

**Power to modify arbitral awards be left to legislature**

**'BUDGET'S GOAL IS TO PROPEL GROWTH, BOOST INVESTMENTS'**

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

**QUOTE OF THE DAY**  
 "KTR is the leader of drugs, casinos, and international thieves. While going to trial in a formula race, KTR has been saying 'Jai Telangana'. The KCR family is insulting the 'Jai Telangana' slogan. KTR is the leader of all types of gambling in Telangana. All BRS leaders are involved in some kind of corruption and irregularities.. I request the government to investigate all of them and protect the youth of Telangana"  
 - B Mahesh Kumar Goud, TPCC Chief and MLC

**DON'T MISS...**  
**24-hr water supply shutdown on Feb 17**  
 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, water supply will be affected in multiple areas under various O&M divisions, including key localities across Hyderabad and its suburbs. Affected ...  
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**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. Unexpectedly, pandemonium broke out as panicked guests scurried 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...  
 -PAGE: 5

**White-collar hiring grows by 32 pc**  
 Hiring for white-collar jobs witnessed a 32 per cent year-on-year surge in January, driven by industries such as semiconductors, energy, waste management and manufacturing in India, a report said on Thursday. 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...  
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**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 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 ...  
 -SPORTS

**Modi arrives in Washington**



**PNS ■ WASHINGTON**  
 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, ...

**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.



CM Revanth inaugurating Microsoft's new office at Gachibowli on Thursday

**Microsoft expands in Hyd, CM terms it a proud moment**

**PNS ■ 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 long-standing relationship with Hyderabad, and its expansion here will further strengthen our position as a leading IT hub," he said.  
 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.  
 Continued on Page 2

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

Orders speedy execution of proposed projects



**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 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 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 urban area within the Outer Ring Road (ORR) to international standards. 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 infrastructure. The data will help plan future infrastructure needs without disrupting essential services. To further streamline Hyderabad's traffic, the CM suggested 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 mitigation efforts.

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**HC order on kids' entry into theatres challenged**

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 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 between 11 pm and 11 am. The High Court had recently directed the government to consult 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 losses to theatre businesses. During the hearing, the Chief Justice's Bench clarified that it could not intervene while the petition was still pending before the Single Bench. The court advised the petitioners to file an implead petition in the ongoing case instead. Following the court's suggestion, the petitioners withdrew their appeal and agreed to present their concerns in the pending case before the Single bench.

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

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 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 cock-fight was organized by betting money belongs to BRS MLC Srinivas Reddy. 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

**'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.

**SEEKING SUPPORT FOR CASTE SURVEY Govt plans all-party delegation to Delhi**

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 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 per cent 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 Ponnamp Prabhakar. Later, Ponnamp 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. Ponnamp Prabhakar said, "Accordingly, 42 per cent reservations will be made legal in local body elections, education and employment opportunities. A cabinet meeting will be held in the first week of March. Continued on Page 2

**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 additional Terms of Reference (ToR) 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 granted 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. Thursday's Supreme Court hearing 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 Centre.

**JOURNALIST ASSAULT CASE SC grants pre-arrest bail to Mohan Babu**  
**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**  
 The Supreme Court on 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 Ashu Kumar directed Babu to cooperate with the ongoing investigation. Babu had moved the top 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 January 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. He resigned on February 9 and submitted his resignation to Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla in Imphal, hours 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 I - assume to myself as President of India all functions of the government of the state of Manipur and all powers vested in or exercisable by the Governor of 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 in the Backward Classes list by the Telangana government 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 and send it to the parliament's nod. "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'. "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'.

**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 distributed across four zones: LB Nagar Zone - 26 cases, Malkajigiri 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 sand. Continued on Page 2







CASTE SURVEY

# Government offers fresh opportunity for uncovered citizens

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

Minister for Transport and Backward Classes Ponnambhakhar 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 Samithi (BRS). 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

their information." He also noted 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.

**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 Ponnambhakhar speaking at a media conference in Karimnagar on Thursday



Nalgonda Collector Ila Tripathi clicking a selfie with students of Kasturba Gandhi Girls Hostel in Kanganal in Nalgonda district on Wednesday

## Collector promises free air travel to meritorious students

PNS ■ NALGONDA

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

Gandhi Girls Hostel in Kanganal in 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 prasada at the elevated platforms. People in large number started thronging Medaram on the second of the festival. Earlier, the elevated platforms of Sammkka, Sarakka and Pagididdaraju were decorated with impressive rangoli designs after anointing them. Minister Sitakka offered her prayers to the deities. On Wednesday night, the tribal priests observed Jaagam and performed special pujas at the elevated platforms. The Medaram area was reverberated with the Adivasi dances performed amidst beating of huge drums. In Chirumanilla village of Karakagudem mandal of Bhadradi 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 Medaram jatara began on a grand note on Wednesday in Medaram in Tadvaivalam of Mulugu district. In all, 10 lakh devotees are



expected to take part in the event. 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 Jampanna Vaagu. The police department beefed up security by 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 paid their vows to the deities and offered jiggery.

## 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 the thief. Soletthi Pushpamma, a woman from Rollkal village under Parvatigiri 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.

## MLC Naveen Reddy donates Rs 2.22 L for Meramma Yadi, Sewalal temple

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

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 gratitude, honoured him with a shawl and praised his philanthropic efforts. MLC Naveen Reddy, who attended the event as the chief guest, participated in special pujas and emphasised the spiritual significance of temples in fostering peace and unity among people. He stated that human life is the most valuable among all living beings and that offering even the simplest gestures, like a leaf or a flower, to God holds immense meaning. He also highlighted the historical and cultural importance of Hindu temples in



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, including former Vice MPP of Farooqnagar Mandal Mounikharikrishna Goud, former Sarpanch of Kasireddyguda Deena Shankar, Deputy Sarpanch Redya Nayak, former Sarpanch of Papi Reddyguda Tandra Vishnuvardhan Reddy, BRS senior leader Shekhar Pantulu, and village elders along with BRS youth leaders and local residents.

## Convict hurls footwear at judge in Rangareddy

PNS ■ 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 slipper 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," a police official said. Ranga Reddy District Court Bar Association strongly condemned the incident. Advocates at the court complex allegedly overpowered and beat up the convict. 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 judge.

## 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. The 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 Edunthula village in Jangaon district. The son, Ramesh, insisted that the last rites of his father, Velikkatte 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 Uperder, and a daughter, Shobharani. However, Uperder, 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 ■ BHADRADI KOTHAGUDEM

Nineteen members of the outlawed CPI (Maoist) from Chhattisgarh surrendered before the police in Bhadradi Kothagudem district on Thursday, police said. The activists surrendered before Bhadradi 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 conference hall. 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 February 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 Officer V Srihari Prasad stated that Komurayya has been arrested and sent to remand.







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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

Finance 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.

## PICTALK



Farmer carries rose flowers during the Valentine's Week, in Agartala

## Russia combines diplomatic strategy with military tactics



NISHAKANT OJHA

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

Russia'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 manoeuvre 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 destabilisation 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 influence. Similarly, in the Caucasus, Russia has engaged in military conflicts, as seen in Georgia, and continues to exert influence in Armenia and Azerbaijan through peace-keeping operations and strategic 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 NATO CONFLICTS, RUSSIA HAS ENHANCED ITS RAPID MANOEUVRE WARFARE STRATEGIES, INCORPORATING ELEMENTS OF GERMAN BLITZKRIEG AND MODERN NATO DOCTRINES, WHICH WERE EVIDENT IN ITS CAMPAIGNS IN GEORGIA AND UKRAINE

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 a 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 historical ties with Russia and its growing partnerships with the 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 over-reliance 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 innovation. Cyber and information warfare play a significant role in Russia's strategy, heavily influenced by China's cyber tactics. (The writer is an expert on cyber security and counter terrorism; views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### 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 these days. 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



Recently, 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

number of shelters available, and the number of 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 IITs, 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

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

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



GAURAV GANDHI

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

The 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 connectivity. 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 Costs 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 decrease. Economies of Scale and Cost Reduction One of the key drivers of cost reduction in 5G is economies

of scale. As more telecom providers, businesses and consumers adopt 5G, the cost of deployment will continue to decline. The larger the global 5G network, the more cost-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 billion by 2030, at a CAGR of 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 businesses. 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 follow, accelerating global 5G

adoption. 5G's Impact on Business As 5G technology becomes more affordable, businesses will have greater opportunities to enhance their operations. 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. 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)





## FIRST COLUMN

### INDIA'S AI DIPLOMACY

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



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Prime 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 high-level bilateral discussions revolved around advanced technology cooperation in an increasingly fragmented world. India played a significant role as the co-chair of the AI 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 AI 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 AI 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 AI innovation due to its robust free-market economy, world-class research institutions, and entrepreneurial drive. His directive emphasized eliminating barriers that could hinder American AI progress, revoking certain existing AI policies, and reinforcing the US's global leadership in AI. He further asserted that sustaining AI dominance was vital for human advancement, economic competitiveness, and national security. India, aiming for a prominent role in global AI governance, innovation and development, has set forth an ambitious AI 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 AI aspirations. Modi's engagements in Paris, India's announcement to host the fourth global AI 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 AI 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



A S MITTAL

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



Despite concerted efforts to combat corruption, red-tapism 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 over-reaching officials in labour, GST, income tax, pollution, provident funds, property registration, drug and health departments. The economic impact is undeniable.

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 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 Rules**  
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 IS ALREADY A COMPLEX CHALLENGE, BUT ITS INTERSECTION WITH CORRUPTION MAKES IT NEARLY INSURMOUNTABLE

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 an erratic pace is either incapable of foresight or complicit in fostering an environment where bribes become inevitable.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India's (FSSAI) recent directive is a promising 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**  
Establishing a factory in India

requires submitting hundreds of 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**  
India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) has revolutionised governance, but business 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 opportunities for corrupt practices.

A small budgetary allocation toward this initiative could streamline regulatory interactions, 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, including the proposed

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 dismantle bureaucratic hurdles, create a predictable 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 IITL 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

Every year, India observes Road Safety Month, during which various events and programmes are organised 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 accident statistics paint

a stark picture, suggesting that road safety is yet to be treated as a priority by Indian citizens. Road accidents are an 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. 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 translates to an average of 1,264 accidents and 462 deaths

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 levels.

**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. The reality is that road crashes are preventable, and the



term "accident" itself is misleading.

**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. 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. Non-compliance 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 strictly and create widespread awareness about their importance.

**Road Safety as a National Mission**  
Prime Minister Narendra Modi has successfully led multiple national missions, including Swachh Bharat

Abhiyan, Skill Development, Yoga for Fitness, 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 both central and state levels. Regular progress reviews, monthly reports, and rigorous enforcement mechanisms would motivate authorities to take proactive steps toward improving road safety.

**A Collective Commitment to**

**Saving Lives**  
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 medical care, loss of productivity 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 priority, we can create safer roads for all.

(The author is COO consumer VOICE; views are personal)





## Failure: Beyond just being the opposite of success

**TEJAL SINHA**  
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Failure 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 long-term 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 sciences."

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 learning?"

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 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 process."

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 matters."

He acknowledges the growing role of technology in education but warns against using tools without a strong pedagogical foundation. "AI 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."



**Manu Kapur, Professor of Learning Sciences and Higher Education at ETH Zurich, unpacks the power of failure in learning as he chats with The Pioneer. Known for his 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**

### LEGAL GAME-CHANGER

## THE ENTREPRENEUR WHO IS REVOLUTIONISING INDIA'S LEGAL LANDSCAPE!

PNS|HYDERABAD

Meet 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.



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 money.

"My experience studying overseas made me realise how 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. AI 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."

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 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 the law."

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 her, 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!

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 young 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



## 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.**

**"While love can always 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.**

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

love. Single Capricorns may find love in the most unexpected places, while those in relationships will feel a renewed sense of excitement and passion. This year will encourage Capricorn to let go of their traditional approach to love and find a new way of relating to their partner.

### Aquarius (January 20 - February 18)

2025 will be one of the most favourable years for love for Aquarius. Aquarians are known to be independent and unconventional, and true love is not about fitting into a mold but finding someone who accepts and celebrates their uniqueness. With Jupiter's influence in their fifth house of creativity and romance, love for Aquarius will come through a sense of freedom and mutual respect.

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 relationships, Aquarius will feel a renewed sense of partnership and companionship, possibly entering into a more committed and lasting phase.

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 planets, Taurus, Libra, Leo, Cancer, Capricorn and Aquarius will have special transits. So, for 2025, it might be a very deep connection or romantic growth that could lead people 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 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 love you deserve.



### BLUE LINEN FULL SLEEVES SHIRT

Elevate your wardrobe with this timeless 100% linen shirt, designed for 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

### FOREVERMARK ICON COLLECTION PAVÉ AND BAGUETTE RING

Make a declaration of everlasting commitment with the Forevermark Icon Collection Pavé and Baguette Ring. Intricately designed and meticulously crafted, this ring showcases the unparalleled beauty of real diamonds, serving as a timeless token of your enduring bond.



## CELEBRATING LOVE

### RED BELTED SHORT DRESS

This elegant dress by Vero Moda features long bishop sleeves, a mandarin collar and a stylish v-neckline, making it the perfect choice for any occasion. The 3 shoulder darts on each side create a flattering silhouette, while the sash belt and belt loops add a touch of sophistication

Price: INR 3,999



### VOLUMIZING SHAMPOO BAR BY A' DASH OF ME

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

# what's brewing?



On the occasion of celebrating the 1st anniversary of Nailashes in Banjara Hills, Krishika and Khushboo hosted a party, which was curated by MMediaworks.

PARTY

Photos by- SV Chary

## 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 burst 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!

### FUN

**ARCHIE**



**CALVIN AND HOBBS**



**GARFIELD**



**NANCY**



**GINGER MEGGS**



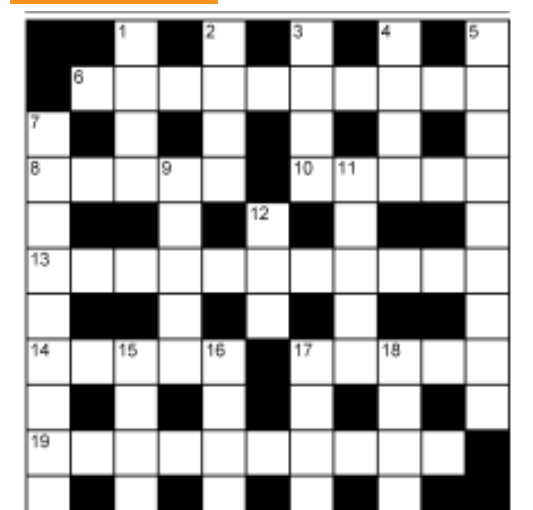
**REALITY CHECK**



**SPEED BUMP**



**CROSSWORD**



**SUDOKU**

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

- Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.
- The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

- ACROSS**
- 6 A team game
  - 8 Foe
  - 10 A bamboo-eating animal
  - 13 Measure temperatures with this
  - 14 Player of bagpipes
  - 17 Stairs
  - 19 Book of word meanings
- DOWN**
- 1 Not in danger
  - 2 All right, but not especially good
  - 3 Halt
  - 4 A sign of tiredness
  - 5 A big sea bird
  - 7 A many-legged creature
  - 9 A radio code that uses dots and dashes
  - 11 Wide awake and ready for anything
  - 12 An animal kept for milk
  - 15 Choose
  - 16 Spoil completely
  - 17 Gritty stuff on a beach
  - 18 Your hearing organs

**SOLUTION**

B	U	C	K	L	E	C	L	E
S	O	K	M	A	R	I	N	E
T	R	I	B	E	E	V	E	
A	S	B	A	R	A	R		
U	L	I	B	R	A	R		
T	K	L	E	O	L			
H	A	N	G	A	R	K	N	E
O	O	R	Z	P				
R	O	T	S	D	E	T	E	S

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

SURESH KAVIRAYANI  
sureshkavirayani@gmail.com

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 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 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

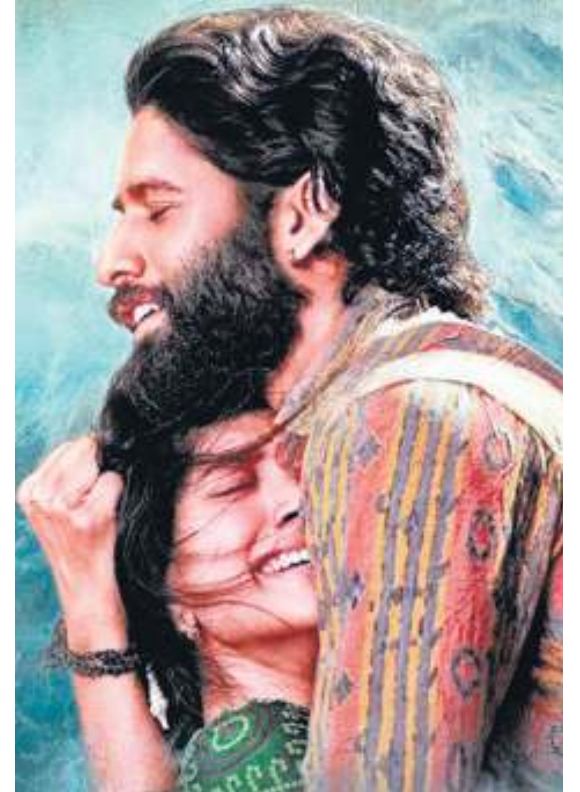


major Hollywood production houses like Walt Disney and Sony. Even the FBI contacts us annually regarding piracy-related matters," he added, highlighting the international reach of their work.

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," 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, making 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 said.

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



Bollywood actress Urvashi Rautela, who has made a mark in Telugu cinema, recently opened up about the invaluable support she received from Megastar Chiranjeevi during a difficult time. The actress, known for her performances in *Daaku Maharaj* alongside Balakrishna and her special dance number in *Waltair Veerayya* with Chiranjeevi, revealed how the veteran actor stepped in to help her mother during a medical emergency.

Urvashi's mother, Meenu Rautela, was hospitalized after suffering an intra-articular fracture in her left leg. The condition was deemed serious by doctors, leaving Urvashi in distress as she struggled to find the best course of treatment. In a moment of uncertainty, she reached out to Chiranjeevi 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 gratitude, 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 support."

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."

## 'SAAREE IS BASED ON REAL-LIFE INCIDENTS'

After a long time the controversial director Ram Gopal Varma is coming up with a film titled *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 Yada 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

anything about their past or present, they end up 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.



## 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 director expressed their happiness, 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.

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

Versatile actor Brahraj takes the lead in the upcoming film *Baapu*, directed by debutant Daya. The film also features Amani, Avasara Srinivas, Dhanya Balakrishna, Balagam Sudhakar Reddy and several other talented actors. Following the release of its trailer, the film has received widespread 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. Brahraj'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 Brahraj expressed his gratitude 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 Brahraj.



## Anupam Kher joins Prabhas' military drama with Hanu Raghavapudi

Bollywood veteran Anupam Kher has become a familiar face in Telugu cinema. Having previously appeared in films like *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

considering *Fauji* as the title. Anupam Kher also 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.

