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Published From: HYDERABAD DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL RAIPUR CHANDIGARH BHUBANESWAR RANCHI DEHRADUN VIJAYAWADA









### Relocation of trees gaining ground

A 100-year-old banyan tree in Shankarpally, Ranga Reddy district, was relocated two to three kilometers to a private property after an individual adopted it to prevent it from being cut down. Despite having all its branches stripped nearly a decade ago, the tree had successfully regrown. This case highlights a growing trend where individuals are stepping forward to adopt and relocate old trees, spending nearly Rs 2 lakh on equipment and transportation to move them to safer locations. The VATA ...

### Cong's 'EAGLE' to monitor elections

The Congress on Sunday set up an eight-member committee --Empowered Action Group of Leaders and Experts (EAGLE) -- to monitor the conduct of free and fair elections by the Election Commission of India. The committee will first take up the Maharashtra voters' list manipulation issue, and submit a detailed report to the leadership at the earliest, the party said in a statement. The panel includes Congress treasurer Ajay Maken and senior leaders Digvijaya Singh, Abhishek Singhvi..

# 'Expert panel soon to

A committee will be set up under the national manufacturing technology to further promote

-PAGE: 8

### Two-tier Test format ahead of India's tour

When Australia face South Africa in the World Test Championship final, it will mark the end of the current format, which is set to be relaunched as a two-tier system ahead of India's tour of England later this summer. In a bid to create a "fairer competition". England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) chairman Richard Thompson, who is the head of the ICC's strategic growth committee, recently held talks with the apex body's chairman Jay Shah and the two will lead the plan. With just .

# BCs constitute 46.25% in TG

Account for 1,64,09,179 people in total population: Caste Survey

Telangana creates history by completing record-breaking Caste Survey in just 50 days: Uttam

Says Cong govt fulfilled Rahul's promise made during Assembly election campaign

KOLISHETTY VENKATESHWARLU

The Chairman of the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Caste Census, Irrigation Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, said that the comprehensive caste survey covered 3,54,77,554 individuals. The survey's demographic data revealed that BCs accounted for 1,64,09,179 that BCs accounted 101 1,0-1,0-1,17, people (46.25%), SCs 61,84,319 (17.43%), and STs 37,05,929 (10.45%). The Muslim population stood at 44,57,012 (12.56%), including 35,76,588 (10.08%) BC Muslims and 8,80,424 (2.48%) OC Muslims. Other OCs accounted for 44,21,115 (13.31%), making the total OC population around 15.79%.

venkat.k.warlu@gmail.com

■ HYDERABAD

Uttam said that the findings would be used to restructure Telangana's social welfare programmes to ensure equitable distribution of resources.

Addressing a press conference later, Uttam said that precisely a year ago, on February 4, 2024, the Telangana Cabinet passed a resolution approving this survey, and, on



Cabinet Sub-Committee on Caste Census chairman and Irrigation Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy addressing the media on Sunday along with Committee members--Damodara Rajanarsimha, Ponnam Prabhakar and Seethakka at Secretariat

### Special Assembly session to approve report

a special session on February 4. The Assembly session will begin at 11 am and the government will present the caste census survey report in the House at 11 am. The Assembly will hold a short debate on the caste census report.

Revanth gram panchayat elections in discussed it.

The Telangana Assembly will hold 
Telangana after implementing 42 per cent reservations for BCs. The government wanted to take a decision on the BC caste census before this as the caste census was undertaken as part of this.

Planning Commission officials have already submitted the caste Reddy census report to the Cabinet sub-Government is trying to hold committee and the Committee STS 10.45%, 10.08%, **OC MUSLIMS** 2.48%, OCS OTHER THAN OC MUSLIMS 13.31%,

Sunday, the completed report stands as a milestone document that will redefine governance and policymaking in the state.

He described it as a 'historic' day for social justice in Telangana and announced that the reports would be presented to the Cabinet on February 4 at 10 am. It will be followed by a short discussion in the Assembly on the same day.

Uttam said that the comprehensive survey, the largest post-independence one, covered 96.9% of Telangana households with the help of 94,863 enumerators and 9,628 supervisors deployed across 94,261 enumeration blocks. He said that a total of 76,000 data entry operators digitised the information within 36 Continued on Page 2



# India clinch Women's U-19 T20 World Cup

PNS KUALA LUMPUR

An utterly dominant India flaunted their embarrassment of riches to win a second successive U-19 Women's T20 World Cup title with a nine-wicket shellacking of South Africa here on Sunday, the triumph giving a peek into the game's most perfectly calibrated youth structure.

Having outclassed every team during their march to the final, India asserted themselves yet again, getting the job done with as many as 52 balls to spare while also becoming the first team to win the Continued on Page 2

THE BIGGEST STAR OF THE **DAY WAS ALL-ROUNDER GONGADI TRISHA, WHO COMPLEMENTED HER** EXCELLENT 3/15 WITH AN **UNBEATEN 33-BALL 44 WHILE BATTING** 



**BCCI** announces cash award of Rs 5 crore

# boost 'Make in India'

mission to get into the details on issues like cutting cost of doing business; preparing future-ready workforce; and availability of Make in India initiative, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has said. Representatives from the Centre, states, and private sector are expected to be there in the committee. It would identify key focus areas, which are futuristic and where there is demand both in the domestic.

### BRS, TG activists must protest against Centre's bias: Mahesh

PNS HYDERABAD

Declaring a war on the BJP in protest against the Centre's stance against Telangana at the Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar's statue, TPCC Chief B. Mahesh Kumar Goud said that the BRS and Telangana activists should come forward to protest against the Centre's biased attitude towards Telangana.

Addressing a protest held at the Tank Bund Ambedkar statue on Sunday, Mahesh appealed to all political parties to put politics aside and come together for the sake of Telangana's development. He said that they will stage a peaceful protest till the Centre gives adequate funds to Telangana.

Asking the Union Ministers from

Telangana, G. Kishan Reddy and Bandi Sanjay Kumar, to reveal whether they don't want the state to develop, Mahesh asked Sanjay and Kishan to quit the Union Ministry. He said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and other Ministers are fighting for Telangana.

He said that the budget introduced by the daughter-in-law of Telugus, Nirmala Sitaraman, puts politics before the nation's comprehensive development. He said the budget allocations proved the BIP's clear bias against Congress-ruled states like Telangana.

Mahesh said the BJP has eight MPs from Telangana, however, the Centre gave only a donkey's egg to Telangana. He said that Niramala Continued on Page 2 Sitaraman



meeting on the Comprehensive Kumar Reddy, said that the report Family survey at the Police Command Control Centre.

During the meeting, the Panchayati election issue also came up for discussion. It is learnt that the Panchayat and election comment will pass a resolution enhancing BC Reservations and Panchayat and election commission officials informed that they are ready for conducting elections.

mittee on Sunday. The Cabinet Sub-Committee chairman 'N. Uttam whether.

will be placed in the Assembly on February 4. There is a possibility that the gov-

send the same to the Centre. It is learnt that the state govern-

ment will go for local body elections report came to the Cabinet sub-com- first week of March while taking a decision on reservations even

### Nobody is happy with Congress govt, alleges Aruna

that 'the elections are coming, and

Revanth conducted a review

PNS HYDERABAD

be careful.

Stating that nobody is happy with Congress rule, the BJP MP from Mahbubnagar, DK Aruna, said that MLAs and the public are fully opposing the Congress government. Aruna said that MLAs, who are

not interested in speaking outside about their own government, held a secret meeting and said the Congress government as a corrupt government.

Reacting to the recent Congress MLAs secret meeting on Sunday, DK Aruna alleged that the Congress government fell into deep neck corruption. "The Congress Government is a percentages' government and work will be done only if given 10 per cent commission.

# Now TG has become a 'State of suicides': KTR

PNS HYDERABAD

BRS Working President KT Rama Rao said that former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao transformed Telangana from starvation and suicides to Annapurna Telangana in just 10 years. However, after a year of Congress rule, Annapurna Telangana has turned into a Telangana of suicides, he added.

Posting regarding this on X on Sunday, KTR said, "Former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao transformed Telangana from starvation and suicides to Annapurna Telangana in just 10 years. However, after a year of Congress rule, Annapurna Telangana has turned into a Telangana of suicides. Telangana real estate has become

weak due to HYDRAA and the Musi Rejuvenation Project. Entrepreneurs who invested in TG are committing suicide as they could not recoup their investments or at least the interest on them. KCR gave a helping hand to agriculture, instilling confidence in farmers and becoming the backbone of the agricultural sector. During Revanth rule, farmers are committing suicide as there is no water, no electricity, no procurement, no farmer assurance and no loan waivers. This is not a ment that hounds the people. Wake people's government, but a govern- up Telangana, wake up."



Super Sunday showdown in Delhi campaign

### I will reveal details only after talking to Deepa Das Munshi: Anirudh

PNS HYDERABAD

The Congress's MLA representing Jadcharla, Anirudh Reddy, said that he would reveal details regarding his meeting with other MLAs only after talking to the AICC's incharge General Secretary Deepa Das

"It's a fact that we MLAs met. What's wrong if MLAs meet at one place and discuss the development of their constituencies? We didn't meet secretly. However, there is more to tell the high command. I will talk to party heads and reveal details to them. I have not kept any file with the Revenue Minister. Nagarkurnool MP Mallu Ravi should reveal which file it is, Anirudh said

Addressing the media on Sunday about his dinner meeting with



Congress MLA from Jadcharla constituency Janampalli Anirudh Reddy

MLAs, Anirudh said that they had also discussed about their families children's education, marriages etc. and that they discussed politics only for a few minutes.

# Prayagraj gears up for 'zero-error' Amrit Snan

PNS MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

Shaken by the deadly January 29 stampede, top Uttar Pradesh government officials on Sunday stressed the compliance of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's directive of "zero-error" during the ongoing Maha Kumbh's final 'Amrit Snan' on Basant Panchami.

The government said said expects five crore pilgrims to take the holy dip Monday, and several steps has been taken to ensure the event remains incident-free.

"Operation Eleven" has been implemented for crowd management, one-way traffic system has been put in place in the mela area for smooth movement for pilgrims and preventing congestion at Triveni Ghats, barricades have been raised, and additional police forces deployed, particularly on pontoon 5 crore devotees expected to attend Maha Kumbh today



bridges, to avoid any mishap.

and Shastri bridges, deployment of Turn and Phaphamau Bridge, and Other key measures include armed state and central police forces increased security at the New Yamuna at major crowd points like Tikarmafi

strategic traffic diversions. Rail and bus operations have

been streamlined, with additional trains and shuttle services for devotees. The Prayag Junction and key city intersections are under heightened security, while extra forces including Rapid Action Force and Provincial Armed Constabulary personnel, have been stationed at sensitive locations. The government aims a "zero-

error" safety approach, ensuring an orderly and secure 'Amrit Snan' experience, according to an official statement.

Two senior IAS officers Ashish Goyal and Bhanu Chandra Goswami, who were part of the team that successfully conducted the 2019 Ardh Kumbh, have been called in to oversee the smooth conduct of the Mela. They have joined Mela Adhikari Vijay Kiran Anand, forming a trio that was part of the mega fair six years ago.

# Monday Mirchi

Securing a central deputation beyond the usual three to five years is no easy feat, but N. Balaram IRS (2010) has managed to get a rare sixth-year extension. What's raising eyebrows, however, is that his file was personally signed by the Chief Secretary herself - an uncommon move that hints at the strong backing he enjoys. Insiders say his extension isn't just a recognition of his work but also a reflection of the strong lobby that stands behind him. A proud son of Palamuru just like Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, Balaram has risen from humble beginnings—once working as a laborer near City Chain to fund his education—to now leading Singareni.

### PAMELA SATPATHY TO OUTSHINE SMITA SABHARWAL IN KARIMNAGAR

The buzz in Karimnagar is that Collector Pamela Satpathy might just achieve what even the celebrated Smita Sabharwal couldn't during her tenure - putting an end to the infamous Karimnagar dump yard saga. A little bird tells us that Pamela has a concrete plan in the works to tackle the long-standing issue, earning her whispers of praise in both bureaucratic and political circles. While Smita left her mark with innovative initiatives, insiders are betting that Pamela's knack for solving persistent problems will cement her legacy for years to come. Political chatter suggests she is already being talked about as the collector who could redefine governance in Karimnagar—possibly surpassing the legendary reputation of

### HARISH RAO'S SELECTIVE OUTRAGE **OVER IRRIGATION ADVISORS IN TG**

Harish Rao has raised concerns over the appointment of Adityanath Das, former Chief Secretary of Andhra Pradesh, as an advisor to the Telangana government. He pointed out that Das had previously advocated for Andhra's water interests and was even sentenced to three months in prison for misleading the court on the illegal construction of the Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation Scheme. However, what Harish conveniently overlooked is that Penta Reddy, an advisor during the KCR regime, has been retained even under the Congress government. Whispers are that if appointing advisors with past allegiances is an issue, then the criticism should apply to all, not selectively. Political circles are abuzz with whispers that Harish's attack is more about scoring points than genuine concern, if advisors are to be blamed, it should be across the board - or not at all.

### THREE SENIOR IPS OFFICERS FROM TELANGANA FOR CENTRAL DEPUTATION?

In a significant bureaucratic shift, three key IPS officers from Telangana are likely to move on central deputation. Among them, one is a high-ranking state-level officer, while the other two are serving as Police Commissioners. The development has sparked discussions within the state administration, as these officers hold crucial posi-

that the process is in the final stages. With their departure, a reshuffle in the state's police leadership is inevitable, leading to speculation about who will fill these key positions. While central deputation is common for senior IPS officers seeking career growth and broader administrative exposure, the timing of these transfers has raised curiosity, especially in the backdrop of evolving law and order challenges in the state.

### MINISTERS' MIXED SIGNALS LEAVE **OFFICIALS BAFFLED**

A recent conference with collectors on ration card distribution turned into an unexpected display of confusion, exposing the lack of unity among the Chief Minister and his ministers. While officials tuned in expecting clear directives, they were instead treated to three ministers contradicting each other-right in front of district collectors. The bureaucratic circles had a field day dissecting the chaos, with one senior IAS officer quipping, The government should first decide what it wants before asking us to implement it. But here, the ministers themselves can't agree, and that only hurts the government's credibility. With collectors left scratching their heads and whispers growing louder, insiders say this isn't just a one-off incident but a sign of deeper cracks within the leadership.

### ABV ENJOYS DOUBLE BONANZA **UNDER NAIDU GOVT**

Retired IPS officer AB Venkateswara Rao is now living the dream, courtesy of the Chandrababu Naidu-led government. After enduring what can only be described as a turbulent rollercoaster ride under former CM YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, where his career was less about promotions and more about suspensions, ABV is now enjoying the sweetest of returns.

Just days after Venkateswara Rao openly criticised Jagan, the Naidu government responded with the swiftness of a well-oiled political machine. Not only did they regularise his suspension periods—both from February 2020 to February 2022 and from June 2022 to May 2024—they decided to treat those "vacation" days as "on duty." And what's that? A full salary and allowances for the entire time he was on forced sabbatical? ABV must be laughing all the way to the bank. But wait, there's more! Before Venkateswara Rao could even get comfortable with his newly minted pay cheques, the Naidu government pulled a masterstroke: appointing him as the Chairman of the Andhra Pradesh Police Housing Corporation Limited. So, while others struggle to get their hands on the last piece of office stationery, ABV is now set to continue his career for another two years with extra perks, professional prestige, and, let's face it, a significant career plot twist. From suspended officer to superstar, ABV is surely taking notes on how to stage the best career comeback in recent memory!

-Yours truly

### **Builder Venugopal Reddy's suicide** is murder by the Cong govt: Harish

**PNS** ■ HYDERABAD

Alleging that Builder Venugopal Reddy's suicide is in a way, a murder by the Congress Government, former Minister T. Harish Rao said that builder Venugopal Reddy committed suicide due to the inefficient rule of the Congress. Harish consoled the bereaved family of builder Venugopal Reddy at Kompally on Sunday along with MLA KP Vivekanand Goud and BRS leader Errolla Srinivas and others.

Harish enquired about the reasons for the suicide of Venugopal Reddy. The family replied that Venugopal had suffered losses in the real estate business last year.

While giving an assurance to the family that the BRS will stand by the family, Harish said

Modi 'jhoothon ka

his 'baap': Kharge

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on

Sunday launched a scathing

attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and AAP

convenor Arvind Kejriwal,

alleging that while Modi is

"jhoothon ka sardar", the former Delhi CM turned

out to be his "baap (father)" in speaking lies.

Addressing a public meeting in Mustafabad here,

Kharge trained his guns at

Kejriwal specifically and said the AAP chief brought elder-

ly Anna Hazare to Delhi by

duping him and then lied to

the people to garner votes.

people to clean sweep AAP

with the broom, the election symbol of the Kejriwal-led

The Congress chief urged

No immediate reaction

Kejriwal made false

promises and abused the

Congress. He tried to defame

us. He is the same person

who used to say 'I am fight-

ing against corruption, we

have to remove corruption

was available from either

the BJP or the AAP.

and bring Lokpal'.

sardar', Kejriwal

PNS NEW DELHI

that in one way Venugopal handloom workers, auto dricarried out by the Congress

"Banks used to give loans to builders queuing up. However, in the last 14 months, builders are not in a position to get loans due to Congress rule. Builder Venugopal Reddy committed suicide after losing confidence as he failed to sell his apartment and could not get loans from banks. It is painful that a 39-year-old builder committed suicide. Venugopal also has a 5-year-old daughter. Who is behind the family's pain? he asked. Harish said that Venugopal

Reddy's relatives are appealing to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy to ensure that the remaining builders do not commit suicides like Minister Revanth Reddy Venugopal Reddy. Farmers, HYDRAA at least now

Reddy's suicide is a murder vers and now builders are committing suicides under Congress rule, he slammed. It is painful that the situation turned to the level that a builder committed suicide due to his inability to sell a flat in Hyderabad, which was a heav-

> Harish said the Congress party's negligent rule and inappropriate and inefficient policies are directly or indirectly the reason behind suicides.

> en for builders during BRS rule.

He said that Revanth Reddy, who has been saying that he came from the real estate business and that he knows everything and there is no need to speak about his real estate business, is destroying the real estate business with his inappropriate decisions. He asked Chief Minister Revanth Reddy to stop

### Centre ignoring census, says Kavitha

**PNS** ■ HYDERABAD

BRS MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha said that the Centre is ignoring the census. She said that the Census is essential for formulating progressive poli-cies which enable inclusive development.

Kavitha tweeted regarding this on Sunday. In her post, she said "From the ?8,754 crore proposed in 2019 to just ?574 crore now, the delay in the Census is a delay in India's

growth. The roadmap to progress cannot be built on mere idealistic statements but requires solid data and surveys that define the true picture of India. Data drives progress. No Census, no caste data, how will growth be planned without understanding the people it serves and the socioeconomic fabric of our society. The Census is essential and mandatory for formulating progressive policies that enable inclusive development."



### SUPER SUNDAY SHOWDOWN

# High voltage campaign by AAP, BJP, Cong for Feb 5 Delhi polls

PNS NEW DELHI

With three days to go for the assembly polls, Delhi saw a high-voltage 'Super Sunday' of campaigning as the BJP, AAP and Congress escalated their war of words with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal and Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra leading the

Campaigning for the February 5 assembly elections will come to an end on Monday evening. The counting of votes will be undertaken on February 8.

The national capital is witnessing a triangular contest between the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), BJP and Congress for the 70-member Delhi Assembly elections.

The BIP scheduled 80 rallies on Sunday. Several Union ministers, including Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Union minister Chirag Paswan, and at least five chief ministers of BJP-ruled states

hit the streets, attacking AAP. The Delhi assembly elections are being seen as a referendum on AAP's gover-nance model and the ruling

party's chief Arvind Kejriwal. As AAP battles to retain its stronghold for a third consecutive term, the BJP is aiming for a comeback after 26 years.

Addressing a rally in RK Puram, Modi slammed AAP alleging that the party ruling Delhi made false promises and indulged in corruption. He accused "AAP-da" of destroying 11 years of the national capital and claimed that a double-engine government dedicated to development and growth will now be elected.

Modi said to the crowds: 'Entire Delhi is now saying -- ab ki baar", and the gathering chanted "Modi sarkar".

The prime minister later in

a post on X said, "Delhiites trust only the BJP because it does what it says. It is clear from the huge crowd gathered in RK Puram that the 'lotus' will bloom in Delhi."

## Sanjay asks Delhi voters to reject corrupt AAP

PNS HYDERABAD

The Union Minister of State for Home, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, called on the people of Delhi to reject the corrupt Aam Aadmi Party. He said that the Rs 28,400 crore Jal Board scam in Delhi, the Rs 4,500 crore bus purchase scam, the misuse of Rs 500 crore in the name of facilities in buses and irregularities running into crores through fake health tests are proof of

AAP's corruption. Union Minister Sanjay, BJP's Telangana Treasurer Bhandari Shanthikumar and its Delhi representative, Noone Balaraju, campaigned in East Delhi and Shahdara Assembly constituencies on Sunday. Sanjay conducted a door-to-door campaign in the areas inhabited by Bania, Brahmin and Valmiki communities and urged them to vote for BJP

Speaking on the occasion, Sanjay said that AAP leaders who came to power

saying that they would rule avoiding

pomp and corruption looted public money by leading luxurious lives and turned people into beggars. He said that AAP MLAs who lived simple lives before coming to power increased their assets after coming to power. He said the Delhi liquor

scam spread to Telangana and this scam made the people of Delhi bow their heads in shame. He reminded that Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia and BRS leader

Kavitha are the main

accused in this scam. He said that Kejriwal, who went to jail in a corruption

case did not resign until the court forced him to do so and that this proves his selfish pol-He said the Ayushman Bharat scheme will be implemented in the first cabinet

meeting after coming to power through which eligible beneficiaries will be provided free medical treatment up to Rs 10 lakh. He also said the promises mentioned in the BJP election manifesto will be imple-

### BCs constitute ...

developed the digital infrastructure for the smooth execution of the project. The first respondent was Telangana Governor Jishnu Dev Varma, who officially launched the survey by participating in it on November 9, 2024.

Uttam said that the survey faced significant challenges, including misinformation campaigns which attempted to mislead the public. Legal hurdles also arose, as PILs were filed against the survey, but the High Court ruled in favour of the government, marks a significant step towards allowing the process to continue.

Among the key operational challenges, 1.03 lakh houses were found locked, 1.68 lakh families were initially hesitant to participate, and 84,137 houses were misclassified due to non-residen-

visits to ensure maximum participation and accuracy in data col-

Telangana made history by successfully completing the largest-Socio-Economic, Educational, Employment, Political and Caste (SEEEPC) survey, which covered 96.9% of Telangana households in just 50 days. The entire process, from passing a resolution in the Cabinet to submission of the report, was completed in exactly a year. This data-driven governance, fulfilling a major promise made by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during the 2023 Telangana Assembly elections.

The Congress Government led by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy

government conducted repeated foundation for welfare policies Sandeep Kumar Sultania, State nomic data.

The Cabinet Sub-Committee, chaired by Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister, Capt. N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, formally received the survey reports from the Planning Department, which spearheaded the massive data collection exercise.

He hailed it as a 'historic' initiative and a revolutionary step in achieving social justice, emphasising that the findings would guide policy decisions to improve the condition of Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other marginalised communities.

Ministers Uttam Kumar Reddy, D. Seethakka, Ponnam Prabhakar and Damodar Raja Narasimha tial usage or occupants being and Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti received the survey reports from non-Telangana residents. The Vikramarka has now laid the Principal Secretary (Planning) them.

Collector Anudeep Durishetty, and other senior officials. The Planning Department made a detailed PowerPoint presentation on the methodology and findings of the survey.

Drawing a comparison, Uttam pointed out that Bihar's caste census took six months and cost Rs 500 crore, while Telangana completed its survey in just 50 days at much lower cost. He credited this success to superior planning, decentralised implementation and rigorous monitoring at the highest levels.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, Deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka, At a high-level meeting, and Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari closely tracked the survey's daily progress. Twelve high-level review meetings were conducted, with the CM personally heading three of

### TG Caste Survey: 'Many households left out'

PNS HYDERABAD

The ongoing Caste Survey in Telangana has raised concerns as reports emerge of several households being left out of the data collection process.

Many residents from localities such Moghalpura, Sultan Shahi and other parts of Hyderabad claim that survey teams have either not visited their homes or, survey results may fail to when they did, failed to collect any details.

Mohd Abdul Akram, an RTI activist from Hyderabad, has highlighted these issues, stressing that numerous residents were unaware of the survey process as no officials

approached them for data collection. This raises questions about the accuracy and inclusivity of the sur-

A caste survey is a crucial initiative designed to assess the socio-economic conditions of various communities, aiding in policymaking and welfare schemes. However, if a significant portion of the population is excluded, the accurately reflect Telangana's demographics.

The activist has urged concerned authorities to address these gaps immediately, ensure comprehensive household coverage, and maintain transparency in the data collection process.

### CM congratulates Indian team for winning Under-19 Women's World Cup

PNS HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy congratulated the Indian team for winning the Under-19 Women's World Cup for the second consecutive time.

The Chief Minister especially congratulated Trisha, a Telangana girl, who played a key role in the victory of the Indian girls' team with her excellent performance in the final match. India became the world champion by winning the final match against South Africa in Malaysia.

Trisha, who hails from

Bhadrachalam Kothagudem district of Bhadradri, played impres-

She played aggressively, stood her ground till the end, scored the maximum runs in the tournament and became the Player of the Tournament.

The Chief Minister said that players like Trisha are the pride of TG and hoped that Trisha would win a place in the senior Indian team.

He assured that the TG government would encourage young men and women who excel in

### TODAY **ALMANAC** Month & Pakshan Sukla Paksha Panchami Feb 02 09:14 AM to Feb 03 06:53 AM Shashthi to Feb 04 04:37 AM Nakshatram: Revati: to Feb 03 11:16 PM Ashwini Feb 03 11:16 PM

Rahukalam 8:15 AM to 9:40 AM 11:05 AM to 12:30 PM Yamaqandam: Varjyam: 06:04 PM to 07:34 PM 1:54 PM to 3:19 PM 09:02 PM to 10:31 PM Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:07 PM to 12:52 PM

to Feb 04 09:49 PM

### HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly Sunny **Temp:** 33<sup>∞</sup> Humidity: 49% Sunrise: 6:48 AM Sunset: 6:12 PM



### BRS, TG activists ...

Continued from page 1

showed an empty hand to Telugus singing Gurajada Apparao's 'Deshamante Matti Kadoy Deshamante Manushuloy' song. The BJP-led Centre's budget allocations look like allocations for Delhi and Bihar elections, he pointed out.

Mahesh said the BJP has been using

the Union Budget for political purposes, dividing states and endangering national unity. He said the Centre did not pay any attention to the country's 'inclusive' growth in the budget. Budget allocations show BJP's stepmotherly attitude against Telangana, he

said. How can India develop when the budget allocates funds only to a few states, he asked. He said that Telangana, which has a 5.1 per cent share in the country's GDP, is getting only 2.10 per cent of the Budget. It is sad that Telangana is not

even getting Rs 40,000 crore from the

Centre, although the Centre collected Rs

1,01,000 crore from Telangana, he said. He said the budget contains zero allocations for Bifurcation Act assurances,

the second phase of the Metro and other

He said that it is strange that the BJP which goes around saying 'Sab ka Saath, Sab ka Vikas,' does not see the problems of the 140 crore people in the country. The people of Telangana will never forgive the BJP after seeing the 2025-26 budget allocations, he said.

There is a need for every Telangana resident to come together beyond politics for TG's progress. The BRS and Telangana activists should come forward to protest against the biased attitude of the Centre. The leaders of the BRS and BJP repeatedly criticise Chief Minister Revanth's New Delhi visits. What will they say about budget allocations now?"

He recalled that the CM and Ministers went to New Delhi and begged the Prime Minister for funds for TG, but nothing happened.

Mahesh called upon Congress activists to burn the effigies of the Prime Minister and Union Finance Minister on

### Special Assembly ...

Continued from page 1

The Cabinet Sub-Committee Chairman, Irrigation Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, revealed some details of the caste census on Sunday.

The Revanth Government is planning to increase BC reservations and go for panchayat elections. There are chances of a resolution being passed in the Assembly demanding a caste census in the country to be sent to the Centre.

The Cabinet sub-committee report states that BCs constitute 55.85 per cent (BCs 46.25% + Muslim BCs 10.08%) of the population.

According to the caste census report, the government will make preparations to implement schemes and reservations. For this, the Revanth Reddy government is making plans to implement reservations without any legal problems.

During the 2023 Assembly elections, the CM had

said that the BC quota would be increased by 42 per cent. Accordingly, a caste census survey was conducted for 50 days in which 1,03,889 officials participated. The report concluded that 96.9 per cent of families in Telangana were covered by the survey as the survey covered 3,540,0000 people. The committee said in its report that 3.1 per cent of people did not register their details during the survey.

The Assembly will approve the caste census report after discussing it.

### India clinch ...

Continued from page 1

without dropping a single game. The biggest star of the day was all-rounder Gongadi Trisha, who complemented her excellent 3/15 with an unbeaten 33-ball 44 while batting.

South Africa, led by Kayla Reyneke, opted to bowl first, but their decision backfired quickly as India's three-pronged spin attack bowled them out for 82. Left-arm spinner Aayushi Shukla was the

star of the show with figures of 4-2-9-2, while leg-spinner Trisha, who has also been a revelation with the bat, further underlined her all-round capabilities with her triple strikes Trisha once again anchored India's chase

with an unbeaten knock that was studded with eight fours. Vice-captain Sanika Chalke (26 not out; 22

balls, 4x4) sealed the victory with a powerful heave to the square-leg boundary, forcing the young Indian players, draped in the Tricolour, to break into wild celebrations.

"I've dreamt of this moment for the past two years, and I can't believe I hit the winning runs -- it's truly surreal. My teammates' support made all the difference, and this moment is one I'll cherish forever," said

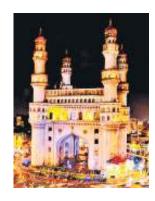
### BCCI announces cash award of Rs 5 cr

PNS NEW DELHI

The BCCI on Sunday announced a cash award of Rs 5 crore for the Indian team and its support staff after the title triumph in the U-19 Women's T20 World Cup in Kuala Lumpur with the board's top officebearers hailing the achievement. "The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) extends its heartfelt congratulations to the India Under-19 women's team for successfully defending their title at the ICC Under-19 Women's T20 World Cup 2025 in Malaysia.

"To honour this remarkable achievement, the BCCI has announced a cash reward of INR 5 crore for the victorious squad and support staff, led by head coach Nooshin Al Khadeer," the Indian cricket board said in a statement.

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Saraswati

Puja 2025

Navarun Sangha Club

February 3, (6 am)

Admissions Expo 2025

By Education Today

Lal Bahadur Shastri

Stadium

February 1 to 3, (9 am)

**Hyderabad Premier** 

Golf League

Hyderabad Golf Club

(Coaching Center)

February 3, (10 am)

**Inked Legacies**,

**Linking Geographies** 

Art Exhibition By Deeksha Nath

Shrishti Art Gallery

Till February 9, (11 am)

criminal Battula

CCS of Madhapur Police

have recovered 428 bullets

during a raid at the residence

of most-wanted criminal

Battula Prabhakar, also

known as Rahul Reddy,

according to Madhapur DCP Dr G Vineeth. The police

conducted searches based on

information provided by Prabhakar and he is being interrogated. DCP Vineeth

detailed the case of

Prabhakar, a habitual offender from Chittoor district,

who escaped police custody in March 2022 while being taken to Anakapalli court for

Since then, he had been on

the run. Last night, he was spotted near Prism Pub in

Gachibowli, where he opened

fire on a constable attempting

Venkatrami Reddy sustained

a bullet injury to his leg. "We

have arrested the accused and

seized two pistols and 21 bul-

lets from him. Since 2013,

Prabhakar has been involved

in crimes across five states,

with nearly 80 cases registered

against him - 11 in Telangana

and 12 in Andhra Pradesh,

making him a most-wanted criminal in both states.

Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka,

Andhra Pradesh and

Telangana, mainly targeting

educational institutions in

remote areas to avoid high-

risk house burglaries. Before

committing a crime, he con-

ducted reconnaissance and

watched YouTube videos to

learn how to evade the

While in jail, he devel-

oped a personal rivalry with

another inmate and planned

to kill him with a firearm pur-

chased from Bihar with the

help of his prison contacts. He

had been using firearms for

the past eight months.

police.

He operated in Tamil

to apprehend him.

a hearing

**Most wanted** 

being quizzed

PNS HYDERABAD

# City Pioneer

the pioneer

HYDERABAD | MONDAY | FEBRUARY 3, 2025

### By Navarun Sangha

### **Daughters perform** mother's last rites with uncle's help

**WARASIGUDA CASE** 

**PNS** ■ HYDERABAD

Two daughters who had been living with their deceased mother in Warasiguda sought their uncle's help for the funeral and completed the rites on Sunday. They are now receiving counselling at the Sakhi Centre in Secunderabad.

The Warasiguda Police ruled out any foulplay in the mother's death. Station House Officer (SHO) R Saidulu told The Pioneer that the police intervened, persuading the uncle to take the responsibility, as no one else had come forward. The daughters also apologized for the past family dis-

putes.
"There is no truth in blaming anyone for the woman's death. The daughters attempted suicide the day after their mother's passing and had self-inflicted cuts on their hands and neck.

Due to a family dispute three years ago, they had no contact with their uncle. We will provide them counselling and since they are educated, they can rebuild their lives," said Saidulu.

The preliminary postmortem report indicated that the woman died of cardiac

A detailed report is expected within a week. The doctors said that she had constant complaints of pain in uterus, the police added.

**RESTAURANTS IN JUBILEE HILLS ROAD No. 36** 

# **Expired products, littered fridge,** cockroach infestation found

PNS HYDERABAD

The Task Force Team of Telangana's Commissioner of Food Safety inspected restaurants in Jubilee Hills Road 36 and found multiple violations.

The Task Force Team inspected Poshnosh Lounge and Bar and found expired and misbranded Sichuan pepper, imported from Bangkok without importer details, which was seized. The establishment was operating with an expired license (20\12\2024).

Key documents such as water analysis reports, pest control records, FOSTAC certificates and employee medical records were missing. Refrigerators were not properly cleaned or defrosted. The kitchen floor lacked proper drainage for food waste and had an open entry without a window or insect-proof screen.

Food and non-food items, as well as vegetarian and non-vegetarian food, were stored together. Food items were placed directly on the ground. Industrial-use citric acid (1kg) was found in storage. Expired food items like soy sauce, papad packets, rasam powder, onion powder, cajun mix, mushrooms and packed methi were discarded. Split cashews were found infested with insects.

Later, The Task Force Team also inspected Kishkinda Kitchen (Kake di Hatti), and found that refrigerators were dirty and filled with food waste. Water analysis reports, FOSTAC certificates, and employee medical records were missing. Kitchen drains were clogged and food items were improperly stored. Spoiled vegetables, live cockroaches and rat feces indicated a pest infestation. Expired items, including juice, mushrooms, sunflower oil and packed mustard seeds were discarded. Food handlers were working without gloves. The Task Force Team stated that a notice will be issued and further action will be taken accordingly.





**STARTUP IDEAS & FUNDING ARE ON HOLD** 

### T-Hub's startup workspaces remain empty

samuelmioshuamimc@gmail.com

T-Hub, India's leading startup incubator, workspaces remain empty as startup ideas and funding are on hold. The Technology Hub, which stands at the epicenter of innovation, connecting startups, corporates, academia, investors and governments is now being run with existing ernments, is now being run with existing and well-established startups.

When asked, employees stated that out of 3,000 startups registered with T-Hub, only 1,900 have allocated workspaces in the building. Asish said that while T-Hub was once fully active under the previous administration, encouraging young entrepreneurs with various ideas, it has now become a very stringent process to get startup registration approved by HR management. He noted that unless the ideas are favoured or reach the ears of Interim CEO Sujit Jagirdar, startups are not getting approved.

The 10-floor building has a floor for

venture capital companies at no cost, but many spaces beside Pinnacle Hall and on other floors remain empty. While most floors have workspaces along with event halls, above the 7th floor is not being used much, while the 10th floor consists of a gym and other amenities. The management portrays the building as fully occupied, but the startup incubator remains mostly empty. While events like summits and conclaves are organised, much of the startup and funding information is not disclosed, with the management and officials avoiding sharing the details. T-Hub often hosts events and partnerships in Marvel Hall and Pinnacle Hall, signs MoUs and organises various startup programmes and conclaves. But many young entrepreneurs and startup enthusiasts want more intake into the incubator, faster funding approval and greater

# T-Consult hosts 2-day health network collaboration meet

PNS HYDERABAD

The two-day TConsult Integrated Health Network (TIHN) Collaboration Conclave 2025 was held at T-Hub, reaching out to 60 countries in 13 languages through TConsult AI. The event brought together top healthers to advance integrated medicine and holistic healthcare solutions.

expert Manthena Sathyanarayana Raju delivered a speech in Telugu, which was translated live into 13 languages by TConsult's AI, making his insights accessible world-wide. He shared health tips for professionals in demanding jobs and appreciated Chairman Sundeep



T-Consult Chairman Sundeep Makthala, along with renowned naturopathy expert Manthena Sathyanarayana at the T-Hub

of sprouts, yoga and early

Meanwhile, Sundeep emphasised the importance of integrating Indian traditional health practices into global healthcare. He announced plans to collaborate with traditional medicine practitioners across

Renowned naturopathy Makthala's disciplined lifestyle India to expand TIHN's reach. With its presence in 63 countries, TIHN aims to bridge modern medicine with traditional healing, boosting medical tourism and strengthening India's economy. The conclave marked a major step in creating an accessible and holistic healthcare ecosystem.

# Stampede victim may be shifted for global treatment

Film producer Bunny Vasu visited the Pushpa 2 stampede victim at KIMS Hospital on

According to sources, as the child has not shown significant improvement, plans are being made to shift him abroad for advanced

The last health update on January 29 stated that the child's vital parameters remain stable, and he is on full nasogastric feeding, receiving physiotherapy and rehabilitation support.

Dr Chetan R Mundada and Dr Vishnu Tej Pudi reported that while his agitation episodes have reduced and he is more awake, he still does not recognise family members or show a consistent response to verbal stimuli.

# Tree adoption, relocation gaining ground in city

deepikapasham2015@gmail.com ■ HYDĖRABAD

A 100-year-old banyan tree in Shankarpally, Ranga Reddy district, was relocated two to three kilometers to a private adopted it to prevent it from being cut down.

Despite having all its branches stripped nearly a decade ago, the tree had successfully regrown. This case highlights a growing trend where individuals are stepping forward to adopt and relocate old trees, spending nearly Rs 2 lakh on equipment and transportation to move them to safer locations.

The VATA Foundation, a Hyderabad-based non-profit organisation has been facilitating tree translocations for years and has been overwhelmed with requests from Telangana and beyond. The organisation has successfully completed translocations in Maharashtra, Goa, Andhra Pradesh, Dehradun and Bhopal.

Speaking to The Pioneer, Uday Krishna Peddireddi, founder of the VATA Foundation, said, "The Shankarpally relocation was initiated after an individual initiated after an individual who wanted to adopt the tree reached out to me for help.'



The 100-year-old Banyan tree being translocated in Shankarpally

It's not just individuals who are coming forward - the Patny-Secunderabad Traffic Police have also requested the relocation of several trees. The request was forwarded to the Forest department and Greater Municipal Hyderabad Corporation (GHMC) and is

now pending execution.

VATA Foundation receives
nearly 15 calls per month from people interested in tree translocation. Since the process is accessible online,

many adopters are willing to hire JCBs and cranes to transport trees.

If the tree is large, only one can be transported at a time, and additional equipment is hired for the day, contributing to the Rs 2 lakh expense per relocation.

The foundation advises adopters to move trees within one to two kilometers for a better survival rate. The increasing interest in tree adoption is

largely due to successful past

translocations, where relocated trees have continued to grow and thrive.

Looking ahead, VATA Foundation is working on a protocol document outlining specific relocation methods for different types of trees. The draft will soon be submitted to the National Wildlife Board and the Ministry of Environment, ensuring that future tree adopters can follow standardised methods for effective transplantation.

# Advanced brain fitness tech unveiled to boost mental clarity



Students, medical professionals and corporate employees experiencing a live demonstration of the BrainTap device at the T-Hub on Sunday

PNS HYDERABAD

BrainTap, a leading brain fitness company, unveiled advanced technology to poost mental clarity, reduce stress and enhance well-being across the country. During the launch at T-Hub on Sunday, students, medical professionals and corporate employees experienced a live demonstration of the device, which is fitted to the eyes and connects to the brain using rhythmic sounds and visuals for overall well-being. BrainTap features the Gamma wave (30-100Hz) for insight and peak focus, along with Beta and other waves at the needed frequencies to reduce stress and improve well-being. Dr Nawab Mir Nasir Ali Khan, Honorary Consul of the Republic of Kazakhstan, along with Ajay Mishra, IAS (Retd.), and other key officials attended the launch.

At the event, Founder & Co-CEO of BrainTap, USA, Dr Patrick Porter explained how the brain can be rewired through neural plasticity and pruning. He

emphasised the importance of exercising the brain as we age and adapting to the changing world. Dr Porter discussed the role of neurogenesis and neurochemical changes during recovery, as well as how the brain can recover from trauma, toxins and negative thoughts. He stressed the need to keep our brains healthy and highlighted BrainTap's mission to unlock the full potential of individuals by harnessing the power of brain fitness.

Dr Porter also mentioned that while several universities in India are still researching BrainTap, he highlighted that they have succeeded in proving the effec-

tiveness of the technology.

Meanwhile, Board Director at
BrainTap USA,Vishal Baijal said that BrainTap seamlessly combines ancient Indian wellness practices with modern neuroscience. Inspired by Dhyana (meditation), Nada Yoga (sound healing), and Trataka (light therapy), BrainTap uses binaural beats, guided visualisation and photonic stimulation to activate the brain's natural healing states.

# BC leaders demand 42 % quota in local body polls

**PNS** ■ HYDERABAD

The BC Caste Associations' Joint Forum has called on the Telangana government to immediately implement 42% reservations for BCs in local body elections as promised in Kamareddy Declaration. During a roundtable at the Somajiguda Press Club, BC leaders and caste association representatives criticized the government's delay and called for state-wide protests if their demands were

not met. Key demands include, local body elections should only occur after completing the caste survey. A special 15-day drive should finish the



incomplete caste survey. 50%of government-nominated chairman and director posts should go to BCs. Political parties should ensure 50% representation for BCs in district president positions and other key posts.

Former chairman of the Commission Dr

Vakulabharanam Krishna Mohan Rao warned the government against using the Supreme Court's verdict as an excuse to deny BCs their share. He urged the government to file a review petition to uphold BC reservations and submit new caste survey data.





HYDERABAD | MONDAY | FEBRUARY 3, 2025

# **KAKATIYA UNIVERSITY** FACING FACULTY SHORTAGE

PNS HANAMKONDA

Kakatiya University (KU) is currently facing a significant short-age of teaching staff, which is severely affecting its academic standards. At present, approximately 20 per cent of the required faculty positions remain unfilled, putting a strain on the education system and impacting the experiences of postgraduate students who are struggling without regular professors across various

The university has been sanctioned 55 professor posts, 96 associate professor posts, and 258 assistant professor posts. However, only 76 faculty members are currently in these positions. Not a single professor post has been filled, and only two associate professors have been appointed. Out of the 258 assistant professors needed, only 77 are



available. This leaves 333 out of ongoing for years, with the last 409 total teaching posts vacant,

major recruitment efforts taking exacerbating the crisis. place in 2010. Since then, as reg-This staffing shortage has been ular professors retired, no new

a result, the educational quality at KU has steadily declined over the

Research activities, in particular, have been severely impacted. With a lack of experienced faculty to supervise research scholars, the quality of research has dropped, and students are falling behind in competitive examinations. Many departments are without heads, such as Telugu and Political Science, while others have only one research guide for multiple disciplines. Once a highly sought-after university, KU is now struggling to attract students for research programmes, with many postgraduate seats going unfilled.

Retired KU professors ament the university's decline in educational standards and student interest, recalling the days when KU was a major academic hub. The students appealed to State government to take immediate action to address the staffing crisis, as the university's credibility is on the line.



### Fake journalists threaten to defame CI, extort Rs 1.10 lakh

PNS NALGONDA

The police arrested two individuals for posing as journalists and blackmailing police officers and several others. The individuals, the police said, had masqueraded as journalists from a digital paper, Crime Mirror. Aanand Kumar, who posed as chief editor of the digital paper, is still at large.

The arrested are Tuppari Raghu, who posed as a staff reporter and

Peraboina Anjaneyulu, a reporter. Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Rajasekhar Raju told reporters that these fake journalists extorted money targeting Miryalaguda Rural Circle Inspector Veeerababu. The blackmailers demanded that the Circle Inspector pay Rs 5 lakh for not reporting the "misdeeds. The police

officer paid Rs 1.10 lakh to the extortionists through his friend. Audio and video evidence of the incident was obtained by the police.

The fake journalists, however, continued to demand that the police officer pay Rs 4 lakh, Unable to cope with the pressure from these extortionists, the Circle Inspector's family nearly resorted to suicide. Following a complaint from the police officer, the fake journalists were taken into custody.

The case went viral on social media, and multiple victims came forward, lodging complaints about similar blackmailing tactics. In particular, officials from Nagarjuna Sagar and Suryapet were also reportedly targeted by these fake journalists in the past.

# Leopard spotted sitting on tree in Asifabad district



Kumaram Bheem Asifabad district on Sunday

ASIFABAD/MANCHERIAL

A wave of panic spread across Chintapalli village under Tiryani mandal in Kumuram Bheem Asifabad district after the villagers spotted a leopard sitting on a tree. Villagers took videos of the leopard sitting on a tree.

When the Forest officer Srinivas was contacted, he mentioned that forest staff had been sent to the area and they had collected leopard pugmarks. The villagers were advised not to enter the forest area.

In a related development, a big tiger attacked a wild boar in a cotton field located adjacent to the forest area of Kannal village under Bellampally mandal in Mancherial district

Since Thursday evening, the

Rajeshwara Swamy temple. It was spotted drinking water at a pond near Kannal village, and it created panic among the villagers. The tiger then moved from the Niligiri forest in Kunta Ramula Bastis to the Mango orchards in Peddanapalli.

The movements of the tiger in the village were confirmed by the Bellampally Range Forest officials. Initially, it was assumed that the tiger had left the Kannal forest, but on Saturday, the tiger attacked a wild boar in a cotton field. Forest officials reported that the tiger spotted in the Kannal forest is likely B-2 and that it may have come from the forest area.

The tiger was found in the cotton field of the Kannal forest, seemingly feeding on the wild boar, even though it was initial-

### **Girl student** goes missing in Burgampadu village

PNS BHADRADRI KOTHAGUDEM

A student from Kasturba Hostel in Burgampadu in Bhadradri Kothagudem district has gone missing.

The student, who is studying second-year nursing at the junior college in Burgampadu, was taken outside by unidentified individuals on Saturday evening. They claimed to be her rela-

When she did not return by late night, the staff informed her family members. Her parents arrived at Burgampadu and filed a complaint with the police. The police are

# MLA Shankar slams Centre for ignoring TG's interests

PNS RANGAREDDY

Shadnagar MLA Veerlapalli Shankar strongly criticised the Union Budget, accusing the BJP-led Central government of ignoring Telangana's interests.

Speaking at a media conference held at the camp office on Sunday, he expressed his anger, stating that the budget was designed to favour the states where elections were due, while Telangana was sidelined. He questioned whether the Central government only allocated funds to states where BIP was in power. MLA Shankar demanded answers from Union Ministers G Kishan Reddy and Bandi Sanjay Kumar, and MP DK Aruna, alleging that Telangana was being deliberately neglected. He pointed out that despite Chief Minister A



Shadnagar MLA Veerlapalli Shankar speaking at a media conference in

Union Ministers, Telangana was unfairly treated in the budget. He lamented that agreements made during the State's bifurcation were ignored and criticised the government for not allocating sufficient funds for employment guarantee workers. He accused the BJP of favouring corporate interests while neglecting the welfare of the poor and weaker sections.

Shankar further alleged that Revanth Reddy's repeated visits to Delhi and appeals to the nomically weaken smaller States government's indifference.

to establish dominance over them. He criticised the BJP leaders for their silence on the issue. He also accused the Central government of being biased, stating that Telangana contributed a significant amount in taxes but received inadequate funds for welfare programs.

The MLA praised Chief Minister Revanth Reddy for introducing several welfare

# Collector conducts surprise inspection of schools, hostels

PNS WARANGAL

District Collector Satya Sharada on Sunday emphasised the need to provide quality food for students.

The Collector conducted a surprise inspection of several government hostels in Nekkonda mandal. They include Government Girls Gurukul School, college, Post Matric Scheduled Castes Boys Hostel and Scheduled Castes Girls Hostel.

The Collector was accompanied by Tahsildar Raj Kumar and MPDO Praveen Kumar.

The Collector examined the registers and later inspected the kitchen room, dining hall

and store rooms. College principals and care-



Warangal Collector Satya Sharada inspecting records in a school in Nekkonda mandal in Warangal district on Sunday

takers are advised to be present in the kitchen room during the cooking of food. The Collector inspected the lunch cooked for Matric SC Boys Hostel.

the mid-day meal. The Collector had lunch with the students at the Post

# Multi-vehicle collision leads to two km traffic jam on NH

Two persons, one of them seriously, were injured in a multi-vehicle collision on the National Highway near Aitipamula village under Kattangur mandal in Nalgonda district on Sunday. A mini SUV, belonging to the RTC, rammed into a stationary container while traveling from Hyderabad to Vijayawada.

Following the collision, six vehicles crashed into the Bolero car one after another. The chain of accidents caused a traffic jam that stretched for nearly two kilo-

The injured were rushed to Nakrekal Government Hospital, while another person was transferred to Kamineni Hospital. It is reported that the condition of the person transferred to Kamineni



Hospital is stable. The two injured individuals have been identified as RTC employees.

Police from Nakrekal and

Kattangur arrived on the scene promptly and cleared the traffic congestion caused by the

### CPI dubs Union Budget as pro-rich

PNS KHAMMAM

CPI National Committee member Bagam Hemanta Rao criticised Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for completely ignoring Telangana in the Union Budget. He accused the BJP and its allies of favouring states under their control for political gains, and stated that such political discrimi-

nation had never been seen in India's history. In protest against the Union Budget, the CPÍ district committee organised a demonstration on Sunday by burning an effigy of the Central government on Khammam bypass. Activists, who began their protest from the CPI office, reached the

bypass and set the effigy on fire.

Speaking on the occasion, Hemanta Rao expressed anger over the fact that Telangana was not allocated even a single project or proposal in the Budget. He made it clear that CPI strongly opposed the Budget, which he claimed was designed to benefit the wealthy classes.

Hemanta Rao also criticised the Central government's neglect of the demands raised by the Kisan Sangharsh Samiti (Farmers' Union) for support prices for agricultural products. He accused the government of completely ignoring the farmers' demands while benefiting corporate powers, and claimed the government was deceiving the people by manipulating numbers.

He warned that the Union Budget, presented by Nirmala Sitharaman, could lead the country toward a future burdened with debt. He raised concerns over how the estimated deficit of Rs 13.65 lakh crore would be managed and pointed out that the Budget ignored key sectors like education and healthcare, as well as failed to address rising prices.

The protest saw the participation of CPI state committee members Jammula Jitender Reddy, Kondaparthi Govindarao and others.



CPI members burning an effigy of the Central government in protest against Union Budget, in Khammam on Sunday

# Arrangements for Mini Medaram Jatara moving at snail's pace



Devotees throng Medaram on Sunday

The Mini Medaram Jatara will take place in another 10 days. This event is held every two years in the Medaram village of the Tadvai Mandal in Mulugu district. In the intervening years, the Mini Medaram Jatra has been conducted, but the preparations are progressing at a snail's pace. With the event a snails pace. With the event approaching, developmental work is not progressing as expected, and devotees arriving for the festival are facing difficulties due to a lack of basic arrangements.

Though the actual jatara will begin on February 12, devotees have started arriving in Medaram in large numbers. They are facing problems due to a lack of basic facilities.

The Medaram Jatara will take place from February 12 to 15. However, the government has instructed officials to make all necessary arrangements as the lakhs of devotees are expected to arrive. Official apathy has allegedly been delaying works related to the Jatara.

Despite spending crores of rupees annually for road repairs during the festival, the roads often end up in poor condition shortly after. Even now, just two weeks before the event, there are still potholes on the roads. Additionally, there are no rooms set up at the Jampanna Vagu Ghats, and devotees are facing issues with access to drinking water. Public toilets are being locked, further adding to the inconvenience.

The government has allocated Rs 5 crore for the Mini Jatra, but despite this funding, the arrangements for basic facilities remain inadequate. The authorities have been accused of not fulfilling their responsi-bilities, and the situation is becoming a cause for frustration among the devotees. There is still a pressing need for authorities to focus on improving the infrastructure and facilities for the Jatra.

Many permanent toilets that were constructed during the major Jatara are now locked, preventing devotees from using them. Despite being built to cater to the needs of the devotees, these toilets are inaccessible as sanitation workers seem to be avoiding their duties by locking the facilities.



### ACROSS THE STATES



### **Woman forces husband to sell** kidney, elopes with lover

woman allegedly coaxed her husband to sell his kidney for Rs 10 lakh to raise money for their daughter's All reducation, only to flee with another man taking away the entire cash in West Bengal's Howrah district, a police officer said on Sunday. Police launched a probe based on a complaint lodged by the husband's family living in Sankrail. The woman had been pestering her husband for the past one year to sell his kidney and earn some money to run their household in a better way and admit their 12-year-old daughter to a good school, according to the complaint. Believing in his wife, the man agreed to go under the scalpel after she sealed a contract with a buyer for Rs 10 lakh to sell the organ. After the surgery held last month, the man brought home the money. His wife asked him to take rest and not step outside for a speedy recovery. "Then one day she left the house and did not return. I later found the entire amount of Rs 10 lakh in cash along with some more was missing from the almirah," the man said.



### **Navy gets replacement** for MQ-9B drone

onths after an MQ-9B Sea Guardian drone crashed into the Bay of Bengal, the Indian Navy has received a replacement for the high-altitude long-endurance surveillance platform from its US-based manufacturer General Atomics, authoritative military sources said on Sunday. One of the two MQ-9B drones that the Indian Navy had taken on lease was lost in a "controlled ditching" at sea following a technical snag in mid-September last year. General Atomics has sent a replacement for the drone that crashed into the sea as per contract obligations, the sources told PTI. The MQ-9B drones are capable of remaining airborne for over 35 hours and can carry four Hellfire missiles and around 450 kgs of bombs. In 2020, the Indian Navy took the two MQ-9B drones on lease for a period of one year. However, the lease period was extended subsequently. In October, India sealed a mega deal with the US to procure 31 Predator drones from General Atomics at a cost of nearly USD 4 billion to crank up the military's combat prowess along the contested borders with China.



### **Kerala CM to inaugurate 30** new smart Anganwadis

erala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan will inaugurate 30 new smart anganwadis equipped with state-of-the-art facilities for children here on Monday. The CM will inaugurate the facilites via video conference at an event to be held in an auditorium here. State Health Minister Veena George will preside over the function, an official statement said on Sunday. George stated that anganwadis in the state have been upgraded to smart anganwadis as part of efforts to make them child-friendly and support the physical and mental development of children. So far, approval has been granted for constructing 189 smart anganwadis, of which 89 have already been opened, she said. "The 30 new anganwadis are now becoming operational in addition to these. With this, a total of 117 smart anganwadis have been established in the state," George added. The smart anganwadis have been designed

### CJI, judges hold meeting to discuss appointment of ad-hoc judges in HCs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna, along with two senior judges of the Supreme Court, on Sunday held a meeting with High Court judges to discuss issues related to filling up of vacancies, appointment of ad-hoc judges in High courts and establishment of evening \_ in a press release.

day after a national conby the apex court here by the state judiciary.

lowed by a meeting of the chief justices of the high court and senior-most judges of the high court with the Chief Justice of India, Justice Sanjiv Khanna, Justice B R Gavai and Justice Surya Kant, judges of the Supreme Court of India," the top court administration said

"Issues relating to filling up of vacancies in high courts, appointment of ad-hoc judges in high courts and establish-

# **India-Indonesia ties rooted** in shared culture: PM Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the relations between India and Indonesia are not just geopolitical but are rooted in thousands of years of shared culture and history with both countries have a tradition of unity in diversity.

Modi made the remarks while addressing the Maha Kumbabhishegam of Shri Sanathana Dharma Aalayam in Jakarta, Indonesia, via video conferencing.
"It is my pleasure that I

have become a part of the Maha Kumbabishekam of the Murugan Temple in Jakarta. I am far from Jakarta but my mind is close to it just like India and Indonesia are close to each other...I extend my wishes to all the people there on the occasion of Maha Kumbabhishegam," Modi said.

Just a few days ago, President Prabowo Subianto had taken the love of 140 crore Indians from India, Modi said and added that through their president, the people of Indonesia



"It is my pleasure that I have become a part of the Maha Kumbabishekam of the Murugan Temple in Jakarta. I am far from Jakarta but my mind is close to it just like India and Indonesia are close to each other...I extend my wishes to all the people there on the occasion of Maha Kumbabhishegam," Modi said

must be experiencing the good wishes of every Indian.

"I congratulate all of you and crores of devotees of Lord Murugan in India-Indonesia and across the world on the occasion of Kumbabhishegam of Jakarta Temple. I wish that the praise of Lord Murugan continues through the hymns of Tiruppugal. May the mantras protect all people," Modi said. "For the people of India and Indonesia, our relations are not just geopolitical. We are con-

nected by thousands of years old culture. We are connected by thousands of years old history. Our relationship is of heritage, of science, of faith. Our relationship is of shared faith, of spirituality. We are also related to Lord Murugan and Lord Shri Ram. And, we are also related to Lord Buddha," he said.

When a person going from India to Indonesia folds his hands in Prambanan temple, that person gets the same spiritual experience as Kashi and Kedar, he said.

When people of India hear about Kakawin and Serat Ramayana, they get the same feeling as Valmiki Ramayana, Kamba Ramayana and Ramcharit Manas, Modi said.

"Now in India, Indonesia's Ramlila is also staged in Ayodhya. Similarly, when we hear 'Om Swasti-Astu' in Bali, we remember the Swasti recitation by the Vedic scholars of India," he said.

# When India is developing, why should Delhi lag? Today, it is the fifth largest, he

The AAP dispensation in Delhi refused central assistance out of fear that the credit would go to the Narendra Modi-led Union government, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh claimed on Sunday.

Speaking at an election rally in Rajendra Nagar, the veter-

"When India is developing under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, why should Delhi be left behind? The city government does not take the Centre's help. We don't discriminate against any state but the (Delhi) chief minister is afraid that Modi ji will get



an leader said India's economy had grown under the BJP government but Delhi did not benefit from it.

"The BJP has not got an opportunity to serve Delhi in a long time... Delhi did not get the development it deserves," Singh said.

India has been on a path of development under the Modi government. India was the 11th largest economy in 2014.

the credit," he said. Attacking former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, the defence minister alleged that he did not resign even when he was sent to jail in the liquor policy case.

Kejriwal -- who was part of the India Against Corruption movement -- went against the wishes of Anna Hazare to form a political party, he claimed.

### Cong sets up 'EAGLE' to monitor conduct of fair polls

PNS NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday set up an eight-member committee -- Empowered Action Group of Leaders and Experts (EAGLE) -- to monitor the conduct of free and fair elec-tions by the Election Commission of India.

The committee will first take up the Maharashtra voters' list manipulation issue, and submit a detailed report to the leadership at the earliest, the party said in a statement.

The panel includes Congress treasurer Ajay Maken and senior leaders Digvijaya Singh, Abhishek Singhvi, Praveen Chakravarty and Pawan Khera. Besides, Gurdeep Singh Sappal, Nitin Raut and Challa Vamshi Chand Reddy are also part of the panel.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has constituted an Empowered Action Group of Leaders and Experts (EAGLE) with immediate effect to monitor the conduct of free and fair elections by the Election Commission of India, the statement said.

Besides Maharashtra, 'EAGLE' will also analyse past elections in other states, and proactively monitor upcoming elections and all other issues related to the conduct of free and fair elections in the coun-

try. Significantly, the setting up

of the panel comes just days before the Delhi Assembly

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi had last month alleged that there is a "serious problem" with the country's election system and that the Election Commission needs to ensure there is transparency in polls.

Maintaining that "something wrong" has taken place in Maharashtra assembly elections, he had said the Congress and the opposition have been asking for voter lists of Maharashtra and Haryana elections, which the EC is refusing to provide.

He had demanded that the EC come clean on the issue.



### Committed to protecting, enriching nature, says Union Min

Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav on Sunday said India is committed to conserving and enriching nature, as reflected in the steady increase in Ramsar sites -- wetlands of international importance -- across the country.

On the occasion of World Wetlands Day, Yadav credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's focus on wetland conservation

for India's record 89 Ramsar sites, the highest in Asia and the third highest in the world.

"With a consistent rise in Ramsar sites, India is showing the commitment to both conserve and enrich nature. Towards that end, PM Shri Narendra Modi ji has laid an unprecedented emphasis on preserving wetlands. It is because of this approach that our tally of Ramsar sites has reached 89," Yadav posted on X.

### 112 killed in Mizoram road accidents in 2024

PNS AIZAWL

At least 112 people died in road accidents in Mizoram in 2024, a senior official said on Sunday. A total of 124 road accidents were reported in the state during the period, Transport Secretary Zosangliana said.

He said that in the past five years between 2019 and 2023, road mishaps occurred on 423 occasions, claiming 355 lives. The Mizoram government had on Saturday kicked off the 'Road Safety Month' campaign.

Altogether 3,99,290 vehicles were registered under the state transport department till January 24, Zosangliana

# 5 killed as bus falls into gorge in Gujarat

PNS DANG (GUJARAT)

Five persons were killed and 35 others injured when a private bus carrying pilgrims hailing from Madhva Pradesh fell into a deep gorge in Gujarat's Dang district early Sunday morning, police said.

Among the injured persons, 17 were grievously hurt, they said, adding the victims were on a trip to religious places across various states in the

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav announced assistance of Rs 4 lakh to the families of the



critically injured victims.

The accident occurred around 4.15 am when the bus driver lost control over the

wheels near Saputara, a hill station, in-charge Superintendent of Police SG Patil said.

He said the bus, carrying 48 pilgrims, broke the crash bar-

The passengers started at night for Dwarka in Gujarat from Trimbakeshwar in Maharashtra's Nashik district.

rier and plunged 35 feet into

The official said they stopped for tea at Saputara before resuming their journey when the accident occurred 2.5 km from the hill station.

"Five persons died on the spot, and 17 others suffered serious injuries and have been rushed to a civil hospital at Ahwa. Some others have sustained minor injuries. The rescue operation is nearly over,' the official said.



### SP anti-Sanatan; loves Ghazi, Paaji: Adityanath

PNS ■ AYODHYA (UP)

Launching a scathing attack on the Samajwadi Party (SP), Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday termed it as "anti-Sanatan" and said the party only loves "Ghazi" and "Paaji"

Addressing a public meeting organised in support of BJP candidate Chandrabhan Paswan for the bypoll to Milkipur assembly constituency, Adityanath called it an election of nationalism versus

dynastic politics.

The UP chief minister alleged that the SP is against Sanatan Dharma and the pioneers of social justice. It embraces anti-India elements and the mafia, he also alleged. "Remember, this is the same

Samajwadi Party that oppos-

es the memorial of Maharaja Suheldev in Bahraich and says it should be of Ghazi (apparently referring to Ghazi Saiyyad Salar Masud). They love Ghazi and Paaji (vile), Adityanath said.

King Suheldev, an icon of the Rajbhar community, had defeated and killed the Ghaznavid general Ghazi Saiyyad Salar Masud in a battle on the banks of the Chittora lake in Bahraich in 1033.

Taking the names of SP leader Moeed Khan, accused in an alleged rape case in the Pura Qalandar area of Ayodhya, and Nawab Singh Yadav, accused of raping a teenager in Kannauj, he said, They (SP) love Moeed Khan of this Milkipur. They love Nawab Singh Yadav of Kannauj, who had tried to molest a daughter."

### with facilities to ensure the comprehensive development of PNS NEW DELHI/

"The conference was fol-

The meeting was held a ference was organised to address issues faced To

ment of evening courts were discussed," it said.

# **Union Min Suresh**

Gopi backtracks on 'upper castes' remarks

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Union Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas Suresh Gopi on Sunday courted a controversy by stating that the members of the "upper castes" should handle the tribal affairs portfolio, which he backtracked later.

Speaking at a BJP election campaign meeting in New Delhi, the actor-turned-politician said that real progress in tribal welfare would only be possible if leaders from "upper castes" oversaw the ministry. Facing backlash over his remarks, Gopi later backtracked, claiming that his statement was made with

good intentions. "If my comment is not well received or if this explanation is unsatisfactory, I withdraw my remarks," he said.

### India prioritised tech-driven progress in healthcare sector: Jitendra

India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership prioritises technology-driven progress in the healthcare sector, Union minister litendra Singh said on Sunday. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to completing 10 lakh genome sequencing in the coming years to enable more accurate disease prediction and personalised interventions.

Inaugurating the Centre for Advanced Genomics and Precision Medicine at AIIMS

**PNS** ■ UNITED NATIONS

India has experienced "remark-

able transformation" in the

last decade, UN General

Assembly President Philemon

Yang has said, underlining that

his upcoming visit to the country will give him an opportu-

nity to see how digital and

technological innovation has

February 4 to 8, his first offi-

cial visit to the country as

President of the 79th session of

"As the world's largest

democracy, the fifth-largest

the UN General Assembly.

Yang will visit India from

"fuelled this change".

- Jammu, the Union minister of state in the Prime Minister's Office said the country was well on its way to leading the world in genomic health care.

"Under Modi's leadership, India has prioritised technology-driven progress in the healthcare sector," Singh said, citing the government's efforts in promoting indigenous research and biotechnology.

He highlighted the exponential growth in India's bio-economy from USD 10 billion in 2014 to nearly USD 130 billion at present, with a target of USD 300 billion

economy and home to one-

fifth of humanity, India is an

important member of the

United Nations," Yang told PTI

in an exclusive interview ahead

the visit's focus, Yang said he looks forward to "understand-

ing, more deeply, India's prior-

ities and vision for the future

During the visit, he will

engage with Indian leadership,

including President Droupadi

Murmu and External Affairs

ed India in 2013 as Prime

Recalling that he had visit-

Minister Dr S Jaishankar.

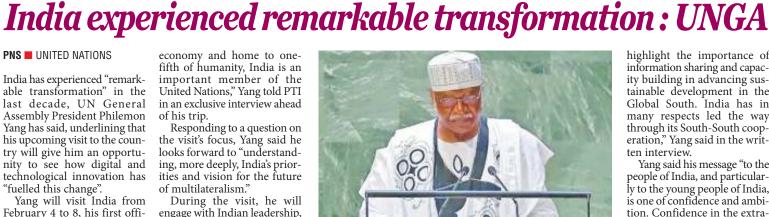
of multilateralism."

Responding to a question on

of his trip.

in the near future. With more than 9,000 biotech start-ups compared to 50 in 2014, India is rapidly emerging as a global leader in medical innovation, he asserted. "Gene therapy promises indi-

vidualised management of disease for each patient. Even if two individuals suffer from the same condition -- be it cancer, kidney disease, or any other ailment -the treatment could be different in each case, guided by the individual's unique genetic makeup, pre-existing susceptibilities and inherited vulnerabilities," the doctor-turned politician said.



Minister of Cameroon, Yang tunity to see how digital and said that since then, India has technological innovation has experienced a "remarkable fuelled this change, all the way transformation" and he expects to the grassroots level. the visit to give him the "oppor-The visit will also serve to

Global South. India has in many respects led the way through its South-South cooperation," Yang said in the written interview. Yang said his message "to the people of India, and particular-

highlight the importance of

information sharing and capac-

ity building in advancing sus-

tainable development in the

ly to the young people of India, is one of confidence and ambition. Confidence in the extraordinary work achieved and ambition in that there is always more work to do, collectively, to make our world a better

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

### **Boost for middle class**

Tax reliefs, agricultural boosts and support for gig workers define Union Budget 2025, but concerns about economic growth persist

inance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Union Budget 2025-26 on February 1, 2025, focusing on stimulating economic growth, supporting the middle class and enhancing agricultural productivity. The Union Budget 2025-26 with a total expenditure of Rs 50,65,345 crore, focuses on economic growth, middle-class relief and agricultural development. On the infrastructure front, capital expenditure there is a modest increase to drive development, though specific figures were not detailed. Meanwhile, the fiscal deficit is projected to be 4.4 per cent of GDP for 2025-26. While the budget lays out ambitious plans to stimulate various sectors, its effectiveness will depend on implementation and overall economic conditions. What must come as big relief for the middle class is raising of the income tax limit. The budget introduced significant tax relief for the middle class by raising the income tax exemption threshold to Rs 12.75 lakh per annum, effectively exempting individuals

with an average monthly income of up to Rs1 lakh from paying income tax. This move aims to boost household savings and consumption.

A six-year programme has been announced to increase the production of pulses and extra-long staple cotton and help farmers. The government plans to support farmers by purchasing pulses at guaranteed prices and investing in research and development to enhance cotton yields, thereby reducing dependence on imports. The budget has also proposed registeration of one crore gig workers on the e-Shram portal. This initiative aims to formalise the gig economy workforce and improve their access

to healthcare and welfare schemes. An allocation of Rs 11.21 lakh crore was made for capital expenditure, reflecting a modest increase from the previous year. This investment is intended to stimulate infrastructure development and economic growth. Some analysts, including Moody's Ratings, have expressed concerns that the tax relief measures for the middle class may have a limited effect on overall economic growth. The effectiveness of these measures in significantly boosting consumption and investment remains uncertain. The budget's capital expenditure increase was modest, which may not be sufficient to drive the desired level of infrastructure development and economic expansion. While the budget outlines ambitious programmes, the success of these initiatives will depend on effective implementation at the ground level. Past challenges in executing government schemes could pose hurdles to achieving the desired outcomes. The Union Budget 2025-26 introduces notable measures to support the middle class and agriculture, but its potential impact on broader economic growth and the effectiveness of implementation remain areas to watch. While the budget's initiatives are promising, concerns linger about their impact on economic growth and



# Rethinking the Places of Worship Act 1991



The Supreme Court's interim order barring civil courts from hearing suits related to places of worship has reignited debate over the Places of Worship Act, 1991

special bench of the Supreme Court led CJI Sanjiv December 12, 2024, had barred all the civil courts from entertaining any fresh or pending suits related to the places of worship, in effect, validating the Act for an interim period, even before hearing the onstitutional challenge to it. The Places of Worship Act was enacted to serve as a legislative firewall against religious disputes over the places of worship. It seeks to bar conversion of places of worship and freezes their religious character as they existed on August 15, 1947, with an exception for the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dis-

Judicial Review and the Rule of

The abatement of suits and other legal proceedings in relation to the places of worship, as sought to be done through Parliament by a legislative fiat in 1991, goes contrary to the basic feature of the rule of law and judicial review as held in Indira Gandhi vs Raj Narain, among others. In India, and other parliamentary democracies, the lew of the Parliament, served through its members, often portrayed as an eternal "will of the people," free from all fetters, is misplaced: it is not only anathema to democratic and constitutional thoughts of our republic but also problematic in its philosophical underpinnings from where it stems out.

The Parliament's act of granting immunity to certain legal disputes is based on a fallacious hypothesis that Parliament is a symbol of the continuous 'will of the people' and, consequently, not answerable to the courts. However, the Indian constitution establishes the principle of constitutional supremacy, as opposed to unchecked parliamentary sovereignty, which ensures that even parliamentary legislation, though reflecting the will of the people, is subject ness. In fact, equality and to judicial review. This is trace- arbitrariness are sworn eneable from Article 13(2), which reinforces that parliamentary laws cannot override the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution and remain subject



The Places of Worship Act,

nevertheless, made its effect

inapplicable to the hitherto

Ram Janma Bhumi-Babri THE PARLIAMENT'S Masjid dispute, by way of ACT OF GRANTING Section 5, acknowledging its special significance emanat-**IMMUNITY TO** ing from being present at a particular site while exclud-CERTAIN LEGAL ing other similarly placed **DISPUTES IS** temples, viz Kashi Vishwanath and Krishna BASED ON A Janma Bhumi, also derive their significance from being **FALLACIOUS** located at specific sites/places. **HYPOTHESIS** In this manner, the Act has created an unreasonable and THAT PARLIAMENT arbitrary classification against Article 14 of the Constitution IS A SYMBOL by treating Ram Janma Bhumi as a separate class in itself. The Supreme Court in CONTINUOUS Royappa has held that "equality is antithetic to arbitrari-PEOPLE' mies; one belongs to the rule AND CONSEQUENTLY, of law in a republic while the other, to the whim and NOT ANSWERABLE caprice of an absolute TO THE COURTS monarch.

Where an act is arbitrary, it is implicit in it that it is unequal both according to political logic and constitutional law and therefore violative of Article 14." In addition, under the two-pronged Article 14 test, first settled by the Supreme Court in Anwar Ali Sarkar, any legislative classification that provides advantages and disadvantages on a differential ground will be declared as unconstitutional: (a) if there is no intelligible differentia between the classification made, which distinguishes those that are grouped from those that have been excluded;

(b) if that differentia does not have a rational relation to the object sought to be achieved by the statute in question. The classification made under the Act is unconstitutional for two primary reasons:

First, the exemption accorded to Ram Janma Bhumi parties attached to the Ayodhya dispute to be more equal and holier than the rights of similarly placed parties about the other two religious sites (Kashi & Mathura); secondly, the classification is devoid of any factual basis and based on a premise that abatement of legal proceedings for reclamation of religious sites other

than Ram Janma Bhumi will ease communal tensions in the country.

Even assuming so, a routine law and order situation cannot be the basis for the suspension of a constitutional right. The unreasonable classification carved out by the Act and placing a bar on parties attached to disputes concerning places of worship from knocking on the court's door warrant serious re-evaluation.

The door of the courts, in a functioning democracy, based on a written constitution, must always be ajar to the victims of wrongdoings. Having said that, invalidating the entire Act, at this stage, may not be the most pragmatic course of action. In that case, following the terms of "ut res magis valeat quam pereat" (it is better for a thing to have an effect than to be void), a more measured presumes the rights of the approach would entail reading down the Act to extend the benefit of Section 5 [exemption from the Act, as done with Ram Janma Bhumil to two other similarly placed temples (Kashi & Mathura), rather than invalidating it entirely.

(The author is a practising advocate in Delhi, with inputs from Vaidushya Parth; views are personal)



# Budget 2025-26: A leap toward 'Viksit Bharat' with fintech at the forefront

Finance Minister has unveiled a forward-looking Budget that reinforces India's



unwavering commitment to fostering financial inclusion, driving innovation and ensuring sustainable economic growth. By laying a robust foundation for a digital-first economy, it not only addresses the present needs of businesses and individuals but

also sets a visionary course for

the future of India's financial

The fintech sector has been a

cornerstone of India's digital

transformation, playing an

instrumental role in expand-

accelerating the adoption of

digital transactions. The gov-

ernment's continued empha-

strengthening digital public

infrastructure, and enhancing

credit availability for small

businesses and startups is a

significant step forward in

unlocking new avenues for

ecosystem.

ing financial accessibility, empowering MSMEs, and sis on fostering a light-touch regulatory environment, enterprises in the formal

fintech sectors. documentation processes, ensuring seamless digital

growth and job creation.

As we look ahead, the fiscal year 2025-26 presents enormous opportunities for fintech players like us at i-exceed to drive groundbreaking innovations in banking and financial services. With strong regulatory support and government-led initiatives, we are well-positioned to: Scale digital banking and embedded finance solutions to cater to unbanked and under-

S SUNDARARAJAN

scape. Leverage cutting-edge technologies such as AI, blockchain, and automation Infrastructure - Initiatives to enhance regulatory compliance, improve credit risk assessment, and strengthen lining trade financing and fraud prevention mecha-

> Accelerate the adoption of relentlessly.

> (The writer is co-founder and CEOCompany: i-exceed



Madam — The Union Budget 2025 may be hailed as the budget of the people, for the people. The FM has admirably identified the middle class's dedication towards nation building, so apart from targeting the indices, ratios and vital parameters to showcase the country's march towards the third largest economy, she has presented a grassroots budget swaying over every aspect of the middle class from largesse on tax benefits, MSMEs, farmers and entrepreneurs. The synergy of the middle class in service, industry and business will have a multiplier effect on the GDP in coming years. The new Income Tax Bill is expected next week and commensurate with the budget, comprehensive amendments and simplification are expected.

Our country has unlimited resources, but they need to be tapped through reasonable and promotional tax legislation and encouraged for wealth creation through ease and promotional legislation. The GDP has a fair ratio of revenue collection of more than sixty percent. So the revenue policymakers, particularly the GST administration, should tune their policy by lowering GST slabs and doing away with the irrelevant concepts of luxury goods. The media has missed the defence outlay increase of 9.53 per cent at Rs 681,210 crores, but looking at the huge investments in defence by neighbouring China, the resources have to be mobilised for the modernisation of infrastructure, sixth-generation missiles, aircraft, artillery, and Navy warships. It is now the turn of the state governments to present their budgets conforming with the union budget, targeting the rural industrialisation and infrastructure, modernising their existing industrial estates and promoting the industry. Vinod Johri | Delhi

### **END EXPLOITATIVE WORKWEEKS**

Madam— The articles 'Beyond the 70hour workweek: Redefining productivity (January 30) and 'A 90-hour workweek: Path to success or recipe for burnout' (February 1), both in *The Pioneer*, are

# **Govt schools show improvement**



ndoubtedly, the general public has a negative image of government schools. As soon as the economy improves slightly, people are eager to send their children to pricey private schools. However, the findings of the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER 2024) offer new optimism. The ASER report, which was conducted on pupils from

timely and well argued. The suggestions regarding 70 to 90 working hours per week by some leading industrialists and capitalists of India are highly reactionary and exploitative.

The suggestion shows their greed for more profits in the name of increased productivity and efficiency. Both the authors have given pertinent arguments against this proposal. All work and no play makes young people dull, unhealthy and unproductive. Extended working hours will make the young population of the country hypertensive, heart patients and mentally deranged. It will cast the young population of India into fire. Despite labour laws, many companies in India are taking 60 hours of work per week from their employees without paying them extra money. Due to fear of unemployment, young people are compelled to work for long hours. All righteous persons, employers and labour union leaders should oppose this proposal tooth and nail. A 5day, 35 to 36.5 hour workweek is considered ideal internationally.

Vinay Kr Malhotra | Ambala Cantt

rural areas, demonstrates that the reading abilities and mathematical skills of youngsters aged six to fourteen in the country improved following the Corona crisis. Students' basic mathematical skills have improved in schools at both the government and private levels.

Children in class five can solve division problems. The good news is that learning standards have increased in schools across the country. This level remained steady until 2010, after which it began to decline. According to the ASER research, as enrolment rates have improved, so has digital literacy. It is encouraging that, following the Corona period, there has been a renewed emphasis on education in schools. Awareness has also been demonstrated among parents.

**Abhijit Roy** | Jamshedpur

### **INDIA T20 WIN: 17TH TIME IN A ROW**

Madam —India clinched a record 17th consecutive T20 series on home soil with a thrilling 15-run win in the fourth match against England in Pune on Friday. This match will be remembered for a long time for the scintillating batting performance of Hardik Pandya and Shivam Dubey, whose half-centuries helped India bounce back from early jolts.

But it was bowler Harshit Rana who stole the show. He made his debut in the match as a concussion substitute for Shivam Dubey and claimed three scalps. However, his impressive performance did not go down well with some foreign players who questioned the entry of Harshit Rana, a bowler, as a concussion substitute for an all-rounder player. But their misplaced criticism does not belittle his feat. These are the same players who seal their lips over bad umpiring against India in their coun-

Manoj Parashar | Ghaziabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



Some of the most impactful highlights of this budget for the fintech ecosystem include: Grameen Credit Score Framework – A groundbreaking initiative aimed at transforming rural financial empowerment by enabling better credit access for Self-Help Group (SHG) members and underserved rural communities. This will facilitate greater participation of rural

Revamped Central KYC **Registry** – A much-needed step toward simplifying compliance requirements for financial institutions, reduc- banked segments, fostering a

commitment to financial inclusion, innovation and sustainable economic growth. ing redundancies, and more inclusive financial landenhancing the ease of doing business across banking and

**Expansion of Digital Public** such as BharatTradeNet will play a pivotal role in streamtransactions, and bolstering India's position as a global trade hub.

Higher Credit Availability for MSMEs and Startups -Enhanced credit card limits for micro-enterprises, alongside expanded guarantee cover programs, will provide vital financial support to budding entrepreneurs and small businesses, fueling economic

nisms.

digital lending and payment solutions by seamlessly integrating with India's rapidly evolving financial ecosystem, thereby enhancing user experience and operational efficiencies. The budget's strong focus on inclusive growth, digital empowerment, and financial accessibility aligns perfectly with our vision of creating next-generation fintech solutions that bridge gaps, simplify processes, and unlock new growth opportunities for businesses and individuals alike. The year ahead promises to be a transformative one for India's fintech landscape. We must seize this momentum, foster collaboration, and continue to innovate

technology solutions; views are personal) www.dailypioneer.com

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### **FIRST COLUMN**

### THE SCIENCE **OF MUDRAS**

Rooted in the five elements, the five pranas and the three doshas, mudras have therapeutic properties



RAVI VALLURI

ord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita says, "There is nothing as sacred as knowledge." Knowledge can be acquired by the human mind through the 5 Ds-dedication, determination, dynamism, devotion and discipline and one H-Humility. The science of mudras, is intrinsically related to the esoteric knowledge of yoga and which can be further segregated into the five elements, the five life forces (or subtle forces of energy called the pranas) and the three doshas. The five elements are namely - Akash (ether or space), Vayu (air), Agni (fire), Jal (water) and Prithvi (earth); the five life forces or pranas are Prana, Udana, Samana, Apana and Vyana and the three doshas are Vata, Kapha and Pitta. Humans unconsciously practice mudras. For instance, the Namaste Mudra or a young child begins learning to walk with his thumbs raised which is called the Meru Dand Mudra. An infant even in a deep slumber, his index finger would involuntarily touch the thumb and the other three fingers are on the base of the palm (Chinmaya Mudra). The universe in its auto-mode conjures these processes to take place and we are oblivious to the occurrence. Some other mudras which need to be practised are:

(a) Jnana mudra: This is performed to increase brain power, improve memory and for the removal of negative thoughts. Thereby one attains

(b) Prithvi mudra: This helps in balancing the five sense organs, improves blood circulation and enhances our energy levels. Practice of this mudra assists in increasing our alertness.

(c) Apana mudra: This facilitates an improved elimination process, revitalising the digestive system, improving the gums and strengthening immu-

(d) Prana mudra: This mudra addresses the problem of fatigue; it also



provides essential vitamins to the body besides increasing stamina and vigour to the human body. It also helps in maintenance of the health of

(e) Dhyana mudra: Essentially, this mudra helps in making us mindful and wakeful and we are at peace with ourselves. Over a period, we attain

(f) Shunya Vayu mudra: Practice of this mudra helps in combating probiems of flatulence and gastric aliments. The gut nouses our solar piexus, which is also referred to as the second brain. We need to take adequate care of our abdomen as most human ailments arise from this part of the body. Therefore, there is enormous merit in the adage, "Health is in

Sudarshan Kriya: The unique breathing technique of Sudarshan Kriya is the fulcrum of the Happiness Programme of the Art of Living. Su means proper, Darshan implies vision and Kriya is a purifying action. Through the actions of our breath, we appreciate a proper vision of who we are. It is momentous to understand that nature runs on a rhythm. For instance, the sun rises and sets at a particular time, similarly, seasons arrive and exit at predetermined times. Humans feel hungry or sleepy at certain times. Our emotions, feelings and thoughts are all cast in the symphony of rhythm. We are unable to distinguish between cacophony and symphony in this frenetic pace of life which is cannonaded by innumerable thoughts, continuous action and noise. When sounds are harmonised by the syllable of Soham, we can term it as magical music. Enlightenment is not accruing anything providential but harmonising our whole being rhythmically. During the breathing process participants feel varied sensations, emotions, tingling sensations, laughter, weeping among others. This wonderful knowledge and wisdom have triggered humanness to blossom when every cell is energised.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

# Cornered in the wild: Trapped tigers spark conservation debate

As human encroachment, tourism and habitat fragmentation continue to blur the boundaries between nature and civilisation write BKP Sinha and Arvind Kumar Jha

viral video capturing a distressing scene of a tigress and her cubs blocked by a throng of safari vehicles in Maharashtra's Umred Pauni Karhandla Wildlife Sanctuary has recently stirred significant concern and legal action. The Bombay High Court has taken suo-motu cognizance of the incident. Soon after, the Supreme Court sought a uniform national policy for managing the country's tiger reserves. The harrowing sight of the tiger family, seemingly gripped by fear while navigating the available space, serves as a poignant metaphor for the troubling dynamics between humans and wildlife, whether inside a tiger reserve or not. Mankind's relentless drive to dominate and exploit nature has led to a disturbingly eroded sense of ecological sanity. Tigers, magnificent predators endowed with a formidable set of adaptations, have long been revered for their prowess. Their sharp teeth and claws, exceptional vision and hearing, flexible spines and explosive bursts of speed enable them to efficiently stalk and capture prey.

Their striped coats act as camouflage, making them elusive both as hunters and as well as prey. Tigers, being solitary creatures, are known to be fiercely territorial, marking their domains with scents, claw marks, and vocalisations. While frequent and close encounters with tigers may thrill tourists, these experiences come at a significant cost to the animals' well-being. Increased human presence not only exacerbates stress and vulnerability among these majestic creatures but also alters their natural behaviour. After several populist initiatives to regularise forest encroachments, the Forest Rights Act (FRA) was legislated in 2006. It marked an era of mass-scale recognition of habitation, self-cultivation, and community forest resource rights. However, it has also resulted in new encroachments and a notable influx of human populations into forest areas increasing the proximity and chances of conflict between wildlife and humans.

The data from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs shows that by November 2024, an over-whelming 4.35 million (85.7 per cent) out of 5.07 million claims under the FRA had IN 2024 HOLDING been disposed of. Titles on forest rights in 33 million acres of forest land having been FOREST OFFICIALS given, illegal occupation continues in the rejected cases which are 36.5 per cent in leftwing affected states and 60 per cent in oth-

The absence of a final deadline for claim submission, ease of securing recommendations from Gram Sabhas that many times are not held, the prevalent use of the FRA as a political tool, and the quality of scrutiny at the authorities' levels have created an environment encouraging encroachers confident of RESPONSIBILITIES regularisation. In Gujarat, 434 cases have been disposed of, and Maharashtra accept- AND CHALLENGES ed 4,322 new individual forest rights claims in November while distributing 498 titles. Triggered by legislation, such a trend of ingress into wildlife habitats is unprecedented. There has been a significant surge in recognition of community forest resource rights (CFRR) after the FRA Rules were amended in 2012. Management rights of forests have been granted to communities by violating the eligibility conditions stipulated in sections 3(1)(i) and 4(3) of the FRA. Not sparing even tiger reserves and National Parks and Sanctuaries, such rights are granted, for example, in huge areas in Chhattisgarh in Dhamtari (5,544 ha), Achankmar and Sitanadi Udanti tiger reserves (12,527 ha), 60 per cent of Billigiri Wildlife Sanctuary in Karnataka, and the



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FACED BY FORESTERS IN BALANCING CONSERVATION **EFFORTS WITH** THE RIGHTS AND SAFETY OF

Tansa Sanctuary in Maharashtra. Such actions do trigger a surge of human presence within wildlife habitats. As regards human casualties resulting from tiger attacks, they were recorded at 110 in 2022 and 82 in 2023. Data from the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), however, sheds light on troubling trends in tiger mortality. In 2021 and 2022, tiger deaths within reserves exceeded those outside. However, this part reversed in 2023 and 2024, with more tiger fatalities occurring outside protected areas. As of January 2025, 17 tiger deaths have been reported, 12 of which occurred outside reserves. The conversion of spared areas into shared spaces impacts the behaviour of wildlife. Tigers are no exception.

They naturally respect territorial boundaries but get forced to venture into human habitations due to encroachment and habitat degradation. It does result in harm to locals, mostly accidental and out of ACCOUNTABLE hunger rather than retaliatory or revengeful. People, however, in contrast to their erstwhile prevalent spirit of tolerance and co-existence, DEATHS WHICH it of tolerance and co-existence, mostly respond now through retal-HAS STIRRED into or out of vengeance resulting in the escalation of human-wildlife conflict.

In an unprecedented move, the Odisha state government issued an order in 2024 holding forest officials accountable for tiger deaths which has stirred conversations about the responsibilities and challenges faced by foresters in balancing conservation efforts with the rights and safety of people. The interaction between humans and wildlife species that are naturally active during the day (diurnal) or at dawn and dusk (crepuscular) face substantial behavioural changes when their activity patterns overlap with human activities. In the case of recreational activities in parks also, animals PEOPLE that typically forage or hunt during these times may alter their routines due to the presence of people, leading to stress and changes in feeding, mating, and territorial behaviours. Inside and near forests, light pollu-

streetlights, homes and recreational areas disrupts wildlife in numer-

It can interfere with their natural movement patterns, making it difficult for animals to navigate their habitats, find food, or avoid predators. Light pollution can also impact predation, as predators might find it easier to spot prey, or conversely, prey might become disoriented and more vulnerable. Additionally, artificial lighting can affect reproductive behaviours, as many species rely on natural light cues for mating rituals and timing. The current approach of providing electricity etc. to interior forest habitations, seemingly beneficial for human populations, does pose a significant threat to long-term wildlife conservation. Along with this, large-scale proposals such as those recently announced in Telangana and Nagarhole (Coorg district) of Karnataka must consider their potential impact on humanwildlife conflict too.

Mitigating adverse impacts on wildlife necessitates more than merely avoiding times when human activities overlap with wildlife activities. Even if human disturbances occur outside of wildlife activity periods, the large-scale nature of such disturbances can still have a profound effect on wildlife. These disturbances often displace animals from their natural habitats, causing significant behavioural changes that can threaten even their survival. Instances from the area near Pench National Park in Maharashtra highlight the negative consequences of the changed behaviour of tigers. In one such case, a tiger in Parshiwni village attacked only tethered cattle, easy prey. During the necropsy of this tiger, excessive fat was found due to changes in its behaviour and diet. In the Ramtek area tigers have exhibited a concerning loss of territorial instincts indicating a breakdown in their natural order and social structure. Another tiger from the Kanhan region displayed unusual behaviour by regularly avoiding consuming its kill. Such avoidance

tion, such as artificial lighting from suggests, prima facie, a high level of stress and disturbance. Such instances are alarming as they simply indicate that the natural predator-prey dynamics and status of the health of the tiger population are compromised. Minimising disturbance to wildlife is paramount inside tiger reserves. However, with the current onslaught by humans and the pace of blurring of ecosystem boundaries, a more nuanced approach is necessary which requires a deeper understanding of the spatial and temporal dynamics of wildlife movement, recognition of the varying levels of sensitivity among different species, and consideration of a broader ecological context that includes fragmented landscapes, human settlements, and the impacts of climate change.

While the whole country is eagerly waiting for an early decision in the matter of Wildlife first and Ors Vs Union of India & Ors (109/2008) from the Supreme Court, the need for a national policy framework for not just tiger reserves but for all habitats cannot be overstated. It should be implemented by State Governments while duly considering the local contexts and the unique challenges faced by each

Evicting illegal encroachments on forest and wildlife habitats and relocating the genuine right-holders onto non-forest areas with adequate infrastructure should be the first step towards restoration of the ecological integrity of our natural systems. The impacts of climate change and natural disasters are no longer theoretical threats but stark realities. Recognizing the broader public interest in wildlife conservation and ecosystem sustainability, the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, the National Tiger Conservation Authority, and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs must collaborate closely to develop and implement effective conservation strategies that address these challenges.

(The writer are former PCCFs, UP and Maharashtra; views expressed

# Budget 2025 puts sustainability at the forefront, but execution holds the key

With substantial investments in renewable energy, climate-resilient agriculture and afforestation, the budget lays a strong foundation for a greener future

he Union Budget 2025 signals a decisive shift towards environmental sustainability, reinforcing India's commitment to a cleaner, greener future. With a strong focus on renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, afforestation, waste management and climate resilience, the government has intended to balance economic growth with ecologresponsibility. Expanding solar, wind, and hydro energy, along with incentives for green hydrogen, is a welcome step toward reducing India's carbon footning bon footprint.

The emphasis on electric vehicles (EVs) and battery clean energy, reducing



SRIVASTAVA

dependence on fossil fuels. However, the chal lenge remains in efficient implementation and ensuring accessibility to these technologies, especially in rural and semi-urban areas. Agriculture, often at the storage solutions will further crossroads of economic and bolster the transition to environmental policies, has received a much-needed sus-

tainability boost. The PM Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana and Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses are moving in the right direction, ensuring climateresilient farming and reducing excessive reliance on chemical fertilisers. However, agroforestry, regenerative farming and watershed management need further integration into mainstream agricultural policy to create a truly sustainable food system.

The budget's allocation for afforestation and biodiversity conservation reflects an increased understanding of the role that forests and ecosystems play in mitigating climate change. With Compensatory Afforestation

Management Authority (CAMPA) enhanced support, there is hope that India's forests will be managed with greater transparency and scientific precision. However, urban greening and nature-based solutions in city planning deserve stronger commitments, given the growing challenges of urban heat islands and pollution. The circular economy model

gets a notable push with incentives for waste-to-energy projects, stricter plastic waste management, and extended producer responsibility (EPR) regulations. These are positive steps, but enforcement remains a crucial hurdle. Ensuring that industries comply with waste



moving towards a zerowaste economy will require robust monitoring and pub-

lic participation. The budget's recognition of management norms and climate resilience, particu-

larly through disaster management investments and early warning systems, is a commendable effort. Coastal and flood-prone regions will

benefit from increased fund-

ing for disaster-resistant infrastructure, but a longterm climate adaptation roadmap needs further

detailing.
One of the most promising aspects of Budget 2025 is the expansion of India's Green Finance ecosystem. With tax incentives for Green Bonds and carbon trading markets, the government is encouraging private sector participation in sustainability efforts. However, ensuring that green investments translate into real environmental benefits will require stringent regulatory oversight and transparency. While Budget 2025 takes

significant strides in promoting environmental sustainability, its true success will be measured by execu-

tion, enforcement, and longterm commitment. India has demonstrated

political will in tackling climate change, but the challenge remains in aligning policy promises with onthe-ground realities. Sustainability is not just a budgetary allocation; it is a mindset shift. To truly achieve a green future, India needs a whole-of-society approach, where the government, private sector, and citizens work together to ensure that economic growth does not come at the cost of ecological wellbeing. With this budget, India has set the direction-what remains is the resolve to act decisively.

(The writer is a retired IFS officer; views are personal) HYDERABAD | MONDAY | FEBRUARY 3, 2025

### MONEY MATTERS



### Tax cut to spur **investment: DEA Secy**

conomic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth on Sunday said the historic decision to give significant income tax relief will stimulate demand and propel growth in the peyt financial stimulate demand and propel growth in the next financial year for which the ministry has pegged the nominal GDP growth of 10.1 per cent. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday announced significant income tax cuts for the middle class. Individuals earning up to Rs 12.75 lakh in a year will not have to pay any taxes benefiting 1 crore taxpayers. However, the tax cuts will cost the exchequer about Rs 1 lakh crore. The Union Budget has tried to address domestic headwinds through measures which can mitigate them, Seth told PTI in an interview. "Very, very significant tax relief given to all taxpayers, and in particular to the middle class, is an attempt towards that direction, because some data is showing that consumption, as well as investment by the private sector is not to a level which requires or which is necessary for a higher growth path," he said.



### **India emerges as a global** export hub: Nissan

ndia is emerging as one of the major global export hubs for Japanese auto major Nissan, with the company beginning to ship the left-hand drive version of its compact SUV Magnite to new countries, according to a senior company official. The company, which has commenced shipping 10,000 units of the left-hand drive (LHD) Magnite across various global markets, is considering the introduction of hybrid and CNG vehicles and more models in India, in addition to its already announced lineup for the country, Nissan India Operations President Frank Torres said in an interview. He also said the global development regarding Nissan and Honda exploring a possible merger would not affect the company's announced plans for new products, including two mid-size SUV models (one five-seater and one seven-seater) and one electric SUV, and the target of tripling its domestic and export volumes to 1 lakh each per annum by the end of FY26 in India. "India is moving as one the global export hubs for Nissan...With the start of exports of the ft-hand drive version of the Magnite, we will total of 65 countries now, thus becoming one of the highest hubs of export globally for Nissan," Torres said



### **Allocation for export** promotion schemes dips

he government has earmarked Rs 2,250 crore for export promotion schemes for 2025-26, down 17 per cent from Rs 2,718.73 crore allocated in the revised Budget estimates for 2024-25. According to the Budget document, allocation for Department of Commerce has dipped to Rs 5,300.99 crore for the next fiscal as against Rs 5,624 crore in the revised estimates (RE) for the ongoing fiscal year. Under export promotion schemes, no fund is allocated for market access initiative (MAI) and interest equalisation scheme. Though the scheme ended on December 31, 2024, the exporting community has been pitching hard for its extension. Now the government has announced plans to roll out an export promotion mission. "New scheme namely, Export Promotion Mission, has been formulated to act as a catalyst to facilitate India's export competitiveness," it said. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget speech on Saturday said that through the mission, the government will facilitate exporters to get easy access to credit, cross-border factoring support, and support to MSMEs to tackle non-tariff measures in overseas markets. Funds for the Duty Drawback Scheme too have dipped to Rs 181.9 crore for 2025-26 as against Rs 258.2 crore in the RE for 2024-25.

# Budget is by the people, for the people: Sitharaman



"I think the prime minister put it succinctly, he said it's the people's Budget, it is the Budget which the people wanted." "As they say in democracy in Abraham Lincoln's words, it is Budget by the people, of the people for the people."

'We have heard the voice of the middle class" who had been complaining about their aspirations not being met despite being honest taxpayers. With the honest and proud taxpayers wanting the government to do more to limit the impact of factors like inflation.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Abraham Paraphrasing Lincoln, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday described the Union Budget as "by the people, for the people, of the people", and said Prime Minister Narendra Modi was fully behind the idea to cut taxes for the middle class but it took time to convince the bureaucrats.

"We have heard the voice of the middle class" who had been complaining about their aspirations not being met despite being honest taxpayers, she said in an interview.

With the honest and proud taxpayers wanting the government to do more to limit the impact of factors like inflation, the prime minister was quick to task Sitharaman to look at

ways to give relief. While Modi was quick to

agree to tax relief, it took a bit of convincing to get on board the officials in the finance ministry and the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) - who are tasked to ensure revenue collection to meet welfare and other schemes, she said.

Presenting her eighth straight budget, Sitharaman on Saturday announced an increase in the personal income tax threshold below which taxpayers owe no tax to Rs 12 lakh, up from Rs 7 lakh, as well as a rejig in tax brack-ets that would help those earning higher than that save up to Rs 1.1 lakh.

The Rs 5 lakh hike in exemption limit is the biggest ever and equals all the reliefs that were given between 2005

"I think the prime minister put it succinctly, he said it's the people's Budget, it is the

Budget which the people want-

Asked to describe the ethos of the budget in her own words, she said, "As they say in democracy in Abraham Lincoln's words, it is Budget by the people, of the people for the

Sitharaman said the new rates would "substantially reduce the taxes of the middle class and leave more money in their hands, boosting household consumption, savings and investment"

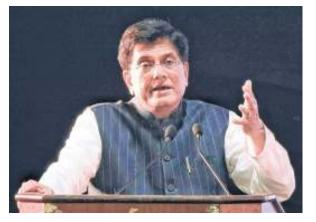
Explaining the thought that went behind the big announcement, Sitharaman said the tax cuts were in the works for some

"It wasn't talking about rate restructuring, although for several years now, we have been looking at ways in which the rates can be a lot more reasonably taxpayer friendly. And

therefore that work was also going on," she said. "Equally, after the July budget, there was this voice of the middle class, which felt that they were paying tax... but also felt they don't seem to have much in the way of redressing their problems.

There was also this feeling that the government was very inclusive in taking care of the very poor and the vulnerable

"So the voice, which came wherever I travelled, was we are proud taxpayers. We are honest taxpayers. We want to continue to serve the country by being good taxpayers. But what do you think about what kind of things you can do for us?" she said. "And so I had this discussion also with the prime minister who put me on the specific assignment to see what is it that you can come up



# 'Expert panel soon boost 'Make in India' initiative'

PNS NEW DELHI

A committee will be set up under the national manufacturing mission to get into the details on issues like cutting cost of doing business; preparing future-ready workforce; and availability of technology to further promote Make in India initiative, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has said.

Representatives from the Centre, states, and private sector are expected to be there in the committee. It would identify key focus areas, which are futuristic and where there is demand both in the domestic and foreign markets, and come up with recommendations on what we should do".

"A committee will be set up under the mission which will go into the details and examine all the issues in detail (like) the role of Centre, and states. Different ministries will be involved, private players will also be involved and they will inform about sectors which have huge competitive advantages in India and which have export potential," Goyal said.

Éinance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has announced the mission covering small, medium

"A committee will be set up under the mission which will go into the details and examine all the issues in detail (like) the role of Centre, and states. Different ministries will be involved, private players will also be involved and they will inform about sectors which have uge competitive advantages in India and which have export potential."

and large industries for furthering "Make in India" by providing policy support, execution roadmaps, governance and monitoring framework for central ministries and states. The mission's mandate will include five focus areas: ease and cost of doing business; future ready workforce for in-demand jobs; a vibrant and dynamic MSME sector; availability of technology; and quality products.

"We will work for its speed implementation," Goyal said. He also said steps announced for startups will help entrepreneurs in areas like deep tech and star-



### FMCG makers hope for a revival in consumption growth

PNS NEW DELHI

Fast-moving consumer goods companies hope for a revival in consumption growth, aided by higher household disposable funds due to significant tax reliefs and increased investments on rural develop-ment announced in the FY26

The measures announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Union Budget on Saturday will not only alleviate the burden of inflation and lay the strong fiscal foundation for the FMCG industry but also help stimulate demand for premium products, experts

and makers said. Terming the budget as progressive, Emami Vice Chairman & MD Harsha Vardhan Agarwal said: "A major highlight of this budget is the significant announcement on personal income tax, which is a wel-

"By putting more money in the hands of consumers, this step is expected to boost consumption and drive an increase in discretionary spending, ultimately strengthening overall economic momentum," said Agarwal, who is also president of the industry body

PepsiCo India & South Asia Chief Executive Officer Jagrut Kotecha said the budget is focused on an income-led economic revival that will provide relief to the middle-income group.
"The measures introduced

should alleviate the burden of inflation and rising living costs, bringing much-needed relief to consumers and in turn help in stimulating overall consumption," said Kotecha. Godrej Consumer Products Ltd Chief Financial Officer Aasif Malbari said the latest annual budget takes a balanced approach by strengthening rural infrastructure, manufacturing, and consumer spending, which are three critical pillars for the FMCG sector.

### Mcap of 7 of top-10 valued firms jumps Rs 1.83L crore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The combined market valuation of seven of the 10 most valued firms jumped Rs 1.83 322 54 crore last week with Hindustan Unilever

Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 1,315.5 points or  $1.72\,\mathrm{per}\,\mathrm{cent},$  and the Nifty went up by 389.95 points or 1.68 per cent. Equity markets were open on Saturday due to the presentation of the Union Budget.

While Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Hindustan Unilever, ITC and Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) were the gainers from the top-10 pack.

# RBI's interest rate decision, global trends key drivers for markets

PNS NEW DELHI

RBI's interest rate decision, quarterly earnings and global cues would be the major driving factors for equity markets this week, adding that impact of the Union Budget could linger on this week. Trading activity of foreign investors will also be a key driver for the mar-

kets, experts noted. "US and India's manufacturing PMI for January to be released on Monday, will be the key macro data to watch out for. Investors will closely study the fine prints of the Budget policies and market focus will shift back to the corporate earnings/outlook and



RBI's interest rate decision to be announced on Friday,' Siddhartha Khemka, Head -Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal

Financial Services Ltd, said. From the earnings calendar, Asian Paints, PC Jeweller, Tata Power, Titan, Apollo Tyres, Bharti Airtel, ITC, MRF, SBI, LIC, M&M and NHPC will announce their earnings this week.

Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP

(Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said, "Will the RBI soften its stance and announce any rate cut in this week's credit policy that would be interesting to watch out for? However, global developments, as any uptick in US bond yields and FII selling could dampen sen-

PMI data for the manufacturing and services would also be tracked by investors.

"As we look to this week, there are several important events on the horizon, including the MPC outcome, the Delhi state election, and developments regarding US

### Power consumption growth takes a dip

Growth subdued at 3% to 137.49 billion units

PNS NEW DELHI

India's power consumption increased by just 2.7 per cent to 137.49 billion units (BU) in January as use of heating appliances like heater and geysers reduced owing to

above normal temperatures.
According to India
Metrological Department (IMD) the country's mean temperature in January was 18.98 degrees Celsius, the third highest for the month since 1901, behind 1958 and

According to official data, power consumption was 133.94 BU in January 2024. Similarly, the highest supply

in a day (peak power demand met) also rose to 237.30 GW from 222.32 GW in January



2024. The peak power demand touched an all-time high of about 250 GW in May 2024. The previous all-time high peak power demand of 243.27 GW was recorded in September 2023.

Earlier last year, the power ministry projected a peak power demand of 235 GW during the day and 225 GW

during evening hours for May 2024 while 240 GW during daytime and 235 GW in the evening hours for June 2024.

The ministry had also estimated that peak power demand may hit 260 GW in the summer of 2024.

According to government estimates, peak power demand is expected to touch 270 GW in the summer of

Experts opine that power demand as well as consumption remained subdued last month mainly due to decrease in use of heating appliances like heaters and geysers amid day and night temperatures remaining above normal levels.

### Will soon work out parameters for 'IFIS': Govil

PNS NEW DELHI

The Finance Ministry, in consultation with Niti Aayog and DPIIT, will soon decide on the parameters for the 'Investment Friendliness Index of States', which will aim to create healthy competition among states to allure private investments, Expenditure Secretary Manoj

Govil said on Sunday. The 2025-26 Budget announced the launching of an Investment Friendliness Index of States in 2025 to further the spirit of competitive cooperative federalism. In an interview , Govil said while many regulations and reforms have been done at the level of the Centre, some investors feel that similar reforms are needed at the state level. The index will nudge the states to look at the regulations to see what is holding back investments.

The main idea is not so much to rank the states and to say who is good or bad but more to prompt the states to take a look at their own rules, regulations and procedures and to find out from them which are the ones which investors deem or find unfriendly, unworkable or difficult and how does that affect the states in getting investments," Govil said.

# Extreme weather events driving food inflation: Report

PNS NEW DELHI

The food inflation rate in India has remained firm over the past two years defying the global trend, and frequent extreme weather events are one of the reasons, the government said in its latest Economic

Tabled in Parliament on Friday, the report said that the production over the past two

years can be partly attributed to frequent extreme weather events in major producing states compared to other

regions. Extreme weather events in 2023-24 damaged crops in major horticulture-producing states, leading to inflationary pressure on horticultural commodities, it said.

"Over the past two years, decline in onion and tomato India's food inflation rate has remained firm, diverging from

global trends of stable or declining food inflation. This can be attributed to factors such as supply chain disrup-tions exacerbated by extreme weather events and reduced harvest of some food items," the report read.

Citing data from the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), the report said that the total crop area damaged in 2024 was higher than in the previous two years due to



Between 2022 and 2024, heatwaves were recorded on 18 per cent of days, compared to 5 per cent in 2020 and 2021, the report said. The Economic Survey acknowledged that recent shocks like geopolitical conflicts and extreme weather have caused price fluctuations, but their impact has now subsided, leading to more variation in commodity prices.

extreme weather conditions. The government also India

Meteorological Department (IMD) data, which shows a significant rise in the frequency

especially heatwaves. Between 2022 and 2024, heatwaves were recorded on 18 per cent of days, compared to 5 per cent in 2020 and 2021, the report said. The Economic Survey acknowledged that recent shocks like geopolitical conflicts and extreme weather have caused price fluctuations, but their impact has now subsided, leading to more variation in commodity prices.

For long-term price stabiliof extreme weather events, ty, the report suggested developing climate-resilient crops, strengthening data systems to monitor prices, reducing crop damage, and minimizing postharvest losses On Saturday, the govern-

ment announced a six-year mission to increase pulse production, aiming to achieve self-sufficiency in three widely consumed varieties -- tur, urad, and masoor.

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Monday February 3, 2025

storytelling becomes truly powerful."

Instead of chasing commercial success, Khan prioritizes sto-

rytelling that feels authentic to him. "I focus on whether the

# 'WE DIDN'T WANT SKY FORCE FEEL LIKE 'BEEN THERE, SEEN THAT' VIBE'

**KNOWN FOR HIS WORK ON** 

**TEJAL SINHA** tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

rom a struggling artist juggling multiple roles to becoming one of the most sought-after screenwriters in the industry, Aamil Keeyan Khan's journey is a testament to perseverance, adaptability and an unrelenting

passion for storytelling.
With films like Drishyam 2, Runway 34, Bholaa, Shaitaan, and Sky Force to his credit, he has mastered the art of keeping audiences at the edge of their seats. His work on Drishyam 2 even earned him the prestigious IIFA Award for Best Story (Adapted). In an exclusive chat with The Pioneer, Aamil delves into his approach to screenwriting, the art of suspense and his unexpected journey into the world of cinema.

Khan's journey into screenwriting was anything but conventional. In fact, he describes it as a "happy accident." Reflecting on his early days in Kolkata, he recalls how financial constraints led him to writing. "Back in Kolkata, I cofounded a theatre group with my friend Anshuman. We acted, produced, and managed the plays, but we barely had enough money to pay for the auditorium - hiring a writer was out of the question." he says "The older plays felt dated in terms of the question," he says. "The older plays felt dated in terms of language, so I was forced into writing simply because we couldn't afford a proper writer. Necessity is a great teacher, and that's where it all started."

However, Khan never saw himself as confined to one particular role. "All the guys I admire - Kishore Kumar, Sylvester Stallone, Clint Eastwood - they've mastered multiple crafts," he says. But he also acknowledges the reality of surviving in the industry. "Let's be real: when the rent is due, you sell whatever sells. Desperation made me cook up ideas in the hopes that someone would buy them."

Determined to make a mark, Khan moved to Mumbai in 2016 Determined to make a mark, Khan moved to Mumbai in 2016 and threw himself into the grind. "I was hustling from morning to midnight - auditioning as an actor during the day, building websites in the afternoon, doing stand-up comedy in the evening, and writing stories at night," he recalls.

Interestingly, his first break in the industry wasn't in screenwriting but in editing. "Ironically, I didn't even start as a screenwriter. My first paid gig was in editing - I assisted cinematographer Sanjay F Gupta on his documentary, editing parts of it."

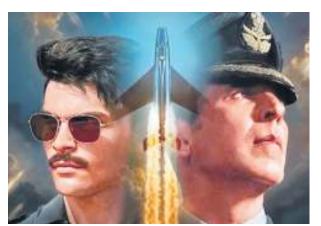
But storytelling eventually took over "I started developing ideas."

But storytelling eventually took over. "I started developing ideas, and in 2020, with Runway 34, let's just say... things finally took off," he says with a smile.

Discussing his approach to screenwriting, he emphasises that every film demands a unique treatment, but at its core, story-telling is always about emotion. "Every story boils down to what it makes the audience feel. The first step is to identify the core emotion of the film - fear, tension, excitement, hope - and then build everything around that."

Once that emotional foundation is in place, choosing the right genre to convey the story becomes crucial. "A thriller like Drishyam 2 is all about suspense and deception - keeping the audience guessing while making sure every reveal is satisfying. Runway 34, on the other hand, had elements of mystery and survival, so the storytelling had to create a sense of urgency and pressure while staying grounded in reality."

Screenwriting, he says, is also about when and how to reveal information. "In high-stakes stories, tension comes from what the audience knows versus what the characters know. The goal is to keep the audience leaning forward, making them active participants in the story. Whether it's a mind game like Drishyam 2 or a high-intensity drama like Runway 34, the challenge is the same - keeping people invested, right up to the final frame."



For Khan, his latest project, Sky Force wasn't just another war film - it was a story that needed to be told. "Some stories aren't just told; they demand to be told. Sky Force was one of them. For me, this wasn't a war film - it was a film about brotherhood. It's not the machine, but the man behind the machine that matters.

At the heart of the film lies the relationship between the officers, a dynamic that drives the narrative forward. With a filmography spanning thrillers, action, and drama, he has proven his ability to adapt to different storytelling styles. He believes the key to mastering different genres lies in understanding their rhythm. "Storytelling is all about rhythm. A thriller demands tension and precision, an action film needs momentum, and a drama thrives on emotion. The trick is to listen to the story - some need a slow burn, some need a ticking clock."

Rather than imposing a personal style on every film, he lets the genre dictate the tone. He also turns to classic films for inspiration, studying what makes them work. "Besides that, I have my go-to bibles in every genre - films that I revisit to understand what makes them work. It's not about copying but about learning the craft from the best and then finding my own way to figure that rhythm.'

Given Khan's previous work on Runway 34, one might assume that he was well-prepared to write another aviation-based film. But Sky Force presented an entirely new challenge. "Having worked on Runway 34, which was also an aviation-based film, we thought we had some idea of what we were walking into... but boy oh boy, we couldn't have been more wrong," he admits. One of the biggest challenges was ensuring that the aerial action sequences felt fresh and engaging. "It was crucial that the scenes didn't give off a been there, seen that vibe," he explains. "To achieve that, we had to take all the technical information and present it in the simplest layman terms possible - so that when the action unfolded, when the dogfights happened, the audience knew what was going on."

One of the defining aspects of Khan's work is his ability to craft morally ambiguous characters that resonate with audiences. He believes that the most compelling stories force audiences to confront their own moral boundaries. "There's a good wolf and a bad wolf within all of us, and the most gripping stories explore that battle," he says. "The key is making the audience understand a character's choices, even if they don't agree with them. In Drishyam 2, the tension comes from making people root for someone who is technically guilty. In Shaitaan, it's about power and control. These stories resonate because they force the audience to ask, What would I do in their place? - and that's when



### Bhumi Pednekar brings 90s-style comedy back with *Mere Husband Ki Biwi* ctor Bhumi Pednekar is excited to take on the comedy genre in her upcoming film Mere Husband Ki Biwi, a move she describes as a refreshing opportunity, especially considering comedy was a dominant genre in 1990s Hindi cinema. The film, directed by Mudassar Aziz, also stars Arjun Kapoor and Rakul Preet Singh, and delves into the guirks and complexities of romantic relationships. At the trailer launch of the film, Pednekar shared her enthusiasm about stepping into a comedic role, a genre she feels is often overlooked for female actors. "I grew up watching films in this genre and was inspired by actresses like Karisma Kapoor and others who brought comedy to the forefront," Pednekar said. "I'm glad Mudassar sir gave me the opportunity to try my hand at comedy in two of his films. Pati Patni Aur Woh and Mere Husband Pednekar expressed that it's rare for female actors to lead in comedy films, making this a significant chance for her to break new ground. "In this film, both female actors take on comedy in a way that was common in the 90s, where actresses would lead the comedic roles just like in the Number One series films," she added, referring to the iconic films of that era. The film's focus on romantic relationships, paired with its comedic elements, sets the stage for an entertaining experience, with both Pednekar and Singh embracing their comedic roles During the conversation, Pednekar was asked about the common perception of rivalry between female actors. She firmly dismissed the idea of ego clashes and insecurities on set, especially between her and her co-star Rakul Preet Singh. "She is my sister. She's married to my best friend (Jackky Bhagnani), and now she has become one of my closest friends. This narrative that two heroines are insecure is not true—it must have been started by insecure men," Pednekar shared, emphasizing the strong bond she shares with Singh. The film's producer, Vashu Bhagnani, along with Jackky Bhagnani and Deepshikha Deshmukh, brings Mere Husband Ki Biwi to the screen, promising a mix of humor and heart. Set to release on February 21, the film will explore the humorous side of complex romantic dynamics, with Bhumi Pednekar, Arjun Kapoor, and Rakul Preet Singh taking With the promise of a fun-filled, refreshing take on relationships, Mere Husband Ki Biwi is sure to be a treat for fans of comedy, offering both entertainment and the delightful chemistry between its lead actors.

# Mahakumbh 2025 breaks tourism records!

The world gathers in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, for the magnifi-cent Mahakumbh 2025, as the Ganges River's hallowed waters churn with excitement. India's rich cultural legacy is demonstrated by this age-old spiritual extravaganza, which takes place once every twelve years. The Mahakumbh, which unites devotees, tourists and explorers from all over the world like a celestial alignment, fosters a sense of wonder, spirituality and community. A parallel phenomenon is taking place as the celebrations rouse the banks of the Ganges: an extraordinary travel boom that is propelling India's tourism industry into the stratosphere. As India proudly presents its rich cultural tapestry to the globe, the stage is set for a monumental celebration that will not only revitalise the economy but also revive the soul!

Data from local companies, airlines and travel agencies indicates that the Mahakumbh is drawing record numbers of visitors, which is stimulating the economy and providing a big opportunity for the travel and tourist sector. With the government spending Rs 5,000 crore on tourism infrastructure, including enhancing roads, railways, airports and accommodation facilities to handle the surge of tourists, the event is anticipated to bring in Rs 40,000 crore in tourism revenue.

Demand for local services, like car rentals, is also rising; businesses like Savaari Car Rentals are observing an increase in reservations for private transportation due to its comfort and convenience. The government has increased infrastructure development to handle the influx, strengthening Prayagraj's roads, growing its airports and bolstering security measures! "The Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 is not just a spiritual event; it is a huge driver of travel and tourism in India," says Gaurav Aggarwal, founder and CEO of Savaari Car Rentals. "We have witnessed a 21.4% increase in spiritual tourism this year, with an anticipated 42 million pilgrims. Travel demand has been directly impacted by this surge, particularly





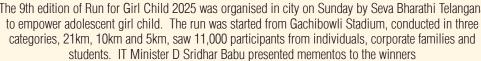
in tier-2 and tier-3 towns. Off-the-beaten-path routes to Prayagraj, like those from Varanasi, Ayodhya and Lucknow, have seen a 35% increase in reservations

over prior years." Aggarwal continued, "We are dedicated to ensuring that this significant transition goes well by growing our fleet, hiring certified drivers and improving on-ground assistance. To meet the increasing demand for hassle-free, dependable and safe travel, we have expanded operations and improved connectivity along important pilgrimage routes. We are crucial to making Maha Kumbh 2025 a huge success for pilgrims and India's tourism industry by guaranteeing last-mile connectivity, even on less-travelled

With a clear and ambitious goal for the future, Savaari Car Rentals hopes to solidify its position as the industry leader in the Indian vehicle rental sector. This vision is supported by an unwavering focus on technology and innovation, a dedication to strategic initiatives and a thorough comprehension of the changing dynamics of the market. It's path has been characterised by noteworthy accomplishments and turning points thus far, laying the groundwork for future expansion and prosperity. Fundamentally, the travel and tourism industry is experiencing a notable economic boom as a result of the Mahakumbh, which is expected to be a historic occasion that will underscore India's position as a global center of culture.

# what's brewing?





















and rediscover the transformative power of humour in daily life. Through a clever mix of wit and irony, the showcased artworks present the absurdities and intricacies of human behaviour with a touch of humour and insight. The











### **ARCHIE**







### **CALVIN AND HOBBES**



REALITY CHECK







### GARFIELD

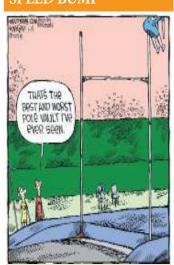




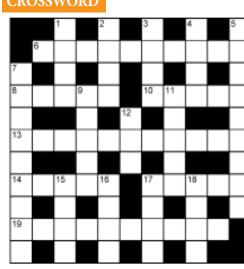


# NURSE HAND ME THE-WHAT TH- WHO TOOK THE LITTLE RED HEART CANDY? IT WAS HERE JUST A SECOND AGO!

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### **CROSSWORD**







### **GINGER MEGGS**







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- 4 Skinny
- 5 The people you play against in a game
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# the pioneer

# It is not combinations, it is content for success: Dil Raju

Top producer Dil Raju made sensational comments about big budget and combination films. He also says that the collections which are showing these days are completely wrong and the percentage of success is very low. He spoke about so many issues related to the film industry at the distributor's gratitude meet...



**SURESH KAVIRAYANI** sureshkavirayani@gmail.com

Top producer Dil Raju made sensational comments at the success meet of his film 'Sankranthiki Vasthunnam'. After a long time, the distributors attended meet to mark the success of a film and they are all very happy that they got profits because of 'Sankranthiki Vasthunnam'. "With this film's success, we learnt a lot of lessons. It is not com-

binations, it is the content that will give success," said Dil Raju. These comments from a top producer like Dil Raju means, it is sensational. These days many top producers rely more on combinations than the content.

Even Dil Raju's other film 'Game Changer' is a big combination of Ram Charan and director Shankar, which is one of the high budget films. It seems, Dil Raiu put a lot of money on 'Game Changer', but the film was a big disas-

ter at the box-office and all the distributors and producer lost a lot of money. After the two days of 'Game Changer' release, 'Sankranthiki Vasthunnam' was released and the first show onwards the film got positive response and became a huge hit. Directed by Anil Ravipudi, the film has now joined the Rs 300 crore club, which is a record. "A Telugu cinema reaching Rs 300 crore club is definitely a miracle," said Anil Ravipudi at the same event.

Dil Raju also said that many films which are showing highest collections are not the actual figures. "When a film gets a breakeven for a distributor, it becomes a hit. But these days many distributors are losing money, at the same time, the makers release posters that it is a big success. Now, the industry has seen only 90 per cent flops, only 10 per cent success. But from the last 20 years, though there are a few flops and success, distributors continue their journey with us which we should thank them," said Dil Raju.

The producer said that he entered into the industry and saw a lot of success and failures too. "We believe in story and content, but in between we too see ups and down, also believe in combinations for the last four to five years. But now, we learnt our lessons,' said Dil Raju. He added that he introduced many new talents to the industry. "We made some classics with newcomers and we always believe in content and now with 'Sankranthiki Vasthunnam', we are back to normal and definitely want to make films in the coming 10 years," said Dil Raju. Senior actor Venkatesh is the lead

actor in this film, while Aishwarya Rajesh and Meenakshi Chaudhary are the female leads. "Major credit goes to Venkatesh," said Anil Ravipudi and added that he has seen two miracles with this film in his life. "A regional cinema collected Rs 100 crore in just six days and also a regional cinema reached Rs 300 crore which I saw for the first time," said Anil Ravipudi, the director.

Dil Raju's brother and another producer Shirish said that these days, people are not giving value to distributors.
"We started our production with distribution and now there is no respect for distributors. But now, Anil Ravipudi gets that respect and value due to the distributors with this success," said Shirish.

One of the distributors LVR said that these days many distributors are at loss, despite the film collections showing high. "In the last few years, no film made any profits for distributors. After many years, the distributors are in a happy position with 'Sankranthiki Vasthunnam'," said LVR.

# After two years, Ajith is arriving with action



# No buzz for Vishwaksen's *Laila*

Vishwaksen, the young actor, is looking for a break with his upcoming film 'Laila'. He is also appearing as a woman in this film and it is touted to be a comedy. The film is slated for a February 14 release, on the occasion of Valentines' Day. Though the makers put on a few events recently, there is no buzz about the film.

Ram Naravan is the director. while Akanksha Sharma is the female lead. Produced by Sahu Garapati, the film's teaser and two songs released recently, but still the film didn't get the buzz that they expected. Recently, another song from the film was also unveiled. Music is composed by Leon James.
Vishwaksen's last two films

'Mechanic Rocky' and 'Gangs of Godavari' didn't do well at the box-office. The actor is now pinning hopes on this 'Laila' which he did hard work especially to appear as a woman. He is one talented

needs a good break and compete with others. The latest song is going to be a major crowd-puller, according to the makers.

The screenplay for 'Laila' is written by Vasudeva Murthy, with Richard Prasad handling the cinematography.



# LQUER SALMAN'S NEW

alayalam superstar Dulquer Salmaan is now concentrating more on Telugu cinema. The actor is on cloud nine with his latest 'Lucky Bhaskar' becoming a big success in Telugu. Now, the actor's new film 'Akasamlo Oka Tara' was launched on Sunday in Hyderabad. Pavan Sadineni is the director, while the film is produced by Sandeep

Gunnam, son of popular producer and director Gunnam Gangaraju. The interesting part about this film is, two big production houses, Swapna Cinema and Geetha Arts owned by Swapna Dutt and Allu Aravind respectively, backed this film.

On Sunday at a simple ceremony, the muhurat was held in Hyderabad. Dulquer Salman Bhaskar' is widening his business in Telugu. He is also popular in Tamil, Kannada and Hindi. So the makers are planning to release it in all other languages too.

On the other hand, director Pavan Sadineni is a successful director with his debut film 'Prema Ishq Kadal' and then made two other films and few web series also. His last web series 'Daya' is also a big success on the OTT. Now, he got a big chance to direct Dulquer Salmaan for 'Akasamlo Öka Tara'. The regular shooting may start soon and the other cast and crew details will also

be announced in the coming days.



### **Anirudh roped** in for Nani and **Odela film**

A nirudh Ravichander is one of the few young music directors in demand in both Tamil and Telugu. The music director is now roped in for Nani and Odela combination film 'The Paradise'. Nani and Anirudh shared this news on their social media and it is their third collaboration. Earlier, Anirudh worked for Nani's 'Jersey' and 'Gang Leader'. "This one is special. My dear Nani and Odela," shared Anirudh in his social media page. "We are on our hattrick. This is an epic," says Nani in his social media page welcoming the music director.

Nani is currently shooting for the film 'Hit 3' and once after he completes this one, he is going to join Srikanth Odela for 'The Paradise'. Srikanth and Nani earlier worked for 'Dasara' which is a period action drama. Nani's performance in that film was critically acclaimed. As the title suggests, this film also has an action backdrop with entertainment, says a source.



usic director S Thaman is all set to play the lead actor in a Tamil film, according to a source. The actor is going Lto share screen space with another actor Aharva in this Tamil film. Interestingly, Thaman made his debut as an actor in 'Boys' directed by none other than Shankar Shanumugham. After that, he appeared as a cameo in a couple of films, but he never was a lead actor.

Now, the source reveals that a Tamil director is all set to rope in Thaman as the lead actor in his film. Though Thaman is one of the top music directors in Down South, he is busy with multiple projects both Telugu and Tamil as music director. But in the meantime, he wanted to pursue his acting too, thus he accepted this role. "It's an interesting story and Thaman's role is very important in it, that's why he agreed to do it," said a source. Thaman's recent film 'Daaku Maharaaj' is a successful one and he is also nicknamed as

Nandamuri Thaman. He is also working for a musical night for NTR Trust to raise funds for medical camps. He also met AP Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu recently.

# **Two-tier Test format likely before India's tour of England: Report**

PTI ■ LONDON

hen Australia face South Africa in the World Test Championship final, it will mark the end of the current format, which is set to be relaunched as a two-tier system ahead of India's tour of England later this summer. competitive. It is going to In a bid to create a "fairer competition", England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) chairman Richard chairman Thompson, who is the head

of the ICC's strategic growth committee, recently held talks with the apex body's chairman Jay Shah and the two will lead the plan. With just five months left for

the next cycle to start with England hosting India at Headingly from June 20, Thompson acknowledged the urgency of the matter.

"It is fully understood that the current structure does not work in the way it should and we need to find a fairer. better competition, but at India and Pakistan do not

this stage no recommendations have been put forward," Thompson told Telegraph Sport.
"We have five months to

work on this, step back and look at what the structure should be going forward. The World Test Championship should be fairer and more change to ensure it always encourages the best teams to reach the final and encourages other nations that want to play Test cricket, to play Test cricket.

"We will protect, grow and ensure the integrity of Test cricket because the format is crucial to the DNA of the

game."
The current model has drawn criticism for its inconsistencies.

Teams do not play every other nation within the twovear cycle, and an excess of two-Test series has skewed standings. Political constraints mean



integrity competition.

Similarly, South Africa reached the final without playing Australia, though they will meet in the title clash at Lord's in June. Discussions will also explore

the possibility of four-day Tests, as this could help boards schedule three-Test series around franchise leagues, the report has said. Notably, no three-Test series involving teams outside the "big three" of England, India, and Australia has taken place since 2019.

However, the four-day Tests won't be there for marquee series such as the Ashes or matches between tier-one nations.

The push for a two-tier system gained traction following Australia's blockbuster series against India, which set attendance records.

The proposed model would see the top-tier nations play

face each other, impacting each other more frequently, potentially sidelining other teams and series which has evoked negative responses from the legends of the game. West Indies great Clive Lloyd has been a strong critic of the system, saying it would be "disastrous for smaller

teams". "All these countries have worked very hard to get there. We have been in ICC for nearly 100 years. We've a great history and now you're going to tell us, because of a monetary situation, this is how it's going to be," Llyod had said.

Sri Lanka's World Cup winning skipper Arjuna Ranatunga has also criticised the move, saying it would only benefit the three boards. "Sport isn't just about Pounds, Dollars and Rupees. Administrators must nurture and protect the game."

Bangladesh batter Mominul Haque and England's former pacer Steven Finn have also criticised the move.

# Hard to go past India, Australia in CT: Ponting

PTI DUBAI

The legendary Ricky Ponting feels the quality of players and recent history make India and Australia the favourites to compete in the summit clash of the upcoming ICC Champions

The 50-over tournament will take place from February 19 to March 9 across three venues in Pakistan and one in Dubai.

"It's hard to go past India and Australia again," Ponting told the ICC

"Just think about the quality of players in both countries right now, and you look back in recent history when these big finals and big ICC events have come around, and inevitably Australia and India are there somewhere," said the former Australia captain.

India and Australia are the



India secured the crown in 2013 and shared the trophy with Sri Lanka in 2002 after the final was washed out, while Australia clinched back-to-back titles in 2006 and 2009.

Pakistan, the defending champions after winning the 2017 edition, will also pose a strong challenge, according to Ponting.

The other team that is playing some really good cricket at the moment is only teams to have won the Champions Trophy twice. Pakistan," said Ponting, who won two ODI World Cups

and as many Champions Trophy titles as captain.

"Their one-day cricket over the last little bit has been absolutely outstanding. We know they're not always the most predictable team in those big tournaments, but they seem like they've sorted things out a little bit."

Pakistan won all the three ODI series they played last year, including a 2-1 comeback win in Australia and Zimbabwe, followed by a 3-0 whitewash of South

## Pure cricketing miscalculation, says Ashwin on concussion substitution row

Former India spinner R Ashwin has questioned the use of concussion substitution during the fourth T20I against England, in which medium-pacer Harshit Rana replaced batting all-rounder Shivam Dube, calling it a case of "pure miscalculation." cricketing

Dube, who had scored a halfcentury, was struck on the head by Jamie Overton off the penultimate delivery of India's innings. Head coach Gautam Gambhir then effectively used the concussion protocol to field Rana in place of Dube, who bowls at speeds in the early 120 km/h range. Rana, on debut, took 3 for 33,

and India won the match by 15 runs, clinching the T20 series with a match to spare. "The game is done. India capture yet another series at home. T20I has been a real juggernaut of a win. But my first question is, did we forgot it was an international game and played an IPL match?,"



Ashwin said on his hindi YouTube channel 'Ash ki baat'. "Because today all the discussion was on how Harshit Rana became Shivam Dube's concussion sub? I can understand it has happened in the past too. In Canberra, Yuzvendra Chahal replaced

Ravindra Jadeja.
"You can call poetic justice, or in fact poetic injustice. I don't understand it. At least earlier, Chahal replaced Jadeja. Here, Rana Harshit replaced Shivam Dube."

The concussion protocol

allows like-for-like replacement, and Rana, a tearaway quick, replaced medium pacer Dube, who is used as an 'impact player' for Chennai Super Kings in the

England's captain Jos Buttler, unhappy with the decision, stated that his team was not consulted and would seek clarity from match referee Javagal Srinath on what exactly constituted a like-forlike replacement concussion cases.

believes

Ramandeep Singh would have been a more appropriate like-for-like replacement for

There is no role of the Indian or England team. If there is no one in the squad, then you can say that Harshit Rana can bat a bit and Shivam Dube can bowl a bit, that's why we brought him in. Like-for-like replacement Ramandeep Singh was sitting outside. I don't understand," said Ashwin.

'This is a case of pure cricketing miscalculation, either on the part of the umpires or the part of the match referee or whoever be it. Ramandeep Singh was there, a batter who can ball a bit, like-for-like for Shivam Dube. But not him.

"Harshit Rana was chosen as the concussion substitute. I think people in charge should look into this. Today it happened against England and hurt, some day India might be hurt too." India will face England in the

final ODI on Sunday.

### Karnatak, Haryana play out a draw

**PTI** ■ BENGALURU

 $R^{\rm avichandran\;Smaran\;gave}_{\rm another\;reminder\;of\;his}$ immense talent with an unbeaten hundred as Karnataka ended the Ranji Trophy season with a draw against Haryana in their Elite Group C match here on Sunday.

However, Haryana have already qualified for the knockouts from the group, starting from February 8, along with Kerala.

Haryana are also the grouptoppers with 29 points from seven games and Kerala finished second with 28 points.

Karnataka were fourth (20) behind Bengal (21) on the table.

Starting from overnight 108 for 3 and 38 runs behind, Karnataka had some work to do to ensure that they would not end up with a defeat in their final league match.

However, they lost Devdutt Padikkal (43), KL Shrijith (2) and Yashovardhan Parantap (12) in the space of 12 overs to slip to 164 for six.

The home side was just 16 runs ahead at that time, but Smaran (133 not out, 217 balls, 14x4, 2x5) and Hardik Raj (40, 78 balls, 4x4) shared an alliance of 98 runs for the seventh wicket to shore their side up.

More importantly, they consumed nearly 25 overs and a couple of hours during the stand that carried Karnataka to 262 before Hardik fell to Jayant Yadav. But by that time, Karnataka had a lead of 114 runs.

Smaran extended that lead to 148 as Karnataka reached 294 for 8 in their second innings, and at that point Haryana agreed for a draw, knowing that there was not enough time to mount a chase.

Smaran was also Karnataka's highest run-getter this Ranji Trophy season with 516 runs in seven matches at an average of 64.50 with two

Erigaisi Arjun (Ind, 4.5) beat Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 7.5); Jorden van

Foreest (Ned, 5) drew with D

Gukesh (Ind, 8.5); Wei Yi

(Chn, 6.5) drew with Anish

Giri (Ned, 6.5); Leon Luke Mendonca (Ind, 4.5) drew

### BCB independent committee to probe BPL corruption allegations

PTI DHAKA

The Bangladesh Cricket Board has established an independent inquiry body to assist its Anti-Corruption Unit in probing a slew of corruption allegations over the last couple of weeks in the Bangladesh

Premier League. This marks the first official corruption investigation in the BPL since 2013 as the league faces challenge with delayed player payments and ticketing controversies.

"As part of its ongoing efforts, the BCB is in the process of establishing an Independent Inquiry Body to further support the ACU in its investigations," a BCB press release said.

"The BCB remains dedicated to ensuring a fair and

transparent environment, and will continue to take all necessary actions to safeguard the integrity of the sport in Bangladesh." Recent media reports have alleged instances of corruption, naming specific players and matches, although these claims have not yet been substantiated by the BĆB's ACU.

"The BCB has also come across media coverage regarding potential anti-corruption concerns about the BPL. The Board reiterates its firm commitment to upholding the integrity and spirit of the game," added the release.

"The BCB strictly adheres to the ICC Anti-Corruption Code for Participants and maintains a zero-tolerance policy towards corruption in

# Balaji-Bollipalli pair wins, Karan impresses

 $N^{\text{Sriram Balaji}}$  and Rithvik Choudary Bollipalli were clinical in their effort before Karan Singh dished out an impressive show on debut as India thrashed Togo 4-0 in the play-off tie to keep their place

piay-off the to keep their place in the Davis Cup World Group I, here Sunday. Starting the day with a 2-0 lead in pocket, India needed to win just one of the three matches of the day. The pair of Balaji and debutant Bollipalli did the job in the very first contest against M'lapa Tingou Akomolo and Hod'abalo Isak Padio.

The Indians needed only 57 minutes to dispatch the Togo team 6-2 6-1 at DLTA Complex.

Togo replaced their best player Thomas Setodji with M'lapa Tingou Akomolo due

to an arm injury. It hurt them as Akomolo could not hold serve even once in the contest. The tie already sealed, India expectedly handed debut to youngster Karan Singh in the first reverse singles. Watched by his coach Aditya Sachdeva, the 21-year-old raced to a 6-2 6-3 victory. Both teams decided not to

play the dead fifth rubber. Surprisingly, it was Sasikumar Mukund who sat in the captain's chair instead of Rohit Rajpal when Karan played. Karan served extremely well, was aggressive in his returns and also wisely used the drop

shots. Padio, who plays in the US Collegiate circuit, hit the ball well but Karan had better control and that made a huge difference in the outcome of the match.

Karan, who also trained at the now-shut National Tennis



Centre (NTC) at DLTA, showed a lot of composure and did not let the occasion

get to him. The only blemish for Karan was dropping his serve in the fifth game of the second set. Balaji was sensational with his serving. Playing percentage tennis, he lost just one point on his serve during the match. It was a pretty straightforward

Balaji and from show Bollipalli, who had won a Challenger together last year. Bollipalli was a bit under pressure when he could not pick up a half-volley, making it 30-all in his first ever service game on debut but managed to hold. After that it one-way throughout.

The Indians got their first

break when Akomolo served in the third game. At 15-15, Bollipalli hit an uppish forehand return that sailed over the two players but landed inside the lines. Balaji then hit a service return winner to earn two break points.

A riveting volley rally ensued on first break points with all four players showing some great reflexes, but eventually one Akomolo return flew over the baseline. It gave India a 3-1 lead and Balaji made it 4-1 with another strong service game.

His nerves settled, Bollipalli came out serving even better and soon Akomolo was serving to stay in the set. However, he did not help Togo's cause by serving consecutive two double faults from 15-15, giving the Indians two set points.

# Praaggnandhaa and Gukesh in joint lead at Tata Steel Masters

PTI ■ WIJK AAN ZEE

World Champion D Gukesh played out a draw with Jorden van Foreest Holland, while Grandmaster

Praggnanandhaa beat Alexev Sarana of Serbia as the two Indians shared the lead after a thrilling day at the Tata Steel Masters here.

Praggnanandhaa notched up his third consecutive win to take his tally to a commendable 8.5 points, same as his compatriot Gukesh after the 12th and

penultimate round. The two Indians are now poised for an exciting finish tournament, with tournament, with the remarkable prospect of one of them potentially clinching the title—a first in Tata Steel Masters history.

Eying the top spot after the 11th round, Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan

title contention on 7.5 points. Praggnanandhaa involved in another Queen's gambit declined opening. Only this time he was playing with white pieces.

It was quite a contrast from his previous round game against Caruana as Sarana went for an early advance of king side pawns and then castled on the queen side. It was time to launch an attack against the black king and Praggnanandhaa did not disappoint. In tactical complications,

Praggnanandhaa was at his best as he sacrificed a piece to rip-apart the black's king position and what followed thereafter was a pleasure to watch.

"At that point I realized it could be a long game, but then I saw this piece sacrifice," said Pragg after the

The game ended through a



fluctuating fortunes against Foreest, who has the ability pawn game as white when he

pawn game as white when he Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan queen sacrifice resulting in was outdone by Arjun force checkmate.

Erigaisi and is all but out of Gukesh played a game of Foreest declared his peaceful game as winte when he many pieces on board.

the king pawn game as winte when he many pieces on board.

the king appeared ready for a Foreest sacrificed a Rook for repetition. However, Gukesh a knight but on the 39th bishops declined the offer and the move Gukesh returned the precise

game was still equal with many pieces on board.

favour with his clock ticking away. It was a won position for Gukesh but precise calculation was needed and it was right here that the Indian faltered allowing his opponent a huge comeback. Foreest had suddenly turned the tables down but did not quite realise it and decided to go for perpetual checks in the heavy piece endgame. Arjun Erigaisi finally proved his mettle against Nodirbek

Abdusattorov, whose ambitions of claiming the top spot came to an end. The game featured a Nimzo-Indian Defense, wherein the Indian had white pieces and his choice of Capablanca variation gave little chances for Abdusattorov to disturb the balance.

In the early middle game, Abdusattorov went for unwarranted complications and ended up blundering on the king side. Arjun won a pawn first and later won two bishops for a rook. With cal<u>c</u>ulations he

wrapped up the issue.
In other games, Leon Luke
Mendonca shared the point
with top seed Fabiano
Caruana of United States,
while P Harikrishna drew with Vincent Keymer of Germany.

The finale could be exciting as Gukesh is up against a resurgent Arjun, while Praggnanandhaa has to tackle Keymer. In case of a drawn result on both boards, the play-off of shorter duration game will decide

the winner. In the challengers' section, R Vasihali lost to Ediz Gurel of Turkey to remain on five points and Divya Deshmukh was on the receiving end against Benjamin Bok of Holland. It's a three-way lead in this section with Aydin Suleymanli of Azerbaijan and Nguyen Thai Dai Vam of Czech republic joining overnight leader Erwin L'ami in pole position on 8.5

with Fabiano Caruana (Usa, 6); R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 8.5) beat Alexey Sarana (Srb, 5.5); P Harikrishna (Ind, 6) drew with Vincent Keymer (Ger, 5); Max Warmerdam (Ned, 3.5) lost to Vladimir Fedoseev (Slo, 7). Challengers: Nodirbek Yakubboev (Uzb, 7) beat Arthur Pijpers (Ned, 5); Divya Deshmukh (Ind, 3)

lost to Benjamin Bok (Ned, 8); Nguyen Thai Dai Van (Cze, 8.5) beat Irina Bulmaga (Rom, 1); Aydin Suleymanli (Aze, 8.5) beat Svane Frederik (Ger, 7); Ediz Gurel (Tur, 7) beat R Vaishali (Ind, 5); Erwin L'Ami (Ned, 8.5) drew with Nogerbek Kazybek (Kaz, 6.5); Oro points. Faustino (Arg, 3.5) beat Lu Results round 12 Masters: MIaoyi (Chn, 5.5).