



LPG line-up

People take shelter under a tree while keeping empty LPG cylinders in a queue amid supply crunch, in Bhopal on Thursday. PTI

From Burj Khalifa to Delhi, ED attaches Mahadev betting app kingpin's assets

The immovable assets, worth nearly Rs 1,700 crore, were seized as part of ED probe into case filed under PMLA

Jayprakash S Naidu
Raipur, March 26

LUXURY VILLAS and high-end apartments in some of Dubai's most premium locations, including in the Burj Khalifa, are among properties collectively worth Rs 1,700 crore attached by the ED in connection with the Mahadev Online Book betting case.

The properties belong to Sourabh Chandrakar, one of the alleged kingpins of the betting platform. He made news in 2023 for his lavish, Rs 200-crore wedding in Dubai, for which family members arrived in private jets, and the guest list included Bollywood celebrities.

Sourabh, originally a clothes salesman from Bhillai in Chhattisgarh, who also ran a juice centre, had teamed up with a key accused in the case, Ravi Uppal, to create the betting platform in 2018, officials said. The total value of properties attached, seized or frozen in the case stands at around Rs 4,336 crore. The ED's Raipur Zonal Office issued a Provisional Attachment Order (PAO) on March 24, and attached 20 immovable properties, including 18 in Dubai and two in Delhi. The immovable assets, worth nearly Rs 1,700 crore, were seized as part of the ED probe into the Mahadev Online Book betting case registered under the PMLA.

"The foreign assets are located in prime areas of Dubai and comprise luxury villas and apartments in Dubai Hills Estate, including Hills View, Fairway Residency and Sidra, apart from multiple high-end apartments in Business Bay and SLS Hotel & Residences. Some of the attached properties are also located in Burj Khalifa," the ED said. The agency said the properties belong to Sourabh Chandrakar, identified as one of the main promoters of the Maha-

dev Online Book application, and are held in the names of entities controlled by him and his associates, including Vikas Chhaparia, Rohit Gulati, Atul Arora, Nitin Tibrewal and Surendra Bagri.

The ED alleged the assets were acquired from proceeds of crime generated through illegal online betting operations linked to the Mahadev platform and other similar apps.

The probe was initiated on the basis of multiple FIRs registered by police in Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal under various IPC sections and the PCA against individuals linked to betting platforms such as Mahadev Online Book and Skyexchange, as well as certain government officials.

The ED said the Mahadev Online Book functioned as a large-scale international betting syndicate, operating through multiple platforms such as Tiger Exchange, Gold365 and Laser247. The network allegedly followed a franchise-based model with "panels" or "branches" run by associates across India, while promoters Sourabh Chandrakar and Ravi Uppal are said to have operated the syndicate from Dubai. Investigators found that promoters retained around 70-75% of profits, with the remainder distributed among panel operators. The proceeds were allegedly routed through thousands of mule accounts using unsuspecting individuals' KYC documents, and later transferred abroad via hawala channels, cryptocurrency and layered financial transactions before being invested in high-value assets.

So far, the ED has conducted searches at over 175 premises, arrested 13 persons and named 74 accused in five prosecution complaints filed before a special PMLA court in Raipur. Further investigation is in progress, the agency said.

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Get serious, Trump warns Iran

proposed by the US, and was concerned that US negotiators might make concessions.

"Indirect talks" between the US and Iran are taking place through messages relayed by Pakistan, with other states including Turkey and Egypt also supporting mediation efforts, Pakistan's foreign minister said.

But Araghchi said this did not amount to negotiation. "Messages being conveyed through our friendly countries and us responding by stating our positions or issuing the necessary warnings is not called negotiation or dialogue," Araghchi said.

"At present, our policy is to

continue resistance and defend the country, and we have no intention of negotiating," he added.

Trump said in a post on TruthSocial that Iran had been "militarily obliterated, with zero chance of a comeback", and was "begging" for a deal.

Calling Iranian negotiators "very different and 'strange'", he added: "They better get serious soon, before it is too late, because once that happens, there is no turning back, and it won't be pretty."

Though Araghchi's comments suggested some willingness by Tehran to negotiate an end to the war if Iranian demands were met,

any such talks would likely prove very difficult given the maximalist positions laid out by both sides.

A 15-point US proposal to end the conflict includes demands ranging from dismantling Iran's nuclear programme and curbing its missiles to effectively handing over control of the Strait of Hormuz, according to sources and reports.

But Iran has hardened its stance since the war began, demanding guarantees against future military action, compensation for losses, and formal control of the Strait, Iranian sources said. It also told intermediaries that Lebanon must be included in any ceasefire

deal, regional sources said.

On Thursday, Iran launched multiple waves of missiles at Israel, triggering air raid sirens in Tel Aviv and other areas and injuring at least five people.

In Iran, strikes hit a residential zone in the southern city of Bandar Abbas and a village on the outskirts of the southern city of Shiraz, where two teenage brothers were killed, Iran's Tasnim news agency said. A university building in Isfahan was reported to have been hit.

Hopes of a resolution to the conflict that had boosted global stock markets in the previous session dimmed Thursday, with oil prices resuming their surge.

REUTERS

War heat

The first impact is likely going to be on exports if the situation remains unchanged for another few weeks, industry sources told *The Indian Express*.

The biggest energy consumer in the painting process is body drying and the paint-curing ovens that are typically powered by natural gas. The reductions in natural gas allocation to industrial consumers means most car makers are left to hunt for alternatives, and looming uncertainty over steady energy supplies. Natural gas is a main energy source in automobile paint shops, often accounting for well over 50 per cent of energy usage, mainly for thermal processes. Apart from powering high-temperature curing ovens for baking paint, gas provides thermal energy for air heating and ventilation, and also for thermal oxidation to neutralise paint solvent emissions.

"If the paint shop goes out of action, that would completely halt the production process in that line, leading to significant production delays," a senior industry executive said.

When car bodies are painted and dried, vaporous substances are generated. To neutralise paint shop solvents and prevent them from harming the environment, the exhaust is cleaned by burning off the substances before releasing the air via a chimney. This is typically done by passing the contaminated air through a bed of ceramic media, where solvent residues are burnt. For this to happen, the air has to be heated to very high temperatures in a short space of time — which is done with natural gas. Electricity is also being used these days, but gas remains the primary energy source.

Automakers also fear that their latest commercial vehicles could be grounded due to uncertainty in the availability of technical grade urea, a key component of Diesel Exhaust Fluid (DEF), a source said. Commercial vehicles use DEF — a 32.5% urea and 67.5% deionised water solution — in Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) systems to convert harmful nitrogen oxides (NOx) into nitrogen and water.

India's urea production is

heavily dependent on LNG imports from Qatar, which have been significantly squeezed since the beginning of the war, after QatarEnergy, the country's state-run energy firm, announced a halt in LNG production amid retaliatory attacks by Iran earlier this month.

The shortages are impacting manufacturing plants that are located in the central, western and southern parts of the country more than those in the north given the higher availability of natural gas in the region, the executive said. Places in Gujarat like Sanand, and in Maharashtra, like industrial areas such as Chakan near Pune, are among the major automotive manufacturing hubs in India.

Queries sent to the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas and Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), the industry's key association group, have not elicited any response.

Not just automakers, but their ancillary suppliers are also facing the brunt of the war-related disruptions. In a letter to the government earlier this month, the Automotive Component Manufacturers Association of India (ACMA) said several companies have reported significant operational and cost pressures affecting exports as well as imports of critical inputs linked to export production.

For instance, export logistics costs have risen by 20-40%, primarily due to vessel rerouting around the Cape of Good Hope, higher freight rates, container shortages and increased insurance premiums due to the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, the industry association said.

"Members have highlighted emerging concerns regarding the availability of LPG and PNG for industrial use, particularly for foundry, forging and machining units, as well as other applications within the automotive supply chain that rely on these fuels for operational processes. It has also been noted that different states are applying varying regulatory norms for the supply of these gases," ACMA said.

"Many of these problems remain unresolved so far," an executive said.

Ramnath Goenka journalism awards today

expose on the illegal sale of British-era bungalows in Pune's cantonment areas.

These are some of the stories that have won the Ramnath Goenka Excellence in Journalism Awards for 2024, the country's most prestigious journalism honour. The winners will receive the awards from Vice President C P Radhakrishnan, who will be the chief guest at the ceremony in New Delhi on Friday.

Instituted by the Ramnath Goenka Foundation, the awards recognise the best of journalism, showcasing 25 outstanding contributions from print, digital and broadcast platforms from across 18 categories, including investigative reporting, politics and government, feature writing, books, sports and regional language

journalism.

The jury for the 20th edition of the awards includes Justice B N Srikrishna, former judge at the Supreme Court; Prof C Raj Kumar, founding Vice Chancellor, OP Jindal Global University; Prof K G Suresh, Director of India Habitat Centre, former Vice Chancellor, Makhnallal Chaturvedi National University of Journalism & Communication; and former Director General, Indian Institute of Mass Communication; Rohini Nilekani, Chairperson, Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies and Co Founder & Director, EkStep; and Dr S Y Quraishi, former Chief Election Commissioner.

For the jury, selecting winners was no easy task. "Each and every story was good... sometimes they were too close a call," said Suresh.

"The winners won by a margin of a few points... otherwise all the entries were equally good," he said, adding that evaluation also depended on the impact of the story and the difficulty which the reporter had to face.

Highlighting emerging trends in journalism, Suresh said, "I see a lot of youngsters now exploring newer areas of our lives like cybersecurity and safety, alongside traditional beats such as environment, health and land issues."

Reflecting on her experience as a jury member, Nilekani said, "Reading all these journalists' entries was like doing a Bharat Darshan — you get to read things that shock you, that make you cry... It makes me feel, 'Thank God, journalism is well and alive'."

She also pointed to the

changing media landscape. "Social media means everybody thinks they are a journalist. It has democratised the spreading of knowledge, which is a very good thing. But my dream is that old-fashioned journalism and investigative journalism will get more space," Nilekani said.

Justice Srikrishna noted a stylistic shift in entries. "This year's entries were more focussed, but tended to dramatise the narration," he said.

Despite concerns about the profession, Suresh is optimistic about the future of journalism. "I have always believed that the format might have changed, the platforms might have changed, the technology might have changed — but the essence of journalism remains," he said.

In Al-Falah probe report, cops cite ex-students

came under scrutiny in the backdrop of the November 2025 Red Fort car blast case. Three doctors working at the Al-Falah School of Medical Sciences & Research Centre were named as accused in the related terror module case, prompting the Government to order a forensic audit of the university's records. According to police, one of the doctors, Umar Nabi, was behind the wheel of the car when it exploded near Red Fort on November 10, 2025, killing at least 13 people and injuring several others.

Of the two charge sheets against the university, sources said one pertains to the alleged claim of NAAC accreditation and the other to purported misrepresentation of qualifications under Section 12(b) of the Uni-

versity Grants Commission Act. Section 12(b) enables the UGC to provide Central grants to accredited universities.

Police have also submitted that the NAAC accreditation of Al-Falah's B.Ed degree college expired in 2016 and of its engineering college in 2019, sources said. They have also placed on record detailed replies of the UGC in this regard, they said. "Among the evidence included is how the university lured students through its official website by claiming accreditation even after its expiration," sources said. All those named as prosecution witnesses in the case are students who enrolled in the university after 2016, following the expiry of its accreditation, sources said.

"In their statements, students have said that NAAC ac-

creditation was a decisive factor in their choice to enrol, viewing it as a crucial benchmark for future employment. They believed it would significantly enhance their job prospects after graduation. However, some now say they have been effectively pushed out of the job market, as their degrees come from a university that falsely claimed NAAC accreditation," sources said.

Al Falah founder Siddiqui was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on November 18 last year on the charge of money laundering. The ED later told a Delhi court that Al-Falah University had generated proceeds of crime amounting to Rs 415 crore by dishonestly inducing students to enrol using false claims. In January, the ED attached im-

movable properties worth Rs 139.97 crore belonging to the university. According to police, Umar Nabi led the terror module, which also included at least two other Al-Falah staff members, identified as doctors Shaheen Ansari and Muzamil Ganai. Ganai was arrested on October 30 last year with police claiming to have recovered 350 kg of explosive material from his rented residence in Faridabad. Later, Ansari was also taken into custody.

So far, 11 accused have been arrested for their alleged roles in the blast that shook the national capital on November 10. On Monday, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) conducted searches at nine locations in Jammu and Kashmir as part of its continuing investigation in the blast case.

H D Kumaraswamy agrees to mediation in dispute with IPS officer M Chandrashekar

Mustafa Plumber
Bengaluru, March 26

UNION MINISTER H D Kumaraswamy, his son Nikhil, and Janata Dal (Secular) leader Suresh Babu on Thursday informed the Karnataka High Court that they were willing to join the mediation process to resolve a dispute between them and senior Indian Police Service (IPS) officer M Chandrashekar. The IPS officer has registered a case against Kumaraswamy, accusing him of allegedly threatening him.

"We are ready to join for



H D Kumaraswamy

mediation," Senior Advocate Hasmath Pasha, appearing for petitioner Kumaraswamy and others, said on Thursday. The counsel for the IPS officer argued that it would suggest the name of a mediator and sought a week.

"We will suggest somebody (mediator). If either of you suggest (a mediator) there could be some misgivings. Let there be an even-handed dealing. We will nominate somebody who can handle this," Justice S Sunil Dutt Yadav said. The court orally emphasised that mediation has nothing to do with adjudication. "I feel that you do not have to spend so much time on such matters," the court said.

The court adjourned the case to April 2, when it will choose "somebody appropriate". "In principle, if you have agreed for mediation, then rest you leave it

to us. It is a win-win for both parties," Justice Dutt said in an oral observation.

Chandrashekar, who heads the Lokayukta Special Investigation Team (SIT) and is investigating illegal mining cases in which Kumaraswamy is an accused, had alleged that on September 28 and 29, 2024, the former Karnataka chief minister held a press conference where he made false accusations and issued threats. Kumaraswamy has also allegedly accused Chandrashekar of bribery and falsifying documents to remain in the Karnataka IPS cadre.

Transgender Bill

birth. This is not a physical condition as sought to be made out under the proposed amended definition. It is also not a mental ailment. It is as ordained by nature," Justice Asha Menon, former Delhi High Court Judge, wrote in her letter on Wednesday. The Justice Menon Committee was set up by the top court in October 2025, while hearing a case involving a transgender woman who was terminated from employment as a teacher by private schools in UP and Gujarat because of her transgender identity.

Noting the administrative lethargy in implementing the 2019 Act, the apex court formed the expert panel to formulate an equal opportunity policy for the transgender community for employment and education, create a grievance redressal mechanism for them, make the process of gender and name change easier for them, provide recommendations for making medical care inclusive for them. The committee was also tasked with looking into how the State could "guarantee rights provided under the 2019 Act to genderqueer and non-binary persons, especially those who do not undergo gender-affirming surgeries".

Apart from Justice Menon, the committee includes Senior Advocate Jayna Kothari as amicus curiae in the case, transgender activists Akkai Padmashali, Grace Banu and Vijayanti Vasanta Mogli, among others. The committee, it is learnt, adopted a resolution on March 20, arguing that the Bill's proposal to deny self-identification goes "against the decision of the Supreme Court in National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) v. Union of India", urging that any future amendments to the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, be made only after "extensive consultation with the community members and other stakeholders". However, the ex officio government members of the committee, which include secretaries from the union ministries, did not attend the meeting.

According to the Bill's Statement of Objects and Reasons, it seeks to protect "only those who face severe social exclusion due to biological reasons for no fault of their own and no choice of their own." The government states that the existing definition of a transgender person is "vague and broad", making it "impossible to identify the genuine oppressed persons" and rendering penal, civil and personal laws "unworkable".

Crucially, the Bill removes Section 4(2) of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, which guaranteed the right to a self-perceived gender identity. Instead, the proposed law mandates that identity certificates be issued only after examination by a medical board headed by a chief medical officer. It also introduces stringent penal provisions, including RI up to life, for compelling anyone to assume a transgender identity through surgical or chemical procedures. Justice Menon's letter called the Bill's mandate requiring medical institutions to disclose details of gender-affirming surgeries to DMs "violation of privacy", stating that "its objective is unclear". It also termed the new penal provisions under the Bill "unnecessary", noting that existing laws against trafficking and abuse under the BNSS and the Juvenile Justice Act are sufficient.

The Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha on March 24 and the Rajya Sabha on March 25, amid strong objections and a walkout by Opposition MPs, who wanted it to be sent to a parliamentary standing committee for further scrutiny. Separately, two members of the National Council for Transgender Persons — a statutory body formed under the 2019 Act to advise the government on, and monitor and review programmes, policies and legislation on transgender persons — resigned from the Council on Wednesday in opposition to the Bill. Kalki Subramaniam, in her resignation letter, alleged that the Bill was moved forward "without any formal consultation with other community representatives of the NCTP and me", while Rituparna Neog, in her resignation letter, wrote that "some of us tried to reach out to you as the voice of the community and we felt we were not heard."

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Press Release

Under the OMSS (D) 2025-26 scheme, the sale of broken rice is currently underway in FCI Punjab, Haryana, and Andhra Pradesh regions. Previously, only bidders registered in the respective regions were allowed to participate. It has now been decided that bidders from any region can take part in these auctions. Accordingly, bidders registered in the HP region are also eligible to participate and purchase broken rice through auctions conducted by FCI Punjab, Haryana, and Andhra Pradesh regions.

-Sd-
General Manager(R)

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E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE

Sale Notice For Sale Of Movable Properties "APPENDIX-IV-A [See proviso to Rule 6 (2) & 8 (6)]

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Movable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 6 (2) & 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s), Mortgagor (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Bank of Baroda, Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" basis for recovery of dues in below mentioned account/s. The details of Borrower/s/Mortgagor/Guarantor/s/Secured Asset/s/Dues/Reserve Price/e-Auction date & Time, EMD and Bid Increase Amount are mentioned below -

For detailed terms and conditions of sale, please refer/visit to the website link <https://www.bankofbaroda.in/e-auction> and online auction portal Baanknet.com. Also, prospective bidders may contact the Authorised officer on Mobile +91-8398000917

Date : 26.03.2026

Place :- Karnal

Authorised Officer, Bank of Baroda.