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THE NEWS THAT MATTERS

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Delhi special court orders PMLA charges against Lalu Yadav, Rabri, Tejashwi in IRCTC case



Lalu Prasad Yadav with his wife Rabri Devi and their son Tejashwi Yadav FILE PHOTO

New Delhi

A Delhi special court has ordered money-laundering charges against Lalu Prasad Yadav, his wife Rabri Devi and their son Tejashwi Yadav in the IRCTC hotels case. The court said there is "strong suspicion" that a railway contract was traded for a valuable plot in Patna and that the family still benefits from it.

The special judge, Vishal Gogne of the Rouse Avenue Courts, ordered that formal charges under Sections 3 and 4 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) be brought against the nine persons accused. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) discharged seven of the others named, and it will read the formal charges on October 3.

The accusations date back to when Lalu Yadav was Union Railway Minister from 2004 to 2009. It is claimed that the officials who reported to him altered the tender for two of the old Bengal Nagpur Railway hotels, one in Ranchi and the other in Puri, in such a way that the leases were awarded to Sujata Hotel Pvt. Ltd., a company owned by brothers Vinay and Vijay Kochhar. During that same period, the Kochhars transferred two to three point five acres of commercial land near Saguna More in Patna at a heavy discount to Delight Marketing Company Pvt. Ltd., a company controlled by Prem Chand Gupta, a close associate of Lalu, and Gupta's wife, Sarla. Later on, the company sold its shares for very little to Rabri Devi and Tejashwi Yadav. Delight Marketing then became Lara Projects LLP. The court said the family still holds what it called "tainted land" on a valuable commercial street in Patna.

The judge said the land resulted from criminal conduct, stating that the abuse of office produced those proceeds for Rabri Devi and Tejashwi Yadav. He dismissed the defence's claim that the inquiry was a political vendetta, saying the nature, timing, and course of the investigation did not justify such a statement. He noted that some deals are made openly. Citing Tagore, he cautions that power that removes all checks from its way will eventually bring destruction upon itself.

The three Yadavs involved in the trial are Prem Chand Gupta, Sarla Gupta, and the Kochhar brothers; the companies are Sujata Hotels and Lara Projects LLP. Those who were discharged include Rahul Yadav, Lalu's son-in-law; Gaurav Gupta; Nath Mal Kakrania; Vijay Tripathi; Deoki Nandan Tulshyan; Rajiv Relan; and Abhishek Finance Pvt. Ltd. The ED had previously seized properties worth ₹44.75 crore, and the Adjudicating Authority has confirmed this attachment. That amount, together with the Patna plot at the heart of the matter, now constitutes the financial basis of the prosecution.

The money-laundering case is based on a CBI FIR dated 2017–18. In October last year, the same court charged Lalu Yadav and 11 other people with corruption, conspiracy and cheating in the earlier case. The two trials will now proceed simultaneously: one on how the hotels were handed out and the other on how the land was transferred into the family's possession.

The accused deny all the charges and regard the investigation as a political tool. The court has replied that the material available at this stage is sufficient to proceed with the trial. The following hearing will determine whether the suspicion becomes proven.

₹15,000 crore recovery doesn't end Mallya PMLA case: ED to Bombay HC

New Delhi/Mumbai



Vijay Mallya

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) told the Bombay High Court that recovering about ₹15,000 crore from assets linked to Vijay Mallya does not end the money-laundering case against him. The agency explained in an affidavit that while bank recoveries may affect the amount of civil claims, they do not determine whether scheduled offences or money laundering under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) have occurred.

This response followed the court's request for the ED and the State Bank of India-led consortium to clarify if the attached properties had cleared Mallya's debts. The ED said that properties worth about ₹14,131.60 crore were returned to the consortium by order of a special PMLA court in Mumbai. The agency explained that this process is a legal requirement under Section 8(8) of the PMLA to return property to those with a legitimate claim. It does not confirm or deny whether a scheduled offence or money laundering took place.

The affidavit stated, "The subsequent restoration or recovery of assets, therefore, cannot be construed as extinguishing or rendering infructuous the pending proceedings under PMLA." The agency explained that criminal prosecution after a PMLA investigation does not end just because banks later recover large sums from returned assets. The ED rejected the idea that the commercial dispute is finished and that the criminal case should end as well. It said that PMLA proceedings are separate from recovery suits and tribunal decisions.

The recovered amount may help show what banks are still owed, but it does not address whether the loan funds were obtained, used, or diverted in a way that breaks the law. Mallya, who left India in March 2016 after Kingfisher Airlines collapsed under heavy debt, has argued that lenders have already been fully repaid. His lawyer told the High Court last month that a consortium recovered about ₹15,000 crore, compared to the original Debt Recovery Tribunal claim of about ₹crore, including interest. He asked to close a 2020 petition that challenged a December 2019 special-court order allowing banks to use confiscated assets for recovery.

Justice Milind N Jadhav noted that the long-running commercial dispute should end so the parties can "move on." However, he made it clear that closing the civil case would not affect the criminal case, which still needs to be resolved. The court asked the ED and SBI for responses before deciding next steps.

The ED's latest filing maintains this distinction. It also noted that Mallya remains absent from India. The agency said his failure to appear for trial is part of the case's background. Mallya was declared a fugitive economic offender in 2019, and extradition efforts from the United Kingdom have not brought him back. The ED continues to argue that, as chairman of Kingfisher Airlines, Mallya played a key role in the company's decisions and in getting loans from several banks.

The ED said its investigation found serious problems in how the loans were approved and used, including funds being diverted from their intended purpose. The money-laundering case is based on these alleged offences, not on whether banks later recovered money from attached properties.

The dispute has two separate parts that public discussions often mix up. The civil part deals with how much the airline and its guarantors owed, the interest, and what was recovered from assets like shares and real estate. The criminal part is about whether the loans and how the money was moved amount to fraud and money laundering.

The ED believes that the civil side of the case can be settled, adjusted, or even over-recovered without affecting the criminal side. For public-sector banks, recovering assets has been rare in a major default. For the ED, returning money does not clear someone of criminal charges.

The High Court must now decide what remains of Mallya's 2020 petition after the banks and the ED have shared their figures and legal arguments. The ED says the criminal case will continue, whether or not the civil accounts are considered settled. Recovering ₹15,000 crore answers the debt issue, but it does not resolve the money-laundering charge.

Congress leader arrested for burning Dhirendra Shastri's poster in West Bengal



Congress activists stage a protest outside Bhowanipur Police Station against Bageshwar Dham chief Dhirendra Krishna Shastri for his alleged remarks against the sentiment of Bengal for the upcoming Durga Puja festival in Kolkata, West Bengal on Tuesday PTI

Kolkata

A day after Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari directed the Kolkata Police Commissioner to arrest people who had burnt the posters of Godman Dhirendra Shastri, the police picked up Atanu Das, a Congress leader who is also the general secretary of the tricolour party of Kolkata district. Das was arrested at night between Thursday and Friday, police sources said.

He was booked for inciting hatred between different religious groups and hurting religious sentiments.

There was statewide criticism after Shastri also called Bageshwar Baba, who had criticised those people who consumed non-vegetarian food during the Durga Pujas, saying, "One thing I do not like about West Bengal .... Here people eat non-veg during Durga Pujas... those who eat non-vegetarian food during the Durga Pujas are Pakhandis (hypocrites) and should be boycotted."

The Congress promptly took up the issue and staged protests throughout the State and even lodged police complaints for allegedly hurting the sentiments of the people. Shastri's posters were also burnt in South Kolkata.

The Chief Minister, in his part, condemned the burning of his poster and directed the Kolkata Police Commissioner during a speech from the Assembly House to arrest the alleged mischief-mongers. "I direct the CP to arrest those who did this," he said.

Meanwhile, the Congress came down heavily on the Government for perpetrating "Tughlaqi raj in Bengal." State Congress president Subhankar Sarkar said, "Instead of taking action against the Baba who hurt Bengali sentiments and culture, he is arresting the protesters... The people are watching and will definitely respond."

Punjab Police foil targeted killing plot backed by foreign handler



Chandigarh

Two alleged operatives of a foreign-based handler, who had recently returned from Dubai to Punjab to execute a targeted killing, have been arrested by the Punjab Police's Counter Intelligence Wing in Pathankot, officials said on Friday.

Two sophisticated .30 bore pistols and 10 live cartridges from their possession, they said.

The arrested accused have been identified as Ravinder Singh alias Dhillon, a resident of Dhilwan in Batala, and Jashanpreet Singh, a resident of village Bal in Gurdaspur, they said.

Police also impounded the motorcycle on which the duo were travelling. The vehicle did not have a registration number, officials said.

Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav said preliminary investigation has revealed that the accused were working at the behest of a foreign-based handler and had recently arrived from Dubai to execute the assigned task.

Further investigation is underway to uncover the backward and forward linkages of the network and identify other operatives connected with the foreign-based handlers, the DGP said, according to a statement.

Additional Inspector General, CI wing Pathankot, Sukhminder Singh Mann said the agency had received specific information that two motorcycle-borne persons were in possession of weapons and were travelling from Gurdaspur towards Batala to execute a targeted killing.

Acting swiftly on the input, CI wing Pathankot teams strategically cordoned off the area and arrested the two suspects from the outskirts of Gurdaspur while they were travelling on their motorcycle, he said.

During a search, two .30 bore pistols along with 10 live cartridges were recovered from their possession, Mann said.

A case has been registered under the provisions of the Arms Act and relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) at the Police Station, State Special Operation Cell (SSOC), Amritsar.

Suvendu may attend BRICS dinner, meet Ambani



Kolkata

West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari is likely to travel to Delhi on Saturday to join a dinner hosted on the occasion of the Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa Summit (BRICS) at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

The Chief Minister, who disclosed the programme, said that he had received the invitation to attend the BRICS dinner at the President's House and was most likely joining it.

At the dinner, the Bengal Chief Minister was likely to share the table not only with foreign dignitaries like Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping, apart from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, but he was also likely to meet the Chief Ministers of other States. The 18th BRICS summit is being held in New Delhi on Saturday and Sunday.

Apart from this, the Chief Minister is also likely to meet industrialist Mukesh Ambani in Mumbai. The Ambanis have a considerable stake in Bengal, and the Chief Minister's Mumbai visit would revolve around bringing more investment sources, quoting the Nabanna (State secretariat) said. The meeting is scheduled to take place sometime next week. During his meeting with Ambani, the Chief Minister is likely to seek his group's bigger participation in Bengal. The Chief Minister said that he had also been invited by Anant Ambani, the son of Reliance Chairman, requesting him to join the Ganesh Puja celebrations.

Nabanna sources also said that the Chief Minister is also likely to attend the groundbreaking ceremony of a 2,000-bed hospital constructed by the Adani Group at New Town in Kolkata. The event was likely to take place on September 24. While one part of the proposed hospital would work for the benefit of the weaker section of the society, the other part will operate on a commercial basis.

Ever since he came to power, the Chief Minister had been running from pillar to post, inviting investment in Bengal because "Bengal has everything that is required for a flourishing industrial climate... More investments would rejuvenate the economy of Bengal", which has been in the scheme of things of the Centre's "look east" policy.

I was targeted: Sheikh Hasina's daughter breaks silence on WHO row

New Delhi:

Nearly a year after being sidelined, former WHO South-East Asia Regional Director Saima Wazed, daughter of former Bangladesh prime minister Sheikh Hasina, has broken her silence. She says the World Health Organisation closed its investigation into allegations concerning her travel to China in August 2026 and found them "unsubstantiated". She was informed of the finding in early August, she says, and the reports were sent to WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. She has received no further communication since.

Wazed had taken charge in February 2024 for a five-year term, becoming the first person from Bangladesh and the second woman to hold the post. She was later placed on leave amid allegations of fraud, questions over academic credentials, and land dealings. In December 2025, her leave was converted from paid to unpaid — a decision she calls retaliatory and linked to her formal complaint over the leak of confidential documents from the Director-General's office.

Her appointment had drawn scrutiny because of her family background. Hasina was in office when Wazed was nominated. Wazed rejects the suggestion that her family ties should have any bearing on her professional appointment, saying WHO's vetting procedures were followed.

The controversy unfolded after Hasina's removal from power in 2024. Wazed says the investigation was initiated at the request of Bangladesh's interim government. WHO has not publicly confirmed her account that all investigations were closed with no findings against her.



Former WHO South-East Asia Regional Director Saima Wazed

Excerpts from the interview:

What specific evidence does the WHO have concerning the allegations related to fraud, academic credentials, and land dealings involving you? What is your response to these allegations?

Saima Wazed: WHO launched an investigation at the behest of the interim regime in Bangladesh in September 2025. I was placed on leave with pay from September, which was to continue until January. In December, the leave was converted to leave without pay. This was done without any substantial allegation or evidence that necessitated such a change, without just cause, and in violation of existing WHO rules and procedures.

The decision to place me on leave without pay was retaliatory in nature. Ten days before the change in my leave status, I had submitted an official request seeking an investigation into the leak of a confidential letter and other information from the Office of the Director-General. This occurred while the investigation was ongoing and while I was fully participating in it during my leave with pay, which I had been informed would continue until January 2026.

: Why were you placed on unpaid leave for nearly a year? Was the WHO considering formal disciplinary action or your removal from the position before you submitted your resignation?

Saima Wazed: All investigations were closed in August 2026. Allegations of fraud regarding travel to China were found to be unsubstantiated, and I was duly informed of this in early August 2026. The reports were sent to Dr Tedros for his final decision on the matter. No further information has been forthcoming from WHO since.

Does your resignation raise broader concerns within the WHO about the vetting, appointment, and accountability mechanisms for senior officials, particularly in cases involving individuals with close political or family ties to senior political figures, including former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina?

Saima Wazed: WHO has a sufficient vetting process for the nomination and accountability of candidates put forward by member states. All such procedures were followed in my case. Familial relationships are not a fair or valid category for questioning a nomination. Most nominees for such positions are political in nature; many candidates are former politicians or are politically affiliated with the regime in power at the time of nomination.

To deny a candidate the right to be selected on the grounds of family background could be interpreted as a violation of an individual's professional human rights and freedom to choose their professional path. It would be equivalent to saying that the son or daughter of a farmer cannot one day become a surgeon or head a department at a medical institute.

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EDITORIAL

Leaders act responsibly to uphold honour of nation

Since independence, leaders in the highest government positions have also served as opposition leaders, each with their own political ideologies. Despite opposing government policies, they never undermined the nation or its achievements. They stood by the government on matters of unity and integrity, displaying patriotism beyond political differences. However, a new trend has emerged—if one opposes the ruling party at the Centre or in states, they resort to baseless allegations, discrediting their own country while praising others. This pattern was evident once again on Monday when Leader of Opposition (LoP) Rahul Gandhi made sweeping and objectionable remarks, which his party supporters and spokespersons defended without logic. Also Read - Rahul Gandhi's tribute to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj on his birth anniversary stokes BJP's ire Rahul Gandhi recently posted a 9.15-minute video titled “Industrial Vision for India” on social media, showcasing a banned Chinese-made DJI drone. He emphasised the evolving role of drone technology in warfare, citing Ukraine as an example, and criticised the BJP government for failing to harness its potential. However, he overlooked how drone technology has been instrumental in India. In Andhra Pradesh, drones aided disaster management during heavy floods in Vijayawada. Also Read - Rahul Gandhi to take up Save Samvidhan Yatra soon In Punjab, the BSF recently seized narcotics transported via DJI drones from Pakistan. Security forces report that 70-80% of drones used by Pakistan-based narco-terrorists are DJI-made. Similar drones were used for surveillance by militants in Manipur during ethnic clashes, prompting the Army and Assam Rifles to shoot down at least 18 last year. The very technology he seemed to promote is being misused against India. Also Read - Rahul and Tharoor meeting eases tensions in Kerala in Congress DJI is a globally recognised brand widely used for filmmaking, photography, and adven ture sports. While India’s drone industry is still developing, rather than merely highlighting China’s advancements, it would have been more constructive for Rahul to study the sector and propose ways to enhance India’s drone capabilities. He should have known that not just China there are other countries like the US and Israel which lead in drone technology, and that India is also a significant player in the global UAV market. While India has invested in indigenous drone manufacturing, further prioritisation of R&D is essential to reduce foreign dependence and achieve technological self-sufficiency. The US possesses the world’s largest military drone fleet, using drones for surveillance, strikes, and signal jamming. China leads the consumer drone market, with DJI being the world’s largest manufacturer. Presently, India has over 400 companies manufacturing drones, with about 50 specialising in components like batteries, motors, propellers, flight controllers, and GNSS. Ignoring these realities, Rahul Gandhi’s remarks undermined India’s capabilities. A leader in a high consti-







Govt Appoints Tuhin Kanta Pandey As New SEBI Chief For Three Years



Washington (AFP): British energy giant BP launched a major pivot back to its more profitable oil and gas business Wednesday, shelving its once industry-leading targets on reducing carbon emissions and slashing clean energy investment.The strategy overhaul comes after a difficult trading year for BP, which is under pressure from investors to boost its share price as countries look to slash emissions. "We are reducing and reallocating capital expenditure to our highest-returning businesses to drive growth," chief executive Murray Auchincloss said in a statement ahead of a presentation to investors in London.Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday lauded Assam for diversifying its economy with focus on technology and manufacturing while inaugurating the two-day Advantage Assam 2.0: Investment and Infrastructure Summit in Guwahati.The summit was inaugurated in the presence of chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, external affairs minister S Jaishankar, several union and state government ministers, foreign envoys and a host of industry captains.Reiterating Government of India's unwavering support and commitment for Assam's rise as an industrial powerhouse, PM Modi said, "East India and North East India are embarking on a new journey of future today and Advantage Assam is a mega initiative to intertwine the incredible potential and progress of Assam with the world.""Despite global uncertainties, experts unanimously agree on one point - India's rapid growth", said the Prime Minister adding that India is working with a long-term vision for the next 25 years. He highlighted that the world has immense trust in India's young population, which is rapidly becoming skilled and innovative. He also noted the growing confidence in India's neo-middle class, emerging from poverty with new aspirations.Underscoring the trust the world places in India's 140 crore people who support political stability and policy continuity, Modi highlighted India's governance that continues to implement reforms. He also pointed out that India is strengthening its local supply chains and entering free trade agreements with various global regions. He also mentioned the robust connectivity with East Asia and the new India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, bringing new opportunities.Highlighting the growing global trust in India, as witnessed by the gathering here, PM Modi said that Assam's contribution to India's growth is steadily increasing. "The first edition of the Advantage Assam Summit was held in 2018 and Assam's economy was valued at Rs. 2.75 lakh crore. Today, Assam has become a state with an economy of approximately Rs. 6 lakh crore," he said adding, under their government, the state's economy has doubled in just six years."The numerous investments in Assam have turned it into a state of unlimited possibilities," he said while appealing investors to come and invest in Assam."Before 2014, there were only three bridges over the Brahmaputra river, built over 70 years, but in the past 10 years, four new bridges have been constructed. Between 2009 and 2014, Assam received an average railway Budget of Rs. 2,100 crore but the BJP-government increased it to more than four times to Rs. 10,000 crore," he said.Touching upon rapid expansion of air connectivity in Assam, PM Modi said until 2014, flights operated only on seven routes, but now there are flights on nearly 30 routes. This expansion has provided a significant boost to the local economy and created employment opportunities for the youth, he added."India is undergoing significant reforms across all sectors and levels of the economy and continuous efforts have been made to enhance the ease of doing business, and a comprehensive ecosystem has been established to promote industry and an innovation culture", he said.He pointed out that Assam has set a target to achieve a $150 billion economy by 2030 and expressed confidence that the state will be able to achieve this goal, attributing it to the talented people of Assam and the commitment of their government. Emphasising that Assam is emerging as a gateway between South East Asia and India, PM Modi said, to further this potential, the government has launched the North East Transformative Industrialisation Scheme, 'Unnati.' He highlighted that the 'Unnati' scheme will accelerate industry, investment and tourism across the entire North East region, including Assam. He urged industry partners to take full advantage of this scheme and Assam's unlimited potential.Stressing that Assam has always had a share in global trade, Modi remarked that today, over 50 percent of India's onshore natural gas production comes from Assam and there has been a significant increase in the capacity of Assam's refineries in recent years. He also pointed out that Assam is rapidly emerging in sectors such as electronics, semiconductors, and green energy. He emphasized that due to government policies, Assam is becoming a hub for high-tech industries as well as startups.Highlighting that in the recent Budget, the Centre has approved the Namrup-4 plant, the Prime Minister remarked that this urea production plant will meet the demand of the entire North East and the country in the future.

Airtel explores deal to collaborate Tata Play's DTH business



Varun Kesavan Managing editor E Mail I'd – varunkesavanpressmedia@gmail.com"Bharti Airtel on Wednesday confirmed its talks with the Tata Group to explore a deal to merge Tata Play's direct-to-home (DTH) business with its subsidiary Bharti Telemedia Ltd."The telecom operator in an exchange filing said, "The above is at a discussion stage only.""A recent media report has said the merger would help Airtel gain access to nearly 20 million homes via Tata Play's connections."It would lead to service providers clubbing broadband, telecom and DTH plans into a single subscription. The deal would be the second high-stakes agreement in the space after the 2016 merger of Videocon d2h and Dish TV."The merged entity would likely be run by the senior management of Airtel."Notably, the Tata Sky began its services in 2004 as a joint venture between Tata Sons and Rupert Murdoch's 21st Century Fox."Later in March 2019, the Walt Disney Company purchased 21st Century Fox's stake in the company. The DTH provider was rechristened as Tata Play in 2022."For the third quarter (Q3) of the financial year 2024-25 (FY25), Bharti Airtel reported an impressive 505% rise in its consolidated net profit at Rs 14,781 crore. This was up from Rs 2,442 crore reported during the same period last year."Sequentially profit soared 311% from Rs 3,593 crore.

Star Health Insurance Stretches home healthcare service to 100 locations



Varun Kesavan Managing editor E Mail I'd – varunkesavanpressmedia@ health insurer Star Health and Allied Insurance Company Ltd has expanded its Home Health Care initiatives to 100 locations across the country, the company said on Wednesday."Launched in July 2023, the initiative covers 85% of Star Health Insurance's customer base, offering cashless doorstep medical care service.""At Star Health, we believe that health insurance goes beyond providing financial coverage. It is a bridge to accessible and affordable healthcare for every individual. Our vision is to remove barriers such as high hospitalisation costs, logistical challenges and the stress associated with seeking care. By bringing quality medical care closer to customers, we aim to ensure their comfort and peace of mind," company MD and CEO Anand Roy said in a company statement."Cities like Mumbai, Delhi and Pune have been proactive in the adoption of these services, with services primarily focused on treating conditions such as viral fever, dengue. More than 15,000 patients have benefitted from the Home Health Care programme.""This initiative is tangible proof of our focus on transforming health insurance delivery by ensuring that it is accessible, affordable, and designed around the evolving needs of our customers," Roy said."The expansion of the programme has been facilitated through partnerships with leading healthcare providers including Care24, Portea, Athulya and Apollo, the company said.

Bengaluru Airport And Menzies Aviation Launch India's Largest Domestic Cargo Terminal



Bengaluru: Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru, operated by Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL) in partnership with Menzies Aviation, has launched India's largest Greenfield Domestic Cargo Terminal (DCT) in terms of designed capacity.According to BIAL, this state-of-the-art 245,000-square-foot facility marks a significant milestone in BLR Airport's cargo-handling capabilities. It offers enhanced infrastructure and streamlined processes to meet the growing demands of the domestic market. This facility will play a key role in connecting industries, strengthening supply chains, and driving innovation toward a more sustainable future for domestic cargo and regional trade, positioning BLR Airport as a leader in cargo handling, the BIAL said in a statement.Spanning over seven acres, the DCT has a peak handling capacity of approximately 360,000 metric tons, with the potential to expand to 400,000 metric tons, it added."With around 42 truck docks, more than 400 specially designed cargo bins, conveyors integrated with X-ray machines, approximately 30 Unit Load Device (ULD) build-up and breakdown stations, along with real-time data capture using 40 handheld terminals and self-service kiosks for agents, the facility will ensure seamless cargo movement while reducing turnaround times," BIAL said. People in India's northeast will soon have a new payment gateway, which will not only break the existing language barrier with the payments gateways and it can also have the option for making offline payment considering the fact that the region still lacks good data connectivity.HookoluPay, an international payment gateway service is likely to be launched by May or June this year. Developed as part of a startup initiative by Assam-based entrepreneur Aziz Ali, HookoluPay is likely to help users with local dialects available in the region and the developers have also kept the option of offline payment considering the fact that some places of the northeast still lack high-speed data."When we talk of digital transformation we must keep in mind that 60 per cent of the people are still not included in the financial services. In many places, particularly in the hilly regions of the northeast people still carry cash for payments. Although there are payment gateways, there is a language barrier like most of the existing payment gateways have services offered either in Hindi or English. HookoluPay will have services in most of the dialects that are available in the region," Ali told ETV Bharat on Wednesday at the Advantage Assam 2.0 summit.Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma requested the Union Minister for Communications and Development of North Eastern Region Jyotiraditya M. Scindia to study the feasibility of bringing optical fibre from the Bay of Bengal through the Brahmaputra. Once materialised, it will prove to be a game changer in getting fast and reliable data in Assam, he added.Speaking on the ever-increasing need of data, Sarma also referred to the announcement of Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) chairman Mukesh Ambani of setting up an AI-enabled data centre in Assam and a similar data centre by HDFC, there will be a requirement of high-speed data.Sarma said that Assam wants to ride high on the digital revolution started by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Assam also wants to ensure that the benefits of digitalisation reach the last mile.

Telangana State-Level Under-16 Basketball Teams Selected in Mahabubnagar "

Mahabubnagar February 27 (Press Media) The selection trials for Telangana State Under-16 boys' and girls' basketball teams were conducted on Wednesday at the Indoor Stadium in Mahabubnagar under the supervision of the Mahbubnagar District Basketball Association. The event was graced by NP Venkatesh Advocate, President of the Mahabubnagar District Olympic Association, along with District Basketball Association officials Maqsood bin Ahmad Zakir Advocate, Nasurullah Haider, and Manohar Reddy, who introduced the young athletes. Speaking on the occasion, NP Venkatesh emphasized that hosting such state-level competitions in the district would greatly encourage emerging players. He urged the selected athletes to maintain discipline and strive for excellence at the national level. Mahabubnagar District Basketball Association Secretary stated that around 200 boys and girls from across Telangana participated in the trials. A total of 25 boys and 20 girls were shortlisted as probables for the Telangana state team. These athletes will undergo a training camp under the Telangana State Basketball Association before competing in the 40th National Youth Under-16 Basketball Championship, scheduled to take place from April 9 to April 16. The selection event was attended by Mahbubnagar District Basketball Association Chairman Mir Arshad Ali, along with association members K. Shubhan, Mir Khaled Ali, Mohammad Ilyas, Gopalakrishna, Farooq Mamakar, and others.

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The Gen Z Mindset

HYDERABAD



Digital, Open, Unfiltered

India's Generation Z approaches the world with a mix of pragmatism, digital awareness, and openness on topics previous generations often kept private. Numbering in the hundreds of millions, they form a large share of the population and influence culture, consumption, and public conversation. Their perspectives emphasize autonomy, authenticity, personal well-being, and practical outcomes over rigid adherence to older norms, while still retaining connections to family and certain traditional structures. Mental health stands out as a domain of greater openness. Conversations about stress, anxiety, depression, and emotional boundaries occur more freely.

Surveys indicate that around 40 per cent report feeling stressed or anxious much of the time. Broader indicators have noted rise in reported mental health concerns among youth. Therapy and support-seeking carry less stigma for many, with some turning to digital tools or online resources alongside professional help when accessible. Positive mental well-being links closely to a stronger sense of purpose and meaningful contribution at work or in life. This generation treats emotional health as integral rather than secondary. Values around work and life balance prioritize free time, the ability to set one's own pace, and alignment between personal principles and daily activities.

Having fun and the freedom to spend time as one wishes rank highly in measures of fulfillment. Economic success matters, but autonomy and authenticity often weigh equally or more. Many seek careers and lifestyles that allow expression of individual preferences rather than purely duty-driven paths. Family ties remain important; shared meals and close relationships continue for large numbers, even as choices around careers, relationships, and independence evolve toward greater personal fulfillment. Social and political views show engagement mixed with skepticism. Employment, education quality, and health frequently top lists of concerns that matter for electoral or public decisions. Inflation and corruption also register. A majority in some polls feel political parties do not adequately understand Gen Z priorities.

Representation remains limited: relatively few legislators fall into the younger age brackets despite the demographic weight of the cohort. Social media plays a substantial role in shaping opinions for nearly half in certain surveys. Demand for accountability appears strong, particularly around issues of opportunity and fairness. At the same time, large-scale street protests have been less characteristic in India compared with some neighboring contexts, with energy often directed toward digital expression, career navigation, or localized concerns. Identity factors, regional differences, and practical job security continue to influence outlooks. Authenticity guides trust in information and brands. Many prefer genuine experiences and real user perspectives over polished celebrity endorsements.

Local creators or manufacturers with transparent reviews can hold appeal. Digital platforms serve as primary arenas for discovering ideas, products, and communities. Comfort with technology extends to expectations around data practices, AI transparency, and online safety, with strong majorities in related surveys supporting regulatory oversight in these areas. Broader social attitudes reflect gradual shifts. Challenges to traditional expectations around marriage, gender roles, or career paths appear, alongside continued respect for family structures in many cases. Environmental awareness, inclusivity on certain social questions, and demand for clarity in communication surface in discussions.

What's on their mind!

- Mental health is no longer taboo, with Gen Z more open about stress, anxiety, therapy and emotional wellbeing.
- Freedom and work-life balance matter, with autonomy, purpose and personal values often ranking alongside financial success.
- Authenticity drives trust, as Gen Z favours genuine experiences, user reviews and local creators over polished celebrity endorsements.
- Digital-first and AI-aware, they expect transparency on data use, AI and online safety while relying heavily on social media for information.
- Ambitious but pragmatic, Gen Z wants better jobs, education and opportunities while demanding greater accountability and fairness.



BHATTI RULES OUT FARM METERS

HYDERABAD

Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka on Friday ruled out the installation of smart meters on agricultural motors and pump sets, saying there was no question of imposing such meters on farmers under any circumstances.

Replying to members in the Legislative Council, he gave a 100 per cent assurance to farmers and their families that the government would not install meters on agricultural pump sets. "Even if the heavens and earth were to come together, or anyone exerts pressure, there will be no meters on agricultural pump sets," he said.

Bhatti Vikramarka appealed to political parties and others not to create unnecessary fears and misconceptions among farmers by claiming that meters would be installed on agricultural motors. He said the government had already made its stand clear on the issue and there would be no change in it.

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'Govt committed to protecting tanks'

HYDERABAD



Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister, N. Uttam Kumar Reddy on Friday asserted that the State government was fully committed to protecting tanks, ponds and other water bodies, safeguarding their Full Tank Level)FTL–boundaries and securing the livelihoods of fishing communities dependent on them.

Responding to issues raised during a discussion in the Telangana Legislative Council, Uttam Kumar Reddy said any instance of damage to a tank's FTL boundary, encroachment affecting a water body or hardship caused to fishing communities would be taken seriously. He directed Irrigation officials to personally inspect the specific issue brought to the notice of the House within a week and ascertain the measures required to protect the water body and address the concerns of local communities. "I am completely committed to the protection of our tanks and their FTL boundaries. If there are specific instances where FTLs have been damaged or fishermen have been affected, bring them to my notice and we will act," the Minister assured the House.

Members said the number of societies had increased from about 2,150 at the time of State formation to more than 6,000, while their membership had risen from around two lakh to 6.5 lakh. Members sought a comprehensive policy giving fisheries cooperative societies a greater role in protecting tanks and other water resources. They argued that fishing communities, whose livelihoods were directly linked to healthy water bodies, could serve as effective local custodians by monitoring tanks, protecting stocked fish seed and immediately reporting encroachments or other threats.

24,000-acre ayacut to get water

Irrigation Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy assured the Legislative Council that the Nellikal Lift Irrigation Scheme would be completed by December 2027,

44,000 tanks geo-tagged

Uttam Kumar Reddy said the government had already initiated a process for constituting committees for all tanks. Such committees had existed in the undivided State but the system was subsequently discontinued. The move to revive them followed recommendations concerning better management and protection of water bodies.

The Minister said about 44,000 tanks had been geo-tagged, providing an important database for their monitoring and conservation. He stressed that the government would not hesitate to provide additional resources wherever required for the protection of tanks.

'17 of 75 MoUs signed at Global Summit commenced operations'

HYDERABAD



Telangana Minister D Sridhar Babu on Friday said 17 of the 75 MoUs signed at the Telangana Rising Global Summit in December last year had commenced operations.

The remaining projects are at various stages of implementation, he said, replying to queries during Question Hour in the Assembly.

During 2025-26, the state government signed 108 MoUs with investors from sectors such as IT and data centres, he said.

The state government is organising initiatives—the Telangana Rising Global Summit, BioAsia, national and international roadshows, and sector-specific conclaves to attract investments into Telangana, he said.

The Telangana government has established a dedicated Investor Facilitation System with designated nodal officers to ensure a hassle-free experience for investors, Sridhar Babu said.

Acknowledging that not all MoUs signed with investors may materialise, the state Industries minister said the government was making efforts to ensure their implementation on the ground.

Alleging that the previous BRS government had proposed setting up 'red category' industries with high pollution potential in the Pharma City on the outskirts of Hyderabad, he said the present government was committed to establishing Green Pharma industries there.

He said the government was committed to promoting the growth and development of MSMEs in Telangana and was providing several incentives to support the sector.

The state government was working to establish sectoral industrial corridors, with a focus on export-oriented industries, while prioritising Green Category industries and encouraging investments in the sector, he added.

The Telangana Rising Global Summit-2025, organised near Hyderabad, was a remarkable success and attracted significant global attention to the state's transformative development agenda, Sridhar Babu had said.

STOLEN ARMY ARMS RECOVERED

Ex-Army havaldar held for stealing 12 firearms, 1,800 rounds

HYDERABAD

A former Army Havaldar, who retired two months ago, was arrested on Friday for allegedly stealing 12 firearms and more than 1,800 rounds of ammunition from the 20 Madras Regiment premises at Bolarum in Secunderabad Cantonment.

Telangana DGP C.V. Anand said all the stolen weapons and ammunition had been recovered. The accused was identified as Upputholla Mallesh, 37, who retired on June 30.

The theft came to light on August 31 when Army personnel found the locks of the 'Kote and Battalion Magazine' broken. The stolen material included five assault rifles, seven pistols, 21 magazines, ammunition and a passive night-vision binocular.

Following a complaint from a Lieutenant Colonel, Bolarum police registered a case, while the Army ordered an internal inquiry.

Investigators examined personnel with access to the facility and explored organised crime, drug mafia, espionage and national security angles. Intelligence agencies analysed around 8.5 lakh mobile numbers, besides using mobile forensics, CCTV analysis and tracking dogs.

The probe focused on Mallesh and another havaldar, TPS Rao. Mallesh's movements before the theft raised suspicion, while his account did not match other statements. He allegedly evaded summons for three days and appeared with his call records and WhatsApp history wiped.



Mr Anand said investigators would retrieve the deleted data. The probe also found that CCTV cameras were not functioning on the night of the theft as power was switched off following an earlier fire incident.

Hour-long break-in

According to police, Mallesh left his Balaji Nagar residence around 11 p.m. on August 30 and entered the regiment through the Kargil Gate. He allegedly broke open the Kote lock, removed the firearms and then spent about an hour breaking open the ammunition chamber to steal matching ammunition.

He allegedly loaded the ammunition boxes onto his scooter, folded the firearms and travelled about 2 km to a remote temple. He later returned to collect magazine covers. When stopped by a guard, he reportedly identified himself as being from the "20 Madras Regiment."

Mallesh allegedly transferred the stolen material into his Brezza car and drove towards Achampet via the ORR and Sagar Ring Road to avoid toll gates. Police said he picked up passengers to create an alibi, dropping four at Devarakonda and two at Dindi.

He later concealed the weapons and ammunition under mud, grass and dirt and shifted them to another location on September 8.

After his wife and father-in-law were informed about the intensifying probe on September 10, Mallesh allegedly confessed at the Task Force office.

Police recovered the stolen arms and ammunition from Kowkoor, Yapral and Achampet. His motive and possible involvement of others are being investigated.

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