

Mesrams begin Nagoba Jatara, the second largest tribal fair in Telangana

Adilabad: Mesrams, a clan from aboriginal tribal communities initiated the process of worshipping Nagoba or serpentine god or Nagoba Jatara, a five-day long important religious and cultural affair of these people with the onset of new moon.

A decision to this effect was made by elders, priests and members of the clan who convened a meeting on the premises of Nagoba temple at Kespur village in Inderveli mandal on Monday night.

According to the elders, priests and Mesrams decided to begin Kachur Prachar or publicity about Mahapuja slated for January 18 by a bullock cart in seven villages from Tuesday. They then place an order to buy sacred pots to be used for performing various rituals during the fair at Rajampet village in Sirikonda mandal. Following the activity, the Mesrams would embark on an arduous task of fetching sacred water from Godavari river at Kalamadugu in Jannaram mandal before performing special prayers at Nagoba temple in Kespur village in Inderveli mandal by trekking covering a distance of over 150 kilometers and passing through 150 tribal villages enroute. Traditionally, they bring holy water in Jhari, a 1,400-year-old brass container used for carrying the water. Distinctively, the tribal clan uses pots and various utensils made of clay and molded by a family of potters residing at Sirikonda mandal centre. They fetch water in the pots from a holy pond situated near the temple of Nagoba and consecrate Naivedyam or offering to the presiding deity by cooking it in these pots. Around 100 Mesrams would ceremoniously perform Mahapuja and Satheek puja, to kick start the affair. They then worship Persapen or the great god and Banpen puja the next day. Bheting, introduction of new daughters-in-law to the deity, Mandagajili puja and Betal Puja, Praja Darbara or grievance redressal programme etc are going to be held as part of the fair. Nagoba Jatara, a five-day-long annual important and religious affair of Mesrams, is the second largest congregation of tribals after the biennial Sammakka Saralamma jatara at Medaram in Mulugu district. Ethnic tribes belonging to several parts of not only Telangana, but also Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh visit the temple and perform prayers during the fair.

New Delhi: Around 62 per cent Indians are using GenAI at work regularly, whereas 90 per cent employers and 86 per cent employees believe that AI impacts productivity positively, a report showed on Monday.

Also, 75 per cent employees and 72 per cent employers believe that GenAI enhances decision making, 82 per cent employees and 92 per cent employers believe it positively impacts quality of work, said the 'EY 2025 Work Reimagined Survey'.

The report shows that India is among the highest AI adopters globally, and leads with 53 points on the 'AI Advantage' score, developed to quantify the real impact of AI at work by measuring how much time employees save, while the global average score sits at 34 points.

The survey, now in its sixth edition, draws insights from 15,000 employees and 1,500 employers across 29 markets globally. In India, where 800 employees and 50 employers were surveyed, a strong environment supports employee engagement and resilience in the changing AI landscape, according to the report.

India also holds a 'Talent Health' score of 82, the highest among all geographies assessed. This score measures employee sentiment regarding culture, rewards, and development, areas that collectively form the foundation of Talent Health.

The global average 'Talent Health'



score stands at 65 out of 100, with culture accounting for 44 per cent, rewards 32 per cent and development 24 per cent, the report mentioned.

"India has made strong strides in AI adoption, and organizations are taking a more intentional approach to balancing productivity, skills, and employee experience. Technology, including AI, is increasingly shaping how work gets done, but the real impact comes from how employers are using it to strengthen talent health, capability, and workforce resilience," said Anurag Malik, Partner and National Leader – People Consulting, EY India.

The findings also reveal how employers and employees view AI governance. Around 94 per cent employers

and 89 per cent employees consistently report higher levels of confidence across ethical and responsible AI.

While both 87 per cent employees and 90 per cent employers in India say learning new skills is essential — actual learning hours remain limited.

Most employees globally report spending fewer than 40 hours a year on AI learning.

The data makes a compelling case for structured skilling: employees who invest more time in AI learning show markedly lower intent to leave. Higher learning hours also translate directly into more hours saved per week, reinforcing the productivity impact of continuous skill development, said the report.

Host of issues welcomes newly elected sarpanches, ward members

Sangareddy: While the newly elected sarpanches and ward members were in a celebratory mood after their swearing-in ceremony on Monday, a host of problems welcomed them in villages. The voters, who elected them with the hope of changing things in the villages, were ready to present several issues before them. Since the Congress came to power around two years ago, the government has completely ignored the development of villages.

The Congress government has not released any funds even for fuel for tractors used for garbage collection and for the installation of street lights in villages. Sanitation works have

gone haywire in villages across the erstwhile Medak district. There were no funds even to pay the salaries of sanitation workers and other panchayat workers.

Tractors, which were given by the previous BRS government to each and every panchayat, have remained idle in most villages. Since the previous sarpanches and ward members' tenure came to an end in January 2019, panchayat secretaries have found it difficult to carry out day-to-day activities in villages due to a severe shortage of funds. Political party merchandise

There are 1,613 gram panchayats across the erstwhile

Medak district. However, the situation is no different in any of these villages. Those elected for the first time will have a more challenging tenure ahead as they also have to deal with inexperience.

Congratulating the newly elected sarpanches and ward members, Sangareddy MLA Chintha Prabhakar urged Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy to grant adequate funds to panchayats to help sarpanches carry out their activities without any issues. Asking Revanth Reddy to learn from the mistakes, he said the people would teach a fitting lesson in the coming MPTC and ZPTC elections if the government continued to ignore panchayats.

Escorts Kubota Showcases Its Next-Gen Construction Line-up at Excon 2025

Unveils the Kubota U22-6, BLX75K, Hydra 15 Mining and Hydra 72 as part of its commercial, prototype and concept-stage line-up.

Hyderabad

Escorts Kubota Limited (EKL), one of India's leading engineering conglomerates in the agricultural and construction equipment space, today unveiled its latest BS V-compliant construction equipment range at Excon 2025. The new line-up reinforces the company's focus on application-specific, high-productivity construction equipment that is designed to reduce the total cost of ownership for customers and meet the evolving requirements of India's fast-growing infrastructure sector. With specialised needs rising across urban development, industrial logistics and mining, the refreshed range aims to deliver higher performance, reliability and operator comfort across diverse job environments. The company showcased new and upcoming products in concept and development stages, reflecting its continued focus on innovation.

In the earthmoving category, EKL introduced the Kubota U22-6 Mini Excavator as a commercial launch. This 2.2-ton model caters to specific applications between the company's 1.7-ton and 3-ton. With precise digging capability, zero-tail swing, ROPS/FOPS protection and an upgraded hydraulic system, the model is suited for unique applications such as urban construction, basement excavation other confined-area tasks. Its digital interface and operator-friendly controls make it a powerful yet compact solution for sites where manoeuvrability is essential.

EKL showcased the Hydra 15 Mining, a prototype-stage variant designed specifically for mining and quarrying conditions. The model incorporates strengthened safety features, including a lift-jack guard and reinforced front bumper, along with an air-conditioned cabin for operator comfort during long duty cycles. Developed to withstand high-impact operating conditions while ensuring predictable maintenance, the variant offers miners a reliable solution for rugged applications.

The company also showcased the BLX75K Backhoe Loader as a prototype-stage variant for wider regional markets at Excon this year. Powered by a next-generation 74.3 hp Kubota CEV-V engine, the model delivers improved fuel efficiency, multiple work



modes and enhanced serviceability. Positioned within the next-generation backhoe loader lineup, the BLX75K reflects the growing integration of Japanese engineering capability into the company's construction equipment portfolio.

At the forefront of the display is

the Hydra 72, introduced as a concept-stage pick-and-carry crane engineered for higher-height lifting applications. Its new 72-foot boom marks a significant progression much needed emerging applications and to cater from the earlier 65-foot class and caters to sectors requiring elevated reach for material han-

dling. The crane features a four-part rope-compensated boom, a heavy-duty hydraulic winch with integrated safety like outriggers inbuilt safety brakes, lift cylinder safety valve systems and a reinforced axle and transmission package built for continuous

Hyderabad sees 25 pc rise in home registrations in November: Knight Frank

Hyderabad: During the month of November, a total of 6,923 residential properties worth Rs.4,904 crore were registered in Hyderabad.

According to a latest report released by the Knight Frank India, the preference for bigger properties continue to grow in the city with 17 per cent of these registrations being for properties spread over 2,000 sft.

According to Knight Frank India's latest assessment, residential property registrations in Hyderabad rose sharply by 25 per cent year-on-year (YoY) and 12 per cent month-on-month (MoM) in

November 2025, while the total value of homes registered increased by 40 per cent YoY during the same period. According to the report, registrations strengthened in the latter part of

the year, with November recording the highest monthly volumes in 2025. Demand for premium housing remains robust, indicated by an 87 per cent YoY surge in registrations for homes valued above Rs. 1 crore. Knight Frank India noted that in November 2025, registrations of homes valued above Rs.1 crore increased sharply by 87 per cent YoY, reinforcing the ongoing premiumization trend in Hyderabad.

Cockroach found in mandi at popular Malakpet eatery

Hyderabad: In yet another instance of food safety concerns gripping the city, a cockroach was allegedly discovered in a Mandi dish at a popular restaurant in Malakpet. The incident came to light on Sunday when a diner found the insect in his meal and shared footage of the unhygienic discovery on social media.

In the video, which has since gone viral, the cockroach is clearly visible within the rice served at the establishment.

The complainant alleged that the restaurant staff initially refused to take responsibility for the contaminated food. However, online reports suggest that the customer did not immediately alert the restaurant owner at the time of the incident, opting instead to document the grievance digitally.



Responding to the widespread circulation of the video, the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) confirmed that the matter has been noted and officially brought to the attention of the Assistant Food Controller.

The incident follows a string of enforcement drives by the Task Force teams of the Telangana Food Safety Department. Recent raids on high-profile restaurants across the city have repeatedly uncovered alarming conditions, including the use of unsanitary utensils, widespread cockroach and housefly infestations, and the storage of expired ingredients.

Despite frequent seizures, the issuance of notices, and the collection of food samples for laboratory testing, hygiene violations appear to persist at several outlets. Authorities have reiterated their commitment to penalising offenders, but the recurring nature of these complaints has raised questions regarding the effectiveness of current deterrents in ensuring public health safety.

Ponnam urges KCR to attend Assembly before flaying Cong

Hyderabad: Minister for Transport Ponnam Prabhakar on Monday urged former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao to attend the Assembly and discuss all issues before criticizing the Congress government. Speaking to the media at Gandhi Bhavan along with Ministers Jupally Krishna Rao and Vakiti Srihari, Ponnam Prabhakar said Telangana is an integral part of the country.

"We have repeatedly requested the opposition (BRS) to support us and provide suggestions if we have made any mistakes. Our governance is people-centric, aligned with the aspirations of the people. That is why voters have supported us in by-elections and sarpanch elections. In a democracy, the people are the ultimate judges," he said.

Docs save life in high-risk emergency surgery

Bhadrachalam: In a remarkable example of timely medical intervention in the public healthcare system, doctors at a government hospital in Bhadrachalam-Kothagudem district saved the life of a migrant worker who was brought in with a critical injury following a

hour" with the support of the Palvancha hospital staff. After the procedure, the patient was shifted to the ICU at Bhadrachalam Government Hospital, where he was under close observation and treatment for nearly two weeks.

He was discharged on Saturday after his condition stabilised.

Addressing a press conference at the Bhadrachalam hospital, District Collector Jitesh Patil commended the doctors and medical staff for their professionalism and courage.

He said the successful outcome demonstrated the growing strength of government healthcare services in the district, even at community-level hospitals. The Collector also praised the ICU team at Bhadrachalam for their round-the-clock care.

Badrachalam MLA Dr Tellam Venkata Rao said the case reflected what government doctors could achieve when given administrative support and confidence.

He lauded Dr Ravi Babu and the entire medical team for undertaking a complex and high-risk procedure under challenging circumstances.

Several doctors, including Dr Ravi Babu, Dr Ram Prasad, Dr Somaraju Dora, Dr Prasad, Dr Ramakrishna, Dr Mallesh, Dr Nikhita, Dr Koundinya and Dr Tejaswi, along with nursing and paramedical staff, were felicitated for their efforts.

The patient and his wife expressed gratitude to the doctors and hospital staff for saving his life, officials added.

suicide attempt, officials said on Monday.

The patient, identified as Bishal Tamang, a native of West Bengal who runs a small food stall near the Kothagudem bus stand, was shifted for emergency care after sustaining a severe injury about two weeks ago.

Given the seriousness of his condition, he was initially being moved to a tertiary hospital in Warangal.

However, based on information received from the family, ENT specialist Dr Ravi Babu intervened and performed an emergency surgical procedure at the Palvancha Government Hospital itself. Officials said the surgery, usually conducted at a super-specialty facility, was carried out during the critical "golden

Cong set to announce party, corporation posts amid discontent

Hyderabad: The Congress is likely to announce party and corporation positions very soon, most probably before the New Year. This has created heightened curiosity among party leaders over who will be accommodated in the upcoming appointments.

Several posts in the Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC), including working presidents, secretaries and other key positions, are currently vacant. Discussions are underway on whether the party will consider the names recommended four months ago or seek fresh opinions from the newly appointed District Congress Committee (DCC) presidents. According to party sources, teams comprising party observers, vice-presidents, general secretaries, MLAs and former DCC presidents had submitted recommendations from all 119 Assembly constituencies four months ago. However, with new DCC presidents now in place, it remains uncertain whether those earlier lists will be followed or revised. A senior party leader told The Hans India that the final decision rests with AICC in-charge general secretary Meenakshi Natarajan, who will take a call in consultation with the Delhi leadership.

Meanwhile, many party leaders are anxiously waiting for positions. Discontent is brewing within the party over what some leaders describe as an unfair allocation of posts. Several leaders have expressed



unhappiness that a few individuals have been given multiple positions, while many others have not been allotted even a single role. One leader remarked that giving multiple positions to the same individual sends the wrong signal and could dampen the morale of grassroots workers. "The party should follow the principle of 'one leader, one position' to ensure wider participation and maintain enthusiasm among leaders," he said.

Khammam to get cultural landmark with new Shilpa Rama monument

In a major move to preserve cultural heritage and promote traditional arts, the Telangana government has announced the construction of a Shilpa Rama monument in Khammam city, officials said.

The government has allocated 5.04 acres of land at Khanapuram Haveli, Revenue Village Survey Nos. 94 and 234, in Khammam Urban Mandal for the project.

The initiative, directed by Telangana Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao, aims to provide a permanent platform for local artists, sculptors, and artisans. Speaking about the project, the Minister said the Shilpa Rama monument would bring Telangana's culture, traditional art forms, and folk heritage closer to both urban and rural populations. The centre is also expected to boost



tourism and create employment opportunities for local youth.

Officials have been instructed to design an attractive entrance gate that reflects traditional sculptural art while incorporating modern amenities and aesthetics. The design is intended to showcase Telangana's artistic heritage and serve as a cultural landmark for the city.

Minister Rao further directed officials to expedite land allocation, prepare designs, estimates, and timelines, and ensure that construction begins soon.

Once completed, the project is expected to place Khammam on the map as a major cultural centre at both state and national levels.

The decision has been widely welcomed by residents, artists, and cultural organisations, who expressed hope that the Shilpa Rama monument would be completed quickly and made accessible to the public.

Singapore church services cancelled after fake bomb threat; Indian-origin man charged

Singapore: An Indian-origin Singaporean man was charged on Monday with making a false terrorist threat at a church where all services for the day were cancelled, Channel News Asia reported. The incident took place on Sunday.

Kokulanathan Mohan, charged with an offence under Regulation 8(2)(a) of the United Nations (Anti-terrorism Measures) Regulations, was arrested after a suspicious item was found at St Joseph's Church along Upper Bukit Timah region, which includes an upmarket residential area.

According to charge sheets, the 26-year-old is accused of placing three cardboard rolls "filled with stone pebbles and sporting protruding red wires, held together using black and yellow adhesive tapes" in the church at about 7.11 am on Sunday.

Harish Rao challenges Congress on irrigation and unfulfilled promises

BRS senior leader T Harish Rao on Monday slammed Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy for 'cheap rhetoric' and challenges government on water rights and welfare failures.

The BRS leader said that while KCR was a



statesman of Himalayan stature, Revanth was a 'Street Rowdy' with a shrunken mindset. Addressing a press conference at Telangana Bhavan, Harish Rao launched a stinging attack on Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and Irrigation Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy.

Harish Rao asserted that while KCR spoke with the dignity, Revanth Reddy's responses reflected a narrow-minded and frustrated perspective that brought disrepute to the office of the Chief Minister. -

Rao questioned the government's failure to deliver on its primary election promises even after two years in power. He pointedly asked why the promised pension hikes and the Rs 2,500 Mahalakshmi monthly

assistance for women remained unfulfilled.

He accused the current administration of focusing its experience on 'loot and shares' rather than mobilising resources for public welfare. Regarding the agricultural crisis, Rao expressed deep concern over the plight of farmers, slamming the government for forcing them into serpentine queues for fertilizers and confusing them with 'apps and maps' instead of ensuring a steady supply.

The BRS leader also countered the government's narrative of 'economic anarchy' during the previous regime. He reminded that global dignitaries and financial experts at the recent summit, including Tony Blair and former RBI Governor Subba Rao, had openly praised Telangana's unprecedented development under KCR's leadership.

He accused Revanth Reddy of damaging the state's prestige for petty political gains and characterised the CM's political history as one defined by 'shifting loyalties like changing shirts' and 'backstabbing', contrasting it with the BRS's history of sacrifice for statehood.

On the critical issue of irrigation, Harish Rao presented a detailed technical rebuttal. He challenged Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy to prove the government's claim that BRS created no new ayacut.

Rao stated that between 2014 and 2023, the BRS government provided water to 17.24 lakh acres of new ayacut and stabilised 31.50 lakh acres, totaling nearly 48.74 lakh acres. He dared the Congress government to show even 11,000 acres of new ayacut created in the last two years.

Intense Cold Grip Telangana as Winter Sets In

As winter takes hold, Telangana is experiencing a significant drop in temperatures, with the cold intensifying just days after the season officially began. Many

alerts for several districts. Residents are warned of the possibility of cold waves in North Telangana, as well as in West and Central Telangana, over the next three days.



residents are reluctant to go outdoors during the chilly mornings and evenings. The meteorological department has reported minimum temperatures already reaching single digits across various parts of the state, and forecasts indicate a further decline over the next few days. Many areas are expected to see minimum temperatures plummet by three to four degrees Celsius below normal in the coming days.

To address these weather conditions, the meteorological department has issued orange and yellow

Recent temperature readings show the seriousness of the situation, with recordings in single digits in several regions. Temperatures include 6.4 degrees Celsius in Patancheru, 8.2 in Adilabad, 10.5 in Rajendranagar, 8.8 in Medak, 11.5 in Hanamkonda, 12.2 in Ramagundam, 13 in Nalgonda, 12.5 in Nizamabad, 12.4 in Dundigal, 13.6 in Hayathnagar, 13.2 in Hyderabad, 16 in Bhadrachalam, 14.6 in Khammam, 15 in Hakimpet, and 15.1 degrees in Mahbubnagar.

As the cold weather settles in, residents are urged to take precautions. It is advisable to wear warm layers, including sweaters or jackets, whenever heading outdoors. Those on bikes should ensure they wear helmets and caps that cover their ears and heads, along with gloves for added warmth. For motorists, keeping windshields clean and ensuring wipers are functional are crucial. Drivers are also reminded to exercise caution and drive slowly, as roads may be damp from fog and dew, increasing the risk of accidents.

DIG Shemushi Bajpai inaugurates training for SCT constables

Anantapur: Deputy Inspector General of Police (Anantapur Range) Dr Shemushi Bajpai inaugurated a nine-month training programme for Stipendiary Cadet Trainee (SCT) Police Constables (Civil) at Police Training College here on Monday.

A total of 692 trainees from Visakhapatnam, Prakasam, West Godavari, Guntur, Vijayawada City, and SPS Nellore districts are enrolled.

Addressing the trainees, Dr Bajpai congratulated them on their selection, calling it a defining moment. She emphasised that constables' conduct shapes the police department's grassroots image. She stressed understanding new laws like



Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA), and Special Local Laws. Constables' duties extend to maintaining pub-

lic tranquility and law and order. Urging discipline, integrity, impartiality, empathy—especially towards weaker sections—and zero corruption, she said honest duty earns public trust. Personal con-

duct is under scrutiny, reflecting on the force.

The DIG advised respectful behaviour, particularly towards women, and focus on training, health, and professionalism to uphold the college's prestige.

Revenge killing shocks Thogal Gallu village

Aspari (Kurnool district): A brutal murder rocked Thogal Gallu village in Aspari mandal, Kurnool district, when Golla Peddaiah allegedly bludgeoned his sister-in-law Gangavathi (46) to death with a wooden pestle stone late Sunday night.

Police said the killing was revenge for the murder of Peddaiah's elder brother, Golla Ahobilam, earlier this year. In September, during Mala Punnam festival, Gangavathi reportedly conspired with her lover Chennabasava (from Karnataka) to kill her husband Ahobilam. He was served spiked food and liquor, then stabbed while riding his motorcycle near the village.

Gangavathi and her lover were arrested but later released on bail. Post-release, Gangavathi lived alone in a hut. Peddaiah, harbouring grudge, allegedly entered the hut while she slept and attacked her fatally.

The incident orphaned two minor children, Bharat



and Varshini, who lost both parents to violence.

Police registered a case and launched a man-hunt for Peddaiah, with investigation ongoing.

MCT bags top state award for electricity savings

missioner Mourya on Monday.

Addressing the officials, the Commissioner stated that the award enhances the corporation's recognition while increasing its responsibilities. She commended the hard work of officials and staff that led to this success. "United efforts from all departments with excellent coordination will bring more awards in the future," she emphasized.

Commissioner Mourya called for seamless coordination across all departments to achieve further awards.

Tirupati: Municipal Corporation Commissioner Narapureddy Mourya urged all officials and staff to work together with greater enthusiasm and responsibility following the corporation's prestigious achievement.

The Municipal Corporation of Tirupati secured the first position in the state for electricity conservation and received the SESHA award. Deputy Commissioner Amaraiah received the award in Vijayawada and presented it to Com-



Police open fire on accused in attempted murder case

Anantapur: An accused involved in an attempted murder case was shot by police while trying to arrest him in Anantapur town on Sunday. The incident followed a series of knife attacks in which three persons, including a police officer, were injured.

According to police, the incident began around 8.15 pm on December 21 near Ayyappa Cafe in Aravind Nagar, where four friends were consuming alcohol. During the gathering, Ajay, a resident of Naik Nagar, allegedly stabbed Chakali Raja after an argument over liquor. Raja sustained serious injuries in the abdomen and was rushed to Government General Hospital (GGH), Anantapur, where he is undergoing treatment on a ventilator.

Following a complaint, police launched search for the accused. After receiving information at 9.30 am on Monday that Ajay was in TV Tower area, II Town police personnel attempted to detain him. The accused allegedly stabbed an auto driver Baba causing severe injuries. The victim was immediately



shifted to Kumar Hospital, where he is undergoing treatment.

Police teams led by II Town CI Srikant intensified search. Acting on specific information that the accused was hiding in a garden near Akuthotapalli, police reached the spot. During the operation, the accused allegedly attacked CI Srikant with a knife, forcing the officer to fire from his 9mm pistol, hitting the accused near the knee. Both the injured accused and CI Srikant were shifted to GGH Anantapur for treatment.

District SP P Jagadeesh stated that the police would not tolerate such violent acts and assured that strict legal action would be taken to ensure swift punishment.

Maths exhibition held at Ananthalakshmi Int'l School

Anantapur: Ananthalakshmi International School organised a vibrant Maths Exhibition, allowing students to demonstrate creativity, logical thinking, and real-world application of mathematical concepts. Chairman Sri Ramudu inaugurated the event,



urging students to connect mathematics with everyday life beyond textbooks.

Vice Chairman Ramesh formally opened it by cutting the ribbon. Principal Shalini KV delivered the welcome address, emphasising experiential and concept-based learning. Chief Administrative Officer Narasimha Rao praised the efforts of students and teachers.

Students confidently presented innovative models, showcasing clarity and teamwork. The exhibition highlighted the school's focus on hands-on learning and critical thinking, concluding with widespread

GMR Hyderabad Airport partners with Buddy Mobility Care for inclusive travel

Hyderabad: Buddy Mobility Care, a venture by BeSure Buddy Pvt Ltd and an inclusive mobility service provider, achieved a milestone by securing a social impact-driven partnership with GMR Hyderabad International Airport. This marks the launch of the nation's first dedicated wheelchair-accessible transportation service at any Indian airport. Buddy Mobility Care provides a complete, end-to-end assisted travel solution, which includes accessible vehicles ensuring custom-designed, wheelchair-accessible transportation and professional personnel who provide dedicated assistance for a safe, dependable, and supportive mobility for all passengers.

This service is specifically designed for persons with reduced mobility (PRM), senior citizens, and travelers requiring special support, ensuring their journey begins and ends with comfort and dignity. Sartaj Lamba, Founder & CEO of Buddy Mobility Care, said, "GMR Hyderabad International Airport has set a new benchmark for inclusive travel in India with this vital social impact initiative."

Collector shyam prasad personally attends to disabled petitioners

Puttaparthi: In a compassionate gesture, Sri Sathya Sai district Collector A Shyam Prasad personally reached out to disabled and immobile petitioners during Public Grievance Redressal System (PGRS) programme held at the district Collectorate on Monday.

Upon learning that several physically challenged individuals were unable to enter the PGRS hall, the Collector stepped outside to meet them. He was seen interacting directly with petitioners, including those lying on the ground due to severe mobility issues, accepting their petitions on the spot and issuing immediate instructions for resolution.

M Krishnappa (55), suffering from paralysis, requested the Collector for a wheelchair and pension. The Collector immediately directed the Disabled Welfare Department to sanc-



tion a wheelchair and verify his pension eligibility.

Similarly, the Collector met Sanjeeva (45) from Hindupur town, who has been paralysed in both legs since childhood. On his request, the Collector ordered the officials to provide a motorised tricycle and initiate medical eval-

uation for pension sanction.

Collector Shyam Prasad instructed the District Medical and Health Officer to ensure that all eligible disabled persons receive their pensions without delay.

Furthermore, he mandated that wheelchairs be distributed immediately to those in need.

To improve future experiences, he ordered that seating arrangements be made inside the hall so applicants no longer have to stand while waiting. Petitioners expressed deep gratitude for the Collector's humane and proactive approach, noting that his direct involvement brought swift relief to those most in need.



SP calls for collective action against drug abuse

Puttaparthi: District SP S Satish Kumar urged all sections of society to actively protect students and youth from drug abuse, especially ganja, to secure the nation's future.

He released anti-ganja awareness pamphlets published by United Telugu Forum (UTF) at his office on Monday, in the presence of UTF district president Shettipi Jayachandra Reddy, general secretary M Sudhakar, treasurer Srinivasulu, secretaries, and Atmiya Trust members including Harjeet Pranav.

Addressing the gathering, SP Satish Kumar ex-

pressed grave concern over narcotics trapping young people and even children, ruining lives early. Police are conducting awareness programmes in schools and colleges, seeking public partnership in eradication. Citizens should report ganja sales or transport via toll-free 1972 or 112. The SP praised UTF's distribution of two lakh pamphlets as a commendable step towards a drug-free society.

UTF State secretary Jayachandra Reddy said drug addiction diverts youth from nation-building, appealing for collective resistance.

Team including Indian scientists designs potent antidote to cobra, krait venom toxins

For some people, snakes are exotic yet dangerous creatures of the wild; eerie but elusive, and not something to worry about in day-to-day life. For others, especially some farmers in India and Africa, they are a constant and terrifying threat to life. Venom from snake bites leads to more than 100,000 deaths every year, with around 400,000 people left permanently disabled. The mortality burden is especially higher in low and middle-income countries in Africa and Asia, with India alone at a staggering average of 58,000 deaths in a year according to a 2020 report. However, considered a "poor man's disease", relatively less attention has been paid to the devastation caused by the bites. In some of these countries, snakebite incidence is distressingly high but inadequate access to proper healthcare prevents fast and efficient treatment, leading to disproportionately more deaths. Things were set to improve in 2017 when the World Health Organisation (WHO) finally stepped in to alert the world about one of its biggest hidden health crises. It officially classified snakebite envenoming as a highest priority neglected tropical disease.

Animals in the middle

A major issue is that the current process of producing antivenom is outdated: it involves injecting large animals like horses with snake venom and collecting the animals' blood for the antibodies it produces against the venom. But the horses' blood could contain antibodies against other microorganisms as well, even against other components of the venom that are not harmful to humans. So only a fraction of the antibodies in the antivenoms is useful to humans, leading to more variability and the need for larger doses. In addition, because these antibodies are produced in another animal, the chances of humans developing an adverse or allergic reaction to these antivenoms are also higher. A variety of venoms

Driven by these concerns, a group of scientists — part of a consortium funded by the Wellcome Trust — decided to sidestep animals and use human antibodies instead. Using a type of toxin found in many kinds of snakes, they synthetically developed a broadly applicable human antibody against the toxin. Their results were recently published in the journal *Science Translational Medicine*. "Venoms of snakes in India are so diverse that venoms of the same species across regions can't be neutralised by the same antivenom," Kartik Sunagar, head of the Evolutionary Venomics lab at the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, and one of the lead authors of the study, said. "Even in the same geographical location, if you look at individuals of the same species, antivenom can only neutralise some venoms and not others. There is a stark variation in venoms, so that's why we wanted to figure out a solution that might work across regions and across species." Screening billions of antibodies

The scientists focused on three-finger toxins (3FTx) — one of the most abundant and lethal ingredients in elapid venoms. Elapids are a major medically relevant family of snakes that include cobras, kraits, and mambas. The scientists nar-

rowed their focus on a-neurotoxins, a specific class of 3FTx that target receptors in human nerve and muscle cells. These toxins prevent the receptors from responding to acetylcholine, a neurotransmitter involved in carrying messages from the neurons to the muscles, leading to paralysis, an inability to breathe, and eventually death. Joseph Jardine, an antibody expert at Scripps Research Institute, in California, led the initial work of "finding the needle in the haystack" — i.e. finding the best antibody that could target the toxins among the billions of human antibodies available.

The scientists first synthesised variants of their toxin of interest, called long-chain 3FTx (3FTx-L, a type of three-finger a-neurotoxins), in the lab. They then screened billions of human antibodies expressed on the surface of yeast cells for ones that bound best to the toxins in their study. This selection of antibodies far exceeds any number of antibodies that an animal's immune system could cook up in response to a venom. After multiple rounds, they had a shortlist of antibodies that broadly reacted with most of the 3FTx variants they used. All but king cobra

Nicholas Casewell's group at the Liverpool School for Tropical Medicine in the U.K. then tested the antibodies *in vitro* in human cells, to see which of them could best neutralise the toxins. This step brought them to an antibody they dubbed 95Mat5. Finally, Dr. Sunagar's group tested 95Mat5 *in vivo* in mice, to see if this broadly neutralising antibody could help protect against lethal doses of a-bungarotoxin, the 3FTx-L in the highly venomous many-banded kraits. They also injected mice with whole venom from king cobras, black mambas, and monocled cobras — all different elapid snakes from Asia and Africa

with venom containing 3FTx-L variants — and tested to check how their antibody worked against them. They found 95Mat5 worked well against all the snake venoms, protecting the mice from death, with the only exception being the king cobras' venom, where the antibody delayed but could not prevent death. "We were surprised by the results of the black mamba, where the 3FTx-L is only 17% of the total venom composition. By knocking out that one toxin, we were able to protect mice fully from the other toxins in the venom in what may be a synergistic effect," said Irene Khalek, a scientist at Scripps Research Institute and one of the authors of the study. An 'impossible' find

"The study is really well-performed, and I would expect that the antibody could be used as an important component in future antivenoms against mambas and cobras in Africa and Asia," Andreas Hougaard Laustsen-Kiel, head of the Tropical Pharmacology Lab at the Technical University of Denmark, said. Dr. Laustsen-Kiel was involved in a different study, published in *Nature Communications* last year, where a group of scientists discovered a similar broadly neutralising antibody against long-chain a-neurotoxins from snakes. "Because snake venoms are so complex, I would have thought it impossible to make an antibody that could knockout the whole venom," Dr. Sunagar said. Closer to a uni-



versal solution

In the current study, the scientists found one reason why their antibody worked so well against their toxins of interest: the crystal structures of their antibody 95Mat5 and 3FTx-L variants revealed that the antibody bound the toxin exactly where the toxin would have bound its target receptor in human nerve and muscle cells. By mimicking the receptor-toxin interaction, the antibody could whisk the toxins away from the receptors and prevent them from exerting their deadly effects. The current antibody works well against a specific kind of toxin present in the venom of many dangerous snakes, but it is also a small first step towards a universal antivenom. The scientists said they are keen on discovering specific antibodies like these against toxins in other snake venoms as well, like in vipers.

"We need to discover antibodies for a couple of other toxins, then we can have a universal solution for the majority of snakes

in the world," Dr. Sunagar said. Rohini Subrahmanyam is a freelance journalist. Venom from snake bites leads to more than 100,000 deaths every year, with around 400,000 people left permanently disabled. The mortality burden is especially higher in low and middle-income countries in Africa and Asia, with India alone at a staggering average of 58,000 deaths in a year according to a 2020 report. The scientists focused on three-finger toxins (3FTx) — one of the most abundant and lethal ingredients in elapid venoms. Elapids are a major medically relevant family of snakes that include cobras, kraits, and mambas. The current antibody works well against a specific kind of toxin present in the venom of many dangerous snakes, but it is also a small first step towards a universal antivenom. The scientists said they are keen on discovering specific antibodies like these against toxins in other snake venoms as well, like in vipers.

Xantham, guar gum in yoghurt, biscuits may raise diabetes risk: Study

New Delhi: Love to binge on ultra-processed foods like cake, biscuits, bread, yoghurt, and ice creams? Beware, these foods rich in emulsifiers like xantham and guar gum may raise your risk of diabetes, finds a study. Emulsifiers, the most commonly used additives, are often added to processed and packaged foods to make them look more appealing, boost their taste and texture as well as increase shelf life. The study appearing in *The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology* linked emulsifiers including mono- and diglycerides of fatty acids, carrageenans, modified starches, lecithins, phosphates, celluloses, gums, and pectins to the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes. Previously emulsifiers have been linked to cancers of the breast and prostate.

Researchers from France's INRAE – National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment studied the relationships between the dietary intakes of emulsifiers, assessed over a follow-up period of 14 years, and the risk of developing type 2 diabetes in a large study including 104,139 adults between 2009 and 2023. They diagnosed about 1,056 cases of diabetes as a result of chronic exposure to some emulsifiers. These were carrageenans (3 per cent increased risk per increment of 100 mg per day); tripotassium phosphate (15 per cent increased risk per increment of 500 mg per day); mono- and diacetyl tartaric acid esters of mono- and diglycerides of fatty acids (4 per cent increased risk per increment of 100 mg per day); sodium citrate (4 per cent increased risk per increment of 500 mg per day); guar gum (11 per cent increased risk per increment of 500 mg per day); gum arabic (3 per cent increased risk per increment of 1,000 mg per day) and xanthan gum (8 per cent increased risk per increment of 500 mg per day).

HDFC Bank opens branch at Kavaratti Island, Lakshadweep

Only private sector bank to have a branch in Union Territory

HDFC Bank, opened a branch at Kavaratti Island in the Union Territory of Lakshadweep. This makes it the only private sector bank to have a branch in the Union Territory.

It was inaugurated by Captain Lovekesh Thakur, Commanding Officer, Indian Navy and Dr K P Muthukoya, a well-known resident. Mr. S Sampathkumar, Group Head- Retail Branch Banking, HDFC Bank and Mr Sanjeev Kumar, Branch Banking Head, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry and other local dignitaries were present on the occasion.

This branch is aimed at upgrading the banking infrastructure in the Union Territory by offering wide range of services with focus on personal banking, digital banking which also includes customised digital solutions including QR based transaction to retailers.

Commenting on the new branch launch, Mr. S Sampathkumar, Group Head- Retail Branch Banking, HDFC Bank said, "HDFC Bank has branches in the cold climes of Kashmir, the southern tip of Kanyakumari and now the island of Lakshadweep. This reaffirms our commitment to serving customers wherever they are in an extremely convenient fashion. We look forward to serving the financial needs of individuals, families, and businesses in Lakshadweep and becoming a trusted partner in their financial journey and contributing to the overall development of the island." As of December 31, 2023, the Bank's distribution network was at 8,091



branches and 20,688 ATMs across 3,872 cities / towns as against 7,183 branches and 19,007 ATMs across 3,552 cities /

towns as of December 31, 2022. 52% of our branches are in semi urban and rural areas. In addition, we have 15,053 busi-

ness correspondents, which are primarily manned by Common Service Centres (CSC).

Xiaomi Priority Club Unveiled in India: Elevating User Experience with Exclusive Benefits"

In a significant push towards fulfilling its commitment to offer end-to-end premium experience to users, Xiaomi, a global technology leader, has introduced Xiaomi Priority Club. Crafted to enhance consumer experience across touchpoints, Xiaomi Priority Club will offer a host of benefits that enable a seamless ownership and service experience while supplementing the unmatched brilliance of Xiaomi products. Xiaomi is revolutionizing customer experience by offering exclusive benefits designed to elevate every aspect of the consumer journey. With priority online appointments and expedited service at service centres, members can expect swift resolutions to their concerns, ensuring minimal disruption to their lives. Complimentary pick-up and drop services for mobile repairs eliminate the hassle of maintenance, while the guarantee of a 2-hour repair or standby device ensures uninterrupted connectivity. Regular half-yearly health check-ups and software updates keep devices in peak condition, optimizing performance.

Muralikrishnan B, President, Xiaomi

India said "Throughout our 10 years in India, we've continually evolved to meet the changing needs of our aspirational users. The commitment to deliver end-to-end premium experiences goes beyond just bringing flagship products. Xiaomi Priority Club extends our efforts in elevating our service standards and reiterates our core focus on customer satisfaction. With this, we are ensuring that every interaction with Xiaomi is nothing short of exceptional."

Additionally, members can enjoy the convenience of prompt callbacks from customer support and direct chat access to knowledgeable agents, bypassing automated systems for a more personalized and tailored experience. These offerings collectively enhance the customer journey, reaffirming Xiaomi's commitment to providing exceptional service and support to its valued consumers. In the first phase, the Xiaomi Priority Club service is being rolled out to Xiaomi's premium smartphones, including the recently launched Xiaomi 14 Series - Xiaomi 14 Ultra and Xiaomi 14. The benefits will also be available for Xiaomi 13 Pro, Xiaomi 12 Pro, and Mi 11 Ultra.

