

## Kukatpally police crack ₹1-cr hawala heist, four held

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

KUKATPALLY police, in coordination with CCS Bala-nagar, swiftly solved the sensational Rs 1 crore robbery case and apprehended key accused involved in the dacoity targeting motorcyclists. A portion of the stolen cash was also recovered during the operation.

The arrested accused have been identified as Md. Omer Shareef (32), Md. Ghouse Saddam (28), Abdul Hameed (33), and Md. Khusruddin (42). Meanwhile, Chotu, Salman, Ghouse, Zeeshan, and Jammu are absconding.

According to police, the prime conspirator, Md. Khusruddin, was working at Sidra Enterprises in Bahadur-pura. He, along with his colleague and complainant Md.

Azeemuddin, was assigned to collect large sums of cash using a token system involving a Rs 10 note. The collected cash was later handed over to one Shaik Ibrahim at various locations.

Khusruddin later realised that the transactions involved unaccounted hawala money. Exploiting this, he hatched a plan to misappropriate the funds. About two months before the incident, he contacted Md. Omer Shareef, a driver, and briefed him about the illegal cash movement.

On March 17, 2026, Khusruddin and Azeemuddin were instructed to collect Rs 1 crore in Kukatpally using the token system. After receiving the cash, Khusruddin tipped off Omer Shareef about their route and movement.

Acting on the plan, Omer Shareef, along with his asso-

ciates, followed the duo on multiple motorcycles. Near Pillar No. 836, the accused attacked them by throwing chilli powder into their eyes, causing them to lose control and crash into a bus.

Amid the chaos, the accused snatched the cash bag and fled the scene. One of the accused, Saddam, also fell during the attack and abandoned his Honda Activa, which later helped police trace the gang.

During investigation, police found that some of the accused were planning to flee to Lucknow by flight. Acting swiftly, Kukatpally Police and CCS teams tracked and apprehended the suspects.

Further investigation is underway to nab the remaining absconding accused and to uncover any wider hawala network linked to the case.

## Govt launches natural farming drive with distribution of farmer kits

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

THE Telangana government has launched the distribution of Farmer Kits to 61,125 farmers across the state under the National Natural Farming Mission. The initiative was formally inaugurated by Agriculture Minister Thummala Nageswara Rao during the 86th episode of the Rythu Nestam video conference, held from the Secretariat on Tuesday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister stressed that excessive use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides has led to alarming health issues, including cancer, while polluting groundwater and the environment. He urged farmers to transition to natural

farming methods, describing them as the ultimate safeguard for both human health and ecological balance.

The distribution covers 489 clusters, with 125 farmers selected per cluster. Each farmer received a kit containing the book Kshetra Darshini on natural farming, a cloth bag, identification card, calendar, cap, pen, and diary.

Alongside the kits, training programmes are being conducted to guide farmers in adopting eco-friendly practices. Highlighting upcoming events, the Minister invited farmers to participate in the Rythu Mahotsavam scheduled from 20 to 22 March. The festival will feature over 150 stalls and interactive

sessions with scientists.

On the concluding day, the Chief Minister will distribute Rythu Bharosa funds for the Yasangi season.

The Minister also congratulated agricultural officers for achieving 110 per cent enrolment in the Farmer Registry, securing Telangana the top rank nationally and earning a special incentive of Rs 422.64 crore from the Centre. The launch event was attended by Anvesh Reddy, Chairman of the State Seed Development Corporation, Agriculture Secretary Surendra Mohan, and Director Gopi. This initiative marks a significant step towards sustainable agriculture and improving the long-term health of the state's farming community.

## 'NOT FOR ALL LPG CONSUMERS' Govt clarifies on eKYC norms for LPG

NEW DELHI: The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas on Tuesday clarified that LPG biometric Aadhaar authentication (eKYC) is only required for unauthenticated LPG customers and not for all customers. The clarification came as some news re-

port have been circulating on the issue of biometric Aadhaar authentication for LPG consumers. In a post by the Ministry is a part of the ongoing efforts of the Government to encourage more LPG consumers to complete biometric Aadhaar authentication.

## BJP demands arrest of MLA over alleged Anti-Hindu remarks

HYDERABAD: The BJP Telangana unit on Tuesday strongly condemned remarks made by Tungaturthi MLA Mandula Samuel, calling them derogatory and inflammatory against Hinduism, the Vedas, and the Brahmin community.

State BJP Vice-President Dr Kalyan Naik submitted an official complaint to the

Director General of Police (DGP), demanding immediate registration of criminal cases and the arrest of the legislator.

According to Dr Naik, the comments made during a March 12 meeting were not only disrespectful to Hindu beliefs but also capable of inciting communal disharmony.

## Maha passes Freedom of Religion Bill

NOT AGAINST ANY RELIGION: FADNAVIS

MUMBAI: The Maharashtra Freedom of Religion Bill 2026 was passed by the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly on Monday.

The law is aimed at prohibiting religious conversions carried out through fraud, coercion, inducement or marriage-related deception. Speaking on the Bill, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who also holds the Home portfolio, said the law is not directed against any religion and is meant only to prevent unlawful conversions. He said the Bill does not restrict

a person's constitutional right to practice religion under Article 25 of the Constitution of India, but it does not include the right to convert others through coercion or deceit.

According to the government, the law applies equally to all religions and its objective is to ensure that conversions are voluntary and transparent. Complaints can be filed by the affected person or close relatives, and authorities or police may take action on suspected unlawful conversions.

## Mojtaba rejects ceasefire push

TEHRAN: Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei has rejected proposals for reducing tensions or for a possible ceasefire with the United States that were conveyed to Tehran by two intermediary countries, a senior Iranian official said on Tuesday.

The official claimed that Khamenei's position for revenge against the US and Israel in his first foreign policy

session was "very tough and serious". However, he did not clarify if Khamenei attended the sessions in person.

Khamenei, in his first statement since his appointment, vowed to avenge those killed in the war and claimed that Iran would "obtain compensation" from its enemy. He said that if it refuses to do so, Iran will "take from its assets" or destroy them to the same extent.

"A limited amount of this revenge has so far taken concrete form, but until it is fully achieved, this case will remain among our priorities," he said. He said that Iran will never retreat and will resist with "full force" and will avenge not just the late Ayatollah Ali Khamenei but every citizen who lost their life in the war. "We will not forget the revenge for the blood of the martyrs," he said.

## 3 lakh MT LPG stranded at Hormuz

NEW DELHI

NEARLY 3 lakh metric tonnes (MT) of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) is currently stranded at the Strait of Hormuz, Rajesh Kumar Sinha, Special Secretary in the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, said on Tuesday. During a key briefing, the senior

government official said that multiple vessels carrying LPG are unable to move due to the situation in the crucial shipping route. He explained that six ships are currently stuck in the Strait of Hormuz, with each vessel carrying around 45,000 metric tonnes of LPG. "Six ships are currently stuck in the Strait of Hormuz, with each

vessel carrying around 45,000 metric tonnes of LPG," Sinha mentioned. Together, this accounts for roughly 3 lakh metric tonnes of fuel that is yet to reach its destination. The Strait of Hormuz is one of the world's most important maritime routes for energy supplies, connecting the Persian Gulf to the Arabian Sea.

## 400 killed, 250 injured in Pak strike on Kabul hospital

KABUL

AT least 400 people have been killed and around 250 injured in a Pakistani airstrike at a hospital in Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, a Taliban spokesperson said on Tuesday. Afghanistan's deputy government spokesperson Hamdullah Fitrat said the airstrike hit the drug rehabilitation hospital at about 9 pm local time, destroying large sections of the 2,000-bed facility.

Pakistan denied the Afghan government's allegations and called them "baseless", saying that no hospital was targeted in Kabul.

Afghan government spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid condemned the strike, accusing Pakistan of "targeting hospitals and civilian sites to perpetrate horrors".

"The Pakistani military regime has once again violated Afghanistan's airspace and targeted a drug rehabilitation hospital in Kabul, resulting in the death and injury of addicts who were undergoing treatment," he posted on X. "We strongly condemn this crime and consider such an act to be against all accepted principles and a crime against humanity," he further said.

Pakistan's Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said that the Pakistani military had "carried out precision airstrikes" targeting military installations in Kabul and the eastern province of Nangarhar. He said "technical support infrastructure and ammunition storage facilities" at two locations in Kabul were destroyed.

## LPG situation a matter of concern, says govt

Continued from P1

"Petrol and diesel are available in sufficient quantity. Regarding natural gas, as I told you, the Government of India is making efforts, and it would be beneficial if all commercial LPG consumers shifted to PNG," Sharma said. Sharma also warned against hoarding and black marketing, saying that adequate measures are in place to ensure smooth distribution across the country. "Regarding enforcement action, so far, about twelve thousand raids have been conducted in the last few days. About fifteen thousand cylinders have been seized... Yesterday in Delhi, about six hundred cylinders were seized. Similarly, in Uttar Pradesh, about four hundred and fifty inspections and raids have been conducted in the last few days."

Meanwhile, various state governments are undertaking enforcement measures to prevent hoarding and black marketing of petrol, diesel and LPG. Raids are being carried out in several states to check hoarding and black marketing of LPG cylinders. Alternate fuels such as kerosene and coal have been activated for certain sectors, including hospitality and restaurants, to ease pressure on LPG supplies.

## Cabinet meet to ratify Budget on March 20

Continued from P1

In view of the Centre's positive response to the state government's plea to allocate more funds for infrastructure projects, the government would also earmark substantial allocations to Hyderabad Metro Rail Phase-2, Musi Rejuvenation project, road development projects, etc.

Sources said that the Irrigation Department would also get more allocations under scheme expenditure this time. Major portion of the allocations in the last two years were utilized to pay the debts and interest payments.

Following the reports of introducing new schemes in the new financial years, officials said that agriculture, education, women develop-

ment and child welfare, SC, ST, BC and Minority welfare wings will also receive substantial funds to speed up the implementation of the schemes and existing development programmes.

The officials of the Finance department said that the ministers were also suggested to accord priority to the implementation of the promises. EV Scooters to the college going girls and the enhancement of old age pension amount are already under active consideration. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is also keen on introducing a slew of development programmes in Education, Municipal Administration and Home departments in the budget.

## Mamata locks horns with BJP's Suwendu again

KOLKATA

TRINAMOOL Congress supremo and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee will fight her protegee turned bitter rival, the BJP's Suwendu Adhikari, from Bhabanipur in Kolkata in the 2026 Assembly elections.

The ruling TMC announced its list of candidates for the upcoming polls, with Mamata Banerjee contesting from the Bhabanipur Assembly constituency.

Addressing a press conference in Kolkata, Banerjee said: "We will contest 291 of the 294 seats. The remaining three seats will be contested by our ally, Anit Thapa-led BGPM, in the Darjeeling hills," Banerjee said, while announcing the names of candidates. Banerjee expressed confidence that the Trinamool would retain power with a comfortable majority in the 2026 Assembly elections. She predicted that her party would secure more than 226 seats in the elections.

In the 2021 election, Adhikari defeated Banerjee in Nandigram by 1,956 votes, following which the Chief Minister had to

shift to the Bhabanipur seat from where she won a bypoll and which she currently represents.

Asked about the challenge Adhikari, who was named the BJP candidate on Monday, will pose, Banerjee said, "We will win with the maximum number of votes from Bhabanipur."

The Chief Minister also sought to reassure party leaders and workers who could not find a place in the candidate list, saying they would be accommodated in the organisation.

"All those who could not be accommodated in the candidate list will be accommodated in the organisation," she said. Targeting the Bharatiya Janata Party, Banerjee said the saffron party would see its numbers decline in the upcoming polls. "The BJP's tally will decrease in this election. They will receive a befitting reply for their anti-people policies," she said.

The announcement of the candidates sets the stage for an intense electoral contest in West Bengal, where the Trinamool is seeking to return to power for a fourth consecutive term.

## Parl panel suggests ₹7,500 EPF pension

Continued from P1

The Committee further take note of the submission of the Ministry of Labour and Employment that the Government of India is already extending financial support towards the Scheme, including the contribution of 1.16 per cent for currently serving members of the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation and the budgetary support provided for ensuring the minimum pension of Rs 1,000 per month.

However, the Committee stated that it is of the considered view that the existing minimum pension amount is inadequate to meet even the basic needs of pensioners, particularly in the present economic scenario marked by

inflation and rising health care and living expenses.

The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry undertake an urgent and comprehensive review of the minimum pension under the Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995, with a view to enhancing it to a more realistic and dignified level. The Committee further recommend that the Ministry explore the possibility of increasing budgetary support to the Scheme, so as to ensure that pensioners receive a reasonable minimum pension commensurate with present-day living costs, thereby providing greater social security and financial stability to lakhs of retired workers covered under the Scheme.

## SIT to probe Moinabad farmhouse drug case

Continued from P1

The team comprises officers from law and order, Greyhounds and the Elite Action Group for Drug Law Enforcement (EAGLE) - Yogesh Goutham, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Chevella; M Ravinder Reddy, Group Commander, Greyhounds; Ch. Sirisha, DCP, Shadnagar; C Harish Chandra Reddy and N Buchaiah (both DSPs EAGLE); Y Mallikarjun Reddy, SHO, Moinabad (the investigating officer) and SIs C Koteswara Rao, N Venkanna and Sadath Ali.

The investigating team will draw out possible links to larger drug networks, of-

ficials said and added that all the 11 arrested persons, including TDP MP from Eluru Putta Mahesh Kumar and BRS leader and ex-MLA Panjigula 'Pilot' Rohith Reddy, will be questioned.

Rohith Reddy, his brother Ritesh Reddy and Delhi-based businessman Namith Sharma have already been produced before a magistrate and remanded into 14 days judicial custody. Six of those detained tested positive for drug consumption, including Rohith Reddy and Mahesh Kumar.

The case came to light on March 14 following a raid by the EAGLE team at a farmhouse in Moinabad on the

outskirts of Hyderabad. The Farmhouse belongs to Rohith Reddy.

Meanwhile, Namith Sharma allegedly opened fire using a revolver during the raid. The weapon is said to be a licensed .32 calibre revolver belonging to Ritesh Reddy. Police seized the firearm along with live and empty cartridges.

Another accused, Silveri Sharath Kumar, was reportedly found holding empty cartridge cases at the scene. A small quantity of cocaine (0.26 grams) was seized from Sharath Kumar, who allegedly confessed to procuring it through a supplier identified as Kaushik Ravi.



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

## LS revokes suspension of 8 Oppn MPs

NEW DELHI: The Lok Sabha on Tuesday revoked the suspension of eight Opposition Members of Parliament after the House unanimously adopted a motion moved by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju following Question Hour. The motion to reinstate Gurjeet Singh Aujla, Hibi Eden, Dean Kuriakose, Amrinder Singh Raja Warring, B. Manickam Tagore, Prashant Yadavao Padole, Chhama Kiran Kumar Red-

dy and S Venkatesan was passed with complete unanimity through a voice vote, reflecting consensus across party lines after days of disruptions. The breakthrough came a day after an all-party meeting chaired by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, where leaders from both the government and the Opposition agreed to resolve the impasse and restore normal functioning of the House during the ongoing Budget session.

## 'Can't support Iran war in good conscience'

Continued from P1

"I cannot in good conscience support the ongoing war in Iran. Iran posed no imminent threat to our nation, and it is clear that we started this war due to pressure from Israel and its powerful American lobby," he added. In a strongly worded message directed at Trump, Kent said he continued to support the President's earlier foreign policy approach. "I support the values and the foreign policies that you campaigned on in 2016, 2020, 2024, which you enacted in your first

term. Until June of 2025, you understood that the wars in the Middle East were a trap that robbed America of the precious lives of our patriots and depleted the wealth and prosperity of our nation." "In your first administration, you understood better than any modern President how to decisively apply military power without getting us drawn into never-ending wars. You demonstrated this by killing Qasam Solamani and by defeating ISIS," he added. Kent alleged that the current conflict was driven in part by

external pressure and a coordinated misinformation campaign. He claimed that early in the administration, senior Israeli officials and influential members of the American media deployed a misinformation campaign that wholly undermined your America First platform and sowed pro-war sentiments to encourage a war with Iran. "This echo chamber was used to deceive you into believing that Iran posed an imminent threat to the United States, and that should you strike now, there was a clear path to a swift vic-

tory. This was a lie and is the same tactic the Israelis used to draw us into the disastrous Iraq war that cost our nation the lives of thousands of our best men and women. We cannot make this mistake again," he said. Kent further said, "As a veteran who deployed to combat 11 times and as a Gold Star husband who lost my beloved wife Shannon in a war manufactured by Israel, I cannot support sending the next generation off to fight and die in a war that serves no benefit to the American people nor justifies the cost of American

lives." He concluded with an appeal to the President, saying, "I pray that you will reflect upon what we are doing in Iran, and who we are doing it for. The time for bold action is now." "You can reverse course and chart a new path for our nation, or you can allow us to slip further toward decline and chaos. You hold the cards. It was an honour to serve in your administration and to serve our great nation." Kent, a former political candidate with links to right-wing extremist circles, was confirmed to his position in July.