt to remove Birla

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

THE opposition's move in the Lok Sabha to remove Speaker Om Birla from the post undermined the parliamentary traditions, Delhi Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta said on Monday. In a letter written to Birla, he asserted that the neutrality of the Chair of the House is central to the parliamentary democracy of the country, and urged that the members respect constitutional institutions. The resolution brought by the opposition parties, seeking the removal of Om Birla as the Lok Sabha Speaker, was defeated by a voice vote last Wednesday. Gupta, in his letter to Birla, said, "It is deeply saddening that certain opposition parties, driven by narrow political considerations, chose to bring a motion against the incumbent Speaker - an office that stands above partisan politics and is entrusted with safeguarding the rules, traditions and dignity of Parliament."

# INDIA-US TRADE DEAL

# Youth Congress stages 'Sansad Gherao' protest

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

THE Indian Youth Congress (IYC) on Monday staged a 'Sansad Gherao' protest at the Jantar Mantar here against the India-US trade deal, alleging the agreement would be detrimental to farmers, workers and small businesses.

Led by IYC national president Uday Bhanu Chib, hundreds of Youth Congress workers from several states gathered at the protest site, raising slogans against the government and demanding that the government



scrap the trade arrangement. Protesters carried placards reading "Cancel the Indo-US Deal" and accused the

government of compromising the country's economic interests. IYC leaders claimed the proposed deal

could adversely affect farmers, the textile sector and micro, small and medium enterprises, while also raising concerns about data security.

An IYC member said the protesters planned to march towards Parliament and would walk up to the point where barricades had been put up by police near the Parliament complex. Several police personnel were deployed in the area to maintain law and order during the protest. Barricades were put up at multiple points around the protest site, restricting movement.



# HC lists J Akbar's plea against Priya Ramani

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

THE Delhi High Court on Monday listed former Union minister M J Akbar's plea challenging the acquittal of journalist Priya Ramani in his criminal defamation case over the allegations of sexual misconduct for final hearing on September 24. "Trial court record has been received. Written submissions have been filed by both the parties. List for final hearing on the next date," Justice Swarna Kanta Sharma said. Akbar has challenged the trial court's February 17, 2021 order acquitting Ramani in the case on grounds that a woman has the right to put grievances before any platform of her choice even after decades. The high court on January 13, 2022, agreed to examine Akbar's appeal against the trial court's order

and admitted it, on which the notice was issued to Ramani in August 2021. In his appeal, Akbar has contended that the trial court decided his criminal defamation case on the basis of surmises and conjecture. His plea contended that the trial court failed to appreciate the arguments and evidence on record. Akbar has also claimed the trial court "gravely erred" in observing that he did not have a stellar reputation and has ignored the well-established principles of criminal jurisprudence. The trial court had dismissed the defamation complaint filed by Akbar and acquitted Ramani, saying no charges were proved against her. The trial court had said it was shameful that crimes against women were taking place in a country where mega epics like the 'Mahabharata' and 'Ramayana' were written about respecting them.

# Youth, juvenile held for attacking man who intervened in assault



HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

DELHI Police has arrested an 18-year-old and apprehended a juvenile for allegedly attacking a man with a knife after he intervened when the duo were assaulting a boy in northwest Delhi's Jahangir Puri area, an officer said on Monday. The arrestee has been identified as Piyush, a resident of Jahangir Puri. Police said the weapon used in the attack -- a knife -- was recovered from the possession of the minor. "The incident came to light on March 13 after a PCR call was received regarding a quarrel in the area.

When police reached the spot, the complainant, Harjeet Singh Sachdeva (23), told them that Piyush, along with a minor and another associate

identified as Raghu, were assaulting a boy in the locality," a senior officer said.

Sachdeva said when he intervened to rescue the boy, the accused were angered. During the ensuing altercation, the minor allegedly took out a knife and attacked him, while Piyush also joined in the assault and thrashed him, police said.

Their associate Raghu allegedly even pulled out a firearm, described to be a country-made pistol, and threatened to kill the complainant, the officer said. On hearing Sachdeva's cries for help, his younger brother Deep and some local youths rushed to the spot, prompting the accused to flee while threatening the complainant with dire consequences, he added.

# 'Phool Walon Ki Sair' reflects city's shared cultural heritage

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

THE 'Phool Walon Ki Sair' festival reflects Delhi's shared heritage and helps connect younger generations with their cultural roots, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said on Monday. The Delhi Secretariat came alive with Shehnai music as the members of Anjuman Sair-e-Gul Forashan presented customary 'Pankha' (floral banners) to the chief minister, a long-standing tradition associated with the festival. Under the festival dedicated

to Hindu-Muslim unity, people offer floral Pankha at the Dargah of Sufi Saint Bakhtiyar Kaki and the Yogmaya temple in Mehrauli.

Last year, the festival was delayed as the necessary approval was not received from the authorities. Finally, it was held after the intervention of the then L-G V K Saxena. Gupta said 'Phool Walon Ki Sair' is much more than a festival and represents a remarkable example of Delhi's shared cultural heritage and spirit of harmony that defines the city. The Delhi government is committed to

preserving and promoting the capital's historical traditions and cultural events. Such celebrations, she noted, help connect younger generations with their cultural roots while strengthening mutual respect and social harmony.

Art, Culture, Language and Tourism Minister Kapil Mishra said the festival plays an important role in reinforcing the city's shared cultural legacy.

He described 'Phool Walon Ki Sair' as a historic tradition that conveys a message of harmony, unity and brotherhood, while also allowing the younger generation to experience Delhi's rich cultural heritage. The festival, which is usually held in September-November, will be celebrated on March 15-21 this year. A series of cultural and religious programmes will be part of the festival.

# Kharge criticises Centre over LPG supply crisis, calls for debate

PURNA SINGH  
NEW DELHI

CONGRESS president and Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday criticised the central government over the reported LPG supply issues in the country, saying the situation highlights weaknesses in the government's management as well as its foreign and energy policies. He urged the

'Kharge says the government is aware of the rising tensions in West Asia and has even issued advisories for Indian citizens in Iran. Such developments should have prompted the government to anticipate possible disruptions to key shipping routes and energy supplies'

government to ensure that LPG remains easily available and affordable for citizens and called for a discussion in Parliament on the ongoing conflict in West Asia.

Speaking in Parliament, Kharge said the govern-

ment was aware of the rising tensions in West Asia and had even issued advisories for Indian citizens in Iran. According to him, such developments should have prompted the government to anticipate possible



disruptions to key shipping routes and energy supplies. He questioned why advance

planning and alternative arrangements were not made despite the possibility of

supply disruptions.

Kharge also asked why the government had not taken the opposition and the public into confidence on the issue to reduce anxiety and ensure a coordinated response. He said transparency and discussion in Parliament would help address public concerns about the impact of global developments on India's energy supply.

The Congress leader said

the situation is affecting a wide range of people, including poor and middle-class households as well as small businesses that depend heavily on LPG for daily operations. He said small eateries, restaurants, hostels, community kitchens and several small and medium enterprises have been facing difficulties due to limited availability of cylinders. According to him, some establishments have

been forced to scale down operations or temporarily close.

Kharge also pointed to reports of black marketing, claiming that in certain areas LPG cylinders were being sold at prices exceeding Rs 5,000. He questioned government statements claiming that there was no shortage of LPG in the country, arguing that the ground situation appears different in several places.

For Advertisement please Call: 9717809984/ 9718673567

## TG govt should curb drug menace with iron fist

In a shocking incident, Putta Mahesh Kumar and 'Pilot' Rohith Reddy tested positive for drugs. They are not ordinary men on the street. One of them is a lawmaker in Parliament while the other is a former lawmaker from Telangana. And they are nouveau riche as well. Mahesh Kumar is a member of Lok Sabha from Eluru in Andhra Pradesh. Representing Telugu Desam Party (TDP), he became an MP in 2024, at the young age of 36 years. His father Putta Sudhakar Yadav is a legislator from Mydukur in YSR Kadapa district. Sudhakar Yadav also served as the chairman of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (TTD) between April 28, 2018, and June 19, 2019. As an MP, Mahesh Kumar's primary role is to take part in enacting laws that govern the

country. Rohith Reddy, who calls himself 'Pilot' Rohith Reddy, was also a lawmaker in the past, albeit at the state-level. In 2018, he won on a Congress ticket as an MLA from Tandur, now in Vikarabad district, but shifted loyalties to Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) which was in power then. However, he lost elections from the same Assembly segment in 2023 on the BRS ticket.

Today, the two have been found consuming drugs! Does this incident show the callous attitude of these two politicians? Or are they not afraid of law enforcement agencies in Telangana?

Incidentally, the duo was allegedly caught red-handed when a team from Elite Action Group for Drug Law Enforcement (EAGLE), on a tip-off, raided a farm-

house owned by Rohith Reddy in Moinabad area. While a liquor party was underway, one of the accused even opened fire at the police team when it entered the farmhouse. A drug test was conducted on 11 people and five of them, including the MP and the ex-MLA, tested positive. Surprisingly, the MP was given a station bail, a police action which is likely to kick up a row nationally, while Rohith Reddy and others were remanded to judicial custody. This incident clearly indicates how fast drug menace is spreading in and around Hyderabad. Drug usage has reached menacing proportions, primarily due to ever-growing pub culture and widespread growth of farmhouses. It is said that there are over 2,000 farmhouses around Aziznagar in

Moinabad mandal alone. Incidentally, the same Rohith Reddy's farmhouse was the place where a plot to buy four BRS MLAs was uncovered in 2022. That incident also rocked Telangana politics as did the Sunday's drug bust.

Nevertheless, strict vigilance on pubs, farmhouses and colleges will reduce the drug threat significantly. Besides, stringent punishment for both drug peddlers and consumers can be a strong deterrent. Coming back to the latest drug bust, it is good that TDP, which is in power in Andhra Pradesh, acted swiftly, served a notice on Mahesh Kumar seeking his explanation, and decided to keep him away from party activities till he comes clean on the allegations. AP Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu

also condemned the irresponsible behaviour of the young MP, while ordering for an immediate action. But BRS has remained silent on Rohith Reddy! A few months back, Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy directed the police to act tough against drug peddlers and consumers. He called for zero-tolerance towards drug usage. He was also instrumental in setting up EAGLE for eliminating the drug menace from the state. The name looks menacing, but EAGLE's action on the ground seems to be lackadaisical. Will this latest sensational drug case spur it into action? Unless the Telangana government acts tough and deals with the narcotics issue with an iron hand, the state will continue to face drug threats day in and day out.

## LETTERS

### Bring a law on euthanasia

The Hans India reader Datta Prasad Shirodkar has rightly stated that the debate about whether mercy killing is right or wrong, ethical or unethical, is likely to continue in the society (THI March 16). There are many families who have exhausted all medical avenues and resources in the treatment of their ailing family member, whose condition is permanently irreversible. They just pray to God to put an end to the suffering of their loved one quickly. It is time the government takes cognizance of the Supreme Court's landmark verdict and enact a law on euthanasia.

Dinanath Shenolikar, Hyderabad

### A touching tribute to Potti Sriramulu

It is a fitting tribute to erect a 58-foot bronze statue of Potti Sriramulu at Shakhmuru in Amaravati as the height of the statue symbolises the number of days he was a fast-unto-death. The statue was unveiled on Friday commemorating his 125th birth anniversary. It is reported that a park is coming up on 6.80 acres of land at an estimated cost of ₹150 crore. His fast-unto-death not only helped create Andhra Pradesh on linguistic lines but also paved the way for forming states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Bihar and Punjab, among others. Though Sriramulu hailed from a humble family, he protested twice before independence for the rights of Dalits and another two times after independence for the same. He sat on a protest for the fifth time for a separate state for Telugu people. His determination and attitude towards public issues made Mahatma Gandhi remark that he would have achieved independence much earlier if he had 10 followers like Sriramulu. The Smrutivanam in his memory will guide future generations.

Pratapa Reddy Yaramala, Tiruvuru (AP)

### Naidu backing criminals

Hailed as the youngest MP, Putta Mahesh Kumar Yadav, representing TDP in the Lok Sabha, did the unthinkable by consuming cocaine unmindful of the repercussions, if caught. Forgetting his position, he behaved like any other Gen-Z and is now repenting whereas his party boss Nara Chandrababu Naidu, as is his wont, simply issued a show cause notice to the MP seeking a reply within 48 hours. Naidu knows how best to circumvent laws and hush up any case filed against his party leaders, including himself. It is a shame that 'criminals' are masquerading as political 'leaders' in our country and rulers, leaving the people high and dry. Naidu himself is "involved" in several white-collar crimes. A past master in managing the entire system including the judiciary, he "managed" to get an interim bail for himself on medical grounds in the Skill Development Scam case after 53 days in jail as a remand prisoner.

Govardhana Myneedu, Vijayawada

### E-waste recycling and safe disposal

This refers to "GHMC collects 15 tonnes of E-waste during mega drive" (March 16). This highlights the urgent need for continuous action. Establishing e-waste collection bins in every residential complex would ensure regular disposal. The collected material can then be recycled, with residues safely handled by GHMC through certified facilities. E-waste recycling recovers valuable metals, plastics, and glass, while safe disposal prevents toxic substances like lead, mercury, and cadmium from contaminating soil and water. The benefits are manifold—conserving resources, reducing pollution, creating green jobs, and supporting a circular economy. It also minimizes landfill waste and lowers the carbon footprint of new electronics production. The challenges include informal recycling practices that expose workers to hazards, limited infrastructure, weak regulation, and rising volumes of e-waste driven by rapid technological change. Stronger policies, global cooperation and consumer responsibility are essential to make e-waste management sustainable.

Dr O Prasada Rao, Hyderabad

### Go for a contingency fund

Propos the editorial "Prudent fiscal situation gives govt headroom to tackle crisis" (March 16). The Rs one lakh crore Economic Stabilisation Fund is a wise move to cushion global shocks, but a crisis corpus cannot substitute for fixing structural flaws. The recent Rs 19,230 crore additional fertiliser outlay exposes this reality. Subsidising manufacturers rather than farmers encourages waste, leakages, and soil damage from imbalanced urea use. Genuine fiscal prudence demands shifting to direct benefit transfers, promoting sustainable farming, and diversifying import sources. A contingency fund should address genuine emergencies, not mask the absence of long-overdue reforms. Creating new corpus without tackling inefficiencies is not consolidation, it is cosmetic comfort.

K Chidanand Kumar, Bengaluru

thehansreader@gmail.com

## BENGALURU ONLINE

### Lack of growth strategy impedes globally popular Mysuru silk industry

BENGALURU: Mysore Silk Saree is not just a garment but a symbol of pride for Mysuru and the entire state of Karnataka. Known for its elegance, purity and rich heritage, the saree enjoys enormous demand not only within India but also among buyers abroad. Yet, despite its popularity and economic potential, the industry continues to struggle due to traditional administrative approaches and lack of a progressive growth strategy.

Industry observers say the demand for authentic Mysore silk sarees is so high that influential people in Mysuru often receive calls from customers in other cities and even overseas requesting help in purchasing the premium saree. However, the inability to scale production and modernise the sector has prevented the industry from tapping its full potential.

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

# TG Speaker's order on anti-defection petitions is a tricky constitutional test



PROF. MADABHUSHI SRIDHAR ACHARYULU

It seems like the Anti-Defection Law is a defective law or a totally defective conclusion on the judgment of the Speaker of Telangana, Gaddam Prasad Kumar, on March 11. This has intensified a debate on whether the Speaker's decision was based on a strictly legal interpretation or influenced by political considerations.

The controversy surrounding the alleged defection of ten Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in Telangana has once again placed India's anti-defection law, legislative ethics, and constitutional accountability under intense public scrutiny. What began as a political dispute has now evolved into a significant constitutional question involving the powers of the Speaker, the limits of judicial review, and the integrity of representative democracy. The recent (March 13) directions of the Supreme Court of India in the matter have not decided the merits of the dispute but have highlighted a critical issue: transparency and procedural fairness in the Speaker's adjudication of disqualification petitions. The matter was heard by a two-judge bench, comprising Justice Sanjay Karol and Justice

Augustine George Masih.

During the proceedings, senior advocates appearing for the Speaker's office and the State government submitted that the Speaker had already completed the inquiry and had passed the final orders in all the disqualification petitions.

The controversy arose after ten MLAs, who were elected to the Telangana Legislative Assembly on the Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) ticket, were accused of joining the ruling Congress party. Alleging that these MLAs had voluntarily given up their party membership, BRS leaders, including its working president K T Rama Rao (KTR) and Padi Kaushik Reddy, along with BJP MLA Yeleeti Maheshwar Reddy, approached the Supreme Court seeking directions regarding the disqualification petitions.

The petitions challenged the delay and the Speaker's alleged inaction in deciding the disqualification complaints under the anti-defection law.

According to the Speaker's decision, the 10 MLAs had not defected from the BRS, and hence the disqualification petitions were dismissed. However, the petitioners raised a serious objection before the Court: copies of the Speaker's orders and records of the proceedings were not furnished to them.

#### SC's directions:

Taking note of these concerns, the Supreme Court questioned why the Speaker's office had not supplied the relevant documents to the petitioners, especially when they were parties to the proceedings. The court directed that certified copies of the



When voters elect a candidate based on the platform and ideology of a particular party, they are essentially endorsing that political programme. If the elected representative later switches allegiance, the voters' mandate is arguably compromised. The anti-defection law was meant to protect this mandate

Speaker's orders must be provided within 24 hours, while the depositions, statements, and other documents recorded during the proceedings had to be furnished within four days. At the same time, the court closed the present batch of petitions, observing that since the Speaker had already delivered his decisions, the appropriate remedy available to the petitioners would be to challenge those decisions through judicial review before the High Court. Thus, while the Supreme Court did not examine the correctness of the Speaker's verdict, it ensured that the petitioners would have access to the necessary documents to pursue further legal remedies.

#### The controversial findings:

The Speaker's ruling that the 10 MLAs had not defected triggered widespread criticism from political opponents and constitutional commentators. Several facts cited in the public domain have raised doubts about this conclusion. For instance, Khairatabad MLA Danam Nagender reportedly contested the Lok

Sabha elections from Secunderabad as a Congress candidate. Meanwhile, records on the Election Commission's website list him as a Congress nominee.

Similarly, Station Ghanpur MLA Kadiyam Srihari had been seen participating in Congress meetings and public programmes. His daughter contested the Warangal Lok Sabha seat as a Congress candidate and won. Given these developments, critics argue that it is difficult to reconcile the Speaker's finding that these MLAs continue to remain members of the BRS.

#### Constitutional Framework

The issue of defections in India is governed by the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution, introduced by the 52nd Constitutional Amendment in 1985. Under the Tenth Schedule, a legislator may be disqualified if:

1. They voluntarily give up membership of the political party on whose ticket they were elected;
2. They vote or abstain from voting against the party whip without permission;

3. An independent member joins a political party after being elected;
4. The authority to decide disqualification petitions rests with the Speaker (or Chairman) of the legislature.

#### Judicial review of the decisions:

The question of whether the Speaker's decisions can be reviewed by courts was settled in the landmark case of Kihoto Hollohan v. Zachillu. In that judgment, the Supreme Court upheld the validity of the anti-defection law but ruled that the Speaker's decisions are subject to judicial review. The court held that judicial intervention may be justified if the Speaker's decision:

- a. Violates constitutional provisions;
- b. Breaches the principles of natural justice;
- c. Is vitiated by mala fides or perversity.

Thus, the Speaker's decision is not beyond scrutiny. This principle is likely to be central if the Telangana matter reaches the High Court. Another recurring problem in anti-defection cases is the delay in deciding disqualification petitions. In the Telangana case, critics argue that not only was there a delay in deciding the petitions, but there was also a reluctance to provide certified copies of the orders, which further obstructed judicial review.

#### Natural justice:

At the heart of the controversy lies the issue of natural justice. Two core principles govern fair adjudication: Audi alteram partem, both sides must be heard, and reasoned decisions, the par-

ties must know the basis on which a decision has been made.

#### Democratic mandate:

Beyond legal technicalities, the issue of defections raises deeper questions about democratic morality. The Supreme Court's latest order does not conclude the controversy. Instead, it marks the beginning of the next phase of legal scrutiny. Once the Speaker's orders and related records are obtained, the petitioners are likely to approach the Telangana High Court seeking judicial review.

#### The High Court may examine several crucial questions:

1. Whether the MLAs had effectively given up their party membership;
2. Whether the Speaker's inquiry was fair and impartial;
3. Whether the decision is consistent with the constitutional principles governing defections.

Depending on the outcome, the matter could eventually return to the Supreme Court.

The Telangana episode also revives a broader institutional debate: Should the power to decide defection cases remain with the Speaker? Several constitutional scholars have suggested that this responsibility should instead be entrusted to an independent tribunal or the Election Commission of India to ensure impartiality. Until such reforms are undertaken, controversies like the present one are likely to recur.

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

## The silent thunder: When Vajpayee, the poet-PM, recalibrated the global order

NOMULA SRINIVAS RAO

We have the capacity for a big blast. Ours is not a cry of despair; it is a challenge to the world - Atal Bihari Vajpayee

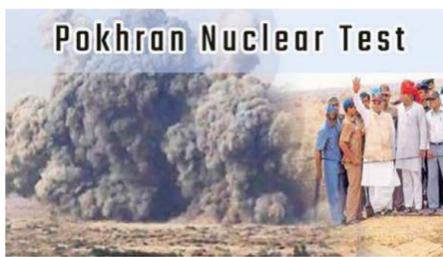
In the blistering, white-hot heat of the Thar Desert on May 11, 1998, the very sands of Pokhran didn't just shift; they shook the foundations of a geopolitical hierarchy that had long sought to keep India in a state of perpetual "strategic restraint." As the ground buckled and the sensors registered a seismic tremor of 5.3 on the Richter scale, a coded message flashed across the high-security corridors of New Delhi: "The Buddha has smiled again."

It was a moment of supreme audacity, orchestrated by a man who was as much a master of silence as he was of the spoken word. Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the poet-statesman, had just led India across the nuclear Rubicon, transforming a "post-colonial entity" into a "formidable power."

#### Anatomy of a secret: Defying the eye in the sky:

The 1998 Pokhran-II tests, codenamed 'Operation Shakti', were not merely a scientific achievement; they were a masterclass in clandestine leadership and psychological warfare. Vajpayee understood a chilling reality: the world's superpowers—armed with billion-dollar KH-11 "Keyhole" spy satellites—were watching India's every move from the heavens. The CIA had successfully blocked previous attempts by detecting heat signatures and soil movement. To succeed, Vajpayee knew he didn't just need scientists; he needed shadows.

Under his unwavering direction, the mission was shrouded in a "cloak of invisibility." He empowered the duo of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam and Dr R Chidambaram to operate with total autonomy, bypassing the traditional, leak-prone bureaucracy. Scientists wore army fatigues to blend in with the local units, worked only during the brief "black



spots" when satellites were positioned elsewhere, and moved heavy equipment under the cover of swirling sandstorms.

Vajpayee's leadership was the steady, invisible hand on the tiller. He took the ultimate gamble with India's economy, knowing that the fallout—draconian economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation—would be immediate. Yet he remained resolute. While the West slept, a poet was preparing a symphony of fire. He chose the nation's long-term dignity over the world's short-term approval, proving that true sovereignty cannot be requested—it must be taken.

#### The nuclear paradox-Iron fist, a velvet heart:

Vajpayee was a walking paradox, a leader who authorized the creation of world-ending weapons while penning verses about the fragility of a dewdrop. His decision to "go nuclear" was not born of warmongering or a thirst for conquest, but of a deep-seated, civilisational desire for peace through strength. He famously remarked that weapons are not for war, but to ensure that war never happens.

He believed that a weak India could never be a truly peaceful India but a vulnerable one. By declaring India a nuclear-weapon state, he wasn't seeking a tool for ag-

gression; he was building a "Minimum Credible Deterrent." His strategic foresight was prophetic. He anticipated the two-front threat from neighbours long before it became a staple of modern defense journals.

The "poet's resolve" was visible even as he faced the wrath of the Clinton administration. He remained unfazed in the face of global condemnation, famously stating in Parliament that India would never use these weapons against non-nuclear states—the No First Use (NFU) policy. This was his hallmark: the heart of a poet who wept for the fallen soldier, but the spine of a warrior who ensured that no mother would ever have to weep because her country was defenseless against nuclear blackmail.

#### From 1998 to a global power:

Estimates are that India possesses an arsenal of approximately 180 nuclear warheads. Vajpayee transformed India from a "suppliant" state, constantly asking for

permission, into a "deciding" power. He proved that India could withstand global sanctions and emerge stronger, eventually forcing the world to sign the Civil Nuclear Deal and recognize India as a responsible nuclear state.

He led with a smile that carried the weight of a thousand suns and a voice that could silence a storm. He showed that you could be a man of peace while holding the ultimate deterrent, and that a poet's vision is often clearer than a politician's calculation.

As we look back at the 1998 explosions, we remember not just the fire in the sky, but the calm in the heart of the man who ignited it. He was Bharat's true Ratna—a bridge between the ancient wisdom of the Buddha and the modern necessity of the missile.

My poetry is a declaration of war against defeat, not a song of surrender - Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

(The writer is a former OSD to Union Civil Aviation Minister)

# State to be developed as East-West cargo corridor

- CM orders faster cargo operations at Mulapeta, Machilipatnam, and Ramayapatnam ports, targeting hinterland cargo from six neighbouring states
- Machilipatnam and Ramayapatnam ports slated for completion by December; Ramayapatnam to gain prominence with BPCL refinery and dedicated rail link to Kadapa Steel Plant
- Port townships, industrial corridors, and fishing harbour expansions planned to position Andhra Pradesh as a logistics hub on India's east coast amid global shipping disruptions

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA

CHIEF Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has directed officials to develop the state as a major East-West cargo corridor by strengthening cargo handling operations at ports across the state.

During a review meeting held at the Secretariat on ports and fishing harbours, the Chief Minister stressed the need to expedite cargo operations at the newly constructed ports of Mulapeta, Machilipatnam and Ramayapatnam. He instructed officials to take necessary steps to ensure cargo movement

from the hinterland regions of neighbouring states such as Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Telangana and Karnataka through these ports.

Officials informed the Chief Minister that construction of Machilipatnam and Ramayapatnam ports is expected to be completed by December 2026. Naidu said that once the refinery of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited is established, Ramayapatnam will emerge as a major container and bulk cargo port.

The Chief Minister also revealed that the Railway Ministry has approved a dedicat-



Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu holds a review on works on ports and fishing harbours with officials at the Secretariat on Monday

ed rail connectivity project from Ramayapatnam to the Kadapa Steel Plant, which will significantly improve cargo transportation.

Naidu suggested developing port townships near the three ports to boost commercial activity and said industrial corridors are also likely to emerge in these regions due to improved infrastructure.

He further directed officials to accelerate the second phase of fishing harbour construction at Budagatlapa-

lem Fishing Harbour, Pudidakata Fishing Harbour and Kothapatnam Fishing Harbour. Highlighting the state's strategic location, the Chief Minister said Andhra Pradesh is poised to become a logistics hub on India's east coast, with ports and fishing harbours planned roughly every 50 kilometres along the coastline. He emphasized that the state's ports should emerge as game changers in cargo handling.

Naidu also pointed out that due to the ongoing glob-

al conflicts affecting ports in Dubai and Gulf countries, there is a growing perception that ports on India's east coast are safer. He urged officials to take advantage of this opportunity to strengthen Andhra Pradesh's maritime infrastructure and attract greater cargo traffic. The review meeting was attended by Special Chief Secretary for Investments and Infrastructure M. T. Krishna Babu and Maritime Board CEO Abhishek Kumar, among other officials.

## AP fixes Rs 2.39 lakh unit cost for PMAY-Gramin 2.0 houses

- Interest subsidy on SHG loans to be reimbursed from 2026-27 to 2028-29
- State housing corporation directed to implement scheme across the state

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA

THE Andhra Pradesh government has fixed the unit cost at Rs.2.39 lakh for construction of houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Gramin 2.0 (PMAY-G 2.0). Housing special chief secretary Ajay Jain issued GO Rt No 20 to this effect on Monday.

According to the government order, the revised unit cost includes convergence funds and Self-Help Group (SHG) loans. The order also provides for reimbursement of interest subsidy on SHG loans by the state government for the financial years from 2026-27 to 2028-29.

Officials said the decision was taken after examining proposals submitted by the managing director of the Andhra Pradesh State Housing Corporation Limited (APSHCL). The proposal



was prepared in accordance with guidelines issued by the ministry of rural development, Government of India, for the implementation of PMAY-Gramin 2.0. Under the scheme, the Centre provides assistance of Rs 1.2 lakh per house, which includes a central share of Rs.72,000 (60 per cent) and a state share of Rs 48,000 (40 per cent). In addition, beneficiaries will be eligible for an SHG loan of Rs 80,000 at an interest rate of 3 per cent, with the state government reimbursing the interest component.

The funding structure also includes convergence components such as wage support under the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajevika Mis-

sion - Gramin (VB-G-RAM-G) Scheme and the National Rural Livelihood Mission, amounting to Rs 27,000, and Rs 12,000 for sanitation support for construction of Individual Household Toilets (IHHL) under the Swachh Bharat Mission. With these components, the total unit cost per house has been fixed at Rs 2,39,000.

The government has directed the managing director of APSHCL to take necessary steps for implementation of the scheme across the state. Officials said the revised unit cost would enable beneficiaries to construct better quality houses with additional financial support through convergence schemes and SHG loans.

### DRIVER'S MURDER CASE

## MLC Anantha Babu's wife appears before SIT

- Lakshmi Durga was questioned by SIT in Kakinada after High Court directive, linked as second accused in 2022 Dalit youth murder
- MLC Anantha Uday Bhaskar, first accused, allegedly staged driver Subrahmanyam's death as a road accident; later released on default bail

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
KAKINADA

STATE Legislative Council member Anantha Uday Bhaskar's wife Lakshmi Durga, on Monday appeared before the Special Investigation Team (SIT), probing the murder of his former driver.

She appeared before the investigating officer in Kakinada at the direction of the Andhra Pradesh High Court. Anantha Uday Bhaskar dropped her at the office of Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO), where investigating officer Manish Patil Devraj questioned her.

The High Court had directed her to appear before SIT between March 16 and March 30 from 10 am to 5 pm. The order was passed on her petition seeking cancellation of a non-bailable war-



File picture of Anantha Babu and his wife Lakshmi Durga

rant against her issued by the Special SC/ST Court in Rajamahendravaram. The SIT, in the supplementary charge sheet filed last month, had stated that Lakshmi Durga had a role in the 2022 murder of Dalit youth Veedhi Subrahmanyam. Following this, she was named a second accused in the case and a non-bailable warrant was issued a week ago.

MLC Anantha Uday Bhaskar, also known as Anantha Babu, is the first accused in the case. He is accused of killing his former driver, Subrahmanyam, and later delivering the body to the victim's house. Sub-

rahmanyam (34) was found dead under suspicious circumstances in Kakinada on May 19, 2022. The MLC of the then-ruling YSR Congress Party had personally transported the body to the victim's parents' residence around 2 a.m. in his own car, claiming it was a road accident.

The family, however, suspected foul play and refused to accept the body. The murder had sparked protests by the victim's relatives and Dalit organisations.

Anantha Babu had allegedly pushed the deceased during an argument, resulting in his fall and death. The

legislator allegedly inflicted additional injuries on the body to make it appear as though the death resulted from a road accident.

The MLC was subsequently arrested, and the YSRCP suspended him from the party.

With the investigating officer unable to submit the charge sheet within 90 days, Anantha Babu was released on default bail in December 2022.

After coming to power in June 2024, the TDP-led coalition government decided to re-investigate the case. Indian Police Service (IPS) officer and incumbent Kakinada DSP Manish Devraj Patil was appointed as the investigation officer. In July 2025, the SC/ST Special Court ordered a re-investigation into the case. The MLC had challenged the order in the High Court, but it granted a stay on a lower court's order, which had also directed that a supplementary chargesheet be filed within 90 days.

Last month, the Supreme Court observed that there was a clear "nexus between police and power" in the case and that the police had attempted to help Ananta Uday Bhaskar secure bail.

Following this, the state government suspended four police officers over the lapses in the investigation that led to the release of the MLC.

## KANIPAKAM TEMPLE TO GET RS 3.4 Cr PUSHKARINI

- The existing temple tank to be shifted forward by 80-90 ft to create open space in front of temple
- Akhilandam to be developed on Tirumala model for coconut breaking and lamp lighting rituals
- Two Kalyana Mandapams and a guest house to be constructed with Rs 25 cr TTD funds

PRADEEP VENNELAKANTI  
TIRUPATI

THE historic Sri Varasiddhi Vinayaka Swamy temple at Kanipakam is set to witness a major transformation with temple authorities launching a series of development initiatives aimed at improving pilgrim amenities and ensuring the smooth conduct of religious rituals and festivals. The plans form part of a comprehensive master development programme being implemented for the temple town.

A key highlight of the initiative is the construction of a new Pushkarini near the Supatha Mandapam at an estimated cost of Rs 3.40 crore. The existing temple tank located in front of the shrine



A view of the Kanipakam temple

has been creating difficulties during major processions, particularly Vahana Sevams conducted as part of the annual Brahmotsavams, as it restricts the movement of temple chariots and vehicles despite the presence of Mada streets on three sides.

Devasthanam Chairman V Surendra Babu popularly known as Mani Naidu said permissions for the project had already been secured from the Endowments Department and the temple administration was moving ahead with the execution schedule.

He told The Hans India that, land transfer process from a private hotel owner will be completed in the next 10-15 days after which tenders will be called for. The target is to complete the new

Pushkarini before the Brahmotsavams this year.

Officials stated that the new Pushkarini would be constructed with the same dimensions as the existing one, measuring about 140 feet in length and width and 12 feet in depth. Stones from the present tank will be re-used, preserving traditional elements while introducing improved facilities.

The structure will feature stone pillars sourced from older temple architecture, along with a centrally located stone Neerajana Mandapam housing an idol of Lord Vinayaka. Steps for devotees, barricades, water purification systems and modern lighting arrangements will also be installed.

The redesign will effectively shift the Pushkarini for-

ward by nearly 80 to 90 feet, creating a spacious open area in front of the temple.

According to the Chairman, this change will significantly improve the movement of the Lord's Utsava Murthy idols during festivals and provide better convenience for devotees visiting the shrine in large numbers.

As part of the expansion, the Devasthanam is also planning to establish an Akhilandam in front of the temple on the lines of Tirumala, enabling devotees to break coconuts and light lamps as part of fulfilling their vows. The existing TTD building and a nearby police station will be relocated, and alternative locations have already been identified. Meanwhile, the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams has sanctioned Rs 25 crore for the overall development of the temple town. With this, two air-conditioned Kalyana Mandapams will be constructed at an estimated cost of Rs 16 crore, including one dedicated to conducting mass weddings, the Chairman revealed.

A guest house costing around Rs 9 crore will also be built by TTD. These facilities will be maintained by the Kanipakam Devasthanam, and the revenue generated from them will accrue to the temple administration.

## BRS slams Guv's speech, says govt 'forced false claims'

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

BRS leaders on Monday strongly criticised the Governor's address at the start of the Telangana Assembly Budget session, alleging the Congress government forced the Governor to present misleading claims.

Former minister Vemula Prashanth Reddy said the speech delivered by Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla was "hollow" and failed to reflect the realities in the state.

Addressing the media at the Assembly, he alleged that the Congress government compelled the Governor to present falsehoods while ignoring key election promises such as the party's "Six Guarantees" and "420 promises".

Prashanth Reddy said the Governor's address contained no reference to welfare promises, including the Rs.2,500 monthly financial assistance pledged to women. He also claimed



that issues concerning farmers, unemployed youth, the elderly, widows and persons with disabilities were completely absent from the speech.

The BRS leader further accused the government of misleading the public about employment, alleging that while it claimed to have provided 60,000 jobs, only around 12,000 posts had actually been filled.

Echoing the criticism, BRS MLA Padi Kaushik Reddy said the Governor's speech

did not mention the Six Guarantees even though the Congress government was presenting its third budget since coming to power under Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy. He alleged that the promised Rs.15,000 assistance under the Rythu Bharosa scheme had not yet been disbursed to farmers. BRS leaders said they would continue to raise the issue in the Assembly until the Congress government fulfils all the promises made to the people.

## KTR jokes with Raja Singh in assembly lobby

HYDERABAD: A brief but amusing exchange between the leaders from rival parties drew attention on the sidelines of the Telangana Assembly Budget Session here on Monday.

As the session began with the Governor's address to both the Houses, former minister KT Rama Rao spotted Goshamahal MLA T Raja Singh stepping out of the BJP Legislature Party (BJLP) chamber in the Assembly lobby. Noticing him, KTR jokingly asked how a leader currently suspended from the Bharatiya Janata Party could enter the BJLP chamber and

playfully told him to "come out" of the room. BJP MLA Payal Shankar, who was present nearby, responded in a lighter vein by inviting KTR to step inside the BJLP chamber as well. KTR laughed and remarked that if he entered the room, the media might spin a different narrative, before walking away smiling. Later, Raja Singh described the BJLP chamber as his "old home", saying he could visit anytime as his friends were still there. However, he said he had not yet decided whether to rejoin the party, adding that time would reveal "who will plead with whom".



## Tribal pregnant woman murdered in Kagaznagar

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
KAGAZNAGAR

A 25-year-old tribal woman, who was seven months pregnant, was found murdered in a forest area between Kondapalli and Sulugupalli villages in Penchikalpet mandal, allegedly by a man after she insisted that he marry her.

Police said Athram Sammakka, daughter of Shankar from Kondapalli, was bludgeoned to death by K Jalapathi from Jaichindpur hamlet in the forest area between the two villages on Saturday.

Her body was traced in the forest after Jalapathi's brother alerted the local police about the incident.

According to the police, Jalapathi, who is already married, informed his brother over the phone after murdering Sammakka, stating that he killed her because she was



File photo of Athram Sammakka

pestering him to marry her.

Despite being married, he had reportedly maintained a close relationship with the woman for around four years. Sammakka was seven months pregnant and had asked him to marry her. Jalapathi allegedly asked Sammakka to meet him in

Jaichindpur and took her into the forest area, where he killed her. Based on a complaint lodged by the victim's family members, a case was registered against Jalapathi under the SC, ST Prevention of Atrocities Act and for murder under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

If your name is Jasprit Bumrah, the pressure comes automatically. He is that kind of bowler. He creates an impact in every game, guarantees you a wicket, and restricts the opposition. That responsibility brings a lot of pressure because his four overs are the most precious thing for MI - Aakash Chopra

## India has depth to field several T20 teams: SKY

'Batting a mix of instinct and reaction and team effort behind 80 per cent win rate'

NEW DELHI

INDIA'S T20 World Cup-winning captain Suryakumar Yadav believes the country's talent pool in the shortest format has grown so vast that it could comfortably field two or even three international-quality teams at the same time, underlining the depth created by a thriving domestic structure and franchise ecosystem.

The flamboyant batter, who has overseen a period of remarkable consistency since taking over the leadership after the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024, credited the steady pipeline of players emerging from domestic competitions and the Indian Premier League for strengthening India's dominance in T20 cricket.

Since Suryakumar took over the captaincy in 2024 -- right after Rohit Sharma stepped down following the World Cup victory in Barbados -- the Indian team has won 42 of the 52 matches played, reflecting team's domi-



nance in a fickle format.

In a podcast interview with PTI Videos on Sunday, Suryakumar called the current group "the best T20 team India has produced", adding that India's depth in T20 cricket is now too evident to be downplayed.

"If you talk about talent, I feel you can find talent regularly. There is IPL cricket, franchise cricket, then there is domestic cricket. You can see how many players come every year. So you can make as many teams as you want in T20 when I am talking about T20," Suryakumar said.

"So I feel talent is unlimited. If you can make two-three

playing XIs, our base is so strong, of the Indian team. So this is not a modest and diplomatic reply. But now it is so strong, so there is no shame in telling the truth," he said.

Suryakumar credited the team's success coming into the World Cup to a collective approach in the dressing room, saying a shared vision among players and support staff helped produce an impressive 80 per cent win rate in a notoriously unpredictable format.

Even with that success rate, the World Cup was not going to be a cake-walk because as Suryakumar noted, "we played bilateral matches one way, and in ICC tournament something

else happened."

For this reason, he needed to motivate the team to maintain the winning streak in the Feb 7 to March 8 tournament.

"I don't pay too much attention to statistics but I hate losing any game. If everyone in the dressing room moves in the same direction, only then can you achieve such a percentage," he said.

Known for his 360-degree strokeplay, Suryakumar described batting in T20 cricket as largely a reactive sport, with preparation accounting for only part of the process. "I feel batting is about 70-75 per cent reaction. The remaining 25 per cent is instinct, what you decide to do in the moment. Once you enter the ground, you are almost in autopilot mode. You try to bat with rhythm and according to the situation," he said.

He also traced the origins of his unconventional range of shots to childhood rubber-ball games in Mumbai, where uneven boundary sizes forced him to improvise.

## Indian women's team to feature in FIH Hockey Nation Cup

LAUSANNE (SWITZERLAND): The Indian women's team will feature in the FIH Hockey Nations Cup to be held in Auckland, New Zealand from June 15 to 21.

The Hockey Nations Cup was launched in 2021 to offer a top-level competition to the best-ranked teams not participating in the Hockey Pro League, and give the winning team an option to be promoted in it the following season. The Indian women's hockey team was relegated from the Pro League 2024-25 after finishing at the bottom of the nine-team standings.

Apart from India, hosts New Zealand, USA, Japan, Korea, Chile, Scotland and France, who were promoted via the Hockey Nations Cup 2, will take part in the event.

The men's event will be held in Cape Town and will involve South Africa, New Zealand, France, Korea, Japan, Wales, Malaysia, along with Scotland, who were promoted via the Hockey Nations Cup 2, as well as Ireland, who were relegated from the 2024-25 season of the Hockey Pro League.

## ORLEANS MASTERS SUPER 300

### Ayush, Tanvi to lead Indian challenge; Injured Prannoy pulls out

ORLEANS (FRANCE): Youngsters Ayush Shetty and Tanvi Sharma will lead India's challenge at the USD 250,000 Orleans Masters Super 300 badminton tournament beginning here on Tuesday after senior shuttler HS Prannoy pulled out due to a shoulder injury.

Prannoy, who was originally slated to face top seed Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei in the opening round, was forced to withdraw after experiencing shoulder pain during the Swiss Open in Basel last week. While the cause of his discomfort was unclear initially, the Indian had decided to pull out of his match against Japan's Koki Watanabe to avoid aggravating the injury.

"The shoulder pain developed after travelling to the Swiss Open. We didn't know the reason then, so I decided to withdraw and fly back," Prannoy told PTI. "After a scan it showed a slight tear. It is a minor thing and hopefully I should be okay soon," added the seasoned pro, who is targeting a return at the Asian Championships to be held from April 7 to 12 in Ningbo, China.

All eyes will be on eighth seed world No. 25 Ayush Shetty, who won the US Open Super 300 last year, as he opens his campaign against Lee Chia Hao of Chinese Taipei.

Former world No. 1 and currently ranked 30th, Kidambi Srikanth will face Denmark's Magnus Johannesen.

Tharun Mannepilli, fresh from a quarterfinal finish at last week's Swiss Open, takes on



Chinese Taipei's Wang Tzu Wei in his opening game. World No. 42 Kiran George will face third seed Kenta Nishimoto of Japan.

In women's singles, Tanvi Sharma, the silver medalist at last year's BWF Junior World Championships, will take on Thailand's Supanida Katethong, while Malvika Bansod will continue her quest for glory after returning to action from a major injury when she faces Sung Shuo Yun of Chinese Taipei.

Rakshitha Sree Santhosh Ramraj will meet Japan's Manami Suizu, while Annol Kharb will be up against Turkey's Neslihan Arin.

In women's doubles, Devika Sihag and Isharani Baruah will take on a pair coming through the qualifiers. The men's doubles pair of Hariharan Amsakarunan and M R Arjun will face the Chinese Taipei duo of Lai Po Yu and Tsai Fu Cheng.

In women's doubles, Ashwini Bhat K and Shikha Gautam will be up against the fourth-seeded Japanese pair of Rui Hirokami and Sayaka Hobara.

## Bumrah creates an impact in every game: Aakash Chopra

NEW DELHI

FORMER India opener Aakash Chopra says pace ace Jasprit Bumrah is guaranteed to deliver in every match for the Mumbai Indians (MI) in IPL 2026, but warned that the five-time Indian Premier League (IPL) champions face a complex puzzle to solve to fit their array of overseas talent into their playing eleven.

Bumrah picked 18 wickets in 12 games at an average of 17.56 and an economy rate of 6.68 in IPL 2025. MI will kick-

start their campaign at home against three-time champions Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) on March 29 at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai. The side had reached Qualifier 2 in IPL 2025 before losing to eventual runners-up Punjab Kings.

"If your name is Jasprit Bumrah, the pressure comes automatically. He is that kind of bowler. He creates an impact in every game, guarantees you a wicket, and restricts the opposition. That responsibility brings a lot of pressure because his four overs are the

most precious thing for MI. Bowl one over in the powerplay, keep one for the middle phase, and two at the death.

"That is Bumrah -- that pressure is not going anywhere. Whether Boult bowls well or Deepak Chahar is fully fit, Bumrah's pressure stays with him. But if Boult is fit, MI will want to continue with him. Fit, available, in form. They will want the new ball to move around a little with Boult and Deepak Chahar. "Shardul Thakur is a capable replacement for Cha-



har, but it does not necessarily mean that he plays ahead of him. A fit Deepak Chahar, a fit Trent Boult, Bumrah, and Hardik Pandya will be MI's four starting pacers. Corbin Bosch is waiting in the wings. He is a very good all-rounder. But again, you cannot play all overseas players," said Chopra on JioStar.

## NATIONAL TENPIN BOWLING C'SHIPS

### Kishan, Preemal crowned champions

BENGALURU: Former national champion Kishan R of Karnataka clinched his second national title in the men's division at the ARC 34th National Tenpin Bowling Championships, which concluded at Amoeba, Church Street, Bengaluru, on Monday.

In the women's division, Preemal J. of Karnataka captured her maiden national title, ending a 15-year wait for Karnataka in this division.

In the Championship Match played based on cumulative pinfall of two games, top-seeded Kishan produced a composed performance to gain a lead of 17 pins in Game 1 (208-191). He extended his lead in the 2nd game, scoring a high game of 244 to Aakash's 238, seal-



ing the Title with an overall margin of 23 pins (452-429).

In the Championship Match, fourth-seeded Preemal J. took an early lead of 20 pins in the first game with 188 against top-seeded Sabina Athica (Tamil Nadu) (168). Despite a close second game, Preemal maintained her composure

to secure victory, claiming her maiden National Title by a margin of 24 pins (332-308).

Special prizes: Most Promising Player: Anirudhan Sanjeevi (TN) and Suchita S. Kumar (KER)

The largest number of scores above 225 in the Men's division: Kishan R. (KAR) (11)

The largest number of scores above 200 in the Women's division: Sabeena Athica (TN) (4)

Highest block of 6 games in Men's division: Kishan R (KAR) (1369 pins)

Highest block of 6 games in Women's division: Sabeena Athica (TN) (1122 pins).

# BJP MP's remarks on namaz draw flak from Oppn

ALIGARH (UP)

THE remarks of a BJP MP that he does not know what Eid or Ramzan is while opposing namaz in this Uttar Pradesh district have gone viral on social media, drawing criticism from opposition politicians, even as community leaders have

appealed for calm.

When reporters asked BJP MP Satish Gautam on Sunday about a local AIMIM leader's demand for permission to hold Eid prayers at the exhibition grounds here, he said he is not interested in such festivals and does not even know their names. "I do not

know what Eid or Ramzan is. I am least interested in them," Gautam said.

He also accused Muslims of "illegally occupying huge tracts of land during the Samajwadi Party's rule" in Uttar Pradesh and questioned the need for additional space for prayers. "There is no need to give

them the ground. They have the Eidgah for prayers," the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader said.

He further said that Muslims are among the major beneficiaries of the present BJP-led government's welfare schemes. "They are getting more than their due share, so what else

do they want from us now?" he asked.

Reacting to the MP's remarks, former Aligarh Muslim University Students' Union president Salman Imtiaz said Gautam is known for frequently making "senseless and provocative statements" and that both Hindus and Muslims

ignore such comments in the interest of peace.

Imtiaz, now associated with the Congress and a former contestant for the Aligarh City Assembly seat, alleged that Gautam's remarks were intended at diverting attention from internal disputes within the city unit of the BJP.



## Man kills 2 in-laws during Panchayat; wife critical

BAREILLY (UP)

A man on Monday allegedly stabbed his mother-in-law and brother-in-law to death and seriously injured his wife during a panchayat in Rahrura Chaudhary village in Bareilly district, police said.

The accused, identified as Afsar Khan, fled after the attack and police teams have been deployed to trace him, Bareilly Additional SP Manush Pareek said.

"Raids are being conducted at several locations and the accused will be arrested soon," he added.

According to the police, the victims have been identified as 19-year-old Adil and his 45-year-old mother Asma, while the accused's wife Saima sustained serious stab injuries and is undergoing treatment in a hospital where her condition is stated to be critical. Family members said Afsar Khan had a violent temperament and frequently quarrelled with his wife over minor issues, forc-



ing her to repeatedly return to her parental home. Saima had reportedly refused to go back with him due to his aggressive behaviour.

They said the accused had earlier been arrested in 2022 for allegedly killing his maternal uncle in the Bithri Chainpur police station area and had recently returned to the village after securing bail from a court.

The police said Saima had submitted a written complaint at Izzatnagar police station on Sunday alleging that her husband was threatening to kill her and her family members. On Monday, villagers convened a panchayat to resolve the dispute when the accused allegedly attacked the family members with a knife before fleeing, the police said.

## 'Embezzlement' of Rs 11.4-cr scholarship funds

# CBI registers FIR against govt officials in 5 states

NEW DELHI

The CBI has registered a case into the alleged siphoning of more than Rs 11.4 crore from scholarship funds intended for students with disabilities by "non-existent" institutes and students, officials said Monday.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has filed an FIR against unidentified public servants and nodal officers in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Jammu and Kashmir for allegedly embezzling funds from the Umbrella Scholarship Scheme, launched in 2018 after six scholarship schemes including the Post-matric Scholarship for Students with



Disabilities were merged, the agency said.

Scholarships under this scheme were available to students of classes 11 and 12, as well as in post-matriculation diploma and certificate courses. Bachelor's degree and diploma and master's degree and diploma from any university recognised by UGC/AICTE were also funded under

these scholarships.

"The objective and allowances of the scheme for the post-metric scholarship, including the details of maintenance allowance, disability allowance, reimbursement of compulsory non-refundable fees and book allowance, are referred to in the scheme book (scholarship scheme for students with disabilities)," the

CBI said.

The central agency had launched a preliminary enquiry last year on a complaint from the secretary of the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, alleging that Rs 11.41 crore in scholarships had been paid to 926 students related to 28 institutes, which were either fake or showed serious malpractices during an inspection by the ministry.

During the enquiry, it surfaced that many of these institutions were non-existent or were closed while still claiming funds from the National Scholarship Portal, according to the FIR.

## Hoax cyanide gas email threat alarms Bhopal office

BHOPAL

AN email threatening to "blow up" the premises of a Madhya Pradesh government office here using cyanide gas cylinders on Monday prompted precautionary evacuation, officials said.

The threat turned out to be a hoax after police personnel searched the office of the Weights and Measures Department in the MP Nagar area.

"While checking mails, I came across a message at 10:20 AM stating that 16 cylinders filled with cyanide gas had been placed inside the department office and would go off around 1 pm," office superintendent Shyam Solanki told PTI.

He contacted his seniors, and the police were informed. Bomb disposal squad personnel and police teams with sniffer dogs rushed to the spot and searched the premises, he said, adding that the office



was evacuated as a precaution.

Solanki said the police did not find any cylinders or explosives in the office. Officials said similar threatening emails had earlier targeted People's University and AIIMS in Bhopal, but those alerts also proved false.

Bhopal City Zone 2 Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Vivek Singh stated that the investigation is underway to identify the sender of the email. He suspected that a gang was behind such emails nationwide, using fake names. Department officers and workers' leader Umashankar Tiwari said staffers resumed work at 1:10 PM.



## Venugopal urges LS Speaker to revoke 8 MPs' suspension

NEW DELHI: Congress leader K C Venugopal urged Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Monday to revoke the suspension of eight opposition members, saying they were suspended "unfairly".

Raising the issue during the Zero Hour, Venugopal said Parliament has seen countless protests but suspending MPs is a "disturbing new trend" that cannot be allowed to continue.

Birla said a decision of the Lok Sabha cannot be discussed on the floor of the House and disallowed Venugopal to speak further. Later, in a post on X, the Congress leader said he had raised concern over the "unfair suspension of 8 Opposition MPs for this Session". "Rose in the Lok Sabha to raise concern over the unfair suspension of 8 Opposition MPs for this

Session. Parliament has seen countless protests but the suspension of MPs is a disturbing new trend, which cannot be allowed to continue. This suspension should be revoked immediately," he said. The eight opposition members were suspended during the first part of the Budget Session for "unruly" behaviour. They were suspended for the entire session.

Workers have been using small gas-enabled burners for cooking. Now, due to LPG cylinder shortage, some factory canteens have shut down, forcing workers to return to their native places. Currently, the situation is not like the COVID pandemic, but it could escalate if the issue is not resolved

-Vinnie Mehta, DG, ACMA



## BIZ BRIEFS

## Levi's rolls out new campaign

The Levi Strauss & Co., has unveiled its 2026 global campaign, 'Behind Every Original', to India, starring Global Brand Ambassador Alia Bhatt. Hiren Gor, MD, Levi Strauss & Co, said: "For over 150 years, Levi's has been worn by those who move culture forward, and Behind Every Original reinforces our commitment to staying at the center of that momentum. Alia Bhatt represents a new generation of originals — confident, self-defined and unapologetically authentic."

## Cooling technology event in Mumbai

Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI) and CEPT University convened industry leaders at a summit in Jio World Convention Centre, Mumbai. The event titled: 'Can Today's Air Conditioners Keep Up with a Hotter, More Humid World? Delivering Affordable, Efficient Comfort for the Global South.' Sanjay Sudhakaran, MD, Bosch Home Comfort India Ltd, said: "As the heat waves intensify and climate patterns shift, India stands on the brink of a cooling revolution."

## Price hike by Tata Motors

Tata Motors announced a price increase of up to 1.5 per cent across its commercial vehicle range, effective April 1. The price increase is being undertaken to partially offset the impact of rising commodity prices and other input costs. The increase will vary depending on the model and variant. According to the company: "With over eight decades of leadership in commercial mobility, Tata Motors is known for its innovation, reliability, and performance."

## PhysicsWallah's expansion plans

Education company PhysicsWallah (PW) has expanded its presence in Andhra Pradesh with the inauguration of its first tech-enabled PW Vidyapeeth centre in Vijayawada, located on MG Road. Ankit Gupta, CEO, Vidyapeeth Offline, PW, said: "At PW, we try to find out avenues of making students' learning experience better. We believe that students should not have to travel to other cities to access quality education, as this can be both emotionally and financially stressful."

## Kai India's new product

KAI India, a name in personal grooming products, offer CAN Face Razor for Women, a product for facial hair removal for Women. Keijiro Takasago, MD, KAI India, said: "We designed the CAN Face Razor to be simple and dependable — something a woman can use quickly, even on busy mornings. It removes the finest hair with care and makes skin feel smooth. Kai products make everyday grooming easier, and that's what we set out to do."

# Markets rebound over 1% on bargain buying after 3-days fall

The equity market staged a late-session rebound, supported by value buying in domestically oriented sectors such as auto, banking, and FMCG

## Domestic Support

- BSE-Sensex rose 938.93pts or (+1.26%) to 75,502.85
- NSE-Nifty climbed 257.70pts or (+1.11%) to 23,408.80
- FII offloaded Rs10,716.64-cr; DIIs bought Rs 9,977.42 cr on Fri



UltraTech Cement surged 4.22 per cent. Trent, HDFC Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, Eternal, Bajaj Finance, ITC, Tata Steel and State Bank of India were among the biggest gainers. Bharat Electronics, Sun Pharma, Power Grid and Bharti Airtel were among the major laggards.

MUMBAI: Stock market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded by over 1 per cent on Monday after facing a massive drubbing in the past three trading days, driven by value-buying in blue-chip banking counters.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 938.93 points or 1.26 per cent to settle at 75,502.85. During the day, it hit a high of 75,805.27 and a low of 73,949.76. The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 257.70 points or 1.11 per cent to end at 23,408.80.

From the 30 Sensex firms,

could provide further support," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

The BSE MidCap Select index dipped 0.36 per cent and Smallcap Select index edged lower by 0.25 per cent. Among sectoral indices, BSE Top 10 Banks surged 1.61 per cent, followed by Private Banks index (1.38 per cent), Financial Services (1.32 per cent), Auto (1.23 per cent), Bankex (1.08 per cent) and FMCG (0.94 per cent). BSE oil & gas index dropped 2.29 per cent, hospitals (1.64 per cent), realty (1.51 per cent), energy (1.36 per cent) and healthcare (1.13 per cent).

"Markets started the week on a volatile note and gained

over a per cent, snapping their recent losing streak, supported by bargain buying. The rebound largely reflects participants taking advantage of lower levels to accumulate select large-cap stocks after the sharp decline. "However, the overall mood remained cautious amid persistent geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and elevated crude oil prices, which continue to raise concerns over inflation and India's import bill. In addition, continued foreign institutional investor outflows and currency volatility are keeping risk appetite in check," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 10,716.64 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs), however, bought stocks worth Rs 9,977.42 crore. On Friday, the Sensex settled at 74,563.92, down 1,470.50 points or 1.93 per cent. The Nifty tanked 488.05 points or 2.06 per cent to end at 23,151.10.

# Exports dip marginally in Feb

Trade deficit narrows to \$27 bn | Imports surge even as global tensions disrupt trade routes

## Trade Insights

- Exports (Feb 2026): \$36.61 bn
- Imports (Feb 2026): \$63.71 bn
- Trade Deficit: \$27.1 bn
- Exports (Apr-Feb FY26): \$402.93 bn (+1.84%)

NEW DELHI

INDIA'S merchandise exports dipped marginally in February while the trade deficit narrowed sequentially as imports moderated compared with the previous month, according to data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on Monday.

Exports in February

stood at \$36.61 billion, registering a slight 0.81 per cent decline year-on-year. Imports, however, rose sharply by 24.11 per cent to \$63.71 billion, pushing the trade deficit to \$27.1 billion during the month.

On a month-on-month basis, the deficit narrowed from \$34.68 billion in January, as imports fell from \$71.24 billion while exports were almost unchanged.

Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said exports have remained resilient despite global challenges, though shipments may see a downward trend in March due to logistical disruptions arising from tensions in West Asia.

For the April-February period of FY26, India's merchandise exports grew 1.84 per cent to \$402.93 billion, compared with \$395.66 bil-

lion in the same period last year. Imports during the period increased 8.53 per cent to \$713.53 billion.

The data comes amid escalating tensions in West Asia following military action by the US and Israel against Iran on February 28. The crisis has disrupted key trade routes, particularly the Strait of Hormuz, through which nearly 20 per cent of global oil and gas shipments pass.

Officials said India has strengthened its resilience to global energy shocks through diversification of imports across about 40 supplier countries and by building strategic petroleum reserves. Government officials added that India is also in contact with Iran to ensure safe passage for merchant ships through the region.



## LG HVAC system showcased at ACREX

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

LG Electronics India Limited (LGE India) has participated at ACREX ISHRAE India 2026 - South Asia's largest exhibition for HVAC and Intelligent Business Solutions. The company presented its most comprehensive product portfolio at the exhibition, spanning residential, commercial, and industrial applications, highlighting innovations that deliver intelligent, reliable, and energy-efficient climate solutions for India. LG Electronics showcased its advanced VRF, Chillers & Cassette range ACs best suited for diverse Indian climate & consumers requirements. Commenting on the company's participation in ACREX, Hong Ju Jeon - Managing Director & Chief Sales & Marketing Officer, LG Electronics India Limited said, "LG Electronics has been part of India's journey for nearly three decades, and has during this period built unparalleled expertise in addressing the country's infrastructure requirements, while meeting performance standards that developers, consultants, and facility managers demand."

## HCLTech ties up with Google Cloud for Agentic AI adoption

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

HCLTech, a technology company, has announced the expansion of its strategic collaboration with Google Cloud to help accelerate enterprise adoption of Agentic AI. HCLTech will use Gemini Enterprise and Gemini models to build custom AI agents for global clients, while strengthening collaboration and security through Google Workspace, supporting their scalable, AI-driven transformation. As enterprises scale AI, the company's Gemini-enabled offerings embed AI into systems, workflows and decision-making to unlock new market opportunities, introduce innovative capabilities and boost operational efficiency. Many of the agents the company has developed are already available on the Google Cloud Marketplace.

This expanded collaboration formalises a structured program to accelerate clients' GenAI and Agentic AI adoption, cultivate Google Cloud



champions across HCLTech and support over 2,000 GenAI-led customer engagements.

The company's key areas include: Building unique offerings with Data and AI at its core, the AI Force platform integrates with Google's Gemini family of models and Gemini Code Assist to transform software development and IT operations. Additional offerings include Unified Migrations, including Oracle, SAP and VMware transformation to Google Cloud and Security transformation.

The company is growing its Center of Excellence to expand industry-specific agentic solutions. Advancing Agentic AI solutions, building on offerings such as Insight for manufacturing and Netsight for telecommunications.

# Sebi mulls light-touch penalty structure for IAs

The regulator aims to promote compliance while ensuring transparency and fairness

NEW DELHI: With an aim to strengthen the investment advisory ecosystem, markets regulator Sebi is working on a raft of measures, including a standardised light-touch penalty structure, a digital regulatory guidance platform, and a common advertisement code, its chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey said. Speaking at an event organised by the Association of Registered Investment Advisers (ARIA), Pandey said the investment advisory ecosystem in India is currently at an important stage of transition.

At present, there are around 1,000 registered investment advisers (IAs) in the country -- about 470 individuals and 530 non-individual entities. He said the regulator is working on a standardised light-touch penalty structure aimed at encouraging compliance



while ensuring transparency and fairness. "A standardised light-touch penalty structure for IAs is being worked out. This should promote compliance while ensuring transparency and fairness," he said.

The regulator is also developing a digital platform -- SEBI SETU -- to provide simple, end-to-end regulatory guidance for investment advisers, covering the entire lifecycle from registration to ongoing compliance, he added.

In addition, the regulator is preparing a common advertisement code for all intermediaries to reduce

operational challenges and improve consistency in communication. Among other initiatives, a working group has been constituted to review the existing regulatory framework for Mutual Fund Distributors (MFDs) and examine overlaps, if any, between MFDs and investment advisers.

Pandey said a simplified certification module is also being developed by National Institute of Securities Markets (NISM) for individuals associated with investment advice who are engaged in sales and other non-core functions. However, he expressed concern over the declining number of registered investment advisers despite a rapidly expanding investor base.

"It is a matter of concern that the number of registered investment advisers has declined since 2021.

## Vedanta eyes ₹2,575-cr via NCDs

NEW DELHI: Vedanta Ltd said its committee of directors has approved raising up to Rs 2,575 crore through issuance of debentures. The fundraising is part of Vedanta's efforts to diversify funding sources and strengthen its balance sheet as it continues to refinance debt and reduce borrowing costs. The committee has approved the allotment of 2,57,500 unsecured, redeemable, rated, listed, non-convertible debentures of face value of Rs 1,00,000 each, aggregating to Rs 2,575 crore on a private placement basis, a BSE filing said. Vedanta has seen strong investor interest in recent debt issuances. In October 2025, its \$500 million bond issue was oversubscribed three times, while an NCD offering in June last year saw nearly 60 per cent oversubscription. The company has been gradually deleveraging its balance sheet. Vedanta Resources Ltd, the parent of Vedanta Ltd, has reduced net debt to about \$4.8 billion as of December 2025 from about \$8.9 billion in March 2022.

# Inflation: Rising crude prices push WPI to 11-month high of 2.13% in Feb

It is likely to pick up pace if oil price rise persists, and spills over to other goods

## Global Jitters

- Inflation in food articles was 2.19%
- Vegetables, inflation eased to 4.73%
- Pulses, potato and egg, meat and fish saw an uptick



NEW DELHI: Wholesale price inflation rose to a 11-month high of 2.13 per cent in February, driven by an uptick in prices of food and non-food articles, even though vegetable prices eased on a month-on-month basis, government data showed on Monday.

This is the fourth straight month of rise in Wholesale Price Index (WPI)-based inflation. It was 1.81 per cent in January and 2.45 per cent in February last year.

Economists said the WPI inflation is likely to pick up pace further if the oil price

rise persists, and spills over to other goods (fertilisers, aluminium) given it tracks international prices more closely relative to the CPI basket.

According to WPI data, inflation in food articles was 2.19 per cent in February, as against 1.55 per cent in the previous month. Although in vegetables, inflation eased to 4.73 per cent in February against 6.78 per cent in Janu-

ary, pulses, potato and egg, meat and fish saw an uptick in inflation in February.

"Positive rate of inflation in February 2026 is primarily due to an increase in prices of other manufacturing, manufacture of basic metals, non-food articles, food articles and textiles, etc.," the industry ministry said in a statement. Negative inflation, or deflation, in the fuel and power basket narrowed

to 3.78 per cent in February, vis-a-vis 4.01 per cent in January. Global oil prices averaged \$68/bbl in February from \$63/bbl in January.

Barclays in a research note said the passthrough of the rise in crude oil prices from the Middle East conflict will reflect more in WPI inflation vs retail CPI inflation, as retail fuel prices are unchanged in the latter.

"With a sharp jump in crude oil prices crossing \$100/bbl as of 16 March, the corresponding WPI will likely reflect this in the March print," Barclays said.

India Ratings and Research the rising crude oil prices since the US-Iran war will have a strong impact on wholesale inflation from March 2026, till the supply side issues are resolved.

The average price of Indian crude basket March 2026 (up to March 12) touched a 44-month high of \$101.25/bbl.

# Nifty likely to reach 35,000 in 3 yrs: Report

In last 4 years Indian markets delivered about 12.7% CAGR; If the index maintains its current valuation multiple of about 20.9x earnings, it could translate into around 12.8-14% CAGR

NEW DELHI: India's benchmark index Nifty 50 is likely to touch 34,000-35,000 levels over the next three years due to earnings growth, stronger consumption and banking credit expansion, a report claimed on Monday.

From these factors and continued investment in infrastructure and manufacturing, Nifty earnings per share may rise to Rs 1,281 in FY27, Rs 1,463 in FY28 and Rs 1,650-1,700 by FY29, the report from investment platform smallcase said. Mid-caps led market returns, outperforming large caps during the past four years when global markets experienced shocks from multiple geopolitical conflicts, the report said.

Indian markets delivered about 12.7 per cent CAGR demonstrated notable resilience, with most geopolitical shocks triggering short-term corrections of



around 2-8 per cent, followed by swift recoveries within weeks, during times of conflict in last 4 years.

This performance has been supported by the strength of the domestic economy, improving corporate earnings, and rising retail participation in the stock market, the firm said. Assuming the index maintains its current valuation multiple of about 20.9x earnings, the trend could translate into approximately 12.8-14 per cent compound annual growth rate (CAGR), the report added.

The firm highlighted mid-caps delivered CAGRs of about 18.4 per cent dur-

ing this period versus 13.4 per cent for small caps and 9.8 per cent for large caps. Defence and aerospace companies have emerged as key beneficiaries of heightened geopolitical tensions, supported by rising global defence spending and stronger domestic procurement initiatives, it said.

Oil and gas producers have also historically performed well during geopolitical crises due to supply disruptions and rising crude oil prices. Commodity-linked sectors such as metals and mining have similarly witnessed phases of outperformance during periods of supply constraints and commodity price rallies, it added. Meanwhile, manufacturing and capital goods companies are gaining prominence as global supply chains undergo structural shifts, the firm suggested.



# Raashii Khanna promises vintage Pawan Kalyan magic

The excitement around 'Ustaad Bhagat Singh' has been steadily building ever since the project brought together Power Star Pawan Kalyan and director Harish Shankar, the blockbuster duo behind 'Gabbar Singh'. Mounted on a grand scale by Mythri Movie Makers, the film promises a festive theatrical experience when it releases on March 19 for Ugadi. With the teaser, trailer, and songs already striking a chord, expectations are soaring — and leading lady Raashii Khanna is feeling the buzz.

Calling this phase of her career "incredibly hectic but exciting," Raashii reveals that joining the film was an instant decision driven purely by admiration. "The moment I heard it was Pawan Kalyan Garu's film, I said yes immediately — even before listening to the story. Since my first film, I've heard so much about his stardom and the phenomenon people call 'Pawanism.' I always wished to work with him at least once. With this film, that dream finally came true."

In the film, Raashii plays Shloka, a contemporary young woman written with depth and presence. She describes the role as both stylish and substantial. "Every character in the story has importance, and Shloka has a strong arc with solid characterization. There's good emotional range in the role." She adds with a smile, "I also have a proper

mass song in the film. I love dancing, so shooting that number was pure fun for me."

Working alongside Pawan Kalyan left a lasting impression on the actress, not just professionally but personally. "He is an incredibly simple person. You'll almost always see him reading books. There's an innocence about him that's very rare and difficult to explain," she says. Their first conversation remains memorable. "On day one, he asked me if I always wanted to become an actress. I told him I had once dreamed of becoming an IAS officer. He speaks very little, but every word carries weight."

What moved her most was his perspective on life beyond cinema. "He encouraged me to think about public service and contributing to society. He genuinely cares about people. I learned a lot about humanity from him." Witnessing his fan following up close was overwhelming. "When I looked at the crowd during the film event, it felt like people were worshipping him like a god."

Raashii is equally appreciative of director Harish Shankar's filmmaking intensity. "He's extremely sharp and understands the pulse of the mass audience perfectly. What amazed me most was his speed — a schedule that usually takes 120 days was completed in just 40. He worked tirelessly, often sacrificing sleep." She recalls how his creativity

flowed even on set. "He would write punch dialogues on the spot. His patience and dedication to cinema taught me so much."

Despite sharing screen space with another leading lady, Raashii says the narrative gives each character room to shine. "We don't have scenes together, so there was never a concern. Each role has its own space, and mine comes with good variations."

Managing schedules around the star's commitments required flexibility and stamina. "I was told in advance that dates could be unpredictable, and I was prepared. There were days we worked 24-hour shifts without knowing whether it was day or night."

She also credits the producers for fostering a creative environment. "They put their heart and soul into films, never compromise on scale, and give directors complete freedom. The working atmosphere is wonderful."

For audiences, Raashii promises a wholesome entertainer. "Like 'Gabbar Singh', this film is packed with entertainment. It's a complete family film everyone can enjoy together in theatres. Releasing during Ugadi makes it even more special. Most importantly, you'll get to see vintage Pawan Kalyan Garu on screen."



## Kiran Abbavaram unveils Thimmarajupalli TV's 'Ooru Song'

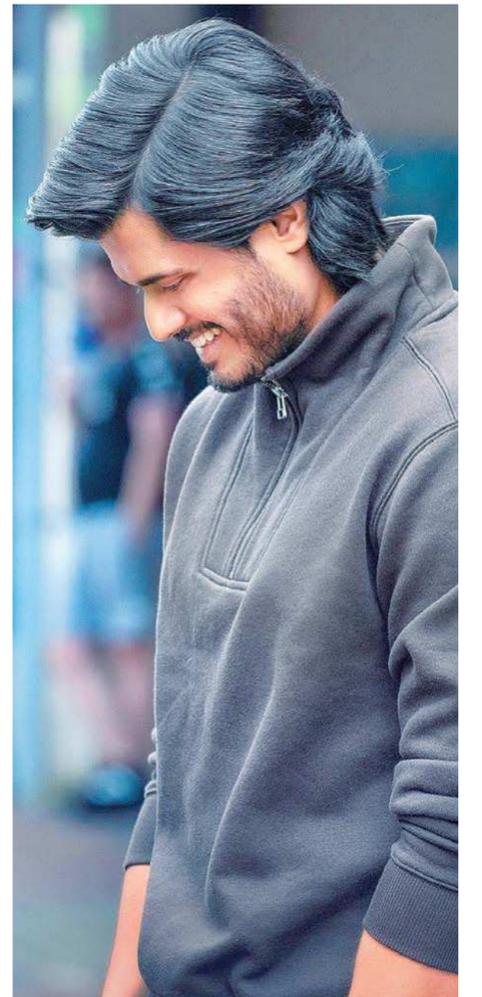
Hero Kiran Abbavaram's KA Productions, in association with Sumaira Studios, is backing the film 'Thimmarajupalli TV', encouraging fresh talent in the industry. Teja Velpucharla is serving as the co-producer. The film introduces Sai Tej and Veda Jalandharr as the lead actors, while V. Murniraju makes his directorial debut with 'Thimmarajupalli TV'.

Set against a rural backdrop, the film is being made as a period drama and is gearing up for a grand theatrical release soon. Today, the makers unveiled



the "Ooru Song" from 'Thimmarajupalli TV'. The track has been beautifully composed by Vamsikanth

Rekhana, with lyrics penned by Sanare and vocals rendered by Mamatha Ramesh. The song vividly captures the festive spirit of a village preparing for the Shivaratri fair. The song portrays the charm of rural life — from the sound of cuckoos perched on tree branches and the lush greenery at dawn to the colourful rangolis adorning homes and the fragrant breeze carrying the scent of flowers. The lyrics also reflect the excitement among people of all ages as the village gears up to celebrate the Shivaratri festival and the vibrant fair that accompanies it.



## Suriya shines in 'Vishwanath & Sons' emotional teaser

The teaser of 'Vishwanath & Sons', starring Suriya, has been unveiled, offering a glimpse into the world of Sanjay Vishwanath. Directed by Venky Atluri and produced by Suryadevara Naga Vamsi, the film promises an emotional and engaging cinematic experience.

The teaser introduces Sanjay Vishwanath, an international pistol shooter who continues to chase his dreams even in his 40s. Suriya appears in a layered role, portraying both fatherly warmth and emotional depth. His stylish screen presence and the impactful dialogues penned by Venky Atluri bring back shades reminiscent of his iconic performances.

Adding freshness to the narrative is Mamitha Baiju, who brings vibrant and charming energy to the film. The teaser hints at an unconventional love story featuring a noticeable age gap. With Venky Atluri's storytelling sensibilities, the film is expected to handle this aspect with depth and

emotional maturity.

The teaser also highlights the film's strong technical craftsmanship. G. V. Prakash Kumar delivers a classy and powerful background score that elevates the visuals. Cinematographer Nimish Ravi captures the film in rich and visually striking frames, while editing is handled by Navin Nooli. Production design by Banglan further enhances the film's immersive world.

Touted as a large-scale family drama with strong emotional undercurrents, 'Vishwanath & Sons' brings together a compelling ensemble cast and a top-tier technical team. Director Venky Atluri, who is riding high on the success of 'Lucky Baskhar' and 'Vaathi', aims to deliver another memorable entertainer.

Produced under the banners of Sithara Entertainment and Fortune Four Cinemas, and presented by Srikara Studios, the film has successfully wrapped up shooting and is gearing up for a grand worldwide theatrical release this July.



## Sudigali Sudheer's 'G.O.A.T' cleared for March 26 release

The upcoming Telugu film 'G.O.A.T' (Greatest Of All Times), starring popular comedian-turned-hero Sudigali Sudheer, has successfully completed its censor formalities and is gearing up for a worldwide theatrical release on March 26.

The film features Divya Bharathi as the female lead and is directed by Vedavyas. It is being produced by Chandrasekhar Reddy Mogulla under the banners of Mahateja Creations and Jaishnav Productions. The film is currently undergoing post-production work.

According to the makers, the content released so far has received a positive response from audiences, and the trailer will be unveiled soon. The film has now completed the censor process and has been awarded a U/A certificate by the censor board.

Speaking about the film, the producer said it is being made on a grand scale without compromising on quality. He added that the film will be technically strong and is expected to become a milestone in Sudigali Sudheer's career. "Every frame of the film has

come out beautifully. Along with being a complete commercial entertainer, the movie also carries a meaningful message that will make today's youth think," he said, expressing confidence that it will entertain audiences across all sections.

Apart from Sudigali Sudheer and Divya Bharathi, the film also features Sarvadaman Banerjee, Nithin Prasanna, Brahmaji, Prithvi Raj, Aadukalam Naren, Rajendran, Anand Ramraj, Chammak Chandra, Pammi Sai, and Naveen Neni in important roles.

The film's music is composed by Leon James, with the background score by Mani Sharma. Cinematography is handled by Rasool Ellore, while editing is done by Vijay Muktavarapu. Rajeev Nair serves as the production designer. Samaira Reddy N is the co-producer, and Prasoon Mandava is the creative producer.

With its blend of commercial elements and a socially relevant message, 'G.O.A.T' is expected to entertain audiences when it hits theatres worldwide on March 26.

## Anand Deverakonda's 'Epic' birthday promo impresses fans

An impressive birthday promo from young hero Anand Deverakonda's upcoming film 'Epic' has been drawing significant attention. The film is directed by Aditya Haasan and produced by Suryadevara Naga Vamsi and Sai Soujanya under the banners of Sithara Entertainment and Fortune Four Cinemas. Srikara Studios presents the film, while Venkat Upputuri and VMR are serving as co-producers. On the occasion of Anand Deverakonda's birthday today, the makers released a special promo from 'Epic'.

The promo shows the hero celebrating his birthday in

London with friends, while his parents call from India to wish him. A touching moment highlights the father subtly conveying his heartfelt wishes to his son.

The promo carries a unique emotional tone, enhanced by the use of the iconic Amrutham title song as the background score.

After the cult blockbuster Baby, Anand Deverakonda and Vaishnavi Chaitanya are reuniting for this film. The recently released song "Sancharame.." from 'Epic' has also received a positive response. With this exciting combination, the film is generating strong curiosity among audiences.