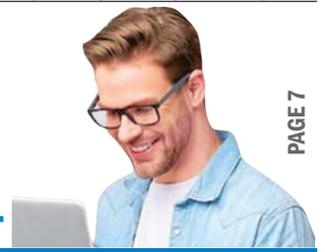




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## 'Can't support Iran war in good conscience'

**TOP TRUMP AIDE JOE KENT RESIGNS**

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump's counterterrorism chief Joe Kent on Tuesday resigned over the ongoing US-Iran conflict, stating that Tehran posed "no imminent threat to our nation." He claimed that the war was initiated due to pressure from Israel and its lobby in the US. Kent, who served as Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, announced his decision in a post on X, saying, "after much reflection, I have decided to resign from my position effective today."

Continued on Page 5

## LPG SITUATION A MATTER OF CONCERN, SAYS GOVT

HANS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

THE Centre on Tuesday said that the energy crisis in India still remains a matter of concern amid the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. However, it assured consumers not to panic over LPG supplies.

During an inter-ministerial briefing on recent developments, Sujata Sharma, joint secretary in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, advised judicious consumption of LPG and suggested using alternate sources for cooking.

"On the issue of LPG, I would like to reiterate that the situation still remains a matter of concern. However, no LPG

- ▶ Centre calls for judicious use amid shortage fears
- ▶ Govt suggests using alternate sources for cooking
- ▶ Assures consumers not to panic over gas supply



Sujata Sharma

distributor is facing a dry-out situation at present. In addition, LPG supplies and cylinder deliveries for all domestic consumers are continuing as usual. With regard to online booking, I would like to inform you that there has been significant improvement, and as of today, nearly 94% of cyl-

**3 lakh MT LPG stranded at Hormuz P5**

inder bookings are being made online. There has also been improvement in the delivery authentication code system, which has now reached 76%. As far as commercial LPG supplies are concerned, these were initially completely halted but were later partially restored," Sharma said. "Cylinders that were placed at the disposal of various state governments and Union Territories are also being distributed.

Several governments, including those of Bihar, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Manipur, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand, have already issued allocation orders for non-domestic LPG," she added. **Cont'd on Page 5**



## SIT to probe Moinabad farmhouse drug case

**Mahesh Yadav, Rohit Reddy to be questioned again**

HANS NEWS SERVICE HYDERABAD

IN a significant development in the sensational Moinabad farmhouse drugs case, the State Government has constituted a nine-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the

case. The Director General of Police (DGP) B Shivadhar Reddy has instructed the SIT team to file a chargesheet within three months.

According to the orders, SIT will function under the overall supervision of Future City police commissioner G Sudheer Babu.

Continued on Page 5

**RAMZAN TIMINGS**  
 IFTAR (Wed) 6.32 PM  
 SEHAR (Thu) 4.59 AM

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

## Parl panel suggests ₹7,500 EPF pension

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.

Continued on Page 5

## Cabinet meet to ratify Budget on March 20

HANS NEWS SERVICE

HYDERABAD: The Telangana Cabinet will meet in the Assembly premises on March 20. The Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy convened the meeting to ratify the Budget 2026-2027. The meeting will be held a couple of hours before the presentation of the Budget on the same day.

The Cabinet will ratify the budget before Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu presents the annual outlay



which is likely to be around Rs 3.17 to Rs 3.22 lakh crore.

Officials said that the Deputy Chief Minister was giving finishing touches to the Budget which is likely to focus more on agriculture, education and infrastructure development in urban and rural areas.

Continued on Page 5

**PAGE: 5**  
**Iran security chief Larijani killed in Israel strike?**  
**400 killed, 250 injured in Pak strike on Kabul hospital**  
**Mamata locks horns with BJP's Suwendu again**  
**Govt clarifies on eKYC norms for LPG**

# Divyanga Shakti

## Free Bus Travel for Persons with Disabilities

Equal opportunity is the foundation of an inclusive society. **Divyanga Shakti** aims to make travel easier for persons with disabilities and strengthen their independence.

Hon'ble Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh

## Sri Nara Chandrababu Naidu

will launch the "Divyanga Shakti" program on March 18, 2026.

**Buses eligible for free travel**  
 City Ordinary, Metro Express, Express, Pallevelugu and Ultra Pallevelugu buses.

**Eligibility**  
 As per the RPwD Act, 2016, Persons with Disabilities (PwD) with **40% or more disability across 21 recognised categories** are eligible for free bus travel.

**Subsidy**  
**₹207 crore per year** towards the free travel facility for PwDs.

**Beneficiary Expansion**

2.06 lakh

Existing Beneficiaries

---

12.76 lakh

Total Beneficiaries (including escorts)

The NDA Government is committed to empowerment and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Issued by: Director, Information & Public Relations Dept., Andhra Pradesh.

# Jeevan Reddy reiterates exit from Congress; decision soon

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

SENIOR Congress leader and former minister T Jeevan Reddy on Tuesday indicated that his exit from the party is certain, saying he has already made up his mind and will formally announce his decision soon.

Addressing the media in Jagtial, Jeevan Reddy said, "I have already taken a decision. I will announce it within three days. A majority of party activists and my supporters have advised me to quit, and I will respect their opinion." He added that the final announcement would be made at a public meeting in Jagtial.

The senior leader expressed emotional distress over ending his four-decade-long association with the Congress party. "It is painful



to break a relationship of over 40 years," he said.

Jeevan Reddy also launched a sharp attack on Jagtial MLA M Sanjay Kumar, questioning his political stand and alleged interference in

Congress affairs. "Nobody knows, which party Sanjay Kumar belongs to. He is asking me to work with him. While there is nothing wrong in working with the government for development, is it right for him to

interfere in Congress internal matters and candidates selection?" he asked.

He recalled that he had raised concerns during the municipal elections about internal issues within the party and held Sanjay Kumar responsible for the current situation. "The same person is now asking me to work with him. Who is he to offer me such a proposal?" Jeevan Reddy questioned. He further alleged that Sanjay Kumar and those backing him are the primary reasons behind his decision to leave the party. He also said the Congress high command must take responsibility for the developments. Reiterating his stance, Jeevan Reddy said he would continue to work sincerely wherever he is, but confirmed that a final decision regarding his political future would be announced shortly.

## Sridhar Babu, Komatireddy casual remarks spark controversy

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD



INFORMAL interactions by senior ministers have sparked political discussion within the Congress party, coming soon after Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy reportedly advised party legislators to avoid casual remarks in Assembly lobbies.

At a Congress Legislature Party (CLP) meeting held on Monday, the Chief Minister is said to have directed MLAs and MLCs to refrain from making comments during informal "chit-chats" and to adhere strictly to the official party and government line.

However, the very next day, senior ministers Komatireddy Venkat Reddy and Duddilla Sridhar Babu engaged in informal media interactions within the Assembly premises, triggering debate among political observers and party members alike.

The development reportedly left party legislators and media personnel in a state of confusion, with many questioning whether the ministers' remarks aligned with the Chief Minister's earlier directive. Discussions among journalists and leaders hinted

at speculation over whether there was a larger political context behind these interactions.

Both ministers are considered senior leaders within the Congress party and have long-standing political experience, leading some to believe their remarks may have been made with specific intent.

During his interaction, Sridhar Babu expressed support for senior leader T. Jeevan Reddy, stating that he had not sought any particular post and was focused on resolving local issues. He assured that the party would extend full support to Jeevan Reddy.

The episode has added to ongoing discussions about internal coordination and messaging within the ruling party in Telangana.

## SP honours prosecutor Edulapuram Srinivas for legal excellence

- Public Prosecutor Edulapuram Srinivas secures convictions in 12 criminal cases
- Seven cases result in life imprisonment while others see prison terms of at least 10 years
- Bhupalpally SP Sirishetty Sankirth honours Srinivas with certificate of appreciation

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
JAYASHANKAR BHUPALPALLY



PUBLIC Prosecutor Edulapuram Srinivas was commended for his effective handling of criminal cases and his role in securing justice in several important trials in the district. In recognition of his efforts, Bhupalpally District Superintendent of Police Sirishetty Sankirth presented him with a certificate of ap-

preciation.

Srinivas, who has been serving as the Public Prosecutor at the Principal Sessions Court in Bhupalpally district, was recognised for demonstrating exceptional skill and dedication while arguing criminal cases. His efforts have contributed significantly to securing convictions,

and ensuring that offenders received appropriate punishment under the law.

According to officials, Srinivas successfully secured convictions in a total of 12 cases through his strong legal arguments and meticulous preparation. In seven of these cases, the courts awarded life imprisonment to the ac-

used, while in the remaining cases the offenders were sentenced to prison terms of at least ten years.

Officials said the recognition was given in appreciation of his commitment to the legal process and his contribution to strengthening the justice delivery system. On the occasion, senior police authorities highlighted the importance of dedicated legal professionals in ensuring that criminal cases are pursued effectively in court.

Telangana Director General of Police B Shivadhar Reddy said that officials who work sincerely to uphold justice and ensure the rule of law would always receive encouragement and support from the department.

SP Sankirth congratulated Srinivas for his remarkable achievements and acknowledged his vital role in ensuring justice for victims by securing convictions in serious criminal cases. He said such dedication from public prosecutors was essential for maintaining public confidence in the justice system.

## PRE-UGADI CELEBRATIONS

# Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla extends Ugadi greetings



Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla and the First Lady are greeted during the pre-Ugadi celebrations at Lok Bhavan in Hyderabad on Tuesday

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

GOVERNOR Shiv Pratap Shukla on Tuesday extended greetings and wished everyone a joyous Ugadi festival.

Addressing guests, invitees, Lok Bhavan Parivar members, and artists during the Pre-Ugadi celebrations held at Lok Bhavan on Tuesday, he said that Ugadi marks the beginning of a new era,

symbolising hope, prosperity, and renewal.

He explained that "Parabhava," the 40th year in the sixty-year cycle of time, signifies defeating ego and negative thoughts to lay the foundation for success. He expressed confidence that the coming year would be one of progress for both Telangana and the nation, urging people to learn from past experiences and move

forward with greater commitment and service.

Highlighting the cultural significance of Ugadi, Shukla spoke about Ugadi pachadi—a blend of six flavours—representing the balance of hardship and happiness in life. He wished for abundant rains this year, so that Telangana flourishes with rich harvests and dairy crops.

The Governor while extending warm wishes for

wealth, health, and happiness to all families in the New Year, reiterated his hope for all-round development of the state and the country, and ended with the spirited call:

The Pre-Ugadi celebrations at Lok Bhavan reflected the festive spirit of the occasion, bringing together dignitaries, cultural performers, and members of the community in anticipation of the traditional newyear.

## HPV vaccine must be given to girls aged 9–14: Collector Haritha

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
KUMURAM BHEEM ASIFABAD

DISTRICT Collector Haritha stated that every girl aged between 9 and 14 years in the district must receive the HPV vaccine to help prevent serious diseases such as Cervical Cancer.

On Tuesday, the Collector, accompanied by NITI Aayog Central Representative Ashla Sharma, conducted a



surprise inspection of the Community Health Centre at Chintapalli in Tiryani Mandal. During the visit, the Collector inspected the operation theatre, patient wards, medicine storage room and maternity register. She also enquired about the number of deliveries conducted each month and reviewed the overall functioning of the hospital. She directed officials to immediately repair the RO plant that provides purified drinking water to patients and visitors. Emphasising the importance of quality healthcare, the Collector instructed medical staff to ensure that all patients visiting the hospital receive proper

treatment and medical attention. As part of the 'Praja Palana Pragathi Pranalika' programme, the HPV vaccination drive for girls aged between 9 and 14 years was formally launched. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector stressed that the vaccine must be administered to every eligible girl in the Mandal to protect them from serious health risks, including cervical cancer. Later, she participated in a programme held at the Mandal headquarters under the 'Sampurnata Abhiyan' initiative, where free vaccination for livestock against Foot and Mouth Disease was conducted. The Collector directed officials to ensure that 100 per cent of livestock in the Mandal were vaccinated and asked them to implement a daily schedule covering three villages per day. Subsequently, the Collector inspected the Jangubai Mandal Federation building under construction at Vijayanagar Colony in the Mandal. Observing that nearly 90 per cent of the construction had been completed, she instructed officials to complete the remaining works, including the installation of doors and windows.

## Literature should promote values and curb crime: Dy SP Nagendra Chary

- Dy SP says literature must inspire youth and promote social awareness
- Ugadi Kavi Sammelanam held at Bhakta Vittaleshwara Hanuman Temple in Sircilla
- Poets felicitated for their contribution to literature and society

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
RAJANNA - SIRICILLA

DEPUTY Superintendent of Police Nagendra Chary said that literature should flow continuously like the sacred Ganga River and guide future generations towards the right path. He

made these remarks while speaking at the Ugadi Kavi Sammelanam organised by the Sircilla Sahiti Samiti and the Maneru Voluntary Organisation at the Bhakta Vittaleshwara Hanuman Temple. Nagendra Chary emphasised that poets have an important responsibility in guiding the youth and creat-

ing social awareness. He recalled that in the past, poets in Sircilla had supported local weavers during difficult times by writing motivational messages, which helped influence both society and the government. He added that literature should also be used as a tool to discourage crime and promote cultural values.

On the occasion, Maneru Voluntary Organisation president Dr Chintaju Bhaskar stressed the need to raise awareness among youth against drug abuse. He said the organisation had been carrying out service activities for the past 18 years, including environ-



mental initiatives and the distribution of eco-friendly Ganesh idols.

Several poets were felicitated during the programme. Among those who participated were Porandla Muralidhar, Vengala Laxman, Neroju Ramesh and Aadepu Laxman.

## Chennamaneni Vikas Rao says party workers key to achieving 'Viksit Bharat'

- Vikas Rao credits grassroots cadre for his appointment as BJP state spokesperson
- BJP leaders call for strengthening party ahead of India's 2047 development goal

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
RAJANNA - SIRICILLA

BJP constituency in-charge and newly appointed state spokesperson Chennamaneni Vikas Rao on Tuesday said party workers would play a crucial role in realising the vision of building a 'Viksit Bharat'. He was speaking at a felicitation programme organised by the BJP district unit at a private function hall in Vula-wada.

Addressing party cadres, Rao said his appointment as the party's state spokesperson came as a result of the relent-

less efforts and dedication of grassroots workers. He emphasised that ideology and commitment to public issues were more important in politics than holding positions, stating that the BJP represented a combination of ideology, organisation and struggle.

Recalling the early days of the party, he said BJP workers once raised the slogan "Ek pair jail mein... ek pair rail mein," reflecting their readiness to fight for the rights of common people. He added that the party's strength today was built on the sacrifices and struggles of its leaders and workers over



BJP spokesperson Chennamaneni Vikas Rao speaking during a programme on Tuesday

the years.

Rao assured that he would stand by party workers not only as a spokesperson but also as a representative who remained accessible and supportive to every cadre member. He called upon party

workers to work collectively to strengthen the party in the district and strive towards making India a leading nation in all sectors by 2047.

Among those who attended the programme were BJP district president Reddavaneni

Gopi, district secretary Srinivas, state executive member Alladi Ramesh, district leaders Madhu and Markandeya, Lingampalli Shankar, former ZPTC Annapurna, and town leaders Regula Santhosh Babu, Laxman and Gopal Reddy.

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Dt: 17-03-2026, Nalgonda

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Dt. 17-03-2026 Sd/- Regional Head, Khammam

# SIR: Parties urged to appoint BLAs for clean voter lists

The role of political parties is crucial in the ongoing SIR process aimed at ensuring accuracy and transparency in the voters' list, says Rizwan Basha Shaikh

Clarifies that the objective of the SIR is not to delete genuine voters

HANS NEWS SERVICE GADWAL

DISTRICT Collector Rizwan Basha Shaikh has emphasised the need for appointing booth level agents (BLAs) by all political parties to ensure the preparation of a transparent and error-free electoral roll.

A review meeting on the progress of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) was held with representatives of various political parties at the Collectorate on Tuesday.



Addressing the meeting, the Collector stated that the role of political parties is crucial in the ongoing SIR process aimed at ensuring accuracy and transparency in the voters' list.

He clarified that the objective of the SIR exercise is not to delete genuine voters, but to eliminate duplicate entries pertaining to the same individual and to

rectify discrepancies arising due to migration. The process also involves preparing a clean and updated electoral roll.

The Collector informed that voter lists of 2002 and 2025 are being compared, and voters are being categorised into A, B, C, and D groups for field-level verification. He instructed political parties to mandatorily

appoint booth level agents for each polling booth and submit their details within one to two days. Official identity cards will be issued to the appointed BLAs.

He further stated that BLAs should be residents of the respective local areas to effectively assist in field verification of voter details and collection of necessary documents. Training for

the appointed agents will be conducted before March 25.

Expressing concern over the slow progress in urban areas, particularly in Gadwal town where only about 48 percent of the work has been completed, the Collector directed officials to expedite the process. He added that door-to-door surveys, along with distribution and collection of forms, will be carried out through BLAs.

Special attention will also be given to resolving issues related to migrated voters and newly registered voters, he said. The Collector urged political parties and officials to work in coordination to successfully complete the SIR process.

Among those present at the meeting were Collectorate Administrative Officer Bhupal Reddy, Election Section Superintendent Manjula, and representatives of various political parties.

# Panchayat workers demand better pay, job security

HANS NEWS SERVICE GADWAL

THE multipurpose workers awareness programme was organised to discuss the rights of social security workers and to strengthen awareness among members of the Telangana Gram Panchayat Multipurpose Workers Union (TG PMWU).

Union leaders emphasised their crucial role in maintaining village sanitation and safeguarding public health. They stated that workers consistently prioritize village cleanliness over personal commitments, contributing to the prevention of diseases and the development of model villages. Representatives highlighted that, despite fulfilling multiple responsibilities assigned by officials and striving to maintain high standards of sanitation, their basic demands remain unaddressed. The meeting brought together 53 service workers and union leaders from various villages, including Tatikunta, Maddehabanda, Elukuru,



Saddaloniipalli, Dasarapalli, Thoomkunta, Nagar Doddi, Mangampet, Amaravai, and Bijjuvaram.

During the event, Maldakal Gram Panchayat secretary Mabi and Mangampet Gram Panchayat secretary Gayatri were felicitated. Service workers took the opportunity to present their grievances directly in their presence.

The meeting was also attended by G Narsimulu, district general secretary of the Telangana Agricultural Workers Union, and M Vinoda, women's secretary from Itikyala mandal.

Several workers, including Jayamma, Thimmanna, Praveen, Bojjanna, Chenayya, Madanna, Narasimhulu, Anjaneyulu.

# Release irrigation water from Puligundala project, orders Tummala

Responding swiftly to complaints that standing crops were drying up in Brahmakunta village and surrounding areas, the minister instructed authorities to remove all obstacles hindering water discharge and ensure supply to nearly 1,000 acres

HANS NEWS SERVICE KHAMMAM

AGRICULTURE Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao on Tuesday directed officials to immediately release irrigation water from the Puligundala project in Penuballi mandal following distress reports from farmers over withering crops.

Responding swiftly to complaints that standing crops were drying up in Brahmakunta village and surrounding areas, the minister instructed authorities to remove all obstacles hindering water discharge and ensure supply to nearly 1,000 acres. During a comprehensive review of the situation, Tummala identified both technical and administrative bottlenecks delaying water



release. He ordered officials from the revenue, forest and irrigation departments to work in coordination and resolve the issues on a priority basis.

The minister also spoke directly with Sub-Collector Ajay Yadav and District Forest Officer Siddhartha over the phone, asking them to address any pending issues without delay. He emphasised that there should be no impediments in releasing irrigation water and that farmers' interests must remain the top priority.

Issuing clear instructions to irrigation officials, Tummala called for action on a "war footing" to expedite the process. He stressed that field-

level implementation should be carried out without any delay given the urgency of the situation.

Stating that protecting farmers' crops is a key priority for the government, the minister assured that every effort would be made to ensure water reaches all affected agricultural lands. He expressed confidence that once water is released from the Puligundala project, it would provide much-needed relief to farmers and revive thousands of acres under cultivation.

Officials are expected to act swiftly following the minister's directions, while farmers in the region remain hopeful that timely intervention will help save their crops.

# Officials trained on child protection and care



HANS NEWS SERVICE NAGARKURNOOL

A training programme held here on Tuesday provided awareness to staff from DCPU, Childline, Child Welfare Committee, Juvenile Justice Board, and Sakhi One Stop Center on child protection and care. Detailed sessions were conducted on the Juvenile Justice Act-2015 and protection policies.

The programme was jointly organised by Touch Organization and Miracle Foundation (Chennai) for the staff of the Women and

Child Welfare department.

Speaking on the occasion, district Welfare Officer Rajeshwari emphasised that child protection is the responsibility of everyone.

Resource person David Raju explained methods to identify children's issues, provide rehabilitation, and deliver emergency services effectively.

Child Welfare Committee member Lakshman Rao, Juvenile Justice Board member Girija Preethi, Child Protection Officer Srisailam, Sakhi Center Administrator Sunitha, and Childline Coordinator Mounika, among others, participated in the programme.

# Rayala attends granite exhibition in China

HANS NEWS SERVICE KHAMMAM

CHAIRMAN of the State Warehousing Corporation Rayala Nageswara Rao visited the Granite International Exhibition being held in Xiamen, China on Tuesday.

Rao, who is also the president of the State's Small-scale Granite Industry Association, toured various exhibition stalls showcasing advanced technologies in granite processing. He closely examined modern machinery used for



granite cutting and polishing, as well as equipment involved in the production of monuments and finished stone

products. During his visit, Rao interacted with exhibitors and industry experts to understand the latest trends and innovations in the global granite sector. He expressed interest in adopting advanced technologies to strengthen the granite industry back home and improve productivity and quality standards.

The exhibition features a wide range of international participants and highlights cutting-edge developments in stone processing, machinery, and finished granite products.



# BJP observes Chandur bandh over attack on party workers

HANS NEWS SERVICE CHANDUR (NALGONDA)

A bandh was observed in Chandur municipal town in protest against an alleged attack on BJP workers by Congress activists.

BJP leaders and party workers took out a rally across Chandur town, raising slogans and staging a protest (dharna) at NTR X Road, condemning the incident.

Speaking on the occasion, senior leader Gangidi Manohar Reddy strongly condemned the attack and demanded immediate action against those responsible. He alleged that Congress workers were behind the violent incident and called for their arrest under Section 307 (attempt to murder) and immediate remand. He warned that such incidents should not be repeated and emphasized that any disputes should be resolved through

dialogue rather than violence.

Providing details, he stated that eight BJP workers were attacked, leaving six seriously injured. Among them, one suffered a head injury while another lost a tooth. He further accused the police of acting in favor of Congress leaders and failing to maintain law and order impartially.

The BJP leader also criticised the local MLA, alleging that the legislator is more focused on securing a ministerial post than addressing the concerns of people in the Munugode constituency. He expressed dissatisfaction with the response of senior police officials, including the SP and DSP, accusing them of treating the issue lightly. He claimed that even the Chandur Circle Inspector had dismissed the incident as a minor issue, which he strongly.

# Precious lives are lost due to lack of trauma centre in Aiza

Repeated incidents of deaths due to lack of the emergency facility highlight the urgent need for better medical infrastructure, including life-saving equipment and the immediate operationalisation of the 30-bed government hospital in Aiza town

HANS NEWS SERVICE GADWAL

SERIOUS concerns are being raised over the inadequate emergency healthcare facilities in Aiza town, as repeated incidents highlight the urgent need for better medical infrastructure, including life-saving equipment and the immediate operationalisation of the 30-bed government hospital.

On Tuesday, two distressing incidents exposed the critical gaps in emergency care. In one incident, three students traveling on a motorcycle collided with an RTC bus. One student Ramu (17) succumbed to injuries on the spot, while the condition of the other two Vishnu (17) VarsVardhan (17) remains critical. Due to the absence of proper emergency treatment facilities in Aiza, the injured had to be shifted nearly 60 kilometers away to Kurnool for advanced care.

In another tragic case, a young man identified as Rajagopal, son of noted public leader Nagaraddi Venkataramulu, died



suddenly after suffering a heart attack. The incident has intensified concerns among residents regarding the lack of immediate cardiac care in the region.

Locals report a worrying trend in recent months, with several young individuals—many around 30 years of age—succumbing to sudden cardiac arrests in Aiza and surrounding mandals. The absence of essential

emergency equipment such as an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) in both government and private hospitals has made timely intervention impossible in many cases.

Medical experts emphasize that in cases of cardiac arrest, immediate CPR support along with AED intervention can significantly improve survival rates. However, due to the unavailabil-



ity of such facilities, patients are being referred to Gadwal or Kurnool hospitals. Poor road conditions and long travel times are reportedly contributing to preventable deaths during transit.

Residents of Aiza have collectively appealed to the authorities to urgently provide an AED machine at the government hospital, stating that the equipment costs approximately Rs 2 lakh—a mod-



est investment compared to the lives it could save.

Furthermore, the long-pending 30-bed government hospital in Aiza remains non-functional, adding to public frustration. Citizens are demanding its immediate inauguration and full-scale operation to ensure access to essential healthcare services locally.

The people of Aiza have urged government authorities to take swift and compassionate action to address these life-threatening gaps in healthcare infrastructure, expressing hope for a prompt and positive response to prevent further loss of lives.

**Hans India Classifieds**

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, LANJAPALLY RAJESH S/o LANJAPALLY KRISHNAIAH R/o.H.No.1-186. SC COLONY MUNAGALA MANDAL Suryapet District 508233, T.S. Changed My Name: As **LINGAMPALLI RAJESH** (TH 44949)

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, SHAUN KORE S/o. Late K BERNARD RATHAN ALIAS BENJAMIN BERNARD RATTAN KORE, K SHILPA Alias SHILPA KORE (Mother), S.S.C., Student, shall henceforth be known as **SHAUN KORE S/o. LATE BENJAMIN BERNARD RATTAN KORE, SHILPA KORE (Mother)**, Jadhcherla, Date: 23-02-2026. **SHAUN KORE (TH\_V MUNG)**

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It is hereby informed to the general public that my client, Mr. Besta Veeresh, S/o Urukundappa, residing at H. No. 2-23, Sindanur Village, Aiza Mandal, Jogulamba Gadwal District, had purchased a property situated at Aiza outskirts bearing: Survey No.: 3/J Plot No.: 05 Registered Document No.: 12385/2017 The link documents pertaining to the above property are: Doc No. 1046/2005 Doc No. 1721/2014 Doc No. 1722/2014 Doc No. 5596/2013 These link documents were lost near Aiza Bus Stand while attending personal work. If anyone finds the above-mentioned documents, they are requested to contact the undersigned within 7 days from the date of this publication.

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# 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.

# POLICE SEIZE ADULTERATED GINGER AND GARLIC PASTE

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

THE Hyderabad Commissioner's Task Force, Khairatabad Zone Team, alongside GHMC food safety officers, has busted illegal manufacturing units and apprehended an owner for producing substandard ginger and garlic paste. Officials seized a significant quantity of the paste and other food products worth Rs 4.5 lakh during the primary operation. The team conducted a surprise inspection at the premises of A1 Sahara Gold Ginger & Garlic Paste, located at Madhura Nagar in Borabanda. During the raid, it was discovered that the accused, Mohd Abdullah, was manufacturing the paste in plastic containers under extremely unhygienic conditions. Investigators found that the product was being created by mixing chemi-



icals such as acetic acid and salt with substandard raw materials, including shells.

Vaibhav Gaikwad Raghunath,

DCP Task Force, stated that the prepared paste was stored in open plastic tubs, exposed to dust, flies, and other contaminants, rendering

it unsafe for human consumption. The adulterated product was supplied to various wholesale stores and catering services, allowing the accused to gain huge illegal profits. The DCP warned that such adulterated paste is hazardous to human life. Police noted that Abdullah managed the business using an FS-SAI licence obtained in his father's name. The apprehended individual and the seized materials were handed over to Borabanda police for further legal action.

In a separate operation, police conducted another surprise inspection at Sahara India in Tappachabutra, Karwan. During this raid, the owner, Mohammed Zafar Alam, was booked for similar offences. The inspection revealed that the accused was manufacturing ginger and garlic paste in plastic containers under highly unhygienic conditions

by mixing chemicals such as citric acid and salt. Police seized adulterated stock worth approximately Rs 2.50 lakh from this unit. Zafar Alam was reportedly engaged in the large-scale manufacture and sale of these tainted products to restaurants and retail shops across Hyderabad.

The total value of seized material from both operations amounts to Rs 7 lakh. The accused from the second raid was handed over to Tappachabutra police for further proceedings.

These coordinated efforts by the Task Force and GHMC highlight a rigorous crackdown on food adulteration units that bypass health regulations to exploit public demand. Authorities have urged residents to remain vigilant and report suspicious manufacturing activities to ensure community health and safety across the city.

## '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.

## 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 Rijju following Question Hour. The motion to reinstate Gurjeet Singh Aujla, Hibi Eden, Dean Kuriakose, Amrinder Singh Raja Warring, B. Manickam Tagore, Prashant Yadaorao Padole, Chamala Kiran Kumar

Reddy 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.

## 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, 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, officials said and added that

all the 11 arrested persons, including TDP MP from Eluru Mahesh Kumar Yadav and BRS leader 'Pilot' Rohit Reddy, would be questioned. Rohit 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 Rohit Reddy and Mahesh Kumar, who along with seven others were subsequently released on station bail.

The case came to light on March 14 following a raid by the EAGLE Force at a farm-

house in Moinabad on the outskirts of Hyderabad that belongs to Rohit 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.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL

MANJULtoons



## '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.

## 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 penning 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.



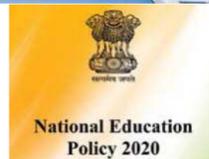
### Blind spots and missteps:

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



## 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.

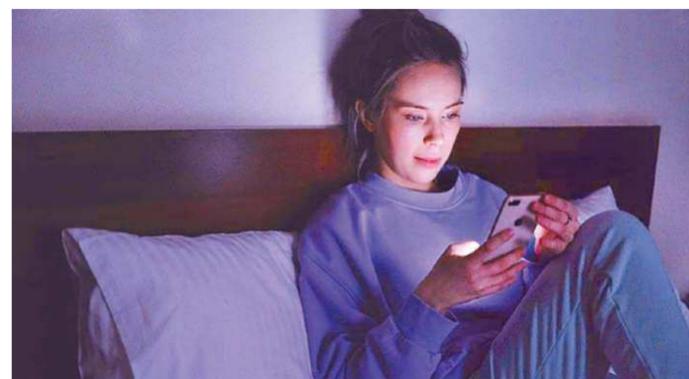
## Survey highlights growing concerns over late-night screen habits affecting teenagers' sleep patterns

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.





## 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

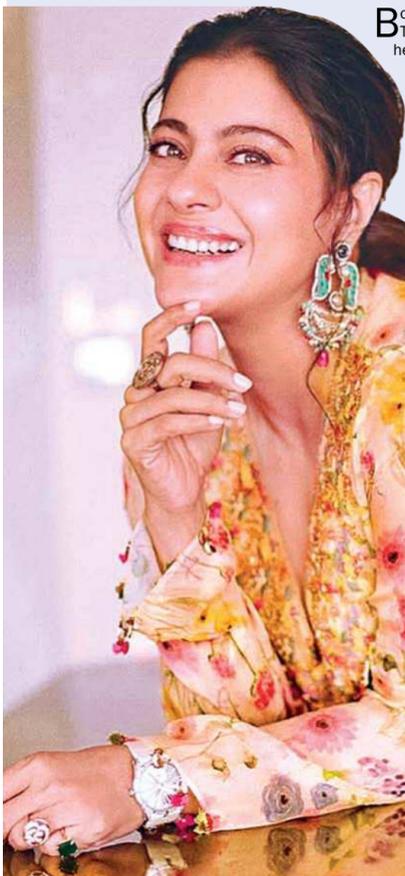
**Malvi Malhotra is set to make her Hindi cinema comeback with the neo-noir dark comedy 'Arjun Bewakoof.' The actress opens up about her role, the film's unpredictable climax, and working with industry veterans**

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 lighthearted 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 miniscule 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.

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 Chikankari 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. Madhuma 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-

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.



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 Chandore.

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 C 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.

# 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.

- 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.

# 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 per cent 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.



## 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.

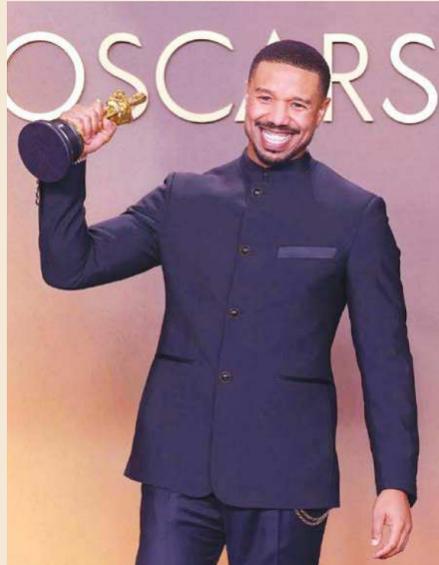
What makes this victory even more striking is the path these films took. Unlike traditional Oscar contenders, none relied on the festival circuit to build

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.