



THE Hans India



15-yr-old Inaara bags top global rankings
The Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI) has officially declared its rankings for the FEI World Dressage Challenge (WDC) 2025, with India's young equestrian talent, Inaara Mehta Luthria, delivering an exceptional performance. **P10**

Firecracker units have become the new killers
Firecrackers have become deadly! If vendors who run these businesses like those running shops in the ordinary market-selling goods without following safety regulations-are allowed to make fireworks and firecrackers in the run-up to Diwali with unskilled. **P6**

Indian Americans rank No.1 in US earnings
Indian-American households have emerged as the highest earners among major ethnic groups in the United States, with a median annual income of about \$151,200, according to a report citing Pew Research Center findings. **P11**

Priyanka Chopra channels 'Mandakini Vibes' at Vanity Fair Oscars Party 2026
Global icon Priyanka Chopra turned heads with a bold and elegant fashion statement at the Vanity Fair Oscars Party 2026, effortlessly bringing "Mandakini vibes" to the red carpet. The actress arrived alongside her husband Nick Jonas, and the couple exuded. **P12**

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RAMZAN TIMINGS
IFTAR (Wed) 06:32 PM
SEHAR (Thu) 04:59 AM

WINDOWS

46,000 MT LPG cargo part shipment bound for Mangaluru

MUNDRA: A major shipment of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) reached India on Monday as LPG carrier Shivalik docked at the LPG terminal of Mundra Port carrying 46,000 metric tonnes of the fuel for Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. (IOCL).
The vessel arrived via the strategic Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most critical maritime energy routes. According to port officials, the cargo will be discharged in two phases. About 20,000 MT of LPG will be unloaded at Mundra Port in Gujarat, while the remaining 26,000 MT will be discharged LPG berth at New Mangalore Port in Karnataka.

Officials said the shipment forms part of IOC's regular LPG imports to ensure steady supply for domestic cooking gas and industrial consumption across India. India relies significantly on imports to meet its LPG demand, which has steadily increased over the years with the expansion of household connections and industrial usage. The current consignment is expected to boost supply in both western and southern regions of the country.

Suspension of 8 Lok Sabha MPs revoked

NEW DELHI: The Lok Sabha on Tuesday revoked with immediate effect the suspension of eight opposition members who were barred from the House on February 3 for "unruly" behaviour, with Speaker Om Birla stressing that there should be no display of placards, posters, photos or AI-generated images inside the House or in the Parliament complex. Congress member K Suresh requested the House to consider the revocation of the eight opposition members, saying whatever had happened in the House was regrettable, and that his party was ready to cooperate in the smooth functioning of the House.

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IRREGULAR by MANJUL

How can we trust them to vote on bills when they cannot even vote properly in Rajya Sabha elections?

US counterterror chief quits over Iran war

Joseph Kent warned against repeating past mistakes such as the Iraq war and urged a reassessment of US policy; Iran commander who ordered reprisals against protestors killed; Will be wrapped up soon: Trump on Iran-US war

TEXAS

JOSEPH Kent has resigned as Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, citing objections to the ongoing United States-Israel war in Iran, according to a resignation letter addressed to President Donald Trump.

In the letter, Kent said he could not 'in good conscience' support the war, asserting that Iran posed no imminent threat to the United States and alleging that the conflict was driven by pressure from Israel and its American lobby.

He also warned against repeating past mistakes such as the Iraq war and urged a

reassessment of US policy. Iranian state media, Press TV on Tuesday shared a first-person view (FPV) of a drone flying over the US embassy compound in Baghdad. Israeli Defence Forces confirmed the killing of Gholamreza Soleimani, the commander of Iran's Basij Unit. According to the Jerusalem Post, the IDF confirmed the death of the head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Basij paramilitary militia, Gholamreza Soleimani, and his deputy, Seyyed Karishi.

As per the report, the two were killed in a makeshift tent area, which had been set up to make it harder to



follow them as opposed to in a known headquarters. The Israeli Health Ministry has reported that 3,530 people have sustained injuries and been admitted to hospitals since the outbreak of the war. Providing a breakdown of the current medical status, the ministry stated that 86 individuals are presently hospitalised, including eight patients in serious condition. US President Donald Trump said that the ongoing

conflict involving Iran would end soon, saying the situation would be "wrapped up" shortly and would ultimately result in a safer world. Trump said that the war could be "wrapped up soon", adding, "It won't be long. And we're going to have a much safer world when it's wrapped up. It'll be wrapped up soon. We're going to have a much safer world. I had an obligation to do this. I didn't want to," Trump said.

LPG shortage: Centre puts up its hands in HC

MUMBAI

THE Central government on Tuesday assured the Bombay High Court that it is making all attempts on domestic and international fronts to address the hardship caused by the LPG shortage amid the ongoing conflict in West Asia.

The Nagpur bench of the court accepted the Centre's submission and disposed of the petition filed by LPG distributors, noting that it is taking "all the necessary steps in the matter to protect the interests of individuals".

Solicitor General of India Tushar Mehta, appearing via video-conference, informed the court that it

Solicitor General of India Tushar Mehta, appearing via video-conference, informed the court that it was making all attempts on domestic and international levels to address the hardship caused by the shortage of LPG; 3 lakh metric tonnes LPG stranded at Strait of Hormuz: Centre



was making all attempts on domestic and international levels to address the hardship caused by the shortage of LPG. Steps are being taken to ensure that the international crisis does not affect India, he said.

As much as 3 lakh metric tonnes of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) is presently stranded at the Strait of Hormuz, Rajesh

Kumar Sinha, special secretary at ministry of ports, shipping, and waterways said on March 17.

Punjab-based LPG distributors said there was an "inadequate" supply of LPG, despite the Union government and oil marketing companies claiming adequate availability and demanded an increase in cooking gas supplies to clear the backlog.

Budget to have key initiatives for women, girls: CM Rekha

HANS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

DELHI Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Tuesday said there will be major announcements for women and girls in Budget 2026-27 to be tabled in the Delhi Assembly later this month. Attending the 'Nari Utsav' programme at Nirmal Chhaya Complex, she lauded women for their nation-building role, said a statement from the Delhi Chief Minister's Office (CMO).

She announced that the upcoming Delhi Budget to be presented on March 24 will include key initiatives for women and girls.

The chief minister reiterated her government's commitment to the holistic empowerment of

The chief minister reiterated her government's commitment to the holistic empowerment of women and children, citing various schemes including 'Lakhpati Bitiya' and 'Pink Saheli' smart cards for free bus travel to women



women and children, citing various schemes including 'Lakhpati Bitiya' and 'Pink Saheli' smart cards for free bus travel to women. Highlighting the importance of self-help groups

(SHGs), she said women in Delhi will be provided employment and entrepreneurship opportunities through small group-based models, and stressed the need to expand platforms

like 'Mahila Haat' to help women showcase and sell their products. "The Delhi government's focus is not just on launching schemes but on ensuring their effective implementation so that benefits reach every needy individual," Gupta said.

The chief minister also inspected Nirmal Chhaya complex including the care home for women, Balika Grih and Bal Niketan, and enquired about facilities being provided to the occupants of these homes. She visited Sankalp Hub, where activities related to women's safety, awareness and empowerment under Mission Shakti were showcased.

At the SHG-run 'Mahila Haat', she reviewed local products and exhibitions, including nutritious millet-based dishes.

Woman killed as 'unsafe' bridge collapses in Roop Nagar

HANS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

A 60-foot iron bridge over a drain collapsed in north Delhi's Roop Nagar area on Tuesday morning, killing a woman, officials said. Police said the bridge had been declared unsafe and was closed for public movement with barricades. Locals informed that the woman, who seemed to be a beggar, would often sit at one end of the bridge.

A PCR call regarding the bridge collapse was received at around 9.28 am, following which police and emergency teams rushed to the spot, police said. The bridge was found to have collapsed into the drain below. Rescue personnel recovered the body of the woman, believed to be around 50 years old, a senior police officer said.

Personnel from the Delhi Fire Service (DFS), National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and Delhi Police carried out coordinated rescue operations at the site. Multiple fire tenders were pressed into service for it. Visuals showed rescue personnel sliding down the broken bridge using ropes to get to the drain to find the woman. Police said efforts are underway to ascertain her identity. An NDRF official said they received information about the incident around 10.15 am. "On assessing the situation, we found that the drain had a strong current.

Hike EPF pension to Rs 7,500: Parl panel

HANS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

A Parliamentary panel on Tuesday recommended an urgent, comprehensive review of the Rs 1,000 minimum monthly pension under the Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995, to raise it to a more realistic and dignified level. This assumes significance in view of pensioners' demand to raise the pension to Rs 7,500 per month, as Rs 1,000 is not sufficient to make both ends meet.

Pensioners under the Employees' Pension Scheme 1995 (EPS-95) run by the retirement fund body EPFO had also staged a three-day protest at Jantar Mantar from March 9, for increasing the minimum monthly pension to Rs 7,500. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour, Textiles and Skill



Development, in its 15th Report on 'Demands for Grants (2026-27)' of the Ministry of Labour and Employment, noted that the minimum pension of Rs 1,000 per month under the Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995, has remained unchanged for a considerable period of time despite the rising cost of living.

During the course of evidence, the committee observed that numerous representations have been received from pensioners seeking an upward revision of the minimum pension, particularly considering the financial hardships faced by elderly and economically vulnerable beneficiaries.

400 AFGHANS KILLED IN PAK ATTACK

HANS NEWS SERVICE ISLAMABAD

PAKISTAN carried out "precision airstrikes" targeting what it described as terrorists and their support infrastructure locations across Afghanistan, but the Afghan government accused Islamabad of bombing a rehabilitation hospital in Kabul, killing at least 400 people. The latest strikes came as Operation Ghazab lil Haq, launched on February 26, contin-

ued, according to Pakistan's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Pakistan launched the operation in response to alleged attacks by the Afghan Taliban forces along the 2,600-km-long border. "Pakistan's Armed Forces successfully carried out precision airstrikes on the night of 16 March as a part of Operation Ghazab Lil Haq, targeting Afghan Taliban regime terrorism sponsoring military installations in Kabul and Nangarhar," Information Minister Attaullah Tarar

said in a post on X. He claimed that the technical support infrastructure and ammunition storage facilities at two locations in Kabul were effectively destroyed. "The visible secondary detonations after the strikes clearly indicate the presence of large ammunition depots," he added. He claimed four Afghan Taliban regime "terrorism sponsoring" military sites were also struck in Nangarhar, destroying associated logistics, ammunition and technical infrastructure.

No govt job through employment offices in Raj in 5 yrs

HANS NEWS SERVICE JAIPUR

MORE than 22 lakh unemployed youth are currently registered with employment offices across Rajasthan, according to information obtained under the RTI Act. It was further revealed that no candidate was recruited in the government sector through the employment offices in the past five years.

The data, provided by the Directorate of Employment, shows that as of January 14, a total of 22,21,317 candi-

More than 22 lakh unemployed youth are currently registered with employment offices across the State; OBC form the largest share among registered job seekers, followed by General, SC, ST and other categories

dates were registered as job seekers in district employment offices across the state. Of these, over 13.08 lakh were male, 9.12 lakh female, and 989 fell under the 'other'

category. Among districts, Jaipur recorded the highest number of registered unemployed people at 2.51 lakh, followed by Alwar (1.53 lakh), Nagaur (1.34



lakh), Jhunjhunu (1.22 lakh) and Jodhpur (86,320). In contrast, Jaisalmer (12,031) and Pratapgarh (14,047)

reported the lowest number of registered candidates. The category-wise data indicates that candidates from

the Other Backward Classes (OBC) form the largest share among registered job seekers, followed by general, Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and other categories.

The data further revealed the limited placements in the private sector during the past five years. According to the information provided, 86 candidates were placed in 2021, 825 in 2022, three in 2023, 23 in 2024 and 71 in 2025 through employment office initiatives, including job

fairs and coordination with private companies. "The private sector has seen high growth in the last two decades.

Investment in crores, but the jobs provided by the directorate are miniscule. Permanent and temporary jobs in the government sector through the directorate seem to have completely stopped. There is a need to activate unemployment offices and refer candidates," Right to Information (RTI) applicant Chandra Shekhar Gaur said.

IN BRIEF



Thunderstorms likely across state for next 4 days

BENGALURU: Parts of Karnataka witnessed early summer showers ahead of Ugadi, with a hailstorm reported in Hassan on Monday. The Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre has forecast thunderstorms and rain across the state over the next four days.

According to officials, several regions are likely to experience light to moderate rainfall accompanied by gusty winds and thunder from Monday onwards. The India Meteorological Department has predicted rainfall in districts including Kalaburagi, Koppal, Vijayapura, Davangere, Bidar, Chikkamagaluru, Ballari, Vijayanagara, Raichur, Mysuru and Chamarajanagar, particularly after Monday evening.

The unexpected pre-Ugadi showers have brought cheer among farmers and residents, as rainfall typically begins only after the festival. This year, however, rains arrived nearly three days ahead of Ugadi, providing relief from rising temperatures.

In Chikkamagaluru district, heavy rains with thunder were reported in areas such as Narasimharajapura, Koppa and Kalasa, while Sringeri witnessed moderate rainfall. Some parts received intense showers, while others experienced brief drizzles. In Shivamogga, which had been facing intense heat over the past few days, rainfall brought down temperatures and improved weather conditions.

Rainfall was also recorded in parts of Kodagu, including Madikeri, Kakkabbe and surrounding areas, offering much-needed respite to residents affected by the scorching heat. Overall, the early rains have cooled down several regions, though authorities have cautioned that thunderstorms and gusty winds are likely to continue across Karnataka in the coming days.

Teens on bikes turn aggressive after being filmed

BENGALURU: A group of six young men riding three motorcycles in triple formation on Kabbana Road became aggressive after a motorist following them recorded the scene on video, sparking a brief confrontation that has now led to police action.

The incident unfolded around 10 pm on Saturday night within the Commercial Street police station limits. As the trio of bikes moved along with two riders each, a youth on a two-wheeler trailing behind filmed them riding. Spotting the recording, one of the group members hurled an object from his hand toward the filmer's bike and issued threats.

The person who shot the footage uploaded the clip to social media, drawing attention to the reckless riding and subsequent hostility. Commercial Street police registered a road rage case based on the video evidence. They took one of the youths into custody for questioning. The remaining five, identified as minors, were summoned to the station along with their parents for detailed inquiry.

The matter was later transferred to Shivajinagar Traffic Police Station under charges of traffic rule violations. Authorities seized the involved motorcycles after establishing that the juveniles had been provided the vehicles. Cases have been booked against the minors and their guardians for allowing under-age use of two-wheelers.

Traffic police confirmed that appropriate legal steps have been initiated against the boys and their parents in line with juvenile justice provisions and motor vehicle regulations.

Illegal electric fence claims life of young tigress

FOREST OFFICIALS INITIATE PROCEEDINGS IN BANDIPUR BUFFER ZONE

HANS NEWS SERVICE
CHAMARAJANAGAR

A tigress aged approximately 2 to 3 years has been killed by electrocution in the buffer zone of Bandipur Tiger Reserve at Padagur village. The tigress came into contact with an illegal electric fence

erected around a banana crop on farmland near the forest. The land, owned by local Ravichandra, had been leased to a farmer from Kerala named Paramesh, who set up the unauthorised live wire for crop protection.

The area has seen heightened tiger activity lately. Last

week, a tiger preyed on and killed cattle belonging to a Padagur farmer. Anticipating further conflict, forest department personnel had deployed a cage trap and maintained vigil to safely capture the tiger if required.

The electrocuted tiger was detected when buffer zone

forest officers flew a thermal drone as part of surveillance operations aimed at locating and potentially trapping the animal. The drone survey revealed the fatality caused by the illicit fencing.

Bandipur Tiger Reserve's Deputy Conservator Prabhakaran, accompanied by ACF

Suresh, DRFO Shivakumar, and supporting staff, reached the location promptly. After thorough inspection and documentation, the team registered a case and initiated appropriate legal and administrative proceedings against those who installed the dangerous electric line.



PROTESTS OVER DENIAL OF KANNADA OPTION

SW RAILWAY DEPT EXAM POSTPONED IN HUBBALLI



HANS NEWS SERVICE
HUBBALLI

THE South Western Railway on Tuesday postponed its departmental examinations following intense protests by Kannada organisations, who alleged injustice to local candidates due to the absence of a Kannada language option.

The exams were scheduled for Goods Train Manager and LDCE (Limited Departmental Competitive Examination) posts, primarily meant for the promotion of existing railway employees. The computer-based test (CBT), which was to be conducted for two hours, triggered controversy after candidates found that the question paper was available only in Hindi and English.

Members of Karnataka Rakshana Vedike (Karave), led by T.A. Narayana Gowda, staged protests and laid siege to examination centres in areas like Keshwapur. Protesters raised slogans against the railway department, accusing it of repeatedly neglecting Kannada-speaking candidates.

Karave activists demand-

ed immediate cancellation of the examination and called for a re-exam with Kannada as an option. "This is a clear injustice and betrayal. Kannada-speaking candidates must be given equal opportunity," protesters asserted.

The agitation intensified as large groups gathered outside exam centres, disrupting the scheduled process. With the situation escalating, railway authorities decided to postpone the examination as a precautionary measure to maintain law and order.

Following the protests, officials confirmed that the exams have been deferred and candidates who had arrived at centres were sent back. Authorities stated that fresh dates for the examination would be announced later.

According to sources, the decision to postpone was taken after instructions from higher authorities, including officials of the Railway Recruitment Cell.

However, no clarity has been given yet on whether Kannada will be included as a language option in the re-scheduled exam.

CM slams railways for cancelling exams over Kannada row

BENGALURU

KARNATAKA Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday criticised the Railway Department for abruptly cancelling promotion examinations for railway employees after protests by Kannada organisations over the denial of an option to write the test in Kannada.

In a statement, Siddaramaiah said the examinations scheduled for promotion to 194 Goods Train Manager posts in the South Western Railway, and 101 Limited Departmental Competitive Examination (LDCE) posts in the Hubballi division were cancelled at the last moment following strong opposition from Kannadigas and Kannada organisations.

He said the sudden cancellation had left Kannada employees in a state of uncertainty.

According to the Chief Minister, thousands of Kannada-speaking railway employees had earlier objected to the denial of an opportunity to write the examination in Kannada. However, the Railway Department allegedly ignored peaceful protests and representations made by employees and organisations. Siddaramaiah said cancelling the examination just as it was about to begin had created confusion and placed Kannada employees in a difficult situation. He added that the situation could have been avoided if the Railway Department had recognised the issue earlier and allowed candidates to write the examination in Kannada. He said that if

Railway officials said that the issue regarding language inclusion would be examined at higher levels. "We will convey the concerns raised by candidates and organisations to the concerned authorities," an official stated.

The controversy has once



the department had corrected its mistake at the outset and permitted the exam in Kannada, the present situation would not have arisen. Instead, it ignored the concerns of Kannadigas and cancelled the examination hurriedly after protests intensified, which he described as condemnable.

Siddaramaiah also alleged that Kannada job aspirants have been facing discrimination in several examinations conducted by Central government departments due to what he described as the Centre's policy of favouring Hindi. He said Kannadigas have repeatedly raised their voice against such practices and sought justice. The Chief Minister expressed disappointment that the issue had arisen even when V. Somanna from Karnataka is serving as the Minister of State for Railways.

again highlighted the long-standing demand for inclusion of regional languages in central recruitment and departmental exams conducted in Karnataka.

Activists argue that denying Kannada puts local candidates at a disadvantage, especially in internal

promotion exams. Earlier, Kannada organisations had warned of large-scale protests if the railway department failed to address the issue.

With the exam now postponed, all eyes are on the authorities' next move regarding language inclusion.

Iran-Israel war hits Ballari jeans industry

Chemical shortage disrupts production



HANS NEWS SERVICE
BALLARI

THE ongoing Iran-Israel War is beginning to impact not just global markets but also local industries in India, with Ballari's well-known jeans manufacturing sector facing a severe crisis. Disruption in the supply of essential chemicals from Gulf countries has led to a sharp decline in production, while exports have come to a near standstill.

Industry sources said that key chemicals required for dyeing and finishing denim—such as Hydrogen Peroxide, Sodium Hypochlorite, and Potassium Permanganate—were primarily imported via sea routes from Gulf nations. However, due to disruptions in shipping caused by the conflict, supplies have been halted completely, leaving manufacturers scrambling for alternatives.

The shortage has also triggered a steep rise in prices. Chemicals that were previously available at around ₹40 per kg have now surged beyond ₹150 per kg. Traders are reportedly selling limited local stock at inflated rates, further worsening the situation for small and medium-scale units.

The timing of the crisis has compounded the losses.

The demand for Ballari jeans typically peaks during festive seasons like Ramadan and Ugadi, especially in international markets such as Dubai and other Gulf regions. This year, nearly 20 lakh jeans were expected to be exported. However, due to the shortage of dyeing materials, production has dropped by nearly 50%, severely affecting business turnover.

Exporters say orders worth crores of rupees are now uncertain, with many shipments either delayed or cancelled.

"Without proper finishing and colour treatment, we cannot meet international quality standards," said a local manufacturer.

The industry, which was already grappling with labour shortages, is now facing a compounded crisis. Rising raw material costs and declining output have put immense pressure on factory owners.

If the situation persists, there are fears that several units may shut down, impacting the livelihoods of thousands of workers dependent on the sector.

Experts warn that unless supply chains stabilise soon, the ripple effects of the conflict could deepen further, threatening one of Ballari's key industrial pillars.

Bagalkot Assembly seat faces third by-election

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BAGALKOT

BAGALKOT constituency now prepares for its third by-election ever recorded. The seat became empty following the untimely death of sitting legislator H Y Meti, reportedly leading to heated discussions over candidate selections in both Congress and BJP camps.

Sixteen general elections have taken place here since 1952. A key historical moment came in 1962 when B T Muralan stepped aside from the seat to support his political mentor S Nijalingappa. Muralan himself represented the area five times, setting a notable record.

BATTLE FOR TICKETS IN BJP AND CONGRESS

During the second by-election back in 1998, BJP's P H Pujar secured victory for the first time, opening the party's account in the region. Congress endured a 33-year drought without a win after 1978, until H Y Meti triumphed in 2013 and ended that streak.

Curiosity now surrounds who will succeed him in the role. Ticket aspirations run high in Congress circles. Meti's sons Mallikarjun and Umesh, plus his daughter Mahadevi, all express interest. Calculations suggest Mallikarjun Meti might receive the nod due to his position as the eldest son. Beyond the



Mallikarjun Meti

Meti family, several others have declared themselves as potential contenders if the party looks outside the lineage.

BJP sees competition



Veeranna Charantimath

between Veeranna Charantimath and P H Pujar, but sources indicate Veeranna Charantimath has nearly secured the ticket as the frontrunner.

Senior Cong MLAs meet Siddaramaiah, demand cabinet rejig

BENGALURU

A group of senior Congress legislators met Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday, urging a cabinet reshuffle to provide them an opportunity to serve as Ministers. The group of about 40 legislators, who have been MLAs for over three terms, has planned to go to New Delhi together on April 11 after the by-polls, to meet the Congress high command and discuss inducting at least 20 of them during the reshuffle. The legislators, who met Siddaramaiah at his office in the Legislative Assembly premises, included H C Balakrishna, N A Haris, Ashok

Pattan, S N Narayanaswamy, M Y Patil, D G Shanthana Gowda among others.

The meeting followed a dinner on Thursday night where most of these ministerial aspirants discussed mounting pressure for the much-awaited state cabinet rejig. Speaking to reporters, Balakrishna said they urged the CM to give an opportunity to 20 new faces during the cabinet rejig.

"More than 40 senior legislators have won more than three times. We met the Chief Minister. During the cabinet formation after the 2023 elections, the high command, the CM and the Deputy CM (D K Shivakumar) stated there

would be a reshuffle after 2.5 years. Accordingly, we urged the CM to rejig the cabinet and give an opportunity to any of the 20 MLAs among the 40," he said. Flanked by Haris and Ashok Pattan, Balakrishna said they plan to meet the Congress high command after the April 9 Assembly by-polls for the Bagalkote and Davangere South segments, and elections in other states, to request an opportunity to become Ministers.

He said, "The Chief Minister said that he too will speak to the Congress high command." Pattan said Siddaramaiah conveyed his plans to go to New Delhi after these polls.

Lack of physical activity leading to rising health issues among women

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TUMAKURU

RENOWNED paediatric cardiologist Dr Vijayalakshmi Balekundri has expressed concern over the increasing health issues among women, attributing it to a decline in physical activity.

Speaking at an International Women's Day programme held at Sridevi Engineering College, she said the growing sedentary lifestyle among women is leading to obesity and other health complications. Dr Balekundri noted that post-COVID, obesity among women has increased by nearly 30 per cent, call-

ing it an alarming trend. She pointed out that neglect of physically active lifestyles is a key factor contributing to this rise. "Those who lead a life of hard work tend to remain healthier and live longer," she said, citing the life of the late Dr Shivakumara Swamiji of Tumakuru as an example of disciplined living and longevity. Highlighting the cultural importance of women, she said India is unique in according women the status of both mother and divinity. However, she expressed concern that modern lifestyles are leading to a gradual departure from traditional values and practices. She emphasised that

women possess the strength to guide society in the right direction by correcting mistakes both at home and in public life. Leadership, she said, comes through responsibility and achievement, drawing inspiration from figures such as Prime Minister Narendra Modi and educationist Dr M.R. Huliyaykar.

Assistant Commissioner of the Revenue Department Supriya Banagar called for greater representation of women in politics, similar to the opportunities they have received in the fields of education and healthcare.

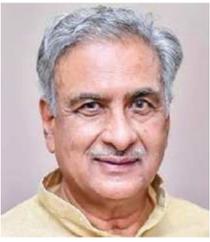
Ophthalmologist Dr Lavanya advised women to ded-

icate at least one hour daily to physical exercise to maintain good health, stating that healthy women contribute to a healthy family and society.

Sridevi Group of Educational Institutions Director Dr Raman Huliyaykar said women are making strides in all fields and stressed the need for continued support and encouragement. The event was attended by institution chairman Dr M.R. Huliyaykar, admission head Roopa Natesh, medical college vice-principal Dr Rekha Gurumurthy and others. A video presentation showcasing achievements of women was screened on the occasion.



SINGLE SHOT



Legislative Council Chairman expresses displeasure over absent ministers

BENGALURU: Legislative Council Chairman Basavaraj Horatti on Tuesday briefly adjourned the House, expressing displeasure over the absence of Ministers and ruling party members post lunch break.

The development comes a day after Assembly Speaker U T Khader adjourned the House and walked out in protest, over the lack of written replies from government departments to questions raised by MLAs.

The "unprecedented" move by the Speaker had caused huge embarrassment to the Congress government, forcing the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to issue directives to Ministers and bureaucrats, including suspending errant officials.

When the council resumed after lunch, Leader of Opposition Chalavadi Narayanaswamy pointed toward the empty treasury benches and suggested that ruling party members seemed to have "boycotted" the proceedings.

Only Minister of School Education and Literacy Madhu Bangarappa and Chief Whip Saleem Ahmed were in attendance. The Chairman asked, "Ministers are not here; what should I do?"

Raising objection to empty treasury benches, Opposition Chief Whip N Ravikumar said, "If we have to speak on any issues, who should we tell? Who is there among Ministers? Where is the government?" Following this, Horatti adjourned the House for 10 minutes.

When the House resumed, a couple of Ministers -- Ramalinga Reddy, Santosh Lad arrived, but the treasury benches by and large remained sparse as most of the ruling Congress MLCs were absent.

The Chairman asked the Chief Whip Saleem Ahmed, "If there are no members and Ministers on the treasury bench side, what is it? How should the House be run? If you don't want, I will adjourn the House for tomorrow. What other work is there during the session? If there are no members and the seats are empty, how can the House run?"

When Horatti asked the Chief Whip about the MLCs, Ahmed replied, "They will be coming." Pointing out that MLCs were not present, despite the House resuming late post lunch, the Chairman said, "What should we do? Shall I adjourn the House for tomorrow? What do you mean that they will be coming? I don't like it." Ravikumar attacked the ruling Congress, asking, "Before whom should we raise the issues?"

When the Chairman expressed his willingness to adjourn the House till Wednesday morning, Ravikumar said the opposition BJP was ready to participate in the proceedings, provided the treasury benches show equal cooperation.

Defending the ruling party members, Congress MLC Ramesh Babu said there was some delay in the return of his party colleagues, who had gone for lunch.

As a couple of Ministers and ruling party MLCs started trickling in, the Chairman called BJP MLC A H Vishwanth to speak on the Budget.

Sri Lankan judge moves HC; Centre, Google raise jurisdiction objections

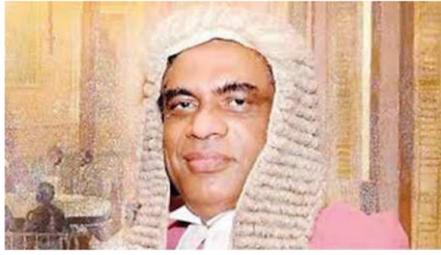
HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

A petition filed by Sri Lankan Supreme Court judge A H M D Nawaz before the Karnataka High Court has triggered a legal debate on jurisdiction, with Google LLC and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology opposing its maintainability.

The plea challenges allegedly defamatory and objectionable content published

online against the judge. The matter came up before a bench headed by Justice Sachin Shankar Magadam.

During the hearing, counsel for Google argued that the petition itself may not be maintainable before the Karnataka High Court. It was submitted that the alleged defamatory content originated in Sri Lanka, while Google is a US-based entity, raising serious concerns about territorial jurisdiction. The counsel



cautioned that entertaining such petitions could open the floodgates for similar

cross-border litigations. Echoing similar concerns, the Centre's counsel

contended that a foreign judge approaching an Indian High Court raises fundamental legal questions. The government argued that the petitioner had not sufficiently established how the case falls within the jurisdiction of the Karnataka High Court.

However, the petitioner's counsel strongly defended the plea, stating that Article 14 of the Indian Constitution, which guarantees equality before law, extends

beyond Indian citizens. It was argued that no individual, including members of the judiciary worldwide, should be subjected to defamatory attacks. The counsel further submitted that the objectionable content was accessible in India through Google's platform, which operates as an intermediary. It was argued that once a complaint is filed, failure to remove such content within a reasonable time makes the platform li-

able for its continued circulation.

Additionally, the petitioner raised concerns that defamatory content continued to be published even while the matter is under judicial consideration. This, the counsel argued, amounts to undermining the dignity of the judiciary. After hearing arguments from all sides, the bench adjourned the matter to April 6 for further consideration.

War of words in Assembly

Priyank Kharge questions BJP MLAs on cow adoption

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

A heated exchange broke out in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly after minister Priyank Kharge questioned BJP legislators over their participation in the state's earlier cow adoption scheme.

Raising the issue during the session, Kharge asked how many cows had actually been adopted by BJP MLAs under the scheme introduced by the previous government. His question reportedly put several BJP members on the defensive, as they were unable to provide clear answers.

The debate intensified when BJP MLA Sharanabasappa Darshanapur (Sharanu Salagar referenced) spoke on cow protection, prompting Kharge to counter by questioning ownership of companies involved in beef-related businesses, leading to objections from the opposition benches.

Senior BJP leader Ash-



with Narayan intervened, urging the government to take action instead of diverting the issue. Kharge responded by questioning his interruption, which led to a sharp exchange between the two leaders.

Narayan accused the government of lacking sensitivity and challenged it to act against alleged irregularities. Kharge, in turn, criticised the opposition's stance, leading to a verbal spat between the two.

Former minister Suresh Kumar stepped in, stating that Narayan was express-

ing genuine concern and questioned the need for Kharge to pose "quiz-like" questions in the House.

Defending himself, Kharge said it was necessary to ask such questions, especially when the opposition was accusing the government of inaction.

He urged BJP members to provide specific details if they had concerns and maintained that raising questions was part of legislative accountability.

Minister Dr. K. Sudhakar also joined the discussion, highlighting the practical

challenges faced by those in animal husbandry. He pointed out that farmers often struggle to maintain non-productive cattle and that merely advocating cow protection without addressing ground realities was not a solution.

Sudhakar emphasised the need to create awareness among farmers and warned against moral policing in the name of cow protection, calling for practical and sustainable solutions to the issue. Returning to his original question, Kharge cited that former minister Prabhu Chauhan had adopted 11 cows and former Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai had adopted around five to six cows. Apart from them, he claimed, no other BJP MLA had participated in the scheme and challenged the opposition to provide data on cow adoption.

The exchange led to a brief uproar in the House, with both sides engaging in sharp verbal arguments before proceedings moved forward.

No price hike ahead of Ugadi; groceries and vegetables cheaper



HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

WITH the countdown to Ugadi underway, consumers have received a welcome relief as prices of essential commodities and vegetables remain stable, with some even witnessing a decline. Unlike previous years, there has been no significant price rise in grocery items, while vegetable prices have softened, adding to the festive cheer.

Traders attribute the trend to reduced demand from the hotel and catering sectors. Due to disruptions in the Middle East, several hotels have reportedly shut down or revised their menus, leading to a decline in bulk purchases of

food items. As a result, wholesale prices at markets like APMC yards have dropped by ₹1-2 per kg compared to usual rates.

This has ensured that retail prices have not increased, benefiting consumers ahead of the festival.

Seasonal factors also help

Typically, when Ugadi falls in April-May, it coincides with school and college admissions, increasing financial pressure on families. However, this year, with exams mostly completed and summer holidays underway, households are relatively more comfortable celebrating the festival.

Additionally, a four-day holiday stretch has further

RATE CARD (IN RS)

Toor Dal:	100-120
Chana Dal:	65-75
Urad Dal:	100-130
Wheat Flour:	42-48
Brown Chickpeas:	60
Green Gram (Moong):	90-120
Jaggery:	42
Rice:	42-47
Sona Masoori Rice:	47-54

boosted the festive mood without financial strain. Overall, stable prices and lower vegetable rates have brought much-needed relief to households, making this Ugadi more affordable and cheerful for consumers across the state.

Govt fulfilled Rs 100/tonne aid promise to cane farmers: Minister

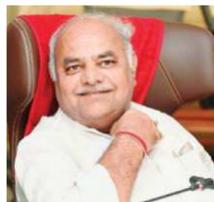
BENGALURU

SUGAR Minister Shivanand Patil on Tuesday said the state government had taken multiple measures to support sugarcane farmers and fulfilled its promise of providing additional financial assistance, while asserting that most farmers were satisfied this year.

Replying to BJP MLC N Ravikumar during zero hour in the legislative council, Patil said the government had already acted on several farmer-centric demands and continued to explore further support measures for both farmers and sugar factories.

"In Karnataka's history, if any government has supported sugarcane farmers twice, it is the government of Siddaramaiah. This time as well, we had promised to provide Rs 50 per tonne from the government and Rs 50 per tonne from factory owners, and we have fulfilled that promise," the minister said.

He maintained that farmers are not in distress; in fact, most farmers are satisfied this year, adding that the government would continue efforts to ensure their well-being. However, Patil questioned the nature of the issues raised



by Ravikumar, stating, "Most of the issues you mentioned seem to favour factory owners. I am not sure whether you are speaking on behalf of farmers or factory owners."

He noted that the government had also taken steps to address concerns of sugar mill owners. The minister said that the Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) with sugar factories for cogeneration had not been renewed in some cases, earlier, due to the availability of cheaper wind and solar energy. "Some PPAs have been cancelled, while some continue... We are considering reviewing this and possibly entering into new PPAs next year," he said, adding that open access allowed factories to sell power in other states where tariffs were higher.

He further said the government was examining demands such as exemption of water usage tax and extending support to both cooperative and

private sugar mills. Highlighting issues requiring central intervention, Patil said the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for sugar had not been revised since 2019 despite repeated representations.

"We have suggested differential pricing, one for essential consumption and another for industrial use," he said, citing large-scale usage by beverage companies. On ethanol, he said, while incentives like a six per cent interest subvention were provided, lack of regulation on production capacity had led to overcapacity.

"Only 10 to 13 per cent of production is being procured, making factories financially unviable," he noted. The minister said that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah had written to the Centre on November 6 and 8, 2025, and a delegation had also met Union Minister Prahlad Joshi to press for revision of sugar MSP and higher ethanol procurement or pricing. Inviting cooperation, Patil said he was willing to lead a delegation, including opposition members, to take up the matter with the Centre.

The minister underlined that Karnataka was among the top three sugar-producing states and emphasised the sector's importance.

Sale of granted land to SC/ST invalid; subsequent transactions also void: HC

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

THE Karnataka High Court has ruled that if the first sale of land granted to Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) is declared invalid, then all subsequent transactions related to that land will also stand cancelled.

The ruling came from a single-judge bench of Justice R. Devdas while hearing a petition filed by S.K. Jayaram, who had purchased the land after multiple transactions.

The court invoked the legal doctrine that "one cannot transfer a better title than one possesses", stating that since the initial sale itself was illegal, every subsequent sale automatically becomes void.

The bench observed that the land in question was first sold in 1956 in violation of conditions imposed under the PTCL Act. Therefore, all later transactions, including Jayaram's purchase in 1988, have no legal validity.

Citing Section 4(1) of the PTCL Act, the court



noted that any transfer of granted land in violation of conditions is automatically null and void, and such transactions do not confer ownership or rights.

The court upheld the orders of the competent authority, which had earlier cancelled the sale, and dismissed Jayaram's petition, stating that there was no legal flaw in the authority's decision.

Background of the case

The land measuring 3 acres 26 guntas in

Survey No. 143 at Khaji Sonnenahalli village, Bengaluru East Taluk, was granted in 1947 to T. Poojappa, a member of the Scheduled Caste community. After his death, his wife and minor sons sold the land in 1956 to Basamma.

Over the years, the land changed hands multiple times before being purchased by Jayaram in 1988.

However, authorities later found that the initial sale itself violated the grant

conditions, leading to its cancellation. This decision was earlier upheld by the High Court, and the latest ruling reiterates that all subsequent buyers cannot claim ownership over such land.

Implication

The judgment reinforces strict enforcement of the PTCL Act and serves as a warning that any illegal transfer of SC/ST granted land—even decades later—can invalidate all future ownership claims.

If activity points are not earned, marks sheet will be withheld: VTU V-C

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

STUDENTS who do not engage in social service and waste time will have their degree marks cards withheld, warned Visvesvaraya Technological University (VTU) Vice-Chancellor Prof. S Vidyashankar.

Speaking after inaugurating the workshop at BGS College of Engineering and Technology on the AICTE Activity Points Tracking

System (APTS) mobile app developed by VTU to manage AICTE activity points online, he said, "Students should stop being immersed in mobile phones all the time. Pay attention to social service activities as well. This will be good exercise for your mental and physical health. AICTE has identified about 16 activities. Accordingly, everyone should choose activities of their interest and actively participate. Without activity

points, the final degree certificate will be withheld," he cautioned.

"Do not produce fake certificates for activity points. This will not be tolerated anymore. Everything will be tracked through the mobile app. Do not participate in activities just for formality. Coordinators will be appointed for management. Through this app, we will receive real-time data. Students must cultivate honesty in life. Do not waste time.

Along with academics, extracurricular activities are also very important. College coordinators should manage this properly," he said.

BGSCET Director Dr. G.T. Raju said: "AICTE introduced activity points with the good intention of instilling a spirit of service among engineering students during their studies. To manage this, VTU has developed a mobile app, which will be very convenient for students."

The event was attended by VTU Bengaluru Regional Office Director Dr. H.R. Sudarshan Reddy, VTU Executive Council Member Prof. Keshavamurthy, BGSCET Director Dr. G.T. Raju, Principal Dr. G.K. Ravikumar, Youth for Seva National Coordinator Ashwini Kumar, AICTE Activity Points Coordinator Meera Rajagopal, and Lifecycle Sports Pvt. Ltd. Chief Business Officer Aravind Jinor, among others.



Prof S Vidyashankar

BGSCET

Kommatireddy senior pitches Jagga Reddy for PCC chief post

Roads and Buildings Minister says the "mass leader" could help Congress win 100 seats in the next Assembly elections

HANS NEWS SERVICE HYDERABAD

ROADS and Buildings Minister Kommatireddy Venkat Reddy's statement has stirred a political debate. His comments have put the spotlight back on internal issues within the Telangana Congress. The statement is fueling discussions about the party's leadership and factional dynamics.

Interacting with media persons in the Assembly lobbies on Tuesday, Venkat Reddy asserted that if a mass leader like T. Jayaprakash Reddy, popularly known as Jagga Reddy, is appointed as the Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC)



President, the party is certain to win 100 seats in the next Assembly elections.

Describing Jagga Reddy as a leader with deep grassroots connections, Venkat

Reddy strongly backed his elevation to the top party post.

He said Jagga Reddy enjoys widespread popularity across both Telugu states

and has the ability to mobilise support at all levels of the party.

Drawing comparisons with the veteran leader late P Janardhan Reddy (PJR), the minister noted that Jagga Reddy commands a similar mass following. He emphasised that Jagga Reddy is capable of uniting leaders and party workers alike, from the grassroots to the top leadership.

Venkat Reddy also appealed to the party high command to seriously consider appointing Jagga Reddy as PCC President, stating that the current political scenario demands a leader of his stature. He added that Jagga Reddy had earlier been a contender for the PCC post,

including during the appointments of Revanth Reddy and Mahesh Kumar Goud, and had himself expressed interest in taking up the role.

While reiterating that Jagga Reddy's leadership could significantly boost the party's prospects, Venkat Reddy's remarks come at a time when Mahesh Kumar Goud is currently serving as TPCC President, a position that typically carries three-year tenure.

With senior leaders like Kommatireddy Venkat Reddy now openly backing Jagga Reddy for the post, it remains to be seen how the Congress High Command responds to the growing demand within the party ranks.

Ponguleti dubs KTR 'brand ambassador' of dictators

HANS NEWS SERVICE HYDERABAD

REVENUE Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy on Tuesday lashed out at the BRS MLA KT Rama Rao alleging that he was the brand ambassador for dictators and said that because of this arrogance his party lost successive elections.

The Minister intervening in a discussion on the motion of thanks to the Governor in the Assembly on Tuesday said that the BRS member was showing arrogance. He said that the BRS had lost every other election. On the defection of MLAs, Srinivasa Reddy said that the defections were first encouraged by the BRS itself.

Several Ministers intervened to counter the comments of KTR during the discussion. When the BRS leader said that the government was aiming to create one lakh women as crorepatris, it will be \$100 trillion economy, the Finance Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka said that the government had fixed a target of making one lakh women as crorepatris in five years and during the last two years, they had spent Rs 57,000 crore giving interest free loans. Responding to this, KTR said that he would resign if the figures were correct. Deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka, along with Ministers Duddilla Sridhar Babu and Danasari Anasuya (Seethakka), responded to the points raised by BRS leader KTR regarding the promise to turn women into millionaires. Minister Seethakka suggested that women both



within 'your family' (referring to Kavitha) and in society at large should be allowed to grow and prosper.

Legislative Affairs Minister D Sridhar Babu said that while the previous BRS government left pending interest subsidies on loans amounting to Rs 3,000 crore, the current Congress government was now clearing those dues. He questioned why the BRS party was not participating in the programme for the distribution of interest-free loans. Minister Danasari Anasuya (Seethakka) announced that the government disbursed Rs 57,000 crore in various forms of loans availed through the Stree Nidhi and Bank Linkage schemes. She further informed that, specifically under the interest-free loan category, funds amounting to Rs 1,121 crore were released to date. She criticized the previous BRS government, accusing it of deceiving women by failing to pay the Rs 3,000 crore in pending interest subsidies.

DIG felicitates police athletes for winning 40 medals

DISTRICT-WISE MEDAL TALLY: MAHBUBNAGAR

TWO gold, three silver, five bronze (total 10 medals); Nagarkurnool: Two gold, one silver (three); Wanaparthy: Five gold, six silver, four bronze (15); Jogulamba Gadwal: Four gold, three bronze (seven); Narayanpet: One gold; mixed events: four bronze medals.

Hans news service Wanaparthy: Jogulamba Zone-VII DIG L S Chouhan on Tuesdays congratulated the athletes who brought honour to the zone by winning medals at the recently held police sports meet and encouraged them to continue their efforts to bring more recognition to the State and the department. He assured that the depart-



ment would provide all support to the athletes.

Addressing on the occasion, Chouhan said that sports are the best way to overcome stress faced during police duties. Sports not only improve physical fitness, but also help develop mental strength and discipline.

At an event held at the zonal office in Mahabubnagar, the DIG felicitated the police athletes from the five

districts under the zone, who gave excellent performance and won 40 medals (14 gold, 10 silver and 16 bronze), bringing pride to the zone at the fourth Telangana State-level police sports and games meet-2026, held from February 16 to 21 at the Cyberabad Police Commissionerate.

He appreciated the athletes for excelling in sports despite the demanding nature of police duties.



'Everyone must contribute to plastic eradication'

HANS NEWS SERVICE NAGARKURNOOL:

AN awareness session on plastic eradication was organised at the Government Science Degree College on Tuesday, as part of the 99-day Public Administration Progress Programme, informed College Principal Madan Mohan.

The programme was conducted under the slogan "Mana Telangana - Parishubhra Telangana" by Telangana National Green Corps and the college Eco Club. Telangana Pollution

Control Board officer Sajeena attended the event as the chief guest.

Students were educated about the harmful effects of plastic usage. They also actively participated by explaining in detail the damages caused by plastic pollution.

Speaking at the event, the Pollution Control Officer Sajeena said that plastic has become a major problem in today's society and emphasized that collective efforts are essential to control it. She urged everyone to take responsibility in eliminating plastic and to spread awareness among others.

DC spurs officials to fast-track devpt works in CM's native village

Closely examines the status of ongoing projects and stresses that every project taken up in the village must be completed within the fixed timeframe without compromise.

HANS NEWS SERVICE NAGARKURNOOL:

GIVING fresh momentum to development activities in Kondareddipalli, the native village of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, district Collector Badavath Santosh issued strict directions to fast-track all ongoing works in the village and ensure their timely completion.

At a high-level review meeting held at the Collectorate on Tuesday evening, the Collector took stock of the progress of various development projects being executed by different government departments in the village, which falls under the Achampet constituency.

The Collector emphasised that quality and speed must go hand in hand and warned against any delays. He directed officials to complete all sanctioned works within the stipulated deadlines while maintaining high construction standards. During the review, he closely examined the status

of ongoing projects and sought detailed updates from concerned departments, stressing that every project taken up in the village must be completed within the fixed timeframe without compromise.

Focusing on key infrastructure, the Collector directed the Vangoor Tahsildar to immediately allocate five acres of land for the construction of the newly sanctioned Advanced Technology Centre (ATC) for the Polytechnic College. He also instructed officials to expedite the dismantling of the dilapidated school building and begin reconstruction work at the earliest, with a target to complete it during the upcoming summer holidays. In addition, he ordered the initiation of construction of a new Anganwadi building in the village and called for the early completion of modernization works of the bank building.

In a decisive move, the Collector ordered that all ongoing works already sanctioned in the village be completed within the next two months. He further instructed officials to immediately bring any hurdles to his notice so that they can be resolved promptly without affecting progress.



Speaker advises BRS to challenge defection ruling in higher court

HANS NEWS SERVICE HYDERABAD

SPEAKER Gaddam Prasad Kumar on Tuesday suggested that BRS members should challenge his decision regarding defection petitions against their party MLAs in a higher court if they felt aggrieved. The defection issue surfaced during the discussion on the motion of thanks to the Governor's address when BRS member KT R was speaking about alleged attacks on party workers during recent elections. The Speaker intervened, advising KT R against using newspaper clippings for discussions in the House and urged him to move past mud-slinging tactics to utilise the given opportunity effectively.



Responding to the Speaker, KT R noted that while the party respects the Chair, a BRS MLA had contested on another party's ticket. The Speaker countered by comparing his role to a judge, stating that if a judgment is unsatisfactory, the aggrieved party should approach a different court. He criticised the BRS for levelling allegations without thoroughly reading his judgment and appealed for a decrease in such questioning. He clarified that he

had refrained from addressing the media despite the comments made against his decision.

The BRS leader maintained his individual respect for the Speaker, acknowledging their friendship, but asserted his right to question the decision as a member.

He argued that in a democracy, questioning is a fundamental responsibility. KT R concluded by affirming that the BRS would definitely challenge the ruling in the High Court. This exchange highlights the growing tension over legislative defections and the procedural boundaries within the Assembly as both sides defend their respective constitutional and democratic mandates.

SEMINAR ON CONSUMER PROTECTION LAWS HELD

HANS NEWS SERVICE SHADNAGAR:

A legal awareness seminar on consumer protection laws was conducted at Nandigama Gram Panchayat in connection with Consumer Rights Day observed on March 15. The event was organised under the guidance of Mandal Legal Services Authority Chairperson Swathi Reddy, with Additional Junior Civil Judge Malyala Sahithi attending as the chief guest.

Speaking on the occasion, Malyala Sahithi said every individual is a consumer and highlighted the importance of understanding consumer rights and legal protections. She advised people to exer-



cise caution while purchasing goods, ensure they buy quality products, always obtain receipts and avoid expired items. She also warned the public to stay vigilant against online frauds and refrain from visiting suspi-

cious websites. She informed the gathering that consumers who face losses due to fraud or defective goods can approach consumer forums at the district, state and national levels for redressal and compensation. She noted that seeking compensation after being cheated is a rightful legal remedy available to every consumer.

The chief guest was felicitated during the programme by Nandigama Sarpanch Kommu Krishna, Deputy Sarpanch Venkatesh Goud, ward members and villagers. CI Prasad, Bar Association President Narva Venugopal Rao, advocates, police personnel and local residents also took part in the seminar.



Rajgopal Reddy pine for Cabinet berth

HANS NEWS SERVICE CHOUTUPPAL (YADADRI-BHONGIR)

A felicitation ceremony for the newly elected municipal chairman and councillors was held at Choutuppal municipal centre in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district, drawing political attention after remarks made by MLA Kommatireddy Rajgopal Reddy.

Attending the event as the chief guest, Rajgopal Reddy congratulated the newly elected representatives and urged them to treat power as a responsibility rather than a privilege. "Authority is not a crown but a duty. Leaders must fulfill the promises made to the people and earn their trust," he said, emphasising accountability in public service.

However, the highlight of

SAYS JUSTICE WILL BE DONE AT RIGHT TIME



his speech was his candid reference to not being inducted into the State cabinet despite assurances from the party

leadership. The MLA revealed that he was promised a ministerial berth but did not receive it, which had caused

him disappointment at the time. He acknowledged that in certain moments of frustration, he had made strong

remarks regarding the issue. Reflecting on his political journey, Rajgopal Reddy asserted that the party leadership is well aware of his commitment and integrity.

"They know I am a sincere leader who works for the people and the party. At the right time, justice will be done to me," he stated, expressing confidence in the high command.

He also underlined that the people of the region are expecting development and believe that granting him a ministerial position could accelerate progress in the constituency.

The MLA's remarks have sparked fresh political discussion in the district, indicating that internal aspirations and expectations within the party continue to remain a subject of interest.

Youth found dead under suspicious circumstances

HANS NEWS SERVICE SHALIGOURARAM (NALGONDA):

A youth was found dead under suspicious circumstances in Perkakondaram village of Shaligouraram mandal in Nalgonda district on Tuesday, creating concern among locals.

According to information provided by villagers, the incident came to light in the early hours of Tuesday when the body of a youth was discovered on National Highway 365 on the outskirts of Perkakondaram village. The deceased has been identified as Mallepaka Srikanth (25), a resident of Vangamarthi village.

Upon receiving the infor-



mation, police immediately rushed to the spot and conducted a preliminary investigation (panchanama). The circumstances surrounding his death appeared suspicious, prompting further inquiry by the authorities. Sub-Inspector Saidulu

stated that a case has been registered based on a complaint filed by the family members of the deceased. He confirmed that an investigation is currently underway to ascertain the exact cause of death and the sequence of events leading to the incident.

The body of Srikanth was shifted to the Government Hospital in Nakrekal for postmortem examination. Police officials said that further details would emerge after the autopsy report and completion of the investigation.

The incident has raised questions among locals, and authorities are examining all possible angles, including accident and foul play.

AP TO FAST-TRACK AIR TAXI INFRASTRUCTURE

- State plans Vertiports for electric air taxis and next-generation urban air mobility
- Sites to be identified for eVTOL landing hubs on land and rooftops
- Network expected to boost inter-city and intra-city connectivity within 150 km

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE state government has taken a major step toward future air mobility by constituting a Vertiports Planning Committee to develop infrastructure for electric air taxis and next-generation aviation services.

The move follows a request from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation to states to initiate planning for Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) systems. Now, the state government approved the formation of the committee and



Picture for representational purpose only

designated the managing director of APADCL as the Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for coordination with the Ministry of Civil Aviation and other stakeholders.

The committee will be chaired by the special chief secretary or principal secretary of the Industries and Infrastructure Department. The committee's primary task is to plan and facilitate infrastructure for electric Vertical Take-off and Landing (eVTOL) aircraft, widely seen as

the backbone of future urban air mobility and air taxi services.

Officials said the panel will identify suitable locations for vertiports, specialized landing and take-off hubs for eVTOL aircraft, either on open land or rooftops in urban areas. These facilities are expected to improve inter-city and intra-city connectivity within a radius of about 150 kilometres while easing urban congestion. The committee will also examine the pos-

sibility of converting existing heliports into vertiports, provided they meet DGCA safety standards.

In addition, it will conduct technical feasibility studies on potential sites, assess building structures for rooftop operations, and evaluate environmental and noise impacts on surrounding areas. Another key responsibility is ensuring regulatory compliance with DGCA aerodrome guidelines and coordinating approvals with aviation authorities.

The panel will also plan supporting infrastructure, including high-capacity charging facilities for electric aircraft weighing two to three tonnes, and integrate vertiport development with urban planning and Smart City projects.

Officials said the initiative aims to build a network of vertiports linked with existing airports, paving the way for future air taxi services and advanced aerial mobility systems in Andhra Pradesh.

Minister sets May 15 deadline for irrigation O&M works

- Nimmala orders completion of all irrigation maintenance before kharif season
- States that the current govt spent Rs 878 cr in two years, far exceeding previous govt's Rs 200 cr over five years
- Farmers allowed desilted soil at Rs 1 per cubic metre to aid cultivation

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

WATER resources minister Dr Nimmala Ramanaidu directed officials to complete all operation and maintenance (O&M) works across the state before the commencement of the ensuing kharif season, setting a strict deadline of May 15. The minister issued these instructions during a video conference held with irrigation department officials at his camp office here on Tuesday.

He said that while the pre-



Water resources minister Dr Nimmala Ramanaidu holds a video conference with irrigation officials on operation and maintenance works at his camp office in Vijayawada on Tuesday

vious government had spent less than Rs 200 crore on O&M works over five years, the present coalition government has sanctioned and spent Rs 878 crore within the first two years itself.

He stressed that massive investments in irrigation infrastructure would go to waste if proper maintenance is not carried out regularly. "Even if thousands of crores are spent on building irrigation projects, without timely O&M works, it would be a futile exercise," he remarked, underscoring the importance of annual maintenance.

Criticising the previous YSRCP government, the minister alleged that irrigation systems were neglected, with no desilting of canals and no repairs to shutters, doors, or gates. "Basic maintenance like greasing was also ignored," he said, adding that such lapses had adversely affected the irrigation sector.

The minister asked officials to restore irrigation systems to normalcy ahead of the 2026 kharif season by starting O&M work immediately and completing it as quickly as possible. He also

instructed that all emergency works be carried out to the highest quality standards.

In a move aimed at supporting farmers, he said that permissions have been granted to supply desilted soil from tanks to farmers at a nominal rate of Rs 1 per cubic metre.

Command Area Development Authority (CADA) commissioner Prasanthi, irrigation advisor M Venkateswara Rao, engineer-in-chief Narasimha Murthy, chief engineers from across the state, and other senior officials attended the meet.

Free FMD vaccination drive for cattle in state

- Animal husbandry director announces launch of National Livestock Disease Control Programme with 83.69 lakh vaccine doses
- Veterinary teams to vaccinate cattle and buffaloes above four months at farmers' doorsteps until April 29
- Initiative aims to prevent Foot-and-Mouth Disease, which reduces milk yield, weakens bullocks, and can cause calf deaths

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

IN a bid to support livestock farmers, the state government has rolled out the National Livestock Disease Control Programme, offering free vaccination against Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) for cattle and buffaloes, including calves older than four months.

Director of animal husbandry T Damodar Naidu said veterinary teams are carrying out the vaccination drive right at farmers' doorsteps, and the campaign will continue until April 29. He urged livestock owners to take full advantage of the initiative to protect their animals.

He explained that FMD mainly affects cattle and buffaloes above four months of age, often due to low immu-



Picture for illustrative purpose only

nity. Crossbred animals are particularly at risk, as the disease spreads through a highly contagious virus. Timely vaccination, he stressed, is the only reliable way to prevent it.

The disease can severely impact farmers by reducing milk yield, weakening the working capacity of bullocks, and, in some cases, causing death in calves. To address this, the government has arranged for the distribution of 83.69 lakh vaccine doses across districts.

Naidu pointed out that the infection spreads through contaminated feed and water, open wounds, and poor hygiene. Common symptoms include high fever, blisters in the mouth and between the hooves, excessive salivation, and difficulty in eating

or walking. In serious cases, secondary infections may develop, and pregnant animals may even abort.

Crossbred cattle tend to show more severe symptoms such as anaemia, breathing difficulties, weakness, and reduced tolerance to heat. Recovery can take up to six months.

The vaccination drive will be carried out in phases. The first round will cover eligible animals, followed by a second round for the remaining livestock, and a booster dose will be administered within the next 15 days.

Veterinary staff will provide the service free of cost, and officials have appealed to farmers to actively participate and safeguard their livestock from the disease.

Increase in polymer prices pushes construction industry into uncertainty

PRADEEP VENNELAKANTI
TIRUPATI

THE construction and real estate sectors are witnessing fresh turbulence as a sudden surge in the prices of key raw materials has significantly increased project costs, raising alarm among builders, manufacturers and traders nationwide. Industry stakeholders warn that if immediate corrective steps are not taken, the ongoing price escalation could slow down construction activity and affect employment linked to the sector.

Over the past few weeks, prices of essential construction inputs — particularly polymer-based materials — have risen steeply, disrupting market stability. Materials such as PVC, PP, PE, HDPE and LLDPE, widely used in pipes, fittings and plastic construction components, have recorded sharp increases within a short span.

Market sources indicate that polymer prices have jumped between Rs 25,000 and Rs 35,000 per metric tonne in just nine to ten days, placing unexpected financial pressure on downstream industries.

Data from trade circles shows that since early March, polypropylene (PP) prices alone have climbed by nearly Rs 35,000 per MT, while HDPE and LLDPE registered increases of around Rs 33,500 per MT. LDPE grades have also witnessed hikes ranging between Rs 25,000



and Rs 28,500 per MT. PVC prices, a critical input for construction and infrastructure projects, have risen by approximately Rs 25,000 per tonne in recent days.

Adding to the burden, petrochemical major Reliance Industries Limited reportedly implemented an additional Rs 6,000 per tonne increase in PVC prices effective March 16, further intensifying cost pressures.

Industry experts attribute the sharp price movement partly to global uncertainties, including ongoing tensions in West Asia, which have disrupted supply chains and in-

fluenced petrochemical markets. Domestic factors have also worsened the situation. Gas shortages in Gujarat's Morbi region — a major tile manufacturing hub — have reportedly forced several production units to suspend operations, tightening supply and pushing up tile prices.

The impact is not limited to polymers alone. Prices of copper wires and electrical components used in housing projects have increased by nearly 20 percent, while steel rates, freight charges and other construction-related expenses are also trending upward. Builders say these

combined increases are driving overall housing construction costs higher, making new homes less affordable for buyers and creating financial strain for small developers. Market volatility has begun affecting manufacturing operations as well. Producers of pump sets, motors, HD pipes and agricultural plastic equipment are reportedly hesitant to accept fresh orders due to unpredictable raw material costs. Frequent price revisions have made production planning difficult, forcing some companies to delay business commitments — a trend that could soon impact both agricultural and infrastructure sectors.

Business associations, including traders from Tirupati, have urged the Centre to intervene and stabilise market conditions. Former president of the Tirupati Chamber of Commerce A Manjunath expressed the need for scrutiny of pricing practices, restoration of gas supply to Morbi's tile units, monitoring of steel and copper pricing, and measures to ease transportation costs.

He felt that continued price escalation could weaken the real estate ecosystem, potentially leading to job losses and reduced tax revenues for governments. With construction serving as a major driver of economic activity and employment, industry bodies are calling for urgent policy action to prevent further disruption and restore market confidence.

NACO targets AP in push to eliminate HIV

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO), under the Union ministry of health and family welfare, will organise a state-level Suraksha Sankalp Karyashala here on Wednesday, as part of its intensified nationwide strategy to strengthen HIV response at the district level. The workshop will be chaired by Dr. Rakesh Gupta, Additional Secretary and Director General of NACO.

The event will bring together key policymakers and administrators, including Saurabh Gaur, G Veerapandian, and Dr K Neelakanta Reddy, along with district collectors, health officials and AIDS control officers from across Andhra Pradesh. The gathering aims to review current progress and develop actionable strategies to strengthen HIV prevention, testing, and treatment services.

This initiative is part of Mission AIDS Suraksha, a focused national drive by NACO to accelerate interventions in high-burden regions through targeted district-level engagement.

Andhra Pradesh, with an adult HIV prevalence of 0.58 percent and an estimated 3.1 lakh people living with HIV, has been identified as a priority state. As part of this effort, 23 districts—including Guntur, Krishna, Visakhapatnam, Tirupati, and Kurnool—have been prioritised for enhanced programme implementation and monitoring.

District teams will present progress reports, identify gaps, and formulate tailored action plans to improve outcomes on the ground. The workshop will also emphasise strengthening prevention strategies, expanding testing services, ensuring sustained treatment adherence, and improving viral load suppression among patients. The Karyashala is expected to foster coordinated planning among national, state, and district stakeholders, reinforcing a data-driven and collaborative approach. Through such focused interventions, NACO aims to accelerate progress towards the 95-95-95 targets and advance India's goal of eliminating AIDS as a public health threat.

- Association leaders meet civil supplies director, warning that 10-day shortages could force closures and drive away skilled migrant staff
- Director assures equitable distribution of limited 30-40% capacity gas to all eateries based on past consumption

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

AMID a deepening commercial LPG crisis, hoteliers across Andhra Pradesh have urged the government to ensure uninterrupted supply of gas cylinders, warning that prolonged shortages could cripple the food service industry.

Representing these concerns, the Joint Action Committee (JAC) of the Vijayawada Hotels Association and AP Star Hotels Association met civil supplies director Nupur Ajay Kumar here on Tuesday evening.

The JAC highlighted that the industry is on the brink

Hoteliers demand urgent relief from gas shortage



Leaders of Vijayawada Hotels Association JAC and AP Star Hotels Association submit a memorandum to civil supplies director Nupur Ajay Kumar in Vijayawada on Tuesday

of shutdown due to severe shortages over the past ten days. Leaders including R V Swamy and Ramana Rao stressed the urgent need for at least partial supply restoration to sustain operations and retain workforce, particularly skilled migrant staff.

Responding to the concerns, the civil supplies director assured that available gas—currently at 30-40 per cent capacity—would be

distributed equitably among all establishments, from star hotels to small eateries, based on their past consumption patterns. This follows directions from Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu to prioritise supply to the hospitality sector and prevent disruption of essential food services.

To manage the crisis, the government is considering temporary restrictions, in-

cluding mandating closure of hotels and restaurants by 10 pm to conserve fuel, potentially saving 10-20 per cent of daily consumption.

Authorities have also encouraged the use of alternative cooking methods such as charcoal and wood-fired stoves, while advising a temporary reduction in gas-intensive menu items.

Additionally, a zonal weekly holiday system may be introduced, allowing staggered closures across different areas instead of a complete shutdown. Officials indicated that a government order outlining these measures, in line with guidelines from Hardeep Singh Puri, will be issued soon.

The JAC reaffirmed its commitment to cooperate fully with the government to ensure continued food services without a complete industry shutdown.

Packaged drinking water prices set to go up

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

AMID rising input costs, prices of packaged drinking water bottles are set to increase across the state, industry sources said on Tuesday.

Manufacturers said that production costs have gone up sharply due to a steep rise in the prices of raw materials and packaging components. With summer approaching, demand for bottled water is also expected to increase by 15-20 per cent, adding further pressure on supply and pricing.

The decision to hike prices was taken at a meeting of the Andhra Pradesh Packaged Drinking Water Manufacturers' Association held in Vijayawada, which was attended by manufacturers from Krishna, Guntur, and Prakasam districts. According to the association, the price of plastic preforms has risen



Andhra Pradesh Packaged Drinking Water Manufacturers' Association president Pinnamaneni Dhanaprakash and general secretary A Srinivas addressing the media in Vijayawada on Tuesday

from Rs 110 to Rs 190 per kg, while bottle cap costs have increased from Rs 0.22 to Rs 0.40 per unit. PVC sleeve prices have gone up from Rs 0.20 to Rs 0.30, and label costs have increased from Rs 300 to Rs 430 per kg. Corrugated box prices rose from Rs 11 to Rs 14 per unit, while shrink film costs surged from Rs 115 to Rs 250 per kg. Adhesive tape prices have also increased from Rs 280 to Rs 400. Addressing the media, association president Pinnamaneni Dhanaprakash and general secretary A Srinivas said that

the cumulative rise in input costs has significantly impacted production. They advised members to increase prices by around Rs 25 per case. They added that the packaged drinking water market in the State is estimated to be over Rs.140 crore and plays a crucial role, especially during the summer when consumption peaks. The usage is higher in urban areas compared to rural regions. They said the price hike has become unavoidable and appealed to distributors and consumers to cooperate with the revised pricing.

War to decide Middle East's future, dynamics of western alliances

US President Donald Trump recently said that he was "not happy with the UK" for the delay in sending two aircraft carriers to the Middle East. In fact, he has reasons to be unhappy with all American allies. Japan and Australia have announced that they were not planning to send navy vessels to West Asia to escort ships through the Strait of Hormuz, which the US President called on the allies to do. He wanted them to create a coalition to reopen the vital waterway. But Japan and Australia are distant US allies; even the UK and Germany, US allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (Nato), have also not been of much use in the war against Iran. UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer

has made it clear that his country will not be drawn into a "wider war" and he is "working with allies" on a viable plan for the Strait of Hormuz. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz was blunter, while asserting that the ongoing war in Iran "is not a matter for Nato."

The arguments proffered by US allies are specious and self-serving; they need American military support, which is critical, according to the Nato website, "for the provision of some essential capabilities, regarding for instance, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance; air-to-air refuelling; ballistic missile defence; and airborne electromagnetic warfare." Moreover, the US' contribution to the total Nato expenditure is the

highest. But they would not help the US when it needs them. Merz's comment is particularly cheeky. At any rate, the US-Israel alliance is fighting for lasting peace in the Middle East, where Iran is the biggest troublemaker, preparing a nuclear arsenal, supplying drones to Russia, and arming and aiding terror groups like Hamas and Hezbollah. The challenge posed by Tehran is not confined to the Middle East. Therefore, supporters of stronger action against Iran argue that the US-Israel alliance is not merely fighting a series of isolated confrontations but is attempting to create a peaceful Middle East. From this perspective, confronting Iranian expansionism and preventing the development of nuclear weapons are

essential steps toward a more stable regional order. The argument holds that failing to act decisively now could allow tensions and proxy conflicts to grow, eventually leading to a far more volatile confrontation in the future.

At the same time, advocates of this position stress that safeguarding the Strait of Hormuz is not solely an American or Israeli concern. After all, the waterway is a vital artery for global energy supplies, disruptions there would affect economies around the world. Oil-importing nations in Europe and Asia would be particularly vulnerable to price shocks and supply shortages. For this reason, proponents believe that ensuring safe passage through the Strait should be

treated as a collective international responsibility rather than a mission carried primarily by the US. The debate highlights a recurring challenge in international alliances: balancing national interests with collective security commitments. While Washington expects its partners to contribute more actively to confront perceived threats, many allies prefer diplomatic engagement and caution over military escalation. Whether a broader coalition eventually emerges to secure the Strait or whether the US and its closest partners act largely on their own will shape not only the future of the Middle East but also the evolving dynamics of Western alliances in an increasingly uncertain global landscape.

LETTERS

A fitting salute to the 'people's poet'

The prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award 2025 being conferred on eminent Telugu poet Nandini Sidda Reddy is a moment of immense pride for Telangana's literary community. This makes for a significant acknowledgement of contemporary Telugu literature. What makes this honour particularly meaningful is the thematic depth of the award-winning Animesha, which revolves around lived realities of ordinary people during the Covid-19 pandemic. Sidda Reddy's contribution extends far beyond a single book. As the first chairman of the Telangana Sahitya Akademi, he played a crucial role in promoting the State's rich regional dialect, folklore, and literary heritage. His earlier achievements—including the Nandi Award for his pioneering stirring lyrics in the film Poru Telangana—reflect his rare ability to bridge the worlds of creative literature, cultural activism, and public consciousness. The latest recognition is not merely an individual accolade to the illustrious son of the soil, whose journey started from a small village in Siddipet but a celebration of Telangana's cultural identity and the enduring power of socially-conscious poetry.

Vidyasagar Reddy Kethiri, Hanumakonda

Making kids emotionally brave

With reference to the article "Raising Emotionally Brave Kids" by Deepthi T Nair (THI March 17), I would like to thank the author for highlighting an important concern of modern parenting. In today's achievement-driven world, many parents tend to shield their children from every possible disappointment. While this stems from love and concern, the article rightly explains how overprotection can weaken a child's emotional resilience. Allowing children to face small failures helps them understand that setbacks are temporary and manageable. Such experiences gradually develop courage, patience and problem-solving abilities. Children learn that success is not always immediate and that effort and persistence are essential to overcome difficulties. This mindset prepares them not only for academic challenges but also for emotional and social situations later in life. The article is particularly helpful for present-day young parents who often struggle to balance work, time constraints and parenting responsibilities. Meaningful parenting indeed lies in guiding children patiently rather than solving every problem for them.

Raju Kolluru, Kakinada

Narcotics network engulfs TG politics

Propos "TG govt should curb drug menace with Iron fist" (THI, March 17). The recent drug bust in Telangana has sent shockwaves across the political and social landscape, especially with the reported arrest of a sitting TDP MP from Eluru alongside other politicians and associates. The revelations underscore the alarming spread of the drug menace beyond urban youth into influential circles of power. What was once perceived as a fringe criminal activity has now exposed deep-rooted networks with alleged links to political figures, raising serious concerns about governance, law enforcement, and accountability. The incident has highlighted the urgent need for stricter enforcement, transparent investigations, and political will to combat the threat. If unchecked, such developments could erode institutional integrity and pose a grave risk to society's moral and social fabric.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, Bengaluru-560056

Punish all peddlers

Propos "TG Govt Should Curb Drug Menace with Iron Fist," (THI, March 17). When elected representatives themselves are found consuming drugs, it signals something more troubling than a law enforcement failure — it reflects a broader erosion of accountability. The Telangana government's EAGLE initiative was a step in the right direction, but as the article rightly notes, ground-level action has been inconsistent. Cracking down on peddlers while ignoring the demand side, particularly among the affluent and politically connected, will only produce selective justice. What is needed is enforcement that does not discriminate by social standing, stronger regulation of farmhouse gatherings, and genuine political will to act against one's own.

A Myilsami, Coimbatore-641402

Wipe out drug menace at the source level

This is further to your editorial "TG govt should curb drug menace with iron fist". It brings out the sad state-of-affairs in social behaviour of the present and past lawmakers who are expected to play a pivotal role in curbing drug menace. Themselves being caught in the act is outright disgusting and condemnable beyond words. This social evil of drug abuse of a variety of variants by the youth of today in Telangana is truly disturbing. The agencies empowered to tackle the menace must be allowed to act fearlessly against all those involved. The supply chain, agents and carriers must be identified so that the authorities can go to the root of this evil and reach the source.

S Lakshmi, Hyderabad

thehansreader@gmail.com

BENGALURU ONLINE

Sri Lankan judge moves HC; Centre, Google raise jurisdiction objections

BENGALURU: A petition filed by Sri Lankan Supreme Court judge A H M D Nawaz before the Karnataka High Court has triggered a legal debate on jurisdiction, with Google LLC and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology opposing its maintainability. The plea challenges allegedly defamatory and objectionable content published online against the judge. The matter came up before a bench headed by Justice Sachin Shankar Magadam. During the hearing, counsel for Google argued that the petition itself may not be maintainable before the Karnataka High Court. It was submitted that the alleged defamatory content originated in Sri Lanka, while Google is a US-based entity, raising serious concerns about territorial jurisdiction.

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

Firecracker units have become the new killers



RAVULAPATI SEETARAMARAO

Firecrackers have become deadly! If vendors who run these businesses like those running shops in the ordinary market-selling goods without following safety regulations-are allowed to make fireworks and firecrackers in the run-up to Diwali with unskilled, low-paid workers, and authorities do not immediately rein them in, the number of casualties from such accidents will keep rising each day.

This dangerous trade, produced without any precautions whatsoever, has become a business of hazards. If this bundle of explosives, which has turned into a "high-risk industry," is not regulated, both the number of fire accidents and the death toll will inevitably keep growing.

Last October in the Konaseema district of Andhra Pradesh, a major fireworks explosion in Grand Fireworks claimed ten lives. When Sri Surya Fire Crackers exploded in Vetapalem village, 20 per-



Aftermath of the blaze in Grand Fireworks at Rayavaram village of Dr BR Ambedkar Konaseema district last October

sons lost their lives in an instant. It was later discovered that both units belonged to the same person. In fact, even though the government had ordered the Vetapalem unit to be shut down as early as January, it is shocking that this controversial company was allowed to continue. It caused yet another deadly disaster.

In the early days, Diwali fireworks used to bring immense joy to everyone! But because the use of explosive materials was less, hazardous situations were not common. Streets would buzz with activity—sparkling flowerpots, moonlight crackers, sparklers and small ground-spinners—making the festival a source of immense happiness for families, especially for children.

Nagpur in Maharashtra and

Sivakasi in Tamil Nadu have the most number of manufacturers of fireworks. Back then, even though strict safety rules were not always followed, the limited use of explosives in manufacturing did not cause any large scale deaths. When accidents did occur, media coverage would spur governments into immediate action to prevent any loss of life or property. The officials responsible for overseeing fireworks also acted responsibly and took appropriate measures whenever needed.

Having seen those days, today thinking about the accidents happening these days makes for a terrifying proposition! In Nagpur, an explosion at the SBEL Energy factory killed 90 workers, most of them being women. In the

It is now crucial that there be a comprehensive review of safety procedures and a deep study of the extent the senior officials are supervising the works in the factory and are swearing by the dos and don'ts. Investigations must determine whether the businesses are providing safe, convenient, and accident-free environments. Licenses should be revoked and criminal action taken against all violators. Otherwise deaths and property losses from these incidents will not stop

last two years alone, over 20 people have lost their lives in accidents at these very units. We should also remember that two people died in solar explosions. This solar plant is huge. Its owner even received the Padma Shri award. Locals mockingly talk about that award, implying it reveals the political connections the owner must have had.

It is because of such political connections that officials responsible for enforcing the relevant laws turn a Nelson's Eye to the sordid goings on. The tragic irony is that those working in such hazardous units are vulnerable as they are unprotected. Whether or not the governments care, accidents keep happening, which is a grievance that the locals keep cautioning about but to avail. People complain that because adequate safety measures are not implemented to the required levels and as the managers of those units are not prosecuted under the

law, accidents are becoming too frequent. In fact, Nagpur has a safety organization responsible for ensuring that protective measures related to petroleum and explosives are in place and in working condition. Because of whistleblowers from that organisation, there have been CBI investigations. Investigations into PESO officers, accused of issuing licenses and taking bribes, have been carried out, yet explosions and loss of life continue unabated.

It is now crucial that there be a comprehensive review of safety procedures and a deep study of the extent the senior officials are supervising the works in the factory and are swearing by the dos and don'ts.

Investigations must determine whether the businesses are providing safe, convenient, and accident-free environments, Licenses should be revoked and criminal action taken against all violators.

Otherwise deaths and property losses from these incidents will not stop.

In Sivakasi, because authorities have enforced strict measures to prevent accidents and have ensured that child labour is not used in such hazardous units, the number of incidents — and consequently the loss of life — has decreased to noticeable levels.

Many years ago, Diwali firework shops used to be located away from towns. That made it clear that precautions were being taken so that, if accidents happen by mistake, the damage would be limited. Police were often stationed near those shops, constantly checking whether the merchants were taking proper safety measures. Shops opened and closed on schedule. Even if many people went from shop to shop to buy crackers, arrangements were so made that they could leave quickly. Today, even though more shops are set up in crowded places, safety measures are being tossed out.

Experience shows that stalls and shops selling items meant for the Diwali celebration were run in ways that never brought sorrow or anguish to families.

(The writer is a retired IPS officer, who has served as an Additional DGP of Andhra Pradesh)

Urgent need to rethink Telangana's education roadmap

DR SREERAMULU GOSIKONDA

The Government of Telangana's decision to constitute the Telangana Education Commission (TEC) in September 2024 is a bold initiative. With a mandate to prepare a comprehensive education policy covering pre primary to higher education, including technical streams, the Commission has attempted to chart a roadmap for reform. This effort deserves recognition.

Yet, while the vision is ambitious, several blind spots risk undermining its transformative potential.

In the 21st century, when education must respond to rapid technological change, global competitiveness, and the demand for inclusive growth, the relevance of such a Commission is undeniable. Its role is not only to set clear standards for quality and align reforms with national frameworks like NEP 2020, but also to ensure accountability across both government and private institutions. Without addressing the welfare of private school teachers—who form the majority of the teaching workforce—the promise of reform will remain incomplete.

A progressive step forward:

The TEC, chaired by Akunuri Murali has rightly acknowledged the challenges facing Telangana's education system. Private school enrolment has surged past 60 per cent, while government schools have seen enrolment collapse to just 26 per cent in first grade by 2024-25. Budget allocations have fluctuated, falling to 5.9 per cent in 2021-22 before recovering modestly to 7.55 per

cent in 2024-25. Learning outcomes remain poor, with only 31.5 per cent of Standard-V students able to read a Standard-II text. Against this backdrop, several recommendations stand out. The integration of pre-primary education into the school system is a laudable reform, ensuring continuity in early childhood learning.

Equally commendable is the merging of intermediate education with school education, which will reduce duplication and ease student transitions. This reform will also help optimise the use of human resources and existing infrastructure, including laboratories, while reducing the financial burden on the government. In addition, it will not only curb commercialisation of senior secondary education but also create a more conducive atmosphere for students to learn effectively.

Junior Lecturers (JL) who currently may lack a B.Ed. qualification should be given sufficient time to complete it, thereby aligning with the required standards for Post Graduate Teachers (PGTs). The emphasis on English-medium instruction across all levels reflects parental aspirations and global realities. The call to embed sports, arts, and socio-emotional learning as core components of schooling is another progressive step toward holistic education. As regards teachers, closing the D.El.Ed programme and restructuring B.Ed. stage-specific degrees is welcome. It acknowledges the systematic failure of teacher education, which has long undermined classroom quality. Similarly, re-emphasising polytechnic education to produce industry-ready diploma engineers is a pragmatic correction.



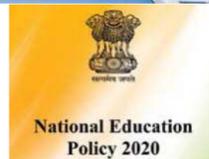
Blind spots and missteps:

Yet, the Commission's vision is not without flaws. Most strikingly, it does not include experienced educators such as school teachers, principals, lecturers, and professors among its members. Policymaking without the voices of those who live the realities of classrooms risks being detached from ground-level challenges. The TEC also suggested that government teachers' salaries are 'relatively high.' In reality, it is a wrong notion. Salaries are determined by state policy and are not excessive.

The move to open Telangana Public Schools with heavy investment is also a questionable proposal. Instead, the state should focus on strengthening existing government schools and improving enrolment.

Ambiguity on NEP 2020:

TEC's stance on the National Education Policy (NEP 2020) is ambiguous. While it acknowledges certain proposals, such as strengthening pre-school education, it avoids clarity on whether NEP will be fully implemented. This lack of decisiveness can be problematic. NEP 2020 mandates mother tongue instruction at the elementary level, recognising that comprehension matters more than English skills in early grades. The TEC's blanket recommendation of English-medium instruction



risks undermining this principle. Moreover, the Commission's report is not available in Telugu, the state's official language. This is a serious oversight. Policy documents must be accessible to all stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and local communities. Promoting Telugu as a mandatory subject in all schools is equally essential to preserve linguistic identity while balancing global aspirations.

At the higher education level, the TEC rightly calls for restoring the regulatory integrity of the aided sector. The fee reimbursement scheme should be limited to meritorious students across social categories seeking higher education in private institutions. The Commission also observed that nearly 70 per cent of teaching positions in government-run universities remain vacant, a situation that has had a negative impact on both teaching quality and research activities. However, the Commission fails to address another pressing issue: the absence of reservation for local qualified youth in private higher education insti-

tutions including private universities. With unemployment rising since the state's inception, ensuring opportunities for Telangana's own graduates is critical.

Silence on private school regulation and teachers' welfare:

The TEC's call for decentralised governance, stronger school leadership, and implementation of Section 12(1)(c) of the RTE Act (mandating 25 per cent seats in private schools for marginalised children) reflects a commitment to equity. Yet, the Commission failed to address the underpaid salaries of private school teachers, who constitute 58 per cent of the state's teaching workforce and remain the backbone of its education system. Private schools in Telangana are regulated under the AP Education Act of 1982 and G.O. Ms. No. 1 of 1993, which mandated recognition, infrastructure standards, staff qualifications, fee regulation, and allocation of 65 per cent of income toward staff salaries and benefits. In practice, however, many institutions defy rules. With nearly two thirds of students enrolled in private schools, leaving them outside effective regulation undermines educational quality and erodes trust. A fair, transparent policy that enforces compliance and protects both teachers and families is essential to correct this prolonged neglect and restore credibility in the education sector.

The way forward:

The Telangana Education Commission has laid out a roadmap that is ambitious and forward-looking. But ambition alone will not suffice. For

the policy to succeed, it must bring frontline educators into the policymaking process and correct misconceptions about government teacher salaries while simultaneously addressing wage disparities in private schools. The state should prioritise strengthening existing government schools and introduce performance-based promotions while tackling the contract and part-time teaching systems that weaken classroom stability. Equally important is in filling supervisory positions.

At the higher education level, providing reservation for local youth in private institutions is essential to address rising unemployment.

Finally, reforms must align with NEP 2020's emphasis on mother tongue instruction in early grades, recognising that comprehension in the formative years' matters more than early English proficiency.

Telangana's education reforms hold promise, but they cannot succeed if they overlook the realities of both government and private school teachers. With nearly two thirds of children studying in private schools, leaving their teachers underpaid and unprotected is an injustice that undermines reform. A "light but tight" framework, including disclosure of private school accounts as recommended by NEP 2020, is essential for transparency and fairness.

The TEC has opened the door to change; now the government must ensure reforms include private teachers, making education policy truly balanced.

(The writer is Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, BHU Varanasi. Views expressed are his personal)

Sri Rama Navami celebrations to be held with grandeur

- Three-day festivities will include the celestial wedding (Kalyanotsavam) of Lord Sri Sita Ramachandra Swamy and mass marriages on March 28
- Special preparations are being made with devotion, particularly for the sacred 'Talambralu'
- Raghuvveera Reddy personally distributed paddy to villagers, encouraging them to take part in the ritual preparations with devotion



Former minister N Raghuvveera Reddy distributing paddy to villagers in Neelakanthapuram for preparing sacred 'Talambralu' ahead of Sri Rama Navami celebrations

The event on Tuesday along with villagers, Raghuvveera Reddy said that the three-day festivities will include the celestial wedding (Kalyanotsavam) of Lord Sri Sita Ramachandra Swamy and mass marriages on March 28.

He stated that special preparations are being made with devotion, particularly for the sacred 'Talambralu' (holy rice used in wedding

rituals). As part of the tradition, devotees from Gangalavayi Palyam and Govindapuram panchayats will manually process paddy into rice using traditional methods.

To facilitate this, Raghuvveera Reddy personally distributed paddy to villagers, encouraging them to take part in the ritual preparations with

devotion. He highlighted that such collective participation reflects cultural heritage and spiritual unity.

Appealing to devotees, he urged people to attend the celebrations in large numbers and seek the blessings of the deity.

Temple committee members, village elders, and several devotees were present during the poster release event.

HANS NEWS SERVICE MADAKASIRA

GRAND arrangements are underway for the Sri Rama Navami celebrations at Neelakanthapuram temples from March 27 to 29, temple committee chairman and former minister N Raghuvveera Reddy announced. Releasing posters for

Congress office rent hike spark doubts over funds

- The party office has 17 attached shops generating a monthly rental income of Rs 1,86,600
- During the 12-month period from February 14, 2025, to January 2, 2026, the total expected revenue is estimated at Rs 22,39,200
- The issue has gained further attention after Boya Kranthi Naidu assumed charge as the new DCC president on January 3



Congress party office in Kurnool and the list of rents collected from 17 shops

NARENDRA KUMAR VARIKUNTLA KURNOOL

SERIOUS concerns have surfaced over the financial management of a Congress party office following a prolonged vacancy in the District Congress Committee (DCC) leadership.

According to available information, the party office has 17 attached shops generating a monthly rental income of Rs 1,86,600.

During the 12-month period from February 14, 2025, to January 2, 2026, when the DCC president's post re-

mained vacant, the total expected revenue is estimated at Rs 22,39,200.

Sources indicate that approximately Rs.7.50 lakh from this amount may have been utilized towards employee salaries and other routine operational expenses.

However, there is no clear public record or official disclosure accounting for the remaining funds, leading to growing unease among party cadres regarding the transparency of financial management during the period of administrative vacuum.

The issue has gained further attention after Boya Kranthi Naidu assumed

charge as the new DCC president on January 3, 2026. Soon after taking over, he reportedly implemented a 25 percent hike in rent across all 17 shops attached to the party office.

The move has drawn criticism from local party members, who are questioning both the timing and the rationale behind the decision.

Party cadres who sought clarification on the utilization of accumulated funds and the sudden rent hike have reportedly not received any response.

The lack of explanation has fueled suspicions among sections of party workers, with

JULY 2025	
1	10,000.00
2	10,000.00
3	10,000.00
4	10,000.00
5	10,000.00
6	10,000.00
7	10,000.00
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11	10,000.00
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21	10,000.00
22	10,000.00
23	10,000.00
24	10,000.00
25	10,000.00
26	10,000.00
27	10,000.00
28	10,000.00
29	10,000.00
30	10,000.00
31	10,000.00
Total	3,18,600.00

some alleging possible misuse of party funds and calling for greater accountability and transparency in financial dealings.

Meanwhile, when The Hans India attempted to contact Kranthi Naidu over the phone to seek his version on the allegations, he did not respond to the calls.

Lorry raided, 156 quintals of pds rice seized

HANS NEWS SERVICE NELLORE

IN a joint operation, following a tip-off, Vigilance, Police, and Civil Supplies departments officials raided a lorry and seized Rs 7.50 lakh worth 156 quintals of Public Distribution System (PDS) rice at a petrol bunk (JK Filling Station) in Kovur on Tuesday.

According to the DSO B. Leela Rani, they have received credible information over illegal transportation of PDS rice to Chennai from Nellore.

The DSO explained that she immediately alerted the Vigilance officials and Kovur SI and conducted vehicle inspections at Kovur.

During the inspection, police noticed a lorry proceeding from Kavali to Chennai carrying 156 quintals of rice worth Rs 7.5 lakh. PDS rice was filled in 600 plastic bags each bag containing 26 kg and transporting with name 'Apple' brand.

During the interrogation, the lorry driver disclosed that PDS rice from Malakonda Swamy Rice Traders of Kavali town was procured from Sri Venkata Srikanth Raw and Boiled Rice Mill located at Gayatri Nagar in Kavali town.

The DSO said that a case has been registered against rice mill owner Korsipati Madhava Reddy, Lorry Owner P. Yoganandh, Lorry driver Muthaiah. Police seized 156 quintals of PDS rice at Kovur on Tuesday.

MLA conducts surprise inspection of govt school

ANANTAPUR

SINGANAMALA MLA Bandaru Sravani Sree conducted a surprise inspection at the Government School in Salakancheruvu village of Singanamala mandal on Tuesday. During the visit, the MLA reviewed key aspects of the school's functioning, including student attendance, teaching methods, and the implementation of the Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

She interacted with the students to assess their learning levels and academic progress. Expressing concern over the need for improved educational outcomes, the MLA advised the teaching staff to enhance academic

standards and ensure effective classroom delivery.

She emphasized the importance of maintaining quality education and consistent monitoring of student performance.

Bandaru Sravani Sree also examined the infrastructure and facilities available at the school. After reviewing the existing conditions, she directed the concerned officials to address the identified issues promptly and ensure that necessary improvements are carried out without delay.

The inspection is part of ongoing efforts to strengthen the quality of education and ensure better facilities in government schools across the constituency.



MLA Bandaru Sravani Sree interacts with students during a surprise inspection at the Government School in Salakancheruvu village on Tuesday

Grand rituals, cultural processions mark 2nd day of Ugadi festivities

- Special puja rituals were performed for the presiding deities, followed by a series of sacred ceremonies
- Chandhi Homam was also performed separately in the Ammavari Yagashala
- The temple witnessed a steady inflow of pilgrims seeking blessings during the auspicious occasion

HANS NEWS SERVICE SRISAILAM

The second day of the Ugadi Mahotsavams at the renowned Srisailam Temple was observed with religious fervour and devotion on Tuesday.

Special puja rituals were performed for the presiding deities, followed by a series of sacred ceremonies in the Yagashala from 8:00 a.m., including Chandishwara Puja, Mandapaaradhana, and Rudra Homam conducted for the welfare of all. Chandhi Homam was also performed separately in the Ammavari Yagashala.

As part of the celebrations, devotees participated in special Kumkumarchana and Navaavarana Archana offered to the Goddess.

The temple witnessed a steady inflow of pilgrims seeking blessings during the auspicious occasion.

Temple authorities stated that evening rituals,



including pujas and Japanushtanam, have been conducted from 5:30 p.m. with elaborate arrangements in place.

The Kailasa Vahana Seva a key highlight of the festivities was also held.

The processional deities after mounted on the Kailasa Vahana was taken out in a ceremonial procession through the temple streets as part of the traditional Gramotsavam.

Devotees hold a strong belief that witnessing this divine procession brings prosperity and fulfils their wishes.

In continuation of the celebrations, the Goddess has been adorned in the Maha Durga Alankaram, symbolising divine power with eight arms carrying sacred weapons.

The Gramotsavam has

featured a wide array of cultural performances, including Nadaswaram, Kolatam, Chekka Bhajana, Chenda Melam, folk danc-

es, and traditional musical displays, showcasing the rich cultural heritage and spiritual significance of the Ugadi festival.



The authorities of Srisailam temple have organized Kailasa Vahana Seva to the presiding deities. Goddess Bhramaramba Devi appeared as Maha Durga Alankaram and Gramotsavam organized in the temple street



Balaji Seva Trust conducts week-long annadanam for Srisailam pilgrims

HANS NEWS SERVICE KURNOOL

SRI Balaji Seva Trust organized free food distribution camps for devotees from Karnataka travelling on foot to Srisailam Temple on the occasion of the Ugadi Brahmotsavams. The annadanam programme was conducted for seven days, from March 10 to March 16, providing timely meals and support to thousands



Organizers of Balaji Sev Trust distributing free food to Kannada devotees travelling to Srisailam on foot

of pilgrims undertaking the sacred journey.

The initiative reflects the Trust's continued commitment to serving devotees during major religious occasions.

According to the organisers, nearly 20,000 pilgrims benefitted from the camps set up in Kurnool town along the pilgrimage route.

In addition to free meals, the Trust also arranged basic medical services to address the

health needs of the devotees, many of whom travel long distances under challenging conditions.

Volunteers actively participated in the service activities, ensuring smooth operations throughout the week-long programme.

Prominent personalities, including Vishwa Hindu Parishad State President Sai Reddy Nandireddy, Venkateswara Swamy

Prakhanda Thimmareddy, L Raju, honorary advisor Vemareddy Dhanunjaya Reddy, Trust Chairman Srikanth, Treasurer Shivakoti Chandrasekar, and members Mohan Reddy and Sudarshan Reddy, took part in the initiative.

The Trust expressed gratitude to donors and volunteers for their support and reaffirmed its resolve to continue such service programmes in the coming years.



Malvi Malhotra returns with dark comedy

ASKARI JAFFER

Actor Malvi Malhotra, who has been part of projects like 'Hotel Milan', 'Zorawar Di Jacqueline', 'Abhiyuham', 'Thiragabadara Saami' and 'Jenna Natchathiram', is gearing up for her return to Hindi cinema with the neo-noir dark comedy 'Arjun Bewakoof'. Directed by Smita Singh and written by Anand Raaj, the film also stars Sanjay Mishra, Dolly Singh and Rajesh Tailang. In this conversation, Malvi opens up about her comeback, the role that drew her in, and working with some of the most respected names in the industry.

"I had done a Hindi film earlier in 2018 called 'Hotel Milan'. After that film, I moved to the South industry and worked mostly there. After a long time, I'm now coming back to Hindi cinema, so it feels really good," she says, calling the project a meaningful return to where she began.

Talking about what made her say yes to the film, Malvi shares, "My character Geet excited me a lot, and the overall story of the film was also very interesting. While working in the South industry, I receive many scripts every day, but very rarely does a script stay in your mind. When I read this script, it re-

ally stuck with me."

She is equally enthusiastic about sharing screen space with veteran performers. "I'm very excited. As a writer myself, I was happy to know that Rajesh sir has also written a book, so I even thought of sharing my book with him. And working with Sanjay Mishra sir is something I'm really looking forward to. I've met him before and we had discussions about acting and craft. He is one of the finest actors who is very natural in his performances. It will be a great learning experience working with him," she says.

Describing the film's tone and appeal, she adds, "Every character in the film stands

Malvi Malhotra is set to make her Hindi cinema comeback with the neo-noir dark comedy 'Arjun Bewakoof.' The actress opens up about her role, the film's unpredictable climax, and working with industry veterans

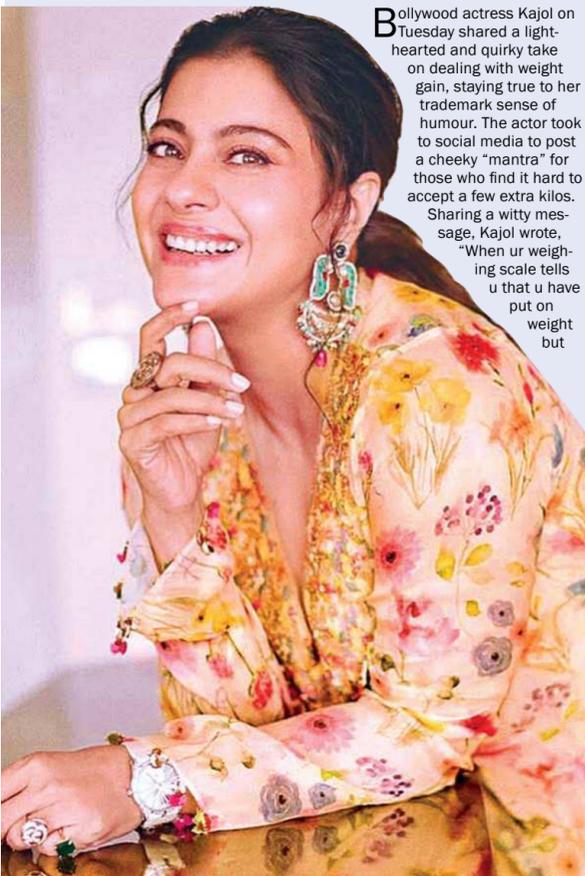
out and has its own importance. The film definitely has elements of dark comedy, so audiences can expect that tone. One of the biggest USPs of the film is that the climax is very unpredictable."

Malvi also speaks about placing her trust in Smita Singh's vision. "I watched Smita's previous film 'Anda-

man', and that convinced me that she can make a good film. My first step was to watch her earlier work, and after that I read the script of 'Arjun Bewakoof'. Both things convinced me, so it didn't take me much time to say yes to the project because of her conviction towards her work."



Kajol offers a quirky mantra for dealing with weight gain



Bollywood actress Kajol on Tuesday shared a light-hearted and quirky take on dealing with weight gain, staying true to her trademark sense of humour. The actor took to social media to post a cheeky "mantra" for those who find it hard to accept a few extra kilos. Sharing a witty message, Kajol wrote, "When ur weighing scale tells u that u have put on weight but

can't see it always assume it's gone to ur head and u have just become smarter! #namaste Follow me for more hidden gems. (Sic)" The actress is often seen sharing pun-filled, fun and quirky thoughts online, offering her followers a dose of humour and positivity. In a similar post showcasing her classic comic timing, Kajol revealed how most of her life is a compilation of random moments that unexpectedly turn picture-perfect.

The 'Maa' actress was seen posing by a door in a social media post. Giving context in the caption, she shared that while deciding whether to shut the door or leave it open, her moment of confusion ended up creating a perfect shot. "Deciding whether I should shut the door or leave it open... And somehow that became the shot! A lot like most of life (sic)," the caption read.

On the professional front, Kajol will next be seen in the action thriller 'Maharagni: Queen of Queens'.

She will play Maya, a woman on a revenge mission, in a story centered on a mother-daughter duo. Helmed by debutant director Charan Tej Upalapati, the film also features Prabhu Deva, Naseeruddin Shah, Samyuktha (marking her Bollywood debut), Jisshu Sengupta, Aditya Seal, Pramod Pathak and Chhaya Kadam in significant roles.

At 57, Bhagyashree swims in ocean at -25°C during exotic Finland holiday

Bollywood actress Bhagyashree recently shared glimpses from her adventurous holiday in Finland, where she visited the iconic Santa Claus Village and even swam in the icy ocean at minus 25 degrees Celsius.

Taking to social media, the 'Maine Pyar Kiya' actress posted pictures and videos from the thrilling experience. In one striking image, she is seen floating in Arctic waters wearing a bright orange survival suit. Surrounded by floating ice chunks, Bhagyashree appeared to be embracing her adventurous side.

Sharing the moment, she wrote, "Swimming in the ocean at -25°. It was an experience beyond imagination."

In another reflective post, she added, "#traveltalesbyb As I closed my eyes, I was felt the magnitude of nature, and how minuscule we are."

The actress also shared glimpses from her visit to the famous Santa Claus Village. In one picture, Bhagyashree is seen posing happily at the entrance of the village dressed in a red winter coat paired with earmuffs and gloves. In another clip, she is seen warming herself near a bonfire set against a breathtaking winter landscape. Captioning the post, she wrote, "SantaVillage! Acres of winter Santa land within the Arctic Circle... from reindeers to gingerbread cottages, bonfires with marshmallows, hot chocolate and cookies, building a snowman to meeting Santa."

She further added, "While I missed my children, I kinda became a child again. Simple joys of surprises, seeing something new. Travel brings you a



different kind of happiness. Grateful n thankful."

Bhagyashree is currently enjoying the exotic vacation with her husband Himalaya Dassani and a group of her close friends. The trip appears to be part of her ongoing travel spree, with the actress exploring international destinations as well as scenic locations across India over the past few months.

On the professional front, Bhagyashree made her Bollywood debut with the 1989 film 'Maine Pyar Kiya'

opposite Salman Khan. The film was directed by Sooraj Barjatya and produced by Rajshri Productions.

Soon after the film's success, she married businessman Himalaya Dassani and stepped away from Bollywood for a long period to focus on her family life. Though she appeared in a few projects over the years, they remained limited in scale.

In recent years, Bhagyashree has gradually returned to the spotlight, staying active through films, television appearances and social media.

CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1 Achieve (6)
 - 7 Out of date (8)
 - 8 Rain cats and ___ (4)
 - 10 Fake (6)
 - 11 Abilities (6)
 - 14 Falstaff's Prince; 2001 computer (3)
 - 16 Bone prefix (5)
 - 17 Elliptical (4)
 - 19 Replenish (3,2)
 - 21 A basin for bathing the private parts (5)
 - 22 Small nails (5)
 - 23 Spandau's last prisoner (4)
 - 26 Lawful colloquially speaking (5)
 - 28 Opening flower (3)
 - 29 Foolish persons (6)
 - 30 Quash (6)
 - 31 Ancient church desk (4)
 - 32 High ranking army officers (8)
 - 33 Yield (6)

DOWN

- 1 Syrian city (6)
- 2 Discordant (6)
- 3 Prying (4)
- 4 Keeping watch (7)
- 5 Distributed playing-cards (5)
- 6 Left-hand page (5)
- 8 Qatar's capital (4)
- 9 Come together (3)
- 12 Internet Service Provider abbr (3)
- 13 Looks slyly or maliciously or lasciviously (5)
- 15 Russian spirit (5)
- 18 Chose by election (5)
- 19 Spasm (3)
- 20 Footlike organ (3)
- 21 Beats, pounds or destroys (7)
- 22 Uncle in Spain (3)
- 23 Uproar (6)
- 24 Taro root (4)
- 25 Choose to do something, perceive as proper (3,3)
- 26 Feudal lord (5)
- 27 Huge (5)
- 28 A derelict person (3)
- 30 Impudence (4)



Solution to March 17

SUDOKU



Solution to March 17

HYDERABAD'S SRIDEVI JASTI HONOURED AT SWIGGY'S 'SHE THE CHANGE' 2026

Sridevi Jasti of Hyderabad was honoured at Swiggy's 'She The Change' 2026 event in New Delhi for her impactful work in plant-forward nutrition through Vibrant Living



The ceremony was graced by Chief Guest Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and Swiggy CEO Sriharsha Majety, celebrating women transforming India's food and hospitality sector. Swiggy (NSE: SWIGGY/BSE: 544285), India's pioneering on-demand convenience platform, recently organized the 2026 edition of 'She The Change' in New Delhi. This flagship initiative, with the tagline 'From Vision to Venture', celebrates women who are redefining India's culinary and business landscape. The Chief Guest, Shri Ga-

jendra Singh Shekhawat, along with Sriharsha Majety, Co-Founder, MD and Group CEO, Swiggy, felicitated 28 women from the F&B industry across two categories—Entrepreneur of the Year and Chef of the Year. These awards recognized their contributions to culinary innovation and business success. The honourees included Sridevi Jasti, Founder, Vibrant Living. Through her entrepreneurial initiative, Ms. Jasti champions wholesome, plant-forward nutrition, turning clean eating into a sustainable lifestyle choice. This recognition highlights the city's

continued influence as one of India's most dynamic hubs for culinary innovation and women-led food businesses. She The Change was a curated gathering of pioneers, disruptors, and visionaries from India's food industry reinforcing Swiggy's commitment to empowering women entrepreneurs in the F&B sector. Swiggy currently has 70,000 women-run restaurants on its platform, and as per internal estimates, these entrepreneurs are generating close to 4,20,000 jobs, with each restaurant employing an average of six direct employees.



AI and India's youth: Learning to build the future

Artificial intelligence is no longer distant technology—it is becoming a powerful learning partner helping young people turn curiosity into opportunity

SATYANARAYANA MURTHY
SURAVAJJULA

In homes, hostels, classrooms and small towns across India, a quiet revolution is already underway. Artificial intelligence is no longer a distant idea from science fiction. It is becoming a study partner, a career coach, a creative assistant and, for many young people, a bridge between dreams and opportunity. The biggest question for this generation is not whether AI will change life—it already has. The real question is whether we will simply consume it, or learn to use it to build a better future.

The future has already entered the classroom

Across India today, students are turning to AI tools for support. A student preparing for exams may use AI to understand a difficult concept. A graduate preparing for interviews may practise responses with it. In smaller towns, young learners with smartphones are exploring career paths—from design and coding to entrepreneurship.

A few years ago, opportunities like these depended largely on access to expen-



sive coaching, networks or resources. Today, they also depend on something else: the willingness to learn and use AI responsibly.

AI is not a replacement for discipline or curiosity. Instead, it acts as a powerful support system. It can explain complex ideas in simpler language, help improve communication skills, organise notes, summarise lessons and support project planning. For many young people, this assistance builds confidence as much as knowledge.

Recent global workforce studies suggest that millions of jobs may evolve or transform due to AI, even as new opportunities emerge. Students who learn how to work with AI rather than fear it will be better prepared for the future.

Why AI feels like a superpower

For today's youth, life often feels demanding. Students must study harder, develop new skills, communicate effectively and prepare for careers in a

rapidly changing world.

AI can ease some of this pressure by helping people begin tasks more easily. A school student might use it to revise lessons. A commerce student might simplify complex financial ideas. An aspiring entrepreneur might use it to draft business ideas or marketing plans. These small uses can build confidence at crucial moments.

One of AI's strengths is that it responds to curiosity, not background. It does not care whether someone stud-

ied in an English-medium or regional-language school. It rewards effort and clarity. That is why many see it as a tool that can help level the playing field.

From small-town talent to big possibility

Another powerful impact of AI is how it reduces distance. A student in a small town can access tools similar to those available in major cities. Someone preparing for scholarships can draft essays, improve communication or explore new ideas. A small business owner can use AI to write product descriptions or connect with customers online.

AI cannot remove every inequality, but it can reduce barriers between talent and opportunity. In a country like India—where ambition is abundant but opportunities remain uneven—this shift matters deeply.

Let the machine do the repetition

AI is particularly useful for repetitive tasks. It can summarise long notes, organise information, generate practice questions and translate text into simpler language. Studies suggest

that AI tools can save hours of routine work each week. However, an important caution remains. AI should not replace thinking—it should strengthen it. Copying answers weakens learning, but using AI to understand ideas builds deeper knowledge.

Not just for engineers

Many people still believe AI is only for programmers or technology experts. That is no longer true. AI can assist writers, teachers, doctors, marketers, researchers, journalists and students from almost every field.

The future will not belong only to coders—it will belong to learners.

Skills that matter most

To use AI effectively, young people must build three key skills: asking better questions, checking information carefully and using AI to create something meaningful—whether a project, portfolio or solution to a real-world problem.

What AI cannot replace

Despite its power, AI can-



not replace human qualities. It cannot feel empathy, carry values or understand the emotional journeys people experience. Kindness, creativity, resilience, teamwork and leadership remain uniquely human strengths.

The real opportunity

For India's youth, AI should not be a fear story—it should be an opportunity story. Instead of using it only to finish tasks quickly, young people can use it to understand better, communicate better and create new

possibilities.

AI can provide speed and access. But purpose still comes from people. The future will belong to those who choose not only to use technology—but to build with it.

(The author is a Director in Product Development, Technology Solutions Division of the Audit function for one of the Big 4 firms in Hyderabad. The views expressed are personal and do not represent those of his employer)

IIT-Delhi offers specialised tech and research courses



The Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology Delhi (IIIT-D) has announced admissions for its postgraduate and doctoral programmes for the academic year 2026–2027, inviting applications from students interested in advanced technology and research-focused courses.

Applications for M.Tech. programmes opened, while admissions for Ph.D. programmes are already underway. The institute is offering a range of specialised courses designed to build strong technical knowledge and research capabilities among students.

The M.Tech. programmes are available in key areas of Computer Science and Engineering, Electronics and Communication Engineering, and Computational Biology. Specialisations include Artificial Intelligence, Data Engineering, Information Security, Mobile Computing, VLSI, Embedded Systems, Communications and Machine Learning. These courses are designed to prepare students for both industry roles and research careers by combining theoretical learning with practical exposure. The last date to apply for M.Tech. programmes is April 13, 2026.

For doctoral studies,

- The M.Tech. programmes are offered in major fields such as Computer Science and Engineering, Electronics and Communication Engineering, and Computational Biology, with specialisations including Artificial Intelligence, Data Engineering, Information Security, Mobile Computing, VLSI, Embedded Systems, Communications and Machine Learning.
- The Ph.D. programmes are available across disciplines including Computer Science and Engineering, Electronics and Communication Engineering, Computational Biology, Human-Centred Design, Mathematics, as well as Social Sciences and Humanities

the institute is offering Ph.D. programmes in disciplines such as Computer Science and Engineering, Electronics and Communication Engineering, Computational Biology, Human-Centred Design, Mathematics, and Social Sciences and Humanities. The deadline for submitting Ph.D. applications is April 8, 2026.

According to Prof. Sumit J. Darak, Dean of Academic Affairs, the programmes focus on equipping students with advanced knowledge and hands-on experience in building complex technological systems. The

curriculum emphasises interdisciplinary learning, research-driven approaches and opportunities for industry internships, helping students adapt to the rapidly evolving technology landscape. The institute continues to encourage students to pursue careers in advanced research and innovation, offering a strong academic environment supported by modern infrastructure and industry collaborations.

Interested candidates can apply through the official admissions portal, where detailed information about eligibility criteria, selection process and course structure is available.

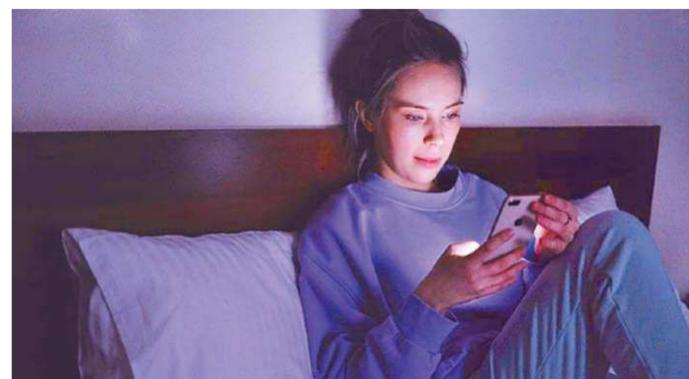
Survey highlights growing concerns over late-night screen habits affecting teenagers' sleep patterns

Concerns over sleep deprivation among teenagers are increasing as late-night smartphone use continues to disrupt sleep patterns across urban India. A recent survey conducted by the Child Online Protection (COP) App among 5,000 parents of teenagers aged 12–18 highlights the growing impact of screen habits on young people's health and daily routines.

The survey covered major cities including Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, Pune, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Jaipur and Lucknow, showing that the issue is widespread and not limited to metropolitan areas. The findings indicate that smartphones are significantly delaying bedtimes and reducing the quality of sleep among teenagers.

Key findings from the survey include:

- **Delayed bedtimes:** Around 62% of parents said their children sleep after 11 PM due to smartphone use. One in three teenagers spends more



than two hours on screens after dinner.

- **Sleep quality concerns:** Nearly 68% of parents believe excessive screen time is affecting their children's sleep quality, with late-night scrolling and constant notifications causing frequent interruptions.
- **Night-time dependency:** A large number of teenagers continue using smartphones in bed, resulting in shorter and disturbed sleep cycles.



City-level insights further underline the seriousness of the problem. In Mumbai, 68% of teenagers sleep after 11 PM due to smartphone use, while 72% of parents expressed concern

about screen addiction. In Delhi, 66% of teens stay up late, and about 46% wake up at night to check notifications—the highest among the cities surveyed. Bengaluru recorded the high-

est rate of bedtime phone usage, with 53% of teenagers using smartphones after going to bed and 74% of parents reporting concerns about its impact on sleep.

Parents in emerging urban centres such as Jaipur, Lucknow and Ahmedabad have also reported rising concern, indicating that sleep disruption linked to smartphone use is spreading beyond major cities.

Experts note that prolonged exposure to screens at night interferes with the body's natural sleep cycle. The blue light emitted by smartphones can disrupt the circadian rhythm, making it harder for teenagers to fall asleep, stay asleep and wake up feeling rested.

With increasing digital engagement and academic demands, experts stress the importance of balanced technology use. Encouraging screen-free routines before bedtime and promoting healthier digital habits are seen as essential steps to address the growing issue of sleep deprivation among teenagers.

Anthah Prerana 7.0 draws global student entrepreneurs

The Entrepreneur Development Cell (ED Cell) of Bhavan's Vivekananda College, Sainikpuri, hosted the 7th edition of Anthah Prerana, its flagship International Business Plan Competition, attracting student entrepreneurs from across India and abroad.

The competition witnessed an impressive participation of 102 teams, representing 11 Indian states along with five international teams from the United Kingdom, United States, and Canada, highlighting the event's growing global reach.

The inaugural ceremony was graced by Group Captain D. Ramanaiah (Retd.), Honorary Secretary of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Sainikpuri Kendra. Meraj Faheem, CEO of Telangana Innovation Cell, attended as the Chief Guest, while Akshay C. S. Deshpande was the Guest of Honour. Addressing the participants, Group Captain Ramanaiah encouraged students to embrace innovation and transform their ideas into impactful ventures. Earlier, Dr. M. Thirimal Rao, ED Cell Coordinator, welcomed the guests and emphasized the significance of the event in fostering entrepreneurial spirit among students.





I am extremely grateful to my parents and my coach, Hriday Chheda, who have continuously supported me and helped me through this journey. My horse, Dasha Deluxe and I have formed a strong bond which truly enriched my experience and made it successful

— Inaara Mehta Luthria, India's young equestrian

WOMEN'S ODI RANKINGS

Mandhana retains top spot, Harmanpreet moves to 7th

DUBAI: India skipper Harmanpreet Kaur moved up to seventh even as her deputy Smriti Mandhana continued to hold on to the top spot in the latest women's ODI rankings released on Tuesday.

Kaur moved up a spot to seventh after New Zealand legend Sophie Devine dropped two rungs to climb down to ninth. Jemimah Rodrigues remained static on 12th. New Zealand batter Maddy Green's fine knock of 94 in the final match of their ICC Women's Championship series against Zimbabwe has helped her make notable progress in the rankings.

The 33-year-old's 73-ball knock in Dunedin contributed to her side's massive 200-run victory that completed a 3-0 series victory while helping her move up five places to 17th position among batters with a career-best 610 rating points.

All-rounder Amelia Kerr, who won the Player of the Match award in the final ODI with an all-round effort of 80 and five for 22, also captured the Player of the Series award while advancing from 21st to joint-19th among batters, registering more than 600 rating points



in both batting and bowling rankings.

Isabelle Gaze (up three places to 61st) is another New Zealand player to move up the batting rankings while seam bowlers Rosemary Mair (up seven places to 58th) and Bree Illing (up five places to 79th) have progressed in the bowling rankings.

The T20I rankings see captain Amelia Kerr attain a career-best 694 rating points after smashing 78 off 44 deliveries in the opening game against South Africa in Mount Maunganui while retaining eighth position in the bowling rankings.

Georgia Plimmer's knock of 63 has helped her go from 50th to 41st position, also contributing to New Zealand's 90-run win. In the T20I bowling rankings, Jess Kerr's figures of two for 13 have helped her move up 11 places to 23rd position while Sophie Devine's career-best haul of four for 12 has lifted her from 104th to 79th position.

FEI World Dressage Challenge 2025

15-YR-OLD INAARA BAGS TOP GLOBAL RANKINGS

MUMBAI: The Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI) has officially declared its rankings for the FEI World Dressage Challenge (WDC) 2025, with India's young equestrian talent, Inaara Mehta Luthria, delivering an exceptional performance on the global stage.

Representing the Amateur Riders' Club, Mumbai, the 15-year-old rider competed astride her horse, Dasha Deluxe, achieving an impressive score of 69.875% in the Youth Category (12-16 years). Inaara secured the No.1 rank in India, No.1 in FEI Zone 9 (comprising India, Singapore, Philippines, New Zealand, Hong Kong, and China), and an outstanding No.6 rank in the world. Inaara was also selected to represent Team India alongside Gaurav Pundir, Miraya R. Dadabhoi, and Samanna Evera T. The team delivered a commendable performance, securing the No.1 position in FEI Zone 9 and ranking No.7 globally.

The FEI World Dressage Challenge is a unique global initiative designed to promote dressage worldwide.

Under this format, international judges travel across participating countries throughout the year to evaluate riders locally, ensuring a fair and consistent standard of judging while eliminating the need for horses and riders to travel internationally. In 2024, India was judged by Natalia Rubashko from Belarus. Inaara Mehta Luthria is a student of Hillspring International School. Reflecting on her achievement, she said, "I am extremely grateful to my parents and my



coach, Hriday Chheda, who have continuously supported me and helped me through this journey. My horse, Dasha Deluxe and I have formed a strong bond which truly enriched my experience and made it successful."

This remarkable achievement highlights the growing prominence of Indian equestrian talent on the global stage and underscores the country's continued progress in the sport.

Telangana's DKR FC set for IWL 2 debut



In a historic moment for women's football in the State, the Telangana Football Association announced that for the first time ever a women's team from Telangana, DKR FC, has qualified to participate in the Indian Women's League 2 (IWL 2) for the first time. Marking the occasion, TFA Secretary G P Paiguna, along with Dr Kavitha Reddy, recently appointed Governing Council Chairman of the Indian Institute of Health and Family Welfare, and Dr Soni Bala, IFS, VCMD SATG, officially unveiled the team jersey. DKR FC will compete in the tournament scheduled to be held from March 22 to March 30 in Thrissur, Kerala. The team hopes to make a strong impression and bring laurels to Telangana on the national stage.

TCA demands CBI probe into HCA-Visakha deal

The Telangana Cricket Association alleged that the Visakha deal is only one part of a much larger pattern of systemic irregularities involving financial mismanagement in excess of Rs 600 crore

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD



THE Telangana Cricket Association (TCA) has demanded a comprehensive Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the controversial Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA)-Visakha agreement, terming it a "classic case of opaque dealings, backdated arrangements, and institutional compromise."

Reacting to the explosive expose titled "Uppal Stadium Deal: Another Bofors waiting to haunt Congress," TCA stated that the revelations raise serious concerns over financial propriety,

governance failure, and possible manipulation of official records within HCA. TCA General Secretary Gururva Reddy, who is currently spearheading TCA's battle for affiliation with the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), said the issue is not an isolated transaction, but a reflection of deep-rooted systemic failure within HCA. "This is not just about one agreement. It exposes a pattern of functioning where transparency is absent and accountability is systematically bypassed," he stated.

TG men's TT team wins bronze at Senior Nationals

INDORE: THE Telangana men's table tennis team secured the bronze medal in the 87th UTT Senior National Table Tennis Championships held at Abhay Prashal Stadium in Indore.

Telangana went down 0-3 to eventual champions Petroleum Sports Promotion Board (PSPB) in the semi-finals after a 3-1 win over Karnataka in the quarterfinals.

The Telangana team comprised SFR Snehit, Mohammed Ali, Varun Shankar, Swarnendu, Trishul Mehra, coach Somnath Ghosh and manager Chaitanya.

Results: Semifinals: PSPB bt Telangana 3-0 (Payas Jain bt Mohammed Ali 11-9, 9-11, 11-6,



11-7, Manav Thakkar bt Snehit 11-7, 11-7, 7-11, 11-13, 11-4, Harmeet Desai bt Swarnendu 11-7, 8-11, 11-8, 11-6)

Quarterfinals: Telangana bt Karnataka 3-1 (K.J. Aakash bt Swarnendu 11-7, 11-7, 11-9, P. Yeshwanth lost to Snehit 9-11, 3-11, 11-13, Atharva Nawarange lost to Mohammed Ali 11-5, 8-11, 9-11, 4-11, Aakash lost to Snehit 7-11, 11-7, 6-11, 8-11).

Aust beat China 2-1, reach Women's Asian Cup final

PERTH: Sam Kerr broke a second half deadlock and Australia edged defending champion China 2-1 for a spot in the Women's Asian Cup final on Tuesday.

The veteran Chelsea forward started the attacking movement on halfway and finished it off with a left-foot shot from a tight angle in the 58th minute, the decisive moment of a semi-final that was tied 1-1 at halftime.

The Australians will play the winner of Wednesday's semi-final between Japan and South Korea. Australia last won the continental championship in 2010. Caitlin Foord gave the host the lead in the 17th when she finished off an attacking raid that started with Mary Fowler combining with Ellie Carpenter on the right. Carpenter crossed back into the area, where Fowler cut the ball back for Foord to fire.

NDA FIELDS FATHER AND SON IN KERALA

KOTTAYAM (KERALA)

WITH Kerala counting days for the April 9 Assembly polls, the southern Kottayam district is witnessing a father and his son seeking votes as NDA candidates in two constituencies with considerable Christian voters. They are none other than veteran politician P C George and his son Shone George.

As the BJP released its much-awaited candidates list on Monday, the father-son duo has been fielded respectively in Poonjar and Pala constituencies, a Christian-dominated central Kerala belt. While George is currently serving as a national



council member of the BJP, Shone George is a state vice president.

A seven-time MLA, P C George, is a household name in his home turf, Poonjar. He had been a member of the state Assembly for over three decades and formed his own



party- Kerala Janapaksham (Secular)- before serving in various Kerala Congress factions.

He had represented Poonjar in the Assembly in 1981, 82, 1996, 2001 and 2006. He later contested from his home turf as an independ-

ent candidate in the 2016 Assembly polls and won, defeating the three major fronts.

George has been known for his outspoken style in public life. His party had been merged with the BJP-NDA ahead of the Lok Sabha election in 2024.

Meanwhile, Shone George, a former district panchayat member, said that both his father and he himself did not want to contest from different constituencies in the same election. However, he said, the BJP leadership insisted that they contest in Poonjar and the nearby Pala constituencies.

"Two persons contesting

from a family pose many difficulties. But the leadership told us that it is not individuals but the party that is contesting," he said here on Tuesday.

One person is BJP's national council member, and the other one is its state office-bearer, and so the party would take care of everything, Shone George said.

In the politically significant Pala constituency, Shone George is fighting LDF leader and Kerala Congress (Mani) supremo Jose K Mani and the sitting UDF MLA Mani K Kappan. He, however, rejected reports of a triangular fight in the segment.

HC orders removal of posts linking Puri's daughter to Epstein

NEW DELHI

THE Delhi High Court on Tuesday directed the removal of social media content linking Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri's daughter to convicted American sex offender late Jeffrey Epstein within 24 hours.

Justice Mini Pushkarna also restrained several users from publishing, circulating or disseminating such content on social media platforms in any manner.

The judge, who was hearing a lawsuit filed by Hardeep Puri's daughter, Himayani Puri, clarified that if social media users did not remove the posts, the concerned platforms shall take down or block access to such content.

The court also observed that Himayani Puri has a prima facie case in her favour and she will suffer irreparable injury if interim relief is not granted. "Consequently, till the next date of hearing, the following directions are issued," the court said, while listing the case for further hearing in August. Senior advocate Mahesh Jethmalani, appearing for the plaintiff, said she has a "global reputation" to protect as a finance professional and that the allegations against her were "completely false, reckless and malicious".



Calling the allegations a "figment of imagination", Jethmalani argued that there was an "orchestrated attack" on the plaintiff, arising from "personal and political malice". He said the defamatory content was published and shared by users who were "self-proclaimed journalists" or content creators.

Jethmalani also told the court that the plaintiff was a resident of New York and urged the court to pass an order to block the defamatory content globally.

Senior advocate Arvind Datar, appearing for Meta Platforms, submitted that such orders were not passed in any country and that the blocking of objectionable content was done country-wise. He informed the court that the issue of a global blocking was pending before a division bench of the high court.

Man dies as gun goes off while filming reel

NEW DELHI: A 28-year-old property dealer died after accidentally shooting himself in the chest while his cousin was filming him loading a pistol for a social media reel in east Delhi's New Ashok Nagar, police said on Tuesday.

The deceased has been identified as Pawan Kumar, a property dealer who lived in Dallapura village in east Delhi, they said, adding that he was handling the licensed pistol belonging to his cousin Himanshu for the first time.

The incident came to light on March 16 after information about a medico-legal case of a gunshot injury was received at the New Ashok Nagar police station from the Dharamshila Hospital in Vasundhara Enclave, they said.



On reaching the hospital, police found that Pawan Kumar, a resident of Dallapura village, had been admitted there in an unconscious state with a gunshot wound on the left side of his chest. Doctors declared him dead during treatment, police said.

According to police, the incident was captured on camera, even though the person filming, Himanshu, appeared unaware of Pawan's intentions.

In the video, which has gone viral on social media, Pawan can be seen inserting a magazine into the pistol and loading the

weapon, while Himanshu can be heard advising him on handling the firearm and cautioning him against firing it.

Moments later, Pawan places the pistol against the left side of his chest, briefly looks towards the camera and pulls the trigger, collapsing on the ground as a shocked Himanshu says, "Ye kya kar diya tune (what have you done)?" The weapon, along with 10 live cartridges, has been seized, police said.

The mobile phone used to record the video has been taken into possession, while relevant exhibits have also been collected from the scene, they said. The body has been shifted to the Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital for post-mortem examination.

Suicide blasts in Nigeria kill 23, injure 100+

MAIDUGURI (NIGERIA): At least 23 people were killed and more than 100 wounded in suspected suicide bombings Monday night that targeted Maiduguri city in northeastern Nigeria, police said Tuesday. It was one of the deadliest attacks in the conflict-battered city in recent history.

Residents and emergency services earlier told The Associated Press that three explosions were reported in crowded places in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state, including in a major market and at the entrance of the University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital. "Regrettably, a total of 23 persons lost their lives, while 108 others sustained varying degrees of injuries," Borno police spokesperson Nahum Kenneth Daso said in a statement that blamed the attacks on suspected suicide bombers.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attacks, but suspicion quickly fell on the Boko Haram jihadi group, which in 2009 launched an insurgency in northeastern Nigeria to enforce their radical interpretation of Shariah.

COUNTING FOR 2 HARYANA SEATS BEGINS

Nitish Kumar, Nitin Nabin elected to Rajya Sabha

NEW DELHI

BIHAR'S longest-serving chief minister Nitish Kumar and new BJP president Nitin Nabin were elected to the Rajya Sabha from Bihar as the ruling NDA swept the elections held in three states for 11 seats of the Upper House on Monday.

Of the total 37 vacancies of Rajya Sabha, elections were held for only 11 seats in Bihar, Odisha and Haryana as the rest of the members were earlier elected unopposed. The ruling NDA alliance won eight seats, including one Independent backed by it, and the BJD bagged one seat in results announced on Monday night.

Counting on two seats in Haryana, which had been put on hold amid allegations of



irregularities, began late in the night.

A total of 14 candidates were in the fray. NCP (SP) supremo Sharad Pawar and Union minister Ramdas Athawale were among the 26 candidates elected unopposed on March 9 after the withdrawal of nominations. In the election held on Monday, the ruling NDA won all five seats in Bihar.

Besides Nitish Kumar, who heads the JD(U), and Nabin, the other winning candidates were Union Minister Ram Nath

Thakur (JDU) and Rashtriya Lok Morcha (RLM) chief Upendra Kushwaha, both sitting members who have been re-elected, and BJP's Shivesh Kumar, who will enter the Upper House of Parliament for the first time.

Outgoing RS member Amarendra Dhari Singh lost the election even after RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav claimed he got the support of five MLAs of AIMIM and one BSP legislator.

In elections for four seats in Odisha, where a total of five candidates were in the fray, the BJP won three seats amid cross-voting. At least five MLAs - three from Congress and two from BJD - reportedly voted in favour of ruling BJP-backed Independent candidate Dilip Ray.

Banks have collected nearly Rs 19,000 crore in penalties over the last three years from customers, who failed to maintain the required minimum balance in their bank accounts. These penalties are not collected from the rich or big borrowers. They are collected from the poorest accounts in the system -Raghav Chadha, Rajya Sabha MP

BIZ BRIEFS

Fabindia unveils Ugadi collection

Fabindia announced its exclusive Ugadi curation, the range features festive looks for the entire family, including specially designed ensembles for men, women, and children. The women's range includes elegantly hand-block printed saris, silk embroidered kurtas, and the timeless grace of Banarasi and Chikanari dupattas. For men, it offers a sophisticated variety of shirts and both short and long kurtas, complemented by artisanal Bandhgala jackets. The kids' wear features silk blend hand-block printed jackets and long kurta-pyjama sets.

Hyland's new MD

Hyland, The Content Innovation Cloud, has announced the appointment of Kumaran Sasikanthan as Managing Director, India and Senior Vice President of Engineering. With over 25 years of experience, Sasikanthan is a seasoned enterprise software executive with a strong track record of scaling global engineering organizations. Tim McIntire, CTO, Hyland, said: "Kumaran's appointment is a significant step forward in how we continue to scale Hyland globally while staying deeply connected to our customers' needs."

Isuzu Motors' summer camp

Isuzu Motors India will be conducting a nationwide 'ISUZU I-Care Pre-Summer Camp' for its range of ISUZU D-MAX Pick-ups and SUVs. The pre-summer camp will be organised across all authorised dealer service outlets, between March 23-28. According to the company: "During this period, customers can also avail special offers and benefits for their vehicles. An initiative of 'ISUZU Care', this camp is aimed at offering customers exciting benefits and preventive maintenance checks."

Amazon's festive offer

Amazon, has launched a festive shopping offers with curated selections and flexible delivery options. Customers can enjoy traditional fasting ingredients and premium dry fruits to classic mithai and refreshing beverages, customers can explore festive favorites from popular brands. For those seeking quick meal solutions during busy festive days, the specially curated Ready-to-Eat Store offers up to 35 per cent off on a wide range of convenient options. All of this is supported by Amazon's delivery network.

Oben Electric logs milestone

Oben Electric, Oben Electric, an electric motorcycle manufacturer, announced that riders of Oben motorcycles have collectively clocked over 3.2 crore kilometres on Indian roads within two years of its rollout. Madhumita Agrawal, CEO, Oben Electric, said: "Daily commuting demands consistency, reliability and ownership confidence. Seeing riders clock over 3.2 crore kilometres on Oben motorcycles across cities and riding conditions is a strong reflection of how customers are integrating these motorcycles into their everyday mobility."

Indian Americans rank high in US earnings

Median income far ahead of peers, including from other Asian communities

NEW DELHI: Indian-American households have emerged as the highest earners among major ethnic groups in the United States, with a median annual income of about \$151,200, according to a report citing Pew Research Center findings. This is significantly higher than the overall US median household income of around \$83,700.

The report noted that Indian-American households earn roughly \$67,000

Highest earners

- Taiwanese-Americans rank second at \$133,300
- Overall Asian-American median income is \$105,600
- Indian Americans contribute 6% of US tax revenues

more annually, nearly 80 per cent higher than the typical

American household. Despite accounting for only about 1.4 per cent of the US population, or roughly 4.8 million people, Indian Americans have a disproportionately large economic footprint.

Their strong earnings are largely attributed to high participation in professional, technical, and specialised sectors such as technology, healthcare, and finance. Even among other high-earning Asian communities, Indian

Americans continue to lead. Taiwanese-American households rank second, with a median income of about \$133,300, around 13-14 per cent lower than Indian-American households. The median income for Asian-American households overall stands at approximately \$105,600.

The report also highlighted the community's contribution to public finances, noting that Indian-American households collectively ac-

count for around 6 per cent of US tax revenues, reflecting their concentration in higher income brackets.

Recently, Elon Musk acknowledged the role of Indian-origin professionals in driving innovation in the US, stating that global talent helps address skill shortages in critical industries.

Meanwhile, India and the United States continue discussions toward a mutually beneficial bilateral trade agreement.



vivo launches T5x model

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

VIVO India has introduced the first smartphone in the T5 series - the vivo T5x 5G. Designed for performance-driven users, the model sports a 7200mAh battery, built for extended usage. Powered by MediaTek Dimensity 7400 Turbo processor, it achieves AnTuTu score of over 1M. The smartphone features military-grade certified durability and industry-leading IP68 & IP69 with water resistance feature. It is equipped with a 50 MP AI-powered main camera with a 4K video recording, along with a 32 MP front camera. Enabled with OriginOS 6, the smartphone reflects company's continued focus on user-centric innovation. The model is available in two colors - Cyber Green and Star Silver. It will be priced at Rs18,999 (inclusive of all taxes) for the 6GB + 128GB variant, Rs20,999 (inclusive of all taxes) for the 8GB + 128GB variant, and Rs22,999 (inclusive of all taxes) for the 8GB + 256GB variant.

Taxman raises ₹5,786 crore tax demand on Maruti Suzuki

Despite the development, investor sentiment remained positive, with shares of the company trading at Rs 12,986 apiece, up 1.82%

NEW DELHI: Maruti Suzuki India on Tuesday said it has received a draft assessment order from the Income Tax Authority involving a demand of Rs 5,786 crore for the financial year 2022-23.

The company clarified that the notice will not have any impact on its financial or operational performance. It added that it will file objections before the Dispute Resolution Panel as part of the due legal process.

According to the automaker, the draft order proposes certain additions and disallowances amounting to Rs 57,864 million to its reported income. "The company has received a Draft Assessment Order for FY2022-23 wherein certain additions/disallowances amounting to Rs 57,864



million with respect to returned income have been proposed," it said in a regulatory filing.

Despite the development, investor sentiment remained positive. Shares of the company were trading at Rs 12,986 apiece, up 1.82 per cent during the session. On the financial front, the company reported total tax expenses of Rs 10,360 million in its unaudited third-quarter results. Its sales stood at Rs 667,769 million, while profit after tax (PAT) came in at Rs 37,940 million.

Operationally, the automaker maintained steady growth. In the first nine months of FY26, it sold 1,435,945 units, registering a 3.9 per cent year-on-year increase across segments, including mini, compact, mid-size and utility vehicles.

Looking ahead, the company remains cautiously optimistic. Senior executive Rahul Bharti had earlier indicated a positive fourth quarter and projected around 7 per cent sustainable industry volume growth, subject to reassessment.

India's private market deals hit \$207 billion in 5 years

New Delhi: India is approaching towards 'top pick' in Asia-Pacific private markets, providing global investors scale and resilience as activity in the Asia-Pacific slows, according to a report. According to an analysis by McKinsey & Company highlighted that about 31 per cent of the more than 50 limited partners surveyed ranked India first and 76 per cent placed it in their top three picks.

This indicates a shift in regional capital flows as investors re-assess Asia and look beyond China for long-term growth, according to the report. "More than half expect to increase allocations to India-focused funds," it said.

Moreover, private markets already account for about 64 per cent of limited partner allocations to India and investors expect buyout and

growth strategies to draw the most interest over the next five years, reflecting a preference for approaches that offer more control.

The report also said from 2021 to 2025, private equity and venture capital deal value in India has risen over one-and-a-half times to \$207 billion compare to the previous five-years, with exits more than doubling to around \$120 billion.

Sector-wise, technology, IT and financial services, pharmaceuticals and healthcare, and consumer sectors accounted for nearly three-quarters of private capital deployed between the aforesaid period. The report also noted that India's Asia-Pacific private equity and venture capital deployment jumped around 21 per cent in 2020-24 which was about 12 per cent in 2015-19.

'Japan, S Korea preferred for spring travel'

HYDERABAD: KLOOK has released its Spring Readiness Index, offering a snapshot of how Indian travellers are planning for the spring travel season across Japan and South Korea. The Spring Readiness Index is based on insights from 900 travellers across nine Asia markets, Japan remains the top spring destination, with 78 per cent of respondents naming it as their preferred choice, followed by South Korea at 52 per cent. For Indian travellers, the main draw during the March-April travel window is seasonal attractions, reinforcing a broader shift toward experience-led travel shaped by natural spectacles, cultural moments, and limited-time opportunities. This is reinforced by Search interest on Klook's platform for spring-related terms such as "cherry blossom" and "sakura" rose 57 per cent from December 2025 to February 2026, highlighting strong momentum for seasonal travel.

Sebi tweaks SGF rules to ease compliance

NEW DELHI: Markets regulator Sebi revised the rules governing the Settlement Guarantee Fund (SGF) for the commodity derivatives segment to ease compliance for clearing corporations.

Under the revised framework, clearing corporations will now calculate the SGF coverage based on the simultaneous default of at least three clearing members (and their associates) that would create the highest credit exposure in stress scenarios.

"Clearing Corporations shall calculate the credit exposure due to simultaneous default of at least 3 clearing members (and their associates) causing the highest credit exposure," Sebi said in its circular. Earlier, clearing corporations were required to calculate SGF coverage based on the simultaneous default of at least two clearing members, causing the highest credit exposure, along with 50 per cent of the exposure arising from the default of all clearing members.

Nvidia doubles down on AI, targets \$1 trillion chip revenue

NEW DELHI: Nvidia has outlined an ambitious growth roadmap, with CEO Jensen Huang projecting up to \$1 trillion in revenue from AI chips by 2027, driven by surging demand for artificial intelligence technologies.

Speaking at the company's annual GTC event in San Jose, Huang said Nvidia is positioning itself to dominate the AI ecosystem through an integrated stack spanning hardware, software and infrastruc-



ture. A key highlight was the projected demand for next-generation AI platforms such as Blackwell and Vera Rubin systems, which could together generate \$1 trillion in revenue by 2027. Huang noted that computing demand has surged dramatically in recent years,

fuelled by AI workloads across industries.

Among product announcements, Nvidia introduced the Groq 3 Language Processing Unit (LPU), designed to accelerate AI inference tasks with improved speed and efficiency. The chip is expected to ship in the third quarter. The company also unveiled the Vera Rubin Space One system, aimed at enabling space-based data centres, with a satellite launch planned later this year.

Kaspersky to double India's investments

NEW DELHI: Global cybersecurity major Kaspersky is set to double down on its investments in India, citing stronger-than-expected financial performance and plans to use the country as a hub for regional services, according to a senior company official. In an interview, Adrian Hia, Managing Director, Kaspersky (APAC), said the company is considering basing its marketing, business development, and cloud operations in India to serve both local and regional customers. Following a strong double-digit

growth in 2024, Hia indicated that the company's 2025 financial results, expected to be released in April, show even better performance. "We are going to continue to double down, not only in people, not only in offices, but we are now even thinking of how we can get some consolidated effort regarding marketing, business development engine, cloud services, cloud engine, to be based in India, but not only to serve the Indian customers, but also to serve customers across the region, (Our) investment has paid off."

Markets extend rally amid positive trend in global mkts

Following a rally in metal and auto shares and a positive trend in global markets

Positive Trend

- BSE-Sensex rose 567.99pts or (+0.75%) to 76,070.84
- NSE-Nifty climbed 172.35pts or (+0.74%) to 23,581.15
- FII's offloaded ₹9,365.52-cr; DII's bought ₹12,593.36-cr

MUMBAI: Benchmark Sensex climbed 567 points and Nifty closed near 23,600 in their second consecutive day of gains on Tuesday, boosted by a rally in metal and auto shares and a positive trend in global markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 567.99 points or 0.75 per cent to settle at 76,070.84. During the day, it surged 801.41 points or 1.06 per cent to 76,304.26. The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 172.35 points or 0.74 per cent to end



at 23,581.15. A total of 2,362 stocks advanced, while 1,892 declined and 157 remained unchanged on the BSE.

From the 30-Sensex firms, Eternal surged the most by 5.70 per cent. Tata Steel, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bharat Electronics, Larsen & Toubro, Bharti Airtel and Maruti were also among the major gainers. Infosys, Bajaj Finance, ITC, Tata Consultancy Services and HCL Tech were among the biggest lag-

gards. "The market extended its gains, driven largely by bargain hunting by domestic investors. Cyclical sectors such as autos, metals, and financials continued to be leaders rebounding after being among the worst affected during the sell-off. However, it is premature to conclude that this reversal is sustainable in the short term, as war-related uncertainties persist," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments

Ltd, said.

The BSE MidCap Select Index jumped 0.86 per cent and SmallCap Select Index climbed 0.67 per cent. Among sectoral indices, metal surged 2.81 per cent, followed by auto (2.05 per cent), realty (1.79 per cent), commodities (1.69 per cent), consumer discretionary (1.54 per cent), industrials (1.54 per cent), capital goods (1.40 per cent), telecommunication (1.24 per cent) and Bankex (0.90 per cent). IT, FMCG and BSE Focused IT were the laggards.

"Indian equities extended their recovery for a second consecutive session, supported by easing volatility and selective sectoral strength, although underlying caution continues to shape market behaviour. A key positive was the sharp decline in India VIX, which dropped 8 per cent to sub-20 levels," Hariprasad K, Research Analyst and Founder, Livelong Wealth, said.

FPI outflows ease to ₹96,974 cr in FY26: Govt

In FY25, foreign investors had pulled out ₹1,27,041 cr from Indian equities, making it one of the significant years

MUMBAI: Foreign portfolio investor (FPI) outflows from Indian equity markets have shown some moderation in the current financial year, with total net selling at Rs 96,974 crore so far in FY26, lower than the Rs 1.27 lakh crore outflow recorded in FY25, the Parliament was informed on Tuesday.

In a written reply in Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said that FPI flows have remained volatile, with alternating phases of inflows and outflows over the past few years -- reflecting global and domestic factors.

According to official data, FPIs began FY26 on a positive note, investing Rs 4,223 crore in April 2025, followed by strong inflows of Rs 19,860 crore in May and Rs 14,590 crore in June. However, sentiment turned negative in the following months, with heavy outflows of Rs 17,741 crore



in July and Rs 34,993 crore in August. Selling pressure continued in September with outflows of Rs 23,885 crore.

The trend briefly reversed in October with inflows of Rs 14,610 crore, but FPIs turned sellers again in November and December. The selling intensified in January 2026, when FPIs pulled out Rs 35,962 crore. February saw a temporary recovery with inflows of Rs 22,615 crore, before out-

flows resumed in March, with Rs 33,917 crore withdrawn till March 10.

Despite the continued volatility, the total outflow in FY26 remains lower than the previous financial year. In FY25, FPIs had pulled out Rs 1,27,041 crore from Indian equities, making it one of the significant years of foreign selling. In comparison, FY26 has seen relatively lower net outflows so far.

The government clarified that such fluctuations in FPI investments do not necessarily reflect weakening global confidence in Indian markets. "FPI flows are dynamic and fluctuate depending upon various factors such as geopolitical tensions, uncertainties surrounding trade tariffs, global investor sentiments, currency movements and portfolio rebalancing by global funds across emerging markets," it added.



ACADEMY AWARDS ANALYSIS

Originals rule the night

2026 Oscars signal a bold shift in Hollywood power play

SUHAS SISTU

The 2026 Academy Awards may well be remembered as the night originality triumphed over formula—and as a defining moment for Warner Bros. Discovery in a rapidly evolving Hollywood landscape.

Studio chief David Zaslav sounded less like a corporate executive and more like an auteur evangelist as he celebrated a staggering haul of 11 Oscars. Leading the charge was “One Battle After Another,” which dominated with Best Picture and multiple major awards, alongside “Sinners” and “Weapons.” The common thread? All three were original films—an increasingly rare gamble in an industry long reliant on sequels and franchises.

Zaslav’s emphasis on creative risk paid off. By backing filmmakers like Ryan Coogler, Michael B. Jordan, and Paul Thomas Anderson, the studio doubled down on storytelling over IP familiarity. Coogler’s deal for “Sinners,” granting him long-term creative ownership, now looks like a blueprint for future filmmaker-studio partnerships.

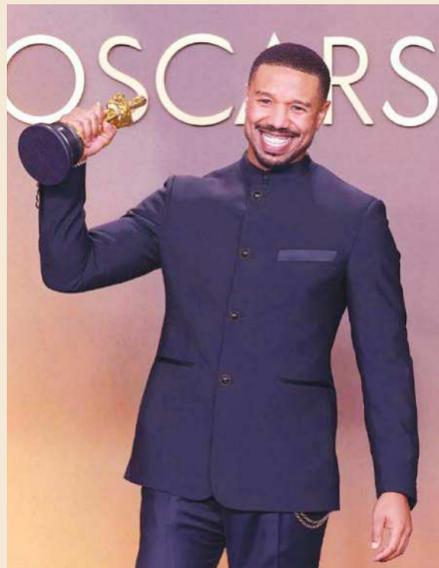
What makes this victory even more striking is the path these films took. Unlike traditional Oscar contenders, none relied on the festival circuit to build

prestige. Following the precedent of “Oppenheimer,” these films proved that awards momentum can be built outside Cannes, Venice, or Telluride—potentially reshaping awards season strategies.

On the acting front, the night balanced predictability with intrigue. Jessie Buckley’s Best Actress win for “Hamnet” was widely expected, but the Best Actor race saw a late surge from Michael B. Jordan, whose dual performance in “Sinners” captured industry attention at just the right moment. His win—following a strong showing at the SAG Awards—highlights how timing and narrative can influence Oscar outcomes as much as early buzz.

Meanwhile, Sean Penn quietly entered elite territory with a third acting Oscar for “One Battle After Another,” joining legends like Meryl Streep and Daniel Day-Lewis. His absence from the ceremony echoed a bygone era when skipping the Oscars was not uncommon—offering a subtle reminder of how awards culture itself has evolved.

Beyond Warner Bros. Discovery’s dominance, Netflix matched its own record with seven wins, driven by Guillermo del Toro’s Frankenstein and the visually electrifying “KPop Demon Hunters.” The streaming giant’s contin-



ued success underscores its growing parity with traditional studios, even as theatrical-first releases made a strong case this year.

The ceremony itself, hosted by Conan O’Brien, struck a confident balance between spectacle and sincerity. With an elegant stage design and minimal interference in acceptance speeches, the show leaned into authenticity—allowing political commentary, emotional appeals, and spontaneous humor to coexist. Notably, a rare tie

in the Live Action Short category added a touch of unpredictability, handled with effortless charm by presenter Kumail Nanjiani.

Yet, even in celebration, the Oscars weren’t without controversy. Omissions in the In Memoriam segment—particularly icons like Brigitte Bardot and Alain Delon—sparked quiet criticism, reminding audiences that the Academy’s choices are as scrutinized as its winners.

Ultimately, the 2026 Oscars reflected an industry at a crossroads. With block-



PROUD MOMENT

In a heart-warming moment for Telugu cinema lovers, legendary actor Kota Srinivasa Rao was remembered at the 98th Academy Awards. The iconic performer was honoured in the prestigious “In Memoriam” segment, celebrating global cinematic legends who passed away. Kota’s inclusion in this elite list is a proud recogni-

tion of his immense contribution to Indian cinema, where he acted in over 700 films across multiple languages. Alongside him, veterans like Dharmendra and B. Saroja Devi were also honoured. This tribute stands as a fitting salute to a truly irreplaceable talent, making it a proud and emotional moment for fans.



buster mergers looming and streaming platforms reshaping distribution, the night’s biggest takeaway

was clear: bold, original storytelling still has the power to dominate both the box office narrative and

the awards stage. As Hollywood looks ahead to its 99th Academy Awards, one question lin-

gers—can this momentum for originality sustain itself, or was this a rare, golden exception?



Anirudh joins hands with Universal Music India for global label expansion

In a major boost for India’s independent music scene, Universal Music India has announced an exclusive partnership with Albuquerque Records, the newly launched label by star composer Anirudh Ravichander. As part of this collaboration, both entities will release future pop and hip-hop tracks by Anirudh and upcoming artists signed under Albuquerque Records. The alliance aims to amplify Anirudh’s global reach while creating a platform for emerging talent from South India. Over time, Albuquerque Records is expected to evolve into a hub for new-age pop and hip-hop artists from the region. Anir-

udh, who made his debut with the viral hit Why This Kolaveri Di, has built an impressive career with over 13 billion streams across 770+ tracks. Known for chartbusters like Hukum and Vaathi Coming, he remains one of the most influential composers in the South Indian music space.

Industry leaders highlighted that the partnership will further strengthen India’s presence in global music markets, particularly in fast-growing genres like pop and hip-hop.

Anirudh expressed excitement about nurturing independent voices through his label, while Universal Music India reaffirmed its commitment to taking Indian music to international audiences through strategic collaborations like this.

‘Rakasa’ gears up for grand release with strong distribution deals

The upcoming fantasy-comedy Rakasa is building solid momentum ahead of its theatrical release, securing a major distribution deal in the Telugu States. The film’s regional theatrical rights have been acquired by Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Movie Makers, reflecting strong confidence from trade circles in its box office potential.

Expanding its reach further, the film is set for a wide international rollout. Overseas distribution will be managed by Atharvana Bhadrakali Pictures, with releases planned across more than 350 screens in key territories such as the United States, United Kingdom, Europe, Canada, and Australia. Additionally, Prathyangira Cinemas will oversee distribution in North America and the UK. Premieres overseas are scheduled for April 2, 2026, ahead of its global release on April 3.

On the non-theatrical front, the film has locked



significant deals, with streaming rights acquired by Netflix and audio rights by Saregama Music. These partnerships further strengthen its commercial prospects.

The film’s promotional content has also gained

impressive traction online. Its teaser and songs, including “Rapappa” and “Padhe Padhe,” have crossed notable viewership milestones, indicating strong audience interest in the soundtrack composed by Anudeep Dev. Starring Sangeeth Sobhan

and Nayan Sarika, and directed by Manasa Sharma, Rakasa blends romance, humor, and fantasy. Backed by Pink Elephant Pictures in association with Zee Studios, the film is steadily shaping up as a promising entertainer this summer.

Priyanka Chopra channels ‘Mandakini Vibes’ at Vanity Fair Oscars Party 2026

Global icon Priyanka Chopra turned heads with a bold and elegant fashion statement at the Vanity Fair Oscars Party 2026, effortlessly bringing “Mandakini vibes” to the red carpet.

The actress arrived alongside her husband Nick Jonas, and the couple exuded charm and sophistication. Priyanka stunned in a shimmering gold gown that perfectly accentuated her silhouette. The outfit featured a daring backless design and a sleek, body-hugging fit, adding a touch of high-fashion drama. She completed her look with soft wavy hair and radiant makeup, enhancing her confident and glamorous presence.

Nick Jonas complemented her style in a classy beige tuxedo paired with a crisp

white shirt and a black bow tie. His timeless look added balance to Priyanka’s bold ensemble, making them one of the most stylish couples at the star-studded event. Walking hand in hand, their chemistry and elegance stood out effortlessly, drawing admiration from fans and fashion watchers alike.

On the professional front, Priyanka continues to expand her global footprint. She was recently seen in Bluff and is now gearing up for a major Indian project, Varanasi. In the film, she will reportedly portray the character Mandakini alongside Mahesh Babu, under the direction of S. S. Rajamouli, further raising excitement among fans.



‘Youth’ team promises energetic entertainer

The Tamil youth-centric entertainer Youth is all set to make its way to Telugu audiences with a grand theatrical release on the 26th of this month. Featuring Ken Karunaas, Anishma Anil Kumar, Suraj Venjaramoodu, Priyanshi Yadav, and Meenakshi Dinesh in key roles, the film is being released in Telugu by E2C, headed by producers Vineeth and Sandeep.

Promoted with the tagline “Come with your gang, no age limit,” the film has already generated buzz through its energetic promotional campaign.



A lively freshers’ meet event further amplified excitement, with several industry personalities expressing confidence in the film’s content.

Cinematographer Suriya Balaji praised the producers’ promotional approach, while

music director Sinjith Yerramilli shared his happiness about contributing to the film’s soundtrack. Filmmakers like Sai Marthand and Venkatesh Maha highlighted the film’s engaging narrative and youthful vibe, predicting strong

reception among Telugu audiences. The cast also expressed optimism, with Priyanshi Yadav and Meenakshi Dinesh urging audiences to support the young team. Actor-director Ken Karunaas described the film as a fun-filled entertainer with emotional depth, promising it will connect with both youth and family audiences.

With positive early buzz, vibrant music, and a relatable storyline, Youth is expected to strike a chord as it hits Telugu screens on the 26th.

‘Sarke Chunar Teri Sarke’ lyrics from ‘KD: The Devil’ faces backlash

Bollywood’s reputation for progressive storytelling is once again under scrutiny, as a newly released song from KD: The Devil has triggered widespread criticism online.

The track, “Sarke Chunar Teri Sarke,” features popular actress Nora Fatehi, known for her chart-topping dance numbers. While the song follows the familiar “item number” template with glamorous visuals and stylised choreography, it is the lyrics that have drawn sharp reactions from audiences.

Social media platforms have been flooded with comments condemning the wording of the song, with many

users calling it vulgar and disrespectful towards women. A particular line from the track has gone viral, intensifying the backlash and prompting debates around the portrayal of women in mainstream cinema.

Several netizens have also questioned the responsibility of the film’s makers and performers in approving such content, especially at a time when the industry is striving to promote more inclusive and sensitive narratives.

KD: The Devil, starring Kannada actor Dhruva Sarja, is being positioned as a high-octane action drama. The controversial song was released as part



of its promotional campaign. However, instead of generating excitement, the strategy appears to have backfired, drawing criticism and reigniting discussions about outdated tropes in commercial films.