



# THE Hans India



**WOMENIA**  
**Ananya Panday on tackling exam pressure: 'They are a small part of a much bigger journey'**  
 The collaboration came to life with a special on-ground activity led by Ananya Panday, along with Nick's beloved characters Chikoo and Bunty. **P8**

**TOGETHER**  
**Together, let us empower our Nari Shakti!**  
 On the 16th of April, Parliament will be convened to discuss and pass an important bill that advances women's reservation. To describe this merely as a legislative exercise would be an injustice. It is a reflection of aspirations of crores of women across India. **P6**

**2nd phase of Ratna Bhandar inventory begins**  
 The current phase focuses on the Bahar Ratna Bhandar, where festival ornaments and jewellery are stored. Justice Rath said this inventory includes the famous 'Suna Bhesa' (golden attire) ornaments used on the chariots and four other occasions. **P5**

**Botcha flags Rs 20,500 cr debt gap, seeks Govt's intervention**  
 Satyanarayana said the response given by the principal finance secretary to a 'starred' question in the February 2026 session understated the actual borrowings, omitting 'key' components. **P4**

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## Constitutional morality not a ground to decide essential religious practices: Centre

**NEW DELHI:** Constitutional morality can never be a ground for judicial review to decide essential religious practices and beliefs in a religion, the Centre told the Supreme Court on Wednesday while stressing that two previous verdicts on decriminalisation of consensual gay sex and adultery provisions based on this doctrine were "not a good law". A nine-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant was told by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that constitutional morality is a "vague and subjective doctrine", and the judgements based on it coupled with the views of foreign legal experts and precedents cannot be a basis to test the correctness of religious beliefs in the country. Mehta submitted before the bench that the wrongly applied concept of constitutional morality by this court in some of the judgements later became the basis for deciding the 2018 Sabarimala case, permitting women of all age groups to enter the hilltop shrine in Kerala through the presiding deity Lord Ayappa is a Naishitika Brahmachari (perennial celibate).

# FRAGILE CEASEFIRE TAKES EFFECT

TEHRAN/WASHINGTON

IRAN, the United States and Israel agreed to a two-week ceasefire in an 11th-hour deal that headed off US President Donald Trump's threat to unleash a bombing campaign to destroy Iranian civilization. But hours after the announcement, Iran and Gulf Arab countries reported new attacks on Wednesday.

It was not clear if the strikes would scuttle the deal, which US Vice President JD Vance called "fragile." Even before the new attacks, much about the agreement was unclear as the sides presented vastly different visions of the terms.

Iran said the deal would allow it to formalize its new practice of charging ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial transit lane for oil. But the details were not clear, nor was it known whether vessels would feel safe using the channel or whether ship traffic had resumed. It also was unclear whether any other country agreed to this condition.

Pakistan, which helped to mediate the deal, said talks would begin in Islamabad on Friday and fighting would pause also in Lebanon, where Israel has launched a ground invasion against the Iran-

## US and Iran prepare for talks in Pak from tomorrow Much remains unclear and some attacks continue Oil prices plunge and shares jump on ceasefire plan

### ISRAEL STRIKES LEBANON

#### Iran threatens to exit truce deal

**TEHRAN:** Iran has reportedly told mediators that talks with US conditional and threatened to withdraw from the truce deal if the attacks on Lebanon continue. It has reportedly told the mediators that it will participate in talks in Pakistan only if the current ceasefire includes Lebanon.

backed Hezbollah militant group. Israel said it would not, and strikes hit Beirut on Wednesday.

The fate of Iran's missile and nuclear programs — the elimination of which were major objectives for the US and Israel in going to war — also remained unclear. Trump said the US would work with Iran to remove buried enriched uranium, though Iran did not confirm that.

Continued on Page 7



#### MOJTABA HELPED CUT TRUCE DEAL

**TEHRAN:** A defiant Iran and the most powerful nation in the world, the US, fighting for over a month, agreed to a ceasefire 90 minutes before Trump's "wiping out a whole civilization" threat was to end.

Continued on Page 7

#### Market cheers ceasefire Sensex zooms 2,946 pts

**MUMBAI:** Indian stock markets extended their rally for the fifth straight session, with both the Nifty and the Sensex posting strong gains. The positive momentum came amid easing global tensions and steady

domestic policy signals. The Nifty closed 3.78 per cent higher, gaining 873.70 points to end at 23,997.35. Meanwhile, the Sensex surged 3.95 per cent, rising 2,946.32 points to settle at 77,562.90.

Continued on Page 7

#### India welcomes US-Iran truce

**NEW DELHI:** India on Wednesday welcomed the temporary ceasefire between the United States and Iran announced by both sides and expressed hope in unimpeded freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz.

"We welcome the ceasefire reached and hope that it will lead to a lasting peace in West Asia. As we have continuously advocated earlier, deescalation, dialogue and diplomacy are essential to bring an early end to the ongoing conflict," the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement.



#### US V-P Vance, Ghalibaf to lead US-Iran talks

WASHINGTON/TEHRAN

UNITED STATES Vice President JD Vance and Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf have been chosen to lead their countries' delegations in the peace negotiations in Islamabad on Friday, the Iranian semi-official news agency ISNA reported on Wednesday. The report also claimed that Iran's 10-point peace proposal framework, which US President Donald Trump previously claimed to be a "workable basis on which to negotiate," entails both Tehran's nuclear program and regional security, as well as lifting primary and secondary sanctions from Iran. Meanwhile, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said earlier that he had invited the American and Iranian delegations to hold talks in Islamabad this Friday, after they reached a two-week ceasefire agreement. **Cont'd on Page 7**



#### Cabinet clears 12% hike in fertiliser subsidy

**NEW DELHI:** The Union government on Wednesday approved 12 per cent hike in subsidy for Phosphatic and Potassic (P&K) fertilisers for Kharif 2026 season to Rs 41,534 crore in order to insulate farmers from rising global prices amid the West Asia conflict. The subsidy for P&K fertilisers for Kharif 2025 season was Rs 37,216 crore. The decision, taken at a Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, fixed subsidy rates effective April 1 to September 30, 2026. For Kharif 2026, the government has set subsidy for nitrogen at Rs 47.32 per kg (up from Rs 43.02 per kg in rabi 2025-26), phosphate at Rs 52.76 per kg against Rs 47.96 per kg, and sulphur at Rs 3.16 per kg against Rs 2.87 per kg. The potash subsidy has been held steady at Rs 2.38 per kg. Subsidy is extended across 28 grades of P&K fertilisers under the Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) scheme, in force since April 2010.

#### Central govt offices in Amaravati Centre readies ₹2,534-cr Central Secretariat project

HANS NEWS SERVICE AMARAVATI

THE Central government is moving ahead with major infrastructure development in Amaravati, with projects worth Rs 2,534 crore poised for roll-out, signalling a significant administrative build-out in the state capital.

A Public Investment Board (PIB) memorandum has been prepared for the construction of a Common Central Secretariat (CCS) at a cost of Rs 1,299.08 crore and government residential accommodation projects worth Rs 1,234.91 crore. The proposals now await a crucial clearance from the Cabinet Secretariat, which is

- ▶ PIB clears Rs 1,299 cr Central Secretariat in Amaravati
- ▶ Cabinet Secretariat nod key to fast-track execution
- ▶ 22.53 acres allocated for central govt infrastructure



expected to unlock the next phase of approvals. Officials indicated that the Andhra Pradesh government has already submitted the Gazette notification formally recognizing Amaravati as the capital to the Cabinet Secretariat.

Continued on Page 7



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#### HC quashes EC notification for Ponda bypoll

**PANAJI:** The Bombay High Court on Wednesday quashed the Election Commission of India's notification for the byelection to Ponda assembly seat in Goa a day ahead of polling, citing violation of the Representation of the People Act as the legislature's term is set to expire in less than a year. Thursday's election was thus cancelled even though postal ballots had already been cast, as the high court also refused to stay its judgement. While the ruling BJP termed the decision as shocking, the Congress accused it of conniving with the ECI to get the election cancelled by delaying the notification, and said it would file an appeal in the Supreme Court. A division bench of Justices Valmiki Menezes and Amit S Jamsandekar of the Goa bench of the High Court declared the March 16, 2026 notification "arbitrary".

**IRREGULAR by MANJUL**  
  
 Polls will be fear-free, violence-free, intimidation-free... shall I also add voter-free?

## ISRO sets 3 uncrewed missions ahead of Gaganyaan

HANS NEWS SERVICE BENGALURU

INDIAN Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman V Narayanan on Wednesday said that three uncrewed missions are scheduled before the India's first human space venture Gaganyaan.

Talking to reporters after the inaugural session of the International Conference on Spacecraft Mission Operations, Narayanan said: "Based on the guidelines, direction and the announcement made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, we are working on the Gaganyaan programme." "Before going

for the crewed mission, three uncrewed missions are targeted. So right now, we are working on the first uncrewed mission. All activities are going on well," he added.

The space agency chief further said that the time frame and everything else about the missions will be announced at an appropriate time. Underlining the importance of Spacecraft Mission Operations, Narayanan said, "Mission operation is an important activity in any space mission. The launch vehicle has to work for hardly 20-25 minutes. This mission operation activity has to continue for a long



time. When we talk about a communication satellite with a 15-year operation, continuously, this operation has to be done."

Narayanan also cited the example of the Mars Orbiter



#### All set for polls in Assam, Kerala, Puducherry

**NEW DELHI:** Campaigning ended in Kerala, Assam and Puducherry, with voting set on Thursday for 296 seats. Officials received EVMs and other materials ahead of voting. Tamil Nadu votes on April 23, West Bengal on April 23 and 29 in two phases.

Polling will cover 140 seats in Kerala, 126 in Assam and 30 in Puducherry, with counting scheduled for May 4. A total of 1,849 candidates are in the fray, with key contests shaped by sharp political exchanges, development narratives and leadership face-offs.

In Kerala, the fight is primarily between the CPI(M)-led LDF, Congress-led UDF and BJP-led NDA, with top leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan leading campaigns.

Continued on Page 7

## CM bats for EV bus shift, expansion of AP highways

### Dual strategy to cut transport costs, boost economy

- ▶ Calls for steps to optimise transport fuel costs
- ▶ Charging infra, battery systems to be scaled
- ▶ Rs 24,502 crore highway works targeted this year
- ▶ Port connectivity, Pushkaram road upgrades prioritised



Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu at a review on R&B department in the Secretariat on Wednesday

HANS NEWS SERVICE AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday outlined a dual strategy of expanding electric mobility and accelerating highway development to lower transport costs and boost economic activity across Andhra Pradesh.

Reviewing roads and highways at the Secretariat, the Chief Minister said affordable and efficient public transport hinges on scaling up electric buses. Adoption of clean energy will reduce operational costs and directly

benefit commuters, he stated. Pointing out that the State has already reduced electricity procurement costs by about Re 1 per unit through efficient solar power management, he called for similar optimisation in transport fuel costs. With EV bus operating costs currently around Rs 72 per km, the Chief Minister directed officials to examine models to bring down expenses, focusing on charging infrastructure expansion and battery standardisation. While recommending a gradual transition of all bus categories to air-conditioned electric buses, he mooted e-cycles as a complementary mass mobil-

ity option. On the infrastructure front, the Chief Minister stressed robust and continuous road maintenance. Of the State's 45,433 km road network, about 10,238 km requires annual upkeep. He ordered immediate repair of potholes and adoption of global best practices, while assuring adequate funding for Roads & Buildings Department's works. Highlighting region-specific challenges, Naidu called for tailored construction approaches, particularly in black cotton soil areas of the Godavari districts, recommending hybrid road models such as BT and white-topping. **Continued on Page 7**

#### India withdraws bid to host climate summit

**NEW DELHI:** India has withdrawn its offer to host the United Nations annual climate Conference Of the Parties (COP33) in 2028, sources said on Wednesday. During his address at COP28 in Dubai in 2023, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had proposed India as the host country for COP33. Sources informed that the decision has been officially communicated to the concerned that India is withdrawing its bid to host COP33. There was no response from the Environment Ministry on the development. A questionnaire sent to the COP headquarters in Bonn also did not elicit a response.

# Madhav flags coastal intrusions, home guards' woes to CM

● BJP leader raises alarm over alleged illegal entry by Tamil Nadu fishermen, seeks strict action and stronger coastal security to protect local livelihoods

● Urges govt to facilitate inter-state transfers for around 400 home guards working away from native places since bifurcation

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA

BJP state president P V N Madhav met Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu in Amaravati and submitted a representation highlighting key issues faced by fisher-

men and home guards in the state.

During the meeting, Madhav raised concerns over frequent incidents of illegal entry by fishermen from Tamil Nadu into coastal areas of Nellore, Ongole, and Bapatla districts. He stated that these intrusions are causing serious difficulties for local fishermen, as outsiders allegedly arrive in speed boats, exploit marine resources, damage fishing nets and boats, and even resort to attacks.

He expressed concern that such incidents are creating fear among local fishing communities and could potentially disturb law and order in coastal regions. Referring to a recent incident in Juvvaladine area of Nellore district, he said

local fishermen had caught some of these boats, but authorities reportedly released them without strict action, raising suspicions.

Madhav urged the Chief Minister to take immediate steps to curb illegal fishing activities, enforce strict action against intruding boats, and strengthen coastal security to protect the livelihoods of local fishermen.

He also highlighted the difficulties faced by around 400 home guards who have been working far away from their native places since the state bifurcation. He requested the government to initiate mutual transfers between Andhra Pradesh and Telangana to address their concerns and provide relief to the affected personnel.



BJP state unit president P V N Madhav felicitating Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu at the Secretariat on Wednesday

# Cancellation of land allotment people's victory: CPM

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA

CH Baburao, State Secretariat Member of Communist Party of India (Marxist), termed the cancellation of land allotment to Lulu International Holdings as a major victory for people's struggle. He asserted that movements to protect government lands and oppose indiscriminate allocation to corporates will continue.

The state government informed the High Court through the Advocate General that it has withdrawn its earlier decision to allot land at the old RTC bus stand in Vijayawada for the construction of a Lulu Mall. The decision follows a Public Interest Litigation filed by farmer leader Vadde Shobhanadreeswara

Rao, challenging the allotment.

Baburao said the government's move to cancel the allotment is a clear outcome of sustained public protests and legal intervention. He criticised the earlier decision as a violation of rules and an attempt to hand over valuable public land to a large multinational corporation.

He pointed out that the government had issued GO No 137 on July 5, 2025, leasing 4.17 acres of land worth nearly Rs 400 crore at the old RTC bus stand to Lulu Group for 99 years at a nominal rate of Rs 1.50 per square foot. The proposal also permitted construction of a three-storey commercial complex over 2.32 lakh square feet.

Stating that Lulu is a multinational company with operations across 25

countries and a turnover of over Rs 66,000 crore, Baburao said several protests were organised by CPM, Left parties, trade unions, and civil society groups against the allotment.

A united citizens' forum had also spearheaded the agitation.

He alleged that the allocation would have weakened the RTC system and adversely impacted small and medium traders in the city.

Due to combined public and legal pressure, the government was compelled to withdraw its decision, he said. Baburao warned that any future attempts to allocate public lands in violation of norms will be strongly resisted, and reiterated that people's movements to safeguard government properties will continue.

# COLLECTOR REVIEWS GOVT MEDICAL COLLEGE WORKS

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NARASARAOPET

PALNADU district collector Kritika Shukla has directed officials to expedite the construction works of the new

Government Medical College and its affiliated hospital in Piduguralla.

She stated that all necessary steps are being taken to commence outpatient medical services at the new

government teaching hospital in Piduguralla. She conducted a review meeting with officials to assess the progress of the construction works of the medical college and the attached hospital. She reviewed the progress achieved so far.

Officials informed that construction is underway in three main blocks of the college laboratories, administration, and lecture galleries.

They also stated that the outpatient, inpatient, diagnostic, and emergency blocks will be completed soon. She instructed that all pending works be completed at the earliest. DMHO Dr Ravi, DCH Prasuna were among those who participated.

# Youth told to grow as entrepreneurs

- A one-day awareness seminar on opportunities for economically weaker sections in MSME parks was held
- Minister for BC Welfare, EWS Welfare, Handlooms and Textiles S Savitha takes part

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
GUNTUR

MINISTER for BC Welfare, EWS Welfare, Handlooms and Textiles S Savitha called upon youth to emerge as entrepreneurs and generate employment opportunities for others. She stated that Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's vision is to develop at least one entrepreneur from every household. She assured that the government is extending full support and encouragement to aspiring entrepreneurs who come forward to establish industries. She was speaking at a one-day awareness seminar on opportunities for economically weaker sections in MSME parks held at Nagarjuna University on Wednesday. She appreciated the initiative of organising awareness programmes for economically weaker sections among upper castes regarding the establishment of small and medium industries in MSME parks. She said the coalition government is committed to uplifting EWS communities and

eradicating poverty. She said that CM Naidu, Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, and Minister for HRD Nara Lokesh are working tirelessly to make Andhra Pradesh a leader in the industrial sector. She reiterated the government's goal of creating 2 million jobs by 2029, as promised during elections. Within just 22 months of the coalition government, investments worth over Rs 25 lakh crore have been attracted to the state, she said. EWS Principal Secretary K Sunitha, MSME CEO M Vishva, Vice-Chancellor Prof Gangadhar Rao were among those who participated.



Minister for BC Welfare and Handlooms S Savitha addressing an awareness meeting at Acharya Nagarjuna University on Wednesday

# 'Dignified livelihood for weavers is govt motto'

- Minister for Handlooms and Textiles S Savitha said that significant benefits are being extended to weavers by the present government

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
GUNTUR

MINISTER for Handlooms and Textiles S Savitha stated that ensuring a dignified livelihood for handloom workers is the primary objective of the coalition government. She said that a free electricity scheme for weavers has been implemented from April 1.

Representatives of the Andhra Pradesh Padmasali Association met Savitha at her camp office in Tadepalli on Wednesday.

They invited her to attend the Pad-

masali Mahasabha scheduled to be held on April 26.

Speaking on the occasion, she said that significant benefits are being extended to weavers under the present government. She highlighted that a pension of Rs 4,000 is being provided to handloom workers aged 50 years and above. An annual allocation of Rs 5 crore is being made towards the thrift fund, and a 15% subsidy is being provided on yarn.

She further stated that a new textiles policy has been introduced, under which mega and mini clusters are being established across the state. Steps have also been taken to increase the sale of handloom products through APCO. Under the Mudra scheme, financial assistance of Rs 24.43 crore has been provided to 2,640 weavers. The government

is also organising handloom exhibitions across the state to boost sales. Since April 2024, credit facilities worth Rs 78.73 crore have been extended to 109 primary handloom cooperative societies.

She emphasised that the government is committed to safeguarding the health of weavers, and measures are being taken under a Universal Health Policy to ensure their well-being. She reiterated that the coalition government is dedicated to enabling weavers to lead a dignified life. Savitha unveiled the poster for the Padmasali Mahasabha. AP Padmasali Association president Jaggarapu Srinivasa Rao and other representatives including Munagapati Venkateswara Rao, Anjibabu, Vijayanagendra, and Bandaru Benjerjee were present.

**यूनियन बैंक Union Bank of India**  
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APPENDIX-II-A [See Proviso to Rule 6 (2)]

**SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF MOVABLE PROPERTIES**

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Movable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 6(2) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described movable properties mortgaged/charged to Union Bank of India, the Physical Possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Union Bank of India (Secured Creditor), will be sold through e-auction on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" basis on 12-05-2026, for recovery of below mentioned amount plus further interest, costs and charges due to the Union Bank of India from below mentioned Borrower/Guarantor. The details of the Reserve price of the secured assets and earnest money deposit are mentioned below:

**DATE & TIME OF E-AUCTION: 12-05-2026 at 12.00 Noon to 5.00 PM**  
(With unlimited extension of 10 minutes duration each till the conclusion of the sale)  
The Online E-auction will be held through web portal/website: <https://baanknet.com>

**Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s):** 1) M/s. R G Water Industries, Proprietor: Smt. Korada Deepamani, Office: Shop No. 311 & 305, 3rd Floor, Sai Shopping Centre, RTC Cross Roads, Dwarakanagar, Visakhapatnam-530016. 2) M/s. R G Water Industries, Proprietor: Smt. Korada Deepamani, Unit: No.17/1, Cherukupalli Village, Backside of Avanti Engg College, Bhogapuram Mandal, Vizianagaram District-532516. 3) Smt. Korada Deepamani, W/o Sri Korada Rama Gopal (Proprietor: M/s RG Water Industries), Door No: 8-52-2, Old CBI Down, China Waltair, Visakhapatnam-530017. Guarantor : 4) Sri Korada Rama Gopal (alias KVVSS Rama Gopal), S/o Korada Rama Rao, Door No: 8-52-2, Old CBI Down, China Waltair, Visakhapatnam-530017.

**Outstanding Amount:** Rs.1,78,95,460.59 (Rupees One Crore Seventy Eight Lakh Ninety Five Thousand Four Hundred and Sixty and Fifty Nine Paise Only) together with contractual rate of interest as of 31-12-2025 plus further interest, costs and other charges.

**DESCRIPTION OF MOVABLE SECURED ASSETS TO BE SOLD**

Details of auction items under physical possession of bank @ Address: M/s. R G Water Industries, Proprietor: Smt. Korada Deepamani, Unit: No.17/1, Cherukupalli Village, Backside of Avanti Engg College, Bhogapuram Mandal, Vizianagaram District-532516.

S.No	Description of the plant, machinery etc. In the physical possession	Make / Supplier	Qty	Year
1	Blow Moulding Machine	-	1 Set	2014
2	Water Treatment Plant (with accessories)	Yercaud Electronics	1 Set	2014
3	Automatic Bottle Equipment - EVATS-1000 with Shrink Tunnel	Canada Pure Fillets Pvt. Ltd	1 Set	2014
4	Sachet Filling Machine - CR-L-500	Crown Industries	2 Nos	2010
5	Bag Closer	Revo Make	1 No	2014
6	Deep Freezer	-	2 Nos	2014
7	Bottle Shape Pouch Packing Machine	Shree Ashapura Tech	2 Nos	2014
8	Manual Cup Sealing Machine	Topchances	1 No	2014
9	Computer with Printer & CCTV cameras	-	1set	2014
10	Air Compressor with 11 kW Motor	-	1 Set	2014
11	Bore Well Pump with Accessories	-	1 No	2014
12	Sump Pump with Accessories	-	2 Nos	2014
13	Computer table	-	1 No	2014
14	Office Tables	-	4 Nos	2014
15	Cushion Chairs	-	5 Nos	2014
16	Executive Office Table	-	1 No	2014
17	Executive Chair	-	1 No	2014
18	Wooden Cupboard	-	1 No	2014
19	Air Conditioners	-	2 Nos	2014
20	Ceiling Fans	-	2 Nos	2014
21	Revolving Chairs	-	2 Nos	2014
22	Digital Spectrophotometer	-	1 No	2014
23	Centrifuge	-	1 No	2014
24	Digital pH Meter	-	1 No	2014
25	Digital Turbidity Meter	-	1 No	2014
26	Heating Mantle	SISCO	1 No	2014
27	Water Bath	SISCO	1 No	2014
28	Magnetic Stirrer (without hot plate)	SISCO	1 No	2014
29	Laminar Flow	-	1 No	2014
30	BOD Incubator	SISCO	1 No	2014
31	Fridge	Electrolux	1 No	2014

**Reserve Price: Rs. 5,15,000/- EMD: Rs. 51,500/- Bid Increment: Rs. 5,200/-**

Bidders are advised to go through the service provider website: <https://baanknet.com> and Union Bank of India website: <https://www.unionbankofindia.bank.in/auction-property/viewauction-property.aspx> for detailed terms and conditions of Auction Sale before submitting their bids and taking part in the E-Auction sale proceedings. There are no encumbrances known to the Bank on the property. The interested bidder may contact the Authorised Officer ascertaining the details of auction and inspection of property. Mail id: ubin0817295@unionbankofindia.bank.in, Contact No. 93245 17291.

Date: 06.04.2026, Place: Visakhapatnam  
Sd/- Authorised Officer, Union Bank of India

# Rs 170 cr mega plan for IGMC Stadium development

- Transport and Sports Minister Ramprasad Reddy lays foundation stone for IGMC Stadium modernisation works
- Sports development activities, which had slowed down over the past five years have now regained momentum
- The stadium is expected to undergo a complete transformation by next year and will be upgraded to host international-level sporting events

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA

TRANSPORT and Sports Minister Mandipalli Ramprasad Reddy said the government is committed to making Andhra Pradesh a leading state in the country in the field of sports by prioritising sports infrastructure in every city, town, and village over the next three years. The foundation stone for the development works of Indira Gandhi Municipal Stadium (IGMC Stadium) in Vijayawada was laid on



Minister Ramprasad Reddy, MP Kesineni Sivanath, MLA Rammohan, Collector G Lakshminsha and Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh Chairman Animini Ravi Naidu performing puja for IGMC Stadium modernisation works in Vijayawada on Wednesday

Wednesday with funds from the Khelo India initiative. The minister was the chief guest.

Speaking on the occasion, he said it was significant that the programme was held soon after Amaravati received legal recognition in Parliament. He said that the stadium holds strong emotional significance for the people of Vijayawada and assured that the government is giving top priority to its development. He announced that approximately Rs 160-170 crore will be spent on the stadium's development in three phases. Of this, Rs 20 crore will come

from Khelo India, Rs 20 crore from Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh, and the remaining funds will be mobilised through the Municipal Administration and the state government.

The minister stated that sports development activities, which had slowed down over the past five years, have now regained momentum. He added that foundation works have already begun in Guntur and will soon commence in Srikakulam. He expressed optimism that proposals worth Rs 1,000 crore have been submitted to the Cen-

tre, with over Rs 100 crore expected in the second phase. He credited Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Minister Nara Lokesh for driving the development of sports infrastructure in the state. He reiterated that Andhra Pradesh will emerge as a sports leader by strengthening facilities across all regions.

Welcoming the proposal to organise the Andhra Premier League (APL) from Amaravati to Kadapa, he assured full support from the state government. MP Kesineni Sivanath said Vijayawada is

a rapidly developing city and that Amaravati's recognition as the permanent capital will open up new opportunities. He added that sports infrastructure is being enhanced in Visakhapatnam, Tirupati and Vijayawada, and revealed that the stadium development could reach an estimated Rs 185 crore.

He also stated that the government is committed to establishing a Sports City across 2,500 acres in Amaravati, along with a Sports University. Efforts are underway to host the National Games in Vijayawada and Amaravati by 2029. SAAP chairman Animini Ravi Naidu said MP Sivanath played a key role in the stadium's development by offering continuous guidance. He added that one block of the stadium will be named after a prominent woman sportsperson. The stadium is expected to undergo a complete transformation by next year and will be upgraded to host international-level sporting events. Several dignitaries, including MLA Gadde Rammohan, District Collector G Lakshminsha, Municipal Commissioner HM Dhyanchandara, SAAP VC & MD S Bharani, and international chess player Koneru Humpy and others were present.

# Pawan urges AU students not to embrace any ideology blindly

- Deputy CM describes students as possessing 'nuclear energy' that must be channelled into building a stronger nation and serving society
- Exhorts youth to avoid following any ideology blindly, urging them instead to choose a path that upholds constitutional values and shows gratitude to the taxpayers who fund their education.
- Sharing his own journey from the film industry to politics, he highlights how overcoming personal failures gave him the strength to lead, encouraging students to dream big despite any setbacks

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VISAKHAPATNAM

DEPUTY Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan emphasised that students possess 'nuclear' energy and their 'explosive' traits have to be utilised for building the nation.

Participating as chief guest at Andhra University's 'Shatabdi Utsavalu' on the concluding day organised in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday, the Deputy CM exhorted the students not to get carried away by any ideology blindly.

"Each one of you make sure what 'ideology' is worth to be embraced. Embrace an ideology which will uphold dharma, constitutional values, and help showcase gratitude to the nation," he urged,

encouraging the student community to dream big and work hard to realise it.

The government is providing education through the money from scores of taxpayers. By getting educated, it is also important to contribute to the nation, Pawan Kalyan underlined.

"The actions we take will decide our future. Our knowledge and thoughts should be constructively channelised and useful for the society," he stressed.

The academic phase of students plays a key role in nation's growth and it is also their responsibility too, the Deputy CM said.

Speaking about Andhra University, Pawan Kalyan, "Several stalwarts, intellectuals and experts were gradu-



Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan along with artists at the centenary celebrations of Andhra University in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday

ated from the 100-year-old Andhra University. Even as I don't deserve to be addressing this great institution, I did come for the centenary celebrations for the love you showered on me."

Recalling his film life, Pawan Kalyan said that he would know about Andhra University's emblem and departments through filmmaker Trivikram Srinivas. "I used to get scared to attend students' programmes because it is tough to answer their

bold questions. Participating in such a large scale student-centric programme today is a big adventure for me," the Deputy Chief Minister admitted. It is common to applaud celebrities. But those who sacrificed their lives and contributed remarkably for the nation deserve such applause, Pawan Kalyan mentioned.

"A decade back, I was not addressing the way I am now. I have overcome several failures in my life before stand-

ing here as failures made me stronger. The main reason behind me venturing into politics is to safeguard future generations. Students and youth play an important role in building future generation and I wish them all the best for it," the Deputy Chief Minister emphasised.

Later, the leader presented prizes to various winners who took part in different competitions in the presence of AU Vice Chancellor GP Raja Sekhar, among others.

# NDA govt is committed to comprehensive regional devt: MP

- Sribharat inaugurates multiple development works worth Rs.2.39 crore, marking a major boost to urban infrastructure in the constituency
- The projects, executed across GVMC wards 52, 89, and 90, reflect a comprehensive development approach
- In ward 90, a newly-developed public park and community hall were opened

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VISAKHAPATNAM

MP M Sribharat stated that the west constituency in the city is witnessing rapid transformation across all sectors, with a focused push on enhancing civic infrastructure to improve residents' quality of life.

Addressing the gathering during a series of inauguration ceremonies organised here on Wednesday, the MP mentioned that the Andhra Pradesh government is committed to driving development in every sphere.

Alongside Government Whip PGRV Naidu (Ganababu), he inaugurated multiple development works



Visakhapatnam MP M Sribharat and MLA Ganababu inaugurating development works in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday

worth Rs.2.39 crore, marking a major boost to urban infrastructure in the constituency.

The projects, executed across GVMC wards 52, 89, and 90, reflect a comprehensive development approach.

Some of them include the inauguration of the Swarna Ward Secretariat building and an additional floor to the community hall in VUDA Colony of ward 52, aimed at strengthening administrative services and public engagement.

In ward 90, a newly-developed public park and community hall were opened, while a women's building in Kakani Nagar and a modernised public park in ASR Nagar were dedicated to the public.

Kothapalem in ward 89

witnessed the launch of a public park and community hall, along with the inauguration of a Muslim Community Hall in Santosh Nagar and a Viswabrahmin (Kamsali) community hall in Adarsh Nagar. These works highlight efforts taken to cater to diverse social groups.

Speaking on the occasion, Government Whip and MLA Ganababu noted that the administration is giving top priority to constructing parks and community halls in tune with public needs, ensuring that development remains people-centric and sustainable.

Former corporators Bommididi Ramana, Dadi Ramesh, leaders Boddeti Vijay, Y Tirumala Rao, V Chandrasekar, alliance leaders, were present.

# AU's Dr Ambedkar Chair designated as national nodal centre

- Marking a remarkable milestone, AU's Dr BR Ambedkar Chair is designated as the national nodal centre
- As Andhra University celebrates 100 glorious years of its academic journey, the recognition adds another feather in its cap
- Hailing it as a historic accomplishment, the university fraternity expressed delight over the development

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VISAKHAPATNAM

THE Dr BR Ambedkar Chair at Andhra University has been officially designated as the national nodal centre for the national portal of Dr Ambedkar Chairs across the country by the Dr Ambedkar Foundation (DAF), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

The prestigious recognition has been conferred at a time when the university is commemorating its centenary celebrations.

The designation of Andhra University as the national nodal centre marks a remarkable milestone, placing the institution at the forefront of coordinating, managing and strengthening the digital ecosystem of all Dr Ambedkar Chairs across India.

The national portal serves as a unified platform for documentation, research dissemination, knowledge sharing and academic collaboration in alignment with the vision of Dr BR Ambedkar and the mission of 'Digital India' for inclusive growth.

In recognition of his outstanding leadership and unwavering commitment, Prof James Stephen Meka, Chair Professor of the Dr Ambedkar Chair, Andhra University, has been designated as the national nodal officer for the portal.

Stakeholders across academic and policy circles appreciated Prof. James Stephen Meka for his consistent, result-oriented and visionary performance, which has transformed the Chair into a model centre of excellence at the national-level.

The Government of India has further strengthened this initiative by sanctioning a dedicated grant for the portal's maintenance, technological upgradation, and national coordination activities over a five-year period.

As Andhra University celebrates 100 glorious years of its academic journey, the recognition adds another feather in the cap.

"This is not just an achievement, but a defining moment in the centenary celebrations, a reflection of our commitment to excellence, innovation, and social inclusion," underlined Prof. James Stephen Meka and the stakeholders.

The university fraternity expressed delight over the development, hailing it as a historic accomplishment that highlights Andhra University's position as a national leader in higher education and social justice initiatives.

# New base year workshop set for state income data

- Experts from 31 States and UTs are transitioning to a 2022-23 base year, moving away from the decade-old 2011-12 series.
- This shift ensures economic data reflects modern market realities and structural changes post-pandemic.
- MoSPI Secretary Saurabh Garg notes that GSDP is the benchmark for state borrowing limits and Central tax devolution.
- The workshop places heavy focus on DDP to map economic health at the local level.

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VISAKHAPATNAM

A three-day-long all-India workshop on state income and related aggregates with the new base year (2022-23) for officers of the Directorates of Economics and Statistics (DES) of States/UTs began in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday.

Organised by the National Accounts Division (NAD) of the National Statistics Office (NSO), under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), the workshop aims to familiarise states/UTs with the methodological changes introduced at the national level and promote uniformity, transparency and comparability in regional accounts



Guests at a three-day-long all-India workshop in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday

statistics.

Attending as chief guest Secretary, MoSPI Saurabh Garg emphasised the importance of GSDP as a key indicator for determining states' borrowing limits and for the devolution of Central taxes.

He highlighted that the availability of GST data enables the preparation of expenditure-side estimates, which can be used to cross-validate estimates compiled through the production approach, thereby enhancing their robustness.

He also stressed the importance of states' active participation in surveys such as ASUSE and PLFS for generating reliable district-level estimates, particularly for the informal sector.

Referring to 'Sadhana Saptah 2026' under Mission

Karmayogi, he underscored the role of data-driven decision-making and administration.

Speaking on the occasion, Principal Secretary (Finance & Planning) Peeyush Kumar highlighted that the shift in base year from 2011-12 to 2022-23 is a crucial reassessment to capture structural changes in the economy.

He also emphasised the importance of District Domestic Product (DDP) in understanding district-level economic structures and stated that the revised series would present a more realistic picture of Andhra Pradesh's economy after its bifurcation.

Additional Director General (National Accounts Division), MoSPI Siddhar-

tha Kundu highlighted that adopting the new base year is a critical step toward ensuring that national accounts remain relevant and reflective of economic transformations. He emphasised the foundational role of states in providing accurate and timely data, which is essential for the reliability of national aggregates.

Deputy Director General (National Accounts Division) MoSPI Subhra Sarker, Director, Directorate of Economics and Statistics B Gopal, Deputy Director, Directorate of Economics and Statistics Subba Rao addressed the gathering.

Around 125 participants from MoSPI, New Delhi and 31 States/UTs will take part in the workshop that will continue till April 10.

# Two Iranian students seek financial assistance to reach home

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VISAKHAPATNAM

Two Iranian students pursuing their final year of pharmacy at Andhra University approached the District Revenue Officer on Wednesday, seeking urgent financial assistance in light of hardships caused by the ongoing conflict in West Asia.

The students, identified as Solmaz Mohammadi and Zeinab Mohammadi, submitted a formal representation explaining their distress.

In their appeal, the students conveyed that they were originally from Iran and are currently residing in India along with their three children, aged seven, five, and four.

They stated that the prevailing war conditions had disrupted communication with their families back home, leaving them without any financial or emotional support.

As a result, they expressed their inability to meet essential expenses, including house rent, children's school fees, and daily living costs.

The representation further noted that the family had



Two Iranian students briefing their distress to the revenue officer in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday

been unable to pay rent for the past two months, amounting to Rs.14,600, while pending school fees for their three children were Rs.29,700. The students also indicated that they required financial assistance to purchase air tickets to return to their home country.

However, they explained that their academic commitments, including an internship scheduled till early June, had compelled them to remain in India for the time being, although the uncertain situation might necessitate an earlier return if possible.

They earnestly appealed to the authorities to extend financial support to help them overcome the crisis, adding that any assistance provided would be useful to them.

# Tirupati-bound IndiGo flight fails to take off due to technical snag

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VISAKHAPATNAM

PASSENGERS who boarded the Tirupati-bound IndiGo flight (6E7063) at Visakhapatnam Airport on April 8 noon had to wait an extra hours because the flight failed to take off due to a technical snag.

For a while, passengers endured discomfort as the air conditioners failed to work on the flight.

Even as a team worked to fix the technical glitch, passengers were asked to wait for over two-

and-a-half hours before departing to Tirupati.

Meanwhile, a few passengers cancelled their travel plans and disembarked as the crew continued to fix the technical problem requesting an extended waiting period.

Some passengers argued with the flight crew seeking clarity on the departure reschedule.

After a prolonged wait, the flight which was supposed to take off at 1:50 pm, finally departed over two-and-a-half hours later.

# INDIAN NAVAL SHIP TRIKAND ARRIVES AT MOMBASA IN KENYA

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VISAKHAPATNAM:

AS part of its ongoing deployment in the South West Indian Ocean Region, INS Trikand, a frontline guided missile frigate of the Indian Navy, arrived at Mombasa, Kenya. Aimed at strengthening maritime cooperation and enhancing bilateral ties between India and Kenya, the port call coincides with

the visit of Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Naval Command Vice Admiral Krishna Swaminathan to Kenya. Professional, cultural and social engagements will be carried out during the stay and essential stores will be handed over to the Kenya Defence Forces.

INS Trikand arrived at Mombasa, Kenya, on April 7. Also, the ship's Commanding Officer will call on senior government functionaries.

On departure from Mombasa, INS Trikand will engage in a Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with units of the Kenya Navy.

The exercise will facilitate the exchange of best practices and enhance bilateral maritime interoperability.

The port call by INS Trikand aligns with India's vision of MAHASAGAR - Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions.

- INS Trikand arrived at Mombasa to bolster maritime cooperation between India and Kenya.
- The visit features high-level meetings with senior government officials to strengthen long-standing bilateral ties.
- The deployment aligns with India's MAHASAGAR vision, promoting security and growth across the Indian Ocean.



As part of its ongoing deployment in the South West Indian Ocean Region, INS Trikand arrived at Mombasa, Kenya

# Atchannaidu for demand-based, sustainable farming

- Agriculture minister urges farmers to adopt demand-driven crops and organic farming for better incomes and soil health
- Warns against excessive chemical use; govt offering training, subsidies, and dedicated markets for organic produce
- Highlights success of Maruteru paddy varieties; calls for village-level awareness and alignment with changing food habits



Agriculture minister K Atchannaidu inaugurated Kisan Mela at the Maruteru Agricultural Research Station in West Godavari district on Wednesday.

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM

AGRICULTURE minister K Atchannaidu called upon farmers to shift towards demand-based crop cultivation and adopt sustainable farming practices to improve incomes and protect soil health.

Speaking at a Kisan Mela at the agricultural research station in Maruteru of Penumantra mandal in Achanta constituency of

West Godavari district on Wednesday, the minister said organic farming offers higher returns with lower input costs while ensuring healthier food for consumers. The event focused on the theme 'Changing Climate Conditions-Sustainable Paddy Cultivation.'

The minister inspected laboratories at the research station and interacted with scientists to understand

the latest developments in paddy varieties.

He also visited stalls set up by Acharya N G Ranga Agricultural University and private companies, showcasing modern farm machinery and technologies.

Addressing the gathering, he expressed concern over the excessive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, which he said is

degrading soil quality and increasing cultivation costs.

He stated that the government is providing training, subsidies and marketing support to encourage farmers to shift towards organic farming. Steps are also being taken to establish dedicated markets to ensure better prices for organic produce.

He noted that paddy varieties developed at the

Maruteru research centre are achieving high yields in several states across the country and appreciated the efforts of agricultural scientists. With changing food habits among people, he advised farmers to align crop choices with market demand.

He directed officials and scientists to create awareness at the village level about suitable crops for different regions. Raja Sabha MP Paka Venkata Satyanarayana stressed the importance of soil testing awareness among farmers and said interlinking of rivers in the state would help address irrigation challenges.

District collector Chadalavada Nagarani said a target of 7.25 lakh metric tonnes has been set for rabi procurement in the district.

Achanta MLA Pitani Satyanarayana, Tanuku MLA Arimilli Radhakrishna, Acharya NG Ranga Agricultural University vice-chancellor Dr R Sharada Jayalakshmi Devi, Horticulture University vice-chancellor Dhanujaya Rao were among those present.

# Botcha flags Rs 20,500 cr debt gap, seeks Gov's intervention

- Opposition leader in Council in a letter to the Governor alleges that finance dept understated borrowings for 2024-25 and 2025-26 by omitting key components
- Claims actual liabilities are Rs 81,082 cr versus the reported Rs 60,485 cr, citing CAG-audited accounts
- Accuses govt of hiding off-budget loans and inconsistent reporting, urging transparency to restore public trust



YSRCP MLC Botcha Satyanarayana

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VISAKHAPATNAM

EXPRESSING concern over debts mobilised by the NDA government, particularly in the past two years, YSRCP MLC Botcha Satyanarayana dashed off a letter to Governor S Abdul Nazeer alleging that the state finance department presented inaccurate details regarding government borrowings for 2024-25 and 2025-26 in the Legislative Council.

Satyanarayana said the response given by the principal finance secretary to a 'starred' question in the February 2026 session understated the actual borrowings, omitting 'key' components.

The leader of Opposition in Legislative Council requested the Governor's intervention in

convincing the state government to provide the real picture of the data to the legislature. "The finance department stated that total borrowings for 2024-25 were Rs 60,485 crore. However, the CAG-audited finance accounts clearly indicate that the actual net liabilities are about Rs. 81,082 crore. This leaves a gap of more than Rs. 20,500 crore which needs attention," he demanded.

Pointing out that three major components would have possibly been omitted, the MLC said, "Borrowings under Ways and Means Advances from RBI were not included, even though they have been classified as internal debt in official records. Net liabilities under public account such as deposits and reserve funds were excluded. Also, adjustments related to GST compensation loans were reduced without valid justification."

He underlined that when the fiscal deficit itself is over Rs 81,000 crore, presenting a much lower borrowing fig-

ure paints a 'different' picture of the state's finances. "Such omissions create a false impression that the government's debt burden is lower than it actually is," he criticised.

Raising another issue, Satyanarayana said the government's claim that there were no off-budget borrowings in 2025-26 is incorrect. "Government backed corporations like MARKFED and Civil Supplies Corporation have been allowed to raise loans with state guarantees. These entities depend on government support and such borrowings clearly fall under off budget liabilities as per Government of India guidelines," he said.

Pointing to alleged inconsistency in the finance department's approach, Satyanarayana said that when details were sought for borrowings from 2014-2024, both public debt and public account were included. However, public account was excluded in the past two years. He expressed that this raises serious concerns.

Stating that officials are expected to present facts in a transparent manner, he stressed that any deviation from this principle affects the credibility of the finance department and weakens public trust. The MLC requested the Governor to intervene and ensure corrective action is taken with immediate effect.

## ELEPHANT RAIDS

# Solar fencing brings hope to farmers in Chittoor region

- Tirupati East forest division installed a hanging solar-powered fence covering about five kilometres in Pulicherla mandal

PRADEEP VENNELAKANTI  
TIRUPATI



FARMERS across several mandals of the erstwhile Chittoor district are beginning to see hope after years of crop destruction caused by recurring elephant incursions, with forest authorities rolling out a solar-powered fencing system aimed at keeping herds away from agricultural lands.

For nearly a decade, villages located along forest fringes in Pulicherla, Somala, Sadum, Palamaner, Punganur and Kallur mandals have witnessed frequent elephant movement. The animals often strayed into cultivated fields, damaging crops across vast stretches and destroying farm equipment, leaving cultivators struggling with mounting losses. The persistent threat forced many farmers to either reduce cultivation or shift to less vulnerable farming practices.

In an effort to address the issue, officials of the Tirupati East forest division have installed a hanging solar-powered fence covering nearly five kilometres, stretching from

Gantavaripalle village in Pulicherla mandal up to the Kallurghat road. The project, implemented at a cost of Rs 49 lakh, has been completed and is set to undergo trial operations shortly. Forest authorities noted that a similar fencing system introduced earlier in the Palamaner range had yielded positive outcomes.

Elephant activity has been particularly intense in villages such as Pathapeta, Palem, Devalampeta, Kammappalle, Rayavaripalle, Challavaripalle and Ellankivariipalle. Farmers in these regions reported heavy losses to crops including paddy, tomato, brinjal and banana. Mango orchards and fodder crops were also affected, prompting several cultivators to cut down on agricultural operations due to uncertainty and financial strain.

Forest department officials said the fence installed earlier along the forest boundary at Palyam in Pulicherla mandal has begun yielding

favourable outcomes. In the month following its installation, elephant herds attempting to enter nearby farmlands have reportedly turned back upon reaching the barrier, providing relief to local farming communities.

Officials explained that the fencing system operates using solar-powered batteries to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply. During summer months, when elephants frequently venture out searching for food and water, power is maintained round the clock. The fence delivers a mild, non-lethal electric shock that deters the animals without causing harm. In the monsoon season, however, the power supply will function between 6 pm and 6 am, aligning with peak elephant movement hours.

Forest authorities expressed optimism that the new measure would significantly reduce human-elephant conflict in the region and help farmers regain confidence in cultivation.

# Focus on uninterrupted power supply, farmer welfare: Energy minister

## Inaugurates APCPDCL corporate office in Vijayawada

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA

ENERGY minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar said the government's primary goal is to provide quality and uninterrupted power supply while enhancing services to the public.

The minister inaugurated the new corporate office of Andhra Pradesh Central Power Distribution Corporation Limited (APCPDCL) at Gunadala, Vijayawada, in the presence of MP Kesineni Sivanath, MLA Gadde Ramamohan Rao, energy special chief secretary K Vijayanand and CMD P Pulla Reddy.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister expressed happiness over the inauguration of the modern office, built at an estimated cost of Rs 35-40 crore with a total area of 65,000 square feet. He credited the collective efforts of the department staff for earning a good reputation for the power sector.

He said that construction of new substations is progressing rapidly across the state. Following the directions of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, the government is focused on providing uninterrupted quality power supply without increasing electricity tariffs. He emphasised that there should be no power disruptions or low-voltage issues, and officials are working dili-



Energy minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar inaugurates the new corporate office of APCPDCL at Gunadala in Vijayawada on Wednesday

gently to achieve this.

The minister further stated that the department aims to improve public perception from the current 80 per cent to over 95 per cent. Under the PM Kusum scheme, tenders have been completed to provide free daytime electricity to farmers, and works will commence soon.

Highlighting achievements, he noted that the state has recorded unprecedented levels of power generation using modern techniques. By purchasing power during low-demand daytime and generating electricity during peak evening hours, the state is ensuring no shortages.

Renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and pumped storage projects (PSPs) are being expanded, and tenders have already been invited at 10 locations for battery storage systems.

He also praised electricity staff for their tireless service during disasters. Recalling past floods and cyclones, es-

pecially in Visakhapatnam, he said around 1,500-2,000 personnel restored nearly 20,000 electric poles within 24 hours, ensuring quick restoration of power supply.

Vijayanand said that advanced, human-independent software is being used to ensure transparency in power purchase and sales. He added that the state successfully managed a record peak load of 14,009 mw this year and supplied 275 million units of power without interruption during the summer. The efficiency of APGenco plants has been increased to 85-90 per cent.

He further noted that the APCPDCL building has been developed with a 'Net Zero' concept, incorporating solar energy and green technologies to reduce power consumption and achieve carbon neutrality.

CMD Pulla Reddy urged discom officials to continue delivering better services to consumers.

# Endowments woman official sent to custody

- Assistant commissioner Kalingiri Shanti remanded till April 21 after ACB arrest over alleged disproportionate assets



Kalingiri Shanti (file picture)

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA

A city court on Wednesday sent an endowments department official to judicial custody in a disproportionate assets case. Kalingiri Shanti, assistant commissioner in the endowments department, was produced before the ACB court, which sent her to judicial custody till April 21. She was subsequently shifted to the Vijayawada district jail.

The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) arrested Shanti after simultaneous raids at premises linked to her on Tuesday. The anti-graft agency took the action following information that she allegedly amassed wealth beyond her known sources of income.

ACB officials conduct searches for 10 hours in different locations, including Tadepalli, Undavalli, and Visakhapatnam. The searches were conducted at four places in Tadepalli, including her residence, a garment shop belonging to her mother, and her sister's residence.

They seized incriminating documents and unearthened assets, including a residential flat in Visakhapatnam, a G+2 building at Kunchanapalli,

776 grams of gold ornaments, nearly 3 kg of silver articles, cash worth Rs 1.15 lakh, bank balances of about Rs 3 lakh, a Volkswagen Polo car, a motorcycle, and electronic gadgets. Following the searches, the ACB registered a Disproportionate Assets (DA) case against the Assistant Commissioner under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

The official was also found to have a locker in a bank in Vijayawada. Further searches and valuation of assets were in progress. Shanti was appointed as Assistant Commissioner in the Endowments Department through the Andhra Pradesh State Public Service Commission (APPSC) in 2020, and worked in Visakhapatnam and Vijayawada. After the TDP-led coalition government came to power in 2024, Shanti was suspended for over an allegation of irregularities. She was under suspension from July 2024 to March 2026. The Endowments Department had initiated a departmental inquiry into the allegations against Shanti. The government had seriously taken the allegations against Shanti, including her recruitment procedure itself.

The suspension was lifted in March, and she was waiting for a posting.

# Lokesh cracks whip on inactive TDP MLAs

- Pulls up several legislators for failing to hold cadre meetings and grievance programmes for four weeks; directs staff to seek explanations
- Warns against negligence, stresses performance-based recognition; honours top 'My TDP' app performers
- Conducts 87th 'Prajadarbar', receives public petitions on railway depot relocation, bus operators' losses, and land dispute issues

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA



Education minister Nara Lokesh honours top 10 performers on My TDP app, at the party state office in Mangalagiri on Wednesday

lack of organisational activity in recent weeks by some legislators.

During a review meeting with party leaders at the party office, Lokesh pulled up several leaders for failing to conduct cadre meetings and grievance redressal pro-

grammes for four consecutive weeks. He expressed concern over the inaction of Mydukur MLA Putta Sudhakar Yadav, Kadapa MLA R Madhavi Reddy and Proddatur MLA Varadarajulu Reddy, and directed party office staff to seek explana-

tions from them. He also voiced anger at Pulivendula in-charge B Tech Ravi, Kamalapuram MLA Chaitanya Reddy and Dharmavaram in-charge Paritala Sriram for not holding the mandated programmes. Lokesh warned that negligence would not be tolerated and instructed leaders to strictly implement party directives.

Reiterating that the TDP recognises and rewards hard work, Lokesh said the party's growth was driven by the performance of its leaders. He emphasised that consistent execution of party programmes would ensure its long-term strength. He also interacted with the top 10 performers of the 'My TDP' app and honoured them for effectively promoting party ideology.

Later, Lokesh conducted

the 'Prajadarbar' public grievance programme at the TDP central office in Mangalagiri, marking its 87th day. He received petitions from people across the state, including party workers and leaders, and assured them of action after carefully hearing their concerns.

Among the issues raised were requests from loco pilots to prevent the relocation of the gala depot in Vijayawada during the proposed South Coast Railway formation, appeals from private bus owners for replacement support after Covid-related losses, and a land dispute complaint from a Kurnool district resident seeking justice over alleged encroachment of ancestral property. Lokesh assured all petitioners that their grievances would be examined and addressed.

# World Bank sees strong investment potential in Amaravati

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA

A delegation from the World Bank met Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu at the State Secretariat on Wednesday and expressed optimism about the vast investment opportunities in Amaravati.

The World Bank representatives appreciated the progress of Amaravati's construction and highlighted that the city's rapidly developing infrastructure, along with reforms in the IT and power sectors, is expected to attract significant international investments. They opined that Amaravati has the potential to emerge as the growth engine of Andhra Pradesh. The delegation further noted that with the ongoing development of

## CM outlines comprehensive development plans



Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu with World Bank delegation at the Secretariat on Wednesday

world-class infrastructure, Amaravati is likely to become a major hub for commercial and economic activities in the state.

During the meeting, Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu briefed the delegation on the government's vision of building a world-class capital while ensuring balanced and inclusive development across

the state. He explained that the government is working on comprehensive plans to promote growth in all regions. The Chief Minister also informed the delegation that strategies are being formulated to develop Andhra Pradesh across three regions, aiming for equitable progress and sustainable economic expansion.

# Second phase of Ratna Bhandar inventory begins

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
PURI

THE second phase of the inventory of the Puri Jagannath temple's Ratna Bhandar commenced on Wednesday, officials said. A selected team of servitors, gemologists and goldsmiths entered the sacred treasury at 11.30 am, along with Ratna Bhandar Committee chairman Justice Biswanath Rath, and Shree Jagannath Temple Administration's Chief Administrator Arabinda Padhee.

The inventory exercise, the first in 48 years, had begun on March 25 for the daily-use ornaments of the deities. "During the first phase, the entire process was documented through videography, photography, and 3D mapping to ensure transparency. A digital catalogue of the daily-use ornaments was prepared and stored in separate 'sindhukas' (treasure chests), categorised by metal



type," Padhee said. The current phase focuses on the Bahar Ratna Bhandar, where festival ornaments and jewellery are stored. Justice Rath said this inventory includes the famous 'Suna Bhesa' (golden attire) ornaments used on the chariots and four

other occasions. According to the 1978 list, the treasury holds 111 items, comprising 78 gold-mixed articles and 33 silver-mixed jewellery pieces. The inventory will continue until April 11, with subsequent sessions on April 13 and from April 16 to 18,

Padhee said. He said the temple rituals will continue uninterrupted, and devotees will have 'darshan' from the 'Bahara Katha' (outer barricade) for security reasons. The inventory is being done as per the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) set by

the State government.

The SOP divides storage into three categories -- the first category covers the inner chamber where the ornaments have been stored for centuries, the second one includes festival ornaments stored in the outer chamber, and the third category consists of daily-use items. While the third category was inventoried on March 25, the current exercise is for the second category ornaments, as the items currently adorned by the deities could not be counted earlier.

Elaborate security measures have been made by the district police in view of the exercise, officials said. The measures include strict access control, multi-layered security, deployment of striking forces at key locations, and standby teams of executive magistrates, fire services, medical staff, and anti-sabotage units, they said.

# CM launches projects worth Rs 40K cr

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR

ODISHA Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Wednesday launched 36 industrial projects worth Rs 40,811 crore, which are expected to generate 59,000 jobs, officials said. Of the 36 projects, Majhi inaugurated 11 industrial units and laid foundation stones for 25 others in the presence of senior officials and industry leaders.

The projects span sectors including green energy equipment, metal and downstream industries, textiles and apparel, plastics, tourism, agriculture and food processing, defence manufacturing, IT, automobiles, and cement. Before launching the projects, the Chief Minister held a round-table with leading industrialists from across the country and assured them of all necessary facilities -- land, power, water, connectivity, and timely approvals.

"We have a dedicated team to facilitate industries to set up their projects in the State. If there is any difficulty, the



industries may directly take up the matter with the Chief Minister's Office for immediate resolution," Majhi told industrialists and urged them to expand existing units in the State and help grow small-scale industries around their projects.

Addressing a public meeting at Bhuinpur near Begenia in Khurda district, Majhi asserted that Odisha is no longer merely a "State of potential" but is now actively experiencing the touch of prosperity. "This is a new and significant chapter in the golden journey of 'Samrudha Odisha'," he said.

Majhi highlighted that in the last 18-20 months, the government has laid founda-

tions and inaugurated 109 projects worth nearly Rs 2.5 lakh crore, creating 1,76,000 jobs. In a post on X, the CMO said, "A new chapter has been added to Odisha's industrial landscape. Reiterating the State government's commitment to providing all kinds of administrative support to industrialists along with further strengthening the industrial infrastructure in the State, the Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri @MohanMOdisha has laid the foundation stone and inaugurated 36 industrial projects worth Rs 40,811 crore at Bhubaneswar, Khordha. These projects have created a new chapter of employment opportunities for over 59,000 people."

# NIA seeks transfer of blast probe

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR

THE NIA formally requested the Odisha Police to hand over the investigation into the blast here in January, which left two persons dead, officials said. The Central agency wrote to Police Commissioner S Dev Datta Singh, seeking transfer of the case for a detailed probe into a possible terror angle behind the explosion that took place at Azad Nagar in the Airfield police station area on January 27.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) intends to examine possible links to larger criminal networks and ascertain whether high-grade explosives such as RDX were used in the blast. The Bhu-



baneswar-Cuttack Commissionerate Police, which is currently investigating the case, had earlier said four persons were injured when prime suspect Shahnawaz Malik (26), a history-sheeter, was allegedly assembling an explosive device on the rooftop of a rented house. Malik and a woman identified as Lizatun Bibi later succumbed to their burn injuries, while two others survived, the po-

lice said. Investigators had seized materials, including explosive residues, from the site. "Though it is suspected that Malik might have used high-grade explosive material, it was yet to be confirmed whether RDX was used," an officer said. An NIA team had visited the blast site in January and examined forensic evidence and CCTV footage as part of preliminary inquiry.

# WOS unveils S R Nayak's 'Cosmic Symphony'

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

'COSMIC Symphony', a book written by London-based management expert and Harvard and Oxford alumnus Smruti Ranjan Nayak, was launched at a glittering ceremony in Delhi.

Distinguished guests from New Delhi and National Capital Region attended the launch ceremony hosted by the World Odisha Society (WOS) on the premises of Shree Jagannath temple at Hazu Khas.

As a renowned author and general secretary of World Odisha Society's UK Chapter, Smruti Ranjan



Nayak is acclaimed for best-selling books like "Battlefield to Boardroom"

and "CRM - Creating Revenue Mechanism". Delivering the welcome

address, World Odisha Society Chairman Kishore Dwivedi praised author Nayak for using his book "Cosmic Symphony" to sensitise young minds toward holistic growth. Dwivedi said this book will empower children everywhere to disconnect from mobile devices and explore their inner lives.

At the launch, Nayak remarked that "Cosmic Symphony" is more than a book; it is an exploration of the mysteries found both "within ourselves and in the world around us." Once children begin to understand their inner selves, the world will naturally open up to them, Nayak added.



# Budget key to Odisha's long-term growth: Majhi

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR

ODISHA Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi has said that the State budget is not merely a statement of income and expenditure, but a strong roadmap for the State's overall development and the realisation of each citizen's dreams. While inaugurating a State-level budget awareness drive, "Ama Janiba, Ama Budget" on Tuesday, Majhi said in compliance with the nation's vision, the State government has set the targets to be achieved by 2047.

The targets include raising per capita income from Rs 1.8 lakh to Rs 32 lakh, enhancing the overall quality of life, reducing multidimensional poverty to just 5 per cent, increasing women's workforce participation to 70 per cent, extending life expectancy beyond 80 years, and eradicating anaemia and malnutrition.

The Chief Minister also said the 2026-27 State budget will act as a strong foundation for achieving the vision of a "Prosperous Odisha". This year's budget introduced 31 new initiatives, including several programmes and schemes. A total outlay of Rs 3.10 lakh crore has been proposed, with a strong focus on capital expenditure. The current budget is 7 per cent higher than the previous year's estimates.

The State government has set a target to transform Odisha into a \$500 billion economy by 2036 and a \$1.5 trillion economy by 2047. He asserted that while the goal may seem ambitious, the people of Odisha have the capability to achieve it with the blessings of Lord Jagannath. Budget for 2026-27 financial year includes special measures for rural development, employment generation, and addressing migration issues, he added. Notably, this budget awareness campaign will be organised across the State from April 1 to 14, to ensure wider public participation and awareness. Majhi said that the budget reflects Odisha's pride and prosperity and, with collective efforts, will transform the State into a major economic powerhouse of the country.

# Token lapses prevent farmers from selling paddy

SUNIL MOHAN PATNAIK  
BERHAMPUR

IN a distressing turn of events that has shaken the agrarian heartland, nearly 3,000 genuine farmers are unable to sell the paddy they worked so hard to harvest due to a deeply flawed token issuance system. What should have been a season of reward has instead turned into a saga of anguish and injustice.

As golden fields bowed with the weight of ripe harvests, hope blossomed in the hearts of farmers. Yet, that hope was cruelly crushed when the much-needed procurement tokens, essential for selling paddy, failed to reach them. The invisible walls of a faulty system rose high, locking thousands out of the marketplace.

While lakhs of farmers successfully navigated the procurement process,



these 3,000 cultivators found themselves trapped in a web of administrative lapses and questionable survey methods. A controversial satellite survey, reportedly conducted in haste, declared several fertile fields as non-cultivated lands, stripping farmers of their rightful eligibility without

even a word of consultation.

The irony cuts deep. After layers of official verification and field inspections, the fate of these farmers was overturned by a remote assessment, leaving them voiceless and vulnerable. Repeated appeals to authorities echoed into silence, as the token sys-

tem remained unresponsive to their plight.

For many, the consequences have been devastating. Forced to sell their produce at throwaway prices to middlemen or let it lie unsold, the farmers now grapple with mounting losses and fading trust in the system meant to protect them.

Voices of protest are now rising like a storm across the fields, demanding accountability and justice. Rushikulya Rayat Mahasabha secretary Simanchal Nahak and other farmer organisations have called for an immediate probe into the irregularities, punishment for those responsible, and compensation for the losses suffered.

In the land where farming is not just an occupation but a way of life, the failure of a system has sown seeds of despair, leaving behind a bitter harvest of broken promises.

# Cash, plots unearthed from engineer

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR

THE Odisha Vigilance department on Wednesday unearthed multiple assets, including a farmhouse, a palatial building, high-value plots, and bank deposits exceeding Rs 60 lakh, during raids on a senior Irrigation department engineer, officials said. Acting on a tip-off, Vigilance sleuths conducted simultaneous searches at six locations linked to Rajesh Chandra Mohanty, currently serving as Additional Chief Engineer of Central Irrigation Circle.

During the operation, officials unearthed a triple-storied residential building at Baramunda Housing Board Colony in Bhubaneswar. A paternal house in Kolhasingh village of Jajpur district and a relative's residence in Deula Sahi, Jubilee Town in Dhenkanal district were also



searched. Raids were further conducted at Mohanty's office chamber in Bhubaneswar, where he serves as ACE (Dam Safety).

Additionally, a double-storied building and a farmhouse spread over approximately 1.71 acres along with another building measuring around 4,000 square feet at Bimbol in Dhenkanal district were inspected. The Vigilance teams also identified five high-value plots, including one in Bhubaneswar and four located in Bimbol and Bhapur areas of Dhenkanal district. Officials stated that the measurement and valu-

ation of the buildings, farmhouse and plots were carried out by the Vigilance Technical Wing.

The raids further led to the seizure of Rs 6.23 lakh in cash, deposits worth over Rs 60 lakh, gold ornaments, flight tickets valued at Rs 13.47 lakh, and two four-wheelers. The total value of assets is likely to increase as the search operation was still underway.

The operation involved a large team comprising one Additional SP, 11 DSP-rank officers, nine inspectors, eight ASIs, and other supporting staff.

# Odisha tops AMRUT 2.0 implementation

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR

ODISHA emerged as a leading State in the country in the urban development sector, securing the first position for the successful implementation and service delivery under the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) 2.0. AMRUT 2.0, which was launched in October 2021 and extended up to March 2027, aims to ensure universal water supply, rejuvenation of water bodies and improved urban infrastructure across

cities. According to an official statement, Odisha has emerged as a leading State by securing the first position in the entire country with the successful implementation of AMRUT 2.0. "In Odisha, the mission has witnessed significant progress across 89 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), with 345 projects approved at an estimated cost of Rs 4,030.18 crore, covering both water supply and waterbody rejuvenation initiatives," the State government said.

It also said that 99 projects under the AMRUT 2.0



scheme have already been completed in the State, while the remaining are progressing steadily across various stages of implementation. Odisha's

Housing and Urban Development department claimed that the State has achieved near-total utilisation of available funds, reflecting robust

financial planning and efficient project management.

Under AMRUT 2.0, Odisha has made notable strides in strengthening urban water infrastructure. Seven Water Treatment Plants with a combined capacity of 43 MLD have been commissioned, benefiting 2.83 lakhs of citizens. In addition, 24x7 water supply systems have been operationalised in key urban centres, alongside the provision of more than 2.7 lakh household water connections.

Overall, more than five lakh urban residents have directly benefited from these

interventions. Speaking on the achievement, Housing and Urban Development Minister Krushna Chandra Mahapatra said, "Securing the top rank under AMRUT 2.0 reflects Odisha's focused approach towards ensuring reliable water access and stronger urban infrastructure. Our priority is clear -- every household should have access to safe water, every city should have efficient systems and every ULB should be empowered to deliver better services. We will continue to build cities that are resilient, inclusive and future-ready,

aligned with the vision of a Viksit Odisha."

The department also noted that under "Pay Jal Survekshan" and "Jai Hi AMRUT" programmes, Odisha has secured incentives and is advancing projects for improved water management and reuse. Community-driven initiatives such as "AMRUT Mitra and Women for Tree" programmes have further strengthened environmental sustainability, with plantation drives and waterbody rejuvenation undertaken through women self-help groups.

## Despite Tehran's claims, it is 'goals accomplished' for the US and Israel

AN interesting aspect of the war in West Asia is that now both sides can declare victory—with some justification. From the perspective of the United States and Israel, the primary objectives were met in the first few days—many of them within hours, when the belligerent allies eliminated Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and a section of the political and military top brass. While the Iranian armed forces are resisting the US-Israel attacks, their capabilities have been seriously degraded. The Iranians may have shot down US aircraft but that is an exception rather than the rule; they have control over their airspace. US President Donald Trump has already claimed victory.

He wrote in a social media post, "The reason for doing so [accepting Pakistan-brokered ceasefire] is that we have already met and exceeded all Military objectives, and are very far along with a definitive Agreement concerning Longterm PEACE with Iran, and PEACE in the Middle East. We received a 10-point proposal from Iran, and believe it is a workable basis on which to negotiate (sic)"

Iran's 10-point conditions that the US finds "workable" include: non-aggression; continuation of Iran's control over the Strait of Hormuz; acceptance of enrichment; lifting all primary sanctions; lifting all secondary sanctions; termination of all Security Council resolutions; ter-

mination of all International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors resolutions; payment of compensation to Iran; withdrawal of US combat forces from the region; and cessation of war on all fronts, including against the heroic Islamic Resistance of Lebanon. This gives Iran reason to claim that it has been able to withstand the sustained assault by the world's mightiest military, in alliance with the regional power, Israel, for more than a month. Trump's vow to bomb Iran's power plants and send the country "back to the stone ages" notwithstanding, Tehran's enemies have not been able to force open the Strait of Hormuz. Trump's warnings became chillier; just before 12 hours of his

ultimatum expired, he posted a warning on social media: "A whole civilization will die tonight." The clerical regime, however, refused to blink, leading to a two-week ceasefire. If the war ends after the culmination of the ceasefire on as-is-where-is basis, it will be a victory of the US-Israel alliance, for they will have militarily truncated a powerful regime in the Middle East which has been spreading jihad all over the world. Regime change would have been the icing on the cake, but Trump would still be happy because he achieved the goals with negligible American casualties. Ditto with Israel. Iran, on the other hand, has lost the deadly nuclear and other capabilities, which it had till a few

months ago. Rebuilding degraded military capabilities, restoring deterrence, and reviving its nuclear programme—if it chooses to do so—will require time, resources, and a degree of strategic patience that may test the regime internally. The economic toll, compounded by sanctions and wartime destruction, will further constrain its options. In this sense, even as Tehran claims moral and political victory, it does so from a position of significantly diminished capacity. What remains uncertain is whether this uneasy equilibrium marks the beginning of a more stable regional order—or merely an interlude before the next, perhaps more dangerous, confrontation.

**MEDLEY**



**LETTERS**

**Custodial deaths: Punish the Doc and judicial officer**

THE verdict of the trial court in the case of custodial deaths in Sathankulam is widely welcomed. Police taking the right to brutally and beating the accused to death is sending the wrong message. Meanwhile, the doctor who had issued a false 'fit for remand' certificate and the judicial officer who had, in a mechanical manner, permitted remanding the two persons should also be treated on par with those who beat the innocents to death.

A G Rajmohan, Anantapur-515004

**Traditional alternatives more healthier**

A PROPOS "Be warned: Soft drinks are silent killers" (April 8, 2026). The lure of fizzy drinks in summer is undeniable, yet their hidden cost to health is sobering. Clever advertising sells them as instant refreshment, but what they truly deliver is a cocktail of sugar, acids, and chemicals that quietly erode wellbeing. Obesity, diabetes, and dental decay are not distant risks, but everyday realities fuelled by these so-called coolers. The irony is that traditional alternatives like buttermilk, lemon water, and tender coconut are not only healthier but far more suited to our climate. If everyone treats soft drinks as indulgences rather than staples, we may reclaim both health and common sense before the silent killers claim more ground.

K Chidanand Kumar, Bengaluru

**Fruit juices are a better option**

A PROPOS "Soft drinks and the illusion of cooling relief" (THI, April 8), the concern about rising consumption of such drinks, especially during summer, is well founded. Many continue to see these beverages as harmless, overlooking their long-term health impact. Awareness alone is not enough. Schools and public institutions should actively promote healthier alternatives like water and fresh juices. Local campaigns, especially in smaller towns, can help change habits gradually. At the same time, ensuring easy access to safe drinking water is essential. A combined effort by authorities, industry, and consumers can lead to more responsible choices and better public health outcomes.

Abbharna Barathi, Chennai-600023

**Better late than never**

WITH reference to the article "Polavaram: Decades of delay, emerging progress and the road ahead" (THI, April 8), the renewed momentum is encouraging, but persistent gaps in planning and execution remain a concern. Large projects cannot afford repeated disruptions caused by weak coordination and irregular contracting. Clear timelines, stable funding, and strict oversight are essential. Land acquisition and rehabilitation must be handled with greater sensitivity and speed. Regular public updates can improve accountability and confidence. Technical monitoring should be strengthened to avoid costly damage to structures. If managed well, Polavaram can still deliver its intended benefits without further slippage or escalation.

M Barathi, Bengaluru-560076

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**BENGALURU ONLINE**

**Are rebels rallying behind HD Kumaraswamy?**

BENGALURU: The political heat around the by-elections in Davanagere South and Bagalkot has intensified, with both Congress and BJP leaders aggressively campaigning on the ground. However, what has caught political observers' attention is the visible shift of several BJP rebel leaders, who appear to be aligning more closely with HD Kumaraswamy rather than the party's state leadership.

Senior leaders considered part of the rebel camp, including Ramesh Jarkiholi, GM Siddeshwar, Kumar Bangarappa and B P Harish, have largely stayed away from campaigning alongside BJP state president BY Vijayendra. While some leaders have maintained distance altogether, others have been seen sharing the stage with Kumaraswamy during campaign events, sparking speculation within political circles. Notably, these rebel leaders have openly expressed reservations about accepting Vijayendra's leadership. Earlier, Basanagouda Patil Yatnal had been vocal in his criticism of the B.S. Yediyurappa family, which eventually led to his expulsion from the party on charges of anti-party activities. Despite his expulsion, Yatnal has continued to campaign in Bagalkot in support of BJP candidate Veeranna Charantimath, though he has also kept his distance from the Vijayendra camp. A similar pattern is visible with Ramesh Jarkiholi, who has participated in campaign activities but avoided sharing platforms with Vijayendra, instead appearing alongside Kumaraswamy. This trend has added fuel to ongoing discussions within the BJP about internal divisions and leadership acceptance.

Amid these developments, there is renewed speculation that in the event of the BJP returning to power in the state, Kumaraswamy could emerge as a Chief Ministerial candidate under a potential alliance arrangement. While the Yediyurappa faction has not endorsed such a possibility, the rebel camp has remained non-committal, indirectly giving rise to interpretations that they may be open to Kumaraswamy's leadership.

Read more at <https://epaper.thehansindia.com>

# Together, let us empower our Nari Shakti!



**NARENDRA MODI**

IN the coming days, India will be immersed in a festive season, with celebrations taking place across the length and breadth of the nation.

The people of Assam will mark Rongali Bihu while Odisha will celebrate Maha Bishuba Pana Sankranti. In West Bengal, Poila Boishakh will usher in the Bengali New Year and in Kerala, Vishu will be observed with immense enthusiasm. Tamil Nadu will celebrate Puthandu, while in Punjab and other parts of Northern India will rejoice Baisakhi, which will usher in a spirit of hope and positivity. I convey my best wishes to all those across India and the world on this festive occasion. May these auspicious occasions bring happiness and prosperity to everyone.

Furthermore, on April 11, we will commence the 200th birth anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Phule and on the 14th, India will pay homage to Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar on his Jayanti. In addition to these spe-

cial occasions, when the spirit of renewal fills our hearts and minds, our nation stands at the threshold of another historic occasion. It is an opportunity to deepen the foundations of our democracy and to reaffirm our collective commitment to equality and inclusion.

On the 16th of April, Parliament will be convened to discuss and pass an important bill that advances women's reservation. To describe this merely as a legislative exercise would be an understatement. It is a reflection of the aspirations of crores of women across India. It is an affirmation of a principle that has long guided our civilisational ethos, that society progresses when women progress.

Women constitute nearly half of India's population. Their contributions to our nation are vast and invaluable. Today, India is witnessing remarkable achievements by women across every field. From science and technology to entrepreneurship, from sports to the armed forces and from music to arts, women are at the forefront of India's progress.

Over the years, sustained efforts have been made to create an enabling environment for their empowerment. Greater access to education, improved healthcare, enhanced financial inclusion and better access to basic amenities have strengthened the foundations of women's participa-



**On the 16th of April, Parliament will be convened to discuss and pass an important bill that advances women's reservation. To describe this merely as a legislative exercise would be an understatement. It is a reflection of the aspirations of crores of women across India. It is an affirmation of a principle that has long guided our civilisational ethos, that society progresses when women progress.**

tion in economic and social life. Yet, their representation in the world of politics and legislative bodies has not always been commensurate with their role in society. This is particularly unfortunate because when they participate in administration and decision-making, they bring along experiences and insights that enrich public discourse and improve the quality of governance.

It is imperative that the 2029 Lok Sabha elections and Assembly elections to various states in the coming times are conducted with women's reservation in place.

Over the decades, there have been repeated efforts to provide women with their rightful place in democratic institutions by the previous governments. Committees were made; bill drafts were introduced but they never saw the light of day. But the broad consensus

has remained that women's representation in legislative bodies must increase. In September 2023, Parliament passed the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam with the same spirit of consensus. I consider it to be among the most special occasions of my life.

This opportunity to ensure women's reservation also resonates deeply with the spirit of our Constitution. The makers of our Constitution, notably the distinguished women members of the Constituent Assembly, envisioned a society where equality is both enshrined and realised in practice. Strengthening women's participation in legislative institutions is an important step towards fulfilling that vision. It reflects our commitment to building a society where every citizen has an equal stake in shaping the nation's destiny.

This is a moment that

cannot be deferred any longer. Every delay in advancing women's representation is, in effect, a delay in strengthening the quality and inclusiveness of our democracy.

For decades, the need for greater participation of women in legislative institutions has been acknowledged, discussed and reaffirmed. To postpone action now would mean extending an imbalance that we already recognise and have the capacity to correct. At a time when India is moving forward with confidence and purpose, it is essential that our institutions reflect the aspirations of all citizens, especially those who form half our population.

Timely action will not only honour long-standing commitments but also ensure that the momentum of progress is sustained. This is truly a historic opportunity to make our democracy

more representative, responsive and future-ready.

This moment calls for collective action. It is not about any one government, party or individual. It is about the nation recognising the importance of this step and coming together to realise it. It is what we owe to our Nari Shakti.

That is why the passage of a bill for women's reservation should reflect the broadest possible consensus and be guided by the larger national interest. Such opportunities call upon us to act not for ourselves, but for future generations. They remind us that the true strength of a democracy lies in its ability to evolve and to become more inclusive over time.

As we approach this historic Parliament sitting, I appeal to all Members of Parliament, across party lines, to come together in support of this important step for the women of India. Let us seize this opportunity with a sense of responsibility and purpose. Let us act in a manner that reflects the highest traditions of our democracy.

India has always shown that when it comes to matters of national importance, it can rise above differences and act with unity. This is one such moment.

Let us move forward together and strengthen Constitutional values and empower our Nari Shakti for national progress.

(The writer is the Prime Minister of India)

## Indian marriages undergoing major transitions from the ritualistic 'arranged' concepts



**DR MOHAN KANDA**

THE Karnataka Legislative Assembly recently passed the 'Karnataka Freedom of Choice in Marriage and Prevention and Prohibition of Crimes in the Name of Honour and Tradition (Eva Nammava Eva Nammava)' Bill, which pointedly states that "the consent of parents, family, caste, or clan is not necessary once two adult individuals agree to go into wedlock. The phrase 'Eva Nammava Eva Nammava' dates to the philosophy of the 12th century social reformer Basavanna. It is a part of one of his 'vachanas', that translates to ".....do not ask who he is, who he is, who he is....."

"Say he is our own, he is our own, he is our own."

Lord Koodalasangama, say he is a son of your house,"

That message of inclusivity highlighted the need for inclusivity, in the context of Basavanna having facilitated a Dalit man's marriage to a Brahmin woman that led to an intense social turmoil and violence.

increase in violence, harassment, threats, and ostracism, perpetrated in the name of caste, hierarchy, honour and custom. It also notes that such crimes disproportionately affect women. The step was necessitated by the fact that the state had witnessed several hate crimes against such couples in the recent past. In a particularly heinous instance of honour related violence, a 20-year-old woman was killed in a gruesome manner by her father for marrying a Dalit man.

Many countries have also put in place legislation banning forced marriages and facilitating inter - faith or inter-caste unions.

Interestingly, the legislation is in sharp contrast to a recent proposal of the government of Gujarat, which requires couples wanting to register their marriages to submit identity documents of their parents, accompanied by a declaration that the parents have been kept informed.

What happened in Karnataka is only one manifestation of the ongoing worldwide transformation in the concept of marriage. From having, earlier, been a social or family obligation based on traditional grounds, such as caste, religion, or family status, the institution of marriage is increasingly being viewed as a matter of personal choice, emotional compatibility, and individual autonomy. There is, in evidence, a global decline in traditional matchmaking, even in traditional conservative societies.

Another emerging feature of marriages is that couples are prioritising education and ca-



**Provisions that envisage providing protection to couples engaged in inter-caste relationships, and facing ostracisation or violence, are undoubtedly welcome. What is of essence, however, is how effectively such noble intentions are translated into concrete actions, especially against the background of crimes against such couples having continued in the past, existing laws notwithstanding.**

reers over early marriages and marrying later in life, allowing more time for personal choice. Marriages are increasingly being seen as a partnership or companionship rather than merely instruments of procreation of financial stability, like love marriages and self-choice weddings. Consequently, there is a welcome and rapidly decreasing value being attached to factors like caste, religion, and, most importantly, the practice of demanding and accepting dowry. The classical and age-old belief was that marriages are made in heaven or that they are divine, predestined and ordained by fate rather than mere coincidences.

Even in traditionally conservative cultures, including in the Middle Eastern countries and parts of Asia, a growing number of women are seen fighting for the right choice in marriages and opposing forced

unions. This is evident in India too. While the practice of arranged marriages has not disappeared altogether, a hybrid variety of what are called - 'arranged with choice' are becoming increasingly common.

Interestingly, a novel concept of a 'trial' for a marriage is also gaining popularity in certain urban settings, a sort of live - in relationship as a prelude to a permanent relationship by way of marriage. In the changing ambience of marriages, one also sees a reduction in the stigma attached to divorce and remarriages. In a manner of speaking, it is almost as though lifelong love and heterosexual marriages are about as obsolete as a horse and carriage.

One way of looking at the emerging scenario is that the world community is amid a transition to a brave new world of intimacy. It is against such a background that one must view

the significance of the events in Gujarat and Karnataka.

Provisions that envisage providing protection to couples engaged in inter-caste relationships, and facing ostracisation or violence, are undoubtedly welcome. What is of essence, however, is how effectively such noble intentions are translated into concrete actions, especially against the background of crimes against such couples having continued in the past, existing laws notwithstanding. An even more pertinent issue arises in the present context, as caste consolidation rather than annihilation is very much in evidence, not merely in the way partners are chosen in marriages, but also the way candidates are picked by political parties and voted to positions of authority by the electorate.

The situation gets curiouse and curiouse when one notes the fact that Karnataka is yet to roll back the controversial law of 2022, dealing with freedom of religion and ushered in by the then BJP government. Some way forward suggestions establishment of specialised fast-track courts to deal exclusively with honour killings to ensure swift justice and prevent delays, by bringing in an amendment to the Special Marriage Act, 1954 to shorten the registration period in order to protect couples from potential threat surveillance and introduction of a provision in the 'Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita' law clearly defining what honour killing is and specifying punishments.

Matrimonial advertisements in newspapers are a popular, traditional way to find partners, widely used for their broad

reach and credibility. Leading newspapers offer dedicated weekly supplements for matrimonial classifieds. A very sensible suggestion by an elderly friend (who, incidentally, is happily married) is that it might be worthwhile putting in place a mechanism which will function as an advisory arrangement, to couples intending to get married. An agency or a set of experts, in other words, to counsel them about the pros and cons of the proposed union, before it is formalized by a ceremony or a registration. That way, it is felt, they will make an informed entry into the era of married life, with their eyes wide open. Even the central and state governments will do well to think in terms of creating an environment which enables such arrangements to be formed and to function, together with creating a regulatory mechanism to ensure that they are not misused.

Some examples from my personal experience reinforce the validity of the issue under discussion. My marriage and those of some of my friends and relatives have also been a sort of mixed bag in this context. Usha and I got married through an 'arranged-but-confirmed-by-choice' mode. One of my nephews married his paternal uncle's daughter, which, in fact, is frowned upon in the Hindu religion. Another friend is the happy result of a Christian-Muslim marriage. And by God's grace, all the unions have resulted in pleasant and well-adjusted relationships.

(The writer was formerly Chief Secretary, Government of Andhra Pradesh)

# Naidu sets 2027 deadline for land re-survey

- 1.12 cr passbooks to be issued under 'Re-survey 2.0'
- 1.37 lakh acres of inam lands to be freed from prohibited list
- Pre-2016 housing beneficiaries to get full registration rights
- Blockchain-backed land records, digital delivery planned



Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu holds a review on revenue department at the Secretariat on Wednesday

HANS NEWS SERVICE VIJAYAWADA

CHIEF Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has rolled out a sweeping set of land and revenue reforms, setting a March 2027 deadline to complete the State-wide 'Re-survey 2.0' and directing the issuance of 1.12 crore new Pattadar passbooks.

At a review meeting of the revenue department held at the Secretariat on Wednesday, the Chief Minister said the exercise aims to resolve land disputes and restore clarity in ownership records, which he alleged had escalated under the previous gov-

ernment's re-survey drive. So far, surveys have been completed in 6,976 villages, with distribution of 22.79 lakh passbooks already underway in 5,717 villages. Naidu directed that the remaining 9 lakh passbooks in 1,259 surveyed villages be distributed by July, and set a target to complete both the survey and passbook issuance entirely by March next year. He further instructed officials to distribute 80 lakh passbooks between July and March, stressing zero-error execution through strict monthly targets.

In a major policy shift, the CM approved the removal of 1.37 lakh acres of 'Village

Service Inam' lands from the Section 22-A prohibited list, along with an additional 1 lakh acres under other inam categories. He directed the drafting of new legislation to formalize the move, stating that previous efforts had stalled due to inaction.

Naidu also announced that houses allotted under government schemes prior to 2016 will now be eligible for full property registration. The decision is expected to benefit around 75 lakh families, enabling them to legally sell, transfer, or mortgage their properties - effectively converting them into formal economic assets.

Further, the government

plans to confer full ownership rights on 9.25 lakh acres out of 13.59 lakh acres currently classified under free-hold categories.

Emphasizing transparency and security, the CM ordered complete digitization of land records, with copies to be delivered directly to landowners via mobile phones. He also proposed integrating blockchain technology after e-KYC verification, allowing property owners to activate a "record-locking" system that prevents unauthorized transactions without their consent. Chief secretary G Sai Prasad and revenue minister A Satya Prasad attended the meeting.

# Jagan intensifies attack on Amaravati, pushes MAVIGUN

- Alleges large-scale corruption and irregularities in Amaravati project
- Questions escalating costs, timeline of capital construction

HANS NEWS SERVICE VIJAYAWADA



YSRCP chief Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy addressing party leaders from Tadepalligudem constituency at party central office in Tadepalli on Wednesday

YSRCP president Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy has once again reiterated his stand in the Amaravati vs MAVIGUN capital controversy, making it clear that he is not backing down from opposing Amaravati as the state capital. Advocating the MAVIGUN (Machilipatnam-Vijayawada-Guntur) model, Jagan termed it a more practical and cost-effective alternative.

Addressing party leaders and cadre from Tadepalligudem constituency at YSRCP central office in Tadepalli, Jagan launched a scathing attack on Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, alleging that Amaravati is being developed purely for "corruption, commissions, and to benefit a select few." He described Amaravati as a "massive hub of

corruption and exploitation," accusing the government of misleading both farmers and the public. "Amaravati is a huge mine of corruption and loot," Jagan said, adding that the YSR Congress had already offered a "practical solution," which the government ignored.

Jagan warned that the current approach could leave Andhra Pradesh without a functional capital. He pointed out that even basic infrastructure - roads, electricity, drainage, and water supply - has been estimated at Rs 2 crore per acre. "For 50,000 acres, Rs 1 lakh crore is insufficient. Now expanding to 1 lakh acres means Rs 2 lakh crore. If all

the money is spent just on infrastructure, when will the actual capital be built?" he said.

Highlighting delays, he noted that even after 12 years since 2014, there is no substantial progress. He cautioned that costs could escalate further to Rs 4 lakh crore or even Rs 10 lakh crore in the coming decades, without delivering a complete capital. Jagan argued that investing even 10 per cent of the projected Rs 2 lakh crore would be enough if planned efficiently.

Promoting the MAVIGUN concept, Jagan emphasized the strategic advantage of the 110-km stretch between Machilipatnam, Vijayawada, and Guntur. He highlighted exist-

ing infrastructure, including highways, the international airport in Vijayawada, and the upcoming Machilipatnam port, stating that development could be decentralized across this corridor to create an effective capital region. "With minimal investment and better connectivity, MAVIGUN can function as a capital from day one and become a major growth engine.

It will also generate employment locally, preventing migration," he said.

Jagan further alleged large-scale financial irregularities in Amaravati projects. He claimed construction costs are heavily inflated - Rs 14,000 per sq ft in Amaravati compared to Rs 4,500 per sq ft in cities like Hyderabad, Chennai, and Bengaluru. Similarly, he pointed out that six-lane roads costing Rs 20 crore per km elsewhere are allegedly costing Rs 53 crore per km in Amaravati.

He also criticised the introduction of "mobilization advances," alleging that contractors linked to the ruling establishment are being given 10 per cent advance payments even before work begins.



HYDERABAD

CONGRESS leader Pawan Khera on Wednesday moved the Telangana High Court seeking anticipatory bail in

a case filed against him by the Assam government on his allegations against Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's wife. Khera, who showed his

residential address in Hyderabad, requested the court to release him on bail in the event of his arrest. The petition was filed on April 7. It will be taken up by the court on April 9.

Khera named the DCP of Guwahati Crime Branch Police Station and Telangana government as respondents to his petition. The case was

- The Congress leader on April 5 alleged that Sarma's wife, Riniki Bhuyan Sarma, has multiple passports and foreign property, which were not declared in the chief minister's election affidavit
- An Assam Police team had earlier visited the Delhi residence of Khera for questioning in connection with the case

registered in the Guwahati Crime Branch Police Station against Khera under several

sections of the BNS, including 175 (false statement in connection with an elec-

tion), 35 (Right of private defence of the body and of property) and 318 (cheating).

The Congress leader on April 5 alleged that Sarma's wife, Riniki Bhuyan Sarma, has multiple passports and foreign property, which were not declared in the chief minister's election affidavit. An Assam Police team

had earlier visited the Delhi residence of Khera for questioning in connection with the case.

Khera's advocate Ponnamp Ashok Goud told PTI that anticipatory bail was sought as the FIR copy has not been uploaded on police website as per Supreme Court's orders, and that the former's Delhi house was searched

with an intention to arrest.

Sarma on Tuesday slammed the Congress for "not verifying" the documents based on which it brought allegations against him and his family. The CM asserted that Khera had "run away" to Hyderabad, but the Assam Police will "hunt him down even from 'patala' (netherworld)".

## ASSAM POLICE FILES CASE

# Pawan Khera moves HC seeking anticipatory bail

## Iran oil refinery struck despite ceasefire

TEHRAN

AN oil refinery on Iran's Lavan Island was hit in what Iranian authorities described as an "enemy attack" on Wednesday, hours after a two-week ceasefire between Iran and the United States took effect. The National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company reported the incident, according to

Shana, the news outlet of the Iranian Oil Ministry. The company said the facility was struck around 10:00 local time. No casualties were reported. Safety and firefighting teams were deployed immediately to contain the blaze and secure the site. The attack occurred despite a ceasefire agreement announced on Tuesday between the United States and Iran.

## TRUMP WARNS 50% TARIFFS ON NATIONS SUPPLYING WEAPONS TO IRAN

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump on Wednesday warned that any country supplying military weapons to Iran will face immediate 50 per cent tariffs with no exemptions. His announcement came in a social media post days after agreeing to a two-week ceasefire with Tehran. "A Country supplying Military Weapons to Iran will be immediately tariffed, on any and all goods sold to the United States of America, 50%, effective immediately," the US President wrote in a post on Truth Social. In a separate post, Trump stated that the United States will "work closely" with Iran following what he called it as a "very productive regime change," and also claimed that there would be no further advancement of uranium in Iran.

## Both US, Iran claim victory

WASHINGTON/TEHRAN

BOTH US President Donald Trump and Iran have portrayed the last-minute ceasefire deal as a victory for their nations. Trump said many aspects of a 15-point plan have been agreed to, adding that the US will work with Iran to dig up and remove buried uranium in the country. He also suggested the US may be involved in securing the critical waterway in a "joint venture" with Iran, while Tehran said Iran's military will coordinate the passage of ships. Minutes after Trump announced the two-week ceasefire, Tehran accepted the deal, claiming victory in the war. In a post on the social media platform X, Iran's Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi wrote: "If attacks against Iran are halted, our Powerful Armed Forces will cease their defensive operations." In his statement, Araghchi expressed gratitude and appreciation for his "dear brothers" - Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Asim Munir. He thanked them for their "tireless efforts to end the war in the region."

## MOJTABA HELPED CUT TRUCE DEAL

Continued from P1

It was Iran's new Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei, the son of former supreme leader Ali Khamenei who was killed in an airstrike at the start of the war on February 28, who nudged his negotiators, for the first time since the war began, to move towards a deal. Iran's Foreign minister Araghchi said that under the two-week ceasefire agreement, maritime traffic through the vital Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of global oil and gas passes, would be guaranteed.

Kamenei, who is yet to appear in public since being named the Supreme Leader, was actively involved in the process to make a truce deal on Monday and Tuesday. Khamenei's blessing for his negotiators to cut a deal was a "breakthrough". Araghchi also played a key role both in handling the negotiations and in pushing commanders from the Revolutionary Guards, an elite force, to accept a deal. China too was advising Iran to seek an off ramp.

# Fragile ceasefire takes effect

Continued from P1

Meanwhile, global oil prices have fallen sharply, and stock markets soared after the US and Iran agreed to a conditional two-week ceasefire deal that includes the reopening of the key Strait of Hormuz waterway.

The price of benchmark Brent tumbled more than 15% to less than \$92 (£68.4) a barrel, while US-traded oil fell similarly to just under \$94. But oil prices remain higher than before the conflict started on 28 February. At the time, it was trading at around \$70 a barrel.

In the streets of Tehran, pro-government demonstrators screamed: "Death to America, death to Israel, death to compromisers!" after the ceasefire announcement and burned American and Israeli flags.

The chants underscored the anger animating hard-liners, who have been preparing for what many assumed would be an apocalyptic battle with the United States. Trump warned

Tuesday that "a whole civilization will die tonight," if a deal wasn't reached.

Trump initially said Iran proposed a "workable" 10-point plan that could help end the war the US. launched with Israel on Feb. 28. But when a version in Farsi emerged that indicated Iran would be allowed to continue enriching uranium - which is key to building a nuclear weapon - Trump called it fraudulent without elaborating. Vance later said the deal was being misrepresented within Iran, though he did not offer details.

Iran's demands for ending the war include a withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from the region, the lifting of sanctions, and the release of its frozen assets.

In his post on Wednesday, Trump said: "We are, and will be, talking Tariff and Sanctions relief with Iran."

It was not clear if other Western nations would agree to that, and the other points are likely nonstarters. United

Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres's personal envoy arrived in Iran for talks on "the way forward."

Pakistan said talks to hammer out a permanent end to the war could begin in Islamabad as soon as Friday.

Israel backed the US ceasefire with Iran, but Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the deal does not cover fighting against Hezbollah.

Israeli Chief of Staff Lt Gen Eyal Zamir said Israel will continue to "utilize every operational opportunity" to strike Hezbollah. The Israeli military said it struck more than 100 targets within 10 minutes Wednesday across Lebanon, the largest wave of strikes since March 1.

Hezbollah has not confirmed if it will abide by the ceasefire, though the group has said it was open to giving mediators a chance to secure an agreement. An official, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to comment publicly, said the group would

not stop firing at Israel unless Israel agreed to do the same.

While Iran could not match the sophistication of US and Israeli weaponry or their dominance in the air, its ability to control the Strait of Hormuz proved a tremendous strategic advantage. Iranian attacks and threats deterred many commercial ships from passing through the waterway, through which 20% of all traded oil and natural gas passes in peacetime.

That roiled the world economy and raised the pressure on Trump both at home and abroad to find a way out of the standoff. The ceasefire may formalize a system of charging fees in the strait that Iran instituted - and give it a new source of revenue. The plan allows for both Iran and Oman to charge ships, according to a regional official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss negotiations they were directly involved in. The official said Iran would use the money it raised for reconstruction.

# CM bats for EV bus shift, expansion of AP highways

Continued from P1

For 570 km of vulnerable canal-side roads, he proposed collaboration with academic institutions to explore durable materials.

With the upcoming Godavari Pushkarams in view, the Chief Minister directed expedited road works in Godavari, Krishna and Guntur districts. In the Godavari region alone, 531 km of roads will be upgraded at a cost of Rs 400 crore using funds under the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI).

For context, the SASCI scheme in AP focuses on developing iconic tourism centers (like Gandikota and Rajahmundry) and enhancing rural road infrastructure. The initiative, with 100% central funding, aims to boost the lo-

cal economy and create jobs through 50-year interest-free loans. Naidu also asked officials to seek special Central assistance on the lines of Kumbh Mela funding.

The Chief Minister emphasized strategic port connectivity, underlining that ports are critical economic nodes. He called for seamless highway links to various ports, including Mulapeta, Visakhapatnam, Gangavaram, Kakinada, Machilipatnam, Ramayapatnam and Krishnapatnam, alongside development of East-West corridors to reduce logistics costs, with nearly 73 per cent of cargo currently moving by road.

The Chief Minister spotlighted key upcoming projects such as the Kharagpur-Amaravati greenfield highway,

Hyderabad-Srisailem-Dornala corridor and the Kalwakurthy-Nandyal Highway. Around 1,335 km of national highways are expected to be completed within two years, while projects worth Rs 24,502 crore are targeted for completion this year.

Naidu proposed ring roads and outer corridor models for certain cities, including Rajamahendravaram, Kakinada, Tirupati, Kurnool and Nellore, to support urban expansion and economic growth.

Ministers BC Janardhan Reddy and Mandipalli Ramprasad Reddy, along with senior officials from the Transport Department, Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation and the National Highways Authority of India, attended the review.

## US V-P Vance, Ghalibaf to lead US-Iran talks

Continued from P1

The diplomatic momentum follows an announcement by US President Donald Trump, who confirmed a two-week ceasefire agreement with Iran shortly before a deadline linked to the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz.

Iranian officials have indicated that talks will commence in Islamabad, crediting Pakistan for playing a key mediating role in securing the ceasefire. The planned talks are being closely watched as a potential step toward ending weeks of escalating conflict and restoring stability in the region. With negotiations expected to begin Friday, the spotlight is firmly on Vance's diplomatic role. Meanwhile, President Donald Trump has credited China for helping broker the fragile truce, even as he claims the U.S. still holds untapped leverage over Iran.

## MARKET CHEERS CEASEFIRE

Continued from P1

Commenting on Nifty technical outlook, experts said that from a technical standpoint, the 23,700-23,600 zone remains a key immediate support. "A breakdown below this range could trigger profit booking. On the upside, a decisive breakout above the 24,500-resistance zone is required to confirm continuation of the current uptrend and unlock further upside potential," an analyst stated.

Investor sentiment improved significantly after geopolitical concerns showed signs of cooling and the central bank-maintained policy stability. Among the top performers in the Nifty index were Shriram Finance, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles, and Adani Enterprises, which saw strong buying interest.

# Centre readies ₹2,534- cr Central Secretariat project

Continued from P1

With this procedural step completed, there is a strong likelihood of the proposal being taken up in an upcoming Union Cabinet meeting.

The projects have already received approval from Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, following a proposal routed through the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, indicating advanced-stage processing at the Centre.

Land allocation for the projects has also been finalized. The Andhra Pradesh government has allotted 22.53 acres to the Central Public Works Depart-

ment (CPWD), including 5.53 acres for the Secretariat complex and 17 acres for residential quarters under the General Pool Residential Accommodation (GPRA) scheme.

Once the Cabinet Secretariat grants clearance, construction activity is expected to accelerate, marking a key step in establishing a permanent central government presence in Amaravati.

The planned Secretariat and residential infrastructure are expected to strengthen administrative integration and support the long-term development of Amaravati as the capital city.

## ALL SET FOR POLLS IN ASSAM, KERALA, PUDUCHERRY

Continued from P1

In Assam, the campaign centred around Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's governance record and the Congress challenge led by Gaurav Gogoi.

The run-up to polls saw allegations and counter-allegations between the BJP and Congress, leading to a political slugfest. The Election Commission has said it is fully prepared to conduct free, fair and peaceful polling in Assam, with webcasting enabled at all polling stations and security forces deployed across sensitive areas.

Over 2.5 crore voters are eligible to cast their vote in the state. In Puducherry, campaigning has also concluded for the 30-member Assembly, where 294 candidates are contesting. The Union Territory has over 9.5 lakh voters. The April 9 voting marks the first leg of a wider election cycle, with Tamil Nadu set to vote on April 23 and West Bengal going to polls in two phases on April 23 and April 29.



## Why sewing is not a hobby, but a career path for today's youth

Sewing is no longer confined to tradition or hobby—it is emerging as a modern, skill-driven career shaped by creativity and technology. For today's youth, it offers a powerful blend of independence, adaptability, and opportunity in an evolving job landscape

SEEMA MAHAJAN

In a world where careers are no longer shaped by linear degrees or predictable corporate ladders, sewing is undergoing a quiet but significant redefinition. Once viewed primarily as a domestic skill or a leisurely pastime, it is now emerging as a credible, future-ready profession—one rooted in creativity, technical expertise, and economic independence. For India's youth navigating an increasingly uncertain job market shaped by automation, platform economies, and shifting consumer values, sewing offers something rare and valuable: a tangible, adaptable skill with real-world application.

The renewed relevance of sewing lies in its ability to seamlessly blend craftsmanship with modern capability. Contemporary sewing is far

removed from the narrow perception of basic stitch work. The tools, techniques, and outcomes have evolved dramatically, expanding what young professionals can create, customise, and scale. Entry-level mechanical machines help learners build a strong foundation in garment construction and fabric handling, while advanced mechanical and electronic machines introduce greater speed control, stitch variation, and material versatility. Computerised sewing machines, with intuitive digital interfaces and pre-programmed designs, enable precision and consistency, allowing creative ideas to translate into professional outputs. Embroidery-enabled machines further widen the creative canvas, making detailed personalisation accessible without extensive manual effort. Together, these ad-



vancements position sewing as a discipline that combines artisanal skill with technological fluency.

### Sewing as Creative Entrepreneurship

This evolution has been amplified by the rise of the creator economy, which has transformed sewing into a viable pathway for creative entrepreneurship. Digital

platforms and direct-to-consumer models have lowered traditional barriers to entry, enabling skilled individuals to build brands, offer bespoke services, and reach niche audiences with minimal infrastructure. Today, a young sewist can launch small collections, offer made-to-measure solutions, create customised products, or monetise ex-



pertise through workshops and digital content. In this ecosystem, sewing extends beyond production—it becomes a tool for storytelling, differentiation, and sustained value creation.

### Cultural Continuity in a Contemporary Context

Beyond its economic potential, sewing holds deep cultural significance in the

Indian context. Our textiles, silhouettes, and construction techniques carry centuries of heritage and regional identity. When young people engage with sewing as a profession, they do more than preserve these traditions—they reinterpret them for contemporary markets. This dynamic fusion of heritage and modern design ensures cultural

narratives remain relevant, adaptable, and commercially viable, positioning sewing as both a creative and cultural profession.

Yet, despite these shifts, outdated perceptions persist. Sewing is still often framed as a secondary option rather than a legitimate career choice. These notions are increasingly being challenged as more young pro-

professionals build sustainable livelihoods, integrate technology into their practice, and engage confidently with national and global markets.

Looking ahead, the role of the sewist is set to become even more relevant. While automation will continue to shape large-scale manufacturing, craftsmanship, personalisation, and design sensitivity remain irreplaceable. Sewing offers resilience against market volatility, adaptability across industries, and the freedom to evolve with changing consumer demands. What was once dismissed as a hobby has emerged as a profession with depth, dignity, and purpose - offering today's youth a forward-looking career grounded in skill, creativity, and opportunity.

(The writer is President of Studio of Fashion & Craft, Usha International)

## From the heart of Hyderabad to the runways of Mumbai: Vaishali Agarwal debuts 'Baakul'

Hyderabad-based designer Vaishali Agarwal marks a milestone moment as she debuts on the national fashion stage with her collection 'Baakul'. Showcased in Mumbai, the line brings the city's rich craftsmanship to a wider audience, blending heritage with modern elegance

Designer Vaishali Agarwal has taken a significant step in her two-decade journey by debuting on the pan-India fashion stage with her latest collection, 'Baakul'. Known for her strong presence in Hyderabad's couture landscape, Vaishali has now expanded her vision to a national audience, unveiling her collection at a recently concluded fashion week in Mumbai, where actor Alaya F walked as the showstopper. This showcase represents more than just a runway debut; it marks Vaishali's first presentation beyond Hyderabad, bringing her deeply rooted design philosophy to a wider luxury audience. Despite the geographic expansion, her work remains firmly anchored in the cultural richness and artisanal traditions of her home city.

Vaishali's journey began with designing outfits for her young daughter, gradually evolving into a celebrated couture label recognized for intricate embroidery, handcrafted textiles, and meaningful storytelling. Over the years, she has consistently bridged traditional craftsmanship with contemporary aes-



thetics, creating designs that resonate with modern brides and occasion wear enthusiasts.

Her latest collection, 'Baakul', reflects this philosophy. Named after the sacred flower offered to Lord Shiva and inspired by the cosmic rhythm of Nataraja, the collection translates spirituality into wearable art. Each piece embodies symbolism, fluidity, and grace, brought to life through detailed craftsmanship and modern silhouettes.

The collection highlights Hyderabad's signature design elements, including rich textiles and intricate surface ornamentation. Motifs such as Nandi and the fish from Ganga are reinterpreted through dhabka embroidery, gota appliqué, handmade floral detailing, and statement dori jackets. These traditional elements are paired with fluid silhouettes, metallic accents, and layered textures, giving the collection a contemporary



edge suitable for today's fashion-forward audience.

Speaking about the milestone, Vaishali Agarwal shared that presenting 'Baakul' in Mumbai marks a defining moment for her brand. She emphasized her intention to carry Hyderabad's craftsmanship into a broader narrative that connects with the aspirations of the modern Indian bride.

Complementing the collection is Shivasa Fine Jewellery, founded by Sandhya Agarwal. The brand blends traditional polkis, vibrant gemstones, and diamonds to create timeless pieces designed for modern women. Together, the collaboration presents a cohesive vision of bridal and occasion wear that celebrates heritage while embracing contemporary elegance.

With 'Baakul', Vaishali Agarwal successfully bridges regional craftsmanship and national appeal, signaling a promising new chapter in her design journey.

## Ananya Panday on tackling exam pressure: 'They are a small part of a much bigger journey'

Actress Ananya Panday's So Positive, a children and family-first initiative designed to acknowledge exam stress, has joined forces with Nick India to come up with new and exciting ways to tackle exam pressure.

Rooted in Nick India's ongoing Pressure Ko Bolo Bye campaign, the initiative encourages parents to actively ease exam pressure by recognizing each child's unique strengths and learning style, while building confidence over comparison.

The collaboration came to life with a special on-ground activity led by Ananya Panday, along with Nick's beloved characters Chikoo and Bunty.

They selected everyday exam worries written on balloons and popped them to reveal easy stress-busting actions.

Shedding further light on the initiative, Ananya revealed that as a kid, she learned that the best way to overcome exam pressure is to take a step back and

remember that exams are merely a small part of a much bigger journey.

The 'CTRL' actress said, "Exam pressure is something almost every student experiences, but it's important to remember that it doesn't have to define you. Growing up, I realised that the best way to deal with it is to take a step back, breathe and remind yourself that exams are just one small part of a much bigger journey."

"What I love about the Nick's Pressure Ko Bolo Bye initiative is that it encourages kids and parents to talk openly about stress and handle it in a healthier, more positive way. Sometimes even small actions,

like pausing, sharing how you feel or just letting go of expectations, can make a big difference," she added. Sharing a glimpse of the initiative, Ananya wrote on her official Instagram handle, "It's that time of the year again - books, exams and all the pressure that comes with it. But this year, with Nick India

and So Positive, we're saying #Pressure-KoBoloBye and will show you exactly how to do this - one pop at a time!"



### CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- Brawl (6)
  - A solemn pledge (3)
  - Romulus kin (4)
  - Freudian terms (4)
  - Restaurant, diner (6)
  - Wept with loud sobs; had a running nose? (9)
  - Metallic element (4)
  - Supplement (3)
  - Farm bird (5)
  - \_\_\_ as a hatter? (2,3)
  - In what way (3)
  - \_\_\_ Aviv: capital of Israel? (3)
  - Garden flower (5)
  - Capital of China's Hubei province (5)
  - "It is" a verbal contraction (3)
  - Low voice (4)
  - Romantic illumination? (9)
  - Halogen element (6)
  - Red vegetable (4)
  - Asian language (4)
  - Drain of strength (3)
  - Source (6)

### DOWN

- Madness or very frantic (6)
- \_\_\_ his advice: doing as he counselled? (6,2)
- Light melodies (4)
- Cunning (7)
- Flow controlling device (5)
- In good health (4)
- Northernmost Irish county (7)
- President Eisenhower's nickname? (3)
- Milk-giving animals (4)
- Use a dagger (4)
- Minatory (8)
- Capital of Lower Saxony (7)
- Samurai code (7)
- Toupee (3)
- Behind at sea? (6)
- Bind (3,2)
- Eggs of insects (4)
- Long trip (4)



Solution to April 8

### SUDOKU



Solution to April 8

Rupee is stabilising around 92-93 against the US dollar. Because of global war-related headwinds and FI withdrawals, there was pressure, but despite these odds, the rupee will stabilise at these levels. One should not worry." -S Mahendra Dev, Chairman, EAC-PM

## BIZ BRIEFS

## ITC Hotels' milestone

ITC Hotels Limited (ITCHL) announced the Milestone 50th Hotel signing for the Welcomhotel brand in India with addition of new hotels in Shirdi and Bhubaneswar to the growing brand portfolio. The soon to open destinations for Welcomhotel brand include Gangtok in Sikkim and Bhopal & Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh. ITC recently entered into definitive agreements with Sandy Resort Private Limited to operate their upcoming 73-room hotel in Shirdi.

## New collection from Tanishq

Tanishq, a jewelry brand from the House of Tata, unveiled its latest launch, Hues, in the natural gemstone category. Hues collection reimagines the way gold is experienced this Akshaya Tritiya, moving beyond traditional, investment-led purchases to jewellery that is expressive and meant to be worn, the company said. The campaign for the new collection features Rukmini Vasanth, Tanishq's new face for South India. The new collection takes centre stage with a focused design language that celebrates contemporary colour stories in gold.

## CAIAA in pact with UniCAM

Chennai Amrita International Aviation College (CAIAA), an aviation training institution, has established a strategic international collaboration with University College of Aviation Malaysia (UniCAM) to bring global aviation expertise directly to its campus. This initiative is designed to strengthen students' practical exposure, build confidence, and equip them with industry-relevant skills for global aviation careers. As part of this collaboration, the college hosted a four-day international training programme from April 6 to 9, 2026.

## NDC celebrates diamond day

Natural Diamond Council (NDC) celebrated first World Diamond Day on April 8. The day was introduced by NDC as a global movement to recognise and celebrate the joy, passion, and community that natural diamonds inspire. Beyond their brilliance, diamonds represent memories, legacy, and the craftsmanship of a passionate industry that brings these stories to life, it said.

## Quest Global's acquisition

Quest Global, a pure-play engineering services company, announced the acquisition of BITSILICA, an India-based semiconductor design services company. The acquisition will strengthen Quest Global's semiconductor offerings and expand its footprint in supporting global semiconductor customers. It will also accelerate the company's strategy to build full-stack capabilities from concept-to-silicon-to-software. With this acquisition, BITSILICA will also gain access to Quest Global's 25 years of deep domain expertise.

## RBI hits pause amid oil surge, global uncertainty

RATE STEADY AT 5.25% | IRAN CEASEFIRE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT FOR POLICY DECISION

MUMBAI: The Reserve Bank on Wednesday expectedly kept interest rates unchanged amid hopes of a global recovery on the back of ceasefire in the six-week-long US/Israel-Iran conflict. The policy decision comes as a month and a-half-long West Asia conflict has disrupted energy supplies, shot up crude oil prices and created fiscal and inflationary pressures for import-dependent nations like India.

This is the first monetary policy review after the government announced a fresh inflation target for the RBI last month. The government has asked the RBI to maintain retail inflation at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side for another five years ending March 2031. Announcing the first bi-monthly monetary policy for the current fiscal, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has unanimously decided to retain short-term lending rate or repo rate at 5.25 per cent with a neutral stance.

The rate cut pause comes on the back of the consum-

er price index (CPI) based headline retail inflation that moved closer to the RBI's medium-term target of 4 per cent at 3.21 per cent in February.

Additionally, the rupee has depreciated by over 4 per cent since the war, which has consequences for pushing up import inflation. However, the rupee has appreciated by 50 paise to 92.56 against US dollar following announcement of the ceasefire by the US and Iran. Based on the recommendation of the MPC, the RBI reduced the repo rate by 25 bps each in February, April, and December 2025 and 50 basis points in June amidst easing retail inflation. India's retail inflation dropped to a historic low of 0.25 per cent in October 2025, marking the lowest level since the Consumer Price Index (CPI) series was introduced.

However, the rupee declined to historic low and crossed 95 against a dollar last month making imports costlier, raising fears of rise in inflation. Rupee touched a record low of 95.21 on March 30, 2026.

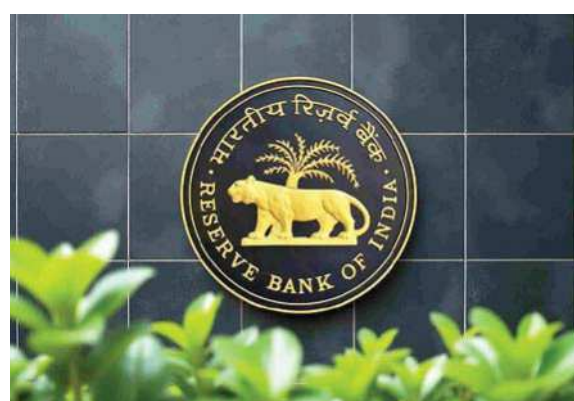
## Both growth and inflation risks flagged

Trims growth view to 6.9% | Inflation at 4.6%, but risks ticking up

MUMBAI

THE Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday projected India's GDP growth at 6.9 per cent for FY27, lower than the estimated 7.6 per cent for FY26, citing elevated commodity prices and supply chain disruptions stemming from the West Asia crisis.

Unveiling the first bi-monthly monetary policy, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said merchandise exports could be hit by disruptions in key shipping routes and rising freight and insurance costs. However, domestic demand is expected to remain supported by strong services sector momentum, GST rationalisation, rising manufacturing capacity utilisation,



and healthy corporate and banking sector balance sheets.

"India's macroeconomic fundamentals exuded confidence with buoyant growth and low inflation, though conditions turned adverse in March due to intensifying geopolitical tensions," he said. The RBI

noted that higher input costs due to energy prices, along with supply chain constraints, could weigh on growth. Still, government measures to support exports and stabilise supply chains may cushion the impact. The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) flagged downside risks to growth

"The ceasefire, to some extent, has been taken into account. The whole implications (will come later), but the ceasefire has been taken into account in the monetary policy decision



-Sanjay Malhotra, RBI Governor

## HDFC Bank sound, no issues found

MUMBAI: THE Reserve Bank of India found no governance or conduct-related issues at HDFC Bank during its supervisory inspection, Governor Sanjay Malhotra said Wednesday. On resignation of HDFC Bank Chairman Atanu Chakraborty, Malhotra said "HDFC Bank is a Domestic Systemically Important Bank (D-SIB) with sound financials, a professional board, and competent management. Periodic assessments show no material concerns."

amid uncertainty over the intensity and duration of the West Asia conflict. For FY27, quarterly GDP growth is projected at 6.8 per cent (Q1), 6.7 per cent (Q2), 7 per cent (Q3), and 7.2 per cent (Q4).

On inflation, the RBI projected retail inflation at 4.6 per cent for FY27, within the target band of 4 per cent (+/- 2 per cent). Quar-

terly projections stand at 4 per cent (Q1), 4.4 per cent (Q2), 5.2 per cent (Q3), and 4.7 per cent (Q4). The MPC observed that inflation remains below target but warned of upside risks from rising energy prices and potential weather-related food price shocks. Core inflation remains muted, though supply disruptions could create uncertainty.

## Central bank plans to revise norms to free up board time

MUMBAI

IN a bid to promote ease of doing business, Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra on Wednesday proposed to revise and rationalise guidelines to facilitate better utilisation of bank board's time and draft directions in this regard would be released shortly. The matters to be placed before the Boards of banks, along with their periodicity, are determined by the Boards themselves, guided by the seven broad themes prescribed by the Reserve Bank of India.

Meanwhile, the Reserve Bank has also mandated certain policies and matters to be placed before the Board for approval, review, or information. "In an endeavor to enable Boards to utilize its time effectively, and to facilitate a more focused and qualitative engagement on strategy and risk governance, the Reserve Bank has undertaken comprehensive review and rationalisation of all such instructions. Draft directions in this regard will be issued shortly for public consultation," RBI said in its



The Reserve Bank has constantly endeavored to refine and strengthen its regulatory and supervisory framework while minimising compliance costs, through periodic evaluation of instructions for their continued relevance.

statement on Developmental and Regulatory Policies.

The announcement comes weeks after HDFC Bank Chairman Atanu Chakraborty's abrupt resignation, citing ethical concerns. "Certain happenings and practices within the bank, that I have observed over the last two years, are not in congruence with my personal values and ethics. This is the basis of my aforementioned decision," Chakraborty had said in his resignation letter dated March 17. This is the first time that the part-time

chairman of HDFC Bank left mid-way raising concerns over its functioning.

Announcing the Monetary Policy Committee meeting outcome, Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra said, "We had recently undertaken a detailed exercise, to consolidate over 9,000 regulatory instructions into 238 Master Directions. A similar consolidation exercise has now been completed for all our supervisory instructions."

The Reserve Bank has constantly endeavored to refine and strengthen its regulatory

and supervisory framework while minimising compliance costs, through periodic evaluation of instructions for their continued relevance. In furtherance of this objective, the Reserve Bank had undertaken a comprehensive consolidation exercise of the regulatory instructions, on an 'as is' basis, in 2025.

The exercise involved consolidation of more than 9,000 existing regulatory circular/guidelines into 238 function-wise Master Directions (MDs), specific to each category of regulated entity, the Statement on Developmental and Regulatory Policies said.

A similar exercise has now been carried out for the supervisory instructions, it said. Accordingly, the drafts of 64 Master Directions consolidating extant supervisory instructions on up to nine functional areas are being published today on RBI website for public comments, it added. To facilitate ease of doing business by MSMEs, Malhotra said, RBI proposed to dispense with the requirement of due diligence while onboarding them on TReDS platforms.

## Adani's request for hearing in US SEC case allowed

NEW DELHI: A US court has granted billionaire Gautam Adani's request to schedule a hearing on his plea to dismiss a fraud case filed by the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

The Eastern District Court of New York approved a pre-motion conference, allowing Adani and his nephew Sagar Adani to argue for early dismissal of the complaint, potentially avoiding a prolonged trial.

The SEC's case, filed in November 2024 alongside a criminal complaint by the US Department of Justice, alleges the Adanis were involved in a \$250 million bribery scheme linked to solar energy contracts in India and



misled US investors during fundraising.

Adani's legal team has strongly denied the allegations, arguing there is no credible evidence of bribery and that US regulators lack jurisdiction. They contend the case represents an "impermissible extraterritorial application" of US securities laws.

## Adani Green jumps over 11%

NEW DELHI: Adani Group stocks were in high demand on Wednesday, with Adani Green surging over 11 per cent, in tandem with a sharp rally in the broader equity market. A US judge granted a request from billionaire Gautam Adani to schedule a hearing in efforts to dismiss a US Securities and Exchange Commission fraud case, which he says lacks necessary jurisdiction as well as fails on multiple reasons.

## HYUNDAI PRICE HIKE FROM MAY RUPEE JUMPS 47 PAISE

NEW DELHI: HYUNDAI Motor India Ltd on Wednesday said it will hike prices of its vehicles by up to 1 per cent across its portfolio from next month citing various cost escalations. The company has planned to increase the prices of its cars up to 1 per cent across the portfolio, effective May 2026, Hyundai Motor India Ltd said in a regulatory filing.

The price revision is attributed to a combination of various cost escalations, it added. The quantum of increase will vary based on the variants and models, HMIL said. "The company's endeavor is always to absorb rising costs to safeguard our customer from price fluctuations.

MUMBAI: The rupee appreciated 47 paise to close at 92.59 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday after US President Donald Trump announced the suspension of military strikes against Iran for two weeks, and the Reserve Bank kept the key benchmark rate unchanged with a neutral stance. Forex traders said investor sentiment got a boost after Governor Sanjay Malhotra assured that the steps taken on forex do not constitute a structural change.

## Women borrowers drive ₹76-L-cr credit surge

Digital push fuels women's financial inclusion | Women now hold 26% of India's total credit

NEW DELHI

WOMEN in India are no longer confined to small-ticket loans but are increasingly driving the country's credit growth by moving into retail and business lending, NITI Aayog CEO Nidhi Chhibber said.

A new report titled "From Borrowers to Builders: Women and India's Evolving Credit Market" highlights a major shift in women's participation in the formal credit system, backed by digital public infrastructure and expanding financial access.

Speaking at the launch, Chhibber said economic growth strengthens when participation becomes broader, deeper and more efficient. She noted that women are increasingly shaping and benefiting from these changes.

"Women borrowers are moving beyond entry-level credit towards retail and business-purpose lending, indicating stronger financial capability and deeper economic integration," she said.

The report reveals that women borrowers now hold a credit portfolio of Rs 76 lakh



crore, accounting for 26 per cent of total system credit. This marks a sharp rise from Rs 16 lakh crore in 2017, reflecting a 4.8-fold increase in credit exposure.

The number of women actively using credit has also grown steadily, recording a compound annual growth rate of 9 per cent between 2017 and 2025.

Prepared under the Women Entrepreneurship Platform of NITI Aayog in collaboration with TransUnion CIBIL and MicroSave Consulting, the report combines large-scale credit data with insights from rural women entrepreneurs.

## Aviation stocks fly high: IndiGo ends over 8% higher

NEW DELHI: Aviation stocks ended sharply higher on Wednesday following a steep decline in crude oil prices after the US and Iran announced a two-week ceasefire. Easing of geopolitical stress led to a sharp fall in Brent crude oil prices, which tumbled 14.12 per cent to USD 93.95 per barrel. InterGlobe Aviation, the parent firm of IndiGo, jumped 8.16 per cent to settle at Rs 4,616.60 on the BSE. During the day, it zoomed 10.98 per cent to Rs 4,737.40.

The stock of SpiceJet climbed 5 per cent to reach its upper circuit limit of Rs 11.14. "The rally was primarily driven by a sharp improvement in global sentiment following the announcement of a temporary ceasefire between the US and Iran, which led to a significant cooling in crude oil prices and eased concerns around inflation and global growth," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

## Mudra democratises credit, drives inclusive growth: FM

NEW DELHI

FINANCE Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday said the Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY) will continue to empower entrepreneurs, making them active participants in India's journey towards Viksit Bharat by 2047.

Marking the scheme's 11th anniversary, Sitharaman said PMMY has driven a "silent transformation", enabling crores of citizens to enter entrepreneurship with confidence. Launched on April 8, 2015, the scheme focuses on "funding the unfunded" by extending credit to those outside the formal banking system.

"Eleven years later, the scheme has been instrumental in reshaping the credit landscape for MSMEs and individual entrepreneurs,"



she said, adding that it has democratised access to finance by removing entry barriers.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the scheme has redefined access to credit, empowering millions "with the confidence to dream and the means to fulfil it".

According to Sitharaman, over 57.79 crore loans amounting to Rs40.07 lakh crore have been sanctioned under PMMY so far. Nearly

two-thirds of the loans have gone to women entrepreneurs, while around one-fifth were extended to first-time borrowers, translating into 12.15 crore loans worth Rs12 lakh crore. Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said PMMY has strengthened financial inclusion, especially among marginalised sections. Around 51 per cent of beneficiaries belong to SC, ST and OBC categories, while women account for 67 per cent. The scheme offers collateral-free loans of up to Rs20 lakh for non-corporate, non-farm income-generating activities through banks, NBFCs and MFIs. The finance ministry said MSMEs remain the backbone of the economy, driving balanced growth, while digital innovations are making credit access easier for small businesses.



It felt like the Mumbai Indians lacked a bit of purpose and intent with the ball, and that certainly spilled over into the batting. It was always going to be a big task to score 151 in 11 overs. Young swashbuckler Vaibhav Sooryavanshi was "brilliant" against pace ace Jasprit Bumrah  
- Anil Kumble

# Vaibhav taking down Bumrah eased pressure, says Jaiswal

GUWAHATI

AMAZED by Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's seemingly effortless takedown of Jasprit Bumrah, Rajasthan Royals batter Yashasvi Jaiswal said his 15-year-old opening partner eased the pressure on him in the 27-run IPL win over Mumbai Indians on a rain-soaked evening here. The talking point before the match was the first face-off between the redoubtable pacer and the teen sensation, and Sooryavanshi lived up to the hype, smashing

an incoming Bumrah 131kph delivery on middle and leg for a first-ball six over mid-on. "First ball, he hit him for a six, and I told him to just keep playing his shots," said Jaiswal, who scored a 32-ball 77 not out to lift RR to 150/3 in the 11-overs a side match that was truncated because of inclement weather. Mumbai Indians, in reply, managed 123/9 to slump to a second loss on the trot, while Rajasthan Royals climbed to the top of the table with three wins from three matches.

**Mahela concedes MI blown away by Sooryavanshi and Jaiswal magic; It felt like Mumbai Indians lacked purpose and intent with the ball: Kumble**

The Bihar left-hander, who was signed by Rajasthan Royals for Rs 1.1 crore during the 2025 IPL mega auction. He had shown glimpses of his prodigious talent by becoming the youngest centurion in T20 cricket and the second-fastest in IPL history with a record-breaking

35-ball hundred against Gujarat Titans last season. On Tuesday too, he was in beast mode from the outset, even though Bumrah operating with the new ball. Sooryavanshi, who turned 15 a day before IPL 2026 began, went on to hit two of

his four sixes off the pacer in his opening over, setting the tempo early with a 14-ball 39. It made life easier for Jaiswal at the other end as their confidence soared, allowing them to target other MI bowlers like Deepak Chahar and Trent Boult who both leaked 22 runs in their respective overs. "Of course, Bumrah bhai is one of the legends, so if he's scoring against him, it's amazing. It made us feel that other bowlers we can also take down," said Jaiswal, who hit 10 fours and four sixes and anchored the

innings," Jaiswal said, are quite an opposition." Mumbai Indians head coach Mahela Jayawardene admitted his side was blown off course by a blistering onslaught from Rajasthan Royals openers Yashasvi Jaiswal and Vaibhav Sooryavanshi. It felt like the Mumbai Indians lacked a bit of purpose and intent with the ball, and that certainly spilled over into the batting. It was always going to be a big task to score 151 in 11 overs," said former India captain Anil Kumble.



## Divya Deshmukh storms into joint lead

R Praggnanandhaa saw his title hopes take a major hit after a loss against Dutch Grandmaster Anish Giri in the eighth round  
PAPHOS

INDIAN chess sensation Divya Deshmukh pulled off a superb turnaround converting what looked like a certain draw into victory to climb into joint lead, while compatriot R Praggnanandhaa saw his title hopes take a major hit after a loss against Dutch Grandmaster Anish Giri in the eighth round, leaving him almost out of contention for a top finish in the Candidates tournament here. In the women's section, World Cup winner Deshmukh turned the tables on overnight leader Anna Muzychuk to jump into joint lead with four others including the Ukrainian on 4.5 points from what had seemed a difficult position to defend. Deshmukh did well to fight on and equalise and then capitalised on an unforced error by her opponent in the queen-and-pawns endgame to score a vital victory. The other Indian, R.



Vaishali drew with Bibisara Assaubayeva of Kazakhstan to join Deshmukh, Kateryna Lagno of Ukraine, China's Zhu Jiner and Muzychuk in the lead on 4.5 points after eight games. The event is wide open now with Jiner giving a knockout blow to the hopes of her Chinese compatriot Tan Zhongyi to move to 4.5 points while Kateryna defeated fellow Russian Aleksandra Goryachkina. On a day when Uzbek Javokhir Sindarov just decided to consolidate his lead and drew with tail-ender Andrey Esipenko of Russia in the 'Open' section, Praggnana-

ndhaa, who had scored his sole victory over Giri in the first round, fell prey to some simple tactics from a seemingly equal position and lost his second game in the tournament. Sindarov took his tally to 6.5 out of a possible eight and looks headed for victory as his lead now stands at a massive two points with six rounds remaining in the USD 700,000 prize money tournament that will also select the next challenger for reigning world champion D. Gukesh in the world championship match slated later this year.

## KKR brace for Shami challenge in LSG clash

TAPAN MOHANTA KOLKATA

OUT of tune and bereft of ideas, Kolkata Knight Riders may ring in sweeping changes in search of their first win of the season when they face a Mohammed Shami-inspired Lucknow Super Giants in the IPL, here on Thursday. Shami is fresh from his outstanding 2/9 against Sunrisers Hyderabad, where he dismissed Abhishek Sharma and Travis Head in successive overs -- the same duo who had battered KKR the other day. The 'local' man Shami, a fine exponent of straight seam bowling and movement, will relish the conditions at Eden Gardens and could emerge as a key threat for a KKR who are yet to win after three matches. A glimpse of what to expect was seen on Monday when PBKS' Australian speedster Xavier Bartlett showed how effective straight seam bowling can be on a grassy Eden pitch, blowing away KKR's top order by dismissing overseas duo Finn Allen and Cameron Green in the space of three balls. From 16/2 in two overs, KKR were fortunate to escape with a point after their match against Punjab Kings was washed out. Because of a trough stretching from Gangetic West Bengal to the Gulf of Mannar, rain has been a constant over the past three days and is forecast around late Wednesday and early Thursday. However, being a late 7.30pm start the match is unlikely to be affected much, which should lift the mood. Coming back to the contest, while Shami will be a major threat in the power play, tackling the rest of LSG's attack including Prince Yadav and mystery spinner Digvesh Rathi could also be decisive. LSG's strength lies in their power play bowling, something evident when they reduced both Delhi Capitals and Sunrisers Hyderabad to identical scores of 26/4 early on.



MATCH STARTS AT 7:30PM

## Ayush stuns world No. 7 Feng in Asia Championships

NINGBO: India's Ayush Shetty stunned world No. 7 Lin Shi Feng of China in straight games to enter the second round of the men's singles competition at the Badminton Asia Championships here on Wednesday. World No 25 Ayush, who had won the US Open Super 300 title last year, registered a 21-13 21-16 victory in 51 minutes. Lin raced to a 4-1 lead early on, but Ayush clawed back to level at 7-7 before gradually taking control to pocket the opening game. After the change of sides, the Chinese again moved ahead 4-1 and extended it to 12-9, but Ayush turned the tide with a six-point burst to surge to 18-13. Lin closed the gap to 16-18, but the Indian held his nerve to shut the door on his fancied opponent. Top stars such as PV Sindhu, Lakshya Sen, Kidambi Srikanth and HS Prannoy will begin their campaigns later in the day.

## India go down 1-2 to Thailand

NEW DELHI: Rituja Bhosale and Ankita Raina salvaged some pride with a consolation win in the doubles after Sahaja Yamalappalli's narrow defeat in the second singles as India went down against Thailand 1-2 in the rain-hit opening Asia/Oceania Group I tie of the Billie Jean King Cup here on Wednesday. A lot was riding on world No. 384 Sahaja as she resumed the match after it was halted due to rain on Tuesday evening. However, the 25-year-old could not keep India in the hunt, losing 4-6, 6-1, 4-6 to Patcharin, ranked 449, in a match that lasted two hours and 25 minutes. Doubles pair of Bhosale and Raina then beat Thasaporn Naklo and Peangtarn Plipuech 6-3 6-4 in one hour and 11 minutes. "We knew going into the match, Thailand is a very good team. We really have to play some good tennis. Unfortunately, we didn't do what we needed to do and lost 2-0. But nevertheless, it's a good thing that we won the doubles because it's still a long tournament ahead. And



every win matters," captain Vishal Uppal told reporters. Earlier, resuming at 3-4 in the decider, Sahaja sent a forehand wide as Patcharin held serve to move 5-3 ahead. The Indian then held her serve after a Patcharin backhand slice found the net, narrowing the gap to 4-5. With the match on knife's edge, Sahaja produced some exceptional groundstrokes, dominating baseline exchanges. She even earned a break point when the Thai hit long. However, she faltered at the crucial juncture, sending a forehand and a backhand long to hand the advantage back. A miscued return on the next point ended her resistance.

# We will move court again to resist voter deletions: Didi

Everything in my life began from here: Mamata after filing nomination for Bhabanipur seat;

KOLKATA

WEST Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee hit out at the BJP and the Election Commission over voter deletions during the SIR exercise and said her party will move a court again to resist the removal of electors from the rolls. Her comments came after nearly 91 lakh voters' names were deleted from the electoral rolls following the completion of the Special Intensive Revision in the state. "You will not be able to defeat the TMC by deleting names. We will move a court again to resist the exclusion of names," Banerjee said while attacking her principal challenger BJP over the roll revision exercise. Banerjee had in February argued in



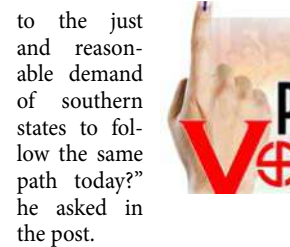
the Supreme Court as she sought an intervention in the SIR process. The EC figures showed the total deletion of over 90.83 lakh names from the original voter base of 7.66 crore in October 2025. Criticising the poll panel over the SIR process, the TMC supreme said, "We will fight legally to get the names included on

the list as per the Constitution. If people cannot cast their votes, what is the need to frame the tribunal? And then you are saying that the list has been frozen. What is this? We will challenge it and try to understand it." Turning her nomination filing for the Bhabanipur seat into a political counteroffen-

sive to the BJP's call for "paribartan", West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee marched from her Kalighat residence to submit her papers, projecting the constituency as a "mini India" under siege of polarisation. "I was born and brought up here in Bhabanipur only. I stay here 365 days a year. My life, my work, my movements -- everything revolves around Bhabanipur. Everything in my life began from here. I thank and salute the people of Bhabanipur," Banerjee said. "People are allowed to eat eggs, fish, or meat in the BJP-ruled states like Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra. The same will happen here if the BJP comes to power," Banerjee claimed. PTI

## CM Stalin on delimitation 'TN will not accept any decision taken without state's consent'

CHENNAI: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Wednesday said the South demanded a fair delimitation and that the state will not accept any decision taken by the Centre on the subject without its consent. Prime Minister Narendra Modi should not turn a "calm south into a storm", he cautioned, and posed a set of questions to the PM. "The Prime Minister must answer these fair and pressing questions raised by the people of the South," Stalin said in a post on 'X' with a headline "Delimitation Danger: Is India sliding into dictatorship?" The DMK chief sought to know why the Union BJP government was "shrouding the entire delimitation process in secrecy instead of coming clean on how it intends to carry it out." "In 2001, former Prime Minister Vajpayee deferred delimitation for 25 years in the national interest. What is Prime Minister Modi's answer



to the just and reasonable demand of southern states to follow the same path today?" he asked in the post. He questioned the timing of convening a special session of Parliament in the midst of five state elections and why the Union government brushed aside the fair and reasoned demand of Opposition leaders to hold the special session only after April 29. "What is it that you are trying to hide? Forcing through far reaching constitutional amendments without even convening an all party consultation is nothing short of dictatorship," Stalin claimed.

## RSS files police complaints against Cong President

GUWAHATI: The RSS on Wednesday said it has filed complaints at two police stations in Assam against Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge for allegedly comparing the ideology of the organisation and the BJP with a 'poisonous snake' at an election rally. The complaints were filed to seek legal action over alleged "derogatory, provocative, and communally sensitive statements made during a recent election rally in south Assam, a RSS spokesman said. In the complaints, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh alleged that the Congress chief had made controversial remarks during an election rally in Nilambazar under the Karimganj South assembly constituency in Sribhumi district. "If a poisonous snake is moving in front of you while you are offering namaz, you



must stop the prayer and rush to kill the poisonous snake first - that is what the Quran prescribes you to do. I tell you that the RSS and BJP are like that same poisonous snake," Kharge was quoted as saying in the complaints. The RSS expressed serious concern, claiming that such remarks were "inflammatory in nature and capable of inciting hostility, intimidation, and violence against workers and supporters of the RSS and the BJP." The complaints pointed out that the statement constitutes a "corrupt electoral practice under Section 83 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, and the remarks criminally intimidated the public and promoted enmity between supporters of different political and social groups".

## Cong levels vote-for-cash allegations against BJP

PALAKKAD

CONGRESS alleged that Sobha Surendran, the Bharatiya Janata Party candidate of the Palakkad constituency in Kerala, was "caught red-handed distributing" cash to voters ahead of April 9 elections to the state assembly. Surendran denied the allegations, calling them "fabricated" to defeat her. She alleged that a local Congress leader and a journalist of a TV channel were behind the allegations, and she would be filing a police



case against them. The BJP leader claimed that a video aired on TV channels, showing some women "offering something" to an elderly woman in her constituency, was wrongly projected by the Congress and the journalist to allege that she offered

money for votes. Visuals aired on TV channels show a woman offering something to the elderly woman, and thereafter, another group goes to her and opens her hand to reveal a small roll of Rs 500 currency notes. Based on the video, it was alleged that the elderly woman was given money by someone in the BJP candidate's campaign team. However, the elderly woman denied having received any money, but admitted to having asked for Rs 5,000 for buying medicines.

## Kerala LoP urges EC to ensure smooth postal voting for govt staff

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Leader of the Opposition in the state Assembly, V D Satheesan, on Wednesday sought the EC's intervention to ensure that government employees can exercise their franchise without any hindrance through the postal voting process. In a letter to Chief Election Commissioner, CEC, Gyanesh Kumar, Satheesan said the issue has already been brought to the attention of the Kerala Chief Electoral Officer by postal voters from all 14 districts, but "no effective remedial measures have been implemented". Assembly polls for 140 constituencies in Kerala will be held on April 9. He said many such employees have also approached him, seeking assistance in resolving these difficulties.

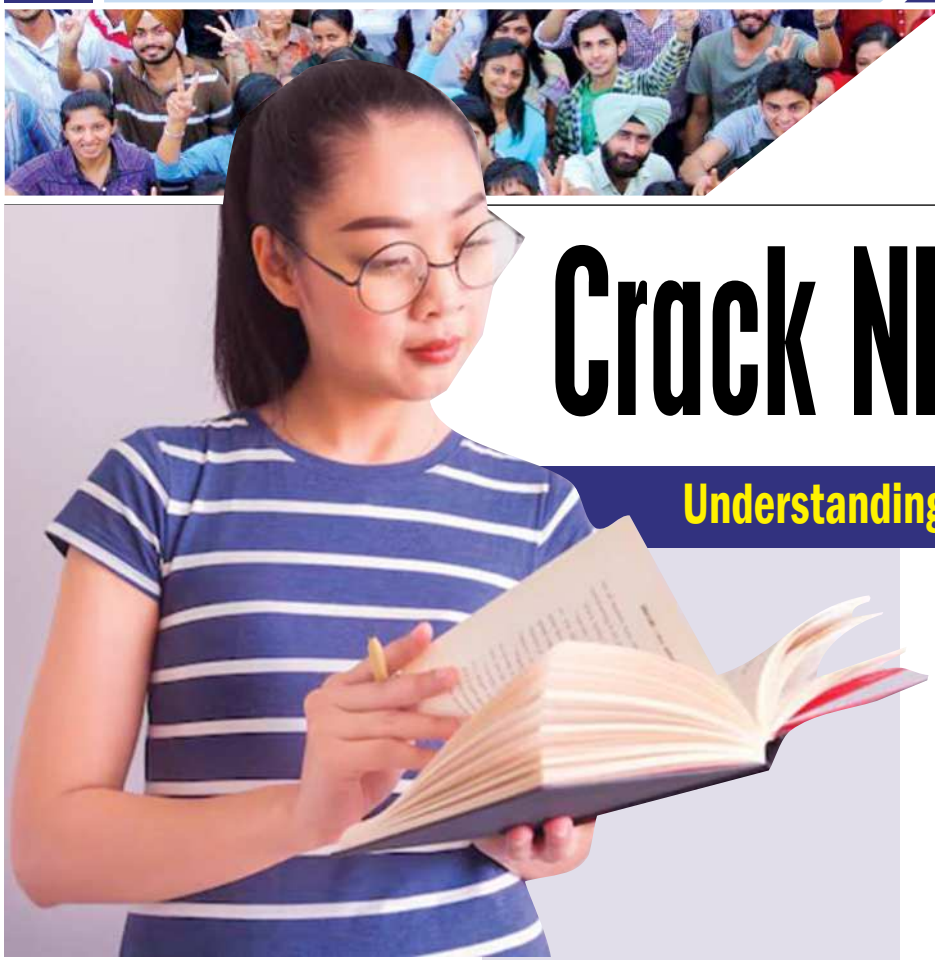
## Himanta using police to intimidate me: Khera

GUWAHATI: Congress leader Pawan Khera on Wednesday accused Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma of "unleashing" the state police on him instead of addressing the opposition party's questions on multiple passports and foreign investments linked to the CM's wife. In a recorded video addressed to the CM from an undisclosed location, Khera said, "Our party had only asked you some questions. Why do you want to silence us? We have asked questions; give us the replies." He added, "Instead of replying, you are hurling abuses at everyone, you have put police behind me. I am not afraid of them. But I am avoiding them as I have more questions to ask." Khera reiterated questions regarding a purported company registered in the US state of Wyoming in the name of Sarma's wife, Riniki



Bhuyan Sarma, claiming that the official company website lists a London address as primary and two other addresses in

Dubai and Dhaka. He said the London address is also linked with 'Bhuyan Properties Ltd', according to UK government records. Referring to his previous charge of Bhuyan Sarma possessing passports of Egypt and Antigua and Barbuda, and the golden visa of the UAE, Khera asked, "Did you or your agent or one of your family members use fake KYC documents to open these shell companies, buy properties?" "It can be known only through investigation. You are in government, and you should probe these rather than trying to intimidate us," Khera added. Khera had brought the accusations against Bhuyan Sarma of possessing multiple passports and properties in foreign countries on April 5, which have been dismissed by the CM and his wife as false.



# Crack NEET Chemistry with the right plan

Understanding trends, focusing on key chapters, and regular revision are key to better performance

- 1. Focus on high-weightage chapters:** Prioritise topics like Chemical Bonding, Equilibrium, and Coordination Compounds.
- 2. Strengthen fundamentals first:** Build a strong base before moving to advanced topics.
- 3. Practice consistently:** Solve previous years' papers and take regular tests.
- 4. Revise regularly:** Especially for Inorganic and memory-based chapters.
- 5. Maintain subject balance:** Allocate time wisely across all sections of Chemistry.

DILIP GANGARAMANI

For students preparing for the NEET UG 2026, Chemistry often feels like a subject that sits between extremes. It is generally more manageable than Physics but not as straightforward as Biology. For some aspirants, it becomes a reliable scoring area, while for others, it presents a mix of challenges—numerical problem-solving in Physical Chemistry, conceptual understanding in Organic Chemistry, and memory-based learning in Inorganic Chemistry.

This makes it essential for

students to adopt a clear and structured strategy. One of the most effective ways to do this is by understanding the chapter-wise weightage of Chemistry based on previous years' papers.

This approach does not mean ignoring any topic but helps aspirants prioritise their time and effort more effectively.

#### Why chapter-wise weightage matters

A close analysis of past NEET papers reveals that certain chapters consistently carry higher weightage. Topics such as Chemical Bonding, Equilibrium, Hy-

drocarbons, Coordination Compounds, and Aldehydes and Ketones are frequently asked and often contribute significantly to the total marks.

Focusing on these high-weightage chapters offers several advantages.

It allows students to allocate more time to topics that are more likely to appear in the exam. It also builds familiarity and confidence, as repeated practice increases accuracy and speed. At the same time, revising low-weightage chapters ensures that students do not lose out on easy marks from straightforward questions.

#### Understanding Class 11 Chemistry Trends

The Class 11 portion forms the foundation of Chemistry preparation. Many of these topics are concept-heavy and require a clear understanding before moving on to advanced chapters.

High-weightage chapters in Class 11 include Chemical Bonding and Molecular Structure, Equilibrium, Hydrocarbons, and Organic Chemistry basics. These topics are crucial not only because of their weightage but also because they form the base for several Class 12 chapters.

Medium-weightage chapters such as Structure of Atom, Thermodynamics, and Some Basic Concepts of Chemistry also play an important role. These chapters introduce key principles that are frequently applied in problem-solving.

On the other hand, topics like Classification of Elements and Periodicity in Properties are relatively lower in weightage but still require revision, as they can contribute to easy scoring opportunities.

#### Class 12 Chemistry: Higher weightage, higher impact

The Class 12 syllabus generally carries slightly higher

overall weightage in NEET. Many chapters in this section are scoring if prepared well.

Among the high-weightage topics are Electrochemistry, Coordination Compounds, and the d- and f-block elements. These chapters are known for repeated questions and relatively predictable patterns.

Medium-weightage chapters include Chemical Kinetics and Alcohols, Phenols, and Ethers. These require a mix of conceptual understanding and memorisation.

Lower-weightage topics such as Amines and Biomolecules are often more theory-based and can be covered through regular revision. While they may contribute fewer questions, they are important for securing complete marks.

#### Building a step-by-step preparation plan

An effective Chemistry preparation strategy begins with strengthening the basics. Students should start with chapters like Structure of Atom and Basic Concepts to build clarity. Once the fundamentals are clear, they can move on to more complex topics such as Thermodynamics, Equilibrium, and Chemical Bonding.

Organic Chemistry should be approached in a logical



sequence—beginning with general principles and reaction mechanisms, followed by specific chapters like Hydrocarbons and functional groups. Understanding reaction patterns is more important than rote memorisation.

Inorganic Chemistry, on the other hand, requires consistent revision.

Short notes, flashcards, and regular recall practice can help retain important facts and reactions.

Solving previous years' question papers is a crucial part of preparation. It helps students understand the exam pattern, identify im-

portant topics, and improve time management. Chapter-wise practice is particularly useful for strengthening weaker areas.

#### Balancing chemistry with other subjects

NEET preparation requires a balance between all three subjects. Biology often carries the highest weightage, while Physics demands strong analytical skills. Chemistry acts as a bridge between the two, offering scoring opportunities if prepared strategically. Students should aim to maintain a balance between Physi-

cal, Organic, and Inorganic Chemistry, ensuring that no section is neglected. A well-rounded approach can significantly improve overall performance.

Chemistry can play a decisive role in determining your NEET rank. With a clear understanding of chapter-wise weightage, a structured study plan, and consistent practice, aspirants can turn it into a high-scoring subject. Rather than studying everything with equal intensity, focusing on the right topics at the right time can make preparation more efficient and result-oriented.

## VIT Chennai Celebrates University Day



The Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT), Chennai, celebrated its University Day recently with great enthusiasm. Binod Kumar, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Indian Bank, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest, while Vaibhav Chaurasia attended as the Guest of Honour. The event was presided over by G. Viswanathan, Founder and Chancellor of VIT, in the presence of G. V. Selvam, Vice-President of VIT.

In his address, Binod Kumar encouraged students to prepare for a rapidly evolving world, emphasizing the importance of continuous effort and adaptability. He highlighted the need for innovation with

a focus on enhancing end-user experience. Stressing a customer-centric approach, he remarked that simplifying people's lives should be a guiding principle, as it helps individuals strive for excellence.

He further underlined the significance of both knowledge and character, stating that while knowledge shapes one's path, it is personal character that ultimately defines success.

Major Vaibhav Chaurasia inspiring students to draw inspiration from their surroundings and focus on positive influences. He urged them to remain resilient and maintain self-belief, reminding them to persevere through challenges and continue work-

ing hard with integrity.

In his presidential address, G. Viswanathan highlighted the transformative power of education, noting that it uplifts individuals, families, and society at large. He stressed that the vision of a developed nation can be achieved through universal access to quality education and knowledge-driven economic growth.

This concluded with the distribution of medals and certificates to meritorious students in recognition of their academic and overall excellence. Senior officials, including Prof. T. Thyagarajan, Prof. K. Sathiyarayanan, and Prof. P. K. Manoharan, were also present at the event.

Industry-integrated undergraduate programmes designed to combine academic learning with practical training. The B.Tech in Applied Life Sciences includes initial classroom study followed by hands-on experience. The B.Sc in Cardiovascular Sciences, both courses focus on skill development, industry exposure, and employability, with structured internships forming a key component of the learning process

HYDERABAD

Young India Skills University (YISU) has launched a set of industry-integrated undergraduate programmes along with a digital learning platform, marking a shift towards skill-based and experiential education.

The launch event was held on Wednesday at the International Institute of Information Technology Hyderabad campus in Gachibowli, in the presence of academic and

## Young India Skills University launches industry-linked courses, digital learning platform



industry representatives. The initiative aims to bridge the gap between classroom education and industry requirements by embedding practical training within degree programmes.

According to university officials, the newly introduced B.Tech programme in Applied Life Sciences has been developed in collaboration with companies such as Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, Het-

ero, and Bharat Biotech. The structure of the programme includes classroom learning in the initial phase, followed by extended hands-on training within partner organisations and internships in the final year.

The university has also introduced a B.Sc programme in Cardiovascular Sciences in collaboration with AIG Hospitals. The course is designed to provide students

with practical exposure in a clinical environment under the guidance of medical professionals.

Vice Chancellor V.L.V.S.S. Subba Rao stated that the programmes have been designed with a strong focus on employability and real-world application. He noted that industry collaboration has been a key factor in shaping the curriculum, ensuring students gain relevant skills

alongside academic knowledge.

Alongside the academic programmes, the university launched a Digital Learning Universe in partnership with Tutorials Point. The platform is designed to offer flexible, self-paced learning through AI-supported content across multiple domains, including technology, artificial intelligence, and professional skills.

The digital platform is expected to initially offer around 75 courses, catering to learners seeking to upgrade skills or explore new areas of study outside traditional degree structures.

University officials said the move reflects a broader shift away from conventional textbook-based education towards practical, skill-driven learning models.

The programmes are also expected to create new opportunities for students, particularly those seeking industry exposure during their academic journey. Admissions for the newly launched courses are currently open, with selection based on an entrance test and interview process.

## Survey finds Gen Z aspirants shifting focus to global, skill-based careers

A majority of Gen Z students in India aspiring for careers in finance are moving away from traditional degree-focused pathways and increasingly prioritising global opportunities and skill-based learning, according to a recent survey by Zell Education.

The report reveals that over 70% of students are actively targeting international career prospects, including roles with global firms, remote work opportunities, and career pathways enabled through internationally recognised certifications. This trend reflects a significant

shift in student mindset, with greater focus on global exposure, higher earning potential, and faster career growth.

One of the key findings of the survey is the growing preference for practical, application-oriented learning. Students are placing more importance on acquiring job-ready skills and real-world experience rather than relying solely on academic degrees. The emphasis is increasingly on employability and industry relevance.

Pratham Barot, CEO and Co-founder of Zell Education, noted that students today are more informed

and outcome-driven in their decisions. He highlighted that career choices are now guided by long-term prospects and skill development rather than just formal qualifications.

The survey also points to a rising demand for globally recognised certifications such as ACCA, CFA, and CPA. These qualifications are increasingly seen as essential for building international careers and aligning with global industry standards.

In terms of career preferences, students continue to show strong interest in fields such as investment banking,

private equity, consulting, and financial analytics—areas known for high growth and dynamic work environments.

However, the report also highlights challenges faced by aspirants, including limited awareness about career pathways, access to industry-relevant training, and the need to balance academic commitments with skill development.

**1. Global outlook:** Over 70% of students aim for international or globally connected careers.  
**2. Skill-first approach:** Practical learning and employ-

ability skills are gaining priority over degrees.

**3. Rising certifications:** ACCA, CFA, and CPA are becoming central to career planning.

**4. Awareness gaps:** Students still face challenges in accessing the right guidance and training.

The findings underline a broader transformation in how Gen Z approaches education and careers, with a clear shift towards global mobility, skill-driven learning, and outcome-focused decision-making in an increasingly competitive job market.





## Bellamkonda Sai Srinivas & Kavya Reddy's engagement was a grand affair

Young hero Bellamkonda Sai Srinivas and Kavya Reddy got engaged in a grand ceremony on Sunday at a spacious farmhouse in Shankarpally, Hyderabad. Friends from the film industry, well-wishers, family members, and many celebrities participated in the ceremony. At the engagement, the Sai-Kavya couple wore customized jewelry reflecting their special bond. Enhancing their appearance, their engagement outfits were designed by Delhi-based renowned costume designer Abhishek Sharma. These looks, blending tradition with modernity, impressed everyone. Photos from the engagement ceremony went viral on social media, with fans and netizens congratulating the Sai-Kavya couple. Sai Srinivas and Kavya Reddy's wedding ceremony has been named 'Srinivasakavyanam'. The wedding ceremony will take place on April 29 in the divine Tirumala, one of the most sacred spiritual destinations, making it a truly memorable venue for their union.



## 'Sampradayini Suppini Suddapoosani' blends family crime comedy

The entertaining film 'Sampradayini Suppini Suddapoosani' is currently making waves on Netflix, trending among the Top 5 titles and gaining massive appreciation from audiences. With its unique mix of humor, emotions, and a touch of crime comedy, the film is emerging as a refreshing watch in the OTT space.

Positioned as a light-hearted crime comedy thriller, the film smartly blends suspense with fun-filled moments, making it engaging for viewers of all age groups. While the narrative carries elements of intrigue and unexpected twists, it never loses its core essence of family entertainment. This rare balance is what makes 'Sampradayini Suppini Suddapoosani' stand out. Audiences are particularly enjoying how the film keeps them hooked with its playful storytelling, witty dialogues, and entertaining performances, while also delivering subtle thrills. The crime angle is presented in a clean and humorous way, ensuring it remains suitable for family viewing without compromising on excitement. Social media is buzzing with positive responses, with many viewers calling it a "must-watch family entertainer with a twist." The film is being widely recommended for weekend viewing, especially for those looking for something different yet wholesome.



The success of 'Sampradayini Suppini Suddapoosani' on Netflix once again proves that audiences are embracing content that combines laughter, suspense, and family values in a meaningful way. If you're in the mood for a light crime comedy thriller that you can enjoy with your entire family, 'Sampradayini Suppini Suddapoosani' is definitely the perfect pick right now.

## Atlee unveils 'RAAKA', Allu Arjun roars

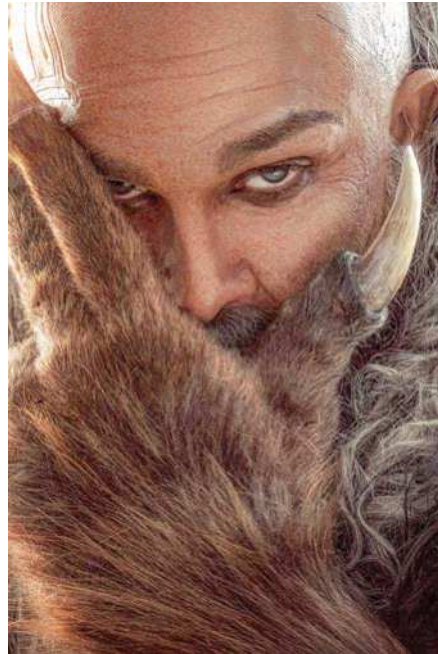
In a blockbuster announcement that has set the Indian film industry abuzz, Icon Star Allu Arjun, acclaimed director Atlee, and entertainment giant Sun Pictures, led by Kalanithi Maran, have unveiled the much-anticipated title of their mammoth project. AA22XA6 is now titled 'RAAKA'. The uniquely titled film is already generating massive excitement for the epic vision Atlee is set to bring to life.

In the first-look poster, Allu Arjun appears in a striking and unique avatar. He is seen bald, kohl-eyed, staring intensely into the camera, while sporting animal-like claws teased earlier. His forehead features markings reminiscent of Viking tattoos, adding to the intrigue.

Beyond this look, little is known about the film, including its cast and genre. Fans have reacted enthusiastically to the stunning transformation, with many calling it "jaw-dropping." Known for constantly reinventing himself, Allu Arjun once again proves his commitment to aligning with the grand vision of his director. This bold transformation has truly surprised everyone.

The first look sent shockwaves across the country, with fans celebrating the Icon Star's birthday with full energy and excitement. After keeping audiences waiting for nearly a year, Atlee and Allu Arjun have delivered a reveal that has heightened anticipation for what's to come.

Following the global success of 'Pushpa: The Rule', National Award-winning actor Allu Arjun is expected to bring his signature style to 'RAAKA'. Reports suggest that the film will be a major technical venture, with Atlee aim-



ing to create visual effects and world-building that rival Hollywood spectacles.

Director Atlee, known for massive blockbusters like 'Jawan', 'Theri', 'Bigil', and 'Mersal', joins forces with Sun Pictures, one of India's most influential media powerhouses.

Deepika Padukone stars as the female lead opposite Allu Arjun, marking their first collaboration. 'RAAKA' is poised to be a cinematic milestone, blending intense emotion, adrenaline-pumping action, grand visuals, and storytelling deeply rooted in Indian culture, with a global appeal.

## Chai Shots brings back 'Rituraagalu' and new serials

At the 'Chai Shots Kitty Party' press meet, Chai Biscuit, a trendsetter in digital entertainment, shared exciting updates about its short-series OTT platform 'Chai Shots', which has already achieved significant success. Designed especially for smartphone audiences, 'Chai Shots' content has received an excellent response. Taking things a step further, the platform is now bringing both new serials and iconic Telugu shows to viewers.

Speaking at the event, Chai Shots co-founder Sharat Chandra said, "Hello everyone. We launched 'Chai Shots' in December, and at that time, we were still figuring out how to design the app and what kind of content to provide. Now, three months later, we've realized that nearly 70% of our audience is above 35 years of age. At Chai Biscuit, we are used to creating content for younger audiences. However, when we introduced TV serial-like content on 'Chai Shots', the response was amazing.

That's when we approached Ramani garu to scale this further. We have created around a dozen short serials with actors and directors currently working in television. Each episode is just two minutes long, with about 30 episodes per season. So far, we have released more than 15 short serials, and many more are on the way.

We have also started devotional shows. Along with cult serials like 'Rituraagalu', we are bringing more legendary Telugu shows to 'Chai Shots'. Our aim is to create a platform that blends the essence of TV and OTT. We have even recreated shows



like 'Pattakhima Pattu Saree', which many of us watched in our childhood. Produced with Hariteja garu, it will be aired daily at 1 PM. While people often ask, "Who watches TV anymore?", the emotions and drama in television remain timeless—and we want to bring that experience to our app." Anurag Reddy added, "During the pandemic, when no one was coming to the office, we started making one-minute videos, which evolved into micro-dramas. While Chinese and Korean content is being dubbed for Indian audiences, we already have incredible native content. We are bringing back cult Telugu serials like 'Rituraagalu'. Our goal is to promote stories rooted in our culture. 'Old is gold'—these timeless stories will entertain audiences again in a new format. Emotions never change; only their presentation does."

Writer Balabhadrapatruni Ramani said, "Sharath has already achieved great success with Chai Biscuit, and I believe he will achieve even more with

'Chai Shots'. Our team has been extremely supportive, and everyone—from actors and directors to technicians—is doing a fantastic job. We are committed to delivering quality serials in a short format, along with devotional programs that cater to senior citizens as well."

Actress Suhasini shared, "I was truly excited when Ramani told me about 'Chai Shots'. It was a unique experience to complete a series—something that usually takes two to three years—in just about an hour. I'm also involved as a producer. The acting process felt fresh, and the stories are very engaging. It's content that appeals to everyone, from children to adults."

Producer Nagababu said, "I thank Ramani garu for this opportunity. It was a wonderful experience to be part of this project. As a devotee of

Baba, working on devotional content brought me immense joy."

Producer Bharathi Krishna added, "Initially, we were a bit skeptical when Ramani garu approached us for short serials. But once we started working, it became an exciting journey. Hats off to Sharath and Anurag garu for their vision. It's encouraging to see devotional content gaining popularity again—even among the youth. This trend is only going to grow in the future."

## 'Thimmarajupalli TV' trailer releasing on April 9

'Thimmarajupalli TV', produced by actor Kiran Abbavaram under KA Productions in association with Sumaira Studios, will have its trailer released on April 9.

Encouraging new talent, Kiran Abbavaram is backing "Thimmarajupalli TV" under his banner KA Productions along with Sumaira Studios, with Teja Velpucharla serving as co-producer. The film introduces Sai Tej and Veda Jalandharr as lead actors, while V. Muniraju makes his directorial debut with this project.

Set against a village backdrop, 'Thimmarajupalli TV' is a period drama gearing up for a grand theatrical release on the 17th of this month. The makers recently shared an update confirming that the trailer will be released on April 9. The film has already begun generating positive buzz among movie lovers.



## 'Lenin' poster to be out on Akhil Akkineni's birthday

Manam Enterprises LLP and Sithara Entertainments' 'Lenin' is set to release on June 26: Akhil Akkineni's birthday special poster unveiled.

Young and dynamic actor Akhil Akkineni's upcoming film 'Lenin' has already created a strong buzz with its first single. The film stars Bhagyashri Borse as the female lead. Directed by Murali Kishor Abburu, 'Lenin' is shaping up to be a complete cinematic package filled with powerful emotions and engaging storytelling.

On the occasion of Akhil Akkineni's birthday, the makers unveiled a special poster wishing the actor a very happy birthday. In the poster, Akhil appears in a refreshing new look, with his charming smile adding warmth. The

much-anticipated film is scheduled for a theatrical release on June 26, 2026, with the date reaffirmed on the poster.

Directed by Murali Kishor Abburu, 'Lenin' is being crafted as a wholesome cinematic experience, promising a blend of strong emotions and compelling storytelling. The team assures audiences that the film will be presented in its finest form, delivering a memorable big-screen experience.

The film also features music by Thaman S, further enhancing its scale and appeal. Produced by Akkineni Nagarjuna and Suryadevara Naga Vamsi under Manam Enterprises LLP and Sithara Entertainments, and presented by Annapurna Studios, 'Lenin' promises to be a memorable big-screen spectacle.

