WINDOWS



Online fraud of over Rs 22 cr from bank a/cs exposed

CHENNAI: An online fraud involving the siphoning of Rs 22.10 crore from bank accounts in the state came to light, police said on Tuesday. Currently, efforts are underway to track the transactions and also check the involvement of local bank handlers or compromised credentials used to execute the transfers, police said.

The police suspect the involvement of an international cybercrime syndicate from Nigeria. BJP leader Vinoj P Selvam claimed that this incident raised yet another set of serious questions about the Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay-led TVK government's administrative oversight, accountability and preparedness.

"These are funds meant for rural development, essential services and public welfare. Money entrusted to the government for the benefit of ordinary citizens. How did cybercriminals allegedly penetrate government payment systems? How were transactions worth crores executed? Where were the security checks, financial controls and monitoring mechanisms?" Selvam said on X today.

Taking a dig at the ruling TVK, he said, "Every political party in the world has an IT wing. But Tamil Nadu seems to have witnessed something extraordinary. For the first time, an actor's fan club and its social media army have gone from trending hashtags to running a state government! Unfortunately, managing hashtags and managing a state are two very different things." He said Tamil Nadu needed transparent answers, stronger institutions and a government that can demonstrate its ability to safeguard public funds.

Three die while cleaning wastewater treatment tank

KRISHNAGIRI : Three contract workers suffocated to death while cleaning a wastewater treatment tank at the Tata Electronics Private Limited (TEPL) facility in Hosur in this district, police said on Tuesday.

The deceased -- Kaveri (30) of Hosur, alongside B Akmal (28) and M Sarathi Kumar (28), both hailing from Dharmapuri district -- were exposed to lethal poisonous fumes and severe oxygen depletion while desilting an Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) storage tank on Monday evening.

According to police, Akmal initially peered into the tank to inspect it, only to collapse immediately from gas exposure.

Attempting a rescue, Kaveri directed Sarathi Kumar to check on their fallen colleague, but he fainted upon entry. Kaveri then rushed inside the enclosure himself, succumbing to the toxic atmosphere moments later.

A fourth crew member who observed the tragedy unfold alerted nearby staff.

Rescuers pulled all three individuals from the tank and rushed them to a private hospital in Hosur, where doctors declared them dead on arrival.

The remains were subsequently transferred to the Government Medical College Hospital in Krishnagiri for post-mortem examinations.

Visiting the site to inspect safety protocols, Krishnagiri district collector C Dinesh Kumar confirmed that asphyxiation during sludge removal was the primary cause of death.

He announced that a comprehensive inquiry has been launched into the breach of safety regulations at the plant, which manufactures and assembles components for Apple iPhones.

Tasmac bottle buyback success, says Minister Vignesh

Chennai

PROHIBITION Minister K Vignesh on Tuesday said 53 to 54 per cent of commercial glass bottles were successfully returned since the TASMAC bottle buyback scheme came into effect on November 1.

In a strong reorientation of the state's excise policy, Vignesh explicitly said that high sales volumes from the state-run Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation (Tasmac) should not be portrayed or celebrated as an achievement. The increase in liquor sales is a matter of shame, he emphasised.

"High sales figures are not an accolade for the government," Minister Vignesh asserted, underlining a shift toward a long-term public health strategy aimed at progressively reducing alcohol consumption across the state.

Speaking to reporters here, the minister underscored that rising liquor consumption is a matter of profound social concern and shame rather than a metric of success. As part of the government's harm-reduction roadmap, Minister Vignesh announced an ambitious healthcare initiative to set up dedicated de-addiction and rehabilitation centres across all 234 assembly constituencies in Tamil Nadu. The project aims to provide localised, accessible medical and psychological support for individuals battling alcohol dependency.

Looking ahead, the minister outlined an upcoming regulatory strategy specifically targeted at tapering liquor sales during major festival periods, which traditionally witness massive revenue spikes. He added that the state will simultaneously undertake extensive public awareness campaigns focusing on the severe physical, psychological, and socioeconomic harms of long-term alcohol consumption.

Addressing recent technical disruptions linked to the digital tracking infrastructure, the minister stated that the underlying QR code verification systems were fully functional prior to the November 1 rollout. He promised a rigorous, unbiased investigation into the current glitches to streamline the return mechanism swiftly.



Vijay to hold crucial meet of TVK legislators today

Chennai

CHIEF Minister and TVK founder C Joseph Vijay summoned his party legislators to Chennai for an emergency consultative meeting, party sources said on Tuesday. The high-level meeting scheduled to take place at the TVK party headquarters in Panaiyur, here on Nov 11, will be chaired by CM Vijay. Party general secretary and Minister N Anand and other senior leaders would participate in the meeting that has been called amidst growing political pressure and scrutiny over the conduct of certain legislators, which the leadership fears could undermine the public standing of the six-month-old government. According to sources, the TVK leadership is expected to strictly instruct the party functionaries and MLAs regarding maintaining discipline and public behaviour to ensure their conduct remained dignified and that they remain responsive to public grievances without abusing their authority.

The meeting will address allegations against TVK MLA and Deputy Speaker M Ravisankar, who is drawing flak from political parties following a controversy involving a local resident (Karthik Kumar) who questioned him about basic civic issues, and also a separate unverified complaint regarding messages sent to a government official by the party MLA.



The party is currently conducting an internal inquiry into the matter. Kallakurichi MLA C Arul Vignesh denied allegations of sending inappropriate messages to Kallakurichi collector on Whatsapp, saying "I have not done any such thing. They are rumours. It is not true."

DMK president M K Stalin criticised the ruling TVK, saying Tamil Nadu's "law and order is in ICU" and the "administration is in coma." "There have been 17 murders on a single day. And a TVK MLA is accused of sending obscene text messages to a female district collector. Criminals have no fear under the current government and police have no security either. People's representatives from TVK have no control. In total, the 'part-time' Chief Minister has no responsibility at all," Stalin said on X. Leader of the Opposition DMK Udhayanidhi Stalin sought to know when Chief Minister Vijay will rein in the erring party MLAs. "The Chief Minister, who is in 'sleep mode' without opening his mouth or taking responsibility for any of this, should wake up immediately and take appropriate action," Udhayanidhi Stalin said in a statement.

AIADMK treasurer Dindigul Srinivasan slammed MLA Arul Vignesh for allegedly sending inappropriate messages to a collector, and claimed that the legislator "went to the collector's house in an inebriated condition and harassed her. This is shocking." "The collector who ought to protect the people seems to have no security for her from the ruling party MLA. What a shame," he said.

AMMK general secretary T T V Dhinakaran said in a statement that the TVK leadership appeared to have turned a blind eye to its functionaries engaging in sexual harassment of school girls, and kidnapping their own party members in a car and gang-raping them. "Bribing contractors, assaulting a person who came to petition the MLA about a public problem, sexual harassment of the district collector are among the heinous acts committed by the TVK MLAs who have been elected to serve the people. I request Chief Minister Vijay to conduct a detailed investigation into the complaint against the MLA for sending obscene text messages to a collector and going to her house and behaving in a disgusting manner, and ensure that he gets the maximum punishment if proved guilty," Dhinakaran said.

AIADMK defection row

Speaker begins hearings against 4 ex-MLAs

Chennai

TAMIL Nadu Assembly Speaker J.C.D. Prabhakar will begin hearings on Tuesday into the disqualification petitions against four former AIADMK legislators who resigned from the Assembly and subsequently joined another political party, following a directive from the Madras High Court.

The proceedings, scheduled from November 10 to 12, will examine complaints filed by AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami against former legislators Esakki Subbiah, Maragatham Kumaravel, Jayakumar and Sathyabama.

The controversy originated in the political turmoil that followed the Assembly elections, when the AIADMK split into rival factions led by Palaniswami and former Minister S.P. Velumani. Both leaders submitted separate representations to the Speaker, seeking recognition of their respective groups as the legitimate AIADMK legislative party.

The confrontation intensified during the confidence vote faced by the Vijay-led Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) government. Twenty-five AIADMK legislators belonging to the Velumani faction voted in favour of the government, prompting the Palaniswami camp to demand their disqualification.



Subsequently, four legislators who supported the government resigned their Assembly memberships and joined another party.

The Palaniswami faction urged the Speaker not to accept their resignations and demanded action under the anti-defection provisions. However, a political reconciliation between Palaniswami and Velumani subsequently brought the rival AIADMK factions together. Following the agreement, the party requested the withdrawal of disqualification proceedings against 21 legislators, while maintaining its complaint against the four who had resigned.

The proceedings against the 21 members were subsequently dropped. Dissatisfied with the delay in deciding the remaining petitions, Palaniswami approached the Madras High Court seeking directions for an expeditious decision. The High Court directed the Speaker to examine the disqualification complaints and take an appropriate decision within two months.

Acting on the court's directive, the Speaker has issued notices to the four former legislators and scheduled hearings from Tuesday to Thursday. Lawyers representing both the former legislators and Palaniswami are expected to present their arguments.

The final hearing has been scheduled for November 17, following which the Speaker is expected to announce his decision after examining the submissions.

Significantly, Maragatham Kumaravel and Sathyabama subsequently won byelections and are currently serving as TVK legislators.

Earlier, former AIADMK Ministers M.R. Vijayabhaskar and C. Vijayabhaskar had also resigned their Assembly memberships and joined another political party, reflecting the continuing realignments within Tamil Nadu politics.

Palaniswami questions CM's 'silence' on Mekedatu dam project

Chennai

AIADMK chief Edappadi K Palaniswami on Tuesday condemned Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay's "silence" over recent statements from Karnataka on the controversial Mekedatu dam project. Accusing the state government of "failing" to protect the interests of Tamil Nadu delta farmers and compromising on state water rights, Palaniswami lashed out at Karnataka Chief Minister D K Shivakumar for claiming that no external permissions are necessary to construct a reservoir across the Cauvery River at Mekedatu.

In a statement here, the AIADMK General Secretary charged the Karnataka government with "intentionally spreading false information" to deceive the public, asserting that the Supreme Court of India has not granted unmitigated clearance for the project.

Highlighting the previous AIADMK regime's track record, Palaniswami detailed a series of official representations he had sent to Prime Minister Narendra Modi between 2017 and 2018 and emphasised that the AIADMK had consistently urged the central government to completely deny statutory and administrative clearances for any reservoir construction across the Cauvery River. He described the ruling TVK as a "passive bystander" and accused Chief Minister Vijay of maintaining a stoic "silence" instead of delivering a fitting response to Karnataka's unilateral stance.



The AIADMK leader warned that the state government's inaction risked turning the fertile Cauvery delta region into a desert, and sought immediate and robust intervention to protect Tamil Nadu's crucial share of Cauvery waters.

Spl court rejects bail plea of ex-DMK Minister Anbil Mahesh

Chennai

A special court in Chennai on Tuesday dismissed the bail petition of former Tamil Nadu School Education Minister Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi in an alleged corruption case involving the collection of money from private schools in exchange for approvals and regulatory permits during the previous DMK government.

Special Judge L.S. Sathyamoorthy rejected the petition after accepting the prosecution's contention that the investigation was still at a preliminary stage and further questioning of the accused was necessary.

Mahesh, who has been lodged in Puzhal Central Prison for the past 16 days,



was arrested by the Chennai Central Crime Branch following allegations of large-scale irregularities in granting recognition and other permissions to private educational institutions. The investigation initially focused on private schools association administrator P.D. Arakumar and others before the former minister was subsequently named as an accused.

Anticipating arrest, Mahesh approached the Madras High Court seeking anticipatory bail. However, Justice V. Lakshminarayanan declined to grant relief on October 26, following which police arrested him and secured his judicial remand.

Investigators subsequently obtained three days of police custody to question the former minister regarding the alleged financial transactions. During the bail hearing, senior advocate Abudu Kumar Rajarathnam, representing Mahesh, argued that investigators had failed to produce direct evidence linking his client to the alleged corruption.

He questioned the changing estimates of the alleged collections, claiming that the amount initially cited as Rs 100 crore had subsequently increased to Rs 400 crore, Rs 600 crore and eventually Rs 800 crore. The defence maintained that Mahesh's mobile phone and electronic devices had already been seized, eliminating any possibility of evidence tampering. It also assured the court that he would cooperate with investigators. Opposing bail, government counsel R. John Sathyan alleged that Mahesh maintained close connections with co-accused Muthukumar and Arakumar.

The prosecution claimed that money collected by Muthukumar had been transported to Mahesh's residence by an individual identified as Saravanan, and that investigators possessed video evidence supporting the allegation.

It further submitted that Saravanan remained absconding and additional interrogation was required.

BOOK PROCUREMENT SCAM

DVAC teams hold enquiry at Anna, Periyar libraries

The library book procurement process was found heavily manipulated during the previous DMK regime to benefit unknown entities, bypassing established and reputed publishers

Chennai

DVAC officials on Tuesday launched a detailed inquiry into the alleged scam of procuring books for Tamil Nadu government libraries and inspected the official records at the Anna Centenary Library here and Periyar Arivulagam in Coimbatore. The action follows a complaint filed by the School Education Department with the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC).

Initial verification by the state government indicated that multiple suspicious publishing firms were operating out of a single address. On Monday, School Education Minister A Rajmohan claimed that the library book procurement process was heavily manipulated during the previous DMK regime to benefit unknown entities, bypassing established and reputed publishers. He alleged that a syndicate, in collusion with officials and political figures, systematically procured these low-quality "trash" books to siphon funds and noted that established, reputable publishers were ignored in favour of unknown entities like "Agal Vilakku Pathippagam."

The publisher came under scrutiny last week after writer Perumal Murugan flagged irregularities regarding nearly 1,800 of its books stocked at the newly inaugurated Rs 300 crore Periyar Arivulagam library in Coimbatore. On Saturday, the Agal Vilakku Pathippagam books were removed from the library shelves.

The library book procurement "scam" has triggered a fierce political row, with the ruling TVK blaming the previous DMK government for approving the bulk purchase orders, while the opposition DMK has demanded an impartial probe to pinpoint which specific officials greenlit the fraudulent procurement.

All identified AI-generated books were being removed from libraries across the state, the minister told reporters here. The authorities have sealed approximately 3,000 books in Coimbatore and identified 523 problematic books in the historic Connemara Public Library here. Rajmohan highlighted specific examples of suspicious books, noting generic author bios, missing bibliographic information, and clear evidence of machine-made text and errors. According to sources, the DVAC would fix responsibility on the persons involved in the scam, following the detailed enquiry. The DVAC team under Deputy Superintendent of Police Kandasamy inspected the documents pertaining to the procurement of books during the previous DMK regime at the Anna Centenary Library at Kotturpuram here. A similar examination of official records was carried out by a separate team at the Periyar Arivulagam.

