

Sudha Murty flags child influencer trend, urges govt to regulate portrayal of kids on social media

NEW DELHI: Nominated Rajya Sabha MP Sudha Murty Friday mooted the idea of a regulatory framework to end the growing commodification of children in digital spaces. Murty, while speaking during Zero Hour in Parliament, highlighted how children are portrayed on social media platforms, the lack of regulation on the same and the need to inculcate a good value system among the younger generation. “Children are our future, and we should develop our children in good value systems, good education, sports, and many other activities. Every drop of water, maybe through a river, goes to the ocean—so are the children. How we bring them up, everything goes to their future,” she said. Murty, an author and philanthropist, further flagged the issue of children as influencers as well as “mother influencers”. “Use social media for betterment, but not by using children as influencers or mother influencers. There are so many such influencers without any regulation. I am requesting the Government of India, particularly regarding social media, to bring regulation on this,” she said. Murty went on to say that there are many positives of social media but several negatives too. “I am really worried about today’s scenario. In modern days,



social media has become very popular. There are many advantages of social media which I don’t want to talk about here, but I want to talk about the other side of social media.” “Many parents use their innocent children—they are not even aware of what they are doing. They are exposed to different

types of costumes, dress, commercialisation, and put on social media so that they can have 10,000 or one million followers. This helps parents financially—I am aware of it,” she added. The MP argued that such portrayal of children on social media in the long run affects the child’s psychology. “But what happens to the child? The child will lose innocence. The child doesn’t give permission because the child is not aware of it. It will affect the child’s psychology in the long range. They will not learn how to do any social activities, sports, or even pursue good education. Children become a source of income to parents, who take advantage of social media,” she said. Murty cited the example of France, which regulates how children are portrayed in digital spaces. “In a country like France, a kind of regulation is there for children who are on social media—you can’t expose them in different costumes; you cannot take their pictures while they are taking bath because you never know, sometimes people with a bad mindset may use those photos for something else,” she said. “Social media is like a knife, I consider, sir—you can cut a fruit or kill a person,” she added. Murty lauded the government’s efforts in regulating such content in advertisements for children. “Our government has done a

fantastic work in regulating children’s advertisements, children working or acting in films, all those things they have taken care of and strict laws have been implemented,” she said. However, when it comes to social media, Murty asserted, it has not been done and this is going to cause a “great problem in future for our children and it should be told to their parents also that there should be a restriction”. “Certain methodologies should not be used. Children cannot use certain kinds of dress and dance, or certain kinds of dress for advertisement because this is not the way we can bring up the next generation of our children,” Murty added.

3 killed, 8 critically injured as bus collides with parked truck in Gondia district

GONDIA: Gondia, Dec 5 (PTI) Three passengers were killed when a private bus coming from Chhattisgarh collided with a stationary truck near a village in Gondia district of Maharashtra, police said on Friday. Eight passengers of the Chhattisgarh-registered bus were critically injured in the accident which took place on National Highway-53 near Dhoobisarad village under Deori tehsil shortly after midnight on Thursday, they said. The bus, belonging to a private travel agency, was going from Kawardha in Chhattisgarh to Chandrapur in Maharashtra. As the bus was passing through Deori at 12.20 am, the driver was unable to notice a truck parked on the roadside due to darkness and rammed into it, according to police. The impact of the collision was such that the front portion of the bus was completely damaged. There were 45 passengers in the bus and three of them perished in the crash. Two

of them were identified as Sunita Hemlal Baghele (45), a resident of Khairagarh in Chhattisgarh, and Manoj Bablu Patle (40), a native Kawardha, while police did not provide details about the third deceased. The critically injured passengers were referred to Nagpur for advanced treatment, said police. On getting information about the crash, a police team led by Inspector Pravin Dange reached the spot and helped the injured come out of the bus with assistance from local residents. Ambulances from nearby Primary Health Centres and Rural Hospitals were summoned and used to ferry the injured passengers to hospitals. According to Assistant Police Inspector Mukesh Rathod, the truck got stranded on the roadside after running out of fuel. Bus driver Chandrashekar Chaudhari failed to notice the truck and this led to the ghastly accident.

Pushed to Bangladesh, Bengal residents Sunali, son brought back to India after 5 months

MALDA: It was finally homecoming for 26-year-old Birbhumi resident Sunali Khatun and her son Sabir who, after spending 103 days in a Bangladeshi prison as alleged “infiltrators”, was repatriated to India though the Malda border in north Bengal on Friday evening following a Supreme Court direction to the Centre to bring her back, officials said. No clarity was, however, received on when the four other deportees, who continue to remain in Bangladesh and whose repatriation has also been ordered by the Supreme Court, would be brought back. An official said that Sunali, in her advanced stage of pregnancy, was handed over to an officer of the rank of deputy high commissioner around 7 pm from where the duo was first taken to the BSF camp at Mehedipur

for formalities, and later moved to the Malda Medical College and Hospital for medical tests. She would be transported her residence at the Dorjee Para area of Paikar village in Murarai in Birbhumi district on Saturday if doctors certified her fit to travel, he added. Picked up by the Katju Nagar police in Delhi on June 18 from the Bengali Basti in Sector 26, Rohini -- where she lived for over two decades and worked as a ragpicker and waste collector -- on suspicion of being a Bangladeshi national, Sunali, along with her husband Danesh and her son, were subsequently pushed to Bangladesh following orders from the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO). The deportation also included another family from the same Birbhumi village

-- Sweety Bibi and her two sons, Qurban Sheikh (16) and Imam Dewan (6). All six were detained at the Chapai Nawabgunj correctional facility in Bangladesh from August 20 as alleged “infiltrators” until a judicial magistrate granted bail to the detainees on December 1 on a bond of Tk 5,000 each. The Union government had challenged a Calcutta High Court division bench order passed on September 26 -- which directed the Centre to facilitate the return of Sunali and five other migrant workers from Bengal and set a four-week deadline to execute the order -- before the Supreme Court. The West Bengal government also filed a contempt petition before the apex court against the Centre for defying the high court’s directive. During hearings, a bench

comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi criticised the Centre for allegedly deporting individuals without due process. The bench flagged “ample evidence” on record -- including 1952 land deeds of the deported families, 2002 electoral rolls listing listing Sunali’s parents as voters of Murarai assembly constituency, Aadhaar and PAN details and birth certificates of the children -- which contradicted police claims of her illegal entry in 1998, when Sunali was not yet born. The court emphasised that the authorities can push back illegal immigrants but not before ascertaining their citizenship. “If someone says they were born in India, grew up here, they have rights. Their version must be heard,” the bench observed.

On December 3, the Centre submitted it would bring back Sunali and her minor son “on humanitarian grounds”. “Finally, after a long battle against the Bangla-Birodhi Zamindars, Sunali Khatun and her minor son have returned to India. This day will be remembered as a historic moment that exposes the torture and atrocities inflicted on poor Bengalis. Sunali, who was pregnant at the time, was forcibly deported in June this year. After enduring six months of unimaginable suffering, she and her child have at last returned to their homeland,” Samirul Islam, TMC MP, wrote on X. It must also be stated that despite the Supreme Court’s order, the “anti-poor” central government failed to take any action over the past two days

to ensure their immediate return, he claimed. “As a result, our advocates were compelled to mention the matter once again before the Supreme Court today. Only then was the return finally made possible,” Islam said, while thanking his party leadership for their support for the deported families. Lipika Burman Ghosh, Sabhadhipati of Malda Zilla Parishad, who was present at the border at the time of Sunali’s repatriation, questioned why four others still remained stuck in Bangladesh when the top court had also ordered their repatriation. “I asked the deputy high commissioner who was present here to receive Sunali and her child why her husband and three others of Birbhumi have not been brought back. He gave me no reply,” she alleged.

IT Minister Kharge assures time-bound action on mobility, infrastructure bottlenecks in Bengaluru

BENGALURU: Karnataka IT Minister Priyank Kharge along with government officials on Friday met senior representatives of leading companies operating along the Outer Ring Road corridor here and assured time-bound action on mobility and infrastructure bottlenecks. The meeting, organised by the Outer Ring Road Companies Association (ORRCA), focused on addressing critical infrastructure, civic and mobility challenges faced along one of India’s most important technology and business corridors, officials said. According to an official statement, during the interaction, industry leaders flagged key issues such as last-mile connectivity to metro stations, condition of service roads and footpaths, congestion at major junctions, accumulation of garbage in high-density stretches, telecom disruptions due to construction and the need for smoother integration between metro, buses and workplace transport solutions. Addressing the gathering, Kharge said that the ORR corridor remains one of the most economically dense and strategically important business districts in the country and must be supported with matching quality of infrastructure and governance. He highlighted that the state government has already earmarked Rs 450 crore for comprehensive road upgradation along the Silk Board to KR Puram stretch, which will include black-topping, service



roads, street lighting and pedestrian infrastructure. “This corridor is central to Karnataka’s global technology economy. While large infrastructure like metro takes time, we are committed to fixing the immediate, high-impact issues on the ground. Regular reviews will be held to track progress and this engagement with industry will not be a one-off exercise,” Kharge said. He added that the government will also replicate this model of structured engagement across other major brownfield business and technology corridors such as Whitefield, Peenya and Manyata, to systematically identify and resolve area-specific challenges. The IT minister also informed participants that these efforts are being undertaken as part of a high-level committee

chaired by Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and vice-chaired by him, which is mandated to provide long-term solutions to traffic, mobility and infrastructure bottlenecks in Bengaluru’s major technology hubs. Greater Bengaluru Authority Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao, who was also part of the meeting, said that the creation of the GBA has already improved coordination and speed of execution across departments. “With the GBA framework in place, decision-making has become more effective and issues are being addressed in a more time-bound manner. The revamping of roads along ORR, coordination with BMRL for metro integration and streamlining civic services are being actively monitored,” he said. He added that close coordination between BBMP, BMRL, Traffic Police and other agencies is underway to ensure smoother implementation of projects, particularly in high-traffic nodes such as Kadubeesanahalli, Bellandur and Marathahalli. The interaction also saw discussions on encouraging greater use of public transport, improving walkability, deploying last-mile connectivity solutions such as feeder services and shared mobility options and exploring industry participation through CSR and collaborative area maintenance models, the statement added.

23 held in India Gate protest accused of assaulting police, outraging modesty of female staff

NEW DELHI: The 23 demonstrators arrested in the India Gate protest case face grave charges, including for assaulting and outraging the modesty of female police staff, using chilli spray on a constable, and raising slogans for a Naxalite, police said. An investigation report in connection with the case was submitted to a magisterial court on Thursday by the Delhi Police. The demonstrators gathered on November 23 to protest against the worsening pollution crisis in the national capital, but the situation intensified as some demonstrators allegedly used chilli spray on police personnel while being removed from the site and taken to the Parliament Street police station. At the police station, they were allegedly involved in another scuffle with the escorting offi-

cers. A case in the matter was registered at the Kartavya Path police station and police arrested the accused. The report by the police details allegations ranging from organising the protest, glorifying Madvi Hidma, circulating digital posters, and coordinating mobilisation through groups to physically obstructing police personnel, assaulting female staff, and possessing pepper-spray bottles. According to police, the protest was organised primarily by members of the Bhagat Singh Chatra Ekta Manch (BSCEM), which officers described as the “main conspirator group”. The report states that several accused were visible in videos raising slogans in support of Madvi Hidma and blocking roads around India Gate and Parliament

Street. The first accused named, Gurkirat, is described as the president of the BSCEM and administrator of the group’s channels. Police alleged that she, along with two other members, attended an anniversary programme of the banned Radical Students’ Union in Hyderabad and raised pro-Naxalite slogans. The report further alleges that BSCEM’s social media pages carried posters “glorifying” Hidma. Co-accused Anvish Satapathy, Akshay E R, and Ayishah Wafiyath Midhath have also been described as active members of the organisation, with police alleging that they participated in slogan-shouting, obstructed police work, dismantled barricades, and circulated posters. One of them is alleged to have sprayed the chilli spray into the eyes of a police constable.

The police report names others -- including Vishnu Tiwari, Prakash Kumar Gupta, Vagesha Anudeep, Sameer Fayis, Karina Sunderani and Priti Rani Chandraker -- whom they accuse of raising slogans, possessing pepper spray, and obstructing the gate of the Parliament Street police station after several protesters were detained. It also lists 17 additional accused who allegedly reached Parliament Street from India Gate after the initial detentions and “stopped police officials from working”, leading to a separate case being registered against each of them. Investigators told the court that the probe is still at an initial stage, and the roles attributed to each accused may evolve as further digital evidence, mobile phone data, and interrogation findings are analysed.

West Bengal Election Watch flags gaps in 2025 electoral rolls revision process

KOLKATA: The West Bengal Election Watch (WBEW) on Friday flagged gaps in the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls and said the present guidelines mark a departure from the revision carried out in 2001-02. Based on information obtained through RTI, the organisation issued a press statement saying voters are now required to provide proof of their presence in the 2002 electoral rolls or that of their parents or grandparents. WBEW is the state chapter of the National Election Watch (NEW) of the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR). The Election Commission has not given any rationale for this significant change from the 2002 process, the WBEW said. It stated that under the current system, if a voter has shifted to a new address, the SIR form remains tagged to the old location. Failure to return the form can lead to their names being marked as “shifted” and deleted from the rolls, with no provision

to record the new residence, it added. According to the organisation, the 2002 exercise enabled corrections and inclusion of electors holding EPIC cards even if their names had been deleted. The 2025 process has no such provision, it said. The WBEW also noted the absence of a mechanism for rectifying spelling or address errors and grouping family members on the same page of the rolls, provisions that were part of the earlier system. Documents such as panchayat certificates, gas or telephone connections and bank accounts, accepted as proof of ordinary residence in 2002, are not valid for SIR 2025, which stresses proof of citizenship, the body said. The organisation questioned how electoral rolls can improve without clear provisions to record migrated voters, include new households and restore names of existing voters whose details are already available.

Tharoor introduces bill to criminalise marital rape, says it’s urgent necessity in legal framework

NEW DELHI: Congress MP Shashi Tharoor introduced a private member’s bill in the Lok Sabha on Friday to criminalise marital rape and asserted that India must uphold its constitutional values and move from “no means no” to “only yes means yes”. Tharoor also introduced two other private member’s bills in the Lower House of Parliament -- to amend the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 and establish a State and Union Territories Reorganisation Commission to recommend the reorganisation of states and Union territories to the Centre. In a post on X, the MP from Kerala’s Thiruvananthapuram said criminalising marital rape is an urgent necessity in India’s legal framework and introduced his private member’s bill to amend the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and remove the marital rape exception, reaffirming that marriage cannot negate a woman’s right to grant or deny consent. “India must uphold its consti-



titutional values and move from ‘No Means No’ to ‘Only Yes Means Yes’. Every woman deserves the fundamental right to bodily autonomy and dignity within marriage, protections our legal system fails to provide. Marital rape is not about marriage but about violence. The moment for action has arrived,” he said. The statement of objects and reasons of the bill said the criminalisation of marital rape is an urgent necessity in India’s legal framework. “Currently,

Section 63 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, excludes marital rape from being a punishable offence, allowing men to engage in non-consensual sex with their wives, provided the wife is not under 18 years of age,” it said. This outdated legal exception is rooted in patriarchal notions that view wives as property -- a remnant of colonial-era mindsets -- the statement added. “This failure to criminalise marital rape has left married women legally defenceless,

distinguishing them from unmarried women and perpetuating the misconception that marriage voids the necessity of consent. This undermines women’s fundamental rights to dignity, safety and bodily autonomy,” it further said. “Allowing a husband to force sex upon his wife disregards her autonomy and perpetuates a culture of control and gender-based violence.... Similarly, factors unrelated to a woman’s autonomy, such as her caste, profession, clothing choices, personal beliefs or past sexual conduct, should never be used to presume her consent. Such assumptions not only perpetuate gender-based inequality but also violate her fundamental rights and dignity. They must be unequivocally rejected,” the statement said. In another post on X, Tharoor said his private member’s bill to establish a permanent States and Union Territories Reorganisation Commission has been brought to ensure that any future creation or alteration of states and Union

territories is guided by objective data (including data from the census), clear definitions, administrative efficiency, economic viability, national unity and the will of the people. According to the statement of objects and reasons of the bill, the constant bifurcation and reorganisation of states confirms that such issues shall be omnipresent in a country of such diversity. “It is pertinent to create a mechanism for reorganisation of states that takes into account economic and financial viability, administrative efficacy, unity of the nation, cultural history, attitude of the people and so on. A pre-planned consistent study of reorganisation of states on the basis of these factors will ensure informed decision-making that will lead to efficient, stable units rather than knee-jerk reactions,” it said. “Keeping true to the words of (Jawaharlal) Nehruji, it will be an objective and dispassionate process for the welfare of both the people and the country,” it added.