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Piracy is like cancer, but we are doing our best to fight it: Damodara • PRASAD





QUOTE OF THE DAY

- B Mahesh Kumar Goud, TPCC Chief and MLC

24-hr water supply shutdown on Feb 17

The Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) has announced a 24hour water supply shutdown on February 17 from 6:00 am to 6:00 am on February 18, to facilitate the replacement of 900mm dia valves (BF and NRVs) at Kondapaka pumping station on the 3000mm dia MS pumping main of GDWSS Phase-I. As a result of this shutdown, water supply will be affected in multiple areas under various O&M divisions, including key localities across Hyderabad and its suburbs. Affected ...

Leopard gatecrashes Lucknow wedding

Wedding celebrations can often get wild. And this one in Lucknow did, quite literally, when a leopard strayed into the banquet hall. xpectedly, pandemonium broke out as panicked guests scampered here and there, the bride and groom locked themselves in a car and a forest officer who tried to take on the big cat was injured when it took a swipe at his rifle wielding arm. It all happened on Wednesday night in the city's Buddheshwar Road area. The leopard was caught and tranquillised after..

White-collar hiring grows by 32 pc

Hiring for white-collar jobs witnessed a 32 per cent year-onyear surge in January, driven by industries such as semiconductors, energy, waste management and manufacturing in India a report said on Thurs The growth in hiring is attributed to surging consumer demand, strategic incentives outlined in the Union Budget 2025-26 and an increased focus on sustainability initiatives, according to foundit Insights Tracker. There was a 32 per cent year-on-year jump in hiring for January...

-PAGE: 8

RCB names Patidar as captain for IPL

IPL franchise Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Thursday named Rajat Patidar as its captain for the upcoming season starting March 21, replacing South African Faf du Plessis who was released from the squad last year. Patidar was among RCB's retained players before the mega auction in November, 2024 and has the experience of leading Madhva Pradesh in the Syed Mushtag Ali Trophy (T20) and the Vijay Hazare Trophy (ODI). The 31-year-old, who signed up with the franchise in 2022, guided



Prime Minister Narendra Modi received a rousing welcome from members of the Indian-American diaspora when he reached Blair House, the President's Guest House.

Prime Minister Modi arrived in the US on Wednesday where he will meet President Donald Trump on Thursday for his bilateral meeting after last month's inauguration ceremony. As he reached Blair House, the President's Guest House, where he will be staying he was accorded a rousing welcome by members of the Indian-American diaspora. Braving freezing temperatures and rain.

CM clears 7 flyovers in Hyd, to come up at key junctions

Orders speedy execution of proposed projects



In a major push for traffic decongestion in Hyderabad, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has given the green signal for the construction of seven

flyovers at key junctions across the

HC order on kids'

entry into theatres

challenged

The Multiplex Owners' Association

has filed a petition challenging the Telangana High Court's ruling that restricts children below 16 years

from entering cinema theatres

all stakeholders before making a final

decision on the matter. Following

this, the multiplex owners moved an

appeal, arguing that the restriction would cause significant financial

During the hearing, the Chief

Justice's Bench clarified that it

could not intervene while the peti-

tion was still pending before the Single Bench. The court advised the

petitioners to file an implead peti-

tion in the ongoing case instead.
Following the court's sugges-

tion, the petitioners withdrew their

appeal and agreed to present their

concerns in the pending case before

the Single bench.

The High Court had recently directed the government to consult

between 11 pm and 11 am.

losses to theatre businesses.

PNS HYDERABAD

city. He directed officials to immediately call for tenders, complete land acquisition, and fast-track execution to minimize delays.

As part of a larger urban transformation plan, the CM emphasized the strategic development of the core mitigation efforts.

dards. He insisted on a comprehensive drone survey across the entire core area, extending the ongoing pilot project, to map housing, water supply, electricity, and sewage infra-structure. The data will help plan future infrastructure needs without disrupting essential services. To further streamline Hyderabad's traffic, the CM suggest-

urban area within the Outer Ring

Road (ORR) to international stan-

ed leveraging Google's expertise in smart traffic management, ensuring smoother vehicular movement. Additionally, he instructed officials to prepare plans for the restoration of lakes and widening of stormwater drains, reinforcing flood

Police issue notices to BRS MLC in Moinabad cock-fight case

Moinabad police issued notices to BRS MLC Pochampally Srinivas Reddy in a case of cock-fight betting money at a farmhouse in Tolkatta village. According to the collected evidence, it came to light that, the land Sy. no.165/3, near Tolkatta village, in which a cockfight was organized by betting money belongs to BRS MLC

Police asked him to produce relevant documents, or any other related evidence in order to proceed in effective investigation within four days from the receipt. Otherwise, it will be construed that the BRS MLC has no evidence on hand and the case will be finalised on merits of the investigation. Continued on Page 2

PNS HYDERABAD

SEEKING SUPPORT FOR CASTE SURVEY

Govt plans all-party delegation to Delhi

TPCC Chief and MLC B Mahesh Kumar Goud said that the

government will take the all-party delegation to the Centre

to discuss on caste census after introducing the 42 percent reservation bill in the Assembly for the sake of legality.

Mahesh Kumar Goud said after discussing with the BC

Union leaders and professors on Thursday along with the

BC Welfare Minister Ponnam Prabhakar, Later, Ponnam

Prabhakar said that the government did not reveal the

details of the caste-wise number. The caste-wise details

doing the rounds are wrong. The opposition parties are

intentionally campaigning caste-wise numbers.
Ponnam Prabhakar said, "Accordingly, 42 percent reser-

vations will be made legal in local body elections, educa-

tion and employment opportunities. A cabinet meeting will

be held in the first week of March

Modi meets US NSA Michael Waltz

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met US National Security Advisor Michael Waltz here on Thursday. Modi arrived in the US

capital Wednesday evening for a bilateral meeting with President Donald Trump.

The meeting with Waltz was his first engagement of the day. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and NSA Ajit Doval were also

present at the meeting.

After arriving at Blair
House, the President's Guest House, Modi met US Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard on Wednesday. "Congratulated her on her confirmation. Discussed various aspects of the India-USA friendship, of which she's always been a strong votary," Modi said on X.





Microsoft expands in Hyd, CM terms it a proud moment

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy inaugurated Microsoft's new office building at Gachibowli, marking another milestone in Hyderabad's IT sector. Addressing the gathering, he described the expansion as a proud moment for the state, highlighting Microsoft's deep-rooted association with Hyderabad.

The Chief Minister emphasized that Microsoft's presence in Hyderabad has played a key role in shaping the city's global reputation in the IT sector. "The world's biggest tech giant has maintained a longstanding relationship with Hyderabad, and its expansion here will further strengthen our position as a leading IT hub," he said.

Continued on Page 2

Pilot or Ajoy Kumar likely as TG Cong incharge

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Two more names have come to the fore for the post of AICC incharge general secretary of Telangana State besides former ministers Bhupesh Baghel and Ashok Gehlot. The two new names are that of

Sachin Pilot and Ajoy Kumar. Sachin Pilot is a member of Rajasthan Assembly and Ajoy Kumar is CWC member. The appointment of the new incharge for Telangana State in place of Deepa Das Munshi will take place in a day or two, it is learnt.

KRISHNA WATER DISPUTE CASE

No relief to Andhra in SC

PNS HYDERABAD

The Supreme Court on Thursday declined to grant any relief to Andhra Pradesh in its writ petition WP 1230/2023, which challenges the issued by the Government of India to the Brijesh Kumar Tribunal (Krishna Water Dispute Tribunal-II) for determining the allocation and sharing of Krishna river waters between Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The court has posted the matter for the next hearing on February 27.

The Government of India issued



the additional ToR in October 2023, following which Andhra Pradesh filed the writ petition in the Supreme Court, contesting the decision. The Supreme Court has heard the case multiple times but has so far not ranted any relief to Andhra Pradesh. Meanwhile, the Brijesh

Kumar Tribunal has continued proceedings on the matter and, after hearing both states, ruled in favor of taking up the additional ToR first.
The next hearing of the tribunal is scheduled for February 19.

ing saw the presence of Telangana Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy, reinforcing Telangana's stance in the dispute. The court's decision to not intervene at this stage strengthens Telangana's position, as the tribunal continues to deliberate on the fresh ToR issued by the

'TG sinking into debts'



PNS HYDERABAD

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman commented that Telangana state had a surplus budget at the time the state was divided, however, Telangana was stuck in debts later only.

While speaking in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday, Nirmala Sitaraman said, "It is a fact that Telangana is mired in debts. Despite all efforts of the Centre, Telangana is sinking into debts. The Centre is not blaming any party for the present situation ". She said that the BIBINagar AIIMS activities are going

on. 2605 kilometres of highway construction took place in 2014. The Centre constructed four Greenfield corridors under the Bharat Mala program. Continued on Page 2 under the Bharat Mala program.

JOURNALIST ASSAULT CASE

SC grants pre-arrest bail to Mohan Babu

PNS NEW DELHI

Thursday granted anticipatory bail to Telugu actor Mohan Babu in an alleged case of assault

of a journalist. A bench of Justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and A h s a n u d d i n Amanullah directed Babu to cooperate with

the ongoing investigation.
Babu had moved the top The Supreme Court on court against the December 23 2024 Telangana High Court order which dismissed his anticipatory bail

application.
"Custodial interrogation of the petitioner is not required. Hence, the order dated anuary 9, 2025, Continued on Page 2

Prez rule in Manipur

Assembly put under suspended animation

PNS NEW DELHI

President's rule was imposed in strife-torn Manipur on Thursday, and the state assembly put under suspended animation, days after Chief Minister N Biren Singh resigned from his post that led to political uncertainty in the northeastern state.

The Manipur assembly, which has a tenure till 2027, has been put under suspended animation, according to a notification issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Singh, who was heading the BJP government in Manipur, resigned as chief minister after nearly 21 months of ethnic violence that has

claimed over 250 lives so far. submitted his resignation to Governor

after his meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah here. The decision to impose the central rule was taken after the governor sent a report to President Droupadi Murmu.

'After considering the report and other information received by me, I am satisfied that a situation has arisen in which the government of that state cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of India," the notification said.

It further said: "Now, therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred by article 356 of the Constitution, and of all other powers enabling me in that behalf, I hereby proclaim that - assume to myself as President of India all functions of the govern-He resigned on February 9 and ment of the state of Manipur and all powers vested in or exercisable by Ajay Kumar Bhalla in Imphal, hours the Governor of the that state".

Will never accept inclusion of Muslims in BC list: Bandi

PNS HYDERABAD

Union Minister of State for Home Bandi Sanjay Kumar on Thursday said the BJP will never accept the inclusion of Muslims

as the party is unequivocally against religion-based reservations.

His comments came a day after the Congress government said it would pass a bill in the assembly soon to provide 42 per cent reservation to BCs in the Backward Classes list by the Telangana government and send it to the parliament's nod. "Muslims in the BC list will never

> "Muslims in the BC list will never be accepted, period. BJP is unequivocally against religious-based reservations. Despite being aware of this, Congress still trying to push it onto the Centre is sheer foolishness," Kumar said in a post on social media platform 'X'

be accepted, period. BJP is unequivocally against religious-based reservations. Despite being aware of this, Congress still trying to push it onto the Centre is sheer foolishness," Kumar said in a post on social media platform 'X'

Alleging that Congress lacks sincerity in implementing BC reservations, he said inclusion of Muslims in the Backward Classes category will deprive BCs of their rightful reservations. If Muslims are included in BCs, the entire Hindu society will revolt, he said.

Saying that Congress will face consequences of its move in the February 27 MLC elections in the state, he said the state government must remove Muslims from the BC list if it is sincere.

71 CASES REGISTERED

Police crack down on illegal sand mining

PNS HYDERABAD

The Rachakonda Police have intensified their crackdown on illegal sand mining and transportation, demonstrating their commitment to enforcing government regulations. Through a special drive, police have registered 71 cases against those violating sand mining laws, seizing significant quantities of sand and vehicles used in illegal transportation.

Over the past few days, Rachakonda Commissionerate has been keeping a close watch on unauthorised sand transportation. On the second day of the ongoing special drive, the number of cases reached 71, highlighting the scale of the illegal operations.

According to police records, the cases were distrib-

uted across four zones: LB Nagar Zone - 26 cases, Malkajgiri Zone - 23 cases, Yadadri-Bhuvanagiri Zone - 10 cases and Maheshwaram Zone - 12 cases. A total of 107 suspects have been booked, and authorities have seized 3,762 tonnes of Continued on Page 2

Pending dues will be cleared: DCM

Assures welfare hostels and Gurukuls

PNS HYDERABAD

Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu and BC Welfare and Transport Minister Ponnam Prabhakar assured that pending rental dues for welfare hostels and Gurukuls operating in leased buildings will be cleared immediately. In the pre-budget review meeting for the BC Welfare and Transport departments, they directed officials to submit proposals for settling these dues and ensuring improvements in hostel infra-

The ministers instructed that renovations be undertak-

Former minister and BRS

leader Harish Rao has lashed

out at the Congress govern-

ment, accusing it of failing to provide basic healthcare ser-

vices to the poor. Highlighting

the deteriorating state of Basti

and Palle dawakhanas, he

questioned why primary

health centers across the state,

including in Hyderabad, Nizamabad, Adilabad, and

erstwhile Mahabubnagar, were

in disarray while the govern-

closure of the Keasara Health

Raising concerns over the

ment remained indifferent.

PNS HYDERABAD

schools, including the installation of mosquito nets on windows and main doors, with necessary funds to be allocated immediately. They also emphasized that BC study centers should function as employment hubs, aligning coaching programs with the Telangana Public Service Commission's job calendar and focusing on competitive exams like DSC and banking recruit-

Highlighting the importance of vocational training in Gurukuls, the ministers proposed that each student should be offered a vocational course

'PHCs are in disarray in TG'

Harish accuses govt of neglecting public health

and Wellness Center under the

Dammaiaguda municipality in

What are the government and

Medchal district, he asked,

the health department doing if

such a situation has arisen?" He

pointed out that during the pre-

vious BRS government, these

healthcare facilities were set up

to serve the urban and rural

poor, but under the Congress

regime, they were either

neglected or shut down due to

BRS government had estab-

lished 500 basti dawakhanas

across Greater Hyderabad and

other parts of the state, along

Harish Rao stated that the

lack of support.

en in welfare residential along with their regular academic curriculum. Since residential education ensures fulltime student engagement, they stressed that vocational training would enhance employment prospects.

The meeting also discussed the procurement of electric buses for TSRTC, as well as the establishment of charging stations for their efficient operation. Officials reviewed TSRTC's assets, management strategies, and revenue generation plans. Among those present were BC Welfare Principal Secretary Sridhar, TSRTC MD Sajjanar, and Transport Commissioner Surendra

with palle dawakhanas in vil-

lages, which were widely

praised, even earning recogni-

tion from the 15th Finance

Commission. "KCR trans-

formed Telangana's healthcare

system into a role model for

the country, but the Congress

government is ruining that

reputation," he remarked.

He further criticized the gov-

ernment for failing to maintain diagnostic services for the poor,

noting that the BRS govern-

ment had introduced Telangana

Diagnostic Centers, offering

134 free medical tests to relieve

financial burdens on under-

privileged families.

booking for sand procurement will be available 24/7, Geology, along with the Director of Mines and allowing seamless transactions for buyers. Geology and the Vice-Chairman and Managing The Principal Secretary (FAC), Mines & Geology, Director of Telangana State along with the Director of Development Mines and Geology and the Vice-Chairman and Managing Corporation Ltd (TGMDC Ltd), held meetings to enhance monitoring and streamline

TG govt ramps up sand monitoring; Opens 24/7 online booking

accessibility, the government has decided to lift restrictions

on the number of days for bulk

sand booking. Additionally,

starting tomorrow, online

Director of TGMDC Ltd, also

convened a meeting with key

government departments that

require sand for major infra-

Representatives from Roads &

Buildings Department,

projects.

National

Assistant Directors of Mines & Geology (ADM&Gs) and Project Officers (POs) of TGMDC Ltd were directed to form dedicated teams responsible for overseeing excavation, dumping and sales operations at their respective reaches. Officials were strictly instructed to prevent unauthorised lorry movements, ensure that overloading is curbed, and allow only permitted vehicles to transport

sand excavation, sales and

delivery processes.

PNS HYDERABAD

Mineral

In a bid to strengthen reforms

in the Mines and Geology

department, Principal

Secretary (FAC), Mines &

Telangana Medical Services Infrastructure and Development Corporation (TGMSIDC), Irrigation Department, Highway Authority, and Panchayat Raj department

decision sparks controversy

structure

were instructed to submit

their sand consumption details and from reach to stockyard. In a key decision to improve March 31, 2025. sand from reach to stockyard. Round-the-clock sand mining

PNS HYDERABAD

The Telangana government's decision to allow sand mining in three shifts has sparked controversy, with opposition leaders alleging that the move violates environmental norms and benefits private interests at the cost of state revenue. As per the Memo issued on 11 Mineral February, Development Corporation was permitted 24-hour min-

ing, which opposition BRS

sees as a direct contradiction

to central environmental reg-

ulations, raising questions

about the true beneficiaries of this policy.

BRS leader Manne Krishank, addressing a press conference at Telangana Bhavan, said that the state's revenue from sand has already dropped by Rs. 200 crore since the change in government. "To meet an unrealistic Rs. 832 crore target, rules are being flouted, and natural resources are being exploited unchecked," he stated, recalling that during the previous administration, sand mining was restricted from 6 AM to 6 PM, ensuring regulation.

Cong resorting to political vendetta: Kavitha

Warns BRS will settle scores once back in power

BRS MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha launched a scathing attack on the Congress government, accusing it of political vendetta and suppressing dissent. Speaking at a press conference, she strongly condemned the alleged false cases being filed against BRS workers, warning that every injustice was being noted in the "Pink Book" and that BRS would settle scores

once back in power.
"We know how to keep accounts, and we will make them pay," she declared, accusing the Congress government of resorting to revenge politics. She alleged that Congress was scared of being questioned

about its unfulfilled promises, which is why Rahul Gandhi had canceled his Warangal visit fearing a backlash over the unimplemented Rythu Declaration.

She criticized Chief Minister Revanth Reddy for silencing critics, stating that even minor social media comments were triggering police action. "The day after a post is made, the police land up at people's houses to harass them. Rahul Gandhi speaks about upholding the Constitution across the country. but in Telangana, Revanth Reddy is crushing it," she alleged.

Slamming the Congress as a party of deceit and betrayal, she said that during K Chandrasekhar Rao's tenure villages saw an inflow of funds

TG excepts 1500MW energy demand with data centre investments

NAVEENA GHANATE naveena.ghanate@gmail.com ■ HYDERABAD

With increased investments in data centres, Telangana is witnessing a rising demand for power, prompting the energy department to ramp up infrastructure to meet the growing load and boost revenue.

Currently, data centres in the State have been allocated 250 MW under the commercial HT-2 category, but officials anticipate that this requirement will soar to 1,500 MW in the near future. Official sources said that there are two kind of data centre investments coming- small and big. "The smaller ones are catering to startups.

Davos when realised will meet a demand of 1500MW generating huge revenue," sources said

The state's focus on becom-

ing a hub for digital infrastructure is evident, with several high-profile MoUs signed at the World Economic Forum in Davos for energy-intensive projects, including pumped storage, battery storage, and solar power. Companies like Sun Petrochemicals, MEIL, and Mytrah Energy have committed significant investments in the renewable energy sector, aligning with Telangana's strategy to integrate sustainable

power solutions for industries, including data centres. According to officials, the

The big ones like those in influx of data centre investments is an opportunity to generate substantial revenue while positioning Telangana as a preferred destination for global tech giants. The energy department is working on capacity augmentation plans to ensure uninterrupted power supply to these facilities while also exploring policy incentives to attract further investments.

With the state's renewable energy potential being leveraged alongside traditional power sources, Telangana aims to balance economic growth with sustainability, ensuring that its power grid remains resilient to the increasing energy demand from digital and industrial sectors

Minister Konda Surekha attends court

NAGARJUNA'S CASE

PNS HYDERABAD

Forest and Environment and Endowment Minister Konda Surekha appeared before the Nampally Special Court personally on Thursday and explained to the Judge in connection with the cine hero Akkineni Nagarjuna's defamation case.

It may be recalled that Akkineni Nagarjuna filed a defamation and criminal case against the Minister for making allegations against family

Police crack ...

illegally transported sand worth Rs 58.72 lakh from 44 unauthorised

sand dumps. The police have also

confiscated 9 lorries, 5 tippers, one

mini van, and 8 tractors, which were

being used for illegal sand trans-

Rachakonda Police Commissioner

Sudheer Babu, emphasised that the

department remains committed to

eradicating the sand mafia and will

take stringent legal action against

offenders. He assured that operations

will continue with unwavering inten-

sity, warning that those involved in

illegal sand mining and transporta-

tion will face severe consequences.

Continued from page 1

Nagarjuna family. It may also be recalled that Nagarjuna's lawyer Ashok Reddy argued that Nagarjuna's family experienced severe mental pain due to Konda Surekha's comments. He argued

that it was not proper for her to make such comments while being in the responsible proper action ought to be

SC grants ...

the notice of the Court that the Minister tendered apologies. However, Nagarjuna's lawyer argued that there is no relation between her comments and the details she submitted to the Court. In the process, the Court issued summons to Minister Konda Surekha directing her to appear before the Court personally. Minister position and that However, she informed the Court several times that was not attendtaken against her.. ing the Court due to her hectic However, Konda schedule as the Minister. However, Surekha's lawyer the Minister attended the Court Gurupree'th personally and gave her explana-

actor by the 35-year-old journal-

Continued from page 1 granting interim protection to the petitioner should be made absolute," it said. The bench went on, "Therefore, we grant anticipatory bail to the petitioner. Accordingly, in the event of the arrest of the petitioner, the petitioner is directed to be released on

the court concerned.' On January 9, the apex court granted interim protection to Babu.

and conditions to be decided by

On December 12, 2024, an attempt to murder charge was

The journalist has alleged Babu was aggressive towards him and other journalists during a visit to the actor's Jalpally home on December 10, 2024, to cover an ongoing dispute between the actor and his younger son Manoj.

The differences within the Babu family became public on December 9 after the actor filed bail forthwith on the usual terms a police complaint, alleging his son Manoj and his wife had "orchestrated" a plan to take possession of his Jalpally home through intimidation and force.

Manoj claimed his fight was not for a "share of the property" but for "self-respect and the safety of his added to the case filed against the wife and children".

TG govt joins hands with Google for Al-led transformation

PNS HYDERABAD

Google has announced a strategic collaboration with the Government of Telangana to accelerate the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) across various sectors in the State. The partnership, formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), aims to drive AI-driven solutions in agriculture, mobility, education, sustainability, digital infrastructure and governance. This initiative is expected to foster innovation, bridge the digital divide and equip the workforce with future-ready skills.

the presence of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, IT Minister Sridhar Babu, and representatives from the Google. The collaboration will see Google working with the Telangana government to develop AI-powered solutions in agriculture to support farmers and enhance mobility through transit data integration and

road information sharing.
Additionally, AI skilling and upskilling programs will be launched, alongside efforts to strengthen digital learning ecosystems through Google for Education. The initiative will also introduce an Open Agriculture Network to connect farmers with critical resources and enhance access to open data via

Google's Data Commons platform. Further, the partnership aims to support Telangana's sustainability goals by accelerating solar energy

adoption through Google's Solar API. It will also foster the startup ecosystem by providing accelerator programs and mentorship opportunities, ensuring AI-driven innovations contribute to the state's economic growth. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy

welcomed the initiative, stating that the collaboration reinforces nance and economic progress. "By integrating cutting-edge AI tech-The MoU exchange took place in nologies, we aim to revolutionize key sectors, ensuring better governance, economic development, and improved public services. This partnership marks a significant step in our digital journey," he said.

Preeti Lobana, Country Manager Google India, emphasised Google's commitment to India's digital transformation, highlighting the potential impact of AI on critical economic areas. "We are excited to work with Telangana to cultivate an AI-ready workforce, support startup innovation, and drive advancements in agriculture, education, and sustainability. AI holds immense value in these key sectors, and we look forward to unlocking its potential to drive equitable development across the state," she stated.

Accelerate construction of RRR

DCM directs officials, stresses protection of R&B assets

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu and Roads and Buildings Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy have directed officials to accelerate the construction of the Regional Ring Road (RRR), assuring that funds will be allocated as work progresses. During the pre-budget review meeting of the R&B department at Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Secretariat, they emphasized

execution and the availability of necessary financial resources.

The ministers instructed officials to expedite the Detailed Project Report (DPR) and 3D designs for the RRR, stressing that the government has no shortage of funds and will release allocations in proportion to the progress of work. They also ordered a comprehensive report on R&B properties across the state, ensuring that valuable assets are protected

Govt plans ...

Continued from page 1

and then a special session of the Legislative Assembly will be held immediately and a bill will be introduced to make 42 percent reservations legal. Later, a team of cabinet ministers led by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy will go to Delhi and meet all parties and central government leaders to support this. BC leaders, professors and intellectuals were advised to tour the districts and work to ensure that those who did not participate in the caste survey participate".
Minister Ponnam told the

BC leaders that the opposition parties are deliberately spreading false figures and that the current caste-wise figures are completely wrong. He said that a toll-free number will be available by the 16th of this month for those who did not participate in the caste survey, and if information is given to it, the enumerator will collect the information.

The BC Union leaders and professors felicitated TPCC chief Mahesh Kumar Goud and BC Welfare Minister Ponnam Prabhakar on the occasion.

The BC leaders described the caste survey as a historical one and a daring decision.

TODAY **ALMANAC** Month & Paksham Krishna Paksha Feb 13 08:22 PM Dwitiya: to Feb 14 09:52 PM Tritiya: Feb 14 09:52 PM Nakshatram: Feb 13 09:07 PM Purva Phalguni Uttara Phalguni: Feb 14 11:09 PM to Feb 16 01:39 AM 11:04 AM to 12:30 PM Rahukalam: 3:22 PM to 4:48 PM 07:06 AM to 08:52 AM Varjyam: 8:12 AM to 9:38 AM Gulika: 04:12 PM to 05:56 PM Amritakalam: Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:07 PM to 12:53 PM HYDERABAD WEATHER Forecast: Sunny **Temp:** 32°° Humidity: 43% Sunrise: 6:43 AM Sunset: 6:17 PM **Updated:** February 13, 2025 5:00 PM

Modi arrives ...

Continued from page 1

the community members gathered at Blair House and welcomed him with 'Bharat Mata ki Jai', 'Vande Mataram' and 'Modi Modi' as they waved the Indian and American flags. "A warm reception in the winter chill! Despite the cold weather, the Indian diaspora in Washington DC has welcomed me with a very special welcome. My gratitude to them," Modi said on X.

Prime Minister Modi is the fourth foreign leader hosted by Trump in the weeks after his inauguration last month. Within less than a month of the start of Trump's second term in the White House, he has hosted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba and Jordan's King Abdullah II. Modi arrived in the US capital on Wednesday evening after a visit to France where he had co-chaired the Artificial Intelligence Action Summit with French President Emmanuel Macron. Modi and Trump will hold bilateral discussions in the White House on Thursday.

"Our nations will keep working closely for the benefit of our people and for a better future for our planet," Modi said on X.

Microsoft ...

Continued from page 1

Celebrating Microsoft India's 25-year journey, he acknowledged the company's contributions to global innovation, many of which originated from Hyderabad. He also noted that the new facility would generate more employment opportunities for the city's youth. "This is a significant step that will empower our workforce and contribute to Telangana's growth," he added.

Highlighting the state's focus on Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Chief Minister announced a collaboration between Microsoft and the Telangana government to launch ADVANTA(I)GE TELANGANA, an initiative that includes an AI Foundation Academy. "Through this partnership, AI education will be introduced in 500 government schools, and AI-driven solutions will be integrated into governance and public services," he said. The initiative will also strengthen the state's startup ecosystem by providing mentorship, AI tools, and access to a global network. He further revealed that Microsoft will set up an AI Center in collaboration with the Telangana government, which will develop cloud-based AI infrastructure and an AI Knowledge Hub.

Expressing gratitude to Microsoft's leadership team, he said, "Your trust in Telangana reaffirms our vision of making the state a global innovation hub. This partnership will accelerate our progress towards 'Telangana Rising' and ensure a brighter future for our youth."

Police issue ...

Continued from page 1

Reacting to it, Srinivas Reddy has refuted allegations linking him to any illegal activities in his farmland at Tolkata village. Addressing the media, he clarified that he had purchased 10 acres and 1 gunta of land in Survey No. 165 (Part) through a registered sale deed in 2018 and had entrusted its management entirely to his nephew, Jnandev Reddy.

He stated that his property is purely agricultural, with mango and coconut plantations and two small rooms for farm workers. He denied the existence of any farmhouse or guest house on the premises. According to him, his nephew had leased out the farmland to Varra Ramesh Kumar Reddy without his knowledge, who in turn sub-leased it to M Venkatapati Raju. "I was unaware of this arrangement until yesterday when the issue surfaced in the media," Srinivas Reddy said, adding that he immediately questioned his nephew about the matter. He emphasised that he had no involvement in any alleged unlawful activities on the land and had already lodged a police complaint against those responsible.

He further revealed that on the day of the reported incident, he was not even in Hyderabad but was attending the Ellamma festival in Warangal. Calling the allegations politically motivated, he said, "This is a clear attempt to tarnish my reputation.

'TG sinking ... Continued from page 1

This year, the Centre gave Rs.5337 crore to Railways in Telangana. Centre sanctioned five Vande Bharata trains to Telangana and modernized 40 Railway stations. Constructed 2 lakh houses under PMAY scheme in cities.... Constructed 31 lakh toilets under Swachh Bharat scheme...Indira Gandhi represented the Medak constituency, however, the Modi government sanctioned the first railway station in Medak district. Modi restored Ramagundam Fertilisers Factory. Centre allotted Turmeric Board to Telangana. The Centre did not give special preference to any state. We are consulting all states before the budget, Nirmala Sitaraman

ANIL KUMAR CONDEMNS 'S REMARKS

Congress Rajya Sabha mem-

said.

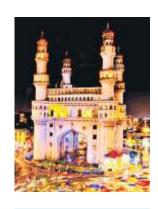
ber from Telangana M Anil Kumar Yadav strongly condemned the comments made by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Rajya Sabha, which completely ignored the genuine concerns of Telangana.

Anil Kumar in a statement said that Telangana was a revenue surplus state at the time of bifurcation, but due to the misgovernance and financial mismanagement of the KCR family, the state has now fallen into a deficit. Adding to this injustice, the Central Government has failed to fulfill key promises made to Telangana over the last 10 years, he slammed.

Anil Kumar said that critical projects like the Bayyaram Steel Plant and various Central Institutions promised during bifurcation remain unfulfilled. These delays have hindered the state's growth and denied the people of Telangana the opportunities they rightfully deserve, he alleged.

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Kala Utsav 2025: Live Musical Concert By Nisha Rajagopalan

Saptaparni February 14, (6 pm)

Live performance By Harish & Martin (Band)

Venue Stone Waters - Kitchen & February 14, (8 pm)

Live performance By The Maahaa Project (Band)

Venue The Moonshine Project February 14, (8 pm)

> CCL 2025: Chennai Rhinos Vs

Karnataka Bulldozers & Bhojpuri Dabanggs vs Telugu Warriors

Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium February 14, (2 pm)

> Friday Night With DJ Prithvi Sai

Venue Sounds & Spirits February 14 (8 pm)

City Pioneer

he pioneer

HYDERABAD | FRIDAY | FEBRUARY 14, 2025

CITY SET FOR A MAJOR TRANSFORMATION

₹15,000 crore for world-class infrastructure in Hyd: IT Min

PNS HYDERABAD

Hyderabad is set for a major transformation, with the Telangana government committing Rs 15,000 crore to world-class infrastructure, propelling the city into a new era of global excellence, IT Minister D Sridhar Babu announced.

On Thursday, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and IT Minister D Sridhar inaugurated Microsoft's new campus in Gachibowli. The Chief Minister also unveiled a plan to reshape Hyderabad's urban and technological landscape.

Speaking on this occasion, Sridhar Babu emphasised that this investment is not just about infrastructure but about making Hyderabad one of the world's most advanced cities. Key projects include Metro Rail expansion, an AI City, a Skills University, an EV manufacturing hub and the Musi River rejuveHe noted that Hyderabad is emerging as India's Data AI power house. With Microsoft's strong presence, the launch of a 1.1 million sq. ft. facility and a Rs 15,000 crore AI investment cement the city's leadership in digital innovation.

Sridhar Babu highlighted that Hyderabad has nurtured global tech leaders like Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella and Adobe CEO Shantanu Narayen. The city now drives global innovation.

The Minister also noted that with 52 research centres, 30+ universities and a six-million-strong work-force, Hyderabad is set to lead in technology. The government is also launching an initiative to connect nine million households to the digital ecosystem.

In conclusion, Sridhar Babu stated "This is Hyderabad's moment. We are not just building infrastructure but we are creating a legacy for future gen-



'Govt stands by entrepreneurs who invest in State'

PNS HYDERABAD

The Telangana government is fully committed to supporting entrepreneurs who invest in the State, assured IT Minister D Sridhar Babu. He was the chief guest at the HyBiz TV Business Excellence Awards 2025 at HICC Novotel

the government's efforts under CM A Revanth Reddy's leadership to create a business-friendly environment for industrial growth. He appreciated the state's young and dynamic leadership and expressed confidence that Telangana will soon lead in all sectors

He urged entrepreneurs to join the government's ambitious mission to make Telangana a trillion-dollar

Serilingampally MLA Arikepudi Gandhi TGIIC MD Vishnu Vardhan Reddy, HyBiz TV & Telugu Now MD M Raj Gopal were

WORLD RADIO DAY 2025

Promoting radio's legacy discussed by city PRCI

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Public Relations Council of India (PRCI), Hyderabad Chapter, celebrated World Radio Day 2025, emphasising the significance of radio in shaping public discourse and driving cultural connections. The event on Thursday brought together eminent personalities from the fields of media, public relations and administration to reflect on radio's historical importance and its evolving role in the digital era.

Delivering the keynote address, RV Chandravadan, retired IAS officer and chief guest, highlighted how radio has been a trusted companion to children, youth and the elderly over the decades. He noted that radio has played an integral role in society. radio has played an integral role in society by offering a mix of entertainment, information and education. From melodious songs, meaningful lyrics and captivating stories to news bulletins and weather forecasts, radio has kept people informed and engaged, Chandravadan said.

However, he expressed concern that with the rise of digital media and artificial intelligence, radio has seen a decline in preference. He urged the government to take active steps in reviving and promoting the legacy of radio, ensuring that it continues to be a powerful medium of communication. The event was attended by Prof. Vinod Pavarala, a leading advocate of community radio, Ramesh Sunkasari, Director of Ákashvani, Hyderabad, PRCI Vice-President Ravindran, Michael Fredrick, and TVS Narayana, PRCI South Head. They emphasised the enduring relevance of radio, particularly in reaching marginalised communities and discussed ways to integrate it with modern technologies to keep it alive in the digital era. The celebration saw active par-ticipation from PRCI Hyderabad leadership, including Shakeel Ahmed, Chairman, Aneeja, Vice-Chairman, and Philip, Secretary. Other members such as Robin and Jacob Ross were also present, contributing to discussions on radio's future and its role in shaping public awareness.

Two acres of Prakruti Resorts in FTL of Komati Kunta razed

PNS HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Protection Agency (HYDRAA) has razed two acres of Prakruti Resorts and Prakruti Convention at Komati Kunta Devaryamjal village in Medchal-Malkajgiri district on Thursday.

As the complaints were from local residents, HYDRAA investigated unauthorised structures within the Full Tank Level (FTL) limits of Komati Kunta. by officials from the Irrigation, Revenue and Municipal departments. The investigation revealed that Prakruti Resorts and Prakruti Convention Centre were built without proper approvals within the FTL boundary. HYDRAA issued demolition orders after confirming the violations. The owners of Prakruti Resorts and Prakruti Convention Centre challenged HYDRAA notice in the High Court.

However, based on reports submitted by the Irrigation, Revenue, and Municipal authorities, the High Court ruled in favour of demolishing the structures. The resort representatives requested 30 days to remove the buildings voluntarily, but they failed to act even after the deadline. Consequently, HYDRAA took direct action and demolished the illegal constructions.

BRAOU leads

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

nation in APAR ID

Dr BR Ambedkar Open

University (BRAOU) has

received national recognition

for successfully implement-

ing Automated Permanent

Academic Account Registry

(APAR) IDs, as part of the

National Education Policy

(NEP) 2020. Telangana's

Director of Collegiate

Education, A Devasena,

lauded BRAOU for achiev-

ing the top position in the

State, calling it a remarkable achievement. Rohit Tripathi,

Deputy Secretary, Ministry of

Education, Government of

India also commended the

university's efforts. Under

the guidelines set by the

University Grants Comm-

ission (UGC) for the 2024-25

academic vear, BRAOU has

generated APAR IDs for 75%

of its students, making it the

leading university in Telan-

gana at the national level.

implementation



HYDRAA demolishing two acres of Prakruti Resorts and Prakruti Convention at Komati Kunta

HYDRAA REMOVES 53 ILLEGAL HOARDINGS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Protection Agency (HYDRAA) has intensified its drive against unauthorised hoardings in the city's suburban municipalities, removing 53 illegal hoardings over the Hoardings were dismantled in the

presence of the municipal authorities. In a week, HYDRAA removed 53 hoardings, including: 35 unipoles, 4 uni-structures and

14 hoardings placed on rooftops. The demolition drive covered Shamshabad, Kotwalguda, Narsingi, Thondapalli, Gollapalli Road and Tellapur, targeting hoardings on both sides of major roads. On Friday, representatives from advertising agencies met HYDRAA Commissioner AV Ranganath, seeking clarification on the drive

The Commissioner assured that hoardings with proper approvals would not be removed However, he reiterated that all

unauthorised hoardings - including unipoles, uni-structures and rooftop advertisements - will be taken down in suburban municipalities. Advertising agencies had

previously been given time to remove illegal hoardings, but HYDRAA proceeded with the demolition as they failed to act, he added.

The agency stated that further removal of unauthorised hoardings will continue over the next seven to 10 days.

FGG seeks total ban on single-use plastics in State

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Forum for Good Governance (FGG) has written to Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, requesting a complete ban on single-use plastics (SUP) in the State. The letter is referred to the Government of India's directive asking states to create action plans to phase out SUPs. Telangana had issued an order (GŎ), but it has not been effectively implemented. FGG president M out that the order made all government departments and local bodies responsible for controlling SUPs.

However, it also imposed a Rs 500 fine on individuals carrying banned plastic items like banners, plates, cups, spoons and thin plastic bags. He questioned how an ordinary person could know if a plastic bag is less than 120 microns thick. He called the order unrealistic and difficult to enforce, as no government department has taken action. He suggested banning SUP manufacturing instead.

Padmanabha Reddy highlighted that unregulated plastic use has become a serious issue across Telangana, with plastic waste littering streets, clogging drains and harming agriculture by reducing soil fertility and groundwater recharge.

24-hour water supply shutdown on February 17 in parts of city

IX: Kukatpally, Bhagyanagar,

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) has announced a 24-hour water supply shutdown on February 17 from 6:00 am to 6:00 am on February 18, to facilitate the replacement of 900mm dia valves (BF and NRVs) at Kondapaka pumping station on the 3000mm dia MS pumping main of GDWSS Phase-I.

As a result of this shutdown, multiple areas under various O&M divisions, including key localities across Hyderabad and its suburbs.

Affected areas: O&M Division VI: SR Nagar, Sanathnagar, Borabanda, SPR Hills, Erragadda, Banjara Hills, Vengal Rao Nagar, Yella Reddy Guda, Somajiguda and

Vivekananda Nagar, Yellamma Banda, Moosapet, Bharat Nagar, Moti Nagar, Gayathri Nagar, Baba Nagar, KPHB, Balaji Nagar and Hasmathpet. O&M Division XII: Chintal, Suchitra, Jeedimetla, Shapur Gajularamaram, Nagar, Suraram, Adarsh Nagar, Bhagat Singh Nagar, Jagadgirigutta and Ushodaya. O&M Division XIII: Alwal,

Father Balaiah Nagar, Venkatapuram, Machabollaram Colony, Vajpayee Nagar, Yapral, Chanakyapuri, Gowtham Nagar and Sainathpuram. Kapra Municipality (O&M Division XIV): Cherlapally, Sai Baba Nagar and Radhika. O&M Division XV: Kondapur, Doyens, part of Madhapur.

O&M Division XVII: Hafeezpet, Miyapur. O&M Division XXI: Kompally, Gundlapochampallý, Thumukunta, Jawaharnagar, Dammaiguda and Nagaram. O&M Division XXII: Nizampet, Bachupally, Pragathinagar, Gandimaisamma, Tellapur and Bollaram. Transmission Division IV: MES, Trishul Lines, Gunrock, Hakimpet Air Force, Secunderabad Cantonment and AIIMS Bibinagar. Rural Water Supply (RWS) Offtakes: Pragnapur (Gajwel), Aler (Bhongir), Gha (Medchal/Shameerpet). Ghanpur

Residents and in these areas are advised to store sufficient water in advance and plan accordingly to minimise inconvenience. The HMWSSB has assured that efforts will be made to complete the replacement work within the stipulated time to restore water supply at the earliest.

Murder-for-gain gang arrested; articles worth Rs 3 cr seized

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a joint operation, the Narayanguda Police (East Zone) and East Zone Task Force Team arrested a notorious gang involved in murder-for-gain and house burglaries, within 24 hours of their latest crime.

The gang, hailing from Bihar had committed multiple offences, including the murder of an elderly woman in Domalguda in January 2024 and a house burglary in Narayanguda in February where they stole diamonds, gold, silver, cash, and foreign currency worth over Rs 3 crore.

The arrested individuals have been identified as Molhu Mukhiya alias Manoj Mukhiya (35), a daily laborer from Madhubani, Bihar, and the prime accused in the murder-for-gain case in Domalguda, Susheel Mukhiya (29),a cook working in Hyderabad, originally from Madhubani, Bihar and Basanthi Arhi (40),a domestic worker from West Bengal, residing in Malakpet, Hyderabad.

The gang targeted wealthy households, particularly from the Marwari and Jain communities, by infiltrating homes as domestic workers, cooks, or security guards. Once they gained the trust of their employers, they would execute carefully planned burglaries. If homeowners resisted, they were willing to commit murder to escape with stolen property.



Airlines found with expired food articles

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A supplier for IndiGo Airlines, Instahot Foods Pvt Ltd, located in IDA Patancheru, was found with multiple violations during an inspection by the Telangana Commissioner

of Food Safety's Task Force Team. The Task Force team found expired food items, including Kasturi Methi (1.25 kg), Mustard Seeds (0.5 kg), and Rai Mota (1 kg). Rotten tomatoes and live cockroach infestation were found in the cooking area and grinding unit. Storage violations included food kept on the ground, rusted racks, and no FIFO method. Nutmeg (1.5 kg) had labeling issues such as missing MRP, Batch No. and packing date and was seized.

Some food items were stored under a leaking air-conditioner, risking contamination. The flooring was patchy and littered with food waste, drains were clogged, dustbins were not maintained, and food waste was dumped in plastic bags. Water analysis was done in a non-NABL lab, making it invalid. No recent testing records for packing materials were available. The Task Force also inspected Asati Rajkumar Roller Flour Mills Pvt Ltd and found that food and non-food items like cement and tires were stored together.

Docs save pregnant woman who had 50% risk of death

deepikapasham2015@gmail.com ■ HYDERABAD

A 35-year-old woman, facing a 50 per cent risk of death due to G4 placenta percreta during her third pregnancy at 27 weeks, was successfully treated at Niloufer Hospital in Hyderabad. Health Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha congratulated the Niloufer Hospital for saving her life.

V Kavitha, a mother of two, developed severe complications in her third pregnancy, requiring an elective hysterectomy, bladder repair and correction of bladder perforations. "The woman is stable and active. She will be discharged within three weeks, but the baby, weighing less than one kilogram, remains in Neonatal Intensive Care Unit



(NICU) critical care," said Dr Ravi Kumar, Superintendent of

Niloufer Hospital. G4 placenta percreta is an extremely rare condition, occurring in 1 out of 50,000 pregnancies. Kavitha was referred to Niloufer Hospital from a private hospital on January 30 with a report of lowlying placenta and severe bleed-

ing. As the doctors first stopped

the bleeding, within a few days, ultrasound and MRI confirmed G4 placenta percreta.

"After informing her husband and family about the high-risk condition, we explained that surgery was necessary to save her life," said Dr Sudha, Gynecologist at Niloufer Hospital.

The three-hour-long surgery involved massive blood loss, from gynecologists, urologists, anesthesiologists, blood bank specialists and oncologists. "Maintaining stable blood

requiring a coordinated effort

pressure was crucial throughout the surgery. In normal cases, the placenta detaches after delivery, but in this case, it had invaded the uterus and extended into the urinary bladder, which required bladder reconstruction. We had to stop bleeding points, replace lost blood." Dr Ravi Kumar explained.

The primary cause of G4 placenta percreta is a history of multiple cesarean sections, though in some cases, repeated abortions also contribute.

"To ensure success, we also included pediatric surgeons in the team. I congratulate the entire medical team for their dedication," Dr Ravi Kumar







HYDERABAD | FRIDAY | FEBRUARY 14, 2025

CASTE SURVEY

Government offers fresh opportunity for uncovered citizens

PNS KARIMNAGAR

Minister for Transport and Backward Classes Ponnam Prabhakar on Thursday asserted that the caste survey conducted by the Telangana government would serve as a model for the entire nation. He clarified during a media conference that there is no "resurvey" of the caste census, contrary to assertions made by leaders of the Bharat Rashtra

Approximately 3.1 per cent of individuals expressed concerns about not sharing their information, leading the government to provide them with another opportunity to participate in the survey. From February 16 to 28, those who missed the original survey or were unable to provide their details will have the chance to take part. The Minister stated, "Some BRS leaders are suggesting that a re-survey is taking place, but this is not the case; it is simply an opportunity for those who missed the original survey or could not provide

that 1.15 crore families out of 1.12 crore households were included in the survey. The households were organized into groups of 150, with 10 enumerators assigned to each group under one supervisor. This process was carried out at both the mandal and state levels and managed efficiently. Senior officials, including the Chief Secretary and representatives from various planning departments, ensured that the process was conducted smoothly and transparently. After the cabinet meeting in the first week of March, a special session of the legislative assembly will be convened. The state government plans to introduce legislation that will provide reservations for Backward Classes communities in education, employment, and political representation. It is essential for everyone to cooperate. Individuals have the right to voice their opinions when participating in any program. The leadership of the BRS party did not engage in this process

their information." He also noted

MINISTER FOR BACKWARD CLASSES PONNAM PRABHAKAR EMPHASISED THAT THIS INITIATIVE IS NOT A RESURVEY, AS CLAIMED BY BRS LEADERS. 'IT IS MERELY A CHANCE FOR THOSE WHO MISSED THE INITIAL SURVEY OR WERE UNABLE TO SUBMIT THEIR INFORMATION,' HE STATED



Minister for Backward Classes Ponnam Prabhakar speaking at a media conference in Karimnagar on Thursday



Nalgonda Collector Ila Tripathi clicking a selfie with students of Kasturba Gandhi Girls

Collector promises free air travel to meritorious students

Parents and grandparents often offer students rewards to motivate them to get good marks in competitive examinations. "If you get the first rank in examinations, I'll buy you a bicycle." "If you score well in examinations, I'll get you the PlayStation you want." Parents often make such offers to their children appearing for board examinations. The Class 10 students and those appearing for the competitive

examinations get those offers. Some schools too reward students who perform well with prizes to motivate them. Various voluntary organisations and public representatives also offer awards or cash prizes to Class 10 students. These rewards are meant to motivate children to study hard and increase their competitiveness.

Nalgonda District collector, Ila Tripathi, has introduced an exciting incentive to motivate Class 10 students and enhance academic performance. She declared that any student who scores 10 out of 10 grade point average (GPA) in their Class 10 board examinations will have the opportunity to fly in an aeroplane. On Wednesday, the Collector made a surprise visit to the Kasturba

MLC Naveen Reddy donates Rs 2.22 L

for Meramma Yadi, Sewalal temple

Nalgonda district. During her visit, she inspected the kitchen and hostel rooms, had dinner along with the students, and engaged in conversations with them.

During her conversation with the Class 10 students, Ila Tripathi advised them to study hard for their public examinations and promised them a chance to fly in an aeroplane if they achieved good marks. She also took selfies with the students after the interaction.

Mandal Education Officer (MEO) Vasu Malatha and the Kasturba School principal were present during the visit.

It may be recalled that Yadadri Bhuvangiri District Collector M Hanumantha Rao also launched a new initiative for Class 10 students. With examinations approaching, he started a programme called 'Wake Up Call,' which offers incentives to nurture talent among students. As part of the program, he personally visited students' homes at 5 am, knocks on their doors, and wakes them up, encouraging them to study hard. Using his own money, he provides study chairs, books, and exam pads, instilling new enthusiasm in the students and helping them prepare for the exams.

Devotees begin thronging Medaram on second day of festival

PNS MULUGU

On the second day of mini Medaram festival celebrations held on Thursday, as per the Adivasi traditions, the tribal priests performed special puja to the tribal deities offering turmeric, kumkum and prasad at the elevated platforms. People in large number started thronging Medaram on the second of the festival.

Earlier, the elevated platforms of Sammkka, Sarakka rated with impressive rangoli designs after anointing them. Minister Sitakka offered her prayers to the deities. On Wednesday night, the tribal priests observed Jaagaram and performed special pujas at the elevated platforms.

The Medaram area was reverberated with the Adivasi dances performed amidst beating of huge drums.

In Chirumamilla village of Karakagudemmandal of Bhadradri district, Minister Sitakka took part in the mini medaram festival and had a darshan of the forest deities. Pinapaka MLA Payam Venkateswarlu and others were present on the occasion. It may be recalled that the four-day mini MedaramJatara began on a grand note on Wednesday in Medaram in Tadvaimandal of Mulugu

In all, 10 lakh devotees are offered jiggery.



expected to take part in

The officials have elaborate

arrangements for the event to rule out any inconvenience to the people. They installed showers for the benefit of the people to take showers on the banks of JampannaVaagu. The police department beefed up security deploying adequate police personnel. The RTC ran 200 special bus services to the venue.

People not only from Telugu states, but also from neighbouring Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Odisha made a beeline to the medaram and payed their vows to the deities and

Constables act promptly, recover stolen gold chain

A woman, who came to offer prayers during the mini-Medaram Jatara, had a 4-tola gold necklace stolen by an unidentified person. However, Crime Branch constables Gali Rajkumar and Madhu, who were on duty at the temple, acted promptly and caught

Solethi Pushpamma, a woman from Rollkal village under Parvatgiri mandal in Warangal district, had come along with her family to visit the tribal

goddesses. A thief snatched her gold necklace. The constables managed to apprehend the thief and handed him over to the police station. The 4-tola mangalsutra that was

stolen from Pushpamma was returned to her in front of her family by the police officers. Constables Raj Kumar and Madhu, who handled the situation efficiently, were appreciated by the higher authorities for their prompt

action in catching the thief

tance of Hindu temples in **Convict hurls** footwear at judge

PNS RANGAREDDY

thropic efforts.

MLC Nagarkunta Naveen

Reddy announced donation of

Rs 2,22,000 for the installation

of Meramma Yadi and Sant

Sewalal Maharaj idols, along

with a flagpole at the temple in Kadiyala Kunta Thanda under

Farooqnagar Mandal. The villagers, expressing their grati-tude, honoured him with a shawl and praised his philan-

MLC Naveen Reddy, who

attended the event as the chief

pujas and emphasised the spiritual significance of temples in

fostering peace and unity among people. He stated that

among all living beings and

that offering even the simplest

gestures, like a leaf or a flower,

to God holds immense mean-

ing. He also highlighted the

historical and cultural impor-

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

in Rangareddy

A man, who was sentenced to life imprisonment in an attempted murder case, a convicted felon, allegedly hurled a slipper at a woman judge in the courtroom here on Thursday, police said. The incident occurred

when the accused was produced before the Additional District Judge court for the trial of another murder case. Police added that the slip-

per did not hit the judge. 'The man, who was sentenced to life imprisonment in an attempted murder case by the ADJ court on February 11, was produced before the same court on Thursday in connection with another murder case,'

Ranga Reddy District Court Bar Association strongly condemned the incident. Advocates at the court complex allegedly overpowered and beat up the convict.

a police official said.

The accused who was sentenced to life imprisonment bore a grudge against the judge and threw a slipper at her, Ranga Reddy District Court Bar Association president Y Kondal Reddy said.

He demanded that stern action be taken against the accused for "attacking" the



human life is the most valuable MLC Nagarkunta Naveen Reddy at a temple in Kadiyala Kunta Thanda in Rangareddy district on Wednesday

India, stressing that regular temple visits bring positive changes in people's lives.

The event saw the participation of several dignitaries, Farooqnagar Mandal Mounikaharikrishna Goud, former Sarpanch of Kasireddyguda Deena Shankar, Deputy Sarpanch

of Papi Reddyguda Tandra Vishnuvardhan Reddy, BRS senior leader Shekhar Pantulu, and village elders along with BRS youth leaders and local

Sarpanch post auctioned for Rs 27L in Gadwal district?

PNS JOGULAMBA GADWAL

The election frenzy for local body polls -sarpanch and Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituency member posts (MPTC) - has begun in the villages elections. Some aspirants have started making efforts to win over voters. They are mingling with people. Some have even released manifestos specifically for the villages, promising to develop the village if they are elected. Recently, an auction has been held for the sarpanch post in a village. In this fiercely contested auction, a person won by bidding a record price.

In Gokulapadu village under Manoapadu mandal in Jogulamba Gadwal district, an auction was held even before the election notification was issued. The vil-

lagers organised the auction to elect the sarpanch unanimously. The total population of Gokulapadu village is 1,000 with 480 votes. The villagers decided to elect the sarpanch unanimously without spending money on elections. To achieve this, they organised the auction. In the auction, four individuals participated, and it was fiercely contested. Ultimately, a person won the auction by bidding a record price of Rs 27.63 lakh. The villagers said the auction was conducted for the new temple being built in the village. The villagers are keeping the auction details confidential.

Meanwhile, the state government is preparing to conduct local body elections. State Election Commission is conducting training classes for the staff.



Man refuses to perform father's last rites owing to property dispute

PNS ■ JANGAON

For three days, the body of a man was kept outside the house by his son, who refused to perform the last rites until the property issue was resolved.

This incident took place in the Edunuthula village in Jangaon district. The son, Ramesh, insisted that the last rites of his father, Velikatte Yadgiri (55), should not be conducted until the property matter was settled

According to local reports, Yadgiri had two wives. His first wife had a son, Ramesh, and his second wife, Padma, had a son, named Upender, and a daughter, Shobharani. However, Upender, the son of Padma, had died earlier due to illness.

Yadgiri owned 15 acres of land. Five acres were registered in his son Ramesh's name, and two acres were given as a dowry to his daughter Shobharani. Another three acres were sold to buy gold, and the remaining five acres were transferred to his second wife Padma's name. Padma later sold three acres of her land to buy a house in Hyderabad for her daughter Shobharani.

19 Maoists surrender

PNS BHADRADRI KOTHAGUDEM

Nineteen members of the outlawed CPI (Maoist) from Chhattisgarh surrendered before the police in Bhadradri Kothagudem district on Thursday, police said. The activists surrendered before Bhadradri Kothagudem Superintendent of Police B Rohit Raju after learning about the welfare measures for surrendered Maoists. They were also influenced by the development and welfare activities undertaken by the police and CRPF for tribal people through the "Operation Cheyutha" programme, the police release said.

As a result, they decided to lead a peaceful life with their family members, the release added. A Divisional Committee Member carrying an Rs 8 lakh reward and two Area Committee Members carrying Rs 4 lakh rewards each were among the surrendered Maoists, police said.

Teachers' MLC polls: Candidates told to adhere to code of conduct

PNS NALGONDA

Warangal-Khammam-Nalgonda Teachers' MLC Election Returning Officer and District Collector Ila Tripathi has emphasised that all candidates contesting candidates must strictly follow the election code of conduct. Following the withdrawal of nominations, the Collector held a meeting on Thursday with the candidates and their agents at the District Collector's office confer-

She stated that campaigning during school hours is strictly prohibited. Candidates must obtain permissions from the respective district election

officers and assistant returning officers within the Teachers' MLC constituency. Permissions for the entire constituency can be acquired through the Nalgonda RO. Specific permissions for vehicles and rallies must be obtained from the respective districts.

The District Collector further instructed candidates to immediately submit details of polling agents and counting agents, along with their photographs for identification cards. According to the voter list published on Februay 10, there are a total of 25,797 eligible voters. The strong room and vote counting centre have been set up at a warehouse near Arjala Bhavi, Nalgonda.

Farmworker arrested for selling wild boar meat

PNS SIRCILLA

Forest officials seized 30 kilograms of wild boar meat. The wild boar meat was seized on the outskirts of Mustafa Nagar village in

Gambhiravupeta Mandal. A farmworker, Ganta Komurayya, a resident of Kondapur village in Konaraopet Mandal, hunted wild boar in forest area near crop fields early in the morning. He slaugh-

tered the boar and was selling the meat in pieces when the authorities caught him in a trap. Forest Range Öfficer V Srihari Prasad stated that Komurayya has been arrested and sent to remand



judge.



ACROSS THE STATES



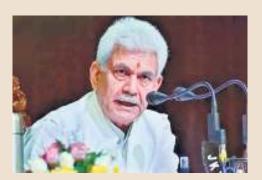
Centre grants Z-category security to Dalai Lama

he Centre has provided a Z-category armed protection cover to Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama in view of potential security threats to him, official sources said on Thursday. The Union home ministry has directed the VIP security wing of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) to take charge of the 89-year-old leader. The sources said the Dalai Lama would be secured by a Z-category protection cover of CRPF commandos in all parts of the country. He had a small protection cover of the Himachal Pradesh Police and was extended security when he travelled to Delhi or any other place by the local police. The government has now granted him a uniform security cover after a review by central intelligence agencies, a senior officer said. A team of about 30 CRPF commandos will work in shifts to secure the Dalai Lama, he said. In a similar move, the home ministry has provided a Zcategory cover to BJP leader Sambit Patra in Manipur, the



Two tents gutted in fire at Maha Kumbh, no casualties

fire broke out at the police line camp near Nagvasuki on ABindu Madhav Marg In Sector o of the Mana Assault However,
Thursday afternoon, gutting two tents, officials said. However, Bindu Madhav Marg in Sector 6 of the Maha Kumbh on no casualties were reported. Chief Fire Officer (Kumbh) Pramod Sharma said that smoke was seen rising from the police line camp in Sector 6 under Nagvasuki police station limits around noon. "Four fire tenders were immediately dispatched to the spot, and they managed to control the blaze within minutes. However, two tents were completely destroyed in the fire," Sharma said, confirming that there were no casualties in the incident. The cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained, officials said. On February 7, a fire broke out at the ISKCON camp and quickly spread to over a dozen nearby camps, leaving them gutted. No casualties were reported. A massive fire broke out in the Maha Kumbh Mela area's Sector 19 due to a cylinder blast on January 19.



LG calls for measures to protect borders in J&K

irecting for stronger measures to protect the borders amid a ceasefire violation and a major IED attack in the recent past, Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday said all security agencies must work together to counter the cross-border threats. He also called for intensified efforts to wipe out terrorism from Jammu province and said every perpetrator and supporter of terrorism must pay the price. "We must strengthen border security against asymmetric threats due to porous border with riverines and difficult mountain range and all the security agencies must work together to provide necessary back-up support," the lieutenant governor said, chairing a high-level meeting to review the security scenario in Jammu division. This was the second security review meeting chaired by the lieutenant governor in as many days. On Wednesday, Sinha presided over a high-level security review meeting in Srinagar for Kashmir valley. The back-to-back security review meetings took place amid a series of incidents along the Line of Control (LoC) in

Power to modify arbitral awards be left to legislature

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday informed the Supreme Court that the key legal question of whether courts could modify arbitral awards under the 1996 law on arbitration and conciliation should be left to the legislature keeping in mind evolving arbitration requirements of the nation. A five-judge Constitution bench of Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justices B R Gavai, Sanjay Kumar, K V Viswanathan and Augustine George Masih was deliberating upon the contentious issue of whether courts could modify arbitral awards under the provisions of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996.

"If we hold that setting aside (of arbitral awards does not include the modification (powers) then it is the end of the matter and if we hold the otherwise (modification powers) then guidelines have to be framed," it said. While posting the hearing on February 18, the bench said, "Please

CENTRE TELLS SUPREME COURT "Practically, the absence of a modification power leads to wasted judicial resources. as courts often have to set aside entire

awards even when a minor correction would suffice." This contradicts the pro-arbitration approach of minimal judicial interference and speedy dispute "This again, ought to be appropriately dealt with by

provide us with what courts of foreign jurisdictions say on modification owers." Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, outlined the legal history on arbitration, foreign laws and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) Model Law on

International Arbitration and said the 1996 law was formulated in pursuance of the

the legislature.'

"Practically, the absence of a modification power leads to wasted judicial resources, as courts often have to set aside entire

Commercial

UNCITRAL model law.

awards even when a minor correction would suffice," he said.

This contradicts the pro-arbitration approach of minimal judicial interference and speedy dispute resolution, added Mehta.

While it is accepted that courts should not rewrite awards or review merits, a narrowly tailored modification power — limited to curable defects — would align with the objectives of arbitration law while ensuring justice, he said. "This again, ought to be appropriately dealt with by the legislature," Mehta said. According to the law officer, while

inherent powers, procedural jurisprudence, and evolving arbitration requirements unique to India could justify reading into Section 34 the power of modification, leaving the matter to the wisdom of the legislature would be the "most appropriate measure" for the country's

'INHUMAN' DEPORTATION OF INDIANS

Will PM convey India's collective outrage to Trump, asks Congress

PNS NEW DELHI

Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with US President Donald Trump, the Congress on Thursday asked if he would "summon up the courage" to convey India's collective outrage at the "inhuman manner" in which Indian citizens were deported from that country.

Posing a series of questions to the prime minister, Congress general secretary in-charge com-munications Jairam Ramesh also asked if Modi would convey to the US president that India would send its own aircraft -- like Venezuela and Colombia did -- to bring back Indian deportees in the future.

The prime minister will be first hugging and then meeting his 'good friend' President Trump at 2:30 am IST on the morning of February 14. India has already appeased the US president by slashing import duties on some farm produce and on Mr Trump's favourite



Harley-Davidson motorcycles," Ramesh said in a post on X.

The Congress leader noted a commitment had also been made to amend the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damages Act, 2010, that US companies had been demanding.

"No doubt pacts will be signed and contracts for defence acquisitions firmed up. Even so, we have five questions for the prime minister -- Will Mr Modi summon up the courage to convey to the US president India's collective outrage at the inhuman manner in which Indian citizens were deported back a few

SC ON AIR POLLUTION Delhi, Centre may not fight, doesn't

mean they will be proactive

PNS NEW DELHI

The tussle between the Centre and the Delhi government might have ended with the change in guard, but that does not mean they would be proactive in resolving the air pollution crisis, the Supreme Court on Thursday said.

A bench of Justice Abhay S Oka and Justice Ujjal Bhuyan was hearing the issue of air pollution in Delhi in the M C Mehta case.

Senior advocate Aparajita Singh, who is acting as amicus curiae, submitted she was relieved that Delhi and the Centre wouldn't be at loggerheads after the BJP was set to from government.

She said half of the time was wasted in fighting and the issues remain unresolved. The bench then said in a

lighter vein,"That's the practical aspect of it. They may not be fighting that does not mean they will be proactive."

Ádditional solicitor general Aishwarya Bhati said she was optimistic that there would no confrontation.

Bhati sought permission to ease GRAP-IV measures that are currently enforced in

The bench said it would consider the issue on February 17 and asked the law officer to give an AQI chart.

The bench asked Bhati to seek instructions on the aspect that the recommendations of the Commission for Air Quality Managements, constituted under Environmental Protection Act. could be be implemented in all cities grappling with air pollution and not just in Delhi.

India to conduct 2 crewed space flights under Gaganyaan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has broadened the scope of the Gaganyaan mission and plans to carry out two crewed space flights by 2028, Parliament was informed on Thursday

According to the enhanced scope, the Gaganyaan programme will have eight missions -- two crewed and six uncrewed -- Union Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office Jitendra Singh said in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha.

Singh said the earlier Gaganyaan programme entailed one crewed mission and two uncrewed ones.

The total funding for the programme has been enhanced to Rs 20,193 crore to address the programmatic requirements, according to the revised scope that includes new developments for the Bharatiya Antariksh Station and precursor missions, he

The allocation also covers additional requirements to meet the ongoing Gaganyaan programme, he further said.

Modi meets Tulsi Gabbard, calls her 'strong votary' of India-US friendship

PNS WASHINGTON

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Tulsi Gabbard, US Director of National Intelligence, and discussed various aspects of ties between the two countries with focused on enhancing intelligence cooperation in counterterrorism and emerging

Modi also congratulated Hindu-American Gabbard on her confirmation as the nation's top intelligence official. She was confirmed on Wednesday.
"Met USA's Director of

National Intelligence, @TulsiGabbard in Washington Congratulated her on her confirmation. Discussed various aspects of the India-USA friendship, of which she's always been a strong votary,"

Discussions also focused on enhancing intelligence cooperation in counter-terrorism, cybersecurity and emerging threats, Ministry of External Affairs official

Modi posted on X.



spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in a post on X.

"PM @narendramodi held a productive meeting with US Director of National Intelligence @TulsiGabbard in Washington DC today. Discussions focused on enhancing intelligence cooperation in counter-terrorism, cybersecurity & emerging threats," the post said.

Modi arrived in the US capital on Wednesday around 5.30 pm (Thursday, 4 am IST) after a visit to France where he had co-chaired the Artificial Intelligence Action Summit with French President Emmanuel Macron.

Modi and Trump will hold bilateral discussions in the White House on Thursday.

"Our nations will keep working closely for the benefit of our people and for a better future for our planet," Modi said on X

Centre should resolve farmers' issues in Feb 14 meeting: Pandher

PNS CHANDIGARH

Farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher on Thursday said that the Centre should resolve the agitating farmers' issues, including legal guarantee for MSP, in Friday's meeting.
This comes after four rounds

of meetings between the Centre and the agitating farmers that were held in February last year. Pandher spoke to the

reporters at the Shambhu border point, where a Kisan Mahapanchayat was held to mark the completion of one year of the ongoing agitation. He said that they will make

efforts to move the Centre towards resolving the farmers' issues in the meeting. Farmer leader Äbhimanyu Kohar said that Jagjit Singh

Dallewal, who is on an indefinite fast, will make his best efforts to participate in the meeting to put forth farmers' demands. He said that Dallewal will try



to participate in the meeting but he is not keeping well.

"Dallewal wants to attend the meeting to put forth farmers' demands before the Centre," Kohar said. Dallewal, who is the convener of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political), has been on an indefinite hunger strike at the Khanauri border point since November 26 last year in support of various demands including a

legal guarantee to minimum support price for crops. On Ianuary 18, a delegation of senior officials from the Union Agriculture Ministry, led by joint secretary Priya Ranjan, invited the representatives of Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha for a meeting to discuss their demands on February 14 in Chandigarh.

Chief priest of Ayodhya temple given 'Jal Samadhi'

PNS ■ AYODHYA

The late chief priest of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple in Ayodhya, Mahant Satyendra Das, was given 'Jal Samadhi' on Thursday evening.

The mortal remains of Acharya Satyendra Das were taken from his residence in a palanguin to the banks of the . Saryu river, where he was given water burial at the Tulsidas Ghat. In the afternoon, his body was taken around the city in a procession on a chariot. His successor Pradeep Das earlier told PTI that in accordance with the traditions of the Ramanandi sect, Das will be given a water burial.

As part of the 'jal samadhi', heavy stones are tied to the body before it is immersed into the middle of a river, explained Pradeep Das. The 85-year-old Satyendra Das died at a hospital in Lucknow on Wednesday.

the disposal of waste in Dhar

district. According to the state

government, the waste trans-

ported from the Union

Carbide factory in Bhopal,

located around 250km from

Dhar, comprises soil, reactor residues, sevin (pesticide) residues, naphthol and semi-



Leopard gatecrashes Lucknow wedding

Bride and groom remain stuck in car for hours

PNS LUCKNOW

Wedding celebrations can often get wild. And this one in Lucknow did, quite literally, when a leopard strayed into the banquet hall. Expectedly, pandemonium broke out as panicked guests scampered here and there, the bride and groom locked themselves in a car and a forest officer who tried to take on the big cat was injured when it took a swipe at his rifle wielding arm.

It all happened on Wednesday night in the city's Buddheshwar Road area. The leopard was caught and tranquillised after hours of efforts around 2 am.

An eyewitness described the scene when the leopard made its entry. The sight of the wild cat, he said, led to panic and screams with guests running frantically to save their lives. Police and forest department officials were called and quickly reached the spot to handle the crisis.

Videos showed the officials putting on protective gear and carefully climbing the stairs of the banquet hall. As they do, the leopard can be seen lunging at one official who leaves

men retreat. Forest department official Mukaddar Ali sustained injuries in his hand while trying to catch the leopard, police "We have ordered an

inquiry into the whole episode.

The animal has been nabbed.

But we want to get into the

bottom of the whole thing,' Uttar Pradesh Forest Minister Arun Kumar Saxena said. The leopard population has increased... we want to guard against such incidents," he

Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Shitanshu Pandey added that the leopard was caught after two tranquilliser darts after which it was trapped using a net and kept

in a cage "It will be relocated and released in the forest after due permissions," he said. It is a

male weighing 80-90 kg. While leopard sightings have become increasingly frequent in many urban centres across the country, it is rare in Lucknow.

The video was widely distributed across all social media platforms and the one question being asked was how it reached the heart of the city his weapon behind as the and went into the building.

40 YEARS POST-BHOPAL GAS TRAGEDY

Unloading of Union Carbide waste starts

PNS DHAR

The process of unloading 337 tonnes of hazardous waste, transported from Bhopalbased defunct Union Carbide factory in container trucks, began at an incineration unit in Pithampur industrial area in Madhya Pradesh's Dhar district on Thursday, an official

He said the exercise, which began at around 3 pm by adhering to all safety norms, was launched in the presence of local representatives and

administration, more than 40 years after the world's worst industrial disaster which occurred when a highly toxic gas leaked from Union Carbide's pesticide plant.

Only the containers packed with chemical waste are being unloaded, and no burning process is being carried out as of now, the official maintained.

In January, protests had rocked Pithampur, around 50 km from Dhar district headquarters, after the waste was brought to a private facility for incineration. Those objecting

to the move claimed it would harm the local residents' health and the environment. Pithampur SDM Pramod

Singh Gujar, in an audio and visual clip, said, "We have brought local representatives to the Ramky plant, where con-



tainers are parked. The waste is being unloaded from the trucks following all safety regulations.

The claims about the start of burning process are incorrect. No misinformation or false rumours should be spread. The waste is being unloaded from the trucks in the presence of all representatives, and no further activity is taking place at the unit," Gujar

On Wednesday, a group of people performed 'shavasana' (corpse pose) to protest against

processed remnants. The Madhya Pradesh Pollution Control Board has said scientific evidence suggests the chemical effects of sevin and naphthol in the waste have now become "nought".

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

Revamping the tax regime

Nirmala Sitharaman introduces the Income Tax Bill 2025 in Parliament, aiming to replace the 1961 Act with a more taxpayer-friendly framework

inance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman introduced the Income Tax Bill 2025 in Parliament on Thursday. This new bill aims to replace the Income Tax Act, 1961, which has become cumbersome due to numerous amendments over the last six decades. The bill focuses on simplification, clarity and ease of compliance for taxpayers while retaining the fundamental structure of the tax system. The bill consists of 536 sections, 23 chapters and 16 schedules within 622 pages, making it significantly more concise than the 880-page 1961 Act. One of the major changes is the replacement of the term 'previous year' and 'assessment year' with 'tax year,' eliminating confusion regarding tax filing timelines. To further enhance clarity, ambiguous terms such as 'notwithstanding' have been replaced with 'irrespective.' The new bill also introduces tables and formulae for key calculations, such as TDS, presumptive taxation, salary taxation and deductions for bad debts. Complex explanations and provisos have been omitted, making the



law more comprehensible and user-friendly. A formal Taxpayer's Charter has been included, outlining rights and responsibilities to promote transparency and fairness in tax administration. All TDS-related provisions have been consolidated under a single clause using simple tabular formats, reducing complexity and improving compliance. Additionally, the bill integrates key court rulings from the last 60 years, providing more legal certainty and reducing disputes. The tax treatment for employee stock options has been refined, offering a more transparent taxation structure to ensure fair and predictable tax treatment for employees receiving stock options. To make tax exemptions clearer,

income that does not form part of total income has now been moved to dedicated schedules instead of being scattered throughout the Act. These changes are expected to bring multiple benefits, such as simpler compliance, a clear taxation structure, reduced litigation, an easier TDS framework and greater predictability for employees with stock options. Despite these advantages, the bill faces certain challenges. Taxpayers and businesses will need time to adapt to the new terminologies and provisions. The removal of 'previous year' and 'assessment year' may cause temporary confusion during the transition. Additionally, the introduction of tables and streamlined TDS clauses will require updates in income tax return (ITR) forms, software utilities and reporting systems. The Income Tax Bill 2025 marks a significant step toward a more transparent, efficient and taxpayer-friendly system. While it does not introduce new taxes, its simplification of language, removal of redundancies, and integration of judicial precedents will reduce compliance costs and tax disputes. If successfully implemented, this bill could enhance tax administration efficiency and encourage better voluntary compliance among taxpayers. After deliberation by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance, it is expected to come into effect from April 1, 2026. How it will actually work will only be clear then.



Russia combines diplomatic strategy with military tactics



Russia's military philosophy extends beyond traditional warfare, incorporating hybrid tactics that blend Eastern endurance with Western innovation

ussia's military strategy has long been shaped by its geopolitical position, straddling both Europe and Asia. This dual identity has led to a warfare doctrine that merges Western technological advancement with Eastern strategic depth and endurance. The ongoing evolution of Russian military tactics provides valuable insight into its approach to global conflicts, shaped by a fusion of European and Asian influences. From the European side, Russia has historically adopted a professionalised military structure similar to Western armies, particularly during the Imperial era and through Soviet reforms. Its command structures have evolved to centralise authority while enabling flexibility on the battlefield.

The modernisation of weaponry has also followed Western advancements, integrating precision-strike capabilities and network-centric warfare. Drawing lessons from NATO conflicts, Russia has enhanced its rapid manoeuver warfare strategies, incorporating elements of German Blitzkrieg and modern NATO doctrines, which were evident in its campaigns in Georgia and Ukraine.

On the other hand, Russia's Eastern influences are deeply rooted in its strategic patience and attritional warfare, a legacy of the Mongol conquests and Soviet-era endurance strategies. Rather than seeking swift victories, Russia often engages in prolonged, resource-draining conflicts that wear down its adversaries over time. Its embrace of asymmetric and hybrid tactics aligns with guerrilla warfare methods, employing unconventional approaches such as cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns and proxy warfare.

This strategic approach mirrors the methods used by China and other Eastern powers, relying on keeping operations and stratedestabilisation rather than direct confrontation. Furthermore, Russia's influence in regional conflicts extends beyond conventional military engagements, utilising mercenaries like the Wagner Group and supporting separatist movements, a strategy similar to



Iran's and China's use of regional proxy forces. Russia's military doctrine extends its influence over neighboring states, shaping their security and geopolitical dynamics. Ukraine has been the epicenter of Russia's hybrid warfare, where cyberattacks, military incursions, and disinformation campaigns have been employed to destabilise the country. Belarus remains a critical ally, hosting Russian forces and acting as a logistical facilitator for military operations. The Baltic states— Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—are under constant Russian influence, facing frequent cyber intrusions and political destabilisation efforts, despite their NATO membership. In Central Asia, Russia maintains a military and economic presence in former Soviet republics like Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, ensuring their alignment within its sphere of

Similarly, in the Caucasus, Russia has engaged in military conflicts, as seen in Georgia, and continues to exert influence in Armenia and Azerbaijan through peacegic alliances. Beyond its immediate borders, Russia balances relationships with China and India, maintaining military cooperation with the former while supplying arms to the latter, ensuring its strategic autonomy amid shifting glob-



DRAWING LESSONS FROM CONFLICTS, **RUSSIA HAS** ENHANCED ITS RAPID **MANOEUVER** WARFARE STRATEGIES, INCORPORATING **ELEMENTS** OF GERMAN BLITZKRIEG AND MODERN NATO

DOCTRINES,

EVIDENT IN ITS

CAMPAIGNS IN

GEORGIA AND

al alliances. The geopolitical strategy of the

United States in the Russia-Ukraine war has been pivotal in countering Russian aggression through military, economic, and diplomatic means. One of the most significant aspects of US involvement has been its military support for Ukraine. The US has supplied Ukraine with advanced weaponry, including Javelin anti-tank missiles, HIMARS rocket systems, and Patriot air defence systems, significantly enhancing its defensive and offensive capabilities.

Another key aspect of the economic strategy has been reducing Europe's dependence on Russian oil and gas. The US.has increased its liquefied natural gas exports to Europe and supported alternative energy sources to mitigate Russia's ability to use energy as political weapon. Additionally, billions of dollars in direct economic aid have been provided to Ukraine to

stabilize its economy and sustain its military operations. India, as a key global player, has maintained a delicate balancing act in the Russia-Ukraine war due to its histor-West. Economically, India has continued its energy cooperation with Russia, increasing imports of Russian oil at discounted prices to mitigate global energy inflation. At the same time, India is expanding

its trade partnerships with Western nations to ensure diversification and avoid overreliance on any single economic partner. In the geopolitical sphere, India has positioned itself as a neutral entity, abstaining from several UN votes condemning Russia and advocating diplomatic dialogue over sanctions.

India's military procurement strategy reflects this balance, as it continues to acquire Russian military hardware such as S-400 missile systems while simultaneously strengthening defense ties with the US and France to modernise its armed forces. The broader Indo-Pacific security landscape remains a key concern for India, as it remains wary of deepening Russia-China military ties. Given China's aggressive posturing in the region, India has increased its engagement with Western powers, particularly through the QUAD alliance with the US, Japan and Australia, to counterbalance Chinese influence. Russia's military philosophy extends beyond traditional warfare, incorporating hybrid tactics that blend Eastern endurance with Western innoical ties with Russia and its vation. Cyber and information growing partnerships with the warfare play a significant role in Russia's strategy, heavily influenced by China's cyber

> (The writer is an expert on cyber security and counter terrorism; views expressed are

The true cost of 5G: Why prices are high now—but will not stay that way



New technologies start costly but become more affordable as adoption grows. With economies of scale, 5G costs will drop, unlocking new opportunities for businesses

⊣he 5G technology is widely recognised for its ability to deliver lower latency, faster speeds and improved connectivity, supporting a vast number of devices simultaneously. However, many consumers perceive 5G as an expensive innovation, primarily due to the high cost of chipsets, while overlooking broader cost factors. Although chipset expenses are a component, they do not represent the complete financial picture.

The Cost of 5G Hardware When considering 5G, it is common to focus on the price of chips. While 4G chips are priced below \$10, 5G chips currently exceed \$100. However, focusing solely on chipset costs ignores the larger financial framework. The primary expense of 5G stems from the extensive infrastructure required to support the network. Telecom providers must invest in building new base stations, fibre-optic networks, and antennas to enable 5G con-

nectivity. Historically, new technologies such as cloud computing and smartphones were expensive when first introduced.

However, as demand grew and adoption increased, prices gradually decreased. A

similar trend is anticipated with 5G. The Inevitable Drop in 5G

Technological progress consistently follows a pattern: initial prices are high, but they decline over time. A case in point is the smartphone market, where the average cost dropped from \$443 in 2011 to \$372 in 2013. Similarly, cloud computing services have become significantly cheaper over the past decade. The same economic principles apply to 5G. As technology advances and adoption rates increase, costs will inevitably

Economies of Scale and Cost Reduction

One of the key drivers of cost

of scale. As more telecom adoption. providers, businesses and consumers adopt 5G, the cost of deployment will continue more affordable, businesses to decline. The larger the global 5G network, the more ties to enhance their operacost-effective its implementation becomes. Research by Juniper predicts that global 5G connections will surge from 5 million in 2019 to 1.5 billion by 2025. Mass production plays a crucial role in reducing costs.

Increased production volumes lead to lower prices for 5G hardware, including chips, antennas, and base stations. The 5G base station market is expected to grow from \$37.44 billion in 2025 to \$132.06 bil-28.67 per cent, according to Mordor Intelligence. These massive investments will drive economies of scale, further lowering the cost of private 5G network deployment for

Affordable 5G Handsets and **Private Networks**

The competition in chipset manufacturing is already pushing down 5G handset prices. As these prices drop, the overall cost of related hardware and services will folreduction in 5G is economies low, accelerating global 5G

5G's Impact on Business As 5G technology becomes will have greater opportunitions. While early adoption may come with higher costs, the long-term benefits will far outweigh these expenses. 5G's ultra-fast connectivity and real-time data transfer capabilities will drive productivity, streamline processes, and facilitate better decision-making.Furthermore, 5G can revolutionise industries by enabling advanced applications in customer service, video streaming, and mobile capabilities.

lion by 2030, at a CAGR of The Future of 5G Affordability

As adoption scales up, deployment costs will decline, making 5G a more democratised technology. This affordability will allow businesses of all sizes to embrace 5G, fostering innovation in artificial intelligence, augmented reality. and beyond. The widespread availability of 5G will enable businesses to stay competitive in the digital world.

(The writer is Founder & CEO, Echelon Edge Pvt Ltd; views are personal)

COUNSELLING CENTRES FOR COUPLES

Madam — Recently, many cases of divorce rocked the nation. The case of Atul Subhash, who ended his life, giving up due to the mental agony faced by his wife during divorce and another incident where a Karnataka woman demanded Rs 6.16 lakh per month as alimony, raised doubts among youth on the institution of marriage. To curb the rising cases of divorce, the Odisha government has come up with a welcome initiative to open a pre-marriage counselling centre in the state. CM Mohan Charan Majhi, following a proposal from National Commission for Women (NCW) Chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar, took this thoughtful initiative. With the changing times, the mindset of the young couples is changing. The word 'divorce' is becoming very common in the country

In case of any conflict, be it external or internal, without giving a second thought, the married couple is straightaway heading for a divorce, just like returning a defective product to a shop. Due to a lack of guidance and understanding, some couples don't even put effort into fixing their marriage, which later leads to affairs and family disputes. This practice needs to change; this is where the pre-marriage counselling centres will help the couples. There are some conflicts that can be resolved under proper guidance and advice that the pre-marriage counsellors will provide to couples. This initiative will pave the path for young couples to take the right call at the right time without falling prey to any misjudgments and misunderstandings. The initiative from the Odisha government is a commendable approach to curb divorce cases and to ensure the mental and emotional wellbeing of married couples.

Manoj Kumar Jena | Cuttack

IAF CHIEF CRITICISES HAL

Madam- Indian Air Force Chief Air Marshal Amar Pratap Singh has said his confidence in defence PSU Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) continues to

Supreme Court slams freebies

THE EDITOR

ecently, during the hearing of a PIL seeking Shelter for the homeless in Delhi, the Supreme Court's bench deprecated the distribution of freebies ahead of elections and remarked that it would be better if the homeless were sought to be integrated into mainstream society so that they could contribute to the nation. The order has been passed in the backdrop of a chart handed over in the court by a petitioner in person, which showed the statewide position with regard to the number of homeless persons, the

erode over its failure to fix delays in delivery and upgrades to the light combat aircraft Tejas. I think the Air Force Chief should be more circumspect in issuing such statements, which harm our nation globally. He should understand that this vill be watched by our enemy countries. Let him air his views with the defence min-

ister or the Chief of all the services. This is not the way one has to mock our own enterprises, that too in the defence sector. He should be aware that the GE firm in the US has been the main obstacle in developing the Tejas, as they are not willing to transfer the technology of the engines because of a lack of certain key materials like titanium. GE might be sending these engines this March, so let us wait for them. The delay from HAL is a combination of various factors. No one should be allowed to speak openly about the state of our defence industries; it's a matter of national security. India should hasten up and ought to go in for Sukhoi/Rafel, as the US can hardly be trusted for reasons well

known to all of us. Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad persons who could be accommodated in the said shelters. The Supreme Court expressed concern over political parties promising freebies and asking whether it was not "creating a class of parasites" instead of bringing people into the mainstream workforce who could contribute towards the nation's development.

The bench has also remarked that people are not willing to work due to the lure of cash transfer schemes like "Ladkhi Behin" and free rations. Shooting down his submission, Justice B R Gavai recounted his personal experience of how agriculturists in Maharashtra were not getting labourers as they were getting things free at home. SC's strong observation comes at a time when political parties go all out to woo voters by promising freebies like free electricity and water with little concern for state finance

P Victor Selvaraj | Tirunelveli

INVEST IN AI

Madam —The Chinese DeepSeek has motivated the major countries including India seeking deep into the Artificial Intelligence pursuit. China surprised the world with its latest AI application but it is the hard work of their government, fund managers, institutions, regulatory authorities for two decades with the investment of billions of US Dollars. The global cooperation in developing the latest AI technology to excel ahead of DeepSeek is welcome. Our 23 IITs and 26 IIITs, IISC have thousands of students, researchers and the most competent faculty who can synergise their efforts, resources and infrastructure to develop our own advanced AI.

The Government should immediately thrust their concerted efforts with the regulatory framework, funding and infrastructural resources and pool our top and globally prestigious engineering institutions to develop our own AI at a fast pace. Vinod Johri | Delhi

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FIRST COLUMN

INDIA'S AI DIPLOMACY

India's plan to host the fourth global Al summit in Delhi underscores its strategic push for leadership in Al innovation



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

rime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visits to Paris and Washington, where he engaged with two of the most influential leaders from the developed world, come at a crucial juncture of shifting geopolitical dynamics. The central theme of these highlevel bilateral discussions revolved around advanced technology cooperation in an increasingly fragmented world. India played a significant role as the co-chair of the Al Action Summit in Paris, alongside host nation France. This marked the third global event dedicated to artificial intelligence, drawing comparisons to the Kumbh Mela of technology—bringing together policymakers, corporate leaders, experts, and world leaders.

The summit's primary focus was on leveraging the transformative potential of AI, a technology that has been likened to groundbreaking human advancements such as the invention of the wheel and the mastery of fire. Meanwhile, China introduced DeepSeek, a nimble generative AI tool, posing a serious challenge to the near-monopolistic dominance of US tech giants that have invested billions in Al research and development. Compounding the complexities of global AI governance, former US President Joe Biden, during his final week in office, passed an executive order known as the Interim Final Rule (IFR) on the Framework for Artificial Intelligence Diffusion.

This order imposed export restrictions on critical software and hardware essential for AI development, targeting nations deemed adversarial to US interests—chiefly China—but also impacting close allies



such as India. Global technology stakeholders have since urged the new US administration to maintain consistency with the previously established Regulatory Freeze Order. They have called for the suspension of the Al Diffusion Rule until further review and stakeholder consultations ensure that the regulations align with both national security and international trade interests.

Despite industry appeals, President Donald Trump has yet to overturn the executive order signed by his predecessor. However, his administration issued a fresh executive order on January 23, signalling a possible shift in approach. Within days of assuming office, President Trump reaffirmed the United States' commitment to AI leadership, stating that the country has historically been at the forefront of Al innovation due to its robust free-market economy, world-class research institutions, and entrepreneurial drive. His directive emphasized eliminating barriers that could hinder American Al progress, revoking certain existing Al policies, and reinforcing the US's global leadership in Al. He further asserted that sustaining Al dominance was vital for human advancement, economic competitiveness, and national security. India, aiming for a prominent role in global Al governance, innovation and development, has set forth an ambitious Al mission of its own.

This vision, however, is heavily reliant on high-end semiconductor chips and Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) currently controlled by US technology firms. Any restrictions on access to these critical processors could pose significant challenges to India's Al aspirations. Modi's engagements in Paris, India's announcement to host the fourth global Al summit in Delhi, and his discussions with President Trump and other world leaders signal a strategic move toward securing India's place at the forefront of global Al advancements. These diplomatic efforts mark an essential step in navigating the rapidly evolving AI landscape and ensuring India's stake in shaping the future of this transformative technology.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

Will 'Jan Vishwas 2.0' deliver real reform



While initiatives like upcoming Jan Vishwas 2.0 aim to ease regulatory burdens, deeper reforms are essential to cut red tape and curb the menace of bribery



espite concerted efforts to combat corruption, redtapism and bribery remain formidable barriers to business growth in India. The recent "India Business Corruption Survey 2024" presents a troubling picture: 66 per cent of business entities admit to paying bribes, with 54 per cent stating they were coerced to expedite government processes, obtain permits, ensure compliance, or acquire duplicate licenses. The problem is most acute in sectors governed by overreaching officials in labour, GST, income tax, pollution, provident funds, property registration, drug and health departments. The economic impact is undeni-

A survey by EY-FICCI reveals that four out of five respondents believe corruption is a significant deterrent to foreign direct investment (FDI). This underscores the urgent need to overhaul India's compliance framework to foster a transparent, fair, and predictable regulatory environment. While the government initiated compliance reforms two years ago, progress has been sluggish.

The Jan Vishwas Act of 2023 was a step forward, decriminalising 180 provisions related to imprisonment clauses that burden businesses and entrepreneurs. However, Finance Minister Nirmala INSURMOUNTABLE Sitharaman's 2025 budget announcement about 'Jan Vishwas 2.0' aims to further decriminalise around 100 provisions. While this is a welcome step, it barely scratches the surface—over 20,000 provisions with imprisonment clauses remain untouched.

The Constant Flux of Compliance

For Indian businesses, compliance is already a complex challenge, but its intersection with corruption makes it nearly insurmountable. Regulatory officials often wield compliance provisions as tools to extract bribes. Many businesses report that unofficial payments are still required to secure regulatory approvals, even when all necessary compliances are met. A significant flaw in the system is



FOR INDIAN BUSINESSES, COMPLIANCE A COMPLEX CHALLENGE.

CORRUPTION **NEARLY**

the enormous subjectivity granted to inspectors, who can threaten imprisonment or factory shutdowns without accountability. Another pressing issue is the

overwhelming frequency of compliance updates, which fosters inefficiency and corruption. Over the past year alone, there have been 9,420 compliance updates—an average of 36 daily changes. This staggering rate of

change indicates either regulatory incompetence or a deliberate design to create systemic corruption pipelines. A bureaucracy that needs to update rules at such IS ALREADY an erratic pace is either incapable of foresight or complicit in fostering an environment where bribes become inevitable.

recent directive is a promising tionised governance but business initiative to curb this chaos. Effective this January, changes to food label regulations will be announced only once a year, offering a model for predictable regulatory changes. Similar measures should be extended across all regulatory bodies

Labour Laws: The Elephant in the Room

A significant portion of compliance-related imprisonment clauses stem from labour laws, which fall under the Concurrent List of the Constitution. While India has replaced 29 colonial-era labour laws with four modern labour codes, they remain in limbo, awaiting implementation. Without this critical step, the long-touted "biggest labour reforms in independent India" remain mere rhetoric. State governments must act swiftly to operationalise these reforms. Simplifying Business Permits: A

Digital-First Approach

self-attested and notarised documents across more than 40 government departments.

This archaic system breeds corruption and inefficiency. A digital-first approach could transform the process. Imagine a scenario where entrepreneurs can apply for factory permissions using a single business identifier, granting regulators access to verified documents via an entity called Digi Locker. Such a tamper-proof, authenticated repository could cut approval times from months to days, mirroring the success of India's Digi Yatra in streamlining

airport security. One Nation, One Business **Identity**

compliance remains fragmented. Entrepreneurs must navigate at least 23 identity numbers issued by various Union and state authorities—from PAN, GSTIN, and CIN to professional tax numbers and factory licenses. Each identifier has its lifecycle, requiring periodic renewals and payments, leading to inefficiencies and corruption. A unified One Nation, One Business Identity system could dramatically simplify compliance, reducing bureaucratic friction and the opportuni-

ties for corrupt practices.
A small budgetary allocation toward this initiative could streamline regulatory interac-tions, enhancing India's appeal as a business destination.

A Global Perspective: The US **Efficiency Threat**

The global competition for investment and talent is intensifying. The United States is advancing governance reforms, Establishing a factory in India including the proposed

requires submitting hundreds of Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), to make business operations seamless. If the world's largest economy (GDP: \$27 trillion) becomes even more business-friendly, why would investors choose India's \$4 trillion economy, where red tape and corruption persist? The answer is simple: they won't. As American efficiency attracts global capital, India risks losing out on both investment and entrepreneurial talent, a fundamental driver of its knowledge economy. The Way Forward

The time for complacency is over. What was an opportunity yesterday is now an urgent necessity. To sustain its economic momentum, India must disman-BUT ITS

The Food Safety and Standards India's Digital Public tle bureaucratic hurdles, create a Authority of India's (FSSAI) Infrastructure (DPI) has revolupredictable compliance environment, and eradicate corruption. A clear, well-structured compliance framework-ushered in through Jan Vishwas 2.0—is not just about ease of doing business; it's about safeguarding India's economic future.

The government must act decisively to attract global companies and empower Indian entrepreneurs to innovate, expand, and create jobs without fear or unnecessary regulatory friction. India stands at a crossroads. Whether the High-Level Committee for Regulatory Reforms embraces a bold compliance overhaul or hesitates, the stakes are high. The choice is clear: modernise or risk being left behind in the global economic race.

(The Author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika ITL Group, Vice-Chairman of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board and Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council. Views expressed are personal)

Making road safety a national priority: A targeted mission to save lives

To achieve meaningful change and save lives, India must move beyond symbolism and adopt a mission-driven approach, treating road safety as a national imperative

ised by the government and civil society organisations at national and regional levels. These initiatives focus on raising awareness and educating the public on ways to reduce road casualties.

While this acknowledgment is a step forward, the critical question remains—has road safety truly become a national priority? Unfortunately, our approach is often reactive, addressing the issue only after tragic accidents occur, rather than proactively implementing global best practices to prevent them.

A Grim Reality: What the **Data Reveals**

Road Safety Month, during which various events and programmes are organized by the government and everyday occurrence in India, and there is rarely a day when one does not hear about a fatal crash.

> According to the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) report for 2022. India witnessed 461,312 road crashes, resulting in 168,491 deaths and 443,366 injuries. Alarmingly, nearly 70 per cent of these fatalities involved young individuals-many of whom were the primary earners of their families.

While the 2023 report is yet to be released, officials have already indicated a steep rise in casualties, making Indian roads even more hazardous. Road accident statistics paint The United Nations Decade of



ASHIM SANYAL

Action for Road Safety aims to reduce road deaths by 50 per cent by 2030, and India is a signatory to this ambitious goal. However, despite past commitments, the recent MoRTH report shows an 11.9 per cent increase in accidents, with deaths rising by 9.4 per cent and injuries by 15.3 per cent compared to 2021. This per day, or 53 accidents and 19 deaths every hour. Achieving the 50 per cent reduction target by 2030 seems increasingly difficult unless immediate and sustained action is taken at both central and state lev-

Strengthening Laws and Enforcement

The introduction of the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019, was a significant step toward improving road safety, imposing stricter penalties and regulations. Initially, the law was taken seriously, but its impact faded over time due to inconsistent enforcement. Socio-cultural factors often override the fear of legal consequences, making road safety a neglected concern.

term "accident" itself is mis-

leading.

The Urgent Need for Action Adopting a structured and data-driven approach to road safety is imperative. Studies indicate that focusing on key risk factors—such as speeding, non-compliance with seatbelt and helmet laws, and unsafe road designs—can significantly reduce casualties.

translates to an average of The reality is that road crash-1,264 accidents and 462 deaths es are preventable, and the Speeding alone contributes to approximately 73 per cent

of all road accidents in India. Scientific speed limits should be enforced on expressways, highways, urban roads and even rural areas where mobility is increasing rapidly.Noncompliance with safety measures is another major concern. In 2022, over 16,715 people lost their lives due to not wearing seatbelts, and more than 50,000 two-wheeler riders died because they were not wearing helmets. These numbers highlight the urgent need to enforce safety regulations

tance. Road Safety as a National Mission

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has successfully led multiple national missions, including Swachh Bharat

Abhiyan, Skill Development, Yoga for Immunisation Programmes, and Child Health Initiatives. These programmes achieved remarkable success through targeted policies, funding and regular progress reviews. Given the scale of road safety concerns, India must adopt a similar mission-driven approach. Declaring road safety a National Mission would ensure the allocation of dedicated budgets, the establishment of clear targets, and continuous monitoring at strictly and create widespread both central and state levels. awareness about their impor-Regular progress reviews, monthly reports, and rigorous enforcement mechanisms would motivate authorities to take proactive steps toward improving road safety.

Road safety is not just about reducing casualties; it is about safeguarding the wellbeing of every citizen, strengthening the economy, and securing the future of India's youth. The financial burden of post-crash

tivity and emotional distress on families is immense. As a global signatory committed to saving lives, India must take decisive steps to ensure road safety is not merely a campaign but an integral part of governance. The time to act is now—by adopting a mission-mode approach, enforcing existing laws and making road safety a top national pri-

medical care, loss of produc-

(The author is COO consumer A Collective Commitment to VOICE; views are personal)

ority, we can create safer roads

for all.

HYDERABAD | FRIDAY | FEBRUARY 14, 2025

MONEY MATTERS



Ather Energy ties up with Kerala-based ChargeMOD

Jectric two-wheeler maker Ather Energy on Thursday said it has entered into a partnership with ChargeMOD, a charge point operator in Kerala. The collaboration gives EV owners with the LECCS (Light Electric Combined Charging System) connector access to 121 more charging locations across Kerala. As of December 31, 2024, Ather had 291 Ather Grid fast chargers in Kerala. "Since the very beginning, we have focused on establishing a nationwide charging network, and have believed that OEMs should collaborate with charging point operators to expand the charging network in the country," Ather Energy Chief Business Officer Ravneet Singh Phokela said in a statement. The standardisation of the LECCS connector as the type 7 connector, further supports this collaboration, he added. Ather Energy was the first two-wheeler OEM to establish a two-wheeler fast charging network in India in 2018. "This collaboration will not only benefit Ather customers but also all electric two-wheeler users, making EV adoption more practical and convenient thereby aligning with Government of India's ambitious vision for a cleaner environment by 2030," ChargeMOD Founder Visakh Raj said.



boAt's invites French tech firms to invest in India

alling for increased collaboration between France and India, Consumer tech firm boAt's co-founder Aman Gupta said India is a powerhouse of innovation with hundreds of thousands of startups and over 100 unicorns. In a LinkedIn post, Gupta, who was present at the Indo-France CEO forum during the Al Action Summit in Paris, shared how he pitched India as a global hotspot for innovation and invited tech businesses to invest in the country. "With over 100,000 startups, 100+ unicoms, and being the 3rd largest ecosystem globally, India is a powerhouse of innovation. It's time to connect the dots globally. "France should send its best minds to Startup Mahakumbh (April, Delhi), and India must show up at Viva Tech (June, Paris). We need more Founder-led partnerships in the future and France should also leverage programmes like Invest in India," he wrote. Gupta also highlighted India's shift "from importing to exporting tech," noting the country's evolution from reliance on global tech giants to making and exporting tech--from boAt headphones to Apple iPhones



HMPL bags work order from NHAI

PNS MUMBAI

Hiring for white-collar jobs wit-

nessed a 32 per cent year-on-year surge in January, driven by indus-

tries such as semiconductors,

energy, waste management and manufacturing in India, a report said on Thursday.

The growth in hiring is attrib-

uted to surging consumer

demand, strategic incentives out-

lined in the Union Budget 2025-

26 and an increased focus on sus-

tainability initiatives, according to

There was a 32 per cent year-

foundit Insights Tracker.

nfra-to-energy player Hazoor Multi Projects Limited (HMPL) on Thursday said it has bagged a new work order from the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI). It has received a letter of acceptance (LoA) from the NHAI for acting as a user fee collection agency at Bijora Toll Plaza in Maharashtra, HMPL said in a statement. The company did not share any further details. Earlier this month, the company announced bagging a similar project from NHAI for acting as a user fee collection agency and upkeep/ maintenance of adjacent infrastructure in Karnataka valued at around Rs 70 crore. HMPL operates in building road projects on an engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) basis. The company recently forayed into the domestic renewable energy sector with the development of 1.2 GW of clean energy projects spread across 4,200 acres of land in Maharashtra.

'Budget's goal is to propel growth, boost investments'

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday said the goals of the Union Budget 2025-26 is to accelerate growth, secure inclusive development, and invigorate private sector investments.

Replying to a discussion on the general Budget in Rajya Sabha, the minister also said the Budget was prepared during a challenging time, with serious external challenges beyond estimates or fore-

Despite this, the government has tried to keep the assessment as accurate as possible, keeping India's interests paramount, Sitharaman said.

There are no models that you can build and understand how the trends will be because they are very dynamic... Despite that, we have tried keeping the assessments as close as possible, keeping India's interests as topmost...This immense uncertainty is still playing out and many Indian imports which are very critical for our economy to grow are also going to



be left with uncertainty," she

The minister also stressed that the Budget has not reduced sectoral allocations and the effective capital expenditure during the next fiscal is estimated at Rs 19.08 lakh crore.

Sitharaman told the House that the first advance esti-

Office (NSO) has projected India's economy will grow by 6.4 per cent in real terms and

9.7 per cent in nominal terms.

So for the Budget, "we have kept our goals" such that we are able to accelerate growth, secure inclusive development, invigorate private sector investments, she said.

The minister also highlighted that the government steered the economy very well during the Covid crisis, and the country emerged as 5th largest major economy in the world.

She also recalled after the global financial crisis of 2008, India was termed as among the "fragile five" economies.

New IT Bill aims to achieve tax certainty: I-T dept

The simplified Income Tax Bill, which is half the size of the 1961 Income Tax Act, seeks to achieve tax certainty by minimising the scope of litigation and fresh interpretation, the Income Tax department said on Thursday.

The new bill, introduced in the Lok Sabha, has a word count of 2.6 lakh, lower than 5.12 lakh in the I-T Act. The number of sections is 536, as against 819 effective sections in the existing law.

The number of chapters

has also been halved to 23 from 47, according to the FAQ issued by the I-T depart-

The Income Tax Bill 2025, has 57 tables, compared to 18 in the existing Act and removed 1,200 provisos and 900 explanations.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, while introducing the Bill in the Lok Sabha, had said that "substantial changes" have been made in the Bill. The number of words have been halved from 5.12 lakh, and sections reduced

from 819 to 236. Following introduction, the Bill was referred to the select committee of the Lok Sabha and mandated to submit its report by March 10. Provisions relating to

exemptions, and TDS/TCS have been made crispier in the Bill by putting them in a tabular format, while the chapter for not-for-profit organisations has been made comprehensive with use of plain language. As a result of this, the word count has come down by 34,547.

"While undertaking simplification exercise, a conscious attempt has been made to minimise the scope of litigation and fresh interpretations," it said to a query on whether principles of Tax Certainty were followed in drafting of the new Bill.

Govt won't extend duty-free import of yellow peas beyond Feb: Joshi

PNS NEW DELHI

The government will not extend duty-free import of yellow peas beyond February in order to protect the interest of farmers, Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said on Thursday.

To boost domestic supply and check price rise, the government had allowed the dutyfree import of yellow peas in December 2023 and subsequently extended it thrice till February 28.

'We are stopping the dutyfree import of yellow peas, Joshi told reporters on the sidelines of The Pulses Conclave 2025.

The matter will be discussed in a Group of Ministers (GoM) meeting headed by Union Minister Amit Shah scheduled on Thursday.

The food ministry has given its comments and a final decision on imposing customs duty on yellow peas will be taken by the GoM, he added.

Joshi, while addressing the event earlier, said the government will review the free import policy for tur, urad and masoor after assessing the domestic pulses production.

He also asserted that the country may not have to import even a single kilogram of pulses by 2027 as Home Minister Amit Shah has expressed con-

Gold prices rose Rs 140 to Rs

88,100 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday

amid strong trends in the

fidence that the country will become self-reliant in pulses

Joshi also appealed to the pri-

to focus on strategies to reduce production fluctuations and raise crop yields besides introducing innovative post-harvest tech to minimum the loss and improve the pulses availability. Meanwhile, India Pulses and

Grain Association (IPGA) Chairman Bimal Kothari said the government may impose restrictions on yellow peas import in the interest of farm-

"We expect that this (duty-

free import of yellow peas) may not be extended or there might be some restrictions on import," he said at a press conference organised on the side-

lines of The Pulses Conclave. India's yellow peas import stood at over 30 lakh tonnes out of 67 lakh tonnes of overall pulses import during the 2024 calendar year, he added.

More than 30 lakh tonnes of

Govt working on augmenting coal production: Reddy

PNS NAGPUR

Union minister G Kishan Reddy on Thursday said that since India's energy demand was growing rapidly, the government was working on augmenting the coal production to Bharat'.

The Coal and Mines Minister also said the government has set the target of producing one billion tonnes of coal this year in a bid to ensure that people do not have to face power shortage, especially in the summer season.

Noting that there was a huge demand for critical minerals like lithium and copper, he said India was acquiring critical mineral blocks in

Reddy addressed the coal industry workers at the



National convention of Akhil Bharatiya Khadan Mazdoor Sangh affiliated to Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh here, and later also interacted with reporters.

"Energy demand is increasing rapidly in India and coal is an important pillar of our energy security. The government is moving forward with the target of one billion tonnes of coal production for this financial year. Coal production is very important for the next 50 years to achieve the aim of Viksit Bharat," he said.

Salary hikes to hit 30-40 pc for emerging skills: Report

PNS NEW DELHI

Corporate India is likely to witness annual salary hikes in the range of 6-15 per cent this year, depending on the industry, role criticality, and niche skills and this figure may touch as high as 40 per cent for emerging skills and critical leadership roles, according to Michael Page 2025 Salary

The leading global recruitment consultancy noted that India's job market has shown resilience in recent months, offering increased opportunities across sectors compared to early

"Annual salary hikes in India generally vary from 6-15 per cent, and salary increments for promotions typically range from 20-30 per cent, with critical leadership and emerging skill roles seeing hikes of 30 to 40 per cent," it said.

Over a dozen new global private equity, sovereign, venture capital, real estate, and infrastructure funds have expanded their operations into India, marking the country's growing significance in the global investment landscape, it added.

international markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 purity had closed at R

87,960 per 10 grams on Wednesday.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity went up Rs 140 to Rs 87,700 per 10 grams from the previous close of Rs 87,560 per 10 "Gold recovered from a recent swing bottom and traded higher on Thursday, as haven demand remains intact in response to multiple

Gold rises Rs 140 to reclaim Rs 88,000-mark

to be implemented shortly," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

Silver prices also jumped Rs 800 to Rs 98,000 per kg on Thursday. The white metal had settled at Rs 97,200 per kg in the previous trading session.

Investors remain worried that US President's trade tariffs might trigger a global trade war, which continues to act a tailwind for safe-haven metals like by President Trump that are scheduled gold, Gandhi said.

Sensex. Nifty close lower for 7th straight session IT, banking shares major drag

PNS MUMBAI

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty pared early gains to close lower for the seventh straight day on Thursday, dragged by fag-end selling in select IT and banking shares and foreign fund outflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dipped 32.11 points or 0.04 per cent to settle at 76,138.97. The index stayed in the positive zone for the most part of the session. The benchmark gyrated 751.1 points between the day's high of 76,764.53 and low of 76,013.43.

The NSE Nifty slipped 13.85 points or 0.06 per cent to 23,031.40.

From the 30-share bluechip pack, Adani Ports, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services, State Bank of India, Nestle and Titan were among the laggards.

Sun Pharma, Tata Steel, Bajaj Finserv, Bajaj Finance, Kotak Mahindra Bank and



Zomato were the biggest gainers.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded

equities worth Rs 4,969.30 crore on Wednesday, accordng to exchange data.

"Despite initial market optimism driven by easing domestic inflation data, the rally lost momentum amid uncertain global cues and subdued corporate earnings. Furthermore, a surge in Chinese technology stocks, fuelled by heightened interest in artificial intelligence, redirected FIIs in pursuit of more attractive returns.

'Conditions ripe for India to be at forefront of Al'

PNS NEW DELHI

Amid buzz around Artificial Intelligence and its profound impact on society, Google's global head of government affairs and public policy, Karan Bhatia on Thursday said conditions are ripe for India to be at the forefront of AI, and that the tech firm is deeply aligned to the country's vision of having indigenous foundational mod-

He also expressed optimism that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ongoing visit to Washington DC will further cement an already-strong bilateral relationship, and lead to

greater collaboration between India and the US, on AI.

Bhatia asserted that the Mountain View, Californiaheadquartered company is already deeply invested and engaged in India's vision of having indigenous foundational models, and is excited to be an important partner in the country's tech journey.

On what makes us optimistic about India, is not just a matter of localised talent... not iust things like the language diversity that makes us so excited... it is also the evidence that we've got that India, the Indian people, are very excited about AI," Bhatia said.

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION 'E' PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE NIT No. 38/EE-6/CRZ /GHMC/2024-25 Nature of the Work: CC Roads, Gym Equipment's and maintenance works etc. Estl. Cost: Rs. 67.70 Lakins. Download Start Date & Time: 14.02-2025 at 04.00 P.M. Last

Date & Time for Receipt of Bids: 18.02.2025 a102.00 P.M. Rame & Address Officer, Last No: Smt. M. Peersingh, EE, Div-6, CRZ, GHMC, Hydersbad, Ph. No. 9154960551. For further details can be seen at e-procurement @ www.tender.eprocurement.gov.in. Note: 1% EMD should be obtained after the date of tender notice. Sdi- Executive Engineer R.O.No: 10234-PR/CL/ADVT/10024-25, Dt. 13-03-2025 Circle No.6, Charminar Zone, GHMC

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SOUTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF T.G LIMITED TENDER NOTICE NO.04/2024-25

Tenders are invited from eligible vendors for various civil works in Yadadr Bhongir circle. Note: The detailed information of the tender can be obtained on website of TGSPDCL i.e. https://tgsouthernpower.org/ Last Date: 21.02.2025 at 15:00 Hrs, Phone: 7901093657.

Sdf- Superintending Enginee

R.O. No.: 10258-PACLIXENTIT(2004-25, Dt. 13-02-2625 Operation Circle, TGSPDCL, Yadadri Bhongis

on-year jump in hiring for emerging as key hubs for these January 2025, signalling renewed roles, which demand specialised

confidence in the market, it said. The report revealed that green jobs stood out in January, witnessing a 41 per cent increase over the last two years led by expanding clean energy initia-

Sectors like semiconductors, energy, and waste management are leading this growth, fuelled by global net-zero emission targets, the report said.

Bengaluru, Delhi and Pune are

skills in areas like energy auditing and sustainability strategy, it

Demand for green jobs is projected to rise another 11 per cent in 2025, driven by renewable energy, EVs, and green hydrogen initiatives.

"India's job market continues to grow at a strong pace, with hiring surging across key industries. Sectors like travel, retail, and green jobs are seeing sustained momentum, reflecting business confidence and evolving indus-



White-collar hiring grows by 32 pc: Report try priorities," foundit Chief Revenue and Growth Officer Pranay Kale said. Government policies, includ-

ing key budget provisions, are accelerating this shift - especially in renewable energy, EVs, and sustainability-focused indus-

"As hiring expands beyond metro cities, Tier II hubs are also emerging as key employment centres, reinforcing India's transition to a future-ready, greener economy," Kale said.

the pioneer derabad

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Friday February 14, 2025

Failure: Beyond just being the opposite of success

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ailure is often seen as a setback, but what if it's the key to deeper learning and innovation? Manu Kapur, Professor of Learning Sciences and Higher Education at ETH Zurich, has spent the past two decades reshaping how we understand and design learning. His pioneering theory of Productive Failure challenges conventional teaching methods, demonstrating how struggle - when intentionally structured can lead to stronger understanding and longterm success

From his early days as a mechanical engineer to becoming a global leader in learning sciences, Kapur's research has transformed classrooms. corporate training and education policy worldwide. In this conversation, he shares his journey, the far-reaching impact of his work and why embracing failure might be the smartest way to learn.

Kapur's academic journey began in mechanical

engineering, but by the time he completed his degree, he realised it wasn't for him. "I went into the industry for a bit, but I didn't enjoy it. I even had a couple of startups, but they didn't work out," he recalls. As a last resort, he turned to teaching - and unexpectedly found his calling. "I started teaching math and became fascinated by how students understand abstract ideas. That led me to pursue a master's, then a PhD and eventually an academic career in learning

Teaching mathematics and mentoring the International Mathematical Olympiad team were transformative experiences. "In my early years, I taught in a mainstream school with average and below-average students. I quickly realised that even if you explain something well, students might nod in agreement, but that doesn't mean they truly understand it. That got me thinking - what is the real problem of

At the Olympiad level, he encountered a stark contrast. "There, you're working with the best minds. Solving complex problems involves a lot of failure - trying different approaches, most of

Manu Kapur, Professor of Learning Sciences and Higher Education at ETH Zurich,

groundbreaking theory of Productive Failure, he explains how struggle, when

designed intentionally, can drive deeper understanding and lasting success - reshaping classrooms, corporate training and education policy worldwide

unpacks the power of failure in learning as he chats with The Pioneer. Known for his

which don't work. But this process is essential for learning." This realisation became the foundation of Productive Failure.

The idea of learning from failure isn't new, but Kapur took it further. "People often say, 'We can learn from our mistakes.' My insight was: If failure is such a powerful teacher, why wait for it to happen? Why not design for failure deliberately?"

Productive Failure creates structured learning experiences where students struggle initially before receiving direct instruction. This struggle, Kapur explains, helps them engage more deeply with concepts, leading to better retention and understanding.

His research has shown that students exposed to this method perform significantly better in the long run than those taught through traditional direct instruction. "Failure, when used early and in a safe environment, helps students develop deeper learning. And because they've built this strong foundation, they perform better when the stakes are high."

Despite its success, implementing Productive Failure in classrooms hasn't been easy. "The biggest challenge is that failure has a negative connotation. In schools, failure is seen as a bug, not a feature. Teachers and parents fear

it. But when they see the evidence-how deeply students learn through this approach-they begin to trust the

Training educators to design lessons using Productive Failure is another hurdle. "Giving a lecture is easy. But designing classroom activities where students struggle productively? That takes skill and practice.

Time constraints in packed school curriculums also make it difficult. "For large-scale implementation, school leadership and education policies need to align with this approach." Kapur's work has influenced national education policies, particularly in Singapore. "It took nearly ten years to go from one school to a nationwide initiative. We started with a single classroom, built evidence, got more schools on board, and eventually engaged policymakers. It was a slow, organic process.'

Other countries can learn from Singapore's

experience. "For meaningful change, you need alignment across stakeholders-teachers, school leaders, policymakers, and researchers. It's not about imposing a new method but demonstrating its value through real results." India, with its deeply ingrained culture of academic success and competitive exams, poses a unique challenge. "Failure is not an option for many students and parents. But that's exactly why Productive Failure makes sense here. If we can help students fail early in a structured way, they will develop the deep understanding needed to succeed when it truly

He acknowledges the growing role of technology in education but warns against using tools without a strong pedagogical foundation. "Al can support learning, but its effectiveness depends on how it is designed and used. We must ground it in solid scientific principles about how people learn."

When asked about the legacy he hopes to leave behind, Kapur's answer is clear: impact. "I want to be remembered for a breakthrough idea-one that changed how we think about learning. If Productive Failure becomes a mainstream approach in classrooms and beyond, that would be a legacy worth leaving." His father's advice has stayed with him throughout his journey: 'Your ambition should always exceed your talent.' "It means never getting too comfortable. Keep pushing yourself into new challenges-that's where real learning happens.'

LEGAL GAME-CHANGER

sciences."

THE ENTREPRENEU WHO IS REVOLUTIONISI INDIA'S LEGAL LANDSCA

PNS|HYDERABAD

eet Shreya Sharma, the ultimate game-changer! This rockstar entrepreneur, lawyer and TEDx speaker is on a mission to revolutionise the way we think about law. With a brain that's always buzzing with ideas, she pursued International Relations at Harvard (yeah, that Harvard!) and later graduated with an LLB Hons from Cardiff University. But here's the thing—she didn't let her fancy degrees define her. Instead, she used them as a launchpad to create something truly amazing. At just 21, she founded "Rest The Case," a legal aggregator platform that's making waves in the industry. This award-winning platform is like a superhero sidekick for anyone navigating the complex world of law. With its user-friendly interface and verified lawyers, it is the ultimate solution for all your legal worries.

In an exclusive interview, she divulges with us, "I certainly encountered my fair share of evebrow-raising when I launched Rest The Case at the age of 21. In India, the legal profession has a long history and many people, including clients and attorneys, were apprehensive about transferring something as important as legal services online. I've heard statements like 'Law is too personal to be handled digitally' and 'People won't trust legal advice from a website." Although it was challenging initially, I concentrated on demonstrating that technology might increase access to legal assistance without sacrificing the human element. People gradually started to realise that online legal services may be dependable—and even better—after we established solid partnerships with reputable attorneys and made sure that all procedures were clear. Although it wasn't simple, perseverance and demonstrating outcomes were more persuasive

Her story is one of passion, grit and determination. Let's continue reading where she states, "From the beginning, trust was my top goal. I was aware that my platform wouldn't endure long if users didn't feel secure utilising it. Therefore, we implemented stringent verification procedures to guarantee that all attorneys on our site were legitimate—no shortcuts. We ensured that users felt supported at every stage and that their data was secure. But it was more about personal connection than technology. In order to cut through the jargon and give consumers the impression that they were speaking with actual, reliable professionals, we simplified legal material. It took some time to establish that trust, but being open and consistent was

crucial. Oh! She's a true inspiration to anyone who's ever dreamed of making a difference. And with her infectious energy and optimism, she's proving that even the toughest challenges can be overcome with the right mindset. There were definitely moments of self-doubt during the interview, particularly when she stated, "Oh, there were plenty of moments! I believe that emotion is familiar to everybody who has ever begun something from the beginning. Things weren't going as quickly as I had hoped at one point in the beginning. Since I was voung and fresh to the industry. I questioned whether I had taken on more than I could manage or if anyone would even consider me seriously. Nevertheless, I learned from those experiences that resilience is about knowing when to change course, adapt and follow your gut. It also demonstrated

to me what it takes to be a leader—to be content with not knowing everything but to keep going. Making a genuine difference while juggling business objectives has always been at the core of Rest The Case. In addition to creating a successful business, the founder aimed to provide legal assistance to those who typically cannot afford it. In order to achieve this, she provides a range of free resources, reasonably priced consultations and adjustable pricing alternatives. To support those who truly need assistance but do not



have the resources, they have also teamed up with non-governmental organisations and legal aid organisations. For her, success has more to do with knowing she is genuinely assisting those who might otherwise feel lost in the legal system than it does with making

approachable and user-friendly legal systems can be when they prioritise information simplification and facilitate assistance access. Because the system is made to be easily navigable, individuals are less frightened by it and legal resources are frequently only a click away in countries like the U.S. and the U.K. In India, where legal procedures might seem intimidating and convoluted. I aimed to provide the same clarity. Our goal has been to simplify legalese, provide unambiguous advice and lessen the intimidating nature of the process. Making the law seem like it belongs to the people and not something to be feared is the goal," she added. However, she also tells us, "AI is really fascinating and we are already looking at ways to integrate it into Rest The Case—whether it's for things like making legal research easier or automating contract drafting. The human element of law, however, will never be completely replaced by technology, in my opinion. Al cannot reproduce the personal tales, feelings and complexity that are often associated with legal matters; these things call for empathy and understanding. The human element will therefore always be at the center of my work, even as we leverage technology to make procedures quicker and more effective.

understand their basic rights," she said. "That was what I sought to change with Rest The Case. Through my knowledge library, blogs and videos, we have concentrated on making legal material understandable to anyone. Creating a culture where individuals feel empowered to effectively navigate the legal system rather than being scared by it is my long-term goal. Rest The Case, in my opinion, is crucial to bringing about the idea that everyone, not just attorneys, should be literate in

According to her attempt to wrap it up, "Legal jargon is such a huge

barrier—it makes people feel like they need a law degree just to

There were undoubtedly difficulties for a young woman working in both the legal and startup industries. In meetings, when pitching to investors, or even while networking in largely male circles, she sometimes felt that she had to put in twice as much effort to be taken seriously. But rather than deterring me, it encouraged her to demonstrate her suitability for those spaces. However, she believes that things are gradually changing. In legal technology, more women are taking on leadership positions and the need for diversity is becoming more widely recognised. She is happy to be a part of the change and hopes that the next generation of women entrepreneurs will encounter fewer obstacles! So, what's next for this trailblazing entrepreneur? The sky's the limit and we can't wait to see what Shreya has in

store for us!

Which zodiac signs will find true love in 2025?

Taurus (April 20 - May 20)

Transformation is the word for 2025 for Taurus, especially in personal relationships. Being ruled by Venus, the love planet, Taurus will be attracted to deeper, more meaningful connections this year. The influence of Jupiter, the expansion planet, will bring growth and positivity to Taurus' romantic endeavours. Whether they are single or in a relationship, this is a time when they will feel more open to vulnerability and emotional intimacy

The harmonious alignment of Venus and Saturn will also help Taurus to ground a relationship in the long-term. Singles are likely to get to know somebody who shares your values and has long-term objectives, making the year stable and committed. People already in a relationship will see the opportunity of deepening this bond and might even take the next step during 2025.

Libra (September 23 - October 22)

Venus-ruled Libra is familiar with love and relationships. During 2025, the cosmic energies will fall in favour of Libra in the months that Venus transits through their sign. This would be a year of balance, harmony and love for Libra. Though they are well known for their charm and social grace, during 2025, they would attract potential partners who truly resonate with their soul

Jupiter's transit through Libra's seventh house will enhance their romantic potential. For singles, this alignment may bring the arrival of someone who shares their intellectual and emotional depth. For those in relationships, the year promises a chance to restore balance and rekindle the spark that may have dimmed in recent times. The planets support deeper understanding and commitment, bringing Libra closer to finding true love.

Leo (July 23 - August 22)

Leo natives can expect a thrilling and love-filled year in 2025 With their natural charisma and fiery nature, they are already well-equipped to attract love. However, this year, the alignment of Venus and Mars in their fifth house of romance and creativity will make Leo irresistible. They will experience an inflow of positive energy that boosts their self-confidence and makes them more open to love.

This is the year when many Leos will experience a surge in passion, maybe meeting new people or again rekindling romance that seemed to lose its spark. If Leo has been looking for someone to complement his powerful personality, 2025 will give him the

At the threshold of 2025, many are waiting for true love, companionship and association. For love, we generally go through quite a number of ups and downs, but through astrology, the zodiac sign is found which will witness massive changes in this year related to love. Based on planetary transits, nakshatras and the unique qualities of each zodiac sign, 2025 promises to be a transformative year for many in matters of the heart.

surprise us, the stars are aligning in ways that will favour the following zodiac signs in their pursuit of true love in 2025," shares ShivaAmit Khanna celebrity Vedic **Astrologer & Life** Strategist.

love. Single Capricorns may find love in the most

love and find a new way of relating to their partner.

unexpected places, while those in relationships will feel a

renewed sense of excitement and passion. This year will

Aquarius (January 20 - February 18)

2025 will be one of the most favourable years for love for

unconventional, and true love is not about fitting into a mold

Aquarius. Aquarians are known to be independent and

but finding someone who accepts and celebrates their

a sense of freedom and mutual respect.

more committed and lasting phase.

uniqueness. With Jupiter's influence in their fifth house of

creativity and romance, love for Aquarius will come through

In 2025, many Aquarians will find a partner who shares their

vision for the future and appreciates their individuality. For

single Aquarians, this is a year of meeting someone who

challenges them intellectually and emotionally, creating a

bond that transcends the ordinary. For those already in

partnership and companionship, possibly entering into a

It's going to be a great astrological year, 2025, as all the

good signs will be around for many people to find true love.

Since each sign's journey is so different, according to the

will have special transits. So, for 2025, it might be a very

planets, Taurus, Libra, Leo, Cancer, Capricorn and Aquarius

to their soulmates. Whether single or in a

relationship, these signs will find that true

love is within their reach, offering a

year filled with the potential for

emotional fulfillment and

lifelong commitment.

As always, love is not only

relationships, Aquarius will feel a renewed sense of

encourage Capricorn to let go of their traditional approach to

"While love can always

opportunity to find a partner who shares the same passion and enthusiasm for life.

Cancer (June 21 - July 22)

2025 will be a highly emotional and transformative year for Cancer. As a sign deeply connected to emotions and the home, Cancer's love life will be touched by the deep influences of the Moon. The year will bring opportunities for Cancer to heal past emotional wounds and enter into relationships based on mutual understanding and nurturing. With Neptune and Pluto affecting Cancer's relationship sector, many will get a strong urge toward a soulmate bond. For those who have been holding onto old hurts, this year promises healing and the possibility of meeting someone who provides a sense of security and emotional fulfillment. For Cancer couples, 2025 is the time to build a firm foundation for the future, perhaps involving discussions about commitment or even marriage

Capricorn (December 22 - January 19)

Capricorn natives are disciplined and goal-oriented, but in 2025, things can change totally for them concerning love. From their ruling planet, Saturn, they would be attracted to more realistic and mature connections. The true love for Capricorns in 2025 will not come from the gossamer attraction or superficial connections but rather a better perception of compatibility and shared values.

The transit of Uranus will challenge Capricorn to step out of their comfort zone and find a more spontaneous and

both style and comfort. Featuring a

classic shirt collar and long sleeves with

buttoned cuffs, this shirt by Selected

Homme exudes effortless sophistication

The button fastening offers

ease of wear, while the

regular fit and curved

hem provide a polished

yet relaxed silhouette.

Price: INR 5,499

deep connection or romantic growth that could lead people approach to

FOREVERMARK ICON COLLECTION PAVE AND

Make a declaration of everlasting commitment with the

designed and this ring showcases the unparalleled beauty of real diamonds, serving as a timeless

about what the stars predict, but also about our openness to the connections we make and the effort we put into nurturing them. Keep your heart open trust the process, and the universe will surely bring you the

VOLUMIZING SHAMPOO BAR BY A' DASH OF ME

love you deserve.

Enjoy the refreshing scent and transform your hair with every wash with the goodness of Brazilian yellow clay adding lift and control oil and orange peel for bouncier hair.

> Price: INR: 299



Forevermark Icon Collection Pavé and Baguette Ring. Intricately

meticulously crafted, token of your enduring bond.

CELEBRATING LOVA

RED BELTED SHORT DRESS This elegant dress by Vero Moda features long bishop sleeves, a on each side create a flattering silhouette, while

mandarin collar and a stylish v-neckline, making it the perfect choice for any occasion. The 3 shoulder darts the sash belt and belt loops add a touch of sophistication

Price: INR 3,999

BUTTER FRUIT AND STRAWBERRY SALAD WITH FETA CRUMBLE, WILD HONEY AND BALSAMIC GLAZE



Chef Name: Chef Ganesh Patil **Designation:** Executive Sous Chef, The Westin Goa

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 ripe avocados, diced
- 1 pint fresh strawberries, hulled and sliced
- 1/4 cup crumbled feta cheese 1/4 cup chopped fresh mint
 - 2 tbsp balsamic glaze 1 tsp organic honey Salt and pepper to taste

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1. In a bowl, combine diced avocado and sliced strawberries.
- 2. Top with crumbled feta cheese and chopped fresh mint.
 - 3. Drizzle with balsamic glaze and honey. **4.** Season with salt and pepper to taste.

This avocado and strawberry salad is a romantic and indulgent treat perfect for Valentine's Day. The creamy avocado pairs beautifully with the sweet strawberries, while the feta cheese adds a tangy touch. It's a dish that will leave you and your loved one feeling pampered and indulged.

A heartfelt delight: Beetroot and Himalayan millet salad for Valentine's Day

This Valentine's Day, celebrate love with a dish as vibrant and wholesome as your bond—our Beetroot and Himalayan Millet Salad. A perfect harmony of colors, textures, and flavors, this elegant creation brings together the goodness of the mountains in every bite.

A SYMPHONY OF FLAVOURS

At the heart of this dish is the beetroot capriccio, thinly sliced to perfection after being salt-baked to enhance its natural sweetness. Nestled atop is a refreshing blend of Jhangora (Himalayan millet), delicately boiled in orange juice, adding a subtle citrusy depth. This is further complemented by avocado, lending a rich creaminess and Himalayan berries, which infuse a hint of tart sweetness. To elevate the experience, a drizzle of citrus vinaigrette ties all the elements together, bringing brightness and balance. The final flourish? A luscious Himalayan berry gel (hesalu) that adds a refined touch of indulgence, finished



Chef Name: Chef Pankaj Singh Panwar **Designation:** Executive Chef. The Westin Resort and Spa Himalayas

with delicate microgreens for a hurst of freshness.

A RECIPE FOR ROMANCE

- Creating this dish is as much a labor of love as it is a celebration of it: 1. Begin with salt-baked beetroot, slicing it thinly and arranging it gracefully on the plate.
- 2. In a bowl, mix boiled Jhangora millet, kafal (bayberry), and avocado, then dress it lightly with the citrus vinaigrette.
- 3. Carefully spoon this vibrant mixture onto the beetroot capriccio. **4.** Finish with a touch of hesalu gel for an elegant burst of berry essence and garnish with microgreens.
- The result? A dish that not only looks stunning but also speaks the language of love—fresh, nourishing, and unforgettable. This Valentine's Day, let your love story unfold with a plate that is as beautiful as your special moments together. Indulge in the flavors of the Himalayas and make your celebration truly exceptional!

On the occasion of celebrating the 1st anniversary of Nailashes

in Banjara Hills, Krishika and Khushboo

hosted a party, which was curated by MMediaworks.

ARCHIE



the pioneer

Hyderabad | Friday February 14, 2025









REALITY CHECK

CALVIN AND HOBBES





CROSSWORD



GARFIELD





YES - SLUGGO CAN BE

ON AN ARMY FOR A FRIEND-ESPECIALLY HIS BEST GIRL!













SUDOKU

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DOWN

 Not in danger 2 All right, but not especially good 3 Halt

ACROSS

6 A team game

with this

17 Stairs

10 A bamboo-eating animal

13 Measure temperatures

19 Book of word meanings

14 Player of bagpipes

4 A sign of tiredness

15 Choose

18 Your hearing organs

9 A radio code that uses

12 An animal kept for milk

17 Gritty stuff on a beach

dots and dashes 11 Wide awake and ready

for anything

16 Spoil completely





GINGER MEGGS

THANKS FOR SHARING THAT STORY ABOUT NANCY AND SLUGGO-I COULD TELL THAT SLUGGO WAS A LOYAL KIND OF KID







DIFFICULTY RATING: ***

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5 A big sea bird The sum of all numbers in 7 A many-legged creature any row or column must equal 45.

Hyderabad | Friday February 14, 2025

PIRACY IS LIKE CANCER, BUT WE ARE DOING OUR **BEST TO FIGHT IT, SAYS DAMODARA PRASAD**

SURESH KAVIRAYANI

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Piracy remains one of the biggest challenges for filmmakers, especially in Telugu cinema. The latest films like Game Changer, Sankranthiki Vasthunnam and Thandel suffered heavy losses due to piracy. Despite a dedicated team working around the clock to take down pirated copies from various websites, new

ed copies from various websites, new uploads keep emerging.

"It's not possible to eradicate piracy completely because it is like cancer," said Damodara Prasad, Secretary of the Telugu Film Chamber of Commerce (TFCC). He explained that TFCC has been relentlessly working to combat piracy. "Earlier, piracy was physical, where films were copied onto CDs. Now, it has become a global issue with dioital piracy. There are legal provisions digital piracy. There are legal provisions to tackle it, but implementing them

takes time. In that period, the damage is already done," he said.

Damodara Prasad acknowledged the government's cooperation in fighting piracy but emphasized the challenges posed by the digital landscape. "We have tied up with Google and our authenticity is such that if a pirated film is uploaded online. we can have it

removed immediately. Many Hindi filmmakers also approach us for help in removing pirated copies of their films," he said.

He further revealed that TFCC's expertise has even attracted the attention of Hollywood. "We have worked with

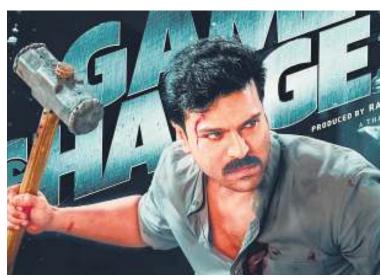
tacts us annually regarding piracy-related matters," he added, highlighting the international reach of their work. international reach of their work.

To protect films from piracy, TFCC charges a nominal fee from production houses before their movie's release. "For small films, we charge Rs 25,000 to Rs 50,000, for medium-budget films Rs 1 lakh and for big-budget films Rs 2 lakh. Considering that filmmakers invest crores in their projects, this is a very small amount. This fee helps pay for software experts who work continuously to track and remove pirated content." ly to track and remove pirated content," he explained. However, he noted that not all filmmakers pay regularly. "Some production houses, like Geetha Arts, have always made their payments before release," he added.

The TFCC piracy cell has removed nearly 36,000 pirated copies of *Pushpa* 2. However, despite these efforts, the movie is still available online. "Some websites, like iBomma and Movierulz, operate from different countries, mak-

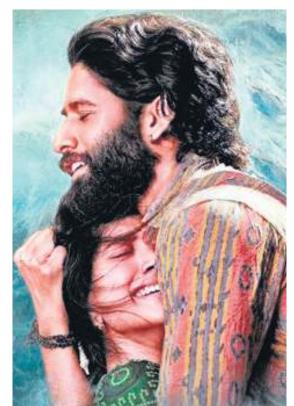
Walt Disney and Sony. Even the FBI con-

ing it impossible to track their IP addresses. Moreover, if India does not have a treaty with those countries, we cannot take legal action against them," he Damodara Prasad, Secretary of the Telugu Film Chamber of Commerce (TFCC), speaks up on the issue of piracy and how TFCC is combatting it



Damodara Prasad also pointed out that most pirated versions of films originate from northern India. "Since most films are now released pan-India, an HD print of the Hindi version is often recorded in a remote village, while Telugu dialogues are separately recorded in theaters in Telugu states. These are then merged to create high-quality pirated copies," he

explained. Despite all efforts, piracy remains a persistent problem. Damodara Prasad believes that the real solution lies with the people. "Whatever we do, we are doing our best. But ultimately, awareness has to come from the audience. If people make a conscious decision not to watch pirated movies. then the problem can be solved," he concluded.



Urvashi Rautela calls

Chiranjeevi her 'Guardian Angel' for helping her ailing mother



tors, leaving Urvashi in distress as she struggled to find the best course of treatment. In a moment of uncertainty, she reached out to

> Chiranieevi for help. The Megastar responded promptly and took it upon himself to ensure that Urvashi's mother received the best medical attention. He personally coordinated with the medical team at Apollo Hospital in Kolkata, facilitating the necessary treatment. Thanks to his intervention, the doctors successfully performed surgery, leading to her recovery.

Expressing her deep grati-tude, Urvashi shared her experience in an interview with a Telugu news outlet. "I had always heard about Chiranjeevi sir's generosity, but I witnessed it firsthand during the shoot of Waltair Veerayya. When my mother faced a major health crisis, I was desperate to find the right treatment. That's when I turned to Chiranjeevi sir for help," she said.

Describing his unwavering support, she added, "He told us not to worry and, like a guardian angel, took the time to understand the entire



situation. He spoke to the Apollo Hospital staff in Kolkata and ensured that she received the best treatment available. Even with his packed schedule, he constantly checked in on us, offering reassurance and

Moved by his kindness, Urvashi further stated, "I cannot put into words the gratitude I feel. He proved that humanity and goodwill still exist. He reminded us time and again not to hesitate if we needed anything. My family and I will always be indebted to him for his generosity."

Nagarjuna comes in support of Rajasekhar's Thala



Actor Nagarjuna is supporting an upcoming small film *Thala*, which is directed by Amma Rajasekhar. His son Ragin Raj is making his debut as the lead actor. On Thursday, the director and the team met Nagarjuna and showed the trailer of the film. Nagarjuna in the pictures is seen keenly watching the promotional videos. He has wished the team a great success. The senior actor appreciated it after watching the trailer, and also bought the first ticket online. "Nagarjuna bought the first ticket for this movie on Book My Show. On this occasion, he watched the trailer of this movie and appreciated the team. Nagarjuna blessed Ragin Raj that he would become a big actor," said Nagarjuna according to the team. He also said about Rajasekhar's direction and wished him that he is excited to see. The team and the irector expressed their happines saying that Nagarjuna purchasing the first ticket of the film is a sign of the enormous success that this film will achieve. Srinivas Goud is the producer.

'SAAREE IS BASED ON REAL-LIFE INCIDEN' fter a long time the controversial director Ram anything about their past or present, they end up

After a joing time the controversian ansets.

After a joing time the controversian ansets. Saaree. Well, he is not the director this time and has given the chance to Giri Krishnakamal to direct this film. Prominent businessman Ravi Shankar Varma is the director and it is released on February 28, in Telugu, Hindi, Tamil and Malayalam languages. The film is a psychological thriller based on real-life events, starring Sathya Yadu and Aaradhya Devi as the lead actors. The trailer of this film was also released. "In social media, many people connect with strangers whose faces and background or foreground they don't know, and without knowing

trusting them, and face risks, horrifying incidents. We've heard and seen these stories many times! This movie 'Saaree' is based on such real-life incidents," said Ram Gopal Varma while narrating the background voice of the film. The censor formalities are also completed about this film. Generally when an RGV film came to the censor certificate, it is not easy to pass as there were many controversies and it happened many times. But this film completed the formalities without any buzz. This makes it clear that RGV has come up with a film that sticks to only story without any political or any other agenda.





Anupam Kher joins Prabhas' military drama with Hanu Raghavapudi

Karthikeya 2 and Tiger Nageswara Rao, he is now playing a key role in The India House, starring Nikhil. Adding to his impressive lineup, Kher has now joined the upcoming film directed by Hanu

Raghavapudi, featuring Prabhas in the lead.

The actor shared the news on his social media, posting pictures with Prabhas and other team members. The film, produced by Mythri Movie Makers, is set against a military backdrop. While the official title has not been announced, sources suggest that the makers are

Bollywood veteran Anupam Kher has become a familiar face in Telugu cinema. Having previously appeared in films like further cementing his status as one of India's revealed that this project marks his 544th film, further cementing his status as one of India's most prolific actors. The National Award-winning actor will be seen in a significant role, alongside debutante Imanvi, who is making her Telugu cinema debut as the female lead.

Adding to the film's star power, veteran actors Mithun Chakraborty and Jaya Prada will also play pivotal roles. Set in the 1940s, the story revolves around a man's struggle for his motherland and his people against British rule. Although the film is historically inspired, it is a work of fiction.

Baapu is a unique film that showcases our culture: Rana Daggubati

ersatile actor Brahmaji takes the lead in the upcoming film Baapu, directed by debutant Dava. The film also features Amani, Avasarala Srinivas, Dhanya Balakrishna, Balagam Sudhakar Reddy and several other talented actors. Following the release of its trailer, the film has received wide-spread appreciation.

Speaking about *Baapu*, actor Rana Daggubati expressed his excitement, stating that while audiences often see mainstream films, this one stands out due to its unique genre. "Films that reflect our culture are always worth watching, and as a viewer, I'm truly excited and looking forward to it," said Rana.

Producer and director Madhura Sreedhar shared that he has already watched the film twice. "I loved it. The film portrays real people from our surroundings, making it a very relatable experience. Brahmaji's support for the film has been incredible, and I'll do my best to help it reach audiences," he said. He also praised director Daya for crafting a natural and beautifully narrated story.

Actor Brahmaji expressed his grat-

itude to Rana Daggubati for attending the event and supporting the film. Rana has always been a strong supporter of small films, and despite being a big star with a packed schedule, he immediately accepted our request to be here," said Brahmaji.



Shreyas was never supposed to be benched: Gambhir

ndia head coach Gautam Gambhir has rubbished speculation that Shreyas Iyer was being side-lined from the ODI set-up despite his brilliant form, saying that the consistent righthander was always in the "scheme of things" and will be an important player in this month's Champions

Trophy (CT).

Iyer displayed excellent form during the just-concluded 3-0 ODI series sweep against England, hitting a counter-attacking 36-ball 59 in the opener when India were 19/2 chasing 249 in Nagpur, and scoring 44 and 78 in the next two

games.
After the opening match, he created quite a stir by stating that he got into the side only after Virat Kohli had to sit out of the game because of a sore knee. This led to speculation that he would be dropped for Kohli in the next two

"He was not supposed to be benched throughout the series. We wanted to give Yashasvi (Jaiswal) a go in the first game and see what he can bring on the table because he was in (a) really good form in Australia," Gambhir said after the third and final match here on

Iyer was preferred over Jaiswal eventually and Gambhir described him as an "important player" in

"I know that you cannot judge someone (Jaiswal) by one innings. But we always knew that Shreyas was going to be an important player for us. Sometimes when you've only got three games, you want to try and rotate your squad as well," the coach reasoned.

"(And) when you have got Champions Trophy around the Champions Trophy around the corner, you want to try and maximise these three games and try and give everyone an opportunity. But Shreyas was always in the scheme of things (and it is) good that he played all the three games," Gambhir added. The Champions Trophy gets underway on February 19 with India talking Bangladesh on February 20 in Dubai.

Harshit and Arshdeep will have to step up

to step up Someone's missed opportunity is another person's golden chance, believes Gambhir, who expects the likes of Harshit Rana and Arshdeep Singh to step up and fill the void created by pace talisman Jasprit Bumrah's injury-forced absence from the Champions



Bumrah, who played a decisive role in India's T20 World Cup win last year with 15 wickets including a vital spell in the final, has been ruled out of the eight-team event

which begins on February 19 owing to a nagging back problem. missing "Someone opportunity could be a great opportunity for someone else as well, that is how sport goes.

Hopefully, these guys (Rana, Arshdeep and Mohammed Shami) can deliver and put their hand up and do the job for the team," he said.
"It's a great opportunity for them

to try and deliver for the country, (it is) as simple as it can get. What we don't have, we do not have. these guys will put their hand up."

Axar's elevation to No.5

Gambhir said the promotion of What we have is what we have, and we are going to try and go with a very clear mind," he added.

Bumrah's replacement, Rana, has done reasonably well and was drafted into the Champions

drafted into the Champions Trophy squad on Tuesday night. "I think guys have shown some really good signs. Harshit has come along really well. Arsh (Arshdeep) was really good today (Wednesday) as well. Obviously, you would always miss a bowler like Jasprit Bumrah," Gambhir

"But then, it is always good to have someone like Mohammed Shami back with his experience and

quality."
When asked if Bumrah's absence will give opposition teams any psychological advantage over India, Gambhir said, "We can't help it."

"If he's not available, he's not available. If he's injured, he's injured," Gambhir said.

Whether it's me, (or) whether it's the captain, we can't do much about it. We know that he's an important factor, but as I just mentioned, people like Harshit, Arsh (and) Mohammed Shami, all

Gambhir said the promotion of all-rounder Axar Patel at No 5 in the first two ODIs was largely to ensure a left-handed batter in the

That's the way cricket is meant to be played. I know a lot of people talk about it but that's the way we've got to play the game and that's the way cricket should be played," he said.

"It's not about the batting order, it's about who can create what (kind of) impact. If you have the option of putting a quality left-hander in the middle, why won't you do that? Why would you want to have top five as right-handers?" he asked. Gambhir said he the only criteria

for deciding the order is the impact assessment of a player, which he believes, cannot be done purely through statistics. We don't look at averages and

stats and all that stuff, we look at who can deliver more at that number and Axar has done fabulously well, (in) both the games he got the opportunity, (and) he delivered for us," he said. know there will always be people talking about it but I think that's the way we want to go in the future as well," he added.



Families not to travel with Team India for ICC Champions Trophy

PTI NEW DELHI

Families will not be accompanying the Indian cricket players heading to Dubai on February 15 for the ICC Champions Trophy (CT) as the BCCI's new travel policy comes into effect for the first time with this tournament.

Bangladesh on February 20. followed by the marquee clash against arch-rivals Pakistan (February 23) and the final preliminary face-off with New Zealand on March 2. The Rohit Sharma-led squad will play its games in Dubai while the rest of the tournament unfolds from February 19 in Pakistan across three venues. Given that the the duration of the tour is just over three weeks even if the final on

March 9 is taken into consideration, the BCCI will not allow families to accompany the players. As per the new policy, families can be with players for a maximum of two weeks during a tour which

is of 45 days or more.

"If anything changes then it is different but as of now, the players are unlikely to be accompanied by their wives or partners for this tour. One of the senior players had enquired about it and he was told that the policy decision will be followed," a senior BCCI source told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

"Since the tour is of less than one month, families won't be accompanying the players. But if exceptions are made, I think that individual will have to bear the full expenses as BCCI won't be covering any cost," he

The Indian team starts its The BCCI policy document together," he confirmed. campaign in Dubai against states: "Players absent from India for more than 45 days during overseas tours can be joined by their partners and children (under 18) for one visit per series (format wise) of up to a two-week period.
"Any deviation from this

policy must be pre-approved by the coach, captain and GM Operations. Additional expenses outside the visitors' period will not be covered by the BCCI."

However, families will be there with the team during the five-Test tour of England in June-July-August as the five-Test. The window for their twoweek stay during the trip will be worked out later.

The new rules were drafted after India's horror tour of Australia during which the team was outplayed 1-3, leading to speculation about lack of discipline and cohesion in the dressing room.

Rules already put into effect
The senior official said that most of the rules have already been enforced by the BCCI.

"If you look at it, already no player can ask for a private vehicle to come for practice. All state units have been notified. Similarly once the players assembled in Kolkata (for the T20I series against England) and Nagpur (for the ODI series against the same side), the team has travelled

The stars have also adhered to the new regulations of plaving domestic cricket when they get time off from their international assignments. Accordingly, Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, and Shivam Dube

turned up for Mumbai. Virat Kohli played his first game for Delhi in more than 12 years amid a lot of fanfare. So did Rishabh Pant while KL Rahul represented Karnataka. Ravindra Jadeja played for Saurashtra.

Personal staff to stay at different hotel

Restrictions have also been imposed on personal staff (managers, agents, chefs), who were accompanying the team and the coaching group earlier. Accordingly, the personal secretary of a member of the coaching staff, who was regularly seen staying at the team hotel, now stays at a different facility even though he has been seen at every venue during the England

RCB names Rajat Patidar as captain for IPL 2025

PTI BENGALURU

franchise Roval Challengers Bengaluru on Thursday named Rajat Patidar as its captain for the upcoming season starting March 21, replacing South African Faf du Plessis who was released from the squad last vear.

Patidar was among RCB's retained players before the mega auction in November, 2024 and has the experience of leading Madhya Pradesh in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy (T20) and the Vijay Hazare Trophy (ODI).

The 31-year-old, who signed up with the franchise in 2022, guided Madhya Pradesh to the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy final where his side lost to Mumbai by five wickets last

year.
"Rajat has the simplicity, (he) cares about the people around him, we have closely seen how he has led Madhya Pradesh, we really liked it," RCB chief coach Andy Flower said at the franchise event to announce



Patidar's elevation. The right-hander was also the second highest run-getter in the premier domestic T20 tournament, behind Ajinkya Rahane, scoring 428 from 10 matches at an average of 61 and a strike-rate of 186.08.

Patidar takes over from du Plessis, who was released after captaining the team from 2022 to 2024. The 40-year-old South African will play for Delhi Capitals this season. Prior to the announcement on Thursday, there was some

speculation about Virat Kohli returning as captain of the franchise. Kohli was the RCB captain from 2013 to 2021 and has a fine record though he could not land them the title. The 36-year-old led RCB in 143 matches, the second

longest stint as captain after the legendary Mahendra Singh Dhoni for Chennai Super Kings. He congratulated Patidar on

the appointment. "Myself and the other team members will be right behind you, Rajat," Kohli said in a video statement shared by the franchise.

"The way you have grown in this franchise and the way you have performed, you've made a place in the hearts of all RCB fans. This is very well deserved," he added.

Kohli had a fine run as RCB captain, though he could not land them the title. The 36-year-old led RCB in 143 matches, the second longest stint as captain after the legendary Mahendra Singh Dhoni for Chennai Super

Kings. Under him, the team won 68 games, and logged 70 losses and four no-results. In 2016, Kohli had led the

franchise to the IPL final, and made 973 runs, to date the highest for a batter in a single IPL season.

In IPL 2024, Kohli was the top run-getter with 741 runs at a strike-rate of 154.

The franchise conceded that Kohli's name was also discussed for the leadership

The tall fast bowler admitted

after the match that he had been trying to rile up and

disturb Breetzke for a while in

the match but once it was over

everything was forgotten and both shook hands.

In another incident, Shakeel

and substitute fielder Ghulam

were fined 10 percent of their

behaviour.

Bahutule appointed Rajasthan Royals spin-bowling coach

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Former India cricketer Sairaj Bahutule was on Thursday appointed Rajasthan Royals' spin-bowling coach for the upcoming IPL season, adding to the long list of support staff led by head coach Rahul Dravid.

Bahutule, a former leg-spinner and left-hand batter, played two Tests and eight ODIs taking a total of five wickets but his exploits in first-class cricket put him in the league of domestic

Bahutule, 52, scored over 6,000 runs and took 630 wickets, besides 197 scalps in List A The 52-year-old returns to the

Royals having been a part of the setup from 2018-21. He represented India in two Tests and eight ODIs and has since transitioned into a successful coaching career, mentoring teams such as Mumbai, Bengal, Kerala and the Indian national men's team where he has been instrumental in developing emerging talents," s Rajasthan Royals in statement. Head coach Dravid said Bahutule would bring a wealth of experience to the side that won the inaugural edition of the IPL in 2008 under the

legendary Shane Warne. "Sairaj's deep understanding of spin bowling and his extensive coaching experience make him an invaluable addition to our team. His proven ability to mentor young bowlers aligns perfectly with our vision at Rajasthan Royals.

"Having worked with him before, I am confident that his insights and guidance will significantly benefit our players as we strive for excellence in the upcoming season," said Dravid. Bahutule said he was looking forward to working with Dravid.

"I am eager to work alongside Rahul and the rest of the coaching staff to develop our bowling attack and contribute to the team's success," said

Three Pakistan players fined for breaching ICC Code of Conduct

International Cricket Council (ICC) has slapped Pakistan's Shaheen Afridi, Saud Shakeel and Kamran Ghulam with fines and a demerit point each for their belligerent behaviour during the tri-series match against South Africa here. Shaheen was fined 25 per cent

of his match fee for breaching Article 2.12 of the Code, which pertains to "inappropriate physical contact with a Player, Player Support Personnel, Umpire, Match Referee or any other person (including a spectator) during an International Match. The incident occurred in the

28th over of South Africa's



when innings deliberately obstructed batter Matthew Breetzke as he ran a single, resulting in physical contact and a heated exchange between the two players on Wednesday. The ICC had imposed a

similar 20 percent match fees

Shaheen fine and one demerit point on Indian star Virat Kohli for

barging into Australia's Sam

Konstas during the Border Gavaskar Trophy series. Interestingly, while Kohli got a lot of flak for his action, Shaheen has hardly been criticised in Pakistan for his

match fees for celebrating too closely to batter Temba Bavuma following his run-out in the 29th over. Both players were found guilty of breaching Article 2.5 of the Code, which relates to "using language, actions or gestures which disparage or which

could provoke an aggressive

reaction from a batter upon

his/her dismissal during an

International Match?

Kane lifts Bayern to beat Celtic in Champions League playoffs

PTI MUNICH

Bayern Munich looks set to survive the new Champions League playoffs round. AC Milan joined Atalanta and Monaco losing their first-leg games

Wednesday.
Bayern got high-class strikes from Michael Olise and Harry Kane either side of halftime in a 2-1 win at Scottish champion Celtic. The return game is Tuesday in Munich. "The (Celtic) fans haven't seen

many losses here, especially in Europe, so we appreciate the importance of the game and the victory," Bayern coach Vincent Kompany said. Bayern had joined Real

Madrid and Manchester City as Champions League title winners in the past five years who surprisingly found themselves in the playoffs because they finished outside the top eight in the new 36-

Madrid won 3-2 Manchester on Tuesday. Feyenoord's goal in a rainsoaked 1-0 win over Milan came in the third minute and relied in France goalkeeper Mike Maignan spilling Igor Paixão's shot into the net. Feyenoord's Brazilian winger gave Milan new signing Kyle Walker a tough first game in the competition for the seventime European champion.

It also was a quick winning start for Feyenoord's interim coach Pascal Bosschaart in his first game after the firing Monday of Brian Priske. Benfica won 1-0 at Monaco

with another goal from Vangélis Pavlídis, a delicate chip shot in the 48th. Monaco had Al Musrati sent off four minutes later.

Club Brugge scored with a disputed penalty kick in stoppage time to beat Atalanta 2-1. That was a meeting of teams that finished 24th and team single standings format. ninth, respectively, in the 36-

team standings two weeks ago. The top eight teams in those standings advanced direct to the round of 16 in March, leaving Nos. 9 to 24 to compete this month for eight more entries in playoffs over back-to-back midweeks. Kane vs Schmeichel

Harry Kane loves scoring against Kasper Schmeichel, his longtime rival in Tottenham vs Leicester and England vs Denmark games. Bayern star Kane's sharp volley in the 49th, when left unmarked at the back post at a corner, was his 19th career goal past Schmeichel, more than any other goalkeeper he

has faced. It was a second impressive goal conceded by Schmeichel, who was helpless against Michael Olise's rising leftfooted shot in the 45th.

On a tough evening for Celtic's all-American central defense of Cameron Carter-Vickers and Auston Trusty,



the Scottish champion has "At 2-1, Bayern are hanging more hope next Tuesday thanks to Japan forward Daizen Maeda cutting the deficit late on.

on," Celtic coach Brendan Rodgers said. "Let's go and have no regrets and see where it takes us. We've shown we can play football and be a threat. Pavlídis hot streak

Benfica's Greece forward might be the most in-form

striker in the Champions League. It is now six goals in the competition and five in the past three games including a hat trick against Barcelona. The 26-year-old Pavlidis latched onto a pass from the halfway line and shrugged off defender Mohammed Salisu before neatly clipping the ball over goalkeeper Radoslaw Majecki in the 48th minute. Benfica's win was soured by another injury for veteran winger Angel Di Maria. The 2022 World Cup winner with Argentina lasted 20 minutes as a substitute before sustaining a left hamstring injury. He pulled up near the penalty area and immediately lay on the ground.

It was Benfica's second win in Monaco, adding to a 3-2 victory in November in the league phase.

Atalanta anger in Brugge
A late light-touch clash Sweden between two teammates was decisive in

Club Brugge's 2-1 win over Atalanta. Entering stoppage time, Atalanta defender Isak Hien

was judged to have raised a hand into the face of Brugge forward Gustaf Nilsson as they chased a loose ball. Turkish referee Umut Meler awarded a penalty and showed yellow cards to three Atalanta

players, including Hien, for protesting before Nilsson won the game. He sent goalkeeper Rui Patricio the wrong way with his spot kick. "We are now going in a direction outside of what football should be," Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini told broadcaster Sky Italia of

the penalty decision, "but beyond the controversy we now have to accept these rules that I no longer recognize." Brugge had led on former Barcelona forward Ferran

Jutglàs shot in the 15th minute and Atalanta leveled in the 41st on Mario Pašalic's header.