



IN BRIEF

'Don't pay attention to auto gas shortage rumours'

BENGALURU: Karnataka government on Wednesday urged auto drivers, owners, and the public not to pay attention to any rumours regarding the shortage of auto gas. It stated that some private auto gas supply companies are experiencing a shortage; to remedy this, state-owned oil companies are supplying higher quantities of gas.

"It has been noticed that some media outlets have published false reports that auto owners and drivers are standing in queues in front of auto gas stations in the State, based on rumours that there is a shortage of auto gas," the Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Disputes Department said in a release. It said there is a shortage in private auto gas supply companies.

To compensate, the public sector gas companies -- IOC, BPCL and HPCL -- have enhanced the supplies to retail outlets, the department said. Earlier, these three companies supplied 56.67 metric tonnes of auto gas per day, and currently, 83.58 metric tonnes/day are being supplied. "Therefore, it has been advised that auto owners and drivers in the State should not panic by listening to any rumours and cooperate with us," it added.

Karnataka Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs K H Muniyappa on Monday said he will call a meeting on April 10, aimed at resolving the Auto LPG supply issue in the state.

Arif murder case: Seven key accused arrested

MANGALURU: In a breakthrough in the Arif murder case, police have arrested seven key accused so far, with investigations revealing crucial details about the conspiracy and the support network behind the crime.

According to police, the murder was a premeditated act. On the day of the incident, the main accused — Rifat, Juttu Ashfaq, Khaleel, Shakir, Irfan and Rizwan — allegedly chased Arif's motorcycle and rammed it from behind using an Innova car. They then carried out a brutal assault before fleeing the scene. During interrogation, it has come to light that the crime involved coordinated efforts by multiple individuals. While six accused directly participated in the attack, another accused, Irshad, is said to have provided shelter and facilitated their movement to the crime spot. Investigators also revealed that Suhail had arranged the rented vehicle used in the crime and later fled abroad. Arshad is believed to have supplied weapons and kept the attackers informed about police movements.

In a development, a previous case accused, Ashwir, allegedly used digital methods to help the group evade surveillance. He is said to have enabled the use of WhatsApp accounts through Dubai-based OTPs to avoid detection.

Further, the probe has uncovered that Mustafa and Ashwir, currently abroad, extended financial assistance to the accused.

Police said that while seven persons, including the six main accused and Irshad, have been arrested, efforts are ongoing to trace and apprehend the remaining suspects. Certain sensitive details are being withheld at this stage in the interest of the investigation, officials added.

BEML-DMRC tie-up aims to boost metro rail projects in India, abroad

BENGALURU

BENGALURU-headquartered defence PSU BEML Ltd on Wednesday said it has signed a MoU with DMRC to collaborate on metro rail projects and expand its footprint in global markets, while also exploring domestic opportunities.

The Memorandum of Understanding aims to establish a framework for co-



operation between the two organisations, focusing on jointly identifying, pursuing and executing metro rail projects, BEML said in a statement.

Under the partnership, BEML and Delhi Metro Rail Corporation Ltd will work together in both domestic and international markets, leveraging their respective strengths.

Speaking on the occasion, BEML Chairman and

Managing Director Shantanu Roy said the association with DMRC would further strengthen the company's presence in the rail and metro sector.

He noted that BEML's capabilities in manufacturing rolling stock, combined with DMRC's expertise in executing and operating metro systems, would enable the two organisations to offer comprehensive, competitive and globally

benchmarked solutions. BEML recently secured its first overseas order for metro rolling stock, valued at around USD 60 million, for a project in Africa. DMRC Managing Director Vikas Kumar described the MoU as a "historic collaboration" between two Indian entities.

He said the partnership would significantly enhance urban mobility, particularly metro networks,

in India and abroad. Kumar also highlighted the need to develop indigenous propulsion systems for rolling stock through innovation and stressed the importance of designing and manufacturing Tunnel Boring Machines (TBMs) domestically for upcoming infrastructure projects such as high-speed rail, metro systems and Regional Rapid Transit Systems (RRTS).

BYPOLLS

Congress eyes retention, BJP seeks gains in two key seats

BENGALURU

VOTING for bypolls to two Assembly segments in Karnataka-Bagalkot and Davanagere South-will be held on Thursday, following a high-voltage campaign by both the ruling Congress and the opposition BJP. The polls were necessitated by the deaths of senior Congress MLAs H Y Meti and Shamanur Shivashankarappa. Counting of votes will take place on May 4.

Although the outcome of these by-elections is unlikely to have an immediate impact on state politics, the contest is seen as a matter of prestige for both the Congress and the BJP. While the Congress faces the challenge of retaining both seats, the BJP is aiming to wrest them and deliver a setback to the ruling party, which is currently witnessing an "internal power struggle" over leadership.

A total of over 2.59 lakh eligible voters are expected to cast their votes at around 319 polling stations in Bagalkot, where nine candidates are in



the fray. In Davanagere South, over 2.31 lakh eligible voters are expected to vote across 284 polling stations, with 25 candidates contesting.

The BJP has fielded former MLA and 2023 defeated candidate Veerabhadrayya Charantimath from Bagalkot, and a fresh face, Srinivas T Dasakariyappa, from Davanagere South. The Congress has given tickets to family members of the late legislators in both constituencies. Umesh Meti is the son of H Y Meti, while Samarth Mallikarjun is the grandson of Shamanur Shivashankarappa. Samarth's father, S S Mallikarjun, is a minister in the Siddaramaiah-led Cabinet and in charge of

Davanagere district, while his mother, Prabha Mallikarjun, is a Member of Parliament from the region.

The BJP is looking to make gains in the bypolls and energise its cadre ahead of the 2028 Assembly elections. For the Congress, retaining both seats is crucial, as a loss could be seen as a negative verdict on the performance of the Siddaramaiah-led government.

Muslim discontentment appears to be a concern for the Congress in Davanagere South. With 14 of the 25 candidates in the fray belonging to the community, there are apprehensions within the party about a split in votes,

which could benefit the BJP. The community had strongly demanded the Congress ticket for Davanagere South, given its significant presence in the constituency. Some factions within the party had opposed giving the ticket to the Shamanur family.

Although the Congress persuaded rebel candidate Sadiq Pailwan to withdraw, he remains in the fray as the move came after the deadline for withdrawal of nominations. In Bagalkot too, the Congress faced some dissidence, with other members of Meti's family seeking the ticket. Siddaramaiah's intervention helped resolve differences to an extent, and they campaigned together.

The BJP, in contrast, saw little dissidence over candidate selection, with its leaders campaigning in unity. Top state leaders from both parties campaigned extensively in the two segments. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, and several ministers camped in and toured the constituencies for over a week.

COFFEE GROWER KILLED IN ELEPHANT ATTACK

Minister calls for debate on wildlife population control

HANS NEWS SERVICE BENGALURU



FOREST Minister Eshwar B. Khandre on Tuesday expressed concern over the rising incidents of human-wildlife conflict in the state, stating that there is a need to consider measures such as sterilisation or vaccination to control the population of select wild animals.

Speaking to reporters in Bengaluru, Khandre clarified that the idea is only at a discussion stage and not a final decision. He emphasized the need for a broader public debate on the issue, noting that while wildlife conservation is important, preventing loss of human life is equally critical. "Both life and livelihood must be protected," he said, adding that certain regions are witnessing a significant increase in wildlife populations, which requires careful regulation.

He further stated that the matter is also linked to a case currently before the Supreme Court, and any concrete proposal would require consultations with experts, legal advisors, and senior officials before being submitted for judicial con-

sideration.

The minister also highlighted the government's ongoing efforts to address the issue of forest dwellers voluntarily relocating from forest areas.

He said authorities have been instructed to prepare a list of those willing to move out, following which financial requirements and budget allocations will be assessed in consultation with the Chief Minister, who also holds the finance portfolio. According to him, such relocation would help expand wildlife habitats while also integrating forest-dwelling communities into the mainstream with better access to basic amenities.

Expressing grief over a recent incident in which a

coffee grower was killed in an elephant attack, Khandre termed it deeply tragic and assured that the government stands with the bereaved family. He said the state is making all possible efforts to mitigate human-elephant conflict but acknowledged that no compensation can truly make up for the loss of life.

The minister also noted that the state government had planned to establish dedicated elephant camps as part of a long-term solution. However, the proposal has faced delays due to pending approvals from the central government. He assured that efforts are being made to resolve these hurdles and move forward with the project.

Record coconut price brings cheer to farmers in Tumakuru

HANS NEWS SERVICE TUMAKURU

IN what comes as a major boost for coconut growers, the famed Kalpataru region has witnessed a record surge in copra prices. At the Tiptur APMC, a fresh benchmark was set on Monday as copra prices touched an all-time high of ₹32,218 per quintal during the auction.

Traders confirmed that several lots were sold above ₹30,000, with premium quality copra fetching up to ₹31,860 per quintal. Interestingly, only 1,621 quintals of copra arrived at the market, significantly lower than usual volumes. This sharp drop in arrivals has been identified as the primary reason behind the steep price rise. The previous record stood at ₹31,606 per quintal, recorded on June 30 last year. With the latest surge, all earlier benchmarks have been surpassed, marking a historic moment for the region's agricultural economy.

However, despite the encouraging price trend, farmers are facing a paradoxical situation. Many growers currently have little or no



stock left to take advantage of the high rates. "Prices are very good, but most farmers have already sold their produce earlier. There is hardly any stock now," said a local trader.

Typically, auctions at Tiptur APMC are held every Monday and Thursday, with arrivals often exceeding 3,000 quintals. But the latest auction saw barely half that quantity, reflecting a sharp supply crunch. Market experts attribute the reduced supply to multiple factors. Coconut production has declined this season, and a growing number of farmers are opting to sell tender coconuts instead of processing them into copra. The rising demand and better prices for tender coconut have made it a more attractive option for growers.

Inquiry ordered into misuse of Rajyotsava funds in Belagavi

HANS NEWS SERVICE BELAGAVI

THE government has ordered a comprehensive probe into allegations of large-scale irregularities in the utilisation of funds released for the Kannada Rajyotsava celebrations in Belagavi.

The Tourism Department had sanctioned Rs. 50 lakh for organising the event in a grand manner. However, several Kannada organisations in the district have strongly alleged that the district administration violated government norms and misused the funds.

The organisations claim that while planning the Rajyotsava programmes, the Deputy Commissioner completely ignored the suggestions and inputs from local Kannada groups.

They further allege that transparency was not maintained in the expenditure and that funds were spent in excess of government guidelines.

Following a series of complaints, senior officials of the Tourism Department have instructed the Belagavi Regional Commissioner to conduct a thorough inquiry as per rules and submit a detailed report at the earliest.

Hanumagiri temple gears up for grand Brahmakalashotsava

HANS NEWS SERVICE PUTTUR

NESTLED amidst serene surroundings, the Hanumagiri temple is all set to witness a surge of devotion and spiritual fervour as preparations intensify for its much-awaited Brahmakalashotsava.

The sacred hill shrine, known for its religious significance and tranquil ambience, is expected to draw thousands of devotees during the multi-day celebrations beginning April 13.

The temple, a prominent spiritual centre in the region, holds a special place among devotees who flock here seeking peace and blessings.

With its rich traditions and vibrant rituals, Hanumagiri has long been a hub of faith, particularly during annual festivities that bring together communities from across coastal Karnataka.

This year's Brahmakalashotsava is being organised on a grand scale, reflecting both the temple's growing prominence and the deep-rooted devotion of its followers.



Priests and volunteers have been working round the clock to ensure that all arrangements are in place, from ritual preparations to facilities for pilgrims.

Speaking to Hans India President of the Brahmakalashotsava committee Nalin Kumar Kateel (former MP of Dakshina Kannada) said the celebrations will feature a series of sacred rituals, including homas, special poojas, and ceremonial offerings, conducted as per Vedic tradi-

tions. The highlight will be the grand procession, where the deity will be taken through decorated streets, accompanied by devotional music and cultural displays, creating an atmosphere of festivity and reverence.

Beyond its religious importance, the event also serves as a cultural gathering, showcasing traditional performances and strengthening community bonds. For many devotees, attending the Brahmakalashotsava is not just a ritual but

a cherished spiritual experience that reinforces faith and unity.

With arrangements made for food distribution, drinking water, and crowd management, the temple authorities are ensuring that devotees can participate comfortably in the celebrations. As the auspicious days approach, Hanumagiri is poised to transform into a vibrant centre of devotion, echoing with chants, rituals, and the collective spirit of faith.

Class 10 girl from Kerala goes missing near Manikyadhara Falls

HANS NEWS SERVICE CHIKKAMAGALURU

A Class X student from Kerala has gone missing near the popular tourist spot Manikyadhara Falls, triggering an intensive search operation by police and forest officials.

The missing girl has been identified as Nandana, a native of Palakkad district, who had arrived in Chikkamagaluru along with a group of around 40 tourists, including her



Nandana

family members. According to officials, the girl mysteriously disappeared on Tuesday evening while returning from the hilltop after taking photographs with her group.

As soon as the incident came to light, personnel from the Chikkamagaluru Rural Police Station, along with forest department officials, launched a large-scale search operation. More than 30 staff members combed the hilly terrain late into the night, continuing

the search until around 1 am.

However, dense fog, darkness and challenging terrain hampered the efforts, forcing the teams to suspend operations temporarily. Search efforts resumed on Wednesday morning with greater intensity. This time, rescue teams deployed drones to scan deeper forest areas and inaccessible regions. The rugged terrain of the Western Ghats, combined with thick vegetation and steep slopes,

has made the operation particularly difficult.

Fire and emergency services personnel have also joined the operation, working alongside police and forest officials in a coordinated effort. Authorities are exploring all possible routes the girl might have taken from the point where she was last seen.

Police said the girl's parents have filed a missing complaint. "The girl was with the group and had

taken photos with everyone. She went missing while descending from the hill," an officer said. The family, which had travelled from Kerala for a holiday, is in deep distress. Local residents have also joined the search, assisting officials in combing the area. Authorities have assured that all necessary resources are being deployed to trace the missing student. The search operation is expected to continue until she is located.