

PM Modi, French Prez Macron hold talks, agree to **deepen ties**

SIMPLIFIED
 INCOME TAX BILL BRINGS IN 'TAX YEAR' CONCEPT

Chiranjeevi lands in a **CONTROVERSY**

QUOTE OF THE DAY
 The pioneer
 Telangana voted seeing Sonia Gandhi's face and not Revanth Reddy's face. The people of Telangana didn't believe local Congress leaders. Sonia Gandhi, Rahul and Priyanka spoke sweetly in Telugu and made people, especially women, believe that they would get an allowance of Rs 2,500 per month. But now Rahul doesn't have the guts to visit Warangal



— Kavitha, BRS MLC

DON'T MISS...
6 bodies of pilgrims reach families

Six out of the seven bodies of individuals who lost their lives in a road accident while returning from the Prayagraj Maha Kumbh Mela to Hyderabad have reached their families in Hyderabad. The victims were travelling in a mini-bus when it collided with a truck in Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur district. One of the deceased, Shashikanth's body remains at Gandhi Hospital, as his children are currently travelling from the USA. The final rites for the rest were performed in their respective localities across Hyderabad and Jangaon. The tragic loss deeply impacted ...

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RSS office has 3 13-storey towers

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh has moved back its office in the city to its old address following the near completion of the rebuilding project spread across over 3.75 acre premises, housing three 13-storey towers and around 300 rooms and offices in total. Sources said the rebuilding exercise of the RSS office, Keshav Kunj, has cost nearly Rs 150 crore collected through contributions from over 75,000 people sympathetic to the Hindutva organisation's ideology and took over eight years, a...

-PAGE: 5

Investors' wealth erodes by Rs 18L cr

Investors suffered an erosion of Rs 18 lakh crore in six days of market fall, where the BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 3 per cent, amid continuous foreign fund outflows and trade war worries. The 30-share BSE Sensex, which had tanked more than 900 points intra-day, ended at 76,171.08, down by 122.52 points or 0.16 per cent following a recovery in bank stocks in the last hour. During the day, the benchmark tanked 905.21 points or 1.18 per cent to sink below the 76,000-level and hit a low of 75,388.39...

-PAGE: 8

India beats England, sweeps series 3-0

A robust batting show led by the Shubman Gill's attractive century heralded India's 142-run hammering of England in the third and final ODI as the hosts completed a dominant 3-0 clean sweep to culminate preparations for the Champions Trophy, here on Wednesday. India ticked all the remaining boxes with vice-captain Gill (112) following up his twin fifties earlier in the series with a seventh ODI ton of his career while middle-order mainstays Virat Kohli (52) and Shreyas Iyer (78) pushed India to a formidable...

-SPORTS



Rythu Bharosa reaches 9.56 lakh farmers in third phase

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Government has disbursed Rs 3,487.82 crore as per the Rythu Bharosa-Yasangi 2024-25 assistance scheme, benefiting 44.82 lakh farmers across the state.

Agriculture Minister T. Nageswara Rao announced details on Wednesday, stating that the third phase of the scheme has covered 9,56,422 farmers, providing them with financial aid for 2.05 crore acres of farmland.

Under the three-phase scheme, the government has so far disbursed funds to 4,482,265 farmers for 58.13 lakh acres of agricultural land. The financial support is aimed at assisting farmers in their Rabi (Yasangi) season cultivation, ensuring timely availability of inputs.

On January 27, 2025, the first phase covered 4,41,911 farmers, supporting 9.48 lakh acres with Rs 5,689.99 crore in assistance, focusing on pilot villages. The second phase on February 5 benefited 17.03 lakh farmers, covering 9.29 lakh acres with Rs 5,575.40 crore for farmers with up to one acre of land. The third phase on February 10 reached 13.23 lakh farmers, covering 18.19 lakh acres, distributing Rs. 10,919.51 crore to those with up to two acres of land.

Govt to table 42% BC Quota Bill in first week of March

Special drive from Feb 16 to 28 for those who could not participate in Caste survey

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The state government is fully committed to implementing 42% reservations for OBCs in education, politics and economic sectors, fulfilling a long-pending demand, Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu said.

Addressing the media at the secretariat on Wednesday, he reaffirmed that the Congress government would introduce the OBC Reservation Bill in the Assembly in the first week of March and ensure its passage.

Bhatti announced that the bill would be forwarded to Parliament, and the state would take all steps to push for its



approval at the national level. A delegation led by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy would visit Delhi to meet the Prime Minister and leaders of all political parties to seek support for the bill. CM

Revanth Reddy held a review meeting on Caste Survey at Integrated Command Control Center along with Ministers and officials, following which the decision was made. **Continued on Page 2**

'Caste census flawed'

BRS leader KT Rama Rao (KTR) launched a sharp attack on the Congress Government over the recently conducted caste census, alleging that it was riddled with errors and had caused distress among backward communities. Taking to X, KTR welcomed the government's admission of mistakes in the survey but demanded an

unconditional apology from Chief Minister Revanth Reddy to the BC communities of Telangana for misrepresenting their population. He criticized the ruling Congress for ignoring repeated objections from the BRS and BC organizations regarding the incompleteness of the survey and proceeding with a resolution in the Assembly based on flawed data.

'Caste survey bogus'

It is a shame that the state government announced that 3.1 per cent of the population did not participate in the caste census survey and that a re-survey will be conducted for them. The entire caste census survey is full of errors, said the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar. As per the Election Commission's calculations,

there are around 3 crore 35 lakh voters in Telangana. Similarly, the number of students studying from Class One to Intermediate has been recorded as 60 lakh. Apart from these, those who do not go to school and children between the ages of 0 and 5 are another 30 lakh. This means that the population of Telangana exceeds 4 crore 30 lakh.

Govt refuses to release vigilance report on Sunkisala collapse involving MEIL



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government has refused to disclose the vigilance report on Megha Engineering Infrastructure Ltd regarding the Sunkisala retaining wall collapse, under the Right to Information (RTI) Act. Social activist G Srinivas, who filed the RTI request, termed the rejection as unconstitutional and accused the government of shielding the company. As per the RTI reply, "Under Rule 8 1 (h) of Right to information Act 2005, there is no obligation to give any citizen information which would impede the process of investigation or apprehension."

Continued on Page 2

Are we not creating class of parasites?

Supreme Court slams freebies promised before polls

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

On political parties promising "freebies" ahead of polls, the Supreme Court on Wednesday said instead of bringing people into the mainstream for national development "are we not creating a class of parasites?"

A bench of Justices B R Gava and Augustine George Masih said it would be better to make people a part of the society's mainstream and contribute towards national development. "Rather than promoting

them to be a part of the mainstream of the society by contributing to the development of the nation, are we not creating a class of parasites?" it asked.

Justice Gava went on to add, "Unfortunately, because of these freebies, which just on the anvil of elections are declared, like 'Ladki Bahin' and other schemes, people are not willing to work."

The apex court was hearing a matter concerning the right to shelter of homeless persons in urban areas and said people got free rations and money without working. **Continued on Page 2**

BHAGEL OR GEHLOT Who is new head of TG Congress?

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress high command is going to make several changes in the incharges of the states, it is learnt.

However, the AICC organisation general secretary KC Venugopal who is in-charge of Bihar, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttarakhand and Assam, will be removed. **Continued on Page 2**

Will Congress enforce its rules and give young hopefuls a chance?

KOLISHETTY VENKATESHWARLU venkat.k.warlu@gmail.com ■ HYDERABAD

Many young Congress leaders in Telangana are hoping for MLA quota MLC tickets. They think that they will get MLC tickets if the party enforces its own rules. The party had framed some rules and they are not to give chances to leaders who have already contested elections while

distributing MLC tickets and corporation chairman posts. This means that chances should be given to people who have lost opportunities and are actively working for the party.

Young leaders would get chances if the party enforces the above rules. AICC General Secretary (Organisation) KC Venugopal too has asked Telangana Congress leaders that posts should be given to young leaders to strengthen the party.

After KC Venugopal's comments, young leaders like TPCC Media Committee Chairman Sama Rammohan Reddy, official spokesperson Charan Koushik and many others who have not got any opportunity so far and have not contested any election are expecting MLA quota MLC tickets.

Sama Rammohan Reddy and Charan Koushik are trying seriously to get **Continued on Page 2**

Plaster crashes at Secretariat, damages car

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A piece of plaster from the fifth floor of the south block of the secretariat collapsed on Wednesday, raising concerns about construction quality. The incident, which damaged the vehicle of Ramagundam Market Committee Chairman, could have become a major accident.

The secretariat, built at a cost of Rs 1,200 crore, has been under scrutiny for poor construction standards with water leakage in some areas.

Reacting to the incident, Shapoorji Pallonji, the construction



firm responsible for building the secretariat, reportedly dismissed concerns over structural integrity and attributed the collapse to recent drilling nearby. **Continued on Page 2**

Irrigation engineers file harassment charges against GRMB official

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Irrigation Graduate Engineers Association has lodged a formal complaint against R. Azhagesan, Member Secretary of the Godavari River Management Board (GRMB), alleging inappropriate behaviour towards women employees.

The Association submitted a representation to the Secretary of the Ministry of Jal Shakti, seeking immediate intervention and disciplinary action against the official.

The complaint says that lady engineers deputed to GRMB from Telangana and Andhra Pradesh have been repeatedly subjected to humiliating behaviour by Athagasan.

The allegations are inquiring about the personal and family matters of

women employees and publicly disclosing their family issues in official meetings, making derogatory remarks about their dresses and engaging in body shaming during training sessions, summoning female employees alone into his chamber citing work and speaking to them with malafide intent, inviting them to his residence for informal gatherings and recalling his previous work experiences at places like Farakka Barrage, where he claims to have worked closely with women engineers and making sexually inappropriate remarks, causing distress, anxiety and humiliation among females.

The letter states that the Chairman of GRMB was informed many times about these concerns, and in December 2024, a representation was submitted detailing the allegations.

MAGHI PURNIMA Over 2 crore devotees take holy dip

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Amid heightened security measures, more than two crore devotees took a dip in the Sangam till 6 pm on Wednesday on the occasion of Maghi Purnima during the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela here.

According to an official statement, special arrangements have been made for the sacred bath that began early Wednesday.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has been monitoring the event since 4 am at the war room in his official residence in Lucknow, the statement said.

With the 'snan' on Maghi Purnima, another auspicious day for holy bath, the month-long 'Kalpavas' will be ending and around 10 lakh 'Kalpavasis' will start leaving the Maha Kumbh. The administration



has requested them to follow traffic rules and use only authorised parking spaces. While lakhs of devotees are headed to the Sangam area, the

government in the statement said that by 6 pm, over two crore people had taken the ritual dip at the Triveni Sangam and other ghats.

1984 ANTI-SIKH RIOTS Court convicts Sajjan Kumar in murder case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Congress MP Sajjan Kumar now faces a maximum of death penalty and a minimum of life term in prison after being convicted on Wednesday by a Delhi court in a murder case stemming from 1984 anti-Sikh riots.

Special judge Kaveri Baweja passed the conviction order and posted the arguments on sentence on February 18.

"Accused has been convicted... List for order on sentence on the next date of hearing," she said.

A detailed judgment is awaited. Kumar was produced in court from Tihar jail for the pronouncement. Jaswant Singh and his son Tarundeep Singh were killed on November 1, 1984.

CS directs Collectors to ensure sand availability at fair price

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari has directed district collectors to ensure that sand is available in sufficient quantities at reasonable prices, emphasising the need for strict monitoring of sand reaches and stockyards to prevent unauthorised lifting. She held a video conference with the collectors of Bhupalpally, Mulugu, Bhadradi Kothagudem, Peddapalli, Mancheril, and Karimnagar districts, instructing them to maintain round-the-clock vigilance and curb

illegal sand transportation. Santhi Kumari emphasised that joint teams should be formed, with police and transport department officials intensifying road patrolling to check the movement of sand-laden vehicles. She insisted that unauthorised activities at sand reaches be dealt with strictly, ensuring transparency in sand distribution. Principal Secretary for Mines Sridhar informed that stakeholder and transporter meetings were held, where the government's commitment to breaking the monopoly over

sand supply was reiterated. He stated that Telangana State Mineral Development Corporation (TGMDC) would leverage technology to curb pilferage and improve the distribution system. The meeting was attended by DGP Jitender, Intelligence DG B. Shivadhar Reddy, ADGP (Law & Order) Mahesh Bhagwat, Mines Principal Secretary N. Sridhar, Transport Commissioner Surendra Mohan, HYDRAA Commissioner AV Ranganath, DMG Shashanka, TGMDC MD Susheel Kumar, and other officials.

RBI to issue Rs 50 notes with Guv Malhotra's sign

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India on Wednesday said it will soon issue Rs 50 denomination banknotes bearing the signature of Governor Sanjay Malhotra. Malhotra assumed office in December 2024 replacing Shaktikanta Das who demitted office after completion of his extended term. "The design of these notes is similar in all respects to Rs 50 banknotes in Mahatma Gandhi (New) Series," the RBI said in a statement. All banknotes in the denomination of Rs 50 issued by the Reserve Bank in the past will continue to be legal tender.

Sridhar Babu and Harish condemn Piyush Goyal's remarks

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Industry and Information Technology Minister D Sridhar Babu has slammed Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal for his remarks that states like Telangana, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu were engaging in "petty thinking" by demanding funds in proportion to their tax contribution.

The state minister took to social media platform 'X' on Wednesday to react strongly to the Union Minister's remarks made at the 'Rashtriya Ekamata Yatra 2025', an event organised by the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) and the 'Students Experience in Inter-State Living (SEIL)' initiative. "Your comments on Telangana asking for its fair share of allocations in the Union Budget are deeply concerning. Our demand is about recognising the contributions

our state and other southern states make. Labelling this as 'petty thinking' disregards the hard work and dedication of Telangana's people and the people of south India," posted Sridhar Babu.

"We contribute significantly to the country's revenue, and it's only fair that we get our deserved share. We are hoping that the Union government will acknowledge this and respect our role in India's economic growth. Telangana plays a crucial role in driving India's economy forward," wrote the minister.

"We deserve to be treated as equal partners in development, not just as revenue sources. We urge the Union government to adopt a more inclusive approach, one that values the contributions of all states, including those in South India. We seek fairness, respect, and our rightful share of resources," Sridhar Babu added.

BRS MLA Harish Rao said, "It is shameful to demean the

southern states by referring to their thought process as 'Choti Soch'."

"It's a fact that the southern states have developed systematically, effectively controlled population growth, and emerged as the growth engines of India. These remarks are a reflection of the 'Choti Soch' of Honourable Union Minister Piyush Goyal

ji. According to the recommendations of the 15th Finance Commission, 41% of the taxes collected by the Centre should be allocated to the states. However, due to the imposition of cess and surcharges, the actual share received by the states has significantly reduced." He added, "While it is stated that 41% is distributed, the actual amount, states receive only about approximately 30%. When a state receives revenue in the form of taxes, it has the flexibility to allocate funds according to the needs of its people. However, by collecting cess

and then distributing it selectively, the Centre is showing bias towards certain states while neglecting others. This is an attempt to centralize financial powers and exert control over the states. States are being forced to bow down to the Centre" Isn't this against the spirit of federalism? Is this the "Team India" spirit that you speak of? He added, "Moreover, while promoting for an increased share of taxes, states are being deprived in two ways by reducing their share in centrally sponsored schemes and by cutting down various Centre-funded government initiatives. It is highly inappropriate to speak disrespectfully when addressing the rights of states. We strongly condemn Piyush Goyal ji's statements. We urge everyone to recognize that the development of southern states, including #Telangana key contributors to India's growth ultimately fuels the progress of the entire nation".



'Rahul scared to visit Warangal fearing public backlash'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha lashed out at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and accused him of cancelling his Warangal visit due to fear of facing public scrutiny over unfulfilled promises.

She said that the people of Warangal were ready to question him about his father's declaration he had announced earlier but failed to act upon. "Rahul Gandhi is scared because he knows the people will not tolerate broken promises," she remarked.

Unveiling the poster for Telangana Jagruthi's upcoming "Mahila Shankharavam" event scheduled for March 8 in Hyderabad, Kavitha demanded that the Congress government fulfil its election promises to women. She warned that

if these promises were ignored, Congress leaders in Telangana would find it difficult to move freely.

Criticizing the Congress leadership, she claimed that local leaders lacked credibility, which was why Sonia Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi, and Rahul Gandhi had to campaign in Telangana during the elections. "Women trusted their faces and voted, but after coming to power, the Congress government has conveniently forgotten its promises," she said.

Kavitha pointed out that even after 14 months in office, the Congress had failed to provide the promised Rs 2,500 monthly financial assistance to women, leaving Chief Minister Revanth Reddy with a pending due of Rs 35,000 per woman. She demanded that this

amount be immediately transferred to every eligible woman's bank account.

Accusing the government of betraying young women, she said that the promised free scooters for girls above 18 years never materialized. She also slammed the Congress for discontinuing the KCR Kit scheme, which had benefited mothers and newborns.

Taking aim at law and order, Kavitha alleged that under Revanth Reddy's administration, crime against women had increased by 20 per cent. "Women now fear travelling alone, and crimes are rampant. Theft cases in suburban homes are rising. During KCR's 10-year rule, not a single communal clash occurred, but under Revanth Reddy's governance, communal tensions are erupting frequently," she alleged.

Fake IAS in TG Secretariat nabbed

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Fake employees are gaining entry into Telangana Secretariat has come to light with the latest arrest of a fake IAS officer. This comes after previous arrests of a fake revenue employee and a fake Mandal Revenue Officer (MRO).

According to sources, the Secretariat Security Wing (SPF) grew suspicious of a man frequently visiting the premises with a fake ID card in the name of Balakrishna IAS. A background check confirmed that he was an imposter, prompting officials to alert the police on the orders of Secretariat CSO Devidas. Further investigations led to the arrest of two more fake employees who had been posing as Secretariat staff.

Officials revealed that this is not an isolated case. In the past month, a man was caught posing as a revenue employee, frequently entering the Secretariat. Another individual was found using an MRO sticker on his vehicle to gain access. SPF identified and arrested Kompelli Anjaiah, who had been visiting the premises multiple times under false pretenses.

Bhaskar Rao from Khammam was caught using a fake Revenue department ID and was arrested along with his driver.

Kadiyam nursery farmers plant 1,000 saplings to celebrate KCR's birthday

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Marking the birthday of former Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao, Kadiyam nursery farmers organised a grand plantation drive under the Vriksharchana initiative of the Green India Challenge. 1,000 saplings were planted in his honour.

Former Rajya Sabha MP Joganapally Santosh Kumar attended the event as the chief guest and actively took part in the plantation drive along with families. Praising on the occasion, he praised the efforts of Paluri Nani, a dedicated nursery farmer, who led the initiative to pay tribute to KCR's contributions to Telangana, especially in promoting afforestation and farmer welfare.

"From the Telangana movement to his tenure as Chief Minister, KCR garu has always championed unity and progress. Today's event is a



reflection of that collective spirit," Santosh Kumar said. He highlighted that during KCR's ten-year rule, the Harihar Haram initiative resulted in the plantation of 280 crore saplings, increasing Telangana's green cover by 8.3%.

Farmers acknowledged that the afforestation program not only boosted greenery but also improved their livelihoods, as the government's purchase of

saplings from nurseries provided employment and economic benefits.

Expressing his gratitude to the participants, Santosh Kumar stated, "I sincerely appreciate the love and respect shown towards KCR garu. Your dedication to environmental protection is inspiring, and I am confident that Telangana's green revolution will continue to thrive."

Ex DSP Gangadhar joins Congress

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) M. Gangadhar, who was contesting as an independent candidate from the Graduate Constituency covering Medak, Nizamabad, Adilabad, and Karimnagar districts, joined the Congress on Wednesday. Industries Minister Sridhar Babu and the Gangadhar formally announced his withdrawal from MLC elections, she said.

Gangadhar had recently resigned from the police and was seen as a strong Independent contender in the upcoming elections. Accompanied by senior Congress leader V. Hanumantha Rao, he arrived at the Secretariat, where Minister Sridhar Babu welcomed him into the party by draping the Congress scarf around his shoulders.

The Minister urged him to actively support the party's official candidate, Dr V. Narender Reddy.

Secretariat fails to ensure accessibility for disabled

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Despite tall claims of inclusivity, the Telangana Secretariat is failing to uphold the rights of disabled individuals, reducing accessibility measures to mere showpieces.

Authorities have spent lakhs on purchasing electric vehicles (EVs) and wheelchairs to facilitate movement for disabled employees. However, these measures remain largely unused, as

even officials and ministers refuse to utilise them, nor do they allow others to benefit from them.

Sources indicate that the EVs and wheelchairs remain stationed like museum artifacts, with no effort to integrate them into daily operations. Employees needing assistance continue to struggle, while accessibility infrastructure gathers dust.

Social activists have criticised the administration,

questioning why funds were allocated for these facilities if they were never meant to be used. They argue that the Secretariat must take responsibility and ensure that accessibility measures are implemented in both letter and spirit.

Medapattu Satish from Laxetipet called for immediate action, stating that the government must ensure disabled employees get the facilities they rightfully deserve.

Who is new ...

Continued from page 1

It is learnt that the party may use the services of AICC general secretary in-charge Deepa Das Munshi in her native State West Bengal. However, Chhattisgarh former CM Bupesh Bhagel or Rajasthan former CM Ashok Gehlot will be appointed as the new incharge general secretary of Telangana State, it is learnt.

In fact, Congress State presidents of Kerala, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Assam and Himachal Pradesh will be changed.

Will Cong ...

Continued from page 1

An opportunity in case the party enforces its own rules. Leaders like Sama Rammohan Reddy are expecting MLC tickets like Rajya Sabha Member M. Anil Kumar Yadav and MLC Balmoor Venkat Narsingrao who were young and got a chance to enter the upper house both at the Centre and in the State.

The Congress has four MLA quota MLC seats. The young hopefuls in the OC quota are Sama Rammohan Reddy and others. Hopefuls trying for the SC quota are Addanki Dayakar, Rachamalla Siddeshwar and some others. Hopefuls in the BC quota are Charan Koushik and others and those in the ST quota are Ramulu Nayak and others. Sources said the probability of caste equations while distributing MLC quota MLC tickets are OC-1, BC-2, SC-1; OC-2, BC-1, SC-1; OC-1, BC-1, SC-1, and ST-1.

However, if the party breaks its own rules then the equations would change and the young may not get an opportunity. Then leaders like T. Jeevan Reddy, R. Damodar Reddy, T. Jagga Reddy, Madhu Yashki Goud, Shabbir Ali, SA Sampath Kumar, Ch. Vamschand Reddy, Harkara Venugopal, Neelam Madhu Mudiraj, Vajresh Yadav Fayeem Qureshi, Feroz Khan, Azharuddin, Sumitha Rao, Saritha Yadav and many others were in the race for the MLC quota MLC tickets.

Now the question is whether the Congress would enforce its rules or not.

Plaster crashes ...

Continued from page 1

"This is not a construction problem or concrete failure. The secretariat's structure is intact and there are no quality problems," sources said.

Sources clarified that GRC (glass-reinforced concrete) frames were damaged during the recent drilling for lighting and new cable installations. Drilling affects GRC material and that is why the panel fell. The building was completed two years ago without any quality problems. It may be mentioned here that work is going on the Chief Minister's floor in the secretariat.

"Kalleshwaram became Kuleshwaram. Yadagirigutta has lots of problems and now it is the secretariat. The BRS will poke us for pointing this out, but we will highlight it," Ayodhya Reddy, the CPRO of the CM said on X.

Govt refuses ...

Continued from page 1

Srinivas had initially sought the vigilance report through an RTI application, but the Municipal Administration and Urban Development (MA&UD) department denied the request. Upon filing an appeal with the Appellate Authority, the same response was reiterated, stating that the information could not be disclosed as it could "impede the process of investigation or apprehension."

Expressing strong objection, Srinivas announced that he would approach the RTI Commission, alleging that the government was deliberately suppressing crucial information to protect the contractor. "The government has completely surrendered to Megha Company. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy once called it the 'East India Company', but today, it has become his ATM. That is why the vigilance report is being hidden," he remarked.

Srinivas further warned that if the vigilance report was not made public, he would take legal recourse, including approaching the High Court. He asserted that the fight would continue until Megha Company was blacklisted. "The people of Telangana deserve transparency. We will not let this matter rest," he added.

He stated that the government's reluctance to release the report raised serious concerns over its credibility in handling large-scale infrastructure projects.

Are we not ...

Continued from page 1

"We quite appreciate your concern for them but would it not be better to make them a part of the mainstream of society and permit them to contribute to the development of the nation?" the bench asked.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for one of the petitioners, said there was hardly anybody in the country who did not want to work,

if they had work.

The judge said, "You must be having only one sided knowledge. I come from an agricultural family. Because of the freebies in Maharashtra which they just announced prior to elections, agriculturists are not getting labourers." The court, however, said it did not want to debate. It said everybody, including attorney general R Venkataramani, was on the same page that providing shelter to the homeless merited due attention.

"But at the same time, should it not be balanced?" the bench asked.

Venkataramani said the Centre was in the process of finalising the urban poverty alleviation mission, which would address various issues, including the provision of shelter for the urban homeless.

The bench asked him to verify from the Centre the time frame within which the scheme would be applicable and also place on record the aspects covered by it.

"In the meantime, the attorney general is also requested to take instructions as to whether till the implementation of the said scheme, the Union of India would continue with the National Urban Livelihoods Mission," it said.

The bench further asked the Centre to collate information from all states for the consideration of the issue on a pan-India basis. One of the petitioners during the hearing said it was unfortunate that the cause of the homeless was not being addressed as it was last on the priority.

'Caste census ...

Continued from page 1

He insisted that Congress must now acknowledge this mistake.

KTR demanded that the caste survey be redone comprehensively and that local body elections be conducted only after granting 42% reservations to BCs by law.

He warned that any attempt to merely pass a resolution and shift the responsibility onto the Centre would not be accepted by BRS or BC organizations.

"The Congress must fully honour the commitments made in the Kamareddy BC Declaration, or else BCs in Telangana will have no reason to trust them," KTR asserted, cautioning the Chief Minister against taking backward communities for granted.

'Caste survey ...

Continued from page 1

The number of people with Aadhaar cards in Telangana is 3 crore 95 lakh. Reducing the population of Telangana to 3 crore 70 lakh in the caste census survey is a big hoax, he said.

Sanjay said that this was just a fake survey. It is clear that there was a conspiracy to deliberately reduce the population of castes in the BC group using the caste census. It is shameful to campaign in the name of the caste survey and do a re-survey on 3.1 per cent of families, without the guts to face the local bodies. People are watching the Congress's fraudulent promises, corruption, irregularities and propaganda, and they are ready to light a fire whenever elections are held.

He said the state government should act with sincerity in matters like the caste census. A re-survey should be conducted by going from house to house in the state. Aadhaar cards should be linked and a re-survey should be conducted by going door to door. In addition, as soon as the survey is completed, the draft list

should be displayed in gram panchayats and wards and objections should be accepted. The final list should be announced with the approval of the gram sabhas and ward sabhas. The entire list should be kept in the public domain. Only then will we consider that the caste census has been conducted scientifically. Otherwise, conducting a survey is a mantra for political gains and propaganda will be of no use.

The mistakes made should be corrected as soon as possible. Even if Muslims are included in the BCs' list, there is no point in being complacent if the population of BC social castes has been reduced. We, on behalf of the BJP, warn that the Congress government will have to pay a suitable price, he said.

Sanjay said that there is a lack of consensus among Congress MLAs, MLCs and Ministers on the issue of caste enumeration. Similarly, if the party itself is at fault for including Muslims in the BC list, it is shameful that they want to avoid the blame by blaming the Centre without correcting the mistake they made, he said.

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha
Tithi: Pratipada: Feb 12 07:23 PM to Feb 13 08:22 PM
Dwitiya: Feb 13 08:22 PM to Feb 14 09:52 PM
Nakshatram: Magha: Feb 12 07:35 PM to Feb 13 09:07 PM
Purva Phalguni: Feb 13 09:07 PM to Feb 14 11:09 PM
Rahukalam: 1:56 PM to 3:21 PM
Yamagandam: 6:47 AM to 8:13 AM
Varjyam: 05:48 AM to 07:32 AM
Gulika: 9:38 AM to 11:04 AM
Amritakalam: 06:34 PM to 08:16 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:07 PM to 12:53 PM
HYDERABAD WEATHER
Forecast: Sunny
Temp: 33°
Humidity: 44%
Sunrise: 6:44 AM
Sunset: 6:17 PM
Updated: February 12, 2025 5:00 PM

City Pioneer

the pioneer

HYDERABAD | THURSDAY | FEBRUARY 13, 2025

03



District Youth Selections For Boys & Girls (16 To 20)

By Hyderabad District Association
Venue

OU Football Ground
February 13, (6:30 am)

Thursday Night

With DJ Hak

Venue

Sounds & Spirits
February 13, (8 pm)

Live Performance

By Aalaap (Band)

Venue

36 Downtown Brew Pub
(Vapour)
February 13, (8 pm)

Kavisammelanam

Venue

Conference Hall -
Ravindra Bharathi
February 13, (6 pm to 10 pm)

GCC Growth Summit 2025

Venue

Trident
February 13, (10 am)

Special trains from Cherlapally to clear weekend rush

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The South Central Railway (SCR) has announced special trains from Cherlapally to clear the weekend rush. These trains will run on from February 14.

The Charlapalli-Kakinada Town Special (Train No. 07031/07032) will operate on February 14 and 21 from Charlapalli at 7:20 pm and on February 16 and 23 from Kakinada Town at 6:55 pm. The train will stop at major stations, including Nalgonda, Guntur, Vijayawada and Rajahmundry.

The Charlapalli-Narsapur Special (Train No. 07233/07234) will run on February 14 and 21 from Charlapalli at 7:15 pm and on February 16 and 23 from Narsapur at 8:00 pm. Stops include Nalgonda, Guntur, Vijayawada and Bhimavaram town. Both trains will have 2AC, 3AC, sleeper and general second class coaches.

Tension as meat found in Jirra Hanuman temple

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The discovery of meat inside Jirra Hanuman temple in Hyderabad's Tappachabutra area on Monday morning sparked tension among devotees and residents. The incident led to a swift police response, with senior officers rushing to the site to assess the situation and prevent communal unrest. According to Tappachabutra Police, the incident was reported around 8:20am when SHO A Ramulu of Tappachabutra police station was informed about the presence of a piece of meat, weighing approximately 250 grams, inside the temple premises.

The police formed four teams to examine CCTV footage from the vicinity, aiming to identify any potential miscreants. However, after a thorough review of the surveillance clips, the police discovered that a cat was responsible for carrying the meat into the temple. Footage from a north-facing camera clearly showed the feline entering the temple with the meat in its mouth before placing it behind the Shiva Linga, said the police in a statement. The police urged citizens to refrain from spreading rumours or misinformation regarding the incident, emphasising that no foul play was involved.

TG to provide digital connectivity to 9.3 M households: Minister



IT Minister D Sridhar Babu at a meeting with the World Bank team at the State Secretariat on Wednesday

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana is set for a digital revolution, with 9.3 million households soon getting seamless internet, announced IT Minister D Sridhar Babu. Speaking at the State Secretariat on Wednesday, he explained the T-Fiber project, which aims to provide high-speed internet to every home in the State. As a pilot project, four villages have already been digitized, proving the initiative's potential. A World Bank team, led by Vaijanti Desai and Kimberly Johns, visited these villages - Hajipally (Ranga Reddy), Maddur

(Narayanpet), Sangupet (Sangareddy) and Adavi Srirampur (Peddapalli) - to see the impact of digital connectivity firsthand.

Minister Sridhar Babu highlighted the state's goal of bringing digital access to all villages within three years. He also said that Telangana has already installed a 32,000-kilometer fiber-optic network, placing the State in the forefront of India's digital growth.

The meeting was attended by IT department Deputy Secretary Bhavesh Mishra, T-Fiber MD Venu Prasad and senior World Bank representatives Ishira Mehta, Arun Sharma and Siew Sanz Ng.

TSWREIS shine with 99% in JEE Mains

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society (TSWREIS) students achieved remarkable results in the JEE (Main) 2025 Session-I exam. The results, announced by the National Testing Agency (NTA) on February 11, show a significant improvement over last year, with students competing on par with corporate coaching centres. A total of 415 students from the TSWREIS's Centre of Excellence (COE) institutions have qualified for JEE (Advanced) 2025, based on last year's cut-off marks. Among the top achievers from Gowli Daddi COE, the following students have secured the highest percentiles, R Manideep - 99.03, K Charan Tej - 98.30, D Tejaswini - 98.267, PAV Srinivas - 96.88, J Ramcharan Teja - 96.78, M Bhavyasri - 95.75, P Bhanuteja - 95.49, V Sujala - 95.49 (COE, GV Gudem), K Charan Tei - 95.20, K Keertana - 95.07 (COE, GV Gudem), said a statement from TSWREIS. There are 28 students with 90 percentile, 80-90 percentile with 111 students, 70-80 percentile with 128 students and 60-70 percentile with 168 students.

Hyd's hot climate puts residents at risk of dehydration: Experts

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad's hot climate and geography put residents at higher risk of dehydration, warn experts. As summer approaches, rising temperatures create a breeding ground for infectious diseases, increasing dehydration risks. Often, dehydration goes unnoticed until severe complications arise. While intense thirst is a common sign, dehydration can also occur subtly, especially in the form of silent dehydration, which lacks clear warning signals. Another serious concern is diarrheal dehydration, which can be life-threatening,



Senior Consultant at Care Hospital Dr B Ravinder Reddy along with Professor of Pediatrics at RVM Medical College Dr C Suresh Kumar addressing a workshop on Wednesday

particularly for children, the elderly and those with health conditions.

Hyderabad's semi-arid climate and occasional water shortages further heighten dehydration risks. Experts

without obvious symptoms and can lead to cognitive decline and kidney issues. He noted that electrolyte-based hydration is more effective than plain water.

Diarrheal dehydration, common in children, can quickly lead to severe complications. Meanwhile, Professor of Pediatrics at RVM Medical College, Dr C Suresh Kumar, stressed early intervention with WHO-recommended

Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS) to restore fluids and prevent fatal outcomes. He noted that incorrect ORS preparation reduces effectiveness, so ready-to-drink ORS is a safer option.

AIMING TO TRAIN 30 LAKH STUDENTS IN 4.0 TECHNOLOGIES

NxtWave initiative to build world's largest vehicle developer in city

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad-based NxtWave, a leader in upskilling India's youth in emerging technologies, has partnered with Japan's TIER IV, the world's first open-source software for autonomous driving, and the Autoware Foundation. Together with NSDC, they aim to build the world's largest autonomous vehicle (AV) developer community, training 30 lakh students in Industry 4.0 technologies.

This partnership will equip Indian youth with future-ready skills in autonomous vehicle technology, bridging the gap between academics and industry needs. Physical AI, which integrates AI with real-world systems, will impact sectors like transportation, logistics, healthcare, and manufacturing. This initiative addresses the rising demand for AI-driven mobility and fosters innovation.

Beyond AV, it will influence logistics, healthcare and agriculture, enabling driverless trucks, medical drones and autonomous tractors. It aligns with India's vision for



Shinpei Kato, founder and CEO of Tier IV and Chairman of Autoware Foundation along with Rahul Attuluri, founder and CEO of NxtWave, exchanging partnership document on Wednesday

emerging technologies and may shape regulatory frameworks and public-private collaborations.

On Wednesday, the initiative was launched in the presence of Rahul Attuluri, Founder and CEO of NxtWave; Ved Mani Tiwari, CEO of NSDC & MD, NSDC International; and Shinpei Kato, Founder and CEO of TIER IV and Chairman of the

Autoware Foundation. It aims to solve India's talent challenges, boost awareness of AV careers and strengthen industry-academia ties.

A hybrid learning model will ensure accessibility across India. In the long run, this programme will create a strong talent pipeline, support startups, and position India as a global hub for autonomous systems innovation.

IMA TG condemns protests by unqualified medical practitioners

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) Telangana division has strongly condemned the recent protests by self-proclaimed Rural Medical Practitioners (RMPs) and Private Medical Practitioners (PMPs), who are essentially first aid centre helpers, demanding legal recognition despite lacking proper medical qualifications. Raising concerns over the growing trend of unqualified individuals practicing medicine, the IMA warned that such illegal activities pose a severe risk to public health. These individuals, lacking scientific medical knowledge, administer unscientific treatments, misuse steroids, and prescribe incomplete antibiotic courses, leading to drug resistance and potential health hazards. "The indiscriminate use of antibiotics, painkillers and steroids by quacks is not just irresponsible but a direct threat to Telangana's healthcare ecosystem," the IMA stated.

The IMA Telangana has also criticised the involvement of political leaders in supporting these illegal practitioners for short-term political gains, warning that such actions could trigger a long-term public health disaster. "Political interference weakens the enforcement of the National Medical Commission (NMC) Act and encourages quackery, putting countless lives at risk," the association stated.



Family members gather for the final rites in Karthikeya Nagar on Wednesday

KUMBH MELA ROAD ACCIDENT

Six bodies of Hyd pilgrims reach families; Minor performs final rites

DEEPIKA PASHAM
deepikapasham2015@gmail.com
■ HYDERABAD

Six out of the seven bodies of individuals who lost their lives in a road accident while returning from the Prayagraj Maha Kumbh Mela to Hyderabad had reached their families in Hyderabad.

The victims were travelling in a minibus when it collided with a truck in Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur district.

One of the deceased, Shashikanth's body remains at Gandhi Hospital, as his children are currently travelling from the USA. The final rites for the rest were performed in their respective localities across Hyderabad and Jangaon.

The tragic loss deeply impacted Karthikeya Nagar in Nacharam, where many of the victims resided. One of the most heartbreaking moments was witnessing a young child performing the last rites of his father, Santhosh Kumar, while his friends - who usually played with him - stood in confusion, wondering why he wasn't joining them.

The grieving family, overwhelmed with sorrow, did not allow anyone to disturb the child and sternly warned the media against going live during the ceremony. One relative sat beside the boy, keeping him engaged, as the child had no understanding of the gravity of the situation. "The children had only their father, as their mother had passed away an year ago. They have no idea what is happening at their home," said a relative.

Cyient secures Boeing contract for parts of precision-machine

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad's Cyient DLM, a design-led manufacturing partner, has signed a production contract with Boeing Global Services (BGS) for precision-machine parts and assemblies.

This contract highlights Cyient DLM's growing expertise in delivering high-precision aerospace components. CEO of Cyient DLM Anthony Montalbano called the deal a major achievement, demonstrating the company's advanced manufacturing capabilities and commitment to excellence. He expressed pride in collaborating with Boeing and emphasised Cyient DLM's dedication to consistently meeting the highest industry standards.

Cyient DLM has established itself as a trusted aerospace and defense partner. It was one of the first AS9100C-certified aerospace electronics manufacturers and the first in India to receive NADCAP certification for Circuit Card Assembly (CCA). It specialises in prototypes, small-batch production, box builds and precision machining. It also excels in additive manufacturing (3D printing) for design verification, proof-of-concept models and functional testing.

City-based Motivity Labs bags US\$ 6 M IT services contract

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad-based Motivity Labs, a leading IT company in India and the US and a key division of Magellanic Cloud Ltd, has secured a major client contract worth \$6 million. This deal is expected to boost the company's growth and strengthen its position in data engineering, advanced analytics and Generative AI solutions. The agreement, signed with one of the world's largest technology and data centre firms, will support Motivity Lab's mission-critical projects in Data Engineering, Advanced Analytics and Generative AI.

Tight security for Celebrity Cricket League

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Rachakonda Police have put in place stringent security arrangements for the Celebrity Cricket League (CCL) 2025 matches scheduled at Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium, Uppal, on February 14 and 15. Rachakonda Commissioner of Police Sudheer Babu chaired a coordination meeting with CCL organisers at the stadium to review security measures and ensure a hassle-free experience for spectators. The meeting was attended by

officials from the stadium management, GHMC, electricity department, revenue department, and various police wings, including intelligence, special branch and reserve police.

Speaking at the meeting, Sudheer Babu emphasised the need for foolproof security to ensure smooth conduct of the matches. Given the participation of film stars from various industries, a large turnout of spectators is expected. He instructed officials to ensure that law and order is maintained without any disruptions. Special atten-

tion was given to crowd management, traffic regulation, and entry-exit procedures.

The Commissioner directed officials to coordinate closely with CCL representatives and implement security measures at all entry points. He also instructed that prices of food and beverages inside the stadium be regulated as per norms.

CCTV cameras will be deployed extensively in and around the stadium, with constant monitoring to track crowd movement. Adequate parking arrangements have been

planned to prevent congestion.

The Commissioner also stressed the need for careful issuance of media and VIP passes to avoid misuse.

Among those present at the meeting were SB DCP G Narasimha Reddy, SOT DCP Ramana Reddy, Traffic DCP Mallareddy, Headquarters DCP Shyam, Malkajgiri Additional DCP Venkataramana, Additional DCP CSW ACP Srinivasa Rao, Malkajgiri ACP Chakra Chakrapani, Celebrity Cricket League founder Vishnu Vardhan Induri, and other officials.

Attack on Army jawan sparks outrage in Khammam district

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

An attack on an Army Jawan, who happens to be a Dalit, by two individuals sparked outrage in the district. Several organisations demanded that two individuals, Ummineni Ramesh and Lagadapati Sai, who allegedly attacked the Jawan, be arrested and Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act be invoked against them.



Army jawan Manoj

The incident came to light on Wednesday the Jawan Boodala Manoj came to the government hospital here. Dalit organization leaders Nandipati Manohar, Nakarikanti Chiranjeevi, Dalit leaders K Ramulu and Arempula Ramanadham met him to express their solidarity with him. Manohar explained that Manoj, a Dalit from Bonakal mandal, had been serving in the Army as a jawan. During his leave, on February 6, while travelling from Khammam to Bonakal, he intervened to stop a fight at the Nagulavanchi petrol bunk. He was then wrongfully implicated in a case.

On February 11, when Jawan went to the Chintakani Police Station

to discuss the case with the local sub-inspector, Ummineni Ramesh and Lagadapati Sai, dragged him out of the police station physically assaulted him, according to Manoj and also Dalit Organisation leaders.

The incident of an Army Jawan being attacked inside the police station raised serious concern. The Dalit Organisation leaders expressed concern that if a Dalit is attacked even inside a police station, it raises serious questions about the conditions of Dalits in rural areas.

Avian Flu scare: Telangana intensifies checking at borders

● In Nizamabad district, avian flu dealt a crushing blow to poultry farmers

PNS ■ JOGULAMBA GADWAL/NIZAMABAD

Following the rise in chicken deaths in neighbouring states due to suspected avian influenza, Telangana intensified checking at inter-state border check posts on Wednesday to prevent the transport of sick birds into the state and strengthened bio-security measures.

Veterinary authorities at the Andhra-Telangana border have closed the border in response to the widespread bird flu outbreak in Andhra Pradesh. They are stopping vehicles carrying chickens, chicks, and ducks from Andhra, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu and sending them back. At the Pullur Toll Plaza in Jogulamba Gadwal district, veterinary authorities and police have set up a check post. Due to the high number of deaths of poultry layers and broiler chickens in Andhra Pradesh caused by the bird flu virus, as a precautionary measure, vehicles carrying chickens and chicks from other states are being intercepted at the Telangana border and sent back.

Authorities state that this step has been taken to prevent the disease from spreading into Telangana, as it is severely affecting Andhra Pradesh. So far, five chicken transport vehicles and two chick transport vehicles have been turned back. Two chick transport vehicles coming from Tamil Nadu were intercepted at the Pullur Toll Plaza and sent



Officials conducting checks on vehicles carrying poultry at Pullur Toll Plaza in Jogulamba Gadwal district

back to Andhra Pradesh, as they were headed for a poultry farm in Kamareddy, Telangana.

Meanwhile, in the undivided Nizamabad district, there are a large number of boiler and layer poultry farms. Nizamabad district has the highest number of poultry farms in Telangana. Eggs are supplied from here to other states. Along with broiler chicken farming, recently desi chicken farms have also increased. However, for the past three days, a virus has been affect-

ing chickens in the undivided district, leading to the death of chickens in the lakhs. The severity of the virus continues. Chickens are dying daily in poultry farms and villages.

In the Kamareddy district, a large number of chickens have died in Banswada mandal's Borlam and Tirmalapur villages. In Birkuru mandal's Chincoli and Kistapur villages, chickens in poultry farms are dying due to the virus in large numbers. In Velpur mandal of Nizamabad district, in villages like

Lakkora, Saibpeta, and several others, chickens are dying in hundreds due to the virus. Similarly, in villages like Bhingal, Pallikonda, Babapur, Lingapur, and Muchkur in Bhingal mandal, thousands of chickens in poultry farms are dying due to the virus. It is feared that chickens in almost all poultry farms in the district have been affected by the virus. The fear of the virus spreading among chickens is evident everywhere.

For the past three consecutive

days, the state government has ordered the Department of Animal Husbandry to take action. Instructions and orders are being issued to poultry farm owners. Officials are visiting poultry farms and sending infected chickens to laboratories. They are advising on how to safely dispose of dead chickens and how to transport unaffected chickens. The poultry industry is experiencing a devastating impact due to this mysterious virus.



Movement of leopards sparks panic

PNS ■ VIKARABAD

Vikarabad District Forest Officer (DFO) Gyaneshwar on Wednesday cautioned local people in villages near Ananthagiri, to remain vigilant and avoid entering the forest area as leopards were roaming.

Authorities also posted warning banners along the road leading to Ananthagiri. Gyaneshwar explained that the leopards do not remain in one spot and continuously move through the forest. He urged the people to report to the Forest officials if anyone spotted one of the leopards.



4-Day Mini-Medaram Jatara begins

PNS ■ MULUGU

The much-awaited four-day mini-Medaram festival began with grand celebrations on Wednesday. Approximately 10 lakh people are expected to participate in this event.

On Thursday, the Mandamelige puja is set to take place.

According to the chief priest, Penuka Rajeshwar, the deity of Pagididdaraju, in the form of turmeric and kumkum, was carried on foot to Medaram on Wednesday evening. The rituals for cleaning the temples dedicated to the forest deities at Medaram and Kannepalli were completed on Wednesday, with various offerings made to the deities. After 8 am, the priests of Sammakka-Saralamma reached the elevated platform, locked the premises, turned off electric lamps, and conducted secret pujas under the moonlight, continuing with the Jagaram throughout the night.

While the grand Sammakka-Saralamma festival is celebrated every two

years, the mini-Medaram festival is held in the year following it. The state government has allocated Rs 5.3 crore for this event, with an additional Rs 60 lakh from the Endowments Department.

On Friday, devotees will fulfill their vows to the forest deities, and the chinajata ritual is scheduled for Saturday. Authorities have made extensive arrangements for the influx of tourists and pilgrims expected at Medaram. In addition to those from Telangana, devotees from Maharashtra, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh are also anticipated to attend. The TSRTC has deployed over 200 special buses for the event, and security has been strengthened with the deployment of 1,000 police personnel.

At Jampanna Vagu, special provisions have been made for bathing, with 320 showers and more than 10 changing rooms for women.

Additional security measures have been put in place to regulate traffic and maintain law and order.

Brahmanavellam irrigation project to be completed soon

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Roads and Buildings Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy has announced that the Brahmanavellam project will soon be provided with irrigation facilities. Nearly 40,000 acres would get water for irrigation in the next week to 10 days. He further stated that by May, the irrigation coverage would be extended to one lakh acres, significantly benefiting the farming community in the region.

On Wednesday, the Minister participated in a programme at Sri Vaarjiala Vengopala Swamy and addressed the media afterwards, expressing his hopes for the blessings of Vengopala Swamy for the prosperity of Telangana.

The Minister who attended the Brahmotsav



Roads and Buildings Minister Komatireddy participating in a programme at Vengopala Swamy temple in Nalgonda on Wednesday

celebrations at Gopalayipalli in Nalgonda district, highlighted the state's focus on ensuring abundant water supply for agriculture. "We are committed to improving irrigation

facilities for farmers in the region," he said. "Development work is underway near the temple, and we are calling tenders for improvements," he added. With the Brahmanavellam project under construction, the Minister is confident it will bring significant relief to the region's agricultural sector.

The Minister also mentioned the SLBC tunnel project, which will be completed soon and help supply water to Nalgonda. The Minister expressed his commitment to transforming Nalgonda into a prosperous region, with irrigation for every acre and drinking water for every household.

He concluded by expressing confidence in the Congress government's ability to fulfil the aspirations of the people through welfare-focused governance.

Dwadasa puja held on grand note

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

The Dwadasa Jyotirlinga Maha Padi Puja was conducted with great devotion and splendor at Venugopal's residence in Konduru under the auspices of Guruswami Sri Sri Kammari Bhupalachari Isari Satyam. The event, which attracted a large number of devotees, was a spiritual spectacle filled with divine energy.

Addressing the gathering, Guruswami Sri Sri Kammari Bhupalachari emphasised that Shiva philosophy is a powerful path to salvation, but its true essence can only be realised through continuous practice. He further explained that the Supreme Lord is hidden within the Shiva Panchakshari Mantra and that



ancient yogis and sages attained Shiva's blessings through intense penance and devotion. Several devotees, including Kondi Yadaiah, Anji, Narasimhu, Lingam Harish, Buggaiah, Venkat Ram Reddy, Yadagiri Anjaneyulu, Shiva Swamis, Guruswamis, and villagers, participated in the program, making it a deeply spiritual and inspiring event.

Cockfight racket busted, 64 arrested

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

A farmhouse was raided here and 64 people allegedly involved in an organised cockfight were apprehended, police said on Wednesday.

Based on a tip-off police teams raided the farmhouse in Tholkatta on Tuesday night and found that a large-scale cockfight was taking place.

A total of 64 people involved in the organised cockfight were apprehended, and police seized 46 cockfight knives, betting cards and cards, 55 cars, 64 smartphones, 84 cocks, and Rs 30.59 lakh in cash, a senior police official said.

A case has been registered under the Gaming Act and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act at Moinalab Police Station. The late-night operation, con-



ducted by the Special Operations Team (SOT) in coordination with Rajendranagar and Moinalab police, led to the busting of the racket.

Officials seized over Rs 30 lakh in cash, 55 luxury cars, 86 betting roosters, and 46 cockfight knives. Additionally, poker chips and other gambling paraphernalia were confiscated from the premises, which had been converted into a high-stakes gambling hub.

Minister Tummala inaugurates biomass plant

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao inaugurated a biomass plant constructed by Agni Esco Private Limited in the Thallada mandal in the district. Gudivada MLA from Andhra Pradesh Venigandla Ramu was also present.

On this occasion, the plant's Managing Director, Venigandla Kishore, explained that the primary reason for selecting Thallada mandal for the plant's establishment was due to the increasing air pollution caused by burning the leftover crops like corn, chili, sugarcane, and paddy, as well as

the depletion of soil fertility. He further added that in order to reduce farmers' losses, the plant would collect the agricultural residues, process them into pellets, and sell them to industries.

He said that this initiative would help farmers avoid soil degradation, prevent financial losses, and contribute to environmental conservation. The plant has been set up to process agricultural waste while raising awareness among farmers. The event was attended by State Congress leader Matta Dayanand, Kalluru APMC Chairman Neeraja Prabhakar, Thallada mandal Congress unit president Kapa Sudhakar and others.



Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao inaugurating a biomass plant in Thallada mandal on Wednesday

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL DEPUTY COLLECTOR, LA, HAML, HYDERABAD

FORM-F Notification by the Collector (LA), HAML (See rule 7 (c))

File No.: C6/07/2025-RHS- Dated: 12-02-2025.

Whereas the following Notifications were issued and published in the Gazettes for acquisition of the land under Extension of Metro Rail Project, Hyderabad Airport Metro Limited, Phase-II, from MGBS to Chandrayangutta, Corridor-VI, situated at Share-E- Hyderabad Village, Bahadurpura Mandal of Hyderabad District for the Public purpose.

In response to the said Notifications the following affected persons (Property owners and others) have come forward to settle their claims through Negotiations. The details of the willing affected persons/Land Owners are as follows.

S.No	NOTIFICATION NO. & DATE	GAZETTE NO. & DATE		
1.	No. C5/189/2024-RHS (201 to 225)	HAML No.29 dated 28-11-2024		
S.No	Name and address	Sketch No.	Premises No.	Extent in Sq. yds
1/2	Sri Mubarak Bin Azzan S/o Azzan bin Bader R/o. 23-6-288, Sultan shahi Charminar, Hyderabad.	RHS-202	23-2-525	5.71
2/3	Sri Mubarak Bin Azzan S/o Azzan bin Bader R/o. 23-6-288, Sultan shahi Charminar, Hyderabad.	RHS-205	23-2-525	9.89

S.No NOTIFICATION NO. & DATE GAZETTE NO. & DATE

1. No. C5/189/2024-RHS (226 to 250) HAML No.30 dated 29-11-2024

S.No	Name and address	Sketch No.	Premises No.	Extent in Sq. yds
1/22	Sri M. Suresh S/o Late M. Ramchander Reddy R/o 13-6-462/1/24/1 Taligadda, Karwan Hyderabad-500067.	RHS-247	23-2-586 & 23-2-588	55.00

It is hereby notified calling for claims and objections if any, to be filed before the District Collector, Hyderabad District / Special Deputy Collector, LA, HAML, Rasoolpura, Hyderabad within the Seven days of publication of this Notification i.e., by 19-02-2025.

Sd/-
Special Deputy Collector, LA, HAML,
Rasoolpura, Hyderabad.

Date: 12-02-2025

DPR R.O.No: 675/LAPPIAD/TAGENCY/2024-25

NORTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF TELANGANA LIMITED

CIN No. U40109TG2000SGC034119

SHORT TENDER NOTICE No. 11/ 2024-25 OF SE/OP/JANGAON. WITH SPECIFICATION Nos. 01 / 2024-25.

The sealed tenders are invited by the undersigned from the registered and valid contractors of TGNPDCL for various works in Operation circle Jangaon as per terms and conditions prescribed in detailed tender schedule. The details such as cost of tender schedule, date of sale of tender schedule, eligibility criteria etc., can be had from TGNPDCL website www.tgnpdcl.com.

SHORT TENDER NOTICE No. 12/ 2024-25 OF SE/OP/JANGAON. WITH SPECIFICATION Nos. 01 / 2024-25.

The sealed tenders are invited by the undersigned from the registered and valid contractors of TGNPDCL for various works in Operation circle Jangaon as per terms and conditions prescribed in detailed tender schedule. The details such as cost of tender schedule, date of sale of tender schedule, eligibility criteria etc., can be had from TGNPDCL website www.tgnpdcl.com.

Tender Notice No.03/24-25 of DE/OP/PALVONCHA. With Specification No. 05/2024-25

Sealed tenders are invited from TGNPDCL registered Contractors of Bhadradi Kothagudem circle for fixing of agency for various works in Dammapeta section of Aswarapeta Sub-Division, Palvoncha Division. The details of the tender can be obtained from our website www.tgnpdcl.com

Sd/- Divisional Engineer
Operation, Palvoncha

R.O. No: 16/176-PPCLADNT/12024-25, Dt. 12-02-2025

ACROSS THE STATES



Odisha hikes pay of junior teachers by Rs 5,000

The Odisha government on Wednesday increased the monthly remuneration of junior teachers working in the state's elementary schools under the 'Samagra Sikshya' programme. According to a resolution issued by the school and mass education department, the monthly remuneration of junior teachers (under various schemes) has been increased from Rs 11,000 to Rs 16,000 per month. The revised rate of remuneration will be effective from the date of issue of the resolution," the department said. On January 17, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi approved a proposal in this regard. Besides the monthly remuneration hike, their EPF (Employees' Provident Fund) contribution will be increased from Rs 1,443 to Rs 1,950 per month. At present, around 13,740 junior teachers (under the Samagra Sikshya scheme) are employed in the state. The state government will bear an additional annual expenditure of Rs 89.15 crore for the enhanced remuneration of the junior teachers.



Film festival begins in Imphal

The second North East India Film Festival (NEIFF) 2025 Manipur was inaugurated here on Wednesday. Speaking on the occasion, chief guest and chairman of Loktak Development Authority (LDA) M. Asnikumar Singh said films have always been a mirror to reflect the actual image of society and that the industry can generate a number of employments besides promoting cultural heritage. "Manipuri film industry is deeply rooted in our heritage and ethos, as it not only entertains but also highlights the challenges," he added. "Films could be a medium to express the rich culture and folklores of the state. Manipur, with its rich and storied cinematic tradition, has long been a torchbearer of cultural expression in the Northeast and beyond," Singh added. The festival will be continue till February 16.



Arunachal Guv advocates cultural ties with UP

Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen (Retd) K T Parnaik on Wednesday highlighted the importance of fostering structured and sustainable cultural exchanges between the state and Uttar Pradesh, according to a statement issued by the Raj Bhavan here. He emphasised the need for collaboration in areas such as language learning, heritage preservation, traditions, music, tourism, sports and the sharing of best practices. Parnaik, who met Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel at Raj Bhavan in Lucknow, reiterated that such partnerships help strengthen national unity and promote a deeper understanding of India's cultural diversity. He suggested exploring joint ventures in key sectors like religious tourism, horticulture, organic farming, and skill development, which could lead to growth and knowledge-sharing between the two states. The statement said that both governors also discussed potential areas of collaboration to benefit their respective states, emphasizing the spirit of 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat,' an initiative to promote unity in diversity.

PM Modi, French Prez Macron hold talks, agree to deepen ties

PNS ■ PARIS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron on Wednesday called for enhancing trade and investment ties between the two countries and committed to further deepening their engagement in the Indo-Pacific and various global forums and initiatives.

After their wide-ranging talks, the two leaders also underlined their commitment to concrete actions to ensure that the global AI sector can drive beneficial social, economic, and environmental outcomes in the public interest.

A joint statement issued after the meeting here said the talks covered a full spectrum of bilateral relations, as well as key global and regional issues.

The two leaders stressed an urgent need for reform in the United Nations Security Council and agreed to coordinate closely on various global issues, including the UNSC matters.

French President Macron reiterated France's firm support for India's permanent membership of the UNSC.

The two leaders reaffirmed



The two leaders reviewed cooperation in the strategic areas of defence, civil Nuclear Energy and Space. They also discussed ways to strengthen collaboration in the fields of Technology and Innovation.

their strong commitment to India-France Strategic Partnership while noting that it has steadily evolved into a multifaceted relationship over the past 25 years.

Prime Minister Modi flew together from Paris to Marseille in the French Presidential Aircraft last evening and held discussions here on the full spectrum of bilateral relations and key global and regional issues.

This was followed by delegation-level talks after arrival in Marseille.

MODI DEPARTS FOR US AFTER WRAPPING UP FRANCE VISIT

PARIS: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday departed for the US to meet President Donald Trump after wrapping his two-day visit to France where he co-chaired the Artificial Intelligence Action Summit alongside French President Emmanuel Macron with whom he also held bilateral discussions. In the US, PM Modi will hold a bilateral meeting with President Trump in both restricted and delegation-level formats. Modi will be the fourth foreign leader to visit Trump in the weeks after the American leader's inauguration as the 47th President of the US in January. In France, during the bilateral talks, Modi and Macron on Wednesday called for enhancing trade and investment ties between the two countries and committed to further deepening their engagement in the Indo-Pacific and various global forums and initiatives. Modi and Macron jointly inaugurated India's new consulate in France's Marseille.

BJP's internal tussle delaying appointment of Delhi CM: AAP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Wednesday alleged that the ongoing internal tussle within the BJP was delaying the appointment of a chief minister for Delhi and affecting the governance of the national capital. There was no immediate reaction available from the BJP which has defeated AAP in the recently-held Delhi Assembly elections.

AAP's chief spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar alleged that long power cuts were being reported in several parts of the city due to the BJP's inaction, an official statement from AAP stated.

Centre endangering national security to benefit billionaires

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress hit out at the Centre on Wednesday, alleging that it has endangered national security to benefit private billionaires, over reports that border security rules were relaxed for a business group to set up an energy park.

Reacting to media reports that the government relaxed national security protocols along the Pakistan border in to make way for a renewable energy park of the Adani Group in Gujarat, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the pseudo-nationalism face of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has once again been unmasked.

The Adani Group did not respond to the allegations.

Cong over reports on Adani energy park



"Is it not true that your government has relaxed such rules, not just at the India-Pakistan border, but also on the land adjoining Bangladesh, China, Myanmar and Nepal, thereby jeopardising our strategic and border security?"

"Narendra Modiji, you have endangered national security at our borders in order to benefit private billionaires," Kharge alleged in a post on X.

"Is it true that you have gifted precious strategic land, just 1 km

near the International Border with Pakistan, to your 'dear friend' by relaxing border security rules?" he asked the prime minister.

"Is it not true that your government has relaxed such rules, not just at the India-Pakistan border,



India's missiles safeguard borders, draw global attention: Rajnath

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday said India is going through a revolutionary phase of transformation, and the country's fighter jets, missile systems, naval vessels are not only protecting our borders but are also becoming the centre of attraction for the entire world.

He said this at the indigenisation event and the valedictory ceremony of Aero India 2025 here. "Aero India has reached heights that are not only unparalleled but historic," the Defence Minister said.

"I was personally present for the past three days in this event and if I have to express my experience in three words,

it is energy, energy and energy," he said.

"Whatever we could see in Yelahanka is a manifestation of energy and the energy and enthusiasm could be seen not only among the participants from India but from across the world. The enthusiasm seen among our entrepreneurs, our startups and innovators is commendable."

Noting that the country is going through a revolutionary phase of transformation, the Defence Minister said, "We all know that India has historically been dependent on imports for its defence needs. If I look back about a decade ago, 65 to 70 per cent of defence equipment was being imported into our country."

EXTREME BRUTALITY

5 senior students held for ragging juniors in Kerala

PNS ■ KOTTAYAM (KERALA)

Five third-year students have been arrested for allegedly ragging first-year students at the Government Nursing College here, police said on Wednesday.

A case was registered after three first-year students lodged a complaint, alleging that the ragging had been ongoing for nearly three months at the nursing institute, which functions under the Government Medical College.

The accused students have been suspended, college authorities said. The action was taken following an inquiry conducted under the anti-ragging law, they added.

The arrested students have been identified as Samuel Johnson (20), Rahul Raj (22), Jeev (18), Rijil Jith (20), and Vivek (21).

According to the complaint, the ragging began in November last year.

The students reported that the incidents involved extreme brutality. They alleged that they were forced to stand naked and subjected to severe physical abuse using dumbbells, including tying them to their private parts.

Further allegations include injuries inflicted using compasses and similar objects, followed by the application of lotion on the wounds.

Poll data system robust, nothing can go wrong:CEC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar on Wednesday asserted that the system of poll data is robust with in-built "red flags" which ensure that "nothing can go wrong".

His remarks came amid allegations of data fudging in the Lok Sabha and assembly elections. Addressing an even here to launch the Lok Sabha 2024 Atlas, Kumar said lakhs of officials including both level officers feed data. "...as a design nothing can go wrong... the system throws up red flags," he said.

Kumar asserted that this makes EC "extremely confident" that nothing can go wrong. He said if someone makes an error, the system won't accept it. Besides allegations on voters' list, there have been allegations regarding spike in the voter turnout around the time when voting concludes.

Atlas-2024 provides detailed information on various aspects of elections and election results. EC said the document is in line with its commitment to maximum transparency, accessibility, and greater disclosure of election-related data.

'NDA will return to power in Bihar'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union minister Giriraj Singh on Wednesday expressed confidence that the NDA would return to power in Bihar, where assembly elections are due later this year.

Singh represents the Begusarai Lok Sabha seat in Bihar. The BJP, JD(U), Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas), Hindustan Awam Morcha and the Rashtriya Lok Morcha are constituents of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Bihar.

"Bihar mein NDA ki sarkar hai aur NDA ki sarkar hi banegi (There is an NDA gov-



ernment in Bihar and it will retain power)," Singh, the Union textiles minister, said. Singh was speaking to reporters after inaugurating garment technology, dyes and chemicals, and handicraft

Nursery schools to be in buildings constructed as per local bye-laws: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday clarified that nursery and elementary schools in the country should run from buildings that were built as per local construction bye-laws.

A bench of Justices B R Gavai and Augustine George Masih passed the order on a plea of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) seeking a clarification on certain directions issued by the apex court in its April 13,

2009 verdict. "The nursery and elementary schools should be housed in the buildings which are constructed in accordance with the local building bye-laws as are applicable in the concerned area," it said.

One of the directions on which the CBSE sought the clarification read, "The nursery and ele-

mentary schools should be housed in single-storied buildings and the maximum number of floors in school buildings shall be restricted to three including the ground floor."

A clarification was also sought on another direction issued by the top court in 2009 which said the staircases, which act as exits

or escape routes, should adhere to the provisions specified in the National Building Code of India, 2005 to ensure quick evacuation of children.

Solicitor general Tushar Mehta, appearing for the CBSE, said the apex court's directions were passed in 2009 keeping in mind fire hazards.

"There are several states where their building bye-laws permit four storied, five storied (buildings) with fire safety mechanism," he said.

Rebuilt RSS office has three 13-storey towers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh has moved back its office in the city to its old address following the near completion of the rebuilding project spread across over 3.75 acre premises, housing three 13-storey towers and around 300 rooms and offices in total.

Sources said the rebuilding exercise of the RSS office, Keshav Kunj, has cost nearly Rs 150 crore collected through contributions from over 75,000 people sympathetic to the Hindutva organisation's ideology and took over eight years, a period marked by the disruption and delay forced by the COVID-19 outbreak.

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat and general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale will be attending a "karyakarta sammelan" of the organisation's Delhi unit on February 19 to mark the beginning of its work from the Jhandewalan office, they added.

The sources said that the RSS, which is headquar-

Fused modern tech with ancient architecture



tered in Nagpur, will organise its annual 'Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha', considered its apex decision-making body, in Bengaluru from March 21 to March 23.

Attended by nearly 1,500 persons, including senior functionaries of the RSS and affiliated organisations, the meet sees discussions over key germane issues besides organisational matters and resolutions are passed to outline the Sangh's positions on a host of matters. Senior BJP leaders, including the party's president, also attend the exercise.

Delhi private schools double down on AI misuse

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Is AI a boon or a bane? As the debate intensifies, several private schools in Delhi are doubling down on the misuse of AI and deploying software to detect if students are taking the help of tools to do assignments.

The fear is that excessive use of AI will stunt creativity and initiative, according to several educators. Sudha Acharya, the principal of ITL International School in Dwarka, says, "We use various software to detect if students have used AI to finish their assignments." She fears that excessive use of AI tools

will stunt students' creativity. "If any student is found using AI to complete internal assessments, they receive zero marks."

AI can either be a boon or a bane, depending on how it is used, according to the educators PTI spoke to. It can be highly beneficial if students use it to develop new skills but over-reliance can become a disadvantage, they say. Mallika Preman, the principal of Tagore International School in Greater Kailash, believes that with technological advancements, students must adapt to modern learning methods. However, she discourages complete reliance on

tools such as AI, instead guiding her students on how to leverage them to improve creativity.

Preman says AI can be integrated into learning without

"Teachers have been instructed to identify AI-generated work and, if necessary, ask students to redo their work in school." "We do not recommend the use of AI tools for students. However, if future curricula changes necessitate their inclusion, we may reconsider our stance."

hampering students' originality. "As technology advances, students must adapt to modern learning methods. We don't encourage complete reliance

on AI but guide students on how to use these tools to improve their understanding of different formats and skills," she says. The Sovereign School in

Delhi Private Teachers' Association chairperson MS Rawat laid stress on the importance of AI literacy for both students and educators.

"As the current generation moves towards new technologies, they must understand both the uses and consequences of AI," according to Rawat.

been instructed to identify AI-generated work and, if necessary, ask students to redo their work in school." "We do not recommend the use of AI tools for students. However, if future curricula changes necessitate their inclusion, we may reconsider our stance," he adds.

Delhi Private Teachers' Association chairperson MS Rawat laid stress on the importance of AI literacy for both students and educators.

"Even teachers use AI tools to brainstorm creative ideas for cultural festivals, games and other school programmes," he adds. Last year, the Union Cabinet approved the IndiaAI Mission, with an outlay of Rs 10,372 crore for five years. The approved corpus will be used to create a large computing infrastructure.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday took part in the AI Action Summit in Paris, describing it as a commendable effort to bring together world leaders, policy makers, thinkers, innovators and youngsters to have meaningful conversations around AI.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Yunus Govt in the crosshair

Bangladesh army shifts away from the Yunus Government as it calls for stronger ties with India amid chaos and downward slide

Bangladesh is currently facing a period of political uncertainty and unrest as the government led by Muhammad Yunus finds itself increasingly at odds with the country's powerful military establishment. The recent statements made by General Waker-uz-Zaman, the Chief of Army Staff, at the Dhaka International Marathon 2025, indicate a significant shift in the military's stance towards the civilian government. His emphasis on peace, stability and international cooperation—particularly with India—suggests growing dissatisfaction within the army ranks regarding the Yunus administration's policies and governance approach. The military in Bangladesh has historically played a crucial role in maintaining internal stability, often stepping in when political crises spiral out of control. With political tensions escalating under the Yunus government, the army appears to be distancing itself from the administration, signalling a potential realignment in the country's power dynamics. Several factors seem to be driving the military's dissatisfaction with the Yunus government. This indicates the military's concerns over the deteriorating economic conditions and increasing social divisions under Yunus's leadership. Persistent political unrest could be damaging to foreign investments and economic growth, both of which are essential for national development.



The military appears to be worried about governance inefficiencies and security concerns, especially as political violence and mass protests become more frequent. The Yunus government's inability to control these disruptions may be viewed as a failure to ensure stability, a key concern for the army. Bangladesh's military leadership values strong bilateral relations with key regional powers. General Waker's remarks about India underscore the army's desire for a pragmatic foreign policy approach that prioritises stability and mutual benefits rather than ideological stances or populist rhetoric. General Waker-uz-Zaman's statement emphasising India as an important neighbour and a key partner in regional security and economic cooperation suggests a strategic recalibration in Bangladesh's foreign policy. His remarks that Bangladesh "depends on India in many matters" and that both countries should respect each other's strategic interests signal a clear endorsement of closer ties with New Delhi. India and Bangladesh share deep economic linkages, including trade, energy cooperation and infrastructure projects. A stable relationship with India ensures continued economic growth and regional connectivity. Cooperation in counterterrorism efforts and border management is crucial for maintaining peace and stability. Bangladesh's military leadership might be viewing stronger ties with India as a means to maintain a balanced foreign policy, ensuring that Dhaka does not become overly reliant on any single regional power. The balance of power between the civilian leadership and the military will be crucial in determining the country's direction in the coming months.

leadership values strong bilateral relations with key regional powers. General Waker's remarks about India underscore the army's desire for a pragmatic foreign policy approach that prioritises stability and mutual benefits rather than ideological stances or populist rhetoric. General Waker-uz-Zaman's statement emphasising India as an important neighbour and a key partner in regional security and economic cooperation suggests a strategic recalibration in Bangladesh's foreign policy. His remarks that Bangladesh "depends on India in many matters" and that both countries should respect each other's strategic interests signal a clear endorsement of closer ties with New Delhi. India and Bangladesh share deep economic linkages, including trade, energy cooperation and infrastructure projects. A stable relationship with India ensures continued economic growth and regional connectivity. Cooperation in counterterrorism efforts and border management is crucial for maintaining peace and stability. Bangladesh's military leadership might be viewing stronger ties with India as a means to maintain a balanced foreign policy, ensuring that Dhaka does not become overly reliant on any single regional power. The balance of power between the civilian leadership and the military will be crucial in determining the country's direction in the coming months.

PICTALK



Devotees perform rituals during the Thaipusam festival at Vadapalani Murugan temple, in Chennai

PTI

Breaking barriers: Building a future for women in science

Trailblazing women scientists continue to defy the odds, proving that inclusion is not just a matter of fairness but a necessity for scientific and societal progress

In the 21st century, where scientific breakthroughs continue to shape our world, the persistent under-representation of women in science remains a glaring issue. Women have been at the forefront of some of the greatest scientific achievements across the globe in diverse fields from basic science to space science. Despite these inspiring role models, systemic barriers continue to stifle women's participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). It's time we confront these challenges and build a future where women can truly thrive in science. What kind of scientific world are we building if we exclude half of our population? Without the full participation of women, we lose access to a vast pool of talent, creativity, and innovative solutions that could address some of our biggest challenges. Many girls are discouraged from pursuing science from a young age due to stereotypes that frame these fields as "unsuitable" or "too difficult." The so-called "leaky pipeline" begins to take its toll as early



as high school, with fewer girls opting for science-related studies and careers. Even for those who break through these initial hurdles, the challenges persist in higher education and professional life. Women in research face a lack of mentorship, unequal access to funding and systemic biases in hiring and promotions. The numbers speak for themselves: UNESCO reports that only 35 per cent of STEM students globally are women, and their representation in leadership roles remains even lower. In India, the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) confirms that while the number of women pursuing science has grown, their presence in top research positions and leadership roles is still dismal. Despite these odds, many Indian women scientists have

defied the status quo and achieved remarkable success. Dr Indira Hinduja revolutionised reproductive medicine by developing India's first test-tube baby in 1986 and pioneering the gamete intrafallopian transfer (GIFT) technique. Dr Soumya Swaminathan's leadership as Chief Scientist at the World Health Organization (WHO) played a crucial role in global health policy. Kalpana Kalahasti, a senior scientist at ISRO, was instrumental in India's triumphant Chandrayaan-3 mission and earned a spot in Nature's list of notable figures in 2023. These trailblazers not only pushed the boundaries of scientific knowledge but also broke societal barriers, paving the way for future generations of women in science. Does this make any difference to the society? Society benefits from more inclusive and comprehensive solutions when women are at the forefront of scientific innovation. Areas like maternal health, gender-specific medicine and community health interventions often flourish because of women scientists who understand these challenges first-

hand. Inclusion isn't just about fairness—it's about enriching science itself. So, how do we move forward? Building a future for women in science requires collective effort on multiple fronts. We must dismantle the structural barriers hindering women's advancement, provide mentorship programmes and promote policies that ensure equal hiring, funding, and career progression opportunities. Educational institutions should actively encourage girls to pursue STEM fields, while workplaces must offer flexible work environments that allow women to balance personal and professional responsibilities. It is time to tear down these barriers and build a future where every young girl who dreams of becoming a scientist can do so without limitations. When women are given equal opportunities to contribute to science, we all stand to gain—from groundbreaking discoveries to a more inclusive and prosperous world. (The writer is the Dean-Academic Affairs, Garden City University, Bangalore, views are personal)



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

hand. Inclusion isn't just about fairness—it's about enriching science itself. So, how do we move forward? Building a future for women in science requires collective effort on multiple fronts. We must dismantle the structural barriers hindering women's advancement, provide mentorship programmes and promote policies that ensure equal hiring, funding, and career progression opportunities. Educational institutions should actively encourage girls to pursue STEM fields, while workplaces must offer flexible work environments that allow women to balance personal and professional responsibilities. It is time to tear down these barriers and build a future where every young girl who dreams of becoming a scientist can do so without limitations. When women are given equal opportunities to contribute to science, we all stand to gain—from groundbreaking discoveries to a more inclusive and prosperous world. (The writer is the Dean-Academic Affairs, Garden City University, Bangalore, views are personal)

Mann ki baat: Leading the global revival of radio



SANTHOSH MATHEW

As we celebrate World Radio Day, Mann Ki Baat reminds us that the essence of communication remains the same—connecting, inspiring and bringing people together

Radio is not just a medium; it is a lifeline that transcends borders, connects people and amplifies voices. On World Radio Day, as the world celebrates the power of this enduring platform, India stands at the forefront of a remarkable communication revolution. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's monthly broadcast, Mann Ki Baat, which recently aired its 118th episode, exemplifies how radio is experiencing a renaissance in the digital age, proving to be one of the most effective tools of governance, inspiration, and soft power diplomacy. When UNESCO designated February 13 as World Radio Day in 2011, the objective was clear: to recognise the influence of radio in fostering dialogue, spreading awareness, and bridging communities worldwide.

In India, Mann Ki Baat is a testimony to the enduring power of radio. Launched in 2014, this monthly programme has transformed into one of the largest and most effective communication experiments in the world, reaching millions of listeners not just in India but globally. With an unparalleled ability to engage audiences through storytelling, Modi's initiative underscores the relevance of radio in an era dominated by digital noise. At a time when many predicted the decline of traditional radio, Mann Ki Baat has revived and redefined its significance. The programme's strength lies in its simplicity and relatability. Every episode delivers not just policy discussions but also inspirational stories of common citizens, grassroots innovations, cultural heritage and national achievements. The 118th episode was no different, weaving narratives that resonated with the spirit of nation-building, environmental consciousness, and collective responsibility. Beyond its national appeal, Mann Ki Baat has become an instrument of India's soft power diplomacy. The global Indian diaspora tunes in eagerly, fostering a sense of connection with the homeland. The broadcast's reach extends beyond national boundaries, often being



translated into multiple languages, including regional South Asian tongues, strengthening India's diplomatic and cultural ties with neighbouring nations. As India emerges as a global leader, leveraging radio as a tool for soft power projection enhances its image as a nation that values dialogue, shared heritage and cooperation. South Asia, a region bound by deep historical, cultural, and linguistic ties, finds an unexpected bridge in Mann Ki Baat. The programme's themes—self-reliance, community-driven initiatives, environmental sustainability and youth empowerment—are not just relevant to India but also resonate with India's neighbours. In an era where integration efforts in South Asia often face political roadblocks, the revival of radio as a medium of cultural and ideological exchange holds immense potential. India's radio diplomacy, through Mann Ki Baat, can become a catalyst for fostering deeper South Asian engagement, promoting shared developmental narratives, and creating common aspirations among regional populations. The 118th episode once again demonstrated how radio can be used as a participatory medium. Modi's interactions with citizens, his references to



AS INDIA EMERGES AS A GLOBAL LEADER, LEVERAGING RADIO AS A TOOL FOR SOFT POWER PROJECTION ENHANCES ITS IMAGE AS A NATION THAT VALUES DIALOGUE, SHARED HERITAGE AND COOPERATION

letters and messages from listeners, and his emphasis on people-centric governance make Mann Ki Baat an inclusive space for dialogue. Unlike social media platforms that are often fragmented and dominated by echo chambers, radio, through this programme, emerges as a unifying force that connects the masses uninterruptedly and intimately. From the fishermen in Tamil Nadu to the farmers in Punjab, from students in Meghalaya to entrepreneurs in Gujarat, Mann Ki Baat speaks to every Indian, transcending linguistic, geographic, and socio-economic barriers. It harnesses the power of storytelling to amplify the voices of unsung heroes, small businesses, and cultural custodians. Radio has always been a tool of influence, but Mann Ki Baat takes it a step further by combining traditional broadcasting with modern digital integration. The program is simultaneously aired on multiple platforms, including community radio stations, AIR (All India Radio), podcasts, and social media channels. This hybrid model ensures that the message reaches every demographic, from the rural farmer with a transistor radio to the urban professional tuning in via a smartphone app. On World Radio Day, as glob-

al discussions revolve around the revival and impact of radio, Mann Ki Baat stands as a shining example of how the medium can be harnessed for nation-building and diplomacy. Countries across the world can draw lessons from India's use of radio as a tool for constructive engagement, leadership communication, and global outreach. In an era where polarization is rampant, radio's ability to create a sense of collective consciousness is more valuable than ever. India, with its vast diversity, has found in Mann Ki Baat a unifying voice that reflects the aspirations of its people. The power of voice, the magic of words, and the intimacy of audio storytelling are elements that make this programme not just a political initiative but a cultural phenomenon. As the world looks for ways to reinvigorate traditional communication platforms, India's example showcases that radio is not just surviving but thriving in the digital age. Mann Ki Baat is leading this revival, proving that in the cacophony of digital noise, the human voice still holds the power to unite and inspire. (The writer is an Associate Professor Centre For South Asian Studies, Pondicherry Central University. Views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

AI FOR PUBLIC GOOD

Madam — Artificial intelligence has become a truly global technology. The adoption of AI in healthcare, education, finance, labour and transportation is impacting society on a global scale while fundamental breakthroughs are being facilitated by research collaborations around the world. Its rapid deployment also creates major challenges in terms of the reliability of information, the protection of basic rights and accessibility. It is the international community's responsibility to maintain balance in our societies and to craft AI that respects universal values. The Paris AI Summit has been focused on several key themes related to opportunities, benefits and governance of AI. Also, these themes include AI for public good, for global AI governance, for innovation and culture and for environmentally sustainable AI solutions. The aim of the summit is to strike a balance between technological advancement and the preservation of universal values. The Paris AI Summit is of significant importance for the future of AI due to its focus on global governance, accessibility and ethical development of AI. The AI Action Committee at Paris, co-chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, shed light on India and France's joint work in the five dedicated working groups to tackle key issues for tomorrow: Public interest AI, future of work, innovation and culture Trust in AI and global AI governance. The role of India in the Paris AI Summit is laudable. A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

US TARIFFS ON ALUMINIUM, STEEL

Madam — US President Donald Trump has virtually dropped another bomb on the global economy with the announcement of levying a 25 percent duty on steel and aluminium imports and reciprocal duty on all other imports from all countries. India is one of the largest exporters of steel to the US. While the world was aware of Trump's unconventional policies, his blanket threat to impose reciprocal tariffs without any exceptions—almost upends the World Trade

Gandhi's insight on education



Propos the article "Rekindling Gandhian values in education." Mahatma Gandhi wrote a few articles in a simple manner on the value of education that should serve as a big motivation for the students of our country. If the students read those write-ups and apply them in the modern perspective, they will surely give a new dimension to our education system. Gandhi played a significant role in value

education by emphasising the importance of moral and ethical principles. He encouraged educators to teach values like truth, non-violence and respect for others. He felt that instilling these values in students would help them become responsible and compassionate individuals.

Gandhi described himself as a curious and eager learner during his student days. He valued education and believed that it was essential for personal growth. We have to apply Mahatma Gandhi's ideas on value education as a demand of time. Gandhi's unique and refined views about value education are not only important but are worth applying not only in India but also in the rest of the world. Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Organisation's (WTO) mandate to promote free trade by eliminating tariffs, quotas and other restrictions.

The free trade regime in the last 20 years kept inflation in manufactured products under control globally. However, Trump's populist agenda to find jobs for his support base consisting of semi-literate people in the US could damage the US-led alliance based on the Bretton Woods system. While the immediate threat from Trump's tariff on steel and aluminium could be negligible, the Indian economy could face the heat from fleeing foreign investors which could affect stock valuations and rupee weakness which could result in imported inflation. N Sathasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

AFFORESTATION NEEDED TO SAVE FORESTS

Madam — It is indeed a matter of concern that a government agency like NHAI is overenthusiastic in felling a huge number of trees but not interested in attending to the compensatory afforestation. The government brought amendments in the Forest Act last year, which is sure to reduce

the forest cover in the country. Already the country's forest cover has come down from the recommended level of 1/3 to 1/5 of the land area.

Now we can expect further deterioration in the status, as using forest land is permitted for shikar and industrial activities. The centuries-old valuable thick forests in the Northeast are threatened with their very existence in the coming years. Mines are given to private players to hasten the process of exploiting the fossil fuels. This is an act that goes against the concern of everyone over the fast-changing climate. Every mine project begins with the destruction of forests in the vast sheet of hill areas, which will take many decades to reconstruct by afforestation efforts. It is high time the moments to save forests take the form of a people's movement to sensitise all the concerned and save the globe to make it fit enough to live. The apex court's concern conveyed to NHAI is welcome. Dattaprasad Shirodkar | Mumbai

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FIRST COLUMN

ONE FAITH ONE WORLD

It's easy to point fingers when things go wrong, but true growth begins with self-reflection



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR **NIKUNJJI**

All of us have heard the famous phrase "United We Stand, Divided We Fall" during our school days through the simple story of an old farmer who, on his deathbed, taught the importance of unity to his disunited sons through a bundle of sticks. That story still holds an important place in our society and has even gained popularity because discord, disunity, strife and warfare have assumed unprecedented proportions in the modern world. Today, one of the most arduous challenges that face humanity is to establish harmony among people of different religions.

There is no doubt that political and religious leaders have time and again endeavoured to bring people onto a common platform and find ways and means to forge better understanding and acceptance of each faith. But despite their hard efforts, not much has changed. Hence, the greatest question of all at present is whether can the diverse religions and faiths ever be united. If so, then how? If we walk down history lane, we would find that one of the important reasons why the need for religious harmony originated is that the most



violent wars and conflicts in human history were based on religious intolerance and hatred. It might be a shocking statement, but it's the harsh reality that religions, which are supposed to make people more peaceful and loving, have today become the biggest cause of discord and bloodshed in the world. It's so appalling to see organized groups across the globe sworn to spread terror in the name of religion and carry out ethnic cleansing in the name of removing evil from the world.

If we closely examine the growth of each faith through the centuries, it reveals an interesting pattern. Even though there are some common values and tenets in all faiths, there are far too many misconceptions and conflicting beliefs that have continually fanned mistrust and hostility among the masses. It's quite imperative to know that, at the time of their inception, every religion had the power of purity, truth, and unity.

Gradually, cracks, factionalism, shallowness, delusion, deception and ritualistic adherence devoid of spiritual significance began to appear. Hence, instead of empowering spiritual values, religions perpetuated dogmas, disciplines, and barriers that segregate people on many lines. Many fall prey to the very evils they preach against, such as the lust for power, pleasure and money. There can be better understanding, tolerance, and acceptance of each faith, but there cannot be unity unless there is a single or common belief. So, what's the best way to reach a common solution acceptable to all faiths? According to divine knowledge imparted by the Supreme Almighty, everything in the eternal cycle of the human world drama goes through a change, which means that everything degrades from a perfect state to an imperfect, fragmented state. Be it human souls, nature, religions, or civilisations, almost everything passes through the sato (pure), rajo (mixed) and tamo (impure) stages as the time cycle spins from the Golden Age to the Iron Age.

As of today, we are witnessing the tamo-pradhan (most degraded) stage of all aspects of human existence, and religions are no exception to this process of change. Hence, we can envisage a unified faith only in terms of the spirituality inherent in all faiths. It is said that God is Truth, and true religion embodies that truth. Hence, when humans embrace that truth in their hearts, there will be a unified world. So, let us all stand united with one unified faith to welcome the new world where truth, peace and harmony will prevail.

(The writer is a spiritual educator and popular columnist; views are personal)

The MBA dilemma: Why degrees alone no longer guarantee success



DINESH SOOD

Once considered a guaranteed gateway to lucrative careers, the MBA is under scrutiny as unemployment rates rise—even among graduates from elite institutions



The job market for MBA graduates has reached a critical juncture, sparking conversations that resonate with a growing number of aspirants and professionals grappling with the changing realities of employment. Once seen as a surefire ticket to high-paying corporate roles, the MBA degree is scrutinised for relevance in an evolving economic landscape. This issue is not confined to India alone; even graduates from elite institutions like Harvard, Stanford, and Wharton feel the squeeze. The Wall Street Journal recently reported that in 2024, 23 per cent of Harvard Business School's MBA graduates were jobless. Other top-tier business schools like Stanford and Wharton have seen similar dips, with unemployment rates hovering around 20 per cent. The problem is not just limited to the United States. According to the International Labour Organisation's Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024, 13 per cent of the global youth labour force was unemployed in 2023—a staggering figure representing nearly 65 million people. This unsettling trend makes traditional, generalist MBA degrees less appealing than targeted skill certifications. A recent Forbes report highlighted how some MBA graduates have succeeded by lowering their expectations and opting for less conventional roles. In an era where industries are shifting dynamically, the rigid, cookie-cutter MBA model is struggling to keep pace. The need for a 360-degree reimagination of this degree has never been more pressing.

Degrees Alone Won't Cut It Anymore One fundamental truth is becoming evident: degrees alone no longer guarantee job or entrepreneurship security. The future belongs to professionals who continuously upskill and adapt to meet the ever-changing demands of the workforce. What used to be a clear, structured career trajectory for MBA graduates—typically leading to consulting, finance, or management roles—is now blurred.



WHAT USED TO BE A CLEAR, STRUCTURED CAREER TRAJECTORY FOR MBA GRADUATES—TYPICALLY LEADING TO CONSULTING, FINANCE, OR MANAGEMENT ROLES—IS NOW BLURRED

immunity against unemployment or underemployment. Even more telling is the global shift in job seekers' mindsets. While travelling to Canada, I recently observed an MBA graduate running a salon branded "MBA Barber Shop." This reflects an important reality—many skilled gig jobs are vital for holistic growth, but traditional academic pathways have often dismissed such careers as unworthy. Yet, most developed nations respect one's skills rather than qualifications or family background. We must ask: Why doesn't Indian society do the same? **Skill Respect Over Degree Prestige** The changing job landscape demands a fundamental shift in how we perceive employment, education, and career success. Skill acquisition is about individuals learning new competencies and families being sensitised to alternative career paths. It is about communities understanding the implications of an evolving job market. It is about cities and regions acknowledging and respecting those who possess the skills necessary to sustain a livelihood, irrespective of whether they hold an MBA or a B.Tech degree.

The MBA has been a gateway to professional and financial success for decades. However, the economy's evolution demands a departure from this narrow thinking. In India and many other countries, social conditioning has led to an unspoken hierarchy of professions. White-collar corporate roles are celebrated, while vocational or blue-collar jobs are often overlooked. This mindset is outdated and damaging in a world where adaptability and skills matter more than mere academic credentials. **A 360-Degree Skills Revolution** What we need now is a complete rethinking of education and skill development. The traditional MBA

must evolve from a broad-spectrum business degree into a dynamic, skills-focused program that integrates emerging industry trends. A 360-degree approach should include everything from finance to marketing and HR. MBA programmes must incorporate niche skills such as data analytics, digital transformation, sustainability management and entrepreneurship in beauty-wellness, the most emerging sector. Instead of theoretical coursework, there should be a stronger focus on apprenticeships, live projects and problem-solving in real-world business scenarios.

Understanding AI, automation, and emerging technologies should be a core part of the curriculum to prepare graduates for future-ready roles. Rather than treating entrepreneurship as an alternative, business schools should actively promote and equip students with the skills to start and sustain their ventures. Business schools must recognise the gig economy's rise and train students to navigate freelance and contract-based work models. **Beyond Livelihood—Dignity in Work**

Redefining career success means placing equal value on all forms of work. Whether a person is an MBA graduate managing a corporate division, an AI consultant, a skilled tradesperson, or a self-employed barber, their ability to contribute meaningfully to society matters. The prestige of a job should be measured not by its title but by its impact and sustainability.

Parents, educators, and policymakers have a role in fostering this change. We must instil in young minds that success is not confined to traditional white-collar professions. Regardless of their chosen field, a skilled individual should be celebrated just as much as a corporate executive. If an MBA graduate decides to become an artisan,

a chef, a salon owner or a renewable energy technician, they should be seen as pioneers, not failures. **The Need for Institutional Change**

Educational institutions must move beyond outdated frameworks and align themselves with industry demands. Business schools should foster adaptive thinking, preparing students for unconventional but lucrative career paths. The focus should be on problem-solving, digital proficiency, and entrepreneurial agility rather than rigid academic theories.

Governments and industries should also contribute by incentivising skill-based education. Scholarships, subsidies, and awareness campaigns can help shift societal perspectives on what constitutes a respectable and rewarding career.

Conclusion: A Future Built on Skills Once a golden ticket to corporate success, the MBA faces an existential crisis. If it is to remain relevant, it must undergo radical transformation. A degree is no longer a guarantee; what truly matters is an individual's ability to adapt, innovate, and deliver value in an ever-changing world.

As a society, we need to support and encourage young professionals in their quest to discover their true potential—even in jobs that were once considered "odd." In reality, no job is odd; what matters is its necessity and impact. By embracing a 360-degree perspective on skills and careers, we can build a more inclusive, resilient, and future-ready workforce. The time for change is now.

(The writer is a Co-Founder and MD of Orane International, a Training Partner with the National Skill Development Corporation, and a Network Member, of India International Skill Centres. View express are personal)

Ethics-driven AI in predictive healthcare: Building a foundation of trust and accountability

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is revolutionising predictive healthcare, offering early disease detection, personalised treatment plans and improved patient outcomes

In today's rapidly advancing healthcare landscape, Artificial Intelligence (AI) plays a transformative role, particularly in predictive healthcare. AI's ability to analyse vast datasets enables early disease detection, personalised treatment plans and improved patient outcomes. The global AI in healthcare market, valued at approximately \$15.4 billion in 2022, is projected to surge to \$187.95 billion by 2030, growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 37 per cent. Yet, with this potential comes a responsibility to ensure that AI is used responsibly, ethically, and equitably. Establishing a framework that prioritises privacy, fairness, transparency and accountability is essential to protect patient rights and



GERALD JAIDEEP

maintain public trust. The Power of AI in Predictive Healthcare AI's role in predictive healthcare is primarily driven by machine learning and data analytics, empowering it to forecast diseases, assess risk factors, and recommend preventive measures. By examining patterns in com-

prehensive datasets, such as medical histories, genetic profiles, lifestyle information and real-time health data, AI can predict the likelihood of conditions ranging from diabetes and cardiovascular diseases to complex ailments like cancer and Alzheimer's. This shift from reactive to preventive care can ease the burden on healthcare systems and improve patient quality of life. For example, AI-based diagnostics for diabetic retinopathy have shown an accuracy rate of over 87 per cent, enabling early detection and timely intervention. Similarly, IBM Watson's Oncology AI has achieved 90 per cent accuracy in cancer treatment recommendations that align with those of human oncologists. However, to har-

ness AI's potential responsibly, it's crucial to address the ethical challenges it introduces. **Safeguarding Data Privacy and Security** The ethical use of AI in healthcare hinges on the responsible management of patient data. Predictive healthcare AI relies heavily on sensitive information, including medical, genetic, and behavioural data. Yet, the need for privacy is ever more pressing—72 per cent of Americans express significant concerns about data privacy in AI applications, particularly in healthcare.

In 2022, nearly 50 million healthcare records were exposed to data breaches in the United States, underscoring the need for strong data security protocols. To protect this information, AI systems must



prioritise rigorous security measures such as encryption, anonymisation and regular audits. Patients should also provide informed consent, clearly explaining how their data will be used and stored. By centring data protection in AI development, healthcare can ensure patient confidentiality and foster the trust necessary for AI's

continued adoption. **Addressing Bias for Fair and Equitable Predictions** AI's reliance on historical data introduces the risk of bias, which can lead to predictions that disproportionately impact certain demographic groups. Research has shown that AI models trained on biased data result in 35 per cent more misdiagnoses for Black and Hispanic patients compared to white patients. In healthcare, such biases could exacerbate disparities for marginalised populations. Ensuring fairness requires AI systems trained on diverse, representative datasets, as well as continuous monitoring and adjustments to detect and correct biases. A study published in Nature Medicine found that AI systems trained on

inclusive datasets significantly reduce diagnostic discrepancies, underscoring the importance of inclusivity in training data. Collaboration with healthcare professionals and ethicists is also vital to developing AI solutions that are equitable and serve all patients effectively. **Promoting Transparency and Explainability in AI Models** The complexity of AI algorithms often results in "black box" decision-making, where the reasoning behind predictions is not fully understood by users or developers. In predictive healthcare, this lack of transparency can hinder trust and adoption among patients and healthcare providers alike. In a survey by the American Medical Association, 67 per cent of healthcare providers

expressed reservations about using "black-box" AI systems, highlighting the need for explainable AI. Currently, only 23 per cent of AI-based diagnostic tools meet explainability standards to ensure transparency. By developing interpretable models, researchers can make AI's decision-making processes accessible to healthcare providers, enabling them to communicate AI-driven recommendations clearly and fostering patient involvement in care decisions. As AI continues to advance, a strong ethical framework will be essential to uphold public trust and ensure that AI-driven healthcare remains a force for good.

(The writer is CEO, Medvarsity; views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

Simplified Income Tax Bill brings in 'tax year' concept

Omits 'previous year', obsolete clauses

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The much-anticipated new income tax bill will replace terminologies like assessment and previous year with easier to understand 'tax year' as part of move to simplify language while removing provisos and explanations.

The Income Tax Bill, 2025, which is likely to be introduced in Parliament on Thursday, will replace 298 sections and 14 schedules in the six-decade old voluminous legislations, with a 622 page new law enshrined in 526 sections, 23 chapters and 16 schedules.

The Bill introduces a new concept of 'tax year' as the 12-month period beginning from April 1. This would replace the present concept of assessment and previous year.

Currently, income earned in the previous year (PY), say in the year April 2024 to March 2025, will be assessed in assessment year (AY) 2025-26.

The new Bill will come into effect from April 1, 2026, after it is vetted by Standing Committee and cleared by Parliament.

The new bill has omitted redundant sections, like those relating to Fringe Benefit Tax. The Bill is free from 'explanations or provisos', thereby making it easier to read and comprehend.



Also, the word 'notwithstanding', which was used excessively in the Income Tax Act, 1961, has been done away with in the new Bill and almost everywhere replaced with the term 'irrespective'.

The Bill uses shorter sentences and has been made reader-friendly with the use of tables and formulae. Tables have been provided for provisions relating to TDS, presumptive taxation, salaries, and deductions for bad debt.

The 'Taxpayer's Charter' has been included in the Bill which outlines the rights and obligations of the taxpayers.

The Bill replaces the term 'previous year' as mentioned in the Income Tax Act, 1961 with 'tax year'. Also, the concept of assessment year has been done away with.

Currently, for income earned in the previous year (say 2023-24), tax is paid in assessment year (say 2024-25). This previous year and assessment year (AY) concept has been removed and only tax year under the simplified bill has been brought in.

Once introduced in the Lok Sabha likely on Thursday, the Bill will be sent to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance for further deliberations.

The Statement of Objects and Reasons of the new I-T Bill said that the Income-tax Act passed in 1961 has been subjected to numerous amendments since its passage 60 years ago.

"As a result of these amendments the basic structure of the Income-tax Act has become overburdened and language has become complex, increasing cost of compliance for taxpayers and hampering efficiency of direct-tax administration," it said.

Continuing the downward trend, retail inflation fell to a five-month low of 4.31 per cent in January, mainly due to a decline in the prices of vegetables, eggs, and pulses.

The Consumer Price Index-based retail inflation was 5.22 per cent in December and 5.1 per cent in January 2024. The previous low inflation was in August 2024 at 3.65 per cent.

The inflation in the food basket was 6.02 per cent in January, the lowest after August 2024 when it was 5.66 per cent.



Retail inflation slows to 5-month low: Govt data

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Statistics Office (NSO) data showed.

According to the data, the top five items showing the highest year on year inflation were coconut oil (54.2 per cent), potato (49.61 per cent), coconut (38.71 per cent), garlic (30.65 per cent), peas (30.17 per cent).

On the other hand, the key items having the lowest year on year inflation in January were jeera (-32.25 per cent), ginger (-30.92 per cent), dry chilies (-11.27 per cent), brinjal (-9.94 per cent), LPG (excluding conveyance) (-9.29 per cent).

Last week, the Reserve Bank years effected a rate cut of 25 basis points after a gap of five years to spur growth as inflation was in its comfort zone. The central bank has been mandated by the government to ensure CPI remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.



Japanese companies to invest in Uttar Pradesh

Deputy Governor of Japan's Yamanashi Prefecture, Ko Osada, on Wednesday paid a courtesy visit to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath at his official residence and discussed investment opportunities in the state among other issues, according to an official statement issued here. Ko Osada said, "Around 250 CEOs from Japan will visit Uttar Pradesh to explore potential investment opportunities. The Japanese delegation will assess the state's investment prospects, driven by its strong law and order, good governance and rapid economic growth." This initiative will also create significant employment opportunities for the youth of Uttar Pradesh," it said. Ko Osada emphasised his commitment to strengthening friendly relations between Yamanashi and Uttar Pradesh. A key focus of the discussions was green hydrogen, the statement said. It was felt that a pact between UP and Japan's Yamanashi Prefecture would drive green hydrogen initiatives, including a centre of excellence, with Japanese technology at its core, it said. Discussions were also held on organising an international seminar that would bring together global experts and stakeholders in hydrogen technology.



Rupee falls 8 paise to 86.87 against US dollar

The rupee failed to sustain its recovery and depreciated 8 paise to close at 86.87 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday due to a firm American currency and unending outflow of foreign funds. According to forex traders, rupee stayed firm initially but lost grounds amid volatile domestic equity markets that also added to the trend of withdrawal by foreign institutional investors. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 86.44 and moved between the high of 86.36 and the low of 86.91 against the greenback during intra-day. The unit ended the session at 86.87 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a fall of 8 paise from its previous close. On Tuesday, the rupee appreciated 66 paise, logging the maximum single-day gain since March 3, 2023, to close at 86.79 against the US dollar. The steep surge came a day after the unit plunged to near 88 per US dollar-level during intra-day on Monday, though the currency ended the session with gains at 87.45 against the greenback. Meanwhile, the US dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.04 per cent higher at 107.87.



DGCI uncovers Rs 1,196 crore GST fraud

The Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGCI), Pune Zonal Unit, has uncovered a GST fraud amounting to Rs 1,196 crore and has arrested one individual in connection with the case. The investigation, involving searches at multiple locations in Pune, Delhi, Noida, and Muzaffarnagar, has revealed a sophisticated network of bogus companies engaged in fraudulent Input Tax Credit (ITC) transactions, FinMin said in a statement on Wednesday. The accused had set up shell entities with no legitimate business operations, generating fake invoices and e-way bills to create a facade of genuine trade, it said. However, it said, these e-way bills had no RFID movements associated with them, confirming the absence of actual supply of goods. The fraudulent network facilitated the availing and passing of fake ITC worth Rs 1,196 crore. The arrested individual, the director of a private limited firm in Muzaffarnagar, is identified as the mastermind behind the operation, it said. The investigation uncovered that the cartel maintained a database of addresses, identities, email IDs, and phone numbers, which were strategically rotated to obtain new GST registrations and evade detection, it said.

6 DAYS OF MARKET FALL

Equity investors' wealth erode by Rs 18 lakh crore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Investors suffered an erosion of Rs 18 lakh crore in six days of market fall, where the BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 3 per cent, amid continuous foreign fund outflows and trade war worries. The 30-share BSE Sensex, which had tanked more than 900 points intra-day, ended at 76,171.08, down by 122.52 points or 0.16 per cent following a recovery in bank stocks in the last hour.

During the day, the benchmark tanked 905.21 points or 1.18 per cent to sink below the 76,000-level and hit a low of 75,388.39.

Since February 4, the BSE bellwether gauge has slumped 2,412.73 points or 3.07 per cent. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms slumped Rs 18,04,418 crore to Rs



4,07,46,408.11 crore (USD 4.69 trillion) since February 4.

From the 30-share Sensex pack, Mahindra & Mahindra, ITC, Power Grid, Reliance Industries, IndusInd Bank, Adani Ports, Titan and Infosys were the biggest laggards.

Bajaj Finserv, Tata Steel, Larsen & Toubro, UltraTech Cement, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Tata Motors were among the gainers.

Foreign Institutional Investors

(FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 4,486.41 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

"Markets were extremely choppy and gyrated sharply in intra-day trade. After crashing over 900 points in early trade, markets recouped lost ground in late trade but select profit-taking in IT, banking and auto stocks saw benchmarks end marginally lower," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research) at Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

ICICI Bank to retain majority holding in PAMC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

ICICI Bank on Wednesday said the bank intends to retain majority holding in ICICI Prudential Asset Management Company even though its joint venture partner plans listing and partial divestment of its stake in the fund house.

ICICI Bank holds 51 per cent stake in ICICI Prudential Asset Management Company while remaining 49 per cent is with its joint venture partner UK-based Prudential PLC.

"We take note of the announcement made today by our joint venture partner Prudential PLC with respect to a potential listing of and partial divestment of its stake in ICICI Prudential Asset Management Company, subject to market conditions, requisite approvals and other considerations," ICICI Bank said in a regulatory filing.

The bank intends to retain its majority shareholding in ICICI Prudential Asset Management Company ensuring long-term commitment, it said.

Prudential plc announced that it is evaluating a potential listing of ICICI Prudential Asset

Management Company Ltd involving the partial divestment of its shares.

It is intended that following the completion of such a divestment, the net proceeds would be returned to shareholders, Prudential plc said in an announcement.

"We will continue to explore opportunities to grow our businesses in the market," it said.

ICICI Prudential Asset Management Company Ltd recorded a net profit of Rs 1,815 crore in FY24 as compared to Rs 1,508 crore in FY23.

RBI lifts curbs on Kotak Mahindra Bank

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India on Wednesday lifted nine-month-old curbs on Kotak Mahindra Bank, allowing it to onboard new customers through its online and mobile banking channels. The Reserve Bank also permitted the private sector lender to issue fresh credit cards.

Gold declines Rs 340 to Rs 87,960 per 10 gm

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices declined Rs 340 to Rs 87,960 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday amid weak global trends, according to All India Sarafa Association.

On Tuesday, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had ended at Rs 88,300 per 10 grams. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity also depreciated Rs 340 to Rs 87,560 per 10 grams. It had closed at Rs 87,900 per 10 grams in the previous trading session.

However, silver prices increased Rs 600 to Rs 97,200 per kg on Wednesday.

Mamata govt tables Rs 3.89 L cr Budget

PNS ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Finance Minister Chandrima Bhattacharya on Wednesday presented a Rs 3.89-lakh crore budget for 2025-26 with a significant focus on social welfare, and announced a four per cent hike in dearness allowance (DA) for state government employees.

The government also unveiled a series of infrastructure and agricultural development projects in its budget, allocating significant funds for rural connectivity, river erosion control, and agrarian support initiatives.

In the last full-fledged budget of the Mamata Banerjee government before the 2026 Assembly elections, Bhattacharya tabled in the assembly a Rs 3.89 lakh crore budget. In the previous budget, the state saw an allocation of Rs 3.67 lakh crore, marking an 8 per cent increase from the previous year 2023-24.



Bhattacharya announced that the state government would increase the Dearness Allowance (DA) by four per cent from April 1, 2025. This would bring the total DA to 18 per cent for over 10 lakh state government employees and pensioners. The move is aimed at addressing ongoing concerns raised by the employees who have been agitating for better compensation. "With this four per cent increase in DA, we are reaffirming our commitment to the welfare of our employees," Bhattacharya said, underlining the state's focus on the well-being of its workforce.

In the budget speech, Bhattacharya announced an allocation of Rs 44,000 crore for rural development and Panchayats. A major highlight of the budget is the Rs 1,500 crore allocation for the improvement of rural roads across the state.

This is aimed at enhancing connectivity and boosting economic activity in remote areas. In a bid to address the persistent issue of river erosion, the government set aside Rs 200 crore, which would provide much-needed relief to vulnerable riverine communities. Further strengthening its focus on infrastructure, the government sanctioned Rs 500 crore for the construction of a 4.75 km-long bridge over the Ganga river at Gangasagar, which is expected to facilitate smooth access for pilgrims and boost local economies.

Industrial output growth slows to three-month low

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's industrial production growth slowed to a three-month low of 3.2 per cent in December 2024, mainly due to poor performance of mining and manufacturing sectors, according to official data released on Wednesday.

The government has also revised the November 2024 industrial output figure to 5 per cent from the provisional estimate of 5.2 per cent released in

the previous month. The pace of factory output growth stood at the same level of 3.2 per cent in September and flat in August 2024. The growth was recorded at 3.7 per cent in October 2024.

The country's factory output, measured in terms of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), witnessed a growth of 4.4 per cent in December 2023.

India's Index of Industrial Production increased by 3.2 per cent in December 2024, an official statement said.



The data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) showed that the manufacturing sector's output grew 3 per cent in December 2024, down from 4.6 per cent in the year-ago month.

Mining production growth declined to 2.6 per cent from 5.2 per cent year-on-year. Power output increased to 6.2 per cent in December 2024 from 1.2 per cent a year ago. In the April-December

2024 period, the IIP grew 4 per cent, slower than 6.3 per cent recorded in the year-ago period.

As per use-based classification, the capital goods segment growth accelerated to 10.3 per cent in December 2024 against a growth of 3.7 per cent in the year-ago period.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
WANAPARTHY DISTRICT GAZETTE
EXTRAORDINARY
PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY

No. 051/2025 WANAPARTHY WEDNESDAY DATE: 04.02.2025
No. GI/144/2025 Dated: 04.02.2025

The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013
As per Section -11 (1) of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (Central Act No. 30/2013) and sub Rule (1) of Rule -25 FORM - VI

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION

Whereas it appears to the Government of Telangana / Collector, Wanaparthi that a total of 499.37 Sq.mts. Plinth area and Open area of the structures is required in the namely Nagarala Village of Srirangapur Mandal & Wanaparthi District for public purpose namely proposed for Rangas Samudram balancing reservoir under Rajiv Utkirrigation Scheme Project.

The said Land Acquisition for the project is exempted from the Chapter-II and Chapter-III of the L.A. Act 2013 i.e., Social Impact Assessment (SIA) and Food Security as per Section 10(A) of Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (Act No. 21 of 2017).

Therefore, it is notified that for the above said project the village namely Nagarala Village of Srirangapur Mandal & Wanaparthi District land measuring more or less (499.37 Sq.mts.) of standard measurement, whose detail description is as follows is proposed for acquisition.

Sl. No.		Total Extent to be acquired	Name of the Occupant	Boundaries			
1	2	3	4	North	South	East	West
1	453	300.57	T. Devireddy	-	-	-	-
		198.80	S/o Krishnareddy	-	-	-	-
Total		499.37	499.37				

Such advertisement relates to whomsoever it may concern under the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act 2013 (Central Act No. 30/2013) and following an exemption as per the Section -11 (1) to inform the concerned people.

The plan related to the lands and other details can be inspected at the office of the District Collector, Wanaparthi and the Special Deputy Collector (LA), RLSP-II, Pebbair, Hq 100C Wanaparthi, The Telangana Government / Collector and his Staff are authorized to enter into the land mentioned in the above schedule survey and take the measurements or to sign the land to check sub-soil and lay a bare to find out the quality of the land and are permitted to take up necessary steps under Section -12 of Act.

As per Section -11 (4), no one is permitted to do any kind of transactions such as sales / purchases / mortgage with reference to such land in the above schedule without the notice of the District Collector, after the date of issuance of this notification. As per Section -11(5) the owners of the land in the above mentioned schedule should bring to the notice of the Land Acquisition Officer / District Collector, Wanaparthi, or the official concerned, in writing, if they have any objections with regard to the acquisition of their land, duly submitting the necessary proofs within 60 (Sixty) days of the issuance of such preliminary notification in the daily newspaper:

Sd/- Sd/-
Sd/- Special Deputy Addl. Collector, Dist. Collector,
Collector (LA), RLSP - II, Wanaparthi
Pebbar

DIPR No. 668/LA/PP-Pub/2024-25

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
'E' PROCUREMENT NOTICE
NIT No. 47/EE/CIR-20/SLPZ/GHMC/1/2024-25 Date: 12.02.2025
Category of work: Other Work, Estimate Amount: Rs. 2.20 Lakhs,
Start Date / Last Date & Time for Receipt of Bids: 12.02.2025 @ 1.30 PM
/ 13.02.2025 @ 1.30 PM. Name & Address, Officer Call No: EE, CIR-
20, SLPZ, GHMC, 9154834248. Sd/- Executive Engineer,
R.O. No: 10187-PP/LA/INTV/2024-25, Dt: 12-02-2025
Circle-20, CHMC



BEYOND CHARITY, BEING VOICE OF THE FORGOTTEN!



TEJAL SINHA
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In a world where philanthropy is often associated with grand gestures and high-profile charities, Dr. Aneel Murarka has carved a unique path - one rooted in self-reliance, grassroots impact, and an unwavering commitment to the people. Often hailed as the 'common man's philanthropist,' Dr. Murarka has spent over three decades championing social causes through his social enterprise, Ample Mission.

His journey into philanthropy began not from wealth or influence but from a deep-seated responsibility he felt during his college days. "I started by helping fellow students who couldn't afford their fees," he recalls in this chat with The Pioneer. "Later, as I witnessed the broader challenges that people endured - whether it was access to healthcare, education, or basic sanitation - I realized that I wanted to make a meaningful difference in a larger way."

One of the biggest misconceptions about philanthropy, according to Dr. Murarka, is that it is reserved for the wealthy. He strongly refutes this notion. "Philanthropy isn't about the size of your bank account - it's about the size of your heart. Small acts of kindness, whether it's volunteering, mentoring, or even helping a neighbor, can create ripples of change." For him, the true essence of giving lies in the intention behind it. "It's not about how much you contribute financially; it's about your willingness to make a difference. When people realise that they have something valuable to offer, irrespective of their financial situation, they become active changemakers in society."

While many social organisations depend on fundraising and grants, his Ample Mission operates on a unique self-funded model. Dr. Murarka explains that this approach was a conscious decision to maintain independence and ensure that the organization stays true to its values.

"We don't beg, borrow, or steal - we fund our initiatives internally," he states firmly. "This allows us to avoid external influences that might compromise our mission." Moreover, self-funding fosters a deep sense of accountability. "When

it's your own money, you are more cautious about how it's spent. It also sets an example-if we are willing to invest in social causes with our own resources, it inspires others to contribute as well."

He further stresses the importance of community involvement in decision-making. "The people facing these challenges should have a say in shaping welfare initiatives. Our goal is to create solutions that are holistic, sustainable, and promote dignity to self-reliance."

For Dr. Murarka, the true power of Ample Mission's work is best reflected in the stories of the people it has uplifted. One such moment that stands out is their work with Warli artisans, a tribal community known for its traditional art. "When we started working with Warli artisans, they were struggling financially and had limited exposure," he shares. "Through skill development and market exposure, they transitioned from financial dependency to self-reliance."

Seeing these artisans establish their own sustainable initiatives was deeply fulfilling. His son, Sidhaant Murarka, has also taken an active role in Ample Mission, bringing fresh energy and modern perspectives to the organization.

Beyond financial support, Ample Mission also provides skill enhancement workshops. "We encourage them to adapt their traditional art to modern trends while preserving its authenticity," he adds. "Through these efforts, we are not only protecting a cultural legacy but also creating sustainable livelihoods."

Then comes building crematoriums and dignified last rites. Discussing his work in creating crematoriums in Mumbai and Bihar, he shares the deep sense of duty that led him to these projects.

"The inspiration behind 'Shivdham' in Mumbai and the crematorium in Bihar's Tetia-Bambar came from a pressing need. In these areas, people had to travel long distances to perform last rites for their loved ones. Understanding the emotional and cultural importance of this ritual, we felt it was essential to provide a dignified space with modern facilities, including free funeral materials and priest services. The goal was to ease the burden on grieving families while addressing a major infrastructural gap."

The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the importance of well-maintained crematoriums. "During the pandemic, the surge in deaths revealed the inadequacy of existing cremation facilities, especially for COVID victims. We collaborated with the BMC and state government to operationalize newly built gas-fired furnaces at Shivdham Crematorium. Ensuring safe and dignified last rites while maintaining health protocols was a challenge, but it was crucial work in those difficult times."

His connection with people across the country allows him to recognise urgent needs, such as the one in Bihar. "The initiative in Tetia-Bambar, Bihar, was prompted by distress calls from a local villager who repeatedly called my office. He explained that the lack of a crematorium forced people to travel long distances, often borrowing money just to arrange transport for the deceased. This was heartbreaking. Through our trust, we built a modern facility, dedicating it in memory of my late mother, Meena Devi Murarka. It's these direct connections with communities that help us identify and act on critical needs."

In 2019, Ample Mission made history at Times Fashion Week by spotlighting transgender models, marking a breakthrough moment for gender inclusivity in fashion. This was the first-of-its-kind event in India and possibly the world. "Having transgender models open the show with activists like Laxmi Narayan Tripathi and Navya Singh sent a strong message about acceptance and equal representation. The response was overwhelmingly positive, with the fashion industry recognising the importance of diversity, and the



transgender community feeling empowered and celebrated." Through platforms like the Shoorveer Awards, Bharat Prerna Awards, and Awards Zindagi Ke, he ensures that extraordinary individuals receive the recognition they deserve.

"We created these awards to honor people whose resilience and courage inspire the nation. The Shoorveer Awards celebrate real-life bravehearts, Bharat Prerna Awards recognise unsung heroes, and Awards Zindagi Ke pay tribute to martyrs of the armed forces."

One story that deeply moved him was that of a doctor who lost both her legs in a train accident.

"She faced rejection from the Medical Council but fought tirelessly to fulfill her dream. She ultimately completed her MD in Pathology from KEM Hospital and now serves patients with unwavering dedication. Her journey is a testament to resilience and determination, which is why she received both the Shoorveer Award in 2016 and the Bharat Prerna Award in 2017. Stories like hers deserve to be told and celebrated."

Dr. Murarka has also been actively working on road safety, especially tackling Mumbai's pothole problem. "Every monsoon, potholes become a serious hazard, leading to accidents and loss of lives. My team and I take direct action by filling potholes using Cold Bitumen Ready Mix, which sets quickly and provides a temporary but effective fix. My son, Sidhaant, leads the team, ensuring timely interventions. We also run awareness campaigns on helmet safety and pedestrian visibility through zebra crossings near schools, colleges, and hospitals."

He believes public participation is key to road safety improvements. "Citizens must report road hazards instead of just blaming authorities. Forming community groups, working with NGOs, and using social media to highlight issues can create pressure for action. Road safety is a shared responsibility, and together, we can push for better infrastructure." Another critical issue Ample Mission addresses is sanitation, particularly in rural areas where open defecation is still common.

"We built hundreds of toilets in regions like Kashmir, Bihar, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra. However, the real challenge was changing mindsets. Many adults were hesitant to switch from open fields to toilets, so we focused on educating school children through creative workshops like 'Dhodala.' They, in turn, influenced their families. Continuous awareness programs and community engagement have been instrumental in shifting attitudes toward hygiene."

One of the most powerful tools Dr. Murarka uses for awareness is filmmaking. "We've produced over 40 short films on crucial issues like Swachh Bharat, anti-smoking campaigns, and breast cancer awareness. Featuring stars like Sunny Leone, Kangana Ranaut, and Amitabh Bachchan, these films have gone viral, reaching millions and sparking discussions on topics that matter." One film, Don't Let Her Go, received special recognition from Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "It was an incredible moment when PM Modi acknowledged our film on Swachh Bharat. His retweet and the Government of India's recognition of our efforts reinforced the power of storytelling in driving change. The Ministry of Urban Development even appointed us as Brand Ambassadors for the Swachh Bharat Mission, a responsibility I deeply cherish." Despite all he has achieved, Dr. Murarka remains focused on new initiatives.

"Our next major projects include building a new crematorium facility near Gorai Beach in Mumbai, where there is a significant need. We're also constructing temples in Mainpur, Uttar Pradesh, to support spiritual well-being. Additionally, we are working on expanding medical facilities in underserved areas."

Travel just got whole lot more meaningful!

PN5|HYDERABAD

February travel patterns are revealing an intriguing picture of the changing tastes of contemporary adventurers as the year approaches a new chapter. Travellers are adopting a more thoughtful approach to wanderlust, putting meaningful experiences and sustainable habits ahead of the excitement of the next short journey. The days of frantic, frequent short get-aways are over. This trend is being driven by rising expenses and environmental concerns, as eco-aware travellers look for longer, more immersive journeys that not only feed their souls but also treat the environment with care. As remote workers take advantage of off-season travel to find hidden gems in less crowded locales, all at a lower price point, flexible work arrangements are further driving this trend.

Furthermore, "destination dupes"—affordable substitutes for well-known locations that have a comparable appeal without the crowds—are growing in popularity among individuals who yearn for the charm of famous locations without the high cost. Pop culture-inspired travel is also flourishing, as fans travel to the actual locations of their favourite TV series and movies. The popularity of wellness-focused travel is still growing, with detox excursions, alcohol-free vacations and holistic retreats providing a break from the stresses of contemporary life. Platforms like Viacation are well-positioned to meet the changing tastes of tourists as these trends develop by highlighting eco-friendly getaways, highlighting lesser-known locations and matching their products with the ideals of today's conscientious, inquisitive and tech-savvy traveller. And it is exactly in line with the intelligent ideas of our interviewee, Viacation's co-founder and CEO, Jatinder Paul Singh.

"We arrange vacations with the ideal ratio of flexibility to structure. While leaving space for unforeseen, memorable moments, we handle the essentials, such as lodging, major attractions and easy transportation. Our tours let passengers enjoy the route without feeling constrained by a rigid timetable, whether it's a local's recommendation for a hidden gem, a picturesque stop along the way, or an unexpected cultural encounter," shares the joint founder. He continues, "At the heart of my travel experiences is sustainability. The three main priorities are cultural preservation, community support and environmental protection! By collaborating with neighbourhood companies, we make sure that tourism boosts the local economy while highlighting lesser-known locations to avoid overtourism. The low-impact activities and eco-friendly lodgings enable visitors to make a positive rather than a negative impression." Excessive tourism can degrade natural landscapes, increase pollution and threaten delicate ecosystems. However, community-based tourism enhances livelihoods and local economies. To make sure that travel continues to have meaning for both tourists and the places they visit, they incorporate these ethical standards.

"After the pandemic, people want more meaningful travel experiences instead of just sightseeing," he continues. "According to studies, domestic travel currently accounts for 75% of all travel expenditures worldwide, indicating that tourists want more intimate and genuine experiences. By designing vacation experiences with an emphasis on culture, mindfulness and personal development, we continue this trend. We make sure that every trip is purposeful and

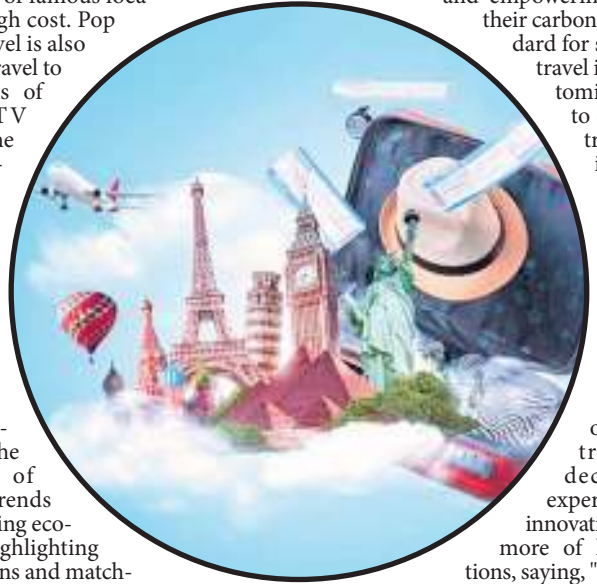
enriching, whether it is by selecting wellness retreats, assisting with conservation projects, or visiting local craftsmen."

Exploration has become much simpler and more responsible. The options are infinite, with an astounding 50,000+ multi-day activities spread across 160+ countries. A worry-free journey is guaranteed with a flawless booking process, knowledgeable advice from travel experts and round-the-clock assistance. Making a difference is more important than merely traveling. More individuals are travelling to locations from their favourite shows and films, a trend known as pop culture tourism. For instance, Formula 1 locations have become more well-known thanks to Netflix's Drive to Survive. We ensure that visitors respect local culture when visiting these well-known locations. In addition to leading tours of popular destinations, we also show visitors undiscovered treasures so they can experience the place in a way that goes beyond what is shown on screen."

By promoting environmentally responsible tourism, collaborating with local operators and empowering travellers to offset their carbon footprint, a new standard for sustainable adventure travel is being set! With customisable options tailored to diverse interests, solo travelers, couples, families and groups can effortlessly discover their ideal adventure. As the travel landscape evolves, the vision remains clear: to expand sustainable offerings, amplify customer satisfaction and redefine the boundaries of organised adventure travel, guided by decades of industry expertise and a passion for innovation. He continues with more of his unique observations, saying, "Technology is making travel more convenient and intimate. AI tools are currently used by 22% of travellers to plan their journeys, a 40% increase since last September. People can save time, discover new destinations and consider additional possibilities with the use of these tools. However, if technology is used excessively, travel may become less intimate."

This innovative travel start-up is reinventing the art of journey-making, driven by industry experts and born out of a passion for discovery. This forward-thinking company, which was founded in 2023 by this visionary leader, creates remarkable experiences by incorporating excellence into each journey. "Connecting with new people, learning about their viewpoints and uncovering aspects of ourselves while travelling is what travel is all about. I had a life-changing experience when I went to a tiny village and ate and chatted with the residents. It served as a reminder that the most memorable travel experiences involve more than just seeing a place; they involve actually experiencing it. Every journey ought to feel like a unique journey. These days, luxury travel is also about unique experiences rather than just upscale lodging. Nowadays, more individuals prefer unusual activities to pricey ones. For instance, 22% of tourists in the United States are wealthy, yet they spend 46% of their money on experiences. Travellers can do more than just stay at a good hotel; they can study a local trade, have a special meal prepared by a renowned chef, or have a private tour of a historic palace. A journey is genuinely unforgettable because of these moments!"

Jatinder concludes the interview by emphatically saying, "Leave space for the unexpected. While preparation is important, true adventure occurs when you embrace the unplanned. Some of the best travel experiences come from impromptu detours—a conversation with a local, an unplanned sunset stop, or a hidden gem found by chance."



MAROON HAND EMBROIDERED VELVET KURTA WITH SALWAR AND PURE SILK DUPATTA

Featuring a rich maroon velvet salwar paired with a makhamal kurta, by WeaverStory's Velvet-Makhamal collection, adorned with intricate zardozi and resham embroidery, it exudes luxury and tradition. Complemented by a hand-embroidered pure silk dupatta, this exquisite ensemble creates a regal, sophisticated look that makes a lasting impression.

Price: INR 28,990



TINT THAT WON'T QUIT

Blush that melts away mid-day? Lip color that doesn't last? No thx. Milk Makeup Cooling Water Jelly Tint buildable stain glides on seamlessly for a watercolor finish with serious staying power.

PRICE: INR 3,200



CELEBRATING LOVE

FONZIE FOLKSY LUXURY PERFUME TRAVEL SET

Discover luxury on-the-go with Fonzie Folk'sy's limited edition Travel Set of four uniquely crafted unisex perfumes. Each of these captivating fragrances will have your loved one swooning over you on Valentine's Day and beyond.

PRICE: INR 2499



DAMENSCH'S VALENTINE'S BOX SETTLES THE SCORE

This Valentine's Day, DaMENSCH is here to celebrate different sides of love with a quirky, stylish twist. Introducing the Valentine's Box, where comfort meets comedy, and relationships get the playful flag treatment they deserve!

Whether one is a green flag couple basking in mutual perfection or a red flag duo laughing their way through life's chaos, this box turns those moments into a gift as unique as their love story.



PERIOD CARE PACK - SEVERE

This Valentine's Day, be thoughtful and considerate by gifting the ultimate comfort during a difficult time. Awshad's Period Care Pack, featuring 4500 mg CBD oil, is designed to alleviate severe menstrual cramps, especially when the cold makes things worse.

what's brewing?



Valentine Pop by Tripti Agarwal at Lively Fusion, afternoon of glamour, fashion and therapy. Best dressed was judged by Dr Shashikala Reddy. Valentine fashion was the theme of the event. Guests present were Sushila Bokadia who won the best dressed award while Koyal Chandak won the second best award

PARTY
Photos by- SV Chary



ASF BBQ and Grill, in line with its commitment to social responsibility, hosted a special dinner for underprivileged children at Road No. 36, Jubilee Hills. The initiative aimed to bring joy, warmth and a sense of belonging to children from underserved communities while reinforcing the company's dedication to giving back to society. The event was attended by Danasari Anasuya Seethakka, Minister of Women and Child Welfare, along with Kada Akhil, CMO, and Arif Ali, COO. Seethakka's participation added great significance to the initiative



Aakash Educational Services Limited (AESL), the national leader in test preparatory services, proudly announces an exceptional achievement in the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) Mains 2025 (Session 1). An impressive 28 students from Hyderabad have scored 99 percentile and above in the first session of the examination. Dheeraj Kumar Misra, Chief Academic and Business Head, Aakash Educational Services Limited, congratulated the students



Malleshaiah Alladi informed the press that they are launching comprehensive software training and placement programme to empower future tech professionals in Kukatpally, Hyderabad. Alladi Cloud Training, a leading provider of software job readiness training, on Wednesday announced the launch of its new software training and placement programme designed to equip aspiring tech professionals with the necessary skills to excel in the competitive job market and secure rewarding careers in the software development field



In a glittering affair that brought together glamour and tradition, Mayuka, a reputed brand in silver jewellery, celebrated the grand launch of its exclusive silver jewellery 3rd store at Jubilee Hills, Road No.10, Hyderabad. Jewellery has introduced exciting launch offers that extend until February 28th, 2025

FUN

ARCHIE



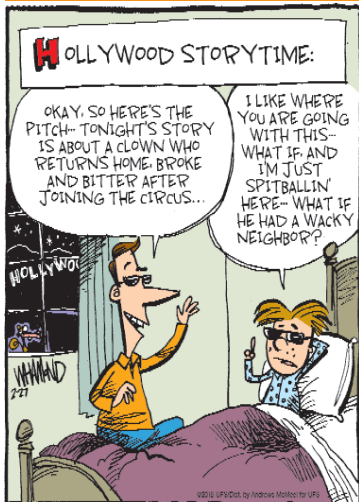
CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



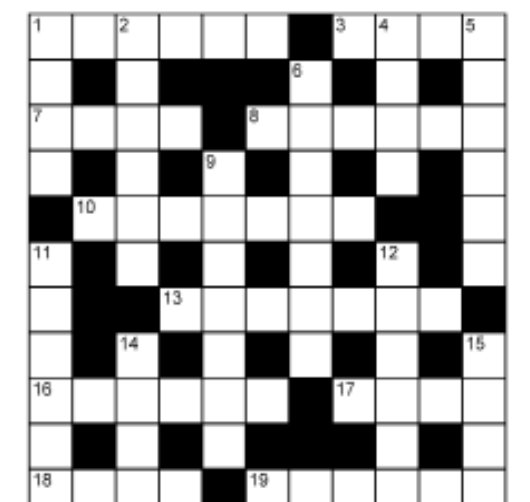
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

2	1	9			7
5	9		4	2	1
		7			
	8	7	5		
3	1	4		9	5
			3	6	1
					4
	3	2	5		9
1				8	2
					5

Yesterday's solution

8	7	2	3	5	1	9	4	6
5	6	1	8	4	9	2	7	3
9	3	4	6	7	2	5	8	1
7	5	9	2	8	3	1	6	4
6	2	8	5	1	4	3	9	7
4	1	3	9	6	7	8	5	2
2	8	5	4	3	6	7	1	9
1	9	6	7	2	5	4	3	8
3	4	7	1	9	8	6	2	5

ACROSS

- A clasp on a belt
- Hint
- A foot covering
- Small glass ball
- Very angry
- Borrow books here
- A large shed for an aeroplane
- Leg joint
- Decays
- Dislike very strongly
- A month
- Alike
- A writer of books
- Medal for third place
- Rope tangle
- Departed

DOWN

- Finest
- A prickly plant
- Part of the ear
- Cricket team number



GINGER MEGGS



I got the mood to get married: Vishwak Sen

SURESH KAVIRAYANI
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Whenever young actor Vishwak Sen's film is released, some controversies also surround the film or the actor. His upcoming film 'Laila' is releasing this Friday. Actor Prudhvi's political comments became viral and hurt some people. Later, Vishwak said sorry about it, because it is his film. "I wanted to stop the controversies," said the actor. He added that he does not want to invite controversies, but they are unexpectedly coming. "Now, I am a more mature person, because I am becoming older. So, I would like to maintain more calm," said the actor when asked why he is quiet these days.

The actor has turned into a female in this film 'Laila'. "As an actor I would like to play all types of characters and a female character is one of them. It also shows a new dimension as an actor, and more than that it is almost two decades since a lead actor played a female role," said Vishwak about him playing a female role. He added that in Telugu there are only a few films like 'Madam', 'Chitram Bhalare Chitram' and 'Bhamane Satya Bhamane' released long back.

"So, I wish to play the female character in a strong way, and at the same time director Ram Narayan came up with this and I immediately agreed," he said. He added that in this film 'Laila' is going to dominate, but at the same time the audience definitely likes Sonu too. In Tamil, Siva Karthikeyan played the female character in 'Remo' and it was released in 2016. "He played a nurse's character and he did it to get his love interest. But in my film he is facing problems from three sides. So to escape from them he turns into a lady," said Vishwak Sen. He added that singer Sravana Bhargavi lends her voice for Vishwak's female character.

The actor said it's not completely an adult comedy, but it attracts youth. "When the director narrated the story to me, I laughed a lot. There are jokes, but they are more like youth content and different jokes," said the actor. Vishwak said it took him nearly two-and-a-half hours to do the makeup. "It's not easy, though I shaved in the morning, but by evening my beard grows, so again I had to shave," he said about the female character. He added that he didn't take any reference or workshop for it. "I used to mock my sister and my aunts, at school with girls, when I was a kid, so those are now helping me to play this female role," said Vishwak.

For this film, they initially roped in Tanishk Bagchi, but he was replaced by Leon James. "I didn't like Tanishk's work and he also couldn't meet our deadlines, so we replaced him with Leon James," he said about music. He added that he doesn't know that director Ram Narayan is also a music director. "When the motion poster was released, I asked who composed the music for it. To my surprise he said he did it," said the actor.

Vishwak also turned into a lyric writer and he said for it also there was no inspiration. "From the last few years I have had this itch in my mind that I want to write lyrics. So I asked my director if he likes them, he can use them, there is no compulsion. I wrote two songs in this film," he said. When asked if the controversy after actor Prudhvi's political comments settled? "I don't know, whatever needed I did," he said. On the same stage, Chiranjeevi also came up with political comments, "but he spoke about his younger brother," said Vishwak about Chiru. He added that he isn't into politics.

The actor accepted that his earlier film 'Mechanic Rocky' was a failure. "Yes, the film did not meet my expectations and we made a few mistakes in the film. I don't want to repeat those mistakes in my future films and I learnt a lesson from it," said the actor. He added that there is a scene in this film



VISHWAK SEN TALKS ABOUT HIS MARRIAGE, HIS MATURITY LEVELS, DISCIPLINE, CONTROVERSIES AND HOW DIFFICULT IS DOING A FEMALE CHARACTER, WHY HE DOESN'T WANT TO DO HORROR FILMS AND SO ON...

which leads to the sequel, but he wanted to add only in the second week. "If this film is successful, there will be a sequel," he added.

Vishwak Sen is going to enter his 30s in the coming March. When asked about marriage, "I got into the mood of getting married," he said. He added that he doesn't have anyone in his mind, and also he doesn't know what kind of girl he wants. "When it comes, I will see," he said.

Vishwak Sen earlier directed a film 'Falaknuma Das' and will he again wield the megaphone? "No, not now, after five years, I will direct a film," he said. He added that if he directs, he can do only one film in a year, otherwise he can do four to five films a year. "I also want to earn something, so I am focused on acting now," he said.

For another question he said, he doesn't want to do horror genre. "When you feel something in real life, you can do it on the screen. But I watched many horror films even in an empty theatre, but I wasn't scared, so I don't do horror films," he said. He said, but he was scared of humans. "We human beings can do anything," he said.

Siddhu's film releasing in theatres after five years

Siddhu Jonnalagadda's film 'Krishna and His Leela' was released directly in OTT in 2020. Ravikanth Parepu was the director, while Rana Daggubati and Sanjay Reddy were the producers. Shradha Srinath, Seerath Kapoor and Shalini Vadnikatti were the female leads. It's a romantic comedy and the film was a successful one on OTT.

Now after five years, the makers are releasing this film in theatres this Friday, on the occasion of Valentine's Day. "We are not re-releasing this film. We are releasing it for the first time in theatres," said Rana about the film. He added that they wanted to rename the film as 'It's Complicated'. "We have few names in our mind, but it is the director who comes up with this title," said Rana.

Siddhu said that he wanted to see this film with the audience and hence releasing it in theatres. "We have many requests on social media about this film's release, so we decided February 14 is the best," said Rana Daggubati.

Director Ravikanth said that his first short film was titled 'It's Complicated,' so he wanted to use the same title for this film.

Siddhu became a big star after his last film 'Tillu Square' which grossed more than Rs 100 crore. Now, the makers wanted to cash in on Siddhu's image.

So they are releasing this film now in theatres, says a source.



Chiranjeevi lands in a controversy for his 'sexist' remarks

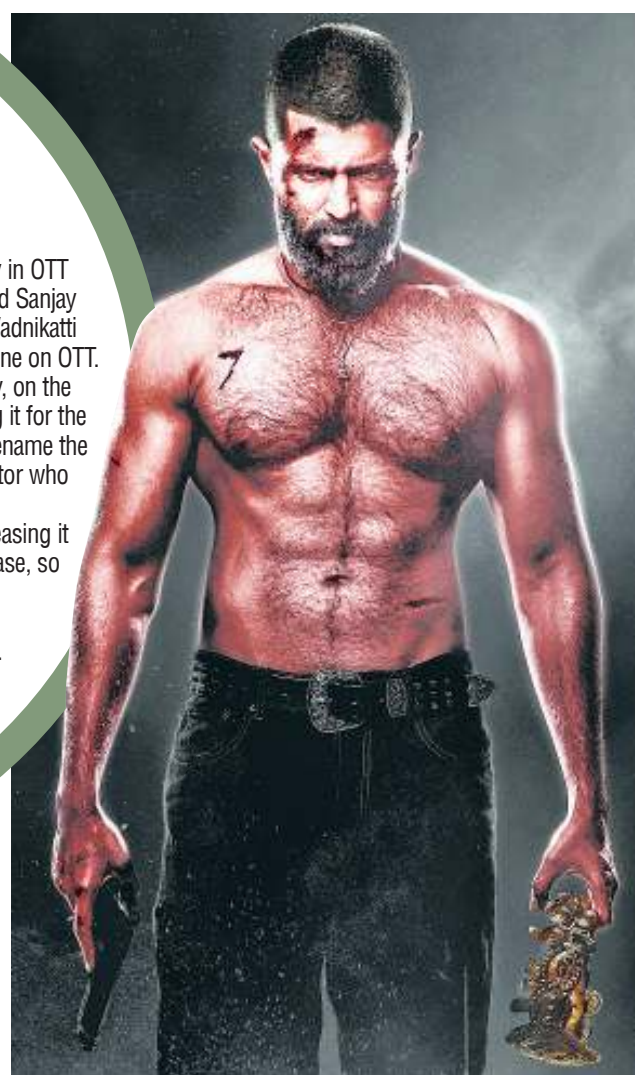
Mega Star of Telugu Cinema, Chiranjeevi is landed in a controversy. The actor was the chief guest for 'Brahma Anandam' film pre-release event. Though he made comments in a lighter vein, those landed him in a big controversy. In the film 'Brahmanandam' and his real son Raj Gowtham are playing the roles of a grandfather and grandson. Relating to this, they showed pictures of Chiranjeevi along with his granddaughters and asked him to comment. He said, "When I am at home with my granddaughters, it is like a ladies hostel, surrounded by many ladies and I am like a warden," said Chiranjeevi.

The actor didn't stop at that and added, "I am telling Charan next time to have a son, so that the legacy continues. But I am afraid he may have another daughter." He ended up by saying 'Lovely kids'. Though Chiranjeevi said it in a very light-hearted way, his comments landed him in a big controversy about his 'sexist' remarks. Many people reacted to his comment and said a girl also can carry on his legacy. Not about it, his other comment about his

In a film's pre-release event, Megastar made comments about his granddaughters. To continue his legacy, he asks Ram Charan to have a boy next time. His political entry and other comments go viral on the social media

grandfather's photo flashes on the screen and Chiranjeevi says, "He is my mother's father Radhakrishna Naidu. He is from Nellore, but settled in Mogaluru and retired as Excise Inspector. You can get any other person's similarities, but not him. Because he is a romantic person. I officially had two grandmothers, and when he was not in a good mood, he went to a third woman. I don't know there may be a fourth and a fifth woman also," he said about his grandfather.

This is the second time that Chiranjeevi attended a film event as a special guest, just one day before he attended 'Laila' pre-release event and then 'Brahma Anandam' event. At the same stage, he clarified that he doesn't want to enter politics again. "I will stay away from politics all my life and I decided to stay in the cinema. There may be doubts that I am meeting many people. So people may doubt, but I am meeting them to do social service," said Chiranjeevi about his political entry. He also added that his younger brother Pawan Kalyan is there to serve people and he will fulfill his vision and mission.



Amma Rajasekhara confident that he is back on track with Thala

For the last few days, Tollywood is busy with pre-release and other film events. Big actors like Chiranjeevi and Nagarjuna participated as chief guests in film events, while another small film 'Thala' also held its pre-release event. Popular choreographer turned director Amma Rajasekhara is the director of this film, and he is introducing his son Amma Ragin Raj as lead actor. The film is releasing on February 14. Srinivas Goud is the producer and this film is also releasing in Tamil at the same time. Ankita Naskar is also making her debut as the female lead.

Ragin Raj, the young actor, who is playing the lead, spoke in an emotional way. He shared how 'Thala' has been in the making for two years and how he endured real injuries for the action sequences. "This film is an intense journey of a young man shaped by his mother's sentiments, with elements of romance and action," said Ragin Raj.

Director Amma Rajasekhara, acknowledging the stress and challenges of the past months, expressed his gratitude to producer Srinivas Goud for unwavering support. He assured everyone that this film would mark his return and sought the audience's blessings for his son's debut. At the same event, Amma Rajasekhara collapsed because of his high blood pressure. First aid was provided immediately and the director recovered after some time.



Vijay Deverakonda's film titled Kingdom

Vijay Deverakonda's upcoming film directed by Gowtam Tinnanuri is one of the most anticipated films of 2025. The makers of this film have officially announced the title as 'Kingdom'. The teaser was also released on Wednesday and it is an adrenaline-fueled action drama packed with intensity, emotions and scale. It promises a larger than life experience leaving audiences on the edge of their seats.

Interestingly, Jr NTR has lent his voice for the Telugu version, Suriya for Tamil and Ranbir Kapoor for Hindi. Vijay

Deverakonda has poured his heart and soul into this film giving it everything to make it as big as possible. After delivering the cult classic 'Jersey', Gowtam Tinnanuri is back, this time showcasing Vijay Deverakonda in a completely new avatar.

Anirudh Ravichander is one of the most in demand music directors, and he provided a power-packed and electrifying BGM adding to the film's intensity. Naga Vamsi and Sai Soujanya are producing this film and they announced that the film is to hit the big screens on May 30.

India thrashes England by 142 runs, sweeps series 3-0

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

A robust batting show led by the Shubman Gill's attractive century heralded India's 142-run hammering of England in the third and final ODI as the hosts completed a dominant 3-0 clean sweep to culminate preparations for the Champions Trophy, here on Wednesday.

India ticked all the remaining boxes with vice-captain Gill (112) following up his twin fifties earlier in the series with a seventh ODI ton of his career while middle-order mainstays Virat Kohli (52) and Shreyas Iyer (78) pushed India to a formidable 356 in the first half.

Indian bowlers then took over the mantle to complete the England demolition job, bundling out the visitors for a mere 214 in 34.2 overs to complete a comprehensive victory — their second largest in ODIs in terms of runs against a familiar opponent.

There was no change in the script for English, who came crashing down against spin after a sparkling start against

pace, which was provided by the pair of Ben Duckett (34) and Phil Salt (24) in tow. The slowness of the surface aided Indian bowlers as strike-making became difficult as the match progressed.

Duckett took charge of England's response early on but played one shot too many. After smacking Arshdeep Singh (2/33) for four consecutive boundaries around the park in the fifth over, he again went after the left-arm seamer but was deceived by the 'pace off' knuckle ball.

The mishit was collected cleanly by India skipper Rohit Sharma at mid-off and Arshdeep soon bounced out Salt, albeit off a slower one which the batter hit meekly to Axar Patel for a simple grab.

Tom Banton gave a good example of himself playing his first ODI against India, hitting a couple of attractive reverse sweeps against spinners but he could not push on beyond a 41-ball 38 with four fours and two sixes.

Joe Root perished for just 24 when an inside edge off Axar (2/22) crashed into his



stumps and Harshit Rana (2/31) hastened the end of England's resistance by getting the rid of Harry Brook (19) and Jos Buttler (6) in quick succession. Earlier, Gill led the way with a fluent 112 while Kohli and

out as Indian bowlers tightened the screws with regular strikes and the visitors also lacked gumption on a pitch which remained true in its nature.

Iyer also cashed in on ideal conditions in their last outing before the Champions Trophy, helping India set a 357-run target. Gill anchored India's innings en route to his seventh ODI ton — 112 off 104 balls

(14x4s, 3x6s) which also took his average past 60 in the format — while putting on two century stands with Kohli and Iyer to consolidate for India.

The India vice-captain Gill also achieved the unique feat

of scoring a century each across the three international formats at the same venue.

Gill, meanwhile, has also scored an IPL hundred here at the Narendra Modi Stadium. Attacking the fast bowlers and spinners alike, Gill's knock was replete with rich strokes particularly down the ground. The opener displayed immaculate footwork at the crease early on to take the attack to the opposition and remained resolute to score off spin, until he was cleaned up by Adil Rashid (4/64).

On his part, Kohli took his time to find the rhythm and when he did, the batting mainstay looked hitting his strides.

Kohli made the most of a juicy overpitched delivery from Mark Wood which he drove through the covers for his first four, then got on top of the ball from Saqib Mahmood to swat it for another boundary through mid-wicket and punished the England pacer for being wayward as he cut him for his third four.

While his stroke play was compelling in the run-a-ball fifty for his 73rd half-

century, there were elements of struggle against leg-spinner Rashid. Rashid continued to have wood over Kohli as soon after he raised his bat for fifty, the England spinner had him caught behind with a loopy leg-break that took an outside edge before settling in the wicketkeeper's gloves. This was the fifth time Rashid has dismissed Kohli in ODIs.

Kohli was stranded 37 runs short of becoming only the third batter ever to make 14,000 ODI runs, missing a personal landmark like his teammate Rohit Sharma earlier in the innings. It is expected to be completed during Champions Trophy.

Coming off a terrific century in second ODI, Rohit (1) could not even get a start as a delivery from Wood which was angled in, straightened enough to take the outside edge and Phil Salt collected a sharp catch.

Iyer only had himself to blame for missing out on a triple-digit score after he was caught behind on a delivery fired down the leg stump by Rashid, one that he needlessly chased and edged.



Strac withdraws, Smith to lead Australia in Champions Trophy

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Steve Smith-led Australia will be without their frontline pace attack at the Champions Trophy (CT) after fast bowler Mitchell Starc withdrew from the tournament citing personal reasons.

The ODI World Cup holders have been forced to make several changes to their 15-member provisional squad due to injuries to captain Pat Cummins, pacer Josh Hazlewood, and all-rounder Mitchell Marsh, along with Marcus Stoinis' surprise retirement.

"We understand and respect Mitch's decision," Chair of men's selectors George Bailey said on Wednesday.

"Mitch is deeply respected for his commitment to international cricket and the priority he places on performing for Australia."

Starc, who appeared to be in discomfort due to a left ankle issue during the latter stages of the final Test in Galle last week, will also miss the upcoming ODI series in Sri Lanka starting Wednesday.

"His well-documented ability to play through pain and adversity, as well as forgoing opportunities in other parts of his career to put his country first, should be applauded," Bailey added.

Cricket Australia said Starc has requested privacy and will

not be commenting on his decision.

The development comes as a major blow for Australia, who will be without the three pacers — Cummins, Hazlewood and Starc — who played a crucial role in their 2023 ODI World Cup victory.

"His loss is, of course, a blow for the Champions Trophy campaign, but it provides an opportunity for someone else to make their mark on the tournament," Bailey said.

Smith, who is leading the side on the tour of Sri Lanka, will captain the team in the absence of Cummins and Marsh during the tournament, which will be played across Pakistan and the UAE.

"The squad has changed significantly over the past month due to untimely injuries and the retirement of Marcus Stoinis," Bailey remarked.

Pacers Spencer Johnson, Nathan Ellis, Sean Abbott, and Ben Dwarshuis have been named in Australia's final 15-man squad for the Champions Trophy.

"The upside is that we have been able to call on players who have had international exposure and success over the past 12 months," Bailey said.

"A strong core of some of our most experienced players will provide a strong foundation in our attempt to win this edition of the Champions Trophy.

India, England teams support BCCI's 'Donate Organs, Save Lives' campaign

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

India and England cricket teams took the field for the third and final ODI here on Wednesday wearing green armbands to support the BCCI's initiative of "Donate Organs, Save Lives" campaign.

The BCCI informed this in a statement shortly after the commencement of the match here at the Narendra Modi Stadium.

"Both teams are wearing green arm bands to support BCCI's initiative 'Donate Organs, Save Lives'. The initiative is spearheaded by ICC Chairman Mr Jay Shah," the BCCI release stated.

The initiative was announced by ICC chairman and former BCCI secretary Shah on Monday.



Shah wrote on X, "On the occasion of the 3rd ODI between India and England in Ahmedabad on February 12th, we are proud to launch an awareness initiative — 'Donate Organs, Save Lives'."

"Sport has the power to inspire, unite, and create lasting impact beyond the field. Through this initiative, we urge everyone to take a

step towards giving the greatest gift of all — the gift of life.

"One pledge, one decision, can save multiple lives. Let's come together and make a difference!" he added.

The initiative was supported by several Indian players, including Virat Kohli and vice-captain Shubman Gill.

"Score the ultimate century.

Your organs can help others live beyond your lifetime. Register as a donor and make every life count," Kohli said in a video shared by the BCCI.

Gill added, "Be the captain of life. Just like a captain leads the team to victory, you can lead someone to life by pledging to donate your organs."

Other Indian cricketers to support the initiative were batters Shreyas Iyer and KL Rahul.

"One donor can save up to eight lives. Pledge today and hit a six for humanity," Iyer said.

Rahul added, "Play the ultimate winning shot. Your decision to donate your organs can be the match winning moment in someone's life. Be a hero off the field too."



Ghazanfar ruled out of both Champions Trophy and IPL

PTI ■ KABUL

Teenage Afghanistan off-spinner AM Ghazanfar has been ruled out of both the ICC Champions Trophy (CT) and the IPL due to a lower back fracture that will keep him on the sidelines for at least four months, the country's cricket board announced on Wednesday.

Left-arm spinner Nangeyalia Kharote, originally named as a reserve, has replaced the 18-year-old in the main squad for Champions Trophy, which will be held in Pakistan and the UAE from February 19.

The 20-year-old Kharote is a left-arm spinner and has played seven ODIs and six T20 Internationals since making his debut last year.

Ghazanfar sustained the injury during Afghanistan's tour of Zimbabwe late last year, sidelining him for "at least four months."

"AM Ghazanfar has been ruled out of the ICC Champions Trophy due to a fracture in the L4 vertebra (located in the lower back), specifically in the left pars interarticularis," the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) posted on X.

"He sustained the injury during Afghanistan's recent tour of Zimbabwe and will be sidelined for a minimum

of four months, remaining under treatment during this period," it added.

The IPL is scheduled to take place from March 21 to May 25 and Ghazanfar was to make his maiden appearance at the event after being bought by Mumbai Indians.

The ACB also informed that off-spinner Mujeeb Ur Rahman will continue to miss ODI action "until he has fully recovered," despite playing for Paarl Royals in the SA20 through January and early February.

Mujeeb, who was not included in the provisional squad for Champions Trophy, last played an ODI during the 2023 World Cup.

Afghanistan will begin their Champions Trophy campaign against South Africa on February 21 in Karachi, followed by matches against England and Australia.

Afghanistan squad for Champions Trophy

Hashmatullah Shahidi (capt), Ibrahim Zadran, Ikrām Alikhil (wk), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Sediqullah Atal, Rahmat Shah (vice-capt), Azmatullah Omarzai, Gulbadin Naib, Mohammad Nabi, Rashid Khan, Fareeh Ahmad, Fazalhaq, Ferooqi, Nangeyalia Kharote, Naveed Zadran, Noor Ahmad.

Shikhar Dhawan among four event ambassadors for Champions Trophy

PTI ■ DUBAI

Former India opener Shikhar Dhawan was on Wednesday named as one of the four event ambassadors for the ICC Champions Trophy (CT) to be held in Pakistan and Dubai from February 19 to March 9.

Besides Dhawan, the ICC has also named Pakistan's 2017 Champions Trophy winning captain Sarfraz Ahmed, former Australia all-rounder Shane Watson, and New Zealand's legendary fast bowler, Tim Southee as event ambassadors.

The quartet will write guest columns and will also attend matches, sharing their thoughts on the event, where the world's best eight teams will compete for the top



honour. "It is such a special feeling to be part of a Champions Trophy, and to be given the opportunity to enjoy the upcoming edition as an Ambassador is an honour," Dhawan said in an ICC release.

"It's the ultimate competition where it's all on the line, and that is what makes it such a

thrilling spectacle. It's a tournament full of passion, pride, and determination, and that's what makes it such a thrilling and emotional journey for everyone involved."

As India's highest run-scorer in the Champions Trophy, with an outstanding 701 runs across two editions, Dhawan

has long been one of the most iconic players in the history of the competition.

He also holds the distinction of being the only player to win two consecutive Golden Bats (for the highest run-getter) in the tournament.

His remarkable achievements include being named the Player of the Tournament in the 2013 edition, as well as holding the record for the most centuries in Champions Trophy history.

"Some of my most cherished cricketing memories come from playing in the Champions Trophy. In the coming weeks, we will see the world's best teams pouring their heart and soul into every match, with everything they have worked for on the line," said Dhawan.

India adopts high-risk-high-reward approach in squad selection

PTI ■ BENGALURU

It aligns with head coach Gautam Gambhir's high-risk-high-reward approach but can India's Champions Trophy squad, having lost its game-changing pace talisman Jasprit Bumrah to injury, deliver the goods at the ODI showpiece?

The answer to that question is not particularly straightforward given the audacious calls taken to decide the final 15.

The selection risks start with the drafting in of five spinners. The Dubai-bound flight will feature Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav and Varun Chakravarty in a spin-heavy bowling attack.

Harshit Rana has replaced Bumrah with the more experienced Mohammed Siraj relegated to the group of non-travelling reserves alongside young batter Yashasvi Jaiswal and all-rounder Shivam Dube.

India's matches will be held in Dubai, a venue where pacers have found more success traditionally in the 50-over format.

Available data shows that the Dubai International Cricket Stadium, where India will play all their matches, has hosted 58 ODIs since 2009, and pacers have taken 466 wickets here at an average of 28.6 and economy of 4.8.

The spinners have combined to take 334 wickets till now at the DICS, and their average goes up to 30 but with a slightly better economy of 4.2.

"The Dubai surface has a bit more carry than say in Sharjah, and the pacers here have found some good success and that's why Pakistan has picked more pacers in their squad, though they are supposed to play only a couple of matches here," a former national selector told PTI.

"If you use the new ball well, then you can have a good

purchase there. I am not faulting the selection of Varun. He is in good form, but I would have liked to see one more experienced pacer in that side, someone like Siraj," he added.

Spinners' role in Dubai

From outside, having five spinners looks like an over-estimation of the conditions. But the management took a chance with Chakravarty because of his excellent recent form.

Chakravarty has been trusted to deliver in a multi-nation tournament, after his failure to do so in the T20 World Cup 2021 at the same venue.

What might have tilted the scales in his favour is the fact that none of India's league stage opposition in the Champions Trophy — Bangladesh, Pakistan and New Zealand — have played him before.

The way he managed to trouble England in the ongoing home series on account of being an unknown entity for the visitors



also worked to his advantage. But on the flip side, it leaves Kuldeep Yadav in peril. With Jadeja and Axar being the first-choice spinners considering their batting prowess, the fight for the third spinner's slot will be between Kuldeep and Chakravarty.

If India follows the template of the recent second ODI against England at Cuttack,

Chakravarty can pip the left-arm wrist spinner, at least in the initial stages of the Champions Trophy.

Why Siraj was overlooked

Another selection paradox is placing Rana ahead of Siraj as Bumrah's replacement for a tournament in which teams will have to do the tight-rope walk of three matches in the league phase.

Conventional thinking says that experience more than explosiveness matters in such events, but the wise men went ahead with Rana.

According to skipper Rohit Sharma, ineffectiveness with the old ball led to Siraj's omission from the marquee event.

On that count, Rana has already given them two examples of his ability to strike when the white ball loses its luster.

In his T20I debut, Rana was the sixth bowler, a much-debated concussion substitute for Shivam Dube, and walked away with game-changing figures of 3 for 33.

In ODIs, Rana went for a few runs, but showed the gumption to bowl across three spells in three various passages of the match.

The risk that the management has taken is to trust Rana to grow in his role quickly and deliver in a high-pressure

tournament as and when he is called for.

Why was Jaiswal dropped? A common line of thinking can be that the selectors wanted a bowler with some mystery element about him in the squad once Bumrah was ruled out with a lower back injury.

So, they picked an in-form Chakravarty. Fair call. But why select him in place of Jaiswal, an opener?

Should they have replaced a spinner for him? Perhaps Washington Sundar could have been the one to be omitted to accommodate Chakravarty.

However, in one shot, the selectors have also avoided the opening conundrum that haunted them in the first ODI against England at Nagpur.

It was tough to accommodate Jaiswal and Shreyas Iyer in the same eleven but an injury to Virat Kohli gave them a temporary relief.

Once Kohli came back, Jaiswal missed out in the second

match, and the big wigs did not want an encore in Dubai.

India is now placing confidence in Rohit, who made a hundred at Cuttack, and Shubman Gill, who scored two fifties in as many ODIs against England, to deliver at the top consistently in the Champions Trophy.

They are hoping that Kohli will find a way to return to his imperious scoring ways and will not put pressure on the rest of the middle-order.

The management has taken the risk of believing that the top five will be in fine fettle throughout the tournament.

They have also risked the traditionally iffy fitness of Hardik Pandya and his ability to plug the gap as the third seamer behind Mohammed Shami and Arshdeep Singh or Harshit Rana.

Looking at the squad, India seem to have taken one risk too many. Will they get the desired high reward? Or will they falter?