



# THE Hans India



Simultaneously published from Hyderabad | Warangal | Tirupati | Vijayawada | Visakhapatnam | Khammam | Kurnool | Delhi

For Advertisement Pl Call: 809696713

Follow @ / thehansindia / thehansindiaweb / thehansindia / TheHansIndiaWeb / thehansindia

Book your Copy: 97055 55551



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

### TOP TRUMP AIDE JOE KENT RESIGNS

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump's counterterrorism chief Joe Kent on Tuesday resigned over the ongoing US-Iran conflict, stating that Tehran posed "no imminent threat to our nation." He claimed that the war was initiated due to pressure

from Israel and its lobby in the US. Kent, who served as Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, announced his decision in a post on X, saying, "after much reflection, I have decided to resign from my position effective today."

Continued on Page 7

## CM to launch 'Divyang Shakti' scheme today

▶ New scheme facilitates free bus travel to people with disabilities

HANS NEWS SERVICE

AMARAVATI: Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu will launch 'Divyang Shakti' scheme in Amaravati on Wednesday. This will offer free bus travel to people with disabilities across the state. MLAs will simultaneously inaugurate the programme in their respective constituencies. The initiative fulfills a promise the Chief Minister made on December 3 last year, observed as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Under the new scheme, people with 40 per cent or more disability can travel free of cost on buses currently covered under the Stree Shakti Scheme. Cont'd on Page 7

## LPG SITUATION A MATTER OF CONCERN, SAYS GOVT

HANS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



distributor is facing a dry-out situation at present. In addition, LPG supplies and cylinder deliveries for all domestic consumers are continuing as

usual. With regard to online booking, I would like to inform you that there has been significant improvement, and as of today, nearly 94% of cyl-

3 lakh MT LPG stranded at Hormuz P7

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

Several governments, including those of Bihar, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Manipur, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand, have already issued allocation orders for non-domestic LPG," she added. Cont'd on Page 7

## No need to panic about LPG supply: CM Naidu

State has 15 days of LPG stock

HANS NEWS SERVICE

AMARAVATI: Andhra Pradesh has adequate LPG reserves for the next 15 days, and there is no need for public concern over cooking gas supplies, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu said on Tuesday. The state currently holds 14,000 metric tonnes of LPG, while another 24,000 metric tonnes of gas is available at Visakhapatnam, providing a comfortable buffer, the Chief Minister said. Cont'd on Page 7

**RAMZAN TIMINGS**

IFTAR (Wed) 6.32 PM  
SEHAR (Thu) 4.59 AM

**PAGE: 7**

**Iran security chief Larijani killed in Israel strike?**

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

**Mamata locks horns with BJP's Suvendu again**

**Govt clarifies on eKYC norms for LPG**

**IRREGULAR by MANJUL**

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

## Parl panel suggests ₹7,500 EPF pension

HANS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

A Parliamentary panel on Tuesday recommended an urgent, comprehensive review of the Rs 1,000 minimum monthly pension under the Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995, to raise it to a more realistic and dignified level.

This assumes significance in view of pensioners' demand to raise the pension to Rs 7,500 per month, as Rs 1,000 is not sufficient to make both ends meet. Pensioners under the



Employees' Pension Scheme 1995 (EPS-95) run by the retirement fund body EPFO had also staged a three-day protest at Jantar Mantar from March 9, for increasing the minimum monthly pension to Rs 7,500.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour, Textiles and Skill Development, in its 15th Report on 'Demands for Grants (2026-27)' of the Ministry of Labour and Employment, noted that the minimum

pension of Rs 1,000 per month under the Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995, has remained unchanged for a considerable period of time despite the rising cost of living.

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

Continued on Page 7

## 6 LPG, crude oil ships to reach Vizag Port soon

RANI DEVALLA VISAKHAPATNAM

MUCH to the relief of the consumers, two vessels carrying tonnes of commercial LPG are bound to arrive in Visakhapatnam Port from the Strait of Hormuz on March 26, 30.

According to port officials, each ship is likely to contain 25,000 to 30,000 metric tonnes of commercial LPG. And the quantity is expected to provide a huge relief to LPG users who are in dire need of it now. Following

shipping disruptions at the Strait of Hormuz, scores of hotels and restaurants have been reeling under severe supply crunch of commercial LPG cylinders.

With a shipment from Qatar arriving earlier and its unloading exercise coming to a close, the other two vessels would take the total quantity to 60,000 metric tonnes of LPG. "These vessels are arriving by the end of this month," a senior port official told The Hans India on condition of anonymity.

Continued on Page 7




# Divyanga Shakti

Free Bus Travel for Persons with Disabilities



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

Hon'ble Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh  
**Sri Nara Chandrababu Naidu**  
will launch the "Divyanga Shakti" program on March 18, 2026.

**Buses eligible for free travel**

City Ordinary, Metro Express, Express, Pallevelugu and Ultra Pallevelugu buses.

**Eligibility**

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

**Subsidy**

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

**Beneficiary Expansion**

**2.06 lakh** Existing Beneficiaries

**12.76 lakh** Total Beneficiaries (including escorts)



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

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

**VISAKHAPATNAM METROPOLITAN REGION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**  
**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
**Rc.No.11021/47/2026/L9 (E-3171856), Dt.16-03-2026.**  
 Application of M/s. Shreya Properties, Rep. by its Managing Partner Sri. Medapati Nanda Kishore requested for approval of layout for an extent of Ac.10.6973 Cts., covered in Sy.No.29/3part, 30/1part, 2part, 3part, 4part, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11part, 31/4part, 5part, 44part and LPM Nos. 1578part, 1579 of Kondakarakam Village of Vizianagaram Mandal, Vizianagaram District vide file Rc.No. 1167/0226/LP/VRDA/2026 is under process in VMRDA. Hence, the general public are hereby informed to submit their objections/suggestions any in this regard within 7 days from the date of publication to VMRDA pertaining to the above approval of layout application failing which it will be construed that there are no objections/suggestions etc., and the above approval of layout application will be processed as per rules.  
**Sd/- Metropolitan Commissioner, VMRDA**

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**  
**MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS NEW DELHI**  
**OFFICE OF THE REVENUE DIVISION OFFICER, ANNAMAYYA DISTRICT, MADANAPALLE**  
**3(A) NOTIFICATION U/S NH ACT 1956**  
**S.O.1225 (E) -** .....In exercise of powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 3A of the National Highways Act,1956 (48 of 1956) (hereinafter referred to as the said Act), the Central Government, after being satisfied that for the public purpose, the land, the brief description of which is given in the Schedule below, is required for building widening, two/four lane with paved shoulders etc.,), maintenance, management and operation of National Highway No.440 in the stretch of land from Km.0+000 to Km.50+000 (Rayachoty to Vempalli section) in Annamayya District in the state of ANDHRA PRADESH, hereby declares its intention to acquire such land.  
 Any person interested in the said land may, within twenty-one days from the date of publication of this notification in the Official Gazette, object to the use of such land for the aforesaid purpose under sub-section(1) of section 3C of the said Act. Every such objection shall be made to the Competent Authority, namely, Joint Collector, Annamayya District, Madanapalle, in writing and shall set out the grounds thereof and the Competent Authority shall give the objector an opportunity of being heard, either in person or by a legal practitioner, and may, after hearing all such objections and after making such further enquiry, if any, as the Competent Authority thinks necessary, by order, either allow or disallow the objections.  
 Any order made by the Competent Authority under sub-section (2) of section 3C of the said Act shall be final.  
 The land plans and other details of the land covered under their notification are available and can be inspected by the interested person at the aforesaid office of the Competent Authority.  
**SCHEDULE**  
**Brief Description of the land to be acquired with or without structures falling in the stretch of land from Km. 0+000 to Km. 50+000 (Rayachoty to Vempalli Section) of NH No.440 in the district of Annamayya in the state of Andhra Pradesh**  
  
 (In English)  
  
 (In Telugu)  
**Sd/- Joint Collector, ANNAMAYYA DISTRICT, MADANAPALLE**

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**  
**MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS NEW DELHI**  
**OFFICE OF THE REVENUE DIVISION OFFICER, BADVEL, YSR KADAPA DISTRICT**  
**3(A) NOTIFICATION U/S NH ACT 1956**  
**S.O.1224 (E) -** .....In exercise of powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 3A of the National Highways Act,1956 (48 of 1956) (hereinafter referred to as the said Act), the Central Government, after being satisfied that for the public purpose, the land, the brief description of which is given in the Schedule below, is required for building widening, two/four lane with paved shoulders etc.,), maintenance, management and operation of National Highway No.167B in the stretch of land from Km.0+000 to Km.58+635 (Mydukur to Singarayakonda section) in YSR Kadapa District in the state of ANDHRA PRADESH, hereby declares its intention to acquire such land.  
 Any person interested in the said land may, within twenty-one days from the date of publication of this notification in the Official Gazette, object to the use of such land for the aforesaid purpose under sub-section(1) of section 3C of the said Act. Every such objection shall be made to the Competent Authority, namely, REVENUE DIVISIONAL OFFICER, Badvel, YSR Kadapa District, in writing and shall set out the grounds thereof and the Competent Authority shall give the objector an opportunity of being heard, either in person or by a legal practitioner, and may, after hearing all such objections and after making such further enquiry, if any, as the Competent Authority thinks necessary, by order, either allow or disallow the objections.  
 Any order made by the Competent Authority under sub-section (2) of section 3C of the said Act shall be final.  
 The land plans and other details of the land covered under their notification are available and can be inspected by the interested person at the aforesaid office of the Competent Authority.  
**SCHEDULE**  
**Brief Description of the land to be acquired with or without structures falling in the stretch of land from Km. 0+000 to Km. 58+635 (Mydukur to Singarayakonda section) of NH No.167B in the district of Y. S. R. (Kadapa) in the state of ANDHRA PRADESH**  
  
 (In English)  
  
 (In Telugu)  
**Sd/- Revenue Divisional Officer, Badvel, YSR Kadapa District**

**GODAVARI PUSHKARAMS**

**Bridges' condition causes concern**

- Rajamahendravaram is connected to major cities such as Vijayawada, Hyderabad and Khammam through three primary road routes
- The Gammon Bridge, opened in 2015 to handle Pushkaram traffic, is also facing technical challenges



Road-cum-Rail Bridge



Dowleswaram Barrage Road

DEEKSHITULA  
 SUBRAHMANYAM  
 RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM

**CONCERNS** are mounting over the condition of key bridges leading into the city ahead of the 2027 Godavari Pushkarams, with officials and residents questioning their capacity to handle the expected surge in traffic. Rajamahendravaram is connected to major cities such as Vijayawada, Hyderabad and Khammam through three primary road routes. Vehicles travelling along each of these routes must cross the Godavari River via bridges to enter the city. However, all three major bridges on these routes are showing signs of strain due to age and technical issues, raising serious questions over preparedness for the mega river festival. Commuters travelling from different parts of the state and the country via Vijayawada have to take routes through Nallajerla or via Tanuku and Ravulapalem after crossing Eluru. Vehicles coming through Nallajerla reach the city either by crossing the Gammon Bridge from Dommeru

or via the Road-cum-Rail Bridge from Kovvur. Those travelling from Tadepalligudem through Nidadavole enter Rajamahendravaram via Vijeswaram by crossing the Dowleswaram barrage bridge. Except for the Ravulapalem route, all other approaches require crossing one of the three major bridges, leaving no real alternative corridors. The Godavari Road-cum-Rail Bridge between Kovvur and Rajamahendravaram, inaugurated in 1974, has crossed 50 years of service. Though designed for a lifespan of 65 years, the bridge has been under stress due to continuous usage. Authorities imposed a ban on heavy vehicles in July 2023 after structural damage was observed at deck joints. At present, only light vehicles and limited public transport are allowed. Repair works are ongoing, including the replacement of damaged railings with iron structures. The bridge has also witnessed periodic closures in recent years for maintenance. The Gammon Bridge, opened in 2015 to

handle Pushkaram traffic, is also facing technical challenges. Officials have identified issues with bearings, particularly at pillar number 52, where slight sinking and vibrations have been observed. Out of 37 bearings, several have worn out and are being replaced. Due to repair works and partial lane closures, traffic congestion has become frequent on this bridge. The bridge across the Dowleswaram barrage between Vijeswaram and Dhavaleswaram, which has been in use since 1982, is another crucial link. As it is part of a barrage structure, authorities allow only limited traffic to avoid pressure on the dam. Heavy vehicles are generally not permitted, and the narrow roadway adds to congestion as vehicles from Ravulapalem, Atreyapuram, Vadapalli, Tadepalligudem and Nidadavole use this route. The bridge has also undergone repairs at various times due to its inability to cope with increasing traffic. Traffic disruptions during the 2015 Pushkarams continue to serve as a reminder.

Hundreds of buses and private vehicles were stranded for hours at locations such as Nallajerla, Kovvur and Ravulapalem due to heavy congestion. Despite all three bridges being operational at that time, the situation could not be managed effectively. Though the Outer Ring Road has been proposed as a long-term solution to ease congestion and provide an alternative corridor for vehicles bypassing the city, there has been little progress on the ground so far. Given the scale of planning, land acquisition and construction involved, officials indicate that completing the project before the Pushkarams remains highly unlikely. RTI activist Varada Nag-eswara Rao said, "Even when all bridges were fully functional in 2015, traffic chaos could not be avoided. Now that these bridges are facing multiple issues, authorities must clearly explain what alternative arrangements are being planned." District Superintendent of Police D Narasimha Kishore said, "We are planning to divert Pushkaram traffic via

Diwan Cheruvu and Vema-giri towards the proposed Katheru ghat. A comprehensive traffic management plan is being prepared, keeping in view the limitations of the existing bridges." State Tourism, Culture and Cinematography Minister Kandula Durgesh said, "We aim to reduce pressure on Rajamahendravaram by developing bathing ghats at Madduru Lanka, Kovvur and Katheru with full facilities. Plans are also under consideration to set up tent cities at Bridgelanka and Pichukalanka. Large-scale parking areas, Pushkar Nagars and satellite bus stations will be created between Diwan Cheruvu and Katheru to regulate traffic effectively." With less than two years remaining for the Godavari Pushkarams, the focus has now shifted to infrastructure readiness. The condition of the bridges and the lack of alternative routes have made it clear that careful planning and timely execution will be key to managing the massive influx of pilgrims expected during the festival.

**50% interest waiver offer**

HANS NEWS SERVICE GUNTUR

THE government will waive 50% of interest, if the all property tax and vacant land tax dues paid in a lump sum on or before the end of this month. The government issued a GO to this effect on Tuesday. Guntur Municipal Corporation commissioner K Mayur Ashok stated that taxpayers who clear their pending property tax and vacant land tax dues in one instalment within this month will be eligible for a 50% rebate on the interest amount as per the Government orders. He further clarified that taxpayers who have already paid their dues along with interest during the current financial year will have 50% of the interest amount credited towards their property tax for the upcoming financial year. Those who have partially paid their property tax and still have pending dues can also avail the interest rebate by clearing the balance amount in full before the end of this month. He urged all taxpayers in the city to utilise this opportunity and contribute towards the development of the city. Administrative secretaries have been instructed to conduct door-to-door visits and distribute slips containing details of tax dues with applicable interest rebate, along with water charges, within two days ensuring 100% coverage. Tax collection counters will function from 6:00 am to 10:00 pm starting Wednesday.

**AP Power Trends magazine released**

HANS NEWS SERVICE VIJAYAWADA

APCPDCL CMD and APGENCO MD P Pulla Reddy formally unveiled the Andhra Pradesh Power Trends Magazine (Volume-2) at his chamber in Vijayawada on Tuesday. Hydal Directors M Sujay Kumar and Usha were present on the occasion. Speaking after the release, Pulla Reddy said the in-house publication serves as an important platform for understanding the latest developments in the power sector and for sharing technical knowledge among engineers



APSPDCL CMD P Pulla Reddy unveiling Andhra Pradesh Power Trends Magazine (Volume-2) at his chamber in Vijayawada on Tuesday

and professionals. Highlighting the State's growing energy needs, he said that Andhra Pradesh recently recorded a daily consumption of about 264.65 million units — the highest since

bifurcation. He assured that the government and power utilities are well-prepared to meet future demand without compromising on reliability. The APSEB Engineers Association congratulated all authors who contributed articles to the magazine. It also lauded the efforts of B Vamsi Srinivas, Technical Secretary, and TVVDV Prasad, Chairman of the Technical Committee, along with committee members, for successfully bringing out the publication. K Nagaprasad, Secretary General, KV Ramarao, Associate President, D Nagaraju, AGS, B Vamsi Srinivas, Technical Secretary, and others were present.

**Pay tax on time, avail loan waiver: Commissioner**

HANS NEWS SERVICE TIRUPATI

HOUSE owners under Tirupati Municipal Corporation limits are requested to clear all pending property taxes in a single payment to avail 50% waiver on interest, said Commissioner N Mourya. The Andhra Pradesh government has issued orders in G.O.Ms.No. 58 MA&UD (C2) Department dated 16-03-2026, offering 50% interest relief on property tax payments. Commissioner said property tax payers should make use of this opportunity.

She said as per the state government orders, house tax and vacant land tax dues payable to the Municipal Corporation in single payment by March 31, will qualify for 50% waiver on the levied interest. House owners, property tax payers under Tirupati Municipal Corporation are appealed to utilize this opportunity provided by the government, clear their house tax and vacant land tax dues immediately, and avail 50% interest waiver. This benefit is available only up to March 31 with no extensions, she added.

**WORLD SOCIAL WORK DAY CELEBRATED**



NELLORE The Department of Social Work at Vikrama Simhapuri University organised the celebrations of World Social Work Day with great enthusiasm on Tuesday. The event was graced by the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Allam Srinivasa Rao, as the Chief Guest, who inaugurated

the program by lighting the ceremonial lamp. Addressing the gathering, the Vice-Chancellor emphasized that social workers play a vital role in uplifting marginalised and underprivileged sections of society. He appreciated their invaluable contributions and encouraged students to go beyond classroom

learning by engaging in fieldwork to gain practical experience. He highlighted that there are vast opportunities in areas such as rural development, women empowerment, and environmental protection. He also remarked that social service is not just a responsibility, but a sacred duty.

**RSASTF wins seven Ugadi-2026 service medals**

HANS NEWS SERVICE TIRUPATI THE Andhra Pradesh government has announced seven Ugadi-2026 service medals to the Red Sanders Anti-Smuggling Task Force (RSASTF) for their exemplary efforts in curbing illegal red sanders transportation.

Task Force Head L Subba Rayudu and SP P Srinivas recommended these awards to honor the outstanding performance of officials and staff. The awardees include Reserve Inspector B Satya Sai Giridhar, Reserve Sub-Inspector C Vinod Kumar, Constable M Manikanta, Head Constable K Rajesh Raju, M Ven-

kataramana, Constable M Rajesh, D Kiran RSASTF in-charge Subba Rayudu stated that the State government has presented these prestigious medals to mark Ugadi. SP P Srinivas congratulated the awardees and urged the team to maintain the same dedication to win more honors in the future.

**HFS Hiranandani Financial Services**  
**HIRANANDANI FINANCIAL SERVICES PRIVATE LIMITED**  
 Regd. Office: 514, Dalamal Towers, 211 Free Press Journal Marg, Nariman Point, Mumbai-400021.  
 Corporate Office: 9<sup>th</sup> Floor, Sigma Towers, Hiranandani Business Park, Technology Street, Powai, Mumbai - 400076.  
 Email: wecare@hfs.in • Website: www.hfs.in • Tel. No.: 022-25763623 • CIN No.: U65999MH2017PTC291060

**DEMAND NOTICE**  
 UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE SECURITIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002 ("the Act") AND THE SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002 ("the Rules")  
 The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Hiranandani Financial Services Pvt. Ltd. (hereinafter referred to as "HFS") under the Act in exercise of the powers conferred under Section 13(12) of the Act read with Rule 3 issued Demand Notice(s) under Section 13(2) of the Act, calling upon the following borrower(s) to repay the amount mentioned in the respective notice(s) within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The undersigned reasonably believes that borrower(s) is/ are avoiding the service of the Demand Notice(s), therefore the service of notice is being effected by affixation and publication as per Rules. The contents of Demand Notice(s) are extracted herein below:

Loan Account No. & Name of the Borrower / Co-Borrowers / Address	Dt. of Demand Notice U/s. 13(2) & Total O/s.	Description of Secured Assets / Mortgage Property
LAN : 4375031101027966 Customer Id: 82744 1. Korbilli Mahesh (Borrower) 2. Edibilli Jyothi (Co-Borrower) Add For Sr. No. 1: 0r No 13-10000 Bus Stand Bobbili, Vizianagaram Andhra Pradesh- 535558. Add For Sr. No. 2: 25- 14415 Siripurupu Veedhi, Revenue Ward No 8 Bobbili, Vizianagaram, Andhra Pradesh- 535558.	Dated : 16.03.2026 For LAN : 4375031101027966 Rs. 24, 03, 575/- (Rupees Twenty-Four Lakh Three Thousand Five Hundred & Seventy-Five Only) as on 10.03.2026 & NPA DATE : 04.03.2026	All That Site Measuring An Extent Of 333 Sq.yds Or 275.88 Sq.mtrs, Being Plot No.g, S No 278-3 Of Patha Bobbili Revenue, Bobbili Village, Siripurupu Street, Ward No.17, Block No. 25, Nearest Door No.25-120/2, Bobbili Within The Limits Of Bobbili Municipality, Bobbili Mandalam, Vizianagaram Dist. Being Bounded By: East: House Of Vemakoti Narasimha Murthy, South: Dry Land Of Sate Narasinga Rao, West: Dry Land Of Sate Narasinga Rao, North: 20 Feet Road A Site Measuring An Extent Of 55 Sq.yds Or 45.98 Sq.mtrs, Being An Individual Share A Out Of Total Extent 530 Sq.yds, Up Area Of 861 Sq.feet And Common Area 215 Sq Feet Total 1076 Sq. Feet, Plot No.302 East Facing In 2nd Floor, Bobbili Bobbili Municipality, Bobbili Mandal, Sub-Registrar Office Bobbili, Vizianagaram District, Bounded By East : Common Area, South: Sky Area, West: Dry Land Of Sate Narasinga Rao North: Joint Wall Of Fno 301, 302. Together With Anything Attached To The Earth Or Permanently Fastened To Anything Attached To The Earth With All Present And Future Structures Thereon.

The borrower(s) are hereby advised to comply with the Demand Notice(s) and to pay the demand amount mentioned therein and herein above within 60 days from the date of this publication together with applicable interest, additional interest, bounce charges, cost and expenses till the date of realization of payment. The borrower(s) may note that HFS is a secured creditor and the loan facility availed by the Borrower(s) is a secured debt against the immovable property / properties being the secured asset(s) mortgaged by the borrower(s). In the event borrower(s) are failed to discharge their liabilities in full within the stipulated time, HFS shall be entitled to exercise all the rights under section 13(4) of the Act to take possession of the secured asset(s) including but not limited to transfer the same by way of sale or by invoking any other remedy available under the Act and the Rules thereunder and realize payment. HFS is also empowered to ATTACH AND / OR SEAL the secured asset(s) before enforcing the right to sale or transfer. Subsequent to the Sale of the secured asset(s), HFS also has a right to initiate separate legal proceedings to recover the balance dues, in case the value of the mortgaged properties is insufficient to cover the dues payable to the HFS. This remedy is in addition and independent of all the other remedies available to HFS under any other law. The attention of the borrower(s) is invited to Section 13(8) of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets and further to Section 13(13) of the Act, whereby the borrower(s) are restrained / prohibited from disposing of or dealing with the secured asset(s) or transferring by way of sale, lease or otherwise (other than in the ordinary course of business) any of the secured asset(s), without prior written consent of HFS and non-compliance with the above is an offence punishable under Section 29 of the said Act. The copy of the Demand Notice is available with the undersigned and the borrower(s) may, if they so desire, can collect the same from the undersigned on any working day during normal office hours.

**Sd/-**  
 Place : Vizianagaram, Andhra Pradesh  
 Date : 18.03.2026  
 Authorized Officer,  
 Hiranandani Financial Services Private Limited

# After five years, civic body's governing council draws its curtains down

- Back on March 14, 2021, the GVMC elections were held and corporators took oath four days later
- With the completion of their full term, all elected representatives have now formally stepped down
- Given the current constraints, officials and public representatives anticipate that this arrangement may continue for about six months

VASU POTNURU  
VISAKHAPATNAM



A view of Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation main building in Visakhapatnam

The tenure of the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) governing council officially concluded on March 17 (Tuesday), marking 'the end' of a five-year-long chapter in the city's civic administration.

Back on March 14, 2021, the GVMC elections were held and corporators took oath four days later on March 18.

With the completion of their full term, all elected representatives have now formally stepped down on Tuesday.

However, despite the completion of the council's tenure, immediate elections could not be conducted due to ongoing academic commitments, including Class 10 and Intermediate examinations.

As a result, beginning from Wednesday, the GVMC will be administered under a Special Officer administration, with District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad appointed as a Special Officer to oversee the civic governance.

Given the current constraints, officials and public representatives anticipate that this arrangement

may continue for about six months.

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has already instructed public representatives to remain actively engaged with citizens and gear up for the ensuing local body elections.

However, elections will only be scheduled after the completion of the examination period, finalisation

of reservation policies and conclusion of the ongoing caste census.

Government sources indicate that these exercises may take another two to three months. With elections across municipal bodies, including GVMC, the polls are expected in the next six months if timelines are met as planned.

Adding another layer of complexity, proposals are under consideration to expand GVMC's jurisdiction.

This includes the merger of remaining villages in Bheemunipatnam mandal, 72 villages from Anandapuram and Padmanabham mandals and rest of the areas of Pendurthi mandal.

Earlier, both Pendurthi and Bheemunipatnam MLAs Pachakarla Ramesh Babu and Ganta Srinivasa Rao have formally requested the government to approve these mergers. In response to their request, the government has directed the GVMC officials to study its feasibility and submit a detailed report. However, if the report favours expansion, officials caution that elections would face further delay as administrative restructuring needs to be completed before that.

# Significant development witnessed in past 11 months: Mayor

- States that he was given an opportunity to achieve significant development in a short span of time
- Underlines that he had accorded equal priority to resolving issues across all wards of the corporation
- Adds that numerous developmental initiatives were brought to fruition through the collaborative efforts of officials and corporators

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VISAKHAPATNAM

MAYOR Peela Srinivasa Rao expressed delight over the cooperation extended by the people of Visakhapatnam and termed it as an unforgettable experience during his 11-month-long tenure as Mayor that ended on March 17. Stating that it gave him immense satisfaction to serve as a Mayor at a media conference held on Tuesday marking the end of the GVMC Council body term, he mentioned that he was given an opportunity to achieve significant development in a short span of time.

He underlined that he had accorded equal priority to resolving issues across all wards of the corporation.



Mayor Peela Srinivasa Rao

International events such as the G-20 Summit and the International Fleet Review (IFR) were successfully executed with the support of GVMC Commissioner Ketan Garg, Srinivasa Rao stated.

Further, he stated that numerous developmental initiatives were brought to fruition through the collaborative efforts of the officials and corporators.

The Mayor highlighted that they had established a closer rapport with the city's residents through the 'Good Morning' initiative and were able to complete development works to the tune of Rs.760 crore. He emphasised that utmost priority was given to providing infrastructure for the public, and he clarified that the staff had made absolutely no compromise

regarding the 'Night Cleaning' operations undertaken along the Beach Road.

He recalled that while the YSRCP regime laid roads primarily to facilitate real estate business, the NDA government laid roads specifically to meet the requirements of the people. On the last day of his mayorship, he recalled that the duration of their governance was not critical but what truly mattered was whether they delivered a people-centric and welfare-oriented administration or not.

As the GVMC's administrative term officially concluded on Tuesday, Mayor Peela Srinivasa Rao extended gratitude to the stakeholders on behalf of the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation.

# Permanent solution likely for Gajuwaka garbage transfer station

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VISAKHAPATNAM

MINISTER for Municipal Administration and Urban Development P Narayana stated that a permanent solution will be executed for the issues related to Gajuwaka garbage transfer station and assured that residents need not to worry about it.

Inaugurating Alluri Sitarama Raju Park, developed over 4.75 acres in HB Colony, Gajuwaka on Tuesday, the Minister mentioned that Gajuwaka MLA Palla Srinivasa Rao had brought to his attention the hardships faced by residents due to foul smell emanating from the garbage transfer station and requested for a solution to it.

In response, the minister directed the officials to ensure that waste is transported promptly to waste-to-energy plants, eliminating the need for a dumping yard.

He also instructed GVMC Commissioner Ketan Garg to undertake planned modernisation of the garbage transfer station without causing inconvenience to the public.

The minister stated that the park, developed at a cost of approximately Rs.10 crore facilitating modern amenities including an amphitheatre with gallery, skating rink, cricket net, cafeteria, toilet blocks, drainage system, security cabin, water fountain with statue, grand entrance arch, walking track, children's play equipment, greenery, flooring, modern gym equipment and compound wall.

Narayana added that tenders worth Rs.14,000 crore have been invited to provide drinking water to every household, and within the next two years, safe drinking water will be ensured across municipalities. He stated that drainage works worth Rs.5,000 crore have been undertaken, and an additional Rs.4,000 crore from the Central Government in 2026-27 will be used for



Minister for Municipal Administration and Urban Development P Narayana along with VMRDA officials, TDP state president Palla Srinivasa Rao during the inauguration of Alluri Sitarama Raju Park in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday

drinking water, drainage, roads, and electricity infrastructure.

Speaking on the occasion, Gajuwaka MLA Palla Srinivasa Rao highlighted that Rs.250 crore has been spent on development in Gajuwaka over the past 20 months, compared to only Rs.90 crore in the previous five years. He emphasised that the long-pending dumping yard issue will be permanently resolved.

GVMC Commissioner Ketan Garg stated that the civic body is preparing zonal-level development plans focusing on roads, drains, street lighting, and sanitation.

VMRDA Commissioner N Tej Bharat mentioned that several development works are being undertaken in Gajuwaka, including a sports village, a kalyana mandapam in Pedagantyada and cultural spaces to support the city's growth. Deputy Mayor Dalli Govindaraju, corporators, including Palla Srinivasa Rao, Routu Srinivasa Rao, Puli Lakshmi, Stalin, Rajana Ramarao, Molli Mutyalu, Bonda Jagannadham, Mumma Devudu and Lella Koteswara Rao.

# Founders Summit 2026 focuses on 70-plus startups

- The summit witnessed a diverse array of innovations, with startups presenting pitch decks across critical sectors
- Startups are not just businesses, they are the catalysts for the economic and social transformation

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VISAKHAPATNAM

'FOUNDERS Summit 2026' served as an effective platform for over 70 startups from across India to showcase disruptive solutions aimed at solving real-world challenges.

The summit that concluded here on Tuesday witnessed a diverse array of innovations, with startups presenting pitch decks across critical sectors including AI-augmented farming and aquaculture, women's safety and social impact, cyber security and healthcare and next-gen beverages. The jury evaluated the participants on three core pillars -- innovation, scalability and societal impact.

Supported by the Department of Science and Technology (DST), GITAM inclusive Technology Business Incuba-



Experts and participants at the 'Founders Summit 2026' that concluded at the campus in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday

tor (iTBI) organised its flagship event. The institution's iTBI Project Principal Investigator P. Bharani Chandra Kumar informed that the iTBI is an initiative supported by the DST and focuses on nurturing early-stage startups through rigorous mentorship, technical support, and ecosystem networking to foster a culture of entrepreneurship.

He said that the iTBI's commitment to transforming Visakhapatnam into a premier startup hub. He highlighted the incubator's comprehensive support system, including dedicated mentorship, state-of-the-art infrastructure and vital funding pipelines.

The institution's School of Business dean Raja Pappu further elaborated on the institution's vibrant innovation culture, stating, "Our focus remains on interdisciplinary collaboration and consistent industry connect, ensuring

our budding entrepreneurs are industry-ready from day one."

Presenting the awards, Pro Vice-Chancellor Y Gouthama Rao and Registrar D Gunasekaran emphasised that the startup spirit is the engine behind the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat, contributing significantly to national economic growth and technological sovereignty. Startups are not just businesses, they are the catalysts for the economic and social transformation of our nation, they expressed.

While Farm Vidya AI Tech Pvt Ltd and Cryptopix (OPC) Pvt Ltd secured the first and second places in best pitches category, Bharathi Photon Irrigation Systems Pvt Ltd and Sankara Neuro Devices secured the first and second places in the women/social impact category. Zenithzap Beverages Pvt Ltd and Ctoskyai Pvt Ltd got the third place in the summit.

# Waltair Division holds surprise ticket checking drive

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VISAKHAPATNAM

THE ticket checking team of the Waltair Division achieved remarkable success onboard train no. 15629 during its journey from Visakhapatnam to Srikakulam Road.

By securing a special one-minute operational stoppage at Srikakulam Road station, the team conducted an intensive ticket checking drive, resulting in the realization of Rs.2,42,000 from 312

ticketless and irregular passengers.

This swift and effective action was completed within a span of two hours, demonstrating exceptional coordination, vigilance, and commitment of the ticket checking staff.

The division commends the proactive approach and dedication of the ticket checking team in effective crowd management, restricting the ticketless travel and ensuring compliance among passengers.



Ticket checking team of the Waltair Division at a railway station on Tuesday

# CBI court sentences two persons to a five-year imprisonment

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VISAKHAPATNAM

THE CBI Court, Visakhapatnam convicted and sentenced Vempadapu Santhoshi Ramu, who worked as a clerk-cum-cashier of Andhra Bank, Cheepurupalli, Vizianagaram district, and dismissed from service,

and another person Mahanthi Ramana to imprisonment for five years with a fine of Rs.1,71,42,000 for their involvement in a bank fraud case.

The CBI registered the case in 2018 against the accused. It was alleged that the accused Vempadapu Santhoshi Ramu, entered

into a criminal conspiracy with Mahanthi Ramana and thereby committed criminal breach of trust and misappropriated funds to the tune of Rs.1,71,41,162 entrusted to him, which was to be deposited into the account of Cheepurupalli Rural Electric Co-operative Society Ltd., an organisation

entrusted with the job of collecting power consumption charges from remote consumers in Vizianagaram district.

Post the completion of investigation, the CBI filed a charge-sheet against the accused. After the trial, the court convicted and sentenced both the accused.

# British Deputy High Commissioner visits VSEZ

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VISAKHAPATNAM

BRITISH Deputy High Commissioner Gareth Wynn Owen visited the Visakhapatnam Special Economic Zone (VSEZ) on Tuesday.

The visit was accompanied by a delegation of of-

icials and industry experts. Highlighting the key industries and businesses operating, Srinivas Muppala, Development Commissioner of VSEZ, provided an overview of the zone's operations.

Gareth Wynn Owen expressed the purpose of their visit, focusing on strengthening trade ties between UK

and India. He had shed light on the ongoing trade deal negotiations between the two governments, emphasising the potential benefits for businesses in both the countries.

The British delegation made a detailed presentation on investment and business opportunities available in

the UK, outlining incentives for industries looking to set up operations there.

This was followed by an engaging interactive session with exporters from VSEZ, where they explored possibilities for collaboration and growth. Later, the delegation planted saplings at the premises.

# Demand for skilled professionals in hospitality industry brought to fore

## HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY HR LEADERS FOCUS ON STRENGTHENING MANPOWER

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VISAKHAPATNAM

THE current manpower requirement in the hospitality industry and the rising demand for skilled professionals in key operational roles such as food and beverage service associates, house-keeping associates, front office associates and south Indian chefs were brought to the fore by leaders of the hospitality industry.

At a meeting held in Vi-

sakhapatnam on Tuesday, hospitality industry HR leaders focused on strengthening manpower for the emerging tourism sector. Organised by Hotel and Restaurant Association of Andhra Pradesh (HRAAP), the meeting was chaired by HRAAP president MV Pavan Kartheek in the presence of AP Star Hotels Association (ASHA) vice president G. Venkata Krishna, HRAAP advisor S. Prashanth and treasurer R. Venkat, along with others.

They shared insights regarding recruitment trends, attrition patterns and challenges faced in sourcing trained manpower. With several new hospitality projects expected to commence operations in Visakhapatnam and across Andhra Pradesh in the coming years, the need for a strong and sustainable talent pipeline was highlighted as an important priority for the industry. Speaking on the occasion, MV Pavan Kartheek stated that the hospitality

industry plays a vital role in supporting tourism, employment generation and overall economic development of the region. He noted that with several new hospitality investments and tourism initiatives taking shape in Andhra Pradesh, the sector is poised for strong growth in the coming years.

Members noted that the hospitality sector in Andhra Pradesh is witnessing encouraging growth driven by increasing tourism, business



Representatives of HRAAP and ASHA at the meeting held in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday

travel and new hotel developments. During discussions, it was suggested that the hospitality sector should actively collaborate with hotel management institutions, skill

development centres and training organisations to create structured training programmes that can prepare aspiring candidates for careers in the hospitality industry.

**Hans India Classifieds**

**HELPLINE**

**THE HANS INDIA**

**NEED YOUR FAVOURITE NEWSPAPER**

**Call: 9705555551**

---

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, No.15356284M Rank Naik CHALLA MOHAN RAO S/O LATE NARAYANA Residing at 37-11-27/1/A, Pattabhireddy gardens, NGG's Colony, Visakhapatnam Andhra Pradesh, in my service records my Wife's name was wrongly noted as CH SATYAVATHI instead of CHALLA SATYAVATHI. My wife's Correct name is CHALLA SATYAVATHI. Vide affidavit dated 17-03-2026

(TH\_KVM)

---

**NOTICE:**

Readers are advised to make appropriate enquiries while responding to advertise ments in these columns. THE HANS INDIA (Hyderabad Media House PVT Ltd) does not vouch for anyclaims made by the advertiers. Hyderabad Media House PVT Ltd. shall not be held responsible/liable for any consequences in case such claims are found to be false.

# AP TO FAST-TRACK AIR TAXI INFRASTRUCTURE

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

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA

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

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



Picture for representational purpose only

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Minister sets May 15 deadline for irrigation O&M works

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

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA

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

He said that while the pre-



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Free FMD vaccination drive for cattle in state

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

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA

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

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

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



Picture for illustrative purpose only

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Increase in polymer prices pushes construction industry into uncertainty

PRADEEP VENNELAKANTI  
TIRUPATI

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# NACO targets AP in push to eliminate HIV

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA

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

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

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

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

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

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

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA

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

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

The JAC highlighted that the industry is on the brink

# Hoteliers demand urgent relief from gas shortage



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Packaged drinking water prices set to go up

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA

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

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

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



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

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

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

# Cong suspends 3 MLAs for cross-voting in RS polls

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR

THE Opposition Congress in Odisha on Tuesday suspended three of its MLAs for voting for BJP-backed Independent candidate Dilip Ray, helping him win the Rajya Sabha polls, according to a party statement. These MLAs are Ramesh Chandra Jena of Sanakhemundi, Dasarathi Gomango of Mohana and Sofia Firdous of Barabati-Cuttack. They voted for Ray during the Rajya Sabha elections on Monday, according to the party.

Announcing their suspension, the State Congress, in a social media post, said, "Those who betray Congress are betraying the nation." State Congress media cell chairperson Arabinda Das said the decision was taken after careful review of their actions, which were deemed detrimental to the party's interests. He said the party's action will be intimidated to



the Speaker for their disqualification from the Assembly.

State Congress president Bhakta Charan Das said, "This act of betrayal was unexpected from these MLAs. We will ensure that they are disqualified from the Assembly under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution." He said the party's national leadership has been apprised of the decision.

Congress Legislature Party leader Rama Chandra Kadam, in a letter to Assembly Speaker Surama Padhy,

sought the disqualification of the three MLAs. Stating that they had cross-voted in the Rajya Sabha polls, he said it was a clear violation of the party whip and amounted to defection.

"Their conduct has not only undermined party discipline but also goes against the democratic mandate under which they were elected," he said in the letter. "I hereby petition before the Speaker to kindly take cognisance of the matter and initiate appropriate proceedings for disqualification..." he added.

In another letter, Kadam also urged the Speaker to change the seating arrangement of the three MLAs. "In view of their suspension from the party, the trio no longer remains part of the CLP (Congress Legislature Party) in the House. Therefore, it is requested that necessary steps may kindly be taken to change their seating arrangement in the Assembly, in accordance with established rules, conventions, and the present status of the said members," he said.

Apart from the three

Congress MLAs, eight BJD MLAs had also voted in favour of Ray, leading to the defeat of the Opposition "common candidate" Datteswar Hota. The Congress had decided to back BJD candidate Hota in a strategic understanding.

The Congress media cell chairperson said Gomango was the party's Gajapati district president twice. "The party did not expect this from him. Jena was a strong leader, but he destroyed himself. Sofia Firdous had a very bright future. She has ended her chances of winning in Cuttack. We will go ahead with the disqualification process," he said.

Ahead of the polling, the Congress had moved eight of its MLAs to Karnataka to "shield them from inducements." Elections were held for four Rajya Sabha seats in the State. The BJD bagged two of them, the BJD secured one, besides Dilip Ray's victory.

## HOSPITAL FIRE DEATHS

# Naveen calls for Health Minister's resignation



HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR

ODISHA'S Leader of the Opposition Naveen Patnaik on Tuesday demanded the resignation of Health Minister Mukesh Mahaling over the death of 12 persons in the fire at the State-run SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack, in which 12 persons died and 11 others suffered burn injuries. The panel is required to submit its report within 60 days, according to a notification issued by the Home department.

The commission's mandate includes a thorough examination of the sequence of events leading to the fire incident at the Trauma Care ICU, the roles and accountability of individuals and authorities involved in the tragedy. The hospital's readiness to handle such emergencies, the effectiveness of response measures taken before and after the incident, and recommen-

Patnaik said the deceased were patients who came to the hospital with the hope of recovery, only to meet a horrific end due to "administrative negligence." "The Health department cannot hide behind inquiries while families mourn. A judicial enquiry is welcome, but it does not absolve the political leadership of its responsibility," he said.

Claiming that the ex gratia of Rs 25 lakh announced by the State government is inadequate, he said, "I demand Rs 50 lakh for the families of each deceased victim." Later, speaking to reporters outside the Assembly, Patnaik said, "During our tenure, the then health minister had to resign due to an accident at a private hospital. The current Health Minister should also resign."

## Retired judge to head probe team

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR

THE Odisha government on Monday appointed retired district judge Laxmidhar Biswal to lead the judicial inquiry into the devastating fire at SCB Medical College Hospital in Cuttack, in which 12 persons died and 11 others suffered burn injuries. The panel is required to submit its report within 60 days, according to a notification issued by the Home department.

The commission's mandate includes a thorough examination of the sequence of events leading to the fire incident at the Trauma Care ICU, the roles and accountability of individuals and authorities involved in the tragedy. The hospital's readiness to handle such emergencies, the effectiveness of response measures taken before and after the incident, and recommen-

ations to prevent future occurrences will also be investigated.

"The State government is deeply concerned about this matter of serious public importance," the notification stated while emphasising the need for a judicial probe to ensure transparency and accountability. The headquarters of the commission will be based in Cuttack, with flexibility to conduct proceedings elsewhere if necessary.

Immediately after visiting the fire incident site in SCB Medical College Hospital, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi had announced a judicial probe into the incident. Majhi also directed the Fire Service DG to personally visit the hospital and ensure fire compliance. "If anyone is found guilty in the incident after the judicial probe, strong action will be taken," the Chief Minister said.



# 344 elephants died in last 4 years

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR

ODISHA Forest, Environment and Climate Change Minister Ganesh Ram Singkhuntia on Tuesday informed the Assembly that 344 wild elephants have died in the State due to various reasons, including poaching and accidents, from April 2022 till March 10 of 2026.

In a written reply to a query from MLA Pradipt Kumar Dishiari, the minister said 23 elephants were killed by poachers and 15 died due to accidents during the period. A maximum of 53 elephant deaths were reported in Dhenkanal district, followed by Keonjhar (42), Mayurbhanj (39), Angul (39), Cuttack (37), Sambalpur (25) and Sundargarh (21), he said. While 93 pachyderms were killed during the financial year 2022-23, a total of 66 elephant deaths were reported in 2023-24 and another 105

were killed in 2024-25, he added. Besides, 80 elephants died in various parts of Odisha during the current financial year (till March 10).

Informing the Assembly about the measures taken for protecting the wild animal, the minister said the government has set up anti-poaching camps, patrolling on foot is being conducted and the movement of wild animals and poachers is being monitored through the use of artificial intelligence in different forest divisions.

Other measures such as deployment of anti-depredation/anti-poaching squads, provision of incentive for informers, formation of joint task force and coordination meetings with the Railways, Energy, and Fisheries and Animal Resources departments, online distribution of compensation and widespread public awareness have been taken, he added.

# 'Forest Fire Awareness' cricket tourney held

JEEBAN MOHANTY  
BELPAHAR

THE Belpahar Forest Range (Jharsuguda Division) hosted a one-day "Forest Fire Awareness" cricket tournament at Ratan Tata stadium on Sunday. Led by Range Officer Pradeep Nayak, the event featured the participation of four teams.

In the final match, Vana Suraksha Samiti (VSS) XI claimed the championship after defeating OFSDP XI. Despite losing the toss and being sent in

to bat, VSS XI posted a solid 73 for 5 wickets in 6 overs. In response, OFSDP XI struggled to find momentum, finishing as runners-up after being restricted to just 25 for 7.

The match was officiated by umpires Prajwal Patel and Ganesh Chandra Marai. Prahlad Nayak, District Wildlife Warden, Jharsuguda, inaugurated the tournament as chief guest. At the closing ceremony, Jharsuguda DFO Manu Ashok Bhatt attended as chief guest and distributed prizes in the presence of Awadh

Kishore Pandey, GM MCL Lakhanpur; Susanta Das, Vice-President of TRL Krosaki and Surendra Kumar Bhoi, Principal, Belpahar Junior College.

On the occasion, Hamid Kumar Mahapatra and Narottam Pradhan were felicitated for their contribution to forest and environmental protection. The programme was coordinated with support from Belpahar forester Sunil Kumar Bhoi, forest staff and Odisha Forestry Sector Development Project (OFSDP) members.



## High-speed corridor to boost economic growth

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR

THE proposed 522-km Khurda-Puri-Tangi-Visakhapatnam-Vijayawada High Speed Corridor will enhance connectivity across Odisha, serving as a massive boost for the State's mining and economic sectors. A high-level meeting, chaired by Works department Principal Secretary Sanjay Kumar Singh, was held on Monday to review the project.

Key discussions included the corridor's layout, district coverage, integration with existing economic zones, city connections and land acquisition processes for the six-lane greenfield highway that will stretch across Odisha. This ambitious project will cover 522 km and link 27 cities in nine districts, including Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Dhenka-

nal, Cuttack, Nayagarh, Ganjam, Gajapati, Rayagada and Koraput.

The new route will be a vital segment of a larger 1,102 km highway network connecting Odisha, West Bengal, Jharkhand and Andhra Pradesh. The largest portion of the corridor, spanning 97 km, will be developed in Ganjam district. Additional sections will cover 88 km in Dhenkanal, 86 km in Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar and 53 km in Rayagada.

The meeting was attended by senior officials, including chief engineers from various sectors and representatives from the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways. They deliberated on the project's technical and logistical aspects. This strategic infrastructure development is expected to pave the way for enhanced regional growth and better connectivity for Odisha's key economic zones.

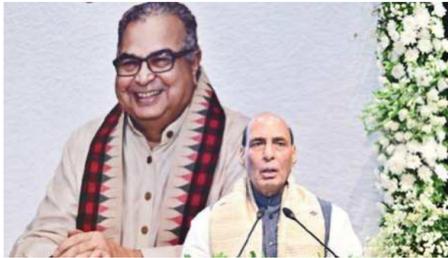
# Debendra skilfully guided BJP, says Rajnath

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR

PAYING tribute to former Union minister Debendra Pradhan on his first death anniversary, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday said he was the 'Bhishma Pitamah' of BJP in Odisha. Addressing a large gathering of leaders of various fields of society here, Singh said, Pradhan was called the 'Bhishma Pitamah' of Odisha BJP because he was not only a skilled strategist but also fully committed to the party's ideology.

He (Pradhan) skilfully guided the party amidst the complexities of regional politics, the Defence Minister said. "Today, the Bharatiya Janata Party is continuously expanding in Odisha and moving forward on the strong foundation laid by Pradhan," he said.

Debendra Pradhan was president of the State BJP three times, during which he worked to strengthen the party at the grassroots level,



Singh said, adding that "It was a part of his passion to establish a direct relation with party workers."

With dedication along with organisational ability and foresight, he strengthened the party's roots in Odisha and today, the BJP is ruling the State, he said. He (Pradhan) had also led the brick collection campaign in Odisha about 30 years ago for the construction of Shri Ram Temple in Ayodhya, Singh said.

Pradhan had connected various sections of society to this movement and strengthened the sentiment of faith, participation, and cultural

unity among the people, Singh said. He further noted that Pradhan has served in several important roles in the Central government and played an active role in the formulation of national policies. He has contributed to the implementation of numerous schemes in sectors such as energy, petroleum, and natural gas.

"One of the most memorable moments in Pradhan ji's political life was the day he took his oath as a Union minister in Odia language. It was not merely a formality but a powerful message. He ensured that Odia language received its due respect," Singh stated.

# Majhi slams Naveen over 'criminal past' remark on cross-voting by MLAs

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR

ODISHA Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Monday hit back at his predecessor and BJD president Naveen Patnaik over the latter's remarks on cross-voting in the Rajya Sabha elections, saying his comments describing some MLAs as having a "criminal past" were an affront to democracy. Patnaik had earlier alleged that 11 Opposition MLAs who cross-voted in favour of BJP candidates had questionable backgrounds.

"I had spoken to many of you in the last few days about the BJP and their allies and the kind of horse-trading they may attempt. They have gathered a number of people who voted for them. Most of those who cross-voted have criminal pasts. You can check how many of their parents went to jail," Patnaik said.

Reacting sharply, Majhi said the remarks were "unfor-



fortunate" and undermined the dignity of elected representatives. "The recent remarks made by Patnaik, in which he called the MLAs who voted on their conscience as having 'criminal backgrounds', are not only unfortunate but also an affront to the dignity of democracy," the Chief Minister said.

While describing Pat-

naik's remarks as "immature and insulting", Majhi said, "Such words are never expected from a person who has served as a chief minister for a long time. To call MLAs who have proved their worth in their constituencies by prioritising the interests of the people and the development of the State as criminals is an insult to the thousands of voters who elected them."

The Chief Minister noted that the elected representatives are not bound by any individual, they are only accountable to the Constitution and their own people. "When there is a lack of internal democracy within the regional party (BJD) and the leadership is confined to a few specific groups, it is only natural for self-respecting representatives to speak up," Majhi said.

Intensifying his attack on the BJD president, Majhi further said, "Naveen Babu is probably forgetting that the people he is calling criminals today were his party's assets a few days ago, and he himself campaigned for them. Did their family background seem clean to him then?" He said that it was unfortunate to make such comments in the context of Rajya Sabha poll defeat.

"Whoever does not remain on the path of development of Odisha, people have

the power to change them. The BJP is working with determination to take forward the prosperity and development of Odisha as a people's government. Its reflection was seen today in the Rajya Sabha elections," the Chief Minister said.

"This landslide victory of the BJP and its supported Independent candidate in the Rajya Sabha elections is not just a party success, but it is a reflection of the strong leadership and visionary guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he said.

Reacting to Majhi's outburst, BJD spokesperson Lenin Mohanty, in a statement said, "Majhi criticised the Leader of Opposition because he was unable to understand what Patnaik told in his statement."

"It is indeed a historic day because horse-trading, as alleged by the Leader of Opposition, is true. Odisha is shamed because of horse-trading today," he added.

## 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.



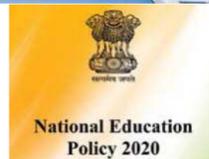
### Blind spots and missteps:

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

# 35 birth waiting homes to boost maternal care in tribal areas

- Health minister says 35 new facilities are coming up across seven ITDA regions at a cost of Rs 12.25 cr; 22 to be ready by May/June
- Centres to provide safe stay, food support and medical access for pregnant women from remote tribal areas
- Around 13,000 women expected to benefit annually once all homes become operational



HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA

HEALTH minister Y Satya Kumar Yadav announced the construction of 35 new birth waiting homes (hostels for pregnant women) to support pregnant women in tribal areas. These facilities are being developed across seven Inte-

grated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) regions to ensure safe and timely access to maternal healthcare. According to officials, 15 buildings are being constructed in Paderu ITDA, while four each are coming up in Rampachodavaram, Parvathipuram, Chintoor, Srisailem and Kota Ramachandrapuram areas. The projects are being executed at a cost of Rs 12.25 crore. Out of the 35 centres, 22 are expected to be completed by May/June, two by

July, and the remaining by the end of this year. Currently, 76 birth waiting homes are operational across ITDA regions such as Seethampeta, Parvathipuram, Paderu, Rampachodavaram, Chintoor, Kota Ramachandrapuram, and Srisailem. Of these, 41 have permanent buildings, while the rest are under construction. Each new facility will include eight rooms, with four rooms dedicated to pregnant women, each attached with a toilet. Additional infra-

structure includes a common kitchen, recreation room, reception area, and storage space.

Each building is being constructed at a cost of Rs 35 lakh under the National Health Mission, supervised by ITDA authorities. These centres are being linked to 27 Primary Health Centres, six Community Health Centres, and 2 area hospitals.

Pregnant women from remote tribal regions will be brought to these centres at least a week before delivery by ASHA workers and ANMs, reducing transportation challenges and health risks. Each beneficiary receives Rs 200 per day for food, Rs 200 for an attendant, and an additional Rs 200 as compensation for lost wages.

In 2025-26, around 11,000 women benefited from these services, with 9,500 already covered this year. Once all facilities are completed, nearly 13,000 pregnant women are expected to benefit annually.

# ₹300 cr AP-CMEP to boost MSME manufacturing, jobs

- New scheme targets 3,500 micro entrepreneurs and 17,000 jobs
- 175 MSME industrial parks planned across all Assembly constituencies

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA



THE state government has launched a new entrepreneurship scheme aimed at strengthening its manufacturing base and accelerating growth in the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) sector. Under the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister's Entrepreneur Programme (AP-CMEP), the state will provide financial support worth Rs 300 crore to about 3,500 micro entrepreneurs, with the potential to generate around 17,000 jobs.

The scheme forms part of the state's AP MSME and

Entrepreneurship Development Policy 4.0 (2024-2029), which seeks to expand industrial activity and promote entrepreneurship under the government's broader "One Family One Entrepreneur" initiative. Officials said the programme will prioritise entrepreneurs who establish manufacturing units in newly planned MSME industrial parks as well as on privately owned land. The state government has already

approved the creation of 175 MSME industrial parks and flatted factory complexes, with one park planned in each Assembly constituency to ensure geographically balanced industrial growth. The Andhra Pradesh MSME Development Corporation and the Directorate of Industries have been tasked with issuing detailed guidelines for the scheme to ensure early rollout.

As part of the initiative, the Ratan Tata Innovation

Hub will assist in designing the framework for financial support to knowledge-economy startups, aligning the programme with emerging technology-driven sectors.

The Andhra Pradesh Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (APIIC) has also been directed to notify the proposed 175 MSME parks, which are expected to serve as the core infrastructure backbone for the state's entrepreneurship push.

The government has earmarked a broader Rs 500-crore corpus under the MSME policy to promote entrepreneurship, strengthen the MSME ecosystem and improve fund utilisation over the five-year policy period.

Officials said the combined policy push, spanning industrial infrastructure, startup support and direct financial incentives, aims to position Andhra Pradesh as a major hub for MSME-led manufacturing and employment generation in India.

## 3 lakh MT LPG stranded at Hormuz

NEW DELHI: Nearly 3 lakh metric tonnes (MT) of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) is currently stranded at the Strait of Hormuz, Rajesh Kumar Sinha, Special Secretary in the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, said on Tuesday. During a key briefing, the senior government official said that multiple vessels carrying LPG are unable to move due to the situation in the crucial shipping route. He explained that six ships are currently stuck in the Strait of Hormuz, with each vessel carrying around 45,000 metric tonnes of LPG. "Six ships are currently stuck in the Strait of Hormuz, with each vessel carrying around 45,000 metric tonnes of LPG," Sinha mentioned. Together, this accounts for roughly 3 lakh metric tonnes of fuel that is yet to reach its destination.

## Maha passes Freedom of Religion Bill

MUMBAI: The Maharashtra Freedom of Religion Bill 2026 was passed by the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly on Monday. The law is aimed at prohibiting religious conversions carried out through fraud, coercion, inducement or marriage-related deception. Speaking on the Bill, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, who also holds the Home portfolio, said the law is not directed against any religion and is meant only to prevent unlawful conversions. He said the Bill does not restrict a person's constitutional right to practice religion under Article 25 of the Constitution of India, but it does not include the right to convert others through coercion or deceit. According to the government, the law applies equally to all religions and its objective is to ensure that conversions are voluntary and transparent. Complaints can be filed by the affected person or close relatives, and authorities or police may take action on suspected unlawful conversions.

## Mojtaba rejects ceasefire push

TEHRAN: Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei has rejected proposals for reducing tensions or for a possible ceasefire with the United States that were conveyed to Tehran by two intermediary countries, a senior Iranian official said on Tuesday. The official claimed that Khamenei's position for revenge against the US and Israel in his first foreign policy session was "very tough and serious". However, he did not clarify if Khamenei attended the sessions in person. Khamenei, in his first statement since his appointment, vowed to avenge those killed in the war and claimed that Iran would "obtain compensation" from its enemy. He said that if it refuses to do so, Iran will "take from its assets" or destroy them to the same extent. "A limited amount of this revenge has so far taken concrete form, but until it is fully achieved, this case will remain among our priorities," he said. He said that Iran will never retreat and will resist with "full force" and will avenge not just the late Ayatollah Ali Khamenei but every citizen who lost their life in the war. "We will not forget the revenge for the blood of the martyrs," he said.

## Mamata locks horns with BJP's Suvendu again

KOLKATA TRINAMOL Congress supremo and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee will fight her protege turned bitter rival, the BJP's Suvendu Adhikari, from Bhabanipur in Kolkata in the 2026 Assembly elections. The ruling TMC announced its list of candidates for the upcoming polls, with Mamata Banerjee contesting from the Bhabanipur Assembly constituency. Addressing a press conference in Kolkata, Banerjee said: "We will contest 291 of the 294 seats. The remaining three seats will be contested by our ally, Anit Thapa-led BGP, in the Darjeeling hills," Banerjee said, while announcing the names of candidates. Banerjee expressed confidence that the Trinamool would retain power with a comfortable major-

ity in the 2026 Assembly elections. She predicted that her party would secure more than 226 seats in the elections. In the 2021 election, Adhikari defeated Banerjee in Nandigram by 1,956 votes, following which the Chief Minister had to shift to the Bhabanipur seat from where she won a bypoll and which she currently represents. Asked about the challenge Adhikari, who was named the BJP candidate on Monday, will pose, Banerjee said, "We will win with the maximum number of votes from Bhabanipur." The Chief Minister also sought to reassure party leaders and workers who could not find a place in the candidate list, saying they would be accommodated in the organisation. "All those who could not be accommodated in the candidate list will be accommodated in the organisation," she said.

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

KABUL AT least 400 people have been killed and around 250 injured in a Pakistani airstrike at a hospital in Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, a Taliban spokesman said on Tuesday. Afghanistan's deputy government spokesperson Hamdullah Fitrat said the airstrike hit the drug rehabilitation hospital at about 9 pm local time, destroying large sections of the 2,000-bed facility. Pakistan denied the Afghan government's allegations and called them "baseless", saying that no hospital was targeted in Kabul. Afghan government spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid condemned the strike, accusing Pakistan of "targeting hospitals and civilian sites to perpetrate hor-

rors". "The Pakistani military regime has once again violated Afghanistan's airspace and targeted a drug rehabilitation hospital in Kabul, resulting in the death and injury of addicts who were undergoing treatment," he posted on X. "We strongly condemn this crime and consider such an act to be against all accepted principles and a crime against humanity," he further said. Pakistan's Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said that the Pakistani military had "carried out precision airstrikes" targeting military installations in Kabul and the eastern province of Nangarhar. He said "technical support infrastructure and ammunition storage facilities" at two locations in Kabul were destroyed.

## 'NOT FOR ALL LPG CONSUMERS' GOVT CLARIFIES ON EKYC NORMS FOR LPG

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

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



## LS revokes suspension of 8 Oppn MPs

NEW DELHI: The Lok Sabha on Tuesday revoked the suspension of eight Opposition Members of Parliament after the House unanimously adopted a motion moved by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju following Minister Gaurav Singh Aujla, Hibi Eden, Dean Kuriakose, Amrinder Singh Raja Warring, B. Manickam Tagore, Prashant Yadaorao Padole, Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy and S Venkatesan was passed with complete unanimity through a voice vote, reflecting consensus across party lines after days of disruptions. The breakthrough came a day after an all-party meeting chaired by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, where leaders from both the government and the Opposition agreed to resolve the impasse and restore normal functioning of the House during the ongoing Budget session.

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

Continued from P1 "I cannot in good conscience support the ongoing war in Iran. Iran posed no imminent threat to our nation, and it is clear that we started this war due to pressure from Israel and its powerful American lobby," he added. In a strongly worded message directed at Trump, Kent said he continued to support the President's earlier foreign policy approach. "I support the values and the foreign policies that you campaigned on in 2016, 2020, 2024, which you enacted in your first term. Until June of 2025, you understood that the wars in the Middle East were a trap that robbed America of the precious lives of our patriots and depleted the wealth and prosperity of our nation." "In your first administration, you understood better than any modern President how to decisively apply military power without getting us drawn into never-ending wars. You demonstrated this by killing Qasam Solamani and by defeating ISIS," he added. Kent alleged that the current conflict was driven in part by external pressure and a coordinated misinformation campaign.

## CM to launch 'Diyang Shakti' scheme today

Continued from P1 These include City Ordinary, Metro Express, Palle Velugu, Ultra Palle Velugu and Express buses operated by the Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation. Earlier, free travel applied to only a few disability categories, while others received 50 per cent fare concession. With the Diyang Shakti scheme, free travel now covers all persons with disabilities with 40 per cent or higher disability. Attendants accompanying them will receive a 50 per cent concession. The scheme significantly expands eligibility, from four disability categories to 21. Beneficiaries include people with autism, neurological disorders, Parkinson's disease, thalassemia, hemophilia and sickle cell anemia, among others. With this expansion, the number of beneficiaries will increase from 1.71 lakh to about 11.16 lakh persons with disabilities. The number of attendants eligible for concession will rise from 33,800 to 1.6 lakh. Overall, the total beneficiaries will grow from 2.05 lakh to about 12.76 lakh. People with dis-

abilities can now travel free on 7,264 buses, which account for about 73 per cent of the APSRTC fleet covered under the Stree Shakti scheme. Existing disability passes issued earlier with three-year validity will continue to be valid. Beneficiaries can also obtain QR-code-based digital passes through the Mana Mitra and the APSRTC App. Since these platforms are linked with the SAD-AREM database, applicants do not need to submit physical disability certificates. Assistance will also be available at 134 designated counters at APSRTC bus stations. The state government will provide an annual subsidy of Rs 207 crore for the scheme. Officials said the programme builds on the success of the Stree Shakti free bus travel scheme for women, launched on August 15 last year. In seven months, women passengers made over 52 crore free journeys, with the government spending Rs 1,826 crore. On average, 24.38 lakh women travel daily, accounting for 63 out of every 100 passengers on RTC buses.

## Iran security chief Larijani killed in Israel strike?

JERUSALEM: Ali Larijani, Iran's security chief, was among those targeted in Israeli strikes on Iran overnight, according to Israeli media reports. It remains unclear if Larijani, a top figure in Iran's establishment, was killed or injured in the strike. Israel's defence minister, Israel Katz, has also claimed that Larijani has been killed. Iran has, however, not yet commented the reports. Larijani, a former nuclear negotiator who serves as secretary of Iran's National Security Council, is widely seen as one of the most influential figures in Iran's power structure. If his death is confirmed, Larijani would be the most senior Iranian official to be killed after Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who died on the first day of the war.

## 6 LPG, crude oil ships to reach Vizag Port soon

Continued from P1 These apart, another four vessels carrying 4.5 lakh metric tonnes of crude oil are inching closer to Visakhapatnam Port. The crude oil is being shipped from different parts of the world, including two vessels from Russia, one each from KG Basin and Ravva Oil Field from Kakinada. At Visakhapatnam Port, the single point mooring system serves as an offshore anchoring point for the LPG, while it will be delivered to distribution points thereon later. Port officials mentioned that about 4.5 lakh metric tonnes of crude oil arriving from different places will be stored and distributed further. After getting stranded in the Persian Gulf due to the ongoing war in West Asia, two India-flagged vessels are sailing out of the warzone to Visakhapatnam Port, while four others are reaching from other destinations this month.

## PARL PANEL SUGGESTS RS7,500 EPF PENSION

Continued from P1 The Committee further take note of the submission of the Ministry of Labour and Employment that the Government of India is already extending financial support towards the Scheme, including the contribution of 1.16 per cent for currently serving members of the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation and the budgetary support provided for ensuring the minimum pension of Rs 1,000 per month. However, the Committee stated that it is of the considered view that the existing minimum pension amount is inadequate to meet even the basic needs of pensioners, particularly in the present economic scenario marked by inflation and rising health care and living expenses. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry undertake an urgent and comprehensive review of the minimum pension under the Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995, with a view to enhancing it to a more realistic and dignified level. The Committee further recommend that the Ministry explore the possibility of increasing budgetary support to the Scheme, so as to ensure that pensioners receive a reasonable minimum pension commensurate with present-day living costs, thereby providing greater social security and financial stability to lakhs of retired workers covered under the Scheme.

## LPG situation a matter of concern, says govt

Continued from P1 "Petrol and diesel are available in sufficient quantity. Regarding natural gas, as I told you, the Government of India is making efforts, and it would be beneficial if all commercial LPG consumers shifted to PNG," Sharma said. Sharma also warned against hoarding and black marketing, saying that adequate measures are in place to ensure smooth distribution across the country. "Regarding enforcement action, so far, about twelve thousand raids have been conducted in the last few days. About fifteen thousand cylinders have been seized... Yesterday in Delhi, about six hundred cylinders were seized. Similarly, in Uttar Pradesh, about four hundred and fifty inspections and raids have been conducted in the last few days. Meanwhile, various state governments are undertaking enforcement measures to prevent hoarding and black marketing of petrol, diesel and LPG. Raids are being carried out in several states to check hoarding and black marketing of LPG cylinders. Alternate fuels such as kerosene and coal have been activated for certain sectors, including hospitality and restaurants, to ease pressure on LPG supplies.

## NO NEED TO PANIC ABOUT LPG SUPPLY: CM NAIDU

Continued from P1 Naidu reviewed LPG stocks, cylinder distribution and the piped gas network at a meeting held at the RTGS centre in the Secretariat. He directed officials to ensure that cylinders are not diverted to the black market by strictly implementing e-KYC and OTP-based verification systems. The Chief Minister asked officials to examine alternative cooking options, including the availability of induction stoves, which could be made accessible to households if required. Naidu also reviewed the expansion of piped gas connections as a long-term alternative to LPG. He directed officials to speed up the rollout of the City Gas Distribution (CGD) network across the state. He stressed the need to utilise natural gas produced in Andhra Pradesh and supply it to consumers

through a wider piped gas network. The Chief Minister also asked officials to explore ways to expand the use of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) and Piped Natural Gas (PNG). Recalling earlier initiatives, he noted that LNG had previously been allocated to the state and pipelines were extended up to Kondapalli. Officials informed the Chief Minister that natural gas is currently being supplied through CGD networks operated by AG&P Pratham, Bhagyanagar Gas Limited, Green Gas Limited, Indian Oil Corporation Limited and Megha Gas. They said the infrastructure currently includes 198 CNG stations and facilities to provide 1.68 lakh domestic piped gas connections. Apart from energy issues, the Chief Minister also reviewed citizen services and governance

initiatives. He directed officials to create awareness among motorists on traffic violations through short messages and asked them to enable electricity bill payment links through mobile apps and WhatsApp governance platforms. Naidu also instructed officials to expedite the launch of the AP One app and review how government departments are using the AWARE disaster management system and the state Data Lake platform. With summer approaching, he directed officials to use AWARE to prepare in advance for drinking water supply, heatwave management and cattle fodder availability. The Chief Minister also called for strict action against crimes against women and stronger drug control measures. Representatives from GAIL (India) Ltd, ONGC, and petroleum companies attended the meeting.



# Malvi Malhotra returns with dark comedy

ASKARI JAFFER

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

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

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

ally stuck with me."

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

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

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

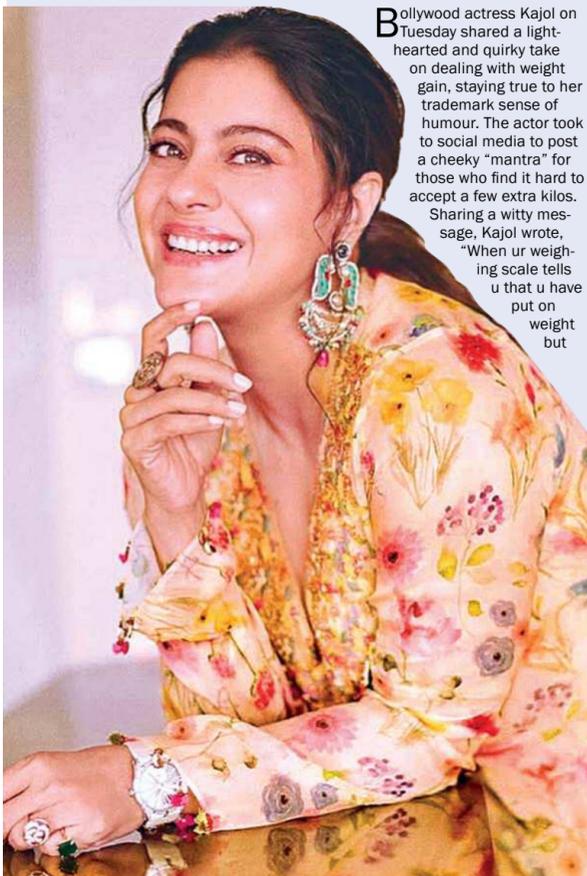
out and has its own importance. The film definitely has elements of dark comedy, so audiences can expect that tone. One of the biggest USPs of the film is that the climax is very unpredictable."

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

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



# Kajol offers a quirky mantra for dealing with weight gain



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



different kind of happiness. Grateful n thankful."

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

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

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

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

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

## CROSSWORD



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

## DOWN

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



Solution to March 17

## SUDOKU

6			1		3			
3	4	6		2	1	8		
			5					
7	1					5	9	
4	5						2	3
			2					
8	6	5		9	2	4		
9			3				7	

6	3	2	8	7	9	4	1	5
7	4	5	2	6	1	8	3	9
9	1	8	3	4	5	2	7	6
3	2	7	1	5	8	6	9	4
5	6	9	7	3	4	1	2	8
1	8	4	9	2	6	7	5	3
4	9	3	6	1	2	5	8	7
8	5	1	4	9	7	3	6	2
2	7	6	5	8	3	9	4	1

Solution to March 17

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

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



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

jendra Singh Shekhawat, along with Sriharsha Majety, Co-Founder, MD and Group CEO, Swiggy, felicitated 28 women from the F&B industry across two categories—Entrepreneur of the Year and Chef of the Year. These awards recognized their contributions to culinary innovation and business success. The honourees included Sridevi Jasti, Founder, Vibrant Living. Through her entrepreneurial initiative, Ms. Jasti champions wholesome, plant-forward nutrition, turning clean eating into a sustainable lifestyle choice. This recognition highlights the city's continued influence as one of India's most dynamic hubs for culinary innovation and women-led food businesses. She The Change was a curated gathering of pioneers, disruptors, and visionaries from India's food industry reinforcing Swiggy's commitment to empowering women entrepreneurs in the F&B sector. Swiggy currently has 70,000 women-run restaurants on its platform, and as per internal estimates, these entrepreneurs are generating close to 4,20,000 jobs, with each restaurant employing an average of six direct employees.

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

**BIZ BRIEFS**

**Fabindia unveils Ugadi collection**

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

**Hyland's new MD**

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

**Isuzu Motors' summer camp**

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

**Amazon's festive offer**

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

**Oben Electric logs milestone**

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

# Indian Americans rank high in US earnings

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

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

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

**Highest earners**

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

more annually, nearly 80 per cent higher than the typical

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



**vivo launches T5x model**

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 'Japan, S Korea preferred for spring travel'

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

## Sebi tweaks SGF rules to ease compliance

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

fuelled by AI workloads across industries.

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

## Kaspersky to double India's investments

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

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

# Markets extend rally amid positive trend in global mkts

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

**Positive Trend**

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



MUMBAI: Benchmark Sensex climbed 567 points and Nifty closed near 23,600 in their second consecutive day of gains on Tuesday, boosted by a rally in metal and auto shares and a positive trend in global markets. The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 567.99 points or 0.75 per cent to settle at 76,070.84. During the day, it surged 801.41 points or 1.06 per cent to 76,304.26. The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 172.35 points or 0.74 per cent to end

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



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.



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.

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

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.

**Kiran Reddy graces Aurora University Sports Meet**

G. Kiran Reddy, former national volleyball player, founder Director of Sarojini Cricket and Tennis Academy inaugurates the Aurora University Sports Meet. He encouraged students to actively participate in sports and highlighted the importance of discipline, teamwork, and fitness in shaping successful careers. The event was also attended by Aurora University Vice-Chancellor Dr Srilata, who joined in motivating the young athletes.



**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.



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.



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

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

SATYANARAYANA MURTHY  
SURAVAJJULA

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

### The future has already entered the classroom

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

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



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

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

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

### Why AI feels like a superpower

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

rapidly changing world.

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

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

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

### From small-town talent to big possibility

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

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

### Let the machine do the repetition

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

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

### Not just for engineers

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

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

### Skills that matter most

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

### What AI cannot replace

Despite its power, AI can-



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

### The real opportunity

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

possibilities.

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

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

## IIT-Delhi offers specialised tech and research courses



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

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

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

For doctoral studies,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Key findings from the survey include:

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



than two hours on screens after dinner.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

## Anthah Prerana 7.0 draws global student entrepreneurs

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

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

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





## 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.

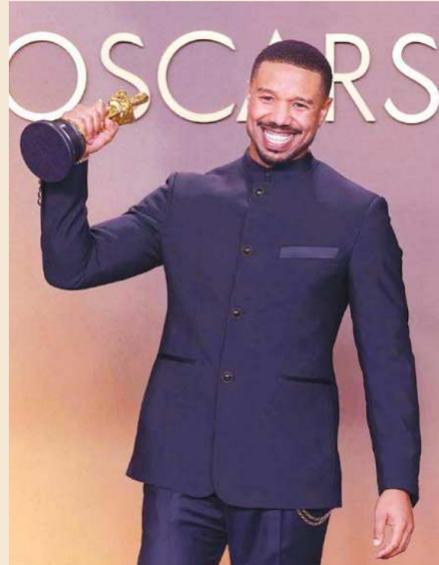
What makes this victory even more striking is the path these films took. Unlike traditional Oscar contenders, none relied on the festival circuit to build

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

Hollywood’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.