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WINDOWS



SC rules out blanket ban on firecrackers

Also not to allow fireworks throughout the day

NEW DELHI: Ahead of festival season, the Supreme Court on Wednesday said it will neither impose a complete ban on firecrackers nor allow their use round the clock, noting that a middle ground would require specifying the hours during which they can be used. A bench of Justices MM Sundresh and PB Varale said a total ban would affect people's sentiments, while allowing fireworks throughout the day would have a "huge impact" on others, including the elderly, sick and children. "We need to find a solution by which we can give a specified time," the bench observed orally. Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati submitted a note stating that limited and conditional relaxation could be considered for specified "next-generation joined green crackers" recommended by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (CSIR-NEERI), subject to applicable noise, emission and safety requirements.

TG's Chikitha strikes double gold on debut in Asian Games

K CHANDRASHEKAR
HYDERABAD

AN archer from the Peddapalli District in Telangana Taniparthi Chikitha has made the country proud by winning two gold medals in team events on her Asian Games debut.

The icing on the cake in India's golden hat-trick in compound archery was the mixed combination of Chikitha and Sahil Jadhav also securing an Olympic quota place

PEDDAPALLI PILLA'S BANAM FOR OLYMPICS

for the country following their top finish. Chikitha is India's first-ever Women's U-21 Compound World Champion.

Chikitha won the two gold medals in the women's team and mixed team on Wednesday. In the Compound Archery (Women's Team) Chikitha Taniparthi, along with Jyothi Surekha Vennam and Prithika Pradeep, defeated China 238-234, equal-



ling world record to grab the gold at the Asian Games. Repeating her marvellous performance on

the same day in a different event of Compound Archery of mixed team, Chikitha, along with Sahil Jadhav, secured gold. Altogether the Archery team had a stellar gold rush on Wednesday by bagging three gold medals. Despite being on her debut tournament, Chikitha held her nerves to contribute in the team's rush for gold at the games.

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Murmu pats archers

NEW DELHI: President Droupadi Murmu extended her congratulations to Indian archers Chikitha Taniparthi, Sahil Rajesh Jadhav, Prithika Pradeep and Jyothi Surekha Vennam following their gold medal victories at the Asian Games 2026.



EC revises SIR schedule in AP

NEW DELHI: The Election Commission (EC) on Wednesday extended the schedule for the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral roll in Andhra Pradesh and Meghalaya, fixing October 16 and October 26, respectively, for the publication of the final voter lists. Earlier, the date for the publication of the final voter list was October 9 for Andhra Pradesh and October 21 for Meghalaya.

Will complete 36 irrigation projects in 3 years: Naidu

K VARAPRASADA RAO
AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu has declared that the state government proposes to complete 36 irrigation projects at a cost of Rs 35,000 crore over the next three years, with the objective of ensuring adequate drinking and irrigation water across the state. He also set the 2028 Krishna Pushkarams as the target for ensuring greater availability of Krishna and Godavari waters.

The Chief Minister on Wednesday addressed a gathering after distributing pattas conferring full ownership rights to 26,401 families under the 'Pedalaku Pattabishekam' programme at

- ▶▶ 26,401 poor families get land ownership rights in Vijayawada
- ▶▶ Plots worth Rs 28,112 cr distributed under 'Pedalaku Pattabishekam'
- ▶▶ AP government targets 11 lakh houses



Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu distributing regularised house-site pattas at Ajith Singh Nagar in Vijayawada on Wednesday

Makineni Basava Punnaiah Stadium in Vijayawada.

Naidu said the implementation of the Godavari-Cauvery river-linking project

could help address water scarcity across southern India. Around 1,400 tmc of Godavari water had flowed into the sea this year, he

pointed out, and argued that diverting even 100 tmc for productive purposes could transform the region.

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Modi calls up Trump, discusses trade & energy

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said that he had a "productive conversation" with US President Donald Trump and reviewed bilateral cooperation between New Delhi and Washington in various sectors.

In a social media post on X, Modi said: "Had a productive conversation with President Trump. We reviewed our bilateral co-operation in trade, defence, energy, critical technologies and other areas. We agreed to maintain close engagement to take our Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership forward."

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INDIA bloc declares all-out war on SIR

- Announces protests on 'vote chori'
- To undertake march to EC on Oct 6
- Demands paper ballots in future polls



Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge addresses a press conference following the INDIA bloc meeting, alongside LoP in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, J&K CM Omar Abdullah and CPP chairperson Sonia Gandhi in New Delhi on Wednesday

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

PUTTING up a united front on the 'vote chori' issue, the Opposition INDIA bloc on Wednesday announced joint 'save democracy' marches in

all districts and five major rallies, demanded that future polls be held with ballot paper and appealed to the Supreme Court to expedite cases of SIR and electoral "malpractices".

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Indian sailor among 5 killed by pirates on hijacked tanker

NEW DELHI: An Indian sailor or was among five crew members killed during an anti-piracy operation on the hijacked fuel tanker MT Honour 25 in Somalia. Puntland Maritime Police Force successfully rescued MT Honour 25, apprehending 16 suspected pirates, and freed other vessels like MT Siblu 1 and MT Eureka. The High Commission of India in Kenya is providing assistance to the family of the deceased Indian national and ensuring the safety and repatriation of other Indian seafarers. The incident highlights a resurgence of Somali piracy, driven by regional conflicts and geopolitical instability in the Red Sea, impacting international shipping. Other hijacked vessels, including MT Eureka with Indian crew, were also released, though some were damaged and had cargo siphoned off.

CM Naidu calls for continuous skill training of govt staff



Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu at a review meeting on skill development in Amaravati on Wednesday

K VARAPRASADA RAO
AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has called for continuous skill development of government employees, directing officials to expand training programmes in collaboration with premier institutions such as the IITs and IIMs.

Naidu made the direction during a review meeting with senior officials at his camp office on Wednesday on the services being delivered by various government departments. Skill development, Anna Canteens, drinking water supply in urban areas and amenities in welfare hostels were among the issues discussed. The Chief Minister said Andhra Pradesh was lead-

- ▶▶ CM asks officials to tie up with IITs, IIMs for specialised training
- ▶▶ No complacency over drinking water supply despite recent rains
- ▶▶ Public participation sought in govt initiatives & welfare programmes

ing the southern states in capacity building and skill training for government employees. He said employees were being trained through various courses on the iGOT Karmayogi platform to equip them to function effectively in real-time work environments. Continued on Page 7

Cabinet hikes MSP for all rabi crops

Green Energy Corridor, Delhi traffic mgmt system get nod

NEW DELHI: The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved three major measures spanning agriculture, power infrastructure and urban mobility, including higher Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for all mandated rabi crops for the 2027-28 marketing season, a Rs 1.86 lakh crore Green Energy Corridor Phase-III scheme and a Rs 1,789.52 crore technology-led traffic management system for Delhi. Continued on Page 7

Hero Indian captain prevents flydubai hijack

Makes emergency landing in Saudi Arabia; saves 180 passengers

NEW DELHI

IN a dramatic mid-air incident, an Indian Captain of flydubai flight FZ1073 from Dubai to Tel Aviv carrying 180 passengers thwarted a hijack attempt by his co-pilot, averting what Israeli media described as a potential "second 9/11."

The flight made an emergency landing in Saudi Arabia after an alleged violent altercation between the two pilots inside the cockpit triggering a mid-air emergency, with



videos purportedly capturing passengers screaming as the aircraft rapidly descended.

The flight was diverted to Tabuk airport after transmitting emergency signals that briefly raised fears of a

aircraft and stab Captain Smit Machchhar during the flight. Despite sustaining injuries, the Captain fought back and prevented the plane from crashing. His quick thinking and courage ensured the safety of more than 180 passengers, most of them Israeli nationals.

The situation escalated when the Captain, injured but determined, managed to restrain the attacker long enough for two off-duty pilots traveling as passengers to intervene. Continued on Page 7

SIR update: No more parent, grandparent details, says EC

Changes Form 6 rule for new voters in 20 states

NEW DELHI

NEW voters in 20 states, where the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) has been completed, will no longer have to provide details of their parents' presence on the electoral rolls. The Election Commission has amended Form 6 to allow applicants in these states to submit the form without the additional SIR-linked



declaration seeking details of parents and grandparents. However, in states where SIR is still underway, new voters will continue to be required to submit the declaration. The move comes days after reports of internal objections within

the three-member poll panel over changes made to Form 6. Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi had reportedly raised objections to the addition of the declaration, with internal records cited by The Indian Express showing that they questioned its legality in the absence of an amendment to the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960. Continued on Page 7

Job creation coalition govt's only agenda: Lokesh

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

CREATING employment opportunities for the youth is the sole agenda of the Andhra Pradesh government, Education and IT Minister Nara Lokesh has said, underlining that the coalition government has set a target of creating 20 lakh jobs to fulfil the aspirations of young people.

Participating in the 'India Today Conclave South 2026' in Kochi, Lokesh said the youth were seeking "jobs, jobs and jobs" and that the Chief Minister, Ministers,



HRD and IT Minister Nara Lokesh participating in the 'India Today Conclave South' in Kochi on Wednesday

and officials were working towards creating employment opportunities.

Responding to questions from senior journalist and

'India Today' Consulting Editor Rajdeep Sardesai, Lokesh said Andhra Pradesh was attracting investments across sectors and develop-

ing specialised clusters and ecosystems. He said nearly 25 per cent of the investments that came to India during the past year were in Andhra

We're in a hurry as we have only five years. And Gen Z is also in a hurry," HRD and IT Minister Nara Lokesh underlining his government's focus on delivering speedy governance in five years. He outlined AP government's ambitious plans to attract investments and build new economic hubs

Pradesh. Lokesh said the government was focusing on sectors ranging from energy and horticulture to quantum computing and was working with industries to equip youth with the skills required for emerging employment opportunities.

On allegations surrounding the recent DSC teacher recruitment examination, Lokesh said the examination was conducted transparently through a computer-based system and claimed that no allegation had been proved so far.

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76-yr-old gets 13-yr jail for 1988 bank robbery

KALPETTA

A 76-year-old man has been sentenced to 13 years in prison and fined Rs 16,000 for his role in the 1988 robbery at the Nallurnad Service Cooperative Bank in Wayanad. The sentence was handed down by Additional District and Sessions Court Judge L Jayavanth.

The convict, Abdul Samad, a Kollam native, was arrested by police in October 2024 and faced trial while in judicial custody. The court said he will have to undergo another 10 months in prison if he fails to pay the fine.

According to police, the robbery took place in the early hours of January 8, 1988, when a six-member gang arrived at the bank in a car, broke open the locks and entered the premises.

The gang took away a safe, nearly one kilogram of gold ornaments and Rs 5,544 in cash.

The prosecution said two people who reached the bank after hearing the noise were attacked with a crowbar. In the case,



four accused -- Subair, Suresh Babu, Alikkuttu and Naseer -- were arrested and sentenced in 1993. Another accused, OK Babu, who had remained absconding, surrendered before the court in 2017 and was later sentenced.

During the trial, the court examined around 40 witnesses. The prosecution produced 166 documents as evidence and 21 material objects seized under the mahazar before the court.

The initial investigation was carried out by the then Mananthavady police and was later taken over by the District CBCID. Public Prosecutor E R Santhosh Kumar appeared for the prosecution.



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