

CM Revanth Reddy targets BRS, says Congress stands for social justice



Hyderabad, Aug 19 (GNS) Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Tuesday unveiled the statue of Sardar Sarvai Papanna Goud at Tank Bund on the occasion of his birth anniversary, describing him as a Bahujan leader who fought against feudal oppression and stood for social justice and equality.

Revanth Reddy said the statue would inspire future generations and directed Hyderabad in-charge Minister Ponnam Prabhakar to ensure proper lighting, accessibility and maintenance of the monument. He said the government would accord the statue importance on par with major memorials in the city.

The Chief Minister also announced that the government would officially observe the birth anniversary of Mudiraj icon Panduga Sayanna on October 22. He said pensions would be provided in "saturation mode" to all eligible weavers and toddy tappers and called for planting toddy and wild date palms along government land and irrigation canal embankments to protect the traditional occupation of the Goud community.

Revanth urged Goud families to educate their children, saying education and skill development were key to improving their future. He highlighted government initiatives including quality education and nutrition in government

schools, Advanced Training Centres, skill universities and a monthly RS 2,000 stipend for students enrolled in ATCs. He also recalled the distribution of 50,000 Kata-mayya Kits and Rs 5 lakh accidental death insurance cover for toddy tappers.

The Chief Minister claimed his government had implemented several welfare measures, including free bus travel for women, 200 units of free electricity for eligible poor households, Rs 500 bonus to farmers, Rs 20,617 crore farm loan waiver, Rs 36,000 crore under Rythu Bharosa and Rs 90,000 crore spent on paddy procurement. He also highlighted Young India Integrated Residential Schools, Young India Skills University and new sports institutions.

Targeting the previous BRS government, Revanth Reddy contrasted his government's "social justice" approach with what he termed "family justice" under K Chandrashekar Rao. He said the Congress government had taken steps on BC enumeration and Madiga categorisation and was working despite a debt burden of Rs 8.11 lakh crore.

Revanth Reddy also appealed to the Goud community to support the Congress government and expressed confidence that it would return to power in 2029. Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka, several Ministers and other leaders attended the programme.

Supreme Court flags students' rights, orders probe into police action

New Delhi, Aug 18 (GNS): The Supreme Court on Tuesday said it would set up a high-powered committee consisting of a retired top court judge, a former high court chief justice, an ex-CBI Director, a former DGP and others to examine allegations of police excesses during the CJP-led student protest last month.

Asking for suggestions from different parties on other members to be included in the proposed high-powered committee by this evening, a Bench d by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said an order to this effect would be released on Wednesday.

The Bench said it would direct the handing over of video footage and CCTV recordings of the violence during the July 20 Parlia-



ment march in the national capital to the panel for examination even as the Delhi Police denied using excessive force during the protest. The panel would examine video footage and CCTV recordings of the violence and the police response during the march and recommend measures to the top court.

The panel will also examine complaints by female protesters who were allegedly molested.

Alleging that 'history-sheeters' infiltrated July 20 protest in which 240 cops injured, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the Bench that except for 2,873 individuals, who have grave cases involving grievous offences of murder, rape, abductions etc, the cases against others can be quashed. "FIRs against student protestors must be quashed. How to do... your Lordships can decide. Anti-social

elements who infiltrated (the protest) have to be probed," Mehta told the Bench which also included Justice Joymalya Bagchi and Justice V Mohana. On behalf of a petitioner opposing the withdrawal of cases against protesters, advocate Rizwan Ahmed said the students should file affidavits expressing remorse before cases against them were withdrawn. Under the BNSS, there were only two categories of protests — lawful and unlawful, and since the July 20 Parliament march was unlawful, the protesters cannot escape liability, he argued.

Rizwan's arguments were opposed by senior advocates Menaka Guruswamy, Gopal Sankaranarayanan, N Hariharan and Shadan Farasat.

Eight Andhra fishermen missing in Bay Of Bengal

Amaravati, Aug 18 (GNS): Eight fishermen from Andhra Pradesh's B. R. Ambedkar Konaseema district went missing at sea, officials said on Tuesday. The fishermen, who had set out on a boat in the Bay of Bengal for fishing on August 3, were scheduled to return on August 12. The families of the fishermen were anxious as there had been no communication from them since the time they ventured into the sea. Andhra Pradesh officials have alerted the Indian Coast Guard, and the search was on for the missing fishermen.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu held a review meeting with officials regarding the incident in which a boat carrying

fishermen from Odalarevu, Dummalapeta, and Vasalatippa villages in Allavaram Mandal of B.R. Ambedkar Konaseema district went missing at sea.

The Chief Minister inquired about the ongoing search operations to locate the eight fishermen on board. He directed officials to intensify the search efforts until the missing boat and fishermen are found.

Officials informed the Chief Minister that the fishermen's boat had set out to sea for fishing from the Odalarevu jetty at 10 a.m. on August 3. They stated that while contact with family members was maintained via phone until 11 a.m., no further information was received thereafter.

Caste Census: Jairam Ramesh accuses centre of another U-Turn

New Delhi, Aug 18 (GNS): Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh on Tuesday accused the Modi government of deliberately undermining the proposed caste census, questioning why Census 2027 does not include a "drop down menu" for caste enumeration that the government itself had recommended in an affidavit filed before the Supreme Court in 2021.

In a post on social media platform X, Ramesh recalled that on September 21, 2021, the Modi government had filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court categorically opposing a plea seeking a caste census. However, he pointed to Para 12(d) of the affidavit, which acknowledged the importance of creating a standardised caste registry. "There was no registry of caste prepared prior to the conduct of 2011 Cen-



sus. It would have been ideal for the Registry of Castes that there should have been given a drop down menu for selection of the castes which could have made some consistent data available which can be relied upon," the affidavit stated, according to Ramesh.

The Congress leader questioned why the same mechanism was not being incorporated into Census 2027. "The question now is this: why does Census 2027 NOT have this drop down menu that the Modi Government recommended in the affidavit it submitted

to the Supreme Court in Sept 2021?" he asked.

Ramesh further claimed that such a standardised menu had already been prepared for the caste surveys conducted in Bihar and Telangana. He also recalled that Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge had suggested a similar mechanism in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on May 5, 2025. Alleging a deliberate attempt to weaken the caste enumeration exercise, Ramesh said, "The conclusion is clear: the Modi Govt wants to simply sabotage the caste census."

46 insurgents surrender under Manipur rehabilitation policy

Imphal, Aug 18 (GNS): In a major step towards peace, reconciliation and development in Manipur, 46 militants, including four women cadres of the proscribed Kangleipak Communist Party-Taibanganba faction, on Tuesday laid down 20 arms and surrendered before the state government.

The "Homecoming Ceremony", organised by the Home Department at the 1st Manipur Rifles Parade Ground in Imphal, took place after Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh, on August 12, publicly announced a 15-day deadline for the surrender of illegal weapons as part of efforts to strengthen the peace process in the state.

Addressing the "Homecoming Ceremony", Khemchand Singh said that the ethnic violence that erupted in the state on May 3, 2023, may have instigated some individuals to pick up arms and join insurgent groups.



He lauded the rebel group for coming forward to surrender, stating that holding guns had not brought peace to the state. He added that the government would extend all possible support to those who had surrendered and help them return to the mainstream.

Khemchand Singh said the surrender of the 46 KCP militants was taking place under the Revised Surrender-cum-Rehabilitation Policy, 2018, under which each surrendered cadre would be provided a monthly stipend of up to

Rs 6,000 for 36 months, besides a fixed deposit grant of Rs 4 lakh. He added that the government would also extend support for providing skill-based training to the surrendered cadres to help them acquire sustainable livelihoods and earn their living after returning to normal life.

Khemchand Singh stated that the government supports the demand for implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in the state, but does not appreciate the practice of calling bandhs.

Congratulations to Mohammad Abdul Kaleem on Appointment as Telangana State Secretary

Hyderabad, Agu 19 (GNS) Heartly Congratulations To Mr Mohammad Abdul Kaleem Appointed As Telangana State Secretary (MCA) Ministry Of Corporate Affairs(Govt of India Registered Organisation RK PROTECTION OF LEGAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION " Hope You Will Give Good Service To Poor And Needy People & I Hope You Will Fight For Our Rights & I Hope You Will Stand For Justice & I Hope You Will Get Good Name in Society Best Wishes From Syed Abdul Kareem Founder/ Director Rk PROTECTION OF LEGAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION



AI, Cybersecurity key to modern governance: Jitendra Singh

New Delhi, Aug 18 (GNS): Union MoS Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions Dr. Jitendra Singh on Tuesday said that AI, quantum technologies, cybersecurity and digital tools are rapidly transforming governance and emphasised the need for continuous learning and adaptation among civil servants. The minister was addressing participants of the 15-Day Refresher Course for Lateral Entry Joint Secretaries, Directors and Deputy Secretaries, and said that officers have to remain curious learners and continuously update their knowledge and skills due to the rapidly changing ad-



ministrative environment.

Dr. Singh also emphasised the additional responsibility of civil servants to use emerging technologies and digital tools for delivering flagship government programmes while maintaining their constitutional responsibilities and the institutional sanctity of gov-

ernment. Dr. Singh said that the refresher course should be viewed as an opportunity for two-way communication and learning through dialogue, rather than merely a platform for delivering lectures. He emphasised that participants, having acquired substantial professional experience and

maturity, should actively engage in discussions and provide feedback on their learning requirements.

The minister also suggested mechanisms for obtaining candid and anonymous feedback on faculty and course content so that training programmes can continuously improve.

He noted that the government has also focused on improving ease of implementation and ease of monitoring of programmes. Referring to the curriculum of the refresher course, the Minister highlighted areas including policy analysis, digital transformation, municipal finance, public health, cybersecurity, education and gov t communication. The minister noted that the changing communication environment, including the growing role of social media, makes it increasingly important for officers to develop the ability to communicate effectively with different stakeholders.

Wake-up call on the climate front

Dinesh C Sharma

THE southwest monsoon has wrought havoc in many parts of the country. The monsoon rainfall so far has been above normal, and several extreme weather events have been reported. The hill states/UT — Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir — are the worst hit, along with Punjab, Rajasthan and parts of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Many cities and rural areas in southern states, too, have recorded heavy rainfall.

The loss of human life due to cloudbursts, flooding, landslides and mudslides is huge. So is the loss of private property and public infrastructure. The heavy rainfall has resulted in bridges collapsing, bunds giving way, even newly built national highways getting washed away, and hydel projects reporting severe damage. Vital transport links have been disrupted, and the crop loss is set to be massive.

The ordeal has not ended. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted that the trend would continue. The monthly average rainfall across the country in September is most likely to be above normal. Most parts of the country are likely to receive normal to above-normal rainfall, posing risks like flooding, landslides, surface transport disruptions, public health challenges and ecological damage.

It is scientifically established that the Indian monsoon has been affected by climate change. Several



eral studies have pointed out that the frequency and intensity of heavy rainfall events have increased since the 1950s over most land areas, and that human-induced climate change is likely the main driver of this increase. A synthesis of these findings has been reported in the periodic assessments issued by the International Panel for Climate Change (IPCC).

Experts attribute the increased intensity of the monsoon to stronger atmospheric moisture build-up over the Indian Ocean, which, in turn, is triggered by higher evaporation due to higher sea surface temperatures, as well as an increased land-sea thermal contrast. The increased level of atmospheric moisture causes a larger moisture flux and higher precipitation as the summer monsoon moves from the southwest

to the east, carrying moisture from the ocean in large rain clouds. It means that the changing monsoon patterns being witnessed are linked to larger climate change.

So, should we simply blame climate change for whatever is happening and continue with 'business as usual' with our public policies relating to environment, urban planning, development, water resources, agriculture and so on? Not at all. First, climate change itself — as defined by the IPCC — is an anthropogenic or man-made phenomenon. For instance, if one of the key drivers of the monsoon — land-sea temperature difference during summers — is changing, it is due to excessive greenhouse gas emissions resulting from human activity. Second, while extreme weather events (incessant rainfall in

monsoon and extreme heat in summer) are going up due to climate change, their impacts (flooding, loss of human life, damage to infrastructure, etc.) are getting aggravated due to wrong public policies (concretisation, encroachment of riverbeds, destruction of hills, deforestation, etc.).

The solution lies in addressing climate change and faulty developmental policies simultaneously. First, we need to make all our public policies compliant with climate change. For decades, we have been saying this, but we see little action on the ground. The progress made under the national and state climate change action plans is limited to the promotion of renewable sources of energy.

Instead of focusing on a few sectors like energy or transport, the need is to mainstream climate change

concerns in all public policies. For instance, while proposing or constructing a hydropower plant or a new highway or a tunneling project in the hills, we should take into account not just immediate environmental concerns but also present and future risks arising due to climate change. The same applies to developmental projects in the plains where urban flooding has become a regular occurrence due to mindless concretisation, destruction of lakes and water bodies.

Second, we should thoroughly review the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regime. Over the years, it has been diluted, and clever ways have been devised to either circumvent its mandatory provisions or do away with it altogether. The most glaring example is the Char Dham highway project. The government agencies concerned avoided a comprehensive EIA by dividing the 825-km project into 53 smaller parts, each less than 100 km long. This way, they could avoid environmental scrutiny since the EIA is mandatory only for road projects exceeding 100 km.

Such segmentation of a large project to bypass environmental regulations was highlighted by environmentalists and raised in the Supreme Court-appointed committee. In some cases, environmental clearance was granted ex post facto to regularise projects initiated without EIA clearance. The apex court struck down the practice as illegal in May.

Equip students with ability to question power

IT is Paulo Freire, one of the greatest educationists, who must be remembered on Teachers' Day because it was he who redefined the teacher's role. While S Radhakrishnan emphasised the teacher as a guide, philosopher and moral force, Freire extended this vision, saying that a teacher is also a learner, and that the best teaching is grounded in dialogue, humility and shared inquiry.

Freire transformed the teacher-taught relationship from a hierarchical, one-way transfer of knowledge into a dialogical, participatory and liberating process where both grow together as co-creators of knowledge. In his seminal work Pedagogy of the Oppressed, he characterises the traditional model as the "banking model of education", in which the teacher assumes the role of an all-knowing authority who "deposits" information into the minds of passive learners.

In this framework, knowledge is treated as a fixed commodity, and students as empty vessels, awaiting the teacher's wisdom. Such a pedagogy reinforces domination, fosters conformity and deprives learners of the opportunity to develop critical consciousness. It reproduces social hierarchies by conditioning students to accept authority uncritically.

Freire proposes a dialogical model of education. Dialogue is not mere conversation but a mode of co-investigation, where both parties bring their experiences and perspectives into a search for meaning. It disrupts the rigid boundaries of authority, allowing education to become a genuinely humanising process.

Freire also advances a "problem-posing" approach to education. Teachers and students together interrogate social, political and cultural issues, thereby linking education to concrete human struggles. This process cultivates critical consciousness, enabling learners to perceive oppressive structures and imagine possibilities for transformation.

Freire does acknowledge that teachers bring experience, perspective and responsibility. Yet, their authority is not authoritarian; it is exercised with humility, respect and openness towards creating conditions for collective inquiry, ensuring that students' voices are heard and fostering a democratic classroom environment. Underlying this vision is a commitment to humanisation. Oppressive systems, whether political, educational or social, dehumanise individuals by treating them as objects to be manipulated.

The central role of education in a democracy is to cultivate critical consciousness among citizens. By equipping learners with the ability to interrogate power structures, challenge dominant ideologies and articulate alternative visions of society, education functions as a safeguard against hegemony and authoritarianism. When education fails in this role, it risks being an instrument of indoctrination.

So, this Teachers' Day, let us bring back the idea that education must not be used as an instrument of producing obedient subjects, but fearless citizens. It must give us the courage to resist authoritarian control and to say "no" when power tries to silence truth. A society where education serves the rulers rather than the people is a society that has already surrendered its freedom.

Curriculum revisions have blurred the vision

BY the government's own estimates, India requires an additional 10 lakh teachers, with nearly four lakh vacancies at the elementary level alone. With political will and administrative resolve, such recruitment could be achieved within a year. The systemic apathy towards the teaching profession persists despite India being a signatory to numerous Sustainable Development Goals.

Teacher recruitment and teacher education programmes have been mired in neglect over the past decade. The constant experimentation with one-, two- and four-year teacher education programmes, often dictated by the whims of policymakers, has generated confusion rather than clarity regarding the pathways to becoming a qualified teacher. The frequency and rapidity of these curricula revisions have blurred the vision of what constitutes a teacher and what professional competencies the role demands.

Equally disquieting are the conditions of service and remuneration. Salaries vary significantly, depending on the nature of the appointment and the type of school management. In flagship government programmes, such as the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, contractual teachers receive monthly salaries of Rs 18,000 in Bihar and Rs 25,000 in Tamil Nadu. These figures are lower than the government-prescribed minimum daily wage for semi-skilled labourers and, in some contexts, half the wages of highly skilled labourers.

Furthermore, 69 per cent of private school teachers and 14 per cent of government school teachers are employed on contractual terms, leaving them devoid of job security and financial stability. Prolonged delays in recruitment processes and the acute infrastructural deficits in rural schools further render teaching an unattractive career choice, dissuading talented individuals from entering the profession. Initiatives such as the National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) and the mandatory 50 hours of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) annually risk compounding the challenges. Rather than strengthening the profession, they often add bureaucratic burdens that undermine a teacher's autonomy and morale. Without structural reorientation, teachers will remain relegated to being subservient employees, compelled to comply with the ideological dictates of their superiors.

Being a teacher in the 21st century is already a formidable task. In the post-modern era, teachers are equated with search engines or AI tools. While digital technologies may provide access to information, they cannot replace the transformative presence of a teacher. What remains indispensable is the teacher as an informed being, one who inspires learners and animates the process of being and becoming. Without investing in this human capacity, India risks fostering a nation of classrooms without teachers, and, consequently, a nation without direction.

India's education system must therefore move beyond viewing teachers merely as a workforce to be deployed. Teaching is a profession that requires dignity, autonomy, adequate remuneration and opportunities for meaningful career progression. Recruitment policies must prioritise merit and transparency while ensuring that vacancies are filled within a clearly defined timeframe. Permanent and secure employment would also help attract capable young people who may otherwise choose more stable career paths.

Teacher education, meanwhile, needs consistency and academic depth. Instead of repeatedly altering course structures, policymakers should establish clear and stable pathways that equip teachers with subject knowledge, pedagogical skills, digital competence and an understanding of diverse learning needs. Teacher training should be designed to support professional growth rather than function primarily as a compliance exercise. Teachers should have greater participation in shaping curricula and professional standards that directly affect their work.

Investment in schools must accompany investment in teachers. Adequate classrooms, libraries, laboratories, sanitation, digital infrastructure and teaching resources are essential for creating an environment in which educators can perform effectively. Rural and disadvantaged schools require particular attention so that teachers are not forced to work under conditions that make both teaching and learning difficult. Improving infrastructure and working conditions can also reduce disparities between schools and strengthen public confidence in government education.

Burying justice in the Umar Khalid trial

Sanjay Hegde

WHAT does it say about our democracy when young men and women spend more than five years in prison without a finding of guilt?

That is where Umar Khalid, Sharjeel Imam and others find themselves today. They are not convicts. They are undertrials, still presumed innocent. Yet, because of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and the Delhi High Court's September 2025 order, they remain jailed. Their speeches, pamphlets and WhatsApp groups have been read as evidence of conspiracy. Meanwhile, the trial limps along under the weight of tens of thousands of pages. The Supreme Court in KA Najeeb (2021) had warned against exactly this: liberty cannot be suspended while cases drag on. That warning has been ignored. The high court relies on the precedent of Watali (2019), which tells judges to accept the prosecution's case at face value at the bail stage. Suspicion, not proof, becomes enough. The court insists that it is not holding a 'mini-trial'. But what it actually does is worse: it abandons scrutiny. Vague witness statements are taken as gospel. A WhatsApp group becomes a smoking gun. Speeches invoking non-violence are twisted into calls for bloodshed. If liberty is denied on such grounds, what remains of the trial, but theatre? Conspiracies can be proved indirectly, but even circumstantial



proof requires coherence. Here, dissent against the Citizenship Amendment Act is equated with a grand plan to burn Delhi.

Take Umar Khalid's Amravati speech of February, 2020. The court says that he "urged protests on 24.02.2020, which coincided with the State visit of the President of the USA" and that "such timing was deliberately chosen to cause violent riots...to garner international attention."

Yet, the actual transcript shows him telling his audience: "We won't respond to violence with violence. We won't respond to hate with hate. If they spread hate, we will respond to it with love. If they thrash us with lathis, we will hold the Tricolour higher." The court brushes past these categorical appeals to non-violence and reads into his mere reference to Trump's visit an intent to incite riots. The leap from "hold the Tricolour higher" to "mastermind of

communal violence" is not inference, but suspicion.

With Sharjeel Imam, the court highlights his speeches at Jamia, Aligarh, Asansol and Gaya. It cites lines where he spoke of "permanently cutting off Delhi from the rest of India" or treating chakka-jaam as a "spark". But what was a familiar protest tactic — road blockades and sit-ins — has been elevated into prima facie evidence of terrorism. The judgment ignores that the Allahabad High Court, evaluating the same Aligarh speech, found "absolutely no instigation to violence" and granted him bail. By criminalising rhetorical flourishes and overlooking explicit calls for peace, the court has made ideology itself the crime.

The judgment acknowledges that Article 19 protects peaceful protest, quoting Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan and even the Supreme Court's 2025 decision in Imran Pratap-

gadhi. But then, it accepts the prosecution's narrative that the anti-CAA protests were violent by design. But protest in India has always been disruptive.

From the Dandi March to anti-Emergency rallies, to sundry rath yatras and marches, sit-ins and road-blocks have been part of our democratic grammar. To brand such acts as "terrorist activity" is to criminalise democracy itself. To reduce the CAA protests to a riot plot is to erase the memory of ordinary women and men who stood up for the Constitution. Several co-accused Devangana Kalita, Natasha Narwal, Asif Iqbal Tanha are already out on bail. In principle, others similarly placed should get the same relief. The court sidesteps this by citing the SC's instruction that earlier bail orders "shall not be treated as a precedent." But Khalid's and Imam's roles are no greater than those already freed.

By declaring their involvement "graver" without showing how, the court avoids the hard question of equality before law. The court also shrugs off long incarceration. Five years behind bars is treated as "natural" because trials take time. But Article 21 promises liberty through a fair and timely process, not liberty after a decade of waiting. Justice delayed is justice denied here, it is justice buried.

The judgment reveals a deeper tilt. Every prosecution claim is accepted. Every defence is dismissed. Absence from riot sites? Ignored. No recovery of weapons? Irrelevant. Calls for peace? Recast as coded violence. If courts are unwilling to protect dissenters against such overreach, the message is unmistakable: liberty is conditional, and the condition is silence. This case is not just about Khalid or Imam. It is about the space for dissent in India. If protest can be read as terrorism, who will dare organise? If WhatsApp groups are conspiracies, who will dare join them? The chilling effect is already visible on our campuses and public squares. More dangerously, the judgment rewrites history. The anti-CAA movement was a constitutional mobilisation.

By painting it as a terror plot, the court delegitimises an entire movement and retroactively criminalises thousands of peaceful protestors. This criminalisation was also attempted with the farm laws protest, but thankfully not proceeded with

Kapas Kisan app will make cotton selling easier for farmers: Union Minister

New Delhi, Aug 18 (GNS): Union Minister of Textiles Giriraj Singh on Tuesday launched the 'Kapas Kisan' mobile app, calling it a "farmer-first" step that will make selling cotton easier and more transparent for growers. The app, developed by the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) under the Ministry of Textiles, aims to digitise the entire procurement process under the Minimum Support Price (MSP) scheme. "This farmer-first mobile app marks a major step in enhancing ease in selling of cotton by our cotton growers," the Union Minister stated. Speaking at the launch, Singh said the app would protect cotton farmers from distress sales and ensure timely and fair MSP operations. "By digitising key steps -- right from registration to payment tracking -- we are ensuring timely, transparent and fair MSP operations. It reinforces our commitment

to safeguard farmers from any distress sales and to accelerate the vision of Digital India," the minister said.

The 'Kapas Kisan' app allows farmers to register themselves, book slots for selling cotton at procurement centres, and track payments in real time. It also provides updates on quality assessment, accepted quantities, and payment processing. Available in multiple Indian languages, the app reduces paperwork, cuts waiting time at centres, and gives farmers the option to choose convenient slots for selling their produce.

The government said the move is part of broader efforts to support India's textile sector, which depends heavily on stable cotton supply. Farmers' interests are safeguarded through the MSP mechanism, while industry competitiveness is maintained through measures such as the recently extended cotton import duty

exemption until December 2025. Cotton remains the backbone of India's textile industry, which employs over 45 million people and contributes significantly to exports. By combining farmer-friendly digital tools like the 'Kapas Kisan' app with policy measures on cotton supply, the government aims to strengthen both cotton growers and textile manufacturers.

The launch of the 'Kapas Kisan' app is expected to bring greater efficiency to the cotton procurement system by reducing the dependence on manual procedures. Farmers will be able to complete registration and other formalities digitally, helping them save time and avoid repeated visits to procurement centres. The system is also intended to make the procurement process more predictable during the peak cotton season.

The app's real-time payment tracking feature could

further improve transparency between farmers and procurement agencies. By allowing growers to monitor the status of their payments, the digital platform can reduce uncertainty and provide greater confidence in the MSP procurement mechanism. Timely payments are particularly important for small and marginal farmers who depend on the sale of their produce to meet immediate household and agricultural expenses.

The multilingual facility is another important feature, as cotton is cultivated across several states with diverse linguistic communities. Providing information and services in regional languages can make the digital system more accessible to farmers who may not be comfortable using English-based platforms. The initiative could also encourage wider adoption of digital services among farmers in rural areas.

Indian Heritage Hotels Association demands GST exemption for foreign tourists

Jaipur, Aug 18 (GNS): The Indian Heritage Hotels Association (IHHA) has submitted a memorandum to Union Tourism Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat seeking GST exemption for foreign tourists. According to IHHA Secretary General Captain Gaj Singh Alsisar, this measure would help India compete more effectively with destinations such as South-east Asia and Israel, while also offsetting the foreign exchange deficit caused by ongoing US tariff issues.

He made these remarks on Tuesday during a press conference at Alsisar Haveli, ahead of the 12th IHHA Annual Convention and 24th Annual General Meeting.

The convention will take place at Castle Kanota in Jaipur on September 6 and 7, with nearly 150 heritage hoteliers from across India expected to participate.

Of the 206 heritage hotels in the country, almost 140 are located in Rajasthan.

This year's convention will be held under the theme 'Romantic Heritage', reflecting how heritage properties embody romance through their music, cuisine, architecture, and equestrian traditions. Rajasthan's Deputy Chief Minister and Tourism Minister Diya Kumari will inaugurate the exhibition on September 6 by lighting the ceremonial lamp.

The inaugural session will feature a talk on Revival of Heritage Architecture by Sanjeev Vidyarthi, followed by the screening of a documentary on Rajasthan's folk music by Abhimanyu Singh Alsisar. A dialogue on Hotel Operations by Veer Vijay Singh Dundlod and a presentation by Solar Edge Technologies will also be part of the day's programme. Later in the day, Union Minister Shekhawat will attend the IHHA Executive Committee meeting.

This exclusive session for committee members will be

followed by a walk through General Amar Singh's Library and Museum, along with the screening of a documentary on General Amar Singh at Mardana Bagh.

On September 7, the IHHA will hold its 24th Annual General Meeting, during which elections will also be conducted. The day will feature a panel discussion on the future of tourism with Rajasthan's eminent representatives. Further panel discussions will explore reviving the dying art and craft as well as horse safari and rural tourism. The convention will conclude with a vote of thanks from IHHA Joint Secretary Prithvi Singh Kanota. The IHHA emphasised that its objective is to infuse youthful energy into heritage tourism, inspire the next generation to take up leadership roles, and strengthen strategies to promote India's heritage hotels both domestically and internationally.

IHHA leaders reiterated that heritage tourism not only sustains cultural traditions but also ensures sustainable development by engaging local communities and promoting responsible tourism.

Future initiatives will focus on deeper government collaborations, empowering rural communities, and positioning India as a leading global heritage tourism destination.

The IHHA said GST relief for foreign tourists could make India's heritage tourism sector more competitive in the international market. Such an exemption, it argued, could encourage more overseas visitors to choose Indian heritage properties and increase foreign exchange earnings. The association believes that competitive pricing is particularly important as global tourism destinations continue to introduce incentives to attract.

Employment in India's unincorporated sector crosses record 13 crore

New Delhi, Aug 18 (GNS): Both establishments and employment in India's unincorporated non-agricultural sector have risen sharply in the January-March and April-June quarters of 2025 over the levels reported in the Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE), 2023-24 annual estimates, according to official figures released by the Ministry of Statistics on Wednesday.

Employment in the unincorporated non-agricultural sector crossed the 13 crore mark for the first time in January-March 2025, reaching 13.13 crore—well above all previous ASUSE annual estimates, which had remained below 13 crore. It then eased to 12.86 crore in the April-June quarter. Employment estimates for the unincorporated sector in both quarters show a substantial increase over the ASUSE 2023-24 annual estimate of just over 12 crore workers, indicating a

marked rise in overall employment levels in this sector, according to an official statement. Women accounted for over 28 per cent of the workforce in both quarters, showcasing the sector's importance as a driver of gender-inclusive growth and entrepreneurship. This is slightly higher than the same observed in ASUSE 2023-24.

The total number of establishments in the unincorporated non-agricultural sector rose to 7.94 crore during April-June 2025, compared to 7.85 crore in the previous quarter. This growth was driven primarily by the trade segment, which rose by 3.63 per cent and other services, which increased by 3.13 per cent. The fluctuation in employment estimates during April-June 2025 is mainly linked to a reduction in the number of establishments engaging hired workers and a moderate performance of the unincorporated manufacturing sector.

Health Ministry to amend rules for new drug, clinical trials to promote ease of doing business

New Delhi, Aug 18 (GNS): The Union Health Ministry on Wednesday announced plans to amend rules for the pharmaceutical and clinical research sectors to promote ease of doing business. "The proposed amendments in the New Drugs and Clinical Trials (NDCT) Rules, 2019, aim to simplify the requirements and procedures for obtaining test licences and for submitting applications related to Bioavailability/Bioequivalence (BA/BE) studies," the Ministry said, noting that it has also published this in the Gazette of India on August 28 to seek public comments.

The initiative underscores the government's commitment to ongoing regulatory reforms in the pharmaceutical sector. "It forms a part of the broader efforts toward Ease of Doing Business to promote the growth of the Indian pharma industry and align domestic regulations with

global best practices," the Ministry said. "These steps are expected to increase the attractiveness of India for clinical research, thereby strengthening India's position as a global hub for pharmaceutical research and development," it added.

The amendment proposes that the current license system for test licenses be converted to a notification/intimation system. "Through this, the applicants need not wait for test licenses (except a small section in the high-risk category drugs) but will need to just intimate the Central Licensing Authority," the Ministry said. In addition, the overall statutory processing time for test licence applications will be reduced from 90 days to 45 days. The proposed amendment also seeks to dispense with the existing licence requirement "for certain categories of BA/BE studies, which may instead

be initiated upon submission of an intimation or notification to the Central Licensing Authority". These regulatory reforms are expected to benefit stakeholders by significantly reducing the timelines for processing applications, the Ministry said.

It will not only "reduce the number of license applications being submitted by approximately 50 per cent, but also facilitate quicker initiation of BA/BE studies, testing and examinations of drugs for research, and reduce delays in the drug development and approval processes", the Ministry added. Moreover, the amendments will enable the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) to optimise the deployment of its human resources, thereby enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of regulatory oversight.

The proposed changes are expected to provide greater flexibility to phar-

maceutical companies and research institutions involved in drug development. By replacing certain licensing requirements with a simpler notification-based mechanism, researchers could begin permitted studies more quickly while maintaining regulatory oversight by the Central Licensing Authority.

The reduction in processing time from 90 days to 45 days could also help shorten the overall drug development cycle. Faster approvals and testing procedures may allow companies to move promising medicines into subsequent stages of research without unnecessary administrative delays, improving the efficiency of clinical research in India.

The reforms could particularly benefit smaller pharmaceutical companies and research organisations that may face greater administrative and financial challenges under complex licensing procedures.

2-wheeler segment logs strong growth in India driven by robust exports, domestic recovery

New Delhi, Aug 18 (GNS): India's automobile industry showed 2.8 per cent year-on-year (YoY) growth in retail sales in August, with robust performance in the two-wheeler segment, a report said on Wednesday.

Two-wheeler manufacturers increased sales by 2.1 per cent primarily through exports and festive-season inventory buildup on the part of dealers, a report from Choice Institutional Equities said. Passenger vehicle sales improved marginally by 0.8 per cent, led by a healthy demand for the SUV segment. The three-wheeler sales declined by 2.3 per cent YoY as consumers moved towards electric vehicles.

Eicher Motors reported a 54.8 per cent increase in two-wheeler sales year-on-year, while TVS Motor saw a 30.1 per cent rise, driven by strong demand for premium motorcycles. iHero Moto-Corp increased by 8.1 per cent due to rural recovery,

while Bajaj Auto saw a 5.0 per cent rise, supported by a 28.6 per cent surge.

The PV segment sales in the domestic market slowed as dealers kept lean inventories in anticipation of GST rate changes. The segment also saw increased CNG penetration, the report said. Mahindra & Mahindra reported a 9 per cent year-over-year decline in domestic dispatches. Maruti Suzuki saw a 0.6 per cent drop but was supported by strong exports. Commercial vehicle sales increased by 8.0 per cent, while tractor sales rose by 29.7 per cent due to rural demand. CV inventory, led by Ashok Leyland, showed a decline, easing dealer pressure after a subdued year, the report noted. The Centre is also expected to lower the tax on entry-level passenger vehicles and two-wheelers to 18 per cent, making them more affordable ahead of Diwali. Currently, all passenger vehicles based on

combustion engines are subject to a GST of 28 per cent plus a compensation cess of 1 per cent to 22 per cent based on engine capacity, length, and body type.

The overall growth in automobile retail sales indicates a gradual improvement in consumer demand, although the recovery remains uneven across segments. Two-wheelers continued to provide support to the market, helped by festive inventory stocking, exports and improving demand from rural areas.

The expected GST reduction on entry-level passenger vehicles and two-wheelers could provide an additional boost to sales ahead of the festive season. Lower taxes could improve affordability for price-sensitive consumers and encourage first-time buyers to enter the market. Rural demand is emerging as an important driver for the automobile sector.

Festive demand, policy changes drove UPI to record high in August

New Delhi, Aug 18 (GNS): India's real-time digital payment system Unified Payments Interface (UPI) recorded 20.01 billion transactions in August 2025, fuelled primarily by festive demand, advancements in technology, and policy changes, a report said on Wednesday. The report in India Narrative stated that a seasonal uptick in consumer spending, especially with early festive demand, led to a 34 per cent year-on-year surge and a 3 per cent month-on-month surge in UPI transactions in August. Further, the Indian government and RBI have promoted UPI adoption through incentives, regulatory support, and ongoing expansion of features such as UPI credit and improved interoperability, all of which have contributed to the surge, the report added.

In August, UPI processed Rs 24.85 lakh crore (\$281 billion) through it with an

average of 645 million daily transactions. Another factor is that India now has over 900 million internet users and at least 500 million smartphone users, enabling seamless access to UPI even in semi-urban and rural areas where digital payments are expanding rapidly. August 2025 also saw growth in FASTag (up 3 per cent from July) and Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AePS, up 24 per cent to 128.17 million).

The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has enabled interoperability between apps such as PhonePe and Google Pay, allowing instant transfers using UPI IDs or QR codes.

More sectors -- including utilities, e-commerce, transportation, and small merchants -- accept UPI, reflecting its growing relevance for both micro and macro transactions.

The government's Digital India initiative, along with

the RBI's regulatory support, introduced UPI Lite for low-value payments and credit integration, broadening use cases.

UPI now accounts for 85 per cent of all digital transactions in India and nearly half of real-time payments globally. UPI's live rollout in seven countries, including France in 2025, showcases its international influence and adoption.

The strong growth in UPI transactions highlights the increasing shift towards digital payments across India. Consumers are using UPI not only for everyday purchases but also for larger payments, making it an important part of the country's financial ecosystem. The expansion of UPI in semi-urban and rural areas is further widening financial inclusion. Small retailers, street vendors and local businesses can accept payments through QR codes without requiring.

Long-term demand outlook for India's cement sector remains robust

New Delhi, Aug 18 (GNS): The long-term demand outlook for India's cement sector remains robust, driven by housing, infrastructure, and urban development projects, a report said on Wednesday.

At the pan-India level, the cement prices rose 7 per cent year-on-year, increasing from Rs 330 per bag in August 2024 to Rs 354 per bag in August this year, PL Capital said in a report.

The peak during the period between July 2023 and August 2025 was seen in November 2023, when prices reached Rs 387 per bag.

As per the report, India's cement sector saw a price drop in August, with the all-India average falling by Rs 6 per bag month-on-month to Rs 354. Eastern markets led the fall with Patna witnessing the sharpest correction in the last month, largely due to subdued demand as heavy rains, seasonal weakness, and festivals slowed down construction activity.

Demand is expected to improve once the monsoon recedes, and pricing is expected to improve only post the upcoming festive season. "For cement companies, the next two months will be critical in balancing cost pressures with demand revival," the report said.

Rural consumption, a key post-monsoon growth driver, is likely to strengthen, supported by higher infrastructure spending.

"After remaining largely steady for the past three months despite the monsoon, cement prices witnessed a sharp correction in August, most notably in the Eastern region," said Tushar Chaudhari, Research Analyst, PL Capital. While companies are attempting price hikes ahead of the anticipated GST rationalisation, weak festive season demand is likely to offset these efforts, he added. Although demand is anticipated to recover post-monsoon, the commissioning of new capacities could challenge the sustainability of current price levels, he said.

Industry players are attempting to push through price hikes ahead of a potential GST rate rationalisation, expected to create headroom for pricing stability, according to the report. However, muted demand and capacity additions across the industry present a challenging backdrop. Dealers highlighted that repeated hike announcements without implementation are causing inventory pile-ups and adding pressure on working capital.

The cement industry is expected to remain an important beneficiary of India's infrastructure expansion, with demand supported by highways, railways, housing projects and urban infrastructure. Government spending on public works, along with continued private-sector construction, is likely to provide a strong foundation for long-term consumption.

The housing segment is also expected to contribute significantly to cement demand, particularly in smaller cities and rural areas. As the monsoon season ends, construction activity could pick up, supported by improving rural consumption and renewed spending on residential projects. This recovery, however, may take some time to translate into stronger cement prices.

Regional variations are likely to remain an important feature of the market. While eastern markets experienced sharper price corrections in August, other regions could see relatively better pricing depending on local construction activity, supply conditions and competition among manufacturers. Companies may therefore adopt different pricing strategies across markets. The commissioning of additional cement capacity is another factor that could influence the industry. While new plants will help meet rising long-term demand, increased supply could create temporary pressure on prices if capacity additions.

Telangana ‘Investor Paradise’, Says Deputy CM Bhatti



Hyderabad, Aug 18 (GNS): Telangana is a paradise that encourages all kinds of investors, and the government’s goal is to transform the state into a hub for clean energy, said Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka. On Tuesday, he inaugurated the two-day India Energy Summit & Expo 2026 at HITEX and Novotel in Hyderabad. Addressing industrialists, investors, innovators, and technology experts attending the summit, the Deputy CM extended a strong invitation.

“Investors, innovators, scientists, CEOs... I warmly invite all of you. Telangana is a state that promotes every kind of investment—it is truly a paradise for investors. We are ready to share our growth and prosperity and welcome you wholeheartedly to grow with us,” Bhatti Vikramarka said.

He emphasized that energy transition is not merely about changing the source of electricity gener-

ation, but a transformative process that reshapes the entire economic system. He expressed the vision of making Telangana not just a consumer of clean energy, but a major global manufacturing hub for clean energy technologies. The Deputy CM explained that the state has designed plans to meet rapidly growing power demand while ensuring environmental sustainability. As part of this, Telangana aims to expand solar power capacity to 20,000 MW by 2030 and over 26,000 MW by 2035. He also highlighted the importance of energy storage for renewable energy integration, stating that through battery energy storage and pumped storage projects, the state plans to achieve 3,800 MW storage capacity by 2030 and 8,000 MW by 2035.

He further noted that Hyderabad’s strengths in IT and AI are being leveraged to transform the future power grid into a digital

network. A dedicated 100 MW renewable energy plant is being planned to support an AI data center in the proposed ‘Bharat Future City.’

Additionally, the state has set targets of producing 400,000 tonnes of green hydrogen annually by 2030 and establishing 12,000 EV charging stations by 2035. Companies manufacturing solar, wind, and battery components in Telangana will receive capital support, SGST reimbursement, and electricity duty exemptions, along with fast-track approvals through TG-iPASS.

He concluded by stating that this energy transformation is only possible through strong government-private partnerships and invited industrialists to join hands with Telangana in this journey. After the event, the Deputy CM visited various exhibition stalls. Energy Special Chief Secretary Navin Mittal and other officials were also present.

Jupally Urges Congress Workers to Protect Voters' Rights

Sirpur, Aug 18: (GNS) Telangana Minister Jupally Krishna Rao on Tuesday alleged that the BJP-led Central government was attempting to delete a large number of voters under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process. He urged Congress workers to remain vigilant and safeguard the voting rights of all eligible voters.

The Minister said that thousands of names in the Sirpur and Asifabad Assembly constituencies have been included in the “anomalies” and proposed deletion lists. He cautioned



that the names of eligible voters could also appear in these lists and stressed the need for careful verification of every case.

Jupally Krishna Rao appealed to voters not to wait for official notices and instead submit Form-7 along

with the required supporting documents to the concerned authorities. He also directed Congress leaders and booth-level workers to conduct regular review meetings and remain active throughout the revision process.

The Minister said the Telangana government, under the leadership of Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, is effectively implementing development and welfare programmes. He urged Congress cadres to work together to ensure that every eligible citizen’s right to vote is protected.

Uttam Reddy Orders Scientific Water Management Amid El Niño Uncertainty

Hyderabad, Aug 18 (GNS): Water management is not merely about looking hopefully at the skies; State Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister Captain N. Uttam Kumar Reddy emphasized that calculations regarding reservoir levels, usable water, reserves for drinking needs, and allocations for standing crops must be grounded in science and reality. Given the uncertainty surrounding the remainder of the monsoon due to El Niño conditions, he directed officials to proceed with the principle of “prioritizing drinking water security while maximizing protection for Kharif crops using available water.”

On Tuesday, the Minister held a high-level review meeting at Jalasoudha regarding reservoir water levels, inflows, and irrigation prospects for



the rest of the Kharif season. He stated that it would be imprudent to formulate water management plans based on the mere anticipation of heavy rains and massive upstream inflows during the upcoming months of September and October.

He emphasized that currently available water should be the primary benchmark, reliable inflows should form

the basis for projections, and scientific analysis of rainfall patterns should guide decision-making. “Our approach must be balanced and prudent. Under no circumstances should the public’s drinking water needs be jeopardized. At the same time, we cannot remain passive spectators while crops wither when there is surplus water available in the

reservoirs beyond drinking water requirements. Every decision regarding water release must be based on actual usable storage, reliable inflows, and realistic rainfall forecasts,” Uttam Kumar Reddy clarified.

The review revealed that major reservoirs in the Krishna basin hold 746.12 TMC of water against a total capacity of 973.68 TMC,

representing a storage level of 76.63 percent. Officials explained that in the Godavari basin, 208.38 TMC of water is available against a capacity of 306.20 TMC, which is 68.1 percent of the total capacity.

Officials informed the Minister that the Nagarjuna Sagar project—a joint venture between the states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh on the Krishna River—currently holds approximately 164 TMC of water. Noting that the project’s gross capacity is approximately 312 TMC and that there is potential to receive about 47% more floodwater, the Minister advised that irrigation needs be assessed with great care, given the ayacut of over 6.4 lakh acres across Nalgonda, Suryapet, and Khammam districts under the Nagarjuna Sagar Left Canal.

Mini Job Mela Gets Good Response in Nizamabad

Falaknuma News
State Correspondent
M.A.Samad
Nizamabad Aug 18

A mini job mela organised at the District Employment Office in Shivaji Nagar, Nizamabad, received an encouraging response from unemployed youth on Tuesday. Three prominent companies — Prudence Hospital, Apollo Pharmacy and Mahindra Showroom — participated in the recruitment drive and conducted interviews for various local vacancies. Prudence Hospital conducted interviews for nurses and receptionist posts, while Apollo Pharmacy recruited pharmacists, assistant pharmacists and apprentices. Mahindra Showroom conducted interviews for managers, mechanics and sales executives.

A total of 168 unemployed candidates attended the job mela, of whom 52 candidates were selected for various positions. District Employment Officer



Velpula Vijetha handed over appointment letters to the selected candidates on the spot. The selected candidates will receive salaries ranging from 13,500 to 18,000 per month.

Speaking on the occasion, Vijetha said the job mela was organised by identifying local employment opportunities to help unemployed youth find jobs closer to home. She congratulated the selected candidates and announced that similar job melas would be organised every month based on available local vacancies. She also said that 4,620 unemployed candidates had registered

on the TOMCOM platform during the earlier overseas mega job mela. In the first phase, 120 candidates were selected for employment opportunities in Germany. Free German language training classes for the selected candidates will be organised from next week, she added.

Vijetha appealed to unemployed youth to make full use of job melas and available employment opportunities. HR representatives Kireeti, Maruthi and Japaniya, along with office staff Swathi, Anith, Sandeep, Satyanarayana and Ravinder, among others, participated in the programme.

Cement Firms Agree to Rs 230 Bags for Indiramma Houses

Hyderabad, Aug 18 (GNS): State Minister for Revenue, Housing, and Information & Public Relations, Pon-guleti Srinivasa Reddy, has appealed to the cement industry to partner in the prestigious ‘Indiramma Houses’ scheme—an initiative launched by the people’s government under the lead-

ership of Honorable Chief Minister Revanth Reddy with the resolve to realize the dream of homeownership for the poor.

On Tuesday, the Minister held a meeting at his Secretariat office with representatives of cement industry managements to discuss reducing the price of cement

required for the construction of these houses.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister stated that the Indiramma Houses scheme implemented by the Telangana government is not merely a housing construction program; it is a noble mission aimed at providing poor families with a dignified life.

Congress Leaders Warn MP Arvind to Restrain His Remarks



Falaknuma News
State Correspondent
M.A.Samad
Nizamabad Aug 18

A press conference was held at the District Congress Party office on Tuesday under the leadership of Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee General Secretary Rambhupal and District Youth Congress President Vipul Goud. Addressing the media, Rambhupal warned BJP MP Arvind to exercise restraint in his remarks against Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee President Mahesh Kumar Goud. He said that making inappropriate comments against senior Congress leaders would not be tolerated. He criticised Arvind for allegedly disregarding political decorum and making personal remarks against Mahesh Kumar Goud.

Youth Congress President Vipul Goud alleged that Mahesh Kumar Goud had a long political career beginning with the NSUI, while MP Arvind had failed to bring sufficient funds from the Centre

for the development of the constituency. He alleged that Arvind visits the district only a few times a year and focuses on criticising Congress leaders for publicity.

Vipul Goud said Mahesh Kumar Goud had worked for the development of Nizamabad district and made efforts for institutions including an agriculture college, engineering college and medical college. He also credited him with efforts towards temple corridor roads and securing funds from the State Government for various development works. Women Congress President Revathi criticised BJP corporators for allegedly making inappropriate remarks against the TPCC president. She warned that such statements would not be tolerated and said Congress leaders would respond strongly if similar remarks were repeated. Corporators Yerram Gangadhar, Praveen Yadav and Panchar Reddy Charan, Co-option Member Bobbili Madhuri and others attended the press conference.

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