

WINDOWS



'Without Cong land reforms move, you'd have been on the streets'

MANGALURU: Former Mayor K. Ashraf has delivered a fiery response to Udupi MLA Yashpal Suvarna over his recent outburst against the Gandhi family, asserting that the BJP leader is standing on land granted by Congress-era land reform policies.

Reacting to Suvarna's aggressive comments, Ashraf pointed out that the land, home, and business that sustain Suvarna's family were made possible by the Land Reforms Act passed during the Gandhi-led Congress era. "Instead of making wild statements on the streets, the Udupi MLA should realize that he is an elected representative today because Congress administration empowered his family through land ownership," Ashraf stated in his press release.

31st annual Codava 'Kakkada Padnett' on August 2

MADIKERI: Marking three decades of public cultural observance, the Codava National Council (CNC) will celebrate the 31st Annual Public Kakkada Padnett on Sunday, August 2, at Capitol Village in Madikeri starting at 10:30 a.m.

The event, which honours one of the most significant folkloric and agrarian traditions of the Codava ethnic community, will feature senior journalist and former media advisor to the Deputy Chief Minister of Karnataka, Deepak Thimmaiah, as the Guest of Honour.

Organizers highlighted that Kakkada Padnett symbolizes the indigenous community's deep spiritual connection with nature, River Cauvery, ancestral sacred groves (Devakads), and traditional warrior heritage. CNC leadership has urged members of the community to attend the milestone gathering dressed in traditional Codava attire.

Dy SP, two others suspended after viral videos

MANGALURU: Three police personnel, including the Deputy Superintendent of Police (DySP) of Karkala subdivision in Udupi district, have been suspended following allegations of demanding money, after videos purportedly linked to the incident went viral on social media.

The action was taken on the basis of a preliminary inquiry conducted by the Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP), which reportedly found sufficient grounds for initiating departmental action.

Those suspended are Karkala DySP Vijay Prasad, Police Inspector Sandeep and Shivananada, a staff member attached to the DySP's office.

According to official sources, disciplinary proceedings have been initiated against the three officials, and they will remain under suspension until the departmental inquiry is completed.

The police department has launched a detailed investigation into the allegations and the contents of the viral videos. Officials said further action, including possible disciplinary measures, will depend on the findings of the final inquiry report. The alleged demand for money had attracted considerable attention after videos relating to the incident began circulating widely on social media, prompting the department to order an immediate preliminary probe.

Over Rs 200 cr saved annually by using 27,700 solar pump sets: Min

BENGALURU

THE Karnataka government has intensified its efforts to promote the use of solar energy in agriculture, with more than one lakh farmers applying for solar agricultural pump sets, officials said on Thursday.

More than 27,700 solar agricultural pump sets have already been installed and commissioned across the State, reducing the demand on the power grid by nearly 144 MW, they said.

The programme, which witnessed slow progress during its initial years, has gained remarkable momentum following the special focus, continuous monitoring and administrative interventions of Energy Minister K J George, officials said.

According to officials, with improved coordination among the Energy Department, ESCOMs, implementing agencies and vendors, key implementation bottlenecks have been resolved, resulting in a significant increase in farmer participation.

In a statement, the department said that with more than 27,700 pump sets now operational, Karnataka is rapidly progressing towards its target of 40,000 solar agricultural pump sets. Of-



ficials noted that to encourage farmers to adopt clean energy, the state government provides 50 per cent financial assistance for the installation of solar agricultural pump sets.

"This has enabled thousands of farmers to switch to solar energy at an affordable cost while reducing their dependence on conventional grid electricity," it said. According to officials, the solar pump sets installed under the PM-KUSUM B program are also transforming the lives of farmers.

Reliable daytime power has eliminated the need for farmers to visit their fields late at night to switch on ir-

rigation pumps or remain awake throughout the night to manage irrigation. This has significantly improved farmer safety, convenience and productivity.

The operational pump sets have reduced the State's grid electricity demand by approximately 144 MW. They are also expected to avoid the purchase of 240 million units of electricity every year, resulting in annual power purchase savings of about Rs 146 crore for ESCOMs, it said.

In addition, the state government is expected to save more than Rs 200 crore annually by reducing the electricity subsidy paid for agricultural pump sets, it added.

Karnataka Energy Minister George said that Karnataka's Solar Agriculture Revolution is creating a new model for sustainable farming and good governance.

"We identified and resolved implementation bottlenecks, simplified the process and gave fresh momentum to the programme. Every solar agricultural pump installed is a permanent investment in Karnataka's future," he said.

He further noted that it reduces the State's power purchase costs, lowers the electricity subsidy burden, strengthens our energy security and improves the quality of life of farmers.

Cabinet expansion likely on Monday

NEW DELHI/BENGALURU

KARNATAKA'S much-awaited cabinet expansion is now likely to take place on Monday, with the final list of ministers expected to be cleared by Sunday night or Monday morning, sources close to Karnataka Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said. According to the sources, the decision was taken at a meeting held at Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's residence in New Delhi on Thursday.

Congress MP Rahul Gandhi, Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, former chief minister Siddaramaiah, Congress general secretary K C Venugopal, AICC general secretary in charge of Karnataka Randeep Singh Surjewala and Congress Karnataka president B K Hariprasad attended the meeting.

Sources close to the chief minister told PTI that the leadership discussed the probable candidates for induction into the cabinet, taking into account caste, religion and regional representation.

"It was decided that the list of the probable candidates will be cleared on Sunday night or by Monday morning. The cabinet expansion is now likely to take place on Monday evening," the sources said.

The expansion had earlier been expected to take place on Friday, but the schedule has now been pushed back following the discussions in Delhi, they added.

HC pulls up judicial officer over alleged road rage

BENGALURU

THE Karnataka High Court has pulled up a judicial officer over her conduct in an alleged road rage incident, observing that CCTV footage prima facie showed behaviour "wholly unbecoming" of a member of the judiciary.

It also raised concerns over the alleged misuse of official position to initiate criminal proceedings against citizens. Justice M Nagaprasanna, while hearing a petition filed by the accused on Wednesday, viewed CCTV footage of the incident, which allegedly showed the principal civil judge and JMFC, Gayathri of Malur, and her husband engaging in a verbal altercation with two-wheeler riders after they overtook the couple's private car.

According to the court, the complainant, a judicial officer, was travelling in her private car along with her husband. The overtaking was done by Accused Nos.1 and 2, who were riding a two-wheeler.

"It transpires that the ego of the judicial officer or her husband is hurt. They chase the vehicle, i.e., the two-wheeler, from their car, and stop them and get down to a squabble. The squabble is captured on the CCTV. This court has viewed the

Says conduct 'wholly unbecoming'



footage of the CCTV, which involves the judicial officer with her husband indulging in quarrel," Justice Nagaprasanna said.

The State Public Prosecutor (SPP) submitted that only the two accused persons were travelling on the two-wheeler. However, at the instance of the judicial officer, a 70-year-old man, the third accused, was also taken into custody.

"It is surprising as to how, in the offences so laid against these petitioners, they were taken into custody merely because the complainant was a judicial officer. It would not mean that the citizens are treated in the manner at the dictate of the said judicial officer," the order said.

The court stated that a perusal of the video, or the video that is now circulated on

social media, would clearly indicate that the judicial officer has behaved in a manner totally "unbecoming" of the office that she holds.

Justice Nagaprasanna observed that the office of a judge or judicial officer is not one that can be donned within the precincts of the courtroom and discarded at its threshold. Judicial office, it said, is a continuing public trust, and a judicial officer's conduct outside the courtroom can either erode or sustain public confidence in the institution.

The court passed an interim order staying further proceedings and investigation against the petitioners and directed the Registry to place the order before the Chief Justice for further action against the judicial officer.

FALSE MLC NOMINATION PROMISE

Teacher, associates booked for duping woman of Rs 1.05 cr

BENGALURU

AN FIR has been registered against a school teacher, who claimed to be a journalist, and his two associates for allegedly cheating a woman of Rs 1.05 crore on the pretext of securing her nomination for the post of MLC, police said on Thursday.

The 54-year-old victim, who hails from Mangaluru, has been associated with a charitable trust for the past 25 years and involved in social service activities, they said. The alleged cheating took place between 2024 and 2025, police said, adding that notices would be issued to the accused for questioning as part of the probe.

According to the FIR registered at Halasuru Gate police station on July 27, the prime accused, Sirigode Yerriswamy, introduced himself as part of the Congress party's media team when she first met him in 2024 at Vidhana Soudha, and claimed to have close links with senior party leaders.

He allegedly convinced her that, given the reputation she had earned through her social work, she could obtain a good political position. He claimed he would speak to AICC leaders in Delhi and secure her nomination for the post of MLC, and showed her photographs



of himself with Congress leaders. He told her she would have to pay Rs 5 crore for this, the complainant alleged.

When she said she did not have such a large amount, he told her Rs 1.25 crore would suffice, the FIR stated. She subsequently arranged Rs 1 crore by borrowing from close associates and handed it over on August 10, 2024, to his two associates — Siddaraju and Basavaraju — as instructed by Yerriswamy, the complainant claimed. She later handed over Rs 5 lakh to a woman in Malleshwaram on January 10, 2025, again on Yerriswamy's instructions, the FIR stated.

On the pretext that she had been called for an interview by AICC leaders in New Delhi, the accused allegedly took her there

and had her stay at a hotel, where he misbehaved with her and sexually harassed her, she alleged. When she later asked him to return her money, he threatened to kill her if she persisted, the FIR said.

Based on her complaint, a case has been registered against the three accused under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, police said, adding that she later discovered he was, in fact, a government school teacher.

The police station concerned had earlier registered only a Non-Cognisable Report based on her complaint, following which she approached the court, which directed the police to register an FIR, investigate the allegations and submit a report by August 25. Further investigation is underway.

Hotels warn of Swiggy boycott from Aug 15 over payment dispute

BENGALURU

BANGALORE Hotels Association (BHA) has warned that hotels affiliated to it and other hospitality bodies in the city would suspend business with online food delivery platform Swiggy from August 15 if the company failed to resolve long-standing issues relating to payment transparency, unauthorised deductions and advertising charges.

The association said it had given Swiggy a final opportunity to rectify the issues through discussions, warning that all affiliated bodies would discontinue business with the platform from Independence Day if corrective measures were not taken.

"Failing this, all our associations in Bengaluru have unanimously decided to suspend all business with Swiggy from August 15," the association said in a press release on Wednesday.

The association alleged that Swiggy was deducting advertisement and promotional charges without obtaining written or digital consent from hotel owners before launching CPC, CPA or promoted advertisements. It also sought a one-click opt-out mechanism for advertisements without any subsequent charges. It further demanded greater transparency in payment statements, saying all charges, including commission, GST, CPC advertisements, offers and promotional charges, should be



disclosed separately.

The association also objected to service charges being levied on the GST amount collected from customers for remittance to the government. According to the association, unnecessary deductions and discrepancies in the accounting system had resulted in hotel owners receiving less than 50 per cent of the billed order value, causing severe financial hardship.

Speaking to PTI, BHA honorary president P C Rao said the core issue was the platform's payout mechanism. "The main issue is that the payment and payout system is not functioning properly. There are too many deductions," he said.

He clarified that the association was not opposed to Swiggy's service charge but objected to additional deductions. "We have no objection to the service charge. Whatever the service charge is, they can take it. But apart from that, they impose additional service charges, payout charges, advertisement

charges, map-up charges, and various other charges without our permission, and deduct them," he said.

He alleged that in some cases, restaurants received only Rs 40,000-Rs 50,000 against payouts of Rs one lakh and said the association had repeatedly raised the issue with the company.

"If they rectify the issues within the next 15 days and conduct business properly going forward, we will continue to work with them. Otherwise, we don't have any other option; we'll come out," Rao said.

He clarified that the association had not yet suspended services and would wait until August 15 before taking a final call. He added that any decision to discontinue Swiggy services would be taken while ensuring customers were not inconvenienced, and that the association would make alternative arrangements wherever possible. There was no immediate reaction from Swiggy on the matter.

Supreme Court removes 'green' hurdle for Rs 614-cr Vijayapura Airport

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

INFRASTRUCTURE Development Minister M.B. Patil said the Supreme Court, in its final judgment delivered on Wednesday, has removed the environmental clearance hurdle that had delayed the commissioning of the Vijayapura Airport, which is otherwise ready for operations. He said that, subject to the remaining statutory approvals being completed as expected, the airport could be inaugurated and become operational within the next three months.

Speaking on the development, the Minister welcomed the judgment delivered by the three-member Bench

comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant, Justice Joymalya Bagchi and Justice Vipul M. Pancholi, describing it as a significant and welcome decision.

Patil also expressed his gratitude to Solicitor General of India Tushar Mehta, Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal, Senior Advocate Devadatt Kamat, Advocate General Shashikiran Shetty, and the State Government's counsel Nishanth Patil for effectively placing before the Supreme Court the larger public interest involved in the Vijayapura Airport project.

The Minister recalled that obtaining prior environmental clearance is mandatory before undertaking projects, whether public or private,

Likely to be functional from Oct



that involve public interest. However, in its order dated May 16, 2025, the Supreme Court had held that projects commenced without such prior approval were liable to be cancelled. This had created serious uncertainty for the Vijayapura Airport project as well. Patil said he had then approached Tushar Mehta, Kapil Sibal, Devadatt Kamat and Nishanth Patil, requesting them to help resolve the issue.

"With today's final verdict, I feel greatly relieved," he said.

Patil said the Supreme Court has now directed the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to dispose of all pending applications seeking environmen-

tal clearance. This has cleared the way for the Vijayapura Airport project to secure the necessary approval.

Once the clearance is granted, officials of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) will visit Vijayapura to inspect the completed infrastructure before granting the required operational clearances.

The Minister explained that when the matter came up for hearing on April 1 this year, the Supreme Court had granted interim relief to projects awaiting environmental clearance, directed a detailed examination of the issue and reserved its final judgment. In Wednesday's verdict, the Court has now made that relief permanent. Meanwhile,

the State Government has already submitted its application seeking environmental clearance for the Vijayapura Airport project, he added.

Patil said that after environmental clearance is obtained, the DGCA will inspect the completed works at the Vijayapura Airport. Once this statutory process is completed, the airport will be ready to commence operations.

The Minister noted that more than Rs 614 crore has been invested in the construction of the Vijayapura Airport. Once operational, it is expected to significantly improve connectivity and provide a major boost to the Kittur Karnataka region as well as neighbouring areas.