

Minor fire breaks out in Tirumala kitchen

A minor fire accident took place in the kitchen of the Sri Venkateswara temple in Tirumala on Sunday. A tin containing ghee slipped and fell on the stove, which started the fire. Fire tenders rushed to the spot and put out the flames within 30 minutes.

10,130 government offices mapped in Kerala

As many as 10,130 government offices have already been mapped as part of the ₹4.24-crore-Mapathon Keralam project, a crowdsourcing mapping initiative, which aims at creating micro-level mans of entire Kerala for identifying its natural and physical assets. The project is part of the Rebuild Kerala Initiative.

'Disha's killers contradicted one another' Two held in A.P.

During inquiry, Arif put the blame on the other three, while they claimed he goaded them: police

ABHINAY DESHPANDE HYDERABAD

The four accused in the gang-rape and murder of the 27-year-old veterinarian are learnt to have given contradictory confessions to the investigating officers about the offence they committed on November 27.

The source said all the four accused – Mohammed Arif, 26, Jollu Shiva, Jollu Naveen and Ch. Chennakeshavulu, all aged about 20 gave different versions of the events that unfolded on that fateful night.

They were taken into custody by the police on December 4 for interrogation and were gunned down in the wee hours of December 6.

Kept apart A senior police officer associated with the investigation said all the accused were held separately at an 'undisclosed' location in Cyberabad. "All of them were scared and narrated different versions of how they planned the offence, sexual-

dead in an exchange of fire on Friday. • PTI

ly assaulted the vet and subsequently killed her. The confessions did not match.' said the officer.

The other three maintained that it was Arif who asked them to consume alcohol and hatched the conspiracy to rape the vet when they first saw her parking her two-wheeler near the Tondupally toll gate on the Outer Ring Road on the evening of

November 27. "While Arif shifted the blame on the other three, they claimed it was Arif who goaded them to commit the offence," said a police official, requesting

Speaking to The Hindu, another officer said that when the accused were taken to the Chattanpalli underpass in the early hours of Friday for reconstruction of

the crime scene, they all said different things. "One said they carried the victim in their hands after parking their lorry on the highway, while another said they took the lorry and went under the

bridge," said a police officer. When the police asked them where they buried the victim's mobile, power bank and her watch, they pointed to different directions.

Family alleges inaction by the police

STAFF REPORTER

Family members of Disha reportedly informed the National seven-member Human Rights Commission (NHRC) team, headed by Senior Superintendent of Police Manzil Saini, of the alleged inaction of the Cyberabad police when they went to lodge a missing person complaint on the fateful night of November

Disha's father and sister met the team of the NHRC at RBVRR Telangana State Police Academy on Sun-

Sources said that Disha's family told the team that the victim's life could have been saved had the Cyberabad police acted on time without citing jurisdiction

for raping minor

Incident took place on November 25

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Within a couple of days of the shooting down of the accused in the Disha rape and murder case in Telangana, another incident, this time involving a minor, came to light from the Tiruchanur police station limits of Andhra Pradesh on Sunday.

The girl, 16, hailing from the vicinity, was walking down the road on the night of November 25, when Chittoor Venkatesh, 28, offered her a lift on his two-wheeler.

She boarded the vehicle, but after going some distance the man stopped near Mundlapudi pretending to have run out of fuel. He called his friend Bukke Rajmohan Naik, 28, requesting him to bring petrol.

Gagged and raped

The latter arrived at the spot a few minutes later. The duo then gagged the girl and dragged her into the nearby

bushes and allegedly raped her. The two then took off on the two-wheeler.

The shocked girl called her parents, who lodged a complaint with the Tiruchanur police. Based on the description given by the girl and with the help of CCTV footage, the police arrested the duo near the Tiruchanur flvover on afternoon.

Accused in murder case Rajmohan Naik is an accused in a murder case registered at the Tirupati West police station last year. The case has since been transferred to Tiruchanur after he changed his location.

Deputy Superintendent of Police (Tirupati East division) T. Muralikrishna said that a case under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act of 2012 had been registered and the accused sent to jud-

Delay in NREGS wages hits BPL families

Centre yet to pay ₹1,000 crore for job scheme and material cost arrears to Kerala

N.J. NAIR

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM The alleged delay by the Centre in releasing the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) wage and material cost arrears of ₹1,000 crore due to Kerala has left about 15 lakh below poverty line (BPL) families in the lurch.

The arrears comprises wages of ₹860 crore and material cost and administrative expenses of ₹140 crore. Payment of wages has been indefinitely held up at a time when the State is trying to

overcome the pangs of rural poverty, price hike of essentials, job loss due to economic slow down and such other major ills.

95% women

About 95% of the 12.98 lakh workers registered under the scheme are women and the lapse in releasing the wages would push them to the verge of poverty yet again. Kerala is one State that had set a model worth emulating for others in taking up projects for creating durable assets and providing maximum employment to

the indigent and marginalised sections. The scheme had come as a blessing to a legion of families that are striving hard to eke out a living. Local Self-Government Department sources told *The Hindu* that the audit reports have been submitted and replies to queries too have also been furnished within the time set by the

All other procedures, including inspections, have been completed and a decision to recover ₹25 lakh in connection with some of the works completed under the scheme have been approved. Still, the payment is being delayed without attributing any valid reason.

The Local Self-Government Department Principal Secretary had apprised the Centre of the issue on December 3 and was learnt to have wrested an assurance for releasing the funds soon, but the Union government had not heeded to such moves so far, sources said.

The delay would have a serious impact on the execution of projects, mainly watershed development, sourc-

ASI rescues girl who jumped into Krishna river

The 58-year-old brought her ashore with help from local fishermen

STAFF REPORTER MACHILIPATNAM

An assistant sub-inspector (ASI) rescued a girl who jumped into the river Krishna at the Puligadda-Penumudi bridge near Avanigadda in Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh on Sunday.

Koppula Manikyala Rao, Avanigadda station ASI, was on duty at the bridge as a part of the weekly 'No-Accident Drive' campaign when he saw the girl jumping.

He promptly jumped into the river, found her, and brought her safely to the shore.



Good job: Avanigadda ASI Manikyala Rao, second from left, being felicitated on Sunday. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

What is commendable is that the 58-year-old ASI managed to swim nearly 500 m in search of the girl. And, he

managed to bring her out safely with help from local fishermen.

According to an official re-

lease, the girl has been admitted to the government hospital in Avanigadda, where she is responding to medical treatment.

The girl is an under grad-

uate student from the nearby Diviseema region. She reportedly attempted to end her life due to some personal

Krishna district Superintendent of Police M. Ravindranath Babu and other officials lauded ASI Manikyala Rao's effort.

Those suffering with suicidal thoughts can dial 100 for

'Kerala is in for major dengue epidemic'

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala could be bracing for vet another major dengue epidemic in 2020 going by the current and early disease surveillance trends, public health experts said.

With serological evaluations showing that there might be a shift in the type of dengue virus hitherto circulating in the community, the possibility of the next outbreak being more virulent, with significant mortality, cannot be discounted, the experts have

warned. Not just dengue, Chikungunya also seems to be rearing its head again, with a significant spike in the number of cases being reported from Thiruvananthapuram. Dengue epidemics occur in a cyclical pattern and the last major epidemic in 2017 resulted in 165 deaths.

Patient wait



shot up to ₹250 a kg in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh on Sunday. • к.v. роогнаснандая кимая

Wild elephants create panic among farmers in Chittoor

A 30-member herd is moving close to fields in Kuppam

STAFF REPORTER

The presence of a 30-member herd of wild elephants moving close to the fields in the villages of Rallabuduguru panchayat of Shantipuram mandal of Kuppam Assembly constituency in Andhra Pradesh is causing

According to available information, the wild elephants raided standing crops of paddy, ragi and vegetables at Bellakogila village of the mandal in the early hours, and started moving towards Rallabuduguru along the forest fringes.

tension among farmers.

Though the movement of wild herds is regular in Kuppam, Gudupalle and Ramakuppam mandals, the villages of Shantipuram mandal are considered safe from the jumbo raids, usually seeing such incidents only occa-



Migratory path: Elephants from Karnataka forests moving close to fields near Rallabuduguru near Kuppam in A.P.

sionally. Forest officials said the presence of various standing crops had lured the herds

Agriculture activity

It has been observed that wild elephants along the Hosur, Krishnagiri, Kuppam and Karnataka are active along the migratory path in the months from November to mid-January due to the

agriculture activity. Meanwhile, forest officials have deployed trackers at the trouble spot, and initiated measures to drive the pachyderms back into forests. By Sunday evening, the herd had split into two and were moving beside the fringe villages along the Kuppam-Kar-

nataka border.

BJP will win at least 13 seats: Yediyurappa

Ahead of the counting today, Karnataka CM is confident of sweeping by elections

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

DHARMASTHALA/SHIVAMOGGA Hours before the counting of votes for the byelection to 15 Karnataka Assembly seats is due to begin on Monday, Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa exuded confidence that the BJP will win at least 13 of them.

Speaking to presspersons during his visit to Dharmasthala here on Sunday, Mr. Yediyurappa said one seat each might go to the Congress and the Janata Dal (Secular). "I don't think our predic-

tion will go wrong," he said

and added that this will help in giving a stable government to the State. had come to the temple to

The Chief Minister said he seek the strength to rule the State effectively in the re-

years. "I'm also praying to the deity to resolve problems of people of the State and give them prosperity,"

masthala. The work will start

Mr. Yediyurappa said he

shortly, he said. Mr. Yediyurappa, Home had released funds for con-Minister Basavaraj Bommai,

and Inland Water Transport Kota Srinivas Poojary also joined them. Earlier, he told reporters **Prayer time:** Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa at Sri Manjunatha temple in Dharmasthala. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT structing a retaining wall to the vented dam built across the Netravathi river in Dhar-

in Shivamogga that most of the disqualified MLAs who contested the byelection would be accommodated in his Cabinet. The Cabinet expansion would be done immediately after the announcement of results as per direction of the BJP central leadership, he said

and Minister for Public

Works Govind Karjol who ar-

rived from Mankalale village

in Sagar taluk of Shivamogga

district, after attending the

wedding of Speaker Vish-

veshwara Hegde Kageri's

daughter in Sagar, visited the

temple along with D. Veeren-

dra Heggade, Pattadhikari of

Dharmasthala. Minister for

Muzarai, Ports, Fisheries

The two-day event around Kumram Bheem will showcase avian wealth

S. HARPAL SINGH ADILABAD

The Forest Department in Kumram Bheem (KB) Asifabad district of Telangana is all set to earn the distinction of being the first in the State to organise a Bird Walk Festival on December 14 and 15, promoting awareness of that part of nature which it protects. There are umpteen places and spots that will enthral bird watchers in the district and from outside who will get to see some of the pristine patches of

Wading birds' spots

"We will have the bird walks on both days at sites in Bejjur and Penchikalpet forest in Kagaznagar Division and in Tiryani forest, especially the Gundala range in Asifabad



Telangana town to host 'Bird Walk' festival

Treat for bird watchers: A Purple Heron seen at Kumram Bheem in Asifabad district of Telangana. • s. HARPALSINGH

Division," revealed KB Asifa-The Bird Walk tour inbad District Forest Officer cludes a visit to the scenic habitat of the Long-billed Ranjeet L. Naik. The walks vultures in Penchikalpet will also be conducted at the picturesque Kumram Bheem range, the scavenger bird being the flagship species. The Project Reservoir and the tank at Sirpur (T), as they athabitat is located in a beautitract a lot of water birds of ful setting at a bend in the varying species," he added. Peddavagu stream close to

Motlaguda village. Giving participation details of the festival, the DFO said interested persons can register themselves by call-

where it joins the Pranahita

river on the Inter-State bor-

der with Maharashtra near

ing the department on 7337552600 9550005343. "Registrations will be limited to 100 and they will be divided into groups of 10," Mr. Naik said.

Video clip

As a teaser, to reveal what's in store, the department has produced a three-minute video clip including some of the 270 species of birds recorded in the district. Early registrations will help the Department in organising the stay and transportation of the birders, the DFO said.

three-and-half