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PRADHAN DISCUSSES CBSE PAYMENT GATEWAY OVERHAUL WITH PSU BANKS
Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan held detailed discussions with senior officials of SBI, Bank of Baroda, Canara Bank and Indian Bank

BANKS TOLD TO HELP SET UP ROBUST SYSTEM

The meeting was held in the backdrop of concerns over the recent payment and technical issues faced by students during the CBSE post-result and re-evaluation processes. During the interaction, Pradhan asked the banks to assist the CBSE to establish a robust, reliable and student-friendly digital payment ecosystem, particularly for post-examination services

REAL-TIME MONITORING TO FIX GLITCHES FAST

- The banks were asked to work closely with CBSE to strengthen the payment gateway infrastructure through advanced technical safeguards, real-time monitoring, and faster grievance redressal
- Pradhan urged officials to accord the highest priority to this initiative to ensure that students do not face technical glitches in future

EXPERTS

FROM IIT-MADRAS AND IIT-KANPUR HAVE BEGUN TESTING CBSE PORTAL FOR GLITCHES



Chit firm can recover dues from surety first, rules HC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Vijayawada

IN a significant ruling, the Andhra Pradesh High Court has held that chit fund companies are entitled to initiate recovery proceedings directly against a surety without first proceeding against the principal borrower, making it clear that both the borrower and guarantor share equal liability in repayment of dues under the Chit Funds Act.

Justice Cheemalapati Ravi delivered the verdict while dismissing a petition filed by K Venkata Rama Rao, who challenged the orders issued by a Guntur court attaching his salary over unpaid chit fund dues payable to Kapil Chits (Kosta) Private Limited.

The court observed that since the surety undertakes responsibility for repayment in the event of default, the guarantor cannot later avoid liability.

It further clarified that there is no provision in the Chit Funds Act requiring lenders or chit fund firms to first exhaust recovery proceedings against the principal borrower before initiating action against the surety.

According to the court, the liability of a surety is co-extensive with that of the borrower and both are equally responsible for clearing outstanding dues. Hence, recovery proceedings can be initiated directly against the guarantor if the amount remains unpaid, the court ruled.

Rejecting the petitioner's contention that only the Registrar, Joint Registrar, Deputy Registrar and Assistant Registrar has authority to issue recovery certificates, the court held that Deputy Registrars are also empowered to do so under the law.

The court stated that the definition of "Registrar" under the Act includes Additional Registrar, Joint Registrar, Deputy Registrar and Assistant Registrar. It further referred to a government order issued in 2008 authorising Deputy Registrars to discharge the functions of a Registrar.

Hence, the recovery certificate issued by a Deputy Registrar is legally valid and carries the same force as a civil court decree, the court clarified. **P4**

Siddu agrees to quit

Siddaramaiah seeks Governor's appointment at 2 pm on Thursday, calls CLP meeting the following day; no clarity yet on successor though Deputy CM Shivakumar is the front-runner

PREETHA NAIR, BALA CHAUHAN, NAUSHAD BIJAPUR & DEVARAJ B HIREHALLI @ New Delhi/Bengaluru

KARNATAKA Chief Minister Siddaramaiah late on Tuesday night agreed to step down, confirmed sources privy to the marathon meetings held earlier in the day in New Delhi. Although Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar is the front-runner for the CM's post, no decision has been taken on who would succeed him nor on when Siddaramaiah would tender his resignation as chief minister.

But sources said Siddaramaiah has sought time to meet Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot at Lok Bhavan on May 28 at 2 pm, and called for the Congress Legislature Party the following day. AICC General Secretary K C Venugopal and AICC General Secretary in-charge of Karnataka, Randeep Singh Surjewala, are scheduled to arrive in Bengaluru on Wednesday.

Sources informed this newspaper that senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi asked Siddaramaiah to step down to resolve the prolonged tussle between him and Shivakumar. They said the CM agreed after a late evening huddle with MLAs supporting him.

Shivakumar had been insisting that the high command hand over the CM's post to him, based



Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah (C) and Deputy CM D K Shivakumar (L) with AICC general secretary K C Venugopal after a meeting with the high command in Delhi | PARVEEN NEGI

on an agreement of sharing two-and-a-half years that he is said to have struck with Siddaramaiah after the party came to power in the 2023 Assembly polls. The half-way mark arrived in November last year, but Siddaramaiah refused to yield.

Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar were summoned to Delhi on Monday, where Rahul is said to have told the CM that the party wanted the transition to take place smoothly. However, Siddaramaiah sought time to respond to the high command's suggestion that he move to the Rajya Sabha to play a "larger role" at the national level, according to sources.

After marathon meetings — from 11.35 am to 6 pm — a visibly

upset Siddaramaiah huddled with his coterie of cabinet colleagues at Karnataka Energy Minister K J George's New Delhi residence and conveyed the message of the high command to them. He agreed to step down after this meeting, sources said.

No wonder, Shivakumar and his supporters looked upbeat.

Siddaramaiah was carrying a letter of support by 100 party MLAs (Congress has 134 of 224 seats in the assembly) to convince the high command about his support. Sources said he will hold a meeting with all these MLAs at George's Bengaluru residence on Wednesday.

The day saw a series of meetings attended by Rahul, AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge,

If not DKS: Who's in race

"The Congress high command could go in for a complete makeover of the party in the state and appoint a young, dynamic leader with a clean image to lead the party in the 2028 assembly elections," sources said

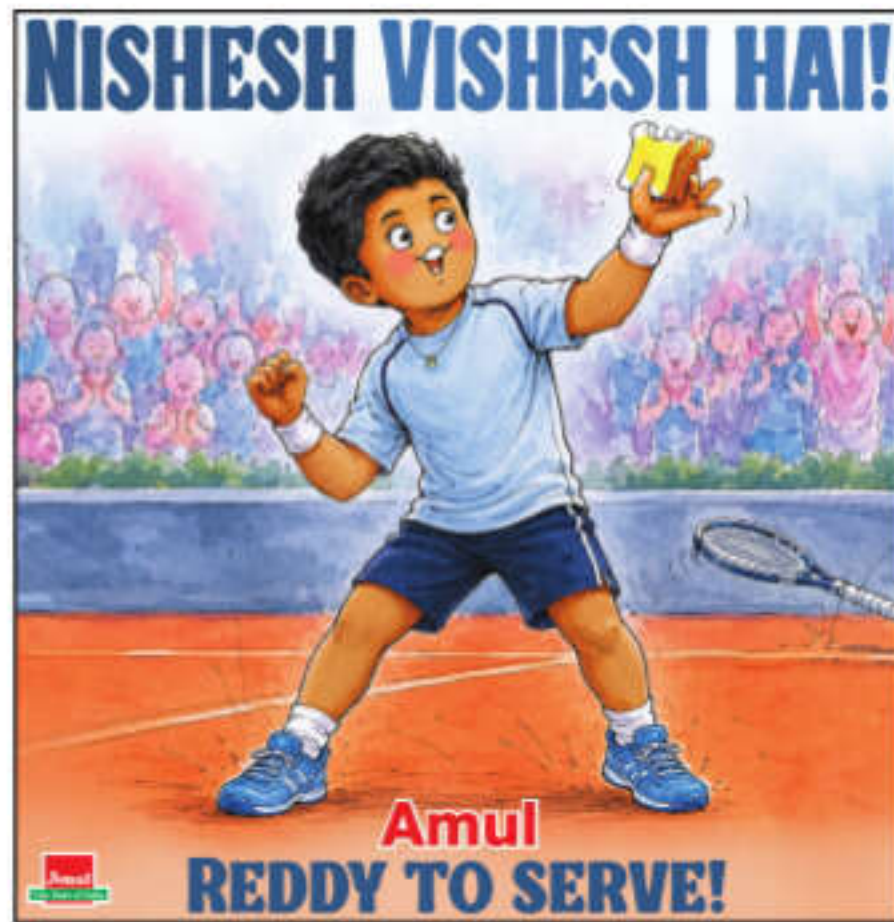
Byre Gowda: Chart topper

The name of Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda is on the top, besides Minister for Large & Medium Industries and Infrastructure Development MB Patil. Both have a clean image and are known for their good work

Venugopal and Surjewala.

Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar were consulted separately at the party headquarters. Following the discussions, Rahul and Venugopal are said to have briefed senior leader Sonia Gandhi on the meetings, before having a closed-door meeting with Siddaramaiah where he offered the latter a larger role at the national level, while asking him to step down as CM.

For the record, Venugopal dismissed all talk on change in leadership as mere speculation. Asked if there was any discussion on leadership change, Siddaramaiah, too, said "No". On a possible cabinet reshuffle, the CM said, "It did not come up for discussion."



Cauvery bodies ask K'taka, TN to pare paddy acreage

JITENDRA CHOUBEY @ New Delhi

AMID forecasts of a weaker monsoon this year, the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC) and Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) on Tuesday asked Karnataka and Tamil Nadu to exercise caution while allocating areas for sowing paddy, a water-intensive crop.

"Last year, we had a bountiful monsoon and the sharing of water was carried out according to established rules, but the upcoming water year (June 2026 to May 2027) is going to be a challenge as the India Meteorological Department has predicted a weaker monsoon," said CWRC chairman Vineet Gupta after a meeting with officials from the two states.

According to projections, water shortage could worsen in the second half of the monsoon season (August-September). CWRC and CWMA were set up by the Centre to oversee the sharing and regulation of Cauvery river water among the basin states. Cauvery river originates from Karnataka's Western Ghats and flows eastward into Tamil Nadu. The two states are locked in a long-standing dispute over allocation of waters.

Furniture Cluster to come up near Gudur

D SURENDRA KUMAR @ Nellore

THE State government has identified about 1,000 acres of land near Gudur for the proposed Andhra Pradesh Furniture Mega Cluster (APFMC). The project has received a push after the government inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Trade Promotion Council of India (TPCI) at the CII Partnership Summit 2025.

After inspection of the site on April 13 this year, TPCI officials had expressed satisfaction with the proposed location, and formally conveyed their willingness to go ahead on April 28, giving the initiative a fresh momentum.

The ambitious project is expected to attract nearly ₹3,500 crore investments, besides generating employment opportunities for nearly 50,000 to 70,000 people.

Planned as a large-scale, port-oriented industrial ecosystem, the cluster will integrate every stage of furniture production - from timber imports and processing to manufacturing and export of finished products.

The masterplan includes dedicated zones for timber processing industries, furniture manufacturing units, logistics and export facilities, a Common Facility Centre, commercial showrooms, residential infrastructure, and sustainability-focused amenities. **P4**

Quad sharpens Indo-Pacific focus

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi



Secretary of State Marco Rubio with foreign minister S Jaishankar | AP

THE Quad grouping sharpened its strategic focus on the Indo-Pacific on Tuesday as the foreign ministers of India, the US, Japan and Australia unveiled a set of initiatives aimed at strengthening regional energy resilience, maritime security, critical mineral supply chains and port infrastructure.

The Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting, held amid rising geopolitical competition and growing concerns over economic

and energy vulnerabilities, signalled a broader push to institutionalise cooperation in major sectors while ensuring the bloc doesn't get the label of a security alliance.

At the heart of the announcements was the launch of the Quad Initiative on Indo-Pacific Energy Security, a framework to deepen cooperation in energy technology, policy coordination, and emergency response.

A joint statement said the initiative would seek to "recognize and leverage the unique

resources and capabilities of each country's energy sector".

External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar described the discussions as "substantive and productive," stressing the strategic importance of maritime collaboration among the four democracies.

"Because we are four maritime democracies located at different ends of the Indo-Pacific, the exchange of perspectives was an exercise of considerable value," Jaishankar said after the meeting.

HIGH-LEVEL PANEL

Unnatural demographic change under the lens

MUKESH RANJAN @ New Delhi

THE government on Tuesday constituted a high-level committee to study how illegal infiltration and other factors lead to unnatural demographic changes across the country.

Chaired by Justice (Retd) Prakash Prabhakar Nawlekar, the panel's members include Census Commissioner Mritunjay Kumar Narayan, former IAS officer Durga Shankar Mishra, retired IPS officer Balaji Shrivastava and educationist Shamika Ravi.

Union home minister Amit Shah said, illegal infiltration and other reasons leading to unnatural demographic change is a very big challenge. The new panel is in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's an-

nouncement on August 15, 2025 to constitute a high-powered demography mission, he said.

Describing the issue as one that goes beyond population data, Shah said demographic change has direct implications for sovereignty, law and order, social structure and the preservation of tribal communities. He said the initiative reflects a proactive effort to protect the country's integrity and social fabric through "well-informed and decisive action".

The committee has been tasked with submitting its report within a year. It will consult all stakeholders and propose comprehensive policy measures to address emerging concerns.



TERMS OF REFERENCE

- Comprehensively deliberate upon the challenges arising from demographic changes, including illegal immigration
- Study possible causes, such as cross-border activities, economic opportunities, and other socio-environmental factors

- Identify underlying factors like illegal immigration, abnormal settlement patterns and orchestrated migration

- Analyse structural population changes at the level of religious or social communities, particularly where they deviate from broader trends

- Recommend a streamlined and permanent operational mechanism for the legal, fair, and time-bound identification, detention, and deportation of illegal immigrants residing in the country

- Recommend appropriate institutional mechanism to strengthen border management, population stabilisation, and identification systems for the continuous monitoring of such trends

