



THE Hans India



15-yr-old Inaara bags top global rankings
The Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI) has officially declared its rankings for the FEI World Dressage Challenge (WDC) 2025, with India's young equestrian talent, Inaara Mehta Luthria, delivering an exceptional performance. **P6**

Firecracker units have become the new killers
Firecrackers have become deadly! If vendors who run these businesses like those running shops in the ordinary market-selling goods without following safety regulations-are allowed to make fireworks and firecrackers in the run-up to Diwali with unskilled. **P4**

Indian Americans rank No.1 in US earnings
Indian-American households have emerged as the highest earners among major ethnic groups in the United States, with a median annual income of about \$151,200, according to a report citing Pew Research Center findings. **P7**

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. **P8**

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RAMZAN TIMINGS
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WINDOWS
Suspension of 8 Lok Sabha MPs revoked

NEW DELHI: The Lok Sabha on Tuesday revoked with immediate effect the suspension of eight opposition members who were barred from the House on February 3 for "unruly" behaviour, with Speaker Om Birla stressing that there should be no display of placards, posters, photos or AI-generated images inside the House or in the Parliament complex. Congress member K Suresh requested the House to consider the revocation of the eight opposition members, saying whatever had happened in the House was regrettable, and that his party was ready to cooperate in the smooth functioning of the House. Following the submissions by several opposition members, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said there was a need to draw a "Laxman Rekha" for the smooth functioning of the House, which both treasury and opposition benches agreed to.

6-year-old girl raped in southwest Delhi

NEW DELHI: A person has been arrested for allegedly raping a six-year-old girl from his locality in southwest Delhi's Chhawla area, police said on Tuesday. The incident came to light after the minor narrated the alleged events to her mother, who subsequently approached the authorities, they said. According to the complainant, the girl, who lives with her family in Chhawla area, was playing near a school along with her younger sister when a man -- who was known to the family and ran a shop nearby -- took her to his premises and sexually assaulted her.

4 arrested in Varanasi for Iftar on boat in Ganga

VARANASI: Fourteen people have been arrested on charges of defiling a place of worship and hurting religious feelings after a video purportedly showing them participating in an Iftar meal, eating biryani on a boat, on the Ganga river in Varanasi, officials said on Tuesday.

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

US counterterror chief quits over Iran war

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

TEXAS
JOSEPH Kent has resigned as Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, citing objections to the ongoing United States-Israel war in Iran, according to a resignation letter addressed to President Donald Trump. In the letter, Kent said he could not 'in good conscience' support the war, asserting that Iran posed no imminent threat to the United States and alleging that the conflict was driven by pressure from Israel and its American lobby. He also warned against repeating past mistakes such as the Iraq war and urged a

reassessment of US policy. Iranian state media, Press TV on Tuesday shared a first-person view (FPV) of a drone flying over the US embassy compound in Baghdad. Israeli Defence Forces confirmed the killing of Gholamreza Soleimani, the commander of Iran's Basij Unit. According to the Jerusalem Post, the IDF confirmed the death of the head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Basij paramilitary militia, Gholamreza Soleimani, and his deputy, Seyyed Karishi. As per the report, the two were killed in a makeshift tent area, which had been set up to make it harder to



follow them as opposed to in a known headquarters. The Israeli Health Ministry has reported that 3,530 people have sustained injuries and been admitted to hospitals since the outbreak of the war. Providing a breakdown of the current medical status, the ministry stated that 86 individuals are presently hospitalised, including eight patients in serious condition. US President Donald Trump said that the ongoing conflict involving Iran would end soon, saying the situation would be "wrapped up" shortly and would ultimately result in a safer world. Trump said that the war could be "wrapped up soon", adding, "It won't be long. And we're going to have a much safer world when it's wrapped up. It'll be wrapped up soon. We're going to have a much safer world. I had an obligation to do this. I didn't want to," Trump said.

LPG shortage: Centre puts up its hands in HC

MUMBAI
THE Central government on Tuesday assured the Bombay High Court that it is making all attempts on domestic and international fronts to address the hardship caused by the LPG shortage amid the ongoing conflict in West Asia. The Nagpur bench of the court accepted the Centre's submission and disposed of the petition filed by LPG distributors, noting that it is taking "all the necessary steps in the matter to protect the interests of individuals". Solicitor General of India Tushar Mehta, appearing via video-conference, informed the court that it

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

was making all attempts on domestic and international levels to address the hardship caused by the shortage of LPG. Steps are being taken to ensure that the international crisis does not affect India, he said. As much as 3 lakh metric tonnes of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) is presently stranded at the Strait of Hormuz, Rajesh Kumar Sinha, special secretary at ministry of ports, shipping, and waterways said on March 17. Punjab-based LPG distributors said there was an "inadequate" supply of LPG, despite the Union government and oil marketing companies claiming adequate availability and demanded an increase in cooking gas supplies to clear the backlog.

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

HANS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI
DELHI Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Tuesday said there will be major announcements for women and girls in Budget 2026-27 to be tabled in the Delhi Assembly later this month. Attending the 'Nari Utsav' programme at Nirmal Chhaya Complex, she lauded women for their nation-building role, said a statement from the Delhi Chief Minister's Office (CMO). She announced that the upcoming Delhi Budget to be presented on March 24 will include key initiatives for women and girls. The chief minister reiterated her government's commitment to the holistic empowerment of

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



women and children, citing various schemes including 'Lakhpati Bitiya' and 'Pink Saheli' smart cards for free bus travel to women. Highlighting the importance of self-help groups (SHGs), she said women in Delhi will be provided employment and entrepreneurship opportunities through small group-based models, and stressed the need to expand platforms

like 'Mahila Haat' to help women showcase and sell their products. "The Delhi government's focus is not just on launching schemes but on ensuring their effective implementation so that benefits reach every needy individual," Gupta said. The chief minister also inspected Nirmal Chhaya complex including the care home for women, Balika Grih and Bal Niketan, and enquired about facilities being provided to the occupants of these homes. She visited Sankalp Hub, where activities related to women's safety, awareness and empowerment under Mission Shakti were showcased. At the SHG-run 'Mahila Haat', she reviewed local products and exhibitions, including nutritious millet-based dishes.

Woman killed as 'unsafe' bridge collapses in Roop Nagar

HANS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI
A 60-foot iron bridge over a drain collapsed in north Delhi's Roop Nagar area on Tuesday morning, killing a woman, officials said. Police said the bridge had been declared unsafe and was closed for public movement with barricades. Locals informed that the woman, who seemed to be a beggar, would often sit at one end of the bridge. A PCR call regarding the bridge collapse was received at around 9.28 am, following which police and emergency teams rushed to the spot, police said. The bridge was found to have collapsed into the drain below. Rescue personnel recovered the body of the woman, believed to be around 50 years old, a senior police officer said. Personnel from the Delhi Fire Service (DFS), National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and Delhi Police carried out coordinated rescue operations at the site. Multiple fire tenders were pressed into service for it. Visuals showed rescue personnel sliding down the broken bridge using ropes to get to the drain to find the woman. Police said efforts are underway to ascertain her identity. An NDRF official said they received information about the incident around 10.15 am. "On assessing the situation, we found that the drain had a strong current.

Hike EPF pension to Rs 7,500: Parl panel

HANS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI
A Parliamentary panel on Tuesday recommended an urgent, comprehensive review of the Rs 1,000 minimum monthly pension under the Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995, to raise it to a more realistic and dignified level. This assumes significance in view of pensioners' demand to raise the pension to Rs 7,500 per month, as Rs 1,000 is not sufficient to make both ends meet. Pensioners under the Employees' Pension Scheme 1995 (EPS-95) run by the retirement fund body EPFO had also staged a three-day protest at Jantar Mantar from March 9, for increasing the minimum monthly pension to Rs 7,500. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour, Textiles and Skill



Development, in its 15th Report on 'Demands for Grants (2026-27)' of the Ministry of Labour and Employment, noted that the minimum pension of Rs 1,000 per month under the Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995, has remained unchanged for a considerable period of time despite the rising cost of living. During the course of evidence, the committee observed that numerous representations have been received from pensioners seeking an upward revision of the minimum pension, particularly considering the financial hardships faced by elderly and economically vulnerable beneficiaries.

400 AFGHANS KILLED IN PAK ATTACK

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

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

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

No govt job through employment offices in Raj in 5 yrs

HANS NEWS SERVICE JAIPUR
MORE than 22 lakh unemployed youth are currently registered with employment offices across Rajasthan, according to information obtained under the RTI Act. It was further revealed that no candidate was recruited in the government sector through the employment offices in the past five years. The data, provided by the Directorate of Employment, shows that as of January 14, a total of 22,21,317 candi-

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

dates were registered as job seekers in district employment offices across the state. Of these, over 13.08 lakh were male, 9.12 lakh female, and 989 fell under the 'other' category. Among districts, Jaipur recorded the highest number of registered unemployed people at 2.51 lakh, followed by Alwar (1.53 lakh), Nagaur (1.34



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

reported the lowest number of registered candidates. The category-wise data indicates that candidates from the Other Backward Classes (OBC) form the largest share among registered job seekers, followed by general, Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and other categories. The data further revealed the limited placements in the private sector during the past five years. According to the information provided, 86 candidates were placed in 2021, 825 in 2022, three in 2023, 23 in 2024 and 71 in 2025 through employment office initiatives, including job fairs and coordination with private companies. "The private sector has seen high growth in the last two decades. Investment in crores, but the jobs provided by the directorate are miniscule. Permanent and temporary jobs in the government sector through the directorate seem to have completely stopped. There is a need to activate unemployment offices and refer candidates," Right to Information (RTI) applicant Chandra Shekhar Gaur said.

HARYANA RAJYA SABHA POLLS

Bhatia, Boudh win; 5 Congress MLAs cross-vote

HANS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH

BJP's Sanjay Bhatia and Karamvir Singh Boudh of the Congress were elected to the Rajya Sabha from Haryana after the counting for the keenly-watched twin seats went past midnight following allegations of violation of vote secrecy by both sides, officials said on Tuesday.

Five votes were declared invalid, four of the Congress and one of the BJP, they said. While BJP's Bhatia (58)

is a former Lok Sabha MP from Karnal, Boudh (61) is a retired Haryana government employee and a prominent Dalit activist, currently serving as the coordinator of the National Scheduled Castes Department of the Congress. The two legislators of the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) abstained from voting, reducing the number of valid votes to 88 in the 90-member Haryana Assembly.

INLD leaders Abhay Singh Chautala and Aditya Devi

Congress to issue show-cause notices to MLAs; Bhatia is a former Lok Sabha MP from Karnal, Boudh is a retired Haryana government employee and a prominent Dalit activist

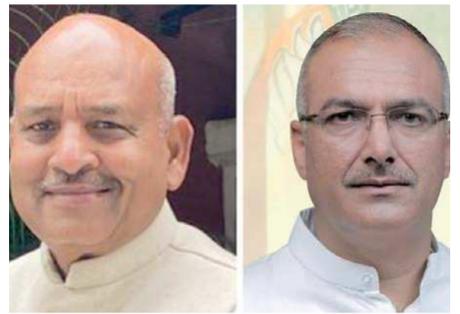
Lal said the party decided to abstain from keeping people's sentiments in view. After both the Congress and the BJP approached the Election Commission alleging violation of vote secrecy, the poll panel declared Congress MLA Paramvir Singh's vote

as invalid. Bhatia won the first seat comfortably, polling 39 first-preference votes.

In the fight for the second seat, Boudh polled 28 votes, while Independent candidate Satish Nandal (63) got 16. Five ballots — four of the Congress and one of the BJP

were declared invalid by the returning officer. With five Congress MLAs allegedly cross-voting, Nandal could have secured Bhatia's 11 second preference votes, reaching 28, had one more Congress legislator cross-voted in the Independent candidate's favour, sources said. Congratulating the winning candidates in a late-night press conference, Chief Minister Saini said, "Nandal lost by just one vote (referring to the narrow difference). Five Congress MLAs cross-vot-

ed. Four of their votes were rejected." The BJP-backed Nandal had unsuccessfully contested the 2019 Assembly polls as its nominee. Asked about 'cross-voting' by five of his party MLAs, state Congress chief Rao Narendra Singh told reporters, "Those who betrayed the Congress will face strict action." Congress general secretary in charge of Haryana, B K Hariprasad, also said that action will be taken against the MLAs who cross-voted and "betrayed the party."



Karamvir Singh Boudh and (Right) Sanjay Bhatia

BUDAUN HPCL PLANT KILLINGS

Shops built on govt land by prime accused demolished

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BUDAUN

THE district administration in Uttar Pradesh's Budaun on Tuesday demolished shops belonging to the prime accused in the murder of two Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) officials, citing that the establishments were built on government land.

On March 12, two officials of HPCL plant in Sejni village -- Assistant General Manager Harshit Mishra (34) and General Manager Sudhir Kumar Gupta (58) -- were shot dead allegedly by Ajay Pratap Singh alias Ramu, a local who was earlier a vendor at the plant. Gupta had recently terminated some employees and blacklisted vendors whose work was not satisfactory.

Singh was among those removed. Since the termina-



tion, Singh had been upset with the general manager and had threatened him on several occasions. Dataganj Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Dharmendra Kumar Singh said that all encroachments made by Ajay Pratap Singh and others

had been identified beforehand. Notices were issued to the concerned individuals, granting them time to voluntarily remove the encroachments. However, the illegal structures were not removed even after the stipulated time had elapsed.

On Tuesday, the administration proceeded to remove the illegal structures using bulldozers. He informed that approximately 12 roadside shops had been identified for demolition with about six shops situated on one side of the

On March 12, two officials Assistant General Manager Harshit Mishra (and General Manager Sudhir Kumar Gupta were shot dead allegedly by Ajay Pratap Singh, a local who was earlier a vendor at the plant

road and six on the other. The SDM further clarified that among the demolished structures, six shops belonged to Ajay Pratap Singh while the remaining six belonged to his uncle, Rakesh Singh.

He added that a survey conducted by the Public Works Department (PWD) revealed that the shops had been constructed illegally on government land.

FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE

Raj to vaccinate 2 cr cattle heads

HANS NEWS SERVICE
JAIPUR

THE Rajasthan government will vaccinate more than two crore cattle heads under the seventh phase of its foot-and-mouth disease control programme, officials said on Tuesday.

The seventh phase of the statewide campaign, which was launched by Animal Husbandry Minister Joram Kumawat from the Ramdev Gauskhana in Bagru near Jaipur, aims to vaccinate 2.32 crore cows and buffaloes across all districts, officials said. Foot-and-mouth (FMD) is a contagious viral disease affecting livestock, including cattle, pigs, sheep, and goats, characterised by fever and blister-like sores on the mouth, tongue and hooves. Kumawat appealed to the livestock owners to ensure vaccination of all cattle heads to protect them from the infectious disease.

"This will improve animal health and help increase



the income of farmers," he said. According to an official statement, the minister directed the concerned officials and veterinarians to complete the vaccination drive in a time-bound manner to achieve the target of making the state free from the disease by 2030.

Director in the animal husbandry department, Suresh Meena, said FMD is a highly infectious disease that affects the productivity of livestock and causes financial losses to farmers. The officials said teams from the animal husbandry department will carry out door-to-door vaccination drives in the villages and monitor the process continuously to ensure maximum coverage.

RSS conducts 88K 'shakhas' daily

HANS NEWS SERVICE
JAIPUR

THE RSS has witnessed significant expansion in the past year with the number of daily 'shakhas' increasing by around 6,000 to reach more than 88,000, a Sangh leader said. Rashtriya Swamsevaka Sangh (RSS) leader Rameshchandra Agrawal said that the number of locations where Sangh's activities are held has also grown to over 55,000 in the country.

He said that RSS activities have now reached remote regions, including the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh, besides tribal areas, where regular 'shakhas' are being conducted. Agrawal said that Rajasthan has 12,109 'shakhas' and 5,950 weekly gatherings, while a large number of Hindu conferences have been organised to strengthen outreach in society.

He said that the three-day meeting of the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha, the highest decision-making body of the RSS, held in Samalkha in Haryana from March 13 to 15, focused on issues of organisational expansion, social harmony and greater participation of society in nation-building. He said that along with organisational expansion, the RSS is also working to enhance social values through its "Panch Parivartan" initiative.

Agrawal said the RSS would organise 96 training camps across the country next year as part of its regular training programmes.



Gunmen open fire at a patient inside hospital

HANS NEWS SERVICE
ALIGARH

TWO armed assailants allegedly walked into a hospital here and fired at a man who was undergoing treatment at the facility, injuring him severely, a senior police official said on Tuesday. Aligarh Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Neeraj Kumar Jadaun told reporters that the victim has been identified as Vedpal (32), a resident of a village in Khair police station area.

He was rushed to Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College Hospital following the incident, and his condition remains critical. One person has been arrested in this connection, while a hunt is on to nab the two shooters, he added. Citing information provided by Vedpal's family, the SSP said Vedpal had developed a relationship

with a girl from Mathura and was planning to marry her soon.

However, the girl's family -- including her father, who is a police constable -- opposed this proposal and arranged her marriage elsewhere last month. Despite this, Vedpal continued attempting to contact the girl. He even went to meet her family last month, where he was severely beaten up and warned with dire consequences if he kept pursuing the matter.

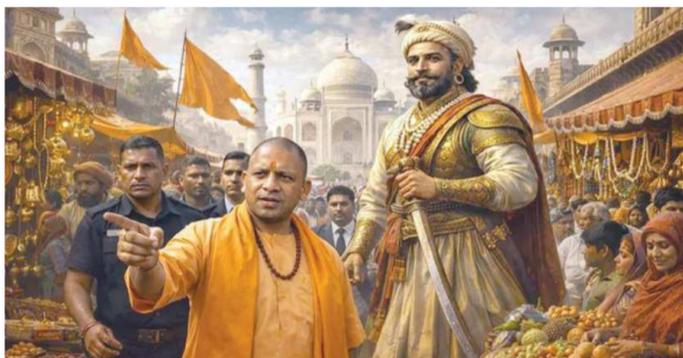
According to the family, Vedpal was admitted to a local hospital two days ago to undergo surgery for the injuries sustained during the earlier beating. The SSP said based on CCTV footage, police have identified the attackers; one of them is the girl's brother, also a police constable posted in a neighbouring district.

Surge in pilgrim footfall at religious sites in UP: CM

HANS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW

CHIEF Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday said the surge in the number of pilgrims visiting religious sites in Uttar Pradesh reflects both improved infrastructure and deepening public faith, even as it presents challenges for the government.

Addressing a gathering after distributing financial assistance of Rs 1 lakh each to 555 pilgrims of Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, he said that earlier only a limited number of devotees could undertake such journeys due to lack of resources, but the situation has changed significantly now. "There was a time when resources were limited and



only a small number of devotees could travel. Today, facilities have improved in Uttar Pradesh and you can see the large number of people coming," the CM said.

In 2025, Adityanath said that around 164 crore pilgrims visited various religious places across the state. The Prayagraj Maha Kumbh alone attracted 66 crore dev-

otes. He noted that places such as Kashi Vishwanath Dham in Varanasi, Ram Janmabhoomi in Ayodhya, and Mathura-Vrindavan have witnessed the arrival of

crores of devotees.

"The arrival of such a large number of devotees is both an opportunity and a challenge. The government is making efforts at its level to provide better facilities - be it connectivity, amenities, or arrangements for pilgrims and tourists," the CM said. Highlighting improvements in the past eight to nine years, Adityanath said several facilities have been developed to promote religious tourism, and efforts are ongoing to further enhance them. He emphasised that while visiting religious places, devotion should come first, followed by tourism and then entertainment, to preserve the sanctity and dignity of such sites.

YOUTH MUST MAKE YOGA INTEGRAL PART OF LIFE: DHAMI

HANS NEWS SERVICE
RISHIKESH

UTTARAKHAND Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami stated on Monday that yoga is not merely a form of physical exercise but a holistic way of life, and that the youth should make it an integral part of their lives. The chief minister emphasised that yoga is more than just physical exertion; it is a comprehensive lifestyle practice that serves to connect the individual spiritually with the supreme soul. Urging youth to incorporate yoga into their daily routines, he noted

that young people currently working in various fields often experience fatigue, and yoga can serve as their greatest ally in overcoming this exhaustion. Terming yoga an invaluable legacy of India's "ancient and magnificent spiritual tradition," he remarked that the multi-faceted discipline has today evolved into a robust foundation for healthy living, mental peace and spiritual growth for the entire world. He said that due to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's efforts, June 21 is now celebrated globally as International Yoga Day, and today, millions of people across more than 180 countries practice yoga.

HP budget to be tabled in Assembly on March 21

HANS NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA

THE Himachal Pradesh budget for the year 2026-27 will be presented in the assembly on March 21, Speaker Kuldeep Singh Pathania said on Tuesday. Addressing mediapersons, he said there would be 13 sittings in the second phase of the budget session, to be held between March 18 and April 2. In the first phase of the budget session held between February 16 and 18, three sit-

tings were held. Discussions on the budget estimates will take place from March 23 to 25, while deliberations on demands for grants and cut motions are scheduled between March 27 and 30, he said, adding that the discussion on the governor's address would be held on March 18, 19 and 20.

The speaker further said a total of 834 questions has been received, including 665 starred and 169 unstarred questions. Eight issues would be raised under Rule 62 (calling atten-

tion), three under Rule 101 (private member's resolution) and five under Rule 130 (motion for discussion on matters of public interest). Most of the questions asked by the legislators pertain to the Indira Gandhi Pyari Behna Sukh Samman Nidhi, the transition of schools from the state board to the CBSE, construction of roads and bridges, detailed project reports (DPRs) for sanctioned roads, and upgradation of colleges, schools, and health institutions within the state.

Inadequate infra, poor medical facilities in overcrowded Pb jails

HANS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH

A report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has flagged overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure, and poor medical facilities in Punjab jails. According to the audit report which was tabled in the state assembly on Monday, the administration took six years to adopt the framework outlined in the model prison manual,

2016 and notify the Punjab Prison Rules, 2022.

Despite recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee, overcrowding in jails persisted, said the report. There are 26 jails of various categories in the state: 10 central jails, seven district jails, two women jails at Bathinda and Ludhiana, one borstal jail at Ludhiana, one open air jail at Nabha (Patiala), and five sub jails.

According to the report,

There are 26 jails of various categories in the state: 10 central jails, seven district jails, two women jails at Bathinda and Ludhiana, one borstal jail at Ludhiana, one open air jail at Nabha (Patiala), and five sub jails

against the capacity of 23,638 male inmates, the occupancy was 24,101 in 2021-22. Similarly, the occupancy was 28,481 in 2022-23 against the capacity of 23,658 male inmates. The report pointed out that the

problem of overcrowding was a major deterrent in making basic facilities available to the inmates.

Audit of records of the test-checked jails disclosed that among others, prolonged custody of undertrial



prisoners due to missed court hearings and delay in construction or renovation of new jails had notably contributed to the increase in overcrowding year after year, thereby worsening the already inadequate availability of facilities for jail inmates in Punjab.

The government in its response said building additional barracks in existing six jails, and construction of a new high-security jail at Ludhiana and a new district

jail at Mohali were under process and this would increase the authorised capacity. Further, the government said that a weekly review of the jail population was being assessed by the State Level Committee headed by the inspector general (prisons) and on the basis of such reviews, from January 2021 to December 2023, 17,916 inmates had been transferred from overcrowded jails to less crowded ones.

Court denies bail to bus driver accused under MCOCA

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court has rejected the bail application of an accused in a case registered under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA), observing they did not meet the stringent twin conditions of bail under Section 21(4)(b) and (5) the Act. The conditions require the court to be satisfied that the accused is not guilty and is unlikely to commit an-

other offence while on bail. Additional Sessions Judge Sonu Agnihotri dismissed the anticipatory bail application filed by accused Riyazuddin as he found it to be "without merit". "Co-accused in their confessional statement have also disclosed the role of the accused which is admissible under MCOCA. At this stage, there is no ground for not believing that the accused is not guilty of offences as invoked against him in the

present FIR," said the court in its order dated March 14. The counsel for the accused alleged that he was falsely implicated in the present case as he had filed a complaint to the Lieutenant Governor against three corrupt police officials. He wrote against Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Yogender and constable Shokendra in 2022, and later against Sub-Inspector (SI) Sahansar Pal in 2025. He also approached the Delhi High Court seek-

ing registration of an FIR against them but the case was disposed of in 2025. According to the defence, the accused drove road transport vehicle (RTV) buses for a living and on February 1, 2022, he met with a road collision accident with a three-seater auto rickshaw (TSR). ASI Yogender and Constable Shokendra approached him shortly thereafter alleging they had received a Police Control Room (PCR)

The counsel for the accused alleged that Riyazuddin was falsely implicated in the present case as he had filed a complaint to the Lieutenant Governor against three corrupt police officials

call regarding the accident, and warned him of being arrested and his RTV being impounded. ASI Yogender demanded Rs 5,000 as a bribe, which

was then renegotiated to Rs 2,000. The two police officials later demanded Rs 9,000 as "protection money" to avoid the RTV from being impounded.



Clash in Uttam Nagar on Holiday; 1 dead

No demolition without notice: MCD tells HC

The civic body made the statement before Justice Amit Bansal on petitions filed by Jarina, mother of Imran, one of the accused, and Shahnaz, whose children were interrogated by police, apprehending demolition of their residential premises

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

THE Municipal Corporation of Delhi on Tuesday told the Delhi High Court that it will not demolish any unauthorised construction in houses belonging to certain individuals allegedly involved in a clash in Uttam Nagar on the day of Holi that left a 26-year-old man dead without issuing prior notice to them.

The civic body made the statement before Justice Amit Bansal on petitions filed by Jarina, mother of Imran, one of the accused, and Shahnaz, whose children were interrogated by police, apprehending demolition of their residential premises. In view of the stand of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), Justice Bansal



closed the proceedings on the petitions. "Senior advocate Sanjay Poddar said the MCD shall not take action against unauthorised constructions without issuing notice to the petitioners. He also submitted that any action shall be in accordance with the Supreme Court judgement (on demolitions)," the court said. The petitioners' counsel said they apprehended that the

MCD would demolish their houses without following the due process of law. Poddar said his statement was only for the residential premises in question in the case. On March 11, the court had protected the petitioners' residential premises from demolition action for a week and asked them to file a fresh plea about their grievance. Several people, including a minor, have been apprehended in connection with the death of the 26-year-old man in a clash between two neighbouring families with long-standing disputes during Holi celebrations in Uttam Nagar on March 4. On March 8, the MCD razed a part of the house belonging to the family of the accused, saying it was built on a drain. In their earlier petitions, the petitioners sought directions to protect their residential premises at JJ Colony in Uttam Nagar from "arbitrary and illegal" demolitions by the MCD. The MCD counsel had then assured the court that demolition activity in the area was not selective but was undertaken to remove encroachment by houses on a public drain, and the law did not require the civic body to provide any prior notice for it.



HC issues summons to Arnab on defamation case by Cong

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court on Tuesday issued summons to Republic TV Editor-in-Chief Arnab Goswami on a defamation case by the Congress, which alleged that he had falsely claimed that the Istanbul Congress Centre in Turkiye is the office of the political party. Justice Mini Pushkarna, however, refused to order an interim injunction against the content in the matter at this stage, observing that the broadcast was published in May 2025.

The party's counsel alleged that the defendant made the false claim in the backdrop of the Pahalgam terrorist attack, and the content "continues to damage" the party's reputation. "I am asking for an injunction (in the lawsuit)... I will also ask that the content be stayed... Offending content continues to do damage. People are still talking about it.

They have admitted it is false," the counsel submitted. "Let's see. May 15, 2025, was the broadcast... I will give you a short date," Justice Pushkarna said.

'Bigger tragedy averted; students use Roop Nagar bridge daily'

Authorities say the bridge had already been declared unsafe and closed for public movement. Despite barricades, the bridge continued to be used regularly due to the lack of a convenient alternative route. It connected Gur Mandi to Roop Nagar and served as a crucial shortcut, reducing travel time by nearly 30 minutes as well as the distance by at least one kilometre for students heading to the nearby government schools



woman, believed to be around 50 years old and suspected to be a beggar, was present near one end of the bridge when it collapsed. Her body was later recovered from the drain by rescue personnel.

Personnel from the Delhi Fire Service (DFS), National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and Delhi Police carried out a coordinated rescue operation. Multiple fire tenders were deployed, and the area was cordoned off to prevent further accidents. Officials said the bridge fell under the jurisdiction of the irrigation and flood control department and had been declared unsafe earlier.

Barricades had been put in place to restrict public movement, they added. However, locals and students alleged that the warnings were routinely ignored as the bridge remained a vital link for daily commuters, especially schoolchildren. Zoya, a class 8 student who attends school from 7.30 am to 2 pm, said the bridge had been in a visibly dangerous condition for some time before the collapse.

"A portion of it had begun to sink and tilt to one side, especially from the direction where the water flows, making it uneven and unstable.

We avoided holding the railing because the netting was torn, and it felt even more unsafe to rely on it," she said. She added that there was barely enough space for two to three children at a time to enter from the Roop Nagar side on their way to school, leading

to crowding during peak hours. A group of students echoed similar concerns, saying the structure would shake whenever people stood on it, creating fear among those crossing daily.

"It used to wobble when we stood on it. We had to walk very carefully, but even holding onto the railing felt unsafe because the mesh was broken. We were scared we might fall," they said. Residents said the timing of the collapse likely prevented a much larger disaster, as the bridge sees its highest footfall during early morning hours when students rush to school. "Had it collapsed even an hour earlier, the consequences could have been very deadly," a local resident said, adding that hundreds of students use the bridge between 7 am and 8.30 am every day.

Visuals from the scene showed the iron structure collapse into the drain, with parts of it submerged in water and twisted metal scattered around. Authorities said efforts are underway to ascertain the identity of the deceased woman. A detailed inspection will also be carried out to determine the exact cause of the collapse.

Police said the area has been secured and movement restricted, while officials from the department concerned are expected to assess the site and plan further action. Locals demanded immediate construction of a safe alternative route. Police said further action will be taken after a technical assessment of the site.

If Jagga Reddy becomes TPCC chief, Cong will win 100 MLA seats: Minister Komatireddy

Komatireddy Venkat Reddy appeals to High Command to appoint Jagga Reddy as TPCC chief

- Says Jagga Reddy commands mass following
- He enjoys widespread popularity in Telugu states

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

ROADS & Buildings Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy on Tuesday asserted that if a mass leader like TPCC working president T Jagga Reddy is appointed as Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president, the party is certain to win 100 MLA seats in the next Assembly elections.

Interacting with media persons in the Assembly lobbies on



Komatireddy Venkat Reddy



T Jagga Reddy

Tuesday, Venkat Reddy described Jagga Reddy as a leader with deep grassroots connections. The Minister strongly backed Jagga Reddy's elevation to the top party post. He said Jagga Reddy enjoys widespread popularity across both Telugu states and has the ability to mobilize support at all levels of the party. Drawing comparisons with vet-

eran leader late P Janardhan Reddy (PJR), the Minister noted that Jagga Reddy commands a similar mass following. He emphasized that Jagga Reddy is capable of uniting leaders and party workers alike, from the grassroots to the top leadership.

Venkat Reddy appealed to the Congress High Command to seri-

ously consider appointing Jagga Reddy as PCC president, stating that the current political scenario demands a leader of his stature. The Minister reiterated that Jagga Reddy's leadership could significantly boost the party's prospects in all elections.

Jagga Reddy had earlier been a contender for the TPCC post, including during the appointments of Revanth Reddy and Mahesh Kumar Goud. During that time, Jagga Reddy had himself expressed interest in taking up the top post and openly appealed to the Congress High Command to appoint him as the TPCC chief.

With Komatireddy Venkat Reddy and other senior leaders now backing Jagga Reddy for the TPCC president post, it remains to be seen how the Congress High Command responds to the growing demand within the party ranks.

Court convicts man of heroin trafficking

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court has convicted a man in a narcotics case involving recovery of commercial quantity of heroin, saying the prosecution has proved the chain of evidence and recovery beyond reasonable doubt. Special Judge (NDPS) Harvinder Singh Johal was hearing a case against Mohit Kumar who was accused under Section 29 (criminal conspiracy) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. Kumar was accused of procuring heroin from Uttar Pradesh and

supplying the substance in Delhi.

He was arrested on September 15, 2017 by the Delhi Police's Crime Branch based on a tip-off. Another person was also arrested along with Mohit, who died during the trial.

According to the prosecution, Kumar was found in possession of a commercial quantity of heroin, packed in small packets for distribution. During the trial, the defence raised objections regarding alleged procedural lapses, including non-compliance with provisions related to sampling and handling of seized contraband.

LG plans to develop city as global capital

NEW DELHI: Chief Minister Rekha Gupta and her Cabinet colleagues called on Lt Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu at Lok Niwas on Monday, and shared with him ongoing initiatives of the Delhi government aimed at achieving the Centre's Viksit Bharat vision.

The LG underlined the key challenges and opportunities and the collective resolve to develop Delhi as a global capital aligned with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision, Lok Niwas said in a post on X. Senior officers of the Delhi government, including Chief Secretary Rajeev Shar-



ma, also met Sandhu. The LG reviewed key governance and administrative matters concerning Delhi with the officers, the Lok Niwas said. The LG, in a meeting with the Police Commissioner and Special Commissioners of Delhi Police, appreciated their efforts and the challenges involved towards policing in the national capital. He encouraged them to further enhance policing to

ensure safe and secure Delhi as per the city's status as the country's national capital, the Lok Niwas said in another post on X.

Within a week after taking charge as the Delhi Lt Governor, Sandhu has been holding a series of meetings with top officers of different departments, discussing with them governance and development related matters.

He also delivered a keynote address on the role of technology in nation building, at National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM) Global Confluence 2026 held in the city.

3 held for robbing rly passengers

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

DELHI Police have arrested three members of a robbery gang who posed as government officials to cheat and rob unsuspecting passengers near the New Delhi railway station, officials said on Tuesday. The accused have been identified as Krishan Kumar (50), an auto driver from Fatehpur Beri in Delhi, Ravi Kumar (50) from Agra, and Rahul Gupta (32), also from Fatehpur Beri, they said.

Police said the gang targeted passengers waiting for public transport near the New Delhi railway station and adjoining areas, posing as officials conducting "security verification".

Krishan would pick up victims in his auto, Rahul would pose as a co-passenger to gain their trust, while Ravi Kumar, the alleged mastermind, would pose as a government official and carry out the fake verification, police said.

On the pretext of checking, the accused would take cash and ATM cards from the victims, obtain the PIN and replace the original cards with duplicate ones placed inside an envelope, which the victims were



asked to open only after reaching home.

The gang would then withdraw money using the stolen cards, police said. The matter came to light on March 12 when a PCR call was received at the Kamla Market police station reporting a robbery.

The complainant, a resident of Faridabad, told police that he reached Delhi from Darbhanga in Bihar and was waiting for a bus near the Tagore Road cut when an auto driver approached him and offered a ride to Badarpur.

During the journey, two more persons boarded the auto, one of whom introduced himself as a government official and began checking the complainant's belongings on the pretext of security verification, a senior police officer said.

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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.



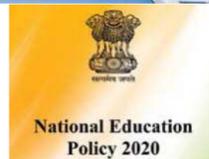
Blind spots and missteps:

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

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 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 immunity. Crossbred animals are



Picture for illustrative purpose only

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. LLDPE 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 influenced petrochemical

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.

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.

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.

NORTHERN RAILWAY OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE	
Invitation of tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement Systems) The Divisional Engineer/Track, Northern Railway, Delhi Division for and on behalf of President of India invites E-Tender on prescribed form for the following work:-	
1. Name of work with its location	Pre and Post attention work for plain track tamping machine and for turnout tamping machines over Delhi Division. (NIT-18-25-26-WC)
2. Approx. cost of work	(1) Rs. 5,65,65,418.40/-
3. Earnest Money	(1) Rs. 13,31,400/-
4. Date and Starting time for filling e-tender & Tender opening time	Starting time for filling e-tender is Date-24.03.2026 at 15:00 hrs. & Tender opening time is Date-09.04.2026 at 15:00 Hrs.
5. Website particulars, published e-tender notice location etc. complete details of tender can be seen and web site where the tender form can be downloaded	Above tender available on IREPS site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in
No.- 128-W/Sr.DEN-C/NIT-18-25-26-WC Dated: 16.03.2026	
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 688/2026	

NORTHERN RAILWAY CORRIGENDUM TO TENDER NOTICE - I		
Sr DEE/Chg/DLI office tender notice for the following work due for opening on 07.04.2026 at 15:01 hrs. Due to adding/deleting in Tender Documents, the firm shall have to download the tender documents from the Railway website. All other terms & conditions will remain the same.		
Tender No.	30-Elect-10T-Chg-2025-26	
Description of work	Cleaning of fresh air & Return air filters, AC grills and cooling/condenser coils of AC coaches during maintenance worksat Washing Line/Sick Line and On-Board Electrical Escorting Duties in Primary-Based Shatabdi/Tejas/Shatabdi Type/Rajdhani/Duronto/Gatman/AC/Express Trains under HNZM Depot over Delhi Division for three years.	
Contact Value (Rs.)	Earnest Money (Rs.)	Period of completion
12,18,74,697.01	7,59,400/-	36 Months
No. 30-Elect-10T-Chg-2025-26 Dated: 17.03.2026		
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 911/2026		



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

TG men's TT team wins bronze at Senior Nationals

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

NDA FIELDS FATHER AND SON IN KERALA

KOTTAYAM (KERALA)

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

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



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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the politically significant Pala constituency, Shone George is fighting LDF leader and Kerala Congress (Mani) supremo Jose K Mani and the sitting UDF MLA Mani 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.

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. Madhumita Agrawal, CEO, Oben Electric, said: "Daily commuting demands consistency, reliability and ownership confidence. Seeing riders clock over 3.2 crore kilometres on Oben motorcycles across cities and riding conditions is a strong reflection of how customers are integrating these motorcycles into their everyday mobility."

Indian Americans rank high in US earnings

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

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

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

Highest earners

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

more annually, nearly 80 per cent higher than the typical

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



vivo launches T5x model

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Japan, S Korea preferred for spring travel'

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

Sebi tweaks SGF rules to ease compliance

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

fuelled by AI workloads across industries.

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

Kaspersky to double India's investments

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

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

Markets extend rally amid positive trend in global mkts

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

Positive Trend

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

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

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



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

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

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

Ltd, said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



ACADEMY AWARDS ANALYSIS

Originals rule the night

2026 Oscars signal a bold shift in Hollywood power play

SUHAS SISTU

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



PROUD MOMENT

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

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



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

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

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

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



Anirudh joins hands with Universal Music India for global label expansion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

On the non-theatrical front, the film has locked



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

The film's promotional content has also gained

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



‘Youth’ team promises energetic entertainer

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

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



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

Cinematographer Suriya Balaji praised the producers' promotional approach, while

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

reception among Telugu audiences.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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